



Virginia Conservation Police

CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.



Annual Report

2024

*Recognizing Service, & Advancing Standards:
The O.P.S. Advisory Council Receives Unit Citation*

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. They 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 Officers (CPO) perform their public service duties while taking on many different roles. These range from educator and ambassador to outdoor enthusiasts; 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 Colonel



As we enter our 121st year as Protectors of Wildlife and Natural Resources, we should be aware that we must evolve to remain relevant in the future.

For us to be essential to the public it often comes down to what services we provide and how well we meet their needs. Much has been done over the last few years to show we are following best practices, through state and national accreditation certification efforts. We are seen across this nation as leaders who are advancing this noble profession. The challenges continue to be securing appropriate funding and maintaining appropriate staffing levels to meet our needs, which leads us to the bigger picture of the VCP Relevancy Plan that we launched last summer in 2023, after comprehensive research and development.

We now need to focus more attention on bringing others to the outdoors to see firsthand our successes in protecting wildlife and natural resources. To accomplish this goal, we need to diversify our workforce who will be better equipped to bring others that have had less opportunity to experience the outdoors with them. The first area of focus will be our ability to train our officers and staff to include developing a passion for the outdoors. The missing piece that we are working on at HQ is determining and finding the appropriate environment, which we are referring to as the W3 (Woods*Wildlife*Water) Natural Resources Training Academy. This will be a significant investment and as such, we drafted a W3 Vision and Mission Statement and you can certainly expect to hear more on this W3 Initiative as we continue to move forward!

I generally do not spend much time looking back on initiatives successfully implemented and past accomplishments as I am more focused on the future. However, the purpose of the VCP 2024 Annual Report is to look at that specific year in retrospect, so here is a list gathered from our monthly Rollcall Newsletters:

1. Completed a total of 106 Career Progression Program (CPP) pay adjustments with an effective date of February 25, 2024. These included the new \$51,000

starting pay and associated increases to all seven pay sub band minimum baselines. In addition, we implemented CPP for Supervisors and Managers. Furthermore, we budgeted for the next round of CPP level increases, including 40 officers who were scheduled to move up on July 10, 2024. The CPP Sworn Compensation Model allows us to forecast our intentions in many proven beneficial ways using a standardized transparent approach.

2. Welcomed 25 recruits to our 13th Basic Academy that began in February; this brought us to 176 sworn positions filled, just six below our current authorization of 182, which is the highest level that we have been at in over more than five years.
3. In regard to our Recruitment and Training Section, we have been conducting significant research, over the last couple of years, on other Wildlife Law Enforcement Training Academies across the nation to include how they are structured in terms of staffing and related duties/responsibilities. As a result, the decision was made to restructure our three training sergeant positions to the rank of First Sergeant.
4. Sixth Annual VCP Awards Ceremony was held in March, where we formally recognized a record 63 officers and staff members. We are extremely fortunate to have so many passionate, hardworking, and outstanding representatives of the agency.
5. **O.P.S.A.C. Unit Citation** (Team Award) was presented to 24 dedicated members of the Office of Professional Standards (O.P.S.) Advisory Council by the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources Travis Voyles (see resolution pg. viii). The collaborative team effort that began six years ago has led to a vast majority of the positive proactive changes that we see today.
6. Launched a new recruitment tool, known as Regional Recruitment Ambassadors. Those selected were tasked with creating a consistent recruitment message, developing in-service training on recruitment efforts with a focus on every CPO is a recruiter, updating and maintaining recruitment materials, attending career fairs, and assisting with applicant testing. Regional Recruitment Ambassadors will also be expected to perform a limited number of speaking engagements at local colleges and universities while building a working network with professors, career counselors and other staff.
7. This year marked the 20th Anniversary of us having an Independent Law Enforcement Academy and we have seen many recruit classes come through during this time. To be an approved training academy we have to be recertified every three years by DCJS in a comprehensive auditing process of our records to ensure we are meeting their minimum standards. Due to the efforts of our training staff as well as our volunteer certified instructors, we passed and received our recertification certificate.
8. With the 13th Basic Class Graduation, 19 new officers headed to the field to assist with staffing concerns and we also completed the recruitment of

14 recruits. This was an outstanding team effort of those members of our training unit as well as those who assist with the recruitment, the selection process, and certification training. In addition, we announced that the Virginia Marine Police with the Marine Resources Commission (MRC) would be enrolling in our 14th Basic Academy that was set to begin in March of 2025.

9. Received over 250,000 views overall with the first two New True Wildlife Crime Series, beginning with Exposing a Prolific Turkey Poacher followed by The Hollywood Buck Case.
10. Reached a milestone this year by recognizing and awarding the 50th Outstanding Monthly Accomplishment Spot Recognition; this unique Colonel's Challenge Coin was created to recognize Conservation Police Officers / Law Division Staff who perform an outstanding accomplishment. This spot recognition is given each month to an individual or team lead for Outstanding Leadership, Professionalism and Excellence.
11. Transitioned from the establishment of the North American Wildlife Law Enforcement Accreditation (NAWLEA) Program to the operational stage of this vital national initiative, leading us to improved quality public service, networking, collaboration, and credibility; since January of 2024, after being recognized by the DOJ, there are now 18 member enrolled states with six of them in the self-assessment phase, including our agency.
12. As a vital part of this Public Safety Investment, we are continuing to move forward with the W3 (Woods*Wildlife*Water) Natural Resources Training Academy. This capitol initiative and specialized unique training programs includes research, planning and development, marketing, fundraising (i.e., establishing public/private partnerships), etc.

As we proceed with meeting the needs of a broader constituency base as identified in the national relevancy studies, we must use our instructional expertise in new ways. We have certainly proven over the last 20 years that we can offer highly successful academy training to our recruits, officers, and staff. However, to be seen by others as essential, especially with our ever declining number of enforcement officers through the years (50 Officers and counting), now is the time to reach larger audiences as a force multiplier to ensure we can continue to provide a safe environment for those who want to explore and enjoy the great outdoors. More to come as we begin to form public/private partnerships with others to visualize this relevancy endeavor...



You will certainly see some pictures and stories in this report that highlight those efforts of many officers and staff to continually move us forward in our "Pursuit of Excellence". We cannot 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 Law Enforcement Staff. As an organization that desires to be an “Employer of Choice”, we spent this year wisely implementing new proactive initiatives and advocating for our dedicated and passionate employees.

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

The best example of organizational team excellence in 2024, is (Drum Roll):

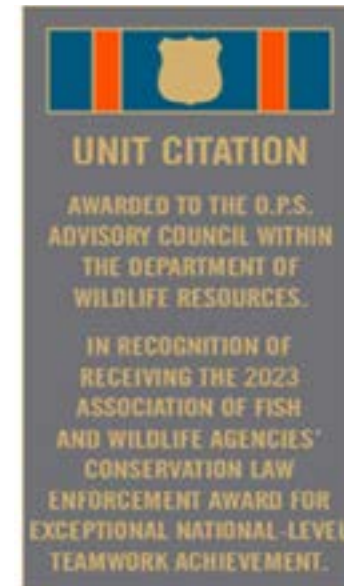
Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources UNIT CITATION



In the year 2024, the Office of Professional Standards (O.P.S.) Advisory Council was honored with our first ever Unit Citation by the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources Travis Voyles with an Official Resolution presented at the 6th Annual VCP Awards Ceremony.

The O.P.S. Advisory Council had been established in 2018; our professional standards vision of Quality Public Service / Employer of Choice / Pursuit of Excellence along with our CREED is the benchmark of this council’s work. This council had seen 24 officers and staff at all levels within our statewide organization serve within this team. They have contributed directly to the research, development, and implementation of many comprehensive long-term team projects, including the Citizen Feedback System; Employee Suggestion Program with its 33 implemented team projects; VCP Recognition and Engagement Handbook; and the Leadership Development Continuum.

Furthermore, in 2023 the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) recognized the O.P.S. Advisory Council with their highest annual teamwork recognition award in Calgary, Alberta (Canada) for outstanding national teamwork achievement in conservation law enforcement. Per the AFWA Press Release (dated October 3, 2023):

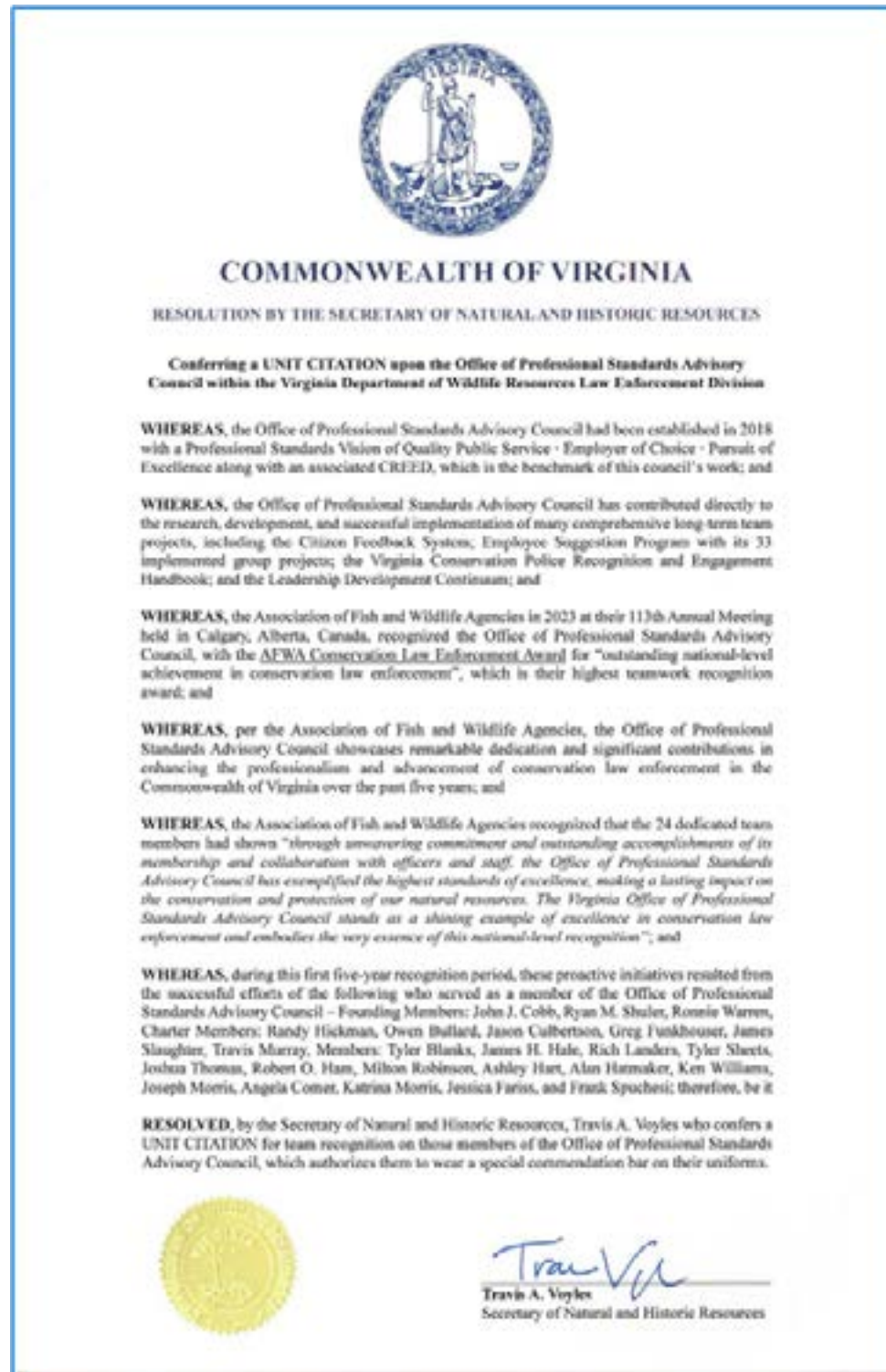



“The O.P.S. Advisory Council showcases remarkable dedication and significant contributions in enhancing the professionalism and advancement of conservation law enforcement in the Commonwealth of Virginia over the past five years. Through unwavering commitment and outstanding accomplishments of its membership and collaboration with officers and staff, the O.P.S. Advisory Council has exemplified the highest standards of excellence, making a lasting impact on the conservation and protection of our natural resources. The Virginia O.P.S. Advisory Council stands as a shining example of excellence in conservation law enforcement and embodies the very essence of this national-level recognition”.

