

Virginia



Conservation Police

CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

CONSERVATION
POLICE

Annual
Report
2022

Our History



ON May 14, 1903, the Virginia General Assembly enacted legislation, during a special session, to establish a statewide system of wildlife law enforcement officers to deal specifically with wildlife crime. From that point through 2007, these officers were called game wardens, now known as Conservation Police Officers. (Visit: <https://dwr.virginia.gov/conservation-police/history/> to read about our full history protecting Virginia's wildlife)



TODAY'S Conservation Police Officers are highly motivated, independent, and well-trained members of the law enforcement community. We are often called upon by federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to assist with various enforcement endeavors, due in part to their ability to deal with a complex array of issues in an expedient and professional manner. Whether working a youth fishing day, tracking a violent offender over rough terrain or providing law enforcement services in the wake of a natural disaster, Conservation Police Officers are always ready and willing to serve.

Conservation Police Officers are fully certified law enforcement 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 also conduct investigations and cross state lines when violations of federal wildlife laws have been committed.

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.

Conservation Police Officer (CPO) 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



Recently, I had the privilege of welcoming the graduates of our 12th Basic Academy, who now will complete their training in the field and begin service to our resources and public. These events are always among our most proud, and I'm looking forward to the many accomplishments that the members of this year's class will have as their careers progress.

As that graduation ceremony was proceeding, the recruitment of our next class of Conservation Police Officers was coming to a close, with over 700 applicants. That Academy will hopefully see the agency reach its current capacity of 182 sworn officers, which has been a goal of the last several years. Recruitment and retention have been key considerations in the law enforcement field, and no different here at DWR. We have been working to not only train the best, but also to position the agency to remain competitive with other agencies while staying within the bounds dictated by available

funding. This will remain a key focus of the agency moving forward.

We are currently leading the way in establishing the North American Wildlife Law Enforcement Accreditation (NAWLEA) program. While it may be hard to believe, currently only 4 (including Virginia) of 50 states have fish and wildlife law enforcement agencies are accredited through either their state accrediting bodies or CALEA. And of course, these other programs are not tailored to the special circumstances that surround conservation law enforcement. NAWLEA will fix that, establishing a uniform set of policies and practices that best fit the nature of our work. This will help build public trust and support for the work that all in conservation are committed to, allow the participating agencies to share best practices, and strengthen enforcement of conservation laws. Of course, there will be individual benefits to each of the participating agencies, but I'm particularly proud of the leadership being exhibited by our folks in this effort and what it will mean for fish and wildlife law enforcement nationally.

Day in and day out, our Conservation Police Officers continue to be an example of the best that our Commonwealth has to offer. I hope that you enjoy this year's Annual Report and the brief highlights it provides of the quality and benefits of their work, 365 days a year.

Ryan Brown

Executive Director

Message from the Colonel

In my second full year as Colonel, I believe we have made great strides of coming out of the woods and off the water to be seen and heard by those less familiar with what we do. Hopefully this will lead to a greater appreciation and support for the wildlife and public safety services we offer each and every day to the Commonwealth. As evident by our 120 years of dedication as protectors and passion as ambassadors, I know there is no one better trained and suited than us.

I generally do not spend much time looking back on the initiatives implemented and past accomplishments as I am more focused on the future (currently working on the development of a VCP Relevancy Plan). However, the purpose of the VCP 2022 Annual Report is to look at that specific year in retrospect, so here is a list gathered from our monthly Rollcall Newsletters:

Governor Youngkin 74th Inauguration Parade, as well as assisting the Capitol Police and Richmond Police Department with related security at both this event and on Lobby Day.

New training initiative, called Game Warden Experience, designed to focus on traditional boots-on-the-ground techniques using hands-on approach over multiple days in the field.

Development of beard and updated grooming standards, along with the issuance of new firearms, outer carriers, and uniforms from recommendations of SMEs and field trials.

Implemented UAV Drone Program through the Employee Suggestion Program with a workgroup that developed a comprehensive program with training and certification.

Fourth Annual VCP Awards Ceremony combined with the Basic / Modified Academy Graduation was an opportunity to formally recognize 44 officers and staff members. This included 16 Basic and 6 Modified Graduates of our Conservation Police 11th Academy.

Established the North American Wildlife Law Enforcement Accreditation (NAWLEA) Program, by creating the Program Standards Manual and NAWLEA Board By-Laws, which will lead to improved quality public service, networking, collaboration, and credibility.



Implementation of the New VCP Command Structure with a dedicated “proactive” purpose for each rank: Colonel = Provide Strategic Direction and Vision; Major = Align · Empower · Forecast; Captain = Develop Best Practices and Administer Programs (Section); Lieutenant = Advocate and Facilitate (Region); added the new position of First Sergeant = Lead and Coordinate Operations (Area); and Sergeant = Coach and Mentor (District).

Implementation of the VCP Career Progression Program (CPP), designed to advance those nonsupervisory sworn Conservation Police Officers (CPOs), including K9 CPOs and Special Agents, to higher levels with seven baseline salary increases for a total of 45%.

DWR, DCR and MRC Law Enforcement Static Display / Boat Operations which was attended by the Secretaries of Natural & Historic Resources and Public Safety & Homeland Security as well as some of the Governor’s Staff and members of the General Assembly.

NASBLA Officer Water Survival Course (OWS) became part of our training portfolio due to working in varied environments and the likelihood that we may end up in the water.

VCP had a prominent role in the Governor’s Summit on Rural Prosperity to include a booth that was set-up directly by the main door and provided numerous vessels for river tours.

Revised residence requirements to better accommodate our field staff that are looking for promotional opportunities at the manager ranks without having to relocate.

Flippo-Gentry WMA Dedication Ceremony where we honored and remembered our last two fallen officers, Allen Flippo and Donald Gentry who 50 years ago this year lost their lives in a tragic plane crash together while patrolling for those engaged in illegally spotlighting deer. Their End of Watch came on December 19, 1972. They gave everything they had as “Protectors of Wildlife and Natural Resources”. The Board of Wildlife Resources had passed a resolution on March 24, 2022, that approved the renaming of the Parker’s Branch WMA to the Flippo-Gentry WMA in Sussex County. A great number of fallen officer family members and friends were in attendance along with retirees who had served with them.

You will see certainly some pictures and stories in this report that highlight these efforts of many officers and staff to continually move us forward in our “Pursuit of Excellence”. We can not be successful without their significant contributions and sacrifices in family/work life balances due to increased demands for our public safety

services combined with historically low staffing levels.

We continue to offer “Quality Public Service” at very high standards thanks to our VCP Officers and LE Staff. This year to streamline operations, we added the Permits shop to the Law Enforcement Division. As an organization that desires to be an “Employer of Choice”, we spent this year wisely implementing new initiatives and advocating for our dedicated and passionate employees. The importance of developing our officers and staff can not be overstated, in fact this year we saw the conclusion of our first ever VCP Leadership Development Program (LDP); Cohort 1 completed this two year program along with their capstone project.

Within these pages of this annual report, you will see many of our accomplishments where it is evident that we are the “Protectors of Wildlife and Natural Resources” as well as those who want to enjoy the great outdoors and all that it has to offer. It is absolutely my honor and privilege to be the Chief of our Law Enforcement Division. I am confident we will develop ourselves to be even more successful as public servants and will be looked on as an example of excellence.

Colonel John J. Cobb,
Chief of Law Enforcement



Message from the Operations Major

The annual report serves as an excellent opportunity for us to reflect on what we accomplished the prior year and assess whether we met our goals. Well folks, I am here to tell you that based on my review, the law enforcement division knocked it out of the park! The quality and quantity of work produced is a direct reflection of the incredible staff, sworn and civilian, that we are so fortunate to employ. The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources is certainly a Premier Wildlife Agency.



A primary focus for our Division in 2022 was restructuring the chain-of-command within the Operations Section. The key to this restructuring effort was the addition of the first sergeant position to our ranks. We found ourselves in a unique position where approximately 50%, or more of our field officers have less than 5 years of service. We also determined that our sergeants were overtasked with administrative duties, and we lacked appropriate oversight of complex incidents and investigations due to our geographical challenges. We really needed our sergeants working in the field, alongside their officers and serving as coaches and mentors. I am happy to report that we were successful in filling seven of the eight First Sergeant positions and plan to readvertise the unfilled position in 2023. These first sergeants hit the ground running and we have already seen tremendous benefit to our operations.

In addition to adding the First Sergeant position to our ranks, we repurposed our field Captain’s position. Instead of four Captains, we now have two, with each one overseeing two of the four regions and our Lieutenants now serve as the regional law enforcement manager. The purpose of this reorganization was to create more consistency in operations across the division and utilize the field Captains to assist with the review and implementation of best practices. With the addition of the eight First Sergeant positions and other separations, we found ourselves running a significant number of promotional processes. In 2022, we promoted a total of 18 sworn positions into a new role. I am not sure if this is a record for the division, but if it is not, it has to be close.



I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the staff members that were promoted in 2022. The fact that they are willing to make the sacrifices necessary to serve as a leader within this organization or, for some of them, expand their level of influence by taking another step up the ladder is commendable. Regardless of where they are in their career, they all started out full of vigor and passion; determined to make a difference and to leave things just a little better than how they found them; knowing that the only thing they were entitled to is an honest paycheck in a very noble profession. For those who have been recently promoted, not much has changed; their passion and

commitment to excellence is ever present.

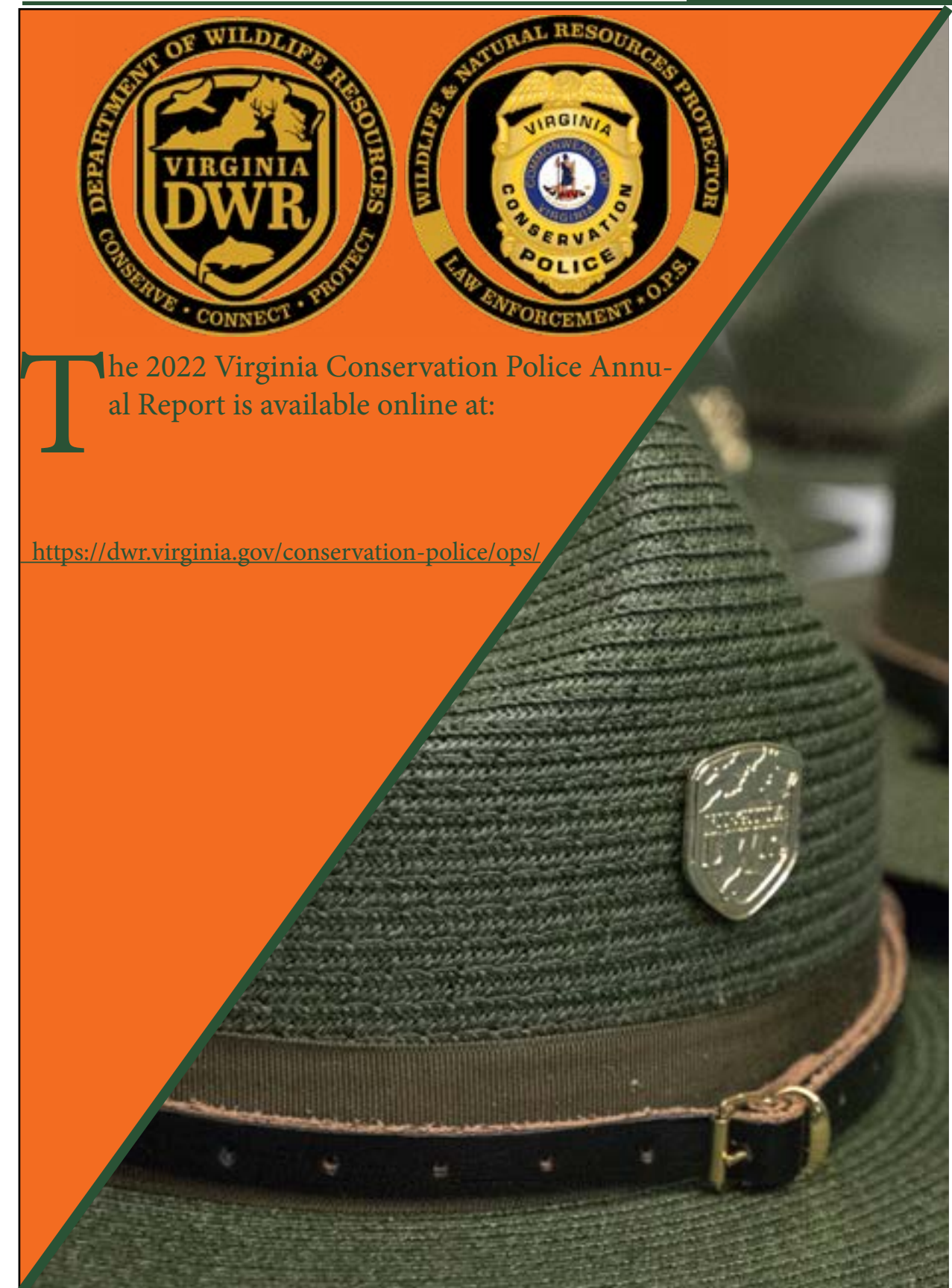
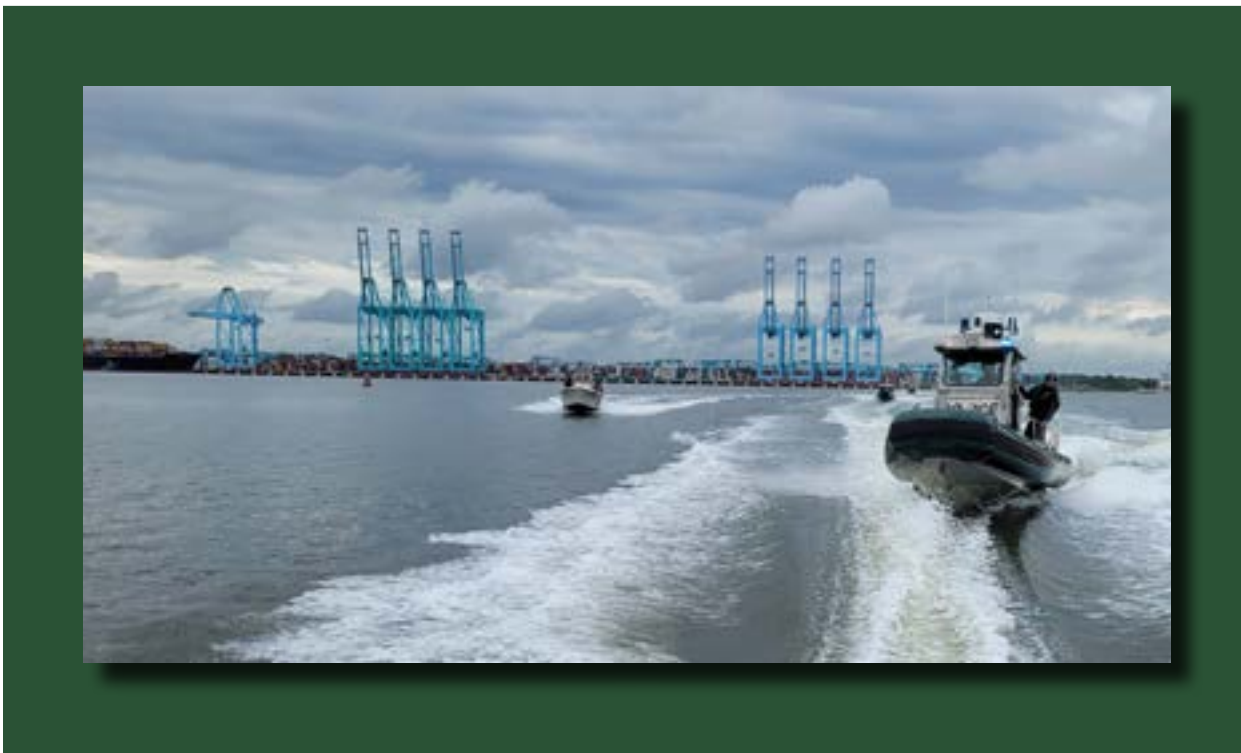
As law enforcement professionals, we have been through some very difficult times over the last few years. The profession we have devoted our professional lives to was in turmoil and under incredible scrutiny. During this time, we lost a lot of really good officers for various reasons. However, we learned a lot. The development of thoughtful, effective police leadership is critically important in creating a better culture of policing. Quality police leadership needs to be by design, not by chance. The communities we serve deserve policing that is fair, equitable and free of all biases and discrimination.

