

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Division of Law Enforcement Weekly Report



Patrol, Protect, Preserve

May 22, 2020 through May 28, 2020

This report represents some events the FWC handled over the last week; however, it does not include all actions taken by the Division of Law Enforcement.

NORTHWEST REGION

CASES

BAY COUNTY

Officer Specialist Brady, Officer Gates and Lieutenant Goodwin were conducting JEA patrols in the Gulf of Mexico off Panama City Beach when they saw a vessel with multiple people on board actively fishing. As the officers approached the vessel it began to move away and came to a stop only after blue lights were activated. During a resource inspection of the vessel, four red snapper were found hidden in the bilge of the vessel. The captain of the vessel was issued a citation for possession of red snapper during closed season.

Officer Specialist Brady, Officer Gates, and Lieutenant Goodwin were conducting JEA patrols in the Gulf of Mexico off Panama City Beach when they saw a vessel with two people actively fishing. The officers conducted a resource inspection of the vessel and found black snapper and gag grouper in a cooler. Gag grouper is closed to harvest at this time. The captain of the vessel took responsibility for the violation and was issued a citation.

Officer Rice received a complaint of an individual that had harvested what was thought to be an undersized sailfish at the Russell Fields City Pier on Panama City Beach. Officer Rice called Lieutenant J. Allen who was near the pier. Lieutenant Allen went to the pier and located the person who harvested the fish. The harvester said he had given the fish to someone on the pier who cleaned it and left. The identity of this person was not known to the harvester. The harvester was educated about the need to report the

harvest of the fish within twenty-four hours. As Lieutenant Allen was leaving the pier, he conducted resource inspections of multiple individuals. During one of these inspections he located an individual that was still actively fishing. The inspection revealed a hand size piece of sailfish fillet in a cooler under a tackle bag. The individual was issued a citation for possession for sailfish in other than whole condition.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officers Cushing and Land were on water patrol near Bayou Texar. They observed an individual beach his vessel at the public boat ramp. The operator fell as he stepped out of his vessel, got up, and began staggering to his vehicle in the parking lot. Officer Land stopped the individual before he could leave to drive his vehicle. Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks (SFST) were conducted and the operator was arrested for BUI.

Officers Cushing and Land were on patrol in state waters of the Gulf of Mexico south of Pensacola in the offshore patrol vessel. They conducted a resource inspection on a vessel with multiple people on board and located eight red snapper and three gray triggerfish. The season is currently closed for both species. The appropriate action was taken in reference to the violations.

Officers Cushing, Land, Matechik, Allgood, Graves, and Manning were on patrol in several different vessels, including an unmarked vessel and offshore patrol vessel. They patrolled waters targeting illegal harvest of red snapper and located many vessels and individuals possessing red snapper in closed state waters. They issued 18 citations for possession of red snapper, multiple fishing license citations, interference with a Fish and Wildlife Commission officer, multiple boating citations and 35 warnings.

FEDERAL WATERS

Officers Cushing and Land were conducting patrols in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico. The officers witnessed a vessel at anchor with dive gear and spear guns in view. When the officers pulled alongside the vessel, the captain claimed his anchor was stuck and placed his vessel in gear moving away. The captain made a sharp turn and officers witnessed occupants at the stern of the vessel dumping items overboard. Officer Land retrieved a gag grouper, gray triggerfish, and a Ziploc bag of fillets floating behind the vessel. The grouper and triggerfish both had spear marks. Appropriate citations were issued for the violations.

Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Nelson and Raker were on patrol in federal waters south of Dog Island. They stopped a recreational vessel with two occupants and located red snapper during closure. One of the individuals had an expired fishing license and neither had the Gulf Reef Fish Angler permit. The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Nelson and Raker were on patrol in federal waters approximately 12 miles south of Dog Island. During the approach of a vessel, they

observed an individual run from the port side of the vessel to the starboard side. The officers moved to the starboard side while continuing to approach and observed an item being thrown overboard. A bag of red snapper fillets was retrieved. Red snapper is currently closed to harvest. A resource inspection located gag grouper during federal closure. The appropriate action was taken to handle the violations.

