



NAWEOA 2012 FINAL REPORT



NAWEOA 2012

The 2012 North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association (NAWEOA) Conference was held at the Loews Ventana Canyon Resort in Tucson, AZ from July 22-28, 2012. Two hundred and sixty six Wildlife Conservation Officers from across North America, including one from Australia, attended the conference. The conference had 432 total registrants from 27 State Agencies, two US Federal Agencies, 12 Canadian Provincial Agencies and 2 National Canadian Agencies. Seventy one employees from Arizona Game and Fish Department including Fifty eight law enforcement officers provided the manpower to run the conference.

Conference Location:



During the initial conference planning stage, three resorts were identified as possible locations. Resort capacity, airport travel time, ambience, food quality, and overall services were looked at to narrow the field. Professionalism of resort staff and a prior working relationship were the turning points for picking Loews Ventana Canyon. Meal/beverage pricing turned out to be a limiting factor in having Torch Run (TR) and Warden Skills Games (WSG) on site. Having to move the WSG and TR off site created issues with transportation, food and beverage procurement, and obtaining the necessary permits. Using the “in-house” audio visual company ended up being an advantage when dealing with all the intricacies of putting on a training conference.

Extreme care should be taken in going over the resort's Banquet Event Orders (BEOs). Although this process is tedious, it will help in the long run to alleviate any last minute crisis of restaging of rooms. Coordination of room locations and transitioning from training events to social events is critical in keeping the conference flowing. The resort also gave us daily updates as to the costs associated with hospitality food, drink, and the coffee/drink breaks. This was invaluable in keeping to our budget. As we got closer to the end of the conference, we increased the amount spent on hospitality food and ended up with a free drink period at the banquet. The only drawback to this resort was the inability to use donated food and beverage, but we overcame this obstacle. The resort gave us the beer kegs at cost, and we negotiated a decreased pour fee. Actual beer consumption was not what we had expected, or from information from previous conferences.

Registration:

The NAWEOA2012az.com website domain was created and hosted over a year and a half in advance, using the services of Rob Brandenburg and his website webwarden.net. The website was developed through the use of Word Press (wordpress.com), and registration was powered by Event Espresso software (eventespresso.com). A PayPal (paypal.com) account was created to complete registration and manage money derived from the website. Registration started in January of the Conference year.

Chairman Kevin Bodmer was tasked with developing the website and registration services and was instrumental in doing so. Utilizing Kevin's knowledge helped keep website development costs to a minimum and helped ensure prompt website updating.

Chairperson Cindy Wall of the Arizona Game and Fish Department managed the registration process and was instrumental in creating name badges, gift bags, conference manifests and payments made by cash/check. Her customer-friendly demeanor kept complaints to a minimum and helped registration go smoothly. The registration desk hours should have been expanded a couple of hours later the first two days and had to open earlier to accommodate early morning tours.

Airport Transportation:

Fifty nine people took advantage of the airport transportation. Follow-up was needed before the conference because people registered for the transportation, but did not provide flight information. Check with your airport because parking for any length of time was not allowed at the terminal. If you do not have someone waiting at baggage claim, you should advise those flying in to go out to the curb. Only one person was not picked up, because they did not walk out to the curb. A "Trac" phone was purchased and the number was given to all those requesting pickup. Several people that did not sign up for being pickup called after they landed and expected transportation. One person called from the train station that was not signed up. Three vans were checked out from Arizona Department of Public Safety at no cost. Specific insurance for transporting people in the vans was needed. This insurance "rider" was separate and more costly than the regular policy.

