

FWC DIVISION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT FIELD OPERATIONS

**WEEKLY REPORT
May 15 – 21, 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 David Jernigan was on enhanced patrol when he observed a subject at the Pipes Recreation Area in possession of alcoholic beverages. The 18-year-old man appeared intoxicated and admitted to having consumed several beers. He was given a notice to appear for possession of alcoholic beverages by a person under the age of 21.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY COPS

Officers Keith Clark and Steve Hoomes assisted with the annual Three Mile Bridge swim. This year, approximately 175 swimmers swam three miles across the Pensacola Bay. Officers Clark and Hoomes provided high visible patrol as they escorted swimmers across the three-mile expanse.

Officers Fred Rondeau and Gary Ridaught assisted with the Annual Kids Fishing Clinic on Palafox Pier in Pensacola. Approximately 1,000 kids participated in this year's event.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

A man was arrested on a felony warrant for giving an officer a false name which affects another. Officer David Jernigan filed the warrant with the Clerk's Office earlier this month, a year after first meeting the man while on patrol on the Blackwater River. Officers Jernigan and Joe Murphy were on patrol in April of 2008 when they observed a man operating a paddleboat and fishing. The subject did not have a fishing license and was cited for the violation. A month or so later, Officer Jernigan was contacted regarding a man who was arrested for failing to appear. The information on his citation was that of another man whom the suspect knew quite well. This man provided information to Officer Jernigan that led him to the suspect. After a computer check and follow-up investigation, Officer Jernigan confirmed the man's true identity. Approximately a year later, Officer Jernigan observed the same man in the same paddleboat. When confronted, the man all but admitted giving Officer Jernigan the false information. Officer Jernigan obtained a felony warrant for the charge of giving an officer a false name which affects another, a much more serious charge than fishing without a license.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY COPS

Officer Andy Maltais spoke to 65 helicopter pilots in training at Whiting Field in Milton. Officer Maltais spoke mostly on boating safety and answered numerous related questions.

Officer Sarah Manning spoke to approximately 100 fifth graders at Gulf Breeze Elementary School. Officer Manning demonstrated K9 Sadie's tracking skills and answered many questions.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Steve Bartlett organized a target enforcement detail to inspect commercial shrimp boats on Choctawhatchee Bay. The detail resulted in warnings being issued for two illegal size nets. While traveling home after the detail, Officer Bartlett observed a vehicle swerving in a careless manner. The vehicle was stopped and the driver displayed signs of impairment. Field sobriety

tasks confirmed the driver was impaired. He was placed under arrest and transported to the Okaloosa County Jail. Once at the jail, the driver agreed to a breath test. The breath test revealed a .170 breath alcohol content. The subject was booked into the Okaloosa County Jail and charged with operating a vehicle while under the influence of alcohol.

Officer Matt Webb conducted a fishery inspection on a vessel in Destin Pass. The inspection revealed a daily bag limit violation of king mackerel. The captain of the vessel was cited for the over-the-bag limit violation.

Officers Steve Bartlett and Matt Webb checked three subjects fishing on the Destin Pass Jetties. Two of the subjects were in possession of illegal size red drum. A computer check revealed one of the fishermen had an outstanding warrant from Escambia County for child abuse. Both subjects were issued a citation for possession of oversize red drum. The subject with the active warrant was taken into custody and booked into the Okaloosa County Jail.

Officer Matt Webb completed a derelict vessel investigation which resulted in the owner being charged after he failed to comply with a warning and remove the vessel.

OKALOOSA COUNTY COPS

Officers Steve Hoomes and Ben Pineda spoke to approximately 80 first grade students from Baker Elementary School at the Blackwater Hatchery. Each year the hatchery hosts an event where several divisions of FWC come together to provide the first graders an up-close look at the various aspects of fish and wildlife conservation. The students were able to ask questions and see various equipment that FWC officers use in their daily patrols. The event was a huge success due to the cooperation of all involved.

Captain Mary Sumner and Lieutenants Mark Hollinhead and Doug Berryman attended a Memorial Ceremony for fallen Law Enforcement officers hosted by the U.S. Air Force's Security Forces and Office of Special Investigations. Representatives from federal, state, and local law enforcement also attended.

