

New Jersey DEP Fish and Wildlife - Bureau of Law Enforcement
Diversity in Law Enforcement Recruiting and Hiring Program
Draft Plan 2022-2023

About NJDEP Fish and Wildlife and the Bureau of Law Enforcement

The Bureau of Law Enforcement employs Conservation Police Officers who serve the law enforcement function of the NJDEP Fish and Wildlife program. The mission of New Jersey DEP Fish and Wildlife is to protect and manage the State's fish and wildlife to maximize their long-term biological, recreational and economic values for all New Jerseyans.

The agency goals are as follows:

- To maintain New Jersey's rich variety of fish and wildlife species at stable, healthy levels and to protect and enhance the many habitats on which they depend.
- To educate New Jerseyans on the values and needs of our fish and wildlife and to foster a positive human/wildlife co-existence.
- To maximize the recreational and commercial use of New Jersey's fish and wildlife for both present and future generations.

The Bureau of Law Enforcement, acting as the enforcement arm of the agency, is charged with the responsibility to enforce statutes and regulations concerning the protection of wildlife resources and natural landscapes of New Jersey.

Proactive enforcement by Conservation Police Officers educates and redirects actions of those utilizing natural resources to ensure compliance within guidelines established through the codification of specific season, size and bag limit restrictions. Through contact with thousands of hunters, anglers, and wildlife management area visitors yearly, the CPO is depended upon to communicate the goals, policies and programs of NJDEP Fish and Wildlife in a manner which is positive and easily understood by the sporting, commercial and non-consumptive constituents concerned with natural resource management and protection in New Jersey.

Job Responsibilities of Conservation Police Officers

The Conservation Police Officer's duties are many and varied. Although a law enforcement officer with full state law enforcement authority, the New Jersey Conservation Police Officer's focus is primarily directed towards protecting wildlife populations, the natural lands under the control of the agency, called wildlife management areas, and the people who engage in wildlife related activities. Of all agency employees, the Conservation Police Officer interacts most with the public through the course of their patrols. As the primary field representatives of the agency, they have the important and unique responsibility of conveying accurately the goals and objectives of the program while performing a law enforcement function. The Conservation Police Officer ensures that wildlife resource licenses or permits are proper and valid; harvest activities are within limitations concerning seasons, size and bag limits; and wildlife possessed has been taken by proper manner and means. Officers patrol wildlife management areas to

protect the landscape from illegal dumping, destructive off-road vehicle use, theft of and damage to vegetation and soils, and other illegal activity that negatively impacts wildlife and habitat. Officers conduct investigations into water pollution and fish kill events. Protection of wildlife goes beyond those species native to state, as officers also investigate illegal possession of exotic wildlife in the pet trade and the illegal commerce in globally endangered wildlife occurring within state boundaries.

Conservation Police Officer Recruit Applicant Requirements

The hiring of Conservation Police Officer Recruits is conducted under the rules of the NJ Civil Service Agency. The job description may be found here: [Conservation Police Officer Recruit](#). Current CSC requirements direct the following minimum qualifications for eligible applicants.

Graduation from an accredited college or university with a Bachelor's degree in one of the Biological Sciences, Biology, Biostatistics, Microbiology, Natural Science, Zoology, Marine Science, Wildlife Biology, Marine Biology, Animal Science, Botany, Physics, Wildlife Science/Conservation, Fisheries Science, Wildlife Management, Conservation Law Enforcement, Ecology, Natural Resource Management, Environmental Studies or Environmental Science. The Bachelor's degree must include or be supplemented by twenty-four (24) semester hour credits in any combination of the following areas: Fisheries Science, Wildlife Science, Ecology, Natural Resource Management or Biological Sciences. A Bachelor's degree in Environmental Education, Parks and Recreation or Criminal Justice supplemented by thirty (30) semester hour credits in any combination of the subject areas indicated above will be considered acceptable.

Applicants must be a minimum of 18 years of age. United States Citizenship is required. Appointees will be required to possess a driver's license valid in New Jersey. Appointees may be required to obtain a motorboat operator's license issued by the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission and a Boating Safety Certificate from a program approved by the New Jersey State Police.

Appointees must be able to satisfactorily complete the police training course administered by an accredited police training academy certified by the Police Training Commissioner (PTC). Such training includes successful attainment of a level of proficiency in the use of firearms and physical fitness standards.

