

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



Patrol, Protect, Preserve

June 19, 2020 through June 25, 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

GULF COUNTY/OKALOOSA COUNTY

Senior Officers M. and H. Webb each made over the limit red snapper cases. In both cases, non-resident fishermen had returned to the Saint Joe City Ramp where the officers conducted resource inspections. Upon inspection they found the fishermen had exceeded their daily bag limits. Appropriate citations were issued.

While Officer Gerber was conducting resource inspections, he encountered a vessel that stated they had several Spanish mackerel. During his inspection he found four undersize king mackerel. The appropriate citation was issued to the individual responsible for catching the undersized fish.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Officer Homan and Reserve Officer D. Brown found a vehicle parked at Douglass Ferry landing on Choctawhatchee River. They learned there was a warrant for the owner regarding narcotics violations. While on water patrol, they located the male subject with a female companion, fishing on the river. The warrant was confirmed, and the male subject was arrested and transported without incident. Fishing license violations were also addressed.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

GULF COUNTY/OKALOOSA COUNTY

Senior Officers M. and H. Webb made two separate water rescues while on patrol. The first one involved two subjects on board a personal watercraft (PWC) that had capsized north of the Destin Bridge. The subjects were swept up in the swift outgoing current. The officers pulled the subjects on board their vessel. Neither subject required medical attention nor were returned to their rental livery. The second rescue occurred in a remote area of Cape San Blas. A severe storm came through the area that had disabled and grounded a vessel with six females and two children on board. The officers located the women and pushed the vessel off the sand into deeper water and escorted them back to the boat ramp inside Eagle Harbor.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Officer Homan responded to a search and rescue call in Econfina Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA). A married couple was hiking on the Florida Trail. After dark they became disoriented and lost their way. With the assistance of the Bay County Sheriff's Office Aviation Section, the couple's location was pinpointed, which allowed Officer Homan to gain access to them. The couple was safely returned to their vehicle.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Lieutenant Kiss, Senior Officer Johnston and Officer Specialist Yates received a late-night call regarding a boating accident on the Ichetucknee River where a vessel struck a fixed object and ejected all three occupants into river. Upon arrival, the officers discovered all three subjects made it safely to shore. Their vessel capsized and sank. The operator was identified and exhibited indicators consistent to that of someone impaired. Field sobriety exercises were utilized, and the operator was arrested and booked into the Columbia County Jail for felony BUI since he was on probation from a recent DUI arrest and had four prior DUI convictions.

DIXIE COUNTY

Officer Specialist Cooper and K9 Officer Specialist Wiggins responded to an airboat accident near Rocky Creek. The vessel struck submerged rocks and ejected four subjects from the vessel causing injuries. Officers escorted the airboat to the boat ramp where EMS was waiting. The operator was later air lifted to a local hospital for treatment, and the other occupants were evaluated and released from the scene.

Investigator Ayers and Officer Sheffield were on patrol and observed an individual trespassing on county property. There are numerous complaints about theft, trespass

and vandalism in the area. This was the second time officers contacted the subject at the same location for trespass. The subject was issued the appropriate citation.

GILCHRIST COUNTY

Officer Sheffield received a complaint in reference to littering. He arrived at the location and met with Officer Specialist Cooper and they worked to identify a suspect and later contacted him at his residence. The subject was cited accordingly.

SUWANNEE COUNTY

Officer Boone and Mobley received information of a dead deer dumped in a residential area near Live Oak. Upon arrival the officers identified tire sign leading away from the carcass to a neighboring piece of property. On the property in question the officers could see an active feeder, hunting blind and a small garden. An interview with the subject residing on the property concluded with a confession to shooting the doe deer with a rifle and discarding the remains on the adjacent property. The appropriate charges of taking a deer during closed season will be filed with the State Attorney's Office.

TAYLOR COUNTY

Officer Touchton was on highway 19 south of Perry when he noticed a truck weaving back and forth. A vehicle stop found the driver to be impaired. The driver refused all field sobriety tasks and was booked into the Taylor County Jail for driving under the influence.

Officers Albritton and Edwards were on water patrol when they observed a vessel with persons fishing up a creek. As the officers were approaching the vessel, they observed a subject throw two redfish overboard. One of the fish was retrieved and the subject was cited accordingly.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

TAYLOR COUNTY

Officer Waychoff and Lieutenant Loyed responded to a vessel in distress 21 miles offshore of Steinhatchee. They made their way through six to eight-foot seas to locate the two individuals. The subjects were placed into the patrol boat and transported back to shore.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

BREVARD COUNTY

Lieutenant Lightsey observed a vessel miss a boat ramp which resulted in the vessel becoming grounded. The operator dislodged the vessel and returned to shore. Lieutenant Lightsey contacted the operator who displayed several signs of impairment. After conducting Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks, the man was arrested for boating under the influence (BUI) and transported to jail.

PUTNAM COUNTY

The Putnam County Squad conducted a detail to identify derelict vessels in the St. Johns River. The detail located 29 derelict/at risk vessels that will be investigated.