Officers Matechik and Rockwell were patrolling in federal waters south of Grayton Beach when they observed a fishing vessel. They approached the vessel to conduct a resource inspection. During the inspection undersized greater amberjack were located in an ice box on the vessel. The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Nelson and Raker were on patrol in federal waters and stopped eight vessels to conduct resource inspections. All the vessels possessed gag grouper during federal closure. One vessel possessed undersized greater amberjack. The appropriate action was taken regarding the violations.

Officers Matechik and Rockwell were patrolling federal waters when they observed a fishing vessel south of Grayton Beach. There were multiple individuals on the vessel actively fishing. As they approached and engaged the emergency blue lights, one subject ran to the stern of the boat and dumped something into the water. Chunks of fish fillets were observed sinking into the water. One red snapper and one undersized scamp were recovered from the water. A resource inspection located two gag grouper and an undersized red snapper and two individuals had fishing license violations. The appropriate action was taken for all the violations.

Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Nelson and Raker were on patrol near St. Vincent Island. They conducted six inspections on commercial shrimping vessels. The officers inspected the vessel's turtle excluder devices (TED's) that are required in the nets to assist with turtles escaping. Two of the vessels had significant TED violations. The appropriate action was taken in reference to the violations.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Officers Hartzog and L. McLeod were conducting offshore water patrol within federal waters when they observed a vessel with rods on board. The officers stopped the vessel to complete a resource inspection and found three gag grouper during Federal Closure. The captain was cited accordingly.

Officers Travis and Kossey were conducting offshore water patrol within federal waters and observed a vessel with multiple subjects actively fishing near K Tower. A resource inspection found three gag grouper during Federal Closure. The captain was cited accordingly.

Officers Travis and Kossey were conducting offshore water patrol within federal waters near K Tower and observed three subjects on board a vessel actively fishing. They conducted a resource inspection of the charter trip with two paying customers present. It

was found that the captain had failed to register his vessel commercially and did not have a federal charter license or federal reef fish permit. The captain was cited accordingly.

LEON COUNTY

Officer Specialist K. Pekerol was on patrol at the Highway 12 landing on Lake Iamonia. A vessel with two occupants approached the landing, saw the officer, and turned around and went back out into the lake. About an hour later the vessel came back to the landing and Officer Pekerol conducted a resource inspection. The two occupants had six bass. Four of the bass were over 16 inches and the appropriate citations were issued. The two illegal bass in the live well were photographed and released alive back into the lake.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer McVaney and Lieutenant Molnar conducted a vessel stop on a personal watercraft due to a passenger not wearing a required personal floating device. The operator showed signs of impairment and agreed to perform Standard Field Sobriety Tasks (SFST). While in route to the county jail, the subject damaged the interior door panel of the marked Fish and Wildlife Commission patrol vehicle to escape. The subject was booked into the Okaloosa County jail on boating under the influence and criminal mischief.

Officer McVaney conducted a vessel stop for violation of idle speed zone at Crab Island. All the subjects on board the vessel was under the age of 21 and all of them admitted to drinking alcohol. When asked, the operator agreed to provide a breath sample into a portable breath tester and the result was positive for the presence of alcohol but was not over the limit of .08 BAC. Each subject on board the vessel was issued a criminal citation for minor in possession of alcohol. The operator was also issued a court date for operation of a vessel by a person under 21 years old with a BAC .02 or higher.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

CLAY COUNTY

Officer E. Barber and Lieutenant Haney were on water patrol on Black Creek and observed the operator of a vessel pulling young children on a tube in a no ski zone. They conducted a vessel stop and observed signs of impairment from the operator. The subject was arrested for boating under the influence and transported to the Clay County Jail. Because there were six young children on the vessel at the time, the operator was subject to enhanced penalties.

Officers E. Barber, J. Barber, Lange, and Lieutenant Haney were on water patrol on Black Creek and observed the operator of a PWC violate a no wake zone. A vessel stop was conducted, and the subject appeared highly intoxicated. The subject was arrested for BUI and transported to the Clay County Jail.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Investigator Bing and Officer Yates were dispatched to a call in Three Rivers Estates in reference to a witness who observed two individuals pursue and capture a fawn deer. The suspects left the scene with the deer inside their vehicle. The officers located the suspect vehicle and contacted the two men upon a traffic stop. A confession was obtained, and charges will be filed with the State Attorney's Office for deer taken out of season.

