

NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement  
Southeast Division

FISCAL YEAR 2024, QUARTER 4  
FISHERY MANAGEMENT  
COUNCIL REPORT

JULY 1, 2024 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2024



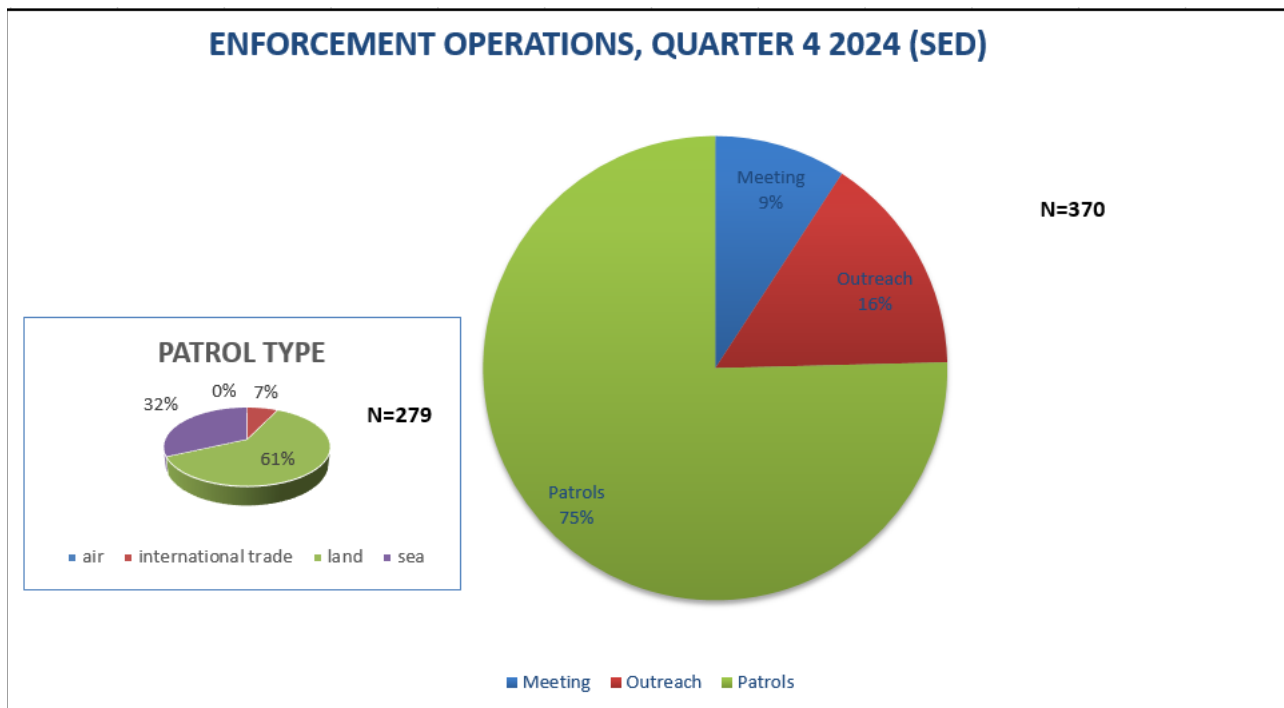
## Contents

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
Investigative Support Program.....	23
Observer Program Highlights.....	24
Cases Referred For Prosecution.....	25
NOAA General Counsel Enforcement Section Charging Information.....	26

# 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 4, 2024, **July 1, 2024- September 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).

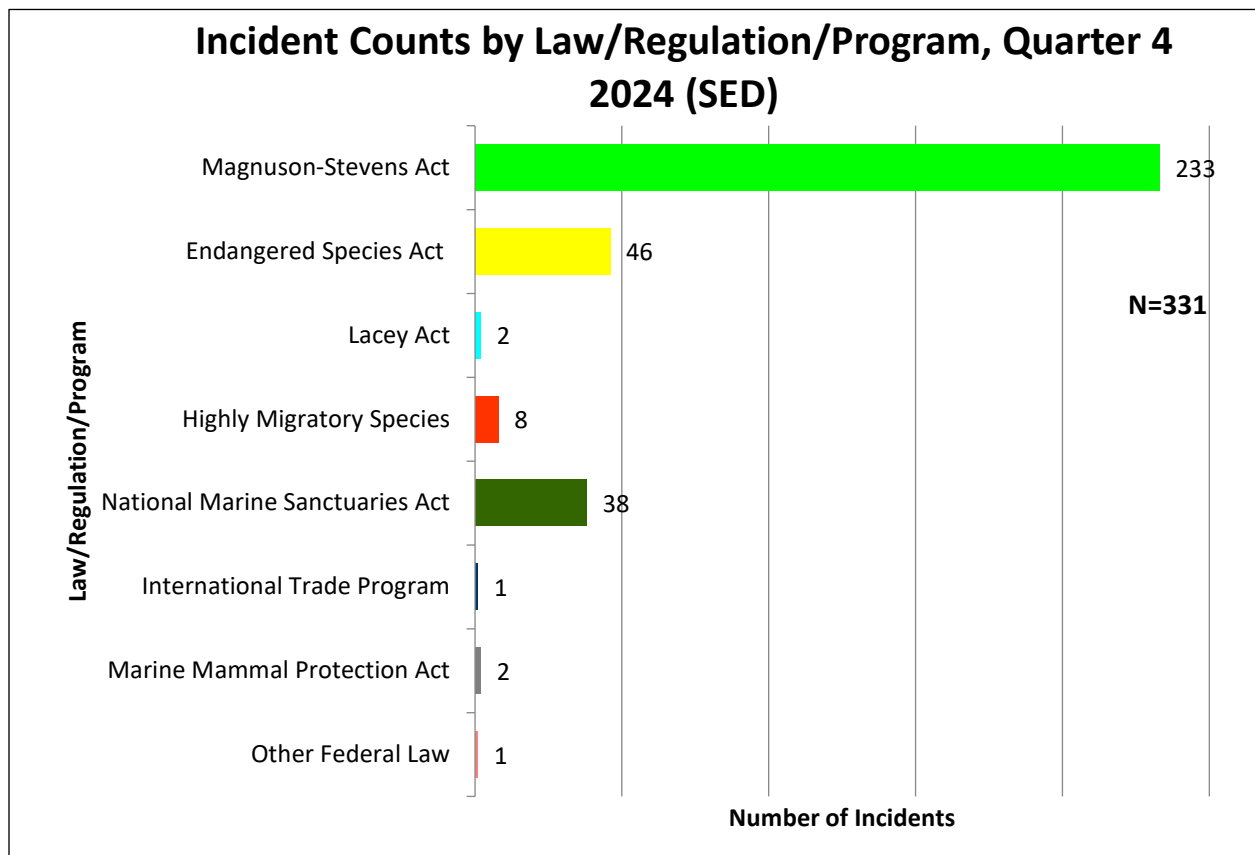
Patrols, outreach and education, compliance assistance, and investigations are the primary activities of OLE’s mission to protect marine wildlife and habitat by enforcing domestic laws and supporting international treaty requirements designed to ensure global resources are available for future generations. Specifically, nine operations were conducted throughout the division. Enforcement efforts are routinely conducted with multiple federal, state and local partners throughout the division. Operations was conducted with state partners in Louisiana and Texas, focusing on shrimp TED/BRD requirements and reef fish activity. Multi-agency operations were conducted with state and federal partners that focused on identifying illegal charters off the west coast of Florida, protecting Sanctuary resources as well as providing domestic seafood security by inspecting imported seafood entering into the U.S. This quarter, OLE-SED conducted and documented **279** patrols, **57** specific instances of outreach and attended **34** meetings.



