

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



*Patrol, Protect, Preserve*

**September 13, 2019 through September 26, 2019**

*This report represents some events the FWC handled over the past two weeks; however, it does not include all actions taken by the Division of Law Enforcement.*

**NORTHWEST REGION**

**CASES**

**ESCAMBIA COUNTY**

Officer Specialist Clark and Officer Long found bush hooks along the side of the river while on patrol on the Perdido River in the Perdido Water Management Area. The hooks were not marked and were baited with pieces of bream. Officer Specialist Clark saw the operator of a vessel checking the same bush hooks that he had recently inspected. He contacted the operator, and confirmed that the bush hooks were his. The subject was cited for using bream as bait and given a warning for not properly labeling his bush hooks.

Officer Cushing was working enhanced patrol at Fillingim Landing in Perdido WMA. He saw four subjects after hours in the parking lot next to their vehicle. Upon contact, Officer Cushing could smell marijuana. The owner of the vehicle admitted to purchasing marijuana and retrieved two baggies (less than 20 grams) from his vehicle. The appropriate action was taken for the violation.

**FEDERAL WATERS**

Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Nelson and Raker were on patrol approximately 15 miles offshore in the Gulf of Mexico south of Franklin County aboard the offshore patrol vessel Intrepid. They stopped a recreational vessel and located gray triggerfish and red snapper out of season. Some of the triggerfish were undersized. The officers also

located gag grouper that was undersized. The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Nelson, Travis and Hartzog were on patrol approximately 65 miles offshore in the Gulf of Mexico just north of the Middle Grounds aboard the offshore patrol vessel Intrepid. They stopped a commercial vessel and conducted an inspection. Upon approach, the officers saw the captain run to the starboard side and quickly move to each of the vessel's starboard reels. The officers saw fish parts sinking in the water and both starboard reels had their lines cut at the reel. The officers boarded the vessel and located cut up reef fish on the port reels that the captain identified as red grouper. The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

#### FRANKLIN COUNTY

Officer Kossey was patrolling the Carrabelle River when he witnessed two subjects fishing. He conducted a resource inspection and found the subjects in possession of two undersized trout and one undersized red fish. The subjects were cited, and the fish were seized as evidence.

Officers L. Mcleod and Swindell were patrolling the Gulf of Mexico when they saw a boat actively engaged in fishing. They conducted a resource inspection and found the occupants were in possession of an undersized gag grouper, scamp, and banded rudder fish. The operator was cited and the fish seized.

#### GADSDEN COUNTY

Officer Hildebrand was patrolling the Chattahoochee area when he saw three individuals throwing a cast net in the Apalachicola river. A fisheries inspection revealed one of the subjects was in possession of 20 gamefish. The individual was educated and cited accordingly.

Officer Bell was conducting a resource inspection on an individual at the Aspalaga boat ramp on the Apalachicola River. The individual had been fishing and did not have a freshwater fishing license or any form of identification. A driver license and warrant check revealed that he had an active warrant out of Liberty County and his driver license was suspended. The individual was detained and transported to the Gadsden County Jail. A written warning was issued for fishing without a freshwater fishing license.

#### GULF COUNTY

Officer Gerber was on patrol at St. Joe Boat Ramp conducting resource and boating safety inspections. He saw a vessel with several individuals aboard return from scalloping on St. Joe Bay. During his resource inspection, he measured the shucked scallop meat they harvested and found them in possession of five pints of scallop meat,

one pint over the daily vessel limit. A notice to appear citation was issued to the owner of the vessel for the violation.

Officer Gerber was on patrol at White City Boat Ramp conducting resource and boating safety inspections. He saw a vessel with two individuals aboard return from fishing. During a resource inspection, he found the individuals in possession of four redfish (two were undersize) and two black drum (one was undersize). The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

Officer Specialist Webb was working marine fisheries/boating safety at Presnell's Landing. He saw a vessel operator having difficulty loading his boat on his trailer. An inspection revealed that the operator was impaired. Officer Specialist Webb placed the operator under arrest for Boating Under the Influence (BUI) and transported him to the Gulf County Jail.

Officer Gerber was patrolling the Apalachicola River when he saw three vessels tied off on Apalachicola Wildlife Management Area property. One individual was standing on the bank along with one dog and one dead wild hog. The individual stated he was with two other people and they were in the woods trying to catch their dogs. Officer Gerber waited for the two individuals to return and saw them in possession of several dogs not restrained. They stated they had been running their dogs on private property, but the dogs crossed the river into WMA property and began trailing. A notice to appear citation was issued to the two owners of the dogs for violating Wildlife Management Area regulations.

Officer Specialist Webb was working marine fisheries and boating safety at the Saint Joe City Ramp during the last week of scallop season. He saw a vessel with two subjects aboard returning from fishing. An inspection revealed they were in possession of six gallons of whole scallops. The captain was cited for the over the limit violation.