As a result of this Unit Citation, those officers who served on the O.P.S. Advisory Council during the first five years are awarded and shall wear this associated commendation bar on their uniform. In addition going forward, those officers who are members of this council in the future are authorized to wear this same commendation bar, only while they actively service in this role.




Resolution by the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources





VCP RELEVANCY PLAN

Public Safety Investment



Purpose of VCP Relevancy Plan:

As we connect more people with the outdoors, the need for our specialized public safety services will only continue to grow statewide. Our situational report (other side) already shows some of the multiple challenges we are facing in both staffing and meeting the needs of the public. This issue has been previously identified in the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap (2019) under "Agency Capacity" and the associated barriers of lacking capacity (*expertise, staffing, and resources*) to serve the needs of broader constituencies. To be successful in having others value the outdoors, we will need to enhance our training and educational services.

- ❖ **Expertise = North American Wildlife Law Enforcement Accreditation (NAWLEA)**
 - **VCP Quality Public Service:** Professional Standards (Governor's BEST IN CLASS)
 - Best practices, networking, collaboration, accountability, credibility, and public trust
 - For the insight to better forecast trends and find viable efficient solutions
 - Adopt programs and methods that are already working for other agencies
- ❖ **Staffing = Natural Resource Public Safety Response Services**
 - **VCP Pursuit of Excellence:** As Protectors of Wildlife and Natural Resources and to respond effectively to those in the woods and on the water during their greatest time of need
 - **SNHR Objective 3:** Increase the outdoor experiences for all Virginians
 - Meet high increased demands for waterway usage, especially by paddle craft users
 - Manage conflict among different outdoor user's groups to include private landowners
 - Build upon our highly specialized skills and utilize these capabilities as first responders
 - Continue to offer training and partner with other first responders as a force multiplier
 - Expand upon our initiatives as **Ambassadors to Wildlife and Natural Resources**
- ❖ **Resources = Woods*Wildlife*Water "W3" Training and Educational Center**
 - **VCP Employer of Choice:** Addressing "quality of life" police retention concerns
 - **SNHR Objective 4:** Recruitment/Retention of key state personnel capabilities
 - Developing Officers and Staff (Best Resource) to meet Challenges of Tomorrow
 - Utilize "Game Warden Experiences" to increase subject matter expertise
 - Build upon Leadership Development Continuum (LDC) for succession planning
- ❖ **VCP Relevancy Plan Activation (New General Funding Consistent Stream)**
 - Need public safety general funding to directly address low officer staffing levels back toward their traditional numbers (request funding support for additional officers; up to 40 CPOs)
 - Allocate Officer Salary (\$51,000) and Benefits (49.1%) \$76,041 (total) + Emergency Patrol Vehicle (\$60,000) and issued personal equipment (\$11,500); total of **\$147,541 per officer**

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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 167 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 2024, Virginia’s population was estimated at 8,715,698



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

By the end of 2024, the Law Enforcement Division comprised of 167 Conservation Police Officers and 26 professional staff. This division is strategically organized to support both field operations and leadership oversight, consisting of 122 non-supervisory field officers, 19 Sergeants, 12 First Sergeants, 5 Lieutenants, 5 Captains, 3 Majors, and 1 Colonel. Every officer carried certification through the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, empowering them with the full authority to enforce Virginia’s laws across a wide range of natural resource and public safety issues.

Table 1: Law Enforcement Staffing from 2020 to 2024

DESCRIPTION	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
CPO (Recruit and non-supervisory)	113	117	108	106	122
SERGEANT	21	26	19	24	19
FIRST SERGEANT	-	-	7	8	12
LIEUTENANT	6	6	4	4	5
CAPTAIN	3	3	5	4	5
MAJOR/COLONEL	3	3	4	4	4
SWORN SUBTOTAL	146	155	147	150	167
DISPATCH	12	11	14	13	12
ADMIN/OFFICE - FULL-TIME	8	9	9	8	11
PART-TIME	6	-	3	3	2
IT SUPPORT	1	1	1	1	1
SUPPORT SUBTOTAL	27	27	27	25	26
TOTAL SWORN/SUPPORT (FULL-TIME)	173	173	174	175	193

Reflecting the Division’s broad enforcement capabilities, each officer with more than two years as a conservation officer also held federal credentials as a Deputy U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Special Agent. This status enabled them to conduct investigations involving federal wildlife law violations, including those that extend beyond Virginia’s borders. These dual commissions highlight the Division’s integral role in both state and federal conservation enforcement efforts.

In addition to sworn personnel, the Division was supported an essential team of civilian professionals who contributed to the agency’s daily success. This support staff included 24 full-time and 2 part-time employees working in essential roles such as emergency dispatch, administrative coordination, asset and records management, and information technology. Their contributions ensured that sworn officers could remain focused on field duties while maintaining compliance, communication, and logistical support. For a broader look at staffing developments over time, Table 1 outlines year-over-year changes in both sworn and civilian personnel over the past five years.

2.2 Years of Service (2024)

At the end of 2024, the Law Enforcement Division had 193 full-time and two part-time employees. Figure 1 shows a five-year incremental breakdown of how long our employees have been with DWR.

Table 2 lists the names of the Law Enforcement division personnel that have reached years of service milestones in 2024.

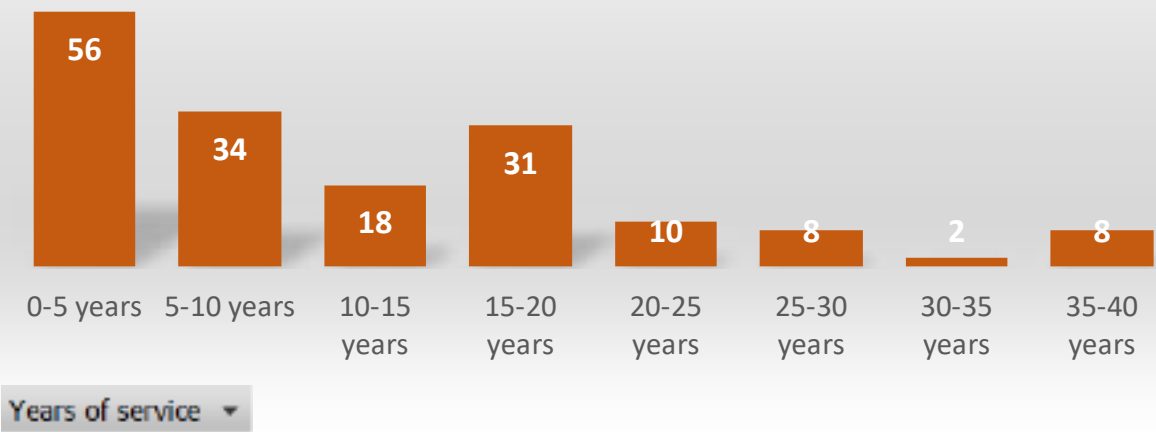
Table 2: Law Enforcement Personnel Years of Service Milestones (2024)

5 YEARS	10 YEARS	15 YEARS
Jesse Maclelland (Fleet Coord.)	Fsgt. Stephen Ritchie	
Janet Richardson (Reg. SVC)	SA Paul Inge	
	Senior Ofc. Tim Bostic	
	Senior Ofc. Justin Chambers	
	Senior Ofc. Joel Early Jr.	
	Senior Ofc. Chirs Gilmore	
	Senior Ofc. Alberto Medina	
	Senior Ofc. Dan Smith	
	Senior Ofc. Tyler Sheets	
20 YEARS	25 YEARS	30 +YEARS
Robert Schmidt (Emerg. Sys Mgr.)	Shirl Dressler-Setzer (Wild-life Permits)	Captain Tony Fisher (35)
Paul Kugelman Jr. (Legal Compliance Officer)		Fsgt. Steve Ferguson (30)
		Sgt. Steve Garvis (30)
Lt. Jason Culbertson		Master Ofc. Mike Entsminger (35)
Master Ofc. Krista Adams		



Sum of Number of sworn LE officers

Figure 1: Years of Service Distribution for Sworn Employees



2.3 Budget

While the majority of this annual report is organized by calendar year, it is important to note that budgetary reporting follows the Commonwealth’s fiscal year calendar, which runs from July 1 to June 30. Accordingly, the following budget overview reflects expenditures for the Law Enforcement Division across the past four fiscal years: FY22 (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022) through FY25 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025).

During this period, the Division’s total budget increased from \$20.6 million in FY22 to just over \$25.2 million in FY25. This growth has been driven primarily by rising personnel costs, which reflect the Division’s ongoing commitment to offering competitive salaries and retaining a highly qualified workforce. Personnel expenses rose by more than \$5 million over the four-year span.

Table 3: Budget

Law Enforcement Budget	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Personnel Costs	\$16,050,771	\$18,423,614	\$20,098,828	\$21,168,015
Non-personnel Costs	\$4,588,549	\$5,180,614	\$5,008,256	\$4,033,585
Total	\$20,639,230	\$23,604,108	\$25,107,084	\$25,201,601

Law Enforcement Training Academy Celebrates 20 Years of Excellence



The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) Law Enforcement Training Academy proudly marked its 20th anniversary in 2024 as an independent law enforcement training institution. Over the past two decades, the Academy has been instrumental in shaping the careers of numerous Conservation Police Officers who serve to protect Virginia's rich natural resources and ensure public safety across the Commonwealth.

Since its establishment as an independent academy, DWR has hosted multiple recruit classes, each bringing fresh energy and commitment to the agency's mission. In 2024 we graduated our 13th basic academy of Virginia Conservation Police Officers. These recruits have undergone rigorous training, preparing them for the challenging and rewarding responsibilities of wildlife law enforcement.

To maintain its status as an approved law enforcement training facility, the Academy undergoes a comprehensive recertification process every three years through the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). This process includes an in-depth audit of training records and procedures to ensure the Academy meets or exceeds the high standards set by the Commonwealth for law enforcement training.

Thanks to the dedication of the Academy's professional training staff and a network of certified volunteer instructors, the DWR Law Enforcement Training Academy recently passed this

demanding audit. The Academy was officially presented with its recertification certificate at the DWR Law Enforcement Committee Meeting in 2024, a testament to its continued excellence and commitment to high-quality training.

As the Academy celebrates two decades of growth and achievement, it remains focused on its mission: to develop highly trained, professional Conservation Police Officers who will safeguard Virginia's wildlife, habitats, and outdoor traditions for generations to come.

Major Milt Robinson has been instrumental in the ongoing success and development of the Law Enforcement Training Academy. He played a critical role during the academy's formative years, serving as a Lieutenant and helping to establish the foundation for what would become a premier training institution. More recently, he has served as the Major over Professional Standards, where his leadership continues to shape the academy's direction and uphold its commitment to excellence.

