



NJDEP Fish and Wildlife
Monthly Highlights
Bureau of Law Enforcement
September 21, 2023 to October 20, 2023

Frank Panico, Chief
Jason Snellbaker, Deputy Chief
Douglas Applegate, Deputy Chief
Linda Quirk, Captain - Administration
Joseph Soell, 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
Shannon Martiak, Captain
Andrew Riviello, Lieutenant (District 3)
Sean McManus, Lieutenant (District 4)
Shari Irick, Technical Assistant 2

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
Brian Scott, 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 6,895.1 hours of duty (6,403.9 - 2022) These hours are charged to the following categories of duty:

	2023	2022
Law Enforcement	5,466.9	4,436.5
Fishing	1,172.94	1,004.5
Marine Resources	1,209.7	1,255.9
Hunting	514.8	185.5
Deer Hunting	752.3	933.9
Trapping	12.1	7.0
Wildlife Mgt. Areas	308.9	185.2
NG & Endangered Species	26.1	148.1
Court	28.0	58.3
Regional Meetings	90.5	70.5
Pollution Investigation	20.1	44.1
Training	1,493.0	989.0
Other Law Enforcement	773.7	465.0
Administration	1,446.4	1,679.5
Fish Management	0.0	0.0

Wildlife Management	27.6	45.0
Information & Education	57.3	56.5
Bear Control	1.0	15.3
Bear Patrol & Invest	378.3	64.6

During patrols, officers performed 1937 field inspections (2901 - 2022) 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>Admin</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>2022</u>
Summonses Issued	66	18	19	131	0	234	197
Criminal Arrests	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Warnings Issued	3	1	3	9	0	16	25
Bear Feeding Warns Issued	1	0	0	0	0	1	4

Field Inspections By Region

Administration	0
Northern Region	139
Central Region	122
Southern Region	258
Marine Region	1418
Total	1937

Field Inspections By Activity

Hunters	165
Freshwater Anglers	97
Trappers	0
Commercial Fishermen	26
Marine Rec. Anglers	967
WMA non hunt/fish	146
Other	32

Listed below are the types of summonses issued:

	<u>North</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>Marine</u>	<u>Admin</u>
Fishing	8	0	4	0	0
Hunting	5	0	0	0	0
Waterfowl Hunting	0	0	0	0	0
Deer Hunting	36	0	4	0	0
Trapping	0	0	0	0	0
WMA	2	18	6	0	0
Striped Bass	0	0	0	0	0
Shellfish	0	0	0	0	0
Marine-Commercial	0	0	0	0	0
Marine-Recreational	0	0	5	127	0
Nongame & Exotic	0	0	0	0	0
Title 58	0	0	0	0	0
Title 39	0	0	0	0	0
Other	15	0	0	3	0
Bear Hunting	0	0	0	0	0
Bear Feeding	0	0	0	0	0
Marine Striped Bass	0	0	0	1	0
Title 2C	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	66	18	19	131	0

Penalties collected during this report period by Conservation Police Officers: \$15,276.00

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

North	222
Central	254
South	272
Marine	161
Total Calls Received	912

Bureau of Law Enforcement personnel status as of Oct 20, 2023

Administration - 9

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

Northern Region - 12

- 1 CPO III
- 2 CPO II
- 5 CPO I
- 3 RCT
- 1 ASR

Central Region - 9

- 1 CPO III
- 2 CPO II
- 3 CPO I
- 2 RCT
- 1 TA 2

Southern Region - 11

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

Marine Region - 15

- 1 CPO III
- 3 CPO II
- 9 CPO I
- 1 RCT
- 1 ASR

Special Investigations Unit - 2

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

Total Employees: 58

Northern Region Highlights

On October 6, 2023, CPO Merritt was notified of a request for assistance from the Mansfield Township Police Department regarding an incident that occurred in Oxford Township, Warren County. While waiting for her bus, a teenage girl heard a gunshot and observed a deer running down her neighbor's driveway. The deer fell near the road, and she watched a man with a long gun walk down the driveway to the deer. The man left and returned a few minutes later with a front-end loader and planned to pick up the deer that was still alive. At this time, another neighbor had observed the incident, contacted local police, and told the suspect not to do anything further. CPO Merrit interviewed the suspect who admitted to shooting the antlerless deer with a .22 caliber rifle. CPO J. Sikora arrived and assisted with the investigation. The individual was issued summonses for hunting with a firearm without a valid 2023 firearm hunting license, hunt with a rifle without a rifle permit, hunt/take deer with an illegal missile, hunt/take deer with a rifle, hunt/take deer with a firearm during closed season, and four counts of possessing

a loaded firearm for the purpose of hunting within 450 feet of an occupied building.

