



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

Vision: Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC 2023 Spring Meeting

May 1-3, 2023

The Westin Crystal City
1800 Richmond Highway
Arlington, VA

Preliminary Agenda

This will be a hybrid meeting to allow for remote participation by Commissioners and interested stakeholders in all meetings except for the Law Enforcement Committee. The agenda is subject to change. Bulleted items represent the anticipated major issues to be discussed or acted upon at the meeting. The final agenda will include additional items and may revise the bulleted items provided below. 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.

MONDAY, MAY 1

12:45 – 2:30 p.m.

American Lobster Management Board

- Consider Final Approval of Addendum XXVII on Increasing Protection of Spawning Stock Biomass of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank Stock
- Update from Work Group on Implementation of Addendum XXIX: Tracker Devices in the Federal Lobster and Jonah Crab Fishery
- Progress Update on 2023 Jonah Crab Benchmark Stock Assessment
- Review Lobster Conservation Management Team Role and Process

2:45 – 3:15 p.m.

Atlantic Menhaden Management Board

- Review of the Menhaden Fishery in Virginia
- Consider Approval of Ecological Reference Point Terms of Reference

3:30 – 5:00 p.m.

Sciaenids Management Board

- Consider 2023 Black Drum Benchmark Assessment and Peer Review Report
- Consider Management Response to the Results of the 2023 Black Drum Benchmark Assessment, if necessary

see PRELIMINARY AGENDA, continued 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

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April 4 - 6

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hyatt Place Durham Southpoint, 7840 NC-751 Highway, Durham, NC; visit <https://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2023/april-council-meeting>

April 10 (1 - 4 PM)

Northern Shrimp Technical Committee and Work Group; visit <https://asmfc.org/calendar/4/2023/northern-shrimp-technical-committee-and-work-group/2104> for more information

April 10 (5:30 - 7 PM)

American Lobster Advisory Panel; visit <https://asmfc.org/calendar/4/2023/american-lobster-advisory-panel/2097> for more information

April 18 - 20

New England Fishery Management Council, Hilton Hotel, Mystic, CT; visit <https://www.nefmc.org/calendar/april-2023-council-meeting> for more information

April 18 (begins at 9 AM) - 20 (ends at 5 PM)

Jonah Crab Benchmark Stock Assessment Workshop, UMass Dartmouth's School for Marine Science & Technology (West Building), 706 South Rodney French Blvd, New Bedford, MA; visit <https://asmfc.org/calendar/4/2023/Jonah-Crab-Benchmark-Stock-Assessment-Workshop/2099> for more information

April 27 (9 - 10:30 AM)

Atlantic Herring Days Out Meeting; visit <https://asmfc.org/calendar/4/2023/Atlantic-Herring-Days-Out-Meeting/2121> for more information

May 1 - 3

[ASMFC Spring Meeting](#), The Westin Crystal City, 1800 Richmond Highway, Arlington, VA

May 11 (1 - 4 PM)

Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Technical Committee and Monitoring Committee; visit <https://asmfc.org/calendar/5/2023/Summer-Flounder,-Scup,-and-Black-Sea-Bass-Technical-Committee-and-Monitoring-Committee/2105> for more information

May 15

Atlantic Croaker and Spot Benchmark Stock Assessment Data Workshop; visit XXX for more information; visit <https://asmfc.org/calendar/5/2023/Spot-and-Atlantic-Croaker-Benchmark-Stock-Assessment-Data-Workshop/2106> for more information

June 6 - 8

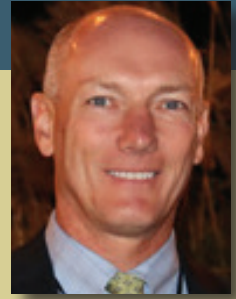
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront, 3001 Atlantic Avenue, Virginia Beach, VA; visit <https://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2023/june-council-meeting> for more information

June 12 - 16

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, World Golf Village Renaissance, 500 South Legacy Trail, St. Augustine, FL; visit <https://safmc.net/council-meetings/> for more information

June 21 (2 - 5 PM)

Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Advisory Panel; visit <https://asmfc.org/calendar/6/2023/Summer-Flounder,-Scup,-and-Black-Sea-Bass-Advisory-Panel/2119> for more information



Next Steps in Climate Change Planning Initiative

Climate change is already having impacts on the resources we manage and more of our stakeholders are telling us about the challenges they are experiencing. While it's impossible to completely predict the impacts of climate change, we expect to see increasingly variable conditions and shifting stocks over time. In the last issue of Fisheries Focus, we explored the East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning Initiative (Initiative), where management bodies have been collaboratively engaging fishery stakeholders to explore jurisdictional and governance issues related to climate change. The items they are exploring now will help us respond to crises in the future.

So far, as part of the Initiative, fisheries managers have: (1) conducted a scoping process to seek feedback from stakeholders on issues facing East Coast fisheries over the next several decades; (2) explored drivers of change in East Coast fisheries in more detail, (3) created and refined a set of four scenarios describing possible conditions in 2042, and (4) sought feedback from managers on potential changes in governance and management that may be necessary to respond to climate-related uncertainties.

