



GEORGIA

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

Law Enforcement Off the Pavement

2017- 2019 Strategic Goals

Final Report

February 2020



VISION STATEMENT

The vision of the Law Enforcement Division is to ensure that Georgia's natural resources will be conserved for our present and future generations.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Law Enforcement Division is to conserve our natural resources and to protect the people we serve. We maintain public support through fair and vigorous law enforcement, quality education, and community involvement. We commit ourselves to our Vision and Mission by practicing our core beliefs, which are **trust**, **fairness**, and **professionalism**.

TRUST IS OUR FOUNDATION

The people we serve are entitled to the highest level of integrity in our public and private actions.

FAIRNESS IS OUR DOCTRINE

We conduct our duties without favoritism or bias.

PROFESSIONALISM IS OUR CREED

We are committed to courteous, effective, and efficient service.



A Word from the Director



The Georgia DNR Law Enforcement Division is the best of its kind in the nation. I am excited as we continue to move forward and stay focused on our core mission, which is Conservation Law Enforcement. Enforcing hunting, fishing, boating, and environmental laws and maintaining public safety on all DNR controlled properties will remain our primary focus. The services we provide are an integral and vital part of fulfilling the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' responsibilities, and our unique capabilities are relevant and essential for all the state's outdoor recreational users.

Game wardens were the first community-oriented officers in the United States, and I believe that we all must continue being active members of our communities, a key element in gaining trust and garnering support for our enforcement efforts.

This "Final Report" is meant to provide an assessment of our division's progress in reaching these aggressive, yet attainable goals. It will show that since the Plan was implemented three years ago, all the goals are in various stages of progress - some completed and others to be energetically pursued during the 2020-2022 Plan.

The success we have seen in our pursuit of these goals has come through collaboration with other DNR Divisions, the hard work of our officers, outstanding field investigations, and our great support staff. Partnerships with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies have been valuable commodities in supporting our core mission as well.

We have made outstanding progress during the three years of the Plan, but as a Division, we still have work to do. As the Law Enforcement Director, I consider it an honor to work with our staff and game wardens and I look forward to the coming years as we strive to meet new goals.

I am proud of the Division's reputation of carrying out our duties in a professional, resourceful, respectful and caring manner. Serving you as the Law Enforcement Director is an honor and having the opportunity to lead this division is something I look forward to as we build on our traditions and culture and we expand our responsibilities to embrace the new challenges that lie ahead.

Colonel Thomas Barnard

Goals and Strategies

Goal 1: Conservation Law Enforcement

Protect Georgia's natural resources and people through fair and vigorous enforcement efforts and provide a safe environment on DNR controlled properties.

Strategy 1.1 - Encourage voluntary compliance with wildlife, boating and environmental laws through proactive and responsive law enforcement patrols on private properties, DNR controlled properties and waters of the state. Capture the number of Citizen Assists provided by our officers.

***STATUS: In Progress** - Through proactive high-visibility patrols, game wardens worked throughout the period to encourage voluntary compliance. Three-year cumulative totals show that game wardens performed 25,777 park patrols, 35,407 WMA patrols, 5,276 PFA patrols and 12,282 on-water boating patrols. During these patrols 74,350 vessels, 59,496 hunting licenses and 93,354 fishing licenses were checked. There were 4,617 citizen assists entered into the computer aided dispatch system and 23,760 cases and 28,656 warning citations were written for violations of the law encountered by game wardens during the period.

Strategy 1.2 - Provide safe boating and hunting experiences through conservation law enforcement efforts to prevent incidents, fatalities, injuries and property damage.

***STATUS: In Progress** – Three-year cumulative totals show 15,268 contacts were issued for boating violations, and an additional 31,873 contacts issued for wildlife and fisheries law violations. During the 2017-2019 period, game wardens responded to 98 Hunting Incidents, 374 Boating Incidents and 166 Drowning Incidents. For the entire Division, 448,660 man-hours were dedicated to wildlife enforcement and 125,809 man-hours dedicated to fish enforcement during the period.

Strategy 1.3 - Safeguard Georgia's natural and cultural resources. Continue to further develop an intelligence-led policing philosophy that includes monitoring trends in conservation law enforcement and the use of existing data. Develop a reliable method of complaint/incident documentation and retrieval of data.