## LEON COUNTY

Officer Hildebrand passed a pickup truck with sacks stacked above the bed rails while patrolling the Apalachicola National Forest south of Lake Talquin. Suspecting that the subjects may have been picking palmetto berries in the WMA, he stopped the vehicle after a brief pursuit on Crawfordville Highway in Wakulla County. A resource inspection revealed 12 bags containing approximately 1200 pounds of palmetto berries. The driver was operating with a suspended license and the other 4 occupants were unable to produce identification. All five individuals were transported to the Wakulla County Jail.

## LIBERTY COUNTY

Officer Dubose responded to a complaint of saw palmetto berries being picked. He arrived at the location and saw approximately 6,000 pounds of harvested berries on a flatbed trailer. The land owner was contacted and had given permission to harvest the

berries. However, the individual running the harvest operation did not have the appropriate permits. The individual was educated and cited appropriately.

## OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Maltais was on water patrol near the Brooks Bridge when he saw a personal watercraft operating in a careless manner. A vessel stop was conducted, and the operator was determined to be 13 years old. Officer Maltais located the child's guardian nearby and issued a notice to appear citation for allowing a person under 14 years old to operate the personal watercraft.

Lieutenant Bartlett and Officer McVaney were on water patrol at Crab Island when they initiated a vessel stop on a personal watercraft for violation of the idle speed/no wake zone. While attempting to tie off to the vessel, the operator fled from the officers on the PWC. He was located a short time later and arrested for flee/elude by vessel. He was also issued citations for violation of the idle speed/no wake zone and no boater safety education card.

Investigative Lieutenant Bartlett and Investigator Pifer were on water patrol in the Destin Pass and stopped a vessel with three adults, two juveniles, and fishing gear on board. They conducted a saltwater fisheries and license inspection. During the inspection, seven red snapper and seven gray triggerfish were found in a storage compartment. The season for both red snapper and gray triggerfish is currently closed. The adults were issued appropriate citations.

Officers Hahr, McVaney and Roberson were on water patrol in Destin when they saw a small vessel with a male lying on the back. A vessel stop was conducted, and occupants onboard appeared to be intoxicated. The operator performed field sobriety tasks and was arrested for BUI. He refused to provide a breath sample and was booked into the Okaloosa County Jail.

Officers Hahr, Corbin, and McVaney were patrolling near Crab Island when they saw two men violate the idle speed/no wake zone on a personal watercraft. The watercraft was stopped and the operator showed signs of impairment. After field sobriety tasks were conducted, the operator was arrested for BUI and provided a breath sample of .12 Breath Alcohol Content.

Officer Brown and Lieutenant Bartlett were on water patrol in the Santa Rosa Sound when they stopped a vessel violating the slow speed/minimum wake zone. During the vessel inspection, the officers determined the operator had an extraditable warrant out of Ohio. The operator was arrested for the active warrant and turned over to the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office for transport to the county jail.

Officer Brown and Lieutenant Bartlett were on water patrol in the Santa Rosa Sound when they conducted a vessel stop on a rental pontoon vessel for violation of the slow speed/minimum wake zone. During the boating safety inspection, the officers found

there was no sound producing device or a sufficient number of life jackets for the occupants onboard. The officers went to the livery where the vessel was rented and conducted a livery inspection. A notice to appear citation for renting a vessel without having the proper boating safety equipment onboard was issued.

Officer Rockwell, along with other FWC Officers, were working a detail on Eglin Reservation targeting individuals illegally harvesting palmetto berries. While tracking a group of harvesters, Officer Rockwell located a 14-year-old juvenile male hiding under a magnolia tree. Dispatch advised the male was reported missing by Collier County Sherriff's Office on September 18, 2018. Officer Rockwell worked with Collier County Sherriff's Office to find an approved location to hold the juvenile until his legal guardian could pick him up.

## SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Roberson was on land patrol and saw three individuals fishing next to a bridge. He contacted the individuals and found one in possession of three undersized sheepshead and one undersized redfish. All undersized fish were seized, and the individual was issued a notice to appear.

Officer Roberson was on land patrol at Brown's Fish Camp on the Yellow River when he saw a fishing kayak come to the boat ramp. Officer Roberson contacted the individual and found him in possession two legal sized redfish, one over the bag limit. The appropriate citations were issued.

Santa Rosa county officers arrested two large groups of people for the unlawful take of saw palmetto berries inside the Eglin Wildlife Management Area. FWC officers arrested 11 persons and seized 14 large bags of berries. The subjects were transported to jail and interviews with some of the individuals strengthened suspicions that human-trafficking was taking place. Immigration Customs Enforcement officials were contacted to assist with the investigation.

## WALTON COUNTY

Officer Brooks conducted a fishery inspection on a vessel returning from flounder gigging on Choctawhatchee Bay. A redfish and blue crab that had been gigged were on the vessel. The subject was issued the appropriate citations for take by an illegal method.

