

AGENDA

Board of Wildlife Resources
Law Enforcement Committee
7870 Villa Park Drive, Board Room
Henrico, Virginia 23228

May 18, 2022
9:00 am

Committee Members: Mr. G. K. Washington and Mr. Brian Vincent

DWR Staff Liaison: Colonel John Cobb

1. Call to Order and Welcome
Mr. G. K. Washington
2. Approval of March 23, 2022 Meeting Minutes **Final Action**
Mr. G. K. Washington
3. Public Comment – Non-Agenda Item
Mr. G. K. Washington
4. CPO Recruitment Update
Major Milt Robinson (Office of Professional Standards)
5. Turkey Enforcement Techniques and Tactics
Sergeant Brandon Woodruff
6. VCP Command Structure Reorganization
Colonel John Cobb
7. Law Enforcement Chief Update
Colonel John Cobb

8. Director's Report
Mr. Ryan Brown
9. Chair's Report
Mr. G. K. Washington
10. Additional Business/Comments
Mr. G. K. Washington
11. Next Meeting Date: Wednesday, August 17, 2022
Mr. G. K. Washington
12. Adjournment
Mr. G. K. Washington

DRAFT Meeting Minutes
Law Enforcement Committee
Board of Wildlife Resources
7870 Villa Park Drive, Board Room
Richmond, Virginia 23228

March 23, 2022
9:00 am

Present: Mr. G. K. Washington, conducted the meeting, and Mr. Brian Vincent attended Virtually; **Board Members in attendance:** Mr. Leon Boyd, Ms. Karen Terwilliger arrived at 9:30 am, **Director:** Mr. Ryan J. Brown; **Deputy Directors:** Ms. Becky Gwynn and Mr. Gary Martel; **Director's Working Group:** Mr. Darin Moore, Ms. Paige Pearson, Mr. Bob Smet, Dr. Mike Bednarski, Dr. Gray Anderson, Mr. Tom Guess, Colonel John Cobb.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 am and welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Chair noted for the record that there was a quorum present for the meeting.

Meeting Minutes: The Chair called for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 19, 2022 committee meeting. Mr. Vincent made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 19, 2022 meeting minutes. It was seconded by Mr. Washington. The Board secretary took a roll call vote: Ayes: Washington and Vincent.

Public Comment – Non Agenda Item: The Chair called for Public Comment – Non Agenda Item, hearing none, the Chair continued with the meeting

Office of Professional Standards - Academy Update: The Chair called on Major Milt Robinson for an Update.

Major Milt Robinson gave an update on the Law Enforcement Professional Standards and the Academy and the upcoming graduation.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Major Robinson for his updates.

Operations - Waterfowl Game Warden Experience: The Chair called on Major Ryan Shuler for a presentation.

Major Ryan Shuler presented the Waterfowl Game Warden Experience.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Major Shuler for his presentation.

Law Enforcement Chief Update: The Chair called on Colonel John Cobb for an update.

Colonel John Cobb gave a Law Enforcement Update on Retired Law Enforcement Officers.

Director's Report: The Chair called on Executive Director Ryan Brown for his Director's Report.

The Director reported:

- The Recruit graduation on April 8, 2022 will be a great time for the agency, the Recruits, and their families
- Excited for a new Recruit academy to start up in the future
- Been to several conferences recently and Law Enforcement is a big topic around the country on compensation, DWR working with the new Administration on Law Enforcement issues and compensation.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Mr. Brown for his report.

Chair's Report: The Chair appreciates all the hard work Law Enforcement staff accomplishes every day and thanks staff for all of their work. The Chair enjoyed the topics for today's meeting.

The Chair announced the next Law Enforcement committee meeting will be May 18, 2022 and asked if there were any additional comments, hearing none, he adjourned the meeting at 9:40 am.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Frances Boswell



VCP Command Structure Reorganization

“A chain is only as strong as its weakest link” – rank structure importance

Organizationally, *“A team is only as strong as its weakest link”*

Each Link in the VCP Chain of Command must have a dedicated purpose and strength (empowerment) to support the future weight of our wildlife law enforcement public service responsibilities.

An excellent opportunity to emphasize and implement “proactive” purposes at different vital levels within our command structure!

RANK PRIMARY “Proactive” FUNCTIONS (Focus)

Colonel = Provide Strategic Direction and Vision (Division)

Major = Align · Empower · Forecast (Units)

Captain = Develop Best Practices and Administrator Programs (Section)

Lieutenant = Advocate and Facilitate (Region)

First Sergeant = Lead and Coordinate Operations (Area)

Sergeant = Coach and Mentor (District)



VCP Rollicall

March 2022 / Edition #13

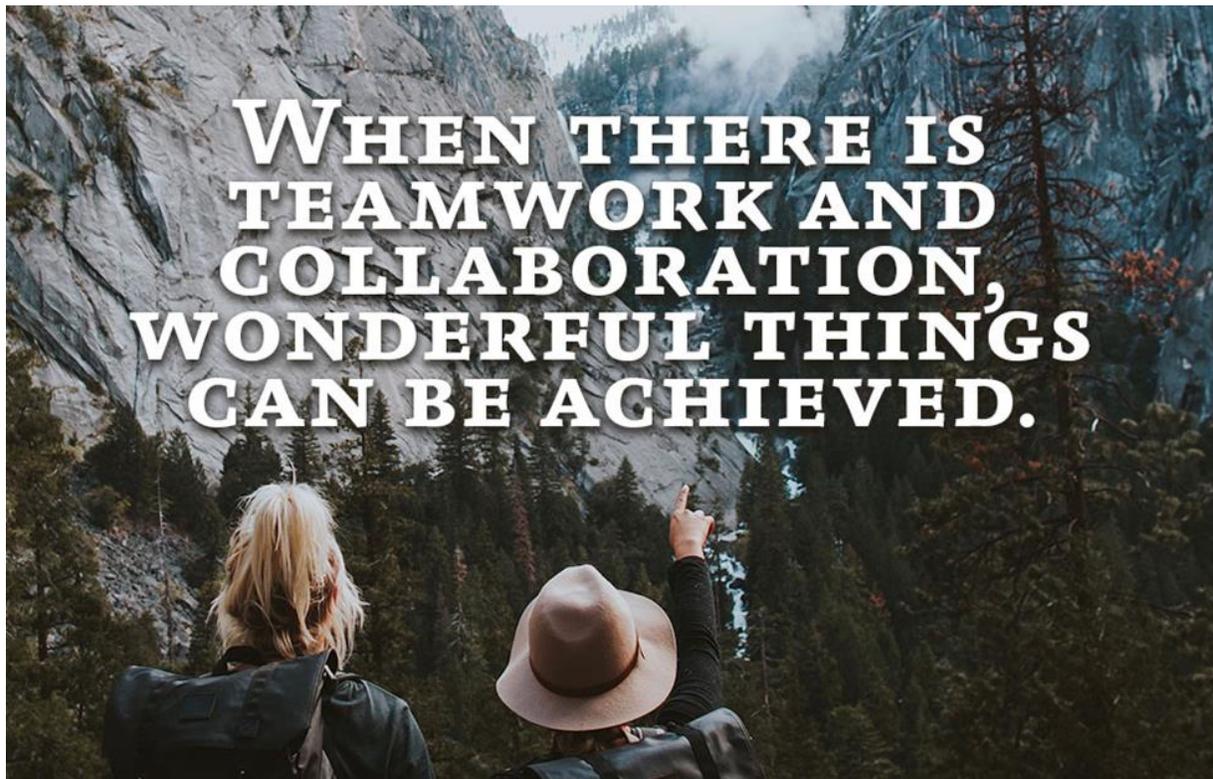


Colonel's Message:

Recently, I received an invitation and had a private meeting with the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources, Andrew Wheeler, in his office while the General Assembly was still in session. We talked about many law enforcement challenges that we face, including staffing issues, appropriate funding and officer compensation. He showed me his four primary goals he wanted to accomplish in his role and we talked about one in detail regarding the importance of "Retention", which included our proactive initiative to implement the VCP Career Progression Program to address this critical issue.

In addition, Major Shuler and I attended the Chief's Quarterly Meeting with DCR & VMRC, where we discussed ideas for how we can work together to become more relevant and stand-out with the special public safety capabilities we provide to the Commonwealth. This included using a joint static display like we did for accreditation and providing elected and governmental officials an opportunity to see up close our officers and equipment.

Colonel John J. Cobb / Chief of Law Enforcement



Proactive Initiatives:

- Implemented UAV Program



Office of Professional Standards:

- ❖ UPDATE - Professional Standards Major
 - VCP Annual Awards Recognition and 11th Basic Academy Graduation is scheduled for April 8, 2022 at the Greater Richmond Convention Center. Invitations are currently being sent out.
- ❖ Recruitment / Retention Initiatives
 - DWR is planning to hire 25 new officers this year. Meetings are underway that will set the hiring process specifics - including announcement date, the hiring timeline, and the list of duty station locations. Anyone who is interested in joining the DWR team as a conservation police officer can receive information about the career, the hiring process, and the training academy by emailing recruiter@dwr.virginia.gov.
 - Prospective applicants can also visit the CPO Recruiting website, <https://dwr.virginia.gov/conservation-police/recruiting/>; this information was recently updated, and answers too many frequently asked questions.
- ❖ Training (Basic and In-service) / Training Offered to Other Agencies
 - Basic Training**
 - The 11th Academy is completing Week 23. Since the last Roll Call update, the students completed their Officer Survival and Boat Incident Investigation training.

The students completed the 40 hour National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) Boat Incident Investigation (BII) Level 1 Comprehensive Course. As part of the BOAT Program, this course gives law enforcement officers the opportunity to develop and perfect their skills in order to conduct a thorough and comprehensive recreational boating incident investigation. To complete the course, our students had to demonstrate understanding of the principles and techniques necessary to conduct a thorough and complete incident investigation. A compilation of performance measures were used, including scenario review, class discussion, practical activities and objective testing.

The NASBLA BII program is in place by many agencies across the country, and will become part of the Basic Training Academy's curriculum in 2021.

The Basic Academy has also completed their Officer Survival Training. This week and a half long training exposed the students to a variety of reality based scenarios. These included responding to a domestic disturbance, apprehending wanted subjects, and traffic stops. These scenarios required the students to make decisions while in stressful situations, and to effectively demonstrate using de-escalation techniques.

- We have been sharing the training highlights with the public through the DWR Facebook page. Check it out to see a glimpse of their training. <https://www.facebook.com/VirginiaDWR>.
- A DCJS representative had a scheduled visit to our training last week. Mr. Wyatt sat in on day 3 of the BII Course. These visits will happen regularly and provide an opportunity to observe our course, and discuss our training program.

In-service Training

- VCP Leadership Training - The Law Division promotes leadership throughout its levels. In support of this, several courses have been identified and our officers are encouraged to pursue the opportunities. The courses include in-person offerings by FBI-LEEDA and online offerings through the Commonwealth of Virginia Learning Center.
- The Department of Conservation and Recreation has requested that DWR's officers provide ATV and UTV training to some of their law enforcement staff during 2022. The first session is scheduled for later this month at Westmoreland State Park. The remainder of the training will take place

around the state. DCR has also requested that In-service training be provided related to recreational boating laws and enforcement techniques.

- Officers from Region 1 and 4 attended the Hampton Search and Rescue Forum in the City of Hampton. This training is presented as a partnership between the Port of Virginia and the United States Coast Guard. Over 120 first responders attended this 5 day technical training. Our officers learned to effectively operate as part of a multi-jurisdictional response to maritime incidents. DWR has been a longtime supporter of this program, and coordinates with the Port of Virginia's maritime Incident Response Team to deliver advanced training opportunities to our area partners.
- Colt Rifle Armorer Course- the Law Division had issued the Colt M4 rifle to its field officers. To ensure these firearms are properly maintained, we have arranged for instructors from Colt to deliver this 24 hour course to our firearms instructors. These officers will gain a complete understanding of the design theory, nomenclature, dynamics, compatibility, interchangeability, detailed disassembly, assembly, maintenance and trouble-shooting of the M16/AR-15 family of weapons including rifles, carbines, and sub-machine guns. This class provides a certification that is valid for 3 years.
- [Training Calendar](#)

❖ Employee Suggestion Program (E.S.P.)

