



# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

## ASMFC 2024 Spring Meeting

*Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries*

ASMFC Spring Meeting  
April 29 – May 2, 2024

For more information, please  
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## **ATLANTIC COASTAL COOPERATIVE STATISTICS PROGRAM COORDINATING COUNCIL (APRIL 29, 2024)**

### ***Meeting Summary***

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Coordinating Council met to review and approve the FY2025 RFP (Request for Proposals) and review project and program updates.

The Council voted to approve the FY2025 RFP as presented by the Operations Committee and Advisory Panel. The Council was presented an update of ACCSP program activities, including software development timelines and projects, major cross-team projects, recreational initiatives, new ACCSP Data Warehouse reports, updates to the recreational sections of the ACCSP website, and the status of ACCSP regional partner coordination.

The Council reviewed the SciFish project that launched April 1, 2024, as the result of a 3-year multi-partner project effort that was funded through the ACCSP RFP. SciFish projects will focus on data collection for marine and/or diadromous fisheries along the Atlantic coast that fill data gaps or data deficiencies, address identified research needs, and clearly articulate how collected data will be used in management and/or stock assessments. The Council received an update on the Atlantic Recreational Discards Pilot Project that has been designed by a subgroup of the Recreational Technical Committee to address counts and lengths of released catch. Eight states plan to participate in the pilot if funding is approved.

ACCSP announced that the public release of 2023 data is scheduled for May 7<sup>th</sup>. The data will be available in the Data Warehouse and shared with NOAA as the consolidated landings. Highlights include a new American Eel dataset contact/provider for Florida freshwater data, reflection of conversion factor changes in SAFIS in the historical dealer data in the Data Warehouse, and an update from Maine for 2022.

For more information, please contact Geoff White, ACCSP Director, at [Geoff.White@accsp.org](mailto:Geoff.White@accsp.org).

### ***Motions***

**Move to approve the 2025 ACCSP RFP and funding documents as presented to the Coordinating Council.**

Motion made by Mr. Carmichael and seconded by Mr. Gary, Motion passes by unanimous consent.

## **AMERICAN LOBSTER MANAGEMENT BOARD (APRIL 30, 2024)**

### ***Meeting Summary***

The American Lobster Management Board met to receive a report from the Lobster Technical Committee (TC) on the lobster resource and fishery on the Northern Edge of Georges Bank, an update from the Plan Development Team (PDT) on its evaluation of the measures of Addendum XXI and XXII and changes in the Southern New England (SNE) fishery, and a progress update on the 2025 benchmark stock assessment.

The TC provided a report to the Board summarizing available information on the lobster population and fishery on the Northern Edge of Georges Bank. The Board tasked the TC with compiling information presence and abundance of lobsters, including ovigerous females, on a seasonal basis, as well as seasonal fishery effort in the area because the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) is considering scallop fishery access on the Northern Edge. The report finds that lobsters are present on top of George's Bank year-round but numbers are much higher in the late summer into fall, especially for large females. Fishery-dependent data show consistently female-skewed sex ratios and catch that is comprised of large lobsters, mostly over 100 mm carapace length. Moderate levels of fishing activity occur from July through November in the area, overlapping with the proposed scallop access options.

The lobster PDT met in April to address the Board task to review the conservation measures originally set in Addenda XXI and XXII and make recommendations for alternate measures to achieve those reductions. Addenda XXI and XXII, approved in 2013, included aggregate ownership caps in Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMAs) 2 and 3 and maximum trap cap reductions in LCMA 3 intended to scale the southern new England fishery to the diminished size of the stock. NOAA fisheries has not implemented the measures from these addenda, but recently published an interim rule to do so on January 1, 2025. The Board and lobster industry have expressed concern that the fishery has changed significantly and therefore implementing the measures in the current context could have unintended impacts. The PDT report showed that there have been reductions since 2023 in allocations and maximum traps fished in LCMAs 2 and 3. The Board agreed the PDT should consider input from both Lobster Conservation Management Teams (LCMTs) for LCMAs 2 and 3 before providing recommendations to the Board for possible alternative management measures.

The Board also heard comments from the public regarding concerns about the implementation of the minimum gauge size increase under Addendum XXVII, which is scheduled to occur January 1, 2025. Industry is concerned that the increase will negatively impact catch and value in the lobster fishery, and put the US market at a disadvantage if Canada's minimum size does not change. The Board plans to send a letter to Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans and relevant Canadian industry associations urging Canada to increase the minimum size for lobster in the Gulf of Maine on the same schedule established in Addendum XXVII. The public also expressed privacy concerns regarding the requirement of Addendum XXIX for 24/7 vessel monitoring of the federal lobster fleet. The Board tasked the vessel tracking workgroup with investigating possible modifications to allow the trackers to only collect data during lobster fishing trips.

A benchmark stock assessment for American lobster is ongoing and is expected for completion in 2025. The Stock Assessment Subcommittee will meet for the Assessment Methods Workshop in July. The Board also elected Renee Zobel as Vice Chair.

For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [cstarks@asmfc.org](mailto:cstarks@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

## **Motions**

### **Move to elect Renee Zobel as Vice Chair.**

Motion made by Mr. McKiernan and seconded by Mr. Reid. Motion passes by consent.

**Move to task the Addendum XXIX vessel tracking implementation workgroup, with input from the LEC, to investigate modifications to the 24/7 vessel tracking requirement which still ensure monitoring of fishing activity while acknowledging that fishermen also use boats for personal/non-fishing reasons. This should include a review of existing processes for when VMS devices can be turned off.**

Motion made by Mr. Train and seconded by Mr. Borden. Motion passes by consent.

**Motion to draft a formal letter to Canada DFO and relevant Canadian industry associations as identified by the board chair and the executive director. This letter would request Canada increase the minimum size for lobster in the Gulf of Maine on the same schedule as ASMFC or as soon as possible as captured in Addendum XXVII.**

Motion made by Mr. McKiernan and seconded by Mr. Borden. Motion passes by consent.

## **SCIAENIDS MANAGEMENT BOARD (APRIL 30, 2024)**

### ***Meeting Summary***

The Sciaenids Management Board met to consider several items: the Spot Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Review and state compliance reports; an update on the ongoing benchmark stock assessments for red drum, spot, and Atlantic croaker; direction to the Spot and Atlantic Croaker Technical Committee on updating their respective traffic light analyses; and election of a Vice-Chair.

