

FWC
Division of Law Enforcement



Weekly Report
December 30, 2016 through January 5, 2017

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

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officers Clark, Hutchinson, Investigator Livesay and Captain Rondeau were patrolling an area in the north end of Escambia County in response to a complaint received the previous week regarding illegal night hunting. While sitting off the road with lights out, Captain Rondeau observed a vehicle drive by shining a light in a manner capable of disclosing the presence of deer. He initiated a traffic stop while Officers Hutchinson and Clark responded as back up. The vehicle was occupied by two male subjects. There were several guns in the backseat of the vehicle and a dead coyote, the head of an eight-point whitetail deer and antlers of a three-point deer in the back of the truck. The vehicle matched the description and tag of the vehicle from the complaint. After interviews and a thorough investigation, it was determined that the subjects illegally killed five antlered deer at night at various locations during the month. A search of the vehicle revealed a total of five long guns. The suspects led officers to their residences where antlers from a three-point, five-point, six-point, eight-point and nine-point deer were seized. The suspects were charged with night hunting and multiple charges are pending upon the completion of the investigation.

Officer Lewis saw a man holding a redfish that was clearly over the legal size limit in his Facebook profile picture and located another photo depicting the same redfish on ice in a large cooler. The redfish appeared to take up the entire length of the cooler. In one of the posts, the man commented that the redfish was 38 inches and he caught it in the bayou. Officer Lewis located the man's address and conducted an interview. The subject eventually, after a couple of different stories, admitted that he harvested the oversized redfish and was planning on eating it. The subject turned over the oversized redfish filets from his freezer and was appropriately cited.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officers P. Rockwell and Trueblood were on board the Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) *Vigilance* while on patrol in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico. They were approximately 16 miles south of Fort Walton Beach and conducted an inspection on a charter vessel out of Destin. During the inspection, the charter vessel was found to be in possession of several species of reef fish without a federal reef fish permit. The vessel captain was cited for the violation.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Hutchinson was on patrol during a severe storm when he saw a female subject standing in the rain at an intersection. He turned around and made contact with the subject and discovered that she was a juvenile. He also found out that she had walked several miles from her Florida residence and was walking to Alabama. She refused to

provide Officer Hutchinson with her parents' contact information. Concerned for her safety, she was detained and FWC Dispatch contacted the subject's parents. Escambia County Sheriff's Office conducted an interview with the juvenile, and she was released back to the custody of her parents.

Officer Hutchinson was patrolling the Blackwater State Forest and saw a vehicle parked in the middle of a paved road. As he approached, he saw two men sitting in the vehicle with the passenger pointing a hunting rifle out of the passenger side window. Another rifle was next to the driver. Both subjects were wearing camouflage clothing without the required hunter safety orange. When asked what they were doing, the driver said, "We saw a deer cross the road and we were trying to shoot it." After further questioning, both subjects admitted to trying to shoot a deer from the roadway. The passenger did not have a valid hunting license, a management area permit or a deer permit. Both subjects were issued a notice to appear citation for hunting from a right of way on a prohibited road. The passenger was issued a written warning for the hunting license violation.

Officer Hutchison was patrolling along a highway within the Blackwater Forest when he saw a subject riding a horse next to the field trial area. He recognized the subject from previous encounters and knew the subject had been caught illegally hunting within the field trial area from his horse. After passing the subject, he concealed his vehicle and waited to see if the subject would enter the field trial area. After a few minutes, he drove back towards the area and saw fresh horse tracks leading into the field trial area. He followed the tracks into a wooded area and saw the subject holding a pump shotgun while riding his horse through the trees as if he was trying to jump a deer. When he shouted the subject's name, the subject spun his horse around and attempted to conceal his firearm by dropping it on the ground. The subject denied possessing a firearm until Officer Hutchinson walked into the woods and located the shotgun lying on the ground. The subject was issued a notice to appear citation for hunting in a closed area and hunting license violations.

Officer Hutchinson received a call from about someone illegally dumping deer carcasses from a bridge into a creek. He received a description of the vehicle, but no license plate number. He remembered seeing a vehicle matching the description at a residence of a subject with whom he had had previous encounters. Later that evening, he the vehicle parked in the subject's yard. Fresh deer blood, hair and meat was in the bed of the vehicle. The subject admitted to illegally dumping the carcasses into the creek and was issued a notice to appear citation for littering in a freshwater creek.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Lieutenant Walsingham and Officer Jackson responded to a call where a landowner was hunting and saw two yearlings leave the property out of his sight. Shortly after, he heard a shot fired. After a short investigation where blood, drag marks, and a golf cart track was located, a suspect was identified at a nearby residence. A citation for taking antlerless deer during closed season and warnings for no hunting license and no deer stamp were issued.

