



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council 2015 Law Enforcement of the Year Award

Nominee's Information:

Name: _____Rodger Kyle Clifford_____

Position/Title: _____Conservation Enforcement Officer Senior____

Agency/Department: Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Marine Resources Division

Mailing Address: _____PO Drawer 458 Gulf Shores, AL 36547_____

Phone: _____251-968-7576_____

Email: _____kyle.clifford@dcnr.alabama.gov_____

Nominator's Information:

Name: _____Major Scott Bannon_____

Position/Title: _____Chief Enforcement Officer_____

Agency/Department: _____ALDCNR/ Marine Resources Division_____

Mailing Address: _____PO Box 189 Dauphin Island Alabama 36528_____

Phone: _____251-223-1218_____

Email: _____scott.bannon@dcnr.alabama.gov_____

Please use no more than one page to respond to the following three items.
Attach your response to this cover sheet and mail to:

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
c/o Charlene Ponce/Phyllis Miranda
2203 N. Lois Avenue, Suite 1100
Tampa, FL 33607

Nominations may also be submitted by fax to: 813-648-1711, or emailed to:
gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org.

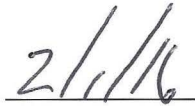
1. Describe the nominee's current responsibilities.
2. Describe the nominee's significant contribution(s) to fisheries enforcement.
3. Describe specific qualities that make the nominee deserving of this award.

I hereby affirm that the information submitted herein is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I am aware that if any of the information provided is found to be inaccurate or untruthful, this nomination shall be removed from consideration for this award.

Nominator's Signature: _____



Date: _____



Alabama - Nomination of CEO Sr. Rodger Kyle Clifford for Officer of the Year

Conservation Enforcement Officer Senior Rodger Kyle Clifford has been an officer with the Alabama Marine Resources Division since June 1, 2012. His primary responsibilities are to patrol the land and waters of the Marine Resources jurisdiction and federal waters in the EEZ for commercial and recreational fishing violations. These duties include dockside inspections, inspections at sea, inspections of retail seafood shops and seafood processors. He is assigned to the Baldwin County District which encompasses approximately 800 square miles and conducts patrols using vehicles, atv's and boats up to 40'. In addition, he is a sworn state law enforcement officer that can enforce all manner of state laws and conducts search and rescue as necessary.

CEO Sr. Clifford is a young officer who has developed rapidly and is considered a training officer in his district and often goes above and beyond his general duties as an officer. He works well with all of the officers of the Division in addition to officers of surrounding state, local and federal agencies. He has assumed a leadership role in planning activities and conducting investigations. He creates an atmosphere of comradery during training and on patrol. He has taken the initiative to lead nearshore and offshore patrols under the JEA program. These patrols resulted in 365 hours dedicated to federal fisheries enforcement where he checked over 1200 anglers, 355 boats and issued multiple fisheries violations. In March of 2015, he intercepted a vessel while on patrol that had whole red snapper and snapper filets during the closed season. This intercept resulted in 3 people receiving violations. During the course of his duties, he discovered some retail shops were not reporting correctly and were not licensed. He was able to initiate cases on several establishments to obtain compliance with state and federal reporting regulations. One retailer, a repeat offender, refused to appear in court. He was located by Clifford and incarcerated for the charges. He has participated in many joint patrols with NOAA/OLE one of which was an inspection of the M/V Althea, a 528' bulk carrier, which resulted in the issuance of Summary Settlements for possessing red snapper during closed season. In addition to patrolling, Clifford took on the maintenance of several boats and pieces of equipment that were not his responsibility but he determined that some maintenance was required to prevent possible injury or major equipment break downs, this resulted in a financial savings for the Division. Clifford participated in the Mobile Boat Show providing information to over 10,000 visitors and was the guest speaker for the local US Power Squadron quarterly meeting providing information on boating safety and fishing regulations. He also attended several Gulf Council public comment and scoping meetings.

