

FWC DIVISION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT FIELD OPERATIONS

**WEEKLY REPORT
September 18 - 24, 2009**

This report represents some events the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) handled over the past week; however, it does not include all actions taken by the Division of Law Enforcement.

NORTHWEST REGION

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

On September 19, Lieutenants Brian Lambert and Dan Hahr were checking into some night hunting complaints on County Road 99 when they observed a truck crossing over into the opposite lane several times. The truck was stopped and when Lieutenant Lambert made contact, the driver exhibited several signs of possible impairment. Field sobriety tasks attempted by the driver indicated impairment. The driver performed poorly on all of the tasks. Lieutenant Lambert arrested the driver for driving under the influence and he was transported to the Escambia County Jail where the driver agreed to provide a breath sample which resulted in .177 G/210L.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

On September 18, Lieutenant Doug Berryman responded to a complaint of a possible shooting of a bear south of Milton off of Garcon Point Road. Once on scene, Lieutenant Berryman observed no sign of a bear being shot; however, he did notice a blood trail along with several dog tracks. While Lieutenant Berryman was trailing the wounded animal, he observed a vehicle matching the description of the suspect vehicle given by the complainant. Lieutenant Berryman stopped the vehicle to determine if the driver had anything to do with the incident. Post Miranda, the driver admitted to shooting his black Labrador retriever in the head with a 9mm pistol, wounding the animal, admitting that he must have made a bad shot and the dog ran off. On September 20, Santa Rosa County Animal Control notified Lieutenant Berryman that they had captured the wounded dog. Animal Control officials advised the dog had been shot in the face/jaw and that the owner was on his way to pick her up to take her to get treatment. That night, the veterinarian euthanized the dog at the owner's request. Investigation is ongoing at this time with possible charges pending for cruelty to animals.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

On September 17, Officer Van Barrow direct filed charges with the State Attorney's Office on two subjects for taking deer during closed season. An investigation is still ongoing for both subjects' involvement in exercising deer depredation permits and failing to tag the deer taken when transported from the field. The investigation started when FWC officers served a search warrant that produced photographs of untagged deer taken in August. The search was requested after Officer Barrow received evidence of a deer taken in a non permitted depredation area. The antlers of the deer were located during the search of the residence.

WALTON COUNTY

On September 20, Lieutenant Mark Hollinhead and Officers Don Walker and Matt Webb worked a detail on hunting leases in south Walton County. Officer Walker had received

numerous complaints regarding trespassing and tree stands being stolen. While patrolling the property, the officers encountered seven subjects on all terrain vehicles (ATVs) and trucks that did not have permission to be on the property. The subjects were issued written warnings for trespass and asked to depart the property. The lessee of the property met the subjects leaving and was pleased that they had encountered the FWC officers and been warned for being on the property.

BAY COUNTY

Officer Joe Chambers checked two fishers in Johnson Bayou and found an undersized speckled trout in their possession. Further observation indicated the subjects had the odor of burnt cannabis about them. When asked, a baggie of cannabis and a glass pipe was produced. A written warning was issued for the trout and citations were issued for the cannabis and the drug paraphernalia.

Officer Dennis Palmer assisted with an alligator case that was being worked by Investigations involving an alligator that had been killed in the St. Andrews State Park. Five suspects were identified and charged.

Officer Joe Chambers was checking shoreline fishers when he encountered two different fishers at the Hathaway Bridge who had the aroma of fresh burnt cannabis about them. One fisher produced a glass pipe and a baggie of cannabis and the other fisher produced a cannabis cigarette. Citations were issued in both cases.

Officer Dennis Palmer responded to a call for assistance early Saturday morning regarding a subject that was riding around in the Old Gaskin area and had stated he was going to commit suicide. Officer Palmer met with Bay County Sheriff's Office deputies and they later found the subject alive and well. Apparently the subject was having troubles with his wife.

Officer David Erdman was on water patrol on St. Andrews Bay and during a boating safety inspection, he noticed signs of impairment from the operator of the vessel. Field sobriety evaluations were performed on the operator. Evaluations concluded the operator was impaired, and he was arrested and booked into the Bay County Jail.

