



ASSOCIATION OF MIDWEST FISH & GAME LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

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ANNUAL AGENCY REPORTS 2021

Association of Midwest Fish & Game Law Enforcement Officers 2021 Annual Report

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Alberta

Sheriffs Branch – Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Services

Submitted by: A/Deputy Chief Miles Grove, Deputy Chief Matt McQuorquodale

Training Issues

As a result of the province utilizing fish and wildlife enforcement staff to assist the provincial police with emergency calls in rural Alberta. All in-service officers completed Carbine Operators (.308 and .223 cal), Immediate Action Rapid Deployment, Intimate Partner Violence, Mental health, containment and new dispatch training. This was challenging with COVID. Some training was conducted virtually. Regular firearms and control tactics re-certification occurred.

Funding and Staffing Issues

Status Quo. Able to recruit to fill vacancies (underway). No new positions. Branch had a deficit budget but overall the Ministry balanced for 2020/21. Diversity is always sought; however, it is dependent upon the qualified applicant pool our last recruitments have seen upwards of 40% female recruits and some visible minorities.

Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends

In October 2020, the Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Branch (FWEB) integrated with the Sheriffs Branch. Reporting to the Chief Sheriff, the uniformed FWEB and support staff are in a directorate called Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Services and the plain clothes Major Investigations and

Intelligence unit, Under cover unit and Forensic Lab are contained in Investigation Services (with other sheriffs plain clothes operations). Both report up through Deputy Chiefs. Also, all Fish and Wildlife Sheriffs are broadly appointed as police to assist the RCMP when required on priority calls in rural areas of Alberta. In Addition, an MOU was finalized with the Environmental Enforcement Branch of Environment and Parks Ministry that identifies primary enforcement and human wildlife conflict roles of each branch and provides a framework for mutual assistance.

New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement

The move to the Sheriffs Branch and integration with the RCMP (Provincial Police), all fish and wildlife officers have been brought onto the secure computer-aided dispatch program and will be transitioned to the RMS Niche program soon. All calls for service and check ins will be facilitated through the Sheriffs Dispatch center along with highway patrol, courts and protection.

State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement

During the pandemic, issues with the courts

and prosecutors have not improved. Many files are still triaged, withdrawn or stayed. This is a systems wide symptom and affects all enforcement/police agencies. There is also a move by Justice to increase specified penalty and administrative sanction processes to keep many prosecutions out of the courts.

Cost Savings Initiatives

The rural crime initiative is based on a “closest car” concept to increase response times. The integration with the Sheriffs Branch will see fiscal efficiencies and financial savings over time with procurement, training, IT systems and dispatching.

Colorado

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)

Submitted by: Ty Petersburg- Asst. Chief of Law Enforcement

Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends

Like most of the country, Colorado is grappling with civil unrest related to calls for social justice and changes to law enforcement. This movement has spilled over to interactions with CPW officers in the field, creating an uneasy approach to conservation law enforcement. Officers are reporting an increase in combative behavior with certain segments of the public and are trying to find the right balance in the changing landscape of community relations and enforcement throughout the state. Colorado has enacted numerous police accountability measures that are changing the way CPW will operate related to the use of force, transparency and reporting. Colorado is adopting mandatory wear of body worn cameras for most law enforcement agencies in the state and new restrictions on defensive tactics and restraints. While many of these changes are warranted, the additional social pressures and critique of police tactics, increasing negative public sentiment toward law enforcement and the year long struggle with the COVID-19 pandemic is beginning to wear on field staff throughout the Colorado.

Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts

A major case from a “minor” tip from 2019 came to a close in 2020. The case originated

from a call regarding a broken-down truck that the caller claimed had a poached elk buried in the bed under construction equipment. CPW officers responded with a wildlife K-9 and made a positive hit on the truck. The ensuing investigation tied the truck back to two men who had been poaching in northern Colorado and southern Wyoming for years. Search warrants and interviews resulting from the tip turned into a seizure of 14 bull elk, a stolen moose head, methamphetamines, and a stolen AK-47. Both men took felony convictions for their wildlife crimes, and one of the men pleaded guilty to possession of methamphetamine and possession of a weapon by a previous offender, additional felonies.



A tip from a caller in the fall of 2019 reported that two pronghorn had been shot and left in the Pawnee National Grasslands. CPW officers and investigators were able to make a positive identification of the shooter through witness interviews and photographs and began to tie the case together. In a joint search warrant served between CPW and Colorado Bureau of Investigation, CPW was able to recover the likely rifle used in the crime, digital

evidence, and a significant amount of drugs that were packaged and ready for distribution. The poacher had multiple previous run-ins with CPW and other agencies, and upon a successful prosecution, will be looking at significant fines and jail time.

New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement

CPW is reaching further into the digital age of evidence collection and law enforcement

techniques. Investigators are writing “geofence” warrants on an average of 1 per week and have recently purchased a digital evidence van- including remote surveillance, equipment to mirror and analyze cell phones and hard drives on site. Efforts are underway to hopefully expand CPW investigations staff and pursue additional criminal activity in the cyber world.

Illinois

Illinois Department of Natural Resources – Office of Law Enforcement

Submitted by: Deputy Chief Jed Whitchurch

Training Issues

New Hires

Fifteen Conservation Police Officer Trainees successfully completed the basic law enforcement

and IDNR academies. As of the end of 2020, all trainees were still in-field training. This is due to the numerous setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the closure of the ISP

Academy forcing several weeks off and limiting the types of traditional training.

These 15 new

officers place the total number of sworn personnel in OLE at 131 as of January 1st, 2021. The

ability to hire three classes in the last two years has helped build the OLE closer to its goal of 181 sworn personnel. However, similar classes were hired in 1999-2000 and many of those officers will be retiring in the next few years causing any ground gained to be given back if we are unable to continue hiring.

As always, when a class is hired, it takes additional effort by everyone in OLE to get the trainees

properly trained and certified as a CPO. This includes background checks, assisting with the hiring process, staffing the academies, providing instructors at the IDNR academy, providing Field Training Officers (FTO's), and finally, covering duties vacated by officers

completing the previously mentioned duties.

In-service Training

A statewide in-service training was held in Bloomington in February. Areas of training included

First Aid/CPR/AED/Bloodborne Pathogens, officer wellness, legal updates, waterway training,

radio operations, cannabis laws, sexual harassment, and firearms familiarization.

Due to COVID

restrictions, the planned in-service for supervisors was canceled.

State-wide in-service training is a great benefit to officers and supervisors as we seek training not always available to individual regions or districts, allowing for a wider diversity of training and clarification of policies through discussion that takes place during the training and beyond.

Firearms

The firearms staff provided a spring and fall shoot that included firearms qualification, numerous drills, and a night shoot. A shoot was also held for the OLE retired officers.

Hands-on

scenario training was delayed due to COVID-19 and in its place, Firearms and Defensive Tactics staff reviewed active shooter videos with officers and discussed each video scenario. Firearms

instructors were also able to test different dedicated light systems, holsters, and belts. These are being tested to ensure we are utilizing equipment that is both economical for the state and safe for our officers.

Defensive Tactics

The OLE training section continues the training of defense tactics (DT) while researching new and improved training methods. The DT program is implemented quarterly on a region or district level allowing more flexibility for scheduling. We continued with the ground fighting techniques to improve officer safety due to increased statistics nationwide on altercations with Law Enforcement that ended on the ground. The COVID-19 pandemic limited our ability to train in several areas, and each section of the state was different due to restrictions, but our instructors continued to be available and instruct in areas that allowed for it.

Physical Fitness and Water Survival Program

The training section is continuing to research a physical fitness program to encourage officers to stay physically fit and healthy due to the rigorous duties of the job. We are also working toward a more established water survival training program and continue each year with a two-day Officer Water Survival training.

Other Training/Outreach Programs

To expand the range of outside training opportunities to our officers, we continue to be members of the MTUs throughout the State, our officers have increased opportunities to obtain mandated training as well as elective training much closer to home, which reduces travel costs and

registration costs. By utilizing the MTUs, it is easier to stay in compliance with State mandated training allows more flexibility of scheduling and more varied opportunities for the officers statewide.

The OLE training section oversees the OLE internship program to promote a more professional learning experience. College students who wish to pursue a career in Law Enforcement/Natural Resources apply for an internship of up to 12 weeks during which they are riding with CPOs, watching, listening, asking questions, and participating in many of the duties of a CPO. These internships provide a wonderful learning experience to students who the IDNR OLE hopes become future applicants. Due to COVID-19, the internship program was canceled for the summer of 2020, fall of 2020, and spring of 2021. We hope to begin the program again in the summer of 2021.

The OLE training section participates in career fairs and presentations to recruit potential applicants for future CPO classes. The training section also works with many high school students who are trying to determine a career path. Upon request, high school students from around the state are scheduled to meet with a CPO or supervisor and are given an overview of the duties of a CPO as well as the mission of the IDNR and the Office of Law Enforcement.

Funding and Staffing Issues

IDNR OLE Sworn Headcount

- CPO Trainee – 30
- CPO I – 58
- CPO II – 34
- CPO Sergeants (District) – 11
- CPO Sergeants (Administrative Staff) – 1
- CPO Lieutenants (Administrative Staff) – 3
- CPO Captains (Zones) – 2
- CPO Acting Captains – 3 (Hard Rank Sergeants)
- Conservation Police Deputy Chief – 1
- Conservation Police Director/Chief – 1

TOTAL 141

OLE Total Headcount 167 Actual
(includes 26 Support Services, civilian staff)

Historically, the Illinois Conservation Police have never had a CPO assigned to every county in the State, but statewide coverage was not an issue because CPOs could easily respond to calls for service in a vacant county. With today's current staffing, we now have multiple counties without an assigned CPO; and in many cases, a CPO is hours away from a call for service. Response time to an emergency is increased. Recently, CPOs have not been able to respond to emergencies, such as personal injury accidents, due to a shortage of personnel. Response times have increased up to two-three hours, placing into question the overall effectiveness of a police force that is mandated to provide emergency services.

It currently takes 1.5 years to hire and train a CPO. Planning for future attrition, as well as backfilling current vacancies, continues to be of the utmost importance. The Office of Law Enforcement has a conservation police officer trainee class of 20 currently in the basic police academy. This hiring is necessary to ensure effective law enforcement coverage and emergency response.

It is important to note the Illinois Conservation Police not only serve as protectors of the state's natural resources, but also provide emergency police response to all those engaged in outdoor endeavors such as hunting, fishing, boating, ATV operating, and snowmobiling to over 1.3 million licensed/permitted citizens. The Illinois Conservation Police fills a unique law enforcement niche that no other law enforcement agency can provide. Illinois CPOs are specially trained on equipment to patrol in rural/remote environments other law enforcement departments would find challenging.

Because the calendar year 2020 includes the last half of Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 and the first half of FY 2021, this report shall touch on the budgets of both fiscal years. The appropriation for FY 2020 was slightly less than that of FY 2019 in the amount of almost \$250,000 (a minor decrease of less than 1% from FY 2019 appropriations). With a FY 2020 appropriation almost at the same level as that of FY 2019, the Office of Law Enforcement anticipates having no issues funding the personnel and operations of the division. The FY2020 appropriations should be sufficient to adequately maintain operations and support the training of the Conservation Police Officer Trainees.

The OLE's only significant issue in FY 2020 could occur with our operation of the automotive line. While the appropriation for this line did not change from FY 2019 levels, the OLE could once again find itself in a position to outsource the installation of emergency lighting, sirens, and communications equipment for a portion of the department's new vehicles so those vehicles can be ready promptly for distribution to the field. With the Office of Law Enforcement nearly depleting its appropriations to pay for almost \$400,000 in fuel expenses annually, this equipment installation expense has the potential to place strains on the operation of the automotive line and could require fiscal staff to once again identify and transfer available funds into the operation of the automotive line (as they had to in FY 2019) to support this expense. The tentative appropriation for FY 2021 is significantly more than that of FY 2020 in the amount of approximately \$1.6 million (an increase of more than 8.5% over FY 2020 appropriations). All of the FY 2021 increase is in the personal services and benefits line to pay the salaries of additional sworn and non-sworn personnel added to the OLE's rosters and will also support annual increases in salary and benefits rates due to contractual requirements. The operating lines of the FY2021 appropriations remain level with FY2021 amounts. With FY 2021 operating lines at the same level as those of FY 2020, the Office of Law Enforcement anticipates having no issues funding the operations of the division.

The OLE's Operations Assistance Fund continues to provide a source of funding for "big ticket" purchases that are normally not obtainable with equipment line appropriations. Regardless of the actual

balance in this account, the OLE is limited to a spending authority limit of \$1.25 million that can be spent from this fund on an annual basis (or the balance that is in the fund if the balance is less than \$1.25 million). This account, funded primarily through fines, donations, and watercraft registrations, was established primarily to allow the Department to address its aging fleet of workboats, snowmobiles, ATVs, laptop computers, and for the procurement of other items necessary for an officer to perform his duties.

Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends

Boating

Water-based outdoor activities are among the most popular recreation activities in Illinois. Abundant water resources across the state offer a wide variety of recreation options from high-speed motorboating to lazy lounging at the beach. The lakes and rivers of Illinois provide ample opportunities for water-based recreation. Lake Michigan, the Mississippi, Illinois, and many other river regions provide many miles of shoreline for water-based participants and are also popular areas for water recreation.

The need to educate the public on the life-saving benefits of wearing life jackets remains a high priority and is supported by accident data. Similar to seat belts in motor vehicles, life jackets save lives.

An increase in law enforcement presence, a multi-pronged, highly visible public education effort, maintaining partnerships with local patrols, and communications

aimed at specific user groups continue to be essential factors in keeping boating safe in Illinois.

Conservation officers have the responsibility to investigate reportable boating accidents. A "reportable" boat accident is any accident (regardless of the number of boats involved) that results in loss of life, injuries that require medical treatment beyond first aid, boat or property damage of \$2,000 or more, or complete loss of a boat.

Illinois law requires every boat operator involved in a reportable boat accident to report the accident without delay to law enforcement officials. Reports of accidents resulting in personal injury, where a person sustains an injury requiring medical attention beyond first aid, must be filed with the Department on a Department accident report form within 5 days. Accidents that result in loss of life shall be reported to the Department on a Department form within 48 hours. The USCG Boating Accident Report form is available on the IDNR's webpage.

As of December 31, 2020, there were 216,175 registered vessels in Illinois that display the State vessel registration number, a 5.75% decrease from 2019. Illinois reports 81 boating accidents resulting in 36 persons injured and 21 fatalities for the federal fiscal year of 2020.

The fatality rate for FFY 2020 was 10 deaths per 100,000 registered recreational vessels. The five-year average is 7.5 fatalities per 100,000 recreational vessels. The data below includes all vessels registered,

including nonmotorized. Even though personal injuries decreased 14%, the fatality rate increased 50% from last year.

Alcohol and drug impairment accounted for 14% of the reportable boat accidents during FFY 2020. The number one contributing factor in boat accidents was careless/reckless operation followed by alcohol use.

Factors that contribute to a boating accident are captured by both the operator and officer. As shown below, the top five factors are Careless/Reckless Operation, Operator Inexperience, Operator Inattention, Alcohol Use, and Congested waters.

Drowning was determined to be the primary cause of death in 85.7% of the fatalities.

Boating Enforcement

Conservation Police officers provide on-the-water enforcement of boating laws. Emphasis has been placed on the enforcement of safety violations, which includes boating while intoxicated, navigation rules, and life jackets. Headcount for the OLE in FFY 2020 totaled 132 officers, a decline of 1 officer due to retirement from the previous reporting period. The officer activity was affected in the enforcement results due to Academy training ongoing during the height of the boating seasons.

The IDNR OLE recorded 24,067 service hours worked on recreational boating safety activities

which include law enforcement, education and outreach, accident investigation, training, and program administration. These service hours accounted for 7.4% of total annual work hours. This was a (39%) decrease from the total hours worked on the program in FFY 2019. The OLE's estimated on the water hours of 15,067 showed a (7%) increase in hours worked on the water over the preceding period.

Boating enforcement activity by the Illinois Conservation Police saw an increase in the total number of citations and written warnings issued in FFY 2020 from the previous year. Citations increased from 735 to 863 (17%), and written warnings increased from 2,623 to 3,208 (22%). Operating under the influence arrest decreased from 132 to 103 (-21%). Personal floatation devices, registration violations, and operating under the influence remained the top boating violations cited by officers.

Safety Education

The Illinois Hunter Education Program was first mandated in 1976 for first-time hunters 16 years old and younger. On January 1, 1996, a state law was passed that anyone born on or after January 1, 1980, may not be issued a hunting license unless they present a valid Hunter Education Certificate of Competency issued by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, or they present evidence he or she has held a hunting license issued by the State of Illinois or another state in a prior year.

Courses cover the basics of hunter responsibility, wildlife conservation and identification, firearms and ammunition, field safety, wildlife management, first aid, archery, muzzleloading, and state regulations.

There are 837 volunteer hunter safety education instructors and 6297 students certified this past year (most online).

The Illinois Boating Safety Education Program was originally passed into law and mandated in January 1978. On January 1, 2016, no person born on or after January 1st, 1998, unless exempted by subsection, shall operate a motorboat with over 10 horsepower unless that person has a valid Boating Safety Certificate issued by the Department of Natural Resources or an entity or organization recognized and approved by the Department. Or they are accompanied on the motorboat and under the direct control of a parent or a guardian, or a person at least eighteen years of age designated by a parent or guardian who meets the mandatory requirements.

Courses cover the basics of boating safety, equipment, and requirements, navigation, motorboat, registration and titling, emergency measures, and the Illinois boating laws.

There are 72 volunteer boating safety instructors and 6202 students certified students this past year (most online).

The Illinois Snowmobiling Safety Education Program was passed into law October 2, 1975, mandating persons at least twelve years of age and less than sixteen years of age may operate a snowmobile only if they have in possession a valid Snowmobile

Safety Education Certificate of Competency issued by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources or they are accompanied on the snowmobile by a parent or guardian or person at least sixteen years of age designated by a parent or guardian.

Courses consist of a minimum of eight hours of instruction and are taught by volunteer instructors. Courses cover the basics in maintenance and repair of snowmobiles, proper and safe operation, history of snowmobiling, first aid, protection of the environment, and state laws.

There are 47 volunteer snowmobile safety instructors and 749 students certified students this past year (most online).

The Illinois Trapping Safety Education was first passed into law on January 5, 1985, and mandated for all first-time license buyers under eighteen years of age. On January 1, 2016, trappers born on or after January 1st, 1998, are required to complete a trapper education course before purchasing a license.

Courses consist of a minimum of eight hours of instruction and are taught by volunteer instructors. Courses cover the basics in equipment and trapping techniques, trap and pelt preparation, wildlife and furbearer management, reporting requirements, trapper ethics, game identification, and state regulations.

There are 48 volunteer snowmobile safety instructors and 331 students certified students this past year (most online).

Invasive Species

Two Conservation Police Officers are designated to full-time duties with regards to Invasive Species Enforcement. These Officers spearhead investigations and enforcement activity to protect the waterways from Asian Carp and a plethora of other invasive species. These Officers focus on targeting individuals who deal with prohibited aquatic species along with education necessities of the importance of combatting invasive species.

Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts

State/Federal Interoperability

The OLE continues to serve as a member agency with the Illinois Terrorism Task Force (ITTF). In addition, the OLE continues to serve on the ITTF Transportation and Critical Infrastructure Security (formerly the Transportation Committee) and the Crisis and Prevention Committee. Serving on the committees allows the OLE to develop partnerships with other state and local law enforcement agencies to help prevent, respond to, and recover from an attack on the waterways of the State.

In addition to communicating with fellow State agencies, the membership in the ITTF allows the cooperating agencies to identify special equipment and needs to mitigate gaps in emergency response and protection of critical infrastructure.

Similarly, the OLE has continued to serve on the USCG Area Maritime Security Committees

(AMSCs) in St Louis, Chicago, Peoria, and the Quad Cities. The AMSCs specifically deal with ports on waterways in which the state and federal governments have concurrent jurisdictions. Working with the USCG also helps merge information and response assets, ultimately increasing the safety of our waterways used for commercial transportation purposes.

New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement

OLE's current fleet consists of 179 patrol trucks and SUVs. 11% of OLE vehicles are over 150,000 miles and an additional 11% of squads are between 125,000 and 150,000 miles. OLE has ordered five assorted covert vehicles and 11 Ford Super crew cab F150s for FY21. However, these vehicles may be on hold due to possible budget cuts.

OLE currently has 133 boats in use statewide. OLE also has five airboats, (13) human-powered boats, and 26 patrol boats in its arsenal. The bulk of OLE workboats consist of various-sized Jon boats which are used for patrol, sonar, and shallow water operations. Approximately 54% of OLE Jon boats are 20 years or older. Although these Jon boats are still serviceable, reliability becomes an issue. Replacement of these older Jon boats remains a primary goal for OLE.

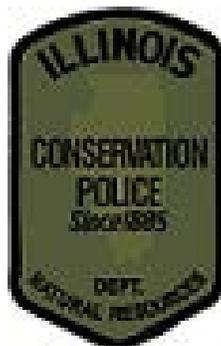
OLE has (40) ATVs and (9) UTVs in its fleet. Of these, 53% are ten years old or older and need to be replaced. OLE's replacement plan is to shift focus from ATVs towards UTVs.

OLE's snowmobile inventory consists of 37 sleds. Approximately 46% of OLE sleds are over 10 years of age. The majority of the sleds in this age group are well maintained and are reliable. The 9 sleds which are 16 years or older are the units that need to be replaced. Three more snowmobiles are planned for purchase in 2021.

Other Special Law Enforcement Issues

Enforcement Statistics

- Written Warnings Issued – 14,386
- Citations Issued – 6,060
- Criminal / Warrant Arrests – 244
- Boating Operating Under the Influence Arrests – 96
- Vessel Safety Inspections Completed – 11690
- Driving Under the Influence Arrests – 41
- Snowmobiling Under the Influence Arrests – 2
- Drug Arrests – 181
- Custodial Arrests – 174
- Boat Accidents Investigated – 526
- Hunting Accidents Investigated – 19
- Commercial Enforcement – 107
- Field Reports Generated – 1644



Iowa

Iowa Department of Natural Resources – Law Enforcement Bureau Submitted by: Colonel Trace Kendig

Training Issues

Over the past year the Law Enforcement Bureau has realigned staff and dedicated a captain position to training and support services. Part of this captain's duties include planning, coordinating and conducting the bureau's Probationary Conservation Officer Academy for new conservation officer hires. We recently completed our Spring 2021 PCO Academy which consisted of 12 weeks of in-house training at various locations across the state. The majority of the academy is taught by instructors from within the Law Enforcement Bureau, along with several outside experts. The goal of the PCO academy is to train new recruits on job duties specific to that of an Iowa Conservation Officer after their state law enforcement academy certification (currently 14 weeks at the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy). Probationary Conservation Officers then enter the Iowa Conservation Officer Field Training and Evaluation Program which consists of 9 weeks of evaluation and training with three different FTOs. It is the goal of the Bureau to train our new officers to the best of our abilities so as to give them the best chance to succeed during the FTO phase of their training.

In addition to the PCO academy, the bureau also recently held a new FTO training for 11 experienced conservation officers to train

and certify them in serving as a field training officer for new recruits.

Funding and Staffing Issues

There were no changes to funding for the LE Bureau. Due to COVID concerns, budgeting was set at status quo. The LE Bureau did add a Support Services Captain in 2020. This position oversees Training, Fleet and Field technology. The LE Bureau also added a dedicated investigator position to the staff. This position will handle cases that require more in-depth investigation. These two positions were created out of the need to address gaps in the staffing. There were also 4 open Conservation Officer positions filled in 2020. These were regular positions that were open due to attrition. During the hiring process, many tactics were employed to attract a more diverse applicant pool. These tactics will be improved upon for the next hiring process.

Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends

Over the last several years Iowa State Conservation Officers have investigated a growing number of timber theft and illegal timber cutting complaints. These complaints have originated from private landowners and other land management agencies such as the US Army Corps of Engineers and county conservation boards. The Iowa DNR has experienced increasing theft of trees from public lands under their management as well. Due to its high and

increasing dollar value, black walnut (*Juglans nigra*) is the primary target but many other species such as those in the oak family (*Quercus*) and even eastern cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*) and silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*) are being cut and sold illegally.

Iowa has had comparatively stringent laws governing the commercial harvest of timber dating back about 40 years. Iowa is not a heavily forested and logged state due to its lack of forested land and a general lack of timber resources. In conjunction with this, more traditional fish and game enforcement has been prioritized leaving enforcement of timber laws inconsistent at best.

Increased lumber values and decreased scrap metal prices have shifted the emphasis from copper and other metal theft to our forest resources. Along with the monetary value and tax revenue loss the theft and unregulated harvest of these trees has long-lasting ecological effects. When only the prime specimens are harvested it results in a loss of the preferred genetics. When a single species is removed from an area it results in diminished diversity, changes forest composition, and alters succession.

Recent changes in the law broadened the definition of "Timber Buyer" and added the requirement for those transporting timber or logs to carry with them a "Timber Transport Certificate". The certificate requirement has increased the ability for officers to more quickly determine if the logs came from a lawful source or if they were possibly stolen. The broader definition of timber buyer has given officers the ability to charge violators under the "Bonded

Timber Buyer" law whereas prior to the change the officer was primarily limited to charging theft. The Iowa DNR worked with representatives from associations in the logging industry and conducted public meetings with private timber buyers, loggers, cutters, and others to draft legislation that led to the law change. Support from the industry was absolutely necessary and vital in getting the law passed.

