

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

American Eel Management Board

*October 28, 2025
10:15 – 10:45 a.m.*

Draft Agenda

The times listed are approximate; the order in which these items will be taken is subject to change; other items may be added as necessary

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| 1. Welcome/Call to Order (<i>K. Kuhn</i>) | 10:15 a.m. |
| 2. Board Consent | 10:15 a.m. |
| • Approval of Agenda | |
| • Approval of Proceedings from August 2025 | |
| 3. Public Comment | 10:20 a.m. |
| 4. Consider Approval of Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance for 2024 Fishing Year (<i>C. Starks</i>) Action | 10:30 a.m. |
| 5. Consider Florida Proposal to Discontinue Young-of-Year Sampling (<i>E. Burgess</i>) Possible Action | 10:35 a.m. |
| 6. Other Business/Adjourn | 10:45 a.m. |

The meeting will be held at Hyatt Place Dewey Beach (1301 Coastal Highway, Dewey Beach, Delaware; 302.864.9100) and via webinar; click [here](#) for details.

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

MEETING OVERVIEW

American Eel Management Board

October 28, 2025

10:15 – 10:45 a.m.

Chair: Kris Kuhn (PA) Assumed Chairmanship: 10/23	Technical Committee Chair: Danielle Carty (SC)	Law Enforcement Committee Rep: Rob Beal (ME)
Vice Chair: Jesse Hornstein (NY)	Advisory Panel Chair: Mitch Feigenbaum (PA)	Previous Board Meeting: August 5, 2025
Voting Members: ME, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, PA, DE, MD, PRFC, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL, DC, NMFS, USFWS (19 votes)		

2. Board Consent

- Approval of Agenda
- Approval of Proceedings from August 2025

3. Public Comment – At the beginning of the meeting, public comment will be taken on items not on the agenda. Individuals that wish to speak at this time must sign-in at the beginning of the meeting. For agenda items that have already gone out for public hearing and/or have had a public comment period that has closed, the Board Chair may determine that additional public comment will not provide additional information. In this circumstance, the Chair will not allow additional public comment on an issue. For agenda items that the public has not had a chance to provide input, the Board Chair may allow limited opportunity for comment. The Board Chair has the discretion to limit the number of speakers and/or the length of each comment.

4. Consider Approval of Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance for 2024 Fishing Year (10:30-10:35 a.m.) Action

Background

- State Compliance Reports were due on September 1, 2024.
- The Plan Review Team reviewed each state report and compiled the annual FMP Review (**Briefing Materials**).
- New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, District of Columbia, and Georgia have requested and meet the requirements for *de minimis* for their yellow eel fisheries. Florida requested but does not qualify for *de minimis* as the state landings in 2023 exceed 1% of the coastwide yellow eel landings.

Presentations

- Fishery Management Plan Review for the 2023 Fishing Year for American Eel by C. Starks

Board Actions for Consideration

- Approve Fishery Management Plan Review, State Compliance Reports, and *de minimis* requests

5. Consider Florida Proposal to Discontinue Young-of-Year Sampling (10:35-10:45 a.m.)
Possible Action
Background - Florida is submitting a proposal to discontinue the young-of-year (YOY) sampling survey (Briefing Materials). - The American Eel FMP requires all states to conduct YOY sampling surveys, unless exempted by the Board.
Presentations Florida Proposal by E. Burgess
Board Actions for Consideration Consider Florida proposal to discontinue the YOY survey

6. Other Business/Adjourn (10:45 a.m.)

American Eel

Activity level: Low

Committee Overlap Score: Medium (SAS overlaps with BERP, Atlantic herring, horseshoe crab)

Committee Task List

- TC – July 2025 review of Maine’s aquaculture proposal
- TC – September 1st: Annual compliance reports due

TC Members: Danielle Carty (SC, TC Chair), Alexis Park (MD), Bradford Chase (MA), Caitlin Craig (NY), Casey Clark (ME), Chris Adriance (DC), Chris Wright (NOAA), Ingrid Braun (PRFC), Jennifer Pyle (NJ), Jordan Zimmerman (DE), Troy Tuckey (VIMS), Jim Page (GA), Kevin Molongoski (USGS), Kimberly Bonvechio (FL), Mike Porta (PA), Patrick McGee (RI), Robert Atwood (NH), Sheila Eyler (USFWS), Tim Wildman (CT), Todd Mathes (NC), Caitlin Starks (ASMFC)

**DRAFT PROCEEDINGS OF THE
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
AMERICAN EEL MANAGEMENT BOARD**

**The Westin Crystal City
Arlington, Virginia
Hybrid Meeting**

August 5, 2025

These minutes are draft and subject to approval by the American Eel Management Board.
The Board will review the minutes during its next meeting.

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1. **Approval of agenda** by consent (Page 1).
2. **Approval of Proceedings of October 22, 2024** by consent (Page 1).
3. **Move to approve the Maine Aquaculture Plan for 2026 and task the Technical Committee to review the aquaculture plan criteria in Addendum V to determine if changes to the language or interpretation of these criteria should be considered** (Page 8). Motion by Megan Ware; second by Dennis Abbot. Motion passes by consent (Page 9).
4. **Move to adjourn** by consent (Page 9).

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ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Megan Ware, ME, proxy for C. Wilson (AA)	Roy Miller, DE (GA)
Steve Train, ME (GA)	Carrie Kennedy, MD, proxy for L. Fegley (AA)
Renee Zobel, NH (AA)	Russel Dize, MD (GA)
Dennis Abbott, NH, proxy for Sen. Watters (LA)	David Sikorski, MD, proxy for Del. Stein (LA)
Dan McKiernan, MA (AA)	Joe Grist, VA, proxy for J. Green (AA)
Phil Edwards, RI, proxy for J. McNamee (AA)	Sen. Danny Diggs, NC (LA)
Eric Reid, RI, proxy for Sen. Sosnowski (LA)	Chris Batsavage, NC, proxy for K. Rawls (AA)
David Borden, RI (GA)	Ross Self, SC, proxy for B. Keppler (AA)
Matt Gates, CT (AA)	Malcolm Rhodes, SC (GA)
Rep. Joseph Gresko, CT (LA)	Mel Bell, SC, proxy for Sen. Cromer (LA)
Robert LaFrance, CT, proxy for Bill Hyatt (GA)	Doug Haymans, GA (AA)
Jesse Hornstein, NY, proxy for M. Gary (AA)	Spud Woodward, GA (GA)
Scott Curatolo-Wagemann, NY, proxy for E. Hasbrouck, NY (GA)	Erika Burgess, FL, proxy for J. McCawley (AA)
Heather Corbett, NJ, proxy for J. Cimino (AA)	Gary Jennings, FL (GA)
Jeff Kaelin, NJ (GA)	Daniel Ryan, DC
Adam Nowalsky, NJ, proxy for Sen. Gopal (LA)	Rese Cloyd, PRFC
Kris Kuhn, PA, proxy for T. Schaeffer (AA)	Chris Wright, NMFS
Edna Stetzar, DE, proxy for J. Clark (AA)	Rick Jacobsen, US FWS

(AA = Administrative Appointee; GA = Governor Appointee; LA = Legislative Appointee)

Ex-Officio Members

Staff

Bob Beal	Caitlin Starks	Katie Drew
Toni Kerns	Jeff Kipp	Samara Nehemiah
Tina Berger	Tracy Bauer	Chelsea Tuohy
Madeline Musante	James Boyle	

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The American Eel Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Jefferson Ballroom of the Westin Crystal City Hotel, Arlington, Virginia, via hybrid meeting, in-person and webinar; Tuesday, August 5, 2025, and was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Chair Kristopher M. Kuhn.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR KRIS M. KUHN: Good afternoon, I'm calling the American Eel Management Board meeting to order. I'm Kris Kuhn; I'm the Chair of the American Eel Management Board currently, and proxy for the Administrative Commissioner for Pennsylvania.

