



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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MONTANA RESIDENT RECEIVES \$5,000 REWARD IN GRIZZLY BEAR CASE

A Montana man who led Federal and State wildlife agents to an illegally-killed grizzly bear and helped them convict the poacher has received a \$5,000 reward from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Montana resident, who wishes to remain anonymous, received the reward January 2. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service paid \$3,000 of the reward and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation contributed \$2,000.

Frank Dunkle, director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and former director of the Montana Fish and Game Department, praised the Montana resident for his assistance in the grizzly bear investigation. "Without this individual's help, this case would not have been solved," Dunkle said. "His action is a great example of the kind of public involvement in conservation that we have been encouraging through the 'Take Pride in America' campaign. I hope his willingness to get involved will serve as a model for other citizens who may observe violations of wildlife conservation laws."

Chip Collins, director of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, said the Foundation plans to pay more rewards in the future. "This reward is the first we have contributed to but it will not be the last," he said. "Because of the importance of deterring illegal killing of protected species such as grizzly bears, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will be establishing a reward fund for people who provide information about wildlife law violations that lead to convictions and enhance the recovery of endangered and threatened species."

(over)

The non-profit National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is a private, independent organization established by Congress in 1984 to help raise funds to support high-priority fish and wildlife conservation programs.

In September 1985, the Montana man overheard that another man had illegally killed an adult male grizzly bear in a portion of the Flathead National Forest, Montana, that is closed to grizzly hunting. He gave the information to officers from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, and also provided information on the location of the bear hide, skull, and skeleton. He later flew into the wilderness area with officers and helped them locate the remains of the illegally-taken bear.

As a result, Phil Sword of Columbia Falls, Montana, was charged in U.S. District Court in Helena, Montana, with one count of illegal take of a threatened species and a second count of possession and transportation of an illegally-taken grizzly bear. Through a plea arrangement, he pleaded guilty to the second count and was fined \$8,500 and placed on 2 years' probation. This is the largest fine ever assessed against an individual for transportation and possession of an illegally-taken grizzly bear.