

Water Patrol Division History

Merger

On June 30, 2010, at Public Beach #2 on the Lake of the Ozarks, Governor Jeremiah “Jay” Nixon signed House Bill 1868; merging the Missouri State Water Patrol with the Missouri State Highway Patrol effective January 1, 2011.

On September 13, 2010, statewide radio operations of the Missouri State Water Patrol merged with Troop F Communications. This resulted in seven radio operators and 20 remote transmitters/receivers being added to Troop F operations.

On January 1, 2011, the Missouri State Water Patrol became known as the Water Patrol Division (WPD) of the Missouri State Highway Patrol and was placed within the Field Operations Bureau. The division was responsible for enforcement and safety activities on approximately 8,322 miles of major lakes as well as the Mississippi & Missouri rivers.

The Water Patrol Division

On January 1, 2011, Major Thomas E. “Tommy” Roam became the Water Patrol Division’s first director.

In early 2011, Water Patrol Division officers attended four weeks of transition training to familiarize themselves with DWI laws, traffic laws, Patrol policies and procedures, and traffic crash and DWI investigation.

The Water Patrol Division is responsible for the following services in addition to normal patrol and investigative duties:

1. Boater Education — All Missouri residents born after January 1, 1984, are required to take a National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) approved boater education course and possess a NASBLA approved boater education card on Missouri lakes (Missouri residents can also choose to add a boating designator on their driver's license or ID card). There is now a provision where an out-of-state boater may obtain a temporary boater card instead of taking the full class. However, they can only get one seven-day temporary boater education permit, once in their life. Each year, thousands of boaters attend boater education courses provided by the Patrol. Courses are taught by troopers and via an online provider.
2. Buoy Permitting — The Patrol issues all buoy, and other navigational aid permits in Missouri. As of December 31, 2015, there were approximately 5,413 approved permits. Permit holders are required to maintain their buoys in a serviceable condition, and the division audits buoys and permits yearly to verify accurate ownership, placement, and buoy condition.

3. Regattas — Regattas and organized events, such as parades, races, and fishing tournaments, are required to be permitted by the Patrol. Approximately 2,000 regattas are permitted annually.

4. Underwater Recovery Team — The division also oversees the Underwater Recovery Team (dive team). The Dive Team provides professional diving services for federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies throughout Missouri, and upon special approval, to bordering states. Services include recovery of boat crash and drowning victims, evidence recovery/preservation dives, emergency services dives, and other dives that require special equipment and/or diving techniques. The Patrol dive team also employs specialized equipment, such as side-scan and scanning sonar systems and underwater metal detectors.

2011

During the blizzard in February 2011, division members teamed up with road officers to assist the public. This epic snowstorm brought with it ice, freezing rain, sleet, and snow. Much of Missouri was digging out from under 12 to 20 inches of snow. Officers were responsible for highway safety, search and rescue efforts, and traffic control. The division's numerous four-wheel drive vehicles were instrumental in providing services to the public.

On March 16, 2011, the Department of Public Safety Director John Britt presented the March 2011 DPS Employee of the Month award to Corporal Harold E. "Junior" Crafton Jr. and Corporal Michael P. "Mike" McClure. These two officers rescued passengers with health risks from the Branson Belle after it had run aground on rocks approximately 70 feet from shore on December 10, 2010. There were passengers on board with medical conditions that were a concern for law enforcement and medical personnel. Corporals McClure and Crafton took emergency medical technicians to the Belle to perform a "triage" of the affected passengers. The officers would then evacuate anyone deemed to be at risk. Before that happened, however, the temperature dropped into the 20s and the winds began gusting to 50 mph. There were also concerns about a breach in the Belle's hull, and due to the position of the ship, the concern was that it could possibly be pulled toward a 100-foot drop-off. In dangerous weather conditions, the two corporals made approximately 12 trips from a nearby dock to the showboat and back in a patrol boat. The remainder of the 600 passengers disembarked the next morning after the creation of a berm and placement of a catwalk.

Thunderstorms on April 19, 2011, were the first of many in the Troop E area. By May 2, 2011, much of the area had received over 20 inches of rain. Levees collapsed—either on their own or were breached by the Army Corps of Engineers. Troopers assisted with evacuations, search and rescue, damage assessments, security patrols and checkpoints, dignitary escorts, and traffic control. They worked in two-man teams on four boats to assist with water rescues. A mobile field force of 21 troopers from around the state grew to include 42 troopers and 18 boats. In one instance, they rescued six

boats of Missouri National Guard personnel when they became stranded. Members assigned to this detail returned to their normal duties on May 11, 2011.

