NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife
Monthly Highlights
Bureau of Law Enforcement
November 21, 2020- December 20, 2020

J. Sean Cianciulli, Chief
Frank Panico, Deputy Chief
Vacant, Deputy Chief
L. Anne Quirk, Captain – Administration
Tom O'Rourke, Lieutenant - Training
Paul Toppin, Lieutenant– Training
Joseph Soell, Conservation Police Officer - Administration

Northern Region (908) 735-8240
Douglas Applegate, Captain
Steven Sutton, Lieutenant (District 1)
Joseph Kuechler, Lieutenant (District 2)
Vacant, Lieutenant Investigator
Vacant, Administrative Assistant 1

Central Region (609) 259-2120
Shannon Martiak, Captain
Bryan Mascio, Lieutenant (District 3)
Vacant, Lieutenant (District 4)
Vacant, Lieutenant Investigator
Shari Irick, Technical Assistant 2

Southern Region (856) 629-0555
Lisa Lacroix, Captain
Zane Batten, Lieutenant (District 5)
Craig James, Lieutenant (District 6)
Vacant, Lieutenant Investigator
Sue Canale, Agency Services Representative

Marine Region (609) 748-2050
Jason Snellbaker, Captain
Brian Scott, Lieutenant (District 7)
Chris Petruccelli, Lieutenant (District 8)
Vacant, Lieutenant Investigator
Noreen White, Agency Services Representative

Conservation Police Officers report a total of 7691.2 hours of duty (7038.6- 2019). These hours are charged to the following categories of duty:

	2020	**2019**
Total Law Enforcement	6226.6	5486.3
Fishing	67	25.4
Marine Resources	1245.6	858.3
Hunting	911.3	722.9
Deer Hunting	3073.6	2441.4
Trapping	11.4	19.5
Wildlife Mgt. Areas	174.7	132.8
NG & Endangered Species	7.7	19.8
Court	20.4	67.1
Regional Meetings	0	192
Pollution Investigation	40.2	9.8
Training	47.8	165.6
Other Law Enforcement	626.9	831.7
Administration	1419.3	1527.7
Fish Management	2.8	2
Wildlife Management	29	22.6
Information & Education	13.5	0

Bear Control	1.5	0
Bear Patrol and Investigation	108	121.2

During patrols, officers performed 4585 field inspections (3656 -2019) of hunters, fishermen or trappers and the resultant caseload is tabulated:

Law Enforcement Regions

	North	Central	South	Marine	Adm.	Total	2019
Summonses issued	101	74	76	45	0	296	264
Criminal Charges	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Warnings issued	11	5	4	6	0	26	16
Bear Feeding Warnings	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Field Inspections by Region	
Administration	0
Northern Region	1066
Central Region	856
Southern Region	1080
Marine Region	1583
Total	**4,585**

Field Inspections by Activity:	
Hunters	2749
Freshwater Anglers	73
Trappers	4
Commercial Fishermen	49
Marine Rec. Anglers	1259
WMA non-hunting/fishing	360
Other	85

Listed below are the types of summonses issued:

	North	Central	South	Marine	Adm.
Fishing	4	0	0	0	0
Hunting	21	30	4	0	0
Waterfowl Hunting	3	3	7	0	0
Deer Hunting	65	19	62	4	0
Trapping	1	2	0	0	0
WMA	5	19	3	0	0
Striped Bass	0	0	0	0	0
Shellfish	0	0	0	1	0
Title 2C	0	0	0	0	0
Marine-Commercial	0	0	0	7	0
Marine-Recreational	0	0	0	18	0
Nongame & Exotic	0	0	0	0	0
Title 58	0	0	0	0	0
Title 39	0	1	0	0	0
Other	2	0	0	3	0
Bear Hunting	0	0	0	0	0
Bear Feeding	0	0	0	0	0
Marine Striped Bass	0	0	0	12	0
Totals	**101**	**74**	**76**	**45**	**0**

Penalties collected during this report period by Conservation Police Officers: $62,935.10.

