

# FWC

## Division of Law Enforcement Weekly Report



**April 13, 2018 through April 19, 2018**

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

***Patrol, Protect, Preserve***

### **NORTHWEST REGION**

#### **CASES**

#### **ESCAMBIA COUNTY**

Lieutenant Lambert received a complaint that four individuals were smoking marijuana at Fillingim Landing in Perdido River Wildlife Management Area. When Lieutenant Lambert arrived, he noticed the individuals described sitting near the river's edge. After a brief time, all four individuals were seen smoking marijuana from a large glass pipe. As Lieutenant Lambert approached the group, one subject was attempting to conceal an item in the sand. Lieutenant Lambert located a methamphetamine pipe and a straw that contained drug residue buried in the sand. Additional bags containing methamphetamine and cannabis were located. Officers Allgood and Manning arrived to assist. One subject was arrested and transported to the Escambia County Jail for possession of methamphetamine, marijuana and drug paraphernalia. The other subjects were issued notice to appear citations for possession of marijuana and drug paraphernalia.

While offshore in federal waters, approximately 17 miles south of Navarre, Officers Rockwell and Matechik along with two National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) officers conducted a joint enforcement patrol in the Offshore Patrol Vessel Vigilance. The officers saw a vessel heading north at a slow rate of speed toward state waters. As they approached, they saw one of the occupants filleting triggerfish. The individual was unaware the officers were next to him. He was still in the process of filleting fish when he turned around and noticed the officers next to him watching his actions. Surprised by the officers' presence, he threw the fish he was filleting in the water. The individual was warned not discard any more fish and the

officers conducted a fishery boarding. During the boarding, the officers found the individual and his crew to be in possession of triggerfish fillets, over the bag limit of triggerfish, undersized triggerfish, and possession of red snapper during closed season. The appropriate action was taken for all violations.

While offshore in federal waters aboard the Offshore Patrol Vessel Intrepid, Lieutenant Marlow and Officer Nelson boarded a charter vessel approximately 11 miles south of Dog Island. The captain and crew were found to be in possession of gag grouper during federal closure. The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

While offshore in federal waters aboard the Offshore Patrol Vessel Intrepid, Lieutenant Marlow and Officer Nelson boarded a vessel and found them to be in possession of undersized black sea bass and some fillets as well. Another boarding, approximately 25 miles south of Alligator Point on a vessel that had previously been found to be in possession of illegal fish, resulted in the officers locating gag grouper during federal closure. The appropriate action was taken for the violations on both stops.

#### OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Jarvis responded to a single vessel boating accident that occurred near Crab Island. Through an investigation, the officer determined the vessel involved was a personal watercraft (PWC) with a single occupant. Okaloosa County Sheriff's Marine Deputy provided information on the accident. The operator suffered a dislocated shoulder and was transported by a friend to a local hospital for treatment. The PWC involved was rented. Officer Jarvis interviewed the operator. The operator was executing a sharp turn when she was ejected off the PWC and, in the process, dislocated her shoulder.

Officer Bartlett was on land patrol in the Eglin Wildlife Management Area and responded to assist Officer White regarding an individual in a closed area. Officer Bartlett located the individual and escorted the driver out of the closed area. Officer Bartlett saw the individual wearing hunter's camouflage and in possession of a shotgun. The subject explained he was turkey hunting and failed to check the Eglin website regarding the closed area. The subject was issued a notice to appear citation for entering a closed area.

#### SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Ramos saw two people fishing at an isolated location near a boat ramp. Officer Ramos conducted a fisheries inspection and asked to see their fishing license. The subjects acted extremely nervous and could not produce a fishing license or any other form of identification. As Officer Ramos continued the investigation and checked one subject for any weapons on his person. The subject attempted to flee on foot. Officer Ramos caught him and a physical encounter ensued until he was placed in handcuffs. The subject who fought with Officer Ramos was arrested and cited for resisting arrest.

with violence, interference with an FWC Officer and failure to produce a saltwater fishing license.

