

## **Marine Enforcement Highlights May-June 2022**

### **May 2022**

In early May, CPO Bahrle was patrolling the Old Bridge, Middlesex County area where he observed individuals catching striped bass and run the fish from the pier up to their vehicle. Upon inspection, CPO Bahrle found two undersized striped bass hidden on the pier behind where they were fishing. After interviewing the fishermen for a few minutes, CPO Bahrle was able to uncover four more undersized striped bass that had been taken the fishermen's vehicle. Summons for undersize and overlimit striped bass were issued.

During a patrol on the Bureau's P/V Integrity, CPOs identified a NJ-based party boat fishing for black sea bass in Federal waters without a Federal Party/Charter Black Sea Bass Permit. While at sea, CPOs made observations of patrons on board catching and retaining black sea bass. CPOs also observed vessel employees assist patrons in removing black sea bass from their hooks and place them into coolers. Over the VHF radio, the party boat operator admitted to targeting black sea bass and claimed the vessel was properly permitted. A subsequent dockside inspection of the party boat revealed hundreds of black sea bass were landed and the operator was unable to produce a valid permit. The operator fully cooperated in processing the violation. The case was referred to National Marine Fisheries Service for possible enforcement action.

### **June 2022**

As the water temperature rises, more and more people wade into the shallows to harvest clams and other shellfish. In early June, CPO Moscatiello was patrolling in Neptune Township when he observed a woman actively harvesting clams in prohibited waters. The harvest of clams and other shellfish from waters classified as prohibited potentially pose a serious risk to anyone consuming the shellfish. After a lengthy surveillance period, he moved to an area where he could approach the woman and perform an inspection. As he approached her, she quickly dumped out the heavy bucket of clams. During her interview the woman admitted to clamming without a license and admitted that she knew she was in prohibited waters. Several summonses were issued, and the case is set to go to court in July.

CPOs Meyer, Capri, and Szelc conducted an inspection of a party vessel returning from a black sea bass trip. The officers inspected the catch of the patrons as they departed the vessel and issued several summonses for possession of undersized black sea bass. CPO Meyer then met with the vessel operator to confirm the vessel was properly permitted and had the required fishing vessel trip report for the trip. Federally permitted party fishing vessels are required to complete electronic fishing vessel trip reports for each trip. CPO Meyer found the vessel had no fishing vessel trip report for that day. Weeks Prior, CPO Meyer had spoken with the same operator regarding the trip report requirement and verbally warned the individual for not completing a fishing vessel trip report. Additionally, CPO gave the operator information and instructions on the reporting requirement. As a result, the vessel was issued a summons for failing to complete required federal trip reports prior to landing and the violation was forwarded to National Marine Fisheries Service for additional enforcement action.

During offshore gear patrols on the Bureau's P/V Integrity, CPO's Petruccelli, Szelc, and Woerner processed violations for unidentified lobster gear, baiting lobster traps in state waters during the closed season, fishing lobster traps in the gear restricted zone on the Axel Carlson Reef, undersize and/or mutilated black sea bass bait in lobster traps, and fishing lobster traps in Federal waters without Federal lobster trap allocation tags. The cases were either referred to National Marine Fisheries Service for possible enforcement action and/or state summonses were issued.

CPOs Petruccelli, Tomlin, and Raker inspected a Wildwood-based party boat upon its return from an offshore fishing trip and found numerous Federal violations. The violations included possession of mutilated yellowfin tuna, possession of highly migratory species without a permit, fishing for and retaining tilefish without a federal party/charter permit, and other records violations. This was the second violation in a year that the owners failed to obtain the appropriate Federal fishing permits for the vessel. The case was referred to National Marine Fisheries Service for Enforcement action.

During a mid-June boat patrol, CPOs Raker and Tomlin inspected two separate vessels in possession of significantly undersized yellowfin tuna and did not have the appropriate Federal Highly Migratory Species (HMS) permit to possess the tuna. The vessel occupants admitted to participating in a fishing tournament which included HMS species. In a follow-up interview with the tournament director, LT. Petruccelli found that the tournament itself was not registered with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) as required for tournaments that include HMS species. The cases were referred to NMFS for possible enforcement action.