

October, 2011

MICHIGAN CONSERVATION OFFICER WAGE COMPARISON



Compiled by the Michigan Conservation Officer Association

INTENT OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose and intent of this document is to provide an up-to-date wage scale comparison of Michigan Conservation Officers against other law enforcement positions most similar to their occupation and employer. The information provided will also identify the underlying problem with Conservation Officer recruitment and retention.

WAGE COMPARISON METHODOLOGY

The wage figures detailed in this document were collected beginning in early 2011 and concluded in August of 2011. All figures are based on a 2080 hour annual work year.

Additionally, overtime (OT) and other financial incentives are not factored into this comparison. Michigan Conservation Officers have very limited OT opportunities which also factors on income. For example, in the case of the Michigan comparable of Washtenaw County SD, their OT availability is abundant and it is not uncommon for Deputies to make over \$80K a year.

Also to be factored when considering income is the fact that Michigan Conservation Officers do not have a 25 year (or better) Defined Benefit Pension system unlike all of their comparables. Michigan CO's are expected to work 30 years in a physically and psychologically demanding occupation where they must devote a significant portion of their wages into a 401K plan as their sole, unsecure retirement income. The significant 401K contributions further reduce their income.

WHO ARE MICHIGAN CONSERVATION OFFICERS?

In order to appropriately categorize or associate a wage to an occupation or job title, one must first understand and comprehend what that occupation or job title encompasses.

The occupation of conservation law enforcement officers (Game Wardens) is well documented as one of the most dangerous and hazardous law enforcement occupations. They are also some of the most highly trained law enforcement professionals.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources-Law Enforcement Division (a para-military type entity) employs Conservation Officers. Conservation Officers are fully empowered, MCOLES (Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards) Certified Law Enforcement Officers with statewide police authority and jurisdiction. Conservation Officers are responsible for enforcing all of Michigan's civil, misdemeanor and felony laws while focusing on recreational and environmental public acts. Conservation Officers routinely conduct law enforcement patrols alone and in remote areas resulting in back-up assistance not being readily available. Routine contacts and encounters frequently deal with armed individuals.

Michigan Conservation Officers have been in existence since 1887, longer than any other conservation law enforcement entity in the country. At least 14 Officers have died or have been killed in the line of duty. Historical archive investigations continue into additional Conservation Officers deaths that have yet to be recognized.

There is only one job title (within the State of Michigan government) similar to Conservation Officers and that comparable is to Michigan State Police Troopers. Outside of State government, Conservation Officers are most similar to the thousands of MCOLES certified police officers employed by county,

city, and township governments. Another job title comparison of Conservation Officers would be against the other Great Lakes region states and Ontario conservation law enforcement entities. A comparison at the federal level would be against US Fish & Wildlife Special Agents. Any private sector comparison is very difficult to obtain because para-military law enforcement entities exclusively exist under the authority of some unit of government. Private entities such as Blackwater armed security agents may be a private sector comparable but will not be detailed in this document.

MICHIGAN CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION & EQUITY ISSUE

Michigan DNR Conservation Officers seem to routinely find themselves struggling for appropriate recognition by the state. In the 1980's and 1990's, CO's were engaged in recognition efforts dealing with wage "PARITY" or "EQUITY" and the pursuit of an adequate and appropriate law enforcement pension system. Both of these issues were successfully pursued, although the pension system acknowledgement was a legislative action. The wage issue was previously addressed and corrected (temporarily) by the Civil Service Commission.

The MCOA has researched Civil Service Commission archives pertaining to the Commissions 1980's course of action recognizing appropriate compensation for Conservation Officers.

Recovered Civil Service Commission archived documents from 1979 reveal the following:

It is the finding of the Civil Service Commission that Michigan history has proven the value of citizen analysis and guidance to the merit system (still in use today), and that such analysis and guidance, uniquely structured as to scope and specificity, is now necessary as an official undertaking of the Commission.

With this resolution, the Michigan Civil Service Commission, the policy making body for the state's merit system, expressed its interest in a fundamental systematic review of personnel management for the state's (then) 65,000 employees. The Commission then took action on June 28, 1978 to create a Citizen's Advisory Task Force on Civil Service Reform.