I'm joined here at the front table by Commission's Caitlin Starks and AFWAs Deb Hahn. We're going to go ahead and jump right in, starting off with the consent items.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CHAIR KUHN: The first up is approval of the agenda. Are there any modifications to the agenda? Okay, seeing none, the agenda is approved by consent.

APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

CHAIR KUHN: Next up in the consent items is approval of the proceedings from the annual meeting in October 2024. Are there any edits to the proceedings from the 2024 October meeting? All right, not seeing any, we'll move on to the third item on the agenda and that is public comment.

PUBLIC COMMENT

CHAIR KUHN: This is for public comments that are not on the agenda. Do we have any members of the public that would like to make a comment for items not on the agenda? Okay, not seeing any, so we're moving right along to Item Number 4. Sorry, Toni.

MS. TONI KERNS: Just to let everybody know who is online from Commissioners. We have

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Jesse Hornstein and Scott Curatolo-Wagemann, and I'm sorry, Scott if I butchered your last name. Both from New York, and Chris Wright from NOAA Fisheries and Steve Train from Maine, and Robert Beal from Maine is the Law Enforcement rep.

CHAIR KUHN: Now moving on to Item 4. Item 4 on the agenda is an Update to the CITES Proposal to List American Eel under Appendix II, and Deb Hahn is nice enough to join us here again to provide an overview of where we stand with that. I will just turn it right over to Deb.

UPDATE ON CITES PROPOSAL TO LIST AMERICAN EEL UNDER APPENDIX II

MS. DEBORAH HAHN: Thanks for having me. My name is Deb Hahn, for those of you that don't know me. I work for the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency on behalf of the state fish and wildlife agencies, and I am the International Relations Director, so within my portfolio is CITES, which regulates international trade, and we have a CITES Conference of the Parties or CoP coming up here in November. It's November 24th to December 5th, and it's in Samarkand Uzbekistan.

The importance of that is that that serves as the primary decision-making body of CITES. They review progress on species conservation; they review listing decisions and decisions that impact the implementation of the treaty resolutions and decisions. AFWA will be there. I will be there along with the four regional reps, that is Gordon Batcheller for the northeast, Buddy Baker for the Southeast, Carolyn Caldwell for the Midwest and Stewart Liley for the West.

We will also have the State Director of the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, Ryan Brown, as a member of the U.S. Government Delegation, so that is who will be in attendance. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is able and certainly welcome to attend, also as an observer. Just a note that registration for that ends on September 25th.

I mentioned that the proposals to add, remove or change a listing of a species in a CITES appendices

are submitted to the CoP, and the reason we're talking is the European Union submitted a proposal to list all eel species in Appendix II. They submitted a proposal, which they believe in their opinion, has the scientific and biological information necessary to meet the criteria for that listing.

These proposals were then debated and voted on at the Conference of the Parties. It requires a two-third majority vote to approve a species listing. There are currently 184 Parties, and the EU, which is a voting bloc. The EU, who submitted the proposal, has 27 votes if it chooses to vote as a bloc. Most of the time I would say the EU decides to vote as a bloc, with 27 votes in one direction.

It is a big obstacle to overcome when you need two-thirds of the votes and the EU already has 20 percent of them. But that does not mean that it will get approved by any stretch of the imagination. The EU's proposal recommends the listing of all eels that are not currently listed in CITES, and the only eel that is currently listed in CITES in Appendix II is the European eel.

It also recommends a delayed entry into force for implementation, and that entry into force would be June 5th of 2027. If approved, this would mean that the American eel would be listed in Appendix II of CITES. This would not have any implication on domestic trade. However, although international trade is permitted, due to its Appendix II listing, it requires export permits from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

To acquire that permit, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service needs proof to demonstrate that the trade will not negatively impact the survival of the species in the wild; so that is the first piece. Secondly, they need proof that they were legally attained. They need proof of legal acquisition. I know we've discussed legal acquisition in particular several times with all of you.

I also know that to date we have not gotten information from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on what they would require to show legal acquisition, and what they would need to show that the trade is not harmful to the species in the wild. We still have that concern about, if the species were listed, about the issuing of permits, and the issuing of permits in a timely manner.

The other thing I'll mention that is at play right now is a CITES resolution on eel conservation. That is the resolution that we hoped the CITES parties would come together at the meeting in February at Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and the state of Maine attended. We hoped the CITES parties would have come together and passed a resolution that would have moved to the CoP, and our hopes was that would prevent the European Union from submitting a listing proposal.

Unfortunately, what happened there, was that a number of the Asian parties could not come to agreement on the language and the text for that resolution. When we left the standing committee in February, it was without consensus by the parties. There is a draft that is moving forward. I think Toni shared that, it is within the CITES CoP 20 Dock 87, and if you look at Appendix II there is a draft resolution.

That resolution is still in play, and it will be discussed and edited and debated at this Conference of the Parties. There is still the potential of having a draft resolution that can meet the needs and the intent of many of the parties, and avoid the listing of the species. It is a hard sell, but it is still possible. I think two of the things we've seen is, one is that the European Union has discussed the fact that they are worried about illegal trade, and the shipments out of the EU that say they are American eel, but they are really European eel, and things like that.

One of our arguments has been, well that is a domestic issue, and how can we use a resolution so that other parties and the EU can help to work to deal with that particular issue with not having it listed. The other piece that they raised in the listing

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proposal, which I think Toni also shared with you is their concern about trade out of the Caribbean and the Dominican Republic.

The question is, can we build a resolution that would allow other countries like the U.S. and Canada to help the DR develop better systems. Can we help the DR improve enforcement if that is the issue, et cetera. We are going to really work with you guys to develop and craft those arguments around some of those points, and then work with parties starting right now, to have those conversations prior to the CoP.

Really our current strategy is to find out what we might be able to get in the resolution to have parties feel comfortable with that resolution, that it would meet their need. Then two is to talk to some parties like African nations, for example, who aren't necessarily tuned into the eel issue, to talk to them about the importance of the American eel from a sustainable use and a livelihoods perspective, which are concepts that resonate with many of our partners in Africa and Latin America.

They will often vote in ways that support those concepts, even if the species is not something that they are directly involved in. We're working at the moment with Toni and Caitlin, and folks in Maine like Megan, to set up some of those meetings to start those conversations, to develop the talking points.

The unfortunate thing is right now there are no formal opportunities through CITES to comment on the proposal. I know Megan, you've raised the fact that there are a couple errors in that proposal, and we're going to get those rectified with the European Union, and certainly share those with the other parties, if they know that the accuracy of the proposal. Having Caitlin's participation, which I think she's going to talk about on the FAO Panel was also very important. There will be other opportunities to comment through the U.S. Government. They will have another Federal Register Notice. If the timeline that they typically use stays, now that

they have a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director confirmed, hopefully they can kind of get back on schedule with the CoP timeline.

They will likely solicit comments in late August or early September, and then the final, final opportunity will be in October to share. They will share the tentative negotiating positions and have a public meeting, where the public and the rest of us can provide comment. However, working with the administration well in advance of that is going to be important.

We do have a meeting set up with the CITES staff on August 18, and we'll share any outcomes of that with Toni and Caitlin. But I think we're going to want to have some conversations with the administration about the importance of this trade economically to the tribes to sustainable livelihoods, et cetera.

That's kind of where we are right now. I think we will work directly with your staff to work on those talking points, and anyone else that wants to be involved is welcome. We would love to have comments and edits for that resolution in any way that you would like to see, so that we can at least bring those to the CoP.

Then I think I'm making an assumption that we are still promoting the position that the states are not in support of an Appendix II listing, but certainly want to make sure that is the case, so we can advance the correct position that all of you would like. I think I'll stop there, Kris, and see if there are any questions, or if I need to clarify anything.

