

# **FWC DIVISION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT FIELD OPERATIONS**

**WEEKLY REPORT  
July 31 – August 6, 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 Faris Livesay observed a subject selling shrimp on the side of the road in Pensacola. Officer Livesay stopped to check the man's retail license and found that he did not have one. The man was issued a notice to appear for the violation.

Officer Gary Ridaught was on water patrol on the Escambia River when he encountered a pontoon boat without a stern light. He stopped the vessel and observed the operator had bloodshot eyes and was displaying signs of impairment. The operator advised that he had recently left the Bushwhacker Festival in Pensacola Beach. Officer Ridaught conducted field sobriety tasks on the operator and determined that he was impaired. The vessel operator was transported to the Escambia County Jail where he refused to submit to a breath test. He was booked for boating under the influence (BUI).

### **OKALOOSA COUNTY**

Officer Matt Webb patrolled the Okaloosa Island Fishing Pier for compliance with saltwater fish regulations. An inspection of a subject's cooler revealed undersize banded rudder fish. The subject was cited for the violation.

Officer Matt Webb stopped a vessel in Destin Pass to conduct a fishery inspection. Undersize amberjack fish were located in a cooler on the vessel. The vessel captain was cited for the violation.

Officer Matt Webb responded to a boating accident at Crab Island. A subject's finger was severed when he reached out to stop a personal watercraft approaching his vessel. The victim was transported to the U.S. Coast Guard Station in Destin where an emergency medical crew treated and transported him to a local hospital. Neither vessel was damaged.

Officer Matt Webb stopped two vessels in Destin Pass for a fishery inspection. The inspections revealed undersize cobia and undersize trigger fish. Both captains were cited.

Officer Van Barrow responded to a vessel taking on water outside of Destin Pass. The vessel stayed under power and arrived safely back to a local boat ramp. An inspection of the vessel determined the operator had struck an underwater object that had damaged the bottom of the hull.

### **BAY COUNTY**

Officer Mike Nobles responded to a call of a subject taking a protected bird and met a Bay County Sheriff's Deputy who also responded. Officer Nobles conducted several interviews which led to the subjects admitting to shooting the great egret and dumping it

off a nearby road. Both subjects were charged with the violation and a .410 gauge shotgun and the bird were seized as evidence.

Officer Joe Chambers checked four fishers in the Pine Log Wildlife Management Area who immediately began to secure their fishing gear upon his arrival. All were found to have the proper licenses; however, all four had the aroma of cannabis around them. After talking with the subjects, Officer Chambers discovered four marijuana cigarettes and a baggie of cannabis. Citations were issued for the violation and warnings given for possession of alcohol.

Officer Mike Nobles located a small vessel with a new outboard motor moored off a Southport boat ramp. A registration check found the vessel was not entered as stolen. Officer Nobles checked on the boat several more times during the week and every time the registration was checked it came back as not stolen. Later the next week, Officer Nobles noticed the outboard engine was missing and again the registration check came back as not stolen. Knowing something wasn't right, Officer Nobles located the registered owner who said he had reported the boat and motor stolen several weeks ago and apparently it had not been entered into the system. Officer Nobles assisted the owner with recovering what was left of his property.

## **NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

### **CITRUS COUNTY**

Lieutenant Dennis De La Paz and Officer Terry Allyn participated in the Citrus County Summer Camp program called Camp Fusion. Seventy-five children participated, ranging from 6 to 12 years of age. During two outdoor classes, the officers presented a description of our agency and the role of FWC officers. Boating safety, fishing, manatees, hunting and wildlife issues were discussed. The children were attentive and asked many questions. Handout materials were distributed after the classes.

Investigator Jim Smith concluded a six month investigation into damaged land on Citrus Wildlife Management Areas by various off- road vehicle clubs. Evidence was obtained by monitoring Internet sites where videos were posted of the violations. Paperwork leads established the identities of those not complying with wildlife management area off- road driving rules. Four citations and two written warnings were issued during the course of the investigation.

### **LEVY COUNTY**

Major Lee Beach and Captain John Burton were on patrol in the Triple Crown Farms area of Levy County. They located four individuals beside a disabled vehicle on a dirt road in a rural area. While attempting to help the subjects, the officers immediately noticed a gopher tortoise pulling stick and a moving burlap sack in the bed of the vehicle. Further investigation revealed four live gopher tortoises. K-9 Officer Sam

Dishman arrived to assist and cited the four subjects for possession of gopher tortoise without a permit.

