

FWC
Division of Law Enforcement



Weekly Report

December 2, 2016 through December 8, 2016

This report represents some events the FWC handled over the past two weeks; however, it does not include all actions taken by the Division of Law Enforcement.

Patrol, Protect, Preserve

NORTHWEST REGION

CASES

CALHOUN COUNTY

Officers Burkhead and Little responded to a landowner complaint in which the landowner saw a truck pull onto his property, shine a light and heard a shot. The landowner provided a tag number of the suspect truck. The officers located the registered owner of the vehicle and conducted interviews with two suspects. Both suspects admitted to shooting at a deer on the landowner's property and were charged with attempting to take deer at night with a gun and light and trespass.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Lieutenant Hahr was patrolling the Perdido River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) when he observed a truck pulling into the Pipes after legal access hours. When he approached the truck, he observed the adult male driver and juvenile female passenger scrambling to hide a glass pipe and small box. After securing the occupants, he located a container of methamphetamine and various other drug paraphernalia. The man was arrested for possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug paraphernalia, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, and accessing the management area after hours and booked into jail. The young woman was charged with possession of methamphetamine and possession of drug paraphernalia and turned over to the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Officers Long and Manning were at a local seafood dealer looking for a suspect that had an active warrant for failure to appear for commercial fishing violations. They had information that he was currently performing maintenance on his vessel. The officers boarded the vessel and located the subject hiding in a small compartment and transported him to jail for the warrant. He was also charged with possession of cannabis.

Officers Long and Manning conducted wholesale and retail license inspections at numerous fish markets and retail establishments. A total of five notice to appear citations and two written warnings were issued.

Lieutenant Hahr was patrolling the Perdido River WMA when he observed a vehicle enter an area after legal access hours. He pulled up to the truck and smelled a strong odor of cannabis coming from the interior. The occupants were two 16-year-old juveniles and one 15-year-old juvenile. Three types of alcoholic beverages were also found in the truck. The three juveniles admitted to smoking cannabis and the two passengers admitted to drinking. All three were charged with possession of alcoholic beverages, possession of not more than 20 grams of cannabis and possession of drug paraphernalia.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer J. Rockwell was on land patrol in the Blackwater WMA. While checking on a bait site he found during bow season, he observed a vehicle parked nearby. He went to the bait site and did not see anyone in the stand, so returned to where the vehicle was parked and began surveillance. He heard a noise that sounded like a tree stand, went towards the sound and observed a subject hunting with a crossbow in a tree climber-style tree stand without hunter orange on. Officer Rockwell searched the area where the subject was hunting and located corn. The subject possessed a hunting license, but no quota hunt permit. He admitted to putting the corn and a mineral block in the area. Officer Rockwell issued him a notice to appear citation for hunting over bait in a WMA and warnings for no hunter orange and no quota permit.

Officer Corbin observed a grounded sailboat at Liza Jackson Park. The officer was familiar with the vessel owner and had previously cited the owner for failure to transfer the title in his name. The officer contacted the owner to address the derelict condition of his boat. The dispatch confirmed the owner had an active warrant for failure to appear on an FWC citation (failure to transfer vessel title). Officer Corbin arrested the individual and transported him to the Okaloosa County Jail.

