

ALABAMA
LEC/LETC State Report – Fall 2021 / March 1-October 8
Submitted by: Maj. Jason Downey

Agency Overview

It has been a very busy summer and it almost feels like we are back to normal from all the COVID restrictions. Our state is still open for Red Snapper every weekend, Fri-Mon, so we are still very busy with offshore fisheries inspections. Our oyster season opened on Oct 4 and we have been averaging around 130 catchers per day. Enforcement officers have been working diligently to ensure all oysters harvested are legal and all catchers are licensed. As far as staffing, we are looking to fill three vacancies which will put us at full staff for the first time since I have been Chief. We have only had a few officers affected by COVID and none have required hospitalization. We do not require our staff to be vaccinated but the majority chose to get theirs. The four officers we hired in the spring have completed the academy and are doing very well with their field training.

Grants/Projects

Officers continue to work out the priorities of our JEA grant as well as a NRDA Sea Turtle and Dolphin grant which provides our Enforcement Section with equipment and overtime opportunities. Our coastal camera system was upgraded using Port Security Grant money and we now have 24 cameras throughout the coast that monitor 24/7. This includes two mobile units that we can tow by truck or UTV to areas that need monitoring.

Enforcement Issues

Officers have done a very good job educating and enforcing the new SEFHIER requirements for federally permitted charter vessels. I believe that our officers have contributed to the success of the program so far. Our charter boat fleet is well aware of the requirements.

JEA's

We concluded our 2020-2021 JEA contract on August 23 and immediately started our 2021-2022 contract on August 24. This year's contract is very similar to last year except that we added several hours of SEFHIER enforcement. With the direct purchase money, we will be purchasing three enforcement vehicles, two outboard motors, and having many maintenance issues resolved on three of our offshore vessels.

JEA Patrols	2368 hrs
Vessel Hours	731
Dockside Hours	1352
Commercial Fishermen Inspected	425
Recreational Fishermen Inspected	5731
Public Outreach Hours	285
Dealers Inspected	11
Vessels Boarded	858

Total Violations	818
State	764
Federal	54

Regulatory Changes/Pending Legislation

N/A

Outreach/Community Education

We have attended several charter boat association meetings over the last few months to educate captains of all the SEFHIER requirements. Officers have attended outreach events as organizations have slowly began to remove the COVID restrictions on this type of activity. We participate in all local fishing tournaments and boat shows by having officers attend to answer questions and hand out educational material.

IUU Concerns/Cases

N/A