

NYSDEC Sweep of Fulton Fish Market Nets Violations of State Law

ALBANY, NY (07/21/2008)-- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) law enforcement officers conducted an early-morning sweep of the Fulton Fish Market in the South Bronx last week, seizing more than 200 illegal fish products. The effort resulted in JMS Seafood Corporation being charged with a misdemeanor for the unlawful sale of oversized striped bass.

The sweep was a joint operation involving 13 NYSDEC Environmental Conservation Officers (ECOs), three Rhode Island Environmental Police Officers, investigators from the New York City Business Integrity Commission (BIC), and agents from the National Marine Fisheries Service. New York State often works closely with surrounding states in the enforcement of marine fishery laws. On Thursday, the Rhode Island officers were present as part of a training initiative to introduce them to the Fulton Fish Market and the market's potential enforcement challenges.

"This was an excellent example of effective coordination between Federal, State, and City law enforcement personnel," New York City Regional Director Suzanne Mattei said. "The interstate cooperation between New York and Rhode Island is especially beneficial for the protection of our shared marine resources."

At approximately 11:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 16, two plainclothes New York State ECOs entered the Fulton Fish Market to conduct surveillance of the wholesale distributors of fresh seafood. These officers noted multiple violations and contacted uniformed personnel with specifics on the locations and nature of the illegal activity they observed. At approximately 1:30 a.m., the multi-agency uniformed task force entered the premises and conducted the sweep.

The officers inspected fish, shellfish, and crustaceans, while also reviewing permits, manifests, and other required documentation. As a result of the inspection, 11 summonses were issued to nine separate violators. Though the size and scope of this enforcement action was not typical, NYSDEC officers routinely conduct random inspections of the Fulton Fish Market, often in coordination with outside agencies such as the BIC.

"One of the primary missions of BIC is to eliminate all forms of criminality and corruption from the public wholesale markets in New York City," said BIC Commissioner Michael J. Mansfield, "We commend the NYSDEC police and our other law enforcement partners, for assisting us in that process. In addition to these criminal charges, the companies and individuals cited are subject to administrative sanctions by the Commission that may affect their ability to conduct business at the New Fulton Fish Market in Hunts Point."

The Fulton Fish Market is the largest consortium of seafood wholesalers in the country. In recent years, over-harvesting, disease, and pollution have put a strain on the marine resources of New York and neighboring states. Violators of state and federal marine wildlife regulations contribute to the decline of fisheries along the Eastern Seaboard. Enforcement actions such as these are crucial to protect and conserve these vital fisheries for future generations.

News from New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

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