Tours:

Date	Attendees	Tours
7/23	32	Arizona Sonora Desert Museum
	23	Golf Tournament
	30	Kartchner Caverns
7/24	44	Bisbee/Tombstone
	23	AZ Sonora Desert Museum
	26	Kartchner Caverns
7/26	24	Nature Hike
	13	Pima Air and Space Museum
	23	Old Time Artisans Shopping
	17	Sonoita Vineyards
7/27	20	Nature Hike
	11	Youth Mammoth Cave Ladder Tour

Setting up the tours started over a year in advance by coming up with ideas for full day and half day activities. The Conference Board decided what tours to follow-up with. Dates were reserved when possible. Continued follow-up with venues was necessary to insure reservations. Not as many people signed up for the tours as expected. The free tour was the only tour that filled up and we arranged for a second tour. Approximately one week prior to conference, similar tours had to be combined or eliminated because of limited number of sign ups. We did not hear a lot of complaints regarding the closure of the tours prior to the conference.



Paying for tours turned more problematic than expected. Some tours did not accept reservations without payment and others did not accept checks. This caused the registration for tours to be closed a week prior to conference. Most tours required a deposit, and some would not refund the deposit for unsold seats. A conference credit card was required for most deposits and to provide food options.

A bus company was used for all major tours. They had three different sized buses and were able to modify the bus sizes according to occupants a week before the tours. A deposit was required to hold the buses, but this company was very flexible in times and any last minute changes. Recommendations: Choose tours that do not require full payment up front. Tours did not fill up as much as expected. Our largest tour was only 55 people. The free nature hike tour filled up quickly and we added another one which also filled up quickly. Recommendation is to offer at least one free tour option for budget minded folks.

Opening Ceremony and Fallen Officer tribute:

The opening ceremony was coordinated between AGRL and NAWEOA over several months. Coordination of officials and speakers started six months prior to the conference, but most would not commit until weeks before the conference. The opening ceremony program should be generic with only naming those people that are guaranteed to attend. Most speakers have a political message so it is recommended to have speakers from both sides. Color printing of the program takes approximately one week. Our Game and Fish Director had a conflict with another conference so production of an opening video was necessary for his welcoming speech. The fallen officer tribute took extensive coordination since this was the first official performance of the Department's Honor Guard. Coordination with a State Concerns for Police Survivors was instrumental in getting to display the State's Fallen Officer Statue. Coordination with NAWEOA was essential in getting Departmental hats and flags for each fallen officers. Plaques for each fallen officer's family and Department were produced.



Training:

Training started with picking the keynote speaker. Dr. GilMarten is a friend of the Department and lives in Tucson. He is also a well rounded and entertaining presenter about a topic that all officers deal with during the course of their careers The rest of the training was developed with the theme of “boots on the ground” training that would be beneficial to field officers. A few wildlife management or biological topics were included to round out the training sessions. Our training showcased geographically relevant training topics that showcased enforcement challenges in the southwestern United States. However, most training topics could be utilized elsewhere in North America. Departmental expertise was utilized wherever possible to reduce costs and promote Department professionalism.

The training committee took many steps to ensure the training block went smoothly. Several preplanning considerations were employed prior to the conference. A few of the more pertinent points are listed below:

- Sent an informational packet to all instructors prior to the conference. This packet included information on the audio/visual equipment would be available for their use; what digital format to utilize when constructing presentations to alleviate compatibility issues; projected number of attendees; size of the conference room; contact information and any other pertinent information. Because of this preconference coordination, all instructors arrived ready to go.
- Presenters were queried on any special needs for their training session. Many unforeseen considerations were discovered and handled prior to the conference.
- Audio/visual needs and conference room design were preplanned with the resort a month prior to the conference. It is also necessary to have extra Audio Visual equipment such as microphones, power point projectors, adapter cords for different computers, and screens.
- Several “alternate” presenters were on stand-by, in the event of a last minute cancellation. Several subtle adjustments were made due to presenter scheduling conflicts.
- To capitalize on training expertise and to give added flexibility many of the break-out sessions were offered twice. This way the attendees had more opportunity to attend training topics that interested them.

The training committee recommends moving training days away from the last Saturday of the conference or offering fewer but larger training opportunities. Several of these training sessions were lightly attended.