Lieutenant Mark Hollinhead and Officer Matt Webb checked the condition of all the Idle Speed/No Wake signs in Okaloosa County with a county public works employee. Numerous damaged signs were documented for repair and replacement.

Lieutenant Mark Hollinhead and Officers Danny Arnette and Van Barrow attended a public workshop on deer management hosted by FWC. Approximately 100 people attended to hear and comment on future deer management proposals provided by the Division of Hunting and Game Management. The officers were available to hunters and landowners and answered numerous questions.

BAY COUNTY

While patrolling the Gulf of Mexico near Panama City Pass, Officer Nick Price conducted a fisheries inspection and found a vessel operator and passengers had harvested red snapper during the closed season. He also discovered they had undersize red snapper and undersize trigger fish. Citations were issued.

Officer Neal Goss was on water patrol offshore of Panama City when he observed a spotlight working offshore. The light went out and he slowly made his way toward the last known

position. He located a vessel with two people onboard fishing. He conducted a resource and safety inspection and discovered a bag of cannabis. The owner was issued a citation for less than 20 grams and failure to display proper navigational lights.

Officers Neal Goss and Nick Price were working the Gulf of Mexico with U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents. The results of their patrols were a boating under the influence charge and taking red snapper during closed season.

Officers David Brady and Warren Walsingham conducted a plain clothes detail targeting dolphin feeding in and around the Panama City Pass. One warning was issued for dolphin feeding.

Lieutenant Jay Chesser and Officer Mike Nobles worked the Econfina Creek portion of the Econfina Wildlife Management Area addressing complaints of illegal activities in this area. Numerous fishers and boaters were checked and five citations were issued for underage alcohol violations, two citations for no fishing license and one citation for possession of less than 20 grams of cannabis.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Lieutenant Rama Shuster and Officers Chris Jones and John Allen were on water patrol aboard the offshore patrol vessel Orion. A shrimp boat was observed entering into East Pass. Officers Jones and Allen boarded the vessel to conduct a fishery and gear inspection. The officers found an undersize cobia and 189 pounds of flounder in the hold. The legal limit of flounder caught as by-catch aboard a shrimp boat is 50 pounds. The officers issued two citations and seized the product. The flounder was sold to the highest bidder.

Lieutenant Rama Shuster and Officers Shon Brower and Chase Yarborough were on water patrol aboard the offshore vessel Orion. At approximately 1430 hours, Officers Brower and Yarborough boarded a recreational dive boat in federal waters. The officers found red snapper out of season and undersized red grouper. A citation was issued.

Lieutenants Jason Marlow and Rama Shuster and Officer Shon Brower were on water patrol aboard the offshore vessel Orion. At approximately 1430 hours, a commercial vessel was boarded in federal waters with four persons on board. The officers interviewed the captain and crew to find out if the vessel was fishing as a charter vessel, as a commercial vessel, or as a recreational vessel. The captain and crew insisted that they were on a recreational fishing trip with friends even though they did not know each other's names. A fisheries inspection revealed that they were over-the-bag limit of red grouper. A federal citation was issued.

Lieutenant Rama Shuster and Officers John Allen and Charles Higman were on water patrol aboard the offshore vessel Orion. At approximately 1150 hours, a shrimp boat was boarded in federal waters to conduct a fisheries inspection. A warrant check on the crew revealed one subject to have an active warrant. The subject was arrested and transported to shore where he was turned over to Franklin County Sheriff's Department. At approximately 1600 hours, Officers Allen and Higman boarded another vessel where they discovered 28 undersize black sea bass in the live well. A citation was issued.

Lieutenants Scott Pearce and Rama Shuster and Officer Charles Higman were on water patrol aboard the offshore vessel Orion. At approximately 1300 hours, a commercial vessel was boarded in federal waters. A fisheries inspection revealed that the captain was using vermillion snapper as bait and did not have the required turtle release gear on board. A federal citation

was issued. At approximately 1400 hours, another commercial vessel was boarded. The captain did not have the required turtle release gear on board. The captain had been previously warned about the turtle release gear and a federal citation was issued.

Officer Steven Cook along with investigators conducted a detail targeting the illegal harvest of oysters from leased water bottom. Officer Cook made contact with four harvesters who were actively engaged in the harvest of oysters. After confirming that the harvesters did not have permission to harvest from the leased bottom, the officers secured information to submit to the State's Attorney Office for pending charges.

