

NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement
Southeast Division

FISCAL YEAR 2025, QUARTER 3
FISHERY MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL REPORT

APRIL 1, 2025 – JUNE 30, 2025



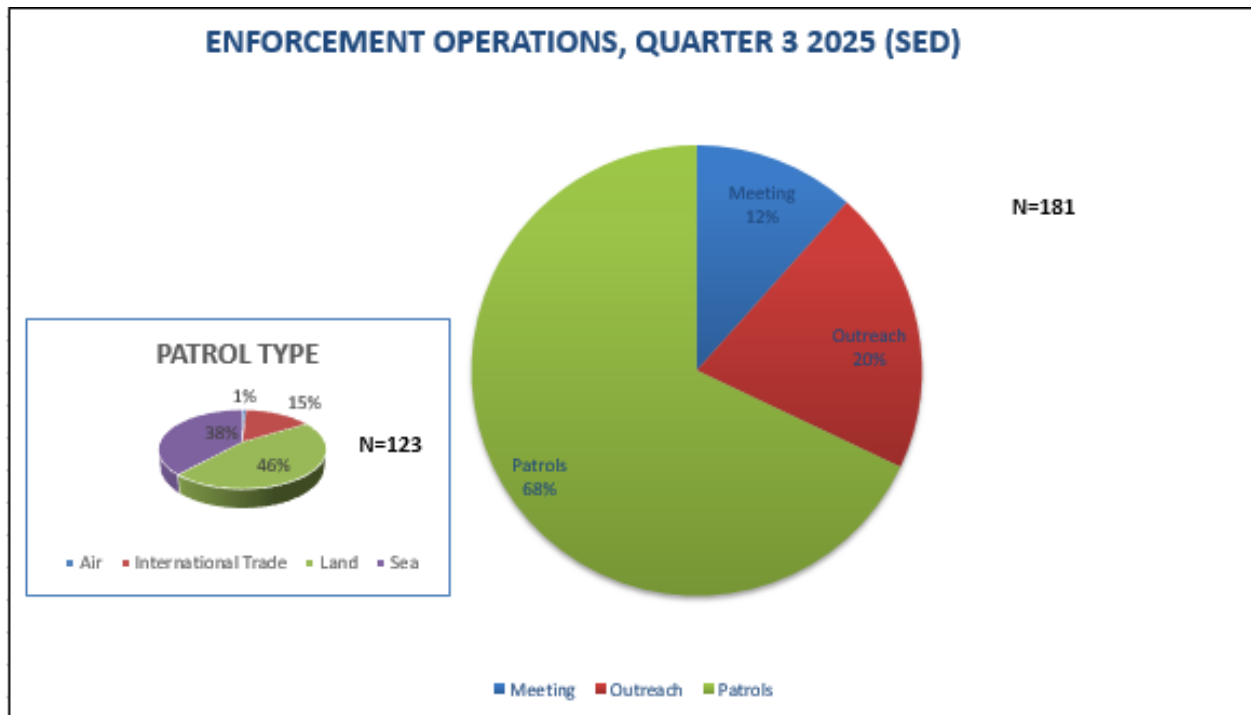
Contents

Enforcement and Compliance.....	2
Incident Information.....	3
International Trade Patrols	4
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Summary.....	5
Gulf Fishery Management Council Summary.....	6
Caribbean Fishery Management Council Summary.....	7
Summary of Cases by Joint Enforcement Agreement and United States Coast Guard Partners.....	8
Caseload Snapshot.....	10
Enforcement Highlights.....	11
Overview of Summary Settlements.....	22
Investigative Support Program.....	24
Observer Program Highlights.....	25
Cases Referred For Prosecution	26
NOAA General Counsel Enforcement Section Charging Information	27

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, 2025, **April 1, 2025- June 30, 2025**. When appropriate, information is separated by council, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC), Gulf Fishery Management Council (GFMC) and Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CFMC).

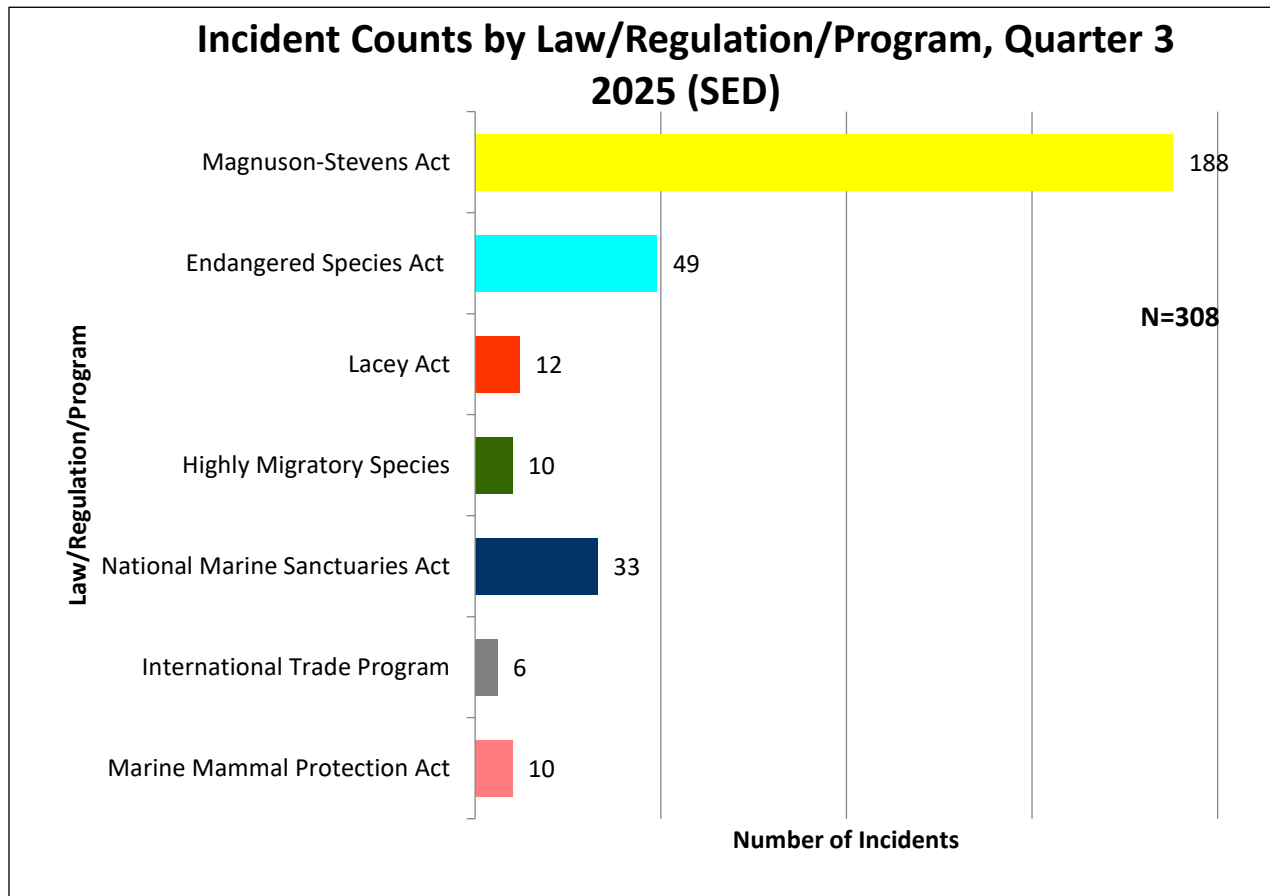
Patrols, outreach and education, compliance assistance, and investigations are the primary activities of OLE’s mission to protect marine wildlife and habitat by enforcing domestic laws and supporting international treaty requirements designed to ensure global resources are available for future generations. In addition to our regular patrols, nine operations were conducted throughout the division. Enforcement efforts are routinely conducted with multiple federal, state and local partners throughout the division. Three IUU/seafood monitoring operations were conducted with multiple federal partners, including U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, among others, and state partners in Alabama. Another two operations focused on sanctuary protection and identifying and deterring illegal charters in the upper and lower keys of Florida. Two shrimp fishery centric operations were held with state partners in Florida and the U.S. Coast Guard, An additional two operations were completed with state partners in Louisiana and Florida, focusing on unpermitted charters, protected area enforcement and general fishery enforcement centered on red snapper opening dates. This quarter, OLE-SED conducted and documented **123** patrols, **37** specific instances of outreach and attended **21** meetings.



