



ASMFC

# FISHERIES *focus*

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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## *Department of Commerce Decision May Impact ASMFC's Ability to Conserve Atlantic Coastal Fisheries*

On July 11th, Secretary of Commerce, Wilbur Ross, notified the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission that he has found the State of New Jersey to be in compliance with Addendum XXVII to the Summer Flounder Fishery Management Plan. According to the letter sent to the Commission, Secretary Ross's decision was based on the assertion that "New Jersey makes a compelling argument that the measures it implemented this year, despite increasing catch above the harvest target, will likely reduce total summer flounder mortality in New Jersey waters to a level consistent with the overall conservation objective for the recreational fishery." This is the first time since passage of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (Atlantic Coastal Act) in 1993 and the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act in 1984 that the Secretary of Commerce failed to uphold a noncompliance recommendation by the Commission.

"The Commission is deeply concerned about the near-term impact on our ability to end overfishing on the summer flounder stock as well as the longer-term ability for the Commission to effectively conserve numerous other Atlantic coastal shared resources," stated Commission Chair Douglas Grout of New Hampshire. "The Commission's finding of noncompliance was not an easy one. It included hours of Board deliberation and rigorous Technical Committee review, and represented, with the exception of New Jersey, a unanimous position of the Commission's state members. Our decision was based on Technical Committee's findings that New Jersey's measures were not conservationally-equivalent to those measures in Addendum XXVIII and are projected to result in an additional 93,800 fish being harvested. Additionally, we had an obligation as a partner in the joint management of summer flounder with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) to implement measures to end overfishing immediately or face the possibility of summer flounder becoming an overfished stock."

Based on the latest stock assessment information, summer flounder is currently experiencing overfishing. Spawning stock biomass has been declining since 2010 and is just 16% above the threshold. The vast majority of fishery-independent surveys show rapidly declining abundance. Any increase in overall mortality puts the stock at risk for further declines and increases the probability of the stock becoming overfished. If the stock falls below the biomass threshold, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requires the Council to initiate a rebuilding program, which could require more restrictive management measures.

New Jersey was not the only state to be concerned about the impact of the approved measures to its recreational fishing community. Two other states submitted alternative proposals that were rejected in favor of the states equally sharing the burden of needed reductions. Those states, as well as other

*continued, see DOC DECISION on page 7*

## Upcoming Meetings

*The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as the deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and diadromous species. The fifteen member states of the Commission are: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.*

### Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Douglas E. Grout (NH)  
Chair

James J. Gilmore, Jr. (NY)  
Vice-Chair

Robert E. Beal  
Executive Director

Patrick A. Campfield  
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#### **August 1-3**

ASMFC Summer Meeting, The Westin Alexandria, 400 Courthouse Square, Alexandria, VA

#### **August 8-10**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Courtyard Marriott, 21 North Juniper Street, Philadelphia, PA

#### **August 9 (10 AM)**

Atlantic Herring Days Out Conference Call (go to <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/8/2017/atlantic-herring-days-out-call/1077> for more information)

#### **August 14 (begin 10 AM) - 17 (ends 3 PM)**

Atlantic Sturgeon Stock Assessment Review Workshop, Marriott Raleigh City Center, 500 Fayetteville Street Raleigh, NC (go to <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/8/2017/Atlantic-Sturgeon-Stock-Assessment-Review-Workshop/1093> for more information)

#### **September 11-15**

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Town and Country Inn, 2008 Savannah Highway, Charleston, SC

#### **September 26-28**

New England Fishery Management Council, Gloucester, MA

#### **September 26-29**

Data Workshop for the Atlantic Striped Bass Benchmark Stock Assessment, Westin Crystal City, 1800 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, VA

#### **October 10-12**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hyatt Long Island East End, 451 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY

#### **October 15-19**

ASMFC 76<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, Waterside Marriott Hotel, 235 East Main Street, Norfolk, VA

#### **November 14**

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Management Board, DC/BWI area.

#### **December 4-7**

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, DoubleTree by Hilton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront, 2717 W. Fort Macon Road, Atlantic Beach, NC

#### **December 5-7**

New England Fishery Management Council, Hotel Viking, Newport, Rhode Island

#### **December 11-14**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Westin Annapolis, 100 Westgate Circle, Annapolis, Maryland

#### **January 30-31**

New England Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Harborside, Portsmouth, NH

#### **February 6-8**

ASMFC Winter Meeting, Westin Hotel, 1800 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, VA

#### **February 13-15**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hilton Garden Inn Raleigh/Crabtree Valley, 3912 Arrow Drive, Raleigh, NC



### Commissioner Survey Identifies Challenges to Fisheries Management

Built into the Commission's 5-year Strategic Plan and annual action plans is the recognition that Commissioners must dedicate themselves to thoughtful and deliberative self-evaluation to effectively achieve our collective vision of sustainably managing Atlantic coastal fisheries. Annually, this self-evaluation takes the form of a Commissioner survey and Annual Performance of the Stocks.

In May, Commissioners reviewed the results of the survey, which identified three broad issues that make our work as fisheries managers complicated and challenging. These include climate change; finite resources for data collection; and the rise of individual state interests over those of the coast. Socioeconomic factors and analyses were a recurring theme throughout.

Climate change and other environmental stressors have drastically changed our ability to manage fishery resources. Warming water temperatures throughout New England have led to the collapse of the Gulf of Maine northern shrimp and the depletion of Southern New England lobster stocks. Some

It is my hope and that of the Commission's leadership that our long-standing history of cooperative management will provide a solid foundation for us to collectively move forward in achieving our vision of sustainably managing Atlantic coastal fisheries.

species, such as black sea bass, Atlantic croaker and cobia are beginning to extend their ranges into more northern waters. Weakfish rebuilding has been hindered by unusually high levels of natural mortality, while diadromous species such as American eel, shad, river herring and Atlantic sturgeon have all been impacted by impediments to fish passage and the lack of suitable riparian and nearshore

habitat. These stressors are outside the purview of the state's fishery agencies and coastwide management efforts, yet they are a significant factor in the fisheries management equation that must be addressed in our management programs. The Commission's Climate Change Work Group, composed of fisheries managers and scientists, is working on developing science, policy, and management strategies to assist the Commission with adapting its management to changes in species abundance and distribution resulting from climate change impacts.

The second issue raised by Commissioners concerns data quality and availability, both of which are hindered by the lack of adequate fiscal resources to maintain long-term data sets,

initiate new monitoring programs, and conduct benchmark stock assessments at an ever increasing pace to match management needs. It's no secret state and federal marine fisheries budgets have been shrinking the past few years, and usually one of the first casualties of these cuts are fisheries monitoring programs, whether it be state young-of-the-year surveys, a regionally-specific survey on horseshoe crab adult abundance, or state/federal cooperative surveys such as those conducted by SEAMAP and NEAMAP (Southeast and Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Programs, respectively). While NEAMAP has been able to maintain consistent funding through various sources, several of the SEAMAP South Atlantic core surveys, which have been operational since the 1980s, have been impacted by funding shortfalls. The Commission continues to place a high priority on ensuring these and other long-running and critically important surveys have secure, long-term funding to support our fisheries management and stock assessment needs.

Many Commissioners expressed concern regarding the current use of recreational catch and effort data generated by the Marine Recreational Information Program. The Commission and the states will continue to work closely with NOAA Fisheries to improve these critical recreational data and better align the recreational management programs with the available data.

Over the last year, Commissioners have rightly been concerned about state and regional parochialism. Bringing together 15 states, all with different needs, has never been without conflict. But the states have always been able to work through their differences within the Commission framework. The states' willingness to sacrifice together in the near-term has always resulted in a rising tide – good for all boats. Indeed, many interjurisdictional fisheries management successes on the Atlantic coast in the last three decades can be traced back to cooperation and compromise among the states under the Striped Bass Act and Atlantic Coastal Act.

