

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

**WEEKLY REPORT  
August 21 - 27, 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**

Lieutenant Brian Lambert stopped a vehicle on Scenic Highway when he observed the vehicle being operated erratically and suspected the driver might be impaired. As Lieutenant Lambert stopped and approached the driver, he immediately observed a marijuana cigarette on the door next to the driver's window. After conducting several field sobriety tasks, Lieutenant Lambert was satisfied with the driver's performance that he was not legally impaired. After completing his DUI investigation and speaking with the passenger in the vehicle, Lieutenant Lambert observed several large pieces of marijuana on his shirt. Both the driver and passenger were issued notice to appear citations for possession of less than 20 grams of marijuana.

Lieutenant Dan Hahr was conducting enhanced patrol in the Perdido River Wildlife Management Area when he observed a truck leaving Sand Landing. When Lieutenant Hahr stopped to talk to the occupants, he smelled the odor of cannabis. After a consent search, he located a marijuana pipe in the console. A further search revealed several items of paraphernalia including scales, grinder, rolling paper and roach clips in addition to three containers of cannabis. Both subjects admitted to smoking cannabis on the way out of the boat ramp. Both were issued notices to appear for possession of cannabis and paraphernalia.

Officers responded to a boating under the influence complaint in the area of Quiet Water Beach in Escambia County. Upon arrival, the officers located the vessel, matching the description in the complaint, leaving the area. When the vessel operator saw the officers approaching, he immediately tied the boat back up to the dock and jumped into the water. Officers conducted several field sobriety tasks on the operator at the scene and determined that he was impaired. The operator was arrested for operating a vessel under the influence and transported to the Escambia County Jail where he provided a sample of his breath which revealed his blood alcohol level to be .179.

Officer Keith Clark stopped a vessel returning to Sherman Cove Marina and found the vessel operator in possession of three undersize king mackerel. A notice to appear citation was issued.

### **SANTA ROSA COUNTY**

Officer Fred Rondeau checked a bank fisherman at Archie Glover Park and found the individual was in possession of two undersize red drum. The individual was issued notice to appear citations for undersize and over the bag limit of red drum.

## OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officers Danny Arnette and Van Barrow completed an illegal hunting investigation and charged a subject with taking deer during the closed season. The investigation began when Officer Barrow stopped a subject hunting in a peanut field. The subject produced a deer depredation permit that was assigned for a different area. An interview with the permit holder revealed he had no knowledge the subject was utilizing the permit in a different area.

Officer Matt Webb conducted fishery inspections in Destin Pass which revealed undersize red fish and king mackerel and possession of red snapper during the closed season. The fish violations were documented on three different vessel inspections. All three captains were cited.

## OKALOOSA COUNTY COPS

Officer Sarah Manning and Alan Kirchinger spoke to approximately 50 students at the Holt Academy in Holt. K-9 Officer Manning displayed K-9 Sadie's tracking skills. Both officers spoke about the core missions of FWC.

## BAY COUNTY

Officers worked a search-and-rescue operation that occurred during Tropical Storm Claudette. The U.S. Coast Guard Station in Panama City received a report that a sailboat was aground and that one individual who was setting the anchor was blown away in a dingy. The Coast Guard was on scene when Officer Neal Goss and Lieutenant Jay Chesser arrived to assist. The dingy was located on Shell Island, however the occupant was missing. The following morning, Officer Dennis Palmer patrolled the island on an all terrain vehicle and Officer Jim Moore conducted the search on the water. FWC air assets flew the area and Lieutenant Drew Nelson and Officer David Brady took up the evening search. The subject has not been located.

Officer Mark Clements was checking fishers when he found a subject who could produce no identification. It was found the fisher had an outstanding warrant from Pinellas County and was booked into the Bay County Jail.

## HOLMES COUNTY

Lieutenant Hampton Yates observed a vehicle on the Lake Cassidy ramp road when a beer bottle was thrown out of the vehicle. A citation for littering was issued to the subject and he was arrested and transported to the Holmes County Jail for a warrant out of Volusia County for failure to pay child support.