Incident Information

During the third quarter, OLE-SED opened **308** incidents, which included **123** counts in the SAFMC area, **236** counts in the GFMC area and **4** counts in the CFMC area¹. These incidents originate from both NOAA personnel and our enforcement partners.

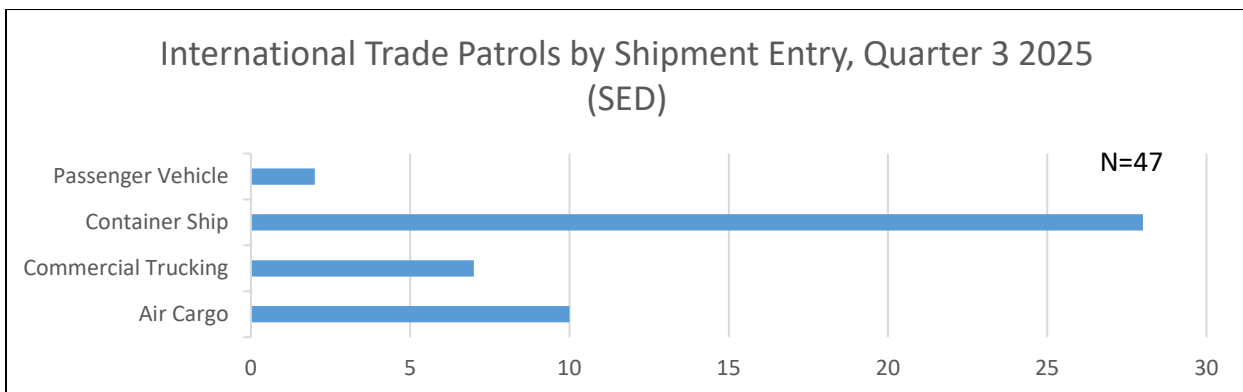
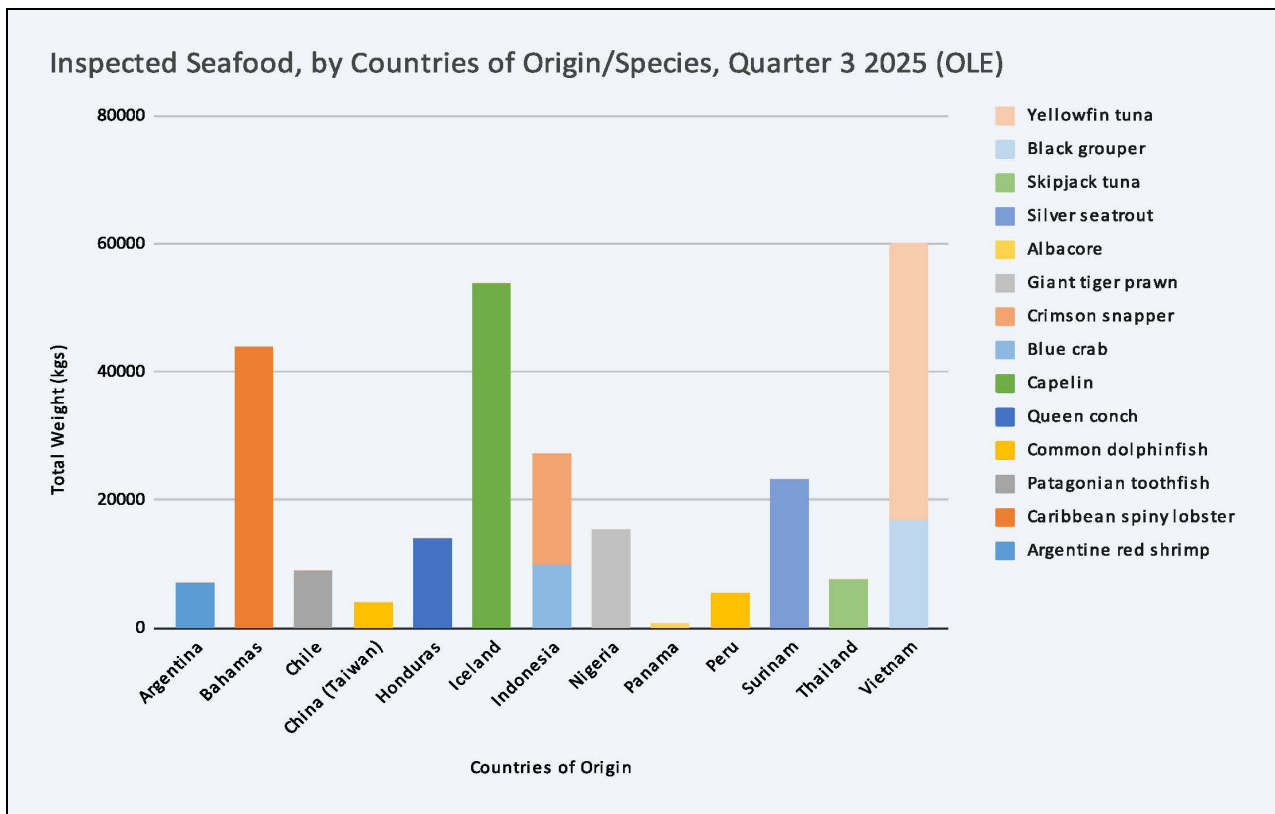
Summary of Incidents by Primary Law/Regulation/Program; Quarter 3, 2025



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

International Trade Patrols

OLE regularly conducts seafood container inspections coming into the U.S. in order to protect commerce and ensure legal fish species are imported. Officers and agents inform other agencies at these ports of entries of potential seafood fraud and provide training in inspecting and verifying seafood is imported properly into the U.S. Throughout the quarter, NOAA enforcement divisions nationwide inspected **272,681 kg** of imported seafood from **13** countries. OLE-SED officers conducted **47** international trade specific patrols. Efforts were focused on a variety of airports, shipping ports and land border crossings.

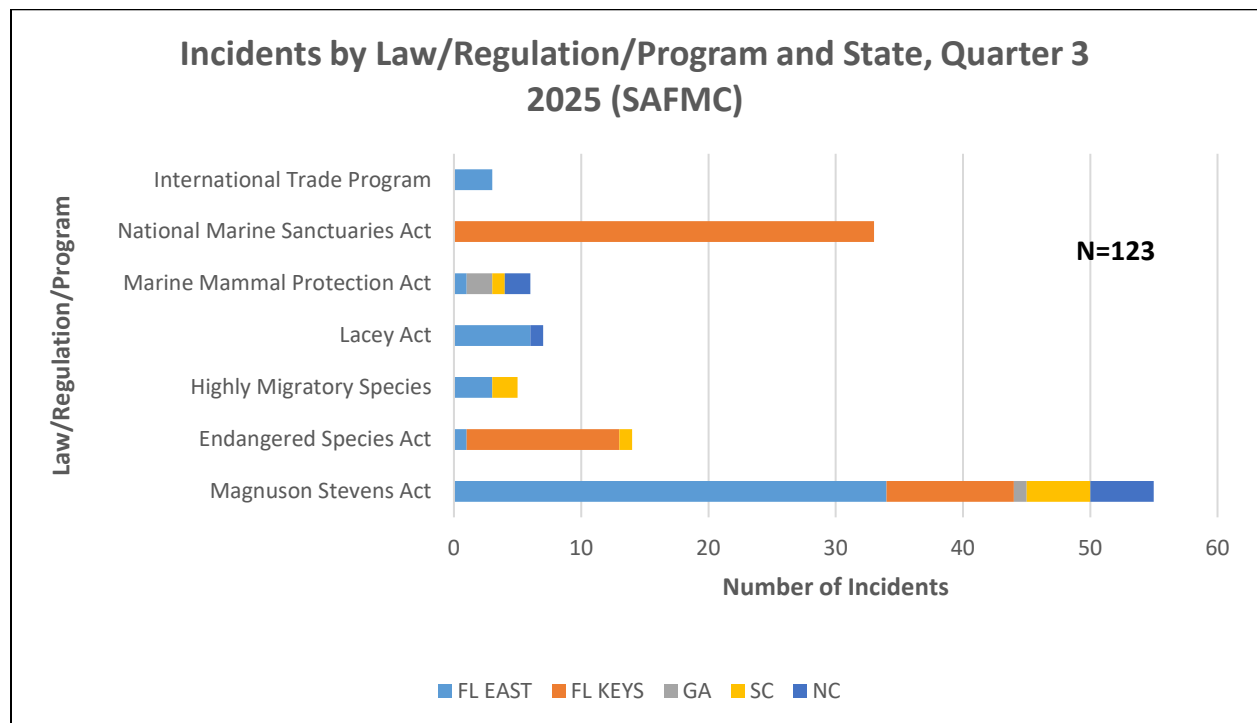


South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Summary

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

Number of Incidents by Primary Law/Regulation/Program and Location; Quarter 3, 2025 (SAFMC)

