Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Law Enforcement Division
2018 Annual Programs Report
This Annual Programs Report was compiled using 2017 data.
Law Enforcement Division marked its 130th anniversary in 2017

Gov. Rick Snyder observed the occasion by proclaiming March 15, 2017, as Michigan Conservation Officer Appreciation Day.

LED Chief Gary Hagler and DNR Director Keith Creagh

On the Air

Since February 2017, the work of Michigan’s conservation officers has been profiled in the “Wardens” television series. The reality-style program highlights officers across the state as they interact with citizens and perform their duties. It educates viewers about the responsibilities of conservation officers and the vital role they play in protecting Michigan’s resources while also encouraging the safe, legal and ethical enjoyment of the outdoors. The series, which is a partnership between the Law Enforcement Division, Wolf Creek Productions, and the Outdoor Channel is a ratings success, attracting more than 14 million viewers. It airs on the Outdoor Channel through the end of 2018.
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Since 1887
Michigan’s oldest statewide law enforcement agency

Michigan

The Law Enforcement Division (LED) of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has a unique role within the state’s law enforcement community. While its primary mission is to protect Michigan’s natural resources, the division continually evolves to accept new responsibilities and confront emerging challenges.

DNR conservation officers undergo some of the most extensive law enforcement training in the nation. Their comprehensive training and specialized equipment set them...
Conservation Officers

apart from their traditional law enforcement counterparts. For example, conservation officers often support communities by serving as first responders for medical emergencies or incidents involving public safety due to their police training, lifesaving skills, specialized training and equipment and statewide coverage. Conservation officers devote considerable time to educating the public on how to enjoy outdoor recreation safely and legally.

Whether in the deep woods, on city streets or on the Great Lakes, this elite team of men and women proudly follow in the footsteps of those who have protected Michigan’s natural resources and families for more than 130 years. We invite you to learn more about the LEDs accomplishments report, which is based on information gathered in the 2017 calendar year.

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<th>Program Area</th>
<th>Hours Worked</th>
<th>Arrests</th>
<th>Complaints</th>
<th>Warnings</th>
<th>Contacts</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td>183,297</td>
<td>2,398</td>
<td>8,562</td>
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<td>Fish</td>
<td>1,896</td>
<td>1,155</td>
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<td>Privately Owned Cervidae (POC)</td>
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<td>Marine</td>
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<td>Snowmobile</td>
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<td>174</td>
<td>2,402</td>
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<td>Off-Road Vehicle (ORV)</td>
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<td>1,734</td>
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<td>239</td>
<td>76</td>
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<td>219</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Land/Water</td>
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<td>Complaints Received 7,762</td>
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<td>Emergency Response</td>
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<td>1,095</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>3,749</td>
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<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>456,462</td>
<td>9,889</td>
<td>12,994</td>
<td>22,327</td>
<td>411,044</td>
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Conservation officers maintain a strong statewide presence through its nine districts that span every corner of Michigan. Conservation officers and special investigators are assigned to districts, ensuring statewide protection of Michigan’s natural resources and families. This organizational structure encourages conservation officers to be part of the communities they serve and enhance their knowledge of an area’s terrain, natural resources and people. Each district aligns with a DNR customer service center in that region.

The LED is headquartered in Lansing. This headquarters houses the division’s top administrators, civilian support staff and the communications center. From headquarters to the field, the men and women of the LED work together as one team to accomplish their mission.

1. **Marquette Customer Service Center**
   - 1990 US-41 South
   - 906-228-6561

2. **Newberry Customer Service Center**
   - 5100 State Highway M-123
   - 906-293-5131

3. **Gaylord Customer Service Center**
   - 1732 West M-32
   - 989-732-3541

4. **Cadillac Customer Service Center**
   - 8015 Mackinaw Trail
   - 231-775-9727

5. **Roscommon Customer Service Center**
   - 8717 N. Roscommon Road
   - 989-275-5151

6. **Bay City Customer Service Center**
   - 3580 State Park Drive
   - 989-684-9141

7. **Plainwell Customer Service Center**
   - 621 North 10th Street
   - 269-685-6851

8. **Lansing Customer Service Center**
   - 4166 Legacy Parkway
   - 517-284-4720

9. **Detroit Customer Service Center**
   - 1801 Atwater Street
   - 313-396-6890

**Division Headquarters - Lansing**
- 525 West Allegan
- 517-284-6000
Text or call:
Report All Poaching (RAP) 800-292-7800
It takes a team of dedicated men and women working in the field and behind the scenes to get the job done. In addition to sworn conservation officers, LED employs civilians who perform vital support such as dispatch, accounting, purchasing, timekeeping and human resources. Their professionalism and expertise keep the division running at peak efficiency.

