



“Big Boat” Vessel on Patrol in Tortugas Waters

The 57’ high-speed catamaran known as the P/V *Peter Gladding* is the newest law enforcement vessel on patrol in the sanctuary’s Tortugas Ecological Reserve (TER), a fully protected zone 80 miles off Key West. LT Joe Scarpa is the captain of the *Gladding*, which sleeps four and remains on station for several days at a time.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) officers who serve on the vessel are cross-deputized for enforcement in both state and federal waters. The vessel is one of five FWC “big boats” in the state and is suitable for operation in deep and shallow water, where low wake and shallow draft are required.

A formal ceremony dedicating the vessel was held on April 11, 2006 in Key West. The high-speed catamaran was named for Peter Gladding, 1948-2004, a commercial fisherman who exhibited leadership in establishing the Tortugas Ecological Reserve. The TER includes critical spawning grounds for important fish and invertebrate species.



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Law Enforcement: From ATBA to Wildlife Violations



While on duty in the sanctuary, law enforcement officers document wildlife violations that include: harvesting undersized fish and lobster (*above left, center*); spearing fish (undersized or otherwise) in areas that are closed to spearfishing; and taking more than bag limits allow for that species (*bottom, left*). Occasionally, a large vessel is cited for operating within the *Area To Be Avoided (ATBA)*, an area closed to vessels greater than 50 meters (~ 150 feet) that could cause damage to coral reefs and other shallow-water habitats.

Note: This article appeared in the Winter 2006--Spring 2007 edition of *Sounding Line*, the newsletter of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. For more information, please visit: <http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/>.