

FWC
Division of Law Enforcement



Weekly Report
August 4, 2017 through August 10, 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

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officer Manning checked four individuals fishing in Escambia Bay. After a resource inspection, he found that they were in possession of more than 50 spotted seatrout. The fisherman claimed they were fishing commercially, but only one possessed the required license. Officer Manning issued the three remaining individuals criminal notices to appear for the violations.

WALTON COUNTY

Officer Tison conducted a resource inspection on a subject fishing along the Choctawhatchee Bay shoreline. An inspection of the subject's cooler revealed six undersized red drum. All the red drum were well under the mandated 18 inches in length. The subject was cited for possessing over the daily bag limit of red drum and issued a warning for the size limit violation.

Officer White conducted a fisheries inspection on a subject fishing in the Choctawhatchee Bay. An inspection of a cooler revealed the subject was over the daily bag limit of red drum. The subject was cited for the violation.

Officer White responded to Topsail Hill State Park after receiving information from park personnel that one of their golf carts had been taken. The subjects responsible were located and issued trespass warnings from the park after they were questioned.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officers continue to patrol shorebird nesting areas around the Navarre Causeway, educating the public on the importance of protecting our imperiled species by not disturbing the nesting areas. Officers Ramos and Lugg informed two individuals who were walking through the protected area.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

Officer J. Rockwell attended the Crestview Youth Academy Graduation. This was a multi-agency event with participation by Crestview Fire Department, FWC and Crestview Police Department. There were 48 students that graduated from the academy. Officer Rockwell brought a vessel and explained FWC's core mission to students and parents in attendance.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

ALACHUA COUNTY

Throughout the weekend while working boating safety and fish bag limits, Officer Troiano, Reith and Stanley issued three different citations for fishing license suspended or revoked.

Officer Stanley saw a female driving a truck with an expired tag at the Windsor Road Boat Ramp. After checking through dispatch, he found that the female had a suspended/revoked driver's license. Officer Stanley issued a criminal citation for driving with a suspended/revoked license with knowledge.

BAKER COUNTY

Officers Burnsed and Gill received information from Baker County Sheriff's Office about photographs they obtained from another investigation that revealed two subjects posing with alligators. The officers tracked down the two subjects at different locations to interview them regarding the alligators. Although not truthful to the officers at first, one of the subjects admitted to catching three alligators and taking them to a friend's house. At the friend's house, they took photographs while holding the alligators. They then released two of the alligators back into the wild, but stated they lost one before it could be released. Both subjects will be charged with unlawful possession of alligators.

CITRUS COUNTY

Officers Reid, Suttles and Lieutenant Jones conducted commercial fisheries inspections on shrimp vessels during the Big Bend food shrimp closure. While approaching a shrimp vessel for a compliance inspection, the operator and one crew threw a large orange fish basket full of bay scallops overboard. Officer Reid recovered several of the scallops while Officer Suttles clung onto Officer Reid's ankle and gun belt to keep him from falling overboard. The vessel occupants were issued a citation for possession of bay scallops on vessel with trawls and interference with an FWC officer.

Officers Cheshire, VanNess and Pilot Burke were working a Targeted Enforcement Action focusing on the commercial blue crab closure, when Officer VanNess discovered approximately 38 traps that were left in the water during the closure. Contact with the owner was unsuccessful. The traps were removed from the water by the blue crab cleanup contractor. Charges will be filed through the state attorney's office.

Officers Browning and Ulrich were conducting fisheries inspections in the Crystal River area when the officers saw a vessel inbound with fishing gear on the vessel. A resource inspection revealed that the occupants had harvested two undersized gag groupers using a spear gun. One occupant claimed responsibility for the undersized grouper and was cited appropriately.

MADISON COUNTY

Officer Ransom was patrolling the Twin Rivers State Forest when he noticed a driver in a stuck vehicle in need of assistance. While helping to remove the vehicle, Officer Ransom noticed a bag of berries in the bed of the vehicle. It was later determined that the operator of the vehicle had been illegally harvesting palmetto berries inside Twin Rivers State Forest. The operator was issued a notice to appear for the resource violation.

