

**FWC**  
**Division of Law Enforcement**  
***Weekly Report***



***November 3, 2017 through November 9, 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**

**FRANKLIN COUNTY**

Officers Matechik and Sauls were on patrol inspecting oyster boats in Eastpoint. They stopped at a seafood dealer and were informed that two subjects dropped off five bags of oysters and left without saying anything to the dealer. The dealer did not want to buy the oysters because they were visibly undersized. The dealer also knew who the oyster harvesters were and gave a written statement to the officers. The officers measured the bags of oysters and they ranged from 70-85% undersized. The officers also noticed that the Saltwater Product License (SPL) numbers did not match up to the harvesters. When they checked the numbers on the oyster tags, the numbers came back to noone. However, on the back of two of the tags were the names of the harvesters. Charges will be direct filed on the two harvesters for undersized oysters and falsification of oyster tags.

**OKALOOSA COUNTY**

Officers Corbin and Pifer responded to a single vessel boating accident that occurred in the Gulf of Mexico, just outside of the East Pass. The vessel involved was a 17-foot open console boat. Information was received that one of the five occupants was transported to a local hospital for treatment of injuries. The US Coast Guard (USCG) responded by vessel and provided assistance by transporting the vessel and occupants to the Coast Guard Destin Station. Officer Corbin responded to the Coast Guard Station to conduct the investigation and Officer Pifer headed to the hospital to ascertain the severity of the injured occupant. Based upon the investigation, Officer Corbin

determined the vessel was cruising west from the Destin Jetties, at half throttle, when the vessel was struck by a large wave causing the vessel to roll hard to the starboard side and ejecting three of the five occupants. The injured occupant sustained a laceration to the front side of her right leg above her ankle. She also sustained a laceration to the back of her right upper arm. This boating accident is currently under investigation.

Officer Nichols responded to call concerning a small black bear cub trapped in a commercial dumpster at a Fort Walton Beach business location. There was a female bear staying close to the dumpster. When the officer arrived, the bears had retreated into a wooded area. Officer Nichols spoke with some employees of the business concerning the bears and inspected the dumpster for bear resistance compliance measures. The dumpster was not secured and the business owner was provided with an educational bear brochure and issued a non-compliance notification letter.

#### SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Hutchinson contacted the Department of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco (ABT) and informed them about an illegal moonshine still that he and Lieutenant Hahr located while investigating a deer poaching case. After speaking with an investigator and passing along the information to them, they drove to the suspect's residence where the still was located. They contacted the suspect who admitted to possessing the still and making moonshine. While speaking with the suspect, the officers observed two more whiskey stills near his shed. They gained consent to search the property and with the help of two other ABT investigators, they located other items used to make moonshine. A felony warrant was later issued for the suspect's arrest for the possession of the illegal moonshine stills.

While on patrol in the Yellow River WMA, Officer Mullins observed subjects at a state forest primitive recreation area. Officer Mullins spoke with the subjects and discovered one subject was in possession of cannabis, drug paraphernalia and alcohol in a posted "no alcohol area." The subject was issued a citation for possession of cannabis under 20 grams.

Officer Ramos concluded an investigation leading to the arrest of a Navarre resident for the unlawful taking of a black bear shot in a resident's yard in October. A thorough investigation of evidence and statements provided by witnesses and involved parties was reviewed by the State Attorney's Office. The presiding judge concurred with the arrest affidavit and approved the arrest warrant. The suspect was booked into the county jail for the unlawful taking of a black bear.

#### ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Detectives with the Pensacola Police Department began an investigation during September into what was originally reported as a missing persons case. As the case developed, detectives began to suspect foul play and, through their investigation,

believed that the victim was possibly located on a farm in Cantonment. Pensacola Police Department requested assistance from FWC due to the wooded terrain in the area and the FWC's expertise in this type of landscape. Officers McHenry, Pettey and Hoomes responded to assist with locating the victim. After an extensive search which included heavily wooded and wetland areas, the officers located the victim's remains. The discovery of the remains led to an arrest of a suspect by the Pensacola Police Department.

## **NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

### **CASES**

#### **ALACHUA COUNTY**

Officers Stanley and Fanelli worked an active bait site in the Grove Park WMA. After checking the sites several times, they observed a hunter who was hunting over the bait. The hunter admitted to placing the bait out and was cited for the violation.

#### **BAKER COUNTY**

Officer Burnsed received a complaint of a doe deer that was killed illegally during the opening of muzzle loading season. Muzzle loading season only allows antlered deer. The officer obtained the name of the subject in violation and verified the information with the landowner who leased the property. The subject was interviewed and admitted to killing the doe deer, as well as attempting to shoot another on the same day. Charges will be directly filed with the State Attorney's Office for taking an illegal doe deer during closed season.

