

# **Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission**

## **Division of Law Enforcement Weekly Report**



*Patrol, Protect, Preserve*

**May 10, 2019 through May 23, 2019**

*This report represents some events the FWC handled over the past two weeks; however, it does not include all actions taken by the Division of Law Enforcement.*

### **NORTHWEST REGION**

#### **CASES**

##### **BAY COUNTY**

Officers Hellett and Gore and Lieutenant J. Allen worked a night detail at St. Andrews State Park. Lieutenant Allen saw a vehicle pull up to the entrance gate. The passenger got out of the vehicle and pushed up the gate arm, allowing the vehicle to pull through. The officers stopped the vehicle and consent was given to search the vehicle. Methamphetamine and drug paraphernalia were found in the vehicle. The operator was arrested and taken to the Bay County Jail on the drug and paraphernalia charges. The operator was also cited for driving with a suspended license. Both the driver and passenger were issued citations for evasion of state park fees.

##### **FRANKLIN COUNTY**

Officers Swindell and Pestka conducted resource inspections on the Eastpoint Fishing Pier. They encountered two subjects fishing who had more than 30 saltwater catfish on the pier next to them. The subjects were leaving the fish on the pier to die. One subject was cited for failure to return a marine organism to the water.

Officers Swindell and Pestka patrolled the Lanark Reef Critical Wildlife Area (CWA). They saw a vessel anchored within the boundary and three people walking on the CWA. They spoke to the subjects who said they saw the posted signs but chose to ignore them. The area is designated as closed to public due to the nesting shorebirds. The captain of the vessel was cited for accessing an area closed to the public.

Officer Kossey saw a subject fishing from a closed city dock. Officer Kossey conducted a resource inspection and found the subject in possession of undersized and over the bag limit of redfish. The subject was cited, and the fish seized as evidence.

## GULF COUNTY

Officer Gerber stopped a vessel occupied by two individuals on the Apalachicola River. During his inspection, he found them to be in possession of several flathead catfish. The individuals said they had caught the fish on limb hooks. Officer Gerber noticed one of the individuals attempting to hide a shocking device with his feet. Both individuals admitted to shocking catfish with the device and using a gig to retrieve the fish. Both subjects were cited for the use and possession of a device capable of producing an electrical current enough to stun or shock freshwater fish.

Officer McMillion and Lieutenant Guy conducted a resource inspection on a commercial fishing vessel at the Port St. Joe City Ramp. During the inspection, two spotted seatrout were located under a bag of ice in a separate cooler. The captain received a citation for commercial harvest of undersized spotted seatrout, harvest of seatrout during the closed season and possession of illegal gear for harvesting.

## JEFFERSON COUNTY

While patrolling the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) portion of the Aucilla Wildlife Management Area, Officer Wilcox encountered two individuals consuming alcohol which is prohibited by SRWMD rules. During the stop, dispatch told Officer Wilcox that one of the individuals had an active warrant out of Taylor County. Both individuals were given warnings for possession of alcohol on SRWMD lands, and the subject with the outstanding warrant was arrested and booked into the Jefferson County Jail.

## WAKULLA COUNTY

Officer Specialist Raker and Officer Nelson were patrolling Oyster Bay when they saw two subjects fishing. They conducted a resource inspection and found the subjects in possession of an undersized red drum. They also located cannabis during their investigation. The subjects were cited for possession of undersized red drum and possession of less than 20 grams of cannabis.

Officer Morales was patrolling in the Apalachee Bay south of St. Marks when he conducted a resource inspection on a vessel. The subjects were found to be in possession of undersized flounder that they were using as bait. The subjects were cited for not landing flounder in whole condition and possession of undersized flounder.

Officer Specialist Raker was dispatched to an Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Landing Notification in Wakulla County. Upon arrival, he was unable to locate the vessel for the

dockside inspection. He continued to investigate with the assistance of Officer B. Hughes. Several hours later when the vessel docked, they conducted a boating safety and resource inspection. The subject was cited for failure to land within notification allotment.

## **COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION**

### **LEON COUNTY**

As part of FWC's "Adopt-a-School" program, Lieutenant Wass de Czege spent a morning reading to four different groups of 1st and 2nd graders at Fort Braden School. He read them "The Lorax" and brought an alligator for the kids to see. After interacting with the elementary school children, Lieutenant Wass de Czege gave a short presentation on conservation law enforcement to a 6th grade science class.

### **SANTA ROSA COUNTY**

Officers Land and Lewis displayed an FWC patrol vessel at Shoreline Park in Gulf Breeze and spoke to approximately 150 Gulf Breeze Middle School students. The officers educated students about boating safety, fish and wildlife regulations, and the role of an FWC officer in protecting Florida's natural resources.

## **NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

### **CASES**

#### **CITRUS COUNTY**

Officer Reid was conducting manatee zone enforcement on the Homosassa River and saw a vessel operating on full plane in a manatee slow speed zone in front of Riverhaven Marina. The operator was also operating at night without navigation lights. Officer Reid initiated a vessel stop and detected signs that the operator may be impaired. Officer Reid initiated a boating under the influence (BUI) investigation and Officer Creel arrived to assist. After conducting standardized field sobriety tasks, the operator was placed under arrest for BUI. The operator was booked into the Citrus County Jail and was issued several uniform boating citations for moving and safety violations.

