

**FWC**  
**Division of Law Enforcement**



***Weekly Report***  
***May 12, 2017 through May 18, 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**

Lieutenant Allen and Officer Rice were patrolling in federal waters when they saw a vessel returning from offshore. During the resource inspection, the operator stated that each of the four people on board had their limit of red snapper. Officer Rice located 8 red snapper in the cooler. The operator was issued a citation for possession of red snapper in federal waters during closure.

Officer T. Basford was on patrol near the Warren Bayou Canal (Steam Plant Canal) when he saw two ATVs being operated at a high rate of speed on a paved county road. The operators each had fishing gear and were heading towards the Steam Plant Canal. One of the ATVs drove around a locked gate to access St. Joe Company property. The two individuals were contacted while they were fishing at the Steam Plant Canal, which is Gulf Power Company property. Both individuals were in possession of undersized red drum and were issued citations for operating an ATV on a public road, possession of undersized red drum and trespassing.

Officers Hellett and Alsobrooks were on foot patrol at a local marina when they saw three individuals on a vessel that appeared to have been on a fishing trip. When asked if they had been out fishing, one of the subjects stated they had been on a two-day trip. Upon inspection, they were in possession of 56 mahi-mahi and two red grouper. The fishermen were over the daily bag limit for mahi-mahi by 26 fish. The bag limit and extended trip rules were explained to the vessel captain and he took responsibility for the violation. A citation was issued to the vessel captain.

#### **ESCAMBIA COUNTY**

Officers Cushing and Land were on water patrol in Pensacola Bay and conducted a marine fisheries inspection on a small fishing vessel near a navigational buoy. Upon contacting the two persons on board, they said that they had a few lane snapper. An inspection revealed they were in possession of 17 juvenile red snapper, all of them measuring between six and thirteen inches. The appropriate action was taken for the violation of possession of red snapper during closed season.

Officers Allgood and Manning patrolled federal waters south of Pensacola and found five different vessel operators in possession of red snapper during closed season. Federal citations were issued for the violations.

Officer Long checked vessels as they returned to Navy Point Boat Ramp and found one individual in possession of 15 undersized red snapper and another individual in possession of an amberjack during closed season. Officer Long issued notice to appear citations for the violations.

Officer Manning received information that someone was selling seafood at a local flea market without a license. When he arrived, he found an individual selling blue crabs, shrimp and blue runners. The individual did not have a saltwater retail license or any records on where the fish were purchased. Notice to appear citations were issued for the violations.

## FRANKLIN COUNTY

Officer Matechik saw a vessel and two subjects harvesting oysters past the required harvesting time. Officers Matechik and Fletcher conducted a resource inspection and found ten bags of culled oysters. Both subjects were charged with over the bag limit and possession of untagged oysters. They were also warned for failing to deliver oysters directly to a dealer and possession of undersized oysters. Officers Matechik and Fletcher seized the oysters and returned them to the bay alive.

While patrolling in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico on board the Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) *Guardian*, Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Boyd, Nelson, Rockwell and Trueblood located a commercial shrimping vessel approximately 12 miles south of St. George Island. During a resource inspection, the officers located egg-bearing slipper lobster in the vessel's ice hold. Interviews of the crew revealed the deckhand placed the illegal product in the hold. The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

Officers Nelson and Raker were in plain clothes on Resource Protection Service patrol at the Old Ferry Dock Boat Ramp in East Point. While walking across the parking lot, Officer Nelson was approached by a female and asked if he wanted to buy some shrimp. The female then showed Officer Nelson three coolers containing shrimp and scales in the back of her truck. When asked if she had a saltwater products retail license, she said "No." The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

While patrolling in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico aboard the OPV *Guardian*, Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Boyd, Nelson, Rockwell and Trueblood located a commercial shrimping vessel approximately 11 miles south of St. George Island. During a resource inspection, the officers located egg-bearing slipper lobster, spiny lobster during closed season and a prohibited Bahama starfish. Further inspection of the turtle excluder devices (TEDs) revealed that all four TEDs exceeded legal specifications with six violations. The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

While patrolling in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico aboard the OPV *Guardian*, Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Boyd, Nelson, Rockwell and Trueblood located a commercial shrimping vessel approximately 10 miles south of Little St. George Island. During the boarding, the officers inspected the TEDs and two of the four TEDs exceeded legal specifications. The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

While patrolling in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico aboard the OPV *Guardian*, Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Nelson and Richardson located two vessels

approximately 12 miles south of Carrabelle. While approaching the vessels, the occupants threw red snapper overboard upon seeing law enforcement. The officers addressed the violations of possession of red snapper during federal closure and throwing fish overboard upon law enforcement approach.

While patrolling in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico aboard the OPV *Guardian*, Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Nelson and Richardson located a vessel approximately 12 miles south of St. George Island. During a resource inspection, Officer Nelson located red snapper and gag grouper aboard the vessel. Both occupants possessed salt water products licenses and admitted to knowledge of the federal closure. The appropriate enforcement actions were taken for the violations.

While patrolling in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico aboard the OPV *Vigilance*, Officers Rockwell and Trueblood, Captain Martin, and NOAA Officer Harwell located a vessel approximately 14 miles southeast of Carrabelle. During a resource inspection, Officer Trueblood located red snapper in the cooler. The violations of possession of red snapper during federal closure were addressed with the appropriate actions.

