

Maryland Natural Resources Police Cadet Training Program

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Abstract: Since its beginning in 1972, the Cadet Training Program of the Maryland Natural Resources Police has provided the Agency with a continuing source of young personnel preparing to attend the Maryland Natural Resources Police (MNRP) Academy. The objective of this program has been to provide these young employees with first-hand knowledge of the MNRP's various functions and responsibilities and to permit the MNRP to observe them in a variety of real-world situations prior to committing the expense of Academy training. The ultimate goal of the program is to acquire capable, well-motivated recruits for Academy training and to enable the MNRP to maintain an acceptable attrition rate over the years. Through careful selection and in-service monitoring and evaluation, we believe that our program is successful, and that our objectives are being met. The following paper describes our methods, experiences, and, to the degree possible, our results.

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The Maryland Natural Resources Police believe that our Cadet Training Program fulfills a real need in providing an important first step in a lifetime natural resources law enforcement career. We believe that this is especially important in a relatively small agency, such as ours, where attrition rates have historically been low. We believe this low attrition to be a result of the level of dedicated interest we perceive to be prevalent throughout the nation's corps of conservation law enforcers. The dedication, however, has been severely tested in recent years by a combination of economic, social, professional, and personal factors.

The first of these forces adversely affecting retention within the conservation law enforcement ranks is the general poor state of the nation's economy in recent years, especially as it relates to state payrolls and budgets. This, of course, is not news. Our perception, however, is that conservation law enforcers have stayed at the low end of law enforcement payrolls for quite some time. With today's economic stresses, young people seem to be gravitating toward the higher paying jobs rather than staying with conservation agencies.

In recent years it has been increasingly important that conservation law enforcement officers present a more professional police image. The nature of our work environment as regards to officer/violator contact has changed dramatically in recent years. Causes of this change include a continuing poor regard for law enforcement in general, and the rise in narcotics trafficking in all areas of the nation. Once officers have been trained to the level of professional attainment we must now require, they begin to look around and see agencies in more traditional areas of law enforcement with better pay and benefits, less demanding kinds of work schedules, and, perhaps, less stringent requirements of a professional nature. At this point, sometimes suddenly, a lot of the joy of protecting nature begins to leak out of these officers' work days. Finally, personal ambition and a desire to advance in a career that will benefit his family are strong reasons for a young officer to seek what he perceives to be a better position.

Training Objectives

The fundamental objective of the Cadet Training Program is to provide a basic foundation upon which a productive, rewarding, and meaningful career in the Natural Resources Police Force may be built. Theoretically, the Cadet Training Program also provides both the individual Cadet and the Department an opportunity to "size up" each other and make a determination as to the suitability and compatibility of one to the other. Additionally, the program provides a well-rounded background and experience for the future police officer through selective assignments and training. The Cadet Training Program also has the advantage of measuring the career-mindedness of the individual and his potential for a lengthy period of service. These objectives are attained through what we consider to be high standards of recruitment, selection, training, and guidance.

Selection of Cadets

The Cadet Training Program begins with a lengthy recruitment and selection process. Even at the very beginning, concentration has to be directed at career-mindedness and retention potential. The MNRP follow guidelines established by the Maryland Department of Personnel, the Personnel Section of the Department of Natural Resources, and the appropriate Equal Employment Opportunity Commission rules and regulations. We have an officer assigned to our headquarters whose principal duty is recruitment throughout the state. Through his efforts, we attempt to obtain a pool of potential applicants as large as possible, and with a composition representative of the state population. These individuals, who are potential applicants, place their name on an "Interest File" with the Maryland Department of Personnel. When the MNRP needs to hire cadets to fill existing or projected vacancies, the superintendent notifies the Department of Natural Resources Personnel Office which establishes a test date and notifies the Maryland Department of Per-

sonnel. The Maryland Department of Personnel then sends each individual in the Interest File a test date notification and other information the applicant will need.

Our most recent need for cadets was midsummer of 1986. At that time, our projected need was for 13 cadets, 7 serving cadets were scheduled to enter the MNRP Academy in early July leaving 6 cadet vacancies. The Maryland Department of Personnel sent notices to more than 500 individuals whose names were in their interest file. They received slightly over 300 positive responses. When the day of testing was concluded we had 161 names with which to proceed. We, the MNRP, were initially somewhat disappointed with what we perceived to be a poor turn-out. We were advised by the Maryland DOP and DNR Personnel Section that this level of what can only be called "loss of interest," was within the normal limits of their experience.

The actual testing for this hiring cycle was conducted on a Saturday in July at 3 university and community college campuses; 1 on Maryland's Eastern Shore, 1 in Baltimore, and 1 near Washington, D.C. The testing consisted of 6 stages.