Recently, the Iowa DNR has been involved in training Department of Transportation Commercial Motor Vehicle Enforcement officers (DOT CMVE) state-wide at their annual in-service training. This has added an additional nearly 100 certified officers enforcing these laws across the state. Recently, representatives from our agency met with the Iowa County Attorneys Association to educate them on the increased illegal activity and applicable laws. We hope that this will lead to increased awareness and support in prosecuting violators. This is not just an issue facing Iowa as all black walnut producing states are experiencing similar issues. In August of 2019 the USFWS hosted a virtual meeting with law enforcement from several Midwestern states and an Assistant US Attorney to share information and discuss issues that they are each experiencing.

On a national and international level, the timber industry/exportation is a multi-billion dollar industry and growing. Exportation to countries such as China continue to fuel the market and drive prices upward and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts

The Law Enforcement Bureau's Investigative Unit works closely with the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) on long term complex multi-jurisdictional cases. Several of these cases have been adjudicated this past year.

- Aaron Volkmar, d/b/a Tails of the Hunt, was convicted of a felony Lacey violation and was ordered to pay a \$5000.00 fine, \$10,000.00 in restitution to the State of Iowa and 2 years probation. Covert agents from USFWS assisted with this case.
- Zach White, d/b/a Prairie Thunder Outdoors of Kansas, pled to 1 count of violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, was fined \$5000.00, was ordered to pay \$10,000 in restitution to the State of Kansas and was sentenced to 3 years probation where he cannot guide, outfit or hunt. Iowa assisted with the covert hunt during this case investigation.
- Cory Fritzler, d/b/a Northwest Iowa Outfitters, pled guilty to conspiracy to violate the Lacey Act and is currently awaiting sentencing. Covert agents from the USFWS and Florida Fish and Wildlife assisted with this case.
- Chris Harward pled guilty to felon in possession of a firearm and drug user in possession of a firearm and is currently awaiting sentencing. Multiple state charges are pending.
- Jim Arnold of Colorado pled guilty to multiple violations stemming from an illegal guided elk hunt in the fall of 2016. Iowa and UAFWS officers assisted Colorado Parks and Wildlife with the covert hunt during this investigation.
- In addition to the above cases, several Conservation Officers have had successful multi-agency cross jurisdictional cases. Conservation Officers consistently work with bordering states as well as other state agencies across the nation to investigate and successfully prosecute violators.
- South Dakota residency case – resident privileges in both Iowa and South Dakota were secured by an individual claiming residency in Iowa. He is a legal resident of South Dakota and pled guilty to several Iowa fish and game violations.
- Illegal harvest of Arrow Arum (endangered plant) by non-resident.
- Joint investigation between Iowa, Nebraska and USFWS concerning a subject poaching furbearers and deer in both states. Charges have been filed in both states. Six total charges were filed in Iowa for the illegal harvest of 3 bobcats.
- Cooperative enforcement efforts between Iowa and Desoto Bend Refuge Agent lead to three successful prosecutions recently. These include; out of season duck hunting, non-resident illegal deer hunting activity on state managed USACE property and a fishing license violation that lead to Nebraska charges and FBI involvement.
- Iowa's boundary rivers provide a unique opportunity for cooperative enforcement efforts. Conservation Officers routinely work with agents from bordering states and federal

agencies to enforce navigation, fish and wildlife related activities. The abundance of recreational opportunities that these areas provide generates year-round enforcement activity.

New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement

The LE Bureau implemented its first body camera program. After a lengthy research and testing process, Visual Labs was selected as the company to go with. These cameras have been very successful since implementation. The LE Bureau also began a process to develop a Criminal Intelligence Analyst position to support the investigator position and the Conservation Officers in the field.

State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement

The State of Iowa is blessed to be a premiere Whitetail deer destination. Through biological balance decisions and strong support of law enforcement in the early years the abundance and size of the deer increased to make for excellent opportunities for trophy deer. This both has positive and negative ramifications. Illegal hunting activities from residents and nonresidents are issues for all fish and game agencies. The debate continues as to what the population of Iowa's deer herd should be. Currently the legislative debate is looking at reducing the liquidated damages. Currently the law instructs that for the illegal taking of an antlerless deer the

liquidated damages would be \$1500. Originally the law instructed the change to \$50. With debate current bill change is \$200 in liquidated damages for any illegally taken antlerless deer.

A bill introduced in 2020 made an allowance of dogs to track deer, requiring the Department to define particulars of the bill such as defining certification of dogs and handlers to be certified with blood tracking. It was the department's requirement to define what the certification would be. Prior to this bill's introduction, use of dogs in any way was illegal for hunting deer. The department began the process of definitions of certifications.

During the current session the department was no longer responsible to define the certifications. Legislation introduced a bill that stuck the certifications of blood tracking for both the dog and handler. The handler also is not required to be licensed for the current deer season.

Deer hunting and legal weapons have always been a debate of allowance of new weapons for use. The State of Iowa tends to constantly change what would be allowed. Several years ago the department was directed to allow the use of rifles and as such the department defined what rifles would be legal. Many debates ensue as to which rifle would make the list and what rifles should be added over the years. The 2020 session required the department to define cartridges of handguns and rifles to be used. The department was instructed to define the use of the rifles and handguns and provided the list for open comment. With some of these cartridges being

previously legal by defined rifle allowance, it also caused some cartridges to no longer be legal. During open comment to be addressed in Administrative rule some these cartridges were brought back for legality.

Minnesota legislation on use of force has caused the State of Iowa law enforcement agencies to not pursue or provide assistance across state lines for active cases.

Cost Savings Initiatives

In 2020 the Iowa DNR Law Enforcement Bureau continued to have extra funds in the budget because of open positions. There was restructuring of select full-time positions that has made the bureau more efficient. Examples include appointing a full-time investigator and taking an officer in an office position and returning them to the field. The Bureau Chief also created a Support Services Captain. This position oversees fleet, field technology and training.

The department was tasked with coming up with a body camera solution. After extensive testing of products we chose to go with a functional yet cost-effective solution.

We continue to use seasonal housing in high resource areas to house full time officers during special projects or details cutting overall travel costs.

The Support Services Captain has been working closely with our installer to reuse

equipment that is up to date and in good working order, instead of replacing it. Captains have been working with our budget and finance division to develop new strategies to get the lowest bids possible on large equipment items that we were not able to purchase due to current shortages and projected price increases.

Other Special Law Enforcement Issues

Over the last few years the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Law Enforcement Bureau has been receiving increasing complaints related to the rafting of boats on our Natural Lakes and river impoundments. Officers are receiving numerous complaints associated with boats tying together and deploying large "lily pad" floats behind the vessels. The complaints associated with this behavior includes noise issues, impeding navigation, public intoxication, minors drinking alcohol, littering, and disorderly conduct. Citizen groups have begun work to get laws changed prohibiting vessels from anchoring within 300' of shore in an effort to move the rafts of boats away from the docks of shoreline property owners. The Iowa DNR did not support this solution due to the fact this would be privatizing public water. This summer the Law Enforcement Bureau will be working with these citizens to investigate possible solutions to this issue before the problem becomes worse. Increased patrols to address any violations witnessed along with better communication with shoreline residents to work together to head off future issues will be top priority.

Michigan

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) – Law Enforcement Division

Submitted by: Chief Gary Hagler

Training Issues

Staff & Command Training

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Law Enforcement Division (LED) has been sending numerous command officers through various Staff & Command Trainings throughout Michigan over the past several years. During 2020, two lieutenants successfully finished the Northwestern School of Police Staff & Command – despite a brief interruption to the program caused by the onset of COVID-19. These leadership classes ensure our command stays professional, current and knowledgeable on police administration so they can implement what they learned within their local levels.

Off Trail Snowmobile Training

Michigan DNR conservation officers participated in a joint snowmobile course with federal agents to enhance their operation of snowmobiles off trail, search and rescue techniques, off trail snowmobile enforcement, and accident response techniques. A group 25 officers attended and spent two days operating their snowmobiles in snow depths of three feet and greater. Overall, the class continues to be a success for officers to improve their operating skills for unique service calls.

Marine and Waterfowl Trainings

Face-to-face training that could not be replaced virtually included a Marine Operating While Intoxicated enforcement as well as migratory waterfowl enforcement. Both trainings have proven effective in providing saturated patrols for targeted enforcement as well as a valuable opportunity for newer officers to learn from officers with vast enforcement



experience in these specific activities.

Funding and Staffing Issues

The division has several vacant conservation officer positions that were created by promotions, transfers or retirements. The Governor of Michigan issued Executive Orders in response to COVID-19, curtailing

spending and limited hiring and promotions for most of the year. The conservation officer positions were supposed to be filled during 2020, but due to these executive orders, the 2020 Conservation Officer Academy was cancelled. In late 2020, a 2021 hiring authorization was received, allowing the division to move forward with hiring up to 25 conservation officers, a combination of current Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards certified officers and those who need basic training. Otherwise, the overall DNR-LED budget remained intact for FY 20-21.

In-service training was suspended during the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic. The LED Training Section purchased an online training program that supported both vendor and LED produced videos and files. This online training platform enabled LED to conduct critical survival tactics training (policies, TASER training, legal use of force, etc.), and conduct the state mandated firearms training and qualification in-person during late 2020, adapting COVID-19 prevention protocols established in a required Safe Start plan.

As part of a larger department effort, the division has created an employee engagement action plan to address priority concerns brought forward by officers. The division implemented weekly meetings between officers, supervisors and upper management to ensure concerns and morale are addressed within a timeline manner.

Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends

Agency Assistance

Michigan DNR conservation officers continue to provide valuable assistance to local law enforcement agencies when it comes to responding to in-progress crimes, structure fires, domestic violence complaints, missing persons, emergency medical assists as well as general assistance to provide additional officers at the scene of an incident, particularly in rural areas.

Cross Jurisdictional

Conservation officers in Southwest Michigan routinely take part in emergency management operation exercises to address any potential threat to two nuclear power plants positioned along Lake Michigan. In an emergency, local conservation officers would patrol Lake Michigan on vessels to create a perimeter and take measurements of radiation to assess the threat and evacuate citizens from land and/or water if the need were to arise.

Aquatic Invasive Species

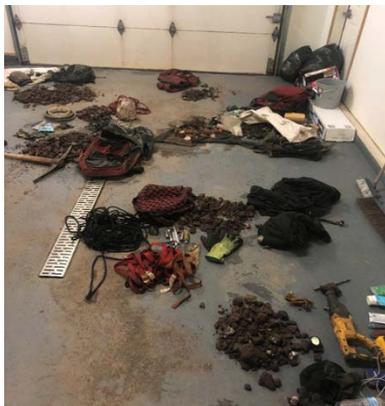
Officers in the Great Lakes Enforcement Unit (GLEU) continue to adapt to expanding responsibilities based on industry trends. GLEU officers have been focusing on the Organisms in Trade (OIT), after recent regulation changes required all Michigan businesses that deal in the aquatic organism live trade industry to register with the Department. Through OIT, GLEU officers have discovered a dedicated and active group of individuals dealing prohibited aquatic species through internet trade as both a business and a hobby. Recent investigations have identified this path as a

high-risk threat to introduce new AIS into the state.

Mining Theft

A sergeant received a tip that individuals were suspected to have broken into an abandoned mine shaft in a remote location of Keweenaw County (Michigan’s northernmost county in the Upper Peninsula). The officer met with the county mine inspector and local law enforcement to devise a plan to monitor the mine shaft opening for activity and set up trail cameras to monitor the area. Within a day of setting up the cameras, the officer received a photo on his phone of a snowmobile entering the mine site, and another photo of the snowmobile leaving.

Utilizing his department snowmobile to check the mine site, the officer found the parked snowmobile and activity



at the mine shaft. With assistance from local law enforcement, the officers worked the location until three subjects were contacted leaving the site – in possession of



hundreds of pounds of copper ore. All three subjects were charged with trespassing and felony larceny.

Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts

Interstate

Conservation officers located in Mid-Michigan, responded to a historic flood that occurred in May 2020 – all in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. A dam breach in Midland County caused life-threatening, flash flood conditions that forced a mandatory evacuation for the city of Midland, including residents, businesses, medical facilities and Dow Chemical’s headquarters. Nearly 24 hours before the initial dam collapsed, more than 20 conservation officers responded with 10 patrol vessels and search and rescue equipment to evacuate people in homes and businesses positioned downriver of the dam. The initial breach caused the failure of a second dam in the area. As a result, a nearby river overflowed its 24-foot flood stage and was predicted to crest around 38 feet. Conservation officers stayed on scene to ensure everyone was safely evacuated and provided search and rescue assistance.



Unique Cooperative

The onset of COVID-19 created challenges for securing and distributing personal protective equipment (PPE) such as hand sanitizer, face masks, gloves and other items to department staff statewide. LEDs

Emergency Management Section established partnerships early on to secure items during the nations devastating PPE shortage and developed a successful plan to distribute PPE to all department personnel throughout the state, including:

- 81,690 masks
- 8,985 hand sanitizer bottles, pails, jugs and pumps
- 344 sanitizer plastic bottles
- 6,762 canisters of wipes
- 60 PPE kits
- 230 gowns
- 2,825 face shields/safety glasses
- 5,123 boxes of gloves
- 95 thermometers

State-to-state

Conservation officers along the Southern border of Michigan conduct targeted patrols to monitor the illegal transportation of deer in and out of the state. Numerous contacts were made and compliance was found to be much higher compared to previous years.

