

Wyoming Game & Fish Department



2015 Annual Law Enforcement Report

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Wyoming is truly like no other place on earth – the wildlife, the history, the people, the wildness and it's citizens have clearly expressed their high expectations for the protection of our state's wildlife and the fair enforcement of Wyoming's wildlife and boating laws. This report reflects the priority Game and Fish places on wildlife law enforcement in response to the public's expectations. In 2015, the Department invested significant manpower and resources protecting our exceptional wildlife resources and ensuring public safety. The Department's 82 law enforcement officers initiated nearly 4,800 enforcement actions including dozens of investigations related to serious crimes perpetrated against wildlife and Wyoming's citizens.



It is important to recognize this tremendous effort requires a large and dedicated team. Game and Fish receives outstanding support and case-breaking help from the public. Many of the most significant wildlife crime investigations begin with a tip from a concerned sportsman or an observant recreationist. Suffice it to say, the achievements documented in this report would not be possible without these individuals.

While this report depicts important statistics and accomplishments related to actions led by game wardens and wildlife investigators, other Department employees work behind the scenes to contribute in a big way to our law enforcement program. Take the time to look at the wildlife forensic lab on page 40. They performed nearly 13,000 analytical tests in 2015 and are a critical component to the Department's law enforcement program. Regional office managers serve as the first contact many sportsmen and women have when they visit one of our offices. They provide much of the information hunters, anglers and boaters need so they can remain compliant with the law. Office managers often field stop poaching reports and other reported violations and disseminate information to field officers. Game and Fish biologists spend a significant amount of time checking licenses in the field, providing helpful information to hunters and anglers and oftentimes assist law enforcement officers with task forces and other enforcement activities. Our Information and Education Specialists use their talents to pro-actively ensure compliance with Game and Fish regulations by targeting specific times of the year with educational messages through the media and other events.

While the citizens of our state and the dedicated employees of the Department are on the front lines protecting our resources, current and past Legislatures and Governors have demonstrated their commitment to wildlife values through the enactment of strong wildlife laws. The enactment of the "winter range statute" in the mid-90s and the addition of felony provisions for the most egregious wildlife violations in 2011 are noteworthy legislative accomplishments that have significantly contributed to holding those who intentionally violate wildlife laws accountable for their actions. Prosecutors and judges around the state do an exceptional job handling wildlife cases in a fair manner in alignment with statutes and regulations promulgated by the Legislature and Commission. Wyoming's elected officials have bolstered the abilities of the Department and the Commission by passing strong laws and following those laws to adjudicate wildlife crimes.

In conclusion, I hope you find this report informative and helpful in understanding the efforts of our Department and Commission to protect Wyoming's wildlife, provide public safety and ensure fair chase. We will continue our commitment to protect Wyoming's wildlife – our public and wildlife deserve no less.

Regards,

Brian R. Nesvik
Chief Game Warden



INTRODUCTION

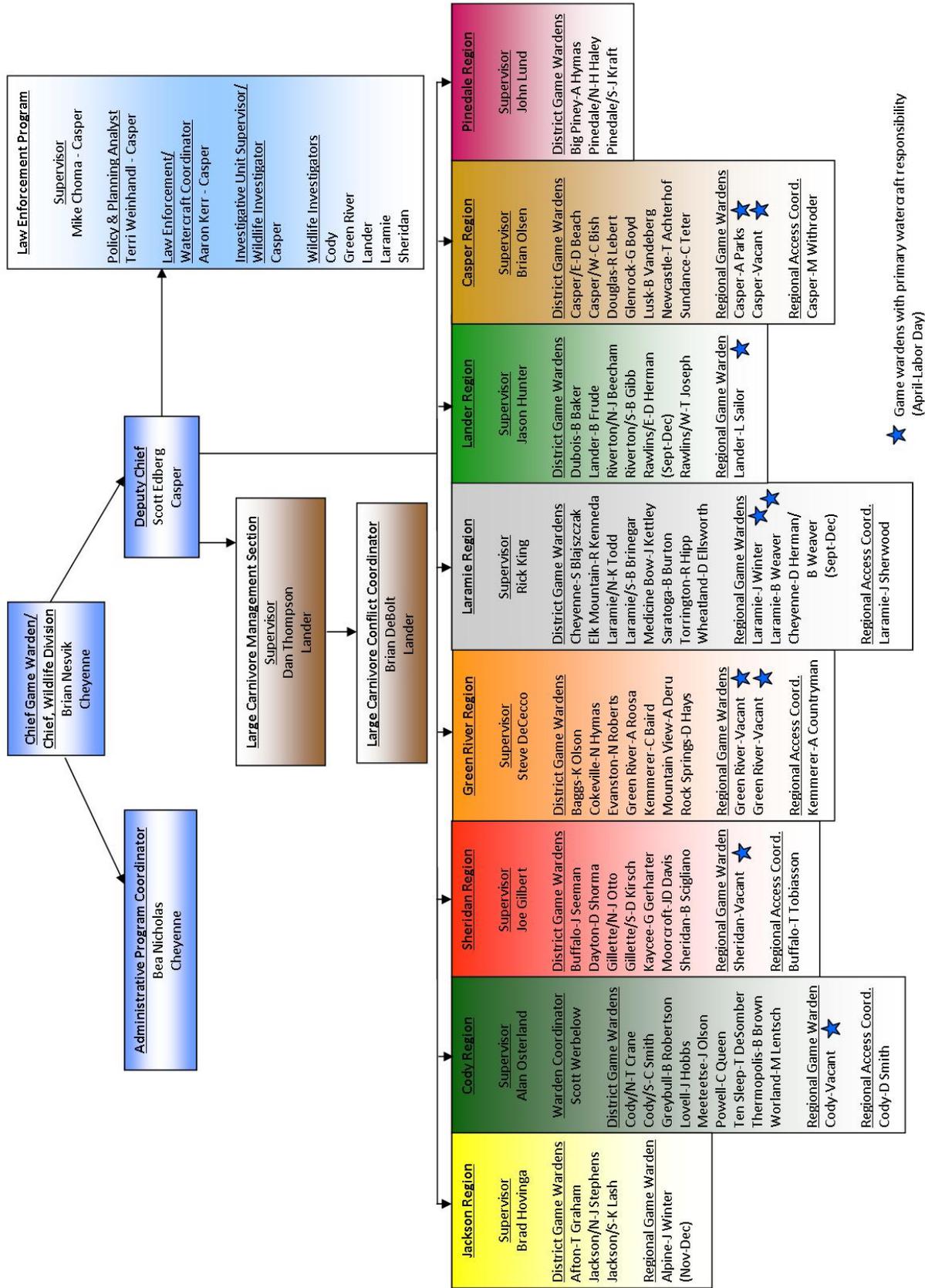
Each year, Wyoming Game and Fish Department (Department) law enforcement officers dedicate thousands of hours, hundreds of thousands of vehicle miles, thousands of boat and ATV hours and hundreds of horseback days patrolling Wyoming's vast landscapes to enforce the state's hunting, fishing, boating and general wildlife laws. They investigate reported wildlife crimes and work through the court process to ensure the successful prosecution of violators.



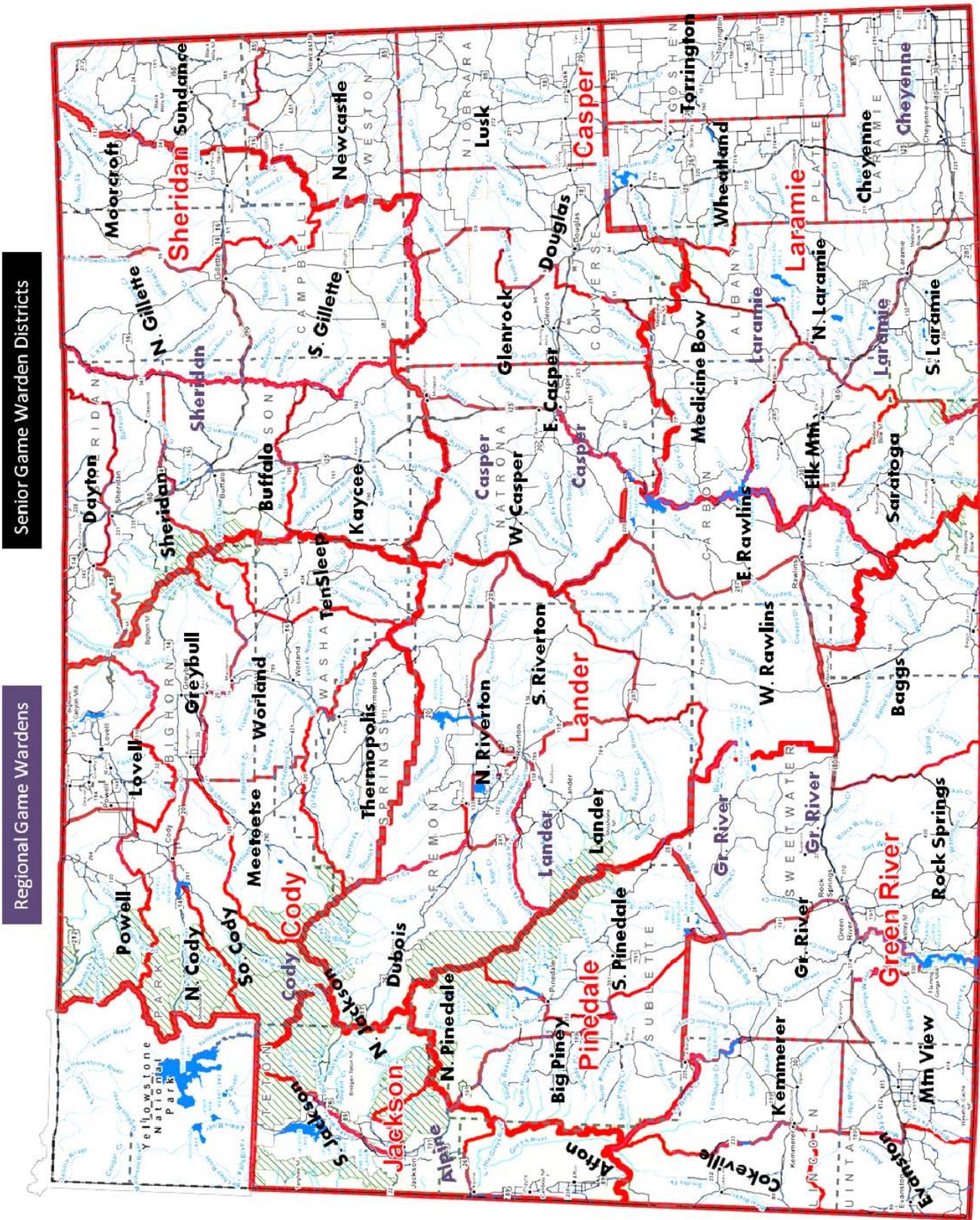
The following report is a compilation of Department law enforcement efforts and highlights for calendar year 2015. Included in this report is an organizational chart of law enforcement personnel, regional summaries, law enforcement statistics, new legislation affecting our law enforcement program, new game warden testing/hiring results, game warden training, our Stop Poaching Program, Wildlife Investigative Unit efforts and other aspects of the Department's law enforcement program.



2015 LAW ENFORCEMENT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



STATEWIDE REGION AND GAME WARDEN DISTRICT BOUNDARIES



REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Jackson Region

Work Unit Overview

The Jackson Region includes the North Jackson, South Jackson and Afton game warden districts. The region has five law enforcement officers, including three district game wardens, one regional game warden stationed in Alpine and the regional wildlife supervisor.

2015 Law Enforcement Efforts

Jackson Region law enforcement officers documented 243 violations within the region in 2015. Officers issued 82 citations, 151 written warnings and investigated 10 cases in which a suspect was never developed. Although the Jackson Region is smaller than most regions, the game wardens in the region are extremely busy from a law enforcement perspective. Between fall hunting seasons, fishing enforcement, bear baiting and dealing with winter range/antler collection violations, there is limited down time for game wardens. Requests for service from a very diverse public are constantly on the rise.

Game wardens in the Jackson Region spent a considerable amount of time working horseback in remote backcountry areas and by boat/kayak on the Greys, Salt and Snake rivers. The high volume of hunting and fishing activity in these areas demands increased law enforcement efforts.



