



Department of Natural Resources Fact Sheet



2012-2013 BIENNIAL BUDGET FACT SHEET Maintenance of Natural Resource Enforcement, Education, and Public Safety Expenditures: \$920,000 FY 2012 / \$2,565,000 FY 2013 (Game and Fish Fund, Natural Resources Fund)

It is needed because

Minnesota's conservation officers play a critical role in maintaining public safety, ensuring safe and enjoyable recreational experiences, and protecting the state's wealth of natural resources. The roles and responsibilities of conservation officers have expanded significantly over the past several decades. For instance, in addition to traditional game and fish enforcement, conservation officers are responsible for invasive species enforcement and education, safety education, water quality and pollution issues, motorized and non-motorized recreation enforcement, Wetlands Conservation Act enforcement, and enforcement of regulations for new hunting seasons. These expanded responsibilities related to public safety, recreational enforcement, and natural resource protection, require specialized training and skills.

Since 1940, approximately 140 community-based conservation officer stations, located throughout the state, ensure these public services are provided. However, current conservation officer field positions have declined by more than 10 percent due to retirements over the past three years, with additional retirements anticipated over the next two years. This initiative will enable the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to maintain the complement of conservation officers to safeguard public safety through education and enforcement (including regulating off-highway vehicle and watercraft operation and responding to natural disasters) and maintain the quality of the state's game and fish populations and other resources. This work has a direct impact on the economic health of the state and results in the creation and retention of tourism and outdoor recreation-related jobs.

Major program elements

This initiative would maintain existing public services by mitigating current losses to conservation officer

field stations. This initiative would enable the department to hire 20 conservation officers over the next two years, providing for increased protection of the state's natural assets and enabling the department to protect public safety and respond to ongoing violations and complaints.

Priority-setting

Conservation officer field positions will be filled based on resource availability, population levels, and public utilization levels.

Project locations

Project locations are statewide.

Key measures and outcomes

The funding provided by this initiative would restore the effectiveness of natural resource enforcement and public safety by maintaining existing enforcement levels. The current conservation officer to hunting and fishing license numbers sold ratio is 1:13,000. The nationwide average is 1:6,300.

Financial Implications (if appropriate)

- \$920,000 for FY 2012 (8 officers)
- \$2.56 million for FY 2013 (12 officers)
- \$2.4 million/year in ongoing costs

In addition, funds from the Peace Officers Training Account will be used to supplement the costs of the academies in FY 2012 and FY 2013.

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