# Incident Information

During the fourth quarter, OLE-SED opened 331 incidents, which included 148 counts in the SAFMC area, 245 counts in the GMFMC area and 1 count in the CFMC area<sup>1</sup>. These incidents originate from both NOAA personnel and our enforcement partners.

## Summary of Incidents by Law/Regulation/Program; Quarter 4, 2024



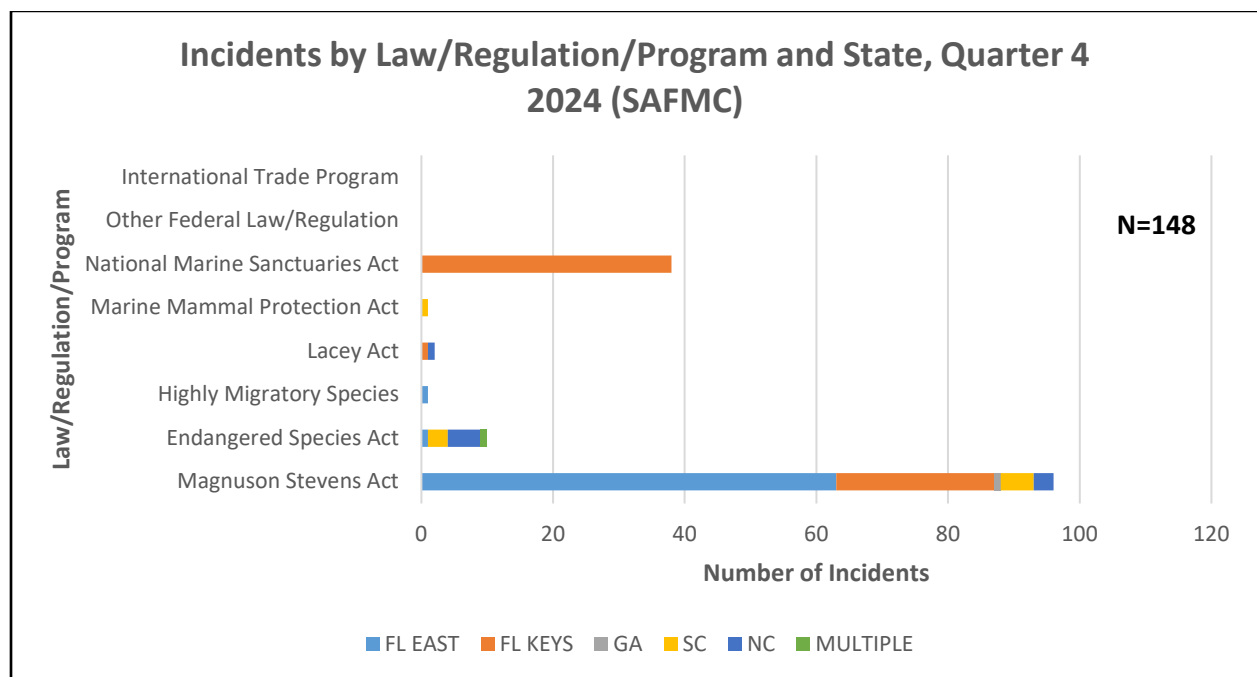
<sup>1</sup> Incidents occurring in the Florida Keys area are included in both SAFMC and GMFMC counts; total individual counts are greater than opened incidents due to multiple counts charged for separate incidents

## 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 4, 2024 (SAFMC)

Law/Regulation/Program	FL EAST	FL KEYS	GA	SC	NC	MULTIPLE	Total
Magnuson Stevens Act	63	24	1	5	3		96
Endangered Species Act	1			3	5	1	10
Highly Migratory Species	1						1
Lacey Act		1			1		2
Marine Mammal Protection Act				1			1
National Marine Sanctuaries Act		38					38
Other Federal Law/Regulation							0
International Trade Program							0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>148</b>

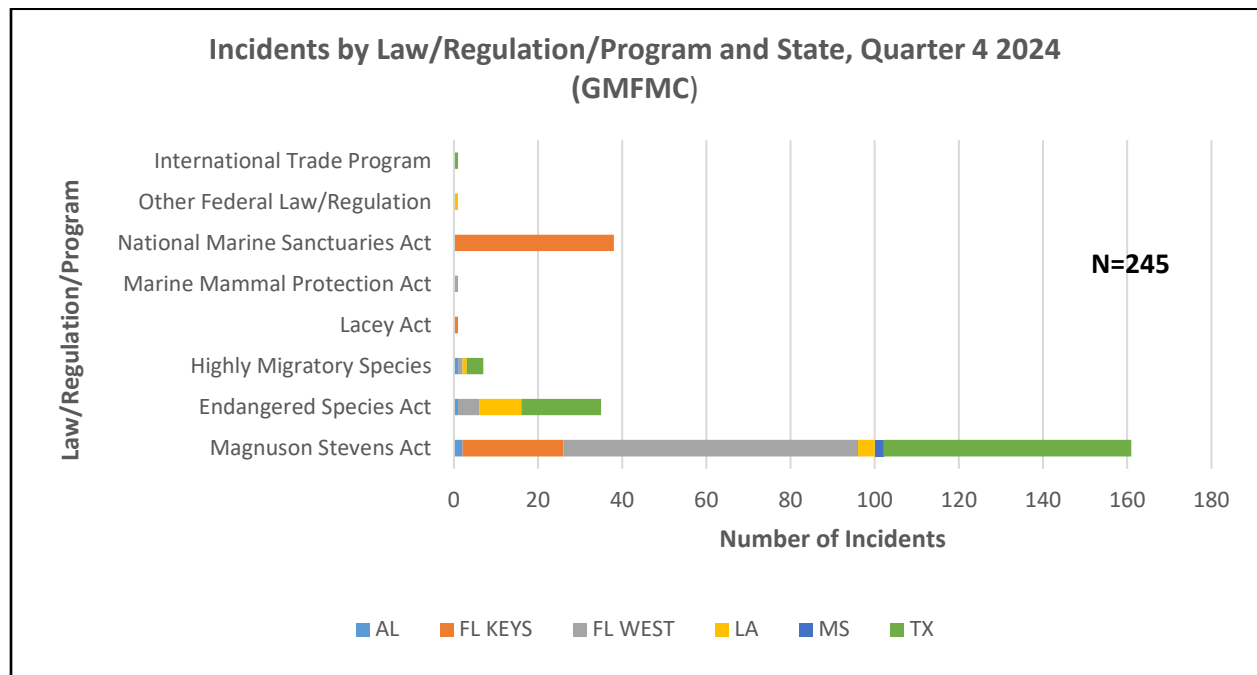


## Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Summary

\*\*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 4, 2024 (GMFMC)

Law/Regulation/Program	AL	FL KEYS	FL WEST	LA	MS	TX	Total
Magnuson Stevens Act	2	24	70	4	2	59	161
Endangered Species Act	1		5	10		19	35
Highly Migratory Species	1		1	1		4	7
Lacey Act		1					1
Marine Mammal Protection Act			1				1
National Marine Sanctuaries Act		38					38
Other Federal Law/Regulation				1			1
International Trade Program						1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>245</b>