#### **DIXIE COUNTY**

Lieutenant Futch and Officer Butler were on water patrol working illegal oyster harvesting at night when they observed a vessel in a closed area and discovered they were harvesting oysters. As they approached the vessel, they observed fresh oysters on the deck of the boat. Following a brief interview, the subjects admitted to harvesting oysters at night in closed waters. The subjects were issued the appropriate citations for the violations.

#### **DUVAL COUNTY**

Officer Christmas was on routine patrol near Broward River and Zoo Parkway when he came across a male and female fishing. A resource inspection of their catch revealed two undersized red drum, four undersized black drum and eight undersized mangrove snapper. The subjects were issued citations for the illegal fish and the fish were seized and photographed. The male subject was also issued a citation for not having a valid saltwater shoreline license.

## GILCHRIST COUNTY

Officer Allen conducted a property inspection for a Deer Depredation Permit. During the inspection, Officer Allen discovered there was a corn feeder placed on the property. A brief time later, he observed a hunter actively hunting deer on the property. The subject was walking around the edge of the field with a rifle in full camouflage. Officer Allen made contact and the subject indicated he was utilizing the deer depredation permit. The subject did not have a copy of the permit with him nor did he have his hunting license. Charges will be direct filed with the State Attorney's Office for the permit violation.

Officer Allen was on patrol when he heard a gunshot that did not sound like a muzzle loader. He found a vehicle near the location and waited until the subjects returned. The subjects came out and Officer Allen discovered they had taken an eight-point deer with a .223 rifle. Following a brief interview, the subjects admitted to taking the deer with the .223 rifle during muzzle loader season. Officer Allen will be direct filing charges with the State Attorney's Office for taking deer by illegal method.

Officer Allen received information that an individual had taken an illegal deer in the Log Landing WMA. A hunter overheard a subject stating that he had killed an illegal spike and attempted to kill two other deer earlier that morning. Officer Allen arrived and observed a subject meeting the description exiting the management area. He conducted a resource inspection and advised the subject he received information that he had taken an illegal deer. The subject denied he killed a deer and showed Officer Allen the area he hunted that morning. Officer Allen back tracked him in the woods to where he was hunting. Later that day, Officer Allen found an illegal deer hidden behind a large tree in the same area the subject had hunted. Officer Allen met with the subject later that afternoon at his residence. When faced with the evidence, the subject admitted to killing the deer and attempting to shoot two more. Charges will be direct filed with the State Attorney's Office for the illegal deer and for willful and wanton waste of game.

Officers Allen and Troiano received information about a hunter harassment complaint on a local management area. The officers went to the area the next morning and posed as hunters. Shortly after daylight, a subject arrived at the parking area meeting the description. The subject drove a short distance away to his property which joins the state lands. The subject then began to shine a flashlight towards the hunters and discharged a pistol four times from his fence line. At that point, Officer Allen stepped out and identified himself as an officer. The subject admitted to willfully interfering with the lawful taking of game on state lands and was issued a notice to appear for the violation.

Officers Cooper and Sheffield received information that a deer had been killed illegally. When they arrived on scene, they discovered the deer had been shot from a public roadway. While collecting evidence at the scene, the suspect drove up. The suspect was questioned and he admitted to shooting the deer from his vehicle. The subject was

issued a notice to appear for discharging a firearm from a public roadway and for unlawful taking of deer.

## NASSAU COUNTY

Officer Christmas was working the last day of the muzzleloader quota hunt in Ralph Simmons WMA when he came across a subject walking out of the woods and back towards his truck. Officer Christmas requested the subject show his license and quota permit. The subject showed his license but then only a printed quota hunt application sheet that clearly read "unsuccessful" on the quota hunt. The hunter stated he believed it was sufficient to hunt. Officer Christmas explained to the hunter that he did not get selected for the muzzleloader hunt and he was not allowed to be in the management area during the hunt. He was issued a citation for the level two violation.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

### COLUMBIA COUNTY

Lieutenant Kiss and Officer McGrath participated in the annual Eastside Elementary Fall Festival. The officers brought their patrol trucks as well as a Yellowfin patrol vessel for display. The officers also answered any boating and resource related questions. Approximately 400 school-aged children and their parents were in attendance.

