

FWC

Division of Law Enforcement Weekly Report



August 17, 2018 through August 23, 2018

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.

Patrol, Protect, Preserve

NORTHWEST REGION

CASES

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officer Allgood made several saltwater fisheries cases over the past week. He issued notice to appear citations for undersized triggerfish and spotted sea trout. He also cited a different subject for possession of red snapper during a closed season.

Officers Allgood and Long were on a vessel stop when they noticed a vessel dock at a residence. Officer Allgood knew who lived at the residence and did not recognize the vessel or individuals as the owner of the property. As they approached the vessel, two of the occupants got out of the vessel and quickly walked away. After confirming with the residents that the individuals were trespassing, Officer Allgood exited the vessel and confronted the individuals. One of the individuals was compliant but the other refused to identify himself and walked away. Officer Allgood gave loud verbal commands to stop and the subject refused. The officer then attempted to place the subject in handcuffs. The subject resisted and both Officer Allgood and the subject ended up on the ground. Officer Allgood gained control of the subject after a short struggle. Officer Allgood arrested the subject and charged him with resisting an officer with violence, possession of a concealed weapon, armed trespass, possession of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia. Officer Long arrested the second subject on an active warrant out of Arkansas.

As Officer Allgood was driving to a commercial fisheries offload inspection, he noticed a vehicle swerving out of its lane and off the road. He stopped the vehicle and spoke to the driver. The driver showed several signs of impairment and was asked to perform

several field sobriety exercises. He did poorly on the exercises and was arrested for DUI. A breath sample was given, and the results were .175 blood alcohol content. The driver was booked into the Escambia County Jail.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Officer Specialist (SPC) Anderson and Major Duval were working an alligator hunting detail. They were at Abercrombie Landing when they heard two gunshots from downriver. About 20 minutes later, a vessel with three people on board came to the ramp and dropped two of the occupants off before heading back downriver. A short time later, the vessel returned, the operator got out and one of the previous occupants got back in the boat and went back downriver while the first operator backed the trailer into the water. Once the boat was loaded, SPC Anderson and Major Duval contacted the three individuals. An inspection of their vessel revealed several raccoons that had been killed illegally. SPC Anderson issued one misdemeanor citation for illegally killing the raccoons and several infractions and warnings for other resource and boating violations.

GULF COUNTY

During the opening weekend for bay scallops, Officer M. Webb noticed a pontoon boat with five people onboard returning from fishing. An inspection revealed they were in possession of over 12 gallons of whole scallops. The captain out of Georgia was issued a citation. Over two gallons of whole scallops was returned to the water alive. The remaining ten was returned to the captain.

Officer M. Webb saw two subjects returning from fishing. During a resource inspection, it was discovered that they were in possession of over four gallons of whole scallops and nearly one pint of meat (three bag limits). The captain was issued a citation. Two gallons of whole scallops was returned to the water alive. The rest were returned to the captain.

Officer Gerber was on vessel patrol in St. Joe Bay and saw a vessel traveling towards the marina. There were three people on board. A resource inspection was conducted, and four pints of scallop meat were located in an ice chest. The owner of the vessel was issued a citation for over the bag limit of bay scallops.

Officer H. Webb was on vessel patrol in St. Joe Bay conducting marine fisheries inspections when he stopped a recreational vessel returning from harvesting bay scallops. The vessel was occupied by two individuals, and upon inspection of their harvest, Officer Webb discovered that they had in their possession five pints of shucked scallop meat inside their cooler, three pints over their legal daily bag limit. The captain of the vessel took responsibility for the violation, and Officer Webb cited him for over the daily bag limit of bay scallops.

Officer H. Webb was on vessel patrol in St. Joe Bay conducting marine fisheries inspections when he stopped a recreational vessel returning from harvesting bay

scallops. The vessel was occupied by two individuals, and upon inspection of their harvest, Officer Webb discovered that they had in their possession six gallons of whole bay scallops inside their two dive bags, two gallons over their legal daily bag limit. The captain of the vessel took responsibility for the violation, and Officer Webb cited him for over the daily bag limit of bay scallops.

