

FWC DIVISION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT FIELD OPERATIONS

**WEEKLY REPORT
April 24 – 30, 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

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officer Keith Clark inspected a commercial fishing vessel as it returned to Perdido Key. The inspection revealed red snapper on the vessel. A check with the Communication Center revealed the vessel's captain failed to make the proper notification that he was landing red snapper. Officer Clark contacted Special Agent Allan Coker with National Marine Fisheries Service and notified him of the federal violation. Officer Clark photographed the fish and constructively seized them. Lieutenant Brian Lambert and Officer Fred Rondeau assisted with the seizure of 197 pounds of red snapper. Federal charges are pending.

Officer Faris Livesay and Lieutenant Dan Hahr were on water patrol near Bayou Texar when they checked a fisherman returning to the boat ramp. The man stated that he had not caught anything and even suggested that he was going to have to eat his bait. A check of his cooler revealed two redfish. The man then stated that he thought that the limit was two fish. Officer Livesay issued the subject a notice to appear for over-the-bag limit of redfish.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY COPS

Officers Steve Hoomes and Faris Livesay attended the annual La Floresta Perdido Hunt Club meeting. All of the club board members were in attendance and the officers had the opportunity to get to know them. FWC Biologist Arlo Kane provided a presentation on the Quality Deer Management Plan for this area. The officers reviewed various laws and rules and answered questions. Most of the questions focused on the deer depredation program.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

After a day of water patrol, an FWC officer returned to the dock at the Navarre Beach ramp after dark. The officer observed a vessel operating without displaying the required navigation lights. Upon stopping the vessel, he discovered the operator was returning from Specter Island with his wife and young daughter on board. During the initial contact and vessel inspection, the officer observed signs of impairment from the vessel operator. Field sobriety tasks were conducted, which further indicated the operator was impaired. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence and was transported to the Santa Rosa County Jail where he refused to provide a sample of his breath for testing.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Darrell Johnson responded to a call for assistance in apprehending a suspect involved in the fatal shooting of two Okaloosa County Sheriff Deputies. Officer Johnson arrived at the scene just as the suspect was shot by Walton County Sheriff Deputies near Highway 331 and Highway 90 in DeFuniak Springs. Officer Johnson helped secure the scene and assisted with traffic control for several hours. Officer Van Barrow also responded and assisted with traffic.

BAY COUNTY

Officer Joe Chambers observed two subjects drive up in a truck and begin fishing. When he checked the individuals, each produced a Florida identification card. When the driver was asked if he had a driver's license, he said it had been stolen. A check found the license was

suspended and the fisher was previously cited for unknowingly driving with a suspended license. Officer Chambers cited the fisher for knowingly driving with a suspended license.

Officer Dennis Palmer located a 30-foot sailboat aground in a local bayou. The boat was tied to a smaller boat that was occupied by an individual. The occupant said he had “salvaged” the sailboat from Grand Lagoon and was trying to contact the owner. Officer Palmer found the owner was currently in prison. A certified letter has been sent to him concerning the derelict status of his vessel and the State Attorney’s Office will review for possible theft charges filed against the “salvager.”

GADSDEN COUNTY

Lieutenant Harry Parker and Officer Lane Bentley were conducting fishery and boating safety inspections on the Apalachicola River. A vessel occupied with two subjects attempted to leave as the officers approached. The officers motioned the vessel to stop. Once the vessel stopped, the officers identified themselves and began a routine safety and fishery check. They observed the individuals had only one fishing rod with a large treble hook attached. The subjects were in possession of several flathead catfish. Upon closer inspection, the officers observed the individuals were in possession of three shocking devices, one of which was still attached to the boat battery. The two Georgia men were issued citations for taking freshwater fish by illegal method. The fish were released alive and the shocking devices were seized.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

DUVAL COUNTY

Officer Sandy Blackburn checked a fisherman at a freshwater lake in Hanna Park who did not have a fishing license. Officer Blackburn noticed a cast net nearby and several palm branches on the ground; she also noticed a bucket with several palm branches sticking out of it. When she removed the branches from the bucket, she discovered a black crappie and four bream in the bucket. The fisherman admitted to catching the fish with the cast net. The subject was cited for using an illegal method to take freshwater fish and received warnings for no fishing license and possession of a cast net in Hanna Park.

