


**SGT. RICHARD PURVIS**

## Update

by Sgt. Richard Purvis, Region 9 Representative

**T**he agents of Region 9 are busy working on the typical summertime activities—commercial fisheries, boating safety patrols, recreational fishing and DWI interdiction, to name just a few. Since it is summertime in south Louisiana, it is *hot*. Along with the heat, the agents are contending with unusually high winds and the ever-prevalent summer rainstorms. My point being, a wildlife agent not only has to learn the skills necessary to be a successful agent, but he or she also has to be physically tough. The latter is not something you can learn—you either are or you aren't. Wildlife agents are called on to go farther, work harder and face Mother Nature's fury on a daily basis. I have been proud to represent these hardy men and women on the LWAA board for the past four years.

As with all things, there is an ending. I will be completing my second term as Regions 9's board representative this July at our annual conference. I would like to take this opportunity, in my last Update message, to thank the agents of Region 9 for their support and for their hard work. They have never balked when I needed them, especially at last year's conference, which our region hosted. Each and every member in Region 9 stepped up to help make it a very successful event.

I would also like to thank my supervisors for working with me on scheduling conflicts. They allowed me the time needed to successfully accomplish the business of this association. Most importantly, I must thank my family. They are the ones who sacrificed family

time when I needed to take care of LWAA matters.

After four years, it's time for me to do two things. First, I need to begin spending more time at home. My son is just entering his teenage years—a period in which I believe he will need all the help and guidance that I can give him so that he can grow to be the man that I hope he will become. Second, it is time for Region 9 to introduce some fresh blood to the representative position. It's a job that requires someone eager and committed to making positive strides to advance the interests of wildlife agents and the profession of wildlife law enforcement.

Whoever my successor turns out to be, I wish him well. You can also count on me to be of service at any time the new representative should need it. 🐾

### REGION 9

**THIBODAUX**  
985-447-0821

**REGION SUPERVISOR**  
Capt. Samuel Martin

**ADMINISTRATIVE  
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Elaine Moore

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Agent William Boyd  
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Cadet Edward Ridgel  
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**LAFOURCHE, TERREBONNE  
PARISHES (COMMUNITY  
OF GRAND ISLE)**

**DISTRICT SUPERVISOR**  
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Sgt. Max Dupre  
Sgt. Richard Purvis  
Sgt. Chad Hebert  
Sr. Agent Thomas Dewitt  
Sr. Agent Jamie Folse  
Agent Joe Arnaud

### PHOTO GALLERY



Shrimp season gets under way with the annual Golden Meadow "Blessing of the Fleet" boat parade in Bayou Lafourche. Father Carl Collins and other dignitaries boarded one of the elaborately decorated shrimp vessels participating in the parade, and Father Carl prayed for the safety of the fishermen and for an abundant catch.



# Terrebonne Parish District Attorney Gets Behind Wildlife Enforcement Efforts

by Sgt. Richard Purvis

Since taking office in January 1997, Terrebonne Parish District Attorney Joe Waitz Jr. has continuously shown local wildlife agents that he takes us, and our enforcement efforts, seriously. Waitz has backed us in and out of the courtroom.

Immediately after taking office, Waitz insisted on more aggressive prosecutions of wildlife cases by his assistant district attorneys. Wildlife crimes used to be viewed as "victimless crimes," and as such they were generally handled outside the courtroom.

In Waitz's district, habitual wildlife offenders are now ordered to appear in court. No more are the days of stopping by the D.A.'s office and paying a little fine and them walking out with a clean record.

This D.A. views wildlife offenders as criminals. "These offenders are stealing from me as a sportsman," says Waitz. "They are stealing from honest fishermen who make a living from our natural resources. If the honest fishermen and sportsmen have to wait for opening seasons, then everyone will!"

Waitz is currently investigating ways to bar "outlaw" commercial fishermen from the fisheries. For those fishermen who continually seem to have problems obeying the law, the D.A.'s office will be pushing to have their commercial



District Attorney Joe Waitz Jr. (right) and Glen Bourgeois, pre-trial services director and a former game warden, are supporters of the LWAA program that encourages children to wear their life jackets when on the water.

fisherman's license revoked. Recently, the district attorney's office produced a public service announcement on our local television station. In that PSA, he gave commercial shrimpers fair warning that if they didn't obey the law during this year's commercial shrimp season they would be looking for a new line of work.

Criminal prosecutions are not the only support District Attorney Waitz has given. He has been a sponsor of the Louisiana Wildlife Agents Association's "I Got Caught Wearing My Life Jacket" program since its inception. In fact for the past four

years, he has been the program's top sponsor. In addition to monetary contributions, Waitz recently sponsored a boating safety PSA, which featured the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries Enforcement Division as well as the sheriff's water patrol. The topic this time was boating under the influence.

Every year Terrebonne Parish leads the state in boating accidents and boating safety violations. Our district attorney has begun doing his part to curb this trend. As of this year, all boating safety citations are being prosecuted by the local parish district

attorney's office. If you are found guilty of a boating safety violation in Terrebonne Parish, you will be required to attend an approved boating safety class. With the help of the LDWF Enforcement Division, Waitz's office has set up its own boating safety classes that are being taught by the D.A.'s own investigators. The investigators have been certified by LDWF to teach the course.

