



BLACK BEAR CONSERVATION COMMITTEE HONORED FOR CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION IN LOUISIANA

The Black Bear Conservation Committee (BBCC) received a top national honor for its work to restore Louisiana black bear populations by building partnerships that unite citizens living in bear habitat.

The Wildlife Management Institute presented its prestigious Touchstone Award to David Telesco, BBCC private lands biologist, during the 72nd North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Portland, Ore., on March 23. Telesco accepted the award on behalf of the BBCC.

Founded in 1990, BBCC is a nonprofit organization committed to promoting restoration of the Louisiana black bear (*Ursus americanus luteolus*) through education, research and management of habitat and populations. BBCC is a broad-based coalition of citizens and more than 60 groups representing private landowners, forest and agricultural industries, utility companies, conservationists, wildlife agencies and university researchers. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is one of those agencies that plays a prominent role as a partner of the BBCC.

The Touchstone Award recognizes individuals or groups for accomplishments that significantly advance natural resources conservation in North America.

“Conservationists nationwide regard the Black Bear Conservation Committee as a model for public and private interests coming together to address conservation issues,” says Steven A. Williams, WMI president.

Listed as federally endangered in 1992, the Louisiana black bear is a subspecies unique to the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley—a stretch of land that runs along the Mississippi River through Louisiana. As with most rare species, habitat loss and fragmentation are primary reasons for the bears' decline. Approximately 700 bears currently exist in this region.

Photo Courtesy of the Wildlife Management Institute



Dave Telesco (left) accepts the 2007 Touchstone Award on behalf of the Black Bear Conservation Committee from the Wildlife Management Institute's President Steve Williams

Historically, bear populations were highest in the alluvial valley's 24 million acres of bottomland hardwood forests. Because of land drainage and forest clearing, these lands shrank to less than 5 million acres by 1980. Acreage has stabilized since the 1990s due to restoration programs. However, additional lands are needed due to fragmentation that reduces habitat size and impacts how bears travel and interact.

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“The Black Bear Conservation Committee accomplishes its mission through credible, science-driven management, building coalitions, and sharing a genuine commitment to restore Louisiana black bears,” says Telesco. “Our success comes from seeking input from people who might be affected by a larger bear population. These people ultimately will determine if a healthy bear population is positive or negative. It's important to include folks at a time when many feel excluded from larger processes that impact their lives.”

BBCC accomplishments include:

- o Developed the “Black Bear Restoration Plan” which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) used to create the official Louisiana black bear recovery plan.

- o Distributed more than 20,000 copies of its “Black Bear Management Handbook” to landowners to help them better understand bears and how to manage bear habitat.

- o Conducted workshops for more than 800 landowners about incentive programs to aid in wildlife habitat restoration.

- o Awarded \$240,000 in grants to help 12 private landowners restore 1,200 acres of bottomland hardwood forests.

- o To reach children, BBCC and its partners produced and distributed over 18,000 copies of the multi-media CD “Bears and Birds of the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley” and created a bear-based curriculum guide for elementary and middle school teachers, with lesson plans on math, science and geography.

- o Helped establish annual bear festivals in Rolling Fork, Mississippi, and Franklin, Louisiana, to promote bear awareness and help local economies.

“Since its inception, the Black Bear Conservation Committee has been exemplary in its efforts to establish comprehensive and cooperative partnerships that have resulted in restoring over 1 million acres of forest in Louisiana black bear habitat,” Williams says. “WMI congratulates the Black Bear Conservation Committee for its amazing success.”

For more information, contact David Telesco, BBCC, at 225-763-5457 or davetelesco@bbcc.org.

F.U.N. CAMP REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS APRIL 20

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) is offering a Families Understanding Nature (FUN) camp for fathers and their children over the May 4-6 weekend at the Woodworth Outdoor Education Center, just south of Alexandria.

FUN camps offer parents and their children an opportunity to spend the weekend enjoying the outdoors, while learning skills and strengthening their family bonds. Professional instructors will help campers feel more comfortable in the outdoors by teaching them about canoeing, camping, rifle and shotgun shooting, archery and fishing.

All participants will arrive Friday evening and stay through noon Sunday. On Saturday night families will cook their own supper and on Sunday morning cook their own breakfast. Instructors will guide campers in setting up camps, building a campfire, cooking and cleaning up. All tents, cooking, shooting and fishing gear, and safety equipment will be provided, except for sleeping bags.

Children must be between 10 and 13 years old. Applications must be received by April 20 and accompanied with a \$50 check for each adult with one child and a \$25 check for each additional child made out to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

The fee includes program activities, materials, meals, lodging and adult and child T-shirts.

Applications can be obtained by calling Mike Burns at 318-484-2212 or by downloading it from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Web site at www.wlf.louisiana.gov/education/funcamp.

This popular camp fills quickly, so families interested in participating are encouraged to register soon.

For more information, contact Michael Burns at 318-484-2212 or burns_m@centurytel.net.



NIGHT HUNTER ARRESTED FOR AGGRAVATED ASSAULT

A Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Enforcement Division agent arrested Coty L. Romero, 21, of Gueydan for alleged aggravated assault with a firearm and hunting wild quadrupeds during illegal hours on March 11 in Vermilion Parish.

