

*Warden Madison Bryan on routine boat patrol
at Madeline island, August 2020.

Photo Credit: Matt Koshollek (DNR)




2020

Annual Report

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Law Enforcement



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CHIEF'S MESSAGE

2020 has truly demonstrated the importance of strong communication and the need to stay connected. As we reflect on 2020, this report is one tool available to us to connect with our valuable partners, stakeholders and members of the public in order to provide a glimpse into our activities, accomplishments and challenges over the past year.

It is with great pleasure I share with you a significant and monumental change for the Bureau of Law Enforcement (BLE).

During late 2020, the Bureau of Law Enforcement was reclassified to divisional status by Governor Evers and is now recognized as the Division of Public Safety and Resource Protection.

This recognition is no doubt due to the hard, dedicated and selfless work and commitment of our staff. Achieving divisional status has allowed the division to restructure to be better suited to provide customer service, as well as place the division structurally equivalent to the other state law enforcement organizations across the nation. In the report we may continue to refer to the Bureau of Law Enforcement since the majority of our work took place before the divisional classification took effect.

During 2020, so much of our division's direction was influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Citizens experienced the devastating impact of the pandemic on local, national and global levels. Employees within our division also felt the impacts, at home and in our work, which by its very nature is highly collaborative and interactive with the public. In our continued pledge to provide necessary services to the Wisconsin residents and visitors who are our customers, the division made adjustments to account for the individual safety of our personnel and members of the public with whom we interacted.

While our staff certainly experienced challenges alongside everyone else, it will be clear as you read this report that our staff faced those unprecedented challenges head-on, found solutions and continued to focus on our established goals of enhancing public safety and protecting natural resources and the rights of all users to enjoy them responsibly.

Many of our staff pivoted to assist with pandemic efforts by performing contact tracing, providing security at isolation centers or medical supply centers or by serving on the department's Incident Command Teams. While taking on these additional duties, our staff answered the public's call and represented the division with the utmost dedication and bravery. Despite every turn, our goal of ensuring public safety and protecting natural resources remained unwavering. I can't help but be amazed and grateful for the resilience our staff demonstrated and for their dedication to their mission to protect and serve.

Another impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 is that Wisconsinites ventured outdoors in record numbers. The agency experienced an increase in fishing licenses and many hunting licenses. We also observed record attendance levels within our state parks and recreational properties. Citizens across the nation took the opportunity to visit new places or try new activities for the first time, while others had more time to spend doing their favorite outdoor activities.



Chief Krueger's swearing-in ceremony, Jan. 9, 2020.
Photo Credit: DNR.

While the number of recreationists increased, the size of our division has not. This has placed a tremendous workload on our staff. More than ever, our staff heard the call for service from our public. As the pandemic continues into 2021 we expect to witness continued high use outdoor activity. Our division is focused on exploring new ways to educate and protect the public we serve. Given higher volume and higher need, we also continue to explore how we can use our resources most effectively to respond to these trends and meet the public demand for safe outdoor spaces.

Division staff were also requested by state and local law enforcement agencies to assist with keeping the peace during the civil unrest that took place across Wisconsin. Divisional staff deployed, demonstrated professionalism, courage and strength during this time, despite receiving threats and responding to several critical incidents in which their own safety was at risk. Across the division it is recognized the need to continue to collaborate and work closely with our public to continue to build upon the gifted trust the public has in our division. Our division will continue to explore increasing the diversity in our workforce, creating an inclusive work environment for all staff and ensuring the safety and inclusivity for all people who step outside to visit Wisconsin's beautiful natural resources.

It was indeed a challenging year. Yet when we asked our staff to assist calls for service concerning spending more time on our recreational properties, working on the COVID-19 front lines or ensuring public safety during civil unrest, our staff responded. Not only did they respond, they still kept to their mission and focused on accomplishing our strategic goals. Teams across the state collaborated and cooperated across regions and sections to offer their support. Employees found ways to adapt and respond to these new challenges.

In the following report you will see highlighted examples of this tremendous work which will re-enforce the following:

- A shared appreciation for the goals that unite us across the division and of our dedication to meeting those goals we thoughtfully put in place. While compiling this report, we felt it necessary to list each work unit (i.e., regions, sections and special teams) to give readers a sense of our organization and the scope and nature of our work, but we want to convey that all of us share the same mission, vision and values, and a shared sense of duty unites us.
- Confidence in our ability to adjust and adapt to the challenges of the day as they arise, while continuing to carry out our core responsibilities. 2020 was challenging, but again and again our team stepped up and met every challenge.
- We strive to provide the strongest return on investment to the public whom we serve, and we continue to look for ways to effectively meet expectations and build public trust. We acknowledge that, to be optimally effective, additional resources may be needed. We will continue to assess where additional funding or positions can be most effectively utilized and will advocate accordingly.

The Law Enforcement Management Team and I wish to thank the employees of the Division of Public Safety and Resource Protection and our citizens for your unwavering support of the work we do on behalf of this fine state.



Casey Krueger
Chief Conservation Warden

MISSION, VALUES, VISION

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources adopted the following mission, vision and values which inform the work done across the agency, including the Bureau of Law Enforcement.

OUR MISSION

WHO WE ARE • WHAT WE DO

To protect and enhance our natural resources:

- Our air, land and water.
- Our wildlife, fish and forests.
- And the ecosystems that sustain all life.

To provide a healthy, sustainable environment and a full range of outdoor opportunities.

To ensure the right of all people to use and enjoy these resources in their work and leisure.

To work with people to understand each other's views and to carry out the public will.

And in this partnership consider the future and generations to follow.

OUR CORE VALUES

HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO



Integrity



Collaboration



Customer Service



Professionalism



Respect

OUR VISION

WHAT WE ASPIRE TO BE

We **excel** at **protecting** and **managing** natural resources while **supporting** the economy and the well-being of our **citizenry**.

BUREAU OF LAW ENFORCEMENT'S STRATEGIC PLAN

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources – Bureau of Law Enforcement provides high quality law enforcement, public safety, environmental protection, resource protection, community outreach and recreational education services to all people who live, work and recreate in Wisconsin. Our staff make us capable, our partnerships make us strong and our commitment to the natural world makes us relevant to all.

By reflecting on the past, evaluating the present and exploring the future, we endeavor to guide enforcement efforts in a progressive, responsible and mindful way. While change and adaptation is essential, our timeless mission is protecting people and promoting, enhancing and passing on Wisconsin's natural resources to future generations.

THE BUREAU OF LAW ENFORCEMENT ESTABLISHED SIX OVERARCHING GOALS TO GUIDE US IN OUR MISSION.

GOAL 1

ENHANCE SAFETY, OPPORTUNITY AND ENJOYMENT

Enhance safety, opportunity and enjoyment of outdoor recreational experiences in Wisconsin.

Safety is our priority and the public deserves to have a safe and enjoyable experience while recreating in Wisconsin's outdoors. We will ensure, expand and promote access to our natural resources and the outdoor experience.

Additionally, we will promote understanding of the benefits to health, community and economy our natural resources provide. Through local partnerships with recreationists, organizations and businesses, we will identify and resolve issues.

Strategies:

- Promote recreation safety and enjoyment through education and enforcement initiatives.
- Provide quality recreational property law enforcement services to all visitors and partners.
- Promote increased outdoor participation by reducing or eliminating potential barriers to outdoor recreational activities.
- Increase awareness, promote acceptance and recognize the public participation in silent sports and provide these users safe and enjoyable opportunities.

In 2020, we accomplished this goal by:

- Targeted enforcement checks for ATV, UTV and boat safety on high use days and holiday weekends
- Deploying to high use properties to ensure public safety and an inclusive, enjoyable environment for all state park users during a year of record-breaking attendance.
- Making contact with recreationists at state parks, trails and forests, with traditional hunting and fishing participants, recreational vehicle users and silent sport enthusiasts.
- Investigating vehicle thefts in state parks and state natural areas, leading to numerous criminal convictions.
- Providing refresher training to wardens on sound level enforcement.

Enhance public safety by being ready to respond to emergencies and natural disasters.

We provide the highest quality law enforcement and public safety services. We are well trained and ready to respond with specialized equipment, skills and resources.

When the public needs us most, we are there to help.

Strategies:

- Rapidly deploy and support high-quality mission resources and capabilities to emergency events throughout our state and nation.
- Enhance mission expertise and emergency response preparedness through proper equipment acquisition, inventory maintenance and reality-based training to position staff for safe, qualified and efficient response to emergencies, disasters and planned events.
- Develop and maintain partnerships to ensure strategic, effective response to emergencies; enhance and expand information sharing with the public safety intelligence community; and foster interagency cooperation in support of homeland security and the prevention of terrorism.
- Provide comprehensive law enforcement services of the highest public safety standard to Wisconsin's citizens to encourage improved warden authority while supporting the role of local agencies as the lead law enforcement organizations in their communities.

In 2020, we accomplished this goal by:

- Providing emergency related to COVID-19 pandemic.
 - o Non-credentialed staff conducted contact tracing and supported DNR's Incident Management Team.
 - o Isolation center security coordination and duties.
 - o Medical equipment supply security duties.
 - o Adapting our guidance and procuring equipment to ensure warden staff could safely continue to serve the public during the pandemic.
- With local law enforcement in Kenosha, Madison and Milwaukee, ensuring the right of individuals to protest safely during protests in spring and summer of 2020. Conservation Wardens from across the state deployed to these areas to meet the request for additional law enforcement personnel.
- Recreational property enforcement at high use properties related to COVID-19 closures and general staffing needs.
- Responding to public safety rescues, floods, storm damage and other events.
- Investigating serious and fatal accidents involving recreational vehicles such as boats, ATVs, snowmobiles and UTVs.

Warden Audrey Royce and K9 partner Nyssa, based in Oneida County.



Photo Credit: DNR

GOAL 3

PROTECT HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Protect health and the environment through clean water, air, and land.

Protecting clean air, land, water and our overall environment is a critical part of maintaining human health, quality of life, national security and a successful business climate. Each and every person depends on healthy and accessible resources, and we serve as the protectors of those resources.

Strategies:

- Ensure compliance with environmental protection laws and minimize threats to public health and environmental risks through a combination of enforcement and education.
- Protect our environment by working with partners, and communicating the results of enforcement and clean-up priorities and efforts.
- Improve consistency, integration and use of technology in environmental enforcement.

In 2020, we accomplished this goal by:

- Ensuring clean air and water through environmental enforcement.
- Completing an investigation involving illegal storage and transportation of hazardous waste in northern and southeast Wisconsin, as well as Tennessee.
- Investigating violations including timber theft and illegal ginseng harvest.
- Developed a compliance agreement with a central Wisconsin landfill site.

GOAL 4

MAINTAIN HEALTHY AND DIVERSE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Maintain healthy and diverse fish and wildlife populations and habitats.

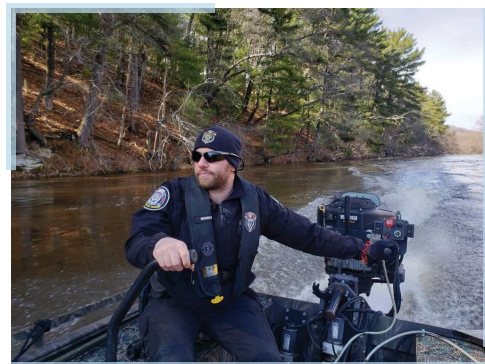
We value the fish, wildlife and habitat resources that make Wisconsin so unique. We believe everyone should be able to enjoy Wisconsin's outdoors, and understand these resources enhance quality of life and contribute to everyone's individual happiness. Our staff are stewards to the natural world. We educate the public about important issues surrounding plants, fish and wildlife, and use law enforcement as a tool to ensure people are using those resources wisely, fairly and sustainably.

Strategies:

- Protect Our Fish, Wildlife, and Natural Resources.
- Prioritize compliance and protection of commercialized natural resources.
- Prevent, control and manage invasive and exotic species, and fish and wildlife diseases.

In 2020, we accomplished this goal by:

- Monitoring commercial activity such as taxidermy by conducting audits and taking enforcement action when violations occurred.
- Completing an investigation into gamefish sales in northern Wisconsin.
- Investigating natural resource violations including illegal wildlife sales, poaching and endangered resources.



Warden Matt Groppi operating a shallow water vessel on the Black River.

Photo Credit: Meghan Jensen (DNR)

Lead by example in conservation and pass on the conservation ethic to future generations.

When citizens connect to the natural world, they are inspired to promote and defend a healthy environment, invest in conservation for the future, and lead happier, healthier lives. We are directly responsible for passing on the conservation ethic through our daily protection, education and community involvement work. We will share our skills, knowledge and passion with the next generation of outdoor recreationists and stewards.

Strategies:

- Increase participation in hunting, angling and shooting sports by youth, novices, families and culturally diverse communities.
- Foster appreciation for the value of our natural resources through increased availability of conservation and outdoor skills education and information.