The Board reviewed and approved the Spot FMP Review and state compliance reports for the 2022 fishing year, as well as *de minimis* status for New Jersey, Delaware, and Georgia. Delaware has exceeded the 1% *de minimis* threshold for three years in a row, ranging between 1.05% and 1.20%. Under Addendum III, any state that exceeds the 1% threshold would be required to implement recreational and commercial regulations. Delaware requested and was granted *de minimis* status by the Board for the 2025 fishing year because landings minimally exceeded the threshold. Delaware will continue to monitor its fishery relative to the FMP's *de minimis* standards.

The Board received an update on the ongoing red drum, spot, and Atlantic croaker benchmark stock assessments. The red drum benchmark stock assessment is scheduled for peer review the week of August 12, 2024, and will be presented to the Board at the 2024 Annual Meeting. After the Board agreed to decouple the spot and Atlantic croaker benchmark stock assessments at its October 2023 meeting, the Spot and Atlantic Croaker Stock Assessment Subcommittee has been conducting modeler calls to develop the Atlantic croaker stock synthesis model. The second assessment workshop and subsequent meetings, including the Peer Review Workshop, will be scheduled once sufficient progress has been made in model development. The spot assessment will be completed approximately one year following the completion of the Atlantic croaker assessment.

Additionally, the Board discussed the potential for updating the spot and Atlantic croaker traffic light analyses this year, after forgoing an update last year. The Board directed the Spot and Atlantic Croaker Technical Committee to conduct abbreviated traffic light analyses for both species this year, focusing only on updating the harvest and abundance composite metrics used to make management decisions.

Finally, the Board approved Shanna Madsen of Virginia as the new Vice-Chair. For more information, please contact Tracey Bauer, FMP Coordinator, at [tbauer@asmfc.org](mailto:tbauer@asmfc.org).

### ***Motions***

**Move to approve the Spot FMP Review for the 2022 fishing year, state compliance reports, and *de minimis* status for New Jersey and Georgia.**

Motion made by Mr. Woodward and seconded by Mr. Cimino. Motion carries without opposition.

**Move to approve *de minimis* status for Delaware.**

Motion made by Mr. Woodward and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion carries (8 in favor, 1 opposed).

**Move to nominate Shanna Madsen as Vice-Chair of the Sciaenids Management Board.**

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Batsavage. Motion passes by consent.

## **ATLANTIC MENHADEN MANAGEMENT BOARD (APRIL 30, 2024)**

### ***Meeting Summary***

The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board met to review a report on an acoustic survey of overwintering Atlantic menhaden offshore of New Jersey; receive updates from Maryland and Virginia on work relating to the study and management of menhaden in Chesapeake Bay; and receive progress reports on the ecological reference point (ERP) benchmark stock assessment and single-species stock assessment update.

The Board reviewed the results of an acoustic survey ([Nesslage et al., 2024](#)) that aimed to generate estimates of biomass and characterize size, age, and sex, and maturity of the portion of the Atlantic menhaden stock that overwinters off the coast of New Jersey. In addition to confirming that a portion of the adult stock resides overwinter along the shelf in the Mid-Atlantic region, the study demonstrated alternative acoustic survey designs can effectively account for the patchy distribution of large schools across the landscape and may prove useful in future monitoring.

The Board received updates from Maryland and Virginia on recent developments in the study and management of Atlantic menhaden in Chesapeake Bay. Maryland representative Lynn Fegley updated the Board on an upcoming communications tool that synthesizes Maryland data to describe the status of predator-prey balance in the Bay. The communication tool is expected to be released in fall 2024. Virginia representative Pat Geer updated the Board on the proposed and enacted legislative and regulatory changes since 2022; more information can be found [here](#).

The Board received progress reports on the ERP benchmark stock assessment and the single-species stock assessment update. The ERP Workgroup met in October 2023 to conduct a Data and Methods Workshop to review new data sources; discuss high priority updates to the ecosystem models, including identifying potential new predators to add to the model; and discuss ongoing ecosystem indicator work in Maryland and Virginia. The Board also reviewed the needs and timeframes for potential spatial components to the ERP models. The ERP benchmark stock assessment and single-species stock assessment update are both scheduled to be presented to the Board at the 2025 Annual Meeting.

Under other business, the Board requested staff to coordinate a presentation by US Geological Survey staff for the Summer Meeting regarding osprey abundance, spatial and temporal distribution, dietary demands, and timing of fledge in the Chesapeake Bay region.

Additionally, the Board elected John Clark as Vice-Chair. For more information, please contact James Boyle, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator at [jboyle@asmfc.org](mailto:jboyle@asmfc.org).

### ***Motions***

#### **Move to nominate John Clark as Vice-Chair of the Atlantic Menhaden Board.**

Motion made by Jeff Kaelin and seconded by Mr. Train. Motion approved by consent.

### **LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE (APRIL 30 & MAY 1, 2024)**

#### ***Meeting Summary***

The Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) conducted a hybrid meeting during the 2024 Spring meeting of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) in Arlington, VA. The committee welcomed Captain Brian Scott of the NJ Fish and Wildlife as the new LEC representative from New Jersey. Captain Scott Pearce of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission transitioned into the role of the Chair of the LEC and Lt. Delayne Brown from the NH Fish and Game Department was elected to the position of Vice -Chair.

#### **Species Discussion**

**Atlantic Striped Bass** –Staff updated the LEC on the implementation of Addendum II of Amendment 7 of the Atlantic Striped Bass plan. Specific discussion was of the adopted compliance measures found in Section 3.0 of the plan. With special attention given to the public comments on the fillet requirement. The LEC appreciated the opportunity to participate in this addendum development.

**Atlantic Cobia** – Staff updated the LEC on the Cobia draft Addendum II of Amendment 1 in consideration of Recreational Allocation, Harvest Target Evaluation, and Measures Setting. The LEC will monitor this addendum development and provide comments when appropriate.

**Spiny Dogfish** – Staff provided an update of actions taken by the MAFMC and NEFMC to reduce sturgeon bycatch in the Federal Large Mesh Gillnet fisheries. The LEC discussed the compliance measures considered by the councils and will support and advise the ASMFC in their deliberations on this issue.

**American Lobster** – The LEC discussed the status of Addendum XXX of Amendment 3 of the Lobster FMP with staff. Specifically, discussion centered around the “Mitchell Provision” and how this addendum will interface with Addendum XXVII. The LEC will continue to follow the development of Addendum XXX and offer comments as appropriate.