Officer Tison was conducting surveillance on an area in Point Washington Wildlife Management Area where approximately 1500 pounds of illegally picked saw palmetto berries had been harvested and hidden near a forest road. An individual on a bicycle came up to the location of the berries, looked around, and left in the direction he came from. A short time later a pickup truck pulled into the area and backed up close to the sacks of berries. Four individuals exited the vehicle and began loading the berries into the truck. Officer Tison contacted the individuals and they fled on foot. Officer Tison was

able to apprehend the driver of the truck, who attempted to escape custody while in handcuffs. Walton County deputies arrived as backup and were able to apprehend a second suspect. The two individuals were arrested for resisting an officer without violence, and violations for the harvest of a commercially regulated plant. The driver was also cited for driving without a license.

Officers from FWC, Immigration and Customs, Department of Agriculture, and Eglin Security Forces worked a joint detail organized by FWC Officer Tison targeting the illegal harvest of saw palmetto berries on state and federally owned land. The detail resulted in the recovery of a missing child and multiple charges on four suspects. Three of the suspects were taken into custody by Immigration and Customs for deportation. One of the subjects with a criminal history had previously been deported and will face federal charges for illegally returning to the United States. Approximately 30,000 pounds of saw palmetto berries were recovered from the illegal harvest.

## **BAY COUNTY**

Officer Alsobrooks received an anonymous complaint originating from photos posted on Instagram. The photos revealed children and an adult sitting on a live alligator that had his mouth and legs taped. He was able to locate the adult subject pictured in the photo. The individual stated the alligator was given to his neighbor by a friend, who was a licensed trapping agent. The neighbor stated that he still had the alligator in his shed. Officer Alsobrooks contacted the agent and charges for illegal harvest and possession or transport of an alligator were filed. He was also issued a written warning for not completing a harvest report within 24 hours of capturing a nuisance alligator. The alligator was turned over to another licensed trapper.

## **BAY / CALHOUN / WASHINGTON COUNTIES**

Officers Gore, Hellett, Burkhead, Homan, Humphrey, Basford, Yates, Tison, and Lieutenant Allen responded to calls related to the illegal harvest and transportation of saw palmetto berries. The locations on state lands were Econfina Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and Pine Log State Forest (WMA). Approximately 2,500 pounds of the saw palmetto berries were seized, and the individuals were cited accordingly

## **NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

### **CASES**

#### **TAYLOR COUNTY**

Officers Wilcox, Albritton, Waychoff, Touchton and Investigator McMillian were working a night hunting detail in Taylor County. A truck passed their location and an occupant fired a shot at a deer that was feeding in the ditch. The officers stopped the vehicle and

found two subjects in the truck with a scoped rifle. K-9 Officer Wiggins was called out to locate the deer. Both subjects were arrested and booked into the Taylor County Jail on multiple charges.

Officer Banks received a complaint of a Facebook post showing an individual posing with a dead alligator. He was able to identify the individual and went with Officer Browning to the individual's home. They conducted an interview and the individual said the alligator was a road kill. He admitted to bringing it home and processing the alligator. Officer Banks retrieved the alligator meat from the individual and located the head and carcass of the alligator on the individual's property. The appropriate citation was issued.

#### GILCHRIST COUNTY

Officer Allen received information from a landowner that subjects were trespassing and picking palmetto berries without the landowner's consent. He responded to the location and discovered sign that indicated two subjects were walking into the woods and harvesting palmetto berries. He followed their tire marks and made contact a few miles down the road. During an interview the subjects admitted to picking palmetto berries while trespassing on private property. Charges will be direct filed with Gilchrist County State Attorney's Office for the violations.

#### DIXIE COUNTY

Officer Allen began an investigation after finding a large amount of household garbage dumped on timber land. He found several names of individuals in the garbage who lived nearby and made contact. Officer Allen conducted interviews and discovered the individuals were trespassing as they were dumping the garbage. The land owner was notified and requested trespass charges be filed on the subjects along with littering. Trespassing and misdemeanor littering charges will be direct filed with the Dixie County State Attorney's Office.

Officer Sheffield received information that an alligator was dumped at a local gas station. He arrived on scene and a witness said an alligator carcass was dumped in front of the gas pumps. Officer Sheffield noticed the carcass was missing the head and tail. The store provided a copy of video footage showing a suspect dumping the carcass. Officer Sheffield identified and interviewed the subject. Charges for illegal possession of alligator will be direct filed with the Dixie County State Attorney's Office.

Officer Sheffield and K-9 Officer Wiggins were on water patrol focusing on the illegal harvest of oysters. They saw a commercial vessel in prohibited waters and conducted a vessel stop. The resource inspection revealed several bushels of oysters on board. The subjects admitted to harvesting oysters at night in prohibited waters and were both issued a notice to appear for the violations.

#### LAFAYETTE COUNTY

Officer Boone was patrolling state land along the Suwannee River and saw several individuals harvesting palmetto berries. Upon identifying the subjects, it was determined one had an active warrant for his arrest. Officer Boone issued the individuals warnings and explained to them that collection of palmetto berries on state land is illegal. The subject with the active warrant was arrested and delivered to the Lafayette County Jail.

