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*Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Division of Enforcement*

*Special Investigations Unit
2000 Legislative Report*

February 2001

The seal of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is a large, circular emblem. It features a central shield with a landscape scene, surrounded by a wreath. The words "MINNESOTA" and "DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES" are inscribed around the perimeter of the seal. The text of the report is overlaid on the left side of the seal.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Enforcement is directed by MS Chapter 335, Article 1, Section 21, Subdivision 8, to submit an annual financial report of funds expended by its Special Investigations Unit. This legislation was passed by the 1989 regular session of the seventy-sixth Minnesota Legislature. Pursuant to this requirement the following report is submitted to the House Appropriations Committee and the Senate Finance Committee.

SUMMARY

In fiscal year 2000, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Enforcement, Special Investigations Unit (SIU) accounted for the disbursement of approximately 2% of the Divisions budgetary allotment. The Special Investigations Unit conducted operations using three full time Special Investigators, nine (9) part time covert Conservation Officers, and one full time clerical position.

SPECIALIZED TRAINING

The Special Investigations Unit redesigned their undercover training program by updating operational manuals, incorporating stress factors into situational scenarios, and placing increased emphasis on investigative case report writing. The SIU subsequently conducted an intense two week training seminar that provided ten Conservation Officers certification to conduct covert and overt wildlife investigations. The curriculum included all facets of undercover operations including intelligence gathering, establishing false identities, surveillance, entrapment issues, report writing and takedown procedures. Officers participated in real-life scenarios designed to portray the intense, high risk situations confronting covert operations.

Two Conservation Officers serving as part time investigators attended the annual International Association of Marine Investigators training sessions. This training traditionally provides valuable insight into the complexities of recreational vehicle crime and allows attendees to share intelligence information and identify trends in criminal activities. This information is then presented to state, county, and local law enforcement agencies.

The Special Investigations Unit conducted a three day instructional exercise for newly certified Conservation Officer part time investigators. During this time, attendees received hands-on training detailing the technical aspects of still camera and video surveillance photography. Officers were certified to incorporate time lapse, infrared, trip devices, and weight bearing activation units into video recording systems. Situational scenarios were integrated into the instruction and officers were required to install, maintain, and trouble shoot camera systems during inclement weather conditions.

Two Special Investigators attended the National Technical Investigators Association Seminar and received specialized training sufficient to construct, install and maintain video surveillance systems. This highly advanced instruction consistently reduced costs associated with electronic surveillance. In addition, proper evidence collection and documentation was ensured. Investigators applied this knowledge in similar training delivered to other Department personnel and out state law enforcement agencies.

ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Enforcement activities conducted by the Special Investigations Unit during fiscal year 2000 included but were not limited to the following:

The Special Investigations Unit (SIU) concluded the covert phases of two multi state undercover operations. Both investigations required the use of state and federal field officers to conduct follow up interviews and further corroborate illicit activities. Currently, defendants await prosecution in state, federal and tribal courts for violations committed. They include:

- The covert and takedown phase of a three year undercover operation in Wisconsin. During this cooperative effort, the MN SIU infiltrated a sophisticated big game poaching ring and documented the illegal taking and subsequent commercialization of five protected species. Formal charges have been filed in which more than thirty (30) individuals will be prosecuted for major violations of state and federal law including: the illegal taking and transportation of black bear, sale of bear parts, illegal taking and transportation of trophy whitetail deer, bobcats, turkey, and ruffed grouse. In addition to the aforementioned violations, follow up investigations have documented more than \$8000 in sales of protected species originating from an Illinois gift shop.
- A two-year cooperative covert investigation involving the illegal taking, sale and subsequent interstate transportation of protected game and fish. During this operation, Special Investigators from the MN Special Investigations Unit and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks Division (MTFWP) observed and covertly documented hundreds of wildlife violations committed by residents of Minnesota, North Dakota, and Montana. Since 1996, these hunters have knowingly and repeatedly violated MT State Law, MN State Law, Leech Lake Indian Tribal Law, the federal Lacey Act, and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Eleven (11) defendants currently await federal, state and/or tribal prosecutions.
- The Special Investigations Unit is currently conducting three additional multi state covert investigations. The status of these operations is classified and still highly sensitive.

