

PROJECT: Improving Justice Information Sharing for  
Conservation Officers in Rural Alabama Communities

The Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (ADCNR) is a state agency that has 5 separate law enforcement divisions under its aegis. Each of these law enforcement divisions have state-wide police authority and arrest powers granted by state law. Our jurisdiction includes both public and private areas throughout rural portions of the state and encompasses over 22.9 million acres of woodlands and 1.1 million acres of waterways. All of our law enforcement divisions assist agencies and communities in rural areas and we are not currently eligible for the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program. For the purposes of this grant, we have officers in 39 counties that are not included in Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA), with officers in an additional 8 counties included in MSAs but their populations are less than 50,000. Overall, we have officers enforcing laws in 47 counties that qualify as rural areas out of a total of 67 counties in the State of Alabama.

Our Department has a long and storied history of cooperation between agencies as we are highly dependent on the local jurisdictions we work amongst for radio dispatching, warrant and license/registration checks, and back-up in dangerous encounters. Consequently, we have always made our services available to Alabama agencies as they are usually as spread out and understaffed as we are. Our officers participate in the Gulf Coast High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Blue Lighting Task Force for narcotics interdiction, the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), the US Attorneys Office Law Enforcement Coordinating Committees (LECC) to share training resources, the Alabama Fusion Center, various regional Emergency Management Agencies Emergency Operations Centers, the multi-agency Unified State Police Dive Team, and various Judicial District Drug Task Forces throughout our rural counties. Our officers routinely participate in multi-agency check points when requested by

local sheriffs' offices, police departments, or the Alabama State Troopers. We assist local municipalities, counties, and state law enforcement agencies with specialized equipment such as 4 wheel drive patrol vehicles, all terrain vehicles, and boats of all types. Besides specialized equipment, we provide training to any agency that asks for assistance from firearms to defensive tactics to man-tracking and vehicle operations. In addition to search and rescue, we excel at natural disaster response and have quickly placed law enforcement teams in areas devastated by floods, tornados, and hurricanes. Although our commitment level is high, our officers have paid a terrible price in the last several years: we had an officer killed while serving a narcotics search warrant with a rural sheriff's office, we had an officer killed during a search and rescue mission in a rural county, and one of our officers killed a suspect while protecting a deputy who came under fire. Our officers have interceded and stopped a court house shooting in a rural county's district court and in 2009 one of our officers traded gunfire with a mass murderer who went on a shooting spree in rural southern Alabama in which 10 people were killed.

Our responsibilities include enforcing all state laws with primary jurisdiction over natural resources, public waterways, state parks, and state-owned land. Criminal intelligence is routinely developed, analyzed, and passed on to other law enforcement agencies and to our new Alabama Fusion Center. Our primary patrol areas are generally remote, rural areas of the state and in many cases we are the only law enforcement agency that these rural communities interact with on a regular basis. Due to our high level of visibility and the great reputation of trust we have developed within these communities, citizens routinely furnish us with tips or other intelligence that they would be reluctant to provide for their local constabulary. We are looking for ways to improve sharing intelligence and information not only among our 231 sworn officers but with the law enforcement agencies they work with on a day to day basis. Alabama has 28

economically depressed areas declared by the Governor's office that we overlap and provide assistance to and our desire is to augment and improve the manpower these communities need and deserve but are sadly unable to provide.

Our proposed activity is covered under Category IV – Rural Justice Information Sharing. Our intention is to use these grant funds to purchase 200 Panasonic Toughbook Model CF-19K6RAXCM laptop computers and issue them to our officers and investigators in the field. This is a sizeable expenditure which is beyond the means of this department due to budget shortfalls and executive mandates. Due to these reductions and the legal requirement to budget all asset acquisitions at least 2 years in advance, we will need assistance to pay for high speed internet connectivity via wireless “air cards” for the first 24 months of the grant period. After the economy stabilizes and our funding sources recover, we should be able to assume the expense of wireless internet service into our routine budgets.

