

Highlights

Marine Region – April 2022

Marine Region CPOs, with the assistance of CPOs in District 4, continue working around the clock in response to numerous complaints involving the illegal harvesting of striped bass reported in the Raritan Bayshore area. To date, nearly 200 summonses have been issued for a range of violations including undersized, overlimit, and mutilated striped bass, interference with the duties of a conservation police officer, littering while fishing, and the failure to obtain a valid saltwater registry.

During offshore gear patrols on the Bureau's P/V Integrity, CPO's found a NJ-based commercial fisherman in violation of the Federal Lobster Management Area (LMA) 5 closed season. In addition to the violation of leaving lobster trap gear out during the closed season, CPOs found multiple lobsters with bands on the claws in the fisherman's traps. Federal law prohibits possession of lobster from LMA 5 during the closed season. Another Federal violation was found on a separate NJ-based fisherman that did not have lobster trap allocation tags on multiple actively fishing lobster traps. Federal lobster fishing effort is controlled through the lobster trap tag allocations. As such, all federally permitted lobster vessels must have allocation tags on all lobster traps. The cases were referred to National Marine Fisheries Service for enforcement action.

The north Atlantic right whale remains one of the most endangered large whales in the world. At the end of 2018 there was an estimated population of under 400 individuals. One of the biggest threats to the right whale's survival is collisions with vessels—especially large ocean-going transport vessels. In 2008, the National Marine Fisheries Service implemented a seasonal mandatory speed rule of less than 10 knots for vessels over 65' in length in certain areas to reduce the risk of vessel collisions with right whales. Utilizing the Bureau's P/V Integrity, several CPOs from the Marine Region participated in a three-day operation with the US Coast Guard, Delaware DNR Police, and National Marine Fisheries Service. The objective of the operation was to enforce the speed rule and to educate mariners on its existence. Ships were monitored with a combination of AIS, MARPA, and hand-held radar technologies. Officers identified a total of 36 vessels exceeding the speed rule greater than the error probabilities of the utilized equipment (+/- 2 knots per hour). Four vessels were identified to be speeding within the zone by less than two knots through AIS and were hailed. All four vessels immediately slowed down and came into compliance.