

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Division of Law Enforcement Weekly Report



Patrol, Protect, Preserve

August 9, 2019 through August 15, 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 Brady and Rice were conducting vessel patrol in St. Andrews Bay near Deepwater Point. They saw a vessel with two people on board returning from off shore and conducted a stop for a boating safety inspection. The officers noticed two spear guns on the deck of the vessel near the console and asked if they had caught anything. They replied that they had one grouper that measured around 23 inches. The officers asked if they knew the size requirement for gag grouper and they replied 24. The officers measured the gag grouper and found it to be 22.5 inches. When asked about it again they said they shot the fish while spearfishing and didn't want it to go to waste. The appropriate citation was issued.

CALHOUN COUNTY

Officer Baber was at Blountstown Landing along the Apalachicola River when he saw a truck pull into the parking lot towing a boat. Two occupants got out and began taking catfish out of the boat and put them on a stringer. Officer Baber contacted the subjects and noticed there were no fishing poles in the boat, but there was a gig. He also noticed gig marks on the underside of the fish as if they had been floating when they were gilled. Officer Baber interviewed the subjects and they admitted they had shocked the fish. The driver of the truck retrieved a shocking device from the toolbox of the truck. Both subjects provided sworn written statements. The subjects were cited for taking nongame fish by an illegal method.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officer Specialist McHenry conducted a resource inspection on an individual fishing at the Fort Pickens Fishing Pier. He was found in possession of 40 Spanish mackerel, 32 of which were undersized. The individual claimed two of his children helped catch the fish. Officer Specialist McHenry seized the illegal fish and cited the individual.

Officer Allgood was patrolling near the Navy Point Boat Ramp when he noticed a vessel returning to the ramp without the proper navigational lights. After the individual loaded his vessel on his trailer and pulled it into the parking lot, Officer Allgood approached him. The person showed several signs of impairment and field sobriety tasks were conducted. The subject was arrested for driving under the influence, failure to give a breath sample and other misdemeanor charges.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Officers Mcleod and Travis were working around the John Gorrie Bridge when they observed three subjects on a boat with a net. After observing the subjects for several hours and watching them retrieve the net, they conducted a resource inspection. The subjects were in possession of a large monofilament gill net. The subjects were arrested and the net was seized.

GULF COUNTY

Officer McMillion was patrolling the Apalachicola River when he stopped a vessel to conduct a resource inspection. The subjects on board were in possession of a shocking device, lead wire, and dip net. Two misdemeanor citations were issued for harvesting freshwater fish by an illegal method.

Officer McMillion approached a vessel at an area boat ramp in St. Joseph Bay to conduct a resource inspection. He discovered two bait buckets containing bay scallops. Due to bay scallop restoration efforts, the season for bay scallops in the waters of St. Joseph Bay is currently closed. The two occupants were issued misdemeanor citations and the two gallons of whole scallops were returned to the water alive.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officers Corbin and Ramos were on water patrol when they saw a vessel being operated in violation of the idle speed/no wake zone in Destin. A stop was conducted to address the violation and conduct a boating safety inspection. There were numerous empty alcoholic beverage containers in the boat and the operator showed signs of impairment. Field sobriety tasks were conducted, and the operator was arrested for boating under the influence.

Officer Corbin was on patrol when he saw several subjects catching crabs at a local marina. A cooler was located near the subjects and a resource inspection was conducted revealing two whole stone crabs in the cooler. Two subjects claimed responsibility for keeping the stone crabs and neither subject had a saltwater fishing license. Both subjects were issued citations accordingly.

Officer Corbin was on patrol when he saw a subject fishing from a local pier. A resource inspection was conducted, and a filleted spotted seatrout was located in a bait bucket. The subject admitted to catching and filleting the seatrout and was issued a notice to appear citation for the violation.

Officers Corbin, Bradshaw, and White were on water patrol when they saw a vessel being operated in violation of the idle speed/no wake zone in Destin. A vessel stop was conducted to address the violation. The operator showed signs of impairment and field sobriety tasks were given. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence and refused to provide a breath sample.

Officers Corbin, Tyson, and Letcher were on water patrol when they saw a vessel being operated while exceeding its capacity plate. A vessel stop was conducted to address the violation and to conduct a boating safety inspection. Alcohol was present and the crew appeared to be under the influence. The operator performed field sobriety tasks and was arrested for boating under the influence. He also refused to provide a breath sample.

