

Virginia Conservation Police **2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

*Award Winning Article:
A Few Good Women*



PHOTO BY ERIC EICHENMULLER



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Law Enforcement Division
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CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

The CPO Badge

The badge of the Virginia Conservation Police Officer represents those who have dedicated their lives to the protection of Virginia's wildlife and natural resources, as well as promoting a safe environment for anglers, hunters, boaters and other outdoor enthusiasts. To earn it requires comprehensive training and highly specialized skills, along with a passion for the outdoors and its wildlife.

Conservation Police Officers are fully certified sworn officers through the Department of Criminal Justice Services, with the authority to enforce all of the laws of Virginia. However, due to the unique nature of this law enforcement profession, those who wear it are unlike any other police officer.

Each Conservation Police Officer (CPO) has to perform their public service duties while taking on many different roles. These range from educator and ambassador to outdoor enthusiast; from evidence technician to boat collision reconstructionist; and from crime analyst to wildlife crime detective responsible for managing informants. CPOs also provide public safety and emergency response, sometimes during severe weather conditions, requiring that they put their lives on the line to rescue others.

Their workplace is geographically vast and diverse with modes of transportation that range from four-wheel drive vehicles to various types of boats. When comparing the duties of a CPO to those of a general police officer, one must keep in mind that the difference between these positions becomes the most evident where the pavement ends and fields and forests begin. CPOs frequently conduct foot patrols in remote areas, usually without back up and often under the cover of darkness. In these types of stressful situations, CPOs have an ability to use little more than their communication skills to shield them from wrongdoers as the "Protectors of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources".

As per a portion of the Conservation Police Officer's Code of Ethics, we must:

"...maintain calm in the face of danger, scorn or ridicule; demonstrate self-restraint; and be constantly mindful of the welfare of others..."

Message from the Director

The past year has seen many challenges for all of us due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I'm proud to be associated with a group of law enforcement officers who rose to the occasion to help keep our woods and waters safe destinations for all of the public during some of the highest-use periods that we have ever experienced. We hope that this uptick in public exposure to the outdoors continues for the good of support of our resources and for the well-being of all Virginians. Take the time this year to introduce someone new, and when you do so, also make sure that you take the time to show them how to be safe while they are out experiencing Virginia's wild spaces.



Know that our Conservation Police Officers (CPOs) stand ready to assist should it be necessary when you're recreating outdoors. Much like their name connotes what they do—assisting with critical conservation efforts while protecting the public—our agency's still-new name is reflective of our mission to conserve wildlife across the Commonwealth, connect people with outdoor experiences, and protect our resources and provide safe outdoor opportunities. Looking across the agency's programs, there's something for everyone; whether you are new to the scene or a longtime constituent, I encourage you to give yourself a new experience that you haven't tried before this upcoming year. I personally find that no matter how much time you spend outdoors, there's always something new to learn.

Our Law Enforcement Division has stepped up as a leader within our agency—whether it is progress toward DJCS accreditation, leadership development for our staff, or organization of an upcoming Academy that will add to our ranks. The women and men serving as CPOs make our agency proud each and every day. This report provides just a brief glimpse into the good work that they do and the service that they provide to our natural resources and citizens.

Ryan Brown

Executive Director



Message from the Colonel

Without a doubt, 2020 was a year like no other! As usual, VCP Officers and LE Staff met the challenges and exceeded expectations in a very difficult environment. We continue to pursue and plan to implement important initiatives in 2021 to include a VCP Career Progression Program (CPP), Leadership Development Continuum (LDC), 11th Basic Academy and VLEPSC Accreditation.

As I assumed the duties and responsibilities of the Chief of Law Enforcement on November 10, 2020, I certainly knew our greatest asset was our CPOs and LE Staff. Having implemented the Office of Professional Standards, I had constantly seen the commendations that came through our Citizen Feedback System and knew we were very fortunate to have members of the Law Enforcement Division that are extremely talented, dedicated and passionate with their role as “Protectors of Wildlife”. It is evident within the pages of this Annual Report that their work effort makes an outstanding contribution towards this wildlife law enforcement profession.



My vision for us includes three main elements that we will continue to focus on as we move forward, which are Quality Public Service, Employer of Choice, and Pursuit of Excellence. It will be my honor and privilege to lead our Law Enforcement Division into the future. I am grateful to have our officers and staff input to help us develop a VCP Roadmap in 2021 that will set our direction for the next few years. While we are in a transformational phase with historically low staffing levels, I am confident that we will develop ourselves to be even more successful in our chosen profession and that we will be looked on by others as an example of excellence.

I know we will continue to promote a safe outdoor environment for our constituents. Additionally, I believe we will find new ways to show others the value of wildlife, which will grow our constituent base, like nature, to be more diverse. We have an obligation to guide others to know for themselves our incredible experience with wildlife resources and the great outdoors.



Colonel John J. Cobb

Chief of Law Enforcement

Contents

The CPO Badge i

Message from the Director ii

Message from the Colonel iii

1.0 Mission Summary 1

2.0 Administrative 2

 2.1 Staffing 2

 2.2 Years of Service (2020) 2

 2.3 Budget 3

 2.4 FEMA Port Security Grants 4

3.0 Office of Professional Standards 5

 3.1 Recruitment 10

 3.2 Training 10

4.0 Law Support Services 13

 4.1 Communication Center: 2020 13

 4.2 Records Program 14

 4.2.1 Wildlife and Boat Revocations 18

 4.3 Fleet and Asset Management 19

5.0 Specialty Teams 21

 5.1 K9 Team 21

 5.2 Marine Theft and Fraud 24

 5.3 Tracking Team 26

 5.4 Honor Guard 26

6.0 Officer Outreach 27

7.0 Recognition and Awards 28

 7.1 Officer of the Year 28

 7.2 Boating Officer of the Year (NASBLA) 29

 7.3 Guy Bradley Award 30

 7.4 Other Awards 32

8.0 Retirees (2020) 35

In Memoriam - Recently Fallen RETIREES 36

Historical Badges and Patches 38

Bonus Article 40

Listing of Tables and Figures

Table 1: Law Enforcement Staffing from 2016 to 2020 2

Figure 1: Years of Service Distribution 2

Table 2: L E Personnel Years of Service Milestones (2020) 3

Table 3: Budget 3

Table 4: Dispatch Summary From 2016 to 2020 14

Table 5: Records Management System Summary from 2016 - 2020 . . . 15

Table 6: Non-Offense Case types in 2020 15

Table 7: Arrest Charge by Minor Category from 2016-2020 16

Figure 2: Arrest Charge by Major Category from 2016-2020 16

Table 8: Top 10 Arrest Charges Issued in 2020 by Conservation Police . 17

Table 9: Revocations entered into the Database from 2016 to 2020 . . . 18

Table 10: Summary for K-9 Activity from 2016 to 2020 23

Table 11: Case Types from Boat Fraud Team 25



1.0 Mission Summary

Virginia Conservation Police Officers operate within the Law Enforcement Division of the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR). The mission of the Law Enforcement Division is to preserve law and order; to enforce applicable criminal and regulatory laws in a fair and impartial manner; to provide education and outreach in an effort to gain voluntary compliance with and promote public understanding and support of the Commonwealth’s wildlife, fish and boat laws and regulations; to work in concert with other Agency divisions in accomplishing the Agency’s mission; to provide responsive, coordinated services to the citizens of the Commonwealth in a professional, efficient



manner.

Conservation Police Officers focus their patrol efforts on enforcing the wildlife, fishing, and boating laws and regulations of Virginia. They utilize specialized law enforcement techniques and equipment to promote compliance, address criminal activity, and preserve public safety. Because of their knowledge and professionalism, officers are often called upon to assist other state and local agencies with various enforcement endeavors. Whether instructing a Hunter Education class, tracking a violent offender through remote terrain, or providing law enforcement services in the wake of a natural disaster, Conservation Police Officers are dedicated to serving the citizens of the Commonwealth.

The protection of Virginia’s vast natural resources is a great undertaking. The Commonwealth is comprised of 95 counties, 38 independent cities, and a total area of 39,490



square miles. In 2020, Virginia was home to an estimated 8,631,393 citizens. From the Coastal shores, to the rolling hills of the Piedmont region, to the peaks of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Virginia’s topography is as diverse as its population. There are 371 rivers or creeks and 27 major lakes to explore. DWR also owns or manages 230 boat ramps to provide users with access to public waters. For the trout angler, Virginia contains over 3,500 miles of trout streams which includes over 2,900 miles of wild trout waters. Hunting and outdoors enthusiasts can recreate on the over 1.6 million acres of National Forest land found in Virginia. Additionally, there are 24 State Forests totaling over 68,626 acres managed by the Virginia Department of Forestry and 46 Wildlife Management Areas totaling over 203,000 acres managed by the DWR.



2.0 Administrative

2.1 Staffing

At the close of 2020, the Law Enforcement Division had 146 Conservation Police Officers including 113 non-supervisory field officers, 21 Sergeants, 6 Lieutenants, 3 Captains and 2 Majors and 1 Colonel. All were fully certified officers through the Department of Criminal Justice Services, with the authority to enforce all of the laws of Virginia. As Deputy US Fish and Wildlife Special Agents, they may conduct investigations and cross state lines when violations of federal wildlife laws have been committed. The Law Enforcement Division is also supported by 21 full-time and 6 part-time civilian positions which include dispatchers, administrative assistants, asset managers, records, and IT staff. **Table 1** looks at the number of full-time sworn and support staff over the past five years.

Table 1: Law Enforcement Staffing from 2016 to 2020

DESCRIPTION	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
CPO (Recruit and non-supervisory)	133	122	130	121	113
SERGEANT	24	17	26	22	21
LIEUTENANT	3	5	5	6	6
CAPTAIN	4	6	6	6	3
MAJOR/LT. COLONEL/COLONEL	2	2	2	2	3
SWORN SUBTOTAL	166	152	169	157	146
DISPATCH	8	8	9	9	12
ADMIN/OFFICE - FULL TIME	8	8	7	7	8
PART-TIME	3	3	3	4	6
IT SUPPORT	1	1	1	1	1
SUPPORT SUBTOTAL	20	20	20	21	27
TOTAL SWORN/SUPPORT (FULL-TIME)	186	172	189	178	173

2.2 Years of Service (2020)

At the end of 2020, the Law Enforcement Division had 167 full-time and six part-time employees. Figure 2 shows a five-year incremental breakdown of how long these employees have been with DWR.

Figure 1: Years of Service Distribution

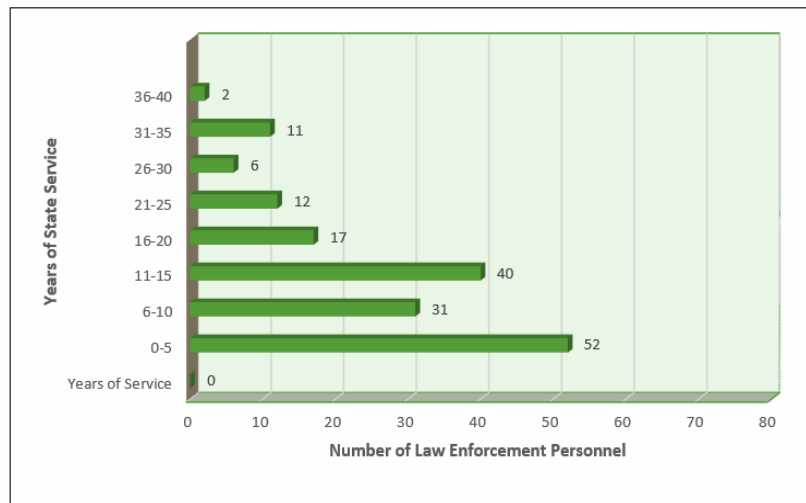


Table 2 lists the names of the Law Enforcement personnel that have reached years of service milestones in 2020.

