

LAW ENFORCEMENT UNIFICATION



Overview



For the past 12 months, DNR administration and a specially formed committee made up of law enforcement representatives from each DNR division with law enforcement have been evaluating DNR's law enforcement structure. DNR has about 160 law enforcement officers.



In recent years, law enforcement nationwide has experienced significant changes. We want to ensure we are serving the public and representing the department in the most efficient and effective manner possible. We also want our rangers, conservation officers and fire investigators to have the best training, equipment and opportunities available.



Four previous audits have recommended consolidating DNR's LE agencies. However, the administration has never pulled the trigger on such a merger.



We believe now is the right time to move forward with unifying law enforcement efforts by creating the Natural Resources Law Enforcement Division within DNR. This means the four divisions currently with law enforcement staff will **in the future** become one unified division.

- This decision has not been easy, and we recognize it will be painful in the short term, but we believe it is the right decision for the long term.
- It will have its challenges and will not happen overnight. Full implementation is expected in 2026.
- In coordination with the formed committee, division leadership, and stakeholders, we will work together to outline and operationalize this process over a number of years.

Unification is the only solution that will address inefficiencies, mitigate liabilities, improve officer proficiency, ensure accountability, and increase organizational capacity – while empowering law enforcement professionals to comply with legal mandates while staying abreast of rapidly evolving best practices.

We believe that realistic opportunities exist for phased, proactive, agency-driven change that will vastly improve the delivery of law enforcement and public safety services to the customers we serve – while safeguarding the treasured cultural, natural, and recreational resources that contribute immeasurably to our quality of life in Utah.

- Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Consolidation Feasibility Committee



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Why

DNR leadership believes it's necessary to move toward unifying our law enforcement efforts primarily for the following reasons:

- **Straight line of authority is needed department wide.** There has been a societal shift in the way law enforcement is perceived. We believe it's necessary to adapt to a structure that allows for a strict straight line of law enforcement authority. Law enforcement has changed and is different today, and we need to be open to evolving with it.
- **Specialized, not generalized, DNR law enforcement officers are needed.** Law enforcement faces increased liability. Our processes, policies, and training need to all be aligned. We believe these changes will allow our conservation officers and rangers to have the best training and opportunities available to them.
- **DNR law enforcement should work towards accreditation.** Utah Chiefs of Police Association (UCPOA) is the single accreditation entity in the state of Utah. Accreditation can only happen with the creation of the division. The unification and accreditation of law enforcement within DNR will help us mitigate state, department and individual litigation.
- **A division of law enforcement will increase efficiency and productivity.** Pooled services will streamline duplicative administrative tasks, increase efficiency and constancy with things like training, records, evidence, complaint process and more. Unifying enforcement efforts will also allow for better data-driven decision police work, and coordination among officers and rangers

What Happens Now?

This change will not happen overnight. Implementation of the division will take some time.

- No layoffs will take place as a result of this unification process. Any reduction in law enforcement personnel will happen over time through attrition.
- We understand this process impacts some law enforcement staff more than others, and we will work closely with rangers and conservation officers to address specific considerations.
- A transition team is being created, and the department will begin working with division leadership teams to develop transition plans.
- The department anticipates consolidated pooled services will begin in July 2024. However, full integration will not be complete until July 2026.
- We recognize this will be challenging. But a unified division and singular mission will elevate the level of service we provide.

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LAW ENFORCEMENT UNIFICATION TIMELINE

NOV 2022 - JULY 2026

