Highlights – Marine Region

September 2022

CPOs Moscatiello and Woerner conducted an overnight patrol in the Manasquan Railroad Bridge area, which has been a hotspot for fish poaching activities in recent years. Surveillance of the area was difficult due to the environmental conditions, so the officers conducted a foot patrol where they encountered three men fishing directly under the railroad bridge itself. Upon inspection, the men were found to be in possession of seven undersized striped bass and one undersized summer flounder. Summonses were issued for undersized striped bass, over the daily possession limit of striped bass, possession of an undersized summer flounder, and trespassing for the purpose of taking wildlife/fish. A total of nine summonses were issued to the three fishermen.

CPO Woerner had a busy month inspecting recreational fishermen in the Shark River area. One notable case involved his response to a complaint that came through the DEP Hotline reporting a group of fishermen keeping undersized tautog by the Ocean Ave Bridge in Avon, Monmouth County. CPO Woerner responded to the complaint and conducted a foot patrol in the area where he was able to locate two individuals keeping undersized tautog. Upon inspecting the fishermen, and locating their cooler, he discovered they were in possession of 23 tautog of which 22 were undersized. Another notable case resulted in the inspection of two fishermen that were found to be in possession of 17 black sea bass, seven tautog, one summer flounder, and one scup. All 26 of their fish were illegal. Multiple summonses were issued for the violations involved.

CPOs Capri and Meyer conducted a land-based patrol focused on recreational fishing activity on the Atlantic City jetties. The officers observed two groups of individuals, each on separate jetties, keeping what appeared to be multiple species of undersized fish. Unbeknownst to the officers, the two groups were together and had likely split up to avoid being caught with all the illegal fish at once. As the officers prepared to move into position and simultaneously apprehend both groups of anglers, they observed one of the groups begin packing up their equipment and head off the jetty. They met up with the other group and combined all their fish, so the officers moved in and made the apprehension with all the fish and all the anglers in one location. Upon inspection, a total of 30 undersized tautog, six undersized black sea bass, and three undersized summer flounder were found. Officers Capri and Meyer issued 19 summonses to the group of 10 anglers with penalties of more than $5000.00.

Early September is typically a time when large numbers of juvenile fish are found in the bays and coastal waterways in New Jersey. On September 10th CPO Szelc focused his attention on anglers fishing in the back bays of Atlantic County – specifically focusing on those fishing the bridges along the White and Black Horse Pikes. CPO Szelc discovered multiple violations among several groups of anglers and recovered a total of 29 black sea bass, most measuring less than eight inches; six summer flounder, most measuring less than 12 inches; and large quantities of undersized blue claw crabs. For the multitude of violations encountered, CPO Szelc ended up issuing a total of nine summonses.

Highlights – Marine

October 2022

Throughout late September and early October, CPOs Moscatiello and Woerner conducted multiple patrols in response to complaints received concerning fishermen keeping illegal tautog. The officers conducted several targeted patrols resulting in the apprehension and charging of 25 fishermen that were in violation. In total, more than 60 over the limit and 23 undersized tautog were seized and/or returned alive.

In early October, CPOs Meyer and Capri took advantage of a nice weather day to conduct a boat patrol in the Barnegat Light area. The officers had heard chatter of large striped bass in the area and conducted inspections of charter and private fishing vessels. Two vessels were found in possession of oversized striped bass exceeding 38 inches. Additional inspections yielded 20 undersized black sea bass, 20 over the limit black sea bass, a closed season summer flounder, 25 filleted black sea bass, and six filleted scup. A total of nine summonses were issued throughout the course of the patrol.

Lieutenant Petruccelli found three men returning to a Cape May marina in possession of 27 dolphin fish over their Federal possession limit. The case was referred to National Marine Fisheries Service for enforcement action.

Lieutenant Petruccelli apprehended a Pennsylvania man fishing on the beach in Fortescue possessing seven small sandbar (brown) sharks, which are a prohibited species. The man was issued a summons for taking 7 prohibited species.