

TOWA

The Official Publication of the **Texas Outdoor Writers Association**

2011 TOWA SPRING BOARD MEETING UPDATE

TOWA Board April 17 Minutes Offered for Membership Review

The following unofficial minutes of the April 17 TOWA Board Meeting held in conjunction with the Rockport/Fulton Spring Fling are presented to our members in accordance with our bylaws.

TOWA Board of Directors Meeting
Best Western Hotel
Rockport, Texas
April 17, 2011

Meeting called to order at 1:05 p.m. by Board Chairman John Goodspeed.

Members present: Cody Greaney, Kendal Hemphill, TJ Greaney, Larry LeBlanc, Bill Mills, Ralph Winingham, David Sikes,

Susan Ebert, John Goodspeed. Also present Judy Mills and Pam LeBlanc.

John Goodspeed asked if someone would take minutes, Pam LeBlanc volunteered.

Meeting was conducted by Vice President David Sikes in President Bob Lusk's absence.

Motion to accept the minutes from the 2011 Conference Board Meeting as read was made by Kendal Hemphill, second by T.J. Greaney. Motion passed unanimously.

Executive Director's report:

Larry LeBlanc distributed copies of conference comparisons of 2009-2010 and 2010-2011, in addition to financial copies of bank accounts. Small business checking account \$34,0152.02. CD scholarship fund \$35,205.75.

Credit Card – Larry reported that the first year taking credit cards was successful

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TOWA Board Member Kendal Hemphill does his best to break a clay target (that large, intact round orange object on the far right) during the Operation Game Thief benefit sporting clay event May 6 near Buda. Unfortunately for the rest of the TOWA team members, Board Chairman John Goodspeed; Sam Caldwell; James Stewart and Ralph Winingham, his clay breaking skills were big on effort and small on success. The team managed to top the Media category (there was only one team entered) with a score of 208 out of a possible 300 as more than 300 shooters helped raise money for OGT in the seventh annual event. Other TOWA representatives participating in the May 6 competition were Board Members TJ Greaney and Cody Greaney, who were shooting as part of the Chevy team sponsored by TOWA Supporting Member Craig Epling. Photo by Ralph Winingham

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TOWA News is published monthly for the Texas Outdoor Writers Association by Ralph Winingham. Layout by SusanEbertInk, SusanEbertInk@gmail.com. Contributors are urged to submit material by the 15th of each month. For advertising information, contact Ralph Winingham at (210) 764-2450 or rwiningham@att.net. TOWA News is emailed to members and mailed first class from San Antonio.

TOWA was formed in 1958 as a professional/social organization for those who communicate about hunting, fishing and other outdoor pursuits, as well as those in business and industry connected with the outdoors.



The TOWA Newsletter is proudly sponsored by Gulf States Toyota. For information, go to www.buyatoyota.com.



2011 TOWA SPRING BOARD MEETING UPDATE

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and should be continued. Putting credit card form on back of silent auction sheets worked great to speed up process. Larry suggested secure page on website to enable members to pay dues and conference fees by credit card on line.

Susan Ebert asked about miscellaneous income item in budget – This was Toyota's payment for lunch and dues.

Larry LeBlanc asked what to about people who had not paid dues for two years and handed out a list of those people. David Sikes said he would contact Joe Doggett, Doug Pike and Sally Moffett; Kendal Hemphill said he would contact Herman Brune; John will contact Tripp Holmgrain. Discussion followed. Board recommended all the people on the list be contacted one last time.

We have 84 paid active members and 41 paid supporting members. Larry LeBlanc is contacting supporting members and sending out invoices. It was suggested that Larry LeBlanc contact Chad Gay at FLW, supporting member liaison, to get his help.

Deadline on dues – Larry LeBlanc asked if prorated dues should be considered for the current year and the next year: discussion followed. Anyone who pays late in the year Larry LeBlanc will notify David Sikes and he will contact the board to decide dues rate.

Larry will send Kendall Hemphill the EIC list of members who paid their dues by March 1, 2011, in order to be eligible to enter the 2012 contest.

Old Business: None.

New Business: Ralph Winingham pointed out that the TOWA website needs updating now. TJ Greaney made a motion that Ralph Winingham take over the website to get it up to date. Discussion followed. Ralph Winingham suggested Cody Greaney would have the technical skills to complete the update and they will work together on this. Cody Greaney agreed to immediately update home page with conference details for next year.