Table 2: Law Enforcement Personnel Years of Service Milestones (2020)

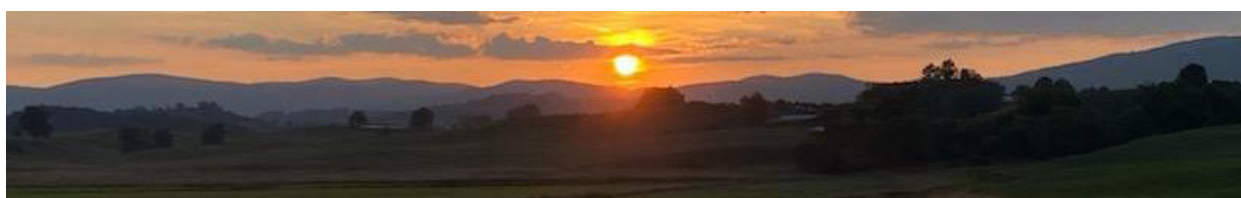
5 YEARS	15 YEARS	25 YEARS	30 YEARS
Nicole Gresham Admin	Tameeka Baugh Dispatcher	COL John Cobb	SGT Joseph Valasek
CPO Joshua Joyce	CPO Isaac Boulanger	CPO Mark DiLuigi	
CPO Joshua Guizar	LT Robert Ham	CPO Donald Wirt	
Gary Sargent Fleet Management	Denise Harrison Admin		
	CPO Steven Hicks		
	CPO Richard Howald		
	CPO Joseph Morris		
	CPO Michael Morris		
	Lt Travis Murray		
	CPO Mark Sanitra		
	LT Ryan Shuler		
	SGT James Slaughter		
	SGT Ken Williams		

2.3 Budget

For most of this annual report, discussions revolve around calendar year reporting, which is not the case with budgets. State budgets operate on a fiscal year schedule from July 1 to June 30. The following lists an overview of the Law Enforcement Division’s budget for the past three fiscal years - FY21 (July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021), FY20 (July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020), and FY19 (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019).

Table 3: Budget

Law Enforcement Budget	FY19	FY20	FY21
Personnel Costs	\$16,239,511	\$16,195,852	\$16,574,540
Non-personnel Costs	\$3,844,072	\$3,948,906	\$3,659,611
<i>Operations</i>	<i>\$3,343,808</i>	<i>\$3,582,082</i>	<i>\$3,068,018</i>
<i>Holiday & Overtime</i>	<i>\$500,264</i>	<i>\$366,824</i>	<i>\$591,593</i>
Total	\$20,083,583	\$20,144,758	\$20,234,151



2.4 FEMA Port Security Grants

In 2020, the law enforcement division submitted a FEMA Port Security Grant application for three projects that totaled \$500,000. The first project was for a 27' SAFE boat that would be assigned to the Middle Peninsula and help to support our public safety mission, while also assisting our other local, state and federal first responder partners that work within the maritime domain. The second project was for seven dual payload vessel mounted FLIR cameras that will replace aging FLIR cameras on some of the current agency SAFE boats. The third project was for training funds that could be used to host two NASBLA Tactical Operations Courses, two NASBLA Boat Crewmember Courses and Two NASBLA Pursuit and Stop courses. As an active member of the Port of Virginia Maritime Incident Response Team, we will sponsor these courses, provide most of the expert trainers and will open them up to our partner agencies. We were fortunate to receive funding for all three of these projects and the procurement process is underway. On February 25th, the 2021 FEMA Port Security Grant Notification of Funding was announced and we are already in the process of preparing the required documentation to seek \$250,000 worth of federal funding for three new projects aimed at equipment sustainability.



3.0 Office of Professional Standards

The mission of the Office of Professional Standards (O.P.S.) is to utilize the best law enforcement practices, combined with risk management principles, in order to provide the highest level of quality service and public trust. To assist in this endeavor, the primary purpose of the O.P.S. Advisory Council is to promote and set the example in terms of our Professional Standards CREED within the Law Enforcement Division of the Department of Wildlife Resources.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS CREED

Virginia Conservation Police (VCP) have a two-part creed regarding professional standards. Conservation Police Officers (CPOs) and law enforcement staff in our agency are expected to perform their public service with ethical core values. Furthermore, management and supervision are obligated to utilize best practices as their professional benchmark.

CORE VALUES = Ethical Behavior and Code of Conduct:

- I. Act with integrity*
- II. Render a high standard of public service*
- III. Perform in a way that promotes trust in our profession*
- IV. Treat others impartially with dignity and respect*
- V. Take responsibility for one's actions*

PROFESSIONAL CRITERIA = Best Practices Management Model:

- I. Create an inclusive, diverse and cohesive team environment to fulfill our agency mission*
- II. Provide both the strategic direction and the necessary tools to be successful*
- III. Follow accepted standards to measure our public service delivery system*
- IV. Employ proactive and collaborative efforts to enhance effectiveness and reduce risk*
- V. Communicate and implement change in a positive and constructive manner*

The O.P.S. Advisory Council consists of a fifteen-member team, which provides guidance and insight over recruitment/retention, training and administrative investigations. This Council will make recommendations to senior leadership utilizing the best practices of successful police operations. In addition, the Council will use acceptable standards to consistently measure our public service delivery system, and oversee a collaborative effort to address effectiveness issues and liability concerns, which require corrective action using agency staff and resources.

In 2020, council members included Tyler Blanks, Owen Bullard, John J. Cobb, Jason Culbertson, Greg Funkhouser, James H. Hale, Robert O. Ham, III, Randy Hickman, Rich Landers, Travis Murray, Tyler G. Sheets, Ryan M. Shuler, Jamie Slaughter, Joshua Thomas and Ronnie Warren.

“There are obligations to treat staff fairly and to be seen as an employer of choice, thus the highest standards must be applied to internal processes as well.”

Directorate of Professional Standards, London's Metropolitan Police Service

O.P.S. ADVISORY COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

- Serve as advisors and advocates for professional standards initiatives, including quality public service enhancements, to senior law enforcement leadership
- Monitor and evaluate the quality of public service and the effectiveness of strategies implemented to raise professional standards within the Law Enforcement Division
- Establish working relationships with other well-respected law enforcement agencies; Research and stay up-to-date on new law enforcement trends and case law
- Market and showcase the uniqueness of our law enforcement profession to include maintaining a Professional Standards Website for our constituents and the public
- Seek-out constructive citizen and staff feedback in order to identify deficiencies and discover new methods to reduce liability and enhance law enforcement operations
- Accept nominations from the field and approve their recommendations to formally honor Constituent Supporters with a numbered O.P.S. Protector Challenge Coin
- Facilitate and ensure the continuous and effective implementation of the Law Enforcement Employee Suggestion Program as well as maintaining those databases
- Accept nominations and make selections for the Professionalism Decree (CPO / Law Enforcement Staff Annual Recognitions) to include the award presentation.

Go to our Professional Standards Webpage at:
[**dwr.virginia.gov/ops**](http://dwr.virginia.gov/ops)

Citizen Feedback System

A centralized Citizen Feedback System and workflow went operational on May 25, 2018 in conjunction with the official launch of the Office of Professional Standards (O.P.S.) website: dwr.virginia.gov/ops. This system was established within the Law Enforcement Division to collect, track and respond to all types of citizen feedback in the interest of quality public service. Officers and Staff were provided with both large and small informational printed cards to be given out to the public to obtain their feedback. Standard Operating Procedures (SOP’s) were initiated for handling feedback appropriately, by various positions.

In reference to Officer Commendations, the feedback system has allowed us to significantly increase the collection of positive interactions from the public’s perspective with our officers and staff. In fact, from the beginning of this new system to the end of the first year (2018), we had a 286% increase in commendations. These records are now kept and maintained by O.P.S.

In Calendar Year 2020:

- Recorded **142** Total Citizen Feedbacks
- Maintained a **4 to 1 ratio** of Officer Commendations to Officer Complaints

Officer Commendations:

- **112** total (59 of them through the website – just about 1/2)
 - Region I – 27
 - Region II – 36
 - Region III – 8
 - Region IV – 25
 - Special Ops – 10
 - HQ - 6

Officer Complaints:

- **30** total (10 of them through the website - 1/3)
- Driving related complaints were the most common (8 total)
- **7** complaints were received after a summons was issued and 6 were for criminal investigation harassment
- Region I - **5**; Region II - **8**; Region III - **3**; Region IV - **11**; and Special Ops / HQ's - **3**

Final Dispositions:

- **16** No Further Action
- **9** Verbal Counseling
- **2** Written Counseling
- **0** Unsubstantiated
- **3** Substantiated

Employee Suggestion Program (E.S.P.)

The purpose of the Employee Suggestion Program is to utilize that segment of the Professional Standards Creed, which deals specifically with “management best practices”. In particular, going into the “*inclusive, diverse and cohesive team environment*” in order to “*employ proactive and collaborative efforts to enhance effectiveness and reduce risk*”. This is accomplished by focusing attention and building functional workgroups on issues that would often benefit the frontlines. More importantly, it is using field level CPOs and Law Enforcement Staff with their knowledge, creativity, and innovation to make improvements within the entire division.

All employees of the DWR Law Enforcement Division are given the opportunity to submit constructive suggestions to the O.P.S. Advisory Council. This council will facilitate employee feedback in one of two ways. If it is an O.P.S. Project that is currently underway in the council’s completion tracker database, the employee should reach out directly to either the designated project leader or one of its team members with feedback and/or suggestions. If the suggestion is already listed as a “Potential” E.S.P. Project or if the employee believes it should be added to that list, the employee may complete an “Employee Suggestion Form” and submit it directly to the O.P.S. Advisory Council at this dedicated mailbox LawESP@dwr.virginia.gov. This council will review employee suggestions on a quarterly basis.

When the interest of senior leadership and the necessary resources both exist to move a proposed project from a potential to active status, those that made the suggestion will be

contacted and a team will be created to work on the new project towards an implementation target date set by the O.P.S. Advisory Council.

From inception to 12/31/2020:

- **35** Projects and work teams created, which has led to the completion of **29** projects, using group creativity and innovation to build upon those employee initiatives
- **Total of 5** Completed Project Titles **in 2020** included: Peer Support Team, VCP Recognition and Engagement Handbook, CPO Hot Sheets, VCP Outside Government Agencies Marketing, Leadership Development Program, Hiring Process Review & Recommendations Report

Peer Support Program

In 2020, as the world struggled through the COVID-19 Pandemic, Peer Support team members were available for their co-workers as we all learned to cope with the unique stress that the pandemic forced upon all of our daily lives. In addition to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Law Enforcement Nationwide faced challenges of negative media attention, defund the police movements, and increased public scrutiny. The conglomeration of the pandemic, public scrutiny, daily stressors, and the innate stress of law enforcement undoubtedly had an impact on Law Enforcement Officers and the division’s peer support team was there to walk alongside our division staff as we traverse these challenges.

