

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Division of Law Enforcement Weekly Report



Patrol, Protect, Preserve

July 3, 2020 through July 9, 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.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

ALACHUA COUNTY

Officer Stanley was on patrol when he received information about two subjects in a section of Grove Park WMA where there have been problems with illegal artifact collection. Officer Stanley was able to locate the individuals and discovered they had collected over 100 artifacts from the management area. Appropriate citations were issued.

Officer Drew was conducting fishing license checks on several individuals on the north end of the county when a records check revealed one of the subjects had an active warrant. Officer Drew attempted to contact the individual who resisted commands and fled into the nearby woods. Officer Britton was able to make positive identification of the individual and file appropriate charges with the State Attorney's Office.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Senior Officer Johnston was on patrol in Lake City when he observed a group of individuals preparing to launch their vessel into Lake Desoto. The individuals were missing life jackets and one subject didn't have a valid freshwater fishing license. Officer Johnston educated the subjects on boating safety requirements and provided the one subject with a list of locations and options to purchase a fishing license. The subjects assured Officer Johnston they would take care of the issues and asked to take a selfie with the officer to which he agreed. Approximately six hours later and roughly 20 miles

away, Officer Johnston was conducting surveillance along the Santa Fe River when he observed the same subjects operating their vessel and actively fishing. Upon inspection, the vessel had no life jackets onboard and the one subject still had not purchased a freshwater fishing license. The appropriate citations were issued.

CITRUS COUNTY

Lieutenant Jones responded to a report of a vessel with an injured person onboard. It was reported that the injured man fell in the vessel while fishing and punctured a lung. Lieutenant Jones located the vessel and transferred the injured man onto his patrol boat and transported him to a near-by boat ramp where EMS was waiting.

Officer Ulrich was on patrol in Crystal Bay, a popular area to harvest scallops. The officer observed a vessel being operated within 300 feet of an anchored vessel, with divers in the water. Officer Ulrich stopped the vessel, contacted the operator and issued a misdemeanor uniform boating citation for reckless operation of a vessel.

DIXIE COUNTY

Officer Specialists McDonald and Nichols were on water patrol in Rocky Creek when they conducted a boating safety/resource inspection on a vessel that was not displaying a registration decal. During the inspection, two red drum were observed in a fish box, one being undersized. Appropriate citations were issued.

DUVAL COUNTY

Officer LeMaster was conducting reef fish enforcement when he encountered a boat 12 miles east of Jacksonville heading towards port. The operator stated that they had a couple vermillion snapper on the vessel. A subsequent inspection revealed several illegally harvested red snapper and undersize vermillion snapper. The owner was issued federal notices of violation for possession of red snapper in closed area and possession of undersize vermillion snapper.

Officers Schirbock, LeMaster and Shearer were conducting reef fish inspection 35 miles east of Mayport and observed a man dumping fish overboard as they approached in a marked patrol vessel. Several red snapper were observed sinking and one 26 inch red snapper floated to the rear of the vessel and was recovered. The subject was cited for interference with FWC inspection and possession of red snapper in closed area.

Officers Cheshire and Sankey were conducting offshore patrol out of Mayport inlet. They observed a vessel anchored near a reef approximately 10 miles offshore. The two fishermen onboard were bottom fishing. When the officers inspected the vessel, they found six red snapper out of season, and a bag of unknown fillets. The subjects were issued the appropriate federal citations.

Officers Cheshire and Sankey observed a vessel displaying a dive flag near a reef approximately 20 miles offshore. Once alongside the vessel, they observed spearguns and with three subjects on board. A resource inspection of the vessel located an undersized gag grouper. One of the subjects on board admitted to spearing the fish and received the appropriate citation.

Lieutenants Arkin and Wright, and Officers Shearer and Sankey assisted the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office with a homicide investigation at Pope Duval Fish Management Area. The call was initially a suspicious vehicle parked at the west end of the management area. When Officer Shearer and a Jacksonville Sheriff's Officer arrived in the area, they discovered a deceased male floating in the pond. JSO is lead investigating agency.

