

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

**WEEKLY REPORT  
July 24 - 30, 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**

While on water patrol, Officer Keith Clark stopped a boat returning from the Gulf of Mexico. A fisheries inspection revealed a grossly undersize king mackerel measuring 16 inches. When Officer Clark lifted the first dorsal fin, one of the passengers asked what the officer was doing. The vessel operator stated, "Looking for a black flag," indicating the operator knew how to identify king mackerel. The operator was cited for possessing undersize king mackerel.

Lieutenant Dan Hahr was on patrol at the Pipes picnic area within Perdido Wildlife Management Area when he observed eight people drinking beer. Lieutenant Hahr approached and asked the subjects for identification. One of the subjects went into the woods when Lieutenant Hahr's back was turned and was spotted trying to cross the river. Lieutenant Hahr convinced him to return to the parking lot and completed issuing citations to the eight subjects for possession of alcoholic beverages in the management area. The subject who fled was also issued a notice to appear for resisting an FWC officer.

Lieutenant Dan Hahr was on patrol within Perdido Wildlife Management Area when he observed a personal watercraft (PWC) being operated on the Perdido River by two subjects without personal flotation devices. When Lieutenant Hahr stopped the vessel, he observed a pill bottle in the console of the PWC. The bottle contained a small amount of cannabis. The owner of the PWC stated the pill bottle contained Tylenol, but later changed his story and said that he did not know how it got into his PWC. Lieutenant Hahr issued a notice to appear for possession of less than 20 grams of cannabis.

While on water patrol at Big Lagoon, Officer Keith Clark stopped a boat to conduct a fisheries inspection which revealed undersize red grouper. The vessel operator was cited for the violation.

While on water patrol, Officer Keith Clark observed a commercial snapper boat west bound in the Intracoastal Waterway near Grande Lagoon. Officer Clark recognized the vessel from a previous stop that resulted in onboard violations. Upon stopping the boat, Officer Clark established the occupants were returning from a fishing trip. During the inspection, a computer check revealed an outstanding warrant on one of the three occupants for violation of probation. Another occupant could not provide photo identification and verbally provided Officer Clark with a name and date of birth. Officer Clark escorted the snapper boat to Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola where NAS security personnel arrived and stood by as Officer Clark arrested and handcuffed the individual for the outstanding warrant. When Officer Clark conducted follow-up with the second occupant to verify information obtained earlier, the individual could not recall the information provided earlier and recanted, stating he had provided false information. Officer Clark cited the second subject for providing a false name to a law enforcement

officer. Both individuals were transported to the Escambia County Jail where the warrant was served on one and the intake process completed on both.

## GADSDEN COUNTY

Officers Hank Forehand and Lane Bentley assisted investigations with a seafood inspection. The investigations section received leads that an individual had numerous violations related to retail seafood sales. Officer Forehand and Bentley conducted an inspection and found the subject to be in violation for not having invoices for saltwater products and he also possessed undersize black drum. Citations were issued for the violations. An investigation is continuing for licensing fraud.

## LEON COUNTY

Officer Chris Jones was on water patrol on Lake Talquin when he conducted a vessel stop and fisheries inspection. An inspection of the catch revealed four undersize bass. The vessel's two occupants were charged accordingly.

Lieutenant Kent Harvey received information about two American alligators being held captive in an apartment on the northwest side of Tallahassee. He and Officer Matt Bell went to the apartment and spoke with the tenants who acknowledged they did indeed have two alligators inside the residence. Consent to search was given and the alligators were retrieved. The tenants though, forgot to hide the drugs and drug paraphernalia that were laying out in plain view leading to the room where the alligators were. Leon County Sheriff's vice unit was called in and took over the narcotics investigation and charged the tenant accordingly. Officer Bell charged the tenant for illegal possession of alligators and the gators were returned to Lake Cascade.