While Officer J. Rockwell was working night hunting in the Blackwater WMA, he heard a shot and began foot patrol to determine where the shot came from. He saw taillights and watched as the occupants of the vehicle shined the pipeline in a manner capable of disclosing the presence of wildlife. He returned to his truck and saw a vehicle coming in his direction from the area where he observed the lights shining. He conducted a traffic stop and checked the three hunters. He was unable to determine if it was the same vehicle that was shining the pipeline, but when he looked in the bed of the truck, he observed a short-horned buck. The longest antler was 8 ½ inches in total length and did not have three points on one side. One of the hunters admitted to killing the buck earlier that day. The subject was cited accordingly.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Hutchinson received a call from a deputy who informed him that he observed a vehicle shining a spotlight in several fields late at night. The deputy stopped the vehicle and made contact with the driver. While speaking with the driver, he discovered a loaded hunting rifle inside of the vehicle. Officer Hutchinson responded to the location and made contact with the driver. The driver admitted to looking for deer while shining the light. After further investigation, Officer Hutchinson discovered fresh deer blood on a rack attached to the back of the vehicle. The subject informed Officer Hutchinson that his uncle shot the deer in Alabama while they were hunting together on the previous day. The subject then admitted to taking the deer and throwing the deer over a bridge into the water because he didn't want to clean the deer. After further investigation, Officer Hutchinson discovered that the subject did not possess a Florida or Alabama hunting license. Officer Hutchinson made contact with the subject's uncle who denied shooting the deer. The subject was issued a notice to appear citation for night hunting.

After the night-hunting case, Officer Hutchinson was approached by a truck with the passenger window rolled down. The driver of the vehicle asked Officer Hutchinson if everything was alright. While speaking to the subject, Officer Hutchinson could smell a strong odor of cannabis coming from the inside of the vehicle. He asked the driver to step out of the vehicle and questioned him about the cannabis. The subject admitted to having cannabis inside of the vehicle and turned it over to the officer. The male subject was issued a notice to appear citation for possession of cannabis under 20 grams.

Officer Ramos discovered signs of illegal placement of bait in the Eglin WMA. Over the course of several weeks, he conducted patrol and surveillance in the area where the corn was placed. Early one morning he returned to check on the location and found a previously identified suspect hunting from a tree facing the bait. After interviewing the suspect, the man admitted to placing bait in the WMA and was charged accordingly. In addition to several criminal charges, the suspect's hunting and fishing privileges in Eglin WMA were revoked for one year.

While on patrol near Escambia River, Officer Ramos stopped to check a person fishing. The person said he had a valid fishing license, but then provided a false date of birth that did not match his name according to Dispatch. Officer Ramos escorted the man back to his vehicle to retrieve his driver license. When the subject opened his vehicle door, Officer Ramos smelled and saw an unburned marijuana cigarette in the ashtray. After further questioning, the man also admitted to possessing a weighing scale, which contained marijuana residue. Officer Ramos discovered additional drug paraphernalia and seized it for evidence and lab testing. The person was charged with possession of the marijuana, drug paraphernalia, and failure to have a valid fishing license.

Officer Ramos was on patrol in the Garcon Point area when he observed two men tonging oysters nearby. He conducted a vessel and resource inspection and chose a random bag of oysters for inspection. Florida law allows for an undersized tolerance of 5% per bag of oysters. The bag measured by Officer Ramos contained 75% undersized oysters. After interviewing the subjects, they admitted to having additional oysters inside their truck at the boat ramp. Officer Ramos found three partial sacks of oysters that were not on ice in the vehicle and one that was on ice. When all the oysters were properly measured, the men were found to be in excess of the daily bag limit of two bags (one extra full bag of oysters). Appropriate criminal charges were filed for the undersized oysters and over the bag limit violations.

While on patrol in the Robert's Pond Unit of the Eglin WMA, Officer Ramos discovered a large 4x4 truck stuck in a wet-weather pond. Two men were actively attempting to get the truck out of the mud. There were large muddy ruts throughout the area and multiple deep holes where two different trucks had bogged down and destroyed sensitive habitat. The subjects admitted to off-roading in the closed area the previous night and one truck was unable to get back to the main road. Each person was issued a citation for operating a vehicle off the named and numbered road and a criminal citation for

destruction of public lands by motor vehicle. Eglin Range Patrol police arrived and revoked the men's access to the Eglin WMA for two years.

During the predawn hours, Officers Jones and Tolbert conducted foot patrol on the Eglin WMA near the community of Holley to locate an individual who had outstanding warrants for his arrest. The wanted person had fled from deputies on a four-wheeler ATV when they had previously attempted to arrest him. The officers believed the suspect was in the area. They located a campsite and arrested the individual without incident. A female who was with the subject was also detained and later released. The subject was booked into Santa Rosa County Jail. A notice to appear was issued to both individuals for trespass on Eglin property after legal hours.

