

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



Patrol, Protect, Preserve

May 15, 2020 through May 21, 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

Senior Officer T. Basford was on vessel patrol in St Andrews Bay when he saw a vessel with visible fishing gear returning from offshore. He conducted a boating safety and resource inspection of the vessel and found three undersized greater amberjack. The captain of the vessel took responsibility for the fish and was issued a citation for the violation.

Officer Specialist Brady and Officer Gates were conducting JEA patrols offshore of Bay County in the area known as the Madison Swanson. During their patrol they noticed a vessel that was at rest. As the officers neared the vessel, they could see several individuals actively fishing with bottom fishing gear. The Madison Swanson is closed to bottom fishing. The officers conducted a resource inspection and found several reef fish species. The captain of the vessel was issued a federal citation for fishing in the closed area.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officers Cushing and Land were on patrol in state waters of the Gulf of Mexico south of Pensacola in the offshore patrol vessel NW Fincat. They conducted a boarding with multiple people onboard and located eight red snapper and three gray triggerfish. The season is currently closed for both species. The appropriate action was taken reference the violations.

FEDERAL WATERS

Officers Cushing and Land were conducting patrols in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico aboard the offshore patrol vessel NW Fincat. The officers witnessed a vessel at anchor with dive gear and spear guns in view and approached the vessel to conduct a fisheries inspection. As they approached, the captain maneuvered his vessel to allow occupants onboard to dump items off the stern. Officer Land retrieved a gag grouper, gray triggerfish, and a Zip Loc bag of filets from the water. The occupants admitted that they knew the fish were illegal and did not want to be cited. Appropriate charges were issued for the violations.

Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Nelson and Raker were on patrol in the offshore patrol vessel Intrepid in federal waters south of Dog Island. They stopped a recreational vessel with two occupants and located red snapper during closure. One of the individuals had an expired fishing license and neither had the Gulf Reef Fish Angler permit. The appropriate action was taken.

Officers Matechik and Rockwell were patrolling on the offshore patrol vessel Vigilance in federal waters south of Grayton Beach when they observed a center console fishing vessel. The vessel was stopped so a resource inspection could be completed. During the inspection undersized greater amberjack were in an ice box on the vessel. The appropriate action was taken reference the violations.

Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Nelson and Raker were on patrol in the offshore patrol vessel Intrepid in federal waters. They stopped eight vessels and conducted resource inspection of their catch. All the vessels had possession of gag grouper during federal closure with several having warnings for undersized fish. The officers also stopped a vessel that possessed undersized greater amberjack. The appropriate action was taken regarding the violations.

Officers Cushing and Land conducted multiple patrols in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico aboard the offshore patrol vessel NW Fincat. The officers encountered multiple violations including possession of red snapper during closed season, possession of undersized greater amberjack, over the bag limit of greater amberjack, reef fish not being landed in whole condition, and reef fish being used for bait. The appropriate actions were taken regarding the violations.

Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Nelson and Raker were on patrol in the offshore patrol vessel Intrepid in federal waters approximately 11 miles south of Little St. George Island. They stopped a recreational vessel and conducted a resource inspection of their catch. The officers located five gag grouper in a fish box with some being undersized. The boat captain was also over the bag limit of gag grouper. During the stop the vessel was found to have an expired registration and multiple other vessel related violations. The officers documented several fishing license violations as well. The appropriate action was taken reference the violations.

Officers Matechik and Rockwell were patrolling on the offshore patrol vessel Vigilance south of Destin when they observed a cat hull fishing vessel traveling north towards Destin Pass from federal waters. They could see multiple occupants and fishing equipment. A resource inspection revealed red snapper located inside the vessel's live well. Red snapper is currently closed to recreational harvest and it was undersized. The appropriate action was taken.

Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Nelson and Raker were on patrol in the offshore patrol vessel Intrepid near St. Vincent Island. They conducted six inspections aboard commercial shrimping vessels. The officers inspected the vessel's turtle excluder devices (TED's) that are required in the nets to assist with turtles escaping the nets. Two of the vessels they had significant TED violations. The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Officer T. Hartzog was on patrol in the Eastpoint Area when he observed a subject fishing under the John Gorrie Bridge. He conducted a resource inspection and found the subject was in possession of seven spotted sea trout and two redfish. Five of the trout and both redfish were undersized. The subject was also over the legal limit of trout and redfish. The subject was cited accordingly, and the fish seized as evidence.