CHAIR KUHN: Thank you, Deb, for a very informative update. There is a lot there, a lot of moving parts to this. Are there any questions around the table for Deb on where we're at right now? I see Rick Jacobson.

MR. RICK JACOBSON: Hi, Deb, thank you for that description of where we are with CITES and American eel. I do have a question. Is the action being proposed by the EU predicated on the effect of international trade of American eel in their native

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range, or is more a function of a lookalike species and implications for European eel, or is it really any of the above that gets to a listing decision?

MS. HAHN: Thanks, Rick, good question. It is actually twofold. They first recommend a listing of American eel and Japanese eel, based on the criteria, pull it up. I want to just read it, because it's a little convoluted, you might say. They basically start with the fact that it is known or it can be inferred or projected that the regulation of a trade in a species is required, in order to ensure that its survival in the wild is not, detrimental is not the right, but ensure the survival in the wild.

To ensure that the harvest of specimens from the wild is not reducing the wild population to a level at which survival might be threatened, by continued harvesting or other issues. It is a relatively broad statement, the criteria, it's inferred, or projected or known. That is the first part of it, Rick, they say that both American eel and Japanese eel should be listed based on that criterion. Then the second criteria, they believe all eel species should be listed based on look alike, which they include American and Japanese eel in that.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you.

CHAIR KUHN: Are there any other questions around the table? Yes, Carrie Kennedy.

MS. CARRIE KENNEDY: I was wondering both Deb and Caitlin, if you can work when the Federal Register is available for public comment, if you can work to distribute that to the Board and the Technical Committee, so we can reach out to our stakeholders and let them know.

MS. HAHN: Definitely, and when we have our meeting on August 18, we'll get a better idea of the timeline on that. We don't have an exact date, but yes, we'll get that to you as soon as we know it.

MS. KERNS: Anne St. John, who works with Fish and Wildlife Service did put a note in the webinar that the next CITES CoP 20 Federal Register Notice will open a public comment period, and it will also announce during that public comment period the public meeting. It's likely that that would be mid-September, not in October, just an FYI. But we will distribute that information to the Board when it happens.

CHAIR KUHN: Thanks for that, Toni, I did see Megan Ware earlier.

MS. MEGAN WARE: Yes, I just have a comment, if that is okay, Chair. I think Deb, you had a question for us, kind of are we reaffirming our position, and I just want to say, yes. I think Maine remains really concerned about what this could do for the glass eel fishery. Anything that the Commission can do to participate in the Federal Register Notice I think would behoove us. Kind of restating the management we have. I think something unique that maybe hasn't had as much attention is the tribal aspect of Maine's fisheries.

We have a portion of our quota that goes to indigenous communities. I think that is an important part of this conversation and the impact that that would have, particularly a time of year when there are not a lot of other opportunities on the water for those communities, so we can provide information on that. But just wanted to kind of reaffirm that I think Maine remains concerned about this and the impact it would have, given the timeliness or lack thereof of U.S. Fish and Wildlife permits.

CHAIR KUHN: Are there any more questions or discussion, comments? Yes, Ross Self

MR. ROSS SELF: Yes, I've got just a couple things for clarification. My recollection is a little fuzzy, but I talked to Buddy Baker a few times about this over the last couple of years. Is it still the case that if the species is added to listed in that fashion, is there a way to delist? Is there a process for delisting something once it gets on the list? Which was a concern at one point, I think.

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MS. HAHN: Well, there is a process. It is very challenging to get something off the list. It's very challenging to get something off the list. In addition, not only is it because you would have to show population impact and population recovery, but we would also have to deal with that look alike issue, which makes it even more challenging.

We had attempted at one point to get bobcat off the list, because it is a look alike for European lynx, and created a whole manual and all of these things, and were not successful in that. There is a process, but it would be very, very challenging to get eel off the list.

MR. SELF: My second question was, if eel is listed, and we move to the point where exports have to have a permit from the Fish and Wildlife Service. Is that a per shipment permit or is that a blanket permit for a season, or would each individual shipment have to be permitted separately?

MS. HAHN: I can't answer that with 100% certainty, because I don't think we know that information from Fish and Wildlife. It would be my understanding that it would be each shipment, at least at the beginning.

CHAIR KUHN: Do we have any other questions for Deb around the table here? If not, I understand there is a member of the public that would like to make a comment/question. All right, seeing none; I'll go to the public.

MR. MITCHELL FEIGENBAUM: Hi there, this is Mitchell Feigenbaum, I'm actually the Chair of the Eel Advisory Panel. I'm going to ask a few questions in that role, as far as making public comment. I can tell from Deb's excellent presentation that there will be opportunities for public input coming up, and I'll reserve my comments until then.

But as far as the questions go, Deb, first of all, can you just clarify or confirm that the actual position to be formed by the U.S., the decision

on how it's going to vote will ultimately be the responsibility of the Fish and Wildlife Service, or is in fact AFWA somehow taking over that role?

MS. HAHN: There would be kind of two separate positions, I guess that are processes. Atlantic States would decide their opinion, which to date has been not to support the listing, which means that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies has taken forward that position. Separate to that would be the U.S. Government's position, and in the end the final decision on that will be leadership within the U.S. Government, most likely it typically is within Department of Interior, above Fish and Wildlife Service, but it would depend on this administration's approach.

MR. FEIGENBAUM: Okay, yes, thanks for that clear answer. I appreciate that. My second question is, at this point in the process at CITES, would there be a possibility, and I'm asking only hypothetically, but would there be a possibility of separating out the unique approach to the Rostrata and Japonica that were being proposed.

Just listing all the non-AA species as based on Appendix II, based on the look alike, without having to make the finding that Japonica and Rostrata are like in an elevated category. You did a good job explaining that while the proposal is to list all 16 species that are not currently listed. The proposal of the EU is taking a separate approach to AJ and AR. Is that all or nothing now? Does a vote of the U.S. have to accept the proposal as written, or would there be any way that that proposal at this late stage could be modified, to suggest that all 16 species were being listed simply because of lookalike issues, without asking the country to make a finding or to vote on a finding that the species is in fact threatened or endangered?

MS. HAHN: Yes, great question. I'll just clarify, they would not be voting to agree to the fact that the species is either threatened or endangered. It is just they would be agreeing that the species requires regulations of international trade, to ensure that it does not become threatened and endangered, just to clarify that.

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There are opportunities with the opportunities to negotiate changes to a proposal. I need to think a little more on how likely it would be for that to happen, and how challenging that would be. But we have seen changes to proposals once they reach the Conference of the Party in the past.

MR. FEIGENBAUM: I'm grateful for that answer, and I appreciate the complications of the question. I have a third question which is, basically really, I think to Toni or Caitlin, and that is, notwithstanding the public comment opportunity that will be created, based on, you know publication in the Federal Register. Would it be possible to convene the AP so that the AP could provide input to the Commission itself separate and apart from just general public comment with the Federal Register process?

MS. CAITLIN STARKS: Thanks, Mitch. It's at the Board's discretion if they would like to convene the AP on this topic specifically.

MR. FEIGENBAUM: Okay, and I understand it's their discretion. Would it be helpful for the AP to make a formal request, or for any individuals to make a request, or how would that topic even come up before the Board to consider exercising that kind of discretion? Certainly, as the Chair of the AP, I would appreciate if the Board would in fact convene that panel. These issues are really important, very important to the future of the fishery.

MS. KERNS: I think, Mitch, unless the Board has another thought, but what we could do is, once we draft a comment letter, which shouldn't take us too much time to do, because we've sent a couple in, and I don't think the position will change significantly. We may need to add some additional information to it.

But we can distribute that to the AP to see if the AP has additional items to add to that comment letter. Then from there we can determine whether or not we need to hold a call or not,

depending on the engagement of the AP members on the draft letter, unless the Board wants us to do something differently.

