

FWC
Division of Law Enforcement
Weekly Report



October 6, 2017 through October 12, 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

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Hutchinson was patrolling the Blackwater State Forest when he observed a couple of vehicles pulled over on the side of a forest road. He stopped to check on the subjects inside of the vehicles. While speaking with them, he could smell the strong odor of cannabis coming from the vehicles. After questioning the two drivers, he discovered cannabis inside both vehicles. Both men were issued notices to appear for possession of not more than 20 grams of cannabis.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

BAKER COUNTY

Officers Burnsed and Fenella were working baited sites in the Osceola WMA during the archery season, targeting an area that was baited with corn and had been recently hunted. Shortly after daylight, the officers saw a hunter who was attempting to take deer over the baited site. The hunter admitted to placing the bait and was cited for hunting over bait in a WMA.

CITRUS COUNTY

Captain Shuster observed a vehicle southbound on the northbound side of US 19 in Homosassa. During a vehicle stop, Captain Shuster noticed that the driver of the vehicle was exhibiting signs of impairment. Officer Suttles administered field sobriety tasks at the scene and the driver was placed under arrest for driving a motor vehicle while impaired. The driver submitted to a test of her breath which determined her breath alcohol to be .187. The subject was charged with DUI.

Officer VanNess was on his way to assist with an ongoing DUI stop in south Homosassa when he observed a vehicle stopped on US 19. As Officer VanNess passed by in the opposite direction, he noticed that the driver's door was open and a woman was in the middle of the road. The traffic travelling in the same direction had to swerve to avoid striking the woman and her car. Officer VanNess approached the subject and determined that she was impaired by the consumption of alcohol. She was arrested and later submitted to a test of her breath which determined her alcohol level to be .180. The subject was charged accordingly.

Lieutenant Jones was on water patrol on the Withlacoochee River to follow-up on recent signs of subjects entering a closed hunting area. On approach to the area, he observed a small Jon boat pulled up the bank and hidden in some brush. Three subjects with bows were located as they made their way back to their boat. After claiming they did not know the area was closed, Lieutenant Jones pointed out that the sign next to their boat stated that the area was state property and closed to hunting. All three hunters were issued a citation to pay a \$218.00 fine or to appear in court on the date provided.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Officer McDonald was patrolling Osceola National Forest when he observed fresh vehicle tire tracks on a closed road. The vehicle was located a brief time later. The operator of the vehicle was putting up a tree stand. The juvenile subject was issued a citation for driving on a closed road. After a consensual search of the vehicle, approximately 4 grams of cannabis was found in a mason jar in the center console. The subject was cited for possession of less than 20 grams of cannabis.

DUVAL COUNTY

Investigator Holleman was dispatched to a complaint of a subject dumping construction debris in a wooded area. Upon arrival, he located two suspects with a stuck four-wheel drive truck attached to a trailer. The subjects admitted to dumping the debris and voluntarily agreed to clean up their trash. The subjects were both cited for littering more than 15 lbs. and less than 500 lbs.

HAMILTON COUNTY

Officer Cline, along with Hamilton County Sheriff's deputies, responded to a call about a suspicious vehicle parked in an agricultural field. Upon arrival, officers located a vehicle leaving the area and conducted a traffic stop. During the stop, one subject was found to

be riding in the bed of the truck with a loaded rifle and the driver was in possession of a large flashlight. After questioning the individuals, post Miranda Warnings, they admitted to trespassing on several agricultural fields and attempting to take deer with a gun and light. The individuals also admitted that they had done this on several occasions. Both subjects were placed under arrest, transported to the Hamilton County Jail and booked on appropriate charges.

TAYLOR COUNTY

Officers Robson and Albritton were on land patrol in the early morning hours near Hagans Cove when they observed suspicious activity of two subjects who appeared to be digging. The subjects appeared to have arrived by air boat. The subjects fled on foot just as the officers were about to make contact. It was discovered that the two subjects had been recently caught by the same officers in another part of the county digging for artifacts on a documented historical site. Both subjects had felony warrants for their arrest and a brief manhunt was unsuccessful. At daylight, officer Robson, while still searching for the suspects, passed a female subject who attempted to flee in the get-away vehicle while trying to locate the male subject. The vehicle was stuck and the female was apprehended by the K-9 team after a short flight on foot. The female was booked into the Taylor County Jail. The male subject is still wanted.

Officers Dasher and Albritton received information from a landowner of possible trespassing. The landowner recognized a vehicle that had passed his home that was captured earlier on a trail camera on private land. The officers intercepted the vehicle and conducted a traffic stop. The occupants were identified on camera trespassing and committing theft of palmetto berries. One of the subjects had been previously arrested a few weeks earlier for the same violations. Charges are being filed with the State Attorney's Office.

While on patrol at Clubhouse Boat Ramp, Officer Colasanti conducted a resource inspection of a Georgia vessel. Officer Colasanti located a cooler that contained four undersized spotted sea trout. The owner of the vessel claimed ownership and responsibility of the fish and was cited for the undersized spotted sea trout. The fish were seized as evidence.

Officers Dasher and Albritton were checking fishermen as they approached the Fenholloway River Boat Ramp when they found two subjects in possession of five undersized red drum and one undersized black drum. The fish were all less than 15 inches. Officer Dasher seized the fish as evidence and issued the subjects the appropriate criminal citations and four boating safety warnings.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

CITRUS COUNTY

Officer Suttles and Lieutenant Jones were conducting joint enforcement agreement (JEA) water patrol offshore Hernando County when they observed a 36' Yellowfin at anchor with multiple persons fishing from the vessel. During a resource inspection, Officer Suttles found one undersized gag grouper and two American red snapper in the harvested catch. The subject was issued the appropriate citations and warnings.