Officer Cushing was working in the Blackwater WMA when he observed several dog hunters rushing to a certain area. He followed and checked the first hunter he encountered. While talking to him, he heard seven shots and a person state, "I got him," over the radio. He located the source of the shots, but the hunters stated that they had missed. Lieutenant Hahr and Officer Jernigan arrived to assist and located where the hunter had been parked down a closed road. Officer Hutchinson contacted one of the hunters and obtained a confession. The hunter stated that he thought the deer was bigger but it was not a legal buck. He returned to the scene and showed the officers the location of the deer. He was issued a notice to appear for taking a buck without three points on one side or a 10-inch main beam.

Officer Jernigan checked a hunter as he was leaving a WMA and determined that he did not have a hunting license or quota permit. He also discovered that the subject's driver license had been suspended and there was a warrant out for his arrest. He booked the man on the warrant and driving with license suspended or revoked and issued the appropriate citations for the other offenses.

Officer Jernigan responded to a complaint of trespass on a private hunting club. The leaseholder found two subjects sitting in one of his tree stands. The subjects stated that they had been hunting and camping on the river and had walked to the private property and decided to hunt. The leaseholder wished to prosecute the subjects and charges will be pending after discussion with the state attorney's office.

WALTON COUNTY

Officers Molnar and Bartlett observed two vessels at a local marina with expired registrations. The officers' investigation revealed that both vessels were sold in 2016 but the new vessel owners failed to transfer vessel title to their name within the required 30-day period. The vessel owners were cited and issued notice to appear citations for failure to transfer title.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officers from Escambia, Santa Rosa and Okaloosa counties conducted a detail for the opening weekend of general gun season. They patrolled the high-activity areas within Santa Rosa and Okaloosa counties, including the Blackwater State Forest. They checked several hunters to ensure compliance of the established hunting rules in each area. They met with landowners who live in these high activity hunting areas and conducted patrols near their properties. The officers issued several warnings and citations for hunting and traffic violations.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

DUVAL COUNTY

Officers Green, Geib, Rorer and Investigator Holleman apprehended three subjects who were trespassing on JEA property. One subject had six red drum over the bag limit and was in possession of seven undersized red drum and two undersized spotted sea trout, another subject was two red drum over the bag limit and the third subject was fishing without a valid saltwater fishing license. All three subjects were cited appropriately which included a major marine resource violation citation (more than three redfish over the bag limit).

LEVY COUNTY

Officer Schulz was on water patrol in the area of the Suwannee Sound when he observed a commercial oyster vessel in a closed area for harvest. As Officer Schulz approached the vessel, he saw one male occupant culling oysters he had just harvested from the closed zone. The subject stated that he did not realize it was a closed area and said he had even looked at the closure maps. Officer Schulz showed the subject the maps and the subject agreed he was well within the closed area. Officer Schulz issued one misdemeanor citation for harvesting oysters from a closed area and returned all the oysters back to the water alive. The subject also received three warnings for boating safety violations and one warning for another oyster violation.

Officer Schulz was on water patrol on the Gulf near the mouth of the Suwannee River when he saw a commercial oyster vessel. Officer Schulz approached the vessel in order to check for commercial oyster compliance and the required boating safety gear. He contacted the male and female subjects on board who had several bags of oysters. During his fisheries inspection, he found the subjects to be in possession of 46% undersized oysters (must be at least 3 inches). The subjects were 41% over the 5% allowable undersized tolerance for oysters. Officer Schulz issued the captain of the vessel a misdemeanor citation for this violation and seized all the undersized oysters which were returned to the water alive.