CHAIR KUHN: That sounds like a good idea from my perspective, Toni. To Toni's point, I mean is that process acceptable to the Board, to move forward with a draft letter and distribute to the AP for consideration, and then move forward based on input from the AP? I don't see anybody in opposition, so that sounds like that approach is what we'll take. Thank you.

MR. FEIGENBAUM: Thank you for that, and then my final question is to Deb again. I did read the materials in advance of today's presentation pretty carefully. But I probably either missed or it may not have been included that you've mentioned that there is a proposed resolution that is moving forward.

While it might face some hurdles, it is still in play. I'm just wondering, is that the copy or a draft of that resolution in the materials that were sent out to the Board in advance of today's meeting, or is it something I need to ask separately to see a copy of that? Because I think it would be very helpful to the AP, to understand what that resolution would say, recognizing that getting a resolution passed would probably be a long shot.

MS. STARKS: Hey, Mitch, this is Caitlin Starks. It was not in the materials. I will distribute that I think, both to the Board and the AP might like to see that, so I can distribute that separately to everyone.

MR. FEIGENBAUM: Okay, thank you everyone, for entertaining these questions and the feedback. Again, Debbie, I thank you for your helpful presentation.

CHAIR KUHN: Thanks, Mitch, for the questions and comments. We do have one member of the public here in person that would like to make a comment, if you could just state your name, and then limit your comment to say, two minutes.

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MS. SONJA FORDHAM: Sonja Fordham, Shark Advocates International. This is my first eel meeting, I don't know if I'll make others, but I do have considerable experience with CITES. I just had a couple questions. I think you might have already answered them. My first one was whether you've made a decision to not support. Is that decision by the Board or the Full Commission, and is that a decision to not support or to actively oppose the listing?

Then if that is the case, just like when that happens, I would love to know. Then just for bonus clarification, you mentioned something about the U.S. Delegation to Uzbekistan, and I was just wondering if you had any information on the U.S. Government's plans on what they intend to send as a delegation to the CoP, thank you.

CHAIR KUHN: Yes, Toni, do you want to take that?

MS. KERNS: The Commission did send a position previously, Sonja, on not to list when there were discussions of a potential listing by the U.S. Government and other countries, and those were done at several previous meetings over the course of the last year, I would say. We have a letter that we sent to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that went to the Federal Register Notice on that position. It was a letter that was approved by the Full Commission.

This Board made that recommendation to, in terms of the listing that is out right now by the EU, if we carry forward with the direction of this Board, staff would draft a letter. That letter would be considered by the Full Commission as well, but we still would need to draft that letter, probably will look similar to the other letter that we have sent previously. I do not know what the Federal Government's delegation will look like, and I don't think Deb does either, but I will let her speak to that.

MS. HAHN: Yes, I think Brian Nesvik was just confirmed on Friday, so they now have a

Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I am assuming that they will be finalizing their approach, and who will be head of Delegation, now that they have a director. But to my knowledge, they do not have their full delegation or anything finalized yet.

CHAIR KUHN: Thanks for the comments and discussion from all those around the Board and online. Is there any other additional comments/discussion here? I don't see any. Caitlin and Toni, do you have what you need, or would you like to provide some clarification on the FAO Panel?

MS. CAITLIN: Sure, thanks, Mr. Chair. I'll just give a brief summary, since Deb mentioned this FAO extra panel, what they do. FAO is bringing together an expert panel. Anytime CITES is considering a proposal for a marine fishery or aquaculture resource, and so they did convene a panel for eels. I did participate in that to add information.

But basically, the Panel's task is to look at the proposal that is put forward, and determine if it is providing sufficient information to say that the criteria for listing, based on whatever the proposal is asking have been met. That Panel then as a whole, puts together a massive report of all of the species that are being considered in this category.

Then FAO provides that full report with the expert panel recommendations to the CITES secretary for consideration at the CoP. That report will be published later this month, I believe around mid-August, and I can distribute that as well, once it is published.

CHAIR KUHN: Thanks for that, Caitlin.

REVIEW AND CONSIDER MAINE AQUACULTURE PLAN FOR 2026 FISHING YEAR

CHAIR KUHN: Okay, we're going to go ahead and move on to the fifth item on the agenda, which is an action item, that is to Review and Consider Maine's Aquaculture Plan for the 2026 Fishing Year. For that Caitlin is going to lead us off with a presentation.

These minutes are draft and subject to approval by the American Eel Management Board.
The Board will review the minutes during its next meeting.

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE REPORT

MS. STARKS: I am going to give this presentation. Our TC Chair position is currently vacant, so I am just going to give a quick overview of Maine's plan. Maine has had their aquaculture quota approved since 2019, and in the table on the right here you can see the pounds that have been harvested under this quota by year.

In 2020 they of course had zero harvest due to COVID, but in the other years they have either met or harvested just under that 200-pound aquaculture quota. For 2025, the fishing season, their plan noted that it was a bit slower than the previous year, and ultimately the aquaculture harvest did not end up meeting that whole 200-pound quota.

Harvest locations were similar to previous years, except for one new harvest location, which was in the Machias River. For 2026, Maine is requesting 200 pounds of aquaculture quota again. This map is just showing where those harvest locations for 2025 are. Then the Technical Committee did review this aquaculture plan and recommended approval for the 2026 fishing year. As they were reviewing the plan, they did note that for the new harvest site on the Machias River, it does not meet all of the criteria that were established through Addendum V for picking preferred harvest sites. Specifically, one of the criteria is that rivers with higher levels of natural mortality and/or passage impediments should be preferred to other rivers.

But the Machias River is unimpeded and the Technical Committee also noted that another criterion related to the Fishery Independent Monitoring at sites where aquaculture harvest occurs might not be as relevant for Maine, because that aquaculture harvest is occurring alongside a much larger commercial harvest under their quota.

In this discussion the Technical Committee determined that it doesn't have concerns with approval of this plan for the 2026 fishing year, but they did request that the Board task the TC with reviewing the Addendum V site selection criteria, so they can consider if any changes to the language are needed, or interpretation of those criteria for selecting aquaculture sites should be considered. That's all I have; I can take any questions.

CHAIR KUHN: Thanks for that report, Caitlin. Are there any questions for Caitlin? All right, seeing none; is there any discussion? Megan Ware.

MS. WARE: I had sent staff a motion. **Move to approve the Maine Aquaculture Plan for 2026 and task the TC to review the Aquaculture Plan criteria in Addendum V, to determine if changes to the language or interpretation of those criteria should be considered.**

CHAIR KUHN: Do we have a second to the motion? Dennis Abbott. Megan, do you have any comments, rationale you would like to provide at this time?

MS. WARE: Yes, I just would highlight how important this is for Maine, and specifically American Unagi, in light of the CITES conversation we just had. I think that really underscores the importance of a domestic market for this product, in supporting domestic use of our eels. I think it ties in well.

I appreciate the TCs flag of the criteria, I think it's appropriate to review those. One of the criteria is a recommendation to have aquaculture harvest in places where there is eel monitoring, and Maine has specifically not been wanting to harvest out of our fishery independent site, to make sure that that time series isn't changed in any way by that harvest.

I think that is an important one to look at. Similar with the Machias River. I think there was a value there in including tribal participants in the aquaculture quota, how we balance those social aspects with the biological, I think is important as well. I fully support that review.

These minutes are draft and subject to approval by the American Eel Management Board.
The Board will review the minutes during its next meeting.

CHAIR KUHN: Dennis, would you like to provide some additional rationale?

MR. DENNIS ABBOTT: No, I don't think it is necessary to add anything, thank you.

CHAIR KUHN: Robert LaFrance.

MR. ROBERT LaFRANCE: Just a quick question. Is it the TC will come back and give us an update after, before we go on for the next approval? In other words, are we going to get a report back from the TC on that interpretation of the criteria? I guess I'm just looking at you, Megan. Are they going to come back and let us know what's happening, what changes they're recommending, and then we'll have an opportunity to look at those, or are those just being incorporated into the future?

