

# Annual Report of Law Enforcement Professional Standards

*Report Required by KRS 235:312*



**Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources**

**August 15, 2024**

***The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources' mission is to conserve, protect and enhance Kentucky's fish and wildlife resources and provide outstanding opportunities for hunting, fishing, trapping, boating, shooting sports, wildlife viewing, and related activities.***

In the 2014 Regular Legislative Session, the Kentucky General Assembly passed legislation that included a provision in law that the department shall provide to the Legislative Research Commission a report detailing the continued training measures that the department has undertaken during the past year for law enforcement officers. The report shall cover areas of enforcement policy and professionalism training to enhance the public's experience in interacting with the department's officers and in enjoying outdoor activities while maintaining a safe and lawful environment. Lastly, the report shall also include any changes that the department implemented during the past year regarding its law enforcement practices and interactions with the public.

In compliance with KRS 235:312 the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources' Law Enforcement Division is pleased to report the following:

- House Bill 586 passed during the 2024 session of the General Assembly and changed the title of Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) peace officers from conservation officer to game warden. The change was an Agency initiative that originated internally from its officers in an effort to better align with public's perspective of our professional title.

- The Law Enforcement Division recently completed an entire promotional process that included the ranks of Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, and Major. All Sergeants and Lieutenants are required to complete leadership trainings at the Department of Criminal Justice Training that includes the Academy of Police Supervision and Criminal Justice Executive Development courses. In addition to these courses, all Game Warden Sergeants complete the KDFWR Game Warden Sergeant academy.
- The Law Enforcement Division executive leadership ranks have attended multiple training courses across the Southeast United States regarding the North America Wildlife Law Enforcement Association (NAWLEA) accreditation program. Accreditation is a three-year commitment, and it is a goal of the Division to become an accredited law enforcement agency by year 2027. Once accreditation is attained, an audit occurs annually and it is a requirement of the Agency to follow NAWLEA standards to maintain accreditation.
- The Law Enforcement Division training section conducted active shooter training for all agency unsworn employees at our headquarters in Frankfort. The training provided safety awareness, threat recognition, pro-active planning components, and response plan preparedness.
- The Law Enforcement Division recently re-organized its public information officer (PIO) program and appointed 11 game wardens from across the state to the program. During the Spring of 2024, all the public affairs section team attended and completed the FBI-LETA public information officer course.
- The Law Enforcement Division policy manual continues to be fluid to ensure the requirements of our ever-changing profession are met and that best practices for law enforcement are up to date. Quarterly meetings are scheduled with a policy working group to guarantee current issues facing law enforcement are discussed and needed changes are made. The committee continues to be thorough and efficient through adaptation and development of new and existing policy and procedure. Our team has placed a specific focus on our Professional Standards section and its policies and procedures. Recently section leadership attended a very beneficial internal affairs training course lead by the very reputable, Daigle Law Group.
- The Law Enforcement Division recently added 8 patrol boats and 18 patrol trucks to our fleet. The addition of these patrol vehicles will help aid in the adequacy of our ability to effectively serve and protect the commonwealth. During 2024, a total 14 patrol

boats, 28 patrol trucks, and 5 all-terrain utility vehicles will have been issued to law enforcement field staff for patrols around the Commonwealth.

- The Law Enforcement Division created and plans to launch the Agency's first Sportsman's Academy. This is the KDFWR version of a citizen's police academy and is designed to inform and educate the public about the game warden profession. We are excited about the program and anticipate a great response from its participants.
- The Law Enforcement Division recently issued several pieces of equipment to game wardens that will better allow them to serve and protect the public during times of need, which include(s); modular optic system (red dot) duty pistols, thermal imaging drones, hand-held thermal imagers, and swift water personal flotation devices.
- The Law Enforcement Division is set to hire 18 new recruits this fall as Academy Class 28. With 587 applicants, Our Agency received the highest application rate in recent years. Upon graduation in 2025, these new game wardens will be assigned geographically across the state, targeting specific areas of need. Hiring game wardens and properly training them is an ongoing focus for our Department.
- The Law Enforcement Division K-9 program has proven to be a great asset to the Department and its mission. After dissolving the program in the mid 2000's, its revitalization in 2023 has been extremely rewarding. Our three K-9/handler teams have single handedly taken thousands of dollars in drugs from Kentucky's recreation areas, located fugitives and criminal evidence, found lost/missing persons, and been a part of hundreds of public relation events across our state.

The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Law Enforcement Division strives to provide a professional, well trained, and competent game wardens to serve the sportsmen and sportswomen that enjoy the resources of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Our wardens are often recognized for their efforts across the state by citizens that we have impacted in some way. Our wardens have a passion for conservation law enforcement and the mission of the Department.

  
Rich Storm, Commissioner