ADCNR's law enforcement officers will use their laptop computers to access restricted data bases such as: 1. the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) via the VOYAGER mobile dispatching system; 2. the Alabama Criminal Justice Information Center (ACJIC) ALACOP website; 3. the Alabama Dept. of Homeland Security's central clearinghouse website Virtual Alabama; 4. the Alabama Fusion Center; 5. Alabama Coastal Monitoring system allowing real-time camera feeds from critical infrastructure along Alabama's 65 miles of Gulf Coast 6. the Law Enforcement Tactical System (LETS) to alleviate the load on local agencies we use for license/registration checks and warrant/wanted persons checks; 7. National Inmate Database; 8. National Sex Offenders Registry; 9. ALISON on-line Code of Alabama and Administrative Code for laws and regulations; 10. NOAA National Weather Service for weather, tide level, water level information; 11. our ADCNR LexisNexis® account for legal opinions and court

research; 12. National Criminal Intelligence Resource Center website; 13. and the Dept. of Justice Regional Information Sharing System (RISS) and Regional Organized Crime Information Center (ROCIC).

Each of the entries and inquiries to these data bases will be tracked each month per officer and incorporated into prevention-oriented strategies designed to focus on community harm assessments, targeting repeat or violent offenders, identifying and dismantling organized criminal groups, and enforcing impaired driver laws in targeted areas. The number of inquiries and entries will be calculated each month by every officer on a specific form generated for this purpose. The form will be submitted to the District Supervisor and tabulated at the District level and then forwarded to each Division's headquarters in Montgomery by the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the following month. The Divisions will then calculate their totals for the month and submit them to the Grant Compliance Officer, appointed by the Commissioner, who will then compile and submit the completed figures to the Office of Justice Programs each quarter.

Roughly one-fourth of our officers are using an issued digital, wearable video camera for evidentiary purposes. The laptop computers will be used for digital file management of videos recorded during enforcement activities. The total number of video files saved and processed, the number of video files used for evidence in court, and the number of video files used in response to citizen complaints will be calculated each month by every officer on a specific form generated for this purpose. The form will be submitted to the District Supervisor and tabulated at the District level and then forwarded to each Division's headquarters by the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the following month. The Divisions will then calculate their totals for the month and submit them to the Grant Compliance Officer, who will then compile and submit the completed figures to the OJP each quarter.

ADCNR's law enforcement officers will also use their laptop computers to complete weekly and monthly activity reports which are currently completed by hand and mailed. We have already initiated an information technology program to take advantage of internal improvements in data collection and sharing. The Conservation Enforcement Officer Reporting System will go online in FY2010 and allow for the electronic submission and compilation of data generated in the field. A conservative estimate is this will save 2 hours a week per officer or approximately 24,000 man-hours per year or the equivalent of hiring 12 officers. Officers will also incorporate Alabama's E-Ticket system as it becomes available for non-traffic offenses. This system, which is also expected to come on-line in FY2010, will allow officers to quickly and efficiently issue citations and file cases with the District Court magistrates, again saving countless man-hours and vehicle mileage. The number of entries into the CORS and E-Ticket systems will be tabulated each month per officer on a specific form generated for this purpose. The form will be submitted to the District Supervisor and tabulated at the District level and then forwarded to each Division's headquarters by the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the following month. The Divisions will then calculate their totals for the month and submit them to the Grant Compliance Officer, who will then compile and submit the completed figures to the OJP each quarter. ADCNR will also explore the possibility of having the system administrators for CORS and E-Ticket automatically generate the number of officers' work products handled by these programs and submit them directly to the Grant Compliance Officer each month.