In 2020, we accomplished this goal by:

- Continuing hunting educational talks when appropriate.
- Connecting through virtual platforms with students and community members to share safety, education and recruitment messages.
- Holding Angler R3 Instructor Training and Certification Workshops and Fishing for Dinner classes (in-person until COVID and then virtual).
- Increasing R3 outreach efforts to people from diverse communities to make new connections and develop interest in recreational activities among new users.



Warden Kyle Kosin seizing an illegal camera on state land, Pierce County.



Warden Wade Romberg with confiscated buck that was shot with a crossbow after hours with the aid of artificial light, also using illegal bait pile.

Photo Credit: Bystander.

GOAL 6

FULFILLING, LEADING, AND ADAPTING

Provide our people with fulfilling careers while leading, adapting and managing the organization to achieve our mission.

Our success relies on the trust of our staff and the public we serve. We will work tirelessly in our efforts to be the investment and employer of choice by seeking diverse, passionate and qualified staff, maintaining the highest of ethical standards and providing fulfilling careers. We believe in providing a trusting, safe, engaging and transparent work environment. We must be adaptive, forward-thinking, and collaborative. Thoughtfully forecasting, managing, communicating and evaluating change is how we best serve our staff and the public.

Strategies:

- Maintain and grow the public's trust in the Bureau of Law Enforcement and share why we are the "Investment of Choice".
- Retain, recruit, hire and train a diverse, satisfied and competent workforce.
- Ensure the Bureau of Law Enforcement communicates in a highly effective manner.
- Maximize efforts dedicated to enforcement, education, and community involvement by managing the budgetary needs of and utilizing technology in the Bureau of Law Enforcement.

In 2020, we accomplished this goal by:

- Maintaining essential partnerships with other law enforcement agencies, District Attorney offices, community clubs and other organizations.
- Establishing connections with new and diverse community groups and leaders throughout the region to tell our story and listen to theirs.
- Welcomed new members to the BLE Recruitment Committee and developed and adopted new proactive strategies to recruit a more diverse workforce.
- Providing opportunities for our employees to serve on committees and advisory teams within and the department, such as DNR's Diversity Team, an advisory body to the Secretary's Office.
- Renewing the tradition of producing Bureau of Law Enforcement's Annual Report to share with our partners and the public.



Warden Meghan Jensen, Buffalo County. / Photo Credit: Matt Groppi (DNR)

2020 IN NUMBERS

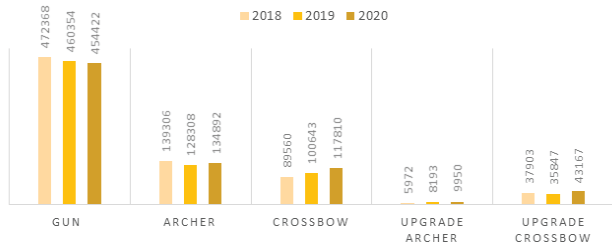
2020 saw a rise in outdoor recreation, including hunting, fishing, recreational vehicle use and state parks and trails usership, indicated by the numbers of licenses sold, vehicle registrations processed, park visitors counted, park and trail passes purchased and safety certifications achieved. With more participation, we also saw increases in calls for service, citations issued and safety incidents.

HUNTING AND FISHING

AN INCREASE IN INTEREST

- Mentored hunting licenses increased by 37% from 2019.
- Over 1.3 million fishing licenses sold in 2020. A 12% increase from 2019.

DEER HUNTING LICENSES PURCHASED:
2018-2020

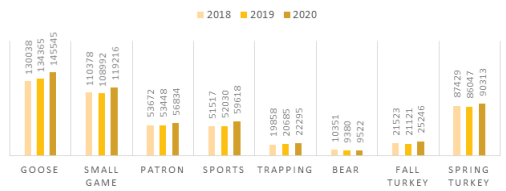


*Data from DNR Bureau of Customer & Outreach Services

With travel and indoor gatherings prohibited or discouraged for most of the year, many hunters and anglers found more time to enjoy their favorite pastimes or took part in hunting or fishing for the **very first time**. Experienced hunters shared their knowledge of the sport with new hunters, illustrated by a **37% increase** in mentored hunting licenses declared over 2019.

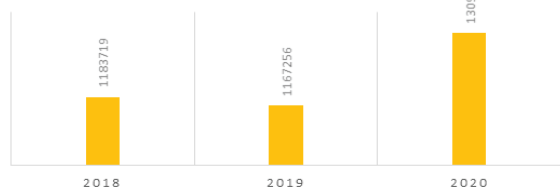
In general, there was an **increase** in hunting and trapping interest and participation, indicated by modest increases in all hunting license types over 2019 totals with the exceptions of gun deer and bear licenses. Fishing license sales saw a **large increase** from previous year totals, with a **12% increase** from 2019.

OTHER HUNTING LICENSES PURCHASED: 2018-2020



*Data from DNR Bureau of Customer & Outreach Services

FISHING LICENSES PURCHASED:
2018-2020

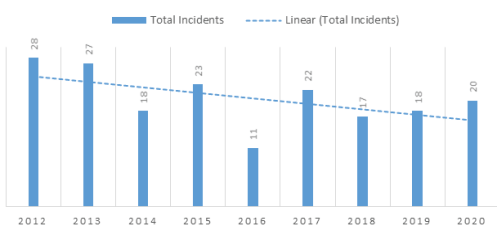


*Data from DNR Bureau of Customer & Outreach Services

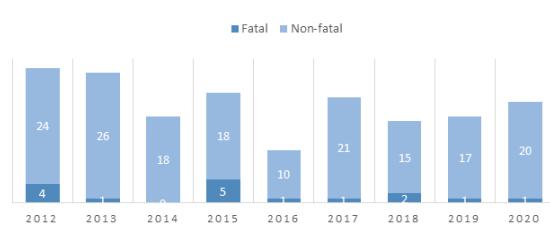
Increases in Wisconsin's license sales in 2020 are **consistent with other states** as well. With more people out engaged in hunting and fishing, including many first-time participants, **wardens made more contacts** and issued **more citations** than in 2018 or 2019.

In 2020 there was a total of **21 hunting incidents**, including one fatal incident. While the trend of hunting incidents continues downward, **BLE will continue to strive for zero incidents**.

TOTAL HUNTING INCIDENTS: TEN YEAR TREND



TOTAL HUNTING INCIDENTS: LAST TEN YEARS



Hunting incident synopses and hunter education annual reports are available at:
<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/hunt/incidentreport>

RECREATIONAL VEHICLES

AN INCREASE IN PARTICIPATION

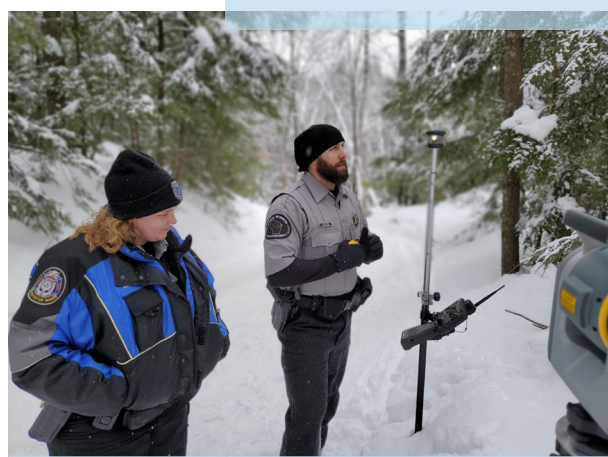
2020 also saw an increase in recreational vehicle participation and number of vehicle registrations.

- **28% more boats registered than 2019.**

The total number of recreational vehicle incidents, including fatal incidents, also increased.

The Bureau undertook an initiative called **"Think Smart Before You Start,"** a statewide effort in cooperation with the Wisconsin Department of Tourism and the Association of Snowmobile Clubs of Wisconsin to **promote safety** and increase proactive visibility patrols.

During one weekend, wardens made contact with over **1,500** snowmobilers, resulting in over **350 warnings, 48 citations issued** and **two arrests** for operating while intoxicated. **Zero snowmobile crashes** were reported during the event.



Reconstructing a fatal snowmobile crash with a Total Station device, Vilas County, Jan 27, 2020. Pictured are Recreational Warden Justin Bender and Officer in Training Annette Swaneck. Photo Credit: Chris Bartelt (DNR)

**Off-Highway Motorcycle (OHM)*

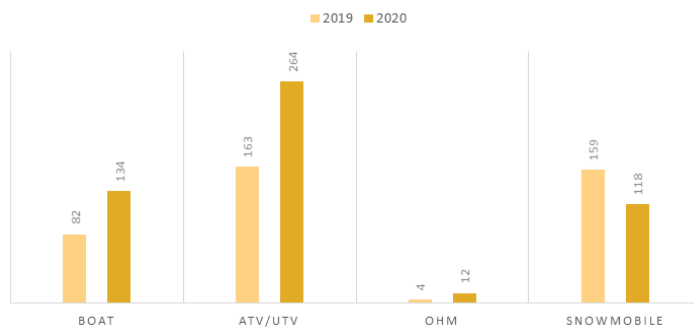
2020 Recreational Vehicle Incidents:

Non-Fatal
Fatal
Total Incidents

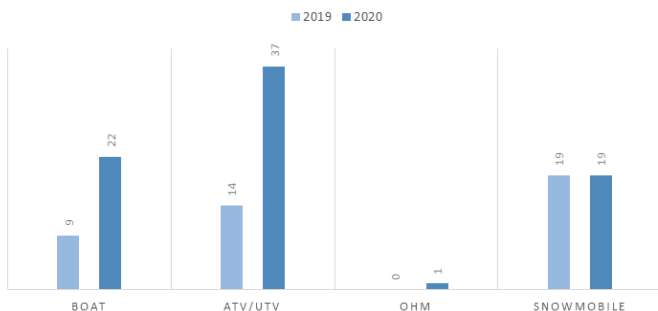
Boat	ATV/UTV	O.H.M.	Snowmobile	Totals
112	227	11	99	449
22	37	1	19	79
134	264	12	118	528

The total number of incidents increased by 29% over 2019, with almost double the number of fatalities. **Educating the public about recreational vehicle safety continues to be priority work.**

TOTAL RECREATIONAL VEHICLE INCIDENTS, 2019 AND 2020



FATAL RECREATIONAL VEHICLE INCIDENTS, 2019 AND 2020



More information on recreational vehicle statistics and trends can be found on the DNR's website (dnr.wi.gov).

2020 boating fatal accidents can be found at: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/Topic/Boat/CrashInfo>.

Since 2018, the Bureau of Law Enforcement has provided enforcement staffing at the DNR's highest-used properties, including the five most visited listed in the chart below and Governor Dodge, High Cliff, Kohler-Andrae State Parks and Northern Highland American Legion State Forest. Law enforcement services at other state properties are supplied regionally based on need, and 2020 saw additional need. BLE credentialed staff, along with our partners in the Parks & Recreation Management Bureau, worked hard to meet the demands for law enforcement and visitor services in an unprecedented year of high usership. An estimated **21 million visitors** came to Wisconsin's parks, state forests and trails, a **22% increase** over 2019. Most contacts with visitors were positive, but the parks and other properties experienced increased litter, vandalism, theft and other crimes.

Property	Attendance Estimates 2018	Attendance Estimates 2019	Attendance Estimates 2020	*Estimate based on camping numbers, vehicle counts, and other methods. Estimate methods may vary by property.
Devil's Lake State Park	2,483,136	2,233,061	2,146,333	
Willow River State Park	930,580	1,037,973	1,777,201	
Kettle Moraine State Forest - Northern Unit	551,892	587,990	1,612,864	
Peninsula State Park	1,153,585	1,164,974	1,364,879	
Kettle Moraine State Forest - Southern Unit	1,458,797	1,580,216	1,193,009	

Several state parks, forests and recreation areas, many of which are located in the south central and southeast parts of the state, were directed to close temporarily in April 2020 due to public safety concerns. Unprecedented attendance levels made social distancing and following other COVID-19 safety protocols all but impossible. The closing of the parks met resistance from the public, and in some cases led to small protests which increased the need for warden presence at the parks. Properties reopened on May 1, 2020 with capacity limits in place to limit overcrowding and allow for social distancing. The DNR has encouraged parkgoers to spread out to find new favorite parks and properties that perhaps have fewer visitors, in order to maintain safe attendance levels.

State Park and Forest Annual Admission Stickers

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
WI Resident Annual	158,070	170,650	183,082	188,531	192,290	199,670	286,970
WI Reduced Rate Annual	44,662	47,601	47,969	49,133	49,087	50,178	38,742
WI Senior Annual	36,243	40,583	43,273	46,518	48,877	53,185	78,572
Non-Resident Annual	33,671	35,998	35,734	36,672	40,280	43,458	103,162
Total Annual Stickers Sold	272,646	294,832	310,058	320,854	330,534	346,491	507,446

Related Press Releases:

- [Gov. Evers Directs DNR To Close 40 State Parks, Forests And Recreational Areas](#), | April 9, 2020.
- [Wisconsin State Parks and Forests to Reopen on May 1](#) | April 28, 2020.