RESCUES

WALTON COUNTY

Lieutenant Hollinhead, Officers Arnette, Tison, and Letcher responded to the Shoal River after Walton County Sheriff's Department requested assistance with a deceased person floating in the river. It was later determined the subject lived in a recreational vehicle (RV) close to the river and encountered trouble when floodwaters reached his RV during the night. The excess water was the result of local heavy rain which caused the water levels to rapidly rise. The officers used a patrol vessel to reach the RV and determined no one else was missing.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

DIXIE COUNTY

Officers Butler and Robson were on water patrol along the Dixie County coastline when they saw a small boat in a creek with two subjects on board. After making contact with the subjects, the officers found that they had been commercially harvesting oyster from prohibited waters. Both subjects will be charged with harvesting oyster from prohibited waters, not having a marine sanitation device on board, and having a false bottom or bulkhead in the boat to keep bilge water from contaminating the oysters.

DUVAL COUNTY

Investigator Holleman conducted a quality control/license check at a grocery store in Neptune Beach which revealed that the grocery chain was not licensed with the FWC to sell seafood at any of its seven locations. In addition, Investigator Holleman found that the wholesale company out of Georgia was improperly licensed with a retail license rather than wholesale license and was claiming Florida resident status rather than non-resident status. Both companies were immediately brought into compliance.

LAFAYETTE COUNTY

Officers Drew and Davenport were on off-road patrol in Mallory Swamp Wildlife Management Area (WMA) when they observed a Ford F-150 exiting the still-hunt area. They stopped to talk with the hunters to see if they had any luck while hunting. During the conversation, the driver stated he had beer in one of the coolers, which is prohibited in the WMA. While inspecting the coolers, Officer Davenport located the beer and observed a small amount of blood in the water underneath the beer. After pulling back the beer cans, Officer Davenport located a 37 ½ inch alligator tail and four alligator legs hidden under the cans. Both subjects were interviewed and admitted to killing the

alligator. The passenger also admitted to having marijuana and a glass pipe. The alligator tail, legs, a 12-gauge shotgun, marijuana less than 20 grams, a glass pipe and rolling papers were seized and charges will be direct-filed with the state attorney's office.

RESCUES

SUWANNEE COUNTY

Officer Boone responded to a call about an overdue boater on the Suwannee River. The boater's wife stated she had not been able to make contact with her husband for several hours and that her husband's boat trailer and truck were still at the boat ramp where they launched. She was concerned for their safety because it was so unusual for him to be out so late after dark. After a search, the overdue boaters were located. Their Jon boat had sunk and the boaters were wet and cold but in good condition. Officer Boone transported the boaters back and returned them safely to their relieved and grateful family members waiting at the boat ramp.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Balgo was performing a vessel safety and fisheries inspection on an individual at Freddie Patrick Boat Ramp in Port Canaveral and saw a blanket on the bottom of the vessel. Under the blanket was a 37-inch red drum. The individual also did not have a fire extinguisher. The individual was issued a citation for possession of an oversized red drum and a warning for no fire extinguisher. The red drum was returned alive to the resource.

MARION COUNTY

While on patrol in the Ocala WMA, Officers Wear and Seiler, Investigators Sumpter and Adam, and Lieutenant Yetter responded to a report of a hunter taking two antlerless deer in the area of the pipeline and Forest Road 2. With the assistance of some local hunters, the officers were able to locate the truck and the subject reported to have been involved. A doe and small button buck were in the bed of the truck and the subject admitted to taking both deer. He was issued a notice to appear for taking antlerless deer and taking over the bag limit of deer on the WMA.

