

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



Patrol, Protect, Preserve

September 27, 2019 through October 3, 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

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officer Specialist Clark received information about an individual who left a marina in a vessel who appeared impaired and was operating the vessel recklessly. He located the vessel in Pensacola Bay and the operator showed several signs of impairment. After field sobriety tests, the operator was arrested for boating under the influence and was transported to the Escambia County Jail.

Officer Pettey and Investigator Livesay worked opening day of dove season in north Escambia County. After conducting several inspections, they found two individuals hunting over a food plot that had recently been baited. Both subjects were issued citations accordingly.

Officer Specialist McHenry completed a derelict vessel investigation. The individual was criminally charged for the violation of failing to remove the derelict vessel out of Bayou Chico. He was also cited for failing to transfer the title and for not having proper vessel lighting at night.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Officers McLeod and Swindell were patrolling the Gulf of Mexico when they saw a boat with multiple fishing rods. As they approached the vessel a subject indicated they had divers in the water. The boat was not displaying a diver down flag. The officers

conducted a resource inspection and found the subjects were in possession of an undersize gag grouper, hog fish, and flounder. The appropriate citations were issued.

Officers Hartzog and Nelson detected the odor of marijuana coming from a vehicle while conducting an inspection of several individuals fishing in Eastpoint. The owner of the vehicle told the officers he had an ounce of marijuana under the driver's seat of his vehicle. The officers located the bag of marijuana along with other drug paraphernalia inside the vehicle. The marijuana weighed 26 grams. The owner of the vehicle was charged accordingly

HOLMES COUNTY

Lieutenant Walsingham and Officers Yates, Homan and Parrish investigated a report of an illegal dove shoot on opening day. The field was baited with a mix of bird seed. Nine citations were issued for taking dove over bait and two citations were issued for over the daily bag limit. One warning was issued for no migratory bird permit.

JACKSON COUNTY

Officer Forehand located a baited dove field a few days prior to the opening weekend of dove season. On opening morning, Officers Forehand, Humphrey, Scott and Baber conducted a resource inspection of five subjects shooting doves over the baited field. All five subjects were cited.

Officer Forehand observed three subjects shooting doves in a field. Lieutenant Allen responded to assist. Once the subjects stopped hunting, they walked to a nearby residence. Lieutenant Allen responded to the residence and checked two of the three subjects. The third subject was behind the residence with a bucket containing 35 doves. Officer Forehand checked the field and found that it had been baited with scratch feed. The officer's investigation revealed 33 more doves that had been dumped in the bushes next to the residence. The suspects admitted dumping the dove in the bushes upon Lieutenant Allen's arrival at the residence. All three subjects were cited accordingly.

While on patrol, Officer Forehand located two individuals actively shooting doves. Officer Forehand walked the field and found a large amount of cracked corn and wheat seed. Both subjects were cited for taking dove over bait.

On Sunday evening, Officers Humphrey and Scott heard gunshots coming from a lake known for duck hunting. They located a truck parked near the lake and continued hearing shots past legal shooting hours. After dark, the officers heard the vehicle start up to leave. As the truck was leaving the area, Officer Scott conducted a resource stop. He found a subject who stated that he had shot at some ducks. In the meantime, Officer Humphrey located four wood ducks behind the suspect's vehicle. The suspect admitted to shooting the wood ducks and throwing them out of the truck when he saw the FWC patrol vehicle approaching. The suspect was cited accordingly.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Hahr was contacted by Eglin Range Patrol to assist with a group of subjects who were illegally harvesting palmetto berries from the Eglin Wildlife Management Area (WMA). When the officer arrived on scene, he saw five individuals in a vehicle that were in possession of 24 bags of palmetto berries. None of the subjects had a permit to harvest or transport the palmetto berries. They also did not have a permit to access the WMA from Eglin's Natural Resources Office. Officer Hahr arrested the three adults who could not be identified and booked them into the Okaloosa County Jail. The driver of the vehicle was issued a notice to appear citation and the juvenile involved was turned over to the driver with no charges filed. The palmetto berries were seized and returned to the landowner.

Officer Maltais was patrolling the Eglin Wildlife Management Area (WMA) when he conducted a traffic stop on a U-Haul truck occupied by six individuals suspected of illegally harvesting palmetto berries. When the vehicle stopped, five of the occupants fled on foot into the woods. Officer Maltais contacted the driver and saw harvest buckets, string, a few empty bags, and approximately 50 bags of palmetto berries. The driver was arrested and booked into the Okaloosa County Jail for no harvest permit and no Eglin WMA access permit. A records search revealed that the individual had been previously arrested in Okaloosa and Santa Rosa County within the last 30 days for similar offenses.

