

Natural Resources

Law Enforcement

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5	Transfer Snowmobile Enforcement from Tribal Gaming Revenues



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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #560

Conservation Warden Patrol Equipment (Natural Resources -- Law Enforcement)

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CURRENT LAW

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Division of Public Safety and Resource Protection (PSRP) is responsible for the enforcement of state laws regarding fish and wildlife, motorized recreation, and environmental quality, as well as ensuring public safety at DNR recreational properties. DNR law enforcement personnel may respond to incidents in coordination with other agencies. Currently, DNR law enforcement staff use several different systems to issue and track citations, develop criminal reports, track and inventory evidence, dispatch and locate wardens and other law enforcement, and report uniform crime data.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Conservation Warden Patrol Equipment Overview

1. DNR has 220 conservation warden positions and 15 seasonal community service officers. Recent biennial budgets have provided DNR with funding to acquire, maintain, and operate new conservation warden equipment. 2019 Wisconsin Act 9 provided \$4.6 million in one-time funding to acquire multi-band radios. 2021 Wisconsin Act 58 provided \$145,100 in one-time funding to acquire body-worn cameras and increased base general operations funding for DNR law enforcement by \$227,400 to accommodate increased costs of routine warden equipment such as opioid-blocking naloxone and body-worn camera data storage. Subsequent action by the Committee in June of 2023 under s. 13.10 of the statutes provided \$62,300 GPR and \$1,816,300 SEG (\$1,712,300 conservation SEG and \$104,000 environmental SEG) for an integrated law enforcement records management system. 2023 Wisconsin Act 19 provided \$76,500 in one-time funding to acquire automated external defibrillators, \$120,100 in one-time funding to acquire Tasers, and \$194,300 each

year to acquire off-road vehicles for conservation wardens.

2. Senate Bill 45/Assembly Bill 50 would provide \$4,306,100 (\$390,400 GPR, \$3,800,500 conservation SEG, and \$115,200 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$3,175,700 (\$130,100 GPR, \$2,957,800 conservation SEG, and \$87,800 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 for the purchase or upgrade of multiple pieces of patrol equipment for DNR conservation wardens. Table 1 shows amounts by fund source for each category of equipment to be purchased. Of the funding that would be provided from the conservation fund, amounts shown as split-funded would be primarily supported by the fish and wildlife account. The Department indicates that its prioritization for conservation warden patrol equipment funding is as follows: (a) ruggedized computers; (b) body cameras; (c) Tasers; (d) vehicle internet routers; and (e) radios.

TABLE 1
Conservation Warden Patrol Equipment Funding -- SB 45/AB 50

	Law Enforcement				
	<u>Radios</u> <u>(Each Year)</u>	<u>Body Cameras</u> <u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>	<u>Taser Units</u> <u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>
GPR	\$92,100	\$232,000	\$12,200	\$30,800	\$1,100
Conservation SEG					
Boat	\$284,100	\$37,300	\$37,300	\$68,200	\$2,300
ATV-UTV	88,800	11,600	11,600	29,200	1,000
Water Resources	21,100	2,800	2,800	7,100	300
Split-Funded	<u>1,606,700</u>	<u>316,600</u>	<u>348,500</u>	<u>560,000</u>	<u>19,700</u>
Conservation SEG Subtotal	\$2,000,700	\$368,300	\$400,200	\$664,500	\$23,300
Environmental SEG	\$62,100	\$8,200	\$8,200	\$20,800	\$700
Total SEG	\$2,062,800	\$376,500	\$408,400	\$685,300	\$24,000
Annual Total	\$2,154,900	\$608,500	\$420,600	\$716,100	\$25,100
	<u>Ruggedized</u> <u>Computers</u> <u>(Each Year)</u>	<u>Vehicle Routers</u>		<u>Total</u>	
		<u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>	<u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>
GPR	\$13,100	\$22,400	\$11,600	\$390,400	\$130,100
Conservation SEG					
Boat	\$40,200	\$49,700	\$25,700	\$479,500	\$389,600
ATV-UTV	12,500	21,300	11,000	163,400	124,900
Water Resources	0	5,200	2,700	36,200	26,900
Split-Funded	<u>230,400</u>	<u>407,700</u>	<u>211,100</u>	<u>3,121,400</u>	<u>2,416,400</u>
Conservation SEG Subtotal	\$283,100	\$483,900	\$250,500	\$3,800,500	\$2,957,800
Environmental SEG	\$8,900	\$15,200	\$7,900	\$115,200	\$87,800
Total SEG	\$292,000	\$499,100	\$258,400	\$3,915,700	\$3,045,600
Annual Total	\$305,100	\$521,500	\$270,000	\$4,306,100	\$3,175,700

3. Some appropriations are common to more than one account within the conservation fund. The amounts paid by each account to fund these appropriation's expenditures are intended to reflect the estimated share that each account's programs contribute to the overall expenditure. DNR annually adjusts the percentage that each account contributes to each of these appropriations based on a variety factors. These factors include: (a) land acreage from each account supported by the appropriation; (b) the full-time equivalent work effort performed in support of each account; and (c) revenues or transactions generated by each account. Split-funded appropriations include: (a) internal services; (b) external services; (c) division management, including enforcement and land program management; (d) facilities and lands operations; (e) endangered resources operations; (f) administrative facility repair and debt service; (g) aids in lieu of taxes; (h) rent and property maintenance; (i) taxes and assessments; (j) education and safety; and (k) handling fees.

A. Ruggedized Computers

4. The Department's current inventory of computers includes 265 ruggedized computers for conservation wardens and community service officers, which were purchased in the fall of 2021. The Department was provided \$261,700 in ongoing funding in 2015 Wisconsin Act 55 for the purchase of computers for conservation wardens. The Department reports that it utilized this funding to purchase computers and support equipment through a master lease in four-year replacement cycles. The Department's current inventory of ruggedized computers are due for replacement in the fall of 2025. The Department indicates that it plans to switch from a fully ruggedized model to a partially ruggedized model due to feedback from conservation wardens.

5. Conservation wardens utilize computers mounted in their vehicles to check hunting and fishing licenses, to check driver's licenses and criminal histories, for documentation and reporting purposes, and for other tasks. Ruggedized computers are resilient to particulate matter, moisture, and temperature and pressure fluctuations. The Department reports that computational power requirements for conservation wardens have increased significantly since 2015, as have inflationary costs. The Department further reports that the new model of ruggedized computer will include improved processors, additional memory, and expanded storage to meet its requirements.

