

**2005 Herman Goldstein Award
Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing**



**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Office for Law Enforcement, Community Oriented Policing**

Conservation Education Corps

1. Summary

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office For Law Enforcement (OLE) is the federal agency responsible for enforcing domestic commercial fishing laws, international fishing and wildlife conservation treaties, the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) to name a few. NOAA OLE divides the United States into 6 regions; California being the Southwest Enforcement Division (SWED). COPPS Officer Rick Hawkins first noticed the problem during routine patrol operations when no one recognized his uniform or agency; he was the only uniformed officer in the state at the time. The “Identity Crisis” problem was present in all parts of the state and Officer Hawkins realized to get people to voluntarily comply with conservation laws they would first have to be aware and knowledgeable of them. The SWED’s innovative thinking resulted in measurable and significant contributions to the conservation and preservation of living marine resources and their environment. Realizing the loss of living marine resources and their environment is permanent and many of the losses were due to a lack of public information or awareness, the SWED sought to remedy these issues. Utilizing the “SARA” principles of Community Oriented Policing and Problem Solving (COPPS), he analyzed the problems plaguing the SWED regarding the apparent lack of name recognition, outreach, and public education which contributed to the high number of MMPA, ESA and Fishery, violations and complaints. Following the identification and analysis of the problem COPPS Officer Rick Hawkins developed a three pronged approach to address each of the three issues.

1. To address the lack of name recognition/identity crisis, they sought out public events, media outlets, industry events, and any large public or marine related event for participation and attendance.
2. To address the lack of public knowledge and outreach, they sought and developed partnerships with local marine mammal stranding networks, non-governmental agencies, state conservation agencies, and other divisions in NOAA.
3. To address the lack of conservation and science education in public schools, they developed and organized a corps of senior citizen volunteers to teach approved science based courses in the Long Beach Unified School District.

The SWED increased its attendance of public events, partnered with numerous state, federal and private organizations and created the **Conservation Education Corps**. In 2004-2005 alone, the measures contributed to the education of over 1500 elementary school children and over 125,000 California residents.

2. Description

Analysis:

2004 was a banner year for the SWED COPPS program and much work and progress was accomplished. Despite the absence of the SWED's COPPS Officer serving part of 2004 on his second active duty recall since 9/11/01 as a Coast Guard Reserve Officer, the SWED completed many extraordinary goals and accomplishments. Even during his Coast Guard assignment, the SWED COPPS Officer organized and participated in many large public events, local and national. They partnered with the Southeast Enforcement division for the annual Miami Boat Show, the largest on the east coast and also partnered with the Alaska Enforcement Division and Northwest Enforcement Division for the annual Fish EXPO, commercial fishing exposition in Seattle, Washington. The SWED also participated in two Fred Hall Sportfishing Shows/conventions, the Long Beach Scuba Show, The International Diving Equipment and Manufacturing Association (DEMA) Show in Texas, and the annual West Coast Seafood Show in Long Beach. The SWED also partnered with local agencies and organizations for countless local events

Representation at these national as well as international events has resulted in thousands of citizens from numerous countries and industry professionals alike being exposed and educated to the NOAA mission and namesake. The SWED showed great initiative and drive by actively seeking out partnerships. This hunger to meet these self imposed goals resulted in the creation of a permanent NOAA OLE and Recreational Fisheries exhibit at the Culver City, California, ECO Station; a wildlife sanctuary and education facility. This exhibit reaches countless school age children and visitors annually.

The SWED strove to nurture partnerships with the local marine mammal stranding network agencies. These efforts proved fruitful in that they were viewed as a new NOAA resource. The SWED assisted the network with Marine Mammal Protection Act violations, provided them with information and reference materials, sought grant funding assistance for them as well as serving as speaker/teacher for their volunteer classes. The SWED made permanent partnerships with local fishing clubs, scuba diving clubs, the Long Beach Aquarium, the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium, Boy Scouts, US Coast Guard Auxiliary, and many local public schools.

The COPPS philosophy is ingrained by necessity in field enforcement personnel as well as in management. The COPPS program, it's parameters, and goals are outlined in the agency's National Enforcement and Operations Manual (NEOM), the OLE Strategic Plan, and in the Commission for the Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) standards. NOAA OLE is very small in comparison with other federal law enforcement agencies, with a corps of less than 200 sworn officers and agents nationwide including Samoa and Guam, OLE is spread very thin. Combined with a mission that regulates billions of dollars in revenue from commercial fishing and a jurisdiction that covers thousands of square miles of land and sea, international and domestic, NOAA OLE has found enforcement through voluntary compliance programs (VCP) is essential for the preservation of America's living marine resources and to ensure America's consumers and America's fishing industry is protected.