Local, State and Federal

Conservation officers led a joint investigation with the Muskegon County Sheriff's Office, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and federal agents at an animal rehabilitation facility located in West Michigan. The owner of the facility has a criminal history with the DNR and was believed to be illegally breeding and housing animals, including "wolf dogs," of which one of the dogs was reported by health officials for using its teeth to rip off a child's arm. Wolf dogs are illegal in Michigan unless necessary permits are obtained. During the search, officers removed six red foxes, three coyotes, four eastern box turtles and two

fawns. Other non-native wildlife remained on-site, including 47 illegal wolf dogs which are under investigation. See the link to the press release [here](#).

International

Conservation officers in Southeast Michigan continue to participate with the U.S. Border Patrol in, "Operation Stone Garden." Working under the Macomb County Sheriff Department's Federal Grant, officers assist the U.S. Border Patrol in ensuring the security of the international border to prevent illegal smuggling operations, entry and other enforcement and safety-related issues. The officers significantly increased their hours this year, conducting 555 hours of patrol, stopped 210 vessels and issued 19 misdemeanor citations and eight civil infractions.

New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement

MiConnect Outdoors Development

The LED mobile application is a smartphone application that allows field officers to obtain information regarding hunting and fishing licenses and data, replacing the need for the information from being displayed on the licenses. The application has been developed and is currently in testing phase with a select group of conservation officers.

Google

Detectives in the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) have been successful using various search warrants for information held by Google to identify suspects in high-profile poaching cases. These warrants often take a long time to get returns on and require several "stages" to the warrant to eventually identify suspects.

One notable case is the poaching of three cow elk in Northern Michigan. Initially, there were no leads, but three suspects were identified through traditional police methods. Once three stages of the geofence warrant were complete, officers confirmed that the three men who had been identified were within feet of the elk at the suspected time of death.

An additional search warrant was executed on the primary suspects' Google account, which revealed the suspect searched, "Michigan fines for accidentally shooting two cow elk" on the day of the violation.

Simultaneous search warrants and interviews were conducted at two separate locations where officers received confessions and seized the weapons as evidence. [The suspects recently pleaded guilty in court](#); each individual lost their hunting privileges for 15 years, forfeited their weapons and was ordered to serve a six-month probation term. In addition, each person must pay \$5,000 in restitution for the elk and a total of \$625 in fines and court costs. This case highlights how technology can be used to identify suspects, but good interview and investigations are still required to prosecute the case.

Social Media

Conservation officers continue to advance their investigation skills using social media sites and gathering forensic information from smartphones. Several cases have been made regarding this unique high-tech area of law enforcement investigations. In November, it only took about one hour for an off-duty officer to identify and locate a suspect featured in a disturbing Snapchat video that circulated on Facebook. The recorded Snapchat video started with a buck standing upright in the middle of the

road, blinded by vehicle headlights. Words of encouragement and laughter can be heard throughout the video, which lasts less than a minute, as a male repeatedly struck the deer in the head with a hammer until it succumbed to its injuries. The officer located the suspect at a nearby house and immediately received a full confession and confiscated the partially butchered deer and severed head. Read the press release [here](#).



Equipment

Conservation officers have seen an increase of individuals recreating in the outdoors since the COVID-19 pandemic began and have been called upon more frequently to assist in rescues and recoveries over the past year. Down scan and side scan sonar units mounted on patrol vessels have proved invaluable in assisting officers in body recoveries, along with new thermal image viewing scope to assist officers in locating subjects in less than ideal conditions.



Additionally, GLEU officers continue to advance their training with on-water

deployment of the Kline side-scan sonar and remotely operated vehicles (ROV). Officers use the ROVs in all weather conditions, including under the ice. The ROVs have been useful to detect Sturgeon setlines, recover police equipment, and document the state's underwater harbor security.

The division has continued to successfully use wireless trail cameras and associated remote covert mounting equipment. Wireless service on the cameras, allows conservation officers to view live feeds and pictures directly on their work cell phones. Several trespass complaints have been investigated and solved, including one that led to a multi-agency investigation relating to illegal game, stolen property, and narcotics trafficking. In addition to helping solve great cases, the cameras have saved countless hours of surveillance and recurring checks which allows officers to use their time in the field more effectively.

[State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement](#)

ORV/Snowmobile User Conflicts

Northern Michigan has experienced record amounts of ORV activity since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has continued throughout the year as more people purchase side-by-sides as an opportunity to enjoy being outside. Additionally, ORVs are a convenient way to access state land and local businesses, particularly those that are connected by trail systems. The increased ORV use has led to conflicts between ORV and snowmobile

user groups regarding trail grooming and etiquette. Many of these trails are multi-purpose and there is no specific law prohibiting ORV use in these areas. Michigan legislators are considering legislation for the next legislative session in 2021.

Walleye Regulations

Walleye regulations on the Saginaw River and surrounding basin have been modified to loosen equipment restrictions as well as simplify overall restrictions for the public. Meetings with local district Fisheries personnel have taken place with officers in the area to make sure officers are aware of the change and how it might impact daily patrols.

Michigan's Boating Ban

In an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19, Michigan's governor authorized a boating ban for a period of time early during the pandemic. The ban was not received well by the fishing or boating industries, or the public, placing conservation officers in a challenging enforcement environment as people were using their vessels to escape the pandemic. Through effective communication, officers were able to maintain calm conversations while increasing compliance.

Pandemic Shutdowns

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions within the State, LED was unable to hold in-person recreational safety classes for most of 2020.



The pandemic also produced an increase in first-time hunters, of whom needed to receive their safety certificate to legally and safely hunt. The Division was able to hold Hunter Education field days in outdoor settings for a short time, which did allow some students to earn their permanent certification. To meet the growing demand for recreational safety certifications, Michigan allowed for a temporary Hunter Education certificate to be earned in an online format. Subjects earning these certificates will still have to complete an in-person field day to earn their permanent certificate but were allowed to enjoy the outdoors in the meantime.



Additionally, all in-person training for volunteer instructors had to be cancelled. To overcome this challenge, the division developed and deployed several training sessions for instructors in a virtual format. The training included methods to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as instructors resumed reduced attendance, in-person classes, abiding by the ever-evolving executive orders.

LED also worked with the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) and Kalkomey Enterprises, Inc. to approve a virtual training course for Marine Education that was taught in K-12 schools by Marine Safety instructors. Michigan saw a sharp increase in individuals taking advantage of the

approved online training courses for marine, ORV and snowmobile safety.

[Open Fields Doctrine](#)

In late 2020, some Michigan legislators held hearings where DNR LED command officers testified regarding the legal concepts involving the *Open Fields Doctrine*. Some legislators remain committed to thwarting this legal doctrine, reconfirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court on many occasions, as it relates to conservation officers only. Michigan expects a continued effort by certain legislators to statutorily restrict conservation officer's legitimate use of the open field doctrine.

[Decriminalization of Several Crimes Including Fishing, Hunting, and Recreational Vehicle Violations](#)

Similar to many states, Michigan conducted a comprehensive review of the criminal justice system and made recommended changes. Part of the change was to decriminalize several hunting, fishing, and recreational vehicle violations from misdemeanors to civil infractions. For many of these changes, LED and department administration approved, if they did not severely curtail the deterrence of a violation or were inconsistent with similar civil infractions in the Motor Vehicle Code.

[Cost Savings Initiatives](#)

[Zoom/Microsoft Teams](#)

Due to State restrictions surrounding COVID-19, the division relied on online meeting platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams to stay informed and communicate on cooperative enforcement efforts. Moving to these online meetings

increased efficiency and inclusion, and reduced travel and lodging costs.

Virtual Academy

As a result of COVID-19, the division invested in various Virtual Academy online trainings to replace some in-person trainings, reducing travel and lodging costs. Most officers reported that the online learning platforms are excellent methods to learn from and have proven to be very efficient and budget friendly as it saves on travel expenses and allows more time in the field.

Other Special Law Enforcement Issues

Stuff a Truck

The Stuff a Truck initiative expanded from Detroit



to include two locations in Northern Michigan. Conservation officers in Northern Michigan invited Jay’s Sporting Goods (an outdoor sporting goods retailer) and Toys for Toys to join the good cause – which collected toys for local families during the holidays. These gifts not only provided children with something to unwrap, but many of the toys were outdoor-related. The intent of the partnership was to provide a service for the local communities while also keeping hunter and angler recruitment/retention in mind.

Conservation officers and DNR staff from the DNR Outdoor Adventure Center in Detroit participated in their second annual “Stuff a Truck,” as part of the Detroit Police Department’s Sergeant Santa event. During an especially hard year for youth in the city



of Detroit due to COVID-19, the Sergeant Santa program sought to collect and deliver toys to children in need. The Detroit area district officers utilized collection bins and hosted two events where the public could donate toys and “stuff” the bed of a patrol vehicle while maintaining safe social distancing. Both weekend events were a great success and nearly 300 toys were collected.

Belle Isle Freedom March



June 5, 2020, conservation officers throughout lower Michigan joined forces to peacefully walk together in the Belle Isle Freedom March located on Belle Isle (an island off of Detroit).

Conservation officers assigned to Belle Isle developed and directed a successful security plan in response to the organized event coined, “Belle Isle Freedom March,” which involved a thousand participants marching on the MacArthur Bridge across the Detroit River, to and from Belle Isle. The peaceful demonstration highlights the professionalism, community engagement and support our officers provide to the citizens of Detroit and throughout the state.

Presidential Election and Black Lives Matter Movements

Officers throughout the state conducted security details for presidential candidate rallies, specifically those held in outdoor forums due to COVID-19 restrictions- many of which took place at state parks and beach areas. In West Michigan, a political rally supporting President Trump took place at the Grand Haven State Park, while a Black Lives Matter (BLM) demonstration was scheduled to conclude at the end of the evening near the pier where the political rally was occurring. Officers were present and patrolled both events which concluded without incident.

At another event on Oct. 31, citizens participated in a drive-in style political rally for President Elect Biden – attracting roughly 250 vehicles. Conservation officers increased patrol efforts on the island, working with the Michigan State Police, Secret Service, U.S. Coast Guard, Detroit Police Harbor Master and U.S. Department of Homeland Security to ensure order and safety for participants and non-participants during this event. The protection and rights of citizens attending this event was the primary objective of the security team.

Poaching Crime

Officers in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and SIU detectives worked a several month-long

investigation regarding the illegal taking of protected species. The district officers and detectives served three separate search warrants simultaneously in Chippewa County which resulted in uncovering evidence of numerous wildlife crimes of various species, including 18 wolves, 3 bald eagles, multiple deer, turkey, and bobcat that had been taken over an 18-month period.

The suspect pleaded guilty and was charged with:

- Three counts of illegal take; possession of wolves.
- Three counts of the illegal take; possession of bald eagles.
- One count of illegal commercialization of a protected species.
- Ordered to pay \$36,240 total- \$27,000 as reimbursement for the animals illegally taken and \$9,240 in court fees and costs.
- Lifetime revocation of all hunting and trapping privileges in Michigan, including that he may not assist anyone else in any hunting and trapping activities.
- 90 days in jail and 18-24 months of probation.
- Forfeiture of all items and evidence seized.

[Read the press release here.](#)

Minnesota

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) – Law Enforcement Division

Submitted by: Col. Rodmen Smith

Training Issues

DNR Enforcement conducted only basic, necessary training due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related limits on gatherings, as well as our substantial involvement in the law enforcement response to civil unrest in Minnesota.

Funding and Staffing Issues

DNR Enforcement has experienced a high number of recent retirements. In addition, we are not holding a Conservation Officer Academy in 2021, so we currently have more than 20 conservation officer vacancies throughout the state. We plan to hold an Academy in 2022. Likewise, we are currently experiencing a reduction in support staff due to retirements coupled with a state freeze on hiring. At the agency level, we are looking at a new funding framework because user fees and general fund allocations are insufficient to meet the current demand for outdoor recreation and natural resources management.

Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends

Following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis in May 2020, DNR conservation officers were deployed to Minneapolis-St. Paul to work in partnership with other law enforcement agencies to protect public safety amid civil unrest. That

began what became a busy year for civil-unrest-related deployments, which numbered 10 in 2020. While this is outside of our job purview of protecting natural resources, it's something for which our officers were well-trained. They performed admirably, even though it was the first time many of our officers had performed such work.

Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts

DNR Enforcement works closely with a variety of other state, national and tribal agencies, and that was no different in 2020. We worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service after zebra mussels were found on "moss balls" sold at pet stores; with the Coast Guard on Lake Superior; and the Border Patrol along the Minnesota/Canada border. In addition, we worked closely with the Red Lake Band of Chippewa on an illegal bear harvest investigation that resulted in a guilty plea in September 2020, and with the Secret Service to assist with security around Presidential and Vice Presidential visits to the state.