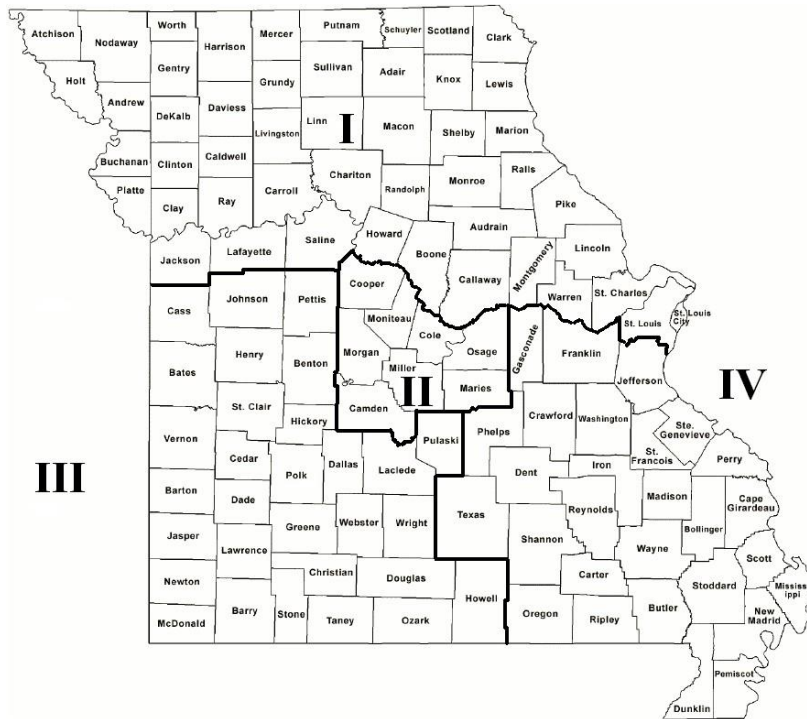
On May 9, 2011, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Missouri Chapter, recognized Corporal Scott Lance, for having the most boating while intoxicated (BWI) arrests in the state for 2010. Cpl. Lance was stationed at the Lake of the Ozarks and made 32 BWI arrests that year. MADD Missouri volunteer Robbie Pace Courtright presented the award at the Osage Beach City Hall.

On May 22, 2011, an EF5 multiple vortex tornado hit Joplin, MO. This was the deadliest tornado to hit the United States since 1947. Immediately, the Patrol sent 50 troopers to the area, as well as one mobile command and communications vehicle and four communications officers. Members of WPD assisted in Joplin as part of the 362 members and 89 civilians deployed to or living in the area who helped during the recovery. In addition to security patrols and checkpoints, troopers went door-to-door searching for people, they attended memorial services and funerals, and they met with countless families. Troopers also handled death investigations, damage assessment, dignitary escort and protection, and were tasked with locating 268 missing people, all of which were accounted for by June 1, 2011. It was reported that 161 people died as a result of this tornado. This special detail ended June 26, 2011.

In June 2011, flooding in Holt, Atchison, and Buchanan counties led to road closures lasting three months. Numerous levees were breached, creating extensive property damage. Division members were part of the 52 troopers from around the state who were assigned to assist during the flooding. They handled security patrols, security checkpoints, search and rescue efforts, damage assessment, and dignitary escort and protection. This special detail would run from June 10 through August 6, 2011.

For the first time, the Missouri State Fair detail included five officers from WPD; and a boat was among the Patrol equipment displayed near the Highway Gardens and Otto-The Talking Car.

On August 1, 2011, half of WPD's District 1 (Troop A and Troop H) were realigned to geographically match those troop areas. Five members of WPD were temporarily assigned to Troops A and H as a pilot program.



Water Patrol Division District Map, January 1, 2011

Trooper Fred Guthrie

On August 1, 2011, the Patrol suffered a devastating loss. Trooper Frederick F. "Fred" Guthrie Jr., and his Patrol K-9 Reed were assigned to Missouri River flood duty at Big Lake on Missouri Highway 118 and Highway 111 in Holt County. Tpr. Guthrie's truck was found running with the driver's door open. Apparently, both Tpr. Guthrie and K-9 Reed were swept away by swift flood water.