Officer Suttles and Lieutenant Jones were on JEA patrol in an area offshore Citrus County when they observed a vessel at anchor with four persons onboard fishing. During a resource inspection, nine American red snapper were in a large cooler. The subjects were issued the appropriate citations.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Officers Johnston and McDonald were invited as guests at the Masonic Lodge in Lake City for its annual "Law Enforcement Appreciation Dinner." The officers were among several members of other agencies, including local county and state agencies. A group photo was taken of the guests and submitted to the Lake City Reporter Newspaper where it was featured a few days later.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officer Miller received a tip from an off-duty St. Johns County Deputy who advised that a subject at the Guana WMA had exceeded the daily bag limit of spotted seatrout. Officer Miller responded by land to the area of the Guana Dam and contacted the subject. He found the local man to be in possession of 11 spotted seatrout, all of which were oversized. Officer Miller issued the man misdemeanor citations for the bag and size violations.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officers Malicoat and West waited outside a closed county park in New Smyrna Beach at night waiting for subjects who had been fishing to exit the area. Three adult males exited and denied catching any fish when asked. Further inspection revealed one of the men was in possession of a snook and red drum. Both fish were under the required slot size limit. He was issued a notice to appear for the violations and issued a non-criminal citation for failing to have the proper license and permit.

Officer McKee investigated an anonymous complaint about the taking of deer by unlawful method. Two male subjects had taken a buck near Oak Hill with a shotgun.

The subjects were tracked down by Officer McKee and provided sworn written statements about the violations. The subject responsible for the violation was charged with taking deer by unlawful method and taking an antlered deer with less than three points or 10-inch main.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officer Salem was on patrol late at night when he came across several people fishing at a creek. While conducting a fisheries inspection, he asked if anyone had caught any fish and the group told him they had caught some catfish. Officer Salem got permission to search the vehicle and located a small bucket. When he asked the owner of the vehicle if there was any fish inside, the owner said, "not that he was aware of." Inside the bucket, Officer Salem found a snook that measured 19 ½ inches long. One of the other men later admitted to catching and keeping the snook. He was issued a misdemeanor citation for possessing an undersized snook.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

While on land patrol at the Courtney Campbell Bridge, Officers Godfrey and Wilkins conducted a resource inspection of two subjects fishing from land. One of the subjects said he had fish in his cooler that was next to him, but refused to let the officers inspect it. After explaining the law to the subject, and specifically the right to inspect, he agreed to let them inspect the cooler which had an 11-inch gag grouper inside. The subject had previously been cited in Monroe County for fisheries violations as well. The subject was cited for possession of undersized gag grouper.

Officer Wilkins and Lieutenant Van Trees were recovering a vessel at the Gandy Boat Ramp when Officer Wilkins noticed a subject with numerous mangrove snapper laying on the dock nearby. Officer Wilkins asked the subject if he knew how big mangrove snapper had to be. The subject replied "10-inches." Upon further inspection, Officer Wilkins found seven undersized mangrove snapper, his entire bag limit. The subject was cited for possession of undersized mangrove snapper and over the daily bag limit of snapper.

While on land patrol near Orient Road, Officers Phillippi and Godfrey observed a subject fishing and trespassing on Swiftmud Property. The subject admitted to passing "No Trespassing" signs to fish in the unauthorized area. The subject was cited accordingly.

LEE COUNTY

Officers Bradshaw and Perry were patrolling the waters near Bokeelia when they spotted a flats boat with two men on board operating recklessly at high speeds in a slow speed zone. The officers stopped the boat and found the two men onboard to be highly intoxicated. After conducting field sobriety tests, the officers arrested the operator for boating under the influence.

MANATEE COUNTY

Officer Dalton was on land patrol around the South Skyway Rest Area and performed a fisheries inspection on a man fishing under one of the relief bridges. During the inspection, the subject was found to have caught and kept one undersized snook. The man was cited for possession of undersized snook and will have to appear in court for his violation.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While on land patrol at the 4th Street Bridge, Officer Wilkins and Lieutenant Van Trees approached a large group under the bridge who were actively cast netting. Upon inspection of a nearby bucket, the officers found an undersized snook and several grossly undersized sheepshead. The group was read their Miranda Rights and after interviewing the subjects it was found that all the fish were caught with a cast net and who was responsible for what fish. Two of the men were cited for numerous charges to include possession of undersized snook, snook taken by illegal method, possession of undersized sheepshead and not having a snook permit.

Officer Bibeau was on land patrol at the Gandy Beach when he observed two subjects actively fishing. Officer Bibeau asked if the subjects had any fish and they told him no, but a catch bag was found floating in the water nearby with numerous fish inside. After a short line of questioning, one of the subjects admitted to catching and keeping an undersized redfish and seatrout that were inside the catch bag. The appropriate citations were issued.

Officers Bibler and Martinez were on water patrol near the Treasure Island ICW when they observed a subject violating the manatee zone. A vessel stop was initiated and, during their interaction with the operator, they noticed numerous signs of impairment. Officer Bibler conducted field sobriety tasks with the operator and determined he was impaired. The officers arrested the subject for boating under the influence, and he subsequently refused to give a breath sample. The operator was booked into the Pinellas County Jail on charges.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

LEE COUNTY

Officer Winton was deployed to Monroe County along with six other officers from the Southwest Region. The mission of the deployment was identifying and removing

displaced vessels from Hurricane Irma. During the 11 days, the officers identified more than 150 displaced vessels and made efforts to contact their owners. The deployment represented FWC's commitment to disaster relief, environmental protection and public safety.