

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



*Patrol, Protect, Preserve*

**June 7, 2019 through June 13, 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**

**BAY COUNTY**

Officer N. Basford was on land patrol and crossing the Hathaway Bridge when she saw a vehicle driving erratically. The vehicle was weaving in and out of traffic and going extremely fast. The officer conducted a vehicle stop and saw signs of impairment. The operator completed the standardized field sobriety tasks and was arrested for operating a vehicle under the influence and taken to the Bay County Jail. At the jail, the operator gave two breath samples of .153 blood alcohol content and .136 blood alcohol content.

Officers T. Basford, Hellett and Lieutenant J. Allen were on water patrol and saw a vessel coming through Panama City Pass from off shore. They stopped the vessel to conduct a boating safety and resource inspection. The inspection revealed an undersized cobia and undersized gag grouper. The captain of the vessel was issued a citation for the undersized cobia and a written warning for the undersized gag grouper.

**ESCAMBIA COUNTY**

Officer Allgood was working fisheries enforcement and found one individual in possession of two red snapper during the closed season and another individual in possession of two undersized pompano. Both individuals were cited for the violations.

Officers Clark, Long and Lugg teamed up to work the opening day of red snapper season. They documented several violations including undersized red snapper and

greater amberjack. Appropriate citations were issued for the fisheries violations. They also encountered one subject with a felony warrant out of Georgia. He was arrested and transported to the Escambia County Jail.

While checking fishing activity on the Bob Sikes Bridge, Officers McHenry and Pettey found two individuals in possession of two oversized red drum. The subjects were attempting to hide the fish behind a trash can. Both individuals were cited for the violations.

Officer Allgood was driving west on Interstate 10 when he saw a vehicle swerving across the center lane and off the edge of the road. He conducted a traffic stop and spoke to the driver. Officer Allgood saw signs of impairment and requested the driver complete standardized field sobriety tasks. The driver was arrested for DUI.

## GULF COUNTY

Officer Specialists M. Webb and H. Webb were on JEA mid-range patrol in the Gulf of Mexico. They were patrolling the Car Bodies Reef on the opening of red snapper season when they intercepted a vessel returning from fishing. Two subjects were aboard, and a resource inspection revealed the captain was in possession of undersized red snapper. A notice to appear citation was issued to the captain.

Officer Gerber was on patrol near Indian Pass when he saw a vessel returning from fishing offshore. Officer Gerber conducted a resource inspection and found the individuals to be in possession of undersized gag grouper. A notice to appear citation was issued to the captain.

Lieutenant Guy was conducting administrative license and resource inspections at the Highland View Canal. During an inspection, a subject's partner was found asleep in a vehicle with a boat and fishing gear in the bed. A closer look revealed that the pair were night flounder gigging and sleeping in the vehicle during the day. A redfish was located hidden in an ice chest separated from the other fish. After questioning the subject, he admitted to gigging the redfish. A citation was issued for take by illegal method.

Officer Gerber was on patrol near the Indian Pass ramp. A vessel arrived at the ramp and it was determined to be a charter captain and four paying guests. During a resource inspection, it was discovered that the vessel had ten red snapper on board. It is a violation for a charter captain to claim a bag limit of red snapper during a chartered trip. A citation was issued to the captain for being over the bag limit.

Officer Specialist H. Webb was conducting JEA dockside inspections at the Port St. Joe City boat ramp. A recreational fishing vessel arrived at the ramp. A resource inspection found several zip lock bags containing fresh king and spanish mackerel fillets. The captain admitted to catching and cleaning the fish earlier during the trip. The captain was cited for failure to land the fish in whole condition.

## HOLMES COUNTY

Officer Homan was on patrol when he checked a camp and several subjects fishing at the mix of Wrights Creek and the Choctawhatchee River. During the checks he encountered a 17-year-old juvenile that was in possession of a soft-shell turtle out of season and a cast net that contained numerous bream that he had just taken. The subject also did not have a fishing license. He was cited accordingly and educated on the seasons and methods of take for freshwater game fish.

## OKALOOSA COUNTY

FWC, Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office, Escambia County Sheriff's Office, Fort Walton Beach Police Department, Alcohol Beverage and Tobacco Agents, Fort Walton Beach Fire and Rescue and Okaloosa Island Fire Rescue worked the 2019 Billy Bowlegs Pirate Festival in Fort Walton Beach. There were approximately 500 to 600 anchored vessels present that surrounded a local sandbar. There were 59 citations and 165 warnings issued. Officers arrested 18 vessel operators for BUI, responded to three fights and two minor medical calls.

## SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Ramos spent several days inspecting blue crab traps for compliance with the Blue Crab Effort Management Program. Nearly 50 traps were checked for compliance and several were not tagged as required by law. Officer Ramos contacted the responsible person and issued him a citation for the violation as well as several warnings related to his traps.

## **NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

### CASES

## BRADFORD COUNTY

Officer Gill received information about a dead deer in the back of a pickup truck in Brooker. He responded to the location and spoke to the driver of the pickup. The driver said he hit the deer with the pickup and then shot it due to injuries. Officer Gill located the scene nearby and determined the deer was not hit by the pickup. It was shot from the road while standing about thirty yards in the woods. Officer Gill spoke with the driver again and he confessed to shooting the deer from the roadway. The driver was cited for taking deer from roadway, taking deer by illegal method and taking deer during closed season.

## **NORTHEAST REGION**

## CASES

### VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officers Wingard and Pelzel stopped a boat inbound from an offshore fishing trip. Five undersize tripletail were located in a forward compartment. Additionally, red snapper fish fillets were in another cooler at the back of the boat. The owner was issued a notice to appear for the violations.

### MARION COUNTY

Investigator Lasher was contacted about a subject having gopher tortoises in his vehicle. The subject was arrested by Marion County Sheriff's Office on unrelated charges and the vehicle was towed to a towing facility. Investigator Lasher and Officer Hayes responded to the facility where employees led them to the vehicle. The officers saw two gopher tortoises in plain view in the rear of the vehicle. The tortoises had been in the vehicle for nearly 72 hours but were still alive. The officers removed them from the vehicle and released them back into the wild. The following day, Investigator Lasher and Officer Hayes met with the suspect. After reviewing body camera footage from the arresting deputies and interviewing employees at the tow facility, Officer Hayes obtained a warrant for the suspect for illegal possession of the gopher tortoises.

### COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

#### LAKE COUNTY

Officer Scrambling attended an outreach event at the Clermont Waterfront Park, which focused on freshwater fishing, gear, regulations and conservation. There were approximately 50 people, including youth, new anglers and bass tournament participants. Lake County Water Authority and Clermont Park staff were also present.

## **SOUTHWEST REGION**

### CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officer Furbay and Officer Lejarzar saw several subjects enter a local management area after it was closed. The officers conducted a stop on the subjects and citations were issued for wildlife management area violations including no daily use permits and entering the management area after hours.

### HARDEE COUNTY

Pilots Fields and Jarrett were on patrol when they saw a vehicle shining and casting dogs from a roadway. Officers Kobs and Hazelwood were on patrol nearby and

responded to the location. Officers Hazelwood and Kobs located two subjects trespassing on private property. Pilots Fields and Jarrett notified ground units there was another subject fleeing on foot. K9 Officers Gaudion and Stasko responded as well as Officers Livingston and Franks. The Officers deployed a K9 and tracked the fleeing subject. The fleeing subject was apprehended, and all were cited accordingly.

## HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

While on patrol conducting boating safety inspections at the Courtney Campbell Boat Ramp, Officer Rorer and Officer Pettifer detected signs of alcohol impairment from a vessel operator. Field sobriety tasks were conducted and the operator was placed under arrest for operating a vessel while impaired by alcohol. The operator was transported and booked into the Hillsborough County Jail. At the jail, the operator refused to provide a breath sample. He was cited for refusal to provide a breath sample as well as boating under the influence.

While on patrol near the Courtney Campbell causeway, Officer Caldwell saw two individuals diving near rocks along the road. He saw the individuals exit the water and load a cooler into a vehicle. Officer Caldwell approached the individuals and initiated a resource inspection. A search of the cooler revealed eleven stone crabs in whole condition. The individuals admitted to harvesting the stone crabs. They were cited for possession of stone crabs in whole condition during a closed season.

Officers Caldwell and Pettifer received information regarding the illegal take of an alligator. They responded to a residence in Hillsborough County and saw an alligator with its mouth taped in the front yard of the address. An inspection of the alligator carcass revealed two bullet holes. After being advised of his Miranda rights, the resident at the address admitted to hitting the alligator with a shovel and shooting it twice. The individual was cited for illegal take of an alligator.