While patrolling in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico aboard the OPV *Guardian*, Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Boyd, Fletcher, Matechik and Captain Wood located a commercial vessel approximately 65 miles south of Carrabelle in the marine protected area referred to as "The Edges." The vessel was using illegal "J" hooks with use of natural bait for reef fish. The appropriate enforcement action was taken for the violation.

While patrolling in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico aboard the OPV *Guardian*, Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Nelson and Richardson located a vessel approximately 15 miles south of Carrabelle. During a resource inspection, Officer Richardson located undersized black sea bass, red snapper and gag grouper during federal closure and the use of "J" hooks with natural bait intended for reef fish, cut-up red snapper on their bait table and hooks. An interview of the occupants reinforced that they had cut-up red snapper and were using it for bait during closed season. The violations of possession of red snapper during federal closure, not landing in whole condition and using reef fish for bait were addressed with the appropriate warnings and citations.

While patrolling in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico aboard the OPV *Vigilance*, Officers Rockwell and Trueblood, Captain Martin, and NOAA Officer Harwell located a vessel approximately 22 miles southeast of Carrabelle. Upon boarding the vessel, Officer Trueblood and Harwell interviewed the vessel owner who admitted to possession of filleting amberjack and placing it in a refrigerator. The violations of possession of greater amberjack during a closed season and not landing in whole condition was addressed with the appropriate action.

While patrolling in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico aboard the OPV *Guardian*, Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Nelson and Richardson located a vessel approximately 16 miles south of Carrabelle. During a resource inspection, Officers Nelson and Richardson located nine red snapper taken during federal closure. An interview of the

occupants revealed they had knowledge of the closure and their location. The violation of possession of red snapper during federal closure was addressed with the appropriate action.

While patrolling in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico aboard the OPV *Vigilance*, Officers Rockwell and Trueblood, Captain Martin, and NOAA Officer Harwell located a vessel near the "O" Tower south of Carrabelle. During a resource inspection, Officer Harwell located red snapper in the cooler. The violations of possession of red snapper during federal closure was addressed with the appropriate action.

While patrolling in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico aboard the OPV *Guardian*, Lieutenants Marlow, Hoelscher, Officers Nelson and Boyd located a commercial vessel approximately 52 miles south of St. Vincent Island. During a resource inspection, Officers Nelson and Boyd located multiple fishing rigs with "J" hooks baited with natural bait for reef fish. The appropriate enforcement action was taken for the violations.

While patrolling in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico aboard the OPV *Vigilance*, Officers Rockwell, Trueblood, Captain Martin and NOAA Officer Harwell located a commercial vessel approximately 50 miles south of Carrabelle. During a resource inspection, Officer Harwell found the vessel was not in compliance with the required turtle mitigation gear. The violations were addressed with the appropriate action.

While patrolling in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico aboard the OPV *Guardian*, Lieutenants Marlow, Hoelscher, Officers Nelson and Boyd located a commercial vessel approximately 60 miles south of St. Vincent Island. While approaching the vessel, the officers saw the occupants looking at the vessel, then start removing reef fish from the lines and throwing them overboard. A vermilion snapper was recovered and a lane snapper was not recovered. Upon boarding the vessel, Officer Nelson and Boyd located undersized lane snapper, red snapper, grey triggerfish, and vermilion snapper in their bait wells and on the hooks. They also issued charges for use of reef fish for bait, possession of marijuana and interference with an FWC officer. The appropriate enforcement action was taken for the violations.

While patrolling in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico aboard the OPV *Guardian*, Lieutenants Marlow and Hoelscher and Officers Nelson and Boyd located a commercial longline vessel approximately 55 miles south of St. Vincent Island. Upon boarding the vessel, Officers Nelson and Boyd located cut-up shark pieces placed on hooks and rigged for fishing. Further inspection revealed approximately 40 pounds of amberjack fillets in a bait container. The vessel operator was asked to retrieve the gear and more shark pieces were located on the hooks, including red snapper pieces. A count of the hooks revealed that they exceeded the allowable amount of 750 rigged hooks and 1,000 total hooks aboard with nearly 1,200 fished, 180 more rigged hooks and an additional 150 plus hooks for a total exceeding 1,500 hooks. Additionally, the crew threw several pieces of shark and trash overboard during the stop. The appropriate enforcement action was taken for the violations.

## GULF COUNTY

Officers H. Webb and M. Webb were on patrol in federal waters and made three separate federal fisheries cases. The first vessel they checked was actively fishing 10½ miles out and was in possession red snapper. The second vessel was inbound from offshore federal waters when the officers approached it. The vessel made a sudden stop and then continued in a northbound direction. Once the officers stopped the vessel, they noticed a large red snapper floating behind them. After a brief discussion, the occupants admitted to dumping the red snapper. The third vessel was actively fishing 13 miles out in federal waters and found to be in possession of red snapper. All the vessels were written federal citations for possession of red snapper during the federal closed season.

## JACKSON COUNTY

Officers Little, Hayes and Baber responded to an ongoing trespass complaint, but when the officers arrived, the individual was no longer present. The officers spoke with the landowner who had game camera photos of the suspect trespassing on a tractor. The officers followed the tire sign for more than a mile to a neighboring residence. As the officers approached the male subject on the property, they located the tractor, a small dog, fishing poles and a cooler that were captured on the landowner's game camera. They also noticed that the subject was wearing the same clothes as in the photos. Appropriate charges will be filled with the state attorney's office for the violations.

## OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Bartlett was on vessel patrol in Choctawhatchee Bay conducting boating safety inspections when he was dispatched to a boating accident at the Marler Bridge. The accident involved a single vessel striking the Marler Bridge piling. The vessel was a 24-foot rental pontoon with three people on board. The investigation revealed the primary cause of the accident was operator inexperience in waters affected by tidal current. The impact resulted in damages of approximately \$6,000 to the starboard side pontoon on the vessel. No one was ejected from the vessel and there were no injuries. A livery operator was issued a notice to appear citation for renting to someone that is required to have a boater safety card.

## SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Investigator Molnar followed up on a complaint about a subject possibly killing over the bag limit of turkey during the 2017 spring season. After multiple interviews with several people, Investigator Molnar interviewed the subject. After the interview, the subject confessed to killing five turkeys in northwest Florida during the 2017 spring turkey season. Three sets of turkey spurs and beards were seized as evidence. Charges will be filed on a later date.

## WAKULLA COUNTY

Officer Hughes saw a commercial oyster vessel returning to Mashles Sands Boat Ramp. Upon seeing the officer, the boat stopped short of the dock and Officer Hughes noticed one of the occupants bending over something in the boat. Officer Hughes made his way to the boat and saw the individual attaching commercial oyster harvest tags to four bags of oysters on board. Commercial harvesters are required to fill out and attach the tags before leaving the harvest area. When the vessel came to the dock, Officer Hughes discovered that all the harvest tags were blank. Officers Stephens and Sauls arrived to assist. When questioned about where they harvested the oysters, the men claimed they had harvested them at the mouth of Chaires Creek in the Ochlockonee Bay, an area that was temporarily closed to all shellfish harvest. In addition to the oyster harvest violations, the vessel did not have a hull identification number attached and was missing some required safety gear. The operator was issued multiple criminal charges and warnings and all bags of oysters were seized and returned to the water alive.

## WALTON COUNTY

Officers Letcher, Brooks, and Tison patrolled Point Washington Wildlife Management Area (WMA) targeting ongoing violations such as destruction to gates, wildlife food plots, and roads with motor vehicles. The officers saw two vehicles traveling together through the WMA in a careless manner causing damage to the road. When a traffic stop was attempted, the drivers fled into opposite directions. As he attempted to avoid being apprehended, one of the drivers operated his vehicle in an aggressive manner toward Officer Tison's patrol vehicle causing him to exit the roadway into a ditch. A short time later, the driver decided to stop and was taken into custody. A records check revealed the driver had a pending case for DUI which involved a traffic accident. A search of his vehicle revealed a small amount of cannabis. The subject was booked into the Walton County Jail for fleeing and eluding, aggravated assault with a motor vehicle, reckless driving, damage to state property, and possession of less than 20 grams of cannabis. The other driver was identified and located the following day and charges will be direct filed for reckless driving and damage to state property.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

### ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officer Cushing spoke to a group of approximately 20 members of the Pensacola Recreational Fisherman's Association. Officer Cushing gave an overview of the agency's core mission and answered many questions in regards to current saltwater regulations and boating safety.

### SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officers Jernigan and Lewis participated in a Career Field Day at Chumuckla Elementary School. The FWC officers, Santa Rosa Sheriff's K-9 deputies, and local EMT's, paramedics, and volunteers from the local fire departments spent time with

different classes to tell about their careers and what they do each day in the field. Officers Jernigan and Lewis spoke to more than 150 children about boating and gun safety. Each child boarded a patrol vessel, received coloring books, stickers and fun facts about Florida's bears and alligators.

## **NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

### **CASES**

#### **BAKER COUNTY**

Officers Burnsed and Tyler responded to a report of illegally dumped household trash off a county roadway. The officers found numerous bags of trash dumped along the roadway and proceeded to find information in the trash that would indicate a suspect. The officers found several documents and went to the location provided by the information. The owner of the documents advised they had paid two individuals to haul their trash off and stated to the officers they must have dumped the trash. The owner provided the names of the suspected dumpers. The officers located both suspects named by the owner and, after questioning, they admitted to dumping the trash at the location. Both suspects will be charged with misdemeanor dumping of trash through the state attorney's office.

#### **COLUMBIA COUNTY**

Officer Johnston and Investigator Bemby were working together at the Montgomery Lake Fish Management Area when they saw a subject fishing with a rod and reel. A subsequent resource/ license inspection revealed the subject could not provide a valid freshwater fishing license. The subject was also found to be fishing with a revoked fishing license due to a child support enforcement violation and was flagged as "Do not sell." Officer Johnston issued the subject a notice to appear in court for the violation. The subject was released on the scene with no further law enforcement action required.

#### **DIXIE COUNTY**

Officers Allen and Wilder were conducting surveillance on an area that is known for illegal oyster harvest. They saw a vessel leaving the area and contacted Officer Cooper to assist. Officer Cooper stopped the subject a short distance from the boat ramp and conducted a resource inspection. During the resource inspection, the subject was found to be in possession of several bushels of untagged and uncultured oysters. Following a brief interview, the subject admitted to illegally harvesting the oysters at night in closed waters. Charges will be direct filed with the state attorney's office.

