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Toyota is New Title Sponsor for ShareLunker Program

DALLAS — Longtime Texas conservation supporter Toyota has been named title sponsor of the nationally-known fisheries conservation effort that will now be known as the Toyota ShareLunker Program.

Headquartered at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens, Texas, the Toyota ShareLunker Program uses angler-donated largemouth bass weighing 13 pounds or more ("lunkers") in a selective breeding program that produces fish for stocking into Texas public waters. Anglers who donate fish receive a fiberglass replica of their catch, ShareLunker clothing and recognition at an annual banquet. The Texas resident catching the largest bass also receives a lifetime fishing license.

Toyota responded to a request for proposals by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation, the official non-profit partner of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The company made a three-year cash and in-kind offer, which includes funding and a new 2010 Toyota Tundra truck. The company will receive naming rights as well as recognition in news releases, signage and other promotional materials and venues.

“The ShareLunker program is one of the most successful in the nation in fisheries conservation,” said Toby Hynes, Gulf States Toyota president. “Toyota has long been a supporter of the Foundation and Department in their innovative programs. We believe it is important to encourage such sound efforts to further the enjoyment of the Texas outdoors.”

As a longtime Foundation and Department partner and sponsor, Toyota has supported several programs for many years. Gulf States Toyota, the privately held distributor for Texas and four surrounding states, in concert with Toyota Motor Sales USA, has previously demonstrated aggressive support and involvement in environmental and conservation activities. Sponsorship activities are designed to perfectly align with the philosophies and strategies of the foundation and department.

Examples of historically-sponsored activities showcasing the value of the partnership between Toyota, TPWF and TPWD include: Texas State Park Guide, Wallet License

Holder's, Bag Limit Cards, In-School Youth Shooting Sports, State Park Maps, TPW Expo, *Life's Better Outside* awareness campaign, Archery In Schools, State Park Interpretive Brochures, Conservation License Plates, Official Vehicle of the TPW Foundation, Texas Conservation Hall of Fame Banquet, Texas Outdoor Family, Spanish translation of key TPWD customer communication, Hook & Bullet Newsletter and the Toyota Texas Bass Classic.

Since 1991, the TPW Foundation has been the official non-profit funding partner for TPWD. By bringing together companies, corporations, communities and individuals, the foundation has successfully raised more than \$70 million benefiting a wide variety of conservation projects. The foundation preserves Texas treasures like Chinati Mountains and the Playa Lakes of the Panhandle. It supports facilities, such as the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, which house programs important to wildlife preservation and study. The foundation plays an essential role in conservation education, with scholarship opportunities, internships, and outdoor activities for children.

The ShareLunker program has been instrumental in increasing the size and occurrence of trophy largemouth bass in Texas. To date, 471 fish have been entered into the program. Program goals include:

- Enhancing the science of genetics and the selective breeding of largemouth bass, with the ultimate goal of producing the world record largemouth bass in Texas (Operation World Record);
- Producing and stocking more fingerlings and increasing the number of "lunker" bass weighing 8 pounds or more in Texas;
- Increasing the awareness of and educating Texans on the value of this program and the importance of donating lunkers; and
- Increasing awareness of how to properly handle and care for big bass.

For more information about the Toyota ShareLunker sponsorship or the Foundation, contact Davis with the foundation at ddavis@tpwf.org or (214) 720-1478.

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