The Peer Team welcomed two new members and celebrated the retirement of Senior Officer Lee Wensel. In 2021, the team plans to train 5 new peers.

The certified team currently consists of the following members:

- Region I: Sarah Druy and Cameron Dobyys
- Region III: Eric Rorabaugh
- Region IV: Tim Bostic and Derrick Kekic
- HQ: Rob Ham, Mike Hill, and Kevin Leonard
- Mental Health Clinician: Dawn Linton, LCSW/Chaplin

To make contact with a peer team member, you may contact any team member directly or contact Rob Ham for assistance or referrals.

Accreditation Self-Assessment Phase

A Continuous Pursuit of Excellence

The Law Enforcement Division of the Department of Wildlife Resources continued its pursuit of excellence in 2020. The Accreditation team and numerous subject matter experts in the division worked to introduce approximately 90 new and revised General Orders. These general orders were designed to put together best law enforcement practices, successfully meet or

exceed VLEPSC accreditation standards, and provide division employees with clear direction. The continuous review of agency directives and practices is the purpose of accreditation. For example, the accreditation team’s Use of Force workgroup successfully prepared for compliance with Presidential Executive Order 13929 before it was even signed into law.

Additionally, the accreditation team along with the Regional Evidence Custodians and Technicians began implementing improved evidence handling practices to include barcoding evidence in the division Records Management System. VLEPSC standards for evidence and property handling were implemented and will continue to be improved into 2021.

Division staff was trained on VLEPSC standards and the importance of detailed report writing during their in-service training session. The venue was used to help Virginia Conservation Police Officers understand the importance of accreditation and their role in the success of accreditation and implementation of best practices.



The division is preparing for their on-site initial assessment in August. The agency is on track to become a VLEPSC accredited agency and stand with the other 99 law enforcement agencies in Virginia to meet this high standard.



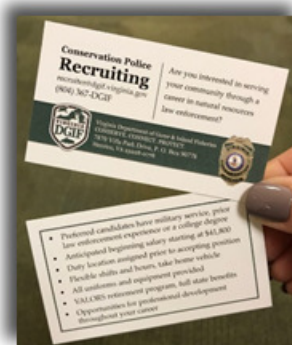
(The Commission’s goals include the following: To increase the effectiveness and efficiency of law enforcement agencies in the Commonwealth through the delivery of services; To promote cooperation among all components in the criminal justice system; To ensure the appropriate level of training for law enforcement personnel; To promote public confidence in law enforcement; and To promote the professionalism of law enforcement agencies in the Commonwealth of Virginia.)

3.1 Recruitment

The 11th Basic and Modified Training Academies are tentatively scheduled to begin in September of 2021. The Division has been actively recruiting prospective candidates to fill the 24 vacancies. The Training and Recruiting Section had to alter the way it reached out to the community due to COVID-19, and increased the use of social media and other methods. A series of videos have been shared through the DWR social media platforms that highlight the conservation police officer career. A new segment called CPO Spotlight features one of the Division’s officers each month, and shares a little about themselves and why they chose the career. These videos and segments have increased the number of calls and information requests we receive each week.



The Division’s recruiters make themselves available to speak with prospective candidates and discuss the career path, hiring process, and the training program new officers attend. These discussions often last 30 minutes or more.



3.2 Training

The Training and Recruiting section program offerings were significantly impacted by COVID-19. Many of the in-person courses were canceled or postponed due to the inability of conducting face to face sessions.

Tactical Operator Course

As Virginia’s primary marine law enforcement agency, DWR has an active training program to address the needs of our officers as well as those of our partner agencies. DWR is a National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) Accredited agency. Through this accreditation, our credentialed instructors are able to present training in several areas of boat operation and investigation. In July, The Port of Virginia and DWR presented two sessions of the NASBLA Tactical



Operator's Course to our partner law enforcement agencies in the Hampton Roads Area. These courses are 5 days in length and follow the Federal Exclusionary Zone Enforcement Training Curriculum. They are designed to enhance the country's port security capabilities by providing students with the knowledge and skills necessary to appropriately react to threats in the maritime community. DWR and NASBLA instructors taught law enforcement officers the same tactics, techniques and procedures that the U.S. Coast Guard uses to train its boat operators, ensuring seamless integration into security operations amongst federal, state, county, and local maritime law enforcement officers and agencies. Participating agencies included VA Marine Resources Commission, VA Beach Police, Norfolk Police, Chesapeake Police, and Newport News Police.

Officer Water Survival

DWR partnered with the City of Hampton Police and Fire Department's to put on the NASBLA Officer Water Survival Train the Trainer Course. This 5 day training program was conducted in accordance with the NASBLA's Boat Operations and Training Program standards, and provides a course of instruction to give the maritime law enforcement officer the skills to survive in and on the water. This course prepares the officer for the unexpected immersion into the water. A



key element of this course is the preparation of participants to become proficient in water survival skills and awareness on how to modify both duty and survival equipment to increase their chances of survival. In addition this "Train the Trainer" offering prepares the professional agency sponsored trainer the skills and knowledge to deliver the NASBLA curriculum within their agency. Participants in this five day/40 hour course participate in swimming, treading and other drills in uniform, with

body armor and a simulated duty belt. This course is physically challenging and uses free style stroke, breast stroke, side stroke and swimming under water.

Advanced Trapping Class for CPOs

In the winter of 2020, an advanced trapping class was held in Southwest Virginia to improve trapping knowledge and skills among a handful of conservation police officers. This 5 day course involved landowners, volunteers, and several CPOs who have trapping backgrounds. This course built upon knowledge gained in the Academy and provided them with a deeper understanding of trapping practices, methods, and Virginia's furbearer species. This class will be offered regularly in years to come.



DCJS Academy Recertification

DWR operates a Department of Criminal Justice Services Certified Law Enforcement Training Academy. This academy is authorized to present basic and in-service training to law enforcement officers and new hires as well as instructor certification and in-service. In March of 2020, representatives from DCJS performed a review of the curriculum and training

records to ensure compliance with established standards. Over the two day period, reviewers went through documentation related to the approximately 1400 training elements. After this review, DCJS re-certified our training academy through June, 2023.

Officer In-service

In 2020, all of our conservation police officers attended their bi-annual officer in-service training. This training covered areas including de-escalation tactics and control techniques, Diversity Equity and Inclusion, commercialization of amphibians and reptiles, and other topics. Halfway through delivering the training the Division's officers, the COVID-19 epidemic hit Virginia. This caused training to be put on hold for several months and the agenda to be adjusted to limit in-person training.

Implementation of the Boat Operation Training General Order

The Department is one of several state natural resource agencies that are NASBLA Accredited. This accreditation provides a national standard of boat operations and training curriculum. In 2020, our Division implemented General Order 04-05 Boat Operation and Training. This details the training requirements and necessary documents needed to show compliance with the program guidelines. General Order 04-05 provides a systematic approach to vessel crew and operator training in order to develop the Law Enforcement Division ready boat crews and boat operators with search and rescue and special response capabilities that are consistent with national training standards. The Boat Operations and Training (BOAT) Program, created by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA), establishes a U.S. Coast Guard and FEMA recognized national standard for the training, qualification, credentialing and typing of marine law enforcement and emergency first responders. Field officers complete a Boat Task Accomplishment Record every 6 months to document their proficiency in several areas, including general boat operation, towing assistance, search patterns, and maritime security zone enforcement.



4.0 Law Support Services

4.1 Communication Center: 2020

DWR continues to operate a 24 hour, 7 days a week Law Enforcement Communications Center. This Center provides support throughout the entire Commonwealth, not only for Conservation Police Officers and State Park Rangers, but all agency personnel as well. During 2020, the Communications Center completed several notable enhancements that greatly improved the operational effectiveness of its services. The most significant change was the elimination of all 3 part-time Dispatcher positions in exchange for 2 additional full-time Dispatchers. This decision has vastly improved the delivery of Dispatch functions and cannot be overstated. The former part-time Dispatch positions created a “revolving door” of staffing recruitment and hiring. With this change, 2020 observed the longest period of consistent and stable staffing levels in the Communications Center. We now have 10 full-time Dispatcher positions in addition to the 2 Dispatch supervisors for a total of 12 positions.



The year 2020 also brought several technology application upgrades to the center. First, DWR has partnered with Tip411 to bring “Text to 911” services for an additional method of “Crimeline” reporting to the Communication Center. The public can now simply text DWRTIP to 847411, plus their tip, and the Communication Center will route the information to the appropriate Conservation Officer or Park Ranger for follow-up. The application also has the ability of the responding officer to continue the text conversation with the tipster. As with any “Crimeline” application, the tipster may remain anonymous. Full marketing and use of Tip411 will expectantly increase in 2021.

An additional technology upgrade that was put into effect was a language line interpretation service. Propio Language Line was chosen to offer interpretation for dozens of languages and can be utilized, by not only the Dispatchers, but the field officers as well. When in need of this service, the Dispatcher calls one number, verifies their account code and then sets up a 3-way call for interpretation to begin. This application addition not only serves the needs of non-English speaking constituents, but also assists the Division with accreditation criteria.

Also, 2020 marked the completion of the 150’ radio monopole at DWR Headquarters. Radio communications are now served by microwave transmissions, which replaced the underground lines that were always susceptible to damage.

Overall, but not unexpected, Calls for Service were down 1.6% in 2020. From a high of 58,734 calls created in 2019, to 57,409 calls in 2020, this decrease can most likely be attributed to the reduced number of Conservation Officers in the field due to retirements and other factors.

Table 4: Dispatch Summary From 2016 to 2020

DESCRIPTION	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total CAD Calls for Service	37,991	44,063	48,442	58,734	57,409
Crimeline Reports	4,058	4,136	2,170	5,090	5,836
Environmental Issues/Fish Kills	67	69	205	206	185
Wildlife Nuisance/Permits/Injured related calls	6,979	6,566	5,932	6,748	5,185
CPO/Ranger Patrols	17,255	20,968	21,106	25,133	24,864
Hunt/Boat/Fish/Trapping Violation Type Calls	6,883	7,084	6,414	5,226	6,460
General / Traffic Violations	708	916	1,594	1,828	1,003
DWR Service-Related Type Calls	4,989	3,178	2,757	3,994	3,287
Hunt Incident Reports	21	17	31	34	32
Boat Accident/Sinking/Drowning Reports	135	126	100	98	79
Distress/Overdue Hunters, Fishermen or Boaters	96	98	149	223	331
Accidents Involving DWR Persons/Equipment	11	17	22	27	32
Criminal Investigations/Complaints	577	419	620	358	924
Stolen Property Reports/Investigations (Boat, other, etc.)	119	130	101	109	73
Abandoned or Recovered Boats	151	149	220	177	279

Lastly, the Communications Center, in coordination with the Office of Professional Standards, established a Dispatcher recognition program for non-supervisory Dispatchers. Each quarter, a Dispatcher is selected as the “Communications Officer of the Quarter”, recognizing them for their contributions and significant support of the center over the three month period. At the end of the year, the “Communications Officer of the Year” is selected, from among the four quarterly recipients, by an independent panel.

We hope that 2021 will bring additional positive changes and enhancements that continue to support and improve the delivery of Dispatch services to our officers and staff.

Stay tuned.

