



United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

Hoosier National Forest
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Hoosier NF Highlights

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Enforcing Laws on the Hoosier National Forest



By J. Rice, Law Enforcement Officer

The Hoosier National Forest (NF) has two designated law enforcement officers (LEO): J. Rice and D. Kidd. Both individuals are certified federal law enforcement officers through the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center and have completed the Land Management Police Training Program at the Center.

As members of the Law Enforcement and Investigations organization, the Hoosier National Forest's LEOs are an integral part of the Forest Service, recognized as leaders in public and employee safety, natural resource protection, and as professional cooperators with other law enforcement agencies. The forest's law enforcement organization is a diverse workforce committed to integrity, responsibility, and accountability.

The other employees on the Hoosier NF are not certified federal law enforcement officers but possess a limited scope of law enforcement authority after attending and successfully completing a 40 hour course taught by LEOs and or special agents. The course is designed to teach selected U.S. Forest Service (USFS) employees non-arrest techniques to mitigate minor violations on the National Forest System lands. In addition to attending the course, USFS employees have to receive approval from the Special Agent in Charge after completing a background investigation. These employees are known as Forest Protection Officers (FPOs) and conduct restricted law enforcement tasks secondary to their primary duties. For example, a Hoosier NF recreation technician with FPO status working on trail maintenance may be able to write tickets for various minor violations.

LEOs have the ability to initiate a federal investigation for felony offenses, write federal violation notices, warning notices; or document an incident report for anything from failure to have a permit, riding an all-terrain vehicle on the NF, illegal drug possession, or an archaeological resource protection violation. Officers need to possess a working knowledge of federal, state, and local laws and ordinances. In the event that complex time consuming investigations arise, LEOs rely heavily on USFS criminal investigators. These criminal investigators are known as U.S. Forest Service Special Agents. They work all federal investigations on the Hoosier NF.

Both Hoosier NF LEOs work in close collaboration with local sheriff offices and conservation officers. They frequently dispatch through these entities, and will back up other officers as needed. Cooperative law enforcement agreements are the cornerstone of the USFS's ability to build relationships with other federal, state, county, and local law enforcement authorities, along with the general public. Those relationships are paramount to successful enforcement of federal and state law on National Forest System lands.

Unauthorized all-terrain vehicle use causes the most resource damage on the Hoosier NF. Dumping is another major issue. Adverse consequences of violating Hoosier NF rules and regulations vary, but may result in as much as six months imprisonment and a \$5,000 fine. Other consequences of violating laws governing the proper use of Hoosier NF land could result in more than one year of imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine.

With only two LEOs on the Hoosier NF, they also rely on visitors to report their concerns. They advise people to be good witnesses and help protect the resources that belong to all of us. The public should consider safety first, but observe as many facts as possible and then accurately report those facts to law enforcement authorities.

For more information on Forest Service law enforcement contact J. Rice at the Bedford office, 812-275-5987 or through the Hoosier NF email at r9_hoosier_website@fs.fed.us.



Marijuana found growing in the Forest is an example of something a visitor might come across. This type of activity should be noted, and reported, but visitors should stay clear of the area.



Braided trails caused by off-highway vehicles cause erosion and resource damage on the Forest.



Household goods and trash are often found dumped along Forest roads.