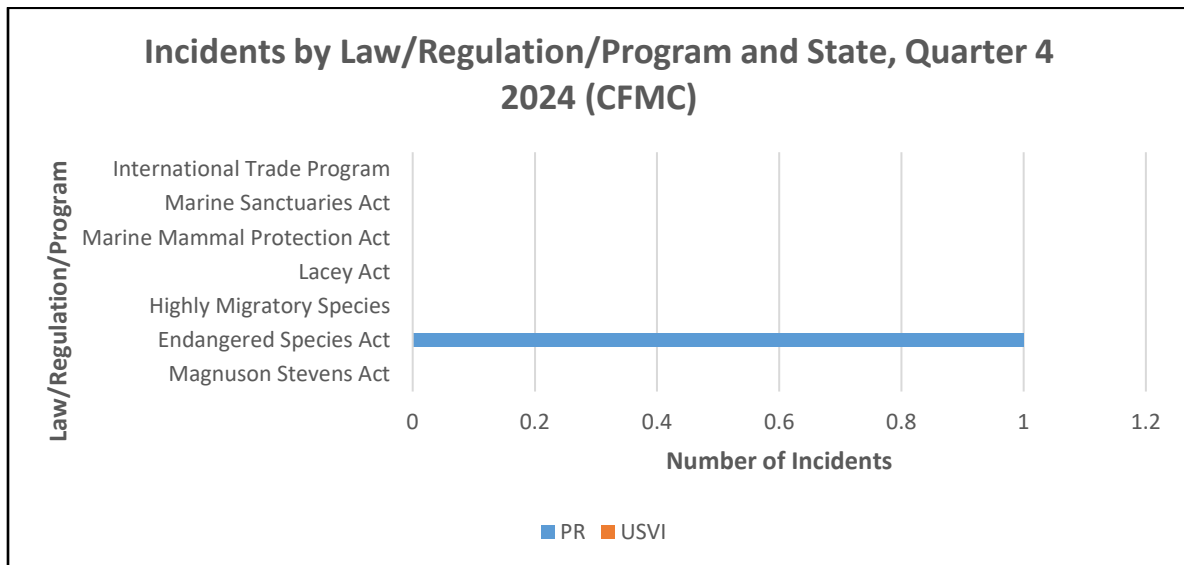


## Caribbean Fishery Management Council Summary

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

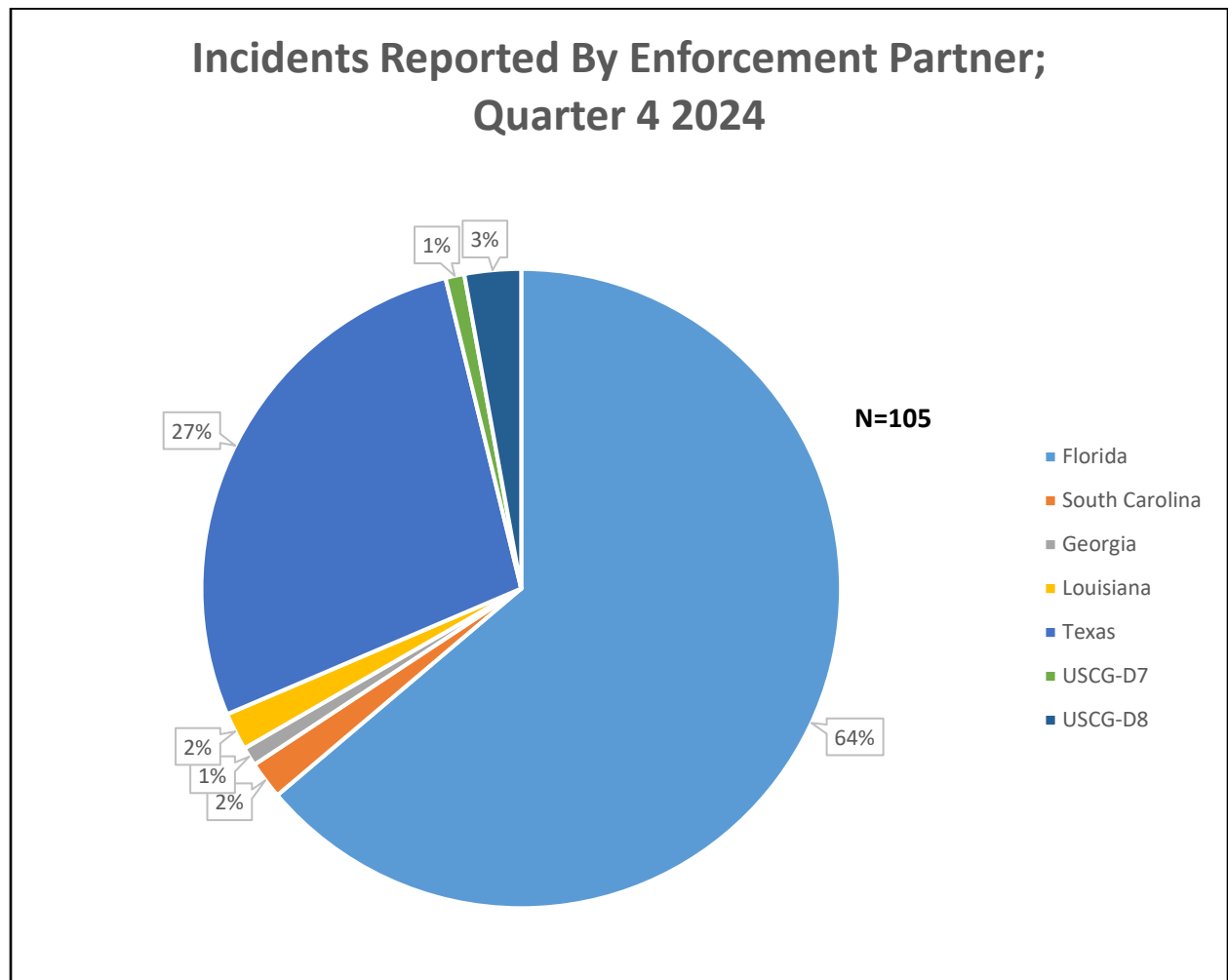
### Number of Incidents by Law/Regulation/Program and Location; Quarter 4, 2024 (CFMC)

Law/Regulation/Program	PR	USVI	Total
Magnuson Stevens Act			
Endangered Species Act	1		1
Highly Migratory Species			
Lacey Act			
Marine Mammal Protection Act			
Marine Sanctuaries Act			
International Trade Program			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>