Officer Creel was dispatched to a complaint in Homosassa regarding an individual allegedly stuffing logs and yard debris into the entrances of multiple gopher tortoise burrows. Officer Creel arrived on scene, confirmed the information and started an investigation. He was able to identify a subject who had an active warrant out of Pinellas County for failure to appear. Officer Creel arrested the subject, read the Miranda warning and proceeded to question him about the gopher tortoise complaint. Citrus

County Sheriff's Office transported the suspect to the Citrus County Jail on the warrant and Officer Creel will direct file charges for harassment/destruction of gopher tortoise burrows.

Lieutenant Griffis received an information only complaint from Seagrass Resort in Homosassa regarding an individual being refused alcoholic beverages. A description of the individual and his vessel were provided. Lieutenant Griffis and Officer Peterson proceeded to Riverhaven Marina in Homosassa and saw a commercial tow vessel towing a vessel matching the description of the earlier complaint. The occupant in the towed vessel exited and began stumbling through the parking lot, exhibiting signs of impairment. The vessel occupant entered a vehicle with a boat trailer attached and began driving toward the boat ramp. Lieutenant Griffis conducted a traffic stop and contacted the driver. Officer Peterson began a DUI investigation. Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks were conducted, and enough clues produced to indicate impairment. The driver was placed under arrest by Officer Peterson and booked into the Citrus County Jail for DUI with breath samples of .274 and .267.

#### GILCHRIST COUNTY

Officers McDonald and Cline were on water patrol on the Santa Fe River when they encountered a subject dressed in camouflage actively hunting on Fort White Environmental Wildlife Management Area. The man had used his gheenoe to access the property from the river. After contacting the subject, the officers saw that he was in possession of a .22 caliber rifle and 3 plastic bags of cracked corn. The man claimed to be rabbit hunting but also said he puts corn out to attract turkeys. The subject took the officers to a spot that he had previously baited. The subject was cited for hunting during closed season and for placing bait in a WMA.

#### ALACHUA COUNTY

Lieutenant Farmer and Investigator Bing assisted the Alachua County Sheriff's Office with the apprehension of two subjects wanted for burglarizing park patrons' vehicles at the Payne's Prairie State Park's La Chua Trail. After learning of the burglaries, Investigators from FWC monitored areas where the violations were occurring. Investigators were able to identify the suspects breaking into more vehicles. Two subjects were arrested and taken to the Alachua County Detention Center for processing by sheriff's detectives.

Officers Drew and Troiano worked the annual Goethe State Forest Hog Hunt. Officer Drew saw two trucks with dog boxes on the side of CR 326 and Wolf Arbor Road. Two subjects were outside with hand held GPS tracking devices. Both subjects had proper licensing for the hunt but had no luck catching hogs. Officer Drew smelled the odor of cannabis emitting from a subject's truck and a mason jar with marijuana shake was produced by the subject. A probable cause search of the truck revealed 239 grams of cannabis in several mason jars and a large vacuum sealed bag, 32 flavored THC oil cartridges used for vaporizer pens, a vacuum sealer, a digital scale, multiple empty

bags with different names of cannabis, weights and prices for the cannabis listed on the bags and \$355 in cash. All items were in a duffel bag in the back seat of the subject's truck. Officer Drew placed the subject under arrest for possession of cannabis over 20 grams, possession of cannabis with the intent to distribute and possession of a controlled substance. Two other subjects were charged for possession of an alcoholic beverage under 21 years of age by Officer Troiano.

Officer Stanley captured three individuals entering Hollingsworth Pits with fishing equipment on a game camera. After a week of investigative work, Officers Stanley and Reith were able to identify all three subjects. Trespass charges are being filed through the State Attorney's Office.

## LEVY COUNTY

Officer Bell was near Eleven Prong in Waccasassa Bay when he conducted a boating safety and resource inspection on a vessel. When asked to show fishing licenses, one of the individuals said that he did not have his wallet. When Officer Bell checked the individual by name and date of birth, it was found that he had an outstanding warrant for his arrest. Upon confirmation of the warrant, the subject was taken into custody, transported to a local boat ramp, turned over to a Levy County Sheriff's Deputy and booked into the Levy County Jail.

Officer Bell was in Waccasassa Bay when he saw a recreational vessel with three people onboard actively fishing. Officer Bell conducted a boating safety and resource inspection and found that one of the subjects was fishing with a revoked license and one did not have a current saltwater license. He explained the rules and regulations to the subjects and cited them accordingly.

While on land patrol, Officer Bell noticed a vehicle travelling at a high rate of speed without tail lights. While conducting a traffic stop on the vehicle, Officer Bell noticed that the driver was showing multiple signs of impairment. Officer Starling responded and performed seated field sobriety tasks on the driver. Based on his observations, Officer Starling placed the driver under arrest for driving under the influence. The driver later provided a breath sample with a BAC of 0.131.

While on patrol near the Suwannee River, Officer Johnston saw a vessel that had just been involved in a boating accident. Officer Johnston noticed that the operator was displaying multiple signs of impairment. After administering seated field sobriety tasks, Officer Johnston placed the operator under arrest for boating under the influence.

Officer Fox conducted water patrol with a U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Shellfish Specialist addressing shellfish violations in Cedar Key. Officer Fox saw a commercial oyster vessel returning to a local boat ramp and identified himself to conduct a commercial fisheries inspection. Officer Fox saw 2 baskets of oysters onboard the vessel and conducted a size tolerance inspection. The captain was in possession of 15% undersized oysters. Officer Fox seized the undersized oysters and

issued the captain a notice to appear for possession of over 5% unattached undersized oysters.