Call volume (reports of violations, general questions, requests for assistance, etc.) received at region offices:

North	* numbers not reported due to office closure
Central	277
South	* numbers not reported due to office closure
Marine	127

Total calls received: 404

Bureau of Law Enforcement personnel status as of 12/20/20:

Administration - 6
1 Chief
1 Deputy Chief
1 CPO I - Admin
2 CPO IIs – Training
1 CPO III- Admin

Northern Region – 11
1 CPO I
2 CPO IIs
7 CPO IIIs
1 CPO Recruit

Central Region - 9
1 CPO I
1 CPO IIs
5 CPO IIIs
1 CPO Recruit
1 Technical Assistant 2

Southern Region - 12
1 CPO I
2 CPO IIs
6 CPO IIIs
2 CPO Recruits
1 Agency Services Rep

Marine Region - 16
1 CPO I
2 CPO IIs
10 CPO IIIs
2 CPO Recruits
1 Agency Services Rep

Total Employees: **54**

Northern Region Highlights

On November 21, 2020, CPO Merritt and Recruit Della Vella were requested to assist a New Jersey State Park Police Officer with an incident at Norvin Green State Forest. The NJSPP Officer advised that she had apprehended two individuals, dressed in camouflage, fluorescent hunter orange and carrying shotguns. When she approached the individuals, one of the hunters tossed his shotgun in the woods to conceal it. NJSPP Officer J. Maurer was able to locate the shotgun that had been tossed into the woods and it was later determined that the individual did not possess a valid NJ firearm hunting license. The second hunter was in found to be in possession of a shotgun, a loaded 45 caliber handgun, and an air rifle. The CPOs responded and interviewed the hunters. Both hunters advised that they were squirrel hunting. The first hunter who tossed his firearm advised that he has never possessed a valid NJ firearm hunting license and threw the gun into the woods because he was just nervous. The hunter was issued summonses for hunting without first procuring a valid firearm hunting license and

interference with the duties of a police officer while enforcing fish and game laws. The second hunter advised that he had camped overnight in Norvin Green State Forest in anticipation of squirrel hunting the next day. The hunter advised that while camping he had the above three firearms in his possession. The hunter was issued summonses for ten counts of possessing illegal missiles for small game and was arrested by the NJSPP Officer for unlawful possession of a firearm.

Lt. Sutton initiated a joint agency investigation, with the Sussex County Gangs, Guns and Narcotics Task Force and New Jersey State Police, into an individual that he had previously arrested for possession of weapons by a certain person not to possess weapons due to previous felony convictions. As a result of the investigation, Lt. Sutton, CPO Merritt and Recruit Della Vella assisted with the service of a search warrant on the residence of the target in Sandyston Twp., Sussex County. CPO Merritt issued a total of seventeen summonses for possession of untagged/unregistered deer, possession of unlabeled deer parts, possession of a wild turkey without a valid possession seal, hunting without a license, providing false information to a license agent, obtaining a firearm license without valid hunter education and obtaining a bow and arrow license without valid hunter education. The target of the investigation and his fiancé were charged with multiple 2nd and 3rd degree criminal charges. The target of the investigation was lodged in the Morris County Jail and the fiancé was released on a summons.

CPO Hausamann followed up on information that a person that was under revocation had killed a deer. He interviewed the suspect, who had registered the deer, and obtained a confession. The suspect advised that he was able to access his tags online so he thought he could use them, even though CPOs Holmes and Hausamann had seized his license from him in the field last year and informed him of his revocation.

CPO Merritt and Recruit Della Vella investigated a complaint of someone encroaching on State owned property at the Columbia WMA in Knowlton Twp., Warren County. The investigation revealed that a neighboring property owner had erected a bicycle track on the WMA. An interview of the suspect resulted in a full confession. The responsible party was issued summonses for disturbing soil on a State Wildlife Management Area and damage to vegetation on a State Wildlife Management Area and agreed to restore the area to its original state.

While patrolling in Frelinghuysen Twp., Warren County, during the six-day firearm deer season, CPO Merritt and Recruit Della Vella located a vehicle that had an uncased rifle and a cocked crossbow laying on the backseat. They conducted a foot patrol of the area and located the owner of the vehicle and a second hunter. During the field inspection, the second hunter was found to be using an unplugged shotgun. They returned to the vehicles and through their investigation they located two additional uncased guns in the vehicles. The following summonses were issued: three summonses for possession of an uncased firearm in a motor vehicle, one summons for possession of a cocked crossbow in a motor vehicle and one summons for hunt with a shotgun capable of holding more than three shells.