Lieutenants Hahr and Lambert were patrolling in the Blackwater State Forest when they saw from a concealed location a group of campers talking about smoking cannabis. After a few minutes, a person in the group rolled a cannabis cigarette and passed it around to the other four people. Once they contacted the group, they discovered that the youngest person in the group was only 16 years old and the two older adults were her parents. All five were cited for possession of cannabis and the girl's parents were cited for contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

### OKALOOSA COUNTY

Lieutenant Clark provided police presence and traffic control, supported park staff, and assisted with the FWC outreach booth during the 11th Annual Mattie Kelley Family Estuary Festival. It's estimated over 1500 people participated. Fred Gannon Rocky Bayou State Park hosted the event.

## NORTH CENTRAL REGION

### COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

#### SUWANNEE COUNTY

Officer Boone spoke to several students at Branford High School. The topics of discussion included public safety, resource conservation and aspects of a career with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Officer Boone attended the annual Catfish Festival in Branford. Approximately 1,000 people were in attendance. There was a boating safety display and Officer Boone answered a broad variety of job-related questions.

#### LAFAYETTE COUNTY

Officer Davenport taught the law portion of a Hunter Education class. There were several students with parents in attendance for the class. Numerous related questions were answered on the topics of conservational enforcement, public safety and hunting.

## NORTHEAST REGION

### CASES

## LAKE COUNTY

Officer Scrambling was checking two subjects fishing a small lake in Tavares. During a resource inspection it was determined both men did not have a fishing license. Further investigation revealed one of the men had an active warrant for his arrest. He was subsequently arrested and booked into the Lake County Jail.

Officer Scrambling responded to a brush fire at Lake Griffin State Park in Leesburg. An investigation revealed that a man had started a small campfire in the woods and it got out of control. Officer Scrambling cited the subject appropriately.

## VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer West and personnel from U.S. Coast Guard Station Ponce Inlet were on water patrol in the New Smyrna Beach area when they witnessed a boat run aground on a sandbar. The boat was being operated by an adult male who was the only occupant. After performing a boating safety inspection for the required safety equipment, the operator showed signs of impairment. He was subsequently arrested for boating under the influence (BUI) and booked into the Volusia County Jail.

## MARION COUNTY

Prior to the 2018 spring turkey season, Officers Dias and Hargabus located a baited area and folding chair on private land bordering Halpata Preserve. After checking back on the area, they found where a turkey had been taken. Investigator Sumpter was assisting with checking on the area and caught the subject attempting to take turkeys within 100 yards of the bait. The adult male was placed under arrest for attempting to take turkeys within 100 yards of a bait station, hunting with a revoked hunting license, and having outstanding warrants out of Sumter County.

## DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

### ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officers Miller, Harris, Graves, Thomas, Lawrence and Greenier, Lieutenant Zukowsky, and St. Johns County Sheriff's Office Marine Deputy Underwood assisted Northeast Regional Biologist Kropp and his team with the posting of the shorebird nesting area on Julia's Island. The island, just northeast of downtown St. Augustine on the Intracoastal Waterway, has been home to several species of shorebird and wading birds during the annual nesting season (April through August). The group of officers and biologists identified the nesting areas on the island and segregated them from other areas of the popular boating site by posting shorebird signage and boundary twine.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

### ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officers Thomas and Harris participated in the law enforcement escort/procession at sea for slain Texas Tech University Officer Floyd East, Jr. The event was spearheaded by the St. Augustine Police Department. Officer East's cremated remains were entombed in a reef ball and, per his family's request, were laid to rest at the Andy King artificial reef approximately eight miles southeast of St. Augustine Inlet. Public service agencies with participating vessel escorts included the FWC, St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, St. Augustine Police and Fire/Rescue Departments, and U.S. Coast Guard Station Mayport.

## **SOUTHWEST REGION**

### **CASES**

#### **CHARLOTTE COUNTY**

Officers Mitchell, Price, and Lieutenant Frantz responded to a call about a boating accident involving a tow boat. The officers determined that the tow boat operator was towing in a boat with several occupants on board when some of the occupants were ejected into the water. Everyone was able to get back to safety aboard the vessel and were brought to shore where medical services were waiting. One of the individuals suffered an injury to her ankle and was transported to the hospital for examination. The accident investigation is ongoing.

