

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Division of Law Enforcement Weekly Report



Patrol, Protect, Preserve

July 12, 2019 through July 18, 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 N. Basford, T. Basford and Wicker were on water patrol in St. Andrews Bay and saw a vessel run aground in shallow water near Courtney Point. The officers contacted the vessel operator who showed signs of impairment. The officers administered field sobriety tasks and the operator was arrested for boating under the influence. The operator refused to provide a breath sample and was booked into the Bay County Jail.

JACKSON COUNTY

Officers Scott and Burkhead were conducting vessel boating safety patrol when they saw a vessel being operated in a careless manner. They conducted a vessel stop and noticed indicators that the operator may be impaired. The officers administered field sobriety tasks and the operator was arrested for BUI. Breath test results were .133 and .136.

Officers Little and Scott were on vessel patrol on Merritts Mill Pond. They checked a subject who was in possession of seven undersized shellcracker. The subject was cited for possession of undersized shellcracker.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Corbin conducted a fishing license check in Cinco Bayou on two subjects fishing. After checking them through NCIC/FCIC, one had an active arrest warrant for possession of narcotic equipment out of Okaloosa County. The subject was arrested and transported to the Okaloosa County Jail and booked on the warrant. The other subject was issued a citation for failure to have a fishing license.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Officer Parrish and Reserve Officer Kinney were on patrol in the Choctawhatchee River Water Management Area (WMA). They encountered a subject unresponsive in a vehicle. Further investigation revealed that the subject was severely intoxicated. A search of the vehicle produced methamphetamine and marijuana. The subject was arrested and charged accordingly.

Officer Gore was on patrol at Culpepper Landing on Holmes Creek when he conducted a boating safety inspection on a vessel returning from Cypress Springs. The operator displayed numerous signs of impairment and was asked to perform field sobriety tasks. The subject was arrested for boating under the influence and transported to Washington County Jail where he refused to provide a breath sample.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

LEVY COUNTY

Officer Bell and Lieutenant Johnston were on water patrol when they inspected an aluminum hull jon boat with two male occupants. They were in possession of a 16-inch red drum. Officer Bell cited the captain of the vessel for possession of undersized red drum.

Officers Willis and Hilliard were on water patrol on the Suwannee River near Fanning Springs. They saw a subject operating a vessel in a careless manner at Joe Anderson boat ramp. When they stopped the vessel to perform a safety inspection, Officer Willis noticed a strong odor of alcohol coming from the subject. The subject consented to field sobriety tasks and was arrested for boating under the influence. The subject refused to give a breath sample and was booked into Dixie County Jail.

Officers Hilliard and Willis were patrolling near Bird Creek Bridge on Highway 40 when they encountered two people loading coolers into their vehicle. The subjects said they had been fishing and fishing gear was present and visible. A resource inspection discovered that they were in possession of three sharks and 137 mullet. One misdemeanor citation was issued for over the bag limit of mullet, one written warning was issued for sharks, and a warning for no shark permit. Thirty- seven mullet were seized.

Officers Fox, Starling, and Bell were on patrol around Cedar Key ensuring navigation light compliance and general boating safety. Four UBC citations and 17 warnings were issued for various boating safety violations.

Officers Bell and Reith were on water patrol near Deer Island when they saw a vessel with two subjects fishing. Upon approaching the vessel, the captain said he had three triple tail fish on board. During the resource inspection, the captain was actively attempting to keep one extra fish out of view of the officers. The inspection revealed that he was in possession of four triple tail fish, one of which was undersized. The captain of the vessel was cited for possession of undersized triple tail.

LAFAYETTE COUNTY

Officer Davenport was patrolling state lands and saw several vehicles stuck in a closed area. Officer Davenport conducted several interviews, working with state, county and private constituents to determine the cost of damage, any potential suspect and the extended enforcement action in this incident. Charges of damage to state lands and criminal mischief have been direct filed with the state attorney's office for the subject in this case. The damage to these state lands was valued at more than \$12,000 and the subject was also given a non-expiring trespass warning for these state lands.