Officer Schulz was on water patrol in the area of the mouth of the Suwannee River on the Gulf. During his patrol he observed a commercial oyster vessel harvesting oysters from a closed area. From a concealed location, he watched as all three male subjects on board harvested oysters illegally from the closed waters. When he made contact with the subjects, they all stated they had not harvested from the closed area. Officer Schulz revealed that he had observed them doing this for several minutes and then they admitted to it. Officer Schulz also saw that the oyster bags had tags falsely stating that the oysters were harvested from open waters. While running all of the subjects on board through his dispatch, it was confirmed that one subject had an active warrant. Officer Schulz issued each subject a misdemeanor citation for harvesting from a closed area and falsifying the oyster tags. The subject who had a warrant was arrested and transported to the Levy County Jail without incident. Officer Schulz seized all of the oysters from the closed area and returned them to the area they were harvested from. Officer Schulz also issued warnings for commercial harvest without a license, no marine sanitation device on board (as required for oyster), and for various boating safety warnings.

Officers Schulz and Willis checked numerous vessels and recreational fishermen at popular fishing areas throughout Levy County during a three-day span. The officers issued numerous misdemeanor citations for violations ranging from undersized gag grouper, undersized spotted sea trout, over the bag limit of red fish, shark not landed in whole condition, and over the bag limit of shark. The officers also issued several boating safety infractions and wrote various other warnings throughout their patrols.

Officer Fox was on water patrol with Officers Johnston and Canfield approximately ten miles south of Cedar Key in federal waters when Officer Fox saw a black fiberglass vessel with three occupants on board heading northeast. They stopped the vessel to perform federal fisheries and vessel safety inspection. Officers Johnston and Fox boarded the vessel and the operator said he had several fish on board including one red snapper. The operator was told that red snapper season was currently closed in federal waters. Officer Fox photographed the red snapper, returned it to the resource, and issued a citation for the violation. He told the operator that a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) fisheries agent would contact him. A federal case package was completed and forwarded to NOAA for the fisheries violation. No further law enforcement action was taken.

SUWANNEE COUNTY

While on land patrol, Officer Ransom heard a gunshot east of his location. As he maneuvered to locate the source of the shot, another gunshot rang out coming from the same direction. A short time later, Officer Ransom was able to locate two UTVs in a nearby hay field. He then noticed three individuals behind several bales of hay in the middle of the field, who appeared to be hunting. Officer Ransom positioned himself in a safe location on the northern side of the field to observe the individuals who were continuing to hunt well past legal shooting light. During this time, Officer Ransom witnessed the subjects display a light in a sweeping motion illuminating the tree line

surrounding the field. This occurred several times throughout the surveillance. Finally, the light was displayed in a sweeping fashion before holding it steady against the tree line. One individual who was holding what appeared to be a rifle fired two shots from the hay bales. After the shots were fired the subjects emerged from the hay bales, walked to the wood line and began using lights to search the area. A short while later the subjects returned to the hay bales. Two of the individuals then exited the area on a UTV while one subject remained. At this time, Officer Cline arrived to assist and both officers made contact with the subject who was still continuing to hunt from the hay bales. Upon contact the subject was in possession of two deer calls, one rifle equipped with a scope and flashlight, which was loaded with 22 rounds in the magazine and one in the chamber (23 total rounds). Post Miranda, the subject admitted to using the flashlight mounted on the rifle to illuminate the wood line and to firing the two shots Officer Ransom had observed. The subject also agreed it may have been a deer he was attempting to take. The subject was charged with attempting to take deer at night using a gun and light and attempting to take deer with a magazine capacity greater than five rounds.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

Fisheries violations were documented during two separate patrols in federal waters off Crystal River aboard the *FinCat*. On one patrol, the crew of the *FinCat*, Officers Canfield, Suttles and Vuxton found a vessel to be in possession of 11 red snapper during closed season and an undersized gag grouper. On a separate patrol, Officers Canfield, Johnston and Fox found another vessel to be in possession of red snapper during the closed season. Federal citations were issued for the violations and the cases will be submitted to NOAA for prosecution.