#### **HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

While on patrol, Officer Bibeau received a call from dispatch advising him that three individuals were catching and keeping snook with the use of a net in Upper Tampa Bay. Officer Bibeau arrived on scene a short time later and located the subjects' vehicle. He waited in a concealed location and contacted the individuals as they were preparing to leave the area. Officer Bibeau conducted a fisheries inspection and located one undersized sheepshead, one undersized trout, one undersized red drum, and 10 undersized snook, all of which had been caught with a cast net. The smallest snook was 7 inches and the largest 12 inches. Officer Bibeau wrote the subjects a total of 11 misdemeanor citations and four warnings for the fisheries violations.

While on patrol at the Courtney Campbell Bridge, Officer Martinez saw a subject cast netting fish along the seawall. He approached the man and performed a resource inspection of his catch and found him to be in possession of seven undersized sheepshead, the largest one measuring 8½ inches. Officer Martinez seized the fish and cited the man for being in possession of undersized sheepshead.

While on land patrol, Officers Caldwell and Messman saw an individual throwing a cast net on the Alafia River. They watched the individual fish and when he waded back to shore, they initiated a resource inspection. Through the course of the inspection they

found the individual to be in possession of a 14 and 15-inch snook. He was cited for possession of undersized snook and illegal method of take (cast net) of snook.

While on patrol at Williams Park, Officer Pettifer saw an individual operating a vessel and having trouble docking. Officer Pettifer approached the vessel from the dock and offered assistance. The operator refused to accept any help. The vessel eventually docked and Officer Pettifer initiated a boating safety inspection. Through the course of the inspection, signs of alcohol impairment were coming from the vessel operator. The operator was requested to perform standardized seated field sobriety tasks. Based on Officer Pettifer's observations, the operator was cited and arrested for operating a vessel while under the influence of drugs or alcohol to the extent that his normal faculties were impaired. At the jail he refused to submit to a breath test and was issued a civil penalty for refusing to submit to a lawful test of his breath.

## LEE COUNTY

Officer Winton and FWC Intern Shindel were on vessel patrol in Pine Island Sound when they saw a commercial stone crab vessel transiting in from offshore waters. Officer Winton noticed that the vessel was carrying many stone crab traps, so he stopped the vessel in order to conduct a resource inspection. During the inspection it was determined that the vessel's occupants were in possession of 52 undersized stone crab claws. The captain of the vessel was issued a notice to appear for the violation, and the undersized claws were retained as evidence.

Officer Winton was on vessel patrol at the mouth of the Caloosahatchee River when he saw a fishing vessel returning from offshore waters. The vessel was stopped so that a fisheries inspection could be conducted. The captain stated that they had caught two red grouper as well as Spanish mackerel. The captain produced both red grouper, one of which measured well under the minimum size limit. Officer Winton searched the vessel and located an additional undersized red grouper in the live-well. The captain of the vessel was issued a notice to appear for the violations.

Officers Winton and Hazelwood were on land patrol targeting night time Wildlife Management Area (WMA) violations when they saw a vehicle driving erratically and failing to maintain a single lane. A traffic stop was conducted and the driver was exhibiting signs of impairment. Field sobriety tasks were completed and it was determined that the driver was operating his vehicle while his normal faculties were impaired. The driver was placed under arrest for DUI and was transported to the Lee County jail where he refused to provide a breath sample.

## MANATEE COUNTY

While on patrol around Long Boat Pass, Officer Gonzales stopped an individual for a boating safety inspection. During the stop it was apparent that the operator of the vessel was under the influence of either drugs or alcohol. Officer Gonzales performed field sobriety tasks on the subject to determine his level of impairment. After the officer

completed his investigation the operator was placed under arrest for boating under the influence. The operator submitted to a breath test at the Manatee County jail and blew over the legal limit of .08 breath alcohol content. He will have to appear in court for his violations.

