

New Law Enforcement Officer Patrols at Shiawassee Refuge

December 15, 2008

Refuge Officer Joseph E. Hughes reported to duty at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge on December 15, 2008. Hughes comes to the refuge from the National Park Service where he worked at several high profile units with very active law enforcement programs, including Yosemite National Park, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and Pinnacles National Monument. Consequently, Hughes has extensive law enforcement experience in both natural resource and public use realms.



New Refuge Officer Joseph E. Hughes. Steven F. Kahl/USFWS; 1/2009

Law enforcement is a critical issue at the refuge that affects the protection of natural resources and the safety of visitors. The refuge attracts an abundance of wildlife and has diverse habitat management programs. However, the refuge also attracts 60,000 visitors per year and is adjacent to the population centers of the City of Saginaw, Saginaw Township, and James Township. Consequently, 600 - 700 law enforcement incidents are documented at the refuge annually.

Some of the more significant resource incidents have included poaching of white-tailed deer and garter snakes, commercial harvest of earthworms, shooting of a sandhill crane, low sightseeing helicopter over-flights, and airboat disturbance of bald eagles. Severe civil incidents have included car clouting, missing persons, a suicide attempt, marijuana cultivation, and arson. Meanwhile, the refuge must respond to chronic offenses such as dumping of household and construction waste, ATV and snowmobile trespass, vandalism, and boundary encroachment. Further, Shiawassee Refuge is responsible for law enforcement on four islands within Michigan Islands National Wildlife Refuge and 118 Farm Services Administration conservation easements spread across 44 counties.