



74th Annual Southeastern Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies Virtual Conference

OCTOBER 26-28, 2020

Law Enforcement Presentations

Tuesday, October 27, 2020

Track: Law Enforcement 1

Presentation Time: 8:45 AM - 9:30 AM

The Use of Technology in Wildlife Law Enforcement - The "Staggs Case"

Presenter: Eric Vaughn - South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

Abstract: A deer case involving a suspect that killed over 300 deer illegally over a period of one year on depredation permits. Suspect was charging fees illegally for hunters to pay to shoot on depredation permits issued for crop damage for antlerless deer only. Bucks were killed during illegal hunting activities and antler velvet collected for sale in addition to illegal meat sales. The investigation included ZETX phone tracking and a full undercover operation of 3 undercover special investigators. Suspect was using a 1993 Lincoln Continental set up for night hunting with a sunroof and special lights. The technology used in this case tracking cell phones gave great advantages to investigators on one of the worst deer violations in South Carolina history, including permit violations, gross over limit of permit limits, shooting of bucks, night hunting, selling deer meat, selling illegal hunts, and collecting of antler velvet for sale. With the use of phone tracking SCDNR Special Investigations was able to track suspects movements and patterns leading to introduction to an undercover officer. In the end the suspect faces 14 years in prison due to violations, and faces losing hunting privileges for a lifetime in SC. The Lincoln was confiscated in addition to a refrigerator truck and several rifles with thermal scopes and hand held FLIR units. The case is very interesting and helps us see the advantages of using technology for modern wildlife enforcement issues. This was one of the first cases that SCDNR used phone tracking software after our subscription to ZETX.

Presentation Time: 9:30 AM - 10:00 AM

Law Enforcement Q & A Session for The "Staggs Case" Presentation

*Moderator: Travis R. McLain - Missouri Department of Conservation

** The Staggs Case is a South Carolina case involving a suspect that killed over 300 deer illegally over a period of one year on depredation permits. The suspect in this investigation was charging fees illegally for hunters to pay to shoot on depredation permits issued for crop damage for antlerless deer only. Bucks were killed during illegal hunting activities and antler velvet collected for sale in addition to illegal meat sales. The investigation included ZETX phone tracking and a full undercover operation of 3 undercover special investigators. The suspect was using a 1993 Lincoln Continental set up for night hunting with a sunroof and special lights. The technology used in this case tracking cell phones gave great advantages to investigators on one of the worst deer violations in South Carolina history, including permit violations, gross over limit of permit limits, shooting of bucks, night hunting, selling deer meat, selling illegal hunts, and collecting of antler velvet for sale. With the use of phone tracking SCDNR Special Investigations was able to track suspects movements and patterns leading to introduction to an undercover officer. In the end the suspect faces 14 years in prison due to violations, and faces losing hunting privileges' for a lifetime in South Carolina. The Lincoln was confiscated in addition to a refrigerator truck and several rifles with thermal scopes and hand held FLIR units. The case is very interesting and helps us see the advantages of using technology for modern wildlife enforcement issues.

Presentation Time: 10:00 AM - 10:45 AM

Georgia DNR Game Warden Academy and Peer Reviews

Presenter: Mike England - Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Abstract: The challenges of recruiting new Game Wardens is an issue that all of us are facing. The lack of diversity and overall quality of applicants has been, and continues to be of concern. Additionally, the challenges of training the millennial generation are well known. Peer reviews have been a very effective tool in building a level of self-awareness in cadets and in improving cadet performance. Although they may not value your opinion, they do care what people think, especially their peers. Their image is everything and peer reviews that re-enforce your observations can be an eye opener to a new cadet. Join Major Mike England as he discusses how the Georgia DNR has utilized peer reviews to train their new game wardens.

Presentation Time: 10:45 AM - 11:30 AM

Operation Oystercatcher

Presenter: Curtis Suggs - William.Suggs@myfwc.com

Abstract: According to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, oysters are among Florida's most valuable commercial seafood products. Due to the presence of Vibrio vulnificus, a bacterium found naturally in Florida waters, oysters can pose a significant threat to human health. Severe sickness, even death, can occur in as little as two days from consuming raw oysters. Because of this, oysters are among the most highly regulated seafood products in the state of Florida. In the summer of 2019, FWC investigators received information that subjects were selling seafood products in Santa Rosa County after a subject approached an individual at an ice machine in Milton, Florida offering fresh seafood. The person who was approached happened to be a relative of a FWC employee, who reported the suspicious activity to FWC Investigators. The investigation revealed the subjects of the investigation had been stealing oysters from an oyster lease owned by the Pensacola Bay Oyster Company and selling them for profit. In total, over \$21,000 worth of oysters were stolen. Four subjects were arrested and charged. The charges culminated in ten felonies and 66 misdemeanors.

