

West appointed Fish and Wildlife Law Enforcement Division Director

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FRANKFORT - A 34-year law enforcement veteran will become the new colonel and director of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources' Law Enforcement Division.

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Gregory K. Johnson today announced the appointment of Harry Joseph (Joe) West, a retired Kentucky State Police Lt. Colonel and current Director of the Rangers Division at Kentucky Department of Parks, to head the 130-member division. West assumes his post Monday, Jan.12.

West, 61, assumes his Fish and Wildlife duties after leading the Rangers Division for the past 20 months. He retired from the Kentucky State Police in 2008 after nearly 30 years of service.

"I've spent my entire professional life in law enforcement, and now I am looking forward to these new challenges and opportunities in conservation," said West. "Honed law enforcement skills are essential for every working officer, but being in tune with the community, sportsmen and sportswomen, conservation clubs and boaters will be just as essential to our Fish and Wildlife success."

West holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Law Enforcement and a Master of Science Degree in Criminal Justice from Eastern Kentucky University (EKU). He also is a 1989 graduate of the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Virginia.

Though his parents and older siblings are originally from Middlesboro, Kentucky, West grew up in Lima, Ohio when the family moved to follow work opportunities. He grew up hunting pheasants, rabbits and squirrels and fishing the Auglaize River. He came back to Kentucky after high school as a walk-on football player at ECU.

West returned to Ohio briefly after graduating ECU and served two years with the Oxford Police Department. He joined the Kentucky State Police in 1978 as a trooper in Floyd County. He subsequently served in Franklin, Shelby and Spencer counties, and worked the Executive Security-Governor's Detail for 18 months.

He was promoted to sergeant and served as a supervisor at Post 9 in Pikeville and Post 12 in Frankfort. He was promoted to Lieutenant and Assistant Post and Section Commander at Post 2 in Madisonville in 1993. In 1997, he became Captain and Commander of the Internal Affairs Section. He was promoted again in 1999 to Major and then to Lt. Colonel in 2004.

“We are especially fortunate to get someone of Joe’s experience and dedication to head our law enforcement division,” said Johnson. “His experience with the Kentucky State Police and State Parks, and his dedication to public service, will help him and benefit us greatly in his new position here at Fish and Wildlife.”

West resides in Frankfort with his wife, Debbie. They have two adult sons. Christopher lives in Frankfort with his wife, Jillian, and their son Wyatt. Nicholas is an Air Force lieutenant currently deployed in Afghanistan.