While conducting a federal fisheries patrol out of Jacksonville, the crew of the *Sentinel*, Officers Geib, Read, Rorer and Lieutenant Givens, observed several vessels anchored and actively fishing over a popular fishing spot. Officers Geib and Rorer boarded one vessel to find that the fishermen possessed two red snapper. Officer Read boarded another vessel at the same location and found the fishermen on that vessel to be in possession of five red snapper. Red snapper are illegal to possess in the federal waters of the South Atlantic. Officers Read and Rorer issued the fishermen on both vessels federal citations for the violation and will submit each case to NOAA for prosecution.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

SUWANNEE COUNTY

Officer Mobley participated in an outreach event at the Live Oak Police Department. Officer Mobley gave a one-hour presentation to a citizen group pertaining to FWC and the division of law enforcement. There were approximately 30 people in attendance. After the presentation, Officer Mobley answered numerous questions.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Kearney received information about potential violations near Turkey Creek, arrived on scene and began conducting resource inspections of the men fishing in the area. The inspection revealed one undersized snook and one live tarpon in a live well. Citations were issued for possession of undersized snook and possession of a tarpon without a tarpon tag. The tarpon was released back in the water alive.

Officer Balgo observed two individuals wading off SR 528 and the Banana River and saw several stone crabs in whole condition and two sheepshead in a bucket. Officer Balgo counted 12 stone crabs in whole condition and one undersized sheepshead. After interviewing the individuals, it was determined which person had caught the stone crabs and sheepshead. The individual was issued one citation for possession of stone crabs in whole condition. He was also issued two warnings for possession of an undersized sheepshead and no valid fishing license.

While on patrol offshore of Port Canaveral, Officers Balgo and Hallsten performed a federal fisheries inspection about 12 miles offshore. While conducting the inspection, Officer Balgo found one red snapper in a cooler wrapped up in a white t-shirt. Officers Balgo and Hallsten issued one federal citation in reference to possession of red snapper in federal waters and two warnings for vessel safety equipment.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Investigator Corfield contacted Lieutenant Eason in reference to a video of a male subject hand feeding an adult black bear at a residence in Orange City. Investigator Corfield provided Lieutenant Eason with an intelligence report in reference to the incident. Lieutenant Eason and Officer McKee responded to the residence in Orange City and made contact with the male suspect and his spouse. The subject admitted to intentionally feeding the bear. Officer McKee explained the dangers of feeding wild animals, especially black bears. He was issued a citation for the violation.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

BREVARD COUNTY

Captain Franklin, Lieutenants Davis, Bonds and Officer Maslo participated in the Merritt Island Christmas Parade along with an FWC patrol vehicle and vessel. There were thousands of members in the community present for the parade.

Lieutenants Davis, Bonds and Officer Miller participated in "Shop with a Cop" at the Merritt Island Target store, along with the Brevard County Sheriff's Office. Each officer

helped a child shop for Christmas presents, which were then wrapped by the officers. There were approximately 200 children involved in this event.

LAKE COUNTY

Officer Weber represented FWC at the Lake County Toys for Tots Run. In attendance was the Lake County Sheriff's Office along with Holiday Marine and Harris Boating Club. There were approximately 100 participants at the event.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