A two-day Summit, held in mid-February, was the latest step in the Initiative. Its goal was to develop a set of potential governance and management actions resulting from a scenario-based exploration of possible future outcomes. Summit participants consisted of representatives from each of the three U.S. East Coast Regional Fishery Management Councils, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and NOAA Fisheries. Discussions at the Summit were framed around ways we can increase flexibility, adaptability, and robustness in management. Summit discussions focused on three overarching themes highlighted by the Commission and Councils at their meetings in late 2022: cross jurisdictional governance, managing under increased uncertainty, and data sources and partnerships.

During the Commission's Spring Meeting, staff will summarize discussion on these overarching themes and potential areas of action moving forward. The main discussion points and suggested outcomes are highlighted below.

1. Cross Jurisdictional Governance

From the start, a priority of the Initiative has been to evaluate the governance structure for East Coast fisheries and to identify improvements that would help it be more adaptable to changing conditions, particularly changes in species distribution and abundance. At the Summit, discussions focused on how our current governance system is structured, including the authority for management in different jurisdictions, and how different entities work together (or don't) to manage species within and across jurisdictions. Suggested outcomes included:

- More consistency in the governance structure of the three regions to allow for more efficient management processes
- A better mechanism for information exchange between the Councils' Scientific and Statistical Committees, particularly when two Councils are working on the same species

2. Managing Under Increased Uncertainty

Climate change is going to increase uncertainties within fisheries management. Being able to respond quickly to those changes will be critical in the future. Discussions at the Summit focused on ways we can increase management flexibility, adaptability, and robustness. Suggested outcomes included:

- Work towards robust management strategies versus trying to model increased uncertainties
- Include spatial considerations in management (different considerations needed for leading/trailing edge of species changing distribution)

3. Data Sources and Partnerships

In building the scenarios, a key factor was based on the predictability of ocean conditions, which includes how well science is able to assess and predict changes in stock production and distributions. Providing information about stocks and their locations hinges on the ability to evaluate accurate and timely data. Summit discussions focused on how to better coordinate data collection systems and develop partnerships to leverage existing funding. Coordination between management entities, federal entities, academic partners, fisheries stakeholders, and other ocean users will play a large role in what our future holds. Suggested outcomes included:

- Standardize data collection to break down geographic barriers along the East Coast (both state and federal)
- Prioritize recreational data collection to reduce uncertainty including possible study fleet projects

In May, the Initiatives' management partners will jointly review the Summit report and discuss a path forward for addressing possible actions. Due to the interjurisdictional nature of this Initiative, there are a variety of potential actions identified for further consideration. Some actions will be appropriate for individual management bodies to pursue, while many others would require either informal coordination, formal and structured coordination, or structural governance changes. In turn, these discussions and suggestions will be considered at Council and Commission meetings later this year, with the goal of evaluating individual and collaborative short- and long-term actions. A full report of all Summit outcomes and list of possible next steps is in development for release later this year.

Species Profile: American Eel

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

Introduction

American eel stand apart from many of the other species under the Commission's care in that the species has both a unique life cycle and commands attention on the international scene for its transnational population range and high market demand. Researchers are still working to better understand the journey and metamorphosis of American eels as they migrate from the Sargasso Sea to the estuaries and rivers of North and South America. Not only is international collaboration needed to manage the species over its wide range, cooperative conservation efforts are also necessary to address the demand and market value for American eel overseas.

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 no larger than a stick of gum. Leptocephali metamorphose into glass eel as they migrate toward land. Then, once they move into brackish/freshwater and develop dark pigmentation that helps them camouflage from predators, they have reached the elver stage. Around age two, they transform into yellow eel and will remain in freshwater rivers or streams until they start to sexually mature, which can occur any time between 8 and 24 years. During this time, the eels take cover during the day to avoid predation and feed mainly at night, targeting insects, crustaceans, and smaller benthic fish.

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. Between males and females, there are differences in size and age at maturity, with increased variation depending on geographic

location. Females will grow larger and reach maturity at a later age than males, particularly in the northern regions of the species population range. In general, males grow to two feet long while 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 then spawn once and presumably die. These 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 to reproduce, the American eel population is considered a panmictic (single) stock. Therefore, the eel you see in your local rivers and streams are part of the same population as eel

Species Snapshot



American Eel *Anguilla rostrata*

Species Range: Rivers and estuaries along the Atlantic coastline from Venezuela to Greenland and Iceland. They also are found along the Gulf Coast and Mississippi River.

