



NFWF



THE GUY BRADLEY AWARD

2024 REQUEST FOR NOMINATIONS for State Agency and Federal Agency Wildlife Enforcement Officers to Recognize Outstanding Lifetime Service

NOMINATIONS DUE BY *Friday, January 19, 2024, by 11:59pm Eastern Time*

OVERVIEW

In 1905, a Florida game warden named Guy Bradley became the first wildlife law enforcement agent killed while performing his duties to protect the nation's wildlife. Law enforcement agents like Bradley are essential to virtually every aspect of wildlife conservation, from recovering endangered species to managing waterfowl and big game resources. In honor of Guy Bradley, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation established this lifetime achievement award to recognize individuals for their commitment and performance in the field of wildlife law enforcement.

The Guy Bradley Award will be presented to one state agency and one federal agency officer whose dedication and public service to protecting the nation's natural resources demonstrates outstanding leadership, excellence in implementation, knowledge, and actions that have advanced the cause of wildlife conservation.

AWARD

One state and one federal recipient will receive a check for \$2,500 and a commemorative plaque in recognition of their efforts. Recently retired officers and previously nominated officers are eligible to receive this award. In the event that a recipient cannot accept a cash award, as is the case for federal employees, a donation of \$2,500 will be made in the recipient's name to the organization/project of his or her choice.

SPONSORING AGENCY

Agency Name: Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Law Enforcement Division

Agency Address: 2000 Quail Drive Baton Rouge LA, 70898

Contact Person Name: Lieutenant Colonel Travis Huval

Contact Person Email: shuval@wlf.la.gov

Contact Person Phone: (225) 765-0469

NOMINEE'S CONTACT INFORMATION

Full Name: Lieutenant Jason Russo

Job Title: Enforcement Lieutenant

Office Address: 2045 Lakeshore Dr. New Orleans LA, 70122 STE. 443

Email: jrusso@wlf.la.gov

Phone: (504) 284-2023

NOMINEE'S YEARS OF SERVICE

List relevant job positions the Nominee has held and years in each position. (400 word limit)

Lieutenant Russo has been employed by the enforcement division for 23 years. He graduated second in his class in academics from the LDWF Training Academy in 2001. He was assigned to Jefferson Parish in southeast Louisiana and in 2003 he was promoted to Sr. Agent (5years). In addition to being a field agent, he was assigned as the Evidence Warehouse Custodian in his Region, became a Field Training Officer, and an instructor in public boating safety courses. He was promoted to the rank of Enforcement Sgt. in 2008(5 Years). During this time, in addition to his previous stated duties, he served as a Parish Sergeant and a training academy instructor. He was promoted to Enforcement Lieutenant in 2013(10+ years) and became a district supervisor of four parishes.

NOMINEE'S CAREER ACHIEVEMENTS

Describe in detail the Nominee's notable performance and accomplishments; especially those related to field work. Please provide specific examples, rather than generalities. (500 word limit)

Lt. Russo has exhibited outstanding work performance throughout the entirety of his career. He produced above his District/Region average for years as a field agent, especially in the areas of boating safety and migratory game bird enforcement on state wildlife management. He earned a reputation for being able to investigate complex wildlife violations and boating incidents and was able to prepare detailed reports. He attended the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center's Marine Law Enforcement Training Program (MLETP) where he was elected class president among conservation officers and marine police from around the country and was also the honor graduate of his class, earning the highest class average. In 2007, Lt. Russo was named the Region 8 Agent of the Year. In 2009, he was named one of New Orleans City Business magazine's "Health Care Heroes" for work performed during Hurricane Katrina.

Lt. Russo has received 3 Meritorious Service awards from the department for his exemplary work in the wake of Hurricanes and tragic floods. He has led the Regions Alpha (first) Emergency Response team for 11years. He is a NASBLA Certified Instructor in Boating Incident Investigation and Officer Water Survival who trains Conservation officers in the boating realm nationwide as well as LDWF cadets in the training academy. He has assisted in developing the Department's boating incident investigation training program and serves as the lead boat incident Reconstructionist in the state. He was named the Louisiana Statewide Boating Safety Officer of the Year for 2022-2023. He was named the NASBLA Southern Regional Boating safety officer of the year and then The NASBLA National boating Safety Officer of the Year for 2023.