The principles upon which the Atlantic Coastal Act is founded are now being put to their greatest test. The Commerce Department's recent and precedent-setting decision threatens to undermine a long history of cooperation among the states. Fisheries are not managed in a vacuum, and I know every one of our Commissioners care deeply about our marine environment – and more importantly the people who depend upon it. While the future impact of Secretary Ross' action is unclear, we must trust in the states' 75-year track record of working together to successfully manage our shared marine resources. It is my hope and that of the Commission's leadership that our long-standing history of cooperative management will provide a solid foundation for us to collectively move forward in achieving our vision of sustainably managing Atlantic coastal fisheries.

# Species Profile: American Eel

## Commission Seeks to Better Understand and Conserve Unique and Highly Valued Species

### Introduction

Few of the species under the Commission's watch have both a unique life cycle story and command attention on the international scene for its high market demand and conservation needs. But American eel is uniquely positioned to captivate one's attention by its biology, ex-vessel value, and continued conservation efforts. Even though much is still unknown about the journey American eels undergo from the Sargasso Sea to the estuaries and rivers of North and South America, it is an important species that requires international cooperation to conserve.

### Life History

From a biological perspective, American eel are as enigmatic as they are fascinating. Once thought to be a freshwater species, American eel are actually a catadromous species, migrating from inland rivers to the ocean to spawn. The only catadromous species found in North America, this elusive animal begins its life in the Sargasso Sea, an area of the western Atlantic Ocean east of the Bahamas and south of Bermuda. For up to a year and a half the Gulf Stream transports and disperses larval eel, called leptocephali, along the eastern coast of Central and North America. At this stage the eels are transparent and are no bigger than a stick of gum. Leptocephali metamorphose into glass eel as they migrate toward land. The elver stage occurs when glass eel turn a brown color and move into brackish or freshwater. As they grow into yellow eel they will feed mainly at night on insect larvae, crayfish, smaller benthic fish, and even smaller elvers when available.

Yellow eel will typically establish a very small home range and have even been known to return to their home range if they are displaced. Another unique characteristic about American eel is when they are densely concentrated in habitat, they are more likely to be males, while eel living in less dense populations are more likely to be females. Females will also grow larger and reach maturity at a later age than males, particularly in the northern regions. Males grow to two feet long and females can reach up to four feet long, although growth rates are dependent on the habitat latitude and distance from the Atlantic Ocean.

Sexually maturing eel, called silver eel, migrate up to 3,000 miles back to where they were born in the Sargasso Sea. They will spawn once and presumably die. The spawning events have yet to be observed and the exact location remains unknown. Because all mature adult eel from the entire range come together in one place and reproduce, the American eel population is considered a panmictic (single) stock. So the eel you see in your local rivers and streams are the same as the ones found in the St. Lawrence River in Canada or rivers in South America!

### Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Eel fishing in North America has been documented as far back as the 17<sup>th</sup> century largely as a subsistence fishery. In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, commercial interest for American eel arose most significantly in the 1960s in response to the European export market. Since then, commercial landings have fluctuated depending on the market price for eel at their various life stages: glass, yellow, and silver. Historically and currently, the majority of commercial landings come from the yellow eel fishery. After an initial decline in the 1950s, commercial yellow eel landings increased to a peak of 3.67 million pounds in 1979, declined again in the 2000s, and have exceeded one million pounds three times since 2004. In 2016, yellow eel landings totaled 928,358 pounds. Eel pots are the most typical gear used in the commercial yellow eel fishery; however, weirs, fyke nets, and other fishing methods are also employed. Although yellow eel were historically harvested for food, today's fishery sells yellow eel primarily as bait for recreational fisheries. At the silver eel stage, eel are completely focused

### Species Snapshot



#### American Eel *Anguilla rostrata*

#### Common Names:

Elver, silver eel, yellow eel, freshwater eel

#### Interesting Facts:

- Eel can travel over land! This fascinating creature can absorb oxygen through its skin, allowing them to travel over land for short distances, such as through mud or wet grass.
- Eel have poor eyesight and likely depend on a keen sense of smell to locate food.
- Aristotle did the first known research on eel.
- Leptocephali (eel larval stage) were originally thought to be a different species.
- American eel were once thought to be the same species as the European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*).

#### Christmas Eel!

- Eel are considered an important component of the traditional Italian-American "Feast of Seven Fishes" dinner celebrated on Christmas Eve.

**East Coast Record:** 44.5 inches/8 pounds, caught in New Hampshire in 1975

**Oldest Recorded:** 20 years

#### Stock Status:

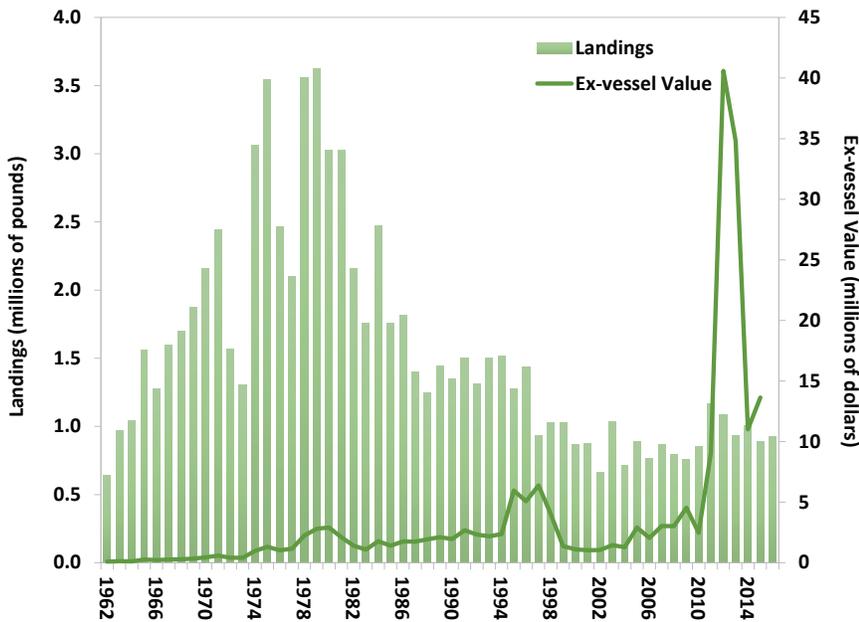
Depleted throughout its US range



Photo (c) Brian Gratwicke

### American Eel Commercial Landings and Ex-Vessel Value

Source: ACCSP Data Warehouse, 2017



\*2016 values are preliminary

Timeline of Management Actions: FMP ('99); Addendum I ('06); Addendum II ('08), Addendum III ('13); Addendum IV ('14)

on migrating back to the spawning grounds and typically do not respond to baited traps. Since the approval of Addendum IV (2014), silver eel fisheries are only permitted on a limited basis in New York's Delaware River.

Glass eel fisheries along the Atlantic coast are prohibited in all states except Maine and South Carolina. Over the last seven years, there has been a significant increase in the demand for glass eel due to concerns over the population levels of European and Japanese eels, as well as tighter restrictions on the exportation of European eels. Glass eel are exported to Asia to serve as seed stock for aquaculture facilities. Little information is available on targeted recreational fisheries for American eel. Harvest by dip net or fyke net has increased as the market price has risen to over \$1,000 per pound. The highest value reported in Maine in the last five years was \$40.38 million in 2012 for 21,611 pounds. Since the implementation of Addendum IV, Maine's glass eel quota has been set at 9,688 pounds (a 17.5% reduction from the 2014 quota). In 2017, preliminary landings indicate 9,282 pounds of glass eel were sold for a value of \$12.08 million pounds. Because of this high value, poaching of glass eel has become a coastwide issue that impedes and undermines the management, monitoring, and success of this species during a critical life stage.