On the opening day of Six Day Firearm Deer season, Lt. S. Sutton received a call from an off-duty NJ State Trooper who believed a hunter on the neighboring property in Montague Twp., Sussex County

had killed an antlerless deer in a closed zone. CPO A. Sutton responded and met with the Trooper. They located a freshly killed antlerless deer and a tree stand nearby. CPO A. Sutton followed tracks back to a nearby residence and interviewed the resident. The hunter admitted that he had killed the antlerless deer before realizing that the season was closed. One summons was issued for take/kill an antlerless deer during the closed season.

On Monday, December 7, 2020, CPO Holmes was contacted by a confidential informant that stated an individual had shot a large 9-point buck without a valid hunting license. The informant was able to provide a photograph from social media of the suspect holding the deer in his driveway. A search of the administrative console showed the most recent hunting license purchased by the suspect was in 2017. CPO Holmes stopped at the suspect's residence on Saturday, December 12th, and observed a fresh white tail deer hide in the driveway. After several attempts to interview the suspect, CPO Holmes contacted him on Monday, December 14th. Consent was given to look at the hunting stand behind the residence and two additional buck heads were discovered on the property. The suspect admitted to shooting the 9-point buck with a crossbow on Monday without a license. He further admitted to killing the other the two bucks without a license in 2018. The appropriate summonses were issued for hunting without a license in multiple years, possession of untagged/unregistered white tail deer parts, and hunting without a valid archery zone permit.

On Friday, December 18, 2020, CPO Robert Driscoll was notified by Chester Police regarding possible illegal hunting. CPO Driscoll and Lt. Joseph Kuechler responded to the Black River Wildlife Management Area to investigate. A hunter shot an antlerless deer on Black River WMA and tracked it across a downed fence onto private property. The deer was still alive, so the hunter shot a second time. The location was only sixteen feet from the homeowner's garage and well within the safety zone of numerous other homes. Upon inspection of the hunter's licenses, it was discovered that he did not possess a valid shotgun permit for that zone and could not harvest an antlerless deer. As a result, summonses were issued for did discharge a firearm without due care or circumspection, did possess a loaded firearm within 450 feet of an occupied dwelling, and did take antlerless deer without a valid shotgun zone permit.

Central Region Highlights

CPOs Garofalo and McManus responded to Whiting WMA, Manchester Twp, for a report of a suspicious vehicle. Upon arrival, the officers encountered a vehicle that attempted to drive off the established roadway and became stuck. It was determined that neither the passenger nor driver possessed a valid driver's license. The vehicle belonged to a relative who was not happy that is was being operated in the woods. The driver also had outstanding criminal warrants. A good samaritan assisted in getting the vehicle onto a roadway and the relative was allowed to pick up the vehicle. After the driver was issued summonses, he was arrested and transferred to the Ocean County Sheriff's Department due to the active warrant.

CPO McManus responded to Colliers Mills WMA, Jackson Twp for a report of a motor vehicle accident. CPO McManus located the vehicle and determined that the vehicle was being carelessly operated causing it to lose control and leave the roadway. In plain view within the vehicle, drug

paraphernalia was discovered. The occupants of the vehicle were not on scene and it appeared that this accident occurred the previous evening. The registered owner was contacted and confirmed that no injuries were sustained. The vehicle was towed, and the driver was issued multiple summonses.

While CPO Riviello was performing inspections of pheasant hunters at Medford WMA, a shot was discharged into the parking lot which rained pellets onto vehicles. No vehicles were damaged, and CPO Riviello was able to quickly apprehend a juvenile hunter who was with his father and had just shot. The firearm was seized and due to the juvenile status of the hunter, he was issued a stationhouse adjustment. The stationhouse adjustment consisted of taking a remedial hunter safety class, writing a report on firearm safety and target acquisition, and finally watching multiple shoot/don't shoot videos.