SUMTER COUNTY

Officer Phillips received a complaint about a subject trespassing on private property in south Sumter County. K-9 Officer Simpson with K-9 Moose, K-9 Officer Wolff with K-9

Chaos and K-9 Officer Stasko with K-9 Pierson were in the area and responded. To the area where the subject was last seen. K-9 Moose was deployed on a track and was able to track the subject from his last known location to the fence line on the subject's property. The officers then interviewed the suspect and he gave a full confession. K-9 Pierson and Chaos were later deployed on area searches and located a palmetto blind and a dead four-point whitetail buck deer approximately sixty yards from the blind on another neighbor's property, where the subject had received a trespass warning in the past. The information was filed with the state attorney's office and a warrant was issued. The subject was arrested for felony trespass by attempting to take any animal by firearm or projectile, trespass after warning, no hunting license, no deer permit, and violation of antler restriction three-points on one side or 10-inch main beam.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

LAKE COUNTY

Public Information Officer (PIO) Weber attended the Dora Pines Homeowner's Association meeting and conducted an outreach in reference to living with bears. The education was well received.

PIO Weber attended the Early Learning Coalition Day in the Park event. There were more than 750 children and 350 chaperones in attendance. PIO Weber's efforts were well received and appreciated by the community, parents and children.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officers McColgin and Hardgrove were on water patrol when they saw a vessel which appeared to be commercially fishing. They conducted a fisheries inspection and determined the vessel was indeed fishing commercially and had a large quantity of mullet on board. None of the fish had any ice on them and there was no ice on board the vessel at all. Further investigation revealed neither the men nor the vessel had a valid saltwater products license (SPL). The men were cited for not having a valid SPL and for not having ice to ensure the quality of the fish.

Lieutenant Wells and Officers Smith, Burks, Alvis, Hughes, Martin and Bergwerff departed out of St. Petersburg on the OPV *Gulf Sentry* for a 3-day patrol. They inspected several vessels and encountered numerous commercial and recreational violations. Violations cited and warned over the 3-day period included possession of undersized red grouper, possession of red snapper during the closed season, possession of greater amberjack during the closed season, undersized stone crab claws, no restricted species endorsement, interfering with an FWC officer, using reef

fish as bait, not having the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) on, non-compliant turtle mitigation gear, harvest of live rock, longlining within 20 fathoms, longlining without a longline endorsement and failure to keep fish intact. The FWC seized approximately 2,300 yards of longline, 247 hooks and gangions, 137 pieces of red grouper being used as bait on the longline, 650 pounds of red grouper and they terminated a commercial fishing vessel's trip. NOAA met that fishing vessel at the fish house and seized 650 pounds of grouper.

HERNANDO COUNTY

Officers Pettifer, Little, Balfour and Canamero conducted a wholesale and retail fisheries inspection at an area seafood company. During their inspection, the officers noticed two men sorting mullet from the back of a pickup truck in the parking lot. The officers initiated a resource inspection and found the mullet were warm to the touch, were not protected from the elements and were not transported on ice. The men were in possession of commercial quantities of stripped mullet but did not possess a valid commercial Saltwater Products License (SPL). Records from the fish house revealed the two men had previously sold mullet there without the proper license. The two men were cited for failure to transport their commercial catch on ice, failure to protect their catch from the elements and possession of commercial quantities of saltwater products without the proper license.

HIGHLANDS COUNTY

Investigator Ervin received a call from the Highlands County Sheriff's Office who responded to a domestic disturbance call where they saw a subject in possession of an alligator. After arriving at the scene, he saw a small alligator inside a glass aquarium in the backyard of the residence. The subject was interviewed at the Highlands County Jail, where he was booked by the Sheriff's Office on unrelated charges. The subject was issued a misdemeanor citation for possession of an alligator without a permit. The alligator was seized and released back into the wild.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Officers Berg, Dalton and Gaudion were on water patrol in the area of the Little Manatee River and conducted an inspection on a commercial fishing vessel. The officers found that the vessel contained an improperly marked entanglement net and the captain of the vessel was commercially fishing on a suspended SPL. Several criminal citations were issued and the subjects will have to appear in court for their violations.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Price was on land patrol and notified Officer Collazo of a red Chevrolet S-10 Blazer with hunting gear parked on the south boundary of the Yucca Pens Unit Fred C. Babcock/Cecil M. Webb WMA in Cape Coral. The vehicle was parked on private property and there were several ATV tracks leading from the vehicle to the interior of

the WMA. A small part of the boundary fence was cut, which allowed entry into the WMA from the vehicle. Officer Collazo brought K-9 Roscoe out to the area and he quickly began to track the subjects. K-9 Roscoe located several boot tracks from the vehicle leading inside the WMA and continued to track north. K-9 Roscoe tracked back to the west and then they made a big circle to the south, when Officer Collazo saw the two subjects dressed in camouflage clothing with hunting rifles. The subjects were instructed to stop and place the rifles on the ground. They complied and were escorted back towards their vehicle, where they admitted to hunting wild hogs inside the WMA. Officer Price issued the subjects 2 misdemeanor notices to appear for hunting in the WMA during a closed season, 2 infractions for entering the WMA at a non-designated entry point, and 2 warnings for entering the WMA without paying the daily use fee or possessing a WMA permit.

