

FWC DIVISION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT FIELD OPERATIONS

**WEEKLY REPORT
June 4 - 11, 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

GADSDEN COUNTY

Officer Ben Johnson arrested a subject on an outstanding warrant at the Chattahoochee boat ramp on Apalachicola River.

While checking bank fishermen at Ochawaha Creek and Highway 67, Officer Ben Johnson cited two subjects for possession of marijuana and drug paraphernalia.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officer Keith Clark checked a vessel as it returned to Sherman's Cove. The vessel owner was found in possession of undersize king mackerel and undersize red snapper. Officer Clark issued a notice to appear citation and a warning for the violations.

Officers Fred Rondeau and Randy Webb assisted with escorting the 300-foot Spanish tall sailing ship *Juan Sebastian Elcano* out of port. The ship was visiting the area to take part in the 450th anniversary celebration of the founding of the City of Pensacola.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Matt Webb conducted a fishery inspection on a vessel in Destin Pass. The inspection revealed undersize greater amberjack. The vessel captain was cited.

Officers Pete Rockwell, Alan Kirchinger and Captain Mary Sumner joined members of the U.S. Coast Guard Station Destin in response to a report of a vessel striking the Destin Bridge with occupants in the water. Upon arrival moments later, the officers located an 18-foot Boston Whaler on shore with one occupant on board. The vessel sustained significant damage to the port bow and the port stern area from striking the bridge. The lone impaired occupant eventually admitted to officers there were two other occupants, a driver and a female passenger. His friend, the driver, left with the female after the vessel came to rest on shore. An inspection of the vessel revealed blood from an injury and numerous empty alcoholic beverages. An intensive search of area boat ramps and hospitals eventually located the driver when he returned to the hospital to pick up his female companion, who had been treated for a laceration requiring stitches. Officer Kirchinger arrested the vessel operator for leaving the scene of a vessel accident involving property damage and injuries beyond first aid and failure to report the accident. The vessel operator was transported to the Okaloosa County Jail.

Officers Pete Rockwell and Ken White assisted FWC Investigations with a single vessel boating accident involving serious injuries to an occupant. The occupant fell overboard and sustained deep lacerations from the motor prop. The victim was air lifted from the U. S. Coast Guard Station Destin and transported to Sacred Heart Hospital in Pensacola. The investigation is ongoing.

FWC officers partnered with members of U.S. Coast Guard Station Destin, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Alcoholic Beverage and Tobacco agents, Pensacola Police and Sheriff Departments from Okaloosa, Escambia, Santa Rosa, Walton, and Bay Counties during the 2009 Annual Billy Bow Leggs Pirate Invasion Festival in the Pensacola and Panama City areas

to provide high profile patrols to interdict disturbances, careless/reckless vessel operation, and boating under the influence (BUIs) in an effort to discourage unlawful behavior and enhance public safety. Additionally, emergency medical response personnel and equipment to address medical emergencies were present. During the event, officers responded to eight vessel crashes – one with serious bodily injury; 32 medical emergencies – six requiring advanced care; 19 BUI arrests; three other arrests including battery, grand theft, and leaving a small child unattended on a vessel. Special Agents with Alcoholic Beverage and Tobacco addressed several instances of underage drinking.

Officer Pete Rockwell responded to investigate a single vessel accident. A preliminary investigation revealed the operator of a personal watercraft lost control and collided with the Tom's Bayou Bridge. The operator was transported to a local hospital with serious abdomen injuries. The accident investigation is ongoing.

Officer Ryan Nelson conducted a fishery inspection on a vessel in Destin Pass. The inspection revealed an over-the-bag limit violation for red snapper. The vessel captain was cited.

WALTON COUNTY

Officer Darrell Johnson worked the youth fishing rodeo on Eglin Air Force Base. Several hundred kids attended the weekend long event.

Officer Ken White responded to a boating accident involving a personal watercraft (PWC) with two occupants that hit the Highway 331 Bridge head on. The occupants suffered minor injuries from the impact, but were transported to Scared Heart Hospital for treatment and later released. The PWC had major damage to its bow. The investigation is ongoing.

BAY COUNTY

Officer Dennis Palmer and Reserve Officer Joey Miles were patrolling Deerpoint Lake when they observed a personal watercraft being operated that fit the description of one that was stolen the previous week off of Shell Island. The officers stopped the vessel and confirmed it was stolen. The originating agency took over the investigation.

