



# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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## MEMORANDUM

June 28, 2018

**To:** American Eel Management Board  
**From:** American Eel Advisory Panel  
**RE:** June 2018 AP Call Summary

**List of AP Participants:** Mari-Beth DeLucia (Chair; TNC), Mitch Feigenbaum (PA), David Allen (ME)

**Other:** Sara Rademaker, American Unagi

**Staff:** Kirby Rootes-Murdy (ASMFC), Dr. Kristen Anstead (ASMFC), Sean Ledwin (ME DMR), and Dr. Gail Wippelhauser (ME DMR)

The Commission's American eel Advisory Panel (AP) met on Thursday June 28<sup>th</sup> 2018 to provide comments on Draft Addendum V, the Maine Aquaculture Proposal, and receive an update on a recent International Workshop on American eel Management in the Dominican Republic.

### Draft Addendum V

Staff presented the Draft Addendum V and AP members provided the following comments by issue items:

#### *Glass Eel*

Maine Glass Eel Quota: Two AP members were in favor of option 1, Status Quo Quota of 9,688 pounds. Reasons cited were concerns over poaching, the recent new news of illegal harvest in Maine outside of the swipe card system and concern over the status of the resource. It was noted that the recommendation from the 2012 assessment was to reduce mortality on all life stages and raising the quota would go against that advice.

One AP member was in favor of Option 2, Quota of 11,749 pounds. Reasons cited was that the state of Maine is has a good handle on the illegal harvest and that the quick response of Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) to close the glass eel fishery early demonstrates they can quickly address issues as they arise.

Aquaculture Plan Provisions: All three AP members were in favor of option 2, Pooling of Aquaculture Harvest Allowance. Reason cited were an interest in spreading the harvest allowance across multiple states to reduce effort and removals from just one watershed and concern that the 200 pound allowance is not enough for an aquaculture business to operate on. Other comments noted frustration that the pooling option 2 didn't require the states in

coordination to complete a life cycle survey. One AP member did note that concern about the enforcement of harvest that may take place in one take and then be transferred across state lines to a facility in another state.

### *Yellow Eel*

Coastwide Cap: Two AP members stated that their preference was for option 4: 12% reduction from the time series average of 1998-2016 landings. Reasons cited were the previous recommendations made by the Technical Committee in 2014 in light of the 2012 assessment results. Both of them also indicated that if option 4 was not selected than their second choice would be option 1: status quo, 907,671 pounds.

One AP member indicated their preference for option 3: time series average of 1998-2016 landings. Reasons cited that the fishery historically averaged closer to 2 million pounds annually and recent genetics research demonstrates that there is significant breeding population that could sustain higher removals. For this AP member, if this option were not selected their second choice would be option 2: median of 1998-2016 landings.

Management Triggers: All three AP members stated their preference for Option 3: two year exceedance of the coastwide cap by 10%. Reasons cited is that adjusting the trigger to be two years will better buffer against fluctuations in the landings.

State Allocations: One AP member indicated their preference for Option 1: Status Quo state allocations. No reasons were cited, but they did note their opposition to Option 2: no state by state quotas. Two AP members did not indicate a preference, instead noting the complexity of the options.

Transfer: All three AP members indicated their preference for Option 2: extending quota transfers to February 15. Reasons cited was that it would allow the states more time to account for overages and get quota transfers as needed.

### **Maine Aquaculture Proposal**

Sara Rademaker of American Unagi presented the Maine Aquaculture Proposal. Sara outlined that the proposal would both purchase glass eels from harvesters in addition to the 200 pound harvest allowance to make the operation financially viable. All harvest the facility would acquire glass eels from would be licensed Maine harvesters using the swipe card system. The facility is a recirculating aquaculture system (RAS) that would have 120 metric ton capacity. Harvest would take place during the currently specified glass eel season of March through June.

The AP posed questions regarding whether converting glass eels into yellow eels would ever be profitable enough to compete with the current price per pound being set by demand for glass eels in Asian seafood markets. Sara noted that there is great volatility in price per pound, which

fluctuated based on market demand, and so domestic production of yellow eels and their facility would hopefully create more stability in the price by augmenting the current market demand. Sara did note that the US annually imports approximately 5,000 metric tons and that when fully operational, their facility would likely 'eat' into that importation demand slightly.

All three AP members were in support of the Maine Aquaculture Proposal because of the opportunity it presents to the state of Maine and potential capacity to reduce the market demand, and potentially fishing mortality, on glass eels.

### **Range State Workshop in the Dominican Republic**

Mari-Beth presented on the recent workshop in the Dominican Republic that brought together Atlantic and Caribbean countries that have or are seeing emerging eel fisheries. The workshop was put on by with funding by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Canada Department of Oceans and Fisheries, and was organized by the Sargasso Sea Commission. In 2016, at the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) Meeting in South Africa, a request was made to collect information from all countries that trade anguillid species, include American Eel. This report out of information from all American eel range states conducted at the workshop, as well discussions on future coordinated international management of American eel. The IUCN Species group will be reconsidering the red listed status in November 2018. And lastly the reports by countries will at the next Animals CITES subcommittee meeting this summer, and the full CITES will next consider whether to add American eel to appendix II in summer 2019.