

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Division of Law Enforcement Weekly Report



Patrol, Protect, Preserve

April 26, 2019 through May 2, 2019

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.

NORTHWEST REGION

CASES

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Officers Hughes, McLeod, and Swindell were targeting illegal night harvest of oysters from the Apalachicola Bay. They located a truck with an empty trailer at the Old Ferry Dock Boat Ramp. From a concealed location, they waited for the boat to return. After waiting for a couple of hours, they heard a boat approaching. They stopped the vessel and found the operator in possession of freshly caught oysters. The subject admitted to actively harvesting oysters in a closed area that night. The subject was cited, and the oysters seized.

JEFFERSON COUNTY

While on patrol on the Wacissa River, Officer Mims stopped a vessel occupied by two individuals who were actively fishing. Officer Mims discovered seven black bass, two of which showed signs of being gilled. There was a gig on the boat with wet aquatic vegetation on it. The passenger was cited for possession of over the bag limit of black bass. The owner of the vessel was cited for possession of freshwater gamefish together with any device prohibited to taking game fish.

LEON COUNTY

Officer Johnson checked the catch of two individuals while conducting a fisheries inspection at the Highway 90 boat ramp on the Ochlockonee River. After showing

Officer Johnson a few fish from their live wells, they said that they did not have any more fish. Further inspection revealed additional fish in the dark water of the live well. Officer Johnson discovered a total of 13 black bass, over the legal limit of five fish each. Both subjects were issued citations for possession of over the limit of black bass, and the fish were seized as evidence.

FEDERAL WATERS

While aboard the offshore patrol vessel "Intrepid," Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Boyd and Travis boarded a commercial longline vessel approximately 65 miles south of Carrabelle. During the resource inspection, they located unattached shark fins and cut up amberjack, shark, and other reef fish. The officers also found a significant amount of reef fish being used for bait and that the vessel exceeded the 750 "rigged for fishing" hook count allowed in the restricted area. The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

While aboard the offshore patrol vessel "Guardian," Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Boyd and Nelson boarded a recreational vessel approximately 13 miles south of Franklin County in federal waters. During the approach, one of the occupants was opening a compartment and leaning over the side of the vessel. The officers saw four red snapper floating in the water next to the vessel and the occupants admitted to throwing the fish overboard when they saw the law enforcement vessel approaching. Appropriate actions were taken for the violations of failure to allow inspection and possession of red snapper during federal closure.

While aboard the offshore patrol vessel "Intrepid," Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Boyd and J. Hughes boarded multiple recreational vessels in federal waters south of Franklin County. During one stop 24 miles offshore, officers located multiple gag grouper during federal closure. During another stop 12 miles offshore, officers located multiple red snapper hidden in a soft cooler bag. Appropriate action was taken for the violations.

While aboard the offshore patrol vessel "Guardian," Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Boyd and B. Hughes boarded a commercial bandit rig vessel approximately 62 miles southeast of Carrabelle. During the stop, officers located cut up red snapper. The officers addressed the violation of failure to land red snapper in whole condition.

While aboard the offshore patrol vessel "Intrepid," Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Boyd and J. Hughes boarded a commercial bandit rig vessel approximately 50 miles south of Franklin County. During the stop, officers located cut up amberjack and the crew stated that they were using it for bait. The officers addressed the violation of failure to land amberjack in whole condition.

While aboard the offshore patrol vessel "Guardian," Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Boyd, Travis and J. Hughes boarded a commercial bandit rig vessel approximately 80 miles south of Carrabelle. During the approach, the vessel made evasive maneuvers and the officers located several undersized lane snapper that showed signs of being on

the deck of the boat for an extended period. During the inspection, officers located undersized lane snapper, undersized red grouper, red snapper and amberjack not in whole condition, and reef fish being used as bait. The officers addressed the violations with the appropriate action.