### **Business Discussion**

The LEC members approved the final draft document of the *Guidelines for Resource Managers on the Enforceability of Fishery Management Measures (July 2024)*. Over the past year a sub-committee of six LEC members reviewed this document and made recommendations to the LEC for consideration. With the always evolving strategies to address the development of fishery management plans, the LEC wished to keep this document relevant for the fishery managers of today. The document was updated with the following:

- A new section identifying regulatory language for “Enforcement Tools.”
- The addition of a new management measure addressing the tagging, labeling, or marking of marine species.
- An updated survey by committee members on enforceability ratings of defined management measures.
- Clarifying language updates to Section 5, Enforcement Strategies and Recommendations.

This document was presented to the ISFMP Policy Board for approval in the Spring of 2024.

**North American Wildlife Law Enforcement Accreditation (NAWLEA)** - Colonel John Cobb and Captain Rob Ham III of the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources provided a presentation on the new wildlife law enforcement accreditation process being implemented through the Southeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA). Created in 2022 NAWLEA offers a comprehensive accreditation program for wildlife law enforcement agencies. Their team is composed of experts in the field who are dedicated to ensuring the highest standards of professionalism among member agencies. Assessors work with agencies to ensure that they meet rigorous standards for professionalism and effectiveness in protecting our natural resources. They are a credentialing entity that is recognized by the United States, Department of Justice for law enforcement accreditation.

**Elver Fishery Enforcement** – Representatives from the Maine Marine Patrol and the USFW Service, Office of Law Enforcement presented on the current state of the Elver fishery. Information was shared about the Canadian elver fishery closure and its impacts on our domestic fishery. Success stories were discussed as a deterrent to the illegal trade of this high values resource.

**Interstate Wildlife Violators Compact (IWVC)** - The committee continued discussions on how best to implement and use the Interstate Wildlife Violators Compact. Specifically, State agencies shared best practices among each state on how to model their respective state programs.



A closed session of our meeting was afforded to openly discuss new and emerging law enforcement issues. Respective agencies were provided with time to highlight their agencies and offer current enforcement efforts. For more information, please contact Kurt Blanchard, LEC Coordinator, [kurt.blanchard@verizon.net](mailto:kurt.blanchard@verizon.net).

### ***Motions***

#### **Motion to approve the revised edition of the *Guidelines for Resource Managers on the Enforceability of Fishery Management Measures* for approval by the ISFMP Board.**

Motion made by Scott Pearce (FL) and seconded by Keith Williams (CT). Motion approved by consensus.

#### **Motion to elect Lt. Delayne Brown of New Hampshire Fish and Game Department as Vice-Chair of the Law Enforcement Committee.**

Motion made by Keith Williams (CT) and seconded by Rob Beal (ME). Motion approved by consensus.

### **HORSESHOE CRAB MANAGEMENT BOARD (APRIL 30, 2024)**

#### ***Press Release***

#### **ASMFC Horseshoe Crab Board Approves Coastwide Stock Assessment for Management Use and Responds to Delaware Bay Management External Criticism**

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s Horseshoe Crab Management Board reviewed the 2024 Horseshoe Crab Stock Assessment Update, which indicates improvements in stock status from the 2019 assessment. The Board also received a response by the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Subcommittee to an external review of the ARM Framework.

The 2024 Horseshoe Crab Stock Assessment Update evaluated the stock status of the resource by region, finding the coastwide population to be in a good condition. Regionally, the Delaware Bay and Southeast regions were also in good condition, the Northeast was considered neutral, and the New York region remains in poor condition. While the Southeast region stock status remains good, there are some indices that are trending down in recent years and trends in the Southeast should be monitored in addition to those in the New York region, which has not improved substantially since the last assessment.

The Board also received a report from the ARM Subcommittee responding to the critique of the revised ARM Framework produced by Earthjustice. After conducting a thorough review and technical evaluation of the specific issues raised in the critique, the ARM Subcommittee maintains the red knot and horseshoe crab population models used in the ARM Framework represent the best use of the available data. Further, the trawl surveys and egg density data all indicate an increase in horseshoe crab populations in the region, a result consistent with the stock assessment update. The Subcommittee concluded that the Earthjustice critique was largely unfounded and failed to offer any alternative management approaches. As science and modeling approaches evolve, the Subcommittee will continue to revise and improve the ARM Framework for managing the Delaware Bay horseshoe crab fishery.

A more detailed description of the stock assessment results, the 2024 Horseshoe Crab Stock Assessment Update Report, and the ARM Subcommittee’s response to the critique by Earthjustice will be available on the Commission website, [www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org), on the Horseshoe Crab webpage next week. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [cstarks@asmfc.org](mailto:cstarks@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

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PR24-12

### ***Meeting Summary***

In addition to accepting the 2024 stock assessment update, and considering the technical response to critiques of the ARM Framework, the Horseshoe Crab Management Board also received a summary of the current demand for horseshoe crabs as bait in the American eel and whelk fisheries. With some states limiting the harvest of horseshoe crabs, the Board requested this information to understand potential impacts of bait harvest restrictions in these fisheries. States indicated that effort trends in the eel and whelk fisheries along the coast have varied, and information is not collected on trends in bait usage.

The Board also received an update on planning for the Delaware Bay stakeholder workshop. The workshop will convene a group of key stakeholders to identify potential management goals the horseshoe crab fishery in the Delaware Bay region to inform future management decisions. The workshop will be held in July near the coast of the Delaware Bay, and a report including recommendations developed during the workshop will be provided to the Board in October.

For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [cstarks@asmfc.org](mailto:cstarks@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

### ***Motions***

**Move to accept the 2024 Horseshoe Crab Assessment Update for management use.**

Motion made by Ms. Madsen and seconded by Mr. McManus. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

### **CAPTAIN DAVID H. HART AWARD AND ANNUAL AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE RECEPTION (APRIL 30, 2024)**

#### ***Press Releases***

### **Dr. Michael Armstrong Named 2024 Captain David H. Hart Award Recipient**

Arlington, VA – At its 2024 Spring Meeting in Arlington, Virginia, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission presented Dr. Michael P. Armstrong, Deputy Director of the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MA DMF), the Captain David H. Hart Award for 2024 for his many notable scientific and management contributions to the betterment of the fisheries of the Atlantic coast. The Commission instituted the Hart Award in 1991 to recognize individuals who have made outstanding efforts to improve Atlantic coast marine fisheries. The Hart Award is named for one of the Commission’s longest

serving members, who dedicated himself to the advancement and protection of marine fishery resources, Captain David H. Hart, from the State of New Jersey.