Officer Specialist Rockwell and Officer Specialist Corbin were contacted by Eglin Range Patrol to assist with a traffic stop on Eglin Reservation. During the traffic stop, the Range Patrol saw palmetto berries in the bed of the vehicle. The officers arrived on scene and all three subjects were identified. The driver of the vehicle did not have a driver license. None of the subjects had a harvest permit or an Eglin WMA access permit. All three subjects were arrested and cited appropriately.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Lewis was on patrol when he saw a baited hook and line tied to a tree in a manner to attract alligators. He spoke with a subject utilizing the boat ramp near the location of the baited line. The subject had a permit to harvest alligators and had placed the baited hook to see what was out there. The officer explained to him that it is a violation to hang a baited hook whether the intent is to harvest alligators or not. The subject was cited appropriately.

WAKULLA COUNTY

Officers Schulz was patrolling the Apalachicola Management Area when he saw a vehicle hidden off the side of the road. He contacted Lieutenant Kilpatrick to assist in locating the individuals and found them harvesting saw palmetto berries. Two subjects were cited for the illegal harvest of saw palmetto berries and one was arrested and booked into the Wakulla County Jail.

FEDERAL WATERS

Officers Cushing and Land were on patrol aboard the FWC vessel NW Fincat in the Gulf of Mexico. They heard the U.S. Coast Guard responding to a commercial fishing vessel in distress on VHF radio. The vessel was claiming to be under attack approximately 20 miles south of Perdido. The reporting party stated that the captain had been stabbed multiple times. A U.S. Coast Guard vessel and the Fincat arrived on scene at the same time. The captain of the commercial fishing vessel had severe wounds and was transferred to the Coast Guard vessel and transported back to shore where he was life flighted to a hospital. Officer Land boarded the vessel and determined that one of the crew members had attacked the captain with a knife and pellet gun. The crew member was arrested, and the other crew member made way for Pensacola Pass. Officers Long, Clark, and Hicks arrived on scene to assist. The fishing vessel was escorted back to shore by FWC Officers and Coast Guard. The vessel was secured at a marina in Pensacola and handed over to the Coast Guard Investigative Service (CGIS). The assaulting crew member was booked into jail by the U.S. Marshalls.

Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Nelson and Kossey were on patrol in the Gulf of Mexico approximately 15 miles south of Gulf County aboard the offshore patrol vessel Intrepid. They conducted a resource inspection on a recreational vessel and located undersize and out of season triggerfish. The appropriate citations were issued.

Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Nelson and Kossey were on patrol in the Gulf of Mexico approximately 30 miles south of Gulf County near the Madison and Swanson Marine Protected Area. They stopped a commercial bandit rig vessel and conducted a resource inspection. Upon arriving at the stern of the vessel, both occupants began throwing fish fillets and parts overboard. They continued to throw items overboard even after the officers told them to stop. The officers boarded the vessel and located pieces of red snapper fillets and red snapper on the hooks. Citations were issued accordingly.

Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Nelson and Kossey were on patrol in the Gulf of Mexico approximately 8.5 miles south of St. Vincent Island in Franklin County. They stopped a commercial shrimping vessel to conduct an inspection of their nets for Turtle Excluder Device (TED). During the inspection the officers found five violations and the appropriate citations were issued.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officers Hahr, McVaney and K-9 Officer Hutchinson responded to the Blackwater State Forrest to aid in the search of a missing adult female and three children. The officers worked throughout the night along-side the Sheriff's Office and Okaloosa County Department of Corrections K-9 teams to search the surrounding areas. The following

afternoon a helicopter was brought to assist with the search and was able to locate the female and three children in good condition on a sandbar along the Blackwater River.

Officer Hahr and Officer Specialists Cushing, Land, and Corbin, along with Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office and the United States Coast Guard, responded to a call of a missing diver approximately 10.5 miles Southeast of the Destin Pass in the Gulf of Mexico. The diver was described as a 60-year-old white male wearing a black swimsuit and a yellow air tank. When the diver did not resurface, the occupants of his vessel became concerned and called for assistance. Search patterns were being conducted when Officer Hahr located the missing diver on the surface, approximately 7.5 miles northeast of his last known location. The diver was exhausted but in good condition.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

LAFAYETTE COUNTY

Officer Boone and Fowler received a complaint about a rifle shot being heard close to Little River Wildlife Management Area. They checked several subjects in the area and determined the shot had originated from across the river on private property. Further investigation located a subject with a freshly killed doe deer. The subject confessed to knowing it was archery season and harvesting the doe deer with a .30-06 rifle. The subject was given a notice to appear for taking deer by illegal method.