## TAYLOR COUNTY

Officer Chad Albritton was working Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) land along the Econfina River when he saw a truck parked in a public use area. Officer Albritton followed the foot tracks to the river bank where he saw two individuals, one wearing a wet suit, snorkel and mask. The subject was diving the river multiple times with a metal basket and removing objects from the river bottom. He was charged with removing historic resources from SRWMD land without proper authorization.

## NORTHEAST REGION

### BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Corey Bridwell was contacted by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Officer Jane Whaley, who advised him that NASA Kennedy Space Center security had a driver trying to enter NASA property without a driver's license. The driver also smelled strongly of alcohol. Officer Bridwell contacted Lieutenant Rob Rowe, who advised him to respond to the scene and conduct a DUI investigation. Once on scene, Officer Bridwell made contact with the male driver. Before conducting field sobriety tasks the driver was told to put out his cigarette. At this time the driver became extremely argumentative and combative. As Officer Bridwell proceeded to arrest the driver, he pulled away. Officer Bridwell employed a takedown maneuver on the subject to affect the arrest. The driver later agreed to a breath test which revealed a .233 and .235 breath alcohol content. Additionally, the subject was found to have a suspended driver's license with knowledge. All total, the driver was arrested for DUI, driving on a suspended license, and resisting arrest without violence. A check of the driver's criminal history revealed that he had seven prior DUI's, making this arrest a felony charge. The driver was transported to the Brevard County Jail after taking a breath test at the Titusville Police Department.

### CLAY COUNTY

Lieutenant Ben Allen and Officers Rich Wilcox and Alan Hofmeister assisted the Clay County Sheriff's Office at Bayard Wildlife Management Area. The sheriff's department received a 911 call from a woman whose husband called her stating he was going to commit suicide. He told her he had a shotgun and was in the management area. She then heard a gunshot and got no further response. Deputies located the subject's cell phone, along with one spent shotgun shell on the property. Lieutenant Allen and Officer Wilcox set up a perimeter between the walk-in area and the Shands Bridge on State Road 16. After approximately four hours, Officer Wilcox began driving slowly along the shoulder of the road, searching the woods for the subject. When he was within 100

yards of Lieutenant Allen, Officer Wilcox saw the subject inside the wood line. Officer Wilcox ordered him out of the woods. He and Lieutenant Allen took the subject into custody. His shotgun was located approximately 50 yards away. The subject was turned over to the Clay County Sheriff's Department and was subsequently Baker Acted.

## MARION COUNTY

Officers John Wilke and Steve Adam were on patrol when they received a complaint call advising that a subject had stopped and picked up a gopher tortoise from the side of County Road 318. The officers arrived at the subject's residence and found him cleaning fish. They also found fresh blood from something other than fish. The subject stated he had cleaned a raccoon and a squirrel. Further investigation led the officers to a freshly cleaned tortoise shell and entrails. The subject was cited for taking a gopher tortoise.

Officer Emily Vought was on water patrol on Lake Weir when she checked a small fishing vessel with three undersize bass in the live well of the vessel. The fisherman was cited for the violation.

Officer Wilke found bags of trash dumped in a retention pond in Fisher Ranch. The trash contained a pay slip with a name and address on it. The officer made contact with two individuals who gave sworn statements of how they dumped the trash. Both subjects were cited for littering in excess of 15 pounds.

Officers Vought and Mike Burke were on water patrol on Lake Weir when they had received information about a fisherman taking undersize bass and keeping them. The same subject was cited in 2005 on Lake Weir for similar violations. The officers found the fisherman in possession of three undersize bass. He was cited for the violation.

Officer Kat Kelley was on water patrol on Lake Weir when she observed a vessel approach the boat ramp. A subject was dropped off at the ramp and showed signs of impairment while attempting to back the trailer down the ramp. After the vessel was loaded, the operators of the vessel and vehicle were contacted. Both operators showed signs of impairment and after field sobriety tasks were transported to the Marion County Jail for BUI and DUI. The operator of the vehicle blew a .117 and .119 on the Intoxilyzer, while the operator of the vessel refused to blow.

## OSCEOLA COUNTY

Officer Paul Mendez, Lieutenant Guy Carpenter II, and Reserve Officer Zach Ricciuti participated in the South Region's lobster detail. The officers made numerous contacts, resulting in eight cases of possession of undersize lobster and one case for possession of lobster out of season. The officers also issued several citations for boating safety and fishing license violations.

Officer Caitlyn Staskiewicz received information from an Osceola County Sheriff's Deputy that a man from Intercession City was in possession of an alligator. She went to the subject's house and found him in possession of a small alligator in a rabbit cage. He also possessed a python. Officer Staskiewicz issued the man a notice to appear for possession of the alligator and for possession of a python without a permit.

