

NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement
Southeast Division

FISCAL YEAR 2024, QUARTER 3
FISHERY MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL REPORT

APRIL 1, 2024-JUNE 30, 2024



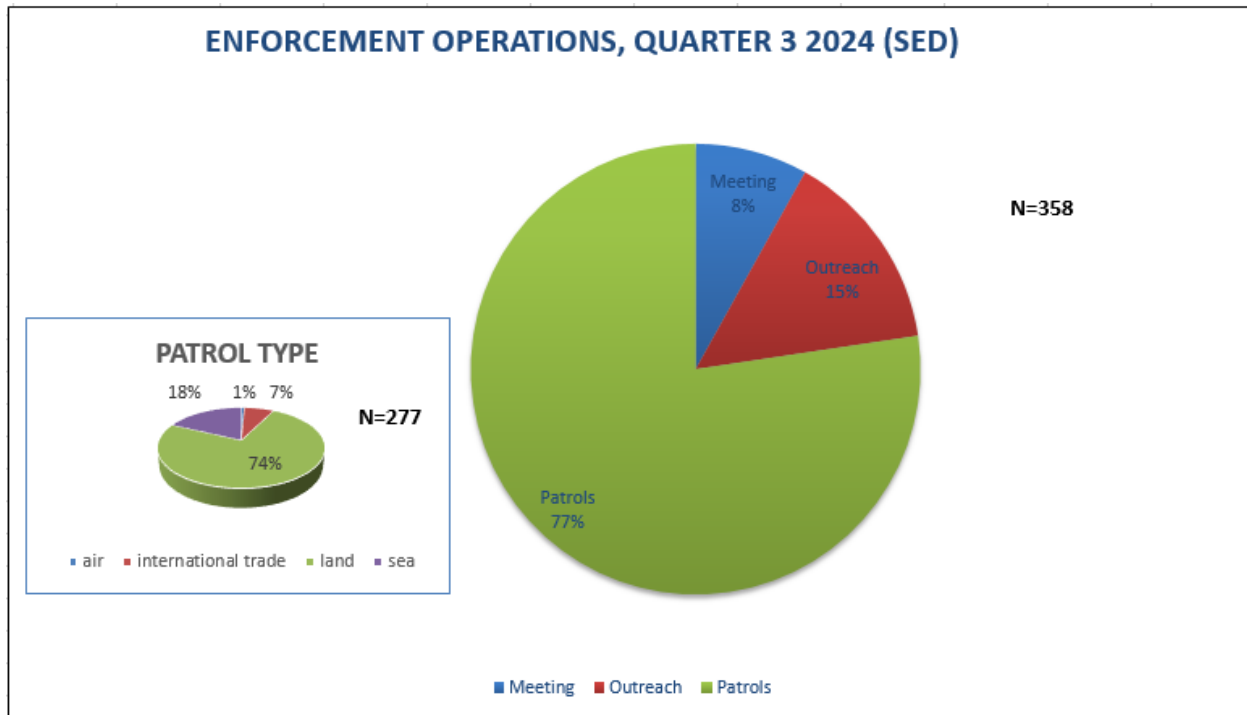
Contents

Enforcement and Compliance.....	2
Incident Information.....	3
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Summary.....	4
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Summary.....	5
Caribbean Fishery Management Council Summary.....	6
Summary of Cases by Joint Enforcement Agreement and United States Coast Guard Partners.....	7
Caseload Snapshot.....	9
Enforcement Highlights.....	10
Overview of Summary Settlements.....	19
Investigative Support Program.....	22
Observer Program Highlights.....	23
Cases Referred For Prosecution.....	24
NOAA General Counsel Enforcement Section Charging Information.....	24

Enforcement and Compliance

Data represent National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Office of Law Enforcement, Southeast Division’s (OLE-SED) enforcement efforts conducted throughout FY Quarter 3, 2024, **April 1, 2024- June 30, 2024**. When appropriate, information is separated by council, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC), Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) and Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CFMC).

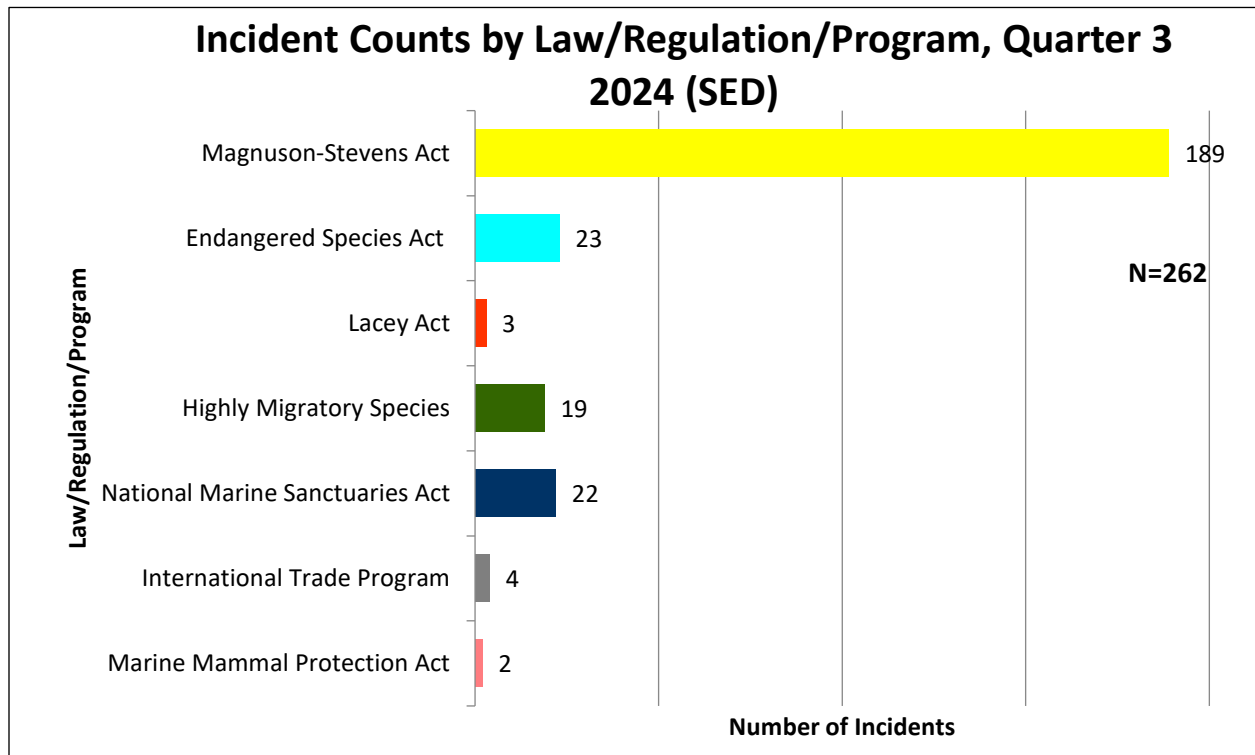
Patrols, outreach and education, compliance assistance, and investigations are the primary activities of OLE’s mission to protect marine wildlife and habitat by enforcing domestic laws and supporting international treaty requirements designed to ensure global resources are available for future generations. Specifically, two operations were conducted throughout the division. Enforcement efforts are routinely conducted with multiple federal, state and local partners throughout the division. A multi-agency operation was conducted in the Florida Keys, focusing on shrimp TED/BRD requirements. Another multi-agency operation was conducted with state partners focused on identifying illegal charters off the west coast of Florida. This quarter, OLE-SED conducted and documented **277** patrols, **52** specific instances of outreach and attended **29** meetings.



Incident Information

During the third quarter, OLE-SED opened **262** incidents, which included **148** counts in the SAFMC area, **150** counts in the GMFMC area and **1** count in the CFMC area¹. These incidents originate from both NOAA personnel and our enforcement partners.

