

FWC DIVISION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT FIELD OPERATIONS

**WEEKLY REPORT
April 17 - 23, 2009**

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

BAY COUNTY

Officer David Erdman was conducting water patrol in the vicinity of Grand Lagoon when he encountered a small vessel violating the idle speed zone. Upon inspection, Officer Erdman determined that the operator was impaired and conducted a boating under the influence investigation. During questioning the operator provided false identification. In addition to the BUI and idle speed/no wake zone violation, he was cited for giving false information to a law enforcement officer.

Officer Jeff Gager worked an unusual boating accident over the past weekend. Beachgoers called 911 after finding a man attempting to make his way to shore in heavy surf. EMS was summoned and the man was admitted to a local hospital for water inhalation. The individual was cobia fishing alone on a borrowed vessel sight fishing from the vessel's tower. As he attempted to climb down from the tower, a wave pitched the boat tossing him into the water. The boat continued on its way west under power for another 130 miles before running out of fuel and then drifting ashore at Fort Morgan, Alabama. The operator is recovering and the vessel is being salvaged by Sea Tow.

Officer Joe Chambers was working Deerpoint Lake when he encountered a subject rolling a marijuana cigarette inside his truck while parked at the Highpoint Boat Ramp. A citation for possession of cannabis and possession of drug paraphernalia was issued. Later, Officer Chambers checked a fisher who had a cloud of cannabis smoke around him as he fished. When confronted about the smoke cloud, the fisher produced three marijuana cigarettes and was found to have no fishing license. Citations were issued and the contraband seized.

Lieutenant Jay Chesser was patrolling the Econfina Wildlife Management Area when he discovered remnants of a methamphetamine lab. The Bay County Sheriff's Office was contacted for clean-up of the hazardous material.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officer Keith Clark checked a vessel as it returned to Navy Point Boat Ramp. Officer Clark found an oversize red drum along with dive gear on the vessel. The oversized red drum showed signs of illegally being harvested with a spear gun. The vessel operator first denied spearing the drum, but later admitted to the violation. He was issued notice to appear citations for the violations.

Lieutenant Brian Lambert and Officers Fred Rondeau and Keith Clark were on water patrol of Pensacola Bay. They observed a commercial shrimp vessel and attempted to stop it for a safety and quality control check. Upon seeing the FWC patrol vessel, one of the occupants dumped a basket of blue crabs overboard. Lieutenant Lambert and Officer Clark boarded the vessel. The individual admitted the basket contained blue crabs, some were egg bearing. One large cooler of shrimp was not iced properly. Officer Clark issued a notice to appear citation for interference with an FWC officer to the individual who dumped the crabs and a notice to appear citation to the vessel operator for the shrimp not being properly iced.

Officer Keith Clark was on patrol in the Gulf of Mexico when he inspected a vessel for safety equipment and a fisheries check. The occupants of the boat were asked twice what they had

caught and they claimed that they had only caught mangrove snapper and trigger fish. An in-depth inspection revealed red snapper fillets on the vessel. One of the occupants admitted catching the fish and cleaning it. No other fish on the vessel were cleaned. The occupant who caught the fish explained he knew red snapper season did not open until June, but wanted to keep the fish because it was one of the biggest he had ever caught. Officer Clark issued notice to appear citations to the occupant who claimed responsibility of the fish.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Fred Rondeau checked individuals fishing from the bank under the I-10 bridge on Escambia Bay. As he approached, one individual kicked a cigarette pack off the sea wall. Officer Rondeau recovered the cigarette pack and found less than 20 grams of cannabis inside. The subject admitted that the cannabis was his. Officer Rondeau issued a notice to appear citation for the violation. The cannabis was seized and it is being stored as evidence.

Officer David Jernigan teamed up with three officers from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to check campsites in the Blackwater Wildlife Management Area. Just after dark, the officers located a large group of campers near Coldwater Creek. While in the parking lot near the campground, the officers observed two subjects sitting in a car. When one of the subjects exited the car, they observed a set of scales. A subsequent search revealed approximately 173 grams of cannabis, approximately one brick. Both subjects were arrested for possession of felony amounts of cannabis and booked in the Santa Rosa County jail.

