

# Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

## Division of Law Enforcement Weekly Report



***Patrol, Protect, Preserve***

**June 14, 2019 through June 20, 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**

Officers Wicker and N. Basford were on water patrol in St. Andrews Bay when they conducted a boating safety inspection on a pontoon vessel. During the inspection the 18-year-old operator showed signs of impairment. Officer Wicker conducted standardized field sobriety tasks and based on the findings, the operator was placed under arrest for BUI and transported to the Panama City Beach Field Office where he provided breath samples of .114 blood alcohol content and .114 blood alcohol content. The operator was booked into the Bay County Jail for BUI.

Officer T. Basford and Lieutenant J. Allen were conducting patrols in St Andrews State Park. At the boat ramp they noticed a white vessel with several occupants enter the basin and tie up to the seawall. During a safety inspection, Officer Basford noticed that the operator was showing signs of impairment and conducted standardized field sobriety tasks. Based on the officer's findings, the operator was placed under arrest for BUI and transported to the Bay County Jail where he provided breath samples of .133 blood alcohol content and .135 blood alcohol content. The individual was booked into the Bay County Jail for BUI.

Officer Specialist M. Webb and Officer Gerber were working dockside JEA (Joint Enforcement Agreement) enforcement in the Mexico Beach Canal. Officer Webb saw a vessel with five people on board returning to the dock. An inspection revealed the

captain was in possession of over the limit red snapper and a gray triggerfish. The captain was cited for over the limit red snapper and warned for triggerfish out of season.

Officer Specialist M. Webb was working dockside JEA (Joint Enforcement Agreement) enforcement in the Mexico Beach Canal. He saw a vessel with six people on board returning to the dock. An inspection revealed the captain was in possession of over the limit red snapper. The captain was cited for the offense.

#### OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officers Hahr and Long were patrolling in the Destin Pass when they saw a fishing vessel returning from the Gulf of Mexico. A fisheries inspection revealed an undersized and out of season greater amberjack as well as a large gray triggerfish. The captain of the vessel was cited for possession of greater amberjack and triggerfish out of season.

Officer Hahr was on water patrol around the Cinco Bayou boat ramp when he saw a couple having a difficult time staying upright on a personal watercraft. When they returned to the boat ramp, the man loaded the PWC onto the vessel trailer but forgot to latch the winch, causing it to fall off the trailer onto the boat ramp as he pulled it out of the water. After observing several other signs of impairment, Officer Hahr conducted field sobriety tasks and determined the man was under the influence of alcohol. He was arrested for boating under the influence and transported to the Okaloosa County Jail.

In 2018, Lieutenant Molnar conducted a vessel stop on a 2014 Yamaha waverunner in Okaloosa County. Upon investigation, the waverunner was seized due to it displaying a fraudulent Hull Identification Number. Through law enforcement databases, the waverunner was linked to Miami as stolen and a suspect was identified. Investigator Hein located the suspect in Miami and during the investigation, located an additional stolen 2014 Yamaha waverunner. The suspect was arrested and cited for 8 felonies and 2 misdemeanors related to title fraud and dealing in stolen property.

#### WALTON COUNTY

Officers Bradshaw and Wilkenson conducted fishery inspections in the Destin Pass to ensure compliance with size and bag limits. One inspection revealed several undersize gag grouper. Both occupants aboard the vessel were cited for the violation.

Officers Letcher and Tison were patrolling Choctawhatchee Bay when they checked two separate large groups of subjects fishing from the bank. Officer Tison checked the first group of individuals fishing and found them to be in possession of two undersized spotted sea trout and two undersized mangrove snapper. The individual who took possession of the fish was cited for the size limit violations and for no fishing license. Officer Letcher checked the second group and found them to be in possession of an undersized red drum and two undersized mangrove snapper. The individual who took possession of the fish was cited for the size limit violations and for no fishing license. Of the six total undersized fish, none measured over 8" in total length.

Officer Letcher and Tison were on water patrol on Choctawhatchee Bay when they checked an individual fishing from the bank. Officer Tison inspected the immediate area around the subject and found one 14" undersized red drum. The individual admitted that the fish was his and was cited for the size limit violation.

## **WASHINGTON COUNTY**

While Officer Specialist H. Webb was working with a BUI Task Force in Holmes Creek at Culpepper Landing, he saw a vessel with two people on board traveling through the area at a high rate of speed. He stopped the vessel and spoke with the operator. The operator showed signs of impairment and was administered seated field sobriety exercises. The operator was placed under arrest for BUI and consented to a breath test. Two samples were collected and registered at .168 blood alcohol content and .161 blood alcohol content.