- New E.S.P. - Ginseng Enforcement
 - American ginseng is a treasured element of Virginia's ecosystem, and is currently being poached at an unsustainable rate. The project will focus on developing a ginseng enforcement program to include a Game Warden Experience Training to assist officers in learning tactics for ginseng enforcement as well as develop SOPs to store ginseng evidence in a way that keeps it alive, and a procedure to return the seized roots back into the ecosystem.
 - Contact Officer First Class Tim Bostic if you are interested in participating in the project.
- [E.S.P. Project List and Completion Tracker](#)
- Have a suggestion? Submit [VCP-180](#) to LawESP@dwr.virginia.gov.

❖ Accreditation

- Volunteers still needed for the Annual General Order Review Committee. Please contact Lt. Ham if you are interested in assisting.
- Reminder when written directives both new or revised are published division employees should review and sign the directives within 10 working days.

- ❖ Risk Management
 - Article: [Bystanding Officer Liability and the George Floyd Murder Trial](#)
 - What obligations does an officer have to intervene when faced with another officer's unconstitutional use of force?
 - The latest revision to the division's [General Order 01-06 Use of Force](#), specifically updated the division's directives to clarify the obligations of a CPO that observes another law enforcement officer using or attempting to use force that is clearly excessive beyond that which is objectively reasonable under the circumstances or inappropriate.

- ❖ Peer Support
 - Article: [6 traits of a bulletproof police marriage](#)
 - Want to talk to a Peer Team Member? [Contact Information](#)

Support Services:

- ❖ Division Budget Update
 - The FY2023 budget proposal for the LE Division has been submitted for review. We are still months away from the final budget presentation to the Board, so this process is far from done. More to come as we move forward.

- ❖ Grants
 - The division will be applying for the FEMA PSGP funds when the application process opens. Currently we are working on identifying the projects that we will focus on.

- ❖ Communications Center
 - The process to hire a new dispatcher and the communications center manager are underway. We have completed the first rounds of interviews for the manager position and will be working to move on to the second interview in the near future.

- ❖ Legal Articles of Interest
 - As you may be aware, General Order 01-06, addressing the use of force, has been recently revised – the effective date is February 15, 2022. Included in this order is a duty to intervene. More specifically, the order mandates that “Any officer while in performance of their official duties that is present and observes another law enforcement officer, regardless of agency affiliation, using or attempting to use force that is clearly excessive beyond that which is objectively reasonable under the circumstances or inappropriate, shall intervene, when such intervention is feasible, to safely end the use of

excessive force or attempted use of excessive force, and to prevent the further use of excessive force.” Gen. Order 01-06.IV.C.1. (emphasis added).

- The general order goes on to require that “officers have the duty to intervene in all other situations where an officer is acting in violation of established laws, orders, policies, or ethical conduct.” *Id.* (emphasis added). It is important to note that this duty is not limited to the actions of members of the Virginia Conservation Police; rather it applies to the actions of any “law enforcement officer, regardless of agency affiliation.” *Id.*
- While a general order does not fix a legal standard, see e.g., Quigley v. McCabe, 91 Va. Cir. 397, 400 (Norfolk Cir. Ct. 2015) (“The standard of a duty in tort in Virginia arises only by statute or common law; it does not arise by rules or policies adopted by . . . executive agencies, Pullen v Nickens, 226 Va. 342, 310 S.E.2d 452 (1983)”), it does set an internal standard with which CPOs must adhere.
- Even so, criminal liability may also attach for failing to intervene. According to the New York Times, on February 24th, three former Minneapolis police officers were found guilty of federal crimes for failing to intervene as then-Officer Chauvin pressed his knee on George Floyd’s neck for over nine minutes ending Mr. Floyd’s life that day. Mr. Chauvin was convicted of murder and sentenced to over 22 years in prison.
- The Justice Department prosecuted these officers for their inaction while another officer used excessive force. A federal jury determined that the officers had willfully violated Mr. Floyd’s constitutional rights by not providing medical care when he lost a pulse and that two of them were also guilty of not intervening to stop a fellow officer from planting his knee on Mr. Floyd’s neck. (Additionally, these officers still face state charges of aiding and abetting murder, with a trial scheduled for June of this year.)
- Fortunately, CPOs are not typically confronted with such grave circumstances. Still, life-and-death situations arise without warning and are, unfortunately, not foreign to our ranks. But that is not the point here.
- The point is that CPOs have a duty to intervene per General Order 01-06 and failure to do so not only results in violation of that general order; failing to intervene may, depending on the circumstances, give rise to additional legal liabilities, both civil and criminal. More than any of that, appropriate intervention is an essential element of good policing – part of protecting the public and protecting your fellow officers.

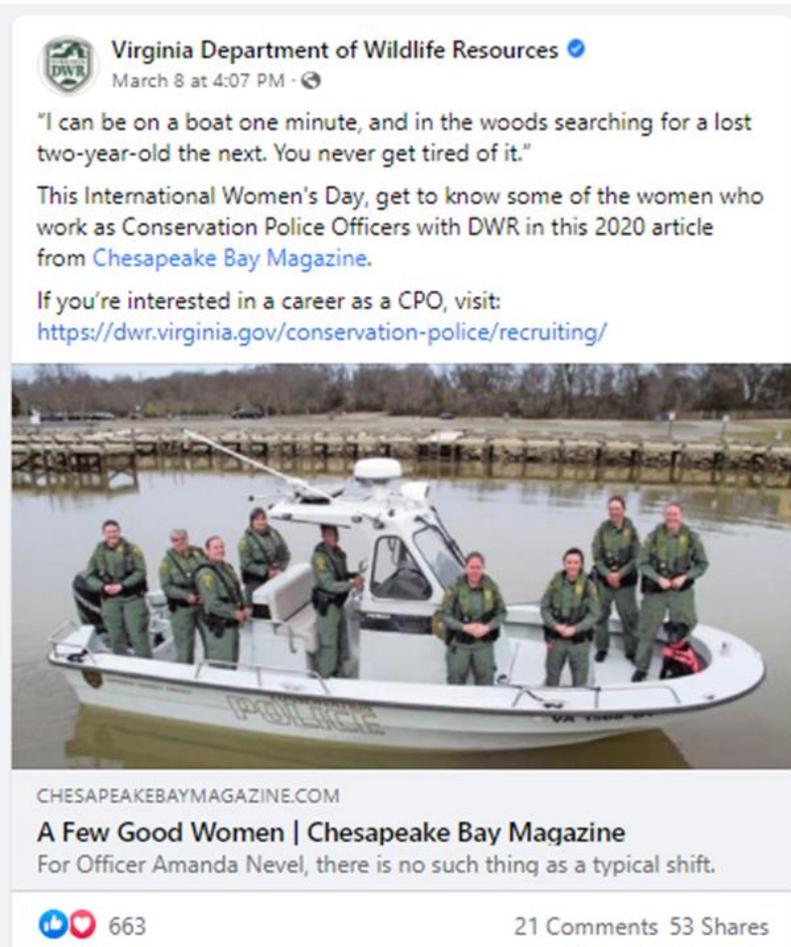
❖ IT Systems

- Need Help - Call a member of the [IT Cadre](#) to set-up either individual assistance or a small group training session
- If you have IT questions, sent them to LawITCadre@dwr.virginia.gov mailbox

Law Enforcement Operations:

❖ UPDATE - Operations Major Update

- March is Women's History Month and I would be remiss if I did not take time to highlight the extraordinary work conducted by the women in our division. We are fortunate to have so many gifted women in the division that wear a number of hats. Regardless of their role, their dedication to service and professionalism is extraordinarily impressive. To you ladies in the division, thank you all for everything that you do each and every day to move us forward and ensure we provide quality service to our constituents and the Commonwealth!



The image shows a Facebook post from the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. The post is dated March 8 at 4:07 PM. The text of the post reads: "I can be on a boat one minute, and in the woods searching for a lost two-year-old the next. You never get tired of it." This International Women's Day, get to know some of the women who work as Conservation Police Officers with DWR in this 2020 article from Chesapeake Bay Magazine. If you're interested in a career as a CPO, visit: <https://dwr.virginia.gov/conservation-police/recruiting/>. Below the text is a photograph of a group of eight people, including several women, standing on a white boat on a body of water. The boat has "POLICE" written on its side. Below the photo, the post includes the source "CHESAPEAKEBAYMAGAZINE.COM", the title "A Few Good Women | Chesapeake Bay Magazine", and a subtitle "For Officer Amanda Nevel, there is no such thing as a typical shift." At the bottom of the post, there are icons for likes and comments, showing 663 likes and 21 comments, and 53 shares.

- As we move through March, and into April, the turkeys have already started to gobble. Please keep an eye on the weather and make every effort to get out early when you can and look for those that want to get a jump start on the season. If you find the birds, then you will find the hunters. We have already had a few violators apprehended that could not wait for the season to come in and I guarantee that there are others out there. Catching a poacher taking, or attempting to take, during the closed season is the definition of one of our primary enforcement objectives; Resource Protection!

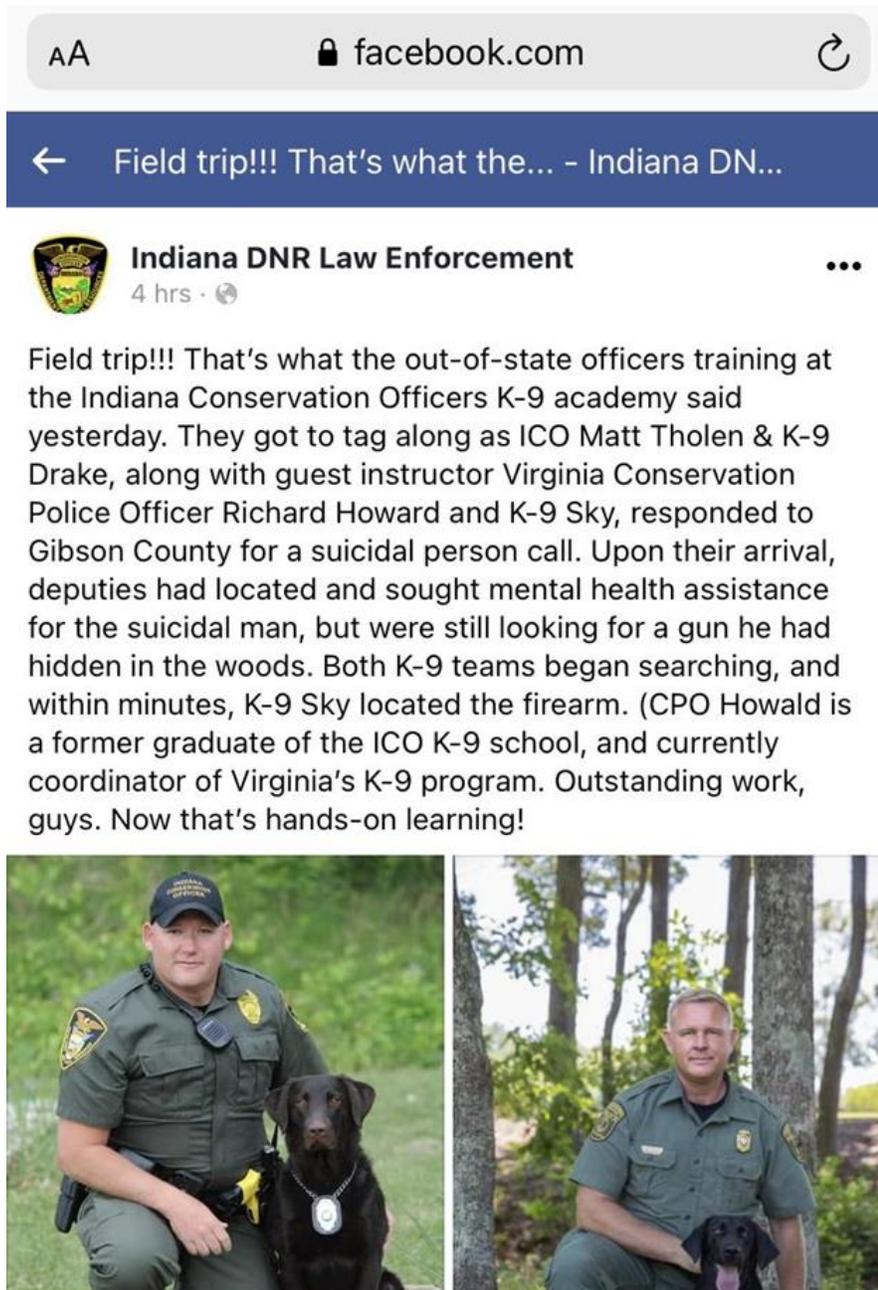
❖ Recent Enforcement Efforts

▪ Activity Reports:

- [Weekly Activity Report 02/16- 02/22 \(External\)](#)
- [Weekly Activity Report 02/23- 03/1 \(External\)](#)
- [Weekly Activity Report 03/02- 03/08 \(External\)](#)
- [Weekly Activity Report 03/09- 03/15 \(External\)](#)
- [CPO Notebook](#)

❖ Media Initiatives

- This was shared on the DWR Facebook page as well.



