

FWC DIVISION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT FIELD OPERATIONS

**WEEKLY REPORT
May 8 – 14, 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 COPS

Captain Mary Sumner and Lieutenant Brian Lambert attended a planning meeting hosted by the U.S. Coast Guard Station at Pensacola Naval Air Station for the anticipated arrival of the Spanish Clipper Sailing Vessel *El Cano* in June.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

On May 13 at 2:00 A.M., an officer responded to a complaint from a resident in the Holley area north of Navarre. The landowner called FWC Communications and advised he had shot and killed a large bear that had killed his goats. The officer located the deceased bear inside a goat pen with two freshly killed goats. The landowner had previously complained of problems with a bear when five of his goats had been killed over a period of weeks and had been cooperating with wildlife technicians in their attempts to live trap the bear. The investigating officer determined that no charges are warranted against the landowner.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officers Matt Webb and Ryan Nelson conducted a fishery inspection on a vessel in Destin Pass. The inspection revealed undersize gag grouper. The captain of the vessel was issued a citation for possession of undersize grouper.

Officer Matt Webb conducted two separate fishery inspections on vessels in Destin Pass. The inspections revealed undersize amberjack and scamp. The captains of the vessels were cited for the fish violations.

Officers Webb and Nelson stopped a vessel in Destin Harbor to conduct a safety inspection. During the inspection, the operator displayed signs of impairment. Field sobriety tasks confirmed the operator was impaired. The vessel operator was placed under arrest and transported to the Okaloosa County Jail where he agreed to a state certified breath test to determine his breath alcohol content. The subject provided a breath sample of .190. He was booked into the jail and charged with operating a vessel while under the influence of alcohol. A computer check revealed the subject had prior convictions for first degree murder and several charges for driving under the influence.

Officers Webb and Nelson conducted fishery inspections and cited two captains on separate vessels for possession of undersize king mackerel.

Officers Pete Rockwell and Ryan Nelson responded to a domestic dispute on a vessel in Santa Rosa Sound near the Fort Walton Beach Brook's Bridge. The complaint indicated a subject had beaten his wife and pushed her overboard. Officers Rockwell and Nelson located the vessel and occupants involved and turned them over to the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Department.

Officers Steve Bartlett and Pete Rockwell responded to the Gulf of Mexico to assist U.S. Coast Guard personnel with the search for a missing and possibly distressed swimmer. Officers Bartlett and Rockwell located the missing female, floating and unconscious. Officer Rockwell immediately entered the water, right-sided the female, and began rescue efforts as he physically returned her to the beach area. Upon arrival to the beach, he was met by Fire Department and

EMS personnel where resuscitation efforts were successful. The female was transported to a local hospital.

OKALOOSA COUNTY COPS

Captain Mary Sumner, Lieutenants Mark Hollinhead and Dennis Welsh and Officer Alan Kirchinger attended the annual Fallen Law Enforcement Officer Memorial event hosted by Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office in memory of the loss of Florida officers this past year. Numerous federal, state, and local agency representatives and the families of three Okaloosa County deputies killed in the line of duty attended the event.

WALTON COUNTY

Officers Pete Rockwell, Randall Brooks and Espy Letcher responded to a missing person complaint, possibly a swimmer in distress off of the beach in south Walton County. Officer Rockwell located the swimmer who was overwhelmed by both the rough water and undertow. The U.S. Coast Guard responded to the scene with a 25-foot vessel and helicopter. The Coast Guard recovered the subject and airlifted him to a local hospital where he was pronounced dead.

WALTON COUNTY COPS

Officers Randall Brooks and Don Walker attended the South Walton Kid's Fishing tournament. Approximately 100 children and 200 parents attended the annual event. The children had a great time and caught a lot of pompano. Officers were on hand to answer questions.

BAY COUNTY

Lieutenant Jay Chesser and Officer Mike Nobles were on water patrol in the Econfinia Wildlife Management Area when they pulled up to a fisher who had a cloud of cannabis smoke around him. When this was pointed out, the individual produced a cannabis cigarette which resulted in him being issued a citation for possession. The individual was cited last year for night hunting after he shot the decoy deer and the year before was cited for numerous marine fisheries violations that resulted in a fine totaling around \$1,300.00.

