

**Call for Papers: Association of American Geographers (AAG) Annual Meeting,
April 5-9, 2017, Boston**

**Conservation Law Enforcement: Policing Conservation Areas and the Trade in
Wildlife and Forest Products**

Organizers: Francis Massé (York University) and William D. Moreto (University of Central Florida)

The multiple conservation crises or “wars” on biodiversity as manifested most prominently in the illegal logging and charcoal trade and the commercial poaching of rhinos, elephants, and less iconic species like pangolin and abalone are gaining increasing attention in academic, policy, and practitioner circles. Whether referred to as “conservation crimes”, “wildlife crimes”, or “environmental crimes” the dramatic increase in crimes against nature and their connection to the multi-billion-dollar illicit trade in wildlife and forest products has sparked a surge in conservation law enforcement or green policing. We are seeing new energy and resources being dedicated to conservation law enforcement from wildlife forensics (Johnson et al., 2014; Ogden et al., 2009), intelligence-led conservation (Moreto, 2015), the militarization of conservation areas and practice (Duffy, 2014; Lunstrum, 2014; see also Shaw & Rademeyer, 2016), and the use of technologies to monitor the movement of wildlife and people (Snitch, 2015). These approaches are coupled with new legislation and the training of judges, prosecutors, and new environmental-specific law enforcement forces at national and international levels all with the aim of combatting the illicit extraction of biodiversity and the subsequent flow of wildlife and forest products.

Conservation law enforcement is not relegated to protected areas, but transgresses scales from the investigation of a carcass to the development of international enforcement partnerships involving a myriad of actors, many of whom are not traditionally associated with conservation or the protection of biodiversity. Such approaches, while needed, are not without critique as many argue that law enforcement alone is not enough to address crimes like poaching (Challender & MacMillan, 2014) to how certain approaches further alienate communities, result in human-rights abuses, and may even be detrimental to conservation (Büscher & Ramutsindela, 2015; Duffy et al., 2015; Lunstrum, 2014). In some cases, law enforcement may diverge or take-away from an ecology or conservation-first approach while in others we see a convergence between conservation and law enforcement science. What is certain is that the rise in conservation crimes and the illegal trade in wildlife and forest products has led to a need for conservation law enforcement that is (re)-shaping protected areas and conservation practice with varying implications, both positive and negative.

Despite the use of geospatial technologies, its focus on particular spaces and movement through them, and the cross-scalar nature of interventions all with the aim of governing relations between people and ‘nature’ and/or spaces of conservation, geographers have little engaged with the topic of conservation law enforcement. A noteworthy exception is the

literature on the militarization and securitization of conservation (Duffy, et al., 2015; Kelly & Ybarra, 2016; Lunstrum, 2014). While important, conservation law enforcement and interventions aimed at combatting the poaching crises and other conservation-related crimes extend far beyond green militarization (Shaw & Rademeyer, 2016) and outright securitization and often in much more nuanced ways.

Our aim in this session is to explore and further our understanding of conservation law enforcement, the various forms it is taking, and its implications with a view to how we might reach a balance between the need for law enforcement, a focus on conservation, and the resource-use rights of populations within and around protected areas. In particular, we hope to combine the insights from geography with those from other disciplines including criminology and criminal justice, crime science, sociology, and political science, among others. We welcome papers from scholars of different backgrounds as well as practitioners of conservation and related law enforcement to bring together a variety of perspectives and contribute to a vibrant and much-needed conversation on conservation law enforcement.

Potential paper topics could include, but are not limited to:

- Technologies and practices of conservation law enforcement, how they are (re)shaping conservation spaces and practice, and with what implications
- The rise of conservation criminology and environmental crime science and their practice
- The balancing of conservation law enforcement, community rights, and community-based natural resource management
- The intersection of conservation/environmental crimes and law enforcement with other sectors
- The combining or synthesis of tools, technologies, and techniques of ecological and law enforcement monitoring
- Theoretical approaches to understanding conservation law enforcement and environmental crime
- Methodological issues or approaches to studying conservation law enforcement

Please e-mail abstracts of up to 250 words to Francis Massé (massef@yorku.ca) or William Moreto (William.Moreto@ucf.edu) by Thursday October 20th. Successful applicants will be contacted by October 26th and will need to submit their abstracts online to the AAG thereafter.

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