



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Division of Enforcement

2014 ANNUAL REPORT

Conservation Officer



2014 Conservation Officer of the Year Scott Staples of Carleton with Colonel Ken Soring, DNR Enforcement director

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Page 2	Table of contents
Page 3	Message from Director
Page 4-7	Division operational achievements, accolades & remembrance
Page 7-8	Thin green line at work
Page 9	High profile investigations net violators
Page 9	Training today for tomorrow
Page 9-10	Statistical accomplishments
Page 11	Close

General Information

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR)-Division of Enforcement currently employs approximately 200 licensed peace officers to serve the public and protect the natural resources of the State of Minnesota. They are supported by a staff of 30 employees. The Division has its headquarters in St. Paul where it operates 18 law enforcement districts throughout the state.

The DNR Division of Enforcement is the primary law enforcement agency within the State of Minnesota responsible for natural resources and recreational law enforcement. The Division staff provides regulatory, educational and informational services to a substantial clientele, including hunters, anglers, and motorized recreational users.

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



It is with great pleasure that I present the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources – Division of Enforcement 2014 Annual Report. The report highlights the work of all our licensed and support staff who work so hard to provide quality natural resources law enforcement services to the people of Minnesota. I am continually impressed with the professionalism of our employees and the support we receive from Gov. Dayton, our elected officials, DNR leadership and staff, stakeholder groups, volunteer safety instructors, and friends from the public. This partnership is critical in making Minnesota's outdoors safe and sustainable.

Please give us some of your time to read what we have provided to you in this report. I think you will be pleased and proud of what your DNR Division of Enforcement is doing for people and Minnesota's natural resources.

Lastly, I speak for the Division in thanking all of you across the state for supporting the efforts of your DNR Conservation Officers.

Yours in Conservation,

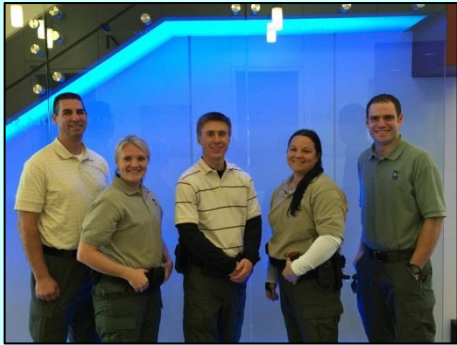
Col. Ken Soring, DNR Enforcement Director

Division operational achievements, accolades & remembrance

Division Strategic Plan. The division's Strategic Planning Committee has outlined four major goals, 15 two-year strategies and 13 key actions per goal to ultimately provide better service delivery to the public. The 10 year plan (2015-2025) would also be tied to developing more flexibility in securing natural resources funding of division operations ranging from ATVs to water recreation, as well as emerging issues such as AIS, groundwater management, and silica sand. The Strategic Plan, when completed in early 2015, will mesh the division's link to Minnesota's quality of life and economy with the department's strategic plan "Conservation That Works."

Records Management System. Enforcement is now connected to the Law Enforcement Technology Group (LETG) test system for the DNR Enforcement Records Management System (RMS). The system will provide officers in the field real-time data to help with their work. It's currently being used in over 200 law enforcement agencies in Minnesota. The system is currently being tested by a few Officers with full implementation expected by early 2015.

CO Prep training underway. Jamie Gangaware, Mike Krauel, Tom Popsun, Trent Seamans, and Leah Weyandt have been selected to participate in the DNR's CO Prep program.



CO Prep is a legislatively funded initiative aimed at increasing diversity in Conservation Officer ranks. The candidates possess a four-year degree and are attending Hennepin Technical College through April 2015 to complete the Minnesota Peace Officer License requirements to become a conservation officer (CO).

Upon completion of their studies CO Prep participants will attend the 12 week Conservation Officer Academy at Camp Ripley.

CO Prep candidates (L-R): Tom Popsun, Leah Weyandt, Trent Seamans, Jamie Gangaware, Mike Krauel

CO Prep profiles:

Tom Popsun has worked for the DNR the past 4-and-a-half years, in the Region 3 Scientific and Nature Resources, as a laborer.