Officers Yates and McGrath received a complaint about a man catching an alligator in a borrow pit in the Osceola WMA. The complainant was videoing the man as he was intentionally catching the alligator with a piece of chicken on a rod and reel. The officers located the man and he confessed to catching the alligator. The officers charged the man for illegal possession of an American alligator. The alligator was released unharmed.

GILCHRIST COUNTY

Lieutenant Humphries and Officer Davenport were on water patrol on the Suwannee River when they stopped a vessel for a boating safety inspection. During the stop, officers saw signs of impairment and conducted a BUI investigation. The subject was found to be impaired and was arrested for BUI. He was transported to the Gilchrist County Jail and refused to provide a breath sample.

HAMILTON COUNTY

Officer Nichols assisted FHP, Hamilton County Sheriff's Office and the Department of Corrections K9 unit with a man hunt for a subject who fled on foot from FHP. After a short track, the subject was apprehended without incident.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

LAKE COUNTY

Officer Specialists Teal and Phillips were on water patrol in the area of the Hull Boat Ramp when they stopped a vessel and conducted a boating safety inspection. The officers noticed indicators of the operator being impaired during the boating safety

inspection and administered Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence and booked into the Lake County Jail.

Officer Specialists Scrambling and Shaw were on water patrol in the area of John's Lake when they stopped a personal watercraft operator for not wearing a PFD and conducted a boating safety inspection. The officers noticed indicators of the operator being impaired during the boating safety inspection and administered Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence and booked into the Lake County Jail.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer Specialist Bertalomi was on patrol in the area of Swoop Boat Ramp in New Smyrna Beach when he conducted a vessel stop for a fisheries inspection. The vessel was occupied by three subjects with rod and reels in plain sight. During the inspection, the subjects were found to be in possession of a short (less than 20-inch fork length) dolphin. Additionally, less than 20 grams of marijuana was discovered with paraphernalia. The operator was issued criminal citations for the violations.

Officer Thornton conducted a boating safety inspection on a personal watercraft (PWC) near Swoop Boat Ramp in New Smyrna Beach. The PWC was occupied by one male operator and a female passenger. The operator displayed signs of impairment and submitted to Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence and transported to the Volusia County Jail.

Officer Specialist Bertalomi was on patrol in the area of Ponce Inlet when he observed a vessel violating the posted slow speed zone. Officer Bertalomi conducted a vessel stop to address the violation and saw signs of impairment from the operator. Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks were conducted, and the operator was arrested for boating under the influence and transported to the Volusia County Jail.

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

While patrolling a St. Johns County pond, Officer Lawshe observed a subject using a cast net to catch freshwater gamefish. Upon inspection, the subject was in possession of two black bass. The appropriate citation was issued.

MARION COUNTY

Senior Officer Simpson was patrolling Lake Weir after dark when he observed a personal watercraft operating without navigational lights and violating the boating safety no wake zone. Officer Simpson contacted the operator to conduct a vessel safety inspection and observed several indicators suggesting the operator's normal faculties were impaired. Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks were conducted and the operator was arrested for boating under the influence and transported to the Marion County Jail.

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Navarino observed two vehicles parked on the banks of the St. Johns River, south of the Hatbill Road Boat Ramp. The subjects were throwing cast nets from the shoreline. A resource inspection revealed both groups were in possession of freshwater gamefish taken with cast nets. The individuals were cited accordingly.

Officer Navarino observed an out of state pickup truck parked on the side of Highway 50 with a large ice box in the bed of the truck. Officer Navarino followed a trail through the wood line and located four individuals cast netting in the canal connected to the St. Johns River. The subjects possessed twenty-three freshwater gamefish (20 panfish and three black crappie). The four individuals were cited for taking freshwater gamefish by illegal method.

Lieutenant Lightsey was at Kelly Park Boat Ramp when he observed a vehicle operator driving erratically in the parking lot while attempting to recover his vessel. Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks were conducted, and the operator was arrested for operating a motor vehicle while normal faculties were impaired. He was transported to the Brevard County Jail.

Captain Bonds was on water patrol when he observed a large pontoon boat violating a manatee slow speed zone. During the vessel stop he observed several signs of impairment from the operator. Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks were administered, and the operator was arrested for operating a vessel while normal faculties were impaired and transported to the Brevard County Jail.