MS. WARE: I'm happy to have those come to the Board, I can go to Caitlin on timing.

MS. STARKS: Yes, I think typically with our talks like this we would like to have the TC meet and talk about these, and then provide some kind of recommendations to the Board as to how to move forward, whether that is no changes needed, simply how to interpret these kinds of things in different situations.

Obviously, I think when the aquaculture provisions were put in place we were thinking about not just Maine, that already has a commercial harvest, but states that don't have any glass eel harvest, so how those might apply to different states. Yes, I believe it would be possible to get the Board recommendations from the TC, definitely prior to Maine's next aquaculture plan.

MR. LaFRANCE: Thank you very much, I was really looking for some clarification, and I also want to support the motion, especially the notion of trying to work with indigenous people, and to try and keep a domestic ability to work in the species, so thank you for that.

CHAIR KUHN: Are there any other questions, discussion around the motion? Okay, not seeing any. The motion was already read into the record, **is there any objection to the motion? Seeing none; any abstentions? Not seeing any, any null votes? Motion passes by consent.** Caitlin, did you have anything else you need for recommendations moving forward? Not seeing any.

ADJOURNMENT

CHAIR KUHN: Is there any other business to come before the American Eel Board here this afternoon? Not seeing any, is there a motion to adjourn? Second. This meeting is adjourned, thank you.

(Whereupon the meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m. on Tuesday, August 5, 2025)

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ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

**REVIEW OF THE INTERSTATE FISHERY MANAGEMENT
PLAN**

**AMERICAN EEL
(*Anguilla rostrata*)**

2024 FISHING YEAR



Prepared by the American Eel Plan Review Team

October 2025



Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

Draft for Board Review

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REVIEW OF THE ASMFC FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN AND STATE COMPLIANCE FOR AMERICAN EEL (*Anguilla rostrata*) FOR THE 2024 FISHING YEAR

Management Summary

<u>Date of FMP approval:</u>	November 1999
<u>Addenda:</u>	Addendum I (February 2006) Addendum II (October 2008) Addendum III (August 2013) Addendum IV (October 2014) Addendum V (August 2018) Addendum VI (May 2024) Addendum VII (May 2024)
<u>Management unit:</u>	Migratory stocks of American Eel from Maine through Florida (East Coast)
<u>States with a declared interest:</u>	Maine through Florida, including the District of Columbia and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission
<u>Active committees:</u>	American Eel Management Board, Plan Review Team, Technical Committee, Stock Assessment Subcommittee, and Advisory Panel

1.0 Status of the Fishery Management Plan

The ASMFC American Eel Management Board (Board) first convened in November 1995 and finalized the [Fishery Management Plan \(FMP\) for American Eel](#) in November 1999 (ASMFC 2000).

GOAL

The goal of the FMP is to conserve and protect the American eel resource to ensure its continued role in the ecosystems while providing the opportunity for its commercial, recreational, scientific, and educational use.

OBJECTIVES

1. Improve knowledge of eel utilization at all life stages through mandatory reporting of harvest and effort by commercial fishers and dealers, and enhanced recreational fisheries monitoring.
2. Increase understanding of factors affecting eel population dynamics and life history through increased research and monitoring.
3. Protect and enhance American eel abundance in all watersheds where eel now occur.
4. Where practical, restore American eel to those waters where they had historical abundance but may now be absent by providing access to inland waters for glass eel,

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elvers, and yellow eel and adequate escapement to the ocean for pre-spawning adult eel.

5. Investigate the abundance level of eel at the various life stages, necessary to provide adequate forage for natural predators and support ecosystem health and food chain structure.

The FMP requires all states and jurisdictions to implement an annual young-of-year (YOY) abundance survey to monitor annual recruitment of each year's cohort. In addition, the FMP requires a minimum recreational size, a possession limit and a state license for recreational fishermen to sell eels. The FMP requires that states and jurisdictions maintain existing or more conservative American eel commercial fishery regulations for all life stages, including minimum size limits. Each state is responsible for implementing management measures within its jurisdiction to ensure the sustainability of its American eel population.

The FMP has been adapted through the following addenda:

[Addendum I \(February 2006\)](#)

Addendum I establishes a mandatory catch and effort monitoring program for American eel.

[Addendum II \(October 2008\)](#)

Addendum II placed increased emphasis on improving the upstream and downstream passage of American eel with the goal of increasing escapement of silver eels to spawning grounds. The Board chose to delay action on management measures in order to incorporate the results of the 2012 stock assessment.

[Addendum III \(August 2013\)](#)

Addendum III was initiated in response to the findings of the 2012 Benchmark Stock Assessment, which declared American eel stock along the US East Coast depleted. Addendum III aimed to reduce mortality on all life stages of American eel. It required states to reduce the yellow eel recreational possession limit to 25 eel/person/day, with the option to allow an exception of 50 eel/person/day for party/charter employees for bait purposes. The recreational and commercial size limit increased to a minimum of 9 inches. Eel pots are required to be ½ by ½ inch minimum mesh size. The glass eel fishery is required to implement a maximum tolerance of 25 pigmented eels per pound of glass eel catch. The silver eel fishery is prohibited to take eels from September 1st to December 31st from any gear type other than baited traps/pots or spears. The Addendum also set minimum monitoring standards for states and required dealer and harvester reporting in the commercial fishery.

[Addendum IV \(October 2014\)](#)

Addendum IV was also initiated in response to the 2012 American Eel Benchmark Stock Assessment and the need to reduce mortality on all life stages. The Addendum established a coastwide cap of 907,671 pounds of yellow eel, reduced Maine's glass eel quota to 9,688 pounds (2014 landings), and allowed for the continuation of New York's silver eel weir fishery in the Delaware River. For yellow eel fisheries, the coastwide cap was implemented for the 2015

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fishing year and established two management triggers: (1) if the cap is exceeded by more than 10% in a given year, or (2) the cap is exceeded for two consecutive years regardless of the percent overage. If either one of the triggers are met, then states would implement state-specific allocation based on average landings from 2011-2013. The addendum also requires any state or jurisdiction with a commercial glass eel fishery to implement a fishery independent life cycle survey covering glass, yellow, and silver eels within at least one river system.

Addendum V (August 2018)

Addendum V increases the yellow eel coastwide cap starting in 2019 to 916,473 pounds to reflect a correction in the historical harvest data. Further, the Addendum adjusts the method (management trigger) to reduce total landings to the coastwide cap when the cap has been exceeded, and removes the implementation of state-by-state allocations if the management trigger is met. Management action will now be initiated if the yellow eel coastwide cap is exceeded by 10% in two consecutive years. If the management trigger is exceeded, only those states accounting for more than 1% of the total yellow eel landings will be responsible for adjusting their measures. A workgroup was formed to define the process to equitably reduce landings among the affected states when the management trigger has been met (see appendix, approved October 2019). Additionally, the Addendum maintains Maine's glass eel quota of 9,688 pounds. The Board also slightly modified the glass eel aquaculture provisions, maintaining the 200-pound limit for glass eel harvest, but adjusting the criteria for evaluating the proposed harvest area's contribution to the overall population consistent with the recommendations of the Technical Committee.

Addendum VI (May 2024)

Addendum VI maintains Maine's glass eel quota of 9,688 pounds originally established under Addendum IV, to remain in place for 3 years (2025-2027) and be reviewed prior to the 2028 fishing year.

Addendum VII (May 2024)

Addendum VII responds to the 2023 stock assessment findings that the American eel stock is depleted and the yellow eel population has continued to decline. Addendum VII set the coastwide yellow eel harvest cap to 518,281 pounds using an index-based method that provides management advice based on abundance indices and catch information, as well as management goals specified by the Board. The cap can be updated after three years with additional years of data. Addendum VII also removes the requirement for collecting individual lengths and pigment stage during the annual YOY surveys, and changes the *de minimis* policy to use a three-year average of landings to evaluate *de minimis* status.

