

ESTIMATES NOTE (2012) Confidential Ministry of Environment Date: June 2013	ISSUE TITLE: Conservation Officer Service Overview
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KEY MESSAGES

- **Key message #1 – There are 156.5 positions in the Conservation Officer Service (COS), of which 148 are sworn Conservation Officer (CO) positions and 8.5 are civilian positions:**
 - **Provincial Operations: 115 positions comprised of 87 Field Officers (including 1 newly established CO 21 position on Haida-Gwaii, being staffed with preference to representative from Haida FN), 19 Sergeants (including new position in Haida-Gwaii), 8 Inspectors and 1 Chief Superintendent. Primarily responsible for public safety including response to human-wildlife conflicts, first responders to reports of violations in progress, and enforcement of environmental regulations.**
 - **Provincial Investigations Branch: 25 positions comprised of 15 Detective Sergeants, 2 Staff Sgts and 1 Inspector in the Major Investigations Unit (MIU), 5 Detective Sergeants and 1 Inspector in the Intelligence and Special Investigations Units, and 1 Superintendent. Primarily responsible for investigating environmental and forest crimes, those of significant impact upon human health, the environment and government revenue.**
 - **Headquarters and Program Support: 15.5 positions comprised of the Chief Conservation Officer, 1 Chief Superintendent) [position currently vacant due to hiring freeze), 2 Inspectors, 1 Staff Sergeant, 2 Sergeants and 8.5 civilian positions. Primarily responsible for providing strategic leadership, policy and procedures, personnel development and training, and COS resource management.**
- **Key message #2 - The Conservation Officer Service saw an increase in staff as a result of government’s October 2010 realignment of the natural resource sector ministries:**
 - **Seventeen staff positions from the Ministry of Forests and Range’s Special Investigations Unit were transferred to the COS. These positions were amalgamated into the Provincial Investigations Branch. One vacant position was transferred to the Staff Development, Training and Recruiting Section to build capacity to address staff development and training needs.**

CURRENT STATUS:

Key Message # 1:

- The COS is a natural resource law enforcement agency that specializes in public safety as it relates to human-wildlife conflict, commercial environmental and industrial investigations, and compliance and enforcement services. COs have responsibilities to enforce 33 federal and provincial statutes.

The COS undertakes investigations and enforcement in response to violations detected through internal compliance verification activities, reports from the public and other agencies, and proactive enforcement patrols. COs are also appointed as Special Provincial Constables under the Police Act and have unlimited appointments to enforce all Acts and Statutes, and protect the public and preserve the peace.

- COs are located in 46 communities in the province. Deployment of officers within the province is based upon a number of criteria including, call demand for public safety and enforcement concerns, population size, level of industrial/commercial and recreational activity, number of existing officers within the area, emerging environmental trends, and partnership opportunities.

Key Message # 2:

- The COS saw an increase in staff as a result of government’s October 2010 realignment of the Natural Resource Sector ministries. Seventeen staff positions from the Ministry of Forests and Range’s Special Investigations Unit were transferred to the COS; one of these positions (BL Inspector) has since been discontinued when the incumbent transferred back to FLNRO. The position was reduced in order to provide FTE offset for upgrading of two DSgt positions to SSgt. The remaining 16 positions were amalgamated into the Provincial Investigations Branch. One vacant position was transferred to the Staff Development, Training and Recruiting Section to build capacity to address staff development and training needs.
- The COS Provincial Investigations Branch conducts large-scale industrial or commercial environmental crime investigations. The very nature of these investigations is complex, labour intensive and is at the criminal standard for prosecution by Provincial Crown Counsel.
- Provincial Investigations Branch has seen a significant increase in workload (32 cases in 2010, 48 cases in 2011, and 72 cases in 2012). The file load has increased concurrent with periods of limited PIB augmentation of Field Operations during peak times for human-wildlife conflicts and staffing shortages, compounding the remaining workload.

- Examples of Recent Major Case Investigations:

Investigation	Nature	Outcome
Testalinden Lake	Dam failure	Case has been completed: decision to not proceed with charges was supported.
Coldstream	Contaminated drinking water	Before the Courts.
Tech Cominco	Intentional Contamination Chemical Pollution	Before the Courts.
Cheakamus Creek	Train derailment, Chemical Pollution	Guilty plea. Fine \$400k plus reparations.
Lillooet	Fatal attack by Black Bear	Bear responsible for fatal attack destroyed.
Kinder Morgan Canada Inc., Cusano Contracting Inc, R.F. Binnie and Associates Ltd.	Burnaby Oil Spill	Each party fined \$1,000 and ordered to each pay \$149, 000 to the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund.