Personnel:

❖ Officer Commendation of the Month

- Goes to OFC Keith Wilson and SO Tyler Blanks

This Citizen Feedback Submission read in part, *“A bullet from a high powered rifle was shot into my workshop with me in there by (at the time unknown) juvenile from 360 yards away. These two officers had little information to work off of and uncooperative suspects but with their very thorough investigation and resilience managed to crack the suspects (father included) and attain an admission of guilt and the weapon that was attempted to be hidden. I am very thankful for these officers and their professional sincere dedication to me and my family. That bullet narrowly missed my head by inches and local authorities failed me in this instance but these two Wardens really came through. Thanks for all that your officers do and sacrifice for the community.”*

❖ Awards & Honors

Our 4th Annual VCP Awards Ceremony will be held in conjunction for the very first time with our Basic and Modified Academy Graduation on April 8.

Here are this year’s recipients that will be recognized at this event:

- **2021 Virginia CPO of the Year - OFC Tim Bostic**
Region 1 CPO of the Year - OFC Amanda Nevel
Region 2 CPO of the Year - MO Brandon Harris
Region 3 CPO of the Year - MO Jason Harris
Special Ops / K-9 Unit CPO of the Year - SGT Wes Billings
- **2021 Virginia Boating Officer of the Year - OFC Shane Wilson**
Region 1 Boating Officer of the Year - SO Joe Rollings
Region 3 Boating Officer of the Year - MO Gene Wirt
Region 4 Boating Officer of the Year - SGT Alan Hatmaker
- **2021 Communications Officer of the Year - Debbie Wilmoth**
- **2022 O.P.S. Professionalism Decree - MO Michael A. Entsminger**
- **2022 O.P.S. Professionalism Decree - MO Neil T. Kester**
- **2022 Colonel's Leadership Award - SGT Frank M. Spuches**
- **2021 Lifesaving Medal (3/6/2021) - OFC Jacob Chaffin**
- **2021 Lifesaving Medal (4/1/2021) - MO Brandon Harris**
- **2021 Lifesaving Medal (4/1/2021) - OFC Kevin Webb**

Upcoming Important Dates:

- The [Virginia Conservation Police Calendar \(Link must be accessed through your DWR google account\)](#) a division wide calendar with important dates for the division staff is under construction. Please add this to your google calendar to stay informed with important dates and reminders.





VCP Rollicall

April 2022 / Edition #14

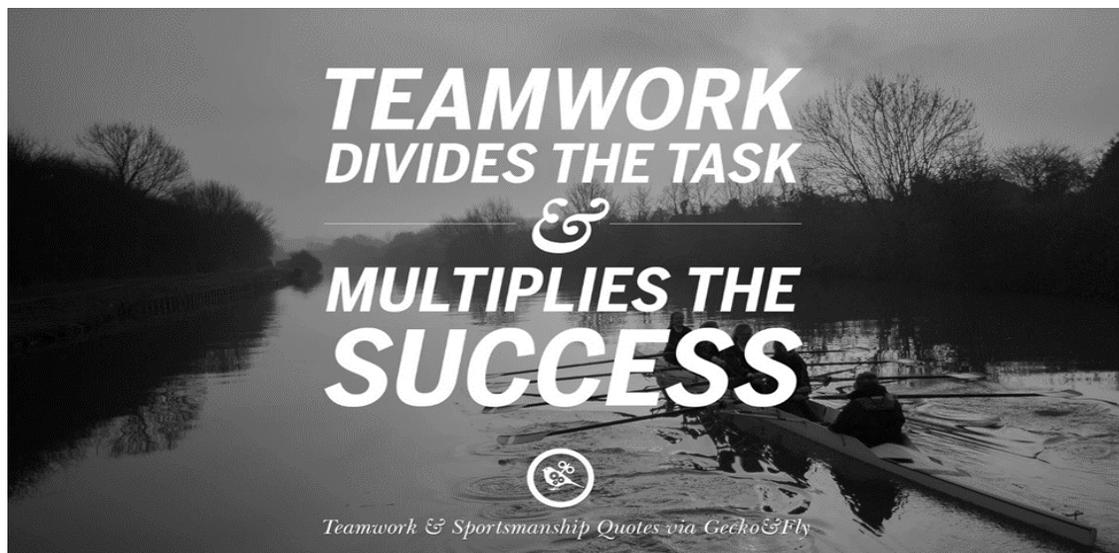


Colonel's Message:

On April 8th, we combined two special occasions into one; an Awards Ceremony along with a Basic / Modified Academy Graduation. It was definitely my privilege and honor to be a part of this very unique event. We had an opportunity to formally recognize 44 officers and staff members. This included 16 Basic and 6 Modified Graduates of our Conservation Police Academy. We were very fortunate to have so many passionate, hardworking, outstanding representatives of this agency together in one place. Making the event even more memorable was that about half of those 200 in attendance were spouses and family of those being recognized. A truly special afternoon!

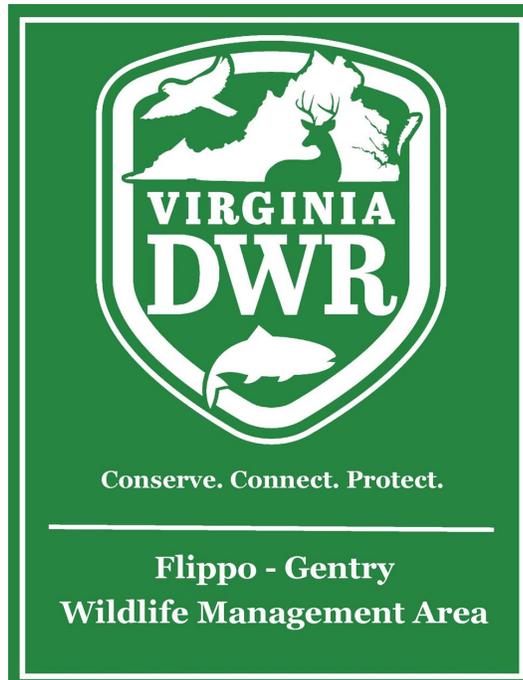
As seen in the GW/CPO Retiree Newsletter this month, the Flippo-Gentry WMA (formally known as the Parker's Branch in Sussex County) will be dedicated on October 20th. We are currently in the planning phase of this WMA Dedication, which is proceeding well as we plan to recognize Allen Flippo, and Donald Gentry, who paid the ultimate sacrifice when they were killed in a plane crash 50 years ago near this location.

Colonel John J. Cobb / Chief of Law Enforcement



Proactive Initiatives:

- DWR Board approved a motion on March 24 to rename a wildlife management area as the Flippo-Gentry WMA (formally known as the Parker's Branch in Sussex County) in honor of our last two fallen officers, Allen Flippo and Donald Gentry, who were killed in a plane crash 50 years ago near this WMA. Dedication Ceremony being planned for October with a date of **Thursday, October 20**.
- Flippo - Gentry WMA signs are being produced now with more information on the dedication ceremony to come later as we plan for this special event



Office of Professional Standards:

- ❖ UPDATE - Professional Standards Major
 - OPS Advisory Meeting- Wednesday May 25, 2022 in Region 3, Marion, VA
- ❖ Recruitment / Retention Initiatives
 - The 2022 CPO hiring process will be launching in May. Anyone who is interested in joining the DWR team as a conservation police officer can receive information about the career, the hiring process, and the training academy by emailing recruiter@dwr.virginia.gov. Prospective applicants can also visit the CPO Recruiting website, <https://dwr.virginia.gov/conservation-police/recruiting/>. There, prospective applicants can find updated information and answers to many frequently asked questions.

- ❖ Training (Basic and In-service) / Training Offered to Other Agencies
 - Basic Training
 - The officers of the 11th Basic Training Class have completed their academic training. They have now begun the Division's 14-week Field Training Program. They have been partnered with experienced officers who will prepare them for a challenging career ahead.
 - In-service Training
 - VCP Leadership Training- the Law Division promotes leadership throughout its various levels. In support of this, several courses have been identified and our officers are encouraged to pursue the opportunities. The courses include in-person offerings by FBI-LEEDA and online offerings through the Commonwealth of Virginia Learning Center.
 - Essentials of BUI Enforcement- Our NASBLA Credentialed instructors will be presenting the 14 hour Essentials of BUI Enforcement course to the City of Chesapeake's Marine Unit in May. This course will prepare their newly assigned officers the training necessary to effectively identify impaired operators within their service area.
 - Multi Agency Tactical Operator's Course- This 5 day course will be presented to DWR and our partner agencies June 20-24. The course provides the training necessary to perform as part of a maritime security zone team.
 - Colt Rifle Armorer Course- the Law Division had issued the Colt M4 rifle to its field officers. To ensure these firearms are properly maintained, we have arranged for instructors from Colt to deliver this 24 hour course to our firearms instructors. These officers will gain a complete understanding of the design theory, nomenclature, dynamics, compatibility, interchangeability, detailed disassembly, assembly, maintenance and trouble-shooting of the M16/AR-15 family of weapons including rifles, carbines, and sub-machine guns. This class provides a certification that is valid for 3 years.
 - Officer In-Service- The 2022 officer in-service will be presented over several sessions in the month of September. The training will provide advanced training in the areas of hunting incident response, and other relevant topics.
 - [Training Calendar](#)

- ❖ Citizen Feedback / Employee Suggestion Program (E.S.P.)
 - [E.S.P. Project List and Completion Tracker](#)
 - Have a suggestion? Submit [VCP-180](#) to LawESP@dwr.virginia.gov

- ❖ Accreditation
 - [VCP-115 - Victim Witness Services](#) Reminder to be giving this form to Victims or Witness focusing on those you expect to need to come to court as part of the prosecution. Not all of the information applies to every case but should answer many questions people have when working with the prosecution.
 - [VCP-230 Vehicle / Boat Impound Form](#) Printed versions of this form with carbon copies will be distributed through the regions in the near future. Once the form is completed upload a copy to the RMS case file.
 - Document scanners will be arriving at each of the evidence facilities. They should be located in the evidence packaging area and may be used by officers to scan documents directly into RMS. Further instructions on installing and using these scanners will be coming out in the near future.
 - Annual Report: Please provide photos from 2021 for the annual report. Photos can be uploaded to [Annual Report Photos 2021](#)

- ❖ Risk Management
 - Article: [Wear Your Armor](#)
 You have several options for wearing your issued body armor. Whether you wear it internally or externally, we encourage you to wear it every day when you go out to work! With the addition of the load bearing vest, the benefits are even more noticeable for those that were developing back problems from the duty belt. Wear It!

- ❖ Peer Support
 - From the Peer Support Team, I want to welcome the 11th Basic Academy to the field. For some, this is not your first Law Enforcement job, but for the majority of the 11th Basic, it is your first month as a law enforcement officer. I have been hearing stories and reading reports from some of the activities that you have been involved with your FTOs. You all have been busy! Many of these first few calls-for-service you will remember for a lifetime and as your career progresses there will be more calls that you will remember. Some will be humorous, others will involve you finally catching that violator that you were watching all season, and others will be tragic. I say this to remind each of you that we have a dedicated group of officers that are willing to talk with you at any time; they are willing to listen to the good and the bad. Please do not hesitate to reach out to any of our peer support team members at any time. I encourage each of you to read Dr. Kevin Gilmartin's book, Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement. If you would like to borrow a copy, please let me know. We are here for you!

- Article: [Tactical Eating - Simple Meal Planning for Law Enforcement](#)
- [National Wellness Survey Results](#) - Several months ago everyone received a survey request to provide input in the national wellness survey. The results are in and special thanks to all of those who participated.
- Want to talk to a Peer Team Member? [Contact Information](#)

Support Services:

❖ UPDATE - Support Services Major

- One of the primary functions of this position is the implementation of as many technology based solutions and resources as possible, while operating within the constraints of our budget and infrastructure. One of the newest tools that we are working to roll out is the Central Square mobile application, which will allow all of you to conduct RMS/CAD functions from your phone. We are diligently working with VITA, and Central Square, to get this into the field as soon as possible. I was hopeful that we would have already launched this app, but we have been dealing with a pesky firewall issue. Once we resolve this issue, we will be ready to roll!

