

FWC DIVISION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT FIELD OPERATIONS

**WEEKLY REPORT
June 12 – 18, 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 Keith Clark observed an individual selling silver trout and shrimp from a truck at an intersection in Pensacola. The individual did not have a retail license to sell seafood and was issued a notice to appear citation for the violation.

Officers Keith Clark and Fred Rondeau checked a bank fisherman in the Bluff Springs area of the Escambia River. The individual claimed that he had not caught any fish. An inspection revealed that the individual was in possession of two undersize black bass. He received a notice to appear citation for the violation.

Officers Keith Clark and Fred Rondeau observed two underage individuals drinking alcohol at the Bluffs Park along Scenic Highway in Pensacola. A third individual was also drinking alcohol but was over 21 years old. Two citations were issued for underage drinking and one citation was issued for providing alcohol to a person under 21 years old.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officers assigned to Escambia, Santa Rosa and Okaloosa Counties worked a detail targeting the use of illegal gear by shrimping vessels in Escambia and Pensacola Bays. During the detail, a recreational vessel was stopped and a subject on board was found to be in possession of an oversize red drum. This subject also had an outstanding warrant for violation of probation for an auto theft arrest. He was arrested and booked into Escambia County Jail.

Officer Gary Ridaught responded to a boating accident near Quietwater Beach. Two men on personal watercrafts (PWCs) were riding separately when they collided. One subject was airlifted to the hospital, but was later determined to have non-life threatening injuries. He was treated for a broken nose, facial lacerations and a concussion. Charges are pending against the other operator for a violation of a navigational rule.

Officer Gary Ridaught was working an off-duty job for a road construction company on I-110 in Pensacola when he observed a vehicle drive through the cone barricades and head toward the construction workers. He stopped the vehicle and immediately observed signs of impairment from the operator. She performed poorly on field sobriety tasks indicating impairment. Officer Ridaught arrested the driver for DUI and transported her to the jail where she provided a breath sample of .245. She was booked for the DUI and issued a citation for failure to obey a traffic control device.

Lieutenant Dan Hahr was on patrol in the Escambia River Wildlife Management Area when he observed five young subjects standing around a personal watercraft (PWC) on the bank. As he approached, he noticed that one of them was lighting what appeared to be a cigarette. The subject immediately placed his hand and the lit cigarette in his pocket. As suspected, it was marijuana. A further consent search revealed a small baggie of cannabis in a vehicle belonging to another subject and several items of paraphernalia including synthetic urine and bottled human urine. The subject admitted to using the urine to pass drug tests at work. Both subjects were issued notices to appear for possession of less than 20 grams of cannabis and paraphernalia.

While off-duty, Officer Kenneth Manning received information regarding a subject in possession of over-the-bag limit of red drum at the Bob Sikes Bridge. Officer Manning relayed the information to Officers Andy Berrey and Gary Ridaught. After making contact with the subject, Officers Berrey and Ridaught discovered one red drum in his possession and another hidden in a cooler in his vehicle with one of the fish oversize. Officer Berrey issued a citation for over-the-bag limit and a written warning for the oversize red drum.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY COPS

Major Dave Pridgen, Captain Mary Sumner, Lieutenants Dan Hahr, Brian Lambert and Mark Hollinhead met with members of the Santa Rosa Fox Hunt Club to discuss issues and concerns on the fox trials scheduled for July 2-4 in the Blackwater Wildlife Management Area.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Matt Webb conducted a fishery inspection on a vessel in Destin Harbor. The inspection revealed a bag limit violation of red snapper. The vessel captain was cited for the violation.

Officer Steve Bartlett responded to the Bluewater Bay Marina to investigate a vessel fire. A preliminary investigation determined the vessel had exploded while an occupant onboard connected battery terminals to a battery. The explosion caused first degree burns to another occupant who was transported to a burn unit in Mobile, Alabama. The boating accident investigation is ongoing.

Officer Pete Rockwell completed a boating accident investigation and issued the operator a citation for careless operation. The operator sustained internal injuries when his personal watercraft collided with Tom's Bayou Bridge in Valparaiso.

Officer Ryan Nelson conducted a fishery inspection in Destin Harbor revealing an undersize cobia. The vessel captain was cited for the violation.

Lieutenants Mark Hollinhead and Dennis Welsh and Officer Van Barrow responded to a boating accident in Destin Harbor. A vessel underway collided with a vessel that was on a lift at a dock. The damage was minor and no one was injured.