CEO Sr. Clifford is a hardworking dedicated officer who has a calm manner and utilizes critical decision making skills to maximize his benefit to the Division and the resources. He has a passion for the job and a serious self-starting work ethic that is a necessity for conservation officers who often work alone and with little to no supervision. He creates an atmosphere of comradery during training and on patrol. His supervisor, Captain Glenn Kornegay, refers to him as "the go to guy", in the district. His skills were put to the test in April of 2015 when a severe thunderstorm passed through Mobile Bay with near hurricane force winds just as a major regatta finished. Dozens of vessels capsized and ten sank, ultimately six people lost their lives but due to the quick actions of CEO Sr. Clifford 2 persons were recovered alive. A male and female were onboard a vessel that sank and the female was able to grab a phone with a life proof case and make a call to 911. The call was routed to the USCG and then to Clifford who had to use local landmarks and talk the couple through a description of where they were in order for him and Captain Kornegay to locate them. With almost no battery left and the couple struggling to maintain consciousness Clifford and Kornegay were able to locate them alive, treat them for hypothermia and get them to medical help. For his actions, CEO SR Clifford was awarded a First Responder Award from the Order of Purple Heart, an organization of former military members who had been awarded the Purple Heart. Clifford represents the Division and law enforcement in general by displaying the highest moral and ethical standards.



Marine Agency members honored for efforts during Dauphin Island Regatta

Cassie Fambro | cfambro@al.com By Cassie Fambro | cfambro@al.com

Email the author | Follow on Twitter

on June 29, 2015 at 8:24 PM, updated June 30, 2015 at 5:28 PM

The Military Order of the Purple Heart recognized members of the Alabama Department of Conservation Marine Resources Division on Monday for their contribution to the rescue efforts on Mobile Bay in late April following the **Dauphin Island Regatta disaster**.

The following personnel were recognized:

- Director Chris Blankenship
- Major Scott Bannon
- Captain Edward & Bo Willis
- Captain Glenn Kornegay
- Officer Steve Humphrey
- Officer Jeremy Hicks
- Officer Kyle Clifford

The presentations were made at USS ALABAMA Battleship Park.

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Teen and boatmate 'lucky, thankful, blessed' to survive Mobile Bay storm that flipped sail boat

Teen and sailor tell of capsizing and rescue in Dauphin Island Regatta

During the 2015 Dauphin Island Regatta a storm capsized their small catamaran and put Hana Blalack and Ron Gaston in the water. It was the first time Blalack, 15, had been sailing. They had already crossed the finish line and were heading back when the storm overtook them. Later, after they were rescued following two and a half hours in the water, they learned just how bad the day really was. Boats were capsized, and sailors were dead or missing.

Jeff Dute By Jeff Dute

Follow on Twitter

on April 28, 2015 at 7:30 AM, updated April 28, 2015 at 2:47 PM

"I've never been so cold in my life," -- Hana Blalack

This map from Ron Gaston shows the area where the 16-foot Hobie catamaran they were sailing in the 57th Dauphin Island Regatta capsized in a violent storm that blew across Mobile Bay Saturday afternoon. Gaston and 15-year-old Hana Blalack spent 2.5 hours adrift in the bay before they were able to direct a rescue boat to their location thanks to a cellphone and handheld GPS unit.

Jeff Dute | jdute@al.com

A violent squall packing 70 mph winds barreling across Mobile Bay flipped Ron Gaston's 16-foot Hobie Catamaran like it was a leaf.

Gaston, 50, found himself holding a rope attached to the boat in one hand and his sailing crewmate, 15-year-old Hana Blalack, in the other.

Gaston's normal sailing partner, 17-year-old daughter Sarah was on another boat, so her Spanish Fort High schoolmate and friend agreed to participate in the 57th Dauphin Island Regatta despite never having been on a sailboat before.

"They told me nothing bad has ever happened during the Dauphin Island race. They said, 'Sailing is perfectly safe.'" Blalack said.

With the wind and waves pulling the boat and them farther from the direction in which they believed lay land, Gaston said a question popped into his head.

"Just for a second it was, 'Boat or Hana?'" said Gaston, who has been sailing since he was a teen. "I let go of the rope."

"He told me later that he thought, 'I can get a new boat. I can't get a new Hana,'" added Blalack.

