

FWC
Division of Law Enforcement



Weekly Report
March 31, 2017 through April 6, 2017

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

Patrol, Protect, Preserve

NORTHWEST REGION

CASES

BAY COUNTY

Officer Gore saw a vehicle operating in a careless manner and weaving out of its lane. During a traffic stop, it was discovered that the subject was in possession of cannabis, several different non-prescribed pills that are considered controlled substances and was consuming alcohol. He was arrested and transported to the Bay County Jail for the felony and misdemeanor charges.

CALHOUN COUNTY

Officer Hayes located two turkey blinds with cracked corn spread within 20 yards and three active feeders within 50 yards. Over the weekend, Officers Hayes and Little checked the blinds and found two subjects actively calling and hunting for turkey. Both hunters were charged with hunting turkey over bait.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officer Allgood was on vessel patrol in the Big Lagoon when he saw a vessel on plane in violation of the idle speed zone. He stopped the vessel and spoke to the operator, noticing several signs of impairment. After performing poorly on the field sobriety exercises, the operator was arrested for BUI. The operator agreed to give a breath sample and the result was .152 g /210L. The operator was booked into the Escambia County Jail.

Officer Manning received information about illegal redfish being harvested at the Bob Sikes Fishing Bridge. As one individual was leaving the bridge, and inspection of his cooler revealed two redfish measuring 30 and 32 inches. The individual was cited for possession of oversized redfish and over the bag limit of redfish.

Officers Long and Manning were on patrol on the Bob Sikes Fishing Bridge when they stopped to speak to a group of fishermen and discovered a recently cleaned redfish. After questioning, one of the fishermen admitted to catching and cleaning the fish. The fisherman was issued a notice to appear citation for failure to maintain the redfish in whole condition.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

While patrolling in state waters on board the offshore patrol vessel *Guardian*, Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Matechik and Nelson located a commercial shrimping vessel inside the nearshore/inshore boundary line in St. George Sound trawling with more than two shrimp nets, which is an unlawful practice. The nets also measured too large, exceeding

the 500-square foot legal limit. The nets were seized as evidence and the captain of the vessel was issued the appropriate citations and warnings for the offenses.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Arnette was working private land where the landowner had been having problems with hunters trespassing from the adjoining Blackwater Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Two young subjects were found trespassing while turkey hunting. The landowner agreed to a trespass warning for the subjects, despite the seriousness of the offense of armed trespass. The young mens' parents were contacted as well.

Officer Corbin saw a 16-foot vessel returning from a fishing trip to a local marina off the Santa Rosa Sound near Brooks Bridge. A resource inspection revealed the operator was in possession of two undersized spotted seatrout. The operator was cited and issued a notice to appear citation.

Officers Pifer and Corbin were on vessel patrol conducting saltwater fisheries and license inspections in the Destin Pass on the east side of Crab Island and saw a vessel displaying rods and reels returning to a local marina/dock. In conversation with the owner/operator, it was determined a cobia was harvested and filleted. The officers inspected two clear plastic bags containing cobia fillets. The operator was issued a notice to appear citation for failure to land the cobia in whole condition.

Officers Pifer and Corbin were on vessel patrol conducting saltwater fisheries and license inspections in Cinco Bayou and saw two kayaks with individuals on board who were actively engaged in fishing the dock lights in the area. The officers initiated a vessel stop on the two kayaks and a resource inspection on one of the kayaks revealed three undersized spotted seatrout. The operator was issued a notice to appear citation.

Officers Pifer and Corbin were on vessel patrol conducting saltwater fisheries and license inspections in the Destin Harbor and saw a local charter boat displaying harvested fish at the Fisherman's CO-OP. The officers saw what appeared to be undersized scamp and undersized vermilion snapper. Upon closer inspection, the scamp and one of the vermilion snapper were undersized. The operator was issued a notice to appear citation for the undersized scamp and a warning for the undersized vermilion snapper.

Officers Pifer and Corbin were on vessel patrol conducting saltwater fisheries and license inspections in Cinco Bayou and conducted a vessel stop on two kayaks actively fishing near lighted docks. A resource inspection on one of the kayaks revealed an oversized red drum, an undersized spotted seatrout, and an undersized gray mangrove snapper. The operator was issued a notice to appear citation for the oversized red drum and a warning for the undersized spotted seatrout and undersized gray mangrove snapper.

