

**Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission  
Division of Law Enforcement Weekly Report**



*Patrol, Protect, Preserve*

**April 19, 2019 through April 25, 2019**

*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**

**CASES**

**ESCAMBIA COUNTY**

Officers Long and Allgood were on vessel patrol and conducted a resource and safety inspection on a recreational vessel with three occupants on board. During the inspection, six gray triggerfish were discovered. Current Florida law prohibits possession of more than one gray triggerfish per person. Additionally, one of the triggerfish was found to be shorter than the required minimum of 15 inches. The captain of the vessel was cited for possession of over the daily bag limit and undersized triggerfish.

**FRANKLIN COUNTY**

Officers Travis, Sauls, Kossey, Hughes, and McLeod were targeting illegal net fishing activities near St. George Island. Around midnight, Officers Travis and Sauls saw a boat working a large net on the Gulf side of the island. They stopped three subjects and determined they were pompano fishing with an illegal monofilament entangling net. All three subjects were arrested and transported to the Franklin County Jail. The net and fish were seized and entered into evidence.

Officers Swindell and Pestka were patrolling Eastpoint when they saw an oyster vessel returning from Cat Point. They stopped the boat to conduct a resource inspection. After inspecting the oysters, they determined the operator was in possession of undersized

oysters. The subject was cited, and the undersized oysters were returned to the water alive.

Officer Swindell was patrolling the Bob Sikes Cut area when he stopped a vessel returning from fishing. Officer Swindell located seven undersized rock bass in a fish box. The fish were seized, and the subject was cited.

Officer Hughes was checking recreational fishing activity on the Eastpoint Fishing Pier. He contacted a group of subjects and checked their licenses and fish. In a cooler, Officer Hughes located two undersized spotted sea trout and one undersized flounder. One of the subjects admitted to catching and keeping the fish. He was cited, and the fish seized as evidence.

Officer Travis was checking boats returning from fishing in the Carrabelle River. He stopped a boat to conduct a resource inspection. The subjects showed Officer Travis their catch and stated that was all they had onboard. During his inspection, he noticed fresh pry marks on one of the hatches leading into the boat's bilge. Officer Travis removed the hatch and found fish filets hidden in the bilge. The subjects then admitted to catching three gag grouper and two red snapper and fileting the fish. The filets were seized, and the subjects cited.

Officers Kossey and Dubose were patrolling the Apalachicola Wildlife Management Area near the Ochlockonee River. They located a couple of trucks and trailers at Revels Landing and waited on them to return. When the subjects returned, the officers conducted a resource inspection. In one boat, they found several flathead catfish and in the other boat, they found fish shocking equipment. The subjects admitted to shocking the catfish. The officers also found drugs and paraphernalia in one of the boats. Two subjects were arrested, and one received a citation. The fish and drugs were seized as evidence.

## LEON COUNTY

Officer Pekerol received a complaint regarding possible illegal fishing. The complaint stated that three individuals with fishing equipment purchased 30 goldfish to possibly use for bait. Officer Pekerol searched the local boat ramps and found a vehicle, a vessel, and three individuals that matched the description in the complaint at Reeves Landing on Lake Miccosukee. When the vessel came back to the ramp, Officer Pekerol conducted a resource inspection. The occupants denied possessing or using any goldfish for bait. Upon further inspection, a bait bucket was located containing one goldfish. One of the occupants admitted to fishing with them and then dumping them out before they came back to the ramp. He was cited for using goldfish for bait.

## SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Ramos was on water patrol in Santa Rosa Sound when he saw a recreational vessel returning from offshore. A boating safety and resource inspection was

performed. During the inspection, Officer Ramos located three greater amberjack that the subjects harvested on their trip. The subjects were issued citations for taking and possessing greater amberjack during the closed season.

While on water patrol in East Bay, Officer Ramos saw a man harvesting oysters. A resource inspection was performed, and the man possessed 78 undersized oysters, which was 55% of his catch. The law only allows for 5% of oysters harvested to be less than three inches. The man was issued a notice to appear in court along with several warnings pertaining to the taking of oysters.

