

## HISTORY OF LAW ENFORCEMENT IN ILLINOIS

### EARLY HISTORY

The first "Game Wardens" hired in Illinois were appointed by the Governor in 1885. There were three of them: one each for the Chicago, Peoria, and Quincy's area. They served a two-year term and were paid by receiving a portion of the fine monies collected from arrests they made for game law violations. They traveled the state by train, and would often be away from home for many days at a time. Fourteen years later, in 1899, twenty-two additional Game Wardens were hired.

Fisheries' laws were introduced many years after the first game laws, resulting in the hiring of several "Fish Wardens" in 1911. Game Wardens didn't enforce fish laws back then. Game Wardens and Fish Wardens joined forces and became the "Division of Fish & Game" in 1917, a new division of the Illinois Department of Agriculture.

The Department of Conservation was created in 1925. Agriculture's "Division of Fish & Game" joined the Department of Conservation in 1928, being renamed the "Division of Law Enforcement." The Game Wardens and Fish Wardens now were interchangeable, having the authority to enforce both fish and game laws instead of only one or the other. Because of this, their titles of Game Warden and Fish Warden were first changed to "Constable," replaced later by the title of "Inspector" (which they held until 1974).

### MODERN HISTORY

The Conservation Department's Inspectors (unofficially referred to as Game Wardens) received additional enforcement duties in 1959 when the Boat Registration & Safety Act was passed. At first, it was thought that the Illinois State Police or some other agency would be responsible for enforcing the new boating laws. However, because Conservation's Law Enforcement Division already had boats (nearly each Inspector had his own boat to enforce fish laws and to check waterfowl hunters), they were to be the primary boating enforcement agency (which included the Department's new responsibility of handling the registration of all motor boats).

The next increase in job duties occurred in the mid to late sixties when legislation was passed giving Conservation's Law Enforcement Division full police authority within the Department's state park system. Prior to this, the Inspectors could only enforce game laws, fish laws, and boating laws. Now, they could enforce all of the state's laws (traffic laws, criminal and drug laws, etc.) within the Department's owned, managed, or leased properties.

Because the law enforcement authority had increased to include duties above and beyond traditional game and fish enforcement, the Inspector's official title was changed to "Conservation Police Officer" (or "CPO") in 1974. In July of 1995, the Department of Conservation merged with several smaller departments to form what is now the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (or the DNR), yet we are still referred to as Conservation Police Officers. Since the beginning, the first title of "Game Warden"

seemed to be the one that has endured, and many people still use that title today for CPOs (not only in Illinois, but throughout the country).

#### ENFORCEMENT DUTIES

Today, although CPOs have full police authority in the enforcement of all Illinois Compiled Statutes, their enforcement mission is to focus upon those laws and activities associated with natural resource protection and recreational safety. Examples of the duties include:

- \* enforcing criminal laws, vehicle laws, drug laws, etc. in the State Parks.
- \* patrolling on Illinois lakes and rivers to check boating safety equipment and watercraft registration
- \* enforcing the fish and wildlife laws (checking hunters, trappers, sport and commercial fishermen for licenses, fish & game size/possession limits, season dates and hours, etc.)
- \* enforcing timber buyers and forest products transportation laws; endangered species laws; snowmobile registration and operation laws; Federal fish & wildlife laws; commercial establishments (e.g. fur buyers, taxidermists, fish markets) and Departmental (DNR) Administrative Rules & Regulations

#### NON-ENFORCEMENT DUTIES

Not all of the duties involve enforcement. A CPO's workload involves non-enforcement activities, such as:

- \* speaking at sport or hunt clubs, civic organizations, school classes, etc.
- \* staffing information booths at major sports, travel or boating expositions, or during "Law Enforcement Career Days" at specific colleges/universities/high schools in Illinois
- \* assisting with hunting, boating, and snowmobiling safety education programs
- \* assisting other law enforcement agencies, or to help in certain emergency/rescue situations
- \* providing instruction to other police agencies in certain "Conservation type" laws or related enforcement procedures
- \* working with college students who earn credit hours in an internship program, by working with veteran Conservation Police Officers to learn about the duties and responsibilities.
- \* attending various in-service type training programs such as: legal and legislative updates, first aid/CPR refreshers, and officer survival training (self-defense and use of firearms); and specialized schools (such as forensics, commercial establishments, sonar use, waterfowl enforcement, interview & interrogation schools, DUI and OUI enforcement [operating watercraft while under the influence alcohol or drugs], accident investigation [boating/hunting], etc.).