LEON COUNTY

Officers Charles Higman and Billy Kemp were on Lake Jackson conducting water patrol when they stopped a vessel for a boating safety and fisheries inspection. The operator could not produce a valid vessel registration. When asked to look at any fish caught, the operator opened a cooler containing three black bass. All three fish were significantly shorter than the minimum 18-inch requirement specific to Lake Jackson. The operator was cited for the resource violation and given a warning for the vessel registration violation.

Officer Chris Jones and an investigator were conducting water patrol on Lake Talquin around Coe's Landing. They stopped a vessel to conduct a fisheries inspection and asked the operator if he had caught any fish. The individual stated he had not caught anything. An inspection by Officer Jones revealed an undersize black bass. The individual was cited for the violation.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

BRADFORD COUNTY

Lieutenant Gary Knowles returned to Sampson Lake boat ramp after a morning of water patrol when he noticed a subject fishing from shore. Lieutenant Knowles asked to see the subject's fishing license, which he could not produce. After obtaining the subject's name and other pertinent information, Lieutenant Knowles conducted a records check that yielded an outstanding felony warrant for aggravated assault with great bodily harm. The subject was arrested without incident and transported to the Bradford County Jail.

DUVAL COUNTY

While on land patrol before dawn, Officer Aaron O'Reilly checked two fishermen near the south end of Little Talbot Island. When he approached the fisherman, he saw a large red drum on the beach where one of the fishermen was standing. He shined his flashlight around the area revealing a stringer with three more red drum attached. O'Reilly measured the fish and found that all four were oversize. One fisherman was cited for possession of oversize red drum, the second was cited for possession of oversize red drum and possession of over-the-bag-limit of red drum. All of the fish were returned to the water alive.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Officer Harold Barry was patrolling in the Osceola National Forest when another vehicle traveling in his direction almost collided with him. Officer Barry turned around and conducted a traffic stop. Officer Leslie Sharp arrived to assist. The operator emitted a strong odor of an alcoholic beverage and was unable to speak clearly or maintain his balance. Officer Barry performed field sobriety tasks and the driver failed all. He was arrested and transported to the Columbia County Jail where he blew 0.219 and 0.203 BAT.

Officers Harold Barry and Leslie Sharp were conducting inspections on Alligator Lake. As a vessel approached the ramp, they observed two occupants. The vessel took a long time to get to the ramp after seeing the officers. The inspections revealed a heavy rod spooled with heavy line and a large two pronged hook. In addition, a large knife, hammer, duck tape and a container of raw chicken was found. After an interview, the duo admitted to catching an alligator with the rod and chicken and taping its' mouth and feet. They dumped the gator after seeing the officers on the bank. The two were charged with attempting to take alligator out of season. The next day, Officer Barry returned and attempted to locate the dumped gator. All that was found was the bundle of duck tape that had come off of the gator's mouth.

Officer Bret Gill responded to a cell phone call for help from a man and his minor child who were lost on foot in the Osceola National Forest. The subjects had hiked from their truck into Big Gum Swamp and had become lost. Officer Gill located the truck, made cell phone contact and guided them back to his location.

A complaint was received that a black bear had been shot during muzzleloading season in the Osceola National Forest. Lieutenants Ken Avinon, David Lee, Paul Graham, Investigator Kevin Larson, Officers Giles, Gill, and Jim Ellis from the U.S. Forest service worked the incident over a seven month period. During a secondary interview with Lieutenant Paul Graham, the suspect gave a written confession detailing the killing of the bear. Officer Bret Gill direct filed charges on the subject for unlawful taking of a black bear.

