



On Patrol

Real stories from Conservation Officers and Forest Rangers in the field

Carl Heilman II

Contributed by ECO Lt. Tom Caifa and Forest Ranger Lt. John Solan

Real TV—Orange County

In early February, ECO Aaron Gordon responded to a complaint of a deer tangled in a snare in Warwick. Upon arrival, the complainant took the ECO to the deer and the officer noticed boot tracks leading into the woods. After ECO Mike Buckley arrived, the two officers searched the woods near the snared deer and found numerous other snares of various sizes, one steel leg-hold trap, and the same boot tracks. The ECOs followed the tracks to a house about a half-mile away. The homeowner admitted to setting the snares and knew that he had caught a deer. He said he saw an episode involving traps and snares on the Canadian television show *Survivorman* and wanted to try setting some. The officers then ordered the subject to walk through the woods and collect all his snares, which totaled 41. The ECOs seized the equipment, and issued the man several tickets, including ones for trespassing and taking deer out of season. Fortunately, the officers were able to release the deer unharmed.

All Down Hill—Franklin County

The Titus Mountain Ski Area in Malone and its former manager were each charged with one felony and three misdemeanors after law enforcement's Bureau of Environmental Crimes Investigators (BECI) conducted a lengthy investigation. Investigators and DEC staff searched the ski area and discovered wastewater from the area was being piped directly into a culvert flowing into the Salmon River. The felony charge was for constructing and operating a waste disposal system that discharged sewage into the waters of the state. Investigators also discovered more than 100 cubic yards of solid waste buried on the property. Charges related to the illegal solid waste disposal are pending.

Logging Lessons Learned—Lewis County

The Jefferson-Lewis BOCES forestry program recently received some unexpected support, thanks to a criminal case involving timber trespass and theft investigated by DEC Forest Rangers and BECI. Two men had purchased the right to log certain state lands, but also removed an additional 801 trees on adjacent state land. This is a violation of state and environmental conservation laws. The men were arrested and under New York State law

could have received penalties of more than \$250,000. However, based upon the defendants' immediate cooperation, and with the belief that something positive could come from a criminal action, the parties involved formulated an idea to make reparations of \$20,000 to the BOCES forestry program. The defendants received misdemeanor convictions in exchange for the reparation and reimbursement of \$15,000 for the stumpage value, plus a \$5,100 penalty paid to the State of New York. The reparation allows for the money to be awarded directly to the area where the crime occurred and allows for beneficial use by the community.

Smoke Signals—Schoharie County

Recently, the Schoharie County Sheriff's Office contacted patrolling Sergeant Keith Isles to assist with an illegal burning complaint in the town of Wright. Sgt. Isles knew the location in question had been a problem in the past and contained several thousand waste tires. While en route miles away, he could see black smoke in the distance. When Sgt. Isles arrived, the property owner stated he was burning a brush pile and "five or six" tires were mixed in by mistake. After the fire department fully extinguished the fire, it was discovered that between 50 and 75 large truck tires had burned. Sgt. Isles issued the man tickets for illegal solid waste disposal and air contamination violations.

ASK THE ECO

Q: I have a stream running through my property. I would like to do some landscaping around it and possibly make some changes to the banks. Do I need any special permit to do this?

A: Many streams in New York State are protected by law. This protection often includes the banks of the stream and some of the surrounding area. A permit is required for disturbing the bed or banks of many streams, so always check with DEC first before taking any action to alter a stream or the surrounding area. While it's desirable to have a well-manicured yard, that's not always the best thing for the stream and its inhabitants. (For more information, see "Permits & Licenses" on DEC's website www.dec.ny.gov.)