

NEWS RELEASE

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

3911 Highway 2321 • Panama City, FL 32409-1658 • 850-265-3676 • Fax 850-747-5690

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CONTACT: Capt. Brad Williams – FWC (850) 595-8978
Special Agent Allan Coker – NMFS (850) 729-8628

ALABAMA MAN PLEADS GUILTY IN ASSAULT CASE ON FWC OFFICERS

An Alabama charter boat captain plead guilty to assault last week in federal court in Mobile for trying to use his 46-foot vessel to ram a boat occupied by two Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) law enforcement officers in April southwest of Perdido Key.

Sandy Smith, 61, Orange Beach, will be sentenced in January in U.S. District Court in Mobile.

Smith's vessel *Misty* was 22 miles south of the Florida-Alabama state line April 17 when FWC officers Dan Hahr and Tim Trepanier, who are deputized as special federal officers, approached intent on conducting a resource check. The officers suspected those on board were red snapper fishing, even though the recreational red snapper season in federal waters didn't open until April 21.

According to a report filed by Hahr, as they tried to overtake the *Misty* on the port side, Smith turned his vessel hard to port, almost causing a serious collision. The officers also saw fish thrown over the side of the vessel before they got it stopped.

Smith's prosecution is expected to send a signal to all boaters in federal waters along the Gulf Coast that they need to think twice before assaulting an officer.

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David York, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Alabama said, "We are pleased that this case has been resolved in this manner, and our office is certainly committed to protecting both natural resources and those who work to protect them."

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