



# ASSOCIATION OF MIDWEST FISH & GAME LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

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ANNUAL AGENCY REPORTS 2020

# ASSOCIATION OF MIDWEST FISH & GAME LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

ALBERTA  
COLORADO  
INDIANA  
IOWA  
MICHIGAN  
MINNESOTA  
MISSOURI  
NORTH DAKOTA  
OHIO  
OKLAHOMA  
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SOUTH DAKOTA  
TEXAS  
WISCONSIN

# **Association of Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers 2020 Agency Report**

**State/Province: Alberta Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Branch**

**Submitted by: Supt. Miles Grove**

**Date: May 15, 2020**

## **Training Issues**

*Describe any new or innovative training programs or techniques which have been recently developed, implemented or are now required.*

The branch has postponed mandatory re-certifications and in-service training due to COVID-19 restrictions. In Alberta, we now have the go ahead to resume some training with strict protocols in accordance to Alberta Health Services. The Western Conservation Law Enforcement Academy is postponed until September 2020 and may be differed to May 2021 based on the lack of recruitment in western Canada. The Government of Alberta has announced that fish and wildlife officers will be assisting the RCMP (Provincial Police) with response to priority one and two emergencies in rural areas. Training courses based on a gap analysis are to start for in-service officers soon in order for the branch to begin its expanded role by fall 2020.

## **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 branch is currently required to vacancy manage its vacant positions that would be available for external hires due to budget restrictions. Internal promotions and transfers are still occurring based on priorities.

## **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 (QUI) initiatives, or other issues which fall outside traditional fish and wildlife enforcement functions).*

As above, the branch will be involved in all aspects of policing in rural Alberta when requested to assist the provincial police during 911 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 are able to

assume total control, fish and wildlife officers will revert to core mandated conservation enforcement 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.)*

## **Special Investigations Section – Major Investigations and Intelligence Unit (MIU)**

The Special Investigations Section 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 (MIU) 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 very 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 and has demonstrated success with officer safety issues and evidence gathering for prosecutions. The forensic lab has been ISO accredited and continues to operate under that criteria.

**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. The Government of Alberta is in the process of hiring and deploying more prosecutors. In addition the government is proposing to streamline processes to reduce physical court time by staff and public.

**Cost Savings Initiatives**

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

Computer Aided Dispatch tied to RMS will be implemented for officer staff by fall 2020. This initiative will enable more effective dispatching from a closest

unit prospective and assist police dispatching to fish and wildlife officer for rural crime emergencies. The branch is underway to reduce many of its land telephone lines with reliance on cell phones and computer instant messaging and Skype. During the COVID-19 emergency, all meetings have been conducted remotely through SKYPE or Webex which has greatly reduced physical travel.

**Other Special Law Enforcement Issues.**

Nothing further.

## **Association of Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers**

### **2020 Agency Report**

**State/Province: Colorado**

**Submitted by: Bob Thompson**

**Date: May 8, 2020**

#### **Training Issues**

In the 2020 POST Academy there are currently eleven-wildlife officer and nine park ranger recruits attending the POST academy through the middle of May. With the COVID-19 pandemic, it has led to a lot of the academy taught virtually. The eleven wildlife officer trainees will spend the remainder of the calendar year in specialized training to become wildlife officers. The nine park officer recruits (one is already POST certified) will spend the next six months in specialized training to become parks officers.

#### **Funding and Staffing Issues**

The economic return on investment of activities supported by Colorado Parks and Wildlife is massive. The agency's annual budget is about \$190 million, which supports activities that result in over \$6 billion in total economic effects (including state park visitation, hunting, fishing and wildlife watching), spread throughout Colorado, from metro areas to rural communities.

CPW receives very little general fund or citizen's tax dollars to support wildlife management, state parks or outdoor recreation programs. As an 'enterprise' agency mandated in statute, CPW relies primarily on license sales, state parks fees or registration fees to support programs. CPW funding streams are required by law to be separate and CPW does not inter-mingle wildlife and parks funding. Wildlife funding is spent on wildlife programs and activities. State Park funding is spent on state parks operations and programs.

Looking to the future, CPW is extremely thankful for the public support of *The Hunting, Fishing and Parks for Future Generations Act*. Passed in May 2018, the bill provides the agency with several opportunities to continue working toward our mission, and to address some of the specific challenges that CPW has over years of stagnant funding. The bill holds CPW accountable to 10 key goals we plan to work toward addressing by 2025. These goals build off the agency's Strategic Plan and long-term vision for wildlife and natural resource management. CPW embraces the goal of stemming the decline of sportsmen and women in Colorado. Also to improve and increase big game populations through investing in habitat and conservation. CPW is beginning to plan the next Colorado State Park for our residents and visitors. CPW needs to continue recruiting and to retain highly qualified employees to carry out our mission. CPW strives to engage all outdoor recreationists to responsibly maintain and manage the natural resources that make up the very heart of Colorado. All 10 goals and the 2019 report are on the CPW website ([2019 Future Generation Act Report](#)). CPW will report the annual progress to the legislature through 2025. While they are large, these goals are important to CPW and we know they are important to all Coloradans. CPW is grateful every day for the opportunity to work with, play in and protect the natural resources of Colorado. It takes a lot of hard work to maintain and improve habitat, conserve over 960 species, and manage 41 state parks. Nonetheless, the

lands, waters and wildlife that our residents and visitors cherish are equally loved by the hundreds of dedicated CPW professionals that work to ensure the health and prosperity of these resources every day.

In summary CPW's current funding model makes us reliant on user fees to support our programs. Our agency is streamlined and committed to providing the public with a high level of service. Financial sustainability for CPW is a key for maintaining our wildlife and outdoor heritage. CPW is currently in the process of implementing our strategic plan and exploring all options to achieve the goal of financial sustainability into the future.

#### **Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends**

Colorado is a destination state for the hunting of mule deer and elk. Colorado has some of the largest populations and largest antlered of these two species in the nation. Unfortunately, wildlife are often taken illegally and transported across state lines to the state where these subjects that poach reside. Colorado currently works closely with the USFWS and other states where poached Colorado wildlife are taken in a cooperative law enforcement effort to bring these poachers to justice. Colorado also relies heavily on the Interstate Wildlife Violator compact, especially the failure to comply with the provisions of a citation, to assist in these law enforcement efforts.

#### **Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts -**

Colorado works cooperatively with many state agencies, federal agencies and other law enforcement/judicial entities across the U.S. and Canada.

#### **New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement -**

Colorado continues to update and enhance the electronic forensics capabilities as "internet wildlife" crimes with all the social media outlets are ever increasing. The Law Enforcement Investigation Unit conducts all cell phone and computer forensics for parks and wildlife officers. There is a trend of doing more-and-more forensics analysis on smart phones and less-and-less on computers. Colorado contracts with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department for wildlife/DNA forensics. In addition, the Law Enforcement Investigations Unit is in the process of purchasing and outfitting a van as a mobile surveillance/forensics unit.

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

In the 2019 and 2020 legislative session many of the fines for violations were increased since many had not been increased for years. For example, the fine for no fishing license used to be \$50 and it is now a \$100 fine. Below is a summary of changes.

## SUMMARY OF CHANGES

- Increases the fine amount for most wildlife regulation violations to \$100
- Directs that the majority of fines collected from violations of Articles 1-6 be credited to the wildlife cash fund
- Increases the fine amount for procuring more than one license of a certain type in a calendar year to \$100
- Increases the fine amount for no fishing license to \$100
- Increases the over bag limit fine for fish, etc., to \$35 per animal
- Increases the fine amount refusing to permit license inspection to \$150
- Increases the fine for failure to void a carcass tag to \$100
- Increases the fine for release of native wildlife to \$200
- Increases the fine for trespass to \$200
- Increases the fine for failure to attempt to locate wounded big game to \$200
- Increases the fine for use of bait to \$200
- Increases the fine for failure to wear fluorescent orange or pink to \$100
- Increases the fine for loaded firearm in a motor vehicle to \$100
- Increases the fine for shooting from a public road to \$100
- Increases the fine for damage to a wildlife property to \$100
- Increases the fine for luring bears to \$200 for a first offense, \$1000 for a second offense and \$2000 for a third or subsequent offense
- Makes exceptions for CPW staff, as authorized by Commission rule, too legally possess aquatic nuisance species
- Refines when a park pass may be transferred
- Increases the fine for no boat registration to \$100
- Increases the fine for boating equipment violations to \$100
- Increases the fine for underage motorboat operation to \$100
- Increases the fine for prohibited vessel operation (wakeless, PWC operation sunset to sunrise) to \$100
- Increases the fine for careless vessel operation to \$200
- Increases the fine for causing water skis, etc., to collide with a person or object to \$200
- Requires a person on a stand-up paddleboard to have a PFD readily accessible
- Increases the fine for no snowmobile registration to \$100
- Directs that money from snowmobile fines be credited to the snowmobile recreation fund
- Increases the fine for underage snowmobile operation to \$100

- Increases the fine for unlawful operation of a snowmobile on roadways to \$100
- Increases the fine for unlawful snowmobile road, highway or railroad crossing to \$100
- Increases the fine for snowmobile equipment violations to \$100
- Increases the fine for careless snowmobile operation to \$200
- Increases the fine for hunting from a snowmobile to \$100
- Increases the fine for no OHV registration to \$100
- Directs money from OHV fines be credited to the off-highway vehicle recreation fund
- Increases the fine for unlawful OHV road, highway or railroad crossing to \$100
- Increases the fine for nor OHV permit to \$100
- Directs that the majority of fines collected from violations of Articles 10-13, 15 and 32 to be directed to the outdoor recreation cash fund
- Increases the fine for camping in an undesignated area to \$100
- Increases the fine for camping without a permit to five times the cost of the permit
- Increases the fines for prohibited vehicle operation (off road, excess of posted speed, no pass, etc.) to \$100

### **Cost Savings Initiatives**

Since 2009, CPW has cut or defunded 50 positions and reduced \$40 million from its annual wildlife budget.

### **Other Special Law Enforcement Issues**

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an up-tick in poaching. Most of the poaching has been mule deer but there is a least one reported instant of a Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep that was poached. With the increasing shortage of domestic meat supplies, it is expected that the poaching will continue to increase.

# Association of Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers

## 2020 Agency Report

State/Province: Indiana

Submitted by: Colonel Steve Hunter

Date: 5/12/2020

### Training Issues

*Describe any new or innovative training programs or techniques which have been recently developed, implemented or are now required.*

We have been capitalizing on programs like teams or zoom or even FaceTime to keep officers engaged and to build connections. We have been able to develop, implement and evaluate training plans for new officers struggling in various tasks in the Field Training Program. These web based programs allow the connection and communication while engaging the officers involved much more than a phone conversation or email. We have been able to create and share ideas while displaying the information for all to have accurate and real time input.

Through the COVID-19 pandemic we have noticed that now more than ever it is important for us to be involved to maintain a level of connection to the officers we are training, while striving to keep them healthy. We are finding alternative ways to train, our hope is to keep officers from feeling disconnected, which has been a trend nation- wide through this pandemic. Districts are still training with smaller groups, this has given more one-on-one attention to the skills and progress through district training.

These same ideas have crossed over to various trainings we provide to other state agencies. Working on creative interactive solutions to their training needs. Most ideas allow for us to be live in a conversation or teaching virtually receiving real time feedback and answering concerns and questions.

### 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.*

Our budget has not increased in recent years and as a result our equipment replacement has fallen behind. We have been much more aggressive in pursuing grants of various types to meet our equipment needs. Doing so has allowed us to replace outdated portable radios, enhance our sonar program, and to replace boats for patrolling and emergency responses. Staffing levels are down but we were able to add ten recruits during 2019. Another class was planned for 2020 but given the

recent developments due to COVID-19 the upcoming class has been postponed.

### 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 (QUI) initiatives, or other issues which fall outside traditional fish and wildlife enforcement functions).*

N/A

### 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.)*

Investigators with the DNR Division of Law Enforcement were recently recognized as sharing a Team Excellence Award by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for their work during a lengthy multi-agency investigation focusing on illegal commercial fishing.

Per USFWS, Team Excellence Award recipients excel in tackling tough issues and work together to craft creative solutions. Team excellence occurs when the sum of the collective efforts is greater than an individual's efforts. For 2018, the USFWS awarded three teams from its Midwest region.

The awarded team that included Indiana Conservation Officers conducted Operation Charlie, a USFWS-led comprehensive joint investigation that also included members of the Ohio, Illinois and Kentucky DNRs. Because their work was done undercover, their names are not being released.

