



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #521

Warden Recruit Class Support (DNR -- Fish, Wildlife, and Recreation)

[LFB 2005-07 Budget Summary: Page 359, #12]

CURRENT LAW

Conservation warden recruits receive in-depth classroom and field training to prepare them for working with a variety of sportsmen and recreational vehicle enthusiasts in the field.

GOVERNOR

Provide \$225,000 annually to support a law enforcement warden recruit class funded from the recycling, environmental, and conservation funds.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Currently, DNR has 205 credentialed law enforcement positions authorized, including supervisors, regional wardens, recreational safety wardens, and investigators. Of the 205 positions, 180 are filled with active wardens, and an additional 11 recruits are currently in training.

2. Warden recruit training covers a wide variety of topics, including firearms instruction, interview and interrogation, communications and field contact training, leadership, stress management, defensive tactics, and training on standard field equipment. The process of interviewing, hiring and fully training a recruit class can take up to a year, requiring some advance planning in anticipation of retirements and warden staff turnover.

3. There are currently 25 vacant credentialed law enforcement positions. The Department is in the process of training 11 recruits, who DNR anticipates will be ready for permanent field assignments by December, 2005. However, by the end of 2005 DNR also anticipates as many as six additional retirements, effectively lowering the anticipated year-end

vacancy rate to 20 as of December 2005. Funds provided under the bill would support additional classes of at least ten recruits each in 2005-06 and in 2006-07. Growth in the availability of warden recruits would be countered somewhat by an additional 8 anticipated warden retirements over the biennium, leading to a potential of, perhaps, eight vacant warden positions by the end of December, 2007 under the bill.

4. The average cost to train and initially outfit a recruit averages approximately \$21,000 (excluding salary and fringe benefits costs averaging \$41,200 per recruit, which is funded through the reallocation of salary savings from vacant positions). Costs include meals and lodging during on-site training classes, some instructor and facility charges, uniforms, basic gear, and firearms. Currently, there is no funding specifically provided for warden training costs. All funding for the program is reallocated from allotments provided for other enforcement purposes (such as supplies, services, mileage, limited-term employee assistance, and operations expenditures). Providing \$225,000 annually would cover the training and outfitting of ten warden recruits annually, as well as \$15,000 for other Department costs (such as recruitment, testing, and background checks), freeing up existing funding for mileage costs, equipment, and operations costs to support conservation warden field activities.

5. Under the bill, funding for the initiative would be provided from the following sources:

	<u>2005-06</u>	<u>2006-07</u>
Conservation Fund		
Fish and Wildlife Account	\$172,100	\$172,100
ATV Account	11,500	11,500
Water Resources Account	2,800	2,800
Boat Account	25,000	25,000
Environmental Fund	10,500	10,500
Recycling Fund	<u>3,100</u>	<u>3,100</u>
Total	\$225,000	\$225,000

6. Issues have been raised in previous papers over the condition of the fish and wildlife account of the conservation fund. An alternative to increasing revenues to the account is to reduce expenditures in order to maintain a positive balance. In addition to concerns over the available funding from the fish and wildlife account, it should be noted that the boat account, while maintaining a June 30, 2007, balance, could have a structural imbalance in the 2007-09 biennium. Further, the water resources account is anticipated to have commitments that exceed available revenues under the bill.

7. The Department has indicated that the support of warden classes during the 2005-07 biennium is a high priority for the law enforcement program. As such, it is likely that funding would continue to be reallocated for this purpose even if the provision is not fully funded under the bill.

DNR may continue to hold positions vacant and reduce other law enforcement efforts to maintain its recruit classes. However, full support of two recruit classes would be unlikely if no additional funds are provided.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Adopt the Governor's recommendation to provide \$225,000 each year to support an annual law enforcement warden recruit class funded from the recycling, environmental, and conservation funds.

2. Adopt the Governor's recommendation. However, provide no funding from the boat or water resources accounts of the conservation fund. The provision would be funded at \$197,200 annually from the recycling, environmental, and conservation funds (fish and wildlife and ATV account only).

Alternative 2	SEG
2005-07 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	- \$55,600

3. Maintain current law.

Alternative 3	SEG
2005-07 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	- \$450,000

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