On Tuesday August 2, 2011, at approximately 6:25 p.m., K-9 Reed was located in swift moving flood water approximately 100 yards from where Tpr. Guthrie's truck and boat were located. K-9 Reed was a five-year-veteran with the Patrol.

On September 28, 2011, Colonel Ronald K. "Ron" Replogle regretfully announced the official death of Tpr. Guthrie. This announcement followed the issuance of Letters of Independent Administration by Platte County Associate Circuit Judge James Van Amburg to Tpr. Guthrie's spouse, Mrs. Teresa Guthrie. Judge Van Amburg issued the letters after hearing evidence and declaring that Tpr. Guthrie was killed in the line of duty on August 1, 2011. The Patrol's search for Tpr. Guthrie included Patrol divers, dragging the flood waters, boat searches of the Missouri River, and ground searches of areas that had previously been flooded. The search included large pumps, heavy equipment, cadaver dogs, and digging by hand. Volunteers and friends joined the Patrol in its desire to locate Tpr. Guthrie. On December 14, 2011, the Patrol held a memorial service for Tpr. Guthrie. Hundreds of people attended the service.

On Thursday, January 12, 2012, Colonel Ron Replogle announced that Tpr. Guthrie's body had been recovered under approximately 3 1/2 feet of packed sand and silt, after a brush pile was removed during an excavation process. The recovery site was south of where K-9 Reed was found months earlier, near the original search site. Trooper Frederick F. Guthrie Jr., 46, was the 30th member of the Missouri State Highway Patrol to make the ultimate sacrifice while serving and protecting the citizens of Missouri. He was survived by his wife and three children.

In September 2011, NASBLA presented WPD with its coveted Compass Award. The award recognized the division's leadership, commitment, and sacrifice in assisting NASBLA and the U.S. Coast Guard. These three entities designed, tested, and implemented the first-ever battery of seated, standardized field sobriety tests, thus enhancing boating under the influence enforcement actions across the nation.

NASBLA also presented Captain Gary T. Haupt with its prestigious NASBLA Award. This award recognizes the exemplary amount of time and effort Capt. Haupt dedicated to NASBLA in the field of boating accident investigation and reconstruction. Capt. Haupt has helped the organization achieve the highest professional reputation in the country through the development of a nationally recognized boating accident and reconstruction training program. Capt. Haupt served the organization on several committees during his tenure. NASBLA works to develop public policy for recreational boating safety. It represents the boating authorities of all 50 states and the U.S. territories.

Effective October 1, 2011, members of WPD were reassigned to the troop in which they reside.

2012 – 2016

Major Tommy Roam (Q/WPD), Captain Timothy J. Hull (Q/PIED), Captain Gregory D. Kindle (F), and Captain Mark E. Richerson (Q/FOB), attended the annual NASBLA conference in Mobile, AL. During one day of the conference, Major Roam experienced Officer In-Water Survival Training. He took the training in full uniform, boots, and with a weighted utility belt making the training realistic. The NASBLA conference also provided an opportunity to learn from other agencies.

On February 1, 2014, Major Tommy Roam retired. Captain Mark Richerson was appointed director of WPD. On September 1, 2016, Captain Mark Richardson retired. Captain Matthew C. Walz was appointed director effective July 1, 2016.

2017

The 2017 spring showers brought heavy flooding. The Patrol assigned WPD personnel and marine operations troopers to areas expected to be hit hardest. Governor Eric Greitens declared a state of emergency on April 29, 2017, in anticipation of the event. The 47 marine operations troopers were all swift water qualified. Troops A, B, and F supplied additional personnel and equipment throughout the event. 31 boats were made available for swift water rescues, evacuations, flood details, and water patrols. The three

aircraft (two helicopters and one fixed-wing) took part in rescues, provided flood assessment, and checked power lines.

The Patrol's flood response lasted from April 28 until May 7, 2017. WPD and marine operations troopers assisted 223 people and handled 82 flood-related rescues/evacuations. Six flood-related fatalities were reported.

Although the Patrol returned to normal operations on May 7, 2017, troopers continued to monitor waterways experiencing higher than normal water levels to caution the public about the potential dangers and assist where needed.

