

FWC DIVISION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT FIELD OPERATIONS

**WEEKLY REPORT
January 15 – 21, 2010**

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 received a call for assistance from an Escambia County deputy. The deputy stopped four individuals attempting to take deer with a gun and light in the Walnut Hill area. Lieutenant Lambert arrived, seized two guns, and issued notice to appear citations for the violation.

Officers John Bell and Kenneth Manning recovered a stolen pontoon boat floating in Pensacola Bay. The boat along with its unlocated trailer was stolen from a residence in Pensacola. Escambia County Sheriff's Office is investigating the theft.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Lieutenant Dan Hahr was on patrol in the Jay area when he observed a truck stop ahead of him in the middle of the road. When Lieutenant Hahr reached the truck, the driver asked about some problems in the area. Lieutenant Hahr noticed the distinct odor of burning cannabis and soon discovered that the subject was holding a marijuana joint. Two tins containing 4 more joints were located in the truck. The subject was issued a notice to appear for possession of not more than 20 grams of cannabis and possession of drug paraphernalia.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officers Van Barrow and Danny Arnette received a complaint from a landowner about individuals trespassing with a firearm and shooting two deer. The officers tracked the suspects' path to a home adjacent to the landowner's property. They located two individuals at the residence who later admitted to shooting the two deer on the landowner's property. The deer meat from the shooting was seized. The officers plan to meet with the State Attorney's Office and file felony trespassing charges.

Officer Danny Arnette assisted the Investigations section with an arrest of an individual purchasing deer meat. After receiving information on an individual wanting to buy deer meat, Investigations arranged to meet the buyer at a specific location and time. Upon completion of the sales transaction, Officer Arnette stopped the vehicle and issued a citation to the individual for illegally buying deer meat.

Officers David Brady and Neal Goss were on land patrol in Point Washington [Wildlife Management Area](#) when they observed a tree stand near an approved food plot. Further investigation [revealed](#) corn [scattered](#) on the ground near the [stand](#). They discovered a ground blind in the same area with corn near it. Officer Brady worked the site for several days [and](#) observed a [vehicle](#) come into the area [near the bait](#). [Three individuals](#) exited the vehicle and walked toward the [baited area](#). Officer Brady [approached the area almost an hour later and](#) observed one subject in a [climbing tree](#)

stand and the other two subjects in the ground blind. Officer Brady issued two citations for hunting over bait in a wildlife management area.

JACKSON COUNTY

Officers Kathy Jackson and Lane Kinney arrested a Samson, Alabama resident for illegally taking freshwater fish by shocking on Waddell Mill Pond in Jackson County. Surveillance revealed the subject and his juvenile son were illegally shocking catfish and other non-game fish from the large lake. Their vessel was set up for shocking commercially and was not properly registered. The officers cited the individual for this as well.

BAY COUNTY

Officer Joe Chambers was watching fishers under the Tyndall Bridge when he observed one subject discard several beer cans into the surrounding shrubs. A citation was issued for littering.

Lieutenant Jay Chesser was patrolling the Econfina Wildlife Management Area when he found a hunter retrieving his kill. The hunter's harvest was found to be a legal buck and a short horned buck that "got in the way". A citation was issued and the illegal deer seized and donated.

Officer Joe Chambers received information on a subject in the Choctawhatchee Wildlife Management Area who was a felon and possibly hunting with a firearm. As Officer Chambers conducted surveillance, a truck drove by and a bottle was thrown out of the window. The truck was stopped and a littering citation was issued. About thirty minutes after dark, two subjects exited the woods carrying firearms and neither was wearing the required hunter orange. When asked about the felony conviction, the hunter indicated he was a felon and that it happened a long time ago. His weapon was seized and charges will be forthcoming for possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. Citations for no hunter's orange and no management permits were also issued.

Officers Mike Nobles and Kenny Atkins received a complaint concerning a computer posting by a subject who claimed to have just killed a doe deer. When the subject was located and asked if he had any doe tags, he replied "I know what this is about". He admitted that he had shot the doe at a feeder behind his residence using a .22 caliber magnum rifle. Citations for killing the doe and illegal method of take were issued and the doe seized.

Officer Kathy Jackson initiated an investigation into a local resident near the Econfina Wildlife Management Area for hunter harassment. The complainant was a still hunter in a tree stand inside the hunt area deer hunting. Officer Jackson filed charges with the State Attorney's Office for the violation.

Officer Nick Price obtained an arrest warrant for a convicted felon who was hunting with a shotgun in the Econfina Wildlife Management Area in December. The subject was booked into the Washington County Jail.