6. SB 45/AB 50 would provide \$305,100 (\$13,100 GPR, \$283,100 conservation SEG, and \$8,900 environmental SEG) each year to purchase 240 ruggedized computers, related hardware, and cellular plans for conservation wardens. The Department plans to continue to use the funding for the purchase of computers through a master lease in four-year replacement cycles. Therefore, the Committee could consider providing \$305,100 (\$13,100 GPR, \$283,100 conservation SEG, and \$8,900 environmental SEG) each year in separate general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund operations appropriations as included in SB 45/AB 50 for the purchase of 240 ruggedized computers, related hardware, and cellular plans for conservation wardens [Alternative A1]. The Committee could also consider appropriating funds into each of a general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund appropriation that are designated for acquiring law enforcement technology [Alternative A2].

7. It should be noted that approximately two-thirds of the conservation fund appropriation for the acquiring law enforcement technology is funded through the fish and wildlife account. The fish and wildlife account is structurally imbalanced and is likely to deplete its balance in the coming

years, absent legislative action. It could be argued that the fish and wildlife account has insufficient funding to acquire technology. To not budget fish and wildlife expenditures, the Committee could replace conservation SEG with GPR for the purchase of radios. Therefore, the Committee could consider providing \$305,100 (\$296,200 GPR and \$8,900 environmental SEG) each year in the general fund and environmental fund appropriations that are designated for acquiring law enforcement technology for the purchase of 240 ruggedized computers, related hardware, and cellular plans for conservation wardens [Alternative A3].

8. Table 2 summarizes the preceding alternatives for ruggedized computers funding by fund source.

TABLE 2
Ruggedized Computers Funding Alternatives

	<u>Alternative A1</u> <u>(Each Year)</u>	<u>Alternative A2</u> <u>(Each Year)</u>	<u>Alternative A3</u> <u>(Each Year)</u>
GPR	\$13,100	\$13,100	\$296,200
Conservation SEG			
Boat	\$40,200		
ATV-UTV	12,500		
Water Resources	0		
Split-Funded	<u>230,400</u>	<u>283,100</u>	
Conservation SEG Subtotal	\$283,100	\$283,100	\$0
Environmental SEG	\$8,900	\$8,900	\$8,900
Total SEG	\$292,000	\$292,000	\$8,900
Annual Total	\$305,100	\$305,100	\$305,100

9. The Committee could consider taking no action relating to ruggedized computers [Alternative A4]. DNR would continue using its current inventory of ruggedized computers and would be required to use existing budget authority for any upgrades.

B. Body Cameras

10. The Department's current inventory of equipment includes 70 body-worn cameras. These body-worn cameras were purchased utilizing \$145,100 in one-time funding provided in 2021 Act 58. 2021 Act 58 also provided \$174,100 each year in ongoing funding for body-worn software licenses and data storage, which are provided under a contract that ends in 2028. The Department reports that it has deployed the 70 body-worn cameras to conservations wardens in two of its four regions.

11. The Department argues that the current partial deployment of body-worn cameras could expose it to criticism regarding transparency, accountability, and consistency if an incident occurred

that was not recorded by a body-worn camera. DNR further argues that equipping all conservation wardens with body-worn cameras would improve public perception of the conservation wardens and improve their law enforcement practice. In 2024, the Department reports that multiple complaints were dropped by individuals after they were informed that there was footage of the incident.

12. SB 45/AB 50 would provide \$608,500 (\$232,000 GPR, \$368,300 conservation SEG, and \$8,200 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$420,600 (\$12,200 GPR, \$400,200 conservation SEG, and \$8,200 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 for the purchase of 150 body-worn cameras for conservation wardens, related software licenses and data storage for 220 body-worn cameras, and to account for the increased workload of records management staff. This would increase the number of body-worn cameras in the Department's inventory to 220, and would equip all conservation wardens. The Department would synchronize the contracts for software licenses and data storage for all 220 cameras to end in 2030.

13. The costs for the body-worn cameras would include: (a) \$170,500 in 2025-26 for the purchase of 150 cameras; (b) \$155,100 in 2025-26 and \$105,700 in 2026-27 for mobile hotspots and cellular data plans to transmit data; (c) \$352,000 each year for software licenses and data storage; and (d) \$105,000 in 2025-26 and \$137,000 in 2026-27 to account for the increased workload of records management staff to redact and analyze footage. As discussed above, base funding for body-worn cameras is \$174,100 each year. Table 3 summarizes the costs for body-worn cameras.

TABLE 3

Body Camera Costs

	<u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>
Body-Worn Cameras	\$170,500	--
Mobile Hotspots and Data Plans	155,100	\$105,700
Software Licenses and Data Storage	352,000	352,000
Records Management Staff Workload	105,000	137,000
Base Funding	<u>-174,100</u>	<u>-174,100</u>
Total	\$608,500	\$420,600

14. The Committee could consider providing \$608,500 (\$232,000 GPR, \$368,300 conservation SEG, and \$8,200 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$420,600 (\$12,200 GPR, \$400,200 conservation SEG, and \$8,200 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 in separate general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund operations appropriations as included in SB 45/AB 50 for the purchase of 150 body-worn cameras for conservation wardens, related software licenses and data storage for 220 body-worn cameras, and to account for the increased workload of records management staff [Alternative B1]. The Committee could also consider appropriating funds into each of a general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund appropriation that are designated for acquiring law enforcement technology [Alternative B2].

15. If the Committee wishes to not utilize the fish and wildlife account, the Committee could

consider providing \$608,500 (\$600,300 GPR and \$8,200 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$420,600 (\$412,400 GPR and \$8,200 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 in the general fund and environmental fund appropriations that are designated for acquiring law enforcement for the purchase of 150 body-worn cameras for conservation wardens, related software licenses and data storage for 220 body-worn cameras, and to account for the increased workload of records management staff [Alternative B3]. Alternatively, the Committee could consider providing \$503,500 (\$495,300 GPR and \$8,200 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$283,600 (\$275,400 GPR and \$8,200 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 for the purchase of 150 body-worn cameras for conservation wardens, and related software licenses and data storage for 220 body-worn cameras [Alternative B4]. This alternative would require the Department to absorb the costs of increased workload of records management staff with current funding levels.

