



NJDEP Fish and Wildlife
Monthly Highlights
Bureau of Law Enforcement
April 21, 2025 to May 31, 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 9,370.9 hours of duty (10,494.1 - 2024) These hours are charged to the following categories of duty:

	2025	2024
Law Enforcement	6,638.5	7,390.4
Fishing	2,703.6	2,589.5
Marine Resources	1,618.9	1,866.0
Hunting	575.0	766.3
Deer Hunting	26.7	15.0
Trapping	11.5	30.5
Wildlife Mgt. Areas	650.4	850.0
NG & Endangered Species	175.7	179.2
Court	56.9	88.4
Regional Meetings	30.6	176.0
Pollution Investigation	33.2	42.7
Training	727.6	838.3
Other Law Enforcement	1,052.4	1,069.7
Administration	2,444.7	2,731.5
Fish Management	0.0	0.0



Wildlife Management	55.8	75.3
Information & Education	52.5	41.5
Bear Control	2.0	16.5
Bear Patrol & Invest	4.5	39.6

During patrols, officers performed 2860 field inspections (4 9 3 9 - 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	117	99	62	93	371	304
Criminal Arrests	0	0	0	0	0	0
Warnings Issued	5	0	12	26	43	25
Bear Feeding Warns Issued	2	0	0	0	2	1
Traffic Summonses	2	9	3	0	14	3

Field Inspections By Region

Northern Region	686
Central Region	428
Southern Region	402
Marine Region	1344
Total	2860

Field Inspections By Activity

Hunters	43
Freshwater Anglers	1004
Trappers	2
Commercial Fishermen	17
Marine Rec. Anglers	1226
WMA non hunt/fish	220
Other	64

Penalties collected during this report period by Conservation Police Officers: \$20,769.50

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

North	117
Central	97
South	138
Marine	170
Total Calls Received	522



Bureau of Law Enforcement personnel status as of May 31, 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 - 13

0 CPO III
3 CPO II
9 CPO I
1 ASR

Special Investigations Unit - 3

1 CPO III
1 CPO II
1 CPO I

Total Employees: 59

Northern Region Highlights

On the opening day of the spring turkey season, CPO C. Sikora and CPO A. Merritt were patrolling Turkey Hunting Area 7 in Montville Township, Morris County. The CPO's located a truck parked off the side of the road. A short time later, two hunters exited the woods and a regulatory field inspection was performed. During the inspection, it was determined that both hunters only possessed turkey permits for Turkey Hunting Area 10. Both hunters, who had previous violations in the same location, received summons for hunting wild turkey in the wrong zone.

At the beginning of the 2025 spring turkey season, CPO A. Merritt located a ground blind on Allamuchy Mountain State Park. CPO Merritt observed that the ground in front of the ground blind appeared to be heavily scratched by wild turkeys. Unsure if the area was baited or not, Lieutenant Holmes and CPO Merritt returned on the morning of Saturday, March 3, 2025. Lt. Holmes and CPO Merritt entered the woods and set up surveillance approximately 50 yards from the blind. Calling could be heard coming from the direction of the blind. Multiple turkeys came off the roost, began gobbling and worked their way towards the ground blind. Two gun shots were heard, and Lt. Holmes and CPO Merritt quickly approached the ground blind and performed a regulatory field inspection of the hunter who had just harvested a jake wild turkey. During the inspection, a large amount of bird seed was located 52 feet from the ground blind in the scratched-up area. When questioned about the seed, the hunter stated it must have fallen from the sky but shortly after admitted to placing it there. The hunter was issued a summons for hunting wild turkey within 300 feet of a baited area and the turkey was seized as evidence.



District 2 officers have been busy conducting fishing patrols over the reporting period and issued 30 summonses for fishing without valid fishing licenses, 7 summonses for possession of trout without valid trout stamps, 3 summonses for possessing bait in a catch and release area, 2 summonses for possession of 5 trout in a catch and release area, 3 summonses for possession of trout during the in-season closure, 2 summonses for possession of undersized striped bass, 2 summonses for the possession of 4 striped bass over the daily limit, 1 summons for trespassing for the purpose of fishing and 1 summons for interfering with the duties of a Conservation Police Officer.

