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JASON C. CLINTON**

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318-371-3049

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Update

by Sr. Agent Jason C. Clinton, Region 1 Representative

With the weather warming up, the outdoor enthusiasts will start thinking about fishing and water skiing. For wildlife agents, we'll start thinking about hot days on the water fighting mosquitoes and trying not to get sunburns and heat exhaustion.

But we know that we must be out there to help ensure the safety and enjoyment of those whom we serve. We hear a lot of verbal abuse from some people when we issue citations; they complain

about how we are just trying to ruin their fun. That is not the case at all. We are there to help you have a good time and make sure you make it home alive. If that means we have to cancel your trip because you don't have enough PFDs, we do it because we know PFDs save lives. That's why you see us wearing ours while we're on patrol. Sadly, we see a lot of boat accident fatalities that didn't have to happen if the passengers had only been wearing a PFD.

Another problem that enforcement agents have a zero tolerance for is DWIs on the water. Alcohol usually plays a big role in the boat accidents that we see, and agents try their best to stop these accidents before they happen. We feel that a DWI arrest is better than a funeral for the families of those people who didn't heed our warning.

So, once again, if you are going to drink while you're out boating, get a designated driver or we will find you. 🍷

Get Ready for Boating Season With This Handy Checklist

by Sr. Agent Jason C. Clinton

The weather is starting to warm up and that means it's time to hit the water to have some fun and try to beat the hot Louisiana summer. But before you put that boat in the water, you need to check it and make sure you have everything you need. Following this quick checklist will help ensure you that have a good time on the water.

1. Personal Flotation

Devices (PFD): both the wearable and the Type IV throwable devices. Check to see that they're serviceable and that you have one for everyone who will be on board.

2. Paperwork: Make sure

your boat registration is valid. If not, renew it. Be sure to keep your boat registration papers in the boat.

3. Electronics: Do your running lights and bilge pump work?

4. Fire extinguisher: Is it charged and accessible?

5. Paddle: Well, this one is self-explanatory.

6. Boat plug: Make sure it's in good working condition (no dry rot). If possible, try to install the plug from inside the boat to prevent it from falling out.

7. Boat damage: Check the boat for any cracks or holes.

8. Boat trailer: Check the tires for dry rot and air pressure. It's also a good idea to go ahead and grease the bearings while you're down there.

9. Cell phone: It's a good idea to carry one just in case.

Some more good advice that will help you enjoy your outing is to abide by the rules of the road when you're on the water.

Operate your boat as if it were a car—drive on the right side of center. If you are being passed, maintain speed and course of

travel. If you're passing, give the other boat plenty of room in case its driver doesn't see you. Don't attempt crazy maneuvers. Not only are stunts dangerous, they're probably illegal.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries teaches a boating safety course that is now mandatory for anyone born after 1988 and wishes to operate a vessel alone with more than 10 horsepower.

If you would like more information on boating safety, contact your local Wildlife and Fisheries office or any enforcement agent. We are always happy to answer any questions before we find a violation and have to explain it that way. Most important, if you are going to be out on Louisiana's lakes and rivers this spring and summer, please be careful and don't drink and drive. 🍷

Bass Fishermen Cited for Over-the-Limit Takes During Lake Bistineau Draw Down

by Sgt. Kenny Balkom

Last summer's draw down of Lake Bistineau generated numerous citizen complaints regarding over-the-limit takes by other fishermen. As a result, wildlife agents increased patrols on the lake and stepped up enforcement of bag limits.

On Aug. 18, 2004, Sgt. Wes-

ley Walker, Capt. Donnie Bates and Sgt. Kenny Balkom found two fishermen, both of Heflin, in violation. When we conducted field checks on both subjects, one was found to be in possession of 16 black bass, while the other was found to be in possession of

33 black bass.

Both subjects were cited for 56:325 Taking/Possessing Over Limit Freshwater Fish. The penalties for such violations are \$100 to \$350, or up to 60 days in jail, or both, plus court costs.

The bag limit on black bass

is 10 per person, per day. With the draw down of Lake Bistineau to be conducted for the next two years, let this be a warning to possible fish poachers. Just because you don't see us doesn't mean we can't see you, even if we're 20 miles away. 🐾



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