

Brothers and Sisters of Lodge 8

The Conservation Law Enforcement Act of 2010 is not a DNR bill but is collaboration with the Maryland Legislative Sportsmen Foundation and FOP 8. The Minimum Staffing Bill of 2009 and the Law Enforcement Conservation Act are a long way from getting us the people we need to survive any future reductions in staffing. We have a lengthy and tough battle ahead of us, but we are not throwing in the towel just yet. Don't let anyone tell you getting a bill passed is an easy process. It is a lot of long hours of traveling to Annapolis, setting up panels to testify before the committees, and obtaining the committee support followed by meeting and greeting Representatives with lots of discussion to keep them informed of our plight.

The Minimum Staffing Bill got my feet wet in the big pool. It was this Minimum Staffing Bill that got us the much-needed attention of the Maryland Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus and Foundation to take on our cause of getting more boots on the ground. The Minimum Staffing Bill may have died in committee in 2009, but it caught the eye of a lot of people. **Hence we got SB 987 – The Conservation Law Enforcement Act of 2010.**

With a lot of work the Act passed through the Maryland State Senate after a great deal of shoving and pulling to get it out of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee. We owe Senator Astle and Secretary Griffin a lot of gratitude for talking with the Committee Chair Senator Conway of the Committee. Senators Dyson and Colburn amended the bill by removing all of the items that the Department put into the bill; that allowed the bill to move out of committee to the Senate floor. It took two days to be passed and moved to the Maryland House of Delegates. On Wednesday, April 6, the bill moved with lightning speed. The House immediately (same day) passed it to the Rules Committee. Their chair convened the Rules Committee and same day pushed it onto the House of Delegates Environmental Matters Committee where it waited for a hearing. On Friday or Saturday it was voted on by the committee, with a unanimous vote, and was returned to the House of Delegates to receive its second reading. On Monday April 12, 2010 at 5:52 P.M. the bill received its third reading and passed with a 138 to 1 vote. Now the Conservation Law Enforcement Act 2010 is waiting to be signed by the Governor, which will then make it **law on June 1, 2010.**

Here is what it does for us; it gets the recognition of the General Assembly under Natural Resources Article 1-201.1 (**BOLD FACE** is new content!)

(A) There is a Natural Resource Police Force in the Department **THAT SERVES AS A PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCY WITH STATEWIDE AUTHORITY TO ENFORCE CONSERVATION, BOATING AND CRIMINAL LAWS.**

(B) THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES POLICE FORCE INCLUDES:

- (1) PROVIDING MARITIME AND RURAL SEARCH AND RESCUE SERVICES;**
- (2) PROVIDING PUBLIC EDUCATION IN HUNTING, BOATING, AND WATER SAFETY;**
- (3) PROVIDING PRIMARY LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES FOR THE STATE PARKS, STATE FOREST, WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS,**

AND PUBLIC LANDS OWNED AND MANAGED BY THE DEPARTMENT; AND

a. SERVING AS THE LEAD AGENCY FOR MARITIME HOMELAND SECURITY ON STATE WATERWAYS.

1-201

- i. In addition to any other powers conferred by this title, the Secretary and every Natural Resources police officer shall have all the powers conferred upon police officer of the State. These powers may be exercised anywhere within the State. The Natural Resources Police Force specifically is charged with enforcing the natural resources **and CONSERVATION (conservation was added to existing law)** laws of the State.
- ii. Every Natural Resources police officer appointed under 1-203 of this subtitle shall perform duties the Secretary designates.
- iii. Any law enforcement employee of the Department of Natural Resources who works overtime for any reason, whether or not the employee receives monetary payment for that overtime work, shall be considered to be employed by this State during those hours for purposes of all other employee entitlements.

10-301.3

(A) THERE IS A COMMEMORATIVE LIFETIME HUNTING LICENSE.

(B) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ISSUE A LIMITED NUMBER OF COMMEMORATIVE LIFETIME HUNTING LICENSES TO CERTAIN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS, CONSISTENT WITH ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA DEVELOPED BY THE DEPARTMENT, UNTIL DECEMBER 31, 2011.