The overturned boat quickly disappeared into the gathering maelstrom of howling wind, blinding rain and building seas.

Now adrift, Gaston and Blalack, who is a sophomore at Spanish Fort High School, held onto each other in an effort to stem impacts of teeth-chattering cold that set in within minutes and to keep from being pulled apart as the storm's fury threatened to do at any second over the next half-hour at least.

Over the 2.5 hours they ultimately spent afloat on the bay, they also could not help but reflect on how a day born of such promise and highlighted by triumph had gone bad so suddenly.

THE RACE

Gaston and Blalack had already crossed the finish line at about 1:50 p.m. p.m. and were only 5.5 miles south of the Buccaneer Yacht Club on the bay's western shore when the storm overtook them.

Despite the start being postponed for nearly 90 minutes, the race itself had been exhilarating, Blalack said.

She and Gaston made a bold, late tactical move to the west to pick up the wind that allowed them to overtake another Hobie 16 captained by Ron Gaston's brother Shane Gaston.

"During the race, she did great," Gaston said. "It was a nice ride, no big deal."

"We were about a mile behind Ron's brother and he had never lost to his brother, so we tacked way out to the west and picked up the wind. We ended up passing his brother right at the finish line," Blalack said.

Blalack said with the south-southwest wind pushing them up Mobile Bay at around 20 knots, she got to enjoy the thrill of the Hobie's true upwind racing speed and agility.

In a twist of fate or luck, Blalack took a handheld GPS unit out of its normal place in a pocket on the boat's trampoline-style deck and hung it around her neck to keep up with the boat's track and speed.

"We were in a great mood. We were making 16 to 20 knots with the wind," she said. "We hit this little lull in the wind, and then it just came out of nowhere."

Gaston took note of the storm's approach. When lightning started popping to the west, he instructed Blalack to sit on the trampoline deck and not to touch any metal.

Even though they saw the storm's approach and were prepared as best they could, there was no way to prepare the small boat for the violence accompanying the darkening clouds.

This map from Ron Gaston shows the route he and Hana Blalack sailed during Saturday's 57th Dauphin Island Regatta before their 16-foot capsized on a return sail to Buccaneer Yacht Club during a violent squall that blasted across Mobile Bay at about 3 p.m.

Jeff Dute | jdute@al.com

Within seconds of encountering the storm's eastern edge, gale-force winds caused them to lose control of the small bow sail called a jib.

The wind caught the sail and Blalack said things immediately "got a little crazy."

"When we lost control of the jib, the wind caught it, the front flipped over and threw us in the water," Blalack said. "I went straight over the back and he was thrown off to the side. When I came up, I couldn't see him."

Blalack said she started swimming around the side of the capsized boat, but a wave picked up the hull and it hit her in the head.

"I was trying to figure out what happened and where Ron was, when all of a sudden, I felt him snatch me backward by my life jacket," she said.

Shortly afterward, Gaston let go of the rope tethering them to the boat.

Luckily, both castaways had on life jackets when they went in the water. Still, the huge waves kicked up by the near hurricane-force winds repeatedly crashed over their heads.

When they were able to stay above the surface, wind-blown rain stung their faces.

Those elements and water temperature in the bay in the mid-70s combined to create frigid conditions in no time.

"I've never been so cold in my life," Blalack said. "I was already cold prior to going into the water. With the cold wind and rain, we were shivering within two minutes."

When the storm's fury subsided a half-hour later, Gaston and Blalack found themselves floating in open water about a-mile-and-a-half southeast of the mouth of the Theodore Industrial Canal.

"She was a trooper. I told her, 'We're fine and at least we're not down at Dauphin Island or out in the ship channel,'" Gaston said.

Their focus then turned from merely surviving the storm to now getting help.

A WATERY SOS

Miraculously perhaps, at about the same time Blalack was hanging the handheld GPS around her neck to track their speed, Gaston placed a disabled iPhone into a pocket on his life jacket.

"I don't know why ..." he said.

Even though the phone's cell service was no longer activated, it still can be used to make emergency phone calls, he said.

