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Court ruling lets State kill bears in southwest Alaska despite ongoing lawsuit challenging the Mulchatna bear shooting program as unconstitutional

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — An Alaska Superior [Court ruling](#) today allows the State of Alaska to continue its Mulchatna bear control program and kill an unlimited number of black and brown bears across roughly 40,000 square miles of southwest Alaska this summer.

"We are deeply disappointed by the court's decision to allow the gunning program to move forward today," said **Nicole Schmitt, executive director of Alaska Wildlife Alliance**. "The State already killed close to 200 bears under a program which was later found unlawful. We can't undo the slaughter of those bears, which includes dozens of cubs, and I fear history will repeat itself until these issues can be resolved, again, in court."

The decision allows the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to continue shooting bears even though the program's legality is being challenged in court. Continuing the program during litigation could cause irreversible harm to bear populations in southwest Alaska.

"Allowing this unconstitutional program to proceed threatens bear populations vital to places like Katmai National Park and McNeil River," said **Michelle Sinnott, staff attorney with Trustees for Alaska**. "Unfortunately, the State will continue pushing forward with its scientifically baseless bear-killing program and by the time this case is resolved, the harm caused to these bear populations cannot be undone. That's not responsible wildlife management."

[The litigation](#), brought by Alaska Wildlife Alliance and the Center for Biological Diversity, challenges the reinstatement of the Mulchatna bear control program after a previous court found it unconstitutional. It invokes the sustained yield clause of the Alaska Constitution, which requires the state to manage wildlife populations as a protected public resource that must be maintained in perpetuity. The Alaska Supreme Court has determined that this clause applies to all wildlife, including bears.

“This unlawful plan has irreversible consequences, and I’m concerned that state game agents could start killing bears before this case is resolved,” **said Cooper Freeman, Alaska director at the Center for Biological Diversity.** “We want to see the caribou herd thrive, but the state simply hasn't shown that the unrestrained killing of bears is going to help us get there. We need to stop this disgraceful waste of the state’s limited resources and work based on science to protect all our wildlife.”

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