Management Unit: Maine through Florida

Common Names: Elver, silver eel, yellow eel, freshwater eel

Interesting Facts

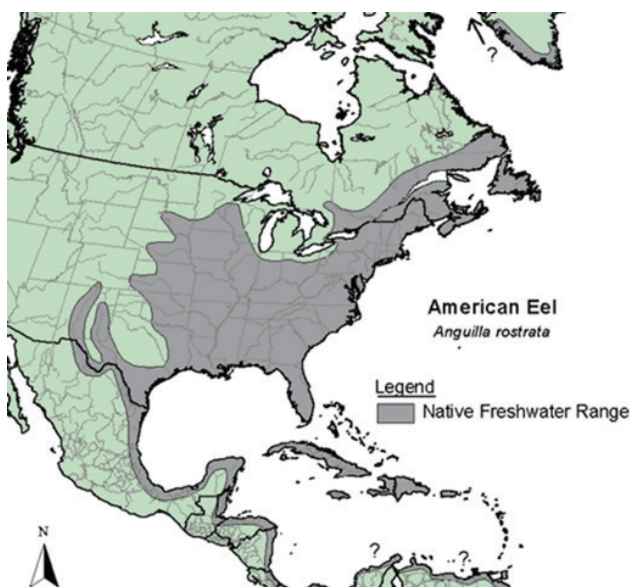
- Eel can travel over land by absorbing oxygen through its skin. Allowing them to travel for short distances through mud, rocks, or wet grass.
- Eel have poor eyesight and likely depend on a keen sense of smell to locate food.
- The first known record of eel research was conducted by Aristotle.
- Leptocephali (eel larval stage) were originally thought to be a different species.
- All American eel belong to one breeding population that resides across the Atlantic coast from Greenland to Brazil.

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

Oldest Recorded: 88 years for a captive eel (<https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/species-especies/publications/sara-lep/eel-anguille/index-eng.html>)

Stock Status: Depleted throughout its US range (based on 2017 assessment)

Map of the range of American eel
(NatureServe 2006)



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found in the St. Lawrence River in Canada or rivers in South America.

Commercial Reduction & Bait Fisheries

Eel fishing in North America has been documented as far back as the 17th century, largely as a subsistence fishery. In the 20th century, commercial interest for American eel arose most predominantly during 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 fisheries, which exist in all Atlantic states and jurisdictions with the exception of Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia. 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, but declined to a low of around 339,667 pounds in 2021. 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.

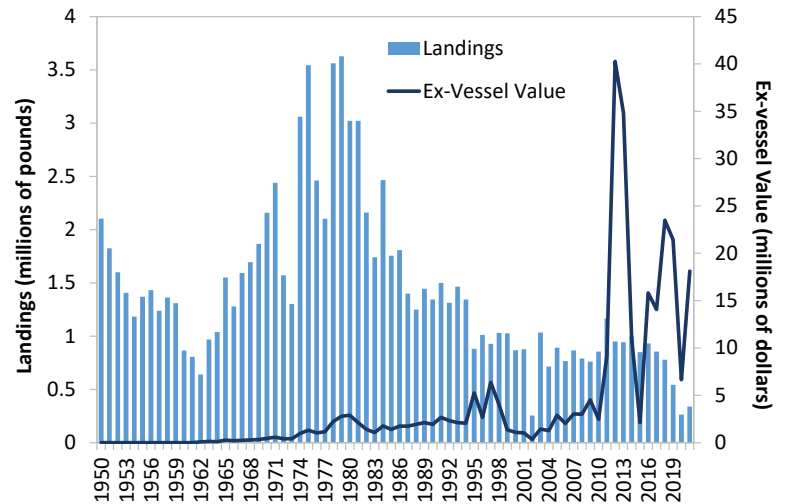
Across the Atlantic coast, most states prohibit the commercial harvest of glass eels, with the exception of Maine and South Carolina, which have seen a growing demand for glass eels to be used for aquaculture purposes. Since 2011, when this increase in demand began, glass eel landings and the price per pound have increased substantially. This growing demand has largely been due to heightened concern over the population levels of European and Japanese eels, as well as tighter restrictions on the exportation of European eels. Once harvested, glass eels are exported to Asia to serve as seed stock for aquaculture facilities. In response to eel demand and market price, poaching has become a coastwide issue that impedes and undermines the management, monitoring, and success of this species during a critical life stage.

The limited data that are available on the recreational harvest and catch-and-release of American eel is collected by the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). Recreational harvest along the Atlantic coast varies from year-to-year but averages about 136,000 American eels a year from 1981-2019. Due to MRIP survey design, which targets coastal rather than inland fishing, there is a very high error and low precision associated with these estimates, which adds to the challenge of managing the species. The number of American eel released alive by recreational anglers have been less variable and more precise, averaging around 223,000 American eel per year from 1981 to 2019.

Stock Status

From a biological perspective, much is still unknown about the species. Information is limited about their abundance, status at all life stages, and habitat requirements. Since 2005 when

American Eel Commercial Landings and Ex-Vessel Value
Source: ACCSP Data Warehouse, 2022



the first ASMFC stock assessment was developed for American eel, no overfishing or overfished determination has been made. However, based on several trend analyses, the stock was considered depleted in the 2012 and 2017 assessments. The stock is at or near historically low levels due to a combination of factors, including overfishing, habitat loss, food web alterations, predation, turbine mortality, environmental changes, toxins and contaminants, and disease. Trend analyses of abundance indices indicated large declines in the abundance of yellow eels during the 1980s through the 1990s, with primarily neutral or stable abundance from the mid-1990s onward.