A request from the Holmes County Sheriff's Office was received to assist with a search and rescue utilizing our patrol boats on the Choctawhatchee River. Lieutenants Hampton Yates and Gary Applewhite, Officers Larry Morris, David Arnette and Alton

Ranew responded along with the FWC aviation section to conduct the search. The two men were located with their disabled vessel south of the original search location. The search party recovered the two men and their boats.

## JACKSON COUNTY

Officers David Arnette, Alton Ranew, and Kathy Jackson worked a detail on Lake Seminole during the opening of alligator season. A vessel was observed hunting alligators on a portion of the lake that lies in Georgia. After further surveillance, the vessel was stopped as it returned to Florida waters. Four occupants were in possession of an untagged 8-foot alligator. They were charged with taking an alligator out of their designated zone and failure to tag the alligator.

## FRANKLIN COUNTY

Officers Steven Cook, John Allen, Chasen Yarborough, Travis Huckeba, and Jason Carroll conducted a shellfish detail on local oyster bars within Franklin County from August 4 – 7 and August 12. During the detail 44 vessels were boarded with 97 harvesters being inspected. Three harvesters were cited for possession of undersize oysters. The percentage of undersize oysters ranged from 45 to 52 percent. Five harvesters were cited for not having a saltwater products license and Apalachicola Bay harvesters permit. Three uniform boating citations were issued for insufficient vessel safety equipment. One harvester was cited for harvesting from conditionally approved waters during a closure.

Officer Chasen Yarborough stopped a vehicle on Highway 98 when it passed another vehicle in a no passing zone. During interaction with the driver of the vehicle, Officer Yarborough noticed the strong aroma of burnt cannabis emanating from the vehicle. After the driver admitted to having smoked the cannabis and gaining consent, the vehicle was inspected with more cannabis being located inside. The driver was cited for possession of less than 20 grams of cannabis.

Officer Carmon Brownell was dispatched to a vessel accident on St. George Island. The accident involved a collision between two personal watercrafts. One vessel operator was transported to an area hospital with a broken leg. During the investigation, it was determined that alcohol was a contributing factor to the accident. One vessel operator was arrested for boating under the influence of alcohol, while the other vessel operator was cited for reckless operation of a vessel.

## **NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

### ALACHUA COUNTY

Officers Dustin Bonds and Joseph Johnston were working night hunting along the mail route in Star Lake Hunt Club. Around 11:30 pm, they observed a vehicle traveling down

a dirt road and began following it. The vehicle was swerving back and forth and then stopped abruptly. The officers stopped the vehicle, observed an expired tag and the driver trying to hide a beer in the center console. After a brief conversation and observation by the officers, the driver was given a field sobriety task and eventually a breath test. He was charged with DUI and possession of alcohol by person under 21.

#### DIXIE COUNTY

Officer Darby Butler conducted a detail on information that he had developed regarding illegal netting of commercial quantities of mullet. Officers Todd Nichols, Travis Cooper and Investigator Larry Ayers assisted him. After six hours of surveillance, Officer Butler spotted the targeted subjects fishing their nets and was able to direct the other officers to an isolated boat ramp where the suspects had launched. A short time later, the violators were apprehended as they attempted to load their vessels. Inspection of the two vessels revealed approximately 8,000 feet of illegal gill net and 195 mullet in one vessel and approximately 4,000 feet of illegal gill net and 48 mullet in the other. The nets and fish were seized as evidence. Officer Butler will be direct filing charges through the State Attorney's Office.

#### LEVY COUNTY

FWC Communications received a call from the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Sector St. Petersburg about an overdue recreational fishing vessel with one person on board. Officers from the Crystal River Field Office, USCG vessel and air assets, and local law enforcement agencies searched extensively for the missing boater. The victim's body was located by a USCG helicopter the next day and Officers Frank DiMartino and Justin Henry recovered the body. The vessel has not been recovered. Investigator Larry Ayers and Captain John Burton, with the assistance of the Citrus County Sheriff's Office Victim Advocates, notified the next of kin. The investigation is ongoing.

