

FWC DIVISION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT FIELD OPERATIONS

**WEEKLY REPORT
May 29 – June 4, 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

Pensacola and Panama City area FWC officers teamed with the U.S. Coast Guard and the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Department in escorting the Juan Sebastian Elcano into Pensacola Pass and to a berthing at the Port of Pensacola. The 300-foot Juan Sebastian Elcano is the third largest Tall sailing ship in the world and part of the Spanish Navy. The ship is in harbor at Pensacola for the 450th celebration of the founding of the City of Pensacola.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Faris Livesay was on patrol at the Archie Glover boat ramp when he observed a man return to the ramp in a vessel. When Officer Livesay approached him, the man dumped a fish from a bucket into the water. The subject denied dumping the undersize redfish that was found in the water at the dock. The man was also found to be in possession of an undersize sheepshead. The fisherman was issued a notice to appear for possession of undersize redfish and undersize sheepshead.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Matt Webb conducted a fishery inspection on a vessel in Destin Pass. The inspection revealed undersize red grouper. The vessel captain had a prior charge for possession of undersize grouper. He was cited for a second time for the violation.

Officer Alan Kirchinger was on water patrol in the Crab Island area near Destin when he observed a 19-foot Hurricane Deck boat and a personal watercraft (PWC) that seemed to be having mechanical trouble. The officer discovered two adults and three children under the age of sixteen on the deck boat, and a sixteen-year-old on the PWC. Officer Kirchinger assisted with securing the PWC alongside the deck boat and then conducted a boating safety equipment inspection. During the inspection, Officer Kirchinger observed signs of impairment from the operator of the deck boat. Field sobriety tasks indicated impairment. The vessel operator was taken to the U.S. Coast Guard Station and given an opportunity to provide a breath sample which revealed .109 and .112 blood alcohol level. The operator was charged with BUI and transported to the Okaloosa County Jail. Arrangements were made to provide the remaining adult passenger and children with safe transportation.

Officer Webb inspected a vessel in Destin Pass that possessed red snapper. The vessel captain had knowledge that the red snapper season had been changed. He was issued a citation for possession of red snapper during the closed season.

Lieutenant Mark Hollinhead and Officer Webb conducted a fishery inspection in Destin Pass. The inspection revealed a bag limit violation for king mackerel. The vessel captain was issued a citation for over-the-bag limit of king mackerel.

Officer Alan Kirchinger was on water patrol of the Crab Island area near Destin when he observed a 14-foot canoe being operated on the congested waterways. As Officer Kirchinger watched, he observed a male sitting in the rear of the canoe steering and in control. The male operator almost capsized the canoe twice as he maneuvered the vessel with what initially appeared to be another passenger in the front. Upon closer inspection, Officer Kirchinger

observed another male lying in the canoe positioned in such a manner as to prevent him from ease of escape if the canoe capsized. A vessel safety equipment inspection revealed no life jackets (PFDs) or any other required safety equipment on board. Upon contact, Officer Kirchinger immediately observed signs of impairment from the operator and his passenger. Field sobriety tasks further confirmed impairment. The vessel operator was taken to the U.S. Coast Guard Station and given an opportunity to provide a breath sample which revealed .128 and .121 blood alcohol level. The operator was charged with BUI, issued a citation for insufficient PFDs, and transported to the Okaloosa County Jail. A sober driver came to the scene and picked up the impaired passenger.

Officer Ryan Nelson conducted a fishery inspection on a vessel in Destin Harbor. The inspection revealed undersize red snapper. A citation was issued for the violation.

Officer Nelson identified a charter fishing vessel with paying customers on board. The vessel captain was unable to produce a charter fishing license. He was cited for the violation.

Officer Matt Webb conducted fishery inspections on two vessels in Destin Pass. The inspections resulted in the two vessel captains being charged with undersize greater amberjack and gag grouper. One of the captains was also issued a warning for undersize king mackerel.

Officers Ryan Nelson and Matt Webb responded to the Gulf of Mexico to conduct a search and rescue after receiving information about a missing diver. The diver was located in a strong current unharmed.

