

**DRAFT PROCEEDINGS OF THE
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
AMERICAN EEL MANAGEMENT BOARD**

**Webinar
October 21, 2021**

Approved February 1, 2023

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ATTENDANCE

Board Members

| | |
|--|--|
| Pat Keliher, ME (AA) | Roy Miller, DE (GA) |
| Renee Zobel, NH, proxy for C. Patterson (AA) | Craig Pugh, DE, proxy for Rep. Carson (LA) |
| Ritchie White, NH (GA) | Lynn Fegley, MD, proxy for B. Anderson (AA) |
| Nichola Meserve, MA, proxy for D. McKiernan (AA) | Russell Dize, MD (GA) |
| Raymond Kane, MA (GA) | Pat Geer, VA, proxy for S. Bowman (AA) |
| Sarah Ferrara, MA, proxy for Rep. Peake (LA) | Shanna Madsen, VA, proxy for B. Plumlee (GA) |
| Phil Edwards, RI, proxy for J. McNamee (AA) | Chris Batsavage, NC, proxy for K. Rawls (AA) |
| David Borden, RI (GA) | Jerry Mannen, NC (GA) |
| Eric Reid, RI, proxy for Sen. Sosnowski (LA) | Bill Gorham, NC, proxy for Rep. Steinburg (LA) |
| Matt Gates, CT, proxy for J. Davis (AA) | Ross Self, SC, proxy for P. Maier (AA) |
| Sen. Craig Miner, CT (LA) | Malcolm Rhodes, SC (GA) |
| Rob LaFrance, CT, proxy for B. Hyatt (GA) | Doug Haymans, GA (AA) |
| John Maniscalco, NY, proxy for J. Gilmore (AA) | Spud Woodward, GA (GA) |
| Joe Cimino, NJ (AA) | Erika Burgess, FL, proxy for J. McCawley (AA) |
| Tom Fote, NJ (GA) | Dan Ryan, DC, proxy for J. Seltzer |
| Adam Nowalsky, NJ, proxy for Asm. Houghtaling (LA) | Marty Gary, PRFC |
| Kris Kuhn, PA, proxy for T. Schaeffer (AA) | Chris Wright, NMFS |
| Loren Lustig, PA (GA) | Mike Millard, USFWS |
| John Clark, DE (AA) | |

(AA = Administrative Appointee; GA = Governor Appointee; LA = Legislative Appointee)

Ex-Officio Members

Troy Tuckey, Technical Committee Chair

Staff

| | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Bob Beal | Kristen Anstead | Kirby Rootes-Murdy |
| Toni Kerns | Emilie Franke | Sarah Murray |
| Laura Leach | Chris Jacobs | Caitlin Starks |
| Lisa Carty | Jeff Kipp | Deke Tompkins |
| Maya Drzewicki | Dustin Colson Leaning | |
| Tina Berger | Savannah Lewis | |

Guests

| | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Karen Abrams, NOAA | Jeff Brust, NJ DEP | Sheila Eyler, USFWS |
| Max Appelman, NOAA | Thomas Burrell, PA F&B | Cynthia Ferrio, NOAA |
| Travis Atwood | Peter Clarke, NJ DEP | Lewis Gillingham, VMRC |
| Pat Augustine, Coram, NY | Margaret Conroy, DE DFW | Michael Ginex |
| Greg Bailey | Heather Corbett, NJ DEP | Robert Groskin, Teaneck, NJ |
| Alan Bianchi, NC DENR | Lennie Day | Sonny Gwin |
| Jason Boucher, NOAA | Justin Davis, CT (AA) | Hannah Hart, FL FWC |
| Rob Bourdon, US FWS | Mari-Beth DeLucia, TNC | Helen Takade-Heumacher, EDF |

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Guests (continued)

Jaclyn Higgins, TRCP
Carol Hoffman
Kyle Hoffman, SC DNR
Jesse Hornstein, NYS DEC
Asm. Eric Houghtaling, CT (NJ)
Bill Hyatt, CT (GA)
Mike Luisi, MD DNR
Chip Lynch, NOAA
Dan McKiernan, MA (AA)
Steve Minkinen, US FWS
Allison Murphy, NOAA

