



NORTH AMERICAN WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

THE VOICE OF RESOURCE LAW ENFORCEMENT



2026 Conference OMAHA, NEBRASKA

July 20-24th, 2026

(Opening ceremonies on July 21st
and the closing banquet will be the night of July 24th.)

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The President's Report

By Larry Hergenroeder



Greetings NAWEOA game wardens from across North America. The training agenda has incredible opportunities with POST members, as the sun rises over the Pennsylvania landscape, the crisp morning silence is interrupted by the thundering gobbles of mature Toms in their annual courtship. Spring is one of the most anticipated times of the year for game wardens. While some prefer the colder weather of recent hunting seasons, the spring thaw is always a welcome sight knowing that warmer days for casting and reeling from boat or streambank is finally upon us. As we set our sights on the upcoming 2026 NAWEOA Conference in Omaha, Nebraska this July, it was business as usual for the NAWEOA Executive Board, meeting in Wilmington, Ohio for the 2026 Executive Winter Meeting. I would like to extend our appreciation to Colonel Patrick Brown and Captain Bryce Morris of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks & Watercraft and the Ohio Wildlife Officers Lodge #143 for hosting the Winter Meeting at Cowan Lake State Park. A full agenda filled the three days of business including a tour of the Delta Marriott Cincinnati in Sharonville, OH, which is the host venue for the 2027 NAWEOA Conference. My sincerest appreciation to Colonel Kandy Klosterman, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife for promoting and supporting the ODNR Wildlife Officers under her supervision with hosting the 2027 NAWEOA Conference. The NAWEOA membership is in very capable hands with our host the Ohio Wildlife Officer's Lodge #143 President, Chris Gilkey and Conference Chairman, Brian Bury.

Nebraska Conservation Officers Association are putting the finishing touches on the 2026 Conference and if you haven't secured your room and registration for the 2026 Conference in Omaha, the time is now. Visit the naweo.org website and click on the conference link to register for the opportunity to network with

NAWEOA is currently seeking Conference hosts for 2028 and beyond. If your Officer's Association is poised and ready to host this amazing annual event, please contact any of the NAWEOA Executive Board members by visiting the naweo.org website. Click on the "About" tab, select "Board" then any of the "Officers", "Region Directors" or "Support Staff" to get the conversation and planning started. DayDay Howe from Conference Direct has been a great partner facilitating contracts with host hotels and would be excited to work with your Officer's Association to secure your opportunity to host.

This edition of the NAWEOA Spring Newsletter will be my final correspondence as your NAWEOA President, I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to the NAWEOA membership for entrusting me to serve as your President. It had been a goal of mine since I attended my first NAWEOA Conference in 2010 to join the NAWEOA Executive Board and make the commitment to ensure that this 46 year tradition continues. The professional and personal relationships gained have made a significant difference in my career as a Pennsylvania State Game Warden Investigator & K-9 Handler. The valued training and networking that has facilitated many successful prosecutions for game law violations along with the personal relationships that will last long into my retirement are a testament of this one of a kind association in a one of a kind profession. Thank you all and I look forward to serving the NAWEOA membership for the next two years as your Past President.

The Vice President's Report

By Chris Maier



Depending on where you live, spring might already be showing itself... and for others, we're still a few months away from even thinking about a suntan. I hope you all had a safe and productive fall and winter, and that you found some time to enjoy the very re-

sources we spend our careers protecting.

First off, I want to thank Pennsylvania and COPA for hosting last year's NAWEOA convention. There are still a few rumblings about who really won the Warden Skills Award... but we'll let that slide for now. All jokes aside, the Pennsylvania team put on a fantastic conference. I hope everyone left with some new friends, a prize or two, and at least one—or seven—Straub Beer bottle openers.

At the convention, we saw a small change on the executive board with Sean Spencer stepping in as the new Region 4 Director. I want to thank Jeromy Huntington for his contributions during his time on the board, and welcome Sean to the team. This is my final term as Vice President, and I'll be putting my name forward for President at the Omaha, Nebraska conference (shameless vote-for-Chris plug...). There will also be an election for Vice President at the convention. If you have questions about the role, please reach out to Larry Hergenroeder or myself. Elections are always exciting, but also a bit bittersweet—new faces join us, and we say goodbye to friends who've served alongside us.

One of the most important responsibilities of the Vice President—arguably the most important—is overseeing the awards portfolio. As we approach the nomination deadline, I strongly encourage you to nominate your peers, colleagues, and coworkers. Last year we had a solid number of submissions, and I'm hoping to see even more this year. If you have questions or concerns about the awards program, please email me. Nominations can be submitted online at naweo.org. Over the past year, NAWEOA has been working through updates to policies, MOUs, and contracts to ensure everything reflects the best interests of our membership. Just like in our day-to-day enforcement work, there's always room to improve and modernize bylaws, policies, and procedures. This takes a significant amount of time and effort, and I want to thank the entire executive for keeping things moving behind the scenes throughout the year.

A big thank-you as well to Chris Gilkey, Brian Bury, and the Ohio officers for hosting the NAWEOA board during our winter meeting.

NAWEOA is always looking for future convention hosts. If you, your association, or your agency are interested, please reach out to any member of the executive for more information.

This summer's conference will be held in Omaha, Nebraska. Alex Hausenhauer and the Nebraska Conservation Officers Association are hard at work planning and preparing to make sure everything runs smoothly. We're looking forward to visiting Nebraska and connecting with everyone again.

I'm excited to see familiar faces—and meet plenty of new ones—at this year's convention. Stay safe, Chris Maier



The Past President's Report

By Kurt Henry



one good thing!!

Good day from Manitoba! I am writing this watching hopefully our last snow fall of the year. Yes wishfully thinking, but you have to dream. We still are ice fishing thru 36 inches of ice and 2ft of snow in the bush. Spring fire season should be delayed

5 km run/walks. I don't remember ever running LOL. I look back on past conventions as I do my career. Where did the time go? Every convention is different; some locations are that travel location you always wanted to go. Others are memorable by a new life long contact you made. NAWEOA has been part of my life for 25 years and I am grateful for all I gained personally and professional thru its networking, education and comradery. I look forward to attending the upcoming conferences with no commitment but to enjoy and continue to learn and make contacts I will proudly take a seat at the retirees' table and tell "ya remember when" stories.

Your executive has just finished its very productive winter meeting hosted by Ohio officers, your host for the 2027 convention. They have it covered and will be a great event held in the suburbs of Cincinnati! 2026 convention is fast approaching and the guys and gals of Nebraska will be our hosts for their second time.

Nebraska first hosted in Omaha 2001 and it was the first convention that I attended. I was fortunate enough to share a room with my local MCOA trip winner Sid McGregor. Yes that guy!! From my first exposure I knew this was an event to return to and except for one year I have attended every conference since. I am now returning to Nebraska full circle as I exit the NAWEOA executive as past president. What a ride it has been, from attending as a younger officer more interested in the social side of things to bringing fellow officers and family members to the next conventions. I have attended many a hospitality night and my fair share of break out training, warden games and

NAWEOA has grown to be an amazing group of wildlife officers with common goals and mind sets. It is an association for you the officer. It is not about your department, your state or province it is about you the OFFICER. North, south, east or west we all belong to the one and only International association for wildlife officers. Please continue to support it and talk to fellow officers that have yet to experience it or have been away from it for some time.

I look forward to what Nebraska has to offer us in July 2026. Make every effort to attend and engage in the learning, business meeting and social aspect of what will certainly be a great time.

See ya in July!!

Kurt Henry
Ret, Manitoba Conservation Officer
NAWEOA past president



NAWEOA Financial Report

By Steve Beltran

Dear Members,

As Secretary and Treasurer of NAWEOA, I am pleased to provide a summary of the financial and operational report presented at the 2026 Winter Executive Meeting.

Throughout the year, the Secretary/Treasurer's office has continued to maintain all required 501(c)(6) business operations, including compliance with incorporation requirements, IRS documentation, financial recordkeeping, and coordination with external agencies. Efforts have also focused on maintaining accurate membership rosters, processing dues, managing reimbursements, and ensuring timely communication with directors and member organizations.

Membership currently stands at 9,780 total members across all categories. Dues renewal notices have been distributed, and ongoing efforts continue to improve roster accuracy and streamline submission processes.

Financially, NAWEOA remains stable and transparent. As of March 14, 2026, total assets include approximately \$265,742.43 USD and \$25,762.72 CAD across multiple accounts. Funds are managed with strict oversight, requiring executive approval for expenditures, and with an increasing shift toward electronic payments to improve efficiency and tracking.

The organization continues to support key programs, including the IWGO publication and administrative operations. Paid roles associated with the publication remain an important part of our communications efforts.

The Fallen Officer Fund (FOF) continues to operate as a separate fund, providing direct support in times of need. These funds are solicited and distributed specifically for fallen officers, while administrative costs are supported by the general fund.

In response to current financial conditions, contingency funds previously held in certificates of deposit have been moved into savings accounts to maintain flexibility and accessibility. Future considerations include revisiting investment strategies and bylaws related to these funds.

Transparency, accountability, and service to our mem-

bership remain top priorities. I appreciate the continued trust placed in this office and encourage members to reach out with any questions regarding finances or membership processes.

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary/Treasurer
NAWEOA

Finance Snapshot

Period: July 1, 2025 – March 14, 2026

Total Income: \$164,687.71

Total Expenses: \$190,940.73

Net Income: -\$20,059.47

Major Income Sources

- Conference Income (PA 2025): \$145,879.27
- Membership Dues (all types): \$18,558.44
- Returned Check Income: \$250

Major Expense Categories

- Conference Expenses: \$90,489.14 (host grants + rebate)
- Administration Costs: \$68,293.35 (includes \$50,000 CD deposit & bank fees)
- Executive Meetings: \$29,121.52
- Web Page Services: \$1,595.40
- Awards & Member Services: \$1,441 (combined)

Other Activity

- Net Other Income: +\$6,193.55 (exchange & transfer adjustments)

Summary

Strong conference revenue continued, but high conference and administrative expenses—especially the CD placement and rebates—produced a year-to-date deficit of just over \$20K.

NAWEOA Conference Liaison Report

By Jason Sherwood

There are a lot of great things in the works right now on the “NAWEOA Conference” front!

Besides assisting with management of some “large-scale habitat improvements” this spring, the Nebraska Conservation Officers Association is on the home-stretch in their preparations for the 2026 NAWEOA Conference in Omaha. If you haven’t yet planned your trip, this convention is scheduled for July 20 – 24, 2026, with opening ceremonies and the fallen officer memorial on Tuesday, the 21st; Warden Skills Competitions on Wednesday, the 22nd; the Torch Run 5k on Thursday, the 23rd; and the closing banquet on Friday evening, the 24th. As always, there will be plenty of certifiable training hours, relevant and personal to game wardens, conservation officers, and environmental police officers—and, of course, networking opportunities galore for officers, retirees, and our families. Echelon Front will be presenting the keynote address, and there is a great mix of training sessions on boating enforcement, personal/mental health, and utilizing technology to catch poachers. The latest schedule is posted on the NAWEOA website.

As always, there are hosted local tour opportunities the day prior to opening ceremonies (Monday, the 20th). There are options to tour the Hornady Factory and partake in ballistic testing demonstrations, as well as an ACTION-PACKED day at one of the nation’s top zoos. The Nebraska crew has also done a stellar job of ensuring there are plenty of activities for families and retirees throughout the week, with options for everything from kayaking instruction, to guided tours of the Strategic Air Command Museum or the Kiewit Luminarium. Other diverse options include participating in glass artistry and taking part in a trap-shooting competition.



CONFERENCE NEWS


OMAHA, NEBRASKA
JULY 20-24, 2026

REGISTER & BE INFORMED!
CONFERENCE WEBSITE
[HTTPS://WWW.NAWEOA.ORG/NEXT-CONFERENCES/](https://www.naweo.org/next-conferences/)

CONFERENCE FACEBOOK GROUP
[HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/173505916518726](https://www.facebook.com/groups/173505916518726)

CONFERENCE HOTEL:
\$122/NIGHT
**DOUBLETREE BY HILTON HOTEL
OMAHA DOWNTOWN**
<https://tinyurl.com/349h53y4>

SUPPORT OUR HOSTS
**DONATIONS AND
SPONSORSHIPS**
PLEASE SHARE CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP
AND VENDOR LEADS:
CONFERENCE@NAWEOA.ORG



NAWEOA Conference Liaison Report

By Jason Sherwood



The convention will be based out of the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Omaha Downtown. Once again, DayDay Howe and ConferenceDirect have helped secure very nice accommodations for us, at a very reasonable rate (\$122/night). The hotel is located within minutes of Omaha's Eppley Airfield (OMA), and they offer a free airport shuttle service. There is a fee for parking, for those of us who will drive there. The reservation link is now available at <https://tinyurl.com/349h53y4>, which will close June 18, or when the block is full (please use the link, as there are a few other DoubleTree Inns scattered around the area).

Registration for the 2026 conference can be completed online, via <https://www.naweo.org/next-conferences/>. Early-bird registration ends the last day of April. If you hurry, you can save enough money to add an extra excursion...

For those looking forward to the 2027 convention, the NAWEOA board recently toured the Cincinnati, Ohio vicinity and venue. The Ohio Wildlife Officers Lodge (with the support of the Ohio DNR Division of Wildlife) is well-underway and we can expect another spectacular event there!

While I'm hearing some buzz for an incoming bid to host the 2028 conference, I strongly urge all NAWEOA members to consider bringing a conference to your home jurisdiction. This is a great way to support the greater game warden community, as well as a huge opportunity to showcase your unique working conditions, skills, and agency to other officers. It would take a big investment for your agency or officer association to send fifty or more officers to most conferences, but it is definitely attainable when the conference comes to you—and most of our agencies have tons of young officers who should experience an international networking and training event. If you or your local association might be interested in hosting, or even helping with an event at another conference, please reach out to me at conference@naweo.org. Hosting can be a great money-maker for your officer association, is a strong recruitment tool and leadership development opportunity for your agen-



NAWEOA Conference Liaison Report

By Jason Sherwood

cy, provides an appreciated economic booster for your local community, and, allowing more of your local officers to attend helps us to grow NAWEOA's network of professional wildlife law enforcement officers (which helps us all be more effective and catch more poachers...).

though). If you're interested, feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns—or jump right in and get your application submitted to the Executive Board.

I HOPE TO SEE YOU IN OMAHA THIS JULY!



On a final note, my second term as conference liaison is coming to an end this summer. If you've ever been a part of a NAWEOA conference host committee and enjoy attending these events, this is the time to apply for this position. It is a very meaningful opportunity to help shape future events and a great way to support our association. Terms are only three years, and the annual time commitment isn't too rough for an active officer to do (it can also be a way for retirees to stay plugged in,

Official Announcement for the NAWEOA Conference Liaison Position

Official Announcement for the NAWEOA Conference Liaison Position:

The Conference Liaison Position is becoming available at the conclusion of the 2026 NAWEOA summer conference in Omaha, Nebraska due to the vacancy created by Jason Sherwood who has reached his two term limit. Jason has been an irreplaceable asset to NAWEOA fulfilling his commitment as the Conference Liaison for the past six years. Our sincerest appreciation for his commitment and dedication to NAWEOA and the Conference Liaison position.

The NAWEOA President is accepting applications from those willing to accept this responsibility in a major role for securing and mentoring future conference hosts. "Only serious applicants should apply". Instructions for how to apply are included in this announcement.

CONFERENCE LIAISON POSITION: (created Winter meeting, Salemburg, NC, Mar/05)

This position is not part of the executive board, but is accountable and reportable to the executive. As such, any recommendations for changes to policy, conference contracts, planning guides etc. by the Conference Liaison person must be approved by the executive board.

Duties: The duties are, but not limited to:

1. Liaison between the NAWEOA executive and all future conference hosts. Will ensure executive needs at the conference are met (e.g.: meeting room, coffee, power point projector, photocopier, etc.). Ensure NAWEOA secretary –treasurer is kept abreast of all matters surrounding financial status and registration details.
2. Administration of the NAWEOA – Conference Host agreement: ensure hosting association and agency is adhering to conditions of agreement.
3. Administration of the NAWEOA conference-planning guide, responsible for the distribution of the most current guide to future hosts.
4. Coordinate and chair meetings among past and future conference hosts at winter NAWEOA executive meetings.
5. Coordinate and chair meetings among past, present and future conference hosts/agencies at summer conference.
6. Liaison between NAWEOA executive and conference hosts during any given conference. - 15 –
7. Attend, as required, meetings in prospective conference host sites, to meet with officer associations, agencies or others, to help with conference planning. The attendance at these meetings needs to be pre-approved by the NAWEOA executive. Conference hosts may be required to assist with expenses, particularly if more than one visit is required.
8. Assist with the organization and coordination of conference bid presentations at each year's conference.
9. Solicit jurisdictions for potential interest in hosting future conferences by encouraging exchange and dialogue among potential interested parties and past conference organizers.
10. Respond to any inquiries about potential conference sites from officer associations, private groups, cities or otherwise.
11. Review conference financial statements and ensure all agree-

ments are being followed and monies have been handled appropriately.

12. Provide Executive board with conference liaison annual budget prior to each summer conference.

Obligations of Position:

1. Maintain regular communications at least monthly with NAWEOA executive through president or designate.
2. Maintain regular communications at least monthly with most current, upcoming conference hosting association/agency.
3. Maintain regular communications at least every three months with all future conference hosts.
4. Assist NAWEOA vice president with conference host delegation to winter NAWEOA executive meeting. (This shall include immediate past conference hosts, immediate upcoming hosts and hosts in immediate following year).
5. Attend NAWEOA winter and summer executive meetings and provide an update on conference status of each upcoming conference. Compensation of Position Successful candidate will sign a contract with NAWEOA, which will outline the only compensation will be the equivalent of expenses, as outlined in NAWEOA Travel policy, to attend the required meetings.

Qualifications and Who is Eligible:

1. Candidate must qualify for regular membership of the association and be a member in good standing of NAWEOA.
2. Candidate shall possess excellent interpersonal and communication skills. Ability to communicate via e-mail and use computers for basic needs is mandatory. Ability to travel is a prerequisite.
3. Preference may be given to candidates who have served on a previous NAWEOA conference planning committees. Candidates who have served in a more senior position within planning committee will be given a higher consideration.
4. Candidates shall have attended a minimum of 3 NAWEOA conferences, preference given to candidates who have attended more than 3 NAWEOA conferences.
5. access to a computer and internet connection in your home.
6. ability to review financial statements and records of conference accountants.

Length of Term:

1. Appointments will be for 3 years, and can be renewed by executive for a subsequent term, after the first two years. Maximum length to be served is six years.
2. Either side (NAWEOA executive and candidate) can withdraw from the contract with three months' notice to the other side.

How To Apply:

1. Interested candidates should provide a written letter of interest, outlining their skills and abilities and any expected compensation to the NAWEOA president. This should be done via e-mail. president@naweo.org
2. The deadline to receive applications is JUNE 1, 2026, determined by the Executive board. The subsequent starting date shall be negotiated between the candidate and the NAWEOA president.
3. For further information, or to apply, contact the NAWEOA President.

Region 1 Director James Zucchelli



Cannot quite believe we are already moving quickly into spring in the South Okanagan! Ice is coming off the lakes/ Migratory Birds are flooding the wetlands and creeks and robins are everywhere! Not sure what happened with winter here,

but it did not show up at all. I tested my shovel once and it melted that afternoon. We are in some uncertain times with the current drought conditions that could lead to serious wildfires. This all depends upon a wet spring and if this is any indication, it will be dry! Hopefully your spring is on track and your upcoming field season is productive and safe.