Susan Ebert pointed out that there are errors in the directory. She volunteered to take over fixing any problems in the directory. Larry LeBlanc pointed out that the database has to be in Excel format and keep the bio to 250 characters because that is all that can be put into any one cell and the supporting members want a copy twice a year in Excel. Larry LeBlanc suggested that we cut the number of hard

copy directories that we order next year.

Everyone had a copy of suggestions handed out by Susan Ebert to update our membership requirements to keep up with the times. Ralph Winingham suggested we approve changes now to be brought before the members at the next conference. Discussion followed. Ralph Winingham will put suggestions in newsletter and ask for feedback from members.

Dallas Safari Club will sponsor a meal at the 2012 conference. TJ Greaney will work with Houston Safari Club in an attempt to get them to participate in the conference. He is working with DSC to have a youth contest at the 2012 conference writing, photo or whatever fits with their program and ours.

TJ Greaney will work with Susan Ebert on the logo so we can have items for sale with a new logo at the 2012 conference.

A lengthy discussion was held about member Will Leschper's citation for a misdemeanor game law violation in Alaska during a 2008 bear hunt. A letter of support for Will Leschper from Jonette Childs was read by John Goodspeed. The Board has asked President Bob Lusk to obtain more information about the incident and present his recommendation for any possible action.

Kendal Hemphill recommended that we not have the Florida Outdoor Writers Association members judge our 2012 EIC entries. He will seek out other possible judges, including Dr. Manuel Flores of Kingsville who has judged the contest in the past, and will report back to the board. Ralph Winingham noted that the change in EIC categories has apparently received the support of the members, adding that the board should be thinking about presenting a supporting members award in next year's contest. Kendal Hemphill suggested a hat with TOWA logo on it.

Scholarship – Judy Mills stated that everything went well last year and they will start sending letters to school this fall.

Applicant screening – David Sikes said everything is going well.

John Goodspeed asked if we need a telephone conference meeting before the September meeting in New Braunfels. Discussion followed. Date will be set at a later time.

Motion to adjourn was made at 3:15pm by John Goodspeed, second by TJ Greaney; motion passed unanimously.

Toyota ShareLunker Program Winds Up Season 25

ATHENS – The Toyota ShareLunker season just concluded marked the 25th anniversary of the ShareLunker program. During that time 523 fish have been entered. The current season's 19 entries was about two fish short of the long-term average.

Toyota ShareLunker anglers will be honored at a banquet at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens June 4.

Two entries this past season set water-body records: a 16.03-pound fish from Lake Austin and a 14.94-pound fish from Lake Gilmer.

Nathan Peña-Alfaro's 13.59-pounder from O.H. Ivie became the new junior angler state record largemouth bass.

Two entries were repeats. Toyota ShareLunker 522 this season from Lake Caddo was the same as No. 487 last season. Toyota ShareLunker 523 from O.H. Ivie was the same fish as No. 503 caught last year. Both fish were lake records when caught last season and still hold that distinction.

The season saw O.H. Ivie Reservoir tie with Sam Rayburn Reservoir for third place in production of ShareLunker entries with 23 each. Only Lake Alan Henry, with 25 entries, and Lake Fork, with 247, have produced more.

The following is a chronological summary of Toyota ShareLunker catches during the season:

Dec. 15, 2010 – Bobbie Gayle of Millersview, TX, joined a very exclusive club when she caught Toyota ShareLunker 505 from O.H. Ivie Reservoir. The 14-pound fish was Gayle's third entry into the ShareLunker program, making her one of only five anglers to have achieved that distinction. O.H. Ivie continued its remarkable run of Toyota ShareLunkers begun last season. No. 505 died December 23, 2010.

Jan. 1 – O.H. Ivie Reservoir continued to pump out Toyota ShareLunkers. Nathan Peña-Alfaro, a 15-year-old sophomore at Western Hills High School in Benbrook, caught Toyota ShareLunker 506, a 13.59-pounder that earned him the state junior angler largemouth bass record. The fish was returned to the lake Feb. 19.

Jan. 15 – Christopher Wright of Flower Mound caught Toyota ShareLunker 507 from O.H. Ivie while fishing in a tournament. The 13.83-pound bass was caught at 2 p.m. and by 2:30 p.m. was in the minnow tank at Elm Creek Village. Toyota ShareLunker 507 produced 51,810 fry. No. 507 was returned to the lake April 14.