The investigation required exceptional teamwork and communication to document potential violations of illegal commercial fishing activities related to sturgeon, paddlefish and other species of concern within the Ohio River basin. USFWS special agents worked with state counterparts from Indiana and Ohio in various roles that ranged from fishing with subjects, to buying/transporting illegal fish and roe from fishers and wholesalers in Indiana, Kentucky and Illinois.

During the investigation, the team documented 60 potential Lacey Act and 90 state violations related to illegal fish and roe/caviar with a potential retail value of at least \$1 million. On Nov. 27, 2018, one of the subjects pleaded guilty to one count of violating the Lacey Act for wildlife trafficking and one count of possession of a firearm. The subject was sentenced to 24 months in federal prison, and was ordered to forfeit all paddlefish caviar and meat, as well as his trailer and boat. Multiple other subjects are being prosecuted.

The award was presented in late May at the ninth annual Employee Excellence Awards Ceremony at the USFWS Midwest Regional Office in Bloomington, Minnesota.

#### **New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement**

*Describe any innovations in equipment, enforcement techniques, forensics, etc.*

N/A

#### **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.*

N/A

#### **Cost Savings Initiatives**

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

We reviewed summer boating overtime policies and practices redefining the criteria for what was necessary and useful patrols. Doing this allowed us to save considerable money that went to refurbish and replace equipment.

#### **Other Special Law Enforcement Issues**

N/A



# IOWA DNR LE BUREAU 2019 INFORMATION

## Training

We have begun updates to our firearms training program. We will hire some outside training companies to meet with our firearms instructors. The current program is adequate, but we want to make sure that our Conservation Officers are receiving the best firearms training possible. Along with the training updates, we have also upped our ammunition purchasing to facilitate more training. We have also updated our search warrant training program. A program by an Iowa Assistant County Attorney was conducted at our annual statewide training in February 2020. We also had a bureau wide online training for officers as well.

## Funding and Staffing

Funding is stable for FY19/20. FY20/21 will be finalized in the next few weeks, but it is anticipated to be status quo. We are behind on staffing. There are plans to hire at least 3 Conservation Officers in calendar year 2020. A Support Services Captain was added at our main office in April 2020. This position handles training, fleet and oversees Hunter's Education and Shooting Sports. We have 5 Field Captains. These positions each supervise a geographical district of the state. We now have a total of 6 Captains.

## Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement

Bureau Iowa DNR State Conservation Officers continue to work side by side with other state, county and municipal law enforcement partner agencies to not only ensure compliance with fish & wildlife laws, but also laws relating to impaired boating, ATV use and snowmobiling. Districts have conducted several projects using the Iowa State Patrol's air wing to use trained spotters in planes to locate ATVs & snowmobiles operating on remote trails & frozen rivers and relay their locations to officers from multiple agencies on the ground. This has also given the ability to follow & track down those machines that choose not to stop or decide to flee without unnecessarily jeopardizing officer safety during a pursuit. State Conservation Officers have also recently been called upon to work in conjunction with state and local tactical teams during high risk situations acting as spotters and containing situations. Conservation officers' unique knowledge of local territories and terrain has enabled them to add additional sets of eyes to tactical situations in locations with typically few available manpower assets and traditionally difficult to reach areas. From what started as several conservation officers near a scene willing to help has developed into our officers being regularly called to play an integral part in containing and relaying real-time information in high-risk situations.

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

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Bureau struggles with new technology and equipment on the market manufactured for the modern hunter. This equipment may not be legal by definition, however, political pressure from large companies has resulted in a change of interpretation which does not fit nicely into Iowa Code. Examples being laser range finder sights, broad head arrow tips with GPS receivers attached, nitro stick muzzleloaders, AR-15 pistols approved as pistols by the ATF, but do not meet the traditional accepted definition of a pistol. The past concerns with fair chase do not hold the same weight they did 10 years ago. These are the issues we are facing as we move into the future.

## New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement

New innovations with the current radio system has been partnered with other state and county agencies for better communication. State dispatch has led the training and has spent time with conservation officers training the system and working to create project groups that can be set up on the fly. When a group of officers are working a project state dispatchers create a patch for the officers in that group to communicate. The patch works that multiple agencies can be on the same talk group and not interfere with other radio operations. Training will commence on allowing conservation officers to create self-initiated calls for service through TraCS. Officers will be able to place details of a stop or investigation with time started, GPS coordination, classification, notes, subjects and articles involved and other officers assigned to the case. Included can be subjects based off of subject descriptors, driver license information, and vehicle (recreational vehicles) information. If an officer is not able to input the information, state dispatch can take over the self-dispatch to provide radio broadcast notes and or assign a case to a state officer. Further training and purchasing of side scan sonar is still a need and useful function for investigation of illegal fish nets, found articles and body recovery. The state is working to have many of the flat bottoms and all patrol boats equipped and officers trained in the use of side scan sonar. Iowa Conservation officers are testing body worn cameras. The state did not have a required wear policy and many officers were utilizing donated or self-purchased cameras for the enforcement interactions. With varying terrain and connectivity across the state needs of officers and the ability to connect has been an issue that no one solution has been determined. In 2019 a testing of multiple brands was conducted. The state is still testing brands and has hired a consultant to work with management staff to get the best product for

reliability, storage, functionality and cost.

### **Cost Savings Initiatives**

The Iowa DNR Law Enforcement Bureau has initiated a potential cost saving measure with our fleet vehicles. The Bureau is analyzing the cost per mile over the life of the vehicle vs. the current lowest initial cost to determine which is more efficient. The Bureau continues to contend with officer shortages that are necessary to balance budgets. Officers are allowed to work a very flexible schedule to maximize their ability to choose when they are needed to cover

calls or work problem areas. This strategy has allowed us to provide a good level of service with a small number of officers.

# Association of Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers

## 2020 Agency Report

### Michigan

Submitted by Chief Gary Hagler  
May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020

#### Training Issues

Speed Measurement Training: The Law Enforcement Division (LED) has recently expanded its efforts in the realm of speed measurement. The program has been around for years; however, due to budget constraints and staff changes, efforts had stalled over time. In 2018, two conservation officers attended training to become speed measurement instructors. In turn, they conducted training sessions to certify numerous conservation officers across the state in basic speed measurement. This will greatly improve the division's capability to utilize RADAR/LIDAR and other speed measurement tools to enforce safety concerns related to ORV, snowmobile, and watercraft use.

Poverty Training: Conservation officers across the state attended a class on poverty training. The session illustrated the values of different economical levels within society. It covered the research behind how individuals differ based on the environment they grew up in (i.e. generational poverty, situational poverty, middle class, etc.). This training will be beneficial by giving conservation officers additional insight when interviewing subjects during law enforcement situations.

Online Training System: During the fall of 2019, the LED contracted with a private vendor for an online training system that offers pre-recorded videos and vignettes that include assessments and tracking training records. This system also provides the LED with the ability to create proprietary videos and written training course materials that reflect the specific needs of the conservation officers and staff. We have used this system to schedule a pertinent training curriculum like Michigan Legal Update and to present training on newly implemented programs like air-purifying respirators and the statewide mandated e-Crash Reporting system. We were able to use our Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES) funding for this project and the full-length training video viewings are recorded in the MCOLES system for each officer's license history. We anticipate using this system to a greater extent in 2020.

Boating Accident Investigation and Boating Under the Influence Training: In May 2019, the LED held a National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) boating accident investigation class for 22 LED officers and three other agency officers (Coast Guard Investigative



Services and US DHS/Air and Marine Ops). The class consisted of four hours of online training and 36 hours of classroom training. Two conservation officers were also sent to the NASBLA Boating Under the Influence Train-the-Trainer three-day course in New Hampshire.

Department-wide Conference and Legal Update Training: Every other year the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) holds a department-wide all-employee conference at various locations in the state. This conference allows the entire department to hear from the department's leadership on emerging policies, goals, and programs along with an opportunity to ask questions and give recognition to long-term employees. Each division then breaks out into separate meetings for engagement and training purposes targeting each division's specific mission. The LED conducted a Legal Refresher session for its training program that covered numerous basic constitutional issues and unique Michigan and DNR statutory enforcement issues. A contracted Michigan attorney presented the course and engaged the officers and staff with a question and answer period.

#### Funding and Staffing Issues

Staffing: After the graduation of Recruit School #9, staffing is at an all-time high in the DNR Law Enforcement Division. This is a huge testament to the work our conservation officers do. Whether it is protecting the natural resources of Michigan or the health and safety of the public, our conservation officers are more visible than they ever have been. This provides increased opportunity for county coverage, assistance to other agencies and divisions, meeting with constituents, and public outreach. With this increased funding, we have shown that our conservation officers are a good investment.

New Equipment: LED has been able to purchase new equipment that has greatly increased response to emergencies and decreased maintenance costs. Having new equipment such as ORVs, side-by-sides, snowmobiles, etc. has made the DNR Law Enforcement Division an asset to many agencies who

need specialized assistance. This equipment has been used in many rescues and further promotes our mission as a natural resource and public safety protector.

### **Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends**

Agency Assistance: Michigan DNR conservation officers continue to expand their relationships with local and state law enforcement agencies – particularly in northern Michigan where many law enforcement agencies are struggling to find qualified applicants and experiencing decreased funding. Because LED is currently funded to staff an all-time high amount of conservation officers with new equipment, our officers have been able to help assist other agencies. This has expanded the division's mission to focus on general criminal situations in addition to the traditional natural resource work that we do.

### **Unique Cross-Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts**

Emergency Management: The Great Lakes are at their highest levels in more than 30 years, and that means people need to be aware of greater risk to personal safety, potential property damage along shorelines, and the effects on fish and wildlife. Michigan is experiencing the wettest one-, three- and five-year periods since data recording started 120 years ago. High-water problems include erosion, flooding, increased river flows, submerged docks, and boat ramps, property damage, swimming and boating hazards, and damage to wildlife habitat. LED Emergency Management staff are actively collaborating with state, local, and non-governmental organizations through the Michigan High Water Action Team. This team provides mitigation strategies and tactics to address the impacts of this natural event.

Special Investigations Unit (SIU): The Special Investigations Unit (SIU) has been working with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and several states regarding investigations involving herptiles and reptiles that are being harvested and traded illegally.

SIU is working with USFWS and looks forward to working with the State of California regarding a Michigan suspect who is trafficking bear galls from Michigan to California.

SIU is working with Wisconsin and Illinois to identify and infiltrate suspects from the Chicago area who are illegally harvesting fish and transporting them to Illinois for sale.

SIU detectives have assisted smaller local law enforcement agencies with cell phone call data analysis and forensic extraction of cell phone data. This is a great way to assist smaller law enforcement agencies that do not have the budget for some of these programs and who do not have the time to wait for State Police Crime Lab resources to assist in their investigation.

US Forest Service Cooperation: In northern Michigan conservation officers continue to work very closely with the US Forest Service law (USFS) enforcement officers. Our missions are closely related, and they are often our nearest backup in the vast national forests of northern Michigan. The USFS also has similar specialized equipment (e.g., side-by-sides, snowmobiles, off-road patrol trucks) and the outdoor knowledge to be a vital partner in the cooperative effort to protect the state and national forest lands.

Conservation officers are also continuing to play a critical role in assisting with multi-agency law enforcement events such as TorchFest (4<sup>th</sup> of July on Torch Lake), Bud Bash, Tip-Up-Town, Gambler 500, Higgins Lake 4<sup>th</sup> of July, and Mud Jam.

2019 Operation Stone Garden: Conservation officers in southern Michigan were once again proud to be

able to support and work with the Macomb County Sheriff Department's Grant on U.S. Border Patrol Federal Funds called "Operation Stone Garden". The grant which is

federally funded allows our department to work seamlessly with U.S. Border Patrol to help protect the international border on the water from illegal smuggling operations, illegal entry, and other enforcement and safety-related issues.

Conservation officers worked on patrol boats during October and early November 2019, helping to secure a safe border between the U.S. and Canada in Macomb County. Conservation officers logged 136 cumulative hours on the water, stopped 71 vessels, and issued three citations for misdemeanor violations.



### **New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement**

Special Investigations: The SIU is continuing to use cell phone forensics and tracking suspects via cell phone user data to identify suspects in wildlife crimes. Google geofence warrants have proven useful, but the time for returns is a factor in using them.

MiConnect Outdoors Development: The department has been working with Sovereign Sportsman Solutions (S3) to develop a new outdoor licensing system in Michigan. Part

of this contract includes the development of a mobile application that conservation officers can use on their smartphones when afield.

This new app will allow quick reference to the licensee's personal information, active and past licenses, special permits, and many other helpful tools. It is still in the development phase, but we are



excited about the potential it will have to put data at the conservation officer's fingertips when away from his or her patrol truck.