Officer D. Travis was patrolling Alligator Point when he saw a flashlight illuminating a sea wall. After observing the subject, he determined he was harvesting oysters. Officer Travis conducted a resource inspection and found the subject was in possession of oysters and five stone crabs. The subject was cited accordingly.

GULF COUNTY

Senior Officer H. Webb was on patrol when he stopped to perform a marine fisheries inspection on a recreational fishing vessel with two individuals on board. The inspection revealed three red drum, all of which were undersized. The captain was cited for possession of undersized red drum and warned for over the daily bag limit.

Officer Lipford conducted a resource inspection on a vessel at the Odena boat ramp. The inspection revealed one of the subjects was in possession of a soft-shell turtle during the yearly closed period beginning May 1st through July 31st. The appropriate citation was issued.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officers Hahr, Brown, and Bower were patrolling in the Destin Harbor and stopped a vessel moving in an erratic path through the harbor. Signs of impairment were exhibited by the operator and Standard Field Sobriety Tasks (SFST) were utilized. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence and booked into the Okaloosa County Jail.

Officer Hahr was patrolling on the Yellow River when he located several bush hooks and free-floating fishing devices in a slough. They were freshly baited but not marked with a name and address as required. A short time later, he located a fisherman with a matching float and lines in his boat. The man was charged with fishing with a free-floating device and warned for the unmarked bush hooks.

Lieutenant Bartlett, and Officers Brown and Bower were on water patrol at Crab Island when they were approached by a boater in the area. While speaking with the boater, he exhibited signs of impairment. Standard Field Sobriety Tasks (SFST) were utilized and the subject was arrested for boating under the influence and booked into the Okaloosa County Jail.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

While on patrol in the Shorebird Nesting Zone on Navarre Causeway, Officer Wilkenson observed several subjects fishing within the bird nesting area under the bridge. A resource inspection was conducted and revealed two undersized red drum. The subject was issued a notice to appear for the violation.

K9 Handler Officer J. Hutchinson was patrolling at night on state owned land near a boat ramp and observed a truck travelling towards him with its headlights off. A stop revealed the driver did not have a valid driver's license. The glove compartment contained a loaded pistol and the driver informed Officer Hutchinson there were possible illegal drugs inside of the vehicle. Drug paraphernalia and methamphetamine were in the driver's pants pocket and a check revealed the passenger was a convicted felon. Two Santa Rosa Sheriff's Deputies arrived and assisted with the search of the vehicle. The driver was arrested for the drugs, paraphernalia and driving while license suspended. The passenger was arrested for possession of a firearm and ammunition by a convicted felon. Both subjects were booked into the Santa Rosa County Jail.

Officer Ramos was on patrol when he observed a man and woman fishing from a public pier. A license and resource inspection were conducted. The non-resident woman didn't have a fishing license and the man admitted that he pulled someone else's blue crab trap out of the water, retrieved a pinfish and placed it on a hook as bait. The female was issued a citation for not having a fishing license and the man was issued a criminal notice to appear for removing or taking possession of the contents of another harvester's blue crab trap.

WAKULLA COUNTY

Officers J. Carr and B. Morales were on water patrol in the Wakulla River. They observed a personal watercraft (PWC) operating on a plane in a posted slow speed zone. During the stop, the operator displayed signs of impairment, refused Standard Field Sobriety Tasks (SFST), and resisted/refused lawful commands. The operator was taken to the Wakulla County Jail where he refused to give a breath sample. The

operator was charged with BUI, refusal to submit to a breath sample, and resisting without violence.

Officers B. Morales and Travers were on water patrol in federal waters. They conducted a resource inspection on a vessel which revealed two gag grouper in a closed season. The owner was cited accordingly.

Officer C. Mallow was on water patrol in the Wakulla River and observed a vessel operating without navigation lights. During the stop, the operator showed signs of impairment and Standard Field Sobriety Tasks (SFST) were utilized. The operator was arrested for BUI and taken to the Wakulla County Jail.

