

**GSMFC Law Enforcement Committee/GMFMC Law Enforcement Advisory Panel
Joint Meeting Summary
Pt. Clear, Alabama
March 17, 2015**

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by LEAP Chair Rama Shuster.

Adoption of Agenda/Approval of Minutes

The agenda and the minutes of the October 20, 2014 Joint LEC/LEAP/Gulf Council Law Enforcement Committee were adopted as written.

GMFMC LAW ENFORCEMENT AP SESSION

Current GMFMC Amendments and Framework Actions

Reef Fish Amendment 39 – Red Snapper Regional Management

Steven Atran reviewed the actions and alternatives in the March 2015 draft of Amendment 39

Action 1 – Regional Management

Panel members expressed concern regarding the preferred option to allow regions to establish closed areas in the EEZ. Panel members indicated that they understood that this amendment was intended to be primarily directed toward landings regulations, but this is an offshore regulation that would require on-the-water enforcement. If states can establish an unlimited amount of closed areas, it would make enforcement much more difficult.

Action 2 – Regional Management and Sector Separation

Panel members noted that sector separation for a single species requires an additional workload for law enforcement due to different sets of regulations, and the possibility of added notification requirements. A suggestion was made that there be a cost recovery fee placed on the for-hire sector to account for increased costs of enforcement and administration due to sector separation.

Action 3 – Establish Regions for Management

A question was raised about the states' ability to enforce regulations in the EEZ. Panel members responded that the states have authority to enforce regulations in the EEZ under the Joint Enforcement Agreement. Also, enforcement is already responsible for addressing regional shrimp closures, so the creation of recreational red snapper regions by itself does not create enforcement issues. However, concern was expressed about how to enforce state regulations in the EEZ if an out-of-state vessel is exceeding bag limits for the state it is offshore from but not exceeded bag limits for an adjacent state that it will be landing in. Some possible solutions were:

- Staff noted that the amendment suggested enforcing only the most lenient state regulations for vessels in federal waters.
- Some AP members noted that they have transit provisions in state waters, and suggested that a similar provision be applied to the EEZ waters, i.e., a vessel could transit the EEZ off of that state, but if it stopped it would be subject to the regulations for that state. However, other Panel members felt that any boundaries that are established should be strict, hard boundaries. Any exceptions, such as transit provisions, would make enforcement more difficult.
- Enforce regulations at the dock, so that it doesn't matter where the fish are caught, only where they are landed. However, states have limited enforcement resources and cannot afford to have officers continuously monitoring the docks for one species. This limits the effectiveness of dockside management. Without hard boundaries, if fish caught off of one state are landed in another state, this could lead to inaccurate counting of catches within a region, which could result in inaccurate regional catch monitoring and management.
- Enforcement could be assisted if the states could require that vessels fishing in their adjacent EEZ waters could be required to have the appropriate state permit (either resident or non-resident). However, there was a question as to whether the states would have the authority under National Standard 4 to impose state permitting requirements on vessels fishing in the EEZ.

Panel members noted that states have limited enforcement resources and cannot afford to have officers dedicated to continuously monitoring the docks for one species. In addition, challenges exist for land based officers to gain access to recreational and commercial docks. This limits the effectiveness of dockside management. Consequently, effective management requires a combination of dockside and on-the-water enforcement.

Under single-species regional management, a vessel will be able to fish for species other than red snapper in the EEZ when a state has closed its region to red snapper fishing. Consequently, enforcement will need to be able to determine where, when, and what a vessel is fishing for, and possibly where the vessel is from, in order to determine if a vessel is in violation of fishing regulations. Without hard boundaries, an enforcement vessel might need to follow a recreational fishing vessel back to its landing port to determine if it is violating that state's regulations. This could create an enforcement nightmare.

Action 4 – Apportioning the Recreational Quota Among Regions

Action 5 – Post-season Accountability Measures

Panel members did not feel that these actions items had any enforcement issues.

South Florida management Issues

Steven Atran reviewed the actions and alternatives in the February 2015 draft options paper for Modifications to Gulf Reef Fish and South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plans.

