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For Immediate Release
April 9, 2009

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Jiffy Lube Franchisee Convicted of Environmental Crimes

Travis County District Attorney Rosemary Lehmburg today announced that Heartland Automotive Services, Inc. was convicted of Texas Water Code violations for discharging oil and wastewater into the city's sewer system. As part of an agreement with the District Attorney's Office, the Nebraska-based corporation was ordered to pay a total of \$300,000 in fines and issue a public apology that appeared in today's *Austin American-Statesman*.

Heartland Automotive Services, Inc. was convicted on three counts of Unauthorized Discharge, class A misdemeanors, stemming from an investigation of a Jiffy Lube store at 8509 Burnet Road. In September 2007, a search warrant was executed on the store by members of the Texas Environmental Task Force and the subsequent investigation revealed employees routinely discharging oil and wastewater into the city's sewer system with the knowledge of regional and district managers.

"Our natural resources are precious and this prosecution reflects our commitment to protect them. We will continue to aggressively prosecute violators who harm the environment and our quality of life," said District Attorney Rosemary Lehmburg.

The conviction is a culmination of the collaborative work of the Texas Environmental Task Force and District Attorney Lehmburg credited the work of Task Force members Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the Travis County Attorney's Office and the City of Austin Special Services Division.

"The Task Force members, particularly Sgt. Gray, did an outstanding job on this case. These crimes are complex and require that all of us, including the community, work together to be vigilant in our protection of environmental resources," added Lehmburg.

Sgt. Jonathan Gray, the lead investigator with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Environmental Crimes Unit, said that the "pit" at the Burnet Road Jiffy Lube location would flood every time there was a major rain event. "It was a nasty mixture that was discharged into the City of Austin sewer system and oil has a great potential to damage the environment. Here, we caught it early enough to avoid a more serious problem," said Gray.

The \$300,000 fine is believed to be the largest for a Texas Water Code violation in Travis County, and possibly in the state.

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