After completing a felony drug arrest, Officer David Jernigan and three DEP officers were walking down the trail near Coldwater Creek to the campsites when they observed one subject walking out. When the man saw the officers, he hurriedly tried to hide something in his pocket. Officer Jernigan asked him what he put in his pocket and the man told him that it was marijuana. A search revealed approximately 5 grams of cannabis and a glass smoking pipe. The subject was issued a notice to appear for the violation.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY COPS

Officer Andy Maltais spoke to a group of individuals at a boating safety class conducted by the Power Squadron in Gulf Breeze. Twenty seven people were in attendance. Officer Maltais discussed boating safety topics and answered many related questions.

An FWC officer taught the laws portion of the Hunter Safety class in Holly.

Officer Sarah Hahner spoke to a group of kids at Gulf Breeze Elementary School. Officer Hahner and K-9 Sadie demonstrated K-9 Sadie's tracking skills. Officer Hahner answered numerous questions concerning FWC and the canine program.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Ryan Nelson responded to a complaint at Twin Hills Park in Crestview reference subjects cast netting panfish. Upon arrival, Officer Nelson identified two subjects in possession of two hundred and twenty panfish (bream) caught with a cast net. Both subjects were issued citations for taking game fish by an illegal method, over the bag limit of panfish, and no freshwater fishing license.

Officers Pete Rockwell and Alan Kirchinger observed two divers under the Destin Bridge. When the divers observed the officers' presence, they discarded their spear fishing equipment and started walking towards their vehicle. They were later identified and issued a citation for spear fishing in a prohibited area.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

ALACHUA COUNTY

Officer Joseph Johnston was on foot patrol targeting illegal fishing activities at the Holden Park Boat Ramp on Little Orange Lake. From a concealed location, he observed two fishermen come to shore in their fishing vessel from a day's fishing trip. Upon making contact with the fisherman, Officer Johnston found the two subjects to be in possession of 33 black bass, which is 23 over their daily limit. Five of the fish were found to be under the legal size limit. The fishermen were sighted for the violations.

A few days later, Officer Joseph Johnston was on foot patrol once again at the Holden Park Boat Ramp. From a concealed location, Officer Johnston watched a fisherman as he returned to shore in his fishing vessel. Officer Johnston made contact and found the subject to be in possession of 13 black bass. The fisherman was sighted for the violation.

DUVAL COUNTY

Officer Chris Holleman conducted a quality control inspection at a retail seafood dealer. The inspection revealed that the dealer was selling spotted sea trout during the closed commercial season. The dealer produced trip tickets showing that the sea trout were purchased from a local commercial fisherman nine months ago. Officer Holleman seized the spotted sea trout and issued the owner of the business a citation requiring him to appear in court.

Reserve Officer Jim Pickard and Officer Sandy Blackburn checked two people fishing from the pier at Little Jetties Park. As they approached the fisherman they noticed a small cooler and a tackle box. The officers found that there were no fish in the cooler, but noticed a large red drum in the bottom of the tackle box. Officer Blackburn asked the fisherman who had caught the red drum and if he had measured the fish, the subject said, "No" and that he didn't know what kind of fish it was. The red drum was measured and found to be oversize. The fisherman was cited for the violation and the fish was returned to the water alive.

Officer Aaron O'Reilly and Officer Jamie Stowell were on water patrol at Sister's Creek and the St. John's River. Their primary enforcement plan was to enforce the manatee zone in the area. While educating the public on the zones, they were also performing fisheries inspection on the vessels they stopped. One vessel had six undersize black sea bass on board, ranging from six to ten inches. Citations were issued for the offense.

Officers Adam Small and Tom Tucker were on patrol in the area of Nassau Sound and Sawpit Creek when they observed a vessel approaching the boat ramp. The officers noticed that the vessel operator appeared to be nervous. Upon inspection, the vessel operator was in possession of five undersize black drum. The fish ranged from ten to thirteen inches. The appropriate citations were issued.