- [Explore Wisconsin's Hidden Gems](#), | June 12, 2020.
- [Find Your Adventure, Go Wild in Wisconsin](#) | Aug. 21, 2020.

SAFETY EDUCATION

PROVIDING TRAINING AND RESOURCES

The Bureau of Law Enforcement's Recreational Safety & Outdoor Skills Section provides training and resources to an active volunteer instructor corps for ATV/UTV, Snowmobile, Boat and Hunter Education classes located throughout the state, which ensures that students don't have to travel far to attend a safety class.

The numbers of our volunteer instructors as of 2020 are:



Even with the pandemic, safety class participation in 2020 was higher than in the previous year (data from Dec. 14, 2020) in all safety classes, with the exception of snowmobile.

The greatest difference occurred in boat safety certifications, which coincides with the **28% increase** in boat registrations from 2019 to 2020.

TOTAL STUDENTS CERTIFIED: 2019 AND 2020

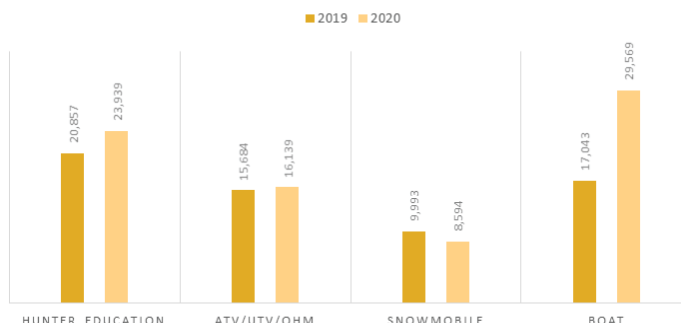


Photo Credit: Jake Bolks (DNR)

Warden Jaime McDermid confiscating an illegally harvested buck; taken by crossbow from inside a UTV while on the roadway and was registered illegally.

Safety Warden Jason Roberts patrolling by snowmobile in Walworth County.

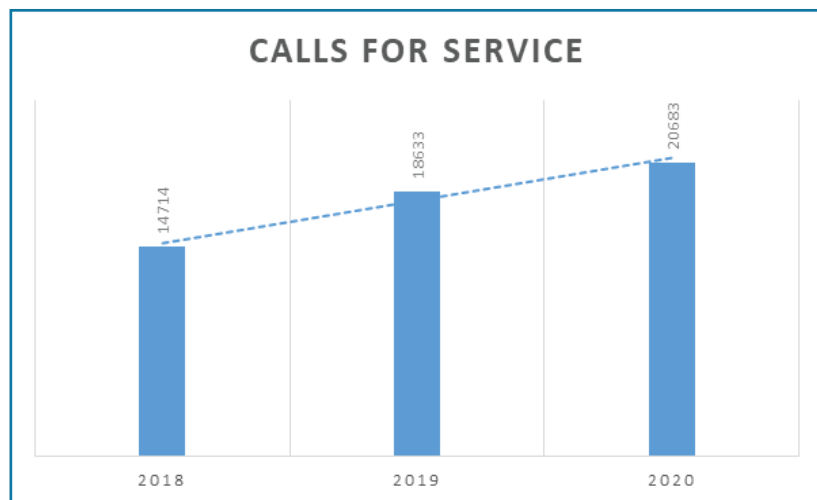


Photo Credit: Matt Groppi (DNR)

CALLS FOR SERVICE

INCREASE IN REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

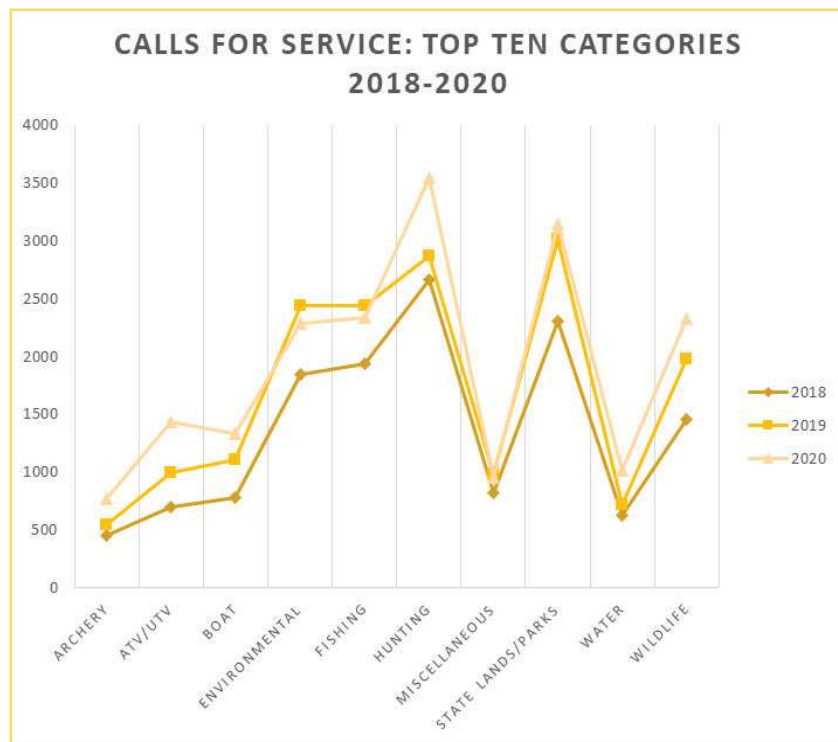
Calls for service are instances of contact by the public with complaints or requests for assistance, generated either by emails or calls to the DNR's tip line or emergency line, or are instances of wardens making direct, documentable contact with members of the public (it does not include each and every contact made by wardens with the public).



From 2018 to 2020 the number of total calls for service per year **increased** by about **40%**.

Increases in calls for service in 2020 compared to previous years can likely be attributed in part to the rise in outdoor recreation that occurred in response to the pandemic, though a larger increase in calls for service occurred between 2018 and 2019, indicating that the upward trend in calls for service may continue after the pandemic.

Of **54,030 calls for service** in the last three years (2018 through 2020), **over 90%** involved the ten categories listed in the chart below.



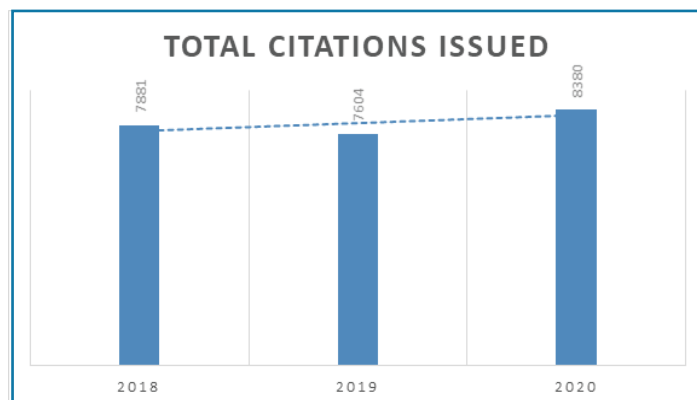
Other categories of calls for service that are not in the top ten include forestry, ginseng, Mission Ready Teams, pesticides, off-highway motorcycles and more.

Calls for service that fall under the miscellaneous category largely consist of assisting other agencies, general public safety (providing medical assistance or helping citizens in need, etc.), drugs and other enforcement issues usually unrelated to natural resources.

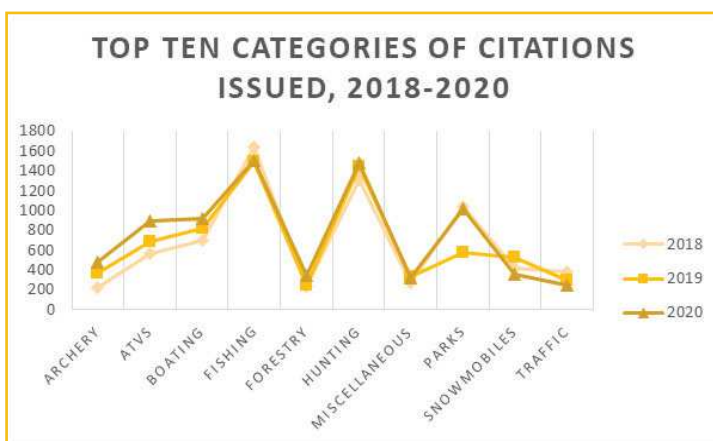
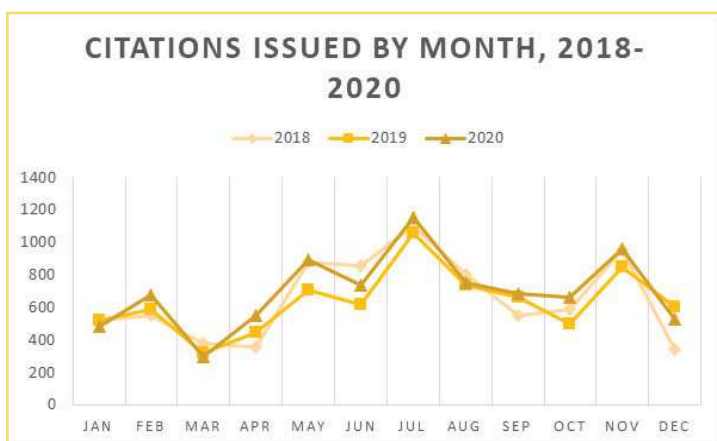
CITATIONS

The Bureau uses education and enforcement initiatives such as advertising to promote regulation compliance and recreation safety.

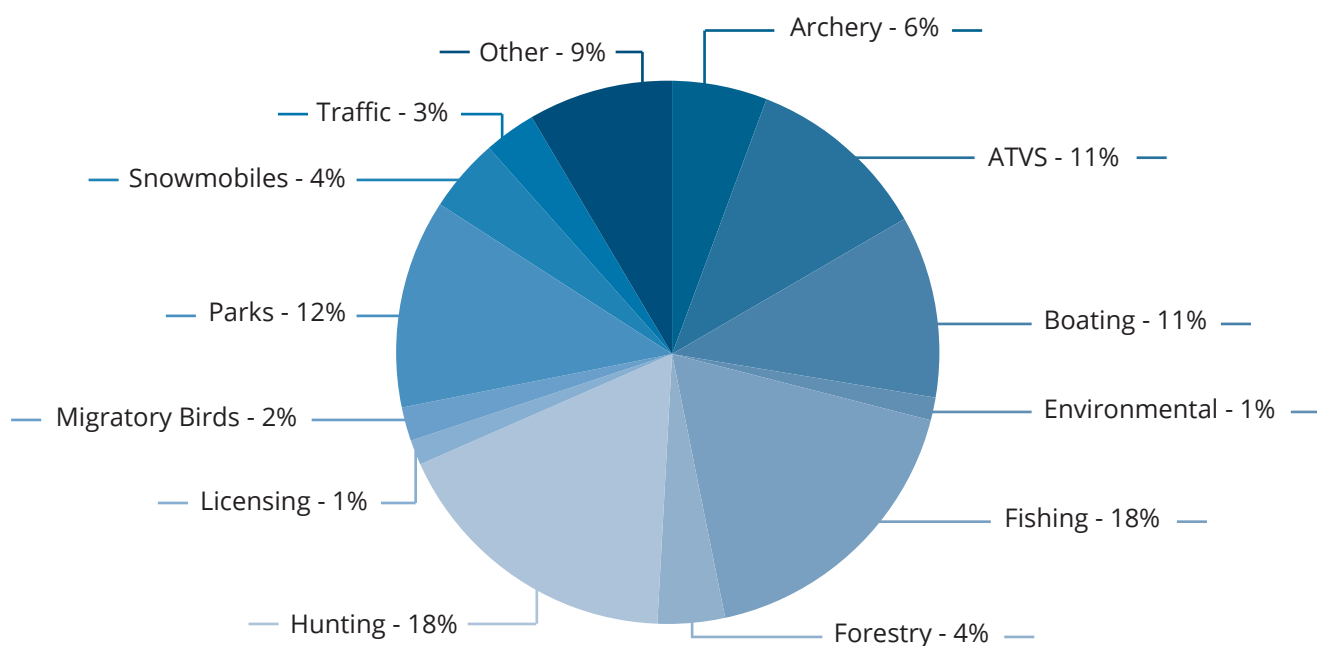
These are crucial tools for ensuring voluntary compliance as often as possible. When those efforts are not sufficient, citations are issued to recreationists who do not comply with natural resource laws and regulations.



In general, citations issued in 2020 followed trends similar to previous years in terms of number issued throughout the year and the purpose of issuance, though data indicates that more citations were issued in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic (April and May 2020) than were issued at the same time in the last two years.