A 15 member Citizen's Advisory Task Force was established and provided the following recommendations:

*.....the Michigan Civil Service Commission should promulgate merit principles specifically designed to meet the needs of Michigan. Those merit principles should recognize that the public service is for the benefit of the public. They should seek to assure that:....and applicants for employment and **employees are fairly and equitably treated.** The recommended principles are:*

- 1. To assure.....*
- 2. All persons.....*
- 3. **Equitable compensation should be provided for work of equal value and incentives should be provided for excellence in performance. Adequate compensation should be provided, with appropriate consideration of the relevant compensation provided by other employers.***

CO's appeared before the Civil Service Commission presenting arguments pertaining to the need for wage parity between Michigan State Police Troopers and Michigan Conservation Officers. CO's illustrated the reality and intricacies of their hazardous law enforcement occupation to the Commission as justification for wage parity. An archived minutes document from a Civil Service Commission meeting dated April 14, 1989, revealed the following under the heading of "SPECIAL ORDERS OF BUSINESS", end of paragraph #1:

*.....It is my (Civil Service Commission Vice-Chair Alan A. May) recommendation that in addition to the pay package that the other state employees obtained, and for the reasons discussed, and because I feel that **equity requires it**, that fairness would include a 2 ½ % increase for the Conservation Officer I and II levels, and a \$3.00 per-diem for emergency response for the Conservation Officer I, II, and III Levels, to be effective October 1, 1989.*

On motion duly made and supported, the Commission approved an additional 2 ½ % increase for the Conservation Officer I and II levels, and a \$3.00 per-diem for emergency response for the Conservation Officer I, II and III levels.

The Civil Service Commission actions brought the CO’s wage scale to an equivalent of the Michigan State Police Troopers wages. However, throughout the years since this 1989 Civil Service Commission action, CO’s have repeatedly fallen farther and farther behind their closest state employed comparable, the MSP Troopers. Despite the 15 member Citizens Advisory Task Force recommendations, CO’s have continued to fall farther behind the acceptable norm for law enforcement officer’s wage scales and retirement systems.

In regards to wage parity and equity with State Police Troopers, the Civil Service Commission itself indicates “equity requires it”.

STATE OF MICHIGAN GOVERNMENT MCOLES CERTIFIED LAW ENFORCEMENT POSITIONS

Within the State of Michigan government, there are very few job titles that require MCOLES certification which result in statewide law enforcement (LE) authority and statewide jurisdiction. DNR Conservation Officers and State Police Troopers are the only MCOLES Certified, state employed, full time law enforcement officers which provide patrol responsibilities in full uniform and marked patrol units. With nearly identical employment requirements and responsibilities, the following comparison will detail base annual wages between the two occupations.

In 1989, the Michigan Civil Service Commission publically recognized that the two civil service occupations of Conservation Officers and State Troopers should be in wage parity with one another due to their occupational similarities and responsibilities. Unfortunately for Conservation Officers, that wage parity has slipped away and the gap continues to grow. The Michigan State Trooper wage figures presented are effective October 1st, 2011.

STATE OF MICHIGAN JOB POSITION TITLE	STARTING BASE WAGE (Annual)	MAXIMUM BASE WAGE (Annual)
Michigan Conservation Officer	\$31,096	\$57,512
Michigan State Trooper	\$43,014	\$62,649

A Conservation Officers starting base wage is \$11,918 or 38% less than a Michigan State Trooper.

A Conservation Officers maximum base wage is \$5,137 or 9% less than a Michigan State Trooper.

MICHIGAN LOCAL UNITS OF GOVERNMENT LAW ENFORCEMENT ENTITIES

Within Michigan, but outside state employment, Conservation Officers can be compared with those LE agencies with similar MCOLES Certified staffing levels. The following list of LE entities was provided by the Michigan Commission On Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES) on February 7, 2011. This list is part of a complete list of LE entities in the State of Michigan detailing staffing levels. This comparison details the 10 most similar sized agencies according to their entire MCOLES certified police officer staffing levels.