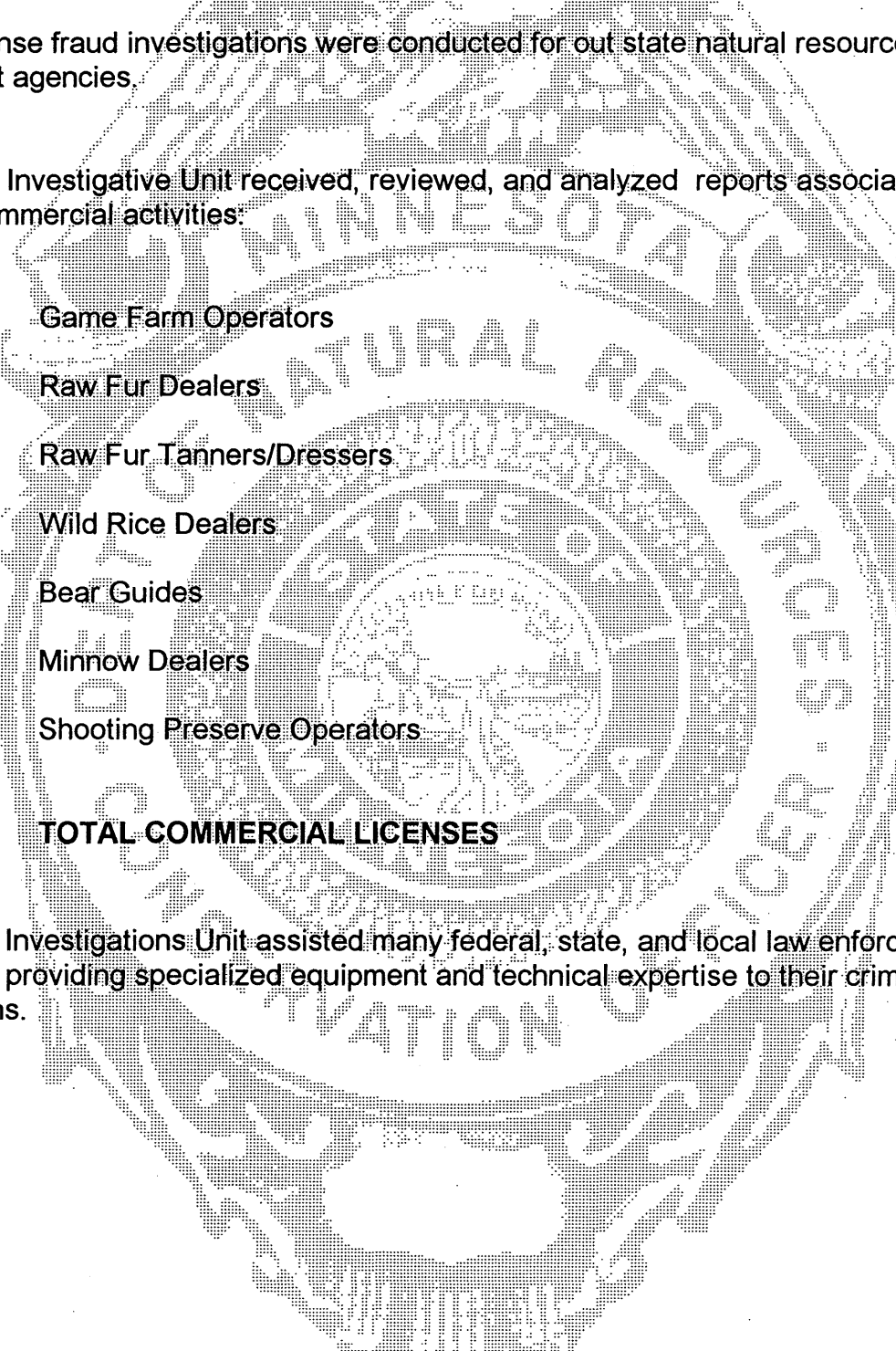
During this fiscal year, Special Investigators supported field level operations by:

- Installing and monitoring five (5) stationary video surveillance systems. This highly effective method of crime detection has resulted in several successful prosecutions, is cost effective, and has diminished the need for officers to physically witness illegal activities as they occur.
- Receiving, reviewing and analyzing more than 140 licensed bear guide annual reports. Inconsistencies in reporting, late reporting, and unlicensed operations were identified and referred to uniform field officers for further investigation.

Twenty (20) additional operations involving unlawful natural resource commercialization were initiated and are currently in various stages of investigation. Multiple suspects are included within each operation. During the fiscal year, the SIU attained a 100% conviction rate of those defendants formally charged.

Five (5) license fraud investigations were conducted for out state natural resource law enforcement agencies.

