

SACRAMENTO COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT
P.O.P. FILES

Sacramento County Sheriff's Department's jurisdiction encompasses 994.1 square miles with a total county population of 1,130,400 people. Of the county-wide population 682,300 people live in the unincorporated area of the county, a geographical area of 871.5 square miles. The Department has 1138 sworn officers and 509 non-sworn positions. Of the 1138 sworn officers only 286 officers are assigned to the Patrol Division. Although dubious, Sacramento County Sheriff's Department has the distinction of being recognized as "the most understaffed large metropolitan police agency in the United States." Per capita we field only about 0.6 officers per thousand citizens.

Sacramento County is truly a combination of urban, rural and metropolitan areas. The city of Sacramento is the capital of California and both the seat of State, City and County governments. Patrol deputies working for the Sacramento Sheriff's Department routinely patrol densely populated urban areas as well as sparsely populated rural areas. An officer on any given shift may be called on to respond to a party fight in a 400-unit apartment complex and later that same shift, be asked to search vast stretches of farm levees for a lost child. In any given day the communication staff will handle twenty-four hundred incoming calls for service of which one thousand or more would be 9-1-1 calls.

The decade of the 90s has brought to the forefront of progressive policing the ideas of Community Oriented Policing, but unfortunately it has also brought economic recession. The past three years have seen the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department's budget cut each year until the cumulative effect has been a net 25% reduction in departmental resources.

In the beginning of 1993 the Department began transitioning to Community Oriented Policing to provide better levels of service with our dwindling resources. One of the first steps taken was a redirection of the Department's extremely effective Aggressive Crime Enforcement Team (ACE) to a Problem Oriented Policing Team. The ACE Team had experience in "Target Specific" enforcement strategies and had considerable experience with directed patrol activities. The ACE Team was given the assignment of "creating" a Problem Oriented Policing Program from the ground up. The Team traveled to several departments recognized for their successful Community Oriented Policing programs, they gathered information on the ideas and experiences of those already transitioned to this service delivery style. Both positive and negative information was gathered. A program was designed to take advantage of the experiences of successful programs, while recognizing some pitfalls already encountered by others.

The conceived strategy called for several major Problem Oriented Policing (POP) Projects to demonstrate the effectiveness of the program. Emphasis would be placed on the benefits of the program such as a reduction in calls for service for a given location or set of

circumstances. Additional benefits of more effective use of available resources and a cooperative effort with those citizens involved in a project were stressed. The demonstration Projects were aimed at the Patrol Officers, the media, citizen groups, and Management. It was felt that the best chances of a successful transition were in obtaining a buy-in from each of these recognized groups- One of these projects was to develop into the "Natomas Growers Against Crime."

NATOMAS GROWERS AGAINST CRIME

Officers from the ACE Team, first met with the group of rice growers who would become known, as the Natomas Growers Against Crime in May, of 1993 at the request of Crime Prevention Specialist Vicki Wright. The group had approached Ms. Wright about crime problems plaguing the growers in the area geographical area known as North Natomas. Some of the problems being encountered by growers were thefts of farm equipment, illegal dumping, burning of insulation off copper wiring in areas of irrigation, trespassing and illegal shooting of all kinds. Ms. Wright helped the group in organizing themselves and began recommending the traditional Crime Prevention techniques. Ms. Wright recommended growers mark the equipment with identification numbers in easily observable locations. Growers were organized into a "Farm Watch" cooperative which purchased window decals identifying vehicles authorized to be in the field areas. However, Ms. Wright ran into trouble finding assistance from within the Sheriff's Department enforcement division. Because of budget cuts, the Department's Theft Bureau had been eliminated and there was no one available to investigate the primary complainant of the growers, theft of farm equipment. Theft victims were being mailed report forms and asked to complete them on their own. As a matter of practice victims were being advised their cases would not be investigated due to budget cuts.

