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For Immediate Release
September 29, 2009

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PLAQUEMINE, LA MAN SENTENCED IN FEDERAL COURT FOR ILLEGAL TAKING OF ALLIGATORS

Defendant fined \$2,000.00

LAFAYETTE, LA . . . United States Attorney Donald W. Washington announced that **JAMES E. GRACE, JR.**, age 47, of Plaquemine, Louisiana, was sentenced yesterday by United States Magistrate Judge C. Michael Hill to pay a \$2,000.00 fine for the illegal taking of alligators.

GRACE was charged in a one-count Bill of Information in January 2009 and pled guilty on June 18, 2009 for the illegal taking of alligators.

After receiving complaints of alligator hunting during closed season, Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries agents observed alligator traps at the Moma's Pond area, which is located in Iberia Parish. The agents observed GRACE retrieving alligators from the traps, and when asked, GRACE admitted that he had been hunting in a closed season. GRACE also admitted that he had placed traps and had been hunting in a place other than where his tags allowed him to hunt.

Pursuant to federal law, alligators are on the endangered species list as a threatened species. As a result, it is a federal misdemeanor to hunt alligators contrary to Louisiana law. In order to hunt alligators in the State of Louisiana, a hunter must have an alligator license. When a hunter obtains an alligator license,

he is given tags allowing him to hunt only in certain geographical areas. The hunter can only place alligator traps in places where he has been given tags to hunt, and he can only hunt during open season. In 2007, no one could hunt alligators prior to September 5th.

Sentencing in federal court is determined by the discretion of federal judges and the governing statute. United States Sentencing Guidelines established by the United States Congress and the United States Sentencing Commission are only used as guidelines by the judge in determining the appropriate sentence. Parole has been abolished in the federal system.

This case was investigated by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney John Luke Walker.

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