## **NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

### **CASES**

#### **COLUMBIA COUNTY**

While on water patrol on the Santa Fe River, Officers McDonald and Nichols saw a vessel exiting the Ichetucknee River and come to plane well inside the idle speed zone. The officers stopped the vessel to conduct a safety inspection. During the inspection, officers detected a strong odor of alcohol coming from the operator. The operator was given field sobriety tasks and was placed under arrest for boating under the influence. The subject was transported to the Columbia County Jail where he refused a breath test. Appropriate charges were filed.

#### **TAYLOR COUNTY**

FWC received a call from a boater who said her husband was having a medical emergency and needed help, but she did not know her location. FWC dispatchers were able to calm the subject and determine she was near the Steinhatchee River. Officers Butler and Reith, along with Officers Robson and Dasher began a search of the area. The officers located the vessel at marker "1" in the Steinhatchee River channel. The officers boarded the vessel and found the male subject unresponsive and transferred the subject to their patrol vessel. They brought the subject back to land where Taylor County EMS was waiting to transport him to the hospital.

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

#### **SUWANNEE COUNTY**

Officer Boone participated in a public outreach event with the Suwannee County Police Athletic League Summer Program. There were 30 kids in attendance for this event. Officer Boone presented information on boating safety, resource conservation and Florida's wildlife. The boating safety display included a patrol vessel and discussions on safety while in and around a vessel.

Officer Boone participated in a public outreach with Camp Cornerstone Summer Camp. There were 40 kids in attendance for this event. Officer Boone offered information on boating safety, resource conservation and Florida's wildlife. The boating safety display included a patrol vessel and discussions on safety while on board a vessel. Officer Boone also exhibited the proper wearing and identification of personal floatation devices.

#### **MADISON COUNTY**

Officers Vazquez and Ransom participated in a public outreach at the Madison County Sheriff's Office Youth Camp. There were 50 kids in attendance for this event. Both officers presented information on boating safety, resource conservation and wildlife. The wildlife display included a small gator and discussions on living safely and successfully with wildlife in Florida.

#### **NORTHEAST REGION**

##### **CASES**

##### **SUMTER COUNTY**

Officer Teal was on patrol in Richloam Wildlife Management Area (WMA), when he observed a truck transporting two off-road motorcycles. He later saw the two subjects driving the dirt bikes within the WMA. Officer Teal stopped the two subjects and escorted them back to their vehicle. Upon arriving at the vehicle, he detected the distinct odor of marijuana. After questioning, one of the subject's admitted to the marijuana and paraphernalia. The subjects were cited appropriately.

##### **MARION COUNTY**

Officer Dias was on patrol near St. John's Water Management property known as Sunny Hill. He saw a subject walking across a cow pasture carrying a sack and watched the subject try to conceal the sack behind some brush. When Officer Dias confronted the subject, he denied carrying anything. Officer Dias walked the subject over to where he tried to conceal the sack and saw a basket full of mushrooms. The subject admitted to picking the mushrooms from the water management property. The subject was issued a notice to appear for removing plant life from water management property.

## **ST. JOHNS COUNTY**

While conducting resource inspections at Guana Dam, Officer Ramsey saw a subject in a restricted area throwing a cast net. A resource inspection revealed the subject was catching fin fish and keeping them in buckets. Officer Ramsey also found one spotted sea trout wrapped in a t-shirt on the ground next to the buckets. This is a violation of the wildlife management area regulations and Officer Ramsey issued the appropriate citations.

Officer Jones was on patrol around Guana Dam when he encountered eight individuals actively fishing. While performing routine license checks, one of the men was found to have an active warrant out of Jacksonville. The man fled on foot and after a short chase was arrested. He was cited for resisting arrest without violence, possession of an undersized redfish and booked on active warrants from the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office. He was also issued a civil citation, along with the remaining seven subjects, for fishing without a license.

## **SOUTHWEST REGION**

### **CASES**

#### **CHARLOTTE COUNTY**

Officer Norris and Officer Stasko were on patrol in Lemon Bay when they stopped a vessel returning from fishing offshore. Upon inspecting and measuring the occupants' catch, they found one undersized American red snapper and one undersized gag grouper on board. The operator of the vessel was issued a misdemeanor citation for possession of the undersized fish.

#### **LEE COUNTY**

While on patrol in Hurricane Bay, Officer Winton located a vessel that was washed into the shoreline, partially submerged, with the cabin open to the elements. Officer Winton determined the vessel was being stored in a derelict condition upon the waters of the state and initiated an investigation. The owner of the vessel was identified, and charges are being filed with the State Attorney's Office.