Lt. Russo supervises one of the busiest districts in the state. His strict oversight of reporting and investigation has led to meaningful prosecution of boating safety and game related violations that are impacting the community, making the waters more safe, and helping to conserve the resource and our citizens safe use of it.

NOMINEE'S DEMONSTRATION OF OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP

Describe the Nominee's leadership qualities and instances that best represent them. (400 word limit)

Lt. Russo has been a district supervisor for over 10+ years but his leadership was on display long before his days as a supervisor. In the face of more veteran agents, now retired, who opted to take the easy path forward, he stood firm and demanded that the right actions were taken. Not only does he lead the agents who have worked in his district, but he is often called upon for his expertise in boat incident investigation from agents and supervisors from across the state. In a time of emergency response his guidance and planning are of indescribable importance to our mission. When posed with questions from his agents, he addresses them systematically ensuring that policy is followed, the issue at hand is

addressed, and that the agents learn from the instance to ensure confidence in future decision making opportunities. He continuously thinks of ways to improve the image of the enforcement division.

His core belief that the men and women of this division are capable of anything and securing their recognition for those efforts and successes are the primary drivers for his actions. He is the type of supervisor that urges his agents to work complaints and investigations completely and in the right manner. He routinely checks in on their progress and offers advice if obstacles are met. He is a supervisor who has and would take any heat for something that was an honest mistake of his own (although they are few and far between). He is the first to give all of the credit for his district's/team's success to the team. Even during times of personal turmoil, he remained engaged with his team. Lt. Russo never brought his home life to work and more remarkably, rarely let his work effect his family life.

At any time he can be counted on to temporarily or even for an extended period fill the role of his supervisor if called upon with the full faith that all items will be handled promptly and completely. He does not blur the lines of supervisor/subordinate. He maintains a strict understanding of his position and the requirements incumbent of that position with his subordinates. Somehow he still remains able to have a respectful and jocular relationship with the agents within the region on most occasions.

NOMINEE'S UNIQUE PROFESSIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS (GOING ABOVE THE CALL OF DUTY)

Describe how the Nominee has demonstrated exceptional performance beyond the duties required by his/her job. Please provide specific examples, rather than generalities. (400 word limit)

Lt. Russo has shown above average intention to many aspects of his job over the full span of his career. Early on, he gladly accepted the task of teaching boating safety education courses to the public. He donated toy boats discarded by his children to utilize for vessel orientation visuals. He purchased navigation lights, wiring, and batteries to show students proper lighting displays. As he progressed in his career, he volunteered to convert many handwritten department documents to electronic format instituting a boost in the efficiency of paperwork flow. His district agents who followed in his footsteps regarding boating investigation and reconstruction were guided to develop and complete incident reports representative not only of what the progressive conservation departments in the country were presenting, but also scratching the surface of what LDWF agents are capable of. He has volunteered to sit on a committee reviewing a comprehensive revision of the division's policy and procedures. As we speak he has spent countless hours of his off duty time creating a comprehensive cache of 3D models of vessels to ensure better presentations of the investigations our agents produce.

NOMINEE'S INNOVATION (PROGRAM STARTER)

Describe any programs or projects that the Nominee has initiated or improved. (400 word limit)

For years, LDWF division agents received a full NASBLA boating incident investigation training in the LDWF basic academy. Agents would complete the academy starting their field careers and be immediately immersed in hunting and fishing encounters. However, a new agent could reasonably be on for two years before they were tasked as lead investigator in a boating incident. Lt. Russo noticed through his experience that like any perishable skill, if it is not utilized it is eventually lost.

Given his position within the boating education sector of our division, he was able to offer his opinion to the training staff. He was given the green light to create an abridged introductory version of the investigation course designed to teach the cadets how to assist other department agents during boat incident investigations. The second portion of the course would be more comprehensive and would come after those newer agents gained field experience and would be better able to enjoy targeted absorbable learning based on specific items they encountered in real time. Our division feels that this will produce better prepared boat incident investigators long term. Additionally, this change opened up

valuable time in our basic academy's schedule to be filled with one of the many trainings that help our agents to be best prepared and efficient. Lt. Russo also created a refresher course in boating incident investigation to be taught at state in-service sessions and a refresher course for boating incident reconstructionist to stay current on investigation techniques as they change over time.

