

FWC DIVISION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT FIELD OPERATIONS

**WEEKLY REPORT
October 30 – November 5, 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 checked three fishermen on a vessel returning to the 17th Avenue boat ramp. The men stated that they only caught white trout. Mixed with over 100 white trout were a red snapper and an oversize red drum. The season for red snapper is currently closed. Notice to appear citations were issued for the violations.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY COPS

Officers assigned to Escambia, Santa Rosa, and Okaloosa Counties staffed an exhibit at the annual Pensacola Fair. Officers talked with the many fair attendees about fishing and hunting laws and becoming an FWC officer.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Fred Rondeau checked a vessel on Pensacola Bay. While issuing an infraction citation, Officer Rondeau found that a passenger on the vessel was wanted for trespass and criminal mischief. A sheriff's deputy transported the individual to the Santa Rosa County Jail to serve the warrant.

Officer Steve Hoomes was off duty when he noticed a truck parked in an area where he had recently received a complaint of a gunshots fired. Officers Gary Ridaught and Andy Berrey were nearby and were called to investigate. While looking at the truck, the officers observed an 18-year-old and a 17-year-old exiting the woods and walking towards the truck. The 18-year-old was carrying a shotgun loaded with buckshot. After a short interview, the subjects admitted that they were hunting deer. The officers followed the subjects back down the trail and located two tree stands and another shotgun. The younger boy admitted to hunting with the other gun. After a further investigation, both subjects admitted that the 18-year-old had shot an eight point buck there several days ago. The time given matched the time of the complaint that Officer Hoomes had received. The young man admitted to killing the buck with the shotgun and turned over the meat and the antlered buck head to the officers. Both subjects were issued notices to appear for attempting to take deer by unlawful method. Charges are pending against both for taking/possession of a deer by unlawful method.

Lieutenant Dan Hahr witnessed a truck speeding through an intersection without stopping. The truck continued across the road into the ditch, bounced through it, and continued driving through a grassy area until it reached another roadway. Lieutenant Hahr stopped the truck and watched as the driver staggered out of it. The driver quickly volunteered that he had been drinking and did not have a driver license because, "They took it last week when I got caught before." The driver performed the field sobriety tasks very poorly and was arrested for driving under the influence (DUI). He later provided a breath sample of .145 at the Santa Rosa County Jail. The driver was

charged with DUI and driving on a suspended driver license. He was also issued citations for open container and running a stop sign.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY COPS

Officers Steve Hoomes and Ben Pineda taught the laws portion of the hunter safety class in Milton. The officers shared their knowledge of various legal issues and commonly encountered violations.

OKALOOSA COUNTY COPS

Captains Mary Sumner and Brad Williams attended a meeting of senior command staff for the Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton County Sheriff's Departments. Continued agencies cooperation and utilization of various resources and assets during lean budget times was discussed.

WALTON COUNTY

On Wednesday, November 4, Dispatch received a call from Eglin Air Force Base Range Patrol asking for assistance with apprehending a subject who fled from them while being checked. Officer Pete Rockwell was the first to arrive on scene and attempted to locate the subject along with Eglin Range patrol officers. Officers Van Barrow, Alan Kirchinger, Danny Arnette, and Ken White also participated in the search. The subject, who is a convicted felon, was tracked by Department of Corrections k-9s through a section of Eglin Air Force Base Wildlife Management Area to a road where it appears he was picked up by a vehicle. The area is a weekend hunt only area. The incident is under investigation.

BAY COUNTY COPS

Officer Jeff Gager attended the annual Cops & Kids Day event on Panama City Beach. The event is hosted by the Panama City Beach Police Department. Many area law enforcement agencies and military attend the event and showcase their equipment. There were demonstrations by various agencies along with static displays. Officer Gager came in contact with several hundred children along with their parents.

Officer David Brady conducted an outreach event at a local school that included an overview of the duties of an FWC Officer. The event was enjoyed by the children and their teachers and Officer Brady answered many questions.

