



NFWF



# THE GUY BRADLEY AWARD

## 2024 REQUEST FOR NOMINATIONS for State Agency and Federal Agency Wildlife Enforcement Officers to Recognize Outstanding Lifetime Service

**NOMINATIONS DUE BY** *Friday, January 19, 2024, by 11:59pm Eastern Time*

### OVERVIEW

In 1905, a Florida game warden named Guy Bradley became the first wildlife law enforcement agent killed while performing his duties to protect the nation's wildlife. Law enforcement agents like Bradley are essential to virtually every aspect of wildlife conservation, from recovering endangered species to managing waterfowl and big game resources. In honor of Guy Bradley, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation established this lifetime achievement award to recognize individuals for their commitment and performance in the field of wildlife law enforcement.

The Guy Bradley Award will be presented to one state agency and one federal agency officer whose dedication and public service to protecting the nation's natural resources demonstrates outstanding leadership, excellence in implementation, knowledge, and actions that have advanced the cause of wildlife conservation.

### AWARD

One state and one federal recipient will receive a check for \$2,500 and a commemorative plaque in recognition of their efforts. Recently retired officers and previously nominated officers are eligible to receive this award. In the event that a recipient cannot accept a cash award, as is the case for federal employees, a donation of \$2,500 will be made in the recipient's name to the organization/project of his or her choice.

### SPONSORING AGENCY

Agency Name: Illinois Department of Natural Resources Office of Law Enforcement

Agency Address: 1 Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702

Contact Person Name: Deputy Chief John L. Miller

Contact Person Email: John.Miller@illinois.gov

Contact Person Phone: 217-900-0214

### NOMINEE'S CONTACT INFORMATION

Full Name: Jed Whitchurch

Job Title: Director Office of Law Enforcement Illinois State Conservation Police

Office Address: 1 Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702

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Phone: 312-550-7548

## **NOMINEE'S YEARS OF SERVICE**

Director Jed Whitchurch has 22 years of Conservation Law Enforcement Experience, most of which has been in the Chicago Metro Area. Director Whitchurch currently serves as the Senior Executive (Chief) for the State of Illinois Conservation Police/ Illinois Department of Natural Resources Office of Law Enforcement, A statewide law enforcement agency with full statewide police authority consisting of over 175 sworn members and 28 civilian employees. Over the past 22 years, Director Whitchurch has held the following positions in Conservation Law Enforcement:

### ***DIRECTOR OF LAW ENFORCEMENT – ILLINOIS CONSERVATION POLICE***

May 2022- Present

### ***INTERIM DEPUTY CHIEF – ILLINOIS CONSERVATION POLICE,***

November 2020 – May 2022

### **CONSERVATION POLICE CAPTAIN – ILLINOIS CONSERVATION POLICE**

February 2019 – November 2020

### **CONSERVATION POLICE SERGEANT – ILLINOIS CONSERVATION POLICE**

February 2017 – February 2019

### **CONSERVATION POLICE OFFICER-ILLINOIS CONSERVATION POLICE**

April 2007 – February 2017

### **POLICE OFFICER-FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT OF DUPAGE COUNTY**

April 2002 – April 2007

Director Whitchurch's wide range of Conservation Law Enforcement positions serves as a testament to Director Whitchurch's exceptional service, highlighting his invaluable contribution to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Law Enforcement. His career service exemplifies the very best of conservation law enforcement and serves as an inspiration for others charged with the protection of natural resources and wildlife conservation.

The positive response Director Whitchurch garners from the public is a testament to his excellent communication skills, approachability, and dedication to ensuring the safety and well-being of the public and the protection of natural resources. By consistently going above and beyond the call of duty, he continues to earn the respect and appreciation of those he serves in the conservation law enforcement community.

Director Whitchurch's commitment to public service, protecting the nation's natural resources, and developing conservation law enforcement leadership is exemplary and recognized by renowned institutions in the field. His expertise and passion have led to an incredible opportunity where he currently serves as an adjunct professor at one of the Nation's leading Public Safety Institutes, the Northwestern University Center for Public Safety.

## **NOMINEE'S CAREER ACHIEVEMENTS**

### **Office of Law Enforcement Medal of Valor Recipient**

Director Whitchurch's outstanding bravery and quick thinking in apprehending an armed suspect involved in a series of dangerous criminal activities led to his deserving recognition and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Office of Law Enforcement Valor Award. The apprehension of the armed suspect, who was responsible for a bank robbery, high-speed chase, and shooting of a police officer, demonstrates Director Whitchurch's dedication to public safety and commitment to upholding the law.

