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**Real stories from Conservation Officers
and Forest Rangers in the field**

Contributed by ECO Lt. Ken Didion
and Forest Ranger Lt. Chris Liebelt

Rangers Aid Flood Victims— Delaware County

In June 2007, several thunderstorms deposited eight inches of rain during a two-hour period in the Spring Brook drainage in the Town of Colchester. Flash flooding occurred with little or no warning and the residents living along State Route 206 were in danger. Several homes were completely washed away, and dozens of homes were filled with water and debris. Residents and travelers were trapped by rising waters. Emergency responders, including Forest Rangers Dave Meade and Dell Jefferey, responded to the scene, only to find themselves unable to access the small valley. After rescuing several people from vehicles, rangers decided to pull back and planned to resume their efforts at first light.

In the morning, DEC rangers realized the damage was much more extensive than originally thought. Rescues took place all morning. People were trapped in buildings, cars, and stranded by high water. Medical emergencies took priority. By that evening, triage was completed and a plan was put in place for additional search and recovery efforts.

By the second day of the search, rangers and state troopers had identified four individuals who were still missing. Two were in their home when it was swept from its foundation and destroyed. Another individual was also in her home when it was ripped from its foundation by the flood waters. A fourth person was stranded in a car and washed downstream by the force of the flood. Over the course of the six-day search and rescue, rangers recovered the bodies of two of the missing subjects. Unfortunately, two of the missing could not be found, and still remain unaccounted for.

The professionalism of all involved is evidenced by the fact that not a single serious injury was incurred by the hundreds of staff and volunteers. In all, 18 DEC forest rangers worked on coordinating the field operations for this multi-jurisdictional incident that saved many lives.

Lazy Is As Lazy Does—Putnam County

ECOs Josh Crain and Chuck Wilson were working with state police to find a truck that had reportedly been involved in a dumping incident. A radio call from the troopers made them aware that the truck had been pulled over on I-684 in the Town of Southeast. When the ECOs arrived, the truck driver and his passenger admitted to the illegal disposal of 96 phone books. The men explained that they were contracted to deliver phone books. They had decided that it would be easier to throw the phone books away and quit work early. The men were charged with the illegal disposal of solid waste. Troopers also charged the driver with operating an uninspected motor vehicle and operating a heavy duty diesel vehicle without a valid emissions inspection. The men were also escorted back to the dumping area to clean up their mess.

Just Plain Scary—Tioga County

ECO Mike Wheeler conducted a joint investigation with the Tioga County Sheriff's Department concerning the misuse of a Russian AK-47. A Tioga man had become angry because he was not allowed to bow hunt on a property bordering his own. The angry man threatened the owner of the neighboring land and told him he "would ruin the hunting on that property" with his AK-47. The man followed through on his threat. On numerous occasions, he shot dozens of rounds into the adjoining woods—during hours when other hunters would most likely be present. Two archery hunters provided written statements documenting they had heard bullets strike trees near their tree stands.

Almost unbelievably, the man had his 14-year-old son perform his shooting ritual for him when he was out of town. With a court order in hand, ECO Wheeler and sheriff's deputies seized eight firearms from the man's residence and served him with an order of protection. He was charged with reckless endangerment, criminal solicitation and two counts of hunter harassment. Two days before the scheduled jury trial, the man pled guilty to criminal solicitation and hunter harassment. He was fined \$1,000 on the penal law charge and \$250 on the ECL charge. The AK-47 is in the possession of the Sheriff's Department and is scheduled to be destroyed.