16. Table 4 summarizes the preceding alternatives for body cameras funding by fund source.

TABLE 4

Body Cameras Funding Alternatives

	<u>Alternative B1</u>		<u>Alternative B2</u>		<u>Alternative B3</u>		<u>Alternative B4</u>	
	<u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>	<u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>	<u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>	<u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>
GPR	\$232,000	\$12,200	\$232,000	\$12,200	\$600,300	\$412,400	\$495,300	\$275,400
Conservation SEG								
Boat	\$37,300	\$37,300						
ATV-UTV	11,600	11,600						
Water Resources	2,800	2,800						
Split-Funded	<u>316,600</u>	<u>348,500</u>	<u>\$368,300</u>	<u>\$400,200</u>				
Conservation SEG Subtotal	\$368,300	\$400,200	\$368,300	\$400,200	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Environmental SEG	\$8,200	\$8,200	\$8,200	\$8,200	\$8,200	\$8,200	\$8,200	\$8,200
Total SEG	\$376,500	\$408,400	\$376,500	\$408,400	\$8,200	\$8,200	\$8,200	\$8,200
Annual Total	\$608,500	\$420,600	\$608,500	\$420,600	\$608,500	\$420,600	\$503,500	\$283,600

17. The Committee could consider taking no action relating to body-worn cameras. [Alternative B5]. DNR would have body-worn cameras for some, but not all, of its active conservation wardens.

C. Taser Units

18. The Department's current inventory of Tasers includes 110 X2 models, 69 X26P models, and 74 Taser 10 models. The Department was provided \$31,200 in ongoing funding in 2021 Act 58 for Tasers and Taser training. The Department was further provided \$120,100 in one-time funding in 2023-24 and 2024-25, which it used to purchase the 74 Taser 10 models, related accessories, extended warranties, licensing, and trainings.

19. Tasers are classified as control devices by the Wisconsin Department of Justice. Tasers are designed to incapacitate a resistive or combative individual and to provide a less-than-lethal option for a law enforcement officer to deescalate a situation. Conservation wardens typically work in remote areas, where communication with emergency services can be unreliable and where assistance is not likely to arrive before an individual or conservation warden is injured. Therefore, the Department indicates that Tasers are a necessity for its conservation wardens.

20. The X2 model was introduced in 2011 and allows for individuals to fire up to two cartridges before requiring a reload. The X26P model was introduced in 2013 but only allows for individuals to fire one cartridge before requiring a reload. DNR reports that conservation wardens prefer the X2 model, but that the company will stop manufacturing replacement cartridges for this model after 2029. DNR further reports that both its X2 and X26P models are no longer covered by warranty.

21. SB 45/AB 50 would provide \$716,100 (\$30,800 GPR, \$664,500 conservation SEG, and \$20,800 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$25,100 (\$1,100 GPR, \$23,300 conservation SEG, and \$700 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 to purchase 146 Taser 10 units for conservation wardens. Along with the Department's current inventory of 74 Taser 10 units, this funding would equip all conservation wardens with a Taser 10 model. The Department reports that the price per unit would be \$5,976 for a five-year contract that would include accessories, supplies, and training. The Department further reports that the funding would extend its contract for its current inventory of 74 Taser 10 units for two years, to align the timeline of the contracts, at a cost of \$93,950.

22. The Committee could consider providing \$716,100 (\$30,800 GPR, \$664,500 conservation SEG, and \$20,800 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$25,100 (\$1,100 GPR, \$23,300 conservation SEG, and \$700 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 each year in separate general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund operations appropriations as included in SB 45/AB 50 for the purchase of 146 Taser 10 units for conservation wardens and to align contracts for the Department's current 74 Taser 10 units [Alternative C1]. The Committee could also consider appropriating funds into each of a general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund appropriation that are designated for acquiring law enforcement technology [Alternative C2].

23. If the Committee wishes to not utilize the fish and wildlife account, the Committee could consider providing \$716,100 (\$695,300 GPR and \$20,800 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$25,100 (\$24,400 GPR and \$700 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 in the general fund and environmental fund appropriations that are designated for acquiring law enforcement technology for the purchase of 146 Taser 10 units for conservation wardens and to align contracts for the Department's current 74 Taser 10 units [Alternative C3].

24. As noted above, the Department indicates that conservation wardens prefer the X2 model to the X26P model and that the Department will be able to purchase X2 model cartridges until 2029. Therefore, the Committee could consider providing \$371,200 (\$360,400 GPR and \$10,800 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 in the general fund and environmental fund appropriations for acquiring law enforcement technology for the purchase of 69 Taser 10 models to replace the Department's X26P models and to align contracts for the Department's current 74 Taser 10 units [Alternative C4]. The \$31,200 in base funding provided to the Department for Tasers would be able

accommodate the ongoing costs for the 143 Taser 10 units.

25. Table 5 summarizes the preceding alternatives for Tasers funding by fund source.

TABLE 5

Taser Units Funding Alternatives

	<u>Alternative C1</u>		<u>Alternative C2</u>		<u>Alternative C3</u>		<u>Alternative C4</u>	
	<u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>	<u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>	<u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>	<u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>
GPR	\$30,800	\$1,100	\$30,800	\$1,100	\$695,300	\$24,400	\$360,400	\$0
Conservation SEG								
Boat	\$68,200	\$2,300						
ATV-UTV	29,200	1,000						
Water Resources	7,100	300						
Split-Funded	<u>560,000</u>	<u>19,700</u>	<u>\$664,500</u>	<u>\$23,300</u>				
Conservation SEG Subtotal	\$664,500	\$23,300	\$664,500	\$23,300	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Environmental SEG	\$20,800	\$700	\$20,800	\$700	\$20,800	\$700	\$10,800	\$0
Total SEG	\$685,300	\$24,000	\$685,300	\$24,000	\$20,800	\$700	\$10,800	\$0
Annual Total	\$716,100	\$25,100	\$716,100	\$25,100	\$716,100	\$25,100	\$371,200	\$0

26. The Committee could consider taking no action relating to Tasers. [Alternative C5].

D. Vehicle Routers

27. The Department reports that conservation wardens currently utilize multiple mobile internet hotspots to provide internet connection while in the field for their computer, body-worn cameras, and other equipment. The Department further reports that the mobile internet hotspots are prone to failure in certain circumstances, such as due to moisture or temperature changes, and that the mobile internet hotspots are not compliant with FBI Criminal Justice Information Services Security Policy. The Department reports that vehicle internet routers would provide more reliable internet connection for conservation wardens in the field and are compliant with the Security Policy. In contrast to mobile internet hotspots, vehicle internet routers are ruggedized, do not rely on rechargeable battery power, and are compatible with emergency response networks.