Analysis, Con't:

Each Officer and/or Agent is trained to analyze crime/complaint data to determine the extent of the alleged violation and to determine the next course of action. If the complaint/report is an isolated incident or one that has been determined to be from a lack of public awareness or education, the COPPS approach may be taken to educate the responsible party. If trends or patterns are detected they seek to find the source and how best to resolve the issue. Wildlife and natural resource law enforcement is very different from traditional law enforcement in three major ways:

1. The victims are often wildlife or natural resources
2. Natural resources belong to no one or as some think belong to everyone
3. Once a resource is lost, it is lost forever and cannot be recovered, unlike personal property from theft that can sometimes be recovered

With these concepts in mind the COPPS method of law enforcement is preferred and essential to educate the public and prevent future recurring incidents or violations of law.



Response:

To meet the goals and objectives the SWED joined forces with many partners and developed some very positive programs. Most notable was the development of an innovative volunteer program and public education course. The SWED realized early on that mission goals were too much for one person to tackle. The SWED had a vision of a corps of volunteers to represent NOAA and to augment NOAA staff at outreach events, conduct public speaking engagements and to serve as teachers and teaching mentors in local public schools. This corps of volunteers would enable the NOAA message to be disseminated at many events simultaneously without impacting normal NOAA staff functions and duties. Armed with only an idea and a plan, they set forth to gain support for their idea, not expecting much, but, to their surprise the idea was well received and supported by OLE management.

The SWED conducted countless hours of research on the management and development of volunteer programs as well as speaking to numerous volunteer organizations to get advice. With this research they drafted written proposals for the program, budget requests, and drafted a comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the program. Using many external as well as internal resources such as other volunteer organizations and legal counsel they developed all the forms and policies required to breathe life into the idea, thus the **Conservation Education Corps (CEC)** was born.



Response, Con't:

With agency approval, funding for start-up, and policies in place, they garnered the support of the Reserve Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) coordinator in the area to begin recruiting. The SWED coordinated recruiting efforts and screened each volunteer for suitability. With the first class of volunteers set, they concentrated on the development of the training program. The SWED developed the training curriculum, scheduled guest speakers, and organized field trips to equip each volunteer with a working knowledge of NOAA. All this hard work came to fruition with two classes of volunteers graduating by 2004 and a third class in process for 2005.

With a corps of volunteer's eager to go to work, they began work on the second phase of the program, the development of a curriculum to be taught in local public schools. The SWED personally met with the science curriculum coordinator for the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) where he provided guidance on the requirements for state standards at the 4th grade level. After several sessions with science teachers and the curriculum coordinator, the NOAA OLE CEC curriculum was developed and produced. They submitted two complete programs to the school district for approval and after minor revisions they were approved as part of the LBUSD school curriculum, a first for any federal law enforcement agency.

While many federal, state agencies, and non governmental organizations conduct presentations in schools, the NOAA Southwest Enforcement Division, Office for Law Enforcement has taken that one step further by having two courses incorporated as actual parts of the 4th grade curriculum. This program is innovative in two ways, it is the first of its kind for NOAA and it is the first such program that is approved by the School District as an integral part of their science curriculum.

The two courses were designed to be lecture based information provided by means of visual aids/graphics and the information is reinforced at the end of each presentation with the use of an interactive activity. This teaching formula was found to be interesting, educational and highly effective with each student retaining much of the material. This method of teaching is engaging and allows students to interact with the instructor, ask questions, and to seek additional information. This program teaches environmental awareness by reaching out to young children with the hope they become environmental stewards.

To date, the SWED and the CEC have participated in over 14 outreach events with attendance over 40,000 visitors and have conducted over 20 presentations to over 1500 students in local elementary schools. This program has significantly increased environmental conservation awareness with the hope and goal of decreasing the number of environmental and marine wildlife resource violations.

In an age where more and more emphasis is placed on the quality of public education, President Bush's "**Leave No Child Behind,**" placed more demands on our teachers, this program has been welcomed with open arms in the Long Beach Unified School District by filling the void with quality science education. Florida, Atlanta, Seattle, and Hawaii have expressed interests in developing similar programs in their local communities. The long term benefits of this program include instilling environmental stewardship to young children with hopes the stewardship message will be retained and passed to others, teaching children the importance and necessity to conserve our environment for future generations, and assisting public schools through the use of external instruction programs.



Response, Con't:

The three issues/problems identified in Section 1, the lack of name recognition, outreach, and public education were identified by the SWED COPPS Officer. Each of the six OLE regions has a COPPS Officer who coordinates community policing activities for their respective region. The problems were immediately noted as the COPPS Officer became more active within the community. Having a uniformed COPPS Officer proved invaluable in that the public as well as industry began to associate law enforcement with NOAA. The high visibility nature of the COPPS Officer proved to be a noticeable deterrent, a means for the public to receive information, and a medium for the public and industry to interact with NOAA directly.