Warden Kyle Lash making backcountry hunter contacts.

During mid and late June, game wardens packed into the Thorofare area (the most remote area in the lower 48 states) on horseback to investigate reports from previous years of extensive over-limits of cutthroat trout being taken by fishermen from Utah. The investigatory trips revealed that no major violations were taking place and compliance with fishing regulations was good among anglers. These enforcement efforts have elicited a positive response from local outfitters that appreciated the extra enforcement presence in this remote area.

Trapping continues to be a very sensitive issue in the Jackson Region. Wardens spent time working trapping enforcement and responding to calls from the public when traps were encountered along major recreational trails on the Bridger-Teton National Forest.

The addition of a regional game warden in Alpine in November of 2015 has been extremely valuable in workload relief for regional personnel. The position in Alpine increases enforcement presence in the region and allows district game wardens to diversify work tasks. Having an Alpine game warden is contingent year-to-year and is based on the availability of a game warden to be placed there.

The Grand Teton National Park elk reduction program and the elk/bison season on the National

REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Elk Refuge continue to be a considerable workload for law enforcement personnel in the region. Both of these hunts present very unique enforcement challenges. This is the only region in the state with a wild bison hunt. This hunt is often weather dependent and can lead to enforcement issues with many hunters concentrated in the same area. Harvest was lower in 2015 than 2014 due to mild weather condition and excellent forage growth, causing a late arrival of elk and bison to the park and refuge.



Warden Jon Stephens checking a wild bison hunter on the National Elk Refuge.

Decoy Operations

In October, Jackson Region game wardens initiated two separate decoy deer operations on the west side of the Teton Range to deal with reports of illegal hunting by Idaho residents. It has long been suspected that Idaho residents are frequently hunting

isolated areas in Wyoming without Wyoming licenses. During the two operations, 13 vehicles passed by decoys that had been placed to apprehend violators nearly two miles into Wyoming from the Idaho border. Of those vehicles, 10 vehicles stopped to observe the decoy, with four individuals shooting at it. All shooters were issued citations for hunting deer in Wyoming without valid hunting licenses. Other violations detected during these operations were shooting from the road and failing to wear fluorescent orange clothing while hunting. The decoy operations received considerable positive press in the local newspaper and on Idaho television.



Warden Jon Stephens and Biologist Alyson Courtemanch setting up a deer decoy.

Task Forces

The region conducted its annual Antler Rendezvous task force in Alpine from May 9-15, 2015. This effort is designed to monitor the sale and transfer of antlers, heads, taxidermy mounts and other wildlife parts during the annual Antler Rendezvous. This is an excellent opportunity to work closely with participating antler dealers/vendors and issue interstate game tags (IGT) for antlers/horns on skull plates prior to and during the week-long event. A modest number of minor violations centering on IGT requirements were documented during the rendezvous. No major violations were detected. Game wardens also worked the National Elk Refuge antler sale on the Jackson town square held on the 3rd Saturday of May each year, immediately

REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

following the Alpine Antler Rendezvous. This provides game wardens an opportunity to address IGT requirements and violations that arise at the auction and is an excellent public relations opportunity for the Department. This event is also a great opportunity for the Wildlife Investigative Unit to collect intelligence on illegally taken wildlife.



Warden Todd Graham gets some help tagging a moose head at the Alpine Antler Rendesvous.

Notable Cases

Waste of Bighorn Sheep - In October, a pair of elk hunters discovered a bighorn sheep carcass left to waste in the Gros Ventre. The seven year-old ram was discovered approximately 100 yards upslope of a second bighorn sheep that had been field dressed the day before by a licensed sheep hunter. The sheep hunter was interviewed by the North Jackson game warden and found to have unintentionally shot both rams. The sheep hunter was cited for taking an over-limit of big game and posted a bond of \$420.

Mistaken Identity - In early November, the North Jackson game warden and a local U.S. Forest Service officer checking wood permits contacted an individual in possession of a doe mule deer in the Hoback area. The deer season had been closed for a month. While on a firewood gathering trip, the hunter observed the deer. The mule deer doe appeared to be so much larger than the deer he was familiar with back in Georgia, so the hunter thought

that it must be a calf elk. He harvested the deer and filled out his elk license. The hunter was advised on the difference between elk and mule deer, and cited for taking a deer without a license. The hunter paid a \$790 fine.

Cody Region

Work Unit Overview

The Cody Region consists of 12 law enforcement officers. These officers include one regional wildlife supervisor, one game warden coordinator, nine district game wardens and one access coordinator. The Cody Region is located in northwest Wyoming and wardens patrol from the Montana state line south to Boysen Reservoir and from Yellowstone National Park east to the west slope of the Big Horn Mountains. The region includes the North Cody, South Cody, Powell, Lovell, Meeteetse, Greybull, Tensleep, Thermopolis and Worland warden districts.

2015 Law Enforcement Efforts

Cody Region law enforcement officers documented 374 violations within the region in 2015. Officers issued 165 citations, 202 written warnings and investigated seven cases in which a suspect was



Warden Travis Crane on backcountry patrol.

never developed. Wardens spent the majority of their time patrolling their districts and assisting neighboring wardens with locating possible suspects and conducting

REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

several search/arrest warrants. It is notable that several Cody Region wardens were involved in four separate jury trials in 2015. Region wardens closed several large cases that have been under investigation and in court proceedings for over a year. The Cody wildlife investigator has been involved in high priority cases and has been instrumental in assisting Cody Region wardens with larger cases that involve search/arrest warrants.

The North Fork Shoshone River and Buffalo Bill Reservoir continue to be a very popular fishery. The North and South Cody wardens continue to spend a great deal of time patrolling these waters. The Bighorn River near Thermopolis has seen an increase in the number of fly fishermen floating and fishing this blue ribbon stretch of river over the past few years. Upper and Lower Sunshine Reservoirs west of Meeteetse continue to be very popular fishing spots for both summer and ice fishermen.

Task Forces

The Cody Region conducted a fishing task force on the Bighorn River in the Thermopolis area on May 1 and 2, 2015. Wardens coordinated with local landowners to set up on private properties north of Wind River Canyon. They checked boaters for compliance with watercraft safety and fishing regulations as they floated by. Fish Division personnel were present and collected creel data for use in fisheries management. Wardens inspected a total of 37 boats and checked 85 fishermen. There were a total of 252 fish caught and released, with only one fish being kept due to being hooked too deep to release. There were a total of five citations and four warning citations issued. These citations were for failure to produce life jackets, failure to purchase a conservation stamp, failure to purchase an aquatic invasive species (AIS) decal and failure to get a boat inspected for AIS prior to launching. None of the anglers contacted were fishing without a license. Approximately 43 man hours were expended in this effort. These boater and fisherman contacts were made on private property along the river rather than at a public boat launching area.

Compliance was fair to good and wardens received many favorable comments from people who were pleased with their efforts.

Notable Cases

Cody Region wardens solved a number of ongoing cases in 2015. Many of these cases involved a great deal of investigative work, assistance from other law enforcement agencies and multiple wardens assisting with evidence gathering, case documentation, interviews and the execution of several search/arrest warrants.

Illegal Trapping Case - The Greybull game warden closed a large case in 2015 that started in 2013. This case involved a Cody resident with a multitude of trapping violations northeast of Greybull. The trapper had been caught committing similar trapping violations several years earlier. During the investigation, the warden discovered that the trapper had caught and killed a number of non-target animals and failed to report these animals to the local game warden. The majority of the non-target catches were mule deer.



One of many deer killed in illegal snares.

The trapper had also failed to check snares within one week, failed to properly anchor snares and failed to properly tag snares. A total of 55 charges were initially brought against the trapper, with 13 of those

REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

charges being for wanton destruction of mule deer. After two years, a plea agreement was reached between the trapper's attorney and Bighorn County Attorney's office. The trapper pled "no contest" to nine counts, was found guilty on three counts of failing to anchor snares, three counts of failing to tag snares, and three counts of failing to report mortality of a non target species. The trapper received a total of \$7,299 in fines and loss of trapping privileges for 27 years.



Golden eagle killed in illegal snare.

Jury Trials - In a somewhat unusual year, the Meeteetse game warden was involved with three cases that went to jury trials. The suspects in all three cases were successfully prosecuted. The first case involved a hunter from Kirby, WY who shot and killed a cow elk on top of Carter Mountain. The hunter left the elk untagged on top of the mountain for 9 days, claiming that inclement weather and health problems prevented him from recovering his elk and that the wind blew his license away. The suspect had multiple opportunities to pack the elk out but refused to do so. The suspect was ultimately charged with waste of big game, failing to properly tag his elk and interference with a peace officer. A jury found the suspect guilty on all counts. He was fined \$1,460 and lost his hunting privileges for two years.

The second trial involved a trapper who failed to check his traps within legal time limits. The trapper had previously been found guilty for the same violation in 2012 and 2014. The trial lasted 10 hours and a jury returned a guilty verdict after 16 minutes of deliberation. The suspect was fined \$220 and lost his trapping privileges for three years.

The third trial involved a hunter who shot a trophy bull elk on private land just before dark. The hunter was alone and afraid of wolves and grizzly bears, so he left the elk overnight and returned to field dress it around noon on the following day. The meat had spoiled so the hunter removed the head and left the carcass in the field. A nearby rancher reported the incident to the game warden, who investigated and cited the hunter for waste of big game. The trial lasted eight hours and a jury returned a guilty verdict after 15 minutes. The suspect was fined \$1,040 and was ordered to forfeit the elk antlers.

Sheridan Region

Work Unit Overview

The Sheridan Region includes the Dayton, Sheridan, Buffalo, Kaycee, North Gillette, South Gillette and Moorcroft warden districts. There are nine law enforcement officers in the region, including seven district game wardens, one regional wildlife supervisor and one access coordinator.

2015 Law Enforcement Efforts

Sheridan Region law enforcement officers documented 1,275 violations within the region in 2015. Officers issued 518 citations, 618 written warnings and investigated 139 cases in which a suspect was never developed. Particular areas of concern remain the out-of-season take of big game, wanton destruction of big game and ethics related violations. Ethics related violations, such as shooting from a public road, waste of big game and take of game from a vehicle were observed across the region. A majority of these violations occurred in Campbell County.

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Wanton destruction of big game generally fell into two categories. Random “thrill killings” occurred throughout the region but were concentrated in Campbell and Sheridan counties. There was also wanton destruction of deer and elk apparently associated with members of the Crow Tribe along the Montana-Wyoming state line and in the vicinity of the Kerns Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA). A high-profile case from 2014, in which several tribal members were charged in Sheridan County Circuit Court with the illegal take of several elk, is still pending and may represent a case of statewide and possibly national significance. Perceived tribal rights, as well as disregard for Wyoming law along the state line is an issue that will likely continue into the near future.

Task Forces

One task force using out-of-region officers was conducted in the Sheridan Region in 2015 to address the problem of illegal take of elk in the vicinity of the Kerns WHMA. Two-officer teams were assigned to the area during December 2014, January 2015 and December 2015. Operations were focused during the night and early morning hours. In January 2015, task force officers apprehended several Crow Tribal members killing elk in Wyoming out-of-season. The suspects in this case entered guilty pleas in Sheridan County Circuit Court. Possible “spotlighting” violations were also observed during the operation but officers were unable to contact potential suspects.

The State Line Task Force, while intensive, yielded few detected violations, reflecting the difficulty in patrolling the area. Poor communications (radio and cell phone), the random nature of violations and the potential for violent confrontations with suspects were identified as difficulties in conducting the operation. Landowners, area residents and the sporting public have all voiced their appreciation with the Department’s efforts to address what has become a significant loss of elk and deer.

Although not a formal task force, officers in the

Gillette and Moorcroft districts closely coordinated watercraft patrols on Keyhole Reservoir. The region has been without a regional game warden position for over two years and the Gillette, Moorcroft and Buffalo district wardens have taken up the slack to provide watercraft safety coverage at both Keyhole Reservoir and Lake DeSmet. In addition, other district wardens in the region assisted at these two bodies of water.



Warden Jim Seeman contacting anglers at Lake DeSmet.