Action 1 – Partial Delegation of Commercial and/or Recreational Management of Yellowtail Snapper to the State of Florida for Federal Waters Adjacent to the State of Florida

Staff questioned whether allowable gear requirements specific to only yellowtail snapper, such as an exemption from the circle hook requirement, would create a problem for enforcement. Panel members responded that they already enforce species-specific gear restrictions on other stocks such as sheepshead and grouper. In addition, it was felt that experienced enforcement officers can tell if a fisherman is targeting yellowtail snapper from the way in which he is fishing. Also, most fishermen will answer truthfully when asked what they are fishing for. Commercial fishermen who target yellowtail snapper will have catches comprised mostly of that species, making enforcement on the commercial sector easier. However, from a more general perspective, exceptions add complexity, and therefore difficulty, to enforcement of a specific regulation. The difficulty factor is compounded when there are multiple exceptions, which by themselves seem insignificant.

Action 2 – Establish ABCs and ACLs for Yellowtail Snapper

Panel members did not feel that this action item had any enforcement issues.

Action 3 – Partial Delegation of Commercial and/or Recreational Management of Mutton Snapper to the State of Florida in Federal Waters Adjacent to the State of Florida

Except for the comment from Action 1 that allowable gear exceptions add complexity and difficulty to enforcement, Panel members did not feel that this action item had any enforcement issues.

Action 4 – Establish ABCs and ACLs for Mutton Snapper

Panel members did not feel that this action item had any enforcement issues.

Action 5 – Mutton snapper recreational bag limit in Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic

Panel members felt that having different bag limits at different times of the year could create confusion among the public.

Action 6 – Mutton Snapper Commercial Trip Limit in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic

Panel members noted that, for a small amount of fish, trip limits in terms of numbers of fish are easier to enforce than trip limits in pounds.

Action 7 – Partial Delegation of Recreational Management of Black Grouper to the State of Florida in Federal Waters Adjacent to the State of Florida

Except for the comment from Action 1 that allowable gear exceptions add complexity and difficulty to enforcement, Panel members did not feel that this action item had any enforcement issues.

Action 8 – Establish ABCs and ACLs for Black Grouper

Panel members did not feel that this action item had any enforcement issues.

Action 9 – Specify Accountability Measures for South Florida Species

It was noted that in the Atlantic, recreational yellowtail snapper fishing takes place predominately along the reef line which may be in state or federal waters depending on location. For this reason, Florida state waters and the EEZ should have consistent regulations.

Action 10 – Modify the shallow-water grouper species compositions and seasonal closures in the Gulf and South Atlantic

Council staff noted that species in the South Atlantic shallow-water grouper complex that were not in the Gulf shallow-water grouper complex had little or no landings in the Gulf, and some of the species are not included in the Reef Fish FMP. Panel members had no immediate enforcement comments, but requested an opportunity to re-review the draft amendment at a future time.

Action 11 – Modify Black Grouper Fishery Closures and Bag Limits in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic

Panel members felt that allowing exceptions to shallow-water season closures adds complexity and difficulty to enforcement.

Action 12 – Harmonize bag and size limits for species in shallow-water grouper complex seasonal closures in the Gulf and the South Atlantic

Panel members did not comment on this action because it contained no alternatives other than the no action alternative, and Panel members were unsure what the intent was for this action.

Action 13 – Changes to Circle Hook Requirement in Gulf and South Atlantic Jurisdictional Waters

Panel members felt that, as with venting tools, an education program would be more productive than enforcement of a gear restriction.

After reviewing Amendment 39 and the south Florida management options paper, Panel members felt that they would like another opportunity to review the documents once they were further developed and passed the following motion.

By unanimous consent, the Law Enforcement AP requests an opportunity to review the south Florida management plan and Amendment 39 before final action is taken.

Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing Issues and Possible Council/Commission Actions

Presentation on IUU fishing – Mexican Lanchas

LCDR Jason Brand presented the Eighth Coast Guard District's Mexican Lancha Threat Overview and Impact Analysis Model Results which were introduced at the last Gulf Council meeting. The lancha problem is not new and has been occurring for at least 25-30 years in an area of federal waters north of the U.S./Mexico EEZ line. The area currently encompasses 3500 square miles (three times the size of Rhode Island). The boats run illegally from Mexico into the U.S. EEZ and fish with a variety of gears from hand lines to long lines, and gill nets which can span up to seven miles in length. The Coast Guard has been sighting more of these boats every year but still have limited success with intercepting them. An estimate of the total take of red snapper alone is around 1.5 million lbs poached from U.S. waters by the lanchas over the past 2 years. This is greater than the entire reported recreational red snapper catch off of Texas. Intercepting the IUU vessels is hazardous and the alien fishermen are technologically advanced. Once an enforcement plane or vessel is spotted, the lanchas quickly move out of the illegal fishing area. There just aren't enough assets on the water or in the air to sufficiently patrol such a large area. In addition, international treaties with Mexico make prosecution nearly impossible¹. Catch, vessels, and gear are seized but the fishermen are returned to Mexico. The lanchas are destroyed based on instructions from Mexico. In many cases the vessels are not seaworthy, and some have sunk while being pursued.