OKALOOSA COUNTY COPS

Lieutenants Mark Hollinhead and Dennis Welsh met with the chief of the Fort Walton Beach Police Department to discuss growing black bear encounters in the city. Two training dates were set up to educate the Department's officers on bear behavior and information officers can pass on to citizens in their patrol area on reducing bear attractants.

WALTON COUNTY

FWC officers assigned to Okaloosa and Walton Counties worked a crab trap detail to deter the unlawful taking of crabs from commercial traps. Two subjects in a vessel were observed removing crabs from commercial traps. Investigator Eddie Gatlin and Officer Darrell Johnson notified Lieutenant Mark Hollinhead and Officer Randall Brooks when they observed the subjects returning to the Choctawhatchee Bay Public Boat Ramp along Highway 20. An inspection of the subject's vessel revealed a cooler full of blue crabs. The subjects later identified the commercial traps they had taken the crabs from and admitted they knew it was

illegal. Both subjects were booked into the Walton County Jail and charged with unlawfully taking blue crabs from commercial traps.

BAY COUNTY

Officer Joe Chambers conducted a resource inspection on a fisher and found him to have two outstanding arrest warrants issued from Bay County for grand theft and failure to appear. The subject was booked into the Bay County Jail.

Lieutenant Jay Chesser and Officer Mike Nobles worked the Econfina Wildlife Management Area along Econfina Creek and issued several citations for underage persons possessing alcohol, overloaded vessels, insufficient number of personal flotation devices onboard and for children not wearing the required personal flotation devices.

Officer Joe Chambers was patrolling the Econfina Wildlife Management Area when he checked two subjects exiting the Cat Creek swimming hole. Officer Chambers smelled the aroma of cannabis and both subjects admitted to having just smoked a joint. Further investigation found additional cannabis and rolling papers. Citations were issued and the contraband seized.

Officer Mark Clements received a disposition on a subject that included a fine of \$750.00 and incarceration in the county jail for 364 days. The subject was observed late one night driving carelessly in the Cat Creek section of the Econfina Wildlife Management Area and found to have a suspended driver's license. The subject had previously been cited by Officer Clements for the same charge.

Officer Dennis Palmer worked a boating accident involving a diver who was struck by a boat's propeller causing severe lacerations to his chest, neck and face. The investigation is ongoing.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Officer Larry Morris responded to transport Washington County Sheriff's Office deputies by 4-wheel drive truck to a secluded area near Caryville in response to the report of drunk suspect threatening some campers and carelessly displaying his firearm. The suspect did not resist and was arrested without further incident.

HOLMES COUNTY

Officer Larry Morris responded to assist the Holmes County Sheriff's Office at Wright's Creek just north of Bonifay on Highway 79. The Sheriff's Office had stopped a 19-year-old Walton County resident with felony warrants. The subject fled to the creek and refused to cooperate with Officer Morris and the deputies. The local Department of Corrections K-9 Team responded and tracked him for three hours. The suspect eluded the team after others picked him up in a vehicle. The suspect was identified and additional criminal charges will be added to the existing warrants.

JEFFERSON COUNTY

Officers Stefanie Wilcox and Bucky Higman provided law enforcement support on the Wacissa River for a 6 mile canoe race. Race organizers requested our support due to some unfavorable encounters with powerboats prior to the weekend race. Prior to the race, law enforcement officers and organizers teamed up to inform the general public and locals about the race and

what to expect the day of the race. The preplanning paid off with a successful race and an enjoyable day on the river for paddlers and power boaters.

LEON COUNTY

Officer Chris Jones was on patrol in Leon County near Eliza Drive when he observed five individuals fishing in a fenced area. A fisheries inspection revealed the individuals were in possession of three undersize black bass. Three of the subjects admitted to catching and keeping the fish. They were cited for the violations.

Lieutenant Kent Harvey and Officer Chris Jones were on water patrol on Lake Talquin when they stopped a vessel pulling a person tubing. A boating safety inspection revealed several safety equipment violations. While issuing the operator a citation for insufficient number of life jackets, the officers noticed an open beer under the console of the boat and a marijuana cigarette in plain view. The operator was only 19 years old. Subsequently, field sobriety tasks were conducted and the operator was given a breath test on the Intoxilyzer 8000 at the boat ramp. His breath alcohol concentration registered above .02. The operator was charged with operating a vessel by a person under 21 years of age while consuming alcohol. He was additionally charged with possession of less than 20 grams of cannabis.