Lieutenant Charlie Wood and Officer Steven Cook responded to a commercial oyster vessel just north of Little St. George Island that was unable to return to port due to high winds and sea state. While attempting to leave the oyster bar, the commercial vessel took several waves over the bow. At that point, the harvesters made contact with the Franklin County Sheriff's Office. The information was relayed through the Communications Center to the Franklin County officers. Once arriving on scene, the commercial vessel was anchored and the two harvesters were retrieved from the vessel and transported back to the mainland uninjured.

GADSDEN COUNTY

Officer Ben Johnson cited a Gadsden County man for possession of undersize black bass on Lake Talquin.

LEON/GADSDEN COUNTIES

Lieutenant Kent Harvey received a disposition on a felony BUI case made on Lake Talquin in March of 2009. The defendant was sentenced to 13 months to be served in the State Department of Corrections. He also received 48 months probation, was ordered to attend Alcohol Anonymous meetings once a week, received a 90-day vessel impoundment and \$2540 in fines.

JEFFERSON COUNTY

Officer Jeff Babauta responded to a call for help from some individuals kayaking on the Slave Canal off of the Wacissa River. The kayakers were not familiar with the area and became disoriented. One of the kayakers was able to describe his surroundings to Officer Babauta by cell phone. With the description given, Officer Babauta pinpointed their location as being in the vicinity of an area known as Half Mile Rise. This portion of the river is not navigable by motorized vessels. Officer Babauta was able to drive into the area and locate the kayakers.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Officer Todd Hoyle responded to a complaint of fresh deer remains that had been dumped in a driveway in Fort White. After interviewing the complainant, Officer Hoyle made his way to Fort White High School. After involving the Columbia County Sheriff's Office and the school's administration, three subjects were identified. The trio was interviewed and gave statements of their involvement. They were charged with taking wildlife at night with a gun and light, taking

wildlife from a county road and possession of deer during closed season. They were also charged with littering for the dumping of the carcasses and given warnings for trespassing while retrieving the killed deer from private property.

Officer Billy Giles responded to a complaint that involved the killing of an alligator. Officer Giles interviewed the witnesses and was able to make contact with the violator. The subject admitted to shooting twice and killing the three foot alligator in a private pond with his shotgun. The subject was charged for the violation and the shotgun was seized.

GILCHRIST COUNTY

Officers Justin Allen, Todd Nichols, Carl Butler and Investigator Larry Ayers were working near the Otter Springs boat ramp area in Gilchrist County. Just before dark, the officers heard several gunshots from a small caliber rifle. The officers proceeded on foot to a nearby farm. From a concealed location, they observed a person carrying a rifle near a barn. Approximately 100 yards away in the adjacent field, they observed a deer staggering and then lay down in the field, appearing to be wounded. The subject with the rifle proceeded to drive a tractor up to the deer and attempt to shoot it. The deer escaped through a fence. The subject then drove the tractor to a second deer which was dead and picked it up placing it in the tractor. He then returned to a nearby barn. At this time, a second person drove up to the barn in a pickup truck, dropping the tailgate. The officers met the shooter on the tractor as he returned to the barn. Further investigation revealed the subject had shot two deer and had called a friend to give one of them away. The shooter was issued citations for unlawfully taking two deer during the closed season. The next day, K-9 Officer Sam Dishman located the second deer that was shot by the defendant.

NORTHEAST REGION

BREVARD COUNTY (COPS)

The American Police Hall of Fame held their annual memorial service for law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty. There were approximately 1,000 people in attendance. Captain Steve Wayne participated in the service and Officer Pat Koch represented the FWC in the multi-agency Honor Guard.

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Erin Tyrrell was conducting fishery inspections on the Eau Gallie Causeway and encountered a fisherman with a cooler. Officer Tyrrell asked the subject if he had caught any fish and he replied he had caught a few. A consent search of the cooler revealed sixteen sheepshead and one grey snapper. Every fish was measured and they were all under the legal size requirements. A citation was issued to the subject for possession of undersize sheepshead and a warning was issued for possession of undersize grey snapper.