## **SOUTHWEST REGION**

### **CHARLOTTE COUNTY**

FWC Communications Center was notified by Charlotte County Sheriff's Office of a fisherman in a canoe robbing blue crab traps. A homeless person observed the fisherman paddling along a line of blue crab traps, emptying the contents into the canoe. Charlotte County Sheriff's Office detained the suspect until FWC could arrive. Before Lieutenant Mike Frantz and Officers Jason Semeyn and Randy Vaughn arrived, the owner of the traps arrived to work his traps and noticed that at least ten traps had been emptied. The suspect admitted to robbing the traps post Miranda Warnings and was booked into the Charlotte County Jail.

### **LEE COUNTY**

Officers Bob O'Horo and Jay Ewing were conducting Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) inspections approximately five miles offshore. As the officers initiated an inspection on a vessel, they observed an individual onboard go to the opposite side of the vessel and cut a red line free. The officers quickly went to the line and observed a goliath grouper, weighing approximately 50 pounds, floating in the water with a red line in its mouth. After the officers confronted the individual and read him his Miranda Warnings, he was issued a citation for possession of goliath grouper.

Officer Demian McColgin was on land patrol in the Crew Wildlife Environmental Area when he observed several people fishing, including one individual fishing with a cast net in a secluded area near Bonita Beach Road. As Officer McColgin approached, the individuals quickly gathered their gear and proceeded to leave the area. Officer McColgin confronted the subjects and conducted a resource inspection. The individual who had been fishing with the cast net was in possession of bluegills and the driver of the vehicle failed to produce a driver's license. Both individuals were issued misdemeanor citations for the violations and the fish were released alive into the lake.

Lieutenants Michael Andriano and Darrin Riley and Officers Brian Cazalot and Justin Koble conducted a panther zone speed enforcement detail on Corkscrew Road. Approximately 13 warnings and citations were written, with the highest recorded speed of 88 miles-per-hour in a 45 mile-per-hour night-time posted speed zone.

### **POLK COUNTY**

Officer Kevin Sweat observed two subjects cast netting fish from a lake in Haines City. After several minutes, the officer noted they were not throwing any fish back into the water. After one of the subjects possibly observed Officer Sweat's vehicle, he emptied a bucket of fish into the water. Officer Sweat recovered the bream and red ear sunfish caught with the net. Both subjects were charged with taking freshwater game fish by illegal method. One of the individuals had previously been charged with taking game fish with a cast net on two separate occasions and had failed to appear in court both times. This individual was booked into the Polk County Jail.

## **SOUTH REGION A**

### **BROWARD COUNTY**

Officer Caske inspected the catch of beach divers in Deerfield Beach. One individual possessed egg-bearing spiny lobster and was issued a notice to appear. The egg-bearing spiny lobster was released alive back into the ocean.

Captain Warrick and Lieutenant Laubenberger attended a memorial service for Deputy Sheriff Gallett. Deputy Gallett worked the Sheriff's Office Port Everglades District where the FWC office is located.

Officers Forrest and Enos inspected the catch of beach divers in Lauderdale-By-the-Sea. One individual possessed egg-bearing spiny lobster and undersize spiny lobster. The individual was issued a notice to appear and the spiny lobster were released alive back into the ocean.

Officers Weis and Enos made contact with individuals in a western Broward Wildlife Management Area. It was determined the individuals possessed alcoholic beverages and all were under the age of 21. All were issued notices to appear for possession of alcoholic beverages by persons under 21 years of age.

### **PALM BEACH COUNTY**

Lieutenant Brown and an FWC Investigator received a call from the U.S. Coast Guard who had stopped a vessel with occupants in possession of an egg-bearing lobster. Lieutenant Brown and the Investigator made contact with the occupants of the vessel at Burt Reynolds Boat Ramp. One of the subjects admitted to taking the lobster and received a notice to appear for the violation.

Lieutenant Charles King along with U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officers Gervias and Chapin focused on the Jupiter inlet area while looking for lobster violations. They observed two men passing a lit cigarette back and forth. As they approached the subjects, one man noticed the officers and threw the cigarette into the water. The officers immediately smelled the odor of burnt cannabis. Upon further investigation, a loaded firearm and multiple bags of cannabis were found. One of the men claimed the

property as his, and will be charged with possession of a firearm in conjunction with possession of over twenty grams of cannabis.

