



2024 AMFGLEO Agency Reports

- *Alberta*
- *Colorado*
- *Illinois*
- *Indiana*
- *Iowa*
- *Kansas*
- *Kentucky*
- *Manitoba*
- *Michigan*
- *Minnesota*
- *Missouri*
- *Nebraska*
- *North Dakota*
 - *Ohio*
- *Saskatchewan*
- *South Dakota*
 - *Texas*
- *Wisconsin*

**Association of Midwest Fish and
Game Law Enforcement Officers
2024 Agency Report
Province/State: ALBERTA
*Submitted by: Deputy Chief Rob Lamont
Date: May 1, 2024***

- **Training Issues** - *describe any new or innovative training programs or techniques which have been recently developed, implemented, or are now required.*

Alberta Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Services (FWES) continues assisting the RCMP (Provincial Police) with response to high priority emergencies in rural areas. (RAPID program). Select 'police' training courses that were identified and required based on a gap analysis respecting RAPID are complete for in-service Fish and Wildlife officers and are a requirement for new recruits moving forward.

Alberta is once again hosting the 4-month Western Canada Law Enforcement Academy Training which is underway for summer 2024 at Lac La Biche, Alberta. About 35 qualified students are attending including 11 from Alberta.

Supported by hands on, specialized in-person training, a key FWES responsibility of increasing focus involves acting as the lead agency in dealing with serious human-wildlife conflict occurrences, including property damage and dangerous wildlife (including maulings and fatalities). FWES supports public safety and protection of property by providing emergency response, occurrence management, and investigation in instances of problem wildlife. FWES also completes investigations and compensation claims for livestock injuries and losses due to large predators and for ungulate damage to stored hay and grain products.

All FWES officers are required to certify in various levels of the nationally recognized Incident Command System (ICS) training to effectively coordinate and assist police and other agencies with large-scale provincial emergencies such as widespread fires or floods.

- **Funding and Staffing Issues** - *identify any recent developments in funding, staffing, and diversity in employment issues and describe what prompted these developments and how improvements in funding, staffing and diversity in employment were accomplished.*

Recently increased funding levels in the branch have been maintained with planning underway to fill current vacancies and to address staffing shortages in some areas. Planning also continues to hire seasonal indigenous staff to support problem wildlife programs near indigenous communities.

Ongoing training sessions respecting EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) for all staff is part of a commitment to creating and fostering an inclusive and diverse workplace.

- **Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends** - *identify any major cooperative, interstate, reciprocal or other cross jurisdictional law enforcement trends (e.g., including community policing, operator under the influence (OUI) initiatives, or other issues which fall outside traditional fish and wildlife enforcement functions).*
- As above, the branch is involved in all aspects of policing in rural Alberta when requested to assist the provincial police including during high priority emergency calls. The intent is to increase response and response times based on a 'closest car' policy. Once the emergency is handled and the police can assume total control, fish and wildlife officers will revert to core mandated conservation enforcement and human-wildlife conflict duties.
- **Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts** - *describe any interagency, interstate, international, state/tribal, or other cross jurisdictional enforcement efforts (e.g., major Lacey Act investigations, progress with Wildlife Violator Compacts, improvements in interagency communication (WCIS), etc.)*

The Special Investigations Section of FWES is the designated liaison for the sharing of intelligence and the facilitation of wildlife and fisheries investigations that transcend provincial or international boundaries. To accomplish this function, the Major Investigations, and Intelligence Unit (MIIU) has established formal information sharing agreements with over 30 state and federal resource law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and regularly participates in cooperative enforcement efforts with resource agencies in all provinces and territories in Canada. These interprovincial and international investigations present unique challenges for evidence collection, the ability to compel individuals to respond to charges (accused and witnesses), and the coordination and presentation of evidence within court systems in multiple jurisdictions. Successful investigation and prosecution of investigations of this type often requires the formal invocation of procedures that are defined within Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties that exist between Canada and many other countries.

- **New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement** - *describe any innovations in equipment, enforcement techniques, forensics, etc.*

The branch continues to utilize UAVs (drones) and has demonstrated success with officer safety issues and evidence gathering for prosecutions.

Arising from the RAPID program, FWES officers are trained and continue carrying CEWs when in uniform.

Semi-auto .308 carbine rifles and load bearing vests with heavy armor have replaced previous equipment.

The FWES forensic/DNA lab continues to operate under ISO accredited criteria.

The FWES Records Management System has changed from Enfor to Niche along with computer-aided dispatch through SOCC (Sheriffs Operational Control Center).

Transitions and pilot programs for e-ticketing using SmartSquad, as well as web-based e-licensing and e-tagging initiatives continue.

- **State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement** - *describe issues which impact or challenge law enforcement authority.*

Triaging of files by Crown Prosecutors remains an issue, as does their decision to no longer compensate crown witnesses for reasonable expenses incurred when responding to a subpoena respecting “provincial” charges. The Government of Alberta is in the process of hiring and deploying more prosecutors and FWES continues to explore the potential of FWES dedicated Crown prosecutors to oversee prosecution files. In addition, the government is working to streamline processes to reduce physical court time by staff and public.

**Association of Midwest Fish and
Game Law Enforcement Officers
2024 Agency Report
Province/State: COLORADO**

*Submitted by: Ty Petersburg- Chief of Law Enforcement
Date: May 1, 2024*

Like much of the rest of the country, Colorado is undergoing a significant transition in demographics and political change directly impacting the operations of Colorado Parks and Wildlife in ways that are both challenging and beneficial.

- **TRAINING, FUNDING AND STAFFING**

When fully staffed, Colorado employs roughly 400 officers: about 250 wildlife officers and 150 parks officers. Current staffing is hovering around 350 officers. In 2022 and 2023, hiring for CPW law enforcement academies has been at record levels with 36 officers in 2022 and 25 in 2023. With some pay increases and changes to advancement, we are hoping to stem the tide and return to normal hiring levels in the next year or two.

Agency wide CPW has added nearly 150 FTEs in the last few years in an attempt to keep up with additive legislative mandates and programs, and lagging staffing in the field. Increased revenues through recent legislation and upgraded pay plans are steadily (and sometimes significantly) increasing pay for CPW employees.

CPW is beginning construction on a building renovation in Denver to create a new Law Enforcement Training Center on the main headquarters campus allowing ample space for academy training, defensive tactics, and other related training, work out facilities, meeting rooms and added office space. Construction should be completed in the spring of 2025.

Additionally, CPW is rolling out a new duty handgun platform (Smith & Wesson M&P 9mm) for all officers that includes miniature red dot sights, and a body worn camera pilot with the intention to fully equip all officers with BWC's in the spring of 2025. BWC's are a major shift for the agency, as CPW was exempted from 2020 legislation mandating this equipment for other law enforcement agencies. However, many judicial districts are increasingly skeptical of CPW case filings where officers were not providing BWC footage of contacts even suppressing witness statements of CPW officers when BWC footage was not available.

- **NEW INNOVATIONS IN CONSERVATION LAW ENFORCEMENT**

- 1. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Task Force Officer Program**

- In 2022, CPW entered into an MOA with the USFWS to join the Task Force Officer Program. The agency added a 10th criminal investigator and assigned him as the TFO in the collaborative program between Colorado and the Service (one of four nationwide).

After 18 months, the program has proven beneficial for both agencies to accomplish common goals. CPW's TFO has been granted all of the authority and access of any USFWS Special Agent allowing for seamless investigations as Colorado cases head out-of-state. To date, CPW's TFO has pursued Colorado cases in 18-20 states and one Canadian province, pursuing felony level and trophy class poaching cases. Colorado's TFO has taken field officers across state lines on 8 separate investigations, cutting red tape and agency approvals to finish these cases. As a result, CPW has had a 100% confession and conviction rate on these specific cases showing the power of having the local officer and TFO show up on the doorstep of poachers hundreds, if not thousands of miles away from Colorado.

Finally, the program has allowed Colorado's TFO to access Denver International Airport, federal criminal and intelligence databases and training to investigate growing markets for wildlife trafficking. DIA is now one of the world's busiest airports (3rd nationally, 6th internationally), becoming a hub for the trade of Colorado wildlife, international markets and exotic imports.

2. CPW K9 Program; Wildlife Trafficking and Conflict Bear Management

In the fall of 2023, CPW was asked to quickly put together a program proposal that would combat wildlife poaching/trafficking and help with conflict bear management across the state. In a hastily put together report, CPW proposed a program of 4-6 K9 officers that would be trained standard wildlife detection work and double as bear hazing dogs. In addition, the proposal called for regular wildlife detection work at DIA in cooperation with the USFWS, in an effort to combat wildlife trafficking occurring at the airport. The idea was to roughly parallel one of CPW's current K9's involved in a nearly 10-year pilot program (K9 Samson).

K9 Samson is a Belgian Malinois that CPW received through the Ben Roethlisberger foundation, based out of Lake George, CO with his handler, Wildlife Officer Ian Petkash. K9 Samson is certified and trained in detection work for 11 unique scents and article searches, and doubles as a bear hazing dog, similar to Karelian Bear Dogs employed by the State of Washington. The success rate of K9 Samson on conflict bears has proven effective with problem bears only having an 18% recidivism rate once they've been hazed. (Wildlife Officer Ian Petkash and K9 Samson received the 2022 JD Hart Wildlife Officer of the Year award for Colorado and recognition from AMFGELO for their efforts).

After reviewing the proposal, the Governor's Administration asked that CPW's K9 proposal be placed in the 2024 long bill, funding a 6 person K9 team, with funding coming live in July 2024. As far as we know, this will be the only program in the United States- combining standard detection K9s with bear hazing skills. Stay Tuned!

3. CPW'S INTERNAL COVERT INVESTIGATIONS ACADEMY (ICIA)

In April 2024, CPW's Law Enforcement Unit (LEU) held its first internal covert academy, modeled after WICA and several other states' internal academies. Twelve officers were selected from around the state to participate, in an effort to groom new covert criminal investigators, create a force-multiplier for the LEU for lower-level cases, and add diversity to our investigations team, allowing for opportunities to investigate crime in otherwise hard-to-penetrate operations (for example- Asian markets)

CPW's 10 Criminal Investigators, with help from investigators from the states of Wyoming, Utah and Kansas, held the 5-day training event in the Denver Metro area, over the opening weekend for the Colorado Rockies and the inaugural Mile High Hunt and Fish Expo.

Students participated in uncomfortable, real-life training in downtown Denver, reality-based training and scenarios, and classroom time. Within weeks of completing the training, one of the graduates was slated to work a UC contact with veteran investigators, expanding the reach and abilities of CPW's current staff.

- **MAJOR CONSERVATION LAW ENFORCEMENT TRENDS**

Two law enforcement trends that appear to be steadily growing in Colorado are license fraud and native reptile trafficking.

LICENSE FRAUD

Colorado offers landowner vouchers to private landowners that can be redeemed by hunters for use in the game management unit where the applicants reside. These vouchers may be sold but only by the identified landowner or their specified agent. Any third party brokering of vouchers is strictly prohibited.

Voucher fraud and brokering appears to be increasing as a black market for these vouchers has emerged. In some cases, criminals are paying landowners for the "right" to file for vouchers based on the owner's property. In others, criminals are enrolling properties without the knowledge of the landowner whatsoever.

The resulting financial windfall is in the tens of thousands, and in one case hundreds of thousands of dollars for the person committing the fraud. Often, hunters are left in the dark with licenses they cannot redeem or use for a legitimate hunt in Colorado.

REPTILE TRAFFICKING

Similar to many states across the nation, Colorado is seeing an increase in the interest of private ownership, trapping and commercialization of native and exotic reptiles. Anecdotally, CPW staff are seeing an overall decrease in reptile populations across the state, particularly in the plains as suspected reptile poachers and traffickers work rural parts of Colorado.

Routinely, these animals are propagated and sold, advertised online, and often shipped out of state to reptile enthusiasts.

Additionally, the sale and import of exotic reptiles continues to be a major problem. Recently, a Denver-metro man was bitten and killed by a Gila Monster that he likely illegally imported through a middleman. The story made national news and resulted in the scrutiny and review of Colorado's reptile regulations.

As a result, CPW is forming a working group to re-evaluate and modernize these regulatory requirements, governing the take and possession of native species, and the import and possession of exotics.

- **LEGAL CHALLENGES AND OTHER CONSERVATION LAW ENFORCEMENT CHALLENGES**

- 1. Continued proposed legislation regarding firearms and law enforcement reform.**

The heavily Democratic-controlled Colorado Legislature has introduced numerous measures in 2023 to tighten firearms restrictions and continue law enforcement/police reform. These initiatives include:

- Banning of Assault Weapons
- Requiring liability insurance for all gun owners
- Requiring firearms to be cased and locked in unattended motor vehicles.
- Banning the carry of firearms in "sensitive places"; including churches and houses of worship, public property and adjacent streets where an organized public gathering is taking place, state lands (including State Wildlife Areas), government buildings and adjacent areas.
- Banning of any prone restraint by law enforcement unless deadly physical force is warranted.
- Development of a centralized reporting database for each LE agency for complaints filed against law enforcement personnel resulting investigations that is searchable by the public.

Many of these bills are still pending or working their way through committees with only 1 week left in the legislature. It is unknown how many of these bills will be signed into law, and in what form, as CPW and other comment and testify before the House and Senate.

- 2. Addition of rare plants and pollinators to CPW's mission**

2024 legislation added monitoring responsibilities of rare plants and pollinators to CPW's mission. While this legislation does not add any enforcement language or authority, it does come with additional agency operational requirements and FTE's. The current bill (soon to be signed) will add approximately 14 FTE to the agency for these efforts.

3. Prop 91 Citizen’s Initiative to ban the hunting of mountain lions and bobcats.

Largely funded by out of state interests, Proposition 91 has been filed with the Secretary of State’s office to be placed on the 2024 ballot. If advocates of Prop 91 gather enough signatures, the ballot measure will ask Colorado voters to decide whether to ban the hunting of mountain lions, bobcats and the federally protected Canada Lynx. In addition, the ballot language seeks to define “Trophy Hunting” and prohibit this vaguely defined term.

4. Prop 114- Citizen’s Initiative to Reintroduce and Restore Gray Wolves

Colorado’s wolf reintroduction and restoration program was voted into law in 2020 by 50.3% of the vote. In December 2023, CPW translocated 10 gray wolves from the state of Oregon and added them to the 2 previously known gray wolves that were residing in the state. This effort has caused an immense amount of strain on local officers, staff and high-level decision makers, as the state is nearly evenly split in opposition and support for this project. However, the areas where wolves have been released are largely rural, heavily agricultural, and strongly oppose the effort.

In April 2024, one of the released wolves was found dead from natural causes hundreds of miles from the release site (possible predation) and another, previously unknown wolf from the Great Lakes region was found dead in Elbert County, southeast of Denver and far from any of the other known wolves. At the same time, the released wolves began a string of depredation events, killing a number of cattle and sheep in Grand County, creating the perfect storm for media attention, distrust and political tension across the state.

Joint investigations with the USFWS are on-going into both dead wolves, with final necropsy results are pending.

Additional wolf releases are scheduled in the coming winters to bolster wolf numbers to a sustainable population and allow for more flexibility to manage the species.

**Association of Midwest Fish and
Game Law Enforcement Officers
2024 Agency Report
Province/State: ILLINOIS
*Submitted by: Director of Law Enforcement
Jed Whitchurch
Date: 03/20/2024***

- **Training Issues** – *describe any new or innovative training programs or techniques that have been recently developed, implemented, or are now required.*

The Illinois Conservation Police continue to develop, revamp, and sharpen our in-house recruit academy standards. There is a constant push to institutionalize the academy staff and create a self-sustaining fourteen-week academy. Building a partnership with the Macon County Law Enforcement Training Center in Decatur, Illinois, has provided a resource with cutting-edge technology and facilities. Continued efforts are being made to have our academy accredited with the Illinois Training and Standards Board.

The Illinois Conservation Police has taken significant steps and successfully became accredited with NASBLA. This accreditation will ensure the readiness of the state of Illinois in the enforcement and emergency response boat crews throughout the country, our ability to conduct missions on our waterways safely and effectively with this standard, and a system to assess our agency's compliance with the standard in place.

Partnering with NASBLA, we are in the final stages of fielding three accredited instructors of OUI and Boat Incident Investigator who will be able to train our department and certify them through NASBLA's certification process.

