



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Sheriff-Port Authority partnership helps bring more federal marine patrol funds to region

◆ ***Recent allocation brings two-year total to \$1.5M for new county equipment***

A partnership established four years ago between the Wayne County Sheriff's Office and Detroit Wayne County Port Authority (DWCPA) has begun paying big dividends that will result in significant improvements to marine patrols and protection along Wayne County's international border, officials announced today.

In 2004, the Sheriff's Office and Port Authority began working together to apply for federal homeland security grants, only 5% of which typically reach Great Lakes ports. However, since the partnership was formed, the Port Authority has been awarded more than \$3 million in marine grants, at least half of which has been allocated to the Sheriff's Marine Unit to purchase new boats and equipment.

Sheriff Warren Evans recently received word of a new \$450,000 allocation and is just weeks away from putting out for bids more than \$1 million in new marine unit equipment, including four new vessels, new motors for its existing boats, night vision technology and new and improved equipment for the Marine Unit's Dive Team and Special Response Team, including 40 gas masks.

"Adding these additional vessels to our fleet will enable us to establish a greater marine presence from Lake St. Clair to Lake Erie, as well as along the industrial areas of the Rouge River," Evans said. "With as many critical assets as we have along our 32-miles of international waterway, this equipment is critical for our officers to have."

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DWCPA Executive Director Curtis Hertel said that Department of Homeland Security funds coming to the Port of Detroit have increase significantly since the new partnership with the Sheriff's Office was established to augment patrols conducted by the US Coast Guard.

"This collaboration has helped us leverage more federal funds to get the added patrols we need to protect our international waters," said DWCPA Executive Director Curtis Hertel. "Through these grants, we have doubled the number of patrol capabilities and lengthened the season for patrols with new, state-of-the-art, closed cabin vessels."

Border security safeguards local economy

A greater marine presence is critical in order to adequately meet the region's international ports security needs, Hertel said. Aside from having the two busiest border crossings in North America, the Detroit River sees more than 8,000 trips annually from both foreign and domestic vessels. The Port of Detroit, itself, sees about 17 million tons of cargo at its docks, annually.

"Any disruption to commercial navigation along the Detroit River could yield disastrous effects on our regional and national economy," Hertel said. "We believe that an increased number of Wayne County Sheriff patrols on the water not only helps with response time to terrorist incidents, but deters potential for such incidents simply through their visibility."