GSMFC IUU Letter

Related to this issue of IUU fishing, Jim Landon, from NOAA OGC, provided an excerpt from the "Improving International Fisheries Management", Feb 2015 Report to Congress (Attachment A). In that report, Mexico was identified as engaging in IUU fishing; specifically for having vessels (lanchas) fishing illegally in the US EEZ. Identified nations that fail to take appropriate actions to address the basis for their certification can face trade sanctions. The Panel agreed that this was not solely a Texas issue but the poached red snapper could impact the total quota for all the Gulf sectors. In addition, it is suspected that much of the illegally caught red snapper is being exported back to the U.S. Because these fish have not been properly iced down on the lanchas, they are not considered to be fit for human consumption. Therefore, the Commission is drafting a letter to consider sending forward to the appropriate agency and people requesting more funding to address the states challenges in combating IUU fishing in all the Gulf States in a significant and meaningful way.

¹ One Panel member explained, after the LEC/LEAP meeting, that the U.S. Coast Guard provides Mexico with a case package documenting the violation. It is then up to the Mexican authorities to prosecute the individuals. The lanchas are held for retrieval by Mexican officials. Failure to pick-up the vessel after a given time is deemed to imply forfeiture.

Proposed Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization language

The Panel did not discuss this agenda item. It was noted that the Council cannot comment on the proposed reauthorization unless asked to by Congress. LCDR Brand added that any support for changes to the Act by the Coast Guard would need to go up the chain of command for approval.

Ideas for Actions by Council and Commission

Mr. Atran stated that he had hoped to come up with a list of ideas for actions by either the GMFMC or the GSMFC that could help improve enforcement. The only idea he was able to come up with was to sponsor the development of a smartphone app for reporting fishery violations. Several state agencies have similar apps or toll-free numbers, but this app would be designed for reporting both federal and state violations. Rather than requiring someone to determine the correct agency to which a violation should be reported, the app would send reports to a central location, perhaps operated by NOAA enforcement, who would then relay the report to the appropriate agency. Panel members agreed that this idea was worth considering. Other ideas that were suggested included developing a relationship with oil companies to help report violations around offshore rigs, or developing a procedure for fishermen to report violations via VHF radio. It was noted that the Coast Guard already monitors all VHF calls.

Discussion of Ways to Avoid Waste of Seized Fish

As noted in the presentation on Mexican lancha fishing, the illegally caught fish that are seized are taken back out to sea and dumped. These fish cannot be sold because they have not been properly iced and are considered unfit for human consumption. LCDR Brand noted that the Coast Guard is looking into providing the fish to non-profit functions such as sea turtle rehabilitation centers or for research.

Mr. Atran suggested that a vessel of origin requirement might help to reduce sales of illegally caught fish. After the LEC/LEAP meeting, NOAA Fisheries announced the release of a report containing the final recommendations of the Presidential Task Force on Combating Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing and Seafood Fraud. That report includes a recommendation for a traceability program to track seafood from point of harvest to entry into U.S. commerce. The report is available at

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ia/iuu/noaa_taskforce_report_final.pdf

Proposed Officer of the Year Award Program

Council staff described the proposed Officer of the Year program. The program calls for a review of nominees by the LEC/LEAP to select the top three candidates. Since this may involve reviewing personal information of individuals, it may require a closed door session. The Council's LEAP can conduct closed door sessions, but the GSMFC's LEC does not have any such provision. To get around this, a suggestion was made to have the review conducted only by the LEAP in an LEAP only session. The Panel passed the following motion.

By unanimous consent, the Law Enforcement AP recommends that the language involving the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission's Law Enforcement Committee in review of nominations be removed from the program description.

The program only recognizes individuals. Panel members stated that there are also team efforts where it is not possible to single out an individual, and suggested that there be a team of the year award. This could be done as a separate award program rather than try to compare team activities to individual activities.

The Law Enforcement AP unanimously concurred that there should be a second award for team of the year.