SARASOTA COUNTY

Investigators Laskowski, O'Horo and Lieutenant Hinds responded to a call of shots fired at Myakka State Park. When the three arrived on the scene, they heard multiple shots coming from a closed area of the park. While Investigator O'Horo maintained a perimeter on State Road 72, Investigator Laskowski and Lieutenant Hinds made their way towards the sounds of the gunfire. After crossing a marshy area, Investigator Laskowski and Lieutenant Hinds found several subjects shooting a high-powered rifle and a hand gun randomly at things in the park. When Investigator Laskowski and Lieutenant Hinds identified themselves, the five subjects took off running and a foot chase ensued. After crossing a river and running through a thick marsh, Investigator Laskowski and Lieutenant Hinds were able to apprehend three of the five subjects hiding in the marsh. Another subject was apprehended the next day by Investigator Laskowski and one remains at large. The rifle, hand gun and more than 300 rounds of ammunition were taken as evidence. All four subjects were cited criminally for park rule violations as well resisting a law enforcement officer.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officers Goggin, Sehl, Morrison and Lieutenant Ruggiero participated in "Shop with a Cop" at the Walmart on Kings Highway. Children got to "shop with a cop" while buying Christmas gifts for their families. Walmart generously donated \$100 to each child to make their purchases. It was a great event to kick off the season and to bring the community together for a great cause.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Furbay and Lieutenant Ruggiero conducted a kids fishing clinic at Manatee Elementary. Many of the children had never been fishing before. The officers educated the children about who FWC is, taught them about fishing safety, and taught them how

to tie fishing knots. As a result of the clinic, approximately 40 other children approached the principal and asked how to join the club.

PINELLAS COUNTY

Officer Pulaski provided instruction for the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators approved seated battery to officers with the Largo and Saint Petersburg Police Department. The officers who attended the training are part of the traffic homicide and DUI investigation units.

SOUTH A REGION

CASES

MARTIN COUNTY

Officers Hankinson and Brevik responded to an migrant landing at the Hobe Sound Wildlife Refuge. Seventeen migrants were apprehended by FWC, United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Customs and Border Patrol, Martin County Sheriff's Office and Jupiter Island Police Department. Following the initial encounter, Officers Hankinson and Brevik and USFWS Agent Calvert spotted two more migrants exiting the refuge. They were apprehended and turned over to US Customs and Border Patrol for processing.

Officer Willems conducted a retail inspection on a roadside vendor selling stone crab claws in Palm City. The vendor had been warned in 2015 and 2012 for not having a retail license. When asked, the vendor could not produce a valid retail license or records of his purchased crab claws. The vendor was criminally charged with not having a retail license and was given a warning for not keeping adequate records.

Officer Willems was on patrol on Hwy 711 when he observed a vehicle on the side of the road. As he approached, the vehicle pulled onto the road causing Officer Willems to have to brake to avoid a collision. The vehicle was being driven erratically and the operator could not maintain his lane. A traffic stop was conducted and signs of impairment were observed. The operator was given field sobriety tasks which he failed. The operator was placed under arrest for DUI and transported to the Martin County Jail. A breath test revealed that he was more than three times over the legal limit. The operator was also charged with attaching a tag not assigned and given warnings for no proof of insurance and failure to maintain lane.

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Officer Allen was patrolling near the Nubbins Slough canal east of Lake Okeechobee when he observed a man and a woman fishing from a railroad bridge marked with "No Trespassing" signs. Upon making contact with the subjects, he found that neither had

fishing licenses and the male subject was in possession of two undersized black crappie. The minimum size limit for black crappie in Nubbins Slough is ten inches. The subjects received warnings for trespassing and for fishing without a license. The male subject received a notice to appear in court citation for possessing the undersized black crappie.

Officers Allen and Crosby received a complaint that four subjects were seen entering the Chandler Slough Public Use Area after dark with a gun and archery equipment. The officers were able to apprehend the subjects who had two compound bows and a .22 magnum semi-automatic rifle. The subjects admitted they were attempting to take wild hogs after legal hunting hours. They were issued notices to appear in court for the violation.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Lieutenant Garzaniti and Investigator Howell responded to a report of an escaped serval cat. The elderly owner of the cat had passed away, and the cat got out of the house due to the foot traffic in and out of the residence. In conjunction with Palm Beach County Animal Control and staff from Busch Wildlife Sanctuary, the cat was located, captured and placed at a properly licensed facility.

