

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



Patrol, Protect, Preserve

July 10, 2020 through July 16, 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 N. Basford and Coker were on water patrol in Grand Lagoon when they observed a wave runner being operated at a high rate of speed through the idle speed zone. They conducted a vessel stop on the wave runner and observed signs of impairment from the operator. Standard Field Sobriety Tasks (SFST) were conducted and the operator was arrested for boating under the influence and booked into the Bay County Jail.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Officers Mcleod and Hartzog were on water patrol in Apalachicola Bay when they observed a vessel return from fishing. They stopped the vessel to conduct a resource inspection and found the subjects in possession of three undersized red grouper. They also discovered an out of season triggerfish. The subjects were cited, and the fish were seized as evidence.

Officers Hartzog and Mcleod were on water patrol when they observed several subjects returning from fishing. They approached the vessel to conduct a resource inspection and found the subjects in possession of over the bag limit of red snapper. The fish was seized as evidence and the owner was cited.

Officer Sizemore and Kossey were on water patrol in Alligator Harbor. They observed a vessel return from fishing and conducted a resource inspection. They found the subjects in possession of over the bag limit of red snapper. The fish were seized as evidence and the owner was cited.

Officer Sizemore was patrolling Bald Point State Park when he encountered three subjects leaving the fishing pier. When the subjects saw Officer Sizemore, they retrieved a fish from their ice chest and threw it into the water. Officer Sizemore waded into the water and retrieved the fish, which was an undersized red drum. The subject was cited for possession of undersized red drum and interference with an FWC Officer.

Lieutenant Olson and Officers Hofheinz and Travis responded to an overturned vessel one mile south of Alligator Point. The vessel took on water and which caused the engine to fail. The vessel capsized due to bad weather conditions. A good Samaritan picked up seven individuals in the water and towed the capsized vessel to Rock Landing. All seven individuals were uninjured.

GULF COUNTY

Senior Officer M. Webb was checking vessels for compliance of state boating safety/fishery requirements in the Mexico Beach Canal. He stopped an incoming non-resident vessel that was returning from fishing. An inspection revealed that the operator was in possession of three (a full bag limit) undersized king mackerel. The appropriate citation was issued.

LEON COUNTY

Officer Specialist K. Pekerol was on patrol at the Highway 12 landing on Lake Iamonia. A vessel with two occupants on board approached the landing, but when they saw the officer, they turned around and went back out to the lake. About an hour later the vessel came back to the landing and Officer Pekerol conducted a resource inspection. The two occupants were in possession of six bass. Upon measuring, four of them were over 16 inches. Appropriate citations were issued, and the two illegal bass were photographed and released alive back into the lake.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officers P. Rockwell and Maltais were working marine fisheries in the Joes Bayou area inspecting vessels returning from offshore fishing. While conducting a marine fisheries inspection on a vessel, four fresh fish fillets were located and identified as snapper. Appropriate citations were issued.

Senior Officers H. and M. Webb were working a special detail targeting boating safety enforcement within the Destin/Crab Island area. They stopped a pontoon vessel with several people on board to perform a boating safety inspection. The operator of the vessel showed signs of impairment and Standard Field Sobriety Tests (SFST) were

conducted. The operator was arrested for Boating Under the Influence and was transported to the South Annex Holding Facility.

WAKULLA COUNTY

Officer Morales responded to a young female who was operating a vessel in the St. Marks River. She said that she was shocked by the steering wheel due to bad weather conditions. Emergency services were called and determined that she was unharmed.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

ALACHUA COUNTY

Officer Reith was on patrol near Worthington Springs when he observed an individual fishing with a rod and reel. Officer Reith conducted a license inspection and discovered the individual had an active warrant out of Alachua County. The individual was arrested and processed into the Alachua County Jail.

CITRUS COUNTY

Lieutenant Jones was on water patrol in Crystal Bay when he observed many boats out with people hunting for scallops. He observed an individual operate a pontoon boat within one hundred yards of a boat with a properly posted dive flag and two snorkelers in the water. The operator was issued a misdemeanor uniform boating citation for reckless operation of a vessel.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

K9 Officer Specialist Gill was called to assist the Florida Highway Patrol in locating evidence. He responded to the scene of a stolen vehicle and deployed his K9 Friar in a wooded area nearby, where two subjects were found hiding. During the search K9 Friar located car keys where one of the subjects was hiding. The car keys were to the stolen vehicle. The subject was charged with theft of the vehicle.

DUVAL COUNTY

Officers Geib, Read and Lieutenant Givens stopped a fishing vessel returning to the St. Johns River during the opening weekend of the red snapper season. Officer Read boarded the fishing boat and found four occupants in possession of nine red snapper. A citation was issued, and the case will be forwarded to NOAA.

SUWANNEE COUNTY

Senior Officer Specialists Johnston and Burnsed were patrolling the Santa Fe River when they saw a vessel without proper navigation lights. When the officers stopped the vessel to address the safety violation, the operator showed signs of being impaired. The operator performed Field Sobriety Tasks and was arrested for Boating Under the Influence.