Leah Weyandt is an 8-and-a-half year employee with the DNR and most recently has worked as the Lake Survey Specialist in the East Metro Fisheries office.

Trent Seamans has held various positions in food services, carpentry, environmental education, wildlife rehabilitation, and natural resource data collection.

Jamie Gangaware started with the DNR over 11 years ago. She is the Assistant Area Wildlife Manager at the Forest Lake Wildlife office.

Michael Krauel has worked for the division of Parks and Trails for the last 4-and-a-half years in a variety of different positions.

Ten new conservation officers begin their initial field assignments. The new officers and their field stations are:

(Front, L-R) Nick Klehr, Litchfield; Beau Shroyer, Remer; Chelsie Leuthardt, Prior Lake; Hannah Cowden, Warroad #2; Marc Hopkins, Tower.

(Back, L-R) Eric Benjamin, Warroad #1; Bill Landmark, Moorhead; Jim Van Asch, International Falls #2; Nick Prachar, Baudette #1; Joe Kulhanek; Hastings



Staff Achievements. Per usual, the accolades piled up in the Division. These are just a few of the highlights, reminding us all why it's pretty awesome to work for the DNR

- CO Scott Staples – 2014 Conservation Officer of the Year
- CO Pat McGowan – 2014 B&W Officer of the Year
- CO Jeff Denz – 2014 Waterfowl Enforcement Achievement Award
- 1LT Jackie Glaser – 2014 Willard Munger Wetland Achievement Award
- CO Scott Fritz – 2014 Enforcement Education Achievement Award
- CO Phil George of Rochester received TIP's Joe Alexander CO of the Year Award.
- Lt Col Rodmen Smith – DNR's Meritorious Service Award for his work on producing the Division of Enforcement's Record Management System (RMS).
- Division of Enforcement Lifesaving Award recipients – CO's Bret Grundmeier, Tony Musatov, Rick Reller, Todd Langevin, Jason Beckmann, Brandon McGaw
- CO Jeff Halverson was named the Minnesota Trapper's Association Conservation Officer of the Year.

Outstanding K9 achievements. CO Scott Staples and Lt. Julie Siems competed in the 2014 United States Police Canine Association National Detector Dog Trial that recently held in the Twins Cities. They performed extremely well. Siems scored 1st and Staples scored 2nd place in the Game Detector Dog category. The scoring in Game Detector is the same as the narcotics testing, except for the odors used. Using that as a guide, if Siems had competed against the 70 narcotics dogs, she would have tied for second place overall. Staples would have tied for 8th place. Siems and K-9 Brady certified in Zebra Mussels and Game. Staples and K-9 Schody certified in Game and Fish. Their high performance is a testament to their excellence and commitment to the DNR K-9 program. Nice Work! (K9 Brady & Siems; Staples & K9 Schody, file photos)



Humphrey School recognizes DNR's K-9 program. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) zebra mussel detection dogs program received a State Innovation Award from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs. State Innovation Awards celebrate the creative work and projects of Minnesota state government.

"Excellent recognition of the program and efforts of our employees to take the initiative to make a difference," said Colonel Ken Soring, DNR Enforcement director. Minnesota is the second state in the U.S. to deploy dogs for the purpose of stopping the spread of AIS.

Of the ten overall winners, three received a professionally produced video to use to share the story of their work with others, including the DNR's zebra mussel detection dogs program. The videos will also be included in the Humphrey School's online repository of digital case studies.

Twin Cities area TV stations captured video of Lt. Julie Siems and zebra mussel detection dog, Brady, at the DNR's aquatic invasive species press event July 10 in Fridley