CPO Recruit Bickerton and Capt. Martiak were notified by Old Bridge PD, that they required assistance with investigating an assault that was reported to them. A landowner drove his ATV onto Middlesex County Park property to confront a hunter whom he felt was harvesting a deer too close to his property line. During the confrontation, the landowner slapped the cell phone of the hunter out of his hand while the incident was being recorded by the hunter. The footage clearly showed that the landowner was the aggressor. CPO Recruit Bickerton determined that the hunter was legal and was not anywhere near the property line. The landowner was also hunting (without a Middlesex County permit) on the property and was trying to intimidate the legal hunter into staying away. The landowner was issued a summons for hunter harassment and a written warning for operating the ATV on the county property.

CPO McManus assisted US Fish and Wildlife with an individual residing in Edison and importing an Asian Swamp Eel, which are classified as potentially dangerous because they are highly invasive. Upon interviewing the individual, he admitted to importing the eel for his aquarium. The eel was confiscated, and the individual was issued a written warning.

Southern Region Highlights

CPO Kille, Detective Vazquez and Lt. Batten conducted regulatory inspections of deer processing facilities during the month of December. During these inspections, the officers issued twenty summonses for violations of untagged deer, no permits, over the legal limits and illegal possession of white-tail deer. Several hunters had registered antlered deer as antlerless after they had filled their limit of bucks. After a lengthy interview of one of these hunters, the accused blamed his actions on the current pandemic stating that if he wasn't home with free time, he would have never had the opportunity to harvest this may deer.

During Six Day firearm season, CPO Kille and Detective Vazquez were in Gloucester County checking into a suspected illegal deer that turned out to be lawfully possessed. During this inspection, two separate deer were found in the cooler that had not been properly registered through the ALS system. The deer were seized and summonses for illegal possession and failure to properly tag were issued.

Detective Vazquez and CPO Recruit Malinski investigated an Atlantic County deer that was shot in a residential area. The officers located biological evidence close to a dwelling which indicated where the

deer was shot. CPO Stites and Lt. Toppin joined the investigation and added insight as to the responsible hunt club that may have been involved. An inspection of the club revealed the responsible party for shooting the deer. A records inspection revealed that he did not register the deer. After an interview of the accused, the officers learned the deer was registered by another hunter so the accused would not be tagged out of the season with his second buck. Both hunters were charged with improperly tagging a white-tail deer, illegal possession and the shooter was charged with discharging a weapon inside a safety zone.

CPO Faith received a call from a hunter reporting that his trail camera was stolen from township property in Galloway, Atlantic County. The hunter left a note at a nearby tree stand looking for any information about his stolen camera. To his surprise he received a call from a hunter who admitted to taking the camera because it was his hunting spot. The hunter arranged for the return of the camera and CPO Faith was waiting for him. The hunter was charged with hindering the lawful taking of wildlife and the property was returned. CPO Faith later received information that the same hunter killed a buck the day before without having an archery permit. When CPO Faith went to the residence for a subsequent interview, he observed bloody hunting boots on the front steps. The hunter confessed immediately and told CPO Faith that he had learned his lesson from previous deer violations and thought that honesty was the best route to take. The hunter was issued summonses for hunting without an archery permit, failure to properly tag a deer, failure to properly register a deer and illegal possession of deer.

CPO Faith received a call about two hunters actively shooting over the limit of black ducks in Upper Twp., Cape May County. The complainant observed the hunters shoot and pick up four black ducks then continue to hunt and kill additional black ducks. CPO Recruit Malinski and CPO Faith contacted the two hunters as they were pulling their boat out of the water. When questioned about the additional birds, both hunters became extremely agitated, repeatedly stating that all the birds they shot were in the boat. A thorough inspection of the vessel did not produce any additional birds, however there was blood and feathers inside of a decoy bag separate from the ducks comprising their bag limit. The hunters were issued summonses for failure to provide vessel registration, no vessel registration, no PFD and having an unsigned federal duck stamp.

Marine Region Highlights

Responding to complaints in the area CPO Klitz and Recruit Szelc conducted a tautog patrol on the canal in Point Pleasant Borough, Ocean County. The CPOs quickly located three individuals keeping tautog under the current size limit of 15 inches. The subjects were successfully apprehended with over twenty undersized tautog. The officers seized the fishermen's gear and issued multiple summonses for the violations.