**Remotely Operated Underwater Vehicle (ROV):** Cpl. Sean Kehoe of the Great Lakes Enforcement Unit (GLEU) and Conservation Officer Justin Vanderlinde assisted the Michigan State Police Dive Team with the recovery of a body from a recent plane crash. After picking up the dive team in Frankfort, they responded to the scene approximately 5 miles out into Lake Michigan. The body was located on the bottom, in 523 feet of water. The staff from Northwestern Michigan College assisted conservation officers with an ROV and were able to locate and bring the deceased to within 30 feet of the surface before divers were able to grab onto the body. The body was recovered and placed on the deck of the commercial fish patrol vessel, "Rick Asher", and transported to the medical examiner who was waiting onshore. The MSP Dive Team was very pleased to be able to work from the deck of the "Asher" which provided a lot more room and comfort than their patrol boat. The ROV was an essential tool for the success of such an operation.

Cpl. Marvin Gerlach of the GLEU along with the Department of Energy, Great Lakes, and Environment (EGLE) Det. Trey Luce and CO David Miller deployed one of GLEU's ROV on an abandoned, sunken sailboat off Manitou Island near the tip of the Keweenaw Peninsula in Lake Superior. During the fall of 2018, the owner of the sailboat ran it aground on a shoal near Manitou Island. The US Coast Guard had to rescue the owner from the vessel using a helicopter and a rescue lift. The owner of the vessel returned to his home in Delaware and has refused to cooperate with Det. Luce in his investigation. Det. Luce requested GLEU's assistance with obtaining a video of the wreck to verify the vessel's identity with GLEU's ROV. The officers located the wreckage of the sailboat that had dispersed over a large area near the lighthouse on Manitou Island. Winter conditions and Lake Superior ice appeared to have torn the sailboat apart. The officer was able to video various parts and pieces of the sailboat with the ROV. Charges against the owner of the vessel will be sought by Det. Luce for a variety of violations.

**Cradlepoint Modems:** LED began installing new Cradlepoint IBR900 modems in patrol trucks in the fall of 2019. To date, 213 patrol trucks and Great Lake enforcement vessels have been outfitted with modems. The vehicles and vessels were also fitted with the latest roof-mounted antennas which contain five antennas versus the traditional single antenna associated with our previous USB air-cards. This upgrade provides two antennas for a cellular signal, two antennas for WiFi, and the fifth antenna is for GPS. The increase in cellular antennas drastically improves connectivity to nearly 100%. The addition of two WiFi antennas also allows the modem to distribute wireless signals over a greater area, again, increasing connectivity area and enhancing the effectiveness of conservation officers in the field.

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

**PFAS Concerns:** In October of 2018, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the DNR issued a "Do Not Eat" advisory for deer harvested within a 5-mile radius of Clark's Marsh. This area included the former Wurtsmith Air Force Base. The advisory was due to high levels of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) detected in one whitetail deer that was part of a test sampling. Although this has not impacted law enforcement activities in the area, it has increased fear in and around that local area about hunting.

**Side by Side ORVs:** Public Act 680 of 2018 (effective March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019) allows side-by-side ORVs to obtain license plates through the Michigan Secretary of State if they meet certain requirements for lights, mirrors, braking, etc. This change will allow increased access for these ORVs, which have exponentially increased in popularity in recent years. Combined with Public Act 288 of 2016, which opened access to hundreds of miles of state forest roads, this change may require increased patrols in sensitive areas to address environmental degradation.

**Slow No Wake Boating Initiative:** Due to increasingly high-water levels in the St. Clair River and St. Clair Flats, conservation officers conducted slow no-wake patrols in St. Clair County to assist local agencies with concerns over damages from vessel wakes due to already flooded properties. During the period from May through



October 2019, 55 patrols were conducted, the officers logged 399 on water hours, contacted 1,289 citizens, stopped 252 vessels, gave 194 warnings, and issued 94 citations. Due to the officer's efforts, boaters were educated, and private property loss due to motorized vessel wake was minimized. Legislators have indicated that they intend to introduce bills to provide for temporary emergency watercraft controls to address the issue. (Note: In 2020, two bills were enacted into law allowing local units of government to establish a 14-day or a 6-month emergency watercraft control).

**Great Lakes Enforcement Unit (GLEU):** The GLEU continues to assist with the creation of a new state commercial fish statue to replace the current act from 1929. In support of this effort, Lt. Terry Short testified in front of the House Natural Resource Committee on the House version of the law. Currently, the House version has passed and is now forwarded to the Senate.



Cpl. Marvin Gerlach of the GLEU contacted the Fisheries Division regarding a state commercial fisher that had overharvested approximately 80,000 lbs. of Whitefish between two of his licenses. The fisher had been cited by Cpl. Gerlach for the violations. The fisher pled guilty and paid a total of \$620 in fines and court costs under the "current" 1929 commercial fishing statute. Since the 1929 commercial fishing statute does not provide for restitution on the illegal Whitefish catch and the fisher was able to market the catch and received substantial financial gain before the violation was discovered. This case disposition is being used as an example of the need to update the state of Michigan's commercial fish statute and penalty section.

### **Cost Savings Initiatives**

Nothing to Report

### **Other Special Law Enforcement Issues**

Sergeant Santa (Belle Isle): Michigan Department of Natural Resources conservation officers that patrol Detroit and the surrounding communities hosted their first "Stuff a Truck" to support the Detroit Police Department's Sergeant Santa event. Sergeant Santa is an annual holiday program sponsored by WWJ News Radio 950 and the Detroit Police Department that collects toys and delivers them to Detroit families in need. Toys are collected and given to families in need throughout the City of Detroit. The goal was to collect enough toys to stuff one DNR patrol truck. Collection boxes were distributed at the DNR Outdoor Adventure Center (OAC) to collect donations. Conservation officers joined the Detroit Police Department on December 18 to personally deliver the toys to 50 families – twice the amount of families that received toys in 2018.

Roscommon Youth Police Academy: In the past 2-3 years, we have been assisting other law enforcement agencies in Roscommon County (mainly MSP, Roscommon County Sheriff Dept, Gerrish Township Police) with a summer youth academy for kids. This gets local kids (ages 10-16 years old) exposed to different levels and divisions of law enforcement for potential career options later in life. One full day is given to District 5 conservation officers to teach these young recruits about our specialized law enforcement by exposing them to presentations, scenarios, and other conservation-related functions.

Off-trail Snowmobiling: Off-trail riding is becoming more and more popular each year and with the growth of this sport, there has been an increased need for specialized LED equipment. Off-trail riders are purchasing long track snowmobiles that can reach very remote areas where short track snowmobiles are not able to access. When these people need help, emergency responders and law enforcement officers must have an equally capable

machine to assist. Another issue off-trail riders face is riding legally. Many of the riders are calling DNR offices asking where they can off-trail ride legally. The riders that don't do their research and only chase snowfall, unfortunately, end up riding on private property which generates trespassing complaints.

Abandoned Vessel Wreckage: Members of the GLEU had received information from a local dive shop owner in Menominee of a gill net hooked on the shipwreck "Home" which is a schooner that sank off the coast of the UP near Seul Choix Point in the 1800s. Efforts were coordinated with the divers to remove the net. Cpl. Mike Hammill, Cpl. Kevin Postma, Cpl. Nick Torsky and Lt. Terry Short conducted a net removing effort with divers utilizing the 30' PACIFIC patrol vessel. The divers ran a line from the net to the officers and then cut the net free of the wreck. The officers were then able to pull 2,000 feet of lost gill net. The Wardens Show filmed the operation for a future episode. Approximately 200 pounds (66 fish) of Whitefish, Lake Trout, and Burbot were removed from the net. The GLEU removed 5,000 feet of gill net and two trap nets that were either lost or abandoned in the Great Lakes.



**Association of Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers  
2020 Agency Report**

**State/Province: Minnesota  
Submitted by: Lt. Col. Greg Salo  
Date: May 14, 2020**

**Training Issues**

We provided all officers with new foam and inflatable PFDs, along with new guidance about when to wear inflatables (only when the water temperature is higher than 50 degrees). We also had a training on the use of PFDs and man-overboard devices for all conservation officers.

**Funding and Staffing Issues**

We continue to receive funding to diversify our conservation officer corps and continue recruiting officers with varying backgrounds and experience. Last spring, we held a diversity job fair in St. Paul, which was well attended and resulted in a number of applications.

**Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends –**

Minnesota DNR Enforcement continues pushing for changes in state laws regarding driving under the influence across the spectrum of motor vehicles and recreational vehicles. We also have been working with other agencies to slow the spread of chronic wasting disease in our wild deer herd and have been directing enforcement efforts at the commercialization of wild game.

**Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative,  
Enforcement Efforts**

We continue working with our tribal law enforcement partners in the state. This past year, for example, our officers worked with Red Lake Nation officers to apprehend a man who's accused of killing a 700-pound bear on reservation land.

**New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement**

We added to our staff an investigator who focuses on social media and electronic forensics. He will be on scene when some search warrants are executed, for example, and will provide support to officers throughout the state.

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

Nothing of note.

**Cost Savings Initiatives**

Our officers continue to use apps such as Skype to conduct meetings when possible, and also have been more active in using social media as part of their jobs.

**Other Special Law Enforcement Issues**

We anticipate in the future we will be working on situations related to the exercise of First Amendment rights.

**Association of Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers**  
**2020 Agency Report**  
**State/Province: Missouri**  
**Submitted by: Randy Doman**  
**Date: May 12, 2020**

**Training Issues**

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) graduated a class of 11 Conservation Agents in October of 2019 from our Agent Training Academy (which initially started with 12 trainees). For the second time within the last five years, MDC will not be conducting an Agent Training Academy in 2020. The nine-month hiring process will soon begin (July 2020) for the 2021 Agent Training Academy. The Academy is Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) certified, and consists of constitutional law, conservation law, defensive tactics, emergency vehicle operations, boating operations, waterfowl school, firearms training, land management practices, trapping, hunting incident investigations, fish kills, etc.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, all group related spring training and qualifications (i.e., firearms, defensive tactics, CPR/First Aid, etc.), meetings, conferences, physical fitness testing, etc., have been postponed until later dates yet to be determined.

**Funding and Staffing Issues**

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 budget for MDC continues to represent less than one percent of the total state government budget in Missouri. The primary sources of revenue are the one-eighth of one percent Conservation Sales Tax, at about \$121 million, and permit sales and federal reimbursements, at about \$64 million. Total receipts for FY 2019 were \$196.7 million.

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

In 2019, MDC welcomed three new commissioners to our four-person Conservation Commission – Barry Orscheln of Columbia, Mo.; Dr. Steven Harrison of Rolla, Mo.; and Mark McHenry of Kansas City, Mo.

The Conservation Commission approved a multi-year market-based pay plan and performance management system which uses a 'Pay for Performance' approach which is directly tied to

available funding. This new system is based on three annual criteria:

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

MDC has a priority-based budgeting program specifically tied to the Department's Strategic Plan: *Design for the Future*. This plan identifies three goals (listed below) to direct the efforts associated with specific FY20-21 Department priorities.

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

With input from the public and conservation partners, MDC has identified six desired outcomes, 17 strategies, more than 150 specific actions, and 42 measures that will help track our progress. The Protection Branch is well represented in all three goals, as well as the current agency priorities which include: Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Management, Feral Hog Elimination, Asset Management Inventory, and Priority Geography Management.

The Department reorganization has switched from an initial planning phase to an implementation phase which has resulted in some extensive restructuring (e.g., divisions changing to branches; regional administrators appointed to all eight regions to place local coordination and decision-making authority at the regional level, etc.).

The Protection Branch currently has 188 full-time employees, which is currently down 12 positions due to retirements, resignations, and terminations. In order to provide superior customer service, while addressing emerging priorities such as disease management and wildlife trafficking, the Protection Branch occasionally reclassifies existing positions to better accomplish our mission. Two examples include: returning a temporary field agent position into the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) to serve in a technical investigator (Sergeant Detective) role and reclassifying a clerical position to a supervisor (Captain) position for our Commercial Wildlife Unit.

At the present time, a little more than one quarter of commissioned law enforcement staff are eligible for retirement within the next five years. This appears to be a consistent dilemma within the entire Department as well.



Effective May 1, 2020 the Protection Branch adopted a law enforcement ranking system to emphasize a statewide chain of command, increase accountability for a statewide program, facilitate more accurate market value comparisons, increase cross-communication/parity with LE peers, enhance succession planning while developing bench strength for future leadership roles, ensure that training and leadership is everyone's responsibility, and that the best trainers are providing instruction, no matter the rank.

- Structure is made up of the following - Branch Chief > Deputy Chief(s) > Major > Captain(s) > Lieutenant(s) > Sergeant Detective(s) > Corporal(s) > Conservation Agent(s) > Agent Trainee(s).