Lieutenant Kent Harvey arrested a subject during the Memorial Day weekend for felony boating under the influence on the St. Marks River in Wakulla County. The subject had several prior arrests for driving under the influence. On July 17, 2009 a disposition was given on the case. The defendant plead to boating under the influence and received two years probation, sixty days in jail, take a boating safety course, no alcohol, random alcohol and drug screening and pay court cost and fines totaling \$3,370.00

## SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Lieutenant Dan Hahr received a phone call around 3:40 a.m. from a complainant who lives in the still hunt portion of the Blackwater Wildlife Management Area. The complainant stated that he had caught several dogs on his property and that there were more dogs running loose and chasing wildlife in the adjacent still hunt area. Lieutenant Hahr responded to the area and heard numerous dogs hunting in the area. After observing for a while, Lieutenant Hahr heard trucks begin to come to the area. Lieutenant Hahr located four dog hunters attempting to pick up their dogs from within the still hunt area. None of the hunters had attempted to stop the dogs from entering the area or attempted to stop the dogs from hunting until after sunrise. While talking to

them, he observed dogs belonging to each of the four men exit the area and get picked up by the hunters. All four subjects were issued notices to appear for hunting with dogs in the still hunt area of the management area.

## OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Matt Webb stopped a vessel in Destin Pass to conduct a fishery inspection. The inspection revealed undersize trigger fish. The vessel captain was cited for the fish violation.

Officer Ryan Nelson checked two subjects fishing from a vessel anchored near the U. S. Coast Guard Station in Destin. A fisheries check revealed the subjects were in possession of undersize and over-the-bag limit of redfish. Both subjects were cited for the violations.

Officer Matt Webb conducted a fishery inspection on a vessel in Destin Pass. Undersize amberjack and trigger fish were located during the inspection. The captain was cited for the violations.

## BAY COUNTY

Officer Mike Nobles checked a shrimper in West Bay whose net's turtle excluder device (TED) was found to be inoperable due to the opening being sewn shut. When this was pointed out, the captain said, "You got me." The net was seized and when measured found to be 530 square feet in size. A citation for the TED violation and a written warning for the oversize net were issued.

Officers Dennis Palmer and Mark Clements were on water patrol checking two shoreline fishers when they smelled the odor of cannabis. When asked about this, one fisher said he hid a small bag of cannabis in the rocks when he saw the officers approaching. The fisher retrieved the bag and was issued a citation for the violation.

While on water patrol, Officer David Brady conducted an inspection of an overloaded vessel for the required safety equipment. The vessel operator had a difficult time responding to Officer Brady's requests and was unable to produce sufficient personal flotation devices for each of his passengers. As the inspection continued, Officer Brady observed enough indicators to suspect operator impairment. Field sobriety tasks were performed and confirmed his suspicions. The subject was arrested for boating under the influence (BUI) and was booked into the Bay County Jail. Officer David Erdman assisted with the transportation of the remaining passengers and the boat.

Officer Neal Goss was summoned by investigators for some assistance at the Panama City Beach fishing pier. They had observed three suspects harvest and reduce to possession 12 king mackerel. Once the suspects exited the pier and made their way to the parking lot, they were inspected and identified. Officer Goss arrived and issued citations to the three individuals.

Officer David Erdman arrested three individuals for boating under the influence in two days. All of which were initiated due to safety inspections and life jacket concerns on vessels with small children and minors aboard.

Officer Jim Moore conducted a vessel stop to inspect safety gear for an extremely overloaded rental boat. During the course of the inspection, the operator and his passengers were unable to locate the minimum required safety gear. They were escorted back to the livery and the deficiencies were brought to the attention of the manager. Officer Moore issued citations and warnings for each of the violations as the vessel had many small children on board.

## **NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

### **UNION COUNTY**

Officer Bret Gill was conducting boating safety and fishery inspections on the Santa Fe River in Union County. While performing an inspection, the operator was found to have an active arrest warrant for failing to pay a prior fishing license citation that had been issued in Bradford County. The subject was arrested and transported to the Union County Jail.