HOLMES COUNTY

Officers Greene and Yates were on patrol when they encountered a group fishing from the shore on Choctawhatchee River. A check revealed two subjects fishing without a license and one subject who had two felony warrants. Appropriate citations were issued, and the subject was arrested for the warrants.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officers Corbin and Wilkenson were on vessel patrol conducting boating safety inspections in the Destin Harbor. The officers stopped a 24-foot pontoon vessel with nine passengers onboard. As the officers approached the pontoon, they were unable to see the vessel's registration numbers, only the decal. The officers determined the pontoon was rented. After establishing communication with the operator and passengers, Officer Corbin detected a strong odor of alcohol coming from the vessel. Several passengers on board the vessel appeared to have been consuming alcohol. The operator had a red Solo cup in a cup holder next to him at the helm and the officers saw the individual drink from the cup. The red Solo cup contained what appeared to be alcohol. The operator had a strong odor of an unknown alcoholic beverage coming from his mouth and his speech was slurred. During the safety inspection, the operator displayed indicators of impairment. Field sobriety tasks (FSTs) were performed on the operator. Based on the indicators on the FSTs, the operator was arrested for BUI. The operator provided a breath sample resulting in 0.096 blood alcohol content and 0.095 blood alcohol content. The operator was transported to the Okaloosa County Jail where the intake process was completed.

Officers Corbin, Matechik, and Mullins were on vessel patrol in the Destin Pass and Destin Harbor conducting boating safety and resource inspections. The officers saw a 22-foot pontoon vessel in violation of the idle speed / no wake zone. The officers stopped the vessel to address the violation. The operator was instructed to place his vessel in neutral. The operator looked in the direction of the officers and was slow to respond. Again, he was instructed to place his vessel in neutral and he pulled back on the throttle but did not place the vessel in neutral. The operator explained he was late returning the rental pontoon back to the livery. During the safety inspection and addressing the violation, the operator displayed indicators of impairment. Field sobriety tasks (FSTs) were performed on the operator. Based on the indicators on the FSTs, the operator was arrested for BUI. The operator provided a breath sample resulting in 0.184 blood alcohol content and 0.181 blood alcohol content. The operator was transported to the Okaloosa County Jail where the intake process was completed.

Officer Corbin was on vessel patrol in the Destin Pass conducting boating safety and resource inspections. The officer saw a vessel with two individuals onboard returning from the Gulf of Mexico with fishing equipment displayed. Officer Corbin stopped the vessel to conduct a boating safety and resource inspection. The fisheries inspection revealed a harvested red snapper during closed season and an undersized gray triggerfish. Throughout the fisheries inspection and boating safety inspection, the operator displayed signs of impairment. Field sobriety tasks (FSTs) were performed on the operator. Based on the indicators on the FSTs, the operator was arrested for BUI. The operator refused to provide a breath sample. The operator was transported to the Okaloosa County Jail where the intake process was completed. The operator was cited and issued a notice to appear citation for harvesting red snapper during closed season and for possession of an undersized gray triggerfish.

Officers Corbin, Matechik, and Mullins were on vessel patrol in the Destin Pass and Destin Harbor conducting boating safety and resource inspections. The officers saw a local charter vessel returning from the Gulf of Mexico into the Destin Pass with six people onboard and fishing equipment displayed. The fisheries inspection revealed two undersized greater amberjack. The deckhand accepted responsibility and was issued a notice to appear citation.

Officers Corbin and Mullins were on vessel patrol in the Destin Pass and Destin Harbor conducting boating safety and resource inspections. The officers saw a vessel returning from the Gulf of Mexico with fishing equipment displayed. The fisheries inspection revealed two undersized greater amberjack. The operator was cited and issued a notice to appear citation.

Officer Corbin was on vessel patrol in the Destin Pass conducting boating safety and resource inspections. The officer saw a vessel returning from the Gulf of Mexico with fishing equipment displayed. The fisheries inspection revealed an undersized gray triggerfish. The operator was cited and issued a notice to appear citation.

Officers Wilkenson and Lugg were on vessel patrol near Crab Island. The officers saw a pontoon boat traveling on plane in violation of the idle speed / no wake zone. A vessel stop was conducted to address the violation. During the identification process of the operator, the Tallahassee Regional Communication Center confirmed there was an active out of county warrant for violation of probation. The operator was arrested and transported to the Okaloosa County Jail.

Officer Corbin investigated two derelict sailboats in Boggy Bayou and Joe's Bayou. One sailboat was in deteriorating condition, completely gutted and the other was sunk. Both owners were located and issued notice to appear citations.