Law/Regulation/Program	FL EAST	FL KEYS	GA	SC	NC	Total
Magnuson Stevens Act	34	10	1	5	5	55
Endangered Species Act	1	12		1		14
Highly Migratory Species	3			2		5
Lacey Act	6				1	7
Marine Mammal Protection Act	1		2	1	2	6
National Marine Sanctuaries Act		33				33
International Trade Program	3					3
TOTAL	48	55	3	9	8	123

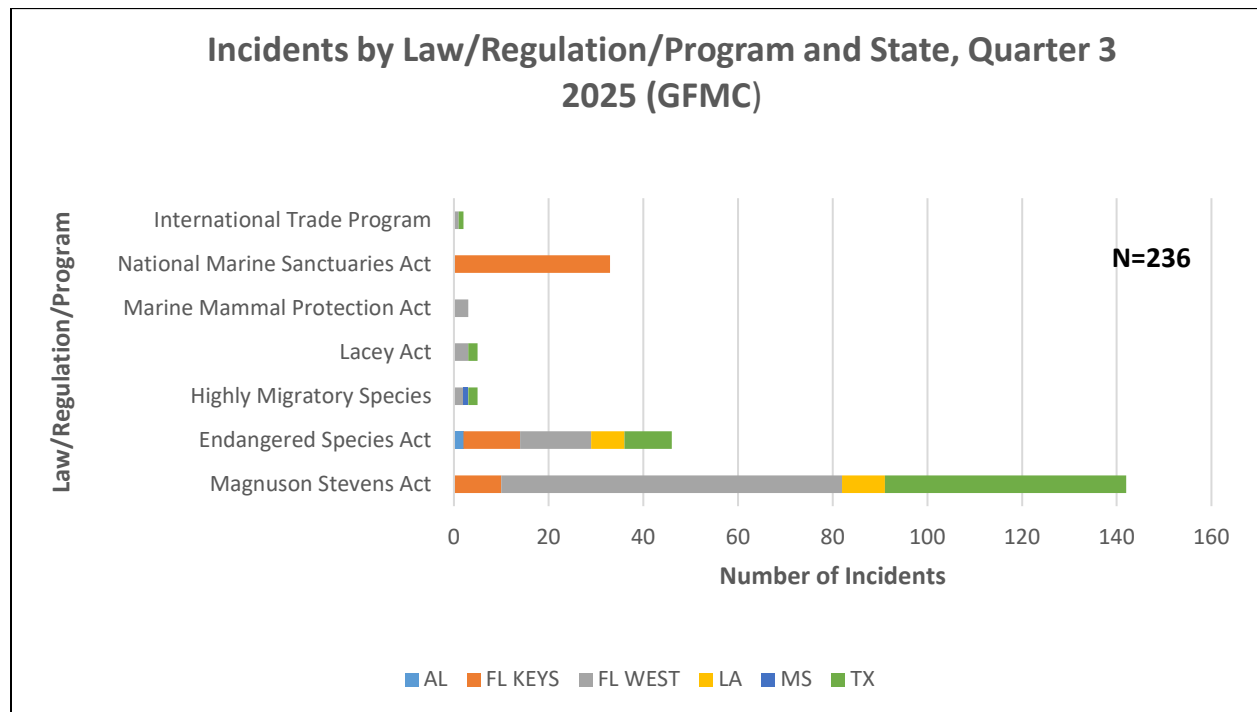


Gulf Fishery Management Council Summary

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

Number of Incidents by Primary Law/Regulation/Program and Location; Quarter 3, 2025 (GFMC)

Law/Regulation/Program	AL	FL KEYS	FL WEST	LA	MS	TX	Total
Magnuson Stevens Act		10	72	9		51	142
Endangered Species Act	2	12	15	7		10	46
Highly Migratory Species			2		1	2	5
Lacey Act			3			2	5
Marine Mammal Protection Act			3				3
National Marine Sanctuaries Act		33					33
International Trade Program			1			1	2
TOTAL	2	55	96	16	1	66	236