4.2 Records Program

2020 was the second complete year the Conservation Police utilized the Central Square Technologies’ Zuercher Suite (Zuercher) records management system as its sole resource for tracking crime data. This product functions on case-centric reporting. Zuercher affords the division a sophisticated tool encompassing a vast array of functions and database groups: CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch); case management, Master Name database; and GEO validation capabilities.

The Law Records Program is responsible for the Records Management System (RMS) aspects of managing the case-based data. A fundamental focus of Law Records is to support system development and maintenance while striving to ensure data accuracy and acting as a primary source for data edits. As mandated by the state of Virginia, we submit our records containing offenses to the FBI through



the Virginia State Police using a National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS). Based on these criminal records, the division makes continual contributions to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service’s (NCIS) Law Enforcement Information Exchange (LinX) system.

Table 5: Records Management System (RMS) Summary from 2016 - 2020

RMS Summary	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
All Case Types*				10,933	9,538
Investigative Cases	6,228	6,902	5,419	8,412	6,602
Arrests	8,058	8,656	6,814	6,676	6,371

Law Records developed and initiated processes within Zuercher establishing specialized case types used to support other agency divisions in their data collection and program management.



Each case type has a unique case indicator, permission rights, data collection forms, and workflows customized for specified user groups. Development included a centralized method for groups to request specific services of our officers in the field. Via this incorporated tool, user groups are able to uniformly work in tangent with our Dispatch center to issue and manage requests for officer services. Within these dedicated cases, group users create a case for each request having the ability to communicate directly with our officers. The system offers the group a window in which they can follow the progress of each request. This aspect alone creates a higher level of efficiency in virtually eliminating additional support by our

Dispatch center and other communicative actions required to determine request status. Agency functions involved in this customized portion of our program are inspections for Boat HIN/Dealer (soft roll-out December 2019), Wildlife Rehabilitation, Foxhound Training Preserves, Licensed Shooting Preserves, Shoot from the Vehicle Permits and Wildlife Kill

Table 6: Non-Offense Case types in 2020

Case Types (non-offense) *	2019	2020
Animal Rehabilitation	18	33
Boat Section	13	172
Foxhound Training Preserve	30	29
Licensed Shooting Preserve	11	125
Records Data Request		263
Shoot from Vehicle Permit	46	26
Waterway Marker		16
Wildlife Kill Permit/DCAP	2,164	2,219
Total Records	2,282	2,883

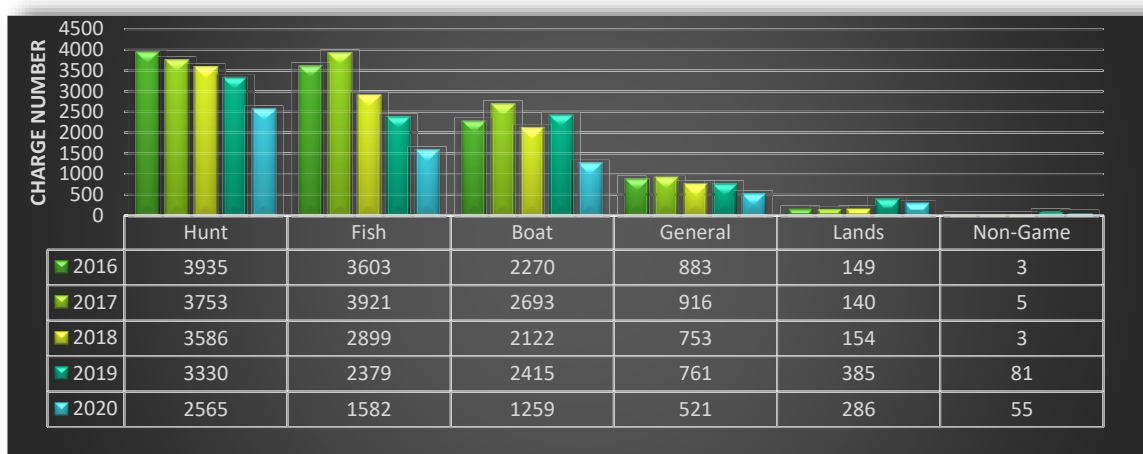
*All case types originated in 2019

Dispatch center and other communicative actions required to determine request status. Agency functions involved in this customized portion of our program are inspections for Boat HIN/Dealer (soft roll-out December 2019), Wildlife Rehabilitation, Foxhound Training Preserves, Licensed Shooting Preserves, Shoot from the Vehicle Permits and Wildlife Kill

Permits/DCAP. The largest and most complex functions involve wildlife’s program for Wildlife Kill Permits/DCAP. Multiple fragmented elements of the Wildlife Kill Permits/DCAP program were incorporated into a single comprehensive management tool. Wildlife personnel, Dispatch, officers, Complementary Workforce volunteers, and even constituents have been empowered by the ability to access the process on varying levels. The extensive and complex information submitted by all of our Zuercher users is essential to documenting and supporting the agency’s mission to the state’s wildlife and constituents. Zuercher has vast potential to envelope additional agency processes.

In 2020, the impact of the Covid-19 virus affected Conservation Police activities in various aspects as it did with the whole nation. With mandatory state and national restrictions placed on social interactions during the majority of the year, officers’ interactions with the public reduced. Summarizing arrest charges within a case gives a view of the hunting, boating and fishing criminal activity that occurs across the Commonwealth. The graphic below breaks down the arrest charges into the following major categories for the past five years: Hunt, Fish, Boat, General, DWR Property, and Non-Game.

Figure 2: Arrest Charge Count by Major Category from 2016-2020



Statutes within the database can be queried by subcategories based on relatedness such as trespassing, license, season, safety, etc. The charge data shown below is reflective of these minor categories.

Table 7: RMS Arrest Charge Breakdown by Minor Category from 2016-2020

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
License - Fish	2,892	3,102	2,359	1,810	1,126
Safety - Boat	1,436	1,791	1,474	1,619	907
Season - Hunt	1,491	1,516	1,397	1,257	1,017
License - Hunt	1,402	1,297	1,274	983	671
Trespass	883	717	531	614	506
License - Boat	686	745	477	579	259
Traffic	252	299	391	414	271
Safety - Other	213	182	306	379	402

Table 7: RMS Arrest Charge Breakdown by Minor Category from 2016-2020

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Season - Fish	277	362	254	288	207
Drugs - Marijuana	159	228	204	155	53
Littering	220	193	191	153	0
Firearm	374	364	159	142	105
Other	112	101	113	130	128
Alcohol - Other	99	146	106	94	60
Fraud	36	75	67	73	53
Drugs - Other	41	68	51	61	31
Alcohol - BUI	32	42	44	53	28
Alcohol - DUI	42	25	44	42	19
Damage	32	20	33	33	29
Elude/Impede	26	22	22	25	18
Larceny	26	28	14	14	17
Alcohol - HUI	N/A	N/A	4	12	4
Assault	2	4	2	6	5
Grand Total	10,733	11,327	9,517	8,936	5,916

The top ten violations resulting in a summons issued in 2020 are listed below. The top two violations have consistently held their rank since 2015. This year Annual Access permit for

Table 8: Top 10 Arrest Charges Issued in 2020 by Conservation Police

RANK	CODE DESCRIPTION	CODE	2020
1	LICENSE: FISH W/O FRESHWATER LICENSE	29.1-335(FRESH)	853
2	WATERCRAFT: PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES REQUIRED	4VAC15-430-30	632
3	TRESPASS: TRESPASS BY HUNTERS AND FISHERS	18.2-132	285
4	TO HUNT OVER A BAITED AREA	29.1-521(4)	224
5	LICENSE: HUNT W/O LICENSE	29.1-335(HUNT)	188
6	DEPT OWNED, CONTROLLED, MANAGED LAND VIOLATION	4VAC15-40-280	145
7	LICENSE: HUNT W/O DEER/TURKEY LICENSE	29.1-335(DEER/TURKEY)	142
8	GAME/FISH: TAKE OR ATTEMPT TO TAKE DURING CLOSED SEASON	29.1-550(i)	138
9	HUNTING IN MANNER NOT PERMITTED BY LAW	29.1-521(10)	131
10	REGULATORY MARKERS AND AIDS TO NAVIGATION	4VAC15-370-50	119

Dept.-Owned lands violations moved up 3 levels from its 2019 ranking and Regulatory Markers and Aids to Navigation is new to the list.

As a Virginia Law Enforcement Agency, DWR participates in the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) program with the FBI. The state repository for this data is through Virginia State Police’s (VSP) Incident Based Reporting Program (IBR). Each month DWR submits crime data from RMS using the IBR format required by VSP. VSP utilizes this collected data to publish the Crime in Virginia report every year based on Uniform Crime Report (UCR) codes. The table below lists DWR’s data from a UCR perspective similar to the Crime in Virginia Report. Based on the NIBRS system, most of what Conservation Police Officers enforce falls under the UCR code 90Z, “All Other Offenses” (6,844 offenses in 2020). Due to the ambiguity of the 90Z designation which can include anything from illegal possession of wildlife to not having a fire extinguisher on a vessel, the Law Division created the major and minor categories, reflected previously, to help focus on DWR’s mission and goals.



4.2.1 Wildlife and Boat Revocations

Law Records is responsible for submitting wildlife revocations to the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact (IWVC), which is also state mandated. On December 1, 2011, the Board of IWVC administrators accepted DWR’s application to become a member. DWR has been contributing Virginia wildlife revocations into the IWVC database since 2014. Law Records staff regularly download IWVC data containing revocations associated with wildlife violations submitted by the 48 U.S. member states.

Boating revocations records are also the responsibility of Law Records. This type of revocation is managed via a customized divisional dedicated IT process. As with the wildlife revocations, Zuercher is the starting point to document a revocation. Officers initially update the associated case with relevant revocation information. Auto generated notifications are issued to Law Records personnel to continue processing the revocation data. Ultimately, an “alert” associated with each revocation is created within Zuercher. The alerts display a visual indicator, automatically deactivated on the expiration date of the restriction. This information can be instrumental in a CPO’s first contact with an offender/suspect and potentially used to support charge presentations in the judicial system.

Table 9: Revocations entered into the Revocation Database from 2016 to 2020

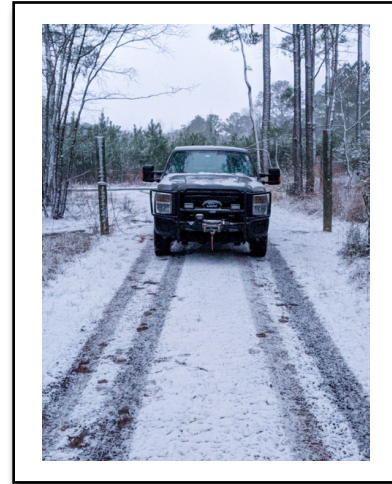
Revocations Entered	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
VA Hunt	113	94	93	94	64
VA Fish	1	4	2	5	12
VA Boat	12	22	9	13	7
Total VA Revocations	126	120	104	112	83
Other State Revocations Ratified	5,287	5,150	7,246	5,591	5,470
TOTAL REVOCATIONS	5,413	5,270	7,350	5,703	5,553

4.3 Fleet and Asset Management

Our fleet and asset team had a very busy 2020. The following list describes some of the highlights that were accomplished while working in a Covid-19 protocol environment:

➤ VEHICLE HIGHLIGHTS:

- Active Patrol Vehicles: **140**
- Average Patrol Vehicle age: **5 years**
- Average mileage on Patrol Vehicle: **77K**
- Total miles on Patrol Vehicles: **9.7M**
- Total miles driven in 2020: **2.2M**
- Average miles driven in 2020: **17.5K**
- Most miles driven in 2020: **33.7K**



- Coordinated with Virginia State Police (VSP) in the decommissioning of surplus vehicles and continued internal decommissioning of selected vehicles and boats.
- Continued internal maintenance of parts salvage to replace broken parts on law enforcement fleet vehicles with parts from surplus vehicles to provide cost reduction for the department.
- Initiated selected removal and installation of vehicle and boat decals to increase cost savings.
- Increased participation in User Agency Requirements Committee (UARC) meetings to strengthen knowledge of VSP functions.