(C) NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS ISSUED HUNTING LICENSES UNDER THIS SECTION MAY, IN COOPERATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT, MARKET AND SELL THE HUNTING LICENSES.

(D) ALL PROCEEDS FROM SALES OF HUNTING LICENSES UNDER THIS SECTION SHALL BE USED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO FUND CONSERVATION LAW ENFORCEMENT BY THE NATURAL RESOURCES POLICE FORCE.

(E) THE DEPARTMENT MAY ADOPT REGULATIONS TO CARRY OUT THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SECTION

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the General Assembly encourages the Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission, under the authority provided in § 24-205 of the Education Article, to help promote public recognition of

and appreciation for the role of the Natural Resources Police Force in enforcing the conservation laws of the State.

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the General Assembly encourages the Department of Natural Resources to conduct a study to identify additional changes to existing law that may enable the Natural Resources Police Force to become more effective and efficient, including a study of the benefits of requiring the use of technology for the prevention and detection of violations. Any findings and recommendations shall be presented in a report to the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee and the House Environmental Matters Committee

by December 1, 2010, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article.

SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the Department of Natural Resources, in cooperation with sportsmen's groups, and any other entities deemed appropriate by the Department, shall study funding policies that may bolster the ranks of the Natural Resources Police Force in order to help meet 21st century demands on conservation law enforcement, including policies by which revenues realized under this Act may be used to leverage additional revenues from the public and private sectors. On or before October 1, 2011, the Department shall report its findings and recommendations, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, to the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee and the House Environmental Matters Committee.

SECTION 5. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the General Assembly encourages the Governor to increase public awareness of and reliance on the Natural Resources Police Force reserve officers, who complement conservation law enforcement-related responsibilities under the direction of the Superintendent of the Natural Resources Police Force.

SECTION 6. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the General Assembly encourages the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to distribute to the Department of Natural Resources, for the purposes of conservation law enforcement, any funds the foundation receives from the United States Department of Justice as fines or penalties resulting from federal convictions of game violations in the State.

SECTION 7. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June 1, 2010.

This is it the foundation on which we can build in the years to come. Next year we will go for the funding sources and people. I have been told, unfortunately, baby steps are necessary to get to the bigger goal of more officers.

I want to thank all who sent in your cards to your representatives. Hopefully, after the dust settles, you will be hearing from them with their input as to how this year's session went.

Also it would help us if you could let us know if you mailed out the postcards to your representative and how many. This will help us determine the impact of the mailing and how to repeat this process next year. You can send this information to webmaster@fop8.com. Additionally, we have established a mail list for handling these mailings and would like your home email address to avoid going through the DNR addresses. Again thank you all for your support.

Having this bill pass would not have been accomplished without the support of the Active and Associate Members of the Maryland Fraternal Order of Police, and the Officers and Reserve Officers of the Maryland Natural Resources Police Force. The Lodge is thankful for the support of Officers and members.

Brothers and Sisters, I want to thank the following people for taking the time to come to the Senate hearing to testify on March 23rd or bear witness to the proceedings; Ray Griggs (BOA & FOP8), Fran Gower (FOP 130), Bill Bates (State FOP), Joe Riley, John Jowanowitch (both members of FOP8), Ted Fedders (FOP 8 Associate and Reserve Officer), Colonel George Johnson, Assistant Secretary Joe Gill, Capt. Bob Davis, Sgt. Art Windemuth, Reserve Officer Tim Beschmann and Candus Thompson of the Baltimore Sun.

The Lodge would like to express its on-going appreciation for the support from these groups:

- Deputy Secretary of DNR
- Attorney General's Office
- Maryland Legislative Sportsmen Foundation
- Coastal Conservation Association of Maryland
- Maryland Aquatic Resource Association
- Maryland Bow Owners Association
- Maryland Saltwater Fisherman Association
- Maryland Charter Boat Association
- National Charter Boat Association
- Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 8

If I missed naming anyone or any group, it is not intentional. Please email us the correction so we can alter our records and change our website. We certainly do not want to perpetuate the mistake. I am sorry it was a busy and long day.

Michael Dyson

President FOP - NRP Lodge 8