

Judge dedicated to teaching, conservation

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[Craig Lamb](#)

LUFKIN, Texas — Texas Parks and Wildlife Inland Fisheries Advisory Board. Texas Association of Bass Clubs. Texas Black Bass Unlimited. Texas Parks and Wildlife. Texas Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame inductee.

Randi Wayland has been involved in volunteer leadership roles with all the above organizations and some not listed. It's no wonder why she received the highest honor of any freshwater angler in her home state.

A common thread woven through her entire life is teaching. The profession was her entry into a second life of teaching others about fishing and conservation. That second life has benefited Texas fishing more than she will admit.

Wayland's lifelong commitment to education is reflected on her business card. It reads Captain Randi Myers Wayland (U.S. Merchant Marine Officer). The reason why is the San Antonio resident is a Texas Parks and Wildlife area chief of boater education.

"I am a teacher and having my captain's license from the U.S. Coast Guard is helpful when I'm teaching boating education classes," she said.

Keep in mind that Wayland rarely pilots a boat, and especially the size required for a USCG license. That side of her life began after retirement from high school teaching.

Wayland kept teaching. She responded to an advertisement in Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine seeking volunteers to teach boating education. That was 25 years ago and she plans to keep teaching the state-mandated course.

Teaching and learning go together and Wayland has combined both as a judge for all 10 years of the Toyota Texas Bass Classic. She's here again for another year at the Toyota Bassmaster Texas Fest benefiting Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

"I'm just a club angler, actually go fishing on my own about once each month," she admitted. "What appeals most to me about judging is the educational aspect of going out with the pros."

"I like to learn, I am a teacher," she continued. "It just fascinates me to hear from the pros in the boat the how, what, why and where of everything they are doing."

Dave Terre understands her passion. He is chief, fisheries management and research, for the inland fisheries division of Texas Parks and Wildlife. Terre and Wayland interact often on projects related to fishing in Texas.

"Randi is an amazing lady, very passionate about fisheries management, and just looking out for the interests of anglers in the state of Texas," said Terre. "She is just a bundle of energy and we are grateful for what she does for fishing in the state of Texas," he continued.

That bundle of energy, by the way, is 79 years old.

Have a conversation with Wayland and her passion for fishing is immediate. Her eyes grow wide and she speaks with excitement whenever telling stories of putting fishing poles into the hands of kids.

“There is nothing more exciting in my life than seeing a child catch their first fish,” she continued.

How she does that is hosting fishing trips for children, paying for stocked fish or having them donated by hatcheries. Physically challenged adults are a new focus. In many cases, both ends of the age spectrum catch their first fish on the trips.

Boating education opened up the door for more opportunities within Texas Parks and Wildlife. Wayland has a master’s degree in marine biology. Speaking the same language as the state biologists stirred her passion for conservation and promoting fishing even more.

As a result, she was appointed to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Inland Fisheries Advisory Board. Board members are the grass roots sounding board for the state’s anglers. Feedback is shared and recommendations made for management practices with TPWD. On a higher level, advisory board members can lobby state politicians about important legislative bills related to fishing. State employees are forbidden from speaking with politicians about the business.

“Lobbying is a tough task and she is always the first to come forward when we need the help,” added Terre.

Wayland, on the board for 15 years now, is also the chairman. Her track record of success speaks for itself.

“She was instrumental in helping us get the votes necessary for passing the freshwater fishing stamp,” said Terre. “With support from the bass clubs and anglers in the state the stamp succeeded and is a great success.”

Fishing license buyers pay an extra \$5 per year for the stamp, authorized by the state Legislature in 2003. The stamp created a fund to repair, maintain, renovate or replace aging freshwater fish hatcheries and more. In the first 10 years the stamp generated \$60 million.

Wayland is a high achiever through her involvement in Texas bass fishing. She was the first female president of the Texas Association of Bass Clubs and remains a long time member of Texas Black Bass Unlimited, another conservation group.

“I just love to teach and promote the sport,” said Wayland. “It defines who I am.”

“I’m going to keep doing it forever and forever is a long time,” she concluded.

Forever is indeed a long time. What Wayland has already achieved is remarkable. Texas anglers should be grateful.