Officer Corbin was on patrol when he saw a vessel returning to a local boat ramp. A resource inspection located a 31-inch redfish. The subject was issued a notice to appear citation for the violation.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Mullins received information that a subject was in possession of a gopher tortoise. The officer located the subject and discovered he had two gopher tortoises in an enclosure at his residence. The subject had the tortoises for some time and had been caring for them as pets. Officer Mullins issued a notice to appear for possession of a threatened and endangered species and the gopher tortoises were returned to the wild.

WALTON COUNTY

Officers Tison and Brooks were patrolling the Choctawhatchee River when they observed two subjects in the process of removing dead head logs. The subjects did not have a dredge and fill permit which is required to transport the logs upon state waters. The subjects were cited for the permit violation and one of them was taken into custody for an active warrant.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

CLAY COUNTY

Lieutenant Haney was working the opening night of alligator hunting season when he saw a vessel returning to the boat ramp with no navigation lights displayed. He conducted an inspection and saw signs of impairment from the operator. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence. He had three prior convictions for DUI and had received his license back that day from his last DUI suspension. These prior violations raised the BUI arrest to a felony violation. The subject was transported to jail where he refused to submit to a breath test.

LEVY COUNTY

Officer Bell responded to a complaint about illegal palmetto berry pickers in Goethe State Forest. Upon his arrival, several of the suspects fled into the forest. Officer Bell was able to locate two suspects who were hiding near several bags of palmetto berries. Appropriate enforcement action was taken.

Officers Starling and Bell were on water patrol near Cedar Key. They conducted a resource inspection on a small vessel and found the operator in possession of two sharks. The sharks were fileted and dismembered. Officer Starling cited the operator accordingly.

Officers Bell and Starling were in Goethe State Forest when they saw several people illegally harvesting palmetto berries. The subjects were placing the berries into a pickup truck that was full of berries. Officers Bell and Starling were able to apprehend two suspects who fled the area upon their arrival. The subjects were cited accordingly.

DIXIE COUNTY

Officer Allen saw a small vessel from Horseshoe Beach headed to an oyster lease area. He conducted a resource inspection to identify the harvester and check for oysters coming into and leaving the oyster lease area. The subject was in possession of oysters and stated that he had harvested them the day before. Charges will be direct filed with the Dixie County State Attorney's Office for possession of oysters during the closed season.

GILCHRIST COUNTY

Officer Allen received information that subjects were trespassing and illegally hunting on private property in Gilchrist County. Officer Allen arrived and saw subjects shining a light from a vehicle. Fresh tire marks indicated they had driven through an open gate clearly marked with no trespassing signs. The officer conducted a vehicle stop and

interviewed two subjects who stated they were just looking for wildlife. Officer Allen called the landowner and determined they were not authorized to be on the property. Trespass charges will be direct filed through the Gilchrist County State Attorney's Office.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

NASSAU COUNTY

Officer Waldo met with 28 members of Deep Creek Hunt Club to explain the new deer reporting rule changes.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

BREVARD COUNTY

Investigator Cogburn received information about an individual advertising python for sale online. The suspect associated with the ad did not have a license to exhibit or sell the pythons. Investigator Cogburn contacted the seller and found him in possession of multiple pythons which he advertised for sale. The seller was educated on how to obtain a license and charges were filed accordingly.

Officer Miller worked land patrol at Christenson's boat ramp near Grant. During a fisheries inspection, three undersized mutton snapper were discovered in a live well. The fish measured 11-inches, 11.5-inches and 12-inches respectively. The man was given a notice to appear in court for the possession of undersized mutton snapper.

Lieutenant Davis was on SR 520 when he saw a car pulled over on the shoulder and the driver was wiping off the rear bumper. Lieutenant Davis found blood on the ground and the bumper and called Officer Marroquin to assist. Once Officer Marroquin arrived, the subject admitted that a deer was in the trunk. The subject opened the trunk to reveal an 8-point velvet buck. The operator's passenger admitted to shooting the deer. Both subjects were issued notices to appear for the violation.

PUTNAM COUNTY

Officers Guirate, Bernard, Chriest, Campbell, and Lieutenant Dickson participated in a Targeted Enforcement Action at the Palatka City Docks in response to numerous complaints of persons taking over the limit of shrimp. A group of five subjects were observed throwing cast nets and making several trips to their vehicles with shrimp. The subjects were stopped for a fisheries inspection and had 40 gallons of shrimp (15 gallons over the limit), three black crappie, and a black bass. The subjects were cited accordingly.