Officer David Erdman was on water patrol on St. Andrews Bay and observed several people snorkeling in the Spanish Shanty Cove area with no divers down flag displayed. Officer Erdman waited at a distance until the snorkelers were through and heading back in. Officer Erdman then conducted an inspection of the vessel and located over 100 bay scallops onboard the vessel. Citations were issued for no divers down flag, harvest of scallops out of season, and harvest of bay scallops in a closed area.

BAY COUNTY COPS

Officer Dennis Palmer taught the laws section of the Hunter Education course in Bay County.

HOLMES COUNTY

Officer Larry Morris assisted the Holmes County Sheriff's Office with a search warrant regarding an indoor marijuana growing operation. The Holmes County Sheriff's Office arrested and charged a Westville man after conducting the search.

Officer Larry Morris responded to a search and rescue call for three missing boaters on the Choctawhatchee River. The location was in north Holmes County south of the Highway 2 boat ramp. Officer Morris located two subjects sleeping in a boat; the boat had run out of gas. The third subject was located after daylight as he walked out of the river swamp.

Officer Jimmy Brooks assisted biologists with the Holmes County Turkey Restoration Program again this year. He assisted in counts and maintaining the turkey bait sites and camera during the study throughout Holmes County.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

During the time period of September 1 – 18, Officers Percy Cook, Carmon Brownell, Steven Cook, Travis Huckeba, John Allen, Chasen Yarborough, Jason Carroll, Nick Barnard, Mike Fish, Shon Brower, Lieutenants Harry Parker and Charlie Wood, along with Captain Donald Duval executed a commercial oyster detail in Apalachicola Bay to address the opening of the winter oyster bars. The detail targeted the harvest of undersized oysters. During the detail 134 vessels were boarded and inspected. The inspections resulted in 23 citations being issued for possession of undersized oysters, 12 citations for no saltwater products license and no Apalachicola Bay oyster harvest permit, 3 citations for expired vessel registration, 1 citation for failure to deliver oysters to a dealer within six hours, and 47 written warnings for various resource and boating safety violations. Due to high number of undersized oyster violations, the detail will be continuing.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

DUVAL

On September 17, Officers Sandy Blackburn and Jill Izsak were near the Alimacani Boat Ramp and observed three fishermen returning from cast netting in a nearby creek. When they checked the fishermen's cooler, they found an undersized black grouper and five undersized black drum. The fishermen also did not have their shoreline fishing license. Citations were issued for the undersized fish and warnings were issued for the license violations.

On September 17, Officers Sandy Blackburn and Jill Izsak inspected a fisherman at Myrtle Creek and found him to be in possession of several undersized fish to include:

two undersized mangrove snapper, three undersized spotted sea trout, one undersized black drum and one undersized flounder. He also did not have a shoreline saltwater fishing license. Citations were issued for the fish violations and the license violation.

On September 20th, Officer Adam Small received a complaint of an individual selling undersize pompano at the Jacksonville Farmers Market. Officer small arrived on scene and found the individual was selling farmed raised pompano from China. There are no size requirements for farmed pompano. However, the individual did not have all of his receipts for the other species of fish he was selling. Further investigation revealed that the individual had been warned a month prior for the same violation. When asked why he didn't have all the required documents, the individual stated that he didn't want his competition to know what he had paid for them. The individual was cited for not maintaining records for retail sale of salt water products.

NASSAU

On September 13, Officer Tom Tucker received a complaint that a sailing vessel had struck the south jetty at the St. Mary's entrance. The vessel was inbound and the operator saw the two white cans that mark the underwater obstruction and assumed that the cans marked safe passage. The vessel struck the jetty and received a large hole on impact. The operator was able to free the vessel and proceeded to Tiger Point Marina, where it was pulled from the water. Warnings were issued to the operator for violation of navigational rules.