Officer Fox conducted a commercial fisheries inspection on the vessel. A size tolerance inspection of two baskets of oysters onboard revealed the captain was in possession of 14% undersized oysters and the captain failed to relay the oysters to a certified dealer by 11 a.m. as required during the month of May if the oysters are "White Tagged." Officer Fox issued the captain a notice to appear for possession of over 5% unattached undersized oysters and failure to relay oysters to a certified dealer by 11 a.m. during the month of May. Both baskets of oysters were seized and returned to the water alive.

Officer Fox conducted state forest patrol in Goethe State Forest during a bi-annual nighttime wild hog. He heard hunting dogs near his location and saw a subject standing next to a truck using GPS dog tracking equipment. Officer Fox identified himself and spoke with the subject. While speaking with the subject, Officer Fox saw another subject walking back toward the truck with multiple hunting dogs. The subjects were hunting at 8:13 p.m. During the Goethe State Forest nighttime hog hunt, hunting is only allowed 1.5 hours after sunset until 1.5 hours before sunrise. Officer Fox issued both subjects the appropriate citations.

#### SUWANNEE COUNTY

Officer Boone targeted boating under the influence violations at the confluence of the Santa Fe and Suwannee Rivers. While conducting a boating safety check on a vessel, Officer Boone noticed the operator displayed several signs of impairment. Further investigation determined that the operator was boating under the influence. The operator was arrested and transported to the Lafayette County Jail.

#### BAKER COUNTY

Officer Tyler responded to a complaint of a subject cleaning a deer. Upon arrival, Officer Tyler spoke to the subject who said the deer was hit by a vehicle. The subject told Officer Tyler that he finished killing the deer by shooting it with a .22 caliber rifle. An inspection of the deer carcass showed no signs of being injured by a vehicle. A check of the subject revealed he was a convicted felon. While trying to validate the story, Officer Tyler located where the subject shot and killed the deer on the neighboring property. The evidence and firearm were documented and seized for trial. The subject was arrested and booked into the Baker County Jail for possession of firearm by a convicted felon, taking deer out of season and illegal method of taking deer.

#### DUVAL COUNTY

Officers Barry and Lemaster conducted fisheries inspections on the George Crady Fishing Bridge State Park. Officer Barry saw a subject fishing that he issued a notice to appear for an undersized spotted sea trout. Officer Barry conducted a fisheries inspection on the subject and found he never paid the fine and that a warrant was

issued for an FWC Level II violation. The subject also had a warrant issued for driving while license suspended. The subject was arrested in compliance with the warrants and transported to the Duval County Pre-Trial Detention Center.

Officers Haskins and Lemaster were on the St. Johns River near downtown Jacksonville, conducting patrols in a slow speed manatee zone. Two individuals on PWCs left the Jacksonville landing and were on plane in the manatee zone. The officers conducted a vessel stop on the operator of one of the PWCs and smelled a strong odor of alcoholic beverages on his breath. Officer Haskins conducted field sobriety exercises and the subject was determined to be operating a vessel under the influence of alcoholic beverages to the extent that his normal faculties were impaired. Officer Haskins placed the subject under arrest for BUI and transported him by vessel to the Duval County Pre-Trial Detention Center.

Officers Barry and Lemaster were on land-based water patrol at Wayne B. Stevens Boat Ramp and Fishing Creek when they saw a van and trailer with two subjects sitting in the van. They smelled a strong odor of cannabis coming from the interior of the van. A search of the van revealed cannabis, rolling papers and a pipe. Officer Barry issued the driver a notice to appear for possession of cannabis under 20 grams.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

### CITRUS COUNTY

Officer Suttles conducted an outreach at Crystal River Primary School with 120 first grade students. The students have been learning about wildlife native to Florida. Officer Suttles spent some time talking about Florida's native wildlife and the duties of a conservation officer. He brought his patrol vehicle and a patrol airboat to display. He described to the students how the Division uses assigned equipment for conservation law enforcement patrols. The students enjoyed having Officer Suttles at the school for the day.

### HAMILTON COUNTY

Officer Cline attended the Hamilton County Annual Spring Festival for a public outreach event. Officer Cline spoke with approximately 50 community members about topics such as the FWC officer's job responsibilities, boating, fishing and hunting regulations. Officer Cline also displayed a Florida alligator for the families and children.

### ALACHUA COUNTY

Officer Harris worked with local news station WUFT Channel 5 on Tuesday. Officer Harris worked on Santa Fe Lake and talked about boating safety issues for the upcoming holiday weekend. Several vessels were checked during the ride.

Officer Troiano talked about boating safety and an FWC officer's job at Metcalfe Elementary School. Officer Troiano spent several hours interacting with the students throughout the day.

## LEVY COUNTY

Officers Bell and Fox worked with the Chiefland Rotary Club and conducted boating safety inspections at their request prior to their annual fishing tournament in Cedar Key. There were approximately 40 vessels that were checked and registered to fish. The tournament was successful and there were no issues throughout the day.

## NORTHEAST REGION

### CASES

#### BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Delano responded to a gopher tortoise complaint concerning damage to a burrow. Once on scene, Officer Delano identified an active land clearing operation and met with staff on site. Officer Delano conducted several interviews and identified that the property owner intentionally filled the burrow with sand. Officer Delano explained that the gopher tortoise and the burrow are protected. The suspect was cited for willfully damaging a gopher tortoise burrow.