I cannot believe that two years have gone by so quickly and my position as Region 1 director will be up for election at this year's conference in Nebraska in July. I am definitely interested in staying on the board as Region 1 director for another two years, but you never know what life has in store for you. This is a great association and I can't say enough about the game wardens across North America that I have met through this association. The most professional, dedicated, selfless hardworking gang on the planet working to protect the Fish, Wildlife, and Natural Resources we all rely on the keep our freezers full and our mental health in check.

The Yukon and NWT were unable to get an update to me in time for the newsletter, but they give their regards and will catch up for the next newsletter.

Keep the faith, poachers know no boundaries; fish and wildlife migrate across borders, and we need to keep connected and strong in order to do them justice.

Hopefully we can connect in the future at an upcoming conference!

Sincerely,
James ZUCHELLI
Region 1 Director

Last year was a crazy year for the BCCOS, lots of great files, great work by BCs finest game wardens! -Transitioned from 40.cal to 9 mm in step with all other police and Law enforcement in British Columbia.

-The BCGEU initiated job action across the public service in September which lasted till the end of October. The longest strike in BC history. Most of the BCCOS were determined to be essential and the strike had limited effect although the distraction and overshadowing of seeing other coworkers on the picket line was very disturbing for dedicated Game Wardens.

-The Society of British Columbia Conservation Officers welcomed a new executive with Conservation Officer Leyland KLASSEN taking on the President Role and Conservation Officer Marc PLAMONDON taking on the VP role. Lots of great work going on with high engagement and behind the scenes work to make the everyday Conservation Officer better.

Hopefully we can more support to travel South to attend NAWEOA 2026 in Nebraska. The ask is large given the increased prices of everything but as we all do, we will adapt and overcome.

Lots of great accomplishments and accolades out there but here are a few of the highlights from the last year.

Jeff CLANCY
Conservation Officer,
Golden BC

The BCCOS Awards Committee is pleased to announce that the recipient of the 2025 Conservation Officer of the Year Award is Detective Anika Hodgson. Detective Hodgson joined the Specialized



2025 Conservation Officer of the Year – Detective Anika Hodgson

Region 1 Director James Zucchelli Continued

Enforcement Section (SES) of the B.C. Conservation Officer Service in March 2023, following her position with Parks Canada where she served as a federal park warden in Banff National Park. Detective Hodgson is being acknowledged for her outstanding dedication, investigative excellence, and strong commitment to protecting the natural resources of British Columbia.

Retirements

After more than 30 years with the British Columbia Conservation Officer Service, Inspector Kevin Van Damme is retiring. A leader in predator attack response and investigations, and a human-wildlife conflict instructor, Van Damme has trained officers from agencies across Canada and North America.



Van Damme

Van Damme was also a BCCOS K9 handler whose award-winning career took him to several postings across the province, including Surrey, Clearwater and Kamloops.

Well-respected for his knowledge, experience and expertise, Van Damme has responded to countless calls, including fatal bear attacks and other high-profile cases. He has cultivated many relationships over the years in the communities he has served, with stakeholders, the public and partners.

More recently, you may recognize him as the officer in charge and media spokesperson of the Bella Coola grizzly bear attack in November 2025.

Conservation Officer Paul Pike CO Paul Pike started his career with the provincial government in 1993 with the Ministry of Forests as a Forest Technician, in Bella Coola. and then later moved into Compliance and Enforcement. In 2006 he transferred to Merritt, but it wasn't until 2008 that he accepted a temporary assignment to the BCCOS. Paul moved into a full-time CO position as of 2009. Over his 32-year career, Paul feels extremely fortunate to have worked in some of the most beautiful regions in British Columbia, while engaging in many investigations and human wildlife conflicts – experiences that will provide stories long into his retirement for years to come. Paul also contributed to the BCCOS by becoming a Community Justice Facilitator, joining the ATV and UTV instructor team, and was a member of the provincial OH&S committee. Paul would like to also express gratitude to all those that he worked alongside that made his career as a conservation officer so memorable.



Paul Pike

Graduations

On August 28, 2025, recruit officers in Class 27 graduated from the Western Conservation Law Enforce-



Region 1 Director James Zucchelli Continued

ment Academy (WCLEA). I am pleased to announce the following new conservation officers and their postings:

Landon Beisel - Mackenzie
Kaden MacKenzie - Fort St. John
Aaron Eversfield - Chetwynd
Luca Sekela - Chetwynd
Rogan Thin - Fort Nelson
Lily Hooper - Fort St. John
John King - Duncan
Ashton Jones - Vanderhoof
Jamie McColm - Mission



Please join me in welcoming these officers to the COS and wishing them every success in their new positions.

Agency News

Passing of K9 “Kilo”

On March 9, 2026, the BC Conservation Officer Service said goodbye to one of our most well-known dogs, Kilo.

The first search and detection dog in BC trained to detect invasive mussels, BCCOS K9 Kilo played a pivotal role in preventing the introduction of invasive mussels into BC waterways. During his 8-year career on the Invasive Mussel Defence Program frontlines, Kilo conducted 200+ high-risk vessel inspections and detected more than two dozen positive mussel contaminations.

Beyond invasive mussels, Kilo’s diverse skillset was also critical in other types of BCCOS work, including searching for and locating evidence, such as shell casings, firearms and wildlife for investigations.

Kilo was also an immensely popular attraction at any of the numerous public events he attended, from trade shows to presentations with partner agencies and municipalities.

Kilo was spoiled in his retirement last year, remaining within the BCCOS family.

Thank you for your service, Kilo. We’ll mark you 10-35.

Recruiting

COS Recruiting Video (<https://tinyurl.com/3pw5z3t2>)

COS Vacancies

84 Vacancies Total

2 civilian staff/admin assistant

82 COS officer positions

63 Aquatic Invasive Species Inspectors/auxillary COS

17 Field COS/GIS/SES

1 Inspector (Covert & intelligence Unit)

1 Sargeant (RJ)

Cases

Feb 23, 2026 Court case

The BCCOS recently concluded an 18-month investigation related to unlawful hunting within the Gladys Lake Ecological Reserve, in northern BC.

As a result, on January 29, 2026, two individuals and a corporation were charged with a variety of offences under the BC Wildlife Act and Ecological Reserve Regulations.

Charged were:

Spatsizi River Outfitters Ltd.- 10 counts, including 3 under the Ecological Reserve regulations, and 7 under the Wildlife Act and regulations

Region 1 Director James Zucchelli Continued

Michael Gilson – 10 counts, including 3 under the Ecological Reserve regulations, and 7 under the Wildlife Act and regulations

Shawn Gilson – 18 counts, including 3 under the Ecological Reserve regulations, and 15 under the Wildlife Act and regulations

The first court appearance is February 25, 2026, in Williams Lake Provincial Court.

Feb 5, 2026 | Court Case |

Two people received a combined \$6,000 penalty in connection with the killing of a grizzly bear on Texada Island.

Texada Island residents Kody Bevan and Seneca Antony pleaded guilty and were sentenced in Powell River provincial court today for failing to promptly report the wounding or killing of a grizzly bear, a violation under section 75(2) of the Wildlife Act (WLA).

In July 2025, the BC Conservation Officer Service initiated an investigation into the killing of a tagged grizzly bear after receiving a report it had been shot and possibly wounded in the Van Anda area. The BCCOS conducted a thorough investigation into these allegations, which resulted in these charges being laid. Bevan and Antony each received a \$3,000 fine, with \$2,000 from each fine directed to the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation.

December 5, 2025

Court Case:

A Maple Ridge man received a \$50,000 penalty and 10-year hunting prohibition for unlawfully hunting and killing wildlife in multiple incidents throughout B.C.

Daniel Gazzola pleaded guilty in Kamloops provincial court to five counts under the Wildlife Act (WLA), including:

Hunting and killing wildlife not within an open season, namely a female mountain goat accompanied by a kid mountain goat;

Hunting and killing wildlife not within an open season, namely a thornhorn mountain stone sheep that did not meet horn curl or horn annuli age requirements;

Knowingly making a false statement in a record furnished under the Wildlife Act, namely records filled out at a cold storage or butcher shop;

Did hunt without consideration for the lives, safety or property of other persons, namely hunting and dis-

charging a firearm within 100m of multiple residences, and

Unlawfully continue to hunt wildlife, mule deer, on or subsequent to the date on which he had taken his seasonal bag limit of that species.

A \$10,000 fine was imposed for each count, with the majority of the penalty going to the HCTF.

Gazzola is also prohibited from hunting, buying a hunting licence or accompanying other hunters in BC for 10 years. He was also ordered to submit an apology letter to the BCCOS.

Two others have been sentenced, and another individual is awaiting trial, as part of the same BCCOS investigation.

Earlier this month, Nicole Elie Rogers pleaded guilty to one count under the WLA for allowing her hunting species license to be used by another person. She received a penalty of \$7,000.

Rogers is prohibited from hunting, buying a hunting license, or accompanying other hunters in BC for three years. She was also ordered to submit an apology letter to the BCCOS.

A third individual, Cole Rogozinski was sentenced in August. He received a \$7,000 penalty for knowingly making a false statement in a record furnished under the Wildlife Act.

A fourth individual, Emmanuel Porcellato, is slated to go to trial in June 2026.

Court Case | October 2, 2025

The British Columbia Conservation Officer Service (BCCOS) recently concluded a three-and-a-half-year Wildlife Act investigation.

Consequently, on October 2, 2025, charges against



Region 1 Director James Zucchelli Continued

two individuals were sworn in Richmond Provincial Court, namely:

- Xiang Jun WANG - 9 counts of trafficking and 8 counts of unlawful possession of wildlife, pursuant to the Wildlife Act
- Stephan GREGA - 1 count of trafficking in wildlife, pursuant to the Wildlife Act

“The BCCOS remains committed to investigating those who are involved in the trafficking of our wildlife resources,” said Inspector Kyle Ackles. “Discovering such trafficking offences is challenging and we rely on members of the public to report such activity.”

As this matter is before the courts, we cannot provide further information at this time.

If you have information on the illegal trafficking of wildlife, please call the Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) hotline at 1-877-952-7277.

Bella Coola Bear attack

On November 20, 2025, a sow grizzly bear with two cubs attacked a group of about 20 Nuxalk Nation students and teachers near the community of Bella Coola, injuring 11 people, including four with serious to critical injuries. Teachers intervened using bear spray and bear-bangers, protecting the children. The BC Conservation Officer Service conducted an extensive search using thermal imaging and DNA testing but officially ended the search on December 5, 2025, after determining that none of the eight bears captured were involved.

Saskatchewan Association of Conservation Officers

Greetings all, from SACO.

So far, Saskatchewan has had a very odd winter with both extremely high temperatures as well as some nasty lows. As I write this however, it feels like we are in our 5th spring of 2026 and I am eager to get the boat out of storage and start patrolling our lakes.

2025/2026 has been an eventful time in Saskatchewan. From class plan renewals, supplement reductions and removals, Sergeant wage discrepancies that caused compression within the branch, one of the worst fire seasons in recent memory, the eventual reinstatement of the 15% wage supplement, implementation of a field training program, resolution of the

Sergeant pay structure, province-wide open elk seasons—and the list goes on.

Throughout it all, SACO stood by its members. We represented Saskatchewan Conservation Officers with pride, professionalism, and supported officers in their time of need.

The ministry has just recently concluded their latest round of permanent officer recruitment. Saskatchewan is sending 8 officers/recruits to the Western Conservation Law Enforcement Academy (WCLEA) this summer. It is great to see vacancy management occurring so quickly in a time when staffing is such a dynamic effort with turnover and other opportunities.

Over the past year or so, SACO represented and supported our officers through some significant pay structure matters. Recently, the employer conducted a class plan renewal, which altered the pay structure for all government employees including that of Conservation Officers. This resulted in a reduction/removal of a pay supplement for all Conservation Officers that had been in place since 2018 for the protection and response team duties that officers are involved with. As a result of this pay reduction, the ministry was encountering compression issues within our ranks whereby qualified officers were choosing not to promote to supervisory positions due to the minimal pay increase and significant increase in workload and liability. SACO was at the forefront of this issue, presenting solutions to executive management, meeting union leaders, the employer, and eventually escalated it to the political level whereby we met with elected officials. I am happy to report, and certainly proud that SACO was instrumental in getting the supplement reinstated for all Saskatchewan Conservation Officers, as well as getting the Sgt. pay structure resolved all while maintaining a high degree of professionalism. These major accomplishments marked great days for Saskatchewan Conservation Officers and it allowed us to focus solely on fulfilling SACO’s mandate of “Serving People & Wildlife, Protecting Saskatchewan’s Resources.”

Our officer’s association is also proud to announce that this April we will be having our 43rd annual officers convention. The event will be held in Yorkton and hosted/organized by those officers. I have no doubt that this year’s convention will be a terrific success and one to be remembered for years to come. This event is a great fundraiser for the association and provides a chance for experiences to be had and stories to be shared by new, seasoned, and retired offic-

Region 1 Director James Zucchelli Continued

ers alike.

Speaking of seasoned officers, Saskatchewan CO ranks continue to experience a cycle where many of our officers have retired or are preparing to retire in the near future. SACO wishes all retirees a happy and fulfilling future, and we sincerely thank you for the dedication and commitment you have shown to our agency and our province.

I would also like to take a moment to recognize and welcome the new officers who will carry the torch for many years to come. You are about to experience the greatest profession one could ever hope to dedicate their life to. You will experience constant change throughout your careers—different programs, different ministry names, different mandates—but one thing will always remain constant: SACO and NAWEOA's commitment to supporting and advocating for its members. In a time where the Conservation Officer role is seemingly moving further and further away from our traditional roles, always remember what brought you to here, and be proud to be a game warden!

Lastly, I want to take a moment to thank all SACO and NAWEOA executive members for the countless volunteer hours that these hard-working men and women devote to the associations. When that passionate member turns to their executive for answers on a burning issue, it is sometimes forgotten that the executive he/she is speaking with is serving their role as an uncompensated volunteer. Without dedicated folks such as yourselves, these officer associations would cease to exist, and it is because of your dedication that SACO and NAWEOA continues to be the successful associations they are!

Thanks for all you do!

Cory Loitz

President

Saskatchewan Association of Conservation Officers

NPWA

Update from the Law Enforcement Branch

In Later November 2024, we launched new decals on our patrol vehicles. This was done to make Park Warden vehicle unique and identifiable compared to the more generic Parks Canada vehicles.

Long time Park Warden Steve Anderson who served around eastern Canada, retired in December 2024 after 35 years of service to Parks Canada. We'll miss you Steve!

In March of 2025, Park Warden Derek Farrugia was on patrol in Point Pelee National Park when he was alerted to a drowning victim at the lakeshore. Derek responded immediately, and because of his actions (along with those of bystanders and EMS) the swimmer was resuscitated after several rounds of CPR. For his lifesaving measures, Derek received a Law Enforcement Branch Director's Recognition Award, as well as an award from the Commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police.

On October 21, 2025, Parks Canada CEO Ron Hallman presented 34 past and present Park Wardens with Peace Officer Exemplary Service Medals at a ceremony in Banff National Park. The award recognizes peace officers with a minimum of 20 years of service who have served in a front-line role to protect the safety and security of the Canadian public.

Enforcement News

We've managed several big files in the last 3 years. Here are a few highlights:

In August 2022, an individual hiking in Jasper National Park, shot a black bear. The individual was arrested and charged with numerous violations under the Canada National Parks Act. In July 2023, the accused appeared before the courts and was fined \$7,500.

In September 2022, Park Wardens responded to a report of jet boats on the Alsek River in Kluane National Park (Yukon) – a designated Canadian Heritage River where operating motorized watercraft is strictly prohibited. One jet boat was seized and slung out by helicopter, and a total of 11 charges were ultimately laid against the operators. In 2023, all accused pled guilty and received a total of \$14,000 in fines and partial restitution for the helicopter expenses. The jet boat was ultimately returned to the owner once the restitution and fines were paid. In October 2019, a YouTube video series titled '30 Day Survival Challenge in the Canadian Rockies' was posted by two individuals, depicting the vloggers committing infractions and illegal activities under the Canada National Parks Act and associated regulations. In a court appearance on April 19, 2023, one of the vloggers was fined \$6,000 for their actions. Additionally, the court ordered the individual to develop and post a video to his social media channel outlining the court decision. The other individual involved currently has an outstanding arrest warrant for failure to attend court for his charges.

Region 1 Director James Zucchelli Continued

In April of 2023, a railway worker was fined \$21,600 for illegally building a mountain bike jump in Yoho National Park. His actions caused damaged to several historical features associated with the construction of the first railway across Canada.

In November 2023, an individual unlawfully drove up a closed road into a caribou winter closure area, in Jasper National Park. When contact was made, the individual fled in their vehicle from Park Wardens and RCMP. The individual was later spotted in Banff National Park, where he fled again. With the assistance of RCMP a spike strip was deployed, the individual then fled on foot and was tracked with a Park Warden K9 and subsequently arrested. In a subsequent court date, the individual plead guilty to numerous National Parks offences and was fined \$8,000.

In August 2024, Park Wardens located two individuals inside a closed area around the Mount Stephen fossil beds in Yoho National Park. The fossil beds are a UNESCO World Heritage Site due to their importance in early-life development on earth. Both individuals were arrested and searched, revealing several fossils that the individuals had removed. At a later court date, the individuals were fined a collective total of \$9,500. In November 2024, an individual plead guilty to several counts of mischief in Thousand Islands National Park. The charges stemmed from multiple incidents of graffiti tags being left around the park. As a result, the individual received a \$6,000 fine and was ordered to publish a letter of apology to the park and do several hours of community service.

In January 2025, an individual pleaded guilty to illegally hunting inside Thousand Islands National Park and was given a \$2,260 fine. The individual was discovered by a park warden on patrol during the hunting season.

In November 2025, an individual was fined a collective \$5,000, and order to make a donation of \$1,000 to a local college, after in in-depth investigation into illegal drone use in Waterton Lakes and Banff National Park. The investigation began after numerous posts were made on various social media platforms. Additionally, the individual must remove all unlawful

drone content and publish a public post informing viewers about drone regulations in national parks.

Also in November 2025, a drilling company was hired to drill a new water well in Lake Louise, in Banff National Park and sediment ended up in the Bow River. After pleading guilty to violating a condition of their permit, and as a result of a plea agreement, the company was fined \$40,000.

In December 2025, an individual plead guilty, after an incident 2 years before in which they disobeyed traffic flaggers who had closed the TransCanada Highway for avalanche control work, within Glacier National Park. The individual drove around the flaggers, causing avalanche crews to have to stop their work for safety reasons and delayed reopening the road. As a result, the individual was fined \$4,500.

News from the association:

The National Park Warden Association Facebook page continues to be our primary tool to reach out to Park Wardens and the general public; The Association is still actively involved with the International Ranger Federation and of course NAWEOA.

The Union representing Park Wardens is in the process of finalizing their demands and began collective bargaining with Parks Canada in early 2026. Nothing has been agreed on at this point.

Contact us if you would like more information: npwa.agpn@gmail.com

Alberta

Greetings from Alberta! My name is Lukas Madsen and I'm the newly elected President for the Alberta Game Warden Association and Sergeant for the Athabasca District. It has been a busy year for Alberta Game Wardens, participating in the security detail protecting world leaders at the G7 Summit, conducting Interdiction Patrols at the US-Canada border, participating at aquatic invasive inspection stations assisting in protecting against zebra mussels and other invasives, and all in addition to a busy training schedule and our regular duties. It was a big workload for all Officers involved.