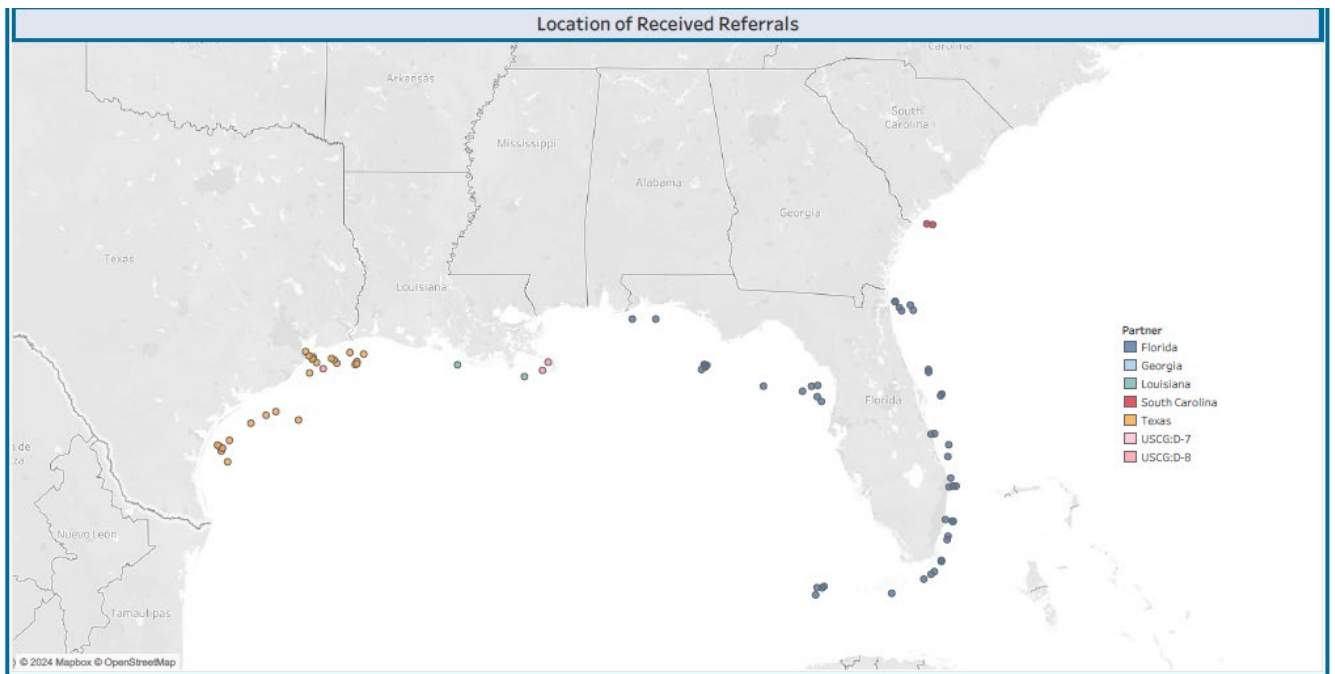


# Summary of Cases by Joint Enforcement Agreement and United States Coast Guard Partners

Throughout Quarter 4, 2024, there were **105** 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 partner<sup>1</sup>. Effort consisted of dockside vessel boardings, offshore vessel boardings and interaction with the general public and industry members.



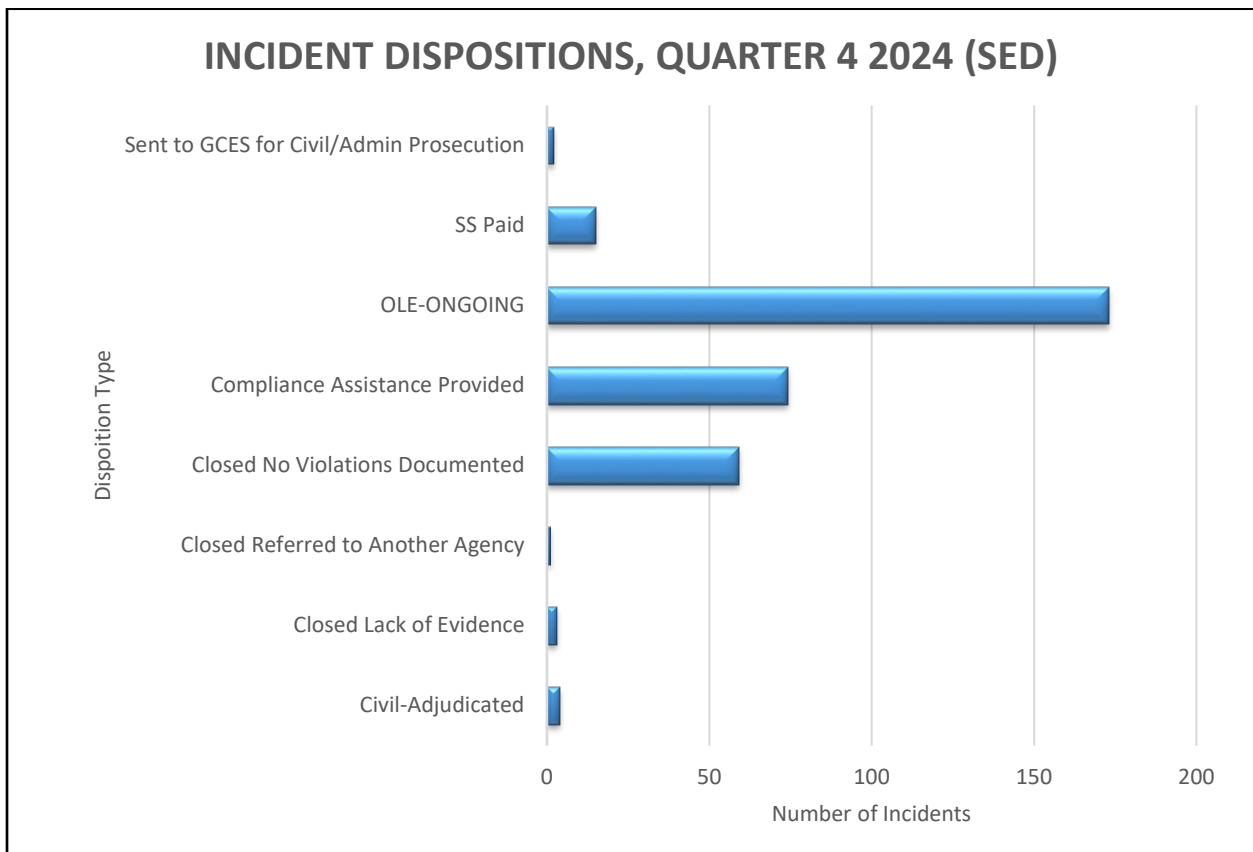
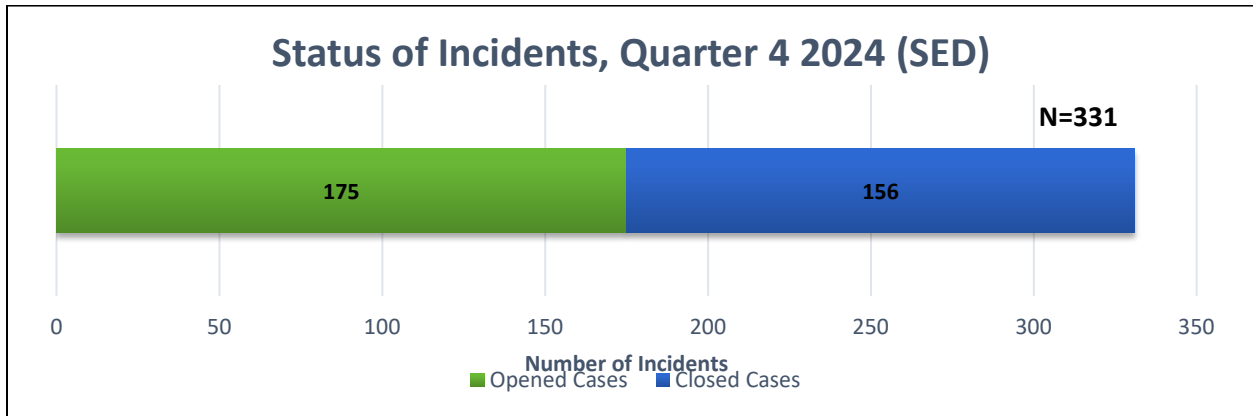
Law/Regulation/Program	FL	GA	SC	LA	TX	USCG-D7	USCG-D8	TOTALS
Magnuson Stevens Act (MSFCMA)	58	1	2	2	22	1	1	87
Endangered Species Act (ESA)	3			1	14		2	20
Highly Migratory Species								0
Lacey Act	1							1
Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA)								0
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	9							9
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>117</b>



<sup>1</sup> 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 (**331**) 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 **47%** of the incoming workload.