Steve Meyers
Lindsey Nelson, NOAA
Josh Newhard, US FWS
Willow Patten, NC DENR
Bill Post, SC DNR
Sara Rademaker, Am. Unagi
Jill Ramsey, CMRC
Tara Scott, NOAA
Somers Smott, VMRC
David Stormer, DE DFW
John Sweka, USFWS

Rustin Taylor
Marek Topolski, MD DNR
David Vantine
Megan Ware, ME DMR
Keith Whiteford, MD DNR
Horace Wynn
Sarah York, NOAA
Darrell Young
Jordan Zimmerman, DE DFW
Erik Zlokovitz, MD DNR

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The American Eel Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened via webinar; Thursday, October 21, 2021 and was called to order at 11:43 a.m. by Chair Lynn Fegley.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR LYNN FEGLEY: Welcome everyone to this meeting of the American Eel Management Board. My name is Lynn Fegley. I am the Administrative Proxy for the state of Maryland, and happy to be your Board Chair today. I think we're going to have a pretty quick meeting. We do have two action items on the agenda, which will require a motion, so please be ready for that.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CHAIR FEGLEY: With that we'll just start with Approval of the Agenda. Is there anybody that has any proposed modifications to the agenda? If you do, please raise your hands.

MS. TONI KERNS: I have no hands, Lynn.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Okay, we will consider the agenda approved by consent.

APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

CHAIR FEGLEY: Moving on to the Approval of Proceedings. The last meeting was in May of 2021, and those proceedings were in your materials. Does anybody have any corrections or edits needed for the May proceedings? If you do, please raise your hand.

MS. KERNS: I have no hands, Lynn.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Great, then we will consider the proceedings approved by consent.

PUBLIC COMMENT

CHAIR FEGLEY: Moving on to Public Comment. I know we have one person on the books. Toni, is there anybody else you are aware of besides Ms. Rademaker, who wants to make comment?

MS. KERNS: I am not aware of anybody, but I'll just give folks an opportunity to raise their hand. If you're not familiar with this webinar, you just need to click on the hand icon, and your hand will be raised when the red arrow is pointing down. Any other hand besides Sara's.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Okay, I was just going to say let's move on with Sara, and then if anybody raises their hand in the meantime, we'll address it when she is done, so take it away, Sara.

MS. SARA RADEMAKER: Hi everyone, I'm Sara Rademaker. I'm the President and Founder of American Unagi, and I've been growing glass eels with aquaculture for the last seven years. You all have continued to support this effort with your approval of the aquaculture quota the last three years, and part of success and ability to grow is in large part due to the aquaculture quota. It's not just the quota itself, it demonstrates that there is support within the eel management plan for the development of domestic aquaculture, and builds confidence in the future of the fishery. That confidence has helped us with putting together 10-million dollars for the build out of our new aquaculture facility in Maine, and it's also with our growth has meant more year-round jobs aquaculture processing engineers and sales that have become connected to this seasonal fishery. But there are some other great benefits I just wanted to take the opportunity to quickly share with you that we're seeing from connecting aquaculture with this fishery.

We've worked with university researchers to provide samples to help development of eDNA testing. That is where you can grab a sample of water and detect if eels are present, and even get an idea of population numbers. This will be huge with improving fisheries management in the future. We've also set eels out for some behavioral research.

We supplied eels to engineering companies that are developing these fish passage turbines that will be eel friendly, and we've created better awareness of eels with our customers and the

general public, sharing how the efforts of Maine harvesters and the regulations that they work with, distinguish our eels from the rest of the world, and really highlight this incredible species.

The aquaculture program clearly has benefits from direct local economic development, down to these kinds of opportunities to assist in fisheries management technology developments, and fish passage for the species to general public support of eels. I'm guessing that our success will certainly lead to more growth of aquaculture in the U.S. in the years to come.