Lieutenant Futch was on patrol when he conducted a vehicle stop on a truck pulling a boat. While talking with the driver, he noticed a blanket covering a large amount of uncultured and untagged oysters in the boat. Dispatch reported that the driver did not



possess a valid driver's license. The subject was placed under arrest for driving with a suspended license and possession of unculled and untagged oysters in commercial quantities.

Lieutenant Futch and Officer Butler were on water patrol focusing on illegal oyster harvest when they saw a vehicle at a local boat ramp that belonged to a suspect with a warrant. The officers contacted Lieutenant Guy and Officer Robson to assist them from land with the arrest of the individual.

Lieutenant Futch and Officer Butler saw two subjects harvesting oysters from a vessel. As they approached, the vessel began to head towards the boat ramp. The suspects were contacted at the boat ramp and a resource inspection was conducted. The resource inspection revealed the suspects failed to properly tag their oysters and were oystering without a saltwater products license. The officers learned one of the suspects was on probation for drugs and received consent to search the suspect's vehicle. After the investigation, the suspect was confirmed to have an active warrant out of Dixie County. Additionally, the suspects were charged with numerous resource and drug-related charges, including possession of methamphetamine, possession of cannabis and possession of drug paraphernalia.

#### DUVAL COUNTY

Over the weekend, a free-floating construction barge broke loose from its mooring from under the Fuller Warren Bridge (Interstate 95). With an outgoing tide and strong wind gusts, the barge was in danger of striking the Florida East Coast Railroad Bridge. The Jacksonville Fire Rescue Department (JFRD) responded, along with FWC Officer Green. Officer Green and the JFRD relocated the barge to a safe location back under the Fuller Warren Bridge just before it struck the Railroad bridge.

#### GILCHRIST COUNTY

Officers Allen and Wilder received information from a landowner that someone had dumped a recently killed deer on his property. The officers arrived and found fresh tire sign at the scene. The officers identified a suspect and initiated contact at his residence. Following a brief interview, the suspect admitted to killing the deer and dumping the carcass on the property. The officers will be direct filing the case with the state attorney's office.

Investigator Ayers and Officer Wiggins were on patrol when they saw a subject riding in the back of a truck which turned onto a road that borders a local hunting club. The officers followed the truck for approximately two miles. When the vehicle stopped, Officer Wiggins exited his patrol vehicle and made his way on foot to observe the subjects. Moments later, the officers heard several gunshots coming from inside the hunting club. Officer Wiggins saw an individual return to the truck carrying a pistol. The officers approached the two subjects and following an interview, they admitted to attempting to take a hen turkey on the hunting club property. Investigator Ayers issued

warnings for trespassing and a notice to appear for attempting to take turkey during the closed season.

Officers Allen and Wilder received information that an individual was keeping over the bag limit of redfish at Shired Island. During a resource inspection, the subject was found to be possession of over the bag limit of redfish and was cited accordingly.

## NASSAU COUNTY

Officer Barry conducted a resource inspection on a commercial crabber fishing in the St. Mary's River. Several improper violations were noted including aerial and side displays, no vessel registration, no saltwater products license on board, safety violations and boxes of crabs sitting in oily bilge water next to the gas tank. The crabber was cited and warned appropriately. Later, Officer Barry checked 10 of those crabber's traps in Little Sisters Creek off the St. Mary's River. Of the 10 traps inspected, 8 had no biodegradable escape panel and no Florida commercial trap tags. Charges for the trap violations are pending.

Officer Barry was departing Eagan's Creek Boat Ramp when a small inshore/nearshore shrimp trawler was seen returning to the dock. As the harvest of shrimp in the area is closed, a vessel stop was conducted and an inspection revealed a cooler filled with small brown shrimp, which are usually found only around inshore waters. The shrimper stated that he had harvested the shrimp outside of three miles in federal water. When asked if he had a federal shrimp permit, he hesitantly stated that he had applied for one, but did not have one at the time. The two men on the boat were issued federal notices of violation for harvesting shrimp in federal waters without the proper permits.

## TAYLOR COUNTY

Officers Robson and Albritton received information of an illegal turkey being taken. Shortly after arriving, the officers saw turkey feathers on the ground around the suspect's residence. The officers identified the suspect as a convicted felon and after noticing a bulge in his pockets, recovered ammunition from his pockets. The officers also noticed a pellet rifle leaning against a storage shed. After an interview, the suspect admitted to taking an illegal hen turkey the day prior and surrendered plastic bags from a refrigerator containing a turkey breast, back, neck and two legs. Firearm parts were also recovered from a storage box on the property. The case is being presented to the state attorney's office for review.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

### NASSAU COUNTY

Officers Barry and Shearer attended an FWC-sponsored Kids Fishing Clinic at Amelia Island State Park. Approximately 200 youths participated and received information on fishing and conservation from a wide spectrum of FWC professionals.

## **NORTHEAST REGION**

### **CASES**

#### **BREVARD COUNTY**

Officer Marroquin was on patrol when he saw a vessel returning to a boat ramp. The officer initiated a vessel safety inspection and saw alcoholic beverages in the vessel. During the safety inspection, the operator showed signs of impairment and was asked to perform seated field sobriety tasks. The operator performed poorly and was arrested for BUI. He was then transported to the Brevard County Jail where he refused to submit to a breath sample.