***STATUS: In Progress** - HQ pulls and sends a complete listing of all cases and warnings to each Captain for their Region for each month. This is disseminated via email by the 5th of the following month. All complaints are entered into Mobile Forms on the CTS system and are available for other game wardens to view and update relative to each complaint on a real-time basis. Data retrieval for individual complaints or trends is conducted for the field by HQ on request. Individual complaints can be pulled through mobile forms by individual offices when needed. A committee was developed and specific data relevant to this strategy was disseminated by HQ. After working with CTS to address data retrieval issues, SmartData was released as a user friendly, data retrieval interface which will allow Region Supervisors and Field Sergeants to more easily access not only individual reports, but also run reports related to individual officers and regions. CTS has also developed a new Incident Report which allows automated crime statistic reporting to the FBI's National Incident Bases Reporting System (NIBRS). This report has replaced the old Incident Arrest Report. A "Watch Order" is under review and once implemented will serve as a living document to enhance the way that game wardens work/document complaints.

Strategy 1.4 - Annually review staffing matrix to determine the staffing requirements to meet the conservation law enforcement needs and public safety needs for all DNR controlled properties, private land, and waters of the state.

***STATUS: In Progress** – The Field Force Matrix was used in professional meetings with Office of Policy & Budget (OPB) and legislative partners to address staffing level needs within LED. During this period LED had 4 hiring cycles, 2 of which utilized HB 208 funds.

Strategy 1.5 - Provide emergency response during critical incidents and natural disasters in accordance with the DNR All Hazards Response Manual and ICS guidelines.

***STATUS: Complete** – During the period from 2017 through 2019, over 500 employees of DNR attended Critical Incident Management. Also, during this period multiple large-scale responses were conducted to include West Mims Fire, Albany Tornadoes, Hurricane Irma, Hurricane Michael and winter weather events.

Strategy 1.6 - Coordinate the Department’s Law Enforcement efforts with all Divisions through regular communication and consultation. Hold monthly meetings between region supervisors in each region to develop focus lists and semiannual statewide meetings with WRD and PRHSD leadership.

***STATUS: In Progress** - LED Region Supervisors met and communicated monthly. The Region Focus List, which was developed quarterly in each region by gathering input from the field game wardens, WRD and PRHSD will be replaced by a “Watch Order” and will serve as a living document. The WRD/LED/PRHSD meetings occurred in March, April, October and November each year during this period.

Strategy 1.7 - Continue to update and improve communication systems for officer safety and enhance responses to calls for assistance from the public. Identify communications needs for each LED Region for radio coverage and develop a communication plan to address the needs, to include the development of digital radio coverage for each Region.

***STATUS: Complete** - The department has been testing a Harris dual band radio in Region 1 with SGT Varnell’s work section. This will be for Bartow, Cobb, and Cherokee County. The Region 5 tower in Bainbridge is going to come down and we are looking to place a 190’ mono pole on Silver Lake WMA inside Seminole County. Region 5 installed new towers at the Region Office, Veterans State Park and a new tower lease from GA Power in Muscogee County, Fortson Tower. Region 2 has moved from the Commerce Tower to the new Arcade Tower and working with Ralph Bevan to change RX/TX between Commerce and Currahee repeaters to eliminate crossover traffic. Region 4 has a new tower lease agreement in Jeff Davis County for a tower in Hazlehurst to improve coverage and reduce annual costs.

Strategy 1.8 - Collect and review all Search and Rescue (SAR) data on an annual basis to ensure a proper response to each call. Identify SAR resources within DNR and list, share and update information annually.

***STATUS: In Progress** - During the 2017-2019 period, LED game wardens responded to 481 land SAR cases involving 885 persons and 606 Water SAR Cases involving 1,467 persons. Land SAR cases required 4,072 man-hours and 59,474 vehicle miles. Water SAR cases required 10,383 man-hours and 106,065 vehicle miles. Thirty-one of our Sonar / ROV operators conducted two weeks of training, one on Lake Lanier and one on Lake Jackson to make sure equipment and operators are ready for deployment. The Division will continue recruitment and training of new sonar operators along with refresher training for existing team members.

Strategy 1.9 - Complete the implementation of the DNR LE Transition Plan.

