

FWC

Division of Law Enforcement Weekly Report



April 6, 2018 through April 12, 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

BAY COUNTY

Officer Basford conducted several inspections on Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) commercial vessel landings at a local fish house. She inspected several commercial vessels that were all in compliance. The last vessel she checked landed with no gulf reef fish permit and no saltwater products license. The captain of the vessel was issued citations for no gulf reef fish permit and no saltwater products license. He was also issued written warnings for no registration certificate on board and no sound producing device.

While on patrol in the Offshore Patrol Vessel Intrepid, Lieutenant Marlow and Officer Nelson stopped two different vessels at approximately 11 and 13 nautical miles offshore. The occupants of both vessels were found to be in possession of gag grouper during federal closure. The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

While on patrol in the Offshore Patrol Vessel Intrepid, Lieutenant Marlow and Officer Nelson were making a final approach to an anchored vessel approximately 15 nautical miles south of Dog Island when one of the five occupants began throwing red snapper fillets and cut pieces overboard. Further inspection revealed additional red snapper pieces cut up and some were located on the fishing hooks they were using. The appropriate action was taken regarding possession of red snapper during federal closure, failure to land in whole condition, use of reef fish for bait, and throwing fish overboard upon approach by law enforcement.

While on patrol in the Offshore Patrol Vessel Intrepid, Lieutenant Marlow and Officer Nelson stopped a vessel at the "C" Tower in federal waters. During the inspection of the vessel, the occupants were found to be in possession of undersized gray triggerfish and possession of gag grouper during federal closure. The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

While on patrol in the Offshore Patrol Vessel Intrepid, Lieutenant Marlow and Officer Nelson stopped a commercial charter vessel approximately 30 nautical miles south of Cape San Blas. The occupants of the vessel were found to be in possession of gag grouper during federal closure and the charter vessel had an expired federal charter permit. The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Officers Peterson and Sauls were working an oyster detail in the Eastpoint Area and saw a vessel returning from harvesting oysters. The officers stopped the boat near the west end of the Eastpoint Channel and inspected a bag of oysters. After counting and measuring each individual oyster they determined the bag contained 41% undersized oysters. Officer Peterson cited the subject and returned 113 undersized oysters to the water alive.

Officers Pestka, Sauls, and Peterson were working an oyster detail in the Eastpoint area and saw a vessel returning from harvesting oysters. Officer Pestka stopped the boat near the Eastpoint Boat Ramp and inspected a bag of oysters. After counting and measuring each individual oyster, she determined the bag contained 58% undersized oysters. Officer Pestka cited the subject and returned 203 undersized oysters to the water alive.

LEON COUNTY

Officer Anderson was on patrol at Bull Headley Landing on Lake Iamonia when he saw a female operating her vehicle at the ramp. As he approached the vehicle, he smelled the odor of alcohol. The subject had slurred speech, along with bloodshot eyes. Officer Anderson administered the standard battery of field sobriety tasks and the subject showed several signs of impairment. The subject was arrested for DUI. Officer Mallow joined Officer Anderson at the Leon County Detention Facility to conduct the breath alcohol test which resulted in .159 BAC and .144 BAC, almost twice the legal limit. The subject was booked into the Leon County Detention Facility for DUI.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Bartlett was on vessel patrol conducting boating safety inspections in the Destin area when he saw an overloaded pontoon boat that was sitting dangerously low in the water. The officer engaged his emergency lights and siren attempting to stop the vessel. The operator continued to motor the boat until it grounded on the shore. Officer Bartlett saw two individuals quickly exit the pontoon holding a brown bag running in the direction

of the parking lot and sand dunes. The officer gave loud verbal commands for the individuals to stop running and return to the boat. Officer Jarvis quickly responded by land to assist Officer Bartlett. The two individuals were located and returned to the boat. Officer Bartlett suspected the juveniles were in possession of an alcoholic beverage. Both individuals were cited and issued notice to appear citations for interference with an FWC Officer. The boating safety inspection revealed a total of 14 passengers on board. The vessel maximum capacity was eight passengers. There also was an insufficient number of life jackets for all the passengers. The operator was cited for both violations.

Officer Nichols responded to a complaint of a bear in garbage at a residence in the Mary Esther community off Highway 98 West. During the past year, this same homeowner had a bear get into his garbage can and was advised of the law to secure his garbage can. Officer Nichols provided the homeowner with a bear brochure and hardware to secure the garbage can. The homeowner was issued a notice of non-compliance letter.