Jan. 27 – T.J. Nissen of Austin set a new lake record for Lake Austin with Toyota ShareLunker 508, a 16.03-pound bass that also ranks 23 on the Top 50 list of big bass caught in Texas. Toyota ShareLunker 508 was returned to Lake Austin Feb. 11.

Jan. 30 – Toyota ShareLunker 509 was caught from O.H. Ivie by Wimberley angler Terry Capps. The 13.01-pounder was O.H. Ivie's fourth ShareLunker of the season. No. 509 produced 63, 525 fry and was returned to the lake on April 14.

Jan. 31 – Falcon International Reservoir kicked in its 12th entry ever into the Toyota ShareLunker program, a 13.22-pound fish caught by Ky Martin of Grandview. Toyota ShareLunker 510 became the fifth entry submitted in January, tying the current season for second in number of entries for the month with January of the 1991-92 season. The 1994-95 season saw the highest number of January entries ever, seven. No. 510 was returned to the lake March 9.

Feb. 13 – Susan Dixon of Hawley was fishing with O.H. Ivie guide and

friend Jeff Walker when she caught Toyota ShareLunker 511. Toyota ShareLunker 511 was returned to the lake April 7.

Feb. 18 – Falcon International Reservoir sent Toyota ShareLunker 512 to Athens, its second entry of the year. The fish weighed 13.84 pounds and was caught by Charles Hardin of DeSoto, MO. No. 512 was returned to Falcon March 9.

Feb. 19 – Travis Lane Epperson of Lubbock caught Toyota ShareLunker 513 from O.H. Ivie. The fish weighed 13.55 pounds. Toyota ShareLunker 513 was returned to O.H. Ivie April 7.

Feb. 25 – Billy Weems of Liberty Hill caught 13.21-pound Toyota ShareLunker 514 from Lake Austin. No. 514 produced 24,998 fry and was returned to the lake on April 20.

Feb. 26 – Cody Erin Smith of New Braunfels followed Weems's catch with a 14.28-pounder, Toyota ShareLunker 515, also from Lake Austin. Toyota ShareLunker 515 was returned to the lake March 9.

March 6 – Falcon International Reservoir produced its third Toyota ShareLunker of the season, its 14th overall and the 12th entry into the program for the season. Gene Patrin of Zapata caught the 14.16-pounder, Toyota ShareLunker 516. Toyota ShareLunker 516 was returned to Falcon March 9.

March 9 – Falcon International Reservoir continued to solidify its status as one of the prime big-bass lakes in Texas with Toyota ShareLunker 517, a 13.56-pound largemouth caught by Jason Shropshire of Cleveland, TX. Toyota ShareLunker 517 died March 13.

March 13 – Toyota ShareLunker 518 came from Lake Fork. Ed Carter of Broken Bow, OK, pulled in the 14.25-pounder. Toyota ShareLunker 518 was returned to the lake April 5. Before the Toyota ShareLunker Tundra made it back to Athens with that fish, Robert Amaya of Robert's Fish 'n Tackle in Zapata called to report Toyota ShareLunker 519, a 13.37-pounder from Falcon International Reservoir caught by David Cosner of Austin. Toyota ShareLunker 519 died April 8.

March 14 – Faron McCain of Sweetwater caught Toyota ShareLunker 523 from O.H. Ivie, a 14.94-pound fish that proved to be the same as last year's lake record, which weighed 16.08 pounds when it was caught by Jerry Bales of Hico and became Toyota ShareLunker 503. No. 523 was returned to O.H. Ivie April 19.

March 15 – Toyota ShareLunker 520 was caught from Falcon by Todd Elrod of Fritch, TX. It weighed 13.18 pounds. Toyota ShareLunker 520 died March 23.

March 17 – Gilmer Reservoir sent a new lake record largemouth bass to the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center (TFFC) March 17. Thomas Milam of Pittsburg, Texas, caught the 14-pounder, Toyota ShareLunker 521. Toyota ShareLunker 521 produced 115,200 fry and was returned to the lake on April 21.

March 18 – Sean Swank of DeBerry, TX, caught Toyota ShareLunker 522 from Caddo Lake. The 16.07-pound fish was the largest caught during the season, earning Swank Angler of the Year honors and a prize package worth \$818. The package includes a G. Loomis NRX854C jig and worm rod, a Shimano ChronarchD1007 casting reel and 150 yards of moss green Power Pro super-braid fishing line. Swank will also receive a lifetime fishing license. Toyota ShareLunker 522 is the same fish caught from Caddo last season by Keith Burns and entered as Toyota ShareLunker 487, when it weighed 16.17 pounds and became the lake record. It was returned to Caddo Lake March 27.