***STATUS: Complete** - The Transition Plan concluded on July 31, 2018 when all DNR POST certified associates relinquished their commissions or transferred to LED.



Goal 2: Education, Marketing and Community Involvement

Utilize communications, marketing, and community involvement strategies to promote conservation law enforcement education, recruitment and retention of sportsmen and women, and the mission, responsibilities and unique capabilities of the Law Enforcement Division.

Strategy 2.1 - Promote safe boating and hunting by providing boater and hunter education through online and in-person classes. Develop seasonal PSAs related to hunting and boating safety for dissemination and presentation by our officers thru local media outlets.

***STATUS: In Progress** - Boating and hunting news releases were sent to statewide media. Public service announcements (PSAs) were written on tree stand safety, safe turkey hunting, recruiting new game wardens, and the Game Warden License Plate. They were disseminated to game wardens across the state for recording and broadcast in their local markets.

Strategy 2.2 - Continue to utilize media relations, LED presentations, press releases and social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, etc.) to enhance communication with citizens and the division's stakeholders. Emphasis will be on using social media to recruit and retain sportsmen and women as an educational tool. Promote social media to have 100,000 followers by the end of 2019.

***STATUS: In Progress** - Throughout the 3-year period, the Division utilized outreach tools and campaigns to educate Georgia citizens and to promote hunting, recruiting, and water safety. Media interviews were concentrated around specific initiatives such as the start of the boating and hunting seasons, "Operation Dry Water" - focused enforcement for boating under the influence, and the July 4th Holiday weekend to promote safe boating and swimming safety and to educate citizens on boating laws and how they are applied. Prior to boating season, in late May each year, LED partnered with the Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS) and the Georgia State Patrol (GSP) to encourage safety on the waterways and highways throughout the summer. The SPLASH Water Safety Campaign, in partnership with many federal, state and private partners, made great strides toward the goal of reducing the number of water-related deaths in Georgia. The acronym highlights positive actions for water safety – Supervision, Prevention, Life jackets, Arms-length, Swim lessons, and Have a water safety plan. Successes of the campaign included placing life jacket loaner boards at 11 public fishing areas and at approximately 20 additional locations across the state: and updating the SPLASH web site and Facebook page. As part of the ongoing effort, the SPLASH team is continuing to explore securing donations of life jackets or funding through corporate sponsorships in order to supply and to replenish jackets on the approximately 250 loaner stations planned for boat ramps and swimming areas across Georgia. Plans are to continue the SPLASH initiative indefinitely. Directed communication methods and social media have been and continue to be an important part of the Division's outreach efforts. Weekly DNR LE Reports were provided to the DNR Board, and presentations and speeches to various civic and community groups, along with news media interviews and interaction were often utilized to disseminate information to the public. The combined LED social media following has not reached 100,000 yet but it now totals over 60,000 and is continuing steady growth. While some DNR divisions elect to pay for social media promotion to generate followers, LED has chosen to allow the content of the pages to attract "organic" followers. The LED Facebook page currently has over 60,000 page "Likes" (people who regularly view the page). Many of LED's Facebook posts have a "Reach" (number of people who may see the post through their friends who "Like" the page) that exceeds 100,000, and occasionally, some are above 200,000. The Division's Twitter account that is linked to Facebook currently has over 1,300 followers, and the LED YouTube Channel with multiple safety-related videos, including a Boating Rental Video with nearly

52,000 views. While Facebook and Twitter have reached somewhat of a plateau in growth, the fastest growing social media account for the Division is Instagram, with nearly 5,900 followers. Instagram is one of the most popular social media apps used by teenagers and young adults, an audience that is often hard to reach with safety messages by other means.

Strategy 2.3 - Develop/promote a marketing plan to emphasize the division's mission, responsibilities, unique capabilities, operational needs and relevance. This message will be communicated to the citizens of Georgia, the General Assembly, board members, local public officials, NGOs and other divisions within the department. Develop quick reference cards, presentation material and public service announcements to promote the various/diverse duties of the division. Provide canned LED PowerPoint presentation to all local elected officials, county commissioners and General Assembly Members. Provide ride-a-longs to local elected officials and members of the General Assembly.