With that growth and the overall benefits, it can bring to the U.S. communities, management and our species, that you all will continue to support the aquaculture program, and even consider expansion of the overall glass eel quota in the future. I just wanted to share that update and some of the stuff that we've been working on with you all so, thanks for the time.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Excellent, thank you, Sara, and I'll say I did enjoy the video that was distributed with our materials, so thank you very much for that. Any more public comment, Toni?

MS. KERNS: I don't have any other hands raised. Spud, I don't know if your hand was raised to unmute you, but I've done that, or if you had something to comment on. Looks like not, Lynn, we're good to go.

**CONSIDER EXTENSION OF MAINE'S GLASS EEL
QUOTA FOR 2022-2024**

CHAIR FEGLEY: Moving along, this is our final action, and this is a requirement of Addendum V, where we are going to have to consider extending Maine's Glass Eel Quota for 2022-2024, so I will send this over to Kirby for background.

MR. KIRBY ROOTES-MURDY: Great, thanks, Lynn. Just sort of a quick presentation for the Board. As a refresher, Addendum V, which was

approved in 2018, set Maine's glass eel quota at 9,688 pounds. What this Addendum did was set it in place for three years, 2019 through 2021, and it outlined that prior to Year 4, 2022, that the Board would revisit their quota.

The language we had in the Addendum allows the Board to extend the glass eel quota at the current level for an additional three years, up through 2024. I will note that setting the quota at a higher level would require an addendum. The current Board action for consideration today, the Board should consider whether to extend Maine's glass eel quota at 9,688 pounds for up to an additional three years. It would end in 2024. I'll take any further questions at this point.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Okay, any questions for Kirby?

MS. KERNS: Just giving it a second, I have no hands, Lynn. Pat Keliher.

CHAIR FEGLEY: All right, go ahead, Pat, please.

MR. PATRICK C. KELIHER: To help move things along I do have a motion.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Excellent, go ahead.

MR. KELIHER: I would move to extend Maine's glass eel quota at its current level of 9,688 pounds for an additional three years.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Okay, we have a motion on the board, can I get a second for that, please?

MS. KERNS: I have Eric Reid.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Okay, thank you, Mr. Reid. All right, is there any discussion on this motion?

MS. KERNS: You have Pat and then Tom Fote.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Okay, Pat Keliher, go ahead.

MR. KELIHER: I forgot to put my hand down, but I can certainly give further justification if there are any questions.

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CHAIR FEGLEY: All right thank you, then let's go to Tom Fote.

MR. THOMAS P. FOTE: I've been sitting on a lot of climate change presentations from NOAA, since I sit on MAFAC also, and since I get to triple dip in basic presentations. One of the things I've noticed in the presentations is that the Gulf Stream is slowing down because of the ice that is coming off of Greenland. Instead of being 5.5 miles an hour it's down to 4.5 miles an hour.

Since basically eels and a number of species basically use the Gulf Stream for their transportation of the young when they come around, has NOAA looked into the fact that this might be affecting the runs, the tide might be different? What do we expect in the long run? Has anybody done any research? I asked that question the other day from New Jersey and they didn't have an answer, so I'm asking it here.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Yes, I don't know the best person of equipped to answer that. I know that there has been a lot of research on the mechanisms that the eels use to get from the Sargasso Sea and transit the Gulf Stream and reach our shores. I don't know, Kristen, is that something you can address?

DR. KRISTEN ANSTEAD: It isn't something we're directly looking at the Gulf Stream in particular. But assessing the impacts of any climate change or environmentally related things that we can in that assessment is one of our TORs.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Oh, perfect. All right, well thank you for that. Okay, well do we have any other comments on this motion before we take action?

MS. KERNS: John Clark.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Go ahead, John.

MR. JOHN CLARK: A question for Pat. I was just curious as to how the glass eel market has been

holding up these last few years, if the price has still been as high, and also, based on what Sara Rademaker said, are you expecting more eel farms in Maine, and if so, what will happen when you are using the full 200-pound aquaculture quota?

