

FWC DIVISION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT FIELD OPERATIONS

**WEEKLY REPORT
May 1 - 7, 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

Officers Mike Nobles and Jeff Gager worked the Cat Creek area of the Econfina Wildlife Management Area focusing on littering and alcohol violations at a popular swimming area. Several citations and warnings were issued for these violations.

Officer David Erdman received a favorable disposition recently regarding a boating under the influence case. The defendant pled no contest and received a \$1,100 fine. He was also ordered to serve twelve months of probation, 50 hours of community service, complete a substance abuse and boating safety course. His vessel was ordered immobilized for ten days.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Lieutenant Harry Parker, Officers Hank Forehand and Mike Fish served a warrant on a Gadsden County man for possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. This individual was arrested earlier this year for taking deer with a gun and light. Follow up investigation revealed he was a convicted felon.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officers responded to a vessel accident involving two personal watercrafts (PWCs), in the Bayou Grande area of Escambia County. Once on scene, the officers learned that one PWC was following approximately 30 feet behind another PWC when the operator of the PWC in front turned abruptly in an attempt to intentionally eject his passenger. The operator of the second PWC was unable to avoid a collision, striking the first PWC and the operator on the left side. The operator of the PWC that was struck suffered a compound fracture of his left leg and was transported to Baptist Hospital in Pensacola.

Lieutenant Brian Lambert checked a bank fisherman at the 17th Avenue boat ramp. The individual was found in possession of an undersize red drum. A notice to appear citation was issued for the violation.

Officer Keith Clark checked a vessel in Pensacola Bay and discovered the vessel was sold to the current owner in January, but the title was never transferred. Officer Clark issued the new owner of the vessel a notice to appear citation for not transferring the title within 30 days.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY COPS

Officers Kenneth Manning and Sarah Hahner attended the annual law enforcement appreciation services conducted by Marcus Pointe Baptist Church in Pensacola. Each year Marcus Pointe sponsors a number of events including the appreciation service to honor law enforcement officer's service and commitment to the community.

Lieutenant Doug Berryman and Officer Andy Maltais provided local reporters with a ride to the site where a large barge was being removed by PBS&J marine contractors as part of the 1.5 million dollar statewide derelict vessel removal project.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer David Jernigan and Lieutenant Dan Hahr were on water patrol on Quinn Bayou off Blackwater River when they observed the bow of a vessel sticking out of the water. The officers observed another vessel assisting an individual who was treading water nearby. The 14 foot vessel was almost completely submerged with the vessel engine on the bottom. The officers were able to tow the submerged vessel to shore where it was drained and then re-floated. Apparently, the vessel began taking on water when the wakes of several large ski boats hit it's stern. The operator was unable to get the boat to calmer water before the water pulled the stern under. The operator was not charged.

Officers Steve Hoomes and David Jernigan, along with Lieutenants Doug Berryman and Dan Hahr responded to a boating accident on the Blackwater River near Milton. A boat was traveling downriver when a passing boat headed upriver lost control and struck it. The vessel that lost control, a bass boat, impacted the other boat, a bow rider, just behind the operator and passenger. The impact punched a large hole in the port side of the boat and destroyed the stern of the bow rider. The bass boat sustained damage to the bow. The two occupants of the bow rider suffered lacerations to their faces; the operator required 12 stitches in his cheek. The three occupants of the bass boat suffered minor bruising. The operator of the bass boat received a notice to appear for violation of a navigation rule resulting in a boating accident.

Officer Alan Kirchinger responded to the Bear Lake Fish Management Area within the Blackwater Wildlife Management Area in response to a partial breach of the man-made lake's dam. Torrential rainfall of 11 inches fell the night before causing the breach. Officer Kirchinger launched his patrol vessel and quickly alerted fishermen in small vessels on the lake to evacuate as part of an emergency closure order.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Matt Webb responded to a boating accident in the Gulf of Mexico near Henderson Beach. A vessel had overturned due to the number of occupants in the vessel's tower. The occupants were not injured. The captain of the vessel was cited for careless operation.

Officers Danny Arnette and Matt Webb investigated a boating accident after a vessel ran into a dock in Destin Pass. One occupant suffered a leg injury and was transported to a local hospital. Field Sobriety tasks determined the operator was impaired. He was placed under arrest and transported to the U.S. Coast Guard in Destin where he agreed to a breath test. The operator's breath alcohol content registered .08. He was transported to the Okaloosa County Jail and booked for operating a vessel while under the influence of alcohol.

OKALOOSA COUNTY COPS

Officer Ryan Nelson participated in the annual Fallen Law Enforcement Officer Memorial in Tallahassee.