28. SB 45/AB 50 would provide \$521,500 (\$22,400 GPR, \$483,900 conservation SEG, and \$15,200 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$270,000 (\$11,600 GPR, \$250,500 conservation SEG, and \$7,900 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 for the purchase, installation, and support of vehicle internet routers in 235 squad vehicles and 15 large patrol boats. The Department indicates that the number of large patrol boats equipped should be 16. The Department reports that the costs for the purchase and installation of vehicle internet routers would be \$1,006 per device and ongoing costs for support of the vehicle routers would be \$1,080.

29. The Committee could consider providing \$523,600 (\$24,500 GPR, \$483,900

conservation SEG, and \$15,200 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$271,100 (\$12,700 GPR, \$250,500 conservation SEG, and \$7,900 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 in separate general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund operations appropriations as included in SB 45/AB 50 for the purchase, installation, and support of vehicle internet routers in 235 squad vehicles and 16 large patrol boats [Alternative D1]. The Committee could also consider appropriating funds into each of a general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund appropriation that are designated for acquiring law enforcement technology [Alternative D2].

30. If the Committee wishes to not utilize the fish and wildlife account, the Committee could consider providing \$523,600 (\$508,400 GPR and \$15,200 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$271,100 (\$263,200 GPR and \$7,900 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 in the general fund and environmental fund appropriations that are designated for acquiring law enforcement technology for the purchase, installation, and support of vehicle internet routers in 235 squad vehicles and 16 large patrol boats [Alternative D3].

31. Since the Department has not utilized this type of device before, it could first pilot the vehicle internet routers in a lesser number of vehicles. Therefore, the Committee could consider providing \$104,300 (\$101,300 GPR and \$3,000 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$54,000 (\$52,400 GPR and \$1,600 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 in the general fund and environmental fund appropriations that are designated for acquiring law enforcement technology for the purchase, installation, and support of vehicle internet routers in 50 vehicles [Alternative D4].

32. Table 6 summarizes the preceding alternatives for vehicle routers funding by fund source.

TABLE 6

Vehicle Routers Funding Alternatives

	<u>Alternative D1</u>		<u>Alternative D2</u>		<u>Alternative D3</u>		<u>Alternative D4</u>	
	<u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>	<u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>	<u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>	<u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>
GPR	\$24,500	\$12,700	\$24,500	\$12,700	\$508,400	\$263,200	\$101,300	\$52,400
Conservation SEG								
Boat	\$49,700	\$25,700						
ATV-UTV	21,300	11,000						
Water Resources	5,200	2,700						
Split-Funded	<u>407,700</u>	<u>211,100</u>	<u>\$483,900</u>	<u>\$250,500</u>				
Conservation SEG Subtotal	\$483,900	\$250,500	\$483,900	\$250,500	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Environmental SEG	\$15,200	\$7,900	\$15,200	\$7,900	\$15,200	\$7,900	\$3,000	\$1,600
Total SEG	\$499,100	\$258,400	\$499,100	\$258,400	\$15,200	\$7,900	\$3,000	\$1,600
Annual Total	\$523,600	\$271,100	\$523,600	\$271,100	\$523,600	\$271,100	\$104,300	\$54,000

33. The Committee could consider taking no action relating to vehicle internet routers [Alternative D5].

E. Radios

34. The Department's current inventory of radios includes 290 portable radios, which are carried by conservation wardens, and 365 mobile radios, which are mounted in conservation warden vehicles. These radios were purchased by the Department in the fall of 2019 utilizing \$4,618,800 in one-time funding provided in 2019 Act 9. The Department's current inventory are Motorola multiband radios, which can communicate with most existing frequencies. However, the Department reports that these radios' estimated service life is five to six years, and, its current inventory is reaching the end of its service life.

35. Mobile radios are high-powered, utilizing up to 100 watts of power, and are reliant on vehicle batteries. These radios are able to connect to a radio system signal in the vast majority of locations in Wisconsin. Portable radios allow conservation wardens to communicate when they are not in a vehicle. However, due to their power limitations, they are unable to connect in certain remote locations. Long-term evolution (LTE) technology allows radios to communicate through both radio and cellular systems. LTE portable radios typically are lighter, have longer battery life, and are better able to connect in certain remote locations. However, LTE portable radios require a SIM card and cellular data plan, and, have ongoing costs. The Department's current portable radios do not have this technology.

36. SB 45/AB 50 would provide \$2,154,900 (\$92,100 GPR, \$2,000,700 conservation SEG, and \$62,100 environmental SEG) each year for the purchase of 240 portable radios, 375 mobile radios, and ongoing costs for related programming and services, such as data plans. The Department indicates the 240 portable radios purchased would include LTE technology functionality. The Department reports that it would utilize a master lease to pay for the purchase of radios over a five-year period, at a total cost of \$10,774,500. The Department indicates that these radios would equip all conservation wardens as well as all conservation warden squad vehicles, utility-terrain vehicles, and boats.

37. The Committee could consider providing \$2,154,900 (\$92,100 GPR, \$2,000,700 conservation SEG, and \$62,100 environmental SEG) each year in separate general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund operations appropriations as included in SB 45/AB 50 for the purchase of 240 portable radios and 375 mobile radios through a master lease and ongoing costs for related programming and services [Alternative E1]. The Committee could also consider appropriating funds into each of a general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund appropriation that are designated for acquiring law enforcement technology [Alternative E2].

38. The Department reports that the cost per portable radio is \$9,843 and the cost per mobile radio is \$13,957. The Department further reports that ongoing funding required for the radios is \$194,200 for related programming and services, such as data plans. Therefore, the Committee could consider providing \$7,790,400 (\$7,565,900 conservation SEG and \$224,500 environmental SEG in 2025-26 and \$194,200 (\$188,600 conservation SEG and \$5,600 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 in the conservation fund and environmental fund appropriations that are designated for acquiring law enforcement technology for the purchase of 240 portable radios, 375 mobile radios, and ongoing costs for related programming and services [Alternative E3]. This would provide a lump sum for radio purchases and obviate the need for a master lease arrangement.

39. If the Committee wishes to provide a lump sum for radio purchases but wishes to not utilize the fish and wildlife account, the Committee could consider providing \$7,790,400 (\$7,565,900 GPR and \$224,500 environmental SEG in 2025-26 and \$194,200 (\$188,600 GPR and \$5,600 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 in the general fund and environmental fund appropriations that are designated for acquiring law enforcement technology for the purchase of 240 portable radios, 375 mobile radios, and ongoing costs for related programming and services [Alternative E4].