Notable Cases

Badger Poaching - While watching a stretch of road where scattered groups of deer were feeding, the Moorcroft game warden observed a pickup with two men driving slowly down the road stopping periodically. Just as the pickup was passing in front of the warden, it turned broadside in the county road and the passenger stuck a rifle out the window and

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shot. The pickup drove up the road about 75 yards to a brush patch and both men got out and started looking for something. After watching for about 15 minutes, the warden heard another shot and saw the men loading something in the back of the truck. The men got back in their vehicle and began to leave the area. The warden stopped the suspects and discovered both men were from Kentucky. They were father and son and the son was the only one with a deer license. The father had a small game/game bird license and had harvested some sharp-tailed grouse and cottontail rabbits before their contact with the warden. The men, however, had a badger in their truck and investigation revealed the warden had witnessed the father shoot the animal from the vehicle and without a license. Both men were cited with shooting from a public road and the father was cited for shooting from a vehicle and taking a furbearing animal without a license.

License Transfer Case - Initiated in November 2014, the case was finally adjudicated in Sheridan Circuit court on May 27, 2015. This case involved the illegal transfer of deer licenses to two Wisconsin men. A rancher from Banner, WY, his ex-wife of Sheridan and her son all gave their resident deer licenses to two nonresident hunters from Mosinee, Wisconsin during the fall of 2014. The men hunted on the ranch and illegally took three mule deer. If

not for an observant employee of the local meat locker plant, the violations might have never been detected. The employee called the Buffalo game warden when she observed suspicious information on a game tag affidavit. The warden, with the help of the Sheridan wildlife investigator and conservation wardens in Wisconsin were able to get full confessions from all of the participants. In the end, total fines and restitution for the case was \$21,620 with loss of hunting privileges for three years for all participants.

Trespassing Call Leads to More Violations - On the evening of October 14, 2015, the North Gillette game warden responded to a trespassing call on the SA Road near Spotted Horse. The suspect was reported to have shot a young buck mule deer from the road in the complainant's driveway, loaded the animal, transported it a quarter of a mile down the road to where he thought the land status was public, and proceeded to field dress it. When the warden arrived, interviews with the three passengers from Colorado revealed that they were paying the driver/shooter "\$100 dollars and a 12 pack" to take them hunting for white-tailed deer on the suspect's "father's land." A sweep of the area revealed a trail of Bud Light beer cans down the road, matching an open 12 pack in the back of the suspect's pickup truck. During the warden's interview with the shooter, she noted cues of intoxication and called the Campbell County Sheriff's Office. The suspect was subsequently arrested on drunk driving charges (a blood test would later show alcohol and marijuana in his system). The suspect was charged with failure to tag, outfitting without a license, trespass to hunt, shooting from a public road and littering.

Closed Season Mule Deer - The access coordinator in Buffalo received a call on December 12, 2015 regarding hunters shooting mule deer during a closed season. He contacted the suspect vehicle and discovered one mule deer buck and two mule deer does in the vehicle (the season for mule deer bucks was closed at the time). There were two hunters in the truck and only one man had deer licenses.



Warden Jim Seeman with deer confiscated in this case.

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During the interview it was discovered that one of the men had shot at the buck mule deer from the vehicle and he did not possess a deer license. The other man had filled all his white-tailed deer only licenses with mule deer. The men claimed the mule deer and white-tailed deer had been mixed together and they shot the wrong species. This was contrary to information from the reporting party, who had advised that there had only been mule deer in the area for several for months. Both men were issued citations.

Antelope Taken Without Licenses - The Kaycee game warden contacted two nonresident hunters who had been antelope hunting in a fairly remote area southwest of Kaycee during the fall of 2015. They had each harvested a buck and a doe antelope. One of the antelope, which was a fawn, was cooking in a pot. One hunter showed the warden his license and carcass coupon, which was not detached and the date wedges were not removed, but just cut on one side. The license was for a doe or fawn white-tailed deer. He explained that he did not know how to tag an animal properly, but he planned to use this license for the antelope since it was the only one he possessed. The second hunter had properly tagged his doe antelope, but again, had used a doe or fawn white-tailed deer license to tag the animal. He explained to the warden how he thought the initials "NR" on his license meant "non-restrictive," not nonresident. The warden pointed out that the man had used the correct Type 1 "any antelope" license for his buck antelope. Both hunters were issued citations for taking antelope without a license.

Deer Taken From a Motor Vehicle - On the evening of November 6, 2015, the Dayton game warden received a report of suspicious activity on a ranch near Ranchar. The caller reported that it looked like people were using their vehicles to "push" deer. The caller said this happened right at dusk. The warden responded the following morning and identified one of the hunters from the previous evening. The hunter was pursuing white-tailed deer

and told the warden his father had harvested a small white-tailed buck the night before. After a short interview, the warden determined that the hunter had also harvested a buck white-tailed deer the previous evening and had failed to tag the deer. He called a friend from town to come and put his tag on the buck he killed, since the friend was going to be tied up at work and could not go hunting for the rest of the season. The warden also determined that the hunter's father had shot his buck from a vehicle. The men were charged with transfer of a license, failure to tag a big game animal and taking big game from a motor vehicle. They were issued citations and posted a bond of \$1,060.



Warden Dustin Kirsch investigating a poached elk.

Turkey Poaching Tip Leads to Large Investigation - A Story fish hatchery employee called the Sheridan game warden to report that a teenage girl had apparently shot some turkeys on fish hatchery property using a shotgun. The hatchery property is only open to archery hunting. The girl stopped at the hatchery with a teenage boy and the boy asked if the area was open to turkey hunting. The employee replied that the pair could hunt turkey, but only with archery equipment.

Ten minutes later, the employee was approached by a hatchery visitor who reported that she witnessed a

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young woman shoot at turkeys with a shotgun from the parking lot near the hatchery visitor center. The employee investigated and found the two young people with two turkeys. The boy claimed that both birds had been shot with a bow and denied that the girl used a firearm. The hatchery employee supplied the license plate number of the hunter's car and a description of the pair to the warden. The warden investigated the scene and discovered a third turkey deliberately tucked under a fallen limb in the area where the hunters had been.

The hunters left the area, but their vehicle was registered to a man in Gillette, so the Sheridan warden notified a warden in Gillette. About an hour later, the Gillette warden contacted the hunters on Interstate Highway 90 west of Gillette. After an extensive interview, the girl admitted that she fired a shotgun at the turkeys, killing three. The boy and girl each tagged one turkey and they hid the third turkey to conceal the over-limit violation.

The girl was known to the Gillette warden as possibly being involved in other poaching activities in the Gillette area. Further investigation not only confirmed this, but also led to evidence that the girl killed a deer without a license in 2014 near Sheridan. Additional investigation uncovered several other violations that had been committed by the boy's associates in Crook, Campbell and Johnson counties.

With regard to the initial violation report, the girl was charged with taking an over-limit of game birds, using a firearm in an "archery only" area and waste of game birds. She was also cited for taking a deer without a license, taking an antelope without a license, taking game birds and small game without licenses, waste of game birds and small game, taking wildlife with artificial light and accessory to license transfer (all stemming from prior violations). Upon conviction, she was fined \$280, lost her hunting privileges for five years and was sentenced to 25 hours of community service.

With regard to the initial violation report, the teenage boy was cited for license transfer, accessory to over-limit and waste of game birds. He was also cited for violations that occurred previously in Campbell County, including taking game birds and small game without licenses, waste of game birds and small game, taking game birds and small game out of season, accessory to taking game birds without a license and taking wildlife with artificial light. In addition to \$740 in fines and restitution, he lost his hunting privileges for five years.

During the investigation, information obtained from search warrants on the two individuals' phones led to dozens of other thrill killing wildlife violations being documented, leading to four other suspects who had committed wildlife violations in three counties in northeast Wyoming. Numerous interviews were conducted with additional evidence and cell phones being seized, which ultimately led to the four new suspects being charged and convicted of 18 violations. These violations included license transfer, accessory to taking big game without a license, taking wildlife with artificial light, taking game birds and small game out of season, taking game birds and small game without licenses, waste of game birds and small game and failing to wear fluorescent orange clothing while hunting big game. In addition to license privilege suspensions, one to five years depending on the suspect, a total of \$2,270 in fines and restitution was assessed by the court. This case illustrates how teamwork between Department personnel and the public can result in the detection of serious wildlife violations.



REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Green River Region

Work Unit Overview

The Green River Region spans southwest and south-central Wyoming and includes the Baggs, Rock Springs, Green River, Mountain View, Evanston, Kemmerer and Cokeville warden districts. Law enforcement personnel include seven district game wardens, one access coordinator and one regional wildlife supervisor.

Typically, the Green River Region has one or two regional game wardens that focus on watercraft activities May-early September and other law enforcement throughout the year. In 2015, the Green River Region was not assigned any of these positions. This is the first time in over two decades the region was without this additional manpower.

2015 Law Enforcement Efforts

Green River Region law enforcement officers documented 480 violations within the region in 2015. Officers issued 207 citations, 234 written warnings and investigated 39 cases in which a suspect was never developed.

Violations by type and severity were about the same as past years. There was an observed decrease in fishing and watercraft violations. This reduction is likely due to less law enforcement effort during May through August since the region was without additional watercraft safety personnel. The region achieved its goals of maintaining coverage through a planned work schedule of district game wardens working together to cover Flaming Gorge Reservoir along with their other spring and summer duties.

There was continued improvement in aquatic invasive species (AIS) compliance, which resulted in a decrease in AIS violations in 2015. This improvement is likely due to better public awareness and information and outreach efforts.

The region continued to focus on antler hunting closures and access program enforcement. Wardens

documented fewer violations and received fewer reports from the public in these areas during 2015. There was an increase in ethics and judgment-related violations in 2015. Wardens documented and the public reported an increase in big game animals being shot and abandoned. The cause of these incidents is typically difficult to determine.



Supervisor Steve DeCecco and Warden Dave Hays searching for a bullet in a poached elk.

Task Forces

Green River Region game wardens planned and conducted a task force aimed at monitoring shed antler gathering activity south of Rock Springs during the winter and spring of 2015 in response to public input and complaints. Wardens drove 6,415 miles and worked 294 hours during this effort. They did not detect any antler gathering regulation or other wildlife violations but did contact many individuals recreating. They made 13 contacts worthy of documentation with people who may have been engaged or interested in collecting shed antlers. Although there were no law enforcement actions, the public contact effort and presence achieved the goals of the project.

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Notable Cases

Interagency Cooperation - The Mountain View game warden completed a case involving a felon with a firearm, waste of big game, over-limit of big game and a fail to tag big game violation. It was a notable case because there were wildlife charges and non-wildlife charges due to teamwork with agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. This case illustrates the connection between wildlife violations and other violations requiring outside agency cooperation.

Trespassing Report Leads to More Violations -

Thanks to a report from a local hunting guide, the Evanston game warden was able to successfully prosecute a local hunter for multiple violations. The hunter had knowingly trespassed onto private property and shot two buck mule deer from his vehicle. Although the hunter continually lied when confronted about the incident, the hunting guide and the warden were able to locate the second deer, which the hunter had covered with a camouflaged coat and hid in the sage brush. The hunting guide also had video of the hunter shooting from the vehicle to further counter the suspect's story. The hunter was charged with taking an over-limit of big game, taking wildlife from a vehicle and hunting on private property without permission. He was ordered to pay \$750 in fines and had his hunting privileges suspended for two years.

Over-limit and Waste of Moose - The Evanston game warden and Kemmerer access coordinator investigated a report of taking an over-limit and waste of a bull moose south of Evanston. Thanks to the testimony of three Evanston High School students, the wardens were able to prove that a youth moose hunter had knowingly shot two bull moose on one license. Instead of taking responsibility for his mistake, the youth hunter and his mother tried to cover up the incident. They allowed the second moose to die a slow death and the meat to go to waste.

Both the youth hunter and his mother were charged with taking on over-limit of moose and waste of a



moose. The two were ordered to pay \$7,500 in restitution plus \$80 in court costs and had their hunting privileges suspended for two years. The three students who reported the incident each received a significant cash reward through the Wyoming Wildlife Protectors Association for their willingness to come forward and do the right thing by reporting a suspected wildlife violation.



