



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Habitat Committee Virtual Meeting Summary

May 23, 2022

Staff present: Lisa Havel, Toni Kerns, Deke Tompkins

Members present: Zina Hense (DE), Jimmy Johnson (Chair, NC), Lou Chiarella (NOAA GARFO), Jessica Coakley (MAFMC), Mark Rousseau (MA), Kate Wilke (TNC), Russ Babb (Vice Chair, NJ), Phil Colarusso (EPA Region 1), Eric Schneider (RI), Michelle Bachman (NEFMC), Sharleen Johnson (SC), Marek Topolski (MD), Claire Enterline (ME), Josh Carloni (NH), Rob LaFrance (CT), Alexa Fournier (NY), Cindy Cooksey (NOAA SERO), Dave Dippold (PA), Kent Smith (FL), Paul Medders (GA), Wilson Laney (NCCF)

Others present: Dewayne Fox (Delaware State University), Dave Kazyak (USGS), Dave Secor (University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science), Shannon White (USFWS)

The Habitat Committee meeting commenced with the introduction of Zina Hense as the new member, replacing Jeff Tinsman, who retired. The agenda was approved by consensus. The committee then received presentations from D. Secor, D. Fox, and D. Kazyak on the Atlantic sturgeon in the Delaware River. They discussed the historical peak in sturgeon abundance around 1888 and the subsequent decline due to industrial fishing and technological advances. The Delaware River, a crucial freshwater port, faces challenges like vessel strikes and habitat disruption, prompting discussions on potential mitigation measures such as no-passing zones and improved spawning habitats.

L. Havel updated the committee on ACFHP's efforts to secure funding and manage projects through Beyond the Pond. Challenges include operational matching and infrastructure issues. The NFHP Board Chair expressed concern about the current trends in funding and its impact on ACFHP operations. The committee also reviewed the Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment (NRHA), with plans to share tools and insights with relevant workgroups.

The committee checked in on species assignments, noting significant changes in bluefish populations in the Chesapeake Bay, likely due to habitat changes rather than fishing. The striped bass amendment report to Congress is expected soon. Discussions on the Habitat Hotline for 2022 covered the impacts of offshore wind and renewable energy developments, with a focus on nature-based solutions and upcoming funding opportunities.

The Habitat Management Series on acoustics faced challenges with a contractor's draft, prompting a re-evaluation of the document's framework and content. A shared folder for related literature was created, and Claire volunteered to assist with document re-formatting. Updates to the climate change document are planned, incorporating new data and developments since 2018. Adjustments to Fish Habitats of Concern (FHOC) designations were discussed, with further reviews planned.

Vision: Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

The meeting concluded with plans for a follow-up call to finalize the Habitat Hotline theme, lead, and articles, with a Doodle poll to be sent for scheduling. The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM.