

Scope of Study

STATE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION POLICE

BACKGROUND

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) State Environmental Conservation Police (EnCon police) have the longest history of service of all state law enforcement entities in Connecticut. Historically, these officers have been referred to as “Game Wardens,” but the role of the EnCon police has changed over time.

EnCon police duties and responsibilities have expanded from their original role of protecting fish and game to also include:

- enforcing boating, motor vehicle, snowmobile, and all-terrain vehicle laws;
- enforcing criminal laws;
- policing the 100+ state parks and forests;
- assisting and supporting state and municipal police departments;
- assisting and supporting homeland security efforts;
- assisting and supporting the U.S. Coast Guard on Long Island Sound; and
- responding to search and rescue missions and missing person incidents in state parks and forests, on state lakes and rivers, and on Long Island Sound.

Today’s EnCon police are certified as police officers from the Connecticut Police Training Academy or its equivalent and must have four years of experience in the field of wildlife conservation, fish culture, commercial shellfishing, commercial fishing, farm management, forestry or law enforcement.

The Division of State Environmental Conservation Police is within the DEP Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. The division consists of three districts: East, West and Marine, and the Hartford Headquarters Command Staff. In the 2004 annual report, the director reported a recent decrease in staff through attrition and predicted that by the end of the year 2009 almost half of the remaining 50 EnCon Police would be eligible for retirement.

According to the division’s annual report in 2004, the EnCon police responded to a total of 12,301 incidents, which resulted in 3,430 arrests and 1,758 warnings. The majority of the incidents reported were categorized as either Fish and Game (44.1 percent) or Recreation/Criminal (41.9 percent). Boating incidents yielded the most arrests (866).

AREA OF FOCUS

The study will focus on evaluating the performance of the Department of Environmental Protection Division of State Environmental Conservation Police in enforcing fish and game laws, state parks and forest rules, boating laws, other criminal laws, and in conducting related functions.

Scope of Study

AREAS OF ANALYSIS

- Describe the authority of environmental conservation police officers and the scope of their responsibilities and activities.
- Analyze budget trends for the division and examine how expenditures are aligned with division priorities.
- Examine and analyze the overall organization and operation of the division, including trends in staffing levels, personnel structure, deployment of personnel, and prioritization of division responsibilities.
- Compare the division's staffing complement to those of other similar federal and state agencies and to any best practices for law enforcement staffing.
- Determine how division resources are supplemented (e.g., seasonal officers, volunteers) and how the general public is engaged to assist the division in performing its duties.
- Identify certification and training requirements of enforcement personnel and compare to the requirements for law enforcement agencies in Connecticut and other similar law enforcement agencies in other jurisdictions.
- Determine if policies, procedures, and standards are in place to ensure consistency and professional conduct of enforcement personnel in carrying out their duties.
- Analyze trends in calls for service, including the number and types of calls over time.
- Examine timeliness and adequacy of response by division personnel to emergency and non-emergency events.
- Examine the adequacy of equipment used to perform enforcement functions, including communications equipment, vehicles, and boats.
- Examine the role of the division in enforcing federal fisheries and wildlife laws and how this function is integrated with state responsibilities.
- Examine how the division interacts and coordinates its activities with other law enforcement agencies or agencies performing a similar function, including state and municipal police.