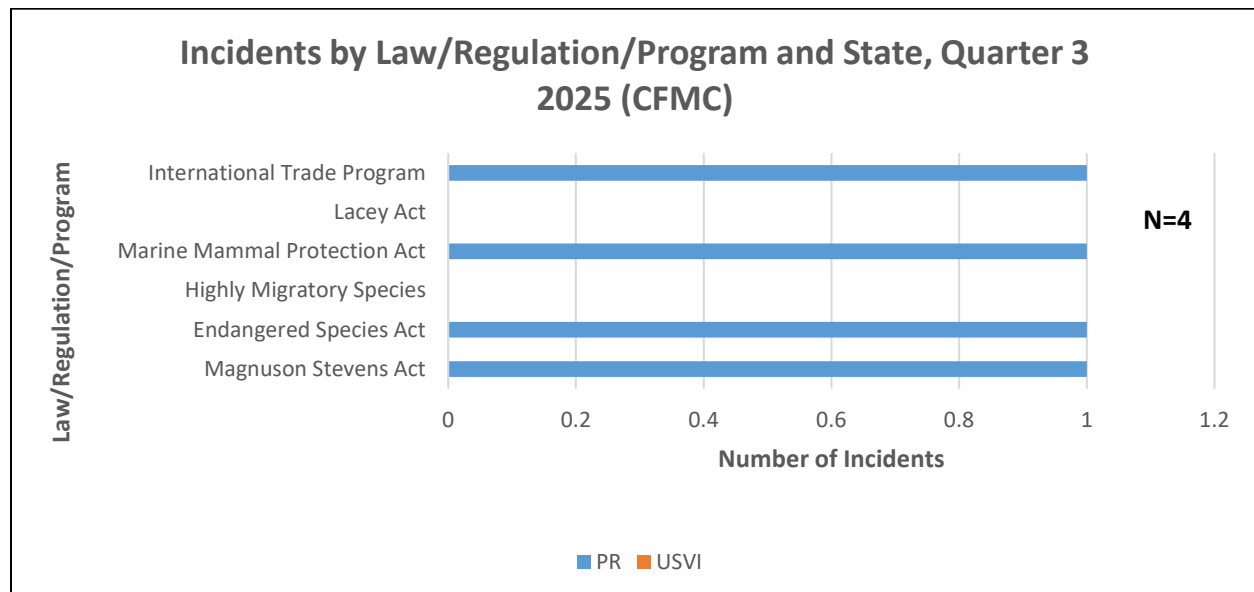


Caribbean Fishery Management Council Summary

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

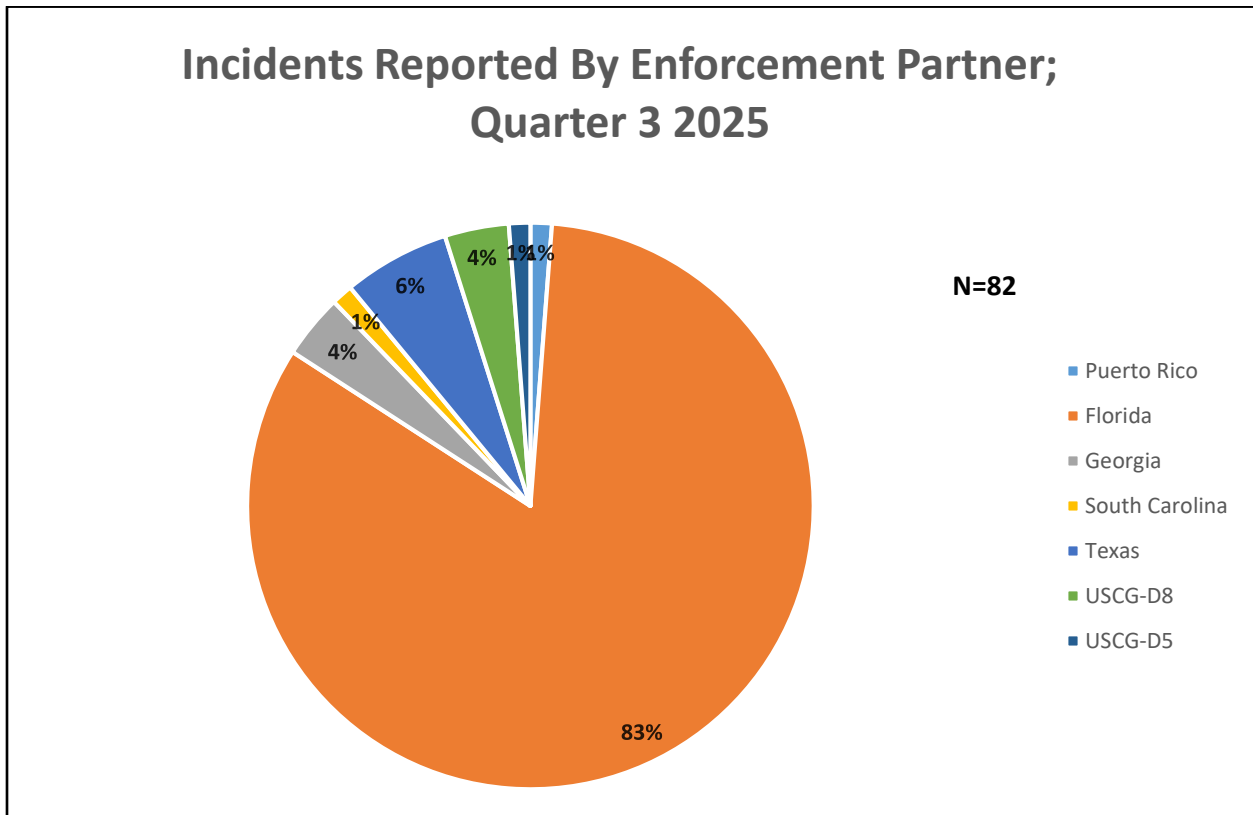
Number of Incidents by Primary Law/Regulation/Program and Location; Quarter 3, 2025 (CFMC)

Law/Regulation/Program	PR	USVI	Total
Magnuson Stevens Act	1		1
Endangered Species Act	1		1
Highly Migratory Species			0
Marine Mammal Protection Act	1		1
Lacey Act			0
International Trade Program	1		1
TOTAL	4		4

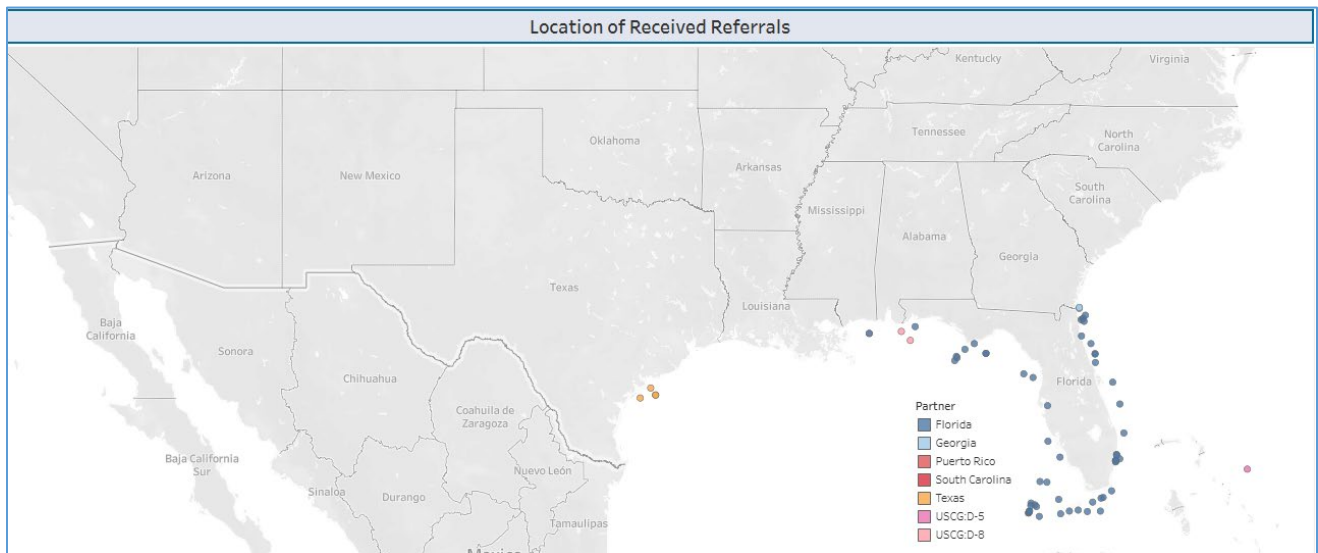


Summary of Cases by Joint Enforcement Agreement and United States Coast Guard Partners

Throughout Quarter 3, 2025, there were **82** 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 primary law/regulation/program per enforcement partner¹. Effort consisted of dockside vessel boardings, offshore vessel boardings and interaction with the general public and industry members.