We are still looking to also add a Sergeant level to take some of the duties off the plates of our Lieutenants.

### Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends

During the 2019 deer season, 5,700 hunters donated 282,935 pounds of venison to Missouri's Share the Harvest program. This was an increase over last year (4,956 hunters donating 259,414 pounds). Conservation staff, in addition to our program partner, the Conservation Federation of Missouri (CFM), are continually working on raising awareness and securing funding for this extremely valuable program.

Operation Game Thief (OGT), is a hotline sponsored by the Department and the Conservation Federation of Missouri. In 2019, Missouri's OGT program received 760 violation reports (an increase over last year), which resulted in 297 convictions and \$8,800 in rewards paid to 45 callers. Our OGT exhibit trailer was used in six events for multiple programs. The Protection Branch actively promotes the OGT program through a variety of media outlets, including our Department's social media page. These efforts resulted in several great cases being made.

One such call to the OGT hotline last year led to the following noteworthy case: On 11/01/2019 Agent Eric Swainston and Lt. Mike Jones received information from two anonymous sources that Harold Piatt was in possession of two fresh questionable deer heads at his residence. Agents Tyler Brown, Swainston and Lt. Jones, with the assistance of the Miller County Sheriff's Office, conducted an interview and interrogation at the Harold Piatt residence which resulted in solving various cases in both Miller and Shannon Counties.

Piatt admitted to shooting multiple deer at night, from the roadway, and taking the antlers as trophies. In most instances, he left the meat to rot, while just enjoying the thrill of the kill. During the course of the interview, and with consent from Piatt, they looked through the photos on his cell phone. Piatt identified each photo, the deer in each photo, approximately

where each deer was killed, approximately what time and date they were killed, and the manner in which they were killed. Piatt identified photos of four deer that he killed in Shannon County and three more deer that he killed in Miller County. He also received multiple drug charges in Miller County. Below is a list of the charges that were filed on Piatt along with evidence photos of illegal wildlife parts seized.

For the violations committed in Shannon County, Agent Brown filed the following charges with the prosecuting attorney:

- Take Deer in Closed Season (x3)
- Take Deer with Aid of Artificial Light (x3)
- Possession of a Controlled Substance Except less than 35 Grams Marijuana
- Unlawful Possession of Drug Paraphernalia-Methamphetamine
- Possession of Less than 10 Grams Marijuana
- Unlawful Possession of Drug Paraphernalia

For the violations committed in Miller County, Agent Swainston filed the following charges:

- Take Deer with the Aid of Artificial Light (x3)
- Take Deer in Closed Season (x3)
- Take Raccoon in Closed Season by Hunting Methods.
- Illegally Possess Deer or Parts Thereof (x2)



*Illegal Antlers*



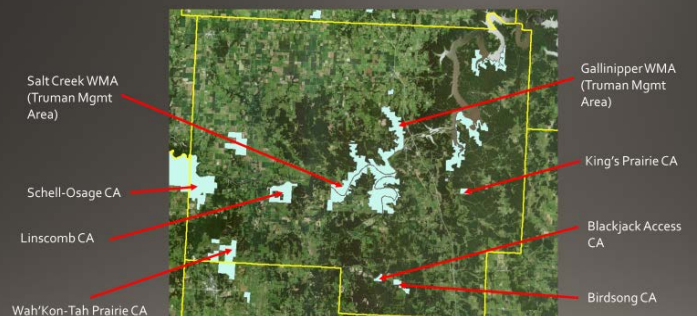
*Illegal Deer and Antlers*

Timber theft also continued to be an issue in 2018-2019 across the state with numerous investigations resulting in successful prosecution (e.g., 29 felonies and 11 misdemeanors, which resulted in \$61,803.63 in fines and restitution for the Kansas City Region). Specific examples from St. Clair County are included below:

## ST CLAIR COUNTY – 10/16/2018

- 2 Search Warrants Served (Roscoe and Eldorado Springs)
- Conservation Agents noted over 180 violations. Conservation related cases filed or pending by Conservation Agents include:
  - Polk County – 2 Felonies – Stealing (Chainsaw - \$810 value)
  - St Clair County – 3 Felonies – Stealing (Walnut Logs)
    - 3 Felonies – Property damage (cutting Walnut trees)
    - 2 Felonies – Property damage (vandalizing 2 MDC Forestry Dozers)
    - 2 Felonies – Stealing (Batteries from 2 MDC Dozers)
    - 2 Felonies – Stealing (Commercial winch - \$6300 value)
  - 8 Misdemeanors – Operate motor vehicle in unauthorized area
  - 1 Misdemeanor – Being on special mgmt area during restricted hours
  - 1 Misdemeanor – Fail to register motor vehicle

## ST CLAIR COUNTY





## ST CLAIR COUNTY

- Pending Cases Filed by Cooperating Agencies
  - St Clair County Sheriff's Office – 1 Felony – Possession of controlled substance (methamphetamine)
  - 1 Felony – Possession of stolen property (flat bed trailer)
- Cedar County Sheriff's Office – 1 Felony – Possession of controlled substance (methamphetamine)
- ElDorado Spring Police Department – 1 Felony – Possession of stolen property (Dodge truck tailgate)

## ST CLAIR COUNTY

Area	Volume (Doyle)	Value	Tree Count
Birdsong CA	2581	\$6,531.04	10
Blackjack Access CA	408	\$1,067.94	3
Gallinipper WMA	526	\$1,439.87	2
Salt Creek WMA	3812	\$10,443.85	28
Linscomb CA	3019	\$8,270.86	7
Kings Prairie CA	5257	\$14,208.18	17
Schell-Osage CA	1389	\$3,806.55	5
Wah Kon Tah CA	740	\$2,027.26	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>17732</b>	<b>\$47,795.55</b>	<b>76</b>

## TACTICS UTILIZED BY SUSPECTS

- Battery operated chainsaws
- Both daytime and nighttime activity
- Stolen equipment (Chainsaws, trailers, winches, etc.)
- Cut trees, leave for several days to a couple of months, return to remove logs
  - Using game cameras to monitor the cut trees to see if they are discovered
  - Cell phone app (IRHiddenCamera) available that will detect infrared game cameras
- Multiple locations vs. a single area
- Selling logs at multiple sawmills

## COOPERATION

- Intra-Departmental
  - Cooperation with Forestry, Wildlife, and Resource Science
    - Tree / log values
    - Locate cut trees on areas managed
    - Map building
    - Provide equipment
- Inter-Agency
  - US Army Corp of Engineers
  - US Fish & Wildlife
  - County Sheriff's Offices and local Police Departments
  - In other areas of the state – US Forest Service and National Park Service



### Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts

See aforementioned Timber Case Information.

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

Missouri SIU staff also remain actively involved in various capacities with the Wildlife Investigators Covert Academy (WICA) training held annually across the country (Missouri hosted this training in 2019).

### New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement

The Protection Branch continues to embrace technology to better protect Missouri's fish, forest and

wildlife resources. Department Administration has tentatively approved and allocated funding to outfit Protection vehicles as mobile workstations. (i.e., laptop mounting system with separate adjustable screen and keyboard, mobile modem, printers, etc.)

The Protection Branch instituted an Incident Reporting System to comply with state crime reporting laws. This system has been designed to be fully integrated with our current Arrest Records and Warnings System, Telecheck System, Permit Sales System, and Accomplishment Reporting System (new this year as well, to track agent daily activities and accomplishments). This allows for a very efficient user experience by eliminating duplicative entry of information that has already been collected in other databases. (e.g., identifying information of suspects, victims, witnesses, or charges pursued.) It also allows us to identify locations with higher public service demands and enable us to allocate resources more effectively. These efficiency and process improvement procedures save staff time and improve both the internal and external customer experience.

The Protection Branch continues to make great cases utilizing game cameras and remote surveillance cameras that send photos to agent's smartphones when activity is detected. Several of our successful 2019 timber theft cases were discovered and effectively documented using this technology, as well as detecting the presence the feral hogs in staged corral traps. Our SIU continues to successfully use Cellebrite in conducting cell phone data extraction and transfer analysis, and ZetX to map and analyze huge sets of phone record data quickly and efficiently while meeting scientific standards (TRAX mapping - tower dumps, exigent pings, etc.).

Protection Branch also enhanced the law enforcement markings on our 2019 and newer vehicles over the past year. The increased visibility is part of a deliberate community policing strategy and an effort to maintain relevance in a changing society...





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

Legislative Session - the Department is engaging in discussions with legislators regarding budget allocations, feral hog elimination efforts, night vision and thermal imagery use for predator hunting and wildlife/feral hog damage control, the definition of 'handgun', and a Landowner Registry, etc.

In 2019, the Missouri Legislature and Governor passed a "Poaching Bill" which provided an optional restitution penalty for poaching Missouri game animals and other native wildlife species –

- Elk and Bear - \$10,000 - \$15,000
- Whitetail Buck - \$1,000 - \$5,000
- Turkey - \$500 - \$1,000
- Paddlefish - \$500 - \$1,000

In addition to the Poaching Bill, effective February 1, 2020 the state Uniform Fine Schedule Committee, in cooperation with Protection Branch, also implemented a revised conservation fine schedule. As part of our strategy to increase voluntary compliance with the *Wildlife Code* and further deter poachers, the conservation fines for more egregious, fraudulent permit, and commercial wildlife violations increased appropriately.

Unfortunately, for the second year in a row, the Missouri Legislature essentially shut down wildlife check points on public roadways (not to include MDC roads on MDC lands) by implementing restrictive language and only allocating \$1 to be spent on such road checks.

Missouri courts discovered several years ago that the previously utilized mail-in ticket Fine Collection Center (FCC) process may have been unconstitutional since prosecuting attorneys were not signing off on tickets issued by law enforcement with the option to plead guilty and pay the fine via the mail. Therefore, the state supreme court has implemented a prosecutor portal in which all tickets are sent directly to local prosecutors who then must decide if they want a personal appearance in court, or to allow for the fine to be paid through the mail. An unforeseen problem is that most of our prosecutors do not want to personally handle all of the paper tickets issued, so

they are requesting an electronic filing system in which law enforcement will need to find a way to electronically file their tickets with the prosecutor. This has unfortunately led to some county prosecutors choosing not to accept and file submitted hand-written citations from our conservation agents. Consequently, MDC is currently in the process of expeditiously creating such an electronic filing system since several prosecutors across the state have refused to accept and file paper tickets.

## Cost Savings Initiatives

The Protection Branch continues to utilize a very active and successful Protection Volunteer Program consisting of approximately 132 volunteers spread across the state. These volunteers assist conservation agents and other MDC staff with projects including enforcement patrols, outreach and education programs, training scenarios and wildlife surveys. This volunteer program has also proven to be a valuable recruitment tool.

MDC Administration approved and appropriated \$100,000 for the Protection Branch to institute a K-9 program which will consist of four agent handler/canine teams. California Department of Fish and Wildlife states that one well trained dog can save approximately 800 personnel hours per year. Based on this information our figures show that if each of our future canines save us 800 hours of labor each year, at an annual cost of \$1,050 dollars per canine, that's \$1.31 per hour in labor, or a total savings of \$15,760 annually per dog. Total annual cost for our K-9 Program is estimated to be \$4,200 with a total labor savings gained annually of \$63,000.

In 2019, MDC launched a permit auto renewal system to allow customers to enroll eligible permits in a service that automatically renews their permits prior to the start of the next season or permit year. More than 22,000 individuals enrolled prior to the beginning of the 2021 hunting and fishing permit season. In addition, our Permits Branch has also reached out to previous permit holders, who have not purchased permits in a few years, and have been successful in encouraging them to remain active in annual hunting, fishing, and trapping seasons with additional permits being purchased.

## Other Special Law Enforcement Issues

MDC is part of a very productive network of federal, state, and private agencies (Missouri Department of Agriculture, US Department of Agriculture, Missouri Farm Bureau, United States Army (Fort Leonard Wood), Missouri Corn Growers Association, National Wild Turkey Federation, Missouri Agribusiness Association, and countless others) called the Missouri Feral Hog Elimination Partnership. All members of the partnership are dedicated to total elimination of feral hogs from the state, and have worked together to successfully remove 10,495 hogs from Missouri's landscape in 2019.

With the U.S. Forest Service's order to prohibit feral hog hunting in the Mark Twain National Forest, the

Partnership implemented an aggressive Statewide Strategic Feral Hog Elimination Plan. The Partnership set up the first Incident Command Structure (ICS) in 2020 for an increased unified removal effort. As of March, this effort, combined with the continued normally scheduled feral hog removal efforts, culminated in 340 landowners assisted, 2,904 feral hogs removed, and nearly 669,000 acres scouted for signs of feral hog activity. The

Protection Branch continues to play a vital role in all aspects and scope of the Partnership's established feral hog elimination plan. Corral trapping and aerial gunning continues to be our most effective control measures at this point in time.

