



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Law Enforcement Committee Meeting Summary

May 5-6, 2025

Committee Members: Scott Pearce, Chair, FL; Rob Beal, ME; Delayne Brown, NH; Chris Baker, MA; Jeff Mercer, RI; Keith Williams, CT; Thomas Gadowski, NY; Brian Scott, NJ; Nicholas Couch, DE; Doug Daniels, PA; David Bailey, MD; Matt Rogers, VA; Jason Walker, NC; Michael Paul Thomas, SC; Chris Hodge, GA; Paul Chapell, USFW; Joseph Heckwolf, NOAA GC; Tom Bleifus, USCG; and Wayne Hettenbach, USDOJ.

ASMFC Staff: Toni Kerns, Chelsea Touhey, Tracey Bauer, and Kurt Blanchard

Other Participants: Captain Jack Chapin, Captain Danial Ipock, Lt. Donald Mackall, Lt. Sean Reilly, PFC. Andrew Alexander, and Erika Burgess.

The Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) conducted a hybrid meeting during the 2025 Spring session of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) in Arlington, VA. The committee welcomed Captain David Bailey from Maryland Natural Resource Police and Captain Jack Chapin from the Massachusetts Environmental Police as new state representatives. Additionally, the committee recognized the retirement and offered gratitude to NOAA General Counsel Attorney Robert Hogan, for his years of support and participation in the LEC. Mr. Joseph Heckwolf succeeds Mr. Hogan as the new committee member from NOAA General Counsel.

Species Discussion

Atlantic Striped Bass – The LEC held a virtual meeting on March 27, 2025, to address the Striped Bass Plan Development Team questions regarding Draft Addendum III of the Atlantic Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan. A comprehensive meeting summary was provided to the Striped Bass Management Board during the Spring meeting week.

Bluefish – Staff briefed the committee on the Technical Committee's (TC) application of the Risk and Uncertainty Tool. The TC is considering using this tool to quantify management uncertainty within the commercial and recreational bluefish fisheries. Two of the seven elements of this tool, Compliance and Enforcement, have enforcement implications and may require the LEC input beyond state compliance reports. The goal of this presentation was to open a dialogue with the LEC and to familiarize the committee with this tool for its future application in fishery management.

Other Business

Case Study - New Hampshire Fish and Game

Lieutenant Delayne Brown presented a case study concerning striped bass enforcement efforts by the New Hampshire Fish and Game department during the Summer of 2024. Two specific cases were highlighted: Case #1 – Castles, Diburro, and Cotone; and Case #2 – Travis.

Lieutenant Brown provided an in-depth study of the origin, procedures, and penalties associated with these cases. Both incidents involved Massachusetts commercial fishers crossing into New Hampshire state waters and exceeding the permitted limit for taking possession of oversized striped bass. Lieutenant Brown shared details of the initial reports of illegal activity, a comprehensive operational plan, and the surveillance techniques employed to apprehend the poachers. The investigations' strengths and weaknesses were discussed as learning tools for other agencies. Lieutenant Brown acknowledged the cooperation and effort of the Massachusetts Environmental Police, Maine Marine Patrol, and several local police agencies in successfully resolving these cases.

The penalty phase resulted in a total of thirty-four warnings issued and forty-six violations cited, amounting to fines totaling \$5,478.00. Additionally, the State of Massachusetts is taking action to suspend the commercial permits of these fishers under the Interstate Wildlife Violators Compact.

Website - The Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) was presented with the new ASMFC website. Staff provided a tutorial on accessing relevant information, including the LEC page, Meetings page, and specific ASMFC guiding documents. LEC offered positive comments regarding the design of the new site.

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.