MADISON COUNTY

Officer Vazquez was patrolling Twin Rivers Wildlife Management Area when he discovered a vehicle parked in a closed section of state forest land. He began searching the area and saw a subject dressed in full camouflage hunting with a compound bow. The subject was issued a citation for hunting in a closed wildlife management area.

BAKER COUNTY

Officer Burnsed and K9 Officer Gill worked an active bait site in the Osceola Wildlife Management Area. On opening morning of archery season, they located two suspects hunting over the bait. Interviews with the subjects revealed a third person had placed the bait. All three subjects were cited accordingly.

LEVY COUNTY

Officers Starling and Fox were on water patrol on the Suwannee River in the area of Fanning Springs. They observed a vessel that would turn around whenever it came within sight of the patrol vessel to avoid contact. The officers found the operator at Joe Anderson boat ramp and conducted a boating safety inspection. The operator exhibited

signs of impairment and field sobriety tasks were administered. The operator was arrested for BUI.

Officer Bell and Lieutenant Johnston were on water patrol on the Suwannee River near Otter Springs boat ramp. They observed a boat being loaded onto a trailer. A boating safety inspection was conducted after the vessel was out of the water. Officer Bell noticed several indicators of impairment coming from the operator and field sobriety tasks were administered. The subject was arrested for BUI and provided a breath sample with results of .128 and .122 BAC.

FEDERAL WATERS

The crew of the Offshore Patrol Vessel Sentinel was notified that NOAA issued a Notice of Violation and Assessment for \$4,500 in a case documented by Officers Read, Boyer and Canfield. At the time the case was made, the three officers, and Lieutenant Givens were on a federal fisheries patrol aboard the Sentinel when they saw a vessel at anchor inside the boundaries of the North Florida Marine Protected Area (MPA), approximately 60 miles east of Jacksonville. Officers Boyer, Canfield and Read boarded the vessel to conduct an inspection and found the vessel was actively fishing inside the MPA, possessed undersize gray triggerfish and almaco jack during the closed season.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

MADISON COUNTY

Officer Vazquez participated in a community event at Four Freedoms Park. There were over 60 kids and adults in attendance. Officer Vazquez provided a wildlife display that included a small gator to educate how to live safely and successfully with wildlife in Florida. Numerous questions were answered about conservation enforcement, public safety and various hunting issues.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

CLAY COUNTY

Clay County Sheriff's Office contacted K9 Officer Gill and requested his help locating evidence in an aggravated assault case. Upon arrival, Officer Gill was informed he would be looking for .45 caliber casings in an area marked beside a highway. Officer Gill deployed K9 Friar and searched the area. About 200 yards away from the marked area K9 Friar located a .45 caliber cartridge. A short distance away from the cartridge, K9 Friar located a spent .45 caliber casing. The evidence was collected by Clay County Sheriff's Office.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

LEVY COUNTY

Officers Hilliard and Willis were in the area of Yankeetown when they received a call about a vessel taking on water in the barge canal channel. They launched their patrol boat and began to search for the vessel. When they arrived on scene, they discovered the vessel had sunk and the operator was in the water wearing a life jacket. Officer Hilliard lifted the subject from the water into the patrol vessel. The subject was able to make it home with only minor injuries.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer Pelzel located illegal hog traps in Bulow State Park. With the assistance of Officer Meade they watched the area. Two adult males were contacted using the traps and were cited for illegally trapping hogs within a state park and illegally feeding wildlife within a state park.

BREVARD COUNTY

Officers Maslo and Beck were on patrol along Haulover Canal when they saw a man fishing from the shoreline. The officers conducted a resource inspection and found him in possession of two snook, one over the legal bag limit of one per person. Both snook were under the legal slot size. The man also possessed one undersized sheepshead and did not have a valid fishing license or snook stamp. The appropriate citations were issued.

Officers Maslo and Beck were conducting resource inspections along a shoreline when they saw a man lying in the shade. Next to the man was a large red drum sticking out of a bucket. A measurement of the fish revealed the red drum was 33 inches in length. A citation was issued for the offense.