We recently awarded our 2026 Officer of the Year, Sgt. Curtis English at our annual AGM. Curtis is a dedicated Fish and Wildlife Officer with over 25 years of service. Curtis has made many significant contributions to Fish and Wildlife, from many years

Region 1 Director James Zucchelli Continued

of service as an AGWA executive member, being a strong leader who has developed many young Officers into Sergeants and ultimately Game Wardens and being heavily involved in the community and defining what “Community Policing” should mean. Congratulations again Curtis!

We had one Officer retirement this past year, Conrad Ozero. Conrad was a dedicated Officer who was a valuable asset to the Defense Tactics team and instruction for many of our recruits. We wish him the best in retirement! In addition to a retirement, we had a handful of Officers depart the service to pursue other opportunities to better balance their family lives. We commend these Officers in doing what is right by their family and they will be missed among our ranks. It has been a year filled with positive court outcomes as well! I have outlined only some of the great cases below:

Three files out of the Red Deer/Ponoka Districts
A File involving the unlawful killing of 4 antlered mule deer and one antlered bull moose receiving a Global sentence of: 75 days jail (intermittence sen-

tence) + \$2000 fine + 8-year hunting suspension and corresponding Judicial Order + Forfeiture of all seized items.

Two individuals who trespassed and hunted two deer unlawfully resulting in a Global fine of \$6000 /2 yrs. recreational hunting suspensions.

An individual who hunted and failed to tag a deer resulting in a global fine of \$3500 / 1 yr. recreational hunting suspension

A Lac La Biche File involving an Outfitter who set out bait for their clients to hunt over resulting in an fine of \$8000.

An investigation out of Cochrane/Canmore and our Special Investigations involving serious trafficking and poaching activity of eagles. Charges have been laid against five individuals following this extensive investigation.

The unlawful possession of a live Serval Cat in Strathmore District resulted in a \$15,000 fine.

An unlawful Bighorn Sheep file from the Sundre/Olds District involving two individuals who hunted a Bighorn Ram within a Road Corridor Wildlife Sanctuary resulting in a fine of \$8000 and a two-year suspension for the shooter.



Region 2 Director Jason Pink



Greetings from Region 2!

The jurisdictions represented in Region 2 include Ontario, Manitoba, Nunavut, Environment Canada and Climate Change, and the National Capital Commission. I would like to

acknowledge the hard work of our jurisdictional representatives (J-Reps) and thank them for the information they provided for this edition of the Spring Newsletter.

The Executive Board has just returned from our winter meeting in Wilmington, Ohio. This annual meeting provides an invaluable opportunity for the Board to gather in person and review details of the upcoming conferences. We also review and refresh the NAWEOA by-laws and policies, coordinate with the International Game Warden magazine as well as the Game Warden Museum staff and volunteers, and discuss emerging issues affecting our association.

While in Ohio, we had the opportunity to meet with the Ohio Conference Planning Committee, and I am excited to share that plans for Ohio 2027 are well underway. Chris Gilkey and his team have been working diligently to secure various venues in and around Cincinnati. I am confident this will be another outstanding conference with high-quality training and excellent networking opportunities.

We also had the pleasure of meeting with Nebraska Conference Chair Alex Hausener, who, along with his committee, is busy finalizing preparations for Nebraska 2026. I encourage all members to speak with their command staff and make plans to attend in strong numbers. If you need assistance in making that case to your agency, we have helpful information available – please don't hesitate to reach out. I look forward to seeing many of you this summer in Omaha, the Gateway to the West!

As Region 2 Director, I am responsible for the Officer Exchange Program. For those unfamiliar with the program, a draw is held during the Officer's Luncheon to select one Canadian and one American officer – attendance at the meeting is required to be eligible. The lucky winners will choose an agency from the opposite country to host them for a truly once-in-a-lifetime experience. This program offers a unique opportunity to work alongside wardens from other agencies and gain insight into how our counterparts work and live! I look forward to the presentations from last year's exchange participants at the conference this July.

Looking ahead to Nebraska 2026, conference registration is now open. It's never too early to start training for the 5k Torch Run/Walk! The registration fee is included with conference registration, and all proceeds support the Game Warden Museum's programming. This year also presents an opportunity for my fellow Canucks to become more involved at the executive level, as nominations will be held for the Canadian Director positions. If you have an interest in playing a larger role within the association, I encourage you to have your name placed on the ballot at the business meeting and make your voice heard!

Finally, a reminder to submit award nominations! If you know an officer who deserves recognition, please consider nominating them. There are multiple award categories still open. Nomination forms can be found on the NAWEOA website.

Wishing everyone a safe and productive spring,

Jason Pink

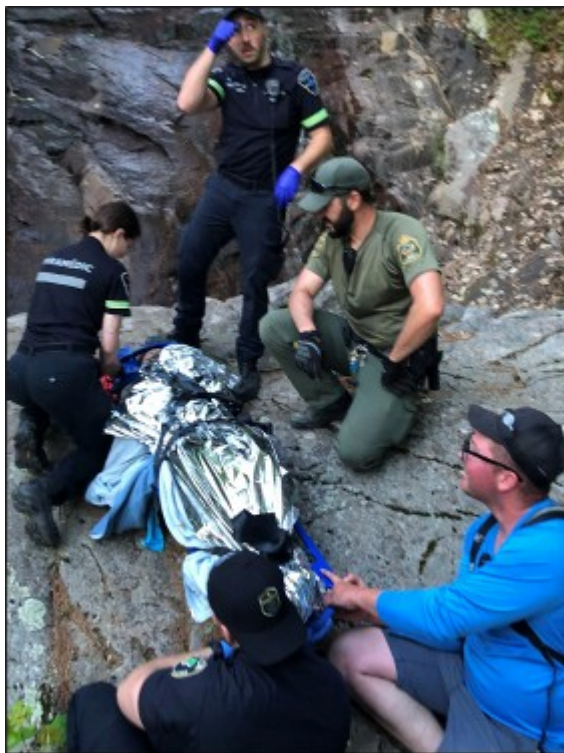
Region 2 Director Hello again! As the J-Rep for the **National Capital Commission (NCC)** in Region 2 (in addition to the being the Director), I would like to share the latest updates from our agency.

After more than 30 years at the same address, we have relocated our field office to a new location in Ottawa. The new facility is more modern and offers increased storage capacity. It can now accommodate not only our field officers, but also our financial and administrative staff, allowing for improved operational efficiency.

Region 2 Director Jason Pink Continued

Recently, the federal government announced significant job reductions across the country. While our agency was notably affected, our Conservation Officer staff were thankfully not impacted. However, our operating budget has been subject to some restrictions. At this time, we do not anticipate any additional job losses this year.

The NCC currently employs seven Senior Conservation Officers, three Conservation Officers, and three Junior Conservation Officers who patrol federal lands throughout the National Capital Region (NCR), encompassing extensive areas in the provinces of Quebec and Ontario. The team is overseen by two managers and structured into two platoons. Several positions are currently filled on an acting basis, and we are hopeful these will transition to permanent classifications in the near future. Additionally, there will be several entry-level field officer positions opening this spring.



Rescue of an injured hiker by Officer Samuel Dostie-Menard, Gatineau Park, Quebec. June 2025.

The NCC Conservation Section has recently undergone a risk assessment audit, and we are awaiting the results to determine whether any changes to our mandate will be required.

Our team has just completed a two-day Wilderness First Aid training course, as we frequently conduct search and rescue operations for lost or injured visitors on NCC lands. In addition, our officers completed advanced chainsaw operation training last fall. Our Officers are fully trained and equipped for forest fire-fighting and serve as the first line of defense when fires are declared on federal lands within the NCR.

When not engaged in search and rescue operations for lost or injured individuals, our officers enforce fishing and hunting regulations on federal lands in both Ontario and Quebec. Fishing is permitted in most areas, with the exception of lakes that are designated as sanctuaries. Hunting and trapping are strictly prohibited on these lands, and our officers actively patrol to detect and deter illegal activity.

One such investigation was successfully concluded this past winter. Officers discovered a site containing multiple small-game snares and subsequently installed trail cameras to monitor the area. A suspect was apprehended shortly thereafter and found to have already trapped six hares. The individual was charged with multiple federal warnings and offences.



Small-game snare, Gatineau Park, Quebec, Winter 2026.

Region 2 Director Jason Pink Continued

Another case involved two individuals who had baited a site with apples, corn and carrots, and constructed temporary deer blinds in Gatineau Park. Gatineau Park is a federal conservation park located just outside of the National Capital, where all hunting is strictly prohibited. An early-morning joint enforcement operation involving NCC Conservation Officers and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) resulted in the interception of two bow hunters at the site. The individuals are now facing more than seven separate charges related to the illegal baiting, blind construction and hunting activity.



Illegal deer blind, Gatineau Park, Quebec, Fall 2025.

As the Capital's largest property owner, our agency manages numerous sites used for a wide range of recreational activities, including overnight camps and day-use areas. One remote location has been repeatedly targeted for the theft of copper wire and other metals. The suspects were cutting down hydro poles and breaking into abandoned buildings to gain access to the materials. Working in partnership with the local municipal police service, our officers conducted surveillance operations and successfully apprehended multiple suspects for break and enter, trespassing, and metal theft. Two individuals were arrested in possession of a truckload of stolen copper wire and are currently facing prosecution.



Nothing like a "gotcha" moment caught on stealth cam! Truck loaded with stolen metal, Gatineau Park, Quebec, September 2025.

Our officers are also certified and trained in the chemical immobilization of large game animals, including bear, moose and deer. The season has just begun, and we have already successfully completed a relocation involving a deer that became stranded on an island after inadvertently travelling along an interprovincial bridge crossing the Ottawa River. Within two hours, the animal was safely immobilized and relocated to a more suitable habitat. The NCC is equipped with a wide range of specialized tools for wildlife relocation, including bear cages and large transport trailers fitted with sled systems for moose and deer. Officers utilize the Pneu-Dart system and operate under the supervision of a veterinarian who is retained for drug procurement and training. In addition, the NCC holds a contract with the City of Ottawa to respond to and relocate all nuisance large game animals within the city limits.



Deer relocation, Bate Island, Ottawa, Ontario, March 2026. From left to right: Officers Jason Pink, Jesse Guilbeault, Zachary Guérnin and Hugo Brochu.

Region 2 Director Jason Pink Continued

Spring weather should arrive soon (fingers crossed!), and with it comes a renewed focus on enforcement related to wild leek (wild garlic) poaching. In Quebec, it is illegal to possess more than 50 bulbs for personal use, as this species is provincially protected and vulnerable to overharvesting. Additionally, harvesting on federal lands is strictly prohibited, regardless of quantity. Penalties for violations are significant. Due to the existence of a black-market trade in wild leeks, it is not uncommon for our officers to encounter and apprehend poachers in possession of thousands of illegally harvested bulbs.



Wild leek seizure, Gatineau Park, Quebec, Spring 2025.

As always, stay safe and make the most of the spring ahead!

Jason Pink

Manitoba

For the first time in a while the Manitoba Conservation Service saw some stability when it comes to organizational structure. Over the past year the MB COS continued to fall under the department of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures and entered its second full year under the leadership of Executive Director and Chief Conservation Officer: Chief Corey Meadows.

Our leadership continues to revitalize and modernize the service with the recent purchase of new duty pistols Glock model 17 9mm Luger with pistol mounted optic (Holosun 509T) and weapon mounted light (Surefire X300T) will replace our aging 9mm Sig Sauer P226 duty pistols. Transition to the new pistol will occur this year.

This past Fall we welcomed 8 new CO recruits, who successfully completed training at the Western Con-



servation Law Enforcement Academy in early September. The final stages of the 2026 recruit competition are being completed as I write this with WCLEA beginning in early May. Chief Meadows continues to place priority on recruitment and filling vacant positions with a heightened focus on properly staffing the north and headquarters support positions.

Last Summer, the MB COS launched a female officer mentorship program with the goal to better prepare female applicants for the recruitment process and establish mentorship opportunities to help retain female officers in the force. The MB COS has historically operated with only a handful of female officers comprising <10% of the service on average. Although only in its first year, the mentorship program appears to be a huge success with this year's recruit class rumoured to be a 50/50 split that will double the number of female officers in the service. A huge shout out to CPL Jill Shale, S SGT. April Elphinstone, S SGT Tracy Kuzenko, and S SGT. Jessica Avery for making this a reality.

Region 2 Director Jason Pink Continued

During the Spring and Summer of 2025, Manitoba experienced one of the worst wildfire seasons in recent history. Several large Wildfires threatened multiple communities across the province from late April well into August. Civil servants from across government were called upon to help with the unprecedented effort. Manitoba COS supported dedicated Manitoba Wildfire Program staff by assisting with evacuations, origin and cause investigations and filling various positions within the Incident Management Teams. CO's from across the province dropped everything they were doing, left their families and other work commitments for days, weeks and in some cases months to join the effort. A big thank you to those officers that helped and an even bigger thank you to the officers, especially our seasonal officers who stayed back in the districts and maintained operations. Their dedication and hard work was indispensable.

As we look ahead to the upcoming wildfire season, we honour the lives of Richard and Sue Nowell and the profound impact they left behind. The Bridge over the Winnipeg River in Lac du Bonnet was re-named by the Province as a tribute to the Nowell family. Recognizing the generosity and spirit they shared and serving as a reminder of the strength shown by many during the most challenging wildfire season in recent memory.

The 2025 fall hunting season brought national attention to the province's moose populations, moose management practices and First Nations position on sustainable harvest and food security. The MB COS continued to focus on illegal night hunting across the southern half of the province and made several successful apprehensions aided by pursuit prevention devices (spike-belts) and K9.

The MCOA would like to congratulate SGT Dawson Keen as the recipient of the 2024 Shakar Safari Conservation Officer of the year award. SGT Keen received the award this past summer during a ceremony with Chief Corey Meadows and the Honourable Minister of NRIF Ian Bushie. Dawson is a dedicated Officer who demonstrates outstanding professionalism and is part of the firearms instructor group of Manitoba Conservation Officers Service.



ister of NRIF Ian Bushie. Dawson is a dedicated Officer who demonstrates outstanding professionalism and is part of the firearms instructor group of Manitoba Conservation Officers Service.



The MCOA would also like to congratulate S SGT. Ben Baranowski as the recipient of the 2024 Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers Association Manitoba officer of the year award. S Sgt. Baranowski received the award this past summer during a ceremony with Chief Corey Meadows and the Honourable Minister of NRIF Ian Bushie. Ben is a dedicated Officer and as the training and standards manager has led the modernization effort of the Manitoba Conservation Officers Service over the last several years.

Ontario

Hey Folks,

As I write this, we're on the home stretch of winter here in southern Ontario. Much of the southern regions of the province have seen higher than seasonal snow fall amounts. Although the melting snow will be a welcomed recharge to our lakes and rivers after an

Region 2 Director Jason Pink Continued

exceptionally dry summer, fingers crossed a flood hazard doesn't accompany the eagerly desired spring warmth. While conservation enforcement is often associated with wildlife protection, the role frequently intersects with public safety in unexpected ways.

This past year, Conservation Officers Tyler Grant and Melanie Kotulak were each presented with a NAWEOA and OCOA (Ontario Conservation Officers Association) Lifesaving Award following what began as a routine public interaction. During the contact, the situation unexpectedly escalated into a medical emergency. There were no initial indicators that the encounter would become life-threatening. However, through rapid assessment, both officers transitioned immediately from enforcement duties to emergency care. They rendered aid, stabilized the individual. Their calm and methodical actions directly contributed to preserving a life.

In a separate incident, retired Conservation Officer Mark Wickham was also recognized with a Lifesaving Award for intervening in an unrelated emergency. Although retired at the time of recognition, his decisive response reflected the enduring professionalism and preparedness ingrained in the conservation officer community.

These recognitions underscore a reality familiar to agencies across North America: conservation officers are often the first — and sometimes only — public safety presence available in remote or rural environments. Advanced first aid training and emergency preparedness are not supplementary skills; they are essential components of the profession.

This past season, I had the opportunity to travel to Webster SD with fellow Ontario officer Todd Steinberg for a pheasant hunt. While the trip was recreational and off duty, it became a meaningful professional journey as well.

South Dakota's upland tradition is deeply rooted in habitat management and community culture. Walking shelterbelts and prairie fields provided a different landscape than Ontario's boreal forest, but the shared conservation ethic was unmistakable.

During the trip, we met off-duty conservation officer

Ausitn Norton. The meeting was planned and casual, conversation quickly turned into a discussion familiar to anyone in our profession — recruitment challenges, evolving public expectations, technology in enforcement, and the unpredictable nature of field work.

Despite differences in geography and species focus, the core mandate remains the same: protect the resource, serve the public, and uphold the law.

Conservation Officer Austin Norton Left, Ontario CO



Todd Steinberg Right

These informal connections matter. Wildlife does not recognize borders, and neither should professional collaboration. Whether patrolling Great Lakes tributaries or walking a South Dakota cornfield behind a flushing rooster, conservation officers across North America share common values — stewardship, accountability, and respect for sustainable use.

Have a prosperous summer 2026! Always make time for friends and family outside of the job. Stay safe and ill see ya down the trail!



CO/Canine Handler Tyler Grant (Left) given NAWEOA lifesaving award by CO David Murphy (Right)

Region 3 Director Shane Hellyer



Hello again to all our Conservation Officer's, Wildlife Officer's and Game Wardens alike from Region 3. The East coast was battered with plenty of snow this year and we are ready to jump into spring and all its glory. I unfortunately could not make the meeting in person in Ohio for

the Winter meeting. Yet was able to communicate with executive board and president and keep up with all the modernization and improvements made. The list of tasks accomplished was long and I would like to sincerely thank the team for all the work they continue to achieve and promote.

Pennsylvania definitely left some heavy boots to fill after their exceptional Summer Conference for 2025. I will say the team in Nebraska are really going to give their all to fill. The training and attractions in Omaha will be something you do not want to miss. Please do everything in your power to attend, the memories and enhancements you can bring back to your career and life in your residing province or state will be invaluable.

To all the great members that I represent under Region 3, I would like to continue to praise and showcase all nominees of awards. I would like to ask each and every officer, supervisor and chief to continue to honor small, large and lifelong achievements of officers they work with. NAWEOA is again one of the best ways to show your support to colleagues and all the great work we do.

Reminder, continue to send in information regarding your department's retirees for a Retirement certificate. Honour their many years of hard work protecting our natural resources.

Quebec

Represented by Association des agents de protection de la faune du Québec (AAPFQ) a very active association with great promotions of great work from their officers on their website and Facebook page. Be sure

to check it out and see their all of their triumphs!

Here is one of their recent investigations:

Wildlife protection officers put an end to the illegal activities of a group of five individuals who operated a network for the sale and purchase of fish from sport fishing in the Salaberry-de-Valleyfield sector in Monterégie.

Partial results of the operation:

- More than 10 counts of indictments could be filed, totaling \$25,000;
- A search resulted in seizing bags of fish and equipment used for vacuum packaging of fish meat.
- * All fish seized and edible were donated to charities and food banks.

Main illegal acts observed:

- Purchase of fish from sport fishing;
- Sale of fish from sport fishing;
- Surplus catch and possession of fish;
- Possession of fish illegally obtained by sale.