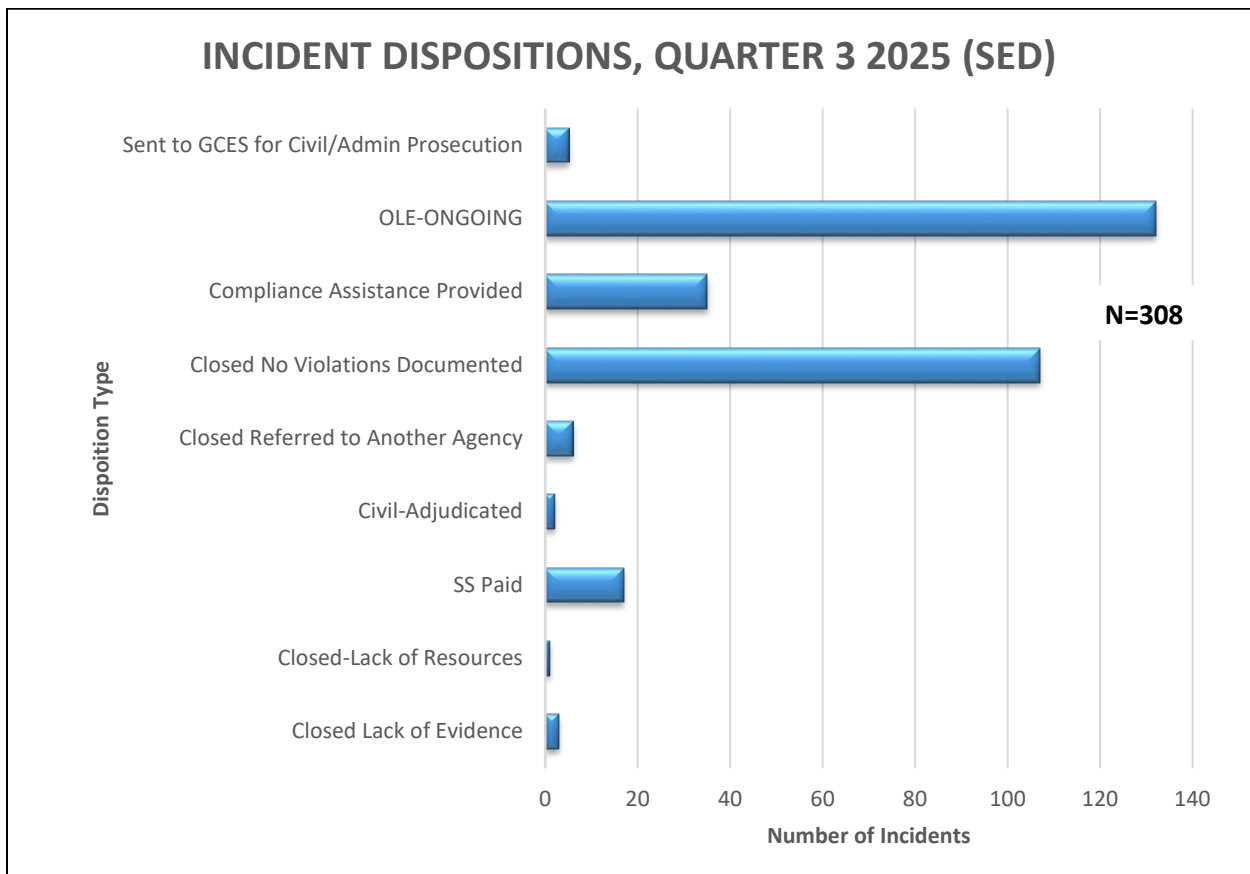
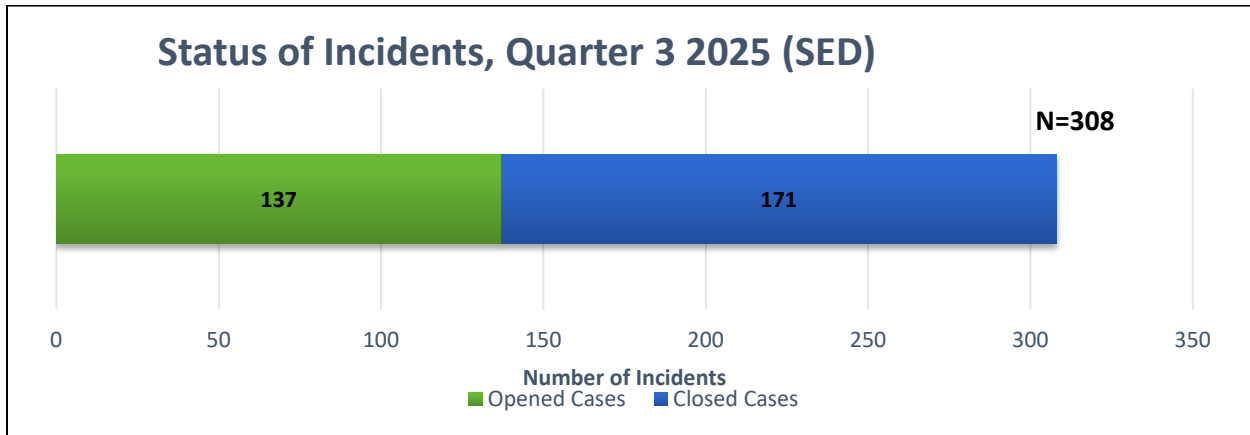
Law/Regulation/Program	FL	GA	SC	TX	PR	USCG-D5	USCG-D8	TOTALS
Magnuson Stevens Act (MSFCMA)	42	1		4	1	1		49
Endangered Species Act (ESA)	4		1				3	8
Highly Migratory Species								0
Lacey Act	6			1				7
Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA)		2						2
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	16							16
TOTALS	68	3	1	5	1	1	3	82



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 (**308**) 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 **56%** of the incoming workload.



Enforcement Highlights

Highly Migratory Species

A Jacksonville, FL special agent (SA) issued a \$2000 Summary Settlement Offer (SSO) to the owner, operator, and a crewman of a commercial fishing vessel boarded by Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR). During the boarding, officers located bags of shark meat which were sampled and sent to the NOAA Forensics Lab for DNA identification. The species were determined to be blacknose and blacktip sharks.

A SC SA was notified by the Southeast Science Center of two commercial swordfish vessels which have failed to submit trip reports for over forty trips each. Science Center staff were concerned this lack of reporting may skew data. The SA called the owners of both vessels. One of which stated he would immediately work on catching his logs up and in one day has submitted approximately half of the missing reports. Both owners submitted reports shortly afterwards contact was made by the SA.

Lacey Act

A Cape Canaveral, FL enforcement officer (EO) issued a \$500 SSO for the possession of two egg bearing spiny lobsters brought back from the Bahamas.



South Atlantic Florida EOs and SAs coordinated and led a multi-agency fishing patrol operation based out of Fort Lauderdale, FL. The team collaborated with the U.S. Coast Guard Sector Boarding Team and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). The operation aimed to enhance enforcement presence across marinas throughout Broward County, with a primary focus on fishing vessels returning from the Bahamas and foreign-flagged vessels. Multiple charter and commercial fishing vessels were boarded and inspected during the operation.

Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) Fishing

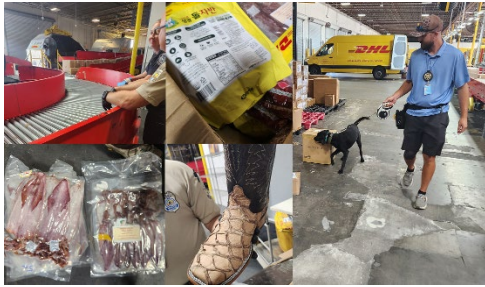


A Houston, TX EO conducted a joint IUU patrol with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) in the Gulf, off South Padre Island, TX. During the patrol, officers observed and intercepted a Mexican fishing vessel, also known as a lancha that was fishing in state waters. Four Mexican nationals were found in possession of

six bull sharks. The lancha and four Mexican nationals were towed to the USCG Station South Padre.

A Niceville, FL EO issued a written warning to the captain/owner of a commercial fishing vessel which was selected for observer coverage during the 4th quarter of 2024. The captain failed to

contact the Southeast Fishery Observer Program prior to any commercial fishing trips during the selection period.



A Cape Canaveral, FLEO, a Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) K9 investigator, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) inspector, and a CBP agriculture inspector conducted a patrol of the air cargo facility at Orlando International Airport. No SIMP products/violations were observed, but CITES violations for squid and arapaima were addressed by USFWS. This was also the first use of FWC's wildlife products K9

working with OLE in support of meeting the cooperative enforcement program IUU requirements. The K9 alerted to the package containing the squid.



Cape Canaveral and Miami, FL EOs conducted a patrol of the Orlando International Airport's air cargo area in anticipation of a shipment of Chinese caught tuna coming in from the Marshall Islands. The shipment was inspected as well as two more shipments of tuna from Indonesia, and French Polynesia. In total, EOs conducted three milestone SIMP inspections.



A collaboration between FWC, CBP, and NOAA's South Florida EOs and SAs, led to an IUU inspection at the Port of West Palm Beach. Officers and agents inspected and investigated approximately 44,000 pounds of spiny lobsters for regulatory compliance. This multi-agency effort highlights the value of collaboration in protecting marine resources, enhancing enforcement capabilities, and deterring illegal fishing practices through shared expertise and jurisdictional reach.



A League City, TX Assistant Special Agent in Charge (ASAC) and Harlingen, TX EO were notified by the National Park Service at Padre Island National Seashore regarding a container of red snapper that washed ashore inside the park. It is suspected the red snapper were associated with a recent USCG Mexican lancha interdiction, which sank in the EEZ.

St Petersburg, FL SAs and an EO participated in a joint operation at Tampa International Airport. The operation focused on inspections of seafood imports and marine resources.

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

Houma, LA and Niceville, FL EOs conducted a SIMP inspection on 33,000 lbs of shrimp imported from Indonesia at the Port of Mobile. The EOs worked with CBP and Alabama Marine Resources Division (AMRD) officers. No violations were documented.



A Houma, LA and Niceville, FL EO took part in a joint IUU/SIMP operation at the Port of Mobile. The EO's worked with a team consisting of CBP, U.S. FWS, and AMRD to conduct inspections on a variety of frozen reefers containing seafood and other goods. The operation completed inspections on 25 containers that were filled with fish, crab, and poultry species. Each agency monitored for violations they are responsible for.