Officer Loeffler saw three men fishing from the shoreline and approached them to conduct resource inspections. Their cooler contained a 33-inch red drum. The appropriate citation was issued.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

BREVARD COUNTY

Lieutenant Lightsey and Officer Rasey participated in the City of Titusville's National Night Out. The public safety event was attended by over 1,500 residents. The officers

displayed a patrol vessel and patrol UTV and answered many questions about fishing and hunting regulations for the area.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Officer Wilkins and the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Marine Unit conducted a BUI detail in Tampa. Officer Wilkins and Deputies Pass and Berg made five BUI arrests over the three-day detail. In addition, twenty citations were issued for various other violations.

PINELLAS COUNTY

Officer Specialist Bibeau saw an individual fishing from a small pier and approached him to conduct a fisheries inspection. The man had a cooler which contained a small redfish. Citations were issued for violation of the executive order pertaining to the redfish closure and a warning for possession of an undersized redfish.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Winton and Lieutenant Spoede stopped a fishing vessel returning from offshore waters. An inspection revealed a mangrove snapper, mangrove snapper not in whole condition and two undersized yellowtail snapper. Appropriate citations were issued.

Officer Winton observed a subject cast netting at Lover's Key State Park. A fisheries inspection revealed the subject was in possession of an undersized redfish. Redfish are under closure due to a red tide executive order. The subject was issued a notice to appear and a warning for failure to possess a current fishing license.

Officers Garcia, Lejarzar and Lieutenant Ruggiero were on water patrol when they saw a vessel along the shoreline with three people on board. The vessel appeared to have engine trouble and the officers approached to assist. A cast net and other fishing gear were on board and the boat did not have any registration numbers. The owner of the boat said he did not have any registration and he never had the boat titled to him. The officers were able to identify the boat which had not been registered since 2001. Appropriate citations were issued for the violation.

Officers Garcia, Lejarzar and Lieutenant Ruggiero were approached by a group of young people participating in a kids' fishing clinic. The officers took time to put on an impromptu fishing and boating clinic. The kids had good questions about fishing, were taught how to safely remove hooks and learned about conserving wildlife.

Officer Price previously arrested a man for BUI. The man had several alcohol related convictions and was cited for felony boating under the influence and refusal to submit to

a breath test. The Lee County courts adjudicated him guilty of felony boating under the influence. He was fined \$3,333 and sentenced to 30 days in jail, two years of probation and a mandatory rehab program. His vessel was also impounded for 90 days.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

LEE COUNTY / HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Officers Hughes, McCormack, Knutson, Alvis and Lieutenant Wells conducted a multiday, directed conservation patrol on the Offshore Patrol Vessel Gulf Sentry. They departed Marco Island and worked federal waters north to Tampa Bay. The crew focused on federal and state fisheries and inspected commercial and recreational vessels. They encountered: a recreational vessel in possession of undersized red grouper; a commercial vessel using reef fish as bait; a vessel that did not have a federal reef fish permit on board and was also not outfitted with required turtle mitigation gear; and a commercial longline vessel with several violations. The appropriate citations were issued.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

HARDEE COUNTY

Officer Franks spoke to the Hardee County Sheriff's Office Explorer Post 400. He spoke to the group of fifteen about law enforcement careers and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). He discussed the responsibilities of FWC officers and the agency's mission regarding search and rescue, resource protection, investigations and research to better Florida's ecosystem and provide public safety services. The group was given an opportunity to ask questions and got a first-hand look at an agency airboat.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

MARTIN COUNTY

Officer Willems was dispatched to a trespassing complaint adjacent to Hungryland Wildlife Environmental Area (WEA). The complainant stated that an individual trespassed on their property and then entered Hungryland WEA to hunt. Once on scene, the subject was located, and his tree stand was approximately 75 feet away from the private property. The area in Hungryland WEA is a no hunting zone that extends approximately a quarter mile from the private property. The individual was cited appropriately.

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Thirteen officers with an aviation unit came together to work Operation Bird Bust, a detail targeting the opening day of dove season. They concentrated on seven different dove field locations and checked 171 individuals. Numerous violations were encountered, resulting in five misdemeanor arrests, three infractions and 24 warnings being issued. One individual was found in possession of cocaine during an inspection and was arrested. While checking one location, officers encountered an individual having a stroke. He was given medical attention until EMS could arrive and transport him to the hospital.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Norbrothen saw a vehicle driving in an area closed to vehicular traffic without a Special Use License (SUL) from the South Florida Water Management District. He observed the subjects until they stopped and began fishing in the reservoir. During a fisheries inspection, the subjects were asked for their SUL granting them vehicle access to the area. The subjects said they did not have a SUL and gained access through the locked gate by waiting for another car to unlock it and then followed them through. The officer explained the vehicle access rules for the area and issued a written warning for not having the SUL.