❖ Division Budget Update

- The FY23 budget seems to be a moving target based on the status of the Governor's biennial budget, which has yet to be approved. Regardless, the Agency budget team is in regular communication and I feel confident that we will end up with a budget that meets the majority of our needs.

❖ Grants

- The Notice of Funding for the 2022 FEMA Port Security Grant is scheduled to be announced on May 13th. Major Shuler is already busy networking with Port of Virginia partners and working on the division's application.

❖ Communications Center

- DWR is very fortunate to have such a professional and dedicated group of dispatchers that are passionate about supporting our officers, as well as our constituents. Their dedication is on full display on a daily basis and all that wear a badge can take some solace in knowing that these fine women and men have our backs!
- From Colonel Cobb: *National Public Safety Tele-communicators Week (NPSTW), observed every second week in April, has been set aside to recognize, celebrate and honor telecommunications personnel for their commitment, service, and sacrifice. Every day and night, public safety tele-communicators answer emergency and non-emergency calls. They connect callers to emergency care and provide valuable resources to those in need.*

Our Communications Center is a valuable and crucial tool within the DWR Law Enforcement Division. This center gives each Conservation Police Officer, Park Ranger and DWR Staff Member a lifeline to rely upon whenever they should need it. The Communications Officer's most critical responsibility is the safety of our officers in the field who are known to work in isolated harsh environments far away from backup. A member of this communication team is always available to assist, and as a result, this center is staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year with dedicated employees who are ready to answer the phone or radio at a moment's notice.

❖ Legal Articles of Interest

- On April 5th, the Virginia Court of Appeals issued its opinion in Grangruth v. Commonwealth (Record No. 0401-21-1). Grangruth was convicted of first degree murder, arson of an occupied dwelling, and arson of personal property. Grangruth appealed the trial court's denial of his motion to suppress evidence for law enforcement's violations of his Fourth Amendment rights. The Virginia Court of Appeals affirmed the convictions.
- While the opinion addressed various issues, I thought that its review of interactions between law enforcement officers and citizens would be useful to share. This is basic information, but sometimes it's the basics that need review. As Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's, said, "It all comes back to basics."
- The court says a lot in what follows. In my view, the key takeaways touch on probable cause. Ultimately, probable cause to justify an arrest means that the facts and circumstances within the officer's knowledge are sufficient to warrant a prudent person in believing that the circumstances show that the suspect has committed, is committing, or is about to commit an offense. Probable cause requires only a probability or substantial chance of criminal activity, not an actual showing of such activity. It does not require any showing that such a belief be more likely true than false.
- Per the court's opinion, generally speaking, "[i]nteractions between the police and citizens fall into one of three categories: (1) consensual encounters, (2) investigatory, or Terry, stops requiring reasonable suspicion, and (3) full arrests requiring probable cause." McLellan v. Commonwealth, 37 Va. App. 144, 150-51 (2001). These categories are not static: what begins as a consensual encounter can progress to a Terry stop and culminate with a full arrest.
- In responding to Grangruth's argument that his Fourth Amendment rights were violated, the court said, "We need not determine when the encounter went from consensual to a Terry stop to a full arrest because,

ultimately, we conclude that the trial court correctly determined that officers possessed probable cause prior to their seizure of appellant.”

- The court went on to note that, although Grangruth contests the trial court’s conclusion that the officers possessed probable cause, he does not “dispute[] that the Constitution permits an officer to arrest a suspect without a warrant if there is probable cause to believe that the suspect has committed or is committing an offense.” Michigan v. DeFillippo, 443 U.S. 31, 36 (1979). Probable cause, “as the very name implies, deals with probabilities.” Derr v. Commonwealth, 242 Va. 413, 421 (1991) (quoting Saunders v. Commonwealth, 218 Va. 294, 300 (1977)). Although probable cause is a higher standard than reasonable suspicion, it “requires only a probability or substantial chance of criminal activity, not an actual showing of such activity.” Joyce v. Commonwealth, 56 Va. App. 646, 659 (2010) (quoting Illinois v. Gates, 462 U.S. 213, 243 n.13 (1983)). It “does not ‘demand any showing that such a belief be . . . more likely true than false.’” Slayton, 41 Va. App. at 106 (quoting Texas v. Brown, 460 U.S. 730, 742 (1983) (plurality opinion)). “Not even a ‘prima facie showing’ of criminality is required” to establish probable cause. Joyce, 56 Va. App. at 659 (quoting Gates, 462 U.S. at 235). Ultimately, “‘probable cause’ to justify an arrest means facts and circumstances within the officer’s knowledge that are sufficient to warrant a prudent person, or one of reasonable caution, in believing, in the circumstances shown, that the suspect has committed, is committing, or is about to commit an offense.” DeFillippo, 443 U.S. at 37.
- Last, the court stated that, in determining whether officers have probable cause to arrest, “we examine the events leading up to the arrest, and then decide ‘whether these historical facts, viewed from the standpoint of an objectively reasonable police officer, amount to’ probable cause.” Maryland v. Pringle, 540 U.S. 366, 371 (2003) (quoting Ornelas v. United States, 517 U.S. 690, 696 (1996)). This requires us to view the totality of the circumstances. Jones v. Commonwealth, 279 Va. 52, 59 (2010). As noted above, in conducting our review, we “give ‘due weight to the inferences drawn from those facts by resident judges and local law enforcement officers.’” Kyer, 45 Va. App. at 479 (quoting Slayton, 41 Va. App. at 105).
- Again, probable cause to justify an arrest means that the facts and circumstances within the officer’s knowledge are sufficient to warrant a prudent person in believing that the circumstances show that the suspect has committed, is committing, or is about to commit an offense. Probable cause requires only a probability or substantial chance of criminal activity, not an actual showing of such activity. It does not require any showing that such a belief be more likely true than false.

- As always, if you have any questions or need anything further, please let me know.
- ❖ IT Systems
 - Need Help - Call a member of the [IT Cadre](#) to set-up either individual assistance or a small group training session
 - If you have IT questions, sent them to LawITCadre@dwr.virginia.gov mailbox

Law Enforcement Operations:

- ❖ UPDATE - Operations Major Update
 - It's finally April! The turkeys are gobbling, anadromous fish are in the river and boats are starting to hit the water. As an officer, this was always one of my favorite times of the year. We are very fortunate to have 16 new officers in the field and I am very excited for each of them (and a little jealous) as they begin their career. From an operational standpoint, we are busy working through numerous projects. I am sure you all have had an opportunity to review the SOP's and General Orders that have recently been published as we continually address gaps in written directives. This will be an ongoing and continual process as we create new directives and modify others based on numerous factors.
 - On April 20th, the operational command staff met in Verona to discuss matters that require more discussion than command staff meetings allow. Some of the topics discussed were working from home, establishing and communicating peak hour enforcement, as well as our command structure. We will continue to hold these work sessions in an attempt to address matters collaboratively and implement solutions in a way that creates consistency.
- ❖ Major Operational Change - Implementation of the First Sergeant Position - as you have all seen in the NOV, we will have 8 F/SGT's with 2 assigned to each region.



❖ Recent Enforcement Efforts

- Activity Reports:
 - [Weekly Activity Report 03/30- 04/05 \(External\)](#)
 - [Weekly Activity Report 04/06- 12 \(External\)](#)
 - [Weekly Activity Report 04/13- 19 \(External\)](#)
- [CPO Notebook](#)

❖ Media Initiatives

- [K9 Grace Celebrates her third Birthday](#)
- [Recognizing the efforts of DWR's telecommunications personnel](#)
- [Illegal Turtle Enforcement](#)

- Trout Stream Clean up Video:
<https://youtu.be/McnEppTzw5c>

Personnel:

- ❖ The Officer Commendation of the Month goes to **Officer Joe Rollings - D14**

This Citizen Feedback Submission reads in part:

For the last two years, my family has had major issues with a particular hunt club that has been trespassing and illegally shooting deer off our property located in Surry County, Virginia.

Unfortunately, this club's illegal activities during the general deer hunting season have become more than a nuisance for us.

On both occasions, CPO Joe Rollings responded to our calls for service without delay.

CPO Rollings did an exceptional job communicating with me and following up on both investigations. I wanted to thank the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and commend CPO Rollings for providing us with exceptional police service and resolving these law enforcement issues with arrests and convictions.

CPO Rollings perseverance and commitment are top-notch and we are extremely grateful for his actions which favorably concluded these investigations. On behalf of our family, please thank CPO Rollings for a job well done. CPO Rollings is a consummate professional who is known for his determined work ethic and kind demeanor.

Thank you again Colonel Cobb and it is my hope that this letter finds its way into CPO Rollings' personnel file.

John Croft – Special Agent – Marine Resource Commission

❖ 11th Academy Graduation

▪ **Basic Academy**

Sally Steward Bambach	King George
Jasemine Morgan Brown	Rockbridge
Brian Tyler Dagliano	King & Queen
Kevin Michael DeVries	Middlesex
Amanda Jean DeZalia-Burks	Chesapeake
Jackson David Dierberg	Warren
Destiny Michelle Evans	Orange
Alan Joel FitzGerald	Hampton
Jared Scott Howell	Charlotte
Trace William Hughes	Buchanan
Amanda Frances Janicki	Newport News
Andrew Willis Rohrer	Craig
Jared Stephen Scripture	Henrico
Gracie Nicole Talbert	Cumberland
Ronald Wayne Wood	Pulaski
Shawn Dwayne Yates	Buckingham

▪ **Modified Academy**

Cody Allen Barnes	Surry
Andrew Stephen Bobbitt	Bland
Lyndon Robert Hawkins	Stafford
Andrew Kyle Jones	Lancaster
Steven Brett Stone	Norfolk
Douglas Joseph Warren	Nottoway

❖ Recent Separations (from DWR Service)

- Master Officer Beth McGuire 4/8/2022 (14 years)

Award Ceremony and Academy Graduation Photos:











Upcoming Important Dates:

- The [Virginia Conservation Police Calendar \(Link must be accessed through your DWR google account\)](#) a division wide calendar with important dates for the division staff is under construction. Please add this to your google calendar to stay informed with important dates and reminders.



GW/CPO Retiree Newsletter



Fourth Edition Spring 2022



From the Editor:

Retired Game Wardens are rarely forgotten. In fact, they often become legendary. I frequently hear stories from long ago about a game warden that did this or that, as far back as the eighties, or even further into the past. Retired game wardens become bigger than life as time passes. That's one reason why I'm honored to be the editor of this newsletter: it gives me an opportunity to reach into the past and bring retired game wardens into focus so that we can see where we came from, and perhaps glean some insight into where we will go in the future.

In this Fourth Edition of the Retiree Newsletter, we will look at a special operation in our not-so-long ago past known as Operation VIPER. Some believe this was DWR (then DGIF) at its most effective in natural resources protection, while others may believe it was a step too far. No matter what your personal views may be, nobody can deny it provided us with a fascinating glimpse of the poaching and natural resources exploitation underworld.

I'm extremely grateful to retired Game Warden and USFWS Special Agent Rick Perry, who has done some impressive investigative work to help us bring a dark day in our department's history some closure. I'm referring to December 19, 1972, when Game Wardens Allen Flippo and Don Gentry perished while conducting a spotlighting patrol. Rick has brought these DWR legends back to life with pictures and stories that we can all appreciate. I especially want to thank the surviving family members of Allen Flippo and Don Gentry for sharing a very personal part of their lives with Rick, and all of us.

And on a lighter note, I once again thank Rick Perry for contributing his fish story (verified with a photo, no less!), which made me determined to get out and catch something myself.

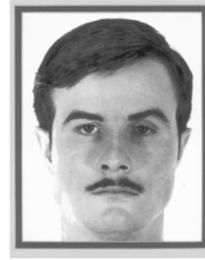
I hope you enjoy this issue of the Retiree Newsletter. I'm sure it will bring back some memories and perhaps provoke a response. Please send any comments you have to rich.landlers@dwr.virginia.gov, I'd love to hear from you!

