



## Southeast Region Monthly Law Enforcement News

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### LEMIS Numbers for Region 4 in March 2015

Incidents reported in LEMIS	504
Violation Notices issued	177
Warnings	234
Arrest	1
Serious Incidents	1



Have you made time to update your law enforcement refresher dates in LEMIS?

### Fresh Water Turtle Poaching, South Florida:

On March 22, 2015, FWO Jake Tuttle investigated a white Chevrolet van as a suspicious vehicle on the Eastern boundary of the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. He discovered three Chinese-Americans asleep in the vehicle. Back-up units from Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (PBSO) arrived. Acting on the smell from the vehicle and observations, FWO Tuttle and PBSO searched the van and discovered 3 crates containing 25 soft shell turtles and 1 mud turtle. Also found were lines, hooks, jugs and bottles. All three subjects were from Brooklyn, N.Y. They were self-sufficient with camp stoves and food. Florida Fish & Wildlife (FWC) Officers arrived. No evidence suggested the turtles were taken from the Refuge. The subjects were charged by FWC with possession of over one turtle, which is the daily limit in Florida. This was part of the growing trade nationally and internationally in freshwater turtles.



**Turtles found in a crate**

### Community Outreach

In late March FWO Raul Sanchez and ZO Bruce Butler were invited to speak at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Elementary School in Vieques, PR, for English Language Week. FWO Sanchez and ZO Butler spoke about their jobs as FWOs and how being bilingual has helped them in their careers. The officers also shared their experiences with learning a new language and how they never gave up. The students also learned about the very important work that FWO perform on National Wildlife Refuges all of the country. After the presentation many of the students expressed to the teacher that they wanted to go on a class field trip to the Vieques NWR.



**FWO Sanchez talking with some of the students**

### **K-9 demonstration in Tallahassee, FL:**

On Feb. 15, 2015, Zone K-9 Officer Brannon and K-9 Riot participated in a K-9 demonstration in Tallahassee, FL. Officer Brannon and K-9 Riot, along with two Leon County Sheriff's K-9 teams, conducted a demonstration of the abilities of their K-9s, and how they perform their functions for their respective agencies. In attendance were approximately 50 third and fourth graders along with several teachers and school staff. This was the first "public" demonstration for Officer Brannon and Riot as he is new to the agency, replacing Officer Brannon's previous K-9, A.J. K-9 Riot was purchased with Washington Office funds, and as of this writing has trained for approximately 400 hours with Officer Brannon since he was purchased in December of 2014. K-9 Riot is trained to detect illegal drugs and contraband as well as track suspects, conduct building and area searches, handler protection, and suspect apprehension. K-9 Riot is also trained to perform tactical assignments when serving warrants or other missions requested.



**ZFWO Brannon and K9 Riot**

### **FWO's from Southeast Louisiana Refuge Complex Assist With Search:**

On Saturday March 29, 2015, at around 5:30PM, 911 received a call that a vessel had capsized on the Pearl River, Near Lock 1. Onboard the vessel was a family of five. The vessel apparently had engine troubles and drifted over the weir and capsized. Three children were rescued, but the adult male and female were missing. Federal Wildlife Officer Brad Kemp was notified about the two missing persons on the Pearl River, adjacent to the Bouge Chitto NWR. FWO Kemp immediately responded and assisted in the search. The following day, Federal Wildlife Officers Kemp and Zach Kincaid assisted with the search of the missing boaters. The bodies of the missing boaters were later recovered.



**Lock 1, located on the Pearl River**

### **Homeless Camps Found at Hobe Sound NWR, Florida:**

Supervisory FWO William Calvert began an investigation into several homeless camps, or camps being used by locals, along the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) at Hobe Sound NWR. The camps contained walls built out of bamboo, tents, tools, drug paraphernalia, drugs hidden in containers and a lot of trash. A network of trails was found in the area as well as trails that were cut from the Florida East Coast (FEC) railroad right of way to access the camps. The camps were concealed well from the ICW and FEC R/W by coastal vegetation and trees.