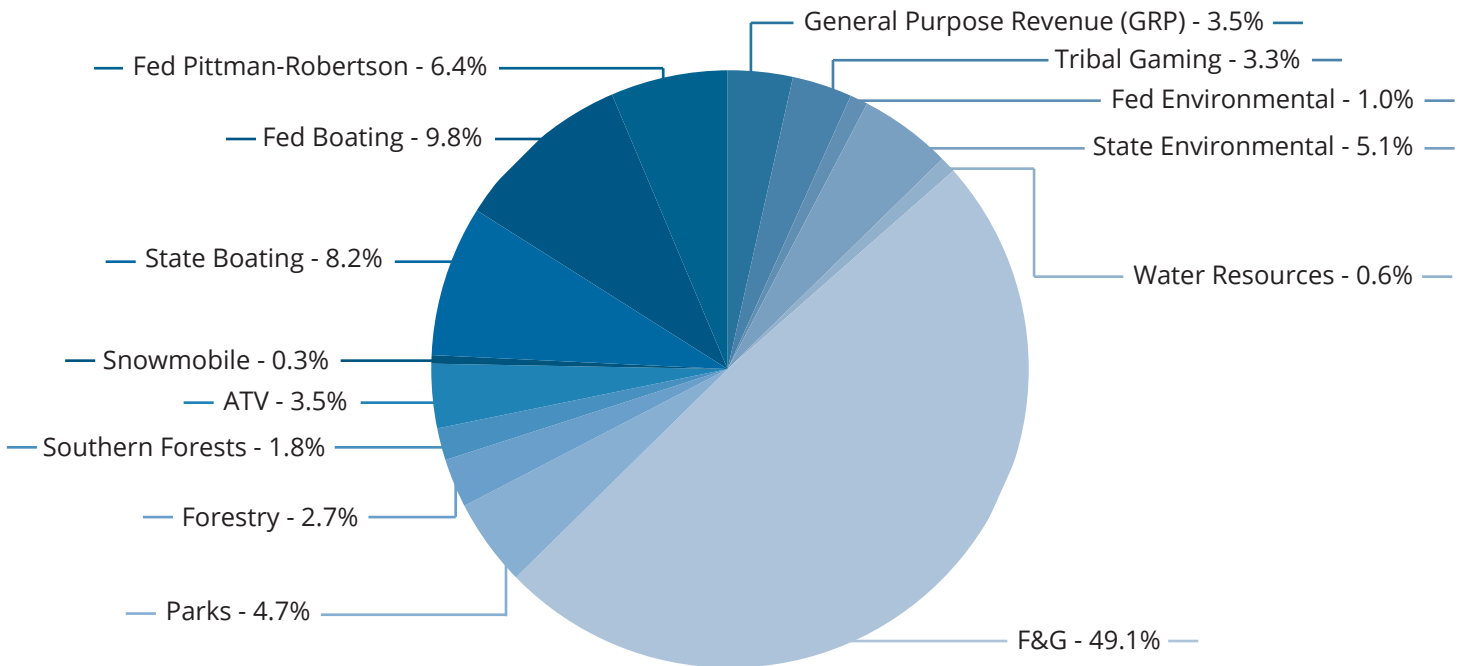
2020 Citations by Category:



BUDGET AND STAFFING

The Bureau of Law Enforcement's budget is comprised of several sources, including federal, state and tribal, with about half from fish and game license revenue.

Budget Funding Sources:



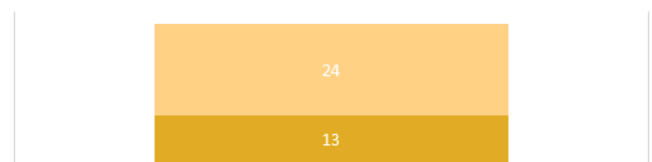
BUREAU STAFFING

As of January 2021, Law Enforcement has 231.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions which are filled, made up of 205 credentialed and 26.5 non-credentialed positions, in addition to 37 limited-term employees (LTEs).

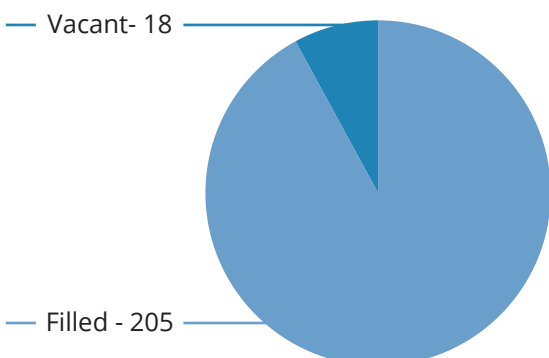
- An additional 26.33 positions are vacant.

FILLED LIMITED-TERM EMPLOYEE (LTE) POSITIONS

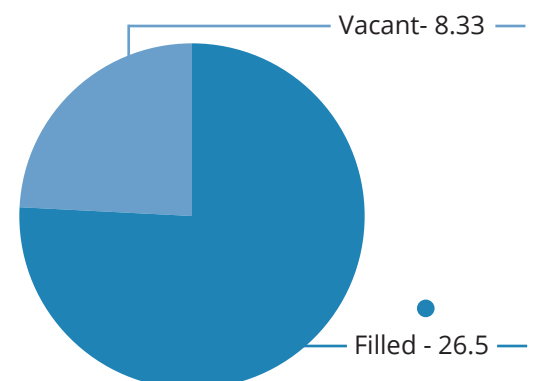
■ Credentialed ■ Non-credentialed



Credentialed Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Positions:



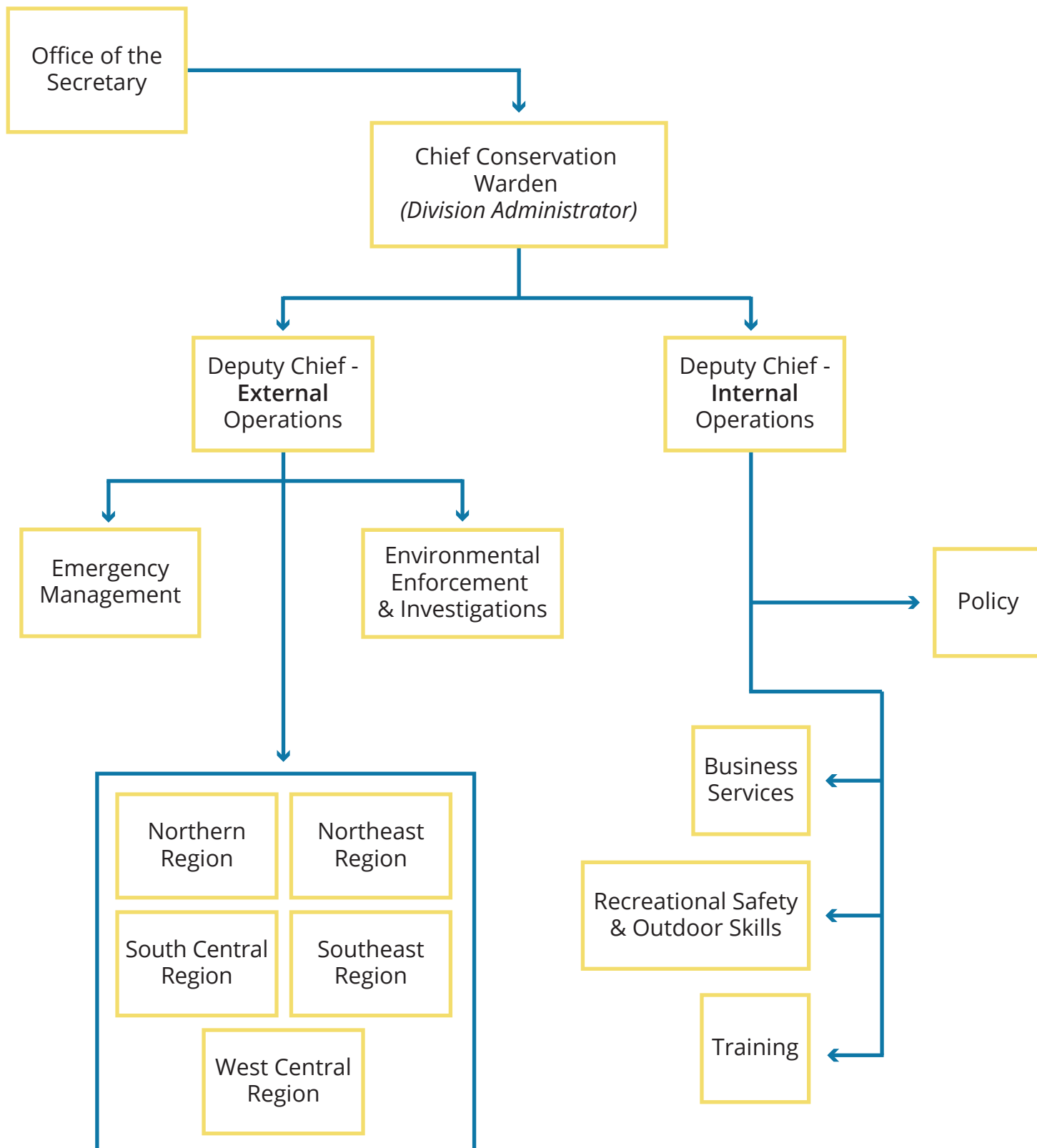
Non-Credentialed FTE Positions:



Division of Public Safety And Resource Protection

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

The organizational chart reflects the current reporting structure.



REGIONS

Mirroring the DNR's geographic regions of service, the Bureau of Law Enforcement's conservation warden force is made up of five regional teams, each led by a Regional Warden, or Warden Captain, who is responsible for overseeing regional law enforcement operations and building local partnerships.

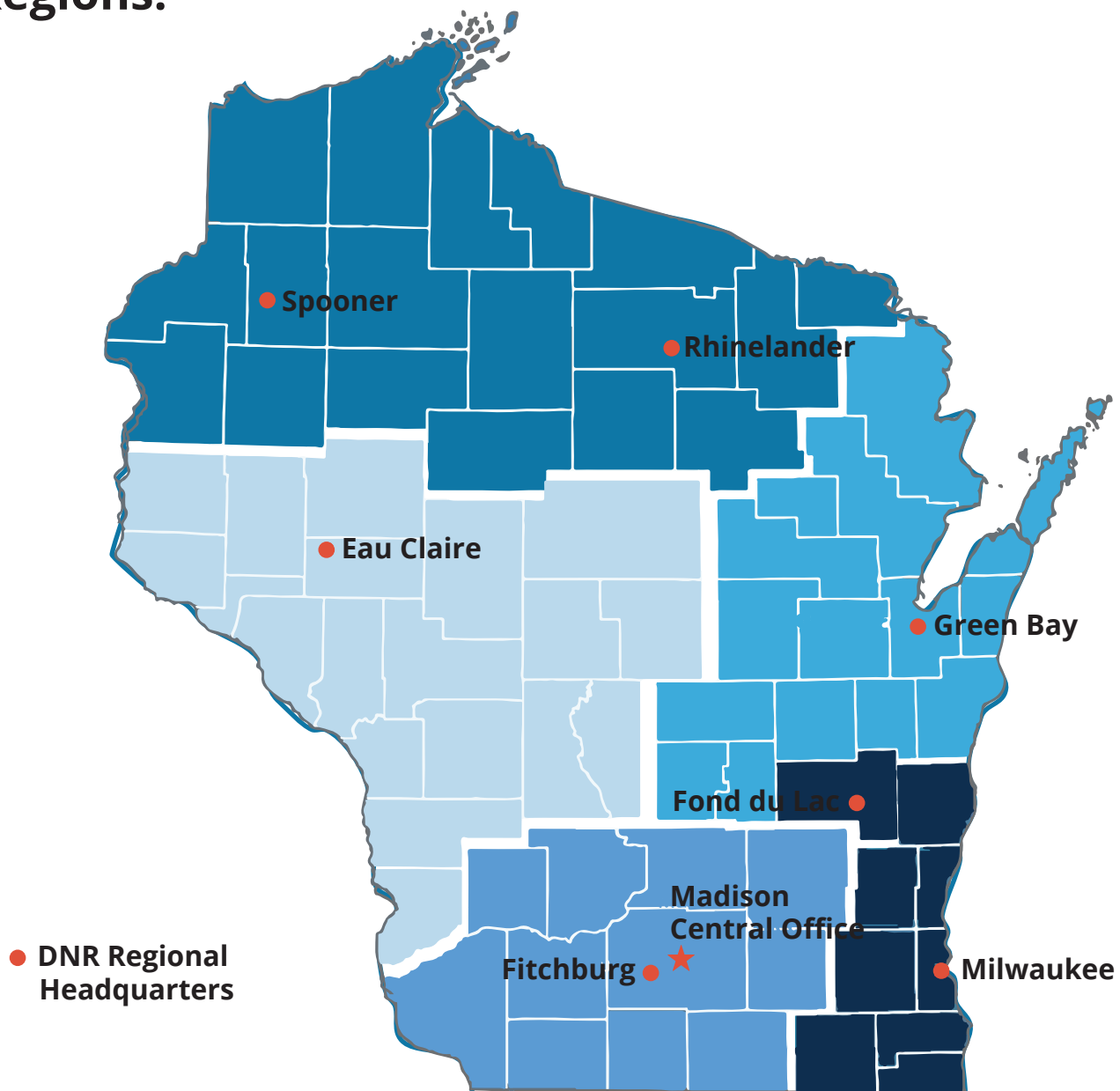
The varying physical and human landscapes within each region ensure that each regional team's work looks a little different from the next, yet the regional borders are only lines on a map. Teams often collaborate on cross-regional initiatives and lend support to one another.