GSMFC LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE SESSION

IJF Program Activity

GSMFC staff provided the LEC with a short update on the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program (IJF) activities. He reminded the representatives that the GSMFC would be requesting updates for the various 'law enforcement' related publications the Commission publishes annually: The 'Red Book' with all the states' annual commercial and recreational regulations, the annual license and fees pub, and the Officers Pocket Guide to Fishing Regulations. The GSMFC had in the past printed the Pocket Guide on waterproof paper which was spiral-bound, and sized to fit in officers' ticket books, however, due to funding issues, printing was discontinued for the past two years. The LEC indicated that if funds were available, the waterproof copy was much more useful than a Xerox copy which didn't last long on the water. Commission staff will look into the cost of printing once they have a better idea of what the Commission's total 2015 printing costs look like.

State Reports

Due to lack of time at this meeting, the state reports were submitted electronically for inclusion in this meeting summary, and are attached (Attachment B).

Other Business

The LEC/LEAP group is routinely running out of time when meeting in a half-day session. A large part of the Tuesday session was spent on Council amendment discussions, and the LEAP would like to continue to be involved in review of amendments as they are developed. It is hoped that the LEC/LEAP meeting could go back to a full day or afternoon/morning setup as it used to be a few years ago. In anticipation of this issue coming up, the GSMFC has already considered a full day for the meeting when bidding for the November meeting. As issues tend to overlap, it seems appropriate to keep it a joint session and not split half days between Council and Commission issues.

The next GSMFC meeting will be the week of November 3. This will be a joint meeting with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and it will meet in St. Augustine, Florida.

The meeting adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

LEAP Members in Attendance:

Rama Shuster, FWC, Chair
Brandi L. Reeder, TPWD, Vice-chair
Scott Bannon, ADMR
Tracy Dunn, NOAA/OLE
Cynthia Fenyk, NOAA/GCES
Chad Hebert, LDWF
Rusty Pittman, MDMR

LEC Members in Attendance:

Chad Hebert, LDWF, Chair
Rusty Pittman, MDMR (Vice-chair)
Scott Bannon, ADMR (Chair)
Jason Brand, USCG
Tracy Dunn, NOAA/OLE
Cynthia Fenyk, NOAA/GCES
Brandi L. Reeder, TPWD
Rama Shuster, FWC

Others:

Chris Blankenship, GSMFC Commissioner
Doug Boyd, GMFMC member
Dan Ellinor, GSMFC Commissioner
Jim Hewitt, Audubon Nature Institute
Jim Landon, NOAA
Campo Matens, GSMFC Commissioner/GMFMC member
Robert Perkins, USCG
Ashford Rosenberg, Audubon Nature Institute

Staff:

Steven Atran, GMFMC
Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC
Debbie McIntyre, GSMFC
Alex Miller, GSMFC

**Excerpt from the “Improving International Fisheries Management,”
February 2015 Report to Congress**

Mexico

Bases for Identification. Mexico is being identified for having vessels fishing illegally in the U.S. EEZ, and for overfishing of stocks shared with the United States, in areas without applicable international measures or management organizations, that has adverse impacts on such stocks.

While foreign fishing without authorization in the U.S. EEZ has been illegal since 1977, the definition of IUU fishing under the Moratorium Protection Act was revised only recently to include such activity. The United States and Mexico have worked to address unauthorized fishing by Mexican vessels in the U.S. EEZ of the Gulf of Mexico over many years, but more violations of this type occurred in 2013.

The USCG apprehended 24 open-hulled vessels powered by outboard motors (known locally as lanchas) in the U.S. EEZ with 82 Mexican nationals onboard, along with evidence of fishing activity. The vessels had made incursions as far as 41 nautical miles into the U.S. EEZ. The USCG documented a total of 1,418 red snapper, five gag grouper, and four gray triggerfish onboard the lanchas; these three species are from stocks shared with the United States and that have been determined to be overfished by the United States. Under the Moratorium Protection Act, the definition of IUU fishing includes overfishing of stocks shared by the United States that has adverse impacts on such stocks. Mexico reported to NMFS that it considers Red Snapper to be fully exploited. NMFS is concerned about the adverse impacts of this fishing activity, particularly on Red Snapper, given the status of that stock and the large amount of catch documented.

The sources of information on Mexico’s fishing activities are 24 case package reports from USCG District Eight transmitted to Director General de Inspeccion y Vigilancia, Comision Nacional de Acuacultura y Pesca, dated between February 21, 2013 and May 29, 2014.