#### WAKULLA COUNTY

Officer Carr was dispatched to Wakulla Springs State Park regarding a possible stolen vehicle. Upon arrival, he spoke with a park ranger who confirmed that a white Ford Bronco had been removed from a fenced area in the park. Officer Carr contacted the Tallahassee Regional Communications Center to enter the vehicle in the criminal justice database as stolen. He turned the ongoing case over to the local investigator for a follow up investigation. The next day, Officer Korade was dispatched to an abandoned vehicle located by the Wakulla County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) in the general vicinity of the stolen vehicle. He confirmed that the vehicle located was the stolen Bronco from the park. The WCSO Crime Scene Unit processed the stolen vehicle before it was released back to the assistant park manager.

Officer Hofheinz received information and a photo from an investigator of a potential violation. When he located the subject identified in the complaint, he was questioned regarding the picture and information provided. The subject confessed to the violation and admitted that he was riding in the management area when he shot the illegal deer with a Marlin 30-30. At the end of the investigation, the subject was issued the appropriate citation. Officer Schulz assisted with the case.

#### WALTON COUNTY

Officer Tison saw a vehicle parked along Bruce Creek and saw three subject's bass fishing at different locations along the creek. A fishery inspection revealed one of the subjects had caught nine bass over his daily bag limit and two of the subjects were in possession of illegal size bass. In addition to the fish violations, two of the subjects did not have a freshwater fishing license. The subjects were cited for over the daily bag limit, size limit and license violations.

#### COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

#### LEON COUNTY

Officer Brookes participated in an outreach event at Holy Comforter Episcopal School in Tallahassee. He brought a 3-foot alligator as part of the outreach attended by 50

children and 6 adults. During the one-hour event, they discussed the alligator, living in bear country, and boating safety.

## **NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

### **CASES**

#### **BRADFORD COUNTY**

Lieutenant Douglas and Officer Fanelli located a dump site in Bradford County consisting of 21 waste tires that had been cut off the rim, one spilled five-gallon bucket of roofing tar, and four spilled five-gallon buckets of solid color stain. Officer Fanelli went to a local metal recycling facility, where he identified a suspect recycling a large amount of metal rims. The suspect later admitted to dumping the waste tires and was cited for littering more than 500 pounds and dumping waste tires.

#### **MADISON COUNTY**

Officer Vazquez discovered an active feeder and cracked corn within 30 yards of a hunting blind. On the last weekend of the season, Officer Vazquez saw a subject exiting the hunting blind and checking for track sign under the feeder. Further investigation revealed that the subject was turkey hunting, and a citation was issued for attempting to take turkey within 100 yards of bait.

Earlier in the turkey season, Officer Vazquez discovered a blind with bait within 100 yards. On the last day of turkey season, Officer Vazquez returned to the site to discover an individual hunting in the blind with a turkey call and a crossbow. The subject admitted to placing the bait for attracting turkeys and hunting for turkeys. The subject was issued a notice to appear for attempting to take turkeys within 100 yards of bait.

#### **LAFAYETTE COUNTY**

Officer Davenport heard a shot near an area where he had earlier discovered a blind with bait only 40 yards away. When Officer Davenport arrived at the location, he discovered a harvested jake turkey, a firearm and a subject in the blind. Further investigation revealed that the subject had taken the turkey over bait. The charge for attempting to take turkey over bait will be direct filed with the state attorney's office.

#### **SUWANNEE COUNTY**

Officer Boone discovered a box blind with cracked corn approximately 30 yards away. Directly in front of the box were two turkey decoys placed in the baited area. Officer Boone saw two individuals enter the blind and began calling for turkeys. It was found that one subject was hunting and admitted to hunting turkeys. The subject was issued a citation for attempting to take turkey within 100 yards of bait.

## DIXIE COUNTY

Officer Davenport noticed several ATVs trespassing on private property along the Suwannee River. Upon stopping the individuals, one of the operators was in possession of a knife with fresh blood and deer hair on it. Further investigation lead Officer Davenport to the residence of these individuals where a fresh deer carcass, frozen deer meat and several guns were found. The appropriate charges will be filed with the state attorney's office.