Officers Pifer and Corbin conducted a vessel stop on two kayaks actively fishing by the Cinco Bayou Bridge. On one of the kayaks, the operator did have the required U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) safety gear, a life jacket and a sound-producing device. The officers asked the operator for his saltwater fishing license and the individual stated he did not have one. The individual stated he attempted to buy one at a local vendor, but was informed his fishing and hunting licenses were suspended. The individual explained his licenses were suspended in the State of Maryland for harvesting a striped bass in a closed area. Florida and Maryland are both part of the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact, an interstate compact to provide reciprocal sharing of information regarding sportsman fishing, hunting, and trapping violations and allows for recognition of suspension or revocation. The individual was issued a notice to appear citation for fishing with a suspended/revoked license and two written warnings for no life jacket and no sound-producing device.

Officer Corbin was conducting state fisheries and boating safety inspections at Marler Park and saw a vessel return to the boat ramp with an expired vessel registration. The officer confirmed the operator was the owner of the vessel. The individual had been the owner of the vessel for two years, but had failed to transfer the vessel title into his name within the required 30 days. The owner issued a notice to appear citation for failure to transfer vessel title.

Officer Nichols and Investigators Armstrong and Molnar responded to a boating accident with injuries, involving two PWCs, in Joe's Bayou. One of the PWCs collided with the starboard stern of the other, ejecting both operators. A boating accident investigation is ongoing.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

While conducting resource inspections at Archie Glover Boat Ramp, Officer Land noticed two individuals with cast nets on the dock. He approached the two men and asked if they had caught anything. One of them replied, "Just finger mullet," as he pointed to a five-gallon bucket. Officer Land looked in the bucket filled with mullet and upon closer inspection, discovered a 13-inch striped bass. It is illegal to possess striped bass under 18 inches and to harvest them with a cast net. The appropriate citations and warnings were issued for the violations.

Throughout the weekend in Blackwater River State Forest, Officer Lewis issued various citations and warnings for operating a vehicle off the established road in a state forest, possession of alcoholic beverages where posted as prohibited, and possession of glass containers in and around waterways. One of the cases he made was at Krul Lake where he saw a man in possession of a glass bottle of beer. Glass containers and alcoholic beverages are prohibited in that area. A woman was sitting next to the man and smoking cannabis. When he approached the couple, the woman attempted to conceal the cannabis cigarette she was smoking but eventually gave it to the officer. Additional cannabis was seized as evidence from the woman. The man was cited for possessing

the glass container and alcoholic beverage. The woman was issued a notice to appear for possession of cannabis not more than 20 grams and drug paraphernalia.

Officer Hutchinson was patrolling a primitive camping area when he saw a man and a woman walking towards a vehicle from the creek. He saw the man carrying a drug pipe and cannabis grinder. The man admitted that he and his girlfriend just finished smoking marijuana with the pipe. When attempting to identify the man and woman, the woman provided a false name. After searching the vehicle and identifying the woman by her identification that was found during the search, two active warrants for her arrest came back. Officer Hutchinson issued the man a notice to appear for the possession of cannabis and drug paraphernalia. The woman was placed under arrest and transported to jail.

Officer Jones was checking fishermen on the Navarre Beach Fishing Pier and contacted a subject who had eight pompano in his possession. The daily bag limit is six fish per day. A citation was issued with a mandatory court appearance. The illegal fish were returned to the water.

WALTON COUNTY

Officer Brooks checked a subject fishing on the Choctawhatchee Bay who was in possession of a legal redfish in a cooler. The subject was asked about another cooler he had in his possession and he stated it only contained his lunch. An inspection of that cooler revealed undersized redfish and gray snapper. The subject was cited for the resource violations.

RESCUES

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Lieutenant Walsingham and Officer Greene responded to assist the Washington County Sheriff's Office in a search and rescue on Holmes Creek. At approximately 9:00 PM, the Sheriff's Office received a call that a 70-year-old resident of an assisted living facility, who has dementia and was new to the area, walked down to Holmes Creek and had not been seen since 2:00 PM. The banks of the creek were searched for extended distances up and down the creek, a Department of Corrections K-9 team was utilized, and the Bay County Sheriff's Office deployed their helicopter with FLIR. Shortly after daylight, the subject was found in good condition at an elementary school a short distance from the assisted living facility.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

The following cases were made this past week in federal Gulf of Mexico waters.