Personnel changes

- Captain Greg Salo was promoted to the rank of major and named the Division's operations manager.
- Captain Todd Kanieski was promoted to his current rank and named Region 3 manager.
- Lt. Shane Kirlin was promoted to captain and named the training and recruitment manager.
- Conservation Officer/Pilot Tom Buker is the Division's new chief pilot. He had been the acting chief pilot since Oct. 2013. Buker assumed the permanent position and was promoted to captain.
- Six conservation officers were promoted to first lieutenant and district supervisor: CO Larry Francis, District 4 (Park Rapids area); CO Robert Gorecki, District 10 (Mille Lacs Lake area); CO Mike Martin, District 12 (Cambridge area); CO Jackie Glaser, District 13 (West Metro area); CO Gary Nordseth, District 15 (Marshall area); and CO Jason Beckmann, District 17 (Mankato area).
- CO Bob Geving accepted the southern pilot position permanently and promoted to first lieutenant.
- CO Alex Gutierrez was named acting captain and admin manager.
- Regional Training Officer Jon Paurus was named acting captain and safety program coordinator.
- CO Kevin Neitzke was named acting second lieutenant and Southwest Metro Regional Training Officer.
- CO Jeff Halverson was named the Minnesota Trapper's Association Conservation Officer of the Year.

Retirements. Retiring July 15, 2014 were Maj. Phil Meier and Capt. Mike Hammer. Meier began his career with DNR Fisheries in 1976 before becoming a conservation officer in 1990. Captain Hammer became a CO in 1985.

1st Lt. Joe Frear began his CO career in 1983. He retired July 29, 2014, while 1st Lt. Joel Mikle retired Sep. 4, 2014. Mikle became a conservation officer in 1988.

After 26 years with the DNR, Roxy Bouc, Academy/Training Support, retired on Oct. 1, 2014. Officer Tony Arhart retired Nov. 4, 2014, after 23 years with DNR Enforcement. Green lights and blue skies to all on a job well done!

In remembrance. Cindy Heinen, 55, I.T. business administrator for the Division, passed away Monday, April 21, 2014, after battling cancer. Cindy worked for the State of Minnesota and the Division of Enforcement for 19 years.

Bev Auger, Central Office Administrative Support, passed away Friday, Dec. 5, 2014 at age 57, after losing a battle with cancer. Bev had worked for the Enforcement Division since 1988.

Peace Officers Memorial Day. The Division participated in the laying of two wreaths at the



Minnesota Law Enforcement Memorial on the State Capitol Grounds on Thursday, May 15, 2014.

Wreaths were laid in honor of Officer Russell Nelson who died in a plane crash on Sep. 28, 1975 and for Officer Marcus Whipps who was shot and killed in Waterville on July 12, 1940. Members of both families participated in the ceremony. The remembrance ceremony was a joint undertaking by the DNR and the Minnesota Conservation Officers Association. *Photo: (L-R) Connie and Wayne Whipps with Jody Nelson. In the background is retired DNR Enforcement Chief Col. Mike Hamm)*



CO's on target. For the 12th consecutive year, the DNR Pistol team brought home the Warden's Jug team trophy. The team in 2014 consisted of DNR conservation officers Aaron Kahre, Greg Oldakowski, Mitch Boyum, Thor Nelson, and Brent Ihnen. Two Minnesota Retired Wardens, Greg Abraham and Fred Peterson both attended as well. The awards were numerous this year:

- Mitch Boyum was the match winner for active Wardens.
- Greg Abraham was the match winner for the Retired Wardens (second year in a

row).

- Aaron Kahre won first place in the tactical course.
- Mitch and the two Greg's (Abraham and Oldakowski) took the top three in almost every other category.

Photo: (L-R) Fred Peterson, Mitch Boyum, Thor Nelson, Greg Oldakowski, Brent Ihnen, Aaron Kahre, Greg Abraham

The Thin Green Line at work

CO saves life. Late Feb. 20, CO Todd Langevin of Center City was contacted by the Chisago County Sheriff's Office to assist in locating a missing snowmobiler in the area of Center City.

The snowmobiler was a young woman in her early 20s who had left her parent's home that evening. As she rode on the snowmobile trails, her snowmobile became stuck in the increasing snow. She called 911 because she was unable to free the snowmobile and she did not know where she was at. Chisago County Dispatch was unable to locate her from the cell phone provider and was unable to make contact with her on her cell phone. Chisago County Deputies and North Branch Police Officers started looking for the woman. CO Langevin was called to assist.