On October 12, 2023, CPO J. Sikora responded to an illegal trapping complaint in Montgomery Township, Somerset County. A fox with a leg hold trap around its leg was found at Hobler Park. A second leg hold trap was found by an Animal Control Solutions Officer on scene. The fox was able to be released unharmed from the leg hold trap. CPOs J. Sikora and Della Vella searched the park for additional traps and none were found. The leg hold traps were found right next to the property line of the adjacent farm. An eight-foot fence was observed surrounding the farm property. CPOs went and spoke with the owner of the farm who denied having and using the leg hold traps. CPOs were informed that snares and box traps were set on the farm to manage the fox and coyote population to protect chickens over five years ago. The property owner stated that green garden posts were used to stabilize the traps. The property owner said all traps were taken down and no longer set. CPOs J. Sikora and Della Vella went back to the park property and found an old green garden post buried in the ground near the spot where the leg hold traps were found. The garden post matched the farm property owner's description. CPO Della Vella observed two snare traps set on the farm property along the fence. The snares were set with loop diameters larger than 12 inches, were untagged, and were higher than 24 inches from the ground. CPOs J. Sikora and Della Vella returned to the farm to speak with the property owner regarding the snares. An additional two snares were found on the property bringing the total to four snares which were untagged, had a loop diameter larger than 12 inches, and were set higher than 24 inches from the ground. CPOs interviewed the individual who then admitted setting the traps to catch deer and admitting to knowing the person that owns and used the leg hold traps. The individual admitted to not checking the traps since March and further stated that he had caught one deer in one of the snares. A total of sixteen summonses were issued as result of the investigation.

On October 17, 2023, CPO Merritt received information that an individual was keeping over his daily limit of trout at Speedwell Lake, Town of Morristown, Morris County. CPOs Merritt and C. Sikora arrived and set up surveillance on the suspect. The fisherman was observed for over an hour during which time he caught one trout which was then stored inside his motor vehicle. CPO Merritt remembered the individual from a prior incident in the spring when Lieutenant Paey had issued the individual a summons for keeping five trout over the daily limit. A search of the NJ Fish and Wildlife records system revealed that the individual was currently serving a two-year license revocation for prior violations. Upon inspection, the fisherman provided a 2023 fishing license which had been previously invalidated. The individual was issued summonses for fishing while privileges were revoked, fishing without a valid 2023 fishing license, fishing trout stocked waters without a valid trout stamp, and littering while fishing.

On October 18, 2023, CPOs received information regarding an individual fishing on a revoked license at Verona Lake, Verona Borough, Essex County. CPO Merritt previously issued summonses to the individual for fishing while revoked on October 17, 2023. CPOs Della Vella and J. Sikora were able to locate and observe the individual fishing at the location. CPOs issued the individual summonses for fishing while privileges were revoked, fishing without a valid 2023 fishing license, and littering while fishing.

On October 21, 2023, CPO A. Sutton received a call about a deceased deer in Woodbourne Park, Wantage Township, Sussex County. CPO A. Sutton responded to the area and spoke to the hunter who admitted to shooting the deer without a valid hunting license. CPO A. Sutton had the hunter bring him to the location where the deer was shot. CPO A. Sutton contacted the property owner who advised that the hunter did not have permission to be there. CPO A. Sutton issued a summons for hunting without a valid hunting license and a written warning for trespassing.

During Segment A of the 2023 Black Bear Hunt, CPOs C. Sikora and J. Sikora responded to two separate hunter harassment complaints at Hacklebarney State Park in Chester Township, Morris County. The CPOs interviewed two bear hunters and were informed that the same individual was intentionally disrupting their hunt. One hunter informed CPO C. Sikora that the individual threatened to destroy his hunting equipment. The second hunter informed CPO J. Sikora that video footage was captured of the incident. Both hunters informed the CPOs that the individual was making loud noises and blowing a whistle in front of them while they were hunting. The individual received two summonses for preventing the lawful taking of wildlife.

Marine Region Highlights

CPO Capri and Lt. Harp responded to a complaint of a gillnet being unlawfully set across a lagoon in Little Egg Harbor Twp., Ocean County. The officers arrived and observed the net's floats stretched completely across the lagoon. After a lengthy surveillance the suspected individual began retrieving the net from the water at which time CPO Capri and Lt. Harp made the apprehension. The suspect was issued eleven summonses, which included charges related to not only the gillnet violations but also additional charges involving illegal use of miniature fykes. More than seventy fish and other marine organisms were released from the net upon apprehension.

CPOs Raker, Tomlin, and Lt. Petrucci inspected a party boat in Fortescue and found patrons with multiple weakfish violations. Six of the eight patrons on board exceeded the one weakfish per day limit by up to 14 fish. The vessel violated provisions of the special fillet permit by filleting many of the weakfish where the remaining parts were smaller than the required minimum size limit. The vessel also did not have a valid NJ saltwater registry for this year. Numerous summonses were issued to the patrons and the captain of the party boat.

CPOs Raker and Tomlin conducted two at-sea boardings of Cape May County-based charter boats that were on a for-hire trip in Federal waters, and in possession of black sea bass and summer flounder without a federal permit. The cases were referred to the National Marine Fisheries Service for enforcement action.

CPOs Szelc, Raker, and Lt. Petrucci made an early morning apprehension of two men in Atlantic City with fifteen undersized Atlantic striped bass. All fifteen striped bass in the men's possession were between 20 and 26 inches. The current striped bass size and possession limits are one fish per person per day at 28 to 31 inches. Upon contact by the CPOs, one of the men threw several striped bass in the water attempting to avoid apprehension. The men were charged with the undersize and over the limit violations, as well as wanton waste of multiple striped bass, interference, operating a power vessel without valid registration, and other boating safety violations. One of the two men apprehended in this case was also apprehended in an incident occurring in March of 2020 where he was found to be in possession of sixty-six undersize striped bass.