Lieutenant Kent Harvey and Officers Matt Bell and Chris Jones were conducting boating inspections at Stoutamire Landing on Lake Talquin. While officers were conducting a boating under the influence (BUI) investigation, Lieutenant Harvey observed a green Ford truck pull into the parking lot. The tailgate of the truck was down and a small child was riding on the back of the tailgate with her feet dangling near the pavement. Lieutenant Harvey and Officer Bell approached the individual to educate him on the proper seating procedures for children and to make him aware of the danger he had placed the child in. While explaining this to the operator, the officers determined the operator's license was suspended for failing to pay traffic fines. The individual was issued a citation for driving on a suspended license and the officers arranged for him and his daughter to get a ride home.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

GILCHRIST COUNTY

During the late night hours, Officer Justin Allen stopped a vehicle which was weaving all over the road in Dixie County. The stop resulted in a white female being arrested for DUI, possession of cocaine and resisting without violence. Once at the jail the suspect's BAC was a 0.214.

Lieutenant Roy Williams and Officer Travis Cooper stopped a vehicle leaving a hunt club in Dixie County. Upon contact with the operator, the officers smelled the odor of an alcoholic beverage. The suspect staggered several times while standing next to his vehicle. Officer Cooper conducted field sobriety tasks on the suspect which subsequently ended with the driver being arrested for DUI. Once at the jail, the suspect's BAC Level was 0.154 and 0.151.

TAYLOR COUNTY COPS

Officers Jeff Summers, Scott Lee and Reserve Captain Bill Sargent conducted a boating safety awareness presentation. The presentation was part of the Steinhatchee Community Health Fair. The presentation concentrated on boating safety and manning the Sturgeon Awareness Unit. Approximately 300 people were in attendance and the officers answered numerous questions concerning sturgeons.

TAYLOR COUNTY

Lieutenant Bruce Cooper and Officer Andrew Bickel conducted interviews on two commercial fishermen concerning the unlawful use of fish traps in federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico. The officers were able to obtain statements from both subjects and verification through the commercial vessel's chart plotter, that the unlawful traps were theirs. In addition, the officers located receipts that the fish harvested from the above traps were shipped out of state for sale. The next day, Officer Bickel went back offshore and documented the remaining unlawful traps that were identified while inspecting the commercial vessel's chart plotter. All together, 36 fish traps were documented unlawfully fishing in federal waters. The case is being sent to the National Marine Fisheries Service for federal prosecution.

Officers Chad Albritton and Dale Wilcox received a call from an informant that several subjects had just poached a doe deer. The officers responded to the scene and were able to back track foot sign and find fresh blood and deer hair. The informant gave the officers a description of the vehicle and both officers contacted local residents in an attempt to locate the vehicle. The following day, Officer Albritton received a call from one of the local residents that the suspect vehicle was in the area and shots were being fired. The resident gave a tag number and a better description of the vehicle. Officer Albritton arrived to find a vehicle meeting the description and conducted a vehicle stop. The vehicle had fresh blood and hair on the trunk. After interviewing one subject, the subject confessed to killing a spotted fawn and also gave names of other individuals involved from the night before. Charges are being filed against the four subjects with the Assistant State Attorney's Office.

Officers Randy McDonald and Scott Lee were off duty fishing when they came upon a boating collision in the Steinhatchee River. The officers retrieved two of the injured occupants from the water and took them to shore where they were met by emergency medical personnel. Officer Chad Albritton responded to the scene and conducted an investigation. The vessel was on plane inbound in the channel when the operator looked down into the live well. As the operator looked down, the vessel struck a channel marker throwing everyone out of the vessel.

NORTHEAST REGION

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Vann Streety was checking boats at the Pineda Causeway boat ramp when one of the operators exhibited signs of impairment. After field sobriety tasks were performed, the subject was arrested for BUI. The subject refused a breath test. During the investigation, a female subject made the statement, "We should have had a designated driver."

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY

not derelict, the owner have a felony no bond warrant for DUI and was booked into the At 2 a.m., Officer Tim Miller received a call from the local Sheriff's Office regarding three subjects in possession of an alligator. They had been stopped for other violations when the 5-foot alligator was discovered. Officer Miller seized a shotgun and rifle and cited all three subjects for the taking of the alligator.

LAKE COUNTY

Officer Jared Beard conducted a boating safety inspection on a vessel in Lake Eustis when he observed signs of impairment from the vessel captain. The subject was escorted by Officer Beard to the nearest public dock to administer field sobriety tasks and was instructed on the one legged stand. After receiving instructions, the subject refused to comply. Officer Beard arrested the subject and transported him to Lake County Sheriff's Office for booking. The subject refused to provide breath samples while at the jail and was subsequently charged with BUI and failure to submit to test.