Summary of Incidents by Law/Regulation/Program; Quarter 3, 2024



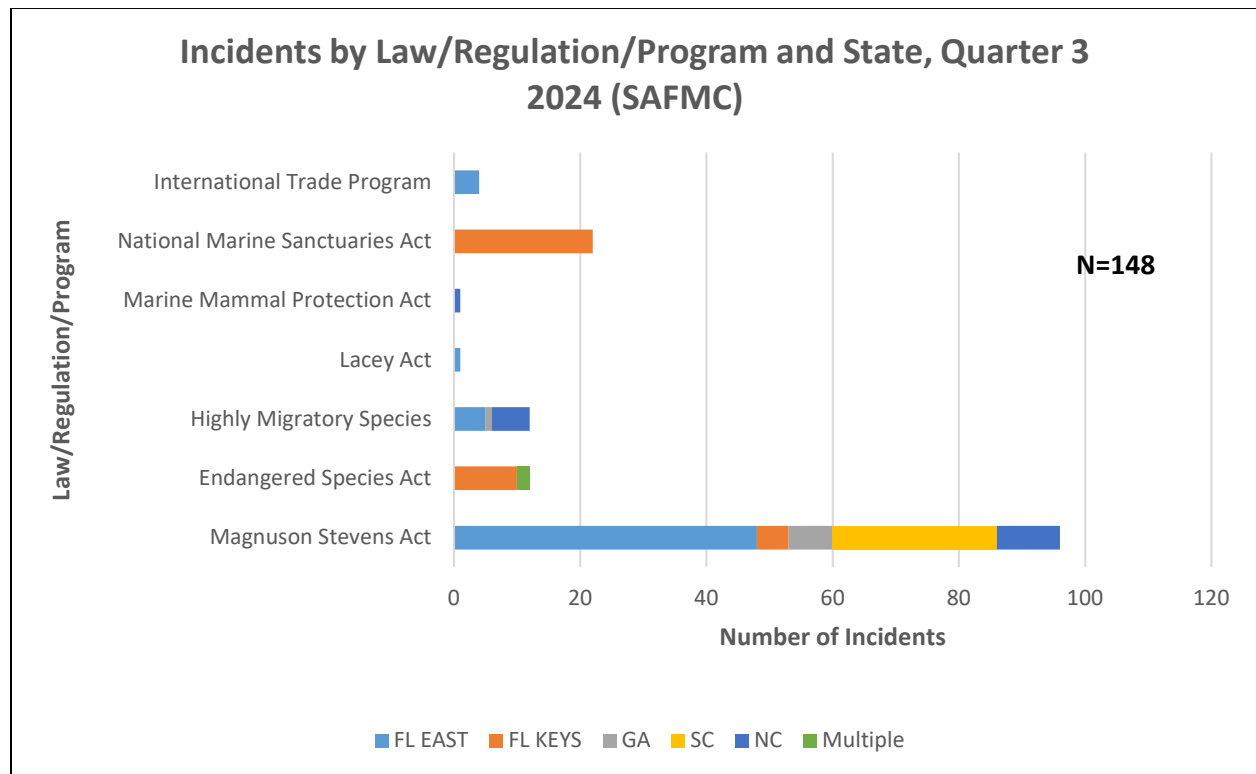
¹ Incidents occurring in the Florida Keys area are included in both SAFMC and GMFMC counts; total individual counts are greater than opened incidents due to multiple counts charged for separate incidents

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Summary

**Total number of incidents listed below includes effort by OLE and enforcement partners, by location

Number of Incidents by Law/Regulation/Program and Location; Quarter 3, 2024 (SAFMC)

Law/Regulation/Program	FL EAST	FL KEYS	GA	SC	NC	Multiple	Total
Magnuson Stevens Act	48	5	7	26	10		96
Endangered Species Act		10				2	12
Highly Migratory Species	5		1		6		12
Lacey Act	1						1
Marine Mammal Protection Act					1		1
National Marine Sanctuaries Act		22					22
International Trade Program	4						4
TOTAL	58	37	8	26	17	2	148

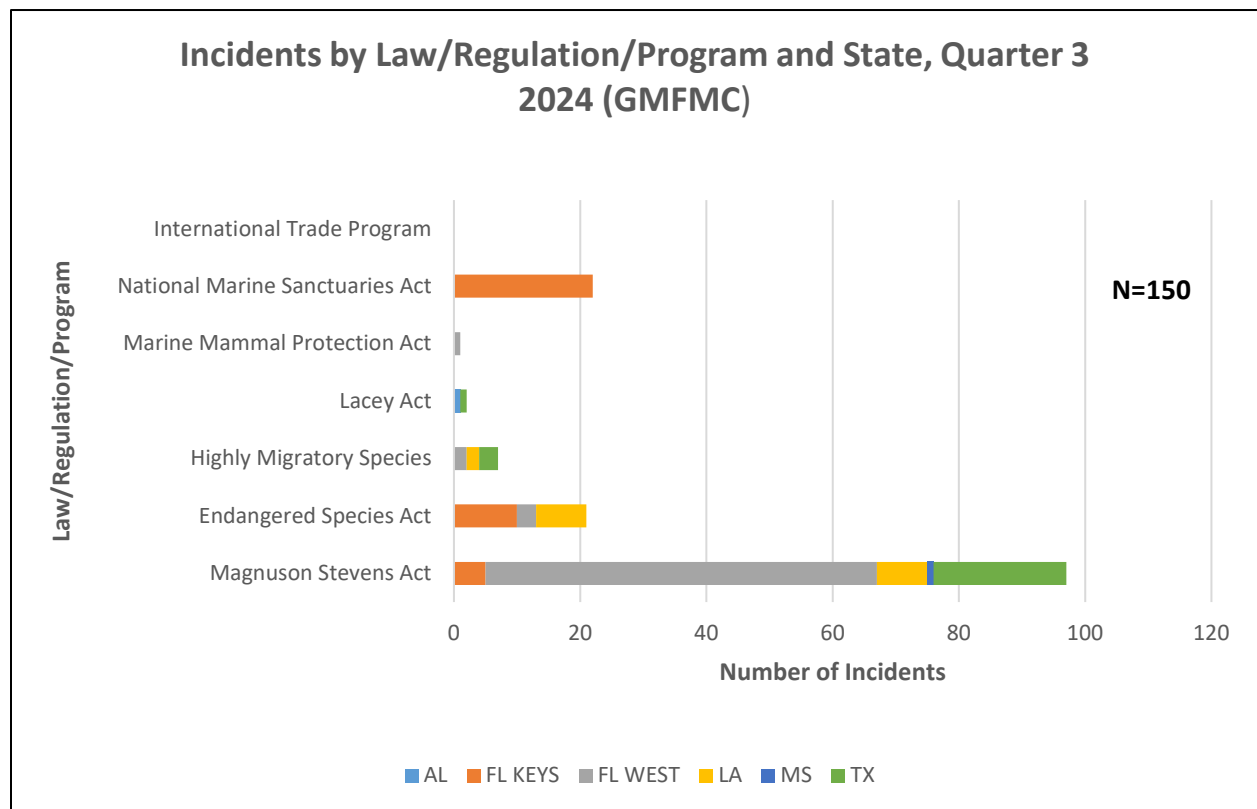


Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Summary

**Total number of incidents listed below includes effort by OLE and enforcement partners, by location

Number of Incidents by Law/Regulation/Program and Location; Quarter 3, 2024 (GMFMC)

Law/Regulation/Program	AL	FL KEYS	FL WEST	LA	MS	TX	Total
Magnuson Stevens Act		5	62	8	1	21	97
Endangered Species Act		10	3	8			21
Highly Migratory Species			2	2		3	7
Lacey Act	1					1	2
Marine Mammal Protection Act			1				1
National Marine Sanctuaries Act		22					22
International Trade Program							0
TOTAL	1	37	68	18	1	25	150