GULF COUNTY

While on patrol of the Apalachicola Wildlife and Environmental Area, Officer Scott Hoffman discovered where an all terrain vehicle (ATV) had driven around a locked gate. Officer Hoffman notified Officer Tony Lee who was in the area on all terrain

vehicle patrol. The officers located the hunter and his ATV and determined he was hunting on the area from a tree stand over bait. He was cited for the violation.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Officers John Allen and Travis Huckeba were on patrol to address illegal net fishing when they boarded a vessel occupied by two fishermen near the mouth of the Carrabelle River. The inspection revealed that the fishermen were in possession of illegal nets. The two were charged with possession of an entangling net, fishing with an entangling net, possession of 51 mullet and an entangling net, and possession of an entangling net on a vessel 22- to 25-foot with the motor in the forward half of the vessel. The nets were seized along with 1135 pounds of black mullet.

Officers John Allen and Travis Huckeba were conducting patrol to address illegal net fishing when they boarded a vessel occupied by two fishermen near Pilots Cove. An inspection revealed that the fishermen were using monofilament trammel nets. The fishermen were charged and jailed on felony violations for flagrant net violations, fishing with a gill net, use of monofilament net and possession of a gill net on a vessel 22- to 25-foot with the motor in the forward half of the vessel. Two infraction citations were also issued for no navigational lights and no visual distress signals. The net was seized along with 338 pounds of black mullet.

Officers Steven Cook, Woody Cook, Chasen Yarborough, Benjamin Barnard and Lieutenant Charlie Wood conducted patrol to address the illegal harvest of undersize oysters at Cat Point oyster bar. The size tolerance inspections revealed four different harvesters were in possession of undersize oysters. The undersize percentages ranged from 37% to 51%. Each harvester was charged for the misdemeanor violations.

GADSDEN COUNTY

Lieutenant Harry Parker and Officer Lane Bentley cited a Gulf County man for taking freshwater fish by illegal method. The individual was taking flathead catfish with an electro fishing device.

NORTHEAST REGION

CLAY COUNTY

Officer Mark Tharp was at Fleming Island Marina when he observed a vehicle that appeared to possess an altered tag. After running a check on the tag, Officer Tharp discovered that not only was the tag expired but its occupant was wanted on a felony charge for dealing in stolen property and providing false identification to a pawn shop dealer. The subject was arrested on the warrant and booked into the county jail.

FLAGLER COUNTY

Officers Eric Meade and Lee Lawshe were working Relay Wildlife Management Area and located a vehicle parked in the area. The truck contained a plastic shopping bag filled with corn. The officers tracked the hunter to his tree stand and found him hunting over corn. The hunter was cited for hunting deer over bait on a wildlife management area.

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY

Officer Curtis Suggs was conducting marine fisheries inspections near the Sebastian Inlet. During one inspection, Officer Suggs asked a subject if he had caught any fish. The subject replied that he had caught and kept a 26-inch redfish. Further inspection revealed that the redfish was 36 inches. The subject was issued a citation for the violation.

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officer Rich Wilcox responded to a complainant who found an oversize redfish carcass dumped in a vacant lot behind her residence. She gave a vague description of a vehicle she had seen in the area earlier. Officer Wilcox recovered the fish which measured 41.5 inches and canvassed apartments in the area and located a vehicle similar in description. He found large fish scales on the back porch of the apartment. Two subjects at the residence were interviewed and admitted to catching, cleaning and dumping the fish. Both were charged with possession of oversize redfish.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

NASSAU COUNTY

Officer Tom Tucker was on patrol in Fort Clinch where he noticed an individual fishing behind the fort. Officer Tucker approached the fisherman and asked if he had any luck. The individual said that the fishing was slow and he didn't have any fish, although a cooler was nearby that had a fish tail hanging out of it. Officer Tucker asked the individual if that was his cooler and the fisherman admitted that it was. An inspection of the cooler revealed a 38" red drum. The defendant had no comment. A warrant check on the defendant revealed an outstanding warrant for failure to possess a fishing license. The defendant was booked into the Nassau County jail.

