

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA CLASS SPECIFICATION

Class Title: Conservation Officer

Class Code: 90312

Pay Grade: GI

A. Purpose:

Manages wildlife, fisheries, water, and land resources; implements department programs; and enforces laws in an assigned district to conserve and protect fish and wildlife, represent the department to the public, and provide recreational opportunities and public safety.

B. Distinguishing Feature:

Conservation Officers manage wildlife, fisheries, water, and land resources; enforce wildlife, criminal, and water laws; and implement department programs in an assigned district.

District Conservation Officer Supervisors supervise Conservation Officers assigned to a geographical district.

Regional Conservation Officer Supervisors supervise District Conservation Officer Supervisors assigned to a geographical region and Conservation Officer Specialists within specified programs.

C. Functions:

(These are examples only; any one position may not include all of the listed examples nor do the listed examples include all functions which may be found in positions of this class.)

1. Manages wildlife resources to conserve and perpetuate species, provide recreational resources for the public, and control depredation.
 - a. Estimates wildlife population levels and trends by conducting surveys.
 - b. Evaluates species and habitat availability, hunter numbers, and landowner tolerance to determine harvest quotas.
 - c. Coordinates with other department personnel, other government agencies, and tribal executives and game managers to develop wildlife management plans.
 - d. Formulates annual population and harvest goals for big game.
 - e. Designs hunting unit boundaries to achieve desired harvest.
 - f. Recommends harvest limits and season lengths in a region and statewide.
 - g. Develops and implements plans to alleviate wildlife depredation and resolve other human-wildlife conflicts.
 - h. Investigates wildlife deaths.
 - i. Performs animal necropsies.
 - ii. Prepares tissue samples for laboratory analyses.
2. Manages fisheries resources to conserve, perpetuate, and introduce species; maintain and develop habitat; and enhance recreational opportunities.
 - a. Evaluates area fisheries' needs and anglers' requests and recommends stocking and habitat development.
 - b. Designs and implements habitat development projects.
 - c. Recommends harvest numbers and size limits, season designs, and other specific harvest regulations for fisheries populations.
 - d. Operates and maintains fish-rearing ponds and traps and transfers fish.
 - e. Monitors commercial fishing to protect game fish, removed, and authorize contract payment to fisherman.

- f. Develops and enhances public fishing opportunities on private waters by recruiting landowners into department programs.
 - g. Investigates fish losses to determine cause and evaluates potential impacts on fish populations.
 - h. Recommends action on applications for fishing tournaments and monitors subsequent activities.
3. Develops long- and short-term plans to improve wildlife habitat and recreational opportunity on department-owned and leased lands and develops and coordinates wildlife habitat programs on privately owned lands.
 - a. Evaluates areas for wildlife production and habitat development potential.
 - b. Recommends habitat management options on areas to maximize wildlife habitat quality, and assists to implement five-year management plans.
 - c. Introduces and coordinates department programs to landowners and negotiates, monitors, and authorizes payment of contracts.
 - d. Evaluates land for acquisition and recommends purchase.
 - e. Monitors unauthorized use of department-owned and leased lands and develops corrective actions.
 - g. Provides recommendations to land management crews on wildlife habitat and fishing access projects.
 4. Enforces laws and regulations to ensure compliance, wise and equitable use of the state's wildlife and fisheries resources, and promote public safety.
 - a. Plans and conducts enforcement and surveillance activities and apprehends, arrests, and cites violators.
 - b. Conducts investigations and resolves cases by collecting evidence, interviewing witnesses, interrogating suspects, preparing forms and reports, and testifying in court.
 - c. Prepares affidavits; obtains and serves search warrants and subpoenas; seizes, collects, and preserves evidence.
 - d. Checks licenses and safety equipment of hunters, anglers, boaters, and trappers; and monitors related businesses for compliance with laws and regulations.
 - e. Conducts inspections of actual and proposed private shooting preserve operations (PSP) and monitors bird releases, conducts regularly scheduled compliance checks, and initiates formal investigations of fraud and criminal misconduct involving PSP's.
 - f. Conducts regularly scheduled inspections of taxidermists, public storage facilities, wildlife processing facilities, bait dealers, and other occupational license holders licensed by the department.
 - g. Plans and assists in search and rescue operations.
 - h. Teaches law enforcement tactical applications, firearms, and boating law enforcement training to co-workers and other law enforcement personnel.
 - i. Certifies and records their competence.
 - ii. Testifies in court as an expert witness to appropriate levels of force.
 - iii. Maintains law enforcement certification as required by law.
 - g. Coordinates and teaches hunter safety programs and recruits and trains volunteer instructors.
 - h. Coordinates with other law enforcement agencies to enforce laws across jurisdictional boundaries.
 - i. Recommends changes to laws, regulations, and procedures.
 - j. Enforces criminal laws.
 - k. Monitor federal aid equipment associated with range activities.