Under Major Robinson's guidance and supervision, Conservation Officers are thoroughly prepared to enter the field with the skills, knowledge, and professionalism needed to meet the complex challenges of their duties. His dedication to high standards ensures that officers not only enforce the law effectively but also deliver high-quality public service to both the citizens and visitors of the Commonwealth.

As we celebrate this milestone, the photos on the following page offer just a snapshot of 20 years of excellence in law enforcement training.



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 an eighteen-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

Since its launch on May 25, 2018, the centralized Citizen Feedback System—introduced alongside the debut of the Office of Professional Standards (O.P.S.) website at dwr.virginia.gov/ops—has become a cornerstone of the Law Enforcement Division’s commitment to transparency and public engagement. Designed to capture a wide range of citizen input, the system enables efficient tracking and response to both commendations and concerns. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were developed at the time of implementation to ensure consistent handling of feedback across all relevant roles.

The system continues to play a critical role in strengthening community trust and accountability. It has significantly improved the Division’s ability to document positive interactions and address public concerns in a structured, timely manner. All submissions are securely archived and managed by the Office of Professional Standards, preserving an accessible record that supports both internal review and long-term service improvement.

In Calendar Year 2024:

- Recorded 105 Total Citizen Feedbacks

Officer Commendations:

- 79 total
 - Region I – 18
 - Region II – 22
 - Region III – 5
 - Region IV – 16
 - Special Ops – 11
 - HQ (Dispatch) – 7

Officer Complaints:

- 26 Citizen Complaints
- Most common were enforcement related, demeanor and driving complaints
- Region I - 12; Region II - 8; Region III - 4; Region IV - 6; and Special Ops / HQ's - 3

Final Dispositions:

- 15 - Unfounded
- 12- Sustained
- 1 - Withdrawn
- 5 -Not Sustained

Figure 2: Citizen Feedback

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

The Employee Suggestion Program was developed to put into action a key component of the Professional Standards Creed—applying “management best practices” to build an inclusive, diverse, and cohesive team environment. The program encourages proactive, collaborative efforts to enhance operational effectiveness and reduce risk by forming work groups that address real-world challenges in the field. It also empowers staff by tapping into the experience, creativity, and innovation of Conservation Police Officers and Law Enforcement Division personnel.

All employees are encouraged to submit constructive ideas through the program. Suggestions can be shared directly with a designated project leader or submitted via the Employee Suggestion Form to the O.P.S. Advisory Council, which oversees the evaluation process. When a submission aligns with leadership priorities and resources are available, the idea may move forward as an active project. In such cases, the original contributor is invited to join a collaborative team to help develop and implement the initiative.

While no viable projects emerged from the program in 2024, it remains an important avenue for employee engagement and continuous improvement within the Division.

From inception to 12/31/2024:

- 41 Projects and work teams created, which has led to the completion of 35 projects, using group creativity and innovation to build upon those employee initiatives

Figure 3: Employee Suggestion Program



3.3 Peer Support Team

Throughout 2024, the Peer Support Team was active in providing support in several capacities. They were available to respond to critical incidents that required immediate attention and assistance. Additionally, they were available for one to one support whether it was a stressful situation on the job or personal struggles, team members were there to offer guidance and support. Their dedication to their peers was instrumental in maintaining the well-being and morale of the Virginia Conservation Police.

The impact of the Peer Support Team's efforts is evident in the number of contacts made throughout the year, as illustrated in Figure 4. The 144 contacts are broken down into general categories, showcasing the various ways in which team members provided assistance. From critical incident responses to offering emotional support, the data highlights the broad scope of the team's work and their commitment to their colleagues' mental health and well-being.

To ensure they were well-prepared to provide the best possible support, the Peer Support Team met twice for training sessions in 2024. These training sessions were crucial for refreshing their skills and knowledge, particularly their training from the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF). The ICISF training is a recognized standard in critical incident stress management and equips team members with the tools they need to effectively support their peers.

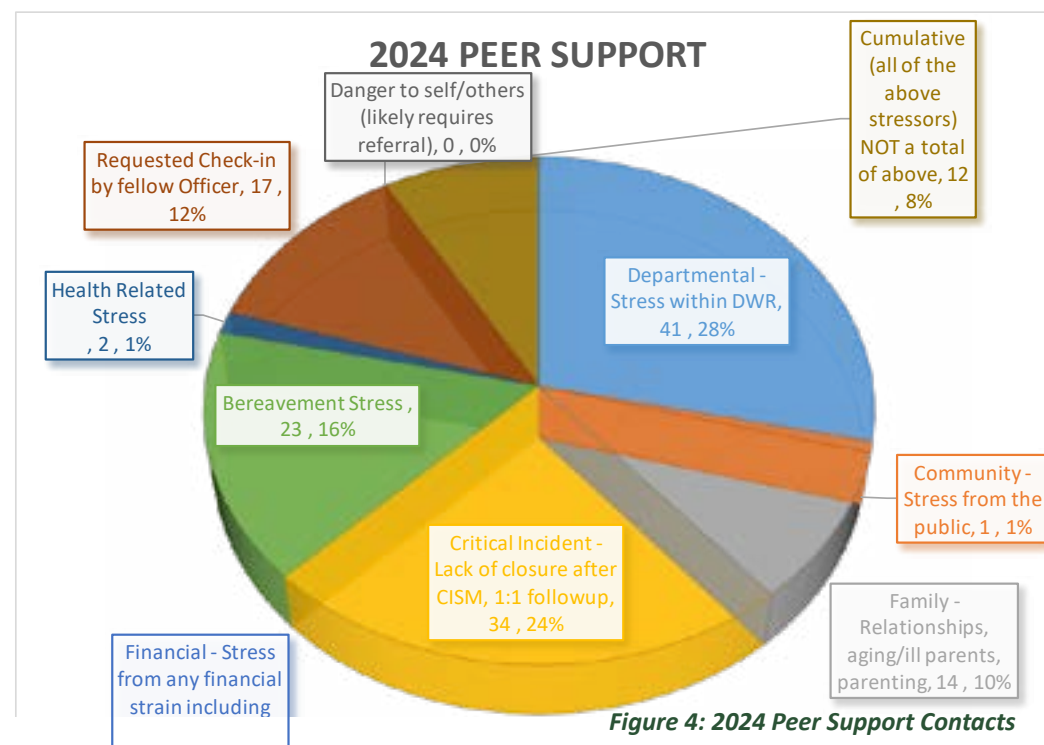


Figure 4: 2024 Peer Support Contacts

3.4 Accreditation

Enhancing Law Enforcement Standards: The Department of Wildlife Resources' Commitment to Accreditation

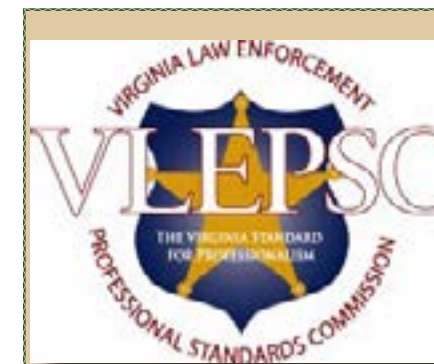
Accreditation involves a voluntary, systematic internal review of an organization's policies, procedures, training, and operations. These are measured against the standards set by an accrediting body to ensure compliance. The Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) demonstrates a strong commitment to this process by actively participating in the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission (VLEPSC) program.



Captain Rob Ham plays a crucial role in this commitment as the Vice-President of the Virginia Law Enforcement Accreditation Coalition. Alongside him, Retired Chief Bobby Mawyer contributes significantly as a part-time accreditation specialist. Retired Chief Mawyer's previous position as the president of the organization further highlights the depth of experience and dedication within the team.

Captain Ham's role extends to representing state-accredited agencies on the VLEPSC standards review committee. In this pivotal position, he ensures a consistent and ongoing evaluation of Virginia's standards, making sure they stay relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of agencies across the Commonwealth.

Both Captain Ham and Retired Chief Mawyer serve as esteemed VLEPSC assessors, using their expertise to assist in accrediting agencies. Their active involvement underscores DWR's unwavering commitment to enhancing the success of VLEPSC law enforcement agencies throughout the Commonwealth. By promoting the adoption of best practices within their communities, DWR continues to advance 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) program stands as a testament to the commitment of natural resource law enforcement agencies to uphold the highest standards of professionalism, effectiveness, and public trust. NAWLEA's goals are multifaceted, each aiming to fortify the structure and function of wildlife law enforcement across the continent. This section explores the key objectives of NAWLEA and their significance in enhancing the conservation efforts of natural resource law enforcement agencies.

One of NAWLEA's primary goals is to increase the effectiveness of natural resource law enforcement agencies. By focusing on the efficient delivery of services, NAWLEA ensures that agencies can respond promptly and effectively to wildlife crimes and natural resource violations. This goal encompasses streamlining processes, utilizing advanced technologies, and implementing best practices in wildlife law enforcement. Efficient service delivery not only enhances the agency's ability to protect wildlife and natural resources but also optimizes the use of available resources, ensuring that every effort is impactful.

NAWLEA emphasizes the importance of cooperation among all components of the criminal justice system. Effective wildlife law enforcement often requires collaboration with various entities, including federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, judicial systems, and community organizations. By fostering a spirit of cooperation, NAWLEA helps to create a cohesive network of support that enhances the overall effectiveness of the criminal justice system. This cooperative approach ensures that wildlife crimes are prosecuted effectively and that offenders are held accountable, thereby deterring future violations.

The success of wildlife law enforcement agencies hinges on the knowledge, skills, and preparedness of their personnel. NAWLEA aims to ensure that natural resource law enforcement personnel receive appropriate and continuous training. This training covers a wide range of topics, including wildlife identification, investigative techniques, legal procedures, and the use of technology in enforcement activities. By maintaining high training standards, NAWLEA helps to equip officers with the necessary tools to perform their duties competently and confidently, ultimately enhancing the overall effectiveness of the agencies.

Public trust is essential for the effectiveness of any law enforcement agency. NAWLEA strives to promote public confidence in wildlife law enforcement by upholding transparency,

accountability, and ethical conduct. Agencies accredited by NAWLEA are committed to operating with integrity and in accordance with the law. By demonstrating their dedication to these principles, accredited agencies can foster positive relationships with the communities they serve, encouraging public support and cooperation in conservation efforts.

NAWLEA's commitment to promoting the professionalism of law enforcement agencies is a cornerstone of its mission. Professionalism encompasses a range of attributes, including adherence to ethical standards, excellence in service delivery, and continuous improvement. By setting and maintaining high standards, NAWLEA encourages agencies to strive for excellence in all aspects of their operations. This dedication to professionalism not only enhances the credibility of the agencies but also contributes to the overall success of wildlife conservation efforts.

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources is a notable participant in the NAWLEA program. Colonel John J. Cobb from the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources serves as the chair of the NAWLEA board, highlighting the department's commitment to the program's goals. Additionally, Captain Rob Ham has been 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. Their involvement underscores the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources' dedication to advancing the standards and effectiveness of wildlife law enforcement.



The North American Wildlife Law Enforcement Accreditation program plays a vital role in enhancing the effectiveness, cooperation, training, public trust, and professionalism of natural resource law enforcement agencies. By achieving these goals, NAWLEA supports the broader mission of conserving North America's natural resources and wildlife for future generations. The program's emphasis on high standards and continuous improvement ensures that accredited agencies are well-equipped to tackle the challenges of wildlife law enforcement and contribute meaningfully to conservation efforts across the continent.