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officer Specialist Thomas responded to a late-night boating accident with property damage in the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) just north of the Bridge of Lions in downtown St. Augustine. A small vessel with three occupants heading south struck a navigation aid piling just north of the bridge, sustained significant damage to its port bow, and limped into the Municipal Marina where it was secured. The operator suffered a laceration to his chin while another male was uninjured. The female passenger suffered a bruise to her face close her left eye. Officer Chamberlain and Lieutenant Zukowsky arrived at Flagler Hospital to assist Officer Thomas with the extended investigation. The operator was booked into the St. Johns County Jail for boating under the influence.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Stelzer and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Officer Lowe were on water patrol in the Intracoastal Waterway during the President Trump boat parade. They observed what appeared to be a vessel in distress in the middle of the moving parade. The officers responded and found the vessel completely swamped with two elderly subjects on board. They recovered one of the occupants, but the second fell into the water. The officers recovered the second occupant, and both were transported to shore.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

LEE COUNTY

Officer Parker was on patrol around the Franklin Locks when she came across a large group of individuals fishing. A fisheries inspection revealed two small headless snook

among mullet in a bucket. Two of the individuals admitted to catching the fish. The fish were seized as evidence and photographed. The individuals were cited accordingly and given warnings for fishing without a license.

Officer Self and Officer Bell were on offshore water patrol conducting fishery inspections when they stopped an inbound vessel. A fisheries inspection located a total of fourteen red snapper along with various other snapper and grouper. There were six people on board the vessel, which put them two fish over the red snapper possession limit. The twelve largest red snapper were returned to the captain and the over the bag limit fish were seized as evidence and photographed. The captain was cited appropriately.

Officer Stanley was on patrol at the Punta Rassa boat ramp. A citizen approached him and advised there was an individual fishing under the bridge who had a grossly undersized grouper in a bucket. Officer Stanley located the subject fishing while sitting on a bucket. An inspection revealed a gag grouper and mangrove snapper which were undersized. The fish were photographed and returned to the water alive. The individual was cited accordingly.

FWC Officers and Investigators responded to a vessel accident with injuries that occurred over the weekend. Two people onboard a vessel was idling away from Cayo Costa State Park beach. The passenger was sitting in a pedestal seat to the right of the operator behind the console. When the passenger leaned back in the seat, the seat broke off the base causing the passenger to fall to the deck of the boat hitting their head and neck on the aft live well. The passenger was airlifted to a local hospital. The investigation underway.

PINELLAS COUNTY

Lieutenant Bibeau observed an individual actively fishing from a rock jetty. Lieutenant Bibeau watched the individual catch and harvest multiple fish. Lieutenant Bibeau contacted the individual and conducted a fisheries inspection which found eight mangrove snapper, one of which was undersized. Lieutenant Bibeau issued the appropriate citation and warnings.

Officer Litherland and Lieutenant DallaRosa conducted a fisheries inspection on a vessel with three people on board coming back from fishing offshore near Clearwater Pass. The subjects were in possession of two undersized red grouper. The captain was cited accordingly.

Lieutenant Van Trees responded to a call from the Largo Police Department about a possible alligator incident at a county park. A subject was swimming in a lake at a county park before sun-up trying to retrieve disc golf frisbees. While trying to retrieve a frisbee, the subject was bitten by an alligator but was able to break free and get help. He was transported to a local hospital where he was treated for minor injuries. The investigation is ongoing.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

LEE COUNTY

Officers Salem and Perry were on water patrol when they saw a pelican wrapped in fishing line with a hook stuck in its bill. The officers were able to safely capture the pelican and removed the fishing line and hook from the bird. The bird flew away unharmed after the incident.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Brodbeck investigated subjects catching and keeping out of season and oversize snook in West Palm Beach. He observed two subjects actively fishing for snook. One subject hooked a large fish, and the second subject held the leader while the fish was gaffed and brought to shore. The fish was concealed in nearby bushes and they continued fishing. Officer Brodbeck contacted the subjects and retrieved the snook from the concealed location. Both subjects were cited accordingly and warned for no license and no valid snook stamp. The snook could not be revived and was seized as evidence.

Officer Brodbeck was offshore of West Palm Beach when a vessel was observed with a dive flag displayed and several subjects in the water actively spearfishing. A vessel stop was initiated to conduct a resource inspection. When asked to inspect any fish on board, one subject held up a large permit with obvious signs of being harvested by spear (a prohibited method of harvest). Officer Brodbeck issued the appropriate citation and the permit was seized as evidence.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Partelow was on vessel patrol near Jupiter Federal Bridge when he responded to a single vessel accident with injuries. Officer Partelow boarded the vessel and provided first aid to the subject. Officer Partelow controlled the subject and injuries until EMS arrived and transported him to the local hospital.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Officers Presser and Osorio were on water patrol south of Key Biscayne where they observed a vessel returning from offshore displaying fishing gear. The officers stopped the vessel to conduct a resource inspection and found two occupants onboard in possession of 28 dolphin, eight of which were less than 20 inches fork length. The captain of the vessel was cited accordingly.

COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Arbogast and Corporal Darren of the Collier County Sheriff's Office were on joint agency water patrol when they observed a vessel violating the slow speed zone of the Narrows. The officers stopped the vessel to address the violation and to conduct a boating safety inspection. During the vessel stop, the operator displayed of impairment. The officers administered the seated battery of Standard Field Sobriety Tests and arrested the operator for boating under the influence. The operator was booked into the Naples Jail Center.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

MONROE COUNTY

Lieutenant Peters was notified of an Area to be Avoided (ATBA) Violation of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) Act. A sixty-one-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 North, heading to its home port in West Palm Beach. Lieutenant Peters contacted Officer Brodbeck to intercept the vessel. Officers Brodbeck and Mann intercepted and boarded the vessel and collected all the pertinent information to document the violation. The captain was issued a Federal Notice of Violation and Assessment (NOVA) for the violation.