ORANGE COUNTY

Officer Mendelson and Resource Investigator Loeffler were on airboat patrol and conducted a resource inspection on a group of individuals fishing with cast nets on the shoreline of the St. John's River in Christmas. The inspection revealed several different species of freshwater gamefish that were caught with the cast net including bluegill, red-ear sunfish and other panfish. One individual was issued a notice to appear for the illegal method of taking freshwater gamefish.

Lieutenant Riley and Officer Hocker were conducting ATV patrol along the St. Johns River near Catfish Hotel when they observed several individuals actively throwing cast nets. A resource and license inspection revealed that one of the individuals had harvested freshwater gamefish with his cast net. None of the individuals could produce valid freshwater fishing licenses. The individuals were cited accordingly.

Lieutenant Riley and Officer Hocker were on ATV patrol along the St. Johns River near Catfish Hotel when they observed ten individuals along the west shoreline of the river. Three of the individuals were cast netting and three were collecting freshwater mussels. A resource inspection revealed that the group had a cooler filled to the brim with freshwater mussels and several tilapia. Officer Hocker canvassed the area and found a

shopping bag filled with more freshwater mussels nearby in the tree line. Two of the individuals were issued citations for no freshwater fishing licenses and three were cited for over the bag limit of freshwater mussels. The group was in possession of 1,934 freshwater mussels, which put them 1,874 Mussels over their daily bag limit. The 1,874 mussels were photographed and returned to the St. Johns River.

Officer Johnson was on land patrol in Tosohatchee Wildlife Management Area (WMA) conducting resource inspections when she stopped a vehicle on Beehead Road for being in the WMA during closed hours. Upon checking the individual's driver's license, he was found to be driving while his license was suspended without knowledge. The subject was issued a notice to appear.

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY

Officer Marroquin and Reserve Officer Ricculti were traveling northbound on A1A just after entering Sebastian Inlet State Park when they observed a vehicle pass them driving northbound in the southbound lane at a high rate of speed, in a careless manner. A traffic stop found the driver to be impaired. The operator was arrested for driving under the influence.

OSCEOLA COUNTY

While patrolling Lake Hatchineha, Officer Stelzer observed a vessel with no registration numbers. During the stop Officer Stelzer observed the operator showing signs of impairment. After conducting Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks, the operator was arrested for operating a vessel under the influence and booked into the Osceola County Jail.

While patrolling Lake Kissimmee, Officer Matthews stopped a vessel for a safety inspection. During the stop Officer Matthews observed the operator showing signs of impairment. After conducting Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks, the operator was arrested for operating a vessel under the influence and booked into the Osceola County Jail.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officer Hazelwood and Officer Morrison were on water patrol and stopped a vessel to conduct a boating safety and resource inspection. The operator did not possess the USCG required safety gear and was issued three written warnings for the violations. The resource inspection revealed the operator of the vessel was in possession of eight gray snapper. Three of the snapper were less than ten inches in length. There were

also two sheepshead which measured less than twelve inches. The operator was issued a notice to appear for possession of undersized gray snapper and possession of undersized sheepshead.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

While on water patrol, Officer McCormack observed two individuals fishing from a boat and conducted a resource inspection. The vessel owner was in possession of an out of season redfish and had multiple vessel carriage requirement violations. Officer McCormack wrote the owner of the vessel a misdemeanor citation for the resource violation along with a warning and civil infraction for vessel carriage requirements.

Officer McCormack observed an individual fishing from a bridge and conducted a resource inspection. The subject possessed an undersized and out of season snook. Officer McCormack wrote the individual a misdemeanor citation for a resource violation along with two warnings for an undersized snook and not landing it in whole condition.

Officers Berg, Wilkins and marine deputies from the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office worked to promote safe boating on the Alafia River. The officers targeted general boating safety and were on the alert for operators boating under the influence. This patrol team arrested two subjects for boating under the influence and issued nine UBC's and wrote nineteen warnings for general boating violations.

While on water patrol on the Alafia River, Officers Pettifer and Rorer observed a person operating a jet ski on plane in a marked slow speed zone. The operator was not wearing a life jacket which is required when operating a jet ski. The officers initiated a vessel stop and detected signs of impairment from the operator. Officer Pettifer conducted standardized seated field sobriety tasks, and the operator was arrested for operating a vessel while under the influence. He was transported and booked into the Hillsborough County Jail.