Lieutenants Golloher and Tolbert were flying when they noticed vacant land being used for solid waste disposal. A subsequent site inspection by Environmental Investigator Hughes revealed solid waste to include household trash, waste tires, plastics, bedding, and other solid waste. A second pile onsite consisted primarily of white goods. Both

piles were approximately 80' x 15' x 5' in size. The source of the waste was from a subject who owned forty-one rental properties, and after tenants moved out he would remove the waste and take it to another one of his properties and burn it. During the site inspection, the property owner advised that he would have the solid waste disposed of properly. The following week, FWC aviation units saw the solid waste being burned. Investigator Hughes obtained two arrest affidavits on two individuals for collecting solid waste and burning it.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Wilkenson was on vessel patrol in Santa Rosa Sound near the Navarre Beach Boat Ramp. The officer saw a PWC being operated in Santa Rosa Sound by an individual that appeared to be under the age of 14 years old with a passenger onboard. A vessel stop was conducted to determine the age of the operator. Officer Wilkenson saw the PWC kill-switch attached to the operator and he was the only person whose hands were on the handle/steering column. The officer determined the operator was 12 years old. The minimum age to operate a PWC is 14 years old. Further, the operator did not have a boater safety card. The PWC was a private vessel and owned by the parents of the operator. It was determined the mother allowed her underage son to operate the PWC. The parent was issued a notice to appear citation.

Officer Hutchinson was patrolling in the Escambia River Wildlife Management Area when he saw a vessel from his position at Keyser Landing. As he watched, the two men worked bush hooks and a trotline, and while doing so, they baited the lines with live bream. When they returned to the ramp, Officer Hutchison contacted them and they admitted to using bream for bait on the lines. Both men were cited for using bream for bait.

WAKULLA COUNTY

Officers Swindell, Hughes and Korade were on water patrol near St. Marks when they saw a vessel returning from fishing offshore. They stopped the vessel and the operator stated they had caught a lot of fish and pointed out the compartment where they were located. An inspection of the compartment revealed a total of 50 black sea bass, 46 of which were undersized. The officers also located two undersized gag grouper and one undersized red grouper in the compartment. Officer Hughes also located a bucket near the back of the vessel which contained a shark that had been filleted to be used as bait. All the undersized fish and the shark were seized, and the occupants of the vessel were issued citations for the violations.

Officer Carr was dispatched to Wakulla Springs State Park regarding a vehicle burglary at the Cherokee Sink parking lot. The complainant was the state park ranger, who noticed a window was smashed on an SUV parked in the lot and glass was still falling on the ground beside the vehicle. Officer Carr contacted the only two people still at the park. He investigated the vehicle burglary and documented the information provided by the victims in an incident report.

Officer Hofheinz saw a vessel traveling towards Wakulla Beach from the east. Officer Hofheinz contacted the operator and upon inspection of the commercially registered vessel, he saw four nets that were wet in the rear of the vessel. Three of the nets had a stretch mesh of 2 ¾ inches, and one had a stretch mesh of three inches. Officers Morales and Carr arrived on scene to assist. Upon further inspection, one of the nets was not legibly marked on both ends and one had two different numbers on both ends. The nets were measured by Officers Carr and Morales for square footage. All the nets measured greater than the allowable limit. The operator was issued citations accordingly and the nets were seized as evidence.

Officer Morales was patrolling the Gulf of Mexico in the waters south of Carrabelle with Officer Carr. As they approached an anchored vessel to conduct a resource inspection, they were advised by the person on board that he had a diver in the water. Neither officer saw a dive flag displayed on the vessel. While Officer Carr maneuvered the patrol vessel alongside the subject's vessel, Officer Morales asked the subject if he had any fish on board. The subject advised the officers that he had two gag grouper on board. The officers continued with their resource inspection, which concluded with Officer Morales issuing one subject a notice to appear citation for harvesting a gag grouper under the minimum size limit of 24 inches and Officer Carr issuing a warning for not having a dive flag displayed. The undersized gag grouper was seized as evidence.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Officer Gore completed an investigation into possible deer depredation permit violations after discovering a buck deer that had the head cut off in a field that was under a deer depredation permit. Upon completion of the investigation, charges were filed for three counts of violation of permit for removing antlers from field and two counts of removing deer from the field without tagging, as well as numerous written warnings for additional permit violations.