Conservation Equivalency Plans

- In February 2014 the Board approved a CE request to allow the State of Maine to suspend the use of input controls (i.e., license and gear caps) to manage the glass eel

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harvest and move to the use of an output control or a total allowable catch provision with buffer and payback provisions.

- In February 2016, the Board approved a CE request for the State of Maine to eliminate a two-day closed harvest per week for the glass eel fishery. The fishery was managed via input controls prior to Addendum 4, at which time the two-day closure was one effort control measure being used. However, once the fishery management program switched to a quota system the two-day closure measure was not needed to control harvest.

2.0 Status of the Stock

The most recent benchmark stock assessment was peer reviewed in late 2022 and accepted for management use in 2023. The 2023 assessment concludes that the stock is depleted at or near historically low levels due to a combination of historical overfishing, habitat loss, food web alterations, predation, turbine mortality, environmental changes, toxins and contaminants, and disease. Despite exploring additional approaches for assessing American eel that were suggested in past stock assessments including a delay-difference model, traffic light analysis and surplus production models, and developing an egg-per-recruit model, overfished and overfishing determinations still could not be made due to data limitations. However, the 2023 stock assessment found that the yellow eel population has declined since the previous assessment, and yellow eel harvest should be decreased.

The first benchmark stock assessment for American eel was peer reviewed in March 2012 and was approved for management use in May 2012 (ASMFC 2012). Due to biological data limitations and the extremely complex life history of American eel, traditional stock assessment models could not be developed and several data-poor methods were used to assess the American eel resource. The stock status was determined to be depleted and overfishing and overfished status could not be determined with confidence.

The 2017 American Eel Stock Assessment Update updated the 2012 American Eel Benchmark Stock Assessment with data from 2010-2016. The trend analysis results in this stock assessment update were consistent with the 2012 results, with few exceptions. Despite downward trends in the indices, commercial yellow American eel landings were shown to be stable in the decades leading up to the assessment, but landings still remained much lower than historical levels. The conclusion of the assessment update was that the American eel population in the assessment range remained depleted (ASMFC 2017).

3.0 Status of the Fishery

Commercial fisheries for American eel occur throughout their range in North America, with the most significant of those fisheries occurring in the US Mid-Atlantic region and Canada. These fisheries are executed in riverine, estuarine, and ocean waters. In the US, commercial fisheries for glass eel/elvers only exist in Maine and South Carolina, a silver eel weir fishery exists in New York's Delaware River, and yellow eel fisheries exist in all states and jurisdictions except

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Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia, though South Carolina and Georgia have not landed yellow eels in recent years.

Although eel have been continuously harvested over the last century, consistent data on harvest has not always been available. Harvest data from the Atlantic coastal states (Maine to Florida) indicate that the harvest fluctuated widely between 1970 and 1980, but showed an increasing trend that peaked in 1979 at 3,951,936 pounds. Landings then declined to a low of 641,000 pounds in 2002, recovered steadily to exceed one million pounds on average from 2010-2014, and have since experienced a general downward trend, reaching a time series low in 2020. Because fishing effort data are unavailable for the entire time series, finding a correlation between population estimates and landings data is difficult.

The Advisory Panel (AP) has provided feedback that recent low landings have primarily been related to market demand; demand for wild-caught American eels from the US for European food markets has decreased in recent years due to increased aquaculture in Europe. Demand for domestic bait decreased from 2019 to 2020 due in part to COVID-19 restrictions. A smaller proportion of landings traditionally goes to the domestic bait market, and the AP indicated it does not anticipate landings to increase significantly from current levels in the near future.

Commercial Fishery

State reported commercial landings of yellow/silver eels in 2024 totaled approximately 284,625 pounds (Table 1, Figure 1). This represents a 3.8% decrease in landings from 2023 (295,934 pounds) and the second lowest level of coastwide landings in the time series. Yellow eel landings increased in four states and jurisdictions, while decreasing in eight. In 2024, state reported landings from Maryland, New Jersey, and New York together accounted for 87% of the coastwide commercial total yellow eel landings. Glass eel landings reported from Maine totaled 9,634 pounds; South Carolina's glass eel landings are confidential and remain below 750 pounds.

Maine's glass eel aquaculture proposal for the 2024 season was approved and 200 pounds were harvested for domestic aquaculture grow out. Maine submitted a similar proposal for the 2025 fishing season that was also approved. For both years, the approved proposals allow for 200 pounds of glass eels to be harvested for aquaculture in addition to Maine's glass eel quota of 9,688 pounds.

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Table 1. Preliminary 2024 Commercial Landings (in pounds) by State and Life Stage

State/Jurisdiction	Glass/Elver	Yellow
Maine	9,634	1,211
New Hampshire	No Fisheries	0
Massachusetts		<i>Confidential</i>
Rhode Island		1,928
Connecticut		3,433
New York		16,067
New Jersey		30,387
Pennsylvania		0
Delaware		8,910
Maryland		200,587
D.C.		0
PRFC		11,316
Virginia		6,229
North Carolina		2,477
South Carolina	<i>Confidential (<750 pounds)</i>	0
Georgia	No Fisheries	0
Florida		2,080
Total	< 10,384	284,625

Table 2. State commercial regulations for the 2024 fishing year.*

State	Min Size	License/Permit	Other
ME	Glass: NA	Daily dealer reports/swipe card program; monthly harvester report of daily landings. Tribal permit system in place for some Native American groups.	In 2017, the Legislature authorized the DMR commissioner to adopt rules to implement the elver fishing license lottery, including provisions for the method and administration of the lottery.
	Yellow: 9"	Harvester/dealer license and monthly reporting. Tribal permit system in place for some Native American groups.	Seasonal closures. Gear restrictions. Weekly closures. Mesh size restrictions on eel pots.
NH	9"	Commercial saltwater license and wholesaler license and harvest permit. No dealer reports. Monthly harvester reporting includes dealer information.	Gear restrictions in freshwater. Mesh size restrictions on eel pots.
MA	9"	Commercial permit with annual catch report requirement. Dealer registration with purchase record requirement. Dealer/harvester reporting.	Traps, pots, spears, and angling only. Mesh size restrictions on eel pots.
RI	9"	Commercial fishing license. Dealer/harvester reporting.	Seasonal gear restrictions. Mesh size restrictions on eel pots.
CT	9"	Commercial license (not required for personal use). Dealer/harvester reporting.	Gear restrictions. Mesh size restrictions on eel pots.

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State	Min Size	License/Permit	Other
NY	9"	Harvester/dealer license and monthly reporting.	Gear restrictions. Maximum limit of 14" in some rivers. Mesh size restrictions on eel pots.
NJ	9"	License required. No dealer reports. Monthly harvester reporting includes dealer information.	Gear restrictions. Mesh size restrictions on eel pots.
PA	NO COMMERCIAL FISHERY		
DE	9"	Harvester reporting, no dealer reporting. License required.	Commercial fishing in tidal waters only. Gear restrictions. Mesh size restrictions on eel pots.
MD	9"	Dealer/harvester license and monthly reporting. Limited entry.	Prohibited in non-tidal waters. Gear restrictions. Commercial crabbers may fish 50 pots per day, must submit catch reports. Mesh size restrictions on eel pots.
DC	NO COMMERCIAL FISHERY		
PRFC	9"	Harvester license and reporting. No dealer reporting.	Seasonal gear restrictions. Mesh size restrictions on eel pots.
VA	9"	Harvester license/eel buyer permit required. Dealer/harvester monthly reporting.	Mesh size restrictions on eel pots. Seasonal closures.
NC	9"	Standard Commercial Fishing License for all commercial fishing. Dealer/harvester monthly combined reports on trip ticket.	Mesh size restrictions on eel pots. Seasonal closures. No commercial harvest in inland waters.
SC	Glass NA	Dealer/harvester monthly combined reports on trip ticket. License and gear permits required.	Max 10 individuals. Gear and area restrictions. Fyke and dip net only permitted. Mesh size restrictions on eel pots.
	Yellow 9"	Dealer/harvester monthly combined reports on trip ticket. License and gear permits required.	Pots and traps permitted only. Gear restrictions. Mesh size restrictions on eel pots.
GA	9"	Personal commercial fishing license and commercial fishing boat license. Dealer/harvester monthly combined reports on trip ticket.	Gear restrictions on traps and pots. Area restrictions. Mesh size restrictions on eel pots.
FL	9"	Permits and licenses. Harvester reporting. No dealer reporting.	Gear restrictions. Mesh size restrictions on eel pots.

