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PR #10-083

Jury Finds Wasilla Man Guilty of 23 Fish and Wildlife Violations

(ANCHORAGE, Alaska) – A jury found a Wasilla man guilty of 23 misdemeanor fish and wildlife violations in the Anchorage District Court Thursday. After a 2-1/2 week jury trial, Kurt M. Lepping, 55, was convicted of:

- three counts of same day airborne for assisting in the take of black bear over a bait site the same day that he was airborne
- two counts of a licensed big game transporter knowingly remaining in the field with clients for the hunt
- four counts of guiding without a big game guide license
- one count of outfitting a hunt without a license
- two counts of unlawful acts for an un-permitted black bear bait station
- four counts of unlawful possession and transportation of game,
- one count of an unregistered black bear bait station,
- one count of illegal remuneration given for use of a black bear bait station,
- one count of sport fish guide without a license,
- two counts of sport fish guide violations, failure to identify a black bear bait station one count of a licensed big game transporter failing to file transporter activity reports

The investigation began on June of 2008 when Alaska Wildlife Troopers contacted two nonresident hunting clients of Lepping at an unregistered black bear bait site in Game Management Unit 16B. During the course of the investigation, Alaska Wildlife Troopers served multiple search warrants in Alaska, Washington and Utah. Troopers also seized two aircraft owned by Lepping – a Piper super-cub and a Cessna 206. The warrants were executed with assistance from agents with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, officers with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and officers with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. Troopers determined that Lepping had sport fish guided without a license in 2005 and taken sport fishing clients to Tustemena Lake for red salmon in 2006. Lepping took nonresident clients to black bear bait sites in 2007 and guided nonresident clients at black bear bait sites in 2008. Lepping obtained a big game transporter license in 2008 but acted beyond what a transporter is allowed to do by conducting big game guide services.

A sentencing hearing is scheduled in January 2011.

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For additional information please contact Andrew Peterson with the Office of Special Prosecutions and Appeals at (907) 269-7948 or contact Alaska Wildlife Trooper Sgt. Katrina Malm at (907)269-5513.