FEDERAL WATERS

The NW FINCAT with Officers Cushing, Land and Matechik on board worked across the Gulf of Mexico from Pensacola to the Dry Tortugas. The officers traveled more than 1900 miles conducting 114 hours of fisheries patrol. They made ports of call in Panama City, St. Petersburg, Key West and the Dry Tortugas. While underway, they focused on several marine protected areas including the Madison Swanson, Steamboat Lumps, Middle Grounds and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. In addition to those areas, the crew spent several days prior to and during lobster mini season patrolling the Lower Keys. During the patrols, many violations were found for the following: closed season gray triggerfish, failure to allow inspection, use of reef fish as bait, closed season red snapper (South Atlantic), undersized spiny lobster, speared spiny lobster, undersized hogfish, undersized mangrove snapper, speared permit, and bottom fishing in a closed area (Madison & Swanson Marine Protected Area). Additionally, officers

located several violations related to boating safety and dive flag laws. The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Officers Homan and Parrish attended the annual Back to School Bash at Live Oak Church. Approximately 300 people were in attendance and informational materials were distributed, questions were answered, and the officers had a small alligator that all enjoyed holding and having pictures taken.

Numerous FWC officers from the area participated in the Active Shooter Training at Vernon and Chipley High School conducted by Washington County Sheriff's Office. It was a collaborative effort by WCSO, CSO, FHP, CPD, EMS, and local fire departments, Training Department from Chipola College and Washington/Holmes Safety Institute, and FWC. It involved training for law enforcement as well as teachers in response to an active shooter situation.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

ALACHUA COUNTY

Officer Reith saw several people on a vessel attempting to hunt alligators on Orange Lake. When he stopped to check permits and required boating safety gear, he noticed the individuals were hunting out of their assigned area. Officer Reith issued a citation for hunting out of area.

Officers Troiano and Stanley were monitoring alligator hunting on Watermelon Pond when they found a vehicle hidden in the trees off CR337. The two officers found foot tracks and dog tracks heading into the wildlife management area. After a long walk, they located individuals who had caught a hog and were trying to get it back to their vehicle. Officers Troiano and Stanley issued several citations for various violations to three subjects to include: hunting during closed season in area after legal hours, and illegal entry/driving in closed area of wildlife management area.

Officer Drew saw an individual attempting to take alligators on Lochloosa Lake. After several hours of waiting, the subjects headed to the boat ramp. Officer Drew checked for permits and boating safety gear and found the individuals to be hunting out of their assigned area. Officer Drew issued citations for hunting out of assigned area.

CLAY/BRADFORD COUNTIES

Officers J. Barber, E. Barber and Lieutenant Haney were patrolling Jennings State Forest after hours and saw two ATVs operating illegally. The operators attempted to flee from the officers but were apprehended. Both operators were arrested and booked into jail for fleeing/eluding law enforcement. One 19-year old subject was carrying an illegally concealed firearm and was charged accordingly. Both subjects were also cited for numerous state forest violations.

Officers J. Barber, E. Barber and Lieutenant Haney were patrolling Jennings State Forest and saw a vehicle with a male and female occupant illegally in the forest late at night. A search of the vehicle revealed alcohol and numerous drug paraphernalia. The female subject had an active warrant for drug charges. She was arrested and booked into the Clay County Jail.

Officer Davenport responded to a boating accident on the Santa Fe River. The operator of a jet ski hit a wake which threw the operator from the vessel. The vessel continued to run until it hit the nearby bank where it came to rest in the trees. The operator suffered no injuries and the boat had minor damage. The operator was given associated paperwork to file about the boating accident.

Officer Ransom investigated a boating accident on the Suwannee River. The operator of a bass boat hit a partially floating submerged log that extended across the river which caused complete loss of vessel control. The vessel continued to move until it hit a nearby boat tied to the bank where it came to rest. The operator and passenger suffered no injuries.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Officer Johnston was on patrol in Ichetucknee Springs State Park when he received a call in reference to a state park contract employee stealing money from the park's general store. The complainant stated \$200.00 was supposedly stolen. Officer Johnston contacted the employee who denied taking any money. However, the suspect inadvertently provided Officer Johnston with information that would later prove to be incriminating. Officer Johnston waited for the employee to leave work and once again made contact as she was walking to her vehicle with her boyfriend. Both subjects granted Officer Johnston consent to conduct a pat down search. During the search, Officer Johnston located \$200.00 in the boyfriend's possession. The female suspect admitted to stealing the money from her employer and gave it to her boyfriend for safekeeping. The boyfriend denied having any knowledge the money was stolen. Charges were filed on the female subject for petit theft.

HAMILTON COUNTY

Officers Johnston and Yates recently concluded an investigation originating from last hunting season. The officers received a trespass call which led them to a group of dog hunters at a camp, one of which had a recently washed truck bed. Another subject was cutting up deer meat with no sex evidence. Additionally, the subjects would not

cooperate and tell the officers where the sex evidence could be located. The officers were able to retrieve DNA evidence from the bed of the truck and a blood sample from the seized deer meat. The officers continued to canvas the surrounding area and found a freshly dumped antlerless deer carcass. The DNA evidence was taken to the University of Florida veterinary forensics lab for analysis. The results were recently returned showing the DNA evidence taken from the suspect's vehicle and seized deer meat was from a female deer. Charges are being direct filed on two subjects for criminal conspiracy and take/possession of an antlerless deer.