CHAIR FEGLEY: Pat, do you want to respond to that?

MR. KELIHER: Sure, thanks for that question, John. We did have a dip in the overall price in 2020 at the beginning of the issues around COVID. That price quickly rebounded for the 2021 season, and I believe the overall value of the fishery was back towards its 20-million-dollar mark. Things do look good from that perspective.

As far as the growth of the aquaculture industry, certainly Sara has set the bar. I can't say enough good things about how Sara has approached her business and her growing market, her interaction with the industry. We have had on occasion other individuals who have talked to us about the need for eels. We actually open it up for almost a prospective bid process, to see if there are others out here who are interested in that quota.

Sara is well aware that if we do see that, that could impact the amount that she would receive, but to date other than some preliminary conversations with people who are showing some level of interest, we've had no others come to the table, and to my knowledge there is nobody else that has come forward with any business plans in the near term. I think a lot of it will depend on, probably where the benchmark stock assessment goes, and where we as a Board go in future years.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Are there any other questions, comments, or discussion around this motion?

MS. KERNS: I have no hands, Lynn.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Okay, then I'm going to go ahead and read it into the record. We have a

move to extend Maine's glass eel quota at its current level, 9,688 pounds for an additional three years, 2022-2024. It's a motion by Mr. Keliher, and second by Mr. Reid. I think this is a final action, and I think I'm going to start the easy way and just ask if there is any opposition to this motion. If you are opposed, please raise your hand.

MS. KERNS: I have no hands, Lynn.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Great, then we can consider this motion approved by consensus. Thank you very much for that.

CONSIDER MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW AND STATE COMPLIANCE FOR THE 2020 FISHING YEAR

CHAIR FEGLEY: Okay, so moving on, the next agenda item is to Consider Management Plan Review and State Compliance for the 2020 Fishing Year. I'll hand that back over to Kirby.

MR. ROOTES-MURDY: I'll try to go through this quickly, since we are running a little bit behind in our scheduled time for this meeting. I'm going to just give an overview of each section in the FMP review, status of the species stock status, status of the fishery, state compliance and PRT recommendations.

As this Board is aware, Addendum V was approved in 2018, and a coastwide cap policy that the work group helped draft that Addendum was presented to the Board and approved by the Board in 2019. For the 2020 fishing season, two aquaculture proposals were submitted and approved in 2019, so this is hopefully a reminder for the Board of its approval of the North Carolina proposal, which straddled both 2019 and 2020, and then Maine had their proposal approved as well.

For those plans, they didn't harvest any glass eels. In Maine, my understanding is that the lack of harvest was due to COVID-19 pandemic, and in North Carolina, while they encountered glass eels, they did not harvest

them. The other important thing to note is that for any states that harvest over 750 pounds of glass eel, you must implement a life cycle survey. Maine started that survey in 2016, and in 2019 moved the survey for all stages yellow and young of year from the Cobbosseecontee Stream to the West Harbor Pond.

In terms of stock status there hasn't been any change since the 2017 update, and Kristen will give probably a brief update for this to the Board. We're going to have a benchmark assessment scheduled to be completed next year in 2022. For the status of the fishery, commercial landings were initially presented to this Board back in the spring.

I will note that we had a slight increase in those numbers with preliminary data hadn't changed. It still remains at a time series low at 259,362 pounds. That's a 51 percent decrease from 2019, and no surprise, the Mid-Atlantic States or jurisdictions, Maryland, PRFC and Virginia account for 78 percent of the harvest.

Maine, in terms of the glass eels landed 9,652 pounds, under their quota, and South Carolina landings are confidential as well. In terms of recreational harvest, because of the error associated with the estimates, harvest estimates are no longer collected and presented in their state compliance reports annually. In terms of our regulations, there haven't been any changes, and I will just note for the Board, we have those broken out by life stages. That first slide shows those glass eel regulations again.