While aboard the offshore patrol vessel "Guardian," Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Boyd, Travis and J. Hughes boarded a commercial bandit rig vessel inside the Middle Grounds Marine Protected Area. During the stop, the occupants threw cut up pieces of red snapper overboard. The officers addressed the violations of failure to allow inspection and failure to land red snapper in whole condition. The vessel also was missing some of the required turtle mitigation gear. Appropriate action was taken for the violations.

While aboard the offshore patrol vessel "Intrepid," Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Boyd and J. Hughes boarded a commercial bandit rig vessel that earlier in the week was found in possession of undersized lane snapper, undersized red grouper, cut up amberjack and red grouper and reef fish being used for bait. During this stop approximately 80 miles offshore, the vessel was found in possession of undersized red grouper and cut up red grouper with multiple fillets laying on the bait table. The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

While aboard the offshore patrol vessel "Vigilance," Officers P. Rockwell and Matechik boarded a vessel approximately 15 miles southwest of Destin. Upon approach, the officers saw an individual rush to a cooler in the bow of the boat, quickly measure a fish (undersized gray triggerfish), and throw it overboard on the opposite side of the fishing vessel. During their inspection, the officers found additional undersized gray triggerfish. The individual who admitted to throwing the undersized gray triggerfish overboard claimed the additional undersized fish that were located onboard. The appropriate actions were taken for the violations.

While aboard the offshore patrol vessel "Vigilance," Officers P. Rockwell and Matechik boarded a vessel approximately 25 miles southwest of Destin. During the inspection, the officers found the occupants in possession of several undersized gag grouper. The gag grouper season was currently closed. The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

While aboard the offshore patrol vessel "Vigilance," Officers P. Rockwell, Land and Matechik boarded a vessel approximately 17 miles southwest of Destin. During the inspection, they found the subjects in possession of over the bag limit and undersized greater amberjack. The season is currently closed for greater amberjack. The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

LEVY COUNTY

Officer Bell received an anonymous phone call about a deer being loaded onto a log truck. With assistance from Officer Johnston and Dixie County Officers Sheffield and Wiggins, they discovered that the truck driver had hit an alligator. The driver admitted to loading the alligator on his truck and dumping it in a different location in the woods for his wife to pick up. The wife came to Levy County and transported the alligator to Dixie County. The alligator carcass and meat were located, seized and brought back to Levy County. Appropriate charges are being filed with the state attorney's office.

Officer Bell was on water patrol north of Cedar Key when he spotted a commercial oyster vessel in an area closed to shellfish harvesting. Officer Bell conducted a vessel stop and found the operator to be in possession of five baskets of un-culled and un-tagged oysters. Officer Bell issued the operator with a notice to appear for the violation.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Officer McDonald was on water patrol on the Santa Fe River when he saw a man fishing at the 129 bridge. Officer McDonald conducted a fishing license inspection and found that the subject did not possess a valid freshwater fishing license but was also fishing on suspended privileges for failure to pay child support. A check revealed that there was a warrant for the subject in Columbia County. The subject was taken into custody for the warrant and was cited for fishing on suspended privileges.

CLAY COUNTY

Lieutenant Haney saw a vehicle passing dangerously in a no passing zone. He initiated a traffic stop and the driver refused to provide his license or registration. The driver acknowledged the traffic violation but stated that FWC officers did not have authority to enforce traffic violations. The driver called 911 and was instructed by Clay County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) to comply with Lieutenant Haney's request. The driver continued to refuse, was ordered out of the vehicle, and taken into custody. He was booked into jail for resisting arrest and was found to be out on bond for felony drug offenses. His bond was revoked, and he remains in custody.

While on water patrol in Black Creek, Officer Heath and Lieutenant Haney saw an individual operating a homemade vessel. The officers conducted a stop for a boating safety inspection. Numerous violations were found, and the officers saw signs of impairment. After conducting a BUI investigation, the subject was found to be impaired and was arrested.