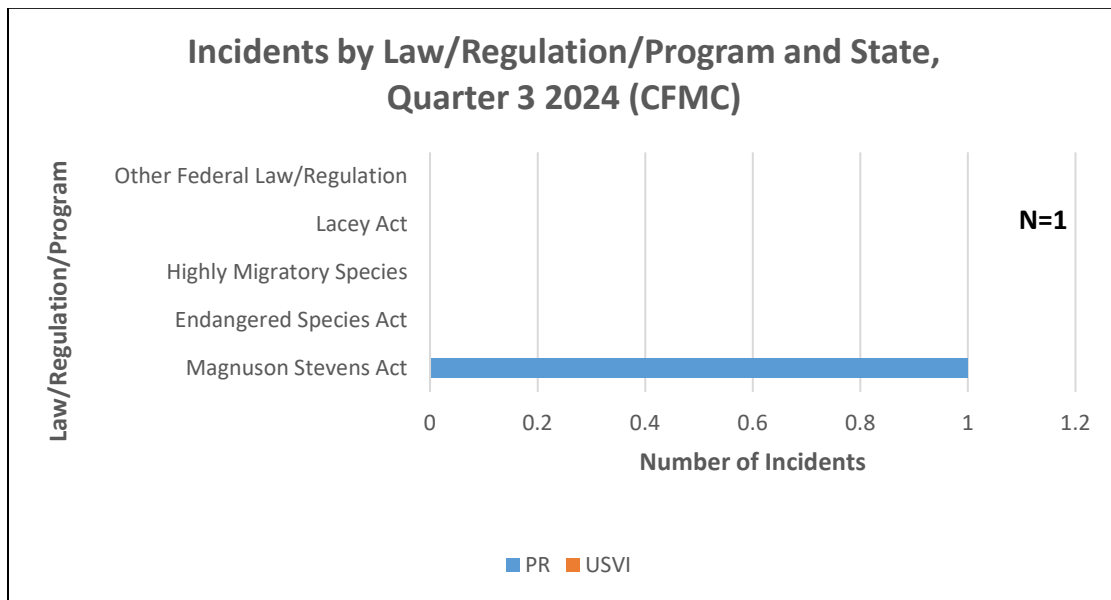


Caribbean Fishery Management Council Summary

**Total number of incidents listed below includes effort by OLE and enforcement partners, by location

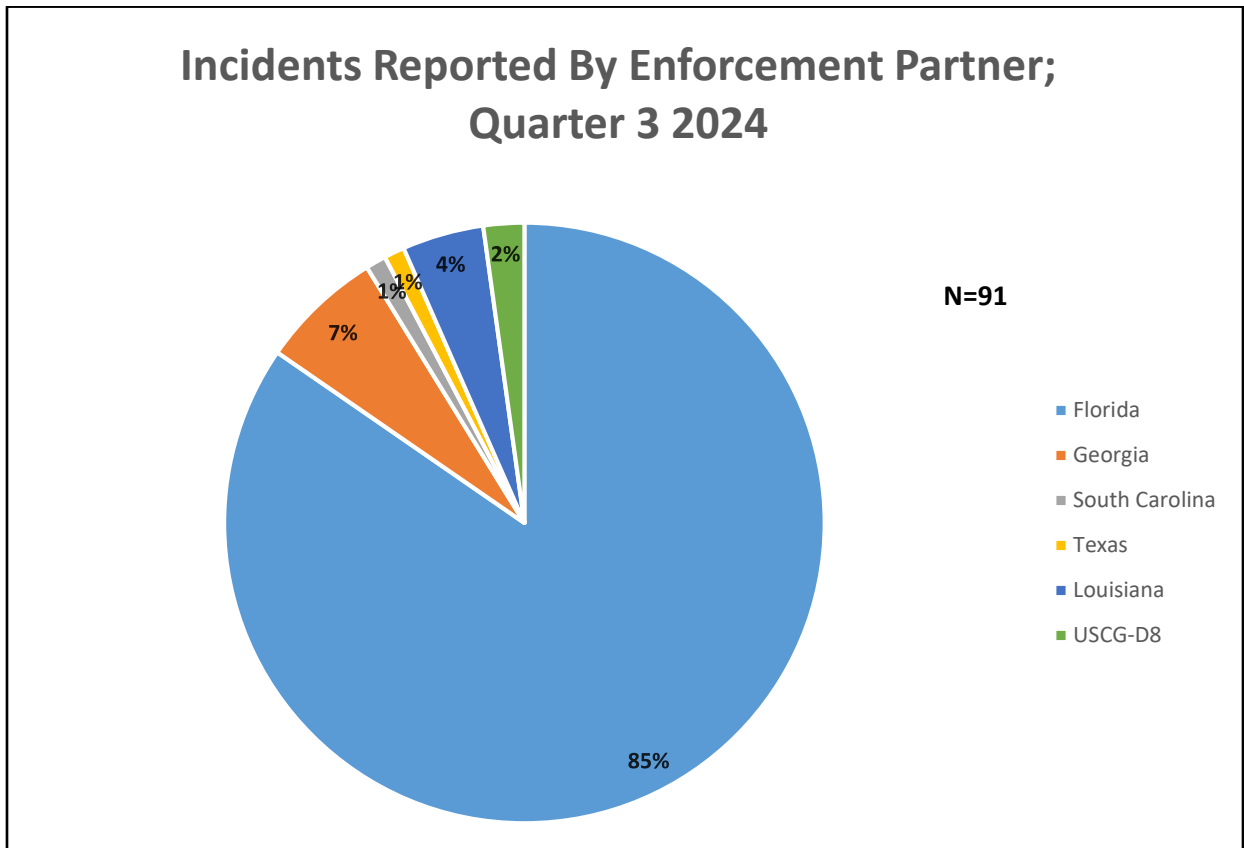
Number of Incidents by Law/Regulation/Program and Location; Quarter 3, 2024 (CFMC)

Law/Regulation/Program	PR	USVI	Total
Magnuson Stevens Act	1		1
Endangered Species Act			0
Highly Migratory Species			0
Lacey Act			0
Other Federal Law/Regulation			0
TOTAL	1		1

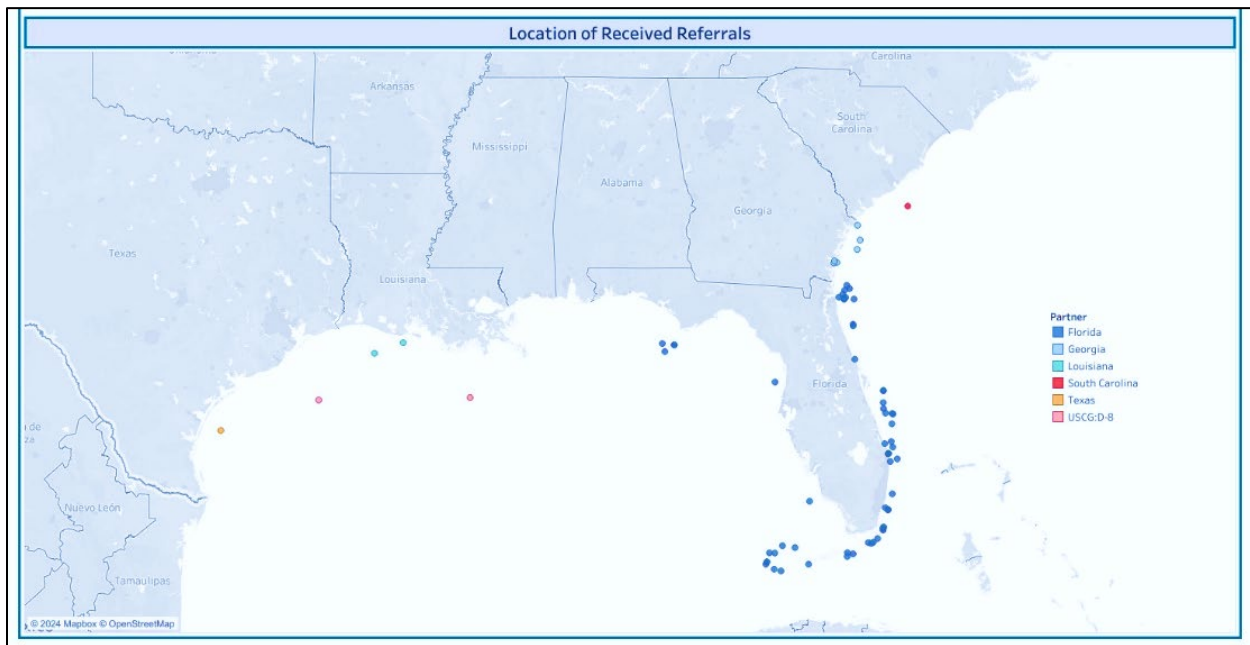
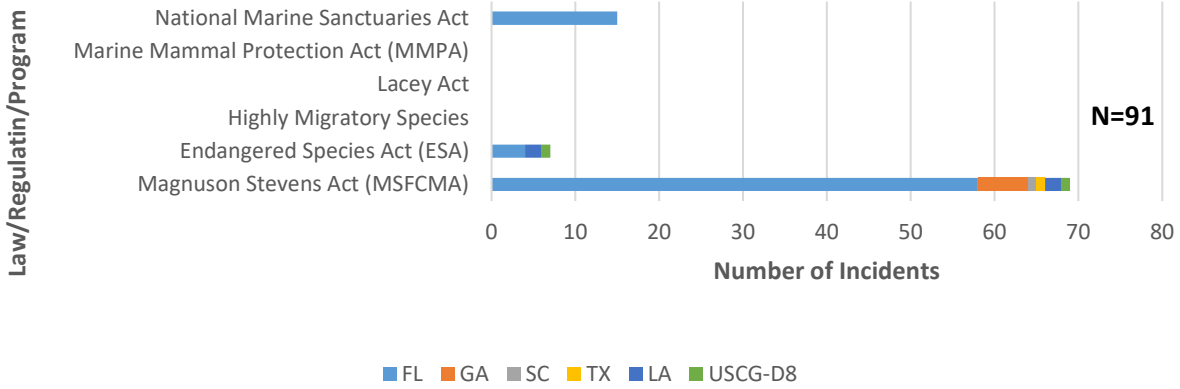


Summary of Cases by Joint Enforcement Agreement and United States Coast Guard Partners

Throughout Quarter 3, 2024, there were **91** cases referred to OLE-SED through Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) and United States Coast Guard (USCG) partners. Below is a summary showing the overall distribution of cases initiated by partner, and a breakdown of case counts by law/regulation/program per enforcement partner¹. Effort consisted of dockside vessel boardings, offshore vessel boardings and interaction with the general public and industry members.