Officers Collazo and Price were patrolling the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) vacant lands and located a stolen vessel in the vicinity. The vessel had been reported stolen in 2014 by the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office. The case was turned over to the Lee County Sheriff's Office and it was towed out of the area. The condition of the vessel was very poor and there were no fingerprints or vehicle tracks present for evidence.

PASCO COUNTY

While on land patrol, Officers Ferguson and Godfrey received a call about a subject keeping illegal fish. The officers arrived on scene and found a subject actively fishing near the location given. A subsequent resource inspection revealed the subject had over his bag limit of spotted sea trout and two of the trout were over 20 inches (only one can be over 20 inches). The subject was cited for his violations accordingly.

PINELLAS COUNTY

Officers Berg and Dalton responded to a call of illegal fishing at Pier 60 in Clearwater. When they arrived, they found several fishermen in possession of 38 undersized spotted sea trout. The men were advised that the bag limit on spotted sea trout is four per person and that they must be at least 15 inches to possess. The men were given citations for possession of undersized and over the bag limit of spotted sea trout and will have to appear in court.

While on land patrol at the Fort Desoto Bridge, Officer Bibeau observed an individual that was returning to his vehicle carrying fishing equipment and a cooler. After a fisheries inspection, an undersized sheepshead was located. During a permitted search of the subject's vehicle, another small cooler that contained a 13-inch gag grouper was found. The subject was cited for possession of an undersized gag grouper and warned for possession of an undersized sheepshead.

While on land patrol at the Fort Desoto Bridge, Officer Bibeau conducted a fisheries inspection and located five undersized gag grouper, the largest of which measured only

11.5 inches. The subject was cited for possession of undersized gag grouper and over the bag limit of gag grouper.

While on land patrol near the Gandy Bridge, Officer Martinez conducted a resource inspection on a subject fishing from shore. Officer Martinez asked the subject if he had any fish and he stated he had, but threw them all back. A subsequent search of a nearby bucket belonging to the subject revealed an undersized snook which the subject admitted was his. The subject was cited accordingly for his violations.

SARASOTA COUNTY

While on patrol in the area of Blackburn Point Bridge, Officer Brown performed a fisheries inspection on a man who was cast netting mullet from the bridge. The man was in possession of 125 mullet and was planning on selling them at a local fish house. The subject was cited for commercially harvesting saltwater products without a SPL and will have to appear in court.

While on land patrol in the area of Blackburn Point Bridge, Officer Brown performed a fisheries inspection on a man that was fishing from the shoreline. During his inspection, he found that the subject had caught and kept several very small grey (mangrove) snapper. Grey snapper have to be 10 inches to possess. The subject was given a criminal citation and will have to appear in court.

While on patrol in the area of Myakka River, Officer Brown performed a fisheries inspection on a subject fishing on the river. The subject had caught and kept two undersized and out-of-season snook. The individual was advised that snook season closed December 1 and he was issued a cited for possession of snook out of season. He was also given two written warnings for possession of undersized snook and over the bag limit of snook.

RESCUES

DESOTO COUNTY

Officer Polaszek was working in the Deep Creek SWFWMD property when he was approached by a Desoto County deputy and advised that the county received a 911 call about a lost hiker on the property. Officer Polaszek had seen the hiker about an hour beforehand, and responded back to the location where he first observed the hiker. The hiker was located and transported back to the parking lot with no injuries.