# Enforcement Highlights

## Highly Migratory Species

A Miami, FL Enforcement Officer (EO) issued a \$3,000 summary settlement offer (SSO) for a HMS referred case involving a dealer making four swordfish purchases on three separate occasions without a current HMS dealer permit.



A Miami, FL Special Agent (SA) issued a \$1,250 SSO to a commercial fisherman who landed a tuna. The subject did not possess a tuna permit and removed the fins and head.

## Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) Fishing

A Miami, FL EO conducted an IUU patrol at the Miami airport inspecting shipments of grouper from Guatemala. Two inspections were completed and no violations were found at the time.

A Jacksonville, FL SA assisted in a joint agency port security and enforcement operation in Charleston, SC. 13 agencies were represented including U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), United States Coast Guard (USCG), South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR), Homeland Security Investigations (HIS), S.C. Law Enforcement Division, and S.C. State Port Authority (SCSPA). Multiple refrigerated containers were inspected for imported seafood products, with no violations found. Additionally, 64 containers and 101 vehicles were inspected and 104 individuals were run through multiple databases.

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

A recent IUU operation in Guam, conducted by Miami, FL and Guam EOs, focused on enforcing SIMP and tackling IUU fishing. Key cases included a shrimp shipment missing documentation and confirmed ineligible for U.S. entry. Another case involved four cases of canned tuna from the Philippines, where NOAA identified missing required forms, tuna tracking documents, lacking SIMP regulations and permits. Additionally, a passenger aircraft with suspected sea turtle meat from the Federated States of Micronesia led to educational materials being posted at the Micronesian airport to prevent future illegal imports. The operation effectively improved local enforcement, enhanced inter-agency cooperation, and addressed regulatory gaps and training needs.

## Marine Mammal Protection Act

Corpus Christi, TX and League City, TX EOs assisted the Texas Marine Mammal Stranding Network regarding the capture of a stranded bottlenose dolphin calf. The coordinator requested assistance locating a shallow draft vessel. The EOs contacted Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to coordinate the use of an airboat. The dolphin was successfully captured and released to the veterinarians at SeaWorld.

A SC SA received information from NOAA staff regarding a particular dolphin pod becoming aggressive toward fisherman catching and releasing fish. The dolphins' behavior is a result of being fed by boaters for years. Recently, there was a report of a fisherman striking a dolphin with a paddle. The SA conducted surveillance in the area where the dolphins are generally feed.

## Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act



Two St. Petersburg, FL EOs conducted land patrol targeting Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) vessels while in field training. Officers investigated an IFQ fishing vessel who returned to shore without sufficient allocation. During the investigation, officers found seven hidden gag grouper that were retained and not sold from the fishing trip.

A Charleston, SC SA and EO monitored a commercial offload and found the operator in violation of trip limits. A golden tilefish overage of 164 lbs and a vermilion snapper overage of 32 lbs was documented along with gear violations. A SSO was issued to the owner/operator.

A Miami, FL EO issued an \$850 SSO for possession of 4 bags of skinless fish fillet while returning from fishing in Bahamian waters and a Lacey violation for possession of queen conch meat. A second vessel was issued a \$450 SSO for possession of 7 bags of skinless snapper/grouper fish fillets while returning from fishing in Bahamian waters.

A Charleston, SC Supervisory Enforcement Officer (SEO), EO and a boarding team from USCG Sector Charleston conducted underway patrols on a NOAA OLE's vessel during the one day Friday South Atlantic Red Snapper opening and the day after. Multiple recreational vessels were boarded and were found in compliance. One vessel's voyage was terminated by the USCG boarding team due to missing safety gear and the vessel was required to be escorted back to safe harbor.



Key Largo, FL EO worked with Florida Fish and Wildlife (FWC) Officers to patrol the Tortugas North and South Ecological Reserves. While on patrol, the officers located a vessel with subjects actively bottom fishing in the Tortugas South Ecological Reserve. An inspection revealed black grouper, mutton snapper, and yellowtail snapper onboard. Throughout the patrol, the officers

encountered other marine fisheries violations including undersized hogfish, marine life violations, and federal numbering requirements on federally permitted fishing vessels. The state and federal fisheries violations were addressed accordingly.



OLE officers from FL and TX completed multi-agency (OLE, USCG, FWC) operations targeting unpermitted charter fishing vessels in the EEZ off of Fort Myers, Cape Coral, Naples, and Marco Island. Five separate patrol vessels participated in the operation. Patrols detected multiple fishery violations ranging from retention during closure, undersize possession, utilizing lane snapper as bait, and failure to possess all of the required sea turtle mitigation equipment.

A Key Largo, FL EO completed nine Southeast For-hire Integrated Reporting Program (SEFHIER) referral investigations for un-submitted weekly reports. The EO issued each permit holder and/or captain a \$500 SSO.

## Endangered Species Act



A Harlingen, TX EO conducted an underway patrol with TPWD. During the patrol the EO assisted as a Spanish translator, interviewing the captain and crew during a boarding of a shrimping vessel. No violations were documented.



During FL 2024 lobster mini-season, two EOs, a FWC Investigator, and a SED SA conducted a vessel stop in the Florida Keys NMS. Subjects on board were found to be in possession of a speared Goliath grouper. State criminal misdemeanor charges were issued.

A New Bern, NC SA completed an investigation on a 190 foot motor yacht that transited over 30 miles through the Area to be Avoided inside the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

## National Marine Sanctuaries



A St. Petersburg, FL and a Houma, LA EO conducted at-sea patrols in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary after the Governor announced a single day Florida resident only lobster season. The enforcement officers conducted several investigations and identified 3 vessels harvesting lobster within Sanctuary Preservation Areas. The enforcement officers also responded to a grounded vessel.

During the 2024 lobster mini-season, SEOs, EOs, SAs and an IST (21 personnel) from across Districts conducted patrols in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. OLE deployed 6 boat crews from Key Largo to Key West. Their primary mission was to deter and detect the illegal harvest of spiny lobster from within the Sanctuary's "No Take Zones." OLE worked in coordination with the USCG, FWC and the USFWS. High winds and rough seas plagued the operation and were a factor in limiting the number of vessels able to reach the reef line where many of the "No Take Zones" are located. Despite the weather conditions and a patrol vessel breakdown, crews patrolled the zones and documented violations for illegal harvest of spiny lobster and hook and line fishing in "No Take Zones," vessel groundings causing damage to seagrass, failure to display diver down flags and harvest of a prohibited fish species.



