

LBA Performance Audit Report Summary:

Department of Safety, Division of Safety Services Marine Patrol Bureau Staffing
Performance Audit Report - March 1998

This audit describes Marine Patrol staffing and analyzes the sufficiency of the numbers of full-time permanent Marine Patrol officers, maintenance personnel, and part-time boating season officers.

Background

Marine Patrol responsibilities are encompassed in RSA 270 and RSA 270-D. The Marine Patrol is generally responsible for enforcing boating and safe navigation laws, maintaining aids to navigation, and boating education. The Director of the Division of Safety Services and Marine Patrol officers have the powers of a peace officer with jurisdiction on all waters within the State having an area of at least ten acres. This includes approximately 1,300 lakes, as well as 3,225 miles of river, and 18 miles of coastline. Marine Patrol officers made 43 arrests, issued 1,308 summonses, and issued 5,264 warnings during calendar year 1997.

Staffing

The Marine Patrol employs nine full-time permanent employees and during the boating season hires part-time employees. Of the full-time permanent employees, four are uniformed officers with enforcement responsibilities (a captain, a lieutenant, and two sergeants), three have maintenance duties, and two have clerical responsibilities. During the 1997 part-time personnel included 50 boating season officers, for a total of 42 full-time equivalents (or FTEs) and nine part-time dispatchers. Boating season officers may work a 40-hour week or less depending upon their availability. The total number of full-time and boating season Marine Patrol officers decreased 18 percent from 1992 to 1997. During the same period the total number of boats registered in the State rose 14 percent, from 79,356 to 90,408.

Revenues and Expenditures

The Marine Patrol receives funding from the federal government and the State's General Fund. Between fiscal years 1992 and 1997, almost \$8 million were expended by the Marine Patrol. Approximately \$4.8 million (or 60 percent) of these expenditures were for personnel-related expenses. Boating-related revenues for the State were almost \$17 million during the six-year period from fiscal year 1992 through fiscal year 1997.

Workload Indicators

Between January 1995 and December 1997, the Marine Patrol received 7,377 calls for service from the public. From 1992 through 1997, Marine Patrol officers on patrol issued almost 27,000 warnings and over 7,000 summonses for boating law violations. During the same period the

Marine Patrol conducted approximately 1,240 courtesy inspections and assisted in some manner over 500 watercraft.

The Marine Patrol had 54 patrol boats and four maintenance vessels during 1997. Twenty-four of the patrol boats, known as fixed boats were assigned to specific bodies of water where they were stationed throughout the boating season. The remaining 30 patrol boats were assigned to Marine Patrol officers who patrol several waterways within specific geographic areas of the State. Boating season officers assigned to the "pull boats" spent, on average, one-third of their work time traveling between waterways and 57 percent of their work time actually on the water. In comparison, officers assigned to fixed boats spent approximately 85 percent of their time on the water.

During 1997 there were 69 boating accidents and six fatalities investigated by the Marine Patrol (2 drownings were not boat related). One source has estimated New Hampshire leads the nation in accidents per acre of water and per 1,000 boats registered.

Results

Our audit resulted in three observations and recommendations, dealing with boating season officers, full-time permanent officers, and full-time permanent maintenance personnel.

- We recommend one of two options for additional boating season Marine Patrol officers. The first option, which we have termed basic coverage would provide 2,320 hours of coverage per week, increasing the number of boating season officers to 58 FTEs. The second option, which we have called enhanced coverage would provide 3,112 hours of coverage per week, increasing the number of boating season officers to almost 78 FTEs. The 42 FTEs employed during the 1997 boating season provided 1,680 hours of coverage per week.
- We also recommend one additional full-time permanent Marine Patrol officer, at the rank of sergeant, which is the entry rank for the Bureau, under current conditions. With the current responsibilities of the full-time permanent Marine Patrol personnel, we found sufficient evidence to warrant one additional full-time person. However, if the Department of Safety were to hire additional boating season officers, a second full-time permanent Marine Patrol sergeant should be hired.
- We recommend hiring one additional maintenance mechanic, if the Department hires additional boating season Marine Patrol officers. We also recommend that maintenance personnel begin to record the amount of time taken to perform repairs on Marine Patrol equipment, including travel time for repairs in the field. We have not recommended any additional maintenance personnel under current conditions due to insufficient information regarding repairs and associated travel times.

Estimated Cost of Recommended Actions

Our estimate of the costs associated with adopting the recommendations we make ranges from \$253,715 for the basic level of coverage to \$411,303 for the enhanced coverage. These estimates do not include the cost of additional boats, motors, or trailers.