Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

TO: **American Eel Management Board**

FROM: **American Eel Technical Committee**

DATE: **July 28, 2025**

SUBJECT: **Review of Maine Aquaculture Plan and TC Recommendations**

The American Eel Technical Committee (TC) reviewed the Maine Aquaculture Plan for the 2026 fishing year. The TC recommends approval of the plan as presented. Additionally, the TC discussed the criteria for aquaculture harvest site selection established in Addendum V to the American Eel Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and developed recommendations for TC review of these criteria.

Addendum V includes the following language to guide the evaluation of proposed aquaculture plans, which was based on TC recommendations:

> "Site selection for harvest will be an important consideration for applicants and reviewers. Suitable harvest locations will be evaluated with a preference to locations that have:
>
> 1. Established or proposed glass eel monitoring;
> 2. Are favorable to law enforcement; and
> 3. Watershed characteristics that are prone to relatively high mortality rates."

In evaluating the Maine aquaculture plan, the TC noted that only some of these criteria were considered, and some may not be appropriate for Maine. For example, in consideration of the larger commercial glass eel fishery that is already occurring, monitoring efforts specific to the smaller aquaculture provision may not provide useful information. The TC noted that the proposal intentionally avoids Criterion 1 in order to avoid the commercial catch skewing the young-of-year survey data. For the newest harvest site, the Machias River, Criterion 2 is addressed as the site is routinely monitored by Marine Patrol. However, it is also an unencumbered waterway, which conflicts with Criterion 3.

The TC does not feel these issues warrant denial of the Maine aquaculture plan but would like to further discuss the site selection criteria for aquaculture plans. The TC recommends the Board task the Committee with reviewing the criteria in Addendum V to determine if changes to the language or interpretation of these criteria should be considered.