As Deputy Director at MA DMF, Mike is responsible for overseeing the Division's programs in fish biology, recreational and diadromous fisheries, and stock assessment and surveys, as well as supervising the Cat Cove Marine Laboratory. Over three decades at the Division, he has contributed to numerous Commission technical and stock assessment committees and later began serving on many management boards, including more than a few times as chair.



From Left: ASMFC Chair Joe Cimino, Executive Director Bob Beal, AAE Recipient Mike Armstrong and ASMFC Vice Chair Dan McKiernan

Mike is well-known for his commitment to scientifically justified management decisions, both at home in Massachusetts and around the Commission table. He draws upon his background in fish biology, marine ecology, data analysis, and stock assessments as a foundation for sound management. He's willing to make the hard, sometimes unpopular decisions to safeguard the health of the resource. Examples for northern shrimp, striped bass, and river herring come to mind. To support this philosophy of science-based decision making, he recently reorganized the Division's fisheries managers and stock assessment scientists to be under the same roof to ensure a constant flow of information.

Mike's passion for applied research to address fisheries management questions is evident in a long list of publications in fisheries science and his endless initiatives to tackle knowledge gaps. In recent years, he has set into motion plans to investigate cod stock structure and site fidelity, understand and assess striped bass release mortality, examine black sea bass spawning behavior, and research winter flounder maturity and habitat use, among others. Mike was personally responsible for the creation of the Division's Age & Growth Lab that provides state staff as well as state and federal partners fish ageing data that are critical to stock assessments. This lab has been a major contributor to standardizing and advancing ageing techniques to improve regional stock assessments.

By way of his leadership and encouraging other state staff to engage in research and publish, Mike has grown the Division's contribution to the scientific literature dramatically. He has helped attract and develop some of the best talent in fisheries science at the Division and created partnerships with numerous institutions to increase the Division's productivity and reach. He serves as mentor to fellow

researchers, committee members, and Commission staff, and continues to lecture to university classes to produce the next wave of fact-driven fisheries scientists and managers.

His mark on the management of recreational fisheries in Massachusetts is of particular note. He has elevated the Division's focus on recreational fisheries to equal that of commercial fisheries. Mike has focused attention on improving the quality of recreational data collection and catch estimation, and shaped the Division's use of recreational permit fees to address critical recreational fisheries needs and give back to anglers with public access improvements.

Mike has grown to be a leading voice around the management table in supporting scientific advice for sound, defensible decision-making. He's able to build consensus on actions with this as his beacon. In accepting the award, Mike humbly stated, "I just show up every day and do what I think is right."

###

PR24-11

### ASMFC Presents 2024 Annual Awards of Excellence

Arlington, VA – Last evening, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission presented its Annual Awards of Excellence to a number of individuals for their outstanding contributions to management, scientific, and law enforcement efforts along the Atlantic coast. Specifically, the 2024 award recipients are Phil Edwards for management and policy contributions; Nicole Lengyel Costa and Laura Lee for technical and scientific contributions; and Deputy Chief Jason Snellbaker for law enforcement contributions.



From left: ASMFC Executive Director Bob Beal, AAE Recipients Deputy Chief Jason Snellbaker, Laura Lee, Nicole Lengyel Costa and Phil Edwards, and ASMFC Chair Joe Cimino

"Every year a great many people contribute to the success of fisheries management along the Atlantic coast. The Commission's Annual Awards of Excellence recognize outstanding efforts by professionals who have made a difference in the way we manage and conserve our fisheries," said Awards Committee Chair Spud Woodward of Georgia. "I am humbled by the breadth and extent of accomplishments of the recipients and am grateful for their dedication to Atlantic coast fisheries."

## **Management and Policy Contributions**

### ***Phil Edwards of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management***

Phil has been an active and integral member on several Commission species management boards over the years, including serving as Chair of the American Eel, and Shad and River Herring Boards. Management of

these diadromous resources is challenging due to data limitations and the various threats they face throughout their extensive range between freshwater and ocean ecosystems. Under his leadership, Phil has been able to deftly guide management of these species. As board chair and member on other boards, Phil has brought a wealth of knowledge and policy acumen to all his Commission endeavors, and the Commission at-large has benefitted from Phil's work ethic, leadership, and expertise.

Phil's strong policy and fisheries management skills are backed by over 20 years of participation on various technical committees and assessment work for Commission species. His extensive knowledge and years of work on fish passage has improved conservation of diadromous fish in Rhode Island, and by extension along the East Coast, and serves as an example of his dedication to these efforts.

## **Scientific and Technical Contributions**

### ***Nicole Lengyel Costa of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management***

For many years, Nicole has been an engaged and important member of several Commission technical committees, fish ageing projects, and plan development teams, and has served as Chair of the Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee for the past few years.

Aside from her technical contributions, Nicole has helped the Commission develop several particularly tricky management actions for striped bass, including recent actions to stop overfishing and aid in stock rebuilding. These actions were structurally complex and Nicole, working closely with her colleagues at the Commission, put together well-crafted documents in order for the public to understand and comment on these complicated proposed measures.

In addition to her efforts with striped bass, Nicole is a long serving member of the ACCSP Operations Committee and has been involved with age and growth work used in stock assessments across Commission species. Nicole brings to all her endeavors a strong scientific skill set and a keen understanding of fisheries management policy. Her efforts not only benefit Rhode Island but fisheries science and management activities along the entire East Coast.

### ***Laura Lee of the US Fish and Wildlife Service and formerly with the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (NC DMF)***

Laura has been involved in Commission stock assessments for nearly 25 years, including some of the first stock assessments for species such as Atlantic croaker, American eel, and spot. She has advanced fisheries science through the development of innovative approaches to common issues faced by stock assessments and the contribution of years of expertise and mentorship to numerous stock assessment subcommittees and scientists along the Atlantic coast. There is hardly a coastal Atlantic species Laura has not worked on, having been involved with or serving as chair on technical committees or stock assessment subcommittees for a multitude of species. During her time as a stock assessment scientist

with NC DMF, she developed numerous codes for routine analyses used by the majority of Commission stock assessments today. With her new position as an ecologist at the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Laura will continue her productive fisheries career.