Earlier that evening Agent Derek Logan received a report of frequent night hunting in the area where Romero was apprehended. In the past few months, agents have apprehended several illegal night hunters in the same area.

Logan spotted Romero shining a light in a field off Vick Road. Logan then proceeded to the area in his truck in an attempt to investigate the activity. A shotgun was fired from the dark in the direction of Logan's vehicle.

Logan accelerated his truck past the area of the shot and then exited the



truck and returned to the location from where the shot had been fired. Logan finally located Romero shining a light down the road toward his truck. From a safe position Logan illuminated Romero with his flashlight and ordered him to drop his weapon and lay face down on the ground. Romero later admitted to shooting at Agent Logan's truck.

Romero was then placed under arrest,

transported to the Vermilion Parish Correctional Center and booked into jail. The investigation is ongoing and further charges may be filed against Romero and a female who accompanied him.

Seized as evidence in connection with the arrest was a semi-automatic 12-gauge shotgun.

Punishment for aggravated assault with a firearm is a fine up to \$5,000, or imprisonment for up to five years with or without hard labor, or both. The penalty for hunting wild quadrupeds during illegal hours with artificial light is a fine up to \$500, up to 90 days in jail, or both plus court costs.

For more information, contact Lt. Col. Keith LaCaze at 225-765-2988 or klacaze@wlf.louisiana.gov.

TWO MEN CHARGED WITH RED SNAPPER FISHERY VIOLATIONS

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Enforcement Division agents cited two men in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico outside of East Bay for alleged federal fish violations on March 8.

Glenn Coleman, 54, and Dwight Andrews, 61, both of Marrero, were each cited for violations of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Management and Conservation Act for taking red snapper during a closed season, possession of under-sized red snapper and possessing red drum in federal waters.

The investigation determined the two men to be in possession of four red drum and 79 red snapper, of which 45 were under the legal minimum size limit of 16 inches. All of the fish involved were seized.

Penalties for violating the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Management and Conservation Act can be up to a maximum of \$130,000 in fines.

The case is a result of work performed by LDWF agents under a state/federal cooperative enforcement agreement between LDWF and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office for Law Enforcement. The agreement provides federal funds to state marine enforcement agencies for enforcement of fisheries resource regulations.

Agents participating in the case were Lt. Glen Gremillion, Sgt. Todd Laviolette, and Senior Agent Ezekiel Talbert. For more information, contact Major Jeff Mayne at 225-765-2980 or jmayne@wlf.louisiana.gov.



CHENIERE ENERGY COMPLETES OYSTER AND FINFISH STEWARDSHIP

Cheniere Creole Trail Pipeline, L.P., a wholly owned subsidiary of Cheniere Energy, Inc., announced today the successful completion of a \$1 million environmental stewardship project to enhance the American oyster fishery in Calcasieu Lake.

As part of this project, Cheniere created 16 acres of new oyster reefs and fishing habitat (artificial reefs) in the Cameron Parish water body. These newly created artificial reefs have been donated to the state for public recreational and commercial oyster harvest and fishing opportunities.

Cheniere worked with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to identify and participate in environmental stewardship opportunities to improve the marine habitat conditions within Calcasieu Lake following Hurricane Rita and to prepare for Cheniere's upcoming pipeline projects. Cheniere elected to donate \$1 million to the stewardship project for reef development in support of the lake's fishing community, additional to required mitigation the company will perform as the result of pipeline construction impacts.

The American oyster plays an important role in Calcasieu Lake as a vital component of the health of the lake. The



Photo by Bo Boehringer

Bryant Hammett, secretary of the Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries, receives plaque from Keith Teague (right), president of Cheniere Creole Trail Pipeline, signifying Cheniere Energy's donation of oyster reef habitat to the state.

oyster provides benefits to the lake such as water filtering, habitat and food for other fish such as trout, red fish and crabs, creating recreational and commercial fishing opportunities. According to the state of Louisiana, oyster harvesting in the Calcasieu Basin produced 286,323 pounds of oysters in 2005.

Additional information about Cheniere Energy, Inc., may be found on its Web site at www.cheniere.com.

OYSTER SEASON TO CLOSE IN PUBLIC OYSTER SEED GROUNDS

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Secretary Bryant O. Hammett, Jr. announced that the 2006/07 oyster season in the Primary Public Oyster Seed Grounds east of the Mississippi River, the Lake Borgne Public Oyster Seed Grounds, the Bay Gardene Public Oyster Seed Reservation, the Hackberry Bay Public Oyster Seed Reservation, the Little Lake Public Oyster Seed Grounds, and the Vermilion/East and West Cote Blanche/Atchafalaya Bay Public Oyster Seed Grounds will close at one-half hour after sunset on Sunday, April 1, 2007. The Calcasieu Lake Public Oyster Area shall close at one-half hour after sunset on Monday, April 30, 2007.

Oyster harvest in these areas during the 2006/07-oyster season has provided valuable economic return to the Louisiana oyster industry, but has reduced market-size oyster resources according to the LDWF Marine Fisheries Division biologists. The LDWF Enforcement Division has also encountered a higher-than-average number of cases during recent months involving the harvest of undersize oysters for market purposes. The closure is being made to protect the remaining oyster resources in these areas. Biologists have also noted young oyster spat in recent biological samples from these areas and feel the protection of these spat is important to the long-term sustainability of the oyster reefs.

