



IDAHO FISH AND GAME GOLDSHEET

March 2026 Commission Meeting

Agenda Item: *History of the Idaho Game Warden*

Presented by: *Barry Cummings*

Position/Title: *Regional Conservation Officer*

Agenda Item No.: 15

Supervisor Approval: *JW*

Background:

When Idaho became a state, fish and game statutes were enforced by state game wardens—political appointees who served at the pleasure of the governor. In 1938, a voter referendum established the Idaho Fish and Game Commission, which separated Fish and Game staff from direct political influence and made possible a truly professional resource agency focused on a single mission: preserving, protecting, perpetuating and managing Idaho’s fish and wildlife resources. The game wardens of old are now the present-day conservation officers. With just over 110 employees in the enforcement program, conservation officers are spread across the state from the largest cities to the smallest and most rural communities, each covering over 1,000 square miles.

This agenda item will provide a historical overview of the IDFG enforcement program. This presentation will provide the background and describe the inner workings of the wildlife enforcement program as it was before Idaho became a state. From the first employee of the agency, Charles Arbuckle, Idaho’s first State Game Warden, we’ll follow the origins of the IDFG Enforcement program up through the establishment of the Commission and to where we are today.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

Idaho Statute 36-1301 outlines the powers and duties of classified department staff to include Conservation Officers.

Public Involvement Process:

None.

Justification:

The enforcement program is responsible for enforcing Idaho statutes and IDAPA rules passed by the Commission.

Staff Recommendation:

None.

Suggested Motion:

None – Informational only.