5 LE entities with staffing levels closest to and above DNR-LED

Macomb County Sheriff's Office	238 MCOLES Certified Officers
Kalamazoo Dept. of Public Safety	235 MCOLES Certified Officers
Lansing Police Dept.	225 MCOLES Certified Officers
Kent County Sheriff's Office	221 MCOLES Certified Officers
Warren Police Department	204 MCOLES Certified Officers

Michigan DNR-LED

197 MCOLES Certified Officers

5 LE entities with staffing levels closest to and below DNR-LED

Dearborn Police Dept.	188 MCOLES Certified Officers
Sterling Heights Police Dept.	161 MCOLES Certified Officers
Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office	159 MCOLES Certified Officers
Southfield Police Dept.	148 MCOLES Certified Officers
Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office	147 MCOLES Certified Officers

The following chart details the ten comparable Michigan governmental LE agencies starting and maximum base annual wages against that of Michigan Conservation Officers.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY NAME	STARTING BASE WAGE (Annual)	MAXIMUM BASE WAGE (Annual)
<i>Michigan DNR-LED</i>	<i>\$31,096</i>	<i>\$57,512</i>
Macomb County Sheriff Dept.	\$45,200	\$57,745
Kalamazoo Dept. of Public Safety	\$47,393	\$71,810
Lansing Police Dept.	\$39,773	\$57,192
Kent County Sheriff Dept.	\$48,776	\$66,060
Warren Police Dept.	\$47,287	\$67,329
Dearborn Police Dept.	\$42,127	\$59,538
Sterling Heights Police Dept.	\$47,979	\$74,426
Kalamazoo County Sheriff Dept.	\$44,553	\$63,294
Southfield Police Dept.	\$43,117	\$62,326
Washtenaw County Sheriff Dept.	\$38,893	\$55,037
10 AGENCY AVERAGE	\$44,509	\$63,475

A Michigan Conservation Officers starting base wage is \$13,413 or 23% less than the average of the ten governmental LE agency starting base wages.

A Michigan Conservation Officers starting base wage is \$5,963 or 10% less than the average of the ten governmental LE agency maximum base wages.

**GREAT LAKES STATES AND ONTARIO CONSERVATION LAW
ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES**

Each state and the province of Ontario have some form of conservation enforcement entity. For the purposes of this survey, comparisons will be made against those Great Lakes region states and Ontario which border Michigan and their respective conservation law enforcement positions.

CONSERVATION ENFORCEMENT AGENCY	STARTING BASE WAGE (Annual)	MAXIMUM BASE WAGE (Annual)
<i>Michigan DNR-LED</i>	<i>\$31,096</i>	<i>\$57,512</i>
Wisconsin DNR-LED	\$44,928	\$62,192
Minnesota DNR-LED	\$44,241	\$57,740
Illinois DNR-LED	\$49,524	\$117,478
Indiana DNR-LED (working off an old 2008 contract)	\$36,852	\$60,008
Ohio DNR-LED (Limited police authority)	\$40,310	\$50,398
5 AGENCY AVERAGES	\$43,171	\$69,563

A Michigan Conservation Officers starting base wage is \$12,075 or 20% less than the average of the five comparable great lakes states conservation law enforcement positions.

A Michigan Conservation Officers maximum base wage is \$12,051 or 21% less than the average of the five comparable great lakes states conservation law enforcement positions.

CONSERVATION ENFORCEMENT AGENCY	STARTING BASE WAGE (Annual)	MAXIMUM BASE WAGE (Annual)
<i>Michigan DNR-LED</i>	<i>\$31,096</i>	<i>\$57,512</i>
Ontario MNR-LED	\$67,787	\$73,320

A Michigan Conservation Officers starting base wage is \$36,691 or 118% less than an Ontario Conservation Officers starting base wage.

A Michigan Conservation Officers maximum base wage is \$15,808 or 27% less than an Ontario Conservation Officers maximum base wage.

FEDERAL CONSERVATION LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

The equivalent of a Michigan Conservation Officer at the federal employee level is that of a United States Fish & Wildlife Service Special Agent.

CONSERVATION ENFORCEMENT AGENCY	STARTING BASE WAGE (Annual)	MAXIMUM BASE WAGE (Annual)
<i>Michigan DNR-LED</i>	<i>\$31,096</i>	<i>\$57,512</i>
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Special Agent	\$61,000	\$106,000

A Michigan Conservation Officers starting base wage is \$29,904 or 96% less than a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Special Agent starting base wage.