## NORTHEAST REGION

### CASES

#### BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Kearney observed a car pull up to a gas pump. After watching the operator for some time, Officer Kearney approached the subject and smelled the odor of alcohol. An open container was visible inside the vehicle. The officer also had reason to believe the operator may have used drugs. After speaking with the operator and seeing several signs of impairment, the operator was placed under arrest for driving under the influence. The operator was also cited for failure to submit to lawful testing of blood, breathe or urine.

Officer Dubose issued a man a citation for reckless operation of a vessel earlier this year. The operator pled guilty to the lesser charge of careless operation and was sentenced to a \$200.00 donation to the Wildlife Alert Fund and the \$50.00 cost of prosecution.

#### VOLUSIA COUNTY

During the week Tiger Bay WMA is closed, between muzzle loading gun season and general gun season, two subjects signed in at the entrance kiosk. At the entrance kiosk where they signed in, the season dates are clearly posted. Lieutenant Baer and Officer Sapp contacted both subjects who were hunting deer in the WMA. Both were issued citations for hunting during the closed season.

Officers Ward and Haskins encountered two men hunting deer in Rima Ridge WMA during the closed season. One of the men had a general gun quota permit for the following weekend and was in possession of a Rima Ridge WMA brochure. Both the quota permit and the brochure clearly state the dates the WMA is open to hunting and the dates the quota permit is valid for. The men were issued citations for hunting the WMA during the closed season.

Officers responded to a complaint in Rima Ridge WMA of a man hunting during the closed season. The officers located a vehicle and called Officer North and his K-9 partner Max. Max tracked from the vehicle to the hunter who was armed with a rifle and a pistol. The man admitted to deer hunting. The area was baited with corn. The hunter said he saw the corn on his way in but did not put it there. In the back of the subject's truck an open bag of corn was located. He was cited for hunting during closed season, hunting over bait in a WMA, and hunting deer without wearing blaze orange.

Lieutenant Baer encountered two subjects in the Lake George WMA with dried blood in the back of their truck. One of the subjects told Lieutenant Baer he killed a 4" spike buck several days earlier with a muzzleloader on private property. He was under the impression that since the deer met the definition of antlerless it was legal. Lieutenant Baer explained that, without a tag, antlerless deer are only legal during archery season. The hunter said he gave the deer to a friend in Lake County who had the meat and antlers. Officer Shaw went to interview the friend who told him that the story was a lie and that his friends had shot an illegal buck in the Lake George WMA that morning. Lieutenant Baer and Officer Sapp made contact a second time with the subjects who admitted, after Miranda warnings, that one of them had shot a short antlered buck that morning and taken it to a processor in Lake County. The hunter gave a written confession and turned over the antlers that he was still in possession of. The buck was a 3 point and the longest beam was 8". He was charged with taking an illegal buck.

## **SOUTHWEST REGION**

### **CASES**

#### **CHARLOTTE COUNTY**

Officer Winton was on ATV patrol at the Cecil Webb WMA when he observed a swamp buggy engaged in hunting activities. Officer Winton also noticed that one of the subjects onboard was not wearing blaze orange, a requirement when hunting deer on public lands. As Officer Winton attempted to catch up to the buggy and conduct a stop, the

buggy began traveling around a flag pond with deep water, as if to avoid being stopped. Officer Winton eventually caught up to the buggy and discovered that one of the subjects had shot a deer that did not meet the antler requirements, and was therefore taken illegally. The subject was issued a notice to appear for the deer violation and a warning for the blaze orange violation.

Officer Winton was on patrol at the Cecil Webb WMA check station when he noticed a vehicle attempting to pass through with a deer in the back. Officer Winton conducted a stop at which time he noticed that the deer did not meet the antler requirements to be lawfully taken. The subject was issued a notice to appear for the violation.

While on land patrol at the Cecil Webb WMA, Officer Winton observed a vehicle towing a trailer with a swamp buggy. Underneath the swamp buggy he saw a deer behind one of the tires. Officer Winton conducted a stop on the vehicle, and a resource inspection revealed that the deer did not meet the antler requirements to be lawfully taken. The subject stated that he knew the antler regulations but had shot the deer before he was able to positively identify it. The subject was issued a notice to appear for the violation.

Officer Winton received information about a deer that was illegally taken at the Cecil Webb WMA, and had been left out in the woods. With the help of Officers Salem and Perry the deer was located, at which time it was determined that it did not meet the antler requirements to be lawfully taken. An investigation is ongoing, and charges will be filed with the State Attorney's Office. Charges will include the illegal take of a deer, failure to check out game and willful/wanton waste of wildlife.