NASBLA Accreditation

A Continuous Pursuit of Excellence on the Waterways of Virginia

Virginia DWR continues to be active participants NASBLA accreditation program in 2024, 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

In 2024, the Recruitment section of the Virginia Conservation Police was actively involved in sourcing and selecting candidates for the next class of Conservation Police Officers. The recruitment efforts began early in the year with the search for successful candidates for the 14th Basic Law Enforcement Academy. The team dedicated significant time to engaging with potential applicants through various channels, including university visits, college outreach programs, and participation in outdoor expos and shows.



These initiatives aimed to identify individuals with the qualities and commitment needed to become protectors of Virginia's natural resources. The recruitment process sought candidates with the necessary law enforcement skills and a genuine passion for conservation law enforcement. By engaging with potential recruits in diverse settings, the Recruitment section demonstrated a strong commitment to ensuring that the ranks of the Conservation Police are filled with individuals who share the mission of safeguarding the state's wildlife and protecting the citizens of Virginia.

3.6 Training

13th Basic Law Enforcement Academy

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) Law Enforcement Academy graduated a new class of conservation police officers. On August 29th, 2024, the Honorable Heidi S. Barshinger, Clerk of the Henrico County Circuit Court, officially swore-in the new officers of the 13th Basic Conservation Police Officer Academy at Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens. The Basic Acade-



my graduates completed an intensive training program that ran for 26 weeks. They took up their assignments across the Commonwealth and proceeded with field training under the direct supervision of field training officers. Congratulations to the 13th Basic "The Elk"!



2024 Training Highlights:

- March 2024 - Interview & Interrogations with Jeff Baile class brought a wealth of knowledge from a retired Game Warden with a ton of interview experience. This intensive three-day class taught CPOs the skills and techniques of well-thought-out interviews and interrogations.
- March 2024 - Game Warden Trout Experience hosted in Region 3 for CPO's looking to learn and expand their knowledge and confidence of proactively working stocked trout waters. This specialized training opportunity will focus on trout enforcement strategies, violation detection, and an overview of the stocked trout program
- May 2024 - NASBLA Pursuit and Stop Course hosted at Portsmouth USCG for DWR and our joint Hampton Roads partner agencies.
- June 2024 - NASBLA Officer Water Survival. This training is required for all officers to participate in to increase awareness and water survival skills for our various boat operations.
- October 2024 - The LDP Cohort 2 wrapped up their final year of the program with their final project presentation to the Command Staff in October 2024 on recruiting poker chips and revitalizing the ride-along program. The project was well received. The goal is to add ride-alongs to the next hiring process.
- November 2024 - Ebike Training - The Virginia National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) State Chapter has committed to enhancing wildlife law enforcement efforts across the state by providing \$68,000 to the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) Law Enforcement Division. This funding enabled DWR officers to acquire QuietKat e-bikes and Flock

Falcon Flex surveillance cameras, cutting-edge equipment that will strengthen the DWR's ability to monitor, patrol, and investigate the state's expansive landscape. These tools will aid DWR with combatting turkey poaching and other violations, a long-standing challenge given the vast terrain officers must cover across Virginia's millions of acres of public and private lands. Traditionally, limited patrol hours and the time required to access remote areas have made it challenging for officers to detect and apprehend violators; however, this funding will provide DWR with additional tools to investigate and pursue cases of illegal activity.

With NWTF's partnership, DWR's Law Enforcement Division will gain additional resources to maximize its conservation efforts and safeguard Virginia's wildlife through an innovative approach to wildlife law enforcement.



- International Assoc of Marine Investigators Training Conference hosted in Virginia Beach February 2024 - Special Operations POC SA Inge
- Hampton Roads SAR February 2024 - Lt Thomas Lead

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 environments 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.

2024 Virginia Boating Incident Summary

- Number of Incidents = 89
- Number of Vessels Involved = 106
- Number of Injured Persons = 46
- Number of Fatalities = 17
- Alcohol was a known factor in 0% of fatal incidents.
- Canoes and kayaks were involved in 35% of fatal incidents.
- In 94% of fatal incidents no life jacket was worn
- Property Damage = \$735,341

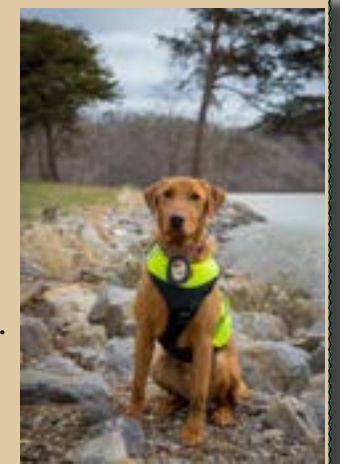


Figure 5: 2024 Virginia Boating Incident Summary



Virginia's Waterways: Rising Boating Risks Highlight Need for Conservation Police Presence

Virginia's recreational boating safety remains a critical concern, with the 2024 Recreational Boating Incident Summary revealing a substantial increase in incidents and fatalities compared to 2023. This trend emphasizes the vital role that Virginia's Conservation Police Officers (CPOs) play in promoting safety on the Commonwealth's waterways.

In 2023, Virginia reported 59 boating incidents and 8 fatalities. In 2024, those figures climbed to 89 incidents and 17 fatalities—marking a 51% increase in incidents and more than doubling the number of lives lost. Property damage also rose significantly, from approximately \$278,000 in 2023 to more than \$735,000 in 2024.

The leading causes of fatal boating incidents in 2024 were falls overboard and capsizing. Many incidents involved operator inexperience, poor swimmer status, and hazardous conditions. Importantly, 94% of individuals who died were not wearing life jackets—an all-too-familiar statistic in recent years.

These data points reinforce the importance of both public education and consistent enforcement. Conservation Police Officers serve as the front line in preventing boating tragedies. Through patrols, safety checks, and enforcement of boating laws, they help deter unsafe behavior and promote responsible recreation.

With boating activity remaining high across Virginia's lakes, rivers, and coastal waters, a stronger, more visible CPO presence is essential. Supporting and staffing these officers appropriately isn't just a policy decision—it's a public safety imperative.

The numbers are clear: lives can be saved through proper preparation, personal responsibility, and professional enforcement.

4.0 Law Support Services

4.1 Communication Center: 2024

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) maintains a 24 hour, 7 days a week, 365 days a year Law Enforcement Communications Center. Current staffing for the center is 11 communications officers, 2 communications supervisors and a communications manager.

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources Communications Center provides support throughout the Commonwealth with one central dispatch center. The communications center is tasked with answering calls, emails, and dispatching calls for service to not only to DWR personnel but also to the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Law State Park Rangers. In addition, the Communications Center is used by the Department of Forestry as an emergency contact for high-risk situations. The communications center also the point of contact for other Commonwealth agencies, Federal agencies and local agencies. In 2024, the communications center over 1,200 calls for services to assist other agencies to include public safety agencies.



In 2024, the Communications Center handled 66,977 calls for service this is an increase of 5,210 calls from 2023. This trend continues to grow every year as more and more individuals are participating in hunting, fishing, boating and other outdoor activities. During 2024, each communications officer averaged 5,581 calls per dispatcher with Saturday (12,133), Fridays (9,856) and Mondays (9,453) being the busiest days of the week. The top 3



busiest months were November (7,093), July (6,291) and June (5,908). For 2024, there were 10,817 calls entered for DCR, and 54,956 calls entered for DWR. Most of the calls were received by the DCR/DWR Officers (49,231) Crimeline (6,244), and Sheriff's Office/Police Departments (2,958).

The Communications Center, in coordination with the Office of Professional Standards, recognized the 2024, Communications Officer of the Year, Dana Sanders. Communications Officer Sanders has one of the highest calls for service averages and is committed to officer and public safety is demonstrated for all of 2024. Communications Officer Sanders had zero unverified addresses for calls for service she created. At times this can be a challenge with the intermittent

technology issues experienced by the communications center. Furthermore, Virginia's rural and urbanized landscapes can also present a challenge to other law enforcement agencies. Primary and assisting agencies frequently rely on the communication center to provide detailed directions and addresses to access some of the remote locations DWR and DCR officers patrol and respond to. Communications Officer Sanders is not satisfied until the location can be verified and is correct. She also serves in the role of auxiliary trainer of new personnel. She has over twenty-five years of law enforcement dispatching experience and has established herself as a competent auxiliary trainer with a willingness to support the training team. As such, Communications Officer Sanders has been selected to attend the certification process for law enforcement communications training officer. Communications Officer Sanders achieved extraordinary contributor for locating a public inquiry request for a return call from an officer. The request went to the wrong location during the busy hunting and holiday seasons, making the request easy to miss. The request also occurred when she was off duty. Her concern for the public was demonstrated by her attention to detail and willingness to assist where she can.

The Communications Center's role is critical to the safety and efficiency of law enforcement and public services across Virginia. The dedication of its staff, like Communications Officer Dana Sanders, ensures that the center remains a cornerstone of support for the Commonwealth's outdoor activities and natural resource protection.

Table 4: Dispatch Summary 2020 to 2024

DESCRIPTION	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total CAD Calls for Service	57,409	50,134	53,235	61,767	66,527
Crimeline Reports	5,836	6,065	5,734	5,725	6,288
Environmental Issues/Fish Kills	185	225	243	280	379
Wildlife Nuisance/Permits/Injured related calls	5,185	4,734	4,493	4,911	5,037
CPO/Ranger Patrols	24,864	19,643	20,445	23,012	25,383
Hunt/Boat/Fish/Trapping Violation Type Calls	6,460	5,650	5,531	5,891	5,521
General / Traffic Violations	1,003	788	843	4,434	5,189
Service-Related Type Calls	3,287	3,098	4,241	5,156	5,691
Hunt Incident Reports	32	36	35	27	29
Boat Accident/Sinking/Drowning Reports	78	128	121	93	104
Distress/Overdue Hunters, Fishermen or Boaters	331	204	226	210	182
Accidents Involving DWR Persons/Equipment	32	1	27	30	53
Criminal Investigations/Complaints	924	78	806	950	966
Stolen Property Reports/Investigations (Boat, other, etc.)	73	58	133	136	100
Abandoned or Recovered Boats	279	170	179	163	206

4.2 Law IT & Records Program

Throughout 2024, the Law Enforcement Division continued to benefit from the dedicated support of its Information Technology (IT) and Law Records Program staff. Together, these teams focused on the development, maintenance, and data integrity of the Central Square Technologies' Zuercher Pro Suite—a comprehensive, case-centric reporting system.

The Pro Suite platform supports over 450 officers and staff, including those within the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission. Its robust capabilities include Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD), case management, a Master Name database, and geographic (GEO) validation tools. The system also allows for the creation of custom modules and case forms, enabling the development of tools tailored to the unique operational needs of each program area.



The Law Records Program continued to play a critical role in managing the Records Management System (RMS) component of the Pro Suite. With a strong focus on data accuracy, the team ensured the integrity and reliability of the system's records by serving as a key source for data reviews and edits.

A major strength of the Pro Suite is its ability to define individual case types, supporting the diverse functions and specialized programs across the agency. This flexibility enhances operational efficiency and strengthens the division's capacity for data-driven decision-making.