Conservation officers also perform administrative duties that are not related to a specific program. These activities include payroll entry, record keeping, equipment maintenance and repairs and ticket audits.
One of LED’s most effective enforcement tools is the Report All Poaching (RAP) hotline. It enhances the LED’s partnership with the public by enabling citizens to report fish, game or other natural resource law violations while protecting the personal information of the caller. RAP also provides monetary awards for information leading to the arrest and conviction of violators.

RAP dispatchers are highly trained professionals who staff the hotline 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. RAP’s ability to quickly and accurately relay information to conservation officers has resulted in numerous apprehensions and prosecutions.

In 2017 the RAP hotline began accepting text messages in addition to telephone calls and an online form. This smart use of technology makes it more convenient for citizens to report violations.
Environmental

Conservation officers routinely enforce environmental protection laws in addition to natural resource protection laws. These investigations typically include littering on public lands, illegal disposal of solid waste, illegal tire disposal and septic waste hauling.

Conservation officers are partnering with the DNR Forest Resources Division on a statewide litter initiative. When a trash pile is found on public land a conservation officer reports the location to dispatchers. After conducting a criminal investigation to find the violators, the litter is scheduled for cleanup by community volunteers.

Coastal Zone Management

Michigan is home to many underwater shipwrecks and antiquities known as “Great Lakes Bottomlands Preserves.” These preserves typically have special historical, ecological, recreational or scientific value. Michigan law protects these items from being removed, altered or destroyed.

The division works in conjunction with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Michigan History Center in these protection initiatives.
The division teams up with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to protect our environment. Leading the charge is the Environmental Investigations Section (EIS), which is funded by DEQ but managed by LED.

Detectives assigned to EIS are highly trained investigators who come from traditional law enforcement agencies and the ranks of uniformed conservation officers. The complexity of environmental law cases requires detectives to have advanced skills. Detectives are DEQ employees who are housed in various DEQ offices across the state. They provide site security for staff when conducting investigations but focus on conducting criminal investigations into environmental law violations. Detectives also respond to scenes of major environmental incidents, assist local jurisdictions with environmental issues and assist in environmental investigations that often are initiated by uniformed conservation officers. In addition, detectives provide the mandatory environmental law training at all police academies and training programs within the state.
LED serves as the DNR lead with the State Emergency Operations Center. All emergency responses provided by DNR are coordinated through the division’s Emergency Management and Homeland Security Section.

Conservation officers play a critical role in the state’s emergency responses. They have provided on-the-water security for critical infrastructure and international boundary waters when national security alerts were at high levels. They also routinely provide security at DNR functions such as Natural Resources Commission meetings and DNR gas and mineral lease auctions.
Conservation officers keep their emergency response skills up to date. They participate in numerous exercises and attend training sessions in conjunction with their local, state and federal homeland security partners.
Wetlands
Michigan’s wetlands are a significant factor in the health and existence of other natural resources such as inland lakes, ground water, fisheries, wildlife and the Great Lakes. Yet, more than half of our original wetlands have been drained, making the protection of remaining wetlands critical.

Conservation officers actively seek out violations such as the dredging or filling of lakes and streams, placing structures on bottomlands, or interfering with the natural flow of an inland lake or stream. They work in partnership with the Department of Environmental Quality when conducting investigations and determining legal action.

Public Lands
Among Michigan’s greatest assets are its vast public land and property resources. Our state boasts more than 9 million acres that are open to some level of public hunting. These include state, federal and commercial forest lands. Considering there also are 103 state parks, 138 state forest campgrounds and several hundred public access sites, it’s no wonder Michigan is a paradise for outdoor enthusiasts.

These public properties are managed by the DNR Parks and Recreation Division and the Forest Resources Division. Conservation officers support their companion divisions by actively patrolling public lands, and enforcing all laws, rules and orders to protect citizens and state property.
Most enforcement actions on public lands involve violations such as illegal timber cutting, trespassing, vandalism, failure to pay required fees, off-road vehicle use, forest fire investigations, disorderly persons and illegal narcotics use or cultivation.
Fish

Michigan offers world-class fishing opportunities thanks to its diverse freshwater ecosystem. It’s an ecosystem that also hosts other aquatic species such as amphibians, reptiles and mollusks, many of which are protected during all or part of the year.

