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Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Division of Enforcement

Special Investigations Unit

Prepared by MN DNR Enforcement SIU January 1998

1989 Minn. Laws Chap. 335 Art. 1 Sec. 21 Subd. 8



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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 ression of the seventy-sixth Minnesota Legislature. Pursuant to this requirement the following port is submitted to the House Appropriations Committee and the Senate Finance Committee.

Line	Description	Expenditure
1	Salaries, full time classified with benefits (Two NR Spec III, on NR Spec IV) Unclassified and temporary assignments	\$230,029
2	Overtime Pay (# overtime hours for the entire unit)	19,716
3	Rents and Leases (Lease of pagers for communication purposes, maintenance contracts for equipment)	1,117
4	Repairs (Equipment repair costs)	539
5	Printing (Printing costs for informational handouts for commercial licensees)	209
6	Professional and Technical Services (Laboratory costs and scientific research for the testing and verification of evidence for court purposes of all Division of Enforcement wildlife evidence)	15,845
7	Purchased Services and Claims, fines, etc. (Seminars, film processing, aircraft, meeting rooms and Funds dedicated for the purchase of evidence and associated costs of investigations directed at commercialized resource crime)	16,605
8	Communications (Telephone charges, long distance tolls, etc.)	5,452
9	Travel (Expenses incurred for intelligence sharing, training etc.)	3,448
10	Supplies and Materials (Gasoline, audio/video tapes, batteries, office supplies, etc.	17,529
11	Employee Development	100
12	Fleet Management (Vehicle operational costs paid to DNR fleet management for insurance, maintenance and replacement of vehicles)	16,547
13	Equipment	13,500
	TOTAL	\$340,636

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# **ANTICIPATED FISCAL YEAR 1998 EXPENDITURES**

LINE	DESCRIPTION	ALLOCATION
1	Salaries Full-time Part-time	\$221,815 2,000
2	Overtime Pay	23,444
3	Rents and Leases	2,000
4	Repairs , Alterations	6,500
5	Printing	500
6	Professional and Technical Services	15,000
	Purchased Services (Claims, fines, etc.)	30,600
8	Communications	9,300
9	Travel In-State	3,300
10	Supples and Materials	10,700
11	Employee Development	1,200
12	Fleet Management	35,000
13	Equipment	14,500
	TOTAL	\$375,859

## Summary

fiscal year 1997, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Enforcement, opecial Investigations Unit (SIU) accounted for the disbursement of approximately 3% of the Division's budgetary allotment. The Special Investigations Unit conducted activities utilizing three full time Special Investigators and ten Conservation Officers certified to conduct part time overt and covert wildlife investigations. A summary of fiscal year 1997 Special Investigations Unit operations include:

### SPECIALIZED TRAINING

- The Special Investigations Unit developed and implemented a state wide Liaison program whereby specially trained Conservation Officers/part- time special investigators were assigned district responsibilities. Primary functions of this program are to provide SIU support at the district level and offer technical assistance to field level officers concerning commercial wildlife crimes
- The Special Investigations Unit purchased a state of the art intelligence gathering software
  program designed to process and analyze confidential information relating to the illegal
  commercialization of wildlife. Specialized training was provided to all SIU associated staff
  so that familiarity with the program could be attained and intelligence submitted through the
  Liaison function of part time investigators. To date, more than 200 entries have been
  inputted, identifying individuals (suspected in violating state and federal wildlife laws)
- The SIU purchased additional electronic surveillance equipment and facilitated the training for two full time investigators. The outcomes of this valuable training were implemented in several surveillance operations requested by field level Conservation Officers
- Special Investigators attended the Midwest Natural Resources Covert Investigator's Seminar. This program provided valuable insight and training to attendees covering undercover identities, specialized equipment, and national trends associated with the illegal commercialization of wildlife. The training session also affords SIU Team Leaders the opportunities to plan and develop cost saving cooperative wildlife investigations
- Part-time investigators attended the International Association of Marine Investigator's (IAMI) seminar and received updated training sufficient to conduct watercraft/snowmobile theft investigations. Officers have subsequently provided training to interested Conservation Officers and county law enforcement officials
- A three day training session was conducted for part-time special investigators and designed to increased proficiency in conducting covert/overt operations, report writing, and the utilization of newly acquired specialized equipment

### **ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES**

Enforcement activities conducted by the Special Investigations Unit during fiscal year 1997 included but were not limited to the following:

- The prosecutorial phase of a two-year bear guiding/hunting investigation occurring in northern Minnesota and Indiana has been completed. As previously documented, this multi-jurisdictional investigation documented an on going conspiracy designed to illegally take, transport, and possess black bear and whitetail deer in violation of Minnesota/Indiana and federal law. This highly publicized covert investigation has resulted in the successful prosecutions of 23 defendants and includes total fines and penalties in excess of \$30,000, jail time of 23 months and approximately 23 years of probation. The two year cooperative investigation resulted in a 100% conviction rate of all individuals formally charged
- The successful prosecution of a MN bear/fishing guide and his associate has been completed. This covert operation documented the illegal bear guiding activities of an unlicensed operator and further substantiated many violations associated with his related fish guiding service. Fines and penalties exceeded \$800 and resulted in the revocation of licenses for an extended period of time.
- A cooperative overt investigation involving a Minnesota resident fraudulently purchasing Montana resident big game licenses. This documented ongoing conspiracy relates to the taking, possession, and transportation of whitetail deer, mule deer, elk, pronghorn, and rocky mountain goat in violation of state and federal law. A MN search warrant was served and resulted in the seizure of many illegal mounts and hides. To date, Montana has successfully prosecuted several co-conspirators with fines and penalties exceeding \$25,000. The Minnesota resident currently awaits prosecution
- The conclusion to a two year illegal netting /sale of walleye covert investigation resulting in charges filed against a major distributor of illegally taken Minnesota walleye. During the course of this investigation, the Special Investigations Unit was able to purchase hundreds of pounds of illegally netted walleye and identify several co-conspirators to the operation. Preliminary prosecutorial efforts indicate a willingness of the primary defendant to enter a guilty plea. Additional charges await co-defendants
- A cooperative overt investigation involving the illegal importation of captive reared big
  game animals from Michigan into Minnesota. Special Investigators from MN DNR and MI
  DNR conducted several interviews, analyzed records, and documented the importation of
  captive reared Cervidae without first obtaining disease free status from state Board of
  Animal Health officials. (Several unrelated out breaks of tuberculosis have been
  documented in Midwest states and pose severe risks to wild deer and elk populations.)
  Violations committed by the Michigan operator serve to increase the potential for spread of
  this devastating disease. The investigation is proceeding with felony charges pending

Twenty one (21) license fraud investigations were conducted for out state natural resource law enforcement agencies

- Twenty nine (29) additional investigations involving unlawful natural resource commercialization have been conducted and/or initiated and include multiple suspects/defendants. The Special Investigations Unit had a 100% conviction rate for cases which were prosecuted.
- Part-time Special Investigators conducted four stolen snowmobile/watercraft investigations and have been assisting local law enforcement agencies with a large scale outboard motor theft investigation
- The SIU assisted many federal, state, and county law enforcement agencies in cooperative criminal investigations
- Receipt, review, maintenance, and associated enforcement of commercial licenses and reporting requirements. These included:
  - 1111 Game Farm Operators
  - 85 Raw Fur Dealers
  - 8 Raw Fur Tanners/Dressers
  - 118 Wild Rice Dealers
  - 76 Shooting Preserves
  - 98 Bear Guides
  - 349 Minnow Dealers

## 1,845 TOTAL COMMERCIAL LICENSES

## **ADMINISTRATION**

- Developed and implemented an Initial Complaint Reporting (ICR) system utilized in conjunction with the 1837 Treaty Response Plan. This computerized program for intelligence gathering was designed for Conservation Officers to identify and track potentially dangerous individuals and/or organizations associated with an anti-Treaty/Indian sentiment. Information was subsequently disseminated to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and local law enforcement agencies. To date, this has been the only multifaceted approach to intelligence gathering utilized.
- Divisional objectives included a two year project designed to increase the compliance rate of game farm operators with reporting and licensing requirements. The Special Investigations Unit drafted a comprehensive document (A Guide to Game Farm Inspections) containing the major components in conducting effective inspections. It includes a synopsis of rules and regulations, requirements of the operators, and a list of "red flag" items which should alert the inspecting officers of possible illegal transactions. The "guide" was presented at district meetings by SIU Liaison officers and protocols for inspections were established

- The Special Investigations Unit administered the Division's forensic research and testing program. During the past year, 87samples, associated with the securing of evidence in criminal cases, were custodied from the Special Investigations Unit to University of Minnesota pathobiologists and USFWS laboratories for forensic analysis
- Maintained the Division of Enforcement's statewide intelligence section and disseminated information when appropriate
- Provided specialized equipment, training, surveillance, and interview assistance to uniformed Conservation Officers upon request

#### Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Division of Enforcement Special Investigations Unit

## **FINANCIAL REPORT - FISCAL YEAR 1997**

LINE	DESCRIPTION	ALLOCATION	EXPENDITURE
1	Salaries	<ul> <li>A state of the sta</li></ul>	
i F	* Full-time	228,183	228,183
	* Part-time	2,091	1,846
2	Overtime	19,716	19,716
	Sub-total	249,990	249,745
3	Rents & Leases	900	1,117
4	Repairs, Alterations	2,700	539
5	Printing	450	209
6	Professional & Technical	15,000	15,845
	Purchased Services (Claims)	30,150	16,605
<b>.</b>	Communications	7,020	5,452
9	Travel	2,250	3,448
11	Employee Development	0	100
	Sub-total	58,470	43,315
10	Supplies and Materials	9,300	17,529
12	Fleet Management	22,500	16,547
13	Equipment	9,864	13,500
	Sub-total	41,664	47,576

#### TOTAL

\$350,124

\$340,636