NORTHEAST REGION

BREVARD COUNTY

Lieutenant Jeff Sidor, Officers Dave Wigley, Jeff Luce, Ryan Smith, Erin Tyrrell, Michael Slotin, Lenny Salberg, and an investigator worked a detail at Ski Island in the Banana River during the Brevard County boating festival. There were approximately 350 vessels surrounding the island at any given time. The event was a success and there were no major accidents or incidents during the day. Lieutenant Sidor and Officer Wigley assisted with a heart attack victim making sure the subject got to EMS. The statistics for the day: 76 water patrol hours, 26 infractions, two misdemeanors citations, 87 written warnings, and 55 written boating inspections.

Officer Slotin was conducting a fisheries inspection on a local head boat out of Port Canaveral. During the inspection, Officer Slotin found three undersize red snapper on board the vessel. The captain of the vessel was issued a federal citation for possession of undersize red snapper.

OSCEOLA COUNTY

While on water patrol on West Lake Toho, Officer Paul Mendez, Reserve Officer Zach Riccutti, and Lieutenant Guy Carpenter II made three undersize bass cases and a possession of cannabis less than 20 grams case. While conducting a fishery inspection, they found two Louisiana men and an Osceola County man, during a separate inspection, in possession of several undersize bass. The three men were issued notices to appear for the violation. While conducting another fishery inspection, the officers smelled the distinct odor of burnt cannabis. When the men were asked about it, one of them admitted to being in possession of less than 20 grams of cannabis. He was issued a notice to appear for the violation.

While on water patrol on East Lake Toho, Officer Mendez and Lieutenant Carpenter observed an Osceola County man displaying signs of impairment while they conducted a boating safety inspection. After having him perform float standardized field sobriety tasks, the officers had probable cause to arrest him for operating a vessel while under the influence. He was booked into the Osceola County Detention Center where he submitted a sample of his breath for determining its breath alcohol content. The results were .063 and .067. The subject also admitted to taking pain medication.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

While working in the Webb Management Area, Lieutenant Mike Frantz was contacted about a person shooting a small caliber rifle at the end of Webb Lake Road. Lieutenant Frantz contacted Investigator Larry Gregory who was also in the area. Investigator Gregory located the suspect, several rifles and a hand gun. The suspect admitted shooting a 22 caliber rifle at the end of the road rather than going to the range. Lieutenant Frantz issued him a citation.

Lieutenant Mike Frantz and Officer Robert O'Horo noticed a fisherman using a cast net in the city limits of Punta Gorda, which is in violation of a special act. After making contact with the fisherman, it was discovered that the individual had an outstanding warrant. The fisherman was issued a warning for using a cast net and transported to jail on the warrant.

HIGHLANDS COUNTY

Officer Dirk Williamson responded to a complaint in Avon Park regarding a subject in possession of a gopher tortoise. Officer Williamson arrived at the address given in the complaint and observed a gopher tortoise in the back of a pickup truck. The owner of the truck confessed to catching the tortoise. Officer Williamson seized the gopher tortoise and will contact the Highlands County States Attorneys' Office for possible charges on the subject.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Officer Brad Clayton received a complaint that a subject dressed in camouflage and carrying a gun entered CF Industries Property in North Hillsborough County. Officer Clayton responded and located the subject's vehicle. While conducting surveillance on the vehicle, he heard four shots fired after legal turkey hunting hours. At approximately 9:30 p.m., the subject emerged from the woods. At the time, he was not in possession of the gun or any game. When questioned, the subject stated he was looking for artifacts. Officer Joe Wolff and K-9 Mojo were called to the scene to assist and a search turned up a shotgun; two male turkeys and a camouflage fanny pack which was found hidden under the CSX railroad tracks. The fanny pack contained a cell phone and other articles belonging to the subject. Several days later, the subject requested to meet with Officer Clayton. Officer Clayton and Officer Alton Still met with the subject who admitted to turkey hunting, killing the two turkeys, trespassing and hiding the gun and turkeys to keep from being arrested. After meeting with the assistant state attorney, Officer Clayton direct filed and charged the subject with two counts of armed trespass, taking over the daily bag limit of turkeys, taking turkeys after legal hunting hours, willful and wanton waste of wildlife, resisting without violence, hunting without a license and no turkey stamp. A warrant was obtained to be served on the subject.