MARION COUNTY

Officer Hargabus received a call from a landowner who said he found an abandoned canoe on his hunting lease. He said the canoe had been there for approximately three months and it did not belong to any lease members. Officer Hargabus located a hull identification number on the canoe and ran it through dispatch. The hull number came back to a landowner in Marion County. The canoe was last registered in the year 2000 but had not been reported stolen. Officer Hargabus contacted the registered owner, who stated the canoe was stolen about 19 years ago and was surprised that it was located.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer West stopped a vessel on the Intracoastal Waterway at the New Smyrna Beach public boat ramp. During the boating safety inspection, the operator displayed signs of impairment. The operator was arrested for BUI and refused to submit to a breath test. He was transported to the Volusia County Jail.

Officer Malicoat watched a vessel towing children on a tube. After one of the children fell from the tube, the operator maneuvered the boat and the tube with the remaining child very close to a fishing pier. He was issued a criminal notice to appear for reckless operation of a vessel.

Officer Pelzel conducted a resource inspection on a vessel returning from fishing offshore at Ponce De Leon Inlet. The coolers on board contained fillets of unidentified shark. The operator was issued the criminal notice to appear for possession of shark not landed in whole condition.

Officer Pelzel was checking the area of Callalisa Creek and contacted an adult male who had been fishing. An inspection of the cooler in his vehicle revealed under the legal size limit of mangrove and mutton snapper. He was issued the criminal notice to appear for the violations.

Officer Fletcher responded to a possible boating accident at the south end of Lake George. When he arrived, he found a vessel out of control spinning in circles. With assistance from Lake and Volusia County Sheriff's Office Marine Units, the officers were able to foul the prop and stop the vessel's motion. The vessel was not damaged and none of the occupants were injured. The vessel operator displayed signs of impairment and was arrested for BUI. He provided breath samples of 0.139 and 0.139 and was booked into the Volusia County Jail.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

LEE COUNTY

Officer Winton responded to reports of a subject unlawfully selling freshwater plants at a residence in Cape Coral. An investigation revealed that the subject imported, possessed, and sold water hyacinths which are highly regulated due to their invasive nature. The subject did not have any permits for his activities and was issued a notice to appear for the violation. The hyacinths were seized as evidence.

MANATEE COUNTY

Officers Gonzales and Dalton were on water patrol in the area of Long Boat Pass. They stopped and performed a boating safety inspection on a vessel transiting in the area. The operator displayed signs of being impaired and field sobriety tasks were conducted. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence and taken to the Manatee County Jail.

Officers Gonzales and Dalton were on water patrol in the area of Long Boat Pass. They performed a boating safety inspection on a vessel which had struck a channel marker. The operator displayed signs of impairment and was arrested for boating under the influence. He was taken to the Manatee County Jail.

PINELLAS COUNTY

Officer Specialist Bibeau saw multiple individuals fishing from a pile of rocks away from the shoreline. When the individuals walked back, Officer Specialist Bibeau contacted them to conduct a fisheries inspection. Two of the subjects were in possession of four redfish and three undersized mangrove snapper. One of the redfish was undersized while another redfish was oversized. Citations and warnings were issued accordingly.

Officer Specialist Bibeau saw two individuals fishing from a bridge and contacted them to conduct a fisheries inspection. One undersized gag grouper, one undersized mangrove snapper and a shark that had been beheaded was inside a cooler. One of the individuals admitted to catching the undersized gag grouper and was issued a misdemeanor citation and warnings for the other fisheries violations.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

Officer Cornell was in the area of Holiday Park when he found a freshly dumped pile of construction debris. He spoke with people in the area and found a witness who saw the truck that dumped the debris. Officer Cornell interviewed the owner of the company

responsible and he admitted to telling one of his workers to dump the debris. The debris was cleaned up and felony dumping charges were filed for the owner and the employee.

MARTIN COUNTY

Officer Hudson was patrolling the Dupuis Wildlife Environmental Area (WEA) when he saw a truck driving slowly down the Powerline Grade. An individual was standing in the bed of the truck holding a 12-gauge shotgun and shining a light in a manner capable of displaying wildlife. The truck was stopped and the subjects said they were hunting hogs. The subjects received a notice to appear citation for hunting hogs during a closed season and hunting at night with a gun and light.

