

Bear baiting allowed for 2nd season in N.W.T.

Last Updated: Monday, June 1, 2009 | 3:04 PM CT

CBC News

The sport hunting season for black bears began Monday in the Northwest Territories, with at least one hunting outfitter allowed to bait bears — a practice that may not last long, according to the territory's environment minister.

This year marks the second season bear baiting has been allowed in the N.W.T.

That means True North Safaris of Yellowknife — the only outfitter that has applied for and received a bear baiting permit — can ensure its chances of bagging a bear for its clients are close to 100 per cent.

"We're going to be a lot more competitive now ... with, say, Alberta and Manitoba," True North Safaris owner Gary Jaeb said.

Officials with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources say they plan to inspect each bait to ensure it's safe.

But while bear baiting is legal now, Environment Minister Michael Miltenberger said that may change when new wildlife legislation is introduced.

"It's not something that I think we should necessarily be out promoting," Miltenberger told CBC News.

"There's enough issues with consumptive tourism and challenges related to wildlife and numbers, pressures from resource development, pressures from man."

Some problems were reported last year, when bear baiting was introduced, including a wounded bear that ran away and baits located too close to roads, trails and gravel pits.

The Wekeezhii Renewable Resource Board says it wants these issues addressed as a condition of its support for the bear hunt.

"We were concerned about some of the safety of the first bear-baiting season, and we encouraged [the Environment Department] to work closely with outfitters," board chairman Alfonz Nitsiza said.