

State Environmental Conservation Police

Section I: Authority

- While conservation officer enforcement authority has always been statutorily limited, it has grown significantly over the years reflecting their expanded responsibilities since 1971.
 - The primary law enforcement authority of EnCon officers is contained in C.G.S. Section 26-6, in which subsection (a) outlines specific areas of the law that both conservation officers and special conservation officers are allowed to enforce, including state laws relating to fish and game, parks and recreation, boating, motor vehicles, and *certain* criminal acts.
 - Most EnCon officers do not believe their current enforcement authority granted to them is sufficient.
 - Conservation officers have indicated the police powers that they believe are most lacking are the ability to enforce narcotics laws on private property and certain motor vehicle violations.
 - While conservation officers have the training and experience to perform a narcotics arrest anywhere within their statewide jurisdiction, and are often on private property because of their hunting and fishing enforcement responsibilities, they are barred from drug law enforcement unless there is also a Section 26-6 violation.
 - The proscribed list of enumerated powers of the EnCon police has not been kept up to date.
1. **The authority of EnCon police should be modified to allow conservation officers to enforce narcotics violations, traffic signal violations, and larceny in the fourth and fifth degree off of DEP owned and controlled property, without having the violation enforced in conjunction with a breach of the laws enumerated in C.G.S. Section 26-6. In addition, the crimes of negligent hunting and hunting under the influence should be explicitly enumerated in C.G.S. Section 26-6.**

Section II: Incidents, Enforcement Actions, and Deployment

- While the total number of incidents and enforcement actions have declined between 2001 and 2005, the number of incidents on a per officer basis has increased on average in the last four years.
- In general, the percentage of recreational/criminal incidents declined, while that of fish and game incidents increased.

- The incidence of more serious crimes handled by the EnCon police (i.e., vice, controlled substances, and crimes against property and people) has declined in the last three years.
 - Most patrol time is devoted to fish and game activities and yields the most amount of incidents, but the least amount of enforcement actions.
 - From 2000 to 2005, an average of 70 percent of incidents were generated by officer observation of violations rather than reported complaints, though this percentage has declined in recent years.
 - Both state and municipal police respond to incidents in state parks and forests and these incidents are not always included in DEP's count of incidents.
 - In general, the EnCon police have more staffing during the busiest days, though, officers do not appear to be scheduled at optimal times as incidents appear to be peaking when officers are beginning to sign off.
 - A potential imbalance in workload distribution exists based on the ways the patrol zones are constructed and officers are distributed.
 - The actual distribution of incidents among individual officers suggests an imbalance among officer assignments.
- 2. EnCon officer work schedules should be better aligned with the occurrence of incidents.**
 - 3. Officer deployment and the patrol zone structure should be reexamined, along with a review as to how incidents are monitored and distributed, to better allocate the caseload among field officers.**
 - 4. EnCon police should institute a protocol to obtain information from state and municipal police departments regarding police activity on DEP property, beginning with parks with high attendance, to fully understand the amount of enforcement activity occurring on DEP property.**

Section III: Conservation Officer Staffing

- In recent years, the number of EnCon police officers has declined and not recovered from the early retirement program offered in 2003.
- Overall, the scope of EnCon police responsibilities has been increasing and most, but not all, of the measures related to EnCon coverage area and regulated entities have increased.
- The percentage of officer-generated actions has declined, while enforcement initiatives, which are considered more reactive policing strategies, have increased.

- The number of delayed/no-response calls has been increasing, but these calls tend to be for non-life threatening incidents and represent a relatively small percentage of all incidents.
- The recent trend in more serious crime and total incidents appears to be down, but incidents overall per officer have increased somewhat.
- While acknowledging the professionalism of EnCon officers, nearly all EnCon “customers” contacted by program review staff expressed some level of dissatisfaction with the level of service provided by the EnCon police, related to staffing.
- There is little data to indicate whether the actual incidence of fish and game violations is increasing or decreasing.
- Conservation officers do not feel there are enough staff to manage the division’s responsibilities.
- The EnCon police and the Department of Environmental Protection management have not consciously deliberated and explicitly defined their policy preference in the areas of policing philosophy, service philosophy, response time standards, and supervision philosophy.
- EnCon’s strategic plan is out of date, and its current goals do not have any associated performance indicators for measuring progress against those goals.
- Accurate staffing calculations for police coverage requires that each of the 22 park management units of the Department of Environmental Protection be formally assessed separately along with any other organization that depends on EnCon police services.
- A basic incident-based staffing model suggests that the number of EnCon police officers is inadequate.
- While some basic training is provided to seasonal park aides, the department does not provide training in conflict management.
- It does not appear the department has planned appropriately to replace retiring conservation officers in a timely manner to maintain the division’s current level of effectiveness as a law enforcement agency.

5. Department of Environmental Protection management needs to explicitly determine the expected role and performance of the EnCon police and develop policy statements on the desired policing style and service philosophy of the division.

6. The EnCon police should develop a new strategic plan with explicit objectives and performance indicators for the division related to its mission. Performance measures should address expected levels of service in parks and for other organizations that depend on EnCon services, and its accomplishments related to its resource protection functions, as well as traditional process and output measures

such as response times, length of time for case closure, and clearance rates for crime. Performance should be closely monitored against established plans and standards.

