**Highlights – Marine Region**

**March & April 2025**

After the exceptional nearshore bluefin tuna fishing this past fall in southern New Jersey, CPOs Tomlin and Raker continued following up on numerous unreported landings. By federal law, bluefin tuna must be reported within 24 hours of landing. Reporting bluefin tuna landings is crucial for sustainable management as it helps track quotas, which help prevent overfishing. Dozens of private and for-hire vessel owners and operators were determined to not have reported bluefin tuna landings in a two-month period—some fishermen landed as many as 20 fish of which none were reported. Cases were referred to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for enforcement action.

CPO Tomlin charged a North Carolina-based commercial fishing vessel for exceeding NJ’s bycatch allowance. The vessel did not have a directed summer flounder permit for NJ and landed in Cape May in late March with approximately 1200 pounds in excess of NJ’s 200-pound bycatch allowance. The vessel operator claimed the additional summer flounder landed was intended for Virginia, but the vessel also did not have a valid NJ Possession in Excess of Daily Limit License allowing for such activity. The appropriate summonses were issued.

Lieutenant Petruccelli and CPO Tomlin filed multiple charges against two Cumberland County commercial fishermen for unlawful use of a dredge in the hand tong harvest only section of Delaware Bay. After a month-long investigation consisting of several rounds of surveillance operations, CPOs observed the men utilizing the dredge in the unlawful area. CPOs were able to recover the dredge as evidence after the men discarded it in the waters of Delaware Bay after their alleged attempt to conceal their harvest method. In addition to the charges of utilizing the dredge in the unlawful area, the men were charged with using an unlicensed vessel to take oysters in Delaware Bay, utilization of an unlawfully sized dredge to catch oysters in Delaware Bay, failure to tag oysters, failure to report oyster harvest, failing to wear personal floatation devices, and use of an unregistered vessel in State waters.