Information collection will become part of the organizational culture of our Department, led by the Division Directors and supervisors encouraging their line officers and investigators to regularly collect and pass on criminal intelligence. The Department's SMART PLAN submitted to the Governor and the Dept. of Finance each year will also be reworked to reflect ILP

principles. The SMART PLAN will be linked to our website and made available to the public and our stake-holders and partners. The Directors and supervisors will continue to encourage a multi-agency approach to combating crime in rural areas of Alabama and continue our vigorous participation in multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional operations. The number of hours assisting other local and state law enforcement agencies will be tabulated per officer each month and submitted quarterly to the OJP. The number of intelligence leads generated by ADCNR officers and passed on to other local, state, and Federal law enforcement agencies will also be tracked and tabulated per officer each month and submitted quarterly to the OJP. The hourly assist/leads generated form will be submitted to the District Supervisor and tabulated at the District level and then forwarded to each Division's headquarters by the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the following month. The Divisions will then calculate their totals for the month and submit them to a Grant Compliance Officer, who will then compile and submit the completed figures to the OJP each quarter.

The Department will also attempt to formalize partnerships formed with other agencies and keep written Memorandums of Understanding and Memorandums of Cooperation on file. The number of MOU/MOCs will be tabulated by each Division Director and submitted to the Grant Compliance Officer. The percentage of increase compared to FY2009 will be submitted each quarter to the OJP. In the interest of transparency, we will also begin publishing the number of assists to law enforcement in rural areas of Alabama on our website, [www.outdooralabama.com](http://www.outdooralabama.com). We will make them available to our Conservation Advisory Board, which is made up of 10 citizens appointed by the Governor. The Board receives input from citizens and holds debate and discussion at three public hearings held annually throughout the state. The 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. We will make all of our Intelligence-Led Policing Principles available to the Advisory Board as well as the data and statistics generated by our information sharing partnerships.

Our performance measures - There will be 0 jobs reinstated or prevented from being eliminated by the use of this Recovery Act funding from our agency. We are already understaffed, it is hoped that the improved efficiency that results from the Intelligence-Led Policing strategies implemented and the improved data collection and dissemination will allow our officers to have more time for patrol activities. We estimate this will augment our manpower by an estimated 12 officers' man-hours added each year.

There will be 0 jobs created by the use of this Recovery Act funding within ADCNR. The purchase of 200 laptop computers and 24 months of high speed internet access for 200 wireless modems will provide jobs for Panasonic Corporation of North America which is headquartered in Secaucus, New Jersey, particularly in their sales and customer service departments. Currently the high speed internet contractor for Alabama is AT&T which should also see jobs provided in the fields of sales, customer support, and infrastructure development.

The percent of essential services maintained without disruption remains to be determined. As of this date, ADCNR has not had to cut any law enforcement positions and our 3 year projections show we should not have to eliminate any law enforcement positions in the near future. We do not have the capability to bring our staffing levels up to their authorized strength, however, and may not be able to maintain officer levels due to normal attrition. Where our percentage of essential services maintained without disruption will be calculated is in the number of hours each officer can devote to patrol activities or investigations. Calculated hours with the improved efficiency of information and data sharing will be compared to the hours spent on

enforcement activities before the implementation of these grant funded activities. This data will be determined from weekly and monthly activity reports submitted at the District level and then turned in to each Division at the end of the month. Each Division Director will then submit these figures to the Grant Compliance Officer monthly, who will submit them to the OJP each quarter.

The performance measurements for Category IV specifically will be tracked by each individual officer and then submitted to the District Supervisor, the Montgomery HQ, the Grant Compliance Officer, and then the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The number of commonly-accessible databases will be established, the number of new database inquiries will be counted, and the number of database submissions will be counted and submitted as discussed above. The number of evidentiary video files processed will also be reported in the prescribed manner.

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources would like to thank the Bureau of Justice Assistance for the chance to apply for this grant to assist rural law enforcement. We were reluctant at first to ask for such a large appropriation but saw this as an opportunity to move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and correct a tremendous gap in our communications and day-to-day operations. Issuing rolls of stamps and carbon paper is a reality for us today and deeply hurts our ability to serve the people of our great state. ADCNR is deeply interconnected with over 400 state, county, and local law enforcement agencies that we serve alongside daily and the use of these computers and communications services will effect not only our 231 sworn officers but will benefit countless rural, impoverished communities and the law enforcement agencies that protect them.