Officers S. Gray and N. Korade were on water patrol in the Wakulla River and observed a vessel operating on a full plane in a posted idle zone. A boating and safety inspection revealed the operator displaying signs of impairment. Standard Field Sobriety Tasks (SFST) showed indicators of impairment and the operator was arrested for BUI and taken to the Wakulla County Jail.

Officer S. Gray was patrolling Bottoms Road and observed two individuals fishing from the side of the road. A resource inspection revealed that one of the individuals was in possession of two undersized red fish. The individual was cited accordingly.

WALTON COUNTY

Officers Brooks and Graves were on water patrol and stopped a vessel for operating without any navigational lights. A fishery inspection revealed four undersized red fish and trout. The subject was cited for possession of undersized red fish, over the daily bag limit of red fish, and for the navigational light violation. He was also issued multiple warnings for other boating safety violations.

Officer Tison was on water patrol on the Choctawhatchee River when he observed a subject in a vessel that appeared to be gigging fish in Morrison Springs. A fishery inspection discovered freshwater game fish that had been gigged. Appropriate citations were issued.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

CLAY COUNTY

Officer Lange and Lieutenant Haney were on water patrol on Black Creek and observed a vessel violating a no wake zone. They conducted a vessel stop and during the boating safety inspection observed signs of impairment from the operator. The subject was determined to be impaired, was arrested for BUI and transported to jail.

DUVAL COUNTY

Officer Hausler observed the operator of a PWC operating at full plane in the Sister's Creek slow speed zone. The vessel was stopped to address the violation and the operator showed signs of impairment. After performing Field Sobriety Tasks, the operator was arrested for boating under the influence and taken to jail.

Lieutenant Bridwell and Officer Hutchins observed the operator of a PWC violating the Sister's Creek slow speed zone. The vessel was stopped, and the operator showed signs of impairment. After performing Field Sobriety Tasks, the operator was arrested for boating under the influence and taken to jail.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officer Greenier responded to a report of a motor vessel that collided with the dock at the Marker 8 Marina in the Intracoastal Waterway at the Bridge of Lions in downtown St. Augustine. The operator was exchanging information with the marina owner when two officers from the St. Augustine Police Department arrived. The officers observed signs of intoxication and impairment. Officer Greenier arrived and Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks offered but the operator refused to perform the tasks and refused to provide a breath sample at the St. Johns County Jail. The operator was arrested for BUI and booked into jail. He was also issued multiple Uniform Boating Citations for violations of navigation rules resulting in an accident.

MARION COUNTY

Officer Specialist Rice concluded a lengthy investigation that involved subjects taking deer and turkey during closed season in the Ocala Wildlife Management Area. With the help of Lieutenant Creech, Officer Specialist Dias, and Senior Officer Simpson, three subjects were identified. A total of 24 misdemeanor charges between the three suspects were filed for taking deer during closed season, taking deer at night with gun and light, taking turkey during closed season, violation of deer management unit antler restriction, and over the bag limit of deer.

Officer Specialists Rice and Dias were on water patrol on Lake Weir when they observed a vessel operating on full plane, violating an idle speed no wake zone. The vessel was stopped to address the violation and conduct a boating safety inspection. During the stop, the operator showed signs of impairment. Standardized Field Sobriety

Tasks were administered, and the operator was arrested for boating under the influence. At the Marion County Jail, the subject refused to provide a breath sample.

SEMINOLE COUNTY

Officers Fahnestock, Auber, and Trimble were patrolling Lake Jesup Park in Sanford when they noticed a vessel with four male subjects coming down the canal from Lake Jesup. Onboard the vessel was a cooler and buckets containing cast nets and fish. The vessel did not have any fishing rods onboard nor did it have a vessel safety sticker. During a resource inspection nine panfish and 12 crappie were found hidden in the vessel. Three of the subject's stated they actively used the cast nets to catch all the gamefish, the fourth subject was just the operator. The three subjects were each issued a Notice to Appear for the take of gamefish by illegal method.

Officers Auber, Fahnestock, and Trimble were on patrol at the Lake Jessup boat ramp in Sanford. They observed a commercial boat approaching the ramp, occupied by one subject that had numerous coolers and baskets on board. A resource inspection revealed 37 crappie, 20 panfish, and one softshell turtle hidden under numerous tilapia. The commercial fisherman, whom had a previous violation history with the agency, was issued a notice to appear for the violations.