Officer Corey Bridwell was on water patrol in the area of Haulover Canal. A fisheries inspection of two men fishing along the northwest shore of the canal revealed no fisheries violations; however, during that inspection a plastic bottle containing a green leafy substance testing positive to be cannabis was found along with a metal pipe for smoking. These items were found in plain view in the top tray of an open tackle box. Both men claimed ownership of the

contraband. Subsequently, both men were charged with the possession of less than 20 grams of cannabis and possession of drug paraphernalia. Both were released with a notice to appear in county court.

Officer Bryan Lee was on water patrol in the Titusville area when he stopped a man speeding in the manatee zone north of the NASA railroad bridge on a PWC. Officer Lee discovered that the subject had two active warrants out of Orange County. One of the warrants was a no bond felony warrant for driving on a suspended license. The second warrant was a battery warrant. Officer Lee arrested the man and transported him to the Brevard County Jail to be extradited to Orange County.

Officer Bryan Lee was on land patrol in the Titusville area when he received a call for service from a Titusville citizen's patrol volunteer. The volunteer was flagged down by a kite boarder whose friend had been pulled out of control to the northwest shore of the Indian River approximately one-and-a-half miles from where he had started. A large lightning storm was moving into the area and the stranded kite boarder was exposed without sufficient cover. Officer Lee promptly launched a boat from the Titusville Field Office and rescued the man from his remote location. The area of shore where the man was stranded had no homes or businesses along it and the man was faced with having to ditch his expensive kite boarding equipment and walk several miles to safety. The kite boarder was very grateful of Officer Lee's assistance.

Officer Curtis Suggs was on patrol in Vero Beach when he received an anonymous complaint of an alligator in a cooler at a multi-unit condo complex in Merritt Island. Officer Suggs responded and made contact with the owner of the cooler which revealed parts from two alligators. An investigation revealed the owner's son was responsible. After reading the subject his Miranda warnings, an interview revealed how the subject killed the 6 and 7 foot alligators. Officer Suggs obtained a written confession and also seized a gaff, fillet knife and topwater plug used to harvest/kill the alligators along with two alligator heads, tails and a bag of meat. The subject was issued a mandatory appearance in court for the violations.

LAKE COUNTY

While patrolling on Lake Eustis, Officer Jared Beard conducted a resource inspection on a vessel and found six black bass in the live well of the boat. The subject admitted to catching all of them. Officer Beard advised him he was over the bag limit and the subject then said, "I know. I was trying to see how many I could catch and then take a picture of all of them together and also weigh them to get an average weight. I was then going to let them all go." Officer Beard measured one of the fish and found it was only 13.75 inches. The subject then asked the officer if he flipped the fish over and measured it. Officer Beard told the subject it would not gain a quarter of an inch by flipping it over. He issued the subject a citation for over-the-bag-limit of black bass and a warning for undersize black bass.

OSCEOLA COUNTY

While on patrol, Officer Kurt Arendas observed tire sign entering an orange grove. He followed the sign, suspecting to find illegal activity, but found a truck parked between two orange trees with a dryer hose running from the exhaust pipe to the cab. Officer Arendas approached the truck cautiously and found a deceased Osceola County man inside. The scene was turned over to the Osceola County Sheriff's Office.

SOUTHWEST REGION

HIGHLANDS COUNTY

Lieutenant Joe Allen observed a subject fishing with a cast net in the Old Kissimmee River channel at the S-65-D Lock Access Road. The man had taken a bass that was less than 12 1/2 inches long and several pan fish with the cast net. He was issued a notice to appear in court for taking freshwater game fish by an illegal method and warned for possessing the undersize bass.

Lieutenant Allen issued notice to appear citations for trespassing to three subjects fishing on the South Florida Water Management District's S-84 water control structure in the Slough Ditch Canal. The subjects walked by two "No Trespassing" signs and were fishing next to a third sign.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Jay Ewing and Officer Lonnie Sushil were patrolling the Caloosahatchee River when they observed fishermen fishing from shore. The officers proceeded to shore to speak with the fishermen and perform a fisheries inspection. One of the subjects was sitting on a bucket and appeared nervous. Officers requested to check the bucket for fish and in doing so found a marijuana pipe and baggie of marijuana. The subject was cited with two misdemeanors, possession of marijuana under 20 grams and possession of drug paraphernalia.