On April 22, 2025, Lt. Paey was contacted by Sgt. Tichenor of the Hillsborough Township Police Department regarding an individual who was impersonating a Fish and Wildlife Officer at Ann Van Middlesworth Park in Hillsborough Township, Somerset County. The individual was wearing a vest that said "geese patrol" and was confronting people fishing, checking their licenses and claiming to be a Fish and Wildlife Officer. The individual was arrested for impersonating a police officer. CPO Hughes and Lt. Paey met with the individual while he was being processed at Hillsborough Township Police Department and issued one summons for violation of impersonating a Conservation Police Officer.

On Friday, April 25, 2025, CPO Jack Sikora received information from a hunter, whose trail camera captured two individuals possibly turkey hunting after legal hours, on the South Branch Wildlife Management area in Readington Township, Hunterdon County. CPO Jack Sikora relayed the information to other District 2 officers so the area would be patrolled.

On Saturday, April 26, around 4:00 P.M., CPO Nash Hughes and CPO Shawn Coiro were following up on information about hunting turkey after legal hours and observed three vehicles parked at the South Branch WMA in Readington Township. Empty gun cases were observed in each of the vehicles. CPO Hughes and Coiro requested Lt. Brice Paey to respond to the area to assist in attempting to locate the hunters. CPO Hughes and Coiro located three hunters in the woods. Three additional hunters that had avoided CPOs in the woods were apprehended by Lt. Paey at the vehicles. Lt. Paey noticed one of the individuals did not possess a firearm and was able to quickly determine that he had attempted to hide his firearm in the woods before returning to his vehicle. Prior to apprehending anyone at the vehicles Lt. Paey heard one gunshot at approximately 5:00 P.M. All the hunters initially claimed to not shooting anything but CPO Hughes and Coiro located 2 freshly deceased mourning doves next to a bait pile. The hunter who had been hunting in that location quickly admitted to killing the morning doves. All of the hunters were found to be hunting out of the legal zone for which they were permitted and well after the end of legal hunting hours, 4 of the hunters did not possess any turkey calls, 3 of the hunters were hunting over bait, 2 of the hunters possessed illegal shot size for turkey hunting and one of the hunters did not possess their hunting license on their person.

A total of 26 summonses were issued for the following violations; Did hunt for turkey in the wrong zone, Did hunt turkey at wrong hours, Did hunt turkey in manner other than prescribed, Did hunt within 300' of bait, Did possess illegal shot size for turkey hunting, Did take Mourning Dove, Interference with the duties of a Conservation Police Officer, and Did fail to exhibit a valid hunting license upon request. The individual admitted to shooting the mourning doves is facing revocation of their hunting license due to it being their second apprehension within 5 years.

On Wednesday, May 7th, 2025, CPOs A. Sutton, C. Sikora and S. Coiro were presented with the Award of Heroism at the SERD award ceremony at the Patriots Theater in Trenton. This award was given for their dedicated service of helping locate a man that had been missing for 30 hours on the Berkshire Valley Wildlife Management Area in the summer of 2024. When the individual was found, he was unconscious and likely had gone into diabetic shock. CPOs loaded the unconscious individual into the UTV and transported him to the roadway, where he was checked by EMTs and air lifted to the hospital for treatment. Without their



assistance in the search and rescue efforts, this individual may not have been found and removed from the woods alive.

Central Region Highlights

CPOs Rea and Garofalo received information about an out of state hunter who harvested a turkey and didn't register it until the following week. CPO Rea conducted a phone interview for the late registration and the hunter admitted to the late check in. The hunter was issued a summons for failing to register the turkey by 3 pm on the day of harvest.

Central Region Officers have been patrolling lakes and ponds during the closed season for large and smallmouth bass. The closed season on bass is intended to protect these species while they are vulnerable during their breeding season. CPOs Carman and Garofalo found one angler at Baldwin Lake in Pennington in possession of 3 largemouth bass out of season. The angler was issued a summons for the possession of the bass. At Lake Assunpink CPO Carman inspected an angler with 2 largemouth bass out of season. The angler was issued a summons for the possession of the bass.

Lt. Sean McManus and CPO Nicole Carman were recently recognized for their part in the rescue of a man who was in peril during the early hours of the Jones Road Fire. Details of their teamwork and key knowledge of the landscape were featured in Stephanie A. Faughnan's article for the Jersey Shore Online which can be read here: <https://www.jerseyshoreonline.com/southern-ocean/dramatic-wildfire-rescue-highlights-power-of-teamwork/>.