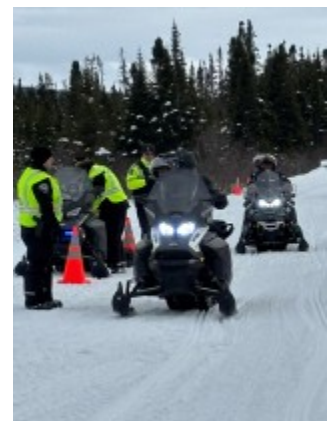
Congratulations to their officers for all their hard work!

Newfoundland

On behalf of Newfoundland Fish and Wildlife enforcement association, please support me by reading a couple recent successful investigations of fall 2025 and a snippet of the great outreach their officers perform!

Officers were out in collaboration again this fall and winter taking in many events like Pumpkin patrol delivering candies during a busy fall to kids across the province. Taking part in the annual Law enforcement Torch Run Polar dip!

As many of you know we also like to showcase working with partners of all sorts. NFLD officers were able to collaborate with the RNC for Off road enforcement this year as well.



Region 3 Director Shane Hellyer Continued

Here is one of many great files had by NFLD officers this summer and fall.

On June 24, 2025, officers from the Resource Enforcement Division, Gander Detachment, with support from DFO River Guardians, apprehended a lone male from Trinity for illegally netting salmon, illegally possessing salmon and illegally possessing a firearm and ammunition out of season.

Officers observed an individual going out from the shoreline in a canoe and confirmed that this individual had set a net in that location. The area was surveyed until the individual returned the next morning to haul the net. The net contained four Atlantic salmon.

The individual was arrested at the scene, and subsequently released to appear in court at a later date where he will face multiple charges under the Fisheries Act and Wild Life Act.

The salmon and canoe, along with a 50-foot gill net, two knives, a .22 caliber semi-automatic rifle, and ammunition were seized as part of this investigation.



New Brunswick

This past fall, New Brunswick Conservation Officers were finally able to return to their core mandated duties after spending much of August through October deployed across the province during an exceptionally active wildfire season. As hunting seasons opened, officers once again encountered a range of Fish and Wildlife violations. The more serious offences included night hunting, hunting without a license, illegal possession of wildlife, and discharging a firearm to close to dwellings. One notable investigation involved a suspect using a horse and carriage to commit multiple serious violations. Many of these cases are now progressing through the courts.

Following a well-deserved holiday break, officers returned to duty in January to complete their annual Use of Force recertification. The five-day program included training in handcuffing, CEW recertification, personal weapons, baton, and OC spray deployments. New ground-fighting techniques were introduced this year, and on the final day officers applied both new and existing skills in a series of reality-based scenarios.

Throughout January and February, the New Brunswick Conservation Officer Association (NBCOA) advanced several new initiatives. As the association celebrates its 30th anniversary, members voted to adopt a modern, simplified logo. The NBCOA also launched its first public raffle, offering a \$1,200 ice-fishing package with the winner announced on March 31, 2026. Funds raised will support rod and gun clubs across the province as they host events introducing New Brunswickers to hunting and fishing. The NBCOA will hold its Annual General Meeting on April 11, 2026, at Bass Pro in Dieppe, NB.



2026 NBCOA New Logo

Region 3 Director Shane Hellyer Continued

Professional development remained a priority this year. Three officers travelled to Hinton, Alberta, in October 2025 to attend the FI-210 Wildfire Origin and Cause Investigation Course, where they learned FI-210 methodology, fire vectors, and indicators used to determine one of eleven fire causes. Their expertise will be invaluable as New Brunswick's fire season, already underway as of April 2, (three weeks earlier than normal) begins under conditions shaped by limited snowpack and a forecasted hotter, drier summer.

Two additional Wildland Fire Investigators returned to Hinton in early 2026 to complete the FI-310 Wildfire Investigation Case Development Course. This advanced training focuses on arson investigations, surveillance team management, and preparing evidence and documentation for court. These skills are

particularly relevant as New Brunswick continues to experience its share of arson-related fires.

A new regulatory initiative is also underway. The Department of Natural Resources has launched an initiative targeting invasive fish species. Anglers are now required to retain certain invasive species that have not yet established viable populations in designated Recreational Fishing Areas. Conservation Officers will play a key role in educating anglers about these new regulations.

Finally, Conservation Officers continue contract negotiations with the province. Over the past year, the Conservation unit has faced challenges with officer retention, with several members leaving for other enforcement agencies. As negotiations approach their final stages, officers remain optimistic about a resolution that supports both the membership and the province.



Region 4 Director Sean Spencer



Hello NAWEOA members. This is my first year on the board, and I am still trying to figure things out. I hope to be able to increase communication between the board, and each state. I was planning to attend the winter board meeting in Ohio, but after sitting in the Las Vegas airport for 18 hours and my flight was cancelled, I wasn't able to make it. But I will keep working in the background to share up-

coming information and get ready for the summer conference in Nebraska.

Out here in Utah it has been a weird winter. We had a record setting low snowpack for the year which means it's likely to be a very dry year. We hope that we will still get some spring storms to help us out. But because of the nice weather that just means people are getting out even earlier to fish and recreate. I want to thank all of the Region 4 J-reps and what they have done throughout the year. I know that each of us is always busy with other things but it is greatly appreciated that these officers take time out of their schedules to communicate and work on NAWEOA business.

Wyoming

Like much of the mountain west, Wyoming had a warm winter with a low snowpack throughout much of the state. Ice conditions were poor for much of the ice fishing season. Wardens have stayed busy assisting biologists with season setting, patrolling, and



working through investigation follow up from 2025 hunting seasons. Wyoming continues to look at recruitment and retention strategies to maintain high quality applicants and high quality wardens in the field.

We would like to recognize Jon Desonier, Access Yes Coordinator / Game Warden, in the Lander region as the recipient of the 2025 Shikar Safari Officer of the Year Award. From Rob Shipe and Jason Hunter: "Jon consistently goes above and beyond to ensure his duties and responsibilities to the Wyoming Game and Fish



Department and the Lander Region are not only carried out, but also done in a fashion that gives the Department and all enforcement officers a positive image."

Colorado

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) continues its efforts to create a self-sustaining gray wolf population in Colorado and has confirmed successful reproduction. CPW staff continue to work with the producers in their communities on conflict minimization and outreach. CPW has added additional resources such as the newly created Game Damage Specialists positions and the further implementation of a Range Riding program. No new releases took place in winter 2025/2026.

In December of 2025 Laura Clellan was chosen as the acting Director for Colorado Parks and Wildlife after the departure of Director Jeff Davis.

It has now been three years since the severe winter of

Region 4 Director Sean Spencer Continued

2022/2023 in northwest Colorado. Since then, the region has experienced three milder winters and there is a lot of optimism from terrestrial biologists and District Wildlife Managers alike in terms of the health of the big game herds. As a result hunting licenses are being added back as the populations recover. “There was this misconception that our herds in northwest Colorado disappeared entirely and that’s simply not the case. They no doubt took a beating that winter and we reduced licenses substantially as a result, but they are recovering very well and there is definitely room again for more opportunity and harvest.” Said one District Wildlife Manager.

The 2025 fire season was very active in Colorado. The Lee and Elk fires in northwest Colorado burned over 150,000 combined acres in habitat critical for wintering big game herds. CPW is currently working alongside their federal partners, landowners and other entities on reseeding projects to help restore these habitats.

In January of 2026, CPW also announced a wolverine restoration plan. A January CPW press release read “Restoring wolverines to Colorado is considered a major step toward conserving the species in its native range in the lower 48”.

District Wildlife Manager (DWM) Evan Jones was chosen as the recipient of the 2025 John D. Hart Colorado Wildlife Officer of the Year Award. This award, in the spirit of its namesake, reflects the dedication an officer has to wildlife enforcement and the many other duties of a Wildlife Officer. Jones covers the Craig South District in northwest Colorado. Jones began his career with CPW in 2011. Part of his nomination reads “Evan is selfless about those in the Game Warden profession. He goes out of his way to seek recognition for others when most often Evan is instrumental in their successes”.

There were multiple retirements of CPW officers this year, Bob Holder 51 years, Mark Caddy 38 years, Jerrie McKee 27 years, Mark Leslie 40 years, Josh Dillely 30 years, Kevin Duckett 25 years. Employee Association

The Colorado Wildlife Employees Protection Associ-



ation (CWEPA) held its annual hospitality night awards ceremony and fund raising event in January of 2026. Several awards were given out as follows:

- Cliff Coghill Career Achievement Award – Elizabeth, CO DWM Casey Westbrook
- Jon Wangnild Case of the Year – DWM Zach Picard, Wildlife Technician Brian Marsh
- Horizon Award – Durango, CO District Wildlife Manager Lucas Clancy
- Life Saving Award – DWM Sean Dodd & DWM Phillip Sorenson
- Medal of Merit – DWM Sean Dodd:

Utah

Natural Resource has undergone a major transformation over the last year. DNR has historically had law enforcement under 4 separate divisions and as of Jan 1 2025 they were combined into a new division under DNR just for law enforcement. This combined rangers and conservation officers together for the first time. This merger has come with a lot of growing pains. On top of this the state has also changed almost every digital operating system that we use from day logs, to citations, performance evaluations, and time-sheets. Even though some things have been tough, I think in the long run this will be a positive thing for our agency and Utah.

Our officer’s association has been working at the state legislature on pay increases for our officers. We have been paying a lobbyist which has proved to be invaluable. Last year we were able to secure about 40% of what we were asking for wages to fall more in line with other state law enforcement officers. We asked for the additional funding this year and it made it all the way through the legislature but wasn’t funded in the end. We will just go back next year and keep fighting.

Region 4 Director Sean Spencer Continued



With work, we have had some great cases throughout the year. We have made a lot of changes to guiding rules and that has led to several new cases with guiding issues. We have seen an increase in the number of cases where individuals are using thermal imaging devices to illegally take animals. One of our officers made a great case that involved multiple individuals that killed 7 elk and 5 mule deer illegally. They killed some of them out of season and in wrong areas.

On the recreational side of things, we have had an early start because of all the warm weather. A lot of our areas get closed for the winter to protect the roads and habitat. More people out early means our officers have had to spend more effort to address people driving on closed roads and off road. It has also been a bad start to the year because we have had 5 ATV fatalities already.

We recently had our statewide yearly law enforcement meeting. At our awards ceremony multiple officers were recognized for their efforts throughout the year. Shikar Safari Officer of the year - Nick Vidrine. Ranger officer of the year – Cade Pies, Trainer of the year – Stetson West, Darn Good Job – Shawn Stucki, Brody Young Never Give UP - Cason Palmer, Heritage Award – Gabe Patterson

Arizona

There isn't a whole lot as far as what's new over here. For the second consecutive year we have experienced below average monsoons and snowfall resulting in an



extremely dry landscape. To give perspective, the south sector in the Yuma region hauled over 1,000,000 gallons of water, to water catchments in 2025. We also experienced an extremely busy conflict bear year. As an agency we received over 2700 reports of bears and handled over 300 bears.

Nevada

This last legislative session we fought in opposition and lobbied against a bill that took game wardens administrative powers and abilities to require hunters and anglers engaged in hunting and fishing to exhibit licenses, wildlife, weapons, or any other device and apparatus used in the activity. We fought hard in legislation and were able to remove this language from becoming effective which would have removed our officers police powers.

We negotiated a good contract for our officers to increase salary by 6%, increase longevity pay for officers to .5% per year increase, and many other incentive pays.

In the field, our officers were able to arrest, charge, and receive convictions on multiple felony crimes related to big game poaching violations, investigate and arrest on Operating under the influence, investigate boating accidents, and begin an investigation into a poaching ring that has over 22 know big game animals poached.

Region 5 Director Jesse Gehrt



Greetings from Kansas, located in the middle of NAWEOA's Region 5. Winter is hanging on, yet Spring is officially here, where it's in the 70sF one day, and freezing the next, tornado warnings and blizzard warnings in the same day. Our Eastern Turkeys are gobbling, and the morals are starting to pop. I hope this message finds all of NAWEOA safe and in good health. Thanks goes out to all the Region 5 J-reps for the work that they have done throughout 2025 and into 2026 thus far. You are a great asset to making sure info flows effortlessly. NAWEOA award nominations trickled in, and I thank you for that. Honoring our fellow officers is only a small token for the great work they accomplish.

There are still some that you may submit with no deadline, such as the lifesaving award, award for valor, and for outstanding service. Please don't hesitate to recognize your peers if you are able. The NAWEOA executive board just recently traveled to Wilmington, OH, which is just outside of Cincinnati, for our winter meeting in mid-March. We had very productive few days again. Big thanks to the Ohio Game Wardens for hosting us this year. Unfortunately not every board member was able to make it. Pesky travel issues still seem to plague those less fortunate, as well as family and work obligations all held a few back from, in-person attendance. It was great that those delegates from north of the border in Canada were able to all travel down and join in all week! With 2026 already in full swing, this brings us all closer to the Summer conference just up the road from me in NAWEOA's Region 5, Omaha, NE. The Nebraska crew is hard at work to make this conference a great one. The officers in NE have a great conference planned, including excellent training for everyone, geared up and ready for all of NAWEOA. I encourage all who can to attend, and I look forward to meeting up with you all in July. Bring your families, and reach out to those other fellow officers who have yet to at-

tend a conference. I guarantee you that once they do, they will be hooked!

OKLAHOMA

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation continues to navigate ongoing legal challenges regarding tribal licensing, with outside counsel retained as litigation between the Attorney General and tribal nations proceeds. Operational updates include the transition to Axon body cameras with routine audits by supervisors, issuance of new M4 rifles, and a return to Galls for uniforms. Wardens are also now required to conduct physical residency verifications for lifetime licenses, and a new license bill has increased and consolidated fees, particularly for non-residents.

The agency is investing in personnel, including hiring seven new wardens currently in the academy, initiating a pay study through Korn Ferry, and implementing additional compensation for Field Training Officers. Communication upgrades are underway with new 800 MHz radios and a partnership with the Oklahoma Highway Patrol for dispatch and programming. Equipment improvements include new Ram crew cab trucks, additional Fluid rib-style boats, and ODWC becoming a Mercury outboard dealer.

NORTH DAKOTA

Here are some updates from ND for 2025. One of our investigators caught a guy who was illegally killing deer using a crossbow with a night vision scope. The individual was aspiring to have a hunting show on YouTube and was filming everything. He killed multiple deer at night with the use of his crossbow. Though the investigation our investigator uncovered many deer that were killed and tagged with tags belonging to his wife and daughter. When interviewed, the wife and daughter had no idea they had gotten deer tags. He filmed everything and also had trail cameras that captured his nighttime hunting. The best picture was from a trail camera directly in front of the blind he was hunting out of. Between the camera and the blind was a mule deer buck. Coming from the blind was a bright beam of light coming from the IR Illuminator on the night vision scope. It was hard for him to argue that one.

Our District Game Warden out of Minot caught an individual illegally killing turkeys in Minot. The Warden initially contacted the individual while he was hunting muskrats on a refuge, also illegal. While checking his hunting license, the Warden saw the individual had gotten a couple turkey tags and asked him about it. The individual was very excited to tell

Region 5 Director Jesse Gehrt Continued

about the two Toms he had shot, but claimed he didn't have any pictures. When asked why he didn't have any pictures, he told our Warden that he didn't have cell service. Our Warden was able to obtain enough PC for a warrant for the individual's phone and found that the individual had shot the turkeys behind his apartment in the City of Minot with his bow. He was cited for illegally taking the turkeys and hunting in the wrong unit as he was roughly 100+ miles from the unit his tags were valid for. He received a 1 year suspension of hunting, fishing, and trapping privileges. Fast forward to February and I now have a case against the guy for Hunting and Fishing Under Suspension in North Dakota, illegally killing deer in Georgia, and fishing under suspension in Florida. He's the kind of guy that just won't stop doing it no matter the outcomes. Hoping for a good outcome on the case I have against him as we are still gathering all the information and getting it to Georgia and Florida.

Wardens in our Southwest Region caught an individual illegally taking pheasants. It was a guy we had gotten reported to us for a number of years, but were never able to catch him in the act. One day, after investigating a separate case in the area, one of our Wardens stopped by to check out what our suspect was doing. He wasn't sitting there 5 minutes before the suspect began using his side by side to flush pheasant and was shooting pheasants from his side by side. He called in other wardens to assist him as he continued to watch the suspect, and his wife who was in the side by side with him, continue to drive through the tall grass to flush the pheasants and then shoot them. The Wardens got into the camp on the property and searched through everything. In the end they found the three individuals at the camp had all hunted without licenses, had illegally hunted from the side by sides, had illegally harassed the wildlife with the side by side, the main suspect was in possession of 18 illegal rooster pheasants and 1 hen pheasant, the main suspect was illegally possessing deer skulls, and a few other smaller violations. The court case was recently settled on that one and even though it was not what we wanted to get out of it, we did get a 10 year suspension of all privileges against the main suspect and that length is unheard of in North Dakota.

Our Wardens in the Northeast part of the state continue to do an excellent job managing all the fishing pressure on Devils Lake. As the state's largest natural body of water, and top tier fishery every year, the lake get constant pressure from guides/outfitters, recreators, and fishermen. They often catch people with gross over limits of white bass that are being taken back to Minnesota to be sold at fish markets.

District Game Warden Drew Johnson our of Finley received the Shikar-Safari Club Wildlife Officer of the Year Award and the Boating Officer of the Year Award for the 2025 year. Investigator Blake Riewer received a Director's Award for his role in assisting the District Wardens with the investigations and the case he had involving the individual illegally killing deer with the crossbow/night vision.

As far as new technology, the only thing I am aware of that was new this year is that we are testing out a new cell phone extraction software that is supposed to help sort the data into an easier way to search/organize a case ready report. The system is called Nighthawk. It is very new and our investigators are still working on learning its full application, but it sounds like a great tool for case prep.

MISSOURI

The Missouri Conservation Agents Association has undergone some changes with our logo and imagery. In 2025 we celebrated our 50th year as an Association and at that time we selected a new logo going forward. Attached is our new logo that we are using for marketing and merchandise. You should be seeing it more and more as we get some new things going. We also developed a new website for our association and are trying to add more links and current information as we go along. Our new website is: www.moagentsassociation.org and has information about us and some community involvement activities as well as the scholarships we award annually.

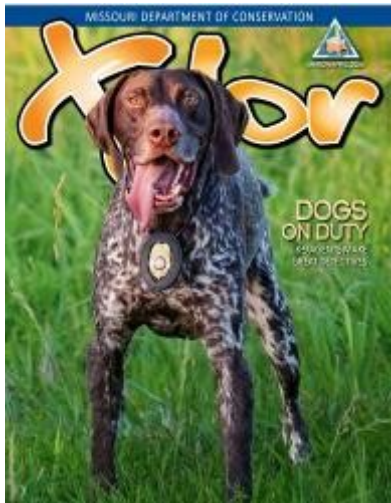
We will be hosting a night in the hospitality room at the NAWEOA conference in Omaha this summer and will have some merchandise on hand for people to take a look at. As of now we are expecting to have about 10 officers from MO in attendance during the conference. We are hoping that number goes up as the time gets closer.

Region 5 Director Jesse Gehrt Continued



**Cpl. Eric Heuring and his wife pictured with his award from DU for Waterfowl Officer of the Year in 2026.*

As for our department, a couple things to mention are Conservation Agent Eric Heuring was recently awarded the Ducks Unlimited 2026 Waterfowl Officer of the Year. Our K9 officers around the state continue to play a crucial role in making wildlife cases and have even assisted local agencies in recovering evidence from shootings and other felony cases.