#### BRADFORD COUNTY

Officers J. Barber and E. Barber assisted FHP with an investigation of an ATV accident that occurred near Lawtey. A wanted felon was operating an ATV with a passenger down US 301 late at night without any lights and was struck by a vehicle. Both were severely injured and the wanted man fled the scene without rendering aid to his friend or reporting the accident. The officers and FHP troopers investigated, positively identified the operator and determined his location. After obtaining a search warrant, the officers and troopers visited the house and found the man hiding in the attic. He refused to come out and fell through the ceiling. He was then taken into custody, treated for his injuries, and booked into jail on the outstanding warrants. Additional charges relating to the ATV crash are pending.

Officers Bryan and Heath responded to a call about a subject trespassing and picking saw palmetto berries near Starke. They located the subject who did not have the proper permit to harvest berries commercially. He was cited for the violation and the berries were seized.

#### CITRUS COUNTY

Officers Hughes and Suttles were on water patrol in federal waters aboard the offshore patrol vessel NC FINCAT. They conducted a marine fisheries inspection on a 23-foot recreational fishing vessel. During the inspection the officer discovered five undersized triple tail inside the fish box. The operator of the vessel was issued the appropriate citation.

Lieutenant Jones was on patrol in the area of the Halls River Bridge in Homosassa when he saw two subjects fishing from the south side of the bridge. He watched as one of the subjects caught a fish and put the fish in a cooler underneath the bridge. The subject returned to the top of the bridge and started fishing again. A resource inspection was conducted and several illegal sized black drum and an undersized mangrove snapper were found. The subjects were issued the appropriate citations.

Officer Crane was dispatched to Citrus Memorial Hospital to investigate a boat crash that occurred between two airboat operators near Flying Eagle Wildlife Management Area. The operator at fault was issued a citation for failure to act to avoid a collision and operation of a vessel with an expired registration beyond six months.

#### COLUMBIA COUNTY

Officers Fanelli and Dasher found an active bait location in Osceola WMA. On opening morning of archery season, Officer Dasher located a hunter hunting over the bait. The hunter was cited for placing and hunting over bait in a wildlife management area.

#### BAKER COUNTY

Officer Fanelli and K9 Officer Gill worked an active bait location in Osceola WMA. On opening morning of archery season, a hunter was located and cited for hunting over bait in a WMA.

#### DUVAL COUNTY

Officer Sankey focused on the commercial blue crab fishery, pulling multiple traps and identifying commercial crabbers with trap violations. She encountered a commercial crab boat with a “V” letter displayed that matched several traps she had pulled with tag violations. During the stop she noted more than 15 traps that had no tags. The boat captain was issued a misdemeanor notice to appear for the violation.

#### DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

#### NASSAU COUNTY

The FWC Port Investigations Team executed “Operation Nassau,” working alongside the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (N.O.A.A.), the United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) targeting seafood being transported in Nassau County. The team intercepted a refrigerated semitruck hauling undersized hogfish. A follow-up inspection in Dade County, where the fish originated led to more undersized hogfish. A subsequent inspection in Sarasota County led to additional undersized hogfish. A total of 92 inspections were conducted. Other violations included missing information on invoices, unlawful purchases by restaurants, and companies selling seafood in Florida without having the required nonresident wholesale license. Appropriate citations were issued for the violations.

#### SEARCH AND RESCUE

#### CITRUS COUNTY

Officer Crane and the Citrus County Sheriff’s Office responded to the Chazzawitca River in reference to a missing kayaker. The Sheriff’s aviation unit located a kayak and landed to investigate. The pilot located the missing person and advised that the person had been injured. Officer Crane transported units to the scene to assist.

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

## SUWANNEE COUNTY

Office Boone participated in a Career Development Day at the Branford High School. Several young adults were in attendance to explore the many career opportunities the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has to offer. Officer Bonne spoke to the participants about the responsibilities and aspects of becoming a conservation law enforcement officer.

Officer Boone participated in a Hunter Safety Class in Live Oak. Several young adults were in attendance to learn about the many aspects of hunting safely in Florida. Officer Boone taught the law portion of the class, discussing regulations, compliance and other facets of being a responsible safe hunter.

## ALACHUA COUNTY

Officers Suttles and Hughes attended the "Touch a Truck" event in Gainesville Florida. The event gave area kids a chance to meet with and see some of the equipment that first responders and other professionals use daily. Officers talked with hundreds of families throughout the day and handed out regulations, stickers and showed off an FWC airboat. The event was a great way for the public to ask questions and interact with FWC officers.

## CLAY COUNTY

Lieutenant Haney visited Keystone Heights Elementary School and spoke to approximately 80 fourth grade students who have recently been studying about the Florida Everglades. He shared information about the Everglades and conservation as well as answered questions for the children.

## **NORTHEAST REGION**

### CASES

#### BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Hallsten was on vessel patrol within Port Canaveral when he conducted a fisheries inspection on a commercial fishing vessel returning from offshore. While conducting the inspection, Officer Hallsten discovered one out of season snowy grouper. One federal citation was issued.

Officer Marroquin saw a group fishing near the US 192 bridge and conducted a resource inspection. An inspection of a cooler in their truck revealed six mangrove snapper, four of which were undersized. The cooler also contained an undersized

permit. One individual admitted to catching the snapper and was issued a notice to appear. Another individual was issued a warning for the permit.

