WASHINGTON (AP).— "Today's decision recognizes at long last the state's efforts to bring back the alligator to abundant population levels," Breaux said.

Alligator hunting, under strict federal supervision, is allowed in a dozen Louisiana parishes where alligator populations have grown dramatically in recent years.

The alligator was placed on the federal endangered species list when populations throughout the country dropped to a dangerously low level. But wildlife authorities in Louisiana and other states report that the alligator is no longer threatened with extinction.

Federal officials hesitated allowing international traffic in alligator hides, fearing such a move would stimulate trade in products from endangered animals such as crocodiles.