A Fort Myers, FL EO completed an investigation in which he and an SEO responded to a recreational fishing vessel that ran aground in Calda Channel near Key West during operation Sanctuary Savior. The EO issued a \$350 SSO to the owner and operator of the vessel for de minimis damage to seagrass.

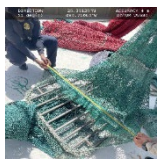
A Fort Myers, FL EO reviewed 9 case referrals in which vessels greater than 50 meters incurred into the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Areas to be Avoided (ATBA). The EO issued 6 SSOs totaling at \$14,000 and referred 3 of the cases to GCES due to the severity of the incursion.

The Compliance Liaison attended and presented at the August Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council meeting. During a dedicated law enforcement section, the CL provided a summary of OLE's efforts from the recent 2024 Florida lobster mini-season operation. SED annually pulls officers across the whole division to concentrate efforts within the Florida Keys for a week before, during and after mini-season. Our focus on preserving National Marine Sanctuary resources was highlighted to the council. FWC and USCG also provided perspective on their mini-season efforts

## Cooperative Enforcement/Partnerships



NOAA OLE, TPWD wardens, and CBP Air and Marine Operations conducted an operation in the southwestern Gulf of Mexico targeting illegal charter activities. Seven charter vessels were boarded, and three sets of Mexican IUU vessel longline sets were recovered.



Officers and agents in Texas conducted a joint operation with the TPWD focusing on illegal fishing activity in the Gulf of Mexico EEZ. Ten boat crews conducted patrols, which covered the entire Texas coast from Port Arthur, TX to Brownsville, TX. During the operation, 252 commercial and

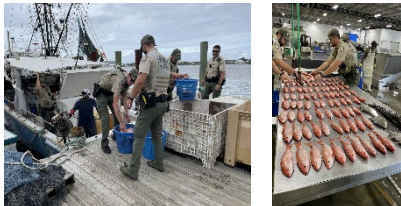
recreational boardings were completed resulting in 77 violations documented. Violations consisted of undersized reef fish, exceeding bag limits of reef fish, no HMS permits, discard of fish upon approach of law enforcement, possession of shark fins, TED/BRD violations and several state violations.



A North Carolina EO participated in an operation alongside USCG and NC Marine Patrol boarding teams to inspect shrimp trawl vessels in the Pamlico Sound. TED boardings were completed prior to severe weather ending the operation

earlier than expected.

A Houma, LA EO conducted an underway patrol with Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) out of Venice, LA. During the patrol they focused efforts on vessels targeting reef fish. No federal violations were documented, but LDWF documented several license violations in state waters that resulted in the seizures of numerous fish.



A NC SA assisted FWC with an operation that focused on the inspection of South Atlantic federally permitted vessels in Jacksonville, FL. The operation was dedicated to training new FWC Officers and monitoring commercial offloads of snapper-grouper species. FWC officers documented multiple federal and state violations including a vessel that was in possession of over

100 undersized vermilion snapper and other species.

A San Juan, PR SA participated in an interagency meeting at the USCG Sector San Juan Base. The purpose of the meeting was to have a roundtable conversation to discuss the threats and needs in the Caribbean. Approximately eight different Federal Agencies were in assistance. During the meeting, a USCG Rear Admiral used an eel seizure case with NOAA OLE as an example of a successful partnership.

A Niceville, FL EO conducted an at-sea patrol aboard a FWC Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) off Pensacola, FL. Officers conducted four boardings of fishing vessels in the Gulf of Mexico EEZ. Minor violations were documented.



Two St. Petersburg, FL EOs participated in a FWC / JEA led operation targeting illegal charter fishing vessels. The team boarded eight vessels at-sea.

A Key West, FL SA assisted USCG Station Key West boat crew who boarded a commercial shrimp vessel approximately 12 miles off the Marquesas Keys. USCG discovered the crew was fishing with an expired permit. The vessel returned to its homeport in Alabama where a Mobile EO met

with the captain for further questioning, and observed the offload. The vessel had approximately 45,000 pounds of shrimp onboard. A SSO was issued.

## Patrols/VMS/Catch Shares

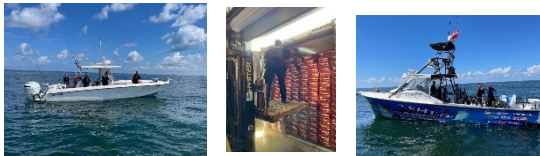


A Cape Canaveral, FL EO was TDY to Guam from 6/17 to 6/28 to assist a Guam EO. Multiple patrols were conducted throughout the island to include SIMP inspections, ESA patrols, and MMPA patrols. An outreach and education meeting was also held with captains

from multiple tour boat companies that conduct dolphin viewings as part of their tours.

A Saint Thomas, USVI EO conducted a joint patrol with CBP to inspect vessels arriving from the BVI. Multiple vessels were contacted and no violations were found.

A Saint Thomas, USVI EO conducted a document review of a seafood shipment that arrived at the STT airport from Puerto Rico. The seafood's origin was documented in Costa Rica and no violations were found.



St Petersburg, FL EOs completed an operation in St. Petersburg/Tampa area that consisted of container inspections, IFQ dealer inspections, underway patrols, and 15 at-sea vessel boardings. The team did not detect any illegal fishing charters but did document violations for failure to possess sea turtle mitigation gear and an undersized hogfish.

A Niceville, FL EO conducted an at-sea patrol aboard a FWC OPV from Pensacola, FL and transited approximately 100 nm to the Madison and Swanson Marine Protected Area (MPA). Officers conducted four boardings of recreational fishing vessels in the Gulf of Mexico EEZ and documented minor violations. The team did not observe any vessels within the MPA.

## Compliance Assistance/Outreach/Education/Public Affairs

A Harlingen, TX EO alongside U.S. Fish and Wildlife, TPWD and USCG participated in an operation focused on the education and public outreach of the Kemp Ridley sea turtle and its nesting areas.

The Compliance Liaison and a St Petersburg, FL EO presented at an IFQ workshop geared towards new participants. VMS and enforcement issues related to the IFQ Program were presented. Fishermen and stakeholders in attendance also learned details of the IFQ, permit and finance programs. Approximately 25 stakeholders attended from the central/southwest area of Florida. Similar outreach workshops are being planned for the future.

A Corpus Christi, TX EO provided compliance assistance to multiple recreational fisherman who failed to carry proof of saltwater registry and venting tools.



A Key West, FL SA and a Jacksonville, FL ASAC traveled to Brevard County to conduct Lacey Act training for FWC. Approximately 25 participants with FWC, USFWS, and the Brevard County Sheriff's Office attended. An outreach event was also completed in a marina and restaurant in

Merritt Island. Topics included Bahamian laws, the Lacey Act, and customs laws. Members from CBP Air Marine, USCG, and FWC also attended.

## 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. The observer class was engaged and asked numerous questions on safety and incident reporting.

An SC EO presented a NOAA OLE brief to USCG Southeast Regional Fisheries Training Center class. The EO spoke about case procedures and case packages as well as overview of SED and OLE. The EO also answered questions from students and relayed contact info for SED EOs.



The Charleston SEO and EO attended the pier ground breaking ceremony presided over by NOAA Administrator Dr. Spinrad for the future construction of the new OMAO pier which will accommodate NOAA Ships Ronald H. Brown and Nancy Foster onboard FLETC Charleston. The pier will include a section for mooring of NOAA

OLE's patrol vessel with a drive-on dock, electricity and water hookups.