While on patrol on Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) lands in Hillsborough County, Officer Rorer observed two men walking along a wood line carrying rifles. She approached the individuals and initiated a resource inspection. The two rifles were pellet guns and the men admitted to hunting doves on SWFWMD lands which is closed to hunting. The subjects were issued citations for violations of regulations pertaining to SWFWMD lands.

LEE COUNTY

Officers Price and Johnson and Lieutenant Ruggiero were on water patrol when they observed a commercial blue crab vessel pulling traps. The vessel did not appear to have the required blue crab endorsement numbers displayed. While conducting an inspection, the officers discovered the fisherman was in possession of a large quantity of undersized blue crabs and a small number of clams. When the officers asked the fisherman about the vessel's endorsement numbers, he presented a small board and a

lid to a five-gallon bucket as the aerial display for his trap numbers which were hidden by traps and other gear on the vessel. The officers counted the undersized crabs and discovered the fisherman was well over the bycatch limit of undersized crabs. A history check on the fisherman revealed he had been warned three times previously for not displaying the endorsement numbers on his vessel correctly. He was issued a misdemeanor citation for the violation and a warning for the undersized crabs. The over the bycatch limit undersized crabs were released into the water.

Officers Price and Garcia observed a skiff speeding through a slow speed manatee zone on the Caloosahatchee River and stopped the vessel for the violation. During the stop, the officers learned the man was commercially fishing for blue crabs and was in possession of a basket of large crabs and a basket of undersized crabs. The fisherman also had several cast nets on the deck of the vessel and was in possession of freshwater game fish. The fisherman had a vessel license and not an individual license. The fisherman said his work vessel had broken down and the vessel he was operating did not display any commercial blue crab endorsements. The man was issued a misdemeanor citation for not displaying the blue crab endorsement number and for possession of over the bycatch limit of undersized blue crabs. He was also issued a warning for possessing freshwater game fish and cast nets aboard the vessel.

Officer Self received an anonymous tip from an unknown caller about an illegal livery operating in Ft. Myers Beach. He responded to the listed address after verifying an online advertisement for the livery business. At the address, he located two personal watercraft (PWCs) matching the advertisement and conducted a livery inspection with the property owner. Multiple violations were discovered, and the owner was educated on the relevant regulations for operating a livery. He was also cited appropriately for the violations.

Officers Self and Furbay were conducting fisheries inspections at a public boat ramp in Lee County. While inspecting one vessel, they located an undersized and out of season gray triggerfish. The vessel owner was issued the appropriate citation. The fish was photographed for evidence and returned to the resource.

Lieutenant Spoede was on patrol in Lee County when he saw four individuals walking out on the mud flats near the Sanibel billboards collecting items off the ground and placing them in a container. Based on his observations and the extremely low tide, he suspected that the individuals were collecting live conch shells. When he approached the individuals, one dropped what appeared to be two shells out of his hand into the mud and a second individual immediately dumped the contents of the container on the ground and quickly walked away from the pile. When Lieutenant Spoede examined the contents which had been dumped, he identified approximately 146 live conch shells, several tulip snails, two clams, a lightening whelk and two undersized, out of season stone crabs in whole condition. The individual in possession of the container was issued the appropriate citations. The crabs and live shells were returned to the water alive and unharmed.

Officer Self and Captain Carpenter were on water patrol in Lee County when they observed a vessel operating without any navigation lights well after sunset. They stopped the vessel to address the violation and noticed signs of impairment from the operator. Officer Self conducted field sobriety tasks with the operator and arrested him for operating under the influence. The operator was transported to Lee County Jail.

MANATEE COUNTY

Officers Gonzales and Wesche were patrolling the South Skyway fishing pier when they observed a subject fishing. A resource inspection revealed the subject was in possession of four gray snapper less than ten inches in length. Additionally, the subject was using the gray snapper as bait. The fish were seized as evidence and the subject was issued a notice to appear for possession of gray snapper less than ten inches long as well as a written warning for using Gulf reef fish as bait.