In 2011, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) initiated a status review of American eel under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to assess the health of the population and the magnitude of threats facing the species. In October 2015, USFWS announced that the American eel population is stable and protection is not warranted under the ESA. Nonetheless, for the species' long-term stability, the agency recommends continuing efforts to maintain healthy habitats, monitor harvest levels, and improve river passage for migrating eels. In 2014, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), a group that assess flora and fauna globally to determine their conservation status, listed American eel as "Endangered" on the Red List. While the IUCN has no legal implications, it is an important metric that accounts for a variety of factors including habitat, threats, potential stressors, and research status. Given these findings, the Commission remains committed to closely monitoring American eel fisheries and making adjustments to the management program as necessary to ensure stock rebuilding.

In 2022, a benchmark stock assessment for American eel was completed and peer-reviewed. In this assessment, an index-based method was developed to provide catch advice. The

continued on next page

assessment team will perform some additional analyses to test the robustness of the method for setting catch limits, and provide a report to the Management Board later this year.

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 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. 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 (FMP) in the mid-1990s. The plan, approved in 1999, provided several reasons why heavy harvest pressure may adversely affect American eel populations: (1) American eel have a slow rate of maturation, requiring 8 to 24+ years to attain sexual maturity; (2) glass eel tend to aggregate seasonally during migration, making them vulnerable to directed harvest; (3) harvest of yellow eel is a cumulative stressor, over multiple years, on the same year class; and (4) all fishing mortality occurs prior to spawning.

Through Addenda III and IV to the Interstate FMP, the Commission and the states

sought to reduce mortality and increase conservation of American eel stocks across all life stages. Addendum III (2013) established new management measures for both the commercial (glass, yellow, and silver) and recreational eel fisheries, and implemented fishery-independent and fishery-dependent monitoring requirements. Addendum IV (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. Additionally, it reduced Maine's glass eel quota to 9,688 pounds (equal to the state's 2014 landings), and allowed for a one-year extension of New York's silver eel weir fishery in the Delaware River.

In 2018, Addendum IV provisions were replaced by Addendum V, which increased the yellow eel coastwide cap starting in 2019 to 916,473 pounds; adjusts the method (management trigger) to reduce total landings to the coastwide cap when the cap has been exceeded; and removed the implementation of state-by-state allocations if the management trigger is met. Lastly, the Addendum maintained Maine's glass eel quota of 9,688 pounds. Under Addendum V, management action will now be initiated if the yellow eel coastwide cap is exceeded by 10% in two consecutive years. If the management trigger is exceeded, only those states accounting for more than 1% of the total yellow eel landings will be responsible for adjusting their measures. A work group will be formed to define the process to equitably reduce landings among the affected states when the management trigger has been met.



Photo (c) Chris Bowser, NYSDEC

The Board slightly modified the glass eel aquaculture provisions, maintaining the 200-pound limit for glass eel harvest but modifying the criteria for evaluating the proposed harvest area's contribution to the overall population consistent with the recommendations of the Technical Committee. Under the revised provisions, the Board approved Maine's glass eel aquaculture proposal for the last few years, the only state to currently use this provision, allowing for an additional 200 pounds of glass eels to be harvested for development in domestic aquaculture facilities. This amount is in addition to Maine's glass eel quota.

For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org.



TUESDAY, MAY 2

8:30 a.m. – Noon Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

- Technical Committee Report on Projections Incorporating 2022 Preliminary Marine Recreational Information Program Data and Quota Utilization Scenarios
- Consider Final Action on Addendum I on Voluntary Commercial Quota Transfers in the Ocean Fishery
- Update on 2023 Tagging Survey

10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Law Enforcement Committee (LEC)

(A portion of this meeting will be a closed session for the LEC Coordinator and Committee members only.)

- Review and Consider Updates to Enforceability Guidelines
- Review and Discuss Commission Species
- Update on Electronic Vessel Tracking Devices in the Federal American Lobster and Jonah Crab Fishery
- State Agency Reports
- Review and Discuss Ongoing Enforcement Activities (Closed Session)

Noon – 1:30 p.m. Legislative and Governors Appointee Commissioners Luncheon

1:45 – 3:45 p.m. Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program Coordinating Council

- Consider Funding Decision Document and FY2024 Request for Proposals
- Update on Program and Committee Activities

4:00 – 5:15 p.m. Coastal Sharks Management Board

- Review Information on Recreational and Commercial Harvest, and Stock Status of Rays
- Review and Consider Comment on the NOAA Fisheries Proposed Rule to Prohibit the Harvest of Oceanic Whitetip Sharks
- Consider Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance for the 2021 Fishing Year

5:45 – 7:15 p.m. Annual Awards of Excellence Reception

WEDNESDAY, MAY 3

8:00 – 10:00 a.m. Executive Committee

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

- Review and Consider Approval of FY2024 Budget
- Discuss Potential for Legislative and Governors Appointee Commissioner Stipends
- Future Annual Meetings Update
- Executive Director's Performance Review (Closed Session)

10:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board

- Review Possible Paths Forward Regarding Atlantic Bonito and False Albacore Management
- Discuss the Future of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Research Set-aside Program
- Discuss Possible Responses to Issues Identified in the Commissioner Survey
- Committee Reports
- Review Noncompliance Findings, if necessary

see PRELIMINARY AGENDA, continued on page 11

Public Comment Guidelines

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 ask members of the public to raise their hands to let the chair know they would like to speak. Depending upon the number of commenters, the board chair will decide 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 the webinar (**April 10**) will be included in the briefing materials.