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

The restoration of elk in Missouri is supported and appreciated by many people and organizations, and elk tourism has proven to be a benefit to local communities. The elk herd continues to grow and in 2020 the Department will hold its first elk hunting season using a lottery system with only five Elk Hunting Permits to be issued this year.

Unfortunately, we continue to investigate poaching activities that have resulted in the illegal killing of six elk over the last couple of years. Working with our partners at the Conservation Federation of Missouri (CFM), Missouri's OGT program offered a \$20,000

reward in late 2019 for information leading to the conviction of those responsible for killing these Missouri elk over the past several years. However, this large reward amount has not proven to be successful in garnering the information needed to make any arrests, so our investigations continue without having received much credible information or assistance from the public.

After numerous years of documented abuse, the Department has established regulations to address a significant level of fraud with our landowner permitting system. A statewide review in 2018 by conservation agents found over 30 percent misuse of no-cost landowner permit privileges (i.e., landowner fraud). Based on this information, the Conservation Commission instituted a landowner registry system to ensure no-cost permits are only being issued to qualifying landowners, and the Commission increased the qualifying land acreage from five to 20 acres.

Lastly, our conservation agents also conducted a very successful statewide covert operation involving pet stores possessing and selling illegal wildlife (e.g., focusing primarily on illegal invasive crayfish). Appropriate charges are pending and soon to be filed in the local courts.

**Association of Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers**  
**2020 Agency Report**  
**State/Province: North Dakota**  
**Submitted by: Robert Timian**  
**Date: May 1, 2020**

**Training Issues**

We continue to deal with issues regarding the training of new wardens. Current POST Board rules cause problems with the timeline between the field training program and the basic law enforcement academy. New hires who are not POST certified must attend the state basic LE academy. Due to POST Board rules, a new officer cannot be registered for the academy until they have a limited peace officer license. To be issued a limited license an officer must be employed by a LE agency, qualify with their duty weapon, and pass the written use of force exam. This means we must hire and begin training new officers before they can be registered for the basic academy. The problem arises here, because there are only three basic classes a year and there are more students than seats available. Our new hires are finishing their 16-week field training program before they have been to the basic academy, causing numerous issues.

We have been utilizing technology for training more frequently with numerous trainings now held via webinars. While this is not a solution for all required training, it is an effective method of training for certain topics.

**Funding and Staffing Issues**

We have seen a large reduction in the number of applicants for warden positions. We are increasing our recruitment efforts by better using social media, video, and university engagement. We are planning for several open positions in the next 1-4 years due to retirements and are hoping to keep two full time temporary positions staffed so we will have trained officers ready to fill in as districts open. We are beginning work on the 2021-2023 biennium budget.

**Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends**

With the continued effort towards reducing the spread of CWD we are also reviewing our regulations and how hunters are impacted by CWD regulations. We are proposing a change to the tagging and transportation requirements

to try and simplify the regulations for the hunters while still achieving the agency goals and making enforcement of the rules possible.

**Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts**

We continue to utilize our Joint Powers Agreements with other states and work on large, multiple state investigations. The wardens are utilizing our agreement with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department forensics lab and have sent numerous samples to them for DNA analysis.

**New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement**

We are currently researching new patrol rifles with the goal of finding an AR-10 (.308) platform rifle that is vastly improved from our current rifles. We are focusing on the weight, balance, and overall reliability. So far, we are finding that technology has improved since we last purchased rifles. We continue to research and have purchased several apps for our smartphones that we hope will improve officer safety, efficiency, and success.

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

As always, we continue to monitor legislation, legal challenges and court decisions to determine how they would affect us. Our legislature meets bi-annually, and this year is an off year, so we will begin working on new legislation for the 2021 session later this year.

**Cost Savings Initiatives**

We continue to aggressively review applications for gratis big game licenses for false information. New screening reports have been developed using new technology which have decreased the amount of time it takes to review the applications. We are also researching ways to decrease the amount spent on vehicle changeouts. Our new officer report and incident management system is nearing completion and it appears that building our own

*will save us money over buying a commercial product.*

***Other Special Law Enforcement Issues***

*Like every other State we are now dealing with how we will adjust to continue operations in response to COVID-19, and in future what funding issues made be coming.*

**Association of Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers**  
**2020 Agency Report**  
**State/Province: Ohio**  
**Submitted by: Ken Fitz, Executive Administrator of Law Enforcement**  
**Date: 5/5/2020**

**Training Issues**

Describe any new or innovative training programs or techniques which have been recently developed, implemented or are now required.

*No new developments on the training front, although we have as a Department moved from each Division (Wildlife or Parks and Watercraft) running their own training program to a centralized cooperative approach blending both divisions for in-service training. This has continued to be a work in progress, with some differences in the needs of the division coming forward resulting in changes in how the trainings are done. A state-wide training was held featuring Brian Willis with "What's Important Now," Kent Williams is scheduled for June 2020, however this training is up in the air due to Covid 19.*

*Recent developments with Covid 19 resulted in our cadets that are enrolled in the Basic Peace Officer Academy to be sent home. They are receiving remote instructions for half of their time in the day to fulfill their basic peace officer training requirements, the rest of the time is covered by remote learning from Division of Wildlife staff to fulfill wildlife academy topics not covered in basic training.*

*The Ohio Division of Wildlife has seen the benefits of conducting trainings for other law enforcement agencies, the public, conservation groups, and our own officers concerning ginseng. The training covers identification, life history, Ohio's management program, regulations, and enforcement techniques.*

**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 approximately fifteen years, a fee increase was put in place, raising the cost of deer permits, turkey permits and fishing licenses. Resident hunting license fees, and multi-year license packages did not increase. Previously fees for nonresident hunting license and permits had increased.*

*Ten cadets completed training and graduated from the academy in early 2019, followed by*

*another hiring in July 2019. Recruiting efforts on social media were greatly increased and resulted in a more diverse group of applicants. Over 900 applications were received for fifteen positions. At the same time the Division of Wildlife was hiring, the Division of Parks and Watercraft hired cadets, which caused some confusion among applicants. Ultimately, two of the diverse wildlife cadet candidates went to the Division of Parks and Watercraft. Thirteen cadets began the wildlife academy training process during the first week of February. As of late April, twelve remain in training. This hiring includes several "nontraditional" candidates that while active in the outdoors and various outdoor sports, are not necessarily the traditional "hook and bullet" sport participants. These cadets are reflective of society and further our goal of increasing relevance to the public.*

**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 (QUI) initiatives, or other issues which fall outside traditional fish and wildlife enforcement functions).

*The authority for Ohio Wildlife Officers is restricted to traditional "game warden" work throughout most of Ohio, however, we also have full police powers on ODNR property. Over the last few years we have seen an increase in drug abuse and accompanying overdoses on our areas. We have also seen a correlation between poaching complaints, and sales of wild animal parts and meat to support drug habits.*

*Deer Processor Investigation - Ohio wildlife officers executed search warrants in Gallia County Ohio on Tuesday, Feb. 11, 2020 concluding a several months long investigation of alleged wildlife violations concerning illegal take and tagging of white-tailed deer and records violations at a deer processor.*

*Five search warrants were conducted by Ohio Division of Wildlife officers and investigators, with an additional search warrant conducted in Pennsylvania by the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Wildlife officers and investigators conducted 22 interviews in Ohio and three in Pennsylvania to verify all alleged violations.*



During the search warrant, more than 1,000 items of evidence were seized, including venison processing equipment, processor records, deer mounts and antlers, venison, and hunting implements. A stolen rifle, illegally possessed firearm suppressors, and a moonshine still were also discovered during the searches. This case is still under investigation, and additional information will be released later.

The Division of Wildlife thanks all the law enforcement agencies involved, including the Pennsylvania Game Commission which conducted interviews and a search warrant concurrent with the Ohio Division of Wildlife, as well as assistance from the Ohio Department of Public Safety, Ohio Investigative Unit.

Canine use - A Division of Wildlife canine officer assisted in a murder investigation, finding the firearm, allegedly used in the crime, hidden under a rock in the woods for two weeks. Our canines have been frequently used by other agencies to find evidence, including assisting with a serial rapist arrest, and by finding personal belongings of a victim in a fatal motorcycle crash, helping bring peace to the family. Changes in hunter behavior – There has been a marked change in hunter behavior in Ohio, with less pressure during the firearms season for deer and more pressure in the archery season. In addition, more firearm hunters have been using the same tactics they would for archery hunting, and there is a decrease in deer drives. This has caused us to look at our scheduling decisions and how we apply our manpower throughout the fall as well as how our officers work to find hunters.

#### **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.)

Ohio continues to participate in several multi-agency task force groups, including the Twelve Party Agreement, regional in-state Environmental Crimes Task Force groups, the Aquatic Resources Task Force on the Ohio River, and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission Law Enforcement Committee.

#### **New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement**

Describe any innovations in equipment, enforcement techniques, forensics, etc.

Officers and investigators have utilized a number of commercially available tools, including remote access trail cameras with tremendous success. In addition, cell phone tracking software had generated valuable data that has been used to put the suspect at the scene of the violation. While this is not new technology, software developers are constantly developing new products that can be utilized to build stronger cases.

#### **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.

Bills have been introduced in the current session of the General Assembly that could impact the ability of the agency to; regulate the hunting and trapping of coyotes, disqualify applicants for a commercial fishing license, or would expand exemptions for hunting and fishing license. The agency is assessing the impacts of these proposals.

#### **Cost Savings Initiatives**

Identify initiatives in any area which contributed to improvements in work effectiveness and fiscal efficiency.

While we have not taken any new initiatives for work effectiveness and fiscal efficiency, as an agency that is funded primarily by license dollars, we are constantly working to be fiscally responsible. To do this we utilize complaint data and public input to determine scheduling and manpower needs.

As an agency, because we see a need to engage segments of the public that have not traditionally funded our efforts, we have directed our officers to engage other segments of the public. Officers have been encouraged to participate in birding groups, garden clubs and others that have an interest in the outdoors, as well as reaching out to others to develop an interest in the outdoors. While we have a legislative mandate to serve all Ohioans, many are not aware of our agency and the work that we do.

#### **Other Special Law Enforcement Issues**

Nothing to note.

# Association of Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers 2019

## Agency Report

State: OKLAHOMA

Col. Nathan Erdman Prepared by: Capt. Marni Loftis

Date: April 07, 2020

The following report covers the period July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020 (FY2020) for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, Law Enforcement Division.

### AGENCY OVERVIEW

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation is comprised of 6 divisions which include: a Law Enforcement Division, Wildlife Division, Fisheries Division, Information and Education Division, Administration Division, and a Federal Aid Division.

The Law Enforcement Division consists of a Colonel/Chief of Enforcement, Lt. Colonel/Asst. Chief of Enforcement, Captain/Operations Manager, and a Secretary located at our headquarters in Oklahoma City. There are approximately 117 field employees which include: Game Wardens who are divided into 8 districts, with each district containing two Lieutenants and a Captain. A game wardens primary responsibility in Oklahoma is to enforce the state's wildlife laws. However, game wardens also have the jurisdiction to enforce all other state laws when necessary. Beyond law enforcement, game wardens are responsible for conducting public outreach programs as well as assisting other divisions with research and other projects. Game wardens are often involved in assisting with spotlight counts, controlled burns, fisheries research assistance, and other Department programs and projects.

In addition, the agency has a reserve force consisting of 13 reserve officers. These reserves are agency employees assigned to various divisions whose primary duties are other than law enforcement. This program has been dwindling as employees retire and we are not actively enlisting new reserves at this time.

The division operates with a straight-line chain of command.

Our upper level positions have all changed hands. Promotions in the upper level include: Nathan Erdman – Colonel/Chief of Enforcement, Wade Farrar – Lt. Colonel/Asst. Chief of Enforcement, and Marni Loftis Captain/Operations Manager.

### TRAINING ISSUES

Previously, new Game wardens attended 4 weeks of unstructured "training" at headquarters, followed by 10 weeks with an FTO, and attendance at the state law enforcement academy, CLEET. The training at headquarters included self-guided study of Title 29 and Title 800 (Oklahoma's wildlife statutes), a couple of one day classes, ordering and issuing equipment, 4 days of firearms training, and 2 days of defensive tactics.

Captain Marni Loftis was promoted in September 2019. She completely restructured and rebuilt the new warden training program by organizing the first Oklahoma Game Warden

Training Academy. Her first class consisted of 6 new game wardens (Probationary Game Wardens - "PGW's"), which were hired on February 18, 2020. These consisted of 5 males and 1 female. Before employment the 6 PGW's completed a pre-hire physical fitness test and their aptitude was recorded for future comparison. Those times etc. were then used to develop a final physical fitness test to be administered at the end of the academy. The PGW's were advised that if they did not meet the improvement requirements they would not continue on past the academy. They were also advised that there would be a final comprehensive knowledge exam and failure of that exam would also result in termination.