There were no noted issues with those regulations implemented by the states. For the yellow eel fishery, just as a reminder. These are the regulations we have in place, and there were no changes implemented by any of the states. There were no noted issues with those regulations based on the compliance reports. Similar to the silver eel life stage, no known changes based on the state compliance report. The PRT noted there were no issues with silver eel regulations, based on the review of state

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compliance reports. In terms of other management measures, we have the aquaculture plan that I noted before.

I'm going to, in the next slide just outline what Maine did. The continuation of their aquaculture plan for 2021, which the Board approved last year, and as it was noted earlier this summer, that was conducted this year and about 138.23 pounds were harvested under that plan. As the Board got in that e-mail, there is an approval now based off of the e-mail vote for Maine to continue that aquaculture plan for 2022.

For each life stage, based on the preceding two years of data, the average commercial landings are less than 1 percent of the coastwide. Then a state can try and qualify for the de minimis. New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, District of Columbia, Georgia and Florida requested de minimis status for the yellow eel fisheries, and based off of their landings information they have met those criteria.

In terms of the Plan Review Team recommendations, the group notes the Board should consider state compliance notes that are in the FMP, simply around dealer reports, primarily that and other states that don't have those inner regulations also do not have either known harvest or dealers in their state, and that's why they are not running into any issues.

In terms of the recent yellow eel harvest, this has likely been due to the market demand as we noted based off of industry feedback back in the spring, and that it will likely continue into the future until that market demand changes. The PRT also asked the Board reevaluate the requirement states provide us, as to what percentage of harvest is going to food versus bait.

You know this is really a guesstimate that the states are able to do it at best each year, and that this information doesn't really inform our current management measures. The PRT noted that this may be just an unhelpful piece of

information that the states are trying to estimate. In terms of other recommendations, the PRT had said this last year and I'll just say this again that states should continue to work with Law Enforcement Agencies and provide information of illegal harvest when available.

That New York should try to separate out yellow and silver eel landings where possible. PRT notes that based on the location of the silver eel landings that those are generally distinguishable, but request some more clarity on that data, and the states should quantify upstream and downstream passage and provide information to the TC for evaluation.

The last item for this Board is to consider approval of the FMP review and state compliance reports for the 2020 fishing year and de minimis requests from New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, District of Columbia, Georgia and Florida for the yellow eel fishery. I'll take any questions, thank you.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Thank you, Kirby, great presentation. Do we have any questions?

MS. KERNS: I have Roy Miller.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Roy, go ahead.

MR. ROY W. MILLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Kirby, looking at Figure 1 in the compliance report. The last two years appear to be the lowest landings on the record since '98, with a downward trend since 2011. Not to put you on the spot, but do you think that is largely in response to market demand decline, or is there something else going on there, that came up perhaps during the PDT review?

MR. ROOTES-MURDY: There was nothing else that came up during the PDT review. You know we've heard from industry regarding the decline in landings. They attribute it primarily to market. They've indicated they don't think availability has gone down. You know in terms of trying to draw a signal out from the state surveys, note it varies across the states.

But in what we have to go off is what is reported, so outside of the commercial information, you know it is the fishery independent data that we use to estimate availability. It's important to note that this resource is still depleted based on the stock assessment update, and that we have habitat that has been cut off for the species range, at least on the Atlantic coast that we've been able to document. It's going to be considered as part of the assessment.

CHAIR FEGLEY: You know we did have a conversation about that at our last meeting, and that the markets have been very, very poor. There really is no place, that people are having trouble selling eels. Anecdotally the fishermen in the Bay area are saying that there are a lot of eels out there, and it looks like we might have some pretty positive survey results for 2021. But that stock assessment is going to be pretty important next year. Any other questions for Kirby?

MS. KERNS: I have no hands raised, Lynn.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Okay, so given that, would somebody be willing to put forward a motion?

MS. KERNS: Waiting for a hand. Pat Keliher.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Thank you, Pat, go ahead.

MR. KELIHER: I would move to approve the American Eel FMP Review and State compliance report for the 2020 Fishing Year and de minimis request from New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, the District of Columbia, Georgia, and Florida for their yellow eel fisheries.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Excellent, can I have a second?