CITRUS COUNTY

Lieutenant Jones, Investigator Thomason and Officer Vanness responded to an alligator attack on Lake Hernando within Citrus County. A homeless female was swimming at the county park when she was attacked by a 5 to 6-foot alligator as she was exiting the water. The alligator grabbed her left arm and attempted to drag her back into the lake. The victim was able to fight off the alligator and contacted 911 for medical assistance. FWC's SNAP was contacted and the local alligator trapper was able to locate and catch a 6' 8" alligator that was in the same location where the victim was attacked. The incident is being investigated by the FWC's Investigations Section.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

LAFAYETTE COUNTY

Officer Davenport participated in the law portion of a hunter education class in Mayo. There were several students with parents in attendance for the class. Numerous related questions were answered on the topics of conservation enforcement, public safety and various hunting related questions.

ALACHUA COUNTY

Officers Troiano and Stanley worked the annual buck scoring event at Alachua Farm and Lumber. A total of 14 deer heads were scored and many questions were answered throughout the day.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officers Harris and B. Miller, along with Lieutenant Yetter, were on Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) patrol about 12 miles east of St. Augustine Inlet during the second weekend on the federal red snapper open season on the Atlantic coast. During one fisheries inspection, the team discovered two redfish on the boat. The officers issued

federal citations to the two men who each admitted to harvesting the redfish in violation of the redfish closure in federal waters.

During the second weekend of the red snapper opening in Atlantic waters, Officers Lawrence and Thomas uncovered multiple fisheries and permit violations while conducting several boardings in federal and state waters. All unlawful catch was returned to the water. The violations included:

- Federal waters – A charter captain who was found to be in possession of an expired Florida vessel (charter) license, an expired federal (charter) snapper/grouper permit and failed to register his vessel commercially. Citations were issued.
- State waters – A recreational subject who harvested two undersized black sea bass and two undersized red snapper from state waters. A citation was issued.
- State waters – Possession of undersized cobia. A citation was issued.
- State waters – Exceeding the vermilion snapper bag limit (by two fish). A warning was issued.
- State waters – Possession of two undersized black sea bass. A warning was issued.

PUTNAM COUNTY

Officer Cheshire was checking boat ramps on Lake Crescent when he ran a vehicle tag at Leonard's Landing. The registered owner had Statewide Alligator Harvest Permits for the Lake Crescent Alligator Management Unit. Upon further investigation, Officer Cheshire found previous resource violations and Facebook pictures of the registered owner with alligators taken from the same location without CITES tags attached. Officer Cheshire surveilled the area until the subject returned to the boat ramp late at night. There were two people onboard and an approximately 8-foot alligator in plain view on the deck of the boat. Officer Cheshire contacted the subject and conducted a resource inspection. The CITES tag attached to the alligator appeared to be secured, but with a light pull, the tag came undone. A misdemeanor citation was issued to the registered owner for failure to secure and lock a CITES tag. A written warning was issued to the passenger for no alligator agent license.

MARION COUNTY

While on water patrol on the Withlacoochee River west of Highway 41 near Dunnellon, Officer Seiler saw a vessel with two subjects alligator hunting. One was holding a long fishing rod, and the other a bang stick. Officer Seiler contacted the vessel for a resource inspection. Upon contact, the operator advised they were getting ready to hunt the river. Officer Seiler asked the subject if he had a permit and he produced an alligator permit which was for Alligator Management Unit #809 in Citrus County. The opening paragraph of this permit states that this management unit specifically does not include Lake Rousseau west of the US Highway 41 bridge. Officer Seiler found that the subject had a

Lake Rousseau permit for a later phase of the hunt. Officer Seiler issued the subject a notice to appear for hunting alligator outside his permitted area.

