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As a wildlife advocate worried about deteriorating polar bear populations, I ask for the prompt cessation of polar bear trophy permits.

Polar bears face an uncertain fate, due to melting Arctic ice, oil and gas exploration, and chemical pollution. In addition, trophy hunters threaten polar bear numbers. Since 1994, prize hunters have ferried polar bear hides and heads from the Canadian Arctic into the U.S. That same year, polar bear imports were exempted from language in the 1972 Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) that classified polar bears a protected species.

While the U.S. forbids big-game hunting of polar bears, the MMPA loophole lets American trophy hunters bring back the body parts of bears killed in Canada.

I understand the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's proposed classification of polar bears as "Threatened" under the Endangered Species Act (December 2006) garnered support from the American public. Yet the agency continues to grant permits that allow American hunters to import heads and hides from bears slaughtered in Canada. In essence, the permits give U.S. citizens a means to partake in a commercial hunt — even though such hunts are illegal in the polar bears' Alaskan habitat.

Please take a proactive stance for polar bears before it's too late. According to the World Conservation Union, polar bears could vanish from most of their range over the next 100 years.

While solutions for climate change require long-term input from citizens and governments — you can help endangered polar bears right now by upholding the heart of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. I strongly encourage you to terminate polar bear trophy permits.

Sincerely,