First, candidates were checked-in against a roster and then they submitted their previously prepared "Statements of Personal History," and related documents (i.e., copies of birth certificates, transcripts, and so forth) for review and verification. The candidates then proceeded to the fingerprinting station and 3 sets of prints were taken on "Applicant" fingerprint cards, FBI Form Number FD-258.

From the fingerprint station the candidates proceeded to a Physical Aptitude Demonstration (PAD). The MNRP, acting upon the best advice obtainable, and in the interest of fairness, used a PAD similar to that employed by the United States military service academies. Additionally, information was obtained from the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco, Georgia, and The Sports Medicine Center in Annapolis, Maryland, in the development of the MNRP-PAD. In general, the performance of a series of 7 physical exercises or calisthenics demonstrations was designed to assess the candidates' physical strength, agility, flexibility, coordination, and endurance. Following completion of the PAD, the candidates were given a written examination and, finally, a 3-person oral board interviewed each candidate. Results of the PAD, written tests, and oral board were sent to the Maryland Department of Personnel for evaluation and grading, and ultimately, a list of qualified applicants was produced and sent to the Department of Natural Resources Personnel and to the MNRP.

From this list a suitable number of the top qualified applicants were selected and extensive background investigations was begun including a mandatory polygraph examination. When this is completed, a summary of results were prepared and, all things being in order, a series of hiring interviews were scheduled.

Once this entire process has been completed and the results tabulated and ranked, notices of selection were sent to those individuals who have been selected by the interview board. Those not selected were also notified and advised that their status as tested applicants would remain unchanged for a period of time specified by the 2 personnel departments involved in the selection process.

Those who received notices of selection were given a date to report to the

MNRP Academy for their initial training and orientation. The Staff of the Natural Resources Police Academy has the responsibility to ensure that the proper training and educational opportunities are provided to each cadet. This career development is provided through selected field assignments and experiences as well as guidance through critical performance evaluations.

Training Program

The 1 formal training and indoctrination program (1 week) consists of all state personnel policies and procedures for new employees as well as an introduction to the goals and objectives of the Natural Resources Police. Other subjects include military courtesy, public relations, first-aid, and an introduction to MNRP rules and regulations, standards, reports and forms.

Uniforms are also issued. The MNRP provide cadet personnel with everything but shoes, socks, and undergarments.

Following the week of formal training, MNRP cadets are deployed to the field and MNRP regional offices across the state. The Agency firmly believes that periodic rotation of Cadet duty assignments (Table 1) is the best method to ensure that cadets develop a good understanding of the various functions of the MNRP. Rotations are made at 3 and 6 month intervals.

Duties and Responsibilities

Patrol Assignments—Cadets assigned to work with a NRP Officer in a Marine, Inland, or Mobile Enforcement Team Patrol Activity will be trained to perform most of those tasks normally carried out by a sworn officer. The Cadet Field Training Officer (FTO) will train the cadet in seamanship, navigation and boat handling skills, as well as vehicle operation skills. The Cadet will observe and assist in the enforcement of the conservation and boating safety laws with a strong emphasis on

Table 1. List of rotation field assignments used for the cadet training program.

Function	Length of assignment
Marine activity patrol	6 months
Inland activity patrol	6 months
Mobile enforcement team patrol	6 months
Training academy	3 months
Maintenance and supply section	3 months
Outdoor education program	3 months
Communications section	3 months
Water resources	3 months
Wildlife/fisheries management	3 months
Violations records section	3 months

resource protection. In general, cadets receive valuable and extensive on-the-job training in each patrol activity with the following limitations:

1. Cadets will not be unnecessarily exposed to situations which will require them to use force against a citizen.
2. Cadets will not issue written warnings, citations or make arrests.
3. Cadets may take part in investigations of a routine nature up to the point at which criminal action is contemplated against the person(s) being investigated. At this time, the investigation will be turned over to a sworn officer for disposition. However, the cadet may be required to testify in court to such facts that he/she may have knowledge of relative to the case.
4. Cadets will not carry firearms of any description while on or off duty. (This should not be construed to prohibit or restrict the use of personal firearms by any cadet for the purpose of lawful hunting while off duty.)

Training Academy—While assigned to the Academy, a cadet will learn the functions of training by assisting the staff in carrying out the administrative procedures necessary for the type of operation. He/she will compile data, keep records, and prepare reports on training activities. Additionally, when time permits, the cadet may monitor and assist in the actual training that will be taking place in the Basic Recruit Class and the In-Service Training Programs. This assignment not only assists the Staff of the academy, it helps prepare the cadet for his/her entrance-level officer training.