Keeping with the trends of officer readiness, we have developed our own control and arrest tactics program, implementing Gracie Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and a train-the-trainer course to advance our trainer platform. Funding and Staffing Issues - identify any recent developments in funding, staffing, and diversity in employment issues and describe what prompted these developments and how improvements in funding, staffing, and diversity in employment were accomplished.

- **Funding and Staffing Issues** – *identify any recent developments in funding, staffing, and diversity in employment issues and describe what prompted these developments and how improvements in funding, staffing, and diversity in employment were accomplished.*

The Illinois Conservation Police are committed to implementing strategies to address recruitment changes and ensure we have a diverse and well-trained workforce that reflects our communities. We have been actively recruiting and hiring individuals from diverse backgrounds to increase the representation of minorities and women within our agency.

These efforts have resulted in a more diverse and representative workforce, with an increase in the number of female Conservation Police Officers and those from underrepresented backgrounds; this has not only enhanced the Department's ability to connect with a broader range of communities but has also enriched the perspectives and experiences within the team, leading to greater effectiveness and understanding in enforcing conservation laws and protecting natural resources.

Additionally, we are investing in training and professional development opportunities for our officers to enhance their skills and knowledge in conservation law enforcement. We are working to improve our relationships with local communities and stakeholders to build trust and collaboration in our enforcement efforts.

Improvements in funding were achieved through various means, such as increasing government budgetary allocations to hiring more Conservation Police Officers. Illinois Conservation Police have hired 116 Officers since 2018, 13% female. There is an academy of 25 recruits who will graduate in April 2024, with the plan to hire an additional 15 in FY2025.

Overall, the Illinois Conservation Police continuously strive to evolve and adapt to meet the unique challenges and demands of conservation law enforcement in Illinois. By prioritizing diversity, training, and community engagement, we are confident that we can better fulfill our mission of protecting Illinois' natural resources for future generations.

- **Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends** - *identify any major cooperative, interstate, reciprocal, or other cross-jurisdictional law enforcement trends (e.g., including community policing, operator under the influence (OUI) initiatives, or other issues that fall outside traditional fish and wildlife enforcement functions).*

As Major metropolitan areas begin to field real-time crime centers (RTCC), traditional information siloing is starting to disappear. The Illinois Conservation Police are pursuing initiatives with local policing agencies in our major population centers to access similar systems, including information-sharing platforms like Slack, to fill the gaps in some of our current systems.

The increased use of License Plate Readers (LPRs) has provided unique opportunities to streamline information-gathering and help expedite case investigations. As the Illinois Conservation Police also provide law enforcement services to State Parks and Historic Sites, we are currently working with our Office of Land Management to begin fielding systems like Vigilant and Flock cameras at some of our select sites.

We have identified an increase in the use of state campgrounds as semi-permanent residences, and increasing scrutiny of these unlawful users has resulted in multiple arrests of fugitives, sexual predators, and users of illegal narcotics.

Further use of these systems would give us better situational awareness about who and what is coming onto those state properties and access to the broader information system collected by those products.

- **Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative Enforcement Efforts** - *describe any interagency, interstate, international, state/tribal, or other cross-jurisdictional enforcement efforts (e.g., major Lacey Act investigations, progress with Wildlife Violator Compacts, improvements in interagency communication (WCIS), etc.)*

In addition to the frequent assistance of other state partners and other state Fish and Wildlife enforcement agencies, the Illinois Conservation Police are pursuing three major cooperative initiatives.

USCG/CGIS/IDNR Task Force – The Illinois Conservation Police continue working closely with the United States Coast Guard. While working with members from the Marine Safety Unit Chicago, Coast Guard Station Chicago, and the Coast Guard Investigative Service, Conservation Police Officers assisted in creating a task force focused on investigating and enforcing illegal charter operations in the Southern Tip of Lake Michigan.

This unique partnership created an informational campaign, a user-friendly investigative tool, and an easy-to-report tip tool. So far, this task force has made multiple arrests and assessed penalties, including a man sentenced to a year in prison and another that resulted in the Coast Guard seeking a record \$80,000.00 in restitution.

State Police SWAT/WMD cooperation—The Illinois Conservation Police have been increasing interagency cooperation with our State Police partners on the regional SWAT and Statewide Weapons of Mass Destruction Teams to increase our agencies' capabilities in remote areas and waterborne operations.

Conservation officers have recently conducted joint waterborne active threat response planning, exercises, and training with the Illinois State Police, FBI Chicago, and the Chicago Police Department. Most recently, with the Chicago St. Patrick's Day Parade, Conservation Officers worked with the Illinois State Police with WMD/CBRN Screening along the Chicago River before the parade.

Environmental Crimes Working Group-Chicago – The Illinois Conservation Police have just entered the founding phase of an environmental crimes working group. Member agencies of this group consist of the US EPA, FBI, DOJ, DHS-HSI, USFWS, USDA, DHS-CBP, Illinois EPA, Indiana Environmental Management, US Office of Housing and Urban Development, Cook County Dept. of Environment and Sustainability, and the Chicago Dept. of Public Health.

This group will help develop liaison relationships between local, state, and federal law enforcement partners in the greater Chicago area, focusing on investigating and prosecuting environmental crimes. This collaborative approach will assist in exchanging ideas and best practices, develop a clear understanding of the environmental issues in the greater Chicago area, and help facilitate a clear path to investigation and prosecution.

- **New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement** – *describe any innovations in equipment, enforcement techniques, forensics, etc.*

Illinois Conservation Police are continuing to increase their capabilities; by sending officers to additional training in fields like crime scene technicians, lead homicide investigations, and crisis and incident management courses, we can learn about new techniques, technology, and procedures that we can leverage and tweak to use in conservation-specific enforcement and investigation scenarios.

Illinois Conservation Police have been utilizing custom-built remote-controlled "boats" containing side-imaging sonar units to be able to run sonar searches on bodies of water that would otherwise be unfeasible to put a boat or diver. Conservation Police Officers have also begun fielding pole-mounted underwater cameras to supplement or replace divers, saving valuable time when conducting search and rescue or recovery operations.

The Illinois Conservation Police are implementing an electronic timber truck inspection form. This new form will be uploaded to the database in real time. By implementing this electronic form, the Illinois Conservation Police are streamlining the inspection process and improving the accuracy and accessibility of inspection data. This database will help us more effectively monitor and enforce timber transportation regulations, ensuring that timber is being harvested and transported legally and responsibly. In addition, having real-time access to inspection data will allow us to quickly identify and address any potential issues or violations, ultimately helping to protect Illinois's valuable forests and natural resources.

- **State, Regional, and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges, and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement** - *describe issues that impact or challenge law enforcement authority.*

In 2023, several bills affected the Illinois Conservation Police. These ranged from minor changes to current laws to complete overhauls of specific pieces of statute.

The most dramatic changes were to the statute governing the timber industry in Illinois. Public Act 103-0218, known as the "Timber Buyers Act," went into effect on January 1, 2024. These changes to the Timber Buyers Act in Illinois represent a significant shift in regulations for the timber industry in the state. By requiring all employees of timber buyers to be listed on license applications and be at least 18 years old, the Act aims to ensure accountability and professionalism within the industry. New regulations provide that every person licensed as a timber buyer shall file a certificate of liability insurance (rather than a performance bond) with the Department of Natural Resources. The increase in the required liability insurance amount to \$500,000 and the higher filing fees for resident and non-resident licenses also indicate a tightening of oversight and regulation.

Furthermore, the provisions related to property seizure and forfeiture reporting suggest a more robust enforcement mechanism for violations of the Act. The changes to what constitutes unlawful behavior, as well as the penalties and fines associated with violations, demonstrate a commitment to upholding the integrity of the timber industry in Illinois.

Overall, these amendments to the Timber Buyers Act signal a more stringent regulatory framework for the state's timber industry, focusing on accountability, compliance, and enforcement.

Illinois also passed a law changing the fish and wildlife codes to allow individuals to obtain a three-year fishing or hunting license. The law also provides that for residents 65 or older and resident veterans of the United States Armed Forces, after returning from service abroad or mobilization by the President of the United States, the fee is one-half of the fee charged for a three-year license.

Illinois Conservation Police also saw amendments to the Nuisance Wildlife Control Operations law. The new law tightens regulations on individuals who act as nuisance wildlife control operators for a fee or compensation. It now mandates that individuals must obtain a permit before conducting trapping activities unless in compliance with specific provisions of the law.

The amendment allows the Department to issue Nuisance Wildlife Control Permits to individuals providing wildlife control services for a fee, governmental bodies, and nonprofit or charitable organizations. It also stipulates that operating without a permit is now a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of not less than \$500. Additionally, any other violation of these provisions, including administrative rules, is considered a Class B misdemeanor, with perpetrators facing potential fines and penalties.

In summary, this amendment aims to regulate and monitor nuisance wildlife control operations more effectively, ensuring that individuals and entities engaging in wildlife trapping activities do so legally and responsibly, with appropriate permits to protect both wildlife and the public.

- **Cost Savings Initiatives** - *identify initiatives in any area that contributed to improvements in work effectiveness and fiscal efficiency.*

Cost-saving initiatives are always at the forefront of the Illinois Conservation Police's efforts to provide the best equipment and training through common-sense decision-making. As we move forward, we invest in our officers an upfront cost analysis identifying where we can create once-outsourced training back under our control in-house. These initiatives include our Firearms, Control, and Arrest Tactics, NASBLA Inland Boat, OUI, Boat Incident Investigations, Court Smart, and Leader Development.

Our team has found new ways to streamline procurement processes for uniforms through a state contract system, and we have regained the ability to purchase our fleet of vehicles. These initiatives put control back into our hands by purchasing the best products for our officers and reducing costs.

Building strong bonds with our supervisors and officers alike has been at the highest level during the last few months, with the signing of the labor union contracts. In all respects, the officers, supervisors, and the state of Illinois came to terms where each side was satisfied

with their quality of life and the sacrifices needed to keep the Department operating at its peak fiscal performance.

Constant field-testing initiatives with equipment allow the officers and the Department to select products that best fit our needs. Although many officers suggest products with the highest price tags, we find it necessary to find comparable products for a lesser investment that will still provide the same quality. Through transparency, there is an understanding amongst the ranks that the Department will provide equipment if the officers are willing to have an open mindset about testing other comparable products to satisfy the needs and the financial burden.

- **Other Special Law Enforcement Issues** - The Illinois Conservation Police are at the forefront of unfunded mandates, including implementing body-worn cameras. Illinois Law Enforcement officers, as a whole, are mandated to wear body-worn cameras by 2025. With our agency spread throughout the state, finding a product with diversification to fit our unique situation was complicated. Not only was it challenging to find the product, but prioritizing funding from other areas to fund the project was also difficult.

**Association of Midwest Fish and
Game Law Enforcement Officers
2024 Agency Report
Province/State: INDIANA
Submitted by: Col. Steve Hunter
Date: April 17, 2024**

- **Training Issues** - *describe any new or innovative training programs or techniques which have been recently developed, implemented, or are now required.*

Our agency is routinely exploring options to improve training and find innovative techniques to ensure our officers are trained and equipped to do their job to the best of their ability. The requirement by the law enforcement training board to train on mandatory topics is not new and at times is “redundant” and sometimes “boring” training. We are currently rolling out a new technique or method to cover our annual statewide law enforcement mandated training topics (Domestic Violence, Hazardous Materials, SIDS, Blood Borne Pathogens, Mental Illness, Human Trafficking, Autism, De-escalation, Alzheimer’s).

Historically, these topics were presented in a lecture or PowerPoint presentation format. After researching alternative methods, we have decided to implement ACT Out as a new training method. Using social issues improv theatre, the ACT Out ensemble, an evidence-based program of Claude McNeal Productions (headquartered in Indianapolis), along with IDEA annually create interactive and entertaining two-hour programs that give you two ILEA credit hours and cover all eight mandated areas of training. This unique way of presenting state mandated training was developed by the Indiana Drug Enforcement Association and has been seen and approved by the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy.

Our agency updated our Use of Force and Motor Vehicle Pursuit policies to become compliant with the State of Indiana mandate. This is an obstacle in itself due to the scheduling and logistics issues that come into to play when attempting to train hundreds of officers across the state of Indiana.

- **Funding and Staffing Issues** - *identify any recent developments in funding, staffing, and diversity in employment issues and describe what prompted these developments and how improvements in funding, staffing and diversity in employment were accomplished.*

Funding – The Indiana legislature was very gracious to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Division in the formulation of fiscal year 2024 and 2025 budgets. Budget increases covered, among other things, an increase in the pay matrix, body worn cameras, a dedicated line item of \$900,000 to cover major patrol boat purchases, and leadership training opportunities for all officers and staff. The total overall budget increase was in the 50% range.

Staffing – We are currently seeing our highest staffing levels in decades. A hiring process for 2024 is currently underway with the goal of hiring approximately 18 new officers. With this addition, we estimate to have 210 officers with a maximum agency staffing limit being 214.

In the wake of COVID-19 and the civil unrest we witnessed over the last few years, we felt it was essential to examine our hiring process to ensure that it attracts a diverse and natural resource focused candidate. We did this in the following ways:

- Maintain a division-wide recruitment team with diverse members.
 - Continually review and revise our recruitment plan to ensure inclusive and equitable processes to attract a diverse pool of candidates.
 - Actively seek out members of diverse groups that traditionally do not apply for our positions in our field of expertise.
 - Identify quality candidates at the front end and keep them engaged throughout the hiring process.
 - Host hiring seminars across the state with a minimum of one per district during a hiring process. These seminars will consist of a detailed explanation of the hiring process, a practice POST test, a Q&A session, and tips on how to be successful in the process.
- **Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends** - *identify any major cooperative, interstate, reciprocal or other cross jurisdictional law enforcement trends (e.g., including community policing, operator under the influence (OUI) initiatives, or other issues which fall outside traditional fish and wildlife enforcement functions).*

We participated in our annual Operation Dry Water (ODW) campaign. ODW is a year-round boating under the influence awareness and enforcement campaign. The mission of ODW is to reduce the number of alcohol- and drug-related incidents and fatalities through increased recreational boater awareness and by fostering a stronger and more visible deterrent to alcohol use on the water.

Operation Dry Water's heightened awareness and enforcement three-day weekend takes place annually around July 4th, a holiday unfortunately known for drinking and boating, and deadly incidents.

In 2023, staff representing each division of the Indiana DNR and some administrative divisions, along with division directors, spent the day with Earl B. Hunter, Jr. Founder and CEO of Black Folks Camp Too (BFCT). Earl shared his vision for inviting and welcoming everyone to public lands across the country in a frank and inspiring keynote address. Indiana State Parks, on behalf of all of us in DNR, contracted with BFCT to provide the keynote and to develop training that helps us all better understand some of the historical perspectives impacting the pursuit of outdoor activities by Black people. The training also provides guidance for us in inviting and welcoming ALL people of color to our properties. Following completion of this training by DNR staff, properties will be able to display the Unity Blaze, which is a trademarked feature of BFCT, that symbolizes that all are welcome. We will market the use of the Unity Blaze with BFCT and will also continue to work with them on activities to further engage communities of color.

This effort, which must span the service of individual leaders and elections, is important for several reasons. First, it is the right thing to do. Our public lands are open and available to every Hoosier and to guests from other states and countries as well. We want everyone to know that and feel welcome. Second, as demographics change in the United States and in Indiana, it is important that all citizens of the state are familiar with and can support the work of DNR and our public lands – not only by visiting and by contributing to their care through fees, but by understanding their value and supporting them with their tax dollars and legislative advocacy. Finally, it is important in laying the groundwork for ensuring that our future workforce includes people of color with their interests and perspectives.

The general goals of this initiative are:

- To have staff across the agency better understand the historical and cultural perspectives of how people of color interact with the outdoors/public lands and evaluate our agency rules, policies, and actions (where possible) in the light of those perspectives.
 - To intentionally engage in invitation, welcoming, and relationship building with individuals and groups in communities of color at the property level and across the agency
 - To promote, through a variety of media, the broad scope of outdoor opportunities at our properties, and to do that promotion in ways that illustrate that those opportunities are available to everyone.
 - To make connections and develop initiatives/programs that improve diversity in our workforce.
 - To keep staff informed on progress in this effort and provide them with opportunities for sharing questions, challenges, and successes so that it remains a priority.
- **Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts** - *describe any interagency, interstate, international, state/tribal, or other cross jurisdictional enforcement efforts (e.g., major Lacey Act investigations, progress with Wildlife Violator Compacts, improvements in interagency communication (WCIS), etc.)*

In 2022, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources reached out for our assistance in investigating the unlawful harvesting of moose by several Indiana residents. This investigation lasted throughout 2023. Throughout the investigation, further evidence was collected, resulting in numerous fish and game charges in both Indiana and Ohio.

