

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



Patrol, Protect, Preserve

June 5, 2020 through June 11, 2020

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

NORTHWEST REGION

CASES

BAY COUNTY

Officers Matechik, Nelson and Rockwell were on patrol in St. Andrew's Bay and checked three commercial shrimping vessels. They conducted resource inspections along with checking the vessel's turtle excluder devices (TEDs). The TEDs allow the turtles caught in the net an opportunity to exit the nets. During one of the inspections, officers found the vessel to have violations related to the vessel's TEDs. The appropriate action was taken in reference to the violations.

CALHOUN COUNTY

K9 Officer Hutchinson received a call from the Calhoun County Sheriff's Office requesting that he and K9 Zara help locate a missing firearm used in a murder and a shooting of a deputy earlier in the week. The following day Officer Hutchinson and K9 Zara arrived at the area to conduct the search. K9 Zara alerted on a firearm along with other items. After locating the firearm, Officer Hutchinson and K9 Zara were requested by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) to locate a projectile involved in the shooting. K9 Zara indicated in a specific area of an unpaved parking lot and Officer Hutchinson discovered the projectile laying in the dirt. All evidence was turned over to the Calhoun County Sheriff's Office and the FDLE.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officers Matechik and Rockwell were on federal fisheries patrol in the Gulf of Mexico when they observed a fishing vessel with three occupants. As they approached the vessel with their emergency blue lights on, they witnessed movement on the vessel and two fish were thrown overboard. They observed two red snapper floating alongside the vessel. A resource inspection also located a Spanish mackerel fillet. The appropriate enforcement action and citations were issued.

FEDERAL WATERS

Officers Matechik and Rockwell were patrolling federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico on the offshore patrol vessel (OPV). They observed a vessel and as they approached with their emergency blue lights on, one individual on board threw a large red snapper over the side of the boat. At the same time another individual threw a second red snapper over the other side of the vessel. A resource inspection located two more red snapper, one of which was under the 16-inch minimum size limit. The violations were addressed accordingly.

GULF COUNTY

Senior Officer Specialist M. Webb conducted a resource inspection on a crew returning from fishing at the Port Saint Joe City Ramp. The captain had five spotted seatrout, three of which were undersized. The captain was cited accordingly.

Senior Officer Specialist M. Webb conducted a resource inspection on a vessel returning from fishing at the Mexico Beach Canal Ramp. During the inspection, an undersized redfish was located. The captain was cited accordingly.

WALTON COUNTY

Officers Tison and Letcher were patrolling the Choctawhatchee Bay and observed individuals returning to the shoreline with cast nets and a cooler. A fishery inspection revealed undersized spotted seatrout and mangrove snapper. One of the subjects claimed the fish and was cited accordingly.

Officer Tison was patrolling along the Choctawhatchee Bay on Eglin Wildlife Management Area (EWMA) when he observed two subjects return from fishing on kayaks. The subjects stated they caught some redfish which was determined to be undersized. One of the subjects was cited for the violation.

Officers Brooks, Fish & Wildlife Commission (FWC) Pilot Tolbert, and K9 Officer Hutchinson coordinated a search with Okaloosa Sheriff's Department for a missing three-year-old child around the Morrison Springs area. Pilot Tolbert conducted an aerial search while other FWC Officers launched several patrol vessels to search by water. K9 Officer Hutchinson coordinated with the Department of Corrections K9 Team during the search. Approximately two hours into the search the child was located unharmed and returned to his family.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

NASSAU COUNTY

Officer Tim Sweat saw a boat trailer being towed without a tag on State Road 200 near Callahan. During a traffic stop on the vehicle, Officer Sweat saw blood on the gunwale of the vessel. Two undersized cobia were located in one of the vessel compartments. Two men in the truck were issued notices to appear for possession/harvest of undersize cobia. The driver was issued a traffic warning.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

MARION COUNTY

Officer Specialist Rice was patrolling Cross Florida Greenway property in reference to information received about subjects illegally hunting feral hogs from a county roadway. Officer Rice observed a vehicle pull onto the shoulder of the road near where several hogs were feeding and saw a subject shine a light out the passenger side window and fire one shot from inside the vehicle. Officer Rice proceeded to where the truck was pulled off the road and observed the operator loading a freshly harvested hog into the bed of the truck. Upon inspection of the vehicle, Officer Rice observed a loaded .17 HMR rifle laying in the passenger seat. The rifle was seized as evidence, and the subject was cited for discharging a firearm from a county roadway.

BREVARD COUNTY

Lieutenant Riley, Officer Hocker, and Officer Navarino were conducting state water patrol near the Haulover canal when they observed two individuals actively fishing on the south side of the canal. A resource inspection found a 38-inch red drum. Both subjects were issued a notice to appear for possession of a redfish over the legal maximum length of 27-inches.

ORANGE COUNTY

Officer Mendelson observed a vehicle parked off a local road near a large landowner's property in Christmas, and an individual on his hands and knees hiding behind a cattle mound. Officer Mendelson contacted the landowner who advised that the vehicle and person did not have permission to be on the property. K9 Officer Hadwin and K9 Blue were nearby and came to assist. The officers, led by K9 Blue, tracked back to the area

where the individual was located and identified. He had a bag with different sized mushrooms taken from the field, binoculars and a large knife. He advised the officers he was out scouting the area for deer and picked some mushrooms. The subject had entered through a neighboring landowner's property from his vehicle, and both landowners requested trespass charges be pursued. The individual was charged with two counts of trespass.

Officer Hocker was on land patrol along the St. Johns River near State Road 50 when he observed a group of individuals fishing from the shoreline with cast nets. The individuals were catching fish and throwing the unwanted fish onto the shoreline. A resource inspection found 11 panfish (freshwater gamefish) taken by illegal method. The individuals were issued notices to appear for illegal method of take for freshwater gamefish and willful wanton waste.