A Sunrise, FL SA gave a presentation at the FWC Regional Meeting in Clewiston, FL. The presentation reviewed eight cases dating back to 2012 that illustrate the evolution of the working relationship between FWC and NOAA in South Florida. The review highlighted various issues including container inspections, charter ops, backdoor sales, Bahamian imports, and other issues.

A Sunrise, FL SA gave a virtual trade enforcement presentation to the 2024 GCES In-service training class held in Boulder, Colorado. The presentation covered IUU and provided information on the import programs used by OLE to prevent the products of IUU from entering US commerce. The presentation also covered OLE's partnerships and collaboration enforcing federal regulations.



A SC SA attended unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) training in Delaware. Three OLE agents and an ASAC received hands-on training with three UAS platforms from NOAA UASD.

A Key West, FL SA traveled to the Bahamas to meet with representatives of USAID, the Bahamas Wildlife Enforcement Network (BahWEN), and the NGO WildAid. The main topic points included the progress of BahWEN, updates with the Bahamian fisheries regulations, and the ways the U.S. and the Bahamas have been collaborating. The recent training NOAA – OLE conducted in Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaican were also discussed, along with what the next steps forward would be.

Two St. Petersburg, FL EOs assisted FWC in a training aimed at targeting illegal for-hire fishing charters. This training supplements an upcoming FWC operation targeting illegal charters during the opening days of the gag grouper opening season.

A San Juan, PR SA attended a USCG Living Marine Resource Boarding Officer course. During the training, the SA presented the federal fisheries regulations in the Caribbean, case package preparation, local trends and recent cases.

A San Juan SA provided training to 15 DNER Officers from the east coast of PR. The training consisted of federal fisheries regulations in the Caribbean and case package preparation. Future trainings are being planned.

## Media

The Compliance Liaison developed a web based story related to SED's charter enforcement efforts. The story highlighted cases and patrols from the 2024 charter for-hire season. OLE's efforts were shared on SERO's regional media feeds and the Gulf Fishery Council site, promoting our efforts. NOAA's AA commended the story and SED's efforts as well.

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/crack-down-illegal-charter-operations-keep-reef-fish-safe-more-130000-fines-assessed>

USCG District 7 issued a press statement related to a joint USCG/OLE Shrimp Seizure investigation: <https://www.news.uscg.mil/Press-Releases/Article/3913437/coast-guard-halts-voyage-for-illegal-fishing-off-key-west/>

NOAA OLE announces a new Director: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/james-binniker-named-new-director-noaas-office-law-enforcement>

NOAA OLE conducts training with international partners to combat IUU fishing: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/noaa-peru-strengthening-maritime-security-and-combating-iuu-fishing-through>

NOAA OLE's Pacific Islands Division recently released a story highlighting their efforts protecting marine mammals from human interactions. Although these efforts highlight spinner dolphin efforts, the same model is applied throughout the Southeast Division for all marine mammal interactions. <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/caught-waves-cost-getting-too-close-hawaiian-spinner-dolphins>

## Overview of Summary Settlements

Listed below is a summary of the **81** 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 (43), Sanctuary related violations (14), Condition of Fish Requirements (10) and Unpermitted Fishing Activity (7). **18** violations were cited throughout the Gulf region, **47** violations were cited throughout the South Atlantic region, **16** violations in the Keys area and none occurred in the Caribbean region.

LAW/REG/PROGRAM	VIOLATION	AMOUNT	STATE
Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Management	Possession of Prohibited Species	\$300	NC
Endangered Species Act	TED/BRD Requirements	\$2,000	FL WEST
Highly Migratory Species	Failure to Maintain Fish in Whole Condition	\$1,250	FL EAST
Highly Migratory Species	Prohibited Species Sold	\$3,000	FL EAST
International Trade Program	SIMP Requirements	\$2,000	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Undersize Possession; Lack of Descender Device	\$850	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Bag Limit Exceeded; Undersize Possession	\$400	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$900	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$500	GA
Magnuson Stevens Act	IFQ Program Requirements	\$2,000	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Undersize Possession	\$150	GA
Magnuson Stevens Act	IFQ Program Requirements	\$1,000	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	IFQ Program Requirements	\$1,000	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure; Undersize Possession; Lack of Descender Device	\$525	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$1,100	NC

Magnuson Stevens Act	Unpermitted Charter Activity-Open Access Permit	\$1,500	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$800	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$400	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Undersize Possession	\$300	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure; Gear Requirements	\$1,100	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$275	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	Failure to Maintain Fish in Whole Condition	\$350	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$850	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$525	sc
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure; Prohibited Gear	\$1,125	NC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$250	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Failure to Maintain Fish in Whole Condition	\$500	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Failure to Maintain Fish in Whole Condition	\$1,000	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Failure to Maintain Fish in Whole Condition	\$500	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Failure to Maintain Fish in Whole Condition	\$850	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Failure to Maintain Fish in Whole Condition	\$300	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure; Prohibited Gear	\$875	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure; Undersize Possession; Lack of Descender Device	\$875	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Bag limited Exceeded	\$950	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	Bag limited Exceeded	\$600	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$350	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Bag limited Exceeded	\$700	TX

Magnuson Stevens Act	Discard of Fish Upon Approach by Law Enforcement; Retention During Closure	\$1,600	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Bag Limit Exceeded	\$600	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	Failure to Maintain Fish in Whole Condition	\$450	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Bag Limit Exceeded	\$850	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	Gear Requirements; Lack of Descender Device	\$250	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Undersize Possession; Gear Requirements; Lack of Descender Device	\$1,175	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$275	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Failure to Maintain Fish in Whole Condition	\$375	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Undersize Possession	\$375	NC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Unpermitted Charter Activity-Open Access Permit	\$500	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Unpermitted Charter Activity-Open Access Permit	\$500	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Undersize Possession	\$375	FL WEST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$300	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure; Undersize Possession	\$400	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure; Undersize Possession	\$650	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure	\$250	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Commercial Trip Limits Exceeded	\$794	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure; Undersize Possession	\$675	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure; Undersize Possession	\$575	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Failure to Maintain Fish in Whole Condition	\$350	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure; Undersize Possession	\$850	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure; Undersize Possession	\$350	SC

Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure; Undersize Possession	\$700	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure; Undersize Possession	\$800	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	Unpermitted Charter Activity-Open Access Permit	\$500	NC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Retention During Closure; Undersize Possession	\$550	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Unpermitted Shrimp Activity	\$750	LA
Magnuson Stevens Act	Unpermitted Charter Activity-Open Access Permit	\$500	FL KEYS
Magnuson Stevens Act	Unpermitted Charter Activity-Open Access Permit	\$500	FL KEYS
Marine Mammal Protection Act	Illegal Take/Harassment	\$500	SC
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Areas to be Avoided Activity	\$2,000	FL KEYS
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Grounding	\$350	FL KEYS
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Fishing within Sanctuary Preservation Area	\$600	FL KEYS
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Areas to be Avoided Activity	\$2,000	FL KEYS
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Areas to be Avoided Activity	\$2,000	FL KEYS
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Areas to be Avoided Activity	\$2,000	FL KEYS
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Areas to be Avoided Activity	\$2,000	FL KEYS
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Areas to be Avoided Activity	\$2,000	FL KEYS
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Fishing within Sanctuary Preservation Area	\$600	FL KEYS
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Fishing within Sanctuary Preservation Area	\$600	FL KEYS
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Areas to be Avoided Activity	\$2,000	FL KEYS
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Areas to be Avoided Activity	\$2,000	FL KEYS
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Fishing within Sanctuary Preservation Area	\$600	FL KEYS
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Fishing within Sanctuary Preservation Area	\$600	FL KEYS
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Grounding	\$350	FL KEYS