Officer Billy Giles, K-9 Parker, and Lieutenant Kihei responded to Union Correctional Institute to assist with a search for a suspected firearm on the facility. Other items were found the night before on the property that led up to the detailed search. Officer Giles and Parker searched several buildings, common grounds and visitation areas. The search lasted approximately six hours and no additional items were found.

### **TAYLOR COUNTY**

Officers Randy McDonald and Clay Huff were conducting fisheries inspections at the mouth of the Steinhatchee River. They found two individuals in possession of 18 gallons of bay scallops in the shell. The scallops were seized and the vessel captain was issued a citation for possession of over the daily bag limit of bay scallops.

### **MADISON COUNTY**

Officer Clay Huff was patrolling western Madison County when he rounded a curve on a dirt county road and saw two vehicles parked on the side of the road and individuals walking around them. As Officer Huff approached, one of the vehicles left the area immediately. The other vehicle's tailgate was down and Officer Huff saw an alligator approximately 9 ½ feet long in the back and two subjects standing beside the vehicle. When questioned, one individual admitted to killing the alligator with a .22 magnum rifle. Officer Huff seized the rifle and the alligator. Both subjects were charged with taking of an alligator and taking wildlife from a right-of-way.

## **NORTHEAST REGION**

No report submitted.

## **SOUTHWEST REGION**

### **HERNANDO COUNTY**

Officer Scott Peterson, Lieutenant Kevin Grover, and a Hernando County Sheriff's Office marine deputy were working the blue crab closure with a jet-drive vessel, searching a previously detected line of traps in shallow water. While looking for the traps, the officers observed a well-boat that appeared to be fishing. As they approached the vessel, it was apparent the individuals onboard had a net in the water. The operator quickly began to pull in the net, as a passenger jumped in the water. An inspection revealed two nets had been tied together, making approximately 1000 square feet of seine net. The subject was charged accordingly and the net was seized as evidence.

Officer Scott Peterson, Lieutenant Kevin Grover and Hernando County Sheriff's Office Marine Deputy Snell worked a blue crab incident during the closed season involving numerous traps that had been left in the water. The investigation revealed that an individual had sold the traps to another person who had left them in the water. After interviewing the subject, he was charged with failure to remove traps during the closed season, and warned for improper markings on his traps.

### **LEE COUNTY**

Officers Adam Resnick and Jay Ewing and Lieutenant Darrin Riley were working speed enforcement in the panther zone, on Corkscrew Road. Twelve citations were issued for speed violations, with the highest recorded speed of 72 miles per hour in a marked 45 mile per hour zone. In addition, Lieutenant Riley issued a misdemeanor citation for operating a motor vehicle while driver license canceled.

Officer Brian Cazalot was returning from training in Tallahassee when he stopped to check on some ranch property near Palomino Lane. After Officer Cazalot observed that the lock on the cattle gate had been cut and removed, he and a local county deputy entered the property and observed two individuals displaying a spotlight in a canal. Officer Cazalot approached the two individuals and found them in possession of a .22 caliber magnum rifle, a spotlight, and a fishing rod equipped with a snatch hook baited with a piece of chicken. The two individuals were arrested for felony trespassing and attempting to take alligators using a gun and light. The individuals were booked into Lee County jail.

Officers Lonnie Sushil and Demian McColgin were on offshore water patrol conducting Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) fisheries inspections, when they observed a charter vessel with seven people onboard. Upon inspection, the vessel captain admitted to having ten gray snapper and four Spanish mackerel, which had been filleted. When Officer Sushil asked why the fish had been cleaned, the captain said that he had been charter fishing for two years and thought he was allowed to clean the fish on the water. Officer Sushil advised the fish had to be landed in whole condition. The captain was cited for two counts of landing fish in other than whole condition and given a court date.

## OSCEOLA COUNTY

Officer Kevin Sweat was on water patrol on Lake Hatchineha when he approached a group of fishermen fishing from boats and observed one of the anglers preparing to leave the area. Officer Sweat stopped the individual and found him in possession of 30 black crappie, which are five over the daily bag limit of 25. The individual was issued a notice to appear in court for the violation.