#### CITRUS COUNTY

Investigator Jim Smith and Officer Justin Henry responded to a report of an individual who had been bitten by an alligator. The victim claimed he did not know the alligator was present until he reached into an area he could not see. Investigator Smith and Officer Henry found evidence that the victim had been attempting to capture the 5 foot alligator to take home and eat. The subject was attacked when he grabbed the alligator by the tail. He was charged with attempting to illegally take an alligator. A nuisance trapper removed the alligator.

#### DUVAL COUNTY

Officer Jamey Stowell was on water patrol in the St. John's River near Jacksonville University when he noticed a commercial shrimp vessel trawling inside the closed area 100 yards from shore. Officer Stowell made contact with the vessel and the subject immediately admitted to knowing that he was trawling inside a closed area and that he

was trying to avoid underwater obstacles. The commercial fisherman was issued a citation.

## SUWANNEE COUNTY

Officer Matt Tyre responded to a call for assistance from the Suwannee County Sheriff's Office. While conducting a raid on a meth house in the Dowling Park area, officers discovered a rattlesnake in the house. Officer Tyre quickly captured the snake and relocated it. He issued the subject a citation for unlawful possession of a venomous reptile without a permit.

## NORTHEAST REGION

### BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Corey Bridwell was on land patrol with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Refuge Officer Jane Whaley when they located a subject suspected of illegal commercial fishing. They watched the suspect and his accomplice harvest finger mullet with a cast net. The subjects left the harvest location and drove to a local bait and tackle shop where they were confronted by Officers Bridwell and Whaley. The primary suspect stated he was recreational fishing, while the other suspect stated he was commercial fishing. A check of their catch revealed over 400 mullet which was well over the 100 per person bag limit. Both men were cited for harvest of mullet in excess of the recreation limit and not having licenses in their possession. Federal citations were also issued for no refuge fishing permit and no commercial fishing permit. The commercial quantities of mullet were sold and the proceeds were entered as evidence.

### CLAY COUNTY

Officer Troy Starling received information that a man had shot a deer behind his house. Lieutenant Ben Allen and Officer Starling walked behind the suspect's house when he was not home and found a food plot planted in a wooded area behind the house. The officers were standing off the suspect's property when they saw three large marijuana plants and 20 smaller plants in the backyard. The officers seized the plants and as they were doing so, they saw deer hair in the yard, a bucket with dried blood and a knife with deer hair. The officers collected DNA samples. Officer Starling later interviewed the suspect and he admitted to shooting a deer two weeks prior. The suspect is also a convicted felon and had taken the 30-30 he used to a friend's house. Officer Starling seized the gun from the suspect's friend. The suspect was charged with taking deer during the closed season, cultivation of marijuana and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

### MARION COUNTY

During the week of August 15, Officer John Wilke and Lt. Kevin Steinke received information on a fire-hunting suspect in the south end of the county. Surveillance was

set up on two separate nights. One night was with two decoy deer, resulting in one individual being charged for night hunting. Additional charges will be presented to the state attorney's office for offenses to which the man confessed during the stop.

Officers Wilke and Hargabus worked an area off Highway 40 in the Ocala National Forest for several nights where they had been watching a good-sized buck. Their patience paid off when a suspicious vehicle eased off the road and one of the occupants fired a small caliber rifle at the deer. The officers approached two subjects who were out of the vehicle and appeared to be searching for something with a flashlight. Three guns were found in the cab, one of which was a freshly fired rifle. All three guns were seized and both subjects were cited for night hunting. The deer was not located.

Officer Joe Simpson inspected a taxidermist who was possibly in possession of a bear skull. Captain Gregg Eason arrived to assist. During the inspection, the subject's uncle hid the bear skull in the clothes dryer. After interviewing the two, they eventually showed the officers the bear skull and were cited for possession of bear parts.

#### OSCEOLA COUNTY

While Officer Kurt Arendas was patrolling Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area, he found a Marion County man skinning two freshly killed hogs at the check station. When the officer asked, the man admitted to killing both hogs earlier in the management area. The subject was issued a notice to appear for taking hogs out of season.

While on water patrol in an unmarked boat on Lake Marian during the first phase of the statewide alligator hunt, Officer Arendas and Lieutenant Guy Carpenter II observed several baited jugs floating without the required restraining line attached. When the officers started to disturb the jugs, two Osceola County men approached and admitted the jugs were theirs. Both men were issued notices to appear for attempting to take alligators by an illegal method.

