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Main Image Credit:

Main Image Caption:

Activist and musician Ted Nugent has signed a plea agreement with federal prosecutors admitting he illegally shot and transported black bear in Southeast Alaska two years ago, according to the agreement.

Nugent, 63, launched an arrow at a black bear while on a bow-hunting trip with friends in Tongass National Forest in May 2009. Federal prosecutors say he wounded the bear, attracted to the hunters by a bait station. Nugent's lawyer says the arrow grazed the animal and it scampered off alive.

Whether injured or merely scratched, the bear got away. Nugent shot and killed another bear four days later. Then he put the scenes on TV.

"The Motor City Madman" was filming on Sukkwan Island, south of Hydaburg, for his TV show "Ted Nugent Spirit of the Wild," according Nugent's deal with federal prosecutors, made public Friday.

It's unclear if a viewer notified federal authorities or if the investigators saw the clip themselves.

Nugent and the prosecutors now agree: The second bear was shot illegally. By striking the first bear and killing the second, Nugent exceeded his bag limit for Game Management Unit 2. Transporting the illegal second bear off federal property -- in a boat called the El Dorado -- amounted to a misdemeanor violation of the Lacey Act, the law that prohibits the sale and transport of illegally harvested wildlife and plants, among other things.

The agreement, set to be entered in court next week, says Nugent will pay a \$10,000 fine and create a 30- to 60-second public service announcement about responsible hunting to run on his show every other week. Nugent will be banned from hunting or fishing anywhere in Alaska and on any U.S. Forest Service land nationwide for one year. He will also be placed on two years' probation.

Nugent signed the agreement April 14. But that doesn't mean he or his lawyer, Wayne Anthony Ross, agree with the hunting regulations for the area.

"They've got apparently some crazy law in Southeast that says if you even touch an animal with an arrow, it becomes your animal," Ross said by phone Friday. "He looked to see if he had hit it and didn't believe that he'd hit it fatally."

The law is less than 5 years old, and Nugent, who's hunted in that part of Alaska for years, was unaware of it, Ross said.

Ross said he watched video from that episode of "Spirit of the Wild." The lawyer and gun-rights

advocate said the arrow "touched" the bear and stuck in the ground. It might have cut the bear's skin, he said.

"There wasn't any blood trail that they could find," Ross said. "There was a little blood apparently at the spot, but nothing that indicated the bear was hard hit."

Nugent and his hunting buddies looked for the bear but didn't find it, Ross said. "The bear didn't die. He only took one bear."

Nugent was not immediately available for comment. The Juneau-based federal prosecutor handling the case, Jack Schmidt, declined to comment.

Nugent sits on the board of directors for the National Rifle Association, as does Ross. Nugent was made aware of either the investigation or pending charges about two months before signing the agreement, Ross said. Criminal information, including the charges and plea agreement, were filed in federal court on Friday.

Ross, a longtime NRA board member and one-time appointee by ex-Gov. Sarah Palin to be the state's attorney general, said he admired Nugent and felt honored to represent him in the case. Nugent supported Ross' 2002 gubernatorial campaign.

"I would much rather be the guy to represent him at a trial," Ross said. "But you've got to look at what the facts are, and the facts are they've got this crazy law down there. You don't go to court and put up a defense just to put up a defense."

Ross said Nugent had devoted his life to ethical hunting and wanted to create a public service announcement urging hunters to always check the regulations for the areas they hunt.

It's not the first time Nugent has run afoul of hunting laws because of his TV show.

According to the Los Angeles Times, Nugent pleaded no contest in 2010 to California charges of baiting a deer in 2009 and having an improperly signed hunting tag.

A spokesman for the California Department of Fish and Game apparently saw an episode of "Spirit of the Wild" and told the Appeal-Democrat, a newspaper serving California's Sutter and Yuba counties, that he "just about fell out of his chair" when he saw Nugent shoot and kill an immature buck. An investigation found that Nugent had used an illegal chemical scent to attract the deer, the Times reported. A charge of shooting an underage buck was dropped. Nugent lost the privilege to hunt deer in California until June 2012.

Nugent made headlines recently for comments in an NRA speech. According to the Washington Post, Nugent, speaking about the Obama administration said, "We need to ride into that battlefield and chop their heads off in November," adding, "If Barack Obama becomes the next president in November, again, I will either be dead or in jail by this time next year."

Nugent confirmed that two Secret Service agents talked to him Thursday and said in a statement that everyone at the meeting agreed there were no threats of violence made in the speech.

Secret Service spokesman Brian Leary told the Washington Post, "The issue has been resolved" and that he "does not anticipate any further action."

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