Officers Burnsed and Schirbock conducted JEA patrol from Mayport. They conducted several fisheries inspections which found five undersized red snapper and one undersized vermillion snapper. One of the subject vessels was stopped while returning from a King Fishing Tournament and a fisheries inspection revealed a bag full of ice and fillets. When the subjects were questioned about the fillets, they admitted they were red snapper. The fillets were seized and all subjects were issued appropriate citations.

Officer Schirbock was conducting JEA patrol at Mayport Boat Ramp as boats were returning from offshore fishing trips. Most of the vessels inspected had kingfish aboard, due to participation in the Youth Kingfish Tournament. One vessel maneuvered to the check-in dock in a careless manner, cutting in and out of vessels waiting to check-in. Officer Schirbock conducted a stop on that vessel and completed a fisheries inspection. During the inspection he found two legal black seabass and one undersized sailfish. The subjects were issued appropriate citations.

NASSAU COUNTY

Officer Barry was on patrol when she observed the operator of a vehicle driving erratically and swerving all over the road. Officer Barry initiated a traffic stop and asked the driver to perform field sobriety exercises. The subject was arrested for driving under the influence of alcoholic beverages.

Officer Sweat was on patrol in the area of the Sister's Creek when he saw a vessel approaching, violating the slow speed zone. The vessel was stopped, and an inspection was conducted. The operator exhibited signs of impairment and Field Sobriety Tasks were conducted. The operator was arrested and transported to the Duval County Jail where he refused a breath sample.

UNION COUNTY

Officers Fanelli and Dasher were patrolling local hunting clubs, when they located a place where dogs were cast on deer. They searched the area and located a hound with

a collar. They continued searching the area and heard dogs actively chasing deer. They got ahead of the dogs and waited on them to cross the road. While waiting, the owner of the dogs arrived and admitted to allowing his dogs to pursue deer. The owner was cited for allowing dogs to run deer during closed season.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

LAKE COUNTY

Officer Specialist Scrambling was on patrol and received information regarding a subject cast netting and keeping bass. Upon arrival, he observed two subjects fishing and conducted a resource inspection. The subject caught two striped bass and a largemouth bass with a cast net. All three fish were photographed and returned to the water. The subject was cited appropriately.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer Vanas and Officer Fletcher responded to a call that someone shot a bear in their backyard. When Officers Vanas and Fletcher arrived at the residence they were informed by the homeowner that he shot a bear in his back yard with a .22 rifle. Officers Vanas and Fletcher entered the woods and located the bear. Footage from a security camera in the backyard was also recovered and showed that at the time of the shooting the bear did not pose a threat to homeowner or his property. Charges were filed with the State Attorney's office.

MARION COUNTY

Senior Officer Simpson was patrolling Lake Weir after sunset when he observed a personal watercraft operating without navigational lights. Officer Simpson contacted the operator to conduct a vessel safety inspection and address the navigational light violation. While completing the safety inspection, Officer Simpson observed several indicators suggesting the operator's normal faculties were impaired. After administering several field sobriety tasks, Officer Simpson arrested the operator for boating under the influence and the subject was transported to the Marion County Jail.

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer J. Humphrey created a targeted enforcement action in reference to information about a man was taking snook out of season. After watching the subject several times, Officers Humphrey, Mendelson, and Navarino observed the man catch an over the slot size snook, out of season, which he did not release. The subject was apprehended and a notice to appear was issued for the violations.

Lieutenant Lightsey observed a vessel in violation of a local manatee zone and conducted a vessel stop for a safety inspection and to address violation. During the inspection, the operator displayed several signs of impairment. Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks were conducted, and the subject was arrested for boating under the influence (BUI) and issued a citation for the manatee zone violation.