Outreach to Mexico. NMFS sent a letter to Mexico dated October 17, 2014, and received a response letter dated December 10, 2014. In its response, Mexico described a number of initiatives it hopes will address the issue of lancha incursions into the U.S. EEZ. These include carrying out a verification of vessel registrations and permits by the end of December 2014, expediting the installation of Automatic Identification System transmitters on registered vessels, strengthening the Mexican Navy’s surveillance and patrol efforts in the area, and analyzing the feasibility of establishing a fishing exclusion zone near the maritime boundary.

**Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Division of Law Enforcement
LEAP/LEC State Report - March 2015**

Curtis Brown, Colonel

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Division of Law Enforcement's 853 sworn personnel operate in six regions throughout the state. FWC officers are responsible for uniformed patrol and investigative law enforcement services on more than 8,400 miles of coastline, 13,200 square miles of offshore waters, and over 34 million acres of land encompassing a variety of habitats including wildlife management areas, state parks and forests. FWC officers stand as sentinels for the protection of Florida's precious resources and the public who utilize these resources. The motto of the Division describes its role and dedication to Florida's resources and public: Patrol, Protect, Preserve. FWC officers are highly trained, versatile law enforcement officers with full police powers and statewide jurisdiction. FWC officers are an effective model of modern law enforcement multi-tasking – providing law enforcement services for: the protection and enforcement of laws relating to all wild animal and aquatic resources; public safety in Florida's state parks; boating safety enforcement; the protection of the public in rural, semi-wilderness, wilderness and offshore areas where no other law enforcement agencies routinely patrol; regulating commercial wildlife activities and inspecting personal and commercial native/exotic wildlife facilities; natural disaster and civil disturbance response; search and rescue missions; environmental crimes/protection; dignitary protection; mutual aid requests; and domestic security initiatives.

TRAINING

FWC Academy

The FWC training academy held one physical assessment this year with over a total of 400 applicants at three different locations throughout the state. These assessments also incorporated the newly adopted Physical Agility Test. A basic recruit class began in August 2014, and will we will graduate 37 new officers into the field on April 24, 2015.

The Training Section hosted a NASBLA Comprehensive Boating Accident Investigation Class in October with 45 attendees. In addition, a NASBLA Advanced Class was held in November with 40 members attending, along with conservation officers from 3 other states. The Training Section conducted a Special Operations Group (SOG) Basic Operators Course with over 30 attendees. The section also provided a three day patrol rifle instructor school which put 18 new instructors into the field.

The Section also provided in-service reality-based training, (RBT), which focused on active shooter scenarios. Every sworn member participated in the two day training event which was

the largest training event undertaken by this section. Members were put through their paces with 6 different active shooter scenarios to include hostage and bomb scenarios. The Training Section held a 16 hour Taser Instructor training class that certified 15 new FWC Defensive Tactics Instructors. This was the result of having one of our senior members designated as a Master Taser Instructor by Taser International. Additionally, members of our staff have been recently certified as Cross-Fit instructors and received certification by the Force Science Institute. The Regional Training Lieutenants, (RTLs), provided training that maintained the Division members' standards in both First Aid and CPR

INNOVATIONS IN CONSERVATION LAW ENFORCEMENT

Aviation

Aviation Unit personnel participated in several multiple agency training exercises for Air to Ground coordination of Radiation Nuclear Detection using aerial and ground based radiation nuclear detectors. These exercises were in preparation and concluded with participation in a Department of Domestic Nuclear Detection (DNDO) Air to Ground Pilot program involving many Federal, DOD, and State of Florida personnel and equipment.

Several pilots participated in Volusia County Emergency Management, Operation Vanishing Mosquito regarding a simulated downed mosquito control helicopter containing hazardous materials. FWC personnel provided marine, land, and aerial based support for the exercise. Aviation personnel provided reconnaissance (RECON) and Air Deployable Search and Rescue (ADSAR) with Florida Task Force 4, Urban Search & Rescue (US&R) teams conducting Wide Area searches.

In preparation for the upcoming hurricane season, aviation unit participated in a planning meeting with Florida Department of Emergency Management (FDEM), State of Florida Emergency Operation Center (SEOC). Aviation unit personnel provide Air Coordination for aviation assets during SEOC activation for disasters. Aviation personnel provide aviation support for a Department of Homeland Security, Integrated Advance (mass migration) exercise.