Officer Adam Small was dispatched to a complaint called in by an anonymous caller. The complainant reported that there were two fishermen keeping undersize red drum at San Carlos Creek. When Officer Small arrived, he approached two subjects fishing. When asked, one subjects stated that they had some fish. Upon inspection of their catch, Officer Small discovered two undersize red drum. Officer Small asked one of the subjects if he had caught both fish, the subject stated that he caught only one of the fish, and that the other subject had caught the other red drum and had given it to him. The other individual confirmed the other subject's statement, but added that he did not know if the fish was legal, so he gave it to the other fisherman. Both fishermen received citations for possession of undersize red drum.

Officer Tom Tucker was on patrol on Heckscher Drive near Sisters Creek where he noticed one individual fishing from shore underneath the bridge. Officer Tucker made contact with the individual and asked him if he had caught any fish. The individual confirmed that he had caught some trout. Officer Tucker inspected the cooler and found an undersize spotted sea trout. After digging through the ice, Officer Tucker also discovered an undersize red drum at the bottom. When asked about the undersize red drum, the subject stated that he had forgotten about the red drum. Appropriate citations were issued.

Officers Tom Tucker and Adam Small were driving east on Heckscher Drive near Clapboard Creek when they saw a car approaching them head-on in their lane of travel. Officer Tucker, and the vehicle traffic behind him, was forced off the road to avoid a head-on collision. Officer Tucker turned around and attempted to stop the vehicle. The Jacksonville Sheriff's Office was notified and joined in on the attempt to stop the vehicle as it continued onto Interstate 95. Sheriff's deputies deployed stop sticks which stopped the vehicle at the corner of Beach Boulevard and University Boulevard. When the defendant was asked why she didn't stop, she stated that her car wouldn't stop. She also stated that she was on medication but hadn't taken it lately because she felt better. The defendant was charged with fleeing and eluding, aggravated assault and numerous traffic violations.

BAKER COUNTY

Officer Donald Bailey and Lieutenant Gary Knowles were patrolling the north shoreline of Ocean Pond when they stopped a vessel to conduct an inspection. Lieutenant Knowles obtained the vessel's registration from the operator when he detected a faint odor of burnt marijuana emanating from both operator and registration. Lieutenant Knowles asked the subject if he had any cigarettes. The subject removed a pack of cigarettes and a lighter from his pants pockets. Lieutenant Knowles noticed that the operator was extremely nervous and his hands shook uncontrollably. Lieutenant Knowles asked the subject if he had anything else that he needed to

present. Without uttering a response, the operator opened a tackle box and retrieved a small bag containing 7grams of marijuana along with a glass pipe. Officer Bailey cited the subject for possession of less than 20 grams of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia.

MADISON COUNTY

Lieutenant Bruce Cooper and Officers Randy McDonald and Rob Goley worked the initial stage of the Withlacoochee River flood when they responded to three separate calls for help. Lieutenant Cooper and Officer McDonald retrieved two men and three dogs from two homes that were flooded and being deluged with rising waters. The two men and their pets were rescued by vessel in the swift rising waters. Officer Rob Goley, with the assistance of two Lee volunteer firemen, rescued a third subject who was clinging to a tree in the fast rushing river. The subject fell from a capsized boat and was clinging for life when Officer Goley arrived by vessel.

NORTHEAST REGION

BREVARD COUNTY

Felony title fraud charges were direct filed on a man that was originally encountered by Lieutenant Robert Rowe on January 19 at the Port St. John boat ramp. Lieutenant Rowe stopped the vessel for a manatee speed zone violation and determined there was sufficient evidence to initiate a title fraud investigation. The information was turned over to Officer Cory Bridwell on January 22, who worked closely with a local FWC investigator over the next few months to determine the chain of events.

Officers Bridwell, Bryan Lee, Harold Lanier and two FWC investigators responded to Parrish Park boat ramp on the Indian River to investigate an accidental drowning. Assistance was also provided from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Officer Jane Whaley. A man had encountered difficulty swimming after he jumped into the water to retrieve a handicapped child who fell from a boat. The unresponsive man was pulled from the water and immediately transported to the boat ramp. Medical personnel obtained a pulse while en route to Parrish Medical Center in Titusville; however, the man succumbed to his injuries later that day. The victim was a retiree from Orlando Police Department and Seminole County Sheriff's Office.