Officers Morales, Nelson, and Pekerol stopped several vessels throughout the day. During one stop, a red snapper that was found not landed in whole condition and being

used as bait. During another stop, vermillion snapper and lane snapper were found not landed in whole condition and being used as bait. The captains and occupants of those vessels were issued the appropriate citations and warnings for the offenses.

Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Fletcher, Hughes, and Richardson were on board the offshore patrol vessel *Guardian* when they located a vessel approximately 11 miles south of Dog Island. After boarding the vessel, the captain explained that his GPS was not working properly. A resource inspection was conducted and the officers located gag grouper on board the vessel during federal closure. The GPS worked when powered on and the individual had also marked his fishing location with a marker buoy using his GPS prior to the officers' arrival. The captain and occupants of the vessel were issued the appropriate federal citations and warnings for the offense.

The crew of OPV *Guardian* located a vessel approximately 18 miles south of St. George Island. Upon the officers' approach, the occupants reeled in their lines and the officers saw Spanish mackerel being used for bait. Upon further inspection of the vessel, the officers located bluefish and more Spanish mackerel not landed in whole condition and prepared as bait, spotted sea trout not landed in whole condition and gag grouper on board during federal closure. The vessel was also short multiple life jackets. The captain and occupants of the vessel were issued the appropriate federal and state citations and warnings for the offenses.

The crew of OPV *Guardian* located a vessel approximately 22 miles south of St. George Island. While approaching the vessel from several miles away, it temporarily stopped then came back on plane and headed north. Due to the rough conditions, the *Guardian* caught up to the vessel quickly. The officers boarded the vessel and located 14 vermillion snapper, which was over the vessel's bag limit. The captain and occupants of the vessel were issued the appropriate federal citations and warnings for offenses.

Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Rockwell, Trueblood and Nelson, on board the offshore patrol vessel *Vigilance*, located a commercial vessel southeast of the Madison and Swanson Marine Protected Area. The officers boarded the vessel and during their inspection located 21 pieces of cut up regulated amberjack on three of their bait tables. The occupants admitted to failure to land in whole condition and using it for bait. The captain and crew of the vessel were issued the appropriate federal citations and warnings for offenses.

The crew of OPV *Vigilance* located a commercial vessel approximately 50 miles southwest of Apalachicola. The officers boarded the vessel and during their inspection located seven undersized lane snapper, two undersized red snapper and two undersized gray triggerfish. The captain of the vessel was issued the appropriate federal citations and warnings for offenses.

During other vessel stops of commercial and recreational vessels, Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Rockwell, Trueblood and Nelson, on board the *Vigilance*, issued multiple warnings and citations for not having the appropriate turtle mitigation gear for

commercial vessels, failure to land fish in whole condition, littering, use of reef fish for bait and boating safety violations.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officers Long and Manning attended the 2017 Annual Anglers Night Outreach Event at the Pensacola Fairgrounds where more than 300 were in attendance. Numerous questions regarding resource and conservation were answered.

WALTON COUNTY

Lieutenant Clark coordinated with Topsail Hill Preserve State Park with an outreach event at the park. FWC Imperiled Species Biologist Moyers presented a PowerPoint presentation and a static display on sea turtles for the staff, volunteers, campers and members of the surrounding communities. The focus of the outreach event was sea turtle identification, the importance of reducing lighting at night and not disturbing nesting areas. Officer Jarvis attended the presentation. Approximately 30 people attended.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Officer Kinney attended Heritage Day at Falling Water State Park. Approximately 5,000 people attended the two-day event, Officer Kinney answered questions and spoke with numerous groups throughout the event.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

ALACHUA COUNTY

Officer Troiano saw a vehicle parked near a bait site he located the week before the opening of turkey season. The officer entered the area and heard two different hunters calling for turkeys. The two subjects were hunting from different ground blinds but over the same baited area. After identifying both suspects, the two men were charged with attempting to take turkey within 100 yards of a baited area.

Officers Troiano and Stanley worked a boating safety and fishing detail on area lakes. After checking a woman for a fishing license, they determined that she did not possess a valid freshwater license and had a warrant from Putnam County. She was cited for not having a fishing license and was transported to the Alachua County Jail for the warrant.