Southern Region Highlights

On a Saturday night in May, CPOs Malinski, Chillari, and Bates engaged in targeted enforcement efforts at Union Lake WMA, in Millville and Upper Deerfield. These efforts were aimed at preventing illegal after-hours WMA usage. After 9 PM, the officers issued 16 summonses. This section of Union Lake WMA will continue to see targeted enforcement efforts.

CPOs Bates and Malinski received a complaint about misuse of Makepeace Lake WMA in Hamilton Township. When the officers arrived at the location, they observed a truck parked in the middle of the road with freshly cut vegetation nearby. The operator of the motor vehicle was identified; however, the truck did not have any license plates and was also being operated in a closed area of the WMA. In addition to this, the operator claimed that he had towed it to the location despite fresh tire tracks indicating otherwise. The operator was issued multiple WMA summonses and motor vehicle summonses. The officers also impounded the motor vehicle.

CPO Kille received an anonymous OGT complaint on opening day of the spring turkey season in Woolwich Township, Gloucester County. The complainant suspected illegal turkey hunting in the area of a specific address after having heard 3 shots throughout the morning. CPO Kille responded to the area specified in the complaint, but no one appeared to be home. The CPO contacted the neighbors in hopes of obtaining additional information that would substantiate the complaint. After speaking to the neighbors, CPO Kille suspected the area was baited and inspected the blinds that the homeowners had hunted. After walking the area, bait consisting of a bird seed blend was discovered. The husband and wife were both charged with hunting turkey over bait.

CPO Kille received information from the Monroe Township Police Department, Gloucester County during the spring turkey season. The detective explained that his department responded to a call from a resident who reported that an individual had shot a turkey in front of his home from within his vehicle. By the time the police department arrived the suspect had departed. The complainant provided the PD photographs of both the vehicle and its' operator after having confronted the man in front of his house. The suspect was now identified as a resident of Philadelphia, PA. The detective utilized the Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) to determine if the suspect had crossed the state line and gone home. CPO Kille contacted the Pennsylvania Game Commission and requested that Officers respond to the suspect's home in

Philadelphia. PA Officers indicated that they would respond. CPO Kille called the suspect and left a voicemail asking him to call back. CPO Kille then recruited CPO Chillari for assistance in locating evidence at the scene of the incident. While in-route to the scene the suspect called CPO Kille and agreed to meet near the Walt Whitman bridge. CPO Kille initiated an interview with the suspect who claimed that nothing unlawful had occurred earlier that morning, denying any wrongdoing. Simultaneously CPO Chillari was collecting evidence at the scene while PA Officers were interviewing the suspect's son in Philadelphia. The suspect eventually admitted to having unlawfully killed a turkey. The turkey was collected as evidence by the PA Officers who administered charges for unlawful possession. CPO Kille charged the man with having a loaded firearm within 450' of a residence, hunting turkey without a permit, unlawful possession of a turkey and stalking turkey.

Marine Region Highlights

On May 4, 2025, CPO Raguz received an Operation Game Thief complaint regarding two fisherman keeping undersized tautog during the closed season at the Manasquan Inlet. CPO Raguz responded to the area and was able to locate the fishermen. CPOs Woerner and Bahrle arrived on scene to assist and were able to make observations of the fishermen. The officers were able to locate the fishermen's vehicle and apprehended the two men as they made their way off the jetty. Upon inspection, 29 tautog were located throughout the vehicle, of which 23 were undersized. It was also determined that the fishermen failed to register with the Saltwater Registry Program. Court mandatory summonses were issued to the fishermen, and court is scheduled for late June.

On May 18, 2025, CPO Bahrle received a complaint that a group of seven fishermen were keeping undersized and over limit black sea bass in a large cooler on a local party boat. CPO Woerner arrived to assist CPO Bahrle, and the two officers were able to apprehend the fishermen as they exited the vessel with a very large cooler. The inspection revealed that the fishermen kept a total of 110 black sea bass, of which 79 were undersized. Current New Jersey regulations allow fishermen to keep up to 10 black sea bass with a minimum length of 12.5 inches. Summonses were issued to the fishermen for the violations.

In mid-May, Lt. Harp was conducting surveillance of a large group of anglers targeting bluefish on the "T-jetty" in Atlantic City when he observed two anglers that appeared to be targeting tautog. The anglers had a cooler hidden in the rocks, which they were cautiously sliding tautog into when other fishermen were not watching. Upon inspection, Lt. Harp apprehended the men with a total of 38 undersized tautog during the closed season. Multiple summonses were issued, and the angler's fishing equipment was seized.