



WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

WARDEN RECRUITMENT

2023 Conservation Warden Hiring Update

The DNR Division of Public Safety and Resource Protection anticipates opening the conservation warden application process in April 2023. Applicants who apply during this time and are successful in the hiring process will begin employment with the DNR in January 2024. This year's hiring process will likely focus on property-specific conservation warden positions assigned to major DNR properties throughout the state. Continue to check the [DNR Warden Recruitment website](#) for more updates.



DNR Conservation Wardens along the Milwaukee waterfront. / Photo Credit: Wisconsin DNR

Conservation Warden Career Myths – Debunked!

Our recruiters receive a variety of questions from prospective applicants every year, and it's not uncommon for people to have misconceptions about the conservation warden career. Learn more about these myths and realities below.

Myth: You need prior law enforcement experience to become a conservation warden.

There is no requirement to have previous law enforcement experience to be hired as a conservation warden. Upon hire, Warden recruits are paid to attend a 720-hour law enforcement academy hosted by the DNR. We regularly hire candidates with and without prior law enforcement experience.

Myth: Conservation wardens have no say in what workstation they are assigned.

In 2022, the DNR began asking new applicants to review available warden field stations and rank them based on their preferences. Field station assignments are based on both division needs and applicant preference. Conditional job offers are provided with a field station assignment, giving recruits approximately 12 months to plan and prepare if they or their family need to relocate.

Myth: Regardless of prior law enforcement experience, applicants must attend the entire training regimen.

We recognize applicants with prior law enforcement experience who bring a core knowledge of law enforcement techniques to the warden career. During the past several years, new hires with previous law enforcement experience have been able to attend an abbreviated academy. This allows new wardens with prior law enforcement experience to get to their field station sooner. That said, all newly hired wardens must still attend numerous specialized trainings throughout their first two years to learn a variety of disciplines.

Myth: Applicants need to have a college degree to become a warden.

Applicants must already possess or be able to earn at least 60 college credits within the first five years of hire. There is no requirement that those 60 college credits be in criminal justice or a natural resource field of study. Other basic requirements include the following:

- 21 years of age or older
- No unpardoned felony convictions
- Pass a background check
- Pass a [physical entrance test](#)
- Pass a mental evaluation
- Obtain boat, ATV, snowmobile, and hunter education safety certifications

Myth: Applicants must already be a resident of Wisconsin to apply.

Being a Wisconsin conservation warden is a dream job for many across the country, and we frequently receive applications and hire applicants from other states. We value the diversity of life experience those applicants can bring to the

warden service. We only require that once you're hired, you become a resident of Wisconsin and live in the state.

Myth: Applicants with prior law enforcement experience start at the bottom of the pay progression (\$25.90 per hour).

You came to this career with experience and should be compensated for it. Applicants with prior law enforcement experience can expect to be compensated at a higher rate than applicants with no experience. Our current pay progression allows for pay increases for years of service at 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11 years. (The top wage for field conservation wardens is \$34.94 per hour.) New hires with prior law enforcement experience can be compensated for their years of service starting on their first day.

Myth: Wardens never have personal time to recreate in the outdoors.

Wardens are allowed a somewhat flexible schedule. Wardens are expected to patrol during high-use times but can adjust and have input on their schedule by working with their supervisor. Many of our wardens continue pursuing their outdoor passions or other hobbies on their personal time and find a healthy work/personal life balance.

Myth: You can't be a warden if you've never hunted or fished.

You are not required to have a lengthy hunting and fishing background to become a warden. Being a conservation warden in the 21st century requires knowledge in countless disciplines, many of which can be learned through the training process. Many warden stations, including those in state parks, urban areas, and the great lakes, interact with a diverse base of outdoor users and focus on much more than hunting and fishing issues.

Myth: You can't be a warden if you've never operated a boat, snowmobile, or ATV.

There is no requirement to have previously operated recreational vehicles before becoming a warden. Regardless of your previous experience on recreational vehicles, all new warden recruits are required to attend specialized trainings for boats, snowmobiles and ATVs. You will develop and refine your skills at these specialized trainings. Our instructors are here to help.

Myth: You can't be a warden if you've gotten a citation in the past.

We recognize that people make mistakes - just because you received a citation in the past does not exclude you from becoming a warden. You may have gotten a speeding or natural resources citation in the past. It is important to us that you have learned from those past mistakes and are open and honest about them during our hiring process. Honesty and integrity are values at the core of the conservation warden service.

[Contact a warden recruiter to learn more about the career and answer your questions.](#)

LEARN MORE ABOUT BECOMING A WARDEN

Working For The DNR

The DNR employs a large, diverse workforce throughout our state. We seek employees with a strong customer service philosophy and an attitude of helpfulness.

Since 1879, conservation wardens have been proudly protecting the people and natural resources of Wisconsin. Our conservation wardens are certified law enforcement officers who patrol statewide day and night, investigate natural resource-related violations, and ensure the safety of everyone who enjoys the outdoors. Conservation wardens use education, enforcement and community involvement to accomplish their duties and promote the conservation ethic. The conservation warden career is both unique and rewarding, and requires candidates with a passion for helping others, communication skills and an appreciation for the outdoors.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE HIRING PROCESS

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Diversity & Inclusion Statement:

The Division of Public Safety and Resource Protection is responsible for protecting natural resources, which are essential for the lives, health and happiness of every person in Wisconsin. We are committed to creating a culture of inclusivity, building trusting relationships, and thoughtfully engaging and serving our diverse public.



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Call 1-888-936-7463 (TTY Access via relay - 711) from 7 a.m. - 10 p.m.