While driving to area lakes, Officer Troiano saw an individual sitting on the side of the road with a “fish for sale” sign behind his truck. After a resource inspection, it was determined the man was selling freshwater fish without a valid freshwater commercial license and was cited appropriately.

Officers continued to work baited areas throughout the week and have located several new bait stations. They have also been working area lakes for freshwater fishing compliance and boating safety regulations.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Officers Johnston, Cline and Drew recently worked two bass fishing tournaments on the Santa Fe and Suwannee Rivers in response to complaints of wake zone violations from recreational boaters, business owners and tournament participants. During the two details, the officers issued four boating citations, several written and verbal warnings for a variety of boating safety violations including wake zone and navigation light violations. One subject blatantly violated the no wake zone without required navigation lights after receiving a pre-tournament briefing/warning regarding boating violations from the tournament president. Appropriate paperwork was issued.

DUVAL COUNTY

The Jacksonville Resource Protection Unit Squad coordinated a targeted enforcement detail focusing on patrol in and near the Talbot Island State Park. Plain-clothes surveillance and observation led to nine resource citations, 31 warnings and two boating citations.

A large amount of illegally discarded litter consisting of mostly furniture, cardboard and children’s toys was found next to a dirt road on property owned by the City of Jacksonville. Mail in the debris led to a Jacksonville residence and a subsequent investigation revealed that the homeowner had hired someone from an online website to haul away the debris and dispose of the items at a landfill. Environmental Investigators Terrones and Starling interviewed the suspect who confessed and agreed to clean up the site and properly dispose of the litter at a landfill. Felony charges will be filed with the state attorney’s office.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

CITRUS AND HERNANDO COUNTIES

The offshore patrol vessel, *Fincat*, along with local officers from Citrus and Hernando counties, conducted a targeted enforcement detail looking for shrimp vessels operating in closed areas revealing two violations. The *Fincat* crew saw a shrimp vessel that appeared to be in a closed area. This was confirmed after continued surveillance revealed the vessel was actively trawling for shrimp in a closed area. A citation was issued to the operator of the vessel for operating trawls in a closed area. Later that

evening, Lieutenant Jones and Officer VanNess saw another shrimp vessel trawling in a closed area. Continued surveillance revealed the vessel was actively trawling in a closed area. A citation was issued to the operator of the vessel for operating trawls in a closed area.

During *Fincat* patrols in federal waters from Dixie to Pasco County, 16 vessel inspections were completed. During one inspection, Officer Suttles located three undersized mangrove snappers. A federal warning was issued and a case package will be forwarded to NOAA. During another inspection, Officer Boyer located an undersized and out-of-season gag grouper. A citation was issued. During an inspection on a commercial fishing vessel, Officer Boyer located an undersized gag grouper and amberjack filets on board. Further inspection revealed the fishermen were using the amberjack as bait. The captain of the vessel was issued a federal citation for undersized gag grouper, amberjack not in whole condition and using reef fish as bait. A case package will be forwarded to NOAA for further action.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Maslo was on patrol when she received a call from FWC dispatch stating a man with an orange bucket was taking undersized mangrove snapper. The officer arrived at a local bridge and found a man fitting the description. A resource inspection revealed the man was in possession of 11 mangrove snapper, seven of which were undersized. The man was also in possession of one undersized spotted sea trout. The man was issued a citation for possession of undersized mangrove snapper, possession of over the bag limit of mangrove snapper, and a warning for possession of undersized sea trout.

Officer Marroquin was on patrol at Sebastian Inlet State Park when an off-duty officer advised him a man was consuming alcohol in the park. Officer Marroquin approached the man, who was fishing, to address the alcohol violation and conduct a fisheries inspection. The officer's resource inspection revealed the man was in possession of three undersized sheepshead and was violating the park's alcohol rules. A citation was issued for possession of undersized sheepshead and a warning for consuming alcohol in a state park.

LAKE COUNTY

Officer Scrambling received information regarding people possibly hunting turkey over bait. He located corn, cracked corn and bird seed on private property and on Seminole State Forest Management Area, adjacent to the private property. The next morning, Officer Scrambling saw a subject in a tree stand using a slate turkey call in attempt to

call turkey. The tree stand was 56 yards away from the bait. The subject was cited for the resource violation of attempting to take wild turkey within 100 yards of bait.

