



**Department of
Environmental
Conservation**

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DEC Environmental Conservation Officer Highlights ECO Actions for Late February

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Environmental Conservation Officers (ECOs) enforce the 71 Chapters of NY Environmental Conservation Law, protecting fish and wildlife and preserving environmental quality across New York.

In 2016, the 286 ECOs across the state responded to 26,400 calls and issued 22,150 tickets for crimes ranging from deer poaching to corporate toxic dumping and illegal mining, black market pet trade, and excessive emissions violations.

"From Montauk Point to Mount Marcy, from Brooklyn to Buffalo, the ECOs patrolling our state are the first line of defense in protecting New York's environment and our natural resources, ensuring that they exist for future generations of New Yorkers," said Commissioner Basil Seggos. "They work long and arduous hours, both deep in our remote wildernesses and in the tight confines of our urban landscapes. Although they don't receive much public fanfare, the work of our ECOs is critical to achieving DEC's mission to protect and enhance our environment."

Recent missions carried out by ECOs include:

Illegal Discharge Leads to Mining Permit Violation – Suffolk County

On Feb. 21, ECO Katie Jakaub responded to a complaint regarding a possible illegal discharge of storm water from a mining operation in Southampton. ECO Jakaub accessed the site from the rear of the property where it borders town-owned land and nature trails. She found a dried pool in a wooded area where sediment-laden water had been recently discharged. Further investigation showed that the nearby mining operation had pumped excess storm water up the bank of the mine and off-site onto the adjacent property. She interviewed the mine owner, who admitted he had been pumping the storm water to accommodate recent heavy rain and snow melt, a direct violation of the site's mining permit. With help from DEC's Division of Mineral Resources, a remediation plan was set in place and efforts to resolve the issue began immediately.



Stained ground where sediment-laden storm water had pooled

Impeccable Timing – Rockland County

On Feb. 23, ECO Melissa Burgess stopped by the Piermont Pier to check on fishing activity. While conversing with a group of fishermen, a second group of fisherman approached ECO Burgess asking for assistance. One of the fishermen had an adult seagull wrapped up in his fishing line and had gently towed the bird into shore, but didn't know how to free the bird. Despite a few bites, ECO Burgess was able to grab the bird and cut away the line wrapped several times around its body, releasing it unharmed.

Excessive Emissions – Westchester County

On Feb. 23, ECOs Wes Leubner and Zach Crain assisted with a joint commercial vehicle enforcement detail coordinated by the MTA Police, Mount Vernon Police, and the New York State Department of Transportation's Commercial Vehicle Inspection Unit. The detail included several patrol cars posted throughout the area to identify and escort potentially unsafe trucks to a checkpoint for further inspection. During the detail, more than 50 commercial vehicle violations were discovered, and five vehicles were taken out of service due to blatant safety issues. Multiple violations of the ECL were observed, including diesel exhaust over the opacity limit—nearly twice the legal limit in one instance—and depositing of noisomesome/unwholesome substances onto the roadway—a heavy duty vehicle leaking both engine oil and diesel fuel. All of the tickets issued are returnable to the Mount Vernon Court.



ECO Leubner operating emissions testing equipment on a vehicle in violation of air quality standards

Farm Dump Fire - Washington County

On Feb. 23 at 6:30 p.m., ECO Matthew Krug was contacted about a large garbage fire in the town of Whitehall. The Whitehall Volunteer Fire Department was attempting to extinguish the fire but was having difficulty due to the fire's location in a remote snow-covered farm field. ECO Krug responded to document the scene and collect evidence. Among the items in the fire were tires, mattresses, and boxes of clothing. Fresh tractor tracks led several hundred yards through the snow to a nearby residence, where ECO Krug located a man who admitted he had intentionally burned some cardboard, which then accidentally spread to the "farm dump." The man said he had mistakenly thought the fire would not spread through the snow. ECO Krug issued the man appearance tickets for the unlawful disposal of solid waste and unlawful open burning, returnable to the Whitehall Town Court. The Whitehall Fire Department eventually extinguished the blaze.



Garbage on fire in Whitehall

High Temps, Good Ice, and a Bad Fisherman – Sullivan County

A daytime high of approximately 70 degrees on Feb. 24 marked the third day of unseasonably warm temperatures in Sullivan County. With ice melting fast, ECO Travis McNamara was surprised to see a few brave ice fishermen out on Swan Lake in Liberty. After crossing the thin ice near the shore, ECO McNamara made his way out to the fishermen. While checking on a group of two fishermen, another lone fisherman eagerly approached ECO McNamara to show his license and catch, and to point out his seven tip-ups. ECO McNamara followed the fisherman's tracks back to where he had been fishing, and found six additional tip-ups partially hidden in piles of slush and ice. The fisherman initially stated that the tip-ups belonged to his wife, but later admitted to fishing with a total of 13 tip-ups. McNamara issued the fisherman a ticket for using more than seven lines while ice fishing, returnable to Liberty Town Court.

Illegal Clams and Lobster Seizure – New York County

On Feb. 24, ECOs Spencer Noyes, Adam Johnson, and John Rich performed commercial fish market inspections in Manhattan's Chinatown. At one of the locations, the facility did not have proper tags for 50 pounds of Manila Clams. The clams were seized and properly disposed of onsite. The market was issued a summons for possession of untagged shellfish. When the officers entered the market next door, ECO Noyes noticed several undersized lobsters in live tanks. The three officers measured the lobsters to ensure they were of legal size; 21 were found to be undersized. That market was issued a summons for offering undersized lobsters for sale. Both cases are returnable to the Manhattan Court on May 24, and the lobsters were seized and donated to the Bowery Mission in Manhattan to help feed the homeless of New York City.



ECOs Noyes and Johnson donating 21 lobsters to the Bowery Mission

A Trout Stream is No Place for an ATV – Monroe County

On Feb. 27, ECO Shea Mathis was dispatched to a complaint regarding ATV operators riding their machines in Four Mile Creek in the town of Webster. The complainant stated that she frequently observed ATVs in the creek and had been told by one of the operators that they weren't breaking the law. Four Mile Creek is a protected trout stream, and ECO Mathis arrived just as the subjects were passing through the creek bed. ECO Mathis issued tickets for disturbing the bed of a protected trout stream and operating an ATV without wearing a helmet.

If you witness an environmental crime or believe a violation of environmental law occurred please call the DEC Division of Law Enforcement hotline at 1-844-DEC-ECOS (1-844-332-3267).

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