Table 5: Records Management System (RMS) Summary from 2020- 2024

RMS Summary	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
All Case Types	9,538	7,937	8,574	8,901	8,053
Investigative Cases	6,602	5,345	6,027	6,404	6,390
Arrest	6,374	3,180	3,176	3,921	4,426

Non-offense case types were developed and designed to support multiple agency functions of which officers are directly involved. These provide a critical aspect of communication between our field officers and personnel associated the corresponding programs. The chart below reflects the usage of some of the non-offense case types within the last three years.

In 2024, there were 6,390 Officer Investigative Cases representing 4,426 arrests.

Table 6: Non-Offense Case types in 2024

Case Types (non-offense)	2022	2023	2024
Animal Rehabilitation	36	32	21
Boat Section	108	81	70
Foxhound Training	31	29	29
Shoot from Vehicle Permit	28	35	55
Waterway Markers	11	148	13
Wildlife Kill Permit/DCAP	2029	2,039	1184
Total Records	2,265	2,366	1,372

Although our officers have full state policing authority, their primary focus is on wildlife and boating regulation enforcement. Freshwater fishing license has historically been our highest volume of offenses.

Below are the top 10 arrest charges/offenses for 2024.

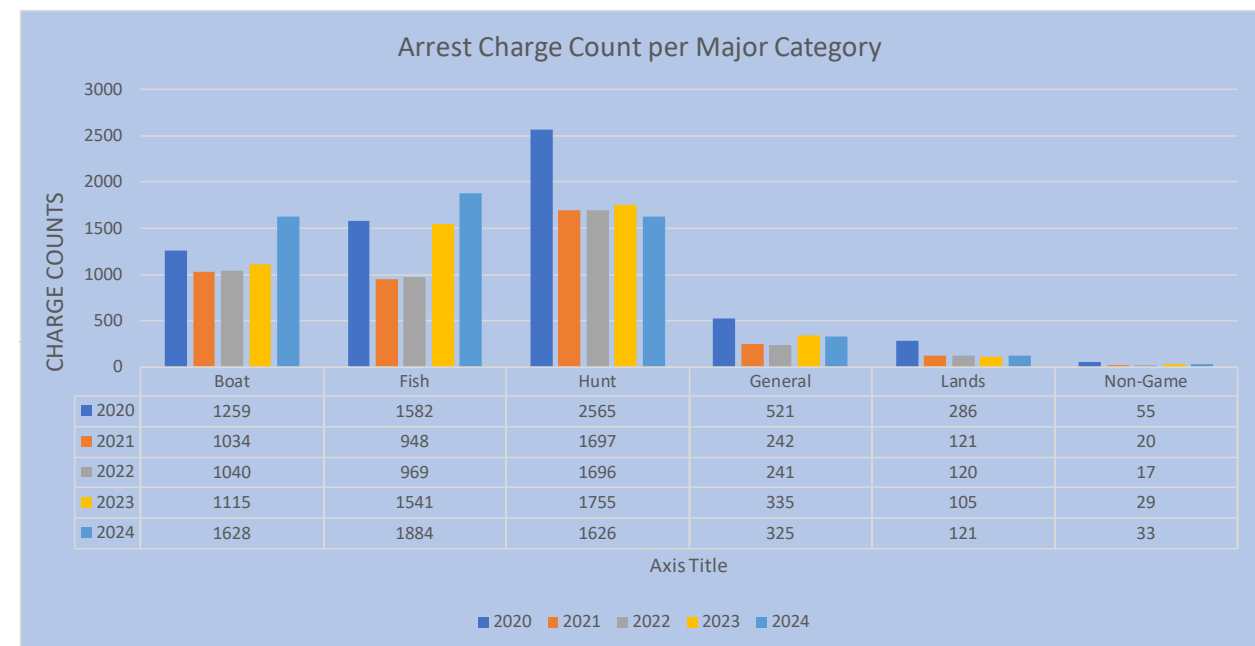
Table 7: Top 10 Arrest Charges Issued in 2024 by Conservation Police

RANK	CODE DESCRIPTION	CODE	2024
1	LICENSE: FISH W/O FRESHWATER LICENSE	29.1-335(FRESH)	1145
2	WATERCRAFT: PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES REQUIRED	4VAC15-430-30	452
3	TRESPASS: TRESPASS BY HUNTERS AND FISHERS	18.2-132	229
4	REGULATIONS FOR VESSEL OPERATION AND EQUIPMENT	29.1-738	192
5	REGULATORY MARKERS AND AIDS TO NAVIGATION	4VAC15-370-50	190
6	TO HUNT OVER A BAITED AREA	29.1-521(4)	187
7	FISHING WITHOU SALTWATER LICENSE	28.2-302.1	138
8	LICENSE: FISH W/O STOCKED TROUT LICENSE	29.1-335(TROUT)	128
9	GAME/FISH: TAKE OR ATTEMPT TO TAKE DURING CLOSED SEASON	29.1-550(i)	126
10	LICENSE: HUNT W/O DEER/TURKEY LICENSE	29.1-335 (DEER/TURKEY)	120

Along with querying individual charges, Pro Suite enables us to review major arrest charge categories which reflect a broader view of officer investigative efforts. Our arrest charges/offenses typically revolve around six major types of incidents: Boat, Fish, Hunt, General, Lands, and Non-Game. The chart below displays the resulting efforts for the most recent 5 years in reference to these incidents.



Figure 6: Arrest Charge Count by Major Category



The data within the Pro Suite program ultimately represents the encompassing efforts of our Conservation Officers reflecting their dedication to uphold wildlife conservation and public safety. The information collected is essential in adhering to mandated agency responsibilities which include reporting to National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS), Virginia State Police Use Of Force, Interstate Wildlife Violators Compact, and Community Policing Data. Via their submitted records, we continue contributions to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service's (NCIS) Law Enforcement Information Exchange (LInX) system, enhancing collaboration in the law enforcement community. Law Records strives to support them utilizing the system from end user assistance to data accuracy to creating requested customized operational tools.

Table 8: RMS Arrest Charges/Offenses Breakdown of specified Minor Incident types from 2020-2024

Charge Category	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
License - Fish	1,126	812	1,114	1,153	1,372
License - Hunt *		422	639	455	294
Safety - Boat	907	793	674	778	1,051
Season - Hunt	1,017	654	650	772	711
Safety - Hunt *		252	179	163	168
Trespass	506	304	181	322	324
License - Boat	256	355	418	293	336
Traffic	271	159	206	251	230
Safety - Other	402	251	16	4	3
Season - Fish	2,207	131	173	282	330
Drug - Marijuana	53	36	4	3	2
Drug - Other *		96	9	15	12
Littering	0	17	52	59	50
Firearm	105	415	69	74	102
Other	128	331	38	74	69
Alcohol Other	60	115	63	43	32
Fraud	53	144	36	28	36
Alcohol - BUI	28	139	16	22	26
Alcohol - DUI	19	97	16	20	10
Damage	29	14	20	11	18
Elude/Impede	18	5	6	7	14
Larceny	17	78	15	19	16
Alcohol - HUI	4	0	1	6	4
Assault	5	3	9	1	7
Totals	5,211	5,653	4,604	4,855	5,217
*New Category 2021					

The Unsung Backbone of Conservation Law Enforcement: Professional Staff and Their Vital Role

When we think of conservation law enforcement, it's easy to picture uniformed officers navigating backroads, patrolling waterways, or responding to wildlife emergencies. However, behind the scenes they rely heavily on a dedicated team. The professional staff at the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) Law Enforcement Division play a critical but often unseen role in supporting law enforcement efforts across the Commonwealth.

At the heart of this support is DWR's 24/7 Communications Center, fielding nearly 67,000 calls each year. Often the only lifeline for officers in remote areas, the center ensures constant coordination, safety, and rapid response.

Other key players include the agency's IT experts, records managers, and permitting staff. These professionals maintain essential systems, manage case records, and handle permits that keep operations running smoothly. Collecting the data that is vastly important not only to this annual report but to recognizing the overall success of law enforcement efforts.

A Unified Team with a Shared Mission

Every call answered, every system maintained, and every record processed by DWR's professional staff plays a role in conserving Virginia's natural heritage. They may not wear a badge, but their commitment to the mission is just as strong.

Together with sworn officers, these professionals form a cohesive team—working tirelessly to protect the wildlife, habitats, and people of the Commonwealth. It's a partnership that demonstrates the power of collaboration in conservation law enforcement, and a reminder that success in the field begins with strong support behind the scenes.

In Memoriam: Debbie Wilmoth

We also pause to honor the memory of Debbie Wilmoth, a dedicated dispatcher whose contributions exemplified the very best of DWR's mission. Debbie's steady voice, deep care for the safety of officers, and unwavering professionalism left a lasting impact on all who worked with her. Her service will not be forgotten, and her legacy continues to inspire the communications team every day.





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 2020 to 2024

Revocation Entered	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
VA Hunt	64	91	82	51	39
VA Fish	12	1	4	0	2
VA Boat	7	3	4	1	0
VA Combo Hunt/Fish	0	0	0	0	2
DWR Property	0	0	0	1	0
Other State Revocations Ratified	5,470	4,693	4,626	6,007	3,822
TOTAL REVOCATIONS	5,553	4,788	4,716	6,060	3,865

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 2024

Reason	Arrest	Summons	No Action	Warnings	Total
CFS	4	43	54	700	801
Check Point	1	2	18	0	21
Equipment Violation	1	27	4	82	114
Other	10	211	44	1126	1391
Terry Stop	0	5	3	45	53
Traffic Violation	7	144	5	144	300
Warrant Service	0	1	0	0	1
Total	23	433	128	2097	2681

§ 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.



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. The division Drone Team, leverages 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

In May of 2024, the DWR K9 Unit successfully graduated two new handlers and two new canines from the 9-week long Conservation Law Enforcement Canine Academy lead by Sergeant Richard Howald. Master Officer Cameron Dobyns and K9 Atlas graduated and returned home to the Northern Neck/Middle Peninsula area of Region 1. While Senior Officer Bruce Young and K9 Blaze graduated and returned home to the Henry County area of Region 2. Along with the two DWR Canines, there was also a West Virginia Department of Natural Resources K9 Handler and canine that graduated from the academy. Throughout the 9-week academy, the handlers and the canine partners focused on tracking and article searches for evidence recovery. The handler/canine partners had to work together to learn how to be the most successful and efficient team. During the academy each current DWR handler assisted in teaching the 3 new handlers. After graduation, each canine/handler combo quickly went into the field and started making an impact throughout the remainder of 2024.



In 2024, the K9 Unit continued to make public outreach events one of their top priorities. Throughout the year the K9 handlers and their K9 partners attended approximately 196 public outreach events. These events ranged from career days at schools/colleges, manning booths at outdoor expos, talks/demonstrations at camps, guest speaking presentations at Ruritan Clubs/Hunt Clubs, and many other community sponsored events.

The DWR K9 Unit also assisted inside the agency and outside the agency by running tracks, locating suspects involved in wildlife and fisheries violations, runaway juveniles, breaking and entering, and search and rescue. They also recovered evidence involving

Table 11: Summary for K-9 Activity from 2020 to 2024

DESCRIPTION	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
TOTAL USES	292	295	319	267	484
CALLS FOR SERVICE	1870	576	1871	1446	2,317
PUBLIC APPEARANCE	14	91	111	71	196
TRACKS	74	82	92	44	81
WILDLIFE DETECTION	17	15	14	-	-
AREA SEARCH	177	118	116	152	204
NONSPECIFIC USE	10	2	9	8	51
HUMAN REMAINS DETECTION	1	4	3	-	-

shooting from the road, trespassing to hunt, and hunting incidents involving injured persons and property damage. They also assisted outside agencies in recovering firearms and evidence used in crimes involving homicides, shooting into occupied vehicles/houses, and locating firearms dropped by individuals hiking. The K9 Unit were also requested and assisted the USFWS and USFS with cases, including one case involving the illegal taking of a bear in the North Carolina section of the Great Dismal Swamp.