Officer Fahnestock was patrolling Overlook Park at Lake Jesup in Oviedo when he observed an individual wading in the water, cast netting fish and taking them back to a bucket on shore. A resource inspection initially revealed tilapia, a non-game species. Further inspection revealed crappie hidden under lily pads in the bucket. The subject was issued a notice to appear for the violation.

LAKE COUNTY

Officer Specialist Teal and Officer Sharpe were on water patrol in the area of the Hull Boat Ramp in Clermont when they stopped a vessel to conduct a boating safety inspection. The operator exhibited signs of impairment and Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks were administered. The subject was arrested for boating under the influence and taken to the Lake County Jail.

ORANGE COUNTY

Officer Daniels responded to a call at Wekiwa Springs State Park in reference to a group of individuals that were drunk and failed to comply with orders given by the park rangers. Officer Daniels arrived on scene and encountered the subjects leaving the park in a vehicle. Contact with the operator of the vehicle revealed signs of impairment and the operator had a suspended driver's license. Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks were administered and the operator was arrested and transported to the Orange County Jail.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officers North, Hastings, Sexton and Cornell responded to a complaint from a large landowner in Ormond beach who reported in-progress trespassers on ATV's. The operators fled when they saw the officers but were eventually stopped. Both operators were charged with trespassing and attempting to flee/elude law enforcement. They were booked into the Volusia County jail.

Officers Pelzel and Bellville were on water patrol and responded to the report of a boating accident in the area of Disappearing Island. The at-fault vessel had left the scene and was identified as a rental boat from video taken by the victims. Officers Pelzel and Bellville waited at the livery for the vessel to return and contacted the operator who showed signs of impairment. Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks were administered, and the operator was arrested for boating under the influence. The subject was transported to the Volusia County Jail.

PUBLIC SAFETY

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officer Harris and Officer Specialist Miller, along with Lieutenant Zukowsky assisted St. Johns County Sheriff's Office Marine Units with waterborne traffic control and security in the Intracoastal Waterway. A flotilla of over 300 vessels began in the Mayport area of Duval County and traveled south to Palm Valley in north St. Johns County. The participating rally vessels and their occupants all displayed prudent seamanship and appropriate courtesy to passing vessels. The flotilla was well organized and was completed without incident.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

HARDEE COUNTY

Officer Karr was on patrol in Ona when he received a call reference to shots fired from a roadway. He responded to the area and observed a vehicle parked in the middle of the road with the headlights off. An inspection of the vehicle located a dead deer, two hogs, and three loaded firearms in the vehicle. One subject admitted to shooting the deer from the road and the other subjects admitted to hunting hogs from the roadway, all of which are illegal activities. Appropriate charges and citations were issued.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Officers Wilkins, Alvis, Lamoureux, Pettifer and academy recruit Brown teamed up to conduct a boating safety detail on the Alafia River. The officers inspected over forty

vessels, issued thirty-five warnings, wrote twenty UBC's and arrested six people for boating under the influence.

PASCO COUNTY

Officer Petru and Lieutenant Parisoe were in the area of Anclote River Channel responding to a report of a sailing vessel being pulled out to sea by a strong current. During their response, the officers were hailed by the operator of a power-driven vessel in the area who was lost and having trouble finding his way back to the marina at night. The officers provided direction to the operator and continued with the active search. After the sailboat was successfully located and secured, the officers searched the area to conduct a welfare check on the power-driven vessel. The officers located the vessel still out in open water past the channel and pulled alongside to speak with the operator. During interaction with the operator, they noticed several signs of impairment. Seated Field Sobriety Tasks were administered, and the operator was arrested for BUI and transported to the Pasco County Jail. The individual's vessel was impounded by a rotational wrecker.

Officer Swindell was on land patrol at Hudson Beach Boat Ramp, when he observed a vessel return from a day of fishing. Officer Swindell conducted a resource inspection and the subject was found to be in possession of two spotted sea trout, one of which was undersized. The sea trout were seized as evidence, and Officer Swindell issued the appropriate citation.