Lieutenant Jason Curtin, Lieutenant George Wilson, Investigator Stuart Messman and Officer Ray Sherertz responded to a boat explosion that had occurred on Beer Can Island in Tampa Bay. Eleven individuals sustained injuries; six of those injuries were serious. The accident investigation is ongoing and being conducted by Investigator Stuart Messman.

LEE COUNTY

Officers Brian Cazalot and Lonnie Sushil were conducting fisheries inspections along the Caloosahatchee River at East Riverside Park in Fort Myers, when they came across an individual who had been cast netting fish. The individual was found to be in possession of eight undersize sheepshead. He was issued a citation and released with a notice to appear.

Officer Gregory Bryson and Officer Jason Cooke were on water patrol when they received a call from dispatch about individuals fishing from a vessel and keeping undersize snook at New Pass. The officers made their way to the location and observed the suspected vessel. The officers made contact with the vessel and conducted a fisheries check with two individuals on board. The individuals said that they only had trout on board. Upon checking their vessel further, they were found to be in possession of six undersize snook. The individuals were arrested for possession of undersize, out of season, and over the bag limit of snook. They were transported to the Lee County Jail.

Officers Adam Resnick and Lonnie Sushil were working panther patrol on Corkscrew Road. The officers issued eight citations for speeding. The highest speed was 77 miles per hour in a posted 50 mile per hour zone. One individual was arrested for driving with no driver's license which was his third offense. The individual was booked into the Lee County Jail.

Officer Brian Cazalot was patrolling the Estero Island State Park area when he observed two individuals sitting in a vehicle in the mangroves, out of sight. Officer Cazalot watched one of the subjects light what appeared to be a cigarette. He approached the vehicle and asked the two for identification which revealed an underage female and an adult male. The cigarette turned out to be a marijuana joint. Officer Cazalot arrested the adult individual for contributing to the delinquency of a minor and possession of cannabis less than 20 grams. He was booked into the Lee County Jail.

Lieutenant Darrin Riley was conducting fishery checks on Bunche Beach when he attempted to check a vessel with four individuals on board. The vessel kept moving away from Lieutenant Riley. Once the vessel was finally stopped, Riley made contact with the operator and noticed signs of impairment. The operator was given field sobriety tasks and found to be under the influence. The individual was arrested for boating under the influence and transported to the Lee County Jail. The individual refused to give a breath alcohol sample.

PASCO COUNTY

Officer Donald Jones was on water patrol between the Pithalachascotee River and Green Key. He observed a small boat that appeared to have been abandoned with all of its safety equipment and motor intact. After running the vessel registration numbers, it was determined that the boat was stolen. Officer Jones towed the boat to Nick's Park boat ramp and turned it over to the New Port Richey Police who returned it to the legal owner.

PINELLAS COUNTY

Investigator Jim Manson conducted an investigation into the escape of a ten foot Burmese Python in Pinellas Park. After contacting the owner, it was determined the reptile had escaped almost two months earlier. A further investigation revealed numerous captive wildlife violations. Charges are being direct filed through the State Attorney's Office, in addition to several written warnings that were also issued to the individual.

POLK COUNTY

Officers Adonious Duhart and Stephen Judah were called to investigate a report of two men catching game fish with a cast net at Lake Starr near Lake Wales. The caller gave a description of one of the men and stated that the men had a stringer full of bass. The officers located the men at their residence and interviewed them. The subjects denied fishing or being in

possession of any fish. One of the men was wet and matched the description given by the caller. After receiving permission to search the area, the officers located a wet cast net on the side of the residence and thirteen bass that were hidden under a tire in the yard. The officers charged both men with taking game fish by illegal method and possession of undersize black bass.

COPS

Officer Joanne Adams sat on the interview board for Criminal Justice students at East Lee County High School. Students were interviewed to continue onto the next level of the program.