Ms. Wright had used the special services of the ACE Team on several previous occasions when our mission concentrated on directed patrol. She contacted the officer responsible for coordination of Team activities within the patrol district involved, Deputy Anthony Taylor. His analysis of the problem showed a theft loss of approximately \$50,000.00 per growing season (two a year) over the past three years. Items stolen ranged from tractor parts, especially starters and alternators to pumping equipment. Officers learned that "core" charges on a diesel tractor starter were as high as \$800. Most of the growers were experiencing the same kinds of problems but were reluctant to report these crimes for various reasons. Some of the reasons were related to farming, as the thefts usually occurred during the height of the harvest season when growers traditionally worked every waking moment of the day and had no time to report crimes. Other reasons were the responsibility of Law Enforcement-As mentioned earlier, budget cuts had eliminated the Department's Theft Bureau and theft reports were mailed out to the victim to be completed by the victim. Thefts were not being investigated and most victims felt reports were a waste of time. Also, there was some dissatisfaction on the part of the growers with the Department over longstanding problems in

the farming community. The Department had over the years, "prioritized its calls for service" and most, if not all of the growers concerns fell below the line established for an officer to be assigned the problem. As far as the growers were concerned the Department had all but abandoned them.

One of the most striking elements of this Project was the vast geographical area affected. The growers farms are centered around a geographical area where four different counties come together. Jurisdictional boundaries would be a problem and officers involved realized that for the project to be successful four different enforcement agencies would have to cooperate with each other.

When deciding whether to initiate this project Team members considered the following:

1. The growers group had not traditionally been recognized as a community by established definitions.
2. The Theft Bureau had been eliminated by Department Management as part of Departmental mission prioritizing.
3. The vast size of the geographical area involved would require participation of Law Enforcement agencies not involved with Community Oriented Policing,
4. Statistical data and crime analysis would not be available to Team members to justify time spent on this project
5. The growers were extremely eager to help themselves solve their own problem. They wanted our help and were ready, able and willing to do whatever we needed them, to do.

The decision was not difficult as the team members were enthusiastic about the opportunity to help a group of people willing to help themselves. The many obstacles that would be encountered, would be considered challenges in a learning process and nothing more.

A multi-agency Task-Force was established comprising of a Deputy from Yolo County Sheriffs Department, Placer County Sheriffs Department, Sutter County Sheriffs Department, an Officer from the California Highway Patrol's Vehicle Theft Investigation Unit and a Deputy from our own ACE Team. As the scope of the Project increased it became advantageous to bring in additional agencies as well. An officer from the California Department of Fish and Game was added, along with an officer from the Sacramento City Police Department. The Law Enforcement Task-Force met every two weeks with the growers and met twice a month as the Law Enforcement committee.

One of the early recognized needs of the Law Enforcement Committee was that of crime analysis and some intelligence sharing of where the suspects were fencing the stolen items. The growers were aware of the loss of our theft bureau and crime analysis details and offered to hire a private investigator to handle crime analysis. An innovative approach using Voice

Mail as the reporting apparatus was used successfully by the Growers and Officers involved- Individual Growers and their field hands were given a 24-hour telephone number to call in suspicious vehicles and to report any criminal activity. CaBs to this Dumber triggered a paging system to the private investigator who would monitor the messages and decide if law enforcement services were needed and on what priority basis. The private investigator had the pager numbers of POP Officers in the event that a quick reaction was necessary. In this manner several suspect vehicles were identified and information was passed along to the growers and members of the Law Enforcement committee.

Numerous "suspicious vehicle" were observed and the information was forwarded to the law enforcement committee. Each vehicle was recorded and a Department of Motor Vehicles history check was conducted. One pickup truck reported by several different growers had a license plate that had expired over eight years before. The V.L.N. from the DMV registration check did not match the make of vehicle the plate was registered to. The vehicle was registered as a Dodge truck but the V.L.N. indicated it was a Toyota. An Investigator from the California Highway Patrol Vehicle Thief Investigation Unit recognized that the vehicle was probably stolen and the V.I.N. had been switched

This suspect vehicle was found in a field in Yolo County the day after a newsletter distributed by the growers identified it as the primary suspect vehicle. The vehicle had been stripped and butned, and all of the "visible" Vehicle Identification Numbers removed- However, it was Identified by the CELP. Vehicle Theft investigator as the suspect vehicle by "Hidden VJLKs."