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

Officer Fretwell was on patrol conducting license and resource inspections when he observed several individuals at a local spillway. Upon making contact with three subjects, he noticed that the fishing gear they were using, a heavy rod and reel with a treble hook, was not consistent with the species of fish they advised they were targeting. No fish of any kind was observed. The subjects' information checked out and they were all in possession of a valid fishing license. As Officer Fretwell moved on to check another subject nearby, he was advised that the three subjects had been actively snatch-hooking for snook. Officer Fretwell returned to the area the subject had been fishing from and began conducting a search for evidence. He was then able to locate a hidden rod and reel which also had a treble hook still attached to a 33-inch snook. With this new information and evidence in hand, he was able to track down the subjects at a nearby residence. One subject was issued a citation for the violation of harvesting snook by illegal method and possession of oversized snook. The other two subjects were issued written warnings.

Officer Arnold responded to the Fort Pierce Inlet State Park when it was reported that a beach-goer had discovered and transported a large military incendiary device to the ranger station. Upon his arrival, it was determined that the device might still be viable and both the Fire Department and Sheriff's Office Bomb Squad were called. The device was examined and rendered safe by the Bomb Squad.

Officers Boulware, Shermetaro and Payne received a call around midnight in reference to a vessel cast netting fish and trespassing at a local spillway. Upon their arrival, the

officers observed a small fishing boat with no navigational lights being displayed inside the restricted area of the spillway. The officers made contact with the occupants in the boat and conducted a resource and safety inspection. The occupants of the vessel were in possession of two undersized black drum. The operator of the vessel was issued a citation for the resource violation and also received a citation for not having navigational lights displayed.

Officers Boulware and Shermetaro were waiting for a suspicious vessel to return to a local boat ramp on the Indian River Lagoon after dark. From a concealed position, they observed a vessel enter the boat ramp with no navigational lights being displayed. The officers then recognized the operator and the vessel from a previous encounter of just a few nights prior, which resulted in a resource violation. The officers conducted a resource inspection and found 17 pompano on the vessel. The recreational bag limit is 6 per person. Both occupants were issued a citation for possession of over the bag limit of pompano.

Officers Boulware, Payne and Shermetaro were conducting resource inspections at a local boat ramp in Fort Pierce. A vessel entered the boat ramp after dark without the required navigational lights being displayed. The registration numbers displayed on the boat were for an 18-foot homemade vessel. However, based on the training and experience of the officers, it was determined that the vessel was not a homemade vessel and that it was also larger than 18 feet. The Hull Identification Number (HIN) had also been removed. The officers found ghost FL numbers under the new registration numbers and drill holes on the back of the boat where the manufacturer's label was formerly located. The operator of the vessel changed his story multiple times throughout the investigation. The operator was charged with operating a vessel without a HIN displayed. The officers also submitted a report to the local Department of Highway Safety Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) for a cancellation of the homemade title and FL numbers that were assigned to the vessel.

Investigator Patterson checked fisherman at the Belcher Canal Spillway in Ft. Pierce. While checking one group, Investigator Patterson observed three red drum inside the cooler measuring 22, 15 1/2 and 16 1/2 inches. The subject stated the 22-inch red drum was caught by his son and the 15 1/2- and 16 1/2-inch red drum were caught by him. Red drum must be 18 to 27 inches to possess. Daily possession limit is one per angler. The subject was cited accordingly.

Investigator Patterson and Officer Cheshire conducted boating safety and resource protection inspections at the Stan Blum Boat Ramp in Ft. Pierce. Investigator Patterson and Officer Cheshire observed a subject operating a vessel and vehicle at the boat ramp. During inspections, an undersized mutton snapper was located. The individual also displayed signs of alcohol impairment. A subsequent investigation ended with the subject being booked into the St. Lucie County Jail by Officer Cheshire on charges of BUI and operating a motor vehicle while under the influence. Once at the jail, the subject's breath analysis registered a .158 alcohol content. Officer Cheshire also issued the subject a written warning for possession of undersized mutton snapper.