CO Langevin loaded his snowmobile into his squad and started towards Center City. He began his search for the woman shortly after midnight on the snowmobile trail when he noticed a black object in a roadside ditch. The object was a snowmobile helmet. The Officer contacted Chisago County Dispatch that he had found a woman in the ditch buried up to her waist in snow and lying on her arms. He was unable to wake her, so he requested dispatch to start paramedics to the area. CO Langevin began pulling the woman from the ditch and was able to get her on to the road surface. At this time, a North Branch Police Officer arrived and verified the description of the woman. Langevin and the North Branch Officer placed the woman in the back seat of the North Branch squad where she started to wake up and speak. She stated she felt ill, but did not want medical attention. The woman was transported for medical care and evaluation.

Col. Ken Soring, DNR Enforcement director, wrote, "I couldn't be more proud of our outfit when I hear of this level of commitment and dedication!"

DNR conservation officers to the rescue. Several Boy Scouts became stranded after their canoes swamped in rough seas in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area and Wilderness on June 12. COs Marty Stage of Ely and Anthony Bermel of Babbitt were the first boat on scene and worked with the a US Forest Service (USFS) pilot and a Lake County deputy to retrieve two cold and soaked young Boy Scouts and their dad, while a Minnesota State Patrol helicopter crew rescued the two other adults from the same party.

Conditions were so rough that a large wave washed over the gunwale and sunk the CO's 16 foot boat at the shoreline as the victims were being loaded aboard. Undaunted, the COs recovered their swamped boat before completing the transport of the wet and waiting Boy Scouts to the island where the USFS was waiting to fly the group to the Ely hospital.

On June 16, with the sun setting, conservation officers rescued a father and son near Edgerton in southwest Minnesota.

The father and son were trying to move their cows to higher ground when they were caught in a flash flood. The two spent four hours in a tree before they were rescued by 1st Lt. Joel Mikle (now retired) and COs Jason Beckmann of Windom and Gary Nordseth of Worthington. It was challenging, since there was a strong current and the Officers had to break branches to get them out of the tree while maintaining the boat's position to rescue them.

In another incident on that date, the trio of conservation officers used a boat to assist with the rescue of a flood-stranded woman driving along Interstate 90 near the South Dakota border and a State Trooper that had come to her rescue.

"Conservation officers always stand ready to respond at a moment's notice," said Col. Ken Soring, DNR Enforcement director. "We have very highly trained and highly motivated conservation officers. I'm proud of their passion, professionalism and willingness to help regardless if it's at the local, state, or national level."



On the job at Lake Superior. The Marine Unit was the recipient of Federal task force funding for 2014 allowing more Officers to experience working the waters of Lake Superior.

Boating safety checks continue to make up a large portion of the summer weekend workload, but Officers responded to a fatal aircraft crash collecting evidence.

The Marine Unit continues to work commercial fishermen and charter captains as well as with multiple local, state and federal agencies.

A newer twenty three safe boat was used for water checks farther up the North Shore. AIS

work was also a priority for the Marine Unit over the open water months with multiple public access checks and visits to the area marinas with educational materials.

North Shore tributaries are worked during the spring fish run. Multiple checks take place of river anglers targeting rainbow trout. A smelt run still takes place and is worked on the area rivers. Due to the late spring most activities seemed to be delayed two to three weeks.

High profile investigation nets violators

The Division of Enforcement executed search warrants involving the illegal take, transport and/or possession of over limit(s) of walleye after an investigation documented numerous violations on Lake of the Woods. The investigation included activities of fishing guides and illegal bear guiding activity.

On Jan. 23, 2014, approximately 40 Minnesota conservation officers, acting upon substantial and credible information, executed search warrants and seized evidence to support 80 natural resources violations.

While this investigation documented disregard for laws designed to ensure conservation of sport fish, it also revealed most fishing and bear guides in the area followed the law, ensuring the protection of the resource.