Well folks, it's not all doom and gloom. The sun has started to rise over the horizon, and we have a young corps of officers standing at the ready; they are ambitious, energized, passionate and hungry for leadership and direction. These young officers want to be led, so we will lead them.

Remember, comfort is the enemy of progress. Discomfort forces us to act. It pushes us to change our environment and make improvements. If you become too comfortable, you stop aiming for something better.

"The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant." —Max DePree

Major Ryan M. Shuler,
Deputy Chief of Law Enforcement



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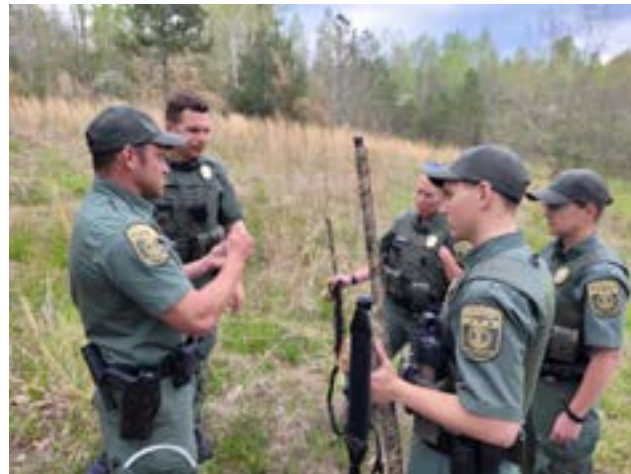


1.0 Mission Summary

Virginia Conservation Police Officers operate within the Law Enforcement Division of the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR). The central objective of the Law Enforcement Division is to uphold law and order, ensuring the enforcement of both criminal and regulatory statutes in an unbiased and just manner. This involves not only enforcing laws but also conducting educational outreach to foster voluntary adherence and bolster public awareness and support for the state's wildlife, fisheries, and boating regulations. Collaborating seamlessly with other divisions within the agency, the Law Enforcement Division contributes to fulfilling the broader mission of the organization while delivering prompt and efficient services to Virginia's citizens in a highly professional manner.



Comprising a team of 147 dedicated Conservation Police Officers, the focus of their patrols revolves around upholding Virginia’s wildlife, fishing, and boating laws. These officers deploy specialized law enforcement methodologies and equipment to encourage compliance, combat criminal activities, and safeguard public safety. Their expertise and professionalism often lead them to assist federal, state, and local agencies in various enforcement undertakings. From conducting Hunter Education classes to navigating challenging terrains while pursuing violent offenders, these officers exhibit unwavering commitment to serving the Commonwealth’s residents. The colossal task of preserving Virginia’s extensive natural resources demands dedication. The state encompasses 95 counties, 38 independent cities, and a vast land area spanning 39,490 square miles. In 2022, Virginia’s population was estimated at 8,683,619.



The state’s topography, ranging from coastal shores to rolling Piedmont hills and the towering Blue Ridge Mountains, mirrors the diversity of its populace. Explorers can venture along 371 rivers and creeks, as well as 27 major lakes, while accessing 230 boat ramps provided by the DWR for public water access. With over 3,500 miles of trout streams, including 2,900 miles of untamed trout waters, Virginia beckons trout anglers. Those drawn to hunting and outdoor pursuits can immerse themselves in over 1.6 million acres

of National Forest land within the state. Furthermore, Virginia hosts 24 State Forests encompassing over 68,626 acres, overseen by the Virginia Department of Forestry, and 46 Wildlife Management Areas spanning more than 203,000 acres, managed by the DWR.



2.0 Administrative

2.1 Staffing

As of the conclusion of 2022, the Law Enforcement Division comprised a team of 147 Conservation Police Officers. This inclusive roster consisted of 108 field officers operating in non-supervisory roles, 19 Sergeants, 7 First Sergeants, 4 Lieutenants, 5 Captains, 3 Majors, and 1 Colonel. These individuals were duly certified by the Department of Criminal Justice Services, granting them the legal authority to enforce the entirety of Virginia’s laws.

Table 1: Law Enforcement Staffing from 2018 to 2022

DESCRIPTION	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
CPO (Recruit and non-supervisory)	130	121	113	117	108
SERGEANT	26	22	21	26	19
FIRST SERGEANT	-	-	-	-	7
LIEUTENANT	5	6	6	6	4
CAPTAIN	6	6	3	3	5
MAJOR/COLONEL	2	2	3	3	4
SWORN SUBTOTAL	169	157	146	155	147
DISPATCH	9	9	12	11	14
ADMIN/OFFICE - FULL-TIME	7	7	8	9	9
PART-TIME	3	4	6	-	3
IT SUPPORT	1	1	1	1	1
SUPPORT SUBTOTAL	20	21	27	27	27
TOTAL SWORN/SUPPORT (FULL-TIME)	189	178	173	173	174

In addition to their state-level responsibilities, these officers held the designation of Deputy US Fish and Wildlife Special Agents. This allowed them to carry out investigative actions, even across state borders, in cases involving violations of federal wildlife regulations. To enhance their operational efficiency, the Law Enforcement Division benefited from the contributions of 24 full-time and 3 part-time civilian personnel. This support team encompassed roles such as dispatchers, administrative assistants, asset managers, records custodians, and IT personnel. For a comprehensive view of staffing trends, please refer to Table 1, which illustrates the headcount of both full-time sworn officers and support staff over the course of the last five years.

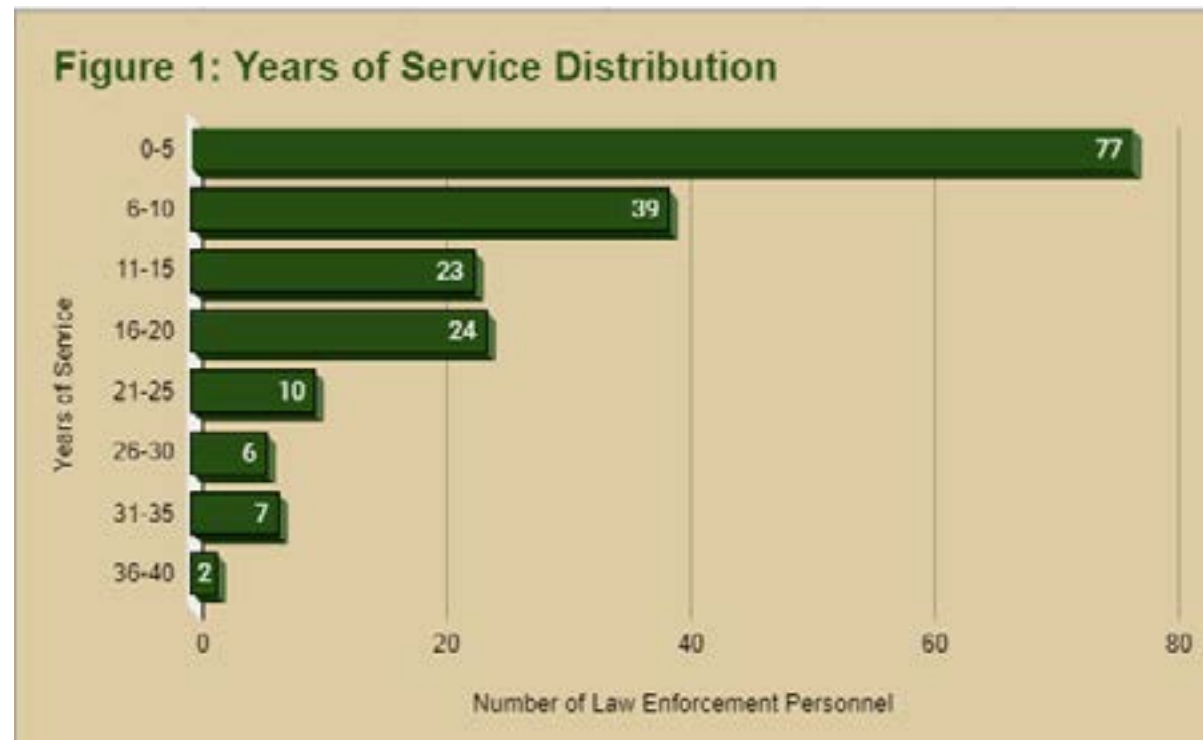
2.2 Years of Service (2022)

At the end of 2022, the Law Enforcement Division had 171 full-time and three part-time employees. Figure 2 shows a five-year incremental breakdown of how long these employees have been with DWR.

Table 2 lists the names of the Law Enforcement personnel that have reached years of service milestones in 2022.

Table 2: Law Enforcement Personnel Years of Service Milestones (2022)

5 YEARS	15 YEARS	25 YEARS	30 YEARS
	Master CPO Sarah Druy	Master CPO Dallas Neel	
	Master CPO Daniel Eller		
	Master CPO Joseph Williams		
	F/Sgt. Brandon Woodruff		
	F/Sgt. Tim Dooley		
	F/Sgt Jessica Fariss		
	Master CPO Eric Plaster		
	Master CPO Steven Bratton		
	Master CPO Eric Dotterer		



2.3 Budget

While the majority of this annual report predominantly delves into discussions centered around calendar year reporting, it's vital to recognize the discrepancy with regard to budgetary considerations. The budget cycles of state entities, particularly the Law Enforcement Division, adhere to a fiscal year framework spanning from July 1st to June 30th. In light of this, we present an overview of the Law Enforcement Division's budget over the past four fiscal years: FY23 (July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023), FY22 (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022), FY21 (July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021), and FY20 (July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020).

Table 3: Budget

Law Enforcement Budget	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
Personnel Costs	\$16,195,852	\$16,574,540	\$16,050,771	\$18,423,614
Non-personnel Costs	\$3,948,906	\$3,659,611	\$4,588,549	\$5,180,614
Total	\$20,144,758	\$20,234,151	\$20,639,230	\$23,604,108

Did you know that the funding for Virginia's Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) primarily originates from sources other than Virginia's general tax revenue?

A significant portion of the financial support that aids our efforts in conserving wildlife and preserving habitats is derived from the public's investment in activities such as purchasing fishing and hunting licenses, tags, or stamps, registering boats, and contributing through a federal excise tax applied to firearms and ammunition.

Thanks to these sources of financial backing, we've successfully safeguarded numerous species and their habitats for over a century. However, the scope of our potential impact on Virginia's wildlife remains extensive and Virginia's Conservation officers play a critical role in the agencies mission. This is where your involvement becomes crucial. Regardless of whether you engage in hunting, fishing, boating, or simply cherish outdoor experiences, you have the opportunity to become an advocate for our cause. By supporting our initiatives or collaborating with us directly, you can play a pivotal role in becoming a steward of the outdoors.

A group of seven Game Wardens in green uniforms and hats stand in a forest, gathered around a large, white, rectangular stone monument. They are holding wooden poles that support the monument. The ground is covered with fallen leaves and some white plastic sheeting. The background shows a dense forest of trees with green and yellowing leaves.

Flippo-Gentry WMA Dedication

Dedication and persistence has been the trademark of those who wore our law enforcement badge and carried forward its uniquely special wildlife mission. We have been in an honorable profession since 1903 for nearly 120 years. 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. On October 20, 2022 the Parker's Branch WMA in Sussex County was renamed to the Flippo-Gentry WMA. To honor and remember the ultimate sacrifice of Allen Flippo and Don Gentry.

LEST WE FORGET



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. It was a Tuesday and the weather for the day was clear, good visibility, light winds, temps in the upper 40's to 50 degrees and a full moon directly overhead at midnight. 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. In the rented plane, a Piper PA-22, tail # N183A, was the pilot, Allen Flippo, age 26 and a former U.S. Army helicopter pilot who served in Vietnam, and was stationed in Virginia Beach and Donald 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 in September, 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 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 till 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 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, 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.



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.



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. There were indications that there was an inflight fire onboard the aircraft prior to it crashing.

3.0 Office of Professional Standards

The Office of Professional Standards (O.P.S.) is dedicated to upholding the highest standards of law enforcement practice, employing risk management principles to deliver exceptional quality service and foster public trust. To further this mission, we have established the O.P.S. Advisory Council, which plays a pivotal role in promoting and exemplifying our Professional Standards CREED within the Law Enforcement Division of the Department of Wildlife Resources.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS CREED

Our Virginia Conservation Police (VCP) adhere to a comprehensive two-part creed that underscores professional standards. This creed expects Conservation Police Officers (CPOs) and all law enforcement personnel within our agency to conduct their public service with unwavering ethical values. Additionally, our management and supervision commit to benchmarking against best practices in their professional conduct.

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 is composed of a fifteen-member team, tasked with providing guidance and insight across recruitment/retention, training, and administrative investigations. This council's role is to present recommendations to senior leadership, drawing from the best practices of successful police operations. Furthermore, the council will consistently measure our public service delivery system against accepted standards, while spearheading a collaborative endeavor to address effectiveness challenges and liability issues. These efforts will be fueled by agency staff and resources.

"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 review 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



3.1 Citizen Feedback System

On May 25, 2018, a centralized Citizen Feedback System and associated workflow were implemented, coinciding with the official launch of the Office of Professional Standards (O.P.S.) website: dwr.virginia.gov/ops. This system was strategically established within the Law Enforcement Division to effectively gather, monitor, and address diverse forms of citizen feedback, all geared towards enhancing the quality of public service. To facilitate this process, both comprehensive and concise printed cards were distributed to Officers and Staff, enabling them to solicit feedback from the public. Ensuring that feedback was handled appropriately, specific Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were introduced to guide different positions in the process.

In terms of recognizing Officer Commendations, the feedback system has played a pivotal role in significantly amplifying the collection of positive interactions and experiences shared by the public regarding our officers and staff. In fact, since the inception of this new system up until the completion of its first year (2018), we observed an impressive surge of 286% in the number of commendations received. These valuable records are now meticulously archived and maintained by the Office of Professional Standards, ensuring their accessibility and preservation.