***STATUS: Complete** - Game wardens visited local schools and colleges, and hunting, fishing and boating trade shows for recruitment and division marketing. They provided the Department PowerPoint to stakeholders, county commissioners and other elected officials. PAO Mark McKinnon updated PSA's and PowerPoints for game wardens to use for recruiting and public safety announcements. McKinnon produced other presentations for delivery to the DNR Board, General Assembly meetings and other special interest groups. Divisional promotional items were created with a message to promote Divisional and Departmental interests. Divisional representatives were identified to attend specific events in effort to promote LED and recruit a pool of diverse, qualified applicants. Game wardens provided educational ride-a-longs to several Legislative members during this period.

Strategy 2.4 - Develop/promote an intelligence led and conservation community oriented policing initiative and philosophy for our core constituents and local conservation communities.

***STATUS: In Progress** – During this period (September 2018) the Division added an analyst position to the Investigative Unit. One of the primary duties for this position is to fulfill requests from the field for assistance in locating and identifying suspects, assisting with digital and social media court orders, distribution of intelligence and look out bulletins and collecting, analyzing, and presenting criminal and statistical intelligence on a statewide level.

Over 800 cases have been assigned to the Investigated Unit and an additional 277 Marine Theft cases have been investigated.

The Division continues to develop intelligence led conservation using new technology and equipment such as body cameras, cellular based game cameras, and unmanned aircraft systems. Three investigators have completed advanced training for investigations using cellular technology and two additional investigators are scheduled to attend in the summer of 2020.

Strategy 2.5 - Equip game wardens with smart phones for the purposes of answering calls and complaints from the public. Cell phones would also be utilized for required social media submissions.

***STATUS: Complete** – All game wardens were provided Verizon Smart Phones; social media submissions are provided directly to PAO Mark McKinnon.



Goal 3: Training, Recruitment and Retention

Promote professional excellence throughout the Law Enforcement Division by providing quality service, knowledgeable associates, and a well-trained and specialized workforce. Continue to improve the Law Enforcement Division’s ability to train and retain the most qualified associates in order to provide the best customer service to the citizens of the State of Georgia.

Strategy 3.1 - Identify relevant training and equipment needs to better prepare DNR Law Enforcement Officers, enhance officer safety, and reduce conservation law enforcement crimes and incidents. Focus annual training on current, relevant needs of the division and DNR controlled properties responsibilities.

***STATUS: In Progress** – Annual In-Service training for the 2017-2019 included Firearm’s Requalification, Firearm’s Training, Use of Force, De-escalation techniques, Archeological Training, Cultural Awareness Police Legitimacy, Procedural Justice and Community Relations, Building Positive Community Relations and Policy / Legislative Updates. All game wardens were trained in the NASBLA Seated Battery SFST program for use in BUI and HUI enforcement. The division also completed the first two phases of X2 Taser deployment. Seventy-three game wardens were trained and certified in the use of the X2 Taser. A statewide Officer Water Survival in-service was also completed. Game wardens were trained in Basic and Advanced water survival techniques that included topics such as drown-proofing, survival swimming, self-rescue and waterborne defensive / firearms tactics. This course will greatly enhance our game wardens’ abilities to operate and survive in the marine environment. The Division also transitioned to a new duty handgun in the fall of 2019. Game wardens were trained and qualified in the Glock Model 45 9mm Pistol with the “Night Stick” weapons mounted light. Advanced Use of Force training is being planned for 2020.

In 2018, the decision was made to re-establish the full Game Warden Academy modifying it to include the 408 hours of POST Basic Mandate training. The Division Training Unit coordinated and taught the POST Basic Law Enforcement Training course and Advanced Game Warden Academy for the cadets of the 33rd Game Warden Academy. In 2019 the training unit combined POST Mandate Training with the Advance Game Warden Academy and submitted a new 935-hour Basic Game Warden Academy course to POST for approval. The course was approved by POST on July 26, 2019. The Cadets of the 34th Game Warden Academy will be trained under the new curriculum. During the period of 2017 – 2019, 67 new game wardens were hired and trained. Nine (9) are currently being trained and will graduate in 2020.

Strategy 3.2 - Research new technology that will enhance the division's ability to provide public safety and safeguard Georgia's natural and cultural resources.

