



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Law Enforcement Committee Meeting Summary

October 17 - 18, 2023

Committee Members: Jason Snellbaker, Chair, NJ; Rob Beal, ME; Delayne Brown, NH; Chris Baker, MA; Jeff Mercer, RI; Sean Reilly, NY; Jeffrey Sabo, PA; Nicholas Couch, DE; Matthew Corbin, MD; Matthew Rogers, VA; Jason Walker, NC; Chris Hodges, GA; Lennie Day, USCG; Eric Marek, USFWS and James Cassin, NOAA

ASMFC Staff: Kurt Blanchard, Toni Kerns, James Boyle

Other Participants: Patrick Keliher, Daniel McKiernan, Jamie Greene, Lt. Andrew Wilson

The Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) conducted a hybrid meeting during the 2023 Annual meeting of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) in Beaufort, NC. The committee welcomed LTC. Jeff Sabo as the new representative from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

Species Issues

American Lobster – The LEC discussed the status of the trigger Indices under Addendum XXVII of Amendment 3 of the American Lobster ISFMP. Every October the ASMFC Lobster Management Board reviews trawl and ventless trap survey results to see if the 35% decline in the recruit abundance has occurred. If the 35% decline in the recruit abundance is reached, then the following management consideration will take effect.

- **1st Gauge Increase** – The first 1/16th of an inch gauge increase will take effect June 1st of the year after a determination by the Board that a 35% decline in recruitment abundance has occurred.
- **2nd Gauge Increase** – On June 1st, three years after the Board's determination, the second 1/16th of an inch gauge increase for LMA1 harvesters will take effect.
- **Escape Vent Increase** – On June 1st, four years after the Board's determination, lobster trap escape vent size increases will take effect.

The committee was updated on the actions of the American Lobster Management Board in extending Addendum XXVII Implementation date to January 1, 2025.

Atlantic Striped Bass – Ms. Toni Kerns updated the LEC on the status of Draft Addendum II of Amendment 7 of the Atlantic Striped Bass ISFMP. Specific discussion was of the proposed compliance measures found in Section 3.0 of the proposed plan. The LEC looks forward to providing comments at the appropriate time on the specific management options.

Tautog Tagging Study – The LEC was briefed by staff on the status of the Tautog Tagging Study being conducted by the Technical Committee and the State of New York. The study will assess the varied types of tags in different environments. This study is to be completed in late 2023 with recommendations to the Tautog Management Board in 2024. 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 within the fishery.

Spiny Dogfish – Staff provided information on actions taken by the MAFMC and NEFMC to reduce sturgeon bycatch in the Federal Large Mesh Gillnet fisheries. The LEC discussed the following topics:

- In response to the 2021 Biological Opinion and 2022 Action Plan to Reduce Atlantic Sturgeon Bycatch in Federal Large Mesh Gillnet Fisheries, a joint FMAT/PDT of the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Councils formed to develop a range of alternatives to reduce sturgeon bycatch in the Monkfish and Spiny Dogfish Fisheries.
- Review Progress and Timeline Updates on the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils' Joint Action on the Spiny Dogfish Fishery to Reduce Atlantic Sturgeon Bycatch.

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 updated 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. The LEC assigned a sub-committee in the Spring 2023. This sub-committee conducted three meetings over the summer months and has prepared a draft document for review and consideration by the full LEC. The next step will be to score and prioritize the management measures contained in the document. This will occur in late 2023, with a goal of this Boards approval in early 2024.

A presentation of the second phase of the NACLELA / ICCA Wildlife Officer Exchange Program was offered. In this phase the US agency representative travelled to the foreign nation to learn about their respective 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. Deputy Chief Jason Snellbaker shared his experience of traveling to Belize and learning about their fishery enforcement program. This shared experience helped to increase international collaboration and individual capacity to address wildlife crime globally.

The committee also discussed how best to utilize the Interstate Wildlife Violators Compact. Specifically, how best to share license sanctions among participating jurisdictions. For example, if the State of Maine were to issue a license sanction for a violation of their regulations; the State of New Hampshire or Massachusetts or any compact partnered state with like regulation, can also revoke the privilege of this same fisher in their state. This would be based on the Maine suspension. For our member state agencies, this is an unused resource that could help protect our marine fisheries and offer a deterrent.

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.