Gaston's first attempts to use the phone's emergency capabilities were unsuccessful.

"She took the phone, and being 15, was able to figure it out," he said.

Gaston's call log shows that Blalack stayed on the phone with the Coast Guard for 55 minutes.

"They were very helpful. It was kind of funny because they kept asking me how we were and if we were still there. I was like, 'Yeah, I'm still here in the water. Where can I go?'"

The handheld GPS allowed them to keep up with their position in the bay and relay those coordinates to the Coast Guard.

"I can't say having those two things saved our lives, but it certainly helped," Blalack said.

After more than two hours in the water, the castaways saw a boat with flashing blue lights making its way west along what they figured was the Theodore Industrial Canal channel. The channel runs out of the canal for nearly a mile 200 yards south of Gaillard Island before terminating at the Mobile Ship Channel.

Gaston said when they first spotted the boat their hopes of rescue soared.

Despite their efforts to get the attention of those onboard by waving their hands, it never turned their way before entering the canal.

"I kept telling the Coast Guard, 'No, they're going the wrong way,' but they kept on going," Blalack said. "I couldn't believe they didn't turn toward us."

When they saw the search boat emerge from the canal, Blalack told the Coast Guardsman on the line to tell those onboard the boat to come to the first channel marker and turn south.

"I knew if they did that, they'd run right over us," she said.

Alabama Marine Resources Enforcement Division Capt. Glenn Kornegay said when they got close to the pair, Blalack still had the iPhone "stuck to her face."

"She was actually on the phone with the Coast Guard and saw us before we saw her. She told the Coast Guard to tell the boat with the blue lights on to turn due south and they'll run right over us," he said. "The Coast Guard contacted us and that's what we did."

The MRD officers took the pair back to the Buccaneer Yacht Club. From there, they made a short drive to Gaston's friends' house on the bay where they were able to take a shower and finally warm up.

It was only then that Blalack called her parents to let them know what happened.

They were incredulous at first, but then the reality of their daughter's experience sank in.

"My mom said that's the closest she ever came to losing a child and she didn't like it. She told me to never do it again," Blalack said.

Gaston and others went back out on the bay on a motorboat Saturday evening, found the boat several miles south of Gaillard Island and towed it back to the western shore.

The mast was broken and its sail shredded.

Blalack was a little sore and very sunburnt the day after her ordeal, but understands a few aches and pains are minor compared to what others caught in the storm endured.

"I'm grateful that I went through this with someone with so much experience. Without him, I don't think I'd still be here," Blalack said. "I'm very, very thankful , very, very blessed to have made it home safely. It makes me sick to know there are still people out there."

POST SCRIPT

Unbeknownst to Gaston and Blalack, the storm had also capsized the Hobie 16 crewed by his brother, Shane, and nephew Connor and another Hobie 16 on which daughter Sarah and Jim Gates, 74, of Van Cleave, Miss., were sailing.

His brother and nephew, who both clung to their capsized boat, were in the water throughout the storm's 45-minute duration.

When it passed, they were able to get the boat turned back upright and sailed it toward a western shore boat dock.

They were able to make a phone call from the strangers' house and got a ride back home.

Sarah Gaston and Jim Gates weren't so lucky.

After crossing the finish line, they were making way toward Aloe Bay on Dauphin Island when the storm caught them head-on.

Their capsized boat with them holding onto it was pushed up against the Dauphin Island Bridge. When the worst of the storm passed, Sarah used Jim's cellphone to contact her mother, who then alerted the Coast Guard to her daughter's location.

They were rescued about 30 minutes after the storm passed.