## HERNANDO COUNTY

Officer Balfour and Lieutenant Parisoe were working the Croom WMA when they were approached by a passing motorist who had questions about hunting. During initial contact, Officer Balfour observed drug paraphernalia in plain view. The vehicle operator also showed signs of impairment. Field sobriety tasks were conducted, and the individual performed poorly. Officer Balfour arrested the individual for driving under the influence, possession of less than 20 grams of cannabis and possession of drug paraphernalia. The officer transported the individual to the county jail without incident, and the drugs and paraphernalia were seized as evidence.

## HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

While on land patrol, Officer Messman observed an individual near a vehicle holding a bag with fish in it. Officer Messman approached the individual and initiated a fisheries inspection. Officer Messman found the individual to be in possession of an undersized 27-inch cobia. The minimum legal size for cobia is 33 inches in length measured to the fork. The individual was issued a citation for the violation.

While on patrol at the Courtney Campbell boat ramp, Officer Messman observed a personal watercraft (PWC) operating at a high rate of speed in a marked slow speed

boating safety zone. The operator drove the PWC at a high rate of speed directly towards a second PWC with two people onboard. At the last possible moment before collision, the operator sharply turned his PWC and sprayed the PWC with the two people onboard with water. This maneuver was done in a slow speed boating safety zone while there was heavy vessel traffic near the boat ramp. Based on the operator's disregard for the boating safety zone, aggressive maneuvers at a high rate of speed, and disregard for the safety of himself, the two people onboard the second PWC, and the other boat traffic in the area, the operator was cited for reckless operation of a PWC.

While on land patrol, Officer Caldwell observed an individual fishing under a bridge. He approached the individual and initiated a fisheries inspection. He found the individual to be in possession of two undersized black drum and three undersized mangrove snapper. The individual was issued a citation for the undersized black drum and a warning for the undersized mangrove snapper.

While on land patrol, Officer Lehman observed a truck parked in an area adjacent to a preserve. Suspecting illegal hunting, Officer Lehman waited in a concealed location for the occupants to return. After some time, he watched as two individuals dragged a hog back to the truck. Officer Lehman approached the occupants, and discovered that there was one other individual in the woods, as well as two rifles. The individuals admitted to hunting on the property and were cited accordingly.

While on patrol, Officer Pettifer located two individuals fishing under the North Skyway Fishing Pier and stopped to conduct a resource inspection. Upon contact, the individuals were in the process of placing fish into a bait bucket. A subsequent inspection of their catch revealed three undersized gag grouper, six undersized mangrove snapper, and two undersized sheepshead. Post Miranda, the individuals admitted to catching the fish and were cited accordingly.

#### MANATEE COUNTY

Officers Hinds and Miller were working land patrol around the South Skyway Rest Area. While on patrol, they noticed the occupants of a fishing vessel and PWC working together to spear fish around the base of the pier. While watching them, they noticed one of the men spear an undersized snook and hand it to the men in the vessel. The officers followed the vessel undetected back to the boat ramp they launched from and performed a fisheries inspection. After the inspection was complete, they found the men to be in possession of undersized sheepshead, mangrove snapper, and the snook they saw the man spear which was hidden in the bilge of the vessel. The man that speared the snook was cited for several criminal violations that will require him to appear in court. The other fishermen were given several infractions for licensing and dive flag violations.

#### PASCO COUNTY



Officer Balfour was on land patrol in the Richloam WMA, when he checked a group of hunters that harvested a hen turkey. During the inspection, Officer Balfour determined the turkey was harvested by an illegal method. Officer Balfour seized the turkey and hunting equipment as evidence, and issued the subject a citation for the violation.

## PINELLAS COUNTY

While conducting resource inspections at the North Skyway Fishing Pier, Officer Caldwell found an individual to be in possession of seven spotted seatrout. After measuring the seatrout, it was discovered they were all under the legal-size limit of 15-inches. The individual was cited for possession of undersized spotted seatrout and issued a warning for possession of over the bag limit of seatrout which is four per person.

While on patrol at a local boat ramp, Officer Pettifer observed a commercial fishing vessel dock at the ramp. He approached the vessel and initiated a resource inspection. The fisherman stated he had a five-gallon bucket of stone crab claws. An inspection of the claws revealed 54 of them were under the legal-size limit of 2  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches. When asked what measuring device the individual used to measure the claws, he stated he did not have one onboard his vessel. The individual was cited for possession of undersized stone crab claws.

Officer Caldwell coordinated a marine sanitation device inspection detail to ensure anchored liveaboard vessels near the Dunedin area were properly disposing of their waste. Southwest Special Operations Group members were used for extra manpower alongside field officers. During the detail, 16 vessels were inspected, and three violations regarding improper working marine sanitation devices were cited.