A St Petersburg, FL SA issued a \$2,000 summary settlement offer to a Florida based business for incorrectly reporting data related to a seafood import from Mexico, in violation of the SIMP.

A San Juan, PR SA conducted an inspection of a container being imported from Mexico with yellowtail snapper, lane snapper and spiny lobster tail. The total weight was 4,618 Kgs. The SA inspected boxes containing all three species and verified the lobster tails met the requirements. No violations detected.



A Harlingen, TX EO was notified by CBP agents of a female subject entering the United States from Mexico via the passenger lanes at the International Port of Entry, who was being held after failing to declare imported seafood products. It was determined that the seafood products were not SIMP regulated, but the EO recognized these seafood products as being regulated by the State of Texas and notified Texas game wardens.

Endangered Species Act



A Fort Myers, FL EO and a Key Largo, FL EO completed an operation in Naples, FL targeting Turtle Excluder Device (TED) compliance of the shrimp fishery as well as a TED inspection training for officers provided by the NOAA Gear Management Team out of Pascagoula, MS. The team conducted six TED inspections onboard shrimp trawl vessels at sea and dockside with only minor violations, which were fixed on scene. FWC officers issued citations for out of season spiny lobster and an undersized cobia.

A Niceville, FL SA was notified by GCES of a \$13,500 NOVA issued to subjects that exceeded the North Atlantic right whale speed rule along the east coast of the United States.



A Houma, LA EO conducted an underway patrol with Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) in the Gulf and conducted boardings and TED inspections on three commercial shrimp vessels. One vessel was given compliance assistance for a minor TED issue. During another boarding, the EO found the vessel did not possess a Gulf Federal Shrimp Permit, which was actively fishing in federal waters and in possession of 99 sacks of shrimp. The EO documented the catch and monitored the sale of the shrimp the following day, totaling 6,600 lbs. A SSO was issued to the owner.



Two St. Petersburg, FL EOs and a SA conducted follow up TED inspections aboard a shrimp trawler in Tampa. An EO previously inspected the TEDs during a multi-agency patrol operation in Tampa Bay and documented violations. The owner of the shrimp boat requested to meet with the EO and have the TEDS re-inspected for compliance.

Marine Mammal Protection Act



A Savannah, GA EO responded to a call for assistance from the East Coast Whale stranding network. In May, a sperm whale had beached itself in Hilton Head South Carolina. The EO helped establish a security perimeter around the stranded whale and coordinated other law enforcement agencies to assist with crowd control. The whale was later removed from the location and buried off site.

A SC SA was provided pictures of a commercial crabber enticing a dolphin to approach his vessel and attempting to pet the dolphin. The crabber was identified and interviewed. He stated the particular dolphin follows many boats and he did not realize he could not interact with the animal. The subject stated he would warn others of potential penalties and would not interact with the dolphin again. The case will be closed as compliance assistance provided.



A Harlingen, TX EO conducted a MMPA and ESA patrol on a South Texas beach. During the patrol, the EO discovered a deceased dolphin and sea turtle. The EO contacted Sea Turtle Inc., the Texas Marine Stranding Network and The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Coastal Studies. A field necropsy was conducted by the biologist and did not yield any conclusive causes of death.

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

SC and Jacksonville, FL SAs, along with a Savannah, GA EO participated in a multi-agency operation focusing on snapper-grouper fisherman prior to the opening of grouper season. OLE patrolled offshore of Charleston, SC checking grounds as far as 50 miles offshore. Compliance assistance was provided to multiple fishermen for not having an approved descending device. One undersized triggerfish was located on a recreational boat and an unpermitted charter vessel was boarded. During an approach to a commercial vessel, the captain cut all of his lines and claimed sharks had broken the lines. During the subsequent boarding OLE discovered an overage of red pogy.

A Houma, LA EO reviewed a referral from the observer program about an Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) vessel who was non-compliant with the program. The EO was able to interview the captain during an offload. The captain was issued a written warning.



Two St. Petersburg, FL EOs and a SA conducted an offshore patrol in the EEZ west of Pinellas County, targeting illegal charter fishing vessels. No violations were documented.



A Key West, FL SA, Key Largo, FL EO, and two FWC officers conducted a four day patrol in and around the Dry Tortugas on a FWC offshore patrol vessel. The patrol focused on the opening of grouper season in the South Atlantic, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) Ecological Reserves near the Dry Tortugas, and the Pulley Ridge Habitat Area. During the patrol, four cases were made with vessels fishing in the closed ecological reserves, one charter vessel was found fishing without permits, and two vessels were found with no turtle mitigation gear and improper numbering. A number of state violations were also written by the FWC officers.



Houma, LA and a League City, TX EO participated in a patrol operation with LDWF across Louisiana that coincided with the opening of the state red snapper season. The EOs and LDWF jointly conducted 16 patrols in four different areas across the state. Rough weather offshore prevented patrols from moving too far offshore but the teams were able to conduct 55 boardings, making contact with approximately 345 individuals. LDWF issued numerous warnings and citations that included over limit of red snapper and a state guide possessing his limit of red snapper.

A Miami, FL EO issued a \$375 SSO to a subject for harvesting five blue line tilefish from the South Atlantic EEZ, during the closed season.

A San Juan, PR SA was notified of a NOVA being issued in a case regarding illegal fishing inside a closed area. The NOVA is for \$5,750.

A Fort Myers, FL EO reviewed two FWC case package referrals in which a commercial fishing captain failed to possess sufficient IFQ allocation of red snapper and red grouper in the vessel and/or linked shareholder accounts at the time of the Advance Notification of Landing. The captain had a prior violation for the same offenses. The EO issued the captain a \$1,500 and a \$2,000 summary settlement offer respectively.

A Niceville, FL EO issued a written warning notification letter to a recreational fisherman for possessing Gulf reef fish while transiting within the Madison and Swanson Sites Marine Protected Area (MPA). The EO initiated the case while on patrol with officers from FWC.

National Marine Sanctuaries



A Cape Canaveral, FL EO conducted a FKNMS air patrol with FWC. The aircrew documented a grounded vessel off of Marathon and directed a FWC patrol vessel to the site for further investigation.



Florida EOs and a Supervisory Enforcement Officer (SEO) conducted a FKNMS patrol operation in Key Largo, FL. The team surveilled the Sanctuary Preservation Areas, Existing Management Areas and Wildlife Management Areas between Key Largo and Tavernier and conducted boardings in the South Atlantic EEZ. The team issued the captain of a recreational vessel compliance assistance for entering a Wildlife Management Area no motor zone. No other violations detected.

A Key Largo, FL EO conducted a 5 day patrol aboard the USCG cutter Charles David Jr. as part of a seasonal patrol operation in the FKNMS. The patrol was the first of the year for the USCG crew

focusing on Living Marine Resources due to their heavy illegal immigration enforcement patrols. The EO and boarding team members conducted 11 at sea boardings. The EO also provided the crew with federal fisheries and Lacey Act enforcement training.

Cooperative Enforcement/Partnerships

A Jacksonville, FL ASAC attended the Northeast Florida Maritime Forum. The forum brought together U.S. Coast Guard, Federal, state and local partners for a collaborative discussion on maritime safety, security, and preparedness in the region. It was a unique opportunity to engage with key maritime stakeholders, share updates, and strengthen the collective efforts in safeguarding the regions maritime environment. The ASAC provided updates on current trends in fisheries and upcoming seasons and closures.

A Panama City, FL EO issued a \$1,325 joint and several summary settlement offer to subjects found to be in possession of 1 greater amberjack, 2 gag grouper and 10 red snapper out of season in the Gulf EEZ. FWC referred the case.



The NOAA ship Oregon II was conducting operations in the Gulf, off the coast of Panama City, FL. The operations officer requested and coordinated with OLE to transport a NOAA core officer from the ship to shore in Panama City. An OLE EO and SA in Niceville, FL and a NOAA core officer stationed at the Southeast Fisheries and Science Center in Panama City, utilized an OLE patrol vessel to rendezvous with the Oregon II 30 miles off the coast to safely transport the NOAA Core officer to shore.