## COLUMBIA COUNTY

Officer Specialist Johnston was working in response to complaints at posted/fenced DEP property known as Kirby Pit in southern Columbia County when he saw two subjects fishing. Both subjects were detained in handcuffs for officer safety with one spontaneously stating he tossed a 9mm pistol when he noticed Officer Johnston approaching. The pistol was recovered on the ground nearby. Officer Johnston heard multiple shotgun blasts coming from within the DEP's property. With the two subjects detained, Officer Johnston saw two additional adult males recklessly discharging a shotgun at random objects. K9 Officer Gill was called for assistance. Officer Gill made contact and detained the subjects. K9 Friar was deployed in the area where the subjects were shooting and located a black bird (grackle) that had been killed by one of the subjects. Officer Gill found an additional three subjects, also trespassing and fishing within the DEP property. Citations were issued, and charges will be filed for the following violations: fishing without a freshwater fishing license, simple trespass, trespass while armed, and one charge for violating the provisions set forth under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (unlawful take of grackle).

## TAYLOR COUNTY

Officer Colasanti was at the Spring Warrior Boat Ramp when he inspected a vessel that had a total of 11 seatrout, six of which were undersized. Officer Colasanti seized the six undersized seatrout and issued the captain of the vessel a notice to appear.

Officers Colasanti and Albritton received information about three people catching undersized redfish at Hickory Mound Impoundment. Officers Colasanti and Albritton arrived on scene and found the subjects in possession of 10 redfish and one seatrout. Nine of the redfish were undersized with the sizes ranging from 13 inches to 17 inches, while the seatrout measured 11 inches. Officers Colasanti and Albritton issued the appropriate citations and gave each of the individuals a notice to appear.

## NORTHEAST REGION

### CASES

## PUTNAM COUNTY

Lieutenant Dickson and Officer Bernard assisted Putnam County Sheriff's Office with a search warrant involving drugs and a suspected chop shop. After completing the investigation, FWC cited the property owner of felony littering over 500 pounds and for commercial purposes.

Officer Jones was traveling on US Highway 17, when a white Pontiac swerved into his lane. The vehicle forced him onto the shoulder to avoid collision. A license check revealed that the driver was driving without a license and never had one issued. The driver was arrested for driving without a license and issued a citation for reckless driving.

## BREVARD COUNTY

Officer M. Humphrey saw two men fishing from the shoreline. Officer Humphrey approached the men and conducted a resource inspection. One of the men initially stated they had caught one fish, but further inspection revealed numerous resource violations. Violations included possession of over the bag limit of mangrove snapper, possession of six undersized mangrove snapper and possession of seven undersized sheepshead. Appropriate citations were issued.

## VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer Pelzel was checking local fishing piers for resource compliance. An adult male was checked, and his catch was inspected. He was issued a criminal notice to appear for possession of undersized mangrove snapper.

Officer Malicoat stopped a boat returning from a fishing trip in the Port Orange area. Six black drum and a sheepshead that were under the legal size limit to possess were located in the boats live well. An adult male was issued the criminal notice to appear for the black drum violation.

## ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officer Thomas encountered several fisheries violations while enforcing federal regulations offshore. During one stop, she found the vessel operator in possession of undersized cobia. The appropriate citation was issued for possession of undersized cobia. Another vessel stop found the operator in possession of one undersized gray triggerfish. The operator mistakenly followed the state regulation of 12 inches rather than the federal regulation of 14 inches. Officer Thomas used discretion and issued the operator a warning.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

## FLAGLER COUNTY

Officers Meade and Campbell assisted a nonprofit organization called 10 CAN, which is designed to honor, revive, and grow military and first responder families through outdoor recreation, education and rehabilitation. Eight youth ranging from 8 to 15 years of age, accompanied by one parent were partnered with the FWC youth hunting program which set up survival training and turkey/hog hunt for the kids and their parents. The survival training focused on finding and building shelter, identifying, harvesting and properly preparing food from the wild and safe ways to get and consume drinking water. The kids were full of questions about surviving in the wild and what plant or bug they could eat. The hunt was arranged so each family with a guide/volunteer picked a spot to set up, and hunt based off trails and reading game sign.

## SOUTHWEST REGION

### CASES

#### PASCO COUNTY

Officer Specialist Pulaski was conducting boating safety/fishery inspections at the Anclote Boat Ramp. He saw an operator lose his balance and fall as he attempted to walk to the bow of his vessel. Officer Pulaski noticed additional indicators of impairment during the boating safety inspection and administered Seated Field Sobriety Tasks to the operator. The subject performed poorly and was arrested for boating under the influence. The subject provided a sample of his breath which registered: .181/.187. Officer Pulaski transported the individual to Pasco County Jail.

### DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

#### LEE COUNTY

Officer Stapleton conducted a directed conservation patrol in a management area known to have a problem with vandalism and other hunting related issues. Officer Stapleton checked a fence line and noticed someone had cut the fence and there were fresh tire tracks in a closed portion of the management area. Officer Stapleton repaired the fence and while he was working on the last strand, he noticed a vehicle coming towards his location. Officer Stapleton watched as a vehicle with two subjects approached the fence and began destroying it with a dead tree stump. As the two subjects were breaking the strands of the fence, Officer Stapleton drove up and stopped them from doing any more damage. Another vehicle came driving down the closed roadway and Officer Stapleton stopped it as well. None of the subjects had a valid permit to be in the management area. Officer Salem, Officer Perry and Lieutenant Ruggiero also arrived to assist with the situation. The officers located another vehicle which was abandoned in a closed area and determined one of the subjects with Officer Stapleton was the owner. The officers helped the subjects get the broken-down vehicle

out of the management area and repaired the fence. Seven infractions were issued and the two subjects who damaged the fence were arrested and cited for felonies for damaging a fence to property that contains cattle.

## **SOUTH REGION A**

### **CASES**

#### **BROWARD COUNTY**

Officers Leathers, Seldomridge and Lieutenant Brock were dispatched to the 17th Street Causeway area about a call for assistance from the United States Coast Guard (USCG). The USCG personnel had a boat stopped for violating an idle speed/no wake zone and believed the operator was impaired. The officers conducted a boating under the influence (BUI) investigation, and the operator of the vessel was arrested for BUI.

#### **OKEECHOBEE COUNTY**

Officer Davis saw an airboat with no navigational lights and no airboat flag leaving Lake Okeechobee. Officer Davis contacted the operator and performed a vessel inspection. During the inspection, Officer Davis noticed the subject was swaying and slurring his words, and he had a strong odor of an alcoholic beverage. Officer Davis conducted seated field sobriety tasks and found the subject to be intoxicated. The subject was placed under arrest for suspicion of operating a boat under the influence and was transported to the county jail.

#### **PALM BEACH COUNTY**

Officer Boyd responded to two subjects who were stranded in the Corbett WMA when their vehicle broke down while driving off-road. It is illegal to operate a vehicle off-road in the Corbett WMA if not actively participating in a hunt. Officer Boyd communicated by phone with the stranded subjects and located them using GPS coordinates. Officer Boyd issued the driver a citation for operating a vehicle off-road in Corbett WMA. The subject was also issued a warning for not possessing a WMA permit.

Lieutenant Hankinson and Officer Ames were at the Boynton Beach Boat Ramp conducting boating safety inspections on four jet skis. Officer Ames saw one of the jet skis was not displaying a registration number. The owner of the jet ski was unable to provide the title or registration for the jet ski. Lieutenant Hankinson and Officer Ames noticed the HIN plate had been removed and found a secondary HIN in the engine compartment. A computer check revealed the vessel was not registered in Florida. The subject was cited for removing/altering hull identification numbers.

While conducting fisheries inspections at the Boynton Beach Boat Ramp, Officer Ames saw a vessel returning with four subjects on board. The vessel had fishing poles, empty

bait boxes and blood on board. A fisheries inspection revealed four undersized mutton snapper and two undersized greater amberjack. Two of the subjects aboard the vessel took responsibility for the illegal fish and were cited accordingly.

#### ST. LUCIE COUNTY

Officer Payne received information from Investigator Patterson that a subject driving a small pickup truck towing a vessel, was driving erratically and was possibly impaired. A traffic stop was initiated, and Officer Arnold responded to assist. Upon contact with the driver, Officer Arnold detected impairment. The subject consented to perform roadside field sobriety tasks. The subject performed poorly and was arrested for driving under the influence (DUI). After the arrest, a search of the vehicle revealed a small caliber handgun and drug paraphernalia. The subject was booked into jail and cited for DUI and possession of drug paraphernalia. The vehicle, boat, trailer and firearm were turned over to the subject's father for safe keeping.

#### COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

#### PALM BEACH COUNTY

Lieutenant Hankinson and Officers Boyd and Ames participated in the annual Palm Beach County Special Olympics Law Enforcement Torch Run. The officers ran to raise awareness and funds for the Special Olympics.