SUMTER COUNTY

The FWC and several other agencies responded to a wildfire within Withlacoochee State Forest. FWC officers responded to ensure public safety and assist as needed until the fire was contained. This is the second fire in the same vicinity and the FWC is assisting the Department of Agriculture Investigations and State Forestry with determining the cause of the fire.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer Ward was on foot patrol monitoring a baited turkey blind during the first week of spring turkey season. About an hour before dark, he heard calling coming from an area nearby, but not in the blind. He approached and saw two men sitting under an oak tree with a decoy about 15 yards in front of them. Both men admitted to calling and said they were turkey hunting. Although they were not in the baited blind, they were set up and hunting only 72 yards from the bait. Both were issued notices to appear for the violation.

Lieutenant Eason and Officer LaRoche responded to Central Florida Regional Hospital regarding the report of a small child that had been bitten by a venomous snake. Once at the hospital, the snake was identified by Investigator McDaniel as a large adult pigmy rattlesnake. The small child had been playing in a sandbox in the back yard of his residence with adult supervision. When the child encountered the snake, the snake struck the child on the right index finger. The snake was then killed by an adult and the child was transported to the hospital by EMS.

Officer LaRoche was called to the front gate of Blue Springs State Park regarding a disturbance. Once on the scene, he found that a male and female couple had been fighting and the male subject had thrown the female victim's cell phone into the woods, thrown a car seat out of the vehicle into the woods and had struck the female victim in the face while she was holding a child. The male subject was arrested and transported to the Volusia County Branch Jail for domestic violence.

Lieutenant Eason was on patrol within Blue Springs State Park near the boat ramp (French Landing) and saw, from a concealed position, a white male walking around the river holding a can of beer. He then saw the subject get into a black Jeep with a female companion. The male subject began driving the vehicle east on French Avenue towards the park entrance. Lieutenant Eason conducted a traffic stop to address the open container violation. The subject agreed to perform sobriety tasks, performed poorly and was placed under arrest for DUI. The subject subsequently provided a breath sample administered by Officer Thornton. The results of the breath test were .181G/210L and .177 G/210L, respectively. Additionally, the subject was issued an open container citation.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Environmental Investigator Hough received information regarding approximately 1,000 waste tires being stored behind a home in Tampa. Upon arrival, stacks of waste tires were visible from the roadway. Investigator Hough contacted the suspect who gave consent to enter his backyard area where some 600 waste tires were discovered. The suspect was culling through these waste tires and selling any that could be used. He was also cutting the sidewall out of the waste tires he could not use and placing them in heavy-duty trash bags, which were then taken to the landfill. The suspect was charged with felony dumping over 500 pounds, storage of tires in an open-top trailer for more than seven days, and storage of waste tires at a unpermitted facility. He was booked into the Hillsborough County Jail.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Salem was on patrol in Boca Grande when he received information about some people spearfishing near the phosphate docks. He saw four people, two PWCs, and some spearfishing gear before he attempted to stop them for a resource inspection. When Officer Salem asked the men if they had any fish, they said they had a sheepshead and "some other fish." The other fish was an oversized redfish. One of the men admitted to spearing the redfish. Misdemeanor charges were issued for illegal method of taking redfish and for possession of an oversized redfish.

While patrolling the bridges around Lovers Key State Park late at night, Officer Bradshaw noticed a group throwing a cast net in an area normally populated by regulated fish. Officer Bradshaw watched the group as one of the men threw the net time and again. All the fish caught were kept, and none were measured. During a resource inspection, they were found to have more than a dozen fish, including snapper, snook, and sheepshead, only four being legally harvested. The appropriate citations were issued.

Officer Hardgrove was on patrol around Matlacha when he encountered two subjects actively fishing from shore. He asked if they had caught any fish, and one of the subjects stated that they had not caught anything. An inspection of the subject's cooler revealed an undersized redfish, an undersized mangrove snapper, and an undersized sheepshead. One subject admitted to catching and keeping all the fish. The subject was cited appropriately. Both subjects were also issued an up-to-date Florida Saltwater Regulations Handbook.