Aside from these professional accomplishments, Laura is an invaluable resource on Atlantic coast fish species and stock assessment methods. She is generous with her time and has mentored several fisheries scientists through complex analyses and approaches. Laura provided advanced statistical analysis and guidance to DMF staff for virtually every FMP adopted during her tenure. Some of these scientists have

gone on serve on Commission technical committees and to further their careers at other state agencies, NOAA Fisheries, and in academia. Despite her formal transition off Commission and Division committees due to her new role, she has continued to show her dedication to Atlantic species by regularly participating in committee meetings and providing valuable feedback to keep science projects moving forward.

### **Law Enforcement Contributions**

#### ***Deputy Chief Jason Snellbaker of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Bureau of Law Enforcement***

Since becoming a member of the Commission's Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) in 2014, Jason has promoted the role of law enforcement in fisheries management. He has represented the Committee on a number of species management boards, including tautog; summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass; Atlantic sturgeon; and bluefish. He has been the voice of the LEC on critical topics such as commercial tautog tagging and the summer flounder research set aside program.

During Jason's time with the LEC, he was selected by his peers to serve in a leadership role as Vice-chair and Chair. He accepted these roles during the pandemic, a particularly challenging time for the LEC as members were drawn to other responsibilities in their home states. Jason kept the flow of communication open and provided steady leadership by staying on as Chair for an extended period. At the state level, Jason's exceptional leadership has been recognized by both NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement for his efforts in support of the Cooperative Enforcement Program, and by the Commission for his work as part of a team of officers working in the New Jersey Fish and Wildlife marine region. He has also promoted marine fisheries law enforcement in forums such as the National Association of Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs where he took on an advisory role and participated in an exchange program with an agency in Belize.

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PR24-10



## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (MAY 1, 2024)**

### ***Meeting Summary***

The Executive Committee (Committee) met to discuss several issues, including the proposed FY25 Budget; a Legislative Committee update and the Executive Director's Performance review. The following action items resulted from the Committee's discussions:

- ASMFC Vice-Chair Dan McKiernan presented the proposed FY25 Commission budget which was reviewed by the Administrative Oversight Committee (AOC).
- Staff reported on the recent activities of Congress, upcoming budget hearings, the appropriations process, and proposed cuts to essential programs within the President's FY25 budget for NOAA. Within the appropriations update, staff discussed three new requests from the Commission to Congress for funding for FY25; 1) An industry-based trawl survey pilot program (\$3 million); 2) funding to complete all research outlined in the Virginia Institute of Marine Science Menhaden Report (\$2.7 million); and 3) one-time Congressionally-directed spending to retrofit the R/V Lady Lisa (\$1 million).
- Staff provided an update on upcoming Annual Meetings, with the 2024 meeting to be held in Annapolis, Maryland. The 2025 meeting will be held in Delaware and the 2026 meeting will be held in South Carolina
- The Executive Committee convened a closed session to discuss the Executive Director's Performance Review.

For more information, please contact Laura Leach, Director of Finance & Administration, at [lleach@asmfc.org](mailto:lleach@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

### ***Motions***

**On behalf of the Administrative Oversight Committee, move to approve the FY25 budget.**

Motion made by Mr. McKiernan. Motion approved by consent.

## **COASTAL PELAGICS MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 1, 2024)**

### ***Press Release***

#### **Coastal Pelagics Board Approves Atlantic Cobia Draft Addendum II for Public Comment to Consider Recreational Allocation and Management Process**

Arlington, VA – The Commission's Coastal Pelagics Management Board approved for public comment Draft Addendum II to Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Cobia. The Draft Addendum considers recreational allocation, harvest target evaluation, and the timeline for setting management specifications.

The Board initiated the Draft Addendum to consider updating recreational allocations using harvest data, which reflects increased cobia landings in some Mid-Atlantic states in recent years. Draft Addendum II presents options for Atlantic cobia management, including a framework for recreational allocation, ways

to account for data uncertainty and respond to quota overages, and an extended multi-year specification setting. For the recreational allocation framework, Draft Addendum II considers options for the data timeframe to form the basis for allocations, and options for the geographic scope of allocations (state-by-state, regional, or coastwide).

Public hearings on Draft Addendum II will be conducted in the coming months; the details of which will be released in a subsequent press release. The Draft Addendum will be available on the Commission's website under Public Input at <https://asmfc.org/about-us/public-input> in late May.

For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [efranke@asmfc.org](mailto:efranke@asmfc.org).

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PR24-14

### ***Meeting Summary***

In addition to approving Atlantic Cobia Draft Addendum II for public comment, the Coastal Pelagics Board received two updates regarding Spanish mackerel.

First, the Board received a presentation on the white paper prepared by the Spanish Mackerel Technical Committee (TC) summarizing state Spanish mackerel fisheries. The TC developed the paper in response to the Board's task to better understand current state Spanish mackerel fisheries to inform potential future Board action on Spanish mackerel.

Finally, the Board received an update from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) on the ongoing Spanish and king mackerel [port meetings](#) along the coast to gather input from mackerel stakeholders on the fishery. The next set of port meetings are webinar meetings for New England states schedule for mid-May.

For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [efranke@asmfc.org](mailto:efranke@asmfc.org).

### ***Motions***

**Move to postpone Draft Addendum II to Amendment I until such time the final MRIP FES Report has been presented to the Commission.**

Motion made by Mr. Haymans and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion fails (2 in favor, 8 opposed, 3 abstentions).

**Move to remove the timeframes for the weighted 10-year/3-year averages from Draft Addendum II Section 3.1 (Option B3, C3, C6, C9, and C12).**

Motion made by Ms. Madsen and seconded by Ms. Fegley. Motion approved without opposition.

**Move to remove any of the options considering 3 regions from section 3.1 C4, C5, C10, C11.**

Motion made by Ms. Madsen and seconded by Mr. Hornstein. Motion approved without opposition.



**Move to approve Atlantic Cobia Draft Addendum II for public comment as modified today.**

Motion made by Ms. Fegley and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion carries with one objection.

**ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 1, 2024)**

***Meeting Summary***

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board met to consider revisions to Addendum II state implementation plans; receive an update on recreational release mortality study results; consider tasks for a Board Work Group on recreational release mortality; consider an Advisory Panel nomination; and elect a Vice Chair.