- Completed verification of DWR law enforcement vehicle assets and reconciliation with VSP Sunflower Asset System. This required purchase and development of equipment, files and protocol for infield inspection of all LE STARS related assets.
- Completed verification of VSP Network Operations Center (NOC) alias records with DWR active aliases to correct VSP records.
- Continued preparation support for accounting asset personnel on vehicles for surplus to facilitate the process.
- Coordinated the purchase of 22 new vehicles for LE.
- Composed justification letters for new vehicle purchases and sole source vendor approvals.

- Researched, purchased and coordinated the installation of LE equipment in several new boats.
- Researched , purchased and coordinated the installation of LE equipment for new vehicles to include the following:
 - Multi-vendor purchases and installation while maintaining Covid safety protocol.
 - Chevrolet trucks: specialty vault, brush guard, back rack, new lights/layout/controls
- Worked with Vehicle Team to determine needs and options for LE vehicle equipment and decals.
- Coordinated vendor demonstrations of law enforcement equipment for vehicle team evaluation.
- Coordinated the decaling and specialty equipment vehicle installations for new K9 Officers.
- Responded to daily requests from field officers for equipment issues, spare parts and coordinated repairs with local vendors.
- Solicited and secured vendor support for Old Dominion One Shot Program.



5.0 Specialty Teams

5.1 K9 Team



CPO Mark VanDyke

K9 Avery



CPO Jim Patrillo

K9 Bailey



CPO Tyler Blanks

K9 Bruno



CPO Bonnie Brazier

K9 Grace



Master CPO Mark DiLuigi

K9 Lily



Senior CPO Wes Billings

K9 Molly



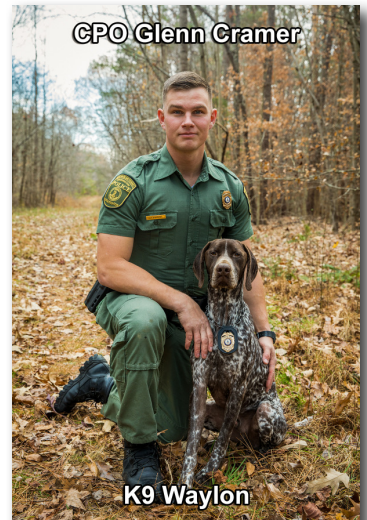
CPO Ian Ostlund

K9 Reese



Senior CPO Richard Howald

K9 Sky



CPO Glenn Cramer

K9 Waylon

2020 brought many changes to the DWR K9 Unit. Wes Billings' longtime canine partner K9 Josie officially retired in May 2020. While Josie will enjoy retirement, Billings has a new partner



Josie

in K9 Molly. Billings and K9 Molly, and new handlers and canine partners CPO Tyler Blanks and K9 Bruno, CPO Bonnie Braziel and K9 Grace, Master CPO Mark DiLuigi and K9 Lily, and CPO Ian Ostlund and K9 Reese attended a Conservation K9 Academy in Virginia. The academy, which consists of 3 – 3 week sessions over a 15 week period, was instructed by Senior CPO Richard Howald and assisted by Billings.



Bailey "alerting" on Human Remains

All new handlers and their canine partners were trained in tracking, evidence/article detection, and wildlife detection. Billings and K9 Molly did not train in wildlife detection, as they and current K9 team CPO Jim Patrillo began training DWR's first canines in Human Remains Detection Training and hope to be certified by mid-2021. This new tool will help bring a quick closure to families of missing victims.

With the onset of COVID in the spring of 2020, the K9 Unit's public appearances were cut by 85%. We are hoping that restrictions will begin to relax in 2021 and they are able to get out and promote the Unit, the Division, and the Agency.



With the resignation of one of the K9 handlers, we advertised and selected Officer David Hennaman to be the new handler of K9 Waylon. This team will attend the Indiana K9 Conservation Academy in the spring of 2021.



Justice

As reported last year, CPO Wayne Billhimer's K9 partner Justice was diagnosed with cancer. We are sad to report that Justice lost his battle with cancer in May 2020.

The following table contains summary information for the K9 unit since 2014 and includes a snapshot of what Senior Officer Billings and K9 Josie and Molly, Officer Tyler Blanks and K9 Bruno, Officer Bonnie Braziel and K9 Grace, Officer Glenn Cramer and K9 Waylon, Master Officer Mark DiLuigi and K9 Lily, Senior Officer Richard Howald and K9 Sky, Officer Ian Ostlund and K9 Reese, Officer Jim Patrillo and K9 Bailey, and Officer Mark VanDyke and K9 Avery did during the calendar year 2020:

Table 10: Summary for K-9 Activity from 2016 to 2020 (*separation of uses and patrols starting in 2018)

DESCRIPTION	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
TOTAL USES	154	76	127	267	286	292
TOTAL PATROLS	*	*	*	182	195	277
PUBLIC APPEARANCE	42	33	60	85	89	14
TRACKS	78	64	52	63	71	74
WILDLIFE DETECTION	29	26	21	28	18	17
AREA SEARCH	87	51	42	51	63	177
NONSPECIFIC USE	21	16	35	40	45	10
HUMAN REMAINS DETECTION	*	*	*	*	*	1



5.2 Marine Theft and Fraud

In 2017, the Law Division recognized an increasing need in the enforcement of thefts and frauds of boats and boat registration applications. Special Agent Jim Croft, as part of the Special Operations Unit, had historically been tasked with investigating stolen boats. The cases he was becoming involved in and the information he was receiving, indicated that he was going to need assistance to be able to effectively address these issues across the Commonwealth. The decision was made to assign two officers each year to work with Agent Croft. This would not only give him the much-needed assistance, but would provide a set of new skills and investigatory knowledge to the assisting officers so they could continue to identify and investigate marine-related thefts and frauds in their respective districts at the completion of their assignments. Through 2020, five officers have participated, been involved in significant cases and taken the Law Division's response to these types of crimes to a new level.

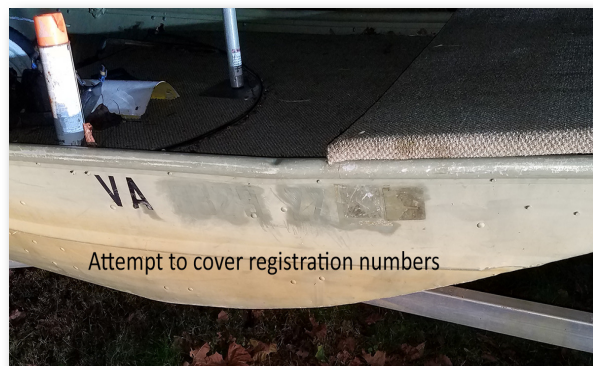


2020 created an interesting challenge for the unit. Agents Croft and Inge were tasked with working around the restrictions and fallout of COVID-19. Due to those restrictions, the public chose to be more engaged with the outdoors and the boat titling section saw a significant increase in applications for new and transferred motorboats. This significant increase also brought an increased caseload of fraudulent representations. This increase, with the closure of many courts, created a new challenge for the investigators. Many jurisdictions were receptive to alternatives



to charges to include the payment of owed taxation monies from misrepresentations in lieu of adding to the already significant backlog of pending court dockets or dismissal of charges to free up that backlog and thus lost revenue for the Agency.

The increased public participation in boating also brought out those who chose to prey on unsuspecting new boaters. Investigators identified 19 violations of individuals selling boats without a watercraft dealers license. Several were innocent oversights; however, a few involved the intentional scamming of purchasers. One case of notation originated from a citizen complaint where an individual was previously selling boats in North Carolina, ran into legal troubles there and moved his business to Virginia. Agents covertly visited the business where the owner and an



employee offered to sell the agents numerous vessels. While looking at the boats, agents identified several with missing HINs and suspicious ghost numbering. Agents left, secured a search warrant for the business, and returned. Before producing the warrant, agents focused on a suspicious boat. They had the owner produce paperwork like they were going to purchase the boat and trailer and the owner provided titles that didn't match what was being sold and also a VIN plate was produced that wasn't affixed to the trailer. The local district officers and a DMV agent arrived and the warrant was executed. The business had 54 boats and as many trailers to comb over with many issues detected. At the conclusion of the investigation 23 charges were filed on the business owner.



The most notable event of 2020 for the unit was the receipt of the 2020 Conservation Law Enforcement Award from the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. The unit was selected from numerous nominations from across North America. This award is for an individual, a unit, bureau, division or combination of the preceding, to enhance the professionalism and significant advancement of conservation law enforcement in the areas of deterrence of violations, forensic techniques, equipment development, public relations, innovative operations, and conservation law enforcement research. Since 2010, Agent Croft and the Marine Theft & Fraud team members have exemplified every component of the Conservation Law Enforcement Award. Members of the unit proudly accepted the award virtually in September.

The unit continues to be successful and looks for new and innovative approaches to enforcement and furthering the goals of the Division and Agency. The following is a preview of what has been accomplished by this team in 2020:

Table 11: Case Types from Boat Fraud Team

DESCRIPTION	2018	2019	2020
CASES DEVELOPED	114	105	74
FELONY CHARGES	11	51	10
MISDEMEANOR CHARGES	55	24	28
WARNINGS	7	31	0
SEARCH WARRANTS	12	60	13
RECOVERED BOATS	11	21	6
RECOVERED TRAILERS	5	12	5
CAMPER RECOVERED	1	1	0
IMPACT ON LOCAL TAXATION	\$90,000	\$90,000	TBD
TOTAL VALUE OF RECOVERED PROPERTY	\$241,000	\$334,000	TBD

5.3 Tracking Team



The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (VDWR) tracking program has been a popular course among local law enforcement agencies. The VDWR tracking training cadre was able to proceed with two tracking classes in 2020, before canceling the rest due to the corona virus pandemic. The two courses were held for law enforcement officers of the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Currently, the VDWR tracking training cadre has received requests from several agencies and plans to hold a VDWR advanced tracking class in the fall of 2021. Once these VDWR Officers have completed advanced tracking training, they will become eligible to join their respective regional tracking team. Additionally, Officers that complete training to become instructors

through the Department of Criminal Justice Services will become eligible to join the tracking training cadre.

The VDWR tracking teams utilized the skills of 29 dedicated Officers who have taken on this extra responsibility in addition to their normal duties. Tracking team members regularly train and work with one of nine VDWR K9 units. Four tracking team members take on yet another responsibility as the regional team leader. Each team leader coordinates regular team training sessions and supervises regional operations as they arise.