SUWANNEE COUNTY

Officer Boone was patrolling the Santa Fe River when he saw a vessel being operated in violation of the minimum wake zone. Upon stopping the vessel, it was determined that the operator was boating under the influence (BUI). The operator was arrested and delivered to the Suwannee County Jail.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

ALACHUA COUNTY

Officers are still targeting violations within the Lochloosa Wildlife Management Area (WMA). One citation and several warnings were issued for various violations throughout the weekend.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

ALACHUA COUNTY

Officers Troiano and Stanley attended a “Buck Scoring” event at Alachua Farm and Lumber during the weekend. Several biologists and a volunteer were also present at the event to help with the scoring. Several bucks were scored with the largest score of 111 from a surrounding county.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Balgo assisted Monroe County during Mini Season for Spiny Lobster. While patrolling from Marathon to Key West, a resource inspection was performed on a man harvesting lobster near the rocks. Upon inspection, Officer Balgo located one undersized lobster. The man was properly cited.

Officer Balgo performed a resource inspection on a female harvesting lobster near the rocks. The individual stated she did not have a measuring device and was placing the lobsters in her bag. After a resource inspection, three undersized lobster were located. The individual was properly cited.

Officer Balgo stopped a vessel at Spanish Harbor Boat Ramp to perform a vessel safety and resource inspection. Upon performing the inspection, four egg-bearing lobster, one undersized lobster, and an undersized red grouper were located. The individual was arrested and properly cited.

Officer Balgo received a tip that a subject was taking snook out of season at Sebastian Inlet State Park. After locating the subject, the officer saw the individual hide a black bag in the rocks and begin walking around the park. The individual walked up and down the north jetty, pretended to clean fish twice at the fish cleaning table and then walked to his vehicle to start it. The individual walked back down to the rocks to retrieve the black bag. Two snook were located by the officer in separate bags. The individual was cited a year ago for snook violations. The subject was cited appropriately.

While on water patrol in the Indian River, Officer Rasey noticed a vessel engaged in fishing activity near the Scottsmoor area. Upon approach, the sole subject on board was crouched down and appeared to be releasing spotted seatrout. A resource inspection revealed the subject was in possession of five spotted seatrout; one more than the allowable bag limit. Additionally, one seatrout was under the 15-inch minimum size limit. When the subject was asked if he had a fishing regulation guide, he produced a

regulation pamphlet with the current seatrout rules. The individual was cited for being over his bag limit and warned for harvesting undersized spotted seatrout.

RESCUES

LAKE COUNTY

While off duty, Officer Shaw was boating on Lake Harris near Yalaha when he witnessed a young girl in distress in the water. She couldn't swim and found herself in water over her head and struggling to stay up. The girl's parents didn't notice that their child was in distress. Officer Shaw jumped in the lake, swam over to the struggling child and carried her to her mother who was on shore. The young girl did not suffer any injuries.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

ORANGE COUNTY

Members of the Northeast Region, Southwest Region and FWC Class #33 Recruits served as lane officials for the National Archery In the Schools Program (NASP) World Tournament. The tournament took place at the Orange County Convention Center over a two-day period, and had roughly 3,700 youth shooters from all over the United States and Canada. FWC staff interacted with the coaches and students, making the event a huge success.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

While on land patrol one evening, Lieutenant Ruggiero spotted several people on a side-by-side and an ATV in a portion of the Webb WMA that was closed to vehicles. The WMA had been closed for a few hours so he stopped them to find out what was going on. Lieutenant Ruggiero approached them and attempted to identify each one through dispatch. He identified all of them except for one man. That man insisted that he had a valid identification and repeatedly confirmed that he had given the officer the correct name. Officer Price responded to the area and by using a fingerprint identification reader, the man's identity was revealed. He admitted he had given the wrong information because he was afraid the officers were going to seize his vehicles. The man was arrested for providing false information to law enforcement. Two infractions were issued for being in the WMA while closed and nine warnings were issued for various other violations such as not possessing a daily use permit, using an ATV in the WMA and operating a motor vehicle in an area where not permitted.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Winton was on marine fisheries patrol in Lover's Key State Park when he located an individual fishing in a closed portion of the park at night. An out of season, undersized and illegally harvested snook, undersized mangrove snapper, and an undersized sheepshead were discovered during a resource inspection. During the investigation, the individual also admitted to driving to the park with no valid driver's license. The individual was issued a citation for several misdemeanor violations, an infraction citation and several warnings.