Indiana's assistance in the investigation resulted in 5 Indiana residents being charged in Canada with the illegal taking of two moose. The suspects are facing fines estimated to be \$48,750. The collaborative endeavors of various agencies yielded sufficient evidence for Canada to press charges against a collective of 21 individuals and 3 corporations involved in the illegal harvesting of 14 moose. The estimated total fines for this case amount to approximately \$170,000, accompanied by hunting suspensions spanning twelve years. Below are some additional disposition details.

Bob Green's Fly-in Camps Ltd., plead guilty to hunting moose without a license, discharging a firearm from a motorboat, possessing wildlife illegally killed, making a false statement in a

document, and obstructing a Conservation Officer. The business was fined a total of \$32,500 (\$40,625).

Green Airways plead guilty to hunting moose without a license, discharging a firearm from a motorboat, possessing wildlife illegally killed, making a false statement in a document, and obstructing a Conservation Officer. The corporation received a suspended sentence. Tourism moose tag shares and bear management areas held by the corporation were revoked by the OMNRF.

Robert A. Green of Red Lake, ON plead guilty to hunting moose without a license, discharging a firearm from a motorboat, possessing wildlife illegally killed, making a false statement in a document, and obstructing a Conservation Officer. He received \$30,000 (\$37,500) in fines, a 5-year hunting license suspension, and is prohibited from guiding big game hunters for two years.

Robert W. Green of Red Lake, ON plead guilty to hunting moose without a license, discharging a firearm from a motorboat, possessing wildlife illegally killed, making a false statement in a document, and obstructing a Conservation Officer. He received \$12,500 (\$15,625) in fines, a 5-year hunting license suspension, and is prohibited from guiding big game hunters for two years.

Chad Dunham of Mitchell, IN plead guilty to hunting a bull and cow moose while swimming, hunting moose during a closed season, and hunting a bull moose without a license. He was fined \$16,200 (\$20,250) and received a 12-year hunting license suspension.

Michael Allen of Lebanon, IN plead guilty to unlawfully hunting a bull and cow moose that were swimming. He was fined \$9000 (\$11,250) and received a 10-year hunting license suspension.

Anthony Alberson of Bloomfield, IN plead guilty to hunting moose during a closed season and hunting a bull moose without a license. He received a \$7200 (\$9000) fine and received a 2-year hunting license suspension.

Clayton Jackson of Wetumpka, AL pleaded guilty to hunting a bull moose without a license. He was fined \$4200 (\$5250) and received a 2-year hunting license suspension.

Daniel Bash of Poland, IN plead guilty to unlawfully possessing an illegally killed bull moose. He was fined \$3000 (\$3750) and received a 1-year hunting license suspension.

The court heard that between the fall of 2019 and the fall of 2021, Robert A. Green, Robert W. Green guided and participated in hunting with clients of Green Airways Ltd., at Bob Green's Fly-in Camp's lodge on Mamakwash Lake. Robert A. Green, with the assistance of Robert W. Green guided clients in wildlife management units where the clients were not licensed, directed clients to shoot moose from power boats, and knowingly assisting with the retrieval and possession of moose killed illegally by these clients.

There was a total of \$178,000 fines and 44,525 surcharge levied against 19 defendants for a total payable of \$222,525. There was a total of 59 years of hunting license suspensions issued.

- **New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement** - *describe any innovations in equipment, enforcement techniques, forensics, etc.*

Thermal Imaging - The Indiana DNR Law Enforcement Division purchased and is equipping each officer with a thermal imaging device. Thermal imaging systems offer more than just the ability to see beyond dark applications. The technology provides the ability to detect extreme small differences in temperature with no light or special illuminators and is not limited by smoke, fog, or other particulates.

Thermal imaging is particularly useful at night to locate threats such as suspects, dogs, or other dangers to the first responder. It can be applied to finding lost children, or a fugitive, and locating animals in dense foliage or darkness. These devices are used as force multipliers in search and rescue operations to cover large search areas rapidly and accurately with fewer personnel at less cost.

Outer Carriers - The Indiana DNR Law Enforcement Division explored the option of outer carriers for our officers. Due to research and feedback from officers, it was decided by the division that officers had the option of purchasing a specific style of outer carrier out of their own pocket to wear on duty while utilizing their class B uniform.

We found several practical advantages that our officers immediately noticed when wearing the outer vest carrier. Because the vest is worn outside of the uniform, it becomes easier to adjust throughout an officer's shift. Officers who work in areas that become particularly hot will be able to remove the vest to provide relief as well (This should only be done in safe, secure areas). This was especially appealing to our K-9 handlers that spend extended times in the heat running search tracks.

Officers will also be able to lighten the load of their duty belts. Many tactical outer vest carriers include additional pouches and pockets for flashlights or radios. Though these individual items may only weigh a few pounds each, any officer working in the field can testify to the tremendous amount of relief provided by taking a few pounds off his or her waist. Additionally, some smaller framed officers may not have room on their duty belts for all the equipment they carry.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) – We recently refreshed and added to our UAV fleet. With the replacement of outdated models and the purchase of additional vehicles, we currently have seven strategically placed UAVs in our fleet.

The UAV has been found to be a safe and useful tool for many law enforcement applications. Some of these applications include search & rescue, incident investigations, incident overwatch, situational awareness, traffic crash reconstruction and evidence search.

- **State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement** - *describe issues which impact or challenge law enforcement authority.*

Indiana lawmakers recently passed a bill allowing the use of infrared drones to locate and recover hunted animals in Indiana. State lawmakers are giving Hoosier hunters the go-ahead to take with them into the woods or fields an unmanned aerial vehicle with infrared capabilities to help locate or recover any legally taken wild animal.

Our previous statute specifically prohibited a person from utilizing a UAV as an aid in “taking” the wild animal. We also had an administrative code that stated an individual must not use infrared sensors to locate or take deer and an individual must not hunt or retrieve deer with the aid of an infrared detector.

- **Cost Savings Initiatives** - *identify initiatives in any area which contributed to improvements in work effectiveness and fiscal efficiency.*

The Indiana DNR Law Enforcement Division is consistently seeking out ways to be fiscally responsible when it comes to budget items, especially items with significant price tags. Our agency has put forth an effort to seek out and apply for port security grants to assist in the purchasing of new patrol boats and to assist in the purchase of thermal imaging devices. We were also able to obtain grants for one UAV. These grants have saved our agency thousands of dollars in our annual budget.

Agency Report
IOWA Dept. of Natural Resources
Law Enforcement Bureau:

In 2023 a law enforcement strategic alignment team, consisting of Conservation Officers and Park Rangers, worked together to look at aligning law enforcement efforts in DNR to enhance operational efficiencies, ensuring that the structure and use of resources are managed to create the best possible future for protecting our natural resources and the citizens of Iowa. Through this teams' hard work and the planning from law enforcement and parks along with management a plan has been developed for integrating the park rangers into the law enforcement bureau starting in 2024. This plan will further streamline law enforcement efforts on all public and private lands in Iowa. The law enforcement bureau currently has 77 field officers, 6 supervisory captains and 1 LE bureau chief.

The Turn in Poachers (TIP) board has again proved to be a great supporter for the bureau. Their assistance has been instrumental, not only with enforcement cases, but also with securing needed equipment through donations. A total of \$28,000.00 dollars was paid out by the TIP board through the Turn In Poachers program to citizens and sports people taking the time to get involved. The board also purchased for the department a wolf and coyote mount for the TIP trailer at \$4,800, purchased a doppler radio tracking unit for enforcement at \$17,000, purchased 8 new fur cases for wildlife ID programs at \$6,400 and a cloudrunner camera for long term surveillance at \$2,500. TIP continues to be a great partner with assisting in protecting Iowa's great natural resources.

Conservation Officers have three mandatory use of force sessions throughout the year, and in addition to the required qualifications that are done within the districts, all officers meet for 1/3 state training. Through these training, three dates are provided where officers receive extra hands-on training that range from positional shooting with handguns and long guns, tactical shooting around and in vehicles, and scenario based defensive tactics training. After the 1/3 state training is completed, a use of force meeting is held within each district. Instructors work on adult learning techniques and reemphasize the lessons learned at 1/3 state training. Conservation officers receive 15 hrs. firearm training, 3 hrs. defensive tactics, 4 hrs. combination of defensive tactics and firearms training annually. Yearly qualifications are handgun, shotgun, rifle, and low light handgun. Other trainings include implicit bias, de-escalation, bloodborne pathogens, security awareness, preventing sexual harassment, swift water rescue, advanced BUI detection and enforcement, LEDT recertification. 2024 goals are handgun red dot training for duty pistols, Gracie survival tactics which is a Jui-ji-tsu based defensive tactics and officer water survival school.

**Association of Midwest Fish and
Game Law Enforcement Officers
2023 Agency Report
Department of Wildlife & Parks: KANSAS
Law Enforcement Division
*Submitted by: Colonel Greg Kyser***

Training Issues

The Law Enforcement Division hired four new Game Warden recruits in 2023. Three of them were already certified officers from other agencies in the state of Kansas, while the fourth recruit attended the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center in Hutchinson, KS.

Annual In-Service was held in February at Acorns Resort near Milford Reservoir. The following topics were covered during the 3-day In-Service training.

- Drug Identification/Trends
- License plate readers
- Profile of a poacher
- MOCIC presentation
- New radio, functions & use
- New Officers Introductions/Boating Update
- Senior Command Staff Talk & Awards

Special Thanks to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and Idaho Game and Fish for the excellent training they provided on "Profile of a poacher", and to the Geary County Sheriff's Office Drug Task Force for training on drug identification trends.

Funding and Staffing Issues

KDWP has 11 openings for entry-level warden positions. Testing has changed multiple times per year to recruit more candidates. The hiring process for Game Wardens has evolved to allow applicants who know/have experience with the outdoors to test. While a bachelor's degree is preferred, it is no longer required.

Pay plan initiative.

- In 2023, a new pay initiative was approved which moved starting pay for new game wardens to \$25.68 per hour. Corresponding pay increases for existing officers resulted in significant pay increases across the board.

Retirement plan – Kansas Police and Fire

- A new retirement plan was approved and went into effect on July 1, 2023. This retirement system allows for officers to retire at age 50 with 25 years of service.

Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends

The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks (KDWP) has partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for their task force officer program. Under this program, a KDWP officer is assigned to work with the USFWS in cases that have a federal nexus. Kansas is only the third state to join this program, following Colorado and Oklahoma. This position has proved to be very helpful as our officer has been able to contribute to multiple cases.

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

Kansas Senate Bill #347

This bill would abolish the current wildlife and parks commission; creating a new Kansas wildlife and parks commission; granting appointment authority to multiple state officers; authorizing the commission to elect a chairperson. This bill is currently still under consideration at the time of this report.

Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts

A Kansas wildlife investigator informed authorities in South Carolina about a group of hunters who were in violation of several laws. The hunters were stopped soon after returning home. During the investigation, multiple interviews were conducted, and search warrants were issued. It was found that the group had illegally transported deer, exceeded the allowed limit of deer hunting, and transferred permits. Among the deer heads seized as evidence, one tested positive for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), which was the first known case in South Carolina. The case was charged through the US Fish and Wildlife Service and three individuals were charged under the federal Lacey Act. The last subject made a plea agreement in February 2024.

Sean Paschall plead to:

\$5000.00 Fine, \$3000.00 restitution to Kansas, 24 months license revocation and worldwide hunting ban.

Chad Seymore plead to:

\$10,000.00 Fine, \$5292.00 restitution to Kansas, 36 months license revocation and worldwide hunting ban.

Justin LeMaster plead to:

\$1200.00 Fine, \$3000.00 restitution to Kansas, 12 months license revocation and worldwide hunting ban.

Southeast Kansas Poison/Poaching

In November 2021, southeast Kansas Game Wardens began an investigation into suspected poisoning that killed multiple raptors and a juvenile bald eagle, in addition to opossums and the complainant's dog. A search warrant for electronic data showed a possible suspect. After observation of electronic data, 6 dead deer and 4 dead turkey carcasses were located. Electronic data returned to a device owned by a US Forest Service employee in Arkansas, who was employed as a chemical applicator.

Samples from the originally located bait pile were sent to US Fish and Wildlife Service lab and was identified as Aldicarb, a chemical banned in the 2000's. Officers conducted surveillance of the subject during the 2022 Kansas Spring Turkey season. During the trip, the suspect unlawfully shot a turkey with a firearm during archery only turkey season.

A search warrant was later executed at the individual's residence and storage unit in Arkansas where multiple items of evidence, including illegal wildlife and Aldicarb poison was seized.

Sentencing WILSON COUNTY RAPTOR POISONING-Tim HOLT, a US Forest Service employee, was initially charged by information for one count of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (2 red-tailed hawks), one count of the Bald/Golden Eagle Protection Act (one juvenile bald eagle), one count of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA-unlawful use of insecticide aldicarb in violation of label) and three counts of the Lacey Act (2022-unlawful take of a turkey with firearm in archery season/2022 unlawful take/attempt to take of white-tailed deer/2018 unlawful take of white-tailed deer).

Based on a plea agreement, HOLT pled guilty to one count of FIFRA and one count of the Lacey Act for the 2022 Turkey hunt. HOLT agreed to abandon all the wildlife and poison associated with these charges, to pay \$5,000 restitution to KDWP, \$3,000 restitution to the FWS Lacey Act reward fund, \$30 to the crime victims account and three years unsupervised probation with a no hunt/trap/fish/guide or be present for said activities for three years. The US Magistrate additionally imposed a \$1,000 fine for the Lacey Act violation due to HOLT being previously arrested by KDWP in 2019 for a white-tailed deer poaching in Kansas.

This investigation was a joint effort by the USFWS, USFWS-Lab, EPA, KDWP, and Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC). The FWS Lab was instrumental in cause of death determinations during the poison investigation, but also in DNA analysis in linking HOLT from deer parts found on private property in Kansas, linking to deer parts thereof in HOLT's possession in Arkansas.

KDWP received a technology award from Google for use of geo-fence warrants in an investigation.

New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement

The Law Enforcement Division of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks recently acquired two Blue Link Inc. underwater remote-operated vehicles (ROVs) using agency funds and matching Coast Guard funds. The ROVs are capable of operating for long periods of time thanks to the tether system that connects them to a power unit on shore or in a boat. They are equipped with the Oculus Viewpoint Sonar system, similar to "livescope", which allows the operator to have access to live real-time images displayed on a computer system or an external monitor. The operator can maneuver the ROV using real-time video footage or by using the Oculus system. During training, a target was placed approximately 150 feet from the ROV, which was being operated from shore. The ROV was able to identify and move towards the target using the Oculus system. Once close enough, the target was illuminated using the forward-mounted LED lights and identified. The ROVs have a remotely operated grabber arm that can grasp objects. The tether is reinforced, allowing the operator or their assistant to physically pull the ROV to the surface and recover the firmly grasped object or body without placing a diver in harm's way. The ROV is quick to use, portable, and can be launched from a boat or from shore. It can be used for investigating boat accidents, drownings, and recovering evidence from the bottom of a lake or pond. Currently, six boating enforcement specialists and the boating law administrator have been trained to operate the ROVs, with additional officers to be trained in the upcoming months.

The Kansas Department of Wildlife Parks Law Enforcement Division established its drone program in 2017, following the Kansas Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) State Committee's encouragement to identify areas where UAS equipment and programs could add value to state departments. The program employs the DJI M30T UAS platform, specifically designed for law enforcement and first responder applications. Its features include a 360-degree obstacle avoidance system, longer battery run time, and the ability to operate effectively in cold, light/mod rainy, windy, dusty environments. The multi-faceted camera system includes a wide-angle camera, digital zoom camera, professional thermal camera, and laser rangefinder. The platform also includes a spotlight, loudspeaker, multiple charging battery charger, and a more functional/practical controller for the pilot. The program has six fully staffed pilots, with at least one pilot per region. All pilots are FAA certified and have completed the FAA Part 107 certification for Commercial Remote Pilots through Kansas State University – Polytechnic in Salina, Kansas. They have also completed and passed a law enforcement training course that covers operating and maneuvering the UAS and camera system. Pilots regularly meet throughout the year to stay up to date with technological updates, FAA new releases, legal updates, and to maintain and increase skill proficiency.