Bureau of Law Enforcement policy prohibits tattoos on the neck, face, head, or hands, and all visible tattoos of an offensive nature. A tattoo is considered offensive if: it depicts, describes, or otherwise refers to sexual conduct, acts, or organs; if it depicts illegal drugs or advocating illegal drug use; if it depicts, describes or refers to intolerance of, or discrimination against any race, color, creed, religion, gender, national origin, or; it is commonly associated with any organization or group which advocate such intolerance or discrimination; or it brings discredit upon the Bureau or violates standards of decency or morality.

Conservation Police Officers are required to live in a residency area based on their assigned patrol area. Conservation Police Officers must establish their residence within this area no later

than 90 days after completing their initial year of training. Recruits are assigned a patrol area and corresponding residency area at the time they are made a conditional offer of employment. The Bureau attempts to accommodate residency preferences but offers are based on existing vacancies and therefore preferences cannot always be accommodated. Transfers to vacant areas are granted based on agency need and seniority.

Agency Staffing

The Bureau of Law Enforcement, when fully staffed, employs 55 Conservation Police Officers, 4 full-time civilians, and hourly or seasonal positions on an as-needed basis. The demographics of the law enforcement employees can be reviewed in the Bureau's Annual Report of Diversity in Law Enforcement Recruitment and Hiring.

About the Bureau's Diversity in Law Enforcement Recruiting and Hiring Program

Following the passage of [P.L. 2020, Chapter 107](#) in October of 2020, the Bureau of Law Enforcement formed a diversity recruiting working group of officers representing different ranks, generations, genders, and geographic regions. Civilian staff joined as well to provide an outside perspective. While awaiting the Attorney General's guidelines, this working group discussed the challenges in navigating the Conservation Police Officer Recruit hiring process, ways in which we could reach a larger and more diverse group of prospective candidates when a hiring opportunity opens, and ideas to engage youth in our community to spark interest in the career of conservation law enforcement.

In 2021 the Bureau's parent agency was working simultaneously on the inaugural Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion \(DEI\) Action Plan](#). This plan, which was published in February of 2022, outlines the initiatives and steps the agency will take to cultivate greater diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging at DEP. The Bureau of Law Enforcement has aligned our diversity recruiting and hiring plan with the DEI Action Plan while meeting the objectives of the [Attorney General Guidelines on Promoting Diversity in Law Enforcement Recruiting and Hiring](#) and NJSA 52:17B-4.10.

Purpose

Mirroring the DEP's DEI Action Plan, our Diversity in Law Enforcement Recruiting and Hiring Program's purpose is to strengthen the Bureau of Law Enforcement by attracting and attaining a workforce that reflects New Jersey's diverse population and fosters equity, inclusion, and belonging, resulting in improved outcomes for our residents, the public health we uphold, and the natural resources we are charged to protect.

Setting Goals

The laws of our nation have long recognized that our wildlife is held in the public trust. As protectors of the state's wildlife, Conservation Police Officers serve the interests of all New Jerseyans: those who rely on wildlife for their livelihood such as commercial anglers and shellfish harvesters; those for whom hunting and fishing are not just recreation but an expression of cultural or family heritage; and those who appreciate wildlife for its intrinsic value unrelated

to human utilization. In their day-to-day interactions Conservation Police Officers primarily contact a discrete group of people: those who are taking or attempting to take wildlife under the laws of Title 23, 50 and 58, and visitors to the state's wildlife management areas.

The DEI Action Plan sets forth Principle 1, Goal 1 as: NJDEP will use relevant data to set target thresholds for staff composition. The AG Guidelines states that we must “determine if there is a substantial disparity between the racial, ethnic, and gender representation within the law enforcement officer ranks as compared with the racial, ethnic, and gender representation in the relevant population of the jurisdiction served by the agency.”

The DEI Action Plan uses New Jersey's U.S. Census Data to monitor the racial and ethnic make-up of New Jersey residents and State workforce. The following studies provide census data for hunters, anglers, wildlife watchers, and wildlife management area users.

[2018 Survey of New Jersey Wildlife Management Area Users](#)

[2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation](#)

[2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, New Jersey](#)

The Bureau of Law Enforcement shares the DEI Action Plan's goal to increase the workforce percentage of minority officers from 2% in 2021 to 7% by 2026 and 12% by 2030.