Officer Martinez received a wildlife alert stating that a male was trespassing and cast netting in a community pond. He arrived on scene and saw the man throwing a cast net into the water. Officer Martinez performed a resource inspection of the man's catch and found him to be in possession of two black bass and multiple tilapia. It is illegal to take freshwater game fish by any method other than rod and reel. Officer Martinez cited the subject for illegal method of take for freshwater game fish.

#### PASCO COUNTY

Lieutenant Parisoe was on land patrol around Serenova Preserve. In the parking area, he noticed several individuals that had returned from fishing. Lieutenant Parisoe conducted a resource inspection and found in their cooler an alligator that was approximately four feet in length. An investigation revealed that one of the individuals had caught and subsequently harvested the alligator. Appropriate citations were issued for the violation and the alligator was seized as evidence.

#### PINELLAS COUNTY

While on patrol at the Tierra Verde Bridge, Officer Martinez saw three males fishing from the seawall. As Officer Martinez approached the males one of them turned towards the car behind him, tucked something into the door jamb, then promptly closed the door and began walking away from the car. Officer Martinez began a resource inspection and found the males to be in possession of two undersized seatrout. He then walked around the vehicle to see if anymore coolers or buckets were inside the vehicle. He noticed a baggy of marijuana in the driver's side door jamb. Officer Martinez conducted an inspection of the vehicle and found 16 baggies of cocaine in the door jam. He interviewed the three males and at the end of his investigation arrested one subject for possession of cocaine and possession of cocaine with intent to sell. He also cited one of the other subjects for possession of undersized sea trout.

While on patrol in Gulfport, Officer Martinez saw a subject cast netting into a canal. Officer Martinez watched him fish, catch fish with his cast net and store the fish in a bucket. Once the subject was through fishing, Officer Martinez approached him and performed a resource inspection. He found several mullet and a juvenile tarpon. He asked the subject if he had a tarpon tag and the man advised that he did not. Officer Martinez seized the juvenile tarpon and cited the subject for illegal method of take of tarpon and harvesting a tarpon without a tarpon tag.

Officer Martinez was patrolling at Gandy Beach when he saw a vehicle parked on the beach after the designated beach hours. He approached the vehicle and spoke to three subjects who were sitting in and around the vehicle. As he told them that they were

trespassing he smelled a strong odor of marijuana coming from the vehicle. Officer Martinez then found marijuana residue and 1½ ecstasy pills in the vehicle. He read the subjects their Miranda warnings and post Miranda one of the subjects claimed the drugs were hers. The female subject had a bookbag which she admitted contained more marijuana. Officer Martinez searched the bag and found 132 grams of marijuana, 36 alprazolam pills, as well as baggies and scales. The subject was arrested and cited accordingly.

While on patrol at the Fort Desoto Pier, Officer Martinez saw a male fishing towards the end of the pier. He introduced himself and performed a resource inspection of the subject's catch. The subject had 10 undersized mackerel. Officer Martinez seized the fish and cited the man for being in possession of 10 undersized Spanish mackerel.

While on patrol Officer Pettifer saw a jet ski operating on plane in a slow speed zone near the Gandy Bridge. Upon conducting a vessel stop and subsequent boating safety inspection, Officer Pettifer determined the individual operating the jet ski had rented the jet ski. He did not possess a boating safety card and was not required to take the temporary boating safety course by the individual who rented the jet ski. Officer Pettifer remained on scene for approximately 30 minutes until the owner came to pick up the jet ski. After interviewing the owner of the jet ski, Officer Pettifer determined he rented two jet skis, did not have insurance, and did not require the operators to take a boating safety course. The owner was issued two citations for renting a jet ski without the required insurance and allowing an individual to rent a jet ski without providing the required boating safety course.

While on patrol at the North Skyway Fishing Pier, Officer Messman saw two individuals sitting in a truck with fishing gear loaded in the truck bed. Officer Messman approached the individuals and asked them if they caught any fish. One of the individuals stated they did not have any luck. Officer Messman saw a cooler and obtained consent to search it. The cooler contained one gag grouper, two undersized mangrove snapper, and one undersized lane snapper. The individual in possession of the cooler was cited for possession of gag grouper during a closed season and possession of undersized mangrove snapper. He was issued a warning for possession of undersized lane snapper.