The versatility of the DWR K9 Unit goes beyond just their specialized unit. For example, throughout the year the DWR K9 Unit members also assisted the 13th Basic Academy with instruction on canine tracking, driver training, firearms, visual tracking, boating/OUI enforcement, and hunting incident training. The K9 unit also completed 9 applicant background investigations in preparation for the 14th Basic Academy that will start in March of 2025.

Officer:	K9 Partner	Notable Activities 2024
Senior Officer Tyler Blanks	Bruno	Assisted outside and inside the agency, deploying K9 Bruno on tracks for runaway juveniles, trespass hunters, located evidence on a shooting from the road, and a homicide.
Senior Officer Bonnie Brazier	Grace	Deployed K9 Grace on multiple hunting incidents, trespass to hunt, shoot from the road calls, and locating evidence on each one. Located evidence for local, state, and federal agencies.
Senior Officer Ian Ostlund	Reese	Assisted the Region with spotlight patrols, DUI arrests. Deployed K9 Reese, locating evidence on multiple hunting incidents, shooting from the road and trespass to hunt calls. Assisted with multiple SAR operations.
Senior Officer Cameron Dobyns	Atlas	Selected to the K9 Unit, successfully completed 9-week K9 Academy with K9 Atlas. Deployed K9 Atlas locating evidence on hunting incidents, and trespass to hunt cases.
Senior Officer Bruce Young	Blaze	Selected to the K9 Unit, successfully completed 9-week K9 Academy with K9 Blaze. Deployed K9 Blaze on multiple tracks for trespass to hunt calls, located evidence on cases inside and outside the agency.
Senior Officer Jacob Chaffin	Molly	Deployed K9 Molly on article searches for trespassing hunting calls, illegal ginseng digging, SAR, and locating evidence for our agency and outside agencies.
Master Officer Mark VanDyk	Coal	Ran multiple tracks with K9 Coal, locating convicted felons with firearms. Did several article searches locating evidence for cases inside and outside the agency.
Master Officer Mark DiLuigi	Lilly	Deployed K9 Lilly on tracks, locating runaway juveniles, trespass hunters, did article searches on multiple hunting incidents, and located evidence on cases inside and outside the agency.

5.2 Marine Theft and Fraud

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources is the agency entrusted by the Commonwealth of Virginia to oversee the titling and registration of all required watercraft. Special Agents Jim Croft and Paul Inge with the Marine Fraud and Theft Unit continued to work closely with DWR's Boating section to identify and prosecute fraudulent activity throughout the 2024 calendar year. The Agency continues to see an increasing trend in which the purchase price of vessels is grossly misrepresented by purchasers to subvert the 2% watercraft sales and use tax. In two separate marine fraud investigations Agents discovered vessels titled in which the purchasers misrepresented the purchase price by \$17K and \$8K. These are just a few examples as there were nearly 3K vessels titled in 2024 with a reported purchase price of \$100 or less resulting in an estimated \$105K in lost revenue.

There were 26 vessels reported stolen in the Commonwealth during the 2024 calendar year, bringing the total to 235 vessels reported stolen since 2015. It is believed there are likely hundreds more which go unreported or are reported to local agencies and never forwarded to DWR. Special Agents worked diligently to locate and recover stolen vessels throughout the year to include a vessel valued at approximately \$60K stolen from a retired US Army General who is now living overseas. Special Agents Inge and Clawson located the vessel in Pennsylvania where they were able to work with local authorities to coordinate the recovery. SA Inge received a commendation for his efforts in which the retired General wrote "the feeling of helplessness, from 8,000 miles away, is not one I am accustomed to. I greatly appreciate SA Inge's ability to be a driving force in alleviating that horrible feeling."

Table 12: Case Types from Boat Fraud Team 2020-2024

DESCRIPTION	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
CASES DEVELOPED	74	84	51	79	41
FELONY CHARGES	10	342	341	45	4
MISDEMEANOR CHARGES	28	22	45	14	3
WARNINGS	0	9	14	-	8
SEARCH WARRANTS	13	15	26	32	14
RECOVERED BOATS	6	13	14	14	10
RECOVERED TRAILERS	5	11	6	6	4
OTHER RECOVERED STOLEN ITEMS	0	1	4	0	2
IMPACT ON TAXATION	-	\$194.6K	\$401.7K	\$437K	-
TOTAL VALUE OF RECOVERED PROPERTY	-	\$214.3K	\$117.5K	-	\$108K

A few noteworthy investigations involving marine fraud and theft which occurred in 2024 are described below:

A stolen vessel was identified and recovered by SA Croft when he was requested to inspect a vessel with a missing Hull Identification Number (HIN). SA Croft determined the vessel, valued at approximately \$13K, was stolen out of Maryland in 2021, and later sold to an unwitting buyer. The suspect had already been identified and convicted of the offenses so SA Croft facilitated the return of the vessel to the rightful owner.

Special Agents Croft and Clawson assisted District 45 CPOs with an investigation in which a vessel was stolen out of Stafford County and subsequently crashed on Aquia Creek resulting in a total loss of the vessel. SA Clawson collected biological evidence attributed to the suspects and SA Croft conducted a follow up interview which resulted in the primary suspect being charged with unauthorized use of the vessel, grand larceny of a vehicle which was used to flee the scene of the boating incident, and property damage.

Special Agent Croft, acting on a tip, located two stolen vessels in Chesterfield County and identified a potential suspect. When confronted, the suspect, who was out on bond for two counts of soliciting a minor, confessed to the larceny of both vessels. The suspect agreed to cooperate with SA Croft and provided information about a stolen motorcycle which was passed along to Chesterfield County Detectives. The suspect with the stolen motorcycle was arrested by Chesterfield PD and had in his possession, heroine, cocaine, fentanyl, and a hand gun with the serial number removed. This subject was later linked to the sale of handguns used in the murders of four individuals and charged federally.

Special Agents Pritt and Inge recovered two stolen vessels in Wythe County and identified the potential suspects who were living in a makeshift campsite nearby. With assistance from the Region 3 Tracking Team, the Agents executed a search warrant on the campsite where they seized narcotics and took the suspects into custody without incident. The vessels were returned to their rightful owners.



5.3 Covert Unit

Following a mandate set forth by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources Board via a resolution passed in 2023, the Special Operations Covert Unit has continued to place a priority on the protection of Virginia's native reptile species. Throughout the calendar year, the Covert Unit focused on combatting the illicit trade of reptiles and other wildlife and plant species in the Commonwealth. The illicit reptile trade continued to grow domestically and internationally with intelligence indicating eastern box turtles, a commonly poached and commercialized species of turtle in Virginia, were bringing between \$28K and \$83K on the black market in China. In 2024 alone, the Special Operations Covert Unit detected and worked to prosecute violations involving 50 species of wildlife including 6 reptile species. The native and naturalized reptile species seized during these investigations had an estimated black-market value of approximately \$27K.



Below are some examples how DWRs Covert Special Agents (CSAs) fought to protect the Commonwealth's most vulnerable species:

A CSA conducted a six-month long investigation involving a suspect who was illegally selling various species of turtles via online forums. During the investigation, the suspect located in Fairfax County, illegally sold a common snapping turtle and two red-eared sliders to the CSAs and illegally purchased two eastern box turtles from them. The CSAs coordinated with uniformed personnel to execute a search warrant on the suspect's residence during which red-eared sliders, eastern box turtles, a common snapping turtle, and digital evidence were seized. All turtles seized were turned over to the Wildlife Rescue League for evaluation. Multiple warrants were obtained for the suspect pertaining to the illegal possession and sale of wildlife.

A CSA initiated an operation in the City of Richmond after receiving a tip via the VA DWR 411tipline regarding the illegal sale of native and naturalized turtle species. A CSA conducted surveillance in the area and was able to locate the suspect fitting the description provided via the 411tipline. The CSA made contact, observed numerous turtles available for sale, and purchased a red-eared slider from the suspect. Red-eared sliders are classified as an invasive species in the Commonwealth and are therefore illegal to possess or sell. Following the illicit sale, uniformed officers initiated a takedown where they identified and charged the suspect and seized numerous of red-eared sliders. It was discovered the suspect was from New York and had traveled to Virginia to traffic the turtles. Similar tactics have been utilized by other suspects emanating from states where wildlife laws and regulations are less stringent. The suspects collect the turtles, often times legally in their home state, and traffic them to Virginia where they benefit from a huge profit margin

selling turtles which cannot be obtained lawfully in the Commonwealth.

One of the unique aspects of life as a CSA is you never know what you might encounter. This was evident when a CSA, operating off of a tip, contacted a suspect illegally selling an American alligator in Louisa County. American alligators are prohibited from possession or sale in the Commonwealth. The CSA coordinated a buy bust operation where they agreed upon a price with the seller and established a time and location to conduct the illicit transaction. Once the sale was complete, uniformed officers executed a takedown where they positively identified the suspect and conducted a field interview during which the suspect advised he purchased the alligator online, no longer wanted it, and decided to post it for sale. The alligator was seized and relocated to a local zoo and charges were placed on the suspect with regard to the illegal possession and sale of wildlife.

5.4 Regional Special Agents

During the 2024 calendar year, the Special Operations Investigative Unit expanded through the creation of four Regional Special Agent (RSA) positions. Special Agents Zach Howlett (Region 1), Joe Williams (Region 2), Philip Pritt (Region 3), and Brett Clawson (Region 4) were selected from a highly competitive pool of applicants and have each brought a unique skillset to the unit. The RSAs primary responsibility is critical boating and hunting incident investigations and they had an immediate impact through their response to a variety of incidents across the Commonwealth.

Incident Type	Incident Number
Boating Incident (Damage)	1
Boating Incident (Injury)	2
Boating Incident (Fatal)	7
Total Boating Incidents	10
Hunting Incident (Damage)	3
Hunting Incident (Injury)	5
Hunting Incident (Fatal)	3
Hunting Incident (Treestand)	3
Total Hunting Incidents	14

The implementation of these special positions allows the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources to dedicate a Special Agent who has undergone extensive training and acquired advanced skills to those boating and hunting incidents in which human life has

been severely impacted or lost. This ensures those impacted by these tragic incidents are



provided with a professional and thorough investigation in hopes of helping them achieve some level of closure.

To ensure the highest level of professionalism while conducting their investigations, each RSA dedicated a tremendous amount of time to improving their skillset through advanced training. Special Agents Howlett, Williams, and Clawson traveled to Springfield, Missouri where they spent a week training with the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) in Advanced Hunting Incident Investigations. The RSAs were then able to bring their newfound knowledge and skills back to DWR where they coordinated hunting incident refresher training for the Law Division's Regional Hunting Incident Investigation Teams.

In addition, SA Howlett traveled to Neptune City, New Jersey where he spent a week obtaining his NASBLA Level I Boating Incident Investigation and Analysis Certification while SA Pritt spent a week in Tallahassee, Florida where he obtained his NASBLA Level II Boating Incident Investigation and Reconstruction Certification.



Special Agent Pritt applied for and was accepted into the 114th Session of the Virginia Department of Forensic Science Academy which he will be attending beginning January 2025. Upon graduation, he will join SA Clawson as one of two Special Agents currently employed with DWR to hold this prestigious certification.