Aviation Unit personnel participated in several multi-agency training initiatives which included: the Airborne Law Enforcement Association, regional aviation safety training conference in Tampa, along with other airborne law enforcement partners from around the world. This training provides opportunities to learn about the latest in technology, and aviation safety; training for law enforcement patrols; aerial cannabis detection with Florida Domestic Marijuana Eradication Program; Air Deployable Search and Rescue (ADSAR) teams attached to Urban Search & Rescue (US&R) teams.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Regional Domestic Security Task Force, Waterborne Response Team

To address the threat of waterborne attacks and to enhance Florida's response capabilities to

critical incidents occurring on or near the water, Waterborne Response Teams (WRTs) have been established within each of the seven Regional Domestic Security Task Forces (RDSTFs). The WRTs are comprised of representatives from local and state agencies including the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), county sheriffs' offices and municipal police departments that possess maritime capabilities. These WRTs will utilize specialized waterborne equipment and trained personnel provided by local, state and federal law enforcement agencies to augment the United States Coast Guard (USCG) mission to ensure compliance with the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002 (MTSA), ensure security of Florida's ports and waterways, and provide a rapid and organized response to WMD events and other critical incidents.

JEA ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS

Fisheries Unit – Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA)

FWC's Division of Law Enforcement has provided over 5,185 hours of JEA patrol during the current contract period which began on August 28th, 2014. In addition to the ongoing IFQ enforcement efforts, FWC was offered additional JEA funding to perform Marine Mammal Protection patrols. These patrols are focused on dolphin interactions involving feeding and harassment.

FWC's Offshore Program recently took delivery of a new 12 Meter Impact built by Brunswick. At nearly 40 feet, this high speed vessel will provide an all-weather platform to conduct offshore JEA patrols.

FWC completed a two day JEA review in February. Upon completion of the administrative review, NOAA staff conducted an overnight JEA patrol on the offshore patrol vessel Gulf Sentry.

Attachment B-2 – Alabama State Enforcement Report

Alabama State Report Fall 2014

From October 1, 2014 to February 28, 2015 AMRD officers conducted the following:

Commercial Fishermen Intercepts- 2,005

Recreational Fishermen Intercepts- 3,715

Total vessel intercepts- 2,289

Total hours of patrol- 6,132

Enforcement Officers assisted NOAA/OLE in the investigation of a dolphin killed by an arrow. Additionally, they assisted in the investigation of a marine turtle that was caught and killed by an individual.

Legislation

The Alabama Legislature will consider a bill from AMRD to allow the use of a fish “stamp” to provide funding for stock assessment of certain species of fish.

Regulations

Changed the mullet limit of 25 during the Oct 1- Dec 31 roe mullet season to a recreational limit to allow for commercial cast nets for of mullet during the roes season.

Increased size limit of Greater Amberjack to 36”

Change red grouper limit to 2 per person in the 4 fish aggregate.

Removed prohibition on taking oysters by diving, swimming or wading in Heron Bay.

Removed specific locations where the AMRD Oyster Management stations would be located.

Define the “inside waters” of Alabama as the Territorial Sea Line

Staffing

AMRD Enforcement is in the process of hiring 3 additional officers to bring the total to 18. This will result in the largest enforcement staff in over 20 years. AMRD is researching the potential use of a resource canine program.



MARINE PATROL

MARCH 2015

Mississippi Spring Report for 2015

For the months of October 2014 through January 2015, Officers with the Marine Patrol spent 3072 hours patrolling the marine waters of the state. Officers made 7012 stops during the same time period. During these patrols officers issued 196 state citations for various seafood and boat and water safety violations.

For the months of October 2014 through January 2015, officers conducted 34 Joint Enforcement Agreement patrols resulting in 759 man hours with 218 at sea hours. These patrols made 238 contacts and there were 17 state citations issued. There were no Enforcement Action Reports issued during this time period. On January 15, 2015, MDMR Officers worked a Joint Detail with Alabama Marine Resources, LA Wildlife and Fisheries, NOAA and MS DOT, at the I-10 East bound Weigh Scales in Hancock County, MS and the I-10 West bound Weigh Scales in Jackson County, MS.

Marine Patrol officers taught two Boat and Water Safety Classes which resulted in 68 students being certified. Officers attended Career Day at Pass Road Elementary with 200 children attending for one Outreach Program during the months of October 2014 through December 2014.