#### ST. LUCIE COUNTY

Lieutenant Rogerson participated in the annual Saint Lucie County Earth Day celebration held at the Oxbow Eco-Center. The FWC booth was stocked with brochures on multiple topics, including alligators, gopher tortoises, coyotes and bats. Boating safety and fishing regulations were also available. Lieutenant Rogerson also had several fun items to hand out, such as key floats, pens, whistles, measuring tapes and junior officer badge stickers. It was estimated that 5,500 people attended the event.

### **SOUTH REGION B**

#### CASES

#### MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Officer Despian and Officer Delgado were on water patrol near Biscayne Channel when they stopped a vessel displaying fishing equipment. A fishery inspection found one under-size yellowtail snapper and three parrotfish on board. The three parrotfish were not kept alive and had no circulating live well water. One of the parrotfish was over the legal-size limit. The harvester was identified and cited accordingly.

Officer Despian and Officer Delgado were on water patrol near Biscayne Channel. The officers conducted a resource inspection and found king mackerel and a barracuda. The king mackerel was undersized as well as the barracuda. The harvester was cited accordingly.

#### MONROE COUNTY

Officers Hoppe and Thompson were on water patrol near Whale Harbor Channel in the Upper Keys when they saw a 32-foot contender with six males on board. The officers performed a vessel safety inspection and noticed that the operator was showing signs of impairment. After conducting seated field sobriety tasks, the operator was placed under arrest for operating a vessel with normal faculties impaired. The operator later provided a breath sample of .122 and was booked in Plantation Key Jail.

Officer Piekenbrock and Officer Chesney were on water patrol in the Lower Keys and saw a vessel displaying no registration numbers traveling near Flemming Key. The vessel operator was identified, and the violations were addressed. The operator was confirmed through dispatch to have multiple warrants out of the state of Virginia. He was placed under arrest and transported to the Stock Island Jail.

#### COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Trueblood and Sutter were conducting federal fisheries patrol in the South Atlantic when they saw a vessel fishing within the Molasses Reef Sanctuary Preservation Area. The officers conducted a fisheries inspection and located fish aboard the vessel. The operator and passengers on board were informed they were fishing within a closed area. All persons were cited for fishing within a Sanctuary Preservation Area of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

Officer Arbogast and Corporal Darren from the Collier County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) Marine Unit were on water patrol around Hurricane Pass. Over 300 personal water craft were holding a rally in the area. The officers saw an operator violating the idle speed zone of Hurricane Pass and conducted a vessel stop to address the violation. During the vessel stop, the officers noticed several indicators of impairment. The operator performed poorly on seated field sobriety tests, was arrested for boating under the influence (BUI) and transported to the Collier County Sheriff's Office Marco Island Sub Station. The operator provided Corporal Darren a breath sample of .142 BAC and was transported to the Naples Jail Center.

#### COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

#### COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Curbelo, Araujo, Polly, McVaney, Thurkettle, Arbogast, and Carrol, along with members of the Collier County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) and the Marco Island Police Department worked together during a personal water craft rally. A social media post revealed a large number of PWC's were planning a "rally" type trip from Caxambas Boat Ramp, out to the dome houses, and then to Keywaydin Island. Officer Curbelo planned the detail, scheduling several officers to patrol the waters to promote boating safety and enforce boating under the influence laws. Throughout the detail several boating safety and navigational rule violations were addressed. Numerous citations and warnings were issued.

## MONROE COUNTY

Officer Dube participated in the state police memorial services with the FWC Honor Guard at the state capitol in Tallahassee. The services included a candle light service at the Capitol Courtyard to honor past and present law enforcement officers that lost their lives. The Fraternal Order of Police sponsors the Families of Fallen Officers at various events during the Memorial. The final event included a parade with the multi-agency honor guards, mounted units, K9 units and bagpipers. The Governor and First Lady along with agency heads attended the survivor portion of the flower pinning on the state wreath. The FWC Academy recruits were also in attendance at the ceremony and took part in the parade.

## SEARCH AND RESCUE

## COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Thurkettle and Polly responded to a spear fishing medical emergency involving a subject that had been shot in the eye area with a spear. The officers located the injured persons vessel approximately 4 miles offshore. The officers transported the victim to the Snook Inn dock where emergency medical services transported the victim to Lee Memorial Hospital.