Officer Dalton was patrolling near Jewfish Key when he stopped a vessel to conduct a boating safety inspection. During the stop the operator showed signs of impairment and a BUI investigation was conducted. The operator was arrested for BUI and booked into the Manatee County Jail.

PASCO COUNTY

Officer Rothchild and Senior Officer Pulaski were on water patrol in the area of Gulf Harbors when they observed a vessel violating the idle speed zone. The officers stopped the vessel to address the violation and noticed indicators of impairment from the operator. Seated Field Sobriety Tasks were conducted, and the operator was arrested for boating under the influence.

PINELLAS COUNTY

Officers Cason and Cocke observed a PWC operator not wearing a PFD and violating the slow speed zone within Clearwater Pass. The officers attempted to stop the PWC to address the violations, but the operator sped away, beached the PWC and fled on foot. With the help of Clearwater PD, the subject was apprehended in a nearby parking garage. A warrants check revealed that the suspect was wanted in Pinellas County for failure to appear on drug charges. The subject was arrested and booked into Pinellas County Jail.

The Memorial Day Holiday weekend produced a mix of sun and fast-moving storms which kept the Pinellas Bravo Shift crew busy. Officers arrested one subject for BUI, issued eleven UBC's, seventeen written warnings, five resource citations, and conducted ten search and rescue missions.

SARASOTA COUNTY

Officer Morrison was patrolling near a bridge on Siesta Key when he observed two men fishing. A resource inspection revealed one of the men to be in possession of one out-of-season and undersized redfish, one undersized gray snapper and one undersized sheepshead. The fish were seized for evidence and the fisherman was issued a notice to appear for possession of redfish in violation of Executive Order 20-05 and two written warnings for the undersized gray snapper and sheepshead.

RESCUES

PASCO COUNTY

Members of the Pasco County Sheriff's Office, United States Coast Guard and the FWC worked together to search for an overdue boat. The individuals had left the previous evening for a late night, offshore fishing trip. After several hours of searching, the boaters were located via telephone as they returned from offshore. Officers Petru and Angelis contacted the vessel occupants at the mouth of Pithlachascotte River to conduct a welfare check. All the occupants were accounted for with no injuries.

PINELLAS COUNTY

Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, Tarpon Springs Police Department and numerous FWC officers responded to the Rabbit Key area of the Anclote River. The response was regarding a report of a distressed person in the water off of Pointe Alexis. A search ensued of the area by water and air and officers were unable to locate any distressed persons. Officers Petru and Angelis noticed a vessel towing several kayaks and learned the individuals had called 911 as they were being pulled out to sea by a strong current and into rough congested waters. Officers Petru and Angelis, and Investigator Williams aided with returning the individuals and their kayaks to Fred Howard Park.

Lieutenant Rosas overheard a broken a distress call on the marine VHF regarding a sailing vessel that had capsized in a storm with three individuals in the water. Lieutenant Rosas responded to the scene and rescued two subjects. The third subject was recovered by a civilian vessel. The vessel was later righted and towed to St. Pete Marina.

Officers Cason and Cocke responded to a report of an overdue personal watercraft (PWC) that was last known to be in the vicinity of Caladesi Island. The operator had run aground and hadn't been heard from for several hours. With the help of a USCG helicopter, the officers located the subject standing in less than a foot of water with his broken down PWC. The officers took the subject on board their patrol vessel, provided first aid, and towed his PWC to the original launch site.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

Officers Dudas and Lopez were on water patrol offshore of Dania Beach and conducted a marine fisheries inspection on a vessel. The occupants had been spearfishing and were in possession of an undersized red grouper. One individual received a criminal notice to appear and the fish was taken as evidence.

Officers Harris and Seldomridge were conducting a boating accident investigation at Hillsboro Inlet when another vessel ran into the North Jetty at their location. The vessel became stuck on the shallow rocks of the jetty. The waves breaking over the jetty pushed the stuck vessel across the shallow water. The officers contacted the vessel to see if anyone was injured and start the boating accident investigation. While interviewing the operator, the officers noticed signs of impairment. Officer Harris conducted field sobriety tasks and arrested the operator for boating under the influence.

Lieutenant McDonald and Officer Fuller responded to a complaint of a market selling egg bearing blue crab. They determined the market was selling live egg bearing blue crabs and seized 403 egg bearing blue crabs. The crabs were released into the water and the store was cited accordingly.