Officer Thompson was working in plain clothes and watching fishermen at a local pass known for snook. He saw three men catching fish with a cast net along the beach. From a concealed location, the subjects were observed catching fish. When the men returned to their vehicle in the parking lot, a resource inspection revealed six undersized, out-of-season and illegally harvested snook, along with several undersized snapper. With so many illegally harvested snook, the major violations will result in enhanced penalties and higher fines.

Lieutenant Barrett was patrolling at a local boat ramp and speaking with several fishermen. He noticed a boat with four men on board and playing loud music, dancing, and yelling as they neared the dock. The operator and several of the men appeared to be highly intoxicated, so Lieutenant Barrett stopped the boat for a boating safety inspection. During the inspection, Lieutenant Barrett noticed several indicators of impairment in the operator and decided to have him perform field sobriety exercises. The operator failed the field sobriety exercises and was arrested for BUI. The operator, visiting Fort Myers from out of state, was a convicted felon on probation for selling narcotics and had a history of DUI.

PASCO COUNTY

Officers Angelis and Jones obtained a report of a boating accident that occurred involving two commercial fishing vessels. The vessels were engaged in harvesting shrimp when one vessel ran into the rear of the other vessel. No injuries occurred. After the investigation, Officer Angelis issued citations to both operators for violations of the United States Coast Guard Navigational Rules.

Lieutenant Parisoe responded to a piece of property where heavy equipment was being used for clearing underbrush. The complainant reported the property contained several gopher tortoises and their burrows. An inspection revealed that two burrows had been impacted during the clearing. A warning was issued for the violation.

PINELLAS COUNTY

Officers Messman, Caldwell and Lieutenant Laskowski investigated a floating jet ski found on Lake Tarpon. The jet ski had been abandoned in a junked condition. A derelict vessel investigation was initiated and a witness reported that he saw a white truck back

down a boat ramp on Lake Tarpon, dump the jet ski and leave. The officers started with the last known registered owner and tracked the jet ski, which had changed hands three times until it was sold to the final owner one day prior to it ending up on the lake. The officers responded to the last known owner's address where they saw an empty jet ski trailer and a white truck in the driveway. The owner of the jet ski initially said the jet ski was stolen a few days prior. After being read his Miranda rights and confronted with contrary evidence, he admitted to buying the jet ski for the trailer and then dumping the jet ski on Lake Tarpon because it did not run. His roommate, who was present during the sale and dumping, further corroborated the evidence. The owner was cited for a criminal derelict vessel violation. Charges for illegal dumping will be filed with the state attorney's office under the Florida litter law.

While on water patrol in south Pinellas County, Officer Bibeau and Lieutenant Van Trees saw a vessel that was not displaying a dive flag with two divers in the water. The officers approached the vessel and encountered the three individuals to conduct a resource inspection. The officers located an undersized, out-of-season snook that had been speared. The individuals were read their Miranda Rights and after a short series of questions, one individual admitted to spearing the snook. The individual was written misdemeanor citations and a warning for the violations.

While on water patrol near Fort Desoto, Officer Bibeau and Lieutenant Van Trees saw three individuals fishing from underneath a nearby bridge. The officers encountered the individuals to conduct a fisheries inspection and located 41 undersized mangrove snapper. All the individuals admitted to catching the mangrove snapper and were cited accordingly.

Officers Martinez and Gonzalez were checking fishermen at the Gandy Bridge when they encountered a group of individuals that began acting suspiciously. The individuals continued to act suspiciously when the officers asked about a cooler in their possession. One of the subjects said it was his, and later admitted there was marijuana in it. An inspection of the cooler revealed marijuana and methamphetamine. The officers arrested the subject, walked him back to his car and, with his permission, retrieved his identification from his car. They saw another suspicious bag in his car and asked him what was in the bag. The subject told them it was money and gave them permission to search it. The search revealed that money and bags of heroin were in the suspicious bag. The officers also found weighing scales. The subject was arrested for numerous felony drug charges including intent to distribute.

RESCUES

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Lieutenants Van Trees, Holcomb, Parisoe and Officer Boogaerts responded to a boating accident with individuals treading water with no life vests. The three men were then hanging on to their capsized vessel underneath the Courtney Campbell Causeway. With a quick response from Tampa Fire Rescue, Safety Harbor Fire Rescue and FWC,

the men were plucked from the water and brought back to land. A Good Samaritan helped retrieve their vessel and luckily, no one was injured.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Toby was notified of an alligator that had been killed illegally on Lake Okeechobee near the Belle Glade area. Multiple witnesses were interviewed and the nearly 12-foot, deceased alligator was located in the water. With the assistance of a local construction crane, the large alligator was removed from the water. Once on dry land, an arrow was found lodged and sticking out of the alligator's head. The alligator and arrow were transported to the FWC evidence compound where it will be held until this case is resolved. A suspect has been identified and this incident is still under investigation.