2. Comments received by 5 PM on Tuesday, **April 25** will be included in the supplemental materials.

3. Comments received by 10 AM on Friday, **April 28** will be distributed electronically to Commissioners/Board members prior to the meeting.

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 and email.

Fishery Management Actions

ASMFC Spiny Dogfish Board Sets Quota for 2023/2024 Fishing Season

On February 1, the Spiny Dogfish Management Board approved a coastwide commercial quota for the 2023/2024 fishing season (May 1-April 30) of 12 million pounds (state-specific allocations are provided in table below).

The quota is consistent with the measures recommended to NOAA Fisheries by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) and New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC). The Board also maintained the commercial trip limit in state waters of 7,500 pounds for the northern region states of Maine through Connecticut. The states of New York through North Carolina have the ability to set state-specific trip limits based on the needs of their fisheries. The Commission's actions are final and apply to state waters (0-3 miles from shore). The MAFMC and NEFMC will forward their recommendations for federal waters (3 –200 miles from shore) to NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Administrator for final approval.

Spiny Dogfish State Allocations (in pounds) for the 2023-2024 Fishing Season

	Northern Region (ME-CT)	NY	NJ	DE	MD	VA	NC
Possession Limit	7,500	To be specified by the individual southern region states					
Allocation	58%	2.71%	7.64%	0.90%	5.92%	10.80%	14.04%
2022-2023	17,144,556	800,413	2,259,728	264,866	1,749,935	3,191,020	4,149,062
2023-2024	6,960,000	324,935	917,359	107,525	710,403	1,295,426	1,684,352

* Any overages in the above quota allocations will be deducted from that region's or state's quota allocation in the subsequent year. Similarly, any eligible rollovers from one season can be applied to that region's or state's quota allocation the following year.

The 2023/2024 coastwide quota represents a 59.4% reduction from the current fishing season's coastwide quota of 29,559,580 pounds. The decreased quota is based on declining trends in several indicators including survey abundance, catch per unit of effort, pup production, and dogfish growth. A research track stock assessment was completed in late 2022, and management advice will be provided through the Northeast Fisheries Science Center's management track assessment that is scheduled for June.

For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior FMP Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

ASMFC Releases 2022 Annual Report

In March, the Commission released its 2022 Annual Report, which fulfills our obligation to inform Congress on the Commission's use of public funds, and provides stakeholders with an overview of activities and progress in carrying out our cooperative stewardship responsibilities for the marine, shell, and diadromous species under our care.

The report includes a quick guide to stock status for the 27 species groups the Commission manages; a fisheries management section, which focuses on species which had the most significant management or stock assessment activities in 2022; and sections highlighting our major accomplishments in 2022 in the areas of fisheries science and fishery-dependent data collection and management.

Please visit the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org for additional information on any of our programs or activities. The report is available at https://asmfc.org/files/pub/AnnualReports/ASMFC_2022AnnualReport_web.pdf



Management Track Assessments Find Winter Flounder Stocks for the Gulf of Maine and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Not Experiencing Overfishing

On January 31, the Winter Flounder Management Board reviewed the results of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center’s (NEFSC) management track stock assessments* for the Gulf of Maine (GOM) and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) winter flounder stocks. These assessments found GOM winter flounder is not experiencing overfishing while the SNE/MA winter flounder stock is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing. The overfished status for the GOM stock remains unknown. The management track assessments for both stocks include data through 2021.

SNE/MA winter flounder experienced a change in stock status from overfished to not overfished due to a change in the years of recruitment estimates used to estimate biological reference points. Instead of drawing upon the entire time series of recruitment estimates, the projections now only use recruitment estimates from the past 20 years (2002-2021). The SNE/MA winter flounder stock is most likely not capable of achieving the high levels of recruitment that were observed prior to 2000 due to changes in environmental conditions; therefore, using a truncated recruitment time series of only the past 20 years better reflects current stock condition. However, despite a change in stock status; trends in survey indices and model estimates all continue to indicate the SNE/MA stock is in poor condition.

The GOM stock uses a modeling method that incorporates survey indices of abundance to obtain area-swept biomass and exploitation estimates. There have been time series lows in fishery removals (harvest and discards) for GOM winter flounder in recent years. Overall, the indices of abundance have not responded positively to the large declines in commercial and recreational removals since the 1980s. However, there were increases in the fall 2021 and spring 2021 and 2022 area-swept biomass estimates, which, if they continue, could be the beginning of a response to continued low fishery removals. It should be noted, however, that no survey data is available for 2020 due to the COVID pandemic, which is a source of uncertainty in this area-swept assessment that relies on survey data.

Given this information, specifications recommended by New England Fishery Management Council, and recommendations from the Technical

Committee and Advisory Panel, the Board maintained 2023 recreational and commercial measures for the GOM and SNE/MA winter flounder stocks for the 2024-2025 fishing years (see table).