Officers Aaron O’Reilly and Bob Burris were conducting inspections of vessels returning to the Mayport Boat Ramp when they came into contact with a fisherman returning from a day of spear fishing. Upon a check of the fisherman’s catch, the officers found that the subject had speared three greater amberjack, two over the bag limit. The fisherman was cited for the violation, and the fish were seized and donated to an approved donation site.

LAFAYETTE COUNTY

Investigator Larry Ayers, Officer Justin Allen and Officer Todd Nichols were working an area in the Hatch Bend Hunting Club, where Officer Allen had previously located a number of cannabis plants. While Investigator Ayers, Officer Allen and Officer Nichols were setting up surveillance in the area, the owner arrived and began watering his plants. The owner of the plants was placed under arrest. He gave consent to search his residence where he was also found to be cultivating cannabis. This individual was charged with the cultivation of cannabis and possession of drug paraphernalia.

NORTHEAST REGION

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Damon Saunders conducted fisheries inspections at the Eau Gallie Causeway in Melbourne. He found one subject in possession of over-the-bag-limit of sheepshead, Eighteen of the 20 fish were undersize. The subject was cited and the fish were donated to the CITA Mission in Melbourne.

Officers Bryan Lee and Harold Lanier were on land patrol in the Titusville area when they stopped a man in kayak fishing under the A. Max Brewer Memorial Parkway bridge. A safety inspection revealed that the man did not have a wearable personal floatation device. While Officer Lanier was filling out the citation for no PFD, a warrants check confirmed a warrant for the man's arrest for driving on a suspended driver's license. Subsequently, the subject was arrested and transported to the Brevard County jail.

Later that night, Officer Lee personally identified a subject who had an active warrant for his arrest. The man was issued a citation for tying to an aide to navigation by Officer Lee several months prior to this encounter. The man failed to appear in court to contest the citation and was issued a warrant for failure to appear. The subject was fueling his sailboat at the Titusville Marina fuel dock when the officers approached to confirm his identity. A warrants check confirmed the active warrant for his arrest. The subject was arrested and transported to the Brevard County jail.

BREVARD COUNTY COPS

Officers Kris Culver, Curtis Suggs and Captain Steve Wayne participated in the Special Olympics Torch Run in Palm Bay. The officers joined other Brevard County law enforcement officers in carrying the torch for the journey to the Special Olympics.

LAKE COUNTY

Officer Tom Kist received information of a suspected intoxicated boater operating near Helena Run near Lake Harris. Officer Kist launched an airboat to locate the intoxicated boater. After two hours of searching the area, Officer Kist located the vessel where the operator showed signs of impairment. After a series of field sobriety tasks, the operator was arrested for boating under the influence. Two and a half hours after the arrest, the subject blew a .088 and a .090.

SEMINOLE COUNTY

Officers Brian Baine and Naomii Tye inspected two commercial fishermen on the St. Johns River. The officers found the fishermen to be in possession of 56 soft shell turtles, 16 over the limit. This is the second time these two fishermen have been found in violation of commercial fishing laws. The turtles were photographed and released.

ST JOHNS COUNTY

Officers Jeff Hickman and Ben Boots were on patrol of the Intracoastal Waterway in St Johns County when they stopped a vessel for a boating safety inspection. During this stop, the officers observed signs of impairment from its operator. After float and field tasks were

performed, Officer Hickman arrested the operator for boating under the influence. His breath level was .157.