In Calendar Year 2022:

- Recorded 114 Total Citizen Feedbacks
- Maintained a 5 to 1 ratio of Officer Commendations to Officer Complaints

Officer Commendations:

- 77 total

○ Region I – 14	○ Region IV – 14
○ Region II – 35	○ Special Ops – 3
○ Region III – 8	○ HQ (Dispatch)- 3

Officer Complaints:

- 14 total
- Enforcement action-related complaints were the most common
- Region I - 4; Region II - 4; Region III - 1; Region IV - 4; and Special Ops / HQ's - 1

Final Dispositions:

- 2 Withdrew or Failed to cooperate with investigation
- 5 Resolved in Preliminary Inquiry/NFA
- 4 Unsubstantiated
- 3 Exonerated/Acted within Policy

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

The Employee Suggestion Program serves the purpose of translating a specific segment of the Professional Standards Creed related to “management best practices” into actionable initiatives. This primarily involves fostering an “inclusive, diverse, and cohesive team environment,” with a focus on “employing proactive and collaborative efforts to enhance effectiveness and reduce risk.” This objective is achieved by directing attention towards and establishing functional work groups that address issues capable of augmenting field operations. Of greater significance, this approach harnesses the expertise, creativity, and innovation of field-level CPOs and Law Enforcement Staff to drive improvements across the entire division.

Every employee within the DWR Law Enforcement Division is afforded the opportunity to contribute constructive suggestions through the Employee Suggestion Program. The O.P.S. Advisory Council plays a pivotal role in facilitating this feedback process, which can occur in either of two ways: First, the council may provide the name of a designated project leader to whom feedback can be submitted. Alternatively, employees can submit an Employee Suggestion Form directly to the council for consideration, potentially leading to its incorporation as a new project.

When a proposed project garners the interest of senior leadership and the necessary resources are available, the initiative advances from a conceptual phase to an active status. In such cases, those who offered the suggestion will be contacted, and a collaborative team will be assembled to work on the project. This team collaboratively strives to achieve the implementation target date set by the O.P.S. Advisory Council.

From inception to 12/31/2022:

- 41 Projects and work teams created, which has led to the completion of 34 projects, using group creativity and innovation to build upon those employee initiatives

Figure 3: Employee Suggestion Program

3.3 Peer Support Team

Virginia Conservation Police Peer Support team members were able to assist their co-workers as things began to open once again. The peer team members responded to critical incidents as well as offered a listening ear to employees that faced challenges throughout the year. Figure 2 shows the number of contacts broken down into general categories. The Virginia Conservation Peer Support team began building relationships with other Peer Support teams in the Commonwealth, specifically the Virginia Law Enforcement Assistance Program.

The inception of VALEAP in 2008, catalyzed by the tragic events of the 2007 Virginia Tech mass shooting and the 2006 Fairfax County Police Sully Station incident, demonstrated a proactive response to the mental health and well-being needs of law enforcement personnel. Since its inception, VALEAP has diligently worked to provide vital Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) services to law enforcement officers facing the toll of traumatic incidents. I am pleased to note that VALEAP's commitment to its mission has been evident through the successful facilitation of more than 1,100 officers from over 90 Virginia agencies participating in 29 Peer-led Critical Incident Seminars (PCIS) events, in addition to collaborations with 22 federal and out-of-state agencies. These accomplishments underscore the program's pivotal role in shaping a resilient law enforcement community.

The strategic alliance between VALEAP and the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources Conservation Police holds immense promise in reinforcing the peer support network and bolstering critical incident response capabilities for law enforcement officers across Virginia. The establishment of the Conservation Police Peer Support Team in 2009 within the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources has been ever-growing and this partnership fosters an environment of understanding, empathy, and resilience among law enforcement personnel. As we embark on this collaborative journey, I am confident that the collective efforts of VALEAP and the Conservation Police Peer Support Team will substantially impact law enforcement officers' lives. By synergizing their expertise, resources, and experiences, VALEAP is poised to set new standards in providing comprehensive peer support services.

3.4 Accreditation

Dedication to the excellence of the VLEPSC Program *A Continuous Pursuit of Excellence*

Marking the completion of its inaugural term as a Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission (VLEPSC) Accredited Agency in the course of 2022, Accreditation has not only become a hallmark but an integral approach for Virginia's Conservation Police Officers. Adhering to the best practice standards established by the commission has become a fundamental aspect of their daily

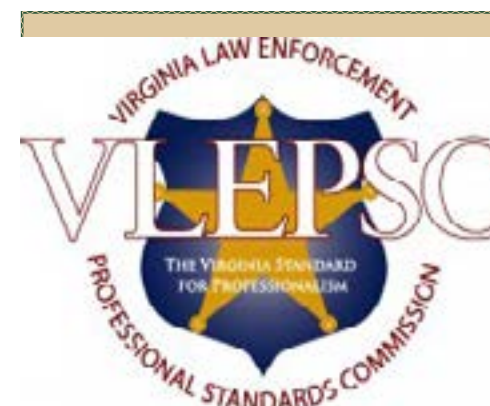


enforcement activities, ensuring the adherence to Virginia's laws and regulations across the diverse landscapes of the commonwealth.

The commitment of the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) to actively participate in the VLEPSC program is steadfast. Captain Rob Ham's active involvement as the Vice-President of the Virginia Law Enforcement Accreditation Coalition, along with the contribution of Retired Chief Bobby Mawyer, who serves as a part-time accreditation specialist, reinforces DWR's dedication to this cause. Moreover, Retired Chief Mawyer's role as the past president of the organization underscores the depth of experience and commitment within the team.

Further strengthening their engagement, Captain Ham represents state-accredited agencies on the VLEPSC standards review committee. This pivotal role ensures a consistent and ongoing evaluation of Virginia's standards, making certain they remain pertinent and responsive to the evolving needs of agencies across the Commonwealth.

Captain Ham and Retired Chief Mawyer serve as esteemed VLEPSC assessors, extending their expertise to assist the commission in accrediting agencies. This active engagement underscores DWR's unwavering commitment to bolster the success of VLEPSC law enforcement agencies throughout the commonwealth. By fostering the adoption of best practices within their communities, DWR continues to champion the advancement of law enforcement standards, contributing to the overall betterment of the field.



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.

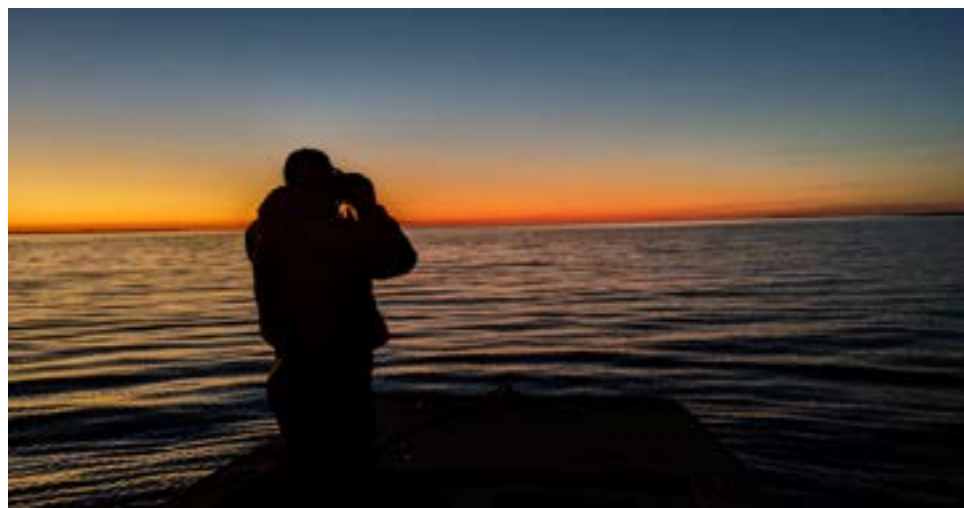


North American Wildlife Law Enforcement Accreditation (NAWLEA)

The North American Wildlife Law Enforcement Accreditation (NAWLEA) assumes a pivotal role within the domain of conservation law enforcement by steadfastly establishing and upholding contemporary standards that mirror the latest professional practices. Its fundamental objectives extend beyond enhancing the efficiency and efficacy of law enforcement services; they encompass a strategic approach to addressing and mitigating liability for both

the agency and its personnel. NAWLEA’s meticulous standards provide the foundation for an unwavering framework of accountability, ensuring that agencies and their staff remain resolutely answerable to the communities they serve. Through the integration of these crucial components, NAWLEA significantly contributes to the advancement and upholding of integrity within wildlife law enforcement practices across North America.

NAWLEA’s inception occurred under the umbrella of the South Eastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, driven by the vision to establish tailored best practices for conservation law enforcement. The official establishment of the NAWLEA board took place in October of 2022 in Dallas, Texas. At this juncture, Colonel John J. Cobb from the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources was selected by the South Eastern Chiefs to lead as the inaugural Chairman of the NAWLEA board, alongside chiefs from Florida, Missouri, South Carolina, and Texas. Captain Rob Ham was designated as the assistant program director of NAWLEA, and retired Chief Bobby Mawyer, also from the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, was chosen as one of two training coordinators for the program.



NASBLA Accreditation

A Continuous Pursuit of Excellence on the Waterways of Virginia



Virginia DWR continue to be active participants NASBLA accreditation program in 2022 by meeting or exceeded the program requirements as well as implementing training standards and performance task based upon NASBLA guidelines. This accreditation ensures readiness of the Virginia Conservation Police

Officer boat crews and their ability to conduct missions on our Virginia waterways safely and effectively. Having Virginia’s Conservation Police Officers trained to a United States Coast Guard and FEMA recognized standard creates seamless inter-agency operations within our maritime homeland security framework.



The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) through its Boat Operations and Training (BOAT) Program will provide its Consultation, Assessment, and Accreditation Process (CAAP) to an agency, department or unit,



of their maritime training policies, procedures, curricula, qualification process and documentation to ensure alignment with the BOAT Program National Standard, and interoperability with marine units across the country in the following applicable capabilities: Boat Crew Member, Boat Operator for Search and Rescue, Enhanced Vessel Operator, Tactical Operator, Pursuit Operator, Fire Boat Small, BUI, Accident Investigation, Small Vessel Radiological-Nuclear Detection Operator and any other discipline the National Director authorizes an agency to teach.

3.5 Recruitment

Throughout the year 2022, the Recruitment section of the Virginia Conservation Police was energetically engaged in the essential task of sourcing and selecting candidates for the upcoming class of Conservation Police Officers. The comprehensive recruitment efforts commenced with the initiation of recruitment for the 12th Basic Law Enforcement Academy early in the year. The team dedicated their time to engaging with potential applicants, actively reaching out through a range of avenues such as university visits, college outreach programs, and participation in outdoor expos and shows. These initiatives



were driven by the profound goal of identifying individuals who possess the qualities and commitment required to become the next natural resource protectors—those who would stand as protectors of the intricate balance of woodlands and waters, and the diverse ecosystems they entail. The recruitment process not only sought to identify candidates with the necessary skills and aptitude for law enforcement, but also individuals who share a genuine passion for conservation and an unwavering dedication to preserving the delicate harmony of Virginia’s natural resources. By engaging with potential recruits in diverse settings and contexts, the Recruitment section demonstrated a resolute commitment to ensuring that the ranks of the Conservation Police are enriched with

individuals who mirror the values and mission of safeguarding the state’s precious wildlife and ecological heritage

3.6 Training

11th Basic Law Enforcement Academy

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) Law Enforcement Academy graduated a new class of conservation police officers. On April 20th, 2022 The Honorable Heidi S. Barshinger, Clerk of the Henrico County Circuit Court, officially swore-in the new officers in the Greater Richmond



Convention Center. The 16 Basic Academy graduates completed an intensive training program that ran for 26 weeks. They will take up their assignments across the Commonwealth and proceed with field training under the direct supervision of field training officers. DWR’s 6 new lateral hire officers joined the Basic Academy Class in the ceremony. These previously certified Law Enforcement Officers attended the 11th Modified Academy for 12 weeks.



Navigating Excellence: The Marine Law Enforcement Training Program (MLETP)

In the realm of marine regulation, protection, and law enforcement, the critical role played by Officers and Agents cannot be understated. These dedicated individuals are tasked with safeguarding our aquatic ecosystems, ensuring compliance with maritime laws, and maintaining safety on the water. The Marine Law Enforcement Training Program (MLETP) stands as a cornerstone of their preparation, providing comprehensive and



specialized training that equips them for the unique challenges of their field.

The MLETP is a program designed to empower Officers and Agents from various agencies and organizations with the knowledge and skills essential for effective marine law enforcement. While their roles may vary, a common thread binds these professionals: a commitment to preserving the integrity of our marine environ-



ments and ensuring the safety of those who navigate them. The core of the MLETP lies in its carefully crafted curriculum, meticulously designed to cover all facets of marine law enforcement. The central focus is on nurturing proficiency in the operation of marine patrol vessels—a vital skill for Officers and Agents engaged in protecting and enforcing maritime regulations. The curriculum goes beyond vessel operation, encompassing a myriad of critical subjects.



The MLETP curriculum paints a vivid picture of the multifaceted training provided to participants. Key subjects include:

- Aids to Navigation: Understanding the markers and beacons that guide vessels safely through waterways.
- Chart Interpretation: Navigational charts are the backbone of marine navigation, and Officers are equipped to decipher them accurately.
- Marine Navigation: The art and science of navigating through varying water conditions and environments.
- Vessel Intercepts: *Techniques for safely and effectively stopping vessels for inspection and law enforcement purposes.
- Safety and Emergency Equipment: *Mastery of essential safety equipment and protocols ensures preparedness in crisis situations.
- Law Enforcement Operations: Participants delve into the specifics of law enforcement activities in the maritime domain.
- Electronic Navigation: Harnessing modern technology for accurate navigation.
- Emergency Procedures: Comprehensive training in handling emergency situations efficiently and effectively.

This is merely a glimpse into the extensive curriculum that arms Officers and Agents with the tools they need to excel in their roles.

The MLETP is not just about imparting knowledge; it's about cultivating a mindset of responsibility and stewardship toward our marine ecosystems. As participants delve into nautical terminology, maritime search and rescue strategies, and law enforcement water safety, they are instilled with the values that underpin their noble profession.

2022 Virginia Boating Incident Summary

- Number of Incidents = 87
- Number of Vessels Involved = 114
- Number of Injured Persons = 39
- Number of Fatalities = 17
- Alcohol was a known factor in 23% of fatal incidents.
- Canoes and kayaks were involved in 29% of fatal incidents.
- In 94% of fatal incidents no life jacket was worn
- Property Damage = \$448,962

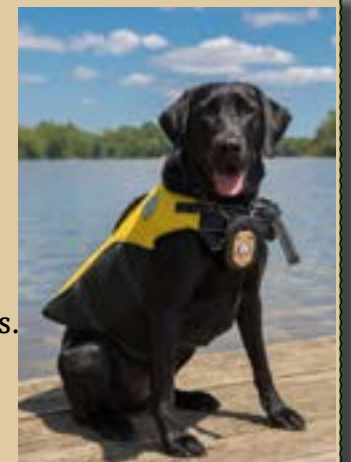


Figure 5: 2022 Virginia Boating Incident Summary

4.0 Law Support Services

4.1 Communication Center: 2022

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) continues to operate a 24 hour, 7 days a week Law Enforcement Communications Center. Our staffing levels have increased by 1 full time dispatch position bringing up the staffing to 11 full time dispatch positions and 2 supervisor positions. We also filled the position of Communications Manager.

