



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #522

Mobile Data Communications (DNR -- Fish, Wildlife, and Recreation)

[LFB 2005-07 Budget Summary: Page 360, #13]

CURRENT LAW

Access to the State Patrol network allows conservation wardens in the field to access statewide and national data files through the Wisconsin Department of Justice and Crime Information Bureau. The data available through the network include driver's license files (all states); vehicle registrations (all states); Wisconsin hunting, fishing, trapping licenses and permits; boat, snowmobile, and ATV registrations (all states); warrants for wanted persons; stolen guns and equipment; criminal histories (state and FBI national files); and Wisconsin conservation and natural resources arrests.

GOVERNOR

Provide \$110,200 in 2005-06 and \$220,500 in 2006-07 in one-time funding from the conservation, environmental, and recycling funds to support the initial two fiscal years of a four-year master lease for a mobile data communication system for use by conservation wardens.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Currently, DNR wardens share a mobile data communication network with the State Patrol, which is upgrading the shared system. The transition is expected to be complete by January, 2007, and will allow the State Patrol to adjust to regulatory changes and replace obsolete equipment. Unless DNR wardens also upgrade to equipment that is compatible with that used by the State Patrol, the shared infrastructure will no longer be available to field conservation wardens after January 1, 2007. The cost per vehicle for upgrading to the new system is estimated to be just under \$3,400 per vehicle, and includes a data transmitter compatible with portable computers, a docking

station, and accompanying software. In total, DNR plans to upgrade the mobile data systems in 180 warden vehicles. Installation of the equipment would be completed by State Patrol radio communications staff.

2. Under the bill, the master lease would cover a data transmitter compatible with portable computers, a docking station, and accompanying software for 180 warden vehicles. Total cost over the life of the lease is estimated to be \$607,100. As the bill provides funding for the 2005-07 biennium only, additional costs to support the master lease would need to come from agency base resources or through future budget requests. In addition to amounts in the bill, approximately \$220,500 in 2007-08 and \$55,900 in 2008-09 would be required under the anticipated master lease agreement. (Under a master lease agreement, the Department of Administration finances the entire cost of the project upfront using lines of credit or certificates of participation, allowing DNR to make payments over several years, including interest costs, back to DOA).

3. In addition to the benefits associated with connecting Department of Justice and Crime Information Bureau databases to law enforcement staff in the field, the system is expected to save wardens time and improve productivity. Currently, wardens must access information on hunting and fishing licenses by telephone or radio exchanges with office staff, who access the information on line and relay it back to the field officer. The updated system would provide that information directly to the field officer, eliminating the need for the "five day warning" system for sportsmen not carrying approvals or licenses when contacted by a warden in the field. (Currently, individuals not able to produce proof of a license when contacted in the field by a warden have five days to contact the Department and provide this information or he or she may be cited for hunting without a license.) Time would also be saved through the efficient accessing of drivers license, registration, criminal histories, and conservation arrests databases.

4. Funding under the bill would be provided as follows:

	<u>2005-06</u>	<u>2006-07</u>
Conservation Fund		
Fish and Wildlife Account	\$84,300	\$168,500
ATV Account	5,700	11,400
Water Resources Account	1,400	2,800
Boat Account	12,200	24,500
Environmental Fund	5,100	10,200
Recycling Fund	<u>1,500</u>	<u>3,100</u>
Total	\$110,200	\$220,500

5. 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.

6. Previously, funding for master leases has generally been provided on an ongoing (rather than one-time) basis in recognition of the responsibility of operational programs to support the lease payments over time. Some concern has been expressed over taking on a longer term financial commitment with funding provided for only the first two fiscal years of the master lease. However, administration officials indicate that providing funding for these master leases on a one-time basis places the responsibility on DNR to request funding in future biennia, rather than requiring the Administration to track leases over their duration and delete funding after their completion (generally three to six years later). Under the bill, DNR would need to request funding in the 2007-09 biennium to complete master lease payments through approximately January, 2009.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Adopt the Governor's recommendation to provide \$110,200 in 2005-06 and \$220,500 in 2006-07 in one-time funding from the conservation, environmental, and recycling funds to support the initial two fiscal years of a four-year master lease for a mobile data communication system for use by the conservation wardens.

2. Adopt the Governor's recommendation. However, specify that funding be provided on an ongoing (rather than one-time basis) to ensure full funding of the request over the duration of the master lease. (Base funding for the project would continue after the lease is paid, unless removed by future legislation.)

3. Maintain current law.

Alternative 3	SEG
2005-07 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	- \$330,700

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