

## Alabama Marine Police 2009 COPS Hiring Recovery Grant Narrative

The Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources, Marine Police Division, has been deeply involved in community policing since the early 1970s. As an organization, we have embraced community policing principles from the command level down to the patrol officers at the field level. It is our desire to build on this solid foundation by participating in the COPS Hiring and Recovery Grant and enhancing and improving our community policing principles.

Our department is headed by the Commissioner of Conservation & Natural Resources, a cabinet-level position appointed by the Governor of Alabama. Assisting the Commissioner is the Conservation Advisory Board made up of 10 citizens, also appointed by the Governor. The Conservation Advisory Board receives input from the community and holds debate and discussion at three public hearings held annually throughout the state. This Board proposes new laws and regulations, reviews Departmental actions and listens to the public's input. The Board also endorses any proposed legislation that goes to the Alabama Legislature. The Alabama Marine Police Division also maintains a website that is available for the community to access information on laws, regulations, news releases, education courses, Alabama Marine Police Division facilities, and services provided to the public. There are also interactive surveys and contact points for citizens to leave feedback and provide input on departmental projects and activities.

The Alabama Marine Police Division have established 4 different district offices strategically located throughout Alabama along with a headquarters and maintenance facility in the state capitol of Montgomery. These offices are open to the public and are staffed with enforcement officers who are available to answer questions and receive input from the local communities. Printed materials can be obtained there and requests for service or complaints submitted can be directly to local commanders. Churches and faith-based organizations, civic clubs, public and private schools, or other groups can make arrangements for visits or public speaking engagements from local officers. Our primary responsibilities include enforcing all state laws with primary jurisdiction over all public waterways. We regulate and license all recreational boating, enforce conservation and wildlife regulations, conduct Homeland Security patrols around our nuclear power plants and port facilities, conduct search and rescue missions,

natural disaster relief, narcotics interdiction in the Gulf of Mexico, and assist every state, local, and Federal law enforcement agency that we can.

Our officers are assigned to a post within a specific county where they must live, work, and raise their families. We do not transfer officers unless they accept a promotional opportunity or specifically request one. We strive to maintain long-term relationships, stability, and continuity of service for our communities. We strongly encourage our officers to become involved in every aspect of their communities and reach out to them. Besides enforcement visibility and interaction functions, our officers teach thousands of hours of water safety, hunter safety, and stewardship of our natural resources throughout the public school system each year. Public support for our presence and our mission is incredibly strong. State legislators, District Attorneys, Judges, County Commissioners, Federal, State, and local law enforcement officials, as well as varied groups of property owners are vocal and adamant whenever a vacancy occurs in their areas. Most of our posts are in rural, unincorporated areas and we are often the only law enforcement presence regularly seen by the community. Local law enforcement is almost universally understaffed and under-funded and they rely on our assistance, presence, and services. Whether on inland waters, coastal waters, or in the field, we have specialized equipment, unique knowledge and training, and expansive authority to handle emergency situations like natural disasters or search and rescue situations that local law enforcement finds difficult to handle on its own. The community support generated from such broad activities is one of the cornerstones of our law enforcement program. The hiring of officers to be assigned to vacant posts will enhance this agenda on a state-wide basis and will also positively effect specific communities and their quality of life.

Additional officers in empty posts will allow officers to prioritize their calls in their own community without having to expand out to cover other counties. Our officers are remarkably autonomous and despecialized which allows them to form partnerships within their respective communities and then take a team approach to collaborative problem solving. Closer contact with specific communities will allow officers to use proactive and systematic examination of identified problems by using the Scanning-Analysis-Response-Assessment paradigm. Stakeholders are more readily identified and involved with choosing patrol tactics, special enforcement actions, and addressing the problems at their root through public education.

Since the Alabama Marine Police Division receive no general fund monies from state government, we are a department that depends on community partnerships and support from the public through a “user-paid” system of licensing fees. Our department fosters community partnerships with other governmental agencies using memorandums of understanding and cooperative efforts with the Alabama Dept. of Education along with various school boards, Alabama Emergency Management Agency, Alabama Dept. of Homeland Security, Alabama Dept. of Public Health, Alabama Dept. of Agriculture, Alabama Dept. of Environmental Management, US Coast Guard, US Dept. of Homeland Security, and the Environmental Protection Agency. We have strong partnerships with numerous community watch programs, property owners associations, boat owners associations, and environmental and conservation clubs and organizations. We regularly seek out the assistance and input from private businesses like Wal-Mart, Bass Pro Shops, Alabama Power Co., and Russell Lands Co. Our partnerships also include non-profit groups and service providers like the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America, US Power Squadrons, etc. Our media efforts are centered on our own Education & Information Section which maintains our website, publishes a nationally-recognized magazine, newsletters, and generates multi-media Public Service Announcements for state-wide distribution. However, our officers themselves appear in hundreds of television and radio interviews and public service announcements. They write articles for newspapers and magazines, and appear at outdoors shows, boat shows, and host our own state-wide outdoors expo.

Our operations plan for expanding and enhancing our community policing program will focus on the following aspects:

1. Leadership – The Alabama Marine Police Division will import community policing training specifically for command staff and supervisors. Community policing will be added as a graded category on annual performance evaluations.
2. Labor relations – There is no union for conservation officers in Alabama, however there is a professional association, the Alabama Conservation Enforcement Officers Association (ACEAO). The Director will meet biannually with representatives from ACEAO to make sure officers concerns are being addressed.
3. Strategic Planning – Community policing principles are already written in to the mission statement of the Alabama Marine Police Division. A committee of officers and

supervisors will be formed to ensure that community policing principles are incorporated into the policy and procedure manual. The Division's SMART PLAN submitted to the governor's office and the Dept. of Finance each year will also reflect community policing principles.

4. Organizational evaluations – The Alabama Marine Police Division will incorporate citizen satisfaction surveys on its website, [www.outdooralabama.com](http://www.outdooralabama.com), and map out a plan to systematically use this feedback into its operations planning. If funds are available, a customer survey similar to the one commissioned from the Luckey Corporation will be reinstated.
5. Transparency – As a Division, we will begin publishing our relevant crime statistics on our website and releasing them to the media at various times throughout the year. We will provide a link for our strategic SMART PLAN from our website as well. We already make them available to our Advisory Board and we will encourage them to use them at their annual public hearings. The Alabama Marine Police Division will also partner with the other law enforcement divisions within our Department to hold 4 “open house” meetings with the public across the state to allow the public to come in and express their views and concerns.
6. Personnel – We already demand %5 of an officers time be spent in community policing activities. To expand on this, we will incorporate an 8 hour block of community policing training into in-service training. We will also rewrite the yearly evaluation category for officers to make sure they are graded on a wider variety of community policing activities. We will use a monthly tracking form to measure their performance and activities. We will republish our recruiting pamphlet to incorporate community policing principles into our hiring and recruitment of new officers. We will also revamp our Recruit School to incorporate a block on instruction on community policing principles and make it a distinct measurable category monitored in our Field Training Officer Program.
7. Information Systems and Technology – The Division is already moving towards use of mobile data terminals to improve the use of information and data tracking. We will work towards providing all officers with a laptop computer with broadband internet access. We will institute the Conservation Officer Reporting System (CORS), a web-based information system, to file all paperwork to headquarters and improve efficiency. We

will also incorporate the E-Ticket electronic filing system for citations as it becomes available for Alabama. We will continue to improve the ability of the public to use online services for renewing registrations and licenses. We will also make accident forms and other applications and paperwork available on our website.