New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement

We are in the process of retrofitting many of our boats with wireless Man Overboard Devices, which are the wireless equivalent of a traditional engine cut-off device. In

addition, a recently hired covert investigator for our Special Investigations Unit has been working hard on the cyber end of wildlife crimes, and our officers in general have been spending more time responding to potential violations discovered as a result of social media.

[State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement](#)

In the wake of the death of George Floyd and an officer-involved shooting in Minnesota earlier in 2021, the state Legislature is taking a close look at potential police reform bills. While it's unclear what

the specific outcomes of those bills will be, it seems clear we'll be affected to some extent.

[Other Special Law Enforcement Issues](#)

Minnesota's outdoors were exceptionally busy in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Conservation officers dealt with many people who were new to outdoor recreation, increased issues surrounding litter, and with extraordinarily heavy use of our state parks. In addition, we provided pandemic-specific direction to our officers in the areas of dealing with expired boat and recreational vehicle registration, as well as entering fish houses and checking hunting and fishing licenses.

Missouri
Department of Conservation (MDC) – Protection Division
Submitted by: Randy Doman

Training Issues

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) has an Agent Training Academy starting on April 1st. The six-month (1000+ hour) academy will consist of 16 Agent Trainees (13 males and 3 females), with a graduation date set for early October. With 23 current vacancies within our Protection Branch, we will be seeking to hold back-to-back Training Academies with one in 2021 and the other in 2022. The Academy is Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) certified, and consists of training in legal studies (constitutional law, conservation law, etc.), criminal investigations, defensive tactics, emergency vehicle operations, boating operations, firearms training, first aid/responder, CPR, land management practices, trapping, hunting incident investigations, fish kills, communications, conducting educational programs, and fish, forest, and wildlife management.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, much of our 2020 group training and qualifications (i.e., firearms, defensive tactics, CPR/First Aid, etc.), meetings, conferences, physical fitness assessments, etc., were postponed until COVID-19 precautions and safeguards were put in place. Alternative options were utilized (i.e. virtual conferences, etc.) whenever possible.

Funding and Staffing Issues

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 operating budget for MDC represents less than one percent of the total state budget and receives no state general revenue. The primary sources of revenue are the one-eighth of one percent Conservation Sales Tax at about \$123 million, permit sales at about \$35 million, and federal reimbursements at about \$34 million. Total receipts for FY 2020 were \$202.7 million.

Many Missourians flocked to the outdoors to hike, bike, walk, hunt, fish, camp, or simply enjoy being outdoors. Hunters and anglers came out in droves to our forests, fields, lakes and streams. For example, the number of Missouri spring turkey hunters increased 8 percent. During the youth season, hunters harvested 41,461 turkeys, a 7 percent increase from the 2019 total.

MDC implemented a new organizational structure, as of July 1, 2020, which integrated the fisheries, forestry, and wildlife disciplines at both the Central Office (Commission Headquarters) and the field level to reflect our tradition of innovation and leadership in natural resource management. A new Regional Administrator role was designed to enhance local decision-making and community partnerships in our eight regions. Other new focus areas included positions dedicated to conservation relevancy, recreational use, planning, citizen engagement, hunter and angler recruitment, wetland/aquatic systems,

inclusion and diversity, and customer experience.

MDC has a priority-based budgeting program specifically tied to the Department's Strategic Plan: *Design for the Future*. This plan identifies three goals to direct the efforts associated with specific FY21-22 Department priorities.

- *MDC Takes Care of Nature*
- *MDC Connects People with Nature*
- *MDC Maintains Public Trust*

In Missouri, conservation pays by enriching our economy and quality of life. In Missouri each year, more than 1 million individuals fish, 576,000 hunt, and 1.7 million view wildlife. Hunting, fishing, and wildlife recreation generate \$5.2 billion in economic impacts, and an additional \$10 billion in economic impacts from the forest products industry for a total of \$15.2 billion in economic impacts. This economic activity supports 111,000 jobs. Conservation makes Missouri a great place to live, work, fish, hunt, view wildlife, and be outdoors.

In June of 2021, MDC Commissioner Don Bedell is scheduled to rotate off the Missouri Conservation Commission where he has faithfully served for the past 12 years. The Missouri Conservation Commission consists of four members appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. Their responsibilities include appointing the MDC Director, serving as MDC policy makers, approving regulations of the *Wildlife Code of Missouri*, strategic planning, budget development, and major expenditure decisions.

Due to the unknown budgetary implications of COVID-19, the Conservation Commission

postponed implementation of the multi-year market-based pay plan which uses a 'Pay for Performance' approach directly tied to available funding. The system is based on three annual criteria:

- 1). Market-based salary comparisons/adjustments,
- 2). Tenure/longevity with the MDC, and
- 3). Performance pay based on set performance measures (i.e., agreed upon goals and objectives).

The Protection Branch currently has 172 full-time employees, which is currently down 23 positions due to retirements, resignations, and terminations. This is the highest amount of vacancies that we have experienced within our ranks in quite some time.

At the present time, more than one quarter of our commissioned law enforcement staff are eligible for retirement within the next five years.

[Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends](#)

During the 2020 deer season, 4,787 hunters donated 238,920 pounds of venison to Missouri's Share the Harvest program. This was a decrease from our 2019 numbers (5,739 hunters donating 282,935 pounds). This is primarily a result of COVID-19 with fewer meat processors participating in the program due to a backlog of commitments to deliver beef and pork orders. Something new to the program this year was the addition of venison snack sticks as an alternative option to the traditionally required method of ground venison.

Conservation staff, in addition to our program partner, the Conservation Federation of Missouri (CFM), are continually working on raising awareness and securing funding for this extremely valuable program.

Operation Game Thief (OGT), is a hotline sponsored by MDC and the Conservation Federation of Missouri. In 2020, Missouri's OGT program received 1035 violation reports (first time over the 1,000 mark), which resulted in 120 arrests and \$4,100 in rewards paid in 23 of the cases. Our OGT exhibit trailer was not used for events or programs in 2020 due to COVID-19. The Protection Branch actively promotes the OGT program through a variety of media outlets, including our Department's social media page. These efforts resulted in many quality cases being made in 2020.

One such example involved a contact with a landowner who reported hearing a gunshot in the area of their property, and promptly investigating the source of the shot. The reporting party indicated they encountered two unidentified individuals attempting to drag a buck off the neighbor's property towards an awaiting pickup truck parked nearby. The reporting party confronted the male subjects and told them that they would not be taking the deer, and to wait right there while he called the police and agent to respond to their location. Both individuals immediately climbed into their truck and drove away. The reporting party utilized his cell phone to quickly take a picture of the fleeing truck, and he identified it as being an early 2000 model, white Chevrolet Silverado 1500, single cab, with two large deer stickers in the rear-window, a black toolbox, and an aftermarket bumper.

MDC posted the photo, taken by the reporting party of the suspect vehicle, on our MDC Facebook page, and explained that the truck in question had been involved in a deer poaching incident, and solicited for information from the public to help solve this case.

The day after the photo was posted on MDC Facebook, the local conservation agent received an anonymous OGT call from an individual who provided critical information on the owner of the truck in question. The caller provided credible information on both of the truck's occupants who were involved in the reported poaching incident. Agents used this information to contact both subjects, and they both confessed to driving around in their truck on the date in question looking for deer to shoot. They indicated seeing a large buck bedded down with some does on the hillside, so the shooter jumped out of the truck and shot the buck while trespassing on private property. The investigation resulted in the discovery of 17 separate violations which included: *Pursue wildlife from a motor vehicle, Knowingly enter private property for the purpose of hunting or retrieving wildlife, Possess wildlife taken illegally while in violation of trespass statutes, Hunter orange violation, Wanton and waste of wildlife, Loan deer permit, Failure to check deer as prescribed, Illegally possess or transport deer, Take deer without valid permit, and Trespass.*

Timber theft continued to be an issue in 2020 across the state with numerous investigations resulting in successful prosecution. Conservation Agent - Corporal Shawn Pennington spent most of February working on a walnut timber theft case involving stealing, property damage and other miscellaneous violations that

occurred at our Osage Prairie Conservation Area, as well as surrounding private property in Vernon County. Many hours were spent on surveillance, tracking down logs, tracking down suspects, applying for and conducting search warrants on cell phones, homes and property, and recovering stolen property used in the timber theft. Some of the stolen property included three tractors, a Ford truck, trailers, chainsaws, other farm machinery and more. Two subjects are in custody, but the main suspect had been “on the run” for several days after warrants were issued for his arrest. He was later arrested without incident.



Pictured are four logs confirmed to have been stolen by the suspects from the Osage Prairie Conservation Area.

Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts

For the second time in recent history, Protection Branch staff were requested by the Missouri State Highway Patrol to assist with protective service operations involving organized public protests and civil unrest. These operations were primarily focused on the Missouri State Capitol building and complex. This was in response to the

national threat of attacks against the capitol buildings in each state.

Protection Branch staff were also requested by the Missouri State Highway Patrol to assist with protective service operations associated with providing security at the 2021 Inauguration ceremony and related activities for Missouri Governor Mike Parson. This is the second time in the history of MDC that we have been asked to provide such assistance with this high-profile event.

MDC is part of a very productive network of federal, state, and private agencies (i.e. Missouri Department of Agriculture, US Department of Agriculture, Missouri Farm Bureau, United States Army (Fort Leonard Wood), Missouri Corn Growers Association, National Wild Turkey Federation, Missouri Agribusiness Association, and countless others) called the Missouri Feral Hog Elimination Partnership. All members of the partnership are dedicated to total elimination of feral hogs from the state and have worked together to successfully remove 12,635 hogs from Missouri’s landscape in 2020.

In December of 2019, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) announced its decision to prohibit feral hog hunting on public land in the Mark Twain National Forest (MTNF). While prohibiting hog hunting, the USFS decision allows for the ‘opportunistic take’ of feral hogs in the MTNF during all deer and turkey hunting seasons. With this USFS announcement, the Missouri Feral Hog Elimination Partnership developed an operational plan to provide additional staff and resources on private and public land around the MTNF. The Conservation Commission is providing \$1.8 million annually to the U.S. Department of

Agriculture for trapping services, and MDC staff contribute more than 25,000 hours annually towards feral hog enforcement and feral hog elimination efforts on both private and public land.

With the official closing of hog hunting on U.S. Forest Service land in Missouri, the Protection Branch was tasked with providing increased law enforcement patrols and maintaining a physical presence to deter potential public unrest, and to provide protection for staff on the ground conducting scouting and trapping operations. Conservation Agents also remained actively involved in the trapping efforts while continuing to enforce the state statutes prohibiting the transportation and release of feral hogs, as well as enforcing regulations prohibiting feral hog hunting on MDC lands.

Missouri's Special Investigations Unit (SIU) continues to remain active as a contributing member of the multi-state Aquatic Resources Task Force comprised of their counterpart investigators from Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Tennessee.

New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement

The Protection Branch continues to embrace technology to better protect Missouri's fish, forest and wildlife resources. The Protection Branch allocated funding to outfit all Protection vehicles as mobile workstations. We are currently outfitting each truck with laptop mounts, *CradlePoint* router 9-in-1 antennas with *Forward Thinking* applications to provide agents with Department of Revenue vehicle/driver information, wants/warrants,

GPS tracking capabilities, and vehicle diagnostics.

The Protection Branch continues to make great cases utilizing game cameras and remote surveillance cameras that send photos to agent's smartphones when activity is detected. Numerous cases were discovered and effectively documented using this technology, as well as detecting the presence of feral hogs in staged corral traps. Our staff continue to successfully use *Cellebrite* in conducting cell phone data extraction and transfer analysis, and *ZetX* to map and analyze huge sets of phone record data quickly and efficiently while meeting scientific standards (TRAX mapping - tower dumps, exigent pings, etc.), as well as Google location warrants which proved to be extremely helpful in our first successful prosecution of an individual who illegally shot and killed a cow elk. This successful investigation utilized cell phone tower information and a Google location data warrant that provided critical GPS mapping data and ultimately solved a previously unresolved illegally killed cow elk case in Carter County. The defendant pled guilty on October 27, 2020, to the two charges of: *04-110-011 Import, transport, sell, purchase, take or possess black bear or elk, or parts thereof, inconsistent with rules of the Code, and 04-110-009 No person who takes or possesses any wildlife shall wantonly leave or abandon any portion of such wildlife commonly used as human food; and was fined \$1,000 per charge.*

State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement

Legislative Session - MDC has been engaging in discussions with legislators on the typical topics (budget allocations, feral hog elimination efforts, landowner acreage for no cost permits, landowner registry, number of commissioners, etc.), but some of the more concerning legislation involves Senate Bill 449 (SB449) and House Bill 1166 (HB1166), both of which could ultimately restrict conservation agents, sheriffs, or their deputies from entering private property, or placing cameras on such private property, without first obtaining probable cause, permission, or a search warrant. This kind of restrictive and impactful legislation is also being filed in other states across the country. We are also seeing Police Reform legislation being discussed, and we are in the process of reviewing our Defensive Tactics training program through PPCT/HFRG. We are also researching various types of body cameras currently on the market to possibly deploy to our field staff in 2022.