Colonel's Message

Dedication and persistence has been the trademark of those who wore our law enforcement badge and carried forward its uniquely special wildlife mission. We can certainly learn from our past, which is why we are offering “Game Warden Experiences” to pass on many traditional “boots on the ground” techniques to the next generation of Conservation Police Officers.

We have been in an honorable profession since 1903 for nearly 120 years. Our educational and enforcement efforts to protect wildlife and natural resources have been extraordinary and have definitely made a significant impact. Most wildlife species in Virginia have greatly increased in numbers during this timeframe. This GW/CPO Retiree Newsletter is an excellent opportunity to showcase those stories of our past dedicated officers that led directly to our successes.

Those contributions made by passionate protectors, unfortunately, sometimes came with grief and strife. It has often been said, how we remember and honor those that came before us says a lot about who we are. A total of 11 sworn officers, known as Game Wardens back then, have paid the ultimate sacrifice. This issue is dedicated to them (see fallen officer rollcall) and specifically to our last two fallen officers, Allen Flippo and Donald Gentry who 50 years ago this year were killed in a tragic plane crash together while patrolling for those engaged in illegally spotlighting deer. Their End of Watch came on Tuesday, December 19, 1972.



Allen Cooke Flippo



Donald Wyatt Gentry

They gave everything they had as “Protectors of Wildlife and Natural Resources”. Their families paid the ultimate sacrifice as well. To show our respect as an agency the DWR Board on March 24, 2022 approved the renaming of a Wildlife Management Area close to where they lost their lives. Parker’s Branch WMA in Sussex County will now be known as the Flippo-Gentry WMA. A dedication ceremony will be held for family and friends on this newly named WMA in October.



I hope to see many of you there to help us pay our respects. **Lest We Forget**



Colonel John J. Cobb
Chief of Law Enforcement

Operation VIPER: Rock's Dixie Emporium

In July 2000, The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries teamed up with the National Park Service to conduct a multi-year wildlife sting known as Operation VIPER (Virginia Interagency Effort to Protect Environmental Resources) to stop the illegal trade of bear parts, ginseng, and other illegally obtained natural resources.

Rock's Dixie Emporium was the storefront where VIPER concentrated its operations. At this country store, an undercover operative named Joseph Rocco (retired CPO Rock Cianciotti) infiltrated both the poaching networks that supplied the bears and the international consumers that buy and sell bear gall bladders. He essentially became a black-market entrepreneur. If anything were to go wrong, he would be completely on his own, and would have to face the consequences of working as an undercover game warden in Virginia's complex Appalachia region.



Rock's Dixie Emporium: 2002

A retired Washington DC homicide detective prior to coming to DWR, Cianciotti cultivated

an impressive underground business in two short years, recording every conversation, every transaction, and every detail of every encounter with the local poachers and criminals. Before long, however, Cianciotti realized that what seemed on the surface to be a culture of crime in Appalachia was in fact also a culture of victims. Government officials had taken Appalachia from Elkton's ancestors through eminent domain to create Shenandoah National Park, and they were not over it. Faced with empathy for these people and contempt for their crimes, Cianciotti needed to find an equitable way to achieve justice without compromising his own humanity.

I spoke with retired Conservation Police Officer Rock Cianciotti at his home in the very mountains he once worked. We reflected about his career at DWR. Everybody who has ever worked with Rock knows that he is outgoing and upbeat, with a genuine interest in people and justice. And like all game warden retirees he has stories to tell. Lots of them.



Rock Cianciotti at home in the Blue Ridge Mountains

BACKSTORY:

Bears were a common part of the Virginia landscape during the pre-colonial and colonial periods, but by 1900 they were just about completely gone. It's no coincidence that the decline in the bear population directly correlates to the arrival of Colonial Europeans. When the colonists began to expand west bears didn't have a whole lot going for them. They were good to eat, they weren't fast or elusive, they had a reputation for ferocity (but are really more cowardly than ferocious), and they tended to inflict a lot of crop damage on struggling pioneers. It wasn't until they reached the brink of extirpation that Virginians decided to do something for the bears. The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries was instrumental to the recovery of bears; and the creation of Shenandoah National Park in 1936, as well as the designation of other National Forest properties adjacent to

the Park, provided the habitat that bears needed to flourish.

This was all good for the bears, but not so good for the local homesteaders who were evicted by the government under the powers of eminent domain. The tables were turned, and now the impoverished locals were the ones struggling to survive while bears rebounded.

Sportsmen quickly latched on to the bear hunting opportunities that were presented. Bear hunters began to enjoy significant harvests from the sport, and with the increase in hunting technologies such as radio-collared dogs, GPS, and radio communications hunters have been able to optimize their success. The thrill of chasing bears with trucks and hounds added a new dimension, and a whole new culture revolving around bears emerged. Bear harvests were carefully monitored and bear hunters worked closely with authorities to ensure their hunting could sustain bear populations. Everyone was winning. Everyone, that is, except those who had lost everything when Shenandoah National Park was created. Nevertheless, it was a stellar example of successful wildlife management.

While this was occurring on American soil, something very fortuitous was happening on the other side of the planet. In China, black bears are not always regarded as wild animals. They are commodities, revered for the bile in their gall bladders. Bear bile is used as a cure-all for virtually every ailment known to man, from impotence to crippling neurological disorders. Unlike their cousins in Shenandoah National Park they frequently exist in tiny, overcrowded cages until they are big enough to have their gall bladders

harvested. In many cases the gall bladder can be pierced and drained so the bear can actually live to produce more bile, to be tapped like syrup from a maple tree on a weekly basis. As a result, there aren't many wild bears left in China.

VIPER Emerges:

Elkton is a small village tucked away in the Blue Ridge Mountains. One of the best features of Elkton is that it's just outside Shenandoah National Park, with the largest concentration of black bears in Virginia. This feature intrigues thousands of American tourists every year. Anybody who has ever driven through the park and seen a lumbering bear will never forget the thrill of their wildlife encounter with no bars, walls, or moats separating the human from the wild.

As the bear population in the Blue Ridge Mountains began to flourish in the 80's and 90's, the bear population in China was swiftly decreasing. This created an unusual and unexpected opportunity for bear hunters in Virginia, and consumers of bear by-products in China. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife was first to get tuned into the problem in Virginia because they had already attempted to deal with it in Alaska. Bear gall bladders were selling for hundreds, even thousands of dollars. To exacerbate the problem, rural Virginia and much of Appalachia suffers from desperate poverty. Where there is desperation, there will almost always be a lack of reverence for natural resources. In Africa, for example, desperate people can turn to elephant ivory or leopard skins. In South America, jaguars and tropical birds can

provide much-needed money. In the Blue Ridge Mountains, it's bear gall bladders, ginseng, and various other wildlife parts that can make the difference between starving or surviving another month.



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release October 5, 1984

Ann Haas (202) 343-9242
Megan Durham (202) 343-5634

34 CHARGED WITH VIOLATING WILDLIFE LAWS AS FEDERAL UNDERCOVER OPERATION COMES TO AN END

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced October 4 that 34 people from 9 States have been charged in Montana and Colorado with violating State and Federal wildlife laws. These actions conclude a 3-year undercover investigation of illegal poaching and smuggling of native and exotic wildlife.

Nearly 200 Federal and State law enforcement agents participated in the arrests and served 20 search warrants. States involved include Montana, Colorado, Florida, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, Alaska, Arizona, Oklahoma, Texas, Oregon, and California. These actions are a result of intensive investigation and strong coordination between the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of Justice, and the U.S. Attorneys for Colorado and Montana.

Fish and Wildlife Service agents covertly ran a tanning and taxidermy business in Colorado, where they detected smuggling of endangered wildlife skins into the United States and illegal trade in protected species of big game and rare birds. Further charges involve illegal guided hunts around Yellowstone National Park and in Mexico. Some indictments allege illicit trade to the Orient of wildlife parts and products supposed to have medicinal and aphrodisiacal properties.

Other charges include smuggling skins from species protected by the Endangered Species Act -- especially the cheetah, jaguar, ocelot, leopard, morgan, and American crocodile -- into the United States through the mail, in containerized cargo ships, and in hidden compartments of vehicles; violations of the Lacey Act for interstate transportation of illegally-taken North American wildlife, including bighorn sheep, mountain goats, elk, mule deer, black bear, antelope, mountain lions, bobcat, and lynx; Eagle Act and Migratory Bird Treaty Act violations regarding the killing and selling of eagles, hawks, owls, flamingo, scarlet ibis, and songbirds; and conspiracy.

-2-

Commenting on the investigation, Fish and Wildlife Service Director Robert Jantzen said, "Public support for laws such as the Endangered Species Act has helped reduce the commercial success of illegal trade in spotted cats in this country. It is clear, however, that an underground market for many species has continued to make poaching a profitable, if risky, activity. We hope that our action today will put potential violators on notice of our determination to stop commercial exploitation of our wildlife."

The investigation found that bighorn sheep skulls might sell on the black market for as much as \$5,000. Finished and tanned tiger and jaguar skins can sell for \$3,000-\$4,000. Bear gall bladders -- prized in the Far East for their supposed medicinal and aphrodisiacal values -- can bring \$3,000 a pound when properly ground, while other bear parts are used in bear-paw soup, which is considered a delicacy.

Press Release from the USFWS of an earlier undercover operation.

Operation VIPER was not the first attempt to address the bear-poaching problem in Virginia. In 1999 the VDGIF announced that it had ended a long-term undercover poaching sting called Operation SOUP (Special Operation to Uncover Poaching). According to the Department, SOUP had revealed an extensive problem with poachers and the

illegal market for bear parts. In addition, many of the same people dealing in illegal bear parts were also illegally harvesting and selling ginseng roots, frequently right out of Shenandoah National Park. Scores of arrests were made and 300 bear galls were seized. The Department took credit for charges on 110 wildlife violations.



Bear carcass, paws and gall bladder removed



Ginseng, dried and ready for market



Ginseng evidence seized during VIPER.

Operation VIPER was unique in that it wasn't targeting primarily poachers. The real problem was the market for bear gall bladders. As long as people were willing to pay high prices for the bear galls, there would be out-of-control poaching in and around Shenandoah National Park. A statement needed to be made, and it wasn't going to happen overnight. As VDGIF conceived it, Rock's Dixie Emporium would bring everyone involved in this wildlife criminal enterprise together, where their activities would be documented and the perpetrators brought to Justice. Initially, they leased the property on Main Street and installed a young officer with no undercover experience to manage the store. After a short period of time the young officer made a mistake that almost cost him his life. That, and the overwhelming workload of documenting and recording every activity at the store caused the young

officer to have a nervous breakdown. He was relieved of the assignment, not quite together but alive, and VDGIF had nobody to replace him.

Cianciotti didn't need the job. After thirty years working for MPD he had accrued a respectable retirement package. He would have been content to build a home in the country and spend his days hunting and fishing. On a whim, he decided to apply to be a game warden with the VDGIF. The idea of cruising down country lanes, meeting folks, and doing a little law enforcement appealed to him. They turned him down at first, but then a few months later he received a call from the Director Woodfin asking him to come in for an interview.

Most people probably would have shown a little more respect toward the Director, but experience has cultivated a healthy distrust for authority within Cianciotti. He'd seen everything he needed to see about the darker side of humanity – first as a teenager in the killing fields of Viet Nam, then working undercover on the vice squad, and most recently as a homicide detective. He's wept over the bodies of murdered children in the slums of DC, and he's explored the inner workings of killer's minds. Respect for authority wasn't a part of his constitution, but apprehending criminals definitely was. Colonel Foster finally convinced the reluctant Cianciotti that the team needed him. Rock was in.

The VDGIF will never know how lucky they were to get Cianciotti. He would be creating and cultivating friendships with pimps, poachers, drug dealers, and other assorted miscreants. He would be working twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Rock's

Dixie Emporium would be his life from the time he accepted the assignment until the operation terminated. With those facts as his job description he accepted his new identity and the keys to the Dixie Emporium.

What struck Cianciotti the most during his time at the Emporium were the people. The folks he met on the streets, down on the river, or just dropping in to see the new store in town were good people, kind and friendly. Everyone offered to help Rocco get settled in, and many folks brought in homemade dishes or baked treats to welcome him. Some even invited him into their homes for dinner! At first, he wasn't sure how he'd be able to build a case against anyone in Elkton – they were just such good folks.

Soon enough, though, a different kind of customer started showing up at the Dixie. Customers that weren't so much interested in how they could help Cianciotti, as how he could help them.