Officers Kearney and Dubose were on patrol when they saw a man fishing at a local waterway. The officers conducted a fisheries inspection and discovered the man was in possession of undersized mangrove snapper. A records check revealed the man had received a warning the previous week for undersized fish. A citation was issued for the offense.

Officer Maslo was on patrol when she conducted a fisheries inspection of a man fishing under a causeway bridge. The inspection revealed the man was in possession of three undersized mangrove snapper. A citation was issued for possession of undersized mangrove snapper and the fish were returned to the resource.

While on vessel patrol, Lieutenant Lightsey conducted a vessel safety inspection on a vessel in the river. During the inspection, the man mumbled his words and had a hard time retrieving safety gear. Due to several signs of impairment, the officer administered field sobriety tasks on the operator. After the tasks were completed, the operator was placed under arrest for BUI. Officer Maslo arrived on the scene to transport the operator to the local police department. After a urine sample was obtained, the man admitted to taking prescription medications.

While conducting vessel safety inspections, Officer Balgo saw two men paddling a canoe. The men did not possess any life jackets or a sound-producing device. One of the men did not possess any form of identification. When provided a name and date of birth, the officer could not find any record for the man. After several attempts, the officer located the man's actual name and date of birth. The man was found to have an active warrant out of Palm Beach and was placed under arrest for the warrant and giving a false a name to a law enforcement officer. The other man was issued citations for the safety equipment.

Officer Eller was on foot patrol on the southeast corner of Haulover Canal when he noticed a male and female fishing from the shoreline. He approached and asked both individuals if they had any luck. The gentleman responded saying that they were only

catching small mangrove snapper but they were not keeping any. Officer Eller conducted a resource inspection which revealed four undersized mangrove snapper and one undersized sheepshead stuffed into a small bait bucket. The subjects were cited accordingly.

Officers Eller and Hallsten were on water patrol in the Indian River when they noticed a large vessel pass by without any registration stickers. Officer Eller stopped the vessel and explained that the registration numbers, which were now visible, were improperly displayed. Following that, both Officers Eller and Hallsten also conducted a safety inspection of the vessel. When the officers asked for the registration document, the operator handed Officer Hallsten a fire extinguisher warning label. The smell of alcohol was apparent from the operator's breath, and he was asked to perform field sobriety tasks. The operator performed very poorly and Officer Eller arrested him for BUI.

#### FLAGLER COUNTY

Officer Greenier investigated a report that a local bait and tackle shop owner was unlawfully harvesting and then offering for sale blue crabs from his business establishment. The shop owner would harvest blue crabs from a recreational vessel and remove crabs from his recreational traps, transport them by vessel and vehicle, then place them in shop tanks and offer them for sale. Through his investigative efforts and personal observations, Officer Greenier issued the shop owner a notice to appear for multiple misdemeanor commercial blue crab gear and licensing violations.

#### INDIAN RIVER COUNTY

While on patrol, Lieutenant Lightsey saw a man loading his vessel out of the water. After dragging the motor's skeg up the boat ramp, the officer approached him to conduct a safety inspection. During the inspection, the man slurred his words, forgot to retrieve items and leaned on things to maintain balance. When asked, the operator admitted to consuming several alcoholic beverages. After conducting standardized field sobriety tasks, the man was placed under arrest for operating a vessel while impaired. The operator refused to provide a breath sample. The man was transported to the Indian River County Jail without incident.

While on patrol near Fellsmere, Investigator Horst saw a truck towing a large trailer full of tires. The truck was not displaying a waste tire collector permit on the driver's door so Investigator Horst conducted a traffic stop on the vehicle to check for a permit to haul waste tires. The stop revealed that the subject did not have a permit to transport waste tires and that he had been hired by a local tire store to transport the tires. The subject advised that the trailer contained approximately 300 tires. The area of the stop has an ongoing issue of tire dumping. The subject was issued a notice to appear for the violation and released from the scene.

#### MARION COUNTY

Officer Rice was on land based water patrol at a boat ramp on Lake Weir. After sunset, he saw a vessel underway coming in to the boat ramp without navigational lights displayed. Officer Rice watched the operator moor the vessel, climb on the dock and immediately began urinating from the dock. Before Officer Rice could make contact to address the violations, he saw the subject lose his balance and fall on the dock. Officer Rice conducted a boating safety inspection on the subject's vessel, and during the inspection he saw several additional clues of impairment. After the subject performed field sobriety tasks, he was placed under arrest and charged with boating under the influence (BUI), operating a vessel with no navigational lights, and issued written warnings for several other boating safety violations.

K-9 Officer Simpson was dispatched to an area regarding an abandoned campsite in the Ocala National Forest. Officer Simpson identified three subjects that had been living at the camp and left all their unwanted belongings in the woods. All three subjects were criminally charged with littering over 15 pounds.

#### PUTNAM COUNTY

Officer Jones was assisting a disabled motorist when a vehicle passed by them at a high rate of speed and extremely close to both of their vehicles. Officer Jones had to take evasive action to keep the other motorist and himself out of harm's way. Officer Jones left the scene and initiated a traffic stop on the suspect vehicle. An investigation led to the driver being charged with habitual traffic offender/driving while license suspended, possession of methamphetamine and possession of drug paraphernalia.

#### ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officers Campbell and Taylor and Intern D. DeLong were on patrol near Guana Dam and Lake Ponte Vedra for resource violations. Officer Campbell was working in plain clothes while Officer Taylor was in uniform and hidden from the fishermen's view. They all saw a male subject catching red drum and placing them into a bucket. After observing the subject catch more than the legal limit, Officer Taylor made her presence known and conducted a resource inspection of the male subject. The subject was in possession of ten red drum. Some were found hidden in a cooler in the bushes by Officer Campbell. The subject was charged with a major violation and the fish were photographed and disposed of accordingly.

Officer Lawshe received information from an individual about a truck leaving from an area known for frequent trespassers. The reporting individual had seen the truck twice and provided the tag number. This was the same area where Officer Lawshe was working an ongoing case of a cannabis grow that would appear yearly off SR 206. His inquiry on the tag matched the one he had from two years prior on a suspect in the cannabis growing case. Officer Lawshe inspected the area further and found approximately 20 cannabis plants growing in plastic containers. Cameras were used to identify the vehicle entering and exiting the area to establish a routine. The color of the truck had changed from prior years' pictures, but the tag number was the same. The

times entering and exiting the area were random. Officer Lawshe visually checked the area where the subject parked his truck from the roadway off SR 206, but did not see a vehicle. For better surveillance, Officer Lawshe trimmed a trail to the grow site and noticed a white, five-gallon bucket sitting in the middle of the grow site. He heard and saw no movement and began to move quietly through the cannabis plants. As he rounded the trail, he could see a shirtless white male trying to hide, stooped down next to a cannabis plant and a five-gallon water bucket. Officer Lawshe announced himself and took the subject into custody. The subject was identified and booked into the St. Johns County Jail for marijuana-producing, schedule one drug and trespass on other than a structure or conveyance. Seventeen cannabis plants were photographed and seized as evidence.

## VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officers Hastings and Dias were on patrol in Lake George when they saw a jet ski on plane in a posted, slow speed manatee zone. The jet ski continued operating to the point where the officers almost had to take evasive action to avoid a collision. The operator turned the jet ski abruptly and flung both the operator and passenger off. The officers made contact to address the violations and perform a boating safety inspection. Signs of impairment were evident and Officer Hastings conducted seated field sobriety exercises. Based on his observations, Officer Hastings placed the operator under arrest for BUI. The operator's breath test results were .106 and .102.

Officers Haskins and McKee were performing resource inspections at a secluded boat ramp on Lake Monroe when they encountered two fishermen who were in possession of large amounts of panfish. A count revealed that one man possessed ten fish over the limit while the other possessed 14 fish over the limit. Both men were issued citations for the violation.

## DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

### FLAGLER COUNTY

Officers Aswall, Greenier, Harris, and B. Miller, along with Investigator Brechler and Lieutenant Zukowsky, assisted Regional Biologist A. Kropp and two local shorebird volunteers with the posting of Julia's Island in the Intra-Coastal Waterway just north of downtown St. Augustine. With the advent of the shorebird season and the alteration of other local shorebird habitat following Hurricane Matthew last October, the island has seen an increase in bird numbers and species this spring. The officers transported Biologist Kropp and the volunteers in local patrol vessels to the island, working with them to erect information signage notifying island visitors of the nesting areas.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

### OSCEOLA COUNTY

Lieutenant Trusley and Officer Wigley participated in the first annual “Kids for Kids Fish-A-Thon.” The event was located at the Kempfer Cattle Company property. Forty children attended the event and caught 238 fish. Lieutenant Trusley and Officer Wigley assisted in getting rods and reels donated, and each child received a donated fishing rod and reel to keep. They also received instruction on fishing etiquette and safety. The children were also taught how to properly fillet and preserve the fish they caught.

## **SOUTHWEST REGION**

### **CASES**

#### **HARDEE COUNTY**

Officer Franks was on patrol after a night-hunting detail and saw a vehicle headed the wrong way on US Hwy 17. He stopped the vehicle and could smell the odor of an alcoholic beverage. The driver was asked to complete field sobriety tasks. After the tasks were completed, Officer Franks arrested the driver for DUI and driving with a suspended or revoked license and cited the driver for driving the wrong way.

#### **HIGHLANDS COUNTY**

Officer Cloud received information about a stolen ATV in Lake Placid. He enlisted the help of Deputy Tagtmeir of the Highlands County Sheriff’s Office. The officers located and recovered the ATV, and it will be returned to its rightful owner. Charges are pending on the matter.

#### **HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

While on land patrol near the Little Manatee River, Officer Ahlers and Baker saw several subjects trespassing and fishing on CSX property. The officers approached and asked if the men had any fish and were told “No.” The officers asked if they could search nearby coolers and after being given permission, found numerous undersized mangrove snapper, none of which were over six inches. Both men were cited for their violations and warned for trespassing on CSX property.

#### **LEE COUNTY**

While on patrol around the Cape Coral Bridge, Officer Hardgrove encountered a subject fishing from the bridge abutment. He watched him for approximately 10-12 minutes from a distance, and saw him catch what appeared to be a mangrove snapper and immediately deposit the fish into a bucket beside him. Upon approaching the individual, Officer Hardgrove asked him if he had caught any fish and he stated that he had no fish. Several mangrove snapper were located inside the bucket. Four of the snapper measured under 10 inches, the minimum size limit. The subject was issued a citation for possession of undersized mangrove snapper.