Lieutenant Jay Chesser and Officer Mike Nobles were patrolling Econfina Creek within the Econfina Wildlife Management Area and stopped a vessel that was operating carelessly. While talking with the subjects, the officers located a cannabis cigarette. A citation was issued for the violation.

Officer Dennis Palmer received information concerning a subject who had put what appeared to be an oversize redfish in the back of his car. The fisher was located fishing in a small boat under the Hathaway Bridge and when asked, replied that he was catching sharks. Officer Palmer then said he needed check the redfish in the back of his car and the fisher relented. The officer found two oversized redfish, for which citations were issued for size and bag limit violations.

While on water patrol in the East Bay vicinity, Officers Neal Goss and Warren Walsingham inspected three fishermen in a boat near the Dupont Bridge. During the course of the inspection, they found three small coastal sharks and three oversize red drum. The three were issued appropriate citations and warnings.

Officer Nick Price was on water patrol near Tyndall Air Force Base in East Bay when he observed a spotlight working along the shoreline. As he approached the vessel, he observed four people on board, two of which were attempting to take crabs with a dip net. One individual was poling the vessel along and one individual was observing. Officer Price inspected their catch and found egg-bearing blue crab in a cooler. The crabs were released and the harvester was cited.

Officer Jim Moore was on water patrol in the Grand Lagoon area when he observed a personal watercraft in violation of the idle speed zone. Officer Moore initiated a vessel stop and determined the operator was under the influence. The operator agreed to a breath test. The results confirmed Officer Moore's suspicion as the operator's breath sample registered .158 and .166 breath alcohol content. The operator was booked into the Bay County Jail.

Officer David Erdman assisted the Boating and Waterways Section with a public service announcement (PSA) in Alligator Point. The theme of the PSA was boating under the influence. Officer Erdman's BUI enforcement experience will be a positive reflection to the PSA.

Officers David Brady and Nick Price were on water patrol in the Gulf of Mexico and located a small vessel with two fishermen on board. During a resource inspection, the officers found undersize gag grouper, triggerfish, and greater amberjack. Appropriate citations were issued.

Officer Nick Price checked a local marina on Watson Bayou early one morning and observed a shrimp vessel sorting through the previous night's catch. During the inspection, he found nine egg-bearing blue crabs and 32 shark fins. He also observed one of the crew strip the eggs from the crabs and discard them into the water. Officer Price issued citations to the vessel master and crewman.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Officer Warren Walsingham observed two juveniles parked in a secluded area just south of Caryville. When Officer Walsingham approached, he observed one subject tossing two objects behind their vehicle tire. Further investigation yielded an uncooperative teenager and a seizure of a smoking device and a bag of cannabis less than 20 grams. Officer Walsingham cited the juvenile to appear in court.

Officers Warren Walsingham, Lane Kinney and Larry Morris assisted at the Billy Bow Leggs Festival in Fort Walton Beach. Their results were four citations, three of which were boating under the influence cases, and ten boating safety warnings.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

ALACHUA COUNTY

Officer Brad Stanley was working an airboat detail on area lakes when he observed a vehicle backed down to the water's edge of Newnan's Lake off Lake Shore Drive. Officer Stanley approached on foot and found an individual near a fishing pole leaning against a tree. There was also a strong odor of burnt cannabis in the area. Officer Stanley asked to see the subject's fishing license and also where the rest of the marijuana was. The suspect responded saying he

had just smoked the last of his marijuana and threw the remains in the water. When asked to empty his pockets, the subject pulled out a pipe, a small amount of cannabis and a plastic bag containing a white powdery substance. After testing the substance, the suspect was transported to the Alachua County Jail for two misdemeanors and a felony charge for possession of cocaine.

DUVAL COUNTY

Officer Aaron O'Reilly spoke with approximately 120 faculty and staff from the University of North Florida during a monthly safety meeting. With the boating season upon us, Officer O'Reilly focused primarily on providing general boating and water safety information and answered questions from the attendees.

During the week of June 1st, in a joint detail with the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Coast Guard, FWC Waterborne Response Team (WRT) members from the Jacksonville Field Office provided waterborne security for Navy high valued assets transiting the area.