The next management track assessments for both stocks are scheduled for 2024, and the next research track assessment, the equivalent of the Commission’s benchmark stock assessments, are scheduled for both stocks in 2026. As part of this analysis, the NEFSC will attempt to incorporate climate data into the SNE/MA winter flounder stock assessment. The management track assessment reports for GOM and SNE/MA winter flounder are available on the Commission’s website at <https://asmfc.org/species/winter-flounder> under Stock Assessment Reports. An overview of the assessment is available at https://asmfc.org/uploads/file/63d6c-34bWinterFlounderStockAssessmentOverview_Feb2022.pdf

2024-2025 Winter Flounder Commercial and Recreational Measures for Gulf of Maine and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Stocks

Stock	Sector	Trip Limit/ Possession Limit	Size Limit	Season	Gear
GOM	Commercial	500 lbs/ trip/day	12"	Maintain closures	Minimum 6.5" square or diamond mesh in cod-end.
	Recreational	8 fish	12"	Open all year	
SNE/MA	Commercial	50 lbs/38 fish/trip/day	12"	Maintain closures	Minimum 6.5" square or diamond mesh in cod-end. 100-lb mesh trigger.
	Recreational	2 fish	12"	Maintain closures	

* Management track assessments are similar to the Commission’s stock assessment updates, where the model from the most recent benchmark assessment is updated to include recent data. However, with the NEFSC’s process, some changes are allowed to be made to the model, such as a change to the recruitment time series used to estimate biological reference points that occurred for SNE/MA winter flounder.

The American Lobster Initiative: Organizing Research and Outreach for the Iconic American Lobster Fishery

The American Lobster Initiative (ALI) was established in 2019 with a goal of increasing the American lobster industry's resilience to the biological, economic, and social impacts of ecosystem change throughout the Northeast US. ALI connects researchers and provides outreach to stakeholders and resource managers charged with sustaining American lobster stocks. Two components that contribute to ALI's goal are the American Lobster Research Program and the Northeast Regional Lobster Extension Program. The American Lobster Research Program supports research conducted by state and federal agencies, academia, and industry members critical to understanding the American lobster resource and fishery and how they respond to rapidly changing environmental conditions. The Northeast Regional Lobster Extension Program brings together Sea Grant agents of six Northeast states from Maine to New York as a network of professionals dedicated to raising awareness of research and increasing collaboration among industry, resource managers, and other stakeholders. Each year since 2019, NOAA's National Sea Grant College Program has dedicated \$2 million to support the ALI, including the funding of projects conducted by the Research and Extension Programs.

Prior to this year, ALI had convened it's network remotely for collaborative chats to share research and projects, since participants had been unable to meet in-person due to impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. That all changed in February, when

the ALI hosted an in-person Regional Research and Outreach Summit in Portland, Maine. The objectives of the Summit were to share research updates, solicit feedback from partners, and encourage exchanging of ideas on future collaborative research and extension projects. The Summit, which was held two days from February 6-7, included several sessions that focused on topics of great relevance to the future of the American lobster fishery. Some session topics included influences of environmental change on early development of lobsters and maternal effects, social-ecological coupling in the lobster industry, and evaluating stock dynamics under changes to life history and management regulations. Projects were also shared during a poster session on the first evening of the Summit. A plenary panel on the morning of the second day connected researchers and members of the Commission's American Lobster Technical Committee, staff, and American Lobster Management Board with a focus on guiding researchers' efforts and products to directly support management objectives.

This Summit played an important part in achieving ALI's overall goal and will ensure that both the resource and fishery, which face considerable change, derive the greatest benefits from research. For more information on ALI, including funded research and extension projects, visit the ALI's website at <https://seagrant.umaine.edu/extension/american-lobster-initiative/> or contact Amalia Harrington, Northeast Regional Lobster Extension Program Coordinator, at amalia.harrington@maine.edu.



Maine Lobstermen's Association

ACCSP Staff Hold Regional Training Meetings

One of the key pieces of information that fisheries scientists and managers need in order to ensure the sustainability of recreational fishing is the number of fish saltwater anglers are catching, along with details such as the size and species, how many are kept, and how many are thrown back. On the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, recreational fishing catch is estimated through the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS), which uses trained samplers to interview anglers at the end of their fishing trips to collect this information.

APAIS is conducted as a state-federal partnership. The Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) leads survey design and produces catch estimates. ACCSP coordinates survey activities and performs data processing for the Atlantic states from Maine to Georgia. The states are responsible for field collection of APAIS data. State involvement brings local knowledge to survey operations and strengthens fishery agency relationships with anglers.



Photo (c) Trevor Scheffel

ACCSP staff update the field trainings annually to incorporate new procedures and to improve the tablet application used to collect data during APAIS assignments. In 2023, over 100 state staff attended two regional in-person training meetings, which were held on February 7-8 in Providence, Rhode Island and February 23-24 in Raleigh, North Carolina.

The two-day trainings reviewed required APAIS procedures, including interview conduct, fish identification, fish measurements, and data entry and review. ACCSP staff led interactive demonstrations of the tablet-based data collection process for both shore-based site assignments and at-sea headboat assignments. Additionally, interviewers conducted

mock assignments to practice their interviewing techniques in order to simulate the interview processes, including angler responses and the measurements of fish.

