

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



Patrol, Protect, Preserve

June 12, 2020 through June 18, 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

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Officers L. McLeod and T. Hartzog were on patrol in the St. George Island State Park when they observed subjects fishing near the east end of the island. They conducted a resource inspection and found the subjects were in possession of over the bag limit of red drum and an undersized permit. Appropriate warnings and citations were issued.

Officers T. Hartzog and L. McLeod were on water patrol when they observed several subjects fishing from a vessel. They conducted a resource inspection and found the subjects were in possession of three undersized tripletail. The fish were returned to the water alive and the owner was cited.

GADSDEN COUNTY

Officer S. Brower received an internet complaint that an individual had posted photos of an illegally harvested alligator on Instagram. Officer Brower identified the subject in the photo and conducted an interview at the subject's place of employment. The subject revealed that he and his cousin watched a vehicle strike the alligator on the roadway and they loaded the alligator into their vehicle. Charges for possession of an American alligator will be direct filed with the State Attorney's Office.

Officer C. Dubose was conducting water patrol on Lake Talquin near the mouth of Little River. A resource inspection on a 14-foot johnboat revealed several channel catfish.

During the inspection Officer Dubose observed an extension cord with approximately three feet of the insulation peeled away with the bare wire woven through a chain. Officer Dubose asked where the converting device was located, and the vessel owner reached under the front compartment and retrieved it. The vessel owner was charged with possession of a shocking device on state waters.

LEON COUNTY

While taking a meal break at a local pizza restaurant, Officer M. Mims observed a man drinking alcohol at the bar. The man appeared to be intoxicated and had difficulty finding the restroom after receiving instruction from the restaurant employees several times. When he returned from the restroom, he rested his head on the bar. After a while, the man staggered out into the parking lot and attempted to get in his car and drive away. Officer Mims stopped him from driving away and told him to go back inside the restaurant and call a ride. After several minutes back inside the restaurant, the man went back outside and drove away before Officer Mims could stop him. Officer Mims got in his patrol truck and attempted to stop the man who continued to drive until he reached a private driveway. The subject was arrested for DUI and booked into the Leon County Jail.

LIBERTY COUNTY

During patrol in the Apalachicola National Forest, Officer C. Dubose observed an illegally dumped vessel, which still had the registration numbers affixed. Officer Dubose conducted interviews with the registered owners and found that the vessel had been gifted to a friend after a tree damaged it during Hurricane Michael. An interview of the friend resulted in a confession of dumping the vessel and charges for littering in excess of 15 pounds will be filed with the State Attorney's Office.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

ALACHUA COUNTY

Officer Harris was on patrol at Marjorie Rawlings boat ramp on Orange Lake when he observed an individual trailering their boat. Officer Harris conducted a fisheries inspection and discovered the individual had 64 panfish, 14 over the legal limit. The individual was issued the appropriate citation.

Officer Specialist Reith received information about a subject actively retrieving artifacts out of the Santa Fe River. Officer Reith arrived at the location and observed the individual sifting for what appeared to be artifacts. Officer Reith contacted the individual and discovered several artifacts hidden in a concealed pocket of the subject's hat. Appropriate charges were filed with the State Attorney's Office.

DUVAL COUNTY

RPU Officer Shearer was conducting plain clothes resource patrol around Mayport Boat Ramp when he saw two vessels near each other transferring fish. One boat left and the other landed at the boat ramp. He conducted a stop on the vessel that landed, and a resource inspection revealed five undersize red snapper, one undersize gag grouper and a filleted barracuda. The owner of the boat denied transferring fish to the other vessel and stated he had taken some friends fishing and wanted to let them keep some fish to take home. Citations were issued for the snapper/grouper violations, and a warning was issued for failure to land fish in whole condition.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Balgo observed a vessel with three occupants fishing at SR 3 and the Barge Canal. A resource inspection located several undersized sheepshead. The individuals had prior violations for the same fishing activity and were cited accordingly.

Officer Balgo was conducting Joint Enforcement Action inspections at Port Canaveral and located a vessel in possession of a red snapper during closed season. The information was documented and sent to NOAA.

While on water patrol, Officer Beck responded to a submerged vessel in the Indian River near the Grant/Valkaria area. Upon arriving on scene Officer Beck interviewed near-by boaters and found that this vessel was seen operating on the water earlier that day with approximately four people on board when it sank. The subjects swam to shore and fled the scene. Officer Beck contacted Officer Cybula who had knowledge of the vessel and was able to identify the vehicle and boat trailer belonging to the sunken vessel. The owner was identified, agreed to remove the vessel, and was cited accordingly.

Officer Beck was on patrol at the 192 Causeway in Melbourne when he observed a subject near a fishing bucket. An inspection of the fisherman's bucket revealed two undersized mangrove snapper. The subject did not have a valid saltwater fishing license and was cited accordingly.