# Investigative Support Program

Southeast Division Active Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) Population: **970**

## Population Breakdown by (VMS) Fisheries and VMS Vendor

FISHERY	ADDVALUE	ATLANTICRT	FARIA	METOCEAN	NAUTIC ALERT	NI	SKYMATE	WOODSHOLE	TOTAL
HMS Pelagic Longline			13			1	14	48	<b>76</b>
HMS Shark			1				1	4	<b>6</b>
Gulf Reef Fish	1		59	81	2	53	103	288	<b>587</b>
Rock Shrimp			2	3		4	7	40	<b>56</b>
Southeast For Hire*	3	2		1	6		43	190	<b>245</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>970</b>

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 **81** referrals from JEA partners. Case support to the field was provided as well, with work ranging from processing summary settlements (**62**), preparing incident reports for GCES, in support of prosecution (**16**), 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 **41** vessels following observation of suspected VMS or fishing violations, as well as providing targeted education and outreach to vessel owners. **11** investigations were referred for VMS violations. Additionally, staff conducted **174** 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 **4** vessels referred to GCES for violating speed restrictions. During this quarter, OLE drafted and mailed **500** compliance assistance letters to stakeholders regarding right whale speed rule violations, with the majority of letters targeting foreign owned vessels. 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 4, 2024, the Southeast Division Observer Programs deployed on **127** trips for **660** sea days. Approximately **95%** of all selected trips were completed without an observer related enforcement incident [assault/harassment (sexual and non-sexual), safety]. Observer programs reported **13** potential fishery violations to OLE-SED. The Galveston Shrimp Program deployed on **20** trips for **215** sea days, and the Galveston Reef Fish Program deployed on **16** trips for **88** sea days. The Panama City Shark Research and deepwater longline Program deployed on **13** trips for **54** sea days and the Panama City South Atlantic Reef Fish Program deployed on **55** trips for **79** sea days. The Miami Pelagic Observer Program deployed on **23** trips for **224** sea days. The summary below details the type of observer related complaints received during Quarter 3 (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	2
SAFETY	2	2		4
NON-COMPLIANT FOR OBSERVER COVERAGE				0
HANDLING			5	5
GEAR	1		4	5
RETENTION		1	2	3
SPATIAL				0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>19</b>

## Cases Referred For Prosecution

Listed below is a summary of the **16** 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 7 occurring in the South Atlantic area, 4 in the Gulf area and 5 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
Endangered Species Act	North Atlantic Right Whale Speed Reduction Violations	MULTIPLE
Endangered Species Act	North Atlantic Right Whale Speed Reduction Violations	MULTIPLE
International Trade Program	SIMP Requirements	FL EAST
Magnuson Stevens Act	Spatial Incursion	SC
Magnuson Stevens Act	Unpermitted Shrimp Activity	FL KEYS
Magnuson Stevens Act	Unpermitted Charter Activity-Moratorium Access	TX
Magnuson Stevens Act	Unpermitted Charter Activity-Moratorium Access	LA
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Anchoring within Sanctuary	TX
National Marine Sanctuaries Act	Fishing within Sanctuary Preservation Area	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	Prohibited Gear within Sanctuary	LA
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 **JULY 2024- AUGUST 2024** (available information since last report). Nationwide results may also be found at the [enforcement charging information site](#)

1. Timothy Prescott Maddock, Jr. was charged under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with selling swordfish without a permit. A \$5,990 NOVA was issued.
2. F/V FL2507SJ – Owner Christopher Shawn Harvey and Operator Christopher Shawn Harvey Jr. were charged jointly and severally under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with fishing for shrimp without the required permit. A \$9,500 NOVA was issued.
3. F/V Lauren Jeanne – Owner Captain Yuri’s Charters, Inc. and Operator Michael Shane Leonard were charged jointly and severally under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with harvesting or possessing red snapper in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone during a closed season. A \$21,000 NOVA was issued.
4. F/V Miss Sea – Operator Michael Creed and Owner Thaddeus Harty were charged jointly and severally under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with fishing in violation of the prohibitions applicable to the South Atlantic red snapper seasonal closure. A \$2,500 NOVA was issued.
5. M/Y Reimagine – Owner Development Reimagined LLC and Operator Michael B.Hall were charged jointly and severally under the Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act with violating the North Atlantic Right Whale speed restriction regulation. A \$30,000 NOVA was issued.
6. 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.
7. F/V FL6487MY – Owner/Operator Carlos Bastos and Owner Bottoms Up Fishing Excursions LLC were charged jointly and severally under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with fishing for Gulf reef fish in the Gulf EEZ aboard a charter vessel without a federal charter permit. A \$19,460 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$17,660.

8. M/V Cedar Island – Owner CIM Enterprises LLC and Operator Steven DeKlerk 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 \$14,000 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$12,600.
  9. M/V GOL Cowboy – Owner GOL, LLC and Operator Steven Brooks 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.
- F/V Robalo – Owner/Operator Eliud Rios Santiago was charged under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with possessing prohibited queen conch in the EEZ around Puerto Rico. A \$5,000 NOVA was issued.

### **Resolved Cases Charged July 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024<sup>1</sup>**

1. 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. The NOVA became a final administrative decision due to default. [See Charged Cases, Item 13, from June 2024 report]
2. 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, and the case settled for \$22,500. [See Charged Cases, Item 8, from April 2024 report]
3. 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, which was later amended to dismiss the Owners. The case settled with the Operator for \$6,750. [See Charged Cases, Item 14, from June 2024 report]

4. 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, and the case settled for \$5,000. [See Charged Cases, Item 13, from May 2024 report]
  
5. F/V Inverted Fishing Charters – Owner Inverted Fishing Charters, LLC and Operator Martin Lane 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 \$20,200 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$2,500. [See Charged Cases, Item 6, from March 2024 report]
  
6. 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. The NOVA became a final administrative decision due to default. [See Charged Cases, Item 15, from June 2024 report]
  
7. F/V FL2507SJ – Owner Christopher Shawn Harvey and Operator Christopher Shawn Harvey Jr. were charged jointly and severally under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with fishing for shrimp without the required permit. A \$9,500 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$8,550. [See Charged Cases, Item 11, from July 2024 report]
  
8. 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. The NOVA was amended to dismiss Euclidean Capital, LLC. The amended NOVA became a final administrative decision due to default. [See Charged Cases, Item 12, from May 2024 report]
  
9. F/V Miss Sea – Operator Michael Creed and Owner Thaddeus Harty were charged jointly and severally under the Magnuson-Stevens Act with fishing in violation of the prohibitions applicable to the South Atlantic red snapper seasonal closure. A \$2,500 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$2,250. [See Charged Cases, Item 13, from July 2024 report]

10. 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. The NOVA became a final administrative decision due to default. [See Charged Cases, Item 15, from June 2024 report]

<sup>i</sup>All cases in this portion of the report were previously charged.