Images of all the season's ShareLunker entries can be found at http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/newsmedia/news_images.

TEXAS STATE-FISH ART CONTEST WINNERS ANNOUNCED



First Place Winner, 10-12 Grade Level: GiGi Barker



First Place Winner, 4-6 Grade Level: Samuel Beltran



First Place Winner, 7-9 Grade Level: Brady King

ATHENS – Officials at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center have announced the winners of the Texas division of the Wildlife Forever State-Fish Art Contest.

The annual contest is open to all Texas students in public, private and home schools and is judged in three grade-level divisions: 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12. First-place winners in each grade-level division advance to the national competition. National winners will be announced at the Wildlife Forever State-Fish Art Contest Expo to be held at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center June 24-25.

The Toyota Texas Bass Classic funds cash prizes for Texas winners: \$1,000 for first place, \$750 for second place and \$500 for third place in the 10-12 division. Prizes in the 4-6 and 7-9 grade levels are \$100 for first; \$75 for second; \$50 for third. First-place winners also receive a travel allowance for themselves and their family to attend the contest expo.

Texas winners in the 4-6 grade-level division are: First Place, Samuel Beltran, Pasadena; Second Place, Candace Ma, Sugar Land; Third Place, Maggie Maddison, Duncanville.

Texas winners in the 7-9 grade-level division are: First Place, Brady King, Livingston; Second Place, Sun Yiming, Katy; Third Place, Lillian Chen, Sugar Land.

Texas winners in the 10-12 grade-level division are: First Place, GiGi Barker, Village Mills; Second Place, Bonnie Leung, The Woodlands; Third Place, Lorenzo Leya, Del Rio.

Honorable Mentions were awarded by the Texas judges to the following students:

Grades 4-6: Mitchell Glover, Lake Jackson; Evett Makenzie, Corsicana; Emmy Emmons, Paige; Allison Killgore, Bremond;

Jessica Schroeder, LaVernia; Seanna McCarty, Katy; and Riley Dean Merritt, Copperas Cove.

Grades 7-9: Ghenica-Rose Delfin, Del Rio; Nasa Xu, Katy; Karli Boyd, Athens; Rachel Reed, Sugar Land; Lauren Millard, Sugar Land; Jonathan Criner, Mertzon; and McKenzie Flowers, Hardon.

Grades 10-12: Madison Johnson, Dallas; Caroline Zurmely, Dallas; Peyton McCown, Willow Park; Elissa Weaver, Richwood; Judith Aguilera, Liberty; Fabian Galvan, Liberty; and Jennifer Lipscomb, Liberty Hill.

Students from across the nation will join the Texas winners at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center for the national awards ceremony to be held June 25 as part of the Wildlife Forever State-Fish Art Contest Expo and Art's Better Outside event. Practicing artists are invited to demonstrate, show and sell their work and interact with the students. Booth space for the event can be reserved by contacting James Booker at (903) 670-2266 or james.booker@tpwd.state.tx.us. Artists in all media are invited.

The public portion of the State-Fish Art Expo will also be held June 25 and will feature fishing, instructional seminars and demonstrations and a display of all the state and national contest winners. Plans are being made for a day-long schedule of events with food booths and outdoor activities and displays that the public can enjoy in addition to viewing the artwork and voting for the People's Choice Award. The public can also vote for the People's Choice Award online at www.wildlifeforever.org.

One outstanding piece of artwork each year is selected for the Art of Conservation Award, and a commemorative stamp featuring the artwork is produced for sale. Proceeds from sales of the stamp are used

to fund conservation projects. The 2011 winner will be unveiled at the expo.

Also to be unveiled at the expo is the winner of the Seth Thomas Spradlin Best of Show Award. In 2008, Spradlin won the Best of Show Award and the Art of Conservation Stamp Award.

In late August 2010, during his second summer earning funds for college as a seasonal employee for the National Park Service in Alaska, Seth and his brother Neal lost their lives in a bush plane accident in remote Katmai National Park.

"Seth's artwork inspired us all. I remember feeling a sense of wetness from the splash in his painting. That element of engagement and his untimely loss challenge us to remember and recognize his talent. I am pleased to rename our top award after him to inspire future young conservationists to excel and achieve in the outdoor world," said Wildlife Forever Chief Executive Officer Doug Grann.