Due to the importance of fish species identification for APAIS, state staff led comprehensive learning sessions of key identifying characteristics for observed species. Training attendees must pass (90% or better) both procedural and fish identification tests each year as a requirement to be an APAIS interviewer.

If you see a state APAIS interviewer at the dock, please take a moment to participate in the catch survey and contribute to the fisheries data collection process. Your information will support good data and good decisions! Additional information is available on the ACCSP and NOAA websites.



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. For further information please visit www.accsp.org.

PRELIMINARY AGENDA, continued from page 7

WEDNESDAY, MAY 3

12:15 – 12:30 p.m.

Business Session

- Consider Noncompliance Recommendations, if necessary

12:30 – 1:00 p.m.

Lunch Break (provided)

1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Horseshoe Crab Management Board

- Consider Work Group Recommendations on Biomedical Best Management Practices
- Review Potential Processes and Resources Required for Evaluating Management Objectives for the Delaware Bay Bait Fishery



ADAPTIVE APPROACHES TO UNDERSTAND
AND MANAGE CHANGES IN FISHERIES

ANGLER ENGAGEMENT SYMPOSIA

GRAND RAPIDS, MI

DO YOU WORK WITH ANGLERS FOR YOUR FISHERIES RESEARCH OR MANAGEMENT?

IF YOU ANSWERED YES, PLEASE CONSIDER SUBMITTING AN ABSTRACT FOR
THESE SYMPOSIA AT THE 2023 AFS CONFERENCE IN GRAND RAPIDS, MI.

SYMPOSIUM #1:

GROWING FISHERIES RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT THROUGH ANGLER ENGAGEMENT

Anglers play an important role in providing scientists and managers with valuable data about the state of our fisheries. As new forms of electronic reporting come online, providing high resolution data that could barely have been imagined just a few decades ago, anglers are becoming ever more important to fisheries research. This symposium will build off the success of similar symposia in 2021 and 2022, highlighting a diversity of projects that have been successful at engaging anglers, including revisiting presentations from the initial symposium where further work with anglers has taken place. An important outcome of this symposium will be a better understanding of the best practices that are necessary to achieve long-term angler engagement. Consistent with our theme of engaging anglers, we are also proposing to involve anglers in this symposium, both with research presentations and through an online engagement via Facebook Live.

MODERATORS: Julia Byrd, South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council <Julia.Byrd@safmc.net>, Clayton James, Fisheries and Oceans Canada <Clayton.James@dfp-mpo.gc.ca>, Susanna Musick, Virginia Institute of Marine Science <susanna@vims.edu>, Sean Simmons, Angler's Atlas and MyCatch <sean@anglersatlas.com>

SYMPOSIUM #2:

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS FOR USING CITIZEN SCIENCE DATA IN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Citizen science has generated interest among fisheries researchers and managers in recent years. The ability of volunteers to cover large areas and help collect information on economically and ecologically important fish stocks represents an intriguing option to fill much needed data gaps. Citizen science as a field is growing rapidly but there are many questions surrounding its applicability and ability to feed into operational research and management enterprises. Statistical limitations may pose significant challenges when integrating citizen science data with other conventional fisheries data sources. Nonetheless, the opportunities posed by this volunteer-driven approach to help address data gaps represents a new frontier for exploration. The purpose of this symposium is to bring together researchers working in this area to discuss opportunities for integrating citizen science data, understanding where limitations exist and identifying where solutions can be found.

MODERATORS: Julia Byrd, South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council <Julia.Byrd@safmc.net>, Mark Chandler, NOAA Fisheries <mark.chandler@noaa.gov>, Laura Oremland, NOAA Fisheries <laura.oremland@noaa.gov>, Sean Simmons, Angler's Atlas and MyCatch <sean@anglersatlas.com>

[HTTPS://AFSAnnualMeeting.Fisheries.org/](https://AFSAnnualMeeting.Fisheries.org/)

For more information, please contact one of the moderators or Sean Simmons by email — sean@anglersatlas.com

Employee of the Quarter

In a little over a year, Tracey Bauer, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, has proven to be a valued member of the Interstate Fisheries Management Program and an important contributor to the success of the Commission. In recognition of her contributions, Tracey was awarded Employee of the Quarter for the first quarter of 2023.

Since joining the Commission staff, Tracey has quickly come up to speed, working alongside Dustin Colson Leaning (and now Chelsea Tuohy) on coordinating management of the four species that the ASMFC jointly manages with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, namely - bluefish, black sea bass, scup and summer flounder. In particular, Tracey played a key role in helping the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board and the Council in setting 2023 recreational specifications for its three species. Without hesitation, she agreed to take on the additional species work load, despite this being her and the Board's first time completing the specifications process using the newly adopted harvest control rule. During the process, Tracey kept leadership well informed, gracefully navigated the use of a new model, and helped the Technical Committee understand the new process. Her close and effective collaborations with Commission, Council, and NOAA staff led to the successful implementation of 2023 measures.

At the same time, Tracey continued to provide support to her other species committees, including collaborating with Jeff Kipp on the successful completion of the black drum benchmark stock assessment and peer review, and continued work on the red drum benchmark stock assessment. In addition, she worked closely with Chelsea to help her better understand the joint management process. A dedicated team player, Tracey has built strong working relationships with committee members and Commission staff, helping to create a positive and productive work environment.