#### PUTNAM COUNTY

Lieutenant Allen was traveling east on Highway 20 in Interlachen when a car came up behind his patrol vehicle at a very high rate of speed. The vehicle continued to follow too close and ran off the road three times. Lieutenant Allen pulled over so the car could go by and then initiated a traffic stop. Because the driver showed signs of impairment, field sobriety tasks were conducted leading to the arrest of the driver for DUI. The subject was also charged with refusal to submit to testing since this was the second time in less than two years the driver had refused a breath test.

#### ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officers Lee Lawshe and Rich Wilcox taught the laws portion of a Hunter Education class at the Fraternal Order of Police lodge in St. Augustine. Approximately 40 students were in attendance.

Lieutenant Steve Zukowsky responded to a Wildlife Alert report of a subject in possession of four snook in the bed of his pickup at the south end of the Matanzas Inlet Bridge (State Road A1A). When Lieutenant Zukowsky arrived at the bridge, the pickup was gone. The local FWC Investigator assisted in intercepting the suspect at the suspect's home without incident. The 18-year old suspect was in possession of four snook. During the post-Miranda interview, he admitted to knowingly catching the snook during the closed season, harvesting over the daily bag limit of snook, and harvesting an oversize snook. Volusia County Officers Clay McDonough and Don Meurlot had cited the same suspect at the same location only two days earlier for possession of snook during the closed season and bag limit violations. The subject was booked into the county jail, his cooler and fishing equipment was seized and the fish donated.

## VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officers Clay McDonough and Don Meurlot responded to the High Bridge area in the northern coastal section of Volusia County to follow up on information that individuals were catching and keeping snook out of season. After arriving, watching and subsequently inspecting the catch of individuals in the area, three adult males were found to be in possession of six snook. All three were issued two misdemeanor citations each for illegally possessing snook out of season and possession of snook outside of the slot size limit.

## **SOUTHWEST REGION**

### CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officers Sam Cohl and Barry Shaw, who was on his third day in the field officer training program (FTO), were patrolling near the Port Charlotte Beach Complex, when they observed an individual operating a vehicle in a careless manner. The individual drove through a parking lot, hit a curb, then exited the parking lot and continued driving on a dead end road until going out of sight behind some mangroves. Officers Cohl and Shaw attempted to stop the vehicle, but were unable to locate it until Officer Shaw looked over the seawall and observed a completely submerged vehicle in the water. Officer Cohl immediately entered the water and swam to the vehicle while Officer Shaw notified the communications center of the situation and coordinated responding emergency personnel. Officer Cohl pulled the female driver and only victim from the vehicle then swam with the victim to shore where Officer Shaw began to administer CPR. The victim was lifeless with no pulse. Officers Cohl and Shaw administered CPR for approximately seven minutes and were able to regain a pulse and gasping of air from the victim. The victim was transferred to emergency medical personnel then transported to a hospital, in critical condition. It was later reported that the victim was recovering and breathing on her own.

Lieutenant Mike Frantz and Officer Robert O'Horo assisted the Punta Gorda Police Department and several other sheriffs' offices with a dive operation on the Peace River

near the I-75 Bridge. The three day operation was to recover evidence used in a murder case that occurred during March, in Punta Gorda.

During the past week, Captain Grealish's area produced 12 saltwater fish violations which included six violations for possession of snook out of season, undersize snook, taking snook by illegal method, and over the bag limit of snook, four violations of possession of redfish, undersize and oversize redfish, two violations for undersize gag grouper and possession of a goliath grouper.

## LEE COUNTY

Officer Demian McColgin was on land patrol inside the CREW Wildlife and Environmental Area (WEA) when he observed a truck illegally parked in the woods. When the occupants observed Officer McColgin, they began to drive off. Officer McColgin made contact with the two occupants and after a brief investigation, determined he subjects had entered the area illegally to harvest saw palmetto berries. Several bags of palmetto berries were returned to the CREW WEA and the subjects were issued misdemeanor citations for the violations.