A League City, TX EO participated in a patrol operation with TPWD, USCG, Homeland Security Investigations, CBP and marine units out of Port O'Connor that coincided with the closing of the state shrimping closure. The EOs and TPWD jointly conducted 11 patrols by land and sea. Rough weather offshore prevented patrols from moving too far offshore, but the teams were able to conduct boardings, making contact with approximately 50 individuals. The EO conducted 7 TED inspections with several violations, TPWD wrote state citations and the marine unit had 1 arrest.

The compliance liaison received a referral from the Southeast Observer Program regarding lack of wheel watch on a reef fish bottom longline vessel. The CL made contact with a local USCG LMR officer and discussed this instance and future collaborations on safety related incidents. USCG was receptive to the idea and offered either air/cutter assets for more egregious reports and also small boat crews that can interdict incoming vessels and conduct safety examinations.

A Jacksonville, FL SA conducted an underway patrol with a FWC OPV crew out of New Smyrna Beach. Multiple vessels were boarded and violations were documented for possession of red snapper during a closed season, gear violations, and failure to maintain fish intact through offloading.

A Niceville, FL EO conducted two at-sea patrols off Pensacola, FL aboard a FWC OPV during the Memorial Day Weekend. Multiple vessel boardings were conducted in state waters with no federal violations identified. Also, the EO conducted an at-sea boarding of an inshore shrimping vessel. The EO conducted a TED inspection with no violations found.

A League City, TX EO conducted two underway patrols with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department out of Palacios, TX for the federal red snapper season opener. During the patrols, officers conducted 49 vessel boardings resulting in several reef fish violations to include bag limit violations and using reef fish as bait.

A Fort Myers, FL EO reviewed four FWC case packages in which officers documented undersized mangrove snappers, anchored and fishing in a Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary - Sanctuary Preservation Area, undersized cobia, out of season spiny lobster, and several TED violations. The EO issued a \$325 summary settlement offer, two \$300 summary settlement offers and a \$1,100 summary settlement offer respectively.

A Houma, LA EO conducted an offshore patrol with officers from Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. During the patrol the officers conducted five TED and resource inspections on commercial shrimp vessels. They also completed several inspections of recreational and charter vessels targeting reef fish. The EO provided compliance assistance to the captain of a recreational vessel for failing to possess a descending device while targeting reef fish.

Patrols/VMS/Catch Shares

A Niceville, FL EO conducted an air patrol aboard an USCG fixed wing aircraft from the USCG Aviation Training Center (ATC) in Mobile, AL. The EO coordinated with a Houma, LA EO who was conducting an at-sea patrol in the Gulf, off the coast of Mississippi and Louisiana.

A Houma, LA EO reviewed an USCG case package and issued a \$1,300 SSO to the captain and owner of a commercial shrimp vessel. During the USCG boarding, officers found the captain was in possession of four undersize bull sharks and did not possess an HMS permit. They also found numerous TED and BRD violations during the inspection.

A Jacksonville, FL SA issued a \$550 SSO to a recreational fisherman for possessing Red Snapper during a closed season. The boarding occurred while the SA was on patrol with FWC.



Panama City and Niceville, FL EOs conducted a three day patrol operation with FWC in Panama City Beach, FL. OLE and FWC conducted patrols targeting illegal charters operating in the Exclusive Economic Zone, along with illegal and unreported fishing inside the Madison and Swanson Marine Protected Area. Multiple violations were detected and documented for prosecution.

During a patrol with Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, a Houma, LA EO conducted a boarding of a commercial shrimp trawler actively fishing in federal waters. During the boarding it was

discovered the vessel did not possess a valid Federal Gulf Shrimp Permit and was in possession of several hundreds of pounds of shrimp. The EO issued a \$750 summary settlement to the captain/owner of the vessel.

During a patrol to conduct an IFQ offload, a Houma LA EO observed a vessel at the dock nearly an hour before the vessel's reported landing time. Upon further review of VMS data and an interview with the captain, the EO determined the vessel landed between 4-5 hours early without submitting an updated landing notification. The EO issued a written warning to the captain and owner of the vessel.

A Fort Myers, FL EO conducted a patrol offshore of Fort Myers Beach, FL aboard a USCG vessel. The team conducted a TED investigation on a shrimp trawler. The EO documented six TED violations to include greater than 4" bar spacing, a greater than 55° TED angle, escape openings on three TEDs less than 71", and the leading edges on two TEDs less than 71."

IS Personnel reviewed trips for potential compliance issues and violations. Identified vessels were referred to sworn personnel for investigation. The issues ranged from VMS non-reporting, failure to submit required prelanding reports, early arrivals based on prelanding reports, and potential landing in locations not reported.

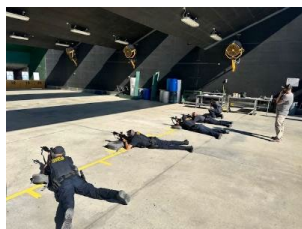
Compliance Assistance/Outreach/Education/Public Affairs

A Corpus Christi, TX EO provided compliance assistance to a SEFHIER charter vessel operator that failed to complete log book entries. The vessel is for sale and the charter operator has ceased operations. The required log book entries were corrected.

Training/Other

The Compliance Liaison and a League City, TX SA provided training to new observers at the Science Center in Galveston, TX. The team conducted scenario based training to help new observers get a better understanding of what kind of issues they may encounter while conducting their duties and how to properly document those issues. OLE's role in ensuring observer safety was discussed in depth as well. OLE reviewed scenarios, reporting tips, observer safety and emergency protocol with the class. The observer class was engaged and asked numerous questions on safety and incident reporting.

A Houma, LA EO presented to USCG students at GRFTC in New Orleans. The EO spoke about NMFS mission and how we work with state and USCG partners to further the fisheries mission. He reviewed several case packages and spoke about best practices for submitting case referrals.



SED EOs and SAs completed pistol and rifle training in St. Petersburg, FL. Five EOs were issued and qualified on their rifles.

The USCG held a three day Living Marine Resource training provided by the Southeast Regional Fisheries Training Center at the USCG San Juan Base. The San Juan SA attended the training and provided a presentation focusing on case package preparation and common local violations and trends.

A Miami, FL EO conducted two specialized training sessions for FWC Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) crews in Fort Lauderdale and Miami. The training focused on the operational enforcement of IUU fishing activities and the application of the Lacey Act, particularly concerning fishing vessels returning from Bahamian waters. The sessions incorporated practical case studies and boarding scenarios to reinforce tactical decision-making and enhance field-level enforcement capabilities. The training received positive feedback from participants and led to the successful implementation of improved enforcement protocols and interagency coordination efforts across the region.



SED EOs conducted a week long TED patrol and training operation out of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary office in Key West. The NOAA Gear Monitoring Team (GMT) out of Pascagoula, MS provided classroom TED measurement instruction utilizing training TEDs to OLE, FWC and USCG enforcement officers. The classroom training was followed by actual TED inspections on shrimp boats out to 50 miles northwest of Key West. The team conducted 11 TED boardings resulting in a 90% compliance rate and documented other violations of the Gulf Reef Fish Management Plan. Four patrols and one vessel inspection completed with no violations documented.

Media

The compliance liaison created a reward story related to a NC SA's case of a dolphin stranding and decapitation. The CL and communications specialist coordinated a web story release highlighting the reward and request for information. The story was also amplified on NOAA SERO and HQ feeds and picked up by multiple news outlets. One interview was conducted related to the case: <https://www.wect.com/2025/05/15/noaa-offering-20000-reward-after-decapitated-dolphin-found-pender-county/>

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/north-carolina-dolphin-found-head-missing>

The compliance liaison created a web story related to a Niceville, FL SA's criminal case of a subject shooting and poisoning dolphins. CL and communications specialist coordinated a web story release highlighting the case and successful prosecution by DOJ. The story was also amplified on DOJ, FWC, NOAA SERO and HQ feeds. Subject sentenced to 30 days incarceration, probation and \$51,000 fine. <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/florida-fisherman-convicted-killing-dolphins>

The compliance liaison created a SED related post to help promote OLE's efforts related to IUU fishing. CL and HQ communications specialist worked with regional communications to post a ports of entry inspection on the TX/MX border, released on IUU Day. Similar posts were made in the West Coast and Alaska divisions.