2020 Regional tracking team leaders were:

- Region 1: CPO Dan Rabago Region 2: CPO John Daniel
- Region 3: CPO Andy Rutledge Region 4: CPO Chance Dobbs

5.4 Honor Guard

The DWR Honor Guard continues to provide essential services during the difficult COVID 19 Pandemic:

In March 2020 the Honor Guard collaborated with Wildlife / Outreach Divisions to assist with the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel Project to protect Virginia’s largest seabird colony. Honor Guard assisted with the decommissioning of



the American flag that flew over Ft. Wool. The flag, which was raised in 2007, flew day and night until DWR partnered with VDOT to create habitat for the seabird colony displaced by bridge tunnel complex construction. The Honor Guard lowered the 20’ x 38’ flag, removed it from the 90-foot pole, and folded it with honors before it was provided to the Hampton History Museum.

Though serving in an altered capacity for much of the year, Honor Guard members fulfilled their purpose by representing DWR and the Law Division during these unprecedented times. Our members adapted to the many challenges in daily life as well as those in their professional life. Dealing with the restrictions of COVID 19, Honor Guard, continued to serve as a well-trained unit rendering honors by presenting flags in memoriam and appreciation to families for their loved one's service to the Commonwealth as prior Game Wardens and/or Conservation Police Officers. The ability to provide quality service during these turbid times is testament to the quality of our team members. Each member possesses the unique skill set required to represent the agency at it highest level and their dedication is unwavering. A beacon of professionalism representing the agency and a staple of the law division charged with preserving traditions, promoting esprit-de-corps, and instilling pride.

6.0 Officer Outreach

On March 7, 2020 Officer Nevel hosted her third annual Women and Youth Hunter Education class in Richmond County. The event was hosted at Independence Farm, a private residence belonging to a retired Army Sargent Major Rick Walters, who hosts several youth and wounded veteran events throughout the year. Stephanie and Rick Walters are both active Hunter Education instructors with the department.

The event consists of a block of instruction in the classroom, followed by a range, and a trail walk. The students are taught a condensed version of the hunter education curriculum in the morning in the classroom covering weapon safety, conservation, hunting safety laws, different weapons for hunting, hunter safety plans, basic survival skills, and much more.

In the afternoon, the students expand upon those lessons taught by experiencing the basic shotgun range. Students learn basic shotgun skills including patterning a shotgun, target practice for turkey and deer hunting, and simulated shooting



from a tree stand by shooting from the seated position. Students participate in the trail walk like they were going on a simulated hunt. Students dawn orange hunting vests and carry a firearm safely in a group. Students practice safely transitioning over a fence individually and with a partner. A hunt master is picked from amongst the group, who must ask the landowner's permission for the simulated hunting group. The students proceed through the trail reviewing shoot don't shoot scenes based on safety and legal requirements (ie: posted property, wildlife too small or out of season, and other hunter's positions). Students cover conservation and preservation of the property with the landowner. Students practice zones of fire by setting up for a dove hunt and are checked by the CPO in the field.

This particular course was met with the onset of COVID 19 just before class. The instructors took safety precautions by cutting down the





group size and running two programs simultaneously in different rooms to allow for social distancing. All safety guidelines were followed to allow for the safety of all the instructors and the students that participated. It was the last class taught in Region 1 before all events were canceled the following week and the state shut down for COVID.

This course also had participants from the Governor's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. At the end of the day, they all reported being pleasantly surprised by the care and thought put into the course, and passion of the instructors.

This amazing course could not have happened without the amazing DWR volunteer hunter education instructors from the Northern Neck and surrounding areas including The Hydes, The Walters, Mark, Ronnie, Rick, Nerine, Barbara, Tony, and Brian. Our number of women participants has increased with each class and the feedback from the students states the class has been well received.

7.0 Recognition and Awards

7.1 Officer of the Year

Officer Cory Harbour has been named the 2020 Conservation Police Officer of the Year.

Each year, DWR regions (I-IV), along with DWR Special Operations, nominate outstanding officers who deserve extraordinary recognition and praise for their accomplishments. This year, the nominees were RI, Senior Officer Brian Bratton, RIII, Officer Benjamin Boyette, RIV, Officer Derrick Kekic, and Special Operations K9 Unit Officer Richard Howald.

Officer Harbour, who works District 23, received 14 commendations through the Office of Professional Standards. Just a few of Officer Harbour's accomplishments are included in the list below:

- Initiated/responded to over 800 calls for service in four districts within his region.
- Made over 200 arrests and recorded over 150 warnings out of almost 400 violations detected.
- Made 14 felony arrests, assisted with 3 additional felony arrests, and made OUI and DUI arrests
- Received the Lifesaving Medal for responding to a DUI crash and pulling the suicidal driver from the edge of the bridge as he was about to jump.



- Assisted with a boating fatality investigation and was lead investigator for two hunting incidents.
- Volunteered to display the breast cancer awareness pink decals and used his media contact to do an interview about the initiative on the local news
- Adhered to COVID protocols to participate in two in person outreach events in the height of the pandemic, while participating virtually on committees in and outside the agency

The time, dedication and effort that Officer Harbour puts into his chosen profession, along with his consistent interaction with his community and local law enforcement, make him very efficient and effective with his work in all aspects. Cory's ability to foster and build relationships, while showing his passion and enthusiasm for the job, is the reason for his many commendations. The qualities shown make him a model conservation police officer and invaluable asset to the Commonwealth.

7.2 Boating Officer of the Year (NASBLA)

Senior Conservation Police Officer Brandon Harris has received The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) Butch Potts Memorial Award. This award, also known as the 2020 Boating Officer of the Year award, is presented to one Officer in the Northern, Southern, and Western US regions.

Each year, DWR regions (I-IV), along with Senior Leadership, nominate outstanding officers who deserve extraordinary recognition and praise for their accomplishments. This year, the nominees were RI, Officer Cameron Dobyns, RIII, Officer Jason Harris, and RIV, Officer Alan Hatmaker. We congratulate all the Officers on their nominations.



Senior Officer Harris works in Halifax County, VA in DWR Region II. His outstanding nomination highlighted his many efforts and achievements. Just a few of Officer Harris' accomplishments are included in the list below.

- Detection efforts for identifying impaired boating operators.
- Three BUI arrests and convictions.
- A recognition by Mothers against Drunk Driving (MADD) for extraordinary efforts.
- Extensive boat patrol efforts that lead to 73 boating related arrests.
- On scene and/or primary investigator for 6 boating related accidents to include a fatal resulting in a manslaughter charge.

Brandon's accomplishments were not all enforcement related. He also received the very prestigious DWR OPS Professionalism Decree Award. He continuously shares this knowledge

with his fellow Officers and is a tremendous asset to their effective patrolling of these waters. Brandon is the lead instructor for our Division's Boat Cadre as well as a team member of our Boating Incident Reconstruction Team. These voluntarily commitments go beyond his basic core responsibilities. This year he assisted in this capacity by reconstructing a major fatality investigation that occurred on Lake Anna, in Spotsylvania County. Brandon's extensive tenure enables him to have more initiative, not be idle and exhibit an above and beyond work effort. Even with the COVID-19 restrictions mandated by the Governor and Agency management, Brandon searched for ways to be most productive and make our waters safe. He conducted 32 boat patrols this year identifying areas on Lake Gaston and Buggs Island Lake where he encountered alcohol, boating safety and fishing violations. Since January 2020, Brandon inspected over 200 vessels and he has completed over 100 waterway marker inspections to ensure safety and compliance. DWR congratulates Senior Officer Brandon Harris on this well-deserved recognition of his outstanding commitment and dedication to the citizens of the Commonwealth, the Agency and Virginia's boating public.

7.3 Guy Bradley Award

The Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) is honored to announce that Conservation Police Officer Sgt. Daniel (Dan) Hall was selected to receive the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's (NFWF) 2020 Guy Bradley Award.

During the course of his 30 plus year career, Sgt. Hall's commitment to our natural resources, the agency, the sportsmen and sportswomen, and the citizens of the Commonwealth and its constituents has been unwavering.

The Guy Bradley Award is presented annually to one state agency officer and one federal agency officer whose dedication and public service in protecting the nation's natural resources demonstrates outstanding leadership, excellence in implementation, knowledge and actions that have advanced the cause of wildlife conservation.

NFWF considers nominee's years of service, career achievements, professional contributions, impact on their community, innovation and other criteria in making their selection.

In 1905, Florida game warden Guy Bradley became the first wildlife law enforcement agent killed while performing his duties to protect the nation's wildlife. Law enforcement agents and officers like Bradley are essential to virtually every aspect of wildlife conservation, from recovering endangered species to managing waterfowl and big game resources. In honor of Guy Bradley, NFWF established this lifetime achievement award to recognize individuals for their commitment and performance in the field of wildlife law enforcement.

"Established in honor of the first wildlife law enforcement agent to be killed while performing his duties, this annual award recognizes extraordinary contributions to national and local efforts to protect wildlife," said Jeff Trandahl, Executive Director and CEO of NFWF. "Conservation Police Sergeant Daniel Hall of the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources has truly earned this recognition. Over more than 30 years, his career accomplishments have





ranged from helping to reopen deer season in southwest Virginia to holding companies responsible for polluting waterways. His efforts have improved the quality of life for local residents and helped to preserve and protect wildlife for future generations.”

Sgt. Hall has demonstrated outstanding leadership in the field of conservation law enforcement throughout the last three decades. Dan was instrumental in the restocking efforts of Whitetail Deer in rural Southwest Virginia. Dan’s passion for the resource and ability to make mutually beneficial relationships with numerous landowners helped facilitate this effort which resulted in the re-opening of deer season in

that area, which had been closed for 18 years. While working the same geographic area, Sgt. Hall identified an opportunity to encourage angler activity in the Breaks Interstate Park, a park whose boundaries lie between Virginia and Kentucky. Working with local legislators and elected officials, Dan facilitated legislation that allowed residents of either state to fish in the park with their own resident licenses. Not only did this encourage angler involvement, but eliminated a significant enforcement issue in this heavily used recreational area.

Not only has Sgt. Hall been a leader in the field of law enforcement, Dan understands the need for outreach opportunities and education that encourages positive interaction between constituents of all ages and diverse backgrounds and law enforcement officials. For the last 20 years, Dan has organized and coordinated the Smyth County Kids Fishing Event that to date, has reached thousands of youths, many of whom have went on to purchase licenses and contribute to conservation later in their life. Other outstanding community-based programs that Dan has been directly involved with include a VFW sponsored boating safety program for elementary school students, the “Shop with a Cop” program, and a 21st Century Learning Grant program that teaches, supports, and encourages fishing and wildlife conservation.



7.4 Other Awards

Colonel's Leadership Award (2020)

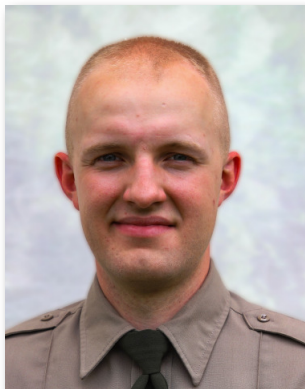
The purpose of the Colonel's Leadership Award is to formally recognize those officers and staff members that set the standard in regard to being a leader within the Law Enforcement Division. Furthermore, the Colonel has an opportunity each year to highlight an employee within the division who is demonstrating a best practices management model through their outstanding actions and deeds per the criteria identified below in our Professional Standards CREED.