TAYLOR COUNTY

Officers Waychoff and Touchton were on water patrol when they received a call about a sinking vessel two miles offshore of Keaton Beach. The officers located the sunken vessel and multiple occupants in the water. The officers, along with nearby fishing vessels, retrieved the occupants from the water and transported them to an awaiting ambulance on shore. The two elderly occupants were treated for minor injuries and released by EMS.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Balgo observed several individuals fishing near Marina Park Boat Ramp. A resource inspection located an individual in possession of a tarpon without a tarpon tag. The individual also harvested the tarpon by illegal method with a cast net. The individual was cited accordingly.

Officers Balgo, Hallsten, and Kearney conducted high visibility patrols around Port Canaveral during the federal red snapper season. They performed many resource and boating safety inspections, writing violations for expired flares as well as vessel registration violations. The officers wrote one federal case for over the bag limit of red snapper, two state citations for undersize cobia, and one charter boat license violation.

Officer Hallsten responded to a late-night disabled vessel near Haulover Canal that had a subject who was wet and experiencing hypothermia. Officer Hallsten located the disabled vessel in the dark and transported the victim to Parrish Park boat ramp where he was evaluated by medical personnel.

While conducting vessel inspections, Lieutenant Davis and Officer Kearney met a pair of jet ski operators that had rented the jet skis. They performed a livery inspection and found that the jet skis were missing documentation and safety equipment. The livery operator was contacted and came to the site. He was issued a misdemeanor citation for failing to provide safety equipment with a rented vessel and several warnings for failure to properly document the rental and safety training.

Investigator Horst responded to a complaint of three subjects disturbing nesting sea turtles. When Investigator Horst arrived in the area, he observed the subjects digging on the beach in the dark into a marked sea turtle nest. The subjects also were observed disturbing a sea turtle attempting to nest. The subjects were issued a notice to appear.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Officer Conrad observed multiple individuals fishing by the Skyway Relief Bridge and made contact to conduct a fisheries inspection. One individual was in possession of an undersized snook during a closed period and was cited accordingly.

PASCO COUNTY

Officers Petru and Angelis responded to Anclote River Park in reference to a report of a single vessel boating accident that occurred with a PWC. The accident happened in the vicinity of Anclote Key Preserve State Park when a person was injured after both occupants were ejected off the PWC. EMS evaluated the injured person at the boat ramp and the subject was transported to a local hospital for further treatment. The accident investigation is ongoing.

PINELLAS COUNTY

Lieutenant Bibeau observed an individual wading along the shoreline underneath a bridge. Lieutenant Bibeau contacted the individual as they were returning to their vehicle and conducted a fisheries inspection. The inspection revealed the individual was in possession of 178 bay scallops. Lieutenant Bibeau wrote the individual a misdemeanor citation for harvesting bay scallops in a closed area.

POLK COUNTY

While on patrol at Lake Summit, Lieutenant Van Trees observed a child operating an unregistered Personal Watercraft (PWC) alone. When the child arrived back at shore, he was greeted by two adults. Lieutenant Van Trees approached the group and confirmed that the child was ten years old and that the PWC was new and had been purchased just days earlier. It is a second-degree misdemeanor to allow a child under fourteen to operate a PWC alone. The child's father confirmed that he let his son drive the PWC alone and was given a notice to appear for the violation.

While on land patrol in Saddle Creek Fish Management Area (FMA), Officer Carter observed a subject using a cast net from the bank. Officer Carter conducted a fishery check on the subject and addressed the cast net violation. It is prominently posted at

the entrance of the management area that it is a second-degree misdemeanor to use a cast net within the FMA. The subject was issued a notice to appear for the violation.

While on water patrol, Officers Earls and Munkwitz observed a personal watercraft (PWC) operating in a reckless manner. The PWC was traveling at a high rate of speed turning at the last minute to spray a stationary vessel with its wake. Officer Earls initiated a stop to conduct a boating safety inspection and address the violation with the operator. The operator was issued a notice to appear for reckless operation of a vessel.

While on water patrol Officers Earls and Munkwitz observed a personal watercraft (PWC) operating in a reckless manner on Lake Shipp. The PWC was spraying other vessels that were pulled up on the beach with its wake. Officer Earls initiated a vessel stop on the PWC to conduct a boating safety inspection and address the reckless operation problem. The operator was issued warnings for improperly displayed registration, expired registration and not properly wearing his personal flotation device. He was also given a notice to appear for reckless operation of a vessel.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