SERO Post on Instagram:



<https://www.instagram.com/p/DKicNtQOmEp/?igsh=MWpqZWRlaWJ5cno4MA%3D%3D>

Overview of Summary Settlements

Listed below is a summary of the **34** 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 (20), Unpermitted Fishing related violations (4), Fishing in a Closed Area (3), and TED/BRD requirements (3). **11** violations were cited throughout the Gulf region, **21** violations were cited throughout the South Atlantic region, **2** violations in the Keys area.

LAW/REG/PROGRAM	VIOLATION	AMOUNT	STATE
Endangered Species Act	TED/BRD Requirements	\$1,500	TX
Endangered Species Act	TED/BRD Requirements	\$2,000	LA
Endangered Species Act	TED/BRD Requirements	\$1,300	MS
Highly Migratory Species	Unpermitted HMS Fishing Activity	\$2,000	GA
Lacey Act	Possession Requirements	\$500	FL EAST
Lacey Act	Possession Requirements	\$500	FL EAST
Lacey Act	Possession Requirements	\$500	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Bag Limit Exceeded	\$1,000	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Fishing in Closed Area	\$275	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$550	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Unpermitted Charter Activity-Open Access Permit	\$500	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Unpermitted Charter Activity-Open Access Permit	\$600	FL KEYS
Magnuson Stevens Act	Fishing in Closed Area	\$550	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Bag Limit Exceeded	\$500	FL EAST

Magnuson Stevens Act	Turtle Gear Requirements; Lack of Descender Device	\$250	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$1,325	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Bag Limit Exceeded	\$1,000	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	IFQ Program Requirements	\$1,000	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	IFQ Program Requirements	\$1,000	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Undersize Possession	\$375	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Failure to Maintain Fish in Whole Condition; Retention During Closure; Lack of Descender Device	\$575	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$700	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$650	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$375	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Commercial Trip Limit Exceeded	\$250	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Observer Program Requirements	\$2,500	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$550	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	Unpermitted Charter Activity-Open Access Permit	\$2,400	FL KEYS
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$650	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure; Lack of Descender Device	\$900	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Fishing in Closed Area	\$300	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	Undersize Possession	\$425	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$300	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$850	FL WEST

Investigative Support Program

Southeast Division Active Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) Population: **921**

Population Breakdown by (VMS) Fisheries

FISHERY	VESSELS
HMS Pelagic Longline	72
HMS Shark	6
Gulf Reef Fish	555
Rock Shrimp	53
Southeast For Hire*	235
TOTAL	921

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 **75** referrals from JEA partners. Case support to the field was provided as well, with work ranging from processing summary settlements (**42**), preparing incident reports for GCES, in support of prosecution (**20**), 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 **521** vessels following observation of suspected VMS or fishing violations, including **195** automated VMS messages sent to notify vessels real-time about closed area regulations and incursions. Staff also provided targeted education and outreach to vessel owners on a daily basis. **10** investigations were referred for VMS violations. Additionally, staff conducted **307** calls with industry related to compliance during the quarter.

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

Observer Program Highlights

During FY Quarter 3, 2025, the Southeast Division Observer Programs deployed on **172** trips for **806** sea days. Approximately **96%** of all selected trips were completed without an observer related enforcement incident [assault/harassment (sexual and non-sexual), safety]. Observer programs reported **20** potential fishery violations to OLE-SED. The Galveston Shrimp Program deployed on **28** trips for **390** sea days, and the Galveston Reef Fish Program deployed on **23** trips for **143** sea days. The Panama City Shark Research and deepwater longline Program deployed on **24** trips for **40** sea days and the Panama City South Atlantic Reef Fish Program deployed on **82** trips for **127** sea days. The Miami Pelagic Observer Program deployed on **15** trips for **106** sea days. The summary below details the type of observer related complaints received during Quarter 2 (calendar year) of 2025, for all three programs.

COMPLAINT TYPE	Galveston Programs	Panama City Programs	Miami Observer Program	TOTALS
ASSAULT				0
HARASSMENT/INTIMIDATE/IMPEDEMENT	4	1	1	6
SAFETY	1			1
NON-COMPLIANT FOR OBSERVER COVERAGE	14	3		17
HANDLING				0
GEAR	2			2
RETENTION				0
SPATIAL			1	1
TOTALS	21	4	2	27

Cases Referred For Prosecution

Listed below is a summary of the 17 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 6 occurring in the South Atlantic area, 5 in the Gulf area, 4 in the Florida Keys area and 2 in the Caribbean 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
Endangered Species Act	North Atlantic Right Whale Speed Reduction Violations	MULTIPLE
Highly Migratory Species	Permit Requirements	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Unpermitted Charter Activity-Moratorium Access	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Unpermitted Charter Activity-Moratorium Access	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Closed Area Incursion	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Reporting Requirements	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Prohibited Species Retention	PR
Magnuson Stevens Act	Unpermitted Charter Activity-Moratorium Access	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Closed Area Incursion	PR
Magnuson Stevens Act	IFQ Program Requirements	FL WEST
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Areas to be Avoided Activity	FL KEYS
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Areas to be Avoided Activity	FL KEYS
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Areas to be Avoided Activity	FL KEYS
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Fishing within Sanctuary Preservation Area	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 2025- MAY 2025** (available information since last report). Nationwide results may also be found at the [enforcement charging information site](#)

1. F/V Dolphin II – Owner/Operator Iridio Orovio was charged under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act with fishing and/or possessing fish in the Tortugas South Ecological Reserve in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. A \$3,750 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$3,375.
2. Ocean Intervention II – Owner Oceaneering International, Inc., and Operator Sean Thomas Stokes were charged jointly and severally under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act with operating a vessel greater than 50 meters in length inside an area to be avoided in or around the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. A \$7,500 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$6,750.
3. F/V Eagle Eye – Owner Eagle Eye Fishing Corp. and Operator John J. Cafiero were charged jointly and severally under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act with fishing within a closed area and releasing sharks with more than three feet of trailing gear. John J. Cafiero was charged under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with interfering with an observer. A \$52,971 NOVA was issued.
4. M/Y Brown Eyed Girls – Owner CBC Yachts II, LLC and Operator Ricky Prescott 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 \$15,000 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$13,500.
5. M/Y TSC Hugo (now The Once in a Lifetime) – Owner The Spaceport Company and Operators Great Eastern Group Inc. and Michael Dean Freeman 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, and the case settled for \$6,750.
6. F/V Grouper Therapy – Owner Wholesale Ventures Inc., Lessee/Permit Holder Palmer Charters Inc., and Operator Christopher Gercken were charged jointly and severally under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with possessing a limited harvest species in excess of its limitation and failing to comply with required protected species conservation measures. A \$12,700 NOVA was issued.

7. F/V Johnny Cake – Owner Blue Heron Fleet LLC, Operator Richard Charles Nagel II, and Passenger Timothy Dean Atteberry were charged jointly and severally under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with removing fishing gear owned by another person from the EEZ, negligently and without authorization. A \$1,000 NOVA was issued.
8. F/V Seeker 3 – Owner Seeker 3 Inc. and Operator David John Ghigliotty were charged jointly and severally under the High Seas Fishing Compliance Act with fishing without a permit. A \$5,750 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$5,175.
9. M/V Dolphin Explorer – Owner Dolphin Explorer, LLC and Operator Eddie R. Farr were charged jointly and severally under the Marine Mammal Protection Act with taking a marine mammal. A \$10,000 NOVA was issued.
10. Tug Polaris – Owner Polaris New Energy LLC, Technical Manager Mcallister Towing LNG Services LLC, and Operator Justin James Cirrincione 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.
11. F/V Free Diver – Owner Nickolas Victor Dorado and Operators David Victor Dorado and Blue Sky Fishing Charters Inc. were charged jointly and severally under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with operating a Gulf reef fish charter in the EEZ without a federal permit. A \$6,550 NOVA was issued.