Torch run:

Coordination of the Torch Run was strained due to limited understanding on who was providing what. The Committee was at first under the understanding that the Federal Wildlife Officers Association (FWOA) was in charge of coordinating the event including any fund raising activities. Initial planning of the Torch run was for it to be held onsite at the resort. That was determined to be uneconomical and an offsite location was located.

Many stumbling blocks were encountered and overcome to hold the event at this location. The most expensive was transportation of participants to the location. This created an added expense for an activity that was meant for raising funds for the Game Warden Museum. Coordination with the local US Forest Service Office was difficult and time consuming to get the permit necessary to hold the event. Initial meal planning accommodations were also determined to be uneconomical, so a last minute alternative was coordinated. Minimal assistance from FWOA was provided for staffing of the event. The barbeque, awnings, tables and chairs were all donated by the local chapter of SCI. The EMTs and fire trucks were all donated through contacts with the local Fire Department.



Warden Skills Games:

The Warden Skills Games were initially planned to be held on site at the resort. The resort's meal/beverage costs were determined to be uneconomical and an offsite location was located. This presented permit coordination issues with the City of Tucson, as well as increased costs for transportation, tables, and chairs. The mariachi entertainment was coordinated through a local high school. The food service was coordinated through local contacts. The fire trucks and medical personnel were donated through contacts with the local Fire Department. Even with the increased costs associated with going off site, it was still more economical than staying on site at the resort. Although several persons were treated for heat related symptoms, no one was seriously hurt or injured and no equipment or property damage was reported during the event.

It is recommended that the Skills games should have a variety of physical and educational games. The physical aspect should be challenging so young officers are kept interested but not so intense to create injury. This year due to being in the desert, particular emphasis was placed on keeping people hydrated and numerous water stations were provided and manned continually. A local ice company gave us a reduced rate for ice and a self-contained trailer that could be plugged in at the resort. Donated frozen water bottles turned out to be a big hit with participants. A refrigerated trailer was used to haul water and beverages to the site.



Hospitality Room:

Bucket raffle items were collected starting over a year out. Most corporate sponsors required written applications sent in advance. Asking at the beginning of the sponsorship budget cycle was imperative. Local stores gave more product than dollar donations. It is recommended that NAWEOA work on getting national corporate sponsors for high dollar amounts and leaving the local stores for product donations. Keeping track of the items and having a large centrally located storage facility was a must. Tools, fishing, and gun related items were a valued bucket items. The Plinko game for the custom made rifle made the most money throughout the week. The Texas hold-em night seemed to be the highlight of the week. A large room with plenty of seating was well received. The inability to use donated food and beverage received several complaints early in the week. Having wine available was well received.



Closing Ceremony:

The closing ceremony took some minor coordination with NAWEOA and the Resort. The room had to be “turned” in a short period to accommodate a larger audience. Rehearsal for incoming and outgoing conference hosts was brief but necessary. An electronic candle had to be purchased for the passing of the torch ceremony. A short briefing of the number of attendees and agencies was requested by NAWEOA.



Banquet and Auction:

Coordinate with your Master of Ceremonies prior to the banquet night to make sure they are available. We decided on going with the buffet style serving instead of plated. This limited the entrees that could be served, but fit in well with the “carnivore” aspect of Conservation Officers. People liked the buffet style, because they could get what they wanted, and as much or as little as their appetite dictated. The closing banquet program was completed at the last minute, because a large number of donations were brought to the conference without prior knowledge. Our program had to be completed by Thursday afternoon to be printed by close of business on Friday. Our auctioneer gave some invaluable tips to make the most for the donations. Make sure that all items for the auction are present including their write ups. We limited the number of live auction items to 10 or 15 to keep the auction from taking too long.

It is recommended to purchase a credit card reading device (we used the Square) to make purchases a lot easier. A majority of our purchases during the auctions were conducted through this device.