SUMTER COUNTY

Lieutenant David Adams and Officer Ian Sweet received a complaint that a subject had killed a large alligator in the Croom Wildlife Management Area several weeks prior. After an investigation, Lieutenant Adams and Officer Sweet made contact with the suspect. The suspect admitted to shooting, cleaning, and dumping the alligator. Lieutenant Adams and Officer Sweet seized the firearm used in the incident, alligator meat and a large alligator skull. Charges are to be filed with the Sumter County state attorneys office.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officer Adam Resnick participated in a public speaking event for the Punta Gorda Boaters Alliance. After the presentation, he answered questions concerning federal saltwater fisheries, state saltwater fisheries, boating safety and marine sanitation devices. Approximately 25 users attended the event which lasted four hours.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Adam Resnick conducted panther patrol on Corkscrew Road and issued eight citations for speeding. The highest recorded speed was 90 miles-per-hour in a marked 50 mile-per-hour zone.

Officers Justin Koble and Brian Cazalot were conducting commercial fisheries checks at the Imperial River boat ramp when they encountered two stone crab fishermen returning from federal waters. An inspection of their catch revealed the individuals were in possession of undersize tripletail. The appropriate citations were issued.

Officers Jay Ewing and Lonnie Sushil concluded a criminal investigation of an individual maintaining a derelict vessel on state waters. On April 7, Officers Ewing and Sushil were dispatched to a grounded sailboat in Fort Myers where they made contact with the vessel's owner and conducted a boating accident investigation. The investigation revealed the individual had stolen several items from other sailboats and was attempting to flee the area at the time of his accident. A derelict vessel investigation ensued and the individual is now wanted on criminal charges. The vessel has been removed from state waters.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While conducting fisheries inspections during the past week, Officer Baryl Martin made several resource-related arrests. Officer Martin issued a citation to a commercial captain for harvest of red snapper without an Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ), seizing 13 American red snapper.

Officer Martin issued citations to two individuals for possession of undersize amberjack and possession of American red snapper out of season, seizing six amberjack and one American red snapper.

In addition, Officer Martin issued a citation to a recreational captain for possession of 19 American red snapper out of season. Officer Martin also issued a citation to a recreational fisherman for possession of undersize snook and over the bag limit of snook, seizing five snook, with the largest being 19 inches in length.

POLK COUNTY

Investigators Daryl Amerson and Joe Brooks were conducting surveillance when a van parked next to their vehicle. The investigators observed the passenger in the van in possession of what appeared to be rolling papers and cannabis. After briefly watching the activity inside the van, the passenger was observed smoking a cannabis cigarette. After identifying themselves as law enforcement officers, the individual was issued citations for possession of cannabis, under 20 grams and possession of drug paraphernalia.

During the past week, Officer Adonious Duhart responded to several resource-related complaints and made arrests in each of them. On April 23, Officer Duhart received a complaint regarding two subjects fishing with a cast net and keeping game fish on Lake Hollingsworth. The subjects were located and found to be in possession of three bass and five panfish. They were issued notices to appear for taking game fish by an illegal method.

Officer Duhart received information from a Mosaic employee regarding several subjects who were possibly trespassing on Mosaic property near Mulberry. Officer Duhart responded and after locating three individuals who had jumped the fence and were fishing in a phosphate pit, he charged them with trespass. Later that day, Officer Duhart received a complaint regarding a subject who was fishing with a haul seine near Cleveland Heights. He located the fisherman, the net and his catch. The fisherman was not permitted to use the haul seine and Officer Duhart charged him with the violation.

COPS

Officer JoAnne Adams participated in Earth Day at St. Pete College and also assisted with Marine Quest in St. Petersburg, on Saturday April 25

SOUTH REGION A

BROWARD COUNTY

Officers Bill Carpenter, Tom Enos and Hank Juntunen responded to a black bear sighting in the City of Weston. A deputy sheriff had taken a picture of the bear to verify its existence. The media reported that a black bear hasn't been seen in Broward County in over 40 years. The bear is believed to be in the woods located just west of U.S. Highway 27.

Lieutenant Dave Bingham and Officer Eric Alford investigated a boating accident that occurred in Port Everglades. A drift fishing vessel was trolling when it "caught" a personal watercraft, ejecting both occupants. The operator of the drift boat was issued a citation for careless operation.