SOUTH REGION A

BROWARD COUNTY

Lieutenant Dave Bingham attended a class sponsored by the International Conference of Police Chaplains. Lieutenant Bingham has been assigned to a team that responds to statewide critical incidents.

Officers David Weis and Craig Baker responded to an alligator complaint at the Bank Atlantic Center hockey arena in Sunrise. The alligator was encroaching onto the property and had to be removed. The officers then responded to a boating accident at a Markham Park canal where a ski boat had struck a submerged rock and sunk.

COPS

A Law Enforcement Officers Memorial service was held at Broward Community College's Law Enforcement Institute. FWC served as the host agency this year with Colonel Julie Jones reciting the proclamation. FWC Honor Guard personnel were present including Captain Warrick, Lieutenant Laubenberger, Officers Jiggins, Buck, and Cook. Lieutenant Pilot Joe Martyna's name was embossed on a plaque and placed on the memorial wall.

HENDRY COUNTY

Officers Henry Rockwell and Greg Louque were on water patrol in the Industrial Canal when they observed three subjects seated near Bass and Sun Condominiums property. Officer Rockwell observed eight coolers next to the subjects. An inspection of them revealed a total of 463 pan fish. All three subjects were cited for over the bag limit of blue gill.

MARTIN COUNTY

Officer George Anchors cited a subject fishing in the Dupuis Wildlife and Environmental Area for taking three black bass over the legal size limit.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Near Southern Boulevard Causeway, a Town of Palm Beach police officer attempted to stop a subject who had been under surveillance for suspicion of turtle egg poaching. The subject fled on foot from the officer with a bag in hand. He threw the bag into the water and then complied

with the officer's orders. The subject was handcuffed after other officers arrived on scene. The officer retrieved the bag from the water and discovered 119 sea turtle eggs inside. FWC and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agents were notified. FWC Captain Jeff Ardelean responded and assisted with processing the case. The subject was arrested for possession of sea turtle eggs and disturbing a sea turtle nest, both felonies. The subject was booked into the Palm Beach County jail. He had been arrested approximately twelve years ago for the same violation. Just before sunrise, the eggs were safely reburied on Palm Beach and FWC biologists will monitor the site.

Lieutenant Chuck Russo issued citations to two subjects in the J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area for driving off trail by Camp J.

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents called FWC dispatch to report that they had a vessel stopped offshore of Fort Pierce Inlet with a suspiciously large amount of fish on board. Officer Randy Irwin and Investigator Mike Orndorf responded to the location. An inspection of the vessel revealed a cooler containing a large amount of black sea bass. Officer Irwin and Investigator Orndorf escorted the vessel to the dock where the fish were counted and measured. A total of 130 bass were counted with 113 of them undersize. Both subjects onboard were charged with possession of undersize and over-the-limit violations.

Officer Andy Zamonis was on patrol near Sebastian Inlet when he received information that subjects aboard a vessel bound for Fort Pierce had speared a goliath grouper. He passed the information onto other law enforcement partners and less than one hour later, U.S. Coast Guard personnel stopped a vessel in Fort Pierce Inlet that matched the description. There were four subjects onboard that had several barracuda and a king mackerel on the deck of the vessel. Further inspection revealed a goliath grouper weighing approximately 100 pounds in the forward cabin of the vessel. The vessel was escorted to shore where Officer Daniel Caron arrived to interview the vessel's owner. He admitted to having speared the grouper and was charged with the possession violation.

SOUTH REGION B

COLLIER COUNTY

Officer David Barrett arrested a subject for boating under the influence. The incident began when he conducted a vessel stop after observing the water skier was not wearing a life jacket. During the stop, the operator exhibited signs of impairment and performed poorly on field sobriety tasks. Intoxilizer test results indicated a breath alcohol level of .097- over the state's legal impairment limit of .08.