40. Table 7 summarizes the preceding alternatives for radios funding by fund source.

TABLE 7

Radios Funding Alternatives

	Alternative E1 (Each Year)	Alternative E2 (Each Year)	Alternative E3		Alternative E4 (Each Year)	
			2025-26	2026-27	2025-26	2026-27
GPR	\$92,100	\$92,100	\$0	\$0	\$7,565,900	\$188,600
Conservation SEG						
Boat	\$284,100					
ATV-UTV	88,800					
Water Resources	21,100					
Split-Funded	<u>1,606,700</u>	<u>\$2,000,700</u>	<u>\$7,565,900</u>	<u>\$188,600</u>		
Conservation SEG Subtotal	\$2,000,700	\$2,000,700	\$7,565,900	\$188,600	\$0	\$0
Environmental SEG	\$62,100	\$62,100	\$224,500	\$5,600	\$224,500	\$5,600
Total SEG	\$2,062,800	\$2,062,800	\$7,790,400	\$194,200	\$224,500	\$5,600
Annual Total	\$2,154,900	\$2,154,900	\$7,790,400	\$194,200	\$7,790,400	\$194,200

41. The Committee could take no action related to the purchase of radios [Alternative E5]. Radio purchases would constitute a majority of funding under the provision. However, the Department has indicated radio purchases are of a lesser priority than other items under the provision. The radio procurement could be considered in a subsequent biennium, including after any actions the Legislature may take to stabilize the fish and wildlife account.

F. Funding Options

42. The forestry account of the conservation fund had an available balance of \$98.7 million on July 1, 2024. Under a cost-to-continue scenario, which includes the base budget, standard budget adjustments, and debt service reestimate amounts, the forestry account is estimated to have an available balance exceeding \$270.0 million on July 1, 2027.

43. Since the Committee has not taken action related to the fish and wildlife account's structural imbalance yet, the Committee could consider transferring forestry SEG in the amount of fish and wildlife SEG from the split-funded appropriations in the alternatives it chooses in the preceding sections to the fish and wildlife account [Alternative F1].

44. The sizeable balance in the forestry account is primarily due to the fact that, under current law, there is an annual transfer from the general fund to the forestry account equal to the amount determined by multiplying the value of all taxable property in the state by a rate of 0.1697 mills. For 2025-27, the estimated current law transfer amount will equal \$166.0 million in 2025-26 and \$173.1 million in 2026-27. These amounts were included in the Committee's May 8 approval of budget paper #106. Given that the revenue to the forestry account is primarily due to the transfer from the general fund, one could reasonably argue forestry SEG amounts should be used in lieu of GPR in the alternatives listed in this paper [Alternative F2]. The Committee could consider taking no action relating to funding options listed above [Alternative F3]. The amounts of fish and wildlife SEG from the split-funded appropriations in the alternatives the Committee chooses would be funded from the fish and wildlife account in addition to the GPR funding.

ALTERNATIVES

A. Ruggedized Computers

1. Provide \$305,100 (\$13,100 GPR, \$283,100 conservation SEG, and \$8,900 environmental SEG) each year in separate general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund operations appropriations for ruggedized computers.

ALT A1	Change to Base
GPR	\$26,200
SEG	<u>584,000</u>
Total	\$610,200

2. Provide \$305,100 (\$13,100 GPR, \$283,100 conservation SEG, and \$8,900 environmental SEG) each year into each of a general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund appropriation that are designated for acquiring law enforcement technology for ruggedized computers.

ALT A2	Change to Base
GPR	\$26,200
SEG	<u>584,000</u>
Total	\$610,200

3. Provide \$305,100 (\$296,200 GPR and \$8,900 environmental SEG) each year for ruggedized computers.

ALT A3	Change to Base
GPR	\$592,400
SEG	<u>17,800</u>
Total	\$610,200

4. Take no action.

B. Body Cameras

1. Provide \$608,500 (\$232,000 GPR, \$368,300 conservation SEG, and \$8,200 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$420,600 (\$12,200 GPR, \$400,200 conservation SEG, and \$8,200 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 in separate general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund operations appropriations for body-worn cameras.

ALT B1	Change to Base
GPR	\$244,200
SEG	<u>784,900</u>
Total	\$1,029,100

2. Provide \$608,500 (\$232,000 GPR, \$368,300 conservation SEG, and \$8,200 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$420,600 (\$12,200 GPR, \$400,200 conservation SEG, and \$8,200 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 into each of a general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund appropriation that are designated for acquiring law enforcement technology for body-worn cameras.

ALT B2	Change to Base
GPR	\$244,200
SEG	<u>784,900</u>
Total	\$1,029,100

3. Provide \$608,500 (\$600,300 GPR and \$8,200 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$420,600 (\$412,400 GPR and \$8,200 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 for body-worn cameras.

ALT B3	Change to Base
GPR	\$1,012,700
SEG	<u>16,400</u>
Total	\$1,029,100

4. Provide \$503,500 (\$495,300 GPR and \$8,200 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$283,600 (\$275,400 GPR and \$8,200 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 for body-worn cameras. (This alternative would omit additional funding for records management staff costs.)

ALT B4	Change to Base
GPR	\$770,700
SEG	<u>16,400</u>
Total	\$787,100

5. Take no action.

C. Tasers

1. Provide \$716,100 (\$30,800 GPR, \$664,500 conservation SEG, and \$20,800 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$25,100 (\$1,100 GPR, \$23,300 conservation SEG, and \$700 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 in separate general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund operations appropriations for acquiring Tasers (Taser 10 model).

ALT C1	Change to Base
GPR	\$31,900
SEG	<u>709,300</u>
Total	\$741,200

2. Provide \$716,100 (\$30,800 GPR, \$664,500 conservation SEG, and \$20,800 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$25,100 (\$1,100 GPR, \$23,300 conservation SEG, and \$700 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 into each of a general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund appropriation that are designated for acquiring law enforcement technology for acquiring Tasers (Taser 10 model).

ALT C2	Change to Base
GPR	\$31,900
SEG	<u>709,300</u>
Total	\$741,200

3. Provide \$716,100 (\$695,300 GPR and \$20,800 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$25,100 (\$24,400 GPR and \$700 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 for acquiring Tasers (Taser 10 model).

ALT C3	Change to Base
GPR	\$719,700
SEG	<u>21,500</u>
Total	\$741,200

4. Provide \$371,200 (\$360,400 GPR and \$10,800 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 for acquiring Tasers. (This alternative would provide funding for DNR to acquire fewer Taser 10 model units, continue the use of Taser X2 model units, and phase out the use of 69 Taser X26P model units.)