Officer Joe Chambers was conducting resource inspections when he found a fisher to be in possession of less than 20 grams of cannabis and no fishing license. Citations were issued.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Officers Lane Kinney and Larry Morris apprehended several subjects this past week for baiting, no hunter orange, no hunting license, and no wildlife management area permit in the Econfina Wildlife Management Area and the Choctawhatchee River Wildlife Management Area in Washington County.

Officer Lane Kinney apprehended a subject illegally netting sucker fish with a gill net on Holmes Creek near Cotton Landing. Officer Kinney issued the Vernon resident a citation for illegal possession of the net on fresh water. He seized the net for evidence and forfeiture.

GULF COUNTY

Lieutenant Raz Castaneda, Officers Scott Hoffman and Arnie McMillion worked a special detail on St. Joe Corporation property commonly referred to as M and K Ranch. The officers utilized the decoy deer after receiving numerous complaints concerning road hunting in the area. At approximately 5:00 p.m., a pickup truck stopped on the roadway and seconds later the officers heard a gunshot. A second shot was fired and before the officers could get into their vehicle a third shot was fired. The officers stopped the vehicle and as they approached one of the subjects confessed to them that he was the shooter. He further stated that they had caught him "red handed". The officers explained to the subjects about the dangers involved in shooting across someone else's property. The suspect admitted to shooting at the deer three times using a .243 caliber rifle. He stated, "I knew something wasn't right after the third shot". He was issued a citation for hunting from the right of way.

From January 8 to January 14, Gulf County Officers Hal Webb, Tony Lee, Karl Hellett, Arnie McMillion, and Scott Hoffman, along with Leon County Officer Bucky Higman, Wakulla County Lieutenant Jeff Schremser, Captain Ken Parramore and Lieutenant Raz Castaneda assisted with rescuing cold stressed marine sea turtles on St. Joe Bay. Battling sub-freezing temperatures and high winds for several days, the officers helped recover over 1200 sea turtles (most of them endangered species) from the frigid waters of the bay. Utilizing airboats the officers recovered the cold-shocked turtles from areas not accessible by boat or by kayakers. This work was extremely valuable as shown by the high number of turtles rescued.

HOLMES/WASHINGTON COUNTIES

Officer Kathy Jackson stopped an Alabama resident illegally operating an ATV inside the Choctawhatchee River Wildlife Management Area. She also assisted with two details targeting night hunting in Washington and Holmes Counties, focusing on the Northwest Florida Water Management District's properties including Econfina and the Carter Tract.

Officers Jim Brooks and Lane Kinney responded to numerous complaints of hunter trespass, illegal hunting, road hunting, and dumping of carcasses on both private and public roadways in Holmes and Washington Counties. Most noteworthy is Officer Brooks' work and dedication to the Williams Road area in his focus on complaints concerning shots fired and trespass hunting.

Lieutenant Hampton Yates observed a Miami resident exiting a Leonia hunting club after dark. The vehicle drove past him carelessly and at a high rate of speed. He stopped the subject and found his driver license had multiple suspensions and failure to pay a summons. The subject was cited for driving while license suspended and careless driving.

Near Ponce de Leon High School around midnight, Lieutenant Yates observed a truck driving without headlights on. With assistance from the Holmes County Sheriff's Office, the investigation revealed five teenage boys smoking marijuana inside the ball field locker room. Four of the five fled on foot but returned in the freezing weather. The HCSO is continuing the investigation into the possession of cannabis, possession of prescription pills, burglary, and trespass on school grounds with firearms (two hunting long guns were in the vehicle). Several unhappy parents responded to pick up the juveniles.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

BAKER COUNTY

Officer Darrin Whitaker received a complaint of two subjects trespassing with an ATV on a local hunting club. Officer Scott Wiggins responded and met with a club member who stated that the subjects entered the club property to retrieve hunting dogs. When the club member encountered the two subjects, they fled the area. The subjects were later located and identified. Both subjects were issued warnings for trespassing per the club member's request. One of the subjects was cited for no hunting license.

BRADFORD COUNTY

Officer Ricky Justus was patrolling a local hunting club when he discovered four bags of household garbage dumped off a county road. Officer Justus inspected the contents of the bags and found mail correspondence that led him to a nearby residence. During an

interview, the resident initially denied dumping the garbage. Officer Justus escorted the individual to the dump site and after inspecting the contents admitted it was his. The subject stated that he paid some kids to take his trash off, but refused to disclose their names. Officer Justus cited the subject with violation of the Florida litter law.