### Stock Status

The 2012 benchmark stock assessment concluded American eel is depleted in US waters due to a combination of historical overfishing, habitat loss, food web alterations, predation, turbine mortality, environmental changes, toxins and contaminants, and disease. Despite the large number of surveys and studies available for use in this assessment, the American eel stock is still considered data-poor because very few surveys target eel and collect information on length, age, and sex of the animals caught. Also, given the extremely complex life history of eel it is challenging to assess using traditional stock assessment models. Therefore, two data-poor methods were used to determine the status of the American eel resource: trend analyses and model analysis.

continued, see AMERICAN EEL on page 11

### Enforcement & Management Respond Effectively to Glass Eel Conservation Needs

With the continued demand for glass eel to supply Asian seafood markets and a market price above \$1000 per pound in recent years, there remains significant incentives to illegally harvest and trade glass eel from US waters. Currently, only the State of Maine has a glass eel commercial quota (9,688 pounds), which is tightly regulated through a swipe card system. South Carolina permits a small harvest (less than 500 pounds in recent years) and Florida has been phasing out glass eel harvest in recent years through regulation.

Prior to the implementation of Addendum IV (2014), which greatly improved the reporting and accounting of glass eel caught in Maine, there were few systems set up to track and monitor the harvest of glass eel across the US Atlantic coast. Glass eel sold to Asia markets had been sourced from around the world; not only American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*) but also the Japanese eel (*Anguilla japonica*) and European eel (*Anguilla Anguilla*). In 2008 and again in 2010, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), an international membership union that aims to assist societies throughout the world to conserve nature and promote ecologically sustainability, made a determination to include European eel on its Red List of Threatened Species as 'critical endangered' due to findings of declining recruitment and abundance indices. In response to the IUCN's determination in 2010, the European Union banned the export of European eel, reducing supply to Asia markets and subsequently increasing demand for glass eel sourced from the US and Asia. At the same time, ongoing monitoring of Japanese eels indicated similar trends in declining abundance. This led to the IUCN determination

continued, see GLASS EEL on page 11

# ASMFC Summer Meeting



*The agenda is subject to change. The agenda reflects the current estimate of time required for scheduled Board meetings. The Commission may adjust this agenda in accordance with the actual duration of Board meetings. Interested parties should anticipate Boards starting earlier or later than indicated herein.*

## TUESDAY, AUGUST 1

8:00 – 9:30 a.m.

### Executive Committee

*(A portion of this meeting may be a closed session for Committee members and Commissioners only)*

- Public Comment
- Discuss Council/Commission Line in NOAA Budget
- Discuss the Secretary of Commerce Decision Regarding New Jersey Summer Flounder Recreational Measures
- Discuss Executive Director's Contract Renewal (**Closed Session**)

9:45 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

### South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board

- Public Comment
- Review and Consider Cobia Draft Fishery Management Plan for Public Comment (*L. Daniel*) **Action**
- 2017 Spot Benchmark Stock Assessment **Final Action**
  - Presentation of Benchmark Assessment Report (*C. McDonough*)
  - Presentation of Peer Review Panel Report (*P. Campfield*)
  - Consider Acceptance of Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report for Management Use
  - Consider Management Response to Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report (*J. Estes*)
- Consider 2017 Traffic Light Analyses for Atlantic Croaker and Spot (*C. McDonough*)
  - Review 2017 Traffic Light Analyses
  - Progress Update on Exploratory Analyses for Incorporation of Additional Indices and Adjustments to the Atlantic Croaker Traffic Light Analysis
- Consider 2017 Atlantic Croaker FMP Review and State Compliance (*M. Schmidtke*) **Action**

1:45 – 2:45 p.m.

### Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program Coordinating Council

- ACCSP Status Report (*M. Cahall*)
  - Program Updates
  - Committee Updates
- Review and Consider Approval of the Marine Recreational Information Program Atlantic Regional Implementation Plan (*G. White*) **Action**
- Recreational Data Collection: Changes on the Horizon (*G. White*)

## Public Comment Guidelines

In order to ensure a fair opportunity for public input, the ISFMP Policy Board has established the following guidelines for use at management board meetings:

For issues that are not on the agenda, management boards will continue to provide opportunity to the public to bring matters of concern to the board's attention at the start of each board meeting. Board chairs will use a speaker sign-up list in deciding how to allocate the available time on the agenda (typically 10 minutes) to the number of people who want to speak.

For topics that are on the agenda, but have not gone out for public comment, board chairs will provide limited opportunity for comment, taking into account the time allotted on the agenda for the topic. Chairs will have flexibility in deciding how to allocate comment opportunities; this could include hearing one comment in favor and one in opposition until the chair is satisfied further comment will not provide additional insight to the board.

For agenda action items that have already gone out for public comment, it is the Policy Board's intent to end the occasional practice of allowing extensive and lengthy public comments. Currently, board chairs have the discretion to decide what public comment to allow in these circumstances.

In addition, the following timeline has been established for the submission of written comment for issues for which the Commission has NOT established a specific public comment period (i.e., in response to proposed management action).

1. Comments received 3 weeks prior to the start of a meeting week will be included in the briefing materials.
2. Comments received by **5 PM on Tuesday, July 25, 2017** will be distributed electronically to Commissioners/Board members prior to the meeting and a limited number of copies will be provided at the meeting.
3. Following the July 25<sup>th</sup> deadline, the commenter will be responsible for distributing the information to the management board prior to the board meeting or providing enough copies for management board consideration at the meeting (a minimum of 50 copies).

The submitted comments must clearly indicate the commenter's expectation from the ASMFC staff regarding distribution. As with other public comment, it will be accepted via mail, fax, and email.

coastal states, implemented the approved measures in order to end overfishing and support the long-term conservation of the resource.

“The states have a 75-year track record of working together to successfully manage their shared marine resources,” continued Chairman Grout. “We are very much concerned about the short and long-term implications of the Secretary’s decision on interstate fisheries management. Our focus moving forward will be to preserve the integrity of the Commission’s process, as established by the Atlantic Coastal Act, whereby, the states comply with the management measures we collectively agree upon. It is my fervent hope that three-quarters of a century of cooperative management will provide a solid foundation for us to collectively move forward in achieving our vision of sustainably managing Atlantic coastal fisheries.”

The Commission is currently reviewing its options in light of Secretary Ross’s action, and the member states will meet during the Commission’s Summer Meeting in early August to discuss the implications of the Secretary’s determination on the summer flounder resource and on state/federal cooperation in fisheries management under the Atlantic Coastal Act.

**BACKGROUND:** On June 8<sup>th</sup>, pursuant to the provisions of the Atlantic Coastal Act, the Commission notified the Secretaries of Commerce and the Interior that it had found New Jersey out of compliance for not implementing the following mandatory management measures contained in Addendum XXVIII to the Summer Flounder FMP:

- Shore mode for Island Beach State Park only: 17-inch minimum size limit/ 2-fish possession limit/128-day open season.
- Delaware Bay only (west of the colregs line): 18-inch minimum size limit/3-fish possession limit/128-day open season.
- All other marine waters (east of the colregs line): 19-inch minimum size limit/ 3-fish possession limit/128-day open season

The implementation of these measures is necessary to achieve the conservation goals and objectives of the FMP to end overfishing of the summer flounder stock.

### 3:00 – 6:00 p.m. American Lobster Management Board

- Public Comment
- Consider American Lobster Addendum XXV for Final Approval **Final Action**
  - Presentation of Proposals from Lobster Conservation Management Teams (LCMT) 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6
  - Technical Committee Report on LCMT Proposals (*K. Reardon*)
  - Consider Final Approval of Addendum XXV
- State and Federal Inconsistencies in Lobster Conservation Management Area 4 Season Closure (*M. Ware*) **Possible Action**
- American Lobster Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank Subcommittee Report (*M. Ware*) **Possible Action**
- Update on Development of American Lobster Draft Addendum XXVI (*M. Ware*)
- Law Enforcement Committee Report on American Lobster Chain of Custody (*M. Robson*)
- NOAA Office of Law Enforcement Draft Enforcement Priorities 2018-2022 (*M. Ware*) **Possible Action**

## WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2

### 8:00 – 10:00 a.m. Shad and River Herring Management Board

- Public Comment
- Review Update for River Herring Stock Assessment (*B. Chase*)
- Review Update for Shad Stock Assessment Timeline (*J. Kipp*)
- Consider Approval of Shad and River Herring Sustainability Fishery Management Plans (SFMPs) **Final Action**
  - Review SFMPs and Technical Committee Memo (*B. Chase*)
    - South Carolina: Updated River Herring SFMP
    - Florida: Updated Shad SFMP
- Consider Approval of 2016 FMP Review and State Compliance Reports (*K. Rootes-Murdy*) **Action**

