

FWC
Division of Law Enforcement



Weekly Report
January 27, 2017 through February 2, 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

CALHOUN COUNTY

Officer Forehand responded to a complaint of a landowner whose property borders the Chipola River. The complainant saw a vessel pulled up to his property and heard a rifle shot nearby. The complainant noted the vessel's registration number and went to the area where he heard the shot. He found a freshly killed doe deer with the top loins removed. At the same time, he heard the vessel crank up and leave the area. Officer Forehand identified the owner of the vessel and met with him to conduct an interview. The suspect admitted to shooting the deer. Charges of taking antlerless deer during the closed season will be direct filed. He was also issued a warning for willful and wanton waste of wildlife.

Lieutenant Allen and Officer Little responded to assist a deputy who stopped a truck displaying a spotlight in a manner capable of disclosing the presence of deer. When the officers arrived, they found a loaded .17 caliber rifle, a loaded .22 rifle, a loaded 12-gauge shotgun and a spotlight inside the truck. The suspect in this case was charged during the last hunting season with taking antlerless deer. He was booked into the Calhoun County Jail for night hunting. All of the firearms and the spotlight were seized as evidence.

Lieutenant Allen and Officer Little responded to assist the same deputy who stopped another truck displaying a spotlight in a manner capable of disclosing the presence of deer. Two suspects were in the vehicle with a loaded .22 rifle and a loaded .223 rifle. Both suspects were charged with night hunting and both of the firearms were seized as evidence.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Officer Matechik was on patrol when a Wildlife Alert complaint came in about an oysterman culling oysters from his vessel at the dock in Eastpoint. After canvassing the area, a subject was located with 2½ bags of oysters and culling oysters on the cull board. Officer Matechik checked the oyster bags and found they did not have the required tags and the subject did not have a saltwater products license (SPL) in his possession. The officer cited the subject for untagged oysters, not culling oysters on the oyster bed, and no SPL in possession.

JACKSON COUNTY

Lieutenant Allen and Officer Guy responded to assist a deputy who heard a shot locate a hunter. When the officers arrived, they located the hunter and checked the area and discovered a freshly killed doe deer. The hunter admitted to shooting the deer and will be charged with taking antlerless deer during the closed season.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officers Nichols, Bartlett, and J. Rockwell had confirmed a disposition from Walton County regarding a subject they arrested for violating a domestic violence injunction. The subject previously admitted to hunting and advised his license had been suspended for a year. Officer Rockwell filed an additional charge of hunting while license suspended or revoked.

Officer Pifer was on vessel patrol conducting state fisheries and license inspections in the Destin Pass. He observed a boat tied underneath the Marler Bridge with one individual on board actively fishing. A fisheries inspection revealed an oversized red drum. The individual was issued a notice to appear citation.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Hutchinson received information about a subject who harvested three antlerless deer in one day during the antlerless deer season, two over the limit. During an interview, the subject said that he, his father, and his son each shot one deer. After interviewing the other subjects and another witness, it was confirmed that the subject shot and killed all three deer himself. The subject then admitted to taking all three deer. Officer Hutchinson obtained a warrant charging the man with taking over the bag limit of antlerless deer.

Officer Hutchinson was patrolling an area after dark where he received several complaints of illegal hunting activity. While working the area, he observed a vehicle driving through the middle of a large field while both the driver and passenger shined the area. When the vehicle was stopped, a loaded hunting rifle was discovered. The man and woman admitted to looking for deer. The driver did not have a valid driver's license. Both were charged with night hunting and the driver was also charged with driving with a suspended license.

Officer Hutchinson saw a vehicle slowly traveling along the road with a spotlight being shined from the vehicle into the field in front of his house. The vehicle was stopped and two juveniles informed him that they were looking for a big buck. A loaded shotgun was lying in between the two front seats. Officer Hutchinson made contact with their parents and, after the parents' arrival, the juveniles were charged with night hunting and released into the custody of their parents.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Mullins attended Bagdad Elementary School to talk with students who were studying conservation and resource management. Officer Mullins explained the FWC's role in conservation and protection of natural resources. After an explanation of laws,

regulations, and why they are important, Officer Mullins answered the students' questions regarding what is and is not allowed and why.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

DUVAL COUNTY

While conducting unmarked surveillance on inshore shrimp trawlers, a Resource Protection Officer identified a commercial shrimper who was violating the buffer north of downtown Jacksonville and dragging his nets too close to shore. Using GPS and a laser rangefinder, the trawler was marked at 240 feet from shore in an area restricted to 300 feet. A records check revealed the captain had two recent shrimp trawl violations. He was issued a misdemeanor notice to appear for the violation.