CLAY COUNTY

Office Ricky Justus was working a baited site in a local wildlife management area. He observed a subject enter the area and retrieve a ladder stand. When the subject departed, Officer Justus followed him and discovered that he had accessed the management area through a hole in a boundary fence. The subject was not armed and denied hunting over the bait. Officer Justus cited the subject with illegal entry and issued two warnings for failure to remove hunting equipment daily and for not wearing hunter orange.

Lieutenant Gary Knowles was patrolling Camp Blanding Wildlife Management Area when he found fresh tire tracks on a closed road. Lieutenant Knowles followed the tracks and located a vehicle parked along the shore of a small pond. A vessel occupied by two subjects was observed operating on the pond. A vessel inspection revealed violations for insufficient wearable personal flotation devices and display of unauthorized registration numbers. The vessel operator was cited for operating a vehicle on a closed area. Two written warnings were issued for the boating safety violations.

DUVAL COUNTY

Investigator Kevin Larson concluded an investigation that had been developed by the FWC Internet Crimes Unit. The investigation involved the selling of reptiles of concern via the Internet. It was determined that the two individuals targeted were not reptile dealers, but were attempting to sell their unpermitted pets. When faced with their options, the individuals decided they would turn the reptiles, one Nile monitor and one albino Burmese Python, over to FWC using the amnesty program designed to get unpermitted reptiles of concern into the hands of permitted owners.

Officer Traci Stebbins and Officer Chris Holleman conducted a fisheries inspection on an individual leaving the Egan's Creek Bridge. The subject had a cooler with several black drum inside. He stated he knew that the fish had to be 14 inches due to the fact that he was issued a warning and given a copy of the regulations a few weeks ago. The cooler contained a 12 inch black drum. He stated that he only had his shoe to measure it with. Officer Stebbins issued a citation for possession of undersize black drum.

NORTHEAST REGION

OSCEOLA COUNTY

Officers Kurt Arendas and Caitlyn Staskiewicz organized and participated in a search and rescue mission for an elderly Florida Trail hiker. The man did not report in to his family as scheduled as he hiked across Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area. The officers coordinated with units from Polk County and the Osceola County Sheriff's Offices. Utilizing ATVs and a helicopter, they searched a vast section of the management area. The missing hiker was found safe at a campsite along the Kissimmee River after he called his family to check in.

ST JOHNS COUNTY

Officers Jeff Hickman and Ben Boots responded to a report of hunters shooting indiscriminately at birds, including protected wading birds in Robinson Creek off of the Intracoastal Waterway in the St. Augustine area. The complainant reported similar activity about a week earlier and the officers had been following leads from that call. The officers arrived on scene and completed a resource inspection of four people in a skiff that matched the description of the vessel described by the complainant. It was determined that one man had been actively shooting birds but only possessed one hooded merganser duck in the boat. The subject admitted to shooting ducks in the creek earlier that morning and on a previous trip. He was asked by the officers if he had shot at any birds other than ducks and he said "No." After the inspection, the officers went into Robinson Creek toward a small marsh island and within minutes found five white ibis, a blue heron, and a laughing gull freshly killed and full of birdshot. They tracked down the primary hunter at his home later that day and confronted him with the dead birds. He confessed to shooting the protected species along with the duck. Officer Hickman then issued him a notice to appear for the misdemeanor violations of taking a species of special concern (ibis and heron) and taking a species (seagull) in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer Darryl Thornhill received a call from an informant about two white males pulling their jon boat out of the Tomoka River at the State Road 40 Bridge in Ormond Beach. The informant advised that the two men had over 50 snook in their boat. Officer Thornhill arrived on scene within 30 minutes and met with Officer Jeff Beal, who had arrived shortly before Thornhill and secured the suspects. The officers found the men in possession of 74 snook, 55 of which were outside the legal slot limit, and a seven-foot gaff with which they harvested the stunned fish. Some of the snook were freshly dead and still bleeding from the gaff punctures. The two local men, 18 and 20 years old, admitted to harvesting the snook with the gaff and knowingly violating the size and bag limits and seasonal closure. Lieutenant Ben Eason and Officers Hickman and Boots arrived to assist Officers Thornhill and Beal with documenting and collecting the evidence. The two men were booked into the Volusia County Jail and charged with

harvesting snook during the closed season, harvesting snook by illegal method, harvesting snook in violation of the slot limit, and exceeding the daily bag limit of snook. The unlawfully harvested fish were donated to the St. Augustine Alligator Farm.

