**Highlights – Marine Region**

**September 2024**

CPO Bahrle and Lt. Moscatiello were following up on a complaint they received about a commercial fisherman utilizing an otter trawl within two miles of the coastline in Ocean County. Regulations allow commercial fishermen to use their otter trawls between two and three miles in state waters. This provides an area inside of two miles for recreational fishermen with undisturbed bottom. While on patrol CPO Bahrle located a vessel off Seaside that was dragging inside the two-mile line. CPO Bahrle issued the captain a summons for utilizing his otter trawl within two miles of the coastline. Court is set for October and the fisherman faces a penalty of up to $3,000.

In early September, CPO Szelc was conducting surveillance of shoreside anglers targeting tautog in Atlantic City. He observed one of the anglers catch an undersized tautog, which he immediately wrapped in a plastic bag, then quickly ran from the jetty and onto an adjacent street. Moments later the greedy angler returned to the jetty without the bag and CPO Szelc, with the assistance of Lt. Petruccelli, was able to apprehend the fishermen on the jetty with multiple undersized tautog. CPO Szelc was then able to identify the vehicle belonging to the group and found additional undersized tautog within it, including the bag he had previously observed. The group of anglers was found in possession of 18 undersized tautog.

Lt. Harp and CPO Klitz responded to a complaint in Egg Harbor Township involving a group of individuals utilizing a large seine net at Malibu Beach WMA. Lt. Harp and CPO Klitz conducted an inspection of the netters when they returned to shore. The group had two large totes, each with approximately 100 pounds of assorted marine life. After several hours of sorting through the catch, Lt. harp and CPO Klitz found a total of 180 undersized blue claw crabs – three of which had eggs attached, seven undersized black sea bass, four undersized tautog, 53 bluefish over the daily limit, and one undersized winter flounder. The net being utilized had a mesh size less than the minimum 3/8-inch requirement and it exceeded 50 feet in length, which would require a license to use. Numerous summonses were issued to the group for the violations.

**October 2024 – Marine Region**

CPO Bahrle observed a group of fishermen with several large coolers coming off the jetty in Barnegat Light State Park. To inspect the fishermen CPO Bahrle ended up having to follow them back to their vehicle, which was parked on a side street several blocks away from the State Park. Upon inspection the fishermen were found in possession of 61 tautog, of which 57 were less than the minimum size limit of 15 inches. Each fisherman was issued court-mandatory summonses for possessing over limit and undersized tautog. Court is scheduled for early November where the fishermen face penalties of $100 per fish for each charge. The tautog were donated to a local food bank.

In late October, Officers with the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (NY DEC) contacted Lt. Moscatiello while they were conducting a boat patrol in the EEZ. The Officers had inspected a vessel that launched out of Keyport, Monmouth County, which had numerous violations including possession of undersized and over limit black sea bass. The officers escorted the fishermen back to Keyport where they were met by CPO Bahrle. CPO Bahrle determined that the fishermen possessed 89 undersized and 88 over limit black sea bass as well as undersized tautog. The fishermen were all issued court-mandatory summonses, and court is scheduled for mid-November. All the fish were able to be donated to a local food bank.

In late August, CPO Klitz and Lt. Harp were conducting a shoreside patrol of Barnegat Light State Park in response to recent complaints of illegal tautog fishing activity.  CPO Klitz observed two individuals leaving the jetty with large backpacks and fishing rods.  The individuals were attempting to avoid detection by walking off trail through the dunes.  CPO Klitz and Lt. Harp were able to identify potential exit points of the individuals and set up to intercept them as they exited the dunes.   When the officers came into view of the individuals, they attempted to run and hide the backpacks.  Their efforts were unsuccessful, and the individuals were apprehended with a total of 39 tautog, resulting in violations including over the daily bag limit and undersized fish.  Summonses were issued for the violations, and the individuals face penalties of $100.00 per fish for each charge.