

Simply the best . . .



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The physical tests on top of the mental challenges and discipline standards of the FWC academy transform recruits into an elite force to carry out their awesome mission.



Sept. 8 is graduation day for the FWC's Law Enforcement Academy. Of the 48 recruits going

through 29 weeks of rigorous training, those with the nerve, skill and drive to earn their FWC badges will take their oath and venture into a challenging and rewarding career.

They will join a force of some of the most highly trained law enforcement officers in Florida. They spent their first 20 weeks at the academy earning certification as police officers and then undertook nine more weeks of specialized training to hone their skills in conservation law enforcement.

It's an impressive sight when, one-by-one, these hand-picked men and women cross the stage at the graduation ceremony in their crisp new uniforms – walking up the steps as recruits and walking back down the other side as duly sworn officers. They face enormous responsibilities to protect one of the most complex and delicate ecosystems in the world.

They always look confident, because they are. They sit through long hours of classes, busily taking notes about conservation laws, species identification and vessel-accident investigation. They learn survival skills to serve them in wilderness areas and on the water, and they master human tracking techniques. They enter their careers armed with modern forensic investigation techniques that officers never dreamed of a few years ago.

They learn from lawyers about search-and-seizure laws. They learn self defense and firearm skills from experts.

FWC officers even have to subdue an 8-foot alligator with their bare hands and a roll of electrical tape to measure up to the standards required of this agency's officers.

The physical tests, the 300-yard swimming test, the 1.5-mile running test, countless pushups and sit-ups on top of the mental challenges and discipline standards of the FWC academy transform these recruits into an elite force to carry out their awesome mission.

These officers will spend their first year on probation in assignments across the state. Their personal conduct and professional development will be under constant scrutiny and supervision, because there are proud traditions behind them, and those traditions must become part of who they are.

When one of these new officers checks your fishing license, you can be sure you are dealing with a professional who chose a career that requires dedication, courage and integrity. They will rescue people in danger; they will wrestle down and handcuff a belligerent felon when they have to; and they will see things that will break their hearts. Yet, they will love this career field, because they know they will be contributors to a great cause. They will protect the natural wonders that Floridians treasure and they will protect the people who have entrusted them with that mission.

When natural or man-made disasters strike, they will be among the first to move in to rescue survivors and maintain law and order.

It's a great honor to welcome them to the FWC. They are simply the best. **FW**