Following complaints received, Officers Clay McDonough and Don Meurlot patrolled for people attempting to take lethargic snook from area waters. The officers located a vessel with two adult males in possession of five live snook. Criminal notices to appear were issued for the illegal possession of snook. The fish were photographed and released.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

While on patrol, Officer Jason Cooke observed three individuals trespassing in a construction zone. After Officer Adam Resnick arrived to assist, the individuals were apprehended and found to be in possession of various tools including screwdrivers, wrenches and hand saws. After their Miranda Warnings were read, the individuals admitted to stealing equipment and supplies from the site. A search of the subjects' vehicle revealed an air pump and a construction light. The subjects were arrested for felony trespassing and petty theft and booked into the Charlotte County Jail. The following day, Officer Cooke returned to the construction site to meet with the foreman and was informed that some of the equipment had been vandalized and was not operational. Officer Cooke filed additional charges with the Charlotte County State Attorney's Office for a total of 15 felony and six misdemeanor charges.

DESOTO COUNTY

Officers Matt Prowant, Jordan Hilliard and Clint Thompson responded to a vessel accident in 2009 and through the course of the investigation, it was discovered that the subject had a suspended driver's license and had operated his vehicle at the boat ramp prior to the vessel accident. The operator was later recognized by Officer Hilliard and was observed driving his vehicle with knowledge that he did not have a valid driver's license and was arrested for the violation. In court, the subject pled guilty to two counts of driving on a suspended license, one count of driving under the influence and one count of boating under the influence. As a result of previous charges and these charges, the subject received 11 months and 29 days in jail, a \$2,000 fine, two years (non-concurrent/consecutive years) of probation and the permanent suspension of his driver's license.

HERNANDO COUNTY

Officers Scott Peterson and Damon Pulaski conducted a detail targeting blue crab trap marking requirements. The officers pulled hundreds of traps and numerous trap violations were found. In one instance, 10 percent of the traps belonging to a local

fisherman failed to have biodegradable panels, as well as several other violations. Charges are being direct filed and several warnings were issued.

While working a hog hunt in Chassahowitzka Wildlife Management Area, Lieutenant Kevin Grover observed a subject exiting the woods with a firearm. A criminal history check revealed the subject was a convicted felon. Charges will be direct filed.

Officer Joshua Allison was dispatched to a call of several subjects trespassing on posted county property and keeping snook. Officer Allison arrived and found three subjects who had climbed a locked gate and fence. They were not found in possession of any snook; however they did not possess valid saltwater fishing licenses. Citations were issued to all three subjects.

Lieutenant Pam Hoback and officers from Pasco and Hernando County responded to water management property to search for four missing teenagers. After searching for several hours, the subjects were found cold and wet, but safe. One of the subjects, a diabetic, suffered from low blood sugar.

HIGHLANDS COUNTY

Lieutenant Jackie Meggison and Officer Kevin Sweat assisted Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks with an investigation regarding a Sebring resident, who was claiming residency in Montana for the purpose of obtaining a resident hunting license. The investigation resulted in the individual being charged with six counts of affirm to false statement to purchase resident hunting licenses and one count of unlawful possession of game animal. The individual was adjudicated guilty on all charges and was assessed a \$3,427.00 fine. In addition, the subject's privileges to hunt, fish and trap in Montana and other compact states were suspended for 24 months. One 5x4 mule deer shoulder mount, one set of 3x3 mule deer antlers on a wooden plaque and eleven pounds of deer meat were seized as evidence.

LEE COUNTY

Officers Stephen Rice and K-9 Officer Matt Griffith were on land patrol near Old Burnt Store Road in Cape Coral when they observed two men fishing near the base of a bridge that crossed a spreader canal. A fisheries inspection revealed two snook fillets in a cooler. Citations were issued for possession of snook out of season and failure to possess a shoreline fishing license.

Investigator Larry Jernstedt and Officer Brian Cazalot were in the Crew Wildlife Management Area when they observed a vehicle leaving the area. After information obtained from the vehicle tag indicated that the registered owner's driver's license was suspended, the officers followed the vehicle through a construction zone and then conducted a traffic stop for speeding. After verifying the driver was the registered owner and did not have a valid driver's license, Officer Cazalot obtained permission to search the vehicle. The search revealed crack cocaine and a pipe customarily used to smoke

the substance. While Officer Cazalot was handcuffing the individual, he began to resist the officer. After Officer Cazalot warned the subject that he would be tasered if he continued resisting, the subject complied with commands and was arrested. The individual was transported to Lee County Jail. While on the way, he expressed his gratitude to the officers for not tasering him. The individual was booked for driving with a suspended license, possession of cocaine, and possession of drug paraphernalia.