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks new RMS system has been under development with training to begin in May 2024. SmartCOP allows for digital ticketing, boat inspections, violator reports meeting NIBRs compliancy rules, and many additional feature

Cost Savings Initiatives

The law enforcement Division re-aligned in 2023 going to 4 regions. This change gave each region an equable number of counties and wardens. Additionally, Lieutenants would have a

more balanced number of wardens to supervise. Lastly, this allows for greater utilization of our command personnel by relocating the emergency management Captain into a field Captain role.

Fuel from Kansas Department of Transportation sites were utilized using their fuel fob system. Fuel is purchased in bulk by KDOT at a discount with no up-charge passed to KDWP. This allows for not only cost savings to the agency, along with a reduction in billing that require reconciliation.

Out of State travel for training was cut due to the division requirement to self-fund the pay initiative.

Each year officers are allotted \$400.00 towards new uniform purchases. This amount was suspended in 2023 to reduce cost due to pay increases which the division self-funded. Replacement uniforms could be purchased as needed with supervisory permission.

Other Special Law Enforcement Issues

In 2023, two Law Enforcement K-9s were retired. K-9 Gypsy was retired in October 2023 due to her age, while K-9 Hunter was retired in September 2023 due to his age and his handler taking a promotion within the Department. The K-9 program, which is currently down by two dogs, will be back to full strength in 2024 with the addition of two new K-9s. This will bring the total number of K-9s in the agency to 10, spread across different locations in the State of Kansas.

The Law Enforcement Division has decided to equip every game warden with Conductive Electronic Devices (CED). After conducting research, Taser 10 from Axon was selected as the preferred option, providing the officers with a less-lethal alternative in the agency's use-of-force continuum. Delivery and training will occur in 2024.

**Association of Midwest Fish and
Game Law Enforcement Officers
2024 Agency Report
Province/State: KENTUCKY
Submitted by: Colonel Jeremey McQueary
Date: May 1, 2024**

- **Training Issues** - *describe any new or innovative training programs or techniques which have been recently developed, implemented, or are now required.*

We recently graduated two officers who underwent training in the Glock MOS Instructor Program. Our Special Investigations Unit Officers are expanding their skill set in undercover enforcement techniques. Future training for the division includes Taser Master Instructor, Hunter Incident, and Internal Affairs. These developments reflect the ongoing commitment to providing our officers with the most comprehensive and up-to-date training possible. Members of the KDFWR Law Enforcement Division training staff recently conducted active shooter training for the agency headquarters staff.

- **Funding and Staffing Issues** - *identify any recent developments in funding, staffing, and diversity in employment issues and describe what prompted these developments and how improvements in funding, staffing and diversity in employment were accomplished.*

As with many other conservation agencies, staffing and recruitment remain a concern. KDRWR Law Enforcement Division is hiring 14 recruit officers. During the recruitment process, the division used an aggressive social media approach that was new to it. We were able to raise our applicants from 283 to 586 this year. The division currently has 110 sworn officers.

- **Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends** - *identify any major cooperative, interstate, reciprocal or other cross jurisdictional law enforcement trends (e.g. including community policing, operator under the influence (OUI) initiatives, or other issues which fall outside traditional fish and wildlife enforcement functions).*

KDFWR Law Enforcement Division is engaged with multiple agencies for BUI/DUI education programs. Those agencies include Kentucky State Police, Louisville Metro Police Department, NASBLA, Coast Guard, MADD, etc. The program also emphasizes safe boating, such as fire extinguishers, PFDs, ECOS, and incident reporting. During the push, Operation Dry Water was highlighted with representatives of the KDFWR law enforcement division, MADD, and NASBLA.

- **New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement** - *describe any innovations in equipment, enforcement techniques, forensics, etc.*

KDFWR Law Enforcement Division recently added a drone with thermal capabilities to its fleet of drones. It was immediately used in enforcement efforts during the spring hunting season, with officers using it to locate individuals suspected of trespassing.

- **Cost Savings Initiatives** - *identify initiatives in any area which contributed to improvements in work effectiveness and fiscal efficiency.*

The KDFWR Law Enforcement Division was restructured last year to streamline efforts. It is divided into six regions. Five regions each containing two districts, and one region contains a training and special operations branches.

**Association of Midwest Fish and
Game Law Enforcement Officers
2024 Agency Report
State/Province: MANITOBA**

Submitted by: Chief Conservation Officer Earl W. Simmons

Date: May 1, 2024

Training Issues

Last year the Manitoba Conservation Officer Service sent eight (8) recruits for training through the Western Conservation Law Enforcement Academy (WCLEA) in Lac la Biche Alberta and all are now full time Officers working throughout the province.

Six (6) new CO recruits hired in March started on the job training with the COS in April. These individuals, once fully trained Conservation Officers, are tentatively scheduled to be posted throughout Manitoba in Churchill, Gillam, Thompson, The Pas (2), and Swan River. We are sending the recruits to this year's WCLEA academy being held in Lac la Biche, Alberta beginning May 6, 2024.

Standard defensive tactics/officer safety training was held February 2023 during annual centralized training for department. New training in spike belt deployment was conducted in late August 2023. Firearms qualifications were again conducted by in-house Basic Firearms Instructors and specialized training was conducted in October 2023 for all COs in use of newly acquired patrol rifles.

Funding and Staffing Issues

Although we were able to hire eight (8) new Conservation Officers last year and six (6) new candidates referenced earlier are scheduled for training, recruitment and retention of full time Conservation Officers continues to be a challenge.

The department currently has eighty-one (81) field officers and twelve (12) staff supporting them out of Headquarters. In addition, several seasonal Patrol Officers were extended into the fall and winter, with assignments to Headquarters, Western, Eastern, and Northern Regions.

Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends

Ensuring public safety remains a top priority of the Conservation Officer Service. During the summer, public safety is enhanced with seasonal Patrol Officers and 40-50 young men and women are trained each year and deployed across the province to assist Conservation Officers in keeping Manitoba Provincial Parks safe and quiet natural places to enjoy the outdoors. Night hunting is another on-going priority. Night hunting regulations remain in

effect in which night hunting in southern Manitoba is banned unless done under the authority of a permit and in pre-approved crown land areas.

Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts

In 2019, Manitoba's Conservation Officer Service (COS) and Environment Canada's Wildlife Enforcement Directorate (ECCC-WED) began a joint investigation into the fur dealing activities of a resident of Niverville. Investigators had gathered information suggesting the individual was illegally trafficking in furs to locations across the globe and failing to comply with a variety of provisions of *The Wildlife Act* (Manitoba) and the *Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act*. As a result of this information, United States Fish and Wildlife Service officials obtained a search warrant for social media communications between the dealer and a client in the United States. Conservation officers uncovered information indicating the individual was illegally buying furbearing animals (i.e., Fisher and Marten) from Manitoba trappers and may have been involved in illegal Wolf, Moose, and Caribou hunts in the area around South Indian Lake. In October 2020, Manitoba COS and ECCC-WED wildlife officers executed a search warrant at a Niverville residence which resulted in the seizure of cellular phones, computers, documents and an (Arctic) Wolf pelt. Through examination of these materials and interviewing witnesses across Canada, officers determined that the individual had been involved in the killing of two Moose out-of-season near South Indian Lake in January 2020, the killing and possession of a Barren Ground Caribou near South Indian Lake in March 2018, and fur dealing without a license between Sept. 1, 2019, and Feb. 23, 2020. Officers executed an additional search warrant at the residence, resulting in the seizure of the illegally possessed Barren Ground Caribou antlers. Officers charged the individual with twenty-three violations of *The Wildlife Act* including killing big game during a prohibited time, possession of wildlife illegally taken, engaging in the business of trading furs without a license, buying and selling wild animal parts without a license, and failure to submit transaction records. On June 28, 2022, the accused from Niverville pleaded guilty to six counts of violating *The Wildlife Act* and was assessed \$3700 in fines and a two-year hunting suspension and will be required to pay \$7000 in Restitution. Following further investigation in 2023, the same accused was fined \$20,000 in a Winnipeg courtroom on January 10, 2024, after pleading guilty to four counts of violating the federal Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act (WAPPRIITA). This additional fine was again related to illegal importing, exporting, and transporting of wildlife, in this case animal parts from a wolf and cougars. In addition to the fine, he was issued a prohibition order from exporting, importing, selling, purchasing, and trading any wild animal species or respective parts and from applying for a permit, for three years.

New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement

This year marked the signing of a Dispatch Services Agreement between the Manitoba Conservation Officer Service and the City of Brandon Emergency Communications

Department (911). Until this agreement, officers on duty were at times working alone and/or were in remote locations of the province where communication by cell phone was sketchy or non-existent. The dispatch center provides service to officers on a 24-hour per day, 7 days per week basis and aligns the CO Service with Workplace Safety and Health legislation to ensure officer safety. As well, the CO Service now has immediate access to police, fire, and Emergency Medical Services and officers can more readily check licenses and registration, trace stolen property, access warrants for arrests, and other information necessary for enforcement. The Agreement will not only improve communications and service by directly and immediately linking the CO Service to important partners, but it will give greater peace of mind to our officers and their family and loved ones.

Use of COS contracted helicopter and of infrared technology were uniquely employed in December 2023. Riverton Conservation Officers were on night patrol using thermal cameras and observed individuals breaking and entering a building near Poplarfield, Manitoba. The suspects' vehicle fled the scene attempting to evade officers on the ground who had activated emergency lights signaling the vehicle to stop. The vehicle left the roadway attempting to flee impacting hard (side airbags deployed) in the steep ditch and making its way onto the field where the three occupants attempted to flee on foot. Two male subjects were pursued in the field and arrested. The third female subject ran to a nearby yard site where a spotlight on the helicopter was used to illuminate the suspect who surrendered to officers and their canine partner. It was later determined the suspect vehicle had been stolen and all three individuals had extensive criminal records. Bear mace, a knife, various break-in tools, and power tools were found in the vehicle. Both males sustained injuries during the violent ride through the ditch and were checked by paramedics, with one being transported to hospital with chest soreness. All three were subsequently taken into custody by Fisher Branch RCMP and the truck was towed.

Over recent years suspects fleeing to avoid prosecution has increasingly become a concern for both public and officer safety. To address this concern the COS introduced the use of spike belts this year as a means of stopping fleeing suspects. The benefits of spike belt deployment were realized on two occasions when violators chose to run rather than stop for officers. On both occasions violators were stopped safely by spike belt and officers were able to collect evidence and initiate prosecution.

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

A First Nation in Manitoba lawsuit against the provincial government alleging amendments to the Wildlife Act concerning night hunting infringed on its members' treaty right to hunt remains on-going.

Metis hunting rights are also impacting natural resource law enforcement, with Conservation Officers having to navigate the various recognized and unrecognized Metis organizations members hunting and fishing in both permitted and closure areas.

Cost Savings Initiatives

This spring the COS re-opened the Brandon District Office that had been closed in March of 2009 and absorbed into surrounding district offices. Brandon is Manitoba's 2nd largest city and growing, and a change back to a Brandon District Office became logical so Conservation Officers can service tens of thousands of people within a reduced land base compared to the previous model. Emergency response distance to Rivers Provincial Park will be significantly reduced and this will allow more officer patrols and provide greater safety and security for park users. The Brandon location will also help officers to effectively address unsafe hunting, problem wildlife, and illegal hunting practices occurring more often in southwest Manitoba. The change provides greater coverage and an ability to conduct more night patrols, enhancing public safety. Overall, the re-instated Brandon District Office will increase officer presence, decrease response times, and deliver a more cost-efficient service in Western Manitoba.

Other Special Law Enforcement Issues

This year the COS re-instated roadside check stations and concentrated efforts near moose closure areas and lakes where fisheries closures were in effect. Check stations also run during regulatory patrols, in targeted night hunting areas, and where over-fishing was occurring. A related issue was suspects' vehicles running from COs when attempting pullovers. New spike belts and related training resulted in three (3) successful deployments and subsequent charges.

**Association of Midwest Fish and
Game Law Enforcement Officers
2023 Agency Report
Province/State: MICHIGAN
Submitted by: Jason Haines, Chief**

- **Training Issues** - *describe any new or innovative training programs or techniques which have been recently developed, implemented, or are now required.*

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Division (LED) transitioned to Glock Model 45 pistols. Two firearms instructors participated in a Glock instructor school in Georgia. Utilizing that training, they along with the other firearms instructors, completed a transition of all sworn personnel to the new pistols.

LED completed specialized trainings in a number of disciplines. These included Off-Road Vehicle Operation and Enforcement, Emergency Vehicle Operations, Water Safety, Waterfowl Enforcement, Trapping Enforcement, Tactical Tracking, Fish Identification and Enforcement, Advanced and Basic Marine Enforcement Trainings. All of these trainings utilized LED expert trainers. LED also sent representatives through a basic search and rescue train-the-trainer course and is in the process of developing its own search and rescue training curriculum.

LED has implemented several new training aids, including Axon Virtual Reality, portable training structures, air soft training weapon systems, and the gunSHOT BOX™. These devices all contribute to LED's efforts to provide the best available training for Conservation Officers.

- **Funding and Staffing Issues** - *identify any recent developments in funding, staffing, and diversity in employment issues and describe what prompted these developments and how improvements in funding, staffing and diversity in employment were accomplished.*

In August 2023, LED hired 12 certified officers that had previously been employed by other agencies. All 12 officers attended a 10-week training academy focused specifically on natural resource law enforcement, followed by 18-24 weeks of field training prior to beginning work in their assigned counties. The majority of the training was conducted by LED trainers.

LED has survived relatively well through the hiring issues of the last few years. Currently, there are 20 formal recruiters within the division who spend part of their time reaching out and responding to individuals and groups that include schools, clubs, and various organizations. The recruiters are spread throughout the state and are contacted by many interested potential candidates. Recruiters attend formal training both in-house and recently through Calibre Press.

LED is working with an external marketing firm to increase digital advertising by utilizing tactics that are not available in-house, such as video and banner ads. In-house, LED is creating new social media content focusing on, 'The day in the life of a conservation officer,' showing the unique perks of the job and the authenticity of the officers. Officers are recording their own video content which will be turned into trending social media reels. Recognizing that there is a generational shift in recreational interests, the goal is to generate interest with non-traditional audiences.

LED has hired one civilian analyst, with another one pending, to provide direct assistance to the Technology Unit. These newly established positions will work directly with commissioned staff on all things technology related including computers, patrol truck modems, and body worn cameras. In support of the newly developed body worn camera program, the LED is also moving forward with two additional civilian staff members who will specialize in requests under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Among pressures against LED's budget is significantly increased fleet costs. LED is required to obtain vehicles through the State's lease program. General Motors was unable to fill any vehicle orders for LED in 2021 and 2023. This resulted in older vehicles being run at higher mileages and subsequently more repairs which increased the per mile rate paid to the lease company. In addition, GM no longer offers a government discount which significantly increased the monthly lease rate.

- **Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends** - *identify any major cooperative, interstate, reciprocal or other cross jurisdictional law enforcement trends (e.g., including community policing, operator under the influence (OUI) initiatives, or other issues which fall outside traditional fish and wildlife enforcement functions).*

Two representatives from LED visited the Quebec Ministry of Natural Resources Wildlife Protection training academy. Representatives were able to tour the training facility, meet instructors, staff, and recruits, as well as local law enforcement officials. During that visit, the LED representatives were able to observe and participate in snowmobile operation training. The two agencies have developed a great working relationship and plan on furthering that relationship through continued collaboration.

LED partnered with the Michigan Science Teachers Association (MSTA) at their annual conference and deployed a new style of display booth. The booth, a mock wildlife crime scene was designed for science teachers to learn a new, inventive way of teaching the scientific theory of wildlife investigations to their students. The teachers took on the role of a Conservation Officer, located evidence, established a suspect, and linked them to the crime using forensic science. In the end, the teachers used their skills to draft an arrest warrant using the claim-evidence-reasoning curriculum.

The display booth was a huge hit and was also deployed at the 2023 National Trappers Association conference in Escanaba. The mock crime scene was part of the "Kids Cave" and

allowed both children and adults of all ages to temporarily wear the badge and help investigate wildlife crime. The event was a huge success resulting in national recognition in the American Trapper magazine.

A team of LED personnel, both sworn and civilian, has been assembled and is working with the overall DNR's Equity and Inclusion Officer (EIO) to incorporate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) concepts into LED. One example is finding ways of recruiting potential candidates that have not been focused on in the past for the next planned training academy. Another example is the inclusion of questions on the topic of DEI into all hiring and promotional interviews. While this can be a challenging topic to navigate, the LED team is finding creative ways to approach the issue.