A Michigan Conservation Officers maximum base wage is \$48,488 or 84% less than a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Special Agent maximum base wage.

WAGE INCREASES & C.O.L.A. 2000-2010

A Detroit News Editorial article dated July 22, 2011 and titled “Realism needed from state worker unions” provided information from University of Michigan economist Don Grimes. Grimes information incorrectly claims that government pay and benefits were not hard hit from 2000-2009. Grimes information indicates public pay has increased by 43%.

Grimes statements infers that all public sector employees (“government pay”) wages increased by 43%. The term “government” is very broad across occupational lines. While Michigan CO’s are governmental employees, they certainly have not secured a 43% wage increase since the year 2000.

The following is an annual list of Conservation Officer wage increases and the federally set Cost Of Living Adjustment (COLA) percentage since the year 2000. The totals reveal that CO’s have not kept up with the COLA since the year 2000.

(Note: The State fiscal period begins on October 1st and ends September 30th)

YEAR	CO WAGE INCREASE	COLA
2000	2%	+3.5%
2001	2%	+2.6%
2002	2%	+1.4%
2003	3%	+2.1%
2004	4%	+2.7%
2005	1% October 2005 + 1% April 2006	+4.1%
2006	2% October 2006 + 2% April 2007	+3.3%
2007	2% October 2007 + 2% April 2008	+2.3%
2008	0%	+5.8%
2009	1%	0.0%
2010	3%	0.0%
Totals	25%	+27.8%

CONSESIONS

The facts are that Michigan Conservation Officers have endured the financial hardships felt by the majority of citizens. Conservation Officers have been forced to take mandatory Banked Leave Time (BLT) of 4 hours per pay period totaling 104 hours as well as mandatory 40 hours of Furlough per officer. Furloughs are mandatory time off work with no pay and are essentially layoffs. On September 29, 2011 Conservation Officers again learned they are forced to take another 32 hours of Furlough.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION FACTORS

Since 1997 (the year in which the 25 year Defined Benefit Pension was stripped from Conservation Officers), recruitment and retention of Michigan CO's has suffered. While variables do exist, the reoccurring explanation of those not interested or leaving the position is the lack of a 25 year pension and a competitive wage package. These highly educated and skilled sought after law enforcement candidates are more financially savvy than ever before and they will seek and secure employment elsewhere. Since 1997, the number of applicants has significantly diminished.

The LED has taken recent measures by creating a recruitment video and has also appointed field recruiters to attract qualified candidates. The LED recruitment efforts, recession and resulting mass of unemployed people have resulted in a recent influx of applicants. Whether or not the recent applicants are highly qualified candidates or just someone looking for a steady job remains to be seen.

Many Michigan CO's have resigned and secured law enforcement employment elsewhere due directly to low wages and lack of a 25 year pension. This fact was again, just recently, reaffirmed by yet another Michigan CO who resigned and obtained employment for another law enforcement agency. The exit interview of this officer (released with his permission) is included at the end of this wage comparison document. The information contained in the exit interview will illustrate and support the retirement and wage concerns adversely affecting the recruitment and retention issue.

MCOA's position, based on the facts presented, is that the Conservation Officer job title fails to offer a competitive retirement and wage package which is discouraging highly sought after candidates.

FACTUAL CONCLUSIONS

Michigan Conservation Officers starting base wage ranges from 20% - 118% less than all comparables.

Michigan Conservation Officers maximum base wage ranges from 9% - 84% less than all comparables.

The dangerous law enforcement occupation of a Michigan Conservation Officer is high functioning, physically and mentally demanding. Despite their occupational uniqueness, CO's only wish to be treated and compensated fairly and equally.



EXIT INTERVIEW

PURPOSE: Provide the Department with information to assist in determining the adequacy of job descriptions, job evaluations, job gradings, and salary range placements as well as suggestions for new training opportunities. Exit interviews will also assist in identifying and determining resolutions for actual and potential personnel problems.