### **Office of Law Enforcement District 4 Officer of the Year Representative Seven Times**

Director Whitchurch consistently surpassed expectations in his role, he consistently delivered exceptional results. His enforcement productivity exemplified his dedication to maintaining law and order along with natural resource protection within his district. His commitment to excellence and his attention to detail made him a role model for others in the field. Not only was Director Whitchurch exceptional in his enforcement efforts, but he also demonstrated a strong focus on public service. Director Whitchurch's exceptional track record, his positive public reception, and his strong leadership skills made him an outstanding candidate for the District 4 Officer of the Year numerous times.

### **Office of Law Enforcement Region 2 Officer of the Year Representative Three Times**

Director Whitchurch consistently went above and beyond the call of duty. His investigative skills and attention to detail allowed him to solve even the most challenging investigations. His pursuit of resolving cases not only made the community safer but also earned him the respect and admiration of his colleagues. In addition to his outstanding investigative work, Director Whitchurch consistently led the state in all enforcement categories. His unwavering commitment to upholding conservation and other state laws did not go unnoticed, as he continuously demonstrated exceptional performance across various enforcement metrics. One of Director Whitchurch's most remarkable achievements is the fact that, despite his stellar accomplishments, he never received a single public complaint.

### **Office of Law Enforcement Boating Officer of the Year Nominee Two Times**

Director Whitchurch's exceptional dedication to waterway safety in his home district, which included Lake Michigan, made him highly deserving of recognition. Taking a proactive approach to ensure the safety of those enjoying the waterways, Director Whitchurch personally spearheaded an enforcement initiative that not only prioritized the enforcement of regulations but also focused on enhancing waterway safety. Director Whitchurch's responsibilities extended to investigating boating accidents. With dedication and empathy, he worked diligently to bring closure to the families involved and sought justice for those at fault.

### **Chicago Police Department Joint Operations Merit Award**

Director Whitchurch's exceptional vigilance and dedication to enforcing the law were demonstrated when he discovered a marijuana grow operation on IDNR property. Recognizing the significance of this illegal activity, Director Whitchurch immediately took action by collaborating with the Chicago Police

Department's Special Investigations Division. Together, they diligently monitored the illicit use of state property. Director Whitchurch worked in close collaboration with law enforcement personnel from the IDNR, Chicago Police, and DEA to strategize and execute a successful operation.

## **NOMINEE'S DEMONSTRATION OF OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP**

Immediately upon taking the Director's role in May of 2022 Director Whitchurch recognized that a unique opportunity for improvement existed for the Office of Law Enforcement. Director Whitchurch worked tirelessly throughout 2022 and 2023 to drastically improve overall operations, work-life balances for all employees, and the organizational culture that existed in the agency for decades.

Director Whitchurch consistently offers valuable insights, advice, and support to both Conservation Police Officers and civilian staff seeking guidance in their career progression by leveraging their expertise and experience. He provides information about potential career paths, skill development opportunities, training programs, and resources that can help Conservation Police Officers excel in their chosen field. A recent example of this process was the coaching and mentoring of two Office of Law Enforcement Lieutenants who, under Director Whitchurch's leadership, completed the Northwestern University School of Police Staff and Command as well as the Northwestern University Executive Management Program.

Director Whitchurch leads by example. Throughout his Conservation Law Enforcement Career Director Whitchurch routinely led the State in his Conservation enforcement and as such he earned the respect of the officers as well as supervisors in the field who are willing to follow his lead. Many of Director Whitchurch's Conservation Enforcement efforts throughout his career remain unmatched today.

Director Whitchurch has a strong commitment to excellence in all aspects of Conservation Law Enforcement as well as a genuine concern for those under his command. He routinely demonstrates an open-minded approach and solicits input from a variety of sources regarding departmental decisions. Director Whitchurch's leadership demonstrates his sincere belief in fundamental fairness regarding all departmental processes. He leads with transparency, empathy, compassion, diplomacy, and tact. Director Whitchurch understands the importance of collaboration with both internal and external stakeholders. His leadership approach fosters an atmosphere of compromise and cooperation that provides abundant opportunities for both immediate and future departmental successes.

## **NOMINEE'S UNIQUE PROFESSIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS (GOING ABOVE THE CALL OF DUTY)**

Director Whitchurch routinely goes above and beyond the duties outlined in his job description. In addition to the innovative programs, strategic approaches, and his commitment to excellence he makes himself available at any time day or night for the officers under his command. Director Whitchurch gives equal attention to both professional performances and personal needs of departmental members. Specific and recent examples of Director Whitchurch's exceptional performance beyond what is required include but are not limited to the following:

Director Whitchurch authorized and played an instrumental role in organizing a uniformed statewide response and show of support in 2023 following the tragic death of an Illinois State Conservation Police Officer's wife. Director Whitchurch recognized the importance and impact that such a response could have on the individual officer, the officer's family, and the department as a whole. His commitment to

the emotional well-being of those individuals under his command is far more than just lip service. Director Whitchurch exemplifies the motto “Deeds not Words” as it relates to the emotional the well-being of both offices and the department as a whole.