NASSAU COUNTY

Officer Sweat received a complaint about stolen property and met with the complainant at the Soggy Bottom Hunt Club. The subject showed the officer his hunting location where a two-man deer stand and a deer feeder had gone missing. At a location where the stand had been dragged off the property was a fresh Burger King receipt.

Approximately two hours later, Officer Sweat located the deer stand on the adjoining property, which belongs to the Nassau School Board and is a known hangout for young people. The complainant identified the deer stand as his. The deer feeder was not recovered at the time, but with the Burger King receipt, Officer Sweat was able to obtain a picture of two young male subjects. One of those subjects admitted to taking the deer feeder to his house. The stand and deer feeder were recovered and returned to the owner. The suspect was given a warning citation and faces petty theft charges through the state attorney's office.

RESCUES

ALACHUA COUNTY

Officers Troiano and Reith responded to a capsized vessel on Orange Lake. When they arrived, the individual had already received a ride to shore. He stated he was fine and did not want EMS to respond, but just wanted to go home. The vessel was marked that night and later retrieved by the owner.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

DUVAL AND NASSAU COUNTIES

Resource Protection Officers worked with Lieutenant Cain who flew over the closed oyster beds in the Nassau River area. Two subjects were found harvesting oysters from the shore and were cited for closed area harvesting and undersized oyster violations. Lieutenant Cain then watched two subjects harvesting oysters from a closed area in a Jon boat. The subjects dumped the oysters when they became aware of the aerial surveillance. Lieutenant Cain guided Officer Culbreth to the dock where the subjects were located. The subjects admitted to the oyster harvesting violation and were cited.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

ALACHUA COUNTY

Officers Troiano and Reith attended the annual Newberry High School Criminal Justice night out. Several hundred students and parents attend the event every year to observe different equipment from each law enforcement agency within the county. The airboat was selected again this year by the officers and past students who had attended the event.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

BREVARD COUNTY

Captive Wildlife Investigator Saunders received information about an unpermitted individual who had taken possession of two reticulated pythons by portraying that he had a permit. A check of the suspect revealed he was on felony probation. The suspect's probation officer set up a search of the suspect's residence which was a condition of the probation. During the search, the probation officers involved discovered two reticulated pythons as well as other contraband. The suspect was arrested and charged with violation of probation as well as possession of conditional species without a permit. The snakes were voluntarily relinquished to FWC and placed at a permitted facility.

LAKE COUNTY

Captive Wildlife Investigator McDaniel investigated the report of a subject illegally possessing venomous reptiles at a house in a residential neighborhood. During his investigation, he discovered that the suspect was indeed in possession of an Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake without a permit. The suspect was cited for the violation and the snake was voluntarily relinquished to FWC.

PUTNAM COUNTY

K-9 Officer Simpson responded to a dumping complaint on private property in the Crescent City area. During the investigation, two suspects were identified and interviewed. The suspects stated that they were going to take the debris to the dump, but decided to dump it on property off a dirt road instead. Both suspects were charged with littering over 500 pounds.

Officer Jones was on patrol in the “Mondex” when he saw a suspicious vehicle parked in the woods. During approach, he smelled the odor of marijuana. An investigation revealed that one subject was in possession of cannabis under 20 grams. The subject was issued a notice to appear for the offense.

Lieutenants Dickson, Yetter and Officer Jones were in the area of the “Mondex” investigating someone possibly using a spotlight to hunt in the woods at night when they heard multiple gunshots nearby. Upon arriving at a bon fire in the woods, Lieutenants Dickson and Yetter were able to identify the shooter who was just shooting into a dirt pile. Officer Jones approached another vehicle at the same location and smelled the odor of burnt cannabis. Upon investigating, a male subject was found to be in possession of under 20 grams of cannabis. The subject was issued a notice to appear for the offense.

