

February 27, 2018 Selfless Servants, Always Ready; Public Safety Dive Teams

Public safety diving is conducted by law enforcement, fire rescue, and search & rescue/recovery dive teams. These dedicated teams are called to action for a variety of missions from drowning victims to location of missing evidence. Public safety divers respond to emergencies 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and may be required to dive in the middle of the night, during inclement weather, in zero visibility or through polluted waters. These selfless men and women are often given very little time to plan a search and rely solely on their team members, training and specialized search equipment. JW Fishers is proud to serve as an extension of these teams by providing the right tools for the job with the same mission-focus and devotion; anytime, rain or shine.

In 2014 Detective Bill Nichols, team leader for the Oneida County Public Safety Dive Team in Rhinelander WI, along with a group of like-minded Public Safety Scuba Divers from agencies around the state of Wisconsin formed the Midwest Public Safety Diver's Association. These divers came together with the support of their agencies to create a resource network that could support public safety dive teams in the Midwest by opening communications to share information training, equipment, operations and policies.

In 2015, the Association held its first annual conference in Stevens Point Wisconsin. More than 70 public safety divers from Wisconsin, Iowa and Minnesota were in attendance. This group represented several law enforcement, fire and rescue teams from across the region. The conference showcased expositions such as forensic autopsies for drowning victims, local case reviews on recoveries of homicide victims, underwater evidence collection and examples of local dive team structure. The conference quickly showed its worth and resulted in countless relationships built, contacts made and networks established that would go on to benefit all organizations represented.

Third annual conference took place in 2017 and once again was an enormous success! The association has opened the conference up to manufactures, vendors and training agencies that support public safety divers and their teams. This cooperation gives the divers an opportunity to get "hands on" experience with equipment and information about quality gear designed for the needs of public safety divers and their teams. These providers have grown to realize the dynamic needs of public safety divers and work closely with their agencies and municipalities. The association recognizes the importance of remaining neutral as it develops and fosters relationships between manufactures, retailers, commercial entities, and the teams. This allows them to remain unbiased and for the best interests of the dive teams to remain paramount for the safety of the divers.

The purpose of the Midwest Public Safety Diving Association is to advance public safety diving as a profession, to promote uniform training and standards, and to be an information resource for public safety divers and their teams. The association will provide a mid-west based resource for public safety dive teams and their members where they can access current policies and procedures, up-to-date training guides, and recommended minimum public safety diving standards based on OSHA, NFPA and major public safety training agencies.

Detective Nichols is a current user of both JW Fishers Pulse 8X and SAR-1 underwater metal detectors. During the conference Bill had his search equipment on display for other divers to view. The Pulse 8X underwater metal detector is the workhorse of the diving industry and has been rated #1 by US Homeland Security against 8 other competitors. The SAR-1 was introduced to the market in 2017 and has become indispensable to dive teams. Specifically designed for "black water" operations the SAR-1 is a must have tool for teams that must succeed when visibility and dependability are a factor and failure is not an option.

The Washington County Water Recovery Unit was also in attendance at the conference. The team is part of the Water, Parks, and Trails Unit. The team is responsible for underwater search and recovery operations that have been directed or requested by the Sheriff. The dive team covers the entire county and aides surrounding communities when needed. Dive operations range from river recoveries to deep lake diving and thin ice accidents. The unit is always on call and has many functions beyond recovery missions; to assist in times of natural or man-made disasters and provide additional support for various functions held throughout Washington County. The team demonstrated their JW Fishers ROV (remote operated vehicle) capabilities to public safety dive agencies at the conference with great success. The ROV is

equipped with sector scanning sonar (SCAN-650) which assists with search operations in low visibility search operations. The team also utilizes a JW Fishers Side Scan Sonar system which they train with regularly.

Best regards,
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