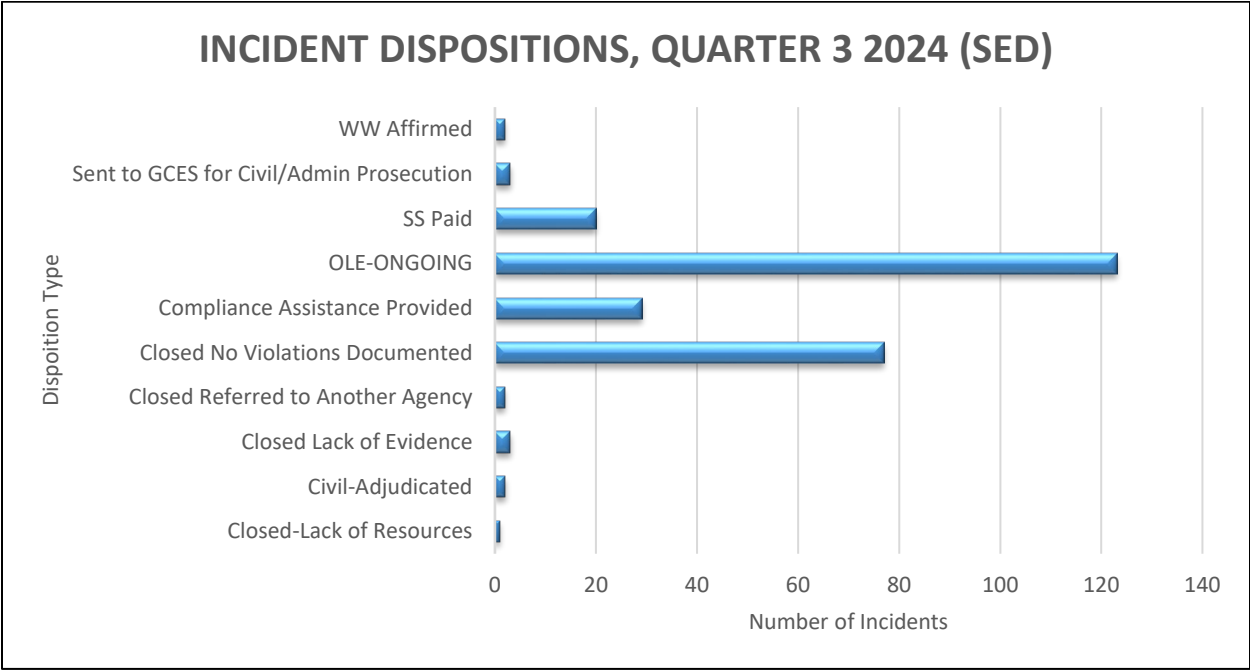
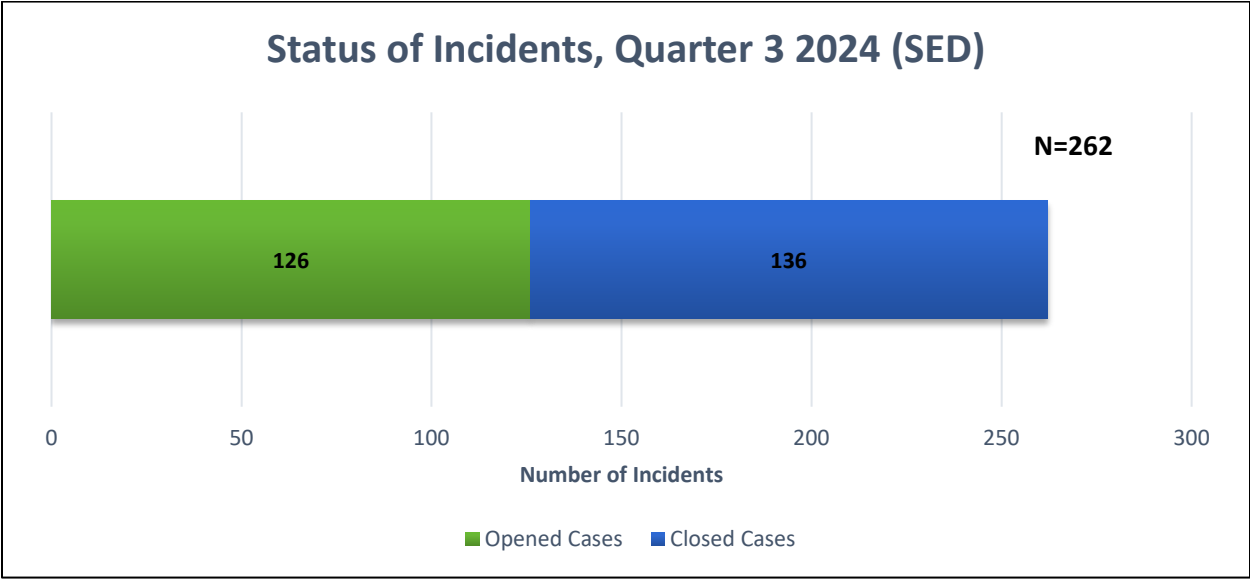
Referred Incidents by Enforcement Partner, by Law/Regulation/Program; Quarter 3 2024



¹ total individual counts may be greater than opened cases due to multiple counts charged for separate cases

Caseload Snapshot

Below is a breakdown of the initiated incidents (262) throughout the quarter, by status and disposition. The total also includes cases referred to OLE-SED by our enforcement partners. Throughout the quarter, enforcement personnel were able to complete investigations and close 52% of the incoming workload.



Enforcement Highlights

Highly Migratory Species

During a recent joint patrol with Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), a Houma, LA Enforcement Officer (EO) conducted a boarding on the vessel and found they were operating as a charter in possession of two Yellowfin tuna and did not possess an HMS charter/headboat permit. A summary settlement for \$1,000 was issued to the captain and owner of the charter-fishing vessel

A Slidell, LA Special Agent (SA) provided compliance assistance to a HMS dealer in Dulac, LA for failing to meet the reporting requirements for the landing/purchase of bluefin tuna. The dealer has now become compliant with the HMS permits office.

A San Juan, PR SA attended and participated in a HMS workshop at the Arecibo Yacht club. The workshop was given by three NOAA HMS personnel and the SA. The HMS personnel had a computer on site and issued several new HMS permits. Approximately 40 recreational and commercial fishermen attended.

A North Carolina EO met with a new charter captain who posted a picture of a sailfish out of the water with the caption "Successfully Released" after his first charter trip. Compliance assistance was provided, HMS regulations were explained and copies of the HMS compliance guides were left with the captain.

A Miami, FL SA was advised by General Counsel Enforcement Section (GCES) that a \$6000 Notice of Violation and Assessment (NOVA) was issued to an individual who helped land a record-setting swordfish and then illegally sold portions to a restaurant.



A North Carolina EO worked the 2024 Big Rock Blue Marlin Tournament. The EO answered a plethora of questions for the public in the widely followed tournament. A 504lb blue marlin won \$1.7 million for being the first fish over 500lbs landed. The overall prize money for this tournament is \$7,562,700.

Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP) and Port State Measures Act (PSMA)

A League City, TX EO and a Houston, TX EO conducted a land based patrol of the Houston area and conducted site visits to local importers holding an International Fisheries Trade Permit (IFTP). Compliance assistance was provided to two seafood wholesalers for not displaying their IFTP permit and not maintaining records at their place of business.

Port of West Palm Beach and Tropical Shipping hosted a workshop on U.S. Imports from the Dominican Republic and the cargo clearance process. The event included multiple federal partners, importers and customs brokers. A Miami, FL EO presented on the importance of IUU, SIMP and relevant regulations. The Port of West Palm Beach is the fourth busiest container port in Florida and the 18th busiest container port in the US.



A Harlingen, TX EO along with Homeland Security Investigation (HSI) Agents were notified by the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) of a female attempting to smuggle sea cucumbers into the United States from Mexico at the International Port of Entry. During the interview, it was discovered the female was a Chinese national with permanent residency in Mexico and held a U.S. Visa. After the interview, CBP revoked her U.S. Visa and deported her back to Mexico for failure to declare and attempting to smuggle products into the United States.

A Miami, FL SA inspected a container at Port Everglades with a CBP unit. The container was placed on hold due to a first-time importer from Venezuela. Each species was located within the container were selected and opened. One box labeled sardine samples containing several Caribbean red snapper whole fish and filets was opened. The broker was called to upload the entry packet to see if the snapper was declared. The packet was uploaded and all of the fish was accounted for. No violations were found.

Marine Mammal Protection Act

A SC SA on temporary duty to the Pacific Islands Division completed multiple patrols on the south Kona coast of Hawaii. Surveillance was conducted in areas where Hawaiian spinner dolphins take shelter during the day. The SA viewed five incidents where subjects pursued dolphins within fifty yards. They included one swimmer, one recreational vessel and three tour vessels. Summary settlements were issued.



A Fort Myers, FL EO conducted a MMPA patrol in Lovers Key State Park where several complaints have been received of tourists harassing pods of dolphins. Outreach and education was provided and several signs were mounted at the boat ramp and kayak launch. More patrols are planned in the park.

A Charleston, SC EO conducted patrols after reports of illegal dolphin interactions. No illegal activity was observed immediately, but video was obtained of previous interactions and will be further investigated.

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

A Cape Canaveral, FL EO served three summary settlements cases for possession of amberjack and scamp in the Oculina Experimental Closed Area (\$300.00), bottom fishing without a descending device (\$250.00), and possession of seventeen undersized black sea bass and fishing without a descending device (\$1175.00)



A Houston, TX EO conducted an at sea Living Marine Resources (LMR) patrol with Coast Guard Station Freeport in the Exclusive Economic Zone. Three boardings were completed and two vessels were found with violations. One vessel was in possession of 14 red snapper during the federal closed season and the other vessel was in possession of one yellowfin tuna without the required Highly Migratory Species Angling Permit. The EO issued both captains Enforcement Violation Reports (EVRs).



A Panama City, FL EO conducted an at sea patrol aboard a Florida Fish and Wildlife (FWC) offshore patrol vessel, targeting violations in the Madison and Swanson MPA. Multiple boardings were conducted-The subjects on one vessel boarded were in possession of 6 out of season red snapper (5 not in whole condition), 1 greater amberjack out of season (not in whole condition) and 2 red grouper over the bag limit.

A Charleston, SC EO received information that a commercial vessel would be landing overages of grouper following a multi-day trip. The EO coordinated with South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) to have an officer on scene during the offload resulting in identifying 127lbs overage of gag grouper. State citations were issued.

A Miami, FL EO issued a \$1,175 Summary Settlement for a FWC submitted case regarding a vessel returning from the Bahamas with bags of skinless dolphin, snapper and tuna onboard. Violations for failure to maintain Atlantic HMS in the specified form and failure to maintain a fish intact through offloading ashore were issued.

A Cape Canaveral, FL EO issued a \$275 Summary Settlement for a FWC submitted case for possessing one golden tilefish during the closed season. A second \$375 Summary Settlement was issued for a second case for a vessel returning from the Bahamas with mahi, grouper and snapper fillets without skin properly attached.

A Charleston, SC EO processed four SEFHIER case referrals for delinquent vessel logbook entries and provided Compliance Assistance for all. Two vessels no longer have active permits and were conducting charters in federal waters. Two owner/operators were given compliance assistance after submitting all delinquent reports.

Endangered Species Act



A Charleston Supervisory Enforcement Officer (SEO), SA, and EO conducted a patrol monitoring vessels transiting the Seasonal Management Area (SMA) designed to reduce North Atlantic Right Whale ship strikes. No vessels were observed violating the SMA and no buoy gear was located during the patrol. Six underway boardings for fisheries inspections were conducted. One commercial vessel

was found with violations for failing to possess sea turtle mitigation gear, a descending device and also did not have the vessel's official number properly displayed. A recreational vessel was found with a violation for failing to possess a descending device. During the patrol, an endangered shortnose sturgeon was observed floating near the jetties. No obvious signs of trauma were observed.

A Cape Canaveral, FL EO processed a FWC case reference for two blue crab traps offshore without weak links. A summary settlement for \$500.00 was issued.

A San Juan, PR SA attended a queen conch workshop organized by NOAA Protected Resource Division. The workshop was designed to inform the fishing industry about the process of regulating the queen conch under the newly designated threatened ESA listing. NOAA Protected Resource division requested the assistance of the SA due to threats posted on-line. The SA also coordinated with Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER) to have five officers present at the workshop.



A Saint Thomas, USVI EO conducted a document review of a CITES coral shipment at the STT airport. Several jewelry dealers were inspected for red and black coral. No violations were found

National Marine Sanctuaries

A Key West, FL EO conducted an at-sea patrol in South Atlantic federal waters and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) on a FWC offshore patrol vessel. Officers performed multiple boardings and documented state and federal violations pertaining to sea turtle mitigation gear and possession of out of season grouper.



NOAA OLE Enforcement Officers from Key West, Key Largo, Destin, St. Petersburg, Florida and Houma, Louisiana, completed OPERATION TED TALK 2024. The week-long operation took place in Key West, FL and was dedicated to training OLE and JEA partners on Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) and the commercial shrimping industry. The NOAA Gear Monitoring Team (GMT) and NOAA Office of Protected Resources traveled from Pascagoula, MS and Miami, FL to conduct formal and hands on training for 19 federal and state law enforcement and boarding officers from the FWC, NOAA OLE and the United States Coast Guard (USCG). The training was followed by seven joint patrols with all participating agencies and divisions, targeting commercial shrimping vessels and TED inspections. The officers were supported by the entire FWC South Region Bravo (SRB) Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) program, Monroe County FWC and USCG vessels. The teams successfully conducted 11 commercial shrimp boardings and documented over a dozen TED, closed season and undersized fish violations.

Cooperative Enforcement/Partnerships

A Charleston, SC EO met with SCDNR and new officers assigned to the Saltwater Enforcement Team to conduct TED training. Eight TEDS were measured and regulations were discussed. Proper documentation and case packages were reviewed.

A Miami, FL SA and EO are collaborating with CBP and FWC to strengthen inspection capabilities for targeted cargo. In response to NOAA's request, a walk-through of the Customs Inspection Processing Services (CIPS) was arranged to demonstrate the collaborative efforts between NOAA and CBP in inspecting containers holding relevant cargo. This joint enforcement initiative aims to streamline IUU activities at the Port of Miami, leading to increased JEA hours and ultimately resulting in stronger case work against IUU activities.



A St. Petersburg, FL EO participated in an IUU operation initiated by FWC investigators. During the second day of the operation, the officers identified an IFQ fishing vessel which landed at a location not listed on the 3 hour landing notification. The investigation revealed the fisherman also did not offload all of the IFQ species and other reef fish from the vessel. The reef fish were located in several hidden locations. The fisherman also was cited for using J-hooks in conjunction with natural bait and did not possess all of the required sea turtle mitigation gear. The EO trained the FWC investigators on federal case package preparation. FWC will refer the case to OLE for prosecution.

A Key Largo, FL EO conducted a joint at-sea patrol in the Upper Florida Keys with USCG and FWC. During the patrol, 6 vessels were boarded with 3 USCG and 3 FWC violations documented. FWC documented a fisheries violation for two undersized dolphin.