### 10:15 – 11:15 a.m. American Eel Management Board

- Public Comment
- Consider North Carolina Glass Eel Aquaculture Plan for 2018 (*K. Rootes-Murdy*) **Action**
  - Technical Committee Report
  - Law Enforcement Committee Report (*M. Robson*)
- Consider 2016 Yellow Eel Landings Overage and Coastwide Cap (*K. Rootes-Murdy*) **Possible Action**
- Consider 2016 American Eel FMP Review and State Compliance (*K. Rootes-Murdy*) **Action**

### 11:30 a.m. – 5:45 p.m. Atlantic Menhaden Management Board

- Public Comment
- Review 2017 Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Update (*J. McNamee*)
- Biological Ecological Reference Point Work Group Report (*S. Madsen*)
  - Review of Hilborn, et al (2017) Paper
- Consider Draft Amendment 3 for Public Comment **Action**
  - Biological Ecological Reference Point Workgroup Report on Interim Reference Points (*K. Drew*)

continued, see FINAL AGENDA on page 8

**11:30 a.m. – 5:45 p.m. Atlantic Menhaden Management Board (continued)**

- Review of Management Issues and Alternatives (*M. Ware*)
- Plan Development Team Report on New York Proposal to Recalibrate Landings (*M. Ware*)
- Advisory Panel Report (*J. Kaelin*)
- Set 2018 Atlantic Menhaden Fishery Specifications **Final Action**
  - Overview of Specification Process (*M. Ware*)
  - Technical Committee Report (*J. McNamee*)
  - Advisory Panel Report (*J. Kaelin*)
- Update on 2017 Episodic Events Set Aside (*M. Ware*)

THURSDAY, AUGUST 3

**8:00 – 11:30 a.m. Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board**

- Public Comment
- Update from the State Director's Meeting and Executive Committee (*D. Grout*)
- Review and Consider New Jersey Appeal of Addendum XXVIII to the Summer Flounder Fishery Management Plan **Final Action**
  - Postponed Motion: *Move to postpone the New Jersey Appeal of the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Addendum XXVIII until the Summer/August ISFMP Policy Board Meeting.* Motion by Mr. Nowalsky; Second by Mr. Keliher.
- Discuss the Secretary of Commerce Decision Regarding New Jersey Summer Flounder Recreational Measures
- Review of the Annual Performance of the Stocks (*T. Kerns*)
- Discuss New England Fishery Management Council Participation on the Atlantic Herring Section (*T. Kerns*) **Possible Action**
- Review and Consider Approval of Standard Meeting Practices (*T. Kerns*) **Action**
- Progress Update on the 2017 Atlantic Sturgeon Benchmark Stock Assessment (*K. Drew*)
- Review and Consider Approval of the Assessment Schedule (*S. Madsen*) **Action**
- Standing Committee Reports
  - Habitat and Artificial Reefs (*L. Havel*) **Action**
  - Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (*L. Havel*)
- Review Non-compliance Findings (if necessary) **Action**

**11:15-11:30 a.m. Business Session**

- Public Comment
- Review Non-compliance Findings (if necessary) **Final Action**

**11:45 a.m. – 1:45 p.m. Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board**

- Public Comment
- Summer Flounder Recreational Working Group Report (*K. Rootes-Murdy*) **Possible Action**
- Review of 2017 Black Sea Bass Recreational Measures (*K. Rootes-Murdy*) **Possible Action**
- Black Sea Bass Recreational Working Group Report (*K. Rootes-Murdy*)

**2:00 – 4:30 p.m. Tautog Management Board**

- Public Comment
- Consider Amendment 1 for Final Approval **Final Action**
  - Review Public Comment and Review Management Options (*T. Kerns*)
  - Advisory Panel Report
  - Law Enforcement Report (*J. Snellbaker*)
  - Consider Final Approval of Amendment 1
- Elect Vice-Chair **Action**

## American Lobster

In May, the American Lobster Management Board moved forward with the goal of increasing egg production for the Southern New England (SNE) stock of American lobster by 5%. This increase in egg production can be achieved through a suite of management tools including gauge size changes, trap reductions, and seasonal closures. The recreational fishery is only subject to changes in the gauge size should any be proposed. In making its decision, the Board took into consideration the extensive public comment, which overwhelmingly supported status quo, and the fact that stock declines are largely

on June 15<sup>th</sup> and will be presented for Board approval in August. Once area-specific measures have been approved, the Board will consider final approval of Addendum XXV.

In its deliberation on the SNE lobster stock, the Board discussed the need to consider changes to the current management goals and reference points, noting changes in the marine environment may limit the ability to rebuild the stock to levels seen in the 1990s. The Board will continue to discuss these issues, particularly as the Commission's Climate Change Work Group develops recommendations regarding the management of stocks impacted by changing climate conditions.

For more information, please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [mware@asmfc.org](mailto:mware@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

## Atlantic Herring

The Atlantic Herring Section approved Addendum I to Amendment 3 of the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Herring. The Addendum includes management measures intended to stabilize the rate of catch in the Area

1A fishery and distribute the seasonal quota throughout Trimester 2 (June through September), which has 72.8% of the season's allocation. The following measures were approved by the Section:

### Days Out Program (effective for the 2017 fishing season)

The Section will separately address days out provisions for federal herring Category A vessels and small-mesh bottom trawl vessels with a federal herring Category C or D permit.

- In addition to landing restrictions associated with the days out program, Category A vessels are now prohibited from possessing herring caught from

Area 1A during a day out of the fishery.

- Small-mesh bottom trawl vessels with a Category C or D permit will notify states of their intent to fish in Area 1A prior to June 1<sup>st</sup>.

Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts will make days out decisions by consensus. If a consensus cannot be reached, then the default landing day scenario will be zero landing days. (NOTE: At their July 26<sup>th</sup> meeting, the states agreed that vessels with a herring Category A permit that have declared into the Trimester 2 Area 1A fishery may land herring five (5) consecutive days a week. One landing per 24 hour period.)

### Weekly Landing Limit (effective for the 2017 fishing season)

The Addendum implements a weekly harvester landing limit for vessels with a Category A permit. The weekly limit will be adjusted throughout the fishing season based on effort. Forty-five days prior to the start of the fishing season, Category A vessels will notify states of their intent to fish in Area 1A, including a specification of gear type. This will provide states with an estimate of effort to calculate the weekly landing limit. (NOTE: At their July 26<sup>th</sup> meeting, the states agreed that vessels with a herring Category A permit may harvest up to 680,000 pounds (17 trucks) per harvester vessel, per week. 120,000 pounds out of the 680,000 pound weekly limit can be transferred to a carrier vessel.)

### At-Sea Transfer and Carrier Provisions

The Addendum also allows at-sea transfer and carrier provisions to be used as potential management tools prior to the start of the fishing year. At their July 26<sup>th</sup> meeting, the states agreed to the following measures for harvester vessels with a herring Category A permit and carrier vessels landing herring caught in Area 1A to a Maine, New Hampshire or Massachusetts port.

- A harvester vessel can transfer herring at-sea to another catcher vessel.

*continued, see FISHERY MANAGEMENT ACTIONS on page 10*



Egg bearing lobster. Photo (c) NOAA Ocean Technology Foundation

a result of climatic changes, including increasing water temperatures over the last 15 years.

Throughout May and early June, Lobster Conservation Management Teams (LCMTs) for Areas 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 met to develop area-specific proposals on how to achieve the 5% increase in egg production. As established through Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster, LCMTs are composed of lobster industry members who are charged with recommending area-specific measures for Board consideration and approval. The LCMT proposals were submitted for Technical Committee review

- A harvester vessel is limited to making at-sea transfers to only one carrier vessel per week.
- Carrier vessels are limited to receiving at-sea transfers from one catcher vessel per week and can land once per 24 hour period. A carrier vessel may land up to 120,000 lbs (3 trucks) per week. The carrier limit of 3 trucks is not in addition to the harvester weekly landing limit.
- Carrier vessel: a vessel with no gear on board capable of catching or processing fish. Harvester vessel: a vessel that is required to report the catch it has aboard as the harvesting vessel on the Federal Vessel Trip Report.