Officer Marroquin saw two individuals cast netting near the US 192 bridge. A resource inspection found the individuals in possession of two undersized snook, three undersized mangrove snapper, two undersized sheepshead, and one undersized black drum. Both individuals were issued the appropriate citations.

Officer Kearney saw two men fishing from a bridge and conducted a resource inspection. He saw several species of fish, including what appeared to be numerous undersized mangrove snapper. After counting and measuring the snapper, it was found that the men were in possession of eight undersized mangrove snapper and over the bag limit of mangrove snapper. The appropriate citations were issued for the violations.

Officer Maslo saw a man fishing from the shoreline and approached him to inspect his catch. The subject possessed eleven mangrove snapper, six over the five per person bag limit. Additionally, eight of the snapper were under the legal minimum size limit. A citation was issued for the offenses.

Lieutenant Lightsey saw a man throwing a cast net off a dock and conducted a resource inspection. A records check revealed the man's fishing license had been revoked since 2017. A notice to appear was issued for the violation of fishing on a revoked license.

## VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer Bellville stopped a vehicle in Lake George Wildlife Management Area (WMA) that was previously observed blocking a road. The vehicle had no license plate attached and the operator's driver license was suspended. The tag had been seized by FHP five days earlier when the driver was arrested for suspended license and no insurance. The driver was wearing camouflage clothing, possessed a compound bow and admitted he was deer hunting. He had no valid hunting license, WMA permit, deer permit, or archery permit. The driver was issued several citations and warnings for the hunting license and permit violations. He was also issued a traffic citation for operating a vehicle with no tag. He was booked into the Volusia County Jail for knowingly driving while his license was suspended.

Officer Pelzel was checking shoreline subjects in the Daytona Beach area. She approached two adult men who had finished fishing and were walking away with their fishing cart. An inspection of their cooler revealed a red drum outside of the legal slot size limit. The appropriate citation was issued.

## OSCEOLA COUNTY

While patrolling in the Prairie Lakes Unit inside Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area, K9 Officer Hadwin briefly saw a small light moving through the woods. After locating a vehicle parked nearby, K9 Blue was deployed and successfully tracked the subject to

his hunting stand. The subject was issued a criminal citation for hunting the management area during closed season and issued written warnings for illegal method, failure to check in, no hunting license, no archery permit, and no deer permit.

Officer Summers received a call about a suspicious vehicle parked on private property next to Bull Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) during opening day of archery season. He saw where the hunters had illegally entered the WMA and waited for them to return to their vehicle. Officer Summers contacted the three hunters as they jumped the fence on their return. The individuals received citations for illegally entering a WMA and failure to sign in.

Officer Platt responded to the Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area Check Station in reference to an individual taking a deer with a main beam under 10 inches. Officer Platt interviewed the individual and issued him the appropriate citation.

## **SEARCH AND RESCUE**

### **BREVARD COUNTY**

Officers Bohne and Luce and Captain Bowlin were dispatched to a vessel taking on water with two adults and a small child on board. The vessel had been swamped by rough seas, which shorted out the bilge pump and electrical systems. When the officers arrived on scene, they transferred the people from their sinking boat to the patrol vessel. Officer Luce remained in the disabled vessel to monitor the status while in tow. The officers safely returned the occupants and their disabled vessel to the boat ramp.

### **VOLUSIA COUNTY**

Officer Goodreau responded to the Mosquito Lagoon area to search for an adult male who had become lost in his kayak. Although a search by helicopter was unable to spot him, Officer Goodreau was able to locate him and safely return him to the boat ramp.

## **SOUTHWEST REGION**

### **CASES**

#### **LEE COUNTY**

Officers Gray and Rogers received information about a subject on a boat who was keeping redfish. When they arrived at the location, the subject had already left but the officers gathered enough information to determine the persons residence. The officers went to his residence and found him and his boat outside at the dock. An inspection of his cooler revealed three redfish. He was cited for possession of redfish during the special closure.

Officers Furbay, Self, Stanley and Winton responded to a trespassing call which found several people hunting ducks out of season. Local sheriff's deputies arrived on scene while the hunters were still shooting. After interviewing the suspects and getting statements from property managers, the subjects were issued citations for taking ducks out of season.

Officer Hardgrove was checking people fishing from shore and encountered numerous individuals keeping illegal fish. Three subjects were cited for criminal violations which included: possession of undersized redfish, possession of redfish during an emergency closure, possession of undersized mutton snapper, possession of Spanish mackerel that were not in whole condition and harvesting live shells in Lee County.

#### MANATEE COUNTY

Officer Gonzales was on land patrol in the area of the South Skyway Fishing Pier in Manatee County. He inspected an individual that had been spear-fishing around the pier. The inspection found the subject had speared two undersized and out of season snook as well as several undersized gray snapper. The subject was cited criminally for illegal method of take of snook, possession of undersized snook and over the bag limit of snook.