CPOs Klitz and Woerner conducted a night patrol for striped bass violations in Perth Amboy, Middlesex County. Just before 2300 hours the officers conducted a foot patrol and found multiple groups in violation for possessing undersized striped bass as well as over their daily possession limit. A total of ten undersized striped bass were seized and multiple summonses were issued to the individuals totaling $1,000 in penalties plus costs.

CPO Henderson and Recruit Capri were conducting a boat patrol in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Seaside Park, Ocean County. They observed a vessel with three fishermen onboard actively trolling for striped bass and in the process of reeling one in. As the CPOs approached the vessel one of the fishermen hastily bent down out of sight at the stern of the vessel. Moments later the fisherman in question stood up and was holding two dead striped bass with one having a bonus tag attached. Once the hooked striped bass was landed, Recruit Capri boarded the vessel and verified there were only three striped bass onboard. After observing the corroded condition of the metal striped bass bonus tag, Recruit Capri suspected foul play was taking place with the bonus tag. After a brief interview, the fisherman admitted the bonus striped bass only had the bonus tag slipped through the gill plate and was not securely fastened prior to the approach of the CPOs. With the intent to circumvent the regulations so additional bonus fish could be taken at another time, the fisherman was issued a summons for failing to properly tag a bonus fish immediately upon retention.

CPO Moscatiello and Recruit Capri were conducting surveillance of the Barnegat Bay at the Barnegat Light Boat Ramp when they observed two fishermen inbound to the High Bar Harbor Marina. CPO Moscatiello and Recruit Capri then relocated to the High Bar Harbor Marina to conduct an inspection of the vessel. Upon inspection the two fishermen were in possession of three striped bass. Recruit Capri spoke with the operator of the vessel who claimed that they had dropped off a third fisherman at Van's Marina because he was not feeling well. The operator provided a detailed description of the third fisherman to Recruit Capri. When the alleged third fisherman arrived on scene, he did not match the description that the operator gave, was unaware of which boat they fished on and couldn't retrace of the events that happened aboard the vessel that day. The operator then admitted that the third fisherman had not been on the vessel at all that day. Recruit Capri issued a summons for possessing one striped bass over the daily limit and an additional summons for interference.

In November, CPO Tomlin and Recruit Szelc began reviewing commercial fishing vessel trip reports for the port of Cape May. The officers discovered a summer flounder landing that exceeded the allowable daily landing limit by 2000 pounds. The discovery prompted further investigation by CPOs Raker, Tomlin, and Recruit Szelc. Through a course of interviews, it was determined there was a miscommunication between the dealer and the vessel which led to the vessel bringing in over the trip limit. Summonses for landing over the daily trip limit and accepting summer flounder in excess of the trip limit were issued to both the vessel and the dealer.

CPOs in Cape May have been busy with the implementation of the new possession in excess of daily limit vessel license. This license allows vessels to enter port and offload catch while retaining summer flounder and black sea bass onboard that is bound for another state. On December 13, 2020, CPO Tomlin and Recruit Szelc conducted an inspection of a commercial fishing vessel in Cape May. The vessel operator claimed to be landing scup and summer flounder under New Jersey daily landing limits and had black sea bass on board bound for Virginia. The vessel, which did not have a New Jersey black sea bass landing permit, had failed to notify the department of any landing. This is an essential requirement in the law which allows enforcement to monitor the excess fish which are being landing in New Jersey. CPO Tomlin and Recruit Szelc issued the appropriate summonses for failing to call in for

the possession in excess of a daily limit landing, failing to call in for a directed summer flounder landing, and exceeding the bycatch limit of black sea bass.

District 8 CPOs have been actively inspecting party fishing vessels in Atlantic and Cape May counties stemming from large quantities of undersized/over the limit fish being found in early November. On November 28, 2020, CPOs Tomlin, Meyer, Sloan and Recruit Szelc inspected two Cape May party boats returning from black sea bass fishing trips. The officers inspected patrons as they departed the vessels and recovered approximately seventy-five illegal black sea bass. A total of eleven summonses were issued primarily for possession of over the daily limit of black sea bass. This increased inspection frequency of party fishing vessels in Cape May and Atlantic Counties has had a noticeable impact on the violation rate of patrons as more recent inspections have resulted in minor, if any, violations.