MS. KERNS: Spud Woodward.

MR. A.G. "SPUD" WOODWARD: I second that.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Thank you, Spud, we now have a motion on the board. Is there anybody who wants to discuss around this motion?

MS. KERNS: I have no hands.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Okay, is there any opposition to this motion?

MS. KERNS: I have no hands in opposition.

CHAIR FEGLEY: That's great, and I guess I am going to go ahead and read it into the record, because I did not do that. **This is approved by consensus, and it is a motion to approve the American Eel FMP Review and state compliance reports for the 2020 Fishing Year, and de minimis requests for New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, District of Columbia, Georgia, and Florida for their yellow eel fisheries.** Thank you very much for that, and we'll just move straight along for our Stock Assessment Update, and Kristen, take it away.

PROGRESS UPDATE ON 2022 BENCHMARK STOCK ASSESSMENT

DR. ANSTEAD: The last time I gave a progress report to the Board was in May, and at that time I discussed some of the challenges we were having modeling eel, and that we were going to bring our issues to the Assessment Science Committee, who were having a call just a couple weeks after that Board meeting.

Just as a reminder, our main challenges that we brought to the ASC were that most methods are not appropriate for the species, due to its unique life history and its range, and that comprehensive data to support model development coastwide doesn't really exist. We requested input from the ASC on whether or not there were other approaches we could try, in addition to the ones I talked about in May, with the Board as well as ASC, and also if they were supportive of us continuing with the benchmark instead of kind of defaulting back to an update.

We had a good discussion with ASC. Ultimately, they supported us continuing to chip away at this benchmark assessment. You know we have done quite a lot of work, and we would lose all that if we defaulted to an update. With that said, there are clearly still challenges for eel, and the ASC did say if we continue to develop the kinds of things that we were working on at that time, and couldn't figure it out, that we could bring it back to the ASC, and that they would form sort of a sub-group, and do a multiday workshop with us to discuss it. It is noted that about four or five members of our stock assessment subcommittee actually sit on the ASC already, so we will have to do some work to try to find other members to participate in that, if that is the route that we go.

We have continued to develop this benchmark. Over the summer and the fall the assessment team has continued to work on some of the modeling. We've actually made some promising progress on the delay-difference model. It does seem to be producing biomass estimates and exploitation rates that we as a committee find probably reasonable.

But with that said, some of the inputs to that model are maximum age, parameters from a growth model and a weight/length relationship. As you all know, that can be really challenging for eel, so we've sort of developed it with an average eel in mind, but that eel doesn't really exist. The growth parameters can vary wildly along the coast, and across the state from fresh water to ocean, not even to talk about how they vary between the sexes. We're struggling with what we would do with this model, if we can get it to a place that we're comfortable with.

It is some progress, but also some challenges. We will continue to discuss our other trend analyses, we have an egg per recruit model, and just some other tools that can hopefully get us something that can provide management advice. We also have our collaboration with USGS, who is developing a habitat model.

I think this is probably the right time to talk a little bit to Tom Fote's question about environmental variables. The TORs we have for that are to explore possible impacts of environmental change on life history characteristics, as well as consider the consequences of environmental factors on the estimates of abundance or relative abundance indices derived from the surveys.

We have these environmental data to standardize the indices. We also tried to use some of that data in a habitat model that we kind of borrowed from menhaden, that allows you to make predictive estimates about what would change for eel if salinity or temperature varied by this many degrees or parts per thousand in the future.

That model didn't really work, and similarly USGS has kind of struggled with how to get some of that into their model, so some data issues. But we kind of abandoned that model, our habitat model with those environmental variables, but USGS is continuing their habitat model. Those are sort of kind of the routes we've been thinking for trying to address these TORs.