GLADES COUNTY

Officer Specialist Allen was on patrol on the Lake Okeechobee when he contacted a subject fishing from a small boat. The man was from out of state and had 40 panfish in a cooler. He stated he had more in his truck and that he had been catching 50 panfish per day for the last several days. Officer Specialist Allen accompanied the subject to his truck where he had an additional 89 panfish which put the man 29 panfish over his legal possession limit of 100. He was issued a notice to appear in court for the violation.

MARTIN COUNTY

Officer Hudson was on vessel patrol near the Stuart Sandbar when he observed a PWC operating without a registration decal. The officer conducted a vessel stop and the operator exhibited signs of impairment. Standardized Field Sobriety tasks were utilized, and the operator was arrested for BUI and booked into the Martin County Jail.

Officer Willems was on land patrol and received an anonymous call regarding two individuals keeping over the bag limit, and undersized snook at the St. Lucie Locks. When Officer Willems arrived, he conducted a resource inspection on two subjects fishing in the area. The subjects were in possession of eight snook and the bag limit is one per person per day. The largest snook measured 25.5 inches, while the size limit is between 28 and 32 inches. The subjects were charged accordingly for the violations and the fish were released back to the water alive.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Loach was on State Road 80 when he noticed vehicles parked at the entrance to South Florida Water Management District Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) 1 East. It was past sunset, and the area is closed to the public after sunset. He waited and later observed six people leaving the closed area carrying two large buckets, a cooler, and a cast net. A resource inspection revealed ten game fish hidden in the buckets. The six subjects were issued citations for illegally keeping game fish caught with a cast net, being in an STA after sunset, and not having freshwater fishing licenses.

Officers Brodbeck and Partelow were on vessel patrol in the ICW and conducted several fisheries inspections. The officers found 13 undersized fish and two license violations. The subjects were cited accordingly.

Officers Norbrothen and Merizio were on patrol of Corbett Wildlife Management Area (WMA) on the last day of the Executive Order prohibiting motorized vehicles from operating in the WMA due to COVID-19. Their patrol resulted in two criminal citations, seven non-criminal infractions, and 11 warnings. All the violations were vehicle use issues despite the Executive Order still being in place.

Officer Ames received a complaint about a construction company breaking ground at a site known to have gopher tortoises. Officer Ames walked the construction site and found 8 active burrows. The project manager was present at that time and was advised to stop work for the next 28 days and to start the Disturbed Site Permit process. Construction work stop immediately, and the project manager started the permit process.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

BROWARD COUNTY

Officers Seldomridge and Harris were on water patrol on the ICW when they observed smoke coming out of the cabin of a vessel nearby. They came alongside the vessel and removed all seven occupants and a dog and retreated to safety. The vessel became engulfed in flames and Fort Lauderdale and Broward Fire Rescue arrived to fight the blaze.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Investigators Stiffler and Fernandez, K-9 Officers Nathanael Matir-Negron and Mag, Officers Hart, McKinley, and Hernandez and Lieutenants Caraker and Dominguez conducted a targeted enforcement action with a focus on South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and coastal canals. They found violations which

included animal poaching, theft, trespassing, and discharging of firearms on state and district lands. Their teamwork recorded thirteen misdemeanors, seventeen civil infractions, with 135 users checked.

Port Investigators conducted two closed season lobster inspections: one from Colombia and one from Dominican Republic. Both shipments were found to have undersized lobster. The Miami investigations team inspected each shipment, measuring over 11,000 lobsters. The Colombia shipment had 2,463 (29%) undersized lobster, and the Dominican Republic shipment had 235 (9%) undersized lobster. Each importing company was cited accordingly.

Officers Presser and Saavedra were on water patrol near Haulover Sandbar and observed an individual operating a personal watercraft (PWC) on plane in a posted slow speed manatee zone. The officers conducted a vessel stop to address the violation and conduct a vessel safety inspection. The officers learned that the PWC had been rented and was missing required safety equipment. The officers followed the PWC back to the Haulover Boat Ramp to speak with the renter. The renter was arrested and charged with five misdemeanors pertaining to livery safety violations.