Marion County Solid Waste Code Enforcement requested assistance regarding a popular dumping area in North Marion County. After a three-month investigation, Environmental Investigator Miller and Officer Rice interviewed a female suspect regarding illegal dumping of waste tires. An arrest warrant was obtained for 4 felony counts of commercial dumping and 1 misdemeanor count for storing waste tires without a permit.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

HIGHLANDS COUNTY

While on water patrol, Officer Smith and Officer Resendez checked a vessel returning to the Veterans Beach Boat Ramp on Lake Jackson in Highlands County. Officer Resendez conducted a safety inspection of the vessel and determined the vessel operator showed clues of impairment. Officer Resendez performed Seated Battery of Standard Field Sobriety Tasks (SFST's) and determined the vessel operator's normal faculties were impaired. Officer Resendez placed the vessel operator under arrest for boating under the influence (BUI) and transported him to Highlands County Jail to be processed. The vessel operator refused to provide a sample of his breath and was issued a Uniform Boating Citation (UBC) for BUI and one UBC for refusal to submit to blood/breath/urine test.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Winton, Officer Hazelwood and Lieutenant Spoede concluded an investigation into the destruction of six burrowing owl burrows in Cape Coral and arrested the suspect for the violation. The suspect was booked into the Lee County Jail and was cited for destruction of a threatened species nest and eggs, a third-degree felony.

MANATEE COUNTY

Officer Miller was on land patrol in north Manatee County off U.S. 41 near the Hillsborough County line. While on patrol, he noticed a group of women that were trespassing on Southwest Florida Water Management District property. He stopped them to address the violation and see what they were doing on the property. During the investigation, he discovered that the women had been removing many plants from the area. Officer Miller cited the women criminally for removing plants from management district property without permits. They will have to appear in court for their violations.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While on water patrol at the Fort DeSoto boat ramp, Officer Bibler conducted a resource inspection of a vessel that had been towed in by a commercial tow company from twenty miles offshore due to engine trouble. During his inspection, the occupants said they only had mackerel and grunts and was shown a cooler where the fish were located. While inspecting the cooler, Officer Bibler found a black bag underneath the other fish that contained eight undersized red grouper. The captain of the vessel was cited for possession of undersized red grouper.

POLK COUNTY

Officer DeWeese and Officer Karr received a complaint about a possible gill net on the Peace River in Polk County. As the officers attempted to locate the gill net, they saw two individuals throwing cast nets. A resource inspection revealed the individuals were in possession of bream. Taking of bream by cast net is illegal. The officers also conducted a vessel safety inspection and found their vessel to have multiple violations. The individuals were issued infractions for the vessel safety violations and were each issued a notice to appear for taking of game fish by illegal method. The bream was seized and photographed for evidence.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

LEE COUNTY

Officer Winton was on patrol watching for illegal palmetto berry picking in Estero Bay Preserve State Park when he saw three subjects picking palmetto berries on a nearby section of private land. Officer Winton conducted surveillance on the subjects and approached them when they returned to their vehicle. Upon interviewing the subjects, it was determined that they did not have permission to be on the property and did not have a permit to harvest the palmetto berries. The subjects were issued notices to appear for harvesting palmetto berries without permission/permit, warnings for littering on private property and trespass warnings for the involved property.

PINELLAS COUNTY

Officer Specialist Pulaski, Officer Specialist Ferguson, Officer Canamero, and Lieutenant Parisoe set up a targeted BUI enforcement detail on the Anclote River. The officers conducted multiple stops of vessels which were in violation of the idle speed zone. During one stop, Officer Specialist Pulaski noticed indicators of impairment from the vessel operator. The operator performed poorly on the Seated Battery of Standard Field Sobriety Tasks (SFST's) and was subsequently arrested for BUI. Officer Specialist Pulaski transported the individual to the Pinellas County Jail, where he provided a breath sample that measured .122 and .128.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Rogers, Moss, Schroer, Trawinski and Brevik conducted patrol on the JEA offshore patrol vessel. The officers stopped multiple vessels and conducted multiple federal fisheries inspections. They issued four federal citations involving fish filets with no skin attached in transit back from the Bahamas and charter/head boats with no federal dolphin/wahoo snapper/grouper permits and undersized fish. The officers also wrote multiple citations and warnings for possession of undersized lobster and vessels without required safety gear.

Investigator Warne received information regarding five Jeeps in the J.W. Corbett WMA during the annual pre-hunt closure. Investigator Warne, Officer Kirkland and Officer Hudson arrived on scene in J.W. Corbett and found where the Jeeps had gone through a wooded area to get around the locked gate. When the Jeeps tried to leave the closed area, the officers located them and issued the drivers a misdemeanor citation for being in a closed area.