LAKE COUNTY

Officer Jared Beard issued a citation to a man on a dirt bike who had entered and exited the Seminole Forest Wildlife Management Area, which is closed to all off-road vehicles.

MARION COUNTY

Officer Kat Kelley was checking vessels and fishermen at the Ocala boat basin when she received numerous complaints about a group of men partying on the Silver River. Officer Kelley went home, retrieved her vessel and returned. She made contact with two subjects in separate vessels and they were found to be boating under the influence. Both were arrested and

transported to the county jail. Another subject was found to be in possession of marijuana and was cited accordingly.

Officer Emily Vought was on water patrol on Lake Kerr checking fishermen. One vessel with three subjects on board was found to have 18 bass. The bag limit for bass on Lake Kerr is three per person. One of the fishermen took responsibility for the over-the-limit of fish and was cited accordingly. Nine of the bass were released alive.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officer Jason Semeyn was contacted by dispatch concerning a dead Osprey. Neighbors witnessed an Englewood man shoot the Osprey, and then kill it with a shovel. Officer Semeyn interviewed the neighbors and then made contact with the suspect. Initially the suspect denied any involvement and began closing his front door, but Officer Semeyn obtained a confession post Miranda warnings. The subject said he was "tired of the bird making a mess of his cars". The pellet gun and Osprey were seized and the suspect was charged appropriately.

Lieutenant Mike Frantz conducted a traffic stop on an ATV in a secluded area of Rotonda. During the stop, Frantz heard a gun shot followed by a bullet narrowly missing him. Lieutenant Frantz concluded the stop with a verbal warning, called the Sheriff's Office for back up and changed locations. In the meantime, several more shots were heard, as if someone was target practicing. The suspected shooters were located in a vehicle and stopped by officers. A hand gun was located on the front seat and several rifles were in the back seat. The two suspects claimed it must have been a ricochet that was heard. They were issued citations for openly carrying firearms and possession of an open container.

LEE COUNTY

Officer John Ruggeiro and Lieutenant Darrin Riley were guest speakers for the Cape Coral Tarpon Hunter's Club at the Cape Coral Yacht Club. The officers discussed laws and rules related to federal and state gulf waters reef fisheries including current rule changes on circle hooks, vent tools, and de-hookers. The officers talked for approximately forty-five minutes and then opened the floor for questions from the members. The meeting lasted approximately three hours and included approximately forty users.

Lieutenant Darrin Riley and Officer Gregory Bryson participated in Marine Emergence Response Training (MERT) exercises off Fort Myers Beach. Agencies participating in the exercises included: Fort Myers Police Department, Lee County Sheriff's Office, Cape Coral Police Department, Sanibel Police Department, Fort Myers Fire and Rescue, U.S. Coast Guard, and FWC. The exercises simulated boating accidents and plane crashes. Members used aviation, vessels, and rescue divers to complete the exercises.

MANATEE COUNTY

Officer Terry Noll received information that a charter boat at the 59th Street boat ramp, may be over the limit of gag grouper. Officer Noll arrived at the boat ramp, conducted a safety inspection on the suspected boat, and asked to inspect the catch. Officer Noll found nine legal

gag grouper in a cooler, with three people present on the boat. The captain of the boat said he had misread the bag limit of gag grouper. The subject was issued a citation for taking over the bag limit of gag grouper. Five gag grouper were seized as evidence.