WALTON COUNTY

Officer Ken White observed a man fishing from the banks of Lake Juniper. As Officer White approached, the fisherman moved away from his original location. Officer White made contact with the fisherman and had him return to his original fishing spot where Officer White discovered undersize bass on a stringer. The fisherman was cited for possession of undersized bass.

BAY COUNTY

Lieutenant Jay Chesser and Officer Mike Nobles were on patrol when they observed a subject injecting methamphetamine while sitting in his truck. Further investigation found an active meth lab, cannabis and methamphetamine. The Bay County Sheriff's Office Meth Lab Unit responded to take possession of the hazardous materials. Two subjects, who are currently awaiting trial on previous federal meth charges, were arrested.

Lieutenant Jay Chesser worked a boating accident at Deerpoint Lake involving a bass boat that hit a stump and sank. No occupants were injured in the accident and the boat was refloated.

While working a boating safety detail on Econfina Creek, Officers Lane Kinney and Larry Morris conducted a vessel safety inspection that revealed 17 empty beer cans in the bottom of a vessel. The operator failed all field sobriety tasks and was arrested for boating under the influence. He was booked into the Bay County Jail where he refused to submit to a breathalyzer test.

BAY COUNTY COPS

Officer Mike Nobles taught the laws portion of the hunter education class held in Panama City.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Lieutenant Charlie Wood conducted a multi-agency detail to coincide with the annual 'White Trash Bash that occurs on Dog Island on Memorial Day weekend. This year the event was split between Dog Island and Alligator Point. Twenty-one FWC Officers from six counties (Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Jefferson, Leon, and Liberty) participated along with six Alcoholic Beverage Agents, seven Highway Patrol Troopers and eight Franklin County Sheriff's Deputies. The results of the detail were: 113 vessels boarded, 656 public contacts made, 56 citations issued, 63 written warnings issued and two arrests. The violations included boating under the influence, driving under the influence, possession of alcoholic beverages by underage individuals, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, insufficient boating safety equipment, expired vessel registration, excessive speed, driving while license is suspended or revoked, possession of open alcoholic beverage container in vehicle, and failure to wear seat belt. One medical emergency was reported and the individual was transported on the *Orion* to paramedics waiting on the mainland. The officers utilized eight patrol vessels and one fixed-wing aircraft to conduct the detail.

GADSDEN COUNTY

Officer Ben Johnson worked complaints of illegal taking of game fish at the Jim Woodruff Dam. After working in the area for several hours, Officer Johnson was able to cite two individuals for taking game fish by illegal methods. The first individual was cited for taking black bass with a snatch hook. The second individual was observed taking game fish with a cast net. Several black bass and speckled perch were seized as evidence.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

No report received.

NORTHEAST REGION

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer David Wigley was working the Jetty Park area of Port Canaveral when he received a complaint of subjects catching undersize snook with a cast net. Officer Wigley located the men and a search of their gear revealed a 22-inch snook in their possession. One subject took responsibility for the undersize snook and advised he caught it with the cast net. The subject was issued a citation for possession of undersize snook and harvesting snook by illegal method. The snook was returned to the water alive.

Officer Corey Bridwell was on land patrol in the area of Patillo Creek Road in the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. At approximately 9 p.m., he noticed a vehicle on the refuge after closing hours and initiated a traffic stop. Officer Bridwell observed an open container of beer in a cup holder in the center console. Officer Bridwell asked the subject to exit the vehicle and whether or not he had any firearms or contraband in his vehicle. The man stated that he did have a firearm. Officer Bridwell secured the firearm and asked if he had any fish in his

possession. The man stated that he had some sea trout. A resource inspection revealed six sea trout, two of which were undersize. Subsequently, the subject was issued a citation for possession of undersize sea trout and possession of over the bag limit of sea trout. Additionally he was issued a warning for the open container. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Officer Jane Whaley was contacted and given the information for the possession of a firearm on a federal wildlife refuge, trespassing after hours and no fishing permit. It is the intention of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to issue federal citations for the above violations.

