



NEWS RELEASE

**KAREN L. LOEFFLER
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
DISTRICT OF ALASKA**

Federal Building & U.S. Courthouse • 222 W. 7th Avenue • Room 253 • Anchorage, AK 99513-7567 • (907) 271-5071

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, February 23, 2012**

**Contact: Andrea T. Steward
Assistant United States Attorney
907-271-5071**

KETCHIKAN MAN SENTENCED FOR ILLEGAL TRAFFICKING OF SEAL SKIN

Anchorage, Alaska – United States Attorney Karen L. Loeffler announced today that a Ketchikan man was sentenced in federal court in Anchorage to 5 years probation and a \$1,000 fine on his conviction of illegally selling a seal skin.

On February 22, 2012, Lawrence Willard, 51, of Ketchikan, Alaska was sentenced by United States Magistrate Judge Deborah Smith.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Aunnie Steward who prosecuted the case, the following information is the basis for the plea and sentencing:

In September of 2008, the defendant, Lawrence Willard, who is an Alaska native, sold a seal skin that was not significantly altered to an individual who was not an Alaska native for approximately \$500. The defendant did so knowing that his actions violated the law. The Marine Mammal Protection Act prohibits the trafficking of marine mammals. There is a narrow exception for Alaska natives that allows the sale of marine mammal products but only if they are first significantly altered to a traditional native handicraft. This is a limited exception carved out to allow for the protection of marine mammals while at the same time allowing for traditional native handicraft. Willard was familiar with the law at the time of the sale. When Willard sold a seal skin to a non-native without first significantly altering the seal skin he knowingly violated the law and abused the privilege accorded to Alaska natives under the law.

Ms. Loeffler commended the Office of Law Enforcement for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association for the investigation that led to the successful prosecution of Willard.

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usao/ak/12-018

Prepared by: Jennifer Lotz, 907-271-5071, jennifer.lotz@usdoj.gov