Other more traditional means of investigation were utilized. They included, identifying possible locations for the "fencing" of stolen property, tracking of stolen property through serial numbers, "stake outs," target hording, and soapect identificatori through MCX history.

ACE Team officers "flexed their shift assignments to the Grave yard watch in an effort to better understand the nature of the problem. Officers were surprised by the high level of activity in the growers fields in the evening hours. They encountered large numbers of persons trespassing in the grower's fields. Illegal activities tanged from the dumping of crash and the discharging of firearms to abandonment of stolen vehicles and the burning of insolation off stolen copper wire. The illegal burning was of special concern to the California Department of Fish and Game as mast of the burn sites were next to State water ways. This criminal activity poised a considerable eaviraamental threat to the State's water system.

In identifying solutions that would address the problem, emphasis was placed on long term solutions. Education would play a vital ide in the prevention of loss and a redirection of some of the growers business practices. Nearly all of the growers had purchased used equipment from some unsavory salvage operators and one grower was convinced he had purchased his own stolen equipment. All of the growers knew of this salvage operation and most admitted having done business with him before, but preferred not to. One of the presentations put on by the Law Enforcement Cornrnittee for the growers was on The Cycle of Stolen Property. This education program stress that the "Market" for stolen merchandise and especially vehicle parts, was fanned by those willing to buy used parts to save a few

dollars. Hue growers themselves came up with, their own solution of purchasing from only reputable dealers and attempting to purchase "new" whenever feasible.

Very few minor theft cases have been reported since the recovery of the primary suspect vehicle. However, the growers were extremely anxious to have officers address other problems they were experiencing. Growers were being plagued with individuals from neighboring communities trespassing in the rice fields to collect Crayfish. These persons were tamping down rice and parking their vehicles on the levee roads blocking Grower's equipment from access to the fields during harvest. This particular aspect of their problem was an extremely sensitive issue with the growers. For years they had been complaining to the Sheriff's Department of the problem, only to be told that their problem was not on the Department's priority list and we would not have time to respond.

Analysis of this problem revealed a cultural problem and some misinformation on the part of local media. It appears that a well-known, television "Cooking Show" whose focus is on the Asian community told its audience where the Crayfish could be found and that the farmers did not care if they harvested them. The television station has agreed to correct the misinformation at the beginning of the coming harvest season. In a cooperative effort with media volunteers from the Department's Service Centers will be manning information check points at strategic locations within the growing area.

Officers were also able to work with the growers through the Off-Duty work program and were extremely successful in this joint venture. The growers can hire Off-Duty Deputies who work in uniform and from marked patrol vehicles. This efficient system has been used by the growers during the harvest season to keep the levee roads open to farming equipment. The Growers intend to expand their use of our Off-Duty work program to cover trespassing problems during the coming pheasant and Duck hunting seasons as well. It appears that a year round partnership has been formed between the Growers and Law Enforcement Community.

Enclosed with this document is a list of statistical information from traditional Law Enforcement Techniques gathered during a four month period, but this Project was not about traditional techniques. It should be emphasized that non-traditional techniques were stressed during this Project and that the success of these techniques are difficult at best to measure. I would point out that the Growers were appreciative enough, to hold a Bar-B-Que, to thank all of the agencies involved for their efforts. Representatives from all of the agencies involved, and local heat officers, sat down together, many for the first time with the growers and enjoyed a magnificent meal. It was hardly a coincidence that this Bar-B-Que was timed by the Growers to coincide with the vote on the Proposition 172 ballot measure (a pro-law enforcement sales tax increase). The real effect of this gesture may never be told, but the ballot measure passed and passed in that part of the county by a wide margin.

Quality of Life issues are difficult to measure, but an invitation from a neighbor to break bread at his dinner table, is high praise indeed.

Attests	7
Warrant Arrests	12
Citations	68
Recovered Stolen Vehicles	12
Field Identification Cards	36
Trespass Advisements	549 (including F&G and the Off-Duty Work Program)