

## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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## News Release

February 15, 2008



Refuge Law Enforcement Officer W. Frank Simms looks on as NC Aquarium Employees Pat Raves and Jason Wheeler survey the donated driftwood. Raves coordinates the Education Program for the Aquarium; Wheeler is Head of Operations for the facility.

Photo Credit: Bonnie Strawser, USFWS

**\$3,000+ in Fines for Collection of Driftwood for Commercial Purposes on National Wildlife Refuge**

On February 12, 2007, Refuge Law Enforcement Officer W. Frank Simms apprehended three individuals for collecting driftwood and operating a commercial operation on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge.

Investigation revealed the subjects, all from the western part of NC, had come to Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge specifically to collect driftwood and intended to transport the driftwood home and sell it, either to local taxidermists or to landscapers. Simms confiscated the driftwood, pending resolution of the case. The total number of driftwood pieces was 457, and the estimated value was between \$6,000.00 and \$13,000.00.

Recently, the case was settled out of court. Each of the three men received collateral fines of 1050.00, which were paid in full.

On February 15, 2008, Simms transported the driftwood to the North Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island. Pat Raves, Education Specialist for the Aquarium, accepted the donation and commented, "These are gorgeous pieces... We'll probably use them in three program areas. Some will be used in Horticulture for landscaping and exhibitry. Some pieces will be used in Husbandry- to decorate freshwater tanks, providing hiding places for the fish. And, the Education program will use some of the smaller pieces for children's crafts programs."