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State of Alabama Unified Judicial System		ALABAMA UNIFORM NONTRAFFIC CITATION AND COMPLAINT <small>(For Scheduled Nontraffic Violations or Misdemeanors)</small>		Case Number 2015 001481	
ARJA-20 Rev. 10/00					
IN THE <u> </u> DISTRICT <u> </u> COURT OF <u> </u> COUNTY		Law-Enforcement Agency or Department AL0030359			
The undersigned complainant, being duly sworn, deposes and says that the person herein named committed the offense hereinafter set forth in that on or about:		Date 3/21/2015		Approx. Time 12:35 PM	
First WESLEY		Middle/Maiden CARLSON		Last WOOLARD	
Street 9731 IVY GREEN DR					
City MONTGOMERY		State AL		Zip 36117	
Driver's License Number 7670342		State AL		Expiration Date 6/7/1990	
Height 5' 9"	Weight 180 lbs.	Eyes BLU	Hair BRN	Social Security Number XXXX-XX-6296	Sex M
Race W					
Name and Address of Employer					
Did violate, VIOLATE FED LAW OR REG IN FED WATERS, Rule/Regulation Number 220-3-.78(1) , within the County of BALDWIN , more particularly described in the DESCRIPTION OF OFFENSE below.					
DESCRIPTION OF OFFENSE					
State Specific Facts Relating to Offense: Assisting Officer(s): Boros Vessel: , Reg. Number: AL1912LL 4 Red Snapper out of Season					
Officer Name Clifford		Officer ID 2922		Agency ORI AL0030359	
Complainant's (Officer's) Signature /s/ Rodger K. Clifford 4/1/2015 2:18:42PM					
Sworn to and acknowledged before me this date 04/01/2015		Signature and Title of Judicial Officer /s/ Elizabeth McCray 4/1/2015 2:19:23PM			
COURT APPEARANCE INFORMATION <input type="checkbox"/> Court Appearance Required					
By signing this citation, I am promising to appear in court on the date and at the time specified below. If a court appearance is not required, I may choose to plead guilty before a magistrate or by mail or in person, paying the required fine and court costs prior to my scheduled court date, in which event I do not have to appear in court. If I do not appear in court on the scheduled date and if I do not plead guilty and pay the required fine and costs prior to that date, I promise to pay an amount prescribed by law.					
I also understand that failure to appear or to plead guilty and pay the fine and costs may result in a warrant being issued for my arrest on the present charge, and I may also be charged with second-degree bail jumping.					
Court Appearance Date (if applicable) 5/4/2015 8:30 AM		Court Address 201 EAST SECTION AVENUE FOLEY, AL 36535		Telephone Number 251-972-6818	
NO SIGNATURE REQUIRED Pursuant to Act 2011-628				Telephone Number 334-657-8822	

NOTICE: FAILURE TO APPEAR IN COURT AND/OR FAILURE TO PAY FINE AND COSTS WILL RESULT IN AN ARREST WARRANT BEING ISSUED.

OFFICER'S NOTES

B NV0598167		
State of Alabama Unified Judicial System ARJA-20 Rev. 10/00	ALABAMA UNIFORM NONTRAFFIC CITATION AND COMPLAINT <small>(For Scheduled Nontraffic Violations or Misdemeanors)</small>	Case Number 2015 001479
IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF BALDWIN COUNTY		Law-Enforcement Agency or Department AL0030359
The undersigned complainant, being duly sworn, deposes and says that the person herein named committed the offense hereinafter set forth in that on or about:		Date 3/21/2015
Approx. Time 12:35 PM		
First THOMAS	Middle/Maiden ATTICUS	Last NORRIS
Street 8018 LAKERIDGE DR		
City MONTGOMERY	State AL	Zip 36117
Driver's License Number 5567561	State AL	Expiration Date 9/22/1948
Height 5' 11"	Weight 165 lbs.	Eyes HZL
Hair BRN	Social Security Number XXX-XX-2527	Sex M
Race W		
Name and Address of Employer		
Did violate, VIOLATE FED LAW OR REG IN FED WATERS, Rule/Regulation Number 220-3-.78(1), within the County of BALDWIN, more particularly described in the DESCRIPTION OF OFFENSE below.		
DESCRIPTION OF OFFENSE		
State Specific Facts Relating to Offense: Assisting officer(s): Boros Vessel: , Reg. Number: AL1912LL 4 Red Snapper Out of Season		
Officer Name Clifford	Officer ID 2922	Agency ORI AL0030359
Complainant's (Officer's) Signature /s/ Rodger K. Clifford 4/1/2015 2:18:30PM		
Sworn to and acknowledged before me this date 04/01/2015		Signature and Title of Judicial Officer /s/ Elizabeth McCray 4/1/2015 2:19:21PM
COURT APPEARANCE INFORMATION		
<input type="checkbox"/> Court Appearance Required		
By signing this citation, I am promising to appear in court on the date and at the time specified below. If a court appearance is not required, I may choose to plead guilty before a magistrate or by mail or in person, paying the required fine and court costs prior to my scheduled court date, in which event I do not have to appear in court. If I do not appear in court on the scheduled date and if I do not plead guilty and pay the required fine and costs prior to that date, I promise to pay an amount prescribed by law.		
I also understand that failure to appear or to plead guilty and pay the fine and costs may result in a warrant being issued for my arrest on the present charge, and I may also be charged with second-degree bail jumping.		
Court Appearance Date (if applicable) 5/4/2015	Court Address 201 EAST SECTION AVENUE FOLEY, AL 36535	Telephone Number 251-972-6818
NO SIGNATURE REQUIRED Pursuant to Act 2011-628		