***STATUS: Complete** - During the period from 2017 through 2019, LED purchased electronic engine cut off lanyards for large patrol vessels. Forty Spartan Cameras were purchased with Ginseng restitution funds. Many of these cameras are at end of life and will be upgraded in early 2020. The Investigative unit purchased 2 drones and currently the Division is having operators certified to operate these units for Search and Rescue and Law Enforcement operations. Infrared Lights and A-Post lights are now part of the standard rigging package for all field game warden patrol vehicles. In 2019, the Division transitioned from the Glock Model 22 .40 caliber pistol to the Glock Model 45 9mm pistol as the issued duty weapon. The Nightstick pistol mounted light was also adopted for use on the Model 45. Rifle Armor has been purchased for all field game wardens and will be issued upon delivery in early 2020. In an effort to keep the policy manual accessible, up to date and to reduce costs, the Division transitioned to a cloud-based policy manual format.

Strategy 3.3 - Continue with Field Training Program for officers who are responsible for training new employees, with each work section having two FTOs that meet policy requirements.

***STATUS: In Progress** - During the period of 2017 – 2019, the Division trained an additional 41 Field Training Officers (FTOs). FTO training is an in-house, 40-hour course designed to develop them as trainers. Successful FTOs produce viable, long-term employees through the continued training and evaluation of new game wardens. The Division also modified its Field Training Program by reducing it from a mandatory six-month program to a minimum of four months. This was done to better align the program with traditional FTO models used throughout the country. There is an option to extend the program for two months should the trainee need additional training. During 2017 - 2019, the 67 cadets who graduated from the 31st, 32nd and 33rd Game Warden Academies completed the Field Training Program.

Strategy 3.4 - Develop and implement a recruitment program within the DNR Law Enforcement Division with a minimum of one recruitment officer per region who focuses on minority applicants. Explore programs that reach out to the surrounding states for recruitment programs.

***STATUS: In Progress** – A Recruiting Committee was created and tasked with making recommendations on recruiting. The committee identified the many challenges of recruiting in today's climate as well as the challenges in recruiting minorities. The public's general attitude towards law enforcement careers, the minimum educational requirement, tattoo policy, hiring standards and their impact on recruiting was addressed. In particular, the swim component of the pre-employment physical agility test and its apparent disparate impact on minority recruiting/success during the hiring process was examined. As a result, the swim test was modified to measure an applicant's trainability by academy instructors in water survival skills rather than as an assessment of the applicant's swimming ability.

Strategy 3.5 - Review hiring standards and remain competitive with compensation packages compared to LE officers in local and other state agencies in order to attract and retain the most qualified employees.

***STATUS: In Progress** – A Hiring Standards Committee was tasked with reviewing the current divisional hiring standards for Game Warden candidates. The committee identified the effects that the current hiring standards have on our ability to attract the most qualified applicants. The committee found that “most qualified applicant” is a very subjective term, therefore efforts were focused on attempting to attract and select those applicants who would have the highest probability for success in the Game Warden Academy. As a result, the composition of the hiring board was changed to allow for more experienced field supervisors to evaluate and rate applicants. The board questions were also updated, and more behavioral based questions were added to the interview question bank to allow for a better assessment of a candidate’s potential.

Strategy 3.6 - Continue succession training to develop and prepare the future leaders of the Law Enforcement Division. Provide access to PMP or Command College for every Corporal and Sergeant in LED in accordance with LE Policy A-3.

***STATUS: In Progress** - PMP continues to be offered to all GWFC and above who have less than a bachelor’s degree. During 2017 – 2019, ten game wardens completed PMP. Six game wardens are currently enrolled in PMP Class 28 and an additional six in PMP Class 29. Command College continues to be offered to sergeants and above who have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Six game wardens graduated from Command College and each was awarded a Master’s Degree in Public Safety Administration. One game warden sergeant is scheduled to begin Command College in January of 2020.

Strategy 3.7 - Increase retention and recruitment efforts by reevaluating the current work schedule.

***STATUS: Complete** - The GWAC proposed the reduction of the number of mandatory work weekends in Calendar 2017. The proposal went from seven weekends to three weekends and was implemented in 2018. In 2019, as a result of HB 208, the Division gained 40 additional positions allowing management to abolish mandatory work weekends.

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