Public admission to the expo and related activities will be included with paid admission to TFFC.

The State-Fish Art Contest is a project of Wildlife Forever. Located in Brooklyn Center, MN, Wildlife Forever is a non-profit multi-species conservation organization dedicated to conserving America's wildlife heritage. Working at the grassroots level, Wildlife Forever has funded conservation projects in all 50 states, committing millions of dollars to "on-the-ground" efforts. Wildlife Forever supports habitat restoration and enhancement, land acquisition, research and management of fish and wildlife populations.

For more information on visiting the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, go to www.tpwd.state.tx.us/tffc.

Fishing Trip Turns Into Matter of Survival

By David Sikes

COASTAL BEND – Local kayak angler Joey Ramos invited a longtime friend on a Nueces River adventure Saturday to catch a few redfish. The trip turned into an unforgettable night of terror.

The pair of experienced kayakers agreed to launch from Labonte Park and paddle downstream a short distance to Rincon Bayou, a partly enhanced channel that runs through the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program's Nueces Delta Preserve. This 5,500-acre private preserve hosts free educational programs for area schoolchildren and teachers. If you're there without permission then you're trespassing.

Ramos simply knows the waterway as a slough south of the park where he catches redfish. He's fished there at night once before and many times during daylight. This would be the first visit to Rincon Bayou and most likely the last for his friend, who asked that I not use his name.

The pair launched before dark, around 7 p.m., with a few bottled waters, snacks, some extra tackle and their cell phones. Their fishing rods were fixed with glow DOA shrimp imitation lures.

Ramos had fished here several days earlier. He easily had caught a limit of redfish and wanted to share his good fortune with a friend.

The sun was setting by the time they

reached a railroad trestle spanning the bayou. But there was enough light to see four young men on the tracks above the bayou. Each was holding a can of beer. One of them had reddish hair and a goatee. They appeared to be in their early- to mid-20s, Ramos recalled.

"They didn't look particularly friendly," he said. "Nobody said anything, not even hello. They just stared at us with an empty look."

Ramos paddled under the trestle first then waited for his friend on the other side.

After the pair rounded a bend in the river, they commented to each other about the strange encounter and the unfriendly group.

"We just got a weird vibe about those guys," Ramos said.

Within 10 minutes it was nearly dark. Their plan was to fish near a set of big black culverts that had been installed to allow the bayou to flow under a caliche road, which is on the Nueces River Preserve. The bayou just before the culverts gets a little deeper and often holds redfish, Ramos said. The pair stood up in their kayaks and began casting lures into the gut. The bayou was quiet except for an occasional mullet splash. The moon was bright.

Suddenly the crack of a high-powered rifle broke the silence and buckled the

anglers' knees.

"It sounded like it broke the branches near my face," Ramos recalled. "I told my friend that I thought somebody was shooting at us, but he didn't think so. He said it was probably just an innocent misfire or a ricochet."

As a precaution they immediately sat in their boats and began to paddle out. Bad plan.

Twelve shots rang out in succession. They heard lead punching through the bayou's surface around them and ducked instinctively at the sickening whir of a single bullet overhead, a distinctive sound they had only read about or seen in movies before then.

"It sounds like death. It's a nasty hissing sound I'll never forget. I remember thinking it was two different caliber guns," Ramos said. "I knew right then that they were aiming at us."

But his partner still wasn't sure. He turned on his flashlight and waved it in the air.

"He was yelling 'we're here, we're over here,'" Ramos said. "I told him to turn it off, you're giving us away."

And as soon as he did, another eight bullets whizzed past. The direction of these shots was different from the first.

Maybe the shooters were on the move. Ramos wondered whether they were

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Kayaker Survival Story Takes First Place in EIC Magazine Feature Category

An account of two kayakers being pinned down by rifle fire was a winning piece for TOWA Vice President David Sikes who earned a first place award and \$200 for his story called "Fishing trip turns into a matter of survival" published in the *Corpus Christi Caller Times*.

A reprint of the story that won first place as an entry as an Excellence in Craft Category 14 Outdoor News Reporting is presented below for our members' enjoyment.

Sikes is to be congratulated for his outdoor news coverage and we encourage all our members to start gathering their entries for the 2012 EIC competition.

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coming closer. He wondered whether they were being stalked.