Lieutenant Clark responded to a complaint of a bear in garbage at a residence in the Mary Esther community off Highway 98 West. This community borders the Eglin Air Force Base property and is a known area of bears getting into garbage cans. Lieutenant Clark had previously contacted the homeowner last year and provided a bear brochure and explained the laws in securing food attractants. The homeowner was issued a notice of non-compliance letter.

Officer Lewis was on patrol in the Blackwater River State Forest when he spoke with a man who was driving out of a campsite. When Officer Lewis requested his driver license, the man stated that he did not have a driver license because it was suspended. A subsequent search revealed a cannabis smoking pipe, a methamphetamine smoking pipe, methamphetamine, and various other paraphernalia in the vehicle. The man and woman were charged with possession of a controlled substance without a prescription, possession of drug paraphernalia, and knowingly driving while driver license suspended. Both subjects were transported to the Okaloosa County Jail.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Officer Gore was on patrol in the Econfina Wildlife Management Area when he saw a vehicle driving recklessly. A traffic stop and investigation revealed methamphetamine, marijuana, drug paraphernalia, and possession of open container of alcohol. The subjects are facing felony and misdemeanor charges.

Officer Gore was on patrol at Culpepper Landing on Holmes Creek when he was given information of a vessel being operated in a reckless manner. According to witnesses, the vessel came close to striking numerous kayakers and swimmers. A brief time later, a vessel matching the description was seen operating at a high rate of speed, weaving through and driving too close to swimmers and kayakers. The operator was cited for reckless operation of a vessel.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

While on vessel patrol in Escambia Bay, Officer Ramos saw a vessel operating in a restricted military zone. After conducting a vessel stop, he found the vessel to be lacking required safety equipment. A resource inspection was conducted and Officer Ramos determined that the two occupants had been commercial fishing, but only one man had the required saltwater products license (SPL). While inspecting a cooler of fish, a commercial quantity of mullet was found in addition to a concealed undersized black drum measuring 10-1/2 inches, under the required 14 to 24-inch size limit. The captain of the vessel was issued warnings for operating in a restricted zone, missing safety equipment and not having his SPL license available for review. He was issued a citation for the undersized black drum. The second man was issued a citation for engaging in commercial fishing without a saltwater products license.

Officer Ramos was on vessel patrol in the Santa Rosa Sound and conducted a boating safety inspection on a personal watercraft (PWC). The PWC's annual registration decal was unreadable and Officer Ramos determined that the registration had expired in June 2017. The operator of the PWC advised that he had rented the vessel from a nearby livery. Officer Ramos followed the operator to the livery and contacted management. The livery was issued the appropriate citation and took the vessel out of service pending compliance with state law.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

WALTON COUNTY

Lieutenant Hollinhead, Officers Letcher, Bradshaw, White, Tison, and Reserve Officer Hahr worked a detail on Point Washington Wildlife Management Area (WMA) to address and deter driving on closed roads and destruction of forestry gates. Multiple vehicles were stopped on posted closed roads and the drivers were cited for the violations.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

LEON COUNTY

Officer Pekerol conducted an outreach event at Roberts Elementary. He brought an alligator and gave a presentation about the agency's mission to approximately 140 students.

Lieutenant Wass de Czege taught the laws portion of the Hunter Safety course which was held at the Jefferson Correctional Institute. There were five students in attendance.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officers Nichols, Bartlett, and Wilkenson assisted Henderson Beach State Park staff by providing security and traffic control during the Easter Sunrise service. It was estimated that more than 5,500 attended the service.

BAY COUNTY

Officer Gore and K-9 Kane attended a public speaking event at Mowat Middle School. Approximately 85 people were educated on FWC law enforcement and outdoor safety.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Maltais provided a presentation to 65 day camp attendees from local military bases. The students' ages ranged from 8 to 13 years old. The camp was hosted by the 4-H Camp in Timpooshee with assistance from University of Florida-Institute of Agriculture and Services Extension staff from Escambia County. They discussed marine conservation, how local FWC officers patrol and how to report marine or animal issues.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Officers Greene and Yates attended a Hunter Safety Education Class in Bonifay and instructed the law portion of the class. There were approximately 25 people in attendance.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

ALACHUA COUNTY

After receiving information from Officer Troiano, Officer Stanley began working a bait site on private property. Officer Stanley heard someone calling turkeys from a ground blind. He contacted two hunters in the blind as they were attempting to take turkeys with long bows. The ground blind was approximately 23 yards from an active feeder with whole and cracked corn. Both subjects were issued criminal citations for the violation.