As an enforcement agent and a concerned member of the community, I, for one, would like to thank District Attorney Waitz for his help and his genuine concern for our cause and the job we do. 🐾

## The Right Place, the Right Time

by Sgt. Richard Purvis

**W**hen I train new agents, one of the first things I tell them is that 75 percent of making good cases is simply being out in the field when violations occur. The other 25 percent is recognizing the violations when you see them. Most of what I consider to be my better cases practically fell into my lap while I was on routine patrol. Let me offer an example.

Sgt. Chad Hebert and I were out on an afternoon/early evening boat patrol in early spring. We were at the end of our shift and were headed back to the boat launch. It was around 8 p.m. and it had gotten dark. Because there was no moon, we were taking our time and picking our way through the marsh. As we entered Bayou DeCade, one of the major thoroughfares, we stopped to idle through a no-

wake zone and were busy discussing where we could stop on the way home to get supper.

Just before we exited the no-wake zone, I heard a voice calling in the distance. At first I thought I was hearing things until Sgt. Hebert asked if I heard someone calling. We stopped and used our spotlight to look around. The light illuminated two men standing in about ankle-deep water, trying to push a 16-foot aluminum flat boat off of a mud flat.

We approached the boaters and asked if they were all right. They said they were OK and explained that they had missed their turn in the dark. We told them to hold on and give us a few minutes to rig a line and we would pull them off the flat. As we got the lines ready, we were making idle chitchat, mostly little jokes about their predicament.

We pulled the boat off the mud flat and one of the fellas asked us if they owed us anything for the tow. We told them, "No, the state pays us to pull guys off of mud flats." They both laughed and asked our names. I told them that my name was Richard and introduced Chad by just his first name.

We were busy picking up our ropes and cleaning up, still making pleasant conversation. One of the men asked us if we had a camp in the area. We told them, "No, we are out here working." They then asked us, "Who do ya'll work for?" We told them that we were game wardens. They thought that was pretty funny.

Then they asked, "No, really, who do you guys work for?" We said, "No, really, we are game wardens."

They either must have

believed us, or they finally got around to noticing that we were in uniform and in a marked boat, because their mood suddenly changed. One of the guys began straightening up an ice chest that had overturned when they hit the mud flat. I noticed that he was doing his best to "nonchalantly" put several bass in the chest without our noticing. Sgt. Hebert and I became very suspicious of their sudden nervousness. We then conducted a game check and found that they had 55 bass in the ice chest, 35 over the legal limit.

When all was said and done, the two received about eight citations that included over the limit of game fish, no fishing licenses and a variety of boating safety violations.

I bet they believe we are game wardens now. 🐾

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# Seaplane Gives Agents Upper Hand Over Gill Netters

by Sgt. Richard Purvis

**H**istorically, the period between Mardi Gras and Easter is a time when agents working Louisiana's coastal areas are besieged by complaints of illegal commercial fishing activity. Demand for seafood surges during the 40-day Lenten period, when many Catholics and other religious observers abstain from eating meat and often substitute seafood as their main course. The premium prices that seafood commands during this period tend to make some fishermen greedy, and as a result they will try to cut as many corners as they can.

For several years now, the state has banned the use of gill nets in saltwater areas. But during Lent, we invariably get complaints that gill net fishermen have crept into the saltwater marshes and bayous to make a quick buck. This year was no exception.

The Region 9 office began getting complaints of two unknown subjects operating a gill net in the westernmost area of Terrebonne Parish. For those unfamiliar, Terrebonne is one of the largest parishes in the state. Approximately 65 percent of the parish is marshes, bayous and lakes—an outlaw fisherman's paradise. The agents worked long night hours attempting to catch these two gill netters, but to no avail. Eventually we had to change tactics. Although we had identified the subjects and



**ABOVE LEFT:** Sgt. Chad Hebert with a garfish weighing more than 200 pounds and retrieved from an illegal gill net. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Agents seized two crates of gill nets as evidence in this case.



knew the approximate area and the approximate time they were going out to check the nets, we could not follow them without being spotted. That's when Capt. Sammy Martin, Lt. Chuck Comeaux, Sgt. Chad Hebert and I came up with a better plan.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Enforcement Division has three seaplanes that are routinely used in enforcement activities. Russell Johnson pilots the plane based in Terrebonne. Our plan was to follow the subjects by air from their home on Bayou Dularge. The pilot and Sgt. Hebert began the surveillance around 3 p.m. I traveled by boat to the general area of the gill nets

and waited for the subjects to arrive. Johnson and Sgt. Hebert flew the area at around 5,000 feet, so as to not be spotted. About 4:30 p.m., they observed the two subjects arrive in two different boats and retrieve their gill nets hidden in the marsh. Johnson and Sgt. Hebert were able to mark the area where the subjects had staked out their nets, and then Johnson landed the plane on the water near me. Sgt. Hebert boarded the patrol boat, and we moved in for the kill.

Fortunately for us, the two subjects had split up far enough that they were out of sight of each other. So subject number two could not see us stop the first fisher-

man. It took about an hour for us to gather up the first subject's nets and issue his citations. After turning him loose, minus his catch and nets, we began looking for the second subject. It took all of 20 minutes to locate him in another part of the marsh.

Had it not been for the access to the seaplane, I doubt that we would have made this case. These fishermen were caught doing the same thing during the last Lenten season, but we had been able to observe them as they staked out the nets.

This year, our subjects had the forethought to not bring the gill nets with them as they traveled to and from the marshes. But this time, we had them at 5,000 feet. 🐟