DUVAL COUNTY

Officer Adam Small was on patrol at the Cedar Point boat ramp where he observed a truck leaving the ramp, and the boat trailer he was pulling didn't have a tag on it. Officer Small initiated a vehicle stop and informed the individual that he was stopped because he did not have a tag on the trailer. The subject became very loud and voiced his

displeasure of being stopped. Officer Small then asked if he had caught any fish that day and the individual stated that he had a few. After further investigation, Officer Small found six spotted sea trout, all of them undersize. The defendant stated that he thought the fish had to be twelve inches, not fifteen. Citations for over the bag limit and undersize spotted sea trout were issued.

Officers Jamey Stowell, Jill Izsak and Lieutenant Tony Wright served an arrest warrant on a Black Hammock resident. The warrant was from a two week long investigation conducted by Officer Stowell involving trespass on the Timuquanna Preserve and the adjoining state and federal lands. The defendant was hunting on these lands with a bow and arrow. He would have someone drop him off at a desired hunting spot and then retrieve his bow from a hidden location in the woods. While interviewing the subject, he admitted to taking deer on the preserve and knowingly trespassing and having a weapon on the preserve. The arrest warrant was served without incident.

Officer Hope McGregor was notified of a vender selling red drum at the Blanding Boulevard Flea Market. Upon arrival, Officer McGregor did not find any red drum. She asked the vender if he had sold any and he stated, "It's against the law and I follow the law." Office McGregor noticed he was selling shrimp and black drum. When asked if he had the proper paperwork for the possession and sale of the salt water species, the dealer could not produce any. A citation was issued for not having the required paperwork for the saltwater products.

LAFAYETTE COUNTY

Officer Bryan Humphrey was patrolling the Mallory Swamp Wildlife Management Area when he encountered a Mayo man in possession of hunting rifles during the closed season. Upon closer examination, it was discovered the subject was also in possession of two small bags of marijuana. He was charged accordingly.

ALACHUA COUNTY

Officers Dustin Bonds and Sam Dishman responded to a search and rescue in Marion County. After locating the lost hunter, the officers were returning to Alachua County when a subject in vehicle in front of them threw a beer can out the window. The vehicle was stopped and a field sobriety task was performed on the operator who passed the tasks. However, after consent to search the vehicle was given, drugs were located. A citation for littering and possession of less than twenty grams of cannabis was issued.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officer Jason Cooke was conducting fishery checks at the Placida boat ramp when he made contact with an individual who was fishing from the shoreline. The subject could

not produce a valid shoreline fishing license. Officer Cooke ran a computer check on the individual and discovered that he had an outstanding warrant out of Sarasota County. He was arrested and booked into the Charlotte County Jail awaiting extradition.

Officer Jason Semeyn was dispatched to a capsized vessel three miles off of Gasparilla Island. The vessel was overtaken by waves and became flooded. When the operator went to the stern to check the bilge pump, his weight caused the water to go to the stern and capsize the vessel. The two people on board were recovered by a nearby vessel. The vessel was recovered by a commercial salvage company.

HARDEE COUNTY

During a night hunting detail, Pilot Mike Wood and Officer Clint Thompson were conducting surveillance from the air when they sighted an individual driving down a desolate road shining two spotlights in a manner capable of disclosing deer or wildlife. They notified Officer Darrell Henderson, and while continuing to watch the vehicle, they observed it slow down several times and come to a complete stop. Officer Henderson initiated a traffic stop, but the vehicle fled. He continued to follow the vehicle onto Mosaic Mine property with lights and sirens activated. The suspect then shut his headlights and brake lights off. With the aid of air support, Officer Henderson maintained contact with the suspect vehicle when it suddenly came to an abrupt stop in some small trees at the edge of an oak head. Officer Henderson apprehended one of the passengers in the vehicle, but the second passenger and operator could not be located after searching the area for several hours. Officer Jared Cloud and K-9 Gus located a Remington 270 Caliber rifle in the area where the vehicle fled. The subject was arrested for resisting an officer without violence. Additional charges are pending.

HERNANDO COUNTY

Lieutenant Kevin Grover stopped a vehicle in the Croom Wildlife Management Area (WMA). While checking the operator's hunting license, he recognized the name as one from a list of convicted felons who had drawn quota permits for the WMA. The subject was in possession of a muzzleloader not meeting the definition of an antique firearm or replica. The firearm was seized and charges will be direct filed.