Officer Demian McColgin was patrolling the Sanibel bridges when he observed several men wade fishing with cast nets. As Officer McColgin made contact with the subjects, he observed one of them discarding an undersize snook that was also out of season. Officer McColgin recovered the fish and determined the snook was taken illegally with a cast net. The individual was charged with two misdemeanors for possession of snook during closed season and taking snook by an illegal method.

Officers Justin Koble and Brian Cazalot were conducting commercial fisheries checks near Jug Creek on Pine Island when they observed a net boat being operated without navigational lights. After the vessel crossed Charlotte Harbor and returned, the officers stopped the vessel, which had two occupants onboard and approximately 700 yards of gill net and pompano. The individuals were arrested for an out of transit violation and booked into the Lee County Jail.

## SARASOTA COUNTY

Officer Loren Lowers was patrolling the New Pass area in Sarasota when he observed an individual wade fishing. Officer Lowers approached the angler and conducted a fisheries inspection, which produced two undersize gag grouper. The individual was issued a citation for possession of undersize gag grouper.

## **SOUTH REGION A**

### BROWARD COUNTY

Officer Kuester conducted a freshwater fisheries inspection and found a subject in possession of too many peacock bass. A citation was issued for the violation.

Officer Nathan Brock observed an adult male target practicing with his son. Subsequently, the subjects left the area leaving cans, boxes and shell casings on the ground. The adult was stopped and cited for littering.

Officers Tom Enos and Darral Thomason observed a group of juveniles attempting to catch an alligator at the Conservation Area 2A boat ramp. One of the juveniles hooked the alligator and was attempting to pull him onto the ramp when the line broke. All of the juveniles were cited for the violation.

## PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Lee LeBlanc had finished his patrol assignment and was en route home when he saw a suspicious vehicle parked in front of a City of Wellington pump station construction site on South Florida Water Management District property. Dyed diesel fuel was visible around the vehicle's fuel tank and the ground. Visible drag marks led from the suspicious vehicle to a contractor's truck that had the fuel cap removed and its anti-theft device broken. Two subjects were eventually located in the area by Palm Beach deputies and FWC officers. After questioning, the subjects admitted to stealing fuel. A container with dyed fuel and a siphon hose were found hidden in the brush near the contractor's truck.

FWC received a call from a female stating that her father and brother went alligator hunting the night before, had yet to return, and couldn't be reached by cell phone. The two had launched from Belle Glade Marina on Lake Okeechobee. Lieutenant Brown launched an airboat and began searching the marsh. Officer Schafer searched the rim canal from a patrol vessel. A news media helicopter arrived on scene, located the subjects in thick vegetation and guided Lieutenant Brown to their location. The subjects were stranded in the water since midnight, but were not injured. Their airboat was submerged in about eight feet of water. Lieutenant Brown helped the subjects on board his vessel and transported them to the marina. The victims planned to enlist the help of some friends to retrieve their vessel.

## **SOUTH REGION B**

### MONROE COUNTY

Officers Michael Milillo, Erik Steinmetz David Graham, Robert Dube, Raquel Daniels and Investigator McDaniel arrested several commercial fishermen on felony charges of trap molestation and theft. Another commercial fisherman witnessed the father and son trap robbing in the Upper Keys, called in the violation, and retrieved the trap the subjects had molested. Officers responded and arrested both fishermen. Additional citations were issue for improper buoy display and failure to possess boating safety equipment.

### COLLIER COUNTY

Officer David Barrett issued misdemeanor citations to a fisherman in Marco Island for possession of undersize snook and possession during closed season. The officer located the fish inside a garbage bag in the back of a vehicle during a fisheries inspection. The officer also issued a Notice to Appear to another fisherman during a fisheries inspection at the Bayview County Boat Ramp for possession of undersize cobia.

Officer Kurt Harris assisted K-9 Trainer Felix Collazo during a demonstration of K-9 Jasmine's abilities at a local sporting goods store in Fort Myers. Customers watched as Jasmine alerted on a snook hidden inside a boat. Reserve Officer John Snow (retired from FWC) explained to numerous groups of onlookers what was taking place and answered questions. The officers showcased the K-9 program to approximately 200 people.