CITRUS COUNTY

Officer Crane received a complaint about the use of a steel trap accompanied by a photo of a raccoon caught in the trap which was hung from a fence. Officer Crane verified no steel trap permits had been issued in the area of the complaint. The homeowner where the trap was placed was contacted and said he was trying to prevent raccoons from getting into his garbage. Officer Crane issued the homeowner a misdemeanor resource citation for utilizing steel traps without a permit.

Officer VanNess was on patrol in the area of Fort Island Trail when he saw three individuals fishing from the bank. He saw one of the individuals retrieve a red drum from his cooler and throw it in the bushes as he exited his patrol vehicle. Officer VanNess located an undersized redfish that was still cold to the touch in the bushes. An inspection of the cooler further revealed an undersized mangrove snapper. Appropriate citations were issued for the violations.

NASSAU COUNTY

During the red snapper season, Officer Sweat checked several vessels at the North End Boat Ramp in Nassau County. Two vessels were found to be in violation of keeping undersized cobia and were issued notices to appear for the take/possession of undersize cobia.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROL

CITRUS COUNTY

FWC officers in Citrus County hosted their first phase of an annual scallop enforcement detail. Officers Delano, Willis, Stuhr, Ferguson, Dasher and Investigator Thomason participated in the detail. The detail targets reckless vessel operation and dive flag compliance to increase public safety during scallop season which features high numbers of vessels and users. Over the weekend, the officers documented 13 misdemeanor reckless operation of vessel cases, issued 14 uniform boating citations and 153 written warnings.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

SUWANNEE COUNTY

Officer Boone participated in a public outreach event with the Suwannee County Sheriff's Office Youth Camp. Presentations were provided about boating safety, resource conservation and Florida's wildlife to those in attendance.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer Pelzel conducted resource inspections in the New Smyrna Beach area. She issued two criminal notice to appear citations to one subject for possessing whole stone crabs and egg bearing stone crabs. Another subject was issued a criminal notice to appear citation for possessing black drum under the legal-size limit. After observing and stopping a vessel operator for a restricted speed zone violation, a subject was issued a criminal notice to appear citation for possessing spotted seatrout under the legal-size limit.

Officer Thornton stopped a vessel to conduct a boating safety inspection while on patrol on the St. Johns River in the area of Lemon Bluff. During the safety inspection, Officer Thornton saw indicators that the operator may be impaired by drugs and/or alcohol. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence.

Officer Thornton was on patrol in Blue Springs State Park when he saw a vehicle speeding and conducted a traffic stop. Officer Thornton smelled the odor of marijuana coming from the vehicle and saw two open alcoholic containers. A search of the vehicle produced nine grams of marijuana, rolling papers, a scale, oxycodone, and .380 ammunition. The driver had a suspended drivers license and was a convicted felon. The subject was arrested and cited for possession of a schedule 1 substance (felony),

possession of ammunition by a felon (felony), driving with a suspended license with knowledge (misdemeanor), possession of less than 20 grams of cannabis (misdemeanor), possession of drug paraphernalia (misdemeanor), open container (infraction), and no seat belt (infraction). The passenger was issued a citation for open container.

Officer Pelzel was checking shoreline subjects in the New Smyrna Beach area and approached a subject actively fishing next to a cooler. When asked if he had any fish in the cooler, he responded he had some mangrove/grey snapper that he had already measured. Officer Pelzel re-measured his catch and he was issued the criminal notice to appear for having multiple under the legal-size limit of mangrove snapper.

Officers Demeter, Pelzel and McDonough were on patrol in the Ponce Inlet area on offshore patrol vessel Osprey when they received information about an individual keeping undersized mangrove snapper and snook out of season. They responded to the Dunlawton Bridge and located an individual in possession of five undersized mangrove snapper and one snook during the closed season. The subject was cited for all violations.