Lieutenant Charlie King received a complaint from Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office about a diver in possession of a snook out of season. Lieutenant King conducted a fisheries inspection and found the diver to be in possession of a speared, out of season and undersize snook. The subject was issued a notice to appear for the violations.

## COPS

On August 4, Officer Lee LeBlanc, assisted the FWC Division of Marine Fisheries and Palm Beach Fishing Club with a three-day event benefiting underprivileged children held at the Bi-Centennial Park in Lantana. Children were brought from local communities and introduced to the fun of fishing. Classes were held for fish identification, knot tying, manatee awareness and casting a rod and reel. Participants were taken offshore on a chartered boat and also fished from the seawall along the Intracoastal Waterway. Nearly two hundred participants turned out each day for the event.

## **SOUTH REGION B**

### COLLIER COUNTY

An FWC Investigator conducted a fisheries inspection near Gordon Pass, where he found a man in possession of 16 undersize gray snapper. The next day, the Investigator conducted a fisheries inspection at the Shell Island Road Boat Ramp where another subject was in possession of 16 undersize gray snapper. Citations for over-the-bag-limit and undersize gray snapper were issued to both subjects in the near identical cases.

Lieutenant Joshua Caraker and Officer Mark Mahoney conducted stationary speed enforcement in a panther zone. They observed a vehicle traveling over the posted speed limit and the driver also turned the vehicle lights on and off several times while driving. The vehicle was stopped and a check through dispatch revealed that the passenger had a domestic violence injunction /protection order against the driver. Dispatch confirmed the order and the driver was arrested and transported to the Collier County Jail.

Officer Mark Mahoney and Lieutenant Joshua Caraker were checking fishermen on Plantation Bridge in Everglades City. They observed a subject drop his fishing pole and run toward the side of the bridge. The subject attempted to retrieve a fish from the rocks and the officers instructed him to stop. The subject complied and an inspection of his catch revealed two goliath grouper. The subject was cited and the fish were released alive.

### MONROE COUNTY

Officer Lindsay and an FWC Investigator were on covert patrol along the north end of the Indian Key Bridge when they noticed a male subject snorkeling along the shoreline. The subject appeared to be holding a spear. Upon inspection, they found him to be in possession of eight wrung lobster tails, seven of which were undersize. The subject was issued several citations, including taking spiny lobster during the closed season.

Officer Lindsay and an FWC Investigator were on covert patrol along the south side of the Tea Table Relief Bridge when they observed a subject wading through the water with a dip net and a stick. They started surveillance and observed the subject catch several lobster, place them in a wire basket, then conceal them underwater in the roots of a mangrove tree. The subject was issued several citations, including taking spiny lobster during the closed season.

Officer Lindsay and an FWC Investigator were on covert patrol along the south side of the Channel Five Bridge. They observed a subject loading up fishing gear into his vehicle. A closer inspection of his bucket revealed several small undersize snapper. Officer Brueing and the Investigator identified themselves and conducted a fisheries inspection. The subject was in possession of 17 snapper. Citations were issued for the violations including possession of undersize mutton snapper, yellowtail snapper, mangrove snapper, over-the-bag-limit of mutton and mangrove snapper.

Officer Robert Dube manned the FWC's annual lobster information booth in Key Largo along with personnel from the Florida Key's National Marine Sanctuary, Everglades National Park and Department of Environmental Protection prior to the lobster mini season. The lobster booth gave lobster measuring demonstrations, showed all the open and closed areas and distributed lobster literature along with diver and boating safety tips. Over 1,350 people visited the lobster information booth.

Officer Robert Dube was the guest speaker on nine different radio shows leading up to and throughout lobster mini season. Topics ranged from diving and boating safety to the most frequently asked questions regarding the rules and regulations of the mini season.

Officers Robert Dube and Jason Rafter participated in the Upper Keys National Night Out at the new Murray Nelson Government Center. This event was sponsored by the Monroe County Sheriff's Office. Officers set up the FWC's Recruiter Trailer and passed out lobster and boating safety information.

Officers Scott LaRosa and Jeff Beal observed two Naples men spear fishing inside Steamboat Creek. The officers inspected the subjects' catch and found two snook along with spiny lobster. Both subjects were cited for possession of snook out of season, possession of undersize snook, possession of speared snook, possession of lobster out of season, possession of speared lobster and spearfishing in the Upper Keys. Both subjects were booked into the Monroe County Jail.

FWC law enforcement conducted over 2,500 vessel inspections during the lobster mini season in Monroe County resulting in 96 resource citations, 56 boating citations, and 275 warnings. Law enforcement also responded to over 100 calls for service.