

## **SERVICE WILDLIFE INSPECTOR HONORED FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO GLOBAL WILDLIFE PROTECTION**

Supervisory Wildlife Inspector Paul Cerniglia, who works for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement in New York, has received the 2007 Clark R. Bavin Law Enforcement Award from the Animal Welfare Institute in recognition of his contributions to wildlife protection.

Honors for Cerniglia and seven other award recipients (including fellow countryman John Webb of the Department of Justice's Environment and Natural Resources Division) were announced at a June 4 ceremony at the 14<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in The Hague, The Netherlands.

The Bavin Award spotlights accomplishments in combating wildlife crime involving species protected under the CITES treaty. It is named after Clark Bavin who, as chief of Service Law Enforcement from 1972 through 1990, launched and guided U.S. efforts to stem global wildlife trafficking.

"We're proud to see Wildlife Inspector Cerniglia singled out for his contributions to global wildlife conservation," said Benito Perez, Acting Chief, Office of Law Enforcement. "His work and that of our other inspectors constitute the Nation's front-line defense against black market wildlife trade."

A veteran officer who has policed wildlife trade at the port of New York for more than two decades, Cerniglia was recognized for his successes in strengthening U.S. enforcement of the CITES treaty. As an inspector at John F. Kennedy (JFK) International Airport from 1982 to 1991, he helped shut down a thriving New York market for wild parrots and launched landmark cases involving trafficking in live caimans and caiman skins. His perseverance in checking shipments for compliance with humane transport requirements as well as conservation statutes helped improve treatment of animals in transit and reduce wildlife mortality.

Cerniglia has supervised wildlife inspection operations at either JFK or U.S./Canada border crossings in New York State since 1991. He expanded trade monitoring efforts, securing hundreds of thousands of dollars in penalties and improving compliance among companies that deal in wildlife and wildlife products. In the late 1990s, he played a major role in implementing new CITES protections for sturgeon, ensuring that caviar shipments entering New York were subject to rigorous inspection and developing leads on possible large-scale smuggling that helped the Service expose multiple U.S. caviar companies as black market profiteers.

As a supervisor, Cerniglia introduced a rigorous on-the-job training program for new inspectors in New York that became a model for Service port operations nationwide. Inspectors who began their careers under his tutelage now help staff more than half of the U.S. ports that handle wildlife shipments. Cerniglia also contributed to the professional development of dozens of Service special agents who have worked at the port of New York during his tenure there.

This year's Bavin Award recipients also include enforcement officers or organizations from Canada, India, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, and Tanzania. Webb – the other U.S. honoree – was recognized for his success conducting and supervising Federal prosecutions involving global wildlife trafficking.

“Service enforcement officers have worked closely with John Webb for over three decades,” said Perez. “His work, which has included numerous high-profile smuggling cases as well as the development of innovative prosecutorial strategies, has helped make a difference for wildlife around the world.”

Webb was honored for his leadership in directing wildlife prosecutions within the Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division and success in enlisting U.S. attorneys across the country in the fight against global wildlife trafficking. His work has secured the convictions of criminals engaged in large-scale wildlife smuggling and led to increased penalties in the United States for such crimes.