### State Landing Report

NOAA Fisheries has granted access to vessel monitoring system-submitted daily catch report data for select staff in Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. This will provide real-time data for the states to implement a weekly landing limit. Therefore, the implementation of a state landing report is not necessary at this time. The Section will include the option to implement a state landing report as part of the interstate fishery management program if it becomes necessary at a future date. The Addendum is available at [http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/592efbfbAtlHerringAddendum\\_I\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/592efbfbAtlHerringAddendum_I_FINAL.pdf).

The Section also approved continuing the use of the GSI30-based forecast system to determine spawning closures in Area 1A. This method was developed by the Technical Committee, then tested and evaluated for effectiveness during the 2016 fishing season. The modified GSI-based spawning monitoring system tracks reproductive maturity to align the timing of spawning area closures with the onset of spawning. The modeling efforts to forecast the spawning closures will be made available via a website.

For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, ISFMP Director, at [tkerns@asmfc.org](mailto:tkerns@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

### Atlantic Striped Bass

In May, the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board chose to not advance Draft Addendum V to Amendment 6 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Striped Bass forward for public comment. Instead, it decided to wait until the release of the results of the 2018 benchmark stock assessment before it considered making changes to the management program.

The Draft Addendum was initiated to consider liberalization of commercial and recreational regulations to bring fishing mortality to the target based on the findings of the 2016 assessment update. The Draft Addendum proposed alternative measures aimed to increase total removals (commercial and recreational) by approximately 10% relative to 2015 to achieve the fishing mortality target in 2017. However, 2016 harvest estimates increased without changing regulations. Additionally, fish from the 2011 year class, which was the largest recruitment event since 2004, will become increasingly available to ocean fisheries in the coming years, possibly resulting in further increases to harvest along the coast. The Board also expressed concern that changing the management program could result in fishing mortality exceeding the target.

In preparation for the 2018 stock assessment, the Board approved the Terms of Reference for the assessment, which will explore new biological reference points for management use.

For more information, please contact Max Appelman, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [mappelman@asmfc.org](mailto:mappelman@asmfc.org) or 703-842-0740.

### Scup & Black Sea Bass

The Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved Addendum XXIX to the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan. The Addendum shortens the length of the commercial scup

summer period and extends the length of the winter II period (Table 1).

This action seeks to allow for the better utilization of the commercial quota, which has been under-harvested since 2011. Specifically, the change in quota period length allows for higher possession limits for a longer period of time each year, thus increasing the likelihood the commercial fishery will fully harvest the quota. The quota allocation for each period remains unchanged. The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) also took the same action through Framework 10. The Council will forward its recommendation to NOAA

**Table 1. New Quota Periods approved in Addendum XXIX**

<b>Winter I</b>	January 1-April 30 (120 days)
<b>Summer</b>	May 1- September 30 (153 days)
<b>Winter II</b>	October 1-December 31 (92 days)

Fisheries for final approval. The Board and Council's action will not affect the 2017 quota period start and end dates; these changes will likely be implemented for 2018 commercial quota. The Addendum is available at [http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/594a8a3fScupAddendum\\_XXIX\\_May2017.pdf](http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/594a8a3fScupAddendum_XXIX_May2017.pdf).

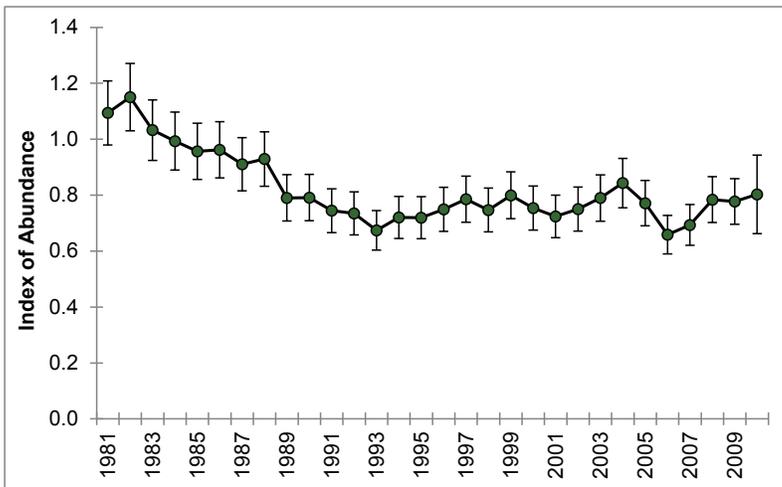
The Board also reviewed the final 2016 black sea bass recreational harvest estimates and considered changes to current measures to meet the 2017 recreational harvest limit (RHL). Based on the performance of the 2016 fishery, which indicated a reduction is needed to stay within the 2017 RHL, the Board set the possession limit for wave 6 (November/December 2017) at five fish in state waters from Rhode Island through New Jersey. All other state measures remain unchanged from 2016.

For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [krootes-murdy@asmfc.org](mailto:krootes-murdy@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

### 30-Year Index of Abundance for Yellow-phase American Eels along the Atlantic Coast

(error bars represent standard errors about the estimates)

Source: ASMFC American Eel Benchmark Stock Assessment Report, 2012



Trend analyses found evidence of declining or, at least, stable abundance of American eel in the US in recent decades. Regional trend analyses identified decreasing populations in the Hudson River and South Atlantic regions, while no consistent trends were found for the Chesapeake Bay and Delaware Bay/Mid-Atlantic Coastal Bays regions. The coastwide model analysis estimated biomass to be at a reduced level. Significant levels of harvest in the 1970s is considered a major factor contributing to the current low biomass levels, but other factors such as habitat loss, predation, and disease have also played a role.

American eel were petitioned for listing as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 2010. At that same time, the Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans conducted a stock assessment on American eel in Canadian waters and found that region-specific status indices show abundance relative to the 1980s is very low for Lake Ontario and upper St. Lawrence River stock, and either unchanged or increasing in the Atlantic Provinces. Furthermore, in 2014 the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) listed American eel as endangered on the IUCN Red List. In October 2015, the US Fish and Wildlife Service made a determination that ESA listing for American eel was not warranted at this time due in part to current management program in place through the Commission. In October 2016 at the Conference of the Parties (CoP) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the European Union requested that more information be collected on the international trade and stock condition of *Anguilla* species, including American Eel, due in part to the increased international market demand and threats to conservation.

### Atlantic Coastal Management

American eel pose unique conservation and management challenges on a coastwide basis as they are a slow growing, late maturing, semelparous species (meaning they spawn once and then die) that migrate between

*continued, see AMERICAN EEL on page 13*

that Japanese eel are endangered, further reducing its availability in the market.

From 2010-2012, the demand for glass eel sourced from North America soared, increasing price per pound significantly, from approximately \$185 per pound in 2010 to over \$1800 per pound in 2012. The Commission's 2012 benchmark stock assessment indicated the need to reduce mortality across all life stages of eel, prompting all states with the exception of Maine, South Carolina, and Florida to prohibit the harvest of glass eel. Since glass eel migrate into, and are available in, estuarine streams and rivers in other states along the Atlantic, the tightening of regulations along the coast has led to the poaching of eel in some states with no glass eel fishery.

With the increased demand to illegally harvest glass eel and the international trade component of the fishery, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, in coordination with other federal and state agencies, conducted operations to identify and apprehend individuals seeking to profit from the illegal harvest and export of glass eels. To date, the ongoing investigation has resulted in guilty pleas for 12 individuals whose combined conduct resulted in the illegal trafficking of more than \$2.94 million worth of elvers in violation of the Lacey Act. In one recent case, a Maine fisherman admitted to illegally transporting or selling approximately \$189,374 worth of elvers in interstate commerce, which had been harvested illegally in Virginia and Massachusetts. The offense in this case is a felony under the Lacey Act, each carrying a maximum penalty of five years in prison, a fine of up to \$250,000 or up to twice the gross pecuniary gain or loss, or both.