"We need to get off our kayaks right now," Ramos said he told his friend. "So we beached them on the bank, got out and hid behind them."

Half submerged and shivering, the pair stretched out on their bellies or sides and clung to their hollow plastic boats. They were cold, muddy and terrified.

"We just laid there and didn't move for a while," Ramos recalled.

Ramos' buddy retrieved his cell phone and dialed 911. The light from their cell phone must have illuminated their position. Another barrage of gunfire broke branches and splashed into the bayou around them.

So they hunkered farther into the muddy bank to make the necessary call for help.

While Ramos' friend tried to explain where they were to a dispatcher, Ramos called 911 on his own cell phone to help. Confusion and panic combined to frustrate the desperate anglers. It's difficult to explain a remote location such as this without roads to go by.

"I tried to get them to get the coordinates off our cell phones," Ramos said. "But the calls were being transferred between Nueces and San Pat counties. They thought we were on the main river. We gave them a description of our truck and where we had parked.

"You can't imagine how frustrating it was," Ramos said. "We were being shot at while we were talking to 911. Our lives were at stake and we couldn't figure out how to let them know where we were."

Eventually Ramos heard one of the dispatchers suggest this was a job for Texas Parks & Wildlife.

Ramos recalled a feeling of hope and relief when he heard one of the dispatchers say they should call game warden Kevin Mitchell. Of course, Mitchell would know how to find them. This is his territory. And Ramos had reported a poaching violation to the game warden a while back. He even had Mitchell's number programmed into his cell phone.

"So I got off the phone with 911 and called Kevin and told him what was happening," Ramos said. "He knew exactly where we were and he said he was on his way."

All they could do now was wait. No more than three minutes of silence separated flurries of gunshots for the next half-hour. Conversation on the bayou was sparse, though both men called their wives.

"I didn't know if I was going to make it out of there and I

wanted to tell her I love her," Ramos said. "At first I think she was in denial of what was happening."

A 911 dispatcher interrupted the call to say TPW was on the way. Afterward, Ramos called his wife back and during this conversation denial turned to alarm when she overheard the gunfire that had her husband and the father of her children pinned to a muddy bank in the dark.

Meanwhile Ramos' fishing partner, whose wife is expecting a sibling for their toddler this summer, was not taking the news well.

Ramos could overhear his partner trying to calm his wife's fears.

"It was sad, scary and intense," Ramos said. "Such a helpless feeling. We couldn't move. God must have been with us."

More than an hour passed since that first shot. Ramos estimates that the shooters fired about 100 rounds.

Ramos called Mitchell again just to get an update on his arrival and to let him know the situation hadn't changed. Mitchell, who was coming from Sinton, told him he would be there soon but that he couldn't talk. He needed both hands on the steering wheel.

The end of that called was punctuated by yet another 20 shots of what sounded like semi-automatic gunfire.

"This time the shots were directly in front of our face, hitting the water right in front of us," Ramos said.

Mitchell called as he had promised. He was on the property. He told the pair to shine a flashlight in the sky when they heard his pickup approach. They obeyed the order of their savior.

Mitchell shut off his engine and scanned the area with night-vision optics. No shots were fired for a minute or two.

Mitchell called out to the two men across the bayou. They floated across clinging to their kayaks and met Mitchell on the opposite bank. He was carrying an M4 rifle.

For a while they hid behind Mitchell's pickup. Several minutes passed and a single gunshot came from the distance. It was not the final shot of the night.

Mitchell brought the grateful pair to the ranch gate. There they heard two final shots. They sounded far. Mitchell, joined by game warden Nicole Spatz, returned to the property to search for the shooters. But they escaped.

Spatz and Mitchell loaded the kayaks and the exhausted anglers into separate pickups and returned them to Labonte Park. No bullet holes were found in their bodies or their boats.

If you have information about this crime, please call TPW at 289-5566.

TOWA MEMBER NEWS

TOWA BOARD MEMBERS TJ AND CODY GREANEY TAKING "THE OUTDOOR ZONE" TO THE AIRWAVES

TJ Greaney and son Cody Ryan Greaney, both TOWA board members, have cranked back up their outdoor radio show, "The Outdoor Zone" on the Austin FM 104.9 (The Horn). Their show will air from 6-8 a.m. each Saturday. Members interested in promoting an event or want to discuss an interesting topic can contact them on Facebook or at www.texasoutdoorzone.com. Photo Courtesy of TJ Greaney.