Officer Guirate received a call from a landowner in reference to finding fresh blood and other evidence near one of the gates on his property. The officer found where a deer had been shot on the property, loaded on a cart, then loaded in a vehicle outside the property’s gate. Officer Jones provided information on a possible suspect in that area. At the suspect’s residence, he found the head and cape of a freshly killed deer and blood in the bed of a truck that appeared to have the same tire tread as the suspect vehicle. The subject admitted to going onto the landowner’s property and unlawfully killing a buck deer and has been charged with felony trespass.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

DESOTO COUNTY

An anonymous tip was called in stating that a man in Arcadia was keeping a bobcat in his backyard. Officers Franks and Kobs were dispatched to investigate. Upon arrival, the homeowner confessed to being in possession of a bobcat. The bobcat was seized and the man was cited accordingly after being educated on the laws pertaining to the possession of a bobcat.

HARDEE COUNTY

Officer Franks responded to a trespassing complaint. Upon arrival, he found five subjects trespassing on Mosaic property while hog hunting with dogs. The males

entered the property through a fence without permission and were operating an ATV. Officer Franks charged and arrested the subjects. They were all transported to the Hardee County Jail.

HIGHLANDS COUNTY

Several FWC officers and investigators responded to a boating accident that occurred on Lake Istokpoga. Two subjects were transported to a local hospital and two subjects were discovered deceased. This is an ongoing boating accident investigation.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Wilkenson received a call from a property owner that several individuals were trespassing on the orange grove he managed. Officer Wilkenson arrived and observed two vehicles driving off the property with approximately 15 individuals ranging from 3 to 35 years old. Shortly after, Officers Thompson and McColgin arrived on the scene. The individuals were asked why they were on the property and they stated they were just driving around. The property manager stated that he didn't want them on the property. All of the individuals were issued trespass warnings and advised not to return to the property.

While on patrol on Pine Island, Officer Hardgrove encountered two subjects cleaning fish at the boat ramp. There were three large cobia lying on the deck next to them. He asked the subjects if they were aware that the possession limit on cobia is one per person. Both subjects stated they understood that but thought the boat limit of six cobia per boat applied to them, since they had been fishing from a boat. Officer Hardgrove explained that the law states the possession limit is one per person or six per vessel, whichever is fewer. The excess cobia was measured at 50 inches and was seized. The subject who kept the second cobia was issued a notice to appear for possession of cobia over the bag limit.

MANATEE COUNTY

While on land patrol in the South Skyway Rest Area, Officer Dalton performed a fisheries inspection on a man fishing underneath the relief bridge just before the Skyway Fishing Pier. He found the fisherman to be in possession of one 10.5-inch sheepshead and one 10.5-inch gag grouper. The man was given a written warning for the undersized sheepshead and a citation for the gag grouper.

PINELLAS COUNTY

The crew of the *Gulf Sentry*, Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Smith, Burks, Martin and Hughes, were offshore conducting fisheries inspections on commercial longline vessels, and as they approached a longline vessel for inspection, the occupants on board started to throw red grouper into the water. The *Gulf Sentry* crew recovered several undersized grouper. Officers Burks and Hughes boarded the vessel to conduct a fisheries

inspection and located 69 pieces of cut up shark, vermillion snapper and other pieces of reef fish that were being used as bait. Several federal fisheries citations were issued.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

LEE COUNTY

Officers Furbay and McColgin conducted a panther zone enforcement detail that resulted in eight citations and six written warnings, with a high speed of 85 mph in a 45 mph zone. The officers also educated the public on the importance of following the posted speed in panther zones.

SOUTH A REGION

CASES

GLADES COUNTY

Captive Wildlife Investigators Dorigchi and Douglas, along with Lieutenant Garzaniti, inspected a wildlife facility that houses venomous reptiles. The inspection revealed venomous reptiles in enclosures that were not locked as required, as well as enclosures improperly labeled. Investigators Dorigchi and LaFoy returned to the facility and issued a misdemeanor citation for the unlocked enclosures and a warning for the improper labeling. The enclosures were properly secured upon their return.

MARTIN COUNTY

Officers Brevik and Norbrothen were on nighttime water patrol in the St. Lucie River, when they were struck by another vessel, which hit the motor's cowling and slid off the starboard side of the patrol vessel. The subject driving the boat was given standard field sobriety tasks and appeared to be under the influence of alcohol. Officer Brevik arrested and charged the subject with operating a vessel while under the influence of alcohol. The subject was then processed into the Martin County Jail.

While conducting offshore vessel patrol, Officers Rogers, Carroll, Moss, and Morrow conducted an inspection of a vessel returning from offshore. Prior to being boarded, the subject was asked if he had any fish on board, and indicated he did not. Officer Rogers located three undersized red snapper in the bottom of a bucket, underneath a pile of trash on board the vessel. The subject, who had a history of fisheries violations, was issued a misdemeanor citation for possession of undersized red snapper and over the bag limit of red snapper. The illegal fish were then returned to the water at the conclusion of the inspection.

