



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #597

Environmental Enforcement LTEs (DNR -- Fish, Wildlife, and Recreation)

Bill Agency

[LFB 2007-09 Budget Summary: Page 410, #7]

CURRENT LAW

The Department of Natural Resources' responsibilities include the investigation and enforcement of laws relating to fish and wildlife, recreational vehicles, environmental protection, and water regulation and zoning. These activities are performed primarily by conservation wardens (which include environmental wardens) whose enforcement authority varies depending on the type, location and severity of the violation. Conservation wardens share responsibilities with park superintendents and forest rangers for public conduct on state lands. When requested, wardens assist local police and are authorized to respond when any crime is committed in their presence.

GOVERNOR

Provide \$82,500 SEG annually from the environmental management account of the segregated environmental fund to provide additional limited-term employees (LTEs) for environmental enforcement activities. Funding would provide five LTEs, one in each of the five DNR regions.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Under 2003 Act 33 (the 2003-05 biennial budget), DNR's Enforcement and Science Division was reduced by 2.92 environmental enforcement specialist positions, as part of reductions in expenditures to balance the environmental management account of the segregated environmental

fund. The Department currently has 19.5 permanent environmental enforcement staff authorized statewide (12.5 environmental enforcement specialists and 7.0 environmental conservation wardens). In addition, the environmental management account provides \$20,500 annually for one LTE to support enforcement efforts that are undertaken by Madison enforcement staff from field referrals.

2. As a result of decreased staffing, the Department argues that environmental enforcement staff have been unable to adequately manage the existing workload. This has led to an increase in the length of time it takes DNR to address an incident.

3. Under the bill, \$82,500 annually would be provided to support five LTEs, one in each of the DNR regions. These LTEs would be classified as office associates, and would provide administrative support to the regional environmental wardens (such as case file development, copying, filing, data management, and responding to information requests). This would allow the wardens and other environmental enforcement staff to conduct more investigations and complete more case analyses and may result in faster resolution of cases.

4. On the other hand, given the condition of the environmental management account under the bill (discussed in a separate budget paper), some may argue increasing expenditures for enforcement is not warranted at this time.

ALTERNATIVES TO BILL

1. Adopt the Governor's recommendation to provide \$82,500 annually from the environmental fund for five environmental enforcement LTEs.

ALT 1	Change to Bill Funding	Change to Base Funding
SEG	\$0	\$165,000

2. Maintain current law.

ALT 2	Change to Bill Funding	Change to Base Funding
SEG	-\$165,000	\$0

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