- **Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts** - *describe any interagency, interstate, international, state/tribal, or other cross jurisdictional enforcement efforts (e.g., major Lacey Act investigations, progress with Wildlife Violator Compacts, improvements in interagency communication (WCIS), etc.)*

LED's Special Investigations Unit and Great Lakes Enforcement Unit worked a cooperative investigation with the States of Alaska and New York, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service involving the illegal importation and mislabeling of diseased baitfish. The suspects purchased diseased baitfish at a reduced cost and concocted a scheme to falsify testing records. The investigation resulted in the seizures of over a thousand pounds of diseased baitfish that were prevented from being used in the Great Lakes. Covert contacts through Facebook, cell phone mapping, and seizures from markets were all used to obtain confessions from the suspects. The case is still in the prosecution stage in Federal Court.

- **New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement** - *describe any innovations in equipment, enforcement techniques, forensics, etc.*

A pilot program was launched for the testing of body-worn cameras. A limited number of field officers have been using the cameras on a daily basis. The cameras have been well received by the field. Our staff are reporting the cameras are a positive addition, improving incident reporting documentation. LED expects to implement body-worn cameras statewide in 2024.

LED has added Computer Aided Dispatching (CAD) with a mobile interface for our field staff. Conservation Officers can now receive incident information from our Communications Section directly to their computer without the need for radios or cellphones. The implementation of CAD has also provided a mapping system which is integrated with the Michigan State Police (MSP). The LED and the MSP can now share location and incident information, improving both interoperability and officer safety.

LED has also begun a test deployment of a biometric device with a fingerprint reader and facial recognition component. The fingerprint component requires a stand-alone device;

however, the facial recognition component is an app that is installed on the officers' issued cellphone. This MobileID Technology provides our field personnel additional tools when attempting to identify subjects without identification, improving investigations and officer safety.

- **State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement** - *describe issues which impact or challenge law enforcement authority.*

In August of 2023, a Great Lakes Fishing Decree that will govern co-management of part of the Great Lakes fishery resource between the State of Michigan, United States, and the five signatory tribes to the 1836 Treaty of Washington for the next 24 years, was entered into in federal court. LED staff, led by members of the Great Lakes Enforcement Unit (GLEU) and in conjunction with a team that included Executive Division and Fisheries Division staff, negotiated with the parties for over four years, and are now in the process of implementing the new provisions of the decree. Regulations were updated to reflect the requirements of this new decree, and LED has been heavily involved in that process, including implementation of new reporting requirements for state-licensed commercial fishermen, wholesale fish entities, and charter captains. Other responsibilities will include monitoring new tribal fishing opportunities and educating recreational anglers about the changes.

Google has announced it will change company access to users' location history, meaning it will no longer respond to police "geofence warrants." LED has used geofence warrants extensively over the last several years on high profile cases, including three cow elk that were shot and left in the woods. Oftentimes wildlife crimes are committed in remote areas with no witnesses. Geofence warrants are a valuable tool in identifying persons of interest in these crimes. Despite what is being portrayed in the media, the warrant does not identify a particular person or their personal information. Second and third warrants are required (and must show probable cause and be signed by a judge) in order to identify personal information. The issue will likely head to the Supreme Court for a final decision on how law enforcement will have to proceed with these warrants.

In response to the significant increase in mental health related incidents, Michigan Conservation Officers were granted authority under the mental health code. Prior to this legislative change, our field personnel were left powerless and unable to provide help to someone experiencing a mental health crisis. Since the change, LED deployed several virtual reality units and began training our staff on mental health response. The virtual reality units are unique because they immerse the officer in a realistic environment that cannot be replicated using traditional law enforcement training scenarios. The units help teach officers to use critical thinking and de-escalation skills, coupled with empathy, to help someone experiencing a mental health crisis. The following link provides additional information on this topic which was released to the public:

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MIDNR/bulletins/36c85a6>

**Association of Midwest Fish and
Game Law Enforcement Officers
2024 Agency Report
Province/State: MINNESOTA
Submitted by: Col. Rodmen Smith
Date: May 1, 2024**

- **Training Issues** - *describe any new or innovative training programs or techniques which have been recently developed, implemented, or are now required.*
 - At the time last year when the Minnesota Legislature was considering a mandate that all law enforcement officers carry Narcan, we already had been considering it. As a result, we purchased Narcan for each officer to carry and partnered with a vendor to provide training and support the rollout to officers.
 - In the aftermath of the George Floyd killing in Minneapolis, the Minnesota Peace Officer Standards and Training Board created new requirements for 16 hours of continuous education credits in a number of different areas, including autism, conflict management, crimes motivated by bias, crisis intervention, cultural differences, de-escalation and an expansion of lethal and non-lethal weapon requirements and training. One of the most recent requirements relates to officer wellness, which is something we have been focused on for several years. Earlier this year, we rolled out the Cordico app for all of our current and retired officers and their families, which provides a wide variety of wellness-related information and resources.
 - After all officers were provided last year with AEDs, we have incorporated their use into our semi-annual CPR training. Since last year's rollout, our officers have used AEDs in two life-saving situations.

- **Funding and Staffing Issues** - *identify any recent developments in funding, staffing, and diversity in employment issues and describe what prompted these developments and how improvements in funding, staffing and diversity in employment accomplished.*
 - We now have a fully staffed Marine Unit, which includes a supervisor and four officers who will work throughout the state. The Minnesota DNR Enforcement Division continues to be a leader in boat and water safety and enforcement, and these specialty positions also will help us expand our training abilities.
 - We continue holding CO Academies on an annual basis to fill vacant positions and keep pace with retirements (as of now, about 25% of our conservation officer workforce is eligible for full or early retirement). Including the conservation officer candidates in the Academy now, we have more officers than positions, but due to retirements that won't be the case when they graduate in August.
 - We have filled two positions with community liaison officers – Hmong and Karen. These positions will work directly with members of both communities and help them understand regulations and enjoy the outdoors safely.

- We continue taking on more responsibilities in the area of animal health, primarily related to farmed white-tailed deer and feral hogs, and as a result have created and filled a full-time animal health coordinator position.
- **Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends** - *identify any major cooperative, interstate, reciprocal or other cross jurisdictional law enforcement trends (e.g., including community policing, operator under the influence (OUI) initiatives, or other issues which fall outside traditional fish and wildlife enforcement functions).*
 - Chronic wasting disease continues to pose a threat to Minnesota's wild deer herd. In addition to hiring a full-time animal health coordinator, officers are taking more responsibility for inspecting deer farms in their work areas.
 - We continue to see increasing numbers of people riding off-highway vehicles on both public and private lands. While some use OHVs for hunting, most people are riding them recreationally. Our enforcement and safety training efforts in this realm have increased as a result.
 - Three of the five dogs in our K9 Unit now are trained to detect zebra mussels on boats and other water-related equipment. We continue working to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species through enforcement and outreach, and work with other agencies and organizations to address risks posed by organism in trade pathways.
- **Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts** - *describe any interagency, interstate, international, state/tribal, or other cross jurisdictional enforcement efforts (e.g., major Lacey Act investigations, progress with Wildlife Violator Compacts, improvements in interagency communication (WCIS), etc.)*
 - The DNR, including the Enforcement Division, works closely with Minnesota's tribal nations to ensure natural resources are protected and to ensure members can exercise their treaty rights, including, for example, spearing and netting in the spring. A more example is the early teal season, when the DNR and bands worked together to ensure state hunters had the opportunity to target teal without interfering with band members' wild rice harvest.
- **New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement** - *describe any innovations in equipment, enforcement techniques, forensics, etc.*
 - Airboats continue to be important to our work, particularly in the realm of public safety. This past winter, for example, we used airboats to rescue dozens of people in northern Minnesota who were stranded on the ice after it broke away from shore, or who had fallen through thin ice. This spring, officers in southeastern Minnesota used an airboat to rescue a lost individual. As our use of airboats grows, more officers have been trained in their use.

- Our Marine Unit includes four large boats designed for use in all conditions on some of Minnesota's largest and busiest waterbodies.

- **Other Special Law Enforcement Issues**

- Conservation officers continue being asked to do traditional public safety work outside of traditional conservation law enforcement. At the local level, they routinely assist city police departments and county sheriff's offices. This past year, dozens of officers also responded to potential demonstrations arising from an officer-involved shooting in the metro area and worked perimeter security at the Minnesota State Fair, which runs for 12 days at the end of the summer and routinely draws more than 2 million attendees.

**Association of Midwest Fish and
Game Law Enforcement Officers
2024 Agency Report
Province/State: MISSOURI
*Submitted by: Randy Doman
Date: April 16, 2024***

- **Training Issues** – The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) Conservation Agent Training Academy graduated a class of 16 on October 3, 2023. This was the 3rd consecutive class and the 4th academy within a five-year span. This addition brought branch staffing levels to full strength and slightly above with three temporary assignments. Ongoing retirements and other attrition will lead to another training academy starting March 2025. On average, MDC receives approximately 300 qualified applicants for each class while retaining the bachelor’s degree requirement. A continuing challenge is training some of the new hires in the traditional hunting/fishing/trapping activities, so they are more knowledgeable and effective when engaging with consumptive resource users.

Additionally, Protection Branch continues a successful mentoring program at the start of each training academy. All conservation agent trainees select a mentor from an approved list of experienced field personnel from across the state. Trainees meet regularly with their mentors to ask questions, build rapport, and facilitate a more welcoming culture. This mentoring relationship is outside the traditional chain of command and is provided as a benefit to help trainees feel more connected, enhance officer wellness, and improve retention.

- **Funding and Staffing Issues** – The operating budget for MDC represents less than one percent of the total state budget and receives no state general revenue. MDC gets a substantial part of its funding through the conservation sales tax. For every \$8 spent on taxable items, one penny goes to conservation. For FY23 the conservation sales tax equated to \$163 million, federal reimbursements at \$45 million, permit sales at \$42 million, with sales/rentals/other sources and interest at \$15 million. Total receipts for FY23 came to \$265 million. Total disbursements for FY23 equaled approximately \$258 million. For FY23 Protection Branch’s approved budget was roughly \$2.2 million.

As an agency we prioritize relevancy and focus on recruiting/retaining staff who are more representative of the demographic makeup of Missouri. Protection Branch supports these efforts in several ways. One strategy is through our conservation agent preparation/intern program, which is designed to help recruit and develop well-qualified, non-traditional candidates. The paid internship provides experience and opportunities for interns to be more competitive in the application and interview process for the Conservation Agent Training Academy. Additionally, all Protection Branch interview panels are comprised of more representative panel members to ensure diverse perspectives are represented and to promote a culture of inclusivity.

Interview questions are designed to assess an applicant's ability to be more inclusive and engage with a broader constituency.

Director Sara Parker Pauley, the ninth Director in MDC's 86-year history, announced her retirement effective July 1, 2024. Protection Branch Chief Randy Doman will also be retiring effective January 1, 2025. Both leaders have had remarkable careers, and we wish them the best in retirement!

- **Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends** – Regulations to combat the spread of CWD continue in Missouri as deer hunting opportunities were extended to assist in CWD Management for the 2023-2024 season. Notable changes for the 2023-2024 deer season included a new early antlerless portion of firearms deer season (October 6-8) in select counties, a new CWD portion of firearms deer season (November 22 -26) in CWD Management Zone counties, and an increase in the number of firearms antlerless permits in most counties throughout the state. An additional 162 positives were identified out of 37,000 samples taken from the 2023-2024 deer season and the cooperative targeted removal efforts. Continued efforts and season adjustments are being examined to assist in slowing the spread of CWD across the state. Conservation agents play a significant role in combatting the spread through landowner contacts, targeted deer removal, carcass transportation, firearms/safety training, venison distribution, and of course *Wildlife Code* enforcement.
- **Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts** –Operation Early Birds was a multi-state waterfowl enforcement effort in the Mississippi and Central flyways during the 2023-2024 waterfowl season. The collaborative patrol included a total of 47 officers from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (11), Missouri (18), Iowa (9), Kansas (3), and Nebraska (6). The multi-day patrol focused on public waterfowl areas and local duck clubs, resulting in 540 contacts, 215 resource violations, 20 other violations, 135 documented warnings, 62 arrests, 3 pink slips, and 36 private duck club interactions.

Additionally, Missouri Conservation Agents Chase Wright and Marc Bagley made a once-in-a-lifetime waterfowl poaching case in January 2024 by apprehending three subjects who killed 50 mallards on the Missouri River, in closed season, during a severe cold snap. Twenty mile an hour winds, frozen boat ramps, and minus 4-degree wind chills made for an eventful and dangerous investigation. Charges are pending.

- **New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement** – Protection Branch implemented a body-worn camera (BWC) program in February 2023, and have logged over 35,000 recordings of law enforcement contacts since program inception. BWCs benefit the agency by aiding in report-writing for conservation agents, capturing additional evidence for prosecution, facilitating better training, and investigating/resolving complaints more effectively and efficiently. We chose the Axon - Body 3 platform with its evidence.com cloud-based storage system. In combination

with the automatic, wireless uploads through our vehicle Cradlepoint routers, the BWC program is as easy and efficient as possible for conservation agents.

MDC's K-9 Unit originated in 2021, and since then the canines and their handlers have provided over 496 programs, reaching over 27,000 people, and have been deployed more than 270 times. The teams have been successful in investigating numerous cases for trespassing, road-hunting, over limits, and closed-season hunting. In addition, they've been effective in finding missing persons and aiding in hunting incident investigations. MDC utilizes Labrador retrievers and German shorthaired pointers trained as single purpose dogs in wildlife scent detection, article searches, and human tracking. Four additional handlers/dogs were added to the team in 2022 bringing us to full strength at nine canine teams dispersed across the state.

- **State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement** – Open fields, private landowner rights, trail cameras, drones, and night vision/thermal imagery continue to be topics of discussion with the Missouri Legislature and the Conservation Commission. Regulations for utilizing drones and thermal imagery to aid in the recovery of mortally wounded big game have been proposed, and Missouri's night vision/thermal imagery season for coyotes entered its 3rd year, open from February 1 through March 31.

A favorable decision was received from the Supreme Court of Missouri in *Conservation Commission and Missouri Department of Conservation v. Andrew Bailey in his official capacity as Attorney General of Missouri, and Ken Zellers, in his official capacity as Commission of the Office of Administration*. The following was stated within the conclusion, "By adopting article IV, sections 40-44, the people of Missouri created the Conservation Commission within the executive branch and "constitutionally empowered" it to expend and use conservation funds for any of the enumerated purposes in the constitution "without interference" by the General Assembly." This is a historically significant ruling that reaffirmed the Missouri Conservation Commission's authority to use conservation funds generated from the 1/8th of 1% sales tax.

- **Cost Savings Initiatives** – Protection Branch continues to utilize an active and successful volunteer program with approximately 100 volunteers spread across the state. In 2023, the program contributed roughly 3,500 hours of volunteer work to MDC. These volunteers assist conservation agents and other MDC staff with projects including surveillance during enforcement patrols, outreach and education programs, training scenarios, and wildlife surveys. The volunteer program also serves as a valuable recruitment tool as several volunteers ultimately work their way into the Conservation Agent Training Academy.
- **Other Special Law Enforcement Issues** - Protection Branch utilizes an internal dashboard to monitor resource contact compliance rates, conviction rates, and a public "approval rating" across the state. These dashboards help drive decision-making,

personnel allocations, and ultimately provide valuable feedback on our citizen engagement, education, and community policing efforts to increase voluntary compliance with the *Wildlife Code*. Missouri has also been an integral member of the SEAFWA states in establishing and implementing the North American Wildlife Law Enforcement Accreditation (NAWLEA) program. A systematic review of branch guidelines and Department policies has started as Missouri prepares for the accreditation process in 2025.

**Association of Midwest Fish and
Game Law Enforcement Officers
2024 Agency Report
Province/State: NEBRASKA
*Submitted by: J Clauson
Date: 5-1-24***

Training Issues

- We attended the WAFWA trainer's summit. Texas graciously hosted the summit at their game warden academy. It was one of the best meetings I have been to and learned a lot about what other agencies are training and what is working for them and what isn't. The networking and sharing of ideas were a great thing to be a part of.