Presentation Time: 11:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Law Enforcement Q & A Session for: the "Georgia DNR Game Warden Academy Peer Review" and "Operation Oystercatcher" Presentations

*Moderator: Travis R. McLain - Missouri Department of Conservation

** "Georgia DNR Game Warden Academy Peer Review" - The challenges of recruiting new Game Wardens is an issue that all of us are facing. The lack of diversity and overall quality of applicants has been, and continues to be of concern. Additionally, the challenges of training the millennial generation are well known. Peer reviews have been a very effective tool in building a level of self-awareness in cadets and in improving cadet performance. Although they may not value your opinion, they do care what people think, especially their peers. Their image is everything and peer reviews that re-enforce your observations can be an eye opener to a new cadet. Join Major Mike England as he discusses how the Georgia DNR has utilized peer reviews to train their new game wardens. **"Operation Oystercatcher" - According to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, oysters are among Florida's most valuable commercial seafood products. Due to the presence of Vibrio vulnificus, a bacterium found naturally in Florida waters, oysters can pose a significant threat to human health. Severe sickness, even death, can occur in as little as two days from consuming raw oysters. Because of this, oysters are among the most highly regulated seafood products in the state of Florida. In the summer of 2019, FWC investigators received information that subjects were selling seafood products in Santa Rosa County after a subject approached an individual at an ice machine in Milton, Florida offering fresh seafood. The person who was approached happened to be a relative of a FWC employee, who reported the suspicious activity to FWC Investigators. The investigation revealed the subjects of the investigation had been stealing oysters from beds leased by the Pensacola Bay Oyster Company and selling them for profit. In total, over \$21,000 worth of oysters were stolen. Four subjects were arrested and charged. The charges culminated in ten felonies and 66 misdemeanors.

Tuesday, October 27, 2020

Track: Law Enforcement 2

Presentation Time: 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Unmanned Aircraft Systems and Wildlife Law Enforcement

Presenter: Brian Aston - Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

Abstract: The AGFC Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) purpose is to provide aerial support during searches for missing persons, scene assessment during natural or man-made disasters, boating accident investigations, hunting accident investigations, and for officer safety. The UAS also serves as support unit for all AGFC special operations groups. This presentation is intended to be informative to wildlife law enforcement agencies wishing to start a UAS program, and also be captivating and informative for students who aspire to become a Wildlife Law Enforcement officer. The primary considerations when implementing a UAS program will be the focus of this presentation.

Presentation Time: 3:00 PM - 3:30 PM

Law Enforcement Q & A Session for: the "Unmanned Aircraft Systems" Presentation

*Moderator: Travis R. McLain - Missouri Department of Conservation

The AGFC Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) purpose is to provide aerial support during searches for missing persons, scene assessment during natural or man-made disasters, boating accident investigations, hunting accident investigations, and for officer safety. The UAS also serves as support unit for all AGFC special operations groups. This presentation is intended to be informative to wildlife law enforcement agencies wishing to start a UAS program, and also be captivating and informative for students who aspire to become a Wildlife Law Enforcement officer. The primary considerations when implementing a UAS program will be the focus of this presentation.

Presentation Time: 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM

Walnut Timber Theft in Missouri

Presenter: Joni Bledsoe - Missouri Department of Conservation - Kansas City Region

Abstract: In 2018, Conservation Agents began an investigation into the theft of walnut logs from the public and private lands surrounding Harry S. Truman Reservoir in West Central Missouri. As the Agents began to investigate, the number of thefts discovered began to grow, and the investigation also grew into a multi-year, multi-jurisdictional investigation (USACOE, Local Sheriff's Departments, and Municipal Police Departments). Join the lead investigators as they discuss the investigation that led to 29 Felony and 11 Misdemeanor charges being filed related to the theft of more than \$61,000 in walnut logs from public and private lands in West Central Missouri.

Presentation Time: 4:30 PM - 5:00 PM

Law Enforcement Q & A Session for: the "Walnut Timber Theft" Presentation

*Moderator: Travis R. McLain - Missouri Department of Conservation

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Wednesday, October 28, 2020

Track: Law Enforcement 3

Presentation Time: 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

A Multi-Agency Investigation of Ginseng Trafficking in Missouri, Illinois, and Arkansas

Presenter: Brad Hadley - Missouri Department of Conservation - Ozark Region

Abstract: This presentation will detail the use of hybridization of methodologies, including both covert and overt contacts, database structure and management, statistics and probabilities in forensic accounting, subpoenas and search warrants, and prosecutorial and judicial follow-up in investigating illegal ginseng trade and commerce. This investigation was conducted from 2013 through 2015 and covered ginseng harvested and exported from 2010 through 2015. Federal prosecution is ongoing.

Presentation Time: 11:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Law Enforcement Q & A Session for: the "Ginseng Trafficking" Presentation

*Moderator: Travis R. McLain - Missouri Department of Conservation

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