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Specialty Gear for Texas Game Wardens Making a Difference Across the State *Gear Up for Game Wardens Surpasses \$5 Million Raised*

Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation's [S. Reed Morian Gear Up for Game Wardens](#) program has surpassed a \$5 million fundraising milestone, which has placed high-tech specialty gear in the hands of Texas Game Wardens across the state for the past seven years.

Through private donations, Gear Up for Game Wardens provides specialty equipment Texas Game Wardens need to maintain safety and ensure the highest level of service for the people of Texas. While the state provides the fundamental necessities for game wardens to do their jobs, there is still a critical need for additional specialized equipment.

"The specialty equipment provided through Gear Up for Game Wardens has been a game changer for us, and we are incredibly grateful for the support of citizens across Texas," said Lt. Col. Ronald VanderRoest, who is the interim Law Enforcement Director for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

"Texas Game Wardens do a difficult and dangerous job, and thanks to technology like sidescan sonars and thermal drones, Texas Game Wardens have the equipment they need to do their jobs more safely and effectively."

The program launched in late 2017, and since then, thousands of pieces of equipment have flowed from Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation (TPWF) to Texas Game Warden field offices across the state. Big ticket items include close to three dozen UTVs/ATVs, and airboats and search and rescue boats, with 25 vessels deployed to date. More than 40 sidescan sonars are now in place across Texas, vastly improving Texas Game Warden capabilities in drowning recoveries, and over 50 search and rescue drones, many with thermal capabilities, are also in use, which have literally saved lives. Thermal and night vision equipment has been provided to more than 160 officers, which is making a huge difference in the effectiveness of night patrols. Finally, the K-9 team got off the ground thanks to support from TPWF, and

Gear Up for Game Wardens has since provided funding to replace 12 K-9 officers as they retired from service.

Though the Gear Up for Game Wardens program is managed by dedicated TPWF staff, the program relies heavily on the help of its volunteer-led statewide leadership committee, which is comprised of citizens committed to supporting Texas Game Wardens. Each region has a local committee that organizes fundraisers for the cause. An event generously hosted by the Big Easy Ranch in Central Texas earlier this year raised more than \$150,000, helping to push the total raised past the \$5 million milestone.

“It's amazing how much has been raised across the state, and it's because there are a lot of people who care about our natural resources,” said Hershell Cavin, co-chair of the Region VII Leadership Council. “When this program got started, they thought we might raise \$50,000, and here we are seven years later, and we've raised more than \$5 million. That just demonstrates what people think about what Texas Game Wardens do for the people of Texas.”

Leadership Council Chairman Randy Risher and his friend Vence Petronella are credited with coming up with the founding idea for Gear Up for Game Wardens.

“This all started because we wanted to help our local game wardens in Port O'Connor,” said Risher. “They were using equipment that really needed to be updated. So, a few of us bought 4-wheelers for the Port O'Connor game wardens. And then we got to talking about it, and we know there are other Texans like us who understand what our game wardens do and the risks they take to protect the natural resources of our state. We met with Texas Parks and Wildlife Commissioner Reed Morian, and he connected us to Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation. And, as they say, the rest is history.”

Morian was appointed as a Texas Parks and Wildlife Commissioner in 2009 and as Chairman in 2019. He was a lifelong supporter of Texas Game Wardens. He passed away earlier this year, and to honor his memory, the program has been renamed in his honor. For more information about the S. Reed Morian Gear Up for Game Wardens program, find us online at [Gear Up for Game Wardens](#).

[View our video](#) celebrating Gear Up for Game Wardens' \$5 million milestone.

Since 1991, [Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation](#) has raised and invested more than \$250 million to advance Texas' proud outdoor traditions and conserve our state's lands, waters, and wildlife. Our vision is for all Texans to have access to the wild things and wild places of our state, both now and for generations to come. For more information, please visit www.tpwf.org.