Captain Mary Sumner and Lieutenants Mark Hollinhead, Dan Hahr, Doug Berryman, and Brian Lambert conducted the second planning session for the upcoming Billy Bow Leggs Pirate Invasion festival scheduled for June 5-6. Many state and local law enforcement agencies and emergency medical response command personnel attended the planning session.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

DUVAL COUNTY

Officer Alex O'Britis was on water patrol when he noticed a vessel traveling east on Jullington Creek violate the slow speed zone. The vessel continued to Mandarin Park boat ramp. Once Officer O'Britis arrived, he noticed only one vessel at the boat ramp. There was one subject at the dock with the vessel and another subject walking toward the parked vehicles in the parking lot. The individual at the ramp told Officer O'Britis that his friend was driving the vessel. Officer O'Britis watched as the subject attempted to back his boat trailer down the ramp. After five attempts, the subject got out of the SUV and tried to jump the railing to the dock, but was unsuccessful. After nearly falling down, the individual walked around the rail to the boat. Officer O'Britis asked the individual if he was driving the vessel and he answered, "No". Officer O'Britis asked how much he had to drink and he replied "obviously a lot". Officer O'Britis administered field sobriety tasks and found the individual to be impaired. He was arrested and booked into Duval County Jail for driving under the influence. He refused to give a breath sample at the jail.

Officer Sandy Blackburn checked a vessel returning to the Oak Harbor boat ramp. During the inspection, Blackburn found that the three fishermen onboard were in compliance with fishing regulations, but the operator was showing signs of impairment. The operator had difficulty in presenting his safety equipment and had difficulty maintaining his balance. When the operator was asked to do field sobriety tasks, he stated that he had only had about three beers. The operator performed poorly on the field sobriety tasks and was arrested and transported to the Duval County Jail for boating under the influence.

Officer Sandy Blackburn approached a vehicle that had been parked at a strange angle in Sunny Pines Park for a long period of time. When Blackburn approached the vehicle, she found the female driver slouched down in the seat with the car still running. The driver seemed very disoriented and her speech was slurred. When Blackburn instructed the driver to turn off her car it rolled backwards almost hitting Officer Blackburn's patrol truck. A check of the driver's out of state license revealed that it was suspended. Blackburn administered several field sobriety tasks and the driver performed poorly. The driver was arrested for driving under the influence, cited for driving on a suspended license, and taken to the Duval County Jail. At the jail, a drug recognition expert who is an investigator with the State Attorney's Office administered more tasks to determine drug impairment. The investigator found signs of drug impairment and the driver admitted to taking both prescribed and non-prescribed medication. A urine sample was taken to determine the amount and type of drugs in the driver's system.

NASSAU COUNTY

Officers Chris Holleman and Tim Sweat were involved in an investigation in Nassau County in the parking lot of a country store. An individual drove up in a jeep asking if the officers were alright. The officers noticed the man was slurring his words. When they approached the vehicle, they noticed two children in the vehicle (5 and 6 years old) that weren't in child restraint

devices and had no seat belts on. Officer Holleman conducted field sobriety tasks and found the subject to be impaired. The subject was arrested for driving while impaired with a minor, driving on a suspended license and was also charged for not using child restraint devices.

While on water patrol at the Fernandina Shrimp Festival, Officer Eric Hall was waved over by Coast Guard to a vessel that they had stopped at Fernandina Municipal Marina. The Coast Guard officers told him that they had administered afloat sobriety tasks and the operator of the vessel appeared to be under the influence of alcohol. Hall administered more field sobriety tasks on shore and the operator performed poorly. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence and transported to the Nassau County Jail.

NORTHEAST REGION

FLAGLER COUNTY

Officer Eric Meade gave a presentation to approximately 300 people who were attending a reptile exhibit at Bunnell Elementary School.

Officers Meade and Mike Florence were checking fishermen in Palm Coast and found one man in possession of one undersize redfish and three undersize mangrove snapper. He was cited for possession of undersize redfish and warned for possession of undersize mangrove snapper.

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY

Officer Kris Culver was on water patrol at Round Island and observed five men wading in the water, carrying a large cooler and two cast nets. Upon inspection, the men were found to be in possession of one 22-inch snook. The owner of the fish was issued a citation for this violation and was given warnings for illegal method of harvest and possession of four undersize sheepshead.

Officer Curtis Suggs was recognized by the 100 Club of Indian River County as their Officer of the Year. Officer Suggs received a beautiful plaque for his accomplishments.

OSCEOLA COUNTY

Officer Caitlyn Staskiewicz, Reserve Officer Zack Riccuti and Lieutenant Guy Carpenter checked two bream fishermen on East Lake Toho and found the Pinellas County men were near their limit of bream. Later that day, the same two men were checked and they had only a few bream on the boat. When asked about the rest of the fish, the officers were told they had been put in a cooler in their truck. An inspection of the coolers revealed the men to be in possession of 121 bream. Both men received notices to appear for the violation of over the daily bag limit of bream.

SOUTHWEST REGION

LEE COUNTY

On September 20, 2008, two friends were operating separate personal watercrafts (PWC) in the Caloosahatchee River. One of the operators had his five-year-old daughter onboard when their vessel was struck by the second PWC. The young girl was seriously injured in the crash and has since recovered. Investigator Larry Jernstedt conducted an investigation, which included an analysis by Florida Department of Law Enforcement of both operators' blood for alcohol and drugs. Results of the blood analysis revealed that both operators were under the influence of narcotics and/or alcohol, including marijuana, oxycodone, and hydrocodone. Investigator Jernstedt filed charges with the Twentieth Judicial Circuit States Attorney's Office and on April 29, 2009 arrest warrants for the vessel operators were issued. On May 1, the father of the young child who was operating one of the vessels was arrested and charged with child neglect without great bodily harm, operating a vessel under the influence of a controlled substance resulting in serious bodily injury, violation of navigational rules and violation of probation. On May 5, the other operator was charged with operating a vessel under the influence of a controlled substance resulting in serious bodily injury, violation of navigational rules.

