**Marine Enforcement Highlights November-December 2022**

During an October night patrol, Conservation Police Officers Timothy Raker and Brian Tomlin noticed a vehicle near the base of a bridge where several previous striped bass poaching incidents have occurred. The officers set up surveillance on several fishermen and were able to hear what appeared to be fish moving around in plastic bags. Upon inspection of the fishermen, the officers apprehended the individuals in possession of 13 undersized and 10 over the limit striped bass. Summonses were issued for the violations.

During a patrol in early November, Conservation Police Officer Brian Tomlin witnessed an individual catch and keep two undersized tautog on a jetty in North Wildwood. The individual then met up with four other individuals as it was approaching sunset. CPO Tomlin observed multiple bags of fish placed into buckets then three of the individuals left, leaving the buckets of fish with two individuals on the jetty. About 20 minutes later, the two individuals hurried off the jetty with the buckets and into a waiting vehicle. When CPO Tomlin inspected the fishermen, they were found to be in possession of 83 tautog under legal size and 78 over their legal limit. Summonses were issued for the violations and all the fishing gear used in the incident was seized.

During the month of December, anglers had a difficult time finding migrating striped bass inside state waters off Atlantic and Cape May Counties. Some anglers, desperate to pursue these fish, ventured into Federal EEZ waters where striped bass fishing, catching and possession is Federally prohibited. CPO’s Klitz, Meyer, Tomlin, Raker and Petruccelli participated in making multiple Federal striped bass EEZ cases as far as 12 nautical miles offshore. The violations included possession/fishing for/catching striped bass in the EEZ, interference, wanton waste, destruction of evidence and false statements. Additionally, several of the individuals apprehended were in violation of NJ striped bass size and bag limit regulations. All cases were referred to National Marine Fisheries Service for Federal enforcement action