Over-limit and Waste of Deer - The Kemmerer game warden concluded a case in which an Evanston man killed a 4-point buck mule deer, did not tag it and continued to hunt in an attempt to take an over-limit of deer. In addition to these violations, the suspect allowed edible portions of the deer to go to

REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

waste. The Kemmerer and Cokeville game wardens conducted several interviews, collected evidence and ultimately gained an admission of the crimes. The defendant was sentenced to six days in jail, seven years suspended hunting privileges and \$1,060 in fines.



Mule deer head seized as evidence in this case.

Laramie Region

Work Unit Overview

The Laramie Region includes eight district game wardens located in Cheyenne, Torrington, Wheatland, Medicine Bow, North Laramie, South Laramie, Elk Mountain and Saratoga. In addition, the region typically has one to three regional game wardens assigned to Glendo, Laramie, and/or Cheyenne Headquarters. An access coordinator and regional wildlife supervisor are stationed in Laramie. In total, the Laramie Region typically has 11 to 13 law enforcement officers.

The Laramie Region has a heavy and diverse workload. On the eastern side of the region, the Cheyenne warden district is primarily private land and has over 90,000 people within the district boundary. Calls for law enforcement and other services are frequent. The Wheatland and Torrington game warden districts have very high workloads with long seasons for many species, private land issues, and substantial fishing and watercraft enforcement responsibilities. The Laramie districts cover a vast range of country and include the Laramie Range in the north and the Snowy Range to the south. Both of these areas have very high elk hunter use days and elk harvest, in addition to many other responsibilities and duties. The Medicine Bow district typically has some of the highest number of pronghorn hunters in the state, although in recent years license numbers have been reduced significantly. The Saratoga and Elk Mountain districts have a mix of private and public land, high hunter use days, significant damage issues and a high diversity of species.

Law Enforcement Efforts

Laramie Region law enforcement officers documented 1,068 violations within the region in 2015. Officers issued 387 citations, 661 written warnings and investigated 20 cases in which a suspect was never developed. Despite multiple priorities, Laramie Region wardens devoted just over 7,000 hours to fishing, watercraft, and wildlife



Warden Jake Kettley examining a rifle during a search warrant.

REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

law enforcement. Wardens drove over 90,000 miles while conducting law enforcement work.

Given the high use of watercraft on Glendo, Grayrocks, Guernsey and Granite reservoirs, it is no surprise that the region documented a high number of watercraft and fishing violations. Wardens documented 84 fishing without a license violations, more than 150 violations related to AIS laws, and nearly 50 failing to provide personal flotation device violations. Region wardens have the responsibility to investigate boating accidents and with the high level of recreational watercraft use in the region, numerous boat accident investigations were conducted. In one watercraft accident during the summer of 2015 at Grayrocks Reservoir, an eight-year-old boy received multiple prop cuts over much of his body. Fortunately, he survived the tragic accident. The Wheatland game warden, with the assistance of several other Department wardens, completed a thorough investigation of the accident.

Between the Laramie Peak, Iron Mountain, Snowy Range, Shirley Mountain, and the Laramie Region's portion of the Sierra Madre herd unit, the region experienced well over 100,000 elk hunter use days during 2015 seasons. Elk seasons ran from August through the end of January in all districts and wardens devoted a significant number of hours working these seasons, documenting 140 violations related to elk.

Notable Cases

Laramie Deer Case - Wardens worked together to solve a case involving the illegal harvest of buck mule deer. A tip from concerned citizen in March of 2015 initiated the case and subsequent investigation revealed a Laramie man killed a buck in late 2014 without a license and out-of-season, hauled it home to his garage and let it go to waste.

This investigation eventually led to a search warrant being served by wardens. The suspect was not truthful in initial interviews regarding where he killed the deer. After getting consent to search the



suspect's cell phone, a warden found a series of photos that pinpointed the time and location of harvest. As luck would have it, the warden was very familiar with the Laramie Peak area where the deer was harvested. In a follow up interview the suspect admitted to elk hunting near Laramie Peak and seeing the buck mule deer at close range several times before giving in to temptation and shooting the deer. He also admitted to knowing the season was closed for the taking of mule deer in this area just prior to Thanksgiving. The suspect was found guilty in court in Laramie and was ordered to pay \$4,000 in restitution, almost \$1,000 in fines and lost his hunting privileges for three years.

Illegal Mountain Lion Hunt - Many cases take time to complete and often span the course of a year or more between the initial investigation and final prosecution and sentencing. In one such case, a hunter from Pennsylvania and his outfitter were found guilty in the illegal take of a mountain lion during the 2014 hunting season. While on an outfitted elk hunt near Glendo, a mountain lion came within 20 yards of the Pennsylvania man and his outfitter told him to shoot the lion. The hunter did not have a mountain lion license at the time and purchased one after the fact. The hunter checked the lion in and signed an oath stating it was legally harvested. The Cheyenne game warden was suspicious that the lion was killed before the license was purchased so he interviewed the hunter, his outfitter and another Pennsylvania hunter that was

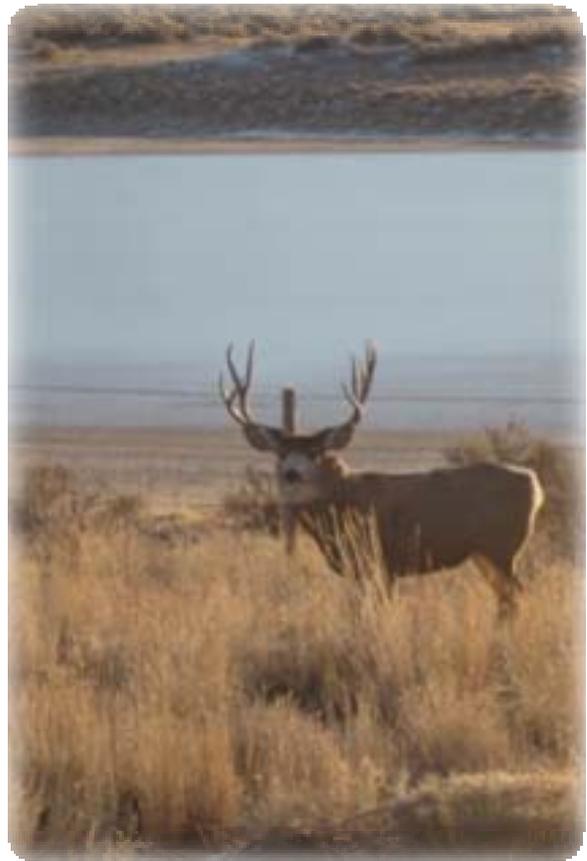
REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

on the hunt. The hunter admitted to killing the lion without a license and the outfitter admitted that he had told the men to lie if questioned by game wardens. The hunter was found guilty of knowingly taking a mountain lion without a license. He was fined \$5,040 and ordered to pay \$2,500 in restitution. His hunting privileges were suspended for five years and he forfeited a Clymer's rifle with an attached Swarovski scope, a firearm valued at more than \$5,000. The outfitter was cited for accessory to knowingly taking a mountain lion without a license, fined \$5,040 and ordered to pay \$2,500 in restitution. His hunting privileges were suspended for five years and his outfitting license was suspended for one year.



Task Forces

The Laramie Region conducted a winter range task force in the Platte Valley in 2015 to protect mule deer. Trophy mule deer bucks are vulnerable to poaching while they migrate to and from winter ranges in the Platte Valley. Five visiting game wardens patrolled winter ranges and migration corridors for one week at a time for five weeks, beginning in early November and continuing through mid-December. Two citations were issued for elk hunting violations and no violations related to deer poaching were detected. Numerous contacts were made with sportsmen, outfitters, landowners, photographers, lion and predator hunters and trappers. Public support for the operation was positive. Success was measured by the lack of poached mule deer and attributed to the diligent presence of game wardens.



Game Wardens collecting evidence during an investigation.

Wintering mule deer in the Platte Valley.

REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Lander Region

Work Unit Overview

The Lander Region has district game wardens in Dubois, North Riverton, South Riverton, Lander, West Rawlins, and East Rawlins. There is a regional game warden position stationed in Lander who spends most of their time conducting watercraft enforcement duties on reservoirs within the region throughout the summer and travels the region to assist in other warden districts as needed. Other law enforcement officers in the region include a regional wildlife supervisor.

2015 Law Enforcement Efforts

Lander Region law enforcement officers documented 346 violations within the region in 2015. Officers issued 138 citations, 177 written warnings and investigated 31 cases in which a suspect was never developed. In 2015, the Lander Region focused efforts on issues ranging from illegal antler collection in Dubois, illegal outfitting in Riverton, multiple shot and left big game animals in the Lander game warden district and overall wildlife law and regulation compliance in the two Rawlins game warden districts. The region made progress in all areas using trail cameras, task force operations, simulated wildlife decoys and coordination with the Wildlife Investigative Unit.

Decoy Operations

The Lander Region used wildlife decoys in all warden districts in 2015, with the most success found in the Rawlins area. In most instances, efforts were focused on individuals hunting out-of-season and in the wrong area. The Lander and Rawlins mule deer decoys were the most effective, with several citations being issued for hunting deer in the wrong area and out-of-season violations in the Rawlins area, and overall increased public awareness in the Lander area.

Task Forces

The Lander Region conducted three task forces in 2015. In total, 12 Department law enforcement

officers from outside the region were utilized to ensure these task forces were successful in addressing the task force goals and objectives.

Miller Hill/Bridger Pass Task Force-South of Rawlins

Total Contacts: ~150

Total Violations: 30 (13 residents and 3 nonresidents)

Total Fines: \$6,120



Overall, the task force was very successful in addressing the hunting of deer in the wrong area and/or during a closed season. During the four days of mule deer decoy operations, Department personnel documented 57 vehicles on the road where the decoy was deployed. Of those 57, six vehicles stopped so a hunter could shoot at the mule deer decoy in the wrong area and from the public roadway. Outside of the six cases using the mule deer decoy, there were an additional three cases for hunters actually harvesting deer in the wrong hunt area along the hunt area boundary, and one case for attempting to harvest a deer well into the wrong hunt area on the Bridger Pass Road during the last few minutes of the last day of the deer hunting season. The task force certainly documented an issue with people shooting from the road and/or vehicles, as well as party hunting. It was common for wardens en route to deploy the decoy to contact hunters who had been hunting in the wrong area. Out of the 150

REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

public contacts made during the five day task force, a total of 30 violations were detected between patrol, decoy and check station operations. The biggest case, taking a deer without the proper license, resulted in the defendant receiving a \$1,000 fine and loss of hunting privileges for one year. This violation was not detected by the task force, but reported by the individual who witnessed the harvest of the deer. Another suspect cited for trespassing, shooting from the road and hunting in the wrong area received \$600 in fines. The Department has received comments from sportsmen in Rawlins regarding the number of Game and Fish vehicles they saw driving around during deer season. The heavy enforcement presence and word of mouth about people receiving citations for hunting in the wrong area was a surprise to most hunters. Overall, the public was very supportive of Department efforts with the task force.

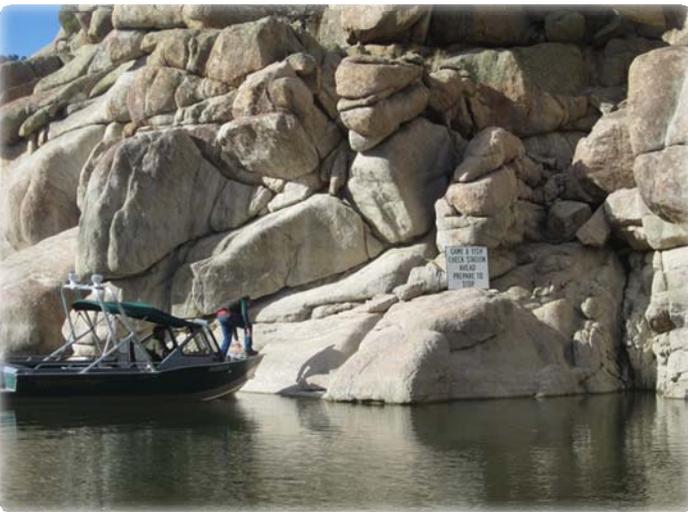
Pathfinder Floating Check Station-East Rawlins Warden District

Total Contacts: 54

Total Violations: 6 (3 residents and 1 nonresident)

Total Fines: \$690

Due to poor weather, checking boats on the water was not very productive and the number of boaters/fishermen on the water was minimal. Due to the lack of boaters, the floating check station ended late on the afternoon of the first day. On the following



day, wardens split up and patrolled the Miracle Mile and Seminole Reservoir. Violations detected included fishing with more than two poles and fishing without a license. Wardens also witnessed an individual illegally kill a California gull and cited him for the violation. Given the right weekend and right weather conditions, another floating check station could prove highly effective in the future.