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officer Matthews assisted in a boating safety detail focusing on boating under the influence (BUI) prevention at the annual "Boater Skip Day" event. Along with Officers Harris and Miller, he assisted Officer Thomas with a BUI suspect who was resisting arrest. The subject was taken into custody and the two remaining passengers on the vessel were assisted safely back to shore. The female passenger was highly intoxicated and was arrested and transported to the St. John's County Jail.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Officer McCormack responded to a Wildlife Alert call of two subjects keeping undersized snook at a City of Tampa waterfront park. Once on scene, Officer McCormack walked along the mangroves on the southern end of the park, located the subjects in waste deep water fishing and initiated a resource inspection. Their cooler contained three undersized and out of season spotted seatrout, along with multiple other legal-to-keep species of fish. Officer McCormack issued appropriate citations and warnings for resource violations and saltwater fishing licenses.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Self was on water patrol when he observed two subjects on their hands and knees digging in the ground on a grass flat. It appeared they were collecting live shells. The area where they were working is designated as an "unclassified area", an area for which no recent sanitary survey exists. The harvest of shellfish from such areas is unlawful. Officer Self approached the individuals and conducted a fisheries inspection. The two individuals had a five-gallon bucket containing a large number of hard clams.

FWC Lieutenant Stuart Spoede arrived on scene and helped Officer Self sort through the bucket of clams. Eighty-four undersized (less than one inch) live, hard clams were found. The illegal clams were returned to the water and the individuals were cited for harvesting in a closed area and for possession of undersized clams.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

MARTIN COUNTY

Lieutenant Carcasses completed an investigation into an October 2019 boating incident which resulted in the death of a twenty-month-old baby and a twenty-eight-year-old female. Eight occupants were on board a vessel on the Intracoastal Waterway near the St. Lucie Inlet when the vessel struck a channel marker. Five of the eight occupants were ejected as a result of the impact. The operator was impaired and after an arrest warrant was issued, turned himself in to the Martin County Sheriff's Office. The operator was charged with two counts of BUI manslaughter, two counts of vessel homicide, and one count of BUI with property damage.

Officers Pecko and Brevik were on land patrol when they observed a single vehicle headlight approaching them. The light was coming from a canal bank that is owned by South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and closed to motorized vehicles. The subject exited the area through a walk-through gate and continued along on the dirt road. The officers initiated a traffic stop and found the vehicle tag was expired and not assigned to that motorcycle. The individual was issued two criminal citations and three warnings.

Officer Pecko received a call from dispatch about someone poaching undersized mangrove snapper from a causeway on the St. Lucie River. Officer Pecko arrived on scene and conducted a fisheries inspection/license check. The subject had a valid saltwater products license and advised he was recreationally fishing. He was in possession of three undersized black drum and four undersized mangrove snapper. The individual was issued citations for the undersize fish.

Officer Pecko was patrolling the border of Jonathan Dickinson State Park when he observed a vehicle operating at a high rate of speed off-trail along the fence line of US Highway 1. Officer Pecko conducted a traffic stop on the vehicle near the front gate and issued a citation for driving off a designated road in the state park.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Riggs and Mann were on patrol in Boynton Beach when they observed two male subjects fishing inside the fenced area at the S-41 spillway. Both subjects were escorted out of the fenced area and cited accordingly for trespass.

Officers Pecko, Partelow, and Brodbeck responded to a complaint regarding a fisherman catching and keeping an out of season snook at the Jupiter Inlet. The officers conducted a resource inspection and located a 29-inch snook. The fisherman received a resource citation for possession of snook out of season, as well as warnings for insufficient number of PFD's, expired fishing license, and no snook stamp.

Officer Brodbeck responded to a complaint regarding several fishermen in Lake Worth catching and keeping oversize snook. Officer Brodbeck responded to the location and observed several fishermen with snook lying on the ground next to them. He contacted the fishermen and none of them possessed a valid saltwater fishing license or snook stamp. One fisherman was in possession of a 33-inch snook and received a resource citation for the violation. Warnings were issued for the license violations.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Langley and Matthews were at Spanish River Park in Boca Raton when they were dispatched to a vessel taking on water in the intracoastal in Delray Beach. When they got on scene the vessel was partly submerged and resting on the bottom. The operator of the vessel was in the water being assisted by a Good Samaritan. With the help of the Good Samaritan the officers were able to safely get the operator onto their patrol vessel.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

MARTIN COUNTY

Officer Brevik responded to a Stuart neighborhood in reference to an alligator that was trapped inside a storm drain. Officer Brevik captured the alligator and relocated it to a safe area.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Officer Cartaya was conducting resource inspections along the northeast side of the Venetian Causeway when he observed a subject actively fishing. A resource inspection discovered four undersized mangrove snapper. The subject was cited accordingly.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Fernandez, assisted by Officer Hart, responded to a complaint regarding two escaped lemurs. The animals escaped from a licensed facility

and were recovered by the owners. One citation and two warnings were issued for the escape and related violations.

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Thompson and Lieutenant Hein were on water patrol in the Islamorada area and noticed a vessel with fishing gear. A resource inspection revealed an undersized sailfish. The operator was cited accordingly.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Miami Dade County Association of Chiefs of Police and local law enforcement agencies partnered with the 5000 Role Models and the Miami-Dolphins for a Police and Youth Conference. The purpose of the event was to come together and show camaraderie between the community and police. Chiefs and upper leadership represented their agencies from Dade and Broward with their agency's marked vehicles on display on the Dolphin's football field for the evening. Officer Washington, Osorio, Captain Maza, and Major Escanio represented the FWC Division of Law Enforcement.