## Lending a Helping Hand

After returning from the Southeast Region annual law enforcement in-service FWO Mike Evans and Zone Officer Bruce Butler assisted the National Park Service with crowd and traffic control at the ST. Croix, USVI annual St Patrick's Day Parade. The parade route started and finished within the boundary of the Christiansted National Historic Site. The parade attracts several hundred persons to the park each year. For the past several years, NPS law enforcement has requested the assistance of FWS to assist with law enforcement functions during this event. NPS Rangers also assisted the FWS at the Sandy Point NWR with opening and closing of the main entrance gate while the FWOs were attending In-service and on an extended detail to the Navassa NWR. This is a great example of how 2 sister agencies within the US Department of the Interior can pool resources together to accomplish their missions.



**Ranger Adrian Fernandez, FWO Mike Evans, Chief Ranger Isander Rodriguez, Ranger Reynaldo Rivera & ZO Bruce Butler at the Christiansted National Historic Site**

## Navassa NWR Mission

FWOs William Wolfrom, Mike Evans, Raul Sanchez and SFWO Bryant Marcial participated in a special detail to one of the most remote refuges within the Southeast Region. Navassa Island NWR is three square miles in area, lies about one hundred miles south of Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, some thirty miles west of Cape Tiburon, Haiti and east of Kingston, Jamaica. Its terrain is a raised coral and limestone plateau, flat to undulating, ringed by vertical white cliffs, approximately nine to fifteen meters high. Navassa Island NWR is mostly exposed rock. However, it has enough grassland to support goat herds. Dense stands of fig-like trees and scattered cactus also exist. Only one tenth of the island's land is meadows or pastures.

Officers assigned to the detail provided law enforcement protection and security services to Amateur Ham Radio Operators who conducted radio operations for 15 days. While on the island FWOs were able to document numerous refuge violations ranging from simple trespass, illegal take, habitat destruction, unauthorized setting of fires, immigration violations and violations to the ESA. Although a language barrier did exist between the officers and the Haitian fishermen officers were able to collect vital information related to the impact to the resource.

FWO observed several goat herds on the island, documented feral cats and what appears to be one feral dog, which was spotted near the lighthouse area of Navassa Island NWR. Signs of recent migrant landings were observed and documented by officers on the walls of the lighthouse left by Cuban nationals who entered the refuge illegally in December 2014. The island refuge is one remarkable landmark as viewed by officers from the helicopter used to conduct the mission. The island's geographic locations relative to other refuges within the Caribbean Islands Complex make it difficult for continuous law enforcement actions by service officers, nonetheless the islands resources have not been significantly impacted by visitors from nearby countries.



**FWO Wolfrom and some Haitian fishermen**



**Evidence of fishing violations found on the island**

### **Boat Accident, Felsenthal NWR, Arkansas:**

At approximately 4 a.m., on the morning of November 22, 2014, FWO Eric Smith and Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) Officers Joe Williams, Shannon Mccoskey, Norman Cornish, John Paul Greer, and Keith Cardin were working duck hunters on Felsenthal NWR. Approximately 50 boats started entering the area. Before the boats made it to the "checkpoint" a loud bang was heard that sounded like a possible collision. All Officers responded and found one subject in the water without a PFD, and two other subjects in a boat. Their vessel had collided with a cypress tree. Officers initiated blue lights in an attempt to slow the other boaters down. The subject in the water was immediately retrieved, and found not to have been injured. One of the subjects in the boat was bleeding profusely from the mouth area, and was struggling to breath normally. EMTs were contacted and requested to meet at the Crossett Port boat ramp. The subject was transported to the boat ramp and transported to an area hospital. The subject suffered broken ribs and a collapsed lung. The operator of the boat was cited for wreckless operation of a vessel and horsepower restrictions. All Officers involved, including FWO Eric Smith, received a Certificate of Commendation from AGFC.

### **Fishing Violation Leads to Drug Arrest, J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR, Florida:**

On 03/21/2015, FWO David Moore received information that two men were taking illegal fish from the Wildlife Drive on the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Upon arrival Officer Moore observed two male subjects, matching the description given, carrying fishing poles and walking toward a dark blue sedan. He also observed a cooler on the North side of Wildlife Drive. Upon contact with the two subjects both admitted to fishing, and to having fish in the cooler. During a compliance check an undersized sheepshead was discovered in the cooler. One of the men admitted to the undersize fish, and fishing without a license. Officer Moore asked the men if they were in possession of any firearms, contraband, or fish, other than those in the aforementioned cooler. They stated there was a pistol in the vehicle, and produced a concealed weapons permit. Officer Moore followed the pistol owner to the vehicle in order to secure the firearm.