NAME BRIAN ENGELHARD	SOCIAL SECURITY NO. / EMPLOYEE ID	
ADDRESS	JOB CLASSIFICATION CONSERVATION OFFICER E11	
CITY HARRISVILLE	STATE MI	ZIP CODE 48740 -
DIVISION/OFFICE LAW ENFORCEMENT- ROSCOMMON	PERIOD OF TIME WORKED IN POSITION 2006 TO PRESENT	
	TERMINATION DATE 7/30/2011	

REASON FOR TERMINATION: Retirement Resignation Discharge

Explanation of Reason for Termination:

Accepted a position with the F&W Service with better pay and benefits in a similar field. CO

compensation for a post 1997 hire is not adequate for a sole provider of a family of 4.

Employees in public safety positions cannot do the job into their 60s. This job is physically more demanding than regular law enforcement.

THE EXIT INTERVIEW

The information received from this exit interview is very important, as it will be used to help improve our Department's employee relations, productivity, training and retention.

Please respond to the following statements and questions. Upon completion, please arrange to discuss your responses with the person you have selected to conduct your interview. Because we are seeking specific information, it is important that all points are covered.

All information received will be treated with respect and used with discretion to improve the Department's management techniques. The results of the interview should be sent to the Human Resources Chief marked "Confidential" by the interviewer.

1. Briefly outline some of the duties of your job.

Natural Resources Law Enforcement

2. What duties do you feel were most crucial to the performance of your job?

Fish and Game enforcement

3. Describe what you liked most about this job. Describe what you liked least.

The lack of micro-management.

4. Describe the orientation and the training you received for the positions you held. Are there improvements that you would recommend?

Excellent training and equipment. The division has taken the right steps in moving away from running their own recruit school to regional academies for new hires combined with the current 5 or 6 week "finishing school" and FTO training which is very thorough.

5. Describe what you liked most about the management style of your supervisor. Describe what you liked least.

Not breathing down your necks- for the most part you are left alone.

6. How do you feel complaints were handled by your supervisor? If applicable, by the Department?

N/A

7. Are there recommendations you would make to the Department for training supervisors?

No- I don't know what is currently done.

8. Are you aware of any management practices, which might be discriminatory practices? Do you feel that you were treated fairly?

No then Yes

9. Describe the working conditions at your work location.

Excellent- but a one-half designation to live in the county could be a detriment to the officer and department.

10. How do you feel about your compensation?

For what we do, compared to state/federal officers, we are inadequately compensated. Of 5 neighboring states, Michigan ranks 4th in compensation and the only one without a pension. Our federal counterparts pay tops out at \$10,000 more. Troopers here earn \$4 more per hour, pay no 3% retirement health care, pay no health insurance premium, no 3% match to a 401K, all adding up to a \$14,000 a year pay difference. Compared to other agencies that have a physical fitness requirement, we are the only agency without compensated workout time. In the event of my death my family receives life insurance and the balance of my 401K. That is in contrast to a State Trooper or Federal law enforcement officer's survivor who receives life insurance and pension benefits for the rest of their life. Bottom line is that the salary of a CO is inadequate to support a family of four, last year my net income was \$31,000.

11. What impressed you about the Department when you first started? How did this impression change and why?

A. High morale-esprit de corp. Not a lot of complaining.

B. One year later I was almost laid-off. Then OT was cut, furlough days came, We were under attack from 2 administrations and the legislature as being "too highly compensated."

12. How do you feel about the progress you made in this Department?

Lots of progress- I am much more effective and proficient at my job.

13. If taking another position, what do you feel the new position will offer that is different from what was offered to you here?

I compare my new job as being promoted to a department detective. The division has limited opportunities for advancement. But the biggest reason is the pay and retirement differences.

14. Would you accept the position again if seeking a job at some future date? If not, tell us why.

I do not know- I could lose retirement health care, the health insurance cost, and pay cut.....

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

State employees are under attack. While being under Chief Gary Hagler things have been good. Not being treated fairly with compensation compared to other State Game Wardens, federal counterparts, and MSP troopers is principle.

I certify that the above information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Brian Engelhard

7-29-11

EXITING EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURE

DATE

INTERVIEWER'S NAME & TITLE

INTERVIEWER'S SIGNATURE

DATE