They are all united in their dedication to their mission of enhancing public safety and protecting Wisconsin's natural resources and in their commitment to excellence and in upholding the public trust.



Photo credit: DNR

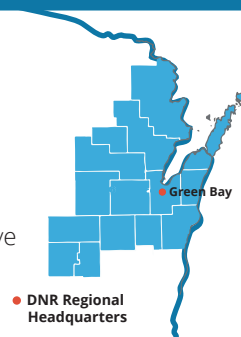
Regions:



NORTHEAST REGION

RICH IN BEAUTY AND BOUNTIFUL RESOURCES

This expansive geographic area includes urban, rural, farmland, northern forest properties and water bodies including many rivers, streams and lakes, including Lake Michigan. It is rich in beauty and bountiful resources that are enjoyed by locals and visitors from all over. The northern part of the region is made up of large tracts of forested lands, including the Lakewood District of the Nicolet National Forest. NER has the largest inland lake in Wisconsin- Lake Winnebago- a world class sturgeon and walleye fishery. NER also has two state forests and eleven state parks including the family destination favorite Peninsula State Park and the high daily use High Cliff State Park.



Serving:

Brown, Calumet, Door, Green Lake, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Marquette, Menominee, Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano, Waupaca, Waushara and Winnebago Counties.

Wardens Jon Kaiser and Benjamin Mott doing pre-teal season scouting, August 2020.



Photo Credit: Benjamin Mott (DNR)

Recreational opportunities include boating, fishing, hunting, recreational vehicle use, commercial fishing, sport trolling for salmon and trout, shipwreck diving, trapping and birdwatching. NER has a large population base in Green Bay and the Fox Valley and has a diverse population, including the Native American Tribes (Chippewa, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Oneida, Potawatomie and Stockbridge-Munsee). Lake Winnebago and the Upper Wolf River Lakes hosts the **largest sturgeon spearing season** for lake sturgeon in the world. Lake Winnebago also hosts the **largest ice fishing tournament** in the Midwest.

- **NER has a large out-of-state tourist group that vacations and/or owns property in the area to recreate throughout the year.**

Between Oconto and Marinette Counties, there are **over 1,000 miles** of snowmobile trails and **over 650 miles** of ATV/UTV trails. The area also includes the popular Mountain-Bay Trail and numerous whitewater rafting, kayaking, hiking, equestrian and cross-country skiing opportunities. Shawano and Waupaca Counties historically are within the **top three counties** for deer harvesting, and the Bay of Green Bay is a **nationwide destination** for waterfowl hunters and walleye and muskellunge anglers.



Warden Clark Delzer with injured Red-Tailed Hawk, near Suring, before taking to Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary in Green Bay. Diagnosed with a punctured lung, the hawk made a full recovery and was eventually released.

2020 Highlights:

- Successful prosecution of double homicide convictions in 2018 Lake Winnebago boat fatality case.
- Request from U.S. Coast Guard for boat accident reconstruction on a significant boat fatality in Cayman Islands.
- Recreational property enforcement including proactive efforts on narcotics at High Cliff State Park.
- Responses to several ATV/UTV and snowmobile accidents in northern part of region.
- Provided on-water security presence during Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) launches.
- Participated in planning for Democratic National Convention in Milwaukee and Ryder Cup at Whistling Straits, Kohler, before cancellation of those events due to COVID-19.
- Continued investigation into ongoing wildlife poisoning case in northern Wisconsin.
- PFAS response to suspected affected streams.
- Sturgeon spearing enforcement.
- Present to keep the peace during on-water presidential support rallies.
- Proactive planning and resource allocation for spring flood responses.
- Piloted Project REVCO before statewide implementation; involved determining and making contact with defendants who purchase licenses when under court order revocation.

The DNR's Marine Enforcement Unit airboat at the launch of the USS Cooperstown in Marinette,

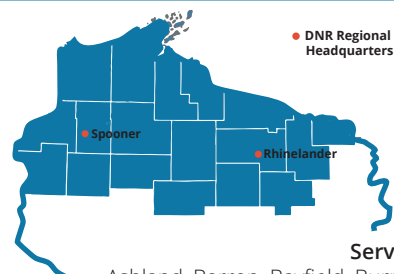


Jan. 19, 2020./ Photo Credit: Val Ihde.

NORTHERN REGION

LIFE IS JUST DIFFERENT UP NORTH

Folks who don't live here love to visit but many say they'd never want to live here permanently; those who call this area home can't imagine living anywhere else. While the region's population numbers and call for service volume may be lower than in other regions, it's a large geographic area containing the resources that everyone across the state benefits from – the clean water, the forests to filter the air, and the diverse wildlife populations that keep Wisconsin a natural place – and they attract tens of thousands of visitors to the counties of the Northern Region (NOR) each year. This diversity of people and natural resources brings a diversity of work in conservation law enforcement, which challenges an officer's skills and makes no two days quite the same.



Serving:
Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Florence, Forest, Iron, Langlade, Lincoln, Oneida, Polk, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor, Washburn and Vilas Counties.



Warden Dylan Belisle with Smokey Bear at a socially distanced National Night Out, Rusk County Fairgrounds, October 2020.

From farm fields and oak ridges in dairy country to old growth hemlock stands in the National Forests, there are **opportunities** for every type of hunting and trapping, including some not found elsewhere. Bear, elk, wolves, cats and marten are species less common in other parts of the state which draw hunters, trappers and wildlife watchers from all around. The region has **hard-to-get-to trout streams** and **easy-to-access lakes**, as well as Lake Superior, the Wisconsin and St. Croix river systems, and **two 10,000+ acre flowage properties** (Turtle Flambeau and Willow Flowages), for which Northern Region wardens provide enforcement coverage. There are many recreational vehicle opportunities with some of the most extensive trail systems in the state; added snow cover throughout the year makes the region a snowmobiling destination.

In the geographically large and dispersed counties of the north, it is crucial to work cooperatively with other law enforcement agencies and natural resource partners. **Wardens serve as an integral part of the public safety team**, often responding with local law enforcement to any number of dangerous and emergency situations. The team also works cooperatively with the U.S. Forest Service and with the DNR's Forestry Division on the vast state and federal forested properties of the north, including the **230,000+** Northern Highland American Legion State Forest. The NOR team maintains a good working relationship with Wisconsin's Native Peoples and participates in cooperative management of resources with the Tribes.

2020 Highlights:

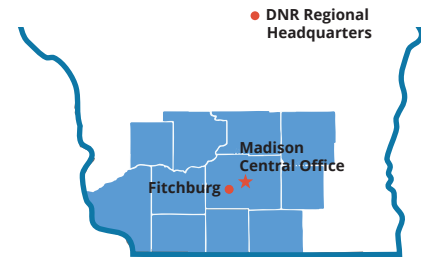
- Second Wisconsin elk hunt in Clam Lake and the first elk hunt in Flambeau River State Forest.
- Worked as part of a multi-agency security team at large community events such as the American Birkebeiner cross country ski race, which brought over 40,000 people to the Hayward/Cable area over four days in February.
- Wisconsin wild rice harvest management and enforcement takes place only in the Northern Region.
- Investigated nine snowmobile fatalities in 2020.
- Hosted the annual recruit snowmobile operations training resulting in 19 snowmobile OWI arrests over two nights of field patrol in the Minocqua, Saint Germain and Eagle River areas.
- Managed Law Enforcement presence on a 230,000+ acre property (Northern Highland American Legion).
- Included coverage of two 10,000+ acre flowage properties (Turtle Flambeau and Willow Flowages).
- Hosted fall hunting training for the new Warden Recruit Class.
- Worked collaboratively on a large-scale animal poisoning investigation in both the Northern and Northeast Regions.

SOUTH CENTRAL REGION

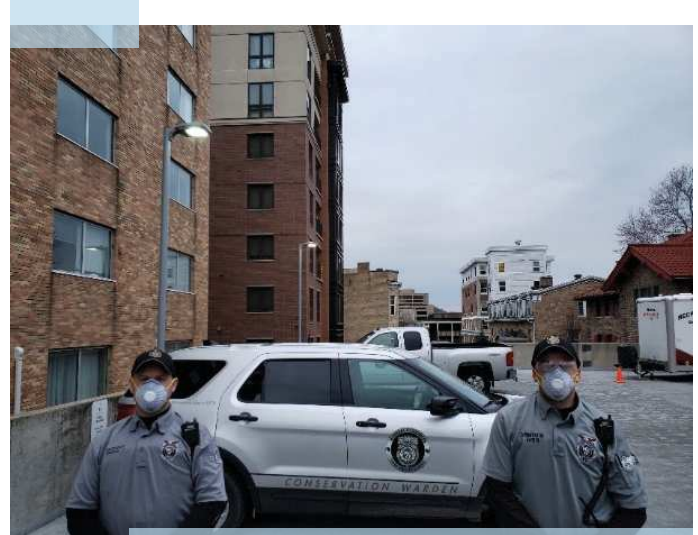
THE PERFECT MIX

Within the South Central Region (SCR) is a perfect mix of people and outdoor opportunities. The Madison metropolitan area is home to a large population of outdoor recreationists, and as the hub for state government and home of the University of Wisconsin-Madison the area attracts many visitors for whom the many natural areas of the region are within easy traveling distance. From the Baraboo Hills, to the dramatic hills and valleys of the unglaciated Driftless Area in the southwest corner, to Horicon Marsh, the largest freshwater cattail marsh in the country, the region is home to some of the most unique natural features in the state and they attract visitors from around the world.

Serving: Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Green, Grant, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Richland, Rock and Sauk Counties.



Warden Mitch Groenier involved in a search on the Rock River.
Photo Credit: Jason Roberts (DNR)



Wardens Caputo and Burton, Madison. / Photo Credit: DNR.

Wardens in SCR have numerous opportunities to interact with all types of recreationists, from hunters and anglers to wildlife photographers and hikers, boaters and paddlers, cross-country skiers to snowmobilers.

- **The abundant agricultural fields and woodlands provide habitat for deer and turkey.**

2020 Highlights:

- Assisted local authorities with the search for a suspect involved in the homicide at Devil's Lake State Park.
- Attended Madison Fish Expo and Madison Deer and Turkey Expo to promote the DNR and Bureau of Law Enforcement.
- Provided enforcement presence at the Columbia County Range during opening and closure times and addressed critical safety aspects such as bump stocks, short barreled rifles, etc.
- Assisted with multiple search and rescue/body recovery efforts in the Wisconsin and Rock Rivers.
- Worked with Dodge County Sheriff's office and a local kayak fishing club to provide additional safety and patrol for a fishing tournament following shots fired toward an angler.
- Annual flooding preparation on the Wisconsin River and the Portage Levee with Columbia County emergency management officials and stakeholders.
- SCR Wardens and the Investigations Team referred for prosecution a Wisconsin wholesale fish dealer for the illegal transportation, possession and sale of invasive carp.

SOUTHEAST REGION

URBAN MEETS RURAL

The Southeastern Region (SER) is the crossroads where urban meets rural. While not a large region in geographic size, this region has the highest population density in the state, as well as some of the state's most beautiful and fascinating natural areas. The region serves a diverse community of people and there are a multitude of recreational opportunities available to residents and visitors alike.

Serving: Fond du Lac, Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Sheboygan, Walworth, Washington and Waukesha Counties.



Documentation of illegal structures added along Lake Michigan shoreline. Photo Credit: DNR



Warden Zach Feest patrolling Lake Michigan. Photo credit: Jason Roberts (DNR)

Some of the finest state parks are found here, including the state's **only urban state forest**, Havenwoods.

Park visitors can venture onto the **scenic shores** of Lake Michigan from Kohler-Andrae or Harrington Beach State Parks or into the stunning woods, prairies and lakes of the Kettle Moraine State Forests.

Whether you recreate in a park, lake, woods or amongst your community, The SER continues to be a **hotspot** for the people of Wisconsin and as a **tourist destination** for people from all walks of life, with **opportunities** for people to recreate in every possible way.