PINELLAS COUNTY

Officer Criswell and Officer Specialist Bibeau observed a group of individuals actively fishing from a seawall. The officers approached the individuals and conducted a fisheries inspection. The inspection found one of the subjects in possession of two out of season seatrout. Officer Criswell issued the individual the appropriate citation for the fisheries violation.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Officers in Tampa received a call about a small flats boat taking on water with two people struggling in the water near the Howard Frankland Bridge. Officers Pettifer and Resendez, along with Lieutenants Van Trees and Grover responded to the area and recovered the two subjects, who were wearing life jackets. The officers were able to take the flats boat in tow until additional help could arrive. The boat was saved and both subjects were returned to shore.

PINELLAS COUNTY

Officer Petru responded to a report of a sinking vessel in Clearwater Pass with eight people aboard. Prior to his arrival, a good Samaritan recovered the individuals from the water. Pinellas Sheriff's Deputies transported the uninjured individuals to Clearwater Marina while the Coast Guard worked to dewater the vessel. When Officer Petru arrived, he spoke with the individuals involved and learned the vessel had taken on a large wave and had started to sink. According to the vessel captain, the individuals were able to don life jackets before the vessel sank. Officer Petru completed a boating accident investigation.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

Officers Dudas and Sellers responded to a boat ramp on the SR 84 canal in Davie. They observed and recovered a personal watercraft that was floating half submerged in the canal. They located the owner and determined the personal watercraft had been taken from his residence in Port. St. Lucie without his knowledge. The owner met with the officers to retrieve his PWC.

Officers Dudas, Grant, Lopez and Lieutenant Laubenberger responded to the 15 Street fuel dock in Ft. Lauderdale. The officers assisted US Coast Guard with a BUI investigation. Officer Grant arrested one individual for BUI.

Officers Dudas and Lopez were on water patrol offshore of Dania Beach. They conducted a marine fisheries inspection on a vessel. The occupants had been spearfishing and were in possession of an undersized red grouper. One individual received a criminal notice to appear and the fish was taken as evidence.

Officers Harris and Seldomridge were conducting a boating accident investigation at Hillsboro Inlet when another vessel ran into the North Jetty at their location. The vessel became stuck on the shallow rocks of the jetty. Waves breaking over the jetty pushed the stuck vessel across the shallow water. The officers contacted the vessel operator to see if anyone was injured and to start the boating accident investigation. Signs of impairment were exhibited by the operator and field sobriety tasks were administered. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence.

Lieutenant McDonald and Officer Fuller responded to a complaint of a market selling egg bearing blue crab. Their investigation discovered the market was selling live egg bearing blue crabs. A total of 403 egg bearing blue crabs were seized and released to the wild and the store was cited accordingly.

GLADES COUNTY

Officer Specialist Allen was on patrol on the Lake Okeechobee when he contacted a subject fishing from a small boat. The man was from out of state and had 40 panfish in a cooler. He stated he had more in his truck and that he had been catching 50 panfish per day for the last several days. Officer Specialist Allen accompanied the subject to his truck where he had an additional 89 panfish which put the man 29 panfish over his legal possession limit of 100. A notice to appear in court was issued for the violation.

MARTIN COUNTY

Officer Hudson was on patrol near the Stuart Sandbar when he observed a Personal Watercraft (PWC) operating without a registration decal. A stop was initiated, and the operator exhibited multiple signs of impairment. Standardized Field Sobriety tasks were performed, and the operator was arrested for BUI and transported to transported to the Martin County Jail.

Officer Willems received an anonymous call regarding two individuals keeping over the bag limit and undersized snook at the St. Lucie Locks. When Officer Willems arrived, he conducted a resource inspection on two subjects fishing in the area. The inspection revealed eight snook. The bag limit for snook is one per person per day. The largest snook measured 25.5 inches, while the size limit is between 28 and 32 inches. The subjects were charged accordingly for the violations and the fish were released alive.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Loach was conducting patrol on State Road 80 when he noticed vehicles parked at the entrance to South Florida Water Management District Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) 1 East. It was past sunset, and the area is closed to the public after sunset. Officer Loach waited and observed six people leaving the closed area carrying two large buckets, a cooler, and a cast net. A resource inspection found ten game fish hidden in the buckets. The six subjects were issued citations for illegally keeping game fish caught with a cast net, being in an STA after sunset, and not having freshwater fishing licenses.