In one case, a suspect had been traveling across the country to attend native American "pow-wows." The purpose of his travel was to collect Native American wildlife artifacts. He showed up at the Dixie Emporium and offered to sell Rock a necklace made out of illegally obtained talons and feathers from a golden eagle. Native Americans could legally possess these items; however, this suspect figured out a way to illegally obtain the items and then liquidate them for a substantial profit. This same suspect would be the source of many more unusual wildlife-related crimes during Rock's tenure.

Another case involved a suspect that wanted to purchase some bear galls, and heard through the grapevine that Rock could find some for him. A DGIF special agent (whose

name will not be given here) soon delivered an enormous bear carcass to the Dixie Emporium, freshly killed, to help Rock complete the sale. The bear was so big that the two special agents could not lift it off the back of the truck without the use of a block and tackle device. After an exhaustive effort, they manage to cram the bear carcass into a large freezer. When the suspect showed up the next day to purchase the bear it had frozen solid and stuck to the freezer. Ever the fixer, Rock used a hair dryer to thaw the stinking carcass out enough to free it, and the block and tackle device to slide it into the suspect's dry-cleaning van (which was full of clean clothing to be delivered, at some point, to the lucky customer).

It went on like this for two years, until VDGIF decided it was time to pull the plug on Operation VIPER.

A January 7, 2004 press release from the NPS stated "*the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) and the National Park Service (NPS) announced the results of a multi-year, joint, undercover, investigation that has produced numerous wildlife violation charges and directly linked the communities surrounding Shenandoah National Park with the multi-million-dollar international black-market trade in American black bears and American ginseng plants. State and federal officials have become increasingly concerned about the commercialization and exploitation*

of natural resources and the results of this investigation confirm the existence of an active black market demand for products from the Virginia mountains. The extent of this international demand threatens the viability of the species involved. Additional investigative support was provided by the FBI, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the National Fish and Wildlife Forensic Laboratory, the United States Attorney's Office, and the Rockingham County/Harrisonburg Virginia Commonwealth Attorney's Office. A total of 487 state violations (193 felonies and 294 misdemeanors) and 204 federal violations (99 felonies and 105 misdemeanors) have been documented against over 100 individuals in seven states, the District of Columbia and one foreign country."

Retirees from DWR all have incredible stories no matter where they were assigned, and these stories always involve the people and wildlife of the areas they have patrolled. It's incredible to me that so many stories, like Rock Cianciotti's, are out there. Each story is like a trophy buck, just waiting to be harvested but rarely seen. I'm indebted to Rock Cianciotti for his willingness to share his stories with me, and in turn allowing me to share them with you.

End of Watch



Two Virginia Game Wardens, December 19, 1972

By Rick Perry

I'm sure each of you remember seeing the pictures of Allen Cooke Flippo and Donald Wyatt Gentry on the wall at Headquarters. I remember them from all the way back in 1978, 44 years ago when I started at DGIF when Headquarters was at 4010 West Broad St.

We are coming up on the fiftieth anniversary of this tragic event. Believe it or not, all the information that we have concerning this event are those two pictures and two plaques (those plaques are not correct) that tells a short story of the crash. Here at Headquarters we have no records that we can find concerning this. We do have memories from our officers that were working 50 years ago but these officers are few and far between. Colonel Cobb asked me if I would mind looking into this to provide more details of what happened. I told him I would and here are some of the things I found. But first, let me tell you the story of the events of December 19th and 20th, 1972, reconstructed from interviews, newspaper accounts, government records and miscellaneous documents.

End of Watch

Of note: During the 1970 – 1971 hunting season, Southampton County was the #1 deer county in Virginia with a whitetail deer harvest of 2,153 animals. As a result, an influx of deer hunters visited the county looking for success the following hunting season.

On December 19, 1972 Virginia Game Wardens planned a routine nighttime patrol to apprehend persons attempting to take deer illegally by the use of lights or spotlights. It was a Tuesday and the weather for the day was good: ceiling was 25,000 feet with thin overcast, visibility was seven (7) miles, winds nine (9) to thirteen (13) knots out of the SW, temps in the upper 40's to 50 degrees and a full moon directly overhead at midnight with 99% illumination. The patrol consisted of four officers, two in the plane and two in a patrol car for the ground unit. In the ground unit were James "Mac" McClenny, Isle of Wight Game Warden and Kenny Skinner,

Surry County Game Warden.



A Piper PA-22, similar to the one flown by Flippo and Gentry on Dec. 19, 1972.

In the rented plane, a Piper Tripacer PA-22, tail # N183A, was the pilot, Allen C. Flippo, age 26 and a former U.S. Army helicopter pilot who served in Vietnam, and was stationed in Virginia Beach and Donald W. Gentry, the Southampton County Game Warden serving as observer and communicator with the ground unit. Allen Flippo was new to DGIF having served only 10 months and he had just married Mary Haney on September 30th, three months earlier. Don Gentry, a four year veteran with DGIF was married to Lorie Gentry and they had six children, four daughters and two sons: Janet age 13, Linda Carol age 12, Donna age 8, Barbara age 6 and Wyatt Jr. age 10 months. Tragically, they lost their oldest son, Michael, in 1970 when he was 14 years old.

Allen flew the aircraft from the Portsmouth-Chesapeake Airport to the Franklin Airport where he picked up Don. After taking off, Don established radio contact with the ground unit. The area of aerial surveillance concentrated on was Southampton County. The patrol began from Franklin to the Ivor area and then headed south. During the course of the evening the ground unit stopped and checked several vehicles pointed out by the plane as suspicious. The

ground unit would maintain visual contact with the plane by shining their spotlight on their patrol car up and around until spotted by the aircraft and Don would radio, "I got you." The plane was very visible to the officers in the roving ground unit. The patrol had worked their way south of Courtland when at approximately 9:45 PM, Don advised the ground unit that they were watching something and for them to standby in the Boykins area. That was the last contact received from the plane. No distress call was ever received by the ground unit or Air Traffic Control. The ground unit tried calling the aircraft after standing by for 10 or so minutes in Boykins with no response. The officers hoped it was just a problem with the radios and if so, the plane would put down at the nearest airport. The officers kept trying to reach the plane while they drove to the Franklin Airport to check there. They also called the Greenville Sheriff's Office to get Cato Collins or a deputy to check at the Emporia Airport. The aircraft was not at the Franklin Airport so they drove to check at the Wakefield Airport. The aircraft was not located at any airport in the area. By this time, it was early in the morning and the calls went out for assistance and officers were awakened and came in from all over the District. The officers concentrated on the area around Boykins and drove the roads and trails and knocked on doors talking to landowners. Sheriff's deputies, the State Police and Civil Air Patrol also responded. Some of the Game Wardens that helped with the search were: Shelton Roundtree, Charlie Hunter, Garland Foster, Chick Hawks, Sam Snead, Cato Collins, Jim Ogden, Richard Wilmoth, Kenny Sexton and of course "Mac"

McClenny and Kenny Skinner.



Darden Pond today. Wreckage for the aircraft still remains at the crash site, 50 years later.

The aircraft was found after daylight, the morning of December 20th, at approximately 10:00 AM. Both officers perished in the crash of the Piper Aircraft. It crashed through trees and then flipped upside down at the edge of a swamp at Darden Pond near the town of Newsoms.

Following their funerals, Don Gentry was buried in Meadowbrook Church Cemetery, Hot Springs, NC and Allen Flippo was buried in Peninsula Memorial Cemetery, Newport News, VA.

The accident was investigated by FAA Investigator Ken Zelowski out of Norfolk and NTSB Investigator Herbert Banks out of JFK Airport in New York. It was widely rumored that the aircraft was shot down but Investigator Banks said that nothing was

found to indicate anything like that. Southampton Sheriff Ryland Brooks stated that he did not believe the plane was shot down. He said people in the area heard the plane but no one heard any shots. The NTSB synopsis of the cause of the crash states- Probable Cause(s) – Miscellaneous – Undetermined. There were indications that there was an inflight fire onboard the aircraft prior to it crashing. The NTSB report stated under Type of Accident – Fire or Explosion: In Flight. The accident was also investigated by the Virginia State Police. A copy of the STATE CORPORATION COMMISSION, Division of Aeronautics' Aircraft Accident Report stated the following under Description of Accident: "The aircraft made a plunge into a clump of trees near the edge of a pond. The plane hit several trees and was dismantled. Both occupants of the plane were killed on impact. It was determined that there was an onboard fire before the aircraft hit the trees and the pond." The report was written by Investigator Trooper G. L. Turner, Jr. and signed on December 20, 1972.

Sources for the End of Watch

- Retired Game Warden Captain Michael Ashworth, Retired Game Warden/CPO Lt. Karl Martin, Retired Game Warden Colonel Herb Foster and Former Game Warden Kenny Sexton.
- Taped interviews with Retired Game Warden/CPO Kenny Skinner and Former Game Warden Richard Wilmoth. Kenny Skinner, Richard, Karl, Kenny Sexton and Herb were all classmates of Allen Flippo at State Police Headquarters starting in February of 1972. Kenny Skinner and

Richard were involved in the search for the aircraft and witnessed the crash scene.

- Don Gentry's five living children were located and contact was made with them, they live in Virginia, Tennessee and Georgia. They provided information and photographs.
- Allen Flippo's wife was located in Florida and contacted. She provided information, photographs and documents.
- Both families expressed interest in visiting the crash scene and one daughter asked if the plane is still in Darden Pond.
- CPO Sgt. Brandon Woodruff located the owner(s) of the pond and surrounding acreage and provided contact information.
- A landowner at Darden Pond, although not yet born in 1972, had fished the pond and as a child remembered that his Dad had pointed out to him what he believed were parts of the plane. I accompanied the landowner in his boat to the back of

the pond and we located the scene of the crash and found pieces of the aircraft – aluminum skin, tubular framework, the plane's battery and recovered with permission – a wing flap.

- Permission was received for the families to visit the crash site and on March 19th, three of the Gentry adult children: Janet, Donna, and Wyatt Jr., visited the crash site at Darden Pond accompanied by CPO Sgt. Brandon Woodruff and Rick Perry.
- Copies of The Tidewater News (the local paper out of Franklin) dated 12/21/1972 and 12/28/1972.
- Copy of the Suffolk News Herald, dated 12/21/1972.
- A copy of the synopsis of the NTSB's investigation.
- Don Gentry's Obituary – USGenWeb Archives.
- A copy of Virginia State Police Aircraft Accident Report dated 12/20/1972.
- A copy of the Virginia Medical Examiner's Report for Allen C. Flippo dated 1/5/1973.

Allen Cooke Flippo

10/14/1946 – 12/19/1972

Allen was born in Fredericksburg, VA, and his parents were Claude Allen Flippo and Alice Elizabeth Cooke Flippo. His dad was a Linesman for Virginia Electric Cooperative and his mom was a Housewife.

CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH
 COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
 DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
 BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS

Registered No. **42780**

1. PLACE OF BIRTH
 (a) County Spotsylvania (b) Municipal District
 (c) City or town Fredericksburg, Virginia (d) Name of hospital or institution Mary Washington

2. USUAL RESIDENCE OF MOTHER
 (a) State Virginia (b) County Spotsylvania (c) City or town Spotsylvania

3. SEX Boy 4. MONTH OF BIRTH October 5. DATE OF BIRTH 14, 1946

FATHER OF CHILD: Full name Claude Allen Flippo, Color or race White, Age at time of this birth 32 yrs., Residence Caroline County, Virginia, Usual occupation Linesman.

MOTHER OF CHILD: Full maiden name Alice Elizabeth Cooke, Color or race White, Age at time of this birth 31 yrs., Residence Spotsylvania County, Virginia, Usual occupation Housewife.

13. I hereby certify that I attended the birth of this child and was born alive at the hour of 2:55 P.M. on the date above stated and that the information given was furnished by Alice Louise Flippo and L. Flippo and used in this child or mother's record.

14. Where registered 785 15. Issuance information valid 10-11-46

16. Signature of Registrar W.D. Bl... 17. Name of Registrar Fredericksburg, Virginia

Allen Flippo's birth certificate from Spotsylvania County.

Allen attended a music summer camp in Chapel Hill, NC, and met a friend, Susan. Susan said that Allen was a talented pianist and had a good ear for music. She said that Allen was a very nice person and she corresponded with him when he was serving in Vietnam. Allen advised her that he flew helicopters. He told Susan that he flew dignitaries around and he also flew wounded soldiers to the Navy Hospital Ship USS Repose. The USS Repose saw service during WW II, Korea and Vietnam. The ship was 520 feet in length and had a large helicopter landing pad on the stern. The ship was nicknamed, "Angel of the Orient". One of the last letters Susan received from Allen was him planning to come to her wedding and he asked her what was the dress code for her wedding.