While on patrol near the Courtney Campbell Causeway, Officer Rorer and Officer Pettifer saw two individuals fishing near a bridge. They initiated a resource inspection and a check of the individual's cooler revealed a legal jack crevalle. During the inspection, the officers heard a rustling sound coming from the mangroves directly behind where the two men were fishing. A search of the area revealed an undersized snook and spotted seatrout hidden in a plastic bag. The illegal fish were hidden less than ten feet from where the men were fishing. The individuals were cited for possession of a snook and spotted seatrout during a closed season.

While on patrol in Simmons Park, Officer Rivard saw an individual fishing from shore and initiated a resource inspection. The individual stated he did not have a shoreline fishing license. While running the individual's information through dispatch, it was determined there was a warrant for his arrest out of Bay County. The individual was taken into custody and transported to the Hillsborough County Jail based on the warrant.

## LEE COUNTY

Officer Furbay has been working on multiple derelict vessel investigations and learned one of the subjects he issued a misdemeanor notice to appear did not show up to court as directed. The judge issued a bench warrant for failure to appear. Officer Furbay made several attempts to get the man to turn himself in or meet with him, but the man refused. After learning the man was planning on leaving town, Officer Furbay went to the man's residence to make an arrest. Officer Furbay saw the man get in his truck and drive to a nearby Walmart. When the subject came out of the store, Officer Furbay approached him and took him into custody. The man was delivered to the Lee County jail without incident.

While on federal water patrol, approximately thirty-five miles out in the Gulf of Mexico, Officer Bell and Officer Gray encountered two recreational fishing vessels. Contact was made with anglers on board and fisheries inspections were conducted. The officers found undersized red grouper aboard each of the vessels. The occupants admitted to catching and measuring the undersized red grouper and placing them into coolers. Notices to appear were issued and the anglers were educated on red grouper regulations.

## MANATEE COUNTY

Officer Dalton and Officer Gonzales were on water patrol in Palma Sola Bay. They performed a boating safety and fisheries inspection on a vessel transiting the bay. The officers found the men on the boat had caught and kept six undersized spotted seatrout during the closed season. The men were written citations for possession of undersized seatrout and warnings for the closed season violations.

Officer Alvis, Officer Hughes, Officer Godfrey, Officer Specialist Smith, and Lieutenant Wells were on a multiday patrol aboard the Gulf Sentry. They stopped a fishing vessel approximately forty nautical miles off Egmont Key and found a bag of cannabis floating directly behind the boat. Six people were on the vessel plus the captain. No one would admit to the cannabis. After questioning, it was determined the passengers paid the captain \$500.00 for only bait, ice, and gas. The captain did not possess a Gulf of Mexico Charter/Head boat reef fish permit. A federal citation was issued, and the case will be turned over to NOAA. The charter captain also could not produce any documents that proved he belonged to a drug consortium per USCG Captain License regulations. This will be referred to USCG investigations.

Officer Alvis, Officer Hughes, Officer Godfrey, Officer Specialist Smith, and Lieutenant Wells were on a multiday patrol aboard the Gulf Sentry. A commercial longline vessel was stopped approximately eighty miles west of Manatee County. The officers boarded the vessel and for three hours monitored the pulling in of miles of longline. The officers were counting the hooks on the longline while it was retrieved to ensure compliance with not using over 750 hooks. After the longline was completely retrieved, an inspection of a fish box found a shark fin, shark belly and numerous pieces of cut up

shark. A federal citation was issued, and the shark remains were seized as evidence and will be sent off for DNA testing. If the shark is a protected species, the fines through NOAA will be upgraded.

## SEARCH AND RESCUE

### LEE COUNTY

Officer Winton and Officer Gray responded to a medical emergency on an island accessible only by vessel. At the time of the call, the location of the injured subject was unknown. Through their local knowledge of the area, the officers were able to find the injured subject and direct medical personnel to their location. The subject was transported to the mainland to receive treatment.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

### HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY



FWC recruiters, Officers Albert and Howard spent time with Senator Scott at the Tampa Waterside hotel. They were attending the Attorney General National Conference on Preventing Crime.

## **SOUTH REGION A**

### **CASES**

#### **MARTIN COUNTY**

Officer Hudson was conducting state water patrol on the Intracoastal Waterway near the Stuart Causeway. While conducting a resource inspection, another vessel saw the officer, packed up quickly and left the area. A vessel operator told Officer Hudson that the exiting vessel had a bunch of illegal fish. The vessel was stopped for a resource inspection and was found to have an over-the-slot limit of redfish. The captain of the vessel received a notice to appear citation for possessing a redfish over 27 inches.