MANATEE COUNTY

Officer Miller was conducting fishery inspections along the south side of the Skyway Bridge when he approached a subject and asked if he had caught any fish. The subject replied that he caught a few sheepshead but threw them all back. He then asked if he could look in the subject's cooler and the subject complied. Officer Miller discovered 12 undersized sheepshead, six undersized gag grouper and four undersized mangrove snapper. Officer Miller cited the subject appropriately.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While on land patrol at the Sand Key Bridge, Officer Bibeau saw two individuals carrying a large bucket while returning to their vehicle from fishing. As the officer approached the subjects to conduct a fisheries inspection, he saw them attempt to conceal the bucket. One of the individuals admitted that they had three snook in the bucket and should only have two. An inspection of the bucket revealed three legal-sized snook and seven trout; three of which were undersized. The subject that claimed two snook and undersized trout was cited appropriately.

While on water patrol near John's Pass, Officers Bibler and Godfrey stopped a vessel to conduct a fisheries inspection, which found the occupants in possession of an undersized red grouper and an out-of-season triggerfish. A notice to appear was issued for the out-of-season triggerfish and a warning for the undersized grouper.

While on water patrol near the Seminole Boat Ramp, Officer Ferguson was notified by a Good Samaritan that a woman was having medical issues on a nearby dock. The woman was moaning and clearly in distress when she fell into the water. The woman's head was under the water when Officer Ferguson and some good Samaritans retrieved her from the water and got her onto a pontoon boat. Officer Ferguson provided first aid until EMS arrived and transported the woman to a nearby hospital.

POLK COUNTY

Officer Carter was patrolling the Saddle Creek Fish Management Area when he saw an individual cast netting. A fisheries inspection revealed the subject had been taking game fish. The subject was cited appropriately.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

LEE COUNTY

Officer Collazo and Lieutenant Barrett assisted the FWRI Charlotte County manatee lab with the rescue of an injured female manatee and her calf in the Caloosahatchee River. Although it was a very complicated rescue with high winds and tight quarters, both animals were successfully recovered and evaluated. The calf was found to be old enough and healthy enough to be released back into the water right away. The mother was turned over to veterinary staff from the Lowry Park Zoo for treatment.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officers Salem, Goggin and Furbay located an illegal abandoned gill net in Charlotte Harbor. This was a very large net that had the potential to kill thousands of fish. The officers retrieved the entire net before it could do any significant damage, and properly disposed of the net.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Over a two-day period, investigators teamed up with patrol on the Alafia River to conduct a BUI detail. There were no violations for BUI's, but 7 boating safety/manatee zone violations were cited, and 10 written warnings for safety equipment violations. The "designated operator" was the story of the day, and many residents along the river thanked the team for their patrols.

PASCO COUNTY

Numerous FWC officers conducted a boating safety detail on the Pithlachascotee River, in support of New Port Richey's annual Chasco Fiesta Boat Parade. During the detail, vessels were inspected for compliance which resulted in several warnings and citations being issued.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

LEE COUNTY

Officer Bradshaw and Lieutenant Barrett attended the 2nd Annual Flea Market and Boat Show at Lovers Key State Park. The two officers worked with other members of the Lee County Marine Law Enforcement Task Force to answer questions about boating safety and fishing regulations.

POLK COUNTY

Officers Tyer and Infante attended an open house at the Colt Creek State Park. The officers discussed the roles of FWC Law Enforcement and answered questions from approximately 1,000 stakeholders.

SOUTH A REGION

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

While on patrol in the Dr. Von D Mizell–Eula Johnson State Park, Officer Tarr saw a vessel pull into the marina. During the inspection, he checked both occupants through dispatch and one of the subjects came back as a registered gang member with two outstanding warrants out of Broward and Miami-Dade counties. The subject was placed in handcuffs and transported to the Broward County Jail.