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources Communications Center provides support throughout the entire Commonwealth, not only for all the DWR personnel, but also for the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) State Park Rangers. In addition, the Communications Center is used by the Virginia Department of Forestry as an emergency contact for high-risk situations.



Overall calls for service were up over 6% from 2021. From 50,136 calls created in 2021, to 53,235 calls in 2022, this trend continues as we move into the new year and can most likely be attributed to the recovery from the pandemic, weather, and other factors.

Lastly, the Communications Center, in coordination with the Office of Professional Standards, recognized the 2022 Dispatcher of the Year, Donna Byrd. Communications Officer Byrd joined the DWR Law Enforcement Division in 2020 with prior experience as a Communications Officer. Since beginning her career over 2 years ago she has demonstrated her wiliness to learn and was able to complete her training program early. Currently she is working on our records management projects, along with assisting with Bureau

and Outreach Division projects on her time off. Recently she volunteered to be a part of the CWD sampling in Hillsville, Virginia this fall. Donna is always displaying a cheerful attitude, which is immediately felt by everyone in the center and the units on the radio. She volunteers to cover vacancies that occur in the center to ensure that the Communications Center is fully staffed due to leave, sickness, or a need to adjust a schedule.

Table 4: Dispatch Summary 2018 to 2022

DESCRIPTION	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total CAD Calls for Service	48,442	58,734	57,409	50,134	53,235
Crimeline Reports	2,170	5,090	5,836	6,065	5,734
Environmental Issues/Fish Kills	205	206	185	225	243
Wildlife Nuisance/Permits/Injured related calls	5,932	6,748	5,185	4,734	4,493
CPO/Ranger Patrols	21,106	25,133	24,864	19,643	20,445
Hunt/Boat/Fish/Trapping Violation Type Calls	6,414	5,226	6,460	5,650	5,531
General / Traffic Violations	1,594	1,828	1,003	788	843
Service-Related Type Calls	2,757	3,994	3,287	3,098	4,241
Hunt Incident Reports	31	34	32	36	35
Boat Accident/Sinking/Drowning Reports	100	98	78	128	121
Distress/Overdue Hunters, Fishermen or Boaters	149	223	331	204	226
Accidents Involving DWR Persons/ Equipment	22	27	32	1	27
Criminal Investigations/Complaints	620	358	924	78	806
Stolen Property Reports/Investigations (Boat, other, etc.)	101	109	73	58	133
Abandoned or Recovered Boats	220	177	279	170	179

4.2 Records Program

As the Conservation Police entered 2022, the utilization of Central Square Technologies' Zuercher Suite (Zuercher) records management system continued to be the cornerstone of their crime data tracking efforts. Having completed its third year in use, the Zuercher system remained the primary resource for managing and analyzing crime-related information. This comprehensive product operates on a case-centric reporting model, providing the division with a powerful toolset that includes various functions and database groups: Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD), case management, Master Name database, and GEO validation capabilities.

The Law Records Program retained its pivotal role in managing the Records Management System (RMS) aspects, with a keen focus on system development, maintenance, and data accuracy. Serving as a vital source for data edits, Law Records played a significant role in ensuring the integrity of the information within

Table 5: Records Management System (RMS) Summary from 2018- 2022

RMS Summary	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
All Case Types*		10,933	9,538	7,937	8,574
Investigative Cases	5,419	8,412	6,602	5,345	6,027
Arrests	6,814	6,676	6,371	3,180	3,176



the system. A critical aspect of this role was adhering to the state of Virginia's mandate to submit offense records to the FBI via the Virginia State Police, utilizing the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS). This commitment to data accuracy extended further, as the division continued its contributions to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service's (NCIS) Law Enforcement Information

Exchange (LInX) system, enhancing collaboration in the law enforcement community.

A notable development in 2022 was the refinement and expansion of processes within Zuercher. The creation of specialized case types aimed to support other agency divisions in their data collection and program management endeavors. Each distinct case type was equipped with unique indicators, permission rights, data collection forms, and workflows tailored to specific user groups. This initiative included the establishment of a centralized method for user groups to request specific services

Table 6: Non-Offense Case types in 2022

Case Types (non-offense)	2020	2021	2022
Animal Rehabilitation	33	42	36
Boat Section	172	127	108
Foxhound Training Preserve	29	30	31
Licensed Shooting Preserve	125	14	22
Records Data Request	263	271	204
Shoot from Vehicle Permit	26	26	28
Waterway Marker	16	16	11
Wildlife Kill Permit/DCAP	2,219	2,015	2,029
Total Records	2,883	2,592	2,469



from officers in the field. Through this integrated tool, various groups harmoniously collaborated with the Dispatch center to initiate and manage requests for officer services.

These dedicated cases allowed group users to create individual cases for each service request, enabling direct communication with officers. The system's transparency provided user groups with a clear view of the progress of their requests, significantly streamlining the process and reducing the need for additional support from the Dispatch center. Notable agency functions integrated into this customized program included inspections for Boat HIN/Dealer, Wildlife Rehabilitation, Foxhound Training Preserves, Licensed Shooting Preserves, Shoot from the Vehicle Permits, and Wildlife Kill Permits/DCAP. Of these functions, the Wildlife Kill Permits/DCAP program

stood out for its complexity and integration of fragmented elements into a unified management tool. This initiative empowered various stakeholders, including wildlife

Table 7: Top 10 Arrest Charges Issued in 2022 by Conservation Police

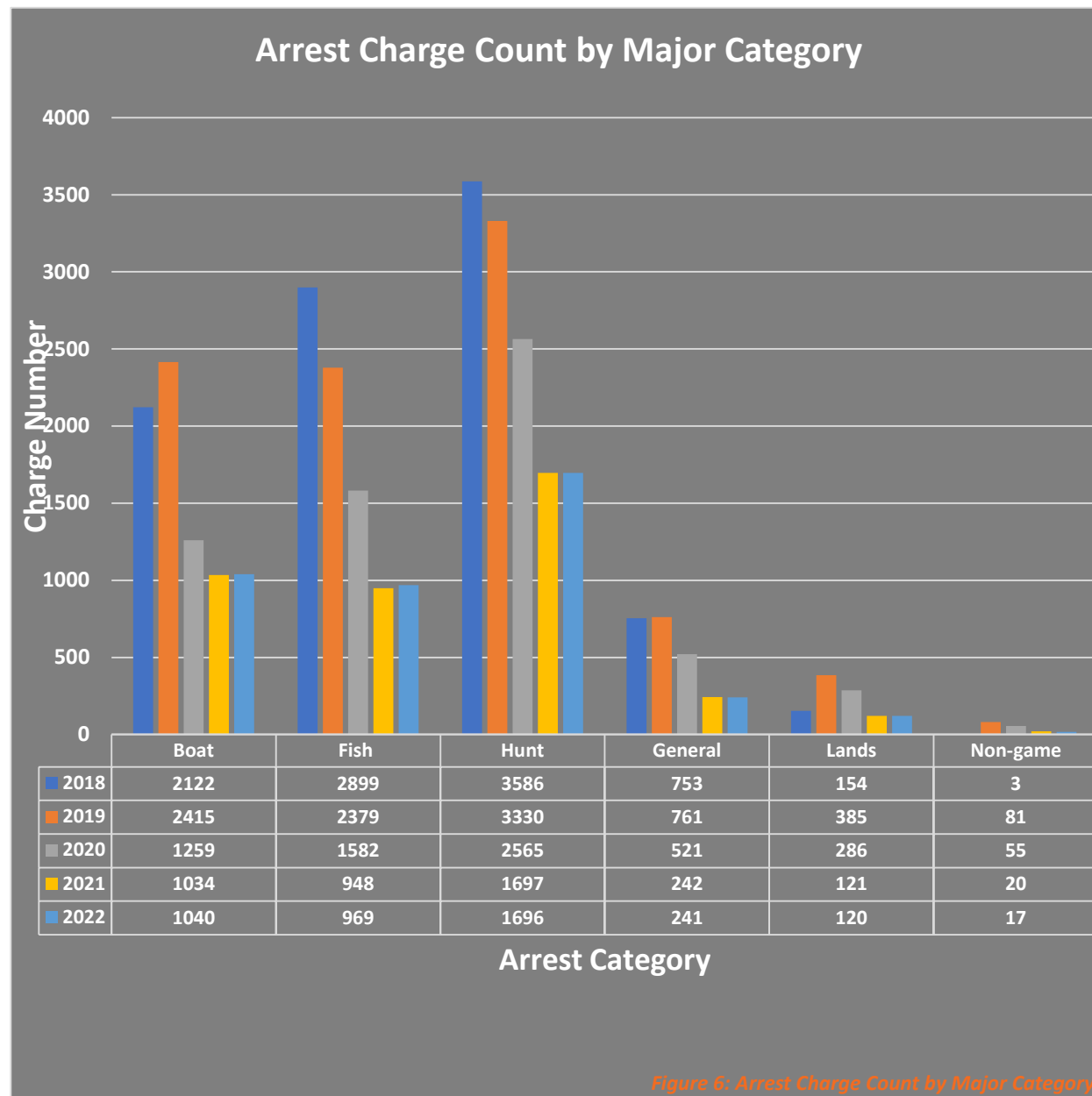
RANK	CODE DESCRIPTION	CODE	2022
1	LICENSE: FISH W/O FRESHWATER LICENSE	29.1-335(FRESH)	775
2	WATERCRAFT: PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES REQUIRED	4VAC15-430-30	362
3	TO HUNT OVER A BAITED AREA	18.2-132	167
4	TRESPASS: TRESPASS BY HUNTERS AND FISHERS	29.1-335(HUNT)	143
5	LICENSE: HUNT W/O LICENSE	29.1-521(4)	140
6	LICENSE: HUNT W/O DEER/TURKEY LICENSE	29.1-521(10)	115
7	GAME/FISH: TAKE OR ATTEMPT TO TAKE DURING CLOSED SEASON	29.1-335(DEER/TURKEY)	106
8	REGULATORY MARKERS AND AIDS TO NAVIGATION	4VAC15-370-50	97
9	HUNTING IN MANNER NOT PERMITTED BY LAW	29.1-550(i)	82
10	LICENSE: FISH W/O STOCKED TROUT LICENSE	29.1-335(TROUT)	77

personnel, officers, Complementary Workforce volunteers, and constituents, to access and contribute essential information to support the agency's mission.

The Zuercher system's database allowed for efficient querying of statutes by subcategories, facilitating analysis based on related factors such as trespassing, licenses, seasons, safety, and more. Notably, the top ten violations resulting in issued summonses in 2022 were indicative of these categories. While the top two violations

Table 8: RMS Arrest Charge Breakdown by Minor Category from 2018-2022

Charge Category	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
License Fish	2,359	1,810	1,126	812	1114
License Hunt *				422	639
Safety - Boat	1,474	1,619	907	793	674
Season - Hunt	1,397	1,257	1,017	654	650
Hunt - Safety *				252	179
Trespass	531	614	506	304	181
License - Boat	477	579	256	355	418
Traffic	391	414	271	159	206
Safety - Other	306	379	402	251	16
Season - Fish	254	288	207	131	173
Drug - Marijuana	204	155	53	36	4
Drug Other *				96	9
Littering	191	153	0	47	52
Firearm	159	142	105	415	69
Other	113	130	128	331	38
Alcohol - Other	106	94	60	115	63
Fraud	67	73	53	144	36
Alcohol - BUI	44	53	28	139	16
Alcohol - DUI	44	42	19	97	16
Damage	33	33	29	14	20
Elude/Impede	22	25	18	5	6
Larceny	14	14	17	78	15
Alcohol - HUI	4	12	4	0	1
Assault	2	6	5	3	9
Totals	8,192	7,892	5,211	5,653	4,604
* New Category 2021					



maintained their consistent ranking since 2015, there were shifts, with the Annual Access permit for Department-owned lands violations moving up three levels from its 2019 ranking. Additionally, Regulatory Markers and Aids to Navigation emerged as a new addition to the list, underscoring the system’s ability to adapt to evolving enforcement priorities.

Aligned with its commitment to data accuracy and collaboration, Conservation Police’s engagement with the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) program persisted in 2022. Through Virginia State Police’s Incident Based Reporting

Program (IBR), crime data from RMS continued to be submitted monthly in the required IBR format. Virginia State Police utilized this consolidated data to compile the annual Crime in Virginia report based on Uniform Crime Report (UCR) codes. Notably, the majority of Conservation Police’s enforcement efforts, as captured by the NIBRS system, fell under the UCR code 90Z, encompassing “All Other Offenses.” To provide a more focused lens on the agency’s mission and goals, the Law Division introduced major and minor categories, offering a structured framework to interpret and prioritize the diverse range of offenses falling under the 90Z designation.



As Conservation Police navigated the complexities of law enforcement in 2022, the Zuercher Suite continued to be an indispensable tool, evolving to meet the dynamic landscape of crime tracking, collaboration, and data management. With its capacity for customization, integration, and adaptability, Zuercher remains a driving force in supporting Conservation Police’s mission to uphold wildlife conservation and public safety.





4.2.1 Wildlife and Boat Revocations

Law Records is responsible for submitting wildlife revocations to the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact (IWVC) database, 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.

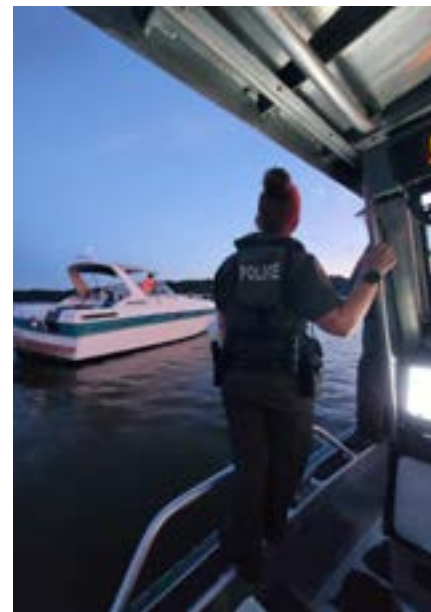


Table 9: Revocations entered into the Revocation Database from 2018 to 2022

Revocations Entered	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
VA Hunt	93	94	64	91	82
VA Fish	2	5	12	1	4
VA Boat	9	13	7	3	4
Total VA Revocations	104	112	83	95	90
Other State Revocations Ratified	7,246	5,591	5,470	4,693	4,626
TOTAL REVOCATIONS	7,350	5,703	5,553	4,788	4,716

4.2.2 Community Policing Data Collection

Effective July 1, 2020, the Virginia Department of State Police, Uniform Crime Reporting Unit began the collection of investigatory stop data based on the creation of the Community Policing Act. Updates to the original legislation were made per Chapter 37 of the 2020 Special Session I. Data from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021 include only those persons stopped while driving. Data from July 1, 2021 and on will contain all persons subject to an investigatory (nonconsensual) stop.