Officer Gonzales was on land patrol in the area of the South Skyway Fishing Pier in Manatee County. He inspected an individual fishing around the pier and found the subject had caught and kept an undersized red grouper. The appropriate citation was issued.

#### SARASOTA COUNTY

Officer Dalton was working land patrol in the area of Pansy Bayou Bridge in Sarasota County. He inspected a person fishing from the bridge and found he was in possession of one undersized redfish. The subject was cited accordingly.

#### CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officers Hazelwood and Winton were on land patrol in the area of Babcock Ranch. They found two men trying to drag two freshly killed deer off the private property and back on to state lands. One of the men admitted to shooting from the management area across from the private property. Further investigation revealed the subject was not supposed to be hunting due to the type of hunt that was allowed in the management area that day. The subject was taken to jail for shooting into private property, which is a felony. Both men were issued appropriate citations for the violations.

#### HARDEE COUNTY

Officer Karr saw a vehicle traveling at a slow rate of speed on a rural road shining a spotlight out of both sides of the truck. The vehicle stopped several times to backup and

sweep the adjacent fields and groves with the spotlights. Officer Karr conducted a stop and found three subjects in the truck along with two LED spotlights and a loaded rifle equipped with a scope. All the subjects in the truck admitted to shining the spotlights out of the windows of the truck with the intent to locate deer. All three occupants were given a misdemeanor notice to appear for illegal take of deer. The rifle and two spotlights were seized as evidence.

#### HERNANDO COUNTY

Officer Canamero saw a subject exit a vehicle with a large black bag and cutting shears. The subject entered property owned by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD). Upon contacting the subject, Officer Canamero found him to be in possession of saw palmetto berries. The subject did not have the proper permits to harvest berries or written permission to be on the SWFWMD property. The subject was cited accordingly.

On the opening day of archery hunting season, Officer Canamero contacted a subject sitting in a tree stand inside the Chassahowitzka WMA. While investigating the area, Officer Canamero located a large amount of corn distributed on the ground. The subject was charged accordingly.

#### HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Officer Rorer conducted a resource inspection on an individual fishing from shore and found him in possession of six mangrove snapper, which is one over the legal bag limit. Five of the snapper were under the legal size limit. When asked for a fishing license, the individual stated he thought the rules had changed and he no longer needed one. Further investigation revealed he was on the "do not sell" list for recreational fishing and hunting licenses for failure to pay financial obligations. He was cited for possession of undersize mangrove snapper and issued warnings for possession of over the bag limit of snapper and fishing without a license.

Officers Pettifer and Caldwell conducted an inspection on a vessel and found a cooler containing two snook and eight red drum. Snook and red drum seasons are closed because of red tide. When the officers measured the fish, all of them were under legal size limits. The individual responsible for catching the fish was issued the appropriate citations.

#### PINELLAS COUNTY

Officer Caldwell conducted an inspection of a vessel and found the person onboard in possession of a redfish during closed season. A citation was issued accordingly.

Officer Specialist Bibeau observed an individual fishing from a bridge catch multiple fish and place them in a nearby cooler. He contacted the subject and conducted a fisheries

inspection. Officer Specialist Bibeau found the individual in possession of nine undersized mangrove snapper. The appropriate citations were issued.

## DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

### LEE COUNTY

Officers Hardgrove, Thompson, Zampella, Stapleton and Guy organized a directed conservation patrol to ensure compliance with commercial crab trap regulations. Over several months the officers checked traps throughout the fishery and addressed violations which included: unmarked trap buoys, untagged traps and traps without the required escape rings. Many violations were found at the beginning of the directed patrol, but a dramatic increase in compliance was observed as the detail progressed indicating a positive educational impact.

## **SOUTH REGION A**

### CASES

#### GLADES COUNTY

Officer Madsen saw a truck traveling on a county-maintained road actively shining a spot light into fields where game is commonly found. After observing the truck for several minutes, Officer Madsen conducted a traffic stop. Upon inspection of the vehicle, Officer Madsen located a hand-held spot light and a loaded rifle. There were four individuals in the vehicle and they received appropriate citations.

#### MARTIN COUNTY

Officer Morrow responded to a report of a vessel with six occupants onboard that had capsized in the Intracoastal Waterway. Upon arrival, contact was made with the operator who displayed signs of impairment. Field sobriety tasks were conducted and the operator was arrested and transported to the Martin County Jail where he provided a sample of his breath. The subject was cited for BUI, BAC of .15 or higher with person under 18 years of age onboard.

Officer Brevik was patrolling in the area of Sandsprit Park when he saw a vehicle enter the park. The vehicle was driving in an unusual pattern and repeatedly stopping in the middle of the roadway. Officer Brevik approached the vehicle to check on the condition of the vehicle and driver. The driver exhibited signs of impairment and was arrested for driving under the influence and driving without ever being issued a driver license.

Officers Brevik, Carroll and Johnson responded to a boating accident in the area of the Stuart sandbar. A woman was reported to have been struck by a vessel propeller. After arriving, they discovered the woman had been struck by her husbands' vessel and that

he had left the scene. Officer Brevik located and arrested the operator of the vessel for boating under the influence while causing injury and leaving the scene of a boating accident without rendering aid.

