



# News Release

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## For Immediate Release

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### **Commercial Fisherman Sentenced for Violations of Lacey Act and Other Crimes Relating to the Trafficking of Paddlefish “Caviar”**

Facing federal charges stemming from a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service law enforcement investigation, with assistance from the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, licensed commercial fisherman Robbie D. Tubbs was sentenced to six months incarceration on October 17, 2013 (United States v. Robbie D. Tubbs et al).

In addition to the six months of incarceration, the U.S. Attorney’s Office, Northern District of Oklahoma, sentenced Tubbs to an additional six months home detention and two years of supervised release, for his role in interstate and international trafficking of paddlefish “caviar.” Tubbs was also ordered to pay a fine of \$500.

"One of our highest priorities is to investigate individuals and companies that are involved in the unlawful commercial trafficking and smuggling of our nation's fish and wildlife," said Special Agent in Charge Nicholas Chavez. "We will continue to identify and apprehend those who exploit protected species for commercial gain."

This case is related to the prosecution of James Chapman, Lee A. Jobe, Jeremy Waldrip, and Jay C. Witt. All parties pleaded guilty to Lacey Act trafficking violations and were sentenced in the Northern District of Oklahoma in July 2013. Chapman knowingly violated the Lacey Act and Oklahoma law by participating in the transportation and interstate commerce of Paddlefish eggs. In the course of the investigation, it was found that Chapman sold paddlefish eggs to Tubbs in Missouri for between \$6,000 and \$7,000 in 2007. Additionally, Witt, Waldrip and Jobe also admitted to illegally providing eggs to Tubbs. In turn, Tubbs admitted to receiving 125 pounds of eggs between 2007 and 2008, with a retail value of \$35,265, with the intent of selling the eggs to a wholesaler in Missouri to be made into caviar.

Paddlefish eggs have become more popular as traditional sturgeon caviar, such as Beluga, has become scarce. Paddlefish are shark-like plankton-eaters that can grow to weigh as much as 200 pounds, making them one of the largest freshwater fish.

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The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service.