#### **OKEECHOBEE COUNTY**

Officers Allen and Hausler encountered two subjects discharging firearms in the Yates Marsh Unit of the Kissimmee River Public Use Area (PUA). Shooting is prohibited in the PUA during the closed season for hunting. Hikers use the area and there was no backstop behind the targets from where the subjects were shooting. The men received notices to appear in court citations for discharging firearms in a public place.

#### **PALM BEACH COUNTY**

While on patrol of the Jupiter Inlet, Officer Norbrothen saw a vessel towing two skiers, with only one skier wearing a life jacket. The officer initiated a stop on the vessel to address the safety violation. The officer identified the operator as a juvenile and noticed the smell of an unknown alcoholic beverage and saw several empty beer cans strewn around the vessel. He also saw indicators of impairment from the operator during his safety inspection and began a boating under the influence investigation. The investigation resulted in the officer having probable cause to believe the juvenile operator was under the influence of alcohol above .02, the limit for persons under 21. The operator provided a sample of his breath which registered .04 breath alcohol level, double the legal limit. The operator was issued a citation for the .02 breath alcohol level violation, a boating citation for insufficient number of life jackets, and five other boating related warnings.

## **SOUTH REGION B**

### **CASES**



## MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Officer Cartaya inspected a shoreline fisherman on the Rickenbacker Fishing Pier. The fishery inspection revealed five undersized mangrove snapper. The appropriate citations were issued for the violation.

Officer Cartaya stopped a vessel that was recreationally fishing in Biscayne Bay. The fishery inspection revealed eight undersized mutton snapper. The appropriate citations were issued for the violation.

While on state water patrol, Officer Cartaya conducted a vessel stop on a recreational fishing vessel. The inspection revealed two undersized mangrove snapper, four undersized yellow tail snapper, one undersized red grouper, and one parrot fish. The subject said that he did not know the types of fish he caught or the size requirements. The appropriate citations were issued for the violation.

Officer Moschiano was at Matheson Hammocks boat ramp doing resource inspections. He checked multiple vessels and found two with resource violations. One of the vessels subjects was in possession of four undersize dolphin. The largest dolphin was 15.5" fork length, the minimum size limit is 20" fork length. The other vessel subjects was in possession of two undersize hogfish. The largest hogfish was 14.5" fork length, the minimum size limit is 18" fork length. The subjects of both vessels were educated and cited accordingly.

## MONROE COUNTY

Investigator Mattson was on unmarked water patrol in Key Largo and observed a PWC doing high speed doughnuts and spraying water. Investigator Mattson stopped the PWC and inquired about the age of the driver which was eleven. Investigator Mattson went to the house where the youth was staying and spoke with the mother. The mother had knowledge that the boy was underage and operating the PWC. She was cited for allowing underage operation of a PWC.

Investigator Mattson performed a fisheries inspection at Tavernier Creek bridge. Three men were fishing, and a check of their catch found them in possession of three undersize mangrove snapper. One of the men took responsibility for the undersize snapper and was issued a notice to appear.

Investigator Mattson was patrolling the area of Indian Key Fill and conducted a fisheries inspection on two men. They were found to be in possession of two undersize mangrove snapper and one undersize schoolmaster snapper. One of the men took responsibility for the fish and was issued a notice to appear.

## SEARCH AND RESCUE

## MONROE COUNTY

Officer Messier responded to a small charter helicopter that crashed into the water near a popular Key West beach. The helicopter had a pilot and two passengers which were all injured and transported by EMS to a local Hospital. Officer Messier compiled all the information which will be turned over to the FAA. The Key West Police, US Coast Guard, Monroe County Sheriff's Office Deputies, Key West Firefighters and Monroe County Airport Rescue Firefighters all responded to assist.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

### MONROE COUNTY

Officer Dube spent a week assisting at the FWC's Everglades Youth Conservation Camp at the JW Corbett Wildlife Management Area in West Palm Beach. Officer Dube helped counselors working with campers to learn archery, paddle sports, hunter safety, camping and fishing. The EYCC Camp is a weeklong overnight camp that runs throughout the summer on the 60,000 plus acre wildlife management area. More information about the camp can be found on [MyFWC.com](http://MyFWC.com).