Director Whitchurch took it upon himself and went out of his way to secure housing for a Conservation Police Officer and the Officer’s family who lost nearly everything in a house fire in 2022. Director Whitchurch was able to utilize the relationships and support he cultivated previously to secure the housing. The officer was then able to return to work after suffering minor injuries in the fire, the officer’s family was able to focus on rebuilding rather than where they were going to live, and the department benefited from Director Whitchurch’s exceptional performance.

Additionally, Director Whitchurch makes it a priority to personally contact officers, statewide, who experience deaths in their families, illnesses, injuries, and other major life events. Director Whitchurch routinely demonstrates a genuine concern for the well-being of all department members and their families through his actions and efforts.

### **NOMINEE’S INNOVATION (PROGRAM STARTER)**

Director Whitchurch has both initiated or improved several departmental programs. In 2023 Director Whitchurch recognized the need for a statewide computer-aided dispatch program for State Conservation Police Officers at the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Prior to this date the department operated a without computer-aided dispatching program of any type. He identified the need for improved office safety, improved response times, improved resource allocation, and an ability for supervisors and command staff to quickly determine the location of all available filed officers at a moment's notice to better serve the public. Director Whitchurch conducted extensive research into to both a statewide operating system that would tie every Conservation Police Office in the state together seamlessly and the heavy financial burden associated with such an undertaking. Director Whitchurch was able to leverage existing relationships he developed, with outside stakeholders, to form a partnership that allowed the objectives outlined above to be met. He did this in a manner that capitalized on operating systems, that were currently in use by other statewide law enforcement agencies and resulted in a very minimal financial impact to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Director Whitchurch recognized the increased scrutiny, accountability, and oversight the public was demanding of law enforcement. As a result, he identified a need for departmental general orders, policies, and procedures to be disseminated, audited, and revised in a timely cost-efficient manner. He understood that providing officers in the field with the most up-to-date training bulletins as well as policy and procedure updates was paramount to the organization's success, and necessary to improve performances across the board. Despite having to deal with some of the most stringent procurement processes in the country for state government Director Whitchurch was able to identify, select, and implement a software program designed to do exactly what was needed for the department and the individual officers.

Director Whitchurch’s commitment to officer wellness is exemplified by his creation of a Wellness Committee. This committee serves to assist the officers in their daily stressors so that they are better prepared to effectively serve the citizens of Illinois as week as the patrons of the Illinois State Parks, and Illinois Historic Sites.

Under Director Whitchurch's leadership a formalized Supervisory Field Training Program was developed and implemented. Director Whitchurch was instrumental in the successful and rapid resolution of two union contracts for Conservation Police Sergeants, Conservation Police Lieutenants, and Conservation Police Officers.

## **NOMINEE'S IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY**

Director Whitchurch's commitment to conservation and outdoor recreation is further evident through his active involvement with Ducks Unlimited. As a member of this esteemed organization, Director Whitchurch not only supports its mission but actively contributes to its success through his vast knowledge and experience in outdoor recreational activities. Director Whitchurch's passion for the outdoors and his understanding of the importance of habitat conservation make him a valuable asset to his local Ducks Unlimited chapter. He willingly shares his expertise as both an outdoor recreationalist and a seasoned professional in the field of outdoor recreation. By providing insights and guidance, Director Whitchurch enhances habitat initiatives and helps coordinate leadership opportunities within the organization. Through his involvement with Ducks Unlimited, Director Whitchurch actively participates in advancing the organization's mission of wetlands and waterfowl conservation. His dedication to maintaining and improving habitats for waterfowl and other wildlife is a testament to his unwavering commitment to preserving our natural resources. Director Whitchurch's contribution to Ducks Unlimited extends beyond his involvement in local chapters. His vast knowledge of outdoor recreation and habitat conservation also allows him to advocate for the organization's objectives at a broader level. His active engagement and leadership in this field contribute to raising awareness and promoting the importance of preserving and protecting our natural environments.

Director Whitchurch's commitment to developing leadership abilities extends beyond his professional endeavors. Apart from his role in law enforcement and his involvement in conservation organizations, Director Whitchurch also lends his expertise to the local volleyball club program. Recognizing the importance of strong leadership in sports organizations, Director Whitchurch actively assists the club program in enhancing the leadership abilities of club directors and coaches. His experience and skills in leadership, problem-solving, and strategic planning are highly regarded by coaches within the program. Director Whitchurch's leadership abilities are sought after by many coaches who recognize his ability to effectively tackle challenges and devise strategic plans to overcome them. His problem-solving skills enable him to analyze complex situations and provide practical solutions, thus fostering an environment conducive to growth and success within the club program. By sharing his knowledge and expertise with club directors and coaches, Director Whitchurch contributes to the development of strong leadership within the volleyball club program. His guidance and mentorship provide valuable insights that help enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the program's leadership structure.

