

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



News Release

Midwest Region

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Wildlife Crimes Don't Pay: Iowa Guide Sentenced to Prison for Wildlife, Fraud and Tax Violations



Federal and state conservation agencies successfully partnered to preserve legal hunting opportunities for future generations in Iowa by putting an end to an illegal White-tailed deer and turkey guiding business in Ringgold County through the sentencing of Mt. Ayr man on October 21, 2010.

A multi-year investigation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, United States Postal Inspection Service and the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation Division ended last week as James Joseph Juergens, 50, of Mt. Ayr., Iowa, was sentenced to twenty-one months of imprisonment for charges of violating Fish and Wildlife laws and mail fraud and twelve months of imprisonment for failure to file tax returns associated with his operation of a hunting guide business known as Lott's Creek Inn located in Ringgold County, Iowa.

On December 30, 2005, a search warrant was served at Lott's Creek Inn, Juergens' hunting lodge. The warrant was obtained and served by the IDNR with assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Evidence seized during the investigation indicated that Juergens' illegal guide operation was expansive and documented more than 140 clients, many of whom were repeat clients, from up and down the eastern sea board. By reviewing seized documents, including photographs, address books, client lists and other financial documents, including returned checks, payment receipts, banking documents, client/guide contracts, IDNR and USFWS agents were able to build a case that the U.S. Attorney's Office elevated to involve both the U.S. Postal Service and the Internal Revenue Service for additional mail and tax fraud violations.

Pat Lund, Resident Agent in Charge for Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin, noted that, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is committed to preserving hunting and hunting opportunities for future generations, saying that "Our mission as a conservation agency is to put a stop to illegal and unethical wildlife activities and we are pleased to partner with the Iowa DNR, the U.S. Attorney's Office and our fellow federal agencies to bring this case to a close."

Paying between \$1,500 to \$2,500 per person for the opportunity to participate in the illegal take of trophy buck deer and turkey, clients hunted without proper non-resident licenses, with illegal firearms and were instructed by Juergens to hunt in closed areas. Juergens' illegal hunting activities have a direct impact on the managed deer population and skew the population numbers that conservation managers use to determine the health of a population relative to hunting and the planned state hunting lottery.

There is an economic cost to Juergens' operation as well. It is estimated that Juergens made more than \$100,000 annually through his illegal guide service and that he failed to report such income to the Internal Revenue Service for more than 4 years. Aside from, the federal fraud, Juergens' illegal hunting activities resulted in the state of Iowa losing out on almost \$800 per illegal hunter through non-resident licenses. Aside from the biological and economic impacts of Juergens' activities, there is a social cost too, with local hunters losing out on legal hunting opportunities in their community.

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. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov>.

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