While on patrol of the Jupiter waterways, Officer Norbrothen saw a vessel operating at night without navigation lights and operating in violation of the posted slow speed zone. The officer stopped the vessel to address the issues. During the stop, the officer saw several indicators of impairment from the operator. The operator was arrested for BUI.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Howell and Environmental Investigator Booth responded to a complaint regarding the illegal possession of a skunk. Upon arrival, they learned the individual was previously licensed for the skunk but allowed the license to expire. One citation was issued, and information was provided on how to renew her license.

BROWARD COUNTY

Captive Wildlife Investigator Corteguera responded to a complaint regarding the illegal possession of a raccoon. He contacted and educated the individual alleged to be in possession of the raccoon on the relevant regulations. The individual stated she turned the raccoon over to a licensed facility and did not have it anymore. A couple weeks later he performed an unannounced inspection at her residence, where he found her in possession of a raccoon. One misdemeanor citation and eight warnings were issued. The raccoon was placed at a licensed facility.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Corteguera recently responded to a complaint regarding the illegal possession of an alligator gar in an aquarium. He verified the illegal possession and learned it was purchased from a pet store. He contacted the pet store and educated them on the regulations pertaining to possessing and selling alligator gar, and learned they were being purchased from an out of state supplier. The pet store removed all alligator gar from their inventory and will not be ordering more. The fish was seized, and warnings were issued regarding the illegal possession and sale.

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Captive Wildlife Investigator Toby responded to a complaint regarding the illegal possession of a raccoon. Upon arrival, he found one individual illegally in possession of a raccoon. He learned the individual applied for a license for the animal, but the request was denied, as it was obtained illegally from the wild. After the license was denied and the regulations provided, the subject knowingly kept the animal illegally. One misdemeanor citation and two warnings were issued for the violations. The raccoon was turned over to a licensed facility.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Lieutenant Fillip, Lieutenant Russo, as well as Officers Brodbeck, Godward, and Morrow responded to a boat fire at Jupiter's Loggerhead Marina. The FWC assisted Palm Beach Fire Rescue with putting out the fire by providing the use of an agency patrol vessel. They also helped in deploying booms to keep diesel fuel and debris from spilling into the Intracoastal Waterway. Two vessels were destroyed, and two other vessels were damaged. Palm Beach Fire Rescue is investigating the cause of the fire.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Working on a tip from Investigators Rodriguez and Martin, Officer Dunn and McKinley stopped a commercial vessel actively bully netting just north of Biscayne Channel. Upon conducting a resource inspection, the vessel was found to have two spiny lobster on board. The vessel was actively fishing inside of the Biscayne Bay-Card Sound Spiny Lobster Sanctuary. The vessel captain admitted to being inside the sanctuary and claimed responsibility. He was cited for lobstering inside the sanctuary.

Officers Cosculluela and Sample were on water patrol when they saw a boat returning inshore while flying a diver down flag with no persons in the water. They initiated a stop on the vessel to conduct a boating safety and resource inspection. Upon inspection, the operator did not have enough life jackets for the number of people on board and produced an expired fire extinguisher. The subject was also found to be in possession of 4 undersized spiny lobster. The subject was cited accordingly.

MONROE COUNTY

While on night patrol, Investigator Williams saw four individuals lobstering the rocks at Vaca Cut with flashlights. After watching the individuals fail to capture any lobster, one of the subjects was heard saying "bring me the spear." The same subject was seen

spearing one lobster while the other subjects held flashlights for the man with the spear. Investigator Williams contacted the four subjects, placing the man in handcuffs that had speared the lobster. Investigator Williams directed the other three men to retrieve their IDs from their vehicles. While writing a citation for the speared lobster, Officers Rubenstein and Conrad arrived on scene and began to gather the IDs when they discovered one of the subjects had left the area without providing his identification. The subject that speared the lobster was written a notice to appear and released. One of the other men was able to give information as where the subject that had left was staying and the officers began searching the area en route to the subject's motel. The subject was located several miles from the incident location and was placed in handcuffs. A computer check revealed the subject had a warrant for failure to pay child support. The subject was booked into the Key West Jail for the warrant and resisting arrest without violence.

Officers Kleis and Arbogast were concluding panther zone speed enforcement at the entrance to Collier Seminole State Park. Officer Kleis saw a vehicle nearly collide with a guard rail. The vehicle continued driving erratically, nearly colliding with the guard rail multiple times and crossing over the center line multiple times. Officer Kleis conducted a stop of the vehicle to address the driving pattern. Upon approaching the driver, he suspected the driver was driving under the influence. The driver consented to field sobriety exercises. Officer Kleis administered the fields sobriety exercises, which confirmed the driver was impaired. The driver was placed under arrest for Driving Under the Influence (DUI) and was transported to the Collier County Jail. The driver refused to provide a breath sample.