Officer Hudson was conducting water patrol at Sandsprit Park when he saw a vessel with a float commonly used for a hookah diving rig. The officer asked the subjects if they had any luck and they said they caught some lobster. Officer Hudson boarded the vessel, inspected the catch, and found an egg bearing spiny lobster. Neither subject admitted to catching the spiny lobster, but both subjects admitted that they were in the water lobstering that day. Both subjects received a notice to appear citation for possession of an egg bearing spiny lobster.

Officers Carroll and Brevik responded to a call off-shore of the St. Lucie Inlet where a subject was said to have discharged a shotgun towards another vessel after a verbal dispute over a fishing location. The officers secured the scene, met with all parties, and conducted interviews. After the investigation, one subject was arrested for aggravated assault with a firearm. This subject was also found to have hidden an undersized cobia in his vessel anchor locker and was charged accordingly.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Pecko and Boyd were on patrol in the Palm Beach Inlet when they saw a vessel coming in from offshore with no navigation lights. They conducted a vessel stop to address the violation and perform a resource inspection. The vessel operator had four undersized dolphin that were speared. The subject was cited accordingly.

Officer Pecko was on patrol at the Jupiter Inlet when he saw three subjects diving close to the jetty with no dive flag. He approached the subjects once they were out of the water and they were in possession of two spearguns and one cubera snapper. The subjects were cited accordingly for fishing licenses, no dive flag, and spearfishing within 100 feet of a jetty.

Officer Ames conducted a vessel inspection at the Boynton Beach Boat Ramp. As he approached the boat, he saw what seemed to be fish blood. An inspection revealed ten undersize dolphin in a compartment at the rear of the boat. The fish were seized, and the subject was cited accordingly.

Officers Riggs and Mann were conducting fisheries and boating safety inspections at Burt Reynolds East Park. During a marine fisheries inspection, the officers saw an egg-bearing spiny lobster in a vessel's live well. The subject in possession of the lobster was cited accordingly.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Officers Washington and Bruder were on water patrol outside of 79th street boat ramp. They saw a deck boat headed towards the bay south of the boat ramp where there was about a dozen PWC jet skis anchored together. The deck boat was overloaded with 15 people aboard. The capacity plate had the boat rated for maximum capacity of 12 persons. Only two of the persons aboard were crew and the rest were paying customers. The captain working in a commercial (charter for hire) capacity did not have the USCG required merchant mariner credentials or licensing. During the safety inspection, there were several violations found: no Type IV device, over capacity, no registration, no flares (VDS), and no sound producing device. Appropriate citations were issued. USCG was contacted and a Coast Guard Station Miami Response Boat conducted a boarding to address USCG documentation.

Officer Cosculluela conducted a fisheries inspection at Crandon Park Marina. The owner/operator of the vessel admitted to harvesting eight undersized dolphin. He was issued a resource citation accordingly.

Officer Presser and Officer Bruder were on water patrol near Haulover Marine Center. They stopped a vessel displaying fishing gear to conduct a vessel safety and resource inspection. The inspection revealed eight undersized dolphin in a fish box on the vessel. The captain of the vessel took responsibility for the undersized dolphin and was cited accordingly.

Officer Bruder and Officer Presser stopped a vessel east of Haulover Inlet to conduct a vessel safety and resource inspection. The inspection revealed four undersize mutton snapper, one undersize king mackerel, and one undersize greater amberjack. The captain of the vessel was cited accordingly.

Officer Bruder and Officer Presser stopped a vessel near Haulover Inlet to conduct a resource and vessel safety inspection. The occupants of the vessel told the officers they were returning from the Bahamas. The inspection revealed 12 wrung lobster tails and a variety of fish fillets without skin attached. Appropriate citations were issued for the violations.

Officer Delgado and Officer Almagro were on water patrol when they saw a vessel coming into the Coral Reef Yacht Club channel with multiple fishing rods displayed. They stopped the vessel to conduct a fisheries inspection and boater safety equipment check. The subject said they only caught two grunts. A fisheries inspection revealed both harvesters were in possession of an undersized mutton snapper. A plastic bag with five undersized mangrove snapper was also located. The subjects were issued citations accordingly.

Officer Almagro and Officer Delgado were on water patrol in Miami-Dade County. They saw a vessel inbound oceanside of Government Cut with multiple fishing rods displayed. The vessel was stopped to conduct a fisheries inspection and a boater safety equipment check. The inspection revealed the harvesters were in possession of six undersized dolphin and one undersized mutton snapper. The subjects were issued citations accordingly.

COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Thurkettle assisted the Collier County Sheriff's Office with a subject illegally harvesting palmetto berries. As the deputies approached the subject, he fled on foot. Officer Thurkettle concealed himself in the woods near the suspect's vehicle. When he returned to his vehicle, Officer Thurkettle assisted the deputies placing the subject under arrest for illegally harvesting palmetto berries and resisting arrest. He was transported to the Naples Jail Center. A second subject was placed under arrest for illegally harvesting palmetto berries. He had been issued a citation 3 days prior for illegally harvesting. He was transported to the Naples Jail Center.

While on land patrol Officer Thurkettle encountered two subjects trespassing inside a South Florida Water Management District control structure. The structure was surrounded by barbed-wire fence, locked gate, and had "no trespassing" signs posted on the fence. One of the subjects did not have any form of identification and stated he did not know his address. The subject was placed under arrest for trespassing in a water control structure and issued a citation for no fishing license. The other subject was issued a criminal citation for trespassing and having no fishing license.

Officer Yurewitch and Officer Kleis were on water patrol near Keewaydin Island. The officers saw a vessel traveling northbound towards Naples Bay in a slow speed zone. The officers conducted a vessel stop to perform a boating safety inspection. The operator displayed signs of impairment and was arrested for BUI. The operator agreed to provide a breath sample which was over the legal limit. He was booked into the Naples Jail Center.

Officer Reams was on land patrol in Picayune Strand State Forest during Archery season. While speaking with subjects in the campground area, he saw a subject cleaning a deer at the cleaning station. Officer Reams conducted a resource inspection and noticed that the size requirements for antlers might not have been met. Officer Reams demonstrated how to properly measure antlers, and while doing so found that

the second point was 1/8 inch short of the required one inch. Officer Reams educated the young man and issued him a warning for antler requirements.

Officers Stearns was on land patrol when he noticed a vehicle hidden out of sight in an area known for poaching. The registered owner of the vehicle had previous violations for poaching in the state forest last year. Officer Stearns remained out of sight close to the vehicle and communicated with Officers Polly, Reams, Thurkettle and Arbogast. Officers Polly and Reams entered the woods and found the subject actively picking Palmetto berries. The subject attempted to run from the officers but was quickly detained. The subject was issued several citations and was trespassed from the state forest.

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Tafoya and Investigator Garrison were on unmarked water patrol on the bayside of mile marker 66. Officer Tafoya noticed individuals diving near traps. The officers conducted a resource inspection of the vessel and found six lobster which were claimed by one individual. The individual's sleeve was dirty with what appeared to be mud consistent to that found on traps. With the suspect vessel in tow, the officers pulled the five traps they saw the individuals diving around. The traps had hand marks and missing mud consistent with the trap being recently molested. The officers separated the two divers and read them the Miranda Warning. One diver admitted to diving down and checking six traps and taking lobster from two of the traps. The individual was placed under arrest and transported to the Monroe County Jail in Marathon. He was cited for trap molesting and trap robbing.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

COLLIER COUNTY

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) of Southwest Florida spent an afternoon with the Collier County team, presenting several officers with awards for their efforts in the enforcement of Boating Under the Influence. Officers Kleis, Arbogast, Plussa, Yurewitch, Araujo, Curbelo, Oldsen, Stearns, and Conroy were among the award winners recognized for keeping the public and stakeholders of the Collier County waterways safe.

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Dube assisted the USCG Station Islamorada with teaching the “Weekender” Boating Safety Course at the Tavernier Fire Station in the Upper Keys. Officer Dube gave instruction on boating safety regulations and local laws. There were 25 students in the course ranging from 13 years old up to 64 years old. All students passed the course and were issued their state boaters license.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

MONROE COUNTY

FWC dispatch received an emergency call of an overturned aluminum vessel in the vicinity of Key Largo Dry Rocks, with five persons in the water. Later dispatch received a call indicating there was a Good Samaritan on a personal water craft (PWC) on scene assisting the persons in the water. Officer Rhoda and Officer Baumgartner responded from John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park. Officer Maldonado arrived on scene within 20 minutes near Key Largo Dry Rocks to find five persons in the water clinging to the capsized fourteen (14') feet aluminum vessel. The Good Samaritan on the PWC rescued a dog from the overturned vessel site. Officer Maldonado rescued four persons from the water. Officer Rhoda and Officer Baumgartner arrived on scene moments later and rescued the vessel owner and assisted with the vessel recovery. Tow Boat US Key Largo arrived on scene shortly after and assisted with the vessel recovery. All vessel occupants were rescued without injuries.