



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #478

Conservation Warden Computers (DNR -- Fish, Wildlife, and Recreation)

[LFB 2011-13 Budget Summary: Page 314, #7]

CURRENT LAW

Department of Natural Resources conservation wardens use vehicle-mounted laptops in their daily field operations.

GOVERNOR

Provide \$338,500 in one-time funding in 2011-12 and in 2012-13 for the first two years of an anticipated four-year master lease for computers for law enforcement wardens.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Wardens utilize vehicle-mounted laptop computers which are designed to withstand rugged use on a daily basis. Due to the strenuous use conditions, DNR generally replaces these units after a three- or four-year life-cycle. In 2011, the Bureau of Law Enforcement is in its fourth year for the current units. The funds provided would cover the first two years of a four-year master lease for the purchase of 216 laptop computers. Funding to purchase laptop computers and associated equipment would be provided as follows:

	<u>Annual</u>
Conservation Fund	
Fish and Wildlife Account	\$258,300
Boat Registration Account	39,500
ATV Account	16,900
Water Resources Account	4,100
Environmental Fund	15,200
Environmental Fund (formerly Recycling Fund)	<u>4,500</u>
Total	\$338,500

2. DNR currently has 206 authorized credentialed law enforcement positions, of which, 172 are filled with permanent wardens, with 10 recruits in training (leaving 24 vacancies). Therefore, it could be argued that 182 computers may be adequate. However, the Department plans to hire a recruit class of between 10 and 15 recruits annually in 2011-12 and 2012-13 to address continued warden vacancies and anticipated retirements. DNR indicates that 216 laptops would allow the Department enough computers to cover 206 authorized wardens, and allow 10 laptops for use as backups for temporary use in the field while a laptop is repaired.

3. The Department estimates the cost of the laptops, and associated equipment, at approximately \$5,500 per unit, and indicates that the master lease is expected to be a four-year master lease at an interest rate of 6%. The unit price under the master lease would include: a docking station (the electronics tray a computer sits in that is mounted to a center console in a vehicle), the laptop itself, a CD/DVD drive, a fingerprint reader, integrated global positioning (GPS) capability, removable memory card, external back up disk drive, wireless capability, and built in web-cam. However, the amount provided under the bill would cover costs beyond \$5,500 per unit. Providing \$314,800 (a reduction of \$23,700 each year) would cover 216 computers at a cost of \$5,500 per unit and an interest rate of 6% (Alternative 2).

4. DNR indicates that the per unit cost could vary depending on whether the Department is able to re-use its existing docking stations. According to DNR, the cost of the docking stations ranges from \$400 to \$650 per station. Therefore, if the Department were able to reuse its docking stations, the per unit cost of the laptops and associated equipment could be expected to be approximately \$5,000 rather than \$5,500. In addition, the actual unit cost of the master lease could be lower than \$5,000 depending on the final negotiated master lease conditions. For example, according to the administration, the Department of Transportation (DOT) recently purchased new laptops for Wisconsin State Patrol officers, at a cost of \$4,600 per unit. DNR indicates that it would purchase the same type of laptops as the state patrol. While DOT's unit package included similar components as those DNR plans to purchase, it did not include docking stations. In addition, the price negotiated under DOT's master lease was based on 589 units, and DNR may pay a somewhat higher price based on a lower number of units purchased (216). In any case, providing \$5,000 per unit could be expected to cover most of the per unit cost even if DNR was unable to utilize existing docking stations. An alternative could be to provide \$286,200 which would support 216 units at a per unit cost of \$5,000 (Alternative 3).

5. Currently, 33 wardens are eligible for retirement by the end of 2013. Therefore, even with a recruit class of 10 to 15 recruits in 2011-12 and 2012-13, significant warden vacancies are likely to continue. An option would be to provide funding of \$265,000 (a reduction of \$73,500) each year to support the purchase of 200 units at \$5,000 per unit (Alternative 4).

6. Revenues in the fish and wildlife account of the conservation fund are expected to fall short of authorized expenditures in the 2011-13 biennium. An alternative to increasing revenues to the account is to reduce expenditures in order to maintain a positive balance (Alternative 5). However, DNR indicates that the current computers are out of the warranty period and nearing the end of their useful life. In addition, failure to replace existing computers with new laptops similar to those purchased by the state patrol could result in communication problems between DOT and DNR. The Department would likely reallocate funding for the master lease even if the provision is

not fully funded under the bill. Further, even if additional expenditure authority is provided, without additional revenues of a corresponding amount, DNR would be required to reduce base-level programs by a similar amount in order to fund the initiative.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Adopt the Governor's recommendation to provide \$338,500 in 2011-12 and in 2012-13 on a one-time basis for the first two payments of a four-year master lease for the purchase of 216 warden laptops and associated equipment.

2. Delete \$23,700 each year to support a master lease for the purchase of 216 warden laptops and associated equipment at \$5,500 per unit.

ALT 2	Change to Bill Funding
SEG	- \$47,400

3. Delete \$52,300 each year to support the first two years of a four-year master lease for the purchase of 216 warden laptops at a cost of \$5,000 per unit.

ALT 3	Change to Bill Funding
SEG	- \$104,600

4. Delete \$73,500 each year to support the first two-years of a four-year master lease for the purchase of 200 warden laptops at a cost of \$5,000 per unit.

ALT 4	Change to Bill Funding
SEG	- \$147,000

5. Delete provision. (DNR would need to reallocate base resources to purchase patrol computers.)

ALT 5	Change to Bill Funding
SEG	- \$677,000

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