Officer Sweet received a complaint that a subject had killed an alligator and dumped the remains on a county road. Officer Sweet arrived at the suspect's residence and saw a bloody area on a flat bed pick-up truck at the residence. Later that evening, Officer Sweet made contact with the suspect and during questioning, the subject admitted to shooting the alligator with a .22 cal rifle and dumping it on a county road. Charges are being filed with the state attorney's office.

OSCEOLA COUNTY

Officer Kurt Arendas and Lieutenant Guy Carpenter II conducted a fish house inspection on a business in Kissimmee. The officers found several species of saltwater fish for sale as well as tilapia, but the business did not have the required saltwater products license or freshwater fish dealer license. Officer Arendas issued the owner of the business a notice to appear for the violations.

Officer Arendas assisted personnel from the U.S. Coast Guard in conducting inspections on the area's airboat tour companies. They conducted 12 tour boat inspections and the Coast Guard issued a warning to one operator for not possessing a captain's license.

Officer Paul Mendez and Lieutenant Carpenter stopped a subject on Alligator Lake for a navigation light violation. While addressing the violation and conducting a boating safety inspection, Officer Mendez detected signs of impairment from the man. After observing his performance on a float SFSTs, Officer Mendez arrested him for operating a vessel while under the influence. The man refused the breath test.

PUTNAM COUNTY

Officer Troy Starling responded to a possible derelict vessel complaint. He arrived on scene to find the boat owner bailing water out of the vessel. Although the vessel was not derelict, the owner had a felony no bond warrant for DUI. He was booked into the county jail.

Officer Starling received a call reporting a lost person in the Ocala National Forest. The man had followed several friends to a location in the forest the night prior, became intoxicated and passed out. When he woke the following morning, everyone was gone. He tried to make his

way out of the woods, became lost and got his vehicle stuck. Officer Starling located the man and assisted him to safety.

Captain Gregg Eason and Lieutenant Ben Allen set up trail cameras on property in which the land owner has had numerous trespass violations. The camera was out for several days and took photos of several vehicles entering and leaving the property. Lieutenant Allen tracked down four of the suspects and caught four other people on the property after the camera was removed. During one week, four citations and four warnings were issued for trespass.

Lieutenant Allen was patrolling Lak-A-Wana boat ramp when he saw a truck driving erratically near the ramp. Lieutenant Allen stopped the truck at the next intersection and when he exited his patrol vehicle, he could hear a man and woman arguing. As he approached the vehicle he noticed blood on the man's face and could tell the two had been in a physical altercation. The local Sheriff's Office responded and assumed the investigation.

SUMTER COUNTY

Officer Ian Sweet received a complaint from a local police department that a gopher tortoise shell, surrounded by buzzards, was located in plain view at a residence. Officer Sweet contacted a male subject at the residence and, after being questioned, the subject admitted he had a dead gopher tortoise in the back yard. The subject stated that he had cleaned two gopher tortoises the previous day and that gopher tortoise meat was cooking on the stove. Officer Sweet seized two cleaned gopher tortoise shells, eight cooked gopher tortoise legs, and one dead gopher tortoise. Charges are being filed with the state attorney's office.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer Duane North observed a man throwing a cast net from the bow of a pontoon boat while his wife drove. Officer North approached and watched the subject pull in the net which had a bluegill in it. Officer North asked the subject if he had any other fish. He said he did and showed Officer North his cooler, which contained one black bass, ten pan fish (bluegill and shell cracker) and a black crappie. The subject admitted to catching them in the cast net and stated he had no other fishing equipment on board. The individual was cited for taking game fish by illegal method.

Officer Jeff Beal stopped a vessel within the South Moon idle zone to conduct a boating safety inspection. During the inspection, Officer Beal observed indicators the operator was possibly impaired. After conducting sobriety tasks, the vessel captain was placed under arrest for boating under the influence. The subject agreed to provide breath samples and the results were .186 G/210L and .183 G/210L respectively, two hours after the initial stop. This was the subject's fourth DUI/BUI related arrest, and he informed Officer Beal that he felt he was perfectly capable of operating said vessel which had been occupied by three other adults and one four-year-old child.

Officers Audrey Warren, Clay McDonough and Lieutenant Kevin McKinney were on offshore patrol when they boarded a shrimp trawler from Fernandina Beach. After an inspection of the gear and catch, the captain was issued the criminal citation for exceeding his fifty pound incidental by-catch of flounder. Ninety pounds of flounder were seized, sold and the check will be held in escrow pending case disposition.