Training today for tomorrow

In the past year the Recruitment and Training Unit provided 16 hours of Officer Training during annual in-service. This training included defensive tactics, firearms training, and realistic training scenarios. Nine hours of training was provided at the district level in the fall that covered firearms qualifications, defensive tactics, and issued weapon maintenance. The unit also coordinated district level law update training, and employee “right to know” training. Over 40 hours of instructor development training was also provided to the Division’s Use of Force Instructor team. The recruitment section coordinated three summer internships within the Division, answered around 200 requests for information on becoming a Conservation Officer. This section also conducted testing and interviews for the inaugural year of the CO Prep Program. *(Photo: Firearms qualification instructor, acting RTO Kevin Neitzke and CO Angela Londgren)*



Here’s a sampling of Division of Enforcement activities from Jan. 1, 2014 to Dec. 31, 2014:

- Issued 2,361 sport fishing citations & 3,581 warnings; 727 big game citations & 593 warnings; 197 small game citations & 262 warnings; 365 migratory waterfowl citations & 715 warnings.
- Issued 57 citations, 740 warnings, and 269 civil citations (that require a court appearance) for Aquatic Invasive Species violations.
- 1,080 TIP calls were referred to Officers with 236 arrests made. Rewards paid totaled \$5,275.
- Issued 459 snowmobile citations and 791 warnings.
- 687 ATV citations and 1,319 warnings were issued, as well as 24 civil citations.



- Total boat and water safety hours worked – 22,180 hours, resulting in 2,501 angling citations & 3,520 warnings; 610 boating citations & 2,125 warnings; and 49 Personal Watercraft (PWC) citations & 164 warnings.
- The Education Section issued 8,620 snowmobile safety certificates with 3,667 adults and 3,694 youths (85 percent) using a DNR issued CD to complete the training. Another 1,278 completed the training in a classroom. There were 3,749 students that completed ATV safety training.
- The DNR Enforcement Aviation Section flew 1,723 total hours last year for the DNR divisions of Enforcement (303), Wildlife (937), Fisheries (324), Forestry (149), and Others (10). Flights included wetland flights, waterfowl and large animal surveys, wolf telemetry, fingerling drops, creel surveys, and search and rescue missions.
- The Division of Enforcement, Special Investigations Unit (SIU), continues to assist conservation officers with statewide investigations involving complex criminal cases. SIU priorities include the illegal commercialization of Minnesota’s wildlife and/or habitual wildlife violators to prevent detrimental effects upon the state’s natural resources.
- SIU continues to respond to intelligence concerning emerging trends of illegal wildlife traffic and disseminate updates to field conservation officers. SIU is challenged to develop innovative enforcement strategies targeting unlawful entrepreneurs and their illicit activities through investigative methods.
- The Division public information officer (PIO) produced 52 editions of the **CO Weekly Report* for statewide news media distribution; 50 editions of the *Director’sNotes*, the Division’s internal newsletter; and four editions of the DNR Enforcement quarterly newsletter for DNR leadership and regional managers. Additionally, 75 ancillary products were produced, including news releases, talking points, fact sheets, graphics, media events, and PowerPoint presentations. Lastly, the PIO fielded 103 initial news media requests for information.
- The Education Section certified 24,540 firearms safety (FAS) certificates. A total of 9,017 students (2,996 youths/6,021 adults) or 36 percent of FAS students completed the course online.
- Enforcement focused on preventing the spread of invasive species into and within Minnesota. In 2014, Conservation Officers:
 - Worked 4,719 hours of invasive species enforcement resulting in 30,274 contacts for AIS education and enforcement.
 - Conducted 27 aquatic invasive species (AIS) check stations resulting in 117 hours of operation, 625 inspections and documenting a violation rate of 16.96 percent.



You can find your local conservation officer at <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/officerpatrolareas/index.html>

Or contact the Minnesota State Patrol or local DNR Office for the name and phone number of a Minnesota DNR Conservation Officer in your area.

***Conservation Officer Weekly Report.** The purpose of the Division of Enforcement weekly report is to promote the activities performed by Division of Enforcement personnel in protecting Minnesota's natural resources through effective law enforcement and education. Information is gathered from the Division's 18 districts as well as various subsections and compiled and edited by the Division public information officer. It's available online at:
http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/enforcement/co_report/index.html

DNR Information Center
651-296-6157 (Metro Area)
888-MINNDNR (646-6367) (MN Toll Free)
Turn In Poacher (TIP) Hotline 800-652-9093



Annual Report 2014
MNDNR Division of Enforcement

Director: Col. Ken Soring
Asst. Director: Lt. Col. Rodmen Smith
Operations Manager: Maj. Greg Salo
Operations Support Manager: Maj. Roger Tietz
Public Information Officer: Rich Sprouse