



Fraternal Order of Police, Inc. Lodge 8

2010 Maryland Legislative Sportsmen's Foundation- Sportsmen's Best Friend of the Year

Maryland Natural Resources Police

P.O. Box 350, Leonardtown, Maryland 20650

www.mdfo8.com



Michael Dyson
President

Timothy Pheabus
Vice President

John Jowanowitch
Secretary

Jeffery Wooddell
Treasurer

June 29, 2010

The Honorable Martin O'Malley
Governor, State of Maryland
State House
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Governor O'Malley:

When you signed the Conservation Law Enforcement Act of 2010 into law on May 4, 2010, not only did you provide the Natural Resources Police with a mission declaration and clarified that the Natural Resources Police Force specifically is charged with enforcing the natural resource **AND CONSERVATION** laws of the State, but you also addressed an issue that has plagued our agency for several years – a demoralized work force lacking the manpower to ensure the future viability of conservation law enforcement within the State of Maryland. Evidence of our concerns is addressed herein. In short, we desperately need increased support as recommended by the Maryland Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus to you on June 15, 2010 and appeal to you now for Leadership.

If MNRP were to staff all 23 counties with only 3 officers per shift for 24-hour coverage as the state police has 24-hour coverage, it would require 207 officers just to cover the time. All 207 officers would have no leave and work every day. Management would have to work the field (from Colonel to Sergeant). No officers are provided for enforcement on the bay and its tributaries unless you take them off the land. Major State Park enforcement requires at least 6 officers for 24-hour coverage on holiday weekends. With one major park in a county, no one could work anywhere else, land or water! Right now, the responsibility for natural resources enforcement on Maryland land and water, including the tidal waters of the Bay and Atlantic Ocean, falls to 180 officers working shift patrols statewide or 143 officers working shifts patrols without sergeants.

Our dire situation now impedes our ability to respond to emergencies in a timely manner, despite our sworn oath to serve and protect our citizens. A case in point occurred on June 16, 2010. We had two officers on patrol in Area 4 (Calvert, Charles and St. Mary's) southern Maryland, during the 4:00 P.M. to midnight shift, after 10:00 P.M. the only coverage for all three counties. After returning from a call in Charles County, the DNR Communication Center radioed both units in St. Mary's and dispatched both units for people in the water near North Beach (Calvert County) Fishing Creek/Chesapeake Bay from Hollywood (St. Mary's County). The North Beach Fire and Rescue and the U. S. Coast Guard out of Oxford, MD had a quicker response time, this emergency coverage was fortunate for the victims of this incident but cannot always be counted upon.

From recruitment to field assignment approximates 5 years – 2 years to graduate and another 3 years to become proficient in the field through learning the geography assigned to them, becoming familiar with the roadways in their area, establishing contacts and informants in an area, gaining proficiency with vessels assigned to the area, being able to navigate the district at night, and mastering the ever changing natural resources laws.

Without reservation, the NRP officers have a gut feeling that our agency will cease to exist as a viable conservation enforcement agency without immediate Executive intervention. In recent years, we have witnessed an annual rate of 15% reduction in the number of authorized officers. Our newest officers are discouraged from declining pay, furloughs, etc, and are considering other careers. According to Colonel George Johnson, Superintendent of the Natural Resources Police, 10 new recruits are in the planning stages, but even if these ten new recruits actually graduate, 10 recruits are woefully insufficient to curtail the declining numbers as we continue to loose officers, 15 officers will retire in 2011, these numbers are estimates could be higher. We do not even have enough authorized Personal Identification Number's (PIN's) to train a

class of thirty officers. These PINS were lost during the October 15, 2008, during budget reductions. We went from 280 PIN'S to 247 Law Enforcement Officers and presently sitting at 227 filled positions from the Colonel down to the Officer.

What do we recommend for your consideration? Our proposals – albeit in recognition of Maryland's difficult budget situation -- are outlined below:

- Increase the number of Personal Identification Numbers (PIN's) for Natural Resources Police Officers to **310 to allow a class of 30 officers** to supplement our depleted numbers in 2012.
- Allocate funds for a class of 30 officers to prevent the further decline in the number of officers as current LEO's retire, transfer, or quit in frustration.
- **Agree to the recommendations of the *TASK FORCE ON FISHERY MANAGEMENT* - DECEMBER 1, 2008** and authorize 435 law enforcement officers (LEOs), stipulating that the number of funded LEO positions should never fall below 400.
- Amend Maryland law so that the fines collected pursuant to the provisions of law of the District Court system imposed by the District Court for a violation of any provision of the Natural Resources Title shall be given to the Natural Resources Police – consistent with conservation violations at the Circuit Court level --- the following matter, less the cost of collection.
 - 25% of the fines collected in fiscal year 2011;
 - 50% of the fines collected in fiscal year 2012;
 - 75% of the fines collected in fiscal year 2013; and
 - 100% of the fines collected in fiscal year 2014 and thereafter.
- Include in the to the Natural Resources Police Force for the next several years, appropriations to fund the continued increase in the number of Natural Resources Police Officers to 435 officers through combination of:
 - A percentage of any funds generated by the Park Service that equals the cost of providing law enforcement and public safety on lands managed by the Department of Natural Resources.
 - A percentage of any funds collected by the Department of Natural Resources for the protection of fisheries.
 - A percentage of any funds collected by the Department of Natural Resources for the Waterway Improvement Fund.
 - A percentage of the aid to the counties for law enforcement funds based on the number of registered and documented boats in each county.
 - An appropriation from the general fund.
 - Funding for equipment and officers with any additional purchases of property through Project Open Space.

Pardon us for our indiscretion here; but, when we see the State Police have a class of 60 officers in the academy started in January 2010, and we have none; the message is seemingly clear – conservation enforcement coupled with criminal enforcement (NRP's statutory mission) – falls woefully short in comparing our two public safety enforcement workforces.

In the final analysis, our ultimate appeal is to you, *Governor O'Malley*. Enactment of the historic Conservation Law Enforcement Act of 2010 coupled with the June 15, 2010 letter from the Maryland Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus, are telltale signs that the public yearns for a stronger conservation law enforcement presence than exists today. As has been stated, what good is the expenditure of billions of taxpayer dollars to help restore our coveted Chesapeake Bay only to idly witness the over-harvesting of our finite resources by a seemingly insular few? We are the loyal and dedicated few to protecting our coveted fisheries and wildlife laws, but we see our role diminishing year after year to the detriment of the very creed we are sworn to uphold. Governor, we need your help, and we need it now!

Faithfully yours,

Michael P. Dyson

Michael Dyson, President
Fraternal Order of Police
NRP Lodge 8

cc: Secretary DNR John Griffin
Deputy Secretary Joseph Gill
NRP Superintendent George Johnson, IV