FWO Moore again questioned the man about the presence of any other fish, drugs, or other contraband in the vehicle. He then stated that there was a small quantity of marijuana in a compartment to the left of the steering wheel. He stated that the marijuana was his, and that it was for personal use. While searching the vehicle, FWO Moore also discovered a small plastic bag containing what appeared to be cocaine beneath the driver's seat. Officer Moore continued the search of the vehicle and discovered an undersized snook hidden next to the spare tire under the false-floor of the trunk. Neither man admitted to catching the snook. Sanibel police placed the man under arrest for possession of cocaine and Officer Moore informed the men that they would be receiving violation notices in the mail for their offenses.

### **Pardoned Felon Convicted of Road Hunting, Arkansas**

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) Officers and FWO Jeremy Nguyen were able to get a successful prosecution on March 19th, in Woodruff County, on a shooting from the road case. The shooter was a former convicted felon that had been pardoned by the Governor of Arkansas, just 11 days before the incident. Contact was made with the man shortly after the incident. He confessed to shooting from the road, and was also found to be driving under the influence of alcohol. He initially plead not guilty, but changed his plea to guilty before trial. 18 points will be assessed to his hunting and fishing license. This carries a one year suspension by the AGFC.

## Southeast Region 2015 In-Service

The Southeast Regions 's annual in-service was held at the Mississippi Law Enforcement Officer Training Academy in Pearl, Mississippi. Officers braved inclement weather for a successful in-service, and received training in Taser, firearms, policy, health and fitness, evidence, commercial fishing, defensive tactics, ambush/counter ambush, social media, legal, and hunting.. National DRLE Chief Jim Hall and Southeast Region NWRs Chief David Viker also spoke to the officers and gave them updates of regional and national policies as well as fielded questions.

Officer of the Year nominees were: FWO Jane Whaley - Merritt Island NWR, FWO Brad Kemp - Bogue Chitto NWR, FWO Mark Cupit - St Catherines Creek NWR, FWO James McClelland - Grand Bay NWR, and FWO Chris Hoag – Lacassine NWR.

The James A Clark Officer of the Year went to FWO Phil Amoroso of Merritt Island NWR. FWO Amoroso always displays an extreme high level of professionalism when dealing with those he comes in contact with. FWO Amoroso consistently shows a proactive approach to handling law enforcement situations. FWO Amoroso has served as an FTO for many FWOs and has always received high evaluations from trainees, supervisors and program managers. FWO Amoroso has served as a defensive tactics instructor for the FWS and continually stays up to date on use of force case law and actions that will assist our officers in performing to the best of their ability. FWO Amoroso is also a member of the Service Honor Guard

FWO David Moore of J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR once again took top honors as "Top Gun," with Jerry "Donnie" Dance of Everglades Headwaters NWR, and Jake Tuttle of A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR as the runners up. The top shooting zone went to South Florida for the second year in a row.

FWOs Nathan Hill and Brad Kemp received the Defensive Tactics Award for their exceptional performance during the Defensive Tactics Session. FWOs participated in multiple defensive, offensive and escape drills for when an officer is in a ground position with a suspect. The drill ended with a timed Tactical Simulation Drill requiring the officer to carry a dummy back and forth across the gym, utilize strikes in a ring of bag holders, strikes and kicks to a hanging bag, escape from a grounded position from a suspect roll player and then apply handcuffs to a prone suspect dummy. FWOs Justin Mulligan, Shaw Davis, Brandon Bland, Andy Berrey, Jimmy Laurent, Joey Lord and Greg Boling were also recognized for their performance during the training.

There have been some noticeable improvements within the Health & Fitness Program. This year 32 FWOs obtained a fitness level of 12 or better. The top 3 awards went to FWOs Brett Wehrle and Jay Eddy for accomplishing a level 1, and FWO Jimmy Laurent had the next top score of a level 2. This year the body composition was re-introduced into the program to be consistent with the national Health & Fitness Policy. Effective Feb 5, 2015 FWOs are allowed 1 hour per duty day for fitness. Please make sure that you have a current health and fitness plan on file.



**Southeast Region Officer of the year. NWRs Southeast Region Chief David Viker, FWO Phil Amoroso & DRLE Chief John Branum**





Top Gun Zone— South Florida FWO's

FWO's Laurent and Hill taking notes during an exercise