SOUTH A REGION

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

While on patrol in the SFWMD Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) 2, Officer Tarr saw a subject fishing inside of the STA. As he approached, the subject jumped onto a bicycle and attempted to flee the area. Officer Tarr caught up with the subject as he was approaching his vehicle. The subject had 34 black crappie inside a cooler. The daily limit for crappie is 25 and it is also illegal to be inside of the STA without the proper hunting or special use permit, which the subject did not have. The subject had also been previously cited for trespassing. The subject received misdemeanor citations for over the bag limit of black crappie, fishing inside of an STA, and trespassing. The fish were seized and entered into evidence. The subject also received an infraction for not having a fishing license.

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Officer Toby observed an individual fishing near Lake Okeechobee at the Lock 7 Pier and conducted a fisheries inspection. The individual was in possession of one undersized black crappie. The undersized black crappie was photographed and returned to the water alive. The individual was cited accordingly.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Toby observed an individual fishing near Lake Okeechobee in Canal Point and conducted a fisheries inspection. The individual had an active warrant for his arrest but fled on foot when he was being taken into custody. A short distance later, the subject was apprehended and arrested for the warrant and for resisting arrest without violence.

From a concealed location Officer Toby observed an individual fishing near Lake Okeechobee in Canal Point with a cast net. When a fisheries inspection was initiated, the individual immediately threw the cast net into the water and attempted to flee. Officer Toby gave chase and had to deploy his Taser while apprehending the subject, who was then handcuffed and arrested. The individual kicked Officer Toby while being placed into the vehicle. Upon searching a bucket the individual had hidden, multiple freshwater game fish were identified, all of which were taken illegally by cast net. The individual was arrested for three felony charges of battery on a law enforcement officer, resisting arrest with violence, and destruction of evidence. Additionally, the individual was issued two misdemeanor charges for taking freshwater game fish by illegal method and failure to allow inspection by an FWC officer. The individual also had an active warrant for his arrest.

Officer Toby observed an individual fishing in a restricted area on SFWMD property at the Lake Harbor Structure near Lake Okeechobee. He had the individual exit the restricted property and conducted a fisheries inspection. The fisherman was in possession of three undersized black crappie and was issued two misdemeanor citations for possession of the three undersized black crappie and trespassing on the restricted property.

Officers Toby, Warensford and McLendon saw six individuals in a restricted area on United States Sugar Corporation Property near Pahokee. While addressing this violation, two additional individuals rode by in this restricted area on all-terrain vehicles. They too were stopped and escorted to the initial violation location with the other officers. Officer Cheshire arrived on scene and assisted. All eight individuals were issued a misdemeanor citation pertaining to the trespassing violation on United States Sugar Corporation property.

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

Officer Arnold was conducting license and resource inspections in western Fort Pierce when he came upon a large group of individuals on the side of the road by a canal cast netting fish. As he spoke with the subjects and gathered their information to check for valid fishing licenses, one subject appeared to be misleading the officer by giving him false information. After several searches of the given name and date of birth, multiple aliases returned on the computer, all with active arrest warrants. The Sheriff's Office was called to assist with positively identifying the subject, using a Rapid Identification Device. When fingerprints were entered into the system, a warrant confirmation and correct name were received along with a booking photo from a prior arrest. The subject was handcuffed, transported and booked in jail for providing false information to a law enforcement officer and also for the active warrant out of Palm Beach County.

Investigator Turner was on patrol at Little Mud Creek when he observed a male acting in a suspicious manner. Investigator Turner conducted a license and resource inspection and upon found several pounds of raw oysters, fifteen mullet, five snook, one mangrove snapper and two sheepshead in the subject's vehicle. The fish were undersized and the oysters were harvested from a closed area. The subject's information came back as "no record found" from Dispatch even though it appeared to be a valid Florida driver license. A closer look at the details of the Florida driver license proved the license to be fictitious. Investigator Turner placed the subject under arrest for the violations and issued a warning for fishing without a valid Florida saltwater fishing license and failure to possess a snook permit. The subject was booked into the Saint Lucie County Jail and held on a \$6,000 bond.

RESCUES

PALM BEACH COUNTY

While on water patrol in Boynton Beach, Officer Spradling heard a "vessel in distress" call over his patrol vessel VHF radio. The vessel in distress was located just offshore of the south Lake Worth Inlet. He coordinated his response with U. S. Coast Guard (USCG) Lake Worth and was on the scene with the vessel in distress within ten minutes. A Sea Tow vessel was with the vessel in distress and its two occupants. After doing a welfare check on both vessel and its occupants, Sea Tow transported the vessel and occupants to their dock.