## POLK COUNTY

Captive Wildlife Investigator Hough and Lieutenant DeLacure worked a case follow-up on an individual that was in unlawful possession of a Class II green monkey in North West Lakeland. They spoke with the defendant's mother and the defendant agreed to come to his mother's residence with the monkey. Prior to arrival, he dropped the animal off at another family member's residence. The defendant was interviewed and produced paperwork for the supplier of the monkey and agreed to take Investigators to where the monkey was concealed. Investigator Hough cited the defendant, who had smuggled the monkey into Florida from Mexico, with unlawful possession of class II green monkey without license, unlawful importation of wildlife without an official certificate of veterinary

inspection, possession of class II primate at an unpermitted location, and tampering with evidence. The defendant was incarcerated in the Polk County Jail due to flight risk. The class II green monkey was transported and boarded at a licensed primate facility.

## SEARCH AND RESCUE

### PINELLAS COUNTY

Officer Ferguson worked the “Shark Bite Challenge,” a kayak, paddleboard, and outrigger vessel race that brings contestants from around the world to compete. During the outrigger races, two of the vessels capsized in four-foot seas ejecting the occupants. With the assistance of a rescue diver, Officer Ferguson rescued two racers who were struggling to stay afloat in the rough seas due to exhaustion and cramping. All individuals were safely returned to land with no major injuries occurring.

## MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

### LEE COUNTY

Officers Hazelwood and Stapleton along with Lieutenants Barrett and Ruggiero responded to a creek on the Caloosahatchee River to rescue a manatee that was injured and suffering. When the officers arrived on scene, they found the manatee unable to swim properly due to a pneumothorax in its lung, which causes air to become trapped in the manatee’s chest and collapse its lungs. They also noticed the manatee had a small calf with it and was swimming alongside. FWC biologists from the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) assembled a rescue team to attempt to capture the manatees and treat the injury. As a crowd gathered to witness the injured manatee, the team moved quickly and captured both manatees. The officers helped load the manatees into the back of a rescue truck where they were transported to Tampa for treatment.

## **SOUTH REGION A**

### CASES

### MARTIN COUNTY

Officer McLeod and Reserve Officer Bingham received a complaint that two large motor vessels were aground along the northern shoreline of the western end of the Jensen Beach Causeway. Small-craft advisories were in affect throughout the area. The winds out of the south were extreme and gusting above 25 MPH. When they arrived, they saw two large motor yachts hard aground on the rocks. The owners were contacted and advised to expeditiously remove their vessels from the rocks as soon as the weather allowed for recovery efforts.

## PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Pecko, Hankinson, Schroer, and Boyd worked Floatopia at Peanut Island. Numerous violations were handled accordingly. During the event, 2 vessels sank and Officers Pecko and Hankinson worked the boating accidents.

## SEARCH AND RESCUE

## GLADES COUNTY

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol along the Caloosahatchee River in Moore Haven when he saw a vessel which appeared to be in distress attempting to anchor in the channel. The vessel's dinghy had broken free and drifted into some rocks. Officer Brodbeck got his patrol vessel and called Officer Dial to meet at a nearby ramp. Once on the water, the officers contacted the sailboat owner and informed him of incoming severe weather. The owner told the officers that he had already called for a tow service for his disabled vessel and that they would arrive in several hours. The owner also was suffering from various health conditions. The officers decided to tow the vessel to a nearby public dock due to the circumstances. A nearby boater offered to recover the dinghy.

## **SOUTH REGION B**

### CASES

## MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Two officers on water patrol responded to the area of Sunset Harbor for what was initially believed to be a sinking vessel that had been reported to FWC by US Coast Guard. Upon arrival, FWC officers found the Coast Guard already on scene with a rented personal watercraft (PWC) and two operators. They said they rented the PWC from a nearby livery and that the PWC started to sink. The FWC officers conducted a livery inspection and discovered that the livery employee knowingly (or should have known based upon weight information on the two driver licenses) allowed the weight capacity of the PWC to be exceeded by almost 100 lbs. Additionally, the fire extinguisher on the rented PWC was non-serviceable and the livery had not posted the legally required signage at the business premises. A warrant check was conducted on the livery employee and the officers were advised that he had an active bench warrant for his arrest for previous livery violations. The livery employee was arrested for the bench warrant and cited for additional livery violations based upon this event.