DUVAL COUNTY

Lieutenant Bevan, Investigator Izsak and RPS Officer Shearer participated in the Early Grouper detail at the Mayport Inlet. Overnight, they witnessed a commercial

snapper/grouper boat approaching the dock at the seafood house. An inspection revealed that the vessel contained large quantities of snapper species. The officers decided to wait until the morning to conduct an offload inspection. The OPV crew arrived to offer relief and conduct the offload. The inspection revealed that the vessel was over the trip limit of vermillion snapper. The vessel also contained grouper which was closed season at the time of the catch. NOAA federal citations were issued to the captain of the vessel for the violations.

Investigator Holleman conducted an inspection at a local cold storage facility and discovered a shipment that appeared to have a significant amount of illegal lobsters. He constructively seized the product and returned with a team of officers for further inspection. Fourteen FWC officers (Investigators Holleman, Norton, James, McMillan, Butler, Sharp, Lieutenants Bevan and Farmer, Officers Quarterman, Larson, Sweat, Fowler and Fanelli) and one NOAA agent, inspected 1,720 lbs. of spiny lobsters. The team seized 225 lbs. of illegal spiny lobsters. More than 25 % of the female lobsters were either egg bearing or had snipped pleopods to disguise the females as male lobsters. In addition, the company exporting the lobsters failed to declare the lobsters as part of their Closed Season Inventory. Charges are pending.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

ORANGE COUNTY

Officer Mendelson responded to a call about an individual that harvested a non-bearded hen Osceola Turkey inside a local wildlife management area. Photographs were provided of the alleged illegal turkey and it was recorded as weighing 9.2 pounds with no beard. Officer Mendelson investigated and interviewed several individuals regarding the illegal harvest. The individual who harvested the non-bearded hen turkey was identified and the charge is being directly filed with the Orange County State Attorney's Office.

BREVARD COUNTY

While on late night patrol, Lieutenant Lightsey saw two known violators returning from fishing along a shoreline. The officer approached and conducted a resource inspection. The men were found to be in possession of two undersized sheepshead and one mangrove snapper caught by illegal method (cast net). One of the men had a felony warrant from another county and refused to be placed under arrest. The man fled on foot but after a short pursuit was apprehended and placed under arrest. The man was booked into the Brevard County Jail on the following charges: out of county warrant, resisting arrest without violence, possession of undersized sheepshead and a warning for illegal method of take for mangrove snapper.

PUTNAM COUNTY

Officer Cheshire was on patrol in Crescent City when he saw a boat returning to the ramp from fishing. A fisheries inspection found that the licensed subject onboard was in possession of two black bass over 16 inches in length. There were six other black bass released from the livewell prior to the inspection. The subject was issued a mail in fine for possession of more than one black bass over 16 inches and a warning for possession of more than five black bass.

Officers Chriest and Bernard were flagged down about a female subject that was being battered by a male subject on Highway 19 in front of the Frontier Dance Hall. They responded to the area and upon arrival the male had the female on the ground and was choking her. He took flight upon seeing the units arriving and was pursued on foot by Officer Bernard. Officer Chriest stayed with the female for medical treatment. Officer Bernard lost the male subject in the thick woods and a Putnam County Sheriff's Office K9 arrived on scene in attempt to follow the track with negative results. The male subject was arrested by the Putnam County Sheriff's Office the following day after he was found hiding in the attic of a nearby residence.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

LAKE COUNTY

Lieutenant Chase, Pilot Lieutenants Dougan and Jarrett, Officers Morrow and Weber and Reserve Officer Baugh participated in the Welcome to the Woods event at Seminole State Forest. The event promoted conservation, hunting, fishing, boating safety, prescribed burns and responsible captive wildlife practices. There were over 150 participants who were split-up into groups to provide an individual experience.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Officer Rorer saw a group of people fishing on a CSX railroad bridge in Ruskin. While approaching the individuals to inform them that they were not allowed to fish on the tracks, Officer Rorer noticed several black drum laying on the bridge. Upon inspection, all seven of the black drum were found to be undersized. One individual took ownership of the catch and was cited accordingly for the over the bag limit and undersized black drum.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Winton, Officer Hazelwood and Lieutenant Spoede were on offshore vessel patrol when they conducted a vessel stop on a commercial shrimping boat. During a commercial fisheries inspection, it was determined that one of the vessel's occupants was in possession of spiny lobster, which are currently out of season. The subject was issued a notice to appear for the violation.