Officers Presser and Cartaya were on water patrol at the Pelican Harbor Boat Ramp and observed a vessel returning to the ramp with a registration decal that had expired as of May 2018 and improperly displayed FL numbers. The vessel was stopped to conduct a vessel safety inspection and to address the registration display violations. The operator showed signs of impairment and Seated Field Sobriety Tasks were utilized. The operator was arrested for BUI and cited accordingly for the other violations.

MONROE COUNTY

Captain Dipre, Lieutenant Hein, and Officer Hoppe were on state water patrol in the Islamorada area. Captain Dipre conducted a stop on a vessel for a boating safety inspection and the operator exhibited signs of impairment. The operator was arrested for BUI.

Officers Hoppe, Thompson and Jacobs, along with Lieutenant Hein were on state land patrol on Card Sound Road. The officers conducted multiple resource inspections and found an individual with a felony warrant for his arrest. The subject was taken into custody without incident and transported to a detention facility.

Lieutenant Yetter was on the Channel 5 fishing pier near Long Key and observed two men struggling to carry a heavy cooler and fishing gear back to their vehicle. A fisheries inspection revealed two goliath grouper. One of the subjects admitting to catching the fish and was cited and issued a notice to appear in court for the violations.

Officers Thompson and Hoppe were on water patrol near Whale Harbor channel when they received a report of a vessel striking the mangroves, almost hitting another vessel, and then leaving the scene near Snake Creek. The officers arrived and observed a

vessel matching the description in a nearby canal. During the vessel safety inspection, the operator exhibited signs of impairment and sobriety tests were utilized. The operator was arrested for BUI, taken to the FWC's Whale Harbor Station where he refused to provide a breath sample, and transported to the Monroe County Jail.

Officer Jacobs was conducting resource inspections at Steamboat Creek when he observed two individuals in the mangroves. One individual was snorkeling in the water with what appeared to be a pole spear in his hand. The other was sitting in the mangroves holding a bucket. A resource inspection revealed eight spiny lobster, a broken mangrove branch, and a bottle of rum. The lobster had been punctured (with the mangrove branch), and two of the eight were undersized. The individuals were cited accordingly.

COLLIER COUNTY

Captive Wildlife Investigators Alford and Corteguera responded to an escaped capuchin monkey. On their second day of searching, they were able to chemically immobilize the animal and return it to its owner. An investigation revealed that human error was the cause of the escape. The owner stated the monkey was becoming difficult to care for, and that he would place it at another facility. A warning was issued for the escape.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

MONROE COUNTY

Officers Dube, Weichhan and Investigator Mattson assisted Mayor Forrester and Monroe County State Attorney Ward with passing out hot meals and other grocery items to locals in need. A collaboration of Feeding South Florida, Monroe County Sheriff's Office, SOS Foundation, the Ocean Reef Community Foundation, the United Way of Collier and the Keys, distributed free drive-through food distribution at the St. Justin Martyr Catholic Church in Key Largo.

PIO Officer Dube along with Officers Thompson and Hoppe participated in the first Coral Shores High School graduation parade in Islamorada. Officers drove marked patrol trucks in the parade along with EMS, Fire Rescue, and various local law enforcement agencies to send off the graduating Senior Class of 2020. Seniors received their diplomas as they passed the high school along the parade route. Despite the pandemic, this graduation ceremony -- although not traditional -- was a huge success and will become a new tradition at the school.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

MONROE COUNTY

Investigator Mattson along with Officers Janzen, Jacobs and Pestka responded to the Florida Keys Wild Bird Center in Tavernier. The Bird Center had a project manager from

a roofing company drop off baby terns that had hatched, as well as eggs to their facility. FWC officers talked to the roofing company owner and told them that they would have to stop the project in order to protect the birds. Officers accompanied wild bird center employees to the condo in Islamorada to relocate the birds and eggs.

Investigator Mattson obtained a warrant for a Louisiana man after Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries saw an Instagram video that showed him capturing a brown pelican at Robbie's Marina of Islamorada and attempting to remove an identification band on the pelican's leg. The investigation revealed the subject captured the pelican within the boundaries of a state park, violated the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and tormented an animal in a cruel and inhumane manner. The man turned himself in to the Monroe County Jail and the case will be prosecuted by the Monroe County State Attorney's Office.