RESCUES

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Merizio, Guerin, Morrow, Carroll and Norbrothen responded to the Corbett WMA, in reference to a reported overturned vehicle with the driver trapped inside. Upon their arrival, the officers observed an overturned pickup truck in a canal, with the passenger compartment completely submerged. The caller, who had also been in the vehicle during the accident, advised that there was still a subject trapped inside. Officers Merizio and Morrow entered the canal, along with Palm Beach County Fire Rescue personnel, and began efforts to open the passenger compartment while Officer Guerin tended to the other accident victim. One subject was removed from the vehicle and transported to a local hospital but, unfortunately, did not survive. The second victim was also transported and later released.

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

A call for assistance went out regarding a subject that was ejected from a vessel and did not surface in the Indian River. Investigator Turner and Officer Fretwell, in addition to the St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office Marine Units, responded to the call. Upon arrival, Investigator Turner and Officer Fretwell assisted in recovering the victim. The FWC Northeast Region is conducting the investigation into the accident.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

MARTIN COUNTY

Officers Carroll, Spanier and Morrow responded to a report of a three-foot alligator in a ditch in a heavily populated residential area. Upon their arrival, the officers located and removed the alligator, which was later released back into the environment without incident.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Spradling directed his patrol towards the seasonal manatee slow speed zone on the ICW just south of Peanut Island in West Palm Beach. The seasonal manatee slow speed zone is from November 15 to March. Officer Spradling has educated the public and issued multiple warnings.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

MARTIN COUNTY

Officers Carroll, Norbrothen, Fretwell and Morrow conducted public safety patrol for the annual Stuart Boat Parade. The parade, which began at the Roosevelt Bridge and continued through to the Manatee Pocket area, had multiple spectators by land and water.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Multiple FWC officers assisted with vessel traffic control for the annual Palm Beach Holiday Boat Parade in the Intracoastal Waterway. Hundreds of boats and thousands of people turned out for the event which collects Toys for Tots and provided 50 brightly decorated vessels for the night-time parade. The event concluded late in the evening without any reported accidents, due in part to a strong law enforcement presence.

SOUTH B REGION

CASES

MONROE COUNTY

While walking the shoreline on Card Sound Road, Officer Swensson observed a subject in the water in Saunders Creek wearing a mask, fins and snorkel and swimming along the shoreline. Officer Swensson approached the subject and stood on the rocky shoreline directly above him. The subject did not see the officer and was observed over several minutes with a spear gun in his hand trying to spear something under a rock. Finally, the subject surfaced with a lobster on the shaft and quickly wrung the tail and put it in his pocket. At that time, a women sitting across the creek said something in Spanish and the subject turned and saw the officer. He then tried to hide the lobster carapace under a rock and dump the tail out of his pocket. He then stuffed the spear gun into another rock and surfaced. He was asked to go retrieve what he put under the rock and kept shrugging his shoulders. Officer Sutter arrived to assist and one wrung tail and one speared carapace were recovered exactly where Officer Swensson saw the subject put them. The subject's gear was seized and he was cited accordingly.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Officers worked a special detail to ensure that all mariners are in compliance with navigational lights requirement per USCG navigation rules. During this detail, FWC officers stopped a total of 21 vessels, distributed boater safety educational handbooks and emphasized the importance of serviceable visual distress signals as well as proper vessel lighting. There were a total of 16 warnings and 26 citations issued, 10 of which were for navigational light violations.

Officers worked a detail enforcing boating safety and BUI enforcement. There was 1 physical arrest, 10 misdemeanor arrests for multiple resource violations, resisting without violence, interference with an FWC officer, and drug possession. Twenty-nine citations and 30 warnings were issued, and a total of 175 users were checked and educated on the importance of boating safety.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

MONROE COUNTY

Officer McKay assisted a Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) park ranger at John Pennekamp State Park with an Alligator/Crocodile evening lecture presentation. The 30+ attendees learned about the different species and Officer McKay answered questions about the S.N.A.P. (Statewide Nuisance Alligator Program) and the training that FWC officers receive in dealing with crocodilians. He also dispelled some rumors and fears about the creatures.