Spence Moriarity Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and Inberg Roy Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA) Antler Task Force-Dubois Warden District

Total Violations: 1 (resident)

Total Fines: \$120

Antler hunting is a very popular activity and the public is very concerned about individuals trespassing on Dubois area WMAs and WHMAs during the seasonal shed antler collection closure. The task force was very effective at increasing enforcement presence, and this increased presence was noticed by the public. Even though the number of documented violations was low, this task force was a success and should be continued in future years.

Notable Cases

Elk and Deer Poaching - In January 2015, the West Rawlins game warden responded to a report of suspicious hunting activity south of Rawlins. The warden arrived on scene and found over a dozen people in trucks and on snowmobiles dragging and field dressing elk. Through the commotion of license checks and interviews, several violations were discovered, including shooting from the road, hunting without permission and hunting in the wrong area. One particular hunting group stuck out that day and the warden suspected that an individual in the group had killed an elk without a license that morning. The warden did not have sufficient evidence to make a case at the time, but eight months later, she received a report that would add clarity to what happened that morning in January. The report included information about a bull elk and a buck mule deer that were killed by the suspect in 2014/2015 out-of-season and without licenses.

REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

The warden executed a Facebook search warrant to protect telling images of the suspect posing with illegally taken wildlife. With the help of other Department enforcement personnel, the suspect and several other people from the January hunting group were interviewed. The suspect eventually confessed to illegally killing a cow elk in January, as well as illegally killing a bull elk and buck mule deer. The suspect's hunting and trapping privileges were revoked until 2031. He was ordered to pay \$16,000 in restitution, \$11,120 in fines and serve 60 days in jail.

Wrong Area Deer Case - The East Rawlins game warden led an investigation resulting in the prosecution of a nonresident hunter who harvested a nice 4x4 mule deer in a limited quota area (Deer Hunt Area 84) with a general license. The hunter did not field dress the deer at the harvest location, leading the warden who checked him in the field to believe something was wrong.



Two game wardens located a drag trail and spent a couple of hours crawling on their hands and knees in the dark with flashlights to trace the trail back to the kill site where they could finally obtain a good blood sample. The blood matched a sample taken from the deer and led to the successful prosecution of the violator, who was sentenced to a \$1,000 fine and loss of hunting privileges for one year.

Casper Region

Work Unit Overview

The Casper Region has seven district game wardens, one regional game warden stationed in Casper, one access coordinator and one regional wildlife supervisor. District game wardens are stationed in Glenrock, Douglas, Lusk, Newcastle, Sundance and two in Casper (East and West).

2015 Law Enforcement Efforts

Casper Region law enforcement officers documented 598 violations within the region in 2015. Officers issued 322 citations, 268 written warnings and investigated eight cases in which a suspect was never developed.

A decrease in the number of licenses available for deer and antelope hunters in the region has resulted in a decrease in violations related to these species. The region continues to have issues with hunter trespass, hunting in the wrong area and failing to tag big game. The entire region continues to see illegal off-road vehicle use on private, state and federal lands. The use of tracked vehicles to pursue game off of established roads during the late fall and winter months has landowners concerned about trespassing on private lands that historically have had very few problems during that time of year. The Casper Region continues to place emphasis on watercraft safety enforcement on Alcova, Pathfinder and Glendo reservoirs and on the North Platte River. Enforcement efforts on these bodies of water have resulted in a decrease in watercraft safety violations and an increased awareness of the dangers of boating under the influence of alcohol and drugs.

Decoy Operations

Decoys were used three times during the fall of 2015, with two citations issued. The Sundance game warden deployed a white-tailed deer decoy on two occasions but did not detect any violations. An elk decoy operation in Natrona County off the Hat Six Road resulted in one individual being cited for shooting from the road and failing to wear hunter orange.

REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Task Forces

Glendo Reservoir Memorial Day Weekend - The Casper Region conducted a law enforcement task force at Glendo Reservoir during the Memorial Day holiday weekend. This task force was to address the heavy recreational watercraft use and walleye fishing on the reservoir. A total of six violations were documented over the holiday weekend, resulting in the issue of three written warnings and three citations for fishing and watercraft violations.

Glendo Reservoir Angler Check Station - Casper and Laramie region game wardens and Casper Region fisheries personnel conducted their annual Glendo Reservoir walleye fishing tournament angler check station on June 28. After a busy weekend of tournament and recreational fishing, game wardens issued four citations and seven warnings for violations including over-limit of game fish, illegal transport of live fish and possession of fish in violation of size limits.

Alcova Reservoir 4th of July - The Alcova Reservoir 4th of July task force included five Casper Region wardens and two additional wardens from around the state. These seven wardens worked Alcova and Pathfinder reservoirs as well as the North Platte River over the July 3rd through the 5th holiday weekend. The task force documented a total of 33 watercraft violations and three fishing violations, including three boating under the influence (BUI) arrests. A total of 18 citations and 18 warnings were issued.

Mile High Meet and Greet - This year the Mile High Meet and Greet Wakeboarder Club held an event at Glendo Reservoir the first weekend in June. This group's main purpose is for wakeboarders to get together, meet each other and ride together.

The Mile High Meet and Greet started in 2005 with a group of people who did not know one another, but were all a part of "Wakeworld." That first year about 25 people and five boats met at Chatfield Reservoir located southwest of Denver. In 2015, a



task force was put together so extra law enforcement was available for this new event at Glendo, which was attended by close to 100 people with more than 25 boats.

The event began on Friday night (June 5) with a pig roast and continued through Sunday. Windy, cool weather deterred event participants from spending as much time on the water as many would have liked. A majority of the participants were contacted before they went on the water by game wardens emphasizing the importance of having a sober driver. Only a few citations were written for not having the proper number of life jackets on board watercraft. Wardens arrested one woman not associated with the group for BUI. Glendo State Park personnel were also instrumental in the success of the event and maintaining public safety through the entire weekend.



REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

During this same weekend, a walleye tournament was scheduled on Glendo Reservoir. Two tournament teams had fished a tournament in Kansas a few days prior to the Glendo tournament and did not comply with Wyoming AIS statutes. These teams were not inspected before launching their boats on Glendo Reservoir. Many waters in Kansas are infested with AIS. The boat owners were issued citations and the boats immediately removed from the water. The boats were sent to an AIS inspection station and decontaminated. Both teams were disqualified from the tournament.

Notable Cases

Casper Pronghorn Poaching - A pronghorn antelope poaching case was recently adjudicated from events that occurred in October, 2015. A brief vehicle pursuit, multiple interviews, the use of a language interpreter, and collection of both physical and electronic evidence, resulted in seven men being arrested by Casper game wardens, assisted by local law enforcement agencies. The investigation occurred over a period of three days. The suspects led wardens to believe that four pronghorn antelope were all that were killed by the group, but video evidence from a confiscated cell phone told a different story.



Through the use of an interpreter fluent in Hindi (spoken in India), wardens were able to hear the suspects give verbal confirmation they had hit and

killed a pronghorn, even though the video did not show the shot animal. Game wardens used the video to confirm the location of the shooting by identifying local landmarks and even the patchwork on the road surface. Once they found the exact location of the shooting, they were able to locate the poached pronghorn and bring wanton destruction charges against the suspect.

In total, seven suspects were charged with 29 different poaching violations including wanton destruction of big game, taking pronghorn without a license, hunting in the wrong area, taking the wrong sex of animal, failure to tag big game, shooting from a roadway and taking big game from a motor vehicle. All of the suspects eventually pled guilty, resulting in \$33,365 in fines and restitution, forfeiture of a .30-06 rifle and a combined loss of 32 years of hunting, fishing and trapping privileges.



Mountain Lion Case - Casper game wardens worked on a mountain lion investigation involving multiple suspects and several violations. Interviews were conducted and confessions were obtained from all the suspects. Violations included taking a mountain lion without a license, accessory to taking a mountain lion without a license, failing to immediately release a treed mountain lion and false statements on a mountain lion registration form.

REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Black Hills Deer Poaching - A Pennsylvania man was charged with intentionally taking four buck white-tailed deer without a license and wasting two deer. The suspect entered into a plea agreement in Crook County. He paid a total of \$14,080 in fines and restitution, will be on unsupervised probation for five years, and has forfeited all license privileges for a period of 26 years.

Port of Entry Deer Case - The Sundance Port of Entry reported a commercial truck with a deer strapped to it.



The driver was eastbound on Interstate 90 and wasn't even required to stop. Earlier that morning, he struck a white-tail fawn near Sundance. A state trooper investigated the crash and specifically told the driver to leave the deer where it was. The driver decided to load the deer up whole and take it back to Florida, where his plan was to eat it. The white-tail fawn had gone through the grill of his truck at 75 miles per hour. The driver was cited for transporting big game without an interstate game tag and paid a fine of \$125.

Elk Harassment Case - The Department received over 30 tips from concerned citizens regarding a video on the internet they felt was wildlife harassment. The video showed an ultralight/sport aircraft repeatedly flying low over a large herd of elk in Deer Creek Park in the Laramie Range southeast of Casper.



Still image from YouTube video of elk harassed by ultralight pilot.

On May 20th, the pilot of the aircraft was convicted in Natrona County Circuit Court of harassment of big game (elk). He received a fine of \$1,500, a one year loss of hunting privileges, one year of jail time (suspended) and one year of unsupervised probation. While amazing to see wildlife up close, the amount of stress the elk endured was unnecessary. The YouTube video didn't show the elk being pushed through a barbed wire fence. The video posted on YouTube by the pilot has been viewed over 51,000 times.

Pinedale Region

Work Unit Overview

The Pinedale Region is divided into three game warden districts which include the North Pinedale, South Pinedale and Big Piney districts. The region is home to a very diverse wildlife and aquatic resource with high desert habitat as well as three major mountain ranges and several cold water lakes. Law enforcement efforts vary depending on the season. Typical enforcement duties include desert and front country small and big game enforcement, watercraft and backcountry patrols. The regional wildlife supervisor and the Green River access coordinator also assist with enforcement efforts in the region. On large-scale investigations, the Green River wildlife investigator is utilized when needed.

REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

2015 Law Enforcement Efforts

Pinedale Region law enforcement officers documented 234 violations within the region in 2015. Officers issued 118 citations, 105 written warnings and investigated 11 cases in which a suspect was never developed. Enforcement efforts focused on different priorities throughout the year. Late winter revolved around the shed antler hunting season closure and WHMA closures. Shed antler hunting complaints continue to increase as more people become interested in this activity. Wardens receive countless reports of illegal shed antler hunting activity every year, but many of the reports are vague and only reporting suspicious activity. While enforcement of the shed antler hunting regulation remains difficult, several cases were made in 2015. Wardens spend a significant amount of time between February and May patrolling and responding to shed antler hunting complaints.

In addition to shed antler hunting enforcement, wardens focus attention to black bear bait compliance checks in the spring. Summer efforts are focused on fishing and watercraft enforcement on lakes and rivers, including back country fishing enforcement. Typical fishing violations were detected in 2015, both on Pinedale area lakes and in remote backcountry areas. While the region has several large lakes, recreational watercraft activity is minimal compared to other regions. Cold water temperatures discourage water skiing and personal watercraft activity, so documented watercraft violations remain low. Fall big game hunting season enforcement was typical of most years, although mild weather conditions resulted in poor elk harvest and fewer subsequent violations in some districts. Several waste cases were investigated, as well as hunters harvesting the wrong sex or species of animal. Compliance with Elk Feedground Special Management Permits remains poor. Game wardens in the Pinedale region also spent time addressing reports of illegal outfitting which require extensive time in the back country, often taking several years to develop a case.