Additionally, LDWF was asked by surrounding sheriff's offices to be taught an introduction to officer water survival for their deputies. Lt. Russo was asked to create an officer water survival course that could be taught in one day to outside law enforcement agencies. He took his knowledge of being a certified instructor and created an abridged version that was delivered to cadets of the Livingston Parish Sheriff's Office.

Lt. Russo guided his agents who worked countless hours enforcing hunting regulations on state WMAs. His unique approach to hiding in plain sight to address complaints and willingness to spend hours in the cold swamps and marshes of these public areas inspired his agents to do the same resulting in an enormous number of violations being addressed.

NOMINEE'S IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

Describe how the Nominee is/has been instrumental in initiating or leading efforts to benefit the local community (e.g. public outreach, community engagement, etc). (400 word limit)

Lt. Russo like many LDWF agents gets the opportunity to talk with people through his patrol work daily. He rarely misses the chance to have a conversation with members of the public. These anecdotes may seem like pleasant conversation, but there is always an underlying caution or reminder of how to complete these activities safely and legally. He has willingly participated in Night out against crime events, attended numerous hunting, fishing, boating expos representing the department well. He has appeared on television shows for both children and general audiences related to outdoor and water safety. He routinely represents the department at local law enforcement funerals/events. He has participated in or helped organized participation in the Special Olympics torch run multiple times. He has many times attended career days at some local high schools, highlighting what our profession is about.

As a young agent in 2005, Lt. Russo worked search and rescue efforts during hurricane Katrina. Because of his local knowledge of the city, he was often placed as a team leader for volunteer officers from other agencies nationwide. He served the community day in and day out, even though he was unable to return to his own home in the immediate days following.

NOMINEE'S MENTORING ACTIVITIES

Describe the contributions made by the Nominee to peers and junior officers. (400 word limit)

Perhaps his legacy that is passed on to those he supervises and works with is his greatest contribution of all. Lt. Russo's district has had immense success under his supervision. Many of his subordinates have gone on to promotions to other positions of leadership within the enforcement division. For a considerable period of time, over 50% of his district agents were involved in the academy training of new cadets. Agents in his district have won the Statewide Boating Officer of the year award 6 times within the last 8 years. Three of his subordinates have gone on to become national instructors. Two of his subordinates followed in his footsteps representing our region within our agents association eventually reaching statewide elected executive positions in the association. There is no doubt that these career successes were in part due to his subordinates' drive and determination. However it would be negligent to assume that this level of success emanating from one district in the state was based purely on geography. Without a good example of how to do things and the tenacity required in the pursuit of those goals, they may never have been realized.

ANY OTHER INFORMATION YOU WOULD LIKE TO INCLUDE ABOUT YOUR NOMINEE

Please submit any additional documentation you think would strengthen this nomination form in support of the Nominee.

Conservation officers nationwide are often compared to local/municipal police. This is largely because they are the law enforcement officers encountered when people are in the woods and on the water as opposed to on the streets and highway. The jobs couldn't be more different. Lt. Russo has claimed and exclaimed proudly that, "I could take any LDWF agent and put them in a regular police position and within a few weeks they would be at minimum, a serviceable officer". He quickly completes the quote saying, "but not every police officer or sheriff's deputy could be made into a game warden". He knows and understands the mentality and sacrifice it takes to thrive in this profession. His immense pride in the men and women who wear this uniform is impressive. He understands the specified training we receive and wants to promote the use of it and the elevation of our department in every opportunity he gets. His selflessness as a leader was displayed recently when he attended the 2023 NASBLA Conference where he was named the 2023 Butch Potts National boating Safety Officer of the Year. In his acceptance speech he humbly thanked those who nominated and voted for him and gave the credit immediately to those he supervises and works with.

SUBMISSION & SUBMISSION ASSISTANCE

Please fill out this form and email it to AFWA Communications Director, Patricia Allen (pallen@fishwildlife.org).

For more information or questions about this request for nominations, please contact Patricia Allen.