Captain Bonds and Officer Beck were on water patrol near Sebastian Inlet when the officers observed a vessel pass their patrol vessel. As the vessel passed, the operator looked at the patrol vessel and immediately left the steering wheel and walked to the front of the vessel. Captain Bonds and Officer Beck conducted a vessel stop and observed signs of impairment from the operator. Seated Field Sobriety Tasks were administered, and the subject was arrested for boating under the influence (BUI).

Lieutenant Lightsey observed a vessel returning to a local boat ramp and approached to conduct a safety inspection. The operator exhibited signs of impairment and after Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks (SFST) were administered, he was arrested for boating under the influence (BUI).

ORANGE COUNTY

Officer Navarino observed several individuals fishing with casting nets under a bridge. Upon conducting a freshwater resource check, one of the individuals was found to be in possession of freshwater game fish. The individual was in violation of the freshwater game fish legal take law, of hook and line only. The suspect was issued a criminal citation for the violation.

OSCEOLA COUNTY

Officer Hocker was conducting water patrol on East Lake Tohopekaliga when he conducted a vessel safety inspection. Upon speaking with the operator of the vessel, Officer Hocker observed signs of impairment. Seated Field Sobriety Tasks were utilized, and the operator was arrested for boating under the influence (BUI). The operator refused the breath test and was booked into the county jail.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Lieutenant Bibeau, Officer Pettifer and Officer Criswell advised Officer McCormack of a possible ongoing illegal livery operation in Hillsborough County. FWC officers had conducted a vessel stop on two PWCs earlier in the day and during the course of their interactions suspected an illegal livery service. Later, at a local boat ramp, Officer McCormack observed a black Jeep Cherokee with a tandem PWC trailer and two

PWCs matching the description the three officers had provided to him earlier in the evening. With the assistance of Investigator Williams and Officer Burks, Officer McCormack interviewed the PWC's owners and the group which had been operating the PWCs. Through the course of the investigation, both owners admitted to renting their PWCs. Appropriate citations were issued with notices to appear at the county courthouse.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While on land patrol Lieutenant Bibeau observed an individual actively spearfishing and conducted a fisheries inspection as the individual began to walk back to their vehicle. Lieutenant Bibeau found the individual to be in possession of an undersized snook which was harvested with the use of a spear. Lieutenant Bibeau issued the individual the appropriate citations for the fisheries violations.

While on land patrol Lieutenant Bibeau observed a fisherman in a kayak return to the shoreline. He contacted the individual and conducted a fisheries inspection. Lieutenant Bibeau found the individual to be in possession of two undersized and out of season seatrout and issued the subject the appropriate citation and warning for the fisheries violations.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

HIGHLANDS COUNTY

Officers Stephens and Smith were on water patrol on Lake June near the sandbar. The officers were approached by another vessel reporting a man floating in the water near the shoreline. The officers maneuvered their patrol vessel toward the shore and located an unresponsive male subject floating upright with his face just above the waterline. Highlands County EMS was requested through FWC dispatch. The officers entered the water and pulled the subject's head above water to make sure his airway was clear. At first the subject was unresponsive, but shortly after the officers assisted him, he began talking. The officers noticed a strong odor of an alcoholic beverage emitting from the subject. EMS arrived, evaluated the man and they determined he was highly intoxicated; however, the subject refused medical treatment. One of the subject's friends came to the sandbar and took him home.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

MARTIN COUNTY

Officer Hudson responded to a call at the Jensen Beach Causeway. He received information about a subject in a vessel who caught a large grouper in the Intracoastal

Waterway (ICW) and did not return it alive and unharmed. The officer located a vessel in the area matching the description and observed two subjects fishing on the vessel. The officer pulled up alongside the vessel and asked the subjects if they caught anything, to which they stated they caught a goliath grouper and a croaker. One of the subjects admitted to catching and keeping the goliath grouper and had been previously warned for undersize and illegal fish. That subject also received notice to appear citations for possessing undersize and illegal fish after the warnings for the same. The subject was placed into custody and booked into the Martin County Jail.