Missouri courts discovered several years ago that the previously utilized mail-in ticket Fine Collection Center (FCC) process was unconstitutional since prosecuting attorneys were not physically signing off on tickets issued by law enforcement with the option to plead guilty and pay the fine via the mail. Thus, Missouri has gone to a Prosecutor Portal in which all tickets are sent directly to local prosecutors who then must decide if they want to require a personal appearance in court or to allow for the fine to be paid through the mail. With

the assistance of the Missouri Office of State Courts and Timmons Group, the Protection Branch successfully created and implemented an e-filing ticket process.

Cost Savings Initiatives

The Protection Branch continues to utilize a very active and successful Protection Volunteer Program consisting of approximately 97 volunteers spread across the state. In 2020, they contributed 2,779 hours of volunteer work to MDC. These volunteers assist Conservation Agents and other MDC staff with projects including enforcement patrols, outreach and education programs, training scenarios and wildlife surveys. This volunteer program has also proven to be a valuable recruitment tool.

Protection Branch initiated our Department K-9 Program which consists of five (5) Agent Handler/canine teams. The canines are single-purpose sporting dogs consisting of either Labrador Retriever or German Shorthaired Pointer breeds. The Handler/canine teams are currently attending the 2021 Indiana Resource Protection School with a set graduation date of May 14th. California Department of Fish and Wildlife found that one well trained dog can save approximately 800 personnel hours per year. Based on this information our figures show that if each of our future canines save us 800 hours of labor each year, at an annual cost of approximately \$1,050 dollars per canine, that's \$1.31 per hour in labor, or a total savings of \$15,760 annually per dog. Total annual cost for our K-9 Program is estimated to be \$5,250 with a projected

total labor savings gained annually of \$78,800.

Renewing Missouri hunting, fishing, and trapping permits was made easier and more convenient through MDC's online Permit Autorenewal service. Autorenewal allows online permit buyers to automatically renew their permits prior to the start of the next season or permit year so they always have a valid permit when they need it. More than 24,200 permits, valued at nearly \$670,000, were renewed in FY20 using Permit Autorenewal.

In FY20, MDC's Mo Hunting app proved to be the most popular method for checking in harvested deer and turkey. Hunters used the app to check in 138,854 deer and 28,808 turkeys. The app accounted for 51 percent of checked harvests, while the phone checks accounted for 37 percent, and the remaining 12 percent were completed online. Hunters also used their mobile devices to buy 994,274 permits in FY20, an increase of 242,196 from FY19, for a total of \$13.3 million sold via mobile devices.

Other Special Law Enforcement Issues

COVID-19 had many Missourians and others looking for safe ways to get outside in nature. As a result, **more people visited MDC conservation areas and natural areas during 2020, and more people bought hunting and fishing permits** than in previous years. To help folks discover nature for free, MDC **waived the requirements for fishing permits and trout tags** from March 27 through April 15. Unfortunately, this temporary waving of the

required fishing permits did cause some issues for Protection staff with uninformed individuals who thought a fishing permit was no longer required for the year.

The Missouri Conservation Commission approved regulation changes to the *Wildlife Code of Missouri* regarding night hunting and feral hog control. In response to citizen requests, MDC approved rule changes to allow the use of night vision, infrared or thermal imagery equipment, or artificial light to hunt coyotes from February 1 – March 31. In addition, the changes allow for landowners or their representatives to use night vision and infrared or thermal imagery equipment, without approval from a Conservation Agent, to address damage-causing feral hogs. Illegal spotlighting and night vision/thermal imagery equipment use continues to generate complaints from the public which tends to keep our Protection staff busy.

As part of its ongoing efforts to slow the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), MDC added regulations to the *Wildlife Code of Missouri* regarding the transport of deer carcasses and carcass parts into and within Missouri, and proper disposal of carcass parts as pertaining to licensed meat processors and taxidermists. These regulations brought with them a level of complexity with moving deer carcasses in and out of designated CWD management zones for testing, and challenges associated with finding sanitary landfills or transfer stations permitted by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources to accept the deer carcasses from meat processors and taxidermists.

Other Agency Updates

In April of 2020, the Missouri Conservation Commission approved Missouri's first elk hunting season. MDC received 19,182 Resident Antlered Elk Applications and 33 Resident Landowner Antlered Elk Applications. From those applicants, MDC issued five permits for the inaugural season through a draw system. **Missouri's first elk-hunting season** ended on Dec. 20 with all five of the selected hunters harvesting bull elk during the firearms portion (Dec. 12-20).

The Missouri Conservation Commission gave final approval in December to MDC for the **state's first black bear hunting season framework**. The approved framework limits bear hunting to areas of southern Missouri and restricts bear hunting to Missouri residents only. The next step to Missouri's first bear hunting season will be MDC presenting recommendations to the Commission this spring for a potential initial permit quota and harvest quota. If quotas are set, Missouri residents will be able to apply during May for an October fall hunt.

Another high-profile poaching incident in the Show-Me State - Brandon Butler cohosts a Driftwood Outdoors Podcast and was formerly the Executive Director of the Conservation Federation of Missouri. Unfortunately, his poaching story and subsequent cabin burning gained national attention.

After witnessing a poaching attempt the night of November 15, Butler filed a complaint with the Missouri Department of Conservation. Butler and his friends saw a truck enter a field less than 300 yards from his cabin and heard at least two shots after

the truck's occupants illuminated the field with a light bar. Butler gave chase, got the truck's license-plate number, and reported it to MDC investigators. Not long thereafter his cabin suspiciously burned to the ground.

Investigators learned that three women were involved in the poaching attempt, which included the truck's owner, and one of them confessed to the shootings – implicating the others in the process. Investigators found no dead or wounded deer in the field or adjacent woods.

Butler has long kept trail cameras trained on his cabin for security, including one in plain view of visitors. When he checked the "dummy" camera, he found someone had removed its SD card. The two cameras he concealed nearby in the woods were untouched. Their SD cards held photos of a man carrying a rifle and container toward the cabin. Photos minutes later showed the man returning only with the rifle as flames erupted from the cabin. A time-lapse sequence documented the cabin's fiery destruction.

After studying the photographs and crime scene, investigators arrested Corey J. Landrigan, 32, on January 16, for allegedly torching Butler's cabin in retaliation for the poaching complaint.

Landrigan, who knew the three women involved in the poaching incident, possesses a 17-year criminal history: including burglary, poaching, assault, and traffic violations. The convicted felon also served



Brandon Butler's torched cabin

prison time for possessing a firearm and controlled drugs.

Butler said the cleanup felt like a two-day funeral, but he kept reminding himself that his loss isn't unique. "I heard from a lot of

people around the country who suffered similar crimes, and the arsonist in many cases was never caught," he said. "I can't imagine what it would feel like if the person was still out there, and could do it again to someone else."



The crew that helped Brandon Butler clean up after the fire

North Dakota
Game & Fish Department – Law Enforcement
Submitted by: Scott Winkelman

Training Issues

Training during the pandemic has been a major challenge and we are trying to find ways to ensure our officers receive the training that they need. With all the canceled trainings and us having to cancel our annual in-service in 2020 we have several officers who are short on training hours for their peace officer license renewals. We have been training online as much as possible. We will be having an in-service training in May that will provide all our wardens with some good training and catch everyone up on hours.

Funding and Staffing Issues

Our efforts to increase our number of applicants using social media, video, and university engagement appear to be working. Our applicant numbers for our last test nearly doubled. We are planning for several open positions in the next 1-4 years due to retirements and we will continue to keep our full-time temporary positions staffed so we will have trained officers ready to fill in as districts open. Our funding is strong with no issues.

Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends

We continue to monitor and be concerned about the national trend to end the open fields doctrine on a state level. We also have formed a CWD task force that is looking at new/different regulations and education opportunities about CWD. CWD continues to spread across North Dakota, and we are making every effort to slow that progression.

Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative Enforcement Efforts

We continue to utilize our Joint Powers Agreements with other states and work on large, multiple state investigations. The wardens are utilizing our agreement with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department forensics lab and have sent numerous samples to them for DNA analysis. We have had tremendous results using Wyoming's services and multiple cases have been successfully prosecuted with their help.

New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement

While not a new innovation we have purchased several new sets of image stabilizing binoculars. We also purchased a wireless man overboard cutoff device for each officer to use while operating a boat. We will be purchasing new radios for all vehicles, boats, and portables in the next

biennium due to a large statewide project to update the state radio system. This has been a massive undertaking over the last several years and is much needed.

State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement

The 2021 legislative session was unique with COVID restrictions, but it was successful for us. New legislation allows us to keep our citation and conviction information electronically. After years of attempted legislation and fighting between hunters and landowners a bill was passed that will allow landowners to post their property electronically. If land is not posted either physically or electronically it is still open to hunters. We were able to oppose

and defeat two bills that would have prohibited all law enforcement from entering private land (open fields) and using any surveillance equipment, which would have included binoculars and spotting scopes, to view private property. We are currently reviewing our policies and will be adding a new policy regarding the placement of recording devices on private property.

Cost Savings Initiatives

The ND Department of Health secured a grant to provide all law enforcement vehicles with a new AED at no cost to the agency. We are currently working with them to determine the placement of the devices.

Ohio
Ohio Department of Natural Resources – Division of Wildlife
Submitted by: Ken Fitz

Training Issues

After some of the recent law enforcement use of force events across the country, several training recommendations were identified for all law enforcement officers in Ohio. One of the recommendations was that agencies provide de-escalation training for their officers. A plan was put in place to ensure this training was implemented. With the current COVID-19 pandemic, officers were limited on the types of scenario-based training they could participate in. Trainers identified the use of the MILO Range Simulator as the method to train officers to fulfill de-escalation training. MILO is an electronic, fully interactive video simulation system where officers participate in an interactive use of force scenario. The instructor can branch each scenario into many situations based on the officer's response. The training team has developed scenarios for use with the system that are specific to situations our officers may encounter.

A wildlife officer cadet academy was in progress when the pandemic hit, with cadets attending the Ohio State Highway Patrol Academy for their basic peace officer certification. Due to the mandatory social distancing and other safety precautions put in place, cadets were sent home where they were provided instruction via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Cisco Webex or other similar computer applications. In addition,

they were given physical fitness assignments which they were required to document. After several weeks, they returned to the academy setting but were not allowed to leave on weekends or for other "liberty." Upon completion of the basic peace officer academy, the remaining wildlife enforcement specific academy was completed with modifications made for social distancing and wearing of masks. Upon graduation, all 13 cadets were assigned to a county or district for completion of the field training officer (FTO) program. The FTO program was similarly impacted by safety requirements due to COVID-19.

Other in-person training events had to be cancelled or modified due to the pandemic.

Funding and Staffing Issues

Following a nationwide trend, license sales in Ohio increased dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic as the public returned to outdoor recreation. However, utilizing a cautious approach due to an uncertain future, a hiring freeze was implemented, including a freeze on promotions or temporary work level assignments. As the year progressed, these restrictions have been lifted on a case-by-case basis.

Despite these restrictions, the Division of Wildlife received capital bond monies for major projects, and support for a water

quality initiative in the Lake Erie drainage titled H2Ohio.

Also following a nationwide trend, and the Roadmap to Relevancy, we have begun efforts for increasing the diversity of both our constituents and our staff through training and education, as well as developing new strategies for engagement of non-traditional audiences. For example, we are incorporating a new strategy for hiring and promotions to ensure there is a diverse panel for interviews. As we seek to be more inclusive and diverse as an agency, we are also trying to make sure we have differing backgrounds and perspectives represented on interview panels that ultimately determine our hiring preferences.

We are currently implementing a restructure of our law enforcement section. The agency sought input from all commissioned staff and then tasked a focus group with evaluating the proposal in light of the input. The focus group was a cross-section of officers from different positions and locations that represented each of our districts. As a result, our law enforcement section will be restructured as follows:

Investigators will transition under one supervisor so they can work together across the state as a team on larger, complex, and important investigations. This will also allow individual skills and talents to be shared with peers or used in the areas of greatest need. This strategy would be similar to a detective's bureau or a major crimes unit. Investigators previously worked for supervisors in each of the five districts. Our undercover unit will be merged into this newly created team.

Our Lake Erie enforcement unit will replace six investigators with two investigators and six uniformed officers. This change will be done through attrition over time and will provide a stronger uniformed and visible presence on Lake Erie.

Our district level supervisors will be backfilled with a newly titled position, the district law enforcement operations manager. This new position will be uniformed and will provide additional support to officers in the field. They will also directly oversee the wildlife officer supervisors and be responsible for the execution of the law enforcement program in each of the five districts.

Current program managers will be centralized and responsible for major program areas, including investigations, information systems, permitting, our canine program, training, equipment, and support for operations.

