



NJDEP Fish and Wildlife
Monthly Highlights
Bureau of Law Enforcement
March 21, 2025 to April 20, 2025

Frank Panico, Chief
Brian Scott, Deputy Chief
Douglas Applegate, Deputy Chief
Joseph Soell, Captain - Administration
Vacant, Lieutenant - Administration
Robert Driscoll, Lieutenant - Training

Northern Region (908) 735-8240
Joseph Kuechler, Captain
Jordan Holmes, Lieutenant (District 1)
Brice Paey, Lieutenant (District 2)
Hannah Koch, Agency Services Representative

Central Region (609) 259-2120
Linda Quirk, Captain
Andrew Riviello, Lieutenant (District 3)
Sean McManus, Lieutenant (District 4)
Mike Anselmo, Agency Services Representative

Southern Region (856) 629-0555
Paul Toppin, Captain
Zane Batten, Lieutenant (District 5)
Craig James, Lieutenant (District 6)
Sue Canale, Agency Services Representative

Marine Region (609) 748-2050
Vacant, Captain
Chris Moscatiello, Lieutenant (District 7)
Ryan Harp, Lieutenant (District 8)
Chris Petrucci, Lieutenant (District 9)
Noreen White, Agency Services Representative

Conservation Officers report a total of 7,536.6 hours of duty (7,517.0 - 2024) These hours are charged to the following categories of duty:

	2025	2024
Law Enforcement	5,492.5	5,182.8
Fishing	2,316.3	2,030.1
Marine Resources	1,143.7	1,023.7
Hunting	110.5	50.5
Deer Hunting	14.1	1.0
Trapping	17.8	53.9
Wildlife Mgt. Areas	397.3	273.0
NG & Endangered Species	7.5	56.5
Court	49.7	21.3
Regional Meetings	0.0	62.2
Pollution Investigation	34.4	13.2
Training	1,479.6	1,492.8
Other Law Enforcement	815.8	950.9
Administration	1,863.9	2,140.2
Fish Management	2.7	1.7



Wildlife Management	22.5	18.0
Information & Education	34.8	49.1
Bear Control	1.5	3.0
Bear Patrol & Invest	17.2	3.5

During patrols, officers performed 2694 field inspections (2020 - 2024) of hunters, fishermen or trappers and the resultant caseload is tabulated.

Law Enforcement Regions

	<u>North</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>Marine</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>2024</u>
Summonses Issued	84	119	56	49	308	202
Criminal Arrests	0	0	0	0	0	0
Warnings Issued	0	0	0	4	4	21
Bear Feeding Warns Issued	0	0	0	0	0	2

Field Inspections By Region

Administration	0
Northern Region	1105
Central Region	556
Southern Region	320
Marine Region	713
Total	2694

Field Inspections By Activity

Hunters	4
Freshwater Anglers	1451
Trappers	1
Commercial Fishermen	12
Marine Rec. Anglers	829
WMA non hunt/fish	243
Other	2

Listed below are the types of summonses issued:

	<u>North</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>Marine</u>
Fishing	68	26	17	0
Hunting	6	0	0	0
Waterfowl Hunting	0	0	0	0
Deer Hunting	0	0	0	0
Trapping	0	0	3	0
WMA	3	71	35	0
Striped Bass	5	0	0	0
Shellfish	0	0	0	12
Marine-Commercial	0	0	0	1
Marine-Recreational	0	9	0	28
Nongame & Exotic	0	0	0	0
Title 58	0	0	0	0
Title 39	0	11	0	0
Other	2	2	1	2
Bear Hunting	0	0	0	0
Bear Feeding	0	0	0	0
Marine Striped Bass	0	0	0	6
Title 2C	0	0	0	0
Totals	84	119	56	49



Penalties collected during this report period by Conservation Police Officers: \$16438.00

Call volume (reports of violations, general questions, requests for assistance, etc.) received at region offices:

North	112
Central	100
South	128
Marine	154
Total Calls Received	494

Bureau of Law Enforcement personnel status as of Apr 20, 2025

Administration - 8

- 1 Chief
- 2 Deputy Chiefs
- 1 CPO II Training
- 2 CPO I Training
- 1 CPO III Admin
- 0 CPO II Admin
- 1 CPO I Admin

