



Department of Environmental Conservation

For Immediate Release: 03/01/16

Contact: Benning DeLaMater | (518) 402-8000
Press Office | PressOffice@dec.ny.gov

DEC Begins Training for Newest Class of Environmental Conservation Officers and Forest Rangers

54 Recruits start First Day of Basic Law Enforcement Training

The Department of Environmental Conservation opened the 20th Basic School for Uniformed Officers, the 27-week training academy that will prepare the newest class of recruits for careers as Environmental Conservation Officers and Forest Rangers, Acting Commissioner Basil Seggos announced today.

“DEC Environmental Conservation Officers (ECOs) and Forest Rangers are our first line of defense in protecting the environment and safeguarding our natural resources, and I welcome this newest class of recruits as they start their journey to join the distinguished men and women that make up DEC’s law enforcement and public protection force,” Acting Commissioner Seggos said. “Our ECOs and Forest Rangers work long and arduous hours, often deep in our most remote wild spaces, to ensure public safety and enforce the state’s environmental laws to hold polluters and poachers accountable.”

ECOs and Forest Rangers are full-fledged State Police officers and are often called upon to assist in some of New York’s most important police work. The 37 ECO and 17 Forest Ranger candidates enrolled in the training academy hail from 26 counties across New York State. Throughout the academy, recruits will receive specialized trainings on firearms, swiftwater rescues, wildland fire suppression and emergency vehicle operation. In addition, recruits will receive extensive training in New York’s Environmental Conservation Laws and proper enforcement techniques.

ECOs, originally called Game Protectors, were first appointed for service in 1880 and undertake a variety of actions from investigating deer poaching to conducting surveillance on a company suspected of dumping chemical waste to checking fishing licenses on local waterways. In 2015, ECOs responded to more than 25,000 calls statewide and issued more than 22,000 tickets.

“Since 1880, but now more than ever, the mission of the Division of Law Enforcement is vital to the protection of New York’s abundant natural resources,” said Joseph Schneider, Director of DEC’s Division of Law Enforcement. “From Montauk Point and the City of Buffalo to deep in the Adirondack wilderness, ECOs protect New Yorkers from environmental damage and exploitation, whether enforcing clean air and water regulations, supporting fish and wildlife laws, investigating large scale environmental crimes, or ensuring solid waste is properly managed.”

(MORE)

The state's Forest Rangers, originally known as Fire Wardens, were established in 1885 with the creation of the Forest Preserve. Their duties focus on patrolling the state's lands and forests, and can span from conducting search and rescue operations to educating the public on forest fire prevention. In 2015, DEC Forest Rangers conducted 341 search and rescue missions, extinguished 175 wildfires that burned a total of 3,924 acres, and worked on cases that resulted in nearly 3,000 tickets or arrests, many of which focused on illegal operation of ATVs and snowmobiles on state lands.

"Once trained, these men and women will be entrusted to protect New York States natural resources and nearly five million acres of state and public lands," said Capt. Eric Lahr, Acting Director of DEC's Division of Forest Protection. "They will develop the necessary skills to enforce various state and environmental conservation laws, conduct wilderness search and rescues for lost or injured persons, and manage wildfire incidents."

Upon graduation, recruits will be assigned patrol areas, typically consisting of one or two counties. They will join the ranks of 268 ECOs and 119 Forest Rangers currently serving across the state. The recruits in this newest class were selected from an eligible list of qualifications and passing scores generated from the most recent Civil Service exam, which was given in 2013. To view job qualifications for ECOs visit <http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/746.html> and for Forest Rangers visit <http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/732.html>

Throughout the Basic School, DEC will host media availability dates for a number of events. For media inquiries, contact Benning DeLaMater, public information officer, at (518) 402-8000 or benning.delamater@dec.ny.gov.

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