SOUTHWEST REGION

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

While conducting fisheries inspections on Tampa Bay, Officer William Holcomb and Reserve Officer Salafia encountered an angler on a vessel, who stated he had some legal fish on board. Upon inspection, the individual was found to be in possession of undersize trout and one undersize cobia. In addition to the possession of undersize fish, the subject was also issued a citation for failure to have a personal flotation device and issued warnings for no saltwater fishing license, no sound producing device, and no registration certificate.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Gregory Bryson was on water patrol in the Estero Bay area when he observed an overturned kayak with an individual swimming around it. As Officer Bryson was attempting to help the individual, he began cursing. The individual displayed signs of impairment and after struggling to board his kayak, he began to paddle away. Officer Bryson attempted to stop him, but the subject continued to paddle away, fleeing into the mangroves. Officer Bryson was assisted by a Lee County Sheriff's Office deputy in his attempt to remove the subject from the mangroves. The individual resisted, was tasered and arrested for boating under the influence (BUI). The subject was booked into the Lee County Jail where he refused a breath test.

Officers Brian Cazalot, Justin Koble and Adam Resnick conducted Panther Patrol on Daniels Extension using the new laser radar guns. The officers issued 12 traffic citations for unlawful speed, with the highest recorded speed being 75 miles per hour in a posted 45 mile per hour zone.

In Captain Grealish's area, five citations were issued for freshwater fish violations relating to large mouth bass and seven citations for saltwater fish violations, involving pompano, spanish mackerel and snook.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While on water patrol in the Clearwater area, Officer Rick Schefano observed a jet boat violate a slow speed zone. Officer Schefano conducted a vessel stop and during the inspection, operator impairment was detected. The operator was taken to the Seminole boat ramp to perform several field sobriety tasks, which he was unable to perform successfully. The subject was arrested and transported to the Clearwater Police Department where he refused to provide a sample of his breath and was subsequently booked into the Pinellas County Jail.

SOUTH REGION A

BROWARD COUNTY

Officer Robert Kuester observed three subjects walking away from the Deerfield Spillway off Military Trail. An inspection of their cooler revealed one undersize snook; the subjects were cited for the violation. Later, Officer Kuester observed two subjects hastily walking off the Deerfield pier with a bucket. An inspection revealed two undersize snook. Both subjects were cited for that violation as well.

Officers Caske and Twist stopped a vessel for a fisheries inspection at the “hot water” discharge canal in Hollywood. A subject on board was in possession of twelve dolphin but only three were of legal size. The undersize fish were seized as evidence and the subject cited for the violation.

Before dawn on Sunday, Officer Caske and Lieutenant Laubenberger conducted a fisheries inspection on a small vessel containing undersize gag grouper and mutton snapper. Officer Caske issued the subject a citation for the violations. Lieutenant Laubenberger then checked another vessel for fisheries compliance. The vessel contained coolers with several species of fish. At the bottom of one cooler, five undersize red grouper were found. The subject received a citation for that violation.

Lieutenant Dave Bingham, along with the United States Coast Guard (USCG), Divers Alert Network (DAN) and Diving Equipment and Marketing Association (DEMA) held a news conference at the Miami Beach USCG station. The news conference was to promote scuba diving safety prior to the upcoming lobster mini season. Lieutenant Bingham spoke to the media about the dive flag awareness campaign and a Dive Flag Awareness (DFA) resolution that was signed by Governor Charlie Crist and cabinet members on June 9. Lieutenant Colonel Bruce Buckson, Lieutenant Dave Bingham, Brian Rehwinkel, and Scuba Board dive club supporters presented the resolution, proclaiming statewide DFA week during June 27 to July 3 to the Governor and Cabinet members. The resolution was in response to numerous efforts to make boaters and divers more aware of the dive flag rules and regulations.

COPS

Lieutenant Laubenberger participated in an honor guard detail with the county’s multi-agency honor guard. He was detail commander for a colors presentation at Deerfield’s Hilton Hotel for the State Grand Fraternal Lodge of the Sons of Italy. There were approximately 120 attendees.

GLADES COUNTY

Officer David Burnsed was on water patrol in Lake Okeechobee when he stopped a vessel at the Harney Pond Canal boat ramp to conduct an inspection. The vessel operator was found in possession of fourteen undersized black crappie and was issued a citation for the violation.

SOUTH REGION B

MONROE COUNTY

A 200 pound loggerhead turtle named Izsak was released back into the ocean from Coco Plum Beach with the help of Officer Anders Bergstrom and staff members from a local turtle hospital. The turtle was named after Officer Jill Izsak who helped rescue it, along with Officer Bergstrom, last April about five miles bayside of Vaca Cut. Turtle hospital staff members had to amputate the turtle’s left rear flipper after it had become entangled in a trap line. After recovery, staff members were satisfied that Izsak could be released.