Officer Hudson received a call from Officer Gouveia about people hunting out of season in Dupuis Wildlife Environmental Area (WEA). Officer Hudson located three subjects exiting the woods walking towards their truck with rifles, shotguns and dressed in full camouflage. The subjects admitted to hunting out of season and were issued notice to appear citations.

Officer Hudson was dispatched to a boating accident at Sandsprit Park. The officer arrived and observed a vessel completely capsized while tied up to the dock. The vessel had one occupant on board who was also the operator. Martin County Sheriff's Office had a mobile surveillance tower set up at Sandsprit Boat ramp that documented the subject operating the vessel, tying up the vessel with great difficulty and then putting the vessel on full plain while still tied up which capsized the vessel. The operator showed multiple signs of impairment and standardized field sobriety tasks were utilized. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence and booked into the Martin County Jail.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

While on patrol of J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area (WMA) Officers Norbrothen and Merizio observed two subjects on an unregistered side by side vehicle operating in an area commonly known as the school board property. When the subjects saw the officers, they drove off into the woods at a high rate of speed. The officers waited for the side by side to exit from an illegal non-designated exit of the WMA and conducted a traffic stop. The incident resulted in a criminal citation for illegal entry/exit of the WMA and several non-criminal citations including possession of an unregistered vehicle, possession of alcohol outside of a camp, operating a vehicle off a named and/or numbered roadway while not engaged in hunting, and not being in possession of a day use fee receipt or management area permit.

While on patrol of J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area (WMA) officers Norbrothen and Merizio observed two dirt bikes illegally exit the WMA along a canal levee. The officers conducted a traffic stop and had adults come to the scene due to the young age of the subjects. The subjects each received citations for not being in possession of a day use fee receipt or management area permit and written warnings for possession of an unregistered vehicle, operating a vehicle off a named and/or numbered roadway while not engaged in hunting, illegal entry/exit, and no motorcycle endorsement on their license.

Officers Partelow and Brodbeck were on patrol approximately eight miles offshore of Boynton Inlet when a charter fishing vessel was observed actively harvesting fish. A vessel stop was initiated to conduct a resource inspection. Officer Brodbeck discovered two undersize dolphin located in the fish box. The captain of the vessel was also unable to produce a valid Federal Atlantic Dolphin/Wahoo charter permit or a valid registration certificate. The captain received a resource citation for possession of undersize dolphin and warnings for the remaining violations.

Officers Partelow and Brodbeck were on patrol approximately eight miles offshore of West Palm Beach when a vessel was observed actively engaged in fishing. A vessel stop was initiated to conduct a resource inspection. Upon checking the fish on board, one undersized dolphin was discovered. The captain of the vessel was issued the appropriate citation.

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol at night in Palm Beach Inlet when a vessel was observed returning from offshore with fishing gear in plain view. A vessel stop was initiated to conduct a resource inspection. Officer Brodbeck located an undersized mutton snapper and an African pompano. A resource citation was issued for the undersize African pompano and a written warning was issued for the undersize mutton snapper.

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol at night near Peanut Island when a vessel was observed anchored with three occupants actively fishing. A vessel stop was initiated to conduct a resource inspection. Upon seeing the FWC officer, one occupant quickly threw two fish overboard. Officer Brodbeck recovered the two undersized mangrove snapper and issued the subject a resource citation for the violation. A written warning was issued for interference with an FWC officer.

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol at night near Peanut Island when a vessel was observed operating without navigation lights. Upon approaching the vessel, the officer observed that the vessel was dragging its anchor off its stern while underway. Upon contact with the vessel operator, numerous indicators of impairment were detected. The operator refused to perform seated field sobriety tasks and was arrested for Boating Under the Influence (BUI). The operator was booked into the Palm Beach County Jail and warnings were issued for no navigation lights, expired registration, and no registration on board.