PINELLAS COUNTY

Officer Dieter Iten was on patrol on I-275 at the Skyway approach bridge. He observed two subjects fishing on Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) property posted "No Fishing". Inspection of their catch revealed numerous fish including undersize gag grouper and undersize red grouper. One of the subjects took responsibility for the fish and was cited along with being warned for fishing off FDOT property.

POLK COUNTY

Officer Robert Adams was called to the Indian Lake Estates community east of Lake Wales to investigate a report of a subject shooting a sandhill crane. When he arrived, he met with the witness who had seen a subject shoot and kill the crane on the golf course the previous day. The witness provided Officer Adams with the name of the suspect and led him to the carcass of the crane. Officer Adams photographed the carcass and showed it to the suspect who admitted to shooting the crane with a .22 caliber rifle. Officer Adams filed a complaint affidavit with the State Attorney's Office charging the suspect with taking a threatened species. An investigation into the shooting of a second sandhill crane earlier in the same week is ongoing.

SOUTH REGION A

BROWARD COUNTY

Officers Hank Juntunen and Darral Thomason observed a subject throwing a cast net into a canal along the turnpike. A fisheries inspection revealed pan fish that had been taken by the illegal method and a citation was issued.

Officers Dave Weis, Craig Baker, Darral Thomason and Hank Juntunen, were on patrol at the boat ramp in Conservation Area 2 when they confronted and arrested a subject for smoking and possessing of marijuana. The subject became combative and spit on the officers.

Lieutenant Laubenberger participated in an oil spill disaster exercise. The practice scenario began with an oil tanker ship suffering a hull breach from one of its tug tenders in the middle of Port Everglades. Subsequent scenarios included containing and cleaning up thousands of barrels of spilled oil, treating affected wildlife and maintaining security perimeters. Numerous federal, state and county agencies took part in the exercise.

Lieutenant Laubenberger participated with the county's multi-agency police Honor Guard in a memorial service for a Federal Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms K-9 "L.E." that was killed in the line of duty last week. Approximately forty canines and their handlers from various agencies also attended the ceremony in Hollywood.

Lieutenant Laubenberger participated with the county's multi-agency police Honor Guard in a colors presentation for Everett University in Coral Springs.

HENDRY COUNTY

Officers Ben Hankinson and Jon Greene were on patrol in Lake Okeechobee when they encountered a subject who was fishing and in possession of three undersize bass. The subject was cited for the violation.

Investigator J.W. Armstrong and Officer A.J. Maynard responded to a local hospital to investigate a reported alligator bite. The victim was bitten on the left wrist by a small alligator, near a canal along U.S. Highway 27. It was suspected that the victim reported for treatment several hours after being injured.

SOUTH REGION B

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Jason Rafter issued numerous citations to a fisherman for stone crab trap violations. The officer observed the subject was in possession of twelve traps and several of the traps appeared to have been used commercially and buoy markers were not consistent. Last year, the officer issued the same subject citations for similar violations.

Officer Seth Wingard responded to the report of an overdue vessel near the Seven Mile Bridge. Monroe County Sheriff's Office located the subjects' vehicle and trailer in a parking lot while the officer responded by water and located the subjects. The boat motor had failed and the boaters were unable to return to shore. Officer Wingard delivered the subjects to safety.

Officer Jason Rafter responded to an overturned vessel with two people in the water near Molasses Reef. By the time the officer arrived, the subjects had been safely recovered by a dive boat operation. However, the subjects were behaving strangely and did not want any law enforcement assistance. U.S. Coast Guard had both subjects onboard their vessel and was in the process of returning them to shore when the officer's investigation revealed that one subject

had an active federal warrant for smuggling. Coincidentally, twenty barrels filled with fuel were discovered floating nearby. After the overturned vessel was righted, twenty more barrels of fuel were discovered in the cabin and compartments of the vessel, totaling approximately 600 gallons. Both subjects were taken into custody by federal agents and state and federal charges are still pending.

Officer Jason Rafter worked a special detail with the U.S. Secret Service providing security for George W. Bush during the former president's fishing trip to Islamorada. Weather conditions were good, but no tarpon were caught. The officer conversed with Mr. Bush and discovered the former president was familiar with the U.S. Navy ship once commanded by Officer Rafter's father.