OFFICER'S NOTES

State of Alabama Unified Judicial System		ALABAMA UNIFORM NONTRAFFIC CITATION AND COMPLAINT <small>(For Scheduled Nontraffic Violations or Misdemeanors)</small>		Case Number 2015 001480	
ARJA-20 Rev. 10/00					
IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF BALDWIN COUNTY		Law-Enforcement Agency or Department AL0030359			
The undersigned complainant, being duly sworn, deposes and says that the person herein named committed the offense hereinafter set forth in that on or about:		Date 3/21/2015		Approx. Time 12:35 PM	
First ARTHUR		Middle/Maiden PAUL		Last WOOLARD	
Street 9731 IVY GREEN DR					
City MONTGOMERY		State AL		Zip 36117	
Driver's License Number 4720771		State AL		Expiration Date 6/6/1963	
Height 5' 9"	Weight 190 lbs.	Eyes BRN	Hair BRN	Social Security Number XXXX-XX-9157	Sex M Race W
Name and Address of Employer					
Did violate, VIOLATE FED LAW OR REG IN FED WATERS, Rule/Regulation Number 220-3-.78(1) , within the County of BALDWIN , more particularly described in the DESCRIPTION OF OFFENSE below.					
DESCRIPTION OF OFFENSE					
State Specific Facts Relating to Offense Assisting Officer(s): Boros Vessel: , Reg. Number: AL1912LL 6 Red Snapper Out of Season					
Officer Name Clifford		Officer ID 2922		Agency ORI AL0030359	
Complainant's (Officer's) Signature /s/ Rodger K. Clifford 4/1/2015 2:18:34PM					
Sworn to and acknowledged before me this date 04/01/2015		Signature and Title of Judicial Officer /s/ Elizabeth McCray 4/1/2015 2:19:22PM			
COURT APPEARANCE INFORMATION <input type="checkbox"/> Court Appearance Required					
By signing this citation, I am promising to appear in court on the date and at the time specified below. If a court appearance is not required, I may choose to plead guilty before a magistrate or by mail or in person, paying the required fine and court costs prior to my scheduled court date, in which event I do not have to appear in court. If I do not appear in court on the scheduled date and if I do not plead guilty and pay the required fine and costs prior to that date, I promise to pay an amount prescribed by law.					
I also understand that failure to appear or to plead guilty and pay the fine and costs may result in a warrant being issued for my arrest on the present charge, and I may also be charged with second-degree bail jumping.					
Court Appearance Date (if applicable) 5/4/2015 8:30 AM		Court Address 201 EAST SECTION AVENUE FOLEY, AL 36535		Telephone Number 251-972-6818	
NO SIGNATURE REQUIRED Pursuant to Act 2011-628		Telephone Number 334-657-8786			

NOTICE: FAILURE TO APPEAR IN COURT AND/OR FAILURE TO PAY FINE AND COSTS WILL RESULT IN AN ARREST WARRANT BEING ISSUED

OFFICER'S NOTES