Decoy Operations

A mule deer decoy operation took place on LaBarge Creek to address chronic wrong hunt area and closed area violations in late October. In less than three hours, three individuals shot at the decoy, which was placed in a closed hunt area. Three citations were issued for hunting in the wrong area, and three citations were issued for shooting from a road. All of the individuals were local Wyoming residents.

Task Forces

An annual Pinedale winter range task force to protect wintering mule deer has been ongoing for 16 years, and continued in 2015. Wardens from other regions assisted in these winter range patrols. The number of documented violations and suspects charged tends to fluctuate annually, and very few violations have been documented over the last two years. This task force remains very important to the public, and continues to have significant public support.



Warden Coordinator Scott Werbelow investigates a dead buck mule deer east of Pinedale while on winter range patrol.

REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Notable Cases

Illegal Outfitting Case - The South Pinedale game warden worked an illegal outfitting case at the Boulder Lake Lodge. A man who was operating the Boulder Lake Lodge was booking wilderness elk hunts to include guiding services and taking deposits from nonresidents with the lodge, but did not have an outfitter's license. The unlicensed outfitter also made arrangements for a worker at the lodge to guide nonresidents in the wilderness under a resident guide license, attempting to circumvent the licensed guide requirement. The outfitter was charged with two counts of outfitting without a license and the guide was charged with two counts of guiding without a license. The outfitter was found guilty and fined \$1580. The guide was found guilty and fined \$600.

Big Piney Wanton Destruction - The Big Piney game warden worked a wanton destruction case involving several juveniles from the Big Piney area. Several antelope were shot and left west of Big Piney in late June, 2015. This was a sensitive case due to the age of the suspects and involved complex interviews, with parents and attorneys involved throughout the process. While no fines were given, the juveniles were sentenced between 50 and 125 community service hours, 9 to 18 months probation,



Field necropsy of an antelope shot and left west of Big Piney

and one year of suspended hunting privileges.

Waste of Bighorn Sheep - The North Pinedale game warden investigated three different cases involving the waste of edible portions of bighorn sheep. Two of these originated in the Cody Region and one in the Pinedale region. In one case, a professional guide and hunter were both cited for waste of edible portions of bighorn sheep after half of the edible portions were left at the kill site. They claimed their packs were too heavy to retrieve all the meat. Each of them paid \$420 in fines.

Over-limit of Mule Deer - The Cokeville and Big Piney game wardens (father and son, respectively) recognized some suspicious activity while hunting together in the Wyoming Range. Their investigation revealed that a Green River man had killed two trophy buck mule deer on one license and involved a juvenile to tag the second buck. The man was charged with taking an over-limit of deer and accessory to transfer of license. He was sentenced to two days in jail, a \$920 fine and loss of hunting privileges for three years. The juvenile was cited for transfer of license, fined \$40 and required to give a presentation at a hunter safety class.



Wardens Neil and Adam Hymas (father and son) pose with the results of an over-limit deer case they discovered while archery hunting together near Big Piney.

WILDLIFE INVESTIGATIVE UNIT

Work Unit Overview

The Wyoming Wildlife Investigative Unit (WIU) is comprised of five wildlife investigators stationed at the Cody, Green River, Lander, Laramie and Sheridan regional offices. One supervisor/investigator is stationed at the Casper regional office. The Jackson and Pinedale regions are without a stationed wildlife investigator.

The WIU is responsible for investigating large, complex, lengthy, overt and covert cases. The WIU places its highest priority on cases with commercial involvement (illegal outfitting or sale of wildlife), multiple suspects, multiple violations and wildlife violations taking place across several jurisdictions. Investigators also assist game wardens with larger enforcement cases, task forces and other law enforcement related special projects. The WIU maintains several databases including the Department's law enforcement intelligence system. WIU members operate with unmarked vehicles and typically out of uniform. The WIU is equipped with digital media forensics, modern evidence collection, surveillance, tracking and other equipment items. The WIU also works closely with other states' wildlife investigators and with several federal agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



Extracting evidence from suspect cell phone.

2015 Law Enforcement Efforts

The WIU initiated 15 major investigations in 2015 and assisted game wardens throughout the state with approximately 150 more cases. The WIU was able to close 38 ongoing investigations and had 12 cases in the prosecution phase at the end of the year.

The WIU has upgraded its digital forensics capabilities with cell phone and computer forensics extraction/mirroring devices. Investigators are trained in cell phone forensic analysis using specialized equipment. The WIU analyzes all cell phones and computers seized during Department law enforcement investigations. These types of advancements are critical in an increasingly digital world.

Notable Cases

Whitetail Creek Outfitters - Concerned citizen reports in 2011 of an illegal outfitter operating in northeast Wyoming prompted the Department, Wyoming Board of Outfitters and Professional Guides, the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Department, and the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks to initiate a joint investigation. The three year investigation ended on March 3, 2015 when the Devils Tower, Wyoming suspect was sentenced in Crook County Circuit Court. The suspect operated Whitetail Creek Outfitters from 2011 to 2013 without obtaining a Wyoming or Montana Outfitter license and guided antelope, deer and turkey hunters in northeast Wyoming and southeast Montana.

A search warrant was served on the Whitetail Creek Outfitters Lodge and the suspect's residence on November 13, 2012. From documents and files obtained from the search warrant, investigators determined that the suspect booked and guided at least 46 hunters and took in over \$110,000 during this three year period. Additional violations of big game, game birds and furbearers being taken without licenses, transfer of licenses, failure to interstate game tag harvested wildlife, guiding

WILDLIFE INVESTIGATIVE UNIT

without licenses and failure to report violations were discovered and documented.

In May 2014, 100 charges were filed against the suspect for outfitting without a license, accessory to guiding without a license, taking big game, game



birds and furbearers without licenses, transfer of licenses, and interstate game tag violations covering a period from 2004 to 2013. A plea agreement was reached on March 3, 2015. The suspect, who pled no contest, was sentenced on two counts of outfitting without a license and 38 counts of shipping/transporting game without a game tag outside Wyoming. He was sentenced to 37 days in jail, with 7 days suspended. He was assessed \$6,890 in fines, court costs and public defender fees. The suspect's license privileges were suspended until March 2024. From interviews and seized evidence, an additional eight individuals were charged with wildlife



violations in Crook County, Wyoming that occurred during the period of 2004 to 2012 involving Whitetail Creek Outfitters. An additional \$8,000 in fines was levied against the defendants. In addition to the Wyoming charges, the illegal outfitter was charged with 19 counts of illegal outfitting and guiding in Montana.

Poaching Across State Lines - A suspect from Laramie, WY illegally killed at least three big game animals in Colorado, just south of the Wyoming-Colorado state line, since 2010. The suspect either hunted without a license, obtained Colorado licenses from associates or purchased Wyoming licenses to cover the animals. The investigation was initiated after a report from an anonymous complainant. The WIU coordinated the investigation with Colorado Parks and Wildlife investigators. A search warrant was obtained and served on the suspect's residence by officers from Wyoming, Colorado and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Investigators also obtained consent to search several additional residences. Frozen meat and three mule deer skull plates and hides were seized. A downloaded smart phone belonging to the suspect showed several photos of deer being processed at his residence. Colorado issued 18 citations to the suspect and his associate for Colorado violations. The defendants worked out a plea agreements with Larimer County, Colorado prosecutors. The suspect was then prosecuted in Wyoming for illegally possessing wildlife. Between both states, fines associated with this case totaled over \$5,000.

LARGE CARNIVORE SECTION

Work Unit Overview

The Large Carnivore Section (LCS) works to manage trophy game species (mountain lions, black bears and grizzly bears) in Wyoming, including harvest management, monitoring and conflict resolution. The LCS includes one Department law enforcement officer who serves as the LCS Conflict Coordinator and several non-commissioned personnel specialized in large carnivore management. The LCS assisted with many law enforcement investigations with regional personnel, as well as assisting U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service investigations related to grizzly bear human conflicts, specifically engaging in investigations where humans and/or grizzly bears are injured or killed. LCS personnel also assist wherever possible to provide information relative to ongoing cases involving mountain lions and black bears, in addition to other wildlife enforcement cases.

2015 Law Enforcement Efforts

LCS enforcement personnel often investigate cases and refer law enforcement actions to local game wardens. During 2015, LCS enforcement personnel worked on four illegal mountain lion harvest cases in Rock Springs, Lander and Laramie. LCS personnel assisted U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service law enforcement and regional Departmental enforcement personnel on 11 grizzly bear mortality investigations in Cody, Lander, Pinedale and Jackson Regions; those investigations are pending. LCS enforcement personnel investigated two illegal black bear killings

in the Lander Region and also monitored bear bait compliance in the Lander Region. These efforts do not include multiple investigations of large carnivore conflicts that occur annually with the potential to develop into law enforcement cases. LCS law enforcement personnel provided large carnivore conflict training to Department employees throughout the state during 2015.



Large Carnivore Conflict Coordinator Brian DeBolt provides training to game wardens on capture techniques.



Wound channel and bullet fragment from grizzly bear mortality investigation.

WATERCRAFT SAFETY PROGRAM

Throughout Wyoming, there are various opportunities for recreational boating, from major reservoirs and river systems to countless smaller lakes, ponds and streams. These opportunities include fishing from boats, towed water sports (tubing and water-skiing), white-water rafting and other boating activities. An important component of game warden duties is ensuring the safety of Wyoming boaters and other water users. The Department is the state agency primarily responsible for promoting and enforcing watercraft safety laws, and coordinates these efforts with other state law enforcement agencies. The Department also partners with the United States Coast Guard and boating safety organizations from other states for consistent regulations among the states and possible improvements to Wyoming's program.



Casper wardens promote safe boating during 2015 Parade Day.

Game wardens had a busy boating season in 2015, dedicating over 4,500 work hours to watercraft safety enforcement and educational efforts. Four wardens (two in the Laramie Region, one in the Casper Region and one in the Lander Region) were assigned full time to watercraft safety duties, and many other wardens worked watercraft safety in addition to their other duties. This resulted in thousands of contacts with Wyoming boaters during the spring and summer months. These contacts emphasize the importance of carrying the proper safety equipment on board and operating watercraft

in a safe and sober manner. Several wardens also took time to speak to various school and community groups to educate attendees on safe boating practices.

The Department is responsible for investigation of all watercraft accidents that occur on Wyoming waters. In 2015, there were 13 reportable accidents. Fortunately, none of these resulted in fatalities, but eight individuals were injured to some extent as a result of watercraft accidents, including a young boy with serious prop cuts to his leg. Over the past several years, the Department has sent many game wardens to advanced training in watercraft accident investigation techniques. Two wardens attended a comprehensive training course in 2015 and two more attended an advanced watercraft accident reconstruction course. This advanced training gives wardens the skills and knowledge required to conduct professional investigations to determine the causes of watercraft accidents, ranging from accidents involving minor property damage to those involving serious injuries or death. Watercraft accidents often involve criminal and civil court proceedings and wardens are often called upon to testify in these cases.



Law Enforcement Coordinator Aaron Kerr gives a media interview about watercraft safety.

STATE LAND ENFORCEMENT

In addition to wildlife and watercraft law enforcement, the Department has an agreement with the Wyoming Office of State Lands and Investments to enforce certain rules applying to Wyoming State Trust Land (state land). Department game wardens have the authority to enforce prohibitions of off-road travel, overnight camping, open fires and littering on state land. Most state land enforcement was incidental to hunting season duties. On many state land parcels throughout Wyoming, off-road travel is an ongoing issue and has caused considerable damage to some areas. Much of this off-road use occurs in

the early spring or fall when soils are wet or when roads are blocked by snow and people attempt to drive around the drifts. Littering is also a problem, whether it is the dumping of large appliances/ household trash or litter left behind from recreational shooters in the form of spent cartridge casings and the remains of items used as targets. Many of the state land violations discovered by game wardens were handled with verbal or written warnings to educate the violators, although several more serious violations causing resource damage were addressed with citations.

STATEWIDE SUMMARY OF STATE LAND ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS

Violation	Written Warnings	Citations	Total
Off-Road Travel	21	47	68
Camping	23	4	27
Open Fires	1	3	4
Littering on State Land	0	2	2
TOTAL	45	56	101



This truck was located several hundred yards from the nearest established road (above).

Examples of resource damage to state land caused by illegal off-road travel (left).

REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS

The Department utilizes a computer database Case Management System (CMS) to document wildlife violations and create individual law enforcement case reports. Our CMS allows for the compilation of wildlife violation data and associated law enforcement action. Personnel work hours are tracked through a Daily Activity Report database. Both of these Department databases were utilized to compile the statistics included in this report.

Some law enforcement positions remained vacant for a portion of the year due to retirements and personnel moves. The number of law enforcement positions listed for each region or work unit represents the total number of positions that documented law enforcement activity while assigned to a region or work unit.

Jackson Region – 5 Enforcement Personnel

(3 District Game Wardens, 1 Regional Game Warden*, 1 Regional Wildlife Supervisor)

<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>HOURS</u>	<u>BOAT HOURS</u>	<u>MILES</u>
WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT	2,037	5	27,927
WATERCRAFT ENFORCEMENT	179	49	2,092
TOTAL	2,216	54	30,019

<u>PROGRAM ENFORCEMENT</u>	<u>WARNINGS</u>	<u>CITATIONS</u>	<u>UNKNOWN SUSPECT</u>	<u>LAW ENF. ACTIONS</u>
TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE	98	43	8	149
SPORT FISH	20	33	2	55
NON-WILDLIFE	25	4	0	29
AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES	8	2	0	10
TOTAL	151	82	10	243

*Alpine game warden was only present in November and December, 2015.



Wardens James Hobbs and Bill Robertson on patrol.

REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS

Cody Region – 12 Enforcement Personnel

(9 District Game Wardens, 1 Regional Access Coordinator, 1 Game Warden Coordinator, 1 Regional Wildlife Supervisor)

<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>HOURS</u>	<u>BOAT HOURS</u>	<u>MILES</u>
WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT	5,810	0	74,742
WATERCRAFT ENFORCEMENT	179	85	1,845
TOTAL	5,989	85	76,587

<u>PROGRAM ENFORCEMENT</u>	<u>WARNINGS</u>	<u>CITATIONS</u>	<u>UNKNOWN SUSPECT</u>	<u>LAW ENF. ACTIONS</u>
TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE	152	127	7	286
SPORT FISH	22	25	0	47
NON-WILDLIFE	13	12	0	25
AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES	15	1	0	16
TOTAL	202	165	7	374

Sheridan Region – 9 Enforcement Personnel

(7 District Game Wardens, 1 Regional Access Coordinator, 1 Regional Wildlife Supervisor)

<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>HOURS</u>	<u>BOAT HOURS</u>	<u>MILES</u>
WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT	5,417	0	77,595
WATERCRAFT ENFORCEMENT	693	196	7,632
TOTAL	6,110	196	85,227

<u>PROGRAM ENFORCEMENT</u>	<u>WARNINGS</u>	<u>CITATIONS</u>	<u>UNKNOWN SUSPECT</u>	<u>LAW ENF. ACTIONS</u>
TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE	427	348	138	913
SPORT FISH	47	75	1	123
NON-WILDLIFE	110	80	0	190
AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES	34	15	0	49
TOTAL	618	518	139	1,275

Green River – 9 Enforcement Personnel

(7 District Game Wardens, 1 Regional Access Coordinator, 1 Regional Wildlife Supervisor)

<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>HOURS</u>	<u>BOAT HOURS</u>	<u>MILES</u>
WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT	4,246	0	62,512
WATERCRAFT ENFORCEMENT	382	83	5,400
TOTAL	4,628	83	67,912

<u>PROGRAM ENFORCEMENT</u>	<u>WARNINGS</u>	<u>CITATIONS</u>	<u>UNKNOWN SUSPECT</u>	<u>LAW ENF. ACTIONS</u>
TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE	157	146	38	341
SPORT FISH	27	42	1	70
NON-WILDLIFE	30	9	0	39
AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES	20	10	0	30
TOTAL	234	207	39	480

REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS

Laramie Region – 13 Enforcement Personnel

(8 District Game Wardens, 3 Regional Game Wardens*, 1 Regional Access Coordinator, 1 Regional Wildlife Supervisor)

<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>HOURS</u>	<u>BOAT HOURS</u>	<u>MILES</u>
WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT	5,784	0	81,177
WATERCRAFT ENFORCEMENT	1,275	287	12,881
TOTAL	7,059	287	94,058

<u>PROGRAM ENFORCEMENT</u>	<u>WARNINGS</u>	<u>CITATIONS</u>	<u>UNKNOWN SUSPECT</u>	<u>LAW ENF. ACTIONS</u>
TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE	333	260	20	613
SPORT FISH	64	73	0	137
NON-WILDLIFE	141	45	0	186
AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES	123	9	0	132
TOTAL	661	387	20	1,068

*One game warden was transferred out of the region in September and another in November.

Lander Region – 8 Enforcement Personnel

(6 District Game Wardens, 1 Regional Game Warden, 1 Regional Wildlife Supervisor)

<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>HOURS</u>	<u>BOAT HOURS</u>	<u>MILES</u>
WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT	4,121	0	73,421
WATERCRAFT ENFORCEMENT	632	136	9,300
TOTAL	4,753	136	82,721

<u>PROGRAM ENFORCEMENT</u>	<u>WARNINGS</u>	<u>CITATIONS</u>	<u>UNKNOWN SUSPECT</u>	<u>LAW ENF. ACTIONS</u>
TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE	112	82	30	224
SPORT FISH	22	25	1	48
NON-WILDLIFE	32	31	0	63
AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES	11	0	0	11
TOTAL	177	138	31	346

Casper Region – 10 Enforcement Personnel

(7 District Game Wardens, 1 Regional Game Warden, 1 Access Coordinator, 1 Regional Wildlife Supervisor)

<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>HOURS</u>	<u>BOAT HOURS</u>	<u>MILES</u>
WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT	4,460	89	60,454
WATERCRAFT ENFORCEMENT	1,041	289	11,240
TOTAL	5,501	378	71,694

<u>PROGRAM ENFORCEMENT</u>	<u>WARNINGS</u>	<u>CITATIONS</u>	<u>UNKNOWN SUSPECT</u>	<u>LAW ENF. ACTIONS</u>
TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE	177	187	8	372
SPORT FISH	38	71	0	109
NON-WILDLIFE	34	51	0	85
AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES	19	13	0	32
TOTAL	268	322	8	598

REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS

Pinedale Region – 5 Enforcement Personnel

(3 District Game Wardens, 1 Regional Access Coordinator, 1 Regional Wildlife Supervisor)

<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>HOURS</u>	<u>BOAT HOURS</u>	<u>MILES</u>
WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT	2,005	0	24,539
WATERCRAFT ENFORCEMENT	95	34	869
TOTAL	2,100	34	25,408

<u>PROGRAM ENFORCEMENT</u>	<u>WARNINGS</u>	<u>CITATIONS</u>	<u>UNKNOWN SUSPECT</u>	<u>LAW ENF. ACTIONS</u>
TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE	80	101	11	192
SPORT FISH	11	11	0	22
NON-WILDLIFE	7	5	0	12
AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES	7	1	0	8
TOTAL	105	118	11	234



Wardens working a check station during hunting season.

Warden Kyle Lash checks hunters during the fall elk season.



WIU AND ADMINISTRATION LAW ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS

Wildlife Investigative Unit - 6 Investigators

(5 Wildlife Investigators, 1 Wildlife Investigative Unit Supervisor)

<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>HOURS</u>	<u>MILES</u>
WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT	8,646	70,342

<u>PROGRAM ENFORCEMENT</u>	<u>WARNINGS</u>	<u>CITATIONS</u>	<u>LAW ENF. ACTIONS</u>
TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE	2	56	58
SPORT FISH	3	6	9
TOTAL	5	62	67

Law Enforcement Administration – 4 Enforcement Personnel

(1 Chief Game Warden, 1 Deputy Chief Game Warden, 1 Law Enforcement Supervisor, 1 Law Enforcement Coordinator)

<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>HOURS</u>	<u>MILES</u>
WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT	1,935	12,200
WATERCRAFT ENFORCEMENT	118	1,698
TOTAL	2,053	13,898

<u>PROGRAM ENFORCEMENT</u>	<u>WARNINGS</u>	<u>CITATIONS</u>	<u>LAW ENF. ACTIONS</u>
TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE	51	25	76
SPORT FISH	7	3	10
NON-WILDLIFE	4	3	7
AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES	7	2	9
TOTAL	69	33	102

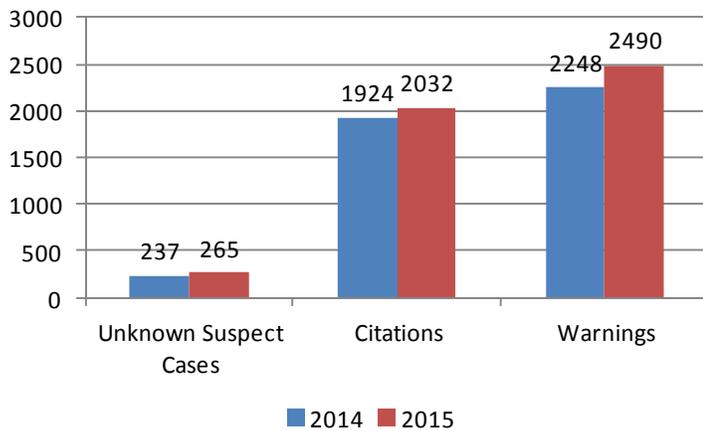
STATEWIDE LAW ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS

82 Enforcement Personnel

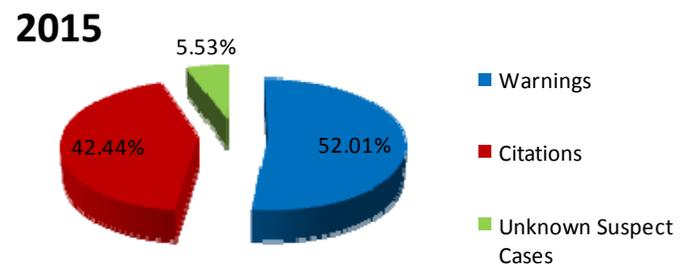
<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>HOURS</u>	<u>BOAT HOURS</u>	<u>MILES</u>
WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT	44,542	179	565,250
WATERCRAFT ENFORCEMENT	4,594	1,074	52,957
TOTAL	49,136	1,253	618,207

<u>PROGRAM ENFORCEMENT</u>	<u>WARNINGS</u>	<u>CITATIONS</u>	<u>UNKNOWN SUSPECT</u>	<u>LAW ENF. ACTIONS</u>
TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE	1,589	1,375	260	3,224
SPORT FISH	261	364	5	630
NON-WILDLIFE	396	240	0	636
AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES	244	53	0	297
TOTAL	2,490	2,032	265	4,787

Two-year Comparison of Violations



Percentage of Law Enforcement Actions



WILDLIFE FORENSICS LAB

The forensics section of the Department's Wildlife Forensic and Fish Health Laboratory provides law enforcement forensic services (analytical and technical) to aid wildlife law enforcement personnel and management biologists in Wyoming and several other states.



Wildlife Forensics Lab personnel sort evidence and prepare it for testing as part of an investigation.

Forensics lab personnel employ a variety of techniques, including DNA analysis, to test evidence items collected during investigations. Analyses include species identification of hair, blood or tissue samples, gender identification of blood or tissue, individual animal identification, tissue matching and other tests. A detailed report of each test is

compiled and provided to the requesting officer. Lab personnel are often called upon to testify in court during trials of defendants charged with wildlife violations.

In 2015, a total of 12,756 analytical tests were performed on 633 forensic samples for 81 law enforcement cases. In 12 cases, defendants pled guilty or were found guilty in a court of law. There are 38 cases still awaiting court appearances or still under investigation. In 31 cases, no legal action was taken, the case is on hold, no biological material could be retrieved from the evidentiary item, the suspect was vindicated or the case was settled without forensic testing.

