



# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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## Law Enforcement Committee Meeting Summary

October 22 -23, 2024

**Committee Members:** Scott Pearce (Chair), FL; Rob Beal, ME; Delayne Brown (Vice-chair), NH; Chris Baker, MA; Jeff Mercer, RI; Keith Williams, CT; Brian Scott, NJ; Doug Daniels, PA; Nick Couch, DE; Matthew Corbin, MD; Jason Walker, NC; Tom Bleifuss, USCG; Wayne Hettenbach, USDOJ; Robert Hogan, NOAA GC; and James Cassin, NOAA OLE

**Committee Member (Virtual Attendee):** Thomas Gadomski, NY; Matthew Rogers, VA

**ASMFC Staff:** James Boyle, Emilie Franke, Tracey Bauer, and Kurt Blanchard

**Other Participants:** Chris Hale, Ben Cunningham, Patrick Keliher, Allison Murphy, Charles Lynch, Jamie Greene, Sean Riley, Drew Wilson, and David Bailey

The Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) conducted a hybrid meeting during the 82<sup>nd</sup> Annual meeting of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) in Annapolis, Maryland. The committee welcomed LTC. Doug Daniels as the new representative from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

### Species Issues

**Atlantic Striped Bass** –Staff updated the LEC on the status of the Recreational Release Mortality Working Group findings and recommendations from a series of meetings held over this past summer. Members of the LEC participated in the work group discussions and provided comments on the enforceability of “targeting” and gear provisions. Staff also provided an update on the stock status and the potential for management changes in 2025.

**Atlantic Cobia** – Staff offered an update on the proposed regional recreational management measures considered under Addendum II of the Atlantic Cobia FMP.

**Spiny Dogfish** – Staff presented the Sturgeon Bycatch Reduction measures of Draft Addendum VII to the Spiny Dogfish FMP. The proposed management options under Section 3 were discussed by the LEC. The LEC recognized that not all jurisdictions have like permitting of this fishery and appreciate the Boards efforts to consider enforcement of this proposal. In consideration of the proposed options, the consensus of the LEC is to support Option 2.

The LEC will continue to monitor the development of this addendum and offer guidance where appropriate.

**Winter Flounder** - Staff updated the LEC on the Board approval of the Conservation Equivalency proposal of a Consecutive Daily Trip Limit Pilot Program for the State of Massachusetts. As presented, this proposal will allow for fisher's, fishing Massachusetts state waters, north of Cape Cod, to take and possess a consecutive two-day trip limit of Winter Flounder, with certain program requirements. At the time of Board's consideration of this proposal, the LEC offered shared experiences with similar programs utilized in other fisheries and supported this pilot program based on the commitment of close monitoring and enforcement by the state. MA DMF has committed to providing a review of the pilot program in its annual compliance report. To enhance enforceability, the LEC wishes to reinforce the use of VMS in this type of program.

### **Other Business**

**"Guidelines "**- The LEC was updated on the ISFMP Board approval of the Guidelines for Resource Managers on the Enforceability of Fishery Management Measures (May 2024). The sixth edition of this document was approved at the May 2024 ISFMP Board meeting. Members were encouraged to share this document with their respective commissioners as well as fishery managers in their home state.

**GCLN** - Members of the National Associations of Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs (NACLEC) presented on the Global Conservation Law Enforcement Network. This is a new communication and information network that provides a platform for global collaboration of conservation law enforcement agencies. Users will have the ability to network and message with specific subject matter experts from participating countries.

**Case Study** - Members from the United States Department of Justice and NOAA Office for Law Enforcement presented on a case from "Operation One-Way Chandelier." This investigation and prosecution were part of a multi-year investigation into fisheries fraud in New York. The investigation led to an indictment of one fisher, a wholesale fish dealer, and two of its managers for conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud and obstruction in connection with a scheme to illegally overharvest at least 200,000 #'s of summer flounder and 20,000#'s of black sea bass. An estimated combined wholesale value of \$885,000. On July 11, 2024, the fisher, the last of the indicted individuals was sentenced to serve 30 months incarceration.

**On Demand Fishing** - The LEC discussed the topic of "On Demand Fishing" with the Chair of both the American Lobster Management Board and the NEFMC LEC. The purpose of the discussion was to highlight this topic and to ask the LEC to consider collaborating with the Council's law enforcement advisors in future development of regulations related to on-demand trap gear.

**LEC Role and Expectation** - With membership turnover within the LEC over the past few years, the new Chair, Scott Pearce, asked for training on the Role and Expectations of the LEC membership. The LEC members were provided information on the ISFMP Charter, 2025 Action Plan and ASMFC resources. The travel guidelines of the commission were also reviewed.

**Website** - The LEC was also briefed on the status of the ASMFC website upgrade and has provided relevant information and graphics to support the upgrade.

A closed session of our meeting was afforded to openly discuss new and emerging law enforcement issues.

Respective agencies were provided with time to highlight their agencies and offer current enforcement efforts.