2020 Highlights:

- SER wardens responded to protests and unrest occurring in Kenosha and Madison after the officer-involved shooting of Jacob Blake. Wardens were on the front line on several critical calls. Wardens secured the scene and provided protection to firefighters working to put out a blaze, and were first on scene to thwart looting attempts at area Walmart and Verizon stores.
- Assisted with Presidential and Former Vice-President details during visits in the wake of civil unrest in Kenosha.
- Wardens provided response to state parks to open and close the high traffic parks during the early part of the pandemic. Park closures resulted in small protests, requiring law enforcement presence to keep the peace.
- With Northeast Region team, participated in planning for Democratic National Convention in Milwaukee and Ryder Cup at Whistling Straits, Kohler, before cancellation of those events due to COVID-19
- Worked with DNR water regulations staff to document and address violations along Lake Michigan involving dumping unapproved materials and adding illegal structures in attempts to mitigate high water.

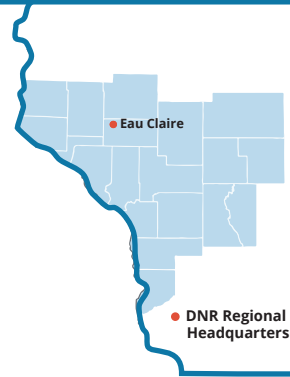


Securing scene at a fire in Kenosha, August 2020. Photo Credit: DNR

WEST CENTRAL REGION

WIDE VARIETY OF RESOURCES

The West Central Region (WCR) is one of the largest regions in the state with 19 of Wisconsin's 72 counties. A wide variety of resources abound over vast woodlands, farmlands and Wisconsin's Central Forest. The WCR also encompasses much of the Driftless Area of the state which received less glaciation between 10,000 and 100,000 years ago during the advances of the Laurentide Ice Sheet. Some of the most revered white-tailed deer hunting, turkey hunting and trout fishing occurs in the coulees and ridges that are found along the Mississippi River Valley in this part of the state.



Serving:

Adams, Buffalo, Chippewa, Clark, Crawford, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Marathon, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Portage, St. Croix, Trempealeau, Vernon and Wood Counties.



Warden Shawna Stringham receives a donation of an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) unit. With Vernon County Deputy Jake Johnson, Stringham saved the life of a bicyclist who suffered a sudden cardiac arrest while biking near Ontario, August 2020

Wisconsin's Central Forest is now home to a **growing** herd of elk that were reintroduced in 2015. The WCR's lakes, rivers and streams provide numerous recreational **opportunities** for sightseers, wildlife watchers, boaters, hunters and anglers annually.

The Frac-Sand Industry found a booming opportunity in the region's soils. From the rolling landscape of the coulee region and eastward through the Central Sands region, runoff effects to surface and ground water are particularly challenging resource issues in the WCR.

2020 Highlights:

- Assisted the Bureau's Training Section with Law Enforcement Academy instruction, field training and waterfowl school for new recruits.
- Investigated multiple thrill-killing cases and successfully prosecuted offenders.
- Annual flood response and rescue in the spring and summer of 2020.
- Supported the DNR's Wildlife Management Bureau on elk issues, including nuisance animals, roadway issues, illegal harvest and mortality investigations.
- Worked with Bureau's Environmental Enforcement Section on Frac-Sand mine issues, run-off issues, fish kills, spills, hazardous waste and industrial regulation.
- With the Captive Wildlife Administrative Warden, managed captive deer and elk farm fencing regulations and conducted follow-up investigations on escaped animals and illegally held wildlife.
- Regulation of the commercial and wild ginseng harvest that impacts international trade on this valuable and vulnerable plant species.
- Wardens participated in wildlife rescues.

Warden Meghan Jensen rescues a bald eagle in Trempealeau County, May 2020



Warden Kyle Kosin and Pierce County Deputy Jeremy Brookshaw helped evacuate homes during a flooding event in July 2020.

The metal structure pictured in the background is a submerged swing set.



INVESTIGATIONS & ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT

This section aims to **protect** Wisconsin's natural resources from illegal commercialization by keeping an even playing field for regulated businesses and upholding the public expectation for enforcement of harvest quotas, drinking water, pollutant discharges and other unlawful activities. The DNR issues permits for hundreds of harvesting activities that could impact natural resources if left unchecked. We also ensure that when you fill your glass with drinking water, you know it came from a clean, healthy source, and that the person who may have tested it for you did it correctly and reported the results accurately.

Previously separate units, in 2020 the Investigations Team (IW) and Environmental Enforcement Team (EE) quickly transitioned into a new combined section, allowing the team to expedite processes and examine how we do business. The section quickly adapted to changes caused by the pandemic which aided us in maintaining our productivity and staying integrated with our customers. We streamlined the organization structure and chain of command resulting in a work product coming from the section chief.

Commercialized wildlife poaching, public safety and health concerns are top priorities for the section. Regulators cannot be everywhere at once, so our staff maintain working relationships with the public and approach conservation efforts with a shared goal. Our highly trained and specialized investigative wardens **closed out 154 cases** in 2020, with many assists in the field using various surveillance techniques.

The EE side of the section uses a stepped enforcement philosophy, with the intent of working with people to solve problems early. For less serious violations, education and outreach measures are utilized. Violators who commit more serious offenses or continue to ignore the laws are held accountable through the use of orders, citations, and in some cases, referral to the Wisconsin Department of Justice. EE teams worked diligently to resolve environmental issues, with most cases handled without the need for escalated enforcement. There were **159 cases** accepted in 2020; 19 resulted in citations and 20 were referred to Wisconsin Department of Justice.

Investigations Team

- Investigates violations of environmental and natural resource laws and collaborates with state and federal partners.

Environmental Enforcement Team

- Protect environment and natural resources by ensuring compliance with environmental and natural resource protection laws through stepped enforcement.



Warden JJ Redemann confiscated a baby alligator that was caught in Florida and brought back to Wisconsin.

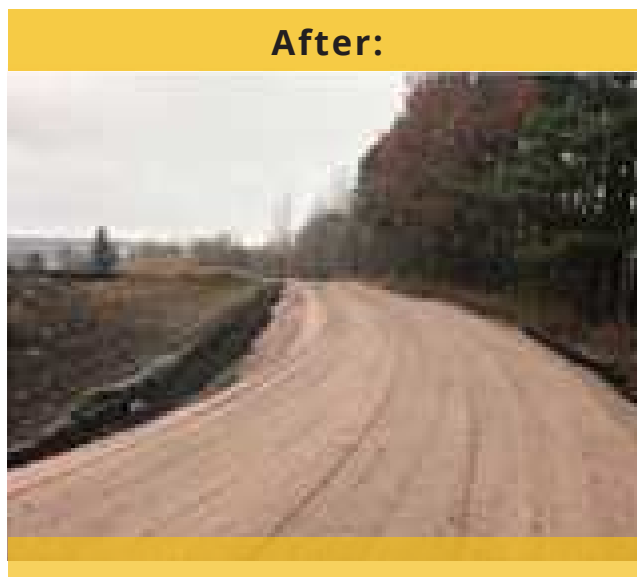
Photo Credit: Jaime McDermid (DNR)

Case Closed Without Penalties

The department and Grede Holdings LLC in Reedsburg worked very closely together to develop a compliance agreement outlining activities and deadlines required to return to compliance at their landfill site.

Grede agreed to and completed several mitigation activities, including construction of liners, perimeter road and sedimentation basin reconstruction and developed plans of operation modifications for long term care, closure costs and condition summary table.

Using a partnership approach, our staff were able to close their enforcement case with the company without penalties.



2020 Highlights:

- Completed an investigation into the sales of gamefish in northern Wisconsin including salmon and walleyes.
- Completed an investigation into the illegal storage and transportation of hazardous waste in northern and southeast Wisconsin. Some of the waste was stored and transported into Tennessee as well.
- Made arrests after several long-term investigations of damage and break-ins to state park buildings and structures including the theft of entry fees at parks across southeast and southcentral Wisconsin.
- Investigative wardens, conservation wardens and the Wood and Waushara County Sheriff's Departments conducted a joint investigation of a chronic traditional law and DNR violator from Wood County who stole a large antlered buck head from a meat processing shop in 2016. Social media played a key role in convicting the suspect, who as a result of this case and probation violations was ordered to serve nine months in prison with hunting license revocations.
- Investigations involving timber theft, illegal ginseng harvest, illegal pet trade and fur laundering.
- In February 2020 the teams held environmental enforcement training for department program staff, Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection (DATCP) staff and tribal partners.
- Referred for prosecution a wholesale-level distributor who imported almost 900 invasive crayfish over two years, who had continued after being notified it was illegal.
- Finalized a case involving a wholesale fish dealer who was caught bringing thousands of pounds of prohibited species of carp into Wisconsin.
- Investigated illegal amphibians and reptiles trade, unlawful game fish sales (lake trout, walleye, smelt, salmon, bluegill, catfish and sturgeon) and bait fish.

RECREATIONAL SAFETY AND OUTDOOR SKILLS (RSOS)

SAFETY IS OUR FIRST PRIORITY

The RSOS Section promotes safe, responsible outdoor recreational experiences to include operation of off-highway vehicles and providing accessible hunting, angling and shooting opportunities. We believe safety is our first priority and the public deserves to have a safe and enjoyable experience while recreating in Wisconsin's outdoors. Outdoor recreational needs and safety trends continue to have impacts on our citizens and visitors of Wisconsin. It is our goal to provide focused, specialized law enforcement services and resources to our customers, while providing the best safety education and opportunities to pass on the conservation ethic to our outdoor users.

Recreation Enforcement Team

- Enforces recreational vehicle laws.
- Investigates rec vehicle and hunting incidents.
- Facilitate local recreational patrol efforts.

Shooting Range Team

- Promotes safe and accessible shooting opportunities at our public ranges.

Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation (R3) Team

- Promotes and guarantees Wisconsin's hunting and angling heritage.

Safety and Education Team

- Manages hunter & recreational vehicle safety education programs and provides education opportunities.
- Communications & marketing of public safety messages and initiatives.

The RSOS Section made adjustments to continue to support public safety and meet the high demand for outdoor recreation opportunities in 2020. With people looking outdoors to escape the pandemic, the DNR saw **increased** participation in hunting, angling and recreational (rec) vehicle use. 2020 saw more safety class certifications than 2019. Sadly in 2020 we saw an uptick in fatal hunting and rec vehicle incidents (see 2020 In Numbers section of this report). In response to the recreational incident trend, the Section implemented a Saving Lives Initiative to push more safety messaging and awareness out through press releases and social media. This initiative included Life Jackets Save Lives and Ride Responsibly campaigns.



Our specialized Recreation Wardens provided technical assistance and case management for those complex incident investigations. The team has become a statewide leader among crash reconstruction units with the integration of UAV technology and photogrammetry software.



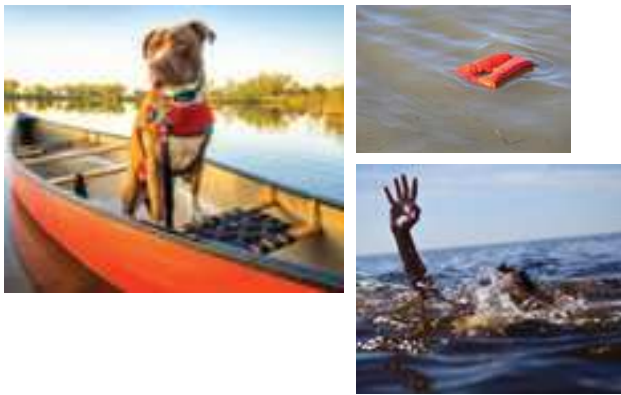
Fishing for Dinner participants sharing a laugh on the Mississippi River near Stoddard, Feb. 22, 2020.
Photo Credit: Theresa Stabo (DNR)

State restrictions on gathering and concerns for participant and instructor safety required the postponement or cancellation of many in-person classes and events, such as Hunter Education and R3 classes and events. In the early months of the pandemic, staff updated their programs and materials in preparation for resumption of in-person events and assisted with DNR and statewide pandemic efforts.

2020 Highlights:

- Pivoted to an all-online Hunter Education certification option for those under the age of 18 before 2020 gun deer season, temporarily waiving the in-person component of certification enabling new hunters to become certified during COVID-19.
- Saw a strong interest in safety class participation, completing more safety class certifications than in 2019.
- Mentored Hunting Program participation increased- 20,903 mentored hunting licenses declared in 2020 license year, an increase of 39% over 2019. The largest increases were seen in the under 13 and 13-17 year-old age groups.
- Implemented Saving Lives Initiative to prevent recreational incidents by building awareness through targeted safety messaging via press releases, social media, radio ads and message boards along public trails.

Boating safety campaign: **Life Jackets Save Lives**



Off-Highway Vehicle operation (ATV/UTV/OHM) safety campaign: **Ride Responsibly**



- Worked with Wisconsin Department of Tourism and Association of Snowmobile Clubs of Wisconsin (AWSC) on Ride Responsibly Winter Campaign messaging.