The following is a reprint of the "Outdoor Wire Digital Network" coverage of the annual National Rifle Association convention held April 28-May 1 at Pittsburgh, PA, providing coverage of issues that relate to everyone involved in firearm activities in border states such as Texas. The 140th annual convention attracted about 75,000 people during the four-day run at Pittsburgh's Downtown Convention Center. It is reprinted for our members' information with permission from the Outdoor Wire.

NRA Convention Wrap-Up Highlights New Pressure on Administration

By Jim Shepherd, Outdoor Wire Editor

"We've never witnessed anything like this rotteness, lying and corruption," said Wayne LaPierre, NRA Executive Vice President and CEO "and we've had it. We've had it with Eric Holder and Hillary Clinton and the rest of this administration. And Lord knows, Americans have sure had it with the arrogant, sanctimonious, gun-hating liars who call themselves the national news media."

That's only a build up to the calling-out of Attorney General Holder, the President and his entire administration that took place April 30 at the National Rifle Association's annual member's meeting.

At the membership meeting, LaPierre, NRA-ILA head Chris Cox and other members of the NRA executive team made it abundantly plain that the NRA was speaking out regarding the growing scandal that proves the NRA's longstanding claim that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms is a rogue organization.

As Congressional investigators are being stonewalled regarding the ill-conceived ATF operation that not only encouraged, but sanctioned the movement of illegal guns into Mexico, the nation's largest pro-Second Amendment group is going on the offensive.

"We've never witnessed anything like the rotten level of corruption, conspiracy and cover-up confronting us today. All because they hate Americans and our rights, more than they care about the lives of innocent people," LaPierre told a crowd that sometime seemed to sit in shock at his unvarnished challenges to the administration.

"I'll say that again," LaPierre hammered, "Our government has been willing to let people die ... to advance their assault on the Second Amendment. Our southern border proves it. When ATF officials ORDER lawful gun dealers to make illegal sales ... that's corrupt."

In what was a blunt, no-nonsense indictment that included video presentations with ATF field agents, victims of violent crimes and outraged members of congress who are determined to move a national investigation of "Operation Fast and Furious" going.

And Mr. LaPierre minced no words when addressing the administration's contention that key leaders were unaware of the entire matter: "If Holder didn't know," LaPierre thundered, "then Holder's gotta go."

This year's annual meeting was characterized by direct calls on members to get involved, the media to get honest and the administration to come clean. In other years, it might have been viewed as unduly confrontational, but 2011 is proving to be anything but a typical year.

Exhibition traffic was heavy, with brisk individual and distributor sales. Several manufacturers told me they were writing an unusually large number of large volume orders. That's uncharacteristic for an annual show normally described as being slower-paced than SHOT, allowing more interaction with the thousands individual attendees.

Exhibit traffic was brisk, and moved at a considerably better pace than the traffic surrounding the David L. Lawrence Convention Center where the latest industry offerings in everything from firearms to accessories that ranged from the sights and optics to brassieres for concealed carry. This event, despite a lower than usual number of new product an-

nouncements, seems to have had a little of something for everyone, and several other happenings not so obvious to most.

While consumers walked the aisles, industry officials held meetings to discuss topics ranging from opposition to legislative restrictions on gun owners, nationwide reciprocal concealed carry laws and the new media.

Before the event opened Friday morning, one meeting brought together a number of media and industry representatives to explore a strategy that would recognize new media, and encourage more of the fine reporting already being done by bloggers who have not only emerged as prime outlets of product news and information, but have lead - or driven - the news process on important issues.

At a Second Amendment Foundation reception, that point was brought home when the pair of bloggers who uncovered and then doggedly pursued the story that is now the "Gunrunner/Fast and Furious" scandal, National Gun Rights Examiner David Codrea and independent blogger Mike Vanderboegh, were recognized for their work.

The pair, along with well-known writer/blogger Dave Workman and Sharyl Attkisson of CBS News – virtually the only "mainstream" news organization to follow and advance the reporting of the Fast and Furious scandal – were recognized for their service to protecting Second Amendment rights.

Their fine work, individually and collectively, may well be the tipping point that convinces industry leaders that the new media contains both solid writers and responsible journalists, despite the fact most don't have business cards with familiar logos or mastheads.

From a business standpoint, there were several products that drew considerable attention at the exhibits, from Ruger's new take on the venerable 1911 pistol to Mossberg's "Chain Saw" – a decidedly different take on the home defense shotgun.