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officers Graves and B. Miller were on JEA patrol in federal waters when they encountered vessels fishing. Upon inspection, one of the vessels was found to be in possession of red snapper, which is illegal to possess during the closed season. The appropriate federal citations were issued.

Officers Thomas and Jones were on patrol in the area of the St. Augustine Inlet when they stopped a vessel for a safety inspection. The operator displayed signs of impairment and was arrested for BUI. He was booked into the St. Johns County Jail.

Officer Jones was on routine patrol when a vehicle swerved into his lane and continued traveling in the wrong lane for approximately a mile. A traffic stop was conducted, and the driver displayed signs of impairment. The driver was arrested for driving under the influence and booked into the Putnam County Jail.

Officers B. Miller and Graves responded to a boating crash where a vessel had left the scene before their arrival. A search of the area was conducted, and the vessel could not be located near the scene. Officer Miller was able to locate the operator of the vessel and ultimately obtain a confession to striking the other vessel. Officer Miller charged the operator appropriately.

PUTNAM COUNTY

Officer Wester was conducting boating safety inspections at Kenwood boat ramp when he saw an airboat approaching the ramp without a flag. When the airboat operator saw Officer Wester he turned around and fled from the area. Officer Wester was able to

observe the vessel through binoculars and obtain a very good physical description of the airboat and operator. A short while later, Officer Wester saw a truck with an empty airboat trailer leaving Kenwood and suspected that they were in route to pick up the airboat at the County Road 310 ramp. Officer Wester waited and was able to intercept the truck, vessel, and operator attempting to leave the ramp. The subject admitted to fleeing because he was boating under the influence. He was cited for boating under the influence and booked into jail.

Officer Mason was patrolling Marjorie Carr Greenway State Park when he saw a motorcycle operator acting suspiciously. The motorcycle did not have a tag so a traffic stop was initiated to address the violation. The operator had an active warrant out of Alachua County, possessed prescription medication without a prescription, had no motor vehicle registration, and was driving while license suspended. The suspect was cited and booked into jail.

Officers Wester, Mason, Guirate, and Lieutenant Dickson conducted early morning compliance checks on vessels participating in the Lake George Shad Harvest. The checks resulted in three misdemeanor charges for gill net violations, five infractions for safety gear violations, and three warnings for net float and safety equipment violations.

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Kearney was on patrol when he saw a vessel return from fishing in the area. A resource inspection was conducted which revealed the man was in possession of two undersized redfish, one redfish over the daily bag limit which is one per person per day. A citation was issued for the offenses.

Officer Marroquin was patrolling in the area of Christianson's Landing boat ramp when he saw a vessel violating the slow speed zone. Officer Marroquin stopped the vessel to address the violation. During the stop the operator showed signs of impairment. Standardized field sobriety tasks were conducted, and the operator was placed under arrest for boating under the influence. The operator was also cited for refusing to provide a breath sample.

Officer Marroquin was patrolling in the area of Jorgenson's Landing boat ramp when he saw two individuals get dropped off at the boat ramp and leave the area with two trucks and a vessel trailer. One of the vehicles almost caused an accident with a Florida Highway Patrol trooper who conducted a stop on that vehicle. Officer Marroquin stopped the truck and trailer for suspicion of driving under the influence. During the stop the driver showed signs of impairment. Standardized field sobriety tasks were conducted, and the operator was arrested for driving under the influence (2nd conviction) and refusing to provide a breath sample.

Officers Bohne and Luce along with Lieutenant Lee were on water patrol in the Port Canaveral area on the offshore patrol vessel Sea Hawk when they stopped a recreational vessel. The vessels three occupants were in possession of six red snapper,

and claimed they caught the fish in state waters even though the red snapper season was open in federal waters. Officer Bohne identified one of the red snapper as being under the state's 20-inch minimum size limit. The vessel captain was cited for possession an undersized red snapper harvested from state waters.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

LAKE COUNTY

Officer Fahnestock attended an FWC Youth Fishing Clinic Summer Program in Mount Dora to discuss boating safety. There were approximately 30 youth in attendance.