While on patrol at the Koreshan State Historic Site, Officers Stanley and Winton conducted a retail fisheries inspection on a vender at a weekend farmer's market. During the inspection, the officers discovered the vender did not possess a valid retail license and had been warned about the same offense in the past. The officers issued the vender a citation for failure to have a retail license and educated him about how to obtain one.

Officers Price and Perry were working plain clothes in the Fort Myers Beach area when they saw a charter fishing boat returning to the dock. While the boat was docking, they saw two passengers quickly jump off the boat, taking a bucket and cooler to a van in the parking lot. Officer Price followed the men to the van and discovered the bucket and cooler were full of fish filets packed in gallon storage bags. During the inspection, the captain admitted the filets were red snapper. Eighty-seven filets of red snapper were discovered, along with three red grouper over the bag limit. The captain was charged with having red snapper out of season, not in whole condition and over the bag limit, as well as over the bag limit of red grouper. The illegal fish were seized and the case has been turned over to officers with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The captain will face federal prosecution.

Lieutenant Ruggiero and Officer Price responded to a complaint about a gopher tortoise violation near a new development. The officers arrived on the scene and saw signs that a mower had cleared an area with several gopher tortoise burrows in the area. Biologist Sievers made a site visit, and together they documented 23 gopher tortoise burrows that had been impacted or destroyed because of the mowing activity. One burrow was slightly collapsed and had a tortoise trying to dig its way out of the burrow. Fortunately, Lieutenant Ruggiero widened the opening and the tortoise escaped unharmed. The officers documented the scene, conducted interviews, and completed a report on the case. The builder will face charges of \$1,500 for every two burrows that were impacted. The case will be sent to the state attorney's office for review and possible prosecution.

## PINELLAS COUNTY

Officer Bibeau stopped a vessel that was returning from offshore to conduct a fisheries inspection and cited the captain for possession of reef fish not in whole condition. Officer Bibeau submitted the filets to the FWC forensics lab to determine the species of the fish. Officer Bibeau received the results of the testing that concluded the filets were gag grouper and red snapper, both of which were closed to harvest at the time of the stop. Officer Bibeau filed two more charges through the state attorney's office for possession of the fish during a closed season.

While on water patrol in South St. Petersburg, Officers Bibler and Godfrey saw a vessel coming in from offshore at a high rate of speed. The officers caught up to the vessel and initiated a resource inspection. The subjects admitted to having red grouper and hog fish on board. A subsequent search of the cooler containing the grouper and hog fish revealed an undersized and out-of-season red snapper. Officer Bibler asked if there



was any other fish on the boat, and one subject produced an out-of-season gag grouper that had been stuffed into the center console. Again, Officer Bibler asked if there was anything else, and the subject produced a spiny lobster also hidden in the center console. After being told there was nothing else, the officers searched the center console themselves and found another spiny lobster. Both lobsters had been speared and were out of season. The subjects were cited for undersized and out-of-season red snapper, possession of out-of-season gag grouper, possession of spiny lobster out of season and taken by illegal method.

Following up on a vessel that fled from them during a recent BUI detail, Officer Bibler and Lieutenant Van Trees arrested the operator of the vessel who fled. They booked him into the Pinellas County Jail for fleeing/eluding by a vessel, reckless operation of a vessel, and interference with a police officer. The subject was also cited for violation of a manatee speed zone, operating at night with no navigation lights, and scarring seagrass in an aquatic preserve. The officers could positively identify the operator the night of the incident, since he originally stopped for the officers before deciding to flee.

While on land patrol at the Skyway Fishing Pier State Park, Officer Bibeau conducted a resource inspection of a subject fishing from the pier. At the completion of the inspection, Officer Bibeau found an 11-inch red grouper in the subject's cooler, well under the 20-inch minimum. The subject was cited accordingly for his violation.

Officer Martinez was following up on a boating accident in St. Petersburg, where an operator purposely raised his engine to spray water on an individual standing on the dock and, in doing so, hit another docked vessel and left the scene of the accident. Officer Martinez found the operator, interviewed him and, after his investigation, charged the subject with careless operation, a navigation rule violation and leaving the scene of an accident.

## SARASOTA COUNTY

Officers Dalton and Alvis were working water patrol near Big Pass. While on patrol, they performed a boating safety inspection on a man operating a personal watercraft in the pass. During their inspection, the two officers became concerned that the operator of the personal watercraft was under the influence of alcohol. They asked the operator to perform field sobriety tasks to better gauge his level of impairment. The operator refused to perform all tasks and was subsequently arrested and booked into the Sarasota County Jail for refusal to submit, a criminal charge.

## MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

## CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officer Fogle responded to a report of an injured loggerhead sea turtle struggling to swim in the Gulf of Mexico, approximately ½ mile off Knight Island. The turtle had been discovered by a passing boater who reported it to the FWC dispatch center. The Florida

Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network was contacted and a team of volunteer rescuers from the Coastal Wildlife Club were then dispatched to the nearby Stump Pass Marina, where they stood by for further direction. Using the last known latitude/longitude coordinates given by the passing boater, Officer Fogle searched for and located the injured turtle. After assessing the turtle's general condition, Officer Fogle marked its updated location and proceeded to the marina to pick up the rescue team. When they arrived back on the scene, Officer Fogle and the team made numerous attempts in the choppy water to approach the turtle, only to have it dive down out of reach. However, due to the animal's injuries, it was only able to stay under water for a short time and would then resurface again. Finally, the team could close in on the turtle, and one of the members jumped in the water to help facilitate safely bringing the now exhausted turtle on board the patrol vessel. Once on shore, the stranding team and marina personnel loaded the turtle in a vehicle and transported it to Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota for medical attention. Although the cause of the injuries is unknown, the sea turtle is expected to survive.

## DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

### LEE COUNTY

Officers Rogers, Thompson, Hazelwood, and Lieutenant Barrett spent Mother's Day patrolling Lovers Key State Park. This park, with miles of hiking trails and access to a beautiful island beach, always draws a large family crowd on Mother's Day. Thanks to the extra patrols and the hard work of park staff, the day went well without any serious incidents.

## SOUTH REGION A

### CASES

#### OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Officers Toby and Dial responded to an abandoned boat that was floating in the Lake Okeechobee Rim Canal near Taylor Creek. The vessel was unoccupied at the time it was located. Officers Toby and Dial requested the assistance of Investigator Lafoy. The vessel had been reported as stolen a few days earlier and the officers began to investigate. After visually inspecting the vessel and matching the hull identification number, the officers contacted the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office (that had taken the initial report). The vessel owner arrived on the scene and verified the vessel and all items were still intact. The case was turned over to the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office for further investigation.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

### PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer LeBlanc assisted with a Kids Fishing Day, sponsored by the Palm Beach County Airboat Club and the FWC. Approximately 225 people attended the event including 90 youths that enjoyed some fishing time. Many fish were caught and there were a lot of smiles throughout the crowd.

## **SOUTH REGION B**

### **CASES**

#### **COLLIER COUNTY**

While conducting a JEA patrol aboard the OPV *C.T. Randall* near Western Dry Rocks, Lieutenant Shea and Officers Thurkettle, Johnson, and Bell performed a resource inspection on a vessel during the mutton snapper spawning season. Twenty undersized yellow tail snapper were found inside the live well of the vessel. The fish were seized as evidence and citations were issued for the violation.

#### **MIAMI-DADE COUNTY**

Officers participated in an operation targeting boating safety violations and impaired boating in the waters of Biscayne Bay. There were 32 vessel inspections, 92 users checked, 18 uniform boating citations, 15 warnings, 2 BUIs, 1 warrant arrest, 1 felony drug possession and a total of 4 physical arrests during the operation.

#### **MONROE COUNTY**

While on water patrol just south of Pigeon Key off the Seven Mile Bridge, Officers Martino and Hettel came along side an anchored vessel with two persons on board to conduct a boating safety inspection. The operator stated they had not been fishing, and no fishing gear was visible. While checking the vessel's safety gear, Officer Hettel noticed a small smear of blood near the vessel's anchor hatch. When the operator was asked about it, he admitted to have been spearfishing and had some grouper on board. The spear guns had been concealed and covered up with life vests and gear bags. The subject then opened a cooler and pulled out two, legal-sized red grouper and a gallon-sized Zip-lock bag containing a gutted red grouper with the head missing. The subject was cited for the fish not being landed in whole condition and issued two warnings for no current registration on board and no fishing license in possession.

### **DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS**

#### **MONROE COUNTY**

Officer Way and Lieutenant Peters conducted a two-day patrol offshore of the Dry Tortugas. The patrol focused on the enforcement of state and federal fisheries, and the

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS). The officers conducted several vessel inspections of recreational and commercial vessels. During the patrol, the officers conducted a marine fisheries inspection on several commercial vessels. The officers stopped a vessel and conducted a marine fisheries inspection that revealed they were in possession of 64 snapper and over their aggregate bag limit of snapper. The captain of the vessel was cited for being over the aggregate bag limit of snapper. On the second day of patrol, the officers discovered a vessel fishing inside the Tortugas North Ecological Reserve of the FKNMS. A marine fisheries inspection revealed the vessel was over the daily bag limit of red grouper, possession of reef fish not in whole condition, and two of the vessel occupants did not possess a valid fishing license. The vessel's catch was documented to include 11 red grouper, 12 mutton snapper (2 of which were not in whole condition), 5 other snapper (1 of which was not in whole condition), and 1 cero mackerel. An inspection of the vessel's marine sanitation device (MSD) revealed the vessel was not in compliance with state and FKNMS regulations. The captain of the vessel was educated on the boundaries of the FKNMS's North and South Ecological Reserve and educated on how to bring his vessel's MSD into compliance with state and FKNMS regulations. The captain was cited for fishing inside the Tortugas North Ecological Reserve, being over their aggregate bag limit of red grouper, and being in possession of reef fish not in whole condition. Two of the occupants on the vessel were also cited for not having a valid fishing license. The captain was also issued three warnings for not remaining in continuous transit inside the Tortugas North Ecological Reserve without possessing a valid access permit, MSD not in compliance with state and FKNMS regulations, and for being over the bag limit of mutton snapper.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

### COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Barringer and Osorio assisted the Collier County Sheriff's Office and Naples Police Department marine units with patrol during the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Stand-Up Paddle Board Special Olympics in North Naples. Over 50 paddle-boarders participated in the event.

### MONROE COUNTY

Officer Mattson gave a presentation at Coral Shores High School in the Upper Keys and talked about the duties and responsibilities of FWC officers. He spoke to several commercial fishing classes during the day with approximately 50 students. The students asked questions about careers with FWC and the cases that the agency handles.