Officers Brevik and Carroll responded to a call of multiple men in the Stuart area illegally harvesting saw palmetto berries on county land. Once on scene, they discovered three men exiting the wooded area with trash cans full of saw palmetto berries. All subjects were issued criminal notice to appear citations for possessing/harvesting saw palmetto berries without a native plant life permit.

Officer Hudson was patrolling in Dupuis Wildlife Environmental Area before the archery quota hunt. He saw a spot in an oak hammock which looked like someone had been baiting the area. The officer placed a game camera on the suspected bait site and left the area. On the same day, a subject was photographed putting out Buck Jam, corn and sunflower seeds. Approximately two weeks later, the subject was photographed again putting out a mineral block that had corn and other grains. Both times the subject was photographed at the illegal bait site the subject was wearing the same camouflage shirt with yellow writing on it. During the second phase archery hunt, Officer Hudson was conducting hunting license inspections at the check station when he saw the subject who had been on the game camera illegally baiting, wearing the same camouflage shirt with yellow writing on it. The subject admitted to putting out Buck Jam, corn and a mineral block Dupuis. The subject also admitted to baiting a second location. The subject received a notice to appear citation for illegally placing bait on a wildlife management area.

## OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Officer Allen was on airboat patrol when he saw three subjects enter the Kissimmee River Alligator Management Unit at US 98. The subjects began alligator hunting after dark and upon being checked it was found that the permittee had a permit for Highlands County and not for the Kissimmee River Unit. He was issued a notice to appear in court for the violation.

Officer Allen was on airboat patrol in the Kissimmee Prairie State Park when he saw two airboats on the Kissimmee River. A few minutes later he heard the airboats enter the state park. Officer Specialist Allen found the airboats in the state park and issued both operators notice to appear in court for trespassing in the state park

Officer Hausler saw four airboats returning from the Kissimmee River marsh at Starvation Slough Airboat Launch. Officer Hausler detected a strong odor of an alcoholic beverage from one of the airboat operators. The operator exhibited signs of impairment and field sobriety tasks were conducted. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence and booked into the Okeechobee County Jail.

Lieutenant Phillip was on night patrol when he saw a vehicle being operated erratically, swerving between lanes and driving on the shoulder of the road. He stopped the vehicle

to address the traffic violations and check on the condition of the driver. The driver exhibited signs of impairment and Officer Carroll arrived to assist. The driver was arrested and processed into the Palm Beach County Jail.

Officer Brodbeck was on vessel patrol late at night when a small Jon-boat without navigation lights was observed against the seawall at the Port of Palm Beach. The boat was disabled with three young occupants aboard. The wind and waves were causing the vessel to strike the seawall and take on water. Officer Brodbeck positioned the patrol vessel and pulled the three occupants on board. The vessel was secured alongside and escorted to Phil Foster Park, where a parent was waiting. The young operator of the vessel received numerous warnings for safety equipment, lighting, and registration violations.

Officer Brodbeck was on vessel patrol at Peanut Island and saw a vessel tied to the park floating docks. A search of the vessel's registration numbers came back to a different vessel, with a different Hull Identification Number (HIN). The HIN on the vessel showed that its registration had expired in 2010. The officer located the vessel owner at a nearby picnic table and inquired about the vessel. The vessel owner admitted to placing different registration numbers on the vessel than the ones assigned. Appropriate citations were issued.

Officer Brodbeck was on vessel patrol in Palm Beach Gardens when a PWC was observed operating at high speed in a slow speed zone. A vessel stop was initiated, and the operator displayed signs of impairment. Seated field sobriety tasks were conducted and the operator was arrested for BUI and transported to the Palm Beach County Jail.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

### PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Norbrothen instructed the law enforcement portion of a hunter safety class at the Everglades Youth Conservation Camp. The course allows students to learn about hunting rules and regulations, public safety, and ethical considerations. Thirty students attended the class and were encouraged to participate by asking questions and role playing in various hunting scenarios.

## **SOUTH REGION B**

### CASES

#### MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Officers Cosculluela and Sample saw a PWC operating on plane in a posted manatee slow speed zone along the south eastern edge of the Haulover Sandbar. They stopped

the PWC and conducted a boating safety inspection. The operator lifted the PWC's seat to look for the required fire extinguisher and revealed a gallon sized clear plastic bag containing loose cash and other items. When asked what was in the bag the subject stated it was weed. The bag also contained a small clear zip top bag containing 11 non-descript pills. There was also a metallic cylindrical "cannabis grinder" containing white crystal residue, green leafy particles, as well as small nuggets of suspected cannabis. The subject was arrested and cited accordingly.

Officers Catalano and Blanco were on state water patrol when they noticed a small vessel engaged in fishing south of the Bear Cut Bridge in Key Biscayne. Upon conducting a resource inspection, Officers Catalano and Blanco found 11 undersize mutton snapper inside a cooler. Officer Catalano conducted a vessel safety inspection and issued the operator three boating citations for safety violations. Each of the four subjects was issued a notice to appear citation for possession of mutton snapper under 18 inches.