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

Investigator Turner and Lieutenant Rogerson responded to a distress call of a small capsized vessel with several people in the water in the Intracoastal Waterway, north of the Harbor Branch. Upon their arrival, they met with the USCG and were advised that the subjects had been rescued by a Good Samaritan and the vessel had been towed to a nearby spoil island. It was determined that the subjects had just launched the vessel on its maiden voyage when a large vessel traveling in the channel produced a large wake that swamped and then capsized the smaller vessel, ejecting its two occupants. No injuries were reported. The suspect vessel did not stop to render assistance and could not be readily identified.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

MARTIN COUNTY

Officers Rogers, Hankinson, Newman, Brevik and Morrow conducted conservation patrol with a special emphasis placed on commercial fisheries and commercial boating safety equipment. Stops were conducted in Martin County and in northern Palm Beach County. Numerous vessels were inspected, yielding nine written warnings in the course of the two-day detail.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Hankinson and Brevik conducted approximately fifty resource inspections while at the STA 1-West. Multiple written warnings were given for not possessing proper licenses and permits.

Officers Brevik and Hankinson were on water patrol in the Intracoastal Waterway where they observed multiple people speeding through the regulated manatee zones. Two warnings were issued and officers educated the operators by showing them where the manatee zones are located.

SOUTH B REGION

CASES

COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Araujo was on land patrol in Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park during the New Year holiday weekend when he came across a man carrying a heavy bucket from the beach toward the parking lot. Officer Araujo noticed a strong alcoholic smell coming from the man and his movements were slow and his speech was slurred. The man

indicated that the bucket contained shells from the beach. Since Officer Araujo did not observe the man consume alcohol or have it in his possession, he directed the man to return the sand in the bucket back to the beach. Approximately 15 minutes later, Officer Araujo observed a vehicle driving in reverse against the flow of traffic within one of the parking lots. Officer Araujo identified the driver as the same man he had asked to return the bucket of sand back to the beach. The man consented to perform seated field alcohol tasks and performed poorly. He was then arrested for DUI. Officer Therkettle assisted by transporting the man to the Naples Jail Center. The man also consented to a breath alcohol test and the results were 0.230 and 0.231.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

FWC officers have been patrolling Moody, Military and Mowry Canals and have encountered fishermen violating various bag and size limits of regulated fish species. In one case, the officer cited a subject for being in possession of twelve, undersized black drum. In another similar case, the officer found a plastic bag containing an undersized black drum that had been hidden in the mangrove tree line near a group of fishermen. When the officer retrieved the bag and confronted the fishermen, all of them denied ownership of the bag and its contents. The officer again questioned the fishermen and again they denied any responsibility for the undersized fish. The officer did not immediately reveal that a saltwater fishing license, purchased that same day, was also in the bag and it contained the identity of the fisherman. Once confronted with that fact, the subject confessed to having caught the undersized fish. The subject was then cited for the undersized violation and interference with the duties of an FWC officer.

MONROE COUNTY

Officers Way and Mobley were conducting a fish house inspection when a local resident hailed down the two officers claiming that a person was currently in the water cutting his vessel's anchor line and was possibly stealing items from his boat. Upon seeing the officers, the diver got out of the water and onto his own boat and powered away. Officers Way and Mobley quickly boarded a nearby patrol vessel and soon intercepted the diver on his boat. An investigation revealed that the diver had cut the anchor line because of an argument between the two parties. The diver was arrested for criminal mischief property damage and resisting arrest without violence.

Investigator Hein was on state water patrol in the area of Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park when he noticed an individual fishing from a small vessel underneath a bridge. Investigator Hein made contact with the individual and conducted a resource inspection. During the resource inspection, the individual was ignoring Investigator Hein's request to search the cooler and continuously tried to change the subject. Upon inspecting the cooler, an undersized black grouper was found. The individual was cited for possession of undersized black grouper, failure to have a non-resident fishing license, and multiple boating safety violations.

Investigator Hein was on state water patrol in the Islamorada area when he noticed a vessel destroying sea grass in a no motor zone. During the boating safety and resource inspection, he saw several large great barracuda sticking out of a cooler. Upon closer inspection, there were three great barracuda on board with one operator. Two more black grouper were located in a hatch after the operator said there were no more fish on board. Another individual was on board who had helped catch the fish. One of them was undersized and one individual was cited for the violation.