Northern Region - 12

- 1 CPO III
- 2 CPO II
- 8 CPO I
- 1 ASR

Central Region - 11

- 1 CPO III
- 2 CPO II
- 7 CPO I
- 1 ASR

Southern Region - 12

- 1 CPO III
- 2 CPO II
- 8 CPO I
- 1 ASR

Marine Region - 14

- 0 CPO III
- 3 CPO II
- 10 CPO I
- 1 ASR

Special Investigations Unit - 3

- 1 CPO III
- 1 CPO II
- 1 CPO I

Total Employees: 60

Northern Region Highlights

On March 27, 2025, CPO Della Vella was notified of an Operation Game Thief complaint along the Pequest River, in the Town of Belvidere, Warren County. The caller observed two individuals actively fishing during the pre-season closure. CPO Della Vella responded and conducted a patrol of the area, and two individuals were apprehended. One individual was in possession of four trout during the preseason closure. The second individual failed to produce a valid 2025 fishing license or trout stamp and possessed two trout during the preseason closure. The appropriate summonses were issued.

On Saturday, April 5th, CPO Adam Merritt observed several individuals fishing on the Pequest River prior to the 8 am opening day start. An inspection was conducted, and the group was found to be in possession of several trout. A total of seven summonses were issued for the violations, 3 summonses for fishing without licenses, 2 summonses for no trout stamp, and 2 summonses for possession of trout



during the closed season. After the apprehension, CPO Merritt participated in the Veterans Fishing Debry at the Pequest Education Pond and his presence was well received.

On Friday, April 11th CPO Allen Sutton received a call for individuals fishing on the Flatbrook TCA, utilizing bait and keeping trout. CPO Sutton responded and set up surveillance from a wooded area nearby. He witnessed multiple fishermen catch and hide trout under the leaves on the bank of the river. One individual retrieved one trout from the woods and placed it in another individual's backpack. As the group started to gather their equipment to leave, CPO Sutton apprehended them. The individuals were all in possession of bait in the TCA and possessed a total of 15 trout. Through a field interview, Officer Sutton was able to obtain how many trout were kept by each individual. A total of ten summonses were issued to the five individuals.

CPO Della Vella received several complaints regarding individuals fishing for trout during the in-season closure, along the Wanaque River, off East Shore Drive in West Milford Township, Passaic County. On April 18, 2025, CPO Della Vella conducted a concentrated patrol of the area. Numerous individuals were apprehended fishing prior to the 5 pm start time. Multiple trout were seized, and six summonses were issued for the violations.

Central Region Highlights

Central Region's CPOs have been frequently patrolling Colliers Mills WMA, Stafford Forge WMA and Greenwood Forest WMA for illegal off road vehicle activity. In these patrols, over 50 summonses have been issued for violations of operating an off-road vehicle on a WMA, operating an unregistered vehicle on a WMA, operating a vehicle on a prohibited area on a WMA and interference with a conservation police officer. Two incidents stand out. On the night of March 22nd in Greenwood Forest WMA, CPOs impounded an unregistered, uninsured Jeep Cherokee being driven by an unlicensed driver who was in possession of alcoholic beverages and on the property during closed hours. On the afternoon of March 31st, CPOs responded to assist Jackson Township Police Department with a motor vehicle collision in Colliers Mills WMA. Two dirt bike riders had eluded a motor vehicle stop initiated by a Jackson Police Officer by leaving the paved roadway and entering the WMA. While navigating a turn in the dirt road, one rider collided with a third dirt bike rider approaching from the other direction. The two riders sustained injuries in the collision. The three riders received summonses for unlawfully riding unregistered off-road vehicles on the WMA. The Jackson Police Department is pursuing additional charges against the two who had eluded the motor vehicle stop.

On March 23rd, CPO Bickerton initiated an investigation into a utility trailer filled with household garbage and other debris that had been abandoned off the side of Success Road in Colliers Mills WMA. Following interviews with people associated with items found in the pile, Officer Bickerton was able to identify the person responsible for abandoning the trailer. Summonses for discarding refuse on a WMA and illegal solid waste dumping were issued.