Tracey's attention to detail, inquisitiveness, strong work ethic, and dedication to team work make her the perfect recipient for Employee of the Quarter (EOQ). As EOQ recipient, Tracey received a cash award and a letter of appreciation to be placed in her personal record. In addition, her name is on the EOQ plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Tracey!



Comings & Goings

COMMISSIONERS



SENATOR VIN GOPAL

Ongoing proxy: Adam Nowalsky

In November 2022, Senator Vin Gopal became New Jersey's Legislative Commissioner to ASMFC, replacing Assemblyman Eric Houghtaling, who had served from 2019-2022. Senator Gopal chairs the Senate Education Committee and serves as Senate Majority Conference Leader. He also is Vice-Chair of the Senate Government, Wagering, Tourism & Historic Preservation Committee, and a member of the Health, Human Services, and Senior Citizens Committee. In his 30s, Senator Gopal is currently the youngest member and the first South-Asian American to be elected to the New Jersey Senate.

A dedicated volunteer who works with many nonprofit organizations to assist people in need, Senator Gopal is also the Founder and President of the Vin Gopal Civic Association, a 501c(3) organization dedicated to helping Monmouth County charities and individuals in need. His community contributions include serving as a past Board of Trustees Member of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Monmouth County, and he served for many years as a volunteer first responder and EMT. He is also a former Adjunct Professor at Monmouth University and is currently the co-chair of the Monmouth University School of Civil Discourse. An entrepreneur, Senator Gopal has started and built several businesses and is currently a business consultant and coach. During the pandemic, he created a district-wide organization of business, community, church, and nonprofits leaders to address the challenges of the coronavirus to the local economy.

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Born in Neptune Township and raised in Monmouth County, Senator Gopal holds a Masters in Public Administration from Rutgers University and a bachelor's degree from Pennsylvania State University. Welcome Senator Gopal and thank you Assemblyman Houghtaling for your service.



REPRESENTATIVE ALLISON HEPLER

Ongoing proxy: Senator Cameron Reny

In January, Representative Allison Hepler was appointed to ASMFC as Maine's Legislative Commissioner, replacing Senator David Miramant who served in that capacity from 2019 to 2022. Representative Hepler teaches history at the University of Maine at Farmington and is the author of "McCarthyism in the Suburbs: Quakers, Communists and the Children's Librarian." She has also worked as a printer, a retail store and office coordinator, a magazine production assistant, and a steelworker. Representative Hepler is part-owner of her husband's wooden boat building and repair business in Small Point, Phippsburg. Welcome Representative Hepler and thank you Senator Miramant for your service.



REPRESENTATIVE MICHAEL WRAY

Ongoing proxy: Chad Thomas

In January, Representative Wray became North Carolina's Legislative Commissioner to ASMFC, replacing Senator Bob Steinburg who served in that capacity from 2015 to 2022. Representative Wray is a member of the Democratic leadership team in the North Carolina House of Representatives. He serves as Chair of the House Ethics and Finance Committees, as well as Vice-Chair of the Agricultural Committee. He also serves as a member of the Health Insurance and Rules, Calendar and Operations of the House Committees. Representative Wray is a small business owner and native of Northampton County. He lives in Gaston with his wife Kay and his twin sons, Matthew and Phillip. Welcome Representative Wray and thank you Senator Steinburg for your service.

STAFF

CHELSEA TUOHY

On February 1, Chelsea Tuohy joined the Commission staff as its newest Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, with coordination responsibilities for bluefish, northern shrimp, scup and summer flounder. Chelsea received her Master of Environmental Management from the Duke Nicholas School and her undergraduate degree from University of Colorado Boulder. After graduating from Duke, she worked in the University's Marine Robotics and Remote Sensing Lab. There she analyzed unoccupied aircraft system (UAS) and satellite imagery to delineate and quantify snow cover for a National Science Foundation-funded project studying how climate affects distributions of Adelie penguin colonies and moss peat banks along the Western Antarctic Peninsula. While getting her masters, she studied polar ecosystem change on the Palmer Archipelago using UAS and satellite imagery to aid in establishing baselines for future research in a warming Antarctic ecosystem. In addition, she researched regional fisheries management organization performance in spatial management with an emphasis on no-take marine protected areas. She completed her master's project using these data to analyze management successes and failures using vulnerable marine ecosystems as a case study.



SIMEN KAALSTAD

On April 11, Simen Kaalstad will be joining the Commission staff as Director for the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership and Coordinator for the Habitat Committee and Artificial Reef Subcommittee. In those roles, he will be leading the ACFHP Steering Committee and its subcommittees in implementing the new ACFHP Strategic Plan, among other things, and will work with the Habitat and Artificial Reefs Committees to provide individual species habitat information to Commission fishery management plans, and publish the next installment in the habitat management series. Simen joins us from the Gulf Coast, where his previous work and graduate research focused on mangrove ecology and restoration. He has a Master of Science in Fisheries and Mariculture from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, and a Bachelor of Science in Marine and Freshwater Biology from the University of Texas.



Please join us in welcoming Chelsea and Simen.