An officer and a lieutenant were on water patrol recently when they stopped a fishing vessel returning to Crandon Park Marina. Two very large houndfish (non-regulated) not in whole condition were plainly visible in the bottom of the small vessel. An inspection of the rest of their catch revealed three bonefish (a catch and release only species) and a very undersized barracuda. Both subjects received citations for the violations.

## COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Plussa, Arbogast, and Thurkettle were conducting boating safety enforcement near Keewaydin. During one stop they found an impaired owner with a sober operator. They thanked the designated driver for operating the vessel and instructed the owner not to do so due to his impaired state. Less than a half-hour later, Officer Plussa encountered the vessel in a nearby waterway with the impaired owner at the controls operating the vessel. Officer Plussa conducted a BUI investigation and the intoxicated driver did not even recall their previous encounter less than a half-hour before. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence and booked into the Collier County Jail. Officers Arbogast and Thurkettle assisted with the other occupants and the vessel.

Officers Yurewitch and Knutson were conducting boating safety enforcement in the Naples area when they saw a vessel containing multiple small children not wearing life jackets. They conducted an inspection and found it to be a livery vessel that was not properly equipped with youth-sized life jackets. Officers Yurewitch and Knutson escorted the vessel back to the rental company and conducted an investigation. They found that the rental company had failed to provide the customer with the right size life jackets for the children – a criminal violation of Florida law. The employee who negligently rented the ill-equipped vessel was charged accordingly.

Officer Plussa was conducting water patrol near Keewaydin when he saw a PWC almost strike another vessel. Officer Plussa conducted a stop and found a 10-year-old child operating the PWC with a teenager onboard with multiple safety violations and an expired registration. Observing the stop, a second PWC with the child's parent onboard pulled alongside and attempted to deflect the stop. A subsequent inspection found that he had multiple safety violations and an expired registration as well. Officer Plussa explained the dangers of a child operating a PWC, that it was a criminal law violation, and the other violations. The teenager was cited for no boating ID card and the adult received a combination of citations and warnings for the violations. The initial PWC was escorted to shore whereby a second adult operator took control of the PWC.

## MONROE COUNTY

Investigator Mattson was on water patrol around Islamorada when he saw a young boy (Age 8) operating a wave runner with the father on the back. The boy was operating the throttle and steering as the father had his hands down by his sides. The man was cited for allowing operation of PWC by someone under 14 years of age.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

## MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

FWC participated in a Beach and Reef Clean-up with Crandon Park staff. They dedicated the morning of Earth day to assisting divers and paddle boarders with removing debris from the reef. Nearly 1,000 pounds of waste was removed from the ocean.

## COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Yaxley conducted an outreach event at the Terracina Grand, an assisted living facility in North Naples. There were multiple residents and staff members in attendance who learned about native wildlife and about the duties and responsibilities of FWC officers in Collier County.

## DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

### COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Kleis and Arbogast conducted speed enforcement in one of the county's panther zones. The officers stopped multiple vehicles for speeding and educated the public on the importance of panther zones. The officers issued multiple warnings and 4 citations with mandatory court appearances for speeds in excess of 30 MPH over the posted speed limit. The highest recorded speed for the night was 89 MPH in a 45 MPH zone.

Officers Plussa, Knutson, Yurewitch, Arbogast, and Thurkettle conducted targeted boating safety enforcement over the busy boating weekend, focusing on BUI interdiction, safety equipment, and boating safety ID card violations. Collectively, they checked 120 users aboard 30 vessels, issuing 15 citations, 45 written warnings, provided education to 60 individuals, and assisted several others with disabled vessels. During their directed patrol efforts, they made multiple criminal cases involving BUI, children operating PWCs, and criminal livery violations.