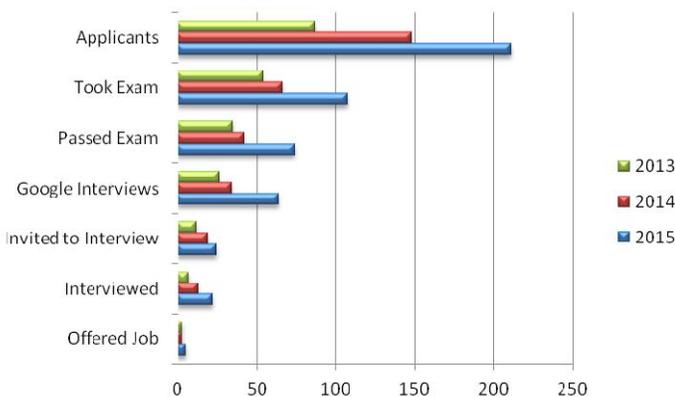
GAME WARDEN APPLICANT TESTING

All game wardens are selected by competitive examination, per Wyoming statute. The first step to becoming a Wyoming game warden is the earning of a bachelor's degree in wildlife management, biology, zoology or a closely related field. Applicants must pass an online written exam consisting of general wildlife management knowledge, wildlife identification and questions about Wyoming wildlife statutes and regulations. Candidates who successfully pass the exam have a preliminary interview using Google Hangouts. This determines which candidates will complete an in-person interview, life history questionnaire, personality profile testing, psychological testing and polygraph examination. Candidates offered a game warden position undergo a thorough background investigation and must successfully graduate the Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy's (WLEA) 13 week, 542 hour peace officer basic course prior to working as a Department law enforcement officer.

In 2015:

- Testing was offered online only
- 211 people applied - 23 not qualified, 81 never registered/submitted qualifying paperwork
- 107 took exam
- 74 passed exam - 69% pass rate

- 64 Google interviews conducted - 60%
- 24 invited for in-person interview - 22%
- 22 interviewed - 20%
- 5 offered job - 4% of applicants taking the exam



NEW GAME WARDEN TRAINING

The five game wardens hired in 2015 will complete their law enforcement training in the spring of 2016. Three game wardens hired as a result of the 2014 game warden exam process graduated from the WLEA as certified peace officers in March, 2015. In April, they attended training conducted by Department training officers and law enforcement staff to prepare them for the upcoming boating season. Training topics included watercraft accident investigation techniques, watercraft patrol, BUI detection, fishing enforcement and watercraft/fishing statutes and regulations. They also received practical training in water survival, boat handling and patrol scenarios. In August, the three new wardens attended a second training session to prepare for the fall hunting seasons. Training topics included review of Game and Fish statutes and regulations, patrol techniques, interstate game tag guidelines and issuance, check stations, the Private Land/Public Wildlife Access Program, general wildlife law enforcement, collection of evidence, crime scene investigation and various other game warden duties. In addition to these intensive training sessions, the new game wardens spent a considerable amount of time in their respective regions receiving “on-the-job” training from other Department employees.



Game wardens participate in scenario-based skills training.

STOP POACHING PROGRAM

The Stop Poaching Program began in 1980 as a means to provide an opportunity for the public to help protect their wildlife resource by reporting suspected poaching activity. The program is an excellent and necessary enforcement tool for helping to identify wildlife violators throughout the state. All information on the reporting party is kept strictly confidential.

In 2015, 565 tips were received from members of the public via the Stop Poaching Hotline, a text tip line and the Department website. Game wardens followed up on these tips, and in many cases, no violation could be determined. In several instances, wardens were able to identify wildlife violations and possible suspects. Of the tips received, 538 investigations have been completed. These investigations led to 79 suspected violators. Defendants charged as a result of tips made to the Stop Poaching Program paid \$91,605 in fines.

WYOMING WILDLIFE PROTECTORS ASSOCIATION

The Department has partnered with the Wyoming Wildlife Protectors Association (WWPA) in an effort to deter wildlife violators. The WWPA began in 1983 and is a registered non-profit organization. The sole purpose of the WWPA is to manage a reward account and provide monetary rewards to citizens who report suspected poaching activity.

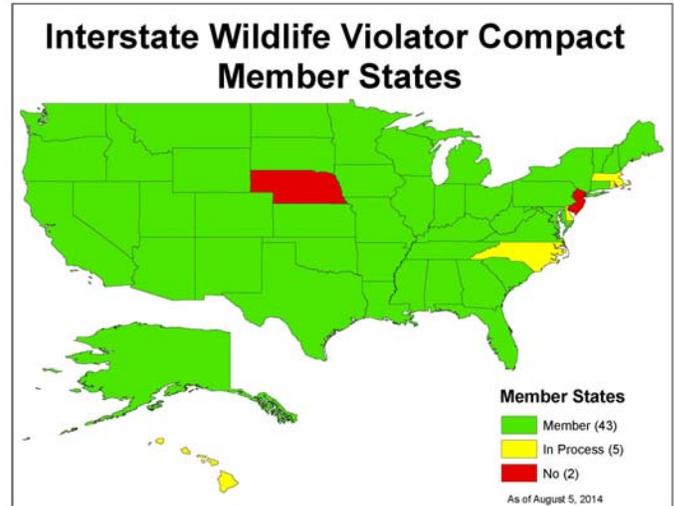
The WWPA's constitution states "The Wyoming Wildlife Protectors Association shall be an association of concerned citizens and organizations, dedicated to the purpose of creating and maintaining a reward fund for payment of information leading to the arrest of wildlife law violators, in an attempt to decrease violations against the wildlife of Wyoming and increase detection and apprehension of perpetrators. The Association is not a political sub-division, however, receives financial assistance from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department." The WWPA also receives financial assistance in the form of restitution as ordered by the court at sentencing of defendants, and from private donations.

Department enforcement officers may submit a reward recommendation request based on a reward payment schedule listed in the WWPA Constitution. A total of \$14,450 in rewards was paid to 16 individuals in 2015.

INTERSTATE WILDLIFE VIOLATOR COMPACT

Wyoming has been a member state of the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact (IWVC) since 1996. The IWVC is a reciprocal agreement between states to honor suspensions of hunting, fishing and trapping privileges for wildlife violators. Individuals who are suspended in one member state may also have their privileges suspended in the other member states. The IWVC acts as an additional deterrent to violating wildlife laws and strengthens the consequences of illegal hunting, fishing or trapping activities.

There are currently 44 member states and four more states are in the process of joining the compact. Nationwide in 2015, there were 5,823 new license suspensions entered in the IWVC, including 65 from Wyoming. Several cases initiated in 2015 are awaiting court proceedings and may lead to further license suspensions.



GAME WARDENS FEATURED ON "BACK COUNTRY JUSTICE"

Television producers developing new content for the "Animal Planet" channel worked with the Department to film a pilot episode for a possible series. During the 2014 hunting season, several game wardens were accompanied by camera crews while conducting their duties. The goal of the show's producers was to showcase the work of Wyoming game wardens throughout the state. In April, 2015, the pilot episode of "Back Country Justice" aired to a national audience. Some of the situations featured on the show involved a warden responding to a trespassing call, two separate investigations of wanton destruction of big game, routine hunter compliance checks and wardens responding to a call regarding a great horned owl caught in a leg-hold trap. Wardens around the state have received positive feedback about the show from members of the public. No additional episodes are currently in development, but it is possible that "Back Country Justice" may become a series in the future.



Warden Travis Crane during filming of “Back Country Justice.”

NEW LEGISLATION AFFECTING LAW ENFORCEMENT

Bills enacted during the 2015 Legislature:

House Bills

HB0136 Interstate Game Tag Exemption - Meat Processors

Signed into Law by the Governor 2/25/15

Summary: This bill repeals interstate game tag requirements for meat processing plants. It also requires processors to maintain records of game animals received and requires these records to be submitted to the Department by January 31 each year. The bill provides for a regulatory inspection of records by Department personnel with a 48-hour notification.

Senate Bills

SF0006 Aquatic Invasive Species

Signed into Law by the Governor 2/25/15

Summary: This bill removes the authority for the Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources to establish and/or collect AIS related fees and allows an individual to show electronic proof of payment for AIS decals as determined by the Commission. It does not impact the Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources role in enforcement.

SF0012 Trespassing to Collect Data

Signed into Law by the Governor 3/5/15

Summary: This bill creates the crimes of “trespassing to unlawfully collect resource data” and “unlawful collection of resource data” and provides definitions of “open land” and “resource data” including exemptions. “Resource Data” is defined as data relating to land or land use regarding agriculture, minerals, geology, history, cultural artifacts, archeology, air, water, soil, conservation, habitat, vegetation, or animal species and does not include data: 1) for surveying to determine property boundaries or the location of survey monuments, 2) used by state or local governments to assess property values, and 3) collected or intended to be collected by a peace officer while engaged in the lawful performance of official duties. The penalty for a first offense of either crime would be imprisonment of up to six months, a fine of up to \$5000, or both. The penalty for subsequent offenses would be imprisonment for not less than 10 days and up to one year, a fine of up to \$5000, or both.



Wildlife seized as evidence in ongoing poaching investigations.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Several Wyoming game wardens were recognized in 2015 for their outstanding service to the state by the Department and other organizations.

2015 Wyoming Game Wardens Association Officer of the Year - Bill Robertson, Greybull Game Warden

2015 Shikar-Safari Club Wildlife Officer of the Year - Todd Graham, Afton Game Warden

2015 Wyoming Game and Fish Department Lifetime Achievement Award - Tim Fuchs, Jackson Regional Wildlife Supervisor

2015 Wildlife Division Employee of the Year - Rick King, Laramie Regional Wildlife Supervisor

2015 Wyoming Peace Officer Association Officer of the Year - Dustin Shorma, Dayton Game Warden

2015 Wyoming Game and Fish Department Team Award - Jason Sherwood, Dan Smith, Matt Withroder, Andy Countryman, Troy Tobiasson - Regional Access Coordinators

2015 Wyoming Watercraft Officer of the Year - Teal Joseph, West Rawlins Game Warden

Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy Honor Graduate - Jordan Winter, Alpine Game Warden

RETIREMENTS

Tim Fuchs, Jackson Regional Wildlife Supervisor - 34 years of service

PROMOTIONS

Brad Hovinga - Jackson Regional Wildlife Supervisor

Aaron Kerr - Law Enforcement Coordinator



Warden Bill Robertson collects spent shell casing as evidence (left), Warden Craig Smith heading up Ishowaa Paas.

HONORING THE FALLEN

On October 31, 1945, Deputy Game Wardens Bill Lakanen and Don Simpson were shot and killed in the line of duty while attempting to apprehend an illegal trapper at his cabin in Nugget Gulch, a remote area in the Sierra Madres. On August 8, 2015, a ceremony was held at Jack Creek Park in the Medicine Bow National Forest west of Saratoga to honor the service and sacrifice of the two wardens. The ceremony included the dedication of a memorial sign and accounts of the incident by the president of the Wyoming Game Wardens Association and the Saratoga game warden. The Wyoming Game Wardens Association Honor Guard performed a 21-gun salute and played "Taps" as a tribute to Wardens Lakanen and Simpson. A memorial plaque was also placed near the site.



Members of the Wyoming Game Warden Association Honor Guard at the Lakanen - Simpson Memorial Ceremony.

On May 15, 2015, a memorial ceremony was held at the Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy to honor fallen officers from across the country. Several game wardens joined officers from other Wyoming law enforcement agencies at the ceremony. The names of the 273 law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty in the United

States in 2014 were read, as well as the names of the 62 fallen officers from Wyoming. There are nine former Wyoming game wardens on the Wyoming Peace Officer Memorial.

John Buxton - 1919
Charles "Ted" Price - 1921
Bill Lakanen - 1945
Don Simpson - 1945
Charles Calvert - 1965
Francis Gradert - 1973
Cliff Stevens - 1983
Kirk Inberg - 1991
Kay Bowles - 1992



The Wyoming Game Warden Association Honor Guard performs a 21-gun salute in honor of Wardens Lakanen and Simpson.



Supervisor Joe Gilbert reads the names of fallen officers at the Wyoming Peace Officer Memorial in Douglas..



Conserving Wildlife
Serving People

**Wyoming's wildlife belongs to you. Help protect it!
Report all wildlife violations.**

Call the Stop Poaching Hotline
or text to TIP411
(text keyword WGFD and message)

Rewards are provided
by the Wyoming Wildlife
Protectors Association



**STOP
POACHING**

Help us Stand Watch

1-877-WGFD-TIP