This year's meeting, however, may be remembered as the meeting where the NRA assumed a sharper, more confrontational tone in its dialogues with officials.

LaPierre's directly "calling out" the administration on the ATF's actions and other outrages and challenges to firearms owners is the direct pronouncement that the gloves are off entering another election cycle.

If that does prove to be the case, the NRA will escalate pressures on legislators and administration officials who have shown an inability to exercise fiscal responsibility, but no reluctance to scapegoat law-abiding gun owners as the causes of societal issues.

This weekend, the NRA called for a variety of tangible actions in Washington from the resignation of Attorney General Eric Holder, and the reform or dissolution of the ATF, but it also called American women to arms in order to protect themselves from "animals roaming our streets" because the government coddled criminals while simultaneously attempting to blame gun owners for escalating violence. It makes for heated rhetoric, but the NRA's continuing to hold the administration's figurative feet to the fire may be another indication that average Americans have, indeed, had enough of business as usual.

Biologists Complete First Guadalupe Bass Stocking on South Llano River

Coalition to protect water quality for people and wildlife along entire watershed

AUSTIN, Texas – Texas Parks and Wildlife Department inland fisheries biologists today completed the first stocking of Guadalupe bass in the South Llano River. The release

of fish here marks a new chapter in a decades-long effort to save the state fish of Texas. It's also the first, prototype effort of a new watershed scale approach to water resource conservation in Texas.



Since 1992, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has been stocking Guadalupe bass in the Guadalupe River system, trying to restore a balance that was upset when native Guadalupe bass started interbreeding with imported smallmouth bass. Interbreeding creates a hybridization problem where the native fish lose their genetic identity. In the South Llano, biologists have a chance to make a big difference.

"When we started in the Guadalupe River system almost 20 years ago, Guadalupe Bass hybridization there was already at 30 percent and worsening," said Gary Garrett, PhD, TPWD inland fisheries biologist and a leader of the agency's new watershed program. "But in the South Llano, samples show only 3 percent hybridization. We're starting this one early, and that's why we have such a great chance to nip the problem in the bud."

The May 11 release was the last of four fish releases done in recent weeks, totaling about 175,000 Guadalupe bass fingerlings going into the South Llano River this year. These are juvenile fish about 1.5 to 2 inches long.

But the restoration effort is broader. Led by TPWD, a diverse coalition is also planning to fight erosion and protect river water quality through tactics like riverbank stabilization with native plants, mimicking natural conditions by creating log complexes and tree root wads, and installing boulder complexes. An important goal is to re-do poorly designed road crossings that alter the riverscape and are often barriers to fish passage.



To combat hybridization with imported smallmouth bass, biologists have released about 175,000 Guadalupe bass fingerlings into the South Llano River. Photos by Chase Fountain, TPWD

The restoration coalition will empower landowners by assembling and communicating Best Management Practices showcasing river protection tactics. The TPWD Landowner Incentive Program is offering grants to landowners to manage not only the river corridor but also uplands that drain into the river and affect water quality. A key partner is the South Llano Watershed Alliance, composed of riverside landowners and other stakeholders.

TPWD is even working with locals and applying for grants to create a new Texas Paddling Trail for kayakers and canoeists along the South Llano.

To help pay for all this, the agency has assembled close to \$1.4 million in funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, in-kind contributions from landowners, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Fish Passage Program, Texas State University, Texas Tech University at Junction, a federal State Wildlife Grant, a federal Sport Fish Restoration Grant, Anheuser-Busch, and the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership.

The new South Llano River project fits

under the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, an effort to address an unseen crisis for fish nationwide: loss and degradation of their watery homes. It's also part of the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership, a multi-state regional collaboration whose work includes restoring native black bass such as the Guadalupe bass across the southeastern U.S.A.

CALENDAR

June 3-4 – Texas Trophy Hunters Bucks and BBQ State Championship BBQ Cook-off and food drive to be held at the Shrine Auditorium in San Antonio. Details available at TTHAnews@ttha.com.

July 9 -11 – The 84th annual Outdoor Writers Association of America will be held at the Snowbird Ski and Summer Resort, Salt Lake City, UT. Details available at www.owaa.org.

Aug. 10-13 – The Professional Outdoor Media Association business conference will be held at Ogden, UT. Details available at www.professionalooutdoormedia.org.