Outside of their primary role investigating critical boating and hunting

incidents, the RSAs assisted with and conducted their own independent investigations involving marine fraud and theft, and commercialization of wildlife. Most importantly though, the RSAs provided direct support to DWR's uniformed personnel in a variety of ways to include instructing Basic Academy recruits in hunting incident investigation techniques, operating under the influence (OUI) enforcement, search and seizure laws, and assisted uniformed personnel with multiple complex investigations.

For example, SA Clawson assisted District 41 CPOs, who were focused on the Division's hound hunting initiative, with an investigation involving the poaching of an 18-point trophy class white-tailed deer in Front Royal. SA Clawson utilized a variety of



investigative techniques to locate the crime scene and pinpoint the suspect's location at the time of the incident. SA Clawson recovered the trophy antlers which had already been taken to a taxidermist, and obtained admissions from the suspect for trespassing to hunt, killing a trophy class deer illegally during closed season, and falsifying check records. The suspect was later convicted and ordered to pay \$2,500 in replacement costs to the Commonwealth's Wildlife Protection Fund.

The RSAs assisted uniformed personnel with obtaining and executing a variety of search warrants to include a search warrant for the DNA of a suspect involved in a fatal boating incident in North Carolina, a search warrant on the residence of a chronic wildlife violator in Roanoke City, and numerous search warrants pertaining to digital evidence.

On the topic of digital evidence, the Special Operations Investigative Unit placed an emphasis on improving the Division's capabilities to conduct digital investigations. The Unit obtained specialized equipment which improved their ability to securely handle and store sensitive evidence. The Unit was awarded a Help Eliminate Auto Theft (HEAT) grant which was used to upgrade software and will greatly enhance the ability to analyze a variety of digital evidence. Finally, SA Williams and SA Howlett earned their certification as Cellebrite Certified Operators (CCO) and Cellebrite Certified Physical Analysts (CCPA) which qualifies them to extract digital evidence from a variety of devices and greatly enhances DWR's ability to extract and process most digital evidence in house.

5.5 Tracking Team

January of 2024, the Virginia Conservation Police (VCP) tracking teams were offered an opportunity to receive search team operations training from the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and Department of Conservation and Recreation Rangers at Natural Bridge State Park. The training was four days long and included multiple topics such as incident command centers, land navigation, extracting an injured person, and focused grid/search patterns.

The VCP tracking training program was a popular course during the 13th Basic CPO Academy. The 13th Basic academy recruits received five days of tracking and rural operations training, led by VCP tracking instructors. The training included topics of visual tracking, surveillance techniques, and K9 tracking teams. The training allows all VCP Officers the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills to later assist them in their investigations and searches.

The VCP tracking teams utilizes the skills of dedicated Officers from all over the state. All VCP team members take on this extra responsibility in addition to their normal duties. During 2024, all VCP tracking teams responded to assist the Department of Emergency Management on multiple occasions with missing persons. The Region 3 tracking team was able to assist with the investigation of a stolen boat and illegal narcotics. The team cut for sign and located the suspect's camp site. With indicators that the camp was occupied the team set up a perimeter and conducted surveillance while the investigator obtained a search warrant. The team would later assist in the arrest of two suspects.



2024 Regional tracking team leaders :

Region 1: MCPO Austin Wakefield

Region 2: SGT Corey Harbour

Region 3: SGT Matt Arnold

Region 4: SGT Chance Dobbs

5.6 Honor Guard

The Virginia Conservation Police (VCP) Honor Guard continued its proud tradition of service, dedication, and honor. Rooted in the values of respect, pride, and professionalism, each member of the Honor Guard upholds a commitment to excellence—striving not only to inspire esprit de corps within the ranks, but also to preserve the dignity of the badge and those who have worn it.



2024 was a year honoring those who have served and passed. Funeral services for retired Conservation Police Officers were an unfortunate focal point, with the Honor Guard proudly rendering final honors to our retired Game Wardens and CPOs across the Commonwealth. These solemn ceremonies serve as heartfelt tributes to the men and women who dedicated their lives to protecting Virginia's natural resources. The Honor Guard considers this its most sacred duty—providing comfort and gratitude to the families of the fallen and ensuring their legacy is never forgotten.

As a symbol Law Enforcement Division's enduring professionalism, the Honor Guard remains a steadfast presence. With every flag folded, every step taken, and every salute rendered, we reaffirm our unwavering mission: to honor the past, uphold the present, and inspire the future.



5.7 Unmanned Aerial System (UAS)

The division's Unmanned Aerial Systems continues to be a successful exploration for the division, a snapshot of our roadmap for implementing the Virginia Conservation Police (VCP) Unmanned Aerial System Program (Drone). Briefly highlighted our activities as we initially launched our Drone Program in calendar year 2022, and then recap our activities for calendar year 2024.

OVERVIEW AND 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 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 process that we used was as follows: We defined our Objectives and Outcomes; created Policy, Plans and Procedures that would comply with all legal requirements; identified Risks and Mitigation Strategies; developed a Realistic Budget which highlighted building out our program and UAS capability in phases; ensured all the right people, disciplines, and agencies are involved and purchased the right equipment that was appropriate for the agencies mission; recruited and developed our operating pilots with the right training; and finally, developed a plan to exercise this capability.

OUR INTENTION: 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 can employ our 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, 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: A few years ago, we began discussions about developing an LE 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, 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, 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 and 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 training for Visual Observers, and all sworn officers completed this training. Fast forward to early-December of 2023 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.

CURRENT / 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.

With 2024 now behind us, it is important to capitalize on our journey, our successes and how far we have come in a little over 2 years. Perhaps one of the best ways to do so is to highlight our UAS activity for calendar year 2024.

Figure 7: Drone Program Data 2024

Here are our overall activity efforts:

2024 UAS - ACTIVITY RECAP	
Activity	TOTALS
# of Calls	30
# of Uses	79
107 Flight Hours	35
Training Hours	10
COA Flight Hours	0
# Citations	11
# of Public Relations Events	3
Activities	34

Activity efforts (live period):

LIVE PERIOD BREAKDOWN (January - December)					
Activity	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	TOTALS
# of Calls	24	0	5	1	30
# of Uses	43	0	33	3	79
107 Flight Hours	19	0	12.5	3.5	35
Training Hours	2.5	2	2.5	3	10
COA Flight Hours	0	0	0	0	0
# Citations	3	0	8	0	11
# of Public Relations Events	3	0	0	0	3
Activities	21	0	10	3	34

*NOTE: During this activity period, the Drone Team had 4 operational pilots until August 2024, when one pilot retired. As a result of the retirement, the position was vacated and remained vacant for the remainder of the calendar year. This vacancy represents a quarter of the Drone Team's pilots and represented approximately 5 months of time that a pilot was not available for UAS activity in that region of operations (approximately 10% of the total time as unavailable).

6.0 Officer Outreach

Celebrating Community Unity: National Night Out Across the Commonwealth

Every year, during the month of 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 34 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 34 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 we 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 our 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 34 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.

Celebrating Kids, Youth, and Community Across the Commonwealth

Every year, Law Enforcement Divisions Conservation Police Officers work diligently to promote outdoor recreational opportunities by conducting and participating in Kids Fishing events. These events are aimed to strengthen the bond between the law enforcement division, the communities they serve, and to promote the great outdoors by getting kids involved. In Virginia, the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) celebrated and participated in these activities in a big way by



participating in 26 events across the Commonwealth. These events provided an exceptional opportunity for DWR to connect with kids, sharing the important work they do to protect and conserve Virginia's natural resources. Along with assisting to plan and staff the events, CPOs participate with activities from teaching the children fishing methods to species identification. Kids fishing events typically occur during the free fishing weekend, this allowing the entire family to participate if they wish. Many of the events include food and prizes. Occasionally, a special prize, a lifetime license, is awarded. Often, local stores donate giveaways so that each participant walks away with fishing gear. These events, held in urban areas, are extremely beneficial with introducing children to the outdoors and sparking an interest in wildlife.

Conservation Police Officers with Santa Claus at the 2024 Gloucester Shop with a Cop event.



Every year, Conservation Police Officers work diligently to promote community outreach by conducting and participating in local Christmas Parades. Participating in these events are aimed to strengthen the relationship between the law enforcement division, first responders, and the communities in which they serve. In Virginia, the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) celebrated and participated in these activities in a big way by participating in 8 events across the Commonwealth. Officers traveled the streets and interacted with thousands of

members of the community while promoting the enjoyment of being involved with the woods and the waterways of the Commonwealth. Engaging with constituents from diverse backgrounds was extremely rewarding and greatly appreciated by those in attendance. The parades brought thousands of residents to the streets, and they were very thrilled to see DWR entries.

Public Safety Force-Multiplier: Hurricane Disaster Response Across the Commonwealth

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources Conservation Police Officers played a pivotal role in providing, aiding, and responding in a disaster assistance role during a momentous period of critical need during and in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. Five Virginia Counties, Grayson, Montgomery, Giles, Pulaski, and Washington, were impacted significantly by this storm. This collaborative effort saw our officers working in tandem with several law enforcement agencies, including local, state and federal agency partners. Our dedicated Conservation Police Officers brought their expertise and professionalism to this significant event, helping by responding to numerous calls for service and tasks assigned by Emergency Operations Centers. The calls began with the arrival of Hurricane Helene, which brought catastrophic rain, wind, flooding, falling trees, and overall mass destruction and devastation to an area already saturated with rainfall from the previous two days. The New River and its tributaries quickly overflowed, resulting in some of the first calls reporting people stranded in the water and needing assistance in many areas of the region. A team of Conservation Police Officers demonstrating extraordinary selflessness and dedication in life-threatening storm conditions placed themselves in danger during their response as many roads were closed due to flooding, downed and falling trees and power lines, or being washed out. On many occasions, officers entered remote areas on foot to make contact, rescue, or deliver life-sustaining supplies to citizens in need. These officers responded to emergency calls, evacuated stranded residents, and maintained public safety whenever other law enforcement agencies were unable to due to the treacherous conditions. At the Operations Centers, officers assisted and responded to several other calls for service, and secured fuel for other agencies. Officers were tasked with doing door-

to-door welfare checks in areas where flooded roads had left people stranded. Officers assisted in curbing looting activity. Officers assisted with evacuating citizens from collapsing housing and flooded vehicles. They provided critical emergency relief efforts by assisting in welfare checks, evacuations, bringing lifesaving supplies, establishing landing zones, and much more. They responded to a call of a gunshot wound and were the first law enforcement officers on the scene. They maintained a perimeter until the Sheriff's Office arrived and took over the investigation. After that, they returned to checking on people stranded by washed-out bridges and roads, and organized water and fuel drops for people using ladders and ropes all while relying on their training and experience. The next morning, they provided security and interacted with Governor Glenn Youngkin, his wife Suzanne, U.S Congressman Morgan Griffith, Delegate Jeb Arnold, Public Safety Secretary Terrance Cole, and staff as they visited the EOC and toured the destruction. For the next two days, the officers located and conducted welfare checks on citizens, distributed water and food, and patrolled the areas as complaints of looting from the debris came in. The actions of our officers involved helped rescue over 50 people trapped due to collapsed bridges or high waters. Demonstrating exceptional commitment and dedication, some officers voluntarily sacrificed their scheduled days off to respond to the crisis, embodying the true spirit of selfless service to their community. Perhaps the most extensive efforts were made on Claytor Lake, where clean-up efforts were ongoing. Numerous officers worked in shifts to assist the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. Lt. Governor Winsome Earle-Sears asked for and was provided passage on a DWR vessel to assess debris and damage on the Lake. Officers organized the ride allowing the Lt. Governor to personally experience the impact of Hurricane Helene and at the same time, learn more about the Department of Wildlife Resources and their responsibilities. As cleanup efforts continued, Conservation Police Officers were asked for and provided passage to the Secretary of Natural Resources Travis Voyles, on October 8th. As a result of the tour and subsequent report made to the Governor's office, Governor Glenn Youngkin declared his intent to tour the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. On October 10th, the Governor, members of his staff, and DWR board members and staff toured the disaster area.