Officer Beck was on patrol at the 192 Causeway in Melbourne when he observed three subjects fishing along the shoreline. A resource inspection revealed the three subjects were in possession of stone crab in whole condition, undersized sheepshead, and no valid nonresident saltwater fishing license. All three subjects were cited accordingly.

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY

Officer Platt conducted a retail inspection of a roadside stand selling shrimp and requested the Saltwater Retail License and the purchase records for the shrimp. The individual selling the shrimp could not produce any records of where the shrimp were purchased or originated. A citation was issued for inadequate records.

ORANGE COUNTY

Officer Mendelson was on patrol off the St. John's River on Tosohatchee Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Christmas when he observed several different groups of fishermen using large cast nets. Officer Mendelson identified three separate groups who harvested freshwater gamefish by illegal method, and one other individual that had removed different species of plant life from the WMA. Multiple resource citations were issued for the violations and one individual was booked into the Orange County Jail.

OSCEOLA COUNTY

While patrolling Lake Kissimmee, Officer Stelzer conducted a fisheries inspection on two men fishing. Both fishermen had separate coolers where they were storing their fish. An inspection of one of the fishermen's cooler revealed 58 panfish and a citation was issued for over the daily bag limit.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

PUTNAM COUNTY

Officer Guirate and Lieutenant Dickson worked the President Trump Boat Parade on the St. Johns River in Palatka. There were approximately 175 boats in the parade and there were no problems.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

BREVARD COUNTY

Lieutenant Davis, Officer Balgo, and Officer Kearney responded to a vessel in distress approximately 20 miles east of Port Canaveral. They located the vessel and assisted the occupants until the U.S. Coast Guard could arrive to tow the vessel back to port.

Officers Kearney, Balgo, and Marroquin responded to a vehicle that drove off the 528 bridge into the Banana River. The driver of the vehicle was uncooperative with rescue attempts and swam to the fenders of the bridge. The officers, along with Brevard County Sheriff's Deputies and medical staff, used a vessel to recover the driver and return him to shore. He was taken into custody by Brevard County Sheriff's deputies.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

While on water patrol, Officer Criswell and Officer Specialist Alvis observed an individual actively fishing from a vessel at the Courtney Campbell Bridge center span. The officers contacted the individual and conducted a fisheries inspection. The individual was in possession of nine gray (mangrove) snapper and was cited accordingly.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While on water patrol, Officer Specialist Alvis and Officer Criswell observed an individual carelessly operating a vessel in Clearwater Bay. The officers contacted the operator and observed signs of impairment. Standard Field Sobriety Tasks were utilized, and the operator was arrested for boating under the influence.

While on land patrol, Lieutenant Bibeau observed multiple people fishing from a bridge which was posted "No Fishing". Lieutenant Bibeau contacted the individuals and conducted a fisheries inspection. The inspection revealed two undersized mangrove snapper and a ten-inch red grouper. One of the individuals admitted to catching the mangrove snapper and the red grouper and was warned and cited accordingly.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

Captive Wildlife Investigator Corteguera responded to the report of a loose Burmese python. Upon arrival, he learned that an eleven-inch Burmese python escaped from a licensed facility. After several days, the owner of the snake was able to recover it under a nearby car. The appropriate citation was issued.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Officer Gomez was on water patrol and conducted a vessel stop on a personal watercraft. After conducting a check on the status of the registration, it was discovered

that the PWC was reported stolen in April. Officer Gomez confirmed the PWC in the database was the PWC physically present. The PWC was seized for criminal investigative purposes.

MONROE COUNTY

While conducting patrols along the sandbar in Whale Harbor, Officer Weichhan spotted a vessel in a “No Motor Zone” being propelled by its engine. He initiated a vessel stop and the operator exhibited signs of impairment. Standard Field Sobriety Tests were utilized, and the operator was arrested for BUI and was transported to jail.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Dube filmed a public service announcement (PSA) in conjunction with the Monroe County’s Tourist Development Council (TDC) for the upcoming lobster sport season in the Keys. Officer Dube discussed all the current lobster regulations, boating safety tips and gave a demonstration how to catch a lobster. Officer Dube also answered numerous questions on camera from Andy Newman, the head of TDC.

Officer Specialist McKay joined with the Monroe County Sheriff’s Office, Monroe County Public Works, and Ocean Reef Public Safety in a Tom Thumb Stores sponsored beach cleanup along Card Sound Road in North Key Largo. Approximately 50 participants picked up litter and debris along the shoreline and roadway.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

MONROE COUNTY

FWC Dispatch was notified of an Area to be Avoided (ATBA) Violation of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) Act. A 61-meter yacht was transiting inside the area to be avoided by vessels over 50 Meters, heading west towards the Dry Tortugas. No FWC assets were available to make the offshore intercept so the violation was to be addressed later when the vessel returned to port. Lieutenant Peters observed the vessel on the automatic identification system traveling east, due south of Long Key, back inside the ATBA. The United States Coast Guard (USCG) was contacted, and they intercepted and boarded the vessel. The captain of the vessel was issued a federal Notice of Violation and Assessment (NOVA) for the violation.