POLK COUNTY

Officer Robert Adams and Lieutenant Lee Birge investigates a vehicle that was parked at a gate in the Hilochee Wildlife Management Area-Osprey Unit. The location was not a designated entrance for the management area. When the officers approached a nearby pond on foot, they observed two people fishing for bass with rod and reels. The Osprey Unit is open for fishing, however the area is catch and release for largemouth bass, so the officers waited for the two men to finish fishing. After about an hour, the officers watched one of the men catch a medium sized bass. The men photographed the fish and took it a short distance away. Shortly after dark, the men packed up their equipment and began walking out of the area, carrying the fish. The subject who caught the fish admitted that he read the signs posted at the entrance that the area was catch and release for bass and told the officers that he wanted to have the fish mounted, stating he thought he could "slip one out past the man". He was issued a notice to appear for the offense and the fish was returned to the water. Both men also received written warnings for illegal entry.

Lieutenant Lee Birge was on foot patrol in the Osprey Unit and heard a small caliber rifle shot come from a nearby hunt club. Unable to locate the shooter, Lieutenant Birge began checking several feeders on the property for turkey hunters. Near the second feeder, he found a vehicle parked with fresh footprints leading toward the feeder. As he approached the feeder, which had been recently filled with whole corn, Lieutenant Birge saw two turkey decoys placed in front of the feeder. A short distance away, Lieutenant Birge located the hunter, dressed in camouflage and holding a shotgun and a turkey call. Lieutenant Birge issued the hunter a notice to appear for attempting to take turkey over bait.

Officers Robert Bratton and Eric Hansberry responded to a complaint that a subject was in possession of a small alligator at a local car detailing shop. Upon arrival, the suspect admitted to the officers that he had the alligator and directed the officers to where he was keeping it. The suspect told Officer Bratton he had taken the alligator from two juveniles the night before and had planned to give it to an acquaintance to eat. Officer Bratton issued the man a notice to appear for possession of an alligator without a permit.

COPS

Officer JoAnne Adams, Officer Matt Griffith and K9 Tucker gave a presentation to Riverdale High School in Fort Myers. This was Tucker's debut performance and he did a great job!

SOUTH REGION A

No report submitted.

SOUTH REGION B

MONROE COUNTY

An investigator located a Miami man who had been avoiding civil service of a Sanctuary Notice of Violation (NOVA) for a case currently assessed at \$44,022. When the subject opened the automatic garage door of his residence, he was very surprised to see the investigator. The time limits for prosecution were about to end, but serving the NOVA will allow the case to proceed. The case involved a vessel grounding in Carysfort Reef where the vessel prop was discovered in the coral. Identifiers engraved on the prop led investigators to the owner.

Officers Jill Izsak and Anders Bergstrom conducted a fisheries inspection at Tarpon Creek resulting in a mandatory appearance to a fisherman for illegal possession of multiple undersize fish including seven yellowtail snapper, nine mangrove snapper, three schoolmaster snapper, and three gag grouper.

Officers Jill Izsak and Seth Wingard conducted a vessel inspection near Little Torch Key on a commercial crawfish vessel that revealed illegal possession of 55 out of season lobster – of these, 38 were undersize. Additionally, the fisherman failed to have an aerial display and was transporting traps during closed season. A mandatory appearance was issued.

Officer Jason Rafter stopped to investigate an abandoned vehicle by the side of U. S. Highway One in Key Largo. An FCIC/NCIC check revealed the registered owner had numerous active warrants issued through various states. In addition, the owner was suicidal, had been reported missing, and was possibly in possession of a firearm. The subject was eventually determined to be a patient in a mental facility in Key West.

COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Shawn Polly responded to a vessel accident near Naples Beach involving a sunken vessel. While underway, the owner/operator of the vessel noticed his vessel listing so he stopped to check the trim tabs. Since everything seemed to be in working order he powered up the vessel. While on plane, he heard a loud cracking noise and turned in time to see both motors rising off the stern and fall into the water. The operator called for help before the vessel sank. Naples Police Department was first to arrive and recovered the operator from the water.

Officer Dave Barrett observed a vessel with four people on board returning to the C.R. 951 boat ramp and conducted a vessel stop and fisheries inspection. When the officer asked if they had any luck fishing, they answered, "No." However, near the stern on a cutting board was a snook. One of the subjects admitted to harvesting the snook with a cast net and using the snook as bait. The subject received a citation for possession of undersize snook, failure to land snook in whole condition, and illegal method of harvest.