Lieutenant Lightsey was conducting patrols around Christianson's Landing Boat Ramp when he saw a vehicle trailering a vessel out of the water late at night. While talking with the operator, he noticed damage to the trailer and a fence post in the parking lot. The driver displayed signs of impairment and Officer Marroquin arrived on scene to provide back up and conduct a driving under the influence (DUI) investigation. The driver performed poorly during the Standard Field Sobriety Tasks and was placed under arrest for DUI with property damage. The driver later provided a breath sample of .138 g/210L. The operator was cited for operating a motor vehicle with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .08 or higher.

Officer S. Loeffler and Lieutenant Lightsey were on patrol when they received a Wildlife Alert call concerning men taking freshwater gamefish by cast net. The officers arrived at the location and saw one of the men throwing a cast net from a canoe. A resource inspection revealed the men were in possession of numerous black bass and bluegill. Additionally, the man throwing the cast net admitted to having caught the fish and did not possess a valid freshwater fishing license. A citation was issued for illegal method of take for gamefish (cast net) and a warning for no freshwater fishing license.

#### INDIAN RIVER COUNTY



Officer Marroquin was on patrol at Sebastian Inlet State Park when he saw a vehicle fail to stop at a stop sign. A traffic stop was initiated to address the violation. During the stop, the driver showed signs of impairment from an alcoholic beverage. The operator was asked to perform field sobriety tasks and performed poorly. The driver was booked into the Indian River County Jail for driving under the influence and issued the appropriate citations.

## ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officers B. Miller and Graves were on patrol in Guana River State Park when they encountered a subject actively fishing on the intracoastal waterway. The subject was found to be in possession of seven redfish, all of which were undersized. The appropriate citations were issued.

Officer Thomas stopped a vessel returning from offshore trolling. During inspection, she located seven bags of dolphin fillets. The owner admitted to filleting the dolphin to save time. Officer Thomas issued the operator a citation for failure to land dolphin in whole condition.

While patrolling the area of Anastasia State Park, Officer Jones received information from a park ranger that people were illegally harvesting oysters from a restricted area. Officer Jones located the area and watched the subjects from a distance. The area was within the state park boundaries and is conditionally restricted. Officer Jones contacted the subjects, who were in possession of 12 gallons of oysters, several dozen clams and blue crab. The subjects were issued misdemeanor citations for the illegal harvest of oyster and civil infractions for no saltwater license and consumption of alcohol in a state park.

Officer Thomas received information that a large group was harvesting shrimp at Guana Dam during the closure. Shrimp is closed to harvest in inshore and nearshore waters in St. Johns County in April and May. After watching from a distance, she identified four subjects that were cast netting shrimp. Each subject was issued a misdemeanor citation for harvesting shrimp during the closure.

## VOLUSIA COUNTY

Lieutenant Baer was dispatched to a shot fired call in Pierson. Upon arrival he located several Hispanic males under a pole barn. The men denied having any firearms, but one of them produced an air rifle and told Lieutenant Baer he was using it to shoot dove because they were eating the cow's food. One cleaned mourning dove carcass was in a nearby cooler. The man who admitted to killing the dove was cited for violation of the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Officers from Brevard, Lake, and Putnam Counties assisted Volusia County officers with patrolling a gathering on Lake George known as "Mayhem." Mayhem is a large party that occurs at the Juniper Run sandbar every year on the first Saturday in May. During

this year's event officers issued numerous citations for safety equipment and manatee zone violations. Four vessel operators were arrested for boating under the influence. There were no reportable boating accidents or injuries during the event.

Officers Goodreau, Pelzel & Bertolami conducted checks of shrimp fishing in the Oak Hill area. Marine fisheries inspections were conducted and several violations were identified to include utilizing wing nets during a closure, utilizing frame nets in the commercial harvest of live bait shrimp, and commercial fishing with no saltwater products license.

Officers Bellville and North monitored the activities of an individual who lives on a canal off Lake George. It had been reported that he was taking over the bag limit and possession limit of panfish. The subject returned to his dock where the officers conducted a resource inspection. An inspection was also conducted of his residence. The inspection revealed him to be in possession of a large amount of freshly caught panfish still in whole condition. After counting, he was in possession 175 fish over his legal possession limit. A citation was issued for the violation.

Officer Bellville saw a truck enter Tiger Bay State Forest well after sunset. The state forest is day use only and is posted as such at the entrance. Officer Bellville followed the vehicle and saw the driver do a burn-out, causing damage to the forest road. FWC has fielded several recent complaints from the Forest Service about vehicles intentionally causing damage to the roads in the forest. Officer Bellville stopped the truck and detected signs of impairment from the driver. After conducting a driving under the influence (DUI) investigation, Officer Bellville arrested the driver for DUI. He was also cited for entering the state forest after hours and destruction of public lands with a motor vehicle. The driver was booked into the Volusia County Jail where he refused to provide a breath sample.

Officer Pelzel was working in Tomoka State Park when she saw two adult males fishing from a bridge at the Tomoka River. She saw them both catch and release multiple fish, as well as catch and keep one fish, placing it in a cooler. When she approached and requested to check their catch, one man took the fish from the cooler and tossed it into the river. He was issued a criminal notice to appear for interfering with an FWC inspection.

## LAKE COUNTY

Officers Teal and Scrambling were on water patrol around the Dead River on the Harris Chain of Lakes. They stopped a vessel and conducted a boating safety inspection. The officers noticed indicators of the operator being impaired during the boating safety inspection and administered Seated Field Sobriety Tasks. The subject was arrested for boating under the influence and was transported to the Lake County Jail.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

## **VOLUSIA COUNTY**

Lieutenant Baer participated in a panel discussion with ranchers and land owners held at the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agriculture Service office in Deland. He spoke on the legal aspects of feral hog removal on private lands.