Officers Brodbeck and Partelow were on patrol in the ICW and conducted several fisheries inspections. The officers found 13 undersized fish and two license violations. The subjects were cited accordingly.

Officers Norbrothen and Merizio were on patrol in Corbett Wildlife Management Area (WMA) on the last day of the Executive Order prohibiting motorized vehicles from operating in the WMA due to COVID-19. Their patrol resulted in two criminal citations, seven non-criminal infractions, and 11 warnings for vehicle use issues in violation of the Executive Order.

Officer Ames received a complaint about a construction company breaking ground at a site known to have gopher tortoises. Officer Ames walked the construction site and found eight active burrows. The project manager was present and was advised to stop

work for the next 28 days and to start the Disturbed Site Permit process. Construction work stop immediately, and the project manager started the permit process.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

BROWARD COUNTY

Officers Seldomridge and Harris were on patrol on the ICW in central Broward County when they observed smoke coming out of the cabin of a nearby vessel. They pulled alongside and removed all seven occupants and a dog from the vessel. Moments later the vessel was engulfed in flames. Fort Lauderdale and Broward Fire Rescue arrived to put out the fire.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Officers responded to a fatal vessel accident near Star Island. One vessel fled the scene and was later located nearby. The investigative team effort resulted in the operator being arrested and booked into jail on several felony charges.

MONROE COUNTY

CASES

Officers Cobb and Sapp were conducting water patrol approximately 5 miles south of Key West and observed a vessel inbound with numerous rods and reels openly displayed throughout the vessel. A vessel stop and resource inspection revealed an undersized black grouper. The captain of the vessel was cited accordingly and issued a notice to appear.

Lieutenant Yetter and Officer Sapp received a wildlife alert in the area of Tarpon Belly Keys. The alert indicated that there were subjects camping on the island and that they were in possession of out of season spiny lobster. Lieutenant Yetter and Officer Sapp discovered the campground and a vessel moored nearby with spiny lobster legs and antennas inside. An inspection of the camper's coolers revealed five out of season spiny lobster. The campers were issued notices to appear.

Officers Thompson and Hoppe witnessed a vessel producing a heavy wake in Whale Harbor Channel near Islamorada. Officer Thompson noticed multiple indicators of impairment from the operator during a safety inspection and conducted a BUI investigation. After field sobriety exercises were conducted, the operator was arrested for BUI and transported to the Plantation Key Jail.

Officers Hoppe and Thompson were on water patrol bayside of Mile Marker 89 in Tavernier, when a boat almost collided with them. The officers stopped the vessel for a safety inspection and to see why the operator failed to react to avoid collision. Signs of impairment were exhibited by the operator and field sobriety exercises were utilized. The operator was arrested for Boating Under the Influence and transported to Plantation Key Jail.

COLLIER COUNTY

CASES

Officer Rubenstein was on patrol in the Big Cypress area and smelled smoke near one of the popular fishing areas. With active wildfires occurring in Collier County, he approached the area to further investigate and observed a group of individuals having a bon fire. The bon fire was in an Australian Pine thicket with no barrier around the fire, and no appropriate way to extinguish it. Officer Rubenstein instructed them to extinguish the fire and cited the responsible individual accordingly.

While conducting shoreline park patrol of Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park, Officer Plussa discovered a vessel moored to shore in a closed area and having evaded park entrance user fees. The operator was fishing and feeding shorebirds gathered around him within the park. An inspection revealed him to be fishing with a two-year expired license, having multiple vessel safety equipment violations, and consuming multiple alcoholic beverages within the park. The subject was issued two citations and six warnings for the violations.

Officer Oldsen conducted a vessel stop to address a navigation light violation. After conducting an inspection of the vessel, the subject was found to be over the aggregate bag limit for snapper. He was also over the bag limit for yellowtail snapper, five of which were undersize. The subject was cited accordingly.