Officers McKay and Swensson responded to a multiple vessel accident in Key Largo. A 28-foot center console was coming up a canal when the owner turned it around to dock at his residence. While doing so, he struck three other docked vessels, causing approximately \$5,000 worth of damage. The boat owner had just purchased the new boat and was not familiar with operating a single engine vessel as he just traded in a triple engine boat. No alcohol use was detected and there were no injuries. The operator was cited for careless operation.

Investigator Mattson was with Officer Rafter on water patrol around Big Basin. They saw a subject in the water with no dive flag harvesting lobster. They saw him diving near artificial habitat and directed him to swim back to his boat. Once at the boat they asked if he had caught anything. Although he said he did not catch anything, Investigator Mattson saw two lobsters in the bottom of the boat. Both lobsters were undersized. The subject was cited for 2 counts of undersized lobster and one count of diving on artificial habitat.

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Arbogast, Kleis, Oldsen, Tidwell, Thurkettle, and McVaney teamed up with the Collier County Sheriff's Office marine unit (CCSO) and United States Coast Guard (USCG) to execute the targeted action plan of "Operation Unstoppable." This was a joint

operation coordinated by FWC focusing on recreational vessels longer than 26 feet in length. Enforcement efforts concentrated on detecting state and federal fisheries violations, marine sanitation device (MSD) violations, vessel safety equipment violations, and boating under the influence (BUI). The patrol vessels conducted over 35 vessel inspections and interacted with numerous boaters. The effectiveness of the operation resulted in numerous boating safety citations and warnings issued by the participating agencies. Criminal charges involved a boating under the influence (BUI) arrest and a notice to appear for failure to land mahi in whole condition. The length of the largest vessel that was inspected during the operation was 71 feet long. Overall, this detail successfully demonstrated to the public that there is no boat that is too big or too small to be exempt from regulations.

Officers Arbogast and Stearns were conducting water patrol, traveling south along the coastline. The officers saw a vessel in the distance traveling north in the opposite direction. As the vessel came closer, the officers saw the operator had changed direction. The vessel was turning in circles, with the engine on, moving just above idle speed. The officers saw one male and one female occupant onboard. The male operator had moved from controlling the vessel to the bow and sat down with the female passenger. There was no longer an operator controlling the vessel. Officer Stearns and Arbogast initiated a vessel stop to inquire about the safety of the individuals, and to conduct a vessel safety inspection. During the stop, the officers noticed several common indicators of impairment. The inspection also revealed that the vessel was missing most of the required safety gear. There were several large alcoholic beverage containers onboard the vessel. Sobriety Tests were given and failed by the vessel operator. Officer Stearns placed the operator under arrest for boating under the influence and transported him to the Naples Jail Center.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE:

MONROE COUNTY

Officers Kleis and Arbogast were dispatched to a bear complaint. The caller stated that there was a bear trapped under a mobile home. The officers, along with a Collier County sheriff deputy arrived on scene to find a large crowd gathered outside the home. The deputy assisted with crowd control while the FWC officers cleared an area on one side of the home allowing the bear to escape from underneath.

Officer Hettel responded to a call of an osprey being shot with a pellet gun at Truman Annex in Key West. A witness claimed he saw a staff member from the museum shooting the pellet gun at an osprey that was perched on the ship's mast. After 5 shots were heard, the bird was struck and spiraled to the ground, landing on the pier. With assistance from Key West PD, Officer Hettel contacted the subject, who after being read Miranda, admitted to shooting at the bird to get it off the ship's mast. The osprey was taken to the Marathon Veterinary Hospital for surgery by the Key West Wildlife Center. The subject was issued a misdemeanor citation and will have to appear in court.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS:

MONROE COUNTY

Officers Arbogast and Kleis were conducting speed enforcement in one of Collier County's panther zones located near the entrance to Collier Seminole State Park. The officers stopped multiple vehicles for speed. All drivers stopped were educated on the importance of watching their speed while driving through areas with high levels of wildlife. The officers issued 4 citations and multiple warnings. The highest recorded speed of the night was 80 MPH in a 45 MPH zone.

A 15-gallon barrel washed up on the beach at John Pennekamp State Park. It was full of unknown liquids and in a very popular swimming area in the park. After marking it with caution tape, Officer McKay contacted the State Warning Point and then the local DEP regulatory office. Their staff responded immediately, tested the contents (water-based product), and removed the container and contents for proper disposal.