Conservation officers protect these species through aggressive education and enforcement. Their methods include classroom presentations, license enforcement, bait dealer inspections and targeted patrols for taking fish by illegal methods and enforcing spawning area closures.

Tribal

Michigan has a rich heritage of Native American culture. Some Michigan tribes have entered consent decrees with the state and the federal government. These agreements contain provisions related to treaty-reserved rights for hunting, trapping and fishing on inland and Great Lakes waters, and for gathering activities that occur inland within specified treaty-ceded areas.

Conservation officers work closely with tribal authorities to ensure the rights and regulations established by the decrees are honored and enforced.

LED has Great Lakes Enforcement Specialists who partner with tribal enforcement officers on issues such as enforcing regulations and the inspection of commercial fishing vessels.
Commercial Fish

The Great Lakes Enforcement Unit (GLEU) enforces regulations pertaining to state-licensed and tribal-licensed commercial fisheries. GLEU officers have highly specialized skills. In addition to patrolling the Great Lakes, they inspect docked vessels and commercial fishing facilities on land.

GLEU enforces regulations covering the wholesale fish industry as well. Conservation officers focus on issues regarding the illegal taking of fish with unlawful gear, fishing during closed seasons, unlawful species, size limits and quotas. Officers also investigate the illegally syndicated commercialization of fish and the loss, improper marking or abandonment of fish nets.

The GLEU team works closely with officers from neighboring Great Lakes states, Native American tribes, federal agencies and Canada on joint patrols and investigations. The unit also is active in homeland security and other maritime issues.

Aquatic Invasive Species

Aquatic invasive species continue to threaten Michigan’s Great Lakes and inland waters. The LED is making a concerted effort to help prevent their spread. Working in conjunction with state and federal partners, the division is attacking this problem through public awareness initiatives and vigorous enforcement.

GLEU has four vessels strategically stationed around the great lakes. This fleet enables officers to conduct patrols effectively, efficiently and safely across the great lakes.
Game
Proper wildlife and habitat management ensures that Michigan’s prized natural resources remain abundant for generations to come. Conservation officers are on the front lines of these efforts. Whether they are patrolling remote areas, enforcing game laws or teaching youth about hunting ethics and safety, conservation officers are integral to the health and sustainability of our state’s wildlife.

Privately Owned Cervidae
Michigan has numerous Privately Owned Cervidae (POC) enclosures. POC is a designation that includes game ranches and hunting ranches. The regulation and monitoring of these facilities is essential to preventing the spread of disease into free-ranging wildlife species.

Conservation officers actively enforce POC regulations. They help with facility and fence inspections and conduct enforcement activities when legal action is brought against a facility. The LED assists the DNR Wildlife Division and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development with monitoring efforts.
LED manages Michigan’s hunter education program, which is recognized as one of the nation’s finest. Since becoming mandatory in 1971, the program was modified in 1988 to include all hunters born after Jan. 1, 1960. It has expanded to include bow hunter and trapper education programs.

The programs are administered by dedicated division employees who specialize in hunter safety. For many students, this is their first exposure to a conservation officer, which allows for a positive interaction in a non-law enforcement setting.

A Michigan hunter education certificate is accepted in all 50 states and many other countries.
Conservation officers are highly trained, fully certified law enforcement professionals. In addition to enforcing natural resources and environmental laws, they often must act on general criminal law violations when interacting with the public. These typically include violations such as illegal narcotics possession, weapons contraband, operating under the influence, driving with a suspended license and domestic or felonious assaults. Many of these violations occur on state property such as state parks and forest campgrounds.

Many times, the environment itself dictates which agency must handle general law enforcement duties. Conservation officers patrol remote, rugged areas that can’t be reached by traditional law enforcement agencies. Some areas are only accessible by off-road vehicles, snowmobiles or watercraft.

Detectives use specialized equipment such as high-powered surveillance optics, audio recording devices and covert extended-use surveillance cameras.
The Special Investigations Unit (SIU) is comprised of highly skilled investigators with advanced training who come from the ranks of uniformed field conservation officers. Investigators receive additional training such as interview and interrogation techniques, evidence handling and covert investigations.

SIU detectives work in a plain-clothes capacity and have a wide range of responsibilities. Priorities include investigating complaints of illegal commercialization of fish, game or natural resources; syndicated poaching operations, and violations of threatened or endangered species laws.