Three jurisdictions, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Potomac River Fisheries Commission (PRFC) submitted revised state implementation plans for Addendum II. States are required to implement Addendum II measures by May 1, 2024. In March 2024, the Board approved Addendum II state implementation plans with the following exceptions: 1) Pennsylvania's proposed timeline for implementing its new spring slot and bag limit; 2) Maryland and PRFC's proposed timeline for paying back any potential 2024 commercial quota overage. Pennsylvania's revised implementation plan specifies that it has implemented its new spring slot and bag limit as of May 1, 2024. Maryland and PRFC's revised implementation plans specify that they will monitor 2024 commercial landings and develop projections as needed to estimate whether landings will exceed the 2024 quota to inform 2025 commercial tag and permit distribution. The Board approved the revised implementation plans for all three jurisdictions.

The Board received an overview of a Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MA DMF) study to characterize striped bass recreational release mortality. The first phase of the study focused on the efficacy of circle hooks and comparing release mortality from J-hooks vs. circle hooks. The second phase of the study focused on comparison of release injury and mortality across various terminal tackle using citizen science data collected by striped bass anglers. Data collection for this phase will continue into 2024 with recruitment of citizen participants from other states. The third phase of the study will focus on a survey of striped bass anglers on terminal tackle use over the next few years. MA DMF noted that additional analysis of collected data and future publication will be pursued in the coming years. Visit <https://mادمf.shinyapps.io/stripes/> for more information.

The Board discussed the establishment of a Board Work Group to discuss release mortality. The Board approved four tasks for the Work Group with an expected progress update from the Work Group at the 2024 Summer Meeting, and a report to the Board at the 2024 Annual Meeting. The first Work Group task is to review existing no-targeting closures (state and federal waters), including any information on impacts to striped bass catch, effort, enforceability, and how anglers may respond to no-targeting closures (i.e., shifting effort). The second task is to review the MA DMF release mortality study and other relevant reports to evaluate the efficacy of potential gear modifications. The third task is to identify stock assessment sensitivity runs to potentially inform Board discussion of release mortality as well as tradeoffs of reducing the release mortality rate vs. reducing the number of releases overall. The fourth task is to consider public scoping (e.g., survey) on potential measures to address release mortality.

The Board approved the nomination of Peter Jenkins, a recreational angler from Rhode Island, to the Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel. Finally, the Board elected Chris Batsavage from North Carolina as Vice Chair.

For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [efranke@asmfc.org](mailto:efranke@asmfc.org).

### ***Motions***

#### **Move to approve the revised Addendum II implementation plans for Pennsylvania, Potomac River Fisheries Commission, and Maryland.**

Motion made by Mr. Armstrong and seconded by Mr. Luisi. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

#### **Move to approve the tasks for the Board Work Group on recreational release mortality as discussed today.**

Motion made by Mr. Hasbrouck and seconded by Mr. Luisi. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

#### **Move to approve Peter Jenkins of Rhode Island to the Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel.**

Motion made by Dr. McNamee and seconded by Dr. Davis. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

#### **Move to elect Chris Batsavage as Vice-Chair of the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board.**

Motion made by Mr. Gary and seconded by Mr. Geer. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

### **AMERICAN EEL MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 1, 2024)**

#### ***Press Release***

#### **American Eel Board Approves Addenda VI and VII**

#### **Addenda Maintain Maine's Glass Eel Quota and Modify Yellow Eel Management**

Arlington, VA – The Commission's American Eel Management Board has approved Addenda VI and VII to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Eel. Addendum VI maintains Maine's quota at the current level of 9,688 pounds for three years. Addendum VII reduces the coastwide cap for yellow eel commercial landings to 518,281 pounds, modifies annual young-of-year (YOY) monitoring requirements, and changes the policy for evaluating de minimis status.

#### ***Addendum VI***

Maine's glass/elver eel quota of 9,688 pounds was established by Addendum IV starting in 2015 and maintained under Addendum V through 2024. The Board initiated Addendum VI to establish a quota for 2025 and beyond. The Board will review the quota before the 2028 fishing year and can extend it via Board action.

Maine commercial glass eel landings have not exceeded the quota since its implementation. The Maine Department of Marine Resources (ME DMR) manages the quota using a program that requires dealers to enter daily landings data and enables ME DMR to analyze those data within 24 hours of

receipt. The quota management program allows ME DMR to track the glass eels from initial purchase to export out of the state.

Maine will continue to maintain daily trip level reporting and require a pound-for-pound payback in the event of quota overages in its glass eel fishery. Additionally, the state will continue to conduct the fishery-independent life cycle survey covering glass, yellow, and silver eels as required by Addendum V.

### **Addendum VII**

Addendum VII responds to the findings of the 2023 Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report, which indicated the stock is at or near historically low levels due to a multitude of factors, including historical overfishing, habitat loss, food web alterations, turbine mortality, environmental

changes, contaminants, and disease. The assessment and peer review recommended reducing harvest levels of the yellow eel life stage, while also recognizing that stock status is affected by other factors. The assessment proposed a new index-based tool, called *I<sub>TARGET</sub>*, for setting the yellow eel coastwide cap, since there is not a statistical model for estimating the population size of American eel. Addendum VII adopts the use of *I<sub>TARGET</sub>* to provide catch limit recommendations based on fishery-independent indices of abundance and catch data with the goal of increasing abundance levels. The new coastwide cap of 518,281 pounds, a reduction from 916,473 pounds, can be updated after three years using the additional years of abundance and catch data.

“In approving Addendum VII and its reduced landings cap, the Board sought to balance responding to the recommendations of the benchmark stock assessment to aid in the recovery of American eel while also allowing for a commercial fishery,” stated Board Chair Kris Kuhn of Pennsylvania. “*I<sub>TARGET</sub>* provides the Board a much-needed tool for setting the coastwide cap.”

The Board slightly modified the requirements of the annual YOY survey by making the biological sampling requirement for YOY surveys optional, as recommended by the assessment and peer review. In addition, Addendum VII establishes use of a three-year average of landings to determine if a state qualifies for de minimis status and can be exempt from implementing fishery regulations and monitoring requirements.

Addenda VI and Addendum VII will be available on the Commission website on the American Eel webpage by mid-May. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [cstarks@asmfc.org](mailto:cstarks@asmfc.org).

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PR24-13

**Motions**

**For Draft Addendum VI, move to select under 3.1 Maine Glass Eel Quota, Option 1: Status Quo (9,688 lbs. quota) and under 3.2 Timeframe for Maine Glass Eel Quota, Option 3 (Three years, with the ability to extend via Board action).**

Motion made by Ms. Ware and seconded by Mr. Grout. Motion passes by consent.