ALT C4	Change to Base
GPR	\$360,400
SEG	<u>10,800</u>
Total	\$371,200

5. Take no action.

D. Vehicle Internet Routers

1. Provide \$523,600 (\$24,500 GPR, \$483,900 conservation SEG, and \$15,200 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$271,100 (\$12,700 GPR, \$250,500 conservation SEG, and \$7,900 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 in separate general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund operations appropriations for vehicle internet routers.

ALT D1	Change to Base
GPR	\$37,200
SEG	<u>757,500</u>
Total	\$794,700

2. Provide \$523,600 (\$24,500 GPR, \$483,900 conservation SEG, and \$15,200 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$271,100 (\$12,700 GPR, \$250,500 conservation SEG, and \$7,900 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 into each of a general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund appropriation that are designated for acquiring law enforcement technology for vehicle internet routers.

ALT D2	Change to Base
GPR	\$37,200
SEG	<u>757,500</u>
Total	\$794,700

3. Provide \$523,600 (\$508,400 GPR and \$15,200 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$271,100 (\$263,200 GPR and \$7,900 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 into each of a general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund appropriation that are designated for acquiring law enforcement technology for vehicle internet routers.

ALT D3	Change to Base
GPR	\$771,600
SEG	<u>23,100</u>
Total	\$794,700

4. Provide \$104,300 (\$101,300 GPR and \$3,000 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$54,000 (\$52,400 GPR and \$1,600 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 for vehicle internet routers.

ALT D4	Change to Base
GPR	\$153,700
SEG	<u>4,600</u>
Total	\$158,300

5. Take no action.

E. Radios

1. Provide \$2,154,900 (\$92,100 GPR, \$2,000,700 conservation SEG, and \$62,100 environmental SEG) each year in separate general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund operations appropriations for radios.

ALT E1	Change to Base
GPR	\$184,200
SEG	<u>4,125,600</u>
Total	\$4,309,800

2. Provide \$2,154,900 (\$92,100 GPR, \$2,000,700 conservation SEG, and \$62,100 environmental SEG) each year into each of a general fund, conservation fund, and environmental fund appropriation that are designated for acquiring law enforcement technology for radios.

ALT E2	Change to Base
GPR	\$184,200
SEG	<u>4,125,600</u>
Total	\$4,309,800

3. Provide \$7,790,400 (\$7,565,900 conservation SEG and \$224,500 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$194,200 (\$188,600 conservation SEG and \$5,600 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 for radios.

ALT E3	Change to Base
SEG	\$7,984,600

4. Provide \$7,790,400 (\$7,565,900 GPR and \$224,500 environmental SEG) in 2025-26 and \$194,200 (\$188,600 GPR and \$5,600 environmental SEG) in 2026-27 for radios.

ALT E4	Change to Base
GPR	\$7,754,500
SEG	<u>230,100</u>
Total	\$7,984,600

5. Take no action.

F. Funding Options

1. Transfer forestry SEG, in the amount of fish and wildlife SEG from the split-funded appropriations in any alternatives selected in the preceding sections, to the fish and wildlife account.
2. Transfer forestry SEG rather than GPR in any alternatives selected in the preceding sections. [The Committee could adopt Alternative F1 and F2.]
3. Take no action.

Prepared by: Jonathan Sandoval



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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #561

Boating Safety and Enforcement Aids (Natural Resources -- Law Enforcement)

[LFB 2025-27 Budget Summary: Page 500, #3]

CURRENT LAW

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) distributes aids to municipalities and counties for the costs of local boating law enforcement, search and rescue, and safety activities. Municipalities and counties are eligible for up to 75% of their approved costs, but aid payments are prorated if claims exceed the appropriation level. No municipality or county may receive aids amounting to more than 20% of the funds available.

Communities with lakes of at least 100 acres or one mile of riverfront are eligible to receive local boating law enforcement aids. Aids may be up to 75% of the total costs of the operation and maintenance of local water safety patrols, minus any fines and forfeitures for water safety violations. Eligible costs include patrol hours, search and rescue missions, and training boating safety enforcement officers. To receive boating safety and enforcement aids, a local boating safety patrol must log at least 80 hours of boating enforcement in a year.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. DNR conservation wardens and local law enforcement agencies cooperate and coordinate to protect individuals on Wisconsin's waterways. The boating safety and enforcement aids program is part of these efforts. The program was developed to aid local law enforcement agencies in their enforcement of state and local boating laws. The number of agencies requesting aids has decreased over time, from 108 in 2018 to 93 in 2024.

2. In 2022-23, conservation wardens logged approximately 67,700 hours of boating enforcement and safety activities and issued 873 citations. In 2023-24, conservation wardens logged approximately 69,600 hours of boating enforcement and safety activities and issued 841 citations. In 2022-23, local law enforcement agency boat patrols logged approximately 46,200 hours and issued

3,861 citations. In 2023-24, local law enforcement agency boat patrols logged approximately 50,600 hours and issued 4,237 citations.

3. Since 2021-22, DNR has been authorized to expend \$1,766,600 from the boat registration account of the segregated (SEG) conservation fund for boating safety and enforcement aids. 2021 Wisconsin Act 58 increased authorized funding from \$1,386,000. Eligible reimbursement requests have exceeded state funding for boating safety and enforcement aids each year since current funding levels were set. Prior to 2022-23, while the statutes authorized DNR to prorate payments if eligible reimbursement requests exceeded available funding, DNR had opted against this. Instead, the Department supplemented funding with the federal Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) Grant received from the U.S. Coast Guard. However as shown in the table below, in 2022-23, the Department began to prorate aids payments and did not use any RBS funds for the program in 2023-24. The Department indicates that it does not plan to use RBS funds for the program in the future due to the necessity of using these funds for other operational needs, such as the replacement of its entire boat inventory.