At the same time, with the implementation of Addendum IV provisions, Maine has been able to significantly reduce the number of state issued violations. Part of this success can be attributed to the development of a swipe card system that allows for a two ticket (harvester and dealer) reporting that improved the accuracy and timeliness of recording information on elvers caught or landed in Maine. In addition to the swipe card system, Maine implemented in 2014 an individual fishing quota (IFQ) system, allowing harvesters an individual quota to discourage 'derby' fishing. These two components of Maine's eel management have improved monitoring and management of the resource, such that in 2016, Maine DMR eliminated weekly closed periods and extended the season by one week to the benefit of elver fishermen. Enforcement staff and resource managers are continuing their efforts to prevent illegal and excessive harvest of glass eels, ensuring the long term conservation of American eel.

### ASMFC Releases Atlantic Menhaden Socioeconomic Report

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has released the report, "Socioeconomic Analysis of the Atlantic Menhaden Commercial Bait and Reduction Fishery," which characterizes coastwide commercial menhaden fisheries, including bait and reduction sectors and the fishing communities they support. The report's findings will be used to inform the Commission's Atlantic Menhaden Management Board as it considers potential management changes to menhaden commercial bait and reduction fisheries through Draft Amendment 3. Additionally, information from the report will be incorporated into the socioeconomic section of Draft Amendment 3, which is scheduled to be released for public comment in August.

In March 2016, the Commission awarded a grant to the research team of Dr. John Whitehead of Appalachian State University and Dr. Jane Harrison from North Carolina Sea Grant to conduct a socioeconomic study of Atlantic menhaden commercial fisheries. Over the past year, the team has collected and analyzed data to describe the coastwide commercial fisheries. The team interviewed stakeholders and conducted industry surveys to characterize participation in the menhaden fishery, vessel and gear characteristics, as well as identify substitute products, subsidies, and other sources of employment. Interview and survey data also provided information on recent market changes, state-quota impacts, and fishing communities. In addition, a public opinion internet survey was conducted, involving over 2,000 respondents from Maine, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and Florida. A secondary data analysis was conducted using Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program data on pounds landed, ex-vessel revenues, and trips. An economic impact analysis was also performed to evaluate the effects of varying levels of quota on both the bait and reduction sectors.

*Atlantic menhaden captured as part of MD's Estuarine Fish Community Sampling Study © Frank Marengi, MD DNR*



*Purse seining for Atlantic menhaden © John Surrick, Chesapeake Bay Foundation*

Some of the report's primary findings include:

- Interviews and surveys of commercial fishermen and other industry members found many agreed demand for menhaden bait, oil, and meal had increased in recent years.
- The public survey used hypothetical quota variations, with associated changes in fisheries revenue, jobs, and ecosystem services. Survey results indicated a willingness to trade-off some amounts of fisheries revenue in exchange for improvements in ecosystem services; however, willingness was influenced by the respondents' attitudes and characteristics (i.e. perceptions about the importance of menhaden as bait for recreational/commercial fishing, as a contributor to their state's economy, as a source of food for predators, etc.)
- Analysis of historic landings data found prices for menhaden were negatively related to landings levels, but the relationship was small and insignificant in some instances. This suggests quota reductions might reduce commercial fishery revenues, as decreases in landings are not fully compensated by higher prices.
- Analysis of the economic impacts of quota changes indicated increases and decreases in total allowable catch corresponded to income and employment increases and decreases, and these effects were concentrated in New Jersey and Virginia.

The full report can be found on the Commission's website at [http://www.asmfc.org/files/Atlantic%20Menhaden/ASMFC\\_MenhadenSocioeconomicReport\\_June2017.pdf](http://www.asmfc.org/files/Atlantic%20Menhaden/ASMFC_MenhadenSocioeconomicReport_June2017.pdf).

For more information, please contact Shanna Madsen, Fisheries Science Coordinator, at [smadsen@asmfc.org](mailto:smadsen@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

## Comings and Goings

AMERICAN EEL continued from page 11

the high seas and inland estuaries and riverine systems, as well as through international, federal, state, and local jurisdictions. Through the Commission, Atlantic coastal states from Maine to Florida manage American eel in their territorial seas and inland waters. Each state is responsible for implementing management measures within its jurisdiction to ensure the sustainability of the American eel population residing within state boundaries. Increasing demand for eel by Asian markets and domestic bait fisheries, coupled with concern about the status of eel abundance and limited assessment data, spurred development of the first Interstate Fishery Management Plan in the mid-1990s.

Through Addenda III and IV, the Commission and the states sought to reduce mortality and increase conservation of American eel stocks across all life stages. Addendum III, approved in 2013, increased the commercial yellow eel minimum size to 9 inches, reduced the recreational bag limit to 25 fish/day, prohibited silver eel fisheries except in the Delaware River (NY), and implemented fishery-independent and fishery-dependent monitoring requirements. Addendum IV, approved in 2014, established the first ever coastwide quota for yellow eel fisheries, set at 907,671 pounds, along with specific management action if the quota is exceeded. Specifically, the Addendum establishes two management triggers: (1) exceeding coastwide quota by more than 10% in a given year, or (2) exceeding the coastwide quota for two consecutive years regardless of the percent overage. If either one of the triggers are met then states would implement state-specific allocation based on average landings from 2011-2013. Addendum IV also specifies that Maine will maintain its daily trip level reporting and require a pound-for-pound payback in the event of quota overages in its glass eel fishery. Additionally, the state has implemented a fishery-independent life cycle survey covering glass, yellow and silver eels within at least one river system. The Addendum specifies these requirements would also be required for any jurisdiction with a commercial glass eel fishery harvesting more than 750 pounds.

Addendum IV also provides opportunities for a limited glass eel harvest for domestic aquaculture purposes. In 2016 and 2017, North Carolina implemented an aquaculture plan approved by the Board that allowed up to 200 pounds of glass eels to be harvest for aquaculture. At the upcoming 2017 August Meeting, the Board will consider a proposal from North Carolina to continue this program for 2018 and beyond.

### Looking Ahead

In fall 2017, the stock assessment update for American eel will be completed and the Board will consider whether management action is needed in response to the results. While the update will include additional years of data to the coastwide and regional trend analyses, stock status determination cannot be made until more information about the species is collected from the full extent of the species range, including the Great Lakes, Canadian Atlantic Provinces, and the Gulf of Mexico. There is continued interest and need for a comprehensive 'continental' stock assessment because without this collaboration there may be limited opportunity to better classify the condition of the stock. Until then, the Commission will continue to work with the states and international partners to collect and consider important information on this unique species.

For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior FMP Coordinator, at [krootes-murdy@asmfc.org](mailto:krootes-murdy@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.



### PROXIES

#### STEVE HEINS

The Commission extends its congratulations to Steve Heins, retiring after a 31 year career with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Bureau of Marine Resources. Steve has been part of the Commission

for most of that time, providing valuable input on the Commission's science and management activities. He was a longstanding member and chair of the Management and Science and Artificial Reef Committees, as well as the NEAMAP Board. Since 2007, he has served as Jim Gilmore's ongoing proxy. Steve has recently been appointed a seat on the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, where he will continue to work for healthy marine resources as an advocate for both sectors of New York's fisheries.



#### TERRY STOCKWELL

The Commission also extends its congratulations to Terry Stockwell, who will soon retire from the Maine Department of Marine Resources after nearly two decades of service. Since 2006, Terry has served as proxy for the state's Administrative Commissioners. Over that time,

he chaired the Commission's Atlantic Herring and Northern Shrimp Sections, as well as Management Boards for American Eel and Shad and River Herring. Regionally, he has served as Chair and Vice-Chair for the New England Fishery Management Council. Terry was recently appointed a seat on the Council, where he will continue to advocate for resource sustainability and the interests of Maine's recreational and commercial fishermen.