PINELLAS COUNTY

Officers Godfrey, Hughes, Criswell, Officer Specialist Alvis, and Lieutenant Wells conducted a multiday patrol on the Offshore Patrol Vessel Gulf Sentry. They patrolled from St. Petersburg north into federal waters, through a habitat area of particular concern called the "Florida Middle Grounds" and finished their patrol in Panama City. During the patrol, two separate commercial fishing vessels were federally cited for not having turtle mitigation gear. One vessel was south of the Florida Middle Grounds and one of the vessels was in Florida Middle Grounds. Also, one vessel had been stranded at sea for five days. They were melting ice from the vessel's fish box to drink; they had shot all their flares and only had a satellite phone. The FWC Gulf Sentry crew provided the commercial fishermen water, flares, and engine oil. The fishermen repaired the oil leak and, with the oil provided by FWC, they were able to get the vessel operational and make it safely to shore.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

Officer Sellers responded to Markham Park boat ramp regarding a boating accident. Lieutenants Carcasses and McDonald also responded to the scene. Officer Sellers conducted a boating accident investigation. An individual operating a personal watercraft crashed into a wooded area in the western canal of Markham Park. The operator suffered a severe leg injury.

Officer Ryan was on patrol in the vicinity of the Loxahatchee Road Area 2 boat ramp. He observed an individual operating a vehicle doing donuts, throwing gravel up towards parked vehicles and pedestrians in the area. He conducted a traffic stop on the vehicle and issued the driver a criminal citation for operating a vehicle with a driver license expired more than six months.

MARTIN COUNTY

Officers Rea and Hudson observed two subjects fishing underneath the Stuart Causeway. Upon inspection of their cooler the officers located an undersized mutton snapper. The subjects were read their Miranda Rights and refused to answer questions. One of the subjects had previously been warned by FWC. Both subjects received notice to appear citations and one received an additional citation for no saltwater fishing license.

Officers Norbrothen and Merizio were on patrol of the Hungryland Wildlife Environmental Area (WEA) and observed a vehicle driving toward the western end of the management area. They noticed the subject was not in the WEA and observed tire tracks leaving the WEA from a gate on canal road 7N, which requires a permit to enter and exit from. The subject was contacted and was unable to provide the necessary permit. The appropriate citation was issued.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol approximately seven miles offshore of West Palm Beach when a vessel was observed with two occupants actively fishing. The vessel did not have registration numbers or a vessel name and hailing port. A vessel stop was initiated to conduct a resource inspection. The inspection discovered seven dolphin in a cooler, five of which were below the 20 inch minimum size limit. The captain of the vessel was issued the appropriate citations and warnings.

Officer Ryan was on patrol and conducted a resource inspection on individuals freshwater fishing. One individual had an active warrant out of Palm Beach County. The individual was arrested and transported to the West Palm Beach County Jail.

Officers Norbrothen and Merizio received a call that a vehicle was left abandoned in J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Upon arriving at the scene, the officers noticed the vehicle had left the graded roadway, struck a tree, and was left inoperable. The officers called for the vehicle to be towed since it was potentially leaking oil and gasoline into the wetland and could not be driven. A welfare check at the registered owner's residence indicated the subject had been home after the accident occurred and was not hospitalized. Approximately four hours after the officers arrived on scene, the subjects who were in the vehicle at the time of the crash arrived to attempt to retrieve the vehicle. Both occupants had sustained minor injuries from the crash. The driver

received two uniform traffic citations for failing to report the crash to law enforcement and careless driving resulting in a crash.

Officer Ames observed a subject waist deep in a local lake cast netting. An inspection found the subject in possession of two largemouth bass and a peacock bass which were caught by illegal method (cast net). The subject was cited accordingly.

Lieutenant Hankinson observed three subjects spearfishing in the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) without the use of a state approved divers down flag. Upon closer inspection, one subject was in possession of a 15.5-inch speared mutton snapper. Minimum size to possess mutton snapper in southeastern Atlantic waters is 18 inches. The violations were addressed appropriately.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Officers Sample and Presser stopped several vessels in Biscayne Bay to conduct fisheries inspections. Three separate vessel stops revealed subjects in possession of multiple undersized dolphin (mahi-mahi). The subjects were cited accordingly for the violations.

Officers Presser and Sample were on water patrol when they were waved down by a boater. The boat captain informed them that he witnessed a man fall off his boat nearby and the boat was now unoccupied and doing circles around the man in the water. The officers went to the scene and found the man swimming in the water trying to stay clear from his boat. Officer Sample maneuvered the patrol boat to protect the man while Officer Presser helped him on board. Once the man was out of the water, Officer Sample followed the runaway boat until they were close enough for Officer Presser to safely board the boat and shut down the engine. The man was returned to his boat unharmed.

While on water patrol in the vicinity of Caesars Creek, Officers Dunn and Cartaya observed a vessel with three men returning from offshore. The vessel had fishing gear visibly stowed on board. They conducted a vessel stop to inspect the vessel for fish and found the men to be in possession of ten undersize dolphin. The appropriate citations were issued.

COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Rubenstein was on patrol of the Ten Thousand Islands Wildlife Refuge and observed an individual cast netting in a popular bird watching area. Upon inspection of his catch the individual was found to be in possession of a juvenile tarpon and a blue gill

that had both been harvested with an illegal method. The individual was cited accordingly.