DUVAL COUNTY

A member of a private hunt club came upon a pickup truck and yard trailer that was backed up to the woods with a large pile of litter on the ground next to the trailer gate. The driver of the pickup truck claimed that he had gotten stuck and when the witness began to take photographs of him and his vehicle's tag number, the suspect left the area without retrieving the litter. Environmental Investigator Terrones and Captive Wildlife Investigator Dorricchi interviewed the suspect who admitted to the littering and agreed to remove the litter and properly dispose of it at a landfill. Appropriate criminal charges were filed.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

ALACHUA COUNTY

Lieutenant Ferguson worked an outreach event at O'Leno State Park. With several hundred people in attendance, the judges selected a winner at the annual chili cook off.

Officer Stanley participated in a vehicle day at W.W. Irby Elementary. He trailered an airboat and spoke to 400 kids about the importance of boating safety.

Officer Stanley taught the law enforcement portion of a hunter safety class in Gainesville.

Lieutenant Ferguson attended a disabled hunt meeting at the Bass Pro in Gainesville. The event will be sponsored by the Bass Pro Shop and will be conducted on several different properties throughout the North Central Region area.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

MARION COUNTY

Officer Rice was conducting overnight surveillance in Ocala Wildlife Management Area (WMA) near Weirsdale when he saw a vehicle slowly moving toward his position. The vehicle was shining a light from the driver's side of the vehicle in a sweeping back-and-forth motion. The vehicle continued shining as it slowly worked around a closed prairie road to the officer's position. Officer Rice stopped the adult male driver who was the only occupant. The driver still had the light in his hand and a loaded rifle was located on the front floorboard of the truck. After interviewing the subject, Officer Rice seized the rifle and ammunition and issued the subject a notice to appear for attempting to take deer at night with a gun and light.

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Hallsten was conducting late night surveillance on the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge when he saw a vehicle operating slowly and tapping its brakes. The vehicle made several U-turns and was shining a spotlight out of the window, concentrating on a specific stretch of the rural roadway. At one point the vehicle slowed and the passenger of the vehicle shot at a deer from the roadway. Officer Hallsten left his area of concealment and conducted a vehicle stop. Officer Hallsten detained the passengers and conducted interviews. Officer North and his K-9 arrived on scene and located two of the spent shell casings. The officers were unable to locate the deer, but due to K-9 support were able to match the casings with the weapon found in the vehicle.

Office Hallsten booked the driver and passenger into the Brevard County Jail on charges of gun and light at night, attempt to take deer out of season, shooting from the roadway and possession of controlled substance.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officers Bresie and Cameron responded to a vessel crash on the St. John's River, north of State Road 44, in Deland. A 33' custom hydro-sports center console, with three 300 HP outboards left the river, crashing through the heavily wooded rivers edge and coming to a rest 50-feet inland. None of the 13 people onboard were seriously injured. The cause of the crash is under investigation.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

BREVARD COUNTY

Officers Hallsten, Eller, and Lejarzar conducted an outreach event at the TICO Airshow in Titusville. The officers talked to many people at the event and answered questions about local and statewide issues. The officers' focus was to reach out and promote career opportunities in FWC's Division of Law Enforcement. The officers were able to build relationships with several interested attendees and put them in touch with the regional recruiter.

SEARCH AND RESCUES

PUTNAM COUNTY

Officers Wester and Campbell responded to a small plane crash on the St. John's River. The pilot suffered minor injuries and the case was turned over to the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP).

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

While on patrol at the North Skyway Fishing Pier, Officer Pettifer initiated a resource inspection. He asked the individual fishing if she caught any fish and she replied she had some fish in a cooler. An inspection of the cooler revealed two undersized 13-inch gag grouper. She was issued a citation for possession of undersized gag grouper.

LEE COUNTY

Officers Winton and Hazelwood were on water patrol in the Caloosahatchee River when they saw a vessel being operated with an expired registration. A vessel stop was conducted and they determined that the vessel was a rental boat. The officers went to the rental location and conducted a livery inspection. They discovered that the owner of the company had not transferred the registration of the involved vessel within 30 days of purchase, and did not have boating safety information displayed at the rental site as required by law. The owner was issued two notices to appear and two written warnings for the related violations.