## RESCUES

### PASCO COUNTY

Multiple officers assisted the Pasco County Sheriff's Office and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) with a single aircraft crash. The crash occurred in the New Port Richey area approximately a quarter of a mile offshore. The single aircraft occupant did not survive the crash. The investigation continues and will be completed by the NTSB.

## **SOUTH REGION A**

### COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

### BROWARD COUNTY

Officers Matthews, Moore, Albert and two duty officers manned the booth at the Fort Lauderdale Boat Show. They handed out brochures and answered questions from the public. An estimated 1,000 people visited the booth during the five-day event.

## PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Albert, two duty officers and office staff attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Veterans Family Fishing Classic at the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse. Regional Director Reinert and members from our fisheries section were also in attendance. Fifty-eight veterans and their families participated in the event. Everyone had an enjoyable experience.

## **SOUTH REGION B**

### CASES

#### COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Plussa was on overnight water patrol near Naples and Marco Island when he conducted a vessel stop for navigation lights and rules violations. An inspection revealed the subject was in possession of an undersized snook. Officer Plussa also noticed multiple safety equipment violations. The operator was issued citations accordingly.

#### MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

On Saturday, November 4, 2017, an officer observed two subjects that appeared to be fishing. However, something didn't seem right and upon contacting them, it was suspected they were trapping migratory birds. The officer requested permission to search their vehicle. A bird holding cage typically used to keep the bait birds was discovered. Upon further investigation, a total of three bird traps were located. It was determined they were deployed in the area. A total of 2 indigo buntings, 1 blue grosbeak and 1 gray cat bird were located inside of the traps. The subjects were cited accordingly.

While on water patrol near Government cut, an officer conducted a marine fisheries inspection on a vessel. The subjects had been fishing in the area for several hours. Upon inspection, the officer identified several undersized mutton snapper. The captain of the vessel claimed responsibility for the undersized fish and was cited accordingly.

Two officers were on nighttime water patrol near Haulover Inlet when they observed a vessel that appeared to have been returning from a fishing trip. The officers conducted a vessel stop and once a fisheries inspection was completed, one subject was found to be in possession of undersized mutton snappers and yellowtail. That subject was issued appropriate citations.

## MONROE COUNTY

Officers Powell and Mobley were called to assist Investigator Williams with a DUI matter at Bahia State Park in the middle keys. Upon arrival, Investigator Williams informed officers that he smelled a strong odor of cannabis coming from the vehicle. The officers separated the defendant from the vehicle and performed a search of the vehicle, as well as conducted field sobriety tasks on the driver. Officers found more than 300 miscellaneous pills that were incorrectly packaged and three cannabis cigarettes hidden in the vehicle. While searching, officers also uncovered a loaded firearm in the console of the vehicle. The defendant was arrested and booked into the county jail with four felonies and three misdemeanors.

## DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

### COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Plussa, Yurewitch and Curbelo conducted focused speed enforcement of the night time panther zone on US-41 in Big Cypress National Preserve. Collectively, the officers stopped more than 25 drivers exceeding the 45-mile an hour night speed limit, with more than five violators driving between 70 and 84-miles per hour. Drivers were cited accordingly.

Officer Plussa conducted targeted enforcement for navigation light violations in Naples Bay. He stopped numerous vessels during the week-long detail, identifying many delinquencies of night time visual distress signals and functioning navigation lights. Officer Plussa issued numerous citations and warnings and provided education to violators, explaining the USCG navigation requirements.

## MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

### COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Plussa responded to multiple calls involving black bears in homeowner's garages, porches and driveways. At each encounter, he educated the property owners of common bear attractants and actions they can take to prevent bears being drawn to their property, reminding homeowners to "stash that trash, scare that bear." In some instances, Officer Plussa had to utilize hazing techniques to encourage the bear to relocate.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

### COLLIER COUNTY

The Naples Zoo held their annual Panther Fest on November 4, 2017. Lieutenant Bulger, as well as a panther and bear biologist, joined staff from National Park Service

Conservancy of Southwest Florida and other local organizations to educate zoo guests about local wildlife.

## MONROE COUNTY

Officers Dube and Steinmetz traveled to the city of Weston in Broward County as members of the Honor Guard Team. Officers joined other Honor Guard members from around the state to present colors at the National Accreditation Conference at a local resort. There were several committee members that approached the Honor Guard members afterwards and thanked them for their service. They also expressed how impressed they were with the team.