Investigator Hein was on state land patrol in the Islamorada area when he noticed a large group of individuals actively fishing. Investigator Hein conducted a resource inspection and asked the group if they had caught any fish. At the conclusion of the resource inspection, one individual was cited for possession of undersized gray/mangrove snapper and possession of undersized schoolmaster snapper.

Investigator Hein was on state land patrol in the Craig Key area on a bridge checking individuals who were fishing late at night. A strong odor of marijuana was detected coming from an individual in front of him. The individual was smoking something and was instructed not to throw it over the bridge multiple times. The individual threw the lit object over the bridge into the water. A search revealed that the individual was in possession of cocaine. The individual was charged with possession of cocaine, possession of drug paraphernalia, tampering with evidence, and placing marine organisms on a bank, bridge or out of the water. The individual was arrested and transported to a detention facility.

Investigator Hein was on state land patrol when he noticed a large pickup truck backed into the woods off the side of a road near the water. Footprints and boat marks indicated a small boat had been launched out of the back of a pickup truck into the water. A 12-foot aluminum vessel with a subject aboard was close to shore underneath a bridge. The subject was observed catching a large number of fish, tossing the fish in a cooler and continuing. At the conclusion of a subsequent resource inspection, the individual was found to be in possession of more than twice the recreational aggregate bag limit of snapper and almost four times the bag limit of gray/mangrove snapper with 23 total snapper. There were 19 gray/mangrove snapper, 5 of which were undersized, and 4 lane snapper. The individual was charged accordingly, arrested and transported to a detention facility.

RESCUES

MONROE COUNTY

Three teens had their holiday vacation disrupted when their rented vessel became flooded with water and capsized 2.5 miles offshore while fishing. Officers Garrison, Mason, Investigator Bingham and Monroe County's Deputy J. Hager came to their rescue in a coordinated effort. When Investigator Bingham and Deputy Hager arrived on the scene, they found the subjects standing on top of the capsized vessel. The three individuals were transported safely to shore on board Deputy Hager's patrol vessel, and

the capsized vessel was recovered. In a fitting end for a tenured member of our law enforcement team, Investigator Bingham retired from the agency, ending his career of patrolling and protecting the waters and people of Florida with one final rescue.

Officer McKay responded to a local livery in Key Largo when a delayed boating accident was reported. A rented 26-foot deck boat was offshore when it began to take on water and rolled over. All four passengers were brought on board a local head boat and brought to shore safely. The recovery was caught on numerous cell cameras and posted to the internet before the case was even reported to FWC Dispatch, who eventually received the call from the USCG. The investigation is ongoing.

FWC officers were notified of a 45-foot sailing vessel aground at West Washerwoman Shoal located south of Sugarloaf Key in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS). The operator of the vessel told Lieutenant Peters and the initial officers on the scene that he was at anchor and drifted onto the shoal. A boating accident investigation revealed the vessel was under power when it struck the shoal. The preliminary evaluation of the grounding site revealed a damaged path of approximately 173 yards. The operator of the vessel was issued a federal citation for operating his vessel in a manner that damaged FKNMS resources and an infraction for violating a navigation rule that resulted in a boating accident. The damage assessment team of the FKNMS will be conducting a formal assessment of the grounding site and will determine if rehabilitation efforts will be needed.

Officers Wagner and Rubenstein were on water patrol when they received a delayed report of a large vessel running aground on a flat in Northwest Channel off Key West. They responded to the location description and found severe sea grass damage that resulted in large trenches on the flat. The investigation is still ongoing and federal and/or state charges may follow. Officer J. Brierley of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as officers of the USCG and NOAA are assisting with the investigation.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

FWC officers responded to a crocodile complaint from an anonymous caller advising an injured crocodile was on a property in Homestead. Upon arrival in the area, the officers attempted to identify any water source located on the property with negative results. A Google Earth review identified a small drainage ditch located between the main office and a maintenance area on the property. The officers made contact with the property's office supervisor, informing her of the report and she advised there was a crocodile on their property that had an injured jaw, and guided the officers to the location where it was last observed. The officers observed an approximately 6-foot crocodile that had an injured jaw that was offset to the left side and a blind right eye. It was not contained and was free to leave at will. The FWC Statewide Nuisance Alligator Program biologists were contacted regarding the issue and the crocodile will be monitored to ensure its well-being.