There were many challenges and hurdles along the way as the CEC was a very new and innovative program. The SWED had to overcome many issues:

1. Funding for start-up
2. Legal liability issues for volunteers
3. Lack of defined policy and procedures
4. Recruitment/screening of volunteers
5. Training of volunteers
6. Retention of volunteers
7. Logistics, such as office space, uniforms, communications, and gear/equipment issue and needs
8. Program/Curriculum development and approval
9. Course/Presentation development
10. Scheduling and promoting the program

With management support, guidance, and confidence funding was provided for start-up. To address the concerns of legal liabilities such as if a volunteer was injured on the job the SWED sought guidance from RSVP. RSVP was very helpful and supportive in that they offered much input into the program and assumed the legal liabilities. Most of the policies and procedures were either borrowed from sister programs and modified to meet OLE existing policies or were “invented” by the SWED. Recruitment, training, and retention of volunteers was learned “OJT” and is still a learning process. Logistics were solved with the funding and by cooperation of SWED personnel who offered gear, office space, and assistance. The CEC curriculum was developed by the SWED with the help from the Long Beach Unified School District Science Curriculum Coordinator. The presentation development and promotion of the program was done by the SWED. As you can see most of the work was done in house by SWED staff which added to the uniqueness and quality of the finished product.



Assessment:

The SWED COPPS Program is a model for the other regions in the agency. Quarterly as well as annual reports are submitted noting COPPS activity in the region, response to “Hotline” calls, the number and location of calls and public events attended, the number of attendees at the events, and the number of schools and students. The SWED attends and participates in over 14 public events annually reaching over 40,000 attendees and industry professionals. To date, the CEC has conducted more than 20 presentations to over 1,500 elementary school students with the goal of reaching 100% by the end of calendar year 2005. The SWED also utilizes an effective information campaign and directed patrol campaign in areas of above normal calls/complaints. This policy of directed information and patrol was highly effective in the LaJolla, California area known as the “Children’s Pool. This was a politically volatile area with opposing groups debating public use of natural resources. The SWED initiated a directed patrol to the area during periods of probable complaints as well as initiated a highly effective information and media campaign. The results were the reduction of calls/complaints while also giving the public a good feeling of results from NOAA.

The SWED has taken a proactive approach to COPPS, the program has significantly reduced the “Identity” crisis and lack of outreach in the region while increasing public awareness. The COPPS Officer in each region is responsible for monitoring crime/complaint trends and for allocating resources to counter the trends. The SWED measures the effectiveness of this method in two ways:

1. Empirical data such as the number of events attended and number of classes taught, further breakdown includes number of actual people and students in attendance
2. Data comparison and case resolution numbers show increases or decreases of calls/complaints from previous times/dates

The data in both methods show positive results from year to year with a spike in numbers in 2004 and early 2005 from the implementation of the CEC program.

NOAA OLE has learned many “lessons” from the COPPS work done in the SWED:

1. Wildlife conservation law enforcement is different than traditional law enforcement
2. Wildlife laws and regulations differ from “traditional” laws and regulations in that they are not common knowledge or widely publicized
3. Wildlife conservation laws are complicated and change more frequently than traditional laws/regulations
4. Wildlife conservation law enforcement is a constant process
5. Public and government opinion about conservation laws and regulations differ from traditional laws
6. Outreach is invaluable
7. Visibility and public dissemination of information is key
8. Creating and maintaining viable partnerships is essential
9. Proactive public education programs are invaluable
10. COPPS is a full time job, but, when done effectively reduces caseloads, complaints, public confusion, and man hours required expended on otherwise non-essential or low priority cases
11. COPPS increases public trust in the agency, the government and the mission of the agency in general, and changes public opinion and perceptions



Assessment, Con't:

Other agencies can learn many things from NOAA OLE's SWED COPPS Program:

1. Having a COPPS program ingrained in all sworn personnel, in their basic and refresher training and in their policies is essential
2. Management support is essential; everyone has to take ownership of COPPS principles
3. Having designated personnel and time for COPPS programs will reap benefits and save man hours and resources
4. The public will accept your mission and cooperate more with an open door COPPS policy
5. COPPS programs take time and effort but, they are well worth it

3. Agency and Officer Information:

NOAA OLE is a very small agency with a large and important mission. COPPS philosophies and principles are taught in our basic academy and annually at refresher training sessions, all Officers and Special Agents are in tuned to the COPPS Mission. There are designated COPPS Officers in each of the six enforcement divisions and budgets set aside for COPPS projects, each COPPS Officer was individually selected/hired for the position and received additional specialized training.

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