Table 10: Community Policing Data 2022

Reason	Arrest	Summons	No Action	Warning	Total
CFS	9	65	27	410	511
Check Point	0	3	9	23	35
Equipment Violation	1	8	10	127	146
Other	9	221	84	1328	1642
Terry Stop	2	12	4	36	54
Traffic Violation	4	99	13	213	329
Warrant Service	1	0	0	0	1
Total					2718

§ 52-30.2. Prohibited practices; collection of data.

- A. No State Police officer shall engage in bias-based profiling in the performance of his official duties.
- B. State Police officers shall collect data pertaining to (i) all investigatory motor vehicle stops, (ii) all stop-and-frisks of a person based on reasonable suspicion, and (iii) all other investigatory detentions that do not result in an arrest or the issuance of a summons to be reported into the Community Policing Reporting Database. State Police officers shall submit the data to their commanding officers, who shall forward it to the Superintendent of State Police.
- C. Each time a law-enforcement officer or State Police officer stops a driver of a motor vehicle, stops and frisks a person based on reasonable suspicion, or temporarily detains a person during any other investigatory stop, such officer shall collect the following data based on the officer's observation or information provided to the officer by the driver: (i) the race, ethnicity, age, gender of the person stopped, and whether the person stopped spoke English; (ii) the reason for the stop; (iii) the location of the stop; (iv) whether a warning, written citation, or summons was issued or whether any person was arrested; (v) if a warning, written citation, or summons was issued or an arrest was made, the warning provided, violation charged, or crime charged; (vi) whether the vehicle or any person was searched; and (vii) whether the law-enforcement officer or State Police officer used physical force against any person and whether any person used physical force against any officers.

Figure 7: Community Policing Data 2022

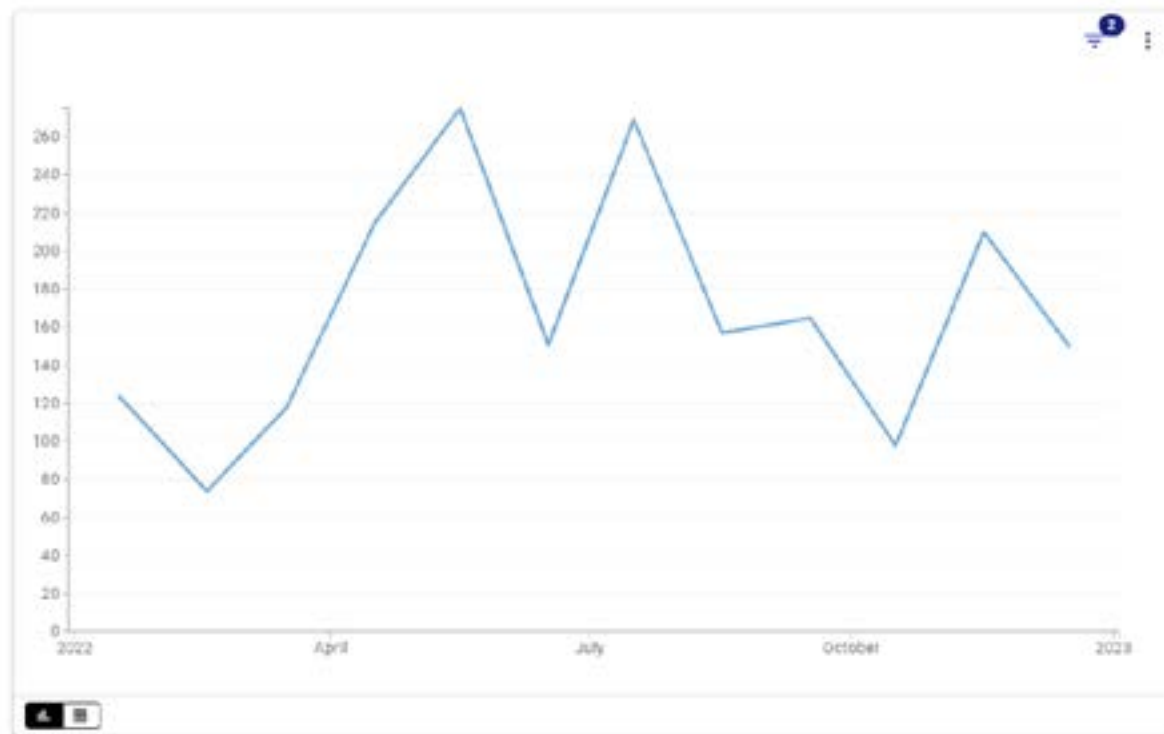


Figure 7 Con't: Community Policing Data 2022

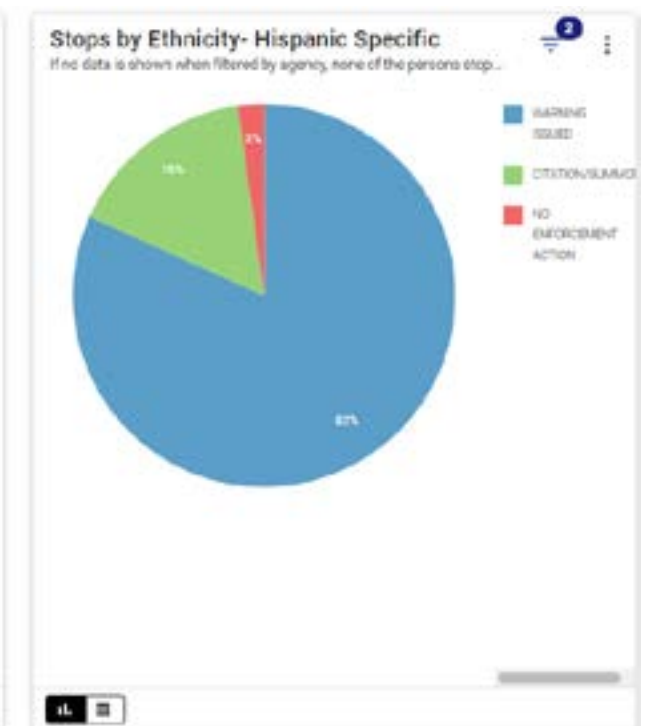
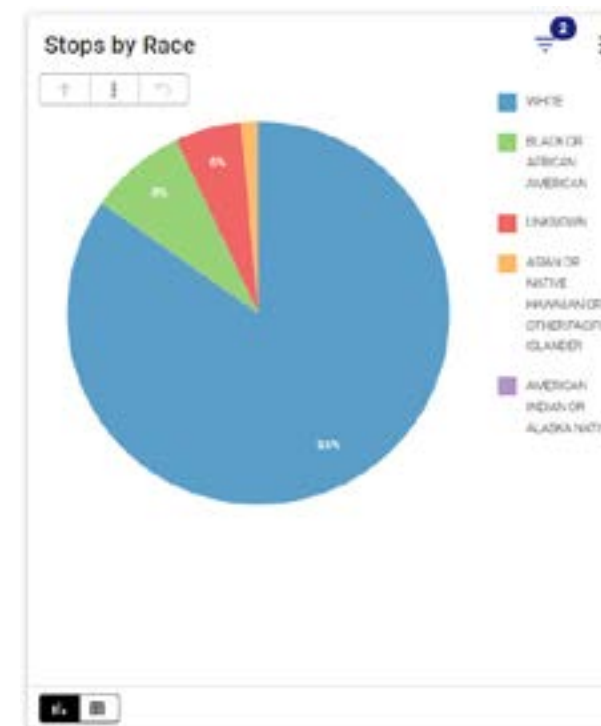
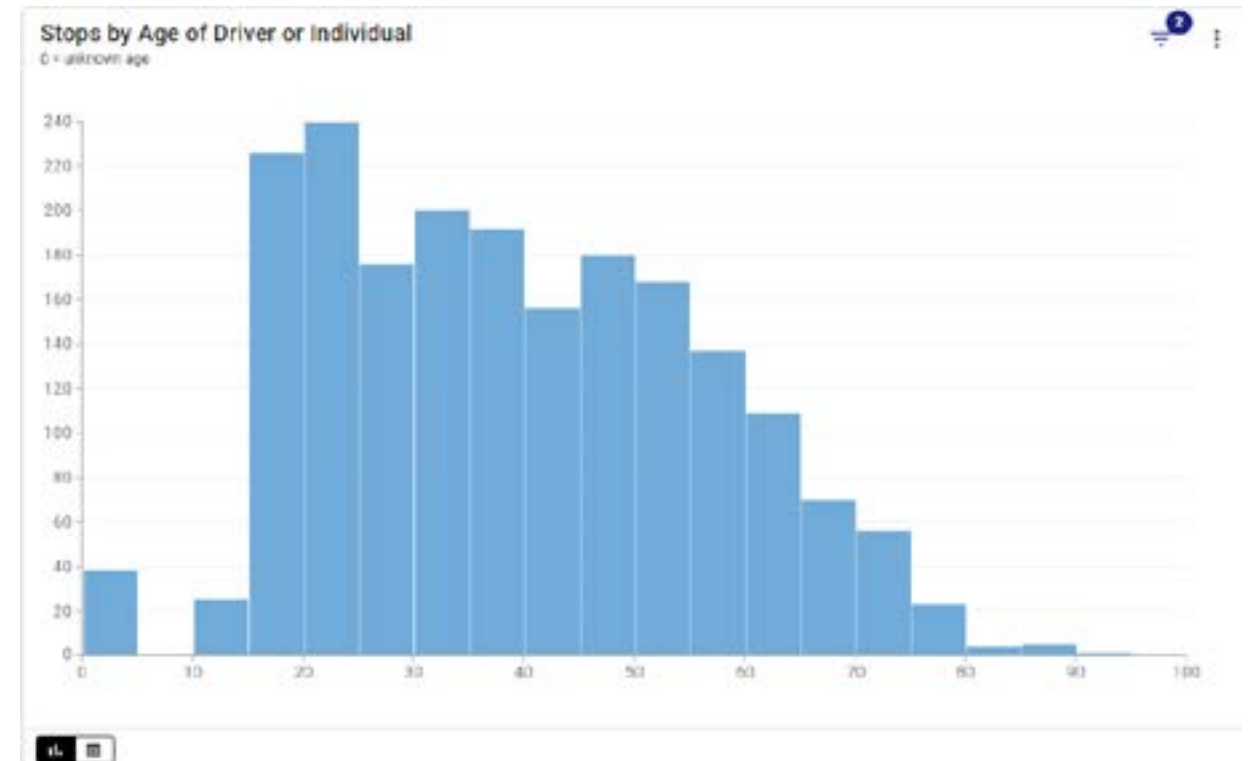


Figure 7 Con't: Community Policing Data 2022



Physical Force Used by Officer



Physical Force Used by Subject

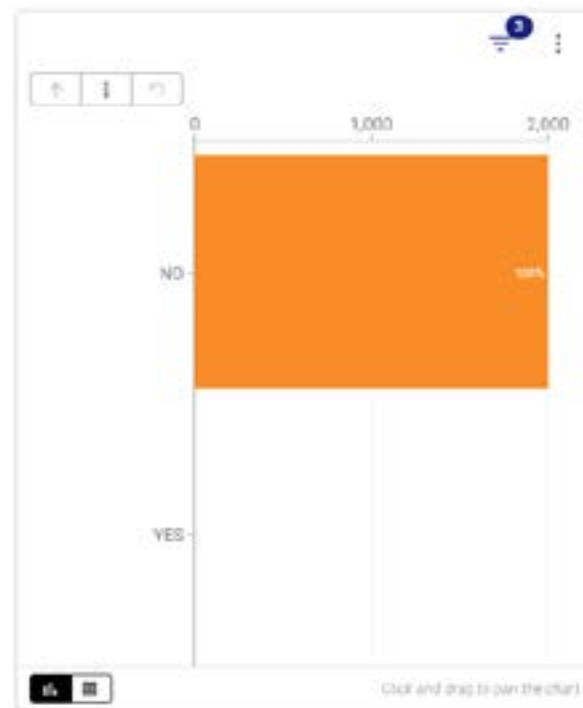
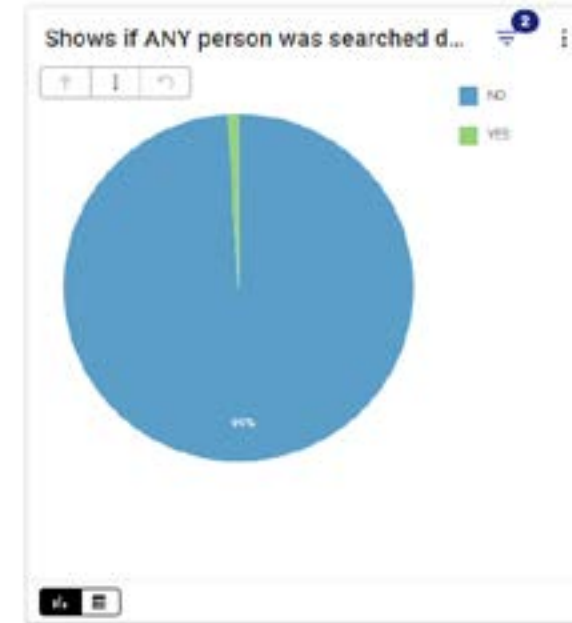


Figure 7 Con't: Community Policing Data 2022

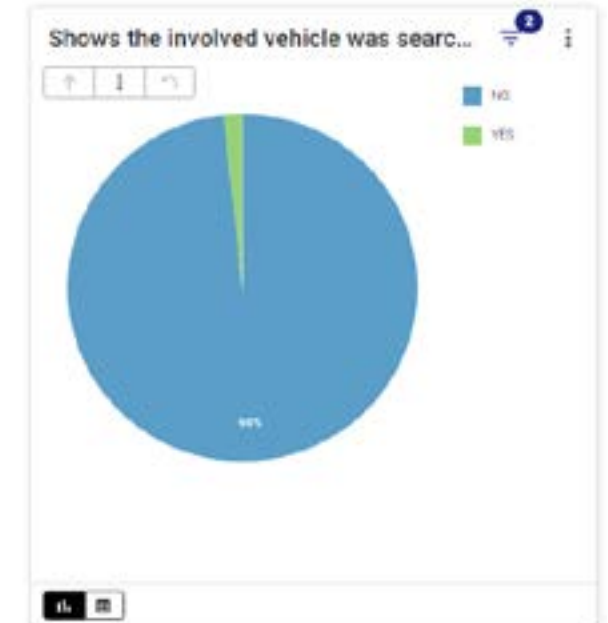
Persons Searched

(Driver or Passenger)



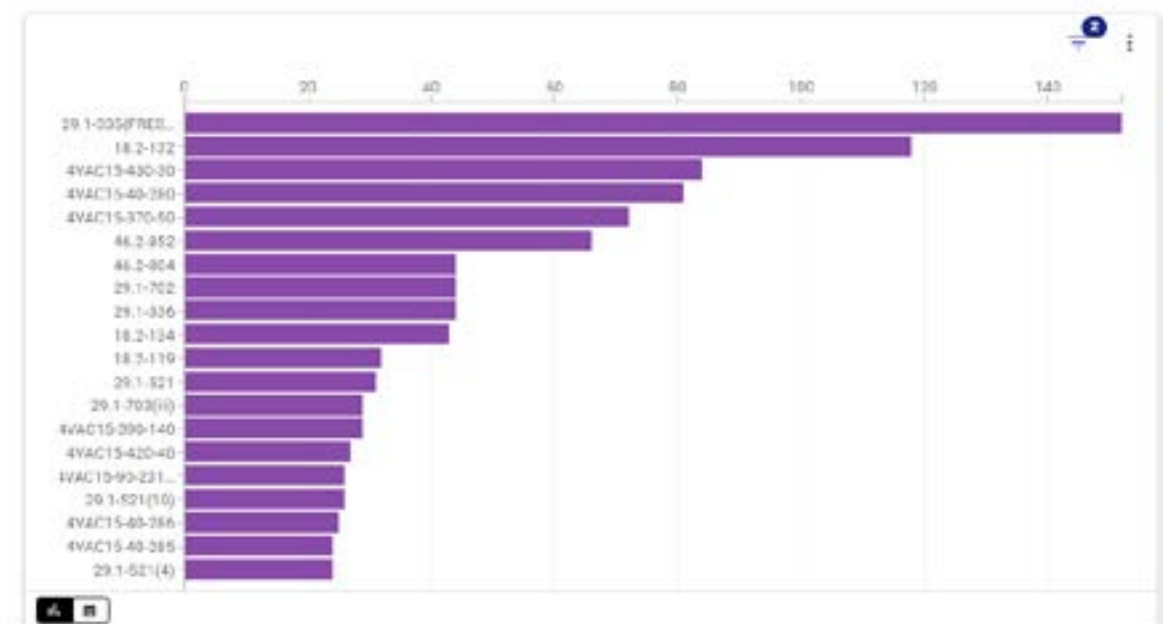
Vehicles Searched

(Specifically related to Driver)



Top 20 Most Frequent Violations

The chart to the left shows the most frequent resulting specific violations cited. This is not all inclusive as only the most egregious violation is captured per stop.