* For specifics on licenses, gear restrictions, and area restrictions, please contact the individual state.

Recreational Fishery

Available information indicates that few recreational anglers directly target American eel. For the most part, hook-and-line fishermen catch eel incidentally when fishing for other species. American eel are often purchased by recreational fishermen for use as bait for larger gamefish such as striped bass, cobia, and catfish. Some recreational fishermen may catch their own to use as bait.

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Despite the incidental nature of hook-and-line eel catches, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) does encounter enough observations to indicate widespread and common presence as a bycatch species. However, there is low precision associated with the recreational fishery statistics for American eel due to the limited numbers that have been encountered during surveys of recreational anglers along the Atlantic coast. These limited numbers are partly due to the design of the MRIP survey, which does not sample from the areas and gears assumed to be responsible for the majority of recreational fishing for American eels. As such, the recreational fishery statistics for American eels provided by MRIP should be interpreted with caution.

MRIP shows a declining trend in the coastwide recreational eel catch starting in the 1980s, but the total annual harvest values are highly uncertain. As of 2009, MRIP no longer provides recreational data for American eel due to the survey design being unsuitable for sampling targeted eel fishing. At the state level, only New Hampshire and Georgia collect recreational data for American eel outside of MRIP.

Table 3. State recreational regulations for the 2024 fishing year.*

State	Min Size	Daily Possession Limit	Other
ME	9"	25	Gear restrictions. License requirement and seasonal closures (inland waters only). Bait limit of 50 eels/day for party/charter boat captain and crew.
NH	9"	25	Coastal harvest permit needed if taking eels other than by angling. Gear restrictions in freshwater.
MA	9"	25	Nets, pots, traps, spears, and angling only; seasonal gear restrictions and mesh requirements. Bait limit of 50 eels/day for party/charter boat captain and crew.
RI	9"	25	Bait limit of 50 eels/day for party/charter boat captain and crew.
CT	9"	25	Two pot limit/person.
NY	9"	25	Maximum limit of 14" in some rivers. Bait limit of 50 eels/day for party/charter boat captain and crew.
NJ	9"	25	Bait limit of 50 eels/day for party/charter boat captain and crew. Mesh size restriction on pots.
PA	9"	25	Gear restrictions.
DE	9"	25	Two pot limit/person.
MD	9"	25	Gear restrictions.
DC	9"	10	Maximum of five eel traps per angler; required labeling of traps.
PRFC	9"	25	
VA	9"	25	Recreational license. Two pot limit. Mandatory monthly catch report. Gear restrictions. Bait limit of 50 eels/day for party/charter boat captain and crew.
NC	9"	25	Gear restrictions. Non-commercial special device license. Two eel pots allowed under Recreational Commercial Gear license. Bait limit of 50 eels/day for party/charter boat captain and crew.

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SC	9"	25	Gear restrictions. Permits and licenses. Two-pot limit.
GA	9"	25	
FL	9"	25	Gear restrictions. Wholesale/retail purchase exemption applies to possession limit for bait.

* For specifics on licenses, gear restrictions, and area restrictions, please contact the individual state.

4.0 Status of Research and Monitoring

The FMP requires states and jurisdictions with a declared interest in the species to conduct an annual YOY survey to monitor annual recruitment of each year's cohort. Some states conduct yellow eel surveys as well.

In 2024, the states and jurisdictions of New Hampshire, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission observed above average YOY counts. Total catch and CPUE for the Lamprey River in New Hampshire were the highest in the time series, and for the Oyster River they were the second highest. The Connecticut YOY CPUE for 2024 was lower than last year but above average. In the New York glass eel survey the geometric mean catch of glass eels in 2024 was above average and the third highest CPUE in the time series, with the highest being in 2023. The New Jersey YOY catch ranked ninth in the twenty-one-year time series. The PRFC relative abundance index for glass eels was the second highest ever observed at Gardy's Millpond in 2024 and more than three-times the time-series average, marking the last three years as the highest in the time series.

The 2024 YOY surveys in Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, and Florida saw average or below average survey counts. The Massachusetts YOY index from the Jones River remains below average, but has been increasing for four years in a row. In Rhode Island, the numbers observed at the Hamilton and Gilbert Stuart fish ladders were higher than those observed in 2023 but both within the average range. In Delaware the geometric mean YOY catch was the 11th lowest in the 25-year time series. In Maryland, the CPUE increased from 2023 but remained below the time series mean in three of the last four years. The overall Maryland YOY index from 2000 to 2024 is variable with no discernable trend in abundance for glass eels. In 2023, American eel relative abundance in the North Carolina YOY survey remained below the time-series average for the third year but 2024 data have not been analyzed. In the Goose Creek YOY survey in South Carolina overall catch rates have largely decreased in numbers since 2001, but the 2024 run experienced a large increase in catch compared to the previous year. Catch at Florida's Guana River Dam remained at the lowest level in the time series for the last three years.

Pennsylvania, D.C., and Georgia do not have YOY surveys, but instead have yellow eel surveys. Pennsylvania's 2024 survey catch was below average, and D.C. saw a slight increase in catch in their backpack electrofishing survey but very low catch in their boat-based electrofishing survey. In addition to their YOY surveys, Maryland and SCDNR monitor yellow eel abundance through a pot survey and electrofishing survey, respectively. Maryland's 2024 Sassafra River

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yellow eel pot survey CPUE was higher than last year, but below average. Relative abundance of American Eel in the SCDNR Electrofishing Survey has generally declined to survey lows, though there is evidence of slight increases in 2022-2024. New Jersey additionally developed and implemented a fishery-independent eel pot survey to collect abundance data of yellow American eels within nursery grounds, which began in 2015. The 2024 yellow eel CPUE in New Jersey was slightly above average.

As required by Addendum IV, Maine continued the fishery independent life cycle survey of glass, yellow, and silver eels within at least one river system (West Harbor Pond) in 2024. In 2019 the site was changed from Cobboosecontee Stream to West Harbor Pond to improve collection of eels at all life stages by Maine Department of Marine Resources staff.

5.0 Research Needs

The FMP does not require any other research initiatives for participating states and jurisdictions. Nonetheless, the American Eel Technical Committee (TC) has identified several research topics to further understanding of the species' life history, behavior, and biology. Research recommendations from ASMFC (2012, 2017) remain important, but the following list was provided in the 2023 benchmark stock assessment, and is specific to what the Stock Assessment Subcommittee thinks could improve the next stock assessment. Research needs for American eel identified by the TC include:

Future Research and Data Collection

- Improve upstream and downstream passage for all life stages of American eels.
- Continue to improve the accuracy of commercial catch and effort data through ACCSP and state partners.
- Characterize the length, weight, age, and sex structure of commercially harvested American eels along the Atlantic coast over time.
- Research coastwide prevalence of the swim bladder parasite *Anguillacolla crassus* and its effects on the American eel's growth and maturation, migration to the Sargasso Sea, and spawning potential.
- Improve understanding of the spawning contribution of unexploited portions of the stock (i.e., freshwater areas of coastal US).
- Characterize the length, weight, and sex structure in unharvestable habitats.
- Conduct a tagging study throughout the species range.
- Quantify recreational removals in marine and freshwater habitats and characterize length, weight, and sex structure.
- Evaluate the passage/passage efficiency of American eels through existing fishways at dams/barriers and evaluate barrier physical attributes (height, material) that can be passed by eel without fishways.
- Evaluate the use vs. availability of habitat in the inland portion of the species range, and how habitat availability has changed through time, including opening of habitat from

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recent dam and barrier removals. This could and should include assisted migration by trucking around dams.