## **LAKE COUNTY**

Officer Shaw instructed the FWC Hunter Safety Instructors First Aid class. There were approximately 80 instructors present at the training.

## **BREVARD COUNTY**

Officer Rasey attended the 9th Annual Sea Turtle Festival in downtown Titusville. Numerous questions were fielded regarding sea turtles, boating safety, and FWC officer recruitment. Over 2,000 visitors were in attendance.

Officers Maslo and S. Loeffler attended the WATERFEST event on Merritt Island. This event kicked off the National Safe Boating Week and there were over 300 citizens in attendance. The officers were able to answer many questions and provide education on boating safety leading up to the Memorial Day weekend.

Officers Johnson, Wehner, and Wigley were on water patrol out of Port Canaveral for "The Thunder into Cocoa Beach" power boat races. This event kicked off the 10th year of power boat races in Brevard County and had several hundred vessels in attendance. The officers were able to answer many questions and provide education on boating safety leading up to the race. The officers conducted boating safety and law enforcement patrols during the event to ensure a safety boating experience.

## **SOUTHWEST REGION**

### **CASES**

#### **PASCO COUNTY**

Multiple FWC personnel worked a coordinated boating safety effort with members from Pasco County Sheriff's Office, Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, the United States Coast Guard, New Port Richey Police Department and Port Richey Police Department. Vessel stops were conducted on forty-eight vessels and three operators were arrested for boating under the influence.

During land patrol in the Aripeka area, Officer Rothchild and Lieutenant Parisoe saw a vessel coming down a canal that is frequently fished. The officers watched as the vessel returned to the launch-site and one person was actively fishing. A resource inspection

was conducted, and both subjects were found in possession of red drum during the executive order closure. One vessel was also being used without having the proper registration decals. Several citations and warnings were issued for the violations and the fish were seized as evidence.

Officer Petru and Investigator Williams were on vessel patrol in the Holiday area when they saw individuals engaged in fishing. The officers stopped the vessel to conduct a fishery inspection. The inspection revealed the subjects to be in possession of a snook during the executive order closure. The officers obtained consent to search a bag on the vessel, which contained narcotics and drug paraphernalia. One individual was arrested for possession of narcotics and paraphernalia. A separate citation and several warnings were issued for the resource violations. The narcotics, other items, and the fish were seized as evidence.

## PINELLAS COUNTY

While on state water patrol, Officer Bibler and Officer Specialist Bibeau stopped a vessel returning from offshore. Officer Specialist Bibeau boarded the vessel and conducted a fisheries inspection. The inspection located one undersized scamp grouper, two undersized and out of season greater amberjack and nine undersized vermilion snapper. Officer Specialist Bibeau wrote the operator of the vessel two misdemeanor citations and two warnings for the fisheries violations.

Officer Ferguson and Officer Phillippi responded to a report of a boating accident on the Tampa Bay side of Pinellas County involving three vessels. Once on scene, they were informed that one of the vessels that was involved in the accident had left after making only a cursory attempt to exchange information with the other two vessel operators. The fleeing operator had expressed that he did not want any law enforcement agency called. A few minutes later Officer Wilkins conducted a vessel stop on a vessel that was traveling east in Tampa Bay, now in Hillsborough County. The operator showed indicators of impairment, had minor injuries and there was damage to his vessel. The officers determined that the subject was the same one that had left the scene of the accident in Pinellas County. The subject submitted to breath testing and was found to be over the legal limit of .08, confirming his operation of a vessel while impaired. The subject was arrested for BUI.

## POLK COUNTY

Officer Livingston received information that a man killed a deer and sold it in a nearby neighborhood. Officer Livingston interviewed the complainant and discovered she had pictures of the person carrying what looked like a dead whitetail deer on his shoulder. Additional pictures taken later show the man only carrying a bag. The complainant was able to identify the person carrying the deer and was able to give a possible address where he lived. After visiting a few locations, Officer Livingston was able to find the person who was in the pictures. After Officer Livingston spoke with the man for several

minutes, he admitted to killing the deer after his dog injured it and selling the deer meat. He was given a notice to appear for killing a deer out of season.

## SARASOTA COUNTY

Officer Brown responded to a call from the Sarasota Sheriff's Department. Deputies were at a house near Fruitville Road and were requesting FWC assistance with a wildlife issue. When Officer Brown arrived on scene, he found the deputies at the house dealing with a domestic issue when they found an American alligator in the home. After interviewing the homeowners, Officer Brown issued one criminal citation for possession of an American alligator to a male subject residing at the house. The subject will have to appear in court for his violation.

Officer Lejarzar was on patrol when he came across an individual using a Hawaiian sling (a type of spear) in a state park freshwater pond. Officer Lejarzar determined the man was in violation of several park rules. Officer Lejarzar gained permission to search the man's vehicle and found a small amount of crystal meth. The subject was arrested and transported to Sarasota County Jail. Appropriate citations were issued.

## LEE COUNTY

Officer Gray was on uniformed patrol when he saw two individuals actively fishing at D & D boat ramp in Matlacha. He watched one of the subjects walk over to the open back of an SUV while holding what appeared to be an undersized mangrove snapper. When the subject looked up and saw Officer Gray, he turned and threw the fish back into the water. Officer Gray contacted the two men and determined that neither individual possessed a fishing license. Further investigation revealed a five-gallon bucket in the back of the SUV containing nine undersized mangrove snapper. Appropriate citations and warnings were issued.

