



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

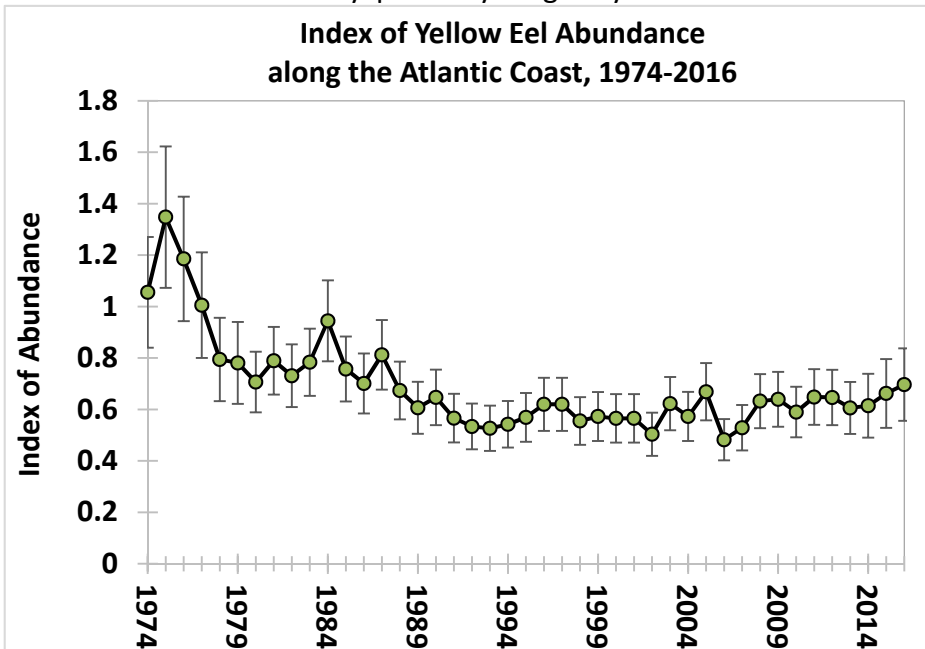
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 19, 2017

PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger
703.842.0740

American Eel Stock Assessment Update Finds Resource Remains Depleted

Norfolk, VA – The American Eel Management Board reviewed the results of the 2017 American Eel Stock Assessment Update, which indicates the resource remains depleted. The assessment updates the 2012 American Eel Benchmark Stock Assessment with data from 2010-2016. Trend analyses of abundance indices indicated large declines in abundance of yellow eels during the 1980s through the early 1990s, with primarily neutral or stable abundance from the mid-1990s through 2016. Total landings remain low but stable. Based on these findings, the stock is still considered depleted. No overfishing determination can be made based on the analyses performed.

The American eel fishery primarily targets yellow eel. Glass eel fisheries along the Atlantic coast are

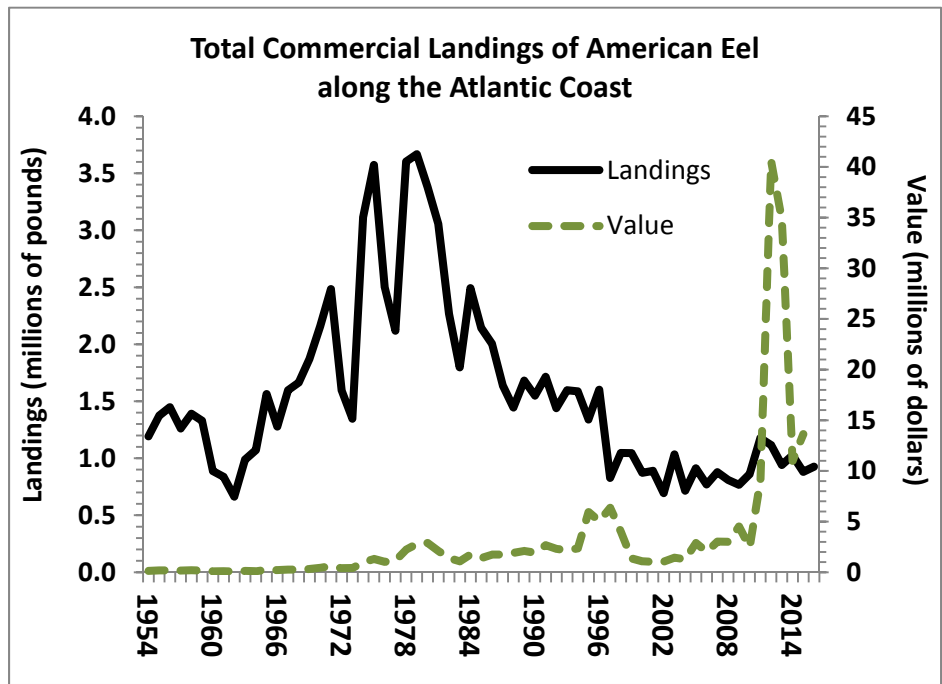


prohibited in all states except Maine and South Carolina. In recent years, Maine is the only state reporting significant glass eel harvest. The highest total landings of all life stages occurred from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s after which they declined. Since the 1990s, landings have been lower than historical landings and have been stable in recent decades. The value of U.S. commercial American eel landings has varied from a few hundred thousand dollars (prior to the 1980s) to a peak of \$40.6 million in 2012 (largely driven by the price of glass eels).

The error bars represent the standard errors about the estimates.

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 a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species.

The 2012 benchmark stock assessment found the resource depleted and Addenda III (2013) and IV (2014) were approved with the goal of reducing mortality across all life stages. These addenda established a 9-inch minimum size limit for commercial and recreational fisheries, a yellow eel commercial coastwide cap of 907,671 pounds, and glass eel quota of 9,688 pounds for Maine beginning for the 2015 fishing year. The yellow eel cap has two management triggers: (1) the coastwide cap is exceeded by more than 10% in a given year and (2) the coastwide cap is exceeded for two consecutive years, regardless of the percent over. If either trigger is met, there is an automatic implementation of state-by-state quotas. The 2015 yellow eel landings were below the cap. However, 2016 landings were 925,798 pounds, which exceeded the cap by less than 10%.



A more detailed overview of the American eel stock assessment is available on the Commission website at http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/59e8c077AmericanEelStockAssessmentOverview_Oct2017.pdf. It was developed to aid media and interested stakeholders in better understanding the results. The assessment update will be available on the Commission website on the American Eel webpage the week of October 23rd.

In other business, the Board maintained Maine's glass eel quota of 9,688 pounds for the 2018 fishing season. The Board also initiated an addendum to consider alternative allocations, management triggers, and coastwide caps relative to the current management program for both the yellow and glass eel commercial fisheries starting for the 2019 fishing season.

For more information on the stock assessment update, please contact Dr. Kristen Anstead at kanstead@asmfc.org and for information on American eel management, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior Fishery Management Coordinator, at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org.

###