### STAFF

#### ASHTON HARP

In July, Ashton Harp left ASMFC, relocating to Washington's Olympic Peninsula to work at the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission. The focus of her new position is salmon and steelhead management for coastal tribes, in conjunction with state and federal

agencies. Ashton has been an extremely valuable member of the ISFMP team, working on species such as coastal sharks, shad and river herring, winter flounder, Atlantic herring and tautog. Over the course of her two years with us, Ashton coordinated the development of two new plan amendments - one for Atlantic herring and the other for tautog. We wish her all the best in her new job on the West Coast!

## 2017 Omnibus Appropriations Bill Approved; 2018 Process Underway

### Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Appropriations

On July 27<sup>th</sup>, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved its Fiscal Year 2018 Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Bill. The bill contains \$5.6 billion for NOAA, an \$85.1 million decrease from Fiscal Year 2017. Funding for NOAA “continues to target... support for state-led management schemes to ensure greater access to the nation’s abundant fishery resources.” Individual line items were not available as of July 28.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (in \$ thousands)				
	2016 Enacted	2017 Enacted	2018 Trump	2018 House
<b>National Marine Fisheries Service</b>				
<b>Fisheries and Ecosystem Science Programs and Services</b>	139,489	139,489	141,323	141,323
<b>Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys and Assessments</b>	163,271	164,000	154,961	163,000
<b>Observers and Training</b>	43,655	43,655	43,572	43,655
<b>Regional Councils and Fisheries Commissions</b>	33,470	34,254	33,407	34,000
<b>Interjurisdictional Fisheries Grants</b>	3,000	3,004	0	3,000
<b>Enforcement</b>	69,000	69,000	68,943	69,000
<b>Habitat Conservation and Restoration</b>	61,408	52,524	51,334	51,334
<b>Ocean, Coastal and Great Lakes Research</b>				
<b>National Sea Grant College Program</b>	64,000	63,000	0	63,000
<b>National Ocean Service</b>				
<b>Coastal Zone Management and Services</b>	40,000	42,500	39,924	39,600
<b>Coastal Zone Management Grants</b>	26,000	85,000	0	45,000
<b>Sanctuaries and Marine Protected Areas</b>	49,000	51,000	48,907	52,000
<b>National Estuarine Research Reserve System</b>	23,000	23,500	0	23,500

### Fiscal Year 2018 House Appropriations

On July 13<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations approved its Fiscal Year 2018 Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Bill on a vote of 31-21. The legislation contains \$4.97 billion for NOAA, which is \$710 million below Fiscal Year 2017. The Committee Report accompanying the legislation also contains instructions to conduct a mid-Atlantic horseshoe crab trawl survey, fully fund SEAMAP, and complete a cobia stock assessment as soon as possible.

### Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Request

On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, President Trump released his Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Request. It requests an 11% decrease from Fiscal Year 2017 for NOAA (\$3.14 billion) and a four percent decrease for NOAA Fisheries (\$821 million). Numerous programs were targeted for elimination including Coastal Zone Management Grants, Regional Coastal Resilience Grants, National Estuarine Research Reserve System, Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grants, Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act Grants, Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants, and Sea Grant.

### Fiscal Year 2017 Omnibus Appropriations Act

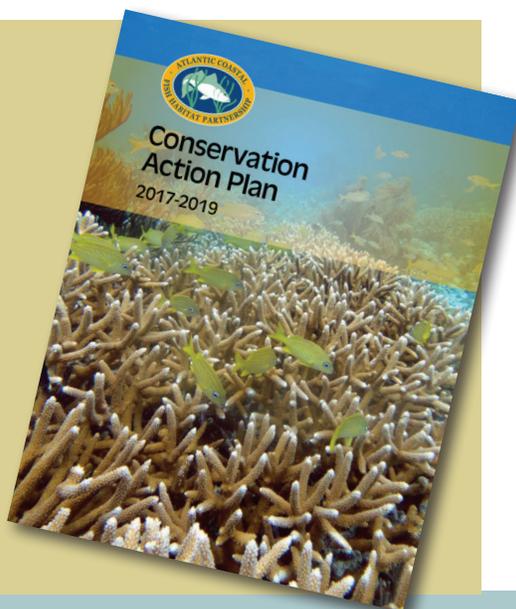
On May 5<sup>th</sup>, President Trump signed H.R. 244, Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017. The legislation contains \$5.7 billion for NOAA, which is \$90 million below Fiscal Year 2016 levels. The law also instructs NOAA Fisheries to fund a Mid-Atlantic Horseshoe Crab Trawl Survey. For more information, please contact Deke Tompkins, Executive Legislative Assistant, at [dtompkins@asmfc.org](mailto:dtompkins@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.



### ACFHP Releases Five Year Strategic Plan

The Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) is pleased to announce the release of its new five-year Conservation Strategic Plan and accompanying two-year Action Plan. The ACFHP Steering Committee has spent the past year developing the plans, which includes goals, objectives, strategies, and actions (Action Plan only) to restore and enhance Atlantic coastal, estuarine, and diadromous fish habitat through conservation, science and data, outreach and communication, and financial initiatives.

*continued, see ACFHP on page 16*



## Integrated Fisheries Reporting Workshop a Big Success!

Fisheries data managers took a big step toward improving Atlantic fisheries data systems when they convened at ACCSP's Integrated Fisheries Reporting (IFR) Workshop in May. Currently, fisheries-dependent data are collected from various sources — including vessel, observer, and dealer reports — and linked together after the fact. IFR describes a fishery reporting system designed so that all reporting for a single trip is done on a single report.

The vast majority of errors in fisheries datasets are introduced by humans, either at the point of entry or during post-trip matching of reports. Using electronic reporting technologies and a universal trip ID generator, an IFR system can automate the collection and integration of reports, thereby minimizing human-introduced errors in fisheries data.

Several programs that collect Atlantic coast fisheries data have already begun to explore ways in which they could implement IFR in their data systems. To ensure that state and federal programs' IFR efforts dovetail with one another and avoid duplication of effort, ACCSP conducted an IFR Workshop for fisheries data managers on the Atlantic coast.

Bringing together representatives from state, regional, and federal fisheries agencies, the main goal of the workshop was to reach consensus on a set of business rules to guide IFR implementation within ACCSP's SAFIS Redesign. Participation was excellent, with representation from the Atlantic coastal states from Maine through Florida; the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission; the three Atlantic Fishery Management Councils; NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Fisheries and Southeast Regional Offices; NOAA Fisheries Northeast, Southeast, and Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Centers; NOAA Fisheries Highly Migratory Species Division; and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF).

Eric Schwaab, NFWF Vice President of Conservation Programs and former Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries, opened the workshop with defining the "why?" He emphasized that

integrated reporting will improve data timeliness and accuracy, thus helping to build trust in the data among both management and industry users.

Attendees were also presented with a synthesis of previous integrated reporting efforts undertaken both within and outside of the United States. Barry Clifford of the Greater Atlantic Fisheries Regional Office (GARFO) presented an update on implementation of the Fisheries-Dependent Data Vision process in the Northeast. GARFO intends to implement IFR using a Trip Management System (TMS) that will distribute the Trip ID to each system component.

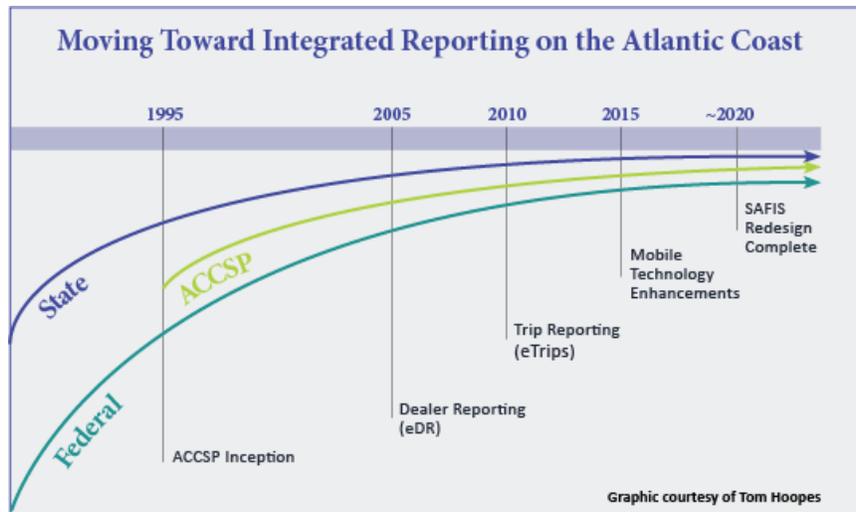
Attendees agreed the TMS would be a logical starting point for discussing an IFR solution that would

meet the needs of all ACCSP partners. The consensus was that the GARFO/Northeast Fisheries Science Center conceptual plan would be the launching point for discussions and development going forward.