WPD and Troop F marine enforcement troopers coordinated to ensure a safe Lake of the Ozarks Shootout event in August 2017. The Shootout Boat Race is the culmination of the event, attracting approximately 100,000 spectators to the lake. The Patrol's presence and course input helped make the event safe—no fatalities, no serious crashes, and no drownings—from a law enforcement perspective.

On Tuesday, August 15, 2017, the Kansas City Police Department recognized the marine troopers and dive team members who were involved with the recovery of Toni Anderson on March 10, 2017. The ceremony took place at KCPD Headquarters, and the appreciation awards were presented by the Board of Police Commissioners and the newly appointed Police Chief Richard Smith.

The appreciation stemmed from the actions of Troop A marine officers Sergeant Bryan G. Parrot and Corporal Kimberly D. Davis, along with dive team members, Sergeant Charles W. Hoff (Q/WPD), Sergeant Chris L. Patton (C), Corporal Adam D. Smith (C), Corporal Dean A. Bartlett (F), Trooper Andy B. Ward (D), and Trooper Billy Cole (A). Anderson was reported missing on January 15, 2017, and her disappearance became a high-profile case in the Kansas City area. On March 10, 2017, the officers responded to the Missouri River near the Platte Landing Park after learning of a submerged vehicle in the water. The vehicle was believed to be Anderson's. Divers recovered Anderson and her vehicle after encountering strong river current, zero visibility underwater, and debris around the vehicle hampering divers' efforts to hook up to the vehicle. Divers and marine officers spent almost 12 hours making the recovery under those challenging conditions, and air temperature of 40 degrees and water temperature of 49 degrees.

In December 2017, four Dive Team members, Corporal Dean A. Bartlett (F), Trooper Rob W. Garrett (D), Sergeant Kurt C. Merseal (Q/WPD), and Trooper Logan B. Monahan (E), recently completed technical diving qualifications. The four newly certified technical divers sacrificed a lot of time away from their families and spent many hours training and studying to meet the requirements for this advanced certification. This certification could not have been possible without the support of Troops D, E, and F, and the divers' zone mates. The required training included intensive textbook study and involved numerous deep dives over the course of three weeks.

Technical diving is a form of scuba diving that involves greater depth and immersion time. The four divers are Padi Tri Mix 65 certified, capable of using and mixing helium, oxygen, and nitrogen tanks to dive at depths of 210 feet for prolonged periods of time. The Patrol's investment in equipment and training strengthened the Dive Team's capabilities in providing closure to families directly affected by waterway fatalities. Having the ability to perform technical dives also enhances the assistance the Dive Team provides during criminal investigations.

2018

The weather forecast in January allowed the first ice rescue training to occur. Lieutenant Michael A. Petlansky (Q/WPD) assisted Sergeant Dave F. Echternacht, (Q/TND), who served as the lead instructor for the training. The course occurred on the family farm of Corporal John M. Sellers (F). Participants attended four hours of classroom instruction followed by equipment on the first day. Troopers spent eight hours on the ice the second day. The Patrol's ice rescue training program is certified through Dive Rescue International, which is also the swift water rescue gear provider. The same equipment is used for both disciplines, giving our marine troopers additional training in their swift water gear.

During the first full week of March every year, WPD and the Training Division host Marine In-service. In 2018, all marine troopers split into two sessions for two days of training. Marine troopers also had the opportunity to spend time catching up with one another and meeting new members of marine operations.

Marine troopers are required to pass a swim test each year, which consists of a 550-yard continuous swim, treading water for two minutes without using their arms, a timed event requiring retrieval of a 10-pound weight at a depth of 10 feet then swimming back the length of the pool, and finally diving and retrieving three rings at different distances and locations. 2018's agenda was a two-hour block of officer survival swimming, where troopers wore BDU uniforms with long sleeves and tennis shoes to swim laps. A wet uniform can add approximately 15 pounds of additional weight, and that's in addition to the weight of a fully equipped gun belt.

In another section of the training, marine troopers had the opportunity to ride a Mercury inflatable. The scenario consisted of two troopers finding themselves in the water, with their inflatable boat upside down. What do you do? Troopers quickly found using ropes and teamwork to be an easy fix. The boat they used during the training was one damaged from the spring floods of 2017. Classroom time covered noise laws, boat accident investigations, and boat accident reconstruction/data retrieval. The in-service provided both refresher and new information to the marine troopers.