Officers Morrow and McConnell and Public Information Officer Weber attended the annual Judge's Conference, which was held in Orlando. They discussed FWC's mission and philosophy with over 150 judges.

Officer Teal attended the International Convention of Allied Sportfishing Trades (ICAST) in Orlando to discuss boating safety and promote FWC. Hundreds of people from all over the country attended the event.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Investigator Cooke and Captain Carpenter were on water patrol in Placida Harbor when they stopped a boat to conduct a safety equipment inspection. They found the boat was missing several pieces of required equipment and the operator was displaying signs of impairment. Standardized field sobriety tasks were conducted and the subject was arrested for boating under the influence and booked into the Charlotte County Jail.

PASCO COUNTY

Senior Officer Pulaski was patrolling the waters of Hudson Beach/Gulf of Mexico, when he saw a vessel violating the idle speed zone. He stopped the vessel to address the violation. The operator displayed indicators of impairment during the boating safety inspection. Seated field sobriety tasks were conducted, and the subject was arrested for boating under the influence. The subject was also cited for refusing to provide a breath test.

Senior Officer Pulaski and Lieutenant Parisoe were on water patrol in the Sea Pines area when they saw a vessel violate the local idle speed zone. The vessel was stopped to address the violation and perform a boating safety inspection. The operator showed

signs of impairment and seated field sobriety tasks were conducted. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence. He refused to provide a sample of his breath to determine the alcohol content.

Officer Specialist Balfour was on land patrol at Nick's Park Boat Ramp in Port Richey. He saw a strobe light flashing and two vessels with no navigational lights heading up river towards the ramp. As the vessels approached, he could hear the two individuals loudly arguing. The operators were contacted to address the navigational light violation. One operator showed signs of impairment and seated field sobriety tasks were conducted. During the stop, Officer Specialist Balfour learned the operator had impersonated a Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Officer while on the river with the other vessel. Officer Specialist Balfour arrested the operator for impersonating an officer and boating under the influence. The individual refused to provide a sample of his breath to determine the alcohol content.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While on patrol, Officer Specialist Bibeau saw an individual actively fishing from a seawall. As Officer Specialist Bibeau approached him to conduct a fisheries inspection, the individual attempted to retrieve several fish from a nearby bucket. Officer Specialist Bibeau told the individual not to throw anything in the water but the subject picked up the bucket and dumped a lot of small fish into the water. After Officer Specialist Bibeau read the individual his Miranda rights, the individual admitted that he had caught several undersized mangrove snapper. Officer Specialist Bibeau wrote the individual a misdemeanor citation for interference with a Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission officer and for harvesting undersized mangrove snapper.

While on patrol, Officer Specialist Bibeau conducted a fisheries inspection on an individual actively fishing from underneath a bridge. Officer Specialist Bibeau found the individual to be in possession of a fourteen-inch gag grouper. Officer Specialist Bibeau wrote the individual a misdemeanor citation for possession of an undersized gag grouper.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Lieutenant Pomares heard gun shots while speaking to two bicyclists exiting the Aerojet complex within SFWMD property. The bicyclists said that a helicopter had circled and landed in the complex. Lieutenant Pomares alerted dispatch and responded to the area. He located the helicopter with the engine running and an individual walking back to the helicopter. Lieutenant Pomares ascertained that he was alone. The subject was in possession of a shotgun and a .45 handgun. Lieutenant Pomares secured the

weapons and cited the individual for trespass on SFWMD property and unauthorized landing on SFWMD property. He was warned for discharge of firearm.

Officer Delgado was on state water patrol when he observed a commercial fishing vessel inbound from Government Cut with multiple fishing rods displayed. During the vessel stop, he conducted a fisheries inspection and a boater safety equipment check. The subjects were in possession of an undersized African pompano. Further inspection revealed 18 undersized mutton snapper, 1 undersized hogfish, 4 yellowtail snapper, and 1 mangrove snapper in a hidden compartment. The subjects were read their Miranda rights and cited accordingly.