Boating Safety and Enforcement Aids

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Eligible Costs</u>	<u>75% of Eligible Costs</u>	<u>State Funding</u>	<u>Federal Funding</u>	<u>Total Reimbursement</u>	<u>Percent Reimbursed</u>
2017-18	\$2,690,300	\$2,017,700	\$1,386,000	\$631,700	\$2,017,700	75%
2018-19	2,829,300	2,122,000	1,386,000	736,000	2,122,000	75
2019-20	2,750,000	2,062,500	1,386,000	676,500	2,062,500	75
2020-21	2,745,100	2,058,800	1,386,000	672,800	2,058,800	75
2021-22	2,653,600	1,990,200	1,766,600	223,600	1,990,200	75
2022-23	2,756,500	2,067,400	1,766,600	150,000	1,916,600	70
2023-24	3,053,700	2,290,300	1,766,600	0	1,766,600	58

4. The primary source of revenue to the boat registration account is the registration fees collected for all motorized boats, and sailboats over 12 feet in length, operated on state waters. Boat registrations are valid for up to three years, beginning on April 1 of the year in which the registration is issued and ending on March 31 of the third year after issuance. Motorized boat registration fees vary according to boat length. Additionally, due to the three-year registration period, the account historically has had one year out of every three in which revenues are comparatively low. Other sources of revenue to the boat registration account include: (a) boat titling and lien fees; (b) fees paid by persons enrolled in boat safety programs; and (c) 1% of the sales tax revenue DNR collects from persons who have purchased boats. (Proof of sales tax payment is required before a boat can be registered.)

5. In 2024-25, boat registration account revenues fund 43.23 full-time equivalent staff positions to support a variety of activities. Boat registration account revenues are used to fund: (a) state costs of boating law enforcement by DNR conservation wardens and the administration of boating safety programs; and (b) boating safety and enforcement aids.

6. The Attachment shows the condition of the boat registration account through June 30, 2024, and the estimated condition through June 30, 2027. The Attachment estimates the condition of the boat registration account in 2025-26 and 2026-27 under Committee action to date, as well as items

remaining under consideration by the Committee. The account had an available balance of \$11.3 million on July 1, 2024, and is estimated to have an available balance of \$3.6 million on July 1, 2027, under Committee action to date and assuming adoption of items remaining under consideration from Senate Bill 45/Assembly Bill 50. Under Committee action to date on cost-to-continue items, the account would have a July 1, 2027, available balance of \$6.4 million.

7. As shown in the Attachment, expenditures from the boat registration account totaled \$8.1 million in 2023-24. In recent fiscal years, revenues and authorized expenditures have generally been balanced for the account. Under the base budget and Committee action to date, authorized expenditures are estimated to be greater than revenues for both 2025-26 and 2026-27. However, the boat registration account is estimated to have sufficient available balances and revenues through the end of 2026-27 to absorb the currently budgeted expenditures, as well as those under SB 45/AB 50.

8. SB 45/AB 50 would provide \$550,000 boat SEG each year in additional funding for boating safety and enforcement aids. The Department indicates that the additional funding would allow it to provide the full 75% reimbursement amount allowable under statute. The Department indicates that the \$550,000 amount is based on the additional funding amount that would have been required to provide 75% reimbursement in 2023-24 (\$523,700), while also accounting for increasing costs. The Committee could consider providing \$550,000 boat SEG each year in additional funding for boating safety and enforcement aids [Alternative 1].

9. However, reimbursement requests of \$3,053,700 were higher than normal in 2023-24, whereas in 2017-18 through 2022-23 reimbursement requests averaged \$2,737,500. The Committee could consider providing \$320,400 boat SEG each year in additional funding for boating safety and enforcement aids, which would increase total funding to \$2,087,000, the average amount of 75% of reimbursement requests from 2017-18 through 2023-24 [Alternative 2].

10. The Committee could consider taking no action [Alternative 3]. It is likely that local boating enforcement aids would continue to be prorated from the statutory maximum amount that local patrols could be paid.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Provide \$550,000 boat SEG each year in additional funding for boating safety and enforcement aids.

ALT 1	Change to Base
SEG	\$1,100,000

2. Provide \$320,400 boat SEG each year in additional funding for boating safety and enforcement aids.

ALT 2	Change to Base
SEG	\$640,800

3. Take no action.

Prepared by: Jonathan Sandoval
Attachment

ATTACHMENT

Boat Registration Account Condition

	2022-23 <u>Actual</u>	2023-24 <u>Actual</u>	2024-25 <u>Budgeted</u>	2024-25 Budgeted <u>Staff</u>	2025-26 JFC to Date/Under <u>Consideration</u>	2026-27 JFC to Date/Under <u>Consideration</u>	2026-27 <u>Staff</u>
Opening Balance	\$13,166,600	\$12,265,900	\$11,591,100		\$11,458,600	\$6,634,000	
Revenues							
Motorized Boat Reg., Under 16 ft.	\$1,203,200	\$1,580,200	\$1,611,800		\$1,227,300	\$1,644,000	
Motorized Boat Reg., 16 to 26 ft.	3,135,500	4,137,400	4,220,200		3,198,200	4,304,600	
Motorized Boat Reg., 26 to 40 ft.	174,900	207,400	211,600		178,400	215,800	
Motorized Boat Reg., Over 40 ft.	34,300	39,200	40,000		35,000	40,800	
Motorized Fleet Registrations	128,000	182,000	185,700		130,600	189,400	
Other Registration Fees	198,500	219,300	223,700		202,500	228,100	
Boat Title and Lien Fees	272,900	267,000	272,400		278,400	277,800	
Other Boat Revenues	<u>337,000</u>	<u>777,400</u>	<u>782,600</u>		<u>386,400</u>	<u>798,500</u>	
Total Revenue	\$5,484,300	\$7,409,900	\$7,548,000		\$5,636,800	\$7,699,000	
Available Balance	\$18,650,900	\$19,675,800	\$19,139,100		\$17,095,400	\$14,333,000	
Expenditures							
State Boating Enforcement and Safety	\$3,017,800	\$3,225,700	\$2,934,500	23.00	\$4,529,700	\$4,543,600	23.00
Boating Enforcement Aids	1,766,600	1,766,600	1,766,600		2,316,600	2,316,600	
Misc.	<u>2,700</u>	<u>3,400</u>					
Subtotal	\$4,787,100	\$4,995,700	\$4,701,100	23.00	\$6,846,300	\$6,860,200	23.00
Split-Funded Appropriations							
Internal Services	\$299,800	\$340,800	\$324,100	2.05	\$402,800	\$372,300	2.05
External Services	903,700	747,400	921,400	8.06	1,027,000	1,027,100	8.06
Law Enforcement	14,000	1,456,400	1,327,100	8.80	1,775,300	1,738,600	8.80
Facilities, Lands, and Property Management	129,900	154,500	140,900	1.27	148,700	148,700	1.27
Administrative Facility Repair and Debt Service	30,800	36,900	153,300		141,200	151,700	
Resource Acquisition and Development	5,100	7,300	6,300		10,000	10,000	
Rent and Property Maintenance	44,000	47,800	47,800		47,100	47,400	
Education and Safety	91,100	52,900	50,300		50,300	50,300	
Handling Fees	<u>79,500</u>	<u>245,000</u>	<u>8,200</u>	<u>0.05</u>	<u>12,700</u>	<u>12,700</u>	<u>0.05</u>
Subtotal	\$1,597,900	\$3,089,000	\$2,979,400	20.23	\$3,615,100	\$3,558,800	20.23
Total Expenditures	\$6,385,000	\$8,084,700	\$7,680,500	43.23	\$10,461,400	\$10,419,000	43.23
Closing Cash Balance	\$12,265,900	\$11,591,100	\$11,458,600		\$6,634,000	\$3,914,000	
Encumbrances and Continuing Balances	\$399,400	\$278,500	\$278,500		\$278,500	\$278,500	
Available Balance	\$11,866,500	\$11,312,600	\$11,180,100		\$6,355,500	\$3,635,500	