LDWF Highlights:

10/1/2014 – 02/28/2015

- 531 Dockside hours and 143 inspections
- 4,646 At-Sea Personnel Hours with 2,978 Vessel hours
- 148 Catch Share Hours
- 50 Outreach Hours educating over 334 people
- Recreational Public Contacts: 7,555
- Commercial Public Contacts: 1,987
- Boardings: 3,482

Agents are actively investigating several Lacey Act violations pertaining to oysters and mislabeling of seafood. They are working closely with NOAA/OLE.

Agents participated in the Louisiana Fisheries Forward Summit discussing commercial fishing issues with individual fisherman and industry.

Gray Triggerfish in Louisiana has been changed to a 2 per person daily limit in aggregate.

Tripletail now has an 18 inch minimum with a 5 per person daily limit. The state has increased the resident saltwater license fee from \$5.50 to \$13.00 effective August 1, 2014.

The enforcement division recently graduated fifteen agents from the training academy with eight of those agents working coastal Louisiana.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Law Enforcement Division
LEAP/LEC State Report - March 2015
Submitted by: Asst. Commander Brandi L. Reeder

- **Funding and Staffing Issues** – TPWD-LE continues to maintain a substantial force of over 500 game wardens statewide. As with many agencies TPWD-LE has had to work with senior management, legislators, and constituents to ensure the strong tradition of Texas Game Wardens endures during difficult economic times. While there are still Law Enforcement Division concerns, such as the aircraft fleet and the vehicle fleet, the division as a whole has fared well. Some highlights include:
 - TPWD-LE now has two full time recruiters (one Game Warden V and one Lieutenant Game Warden) to assist with recruiting efforts.
 - In addition to the new recruiters game wardens statewide will have a recruiting component added as part of their annual performance evaluation in an effort to increase diversity in the work force.
 - The 84th Session of the Texas Legislature has started with many Bills filed proposing amendments to many Texas Parks and Wildlife Code Statutes.
 - A game warden cadet class started January 5, 2015 with 19 cadets. In addition, this is the first class to include cadets from the State Parks division that will serve as Park Peace Officers upon graduation from the 7 month academy.
 - TPWD-LE has a new Airbus AS350B3e helicopter outfitted with the latest law enforcement technology, purchased with funding appropriated by the 83rd Texas Legislature. The helicopter is outfitted with a hoist allowing insertion of personnel to conduct search and rescue operations.
- **Training Issues** – The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department – Law Enforcement Division (TPWD-LE) continues to encourage and promote relevant training to ensure game wardens are prepared to meet the demands of their job. Some highlights from the past year include:
 - TPWD-LE has provided officer water survival (OWS) training to game wardens in advance of the spring and summer water safety season. Training Academy Staff will deploy this training to all game warden personnel in a series of in-service training as well as a training module for game cadets. This training is part of the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) Boat Operations and Training (BOAT) Program catalog of nationally credentialed courses.

- TPWD-LE now has 10 K-9 Teams fully trained in Search and Rescue and scent detection. In its first year, the K-9 Team has found 16 people and assisted in innumerable narcotics and resource related arrests.
 - TPWD-LE continues with a strong tradition of representation at the prestigious FBI – National Academy with game wardens attending when in positions are offered to the LE division. The 10 week course of study is instrumental in providing the training to prepare ranking game wardens for future roles in senior management.
 - TPWD-LE has expanded leadership training to include the FBI – Law Enforcement Executive Development Association training classes as well as the FBI – National Academy Associates Command College.
- **Major Conservation Law Enforcement Trends** – Significant advances have been made by TPWD-LE in support of major conservation law enforcement trends. Whether working traditional conservation law enforcement efforts in federal waters or being the lead agency on border operations game wardens continue to adapt and excel as their job duties change and expand. A few examples of TPWD-LE involvement in these trends include:
 - TPWD-LE has conducted numerous fisheries outreach events for other government and non-government agencies as well industry personnel to ensure commercial and sport fishing regulations are understood and concerns are addressed.
 - TPWD-LE is recognized as being the lead agency enforcing the Texas Water Safety Act on all public waters in the state. Boating While Intoxicated (BWI) is an integral part of that enforcement effort and game wardens have incorporated “no refusal weekends” and “mandatory blood draws” as tools to be utilized when handling BWI suspects.
 - Border operations continue to be an enforcement effort game wardens are involved with along the Texas/Mexico border and in the Gulf of Mexico. TPWD-LE game wardens fill a vital niche with their expertise of navigating the waterways and back country of rural Texas. Some of the most challenging areas for game wardens to patrol are the remote mountains and canyons in the Big Bend region of west Texas. While maintaining these patrols game wardens are constantly in search of illegal drug and human smuggling activity in addition to their enforcement efforts of the Texas Parks and Wildlife and Penal Code. These operations serve a dual purpose by allowing game wardens to practice conservation law enforcement while serving as a force multiplier providing security along the border.