A St. Petersburg, FL EO conducted an IFQ offload investigation with USCG boarding team officers. This patrol also served as IFQ training for JEA partners looking to gain knowledge in IFQ dockside inspections. The team inspected one vessel in which officers gained knowledge in regional fish identification, IFQ rules, and case package preparation.



A Niceville, FL EO conducted a joint at-sea patrol aboard a FWC offshore patrol vessel in the waters offshore of Pensacola, FL. Multiple vessels were boarded with no federal violations identified. The EO and FWC crew responded to a Search and Rescue (SAR) call aboard a headboat. The EO and crew provided immediate care to an individual suffering from anaphylactic shock. USCG responded with a helicopter and small boat and the individual was transferred off the headboat without further incident.

A Houma, LA EO participated in a joint patrol in the GOM EEZ with Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR). The patrol conducted boardings and TED inspections on several vessels. The EO was able to assist two new MDMR officers with completing a full TED inspection. The team also conducted boardings on 14 recreational vessels targeting red snapper. No major violations were documented.

A Houston, TX EO conducted an underway patrol with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) in the Exclusive Economic Zone from Matagorda, TX to Sargent, TX. During the patrol, the EO along with TPWD, conducted 15 boardings resulting in 5 recreational vessels found with over the limit of red snapper.

Patrols/VMS/Catch Shares

After observing vessels repeatedly getting underway without submitting a declaration, possible area incursions and vessels repeatedly arrive late to its designated landing location; IS personnel referred multiple vessels to EOs for follow-up action.

In response to the highly anticipated grouper season opening, a Charleston, SC EO conducted a land side patrol in Mt. Pleasant, SC. Eleven vessels were boarded dockside with numerous dolphin fish and snapper species on board. An increased compliance rate in possession of descending devices was observed and no violations were issued.

A Niceville, FL EO conducted a land patrol to Panama City Beach, FL. The EO visited multiple IFQ landing locations.

A Niceville, FL EO conducted a land patrol to Destin, FL. During the patrol the EO conducted a boarding of a federally permitted for-hire fishing vessel and a commercial fishing vessel. The EO monitored the offload of IFQ red snapper and other reef fish. The EO also conducted outreach with the captain/owner of an additional for-hire fishing vessel for vessel identification requirements and sea turtle conservation measures.

A Niceville, FL EO conducted a land based patrol to Destin, FL. The EO met with several dually permitted for-hire/commercial fishing vessels to discuss VMS hail-out requirements. The EO also conducted dockside boardings of two fishing vessels following commercial trips in the Gulf of Mexico. The EO identified a landing notification violation and monitored the offload of IFQ red snapper.

A Houston, TX EO and a League City, TX EO conducted a land based patrol from Freeport, TX to Galveston, TX. During the patrol, the EOs monitored an IFQ offload of approximately 9,000 lbs of red snapper from a commercial fishing vessel. No violations documented.

A Houma, LA EO conducted a patrol with LDWF in the GOM EEZ out of Venice, LA. The team conducted boardings on 16 recreational vessels targeting reef fish with no major violations documented. During the patrol the EO also conducted a boarding on a charter vessel actively fishing in the EEZ. During the boarding the EO discovered the captain was in possession of numerous snapper and grouper and did not possess a GOM reef fish charter/head boat permit.



A Houston, TX EO and a League City, TX EO conducted an underway Living Marine Resources patrol with the USCG Cutter Hawk out of Galveston, TX. The patrol covered portions of Galveston, TX, Freeport, TX and a portion of Stetson Bank of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary. During the patrol, EO's conducted 14 boardings on recreational and for-hire fishing vessels. Violations documented consisted of undersized red snapper, exceeding the bag limit of red snapper, possession of red drum, and possession of out of season gag grouper.



A North Carolina EO made a patrol encompassing all of NC's Northern Outer Banks to include portions by ferry to Ocracoke Island, Hatteras, Oregon Inlet, Manteo & Wanchese. Several charter boardings were completed with one charter vessel cited for landing undersized fish. NC has no JEA and this area does not get patrolled regularly due to the remote location.

Compliance Assistance/Outreach/Education/Public Affairs

The Compliance Liaison developed a handout focusing on Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary boundaries and regulations. Recent cases of commercial vessels fishing in closed areas led to collaborative talks between sanctuary and OLE staff. Handouts were distributed to the field and sanctuary offices.

A Miami, FL EO met with the West Palm Beach Fishing Club for an outreach event. Education was provided on HMS and fishing the corner of the Bahamas EEZ and US EEZ.

The Compliance Liaison and a Jacksonville, FL Assistant Special Agent in Charge (ASAC) attended a USCG led Industry Day Event for the port of Jacksonville, FL. The event, held at FL Dept. of Law Enforcement Center, included 21 port related organizations in attendance. The CL presented material on current right whale regulations, including SMA, ship reporting and viewing requirements. Handouts and contact information were provided. Previous case work and recent whale sightings inside the port were highlighted by the ASAC.

When asked by one of the fish house owners, a North Carolina EO gave an unprompted federal fisheries and regulations brief to members of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture Committee that were touring Outer Banks fish houses. Numerous questions were answered about snapper/grouper, HMS, and shark fisheries.

A Corpus Christi, TX EO provided a charter operator with information on the requirements regarding turtle mitigation gear, vessel ID, red snapper retention during closed federal season, HMS permits and the Descend Act.

Training/Other

A Houma, LA EO gave a presentation to students at the USCG Gulf Regional Fisheries Training Center in New Orleans, LA. The class consisted of USCG LMR students and MS Marine Resources officers. The EO talked with the class about NOAA's mission and how we work together with the

USCG and State partners. The EO reviewed several case packages with them to show what is needed in a referred case package.

A Charleston EO and SA provided a NOAA brief to multiple class sessions at the USCG Southeast Regional Fisheries Training Center. Current trends, case packages, and recent violations were discussed.



A Cape Canaveral EO and Miami, FL EO conducted training on the Lacey Act and cases made involving vessels returning from the Bahamas for FWC's Advanced Officer Conservation Academy (ACOA). The training the EOs provided was applied during the weekend as officers conducted patrols focusing on vessels returning from the Bahamas.



IS personnel attended the OLE's IS In-service in Boulder, Colorado. Best practices and training were shared across all OLE divisions.



The St. Petersburg ASAC, a GCES-SE Attorney, the Panama City EO, a SDFL AUSA, and a USCG Officer from the International Mobile Training Branch conducted the first of two Caribbean Regional IUU Fishing Enforcement Workshops in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Participants included Fisheries Inspectors, Coast Guard, Marine Police, Customs Officers and others from the following countries: Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. Additional attendees include MPAConnect, Regional Security System, CARICOM IMPACS, and the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM).



The St. Petersburg ASAC, a GCES-SE Attorney, the FL Keys SA, a SDFL AUSA (virtual), and a USCG Officer from the International Mobile Training Branch conducted the second of two Caribbean Regional IUU Fishing Enforcement Workshops in Kingston, Jamaica. Participants included Fisheries Inspectors, Coast Guard, Marine Police, Park Wardens and others from the following countries: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Belize, the Cayman Islands, Jamaica, and the Turks and Caicos Islands. Additional attendees included the USCG attaché to Jamaica, MPAConnect, WildAid, and the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM).

The Compliance Liaison presented a federal enforcement overview, virtually, at a MREP Workshop held in USVI. Material presented focused on local closure areas, case examples and recent enforcement trends. A Caribbean tailored handout was also developed and distributed to

attendees. Over 30 participants attended and included a contingent of receptive younger fishermen new to the industry. Questions included clarification on SIMP and compatibility of regulations between federal and state waters.

A Houma, LA EO provided case package preparation training to the LDWF Enforcement agents from Region 6 in Houma, LA and Region 8 in New Orleans, LA. The EO provided training to the agents on the requirements when submitting a case package to NOAA. The EO went over required forms, seizure policy, and best practices for JEA partners submitting case packages.