Another friend of Allen in Fredericksburg is Carey Leitch. Carey lived in the Ferry Farm subdivision and he met Allen at the Ferry Farm pool where Allen was a Lifeguard. At that time, Allen was in high school at Spotsylvania High and Carey went to James Monroe. Carey said that their lives ran parallel – they were both in boy scouts, they were both musicians and both were in a band. He also dated Allen's first cousin, Anne, and they double dated together. Around 1967-1968, Carey went to college, Purdue, and Allen went into the Service and to Vietnam but they wrote to each other regularly. Carey said that prior to Vietnam, Allen was at RPI (VCU now) and was a math major and completed his junior year and he enlisted into the Army, he was not drafted. Carey asked Allen why he didn't go ahead and finish college and Allen told him, "It was not important anymore." Carey said that he and Allen were both in the National Honor Society and that Allen was very smart. Carey kept in touch with Allen during Allen's tour in Vietnam. Allen told him that he flew "slicks" and he flew troops into battle, flew "dust offs" and medevac missions. Allen was a WO 1 (Warrant Officer 1) and held FAA ratings of Commercial Pilot Rotorcraft – Helicopter and later added Airplane Single Engine, Land and Sea. Carey described Allen as a very serious and quiet guy and that Allen played by the rules. Carey said that towards the end of his tour, Allen told him that he was very disenchanted with the military and disappointed with the whole thing. Once Allen left the military they got together again

and went on a double date to the Mosque in Richmond (now The Altria Theater) and saw a show opened by Neil Diamond and featured Three Dog Night. Later, when he heard that Allen had died he couldn't believe it. That Allen had survived flying "Hueys" (Bell UH-1 Iroquois) in Vietnam and then was shot down flying a spotlighting patrol for the Game Commission. Allen's wife, Mary, said that she met Allen in January of 1972 and they married on September 30, 1972. She thought one of the reasons that they got along so well was because neither of them had siblings. Once married, they lived down in Pungo because Allen was assigned to Virginia Beach.



Allen and Mary on their wedding day: September 30, 1972.

She said Allen had a black German Shepherd puppy, named Herzog, that he was training. Mary said of Herzog, "He could not get enough of being around and with Allen – he reveled in Allen's companionship, such a happy, joyful, carefree dog-person!" When Mary introduced her cat into the household, Allen never said anything but she knew Allen more or less tolerated the cat as compared to his relationship with Herzog. Mary said that

both Allen and she enjoyed "muscle" cars and Allen had a 1970 Dodge Charger with a 440 magnum engine.



A 1970 Dodge Charger with 440 engine.

Mary remembered a dinner late one afternoon/evening that they had at the Back Bay Ranger Station. It was a fish fry and she remembered the warmth and camaraderie of the group. She said that Allen enjoyed working for the Game Commission and he loved flying and working to protect Virginia's wildlife.



Donald Wyatt Gentry Sr.

July 19, 1936 – December 19, 1972

Donald Gentry was born and raised in Asheville, NC and his parents were Wyatt H. Gentry “Preacher” and Parasadie Edwards Gentry. Don’s father was a full-time minister and his parents moved to Hendersonville in 1947 and the couple founded the Hendersonville First Church of the Nazarene.



According to Don’s younger sister, Viola “Sissy”, Don was very energetic as a boy and was always wanting to do something. She remembered that when Don was around 12 he would walk miles

to the Hendersonville Country Club to search for and hunt down lost golf balls that he would sell to the clubhouse. He did other odd jobs like that and he would always share the money that he made with their parents. He always wanted to help. In the family there were four children, three boys and one girl, “Sissy”. She said that Don loved to go to church. Don was also a practical joker. He loved hot pepper, the hotter the better and would have it every night for dinner. He loved to sneak hot pepper into her food and wait for her reaction of her mouth on fire, then he would laugh and laugh. “Sissy” said that her brother was very comical and he could get you to laugh even on your worst day. When they were little, her Daddy’s Daddy would keep Don and take him hunting and fishing and he fell in love with the outdoors. He turned out to be the only outdoorsman in the family. “Sissy” said that Don went to Ednyville High School where he played basketball. Their

father didn’t want him to play since the school was ten miles from their home and they only had the one car. Don insisted and he walked or caught rides back and forth. “Sissy” said that Don was a very good boy and he respected his parents and he obeyed Ma Ma and Daddy’s rules. She said Don was always more grown up than his age. “Sissy” also knew Don was a strict game warden and firmly

believed in his job of protecting the wildlife.



David Gentry, Don’s younger brother, knew Don very well. David was almost ten years younger than Donald and would go stay with him at Christmas

and during the summer. He knew that Don loved to hunt and spend time outdoors and he believed that this interest is what propelled him into his wildlife career to protect what he loved. Don was a very good game warden, he would do what it took to catch anyone breaking the wildlife laws. David said that Don was a North Carolina Game Warden for eight or nine years before leaving to become a Virginia Game Warden in 1968. He said Don was stationed in two different areas in NC and he would go stay with him and get to ride with him on his patrols. David remembered Don’s dog, Prince, and he believed Don got Prince around 1960. Don was training Prince and David remembered helping to train him. David said that his brother was a real “died in the wool” wildlife officer and one thing that

really stood out – was Don’s dedication to his job. David remembered in 1970 when Michael (Don's son) was killed by the hunter and at the time, Don was stationed in Northern Neck. He said that Don was the first officer on the scene. Following the death of Michael, Don and his family transferred to Southampton County. David said that Donald was a great brother and a great man. Their parents instilled in them an excellent work ethic – no matter what you do, always do your best. He knows that Donald lived his life that way. (Of note, so did David – David retired in June of 2021 after being a teacher and high school football coach for 50 years. David Gentry was North Carolina’s all-time winningest football coach, with 426 career wins, a 9 time state champion and was named a National Coach of the Year.)

Retired Virginia Game Warden/Conservation Police Officer Kenny Skinner remembers working with Don Gentry during the summer of 1972 when he was a rookie officer and stationed in Surry County. Kenny said that he would drive down and ride with Don on boat patrols on the Nottaway and Blackwater Rivers and really enjoyed the time out on the water with him. Kenny said that Don called him his “Little Buddy”. Kenny was also part of the ground crew on that fateful night of December 19, 1972. He stayed up all night and through the next morning searching for the plane until it was found.

Don’s oldest daughter, Janet, said that her Dad was fairly strict with us kids, because he took his job as Dad very seriously and because he loved his family dearly. She said her Dad loved the outdoors and that they often went on camping trips with friends and family. Janet said that it was her Dad’s love for the outdoors that Dad loved being a Game Warden. He took his job seriously and he upheld the law no matter who you were. She remembered that her Dad worked long hours and he worked hard but he loved every

minute of it. Janet said that the values her Dad upheld stayed with her throughout her life and she attributes her tenacity to work hard from the things her Dad taught each of the children.



Don’s daughter, Linda Carol, said that the real memory of her Dad that she truly values today are the ideals he instilled in her concerning the importance of honesty and integrity.

Don’s third daughter, Donna, said that her Dad was a great outdoorsman – he loved hunting, fishing, camping and photography. He was also a coin collector. A memory that stands out most for her is when her Dad signed her up for Girl Scouts – The Brownies - - and he would drive her to and from the meetings. One day he told me to stop throwing rocks at the car. I kept telling him that I wasn’t throwing any rocks. He would then start laughing at me and then he slid me over to him and hugged me. It took her a while to realize that he was driving the car into water standing on the side of the road which made the sound of rocks hitting the car. Donna said that was their special time, spending time together. She also remembered that after he died, she missed him so much she went to her Mom’s room to smell his pillow (old spice) and that even now smelling it makes her think of him. Donna also remembers her Dad’s dog, Prince. She related that Prince died on the same night as her Dad. Prince was around 12 years old.



Don's son Michael, and his dog Prince.

Barbara, Don's youngest daughter was only 6 when he died and she said her life changed so much and she missed him terribly, it seemed to her that she cried for weeks. Her fondest memory of her Dad was crawling up into his lap when he was in his favorite chair and resting her head on his chest while he was watching TV.



Gentry's children: Wyatt Jr., Janet, and Donna at Darden Pond

Donald Wyatt Gentry Jr. was only ten months old when his Dad died. He goes by Wyatt and said that of, course, he has no memory of his father but he has been told by relatives that his Dad was very proud to have a Jr. and made sure to call his brothers and brag to them. Wyatt was told that the first thing his Dad would do when he got home was to come in

and check on him. Wyatt said he was honored and proud to be named after him as a Jr. Wyatt said that they were both named for his Grandfather, Wyatt Henry Gentry.

Southampton game warden

D. W. Gentry dies in crash

NEWSITEMS—Southampton County game warden D. W. Gentry, 36, of Courtland and another man were killed Tuesday night when their single engine plane crashed into a large pond near here.

Accident with Gentry in the two-engine plane was pilot's son Alan C. Flippo, 24, of Virginia Beach. Flippo was listed as the pilot.

According to F. N. Satterly, information officer for the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, the last radio report from the plane came at 9:40 p.m. Tuesday. Satterly said the crash was on a routine law enforcement mission looking for illegal hunters.

The plane was reported missing after Tuesday night when it failed to return to the Portsmouth-Chesapeake Airport. Authorities were unable to locate the plane until its wreckage was sighted at 10 a.m. Wednesday by the Southampton County sheriff's department and members of the state game warden commission.

According to Civil Air Patrol Capt. Joseph Sasser, Flippo, pilot's son, was from the C.A.P. in Portsmouth and a lieutenant from the State Police took part in the search. Ken Zelenewski, accident prevention counselor for the Federal Aviation Administration who investigated the crash, said the plane's engine apparently stopped in flight and the plane stalled in a firm bend of the tree along a firm bank on the south side of the property about a mile from Newsoms.

The plane split open, dumping Flippo on the bank, but another tree on the pond's edge, burst into flames and came to rest in about a foot of water.

Gentry's body was found inside the burned out wreckage.

An on-site observer said the plane crash drew just 50 yards from a large field where it might have been able to land safely.

The dead man's remains were taken to the Southampton Memorial Hospital morgue.

Christmas mail heavy

Franklin postmaster Hudson Lambford could give no figures on the end-of-the-year Christmas mail load in the city but compared it as "about the same" to last year.

Lambford reported Monday, Dec. 8, it was the peak day so far for mail coming into and going out of Franklin.

"At first it looked like we weren't going to have so much mail this year," Lambford said, "but things picked up the last couple weeks."

Lambford credited postal customers for making the post office's job much easier in the final part of the year.

"We estimate 85% of the mail is sent following the guidelines," Lambford noted. "At least 95% of the people use zip codes. That's how we process cards and packages much faster."

Rawls library

COURTLAND—The W. C. Rawls Library at Courtland, will be closed Dec. 22, 23, and 24 for Christmas, and Jan. 1 to 31 other days the library and its bookmobile will operate at their regular schedule.

Rawls library

FAA accident prevention counselor Ken Zelenewski of Norfolk probes the wreckage of the Gentry craft on the Ralph L. Porter farm near Newsoms.

Following Don's death, his wife, Lorie, became a single Mom. She never remarried and died on May 6, 2008. She is buried next to Donald in Meadowbrook Church Cemetery in Hot Springs, NC.



The Walleye of a Lifetime

By Rick Perry

This last Thursday, March 3, I caught the fish of a lifetime in the New River. I had always wanted to catch a walleye, but didn't really want to go to Canada to catch one. Last September I was working with CPO Wes Billings when he advised me that we have trophy walleyes here in Virginia, in the New River. I set up a trip with a guide for during the spawning run. I was really looking forward to it and my friend, Greg Sanders came with me. We met the guide in the morning and launched on the river. Greg had me skunked by catching the first two walleyes, nice keeper fish. I finally caught a small walleye and released it. We took a needed break and had a really nice lunch provided by our guide and then headed downriver for a float. The river and scenery were really beautiful and running the rapids was a fun treat.

It was a very nice day and warm so I switched my chest waders and float coat for hip waders and my suspender personal flotation device. Our guide had us switching baits regularly to find what looked good for walleye. We had about another hour to fish and I was casting a jerk bait when it happened.