LEVY COUNTY

K9 Officer Sam Dishman and Officer Dustin Bonds received information of illegal night hunting activity in southern Levy County. The officers, who were on patrol in Alachua County, coordinated with the Sheriff's Offices of both Levy and Citrus Counties and were able to get the suspect vehicle stopped in northern Citrus County. Once on scene, Officer Dishman and Officer Bonds located blood and deer hair on the tailgate of the truck. This, combined with suspect interviews, led to the officers discovering a freshly killed buck deer wrapped in a tarp in the enclosed cargo area of the truck. Officer Dishman used K9 Bear to locate the firearm used, a spare magazine and a gun case on the side of the road. Interviews revealed that the four men had traveled from Tampa with the intention of killing a hog. The deer was the first thing they saw, so they killed it instead. All four men actively participated in the taking of the deer. The men were booked in the Citrus County jail for taking and possessing deer during the closed season.

Officer Robert Johnston received information that someone had illegally dumped several short redfish carcasses along the side of the road. Officer Johnston gathered information from the complainant and successfully located the suspect at a nearby residence. After a brief interview, Officer Johnston gained a confession that the suspect had dumped the illegal fish. Officer Johnston seized the fillets of 13 undersize redfish and 1 undersize black drum. The man was cited for possession of undersize redfish, possession over the bag/possession limit of redfish and littering more than 15 pounds.

TAYLOR COUNTY

FWC Officers initiated Operation Renewable Stone. The operation is targeting the abandonment of stone crab traps during the closed season. During the first two days of the

detail, over 50 stone crab traps were located and documented for criminal prosecution. Photographs of hundreds of dead and dying stone crabs were taken to document the damage being done by abandoned traps to the renewable resource of stone crabs.

During Operation Renewable Stone, Officer Andrew Bickel located 24 fish traps in federal waters. The unlawful fish traps were traced back to a local fisherman and federal charges are being prepared.

Officer Scott Lee received information from Camp Misery Hunt Club of vandalism to one of their metal gates. During the subsequent investigation, Officer Lee located a possible subject and found fresh damage and paint transfer to the front bumper of the subject's vehicle. In addition to the criminal mischief charge, the subject had an active outstanding warrant for his arrest.

NORTHEAST REGION

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Michael Slotin was working offshore Port Canaveral in federal waters and conducted a fisheries inspection on a commercial kingfish vessel. The vessel operator advised that the only fish on board were Kingfish. During his inspection, Officer Slotin found an undersize cobia among the subject's catch. The subject had no federal pelagic permits to possess the fish. The captain was issued two federal citations for undersize cobia and no pelagic permit.

Officer David Wigley was conducting fisheries inspections at Sunrise boat ramp in Port Canaveral and found undersize red snapper and red porgy in one of the vessels he checked. The subjects also had over-the-limit red porgy in their possession. One citation was issued for undersize red snapper and warnings were issued for undersize red porgy and over-the-limit red porgy. One subject on board was also issued a citation for no saltwater fishing license.

Officer Ryan Smith was conducting fisheries inspections in Port Canaveral and noticed a charter head boat pass by and saw what appeared to be an undersize cobia hanging from a hook on the vessel. He conducted a fisheries inspection on the vessel after it moored to its dock. Officer Smith located the cobia and it measured well under the legal size limit. The captain of the vessel was issued a federal citation for possession of undersize cobia.

Officer Slotin was conducting fisheries inspection in Port Canaveral and checked one of the new charter head boats in the area. The vessel had fish on board, but the charter boat license was expired. The captain also had no federal permits to fish in the location he had been fishing. The captain was issued a state citation for no charter boat license and a federal citation for no federal permits.

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY

While on water patrol in the Atlantic Ocean, Officer Curtis Suggs conducted a marine fisheries inspection on a vessel approximately 18 miles southeast of Sebastian Inlet. The operator stated he had two cobia on board, both measuring 33 inches. After measuring the fish, both were found to be undersize at 27 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches and 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. After talking to the operator, he stated

that he never measured them, but knew what the limit was. A safety inspection revealed the vessel to be one PFD short. The captain was issued citations for possession of undersize cobia and for the boating safety violation.

MARION COUNTY

Officer Joe Simpson received information on two subjects that killed an alligator. Officer Simpson and Lieutenant Kevin Steinke went to a residence in Salt Springs and spoke to one of the suspects. The officers were also shown a dead alligator in the freezer. The suspect gave a sworn statement of how he and another suspect killed the alligator while bow fishing. The other suspect, the actual shooter, resided in Dixie County. Officers Justin Allen and Todd Nichols were contacted and they quickly tracked down the second subject at the Dixie County Jail. The subject gave a sworn statement of how he shot the alligator while bow fishing with his friend in Salt Springs. The alligator was seized and both suspects will be charged accordingly after consulting with the State Attorney's Office.