MANATEE COUNTY

Officer Gonzales and Officer Dalton were on water patrol near Long Boat Pass. They stopped and performed a boating safety inspection on a vessel transiting the area. During the inspection, the two officers saw that the operator of the vessel was showing signs of being under the influence of either alcohol or drugs. The officers performed sobriety tasks on the operator to determine his level of impairment and when they concluded the tests, the operator was arrested for boating under the influence of alcohol. He was taken to the Manatee County Jail and will have to appear in court for his violation.

Officer Klobuchar, Officer Davidson and Officer Dalton were on water patrol near Long Boat Pass. They stopped and performed a boating safety inspection on a vessel transiting the area. During the inspection, the officers saw that the operator of the vessel was showing signs of being under the influence of either alcohol or drugs. The officers performed sobriety tasks on the operator to determine his level of impairment and when they concluded the tests, the operator was arrested for boating under the influence of alcohol. He was taken to the Manatee County Jail and will have to appear in court for his violation.

PASCO COUNTY

Officer Specialist Pulaski and Officer Rothchild were on water patrol in the Gulf Harbors area when they saw an operator on a personal watercraft violate the idle speed zone. Additionally, they saw the operator attempt to hide a green can on the port-side of the watercraft. Upon contact with the operator, OS Pulaski noticed indicators of impairment and administered Seated Field Sobriety Tasks. The subject performed poorly on the tasks and was arrested. The individual was given an opportunity to provide a breath sample. He refused and was charged accordingly.

Officer Rothchild and Officer Specialist Pulaski were on water patrol near the Anclote Boat Ramp. They saw a vessel violate the idle speed zone. They stopped the vessel to perform a boating safety inspection. Officer Rothchild noticed indicators of impairment from the vessel operator. Officer Rothchild requested the individual submit to Seated Field Sobriety Tasks, to which he agreed. The operator performed poorly on the tasks. Officer Rothchild arrested the subject for boating under the influence. The operator refused to provide a sample of his breath and he was charged accordingly.

PINELLAS COUNTY

Officer Specialist Bibeau saw an individual actively fishing from the shoreline of a local lake and contacted the individual to conduct a fisheries inspection. The individual was in possession of three black bass. The bass were measured and all three were over sixteen inches. Officer Specialist Bibeau wrote the individual a misdemeanor citation for possession of more than one black bass over sixteen inches.

Officer Specialist Bibeau saw a person fishing from underneath a bridge and contacted the subject to conduct a fisheries inspection. The subject was in possession of a redfish. Officer Specialist Bibeau wrote the individual a misdemeanor citation for violation of the executive order pertaining to the closure of redfish.

Officer Caldwell saw a subject return to his vehicle carrying a white styrofoam cooler with a towel draped over the top and place it in a vehicle. Officer Caldwell contacted the subject to perform a resource inspection. The inspection revealed three undersized snook inside of the cooler. The subject was cited for the violation and issued a notice to appear for Pinellas County court.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

In response to several complaints from nearby residents, Officers Armstrong, Hart, Tarr and Lieutenant L. McDonald conducted a detail in the Miramar Mitigation Area. The detail spanned two nights and resulted in 1 arrest for DUI, a criminal citation for leaving a campfire while the fire was still burning and 22 infraction citations for ATV violations including operating on a public roadway at night.

