**Marine Region Highlights**

**May and June 2024**

**MAY**

CPO Tomlin charged a commercial fishing vessel operator after ascertaining violations against New

Jersey's Possession in Excess of Daily Limit License. New Jersey's Possession in Excess of Daily Limit License allows commercial fishing vessels to enter New Jersey's ports and exceed trip limits with summer flounder and/or black sea bass during open and closed seasons. The license also allows vessels that are not permitted to land summer flounder and black sea bass in New Jersey to enter port with and offload other species like scup and squid while retaining summer flounder and black sea bass on board for sale in other states. The vessel operator must notify and declare the species and quantity of fish along with their intentions prior to entering State waters. The vessel must be properly licensed in the intended landing state, and the fish must be lawfully landed and sold in the intended state.

The vessel in question did not have a New Jersey black sea bass landing permit, and New Jersey's season was closed. The operator landed a trip limit of scup in Cape May and declared his intention for 1,000 pounds of black sea bass onboard the vessel to be landed and sold in Virginia. When the vessel left New Jersey, it immediately went back out scup fishing and returned to Cape May a couple of days later and offloaded additional scup with the original 1000 pounds of black sea bass remaining on board as well as an additional 400 pounds of black sea bass intended for Virginia. The vessel then went back out fishing again and when it returned to Cape May a third time to offload scup, it returned without any of the black sea bass on board.

Upon interview, the operator admitted that it was not financially beneficial for him to transport only

1,400 pounds of black sea bass to Virginia, so he discarded the fish at sea. The operator was charged with unloading fisheries products from the vessel without the prior approval of the department within a seven-day period from the initial offload and failing to provide records documenting the sale of the excess black sea bass to a dealer in Virginia.

**JUNE**

Lt. Moscatiello received information that a group of fishermen were keeping tautog during the closed season at the Point Pleasant Canal. When the officer arrived, he located a vehicle with a group of fishermen trying to repair a flat tire. During the initial inspection, the fishermen claimed they had not kept any fish, and none were located. Lt. Moscatiello determined that there was another vehicle involved and was able to convince the second vehicle to return to the scene. Upon arrival, Lt. Moscatiello located a total of forty-two tautog that were kept during the closed season. All forty-two were under the legal minimum size of 15 inches. CPOs Bahrle and Woerner, who just cleared from boat patrol, arrived on scene to assist Lt. Moscatiello document and process the violations. Summonses for the possession of forty-two closed season tautog and forty-two undersized tautog were issued to the fishermen. The tautog as well as eight summer flounder from CPO Bahrle and Woerner's boat patrol were donated to a local food bank.