Funding and Staffing Issues:

Both Craig Stover and Duane Arp retired on December 29, 2023, leaving Travis and Jeff holding the bag for the command staff. Interviews for the new administrator took place on April 28th and Jeff Clauson was selected as the next Law Enforcement Division Administrator. Having both leave on the same day was a significant loss and it's been quite the learning curve for the two remaining. Now that the chief position has been filled, we will begin the process of backfilling the other command staff positions and all the positions that occur from the promotional process.

We have now fully implemented our permanent sergeant and investigator positions. Both positions are now separate job classifications and have separate pay scales, providing advancement opportunities for officers. All sergeant positions and the investigator position have been filled and they're integrating well into their districts. The legislature approved five new conservation officer positions for FY23/FY24, however we only received authority to fund their salaries in the second half of the biennium, and no additional funds were given for equipment and other operating expenses.

Applicant numbers for our conservation officer positions continue to dwindle and getting them into our state law enforcement academy has become a challenge. We are only allowed two slots per academy and with only three academies held in a calendar year, we're limited in the number of officers we can get into each academy. Fortunately, we've been able to fill some vacancies with qualified certified officers to make up most of the difference, but this has been and continues to be an issue. As was reported last year, our State Patrol received a 22.5% in FY23, while our officers received a max of an 8.5%. Efforts to level that playing field will likely be part of the next bargaining cycle.

In 2023, the legislature passed a bill that gave free tuition to any Nebraska state college or university to law enforcement officers in Nebraska and their families. The original bill excluded conservation officers (any many other state law enforcement officers) based on the language used to define law enforcement officers. Fortunately, a bill in the 2024 legislative session included was passed to include our officers which will greatly benefit them and their families.

Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends

- Licensing guides and outfitters continues to be a topic in Nebraska. The recent large-scale investigations that involved guides/outfitters has put a spotlight on licensing. Legislation was recently passed to create a voluntary licensing program for guides/outfitters. At this time, we're unsure of the impact this will have on the Law Enforcement Division and NGPC overall.

Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts:

- Operation No Trace is finally complete and the main defendant, Dustin Noble, has been sentenced. Dustin guided for those that didn't care about laws at all just killing trophy animals. He targeted big mule deer in August with thermals when they could see how big the velvet antlered mule deer were from the road. Most of the people he guided, came in with the full knowledge they were going to be breaking the law in their effort to shoot a big mule deer. They also shot big white-tails and antelope, but primarily focused on trophy mule deer.
- This summer we are planning a cooperative law enforcement detail for Operation Dry water on the Missouri River w/SD and Iowa in an attempt to cover the entire Missouri river. Operation Border to Border will be taking place over the Independence Day weekend and include officers from South Dakota, Iowa, and Nebraska. This operation was done last year in our Northeast District when they completed this with SD on that stretch of the Missouri River. As described above this will now be expanded to include Iowa running down the Missouri state line. We are looking forward to making this an annual event.

New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement:

- Our Wildlife Crimestoppers board purchased thermal imagers for our officer's cell phones for night work. They have proven to be a cost-effective way of working nights without the huge outlay of capital for regular thermal imagers. We also continue to expand our drone and technical surveillance team.
- We recently completed the transition from truck mounted tablet computers, to mounted Toughbook laptops. Other than minor tweaks, the transition has been smooth, and the officers seem to be happy with them.

- We continue to work on the deployment of an RMS system. We've selected the TraCS RMS system because it will integrate into our electronic citation program and the cost is minimal with our TraCS software agreement.

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

- Fortunately, there have been no recent efforts by the state legislature that directly impact our enforcement efforts. The number of questions regarding our authority to enter private lands is increasing and we're monitoring the national trends on this issue.

Cost Savings Initiatives

- We continue to monitor the increasing costs of equipment, training, travel, etc. We were forced to hold the five new conservation officer positions open due to lack of funding, but beginning in FY24/25, we'll be able to move forward with filling these positions.

Other Special Law Enforcement Issues:

- Due to the shortage of state troopers our officers in more rural and western areas have been called on to assist with much more traditional law enforcement calls than ever before. Our officers are being called to assist with motorists, accidents, domestic violence cases and more back up with local officers.

**Association of Midwest Fish and
Game Law Enforcement Officers
2024 Agency Report
Province/State: NORTH DAKOTA
Submitted by: SCOTT WINKELMAN
Date: APRIL 19, 2024**

- **Training Issues** – We recently hosted the NASBLA Boat Accident Investigation training and will be hosting the GPS Forensics training in June. The basic law enforcement academy has been held in a mostly online format while the Highway Patrol training center is undergoing a remodel. This has created numerous problems but has also worked to get new recruits trained and certified. We are anxiously awaiting the new and improved training facilities which will make a huge difference in the training experience and increase participation.
- **Funding and Staffing Issues** – Our funding continues to be strong overall. Recruitment continues to struggle, and we are looking at all possible ways to improve our applicant pools. We now have 4 wardens who act as a regional recruitment officer. They are attending job fairs, presenting at university classes and other venues to try and recruit new wardens to our team. With inflation and trying to maintain high recruitment and retention, we may need to ask for a license fee increase and start charging credit card fees for license purchases.
- **Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends** – New and ever-changing technology being developed and used by hunters, anglers, trappers, and boaters continues to be challenging for us to regulate and use in our investigations.
- **Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts** - Numerous investigations have been completed with the assistance of other state game and fish agencies. We are continuously looking for new MOU's that will enable us to better combat the illegal taking and commercialization of wildlife in North Dakota. The Wyoming Game and Fish lab has been invaluable with providing DNA identification for our agency and we look forward to continuing our work with them. North Dakota will host the Wildlife Investigators Conference in June in Devils Lake.
- **New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement** – We are currently testing and evaluating body cameras and will be purchasing new in-car and body camera systems for all officers in spring of 2025. We are also using new wireless cutoff switches for all our patrol boats.
- **State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement** – The Open Fields Doctrine continues to be a topic of discussion, and we anticipate another attempt in the 2025 legislative session to overturn it by state law. The Department will continue to

oppose any changes. Electronic tagging is also starting to be talked about. There are numerous enforcement issues with e tags and enforcement difficulties need to be addressed. We are currently awaiting an opinion from the State Supreme Court regarding game wardens' violation of the 4th amendment when talking to a hunter in the field regarding a violation.

- **Cost Savings Initiatives** – We have been fortunate to be able to make several large purchases of equipment in the current biennium that will save us money in the future.
- **Other Special Law Enforcement Issues** - Our game wardens have dramatically increased the number of community outreach events they have been participating in, along with weekly blogs and social media posts. Wardens have been active in Halloween trunk or treats, law enforcement Easter egg hunts, first responder Christmas toy and food drives, sports shows, and the State Fair. The enforcement division blogs, and social media posts are very popular and consistently receive high view numbers, comments, and likes.

**Association of Midwest Fish and
Game Law Enforcement Officers
2024 Agency Report
Province/State: OHIO
*Submitted by: Kandy Klosterman, Colonel
Date: 4/30/2024***

Training Issues - *describe any new or innovative training programs or techniques which have been recently developed, implemented, or are now required.*

- Thirteen new wildlife officers graduated from the academy and were assigned throughout the state. During this hiring process, we had over 900 applicants. We believe this was due to changes in our recruiting practices and accepting a more diverse field of degrees to meet our minimum qualifications. We have graduated three cadet academies in the last four years. Every field officer position is currently filled, with five additional officers serving in an at-large status working in a district area where they will transfer into a permanent duty assignment as needed over the next few years. We currently staff 145 commissioned officers across the state.
- We also initiated a mentorship program to anchor our new wildlife officers to the organization, promote professional growth, inspire personal motivation, and instill values to strengthen future generations of officers. Each cadet was paired with a current wildlife officer as their mentor during their first week in training. The mentor-maintained contact with the cadet, providing encouragement, support, coaching, and active listening. Based on the positive feedback, we will incorporate mentorship with future iterations of the academy.
- We recognize that fewer new wildlife officers have robust backgrounds in hunting, fishing, and trapping, corresponding to declining participation trends. To meet them where they are, we have added focus on the North American Model of Conservation, including conservation funding, conservation organizations, and historical changes in wildlife management. We provide training for the types and use of hunting and fishing equipment, cleaning and care of game, and field-to-table experiences.
- Continuing professional training (CPT) is now mandated for all law enforcement officers in Ohio. A minimum of 24 training hours must be completed annually on prescribed topics.
- We have empowered our Women Officers of Wildlife (WOW) group to help develop policies that foster a more inclusive and diverse workplace. In collaboration with the WOW group, management has issued a directive recognizing the unique challenges that may arise when a wildlife officer announces their pregnancy in the workplace. Normal physical and mental changes may occur, which could alter the work abilities of the pregnant officer during and after the birth of their child. This directive is intended to provide pregnant officers and their supervisors with the initial path to communicate expectations, promote further understanding, and facilitate the officer returning to full duty after their child is born.

Funding and Staffing Issues - *identify any recent developments in funding, staffing, and diversity in employment issues and describe what prompted these developments and how improvements in funding, staffing and diversity in employment were accomplished.*

- Commissioned supervisors were given a pay upgrade to alleviate pay compression between officers and supervisors.
- Our agency now leases mineral and gas rights for fracking under selected wildlife properties. The leases will not allow surface impacts, and royalty payments will be returned to the agency.

Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends - *identify any major cooperative, interstate, reciprocal or other cross jurisdictional law enforcement trends (e.g., including community policing, operator under the influence (OUI) initiatives, or other issues which fall outside traditional fish and wildlife enforcement functions).*

- Non-traditional taxidermy and the “curiosity and oddities” market is a pathway for commercial exploitation of wildlife, often through online sales or auction sights. We have initiated several investigations into the illicit sales of wildlife and preserved specimens, working with our law enforcement partners, including local police partners, prosecutors’ offices, probation departments, humane agents, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Notably, one of the current investigations involves online sales totaling hundreds of thousands of dollars. We have also published a reference sheet for native wildlife sales that is available online to better inform the public.
- Ohio amended our rules to clarify that aerial drones may be used to aid in the recovery of a deer after the taking has occurred as long as no one involved in the recovery is employing a hunting implement, and to allow hunting to resume once the use of the drone has been discontinued in this limited instance.
- The Ohio Division of Wildlife continues to monitor and inspect for injurious aquatic invasive species (IAIS). Working with industry stakeholders, we have listed Alabama bass, Florida bass, and red swamp crayfish as IAIS in Ohio. With few exemptions, IAIS cannot be possessed, imported, sold, or released in Ohio. Red swamp crayfish may be harvested, possessed, and sold for consumption, provided they are killed within 48 hours of receipt or possession in Ohio.

Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts - *describe any interagency, interstate, international, state/tribal, or other cross jurisdictional enforcement efforts (e.g., major Lacey Act investigations, progress with Wildlife Violator Compacts, improvements in interagency communication (WCIS), etc.)*

- The ODOW has been a part of the Ohio Environmental Crimes Task Force for the past 20 years. The task force uses a collaborative, multidisciplinary approach to investigate and prosecute the most egregious environmental crimes. This task force is comprised of the U.S. Attorney’s Office, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, the Ohio Attorney General's Office, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement - *describe any innovations in equipment, enforcement techniques, forensics, etc.*

- The Ohio Division of Wildlife has added three Quiet Kat E-bikes to their fleet to allow our officers to cover more ground more discreetly. These bikes will expand our capabilities over traditional all-terrain vehicles.
- We are currently developing a search, rescue, and tracking team (SRTT) to combine these unique skills within a single team. The SRTT will be comprised of specially trained officers, five canine units, and six aerial drone operators. The current team members recently completed tactical combat casualty care, land navigation, and camouflage and concealment training.
- We have established a working group with stakeholders in the guiding and outfitting community to establish a voluntary accreditation program in Ohio. Currently, there are no specific regulations on outfitting services in Ohio.
- While not new for many agencies, Ohio wildlife officers were recently issued external body armor carriers. We implemented an overview and training session that included live fire range time due to the adjustments in equipment placement and overall fit for many officers.
- We are seeing an increase in the use of thermal imaging in the field, including incidents of poaching. The price of this technology has continued to come down, contributing to thermal availability and use. We have adjusted our enforcement techniques and purchased more thermal imaging units to combat their increased illegal use.

State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement - *describe issues which impact or challenge law enforcement authority.*

- Based on legal challenges and current trends in conservation law enforcement, we have adopted policies to be more conservative with officers entering private property without a warrant, including placing surveillance cameras on private property. Following a lawsuit initiated by the Institute for Justice, we amended the law for taxidermists and meat processors to specify that the owner or person in charge of a facility may refuse inspection, and if refused, wildlife officers may seek a warrant to proceed with the inspection.
- Provisions were introduced in the last budget bill to remove our authority as peace officers, alter our authority to enter private property, and require all seasons and methods to be approved annually by the wildlife council. Currently, only changes must be approved. The challenges to our authority were removed before the budget was passed. The provisions related to the wildlife council were line-item vetoed by the governor.

Cost Savings Initiatives - *identify initiatives in any area which contributed to improvements in work effectiveness and fiscal efficiency.*

- We have expanded the use of cell-based cameras to be more efficient and enhance surveillance abilities.
- We've reduced staff through attrition (investigators) due to the law enforcement program restructure (from 2021).

Other Special Law Enforcement Issues

- In 2023, the Division of Wildlife celebrated 150 years of wildlife conservation. Established as the Ohio Fish Commission in 1873, we have remained devoted to managing and improving wildlife populations and habitats for the people of Ohio. Ohio's wildlife has seen incredible success stories over the years; from bald eagles to river otters, many species thrive today thanks to the dedicated work of the Division of Wildlife and its partners. Most recently, the trumpeter swan was removed from our state threatened species list.

**Association of Midwest Fish and
Game Law Enforcement Officers
2024 Agency Report
State/Province: SASKATCHEWAN
*Submitted by Steve Dobko, Chief Superintendent
Date: April 29, 2024***

- **Training Issues** – In 2023, ten permanent field conservation officers successfully graduated from the Western Conservation Law Enforcement Academy (WCLEA) in Lac La Biche, Alberta. This was the largest class of recruits to ever graduate in the history of WCLEA with fifty officers being successful. 2024 will see nine more Saskatchewan recruits attend WCLEA in Lac la Biche with the recruit numbers being like 2023. Current Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety (CPPS) officers will be attending a 2 ½ day Use of Force recertification and will include additional branches of the Ministry of CPPS, which are Legislative District Security Unit (CSO), Safer Communities and Neighborhoods (SCAN) and the Provincial Firearms Office. The Training and Standards Unit also coordinates and assists with three Deputy Sheriff recruit classes per annum. These recruit academies are eight weeks long and support the officer numbers required to run the Prisoner Transport Program. In 2024 the ministry training program will utilize approx. 50 field and training officers to complete use of force recertifications for approx. 388 officers.
- **Funding and Staffing Issues** – Staffing actions and transfers have been at an all-time high in 2023. Funding has remained steady since the move to the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety. Various areas of improvement include capital equipment purchases, operational expenses, and overtime payout.
- **Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends** – On April 1, 2022, conservation officers were moved into the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety along with Highway Patrol Officers, Safer Communities and Neighborhoods (SCAN) Officers and Community Safety Officers. All officers are now united under a single organizational structure called the Provincial Protective Services branch. The new structure brings the various departments together to work as unified branch to enhance public safety. In 2022 Saskatchewan created an unlawful outfitting task force. This task force focused enforcement efforts towards unlawful outfitting practices throughout Saskatchewan leading to unlawful export of wildlife through the northern and Midwest states. Officers performed increased inspection at the Saskatoon International Airport and all US land border crossings through the fall and winter of 2023.
- **Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts**
Enforcement investigations and intelligence sharing continue with several Canadian and USA agencies and US States including British Columbia, Manitoba, Alberta, CBSA, USFWS, US Homeland Security Agency and the Environment and Climate Change Canada Wildlife Directorate.

Unlawful outfitting and unlawful export of wildlife was one of Saskatchewan's key priorities in 2023 and into 2024. Recent discussions and Cabinet decision items may result in new export and outfitting policies.

Special investigations involving illegal outfitting and trafficking in wildlife (bear, all wild meat, and fish) have been the main focus in 2023.

Officers continue to run into individuals obtaining residency licenses in one or more provinces within that year, as well as applying for Saskatchewan draws licenses when they do not qualify. Saskatchewan will continue to share intelligence and make requests to our partner agencies in 2024 and one can expect the priorities of 2023 to carry over into 2024.