Officer Hart was on land-based water patrol around Mowry, Military and Moody canals. He came across a subject actively harvesting fish and conducted an inspection. The inspection revealed eleven undersized mangrove snapper. The subject was cited accordingly. Another subject was inspected and had harvested six undersized schoolmaster snapper. The subject was cited for the violation.

MONROE COUNTY

Investigator Mattson was on unmarked water patrol in the area bayside around Mile Marker 62.5. He observed three people fishing from the shore. An inspection of their catch revealed two undersize mangrove snapper and two undersize barracuda. The subjects were cited for the violations.

Officer Jacobs was on patrol in the area of Snake Creek in Islamorada. Officer Jacobs conducted a resource inspection on two individuals fishing under the bridge. The individuals were in possession of 27 mangrove snapper. Both individuals were cited appropriately.

Officer McKay responded to an overnight boating accident off Jewfish Creek in Key Largo. The operator and passenger were battling a severe thunderstorm when they missed a curve in the channel and ran into the mangrove tree lined shoreline. There were no reported injuries with minimal damages to the boat. Officer McKay went out with Tow Boat US to salvage of the vessel and to complete the appropriate paperwork.

COLLIER COUNTY

The Offshore Patrol Vessel CT Randall, captained by Lieutenant Shea, conducted a three-day patrol from Miami to Key West to Marco Island. The officers conducted fisheries inspections inside the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. The patrol covered 220 nautical miles and inspected 20 recreational fishing vessels. This yielded 50 users checked, one misdemeanor citation and ten boating and resource warnings during the patrol period. While conducting an inspection of a recreational diving vessel near The Content Keys, Officers Araujo, Rubenstein and Conroy discovered 2 speared undersized hogfish and an undersized, out of season, gray triggerfish. The subjects were cited accordingly.

Officers Thurbett and Curbelo conducted speed enforcement in the panther zone on Tamiami Trail. They issued numerous speeding citations and warnings. The officers also educated the public on the importance of reducing their speed in the panther zones at night. The highest speed recorded was 84 MPH in a 45 MPH zone.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Officer Cartaya was invited to make a presentation for career day at Our Pride Academy. Students and young adults attend the school which is structured for individuals with special needs. Along with the emphasis on boating safety and resource protection, Officer Cartaya brought a small alligator to share and interact with the class. A future date will be set for a fishing camp at Bill Baggs State Park for interested students in the upcoming school year.

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Dube was the guest speaker on several different radio shows at local venues and storefronts preceding the “Lobster 2 Day Sport Season” in the Upper Keys. Officer Dube also filmed a couple of Facebook Live segments for the TDC “Tourist Development Council.” Officer Dube discussed the many different laws and regulations pertaining to the Sport Dive Days.

Officer Dube and Recruiter Pestka manned the popular “Lobster Information Booth” in Key Largo for 4 days preceding the Lobster 2 Day Sport Season. Officer Pestka received dozens of potential applicants. Officers gave demonstrations on how to properly measure lobster along with handing out boating and diver safety tips. Officers also answered countless questions regarding local lobster laws.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Kleis responded to a complaint of people harassing baby sea turtles. The Officer arrived and learned that a group of approximately 15 newly hatched sea turtles had made their way to the pool/restaurant area of a beach front hotel. The turtles were returned to the nest site, where they made their way to the water. The patrons were educated regarding the hatching process of sea turtles.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

MONROE COUNTY

The FWC dive team investigated a complaint in Lake Surprise (north Key Largo) of vessels illegally moored to the bottom. Investigator Mattson created a Targeted Enforcement Action (TEA). Members of the dive team snorkeled the area and found numerous violations to include: illegally moored boats, at risk vessels, decal and FL number violations, and no proof of pump outs. A total of 32 citations were written during the Targeted Enforcement Action.