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol near Peanut Island when a vessel was observed operating in a reckless manner. The operator of the vessel was aggressively changing directions in a swim area where no vessels are allowed. The erratic operation of the vessel caused the overloaded passengers to be thrown about, endangering their safety. A vessel stop was initiated to conduct a safety inspection and to check on the wellbeing of the operator and passengers. Upon contacting the operator, who was unable to produce enough PFD's for the number of passengers, numerous indicators of impairment were detected. After refusing to perform seated field sobriety tasks, the

operator was arrested for Boating Under the Influence (BUI). The operator was booked into the Palm Beach County Jail and a citation was issued for insufficient number of Personal Flotation Devices (PFD's). Warnings were issued for reckless operation, expired registration, and improper display of registration numbers.

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol approximately nine miles offshore of Lake Worth when a vessel was observed with two occupants actively fishing. A vessel stop was initiated to conduct a resource inspection. Upon inspecting the fish box, three undersize dolphin were found. The vessel had on board a measuring device which correctly listed the minimum size limit for dolphin as 20 inches fork length. The vessel owner was issued the appropriate citation.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Hudson and Boyd responded to a call for an injured leatherback sea turtle. Officer Hudson arrived on scene and secured the area and communicated with volunteers on site. Officer Boyd transported biologists to the scene on his vessel and oversaw the safety of the volunteers assisting with the rescue. After the volunteers and biologists secured the sea turtle in a rescue stretcher, Officer Boyd towed the sea turtle to the shoreline where it was moved to a rescue vehicle and taken to a facility for care.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Officers Dunn and Saavedra were patrolling the area of Crandon Park Marina and observed fishing equipment on an unregistered vessel with three occupants. A fisheries inspection revealed nine undersized mutton snapper in white plastic bags in a backpack. The fish were gutted and eight were scaled. The subjects were all charged accordingly and the operator was also cited for not having life jackets on board, a sound producing device, and operating a unregistered vessel. The occupants were issued warnings for not having saltwater fishing licenses.

The FWC inland squad worked together to enforce violations on state lands and state waters (canal systems). Violations addressed included no freshwater fishing license, no shoreline fishing license, operating motorized vehicles on South Florida Water Management property, launching a vessel from a non-designated boat ramp, and boating safety violations on PWC's operating in the canal systems. Twenty misdemeanors, thirty warnings, and twenty infractions were issued during the detail.

Officers Presser and Sample were on water patrol near Bear Cut when they stopped a vessel displaying fishing gear returning to Crandon Park Marina. A resource inspection located two barracuda, fifteen grunts, one mangrove snapper, one porgy, three parrotfish and one porkfish in a fish box on the vessel. The operator was issued a Notice to Appear for failing to land tropical ornamental marine life species alive.

Officers Presser and Sample responded to a Wildlife Alert on the Venetian Causeway regarding two individuals catching and keeping undersized snapper. The officers contacted the two individuals as they were getting into their vehicles to leave. There were multiple fishing rods leaning against one of the vehicles and a bucket and cooler in plain view in the back seat of the vehicle. A resource inspection revealed seven undersized mangrove snappers and one undersized mutton snapper. A notice to appear and appropriate citations/warnings were issued.

COLLIER COUNTY

While Officer Conroy was conducting water patrol, she observed a vessel violating a Manatee Slow Speed Zone. Officer Conroy stopped the vessel to address the violation and noticed several indicators of impairment from the operator. Seated Field Sobriety Tests were administered, and the operator was arrested for Boating Under the Influence. The vessel was released to a non-impaired driver and the subject was transported to the Collier County Jail.