Maintenance and Supply Section—This assignment provides the cadet with the opportunity to learn and practice some basic fundamentals of equipment maintenance. The cadet receives training in inboard and outboard engine maintenance, hull repair, and electronics maintenance. The cadet is also acquainted with the procedures for requisitioning, storing, and disbursing of supplies and materials. This “hands-on” training will prove to be invaluable in the future as an officer.

Outdoor Education Program—This assignment allows the cadet to assist the coordinator and/or regional coordinators with administration of the Maryland Hunter Education Program, Maryland Safe Boating Education Program, and the Aquatic Education Program. The cadet will go into the field to help in the instruction of each Education Program.

Communications Section—The Communications Section is located in the MNRP headquarters in Annapolis, Maryland. After completing on-the-job training in proper radio telephone procedures, the cadet will perform the functions of a Police Communications Operator (PCO); under the direct supervision of a PCO. The cadet will receive and dispatch information to MNRP units throughout the State of Maryland. He/she will be able to operate various computers to access vehicle and vessel information, natural resources harvesting licenses, and violator identification information.

Water Resources—Cadets assigned to this Agency within the Department of Natural Resources will be provided an opportunity to become involved in law enforcement operations related to oil pollution, dredging of wetlands, sediment control, surface mines, and water quality standards. He/she may be required to take

water samples, collect evidence, do shoreline surveys, and perform other appropriate functions.

Wildlife/Fisheries Management—In this assignment, the cadet will work with the Wildlife and Fisheries Administration game and fish biologists in the field. The cadet will assist with field surveys and work on special projects relating to species management. This assignment helps the cadet in the identification of species such as waterfowl, upland game, furbearers, and tidal and non-tidal fish as well as various management techniques.

Violations Records Section—This position provides the cadet with the working knowledge of how police records must be handled and documented. It also provides the cadet with a good background in how citations and warnings are written, recorded and maintained.

General Details on Assignments

All cadets may not necessarily have all of these assignments during their tenure. Additionally, these assignments may be increased or decreased in length by the Police Academy on an as needed basis. However, every cadet will spend at least 6 months in the Marine Activity Patrol and the Inland Activity Patrol. These assignments are evaluated periodically to determine their value in terms of meaningful training to cadet personnel.

Every effort is made to avoid employing cadets in “go-fer” details and other tasks not related to providing positive work experiences. Cadets will not be given menial tasks to perform unless such tasks are those that would normally be performed by the sworn officer or civilian to whom he/she is assigned.

We are well aware of the elements of risk involved in some of these duties, and every effort is made to ensure that no cadet is exposed to a level of risk we would regard as unacceptable. In addition to the duties being monitored, cadets are evaluated every 3 months by supervisory personnel and the Cadet Field Training Officers with whom they serve. These reports are monitored by MNRP Academy Staff who direct the rotation process.

Attrition Comparison

Even with what is hoped to be the best selection procedure available, there will still be a certain percentage of attrition beyond that of normal service retirements. The NRP Cadet Program began in 1972 with 10 cadets of which 4 graduated in 1975. Including the first 4 cadets, 46 cadets have graduated from the Academy in the following 11 years. Of these 46 cadets 1 resigned, 2 transferred to other police agencies, and 1 is deceased. This reflects an 8% attrition rate over an 11-year period.

In the same 11-year period, 92 officers who did not have the cadet experience graduated from the Academy. Of those 92, 20 have left the Agency. This reflects a 21% attrition rate over an 11-year period. We believe these statistics show the Cadet

Training Program has provided candidates for the entrance level officer position with a 250% higher retention rate.

Regardless of which group is studied, it is interesting to point out that if you combine the two groups' attrition rates, and average them over the 11-year period, the MNRP has a 98.4% per year average retention rate of new officers graduating from the MNRP Academy.

By working in the Agency, cadets learn leadership qualities and develop good citizenship and character traits, while acquiring an awareness of civic responsibility. They develop an insight into the Department's objectives and the difficulties and hazards confronting the police officer in the performance of his duties. In this way, cadets experience both the advantages and drawbacks of a career in police work before they become police officers. (Deak 1986).

Conclusion

In summary, the Maryland Natural Resources Police Cadet Training Program has proven to be an overwhelming success. There has been a significant savings in costs per hour of training (T. Mowers unpubl. rep., Md. Natl. Resour. Police, Annapolis, Md. 1981). We have been able to hire and train officers with a much broader education in the functions of the Department of Natural Resources. The objective of maintaining an acceptable attrition rate over the past 11 years has been met with the help of acquiring devoted and thoroughly trained officers from the Cadet Training Program who are committed to a career with the Maryland Natural Resources Police Force.

Literature Cited

Deak, F. 1986. Police apprenticeship program. F.B.I. Law Enforcement Bull. 13-17.