Fiscal flexibility as a result of the restructure will allow the Division to continue with a strong uniformed presence in each of Ohio's 88 counties.

Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends

We continue to participate in several different cross-jurisdictional teams and programs, including regional Environmental Crimes Task Force meetings, NACLEC, Great Lakes Fishery Commission Law Enforcement Committee, the 13 Party Agreement (Great Lakes states and provinces), and the Ohio River Task Force to name a few.

Recent trends in nontraditional wildlife law enforcement include the sale and trade of wild animals and their parts on the internet through a variety of online platforms. These sales not only include traditional game animal items like deer meat and antlers, or fish fillets, but also non-game animals which are often entered into the pet trade. These sales often include reptiles and amphibians as well as aquatic invasive species, such as Wels catfish, zebra mussels inadvertently included with aquarium plants, and self-cloning crayfish (marbled crayfish or marmorkrebs).

“Community Policing” has always been a major component of our enforcement philosophy, with participation in community events, fairs, and traditional sportsmen’s club meetings. Recent efforts have been made to diversify these events and reach out to broader constituent groups, such as garden clubs, birding groups and others that are interested in wildlife but not normally engaged by our officers. In addition, we are reviewing our laws and regulations on wildlife areas to make them more inviting to additional user groups (birders, hikers, stargazers, etc.).

Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts

A multi-year, multi-state ginseng investigation was completed in partnership with the USFWS. Ginseng is a valuable commodity, especially in Southern Ohio, and as a CITES species is highly regulated. Over 100 defendants are facing 116 charges in state and federal courts.

New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement

The use of mobile technology and cellular phone apps had continued to be a benefit for Ohio wildlife officers. Camera apps which allow a timestamp on the photo, the HuntStand app and others have proven to be very beneficial.

The Ohio Division of Wildlife developed a smart phone app known as HuntFish OH. This app allows our constituents to purchase and carry licenses electronically and register harvests from the field. The app also serves as a convenient resource for our officers to access maps and regulation booklets.

Permits for special activities (E.g., wild animal propagation, dog training grounds, etc.) have been moved from a paper, mail-in system to our online licensing system. This allows for much more efficient and timely processing of applications as well as better customer service.

To answer questions regarding the possession and sale of native wild animals and their parts, an Ohio Native Wildlife Sales Publication was developed. This resource is available to our officers and the public to provide information regarding the legality of sales of native wildlife. For example, commercially caught fish, propagated game birds and animals, or legally acquired deer antlers may be sold, but sport-caught fish, hunter harvested game birds and deer meat may not.

A new enforcement vessel was purchased for use on Lake Erie. A 21’-22’ fiberglass pilothouse style boat was sought and

Defiance Boats of Bremerton, WA won the bid process with their 220 Admiral powered by a single Honda 225HP outboard. At around 24' in total length and just under 5,000 lbs., this boat is towable with our current fleet of ½ ton trucks and is usable year-round. It offers crew protection from the elements, has the latest in electronics from Garmin, has restroom facilities to support an increasingly diverse workforce, and offers true seating for 3 in addition to the operator. A second operating station was ordered on the aft panel of the pilothouse. This offers clear vision while approaching vessels/docks on the starboard side and allows the operator to fend off collisions without having to quickly run from the main helm through the back door. Two vessels were traded in towards the purchase of this one, reducing our fleet by one. It will soon be upfitted with law enforcement lights and accoutrement.

Using ARCGIS licensing and the Survey 123 app, in cooperation with our own IT personnel, the Division has built its own internet-based commercial fish reporting system. We are no longer beholden to private contractors to support our electronic reporting system statute. Commercial fishers will download the free app to a device of their choosing. They will then be provided with usernames and access to our system where they will input their catch data. Data will be available instantaneously for law enforcement and biological purposes.

[State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement](#)

As mentioned above under training, recent use of force events across the country and the pandemic have had an impact on our agency.

[Cost Savings Initiatives](#)

As described above, the restructuring of our law enforcement operations is expected to result in substantial savings as well as streamlining communication and supporting operations. In addition, the continued movement of licensing and permits to electronic systems simplifies things for customers and reduces staff time.

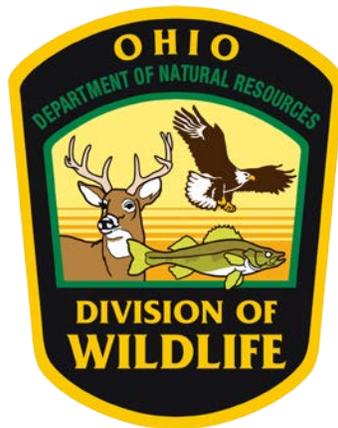
[Other Special Law Enforcement Issues](#)

During an investigation into deer poaching in a known problem area, Wildlife Investigator Kevin Behr was shot and critically injured. While this investigation is currently in the court system, it appears as though Investigator Behr may have been mistaken for game, although that is not certain as of this writing. He received lifesaving first aid from other officers on scene and was life-flighted to a hospital. He has undergone numerous surgeries and after three months has returned home to continue to heal, with additional surgeries in his future. In addition, a well-known and respected officer in our sister agency, the Division of Parks and Watercraft, died in the line of duty during an attempted rescue of a teenager that had gone through the ice. These traumatic events, along with a string of other tragedies involving members of the public on our properties, have had an impact on our officers. Our Officer Support

Team has provided much needed support and assistance to promote healing in our staff.

During routine sampling of hunter harvested deer, a CWD positive sample was collected from a wild deer in a part of the state with a relatively low expectation for this to occur. Additional increased sampling was conducted, and we found another

positive free-range deer. Additional sampling is taking place to determine the prevalence of the disease and to determine the path forward. A large number of enforcement officers are involved in this sampling effort, which takes priority over enforcement efforts in the short term.



Saskatchewan

Ministry of Environment – Enforcement & Investigations Section

Submitted by: Glen Pranteau, Intelligence Officer

Training Issues

The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to disrupt the year's annual *Use of Force training*. We will continue with the same training format and mandatory safety precautions as last year. There will be some online training to review decision-making/de-escalation scenarios. The firearms team will be conducting annual firearms qualifications via "Road Show" and will be travelling to Meadow Lake, Prince Albert and Regina. This will help limit field officers travelling long distances which requires overnight hotel stays.

The *Western Conservation Law Enforcement Academy* will take place this fall and will be looking at approximately 14 to 16 recruits. To respect the COVID-19 restrictions, Saskatchewan will only have local SK candidates participating in the 2021 Academy.

Funding and Staffing Issues

The 2021-22 budget for Compliance and Field Services includes an increase of \$594 thousand for additional officer positions and one manager position. The branch needed resources to meet the demands of the blended police model of the Protection and Response Team initiative and its core environmental duties supporting the Ministry of Environment.

- The funding of salaries will be applied to positions in both our *Conservation Officer Service* Section and the *Enforcement and Investigations* Section.
- 5 positions of varying responsibilities will be used to strengthen leadership and specialty positions.
- An *Intelligence Management Unit Manager* position will provide oversight, coordination, and expertise on intelligence and communications to the existing intelligence unit.

Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends

The province introduced The Police (Serious Incident Response Team) Amendment Act, 2021, which states that Conservation Officers will now be subject to civilian-led oversight where incidents involve serious complaints. This implements a civilian-led independent Serious Incident Response Team (SIRT) to investigate serious incidents involving police officers. Acting under a Civilian Executive Director, SIRT members will investigate all matters where a person has suffered a sexual assault, serious injury, or death while in the custody of the police or as a result of the actions of a police officer. Investigations may also be conducted in other incidents where the Executive Director believes it is in the public interest to do so. The proposed amendments ensure the SIRT includes

Indigenous representation by requiring an appointment of a First Nations or Métis community liaison if the victim is of First Nations or Métis ancestry.

Unique Cross-Boundary or Cooperative Enforcement Efforts

Due to the ongoing global COVID-19 Pandemic, cross-boundary and cooperative enforcement efforts have been minimal to this point in time.

New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement

Saskatchewan Environment is now part of the province's Crime Watch Advisory Network. This network provides residents, who have signed up for the service, with criminal activity advisories. These advisories are specific to their areas from police services via text messages, emails or phone calls. The Crime Watch Advisory includes the RCMP, municipal police and conservation officers.

State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement

A very recent Supreme Court of Canada ruling. An American citizen shot and killed an elk without a hunting license in the Arrow Lakes region in British Columbia in October 2010. He is a member of the Lakes Tribe of the Colville Confederated Tribes and lives on a reserve in Washington State.

The Supreme Court concluded in short that people who are not Canadian citizens, and who do not reside in Canada, can exercise an Aboriginal right that is protected under the Canadian Constitution, providing they can prove Aboriginal Rights under section 35 of the Constitution. They have to prove their Tribe's traditional areas extended to Canada before the establishment of government control. The effect on Saskatchewan is unknown at this point however there are Reservations in North Dakota and Montana with ancestral and traditional ties to the province.

Other Special Law Enforcement Issues

Current COVID-related restrictions have impacted some law enforcement-related duties however through wearing of PPE, distancing and proper hygienic practices the disease has had minimal effect on staff health up to this point.

South Dakota
South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP)
Submitted by: Sam Schelhaas, Law Enforcement Section Chief

Training Issues

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic created many significant challenges in the training world, but we were still able to complete the statutory and Department requirements while following the established guidelines and respecting everyone. We have an excellent training cadre and they performed admirably in these unique circumstances.

Civil Disturbance

While the civil unrest seen across the country did not affect South Dakota as much as it did many other states, we continued our training in civil disturbance and are prepared to work alongside our Highway Patrol Officers when called upon.

Drug Recognition Experts (DRE)

We currently have 2 Conservation Officers in the process of completing their education and training in becoming DRE officers. With the current marijuana laws in South Dakota up in the air we anticipate the need to have several experts in this field to help with the detection of Boating Under the Influence, Possession of a firearm while intoxicated and many other investigations.

Funding and Staffing Issues

In July of 2020 the Wildlife Division of the

South Dakota GFP established the Law Enforcement Section thus ensuring straight line reporting for Conservation Officers and Park Rangers. Moving forward all GFP law enforcement officers to include Park Rangers are now under one section. Prior to this there were 4 Wildlife Division Regions and 4 Parks Division Regions. While each Region was doing their best to operate consistently, there were many inconsistencies. With the new section a Law Enforcement Section Chief was selected to lead and was soon followed by the selection of a Deputy Chief. These are exciting times for the GFP and in particular the newly created Law Enforcement Section.

Funding remains consistent and South Dakota saw unprecedented camping numbers and visitation in our State Parks was at an all-time high. Fishing and small game licenses were up in the resident categories. One of the biggest questions heading into the fall of 2020 was whether non-resident hunters would continue to come to South Dakota in pursuit of pheasants. The answer was yes. Our non-resident small game licenses were consistent with our 2019 numbers. South Dakota GFP kept the outdoors "open" throughout the pandemic and there were many people who picked up a rod or a gun for the first time in years.

Trends

The department participated in Operation

Dry Water for the 9th straight year. Our Conservation Officers continue to patrol the lakes and rivers of South Dakota and are always excited to take part in this national campaign bringing awareness to the dangers of boating under the influence. Statistics from 2020 include:

- 34 operations
- 57 officers
- 851 vessels inspected
- 46 boating citations (8 of which were boating under the influence)
- 151 warnings issued

The Turn in Poachers (TIPS) program in the South Dakota continues to be an active and productive program. The program is critical to the protection of South Dakotas natural resources and provides individuals with the ability to remain anonymous and assist Conservation Officers in the deterrence and detection of illegal activities. Statistics from 2020 include:

- 318 investigations
- 174 arrests
- \$42,000 in fines
- \$6,650 in rewards paid

Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts

Much of our cross-boundary work with our neighboring states and our sister agencies in the USFWS, NPS and USACOE was put on hold through much of 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic.

New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement

Like most of the United States Conservation Officers within our Department adapted new technology such as Microsoft TEAMS and Zoom to continue making sure that the mission and the priorities of the Department were continuing to be carried out on a consistent basis. What we discovered is that while not the same as meeting in person utilizing video conferencing is the next best thing and many things that we learned over the last year will continue to carry on in years to come.

State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement

HB 1034, Revised the youth hunting, fishing and trapping requirements streamlining the licensing requirements, defining youth as under 18 years of age and allowing non-resident youth the same privileges as resident youth.

HB 1035, Revised language and took the initial steps in moving towards and electronic tagging process and revised language in Codified law and granted the GFP Commission the authority to draft the rules guiding this process.

HB 1047, Established a process for non-resident landowners to be able to obtain a land owner own land deer tag. Prior to this there were no non-resident licenses available in our East River deer season. The non-resident landowner must own at least

160 acres of land and there was a cap limiting the annual allocation to no more than 250 deer tags.

HB 1111, Removed some antiquated laws that gave the GFP unilateral authority to forfeit contraband and other items that were seized. In practice we did not use these authorities and worked through court procedures when items were forfeited. These changes have very little impact on the work that a Conservation Officer does.

