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I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your inquiry into the current staffing level of our Conservation Officers. Currently we have four unfunded Conservation Officer Positions, they have been open and unfunded for the past ten years. Currently there are thirty-six officers covering calls in the field and two new officers in training for a total of 38 field officers covering the state.

We have four administrative officers working at Fish and Game Headquarters in Concord, NH who on occasion also patrol and assist the field conservation officers when the need arises. In the year 1972, New Hampshire Fish and Game had fifty Conservation Officers working in the field responding to calls for service. The calls for service and patrol responsibilities the officers face today have more than tripled from seventy years ago, however, the number of officers responding to these demands remain at thirty-eight.

There are almost no occasions when all thirty-eight conservation officers are working on the same day due to vacations, sick time or regularly scheduled days off. There are many times when there are less than fifteen officers working statewide on any given day. Most of the search and rescue calls we receive require multiple officers to successfully complete. For example, during any type of mountain rescue mission where a litter carry out is required we need a minimum of fifteen to twenty people to successfully complete the mission. Essentially, at our current staffing levels, this would require us to call in the entire available field force with no one left in patrol areas to cover any other calls during this time. If we needed to conduct an extended search mission for more than a day as many of these missions can require, it would create a potentially significant challenge to find enough officers to conduct the search and cover calls for service.

As a result of our efforts to respond effectively and safely to all calls for service when we are so short staffed we are forced to call officers back to work from scheduled days off time to meet our mission demands. This creates both challenges for us as an Agency as well as challenges for the officers themselves. These officers being called back to work to respond on days off requires us to pay them at an overtime rate of pay. This results in higher overtime budget requirements and at times presents challenges to locate officers who are available to return to work when they are scheduled off. This is also a challenge for these officers who are on scheduled days off seeking to spend some well-deserved quality time with their families. It sometimes creates a situation where we cannot locate enough officers who are available to return to work for these missions.

The Law Enforcement Division have discussed and reviewed many options regarding our ability to adequately fund these four open positions. We would respectfully request that you consider funding two of these positions using OHRV funds. We believe the following facts would support this request:

- We currently have approximately 2.5 million dollars in the New Hampshire Fish and Game non-lapsing OHRV account which would be more than adequate to support two additional Conservation Officer positions.
- The snow machine and OHRV registrations are increasing each year as this sport becomes more popular throughout the state. In the year 2020 there were a total of 91,014 registrations sold and we are on track to increase these numbers this year as we have already sold 89,771 registrations and we have still have months until the end of this fiscal year.
- In 2020 Conservation Officers responded to 2120 calls for service calls for service relating to OHRV's and snow machines and 145 accidents were investigated. In the year 2021 they responded to 1610 calls for service with 155 accidents investigated. These calls for service and accident investigations have dramatically increased from years past.
- 18% of our current Conservation Officers total time working, is expended on OHRV patrols and service. We are seeking to fund 2 positions which equates to 4.7% of our total field force from a user group receiving 18% of our total hours of service.
- Investing in two additional officers is justified in this account and will assist us to better address the needs of the OHRV and snow machine communities.

We are a self-funded agency currently. User fees and license fees are how we fund the vast majority of the Law Enforcement Division. Each year we are more challenged to cover our costs to continue to provide the levels of service we provide to the citizens of our state. Each year our calls for service and duty assignments increase relating to citizens and services not related to hunting, fishing or trapping. Ever increasing each year, we are providing services to citizens who are not financially supporting New Hampshire Fish and Game. During some past budget cycles, we have received some monies for the general fund, however I would submit the services we are providing exceed those contributions. Examples of these services would include nuisance animal calls, responding to injured wildlife calls, rabies response and transports, search and rescue missions and dive recoveries. As a result of the increasing calls for service in these areas we are seeking to fund the remaining two unfunded positions using general funds. We have some facts that we believe would support this request:

- Search and Rescue Missions and calls for service over the past two years have totaled 679 calls seeking assistance. This has required the officers to commit 3117 total regular hours and 4087 hours of overtime. The cost for these missions and calls exceeds \$350,000.00 each year.
- These missions are responsible for causing the vast majority of officer injury and workmen's compensation claims as this is a very challenging activity. When staffing levels are reduced these injuries and problems relating to having an appropriate number of officers to safely carry out the mission while having staff to respond to calls for service in the field become challenging. Having a limited number of the same staff performing these missions can certainly burn out an average officer both physically and mentally.

- Based upon an average over the past four years, thirty-six field officers responded to a yearly average of 6879 calls for nuisance wildlife. These calls represented an average of 7% of the officers' total time spent in the field. This averages also represents approximately 6000 hours of labor each year at an annual cost of \$189,000.00 for the time spent only on these calls.
- We would be asking the general fund to provide financial support for approximately a 4.7% increase in staffing to continue to provide services at our current level of 14% of our total time spent in the field responding to search and rescue calls and nuisance animal calls, meeting the needs of citizens and services that are not supported through user fees.

According to the latest census bureau information release we have a population of 1,377,529 people living in New Hampshire. There is 8951 square miles of land and 396.4 square miles of water. We are trying to meet the needs of our citizens and actively patrol these areas using 36 field officers today. Below is a breakdown of officer to citizen comparisons which directly relate to our challenges:

- District One Total Population 31,670. District One has 5 officers assigned to patrol in the field. We have one officer for every 6334 people.
- District Two Total Population is 121,324. District Two has 7 officers assigned to patrol in the field. We have one officer for every 17,332 people.
- District Three Total Population is 169,659. District Three has 7 Officers assigned to patrol in the field. We have one officer for every 24,237 people.
- District Four Total Population is 322,302. District Four has 6 Officers assigned to patrol in the field. We have one officer for every 53,717 people.
- District Five Total Population is 583,008. District Five has 6 officers assigned to patrol in the field. We have one officer for every 97,168 people.
- District Six Total population is 222,532. District Six has 4 Officers assigned to patrol in the field. We have one officer for every 55,633 people.

I have included some documents with this memo outlining some statistics for your review. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Colonel Kevin Jordan
 Chief of Law Enforcement
 New Hampshire Fish and Game