**Move to approve Addendum VI to the American Eel FMP, as modified today.**

Motion made by Ms. Ware and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion approved by consent.

**Main Motion**

**Move to approve under 3.1 Issue 1 Option 1 status quo.**

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Dize.

**Motion to Substitute**

**Motion to substitute to replace “under 3.1 Issue 1 Option 1 status quo” with “under 3.1 Issue 1 Option 2 (202,453 lbs.).**

Motion made by Dr. Davis and seconded by Mr. Jacobson. Motion fails (3 in favor, 16 opposed).

**Motion to Substitute**

**Motion to substitute to approve under 3.1 Issue 1 Option 3 to set the coastwide cap at 518,281 pounds.**

Motion made by Ms. Madsen and seconded by Mr. McKiernan. Motion passes (12 in favor, 6 opposed).

**Main Motion as Substituted**

**Move to approve under 3.1 Issue 1 Option 3 to set the coastwide cap at 518,281 pounds.**

**Motion to Substitute**

**Move to substitute to approve under 3.1 Issue 1 Option 5 to set the coastwide cap at 716,497 pounds.**

Motion made by Ms. Fegley and seconded by Mr. Train. Motion fails (7 in favor, 12 opposed).

**Main Motion as Substituted**

**Move to approve under 3.1 Issue 1 Option 3 to set the coastwide cap at 518,281 pounds.**

Motion passes (15 in favor, 4 opposed).

**Move to approve:**

- **For Section 3.1, Issue 2, Option 1 [Status Quo, >1% coastwide landings]**
- **For section 3.5, Option 2 (3-year landings average for *de minimis*)**

Motion made by Ms. Fegley and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion passes (15 in favor, 2 opposed, 2 abstentions).

**Move to approve for Section 3.2, Option 1 (three years coastwide cap duration)**

Motion made by Ms. Madsen and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion passes 18 in favor, 1 abstention).

## **Main Motion**

### **Move to approve:**

- **For Section 3.3, Option 1 (Status Quo);**
- **For Section 3.4, Option 1 (mandatory CPUE data collection)**

Motion by made Mr. Kaelin and seconded by Ms. Fegley.

## **Motion to Amend**

### **Move to amend to replace Option 1 with Option 2 for section 3.3.**

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Grout. Motion passes (16 in favor, 2 opposed, 1 abstention).

## **Main Motion as Amended**

### **Move to approve:**

- **For Section 3.3, Option 1 (Status Quo);**
- **For Section 3.4, Option 1 (mandatory CPUE data collection)**

Motion passes (18 in favor, 1 opposed).

### **Move to approve Addendum VII to the American Eel FMP, as modified today.**

Motion made by Mr. Hasbrouck and seconded by Mr. Miller. Motion passes by consent.

### **Move to approve an implementation date of January 1, 2025.**

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Cimino. Motion passes (18 in favor, 1 opposed).

### **Move to elect Jesse Hornstein as Vice-Chair.**

Motion made by Mr. Cimino and seconded by Ms. Fegley. Motion passes by consent.

## **COASTAL SHARKS MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 2, 2024)**

### ***Press Release***

### **Coastal Sharks Board Sets Possession Limits to Zero for Oceanic Whitetip Sharks**

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s Coastal Sharks Management Board established a zero possession limit for oceanic whitetip sharks for recreational and commercial fisheries. States will begin rulemaking to implement the new possession limit, effective immediately.

NOAA Fisheries issued a final rule in January prohibiting the retention and possession of oceanic whitetip sharks in US waters of the Atlantic Ocean, which became effective February 2, 2024. This rule responds to the 2018 determination that oceanic whitetip sharks warranted listing as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act throughout its range, and a 2020 Biological Opinion that encouraged the inclusion of the species on the Highly Migratory Species (HMS) list of prohibited sharks for recreational and commercial HMS fisheries.

The Board action closes a potential loophole allowing take of oceanic whitetip in state waters. The Board also indicated it will consider moving oceanic whitetip sharks from the pelagic species group to the

prohibited species group as part of the next addendum or amendment action, as a complementary measure to the NOAA final rule.

For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [cstarks@asmfc.org](mailto:cstarks@asmfc.org).

###

PR24-15

### ***Meeting Summary***

In addition to taking action on oceanic whitetip possession limits, the Board received updates on several ongoing and future actions for NOAA Fisheries Division of Highly Migratory Species (HMS). A final rule on Amendment 15 the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP is expected in the summer of 2024. Amendment 15 extends the boundary of the Mid-Atlantic shark closed area and shifts the timing of the closed seasons to November 1 - May 31. Last year, NOAA accepted public comments on an advance notice of proposed rulemaking to modify or expand electronic reporting requirements for HMS, and a proposed rule on this action is expected later this year. In May 2023, NOAA released a scoping document for Amendment 16. Amendment 16 could result in substantial changes to the entire commercial and recreational shark fishery, and is necessary to implement the revised framework for establishing quotas and related management measures for Atlantic shark fisheries, as set forth in Amendment 14. Comments were received through mid-August 2023, and the development of Draft Amendment 16 is dependent upon the completion of the SEDAR 77 hammerhead stock assessment, expected end of 2024.

For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [cstarks@asmfc.org](mailto:cstarks@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

### ***Motions***

**Move to set the state waters commercial and recreational possession limit for oceanic whitetip sharks to zero, effective immediately.**

Motion made by Mr. Miller and seconded by Mr. Batsavage. Motion approved by unanimous consent.

### ***Main Motion***

**Move to initiate an addendum to change the species group for oceanic whitetip sharks to the prohibited species group.**

Motion made by Mr. Batsavage and seconded by Dr. McNamee.

### ***Motion to Substitute***

**Move to substitute to move to include oceanic whitetip on the prohibited species group in the next addendum or amendment action.**

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Ms. Meserve. Motion carries by unanimous consent.

### ***Main Motion as Substituted***

**Move to include oceanic whitetip on the prohibited species group in the next addendum or amendment action.**

Motion carries by unanimous consent.

## **SPINY DOGFISH MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 2, 2024)**

### ***Meeting Summary***

The Spiny Dogfish Management Board met to review the preferred alternatives recommended to NOAA Fisheries by the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils in Spiny Dogfish Framework 6 to reduce sturgeon bycatch in the spiny dogfish fishery and consider complementary action.