- **Unique Cross Boundary or Cooperative, Enforcement Efforts** – TPWD-LE continues its involvement with several cooperative enforcement efforts with federal and state partners which include:
 - The U.S. Coast Guard continues to be a partner on the maritime forefront whether working together on border operations or fisheries issues. In addition, Recreational Boating Safety funds enable game wardens to maintain and enhance their officer presence on all waters of the state as they continue to serve as the lead agency ensuring public safety on public water.
 - TPWD-LE has partnered with NOAA – Office of Law Enforcement, National Marine Fisheries Service since 2001 by maintaining a Joint Enforcement Agreement that provides federal funds for state game wardens to patrol coastal waters and points-of-entry for enforcement of recreational and commercial fisheries violations. This successful partnership has provided equipment and operational funds which have allowed for increased officer presence in the bays and Gulf of Mexico.
- **New Innovations in Conservation Law Enforcement** –
 - After successful iPhone provisioning statewide to game wardens, the agency has rolled out its first app, which allows game wardens to verify Hunter/Boater Education status without making a call. A daily reporting app is coming out next, and several more are planned thereafter. 440 Mini iPads have been acquired, and additional registration/ticketing systems are being evaluated for field use.
 - TPWD-LE has rolled out many new applications this year Pocket Cop enabling game wardens to run individuals and items for wants or warrants in the field. A TPWD license verification app will be released in April allowing game wardens to verify licenses and determine whether a subject has been placed on a license block or suspension due to Child Support, Civil Restitution, Criminal Judgement, or check with insufficient funds. A fisheries enforcement application is currently in construction, set for release in September 2016, which will allow wardens to capture Joint Enforcement Agreement vessel and fish dealer contact information and provide an administrative component to run reports and complete invoicing forms.
 - 10 Mobile Fingerprint Readers have been successfully deployed to game wardens statewide, with 40 more in process. These have led to enhanced identity verification capabilities in the field.
 - The TPWD Law Enforcement Division Facebook presence is sizeable, with an average of 4,400 weekly engaged users. Twitter presence is sizeable, with over 2,000 followers and

growing. The social media team has completed two virtual ride-alongs, resulting in exposure to over 120,000 viewers.

- Internal and external web sites have been updated and are now authored by game wardens for game wardens and their constituents. The intranet site has been optimized for the field, making forms easier to navigate and use.

- Operation Game Thief (OGT), enacted by the 67th legislature in 1981 is the states' premier crime stoppers program for reporting fish, wildlife and certain water safety and environmental crimes violations. The primary focus of the program is to assist game wardens of the law enforcement division in the investigation and apprehension of violators. This is accomplished through the rewards program offering up to \$1000.00 for information leading to a conviction. OGT is no stranger to the age of new technology and as a result the program has incorporated a Text Tip reporting feature at **847411** in addition to the already established **1-800-792-4263** hotline, to further add to the game wardens ability to receive information quicker in real time and improve apprehension of violators. In addition OGT has a new software program for the reporting and tracking of information and violations that greatly increased officer efficiency reporting allowing game wardens to spend more time in the field instead of the office writing OGT reports.

- **Cost Savings Initiatives –**

- TPWD-LE continues to move forward with embracing new technology and incorporating new ideas and concepts into the traditional methods of accomplishing the agency and division missions. E-documents and interactive conference calls are replacing massive mailings and face-to-face meetings which were once the standard. As a result TPWD-LE disseminates information in a more timely and efficient manner at an overall cost savings to the Law Enforcement Division.

- **Other Special Law Enforcement Issues –**

- TPWD-LE remains on the forefront of providing the most advanced equipment; technology and training available for all personnel to ensure officer safety and productivity are maintained at the highest level. This is accomplished at a time when the Law Enforcement Division continues to expand its conversation law enforcement efforts into non-traditional fields such as border operations and numerous team concepts. Additionally, TPWD-LE continues with efforts within the conservation realm by more intense participation in areas ranging from fisheries enforcement in federal waters to education and enforcement efforts of harmful exotic species regulations within the state.