My bait was almost to the boat when the water exploded and the walleye came from below. We got to see all of her as she hit the lure and came up. She soaked the boat as she turned and dove down headed upriver, making the drag scream. I played her for several minutes until she stopped, and I thought I was hung up, maybe she was under a log. After another minute or so I could feel her bump the line and then she started heading up. She broke the surface and dove

down one more time, taking out drag, and then it was over. The guide netted her, and you have never heard such yelling and screaming. The guide was extremely careful with the fish by keeping her in the water and out just long enough for measuring and photos.



He made sure she was in clean water with water running through her gills and rested before he released her, and she swam off strongly. She was just full of eggs. Her length was just over 28". He estimated she was 10 or 11 pounds and said it was the largest walleye he had ever caught with his guide service.

What a day on the New River. All I wanted to do was catch my first walleye—I didn't realize I would catch the walleye of a lifetime!

[Editor's Note: If you've had an outdoor experience you'd like to share with us, please send your story, and pictures, to rich.landiers@dwr.virginia.gov]

Region Christmas Luncheons 2022 (SAVE THE DATE)



We are resuming this DWR holiday tradition in December, and tentative dates are being set! Please contact your Region office in the fall to see if dates have finalized.

Region 1: Thursday, December 15, 2022

Location: New Kent Forestry Center

Address: 11301 Pocahontas Trail, Providence, VA

Contact: Please RSVP at 804-829-6580

Region 2: Wednesday, December 14, 2022 (12:00)

Location: Forest Recreation Center

Address: 1088 Rustic Village Road, Forest, VA

Contact: Janet Richardson – 434-525-7522

NOTE: Please call Janet to attend

Region 3: Thursday, December 8, 2022

Location: TBD

Address: TBD

Contact: Contact Region Admin for details, 276-783-4860

Region 4: Wednesday, December 7, 2022 (12:00)

Location: DWR Region 4 Office

Address: 517 Lee Highway, Verona, VA

Contact: Please RSVP – 540-248-9360

Officer and Law Enforcement Staff Recognition

The Virginia Conservation Police (VCP) Recognition and Engagement Program recognizes Officers and Law Enforcement Staff for their state public service and strides to acknowledge their outstanding contributions to the mission and goals of the Department of Wildlife Resources and to the citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is our belief we must utilize employee engagement to enhance our public service delivery system and overall professionalism. This year's honorees are:



Virginia CPO of the Year Officer First Class Tim Bostic

Region 1 CPO of the Year OFC Amanda Nevel
Region 2 CPO of the Year MO Brandon Harris
Region 3 CPO of the Year MO Jason Harris
Special Ops / K-9 Unit CPO of the Year SGT. Wes Billings



Virginia Boating Officer of the Year Officer First Class Shane Wilson

Region 1 Boating Officer of the Year SO Joe Rollings
Region 3 Boating Officer of the Year MO Gene Wirt
Region 4 Boating Officer of the Year SGT. Alan Hatmaker

Communications Officer of the Year Debbie Wilmoth



O.P.S. Professionalism Decree MO Michael Entsminger
O.P.S. Professionalism Decree MO Neil T. Kester



Colonel's Leadership Award SGT. Frank M. Spuchesi



Lifesaving Medal (3/6/2021) OFC Jacob Chaffin
Lifesaving Medal (4/1/2021) MO Brandon Harris
Lifesaving Medal (4/1/2021) OFC Kevin Webb

Law Enforcement Retirees in the last year



Wayne Bilhimer (13 Years)



Troy Phillips (23 Years)



Andrew Howald (12 Years)



Daniel Ross (18 Years)

Game Warden Retiree Annual Reunion Continues in 2022

Hello Fellow Warden:

I would like to invite you to come and participate in our annual Game Warden Reunion. This invitation includes retired Game Wardens and those that worked as Game Wardens and then went on to other careers. Please bring your spouse or significant other. Enjoy camaraderie, fellowship, war stories and a great meal!

We have a covered picnic pavilion, with kitchen and bathroom, to provide shelter. It will be held on **Saturday, June 11, 2022**. Put the date on your calendar or tell someone that has a better memory than you! We will plan to eat at 1:00 pm. Come earlier if you can. If you can bring a covered dish, desert or beverages it would great. If you can let me know what you're bringing and I'll keep a list and make sure we have everything covered.

Please bring any old photos or Department memorabilia that you would like to share. It will be held at 1439 Oakwood Knolls Dr, Bedford, VA. Please RSVP by June 3, but if you don't know until the last minute come anyway.

Don't miss it. We have a great time!!!

Sincerely,

Michael Ashworth
Bedford, VA 24523
540-330-9957
Mikeashworth52@gmail.com

Directions: From Rt. 460 at Bedford take 122 South exit. Go 1.5 miles and turn right on Oakwood Knolls Dr (Rt. 910). Go ½ mile and turn in driveway on your right at 1439 Oakwood Knolls. I'll post a Department sign at our driveway.



Photo of Game Warden/CPO Reunion 2021

Special thanks to Mike Ashworth!!



Retiree Firearms Qualification / Regional Dates



Region 1: October 5, 2022 at 2:30 p.m.

Location: Surry Nuclear Power Plant Firearms Range, 5570 Hog Island Road, Surry VA. Address will get you to the main gate. follow the road in and the range will be on the access road to the left just before you cross the bridge for the discharge channel. Allow time to get through the security check at the main gate. I will provide the guards a roster of registered shooters that RSVP by calling, texting or emailing Officer Roy Morris, (804) 291-8470, roy.morris@dwr.virginia.gov We will provide targets, retiree's will need to bring their firearm, 50 rounds of ammunition, a holster, ear and eye protection.

Region 2: June 15, 2022 at 9:00 a.m.

Location: Norfolk and Southern Railway Range: 50 30th Street, NW, Roanoke, VA. For more information, contact: Master Officer Joe Williams, (540) 488-0062, joseph.williams@dwr.virginia.gov



Region 3: August 18, 2022 at 12:00 p.m.

Location: Marion Police Department Range. For more information, contact: Master Officer George Shupe, (276) 733-1451, george.shupe@dwr.virginia.gov

Region 4: September 22, 2022 at 1:00 p.m.

Location: Shenandoah County Landfill Firearms Range at 349 Landfill Road, Edinburg, VA. Please RSVP; by calling, texting or emailing Officer Steve Hicks, (540) 295-3075, steven.hicks@dwr.virginia.gov



Virginia Conservation Police Association

*The VCPA Board thanks you for your service
and welcomes you to join us!*

The Virginia Conservation Police Association (VCPA) has served active Conservation Police Officers with the mission of serving people and wildlife since 1981. The VCPA has found opportunities to improve compensation, retirement, benefits, and training for all of its members for the last 40 years! We find opportunities to give back to its members and other related outreach organizations each year by donating thousands of dollars to support programs developed and coordinated by our members. Some of the VCPA's most prominent achievements include:

- Full Police Powers
- Officer of the Year Monetary Award
 - Police Officer Bill Rights
 - Retirement Badge
- Title Change (From GW to CPO)
 - 40-hour workweek
- Enhanced Legislative Recognition/Support

(Resulted in defeating several bills that would have impacted the membership)

It is important to note that the VCPA is constantly seeking and fulfilling opportunities to support its membership and give Conservation Police Officers a leg up. As with any successful organization, it all starts with the dedication and commitment of its membership. As of March 2022, the VCPA has adopted new By-Laws to open membership to all retired officers. Retirees with prior VCPA membership for 5 years are welcome to join free of charge. Retirees without 5 years prior VCPA membership are welcome to join for half price membership fee. Membership includes access to the VCPA Emergency Relief Fund to aid those in a time of need, fellowship at all VCPA functions, flowers to families in time of loss, and more. The VCPA welcomes all former Game Wardens and Conservation Police Officers to join us. For those interested in joining please email vaconservationpoliceassn@gmail.com. Please note our annual meeting is scheduled for June 8, 2022 at Smith Mountain Lake State Park. We hope to see you there.

VCPA Executive Board

President- Dallas Neel

1st Vice-President - Dale Owens

2nd Vice-President – Shane Wilson

Treasurer - Jaime Slaughter

Secretary - Amanda Nevel



The Virginia Conservation Police Association



Serving People and Wildlife

Membership Application

Name: _____

Address _____

PERSONAL EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Telephone # _____ **D.O.B.** _____

Date of employment as a VA Conservation Police Officer: _____

Next of Kin _____ **Membership is open to all CPO's**

Telephone # _____

Address: _____

(Dues: \$40 / year or \$1.67 semi monthly)

Mail to: VCPA - P.O. Box 2126 Forest, VA 24551-9998

Virginia Conservation Police Association Inc.

I, _____, hereby authorize the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources to deduct \$1.67, from my pay semi-monthly to pay for Virginia Conservation Police Association dues effective immediately.

(Signature)

(Date)

(Employee ID Number)



IN MEMORIAM - Recent Fallen Retirees



Retired Game Warden Captain Don Hinchey passed away on July 23, 2021. Captain Hinchey served the department for over 38 years in Region 3 (Southwest), beginning his tour of duty on October 4, 1968 until retiring on December 31, 2006. He was 79 years old at the time of his passing. He was born in Abingdon, Virginia on July 17, 1942. He was a United States Air Force veteran prior to becoming a game warden. A graveside service was held on July 28, 2021, at Knollkreg Memorial Park with the Rev. Jerry A. Eggers officiating. Military honors were provided by the United States Air Force and the Highlands Veterans Honor Guard. Don is survived by his wife of 47 years, Terri Hinchey; daughter, Kimberly Galloway; grandson, Rodney Noland and long-term girlfriend, Jessica Jacobsen; grandson, Nicholas Noland and wife, Lauren Noland; and his brother, Charles Hinchey. We are eternally grateful to Don and his family for his service to our country and to DWR.

Retired Game Warden John Edward Selfe, Jr. passed away on May 17, 2021. He was born June 29, 1951 in Abingdon, Virginia. Ed was very highly regarded by everyone who worked with him at DGIF. Survivors include his wife, Lori Selfe; sons, Andy and Ruthie Selfe of Marion, VA; John Selfe, III and fiancée Robyn Bozik of Louisa, VA; grandchildren, Jayden Selfe, Logan Selfe, Landon Selfe and Taylor Selfe; a sister, Rebecca and Dale Collins of Wythe County; brothers, Kenneth and Karen Selfe of Bedford, Don Selfe of Christiansburg, Allen and Chrissy Selfe of Catawba, NC and Greg Selfe of Wytheville. He was 69 years old at the time of his passing. Ed began his tour of duty on May 7, 1979 and retired on April 1, 2002. From everyone at DWR, we are sincerely grateful for Ed's 23 years of service with the department.



I was sitting at a remote pullout on a dirt road known as Mutton Hollow, waiting for a trout stocking truck, when I got the news. In this job, we are accustomed to receiving news that is shocking, unexpected, and sad. But hearing that Debbie had suddenly passed was a gut punch, especially given the breathtaking autumn scenery surrounding me. There aren't too many people who have made such an overwhelming impact on day-to-day work efficiency at DWR. Debbie was always there for all of us when we ran into an accounting obstacle, and she will be dearly missed.

In Memory of the Virginia Conservation Police Officers who made the Ultimate Sacrifice

Charles F. Headley	February 8, 1924
Joseph J. Powell	December 16, 1924
Frank H. Gilliam	April 28, 1929
Harvey M. Carter	September 2, 1930
John L. Cox	June 28, 1931
John F. Shank	March 21, 1932
Frank M. Tompkins	November 1, 1934
Cecil B. Bays	November 27, 1952
Francis E. Lindsay	March 10, 1960
Allen C. Flippo	December 19, 1972
Donald W. Gentry	December 19, 1972

SAVE THE DATE

Flippo-Gentry WMA Dedication Ceremony

October 20, 2022 (Rain Date: October 21)

Located off Summerfield Rd and Beaver Dam Rd in Sussex County

For additional info and to RSVP, call Rick Perry (804) 912-3609

Call For Submissions

We encourage anyone with a desire to contribute to the newsletter to contact us. If you would like to share a story of interest in the next retiree newsletter please email us at rich.landiers@dwr.virginia.gov.



Any suggestions for improving this Retiree Newsletter can be sent to:

Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources
Law Enforcement Division
Office of Professional Standards
7870 Villa Park Drive, Henrico, VA 23228
rich.landiers@dwr.virginia.gov