Officers Polly, Arbogast, and Georgevich were on water patrol in Goodland Bay when they observed a vessel traveling towards them with two occupants onboard. The operator was trying to alert the Officers by waving his hands and yelling. The vessel was running with no one at the helm and was floating in the middle of the marked channel. The operator appeared to be impaired and a seated battery of tests were conducted. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence and transported to the Naples Jail Center.

Officer Rubenstein received a report of the occupants of two vehicles shooting rifles within the Picayune Strand State Forest. Officers Arbogast, Georgevich, and Lieutenant Bulger located the vehicles off the Triple G Loop and Sabal Palm Road. One of the vehicles was stuck in the sand, off the designated trail. The three individuals explained that they were target shooting with the rifle. The officers warned them for target shooting and cited them for being off the designated trail.

Officer Georgevich and Lieutenant Bulger observed vehicle operator throw trash out the window. After initiating a vehicle stop, the operator admitted that he knew that he was driving with his license suspended. The officers charged the operator for littering, being inside the state forest at night, and knowingly driving with his license suspended.

Officers Arbogast, Curbelo, and Georgevich conducted a resource inspection on a vessel fishing within Goodland Bay. The inspection found two undersized mangrove snapper. A few months prior, Officer Arbogast had warned the same individual for possessing four undersized mangrove snapper, along with many other licensing and safety equipment violations. The subject was issued a notice to appear for the violation.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

MONROE COUNTY

Lieutenant Yetter and Officers Janzen and Sapp were conducting offshore patrol in the Dry Tortugas North Reserve. The officers observed a vessel inside the reserve with numerous rods and reels openly displayed throughout the vessel. A vessel stop and inspection was conducted, revealing eight red grouper, two mutton snapper, and 11 yellowtail snapper. The captain of the vessel was cited accordingly.

COLLIER COUNTY

FWC units supported the Collier County Sheriff's Office in their wildfire response impacting Golden Gate Estates and shutting down I-75 for several days. FWC Officers utilized their 4x4 patrol vehicles to notify residents in rural areas of the mandatory evacuations of the approaching fire.

Officer Plussa conducted beach patrol of Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park with four Collier County Sheriff's Office patrol units. They inspected over a dozen vessels and 50 park patrons. Officer Plussa issued 26 written warnings for feeding threatened wildlife species and evasion of user fees for entering the park by vessel and through an undesignated area.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

MONROE COUNTY

PIO Officer Dube, Recruiter Pestka and Officers Rafter and Thompson volunteered to help distribute meals and groceries at Founders Park in Islamorada. FWC officers were joined by Deputies with Monroe County Sheriff's Office, Monroe County State Attorney Ward, Congresswoman Powell and other countless volunteers. Islamorada Mayor Forster and his restaurant, Mangrove Mike's, spearheaded the event with donations from Feeding South Florida and United Way. Local food banks handed out approximately 1000 meals to Keys locals.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROL

MONROE COUNTY

In response to repeated reports of personal watercraft (PWC's) violating manatee slow speed zones and speeding near other boaters, Officer Plussa focused his water patrol in the area of Delnor-Wiggins State Park. Several PWC's were found in violation of the speed laws and citations/warnings were issued accordingly.

Officer Plussa observed a personal watercraft (PWC) violating the slow speed, minimum wake Manatee zone and carelessly speeding in between boats that were adhering to the speed zone near Wiggins Pass. The PWC operator was not wearing a personal floatation device (PFD) or a kill switch lanyard as required. Officer Plussa conducted a stop to address the violations. Citations and written warnings were issued accordingly.

Lieutenant Mahoney observed people trespassing behind a posted No Trespassing sign in the Fiddler's Creek neighborhood canal along CR-951. The juveniles were seen fishing in the Fiddler's Creek pond. Lieutenant Mahoney, Officer Plussa, and community security personnel trespassed three juveniles from the property. Two of the three were issued warnings for no fishing license.

COLLIER COUNTY

WILDLIFE RESPONSE

Officers Plussa and Neal responded to a report of an entangled burrowing owl in Marco Island. They observed a chick that appeared to have an entanglement wrapped around its leg. With Audubon of Western Everglades Biologist Smith and Hall, the officers helped capture the owl. The officers assisted in removing fishing line and Spanish moss wrapped around its leg. The owl was delivered to the Von Arx Wildlife hospital at the Conservancy of Southwest Florida for further care.