Conservation Officer Service Positions (FTEs)

Type of position	2013/ 2014 ¹	2012/ 2013	2011/ 2012	2010/ 2011	2009/ 2010	2008/ 2009
Uniform/patrol Conservation Officer and Sergeant	106	105	105	105	104	98
Plainclothes Investigation Sergeant and Detective Sergeant	22	22	24	25	11	11
Seasonal Conservation Officer	0	0	0	0	0	8 ²
<i>Subtotal – boots on the ground (FTEs)</i>	<i>128</i>	<i>127</i>	<i>129</i>	<i>130</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>117</i>
Inspector and Executive Officer	16	17	17	17	17	17
Training Sergeant	2	2	2	1	1	1
Predator Conflict Reduction and Response Coordinator	1	1	1	1	0	0
Staff Sergeant, Quality Control	1	1	1	1	0	0
Civilian	8.5	8.5	9.5	11.5	11.5	11.5
Total Conservation Officer Service positions (sworn officer and civilian)	156.5	156.5	159.5	161.5	144.5	146.5

***Notes:**

Positions are reported as of the end of each fiscal year;

*indicates seasonal positions (FTEs) that equated to approximately 14 staff employed for 8 month terms;

Increase in field conservation officers in 09/10 resulted from the demising of the seasonal program;

In October of 2010, seventeen positions (FTEs) were transferred to the COS from the former Ministry of Forests and Range.

KEY FACTS/BACKGROUND/OTHER AGENCIES:

- The COS is responsible for ensuring public safety as it relates to human-wildlife conflicts, environmental crimes, e.g. Controlled Alien Species (CAS) and forest crimes, such as arson, and recreational activities such as hunting in close proximity to urban settings. The COS is responsible for investigating environmental and forest crimes that impact upon human health, the environment, and government revenue, e.g. fraudulent forest scaling practices. The COS enforces a variety of environmental regulations related to recreational activities, e.g. fishing and hunting regulations.
- The COS has adopted the Incident Command System for managing responses to high

¹ Positions are reported as of the end of each fiscal year, except for 13/14

² Indicates seasonal positions (FTEs) that equated to approximately 14 staff employed for 8 month terms; increase in field conservation officers in 09/10 resulted from the suspension of the seasonal program.

risk and sensitive issues such as the CAS regulation and attacks by predators on humans. Quick response teams have been established and regularly train and exercise to maintain the necessary skill levels. These occurrences generate significant media interest, and have significant impact upon the individuals and communities. The COS has successfully managed responses to these incidents and will continue to do so, including timely senior-level liaison with Branch and MoE Executive.

- The COS delivers a number of its services through partnerships with other agencies and partners. The COS will continue to establish new partnerships and relationships to work collaboratively to protect the environment and the public. Examples of these partnerships include:
 - In 2011, a partnership MOU was signed with the Regional District of the East Kootenay to provide an additional conservation officer to address environmental issues resulting from recreational use in sensitive habitats. This position was recently staff from within the COS.
 - Staff is involved in negotiations being led by the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation and the Maa-Nulth First Nations regarding providing services to enforce Maa-Nulth First Nations treaty laws. The Maa-Nulth First Nations would be responsible for providing funding for any enforcement services delivered by the COS.
 - In 2011/12, COS optimized its service delivery where feasible. These initiatives included livestock protection services (education and predator mitigation) in partnership with livestock producers, the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, the MFLNRO, the BC Agriculture Research and Development Corporation; Community Environmental Restorative Justice program (Recipient of Premier’s Award – Regional). The COS is also exploring the use of civil forfeiture for assets and property used in the commission of environmental and forest crimes through the Civil Forfeiture Office of the Ministry Justice and Attorney General.
- The number of case files, tickets and warnings has seen a gradual increase over the past nine years.

Year	FY 04/05	FY 05/06	FY 06/07	FY 07/08	FY 08/09	FY 09/10	FY 10/11	FY 11/12	FY 12/13
Total Case Files	5,261	6,081	7,139	6,743	8,207	8,937	8706	8171	9375
Tickets	1,463	2,062	2,436	1,989	2,096	2,190	1961	2220	2271
% change over previous FY	n/a	41%	18%	-18%	5%	4%	-10%	13%	2%
Warnings	1,862	2,293	3,067	2,466	2,441	2,598	2452	2623	2843
% change over previous FY	n/a	23%	34%	-20%	1%	6%	-6%	7%	8%

- The Conservation Officer Service is responsible for enforcing 33 federal and provincial Acts and associated regulations. The COS undertakes investigations and enforcement in response to violations detected through internal compliance verification activities, reports from the public and other agencies, and proactive enforcement patrols.
- The level of effort to investigate and take enforcement action varies depending upon the nature of the activity. Investigations into violations of environmental protection and human health regulations require a significant investment in resources as compared to enforcement of fishing and hunting regulations. Typically, an environmental investigation will take an average of 70 person days to complete with some taking as much as 100 person days, and may result in several charges being laid. In contrast, a one day enforcement patrol to address fishing or hunting activities may result in numerous violation tickets being issued.
- The number of charges laid does not reflect the level of effort or priority the COS places on these activities. The COS plans its activities to address public safety and human health concerns, environmental and forest crimes, property damage caused by dangerous wildlife, and regulations regulating the use of natural resources. The *Wildlife Act* is administered by the FLNRO; enforcement of the *Act* and regulations is jointly undertaken by the COS and FLNRO Compliance and Enforcement Staff.
- The COS is using Community Environmental Justice Forums to address non-compliance as an alternative to issuing tickets or taking an offender to court.
- In 2012/13 the COS received approximately 29,615 calls regarding human-wildlife conflicts compared to 30,750 in 2011/12. Of those calls in 2012/13, approximately 18,975 involved human-bear conflict, compared to 21,250 in 2011/2012. These numbers are similar to conflict levels from previous years. The COS received another 5,204 calls regarding environmental violations in 2012/13.

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