Officer Hankinson was conducting resource inspections with the United States Coast Guard at the Lake Park Marina. A subject was in possession of two undersized and illegally speared tripletail fish. The subject was cited for the two criminal violations.

Officer Hankinson and Lieutenant Russo responded to a reported snook violation at Jupiter Inlet Park. During shoreline inspections, a subject was found to be in possession of an undersized snook during the closed season. The subject was cited for the criminal violation.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

COLLIER COUNTY

On the opening day of archery season in Picayune Strand State Forest (PSST), Officer Arbogast saw a truck parked on the side of the road in an area closed to hunting. Shortly, two subjects emerged from the closed area dressed in camouflage and carrying compound bows. The subjects had valid hunting licenses, and were asked if they knew they were hunting in a closed area. The subjects stated they had a PSSF WMA brochure in their truck, but could not produce it. Both subjects were cited accordingly.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

An officer saw a subject spearfishing in a fresh water canal and conducted a fisheries inspection. The defendant admitted to spearfishing in the canal, which is prohibited, and

was in possession of 11 total speared fish. Five were speared peacock bass and one was a largemouth bass. The defendant was cited two misdemeanors (over bag limit on peacock bass and illegal method of take) and one infraction (No fresh water fishing license).

MONROE COUNTY

Officers Wilkins and Garcia were on state land patrol when they received an anonymous tip through the dispatch center about a group of people taking lobster out of season behind a house in Islamorada. The two officers arrived at the location and saw a group of people in the backyard of the house and decided to investigate further. The officers asked who was the owner of the house and a gentleman came forward. Officer Garcia stated the reason for the officers being there on the property and asked if the anonymous tip was valid. Without hesitation, the owner of the property said that he had some lobsters that were taken out of season from the seawall behind his house. The owner of the house took the officers to a large, white cooler and inside were several wrung lobster tails. Officer Wilkins asked if there were any more lobster tails on the property. The owner stated that he might have a few more in the refrigerator outside and, upon further inspection, located a few more wrung tails in the refrigerator. The owner of the property admitted that his teenage sons took the lobster and that he had knowledge of them doing so. The officers found a total of 20 wrung lobster tails, four of which were undersized. Officer Wilkins charged the owner of the property with a notice to appear for 20 out-of-season lobsters and four undersized lobsters.

Major Escanio and Officer Sapp were on water patrol, approximately five miles north of the Seven Mile Bridge during the two-day mini-lobster season. Officer Sapp saw a vessel a few miles away displaying dive gear and traveling at a high rate of speed. He stopped the vessel to perform a marine resource inspection and found 24 undersized spiny lobster in the live well. Four subjects on board the vessel were cited and issued notices to appear.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

MONROE COUNTY

Officers Richards, Foell, Wagner and Captain Mravic went on offshore patrol aboard the offshore patrol vessel (OPV) *Interceptor* to the Dry Tortugas and found multiple violations. Their first resource inspection on a vessel revealed 29 undersized snapper in the live well, as well as yellowtail, mangrove, and lane snapper. Their second resource inspection on a vessel revealed fish fillets which were sent for laboratory testing to confirm species identification. Their third resource inspection on a vessel revealed a bag full of yellowtail snapper fillets hidden under ice in a cooler. All subjects were charged accordingly.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Dube assisted the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary with teaching the FWC “Boat Smart” boating course in Islamorada. Officer Dube was a co-instructor for approximately 25 students in attendance. Students learned about boating safety, boating accidents, charting and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. All the students passed their exam.

Officers Baumgartner, Garcia, Lieutenants Walsingham and Lyne participated in the “National Night Out” campaign at Founders Park in Islamorada. The officers showcased the FWC’s new 850 Impact patrol vessel, patrol trucks and the dive team trailer and associated specialty gear.

Officer Dube was the guest host on the Sun103.1 Friday night radio show with Captain Bill Kelly at Wahoo’s restaurant in Islamorada. Officer Dube discussed the opening of regular season and the recent lobster busts made by officers in the keys. Officer Dube also talked about safety tips for boating dive flag and diving.