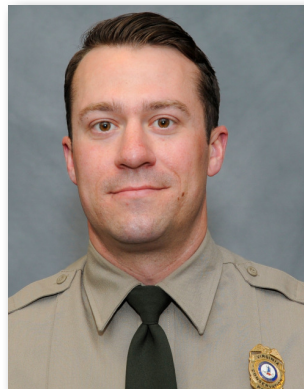
David Hennaman with Waylon Flanked by Maj. Shuler & Colonel Cobb

Lifesaving Medal (2020)

The Lifesaving Medal may be awarded to any sworn officer of the Law Enforcement Division who, through demonstrating extraordinary effort, provides direct life sustaining emergency medical care, or rescues or endeavors to rescue any person from life-threatening incidents such as drowning, vehicle accidents, fires, or other perils.



Benjamin Boyette



Daniel Hyman



Sgt. Adam Keene

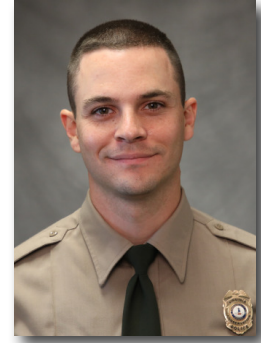


Meritorious Service Medal (2020)

The Meritorious Service Medal may be awarded to any sworn officer of the Law Enforcement Division who, in the line of duty, rescues or endeavors to rescue any person from life-threatening incidents such as drowning, vehicle accidents, fires, or other perils. The Meritorious Service Medal shall only be awarded to an individual who performed a rescue or attempted rescue at significant risk of his or her own life, and demonstrates extreme and heroic daring.



Sgt. Steve Garvis



Anthony Pennino

O.P.S. Professionalism Decree (Class of 2020)

The purpose of the O.P.S. Professionalism Decree (Innovation Award) is to establish a tradition to formally recognize those Sworn Officers and DWR Law Enforcement Staff who have gone above and beyond to promote the professionalism of Virginia Conservation Police through their commitment and dedication to this public service profession.



Stanley Ripley



Brandon Harris



Sgt. Baxter Bell



Sgt. Steve Ferguson



Amanda Nevel

AFWA Conservation Law Enforcement Award (2020)

The purpose of the “AFWA” award is to recognize outstanding, national-level achievements in conservation law enforcement by an individual, a unit, bureau, division or a combination of the preceding, to enhance the professionalism and significant advancement of conservation law enforcement in the areas of: 1) Deterrence of Violations; 2) Forensic Techniques; 3) Equipment Development; 4) Public Relations; 5) Innovative Operations; and 6) Conservation Law Enforcement Research.



Paul Inge



S.A. James Croft



Wm. Jason Harris



Joe Williams



Tyler Bumgarner



Sgt. Tim Dooley

Communications Officer of the Year (2020)

The Communications Officer of the Year Award is presented to a member of our Communications Center, who during the calendar year has excelled in the areas of enhancing officer safety, quality public service and working with agency partners in support of our mission.

Laura O’Hara

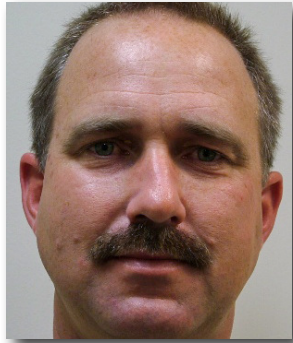
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8.0 Retirees (2020)



Cpt. Kevin Clarke
44 years



Lt. Paul Atkins
31 years



Beth Garrett
23 years



Greg Hall
22 years



Sgt. Owen Bullard
19 years



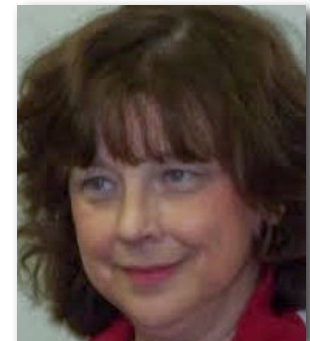
James Brooks
18 years



Cpt. Jamie Davis
17 years



Carol Lee Bell
14 years



Karen Austin
13 years



Mark Chitwood
13 years

In Memoriam - Recently Fallen RETIREES

Sergeant Walter Edward Eggleston 11/18/2020

Walter Edward Eggleston (86) known to all as Eddie, passed away peacefully at his home in Woodlawn Virginia, November 18, 2020. He was born in Newport News Virginia, June 18, 1934. He is survived by his wife, Brenda, and son Jeffrey. Eddie began his career in the design department of Newport News Shipbuilding. After 15 years there, his love of nature and the outdoors led him to become a Virginia game warden where he served for twenty-three years. At retirement, he and Brenda moved to his beloved Virginia Mountains. Eddie enjoyed growing antique varieties of apples and he loved his animals.



Sergeant E.G. Mitchell 3/2/2021

Edward Goodman Mitchell Jr. of York County, 81, passed away on Tuesday, March 2, 2021, and is now reunited with his wife, Barbara Wells Mitchell, of nearly 60 years. Retired Game Warden Sergeant E.G. Mitchell was born and raised in Dinwiddie, Virginia, until he moved to the Peninsula in 1963. His career as a Game Warden with the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries brought him to the area where he worked until his retirement as a sergeant in 1991. As a Game Warden, he was an instructor for the Virginia Hunter Education Program, a firearms instructor, and Game Warden of the Year in 1974.



Office Locations

Headquarters (Henrico)

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P.O. Box 90778, Henrico, VA 23228-0778
Henrico, VA 23228
Hours: Mon–Fri, 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM
Phone: 804-367-1000



Region 1 Office (Charles City)

3801 John Tyler Memorial Hwy
Charles City, VA 23030
Hours: Mon–Fri, 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM
Phone: 804-829-6580



Region 2 Office (Forest)

1132 Thomas Jefferson Rd
Forest, VA 24551
Hours: Mon–Fri, 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM
Phone: 434-525-7522



Region 3 Office (Marion)

1796 Highway Sixteen
Marion, VA 24354
Hours: Mon–Fri, 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM
Phone: 276-783-4860



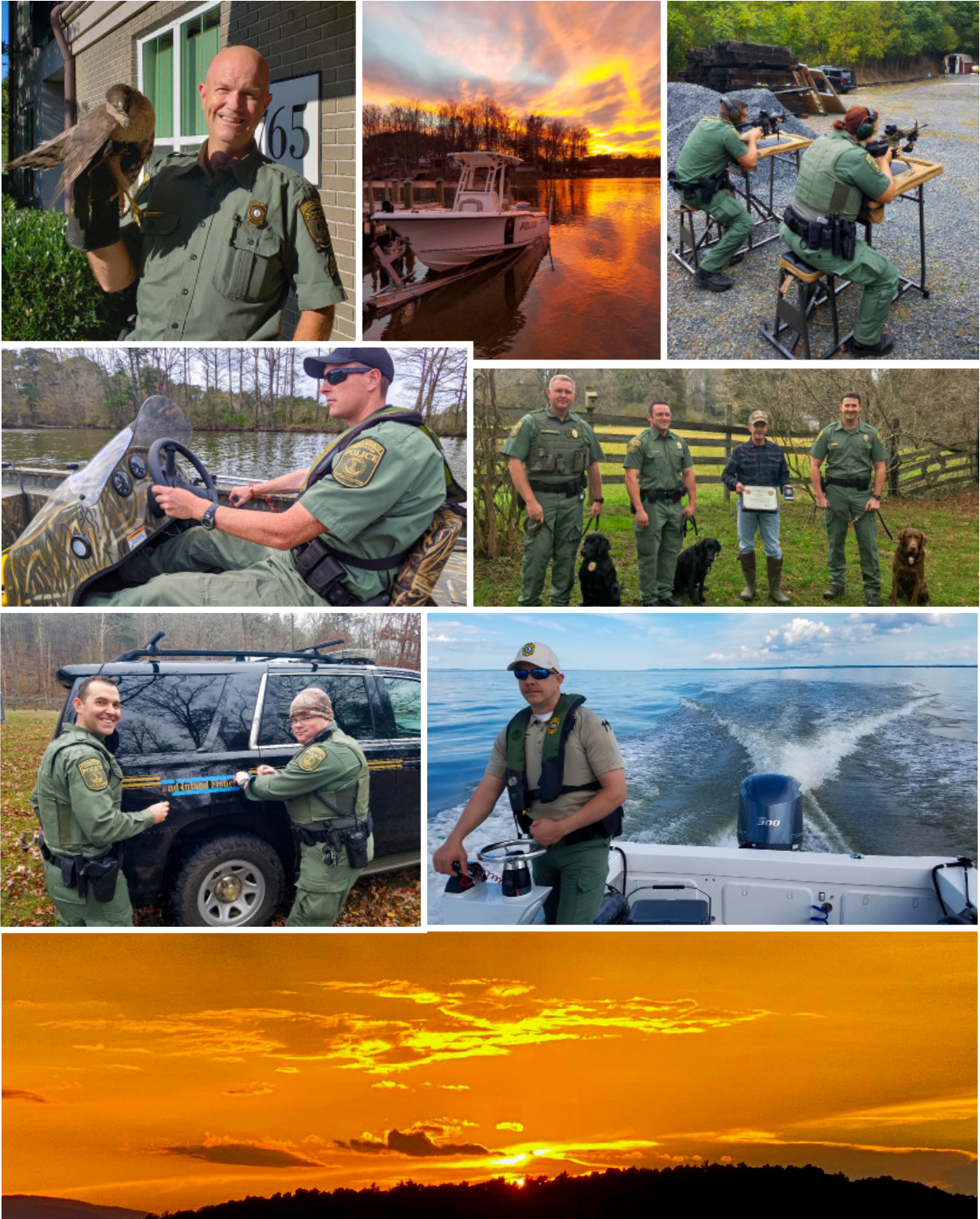
Region 4 Office (Verona)

517 Lee Highway
Verona, VA 24482
P.O. Box 996, Verona, VA 24482
Hours: Mon–Fri, 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM
Phone: 540-248-9360