While on water patrol in the Caloosahatchee River, Officers Winton and Hazelwood saw a vessel being operated without a registration decal. A vessel stop was conducted and the officers discovered that the subjects onboard had been fishing and were in possession of several spotted seatrout. Three of the seatrout measured below the minimum size limit. The operator of the vessel was issued a notice to appear for the violation and a warning for failure to display a registration decal.

MANATEE COUNTY

Officer Gonzales was on land patrol around the South Skyway Fishing Pier. While on patrol he stopped and performed a fisheries inspection on a subject fishing from the pier. Officer Gonzales found that the individual had caught and kept 42 undersized gray (mangrove) snapper. The subject was issued two criminal citations for possession of over the bag limit and undersized grey snapper and will have to appear in court for the violations.

PASCO COUNTY

Officer Pulaski responded to a complaint of a restaurant employee that was discarding the grease from the restaurant into a storm water run-off drain. Officer Pulaski issued several citations for the violation. The Department of Environmental Protection was notified and cleanup has been initiated.

Officers Angelis, Jones, and Investigator Tsongranis responded to a report of people trespassing on a piece of environmentally sensitive county lands. The officers assisted members of the Pasco County Sheriff's Office with locating the individuals. Approximately 18 people were warned for trespass on the property.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While on land patrol at the Fort Desoto Bridge, Officer Bibeau contacted a group of individuals to conduct a fisheries inspection. The subjects had two out of season and undersized gag grouper, along with one undersized Spanish mackerel. Officer Bibeau read the individuals their Miranda rights, and after a short series of questions one subject admitted to catching all the fish. The subject was issued a misdemeanor citation for possession of gag grouper during closed season and warnings for the remaining fisheries violations.

While on land patrol near the North Skyway Fishing Pier, Officer Bibeau saw three individuals actively fishing from the shoreline. He contacted the individuals as they were preparing to leave the area to conduct a fisheries inspection. One of the individuals was carrying a large bucket. An inspection of the bucket revealed seven mangrove snapper, three of which were undersized, hidden underneath ladyfish. The individual that was in possession of the bucket admitted to catching all seven snapper. He received a misdemeanor citation for possession of undersized mangrove snapper and a warning for harvesting over the daily bag limit of mangrove snapper.

Officers Hughes, Smith, and Lieutenant Wells were on offshore patrol working the recreational fishing fleet off Pinellas County. The officers identified a vessel in the distance that was actively fishing. They approached the vessel and conducted a boarding and fisheries inspection. The officers located multiple undersized red grouper and undersized out of season gag grouper. Some of the red grouper were returned alive to the water. The vessel captain was issued multiple citations for the violations.

POLK COUNTY

While on land patrol Officer DeWeese saw an individual turkey hunting on a private ranch located in Southwest Polk County near a feeder which contained corn and bird seed. Officer DeWeese contacted the subject and he admitted knowing he was hunting near the bait. Officer DeWeese issued the subject a notice to appear for attempting to take turkey over bait.

While on land patrol near Blind Pass, Officer Bibeau saw three individuals actively fishing from a rock jetty. Officer Bibeau watched the individuals from a concealed location and saw them retrieve a hidden stringer of fish from the rocks. Officer Bibeau contacted the individuals at their vehicle and conducted a fisheries inspection. The inspection revealed 15 undersized mangrove snapper and one small mangrove snapper fillet. All three individuals were issued a misdemeanor citation for possession of undersized mangrove snapper.

SEARCH AND RESCUES

PASCO COUNTY

Officer Pulaski was on water patrol when he was contacted about an overdue boater. Officer Pulaski, members of New Port Richey Police Department, and the Pasco County Sheriff's Office (PCSO) conducted the search. The PCSO helicopter located the vessel near the Pithlachascotee River area. Officer Pulaski removed the individual from the disabled vessel and transported him to shore.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

HIGHLANDS COUNTY

Several FWC officers from Polk, Highlands, and Hardee County participated in an active shooter exercise conducted by the Highlands County Sheriff's Office. This was a great opportunity for FWC officers to hone their skills at responding and communicating during a multi-agency exercise. The officers faced challenges such as being unfamiliar with the area they were responding to, working with another agency's chain of command, and performing clearing drills under realistic conditions.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

Officer Tarr responded to a complaint of a person cast netting game fish at the Sawgrass Trailhead Recreation Area. Officer Tarr saw a subject walking to his vehicle with some fishing equipment. A freshwater fisheries inspection found the subject to be in possession of 24 black bass and 32 pan fish. The daily limit for black bass is 5 per person. The subject was issued a misdemeanor citation for over the bag limit of black bass, an infraction for not having a fishing license, and a warning for illegal method of taking gamefish. All the fish were returned to the water alive.