7. **Explicit standards should be created in consultation with the 22 park management units, lake authorities, and other organizations that depend on EnCon police services regarding the expected level of service from EnCon.**
8. **The Department of Environmental Protection should explore expanding training requirements for park aides to include conflict management and methods for dealing with difficult people, especially in parks with high attendance.**
9. **The Department of Environmental Protection should develop a long-term plan, along with a commitment for funding in the next budget cycle, for the expected replacement of retiring officers. It should be phased-in to address anticipated shortages of sworn personnel and recognize the need for extended training of new officers.**

Section IV: Equipment and Facilities

- While the majority of the equipment issued to the officers is in good condition, according to some, the type of equipment is not always sufficient to perform their tasks.
- The division's use of technology, such as surveillance equipment and mobile data terminals, should be expanded.
- Committee staff is in agreement with the results and conclusions of the previous facilities review that found the central division and nearly all district headquarters to be lacking space, security, and confidentiality.
- The evidence storage facilities and practices of the EnCon police raise serious concerns regarding compliance with chain of custody legal requirements.

10. **The division should expand the opportunities for conservation officers to participate in the selection of equipment.**
11. **DEP should explore the potential benefits of the use of surveillance technology, especially for historically significant buildings and other vulnerable park buildings, and expand the use of mobile data technology to increase the safety and efficiency of officers in the field.**
12. **The department should plan for and phase in facility improvements that accommodate the unique needs of the EnCon police in a timely manner as funds are made available, in accordance with the recommendations provided by the 2002 independent facilities review to provide each district's headquarters with additional space and modern amenities.**

13. The division shall ensure compliance with the chain of custody requirements recommended by accreditation standards such as CALEA (Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc.) or POSTC (Police Officer Standards and Training Council).

Section V: Management Practices

- Despite consistently exceeding the amount of training required by POSTC, a significant number of officers request additional training.
- The policies and procedures manual, called the General Orders, could be more comprehensive to minimize liabilities and maximize each officer's understanding of operations.
- The majority of the complaints received were from private citizens alleging an officer's attitude or conduct did not meet their expectations.
- Although the most common disposition for complaints was "sustained with discipline," for many officers it was their first offense, and supervisors elected to either just document the officer's performance in their Performance Observation Report or provide counseling.
- Several files in the complaint system lacked information required by the General Orders.
- The DEP Emergency Dispatch Center is in the process of developing its first annual training program for dispatchers.
- The dispatch center does not have a formal or sufficiently organized and accessible manual of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) or guidelines.
- There is no established program or practice for evaluating DEP dispatchers for quality control purposes.
- The dispatch center and the division do not currently meet to review trends and findings revealed by dispatch documentation or to notify each other of important changes in a timely manner.
- Most agencies have expressed satisfaction with the coordination and working relationship with the EnCon police.
- The division does not have mutual aid agreements or MOUs with municipal departments.
- Revenue generated by DEP law enforcement activity has decreased by approximately \$100,000 since FY 2001.

14. The division should regularly assess the training needs of its personnel to ensure the training they receive allows them to perform their duties with confidence in the field.

15. The administrative sergeant located at the Central Headquarters in Hartford should be responsible for finding appropriate elective training events and implementing a system to notify all officers of the dates of such events as well as deadlines for application.
16. The division should revise the General Orders to include topics that are either missing or underdeveloped and establish a process for periodic review and update.
17. The division should also consider seeking accreditation from either POSTC or CALEA.
18. Supervisors should adhere to the report format presented in General Orders Chapter 4, Section 2, Appendix A for internal affairs investigations and administrative inquiries to ensure the accuracy and completeness of these files. Appendix A should be amended to include a description of the method of corrective action decided upon.
19. The DEP Emergency Dispatch Center should develop and periodically update a standard operating procedures manual to include, but not be limited to call handling procedures on how emergency and non-emergency calls are handled and how calls are to be managed when there is no officer on duty. These protocols should be followed and well documented to increase the accountability of both officers and dispatch operators. The procedures manual should be available in an easy to use and easy to reference format.
20. EnCon should review, validate, and further refine the underlying incident and activity data codes along with the input criteria for its Computer Aided Dispatch system.
21. The DEP Emergency Dispatch Center should develop a quality assurance program to ensure appropriate and defensible dispatch procedures are followed. The program should include a periodic review of recorded calls to ensure each dispatch operator asked the right questions, provided the correct answers, and followed protocol. DEP dispatch will need to retrain operators to address any deficiencies that are revealed.
22. The DEP Emergency Dispatch Center should develop a clear, safe, and consistent strategy for handling calls that require medical assistance, such as transferring calls to emergency 9-1-1.
23. The DEP Emergency Dispatch Center should develop and report annually performance measures related to dispatch functions and operations, including but not limited to dispatcher response times and accuracy standards.

- 24. Personnel representing the DEP Emergency Dispatch Center and the Division of State Environmental Conservation Police should meet at least annually to formally review the trends and findings revealed by dispatch documentation. Any changes in codes, policies, procedures, and deployment, and when those changes are to be implemented should be documented.**
- 25. EnCon police should examine becoming a member of regional mutual aid agreements throughout the state, and enter into mutual aid agreements or memoranda of understanding with municipalities where it will be beneficial for both agencies to formally define their relationship and respective responsibilities in areas of mutual concern or in the event of an emergency situation.**
- 26. EnCon should institute a practice of having captains meet with the relevant local chiefs of police before and after the summer season to discuss areas of mutual concern in areas with high attendance parks.**