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY

Officers Damon Saunders and Curtis Suggs were set up in concealed locations at the Sebastian Inlet. They received information that a subject on the catwalk had slipped an undersized snook into a bucket and thrown a cast net on top of it. Shortly after, the officers watched the subject carry the bucket to his truck and transfer the small snook to a cooler. He then carried the bucket back to the catwalk to continue fishing. After about an hour, the subject started to leave. The officers conducted a fisheries inspection and discovered the undersize fish, which measured 24 inches. The subject was cited for the violation.

OSCEOLA COUNTY

While checking fishermen around a water control structure on the Saint Cloud Canal, Officer Paul Mendez found a subject fishing inside the posted fenced area surrounding the structure. Officer Mendez issued the man a notice to appear for the violation.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer Jeff Gier spoke before the Deland Kiwanis Club on the topic of nuisance wildlife. Officer Gier talked about living with black bears and alligators and handed out Living with Alligators, Living with Black Bears and Living with Panther pamphlets. Twenty-seven people were present.

SOUTHWEST REGION

LEE COUNTY

Officers Adam Resnick, Justin Koble and Brain Cazalot conducted Panther Patrol on Corkscrew Road using new hand-held laser speed detectors. The officers issued 18 citations. The highest speed was 93 miles per hour in a marked 50 mile per hour zone.

An angler initiated a complaint at the Fort Myers FWC Office regarding four wade fishermen who were in the Caloosahatchee River taking snook. Lieutenant Frantz accompanied the complainant to the location of the violation and requested assistance from Officers Jonathon Ruggiero and Lonnie Sushil. The fishermen were located and following an inspection of their catch, a live snook was located on a stringer in some mangroves near their location. One of the anglers was identified as the one who had put the snook on the stringer and was issued a citation for the possession of snook during closed season.

Officers, Jason Cooke, Justin Koble, and Gregory Bryson issued seventeen misdemeanor citations for fish violations reference the following: possession of goliath grouper, redfish,

sheepshead, grey snapper, and snook (undersize, illegal to possess, out of season, and taking by an illegal method).

PINELLAS COUNTY

Officer Dieter Iten responded to a complaint of an individual hiding undersize gag grouper while fishing. An inspection of the angler's cooler revealed numerous fish, including an undersize sea trout. An inspection of a bait bucket revealed an 11 inch gag grouper. The subject was issued a citation for possession of undersize grouper and warned for the undersize sea trout.

Officer Dieter Iten was patrolling Blind Pass Jetty in reference to a complaint regarding snook being taken out of season. Officer Iten inspected several anglers in possession of a cooler containing four snook. The subjects were cited for the violations.

Officer George Wells has assumed the position of Derelict Vessel Coordinator for Pinellas County. With the assistance of Jon Saltzgaver, 17 cases have been worked. Seven of the cases were resolved by having the registered owners remove their vessels. Seven others were transferred to a private contractor for vessel removal from the waters of the state. Two are on extensions, and one is pending. One misdemeanor was issued and two felonies were filed with the Pinellas County State Attorney's Office. Currently, there are several new derelict vessel incidents to investigate.

SOUTH REGION A

BROWARD COUNTY

Officer Dave Weis responded to two subjects who were observed attempting to net Sandhill Cranes along U.S. Highway 27. When Officer Weis checked the vehicle he found crane feathers in the trunk. The subjects, who had possessed one earlier, were trying to catch more. The subjects were cited for harassing a threatened species.

Lieutenant Dave Bingham received word from the Broward Sheriff's Office that they had set up a perimeter around a black bear who had been eluding authorities for three months. The bear was seen on several occasions in the City of Westin, near U.S. Highway 27 & S.W. 26 Street. Officers Nathan Brock, Mike Naujoks, David Weis, and Lieutenant Bingham responded to the area. Investigator Bill Stiffler and Joe Bozzo, an FWC bear biologist from Collier County, also responded with tranquilizer guns. The bear was located and tranquilized and then placed into a cage without incident. Commissioner Ron Bergeron spoke with the media about the incident and provided information about bears in the area. Mr. Bozzo transported the bear to Collier County's Picayune Strand Forest to be released.

