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Man Sentenced Following Extensive AWT Investigation

(ANCHORAGE, Alaska)— Yesterday the Alaska Wildlife Troopers witnessed a successful conclusion to a lengthy multi-agency investigation. Charles E. Vandergaw received his sentence in a Palmer court after accepting a plea deal from the state. Vandergaw was convicted on charges of Intentionally Feeding Game. The plea deal requires that he pay the state \$20,000 and serve three years of probation. He also received a suspended jail sentence of 180 days. The investigation was a cooperative effort between the Alaska Wildlife Troopers and the Department of Fish & Game.

The Alaska Wildlife Troopers investigation revealed that Vandergaw fed bears on an almost daily basis at his remote cabin near Skwentna. Firecracker Films, Ltd., a foreign film company located in England, paid Vandergaw and Carla Garrod over \$75,000.00 to create a documentary film in 2008. Troopers documented that Vandergaw, Garrod and Terry Cartee purchased over 7,350 pounds of dog food and 844 pounds of cookies during the summer of 2008 for the purpose of feeding bears which allowed Firecracker Films, Ltd. to make its documentary.

Alaska law has prohibited the intentional feeding of game, including bears, since 1985. The offense of intentional feeding of game was prosecuted as a non-criminal violation prior to 2008. Vandergaw was previously cited for feeding game in 2002 and again in 2008 for feeding bears in 2007.

Vandergaw was warned in 2008 that the State law prohibiting the intentional feeding of bears was reclassified as a class A misdemeanor offense. Vandergaw was further put on notice that the State intended to seek a search warrant if evidence suggested he was still feeding bears at his remote cabin.

State officials believe that Vandergaw's recklessness and disregard for the safety of humans will inevitably lead to a tragic ending at Bear Haven. Specifically, officials were concerned with the fact that Vandergaw placed not only himself, but other individuals, including children, at risk of being attacked or killed by bears. Vandergaw's feeding activities directly conflicted with State bear education efforts. The feeding of bears in this region also artificially aided in boosting bear numbers in a region that was part of a predator control program with the goal of increasing the resident moose population. Finally, Vandergaw was profiting from his illegal activities.

In September 2008, Alaska State Troopers executed a search warrant of Vandergaw's remote cabin. Troopers found 1040 lbs of dog food on the property. When asked about his feeding activities, Vandergaw admitted to feeding bears for the past 20 years and to being unable to stop feeding them immediately. Richard Terry, a camera man hired by Firecracker Films, Ltd., confirmed that Vandergaw fed the bears at his remote cabin twice daily during the summer of 2008.