The Academy was 6 weeks in length which included 1 week in Oklahoma City for new hire orientation, issuing equipment, and instruction on basic Department functions. The next 5 weeks were spent at Camp Gruber (a National Guard training facility in Eastern Oklahoma). Those 5 weeks were divided into the following classes: Introduction to Title 29 and 800, Application of Title 29 and 800, Citation Writing, Computer/License System Training, Ethics, Federal Training, Waterfowl Enforcement Techniques, Introduction to Investigations (including basics on Hunter Incident Investigation, Wildlife-Human Attack Response Training, Man-tracking, Blood-tracking, and Wildlife Forensics), Trauma/First Aid, Firearms Training, Precision Driving, Defensive Tactics, Report Writing, Officer Involved Shootings, Simulations, GPS Skills for Law Enforcement, Precision Boat Driving, Search and Seizure/Probable Cause, Writing Search Warrants, and Interview and Interrogations as well as a daily PT schedule.

Game Warden CLEET certified instructors from across the state stepped up to volunteer to teach these classes. They organized PowerPoints, scenarios, etc. Defensive Tactics instructors proposed the purchase of a new HighGear Suit and it was approved and purchased. This suit was used during Defensive Tactics and Simulations for actual hand to hand combat as well as training on the progression of use of force with the Simulations training. Capt. Loftis was able to get over 50 of the class hours approved for CLEET credit.

Along the way, one PGW turned in their resignation. It was apparent they were not going to pass the PT test and after 3 weeks of training they decided that they had not understood what being a Game Warden entailed. So they turned in a resignation and did not complete the last two weeks of the academy. The other 5 PGW's all passed their final PT test and the Comprehensive Knowledge Exam. Currently PGW's will continue with the previous 10 week FTO program, and PGW's who are not already CLEET certified will continue on to the 14 ½ week state CLEET Academy.

The Academy will be held once a year between February and March. Plans are already being made to extend the Academy by 2 weeks. This will allow the addition of 2 days for Officer Water Survival Training (if we can get 2-3 instructors through the NASBLA school), 1 day for Water Enforcement Techniques, 3 days for Boat Training, 2 extra days for Defensive tactics, and the expansion of the Investigation and Report Writing classes.

The Academy was a huge success thanks to the team work between instructors and Capt. Loftis, as well as the major role which upper administration played. New Colonel Nathan Erdman and Lt. Colonel Wade Farrar were vital in the approval and implementation of The Academy every step of the way. They not only supported the organization of the academy but they assisted when they could. Their contribution and support, in conjunction with the overall approval by Director JD Strong, were tantamount to the success of The Academy.

Capt. Loftis now has plans to ensure all classes are CLEET accredited at future academy's. She also plans to begin rebuilding and restructuring the Field Training Officer program.

Other aspects of training require that all game wardens complete twenty-five hours of certified law enforcement training with two hours of mental health training each calendar year. The Division has 57 CLEET certified instructors. These instructors wrote 25 classes which were CLEET certified. Unfortunately, for the most part, they only had access to teach the classes they wrote. Capt. Loftis set up a google drive where all presentations and class forms can be shared. She also applied to have multiple other classes obtain CLEET certification. We know have approximately 35 CLEET accredited continuing education courses that most all of our instructors can teach. This assists with wardens not needing to rely on outside sources or agencies to complete their mandated training.

All commissioned wardens and reserve wardens are required to train and qualify annually with pistols per CLEET mandates. In addition, game wardens and reserves must qualify with shotguns and carbines and must also attend a certified annual 8-hour defensive tactics refresher course per department policy.

#### **FUNDING AND STAFFING ISSUES**

Funding remains unchanged from the previous year. We are fortunate that we are a revenue-based agency and not experiencing any funding shortfalls.

We currently have four warden vacancies. The open positions are a result of retirements and one resignation from the newly instituted Game Warden Training Academy. We have had 2 sets of new game wardens hired during this period, 5 wardens on the old training system and 5 wardens on the new training system.

We were able to purchase 19 Dodge four-wheel drive extended cab pickups and 4 crew cab pickup all with the Dodge cargo management system. The equipment installed on this years trucks include LED light bars, locking double gun racks, and grill guards. We purchased two eighteen foot jet boats with 110-80 horsepower motors and one sixteen foot flat bottom boat equipped

with a 25 horsepower outboard jet prop motor. We purchased fifteen radios, ten digital high-band and five 800 megahertz radios to replace aging equipment. We have added a Streamlight TLR flashlight to the duty handgun and replaced all holsters to accommodate the added light.

We are currently pursuing the purchase of body worn cameras to document contacts with the public and critical incidents. We have field tested a body worn camera system by Visual Labs which will provide download of video via a cell phone at a much lower cost than current Law Enforcement camera companies. We have written policy in regards to the body cameras and are currently working our way through the state purchasing procedures.

#### **MAJOR CONSERVATION LAW ENFORCEMENT TRENDS**

Hunting guides are continuously increasing and with that increase, competition for clients is increasing. This, in conjunction with weather, significantly increased the number of cases being made for baiting migratory birds. Our hunting and fishing culture among constituents is changing and the use of guides is growing. Our busy way of life leaves little time to manage a plot of land for deer or scout for turkeys, etc. That in combination with fewer and fewer available leases will likely lead to a continued increase in guided hunts and new areas of illegal activity that will result from such.

#### **UNIQUE CROSS BOUNDARY OR COOPERATIVE ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS**

The Pensacola, FL shooter obtained his gun with a hunting license. There is a unique loop hole in Florida law which considers hunting and fishing licenses as official state documents which can be used to purchase guns. Oklahoma has this same loop hole, so we brought this to the attention of an FBI and OSBI joint task force on terrorism. We started working with them to look up flagged foreign nationals in our license system to determine if they had purchased hunting/fishing licenses. That work became extensive quickly with over 1000 new Saudi foreign nationals a year entering Oklahoma. So we used our new license system to develop a report on foreign nationals who have obtained hunting/fishing licenses. This report is now being shared with the FBI/OSBI joint task force.

#### **NEW INNOVATIONS IN CONSERVATION LAW ENFORCEMENT**

Several districts have purchased or are in the process of purchasing thermal imaging devices which attach to phones. We are also looking at other thermal devices for consideration.

#### **STATE, REGIONAL, AND NATIONAL ISSUES, LEGISLATION, LEGAL CHALLENGES AND COURT DECISIONS IMPACTING NATURAL RESOURCES LAW ENFORCEMENT**

New legislation and administrative rules:

New and additional counties were opened to the harvest of bears. Raccoon season was extended to a year round season.

Record of Game is no longer required to be filled out on paper licenses due to the new license system. Sportsmen still have to field tag the animal.

Rifle and handguns no longer have cartridge length or caliber restrictions as long as they fire at least a 55 grain bullet. Shotguns are no longer restricted to 20 gauge or larger.

New constitutional carry rules took effect in November 2019. People can now carry loaded firearms in vehicles, including on our WMA's and PHA's, etc.

New laws allowing the use of ATV's on county roads took effect in November 2019 as well. This has caused issues on our WMA's and PHA's.

#### **COST SAVING INITIATIVES**

Fuel costs continue to be a concern in Oklahoma. Game wardens are encouraged to use time management and to work wisely while conducting their patrols. We have discontinued the installation of CNG on vehicles due to repair and maintenance costs.

The continued rising cost of vehicles, boats and general safety equipment is a major concern with a small reduction in the number of licenses and also the decrease in the stock market. This means smaller budgets with the

same amount of expenses going out. We are trying to save some money by switching to Dodge trucks, which have the same fleet warranty as Chevy does. Also we are looking at buying fewer boats and UTVs to save other money. Once the stock market picks back up we should be in a better position to replace the reduced equipment purchases.

#### **OTHER SPECIAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ISSUES**

The invention of the Livescope for fishing has caused quite a stir from wardens, biologists and even sportsmen. Right now it is a legal device. However, it is being scrutinized and analyzed do to targeted snagging of paddlefish. Enforcement of the illegal harvest and sale of paddlefish eggs for caviar continues to be a major enforcement issue. Game wardens maintain an increased enforcement emphasis during the annual spring spawn to help curtail the illegal activities associated with the illegal caviar trade.

**ASSOCIATION OF MIDWEST FISH AND GAME  
LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS  
2020 AGENCY REPORT  
SASKATCHEWAN**  
**Submitted by: Glen Pranteau, Intelligence Officer**  
**May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

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**Training Issues**

New for this year is the tourniquet training module for all in-service officers. We will have everyone trained with practical application of tourniquets for injuries this year. Everyone will be issued and wearing a tourniquet kit for field use as part of their Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

With the emergence of COVID-19, some annual training has been cancelled. The remaining training has been moved to an online format or will proceed where it can be conducted with mandatory physical distancing between trainer and trainee.

The Western Conservation Law Enforcement Academy has been delayed for new recruits this year due to COVID-19 pandemic.

**Funding and Staffing Issues**

Approximately half of all conservation officers in Saskatchewan are currently dedicated to COVID-19 related duties. The majority are staffing roadblocks in the northern part of the province. All duties (overtime, PPE costs, etc.) related to the pandemic are being coded to a special government COVID-related account.

**Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends**

Due to the ongoing pandemic, Saskatchewan's Chief Medical Health Officer has declared a public health emergency and the government set up 10 checkpoints near locations that are COVID-19 hotspots. Conservation officers are manning each of the roadblocks and are enforcing the Public Health Order. The order deems certain areas of the province closed to travel, in and out. Fines for contravening the Public Health Order are \$2,000.00 plus court costs of \$800.00.

To date the rate of compliance has been good, with very few arrests and few people ticketed.

Conservation officers are now required to wear approved PPE when conducting vehicle stops and at checkpoints. As well, to maintain social distancing guidelines, one officer per vehicle is now the standard.

**Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative Enforcement Efforts**

In October, Alberta Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Branch received a call from an area landowner on the Report a Poacher Hotline advising that he had discovered a dead bull caribou that appeared to have been shot and left on his property near Valleyview, Alberta. Woodland caribou are listed as an "endangered animal" pursuant to the *Wildlife Act* in Alberta. An investigation was initiated and revealed that the subject shot the caribou, left it and returned to Saskatchewan. Warrants, through several cell phone companies in Alberta, acquired text and call messages. The subject was interviewed by Saskatchewan conservation officers. A confession was obtained and the subject pled guilty in an Alberta court. He was given a \$6,500.00 fine and five-year hunting suspension.

An American outfitter from California was suspected of illegally outfitting migratory birds in Saskatchewan in 2018. An investigation was initiated and the illegal activity was substantiated via social media investigative tools targeting messages via Facebook and Facebook Messenger. Through cooperation with U.S. authorities, in the fall of 2019, the subject was again suspected of illegally outfitting in Saskatchewan. He was interviewed and confessed to bringing and guiding four separate groups of U.S. hunters over a four-week period. He pled guilty in December of 2019 and was assessed a \$4,900.00 fine and a three-year hunting suspension.

Conservation officers from the Investigations Unit conducted a three-year investigation into the unlawful sale of bear gall bladders and paws. During the investigation, officers learned

methods of use, consumption and shipping of the illegal bear parts directly from the targets themselves. It was clear that this type of activity had been happening for a number of years.

Undercover officers determined that bears were being shot at the landfill in the Sandy Bay area and some of the bear galls were initially purchased by a local restaurant in Sandy Bay and then were being resold to a restaurant in Saskatoon. From there, it was determined that the bear galls sold in Saskatoon were headed to another purchaser in Toronto, Ontario.

Undercover officers gained the trust of the subjects in Sandy Bay and Saskatoon, selling them numerous bear gall bladders and bear paws. Undercover officers also made contact with the recipients of the bear gall bladders in Toronto and sold one accomplice bear galls. As well, undercover officers identified the shooter of the bears at the Sandy Bay landfill and met with him numerous times during the investigation.

A total of 31 bear gall bladders and 28 bear paws were bought and sold during the investigation. The investigation was completed in April 2019 and resulted in a search of the restaurant in Sandy Bay.

The final court dates were held in December 2019. Six individuals were convicted and their fines totaled \$67,370.00. As well, they were all given five-year hunting suspension.

Bear gall bladders sold on the black market can range from \$2,000 to \$10,000 per gall bladder once it gets to its final destination. This investigation resulted in the conclusion that the trade in bear parts is still a relevant issue in Canada and that perhaps it has been driven more underground with its illegal nature. All accused were well aware of the illegal sale of bear parts and took steps to avoid being discovered.