NORTHEAST REGION

OSCEOLA COUNTY

While on patrol, Officer Kurt Arendas observed a Pinellas County man attempting to take alligators on West Lake Toho with a baited jug without the required restraining line in the middle of the day. During an inspection, Officer Arendas found the man was not a permitted alligator hunter, but was serving as an agent for another Pinellas County man who was not present. After locating the permittee, the officer issued the appropriate notices to appear.

Officer Caitlyn Staskiewicz filed warrants for three men who failed to respond to non criminal citations she issued to them.

PUTNAM COUNTY

On Monday, Lt. Ben Allen was contacted by the Putnam County Sheriff's Department to assist in searching for a missing person in the Melrose area. Detectives stated a 21-year old female walked away from her home the previous Thursday at 4:00 a.m., wearing a Florida State sweatshirt and no shoes. Lt. Allen responded and began searching a wooded area near the woman's house until after dark.

The following morning Lt. Allen and Officers Troy Starling, Eric Meade, Lee Lawshe, Rich Wilcox and Mike Pedonti returned to the area, searched and cleared the area where Lt. Allen had searched the prior evening. Detectives then asked FWC to begin searching 9,300 acres of University of Florida property near the woman's house.

Officer Rich Wilcox was searching by ATV. Late in the afternoon, he contacted Lt. Allen stating he had found a burgundy sweat shirt that was turned inside out and was fresh. Officer Wilcox turned off his ATV and began hearing faint cries for help. He notified Lt. Allen and went to the victim. Lt. Allen and several deputies went into the property off Hwy. 26 and made their way to Officer Wilcox and the victim. She was severely dehydrated, covered with bug bites, sun burned and unable to move. Officer Wilcox had taken off his uniform shirt and wrapped up the victim. He also began giving her water and administering first aid.

The victim was carried several hundred yards on a backboard to Lt. Allen's patrol vehicle. She was then transported out of the property to an awaiting ambulance and the victim's family. Paramedics told the officers the victim would not have lived more than a few more hours had she not been found.

SOUTHWEST REGION

LEE COUNTY

On September 22, Officer Adam Resnick conducted panther zone speed enforcement on Corkscrew Road and issued four citations for speeding. The highest recorded speed was 80 miles-per-hour in a marked 50 mile-per-hour zone.

PINELLAS COUNTY

On September 18, Captain Roger Young was off duty with his kids at North Shore Park in St. Petersburg when he witnessed several individuals catching redfish and placing them on a stringer. After observing several redfish being kept, Captain Young notified Officer Will Widener who was working a short distance away. After a short-term surveillance on the individuals, Officer Widener conducted a fisheries inspection and found the three subjects in possession of nine redfish on a stringer. The fish were released alive into the water and the subjects were issued citations for over the bag limit of redfish.

POLK COUNTY

Just prior to midnight on September 18, Officer Robert Adams conducted a fisheries inspection of the occupants in a vessel on Lake Marion. One of the subjects was keeping his catch in an ice cooler and told Officer Adams he had "about 25" crappie (speckled perch) in his cooler. The other subject, who was keeping his catch in a five-gallon bucket, told Officer Adams "you don't even need to count them, I have more than

25.” Officer Adams counted the fish in the cooler and determined the subject was in possession of 42 crappie. The other subject was in possession of 47 crappie. Officer Adams seized their catch and issued both subjects a notice to appear for taking over the daily bag limit of crappie.

SOUTH REGION A

BROWARD COUNTY

On September 17, Officer Robert Kuester observed a beach diver harvesting lobster. A catch inspection revealed the subject had harvested over the allowable limit and was cited for the violation.

On September 20, Officer Darral Thomason witnessed a small plane crash in an area of the Everglades and Francis S. Taylor Wildlife Management Area. Emergency rescue personnel were notified and several FWC officers responded to the crash site by airboat. Unfortunately, there were no survivors. The following day, FWC Officers assisted the National Transportation Safety Board and the Broward Sheriff's Office with recovery efforts.