**K9 Cedar (Handler Cpl. Poole) was featured on the front cover of our department monthly kids magazine.*

Snagging season (Paddlefish) and catch and keep trout seasons are in full swing in Missouri and have been generating cases in some of our large reservoirs and trout parks around the southern part of the state.



**Agents working Paddlefish snaggers on Truman Lake/Lake of the Ozarks during the opening weekend of Paddlefish snagging season.*



**K9 Astro (Handler Cpl. Swem) was recently involved in recovering evidence in a shooting near Springfield.*

Agents are also being tasked with assisting with security details for the upcoming FIFA World Cup games that will be played in the Kansas City area. We will be sending approximately 12-15 agents per day most days to work security or have extra enforcement in various areas. That is being coordinated (somewhat) with the Kansas City Police Department.



**New logo for the Missouri Conservation Agents Association*

Region 5 Director Jesse Gehrt Continued

IOWA

Greetings from Iowa. We are in the second year of our department's consolidation of Park Rangers and Conservation Officers. Ultimately all Park Rangers will be assigned as Conservation Officers as retirements and transfers take place across the state. Eventually Conservation Officers will be dual role covering parks as well and gaps will be filled with seasonal employees. The total number of officers across the state will be reduced by approximately 25% when the consolidation nears completion.

We, along with many states, face the same budget challenges as we navigate an ever-changing landscape of enforcement issues and private lands issues. Iowa ranks 49th out of 50 states for the amount of public land with only Rhode Island having less. 93% of land in Iowa is privately owned and presents particular difficulties in regulation and enforcement of our natural resources across our great state. Efforts continue to educate our public and stakeholders along with our representatives about these unique challenges. Water quality issues, cancer rates, deer population control, private property rights and an aging user base top the list.

It's not all doom and gloom though. Many veteran Conservation Officers still enjoy getting up every day and doing the job they always wanted. Sometimes a little perspective is all you need to get out and enjoy what is still one of the best jobs on the planet.

Here is an overview of a waterfowl case from just this past winter. In early December, 2025, Iowa Conservation Officers noticed a large number of Mallard harvest pictures posted on social media. The account was linked back to an individual living in Burlington, Iowa. With the ice and snow present in the area at the time, it drastically narrowed down the possible hunting locations with any open water. Conservation Officers noticed an additional post on December 14, 2025 with approximately 36 mallards, posted by a separate individual, also from the Burlington area. On December 15, with only 2 days left of the Iowa Waterfowl season, Conservation Officers attempted to locate the hunters in the field. In the late evening hours, a Conservation Officer matched the background of the photo to the Green Bay Bottoms area in rural Lee County. Shortly after sunset, a small passen-

ger car was seen peeling out through a snowy corn field towards the end of a dead-end road.

The Conservation Officer approached the vehicle and recognized the occupants as the individuals from social media. The suspects exited the vehicle and began pulling ducks and geese from the trunk. The interior of the car was full with loaded shotguns, 4 with no plugs. Another vehicle approached and also had several shotguns with no plugs. One of the individuals had no licenses or stamps to hunt waterfowl. Conservation Officers interviewed the suspects and determined the 36 mallards killed the day before had been killed by 4 hunters (20 over their limit). The group also confessed to being over their limit on other dates as well.



Region 5 Director Jesse Gehrt Continued

After completing cell phone warrants and a residential warrant, Conservation Officers located nearly 100 duck carcasses, including 38 whole birds dumped in a rural road ditch in Des Moines County, Iowa. Officers determined the hunters had likely killed nearly 50-60 mallards over their limit during the 2-week period. Combined with the gross over limits, the area they were hunting was baited with corn. It was also determined deer were killed illegally as well as pheasants taken out of season. Conservation Officers filed a total of 43 charges. The defendants pleaded guilty to 31 charges in February 2026. The 4 defendants will all serve a 3-year license suspension. A great case made by Iowa Game Wardens.



SOUTH DAKOTA

Greetings from South Dakota. 2025 was a great year for wildlife conservation. Recently, the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Law Enforcement Section achieved a major milestone: the third full-time wildlife investigator position was established and filled. After operating with just two wildlife investigators for several decades, this is a tremendous advancement for our law enforcement section.

Hiring remains a top priority, and the results speak for themselves. Wildlife Conservation Officer staffing levels are at their strongest in recent years, with vacancies at an all-time low. While we proudly honored

seven retirements this year — six of whom dedicated over 30 years of service — our pipeline has never looked better. Applications are at a multi-year high and we currently have 10 officers in field training, the academy, or delayed hire ready to enter the academy.

One of the standout cases this year began with a Turn in Poachers (TIPs) call reporting individuals using thermal equipment to illegally kill deer, waterfowl, and other wildlife under the cover of night. Suspects were cooperative during interviews, and investigators documented a staggering 145 counts of closed-season and artificial-light violations. This case highlights the importance of our TIPs program. The case was fully adjudicated with significant consequences:

5 subjects convicted of a total of 17 violations - \$5,658.50 fines -\$11,200 civil damages -13 years of hunting revocation -420 days jail sentence with 30 days served -Forfeiture of 6 guns, 6 silencers, 2 thermal scopes, one vehicle thermal mount unit, and an iPad.

Officers in the Southeast region of South Dakota are tackling turkey violations head-on with impressive results. A May 2025 case involving two Mississippi hunters illegally harvesting turkeys without licenses sparked a push for better enforcement tools. Officers secured a \$2,300 Hunting Heritage Superfund Award grant through the SD State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) and used it to acquire a robotic turkey decoy, a stand-up tom with a swiveling base, swiveling head, and moving tail fan. This powerful, new tool will hit the field this spring. It is great to partner with NGOs like NWTF to protect the valuable resources we have!



Region 5 Director Jesse Gehrt Continued

Two impactful bills were signed into law July of 2025, delivering meaningful progress for South Dakota's people. The first establishes clear criminal offenses and penalties for boat operators, significantly strengthening our state's boating laws. This legislation provides long-overdue protection for victims and their families, while providing safeguards for the broader boating public. Prior to its passage, there were no manslaughter laws governing boat accidents — meaning individuals responsible for killing or injuring others on the water often faced only misdemeanor charges. That gap has now been closed. Boating laws in South Dakota now mirror those applied to motor vehicles: operating a boat under the influence and killing someone is a Class 3 felony; causing injury under the same circumstances is a Class 4 felony; and fleeing the scene of a boat accident involving se-



rious injury or death is a Class 6 felony. While this is a critical step forward, it is a sobering reminder that it took a tragic event to expose these inadequacies and drive meaningful change.

On the recruitment front, an exciting new partnership is taking shape. Lake Area Technical College, one of only three technical colleges in South Dakota offering law enforcement certification without requiring attendance at the State's Law Enforcement Training Academy, launched a specialized track this past summer. Second-year law enforcement students now have the opportunity to complete eight additional weeks of intensive coursework focused exclusively on natural resources and natural resource law enforcement, in-

cluding hands-on field training alongside our officers. This recruitment portal has real potential, and we are confident that this program will inspire talented graduates to pursue conservation officer careers.

WISCONSIN

Ten conservation wardens were hired as the warden class of 2026. Hiring for the conservation warden class of 2027 will kick off in late April. Interested candidates can find information on the DNR's website, dnr.wisconsin.gov, and search for warden recruitment.

Wardens focused training last year on enhancing life-saving measures by ensuring up-to-date CPR/first aid training and continued deployment of AEDs to ensure all wardens have these life-saving devices. AEDs continue to be a critical tool for our field staff. On average, our division is recording a deployment of these devices once every five weeks.

We were successful in acquiring two new underwater ROV units to replace two failing units no longer useable. These tools are critical to bring closure to families in drowning tragedies as well as use in boat incident investigation, underwater evidence documentation and assisting our partners dive teams perform complex missions.

Investigative wardens (IW) are assisting wardens with cases statewide. IWs assist conservation wardens and other state/federal agencies with more complicated investigations and crimes including water pollution, illegal asbestos removal and disposal, illegal guiding, illegal sale of game, unlicensed wholesale fish dealing, wildlife poisoning cases, forest arson and more. Our Organisms in Trade administrative warden who oversees aquatic invasive species enforcement program formed a warden team who are investigating illegal shipments of live invasive species into Wisconsin. We are protecting waterways from potential disease spread by performing audits of bait dealers across the state to ensure compliance with licensing and live bait shipping regulations.

Environmental Enforcement specialists use stepped enforcement to assist regulatory programs in ensuring that violators come back into compliance with environmental laws. Requests from the DNR regulatory programs (such as drinking and groundwater and non-point/agricultural runoff) continue to be steady throughout the year.

Wisconsin was the host to the national Operations

Region 5 Director Jesse Gehrt Continued

Dry Water Impaired Operation Awareness and Enforcement Campaign, organized through NASBLA (National Association of State Boating Law Administrators) in Green Bay. Through this national safety campaign effort, it is our goal to increase presence and visibility of law enforcement on our waters to deter/detect BUI and remove these individuals from our waters. In total, 120 wardens participated in the campaign contacting 2,121 boats and about 6,227 people on board the boats. Through these contacts 29 individuals were determined to be boating under the influence of intoxicants and 3 operating under the influence of drugs and the highest BAC was .288 with the legal level of intoxication being 0.08.

Prevention of ATV and UTV crashes through enforcement and education continues to be a top priority for wardens around the state. During Labor Day weekend 2025, the annual ATV/UTV safety enhancement effort “Think Smart Before You Start” happened. This coordinated patrol campaign includes wardens and county sheriff deputies around the state for a singular focus – making sure operators are riding safe on the trails and routes. Our department has partnered with Kwik Trip to showcase ATV and UTV safety messaging at the gas pumps through the busy OHV season. In most fatal crashes, operators and passengers are not wearing helmets or seatbelts. Additionally, the top three contributing factors for ATV, UTV, and snowmobile crashes are alcohol, careless operation and speed. To date, UTV crashes are accounting for 85% of the fatalities this year.

The division held its sixth annual Sled Safe safety enhancement campaign this winter. Sled Safe is an all-out, all-hands-on-deck snowmobile safety and enforcement campaign focused on heightened law enforcement presence and deterrence of risky behavior on state’s trails and other popular snowmobiling areas and frozen waterbodies. The purpose is to raise awareness and promote safe snowmobiling all season. Department conservation wardens collaborated with local enforcement partners and mobilized for this event. Our top priorities during this campaign included detection and removal of intoxicated operators from the trails, education and being visible, checking safety certification, stop sign compliance and crossing roadways safely, along with speed limit compliance to

include nighttime speed limits of 55 mph. Participation by 34 different counties patrolled, 3,658 miles of trails patrolled and 161 frozen waterbodies, 1,333 contacts were made, approximately 106 citations issued, and 313 warnings given, three OWI and three drug related arrests, 21 snowmobiler assists provided by law enforcement and 12 unsafe conditions discovered.

DNR conservation wardens rescued residents from homes surrounded by rising water and then performed search-and-rescue missions as storms doused the Greater Milwaukee area. Numerous rescues were made with specialized watercraft.

Wisconsin Hunter Education is striving to continue to bring in more instructors every year and help promote hunting safely for future generations. Through our course options to date, we have completed approximately 335 courses with approximately 586 courses registered for 2025, graduating approximately 7,338 graduates and recruiting 239 volunteer instructors. SEE ATTACHED PHOTO – OPERATION DRY WATER

NEBRASKA

As the Nebraska Conservation Officers Association prepares to host NAWEOA 2026, the agency is celebrating 125 years of service. Since 1901, when just five wardens enforced game and fish laws statewide, conservation officers have continued to protect Nebraska’s natural resources while expanding their role to include public safety, education, wildlife management, and broader law enforcement duties. In total, just over 200 individuals have worn the badge. To commemorate the 125 years, the agency has issued a new 125 uniform patch and badge.

Modernization efforts include marked patrol units equipped with FirstNet routers and the testing of body-worn cameras. Five new officers recently completed field training and have been assigned across the state. Grant Albrecht will be stationed in Sidney and Easton Albrecht will be stationed in Lancaster County (yes they are brothers). Logan Smith will be stationed in Arapahoe. Hannah Holtmeier will be stationed in O’Neill and Logan Sanders will be stationed in McCook.

Nebraska is also among the few states participating in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Task Force Officer program. A major joint investigation with USFWS concluded with the prosecution of multiple individuals tied to illegal hunting activities led by Dustin No-

Region 5 Director Jesse Gehrt Continued

ble from 2015–2021. The case documented 114 unlawful hunts involving numerous species, including 61 mule deer. In total, 20 defendants were sentenced to jail time, probation, hunting restrictions, and over \$275,000 in fines and restitution, along with the seizure of more than 50 trophy mounts.

So, everyone, please start thinking about this summer, and traveling to Omaha, NE, for the NAWEOA summer conference! We look forward to seeing you all in July!

KANSAS

Kansas Dept. of Wildlife and Parks keep moving forward like many others. We are slowly filling our vacancies, one hiring process at a time. Once the new officers graduate from the state police academy, they then spend the next couple of months in an FTO program. Our agency still does not require a 4-year college degree, it is only recommended and not required. We still have been able to hire a few that have come from other Law Enforcement agencies and are already LE certified, and some with prior military experience. KS Wardens are almost ready for the Spring Turkey Season, with the youth/disabled opening April 1st. Nonresidents are still required to apply and get drawn to be allowed to hunt one bird here, and this always brings in frustrations as we have long been open to no tagging limits. Those with hunting leases are not guaranteed a tag to hunt with.

To roll in 2026, our Secretary of KDWP was hoping for a consolidation of LE Certified staff across multiple divisions. This was met with resistance at the legislative level and was put on hold at this time. He continues to strive for positive changes for the agency and LE Division as a whole, and we look forward to the future. Officers are in full swing using the SmartCop RMS system, now fully integrated with officer/case reports. Like with any new system, it doesn't come without hiccups, but we have welcomed electronic tickets/warnings, and soon a searchable records management system, and have worked through most of the bugs. Last summer one patrol boat was equipped with the computer docking station and printer, and we are currently working on installing more yet this Spring. This new tool has sped up contacts with recreators on the water. One new un-

derwater ROV's arrived this past year, bringing our total up to 3 in service, and local KDWP Game Warden Boating Enforcement Specialist officers have been using them as much as they can. Continued interest in this technology was made part by Game Wardens attending training and conferences in other states about them and by agencies that use them with great success. Just another great plug for associations like NAWEOA that facilitate this networking and communication among officers and agencies.

KS Game Wardens are still maintaining our identity from other LEOs by keeping our green uniform look. We just transitioned to gray class B uniform shirts, a throwback to the old days. This, coupled with our new green outer ballistic carriers, has changed our look yet again. Fall of 2025, new green trucks were outfitted for patrol use. That color change will continue into 2026 as well. We just switched body worn cameras again, now utilizing the Axon Body 4. This couples very well without Taser 10 units that we were issued last Fall. These were rolled out in March, and we are currently just getting to know the ins and outs of them. The drone program is still moving forward, and getting successful uses all the time.

On the afternoon of October 12th, 2025, some concerned family members called 911 to report that a 57 year old hunter went to Melvern Wildlife Area to deer hunt that morning, but never came home. Osage County dispatch contacted GW Houck, who responded to the area immediately to speak with the missing hunter's brother-in-law. The brother-in-law had already conducted his own search around the missing person's vehicle and throughout the wooded area near the vehicle with no success. GW Houck began to organize a search team by contacting drone team mem-



Region 5 Director Jesse Gehrt Continued

bers (GW Cook and GW Bratton). GW Houck also requested assistance from other nearby personnel including: GW Cunningham, Park Ranger Gum, and Osage County deputies. Osage County SO brought an additional drone. GW Houck, with K9 Rip and two other family members of the missing party, began searching timber/creek bottom along the Marais des Cygnes River while a deputy and PR Gum searched the creek bottom in the opposite direction, covering approximately 80-90 acres. The search party were constantly making noise, shouting the missing person's name, and even initiated emergency sirens, hoping the missing hunter would hear them. Eventually,



two gun shots were heard. The search party met back up and discussed the plan to triangulate where the gun shots came from. GW Houck and GW Bratton were in the area when they observed a man wearing an orange hat stuck on a large log jam in the Marais des Cygnes River, and made it out to the man. GW Houck notified the other wardens, who responded to the location. After being lost for approximately 10 hours in 90-degree weather, accidentally leaving his cell phone in his vehicle, making a fire and boiling water in his own boots to stay hydrated, the missing hunter was located and rescued from the logjam by the game wardens. GW Houck transported the man back to his family where he received a warm welcome. Great job to all who assisted!

We recently held our annual in-service, after it was cancelled in 2025 due to weather. Congratulations to Game Warden Kalaeb Bratton on being selected as the 2025 KS Game Warden/Shikar-Safari Club Wildlife Officer of the Year. Your efforts have not gone unnoticed by your peers. We look forward to hopefully seeing Kalaeb this summer in NE at the conference. Game Warden Justin Counts was selected as the 2025 Boating Officer of the Year. Justin is just in his 2nd year as a officer, and works on Milford Reservoir, Kansas's largest body of water. Congratulations Justin!

Stay safe everyone! I hope to see you all in NE this summer, for NAWEOA 2026! Expect it to be a great conference as always!

Jesse Gehrt
NAWEOA REGION 5 DIRECTOR

Region 6 Director Shawn Elmore



My fellow compadres in the “Thin Green Line”, I hope this newsletter finds y’all to be healthy and getting fired up for the spring and summer seasons. As spring is among us, the turkeys are gobbling, and down here in the South, the sky fills with a yellow tint, and everything gets covered in pollen!! I want to say, Thank

You for being able to represent each and every one of you as your Region 6 Director!! Your Executive Board had the Winter Meeting in Wilmington, Ohio in March and it was a valuable meeting!! I want to welcome the Alabama Conservation Enforcement Officers Association and Alabama J-Rep Adam Fuller to NAWEOA!! We are glad to have them on board. I would encourage every one of you to talk with your co-workers and other agencies in the wildlife enforcement profession about the benefits of being a NAWEOA member and attending conferences. The vast amounts of awesome training, the awards and recognitions, and most of all the comradery/networking that is available at the conference is invaluable!! Nowhere else will you have this many GAME WARDENS to network with over the week!! So, I encourage you to take a week out of your busy schedule and join us in Omaha, Nebraska for the Summer Conference July 20 – 24, 2026!!!!

I want to remind everyone to make their reservations for Omaha!! See y’all in July!
Shawn

Georgia

National Safe Boating Week

Col. England from DNR, Lt. Col. Lowe from DPS, and Director Poole from Governor’s Office of Highway Safety went on the Belts & Jackets Media Tour on May 21, 2025, reminding everyone that seat belts and life jackets save lives, and that troopers and game wardens will be enforcing all boating and traffic laws Memorial Day weekend and all summer. Stops included Lake Lanier, Lake Oliver, and Lake Blackshear.

In recognition of National Safe Boating Week, the



Georgia Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Division, the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency’s Marine Patrol Division, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Division of Law Enforcement, held a joint press conference on May 21st at Lakepoint State Park in Eufaula, AL. The event highlighted important boating safety messaging for those who enjoy the waterways in these three popular boating states. National Safe Boating Week is observed annually during the week leading up to Memorial Day Weekend. The campaign promotes responsible boating practices, aiming to prevent accidents and fatalities through public education and increased awareness ahead of the summer boating season.