Officer Mike Naujoks checked a vessel near Port Everglades and found numerous undersize yellowtail snappers and red grouper. Two subjects were cited for over-the-limit and undersize fish violations.

Lieutenant Laubenberger and Reserve Officer Ginsberg were patrolling an area in western Boca Raton when they observed subjects cast netting in a canal along Highway 441. The subjects were found to be in possession of bream and peacock bass. These fish are classified as game fish and can only be caught by rod and reel. The officers issued one subject a citation for taking freshwater game fish by illegal method.

Officers Kuester, Caske, Molnar, Twist, Harp, Stark, Fowler and Lieutenant Laubenberger assisted the Boca Raton Police Department during an event called the Boca Bash. Boca Raton Police Department asked for the FWC's assistance with waterborne law enforcement in Lake Boca and its vicinity. Hundreds of boats rafted together in the lake for the event. Officers issued various citations while Boca Raton Fire Rescue responded to a medical emergency that occurred in the middle of the lake.

MARTIN COUNTY

Three teenage boys were fishing from a pontoon boat on the North Fork of the Loxahatchee River. The vessel was travelling at a slow speed when one of the boys tripped and fell overboard from the front of the vessel. The other two boys put the vessel engine in reverse, but the vessel still ran over the victim, seriously injuring him. The victim was transported to St Mary's Hospital where he is being treated for his injuries. Officer George Anchors is investigating the accident.

Officer Ray Woolrich was on patrol when he observed a truck stopped near Minute Maid Road. The area is habitually used to illegally dump trash. Officer Woolrich observed one subject tossing large pieces of drywall out of the back of the truck, while another subject stood nearby. Officer Woolrich confronted the subjects and established that the vehicle was commercially owned and operated. Because of that aggravating circumstance, Officer Woolrich was able to arrest the two subjects for the more serious, felony level dumping violation.

Officer Brent Abbott jointly investigated a case with members of the Department of Environmental Protection, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Martin County Sheriff's Office. The case involved a live aboard vessel, located along the Intracoastal Waterway in the Peck's Lake area, with visible hazardous materials stored on board. Also, the owner of the vessel was storing old engines and parts along the shoreline of Saint Lucie Inlet Preserve State Park. The storage of those items was damaging the mangroves. Criminal charges are pending the completion of the investigation.

HENDRY COUNTY

Lieutenant Pam Steelman, Officers Jon Greene, Henry Rockwell, Greg Louque, and Reserve Officer Andy Taylor were dispatched to assist the Labelle Fire Department and Division of Forestry with a fire near Cowboy Way. The fire damaged two houses and two cars and a camper.

SOUTH REGION B

COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Shawn Polly responded to a vessel accident near Naples Beach. The owner/operator of the vessel noticed his vessel was listing while underway so he stopped to check the trim tabs. Since everything seemed to be okay, he powered up the vessel. While underway, he heard a loud cracking noise and turned around 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 personnel was first to arrive and recovered the operator from the water.

Officer Dave Barrett inspected a vessel with four subjects aboard that was returning to the County Road 951 boat ramp. When the officer asked if they had any luck fishing, they answered, "No." However, there was a snook on a cutting board near the vessel's stern. One of the subjects admitted to having harvested the snook with a cast net and using it as bait. The subject was issued a citation for possession of undersize snook, failure to land snook in whole condition and illegal method of harvest.

MONROE COUNTY

Officers Raquel Daniels and Erik Steinmetz responded to a boating accident in Barnes Sound involving a sunken 16' vessel. The vessel was headed to Card Sound when a wave from rough seas ejected both occupants. Due to rough seas, the operator had the foresight to attach a kill switch lanyard, which effectively caused the vessel to stop after he was ejected. Both subjects swam safely back to the vessel and got in. However, another wave swamped the vessel. As the vessel was sinking, the subjects put on their personal floatation devices. Good Samaritans recovered them and a marine salvage operation recovered the vessel. Officer Daniels completed a boating accident report and the operator received a warning.