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Officer Davis received information from a local ranch owner about poachers coming on to his ranch. Officer Davis, along with the landowner, found vehicle tracks in the dirt along the fence line and foot prints going into the ranch. While on patrol a week later, a vehicle was found parked in the bushes along the ranch fence line. Officer Davis took a position of concealment on the ranch, while Officer Allen and Lieutenant Strenth conducted surveillance of the fence line and waited for the subject to return to the vehicle. The subject was spotted walking out of a slough located on the ranch. Officers Davis and Allen made encountered the subject who was in possession of a .22 rifle. While processing the subject at the scene, two more individuals approached the officers' location, one of which was armed with a 20-gauge shotgun. The two individuals stated they were with the subject that the officers had detained and admitted to hunting on the ranch that morning. K-9 Officer Payne and Lieutenant Strenth tracked the path the subjects had taken through the ranch and confirmed, through sworn statements and foot prints, that all subjects had been on the ranch. Two of the subjects were arrested for felony trespass and taken to the Okeechobee County Jail. A charge of misdemeanor trespass will be pursued through the state attorney's office for the third subject.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

While conducting land patrol in the JW Corbett WMA, Officers Morrow and Gamage encountered a group of subjects who were illegally camping. The officers noticed the odor of marijuana coming from the tent where the subjects were sitting. When asked, one of the subjects admitted to possession of cannabis. A search of the site revealed that the subject was in possession of three small containers of marijuana, two glass smoking pipes, and other paraphernalia. The subject was then issued a misdemeanor citation for the illegal drugs. All subjects were issued warnings for the illegal camping. The contraband was seized and placed into evidence.

Environmental Investigator Luher was traveling southbound on the turnpike when she saw an 18-wheeler truck with a rear brake on fire. She radioed for fire rescue, and got the truck pulled over. She ran up to the cab and told both occupants to get out of the cab due to a fire. The driver indicated he was unaware of the fire. Investigator Luher extinguished the fire with her fire extinguisher and no persons were injured and the cargo was not damaged.

Environmental Investigator Luher discovered numerous five-gallon buckets containing used oil near a dumpster at a marina. The containers were placed directly on the ground, with no secondary containment and no labels as required. She located the

general manager and discussed the violation with him. The oil was from the customers at the marina. An inspection of additional larger containers of used oil revealed that those also did not contain the required secondary containment and labeling. The marina was issued warnings for these violations, and was given a pamphlet on the regulations pertaining to used oil management. This location will be inspected in the future to ensure compliance.

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

Officer Fretwell was approached by two individuals while at the Treasure Coast Boat Rentals, who stated that they had just witnessed a subject catch and keep what appeared to be an undersized snook. They stated that the snook was approximately 18 inches long. They provided Officer Fretwell with a detailed description of the subject and then pointed out his parked vehicle at the nearby Black Pearl Boat Ramp fish cleaning table. Proceeding to the area in a marked patrol vehicle, Officer Fretwell encountered the subject who matched the description given to him earlier. Approaching the vehicle, the driver rolled his window down. Officer Fretwell asked the subject if he was in possession of an undersized snook. The driver hesitated and then stated, "well, yes." Officer Fretwell asked him to exit the vehicle and retrieve the snook for inspection. The subject retrieved a one-gallon style bait bucket and proceeded to remove a 15.5-inch snook with the head cut off. Snook must be 28-32 inches to possess. The snook was seized as evidence and the subject was cited for the violation.

RESCUES

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

Officer Fretwell, as well as the St. Lucie County SO, U.S. Coast Guard and Sea Tow, responded to reports of a capsized vessel approximately seven miles offshore of the Fort Pierce Inlet. There was communication with the vessel through a cell phone. Sea Tow was the first to arrive on the scene and secured all five occupants of the vessel. The occupants had used the capsized vessel to stay afloat. Upon arrival of USCG and FWC, they secured and collected the passengers and their personal belongings. The cause of the boat capsizing is under investigation.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

HENDRY COUNTY

Officer Toby taught the laws and ethics portion of a Hunter Safety class at the Hendry County Sheriff's Office range.

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Officer Boulware conducted patrol at the Okeechobee Battlefield State Park for the Seminole War Re-Enactment. Approximately 3,500 people attended the three-day event.