Training Unit

39th Game Warden Academy

The Game Warden Academy began on January 12th



Region 6 Director Shawn Elmore Continued

with 19 cadets, but by early March, the class was down to 11. Those 11 cadets persevered through the remaining training schedule and successfully graduated on April 25, 2025. The newest Georgia Game Wardens completed Field Training in July and are now in field serving the citizens of Georgia.



40th Game Warden Academy

The cadets of the 40th Game Warden Academy began their journey to becoming Georgia Game Wardens on January 11, 2026. We started out with 25 and currently have 17 that had met the challenge thus far and are slated to graduate and begin Field Training on April 17, 2026.



40th Game Warden Class at Boat EVOC Week

Retiree Game Warden of the Year Badges Col Mike England and Lt. Col. James McLaughlin recently presented retired and former Game Warden's of the Year with a one-of-a-kind commemorative game warden of the year badge engraved with the year they received the award.



Sgt. William Vickers (1983) Capt. Doug Lewis (1989)



Sgt. Michael Bone (1982)



Cpl. Bill Bunch (1993)

Region 6 Director Shawn Elmore Continued



Cpl. Arvid Edwards (1994)



Sgt. Mitch Yeargin (1995)

Aviation

Captain Jaye Bridwell, Lieutenants Ryan Buller and Sam Miller pilot DNR Aviation's three Bell 407 helicopters. The Aviation Unit plays a critical role in the DNR Law Enforcement Division's mission and vision, flying hundreds of hours each year supporting state and federal agencies, many of these hours directly supporting game wardens in law enforcement activities including search and rescue, hunting and boating enforcement, and special operations.

The Unit also supports the Wildlife Resources Division, flying survey flights for Bald Eagles, kestrel, and waterfowl. Additionally, surveys for manatee and diseased dolphin along the Georgia coast are also flown. From early fall through early spring, the Unit works closely with the Law Enforcement Division in

protecting the state's waterways and woodland areas with flight support for night alligator hunts, night deer hunts, and illegal shrimping along the coast. County surveys are also conducted looking for baited fields, baited duck ponds and a variety of other violations.



DNR Aviation is often requested by the Department of Justice and EPA to assist in investigations, and by the FAA in the location and mapping of downed aircraft debris fields. Every year, they support the Georgia Forestry Commission in fire suppression by dropping water on designated hot spots, and in the prevention of fires on state lands through prescribed burns.



Search and rescue operations frequently require DNR Aviation assistance. The Unit's pilots and Aerial Observer and Rappel Team are highly trained in long line rescue and rappel operations and advanced search missions.

LED Special Operations Group

The six newest members of the division's Special Operations Group attended the Georgia National Guard Counter Drug Unit's Woodlands Operations Course. This course focused on mission planning, land navigation, surveillance, and paramilitary / law enforcement operations in a wooded environment.

Region 6 Director Shawn Elmore Continued

Peer Support

“Strike three...and that’s the game!”, the announcer says with disappointment, as the Atlanta Braves come up short against the LA Dodgers. As they put another “L” in the loss column, I am reminded of how much I hate when my team loses. But, as much as I hate for my beloved Braves to lose, I will have moved on by the next day, forgotten about the loss and looking forward to the next game. We are bound to have many more wins in a 162-game season, making the losses more bearable. Unfortunately, some losses in our lives have a much deeper impact. The loss of a family member, a loved one, a friend, or a co-worker can have a lasting effect, both physically and mentally. Loss is a significant side effect of the law enforcement profession, as peace officers are much more likely to experience these types of losses than our civilian counterparts. When these types of losses occur, it is important to acknowledge that you may not be “okay” and that you feel comfortable asking for help. Loss is an inevitable part of life. How we handle loss directly affects our well-being. If you are struggling with a loss, we encourage you to reach out to your Peer Support Team.

If your state doesn’t have Peer Support team, I would highly recommend you getting with a state that does and get yours started!! It is extremely beneficial for the mental wellness of your officers.

Awards

2025 Georgia Game Warden of the Year – Game Warden First Class Hunter Rush (Murray County)
2025 James R Darnell Award – Corporal Zach Griffis (Glynn County)
2025 GA Level Torch Award – Game Warden Thomas Ledford (McDuffie County)
2025 Supervisor of the Year – Sergeant Bart Hendrix (Hall County/Lake Lanier)
2025 NWTF Officer of the Year – Game Warden First Class Hunter Rush (Murray County)
2025 Investigative Game Warden of the Year – Corporal Jonathan Segars (Habersham County)
2025 Hunter Education Game Warden of the Year – Game Warden Noah Osborne (Elbert County)
2025 Rocky Wainwright Waterfowl Award – Corporal Jason Bennett (Twiggs County)
2025 Administrative Professional of the Year – Ms.

Tasha Lamb (Region 2 – Gainesville)
2026 Hunter Education Game Warden of the Year – Corporal Levi Thompson (Columbia County)

Promotions

Captain Casey Jones – Region 1 Supervisor
Sergeant Jason Roberson – Region 2/Gainesville – Franklin County
Sergeant Chad Cox – Region 1/Acworth – Polk County
Corporal Skyler Redmond – Region 3/Thomson – Burke County
Corporal Zach Griffis – Region 6/Brunswick – Glynn County
Corporal Jack Thain – Region 4/Metter – Screven County
Corporal Brandon Pierce – Region 2/Gainesville – Hart County
Corporal Amy King – Region 1/Acworth – Paulding County
Corporal Jeffery Turner – Region 2/Gainesville – White County
Corporal Phillip Nelson – Region 3/Thomson – Greene County
Corporal Adam Kimbrough – Region 5/Albany – Schley County
Corporal Drew Weathersby – Region 5/Albany – Webster County

Retirements

Captain Rick Sellers – Region 5/Albany – 34 Years
Sergeant Eric Brown – Region 1/Acworth – 26 Years
Corporal Shane Sartor – Region 2/Gainesville – 25 Years
Corporal Anne Wiley – Region 2/Gainesville – 30 Years

North Carolina

Meet the Officer: Brian Gillespie-Haywood County-District 9

Master Officer Brian Gillespie began his law enforcement career in 2008 as a patrol officer for the Asheville, NC, Police Department. In 2012, Officer Gillespie turned to his passion for the outdoors and attended the North Carolina Wildlife Officers Basic Training School. Brian obtained his AAS in Fish and Wildlife Management from Haywood Community College and is from the Leicester area of Buncombe County. In 2014, Brian transferred from Halifax County to Haywood County and has been serving the citizens of Haywood, Buncombe, and Madison Counties since then.

Officer Gillespie grew up with a passion for the out-

Region 6 Director Shawn Elmore Continued

doors and still enjoys fishing, as well as deer, turkey, rabbit, and duck hunting. He has taken several youths on their first hunting or fishing experience and continues to share his knowledge of the outdoors with the community to ensure the hunting and fishing traditions.

Brian's dedication to his work and community earned him the National Wild Turkey Federation nomination for District 9 in 2020 and the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators nomination for District 9 in 2018. Brian is a focused and driven officer whose efforts extend beyond traditional wildlife work and into the protection of unlawfully harvested plants, such as wild ginseng, to help reduce over-harvesting and unlawful trade, and assists with search and rescue efforts in the mountainous terrain of Haywood County.



Brian Gillespie

Building Connections: NC Wildlife Officers Engage with Students at Career Day
North Carolina Wildlife Law Enforcement officers recently participated in Career Day events at Brunswick County high schools, showcasing careers in conservation law enforcement. Officers Timothy Stacy, Alex Holbrook, and Jason Munson, along with Area

Sergeants Miles Sampson and Matt Criscoe, engaged with students to discuss employment opportunities and the vital role Wildlife Officers play in protecting the state's wildlife resources.

During the events, officers highlighted hunter education and boating safety programs, explained daily responsibilities, and demonstrated field equipment used in enforcement operations. Students had the chance to interact with gear and learn how officers ensure compliance with hunting, fishing, trapping, and boating regulations while promoting public safety.

These outreach efforts reflect the law enforcement division's commitment to community engagement and workforce development. By connecting with youth, officers aim to inspire future conservation professionals and reinforce the importance of protecting North Carolina's outdoor heritage.



District 4 Program

Precision in the Wild: Infrared Drone Technology Aids Critical Rescue

On November 22, 2025, Master Officers Aaron Carter and Shane Weeks demonstrated exceptional skill and dedication during a search for an elderly woman with dementia in Halifax County. After nine hours missing in the deep woods, the officers deployed a drone equipped with infrared thermal imaging to assist in the search.

Covering approximately 175 acres, Officer Weeks detected a unique heat signature on his final battery, different from wildlife heat signatures seen earlier. Unable to confirm from the drone, Officer Carter moved into the dense cutover area and coordinated with a nearby search team while Weeks guided them to the location. The heat signature proved to be the missing woman, barefoot and cold.

Region 6 Director Shawn Elmore Continued

Acting quickly, Officer Carter gave her his jacket for warmth while Weeks directed medical personnel to the scene. Together with search team members, they carried her to Carter's patrol truck and transported her to Incident Command, where local EMS provided care. The woman was later returned home safely with only minor injuries.

This successful rescue highlights the critical role of Wildlife Law Enforcement officers, not only in protecting wildlife resources but also in safeguarding lives through advanced technology and unwavering commitment.



Drone above the Blue Ridge Mountains

Meet Officer Matt Woodlief

Matt Woodlief grew up in the rural community of Kittrell, North Carolina, where he was immersed from an early age in the traditions of hunting, fishing, and outdoor stewardship under the guidance of his father and, most profoundly, his grandfather. Those formative years spent learning woodsmanship and ethical hunting practices instilled in him both a passion for the outdoors and a sense of personal responsibility that would shape his professional life. At eighteen, he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, where his aptitude for leadership and disciplined work ethic became evident. Serving as an Infantry Rifleman, he quickly advanced to squad leader and subsequently earned the rank of sergeant. His service included leading Marines during a combat deployment to Afghanistan, an experience that further refined his judgment,

resilience, and capacity to lead under pressure.

Following his military service, he recognized the alignment between his lifelong connection to the outdoors and the mission of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. After seeking counsel from his grandfather and local wildlife officers, he pursued what he knew to be a natural calling as a wildlife officer. Now in his third year with the Wildlife Commission, he has distinguished himself through exemplary performance, handling fatal boat crashes, hunting accidents, earning the District 3 Officer of the Year Award, as well as the statewide Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) HERO Award. He has pursued advanced professional training, including the Police Law Institute, Boating Incident Level I certification, and national-level Hunting Incident Investigation coursework. In addition to serving on the Special Response Team, he instructs new recruits in hunting incident investigation at the basic academy, reflecting both his expertise and his commitment to mentoring the next generation of officers.

Beyond his official duties, he remains deeply connected to the outdoors. He spends his free time hunting, fishing, shooting, riding his Harley, and sharing stories with his grandfather—who first nurtured his love of the outdoors. True to the tradition passed down to him, he has introduced many others, including fellow Marines, to their first hunting experiences. His professional dedication, combined with his lifelong passion and formidable potential, make him an invaluable asset to the conservation and protection of North Carolina's natural resources and the citizens of Franklin County, where he currently serves.



Matt Woodlief

Region 6 Director Shawn Elmore Continued

ONE TOO MANY

Officer Stewart Abrams and Officer Blake McLawhorn were patrolling duck hunting on the morning of Thursday, January 30th, 2025, in the area of Cedar Island in Carteret County. Officer McLawhorn was hidden in a marsh in a position that allowed him to witness a group of duck hunters, as well as a “guide”, commit the violation of taking over the limit of ducks. Once Officer Abrams was able to retrieve Officer McLawhorn by vessel, the pair approached the hunters. In all, the hunters killed 47 bluebills and 4 redheads, for a total of 51 ducks. The maximum number of ducks a hunter can harvest is 6 ducks daily, with only 2 of those being bluebills and 2 being redheads for this time of the year- thus resulting in the group being 37 ducks over the limit. As a result of this investigation, each hunter paid a \$1,000 fine, split the replacement cost of \$2,091, and lost their hunting licenses for one year. The “guide” was ordered to pay a fine of \$10,000. In all, the group paid a total fine of \$16,091.



One too many-Ducks

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

Officer Anthony Bynum investigated a Landowner Protection Act (LPA) violation in Cabarrus County where a landowner was having trouble with people sneaking onto his property to fish. Officer Bynum worked closely with the landowner, who had multiple trail cameras set up on their property, to identify the trespassers fishing in his pond. After reviewing the landowner’s trail cameras photos, Officer Bynum was able to identify both trespassers. He contacted and charged one trespasser with the LPA violation. While at the residence of the second suspect, Officer Bynum was issuing the citation for LPA, and the suspect drove off leading to Officer Bynum being unable to

locate him. A warrant was issued for the arrest of this individual for resisting, delaying, and obstructing a law enforcement officer, as well as the initial charge of fishing without written permission (LPA).

The suspect turned himself in after the warrant was issued and appeared in court. His defense was that he told the officer to “put the ticket in the mailbox” because he was not going to wait for him to issue the citation. The defendant was found guilty of all charges and was required to pay a fine and the cost of court.

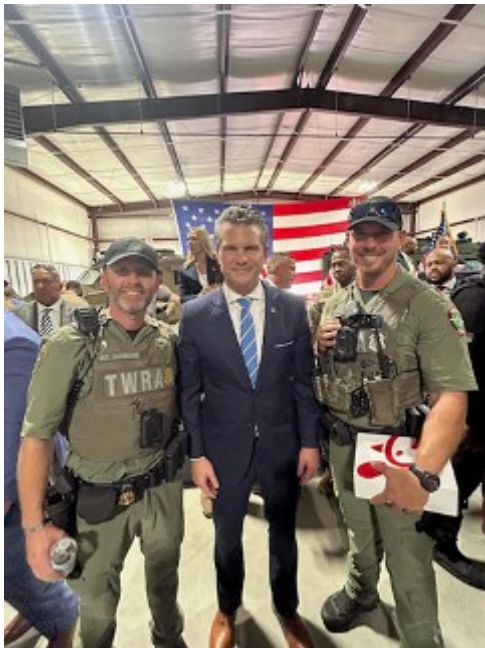
Tennessee Memphis Safe Task Force



We sent around 100 Game Wardens to Memphis to serve as Deputy US Marshals as part of the Memphis Safe Task Force. We were asked by Gov. Lee and President Trump. We filled several roles while there, from serving on high-risk felony warrant teams, running traffic stops, and hauling folks to jail. We worked alongside some very high speed officers, from FBI, US Marshals, HSI, DSS, ICE, TBI, TDOC, and



Region 6 Director Shawn Elmore Continued



local agencies. It was an awesome assignment for a bunch of Game Wardens to get to play in Memphis. If you asked any one of us that spent time there, it made a difference. The number of thank you we received while there made it worth it.

TWOTA Class 25-006

We have a cadet class made up of 12 cadets that started their journey in November. They just graduated from the Tennessee Law Enforcement Training Academy in Nashville on March 27. They will return to TWOTA to finish out their Game Warden training on April 12.

We just concluded our annual in-service training at Fall Creek Falls State Park. Training consisted of boat incident topics, Spanish for LE, and BLS CPR and First Aid. It was great getting to see everyone and fellowship.

NWTF

We hosted an Officer Social at the National Wild Turkey Federation Convention in Nashville. There were 24 officers from all over that were in attendance. We're already looking forward to next year.

Outreach Events

TWOA has sponsored several youth Deer, Squirrel,

and Raccoon hunts. We also sponsored and partnered with 4 different Shop with a Cop Christmas events across the state for under privileged youth.

Virginia

VDWR 14th Basic Academy:

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) Law Enforcement Academy conducted their first joint academy with the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) graduating a new class



of natural resources police officers. On September 12, 2025, The Honorable Heidi S. Barshinger, Clerk of the Henrico County Circuit Court, officially swore in the new officers of the 14th Basic Conservation Police Officer Academy at Fairmount Christian Church. The Basic Academy graduates completed an intensive training program for 28 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 14th Basic "Snapping Turtles"!

Cases from across the state:

“Armadillo Hunters” Case Ends in Guilty Pleas:

Opening day of Virginia’s 2025 general firearms deer season led to an unusual enforcement action in Rappahannock County. Virginia Conservation Police Officer Bostic responded to a request for assistance from the Rappahannock County Sheriff’s Office (RCSO) after two lawful hunters arrived at their established hunting location and found two individuals occupying their tree stands. The hunters observed that the individuals were not wearing the required blaze orange/pink clothing and, rather than confronting an armed subject, contacted law local enforcement. The suspects were detained by RCSO as they attempted to leave the area. CPO Bostic responded and requested assistance from CPO Medina due to a significant language barrier. During the investigation, both individuals denied hunting deer and claimed they were hunting “turkey and armadillos.” This created a problem, as armadillos are not present in Rappahannock County and the fall firearms turkey season was closed. The investigation further revealed additional violations, resulting in multiple summonses for hunting over bait, failure to wear blaze orange/pink, and other offenses. The case was successfully resolved in March through

Region 6 Director Shawn Elmore Continued

a combination of enforcement action and education, holding the individuals accountable while reinforcing compliance with Virginia's wildlife laws.

Violations: Closed Season Hunting, Fraudulent License Purchase, Hunting Over Bait, Fail to Check, Kill Deer Illegally, Unlawful Weapon, Fail to Wear Blaze Color Clothing

Field Ops: Senior Officer Tim Bostic; Master Officer Alberto Medina

Mutual Aid: Rappahannock County Sheriff's Office

Vessel Recovered After 20 Years

On March 17th, a Virginia Conservation Police Special Agent recovered a vessel originally reported stolen out of Chesterfield County in 2006. The investigation began when the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources Boating Section received an application for title for the missing vessel. The Special Agent determined the vessel was stolen out of the owner's back yard and had never been recovered despite being purged from the system due to the age of the report. The Special Agent successfully recovered the vessel in Henrico County with assistance from Officers Aurora Trick and Scotty Hancock. Unfortunately, the owner had since passed but the Special Agent was

able to contact his next of kin to coordinate the vessels return.

FIELD OPS: Officer Aurora Trick, Officer Scotty Hancock

SPECIAL OPS: Virginia Conservation Police Special Agent

MUTUAL AID: DWR Boating Section

CPOs Investigate Eagle Shot from the Roadway:

On February 28th, Virginia Conservation Police Officer Townsend received a report of a subject shooting wildlife from the roadway in Mathews County. Upon further investigation, Townsend identified the shooter and determined he had shot and killed a Bald Eagle and Black Vulture from his vehicle, while stopped on a public roadway. The birds were eating a deer carcass that had been placed in a field by the subject with the intent of hunting coyotes. On March 1st, CPO Townsend and Sgt. Jones executed two search warrants related to the investigation and located additional evidence. Charges are pending for both state and federal violations.

VIOLATIONS: Violate Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, Violate Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Shoot from the roadway, Shoot from a vehicle

FIELD OPS: CPO David Townsend

SPECIAL OPS: CPO Special Agent

SUPERVISION: Sgt. Andrew Jones

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Region 7 Director Kris MacCabe



As spring arrives, bringing renewed energy and growth, we're pleased to share the latest updates from Region 7. Wardens and Conservation officers in the region have been hard at work, and in this spring newsletter you'll see the ongoing efforts of our

dedicated members who continue to move the NAWEOA mission forward.

I'm truly grateful for the continued commitment and collaboration across Region 7. We're excited to build on this momentum as we head into the summer conference in Nebraska, and we're already looking ahead to the important work leading up to the 2027 conference, which will be hosted in Ohio.