Officers Curbelo, Kleis, and Lieutenant Balfour were conducting traffic and speed enforcement in the Panther Zone at the entrance to Collier Seminole State Park. Officer Curbelo stopped a vehicle for a traffic violation, and suspected the driver was impaired. Field sobriety exercises were conducted, and a search of the vehicle revealed a bag of marijuana. The subject was arrested for Driving Under the Influence and possession of marijuana, less than 20 grams. The subject provided a breath sample, which revealed no alcohol on the subject's breath. Officer Specialist Kleis, a Drug Recognition Expert, collected a urine sample from the driver. A drug influence evaluation was conducted on the subject. Officer Kleis confirmed that the subject was impaired by drugs. The subject was booked into the Collier County Jail and the marijuana was seized as evidence.

While on water patrol in Wiggins Pass near Delnor Wiggins Pass State Park, Officer Plussa observed two Personal Watercraft (PWCs) on full plane in an idle speed, no wake manatee zone. The officer stopped both operators for the speed violation. They were cited for not having a boating safety card and the wake zone violation.

While conducting overnight water patrol at Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park, Officer Plussa observed an unlit vessel docking at the park boat ramp after park closing time. Officer Plussa stopped the vessel to address the navigation lights violation and issued the operator citations for unlit vessel operation and children aboard the vessel not wearing life jackets.

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Piekenbrock and Investigator Alvarez were traveling to Marathon on land patrol when they stopped to inspect three individuals oceanside of Missouri Key. Investigator Alvarez observed these individuals earlier snorkeling without a dive flag and with a floating cooler. Upon inspection, the individuals were in possession of 41 queen conch, three out of season spiny lobster (one was legal size), and no fishing licenses. All of the subjects were issued notices to appear and infraction citations for not having a required fishing license.

WILDLIFE RESPONSE

COLLIER COUNTY

FWC received a report of a bear disturbing multiple trash cans in a neighborhood in North Naples. Officer Plussa responded to the scene and applied aversion techniques that directed the bear back into the woods behind the homes. The officer provided the caller and the neighbors bear information pamphlets.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Dube responded with staff from the Marathon Turtle Hospital to an injured sea turtle approximately five miles offshore bayside of Conch Key after a recreational boater observed the turtle in distress. A USCG boat crew from Marathon assisted in the recovery of the adult green sea turtle which was brought to shore at Outdoor Resorts and transported to the Turtle Hospital for treatment.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

MONROE COUNTY

Lieutenant Peters was notified of an Area to be Avoided (ATBA) Violation of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) Act. Lieutenant Peters began tracking the vessel "Regulus", an 82.6 Meter (272') platform supply vessel (PSV) transiting inside the Area to be Avoided by Vessels over 50 Meters. Lieutenant Peters observed the vessel on the automatic identification system (AIS). AIS is required by SOLAS for all passenger ships irrespective of size. The vessel was heading west towards the Dry Tortugas. An investigation revealed the vessel is owned by the Tidewater Marine Services, LLC. Officer Keifer and Lieutenant Peters, intercepted the vessel inside the ATBA south of Maryland Shoal in the Lower Keys. The captain drastically altered his course towards the outer boundary line of the ATBA as the officers closed on the vessel. The officers collected all the pertinent information to document the violation. The captain was issued a Federal Notice of Violation and Assessment (NOVA) for violating the ATBA of the FKNMS.

Investigator Mattson received a call from MCSO Islamorada Village Marine Deputy Sanchez in reference to a vessel grounding. MCSO Deputy Sanchez told Investigator Mattson that a large 46-foot Viking named the "Cajun Queen", hailing port Fort Myers, Florida had run aground on the reef, Sanctuary Preservation Area (SPA) known as Cheeca Rocks. Deputy Sanchez advised that the boat was at a local marina on land. Deputy Sanchez also provided Investigator Mattson with the coordinates where the vessel had run aground. Investigator Mattson and Officer Janzen went to the provided coordinates and took video/photos of the reef area that had been damaged by the vessel. Investigator Mattson recovered a propeller blade as evidence from the reef and went to the local marina where the boat was dry docked. While at the marina, Investigator Mattson matched up the prop that he found with the damage on the vessel. The case will be turned over to NOAA Federal agents.