#### **New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement**

The Mobile Responder App has been adopted for computer-aided dispatch (CAD). All officer's now logon and logoff through their smart phone or tablet. Officer locations are also tracked through the app. Expected results are increased data accuracy, improved officer efficiency, and extended capabilities of CAD. The Mobile Responder App is integrated with the online Versaterm Records Management System (RMS).

Saskatchewan conservation officers have now fully transitioned to the paperless RMS. All enforcement files, TIPP reports, incident reports and calls for service are recorded online.

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

As a result of a court case not being heard by the Supreme Court of Canada, the R v Pierone Saskatchewan Court of Appeal decision now stands. All Aboriginal hunting cases involving hunting on private land are now being reviewed before prosecution may proceed.

#### **Cost Savings Initiatives**

#### **Other Special Law Enforcement Issues**

The COVID-19 global pandemic is currently occupying a great deal of conservation officer law enforcement duties.

# AMFGLEO/WAFWA Law Enforcement Annual Report

## State Report – South Dakota

By: Andy Alban

Law Enforcement Administrator  
South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

This report covers the period April 1, 2019, through March 31, 2020, for the State of South Dakota, Department of Game, Fish and Parks – Law Enforcement.

### AGENCY OVERVIEW

Are officers 100% Wildlife Law Enforcement or Mixed: **Mixed**

Straight Line Reporting Structure: **No** – Regional Supervisor positions are no longer required to be LE (currently two of four are LE). LE Administrator position resides within Division of Administration. Conservation Officers reside within Division of Wildlife. Park Rangers (eight total) reside within the Division of Parks & Recreation.

Officer Breakdown: **87 total officers:** 8 Park Rangers, 55 CO's, 12 District CO Supervisors, 4 Regional CO Supervisors, 1 Training Supervisor, 2 Regional Supervisors, 2 CO Specialists, 1 Investigations Supervisor, 1 Investigator, 1 LE Administrator.

### TRAINING ISSUES

#### *Civil Disturbance - Pipeline*

We have acquired additional gear to better equip our officers should their assistance be needed for any protests/civil disturbance associated with the Keystone XL pipeline in the future. Every officer will be outfitted with a riot baton, gas mask, and ballistic helmet. We had to cancel some additional training due to the COVID-19 pandemic that would have been conducted by the SD Highway Patrol. This will be rescheduled for a later date. According to their LE liaison, it appears that TC Energy will not be putting pipe into the ground in South Dakota until 2021.

#### *New Patrol Rifles*

We finally replaced our old Dept. Of Defense 1033 Program M-14's (.308) with new AR-15's. We went with the Sig Sauer M400 Pro model. Familiarization training and qualifications were conducted during the fall of 2019. Going to the .223 platform should save the Department some money in ammunition costs. This weapon is certainly more versatile than our old M-14's.

### FUNDING AND STAFFING ISSUES

#### *License Sales Update*

Nonresident small game licenses are a major source of revenue (almost 1/3 of the operating budget) for the Wildlife Division. Sales

usually fluctuate with the pheasant population index in the state. The decrease (17%) in pheasants in 2019 resulted in an decrease (nearly 5,000 fewer or roughly 67,000 total) in the sale of nonresident small game licenses, which correlated into a decrease in revenue exceeding \$600,000. Fishing license sales also showed a marked decline. The one bright spot was furbearer license (trapping) sales, but numbers are not appreciable to offset other losses. We anticipate strong fishing license sales in the coming year due to COVID-19 restrictions in place.

#### *Nest Predator Bounty Program*

The Department embarked upon a nest predator bounty program from April 1 – July 31, 2019, in an effort to increase nesting success for pheasants and ducks. It has been shown that intensive predator (raccoon, striped skunk, badger, opossum, and red fox) removal efforts can result in site-specific improvements in nesting success. Staff collected tails that were turned in by trappers, who received \$10 per tail for their efforts (maximum \$599 per participant). We are still assessing biological impacts. However, we have seen an increased appreciation for trapping; especially with youth who were introduced to the sport. This bounty program also coincided with a live trap giveaway program, which drew great interest and made it easy to mentor youth.

### MAJOR CONSERVATION LAW ENFORCEMENT TRENDS

#### *Operation Dry Water (ODW) Efforts*

The Department participated in the nationwide ODW effort on the weekend of July 5-7, 2019, with the goal of raising awareness of the dangers of boating under the influence and removing impaired operators from our nation's waterways. Statistics include:

- 20 operations/patrols
- 70 officers involved
- 475 vessels contacted
- 26 boating citations issued (10 of which were for boating under the influence)
- 68 warnings issued

#### *Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact (IWVC) Update*

South Dakota has been a very active participant in the Compact since joining in 2004. In 2019, our state reported 369 violator names to the database. During that period, 6,095 violators were entered nationwide in the Compact. Considering those figures, South Dakota entered approximately 6% of the Compact names.

#### *Turn In Poachers (TIPs) Program Update*

The South Dakota Turn In Poachers (TIPs) program continues to be operational and callers who have knowledge of illegal hunting and fishing activity could be eligible for rewards. The program provides an important avenue for citizens to report hunting and fishing law violations, and in the process, prevents the loss of wildlife that can result from illegal actions. In the annual reporting period from July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2019, the TIPs program reported 298 investigations initiated through citizen reports, leading to 217 arrests, \$36,490 in fines and \$111,850 in civil penalties. Callers can remain anonymous, and are eligible for rewards in cases that lead to an arrest. Rewards may range up to \$300 for big game and start at \$100 for small game or fishing violations. Higher rewards may be offered in extreme cases. Last year, over \$7,025 in rewards were paid. The TIPs program has been going since 1984, and in that time citizens have generated over 12,200 investigations that have led to over 4,500 arrests. Each and every call is a vital part of the work to preserve our natural resources. Individuals may call the TIPs hotline at 1.888.OVERBAG (683-7224) to report violations, or report via the TIPs website at [tips.sd.gov](http://tips.sd.gov).

#### **NEW INNOVATIONS IN CONSERVATION LAW ENFORCEMENT**

##### *Intrepid Response App*

The Department began using the Intrepid Response app that allows those with access the ability to see officer locations in real time, share waypoints, pictures and other information. It can be accessed on officer smartphones, as well as desktop computers. We have given access to our state radio dispatch centers as an increased officer safety measure. Each officer logs in on their phone when they go on duty each day.

#### **STATE, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL ISSUES, LEGISLATION, LEGAL CHALLENGES, AND COURT DECISIONS IMPACTING NATURAL RESOURCES LAW ENFORCEMENT**

##### *2020 Legislative Session*

The 2020 Legislative Session saw a number of bills introduced that had potential effects on our agency. Notable bills that passed include:

- HB 1033, a bill to provide for the prevention of aquatic invasive species (AIS) contamination in public waters, provides the framework needed to reduce the spread of AIS. The bill gives GFP the authority to establish AIS inspection and decontamination stations. Also, the bill gives law enforcement and authorized GFP personnel authority to inspect and require decontamination of watercraft and other conveyances. Finally, the bill

categorizes the possession, shipment, importation, or transportation of AIS as a Class 2 misdemeanor and subsequent violations within one year as a Class 1 misdemeanor.

- HB 1095, revised requirements regarding hunting mentors, created greater opportunities for mentors to participate in youth/mentor hunting. Prior to the passage of this legislation, a mentor had to be a resident of South Dakota. Now an individual can be from another state and mentor resident youth. This legislation expands the pool of eligible mentors and therefore creates more opportunities for residential youth to get involved in hunting.
- HB 1257, revised certain provisions regarding hunting, fishing, or trapping on private property without permission, increased the penalty for a person who knowingly trespasses while in the act of hunting, fishing or trapping on private property. Prior to passage of this bill, the fine amount was established by the bond schedule at varying amounts between \$154.00 and \$204.00 depending on the recreation being pursued. HB 1257 enhanced the fine and made the fine equally applicable to hunting, fishing, and trapping. The fine amount is now set at \$500.00 for knowingly trespassing on private property while engaged in hunting, fishing, or trapping.
- SB 150, revised nonresident waterfowl licensure, by modifying the number of days a nonresident waterfowl license is valid. Prior to this legislation, a nonresident waterfowl license was valid for ten consecutive days. Now the ten days can be split into two periods of five consecutive days. This will allow hunters to come back to South Dakota a second time in the same year to enjoy South Dakota's abundant outdoor resources
- SB 162, a bill to provide limitations on the use of lighting equipment while hunting, cleaned up the definition of what qualified for "night-vision." The bill also exempted a person who was engaged in trapping activities from the restrictions of the statute. The old definition of "night-vision" did not account for the development of new technologies that were being utilized. As such, these technologies were not meeting the letter of the law. Since the passage, the statute now has the ability to account for development in technology as related to "night-vision." Also, now an individual can legally check and dispatch trapped animals while using artificial light without violating spotlighting laws.



*2019 Legislative Session*

*Below is a summary of applicable legislation that was enacted in 2019.*

- HB1023 – Revise certain provisions regarding the sale and purchase of big game animal parts. Repeals a provision that required velvet antlers to be tagged prior to being sold.
- HB1024 – Authorize certain species of game fish to be used as bait. Allows lake herring and sunfish of the genus *Lepomis* to be used as bait in hook and line fishing.
- HB1054 – Revise certain provisions regarding the possession of firearms on certain vehicles. Creates an exemption to the unloaded/cased firearm requirement for UTV's.
- HB1073 – Revise provisions regarding the locating and spotting of predators or varmints from a drone. Creates an exemption to the hunting with aircraft law for the spotting of predators/varmints with a drone. This can only be done on/over private land by the landowner or person with permission from the landowner and cannot occur during the period from September 1 – November 3.
- HB1159 – Repeal a provision that prohibits hunting of mourning doves on public roads or highways. Repeals a provision that previously prohibited the hunting of doves within 50 yards of a public road. Doves still cannot be hunted from the road right-of-way.
- HB1201 – Revise provisions regarding group pheasant hunts for disabled veterans. Adds Purple Heart recipients to list of those eligible for special hunts.
- HB1242 – Include opossums within the definition of predator/varmint.
- SB47 – Repeal and revise certain provisions regarding permits to carry a concealed pistol. Creates a general allowance to carry a concealed pistol without a permit, with some restrictions.
- SB63 – Increase the penalty for a subsequent conviction for trespass to hunt, fish, or trap. Establishes a two-year revocation for a second or subsequent conviction within a ten year period.
- SB115 – Authorize the conditional carrying of a concealed pistol in the state capitol by certain persons. Establishes the requirements and notification process to allow possession in the state capitol.
- SB153 – Authorize the Game, Fish and Parks Commission to provide for a special hunting license with the proceeds to be used for habitat. Establishes the framework for up to ten special big game licenses and associated application fees used to raise money for wildlife habitat.
- SB176 – Make an appropriation for the second century habitat fund. Appropriates one million dollars to be administered by the executive board of the second century habitat fund for the protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat across the state.

# Association of Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers 2020 Agency Report State/Province: Texas



## Submitted by: Lieutenant Jason B Jones – Texas Parks and Wildlife Department – Law Enforcement Division

### Training Issues

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

- Texas Game Wardens transitioned to new long gun and handgun platforms. Wardens moved from the Glock 22 .40 Cal to the Glock 17 9mm. Daniel Defense M4 V7 replaced the Bushmaster M4 as the patrol rifle. Transitioning 550 sworn officers offered a challenge. With the 63<sup>rd</sup> Academy in session, the Staff at GWTC along with Special Operations were able to successfully offer the training.
- 38 New Game Warden Cadets and 15 Park Peace Officers began the 63<sup>rd</sup> Academy September 2019 and completed April 2020. The trainees endured 30 weeks of extensive training in state and federal law.
- The 64<sup>th</sup> Academy will begin September 2020.

### Funding and Staffing Issues

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Law Enforcement Division maintains a force of over 550 game wardens statewide. TPWD-LE works with agency leadership, legislators, and constituents to ensure Texas Game Wardens can complete their mission. The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on Texas' economy. The effects will be long term and will create a strain on funds

that are appropriated to TPWD. This will present challenges to all divisions including TPWD LE.

### Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends

Significant advances have been made by TPWD-LE in response to major conservation law enforcement trends. Texas Game Wardens continue to adapt and excel.

- Protecting the many shark species residing in and migrating through the Gulf of Mexico, as well as sharks illegally trafficked from around the world and offered for sale in Texas remain among the division's highest priorities. Texas Game Wardens continue to proactively work investigations related to illegal shark fin products and violations against the many species of wildlife found throughout the state.

### Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts

- Texas Game Wardens have been working alongside Texas Military Department, Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, and Texas Department of State Health Services at rural drive-thru Covid-19 testing sites by transporting tests to awaiting aircraft to be flown to the appropriate lab. Texas Game Wardens have been transporting

tests by land and air.

- With a steady demand for products such as red snapper, shark fins, and other aquatic species, we continue to see the illegal fishing activities targeting US resources along the Texas/Mexico border. TPWD-LE, USCG, NOAA, CBP, USFW and the FDA continue to actively work cooperatively to address this growing trend of Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing (IUU). This is accomplished not only by detecting and interdicting illegal fishing vessels from Mexico, but identifying illegal shipments entering through our Ports of Entry. TPWD-LE along with State and Federal partners conducted multiple border operations along the Texas/Mexico border including our Ports of Entry. These operations targeting the illegal harvest, importation, and sale of aquatic products and other wildlife resources. These week-long saturation enforcement efforts extended from Brownsville to El Paso and resulted in hundreds of inspections, several State and Federal cases filed, and the seizure of illegal fishing vessels, wildlife resources, and illegal fishing devices.



- From October 2019 through April 2020 over 300 incursions by Mexican fishing vessels have been detected along the Texas/Mexico border. This includes 88 that were interdicted by the USCG and Texas Game Wardens. This already exceeds the total number of Mexican fishing vessels seized during the previous year. In addition, the USCG and Texas Games Wardens have also confiscated a high volume of illegal fishing devices such gill nets, crab traps, hoop nets, trotlines, and illegal long lines being placed in Texas public waters as well as the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) by Mexican fishing vessels.



#### New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement

- Texas Game Wardens have been provided with a new App based program to help assist with investigations, search and rescue, and other law enforcement needs. Texas' Operation Game Thief purchased a 5-year subscription to BaseMap for wardens. BaseMap is a mapping program that provides various layers of data to aid wardens in daily law enforcement activities.

- All American Marine, Inc. (AAM) has completed construction and launched an innovative aluminum catamaran. This vessel will serve an integral role in patrolling both Texas and federal waters for the law enforcement division of Texas Parks and Wildlife. The 80' x 27' (OAL)PV(?) Captain Murchison features twin CAT C18 ACERT D Engines, with Hamilton Jet HM 521 waterjets and is built to USCG Subchapter T standards.
- The state-of-the-art hydrofoil assisted vessel, from Teknikraft Design, combines innovative design features critical to modern maritime law enforcement. One revolutionary feature is the inclusion of Teknikraft's Rapid RHIB launching system. This feature integrated into the stern of the vessel, will increase safety and reduce the time and manpower required to deploy the vessels' rigid hull inflatable boat (RHIB). It will allow for deployment and retrieval in under 1 minute. The RHIB is a 20' Willard with a 170 HP Volvo Diesel Engine, and features Hamilton Jet Propulsion. The Captain Murchison is also the first vessel in North America to feature Hamilton Jet's innovative Advanced Vessel Control (AVX) system. The new AVX features include both a station keeping and a JETanchor positioning system. Additional vessel features include a DJI Mavic Drone integrated to the helm displays, as well as a FLIR M400 XR High resolution thermal imaging video with tracking to assist with patrol duties in the Gulf of Mexico.
- After identifying that patrols in the shallow bays, ponds, and estuaries of the middle coast are problematic, TPWD partnered with Flatsworthy to seek a solution. Our current patrol platform in these areas was only by airboat and that did not lend itself to the user groups that sought these areas out for the solitude and unique experience. In late summer 2019, Chuck Naiser with Flatsworthy proposed the use and acquisition of a specialized boat to accommodate this need. Flatsworthy partnered with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation and received a huge amount of support for this project from many individuals, including Chairman Chuck Nash. The result was a custom, hand-made boat, by Tim Clancy of New Water Boats in San Antonio. In February 2020, TPWD took delivery of a 17-foot Curlew Skiff, the first ever of its kind in the game warden fleet. The Curlew is a center console outboard, designed and configured to handle not only the waters of the open bay but also to navigate extremely shallow water areas with little to no impact on the

environment, including seagrass. The result is that our game wardens will be able to easily and safely have a visible presence in areas they have historically been unable. This community partnership embodies TPWD's long history of community-oriented policing.

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

- SB 317 License exemption for feral hogs.

Purpose: Amends sections 42.002(c) and 42.005(f) of Parks and Wildlife Code to remove the requirement for a hunting license to take feral hogs.

Main Point(s):

- Removes requirement that feral hogs be "causing depredation"
- Removes language involving agent/lessee
- Provides exemption from license requirements for ALL take of feral hogs on private property with landowner consent
- 

- SB 810 Identification of breeder deer

Purpose: Amends 43.3561 of Parks and Code related to the identification of breeder deer.

Main Point(s):

- Provides for change to five-character unique identification numbers
- Requires use of electronic identification device (microchip or RFID button tag)
- Requires (after phase-in period) that ID tags be commercially printed
- Provides size and proportion requirements for text on tags
- Requires that unique number be placed on front of tag and specifies spatial relationship to other markings
- Provides options for replacement of lost tags (handwritten, but meeting text size and placement requirements)

Legislative Intent: To modify and refine the identification requirements for breeder deer to facilitate performance of departmental duties as they relate to facility inspections, disease monitoring, and movement of breeder deer.

- "The Migratory Bird Treaty Act Does Not Prohibit Incidental Take" (M-37050 or M-

Opinion). M-Opinion concluded that the Migratory Bird Treaty Act ("MBTA") does not criminalize the "incidental take," or unintentional killing, of migratory birds. This has led to TPWD-LE fielding many questions to address the nesting of birds on structures scheduled for construction and works with other agencies in respect to the construction of roads, bridges, and other structures and the impact to migratory bird enforcement.

#### **Strategic Planning Initiatives**

- Law Enforcement is exploring mobile solutions to help game wardens work more safely, more effectively and more efficiently with the use of new mobile technologies and applications. Game wardens and command staff continue to seek the best technologies and applications to provide staff access to real-time data and allow them to make the best decisions based on the latest situational information.

**2019 Agency Report**  
**State/Province: WI**  
**Submitted by: Chief Casey Krueger**  
**Date: 4-27-20**

**Training Issues**

Describe any new or innovative training programs or techniques which have been recently developed, implemented or are now required.

- o Training at the team level took place on traffic law, motor vehicle OWI and motor vehicle accident investigation throughout the state in response to increase presence and enforcement on state owned property where we have full police authority.
- o We transitioned to a new model of field training. We completed the transition training for all of our FTO's in the Police Training Officer (PTO) course which focuses training on problem solving and community involvement. The new officer training focuses on journaling, self-reflection and narrative based evaluations. This was a multiyear effort where data was collected from other agency experiences, and surveys of DNR LE staff at all levels of the organization. This new training is self-taught and we are piloting an online version of the training during the COVID Pandemic.
- o Wellness, Swim and fitness – BLE completed officer fitness training, healthy eating and resiliency training at recertification this year. BLE no longer requires a swim assessment during our hiring process. New employees are trained in the academy to meet the minimum swim standard.

**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.

- o More than half of our training section positions are vacant. Recruitment is underway to fill a couple of them.
- o Several upper level management positions will be vacated due to retirement and or promotions.
- o We have a new Chief Warden, Casey Krueger 608-279-0830, [casey.krueger@wisconsin.gov](mailto:casey.krueger@wisconsin.gov). Casey was promoted from his Captain level position when former chief Todd Schaller retired in January 2020.

**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 (QUI) initiatives, or other issues which fall outside traditional fish and wildlife enforcement functions).

- o Locally we had a significant push to the SO's educating them about increasing rec vehicle traffic. There was a trend towards opening more and more road routes between Sheboygan and Fond du Lac counties and our partnership allowed for continued education during respective in-service trainings. These training also gave us the opportunity to better clarify warden authority, discuss nuisance animal complaints, and further offer our assistance with manpower and resources.

- o Opioid addiction and response with NARCAN increasing in the Fox Valley area
- o Saw an uptick in juvenile offenders
- o Safer at Home/COVID initiatives changed the way law enforcement responds to complaints
- o An increase in internet investigations. With tags no longer an enforcement tool, a large amount of violations and interviews we have conducted resulted from registration violations, audits, and other information obtained online.
- o The Recreation Warden's teamed up with Wisconsin State Patrol, the Wisconsin ATV/UTV Association (WATVA) and Medical College of Wisconsin to conduct a controlled UTV crash to research the impacts of wearing helmets and seatbelts while operating recreational vehicles. The research was analyzed by Senior Engineers and Master Students from the college. The Recreation Wardens and State Patrol also documented the crash scene to include total station and 3D scanning to help with further investigations and data collection. The Recreation Warden team will continue to work with partners to establish more trainings and controlled crashes to collect further data to help determine what we need to do to make Wisconsin a safer place to recreate.
- o The Operation Dry Water (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 accidents 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 2019 was July 5<sup>th</sup> through the 7<sup>th</sup>. Annually, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, local law enforcement patrols, and the U.S. Coast Guard join together in an intensified effort to provide heightened enforcement and awareness about the dangers of drinking while boating, detect intoxicated boaters and enforce boating under the influence laws in Wisconsin. The increase in law enforcement participation led to a positive increase in recreational boater outreach as well. In 2019, Wisconsin DNR officers contacted 2,410 vessels, 6,801 boaters, issued 202 boating citations and removed 25 impaired boaters from the water.
- o Wardens and local law enforcement officers worked together for several ATV/UTV and Snowmobile Group Safety Enforcement checks throughout 2019. The increase in law enforcement participation led to a positive increase in recreational vehicle outreach as well. The goal of the safety and enforcement checks is to ensure participants are following safety and operational laws, remove impaired operators from the trails, while raising awareness about the dangers that come with the decision to operate under the influence.

**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.)

- o Staff participated in a Sturgeon Roe/Caviar processing investigation with USFWS, other State Wildlife Agencies
- o Upgraded DNR Radio conversion/updates with Statewide/county by county communications. Fixed commination problems with both mobile and portable radios
- o Wisconsin Conservation Wardens assisted the US Forest Service and Bayfield Sheriff's Department during the 2019 Rainbow Family of Light Gathering which occurred on [Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest](#) near Iron River, WI. This annual gathering had approximately 6,000 people from across the United States in attendance. Conservation Wardens encountered numerous drug violations throughout the month long event.
- o The Department was able to finalize a 10 year Lake Superior Fishing Agreement between the Red Cliff and Bad River Tribal commercial fishermen, State Commercial Fisherman and recreational anglers. This new agreement required additional state administrative code changes which were finalized in spring 2020.
- o The USFS, USFWS and Conservation Wardens in NE Wisconsin continue to investigate numerous poisoning deaths of wild animals to include coyotes and wolves but also domesticated pets. Several families have been impacted when their pet ingested poison, which were located along various roadways. Some excellent cooperation is occurring between the agencies to locate the responsible parties.

#### **New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement**

Describe any innovations in equipment, enforcement techniques, forensics, etc.

- o Drone Use for search and rescue has increased. Wardens have relied on local fire and police departments to assist with these types of scenarios. The DNR is has kick started its drone team but currently not in use.
- o Wardens have started to use solar powered battery cells hooked up to remote cameras now can record for extended periods of time, (a month or more) without intervention from a warden.

#### **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.

- o Continued challenge creating a culture that views recreational vehicle safety, OWI, and accident issues as a serious public safety items warranting legislative action.
- o Increasing legislative focus on health and wellness of first responders. Law enforcement survivor's act will now allow surviving spouses and dependents to receive continued health insurance coverage if law enforcement officer killed in the line of duty. Additional hearings on mental health bill that would allow worker's comp to cover PTSD treatment and counseling for first responders; not enacted into law this session.
- o Continued interest in the promotion of private property rights, including restricting law enforcement access to open fields and having private property exemptions for recreational vehicle laws.
- o Body camera legislation sets forth statewide requirements for policies, records retention/release, and victim protection if an agency elects to deploy body cameras.
- o Several positive outcomes from state and federal court decisions supporting officer safety during traffic stops, OWI enforcement relating to unconscious drivers, and vehicle searches incident to arrest.
- o Reasonably anticipate the next session will present challenges associated with fiscal imbalances.

#### **Cost Savings Initiatives**

Identify initiatives in any area which contributed to improvements in work effectiveness and fiscal efficiency.

- o We initially worked on rolling a few sedans into the vehicle fleet for positions that had more administrative responsibilities. The cost per mile to operate them was cheaper, but after several years of running them and evaluating their use. They were did indeed prove to be cheaper to operate, but they were not as practical as we'd hoped. Plus, taller staff felt tactically disadvantaged. We won't likely be acquiring additional sedans.

#### **Other Special Law Enforcement Issues**

- o We increased our work to assess Aquatic Invasive species threats across the state.