Officer Gray saw two individuals actively fishing at Billy Creek Bridge in downtown Ft. Myers. After contacting the subjects, it was determined that one of them was fishing with a suspended fishing license. Due to the subject's extensive history with FWC, he was placed under arrest for the misdemeanor charge. Incidental to arrest the subject was searched and was found to be in possession of cocaine. He was booked into the Lee County Jail without incident.

Officer Winton and Officer Hazelwood were on patrol in the Cecil M. Webb Wildlife Management. They stopped a vehicle for being in the management area after hours. During the stop, it was determined that one of the passengers was in possession of five bass, three of which were over 16". Since each subject can only take one bass over 16", the subject was issued a notice to appear, and two of the oversized bass were seized as evidence.

Officer Perry was watching subjects at a local fishing hotspot when he saw a man acting suspiciously. The man picked up a plastic grocery bag which appeared to contain

something large and heavy. He hid the bag in some bushes. When Officer Perry approached the man and asked what he had put in the bushes the man denied knowing anything about it. Officer Perry recovered the bag from the bushes and found a thirty-four-inch snook inside. The man was cited for possession of snook during the closed season and possession of a snook over the thirty-three-inch size limit.

Officer Hardgrove saw a man working at a filet table. When he approached the man, Officer Hardgrove realized the subject was filleting two redfish. The smaller redfish already had its head removed, but the man admitted that it was only seventeen inches long. The other redfish measured twenty-nine inches long. The man was cited for possession of redfish which were not within the eighteen to twenty-seven-inch slot limit, possession of over the bag limit of redfish and possession of redfish during an emergency closure following last year's red tide event.

## MANATEE COUNTY

Officer Gonzales and Officer Dalton were on water patrol around Long Boat Pass. They stopped and performed a boating safety inspection on a vessel transiting the area. 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. 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 Gonzales and Officer Dalton were on water patrol around Long Boat Pass. They stopped and performed a boating safety/fisheries inspection on a vessel operating in the area. During the inspection, the officers discovered that the captain of the vessel was in possession of a bag full of filets and several trigger fish. The captain of the vessel was criminally cited for failure to land fish in whole condition and given a written warning for the trigger fish.

## MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

### CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officer Cohl, Officer Hazelwood and Captain Carpenter assisted Florida Wildlife Research Institute personnel with a manatee rescue in Charlotte Harbor. The injured manatee, along with its calf, were successfully captured and taken to the Lowry Park Zoo for rehabilitation.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

### LEE COUNTY

Officer Winton, Officer Bell along with Captain Carpenter and personnel from the Fort Myers Field Office participated in the Lee County Fallen Officers Ceremony. FWC provided several vessels for the event as local agencies paid their respects to officers who had made the ultimate sacrifice.

## **SOUTH REGION A**

### **CASES**

#### **MARTIN COUNTY**

Officer Hudson was patrolling the Stuart Causeway when he saw an individual fishing from the bridge. The officer conducted a resource inspection and found the individual in possession of 5 whole stone crabs, 8 undersize stone crab claws, 1 egg bearing stone crab, and multiple marine life species not in circulating water. The individual also did not have a saltwater fishing license. The subject was cited for two misdemeanor charges and 4 warnings.

Officer Hudson was conducting water patrol when he saw an individual exit his vessel at Sand Sprit Park and begin walking towards the parking lot. The officer asked if he had any luck fishing, to which the individual said he didn't go fishing. The officer could smell a strong odor of an unknown alcoholic beverage emitting from his breath. The officer conducted a boating safety inspection with the individual and asked if he would submit to Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks. The individual performed poorly on the tasks and based on the personal contact with the operator, standardized field sobriety tasks, and the totality of circumstances, the officer placed the individual under arrest for boating under the influence. When asked to submit to a breath test the individual refused to give a breath test. The subject was booked into the Martin County Jail for boating under the influence and was given a citation for refusing to submit to a breath test.

Officer Hudson was patrolling the Dupuis WEA during a hog hunt. He saw an individual wearing a blaze orange hat heading towards the exit of the WEA. The officer asked the subject if he could look in his cooler and he agreed. Inside the cooler was a bag that was labeled wild hog feed. The subject admitted to placing bait in the Dupuis WEA. The subject then took the officer to the baited site where he had hunted that afternoon. The subject was given a notice to appear citation for placing bait for wildlife in a WEA.

#### **PALM BEACH COUNTY**

Officer Schroer and Investigator Fowler saw two queen conch shells sitting on the back of a docked vessel. Both shells had an off-center hole in the spiral larger than 1/16th of an inch. The vessel's captain said he collected both shells in the Bahamas and brought them back to Florida waters. In Florida, no one may possess, in or upon waters of the state, a queen conch shell with an off-center hole larger than 1/16th of an inch in the

spiral even if the it was collected in the Bahamas. The captain was cited for the violation.

While on patrol of the Intracoastal Waterway in Jupiter, Officer Norbrothen saw a vessel which appeared to be speeding in the manatee zone. The vessel was also not displaying the proper navigational lights for operating at night. Upon activation of his radar, he confirmed his speed estimation and conducted a vessel stop. The officer addressed the violations and conducted a boating safety inspection. During the inspection the officer noticed several indicators of impairment from the operator and asked the operator to board his vessel to participate in standardized field sobriety tasks (SFSTs). The subject agreed and because of the officer's investigation was placed under arrest for Boating Under the Influence (BUI). The subject was also given a citation for refusing to provide a lawful sample of his breath as well as boating and resource warnings.