Officer Hudson responded to a wildlife alert at the Juno Beach Pier about two subjects keeping bonefish and undersize pompano. He located the subjects and found them in possession of three undersize pompano and one bonefish. The subjects were given notice to appear citations for the violations.

Officer Brodbeck was on vessel patrol offshore of West Palm Beach and encountered a group of personal watercraft (PWC). A boating safety inspection found two of the PWC's had no registration. One vessel displayed Florida registration numbers and a dealer decal for Wisconsin. Officer Brodbeck documented the vessels and operators and conducted a follow up interview later in the week. The operators were issued criminal UBC's for improper use of dealer registered vessels and a notice to appear citation.

Officer Hudson was conducting fisheries inspections on 1000 North Dock in Jupiter. He saw two subjects fishing and approached to conduct an inspection. As he approached, one subject attempted to throw a bag with fish into the water. The two fish in the bag were undersized mangrove snapper. The two subjects received misdemeanor citations for interference with an FWC officer, possession of undersized mangrove snapper, and expired saltwater shoreline fishing licenses.

Officer Brodbeck was on vessel patrol offshore of West Palm Beach when a vessel was observed with spearfishing equipment. A resource inspection found a cooler with two large barracuda and a black grouper. The black grouper measured less than the required 24 inches and the vessel limit for barracuda greater than 36 inches in Palm Beach County is one. The appropriate citations were issued.

Officer Brodbeck was on vessel patrol offshore of Riviera Beach when a vessel was observed with fishing equipment. A resource inspection found two hogfish, one of which was undersized. The appropriate citations were issued.

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol near Lake Worth when a vehicle was observed driving erratically and at a high rate of speed. A traffic stop was initiated to address the violation and the driver appeared to be impaired. FHP Trooper Sayih, a Drug Recognition Expert, arrived on scene as backup and to conduct field sobriety tasks. A consensual search of the driver's belongings revealed two capsules containing fentanyl, as well as syringes and other drug paraphernalia. The driver was arrested and cited for possession of a controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia, driving under the influence, refusal to submit to a urine test, refusal to sign a criminal traffic citation, and driving on a suspended driver license.

Officer Brodbeck responded to a complaint regarding a subject trespassing on South Florida Water Management District property at Stormwater Treatment Area 1 West. Upon arrival, the officer was able to locate the subject in a vehicle behind a locked gate. The appropriate citation was issued.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Brodbeck was on vessel patrol near Peanut Island when a swimmer was observed being pulled away from his anchored vessel by fast moving currents. Officer Brodbeck quickly positioned the patrol vessel to grab the swimmer, who appeared to be in distress. The subject was exhausted but otherwise in good health and was returned to his vessel.

Officer Brodbeck was on vessel patrol near Peanut Island and saw a Palm Beach Sheriff's Office (PBSO) Marine Unit assisting a PWC in distress. Officer Brodbeck arrived on scene, helped two subjects into the PBSO vessel, and secured the PWC which was full of water to the FWC vessel. The subjects rented the PWC from a person on Peanut Island. Officer Brodbeck and the PBSO deputies escorted the vessel and its occupants back to Peanut Island. Officer Brodbeck conducted a livery inspection of the subject who had rented the PWC. The subject admitted to renting the PWCs and did not have any insurance on the vessels nor the appropriate paperwork relating to vessel safety and instruction. The livery owner received the appropriate criminal citations

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

MARTIN COUNTY

Officer Boyd and Officer Shermetaro attended an outreach event with the Treasure Coast Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts. The officers spent the morning helping scouts learn

about fishing and boating rules. The Fish-O-Ree event was a success as many scouts from the Treasure Coast area fished for their first time and learned to fish responsibly.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Investigator Fernandez conducted a check on an individual hunting dove. He discovered a pile of grain next to subject. The subject admitted to knowing about the bait and still decided to hunt. The appropriate citations were issued.

Lieutenant Yanez and Officer Hernandez saw three subjects setting up to dove hunt near some trees. They inspected the subjects and found a pile of grain. The subjects admitted to knowing that the grain was there and still decided to hunt. The appropriate citations were issued.

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Thompson conducted a vessel stop and the operator appeared to be impaired. After conducting field sobriety tasks, the operator was arrested for BUI.