HENDRY COUNTY

Officer Keen responded to an anonymous tip of an alligator hatchling at a residence in Glades County. Officer Keen located the alligator hatchling and questioned the subject and son on how it came to be at their residence. The subject was issued a noticed to appear citation for possession of an alligator hatchling and a warning to the son for possession of an alligator hatchling.

MARTIN COUNTY

Officers Pecko and Morrow were conducting land based water patrol. They saw a subject in the middle of the roadway having trouble keeping his balance. While trying to identify the subject, drugs and drug paraphernalia were found in the subject's possession. The subject was arrested and cited accordingly.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

FWC officers and investigators responded to a late-night boating accident at the Spanish River Park in Boca Raton. When they arrived on scene, they were told that a vessel had run aground into the mangroves. The vessel was heading southbound in the ICW at the Spanish River Bridge when the operator encountered a wake from another vessel. When the vessel hit the wake, it launched into the mangroves ejecting the operator. Two other occupants remained on the vessel as it went through the

mangroves. A Boca PD marine unit arrived on scene, arrested the operator for BUI and had him transported to the Boca Hospital where he was evaluated and released back to Boca PD with no injuries. He was transported to the Palm Beach County Jail. Occupant 1 was taken to the Delray Medical Center. He received facial lacerations and a fractured skull. Occupant 2 took himself to the Delray Medical Center to be evaluated for a concussion and small lacerations to his face.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

HENDRY COUNTY

Officer Brodbeck was dispatched to a call for assistance from the Hendry County Sheriff's Office regarding an injured bald eagle. The officer arrived at the described location but was unable to find the eagle. Officer Brodbeck tracked the injured bird across a dirt road and onto a large property. After a 30-40 minute search, the eagle was located and appeared to have a broken wing. With help from Hendry County deputies, the officer was able to capture the eagle and secure it for transport to Sue Arnold's Wildlife Center located in Okeechobee County. While enroute, Officer Brodbeck received a call from dispatch regarding an injured juvenile sandhill crane near the wildlife center. The officer captured and secured the injured crane and transported both birds to the wildlife center for evaluation and treatment.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Two officers were on water patrol near Cape Florida Channel checking fishing vessels returning from offshore waters. The occupants of an inspected vessel returning from the Bahamas were found to be in possession of two, one-gallon zip lock bags of skinned grouper fillets. The captain of the vessel was cited for the violation. The officers also cited the captain of another fishing vessel for being in possession of two undersized mahi-mahi.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Landa continued his enforcement efforts targeting the illegal exhibition of wildlife on South Beach. He saw a known subject exhibiting a large snake to the public. This individual had been previously cited for the illegal possession of Burmese pythons and knew it was illegal to exhibit his snakes without a license. Furthermore, the subject did not appear in court for his previous charges and had an active warrant out for his arrest. The subject was arrested and booked into the county jail on the outstanding warrant and received an additional misdemeanor citation for the illegal exhibition of wildlife. Captive Wildlife Investigator Smith, Lieutenant Miranda, and Officer Osorio assisted on this incident.

MONROE COUNTY

Investigators Mattson and Hein were on unmarked water patrol around Indian Key Fill near Islamorada. They saw a vessel on plane passing through a no motor zone. They stopped the rental vessel and a safety inspection revealed that the flares on the rented vessel had expired. The operator received a warning for the speed zone violation. Officers cited the livery operation for renting a vessel with insufficient safety equipment.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Hoppe attended the Coast Guard's "Boat Safe" day at the Ocean Reef Club in North Key Largo. He handed out numerous "life jackets save lives" wrist bands and discussed the importance of always wearing a life jacket while boating. He worked alongside Coast Guard representatives to deliver the boat safe message to the public on the proper way to boat and how to ensure everyone is being safe.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

FWC participated in a migratory bird release event where more than 100 birds native to south Florida were released at Everglades National Park after they had been seized for being illegally trapped. Five individuals were arrested and the birds were seized as part of a multi-agency operation called "Operation Ornerly Birds."