

Public Service

2019

Missouri State Employee Award of Distinction

Andy Barnes

Conservation Agent

Missouri Department of Conservation



Andy Barnes was chosen for the leadership role he played in shutting down *Operation Geronimo*, an international poaching ring based in Southwest Missouri.

A tenacious investigator, Mr. Barnes obtained numerous search warrants for homes and vehicles, along with the arrest warrants for the three main suspects. He also helped coordinate the massive suspect interview operation involving 100 officers from Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, and Canada.

The investigation uncovered hundreds of wildlife violations. The suspects pled guilty to 142 charges, and paid over \$51,000 in fines and court costs. The violations led to the lifetime revocation of the hunting privileges of both David Berry Jr. and David Berry Sr., who during the investigation also intimidated witnesses, threatened to burn down Mr. Barnes' home, and kill his children's livestock.

While Mr. Barnes is being recognized for closing down one of the worst poaching rings in Missouri history, he is best known for his professional and courteous manner and his ability to work with the citizens of Lawrence County.