Historical Badges and Patches



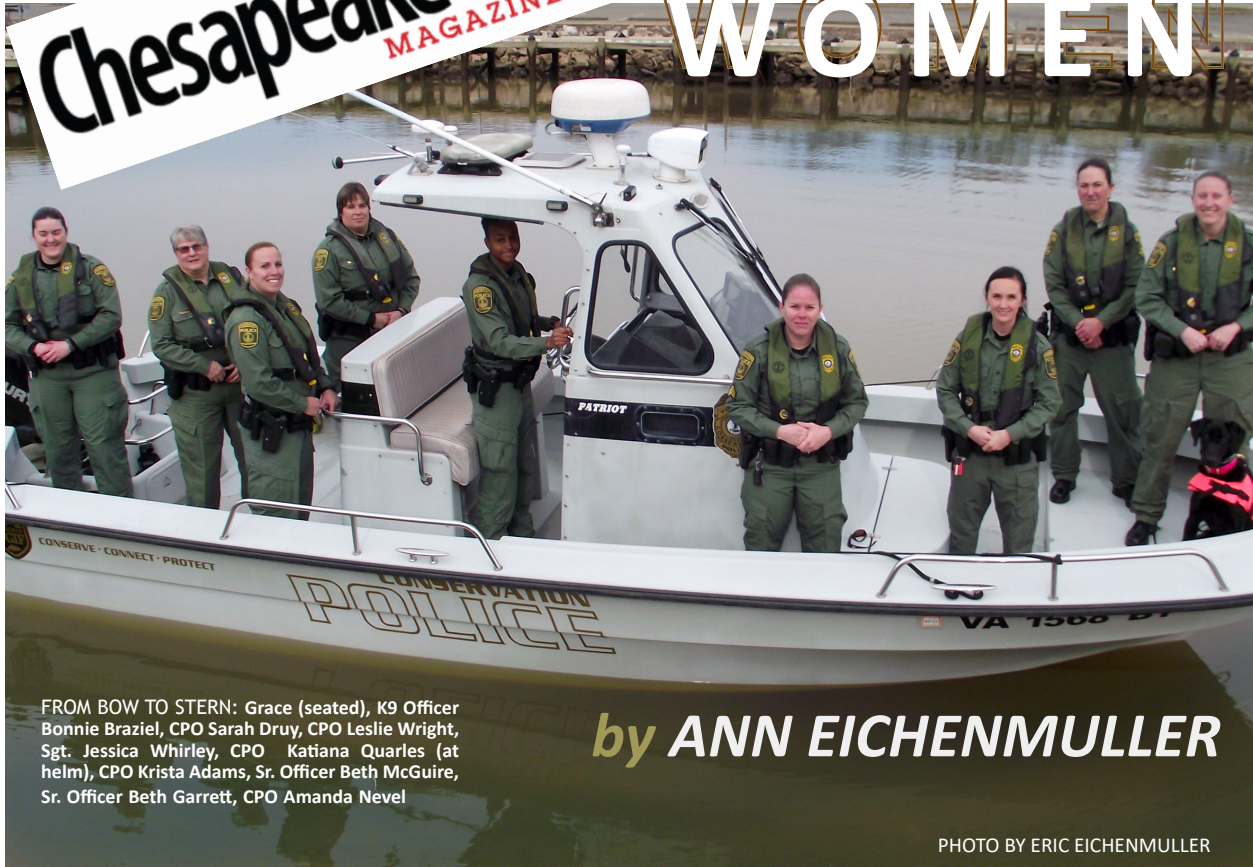


Annual Report Compiled by
Gary Sargent, Law Enforcement Division,
With Submissions and Assistance from Many

All photos in this report were contributed by DWR staff
unless otherwise noted

Chesapeake Bay
MAGAZINE

A FEW GOOD WOMEN



FROM BOW TO STERN: Grace (seated), K9 Officer Bonnie Brazier, CPO Sarah Druy, CPO Leslie Wright, Sgt. Jessica Whirley, CPO Katiana Quarles (at helm), CPO Krista Adams, Sr. Officer Beth McGuire, Sr. Officer Beth Garrett, CPO Amanda Nevel

by **ANN EICHENMULLER**

PHOTO BY ERIC EICHENMULLER



CPO Amanda Nevel on Rappahannock River patrol
Photo By: Eric Eichenmuller

On this cold November morning it starts at sunrise. Nevel is on her way to organize a hunt for disabled sportsmen at the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge, and I am along for the ride. We are only on the road a few minutes when she gets a report of an injured bird, followed by a call from a hunter who has harvested a buck showing signs of disease. Over the next eight hours, Nevel will traverse two counties, cover close to two hundred miles, and end her day deep in the woods, dropping cameras where she suspects illegal baiting. This is crunch time, when hunting and rockfish seasons intersect, and no two shifts are the same.

For Officer Amanda Nevel, there is no such thing as a typical shift

“Normally I start off with a plan, but it doesn’t always work out that way,” she laughs. “You

never know what's going to happen when you go on duty. That's why I like it."

Nevel is one of only 153 conservation police officers (CPOs) tasked with enforcing Virginia's hunting, fishing, and boating laws across the Commonwealth's 42,775 square miles of land and more than 49,000 miles of river. But she is also part of an elite subset because of her gender. The state employs only nine female CPOs (formerly known as game wardens), making up about six percent of the Department of Wildlife Resources force.

Nationwide, women currently earn nearly half of all undergraduate degrees in law enforcement and more than half of the degrees awarded in biology, agriculture, and natural resources programs. Any of these majors could easily lead to a career in conservation resource policing, but few women consider it as an option. It just isn't on their radar, according to

Nevel, because they haven't grown up seeing women CPOs. She's working to change that by teaching hunter education classes to women and young girls. She says participants are often surprised to see her there.

"They tell me they didn't know ladies could be game wardens," Nevel explains.

Her experience is echoed by her sister officers. Many say they were the first female CPOs their communities had ever seen.

"I remember when I was still in training," say Senior Officer Beth Garrett, now in her 22nd year. "I was in a 7-11 store in the Northern Neck, and this guy just kept following me around, staring at me. I finally turned asked if I could help him. He said, 'I heard tell there was a female game warden down here, but I wouldn't believe it till I laid eyes on you.'"

She laughs. "I twirled around in front of him and said 'Well, you can believe it now.'"

I hear her story—and those of the others—at the Osbourne Boat Landing on the James River, thanks to the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. The agency has orchestrated a rare gathering of the state's nine female CPOs for an interview and photo shoot that quickly takes on the feel of a family reunion. Faces light up as each new vehicle arrives, and soon the parking lot is filled with the sound of excited voices and laughter. Everyone is eager to pet Grace, a Labrador retriever puppy who is also Officer Bonnie Brazil's new partner. Grace is the only dog paired with a female CPO as part of the canine program. It is just one of many firsts for this group that is changing the face of the VDWR. Though they come from diverse backgrounds—a family history of public service; a stint in the military; two, four, or even six years of college—they share a common bond: They are committed to preserving and protecting nature for future generations, and they hate to sit still.

"It's my parents' fault," jokes Garrett, who grew up camping and boating. "I got out of school, took an office job, and I hated it."

In addition to a love of the outdoors, these



women say it is the fast pace and variety of the work that drew them to conservation policing. "It's always something different," explains Senior Officer Beth McGuire, who considered other law enforcement careers before joining the VDWR. "We're not stuck to the pavement."

"I can be on a boat one minute, and in the woods searching for a lost two-year-old the next," says Sergeant Jessica Whirley agrees. "You never get tired of it."

All that variety can lead to some memorable moments, from calls about bears trespassing in trailers to naked boaters—the latter of which apparently happens more often than you might think. Everyone who has worked the water seems to have a story about nudity. Officer Katiana (Kat) Quarles recalls a couple boating in the buff on a very crowded Lake Anna. When stopped, they insisted they weren't doing anything wrong because they were too far out for the walkers to see from the shore.

"I couldn't believe it," she laughs. "I pointed all around them and said, 'What about all the other boats?'"

There are also more serious calls for boating accidents, missing persons, and recovering the bodies of drowning victims. CPOs often go undercover to track down illegal smuggling of animal parts and even assist local police in murder investigations. They serve as deputy U.S. Fish and Wildlife officers, crossing state lines to investigate violations of federal law. To prepare, every candidate must complete the 26-week Basic Law Enforcement Academy followed by a 15-week field training. CPOs go to driving school to hone off-road and fast-track pursuit skills, and they take ongoing defensive tactics and weapons training. It is a rigorous program, and one that Officer Krista Adams credits with instilling in CPOs a sense of mutual respect. Because they are all held to the highest standards, she says, "the guys see us as equals."

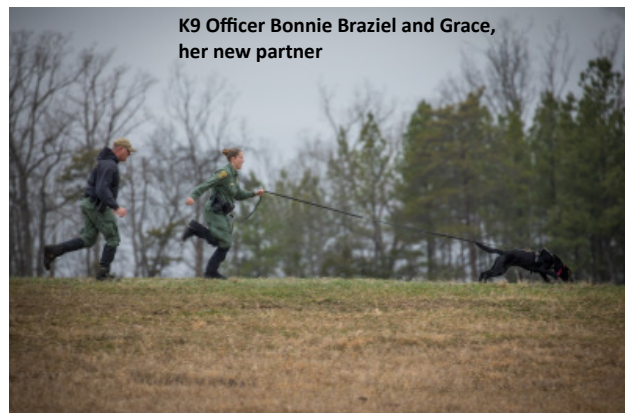
That is not always the case with the public. The women joke about how often they are called "honey," "sweetheart," or "darlin" while on duty.

"Sometimes you let it go," says McGuire. "You understand, especially with older gentlemen, it's not meant as disrespect, it's just how they grew up."

But there are also times when the terms are intended to be condescending and demeaning, Adams points out. "That's when you have to call them on it."

"I say they need to use 'Officer' or 'Ms.' because those other names are reserved for my husband," McGuire says with a smile. "That usually takes care of it."

Learning to maintain professionalism in the face of rude or insulting behavior is an essential skill, according to the VDWR. That is because



K9 Officer Bonnie Braziel and Grace, her new partner

conservation policing has a higher inherent level of danger.

"If you think about it, nearly every person I am in contact with is armed," observes Nevel. "They either have a loaded gun or a knife, and I'm usually approaching them in an isolated environment."

It is in these challenging circumstances, she says, that being a woman can be an asset.

Officer Krista Adams agrees.

"Females have a different perspective," she notes. "We understand how to defuse a situation. Even if we're not as physically strong,

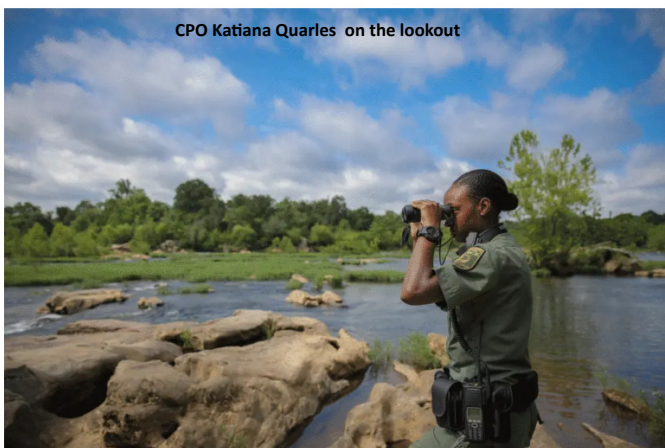
we bring this other skill to the table.”

These aren't just opinions. They are borne out by forty years of research showing women have a less authoritarian style of policing, are better communicators, and are less reliant on physical force than their male counterparts. More importantly, female officers are less likely to escalate volatile confrontations. It is a scenario I watch play out during my ride along with Officer Nevel.

We are out at Windmill Point, in the driveway of a hunter who violated regulations by transporting his deer home to process before tagging it. From the front passenger seat of the officer's SUV, I can hear his voice rising. Nevel continues to talk in a soothing voice, even when he shouts about how much he hates game wardens. When he finally winds down enough to take a breath, she responds sweetly, “Now sir, that's not nice. I don't feel that way about you.”

His anger evaporates. He even gives Nevel a tip on a poacher after receiving his ticket.

The same level of professionalism and heart to serve are apparent in all nine of the female



officers. They take enforcing the law seriously, but they strive to execute their duty with both humor and compassion. It is a credo summed up best by Officer Krista Adams.

“The goal at the end, regardless of the interaction—even if I'm writing someone a summons—is to leave them with a smile.”



Ann Eichenmuller is a freelance writer and the author of two nautical mystery novels. She lives along Virginia's Rappahannock River where she and husband Eric sail Avalon, a Morgan Out Island. This article won a Merit Award from Boating Writers International

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