Officer Fuller was on land patrol when he saw 2 subjects fishing from the seawall at Sullivan Park in Deerfield Beach. Officer Fuller conducted a marine fisheries inspection and neither of the subjects were able to produce a shoreline saltwater fishing license. Officer Fuller obtained both subject's information to check for a fishing license. A check through dispatch determined that one of the subjects had an active warrant. Officer Fuller approached the subject that had a warrant and asked him to stand up. The subject became actively resistant, pulling/backing away from Officer Fuller and started to run. Officer Fuller was able to successfully taser the subject and take him into custody. The subject was booked into jail with the active warrant and a charge for resisting arrest without violence.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Major Rondeau and Major Escanio were patrolling Lake Boca during Boca Bash and stopped an operator of a personal watercraft (PWC) for improper size lettering of registration numbers. While speaking with the operator they suspected his physical

faculties may be impaired due to consumption of alcohol while operating the vessel. Officer Boyd initiated standardized field sobriety tasks (SFST's) on the operator and confirmed that he could not perform the tasks properly. Officer Boyd arrested the operator and charged him with boating under the influence (BUI). The operator also received citations for refusing to submit to a breath alcohol test, improper size lettering of vessel registration and failing to possess a copy of the registration for the vessel.

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol in West Palm Beach when a vehicle nearly rear-ended the marked vehicle, then ran another car off the roadway. The officer initiated a traffic stop to address the violations. Upon contacting the driver, who did not have a valid driver's license, numerous signs of impairment were detected. The officer requested the driver to complete field sobriety tasks, and he complied. Officer Brodbeck had to end the tasks due to the risk of the driver injuring himself and placed him under arrest for DUI. The driver was transported to the Palm Beach County Jail.

Officer Norbrothen was on water patrol during the Boca Bash event in Boca Raton. The officer saw a vessel displaying registration numbers in violation of the proper spacing required between the characters. The officer conducted a vessel stop and a boating safety inspection on the vessel. During the inspection, the officer saw several indicators of impairment from the operator. The operator participated in a series of seated standardized field sobriety tasks on the officer's vessel. The officer's investigation yielded probable cause to place the operator under arrest for BUI. The operator provided a sample of his breath to determine its alcohol content which measured .194, or almost 2.5 times the legal limit.

Officer Hudson was traveling to a boating accident with no injuries when he saw a vehicle driving erratically on I-95. Officer Hudson initiated a stop on the vehicle and the vehicle crashed into the guard rail when it pulled off the road. The operator showed multiple signs of impairment, had multiple empty Bud light cans around him, and a 7-year-old in the back seat who was not wearing a seat belt. The operator attempted field sobriety tasks and was placed under arrest. The operator provided a breath sample of .232g/210 and .240g/210 at the jail. The operator was booked into the Palm Beach County Jail under the following charges: driving under the influence with a person under 18, culpable negligence of a minor, reckless driving and no driver's license. The operator also received a ticket for child under 18 not in a seat belt, open container, and a warning for failure to maintain lane.

Officer Hudson was conducting fisheries inspections at Hobe Sound Beach when he saw an undersized mangrove snapper inside of a plastic bag beside a subject. The subject stated that he did not catch the mangrove snapper but that he was just going to use it as bait. Officer Hudson conducted a resource inspection on the same subject at the same location in January and found him to be in possession of multiple undersized mangrove snapper. That time, he was given a warning and an FWC fish regulation book. This time, Office Hudson issued the subject a notice to appear (citation) for undersized mangrove snapper and a warning for an expired saltwater shoreline fishing license.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Officer Despian and Officer Seiler were on water patrol near Sandspur Island. They stopped a vessel displaying numerous rods and reels heading south bound. After inspecting the catch, the officers discovered numerous bags of fillets without the skin attached, bags of conch, under-size yellow tail snapper, queen conch shells, and spiny lobster tails on board. The subjects were cited for no skin attached on fillets, under-size yellow tail snapper, possession of queen conch, possession of queen conch shell with hole larger than 1/16 inches, possession of wrung spiny lobster tails, possession of under-size spiny lobster tails and possession of out of season spiny lobster.