The DEI Action Plan sets no goal to change the percentage of women officers, as the Workforce Development Plan target for women in nonsupervisory law enforcement positions is currently met. The Bureau of Law Enforcement is 10% women, above the New Jersey percentage of law enforcement agencies (9.2%), and slightly below the national percentage (12.6%). Based on recent recruit applications, the WMA User Survey, and the goals of the [30x30 Initiative](#), the Bureau's goal for percentage of women officers is 25%-30% by 2030.

Addressing Underrepresentation

The Bureau of Law Enforcement, with the assistance of other DEP entities including the NJDEP's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and the Division of Human Resources, will address the underrepresentation of minorities and women through layered efforts. These efforts are categorized in the DEI Action Plan by Principles and Goals.

- Outreach at New Jersey's [Minority Serving Institutions](#) (MSI) (Principle 3, Goal 1)
 - Conservation Police Officers will attend career fairs at MSIs and other colleges and universities to promote careers in conservation law enforcement and provide resources on navigating the hiring process.
 - Conservation Police Officers will contact MSI student organizations that focus on biology, conservation, and outdoor recreation to coordinate presentations on careers in conservation law enforcement.

¹ The DEP DEI Action Plan sets a goal of 5% increase in minority law enforcement employees by 2025. Current staffing levels and anticipated retirements project that CPO Recruit hiring opportunities may occur in 2025 or 2026.

- Assess needed improvements to the hiring process (Principle 3, Goal 1)
 - With the assistance of the Division of Human Resources and the Civil Service Commission, we will assess our hiring practices for barriers to underrepresented groups and devise solutions to overcome these barriers.
 - We will review the Conservation Police Officer Recruit educational requirements and update the acceptable degrees and credits to reflect today's higher education program offerings.
 - We will increase the salary of the Conservation Police Officer Recruit position to be competitive with equivalent NJ state law enforcement recruit titles and similar entry level conservation law enforcement positions in the northeast.

- Connecting with community stakeholders (Principle 3, Goal 2)
 - Members of the Bureau of Law Enforcement will meet with NGOs that promote outdoor recreation among underrepresented groups to discuss perceptions of conservation law enforcement and identify means to strengthen our relationship with these communities.
 - Conservation Police Officers will continue participation in community events such as National Night Out and PAL Fishing Derbies, with increased involvement in urban communities.
 - Conservation Police Officers will seek opportunities for positive one-on-one interactions with youth participating in wildlife related recreation, with every officer supplied with quality recruiting outreach materials.

- “Pipeline programs” to reach middle school and high school students with an emphasis on outdoor recreation groups in urban communities (Principle 3, Goal 3)
 - Conservation Police Officers will conduct outreach programs about conservation law enforcement with scout, 4-H, and other youth groups with a focus on environmental stewardship and outdoor recreation.
 - Conservation Police Officers will look for opportunities to participate in activities with Hooked on Fishing chapters.

- **The Bureau of Law Enforcement will initiate a Career Development Plan (Principle 3, Goal 3)**
 - To address the lack of exposure to the career of conservation law enforcement for potential applicants, the Bureau of Law Enforcement will offer a seasonal internship for young adults enrolled in college.
 - Interns will gain experience about the work of Conservation Police Officers through a structured ride-along program.
 - Interns will learn skills such as first aid, CPR certification, water and land-based navigation, wildlife identification, and hunter education.
 - Interns will receive instruction on the CPO Recruit hiring process, PTC physical fitness standards, and preparing for the police academy.

- Updating recruiting materials/videos (Principle 3, Goal 4)
 - With the assistance of the Bureau of Information and Education and the Office of Communications, we will create relevant recruiting videos and other media depicting the career of conservation law enforcement and the contributions of CPOs to the environment and community.
 - We will use social media platforms relevant to youth and young adults to promote the career of conservation law enforcement and the contributions of CPOs to the environment and community.

Methods of evaluation

The Bureau of Law Enforcement will use the Annual Law Enforcement Diversity Reporting Form to determine the long-term effectiveness of our Diversity in Law Enforcement Recruiting and Hiring Program. Other evaluation factors will include interest and participation in the Career Development Program, social media “reach,” and increasing engagement with diverse communities in the form of outreach events.

Public Posting

In accordance with the Attorney General’s guidelines, the Bureau of Law Enforcement’s Diversity in Law Enforcement Recruiting and Hiring Program will be posted on the Fish and Wildlife website.