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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #562

Patrol Boats (Natural Resources -- Law Enforcement)

[LFB 2025-27 Budget Summary: Page 500, #4]

CURRENT LAW

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has 130 patrol boats in its inventory of vessels that it uses for recreational boating law enforcement. Of these 130 patrol boats, 16 are classed as large patrol boats, which are between 23 and 30 feet in length. DNR's 16 large patrol boats are headquartered on Lake Michigan, Lake Superior, Lake Winnebago, the St. Croix River, and the Mississippi River. Department conservation wardens who have received specialized training are assigned to operate each of the large patrol boats. These large patrol boats are used for general conservation law enforcement patrols, recreational boating law enforcement patrols, responding to capsizing vessels and other water-related emergencies, and the enforcement of commercial fishing laws on the Great Lakes.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. To provide the necessary functionality for the tasks described above, DNR requires large patrol boats to be specially designed and equipped. For example, for water-related emergencies these boats need to be able to accommodate a conservation warden, local first responders, and divers, for up to 12 hours in all weather conditions. Further, for the enforcement of commercial fishing laws on the Great Lakes, these boats need to be able to pull in nets, buoys, floats, and other fishing equipment, and therefore, require side-open doors, winches, and a large open space on the deck.

2. In 2022, the U.S. Coast Guard reduced its response units that are designed to respond within 30 minutes from three to one in Door County area waters. The U.S. Coast Guard closed its Green Bay Station and did not open its seasonal Washington Island Station in 2024. Coast Guard services for the area are instead being provided out of its Sturgeon Bay Station. The Department reports that the Coast Guard conducted 60 search and rescue operations, including nine ice rescues,

in Door County area waters from October, 2023, through September, 2024. The Department further reports that these closures will require that DNR conservation wardens respond to water-related emergencies more often and with less assistance from the Coast Guard. The U.S. Coast Guard indicates that it relies on conservation wardens to assist in its emergency response and search and rescue activities. Therefore, the Department indicates that a reliable fleet of large patrol boats is necessary to account for this expected increase in demand.

3. The Department's large patrol boats have purchase dates ranging from 1990 through 2018, with a 2008 average purchase date. Motor purchase dates range from 2004 through 2020, with a 2012 average purchase date. The number of hours that the large patrol boat motors have been operated ranges from 280 to 2,410, with a median number of hours of 563. The table below provides the boat purchase date, motor purchase date, and number of hours that the motor has been operated for each of the Department's 16 large patrol boats.

DNR Large Patrol Boats

<u>Patrol Area</u>	<u>Boat Purchase Date</u>	<u>Motor Purchase Date</u>	<u>Motor Hours</u>
Ashland	2006	2019	419
Bayfield	2009	2009	482
Bayfield	2018	2018	1,021
Brown County	2006	2006	2,110
Douglas	2009	2017	280
Kenosha and Racine	2007	2020	300
Lake Winnebago	1998	2004	574
Milwaukee and Ozaukee	2011	2017	467
Northern Door	2006	2017	2,078
Northern Door	2014	2014	303
Oconto and Marinette	2007	2007	1,639
Pierce	2016	2016	551
Sheboygan and Manitowoc	2006	2006	935
Southern Door and Kewaunee	1990	2008	502
Southern Door and Kewaunee	2009	2006	1,395
St. Croix	2010	2010	2,410

4. The Department reports that it determines the priority of replacements based primarily on the number of hours that the large patrol boats motors have been operated. Typically, the more hours a motor has been operated suggest the greater likelihood that repairs are necessary. The Department expended an average of \$41,000 per year in the past three years for large repairs to nine of its large patrol boats. The Department tries to prioritize replacement of its large patrol boats when the number of hours its motor has been operated reaches 1,000. However, as shown in the table above, six of the Department's large patrol boats have exceeded this threshold as of April, 2025, with three large patrol boats exceeding 2,000 hours.

5. Senate Bill 45/Assembly Bill 50 would provide \$336,000 SEG each year from the boat registration account of the conservation fund for the replacement of one large patrol boat per year. (See Paper #561 for an overview of the boat registration account.) The Department reports that it would utilize this funding to replace one large patrol boat per year for 16 years, until each of the Department's large patrol boats has been replaced. Therefore, the Committee could consider providing \$336,000 boat SEG each year [Alternative 1].

6. The Department reports that the most recent large patrol boat motor replacement cost approximately \$56,000. As discussed above, currently there are six large patrol boats that have motors with operating hours exceeding 1,000. Since the Department indicates that the number of hours the motor has been operated is its most important metric when determining replacement, the Committee could consider providing \$168,000 boat SEG in 2025-26 and \$168,000 boat SEG in 2026-27 in one-time funding to replace the motors of six large patrol boats over the biennium [Alternative 2].

7. The Committee could consider taking no action [Alternative 3]. Boat and motor replacements would be funded from DNR's base budget authority.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Provide \$336,000 boat SEG each year for the replacement of large patrol boats.

ALT 1	Change to Base
SEG	\$672,000

2. Provide \$168,000 boat SEG in 2025-26 and \$168,000 boat SEG in 2026-27 in one-time funding for the replacement of large patrol boat motors.

ALT 2	Change to Base
SEG	\$336,000

3. Take no action.

Prepared by: Jonathan Sandoval

NATURAL RESOURCES

Law Enforcement

LFB Summary Item for Which No Issue Paper Has Been Prepared

<u>Item #</u>	<u>Title</u>
2	Conservation Warden Overtime