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Officer Allen received information that a dog had been killed by a snare at a residence in a neighborhood north of Okeechobee. Investigator Douglas and Officer Allen inspected the wooded area behind the residence and found a snare and five steel traps. At the residence, two raccoon skins were drying on stretchers. The suspect who lived at the residence was interviewed. He had a valid furbearer's license and admitted he took two raccoons with the steel traps. After consulting with the Okeechobee County state attorney's office, the suspect was issued a notice to appear in court for taking wildlife with steel traps.

Officer Allen was on patrol just after dark when he observed a vehicle and a boat trailer at the Kissimmee River and State Road 70. He went to the S-84 South Florida Water Management District structure where numerous instances of trespassing had occurred in the past and found two subjects trespassing and fishing on the structure behind several "No Trespassing" signs. The men were issued notices to appear in court for the violation.

While on patrol of the Kissimmee Prairie State Park, Officer Boulware and Lieutenant Strenth were advised by park staff that people were camping in the primitive camp area and had a vehicle with them. During a check of the area, four subjects and one truck were located at a campsite. After being contacted, they stated they had driven through an open gate at 8:30 pm and drove to the campsite. It was later learned they had come through a locked gate behind a registered camper and drove around a chained gate to gain access to this area. The subjects were escorted out and given citations for evasion of fees and hanging hammocks from the trees.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer LeBlanc responded to a derelict vessel call that was initiated by Officer Newman at the Stub Canal Boat Ramp, located at Gem Lake. Officer LeBlanc and a Good Samaritan removed a partially submerged PWC from the water. The registration numbers on the hull revealed that the vessel had been reported stolen. The HIN (hull identification number) was removed and he saw two, 2-inch holes cut into the hull. Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (PBSO) Deputy Trentman arrived on the scene and confirmed that the PWC had been reported stolen. Deputy Trentman had the PWC towed to the PBSO compound for further investigation.

Officer Morrow saw a vehicle occupied by an elderly male driving erratically and running a red light in northern Palm Beach County. A traffic stop to investigate the welfare of the driver was initiated and a dispatch query of the vehicle tag revealed that the tag was expired and that the registered owner and driver had a suspended license. When he approached, he noticed a strong smell of marijuana emitting from the vehicle. The driver admitted to having marijuana in the vehicle, which was located after a search. In addition, the vehicle was found to have the registration sticker of another vehicle affixed to the license plate. The subject was then cited for possession of cannabis under 20 grams and for affixing an unassigned registration sticker and given written warnings

reference driving while suspended, driving with an expired tag, and for running a red light. The vehicle was then transferred to a family member.

Officer Nasworth was duck hunting while off duty on Lake Okeechobee and saw two airboats, with two occupants each, hunting in his vicinity. The subjects began shooting ducks approximately twenty minutes before legal shooting hours and he made contact with dispatch and advised them to have an officer respond to the Lake Harbor boat ramp. The subjects left the area and Officer Allen arrived at the boat ramp where he made contact. Officer Nasworth responded to the boat ramp and went on duty to conduct the investigation. After reading the subjects their rights, they admitted to shooting before legal shooting hours. Officer Nasworth wrote all four subjects citations for taking or attempting to take waterfowl before legal shooting hours and provided them with a court date. Officer Allen addressed the license violations.

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

Officer Shermetaro was conducting license and resource inspections in Fort Pierce and saw several people fishing. Each individual was checked for compliance. One individual had an active warrant out of St. Lucie County and the subject was placed under arrest and transported to jail.

RESCUES

GLADES COUNTY

Officers Allen and Boulware, Investigators Lafoy, Patterson and Turner, Lieutenants Harris and Brown and Captain Suggs received information of an overdue boater in the Buckhead Ridge Canal System. He had launched his 10-foot jon boat the previous day and never returned. Ultimately, he was located safe and sound and stated that he had motor problems and spent the night on the boat.