The Special Investigative Unit received, reviewed, and analyzed reports associated with the following commercial activities:



1150	Game Farm Operators
49	Raw Fur Dealers
14	Raw Fur Tanners/Dressers
12	Wild Rice Dealers
171	Bear Guides
1146	Minnow Dealers
77	Shooting Preserve Operators
2619	TOTAL COMMERCIAL LICENSES

The Special Investigations Unit assisted many federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies by providing specialized equipment and technical expertise to their criminal investigations.

ADMINISTRATION

The Special Investigations Unit administered the Division's forensic research and testing program. During the past year, 53 samples associated with securing of evidence in criminal cases were transferred from the Unit to University of Minnesota pathobiologists and USFWS laboratories for forensic analysis. Subsequent expert testimony was also provided.

The Unit maintains the Divisional statewide intelligence section. Information is collected and computerized in a central repository and disseminated to field level Conservation Officers and other law enforcement agencies when appropriate.

The Special Investigations Unit (SIU) planned and facilitated a two-day training exercise for Special Investigators of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. During this time, Iowa Conservation Officers received hands-on training detailing the technical aspects of still camera and video surveillance photography. Officers were certified to incorporate time lapse, infrared, trip devices, and weight bearing activation units into video recording systems.

The Special Investigations Unit Policy and Procedure Manual was reviewed and rewritten to reflect major changes in operational procedures. In addition, the Unit's Operation Manual was redesigned to incorporate new technology in video surveillance, evidence collection and search warrant applications.

The Unit has continued to incorporate commercial license reporting into a valuable data base system. This process provides an effective tracking mechanism to ensure year end reporting has been completed and has resulted in a valuable intelligence gathering tool.

The Special Investigations Unit Clerical Support continues to coordinate the Divisional statewide pager system. Cost analysis, purchases, software, and trouble shooting are responsibilities accepted by the Unit.

The Unit provided background intelligence and futuristic trends of captive reared big game farming. Information relating to the illegal commercialization of protected big game animals, genetic pollution and disease potential has been provided to Department personnel. The SIU has drafted suggestions for proposed legislative change in game farm statutes.

Throughout the year, the SIU provided administrative and interview assistance to field level Conservation Officers on countless occasions.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Division of Enforcement
Special Investigations Unit

FINANCIAL REPORT - FISCAL YEAR 2000

LINE	DESCRIPTION	ALLOCATION	EXPENDITURE
1	Salaries * Full-time	\$258,973	\$258,973
2	Overtime Pay	25,603	25,603
	Subtotal	\$284,576	\$284,576
3	Rents and Leases	1,400	979
4	Repairs, Alterations	4,550	991
5	Printing	1,850	1,218
6	Professional & Technical	17,000	15,408
7	Computer & System Services	919	919
8	Purchased Services (Claims)	9,520	16,329
9	Communications	6,510	5,245
10	Travel	2,310	211
12	Employment Development	840	992
	Subtotal	\$44,899	\$42,292
11	Supplies and Materials	3,990	1,504
13	Equipment	10,150	12,705
	Subtotal	\$14,140	\$14,209
	TOTAL	\$343,615	\$341,077

<u>LINE</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>EXPENDITURE</u>
1	(Two N.R. Spec III, one N.R. Spec IV) (Unclassified and temporary assignments)	\$258,973
2	Overtime Pay	25,603
3	Rents and Leases (Maintenance contracts, parking cards for state vehicles, contracts for equipment)	979
4	Repairs (Equipment)	991
5	Printing	1,218
6	Professional and Technical Services (Laboratory costs and scientific research for the testing and verification of Divisional evidence)	15,408
7	Computer and System Services	919
8	Purchased Services and Claims, fines, etc. (Seminars, film processing, aircraft, meeting rooms and Funds dedicated for the purchase of evidence associated costs of commercial resource investigations)	16,329
9	Communications (Telephone charges, cell phones, pager rental, etc.)	5,245
10	Travel, In and Out State (Expenses incurred for intelligence sharing, training, etc.)	211
11	Supplies and Materials (Gasoline, audio/video tapes, batteries, office supplies, etc.)	1,504
12	Employment Development	992
13	Equipment	12,705
	TOTAL	\$341,077

ANTICIPATED FISCAL YEAR 2001 EXPENDITURES

<u>LINE</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>ALLOCATION</u>
1	Salaries Full-time	274,348
2	Overtime Pay	24,403
3	Rents and Leases	2,000
4	Repairs, Alterations	6,500
5	Printing	500
6	Professional and Technical Services	15,000
7	Computer and System Services	525
8	Purchased Services (Claims, fines, etc.)	11,045
9	Communications	9,300
10	Travel In-State	3,300
11	Supplies and Materials	15,300
12	Employee Development	2,100
13	Equipment	5,600
	TOTAL	\$369,921