OSCEOLA COUNTY

While on water patrol on West Lake Toho, Officer Paul Mendez stopped a boat to conduct a fisheries and boating safety inspection. During the inspection, the officer found the subject did not have a valid freshwater fishing license. A wanted person check revealed a warrant for failure to pay child support out of Osceola County. Officer Mendez arrested the man for the warrant and booked him into the county jail.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officers Clay McDonough and Don Meurlot were on targeted patrol offshore Ormond Beach. They located a shrimp trawler from North Carolina dragging four standard shrimp otter trawl nets and one otter try net within one nautical mile of the beach. This is considered near shore waters and use of more than two try nets is prohibited within a mile from the state shoreline. Also, the size of the trawl nets violated the size of nets allowed in state waters. The vessel captain was charged with two misdemeanor violations concerning the illegal trawl nets, one misdemeanor charge for possessing more than his legal amount of flounder and a civil fine for a marine sanitation device violation. The four otter trawl nets (valued at approximately \$3500 each) were seized. The total amount of flounder possessed on board and all shrimp within the nets at the time of the violation were seized and sold to a local wholesale dealer with the proceeds placed in escrow.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officer Jason Cooke was conducting water patrol near Gasparilla Pass when two individuals on a personal watercraft (PWC), who were not wearing PFDs, went past him going approximately 35 miles per hour. Officer Cooke attempted to stop the PWC, but the operator failed to stop. Approximately five minutes later, Officer Cooke observed the operator on the PWC once again and was able to stop the watercraft. He observed signs of impairment and transported the suspect to the Placida Boat Ramp. The operator was given standardized field sobriety tasks

(FST) to perform and was subsequently arrested for boating under the influence (BUI). The operator was booked into the Charlotte County Jail and refused to submit to a breath test.

HARDEE COUNTY

Officer Darrell Henderson responded to possible trespassers on Mosaic Property, west of Bowling Green and located two subjects inside fenced property. The subjects were in possession of three large bass and several Nile perch they had caught with a cast net. Officer Henderson charged the individuals with trespass and taking freshwater game fish with a cast net. After being transported to jail, it was determined that one of the subjects had provided a false name because he had an active warrant for failure to appear. He received additional charges for an outstanding warrant and providing false information.

HIGHLANDS COUNTY

Officer Erica Zimmerman observed a spotlight being displayed from a vehicle in a manner capable of disclosing the presence of wildlife. Officer Zimmerman stopped the vehicle and found the operator in possession of a 12 gauge shotgun. A notice to appear was issued for possession of a gun while displaying a light.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Adam Resnick, Investigator Joe Brooks and Officer Evan Laskowski conducted panther patrol on Corkscrew Road using new laser radars. Eleven citations were issued, including one misdemeanor for driving while license suspended with knowledge. The highest recorded speed was 76 miles per hour in a marked 45 mile per hour zone.

Officers Adam Resnick, Justin Koble and Gregory Bryson conducted panther patrol on Daniels Parkway using the new laser radars. Six citations were issued. The highest recorded speed was 74 miles per mile in a marked 45 mile per hour zone.

Officer James Suttles was on water patrol on the lower Caloosahatchee River performing boating safety and marine fisheries inspections when he came in contact with a charter fishing vessel. The captain admitted to being on a "for hire" charter. Further inspection found that the captain's fishing license had been expired since 2008 and the vessel registration was also expired. A fishing license citation for charter captain, four or fewer was issued and a warning was issued for the expired registration.

SOUTH REGION A

BROWARD COUNTY

Officer Nathan Brock provided an escort/dignitary protection as Commissioner Ron Bergeron toured the Everglades by airboat with the Governor of Montana.

Officers Tom Enos and David Weis responded to Southwest Ranches due to a reported alligator attacked a domestic dog. When they arrived on scene, the alligator was nowhere to be found and the dog was missing as well. The information was passed on to nuisance alligator program.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Jarrod Molnar and David Fowler stopped a fishing vessel offshore of Gulfstream Golf Course to conduct a safety/fisheries inspection. The inspection found the fishermen to be in possession of 53 yellowtail snapper and one mutton snapper. The subjects were escorted to Boynton boat ramp, where Officer Molnar cited the captain for over-the-bag-limit of snapper and seized 34 yellowtail snapper.

COPS

Palm Beach officers and trainees attended a joint training facilitated by Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office. The multi-agency training involved an ATV and swamp buggy ride through one of the Palm Beach County natural areas where deputies explained the rules and regulations within those areas.

SOUTH REGION B

No report submitted.