While on patrol in Matanzas Pass, Officer Winton located a vessel that was washed into the shoreline, partially submerged, with the cabin open to the elements. Officer Winton determined the vessel was being stored in a derelict condition upon the waters of the state and he initiated an investigation. With assistance from FWC's intelligence section, the owner of the vessel was located, and Officer Winton was able to contact him at his residence. The owner was issued a notice to appear for the violation.

Officer Winton, Lieutenant Spoede and Lee County Sheriff Deputy Woodby were on vessel patrol off the coast of Sanibel Island when they stopped an offshore fishing vessel to conduct a fisheries inspection. During the inspection, it was determined that the vessel's occupants were in possession of over the bag limit of red snapper, undersized/out-of-season greater amberjack, and out-of-season gray triggerfish. The vessel's occupants were interviewed and the captain of the vessel was issued a notice to appear for seven counts of misdemeanor fisheries violations. One passenger was issued a notice to appear for two counts of misdemeanor fisheries violations and another was issued a citation for failure to possess a current saltwater fishing license.

#### **MANATEE COUNTY**

Officers Davidson and Klobuchar were on water patrol around Long Boat Pass. They stopped and performed a boating safety inspection on a vessel transiting the area. 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 arrested him for boating under the influence of alcohol. He was taken to the Manatee County Jail.

Officer Davidson was on land patrol in the area of Palma Sola Bay off Manatee Avenue. He performed a fisheries inspection on an individual that had been fishing in the bay. He found that the subject had caught and kept two undersized red drum. The subject was cited criminally for possession of red drum during a special closure of that species and possession of undersized red drum.

Officers Klobuchar and Davidson were conducting vessel safety checks and resource inspections around Longboat Pass and Jewfish Key. They saw a vessel displaying several fishing rods and spearfishing gear and initiated a stop. The captain of the vessel was found to be in possession of two undersized gag grouper and two undersized and out-of-season gray triggerfish. The fish were seized, and the captain was issued notices to appear for undersized gag grouper and out-of-season gray triggerfish. He was also issued warnings for the triggerfish being undersized.

#### **SOUTH REGION A**

##### **CASES**

##### **PALM BEACH COUNTY**

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol when he observed a vessel with four subjects on board was returning to a boat ramp. A vessel stop was initiated to check their catch. Officer Brodbeck discovered a total of 36 snapper on board the vessel, including 8 undersized mutton snapper. The vessel owner was cited for being over the daily aggregate bag limit of snapper, as well as being in possession of undersized mutton snapper.

Officers Godward and Brodbeck were on night patrol near the Palm Beach Inlet. They saw two individuals fishing from a vessel without proper navigation lights displayed. A vessel stop was initiated to address the violation as well as to check their catch. Upon boarding the vessel, numerous violations were discovered including a large bonefish in a cooler. The owner of the vessel received a resource citation for possession of bonefish, as well as a citation for having no life jackets on board. The vessel owner received additional warnings for possession of undersized mutton snapper, possession of undersized gray triggerfish, and numerous boating safety violations.

Officers Godward and Brodbeck were on vessel patrol near Peanut Island. They saw a small vessel being operated at night with no navigational lights displayed. A vessel stop was initiated to address the violation. When the registration numbers were checked through FWC dispatch, they came back as belonging to a different vessel. After speaking with the operator, he admitted to placing the incorrect numbers on the vessel. The operator of the vessel received a criminal citation for display of an unauthorized number, a citation for no navigational lights displayed, as well as a warning for no registration being on board.

Officer Brodbeck was dispatched to a complaint of a subject harvesting snapper with a cast net from a bridge in Palm Beach Gardens. The officer located the subject, along with a bucket containing a cast net and multiple fish including snapper. Upon close examination of the snapper, it was determined that they were not harvested with a cast net, and they were well below the minimum size limits. The subject was issued one criminal resource citation for possession of undersized mangrove snapper, as well as warnings for undersized schoolmaster snapper and ornamental marine life violations.

Officer Forrest was on land patrol in the South Florida Water Management District A1 Flow Equalization Basin when she conducted a freshwater fisheries inspection. During the inspection, the subject was found to have harvested four black bass over sixteen inches. The subject received a criminal notice to appear for the violation and the illegal fish were seized as evidence.

Officer LeBlanc issued several notices to appear for the owners of derelict vessels that were identified and processed. Several were removed from the water, including one 30ft. sailboat from the Peanut Island sandbar; two from Phil Foster Park; a 28ft. sailboat, a 34ft. powerboat and a 34ft. sailboat from Bryant Park. The removal contractor will separate and recycle the metal, all hazardous materials will be removed, and the fiberglass vessels will be destroyed.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Toby was on patrol when he witnessed two individuals fishing at an area closed to the public. He watched the subjects climb a fence while leaving the area and issued each subject one misdemeanor citation for illegal entry into the property.