Ohio DNR J Rep- Brian Bury

Ohio Wildlife Officer's Lodge 143, has been working tirelessly on getting an Ohio Game Warden magazine started. There have been many highs and lows, but we are close to officially having a magazine. We also launched a merchandise line in 2025. Sales have been good enough to reinvest numerous times. We are now running a successful business and look forward to offering our merchandise in Nebraska.

Ohio Wildlife Officers are also busy working on NAWEOA 2027, which will be hosted in Sharonville, Ohio, July 27-30. We have full support from our administration and as a result, about 90 staff members have expressed interest in helping with the conference planning and/or working the conference. We have divided everyone into teams and have begun planning for an amazing conference. We have rented out the entire hotel, the Delta Hotel by Marriott, which will give us flexibility in how we use the hotel. We also have contracted with Third Eye Brewing Company, which sits next door, to host a private event for us on Monday, July 26, which will be the first hospitality night. Many more exciting plans are in the works. We hope to see everyone in Ohio in 2027!

We have expanded our drone program, making several more drone purchases in the last year. These drones have been useful in law enforcement, search and rescue and wildlife management. We are going to be retiring several of our K9 Officers in 2026. We are in the process of selecting replacement K9s. We have started the hiring process for 12 new Wildlife Officers. We had a new record of over 1000 applications for these 12 positions. Applicants who passed the prescreening process have taken the civil service test and the highest scorers will be moving on. Last but not least, we have purchased a new patrol boat for Lake Erie. The boat is a Life Proof runabout style, made by Invent Tech Marine in Washington. This boat will be a significant upgrade to our fleet. We hope to have it on the water sometime in 2026.

New York Department of Environmental Conservation- J Rep Adam Johnson

The NYSDEC Division of Law Enforcement recently started its latest training academy. As of Week 3, there were 35 recruits still in the nearly 7 month academy held in Pulaski, NY.

The Division will continue planning and preparing for the upcoming 250th Anniversary Ceremony in NYC this summer. DLE will play a role in assisting federal, state and local agencies with operational security details in NY Harbor and the Hudson River.

2025 Awards:

Shikar-Safari Officer of the Year Award – Presented to the Member who has done an outstanding job in the area of wildlife law enforcement. In assessing candidates for this award, the candidate's entire record with the Division shall be considered.

Recipient: ECO Lucas Palmateer, Region 4

Northeast Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs Association Officer of the Year – Presented to the Member who has done an outstanding job in his or her areas of responsibility. In assessing candidates for this award, the candidate's entire record with the Division shall be considered.

Recipient: ECO Jeffrey Krueger, Region 7

The New York Conservation Officers Association Future of the Division Award – Presented to a member with five or fewer years total time in service with the Division who has done an outstanding job in their area of responsibility. In assessing candidates for this award, the candidate's entire record with the Division shall be considered.

Region 7 Director Kris MacCabe Continued

Recipient: ECO Tyler Ableson, Region 2

The NYCOA Bryan Burgin Award – Presented to a member who through acts of conspicuous dedication promotes the work of the Division through public education and outreach. Bryan Burgin was a mid-20th Century Game Protector best known for his role in the 1955 movie “Game Warden”. This was one of the first motion pictures to promote the profession of environmental law enforcement and spread environmental awareness and concern.

Recipient: Lt. Matthew Lochner, Region 8

New York State Rifle and Pistol Association Award – Presented to a member who promotes and personally participates in marksmanship competitions and one who encourages such participation by New York's youth.

Recipient: ECO Justin McGhee, Region 1

The Samuel S. Taylor Award: The Samuel S. Taylor Award is presented in memory of the first New York State Game Protector killed in the line of duty. Officer Taylor was killed April 5, 1914, in Rome, New York. This award is presented to those Members who by a conspicuous act of valor, courage, integrity, resourcefulness, and bravery in the protection of our natural resources and/or public safety, have clearly set themselves apart in the performance of their duties.

Recipients:

ECO George Scheer, Region 9 – Courageous response to a barn fire

ECO Christopher Lagree, Region 5 – Courageous response to residential house fire

ECO Jordan Doroski, Region 5 – Courageous response to an aviation accident

The Fred P. Drew Award – Presented in memory of the first Chief of Law Enforcement. The award is presented to those Members who display special and outstanding levels of achievement in the performance of their duties. The award categories include completion of noteworthy projects, outstanding enforcement efforts which impact on the Division's image, and innovative ideas whose adoption have increased the productivity and efficiency of the Division of Law Enforcement.

Recipient:

ECO Ryan Wing – Exceptional Timber Theft Investigation – Region 7

ECO Corey Schoonover and ECO Matthew LaCroix – Exceptional dedication to the 2025 K9 Academy

The Division of Law Enforcement Lifesaving Award: The Division of Law Enforcement Lifesaving Award is presented to a member or members whose extraordinary actions saved, or attempted to save, the life of a fellow officer or member of the public.

ECO Brendan Dickson, Region 1 – Swift water rescue and CPR on diver

ECO Matthew Krug, Region 5 – CPR response to unconscious individual

ECO Shawn Michalet, Region 8 – CPR response to unconscious individual

Maine Warden Service- J Rep Kris MacCabe

The Maine Warden Service recently Warden Chad Robertson, Investigator Jeremy Kemp, and Warden Marc D’Elia have been promoted as Sergeants in Maine Warden Service.

Warden Robertson began his career with the Department in 2013 and has patrolled the Skowhegan District for much of his career. Chad has served on the K9 team for many years, most recently working many successful missions with his K9 partner Storm. He has been assigned as cadre staff for the 2023, 2024, and 2025 Maine Warden Service Training Academy. Warden Robertson was selected as the lead cadre in 2025, managing the training program and providing guidance to fellow staff. He has taken an active role in the mentoring of our new staff across the state, serves on the Whitewater Guide Advisory Board, and is committed to our mission of protecting Maine’s natural resources. In 2023, Chad was recognized nationally as the International Wildlife Crimestoppers “Warden of the Year.” His field experience, knowledge, and ability to effectively communicate with people will help him lead his new section. Sergeant Robertson will be assigned to Section 11 in Division D.

Investigator Kemp began his career with the Maine Warden Service in 2001, after working for the Department for several years at the Grand Lake Stream fish hatchery. Jeremy has served in many special roles over his 25-year career. He has been a firearms instructor, MSLEA board member, and a NASBLA water survival instructor. Currently, Investigator Kemp is a senior member of the MWS Dive Team and member of the Advisory Board for the Licensing of

Region 7 Director Kris MacCabe Continued

Guides. Jeremy has a wealth of knowledge in law enforcement practices and the Moosehead Lake region stemming from his 20 years serving as a Game Warden in several districts across the state and recently, his 5 years as the Division D Investigator. All of which will be of great benefit as he leads staff in his new section. Sergeant Kemp will be assigned to Section 12 in Division D.

Warden D'Elia began his career with the Maine Warden Service in 2018 as a Deputy Warden. He was hired full time in 2019 and has served as a Game Warden in central Maine for several years. Marc serves in many leadership roles for the bureau including as a Warden Training Officer, instructing at multiple Warden Schools, providing training in impaired driving detection, serving as Maine OGT liaison, and as a cadre member for the 2025 Advanced Warden Training Academy. He is a certified drug recognition expert and routinely recognized as a leader across state law enforcement in this discipline. Marc's willingness to tackle any task assigned to him is evident with his success in the field and his diverse base of knowledge. He is diplomatic and has a clear vision for the future of the agency. Sergeant D'Elia will be assigned to Section 8 in Division C.

Major Aaron Cross stated "Their experience, knowledge, vision, and ability to connect with people will undoubtedly help carry Maine Warden Service into the future and positively impact the staff that they supervise. We are excited to add them to the Maine Warden Service leadership team. There will be a formal swearing in ceremony soon, more details to follow."

Maine Warden Service Investigations CASE #1

Warden Milton and Warden Gormely had been aware of possible illegal activity occurring in their respective districts. One evening prior to rifle season Warden Milton and Warden Gormely responded to a night hunting complaint, where a landowner had observed hunters out in his field with flashlights. When they arrived, Warden Gormely learned that one of the suspects was a hunter who Warden Gormely had been actively working for the illegal activity. Wardens Milton and Gormely responded and combed the area for

evidence and documented the scene.

They recognized, that although there was sufficient evidence to charge and potentially prosecute the involved parties, this was not an isolated occurrence and was likely a much more serious pattern of illegal hunting activity that had serious potential ramifications for local wildlife. Wardens Milton and Gormely chose to investigate further to show the magnitude and frequency of the illegal activity that was occurring. The Wardens determined this course of action knowing that it would require them to dedicate significant time and effort, with no guarantees of developing further incriminating evidence.

During the next three months, Wardens Milton and Gormely developed an immense amount of information and evidence through reviewing tagging records, surveillance, walking hunting areas, speaking with people in the community and proactively working night hunting activity. Wardens Gormely and Milton worked with Investigator Buuck, multiple area Wardens, and the District Attorney's Office to accomplish the investigative steps needed.

While continuing to work these hunters for ongoing illegal night hunting activity in the area of the suspect's residence, they observed a vehicle in the back of a field after dark. Upon further investigation, they learned that several of the individuals who had been involved in the illegal hunting crimes, were in the woods looking for a deer that had been shot. Because they were carrying crossbows and lights after dark, they were interviewed and charged with night hunting, but the case was far from over.

Wardens Milton and Gormely continued to put together interviews and gather evidence to include cell phone information. This culminated in the drafting and execution of a search warrant, for two residences during early November and an additional search warrant for digital evidence. The search warrants resulted in the collection of multiple deer and the issuance of approximately 45 summonses to three individuals to include five counts of exceeding the bag limit on deer and five counts of night hunting.

The summonses were issued to four different courts due to the violations being committed in four separate counties. Their thorough and diligent investigation enabled Wardens Milton and Gormely to accurately piece together the required information needed to charge these hunters for their actions in the appropriate courts. The ripple effect of this case will undoubtedly cause other violators in the area to look over their

Region 7 Director Kris MacCabe Continued

shoulders as they wonder if these two wardens are on to them as well.



Case#2

In September of 2025, Game Warden Corporal Tony Gray received information about alleged illegal snagging of landlocked salmon in the Crooked River in Oxford County. Cpl. Gray interviewed the complainant about the reported activity, and he learned that multiple individuals were illegally catching native landlocked salmon by snagging in a fly fishing only river. The information indicated that they were far exceeding the bag limit, as well.

Game Warden Mike Pierre learned of the information from Cpl. Gray, and he began conducting reconnaissance along the river to determine where the activity was likely occurring. The Crooked River is an essential spawning habitat for landlocked salmon that live in Sebago Lake. Salmon are incredibly vulnerable to exploitation during the fall when they often stage in shallow pools during their spawning run. Warden Pierre has spent years, and countless hours, learning the river and protecting its resources. Warden Pierre regularly walks into remote pools, and places and moves cameras based on where the salmon move to ensure that the resource is protected. Because of his extensive knowledge of the river, Warden Pierre identified a pool along the river that held a large number of salmon and that lined up with the information received from the complainant.

Warden Pierre and Corporal Gray then began conducting surveillance on this pool in order to catch the fish poachers in the act of snagging salmon. Both Wardens spent hours watching the pool, with no sign of the violators. Conducting multiple days of surveillance is often monotonous and holds no guarantee of a successful apprehension. Warden Gray and Warden Pierre work in districts that can have high complaint loads, and that makes the commitment to surveillance all the more challenging.

Finally, on October 4, 2025, Corporal Gray was observing this pool when two individuals walked down to the river and began attempting to snag fish. When the men began to pack up to leave, Corporal Gray confronted them and seized their fishing equipment, which was rigged with treble hooks for snagging fish. Subsequent interviews resulted in confessions from three different men who had been snagging landlocked salmon. Game wardens also gained permission to conduct a consent search of the freezer at the subjects' house, which resulted in the seizure of 15 frozen salmon fillets and 1 large whole salmon. 8 salmon fillets were obtained from another subject. One of the three men admitted to catching and killing 30-40 salmon, primarily through snagging, while another admitted to snagging and killing 8-10 salmon, all of which were between 21 and 26 inches long.

The three suspects were charged with eleven different violations, including fishing by snagging, closed season fishing, exceeding the bag limit for landlocked salmon, fishing without a license, and fishing with artificial lures in a fly fishing only water.



The Maine Warden Service Association is excited to announce that it will once again be hosting the Summer Field Days this year in August. This is a great time before the kick off of a busy fall for Wardens to network and enjoy a lobster or two.

Region 7 Director Kris MacCabe Continued

Maine Warden Service Association Field Day 2026
August 17, 18, & 19

Welcome all current and retired Conservation
Location: Bog Brook Training Site in, Gilead, ME
Please RSVP for Game Warden Meagan Seeley Meagan.a.seeley@maine.gov

8/17/26

3:00 – 5:00 arrival / check in. Move into bunks

8/18/26

Training Portion (Progressive and Alternative Training for Helping Heros (PATHH))

Lunch (Lobster bake, BBQ)

Field games / antler toss

Dinner (Pig Roast, BBQ)

MWSA Raffle Drawings / Field Games awards

8/19/26

Checkout by 9 AM

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission- J Rep Matt Visosky

The PA Fish and Boat Commission, Bureau of Law Enforcement currently has the 27th Waterways Conservation Officer Class in training with a total of 9 cadets. The field districts currently have 13 vacancies, so one they graduate in July we'll still have open districts.

The NW and SW Region BLE staffs have started the planning for moving of patrol boats a little earlier this spring. This is due to patrol obligations during the 2027 NFL Draft being held in Pittsburg in April.

The PFBC and PGC have entered into a joint study of manpower to see if the commissions can combine manpower or bureaus to reduce redundancy.

The host Erie district of the 2025 NAWEOA Conference will be receiving in May a new 27ft patrol vessel from Lake Assault Boats in Wisconsin. This was made possible through a 450 Thousand Dollar grant from the feds.

I'll see everybody Omaha.

VERMONT WARDEN SERVICE- J Rep Dustin Circe

As winter transitions into spring, the Vermont Warden Service has remained busy across the state with a blend of enforcement, community outreach, and assisting our biologists. Wardens have been diligently patrolling for ice fishing and snowmobile compliance,

while also wrapping up several high-profile poaching and illegal trapping cases.

One poaching case included a complex, multi-year investigation into a poaching operation that began in Weathersfield in December 2025. The case involved 18 illegal Vermont deer taken over three years, and investigators also uncovered three deer poached in New York State. Warden David Lockerby officially submitted the extensive paperwork for this case in early March.



Some of the illegal deer seized during Warden Lockerby's investigation

Warden Justin Goodwin was the lead investigator in an illegal trapping case that involved twelve wardens. The investigation was complex, which involved hiking six miles through deep snow to document and secure 30 illegal snares, and extensive use of cellular trail cameras. The operation resulted in a male suspect being charged with 19 counts of snaring.

Beyond enforcement, the service has been active in the community, participating in recruitment events, presenting at the Yankee Sportsman's Classic, and participating in ice fishing festivals. As temperatures begin to rise, wardens are now shifting focus toward bear den checks with biologists and responding to an increasing number of wildlife calls regarding nuisance animals and public safety.

Connecticut Environmental Conservation Police- J Rep Bill Logiodice

Connecticut Environmental Conservation Police (EnCon) is in the process of selecting a new Colonel, after 5 years under the direction of Chris Lewis. Colonel Lewis accepted a director position with Alabama Fish and Game, we wish him the best there and thank him for his time and leadership. A process is currently underway to create a new hiring list to replace recent retirees.

EnCon continues moving forward with NASBLA ac-

Region 7 Director Kris MacCabe Continued

creditation requirements, completing inland boat operation training for all officers, and hosting a boating accident reconstruction course. The EnCon Police defensive tactics instructors assisted the Officer Survival Series cadre in teaching their class in January which allowed 6 officers to get seats in this course. The En-Con K-9 team graduated 3 new dogs in both basic tracking/man trailing training and fish and game detection.

Pennsylvania Game Commission- J Rep Rick Finnegan

The 37th Class of the Pennsylvania Game Commission's Ross Leffler School of Conservation graduated Jan. 31st 2026, adding 24 more officers to the ranks.

Graduate Katherine Nealen received the class award for academics, with a score of 94.74%.

Graduate Adam Beinhauer was presented with the EVOC driving award for exhibiting safe and exceptional police driving skills during the training program.

Graduate Michael Shatalov was honored with the marksmanship award, achieving the highest overall proficiency in a series of courses firing the handgun, rifle and shotgun.

Graduate David Kennedy was selected as the fitness award winner for maintaining the highest standard of physical fitness during the training program. Kennedy also was presented with a Life Saving Award for his actions on Oct. 18, 2025, while on field training assignment. Kennedy was part of a two-man team that was able to find and rescue a hiker who was experiencing a medical emergency on a remote section of the Appalachian Trail on State Game Lands 211.

Graduate Joshua Tanner earned the academy torch award for maintaining the highest professional standard of conduct, values, ideals and demonstrated abilities as judged by his fellow classmates.

Graduation of new game wardens follows 44 weeks of intensive training, including 10 weeks of field training.

“Every one of these graduates is embarking on a demanding journey and the beginning of a lifelong commitment to service, conservation and duty,” said Col. Richard Danley, Director of the Game Commission's Bureau of Wildlife Protection. “Becoming a Pennsylvania Game Warden is a calling to protect wildlife and to serve the people of Pennsylvania, even when the work is unseen, difficult, or dangerous.”

The 38th cadet class testing process is taking place now. Those who are fortunate enough to begin becoming a PA State Game Warden will be reporting to RLSC in April of 2027.

Awards:

For 2025, State Game Warden Jonathan Bowman was chosen for the Shakir Safari award, and State Game Warden Brooke Hargenrader was chosen for the NWTf Officer of the year award.

Warden Spencer Palczner was chosen for the Northeast Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs Officer of the Year.

Rhode Island Environmental Police- J Rep Sheila Paquette

Submitted by RI J-Rep Sgt. Sheila Paquette: RI Officers continue to train and become proficient in tactical operations and low light shooting with the Sig Sauer model P320 9mm with Romeo 1 Pro optics. Range training has included transitioning from pistol to long gun tactics. We also conducted some training with off duty weapons and carrying firearms while working undercover and various civilian clothing that could affect accuracy.

Members of our Agency have also been busy with training including a two-day Rescue Swimmer training that incorporated patrol vessel handling and working with Division rescue swimmers. Often it is a two-person patrol so that the operator and rescue swimmer work together but may not have conducted this type of patrol together. This training helped to better understand communication and close quarter maneuvers during rescue and search operations. Additional training included BUI refresher course, the NASBLA Comprehensive Boat Accident Course with GPS and the USCG Living Marine Resources School. Continual required trainings included mental health and Wellness for Police Officers and Bias based policing to round out our core curriculum. Our Vessel Specialist recently completed a full marine Systems Program through the International Yacht Restoration School (IYRS) Newport, RI and is now a ABYC certified marine technician. An in-house boat mechanic will be

Region 7 Director Kris MacCabe Continued

very helpful as we prepare for the upcoming boating season.



Rhode Island Officers also recently teamed up with Connecticut EnCon Officers and their bear biologists to attend bear denning and trapping training. A continued effort to defensive tactics and LOCK UP techniques include mat nights and trainings with multi officer arrest techniques, tactical take downs and officer survival in close combat. Our agency is at full complement now with 32 Sworn Officers and seven Civilian Communication System Operators. We had



no retirements this past year. Sadly, the RIEPOA

Chapter Eternal peacefully welcomed Retired Officer Gilbert Brownell this past year.