- **New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement** – With the various departments joining the new Provincial Protective Services branch, this will allow better utilization of equipment and resources for special enforcement projects as well as provide better public safety for the residents of Saskatchewan through unified enforcement efforts. Along with being part of the Provincial Protection and Response Team, select conservation officer vehicles have been equipped with Automatic License Plate Readers (ALPR). These units are designed to read vehicle license plates as they pass by and inform the officer if the vehicle is registered, expired or if the vehicle is associated to a suspended driver. In addition, the ALPR, Saskatchewan plans to complete 50 mobile workstations and E-ticketing in patrol vehicles over the coming year, with the remainder to follow in 2025. Highway Patrol Officers have been given Fish & Wildlife appointments to allow for response for calls for service for animal dispatch on highways or apprehension of suspected Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) watercraft on highways.
- **State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement Federal** - The Migratory Birds Regulations, 2022. The new regulations came into force on July 30, 2022. Some of the more notable changes related to migratory game bird hunting include a change in possession, the new concept of preservation introduced i.e., preserved birds no longer count towards possession limits (except for murre). New provision allowing retention of either a fully feathered wing or fully feathered head attached. New prohibition on the abandonment of harvested migratory game birds. Twenty-eight changes in total. Saskatchewan has not to date changed provincial legislation regarding possession or preservation requirements to mirror this new federal amendment.

Provincial - Amendments to The Trespass to Property Act came into force on January 1, 2022. These amendments will require individuals seeking access to private property to obtain the consent of the landowner or occupier prior to entry. The Trespass to Property Act seeks to balance the reasonable expectations of landowners and those

who want access to privately owned property for a variety of legitimate reasons. On January 1, 2023, The Police (Serious Incident Response Team) Amendment Act, 2021 came into force, which formally establishes a serious incident response team (SIRT) in Saskatchewan. These changes will allow the SIRT to engage in any serious incident involving police, from initiating a full investigation to reviewing, overseeing, assisting, or delegating. SIRT members will investigate matters where serious injury or death may have occurred while in the custody of police, as a result of the actions of a police officer, or where sexual assault or interpersonal violence involving police are alleged.

- **Cost Savings Initiatives** – In approximately 2015, the Conservation Officer Service began to replace existing patrol trucks with the heavier $\frac{3}{4}$ ton chassis crew cab. The varied and harsh environments within which officers work, tended to put the lighter series $\frac{1}{2}$ tons in situations that likely exceeded the vehicle design. At that time, the move to heavier vehicles was believed to be a cost savings with less maintenance issues. The current fleet consists of approximately 112 $\frac{3}{4}$ ton patrol trucks. A review into downsizing these units from $\frac{3}{4}$ ton to $\frac{1}{2}$ ton was done in 2023. The review identified significant savings that could be realized both annually through fuel and fixed costs, and through the amortization period. The branch will be starting the process in 2024 to reduce the fleet to include 50% of the fleet into $\frac{1}{2}$ ton series units in the urban and southern locations for a realized budget savings of \$200K per year. Other efforts are underway to increase the ratio of marked vs unmarked vehicles to promote a higher visibility of law enforcement in rural communities.
- **Other Special Law Enforcement Issues** – In 2022 the Saskatchewan Government announced the province will be developing a new Saskatchewan Marshals Service (SMS) and expanding the Crime Reduction Team (CRT) and Warrant Enforcement and Suppression Team (WEST). Staffing will start in 2024 and when completed will consist of approximately 70 officers. The service will provide an additional law enforcement presence across Saskatchewan, conduct proactive investigations and support RCMP and municipal police operations. Their duties will include responding to areas with high crime rates, apprehending offenders with outstanding arrest warrants and investigating farming-related offenses like theft and trespassing. The SMS is expected to be operational by mid-to-late 2026. The RCMP will remain the provincial police service of jurisdiction. In some locations, Saskatchewan marshals will work out of the same offices as conservation officers.

**Association of Midwest Fish and
Game Law Enforcement Officers
2024 Agency Report
Province/State: SOUTH DAKOTA
*Submitted by: Sam Schelhaas
Date: 4/12/24***

- **Training Issues** - *describe any new or innovative training programs or techniques which have been recently developed, implemented, or are now required.*
 - Peer support continues to be a program that we are pursuing. Things are progressing nicely, and it is anticipated that the peer support team will be up and running in 2024. There have been several other states that have shared their program philosophy and policies with our agency and that has been greatly appreciated!
 - SDGFP has partnered with our Law Enforcement Training (LET) center for several years. This has been a great partnership that fills a need for Firearms, Defensive Tactics and Emergency Vehicle Operation Instructors at the training center. This is also a great opportunity for our instructors to continue to practice their skill and pass on the information to new law enforcement recruits. We are currently working with LET to provide funding for our officers to teach the courses along with funding to provide training for SDGFP instructors.
- **Funding and Staffing Issues** - *identify any recent developments in funding, staffing, and diversity in employment issues and describe what prompted these developments and how improvements in funding, staffing and diversity in employment were accomplished.*
 - For the first time in several years our conservation officer numbers remained strong throughout the year. There are several contributing factors to this, but most notably was a 20% raise for all our field officers. This comes on the heels of a substantial raise the previous year with most of the officers receiving a 30-35% raise in the past 2 years. While this is great news, it does set up for the potential of a significant wave of retirements in the future.
- **Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends** - *identify any major cooperative, interstate, reciprocal or other cross jurisdictional law enforcement trends (e.g., including community policing, operator under the influence (OUI) initiatives, or other issues which fall outside traditional fish and wildlife enforcement functions).*
 - SDGFP has begun looking into new ways to assist in the investigation and prosecution for fraud license cases. A new law was passed that provides clear definition to when an individual would terminate their resident status in the state of South Dakota. It states that if an individual is absent from the state for 180 days or more in a calendar year then they would not be considered a resident. To aid in these investigations we have obtained

licenses to utilize a program called cell hawk. This is a great tool to have and analyzes and maps the thousands of data points that are often associated with a request for cell data.

- **Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts** - *describe any interagency, interstate, international, state/tribal, or other cross jurisdictional enforcement efforts (e.g. major Lacey Act investigations, progress with Wildlife Violator Compacts, improvements in interagency communication (WCIS), etc.)*
 - SDGFP continues to prioritize the relationships with neighboring states and their officers. Border states meetings are a great way to take some time to connect and network with neighboring states. The Dakota Territories meetings involves South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming and continues to take place annually. Along with that, South Dakota, Minnesota, and North Dakota meet annually in the northeast corner of the state and South Dakota, Iowa and Nebraska continue to meet in the southeast corner of the state. This is not a new concept nor is it unique to South Dakota, however, these meetings are very valuable and are unique to the different issues and aspects in these areas.
- **State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement** - *describe issues which impact or challenge law enforcement authority.*
 - The Department brought forth a few pieces of legislation in the 2024 legislative session. Those 4 bills had to do with funding for dam renovation, park entrance licenses, e-bikes on park trails and residency clarifications. Of those, the most impactful to the law enforcement section was the clarification of residency requirements. This bill established that if an individual resided in another state or territory for an aggregate of 180 days or more in a calendar year, they would terminate their residency. This bill was signed into law on February 6th by Governor Noem and will provide some clear direction for our officers and our sportsmen and women.
 - There were also several bills that the Department took interest in brought forth by legislators. Some good bills such as landowner-own-land elk licenses, habitat conservation license plates and blaze pink were passed. For the 2nd straight year there was a bill requiring 24-hour law enforcement coverage in Custer State Park and require conservation officers to investigate vehicle accidents on all Department owned or leased lands.

**Association of Midwest Fish and
Game Law Enforcement Officers
2024 Agency Report
Province/State: TEXAS
Submitted by: Chris Davis
Date: 03/26/24**

- **Training Issues** - *describe any new or innovative training programs or techniques which have been recently developed, implemented, or are now required.*

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Law Enforcement (TPWD-LE) continues to develop and adopt training as needed to ensure Game Wardens and State Park Police Officers are prepared to meet the demands of their job, through the assistance of the LE Division's Texas Game Warden Training Center (GWTC) Staff:

- The 66th Texas Game Warden Cadet class of 29 Game Wardens and 13 State Park Police Officers is scheduled to graduate on May 31, 2024. (The class began on October 1, 2023, with 35 Game Wardens and 16 State Park Police Officers.)
 - The 66th cadet class will complete the new state mandated active shooter training for all Basic Peace Officer Course (BPOC) providers to teach the ALERRT Level I - 16hr.
 - GWTC staff will have hosted multiple ALERRT LEVEL I – Train the Trainer courses by the end of the Summer 2024 and will roll out this training to all officers to meet the new state in-service mandate.
 - The 66th cadet class has taken part in multiple expanded static scenarios training. These scenarios are set up with no role players and involve cadets going through different types of camp checks that are a test in observational skills and comprehension of the application of laws based only on what they can see in front of them. This allows the cadets to familiarize themselves with those camp checks and situations in preparation for doing camp checks with role players.
 - The GWTC hosted an academy open house for all potential applicants and their families. This event was led by the recruiting section and allows potential applicants, and their families, to tour the facility and see what life looks like for cadets. This allows them the ability to engage with training staff and field officers and get answers to any questions they have.
- **Funding and Staffing Issues** - *identify any recent developments in funding, staffing, and diversity in employment issues. Describe what prompted these developments and how improvements in funding, staffing and diversity in employment were accomplished.*
- Funding continues to be a challenge based on inflation related to capital equipment, office, boat storage leases, general operational needs, in addition to replacement costs of critical equipment.

- Funding solutions primarily focus on prioritizing legislative request for the 89th legislature beginning in January of 2025.
- Staffing Issues – We continue to encounter staffing issues with very specific positions within the Law Enforcement Division to include Police Communication Officers (Dispatchers) and Aircraft Pilots.
 - The issues with staffing dispatchers are a combination of obtaining quality applicants due to salary, work schedule, shift times, and not having the flexibility to work from home. Additionally, applicants that are selected rarely make it through the required background investigation.
 - Solutions include adding position classifications to increase salary and position steps. Identifying alternate communication centers to increase the applicant pool in other markets besides Austin.
 - Issues with staffing pilots is primarily due to the competition from commercial opportunities that offer better pay and schedules.
 - Solutions include adjusting minimum qualifications and establishing an internal program to train pilots.
- Game Warden applicant numbers have stayed consistent over the past two hiring processes between 700-800 applicants. Having a diverse pool of quality applicants continues to be a priority within our recruiting program to include the Career Development Program.
 - The Career Development Program (CDP) is designed to increase opportunity for prospective applicants to see what we do firsthand and assist with recruitment and diversity measures. The CDP is a structured ride along program for interested college students and applicants to tag along with a field officer and see them interact in their daily duties with the public. This program has an electronic evaluation that is completed at the end of every ride along.
- **Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends** - *identify any major cooperative, interstate, reciprocal or other cross jurisdictional law enforcement trends (e.g., including community policing, operator under the influence (OUI) initiatives, or other issues which fall outside traditional fish and wildlife enforcement functions).*
- The TPWD LE Division has been involved full time in Operation Lone Star which is a Governor requested border operation since January 6th of 2022. Our primary focus is marine patrols and public safety.

- Partner agencies include multiple state, federal, and local partners, to include Game Wardens from other states.

TPWD Border Enforcement initiative utilizes two strategies.

1. A Border/Coastal County wide enforcement approach that utilizes 209 Texas Game Wardens stationed fulltime along the US/Mexico Border Counties and Coastal Counties that perform the TPWD mission while considering border driven criminal activity and intelligence, to include Texas Coastal Waters. They also serve as a statewide law enforcement force multiplier during border events.
2. Operation Lonestar consists of approximately 30-60 Game Wardens pulled from around the state to perform a 9-day deployment in the Rio Grande Valley to maintain state water security 24/7 along an approximate 35-mile stretch of the Rio Grande. Personnel also serve as a quick response force as requested by our state and federal partners.

Texas Game Warden Operational Strategy:

Texas Game Wardens in conjunction with The Department of Public Safety, Texas Military Forces and U.S. Border Patrol are conducting a strategic operational surge in and around the McAllen and La Joya areas along the Rio Grande River. Efforts are marine based, and focused on the disruption, deterrence, and interdiction of Transnational Criminal Organizations, Drug trafficking Organizations and Human Smugglers.

Intelligence Driven Purpose:

The approximate 35-mile stretch of Rio Grande River has historically been an area that Transnational Criminal Organizations have utilized for its ability to traffic large quantities of people and contraband. The deeper water combined with easy vehicular access on both sides of the river provides a platform for criminal activity. In addition, the ability to have concealed vehicle access on the US side and quickly move people and contraband to nearby stash houses or within the City of McAllen has identified the need to disrupt, dismantle and deter Transnational Criminal Organizations, Drug trafficking Organizations and Human Smugglers from utilizing this stretch of river. Deterring criminal activity in this area moves the activity to areas that put law enforcement at a greater and safer advantage to apprehend the criminal element.

Texas Game Warden Operation/Enforcement Action:

TPWD strategically utilizes a multilayer approach to include 24hr Marine patrols, a small tactical team of land-based units that flank marine units, K9 and UAS to deter and apprehend criminals utilizing the approximate 35-mile stretch of the Rio Grande River. Transnational Criminal Organizations, Drug trafficking Organizations and Human Smugglers are constantly testing the enforcement infrastructure using scouts, drones, and decoys due to the high value of the area utilized for criminal activity. Game Wardens provide intelligence feedback to the unified command, refer UDA's to US Border Patrol, deter criminal entry with high

visibility patrol, seize narcotics, apprehend human smugglers, provide water safety, and serve as infrastructure on the water to deter criminal activity to areas that provide OLS law enforcement a distinct advantage.

- **Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts** - *describe any interagency, interstate, international, state/tribal, or other cross jurisdictional enforcement efforts (e.g., major Lacey Act investigations, progress with Wildlife Violator Compacts, improvements in interagency communication (WCIS), etc.)*
 - Expanded Point of Entry (POE) operations across regions including the entire US/Mexico border. These operations include cooperative partnerships with USFW Inspectors, Border Patrol and Homeland Security. The operations focus on resources illegally being imported or exported to include commercial exploitation of aquatic products, pet trade, live animals, and animal parts.
- **New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement** - *describe any innovations in equipment, enforcement techniques, forensics, etc.*
 - The Division transitioned to Glock 45 9mm pistols equipped with the Acro red dot pistol mounted optic issued to all Game Wardens and Park Police Officers.
 - The Department was awarded funding for two Grand Caravan fixed wing aircraft both fully equipped with high powered surveillance camera equipment and infrared systems.
- **State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement** - *describe issues which impact or challenge law enforcement authority.*
 - HB 3065 relating to the taking of wildlife by an employee of the Parks and Wildlife Department or by a person, or agent of the person, on the person's property.
 - Provides exception to applicability of various statutes related to taking of wildlife for disease management/health purposes from public roadways and discharge of firearms from public roadways for authorized employees of the department (including biologists).
 - Grants TPWD ability to authorize landowners/agents to take wildlife for disease diagnosis/management purposes irrespective of seasons/lawful means, etc.
 - Senate Bill 1236 – Prohibiting The Use Of Certain Weapons In Or On The Bed Or Bank Of A Navigable Stream or River.
 - Prohibit the discharge of firearms (other than shotgun with shot only) and archery equipment (exempts bow-fishing equipment) in or on the bed or bank of all navigable rivers and streams.

- A person who violates this statute commits an offense of a Class C PWC misdemeanor.
 - Statewide Changes to Spotted Seatrout Regulations to take effect March 26.
 - The below changes to the regulations for spotted seatrout took effect on March 26 at 12:01 AM. The new statewide regulations are as follows:
 - ❖ Three fish daily bag limit per angler.
 - ❖ A minimum size of 15 inches and a maximum size limit of 20 inches.
 - ❖ One oversized trout greater than 30 inches allowed as part of daily bag limit.
 - Additional Statewide Changes to Spotted Seatrout Regulations to be proposed at the March Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission Meeting
 - ❖ TPWD staff will also be going back to the commission this week to propose additional changes relating to the harvesting of oversized spotted seatrout greater than 30 inches. The proposed change, which, if adopted would remove the allowance of fish over 30 inches or greater to be retained as part of the daily bag limit until a tag system is implemented in the next license year, beginning September 1, 2024.
- **Cost Savings Initiatives** - *identify initiatives in any area which contribute to improvements in work effectiveness and fiscal efficiency.*
 - Staff has worked to implement a more effective and efficient replacement plan for critical equipment with known expiration timelines. This allows for a more strategic and known fiscal impact and ability to manage and set aside funding for long term planning.
 - Specifically, vehicles which are on an approximate 5-year rotation would come with a computer, body armor PFD etc. This would make tracking of expiration dates and replacement needs more efficient.
- **Other Special Law Enforcement Issues**
 - Body Worn Camera storage: The Division is working towards a cloud-based storage system for BWCs. Issues are cost and internet connectivity.
 - Expungements: The Division has seen an increase in expungement request and is currently reviewing procedures to increase efficiency by streamlining procedures.
 - TPWD-LE has continued the use of the Guardian Alliance background system for new hires. All backgrounds are completed electronically in this system and have allowed the department to meet the new state requirements for the minimum

standards for how a background is conducted, along with the new requirements of sharing background information with other law enforcement agencies.

