

Law Enforcement Planning: A Challenge and a Dilemma

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Abstract: Law enforcement practitioners have always found effective planning difficult in terms of measuring results. The Division of Law Enforcement has developed a planning system that maximizes limited resources, enhances morale and fosters a team spirit. Mandatory long-range planning within the agency has led to the implementation of a "quarterly field planning" concept by the Division in which supervisors and their officers meet together each quarter and set 4 high priority work goals and develop strategies to meet those goals. This "directed patrol" concept reduces aimless, rambling patrols, and increases group interaction and team problem solving. The quarterly plans also serve as a mechanism by which top management can direct field changes in policy or priority activities. Results for each quarter are evaluated by regional and Central office personnel. Quarterly planning meshes into the Division's strategic (long-range) planning by providing information on problem areas for the Division's Central office review and action.

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In these days of tight budgets and limited resources, wildlife law enforcement agencies must learn to accomplish more with less. Growing human populations, expanding urban areas and environmental problems are placing greater demands for services and enforcement actions on state/federal conservation agencies. How can we cope with expanding responsibilities without an increase in personnel and resources? In Florida, we have found that we can make our present operations more effective and efficient by improving our operations through planning.

Planning helps reduce unproductive time and concentrates available personnel in known problem areas. It gives officers a sense of direction and focus and makes them feel more productive. Utilizing input from the officers also increases their commitment to the job and makes them a more integral part of the law enforcement effort. This, in turn, increases morale and productivity.

Planning does not have to be a "paper tiger." Properly done, planning does not reduce field enforcement time. On the contrary, the small amount of time invested in proper planning can prevent thousands of wasted work hours.

For the last year and a half, the Division of Law Enforcement has been using a planning system that has improved our operations. It has been well received by the field. We have been using a planning system made up of 2 types of planning models: (1) field quarterly planning, which is performed totally at the area level; and (2) statewide operational planning, which is done annually at the central headquarters with field input.

Annual operational planning is a mandatory function of our division as part of an agency-wide "strategic plan." The quarterly field planning has been an optional program that we implemented on an experimental basis. We believe that the quarterly field planning process can greatly aid any law enforcement operation. If used in conjunction with a strategic plan, it can generate needed data for long-range projections.

Quarterly Field Planning

In order to perform quarterly planning, wildlife officers, sergeants and lieutenants meet together in an informal setting to discuss high-complaint areas, anticipate problems, and agree on law enforcement goals for the next 3 months. The quarterly goals/priorities are limited in quantity—there is room for only 4 goals on the planning form. We want to ensure that only the most important enforcement needs are addressed. These are goals that they must have a burning desire to achieve, that they are committed to 100% and have collectively decided upon. They must state their goals specifically in terms of the realistic results they want. They must also define the "strategies and activities" they will use to achieve the goal. Finally, they must get together at the end of the quarter and evaluate the results of their efforts and begin work on their next quarter's goals. Usually these meetings are held at a lakeside, a camp, or other suitable location which will not take them from the field. Subjects other than planning are usually placed on the agenda to make the meeting as productive as possible.

How the Plan is Developed

First, goals must be specific. A goal such as "ensure compliance with fishing regulations" is useless. It does not provide the officers with any sense of direction, it just allows "business as usual." What we are looking for is specific directional goals. For example, "Reduce complaints of illegal netting of game fish on the St. Johns River between the Memorial Bridge and Julington Creek." This goal tells exactly what is needed and what the desired results will be—a reduction in public complaints. The "strategies and activities" to be used to attain these goals must also be specific. A poorly worded example would be: "Work these areas by boat and on foot." Again, this does not give direction. A well-worded strategy would be: "During the months of January, February and March, 4 officers will use 2 boats, alternating officers each week for a total of 12 work days on the river during the quarter; spotting scopes and aircraft will be used." If desired, the times of patrol

could also be specified, but usually such scheduling is made and written notification is given to the officers working these details.

At least 3 more goals/priorities are selected for the quarter. These goals provide officers with specific "directed-patrol" work plans that they must complete during the 3-month period. Obviously, these projects will not consume all their time and they will still be available to answer complaints and handle emergencies. However, it does keep unproductive wandering to a minimum and it does increase effectiveness.

At the end of the quarter, the officers state the "results" of their efforts on each of their goals. Since the quarterly plans are reviewed by the captain, major, and the Division's Central office command, the officers know that their effectiveness is being closely monitored. Therefore, they stay committed to their goals during the quarter. A well-stated result would be: "Four officers worked a total of 140 hours, checked 134 users, issued 20 citations and 7 warnings, and filled out 99 commercial fishing device survey forms. Of the 20 citations, 12 were for illegal use of gill nets. Public complaints decreased by 75%."