Media

The Compliance Liaison created a web story related to a recent dolphin that was found shot to death in Louisiana. SERO Public Affairs Lead helped post the story on SERO's site, social media feeds and solicited Houston and local Louisiana media to aid in broadcasting the reward story and need for public tips to aid the investigation. Upon posting, the story has been viewed over 2000 times and received numerous comments. <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/louisiana-dolphin-shot-dead>. As a result of the web story, the CL worked closely with SEROs Public Affairs Lead and conducted multiple interviews with media. Local radio, tv station and news articles reached out for comment on the reward story. The CL promoted OLE's lead role in the investigation, the need for public tips and how to report tips/claim reward. Numerous national news outlets have also picked up on the story and broadcast our request for reward story. <https://www.klfy.com/local/20k-reward-offered-after-dolphin-found-dead-on-louisiana-beach-with-multiple-gunshot-wounds/> ; <https://www.wvltv.com/article/news/crime/louisiana-cameron-dolphin-shot-multiple-authorities-suspects-bottlenose> ; <https://louisianaradionetwork.com/2024/04/24/20000-reward-for-information-in-the-death-of-a-dolphin-in-cameron-parish/>

The Compliance Liaison wrote a web story about a recent TED operation in the Florida Keys led by a Key West EO and four other EOs. Partnerships with Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary staff, FWC, USCG as well as the Gear Monitoring team and turtle biologists were highlighted. The story was published on OLE's and SERO's main sites. News was additionally amplified on local Keys radio stations, Sanctuary website and FWC communications team.

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/noaa-enforcement-helps-protect-sea-turtles>
<https://myfwc.com/news/all-news/le-sea-turtle-524/>



The Compliance Liaison developed a web story based off Houston and League City, TX EOs that participated in a local fishing clinic trip. The fishing trip, held by the Flower Garden Banks NMS and National Parks Trust, departed out of Galveston, TX and allowed military families access to fishing. During the fishing trip, EO's were able to provide education on fishing regulations, species identification, and provide an overview of the Office of Law Enforcement. The

web story was published through the HQ PAO and amplified on local SERO and Sanctuary feeds <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/protect-and-serve-noaa-enforcement-gives-back-military-families>

Overview of Summary Settlements

Listed below is a summary of the **52** Summary Settlement penalties issued during the quarter. The most frequently observed violation types cited involved retention during closure, undersize possession and/or lack of descender or turtle mitigation devices (28), Sanctuary related violations (16), IFQ Program Requirements (5) and Unpermitted Fishing Activity (5). **26** violations were cited throughout the Gulf region, **20** violations were cited throughout the South Atlantic region, **2** violations cited in the Caribbean region and there were **4** violations in the Keys area.

LAW/REG/PROGRAM	VIOLATION	AMOUNT	STATE
Endangered Species Act	TED/BRD Requirements	\$100	TX
Endangered Species Act	TED/BRD Requirements	\$200	FL WEST
Endangered Species Act	TED/BRD Requirements	\$300	FL WEST
Highly Migratory Species	Unpermitted HMS Fishing Activity	\$1,000	PR
Highly Migratory Species	Unpermitted HMS Fishing Activity	\$500	FL EAST
Highly Migratory Species	Unpermitted HMS Fishing Activity	\$2,500	PR
Highly Migratory Species	IBQ Program Requirements	\$500	SC
International Trade Program	SIMP Requirements	\$1,000	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Observer Program Requirements	\$2,500	NC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$325	FL KEYS
Magnuson Stevens Act	Commercial Trip Limit Exceeded	\$580	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Gear Requirements	\$250	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$700	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$700	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	Undersize Possession	\$975	GA

Magnuson Stevens Act	Discard of Fish Upon Approach by Law Enforcement; Retention During Closure	\$1,300	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$325	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$325	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$650	GA
Magnuson Stevens Act	Sea Turtle Gear Mitigation and Gear Requirements; Lack of Descender Device	\$250	GA
Magnuson Stevens Act	Undersize Possession; Gear Requirements; Lack of Descender Device	\$250	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Unpermitted Fishing Activity	\$1,250	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Undersize Possession; Gear Requirements; Lack of Descender Device	\$1,225	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure; Gear Requirements	\$525	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	IFQ Program Requirements; Sea Turtle Gear Mitigation Requirements	\$1,000	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$800	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$1,000	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$375	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$800	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$900	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$250	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Unpermitted Shrimp Activity	\$500	GA
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$550	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	Sea Turtle Gear Mitigation Requirements	\$250	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure; Lack of Descender Device	\$700	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Sea Turtle Gear Mitigation Requirements; Vessel ID Requirements	\$325	FL WEST

Magnuson Stevens Act	IFQ Program Requirements	\$350	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$375	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$1,250	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$650	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	IFQ Program Requirements	\$1,000	FL KEYS
Magnuson Stevens Act	Discard of Fish Upon Approach by Law Enforcement; Retention During Closure	\$2,450	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Sea Turtle Gear Mitigation and Gear Requirements; Lack of Descender Device	\$575	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	IFQ Program Requirements	\$1,000	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	IFQ Program Requirements	\$2,000	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$300	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Lack of Descender Device	\$250	GA
Marine Mammal Protection Act	Dolphin Feeding	\$1,000	FL WEST
Marine Mammal Protection Act	Dolphin Harassment	\$100	TX
Marine Mammal Protection Act	Dolphin Feeding	\$500	FL WEST
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Fishing within Sanctuary Preservation Area	\$1,300	FL KEYS
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Fishing within Sanctuary Preservation Area	\$600	FL KEYS

Investigative Support Program

Southeast Division Active Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) Population: 1096

Population Breakdown by (VMS) Fisheries and VMS Vendor

FISHERY	ADDVALUE	ATLANTICRT	FARIA	METOCEAN	NAUTIC ALERT	NI	SKYMATE	WOODSHOLE	TOTAL
HMS Pelagic Longline			13			2	14	49	78
HMS Shark			1				1	4	6
Gulf Reef Fish	1		66	80	2	60	111	301	621
Rock Shrimp			2	5		4	7	38	56
Southeast For Hire*	3	2	4	1	6		59	260	335
TOTAL	4	2	86	86	8	66	192	652	1096

The Investigative Support Program staff play a vital role in ensuring compliance and provide assistance to enforcement officers and special agents. Staff received and processed **87** referrals from JEA partners. Case support to the field was provided as well, with work ranging from processing summary settlements (**36**), preparing incident reports for GCES, in support of prosecution (**18**), confirming vessel ownership and track lines, validating AIS data and creating chartlets. During the quarter, commercial and charter trips were monitored via VMS to detect potential violations. Violations, ranging from fishing in closed areas, improper gear use and failure to comply with reporting requirements (trip declarations, daily reports, and pre-landing notices) were detected by Investigative Support staff and referred to enforcement officers or special agents for follow-up. Staff technicians initiated targeted warnings and messages to **51** vessels following observation of suspected VMS or fishing violations, as well as providing targeted education and outreach to vessel owners. **9** investigations were referred for VMS violations. Additionally, staff conducted **161** calls/emails with industry related to compliance during the quarter.

Another continued area of focus this quarter involves North Atlantic Right Whale protection, as comprehensive investigative work was completed for **2** vessels referred to GCES for violating speed restrictions. Items of interest to industry include program progress on streamlining VMS report forms. Most VMS vendors are actively taking steps to deploy new software through their fleet units. The updates approved include: **removal of SEFHIER forms from respective units, removing the Powerdown declaration, updating language displayed on Declare out of Fishery declarations. There are also some HMS specific updates- allow for additional bycatch interaction reporting, under HMS Set Reports and updated gear options (greenstick).**

*VMS no longer required for the for-hire fleet, but units still reporting are noted.

Observer Program Highlights

During FY Quarter 3, 2024, the Southeast Division Observer Programs deployed on **155** trips for **754** sea days. Approximately **98%** of all selected trips were completed without an observer related enforcement incident [assault/harassment (sexual and non-sexual), safety]. Observer programs reported **17** potential fishery violations to OLE-SED. The Galveston Shrimp Program deployed on **23** trips for **346** sea days, and the Galveston Reef Fish Program deployed on **32** trips for **109** sea days. The Panama City Gillnet Program deployed on **6** trips for **6** sea days, Panama City Shark Research Program deployed on **23** trips for **32** sea days and the Panama City South Atlantic Reef Fish Program deployed on **49** trips for **75** sea days. The Miami Pelagic Observer Program deployed on **22** trips for **186** sea days. The summary below details the type of observer related complaints received during Quarter 2 (calendar year) of 2024, for all three programs.