- TPWD-LE is currently moving to using the PowerDMS system for policy editing. This system will streamline the approval process while providing a single platform to track edits and changes in any policy being reviewed.

**Association of Midwest Fish and
Game Law Enforcement Officers
2024 Agency Report**

**Province/State: Department of
Natural Resources WISCONSIN**

*Submitted by: Casey Krueger, Chief Warden,
Division of Public Safety & Resource Protection*

Date: 4/23/24

Training Issues - *describe any new or innovative training programs or techniques which have been recently developed, implemented, or are now required.*

- In 2023, the Division of Public Safety & Resource Protection's Training Bureau:
 - Deployed a training needs survey and evaluated its results to ensure we provide relevant, necessary training to all staff. This analysis was the basis for the development and implementation of an annual training plan to ensure equitable training opportunities across the division.
 - Lead a statewide rollout of the Wisconsin Incident Based Reporting System as part of a federal requirement to change how we report specific incidents to the FBI.
 - Received and processed 572 applications for 20 conservation warden positions.
 - The division provided offers to 20 full-time conservation wardens to support our mission to protect, enhance, and promote public safety and natural resources in Wisconsin. This was the largest class of full-time conservation wardens hired in the 21st century and took a great deal of staff time and dedication to process. The 572 initial application ratings, 231 one-way interview ratings and 63 background investigations were all completed in-house by division staff.
 - Hired 10 Community Service Officers (CSOs) to assist conservation wardens at tier one (high use) state properties.
 - This program was utilized for a second year in 2023. CSOs provide citizens with valuable education regarding Off-Highway Vehicle (ATV, boat) safety, aquatic invasive species and legislative rules and regulations. This position continues to be a great tool to gain experience for those who may wish to pursue a career as a conservation warden. Two of the CSOs were hired at the end of 2023 as full-time conservation wardens.

Funding and Staffing Issues - *identify any recent developments in funding, staffing, and diversity in employment issues and describe what prompted these developments and how improvements in funding, staffing and diversity in employment were accomplished.*

- The department's Fish and Wildlife Account remains challenged by a structural deficit. This account funds about 20% of WI DNR's authorized positions and is a primary

source of funding for the division. There is a structural deficit in the account because; fewer people are buying licenses, prices for several license products have not increased in several years, and staffing and supply costs continue to go up. The deficit has affected our ability to fill vacancies and complete long-term projects, and supply budgets have been tighter. This said, we continue to provide the best services that we can with our existing financial resources and our department has been engaging stakeholders, the governor, and the legislature to explore options to rebalance the account in the 2025-27 biennial budget.

- The work of the division's Compensation Committee to procure market wage adjustments for the 2023-2025 biennium paid off and we are already developing a budget and compensation plan proposal for the 2025-2027 biennium. Through market research and data analysis, a compensation package, which included a 6% biennium wage increase for all staff was approved by the state legislature and governor. Additionally, our field conservation wardens, recreational safety wardens, and investigative wardens were granted a reduction to a seven year pay scale to align with Wisconsin State Troopers, plus a minimum additional \$5 per hour wage increase for these staff and our first line warden supervisors. While this compensation package was a huge win for the division, our wardens at all ranks are still behind the market compared to counterpart state agency officers.
- The mission of the division's Recruitment Committee is to recruit a competent and diverse workforce by providing up-to-date and relevant recruiting information to candidates, division staff, and community partners. The Recruitment Committee's objectives focus on:
 - Recruiting a highly qualified and competent workforce that is educationally, gender and culturally diverse, to better serve an increasingly diverse public.
 - Utilizing new and existing technology, outreach strategies, training, and program evaluations to ensure an effective recruitment and hiring process that balances the needs of the division and the applicant pool.
- In 2023, division recruiters attended 63 recruitment events where they promoted a variety of positions. Many of the events were held at educational institutions such as universities, technical colleges, or high schools. Recruiters connected with over 260 prospective candidates to provide answers to any career or hiring related questions. The Recruitment Committee continued to publish a reoccurring e-newsletter for prospective candidates, finalized a new recruitment video, and continued outreach to diverse community groups and leaders.

Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends - *identify any major cooperative, interstate, reciprocal or other cross jurisdictional law enforcement trends (e.g., including community policing, operator under the influence (OUI) initiatives, or other issues which fall outside traditional fish and wildlife enforcement functions).*

- Over the past year, our wardens have been involved in numerous lifesaving events including drug overdoses, heart attacks, car accidents and countless recovery efforts that brought much needed closure to many families. Answering these calls demonstrates our wardens' unwavering, selfless commitment to the citizens of our great state. Just a few examples include:
 - Wardens received a report of a boat on the Mississippi River whose operator was driving reckless and with occupants passing around a bottle of liquor. A warden arrived at the dock as the boat was returning. Once the warden identified himself, the operator hit the dock with the boat and attempted to continue operating. The occupants of the boat were uncooperative, and one was belligerent. One intoxicated subject left the dock and proceeded to get into a truck and drive away. This individual was soon after stopped and arrested by State Patrol for operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated. The warden arrested the boat operator for OWI as well.
 - Wardens responded to the Kettle Moraine State Forest Northern Unit for a report of three missing juveniles on a hot summer day. They deployed ATVs to check the trail systems and support a canine track. Wardens located the juveniles walking along the Ice Age Trail and escorted them to the nearest road where they were reunited with their foster mother. They were very thirsty but otherwise unharmed.
 - Wardens assisted the Fond du Lac County Sheriff's Office with an armed suicidal subject in Campbellsport, WI. A man was attempting to enter his ex-girlfriend's residence, making threats to shoot her and her family. The man later began making threats to commit suicide-by-cop as deputies arrived on scene. Wardens assisted in establishing a perimeter while negotiators and SWAT were deployed, taking the man into custody with the use of less-lethal munitions and a canine.
 - Wardens responded to a fall at Governor Dodge State Park. The victim sustained a serious lower left leg injury after falling approximately 20 feet while climbing a rock face without safety equipment. The victim was alone and called 911 for assistance. Fire and EMS staff had difficulty finding the victim. A warden launched a boat and climbed the adjacent slope, locating the victim. The warden and EMS/Fire staff were able to carry the victim out in a stokes basket to a UTV, then transferred the victim to the warden's boat to the awaiting ambulance at the boat landing.
- The division directed a huge focus towards community outreach again in 2023:
 - Operation "Sled Safe" and "Think Smart Before You Start" Safety Efforts: These were both all hands-on-deck efforts focused on curbing risky behaviors and making sure recreators are staying safe on the trails. Local sheriff's department and state conservation wardens looked for intoxicated operators, checked for

- helmet and seatbelt use, made sure operators were following regulatory signs, and sometimes simply provided some on the spot education or assistance.
- Outreach with Ride Safe Foundation: Several wardens assisted in providing safety messaging to around 3,000 students at three different schools in Northern WI. One message was crystal clear – always wear a helmet.
 - Partnership with Murphy & Prachthauser and the US Coast Guard Auxiliary for an infant, toddler, and youth life jacket give away. In total, 850 life jackets were given away to families in Southeastern Wisconsin to keep people safe when recreating on Wisconsin waterways.
 - Operation Dry Water Campaign: Staff participated in this nationally recognized event over the July 4th weekend, focusing on the dangers of alcohol and drug impaired boat operation. The division had 98 conservation wardens statewide participate in this enforcement effort, contacting 2691 vessels, an estimated 7611 boaters, issuing 217 boating related citations and arresting 27 intoxicated operators and 1 drug impaired operator.
 - Field wardens and program staff participated in many community outreach events, including C.O.P.S. Kids Camp, Farm Tech Days, Milwaukee Admirals games, Wisconsin State Fair, the Governor’s Fishing Opener and more. These events do so much for our ability to make meaningful contact with the public and shed light on the great work of our division.
 - The Hunter Recruitment, Retainment and Reactivation (R3) team facilitated 88 Learn to Hunt programs for deer, pheasant, waterfowl, turkeys, and bear. The R3 Team also worked with partners to conduct outdoor educational skills events including shooting, scouting, processing, and cooking workshops. After the success of four pilot Deer Processing workshops in 2022, staff expanded offerings to 9 locations throughout the state in 2023. In addition, program staff attended several events throughout the year including semi-professional sports games, Milwaukee Sports Show, Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expos, NASP state tournament, Wisconsin state trap shoot, and multiple local hunting/R3 related events, focusing efforts on safety, Hunter Safety course enrollment, and instructor retention/recruitment.
 - The division’s four ‘Fishing in the Neighborhood’ interns (FiN’terns) deployed the Fishmobile Mobile First Catch Centers which were key to introducing fishing skills to 1883 people at 52 summer clinics in diverse neighborhoods, largely in Milwaukee and Madison, WI.
 - The division utilized social media, radio, digital media, news releases and in-person media interviews to promote public safety and education on an array of topics.

Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts - *describe any interagency, interstate, international, state/tribal, or other cross jurisdictional enforcement efforts (e.g., major Lacey Act investigations, progress with Wildlife Violator Compacts, improvements in interagency communication (WCIS), etc.)*

- In 2023, 13 different boating-related trainings were offered to staff, local municipal partner agencies, and marine enforcement professionals from around the country. Division staff instructed courses in GPS Forensics, Boat Incident Investigation, Field Sobriety Testing, Airboat Operation, basic Law Enforcement Boat Operation and Boat Search and Rescue. The biggest highlight was being selected by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) to host and instruct one of their three Coast Guard funded Boat Incident Investigation Courses. This course was held in Hudson, WI and taught by Wisconsin conservation wardens. Students who attended consisted of PSRP staff, municipal patrols, the US Coast Guard, Minnesota DNR, and staff from Sheriff's Departments in both Minnesota and Michigan. This was a great opportunity for Wisconsin to stay relevant nationally and to highlight our skilled staff in the Great Lakes region of the country.
- To ensure our staff are in the best position to remain safe while working on the ice and responding to rescues, wardens on the Marine Enforcement Team partnered with staff at the US Coast Guard for a day of practice using ice rescue equipment and learning how to implement self-rescue techniques in the event one of the wardens would go through the ice.
- The Division hosted the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) National Hunting Incident Academy in 2023, which provides skills, knowledge, and techniques to conservation wardens to conduct hunting incident investigations. The training involved 10 Wisconsin wardens and 30 out-of-state wardens (Iowa, Florida, Mississippi, Ohio, Delaware, Connecticut, and Maine). PSRP staff coordinated the logistics of the training and served as role players for scenarios.
- The Investigations Bureau's focus in 2023 was to provide efficient investigative resources to the field and DNR regulatory programs when needed. Staff investigated cases such as thrill killing, night shooting, elk poaching, internet-related complaints, illegal ginseng sales, timber theft, air and water pollution, etc. Several burglaries and cash thefts from self-pay stations on state lands were investigated which led to citations or arrests. We helped protect forested lands and public safety by assisting wardens and DCI agents across the state in several wildland arson investigations. The bureau maintains close relationships with the Wisconsin State Lab of Hygiene and the State Crime Lab through our investigative warden liaison who regularly processes and sends evidence to the lab for forensic analysis.

- The division received funding under a federal grant to pay for a specialized work group of investigators and wardens that focused efforts on aquatic species in trade industries. Through this grant, we were able to:
 - Identify two specialty grocery stores that had been acquiring live, invasive Asian swamp eels from out-of-state distributors and selling them in Wisconsin. This prompted a joint forces operation between several states under the authority of the 12-Party MOU (Agreement on Regional Cooperative Enforcement Operations). In Wisconsin, wardens seized 44 of these invasive fish. These invasive species along with other non-native aquatic species are known to be released into waterways and are also purchased as live food product. Citations were issued to several retail/wholesale suppliers in Wisconsin, Illinois, and New York.
 - Continue to investigate distributors of highly invasive live invasive red swamp crayfish. Several red swamp crayfish found in the wild in Wisconsin in the past two years have been linked to the illegal shipment of these species into the state.
 - Continue public outreach to suppliers in the live food, pet, and biological supply trades to educate companies about which species are prohibited in Wisconsin, along with helping them identify alternative species to sell.
 - Work with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and several other states to identify illegal shipments and sales of live, invasive snakehead fish, coming to Wisconsin as part of the underground trade in invasive fish as pets.

New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement - *describe any innovations in equipment, enforcement techniques, forensics, etc.*

- After extensive financial planning, IT troubleshooting, vendor presentations, policy development, and officer training, the division was successful in deploying a records management system (RMS) and body camera program. These projects could not have been completed without the funding and support of Governor Evers and the Joint Finance Committee through approval and implementation of the state budget. We are fortunate to have this opportunity to maintain transparency with our public and share the great work that we accomplish each day.
 - The division obtained 68 Axon body cameras and deployed them to wardens in the Northeast and Southeast regions of Wisconsin. Body cameras aid wardens in documenting cases, resolving complaints, and more. We hope to be able to outfit all conservation wardens across the state with this valuable technology in the future.
 - The division entered an RMS contract with ProPhoenix to allow staff to efficiently and effectively document daily notes, document cases, track warnings/contacts, manage evidence and more.
- During the open water season, staff responded to multiple search and rescue calls and unfortunately multiple drownings/body recoveries. Each of these unfortunate incidents required the use of specialized training and specialized equipment, including side-scan

sonar, underwater remotely operated vehicles (uROV), and a sophisticated towfish sonar unit. One of these incidents was a fatal plane crash into Lake Winnebago. A member of the DPSRP Marine Enforcement Team was asked to assist the National Traffic Safety Board, the Federal Aviation Administration, and Winnebago County Sheriff's office to locate and recover the plane as well as recover the deceased and provide closure to the families. The DNR is continuing its efforts to ensure these technologies are available for use to enhance public safety.

- The Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Mission Ready Team (AKA drone team) continued efforts in 2023 to provide incident stabilization and assist with scene reconstruction during investigations. The team is FAA certified and trains with Wisconsin Drone Network, Wisconsin State Patrol, State Capitol Police and Wisconsin Department of Justice.
- With the increase in recreational vehicle registrations and traffic, the department has been investing in technology to expand our capabilities in recreational vehicle incident investigation. The department has sent staff to advanced trainings, invested in computer technology to map incident scenes, and technology to help us learn more about these incidents. This significant financial investment in training and equipment over the last year helps us to better review incidents and provide lessons learned for all interested parties. The knowledge gained from these investigations will help us to better understand the chain of events that led to these incidents. Our hope is to share information learned from tragedy to help others more safely enjoy the trails and provide a better overall recreational vehicle experience for all.

State, Regional and National Issues, Legislation, Legal Challenges and Court Decisions Impacting Natural Resources Law Enforcement - *describe issues which impact or challenge law enforcement authority.*

- Conservation wardens have full police power while conducting work on state owned properties; however, outside of those lands the enforcement authority decreases for certain law enforcement related issues. Wardens must first request "expanded authority" from the local jurisdictional agency to handle these issues. This can create safety concerns with prolonged contacts.
- The division worked collaboratively with partners provided feedback for legislative changes to improve rec vehicle and boating safety. This includes working with the Wisconsin ATV Association, Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and the Ride Safe Foundation.

Cost Savings Initiatives - *Identify initiatives in any area which contributed to improvements in work effectiveness and fiscal efficiency.*

- Deployment of the new records management system (RMS) will reduce administrative costs (budget and staff time) by allowing staff to track data in one place instead of having to maintain multiple databases.
- Environmental Enforcement work and holding violators accountable will always be a high priority for the division. This said, environmental enforcement staff had to scale back their work in 2023 due to this workload significantly exceeding EPA allocations.
- Considering the funding and staffing challenges outlined above, workload management has been a high priority for the division. Thoughtful planning surrounding, fleet management, overtime management, etc. have been critical in managing operational costs.