5. Acts as a liaison between the department and the public to resolve conflicts and enhance and maintain a positive public image.
 - a. Meets with members of the community in a variety of situations to relay information about the department; collect public opinion, input, and requests; and establish a network of communication.
 - b. Responds to public complaints, inquiries, and statements.
 - c. Presents department information to the public via the media by writing news articles and participating in radio and television shows, sport shows, and fairs.
 - d. Prepares and presents informational programs for civic organizations, sportsmen's groups, and schools.
 - e. Facilitates and organizes educational programs in the schools and outdoor events e.g. Step Outside events.
 - f. Coordinates and recommends permits for special events or requests involving department-controlled recreational facilities or areas.
 - g. Schedules, tracks, and prioritizes daily contact with land owners in order to implement effective outreach and communication between the department and landowners.

6. Performs other work as assigned.

D. Reporting Relationships:

Reports to a District Conservation Officer Supervisor or a Regional Conservation Officer Supervisor; does not supervise.

E. Challenges and Problems:

Challenged to represent the department to the public. This is challenging because incumbents work with a public of broad social and economic variety and must find solutions to situations which involve groups with diverse interests and individuals who have conflicting points of view about wildlife and fisheries management. Also challenged to evaluate law enforcement confrontational situations and determine the appropriate course of action and level of force response. This is difficult because decisions must be made instantly and each situation is potentially volatile.

Problems encountered include allocating time to accomplish required tasks adequately and continually reprioritizing to factor in unexpected incidents; meeting customer service demands during off-duty hours; and maintaining proficiency in defensive tactics and firearms use.

F. Decision-making Authority:

Determines components of land, fisheries, and wildlife management plans; prioritizes and schedules work; resolves wildlife depredation problems and other human-wildlife conflicts; formulates license numbers and types for big game and designates hunting unit boundaries; determines probable cause for search warrants and arrests; determines solutions to complaints; determines enforcement response in discretionary situations; develops training and educational courses; recommends state law and department regulation changes, bag limits, and season lengths; recommends improvements in survey methods; recommends expenditure of funds for special projects, equipment purchases, and capital development projects; recommends land purchases; and negotiates contracts for habitat management and other services.

Decisions referred are final approval of management plans, harvest limits, and season lengths; state laws and department regulations; schedule of training courses; equipment, land purchases, and capital development projects; and work assignments outside of districts.

G. Contact with Others:

Daily contact with the public to establish rapport, resolve conflicts and complaints, enforce laws, implement department programs, and answer questions about wildlife and fisheries management and law enforcement; weekly contact with other law enforcement and natural resources management agencies to coordinate similar functions and purposes; and with the media to provide information or write articles about wildlife and fisheries resources issues; and biweekly contact with civic organizations, schools, and sportsmen's groups to present informational programs.

H. Working Conditions:

Works outdoors in all weather conditions and on all terrains and waterways; apprehends and cites violators who carry weapons and are sometimes confrontational and in situations that may involve high-speed pursuits often while alone and in remote areas; operates equipment in adverse weather and wind conditions during search and rescue operations and spawning; deals with hysterical and bereaved relatives and friends; flies in small aircraft at low levels while conducting game surveys and enforcement patrols; is exposed to hazardous materials while applying pesticides and investigating chemical spills and poisoned carcasses; and is exposed to contagious diseases and physical harm as a trained first responder and while dealing with sick or dead wildlife.

I. Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

Knowledge of:

- the principles and techniques of wildlife and fisheries management including biological concepts of zoology and ecology;
- federal and state laws and regulations pertaining to conservation of land, fish, and wildlife resources;
- procedures and techniques for implementing wildlife and fish surveys and collecting field data;
- hunting, fishing, and trapping;
- criminal and conservation laws, forensic investigative procedures, and rules of evidence;
- methodologies of arrest, search and seizure, and use of force;
- the correct use of English, grammar, and punctuation;
- the proper use and care of firearms;
- motor vehicle and boating safety laws.

Ability to:

- evaluate habitat, wildlife, and fisheries needs and project long- and short-term management goals and objectives;
- establish and maintain effective working relationships with landowners and the general public;
- prepare and make presentations and answer questions about wildlife, hunting, fishing, and related topics;
- assess and control situations where laws have been violated and perpetrators apprehended;
- communicate sufficiently to decelerate and resolve conflicts in tense situations;

- interview witnesses and interrogate criminal suspects;
- use, and qualify with, a variety of defensive weapons and tactics;
- meet and maintain physical fitness standards;
- work under arduous conditions;
- operate a variety of vehicles and specialty equipment.

J. Licenses and Certification:

Successful completion of the South Dakota Law Enforcement Officers Standards Training Course and the Game, Fish, and Parks Conservation Officer Field Training Program; semi-annual qualification and training with department-issued firearms and semi-annual qualification in defensive tactics and other required law enforcement training. Valid driver license.