Officers Joshua Allison and Joe Wolff located an unoccupied vehicle registered to a convicted felon who had drawn a quota permit for Croom Wildlife Management Area. Lieutenant Kevin Grover arrived to assist, and while preparing to run a k-9 track, the subject's cousin returned to the vehicle. He told the officers that the subject was still in the woods, and after securing his firearm, he led the officers to his tree stand. The

subject was found in possession of a muzzleloader not meeting the definition of an antique firearm or replica. The firearm was seized and charges will be direct filed

LEE COUNTY

A sailboat became entangled in power lines in the St. James area of Pine Island Sound. There were no injuries; however, the incident caused a power outage for several hours. The operator was not familiar with the area and thought the sailboat had sufficient clearance. Officer Jonathan Ruggiero issued the operator a citation for improper lookout.

Officer Jay Ewing conducted panther patrol off Corkscrew Road, issuing four citations. The highest speed recorded was 68 miles per hour in a marked 45 mile per hour zone.

INVESTIGATIONS

On September 17, Investigator Jernstedt received information that a Hernando County shrimper was selling bait shrimp to Lee and Charlotte County bait shops without the proper license and that the fisherman had an outstanding warrant. On September 25, Lieutenant Kevin Grover, Officer Joshua Allison and Officer Sean Smith arrested the fisherman in Hernando County for the outstanding warrant and advised him that he was not licensed to sell saltwater products outside of Hernando County. On October 21, Investigator Stanley and Investigator Jernstedt observed the same subject selling bait to a Lee County bait shop in Matlacha. The fisherman was issued a summons for no wholesale dealer's license.

On July 24, Investigator Greg Stanley received a complaint that a female was going door to door in a Lee County neighborhood attempting to sell deer meat. The complainant provided a phone number for the woman and Investigator Stanley called and spoke with a male who answered the phone. The male offered to sell Investigator Stanley deer meat the following day. On July 25, Investigators Larry Gregory and Greg Stanley met with the subject at his residence and purchased four packages of frozen deer meat for twenty dollars. During conversations with the subject, he indicated he had access to more deer meat that was coming from Tennessee. After numerous attempts to purchase additional deer meat were unsuccessful, on October 17, Investigator Stanley issued the seller a citation for the original sale of deer meat.

COPS

Officer JoAnne Adams and Reserve Officer Jack Salafia represented the agency at Polk State College in Lakeland for their Veterans Career Fair.

PASCO COUNTY

Officer Paul Van Ost stopped a vessel west of Anclote Power Plant and asked the two subjects on board if they had any fish. They said they had a few that they were going to throw back. An inspection of the live well revealed a ladyfish and a few small grunts. There were other fish that were in the well, but before Officer Van Ost could identify them, the operator closed the lid and put his cutting board with bait on top of the live well. Officer Van Ost completed a safety inspection and then asked to see the fish again. The unidentified fish turned out to be two undersize gag grouper. They measured 12 and 15 inches each. The fish were photographed and returned to the water alive. The subject who claimed the fish was charged with possession of undersize grouper.

SOUTH REGION A

BROWARD COUNTY

Officers Craig Baker and Dale Twist were conducting fisheries inspections at a Fort Lauderdale boat ramp when they encountered a subject in possession of fifteen snapper over the limit. The subject was cited for the violation.

Officer David Weis observed a vehicle driving erratically in the western part of the county. After stopping the vehicle, the officer determined that the driver was impaired and arrested the subject for his second DUI. He was transported to a test facility for further processing.

HENDRY COUNTY

Officer Greg Louque was on patrol when he observed a vehicle driving erratically. Officer Louque conducted a traffic stop and observed that the driver displayed signs of impairment. The driver failed field sobriety tasks and was arrested for DUI.