Last year an awards day was held in October to acknowledge many who received awards. NECLEA- Lt. Adam Hill, Shikar Safari- EPO Emily Ryan, NASBLA Award-EPO Anthony Esposito, Department Life Saving Award- Vessel Specialist Kyle Murray and EPO Bob Murtha, Outstanding Collaboration Award - Dispatcher Valerie Jencks Vessel Specialist Kyle Murray, EPO Jacob Maione, EPO Kody Gordon, and Lt. Jeff Mercer Presenter: Sgt. Joshua Beuth, Lt. Jeff Mercer and Chief's Commendation – Dispatcher Valerie Jencks

Officers in RI respond to and investigate a variety of crimes and violations. These range from our work with the Joint Enforcement Agreement with NOAA, Arson, Solid Waste, Hunting, Fishing, and Boat accident investigation. To highlight a few this past year include:

When Officers boarded a vessel at Fort Adams, Newport their boarding revealed that three out of State residents were on board and upon further inspection for-eight tautog, and twenty-one black sea bass were located in a fish well. All but two of the fish were undersized. The vessel owner received two boating safety violations and was charged with four misdemeanors for fin fish violations. The boat owner paid over \$1000.00 in fines

An investigation into illegal deer hunting resulted with multiple search warrants that yielded evidence to show violations to hunting laws. The hunter was charged with Written Permission required, Failure to report deer harvest, Unlawful possession of deer and four counts of ensnaring, enticing or baiting deer. The hunter paid over \$600 in fines and forfeited his bow, deer stand, and Trophy mount deer.

A waterfowl rallying case was made involving two subjects who continued to shoot at black ducks. State and Federal charges were brought to the two subjects involved and their weapons seized. The subjects charged settled the case with no trial.

A Joint task force including the Division of Law Enforcement and the Federal Office of Inspector General and Federal Department of Labor culminated with a construction company and employee charged with operating a solid waste facility and lying to public officials as they allegedly disposed of contaminated solid waste and debris in and along the highways of the

Region 7 Director Kris MacCabe Continued

state. This first criminal cases of its kind in this State, yielded a 10 million dollar settlement as well as \$250,000 to the RI DEM Emergency Response Fund. Space is still available as the RIEPOA chapter again hosts our annual Spring Sporting Clay Shoot at the Peacedale preserve May 3, 2026 with a pig roast dinner included. This is a sanctioned New England Regional event and we are welcoming teams and donations. There will be food, raffle, and good cheer. Please consider visiting our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/RI-Environmental-Police-Officers-Association-367752314079312/> for more information, to be a vendor/exhibitor and/or to donate email stoppoachingri@gmail.com . A portion of the proceeds go to IWC and Operation Game Thief as well as our Richard Coons Memorial Scholarship Fund.

Michigan- Game Warden Tim Rosochaki

Michigan has experienced an excellent winter season, with consistent snowfall and cold temperatures providing ample opportunities for patrols. Our conservation officers have made several noteworthy cases, including a recent jury verdict that resulted in jail time for a repeat offender who continued to ice fish while their privileges were revoked. Decisions like this are uncommon in our urban districts and have received positive statewide attention.

We are nearing the establishment of a dedicated statewide Search and Rescue team. This initiative has been in development for several years and is now becoming a reality. We look forward to the improvements this will bring as we continue adapting to the evolving needs of outdoor users across Michigan.

To support recruitment, we have introduced a one-week Cadet Academy that offers a preview of our 23-week paramilitary-style training program. This hands-on experience allows selected individuals ages 18 to 21 to spend five days training with our officers and other DNR divisions. The program has proven to be an effective tool for attracting high-quality applicants and engaging younger individuals who are not yet eligible to apply.

MCOA Officer of the Year:

Cpl. Troy VanGelderren has been recognized as the Michigan Conservation Officer Association's Officer of the Year. This peer-nominated and peer-selected award reflects his exceptional service and leadership. Cpl. VanGelderren serves as a boat captain for the Great Lakes Enforcement Unit based in Ludington on Lake Michigan and has been actively involved in MCOA for more than 17 years, including managing the "Fighting Fish Cops" hockey team. He also contributes to the department as a first aid instructor and both Advanced and Basic Marine instructor. He is highly respected for his expertise and humble professionalism.



Photo courtesy of Animal Planet

North American Game Warden Museum

Greetings from the North American Game Warden Museum, where we celebrate the game warden profession and honor the officers who have given their lives in the line of duty. A new summer season is quickly approaching. A summary of the events and topics that may interest you are listed below:

Museum Opening – The Museum will open on weekends only beginning on May 23rd. Our full-time schedule (open 6 days/week, closed Tuesdays) will begin on June 17th and run through September 7th. We will re-open on September 11th to recognize the 25th anniversary of the World Trade Center terrorist attacks. For the full schedule, visit our website at <https://gamewardenmuseum.org/wp/>

Fallen Officer Memorial Ceremony - Our annual ceremony will be held on August 8th at 2pm CST at the museum. We will be streaming it live on our Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/gamewardenmuseum> The video will also be available to watch later.

North Dakota Moose Raffle – First prize is a North Dakota moose tag. This tag can be used by non-residents of North Dakota, making it a much sought after prize. Second prize is \$2000. Third, fourth and fifth prizes are all long guns. The drawing will take place on June 15th at 2pm CST. We will be streaming it live on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/gamewardenmuseum> For more information or to purchase tickets, contact Jon Tofte-land at us-treasurer@gamewardenmuseum.org

Visiting Officer Program – We are now accepting applications for the 2026 season! Information on this program is available on our website or by emailing Tom Caifa at vicepresident@gamewardenmuseum.org

Scholarship Program – Our scholarship program is now accepting applications for 2026. Information on this program is available on our website or by emailing Sheila Paquette at secretary@gamewardenmuseum.org

Manitoba Golf Tournament – Our annual golf tournament will be held on August 5th in LaSalle, Manitoba. All proceeds will benefit the North American

Game Warden Museum. For more information, go to our website or contact Jessica Avery at ca-treasurer@gamewardenmuseum.org

Fallen Officer Memorial Stones - Every game warden jurisdiction has a fallen officer memorial stone at the museum. Have you checked yours for any addition or corrections? If you would like to view your memorial stone, it can be seen on our website at: <https://gamewardenmuseum.org/wp/fallen-officer-memorial/>

Museum Exhibits – The museum is always looking for new exhibit items. We are particularly interested in case related seizures, uniforms, gear and “tools of the trade.” These items can be historical or current. Please help us showcase our profession! For more information, please contact our museum manager, Stephanie Lee, at: gamewardenmuseum@gmail.com

NAWEOA Torch Run – the 24th Annual 5K Torch Run/Walk will be held in Omaha, Nebraska as part of the 2026 NAWEOA Conference. All proceeds will benefit the North American Game Warden Museum. For more information, please visit the NAWEOA website or their conference Facebook page.

Museum Board Vacancies - Do you know someone who might be interested in joining the Museum Board of Directors? We currently have two US vacancies and one Canadian vacancy. For more information, please contact any of our board members. Our contact information is listed on the website at <https://gamewardenmuseum.org/wp/mesmerize/our-board-and-staff/> or you can send an email to gamewardenmuseum@gmail.com

As always, the Museum is here to educate the public and celebrate the natural resource protection work done by your officers. If you have any questions or if there is anything we can do for you, please let us know.

CONTACT US

Website: gamewardenmuseum.org

Email us at: gamewardenmuseum@gmail.com

Visit us on Facebook



North American Game Warden Museum

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North American Game Warden Museum



North American Game Warden Museum

Educating, Honoring and Celebrating Natural Resource Protection
www.gamewardenmuseum.org

Our 24th Annual Torch Run Needs Your Support!

Greetings Fellow Officers,

The 24th Annual NAWEOA 5K Torch Run/Walk will be held in Omaha, Nebraska as part of the NAWEOA Conference on Thursday, July 23rd, 2026. All proceeds from this event will benefit the North American Game Warden Museum. Once again, we are asking for your much-needed support.

As a donor, your association's name will appear on the front of the event t-shirt worn by all participants. The name of every conservation officer that has fallen in the line of duty since 1980 is memorialized on the back of the shirt. After the event, a meal is provided, and medals are presented to eight classes of participants.

If your association is interested in donating, please fill out the donation form and return it no later than June 10th. Your generous donation will help ensure the future of the museum and help us continue to honor those that have fallen in the line of duty.

Best Regards & Stay Safe

Thomas J. Caifa

Thomas Caifa, NYS Environmental Conservation Police
Vice President, North American Game Warden Museum



North American Game Warden Museum



24th Annual NAWEOA Torch Run Donation Form

Please mail this form & donation to:
Thomas Caifa
P. O. Box 26
Altamont, NY 12009

If you have any questions:
nygameprotector@gmail.com
or call me at (518) 424-0408

Make check or money order payable to: North American Game Warden Museum

*** You can now donate with **VENMO***** Search @NAGWM for our Venmo ID.

Name of Association/Individual: _____
(As desired to appear on t-shirt)

Contact Person: _____ Title: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State/Prov: _____ Zip Code: _____

E-Mail Address: _____ Phone# _____

Donation Amount: \$ _____

*Donations must be received prior to **June 10th** for donor name to be included on t-shirts*



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

NAWEOA Awards

N.A.W.E.O.A. believes deeply in recognizing the commitment of the wildlife law enforcement professional. The awards recognize people and agencies that have performed outstanding work, exemplary service to the public, or have contributed to wildlife law enforcement in other ways. Look at the award categories below and consider nominating your fellow officers for accomplishments. Submitting an award is easy. Go to NAWEOA.org and in the main menu under "Awards", is "Award Application". Click that link and you will be taken to the online Award Applications.

NA.W.E.O.A. OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARD

1. Must be a fully certified conservation officer in the state, province, territory, or country in which employed.
2. Must be a full time field officer, up to and including first line supervisors from the field in the last calendar year.
3. Both nominee and person submitting nomination must be a member of NAWEOA.
4. An officer whose character is beyond reproach.
5. An officer who is competent, knowledgeable and capable.
6. An officer who promotes wildlife law enforcement.
7. An officer who demonstrates professionalism in every facet of life.
8. The person submitting the nomination shall provide background material when submitting the nomination. Background material shall be in written narrative format, not exceeding 5 pages. Other supportive articles, certificates, awards, media coverage, etc. may be included with the nomination.
9. All nominations must be received by the Vice President of NAWEOA not later than April 1st each year. The successful officer will be notified by April 15th..

NAWEOA TORCH AWARD

Presented annually to an officer from each region, to encourage the professional development of recently appointed officers. The selection criteria are as follows:

Both nominating and nominated officers must be regular NAWEOA members.

Nominated officer must not have worked as a wildlife enforcement officer more than five years.

Must have demonstrated a genuine desire to protect the resource and develop professionally.

Must demonstrate exceptional ability and initiative in the performance of his or her duties, including public education.

Must be respected by his/her peers and the general public.

Nominations must be received by April 1st each year. Winners will be notified by April 15th.

Awards will be presented at annual conference; attendance encouraged but not mandatory.

OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD

Anyone who is eligible for regular or deputy membership may be nominated for this award. It is given for outstanding achievement or service in the field of Wildlife Law Enforcement, to NAWEOA executive or outgoing NAWEOA Directors. (Amended Winter 2003, West Palm Beach)

CERTIFICATE OF RETIREMENT

Anyone who is eligible for regular or deputy membership may be nominated for this award. It is given to honor years of service to the profession. This award is distributed on behalf of NAWEOA by regional reps and is not subject to executive review.

AWARD OF VALOUR

Anyone who is eligible for regular or deputy membership may be nominated for this award. It is given to the officer who performs a

NAWEOA Awards

heroic act, or risks or receives serious injury, in the line of duty in an attempt to protect him\herself or a member of the public from a dangerous situation or circumstance. It infers bravery in the face of adversity.

LIFESAVING AWARD

Anyone who is eligible to be a regular or deputy member of the association or anyone who is a member of the association may be nominated for this award. It is given for any act at any time which saves the life of another person. (Amended Winter 2003, West Palm Beach)

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

Anyone who in any way is helpful to the association and/or it's members may be nominated for this award. This includes, but is not limited to speakers, conference or workshop hosts, fundraisers, committee or special project members, citizens or politicians.

HONOURARY LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP

Anyone who has performed an extraordinary service to the association over a number of years may be nominated for this award. It is one of our most prestigious awards and may only be given in rare circumstances. Anyone who is eligible for regular membership in the association who receives this award shall maintain their voting privileges within the association.

K-9 AND HANDLER "LOYAL PARTNER AWARD"

Must be a fully certified conservation officer in the state, province, territory, or country in which employed.

Must be a full-time field officer, up to and including first line supervisors from the field in the last calendar year.

Both nominee and person submitting nomination must be a regular member of NAWEOA.

Three years minimum experience and active as a K-9 handler at time of nomination.

All nominations must be received by the Vice President of NAWEOA not later than April 1st each year. The successful officer will be notified by April 15th.

Both K-9 and handler must demonstrate exceptional ability and initiative in the performance of his or her duties.

Award will be presented at annual conference; attendance encouraged but not mandatory.



Winter Meeting Report

By James Zucchelli

The 2026 NAWEOA Executive Winter Meeting was held in Wilmington, Ohio at the Cowan Lake State Park office and facilities. Special appreciation to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and the Parks staff that hosted the Executive Board, providing space for a productive Executive Meeting. Great partnerships between the ODNR Wildlife Division and Parks Division in support for the upcoming conference was evident.



We cooked our own meals in the cabin which makes the meeting more enjoyable and less expensive. We all took turns helping in the kitchen and on the grill resulting in good food and great stories!

Unfortunately, the winter weather did not cooperate with us causing untimely flight delays/cancellations and unplanned hours, and nights in airports/airplanes and overall chaos for some members of the board. It took Vice President Chris Maier 2.5 days to get to Ohio from Saskatchewan and spent the night in Houston, Texas and almost was rerouted to Paris! Equally as unfortunate we missed Region 4 Director Sean Spencer who spent the night in an airplane only to have the flight cancelled with no reasonable chance to get to get to Ohio in a timely manner. Region 7 Director Kris MacCabe joined us virtually from Maine and Region 3 Director Shane Hellyer ended up with mandatory training being scheduled by his agency, so he was unable to attend. The attending board members, did persevere and as we were wrapping up on the 18th the sun finally came out and the wind and snow let off which allowed for smooth travels back to our home jurisdictions.

In summary we conducted 2.5 days of executive meetings and a 1/2 day tour with the 2027 NAWEOA Conference Hosting Committee.

Day one and two were spent in the boardroom going over the business side of running NAWEOA. Revenues/bylaws/hosting agreement/membership categories/Torch Run support/ IGW Magazine/ Fallen officer Fund/support for Wayne Saunders and the Wardens Watch podcast. Next, going through the financial records line by line with Secretary/Treasurer Steve Beltran and then producing a draft budget for 2026-2027 must be done meticulously and responsibly with thoughtful discussion on each point from all members of the Executive Board.



We received a breakdown of the 2026 conference planning progress from Nebraska Conservation Officers Association (NCOA) Host Chairman Alex Hasenauer who has his hands full running the conference, dealing with massive wildfires in the state, and to top it off he and his wife welcomed a baby the previous day! Meeting virtually from a spare closet at the hospital (now that's dedication) Alex went over the nuts and bolts of the conference and it will be a great grass roots game warden conference. The training will be next level with Echelon Front headlining the conference to get things rolling. All the standard events with a few small changes here and there to spice things up.

Day three we met in the morning and finished the

Winter Meeting Report

By James Zucchelli



business agenda and then after lunch we were met by the Ohio Hosting Committee members Chris Gilkey, Brian Bury, Jason Heller and Kirk Kiefer. We drove out to Sharonville, Ohio and toured the host hotel and conference center as well as the Torch Run and potential Warden Skills Event locations.

The NAWEOA membership is in great hands for 2027!

Ohio the heart of it all, definitely a great place to visit and great place to plan out the next years adventures for the North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association conference. Thanks to everyone that supported us and we look forward to supporting you in the future.

James ZUCHELLI

Notice of Bylaw Changes:

NORTH AMERICAN WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS ASSOCIATION FALLEN OFFICER MEMORIAL AND/OR COMPENSATION FUND CRITERIA - 20 - The North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association may recognize wildlife and fisheries law enforcement officers killed as a consequence of performing their duties. NAWEOA recognition may be monetary and/or commemorative, indicating solidarity within our profession and compassion toward family survivors for immediate relief.

ELIGIBILITY:

Also not included under this definition are deaths attributed to voluntary alcohol or controlled substance abuse, deaths caused by the intentional misconduct of the officer, deaths caused by the officer's intention to bring about his or her own death and deaths attributed to an officer performing his/her duty in a grossly negligent manner at time of death.

Fallen Officer Fund to include language for those lost to suicide for recognition at the annual memorial held at the summer conference less the immediate relief payment.

POLICY: COMPLIMENTARY CONFERENCE REGISTRATIONS AND RELATED Date in Force: (Summer conference, 2005, Penticton) The following persons will receive annual compensation from NAWEOA as duly noted:

3.1 NAWEOA merchandise chairman: annual basic conference registration paid by NAWEOA and \$500 towards fuel expenses to attend conference (Amended Winter 2009, Cambria, CA).

3.2 NAWEOA conference photographer: annual basic conference registration paid by NAWEOA and \$150 towards film and film processing costs.

3.3 NAWEOA patch chairman: annual basic conference registration paid by NAWEOA.

3.4 Officer of the Year: Basic conference registration and up to \$1,500 travel and accommodation to attend NAWEOA conference. (Beginning 2023 Amended Winter 2022, Utah)

Policy Updates

3.5 Officer exchange winners (2): Basic conference registration paid by NAWEOA towards conference in year following their win.

3.6 Conference chairman of preceding conference (if required by Host Agreement – Host Responsibilities #1) and NAWEOA executive, as per travel policy.

3.7 Families of fallen officers will be provided \$500 towards conference expenses (i.e., hotel, travel), plus one paid conference registration for the conference when their family member is being honoured. The monies will be paid to the family member in attendance closest to the fallen officer, once receipts are provided to the NAWEOA Sec-Treas. This does not prohibit conference hosts from assisting (eg: waiving conference registration fees).

3.8 Torch award recipients will be reimbursed for the conference registration fee if they attend the - 33 - conference to receive their award during the same year in which it was presented. (Adopted at 2013 Winter Meeting @ Reno, NV)

3.9 JRep of the Year “Muddy Boots” Award will be reimbursed for the conference registration early bird fee if they attend the conference to receive their award during the same year in which it was presented. (Adopted at 2019 Winter Meeting, Waverly, TN)

Section Change 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6 and 3.8 to allow for early bird registration and update 3.7 from one registration to four for the family.

9. When a selected officer enters into an agreement with NAWEOA, the association will pay up to \$1500.00 in the currency of the Officer’s country of residence to be used toward the travel and accommodation expense incurred by that individual, upon submission of receipts. (Beginning 2023, Amended 2022 Winter, Utah)

Officer Exchange payout \$1,000.00 reimbursement for first year trip and \$500.00 reimbursed for attending the next year’s conference for presentation. Registration reimbursement unchanged.

Associate Membership Dues: **Increase Associate yearly membership fee to \$50 and Associate or Affiliated Organization Memberships to \$50 and eliminate the lifetime Associate or Affiliated Organization Membership.**

Conference Hosting Agreement: Edited

IGW Magazine: Group membership subscription and back issue increases. **Increased to \$21.00 per person and \$10.00.**