HB 1140, Prohibits Conservation Officers from entering on to private property without permission from the landowner. Exceptions are 1) unless an officer has reasonable suspicion or probable cause to believe that a violation occurred, 2) to dispatch wildlife, 3) In emergency situations. This law also states that Conservation Officers cannot be held criminally or civilly liable for a violation of this law.

Texas
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) – Law Enforcement
Division

Submitted by: Lieutenant Jason B Jones

Training Updates

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Law Enforcement Division (TPWD-LE) continues to develop and adopt training to ensure game wardens are prepared to meet the demands of their job.

- 64th Cadet Class dismissed and quarantined December 10 – January 6 due to COVID-19.
- TPWD-LE provided Use of Force train the trainer updates, to assist in the field and with cadet training.
- Increased our Cadet Physical Readiness Entry Standards to handgun stability, 2000-meter row at 70% VO2 max, and Swim - 1 min tread water and 100-meter swim in 4 min.
- Implemented De-escalation Training statewide.
- Taser Testing Program and assessment taking place – pending funding.

Funding and Staffing Updates

- Lt. Program Coordinator to the GWTC Staff
 - Opened an Instagram account for Recruiting to reach a more diverse audience.

- Using QR codes at recruiting events to help gather information
- Paid and Unpaid Internships
- 64th Cadet Class began with 40 Game Warden and 16 PPO cadets, total 56 cadets. Started October 2020 scheduled to Graduate June 2021

Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department initiated a transition of the department's Boating Education Program from the Communications Division to the Law Enforcement Division. This transition will help consolidate and streamline Recreational Boating Safety Grant key functions.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Law Enforcement division has personnel assigned to County Emergency Operations Centers, Disaster District Centers, and the State Operations Center to assist with the dissemination of COVID-19 information to the public, employees, and first responders. In addition to dissemination of information, TPWD LE personnel assigned to these centers facilitate the use of TPWD resources throughout the state as needed and/or requested by TDEM following the ICS model. Some of those requested resources

include the request for TPWD LE first responders to assist with security and law enforcement activities at COVID-19 test sites, the transportation of COVID-19 test samples collected at Texas rural county drive-thru sites, and the pre-positioning or movement of PPE supplies and equipment to support TPWD first responders. TPWD LE division also has non-LE personnel assisting with the identification and ordering of available PPE to ensure first responders have the necessary PPE and supplies to continue supporting TDEM led COVID-19 operations, TPWD patrols, and TPWD public services.

TPWD Game Wardens were a part of an operation that supported the mission of making COVID-19 testing available to all Texans; this operation is known as, “Operation Pony Express”. Texas Game Wardens were responsible for the transportation of COVID-19 samples collected at mobile test sites across the entire state of Texas to a regional staging area managed by AgriLife. The samples from multiple sites would then be gathered and transported by an AgriLife agent to a DPS or TPWD plane bound for one of a few labs with the capacity and resources to analyze hundreds of samples.

Since the start of “Pony Express”, Texas Game Wardens have assisted with the delivery of samples from 627 testing sites from 228 counties. TPWD Aviation has performed 22 flight missions to assist with the transportation of 97 various sized coolers containing COVID-19 test samples. Along with test samples TPWD Aviation has been assisting with the delivery of sample kits to be distributed to different test site locations throughout the state.

Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts

Texas Game Wardens executed Operation Brush Guard III covering the Texas-Mexico border along the Falcon Lake area for the purpose of protecting the State’s diverse valuable, and fragile natural resources including fish and wildlife. This operation resulted in the:

- Arrest of multiple subjects for human trafficking, evading arrest, driving while intoxicated, and possession of a controlled substance.
- Seizure of 9,610’ feet of gill net.
- Seizure of 2,350 LBS of fish.

In total, for FY 21, Texas Game Wardens have arrested 3 commercial fishermen, seized almost 46K’ feet of gill net, 2 hoop nets, and 660’ feet of trotline from Falcon Lake.



Texas Game Wardens continue to work with federal partners at the southern Ports of Entry to combat Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and seafood fraud. Seafood fraud and IUU fishing have a potential to overlap each other through



the mislabeling and/or smuggling of aquatic species in efforts to hide the origin of such species.

During the month of January, Game Wardens out of Region 8 responded to 16 calls for service resulting in:

- 6 citations and 4 warnings were issued
- 37.38 lbs. of illegal oysters were seized
- 478.64 lbs. of aquatic products other than oysters were seized

New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement

Texas Game Wardens and State Park Police were recently equipped with and trained on, 500 drowning resuscitation kits that were distributed statewide. This equipment was directly funded through a budget line item from the 86th Legislative Session. This equipment will be vital to providing emergency oxygen to victims of a drowning in hopes of arresting the drowning process and providing them with lifesaving oxygen.

The trucks Texas Game Wardens are being issued are now coming with a mounted in-car computer system with the Dell Latitude 5420 Rugged CTO.



State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement

The 87th Legislative Session began in January. Several bills are being monitored to evaluate the impact on Texas Parks and Wildlife. Two of those are similar that would have an impact on the Agency financially. SB 465 and HB 1341 are related to a waiver of certain state park fees for certain disabled veterans and first responders.

Other significant bills being monitored:

- HB 409 – Wavers for entrance fees to state parks and certain hunting and fishing license fees for resident first responders
- SB 675 and HB 2040 – Setting Veteran Days for Waterfowl Hunting
- HB 2499 – Requirement of wearing a PFD while being towed behind a motorboat
- SB 1057 and HB 1984 – Addresses the durations of special open hunting season for persons under 17 years old
- SB 599 and HB 2724 – Amends verbiage about removal of Abandoned Fishing Devices from State Water
- HB 2326 Burmese Python Reclassification of Species

Wisconsin

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) – Bureau of Law Enforcement

Submitted by: Chief Casey Krueger

Training Issues

We transitioned to an accelerated academy track for our new hires who came to us already having Wisconsin law enforcement certification and experience. 9 of our newly hired 22 Conservation Wardens successfully completed this track.

Due to the COVID-19 precautions, all of our Department of Justice mandated 24 hours of recertification training was completed in an entirely virtual format through recorded training sessions.

Implemented mandatory CPR/AED/First Aid training for all of our credentialed staff, including procuring online options in order to comply with the Agency's COVID-19 guidelines.

Funding and Staffing Issues

Our law enforcement section was moved from a Bureau to a Division within our Agency and was renamed the "Division of Public Safety and Resource Protection" from the "Bureau of Law Enforcement". This move better aligned us with the other main sections within the Agency and effectively promoted our command staff from Bureau level to Divisional level leadership.

Karl Brooks, the previous Deputy Chief Warden, retired and we split his position

into two different Deputy Chief Warden roles, and external and internal operations. Matt O'Brien, previous policy and law officer, was promoted to the internal operations Deputy Chief position and oversees the Business Services, Recreational Safety and Outdoor Skills, and Training sections. Jeremy Peery, previous Lieutenant for the Lower Chippewa Team, was promoted to the external operations Deputy Chief position and oversees the Investigative and Regional Field Operations sections.

We combined our Special Investigative Team with our Environmental Enforcement Team into a new combined section. This allows the section to integrate on cases, expedite processes and further evaluate how we do business to fully capitalize on investigative resources.

Our Recruitment Committee began an intentional and concerted effort to recruit more diversity into our law enforcement ranks by researching and implementing new strategies:

- Committed to a more proactive recruitment – we cannot wait for candidates to come to us
- Authored and implemented a diversity and inclusion statement
- Conducted outreach to over 125 diverse groups and community leaders

- Direct outreach to educational institutions; over 280 separate higher education institutions contacted, including land grant colleges as well as historically Black, Hispanic and tribal education institutions
- 65 virtual presentations offered by conservation wardens, focused specifically on recruitment
- Hosted two large-scale, live virtual presentations with over 400 attendees

Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends

Worked closely with the Wisconsin Department of Tourism and the Association of Snowmobile Clubs of Wisconsin to create an annual snowmobile saving lives initiative similar to boating's "Operation Dry Water" called "Think Smart Before You Start". This campaign was a statewide weekend effort directed at snowmobile safety messaging, heightened enforcement and increased proactive visibility patrols. More than 1500 snowmobilers were contacted during the event that resulted in over 350 warnings and 48 citations issued, including two arrests for operating while intoxicated. Most importantly, there were ZERO reported snowmobile crashes during the event.

The Recreation Enforcement Team and members of the RSOS Management Team partnered up with the Wisconsin ATV/UTV Association (WATVA), the Wisconsin State Patrol's Technical Reconstruction Unit and the CIREN Center of the Medical College of Wisconsin to conduct the first State of Wisconsin controlled UTV Crash to study

crash dynamics, injury causation, and occupant movement as it relates to the importance of wearing helmets, seatbelts and having children in the UTV while under operation. Due to the study, undergraduates at CIREN are now conducting additional ATV/UTV crash injury-related research for national safety/equipment recommendations specific to children.

Though 2020 was a challenging year for our Archery Education programs, we added over 30 new schools to those teaching archery as part of the school day through our partnership with Wisconsin chapter of National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) and put together several virtual events, including a state competitive event with around 200 archers. We also added 5 more (S3DA) archery cubs and teams to our WI Scholastic 3-D Archery (S3DA) program.

While working through COVID-19 restrictions, our Outdoor Skills Trainers reopened a number of our statewide shooting ranges and provided staff and resources, creating a safe atmosphere and positive experience for recreational shooters.

With many people off work through the year, our public sought out activities in the outdoors to escape the monotony of the COVID-19 directives. The numbers showed:

- More than 21 million visitors came to our parks, state forests and trails, a 22% increase over 2019.
- Nearly 500,000 annual park passes were sold, a 42% increase.
- Boat registrations were up 28%.
- More than 1.3 million fishing licenses were sold, a 12% increase.

- Calls for service rose from 8490 in 2018 to 12,234 in 2020 an increase of 30%. Fishing and hunting violations led the way both with 18% of the yearly total, followed by State Parks (12%), boating and ATV with (11%).
- As of Dec. 14, 2020, 20,903 mentored hunting licenses declared in 2020 license year (37% increase from 2019). The largest increase seen in <13 years old and 13-17 age groups. There were also increases in mentor hunting license sales in 18-19, 20-29, 30-39 and 40-49 age groups.

Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative Enforcement Efforts

Our Marine Enforcement Unit, made up primarily of wardens along the Lake Michigan coast line, provided an the water security (both in conventional boats and air boats) to support the US Coast Guard during Littoral Combat Ship launches in Marinette County.

Staff in the northern section of the state continue to work high profile intentional wildlife poisoning cases where people place out poisoned meat baits with the intent to kill wolves. Many domestic pets have fallen victim to these indiscriminate activities.

Staff were heavily involved in the summer's civil unrest activities throughout the state. We provided security at the State Capitol building to ensure necessary governmental functions continued, protected businesses, firefighters and other property during violent riots and members of our staff on

the statewide tactical response team provided responses to several high risk incidents.

Staff worked as part of a multi-agency security team at large community events such as the American Birkebeiner cross country ski race, which brought over 40,000 people to the Hayward/Cable area over four days in February.

Wardens and the Investigations Team referred for prosecution a Wisconsin wholesale fish dealer for the illegal transportation, possession and sale of invasive Asian carp, one of the first cases of its kind in Wisconsin.

Wardens on the western part of the state responded to several calls for rescues during periods of high flooding. We worked closely with local LE and Governmental officials including the USFWS, using our specialized equipment and expertise, to evacuate homes and rescue stranded citizens during these events.

We are seeing a large uptick in "thrill killing" cases with young adults. These cases increased over during the year as many of the teenagers were out of school due to the pandemic. In one instance, a group admitted to the indiscriminate killing of deer, swans, vultures, geese, ducks, red-winged blackbirds and squirrels; all from a vehicle along a public roadway.

Staff continue to deal with timber thefts – primarily birch pole cutting on private property. Additionally, we are seeing an uptick in cases where specialty items, such as wood burls, are being stolen from private woodlots as well.

New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement

We implemented a new statewide drone team to assist with surveillance, accident scene reconstruction and searches. This team consists of 6 wardens statewide, all of whom are FAA certified and hold Airmen Certificates as Part 107 Remote Pilots for Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems. The team cooperatively trains with Wisconsin Drone Network, Wisconsin State Patrol, State Capitol Police and Wisconsin Department of Justice.

State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement

- Continued legislative and executive evaluation of policing standards, including transparency, use of force, training, de-escalation, and civil liability.
- Numerous legislative initiatives related to recreational vehicle use, including increased OWI penalties and increased size/weight limits for off-road vehicles.

Cost Savings Initiatives

- Utilized COVID-19 federal funding opportunities to subsidize overtime costs associated with pandemic response and incident management activities.
- Continued diversification of fleet (trucks/SUVs) to include hybrid powertrains with improved fuel efficiency.
- Utilized surplus fiscal year funds, including reduced operational costs during COVID-19, to front-load multi-year contracts and reduce fiscal impacts in subsequent years.