Officer A.J. Maynard was on patrol when he observed a vehicle “blacked out” on Rogers Road Bridge. Officer Maynard investigated and a background check revealed a warrant for the vehicle operator’s arrest. The subject was arrested and transported to a police substation. While conducting a property inventory, a small plastic baggie containing white powder was found in the subject’s wallet. The powder tested positive for cocaine and the subject was additionally charged with possession of cocaine.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Travis Basford and Amanda Phillips were conducting marine fisheries inspections on vessels at the Curry Park boat ramp. Officer Basford checked a vessel and located twenty-three undersize yellowtail snapper. One subject was charged with the undersize and over-the-limit violations. Officer Phillips checked another vessel that had eight undersize and twelve over-the-limit yellowtails. The vessel operator was charged with the violations.

Officer Phillips and Basford were on patrol when they encountered two subjects cast-netting game fish at Okeeheelee Park. Both subjects were written citations for taking game fish by an illegal method. Twenty bluegills and black crappies were seized as evidence.

SOUTH REGION B

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

On November 1, at the start of general gun season, Investigator Miranda was called to respond to a hunting accident that resulted in a death. Miami-Dade Police Department is leading the investigation.

Officers Roberto Rodriguez and Steve Persaud responded to a call for assistance at the U.S. Coast Guard's (USCG) Miami Beach station. USCG vessels interdicted a suspicious vessel approximately ten miles offshore. Two subjects were on board and the vessel contained ten fifteen-gallon drums of gasoline in non-approved containers. The vessel was escorted back to the USCG station. Lieutenant Christian Rodriguez arrived to assist. After investigation, the two subjects were arrested and jailed for illegally transporting gasoline. Their vessel was seized.

MONROE COUNTY

Officers Janette Fernandez and Raquel Daniels responded to an incident in Card Sound involving Cuban migrants discovered by a family out for a day of fishing. The family provided food and water, then contacted authorities. Officer Santi Ayala from Dade County and U.S. Coast Guard escorted the twenty-one migrants that included men, women, and one two-year-old boy to shore where they were transferred to Border Patrol Officials. The migrants told officials they were brought to Florida in a go-fast vessel.

Officers Joshua Greenier and Robert Dion responded to a complaint resulting in a notice to appear for possession of 243 over the bag limit of ricordia, a type of mushroom coral. During a fisheries inspection at a marina in Stock Island, the suspect commercially licensed marine life collector first told officers that he was in compliance. However, Officer Greenier noticed several five gallon buckets stacked together and continued investigating. After separating the two buckets, the officer located more ricordia.

COLLIER COUNTY

Lieutenant Wayne Maahs and Officer Steve Wicker patrolled Lake Trafford to check alligator hunting compliance near the end of the season. The issued several citations for possession of an untagged alligator and for attempting to take alligators without an Agent License.

Lieutenant Wayne Maahs responded to a complaint of a nine-foot boa constrictor discovered in a ditch next to a condominium in north Naples. The dead snake appeared to have been hit by a vehicle.

Officer Doyle Cook responded to an Everglades City airboat accident that resulted in injuries. As a result of a recent accident, the rental business initiated a new procedure requiring airboat operators to communicate by radio when they are entering a narrow creek that is used regularly. Although both airboat operators communicated they were entering the creek, neither operator received acknowledgement and continued to navigate through the narrow creek. Both operators were charged with violation of a navigational rule.

Officer Marc Shea observed a vessel reach the shore and one occupant hide two plastic bags inside a tree line. Although both subjects denied having any fish inside the bags, they started to apologize as the officer's inspection revealed an undersize sheepshead. The subjects then denied having any fish in the boat, but as the officer approached the boat they admitted to having some jacks. An inspection revealed a cooler full of fish. Officer Doyle Cook and Lieutenant Wayne Maahs assisted with the investigation, resulting in the arrest of both subjects for possession of undersize snook, redfish, sheepshead, and mullet in excess of the bag limit, as well as illegal method of harvest of snook.

FWC Officers, U.S. Coast Guard, U S. Customs, and the Everglades National Park Service conducted a two day interagency detail to ensure compliance with commercial fisheries and labor laws during stone crab season. Although no resources violations were observed, fourteen illegal immigrants employed as deckhands were apprehended.