5.0 Special Operations

The Special Operations Unit within the DWR boasts an amalgamation of specialized divisions, forming a formidable team at the forefront of the division's operations. This unit encompasses the division's K9 Units, the Marine Fraud and Theft Unit, and the Covert Unit. The Special Operations Unit extends its purview to oversee various additional teams, each contributing distinct skills to the division's capabilities.

Beyond the full-time assignments within the unit, the Special Operations Unit assumes responsibility for guiding the division's Man Tracking Team, which employs finely honed skills to track individuals in diverse terrains to enhance the divisions Search and Rescue abilities. A newly formed Drone Team, leveraging cutting-edge technology, enhances the unit's aerial capabilities, adding a layer of modern sophistication to their operations. Moreover, the Hunting and Boating Incident Teams are available to assist Conservation Officers throughout the state in complex investigations. Finally, to culminate this impressive array of responsibilities, the Special Operations Unit assumes the revered duty of overseeing the esteemed Honor Guard Unit.

This unified assemblage within the Special Operations Unit serves as a testament to the division's commitment to excellence and adaptability. Each segment contributes its unique proficiencies, resulting in a synergistic force that remains prepared to navigate the complex and dynamic challenges within the realm of conservation law enforcement.



5.1 K9 Team

2022 brought several changes to the DWR K9 Unit. Long-time officer and K9 Handler Richard Howald was promoted to Sergeant over the DWR K9 Unit. Along with promotions the unit also experienced some losses, Senior CPO Jim Patrillo took another position within the Agency. Patrillo’s K9 partner Bailey was retired and is now living her best life with Jim and his family.

Before accepting a new position and K9 Bailey’s retirement Officer Patrillo and Bailey assisted officers within DWR and multiple other agencies. One such assist came from an outside agency. Senior Officer Patrillo and K9 Partner Bailey were requested to assist with locating evidence in homicide. After searching the area K9 Bailey kept returning to a vehicle and presenting an alert. Officer Patrillo explained to the investigators that the vehicle was likely involved. Further investigation led to the discovery of blood on the vehicle, which had been disguised so that it did not match the description of the vehicle involved. On the same day Officer Patrillo and K9 Bailey also assisted DWR Officers. They first responded to a shoot from the road incident. Before arriving on-scene the requesting Sergeant located a large hole in a street sign. Once on-scene Officer Patrillo deployed Bailey, and after a short search of the road edge he observed her display a trained final response. Officer Patrillo and Bailey located a wadding from a rifled shotgun shell to help further the Sergeants investigation. After locating evidence for two cases one would think that Jim and Bailey would be finished for the day, but not these two. Before finishing the article search along the road they were requested by another officer. Once finished the Officer Patrillo and Bailey along with the district Sergeant responded to the requesting officer. Once on-scene the officer pointed out a parked vehicle and advised that the property was posted by Henrico Co. and nobody had permission to hunt or fish. Bailey was again deployed. She quickly went into tracking profile and led the Officer down the main road, through several large cut corn field before ended 2 miles away at a large pond. Once at the ponds the Officers located three individuals trespassing to fish. These three events all transpired on one day and easily demonstrates the capability and versatility of DWR’s K9 program.



Without K9 Bailey and Officer Patrillo’s assistance on that day, crucial evidence would have been missed. We want to wish Officer Patrillo the best with his future endeavors and thank him and Bailey for the many years of hard work they have provided to the DWR K9 Unit.

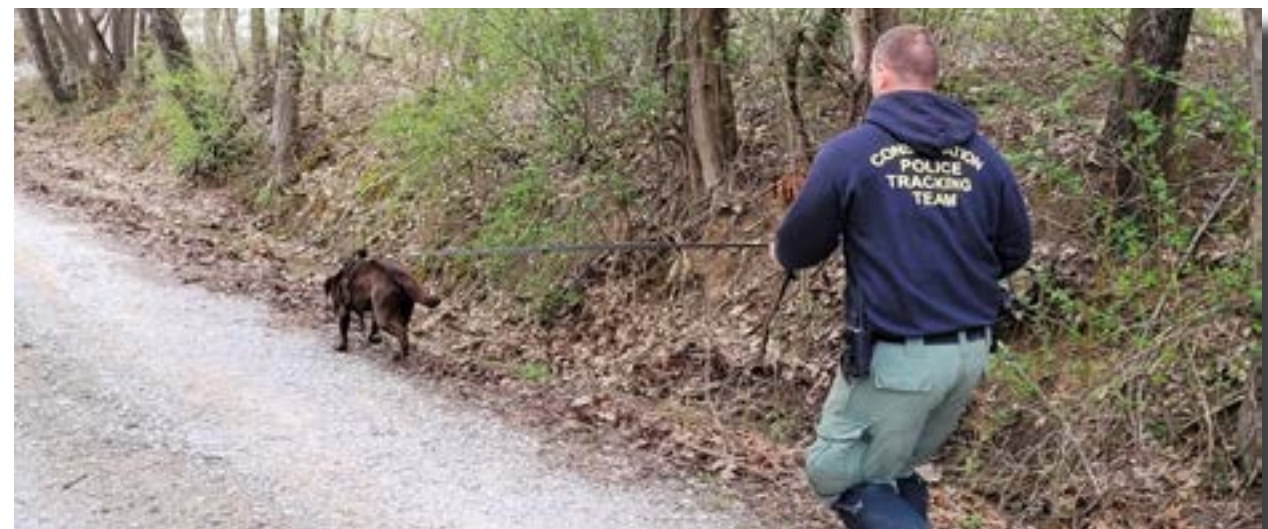
Now that we are two years’ post-COVID and most normalcy has returned, our unit has seen an increase in requests for public appearances. Officers and K9 partners have been requested to provide K9-Demos as well as manning event booths throughout the state. This is a welcome relief for the K9s who have missed all of the interaction and attention they receive while at these events.

Officer Chaffin and K9 partner Molly, along with Officer VanDyke and K9 partner Coal completed the Indiana Department of Natural Resources K9 Academy in May 2022. Soon after completing their academy officers and K9 partners hit the ground running. They along with the other members of the K9 unit ran multiple tracks, article searches, and area searches. This led to multiple cases, and safe returns for missing parties.

The past year has been a busy one; the following table contains summary information for the K9 unit since 2020 and includes a snapshot of what Officer First Class Chaffin and K9 Molly, Senior Officer Tyler Blanks and K9 Bruno, Officer First Class Bonnie Braziel and K9 Grace, Master Officer Mark DiLuigi and K9 Lily, Sergeant Richard Howald and K9 Sky, Senior Officer Ian Ostlund, and K9 Reese, Officer Jim Patrillo and K9 Bailey, and Master Officer Mark VanDyke and K9 Coal did during the calendar year 2022.

Table 11: Summary for K-9 Activity from 2018 to 2022 (*separation of uses and patrols starting in 2018)

DESCRIPTION	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
TOTAL USES	267	286	292	295	319
CALLS FOR SERVICE	-	-	1870	576	1871
PUBLIC APPEARANCE	85	89	14	91	111
TRACKS	63	71	74	82	92
WILDLIFE DETECTION	28	18	17	15	14
AREA SEARCH	51	63	177	118	116
NONSPECIFIC USE	40	45	10	2	9
HUMAN REMAINS DETECTION	-	-	1	4	3



5.2 Marine Theft and Fraud

During the 2022 calendar year the marine theft and fraud unit consisted of two Special Agents, Paul Inge and Jim Croft. The agents concentrated on working marine theft and identifying persons involved in larcenies of watercraft and marine equipment such as motors and trailers. The agents also looked into suspicious insurance theft claims made by boat owners

They also investigated consumer complaints on persons involved in unscrupulous transactions with boat dealers and persons selling vessels without a Watercraft Dealers License.

In 2022, dozens of individuals who committed tax fraud by misrepresenting the purchase price of vessels on their title applications were identified and appropriate measures taken. According to tax codes, it is permissible to assess and impose an additional 50% penalties where purchasers misrepresent the amount of money they spent on a boat to evade taxes. Imposing these penalties on tax cheats is a valuable lesson for them and serves as a deterrent to others, as well as providing needed additional revenue for DWR.

Agents were also busy assisting other law enforcement agencies with investigations on stolen vessels, break-ins of businesses and other criminal activities.

During 2022, due to that heavy call volume, Agents focused on more serious felony-level cases and targeted individuals who prey on new boaters or those maliciously misrepresenting purchases prices to evade paying taxes.

They also continued to provide awareness training both within the Agency and outside the Agency to bring awareness to boat theft trends and strategies to identify

Table 12: Case Types from Boat Fraud Team

DESCRIPTION	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
CASES DEVELOPED	114	105	74	84	51
FELONY CHARGES	11	51	10	342	341
MISDEMEANOR CHARGES	55	24	28	22	45
WARNINGS	7	31	0	9	14
SEARCH WARRANTS	12	60	13	15	26
RECOVERED BOATS	11	21	6	13	14
RECOVERED TRAILERS	5	12	5	11	6
OTHER RECOVERED STOLEN ITEMS	1	1	0	1	4
IMPACT ON TAXATION	\$90,000	\$90,000	-	\$194,600	\$401,737
TOTAL VALUE OF RECOVERED PROPERTY	\$241,000	\$334,000	-	\$214,275	\$117,512

stolen boats. Some of the presentations and training including giving a presentation to the Southeastern Fish and Wildlife Agencies Annual Conference in West Virginia on marine theft and fraud investigations and the Chesapeake Police Marine Unit.

The unit's success is clearly evident from the data:

- During 2022 there were 19 stolen boats reported to the Agency from across the Commonwealth. During the same timeframe, Agents recovered 14 stolen vessels. This recovery rate of 68% is well above the national average of 41%.for 2022.

- Since the inception of the unit through 2022, vessel thefts in Virginia have decreased by 62% (2017: 45, 2018: 30, 2019: 20, 2020: 19, 2021: 17) However there was a slight increase in 2022 with 18 boats reported to DWR. Virginia's stolen vessel decline remains significantly more than the national average for the same time period.

A few noteworthy cases handled by the Marine Theft & Fraud Unit during 2022 and are described below:

A case involving a stolen boat led to the execution of search a warrant of the suspect's residence in Buckingham County. Conservation police officers recovered a stolen vessel and also discovered and seized counterfeit money and counterfeit vehicle inspection, stolen guns and possession of drugs with intent to distribute. This led to the grand jury returning 98 indictments against the suspect.

A joint investigation by the Marine Theft & Fraud Unit and the Virginia Marine Police Special Investigative Unit lead to the arrest of a boat owner that falsely reported his pontoon boat stolen to the Virginia State Police. He was paid for his loss by his insurance company.



Investigators recovered the boat dumped in a wooded path in Suffolk. A trail camera captured an image of a white Ford F-250 dumping the boat off and driving out with the outboard and trailer. An unusual pattern and shading on the side of the truck appeared on the trail camera and it appeared that lettering on the truck had been



painted over.

The owner of the boat stated his boat was stolen after he left it on the side of the road due to wheel bearing problems and said that he left the boat to go buy new bearings to make the repair. He later provided the receipt for the bearings to the insurance provider, who then quickly paid the claim. However, Agents determined that he bought the bearings hours after he had made a police report about the theft and this raised suspicions that this was an insurance fraud case. The boat owner became a suspect, but he could not be linked to the truck that dumped the pontoon boat off in the woods path.

Investigators eventually spotted a similar Ford F-250 parked in a shopping center about a mile from the suspect's house. A GPS tracker was installed on the truck in an attempt to associate the suspect with the vehicle. The truck did not move during the month but investigators documented the suspect trying to sell the vehicle.

Enough evidence was collected to obtain a warrant to seize the suspects cell phone. As investigators served the suspect search warrants for the Ford F-250 and the cell phone, the suspect broke away and began to smash the phone in an attempt to conceal evidence on his phone. He was forcibly arrested in the process and the cell phone seized. The cell phone was reconstructed by the U.S. Secret Service evidence section. Pings on the phone put him at the scene where the boat was dumped. Additional evidence was recovered from his phone connecting him to this crime as well as a stolen motorcycle that he sold to another individual. That motorcycle was recovered by York Co. Sheriff's Office.

The F-250 was also seized. Agents requested the assistance of NCIS forensic investigators who used alternate light source photography to highlight the painted area of the truck. The images of the painted over lettering on the truck recovered from the trail cam were matched to the patterns revealed by the forensic photography. He was charged with the insurance fraud and obstruction of justice.

A multi-year sales tax fraud case was conducted on a man suspected of misrepresenting the actual sales price of a boat let to five counts of boat tax fraud on 5 different boats the suspect had purchased. The suspect was charged with a total of 11 felonies, four Class 1 misdemeanors and three Class 3 misdemeanors. DWR as well as the County of Fluvanna recovered \$38,200.00 in tax restitution as a result of this investigation.



An unknown subject had made phone calls threatening Conservation Police Officers. This investigation was conducted by the Marine Theft and Fraud Unit due to their expertise with phone data investigations. Multiple search warrants were issued for phone records that led to the identification of a suspect and he was arrested and convicted for the threats. While being arrested, he also threatened to kill arresting officers. He was convicted and sentenced to jail.