- To the extent that the data allows, account for the proportion of the population (yellow, silver phase) represented by the inland portion of the species range.
- Evaluate the relative impact that commercial harvest has on population status versus the accessibility to inland habitats.

Assessment Methods

- Develop methods to assess spawner escapement and biological information pertinent to silver eels in major river basins.
- Perform a range-wide American eel assessment with various countries and agencies (e.g., Canada DFO, ASMFC, USFWS, Caribbean, US Gulf and inland states).
- Explore methods to characterize data by sex to support a female-only delay-difference model.

6.0 Status of Management Measures

The FMP requires that all states and jurisdictions implement an annual YOY abundance survey in order to monitor annual recruitment of each year's cohort. Addendum III requires a 9-inch minimum size restriction in the commercial and recreational yellow eel fisheries, as well as a minimum mesh size of ½ by ½ inch in the commercial yellow eel pot fishery. The recreational bag limit is 25 fish/angler/day, and the silver eel fishery is restricted, as is the development of pigmented eel fisheries.

7.0 Current State-by-State Implementation of FMP Compliance Requirements

The PRT reviewed the state compliance reports for the 2024 fishing year. The PRT notes the following issues with state implementation of the required provisions of the American Eel FMP:

Silver Eel Fishery Measures:

- Delaware has not implemented regulations preventing harvest of eels from pound nets from September 1 through December 31. No pound net landings have been reported in the state in over 50 years. Delaware will address this issue as part of any future changes to the eel regulations.
- Florida does not have a regulation preventing harvest of eels from pound nets from September 1 through December 31, but the state is unaware of any active pound net fishery in the past 10-15 years.

Reporting Measures:

- Rhode Island did not report CPUE for commercial harvest, harvest by life stage, or harvest by gear type, which are required under Addendum III.
- The following jurisdictions do not have dealer reporting:

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- New Hampshire and New Jersey do not have dealer reporting (there are no permitted eel dealers for either state), but harvesters report some information on dealers.
- Delaware (no permitted eel dealers)
- Potomac River Fisheries Commission (jurisdiction reports harvest, not landings)
- Florida (considered a freshwater species and there is no dealer reporting for freshwater species)
- Many states have been unable to provide information on the percent of commercial harvest sold as food versus bait; only Maine, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and Florida provided this information for 2024.
- Only Maine, Delaware, Virginia, and Florida have provided information on exports of American eel.

Addendum VII to the American Eel FMP stipulates that a state may apply for *de minimis* status for each life stage if (given the availability of data), for the preceding three years, its average commercial landings (by weight) of that life stage constitute less than 1% of the coastwide commercial landings for that life stage for the same three-year period. States meeting this criterion are exempted from having to adopt commercial and recreational fishery regulations for a particular life stage listed in the FMP under Section 4 and any fishery-dependent monitoring elements for that life stage listed in Section 3.4.1.

Qualification for *de minimis* is determined from state-reported landings found in annual compliance reports. New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, District of Columbia, and Georgia have requested continued *de minimis* status for their yellow eel fisheries and meet the *de minimis* criteria.

8.0 Recommendations/Findings of the Plan Review Team

1. The PRT recommends the Board consider state compliance notes as detailed in Section VII.
2. The PRT recommends *de minimis* status be granted to Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, District of Columbia, and Georgia for their yellow eel fisheries.
3. The PRT had previously requested that the Board reevaluate the requirement that states provide estimates of the percent of harvest going to food versus bait, as there is a high level of uncertainty and subjectivity inherent in the data. Additionally, the PRT notes that this information does currently impact regulations and is unclear of the benefit for management.
4. The PRT recommends that the Commission and USFWS work together to annually compare domestic landings data to export data for American eel across all life stages.

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9.0 References

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). 1998. Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Eel (*Anguilla rostrata*). Washington D.C. NOAA Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Award No. NA97 FGO 0034 and NA07 FGO 024.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). 2023. American Eel Benchmark Stock Assessment. Arlington, VA.



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MEMORANDUM

To: Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) – American Eel Management Board

From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Division of Marine Fisheries Management

Date: October 13, 2025

Subject: Florida's request to be exempt from annual glass eel sampling

The state of Florida is requesting an exemption from young-of-year (glass) eel sampling beginning in 2025. There is limited funding for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to continue this sampling, and there have been extremely low catches in recent years at the current sampling site, with no viable alternative sites available for sampling. With the limited funding available, it is the opinion of FWC researchers that the available funding could better support management and conservation of the American eel by investing in other research and monitoring activities.

There are limited sampling locations for juvenile eels along Florida's Atlantic coast due to few locations having constriction points with high freshwater outflow. The Guana River Dam site in St. Johns County, FL, is the only long-term sampling location in Florida that was established for the glass eel survey. No other site investigated was found to be suitable for sampling glass eels. Based on previous reports, researchers surveyed potential locations in the St. Johns River basin as far south as Titusville, FL. Fyke nets and Australian rope pots were used at several different locations, but only eight total glass eels were collected over 43 nights of sampling.

In addition to the lack of suitable sampling locations in Florida, the low numbers of glass eel catches may also not adequately represent American eel recruitment into Florida waters. FWC sampled the Guana River Dam site from 2001 until 2021, which generally consisted of three to four sampling events using dip nets per week over a six-to-eight-week period each year. This sampling was later contracted to the University of North Florida (UNF) from 2013–2024. Although there was a year where glass eel catches were as high as 1,217 eels (21.3 eels/dip), glass eel catches have drastically declined in recent years for unknown reasons. At the current catch rate of less than 20 individuals per year, FWC is spending more than \$700 per glass eel caught. FWC funding was discontinued for the 2025 sampling season, but UNF has conducted some voluntary sampling at a reduced level and is requesting additional funds from other sources to continue its work for 2026. If funding becomes available, UNF has agreed to continue sampling using standard methods and share count data with FWC.

Eels have been collected in other locations, including by lift net at Rodman Reservoir (Putnam County, FL), eel ramp in Gulf coast drainages, and electrofishing

throughout fresh waters of the state. Just considering the standard electrofishing surveys, FWC has collected over 1,700 individuals, predominantly elver and yellow-stage eels, in 79 lakes, rivers, and canals since 2006. During all of these other surveys, only a single glass eel was collected in an eel ramp set. Thus, although glass eel data remain limited, there is ongoing monitoring in fresh waters across the state that can provide basic biological and distribution information for other life stages.

FWC continues to support research on the American eel that is important for the future management and conservation of the species. This research has yielded information on age and growth, parasite prevalence, and yellow eel movement, length, weight, and distribution. For example, a recent study (Bonvechio et al. 2024) led by FWC was the first age and growth study on an American eel population in Florida.

Due to the absence of suitable sampling sites, the low number of glass eels being collected, and limited funding, the state of Florida respectfully requests to be exempt from the glass eel survey requirement beginning in 2025. FWC will continue to use its limited funds to conduct research on Florida's American eel population that will provide information useful for managers. Erika Burgess (FWC), my ongoing proxy to ASMFC, can answer any questions on this matter and she can be reached at 850-570-6653 or erika.burgess@myfwc.com. We look forward to the American Eel Board's decision on this matter.