HENDRY COUNTY

Officer Allen and Lieutenant Brown responded to assist FHP with a car accident where a car had rolled into a canal. The vehicle was pulled from the canal with no one in it. Divers searched the canal and did not locate the driver. The officers used UTVs to look in the wooded area and cane fields. The driver hasn't been located and the investigation is ongoing.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Hankinson conducted manatee conservation patrol throughout the Jupiter and Loxahatchee River regulated manatee zones. Numerous boaters were educated and violations were addressed accordingly.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

GLADES COUNTY

Officer Alford spoke on the laws and regulations of FWC to a group of 20 people at a Hunter Safety Course at the Lykes Brother's Office.

SOUTH B REGION

CASES

COLLIER COUNTY

While performing dockside inspections at Marco River Marina, Officer Lugg observed a charter vessel returning to the dock. The captain began offloading fish onto a dockside cleaning table after his guests departed from his vessel. The officer approached the captain and performed a marine fisheries inspection. He found that the captain possessed two undersized spotted trout and an undersized pompano. The captain admitted to the violations and was cited accordingly.

Officers Arbogast, Kleis and Plussa were conducting a follow-up investigation to a derelict vessel case where they were attempting to locate the vessel owner over the course of several months. The officers were able to reach the vessel owner to review the items that were sent to him by mail. After reviewing the documents with the vessel owner, he was arrested for the charges related to the derelict vessel investigation. A subsequent search of the owner after his arrest revealed that he was in possession of cannabis and drug paraphernalia. The owner of the vessel was transported to jail and cited for five misdemeanor charges including storing a derelict vessel on state waters, storing a titled vessel on state waters without a hull identification number, failure to change registration or address of a vessel, possession of cannabis, and possession of drug paraphernalia. He also received three citations regarding the registration and navigational lights display relating to the vessel.

Lieutenants Mahoney, Sushil, Officers Arbogast, Lugg, Miller, Osorio-Borja, Polly, Reams and Thirkettle assisted the Collier County Sheriff's Office in a detail focused on vehicle and vessel thefts during the early morning hours. Both agencies proactively patrolled I-75 and US-41 for several nights and mornings in an effort to identify and locate stolen vehicles and vessels transiting through Collier County. Several stops were conducted throughout the detail; however, no stolen vehicles or vessels were present.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Officers responded to Bill Bags State Park regarding a report of an attempted suicide. The caller was closely related to the individual and stated that he was in a terrible state

of mind and armed with a knife. Upon arrival, FWC officers saw the individual struggling with an officer from another agency. Collectively, officers were able to subdue the individual without further incident. The individual was transported by Fire Rescue to an area hospital and detained due to his state of mind.

While on water patrol in Biscayne Bay, officers stopped a vessel for a marine fisheries inspection. At the conclusion, the officers discovered the occupants were in possession of an undersized cobia. The subject was cited accordingly.

MONROE COUNTY

Officers Piekenbrock and Rubenstein received a tip from Officer Brierley of the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service that a person was illegally camping in the refuge and was trespassing. He was asked to pick up his camp site and leave the refuge. He had moved his camp, but there was an unregistered motorcycle hidden in the woods near his camp. The officers ran the unregistered motorcycle and found the name of the owner. Officer Brierley made contact with the individual through telephone to meet to arrange getting his motorcycle out of the refuge. The individual was aware he had a warrant and took off running down US1 on Big Pine Key. Knowing he was hiding in the refuge, FWC Officers Rubenstein, Piekenbrock and Mason, US Fish and Wildlife Officers, and Monroe County Sheriff's deputies searched the woods and located the subject hiding in the palmetto thickets. The subject was charged with resisting arrest without violence, possession of marijuana less than 20 grams and an active warrant for failure to appear out of Monroe County.

RESCUES

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

FWC officers were on water patrol when they were notified of a sailboat that was reported overdue from Crandon Park, in route to Watson Island Boat Ramp. The operator was the sole occupant of the vessel. During the voyage, he fell in the water and lost his cell phone while talking to his family member who was waiting for his arrival at the boat ramp. The United States Coast Guard (USCG) issued an emergency broadcast for all mariners to search for this vessel. The FWC officers were conducting search patterns and noticed a sailboat matching that description nearing the flats south of Fisherman's Channel. The officers identified the vessel and positively confirmed it was the missing man. The subject was issued a PFD and safely escorted back to his family at the boat ramp.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

MONROE COUNTY

Officers Foell and Sapp attended Career Day at Saint Mary's Basilica School in Key West. The Officers brought a patrol truck and vessel and explained the many roles of an

FWC officer and the importance of regulations. There were approximately 300 children who attended the event, from Pre-Kindergarten to 8th grade.