SOUTH B REGION

CASES

COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Plussa was conducting surveillance in an unmarked patrol vehicle near Goodland when he saw a previously marked, posted, and approved-to-remove derelict vessels with a new vessel moored up to it with a subject moving items around the posted vessel. Officer Plussa contacted the Collier County Sheriff's Office Marine Unit and asked for their assistance in accompanying him to the derelict vessels to investigate. When they arrived at the vessel, they found it occupied by the owner and a female who claimed to be his daughter. The subject produced a title for the vessel but stated he was unable to transfer or register it because he had been a victim of identity theft. Officer Plussa asked him if he was aware that the vessel was marked and posted as derelict. The subject stated he was and that he was the one who removed the derelict notice. Officer Plussa issued him three criminal misdemeanor charges for operating, using and storing a derelict vessel on state waters, failure to transfer title, and failure to transfer registration within 30 days of ownership change. The subject was advised that the derelict vessel removal process was ongoing and that the vessel was in que for removal.

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Garcia recently responded to a complaint of a monkey loose at a marina. He captured the monkey which was identified as a marmoset monkey. The monkey was turned over to Captive Wildlife Investigator Smith for placement and further investigation. Two days later, Investigator Smith located the owner and returned the monkey. The owner was issued a misdemeanor citation for the escape.

Officer Baumgartner was patrolling through Card Sound Road when she noticed a vessel nosed up into the mangroves. Upon approaching the vessel by land, she saw one individual removing fishing gear from the vessel. When asked, they responded by saying they were dropping off a friend and some gear and then going back out fishing. Officer Rafter arrived and assisted by land and Officer Sutter arrived by water. Upon conducting a resource inspection, the individuals were found to be in possession of over the vessel limit in barracuda, undersized hogfish, undersized mutton snapper and undersized out-of-season red grouper. Officer Baumgartner issued five misdemeanor citations to the fisherman and one infraction citation to an individual for no valid fishing license.

RESCUES

MONROE COUNTY

Officers Baumgartner, Garcia and Sutter responded to two calls for service back to back in the Upper Keys. The first was for an overdue personal watercraft. The operator had partially sunk the personal watercraft in Matecumbe Bight before swimming to a nearby liveaboard and phoning for help. The second was a medical emergency aboard a vessel that had run aground near Rock Harbor. Both individuals were escorted back to shore safely.

Two tourists rented a two-person kayak from a local livery on the bay side of Key Largo and paddled southbound near the shoreline of Blackwater Sound. The wind speed was near 20 mph from the east-southeast. Once they reached the entrance to Dusenbury Creek, they decided to go back. The couple found themselves two miles offshore in Blackwater Sound and were becoming victim of the pounding choppy waters, paddling against a strong wind and waves in a sinking kayak. Once they realized the gravity of their situation, they called 911 and the Monroe County Sheriff's Office (MCSO). The MCSO dispatcher transferred the call to a FWC Dispatcher who dispatched the emergency call to all officers in the area. Officer Maldonado responded right away to the emergency. The couple on the kayak were now with a half-submerged kayak and were unable to clearly communicate their position. Officer Maldonado ran the entire length of Blackwater Sound easterly shoreline in a futile attempt to locate the distressed pair. The MCSO and FWC dispatchers could ping the location of the cell signal and communicated the same to Officer Maldonado. Through his binoculars, he saw a small yellow object near the surface and found the couple clinging to their now sunken kayak. Both persons in the water were wearing their life jackets, and holding their phones out of the water. The couple were brought aboard his patrol vessel and returned back to the rental company. Both persons were very stressed but relieved to be rescued finally. The USCG arrived on scene shortly afterwards and assisted by recovering the sunken kayak.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Sapp received information regarding a pelican in distress on an island near Cudjoe Key. Once on scene, he saw a brown pelican that was hanging upside down from a mangrove branch. The pelican had braided fishing line wrapped around his foot, and was partially submerged. The pelican was struggling to keep his head above water, and could not free himself. Performing exceptional boat handling skills, the pelican was brought safely onto land and turned over to the Bird Rehabilitation Center in Key West. The pelican is expected to make a full recovery.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

FWC officers participated in a youth outreach event at Columbus High School in Miami. It was the 1st Annual Bass Fishing Tournament for the school's Angler's Club. FWC officers answered many questions the students had as well as educated them on the FWC's role in relation to fishing and conservation.

Officer Ingellis participated in the 10th Annual Career Day at the Miami Country Day School, along with representatives of the Guy Harvey Institute and the Florida Fishing Academy. More than 125 students participated in the event, and topics included boating safety, fishing regulations and environmental issues. The students then boarded several charter vessels out the Bayside Marina for a fun day of fishing in Biscayne Bay.