Some of it might end up being qualitative instead of quantitative, but we will do our best. Finally, I'll just touch on our timeline. Our original timeline has us bringing the assessment to peer review early next summer or fall, and then to the Board at annual meeting in 2022. Thus far we're on schedule, so I can take any questions.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Great, thank you for that, Kristen. It's just an incredible amount of work, and it sounds like you guys are really covering the bases, and I'm very happy to hear about that collaboration with USGS. Hopefully you guys will get a product that will be useful, and provide some additional information for us. Are there any questions?

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MS. KERNS: First, I have Tom Fote, and then followed by Chris Wright, and then one more after that.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Okay, go ahead, Tom.

MR. FOTE: Now that I've finished with the Gulf Stream, how about the Sargasso Sea? I understand that we're basically losing some of it, and with the rate of storms going through, how bad is looking up the Sargasso Sea? We really don't know the real-life cycle. We've never seen an eel spawning in the Sargasso Sea. Are we looking at research with all these drones and everything that follows hurricanes, and maybe look to see what is happening in the Sargasso Sea in NOAA?

CHAIR FEGLEY: Kristen, do you have any insight on that? Great question.

DR. ANSTEAD: Yes, you have a lot of good questions about this today, Tom. We have not specifically looked at the Sargasso Sea. I think that would fall under our kind of more general literature search, and it's certainly something I will write down and bring to the Stock Assessment Subcommittee as something to consider.

As you know, eel has a lot of kind of periphery committees as well, where we also have constant dialogue with Canada, as well as the Sargasso Sea Commission. We participate in their annual meetings, where many different countries get together and kind of compare notes. We can also revisit our notes from that from last year, and see if there is anything that we can bring through to the assessment, at least in a literature form.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Thanks for that. The Sargasso Sea Commission, you know it is interesting to tune into their meetings and get that more global perspective. Any other questions for Kristen. I'm sorry, was it Chris Wright next? Go ahead, Chris.

MR. CHRIS WRIGHT: I was just curious, did the stock assessment folks look at anything happening in Canada? I guess you had looked at the literature, from what you just responded to Tom's question. But do they do a stock assessment up there that we could get any kind of indicators from?

DR. ANSTEAD: Yes, they do stock assessments up in Canada, and it's just a different process. Theirs are more region based. We do not have a formal collaboration with them for this assessment, but a couple of their DFO scientists have been attending all of our calls, and they chime in as needed. While we're not using their data, we will pull in for some figures, probably some of their indices and their landings. But it is not a formal collaboration, but we are in communication.

MR. WRIGHT: Okay, thank you, because it would be curious whether or not any of their indices would be helpful for our exercises, we don't have full coverage along the coast.

DR. ANSTEAD: Yes, I'll note that we have more indices and fishery independent data than they do, kind of across all of their different provinces. Our time series are a little bit longer, so they have been a little bit hard to compare, but certainly DFO made an effort a couple years ago to standardize more of their indices, and then analyze them in a way that is consistent with our benchmark. But there wasn't quite as much success in that as we hoped. But we are still talking about that, and hopefully we can, in the future, fold sort of our indices into each other assessments.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Anybody else?

MS. KERNS: We have one member of the public, Erik Zlokovitz, hope I said that right, Erik.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Erik Zlokovitz, go right ahead, but please keep it quick, we're running behind.

MR. ERIK ZLOKOVITZ: Hey guys, sorry, I accidentally unmuted myself, I didn't have any comments. Sorry.

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CHAIR FEGLEY: No worries, thank you so much. All right, well I think that was the last item on our agenda. I do believe that this is my last meeting as Chair.

CHAIR FEGLEY: I want to thank you all, it's been a pleasure, and I believe it is Phil Edwards from Rhode Island who will be taking over. I'm looking forward to take his leadership.

ADJOURNMENT

CHAIR FEGLEY: With that, is there any other business that needs to come before the Board?

MS. KERNS: I have no hands.

CHAIR FEGLEY: Is there any opposition to adjourning this meeting?

MS. KERNS: I see no hands.

CHAIR FEGLEY: All right, consider ourselves adjourned, and have a wonderful afternoon, everyone.

(Whereupon the meeting convened at 12:18
p.m. on Thursday October 21, 2021.)