In October 2018, Dive Team members Trooper Andy B. Ward (D), Trooper Bill C. Cole (A), and Sergeant Charles W. Hoff (Q/WPD) became Padi Tri Mix 65 TEC certified. The Dive Team also added four members to the team: Corporal Jason M. Hurt (I), Trooper Brandon L. Butler (D), and Trooper Colby W. Tierney (I).

2019

Missouri experienced significant flooding along the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers in 2019 and Governor Parson declared a state of emergency on March 21, 2019. Marine troopers staged in the affected areas and performed numerous evacuations and water rescues. WPD facilitated the closure of the Osage River due to severe flooding through the Department of Public Safety from the Bagnell Dam to the Missouri River in June and July 2019.

On September 25, 2019, Sergeant Dave F. Echternacht (Q/TND), administered the inaugural Open Water Swim Class for 10 troopers at Lake of the Ozarks. Sgt. Echternacht identified the need for this course through input from marine troopers. The Open Water Swim Class was designed to increase the marine troopers' confidence in their ability to swim and navigate open water of varying depths (30-100 feet deep), without wearing a personal floatation device (the swimmers wore a swim buoy attached to their waist as a precaution). A patrol boat escorted the swimmers in the water. The students encountered wave action, wind, vessels in the vicinity, and debris in the water. The swimmers treaded water to rest and ensured they stayed together as a group. During the training, the troopers swam 1.4 miles, crossed the main channel of Lake of the Ozarks twice, crossed the Morgan/Camden County line twice, and were away from the shore for approximately an hour and a half.

2020

In response to COVID-19 restrictions at the state and federal level, many permitted fishing tournaments were canceled or rescheduled, and in-person boater safety classes were canceled. Missouri experienced many visitors to our waterways during the pandemic and this was reflected by an increase of 13,229 additional boater safety cards being issued compared to 2019.

In May 2020, the Dive Team added two Padi Scuba Dive Instructors: Corporal Logan B. Monahan (G) and Trooper Robert W. Garrett (D).

In October 2020, Cpl. Monahan and Sergeant Kurt C. Merseal (Q/WPD) became Cavern Diver Instructors and initiated the Patrol's cave diving program.

On December 16, 2020, Corporal Stacey L. Mosher (Q/GSD) was recognized during a virtual NASBLA awards ceremony and awarded the Boating Safety Award. Cpl. Mosher was assigned to the Lake of the Ozarks from 1994 until 2020, setting a positive example enforcing the boating laws of Missouri and serving as a valuable marine training officer for numerous marine troopers. She removed intoxicated boaters from Missouri waters and aggressively enforced hazardous boating violations. While assigned to the water, Cpl. Mosher was active with local charities, the Water Safety Council, peer support teams, volunteer organizations, and engaged with local citizens and businesses. She coordinated Ameren Missouri's shoreline clean-up teams with troopers, Ameren employees, and local citizens for numerous years. Cpl. Mosher fostered excellent working relationships with private businesses, residents, fire

departments, county and city police departments, marine troopers, federal agencies, other state agencies, and road troopers assigned to Lake of the Ozarks. She also coordinated, "End of the peak boating season" gatherings at local establishments to network and better foster relationships while assigned to Lake of the Ozarks.

2021

On February 1, 2021, Lieutenant Stephen M. Burgun transferred to WPD as the assistant director.

2022

In May 2022, Corporal Billy V. Cole (A), Trooper Rob W. Garrett (D), and Corporal Andy B. Ward (D) became cavern diver instructors to enhance our cavern diving capabilities.

The Dive Team hosted a five-week intensive New Diver Training starting in April and ending in June 2022. Corporal Tom N. Ziegler (C) and Trooper Adam S. Rice (D) successfully completed the course and became members of the Missouri State Highway Patrol Dive Team.

In June 2022, WPD took possession of a 22' Gator jet landing craft, with towed fish sonar technology, as the Patrol's primary dive boat platform. This boat provides adequate space and storage for the technical deep divers, their gear, and air tanks.

2024

In May 2024, Corporals Adam D. Smith and Travis N. Ziegler (C) became TEC divers.

2025

In March 2025, Corporal Billy V. Cole (A) became a Dive Medic Technician on the Dive Team. As a prerequisite of this, he had to successfully become an EMT first. In June 2025, after five intense weeks of new diver training, the Dive Team welcomed Troopers Luke A. Benke (F) and James A. Crewse (A) to the MSHP Dive Team.