



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Law Enforcement Committee Meeting Summary

May 2, 2023

Committee Members: Jason Snellbaker, Chair, NJ; Scott Pearce, Vice Chair, FL; Rob Beal, ME; Delayne Brown, NH; Keith Williams, CT; Sean Reilly, NY; Chris Baker, MA; Nicholas Couch, DE; Jeff Mercer, RI; Matthew Corbin, MD; Jason Walker, NC; Michael Paul Thomas, SC; Chris Hodges, GA; Jeff Ray, NOAA OLE; Bo Hale, USCG; Wayne Hettenbach, USDOJ

ASMFC Staff: Kurt Blanchard; Toni Kerns; Geoffrey White, Mike Rinaldi, Tracey Bauer, James Boyle, Chelsea Touhy

Other Participants: Patrick Keliher

The Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) met during the 2023 spring meeting of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) in Arlington, VA. The LEC welcomed alternate representatives Lt. Sean Reilly from NY and Lt. Bo Hale from the USCG.

Species Issues

American Lobster - Members of ASMFC/ACCSP updated the LEC on the status of VMS implementation in the lobster fishery under Addendum XXIX of Amendment 3, of the American Lobster Fishery Management Plan. Specifically, a review of the current software program in use for this management measure and a review of the approved hardware vendors for the VMS systems. ASMFC staff will continue to include LEC input to working group discussions regarding further VMS development and use in the lobster fishery.

The LEC discussed the current proposals under Addendum XXVII of Amendment 3 of the American Lobster Fishery Management Plan. Specific discussion was about the consistency of management measures across specific Lobster Conservation Management Areas. The LEC recognizes the uniqueness of certain LCMA's but continues to support consistent management measures within each of the LCMA's.

Atlantic Striped Bass – The LEC discussed the current findings of the Technical Committee – Stock Assessment Subcommittee as reported at the May 2023 meeting of the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board. Specifically, the TC - SAS reported that there was a 40% increase of recreational removals, with a 33% estimated removal over both sectors of this fishery. Recognizing that the board may wish to act on these findings, the LEC discussed how a mid-season regulatory change would affect enforcement efforts in this fishery. Specifically, members reported that regulations have been promulgated and advertised for the current

fishing year. This may cause confusion among fishers and a potential enforcement concern with the inability to effectively enforce the regulatory change.

Law Enforcement compliance reporting for the annual Striped Bass Management Plan review process was discussed by the committee. In the recent plan review the PRT identified an inconsistency in how state law enforcement was reporting patrol activity. Some states would provide specific patrol data of inspections, citations, and seizures. Where others would report current trends and observations within the fishery. In working with the FMP Coordinator and the PRT, it was agreed by all that a narrative Identifying common striped bass violations in the current year and any new or emerging enforcement issues would be beneficial. Quantitative information is optional as most states do not collect species specific data.

Tautog Tagging Study – The LEC was briefed on an ongoing survey by ASMFC and the State of New York in reference to tautog tagging. The survey will assess the varied types of tags in different environments. The goal behind this study is to identify a tag for use that will not damage a fish in the live market and hold the appropriate information necessary for tracking in the fishery.

Other issues

Members reviewed the current ASMFC document “Guidelines for Resource Managers on the Enforceability of Fishery Management Measures (August 2015)”. This document has not been reviewed since 2015. With the always evolving strategies to address the development of fishery management plans, the LEC wished to keep this document relevant for the fishery managers of today. Our review focused on the relevance of past management measures and new and emerging management measures. Consideration of re-scoring each of the past management measures while scoring and updating newly identified measures was discussed by the committee. It was agreed by consensus that there would be no need to completely rewrite the document. The document was still relevant but needed updating of newly identified management measures. The committee will move forward with updating this document, with a plan to have Policy Board approval in the Fall of 2023.

A presentation about the NACLELA / ICCA Wildlife Officer Exchange Program. This program is of interest as the Chair of the LEC, Deputy Chief Jason Snellbaker (NJ) was invited by the organizers to participate in this program in his role as a state officer and a NACLELA graduate. This exchange was with an ICCA graduate from the Fisheries Compliance and Enforcement agency of Belize. This shared experience helped to increase international collaboration and individual capacity to address wildlife crime globally.

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

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