5.3 Covert Unit

The Covert Unit of the Special Operations Section was actively engaged in its second year of an extensive investigation into the illegal reptile trade within the state of Virginia. Initially faced with a scarcity of leads and a lack of active sources, this investigation steadily evolved, yielding valuable resources that ultimately led to the identification of more than 20 individuals involved in the illicit sale of prohibited Virginia wildlife. To deepen our probe, we obtained search warrants for both physical and electronic evidence, uncovering implications that spanned national and international boundaries. To effectively combat these crimes, the Covert Unit established vital partnerships with federal, local, and state agencies, facilitating the successful prosecution of those involved in the unlawful trade of protected species. In 2022, our collective efforts culminated in the acquisition, confiscation, and voluntary surrender of 253 native animals, representing 17 different species. This remarkable achievement was made possible through the unwavering support of our colleagues in the uniform division.



While reptile trade violations were observed throughout Virginia, they appeared most rampant in densely populated areas, with the Greater Norfolk region being a prominent hotspot. Here, we encountered numerous complaints and documented ongoing illegal activities during public events such as college gamedays and festivals. Recent coordination with local agencies has shown promise for future prosecutions in these high-activity zones.

In addition to our extensive reptile trade investigation, the Covert Unit also probed the unlawful sale of game species. We uncovered illicit trafficking in bear, deer, and turkey, leading to their seizure as a result of investigations initiated in 2022. Concurrently, we initiated investigations into the illegal sale of freshwater fish species in 2022, which remain ongoing.

Whether in the field, where we act as a force multiplier against illegal fishing operations, or in regional offices equipped with highly specialized software, the

Covert Unit remains ready to support field operations. In 2022, our team played a pivotal role in surveillance, evidence collection, and data analysis, all of which contributed significantly to the successful prosecution of violators.

In summary, 2022 was a year marked by unwavering dedication, collaboration, and significant progress in our ongoing battle against wildlife trafficking and the illegal sale of protected species in Virginia.

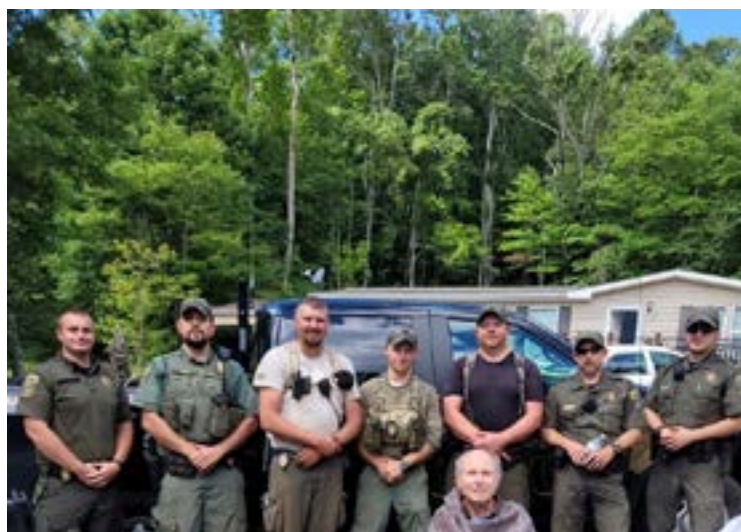
5.3 Tracking Team

The Virginia Conservation Police (VCP) tracking training program has been a popular course among local law enforcement agencies. The VCP tracking training cadre were able to proceed with some of the requests that it receives annually. Tracking instructors worked with regional K9 units in Southwest Virginia and trained representatives of Virginia State Police Tactical Teams in 2022.



The VCP tracking teams utilized the skills of 42 dedicated Officers who have taken on this extra responsibility in addition to their normal duties. Four tracking team members take on yet another responsibility as the regional team leader (listed below). Each team leader coordinates 4-10 team training sessions and supervises regional operations as they arise. The Region 2 tracking team, led by CPO Routon, planned and coordinated a successful mock training incident including multiple local agencies and emergency response services.

During 2022, VCP tracking team members from Regions 2 & 3 responded to assist the Department of Emergency Management and were successful in locating lost persons on two different incidents. CPO Wilson and K9 handler Chaffin located one person after being lost for 8 days. The Region 3 team led by SGT Arnold located a missing person and assisted with the extraction through steep and very dense forest. An illegal hunting investigation in Region 4 was solved by tracking team member MCPO Heine and VCP K9 handler Ostlund.



5.4 Honor Guard

The Honor Guard kicked off 2022 by performing in their first ever parade for the Inauguration of Governor Glenn Youngkin in January. The VCP does not typically participate in this type of event as part of normal duties but will rise to any occasion to represent the agency in a professional manner. It was a pleasure to participate in such a monumental event. The year continued with the Honor Guard fulfilling its purpose to represent the division, preserve traditions, promote esprit-de-corps, and instill pride by celebrating the accomplishments of CPO's through participation of awards ceremonies and graduation events.



The VCP Honor Guard members created their first challenge coin to represent the unit in 2022. "Stand for the Fallen" is prevalently inscribed on the outside edge of the coin face. An HG member depicted with eleven stars in the background pays



homage to the fallen Game Wardens who dedicated their lives to wildlife protection with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. They will be forever remembered as protectors of the woods and waters. The coin was unveiled at the Flippo-Gentry WMA dedication and memorial service. VCP Honor Guard was instrumental in execution of the event conveying the respect and concern of the Department of Wildlife Resources to the families in attendance.

5.5 Unmanned Aerial System (UAS)

The launch of the Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) Program marks a significant milestone, reflecting our dedication to staying at the forefront of technological advancements in law enforcement and resource management. We firmly believe that this initiative will empower our officers and enable them to carry out their duties more safely and effectively.

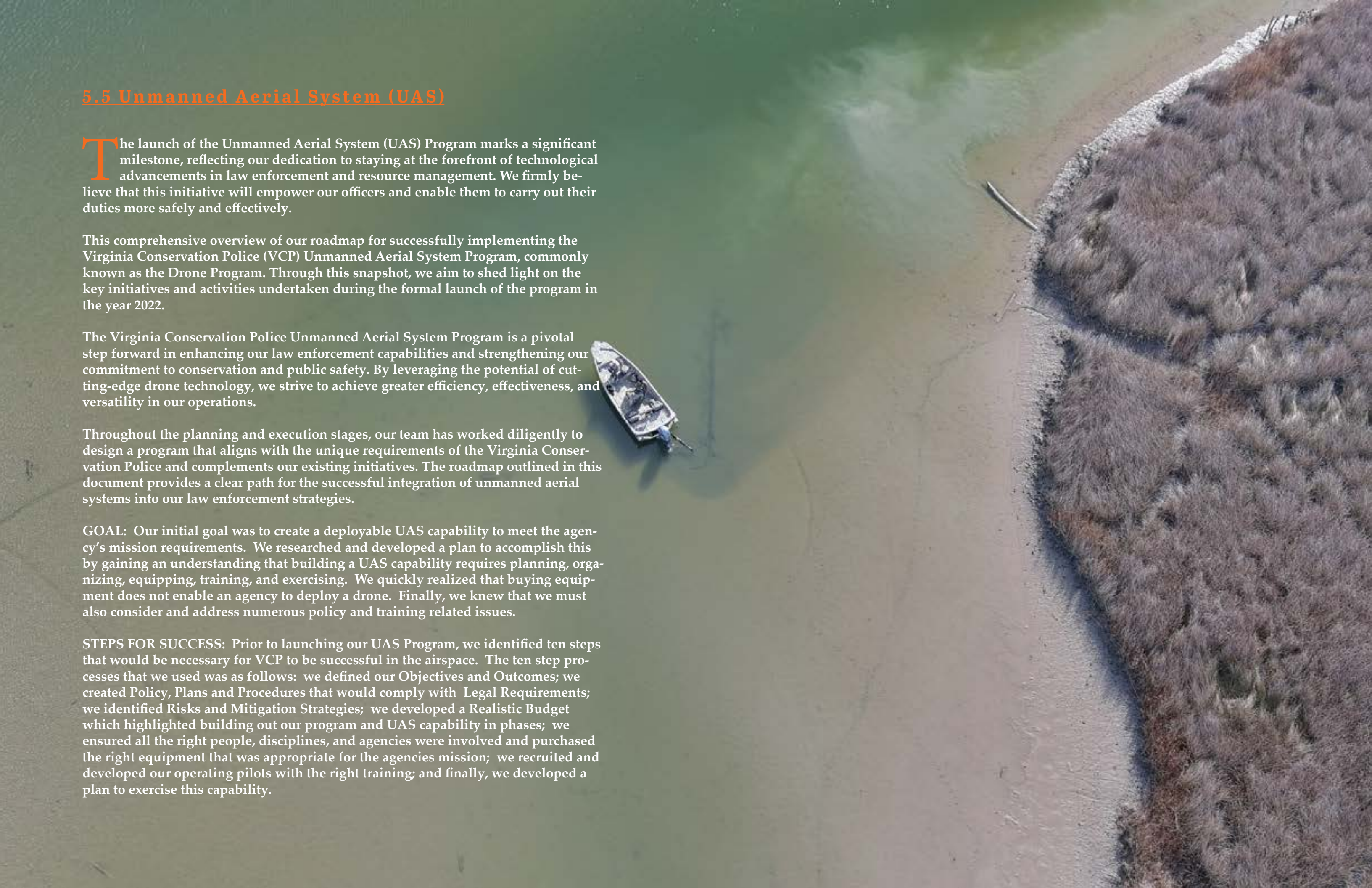
This comprehensive overview of our roadmap for successfully implementing the Virginia Conservation Police (VCP) Unmanned Aerial System Program, commonly known as the Drone Program. Through this snapshot, we aim to shed light on the key initiatives and activities undertaken during the formal launch of the program in the year 2022.

The Virginia Conservation Police Unmanned Aerial System Program is a pivotal step forward in enhancing our law enforcement capabilities and strengthening our commitment to conservation and public safety. By leveraging the potential of cutting-edge drone technology, we strive to achieve greater efficiency, effectiveness, and versatility in our operations.

Throughout the planning and execution stages, our team has worked diligently to design a program that aligns with the unique requirements of the Virginia Conservation Police and complements our existing initiatives. The roadmap outlined in this document provides a clear path for the successful integration of unmanned aerial systems into our law enforcement strategies.

GOAL: Our initial goal was to create a deployable UAS capability to meet the agency's mission requirements. We researched and developed a plan to accomplish this by gaining an understanding that building a UAS capability requires planning, organizing, equipping, training, and exercising. We quickly realized that buying equipment does not enable an agency to deploy a drone. Finally, we knew that we must also consider and address numerous policy and training related issues.

STEPS FOR SUCCESS: Prior to launching our UAS Program, we identified ten steps that would be necessary for VCP to be successful in the airspace. The ten step processes that we used was as follows: we defined our Objectives and Outcomes; we created Policy, Plans and Procedures that would comply with Legal Requirements; we identified Risks and Mitigation Strategies; we developed a Realistic Budget which highlighted building out our program and UAS capability in phases; we ensured all the right people, disciplines, and agencies were involved and purchased the right equipment that was appropriate for the agencies mission; we recruited and developed our operating pilots with the right training; and finally, we developed a plan to exercise this capability.



Early on we recognized that Virginia law was very restrictive but that it did allow certain uses. Our intent was to utilize our drones as a force multiplier in these permitted activities. Thus, we adapted the following situations for which we could employ a drone: To enhance Situational Awareness, to be a Supervisory Aid in planning for events; during Search and Rescue operations, to assist with Amber, Silver and Blue alerts, and missing persons alerts; as a Visual Perspective, to provide direction in complex environments; to assist with Scene Documentation, as a tool to document accident and crime scenes; to assist with Natural Resource Management, specifically to aid in resource decisions; to maintain Training, and thus to be proficient; and finally to Maintain and Test our equipment so that we would be fully operational.



HISTORY: Approximately 3 years ago we began discussions about developing a Law Enforcement Drone Program. A small workgroup, 4 officers, 1 from each region, was assembled to begin discussions on developing a program. One of the driving motivators was when an officer attended some training and saw firsthand how we were missing an opportunity. Discussion at a Command Staff meeting gave us an understanding that this could be a tremendous opportunity for us to add a significant force multiplier in our law enforcement operations. Thus, our journey began, and we formed a Drone Committee Team. Our team started out with 5 members, 1 manager to keep the group focused and moving forward, 1 officer who was already a certified pilot and 3 officers who already flew personal drones. Very soon all 4 officers became certified pilots. We developed goals, conducted research, and attended professional meetings. We learned and gathered as much information and literature as possible. We reached out to other agencies, and other states, for assistance. We researched Virginia law. We researched many different drone manufacturers to find the best fit for our agency. We developed our General Orders, Standard Operating Procedures and Reporting Forms. Finally, we created a purchase order requisition to purchase two drone systems.



In April 2022, we received the first two drone systems and began our transition from concept to reality. From April to August, we attended meetings, conducted training, trained, and swapped the drones among the pilots so that each could become familiar with them, learn how they operated, and fly training flights. While this was occurring, we developed train-

ing for Visual Observers, and all sworn officers completed this training. Fast forward to early-December when we received two additional drone systems and fielded them. Now, each pilot had their own drone system, and each operations patrol region had a drone pilot.

FUTURE: Our vision for success was developed around different phases of our program. In Phase I, we established and launched the VCP Law Enforcement Division Drone Program / Team. Our plan is to maintain this until we begin to expand into Phase II. In Phase II, we want to develop additional training standards, recruit, and train new members, and expand the program to 8 drone pilots, with 2 in each region of operations. Our long-term goal, Phase III, is to expand this capability to include underwater drones to aid in all underwater search and rescue and boating accident investigations

Here are our overall activity efforts:

Figure 8: Drone Program Data 2022

2022 UAS - ACTIVITY RECAP			
Activity	Pre-Live	Live	TOTALS
# Of Calls	19	13	32
# Of Uses	19	23	42
107 Flight Hours	9.5	20	29.5
Training Hours	12.5	0.5	13
COA Flight Hours	0	0	0
# Citations	0	1	1
# Of Public Relations Events	3	0	3
Activities	12	12	24

PRE-LIVE PERIOD BREAKDOWN (April -August)					
Activity	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	REGION 4	TOTALS
# Of Calls	17	0	1	1	19
# Of Uses	12	2	3	2	19
107 Flight Hours	7	0.5	1	1	9.5
Training Hours	8	1.5	1.5	1.5	12.5
COA Flight Hours	0	0	0	0	0
# Citations	0	0	0	0	0
# Of Public Relations Events	3	0	0	0	3
Activities	8	0	2	2	12

LIVE PERIOD BREAKDOWN (September -December)					
Activity	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	REGION 4	TOTALS
# Of Calls	6	4	0	3	13
# Of Uses	6	4	0	13	23
107 Flight Hours	7	6.5	0	6.5	20
Training Hours	0	0	0	0.5	0.5
COA Flight Hours	0	0	0	0	0
# Citations	1	0	0	0	1
# Of Public Relations Events	0	0	0	0	0
Activities	6	3	0	3	12

Finally, here is a breakdown of some of our Public Relations Events and our Activities and Narratives related to those activities.

PUBLIC RELATIONS EVENTS: (April-August)

- (R1) Lakeview Elementary School Career Day in Portsmouth, VA on 04/08/22. Approx. 300 students rotated through the demonstration. Attending were CPOs Smith, Corley and Braziel.
- (R1) DWR Static Display on 7-7-22 at First Landing State Park in Virginia Beach. Approximately 40 people contacted, including members of state level cabinet. Multiple Conservation Police Officers present for the event.
- (R1) Career Day event

UAS ACTIVITY/COMMENTS: (April-August)

- (R1) Demonstrated the UAS for several K-6 elementary school kids. Special training: included launching, operating, and landing UAS on a boat in Back Bay.
- (R1) SAR training Cavalier WMA
- (R1) Training from a boat in Suffolk
- (R1) Training at Cavalier WMA and training, observing bear crop damage.
- (R1) SAR training
- (R2) Setup drone and controller up this month and familiarization with equipment.
- (R3) Familiarization with equipment
- (R3) Show drone to DWR tracking team.
- (R3) Used for crop damage
- (R4) Familiarization with equipment.
- (R4) Training flight over personal property, prior to getting USFS flight permission. DWR Officer sent a person out into my brushy field to hide. Then used the drone to find them. DWR used the camera first to ID what was thought could be a person hiding, then switched to thermal and confirmed that it was the subject.
- (R4) Training flight in the vicinity of a missing person on USNF.

PUBLIC RELATIONS EVENTS: (September-December)

- none

UAS ACTIVITY/COMMENTS: (September-December)

- (R1) SAR in Suffolk.
- (R1) Trespassing complaint in Suffolk.
- (R1) Boat accident in Chesapeake
- (R1) Nansemond River in Suffolk, looking for waterfowl bait in public waters
- (R1) Back Bay in Virginia Beach, looking for waterfowl bait in public waters
- (R1) Tar Bay in Prince George, looking for waterfowl bait in public waters
- (R2) Utilized to document 2 boats that were involved in a boat crash that resulted in a double fatality.
- (R2) Missing boater search on the James River.
- (R2) Search for possible drowning victims.
- (R4) On November 16, 2022, DWR flew 7 missions over the James River below the Dam at Big Island, off Elon Rd in Bedford County. This was in reference to a SAR for a missing boater. DWR did not locate the missing person.
- (R4) On November 17, 2022, DWR flew 5 missions over the James River at Balcony Falls and downstream along the RR tracks (Rockbridge Co). DWR checked both sides of the river, all islands and log jams. This was in reference to a SAR for a missing boater. DWR did not locate the missing person.
- (R4) On Tuesday Dec. 27, 2022, DWR was requested to fly on a SAR mission the next day on the James River in the Maidens area of Goochland Co/Fluvanna Co. On Wednesday Dec. 28, 2022, Officers arrived on scene at 0930 hrs. and flew 1 training mission in the parking lot while waiting for an assignment. Cadaver dogs alerted to a target along the riverbank and UAS flights were held by Incident Command. DWR was released from the scene without flying on any missions when the Chesterfield Dive Team arrived to clear the target area found by the cadaver dogs. The missing woman was found by divers that evening.



6.0 Officer Outreach

Celebrating Community Unity: National Night Out Across the Commonwealth

Every year, on the first Tuesday in August, communities across the United States come together to celebrate National Night Out, a remarkable event that aims to strengthen the bond between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. In Virginia, the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) joined the festivities in a big way, participating in 33 events across the Commonwealth. These gatherings provided an exceptional opportunity for DWR to connect with citizens and elected officials, sharing the important work they do to protect and conserve Virginia’s natural resources.



National Night Out is not just a night; it’s a movement that promotes police-community partnerships, neighborhood camaraderie, and crime prevention. It encourages citizens to step out of their homes, meet their neighbors, and engage with the dedicated law enforcement officers who work tirelessly to keep our communities safe. It’s a night that brings people together, fostering trust and building stronger, safer neighborhoods.

At these 33 events, DWR staffed booths and actively participated in the festivities. This engagement allowed them to interact with citizens from various corners of the Commonwealth, as well as elected officials from state and local government. The presence of distinguished guests, such as the Secretary of Public Safety and the Lieutenant Governor, highlighted the significance of this event and its role in promoting community safety and unity.



The DWR’s participation in National Night Out was more than just a showcase of their presence; it was an opportunity to shed light on the vital work they do. From conserving Virginia’s rich biodiversity to ensuring the responsible management of its wildlife resources, DWR plays a pivotal

role in safeguarding the natural treasures that make our state so special. By sharing their mission and initiatives with both familiar faces and newcomers, DWR was able to



foster a deeper understanding of their role in preserving the natural beauty of Virginia.

In addition to highlighting their conservation efforts, DWR also engaged in meaningful conversations with citizens about responsible outdoor activities, wildlife management, and how individuals can contribute to the protection of our natural heritage. These interactions not only educated the public but also inspired a sense of responsibility and stewardship toward Virginia’s

environment.

National Night Out is a reminder that strong communities are built on trust, collaboration, and shared values. By actively participating in these events, the Department of Wildlife Resources demonstrated their commitment to these principles and their dedication to serving and protecting Virginia’s precious natural resources.

As National Night Out continues to grow and evolve, it remains a powerful reminder of the strength that lies in our communities. It is a testament to the positive impact that can be achieved when law enforcement agencies and citizens come together with a common purpose. In Virginia, the Department of Wildlife Resources embraced this spirit wholeheartedly, and their participation in 33 events across the Commonwealth underscored their commitment to building safer, more united communities, while also emphasizing the importance of preserving our natural heritage for generations to come.





The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources Conservation Police Officers played a pivotal role in upholding security and ensuring the safety of the 74th Governor of Virginia, Governor Glenn Youngkin, during his inauguration. This collaborative effort saw our officers working in tandem with several law enforcement agencies, including the Commonwealth of Virginia Capitol Police, Virginia State Police, and the Richmond Police Department.

Our dedicated Conservation Police Officers brought their expertise and professionalism to this significant

event, helping to create a secure environment for the smooth proceedings of the inauguration. They were strategically positioned at various key locations, contributing to the overall safety measures in place.

Furthermore, our division's esteemed Honor Guard, known for their precision and commitment to duty, made a notable appearance at the inauguration. They not only added a touch of ceremonial solemnity but also demonstrated the level of excellence and discipline embodied by the Virginia Conservation Police.



To showcase the unique resources and capabilities that the Virginia Conservation Police bring to the Commonwealth of Virginia, we proudly displayed a range of specialized equipment and assets in the inaugural parade. These assets represent our commitment to conservation and wildlife preservation, which aligns with the broader goals and values of the Commonwealth.



In summary, the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources Conservation Police Officers played a vital role in ensuring the security and success of Governor Glenn Youngkin's inauguration. Our officers' collaboration with multiple law enforcement agencies, the presence of our esteemed Honor Guard, and the display of our specialized resources all contributed to making this event a memorable and safe occasion for all.

Dawn Linton is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker first started volunteering with the DWR's CISM/Peer Support team 2009. When (Ret.) Lt. Hank Garner approached her about working with out officers.



Over the course of 13 years, Dawn's dedication and tireless efforts contributed significantly to the growth and success of the DWR peer support team. She played an instrumental role in shaping and solidifying the foundation of the team as it stands today, providing essential emotional and psychological support to those who serve in demanding roles to protect the natural resources of Virginia.

During the Law Enforcement Committee meeting on August 17th, 2022, Dawn was recognized for her years of service to Virginia's Conservation Police Officer and Communication Officers. Dawn was presented with a CPO badge in Lucite, a Commonwealth of Virginia flag that was flown over the Capitol and a one of a kind Sgt. Steve Garvis original handcrafted Sandpiper.

Dawn's legacy as a compassionate advocate for mental wellness within Virginia's law enforcement community will continue to inspire and uplift those who follow in her footsteps. Her dedication and selflessness serve as a shining example of the profound impact one individual can have in supporting the well-being of those who protect and serve our communities and natural resources.

Dawn left us with this poem:

*"Safeguard us through the day, especially at the corners of the way;
For when the way is straight, we fear no sudden fate, but see ahead the evening's open gate, but few and far between are days when all is seen, of what will come, or yet of what has been, for unexpected things swoop down on sudden wings and overthrow us with their buffetings... Control and guard this day... at the corners of the way"*

7.0 Recognition and Award

7.1 Officer of the Year

Officer First Class Amanda Nevel has been named the 2022 Conservation Police Officer of the Year. Natural resources law enforcement is a specialized field that involves a unique form of community policing that requires an unwavering commitment to protecting our state's citizens and its natural resources. It is clear to those who know Officer Nevel that she is such a committed officer, and she continually demonstrates a work ethic of quality professional customer service. She thoroughly immerses herself into fulfilling DWR's mission of conserving, connecting and protecting our citizens and wildlife resources in the Commonwealth. Officer Nevel is one of a dozen female officers proudly serving as a Virginia Conservation Police Officer (CPO). For the past seven years, she has protected the citizens and wildlife resources in the Northern Neck area of the state while patrolling the woods and waterways. "The Officer of the Year award is considered the highest honor that can be bestowed on a Conservation Police Officer in their career. I am very proud of all of our capable and hard-working officers, but especially proud of Officer Nevel and her commitment and the work she has done to be selected for this prestigious award. She was part of an extraordinary group of nominees across the state that we are privileged to have working for all of us here in the Commonwealth. Each one of them is to be congratulated on being chosen to represent their assigned regions in this Officer of the Year selection process," said DWR Chief of Law Enforcement John J. Cobb. Throughout her career, Officer Nevel has demonstrated a professional and positive attitude toward all her duties and responsibilities. These duties include the enforcement of our state's hunting, trapping, fishing, and boating laws. She has become the district leader in her work area and serves as a mentor and training officer to new recruits who join our team. Her steadfast work ethic and amicable demeanor serves as a positive example for all her fellow officers. She is a proven leader who has completed the inaugural Law Enforcement Leadership Development Program and sets the mark for how a committed and professional officer should conduct themselves while performing their duties. Her unwavering commitment to ensuring safe boating, responsible hunting and fishing, and her propensity to the education of our constituents in ethics, safety and legal responsibilities is to be commended. DWR is proud to have Officer Nevel on our team and serving the citizens of this Commonwealth. We offer her our wholehearted congratulations on a job well done!



7.2 Boating Officer of the Year (NASBLA)

CPO First Class Tyler Routon of the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources was named the 2022 Virginia Boating Officer of the Year. He is highly regarded for his exceptional leadership, dedication to teamwork, and commitment to public service. Routon voluntarily assumed additional responsibilities, such as preparing boating schedules for the 2022 season, coordinating with peers and regional supervision for coverage. He also organized water safety checkpoints at Smith Mountain Lake, showcasing excellent planning and coordination skills.



Routon actively engages in public outreach, participating in four boating-related events throughout the year. He is an exceptional boating incident investigator, responding to and leading investigations for eleven incidents, including a personal watercraft crash and a collision between a PWC and another vessel, both resulting in charges. He also played a crucial role in a search and recovery operation on the James River, recovering a missing boater after an extended 25-day operation.

CPO Routon was pivotal in the planning and execution of Operation Hydro Summit, an extensive training exercise on Smith Mountain Lake SML. He spent an extraordinary amount of time developing and coordinating the operation in the months prior. CPO Routon created a multi-layered scenario involving a boating incident, a land-based search and rescue, a water-based body recovery with divers, and a follow up boating incident investigation. He coordinated these joint efforts internally amongst multiple Districts, the DWR Man Tracking Team, DWR K9 Unit, DWR Boat Incident Investigative Team, and DWR civilian staff. Coordination with external entities included the SML Fire Department, staff at Mariner's Landing, and local media. Throughout the operation, CPO Routon served as Team Leader alongside Incident Commanders while following Incident Command System protocols, general orders, standard operating procedures, and best law enforcement practices. Following the exercise, CPO Routon conducted a team debrief with the DWR Tracking Team followed by an incident debrief with all participants in attendance.

CPO Routon's extraordinary effort in planning, coordinating, and executing the operation allowed all participants to benefit from a training environment which was safe, conducive to learning, and left everyone better prepared for a real incident. He received an Acknowledgement of Extraordinary Contribution and a Certificate of Achievement for his efforts.

7.4 Other Awards

Colonel's Leadership Award (2022)



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. The recipient of the 2022 Colonel's Leadership Award is Sgt. Frank Spuchesi.

O.P.S. Professionalism Decree (Class of 2022)



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.



Master Officer Neil Kester



Master Officer Mike Enstsminger

7.5 Promotions

- Captain Rob Ham- Accreditation Project Manager
- Captain Randy Hickman -East Section Operations Manager
- First Sergeant Frank Spuchesi- Region 1 – Area (A)
- First Sergeant Brandon Woodruff- Region 1 – Area (B)
- First Sergeant Tim Dooley-Region 2 – Area (A)
- First Sergeant Jessica Fariss- Region 2 – Area (B)
- First Sergeant James Hale- Region 3 – Area (B)
- First Sergeant Derrick Kekic- Region 4 – Area (A)
- First Sergeant Steve Ferguson- Region 4 – Area (B)
- Sergeant Richard Howald- K9 Unit



First Sergeants are implemented in to the rank structure of the law enforcement division to lead and coordinate operations in their respective areas. This position was first presented about 15 years ago and has finally come to realization.

These experienced officers are strategically positioned within the rank structure to lead and coordinate operations in their respective areas. Regions were divided in two A and B areas creating 8 First Sergeant Positions throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

As Virginia's eight First Sergeant positions exemplify, this innovation has the potential to improve the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies by addressing regional challenges and optimizing resource allocation. The evolution of the First Sergeant role continues to be a crucial step in the ongoing improvement of law enforcement practices.

8.0 Retirees (2022)



Sergeant Dan Hall
35 Years



Lieutenant Greg Funkhouser
24 Years



In Memoriam - Recently Fallen RETIREES

Bobby Bondurant 09/24/2022



Bobby Joe Bondurant, 84, of Amherst Virginia, went to his Heavenly home to be with the Lord. Bobby was the beloved husband of Judy Bondurant, and father of Robert Bondurant and Joseph Bondurant.

Bobby served as the Game Warden for Amherst County for 28 years. He was also active in his community by serving on the Amherst Town Council. Bobby was also a part of the Driskill Funeral Chapel family for many years helping and serving those in bereavement and loss.

Bobby loved NASCAR, fishing, joking with friends and growing the finest vegetable gardens in Amherst. Bobby served with DWR from 1972 until he retired in 2000.

Robert Mitchell 10/6/2022

Retired Game Warden Robert Gayle Mitchell, Age 86, of Rural Retreat, VA., passed away on October 6, 2022. He was born December 5, 1935 in Troutdale, VA.

He grew up in Troutdale VA. He was a United States Army veteran and was stationed in the Republic of Korea. He was a 53-year member of the Rural Retreat American Legion Post 229 and a past Post Commander. Loved the outdoors and served as a Game Warden with DWR for over forty years where he served as a Sergeant, retiring in 2003.



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

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