On March 30th, CPO Garofalo was called out to Medford WMA for a complaint of people illegally camping on the property with a bonfire. With assistance from NJ Forest Fire Service, the fire was extinguished. The campers were all issued summonses for camping and picnicking on a WMA.

On April 10th, CPO Bickerton initiated an investigation into a large pile of household items dumped in a parking lot off Allenwood- Lakewood Rd. in Manasquan River WMA. The investigation

indicated the property came from a house in Brick currently listed for sale. When CPO Bickerton returned the next day with Lt. Riviello to continue the investigation, they found additional furniture and decor items had been dumped in the parking lot. These items matched the furniture in the home's Zillow listing. The officers were able to quickly make contact with the homeowner, who took responsibility for the dumping. The individual was issued summonses for discarding refuse on a WMA and illegal solid waste dumping and cleaned up the area.

Southern Region Highlights

During the month of April, Lt. James discovered a trash pile on the Peaslee WMA within Maurice River Township. The investigation pointed towards suspects in Cape May County. Lt. James contacted CPO Malinski, who was in Cape May County at the time, to conduct an interview of the suspects and determine who was responsible. The accused indicated that they dumped the trash as their township recently reduced the amount of waste collection bins they were permitted to have. CPO Malinski issued summonses for dumping of solid waste as well as discarding refuse on a state WMA.

CPO Malinski and CPO Bates performed fishing inspections in Hamilton Township and Weymouth Township. The CPOs inspected numerous fishermen and identified several individuals in violation. Summonses were issued for failure to comply with the salt-water registry program as well as for failing to exhibit a freshwater fishing license upon request.

Due to ongoing complaints in the evenings at Union Lake WMA, CPOs Chillari, Malinski, and Vazquez spent additional time in the area addressing these potential violations. The above officers spent several evenings enforcing the closed WMA hours of 9 P.M. to 5 A.M. When CPOs were present, all individuals entering the Union Lake WMA during closed hours were issued summonses. In addition, a digital sign board was deployed by Lt. James to educate the public on the appropriate hours of use on the WMA.

Lt. James responded to a complaint of a hawk caught in a leghold trap in Millville Cumberland County. Upon arrival, a dead chicken was spotted on a fence post on the adjacent farm. A closer look with binoculars revealed that the chicken was bait for a leghold trap. After seeing him riding down the property edge on a UTV, Lt. James questioned the farmer about the trap. The farmer admitted setting traps to protect his 180 free-ranging chickens. A total of seven leghold traps were recovered from the farm including one that still had a Barn Owl skull in it. The farmer was issued summonses for possessing seven steel-jaw leghold traps, setting / using five pole traps, take / attempt to take animal by means of six leghold traps and taking a nongame species. The Red-Tailed Hawk was transported to Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research in Delaware, where it remains in rehabilitation.

Marine Region Highlights

CPO Tomlin charged a North Carolina-based commercial fishing vessel for exceeding NJ's bycatch allowance. The vessel did not have a directed summer flounder permit for NJ and landed in Cape May in late March with approximately 1200 pounds in excess of NJ's 200-pound bycatch allowance. The vessel operator claimed the additional summer flounder landed was intended for Virginia, but the vessel also did not have a valid NJ Possession in Excess of Daily Limit License allowing for such activity. The appropriate summonses were issued.



Lieutenant Petruccelli and CPO Tomlin filed multiple charges against two Cumberland County commercial fishermen for unlawful use of a dredge in the hand tong harvest only section of Delaware Bay. After a month-long investigation consisting of several rounds of surveillance operations, CPOs observed the men utilizing the dredge in the unlawful area. CPOs were able to recover the dredge as evidence when the men discarded it in the waters of Delaware Bay in an attempt to conceal their harvest method. In addition to the charges of utilizing the dredge in the unlawful area, the men were charged with using an unlicensed vessel to take oysters in Delaware Bay, utilization of an unlawfully sized dredge to catch oysters in Delaware Bay, failure to tag oysters, failure to report oyster harvest, failing to wear personal floatation devices, and use of an unregistered vessel in State waters.