Depending on the case, detectives may investigate in an overt manner or engage in undercover roles to infiltrate a poaching organization.
Motorized Recreation

**Marine**
Michigan is made for boating. In addition to the Great Lakes, our state boasts more than 11,000 inland lakes and over 36,000 miles of rivers and streams. Conservation officers responsible for protecting these resources and ensuring the safety of those who enjoy them.

LED has many duties related to public safety, marine enforcement and safety education. It also administers federal grant money from the U.S. Coast Guard for Michigan. The Division allocates a set portion of these grant dollars to county sheriff’s departments to assist in enforcement and education.

**Off-road Vehicles**
Conservation officers often use “group patrols” to target problem ORV areas such as river and stream crossings, wetlands and bogs, hill climb areas and other protected venues.

Off-road vehicle (ORV) riding continues to grow in popularity, generating a lot of ORV traffic on more than 16,600 miles of designated trails, routes and state forest roads open to ORV use. Conservation officers keep these trails safe by patrolling them on motorcycles, ORVs, sport utility vehicles and four-wheel trucks.

Officers are devoting more time during their daily patrols to ORV-related complaints on state and federal lands. This often results in enforcement action for violations such as operating off designated trail systems, through sensitive habitat and in forest production areas. Officers also enforce drug and alcohol laws during these patrols to ensure public safety.

ORV education is one of LED’s priorities. In addition to attending numerous safety classes across the state, conservation officers administer ORV funds to other Michigan law enforcement agencies to help with enforcement and youth education.

Michigan has roughly 795,000 registered vessels and countless canoes, kayaks, paddle boats and other watercraft not required to be registered.
Snowmobiles

Snowmobiling is a favorite pastime in Michigan and it’s the job of conservation officers to make sure the sport is enjoyed safely and legally. Conservation officers patrol on public trails, along roadways and near private property to ensure safety and protect the environment.

In addition, conservation officers routinely enforce snowmobile regulations in conjunction with fish and game patrols on public lands, seasonal roads and frozen lakes. The Division takes a leadership role in educating young snowmobilers, too. It administers Michigan’s snowmobile education program and officers frequently make presentations at classes across the state. They allocate grant funding for local agencies for snowmobile enforcement and education as well.

With more than 6,500 miles of groomed, designated snowmobile trails, Michigan offers one of the largest snowmobile trail systems in the country.
Conservation officers play a vital role in Michigan’s public safety network. They are highly trained, well-equipped peace officers with full authority to enforce all state criminal laws.

Only the finest candidates are selected for recruit training, which pushes them to their limits academically and physically. LED’s Recruit School runs 23 weeks and is some of the most comprehensive law enforcement training in the nation. Recruits receive basic instruction required by the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards along with specialized training due to their diverse responsibilities.

A conservation officer’s training never ends. Throughout their careers, officers are tested for physical fitness and basic law enforcement skills to maintain their law enforcement certification. Many officers enhance their knowledge by pursuing additional professional training as well.

Twenty-two recruits graduated from Recruit School #8 in 2017. Gov. Rick Snyder visited recruits and their instructors twice in 2017 to express his gratitude for their commitment to serving our state.
Recruit training covers many bases, including survival tactics, emergency vehicle operation, ORV handling, firearms, first aid, search and rescue, marine enforcement, and fish and game laws.

The goal of Recruit School is to build the best conservation officer and to shape the highest-quality individual.
The goal of Recruit School is to build the best conservation officer and to shape the highest-quality individual. Serving Communities

Conservation officers have a genuine connection to the communities they serve. They live in the areas they patrol, which gives them a personal understanding of the region’s inhabitants and natural resources.

The concept of community service is ingrained in every conservation officer. It’s part of the training curriculum for all conservation officer recruits and it reflects in the daily actions of every sworn officer. For example, conservation officers frequently respond to medical emergencies and public safety situations, often at personal risk and even when off duty.

In 2017, the division’s staff and recruit school #8 collected more than 1,800 items for the Michigan Harvest Gathering, the state’s annual food drive for needy families.
Conservation officers saved the lives of seven citizens in 2017. Since January 2014 the division has presented more than 20 of its conservation officers with Lifesaving Awards.
The mission of the Law Enforcement Division is to protect Michigan’s natural resources and the environment, and the health and safety of the public through effective law enforcement and education.