

OCI History

Executive Order 1995-18 created the DEQ effective October 1, 1995, and called for the transfer of the specially trained Conservation Officers of the Environmental Investigations Section (EIS) from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to the DEQ.

Michigan led the nation by being the first to appoint an environmental crimes enforcement team. This was established as the Environmental Enforcement Division (EED) within the DNR, staffed with Conservation Officers in 1978, by the DNR Director's reorganization letter No. 8. The federal government and several states were early adopters, embracing this new movement and establishing their own "Toxic Cop" forces shortly thereafter.

In 1979, the DNR Law Enforcement Division (LED) established six Environmental Conservation Officer positions to perform environmental investigations and also conduct non-environmental duties similar to their other officers. In 1983, LED created an Environmental Enforcement Unit (EEU). By 1985, DNR merged the two groups of environmental investigators (EED and EEU) under the LED umbrella in the newly created Environmental Investigations Section (EIS). The EIS existed within the DNR until the creation of the DEQ in 1995.

In 1996, the DEQ changed EIS to Criminal Investigation Section (CIS), to reflect the unique work accomplished by this section. Furthering the DEQ commitment to professional criminal enforcement, CIS was raised to office-level status in 1998. As a result of the activities undertaken by the Office of Criminal Investigations (OCI), major violations against the environment in this state are criminally prosecuted. The motive consistently behind environmental crime is the saving or gaining of money. This includes illegally dumping onto the land or discharging into the water or air to avoid disposal costs, or failing to register a regulated item in an attempt to avoid compliance with laws, rules or inspections. OCI's successful prosecutions in high profile cases, serves as a deterrent factor to those who contemplate violating the law.