While off duty, Officer David Barrett observed a commercial stone crab vessel, with two fish traps onboard, heading offshore. Days later, Officers Barrett and Daniel Stermen located the vessel returning to port. Both fish traps were no longer onboard the vessel, but a fisheries inspection revealed eight grouper with obvious signs of "trap-rash." During an interview by Lieutenant Mitz Mravic, the operator/owner of the vessel admitted to having fished the two illegal fish traps approximately thirty miles offshore. The following day, Officers Stastny,

Stermen and Marc Shea headed offshore to recover the illegal fish trap. Federal charges are being filed through NMFS.

Officers from FWC and Collier Sheriff's Office (CCSO) began a search for an overdue vessel from Chokoloskee Island. The 75 year old subject on the vessel was reported to have no food or water and was 20 hours overdue. At 10:30 PM, a U. S. Coast Guard helicopter located the subject in a small bay off Ferguson River. Lieutenant Mitz Mravic and CCSO Sergeant Bruening launched a jon boat and proceeded to the location of the stranded boater. Due to the remote location and shallow water, it took over three hours for them to reach the site. The extremely dehydrated and slightly disoriented subject was delivered to fire/rescue personnel and transported to a local hospital for treatment.

FWC officers participated in an annual multi-agency detail dubbed Operation Little Marco 2009. The detail was in response to a public party that traditionally occurs after the Great Dock Canoe Race in Naples. This year there were an estimated 700 boats and 6,000 beach partiers at the southern tip of Keewaydin Island. The detail produced nine arrests - six for boating under the influence, others for battery, and one drug arrest. For the third year in a row, no boating accidents with injuries were reported.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Officer R. Rodriguez responded to a call of two subjects spearfishing in a freshwater lake. Officer Rodriguez observed the subjects' illegal actions and eventually confronted them. The subjects were in possession of peacock bass, blue tilapia, and cichlids. They were cited for several violations.

Officers R. Rodriguez and D. Gronski were working a plain clothes surveillance detail with two U.S. Coast Guard personnel, targeting suspicious marine activities at a Miami Beach boat ramp. The officers observed a vehicle drive into the parking area and pull up behind another parked, vehicle. Subjects inside the suspicious vehicle activated what appeared to be police emergency lights. The officers cautiously approached the situation, thinking they were assisting other plain clothes officers. Officer Rodriguez then smelled a strong odor of marijuana emanating from the suspicious vehicle and established that the driver and his occupant were not police officers. A consent search of the vehicle revealed a large stash of marijuana. The driver was arrested for prohibited use of emergency lights, possession of marijuana and possession of marijuana with intent to distribute.

Officer Mike Albert was patrolling the C-4 canal, near State Road 826 when he observed a subject operating an unnumbered personal watercraft (PWC). Suspicious, Officer Albert watched the subject load the PWC onto a trailer and drive to a nearby apartment. Officer Albert waited until the subject returned to his van and trailer and drive to an empty lot near the same canal. Officer Albert approached the subject and asked for a driver license; the subject could not produce one. A computer check revealed that the subject was a fugitive from Hendry County. The PWC and trailer were discovered to have been stolen from a Broward County owner. Officers R. Rodriguez, E. Sullivan and D. Gronski arrived to provide assistance. The subject was arrested and charged with two counts of grand theft.

MONROE COUNTY

Two local residents departed from the shoreline of Tavernier Key to go snorkeling. Well after dusk, they were reported overdue and six FWC water patrol officers responded to conduct a

search. Lieutenant Keith Barcomb observed one of the divers walking along U.S. Highway 1. She was exhausted and explained that she and her friend became separated by tides and currents that carried her farther from shore than expected. After a long struggle, she was able to swim back to shore. The other snorkeler had already landed safely and returned home.

Officers worked a three day special enforcement detail during Hospitality Week in Islamorada. They documented 2,874 users checked, 1,100 vessel inspections, and issued 34 boating citations, 7 other citations, 125 boating safety warnings and 24 other warnings. They also effected 3 boating under the influence arrests. Their patrol totals included 331 hours of water patrol, one hour of air patrol, and 356 boating safety hours. They collectively responded to 34 calls for service and two search and rescue missions. There were no boating accidents reported during the three day event.