COMPLAINT TYPE	Galveston Programs	Panama City Programs	Miami Observer Program	TOTALS
ASSAULT				0
HARASSMENT/INTIMIDATE/IMPEDEMENT	1			1
SAFETY	1	1		2
NON-COMPLIANT FOR OBSERVER COVERAGE				0
HANDLING			7	7
GEAR	1	1	5	7
RETENTION			3	3
SPATIAL				0
TOTALS	3	2	15	20

Cases Referred For Prosecution

Listed below is a summary of the **11** cases forwarded to NOAA Office of General Counsel Enforcement Section (GCES) and/or the United States Attorney Office/Department of Justice for this quarter. Cases varied in violation type, with 5 occurring in the South Atlantic area, 2 in the Gulf area, 1 in the Caribbean area and 3 in the Florida Keys area.

LAW/REG/PROGRAM	VIOLATION	STATE
Endangered Species Act	North Atlantic Right Whale Speed Reduction Violations	MULTIPLE
Endangered Species Act	North Atlantic Right Whale Speed Reduction Violations	MULTIPLE
Endangered Species Act	North Atlantic Right Whale Speed Reduction Violations	MULTIPLE
Lacey Act	Foreign Fishing Activity	FL KEYS
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Unpermitted Shrimp Activity	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Prohibited Species Retention	PR
Magnuson Stevens Act	Unpermitted Charter Activity- Moratorium Access	LA
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Areas to be Avoided Activity	FL KEYS
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Areas to be Avoided Activity	FL KEYS

*Cases sent to the United States Attorney Office/Department of Justice for criminal prosecution.

NOAA General Counsel Enforcement Section Charging Information

The following Civil Administrative Enforcement Actions are results from NOAA GCES that occurred in the Southeast Division, from **April 2024- June 2024** (available information since last report). Nationwide results may also be found at the [enforcement charging information site](#)

1. F/V Conch Too – Owner Kirchner Marine Inc. and Operator Joel Isay Cruz were charged jointly and severally under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with fishing for Gulf reef fish in the EEZ aboard a charter vessel without a federal charter permit. A \$5,750 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$5,175.
2. F/V Johana – Owner Yordanis Antonio Reyes was charged under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with failing to provide required information to the Agency. A \$1,000 NOVA was issued.
3. F/V/White Water II – Owner White Water Seafoods Corp. and Operator Kevin Beland were charged jointly and severally under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with fishing in the Charleston Bump closed area while pelagic longline gear was on board. A \$38,435.91 NOVA was issued.
4. M/V My Baby – Owner/Operator Michael B. King and Owner Ellen H. Manning were charged jointly and severally under the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act with violating the North Atlantic Right Whale speed restriction regulation during the 2022 season. A \$7,500 NOVA was issued in January. The NOVA was amended to add two additional counts of violating the North Atlantic Right Whale speed restriction regulation during the 2023 season for a total penalty of \$32,500. [See Charged Cases, Item 11, from January 2024 report]
5. M/V Sea Dozer – Owner Gerken Leasing Company Limited and Operator George Keune were charged jointly and severally under the Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act with violations of the North Atlantic Right Whale speed restriction regulation. A \$7,500 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$6,750.
6. Archimedes – Owner Knossos Ltd., Operating Company Euclidean Capital, LLC, and Operator Christopher Walsh, were charged jointly and severally under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act with operating a vessel greater than 50 meters in an Area To Be Avoided in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. A \$7,500 NOVA was issued.
7. F/V Mahi Tuna – Owner/Operator Adrian Enrique Martinez was charged under the National Marine Sanctuary Act with fishing in the Tortugas South Ecological Reserve in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. A \$23,232 NOVA was issued.
8. M/V Day Sea – Owner DLRD, LLC and Operator Luke Krenik were charged jointly and severally under the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act with violating the North Atlantic Right Whale speed restriction regulation. A \$20,250 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$18,225.

9. F/V Gypsea – Owner/Operator Eliu Gonzalez was charged under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with failing to have sufficient allocation in the IFQ vessel account or linked shareholder account equal to pounds estimated to be landed at the time of the advance notice of landing. \$7,485.55 in proceeds from the sale of red snapper and red grouper were voluntarily abandoned. A \$20,000 NOVA was issued.
10. M/Y Elandess – Owner Esselco Marine LLP and Operator Charles Norbert-Muns were charged jointly and severally under the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act with violating the North Atlantic Right Whale speed restriction regulation. A \$7,500 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$6,750.
11. F/V CJR – Owner C&G of Murrells Inlet Inc. and Operator Darrell Anthony Bessent were charged jointly and severally under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with fishing in the Northern South Carolina Marine Protected Area and with failing to maintain fish intact. A \$12,783.25 NOVA was issued.
12. F/V Big Chief – Owner/Operator Matthew Lasinski was charged under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act with operating a vessel in such a manner as to strike or otherwise injure seagrass. A \$2,500 NOVA was issued.
13. M/V Freedom – Owners Freedom Unlimited and Aereon Marine Inc., and Operator David Passmore were charged jointly and severally under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act with operating a vessel greater than 50 meters inside the Area To Be Avoided in and around the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. A \$7,500 NOVA was issued.
14. M/V American Serenade – Owner American Cruise Lines Inc. and Operator Gregg Scheiferstein were charged jointly and severally under the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act with violating the North Atlantic Right Whale speed restriction regulation. A \$22,500 NOVA was issued.
15. M/V Done Deal – Owner Outside Centre LLC and Operator Joseph A. Walker were charged under the Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act with violations of the North Atlantic Right Whale speed restriction regulation. A \$7,500 NOVA was issued

Resolved Cases Charged April 1, 2024 to June 30, 2024¹

1. F/V Capt Andrew – Owner Capt Andrew LLC and Operator Tam Van Le were charged jointly and severally under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with possessing shark fins without the corresponding carcasses. Thirty-two shark fins were voluntarily

abandoned. A \$12,000 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$10,800. [See Charged Cases, Item 10, from February 2024 report]

2. M/V Digging It – Owner Jeffrey Laydon and Operator Cole Sikes were charged jointly and severally under the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act with violating the North Atlantic Right Whale speed restriction regulation. A \$30,000 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$24,000. [See Charged Cases, Item 12, from January 2024 report]
3. M/V Gratitude – Owner Tipsnme, LLC and Operator John Timothy Roehrs were charged jointly and severally under the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act with violating the North Atlantic Right Whale speed restriction regulation. A \$22,500 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$20,250. [See Charged Cases, Item 14, from February 2024 report]
4. F/V 1208811 – Owner/Operator Charles Walter Bentley was charged under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with fishing for Gulf reef fish in federal waters aboard a charter vessel without a federal charter permit. A \$20,185 NOVA was issued. The NOVA became a final administrative decision due to default. [See Charged Cases, Item 15, from February 2024 report]
5. MSC Magnifica – Owners MSC Cruise Management (UK) Limited, and Newco Magnifica SA, and Operator Vincenzo Miele were charged jointly and severally under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act with operating a vessel greater than 50 meters inside the Area To Be Avoided in and around the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. A \$7,500 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$6,750. [See Charged Cases, Item 8, from March 2024 report]
6. T/V Adeline Marie – Owner JMB Shipping ATB 205, LLC and Operator Michael Angel Figueroa-Arocho III were charged jointly and severally under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act with operating a vessel greater than 50 meters inside the Area To Be Avoided in and around the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. A \$7,500 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$6,750. [See Charged Cases, Item 19, from February 2024 report]
7. F/V FL9642NY – Recreational Anglers Paul Lee Libretto and Michael Scot Edwards were charged jointly and severally under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with fishing for and/or possessing red snapper during a recreational sector seasonal closure. An \$8,500 NOVA was issued. The NOVA became a final administrative decision due to default. [See Charged Cases, Item 7, from April 2024 report]

8. F/V El Duro Punetazo de la Pesca – Owner/Operator Melvin Serrano-Ramos was charged under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with fishing in the Abrir La Sierra Bank closed area off Puerto Rico. A \$2,500 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$2,250. [See Charged Cases, Item 10, from April 2024 report]

9. Tristan International, LLC – Seafood Importer Tristan International, LLC was charged under the Marine Mammal Protection Act with unlawfully importing yellowfin tuna and/or yellowfin tuna products from a nation subject to embargo and of importing yellowfin tuna and/or yellowfin tuna products without an accurate and complete Fisheries Certificate of Origin. A \$42,188 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$37,969.20. [See Charged Cases, Item 11, from May 2024 report]

10. M/V Sopot – Owner/Operator Polska Zegluga Morska PP dba Polsteam was charged under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act with operating a vessel greater than 50 meters in an Area To Be Avoided in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. A \$7,500 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$6,750.¹

¹All cases in this portion of the report were previously charged.