While on patrol of Storm Water Treatment Area One West (STA 1W), Officer Norbrothen saw an individual throwing a cast net from a water control structure within the STA for almost 40 minutes. The officer saw the person keep every fish from the cast net and never saw him return a fish to the water. The individual had one cooler and a cast net bucket full of fish. Toward the bottom of the cooler, underneath Tilapia and other invasive fish, the officer found five black bass and nine pan fish. The subject was cited for illegal method of take of game fish. The officer seized the fish and cast net as evidence. The individual was also given a warning for trespassing on a South Florida Water Management District water control structure and not having a valid freshwater fishing license.

While on patrol of Storm Water Treatment Area One West (STA 1W), Officer Norbrothen saw two individuals fishing in a part of the STA closed to the public. One of the men was fishing from a water control structure next to the levee. The officer conducted a resource inspection on the subjects and began an investigation into trespassing in the STA. One of the subjects had been stopped one week prior in the same area and warned that he was trespassing, fishing in a closed area of the STA, and fishing without a valid fishing license. The officer asked them to return to their vehicle and saw they had entered and exited the STA illegally. The male who was not stopped previously was issued warnings for illegal entry/exit of the STA, fishing in a closed portion of the STA, and one citation for no valid freshwater fishing license. The male subject who had been warned previously was issued two criminal citations for illegal entry/exit of the STA, fishing in a closed portion of the STA, one citation for no valid freshwater fishing license and one warning for trespassing on a South Florida Water Management District water control structure.

While on water patrol near the Jupiter Inlet, Officer Norbrothen saw a nearly submerged vessel by the Indiantown Road Bridge. He identified it as a vessel that he had cited previously while it was afloat, for being at-risk of becoming a derelict vessel. Officer Norbrothen saw that the vessel in its current condition was lying on the bottom of the intracoastal waterway and listing heavily to port. The officer began a derelict vessel



investigation. The resulting investigation made the determination that the vessel was derelict due to it being stored on waters of the state in a wrecked condition and submerged below the mean high tide. The owner of the vessel was notified and received a criminal citation for leaving a derelict vessel on the waters of the state.

Officer Brodbeck was on vessel patrol in West Palm Beach when a PWC was located with no registration numbers. A vessel stop was initiated to address the violation and to speak with the operator. The PWC was registered to a livery in West Palm Beach and the operator did not have a boater safety card, nor was she given any instruction on the safe operation of PWC's from the livery staff. Officer Brodbeck had documented 4 similar violations with the same livery over the past two weeks. The officer traveled to the livery operation and contacted two employees at the business. Both employees were issued criminal citations for failure to provide instruction and education to PWC operators.

Officers Schroer and Kuester conducted a boating safety inspection on a vessel transiting from the Bahamas to Florida. During the inspection, Officer Schroer found the captain of the vessel to be in possession of three-gallon sized plastic bags filled with fish fillets that had no skin left intact. The captain said the bags contained yellowfin tuna fillets. When transiting from the Bahamas to Florida by boat, recreational harvesters may transport their daily Florida bag limit of fish fillets from dolphin, wahoo, snapper or grouper if the skin remains intact for identification. When transiting tuna from the Bahamas to Florida, recreational harvesters must keep the fish in whole condition. The captain of the vessel was cited for the violations.

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol in Boynton Beach when several subjects were using a cast net to harvest fish from a freshwater canal. The officer conducted a resource inspection and numerous violations were discovered. The subjects were in possession of 15 freshwater gamefish including black bass, peacock bass, red-ear sunfish, and bluegill. One subject took responsibility for the violations and received a criminal citation for harvesting gamefish by illegal method. The fish were seized for evidence.

Officers Brodbeck and Godward were on vessel patrol near Munyon Island when a 21' center console vessel was dangerously cutting in front of a large sportfishing vessel. A vessel stop was initiated to address the violation and to conduct a resource inspection. Upon contacting the operator of the vessel, Officer Brodbeck detected numerous signs of impairment. After completing seated field sobriety tasks, the operator was placed under arrest for BUI. The subject was transported to the Palm Beach County Jail, where he refused to provide a breath sample. The operator received a criminal citation for BUI, as well as citations for refusal to submit to a breath test and careless operation of a vessel.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

Members of the FWC Honor Guard traveled to participate in the Annual National Police Memorial Week in Washington DC. They were involved in various ceremonies throughout the week and did an excellent job of representing the FWC and the State of Florida.

## **SOUTH REGION B**

### **CASES**

#### **MONROE COUNTY**

While patrolling the waters of John Pennekamp State Park, Officer McKay stopped a PWC for traveling across a protected sea grass flat. The 13-year-old operator said his father, the registered owner, routinely lets him take out the PWC. After speaking with his father who verified this information, Officer McKay towed the PWC to shore where he met with the father and issued him a notice to appear for permitting a person under 14 years of age to operate a PWC. The juvenile was cited for no boater ID card, which he forgot to bring, and several written warnings.

#### **COLLIER COUNTY**

While patrolling Picayune Strand State Forest, Officer Rubenstein saw a vehicle parked just off a dirt road. While inspecting the vehicle the officer saw lights in the nearby tree line. Officer Rubenstein concealed himself and waited for the subjects to return to their vehicle. When the two subjects returned to their vehicle they were found to be in possession of spotlights, crossbows, and high-power pellet guns. Officer Araujo arrived to assist with the stop. The subjects were cited accordingly.