Attendees then discussed current issues for implementing integrated reporting, including:

- Duplicate reporting requirements
- Statistical areas
- Definition of a trip
- Regulatory changes
- Local flexibility

Workshop participants began to develop integrated reporting business modules for trip, dealer, biological sampling and observers, and expanded business modules for the Vessels Monitoring System, electronic monitoring, private recreational angler, and cooperative research. The Workshop report, to be released in August and presented to the ACCSP Coordinating Council in fall 2017, will be used for a timeline for incorporating integrated fisheries reporting in SAFIS.



Graphic courtesy of Tom Hoopes



ACCSP is a cooperative state-federal program focused on the design, implementation, and conduct of marine fisheries statistics data collection programs and the integration of those data into a single data management system that will meet the needs of fishery managers, scientists, and fishermen. It is composed of representatives from natural resource management agencies coastwide, including the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the three Atlantic fishery management councils, the 15 Atlantic states, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, the D.C. Fisheries and Wildlife Division, NOAA Fisheries, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. For further information please visit [www.accsp.org](http://www.accsp.org).

# THE CURIOUS AMERICAN EEL

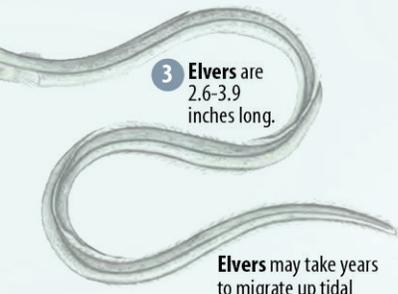
American eels arrive in Maine each spring by the millions as tiny, transparent “glass eels,” or elvers. These tiny eels are netted and sold, most recently at hefty prices of \$1,700 to \$2,000 per pound. Most are sent to fish-farming operations in China and Japan, where they are raised in captivity to market size for sale throughout Asia, where eels are considered a culinary delicacy.

## The life cycle and migration

**4** Elvers progress to **Yellow eels**. Yellow eels may spend over 30 years in freshwater estuaries, rivers and lakes. They grow into the final, sexually mature stage of their life cycle, silver eels.



**5** **Silver eels** spend most of their lives in fresh or brackish water but eventually descend rivers and return to the Sargasso Sea, where they spawn once and die.



**3** **Elvers** are 2.6-3.9 inches long.

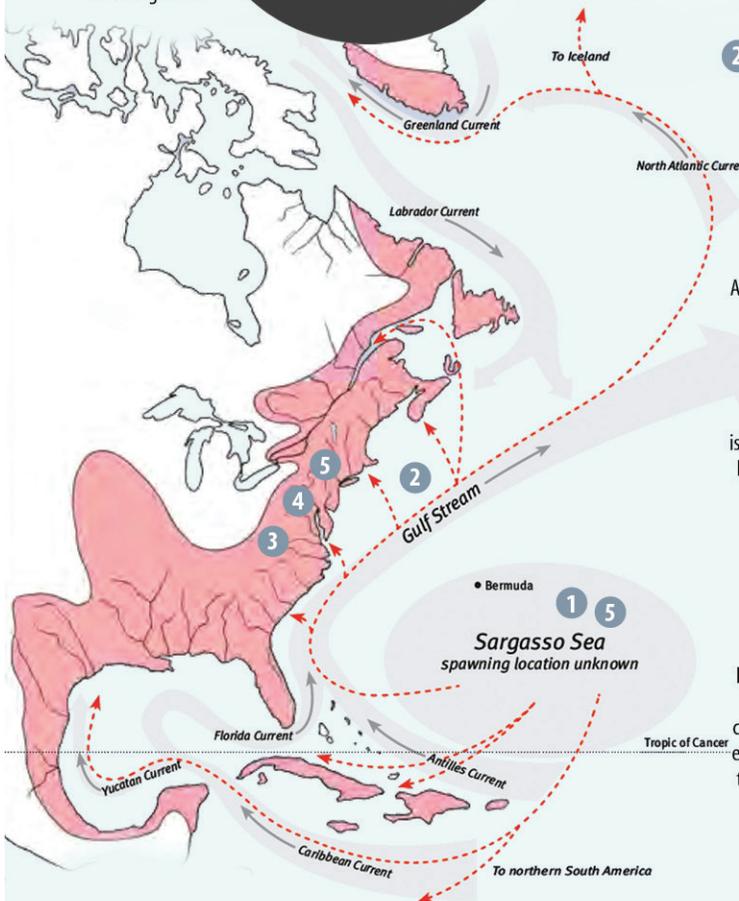
**1** **Leptocephali** are larvae hatched from eggs, carried along ocean currents to the Americas, including Maine.



**2** **Glass eels** (not shown) are 1.8-2.8 inches long. They swim toward coastal areas; once they reach estuaries, they are known as elvers.

## The cycle of life

American eels spawn in the Sargasso Sea. Eggs and larvae join ocean currents and are transported to South America, Central America, the Caribbean islands and North America's Eastern Seaboard. After as many as 30 to 40 years, they migrate back to the Sargasso Sea, where they spawn and die. Spawning habits remain a mystery, having never been observed in the wild. Habitat loss, water quality, overfishing and climate change are threatening the eel population just as it has threatened the populations of other fished North American species.



SOURCE: Illustrations courtesy of Ethan Nedreau, www.biodrawriversity.com; text from “American Eels, Restoring a Vanishing Resource in the Gulf of Maine,” Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment; BDN PHOTO BY TROY R. BENNETT

BDN GRAPHIC BY ERIC ZELZ

ACFHP continued from page 14

The 2017 – 2021 Conservation Strategic Plan updates and revises ACFHP’s first conservation strategic plan, which covered the 2012 – 2016 time frame. Some of the Partnership’s accomplishments during this period can be found listed on page 5 of the new plan. Most notably, ACFHP has contributed over \$400,000 directly to conservation projects, leveraging \$4 for each ACFHP restoration dollar. This has helped to open 75 river miles, restore 0.5 acres of riverine spawning habitat, 2.95 acres of oyster reefs, 2.4 acres of tidal vegetation, and 19 acres of seagrass beds, adding an estimated \$41 million in economic value to the Atlantic coast annually.

In addition to the Partnership’s goals, objectives, and strategies, the Conservation Strategic Plan describes ACFHP’s 3 – 4 priority habitats and the major threats to each of those habitats within our four subregions (North Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, and South Florida). These habitat priorities were informed by the results of ACFHP’s Species-Habitat Matrix study. Published by Kritzer et al. (2016), the Matrix evaluated the importance of benthic habitats to over 100 species of coastal fish and non-stationary invertebrates as a space for shelter, feeding, and breeding.

The 2017 – 2019 Action Plan has identified 32 specific actions to be taken to advance a subset of objectives and strategies listed in the Conservation Strategic Plan. These actions will be carried out by ACFHP and its partners.

To view the plans, visit the ‘Publications’ page under the ‘Planning Resources’ tab on the [ACFHP website](http://www.atlanticfishhabitat.org/planningresources/publications/), or click here directly: <http://www.atlanticfishhabitat.org/planningresources/publications/>.



ACFHP is a coastwide collaborative effort to accelerate the conservation of habitat for native Atlantic coastal, estuarine-dependent, and diadromous fishes. The Partnership consists of resource managers, scientists, and professionals representing 33 different state, federal, tribal, non-governmental, and other entities. ACFHP works from Maine to the Florida Keys, and from the headwaters of coastally draining rivers to the edge of the continental shelf, with a focus on estuarine environments.