Officer Despian was on land-based water patrol when he saw a vehicle that was stopped in the right lane displaying the flashing hazard lights with the front passenger door wide open but no occupant inside. As he conducted the vehicle stop, the driver was walking back from a wooded area. He was carrying two out of six wooden traps back to the vehicle. Upon requesting to inspect his catch, the subject opened one of the hatches and inside was a blue land crab. There was another blue land crab inside his vehicle that he had caught with the other traps. He was cited for harvesting blue land crab with gear other than by hands or a dip net.

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Jacobs was on patrol near Jewfish Creek and saw an out of season snook in the bed of a parked pickup truck. After checking the area for the owner of the vehicle, Officer Jacobs monitored the area for approximately two hours before two individuals arrived by boat. Officer Jacobs spoke with the individuals and confirmed that the vehicle belonged to the operator of the vessel. The vessel operator admitted he caught the snook while fishing for bait and threw the snook into the bed of his truck before going fishing on the boat. The subject was charged accordingly.

COLLIER COUNTY

Lieutenant Shea and crew of the OPV CT Randall conducted a three-day patrol from Marco Island to the Dry Tortugas and Key West. The patrol covered multiple fisheries in the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and sensitive marine habitats, including the North and South Tortugas Ecological Reserves. The patrol covered over 390 nautical miles inspecting shrimping vessels, commercial fishing vessels, and recreational fishing vessels. While conducting an inspection of a fishing vessel in the South Atlantic fishery, Officers Wagner, Rubenstein and Piekenbrock found the vessel to be in violation of the shallow water grouper closure. During the inspection, the vessel operator told the

officers he had one barracuda on board the vessel. However, red and black grouper were also found. The vessel was over the bag limit, and two of the red grouper were undersized. The violations were documented, and citations issued.

While patrolling the northwest corner of the North Tortugas Ecological Reserve, Officer Rubenstein saw a vessel on the CT Randall's RADAR. The officers intercepted the vessel and conducted a fisheries inspection. Officers Rubenstein and Wagner approached the vessel and saw the vessel actively fishing with trolling gear in the water. The boarding team found the vessel to be over the commercial bag limit of great barracuda. The vessel was allowed a total of four great barracuda. During the inspection 86 barracuda were located, 82 over the commercial bag limit. All violations onboard were documented, and state and federal citations were issued.

Officers Polly and Reams were on land patrol Big Cypress when they saw three subjects fishing in a rock pit. The officers approached the subjects to perform a license and resource inspection. The subjects were found to be over the bag limit of peacock bass which is 1 per person per day, and none of the subjects were in possession of a valid freshwater fishing license. All three subjects were cited accordingly.

Officer Parker and Investigator Taboas were on land patrol when they noticed a bird trap hanging on a fence. Upon inspection the officers found that the home owner had 4 painted buntings. Buntings are protected under the migratory bird treaty. The birds were recovered, and the homeowner was cited accordingly.

Officers Reams and Yurewitch assisted Officer Parker with a migratory bird treaty violation. While in the area the officers saw an adjacent property with a bird cage in plain view. The officers saw multiple parakeets and one unidentifiable bird from the distance. The tenant allowed the officers to inspect the bird cage. Upon inspection the officers confirmed the small unidentifiable bird was a juvenile indigo bunting. Buntings are protected under the migratory bird treaty act. The tenant stated the birds belonged to the property owner. The officers met with the homeowner who was cited accordingly for the violation.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Kleis and Thurkettle participated in an outreach event at Naples High School. The officers spoke to over 90 students in the JROTC classes. The officers spoke about the requirements to become an FWC Officer, as well as the everyday duties of an FWC Officer. The officers answered multiple questions from the students and faculty.

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Mobley and Investigator Hein conducted outreach at Coral Shores High School in the Upper Keys. Officers spoke to 5 different classes, 4 of which were the college preparedness class where they discussed the importance of education and the many options of higher education. Officers also discussed career opportunities and benefits of working with FWC including the tuition waiver program. At the conclusion, they had a hands-on display with ball pythons and American alligators for the students.