Ride Responsibly Winter Campaign messaging



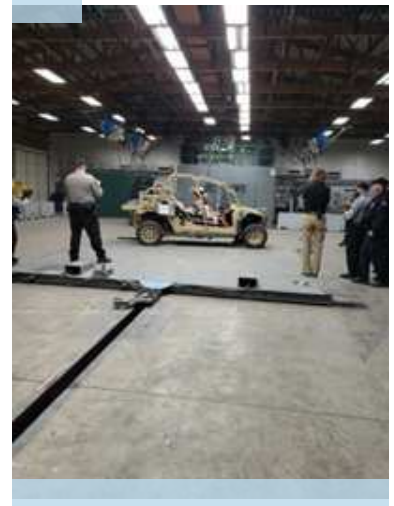
- Participated in Operation Dry Water, in partnership with local law enforcement agencies and the U.S. Coast Guard. During this national campaign effort, DNR wardens on the water concentrated efforts on boating under the influence enforcement, drug enforcement, safety compliance checks, search and rescue, saturation patrol, heightened awareness during normal patrol, education and public disturbance and disorderly conduct. Wardens removed 31 impaired boaters from the water, assisted stranded boaters and responded to accidents.

Photo Credit: Dale Hochhausen DNR



Warden Josh Wiedenhoef operates an airboat on the Black River.

- The Recreation Enforcement Team and members of the RSOS Management Team partnered up with the Wisconsin ATV/UTV Association (WATVA), the Wisconsin State Patrol's Technical Reconstruction Unit and the CIREN Center of the Medical College of Wisconsin to conduct the first State of Wisconsin controlled UTV Crash to study crash dynamics, injury causation and occupant movement as it relates to the importance of wearing helmets, seatbelts and having children in the UTV while under operation. Due to the study, undergraduates at CIREN are now conducting additional ATV/UTV crash injury-related research for national safety/equipment recommendations specific to children.



- Provided hunting incident investigative training and boat, ATV/UTV and snowmobile operation training to new warden class.
- While working through COVID-19 restrictions, R3 reopened a number of our statewide shooting ranges and provided staff and resources, creating a safe atmosphere and positive experience for recreational shooters.
- Reopened the Columbia County Shooting Range after months of range improvement construction including backstop repairs, new target stands, 100-yard shooting shed repairs and a new storage building on the site. Range monitoring and sound mitigation practices are continuously being evaluated and applied to help promote safe behavior from users and maintain good relationships with neighboring landowners.
- Using email and radio messaging, R3 Team promoted hunting as a safe and enjoyable way to recreate during the pandemic with the goal of reactivating lapsed hunters and mentoring novice hunters within households.
- Though 2020 was a challenging year for our Archery Education programs, we added over 30 new schools to those teaching archery as part of the school day through our partnership with Wisconsin chapter of National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) and put together several virtual events, including a state competitive event with around 200 archers. We also added 5 more archery cubs and teams to our WI Scholastic 3-D Archery (S3DA) program.



**To hear more about our efforts in 2020,
please visit dnr.wi.gov to view our press releases:**

- [Limited Number of State Shooting Ranges to Reopen May 14](#), May 11, 2020
- [DNR Hunter Safety Classes Resume July 13](#), June 26, 2020
- [DNR Wardens Join Local Boat Patrols For July 4 Safety Weekend](#), July 1, 2020
- [Boat Responsibly: Wear A Life Jacket](#), July 2, 2020
- [Be Safe While Having Fun: River Safety Starts With A Life Jacket](#), July 6, 2020
- [Ride Responsibly: New ATV/UTV Safety Laws](#), July 14, 2020
- [Trapper Education For Adults And Kids Now Available Online](#), July 16, 2020
- [Water Safety Always Starts With A Life Jacket](#), August 6, 2020
- [Life Jackets Save Lives](#), September 2, 2020.
- [ATV/UTV Operators: Ride Responsibly Labor Day Weekend](#), September 3, 2020

With assistance from the Bureau's Training Committee, Recruitment Committee, Background Investigators, Field Training Officers and Instructors, the Training Section coordinates and facilitates the recruiting, hiring, training and recertification of Bureau of Law Enforcement staff.

For the first time, this year's new warden training included an accelerated training track for newly hired wardens who had previously graduated from a law enforcement academy. Though put in place because of COVID-19 and the need to restrict the academy size to under 10 people, the Bureau will continue to use the accelerated track in order to reduce training time for those who have already received similar training. These new wardens who have more experience can then hit the ground sooner than those who require more training.

The Training Section, together with the Training and Conference Planning Committees, planned and hosted the 2020 Bureau of Law Enforcement Conference in early March 2020. Many of the speakers and breakout sessions centered around leadership and wellness, two areas of priority for the Bureau. The Recreation Warden program offered Sound Enforcement Training as a breakout session, which proved to be a helpful and well-received training that will be offered to field staff in the future. There were also Environmental Enforcement trainings offered including breakout sessions on Septic Hauler and Lab Services.



Despite the pandemic, the 2021 Conservation Class completes their Wilderness First Aid training.
Photo Credit: Falon French (DNR)



The Training Section also hosted and tracked online training sessions throughout the year on new topics, refresher training and recertification. Examples include Wetlands Update and Special Investigative Training sessions curated by the Environmental Enforcement team, and radio training developed by Lt. Brian Knepper to help staff learn and acclimate with the newly issued Motorola radios.

Chief Warden Krueger swears in the first 9 graduates from the Conservation Warden Class of 2021 following their completion of the Accelerated Academy training program, Dec. 4, 2020.
Photo Credit: Summer Wilson (DNR)

2020 Highlights:

- Planned, coordinated and hosted 2020 Bureau of Law Enforcement Conference (March 2020).
- Hired the Conservation Warden Class of 2021 consisting of 17 Full Time and 5 Part Time Wardens.
- Planned and instructed BLE's first Accelerated Academy, a 6-week focused training program for 9 of the newly hired wardens who have completed a Department of Justice 720 Academy.
- Procured and issued new NARCAN to credentialed staff at BLE Conference and collected expired product.
- Coordinated CPR/AED/First Aid certification for credentialed staff, including procuring an online option to comply with COVID-19 guidelines.



DNR Bureau of Law Enforcement conference, March 2020.
Photo Credit: DNR

The Business Services Section supports the entire Bureau of Law Enforcement by managing the Bureau's budget and maintaining and improving our Information Technology (IT) systems. The section also integrates with other department internal programs on critical needs including fleet management, finance, technology services and budget.

In 2020, the section was primarily responsible for organizing and managing the rollout and installation of **over 600 new** Motorola portable and mobile law enforcement radios to all credentialed DNR officers statewide. This effort involved coordinating scheduling at multiple locations across the state over a period of months and included installations in every DNR squad vehicle and roughly **120 patrol boats**. This new Motorola radio platform now allows remote radio programming to wardens statewide, greatly improving the efficiency of reprogramming radios and removing the need for wardens to drive to a radio technician to get their radio programming done in person. This feature will save thousands of miles and hours of driving each year just for radio reprogramming.

2020 Highlights:

- Coordinated programming, distribution and installation of over 600 new portable, mobile radios to all credentialed DNR officers statewide.
- Acquired and coordinated the installation of 50 mobile routers in squads to test improvements in network connectivity while performing patrol duties in geographically remote locations.
- Provided IT support for the new radios and mobile routers, increased technology in accident reconstruction, and increased use of remote cameras, in addition to regular computer and telecom support.
- Provided IT support for Parks reservation system distribution to all wardens.
- Provided IT support for statewide and department-wide IT efforts such as email migration and Windows upgrade, and supporting employees working remotely due to pandemic.
- Worked with Fleet Management to acquire and test some hybrid squads for improved fuel efficiency and lower emissions as part of the department's efforts to 'green the fleet'.

MISSION READY TEAMS

The purpose of a Mission Ready Team (MRT) is to recruit, train, organize, sustain and deploy wardens statewide who have specialized skills, training and equipment above and beyond the day-to-day operations of a field warden.

MRTs deploy for unique emergency or pre-planned events specific to their expertise and mission objectives. Beyond their regular duties, members volunteer to serve on these teams and are often expected to meet additional national and/or state training standards.

The Bureau's five Mission Ready Teams are:

- Statewide Joint Tactical Team
- Tactical Boat Operators
- Underwater Remote Operated Vehicle
- Unmanned Aircraft Systems
- Natural Resources Board/VIP Protection Team



STATEWIDE JOINT TACTICAL TEAM

Led and managed by the Wisconsin Department of Justice's Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI), a team of 6-8 DNR wardens joins other tactical operators from DCI and Department of Transportation's State Patrol to train and operate as a statewide multi-departmental tactical team, optimally equipped and organized for the cost-efficient deployment of personnel and equipment. The JTT can augment local law enforcement when local resources are exhausted or insufficient to adequately address critical incidents. Wardens have unique training and experience from the other agencies, therefore maximizing the effectiveness of the JTT in rural and water-based operations. The Wardens assigned to this team are a resource for reviewing any planned tactical operations on behalf of the Bureau of Law Enforcement and provide tactical response training at recruit training and in-service training events.

JTT missions include but are not limited to: Situations involving hostages/rescues, barricaded subjects, snipers; high-risk apprehensions, warrant services or security operations; dignitary protection; rural operations; maritime SWAT operations; terrorist activity; and drug enforcement.

In 2020:

- Assistance to Kenosha and Milwaukee during civil unrest.
- Fugitive search for a subject suspected of double homicide, arson and shooting at police.
- Presidential security details: Three presidential, three vice presidential, one presidential candidate.
- High-risk search warrant on a suspected meth-lab; two high-risk narcotics search warrants.
- Before postponement, preparation for significant security role at 2020 Ryder Cup, an international golf tournament at Whistling Straits near Sheboygan, which included advanced training from the U.S. Secret Service and Wisconsin Department of Justice. The team received the same opportunity in 2021.
- Before cancellation of in-person event components, preparation for significant security role at 2020 Democratic National Convention in Milwaukee.

TACTICAL BOAT OPERATORS

The team's main focus is to support missions on the Great Lakes and the state's inland waters, and to support field wardens during large scale events on inland waters when increased warden presence is needed. The 10-15 wardens who make up this team have specific training and experience above and beyond standard boat operation training for field wardens. This training typically includes certified training courses by National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) such as Boating Search and Rescue (BSAR) and Tactical Operations Course (TOC). There are mandates of performing specific missions or training annually in order to maintain operator certifications.

Missions include but are not limited to: Establishing security/safety zones for large events (PGA tour, Naval ship launchings, dignitary visits); drug interdiction; FBI and other tactical team support; ship boarding; special requests by local agencies.

In 2020:

- With Marinette and Menominee Sheriff's Offices and an FBI Counter Intelligence Agent, assisted with the security of USS Marinette LCS 25 Freedom-class Navy ship launch on the Menominee River out of Marinette County.
- Before postponement, preparation for significant role at 2020 Ryder Cup event in cooperation with US Coast Guard and US Secret Service.
- Before cancellation of in-person event components, preparation for significant security role at 2020 Democratic National Convention in Milwaukee.

UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS TEAM (UAS)

Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), more commonly known as drones, are new to the Bureau in 2020. The team of operators established necessary protocol and procedures early in the year and then were in operation, flying missions across the state. This team consists of 6-8 wardens statewide, all of whom are FAA certified and hold Airmen Certificates as Part 107 Remote Pilots for Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems. The team cooperatively trains with Wisconsin Drone Network, Wisconsin State Patrol, State Capitol Police and Wisconsin Department of Justice.

The team has two focuses for use of the UAS which enable the Bureau to more effectively support public safety and environmental enforcement:

- The first focus of this team is to preserve life safety, property preservation and incident stabilization. The UAS can fly into smaller spaces and at lower altitudes than manned aircraft systems, can provide real time monitoring, and can be equipped with thermal imagers and night vision systems, making them valuable tools in search and rescues and evidence collection. They also preserve the safety of wardens by reducing the need to enter dangerous areas on foot to collect evidence, especially important in instances when wardens are threatened. The team works in close coordination with the Wisconsin Air Coordination Group and Wisconsin Emergency Management in these missions.
- The second focus is to further BLE's crash/accident reconstruction capabilities for snowmobile, ATV/UTV, boat, automobile, and other recreational incidents (ie. hiking or hunting accidents). Certain UAS can be used with Pix4D software to map a scene, then create a computer-generated 3D orthomosaic model, providing key evidence during incident investigations.

Typical missions include but are not limited to: search and rescue operations; law enforcement sensitive flights; tactical operations- fugitive apprehension and/or hostage situations; recreational vehicle and hunting accident reconstruction; spills (hazmat); maritime security; preventative security for large public events; disaster response; special or circumstantial events or incidents.

In 2020:

- The team logged over 51 flight hours including 300 take-offs, 71 pilot log entries and 25 CFS completions in its inaugural year.
- Mission requests totaled 23 deployments – 13 search and rescue/recovery, 3 hunting incident reconstructions, 3 environmental, 2 off-highway vehicle crash reconstructions, 1 emergency/damage assessment and 1 tactical response to assist a local agency with a possible barricaded subject wanted on criminal charges.
- Flew a significant environmental enforcement case, capturing critical evidence of violations from the air; preserved wardens from entering a property in which the landowner had previously threatened law enforcement officers.

NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD (NRB) DIGNITARY PROTECTION TEAM

With additional training in personal protection detail, the 6-8 person team's primary focus is to ensure a safe and secure meeting environment for everyone attending Natural Resources Board meetings and field visits, including Board members, department staff, participants and spectators. The team may also be utilized for other events involving dignitary protection or potentially controversial meetings hosted by the department.

In 2020:

- Before postponement, preparation for significant security role at 2020 Ryder Cup. The team had been requested by local authorities and anticipates the same opportunity in 2021.
- Natural Resources Board meetings in January and February of 2020.

UNDERWATER REMOTE OPERATED VEHICLE TEAM

(UROV) TEAM

The Bureau has six vehicle units spread across with the state with a total of 16 team members/operators who operate them. Tragically, a common use of UROVs is to search for drowning victims to provide closure to families. The use of UROVs replaces the need to send human divers into sometimes cold and dangerous waters, thereby reducing risk to more lives. They also serve a valuable role in evidence recovery and underwater surveillance and security.

The UROV operators have a unique skillset and are trained to deploy from land, water, ice and boat. The team is requested not only by DNR but also local, state and federal partners.

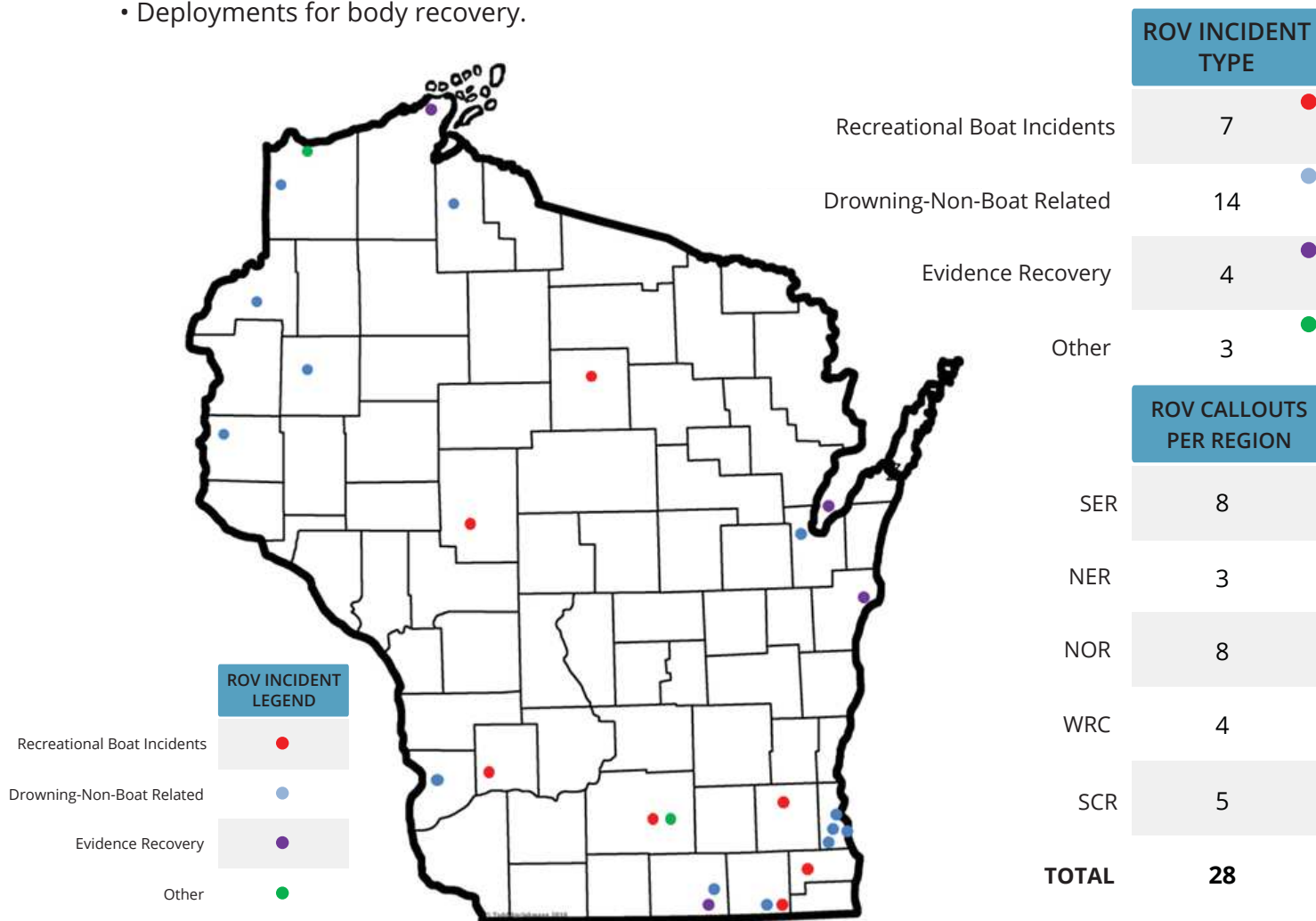
Missions include but are not limited to: Body search and recovery, evidence recovery, improvised explosive device (IED) searches, critical infrastructure inspections, investigations, commercial net inspections, ship hull inspections and other requests by local agencies.

In 2020:

- Assists to local law enforcement to attempt to locate weapons in water bodies which were suspected of use in crimes.
- Deployments for body recovery.



UROV unit deploying into Lake Michigan from Cave Point County Park in Door County.



HONOR GUARD AND PERSONNEL



The Wisconsin Conservation Warden Honor Guard represents the United States of America, the State, the Department of Natural Resources and its people in an honorable and respectful manner, while keeping the highest traditions of the Bureau of Law Enforcement.

The Honor Guard members are trained in ceremony, drill, funeral service, as well as special event etiquette and are disciplined enough to withstand the elements in which they are dealt. DNR's Honor Guard consists of a select and small team of active duty wardens from around the state who deploy to events such as memorial dedications, awards ceremonies, graduations and funerals.

The Honor Guard duties include the presentation and posting of the state and national colors, and conducting funeral details (pall bearers, standing guard, folding of flags, etc.).

NEW STAFF

BLE welcomes our newest employees and the Warden Academy Class of 2021!



Erik Anderson
Conservation Warden,
Warden Recruit Class



Renee Bennett
Conservation Warden,
Warden Recruit Class



Theodore Doellman
Conservation Warden,
LTE



Paul Donner
Conservation Warden,
LTE



Samuel Eagan
Conservation Warden,
Warden Recruit Class



Falon French
Operations Program
Associate,
Training Section/
Warden Recruit Class



Samuel Haferkorn
Conservation Warden,
Warden Recruit Class



Kyle Halverson
Conservation Warden,
Warden Recruit Class



Derek Hansen
Conservation Warden
Warden Recruit Class



Madeleine Johansen
Conservation Warden,
Warden Recruit Class



Andrew Johnson
Conservation Warden
Warden Recruit Class



Michael Livingston
Conservation Warden,
LTE



Jacob Neve
Conservation Warden
LTE



Joseph Olson
Conservation Warden,
Warden Recruit Class



Kevin Patterson
Conservation Warden,
LTE



Clayton Peters
Conservation Warden,
Warden Recruit Class



Lucas Raitz
Conservation Warden,
Warden Recruit Class



Ryan Serwe
Program Specialist,
Recreational Safety
Central Programs



Travis Sindles
Conservation Warden
Warden Recruit Class



Mason Weber
Conservation Warden,
Warden Recruit Class



Matthew Weseli
Conservation Warden,
Warden Recruit Class



Logan Woods
Conservation Warden,
Warden Recruit Class



Chad Ziegler
Conservation Warden,
Warden Recruit Class

Emily Pedersen,
Environmental
Enforcement Specialist

Harvey Eustice
Program Specialist,
Recreational Safety
R3 Team

**Not Pictured*

RETIREMENTS

Congratulations to our 2020 retirees as they adjust to a new change of pace.

- **David Allen** - Conservation Warden
- **Patricia Breister** - Office Operations Associate
- **Karl Brooks** - Deputy Chief Warden
- **Russell Fell** - Law Enforcement Supervisor
- **Heather Gottschalk** - Safety Specialist Warden
- **Christopher Groth** - Law Enforcement Supervisor
- **Joseph Jerich III** - Law Enforcement Supervisor
- **Penny Kanable** - Program Specialist
- **Jeffrey Knorr** - Conservation Warden
- **Robert Lee** - Conservation Warden
- **John Moore** - Administrative Warden
- **Karl Roovers** - Environmental Enforcement Specialist
- **Todd Schaller** - Chief Warden
- **Michael Sealander** - Conservation Warden
- **Steven Sisbach** - Section Chief (*Environ. Enforcement*)
- **Thomas Sturdivant** - Conservation Warden
- **Richard Thole** - Conservation Warden
- **Kenneth Thomson** - Conservation Warden
- **David Walz** - Law Enforcement Supervisor
- **David Zebro** - Regional Warden (*Northern Region*)
- **Roy Zellmer** - Law Enforcement Supervisor

INTERNAL AWARDS

Haskell Noyes Efficiency Award (The Watch)

Recipient: Warden Mike Disher



Division Excellence Award

Recipient: Summer Wilson



Steve Sisbach Environmental Enforcement Achievement Award

Case Team: Grede Holdings LLC

In its inaugural year, this award named for recently retired Environmental Enforcement Section Chief Steve Sisbach was awarded to a team of staff from across the department that exemplified how the stepped enforcement process works. The team worked with Grede Holdings LLC (formerly know as American Axle and Manufacturing) to obtain voluntary compliance at their landfill site, which had been filled beyond the approved design capacity. *See page 25 for more on this case.*

Recipients:

Environmental Enforcement staff Pam Buss; Waste & Materials Management staff Ann Bekta, Colin Maus, Cynthia Moore, Mark Peters; Air Management staff EE Staff Samuel Saeian and Barb Pavliscak.

Harold D. Hettrick Investigative Excellence Award

Case Team: David Neelis Junior dba Dave's Sewer Service

This case illustrated the importance of working cooperatively among DNR divisions and with external agencies and partners to bring polluters to justice. A septage servicing business had been engaging in improper disposal and remained noncompliant despite department efforts to work with the business to enter into compliance. Septic waste disposal, when improperly disposed, can be a source of bacteria and nitrates in groundwater, and as such is regulated to protect groundwater and surface waters. Team members involved with this case include numerous individuals from DNR and other agencies.

DNR staff: NER Wastewater Supervisor Heidi Schmitt Marquez, Statewide Coordinator Fred Hegeman, EE Specialist Pam Buss, Retired EE Specialist Karl Roovers, Conservation Warden Supervisor Ted Dremel, Conservation Warden Kaitlin Kernosky, Conservation Warden Tyler Flood, Conservation Warden Jon Kaiser, Conservation Warden Ben Mott, Retired attorney Judy Mills, Retired attorney Edwina Kavanaugh. Search warrant assistance: Retired Warden Jeffrey Knorr, Warden Mark Schraufnagel, Warden Supervisor Andy Lundin, Retired Warden Supervisor Thomas Krsnich, Lab Coordinator Zana Sijan, IS Resources Support Technician Raquel Sanchez, Hydrogeologist Bill Phelps, Wastewater Specialist Alexis Peter, Public Water Supervisor JaNelle Merry, Hydrogeologist Rick Joslin, Retired Conservation Warden Tom Sturdivant, NER Regional Warden Ben Trembl, and Forester Benjamin Baumgart.

Wisconsin DOJ: AAG Emily Ertel and AAG Brad Motl.

Waupaca County: Lara Pagel, Planning & Zoning; Jed Wohlt, Health and Human Services; and Stefan Stultz, Land and Water Conservation Department.

State Lab of Hygiene: Primary contact was Noel Stanton, Laboratory Manager.

EXTERNAL AWARDS

Wisconsin Bowhunters Association Warden of the Year

Recipient: Warden Kurt Haas



Shikar Safari International Wildlife Officer Award

Recipient: Lt. Andy Lundin



NAWEOA Torch Award

Recipient: Warden Pete Carlson



**Mississippi Flyway Waterfowl
Protection Officer of the Year**

Recipient: Warden Trevor Tracey



**National Wild Turkey Federation:
Wisconsin Chapter Officer of the Year**

Recipient: Warden Jake Bolks



**NASBLA Wisconsin
Boating Officer of the Year**

Recipient: Lt. Chris Groth



**Wisconsin Wildlife
Federation Warden of the Year**

Recipient: Warden Mike Disher



**Wisconsin Off-Highway
Vehicle Officer of the Year**

Recipient: Recreation Warden Justin Bender



MAFWA "Spirit of the Shack" Award

Recipient: Warden Joseph Paul





Photo Credit: Penny Kanable (DNR)