An Estero man advertised a Burmese Python for sale on Craig's List without possessing a Reptile of Concern License. Investigator Larry Gregory contacted the owner and arranged to purchase the snake for \$100. During the phone conversation it was clear the owner had knowledge that he needed a license to sell or possess the snake. Investigator Gregory contacted the owner of the snake and identified himself as a law enforcement officer, seized the snake and issued a citation for no Reptile of Concern License and issued written warnings for no PIT Tag on a Reptile of Concern and failure to have a license to exhibit or sell wildlife.

PASCO COUNTY

Officer Jeff Manson issued a notice to appear for possession of an illegally harvested snook. The violation occurred off Gulf Harbor in the Gulf of Mexico. The subject was snorkeling and spearfishing from his vessel, when Officer Manson approached to check his catch and licensing. The subject was in possession of a 27 inch snook with spear holes behind the gills.

SOUTH REGION A

BROWARD COUNTY

Lieutenant Laubenberger responded to the 34.8 mile marker on Alligator Alley to assist Florida Highway Patrol. Troopers on scene stated there was a six foot alligator in the roadway. In reality, it measured closer to nine and one-half feet long. Licensed trapper Garvey arrived shortly thereafter. With the lieutenant's assistance, the alligator was captured and taken into possession by the trapper.

HENDRY COUNTY

Officer Sulin Schafer was conducting a boating safety and freshwater fisheries inspection on a vessel at a Clewiston boat ramp. While counting the subject's bluegills, Officer Schafer found two black bass at the bottom of the cooler. Officer Schafer measured the bass and found that they were undersize. A citation for the violation was issued.

Later, at the same location, Officer Schafer ran a computer check on the operator of another vessel. That subject had an active warrant and was arrested.

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Officers David Burnsed and Mike Davis were on water patrol in the Kissimmee River, conducting boating safety and freshwater fishery inspections. The officers stopped a vessel to check the subjects' catch and found they were in possession of illegal size black bass. The vessel operator said that they were participating in a bass tournament, but he was unable to produce a size exemption permit. Officer Davis issued a citation to the operator for the violation. Later on, the officers stopped another vessel participating in the same, unauthorized tournament. That operator was also found to be in possession of illegally sized black bass. He too was issued a citation for the violation.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Alan Webb was patrolling Singer Island when he observed two juvenile subjects walking down the road from a popular diving and fishing spot with spear guns and a stringer of fish in hand. He stopped to conduct a resource inspection and discovered they had speared several species of legal fish and one Goliath Grouper. One of the subjects admitted to having speared the grouper and thus was issued a citation for harvesting a prohibited species.

Officer Anchors and Lieutenant Russo checked two subjects fishing from the beach in Jupiter. An inspection revealed that one of the subjects was in possession of an undersize snook; he was issued a citation for the violation.

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

Officer Kyle Patterson responded to a call of an injured juvenile Bald Eagle at Ten Mile Creek, in western Fort Pierce. Officer Patterson observed the bird standing at the bottom of a dry ditch, unable to fly. The eagle was captured and turned over to a licensed rehabilitator. An examination revealed no noticeable injuries; however, the bird was malnourished. It will be rehabilitated and released.

SOUTH REGION B

MONROE COUNTY

COPS

Officer Robert Dube attended a media event that occurred at the site of the U.S.S. Hoyt Vandenberg in Key West as work crews continue to prepare the 523' ship for sinking in 140' of water, six miles south-southeast of Key West. The Vandenberg will become the largest artificial reef in the nation. After the Vandenberg project is completed, the Florida Keys will hold the distinction of being home to two of the three largest artificial reefs in the nation. FWC Commissioner Rodney Barretto, Regional Director Chuck Collins, Monroe County Commissioner Mario DeGennaro, and other dignitaries spoke to the media and participated in a walk-through tour of the ship.

Officers Robert Dube and Jill Izsak assisted during the Kid's Fishing Clinic on Summerland Key. Almost sixty children participated in the event that included education on conservation and species identification, instruction on fish handling, gear and tackle, and casting techniques. Florida Wildlife Research Institute provided a touch tank filled with saltwater species that enabled the kids to explore and discuss various types of marine life. The event was sponsored by FWC, Reef Light Tackle, U.S. Boy Scouts of America, Sport Fish Restoration Program, and the Florida Sport Fish Foundation. It was held at the Britton Center of the U.S. Boy Scouts Sea Base on Summerland Key.

FWC received three patrol bicycles for patrolling the Greenways and Trails in Monroe County. Department of Environmental Protection, Greenways and Trails donated the bicycles to FWC to provide officers easier access to bridges and recreation areas throughout county. Officer Dube spoke to the media about the partnership and the mission to provide education, increase public safety and enforcement.