7.0 Recognition and Award

7.1 Officer of the Year

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) is proud to announce that Conservation Police Officer (CPO) Daniel Smith has been selected as the 2024 Officer of the Year. Assigned to Sussex County, Officer Smith has demonstrated exemplary service, outstanding leadership, and an unwavering commitment to protecting Virginia's natural resources.

Over the past year, Officer Smith has gone above and beyond in his duties, consistently exemplifying the highest standards of professionalism and community engagement. He led numerous district-wide operations, including coordinated responses to spotlighting complaints and joint patrols with local law enforcement. Officer Smith also played a key role in fostering public outreach, organizing eight educational events—including a new youth fishing program in Hopewell that will now be held annually thanks to its success.

A standout achievement was his six-month investigation into widespread spotlighting violations across several jurisdictions. The operation led to 180 charges, including 22 spotlighting offenses and 25 violations for exceeding bag limits. His efforts resulted in significant legal consequences, including four license revocations totaling 48 years and restitution of more than \$6,700. In recognition of his dedication and investigative excellence, Officer Smith was awarded the Colonel's Challenge Coin in April 2024.

Officer Smith also served as Region 1 Lead Firearms Instructor and a Field Training Officer (FTO), training new officers and supporting statewide instruction for firearms and officer survival tactics. Despite these additional responsibilities, he led the region in violations detected and responded to 25% of all public-generated calls for service in his district.

His ability to excel across multiple roles—patrol, investigations, public education, and officer development—distinguishes him as a leader among his peers and a valued asset to the Virginia Conservation Police.



7.2 Boating Officer of the Year (NASBLA)

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) is proud to announce that Senior Conservation Police Officer (CPO) Tim Bostic has been selected as the 2024 Boating Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. Serving in Region 4 and based in Rappahannock County, Officer Bostic has earned this prestigious recognition through his outstanding dedication to boating safety, professional excellence, and mentorship.

Throughout the 2024 boating season, Officer Bostic distinguished himself as a leader in the field. He conducted 21 boat patrols and made 25 boating-related arrests, including three for operating under the influence (OUI) and two for reckless operation. Demonstrating a remarkable 1:3 OUI arrest-to-patrol ratio, Officer Bostic balanced proactive enforcement with a deep commitment to mentoring new officers. He directly assisted colleagues with four additional OUI cases, often stepping back to allow less experienced officers to take the lead, helping them gain confidence and valuable field experience.

Officer Bostic's leadership extends far beyond enforcement. He served as a critical mentor on Lake Anna, training fellow officers in techniques ranging from field sobriety testing to courtroom procedures. His calm guidance in high-pressure situations, including those involving uncooperative or belligerent individuals, ensured officer safety and professional conduct.

In recognition of his contributions to impaired boating enforcement, Officer Bostic was honored with the 2024 MADD Virginia Law Enforcement Award. His efforts have not only made Virginia's waterways safer but also strengthened the capabilities of the entire conservation police force.

Committed to public outreach, Officer Bostic coordinated and participated in nine boating safety education events, reaching nearly 6,000 community members. His engagement in programs such as First Night Out, Fireman's Parades, and school career days underscores his dedication to building public trust and promoting water safety awareness.

Officer Bostic exemplifies the values of the Virginia Conservation Police: professionalism, service, and stewardship. His selection as the 2024 Boating Law Enforcement Officer of the Year reflects a career marked by excellence, leadership, and a tireless commitment to protecting the citizens and waterways of the Commonwealth.



7.3 Other Awards

Colonel's Leadership Award (2024)



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 2024 Colonel's Leadership Award is Sgt. Alan Hatmaker



O.P.S. Professionalism Decree (Class of 2024)



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.



First Sgt. Derrick Kekic



Tributes to Our Deceased Officers Last Year



Left: Joseph J. Powell, EOW December 16, 1924, Wreath Placed on His Grave December 16, 2024, on the 100th Anniversary of His Death by Gunfire in Greensville County. **Right:** Allen Flippo and Donald Gentry, EOW December 19, 1972. Wreath placed at the Airplane Crash Site on December 16, 2024 in Southampton County.

Right: Gift to the Department from the 13th Graduating CPO Recruit Academy Class. In the Framed Shadow Box on the **Left** is Sgt. Joe Valasek's Modern Day Coat and on the **Right** is Lt. Cato Collins' 1957 Mackinaw Game Warden Coat. Both Coats Donated by the Families. Both Officers Gave 34 Years of Dedicated Service to the Commonwealth of Virginia.



7.4 Promotions

Major Frank Spuchesi - Support Services
 Captain Ivan Kopelove - Administrative Investigations
 Lieutenant Joshua Thomas - Region 1
 First Sergeant Stephen Ritchie - Training (HQ)
 First Sergeant Admanda Nevel - Training (HQ)
 First Sergeant Mike Hill - Recruitment (HQ)
 First Sergeant (ASAC) Tim Dooley - Special Operations
 First Sergeant Tyler Bumgarner - Region 1
 First Sergeant Ken Williams - Region 2
 Janita Royal - Permits Manager
 Andi Frisby - Communications Dispatch Supervisor
 Special Agent Zach Howlett Region 1
 Special Agent Joe Williams Region 2
 Special Agent Philip Pritt Region 3
 Special Agent Brett Clawson Region 4

8.0 Retirees (2024)



Daniel Corley
16 Years



Master CPO Owen Heine
20 Years



Sgt. Joe Valasek
34 Years



Debbie Wilmoth
15 Years (* 12/31/23)



In Memoriam - Recently Fallen RETIREES



Major Joseph K. "Joe" Cooke 5/30/24 (age 79)

Joe was a lifelong servant of the Commonwealth. He retired as a Major with the Law Enforcement Division of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. He began his career on April 3, 1967, and retired on January 1, 2003, after 37.7 years of service. He was a life member of both Ashcake Volunteer Rescue Squad and the Albemarle/Charlottesville Volunteer Rescue Squad. Joe served as an instructor for Fire and EMS Departments across the state.



Sergeant Cameron Gray 4/1/2024

Cameron was hired as a Virginia Game Warden on February 14, 1972, and gave twenty years of service to the Department before leaving in 1992, to pursue other interests. He was a graduate of Douglas Freeman High School and later inducted into their Athletic Hall of Fame for football and wrestling. Cameron served his country as a member of the United States Marine Reserves. He lived many years in Nottaway County and loved the outdoors and fishing on the Outer Banks.



Sergeant Joseph "Joe" Valasek 6/17/2024 (age 62)

Retired Virginia Conservation Police Sergeant Joe Valasek passed away unexpectedly on June 17, 2024. Joe was born and raised in Brackenridge, PA, and graduated from Slippery Rock University in 1983. He worked as a seasonal Park Ranger in Shenandoah National Park from 1984 – 1989. He became a Game Warden with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries in February of 1990. During his tenure, he was a valued and decorated officer for 34 years. He was promoted to Sergeant in 2010, and served the remainder of his career in that capacity. Joe was an avid hunter, fisherman, gardener, chef, tremendous friend, and self-proclaimed comedian. Above all, his greatest life fulfillment was being a father to his two children.



Lieutenant Phillip "Phil" S. Parrish 7/20/2024 (age 75)

Phil found his life's calling when he became a Virginia Game Warden on May 14, 1973, and retired on November 30, 2007, after 34.5 years of dedicated service. His work area covered Northern Virginia, among the most populated area in the state. Everyone who knew Phil loved him. He was instrumental in forming the Virginia Game Warden Association. Phil was a Civil War buff and read history books like avid readers devour novels. Phil was a gifted storyteller and a bourbon connoisseur who invented a drink called The Goldvein Sunset. He loved the outdoors, metal detecting, gardening, but what he enjoyed most was spending quality time with family and friends.



Lieutenant Diane Louis Gawrys 7/24/2024 (age 71)

Diane graduated from First Colonial High School in 1970, and from Virginia Tech in 1974. She served the State of Virginia for 29 years. Initially, Diane spent five years as a distributive education teacher with the Spotsylvania School System. After 24 years with the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Diane retired as a Lieutenant. She was one of the first female game wardens in the state of Virginia and had a distinguished career with the Department. Diane was a proponent of gun safety and served as a trainer for firearm safety and hunter education. Diane loved animals of all kinds and was a fishing enthusiast and enjoyed fishing in the Gulf Stream.



Lieutenant Dennis Farrell Mullins, Sr., 12/6/2024 (age 77)

Dennis was a born-again Christian. He attended Trinity Life Center Church in Coeburn, Virginia and The Lighthouse in Wise, VA. He was a graduate of J.J. Kelly High School. He began his employment with the State of Virginia as a Surveyor with the Department of Transportation. In 1973, Dennis joined the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries as a Game Warden and retired as a Lieutenant in 2004, after 31 years of dedicated service. Dennis was named Game Warden of the Year in 1988. After retirement, he worked part time as a Botetourt County Deputy for seven years. In 2011, he returned to Wise to live at the family home. Dennis was an avid outdoorsman, and he loved to share his passion with his family and friends. He was the founder of the local Wild Game Expo where his main goal was making sure those in attendance heard the Word of God.



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The 2024 Virginia Conservation Police Annual Report is available online at:


<https://dwr.virginia.gov/conservation-police/ops/>



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All photos in this report were contributed by DWR staff unless otherwise noted.
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W3 (Woods * Wildlife * Water) Natural Resources Training Academy

Sharing Wildlife Experiences in an Immersive Hands-on Outdoor Training Environment



TRAINING

The W3 Mission is to greatly expand from training future generations on how to protect our wildlife resources to the much more challenging task of how to bring others to experience what the outdoors has to offer them in a safe manner.

The W3 Goals are to continue to offer an exceptional Law Enforcement Basic Academy and In-service Training to Virginia Conservation Police within the Department of Wildlife Resources

- **Expand** our comprehensive instructional learning to Virginia Marine Police within the Marine Resources Commission and to other state and local first responders
- **Offer** additional opportunities for K9 and Tracking Schools with partner agencies to enhance emergency outdoor response capabilities
- **Establish** a "Champions for the Wild" Program using graduates of the newly created W3 Natural Resources Civilian Academy who can then lead others to the outdoors through shared experiences

For additional updated information: dwr.virginia.gov/w3 or scan QR





Join the W3 Mission Today

Help us to develop a passion in others for Virginia's Outdoor Experiences

SUPPORT

The Ward Burton Wildlife Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, enables the public to show their support by contributing to the W3 mission and related programs. Donations can be made by mail or directly through the QR code. Mailed donations should note "W3 Fund."



DONATE TODAY!
The Ward Burton Wildlife Foundation
PO Box 519, Halifax, VA 24558

\$25—Supporter: Conservation Police / DWR Challenge Coin



\$100—Protector Sponsor: Conservation Police Unit Citation Coin



\$150—Guardian Sponsor: W3 Natural Resources Training Academy Coin



\$250 or more—Legacy Sponsor: Complete Set of all Three Coins



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