



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC American Eel Board Accepts Benchmark Assessment & Peer Review Report for Management Use

Two Addenda Initiated for Yellow Eel and Maine Glass Eel Fisheries

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s American Eel Management Board has accepted the American Eel Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report for management use. The Report indicates the stock is at or near historically low levels due to a combination of historical overfishing, habitat loss, food web alterations, predation, turbine mortality, environmental changes, and toxins, contaminants, and disease. Since completion of the first Commission American eel stock assessment in 2005, available data have not allowed overfishing or overfished determinations to be made. Based on several trend analyses, the stock is considered depleted, consistent with the findings of the 2012 and 2017 assessments.

In response to the assessment findings, the Board initiated an addendum to consider changes to the coastwide yellow eel harvest cap. Historically, the coastwide cap of 916,473 pounds was set based on the average landings from 1998 to 2010. The benchmark assessment proposes a new tool for setting the coastwide cap based on abundance indices and catch. The addendum will consider using this tool to recommend a range of coastwide caps and management options.

The Board also initiated an addendum to address the quota for Maine’s glass eel fishery. Maine’s glass eel quota has been set at 9,688 pounds since 2015. However, a new addendum is needed to establish a quota for the 2025 fishing year and beyond.

The Plan Development Team will begin work on both documents, with a progress update provided to the Board in October and Draft Addenda presented for Board consideration in February 2024. The Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report will be available on the Commission website at <https://asmfc.org/species/american-eel> (under stock assessment reports) by mid-August. An overview of the assessment will be can be found at https://asmfc.org/uploads/file/64caa25eAmericanEelStockAssessmentOverview_August2023.pdf. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org.

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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 diadromous species.