Officer Oldsen was on land patrol in the Picayune Strand State Forest when he noticed a vehicle with a boat trailer parked near the Faka-Union Canal. Officer Oldsen concealed his truck and monitored the area for two hours until the boat returned. Upon conducting a resource inspection on the vessel, Officer Oldsen found two undersized, out of season snook. Two of the four people involved admitted to catching the fish and were cited accordingly.

While on land patrol at Delnor-Wiggins State Park, Officer Stearns stopped a vehicle for violation of park rules. The driver was unable to produce a valid driver's license and admitted to never acquiring a driver's license. He had been driving unlicensed for eighteen years. The driver was placed under arrest and transported to the Naples Jail Center.

While on land patrol at Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park, Officers Conroy and Kleis saw a vehicle being driven in a dangerous manner. There was heavy pedestrian traffic due to the holiday weekend and the officers saw the subject fail to stop at a red light. During the traffic stop, Officer Conroy saw indicators of impairment and the operator performed

poorly when given the Standard Field Sobriety Tests. He was arrested for Driving Under the Influence and transported to the Naples Jail Center.

During a vessel stop for suspicious registration display near the Cocohatchee River, Officer Conroy also completed a resource inspection. The inspection revealed undersized juvenile permit in the live well and the vessel did not have proper Hull Identification Number displayed. The operator was cited accordingly for the violations.

Captain Mravic was on water patrol near the offshore jetties adjacent to Marco Island when he saw a subject snorkeling without the required divers-down flag. When approached, the subject was found to have speared two small snook and was cited accordingly.

Officers Arbogast, Kleis, Thurkettle, Oldsen and Lieutenant Sushil conducted a targeted enforcement action plan in a panther zone. A vehicle was stopped for speeding and the operator was arrested for Driving Under the Influence. The operator was also in possession of cannabis under 20g and in possession of a controlled substance without a prescription. The subject was placed under arrest and transported to the Naples Jail Center.

While conducting water patrol, Officers Conroy and Stearns were inspecting rental vessels for compliance. As they approached one rental boat, they noticed the operator at the controls switch places with a passenger. The officers had the original operator complete the safety inspection during which they saw multiple indicators of impairment. There were many empty containers onboard, and a strong odor of alcoholic beverages coming from his breath. When asked he denied being the operator. The seated battery of Standard Field Sobriety Tests was given and the subject was placed under arrest for felony Boating Under the Influence.

## SEARCH AND RESCUE

### COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Stearns responded to a marine medical emergency involving a vessel operator who had fallen overboard. The person was unable to get back into the boat. With assistance from Collier County Sheriff and Fire Rescue the operator was safely returned to his vessel and to shore without further incident.

## DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROL

### COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Thurkettle, Kleis, Arbogast, Oldsen, and Lieutenant Sushil, participated in a targeted enforcement action plan, focusing their attention on panther zone speed enforcement for Florida panther conservation efforts in Ochopee, Florida. The officers utilized radar equipped Ford Interceptors (panther cars) to detect speeding violations.

The speed limit is 60mph during the day and 45mph at night. The officers conducted approximately 25 vehicle stops to address excessive speed violations and educate the travelers about the importance of slowing down for panther conservation efforts. Several citations were issued.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

### MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Officer Washington and Duty Officer Fuller taught students about alligators and the importance of environmental stewardship at Zora Neale Hurston elementary school for Career Day. They spoke to over 100 students and faculty about a career in conservation law enforcement and boating safety tips.

Officer Washington hosted a media event to promote safe boating and the importance of wearing life jackets at Watson Island Boat Ramp. To send a clear safety and enforcement message for a historically very busy Memorial Day weekend, all local media were invited to attend the National Safe Boating Week news conference. This year, media attendees were afforded the opportunity to witness a live search and rescue demonstration. There were demonstrations and information about life jacket use, boating under the influence enforcement, awareness on the water, emergency locator beacons and required boating safety equipment.

Officer Washington and Duty Officers Clark and Morris talked about alligators and the importance of environmental stewardship at a K-8 Toni Bilbao Preparatory Academy school for Career Day. They spoke to over 100 students about a career in law enforcement and boating safety tips.

### MONROE COUNTY

Officer Dube was the featured guest on several radio shows promoting boater safety for the Memorial Day Holiday weekend. Officer Dube along with USCG and other law enforcement partners talked about boating safety tips and many other ways to stay safe on and in the waters while in the Keys. Officer Dube shared safe boating advice, along with some dive safety tips while snorkeling and diving.

### COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Stearns and bear biologist Peltier participated in a joint outreach event held at Rookery Bay. The Division of Habitat and Species Conservation and the Division of Law Enforcement answered stakeholder questions and discussed the best practices to prevent human-bear conflict encounters.

Officers Thurbett and Arbogast held a public outreach event at the Boys and Girls Club of Collier County. The officers spoke about International Water Safety Day to

approximately 200 students ranging from 5th to 12th graders. Officers Thirkettle and Arbogast stressed the importance of swimming in pairs, wearing life jackets, avoiding lightning, and the need to further practice the CPR skills they had been taught at the club. The officers brought along a patrol vessel for students to see and ask questions about.

Lieutenant Mahoney and Officer Plussa conducted a children's fishing clinic at Sugden Park. Children and parents participated, all fishing for their first time. Local vendors donated prizes for the child who caught the most fish and for who landed the largest fish of the day.