Officer Mike Naujoks stopped a vessel whose occupant he recognized as a prior resource violator. Officer Naujoks conducted a fisheries inspection and found yet another case of the subject possessing undersize snapper. Officers Craig Baker and Bill Carpenter responded to assist. Consequently, the subject, who had been cited on three previous occasions for undersize snapper, was arrested and taken to jail.

GLADES COUNTY

Officer David Burnsed was on water patrol in Lake Okeechobee conducting boating safety and freshwater fishery inspections. Officer Burnsed stopped an out-of-state registered vessel with two subjects on board in Harney Pond Canal. They were found to be in possession of 106 pan fish. The previous day, Officer Burnsed had observed the same subjects fishing over some pan fish beds, but did not intervene. Recalling that fact, Officer Burnsed initiated an investigation into the possibility of the subjects being over their cumulative two-day trip limit. The subjects stated that they had more fish in two large coolers at their rental unit, but the number of the fish was unknown. Officer Burnsed contacted Officer Greg Louque to assist. The contents of the coolers were counted and a total of 261 pan fish were documented. Officer Burnsed cited both subjects for taking over their daily bag limit and possessing over their two day trip limit of pan fish. After completing that incident, Officer Burnsed stopped another out-of-state registered vessel with two subjects on board. These subjects were also found to be in possession of 104 pan fish. Both of them were issued citations for the violation.

MARTIN COUNTY

Officer George Anchors caught two subjects on horseback, illegally hunting hogs while using dogs, on the Lakeside East Ranch South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) property. Both subjects were issued citations for hunting and trespassing on the closed property.

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

An FWC investigations lieutenant responded to assist county police with a trespassing complaint. Two subjects had been stopped in their vehicle. A freshly killed, antlerless deer, along with compound bow and arrows, were discovered inside the vehicle. Several other FWC officers responded to assist. The male subject was jailed on related charges while the female subject was cited and released. Blood was discovered by an FWC canine unit at the suspected trespass location and samples were collected for analysis. Felony trespass charges are being considered by the state attorney office.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Investigator Jon Garzaniti issued a local charter boat captain a citation for possessing undersize dolphin. The citation was issued as result of a joint investigation between FWC personnel and National Marine Fisheries Service agents. The investigation resulted in federal fisheries charges.

COPS

Officer Lee LeBlanc and Captain Ardelean provide information about alligators and crocodiles in Florida to over 300 firearm instructors from all over the globe. The three day conference is held annually and this year's was hosted by the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office. FWC provided a small, live, captive alligator and crocodile that provided photo opportunities for many of the foreign and out- of-state attendees.

SOUTH REGION B

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Officer Mike Albert observed a male and female subject fishing along a canal bank near N.W. 135th Street and 47th Avenue. Officer Albert asked one of the subjects to produce a fishing license. The subject could not produce either a fishing license or suitable identification and both lied about their identity. There were also discrepancies and violations with the vehicle registration and tag information. The male subject was arrested and finally admitted to his actual identity. The female subject reluctantly provided her real identity. A computer check then revealed active arrest warrants had been issued for both of them. Both were transported to jail and the male subject was also cited for not possessing a fishing license.

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Joshua Peters issued four misdemeanor citations during a fisheries inspection of three divers in Sigsbee Basin. A resident of Key West was cited for possession of 12 out of season, 12 wrung and 9 undersize lobster tails, and failure to possess a measuring device. His companions received infraction citations for failure to possess saltwater fishing licenses and written warnings for possession of two undersize hog fish, two undersize mangrove snapper, and one out-of-season stone crab claw.

Officers Joshua Peters and Investigations participated in a search and rescue for a subject on a personal watercraft (PWC) that collided into a derelict vessel. The subject was not located and it was discovered the PWC had been reported stolen from Key Haven. Monroe County Sheriff's Office recovered the stolen PWC and FWC is investigating the boating accident.