Officer McKinley was on patrol in Southwest Miami-Dade when he stopped an individual hunting in the bird sanctuary. He contacted the subject while he was actively hunting in a field just west of the Homestead airport. He had camouflage gear and a shotgun in his hands. He did not know he was in the bird sanctuary. Officer Mckinley cited the subject accordingly.

Officers Hedgepeth and Sarmiento were on state water patrol when they conducted a resource inspection on a motorboat harvesting saltwater fish in Biscayne Bay. Their inspection resulted in two individuals cited for spearing 3 spiny lobster and one queen triggerfish.

Officer Cartaya encountered a PWC at Crandon Marina Boat ramp and conducted a boating safety inspection. The operator stated that the PWC did not belong to him and the guy who rented the vessel to him would be there shortly. A truck with a trailer for jet skis arrived at the boat ramp. After conducting an inspection, the livery operator was cited appropriately for the violations which included: renting a vessel without proof of insurance, boating information not properly displayed at livery, lease, hire or rent of a vessel equipped with an engine of over 10HP without adequate pre-ride instruction, any person receiving instruction in the safe handling of personal watercraft must provide the livery with a written statement attesting to the same, and knowingly lease, hire or rent PWC to persons who has not received instruction in the safe handling.

## COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Knutson, Araujo and Stearns saw two vessels within a Critical Wildlife Area (CWA). Two male subjects were fishing next to a regulatory sign while other subjects were setting up tents, tables, and chairs on the beach. All four subjects were educated on the regulations protecting the CWA. The two male vessel operators were cited for entering the CWA and received citations for no personal flotation devices.

While conducting a shoreline resource inspection, Officers Arbogast and Georgevich noticed one subject concealing what they later discovered to be redfish under a park bench. The officers issued citations for out of season, undersized, and over the bag limit of redfish.

Officer Rubenstein patrolled the Picayune Strand State Forest during the muzzleloader quota season. He saw two subjects exit their vehicle and illuminate the area near a wood line clearing. Officer Rubenstein conducted a vehicle stop and saw a loaded muzzleloader with a light in the vehicle. The subject was cited accordingly.

Officers Yurewitch and Georgevich were on water patrol when they observed an individual exit a shoreline with a cast net and a bucket. The individual noticed the officers and immediately put his cast net in the bucket. The officers contacted the individual who stated that he had caught fish. He removed the cast net from the bucket and revealed three tilapia and one tarpon. Tarpon are a species illegal to harvest without the proper permit. The individual was cited for the violations.

#### MONROE COUNTY

Officer Weichhan and Hoppe received a call about individuals keeping undersized mangrove snapper and swimming in the water near Faro Blanco Marina in Marathon. Upon arrival the officers saw five individuals fishing. A fisheries inspection revealed five undersized mangrove snapper and six undersized wrung lobster tails. All five subjects were cited accordingly.

Officers Alvarez and Sizemore were on water patrol in Rachel Key near Marathon. They observed a vessel operating without registration numbers and conducted a vessel stop. As the officers approached the vessel, the operator swapped places with another occupant. There was a strong odor of alcohol coming from the vessel/occupants. The operator performed field sobriety tests and was arrested for operating a vessel with his normal faculties impaired. He refused to submit a breath alcohol sample.

#### DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROL

#### COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Arbogast and Georgevich conducted focused patrol targeting panther speed zone violations. The officers issued multiple citations and warnings for violations of the nighttime speed limit which decreases from 60 to 45 MPH.

#### MONROE COUNTY

Officers Trueblood, Sutter, Richards and Foell conducted a wholesale dealer inspection at Lobster Walk LLC. During the inspection, the officers located multiple short live lobster, one egg bearing live lobster, multiple short lobster tails, and multiple lobster tails where the eggs had been removed. The officers documented all the violations and a

warrant for the arrest of two suspects was written. Each suspect was charged with 18 misdemeanors.

## SEARCH AND RESCUE

### COLLIER COUNTY

While responding to a marine emergency call for an overdue vessel in foul weather, Officers Araujo, Knutson, and Stearns saw a capsized vessel with two people floating in the water. The officers rescued the couple from the water, assisted them in righting their sailboat, and safely returned them to shore. During that time, the overdue vessel from the original call was located back at their dock.

## MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

### COLLIER COUNTY

FWC received a report from a caller who claimed a bear was knocking over trash cans, spreading garbage, and “wreaking havoc” in an Immokalee community. Officer Knutson responded to the scene, but the bear had already departed from the area. Officer Knutson went door to door and educated residents of the necessity to secure their trash cans and avoid attractants. He issued five notices of bear regulation non-compliance to residents whose unsecure trash had initially attracted the bear.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

### COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Georgevich and Arbogast were invited to be special guest judges at the “Hook ‘em in the Everglades” fishing tournament benefiting Everglades City High School. The officers answered questions and educated public stakeholders among the 95 vessels that participated in the tournament.