This sounds great, but as we all know the results of operations may not always be so graphic. Many times we receive public complaints of suspected activities but find none. First of all, supervisors should be hesitant about committing significant resources to work a complaint of unknown validity; however, if they choose to work the complaint, they, of course, must first verify it. If officers are assigned to regularly work the area for the entire quarter and they find out, after a reasonable period of time, that there is no illegal activities present, then the priority should be dropped and another one substituted. An appropriate result here might be: "A total of 71 nighttime hours were worked on this night-hunting complaint prior to canceling the detail. No activities at all were observed. No arrests and no warnings were made and the complaints were considered invalid."

Our supervisors and officers have supported the quarterly planning concept. Officers feel good about participating in the planning of the schedule, and work more as a unit. Everyone is committed to the goals because everyone played a part in preparing them. These planning sessions also facilitate the sharing of information and reduce "the lone-ranger" syndrome. Also, they know that if they do not speak up about problem areas, they may not have time to work on their "hot spots" themselves because of other goal commitments. These factors help foster a team spirit and high motivation. In most instances, an officer who is kept busy with "important assignments" as part of a recognized team has high morale, and these planning activities seem to contribute to this phenomenon.

Directed Patrol

The heart and soul of this type of planning is the "directed-patrol" concept. Many law enforcement studies have found that "directed patrol" is much more productive than "random patrol." Directed patrol is simply channeling officers and resources toward specific target areas that have been shown to have a high incidence

of violations or that are staging areas for the planning of crimes. Directed patrol is a practical application of the preventative patrol precept of "being seen at the right place, at the right time."

All officers practice "directed patrol" when they are working a good complaint or are patrolling high-complaint areas. Proper planning formalizes the process and helps officers to better prepare and schedule their work time. This helps avoid unproductive times when they may patrol randomly waiting for a complaint or some other development.

In addition, "special details" can be planned involving systematic inspections of fish dealers, game farms, fur buyers, pet shops, environmental dumping areas, taxidermists and other duties that are best accomplished with a team of officers. These details are especially effective during periods when hunting/fishing/boating activities are down.

Strategic Planning

Our agency develops a strategic plan 1 year in advance. The Division of Law Enforcement bases its plan on information gathered at the field level, together with priorities developed at the Central Office. The strategic plan is developed through the Central Office of the Bureau Chief of Uniform Patrol Operations, Aviation and Inspections, along with the 5 regional Law Enforcement commanders. Each commander's region is divided into 2 separate geographical areas, each of which is supervised by a captain. In each captain's area, major geographical formations and state-controlled land holdings are defined and each is evaluated in terms of enforcement needs. Enforcement priorities are agreed upon by the "Captain's area" for wildlife management lands, fish management areas, refuges, environmental areas and other geographical formations (major rivers, lakes, etc.) that need special attention. Specific goals are established to address known problem areas or situations. This enables interested Commission personnel to see our priorities for the year and provides our supervisors and officers with direction for developing quarterly field plans.

Long-range plans are also developed in the Central Office for Wildlife Inspections, Aviation, Investigations, Communications, Training, Records, and Administration.

Measuring Success

How does a law enforcement entity measure the success of its operations? Most law enforcement planners have long wrestled with this problem. For decades the Federal Bureau of Investigation has used "crime indexes" in which the number of reported crimes is measured against the number of crimes cleared. Although crimes against persons are usually reported, crimes relating to the illegal taking of wildlife or fish are "victimless" with few people observing the violation other than the

perpetrator. Therefore, the effectiveness of wildlife enforcement operations must be measured by other factors.

The Division has chosen certain measurement criteria (Table 1) to determine the effectiveness of a specific enforcement detail. Our officers are asked to rate the following factors as they apply to each goal in the strategic plan. Each factor is assigned a positive or negative point value.

Table 1. Measurement criteria used to determine effectiveness of enforcement details.

Criterion	Point value
1. Wildlife officers observe a decrease in illegal activity.	5
2. Public complaints to officer/Commission office reduced.	5
3. Arrests/written warnings increase.	3
4. Illegal activity not found (complaint invalid).	5
5. Public complaint volume not reduced, or actually increases.	-5
6. Signs of illegal activities are still being observed by wildlife officers.	-5

A point value of 5 is necessary in order for results to be considered “acceptable.” A rating of 10 is designated as “good” and over 10 is “excellent.” Negative factors obviously reduce the effectiveness of an operation. We purposely gave the arrest category a low numerical value because we feel strongly that arrests should not be the primary factor in evaluating success. Under certain conditions, a decrease in arrests because of a strong law enforcement presence can indicate the success of a mission.

Although simple in format, we believe these 6 factors represent the basis for sound evaluation of law enforcement operations. Wildlife officers’ observations, the numbers and types of official enforcement actions, and public satisfaction with our efforts are the cornerstones of our evaluation process. Although somewhat subjective in nature, these factors provide for a measurable standard that is not otherwise available to wildlife law enforcement.

Summary

In order to be effective in long-range and short-range planning, a systematic approach is necessary. The Division of Law Enforcement’s planning system keys on directing the activities of field operations based on information from both the field and Central Office. The intercommunications that occur through this system provide feedback that enables us to constantly evaluate and redirect field operations for peak performance.