On September 22, Officer Mike Naujoks responded to Hillsboro Inlet after having received a report of a sunken dredge. The sinking caused the dredge to spill approximately 200 gallons of diesel fuel. The United States Coast Guard also responded and coordinated the cleanup effort. Officer Naujoks issued three citations for registration violations.

GLADES COUNTY

On September 20, around midnight, Lt. Eddie Brown was on patrol when he observed a truck enter and leave Fisheating Creek Wildlife Management Area. The truck eventually entered Curry Island. Lt. Brown then observed somebody in the truck shining a spotlight in a suspicious manner. The truck was stopped and four subjects were inside along with a spotlight. The back of the truck held dogs and a large toolbox that contained two loaded rifles. Lieutenant Steelman arrived to assist. All four subjects received citations for the violation of possessing guns at night while shining a light. Lt. Steelman also issued warnings for possession of firearms and dogs in a management area.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

On September 20, Officers Amanda Phillips and David Fowler were conducting a fisheries inspection on a vessel and its four subjects at Phil Foster Park. The inspection revealed several undersize snapper and one federal/state protected Loggerhead sea turtle. The operator was charged with possession of undersize snapper and possession of the sea turtle. The juvenile turtle was taken offshore and released.

SOUTH REGION B

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Shawn Polly and Clinton Bean responded to information they had received about a hunting violation in Picayune Wildlife Management Area. The officers set up surveillance that resulted in the arrest of a subject for hunting over bait. The subject had placed corn and vegetables within 15 yards of his tree stand.

Officer Felix Collazo issued a citation to a subject who was in possession of a tarpon without the required tag. The incident occurred in the Picayune Wildlife Management Area while the officer was inspecting archery hunters. The subject told the officer he had harvested only one black bass but after further investigation, he admitted that he had also caught a "Snook" which the officer correctly identified as a small tarpon.

Officer Greg Stastny provided safety patrol during an artificial reef clean-up project sponsored by the Collier County Marine Alliance. The project, funded by the Collier County Sea Grant, succeeded in recovering over a dozen illegal monofilament nets that were detrimental to numerous local artificial reefs in the Collier County area.

Officer Jason Tidwell assisted in capturing and recovering an injured manatee near Hideaway Beach, Marco Island. The manatee's injuries were so severe that it had to be euthanized.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

On September 21, Officer Erik Sullivan responded to a complaint of subjects spear fishing near the jetties at Haulover Inlet. Officer Sullivan arrived and covertly observed the subject spear fishing. The subject eventually exited the water and walked to his vehicle with two other subjects accompanying him. Officer Sullivan approached and conducted a fisheries inspection which revealed two speared undersized Snook and six undersized lobsters. The subject was arrested and jailed on several charges.

On September 22, Officer Mike Albert was conducting surveillance on several subjects fishing at a canal near Biscayne Boulevard and NE 82 Street. He eventually inspected two subjects that were leaving in separate vehicles. The inspection revealed only mullet. However, neither subject could produce a requisite fishing license, and when asked for a driver license, one subject nervously reacted. Local police were contacted for assistance. The subject pointed to a nearby truck and said, "You'll find what you're looking for there." The truck contained three large coolers and when its owner approached, Officer Albert asked him if there were any fish in the coolers. The owner replied that he had a Snook. A fisheries inspection revealed one oversized Snook. A citation was issued for the violation and warnings were issued for other violations.

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Steve Golden arrested a commercial fisherman and his son on major violation charges for numerous offenses, including possession of 310 wrung lobster tails on the water, 277 of which were undersized. The officer made additional arrests for six stone crab claws out of season and interference with the duties of a FWC Officer. Officer Golden had observed a skiff operating suspiciously near No Name Key and when he approached, the vessel operator took evasive action by maneuvering into very shallow, rocky waters while the passenger dropped an object over the side. The officer stopped the skiff and then returned to investigate the area where the object had been dropped overboard. Officer Golden recovered a large plastic box filled with the illegal lobster tails and claws. If convicted, in addition to criminal penalties, the subject will be subject to numerous civil and enhanced penalties due to prior convictions for FWC rule violations.