Officer Gregory Bryson was on water patrol in Estero Bay when he observed a vessel operating at high rate of speed in a marked 25 mile-per-hour speed zone. Officer Bryson stopped the vessel, which had two occupants onboard. While talking with the operator, Officer Bryson detected signs of impairment. The individuals were taken to Punta Rassa Boat Ramp, where the operator was asked to perform field sobriety tasks. During the field sobriety task performance phase, the individual stated, "I know I'm drunk so let's go ahead and get to jail." The individual was arrested for boating under the influence (BUI) and transported Lee County jail, where he refused to submit to a breath test.

SOUTH REGION A

BROWARD COUNTY

Officer Brock responded to John U. Lloyd State Park where a vessel had washed ashore. Officer Brock located the vessel's occupants and found that they had experienced engine problems. As a result, the vessel had washed ashore. Officer Brock assisted the occupants with positioning the vessel so another vessel could pull it from the beach.

Officer Carpenter was on airboat patrol west of Holiday Park when another airboat operator attempted to come alongside, made a turn that was too sharp, and capsized the vessel. The four occupants jumped from the overturning airboat to avoid being trapped underneath it. Fortunately, no injuries were sustained but the operator was cited for careless operation.

Officers Matt Hopp and Tyler Harrison were on patrol near the Miami Canal levee and the Holeyland Water Management Area when they encountered three subjects target practicing with an assortment of high powered rifles and shotguns. The levee was littered with empty shell casings and trash from the subjects. The officers issued citations and seized a shotgun that did not have a serial number.

Officer Robert Kuester responded to a vessel fire offshore of Pompano Beach. Two subjects had been fishing when their vessel caught fire and burned to the waterline. A nearby vessel rescued the two subjects. Officer Kuester conducted the investigation.

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Officer Mike Davis and Lieutenant Eddie Brown were on patrol on Lake Okeechobee when they inspected a commercial vessel running trot lines. Officer Davis remembered the subject from a previous stop where he had warned the subject to mark his lines with the requisite identifiers. The lines were inspected again and the officers discovered that the subject had not complied with the warning. A citation was issued for the violation.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Lieutenants Steve Arcuri and Steve Sheridan assisted with the release of over 100 sea turtles at the Loggerhead Marine Life Center in Juno Beach. The turtles were rescued from the Mosquito Lagoon in Brevard County during the most recent cold front. The turtles were transferred to Sea World in Orlando for rehabilitation and then trucked to Juno Beach for release. There were twelve adult green turtles up to 400 pounds and approximately 90 juvenile turtles, most of which were green sea turtles along with a few loggerheads.

Officer Sulin Schafer was on water patrol when she observed several subjects fishing at the Lake Harbor structure on the rim canal side of Lake Okeechobee. The subjects were checked and one was found in possession of five undersize black crappie. A citation was issued for the violation.

COPS

Officer Alan Webb and Lieutenant Atwell Pride participated in Palm Beach County's Leadership and Youth Leadership Environmental Day held at Grassy Waters Preserve. Adults who had an interest in environmental issues attended the first day while approximately forty high school students attended the following day. The students were selected to attend based upon achievements made in the field of environmental issues. The two groups were shown a static display of FWC patrol vehicles, vessels, and gear. They enjoyed hearing stories about the different types of cases that FWC officers have made through the years.

SOUTH REGION B

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

A U.S. Customs and Border Protection officer called to report a vessel at the Dinner Key boat ramp that had fifteen undersize mutton snapper on board. Officer Mayberg responded to the location and issued citations for the violation.

MONROE COUNTY

Officers Janette Fernandez, Jason Rafter, Lewis Hoover, Bret Swensson, Robert Dube and Lieutenant Elizabeth Riesz escorted participants from Key Largo to Key West during the Wounded Warrior Memorial Bike Ride. Bicyclists and wounded veterans rode to commemorate U.S. Service Members wounded in action.

COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Thomas Van Trees and Investigations conducted nighttime panther zone speed enforcement resulting in eight citations issued to vehicle operators exceeding 20 miles per hour over the posted speed limit of 45 miles per hour.

Officers assisted U.S. Coast Guard and local law enforcement marine and aviation units in searching for a missing boater in Gulf waters between Fort Myers and Key West. The 67-year-old Marco Island resident was discovered in fair condition several days later by a Panamanian freighter, 75 miles offshore. The U.S. Coast Guard brought the man to shore.

Due to recent cold weather conditions, officers and Collier County deputies increased manatee patrols on Collier County coastal waters, focusing in Port of the Islands where an estimated 65% of the Collier County manatee population exists. To date, four manatee carcasses were located - each displayed signs of cold stress.