The Board reviewed the recommended alternatives and discussed the inconsistency between the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Spiny Dogfish and Spiny Dogfish Framework 6 if it is implemented by NOAA Fisheries. Framework 6 proposes prohibiting overnight soaks for federal spiny dogfish permit holders on gillnets with 5"-10" mesh in November and May for a certain area of state and federal waters off of New Jersey, as well as for gillnets of 5.25"-10" mesh in November through March in specified areas off of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia.

The Board discussed initiating an addendum to consider maintaining consistency by establishing matching restrictions in state waters for harvesters that possess state spiny dogfish permits but do not have a federal spiny dogfish permit. However, the Board postponed the decision to initiate an addendum until the Commission Summer Meeting after staff can compile more information on the potential impacts on state fisheries, particularly states that issue multispecies gillnet permits vs. a directed dogfish permit similar to the federal permit.

For more information, please contact James Boyle, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator at [jboyle@asmfc.org](mailto:jboyle@asmfc.org).

### ***Motions***

#### **Main Motion**

**Move to initiate an addendum to maintain consistency between the Spiny Dogfish FMP and the recommended alternatives of Spiny Dogfish Framework Adjustment 6.**

Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck.

#### **Motion to Postpone**

**Move to postpone until the next meeting of the Spiny Dogfish Board.**

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Dr. Davis. Motion carries by consent.

## **INTERSTATE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM POLICY BOARD (MAY 2, 2024)**

### ***Meeting Summary***

The ISFMP Policy Board met to review the 2024 State of the Ecosystem Reports; receive an update from the Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel on an industry-based survey pilot project; consider approval of the revised *Guidelines for Resource Managers on the Enforceability of Fishery Management Measures*; receive a summary of the Law Enforcement Committee activities (see LEC meeting summary); receive an update on the sturgeon and river herring benchmark stock assessments; and consider two letters from the American Lobster Board.

Dr. Sarah Gaichas (Northeast Fisheries Science Center) presented key findings from the 2024 Mid-Atlantic and New England State of the Ecosystem reports. The reports provide information on the status and trends of relevant ecological, environmental, economic, and social components of the Mid-Atlantic and New England ecosystems. The reports evaluate the performance of different ecosystem indicators relative to management objectives and the potential climate and ecosystem risks to meeting those management objectives.

Highlights from the 2024 reports include:

- Commercial seafood landings and total revenue in the Mid-Atlantic were near historic lows driven by declining landings and price of ocean quahog, Atlantic surf clam, and scallops. Commercial landings within New England show no long-term trend for Georges Bank, and a long-term decline in the Gulf of Maine.
- Recreational harvest remains below the long-term average, but recreational effort (in number of trips) is above the long-term average. Overall, recreational harvest has also declined in New England; however, harvest has rebounded somewhat from the historical low level in 2020.
- Many fish stocks and protected species distributions are changing in the Mid-Atlantic due to increasing temperature, changing oceanographic features, the spatial distribution of suitable habitat, and the availability of prey. In New England, adult fish diversity indices are stable while zooplankton diversity is increasing, indicating potential instability. Several climate and oceanography metrics are changing and should be monitored as warning signs for a potential regime shift or ecosystem restructuring.
- 2023 sea surface temperatures in the North Atlantic were the warmest on record and were linked, along with low oxygen and acidification, to fish and shellfish die-offs off New Jersey and the Elephant Trunk region. However, Northeast US continental shelf temperatures were more variable, with near record highs in winter and near average in other seasons. Northward shifts of the Gulf Stream, including a prolonged shift in the fall, resulted in unusually warm and salty surface waters in the southern Mid-Atlantic. This shift severely constricted the waters between the shelf break and Gulf Stream and inhibited warm core rings.

The Policy Board received an update on the development of an industry-based survey pilot project by the Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel. The goal of the project is to test the viability of an industry-based survey as described in the white paper titled “Draft Proposed Plan for a Novel Industry Based Multispecies Bottom Trawl Survey on the Northeast U.S. Continental Shelf.” The Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel (NTAP) met on February 8, 2024, and the NTAP Bigelow Contingency Plan Working Group met on February 29, 2024, to continue their discussions of the pilot project and develop recommendations for Council consideration. Although the NTAP and NTAP Working Group have made substantial progress, there are still a number of details that need to be further developed at future meetings. The Policy Board continued to emphasize the importance of this project and its continued development.

The Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) presented the updated the *Guidelines for Resource Managers on the Enforceability of Fishery Management Measures* document. The document covers a variety of management strategies that are employed in Commission FMPs. It is intended to help managers to



take into account the enforceability of all management regulations that are developed. The Guidelines are intended to support and strengthen the effectiveness of Commission efforts to conserve fisheries resources.

The Board approved two letters recommended by the American Lobster Management Board (see American Lobster Board meeting summary). The first letter is to the New England Fishery Management Council highlighting key points of the Lobster Technical Committee report on the conduct of the lobster fishery on the Northern Edge of Georges Bank. The second letter is to Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Canadian industry associations, encouraging Canada to raise its lobster minimum size limit to match the upcoming changes in the United States to address potential trade concerns.

Lastly, under other business, the Board approved a letter to the US Ambassador in Canada to encourage Canada to swiftly implement rules and laws to ensure the protection of the American eel resource. The Board was presented with information indicating Canada is becoming a center for the illegal, unregulated, and unreported trafficking of glass eel. This illegal activity could potentially have negative impacts to the resource which is depleted. In addition, there are possible negative impact on eel value in the US, thus causing a loss of revenue to the highly regulated US fishing industry.

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

#### ***Motions***

**Move to approve the *Revised Guidelines for Resource Managers on the Enforceability of Fishery Management Measures*.**

Motion made by Mr. Keliher and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion passes by consent

**On behalf of the American Lobster Management Board move the Commission to send a letter to Canada DFO and relevant Canadian industry associations as identified by the board chair and the executive director. This letter would request Canada increase the minimum size for lobster on the same schedule as ASMFC or soon as possible as captured in Addendum XXVII.**

Motion made by Mr. Keliher. Motion approved by consent.

**Move to send a letter to the US Ambassador in Canada encouraging Canada to implement rules and laws as quickly as possible to ensure the protection of the American eel resource.**

Motion made by Mr. Keliher and seconded by Ms. Patterson. Motion approved by consent.