## POLK COUNTY

Officer Robert Adams was on patrol in the Lake Hamilton area when he observed an individual fishing from shore, north of the Lake Hamilton public boat ramp. The subject stated he had caught approximately 30 bluegills and said that he had not counted his catch. An inspection by Officer Adams revealed that the subject was in possession of 59 bluegills, which is nine fish over the daily bag limit. Officer Adams charged the subject with taking over the daily bag limit of panfish.

Officers Robert Adams and Adonious Duhart located several vehicles parked at two different gates at the Osprey Unit of the Hilochee Wildlife Management Area. The gates are not designated entry points to the management area. The officers contacted Lieutenant Lee Birge who responded to assist. After a short time, Officers Adams and Duhart observed two subjects carrying fishing tackle, emerge from an area of the management area that is closed to public access. The officers stopped the subjects and charged both with illegal entry to the management area. A short time later, Lieutenant Birge located four subjects leaving the management area on foot. Two of the subjects were carrying fishing equipment and a small cooler and were in possession of two small largemouth bass. The rules of the Osprey Unit prohibit the taking of bass. The four subjects were given warnings for illegal entry and for blocking the management area gates. The subject who had caught the bass was given a notice to appear for taking bass in the management area.

Officers Robert Adams and Adonious Duhart were on water patrol on Lake Haines when they checked a vessel occupied by three fishermen. While conducting an inspection of the fish on board, the officers found one of the subjects in possession of

94 bluegills. The subject was charged with taking over the daily bag limit of panfish. The officers made a second bag limit case on Lake Haines later that day

## **SOUTH REGION A**

### **BROWARD COUNTY**

Lieutenant Dave Bingham and Officer Jorge Pino were working Conservation Area 2A when they observed two subjects feeding alligators. Both subjects were cited for the violations and a trapper removed three nuisance alligators.

Lieutenant Dave Bingham and Officer Nathan Brock were checking boats returning from lobstering. They found one subject with an egg bearing female lobster. Officer Brian Weis and Reserve Officer Rudy Gabor found a subject with undersize red grouper on board a vessel. All subjects were cited.

### **PALM BEACH COUNTY**

Officers Jarrod Molnar and Luis Rodriguez apprehended two subjects off of Boynton Inlet for over the bag limit of king mackerel and taking one undersize sailfish. Six king mackerel and the sailfish were seized. Notices to appear were issued to the two individuals.

## **SOUTH REGION B**

### **MONROE COUNTY**

On the weekend preceding the mini sport lobster season, Miami investigators conducted a pre-mini lobster season detail. Lieutenant Pat Reynolds and Investigator II Bill Stiffler watched an unnumbered vessel approach the Card Sound boat ramp at 8:00 pm on Saturday. The vessel's occupants kept a bucket with lobster antennas visible above the rim on the floor of the boat. An inspection of the vessel revealed seven lobsters including one with a hole in the carapace. Lobsters were measured and all were undersize, a spear was found in a cooler in the boat that had lobster flesh on the point and it matched the hole in the carapace. Three undersize snapper were also found in the bucket. Neither the operator nor passenger had any identification or fishing licenses. Several citations were issued for out of season, undersize and speared lobster, no fishing license and warnings for undersize snapper. On Sunday a speared undersize red grouper case was made at the same boat ramp.

### **MONROE COUNTY**

Pilots George Waldeck and Tim Riorden located several subjects during a late night search and rescue mission. The subjects, one adult and one juvenile, were on a personal watercraft (PWC) on the ocean side of Seven Mile Bridge when their PWC

broke down around 6:00 a.m. Initially they called for help on a cell phone, but their cell phone lost service. FWC received information on the missing pair around 11:00 pm. and responded with helicopter and water units. At 2:30 a.m., the victims were located near a key bayside of the Seven Mile Bridge. The victims signaled aircraft with a t-shirt tied to the end of a pole spear. Officers Anders Bergstrom and Jill Izsak recovered the subjects and transported them to shore.