MARTIN COUNTY

Officer Carroll was on patrol at Boat Ramp Road when he saw a subject operating an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) on South Florida Water Management District lands. Officer Carroll conducted a stop of the ATV and issued the subject a citation. Shortly after this incident, Officer Carroll received a call from a local landowner stating there were some people on ATV's trespassing on his property. Officer Carroll stopped the subjects trespassing and determined that they were the same subjects previously stopped. Officer Carroll issued all the subjects trespass warnings.

#### **OKEECHOBEE COUNTY**

Captive Wildlife Investigator Toby was on patrol when he saw a subject on the side of the road cutting the head off an alligator. The subject loaded the alligator head into his vehicle and proceeded to leave. Investigator Toby stopped the vehicle and issued one misdemeanor citation for the illegal possession of alligator parts.

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

#### **BROWARD COUNTY**

Lieutenant Brock attended a community meeting in Hollywood to answer questions from residents about limited anchoring areas and permitted mooring areas in Florida. There were approximately fifty residents in attendance at the meeting.

#### **SOUTH REGION B**

##### **CASES**

##### **MIAMI DADE COUNTY**

Officers Sample and Osorio saw a fishing vessel returning through Haulover Inlet. They initiated a stop on the vessel to conduct a resource inspection. The captain stated that they were returning from the Bahamas and had some snapper in the cooler. The officers found 31 yellowtail snapper, 14 silk snapper, 5 wenchman snapper, and 4 vermilion snapper – which put the 4 men on board over their aggregate snapper bag limit. The appropriate citations were issued for the violation.

FWC Miami Regional Communication Center received a complaint about fishermen harvesting spiny lobster out of season from the seawall near the Miami River. Officer Washington was dispatched to respond and when he arrived at the location, there were two subjects sitting on a bench facing Biscayne Bay. Officer Washington noticed five spiny lobster a few feet away from where they were sitting, underneath a white T-shirt and next to a 5-gallon bucket. Officer Washington told the subject who admitted to harvesting the lobster out of season, that it is also illegal to recreationally harvest lobster

by any method other than diving, hoop or dipnet. The appropriate citations were issued for the violations.

#### MONROE COUNTY

Officers Thompson, Sizemore and Hoppe were on water patrol near the Whale Harbor Sandbar in Islamorada. The officers stopped a rental boat leaving a sandbar and performed a vessel safety inspection. Officer Hoppe noticed signs of impairment from the operator and after completing field sobriety tasks, arrested him for operating a vessel while normal faculties were impaired. He was transported to Plantation Key Jail where he refused to provide a breath sample.

Officers Hoppe and Thompson were on water patrol near mile marker 76 when they saw a PWC jumping the wake of another boat and operating recklessly. The officers stopped the vessel and began a safety inspection. While completing the inspection, both officers saw signs of impairment. After completing field sobriety tasks, the operator was arrested for BUI. The subject refused to provide a breath sample and was booked into Plantation Key Jail.

#### COLLIER COUNTY

While on patrol at a local boat ramp, Officer Conroy saw a vessel on full plane in a posted slow speed, no wake zone. The operator was driving recklessly, and Officer Conroy initiated a vessel stop to address the violations. The vessel operator exhibited several signs of impairment and after the completion of standardized field sobriety exercises, was placed under arrest for boating under the influence (BUI). The operator had two active warrants and was transported to the Naples Jail Center.

Officers Trueblood, Hoppe, and Sizemore were working a late-night patrol aboard the off-shore patrol vessel, Interceptor. The officers were inspecting Turtle Exclusion Devices aboard shrimp boats. During an inspection of a shrimp boat ice hold, the officers located 54 cowfish. Cowfish are a regulated marine life species and must be kept in live condition while aboard the vessel, until landed at the dock. The captain of the vessel was cited for multiple marine life violations.

Officer Yurewitch was on land patrol in Everglades City when he saw an individual fishing near a bridge. The officer conducted a resource inspection and fishing license check. Officer Yurewitch saw two fish tied to a stringer that was hidden under a palm frond. The subject stated that he caught the fish on the stringer. There was one undersize red drum and one goliath grouper. The subject was cited accordingly for the violation.

While on patrol in the Picayune Strand State Forest, Officer Yurewitch saw a vehicle traveling off the designated roadway during closed hours. The officer followed the vehicle and watched it make aggressive movements and leave the road several times. Officer Yurewitch conducted a vehicle stop to address the violations and noticed the

strong odor of alcohol and multiple signs of impairment when contacting the operator. The subject was asked to perform standardized field sobriety tasks and was placed under arrest for driving under the influence. He was transported to the Naples Jail Center where he refused to provide a breath sample.