

EXECUTIVE DIGEST

LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

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| INTRODUCTION | This report, issued in June 2001, contains the results of our performance audit* of the Law Enforcement Division (LED), Department of Natural Resources. |
| AUDIT PURPOSE | This performance audit was conducted as part of the constitutional responsibility of the Office of the Auditor General. Performance audits are conducted on a priority basis related to the potential for improving effectiveness* and efficiency*. |
| BACKGROUND | <p>LED's mission* is to protect the State's natural resources and the environment and the health and safety of the public through effective law enforcement and education. LED functions include enforcement of traditional outdoor recreational and natural resource laws as well as environmental laws. In addition, LED administers safety education programs and the Report All Poaching Program.</p> <p>LED had 245 employees as of September 30, 2000 and expended approximately \$26.7 million for operations for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2000.</p> |
| AUDIT OBJECTIVE, CONCLUSION, AND NOTEWORTHY ACCOMPLISHMENTS | <p>Audit Objective: To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of LED operations.</p> <p>Conclusion: We concluded that LED operations were generally effective and efficient. Also, we concluded</p> |

from our observation of conservation officers during field operations that officers were well-trained, professional in both performance of their duties and appearance, and effective in dealing with the public while maintaining respect for the public's legal rights and concerns. However, we noted reportable conditions* relating to measurable program goals and objectives and vehicle inventory monitoring (Findings 1 and 2).

Noteworthy Accomplishments: LED became only the third law enforcement agency in the State with its own law enforcement academy. New LED conservation officers attend the 20-week academy, which focuses on physical fitness; communication skills; firearms and vehicle training; and enforcement of natural resource, environmental protection, and general criminal laws. The academy provides LED with the flexibility to conduct training sessions as needed, focusing on training specific to its operations, and allows LED additional time to evaluate candidates.

In addition, starting in October 2000, LED implemented an employee activity reporting system that accumulates information to help monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of LED operations.

**AUDIT SCOPE AND
METHODOLOGY**

Our audit scope was to examine the program and other records of the Law Enforcement Division. Our audit was conducted in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States and, accordingly, included such tests of the records and such other auditing procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances.

Our audit procedures included an examination of LED records and activities for the period October 1, 1998 through December 31, 2000.

We performed a preliminary review that consisted of interviewing LED management and field staff and reviewing applicable statutes, appropriations acts, administrative rules, management plans, and policy and procedure manuals. We visited four LED district field locations to gain an understanding of, and to observe conservation officers performing, field operations. The purpose of the preliminary review was to obtain an understanding of LED operations and to plan our audit.

To evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of LED operations, we examined various LED program reports, program performance documentation, and the assignment of conservation officers to field locations. In addition, we analyzed LED's monitoring of various safety education programs, reviewed hiring and training requirements of conservation officers, and reviewed procedures and controls pertaining to LED equipment and confiscated property inventory.

We reviewed the operation of the Report All Poaching Hotline. This included reviewing the number and type of calls received, the distribution of information to field locations, and the follow-up by the conservation officers.

**AGENCY RESPONSES
AND PRIOR AUDIT
FOLLOW-UP**

Our audit report includes 2 findings and 2 corresponding recommendations. The preliminary response prepared by the Department of Natural Resources indicated that it agreed with the recommendations.

LED partially or fully complied with 3 of the 4 prior audit recommendations. One of the prior audit recommendations was rewritten for inclusion in this audit report.