## **NOMINEE'S MENTORING ACTIVITIES**

By engaging with employees and understanding their goals, strengths, and areas for improvement, Director Whitchurch provided personalized guidance tailored to each individual's needs. This support includes setting career goals, identifying relevant training and development opportunities, offering

mentorship, or coaching, and providing feedback on performance and progress. Director Whitchurch has successfully implemented innovative methods enabling field officers to exercise greater control over their careers while affording supervisors the opportunities to better manage talent. His leadership provides education and training to the right employees, for the right task, at the right time. Director Whitchurch's leadership displays a commitment to fostering a dynamic and efficient workforce within the Office of Law Enforcement.

Director Whitchurch recognizes the importance of individual aspirations and growth by empowering employees with greater control over their career paths. This approach enhances employee engagement and satisfaction. His leadership fosters a sense of ownership and accountability for personal and professional development.

Additionally, Director Whitchurch acknowledges the significance of aligning employees' skills and capabilities with the organization's needs by affording leaders the opportunities to better manage talent. This strategic approach enables leaders to optimize resource allocation, promote teamwork, and create a conducive environment for high performance.

Furthermore, Director Whitchurch's emphasis on education and training for the right employees, for the right task, and at the right time highlights the importance of targeted development initiatives. By identifying specific skill gaps and providing relevant training opportunities, employees now have the necessary knowledge and competencies to excel in their roles as State Conservation Police Officers. This approach not only enhances individual performance but also contributes to the organization's overall success.

Director Whitchurch's commitment to developing law enforcement leadership is exemplary and recognized by renowned institutions in the field. His expertise and passion have led to an incredible opportunity where he was offered a position as an adjunct professor at one of the leading Public Safety Institutes, the Northwestern University Center for Public Safety. As an adjunct professor, Director Whitchurch has the privilege of sharing his extensive knowledge and experience in law enforcement leadership with law enforcement supervisors and executives from across the country. By teaching classes in the Staff and Command School Program, he plays a crucial role in shaping the future leaders of law enforcement agencies. Director Whitchurch's teaching curriculum covers a comprehensive range of important topics in law enforcement leadership. From organizational behavior and officer wellness to performance appraisal and managing problem employees.

## **ANY OTHER INFORMATION YOU WOULD LIKE TO INCLUDE ABOUT YOUR NOMINEE**

Director Whitchurch embraced the opportunity to influence the next generation of law enforcement leaders. His dedication and expertise help shape the mindset and skillset of these future leaders, ensuring they are well-prepared to face the challenges of a rapidly evolving law enforcement landscape. Director Whitchurch's position as an adjunct professor at the Northwestern University Center for Public Safety is testament to his belief in developing law enforcement leadership. His curriculum covers a wide range of critical topics and equips students with the knowledge and skills required to lead effectively in the field of law enforcement. Through his teaching, Director Whitchurch is making a significant impact on the development of law enforcement leaders at a national level.

Director Whitchurch's commitment to professional development is commendable, as evidenced by his recent pursuit of higher education. Despite already having a successful career, he took it upon himself to embark on an educational journey to complete his Master of Science in Criminal Justice in both 2021



and 2022. Taking on such a rigorous educational workload while simultaneously fulfilling his responsibilities in a high-level law enforcement administrative role is a testament to Director Whitchurch's determination to enhance his abilities and serve as a role model to others in Conservation Law Enforcement. By pursuing further education, he exemplifies the importance of continuous learning and personal growth, instilling a culture of self-improvement within his team and others in Conservation Law Enforcement. Director Whitchurch's decision to pursue a Master of Science in Criminal Justice aligns perfectly with his dedication to his profession and his commitment to showcasing exemplary leadership within the conservation community. Not only does Director Whitchurch's pursuit of higher education benefit him personally, but it also positively impacts the organization he serves. His enhanced knowledge and skills can be applied to critical decision-making processes, policy development, and implementation strategies, ultimately enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the law enforcement agency under his leadership. Director Whitchurch's decision to pursue higher education and complete his Master of Science in Criminal Justice while continuing to excel in his law enforcement administrative role demonstrates his unwavering commitment to personal and professional growth. His dedication to improving his abilities and serving as a role model to his subordinates is truly admirable, and his pursuit of further education will undoubtedly contribute to his effectiveness as a leader in the criminal justice field.

#### **SUBMISSION & SUBMISSION ASSISTANCE**

Please fill out this form and email it to AFWA Communications Director, Patricia Allen ([pallen@fishwildlife.org](mailto:pallen@fishwildlife.org)).

For more information or questions about this request for nominations, please contact Patricia Allen.