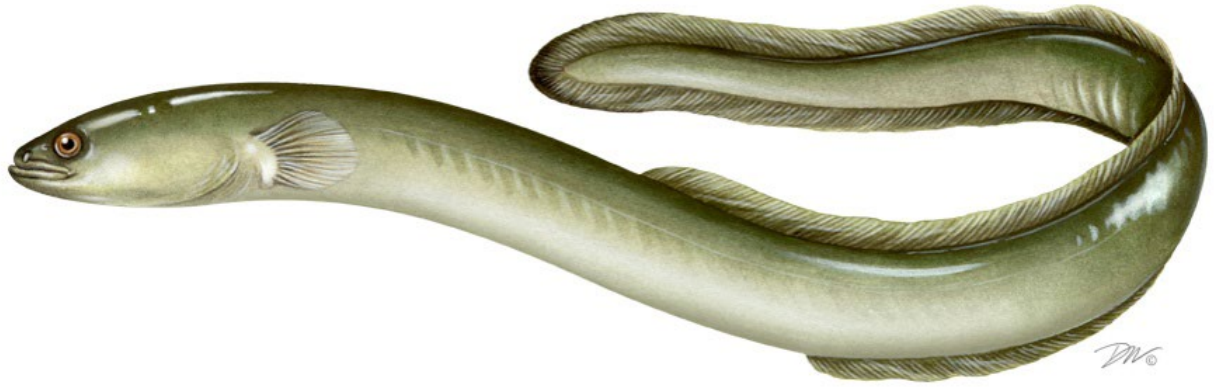
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

American Eel
FMP Review for the 2024 Fishing Year



October 28, 2025

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Presentation Outline

1. Status of the FMP
2. Status of the Stock
3. Status of the Fishery
4. Compliance Review
5. *De Minimis* requests
6. PRT Recommendations
7. Board action

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Status of the FMP

Management Measures (*all life stages*)

- Required YOY survey (2000)
- All states must maintain regulations (2000)
- Trip level catch and effort reporting by harvesters and dealers at least monthly (Addendum I)
- Sustainable fishery management plans:
  - Fishing Mortality Plan
  - Transfer Plan quota from yellow to glass
  - Aquaculture Plan: 200 pounds of glass eels if can demonstrate watershed contributes minimally to spawning stock
- Plans must scientifically demonstrate they will not increase overall fishing mortality
- No change in regulations

Status of the FMP

Glass Eel Fishery Requirements

- Max of 25 pigmented eels per pound of glass eels (2014)
- Maine glass eel quota of 9,688 lbs with payback (2015)
- Daily trip level reporting with daily electronic accounting for both harvesters dealers (2014/2015):
  - Maine has electronic monitoring program for daily reporting
  - Harvester to dealer
  - Dealer to dealer
  - Export from state
- Maine required to implement life cycle survey (2015)

Status of the FMP

Yellow Eel Fishery Regulations

- Minimum size of 9” (2014)
- ½” x ½” min mesh size for yellow eel pots
- Recreational 25 fish bag limit per day per angler
- Crew and captain allowed 50 fish bag limit per day
- Coastwide harvest cap of 916,473 lbs (2019)
- Management trigger of 10% overage for 2 years (2019)

- Addendum VII (May 2024)
  - Coastwide harvest cap of 518,281 pounds starting 2025

Status of the FMP

Silver Eel Fishery Regulations

- Seasonal closure from Sept 1 – Dec 31, no eel take except from baited pots/traps and spears (2015)
- Exemption for weir fishery in Delaware River and its tributaries in NY (2014)
  - Restricted to 9 permits that may be transferred (2015)
- No change in regulations

Status of the FMP

Aquaculture Plans:

- Maine submitted a continuation of Aquaculture Plan for 2025
  - Approved by the Board in August 2024
  - 200 lbs were harvested by American Unagi in 2024

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Status of the Stock

- Benchmark stock assessment peer reviewed in 2022 and accepted for management in 2023
- Stock status: depleted at or near historically low levels
  - combination of factors: historical overfishing, habitat loss, predation, turbine mortality, environmental changes, disease, etc.
- Yellow eel population declined since last assessment
- No overfished/overfishing determination
- Addendum VII (2024) responds to depleted status by reducing coastwide cap for yellow eel harvest

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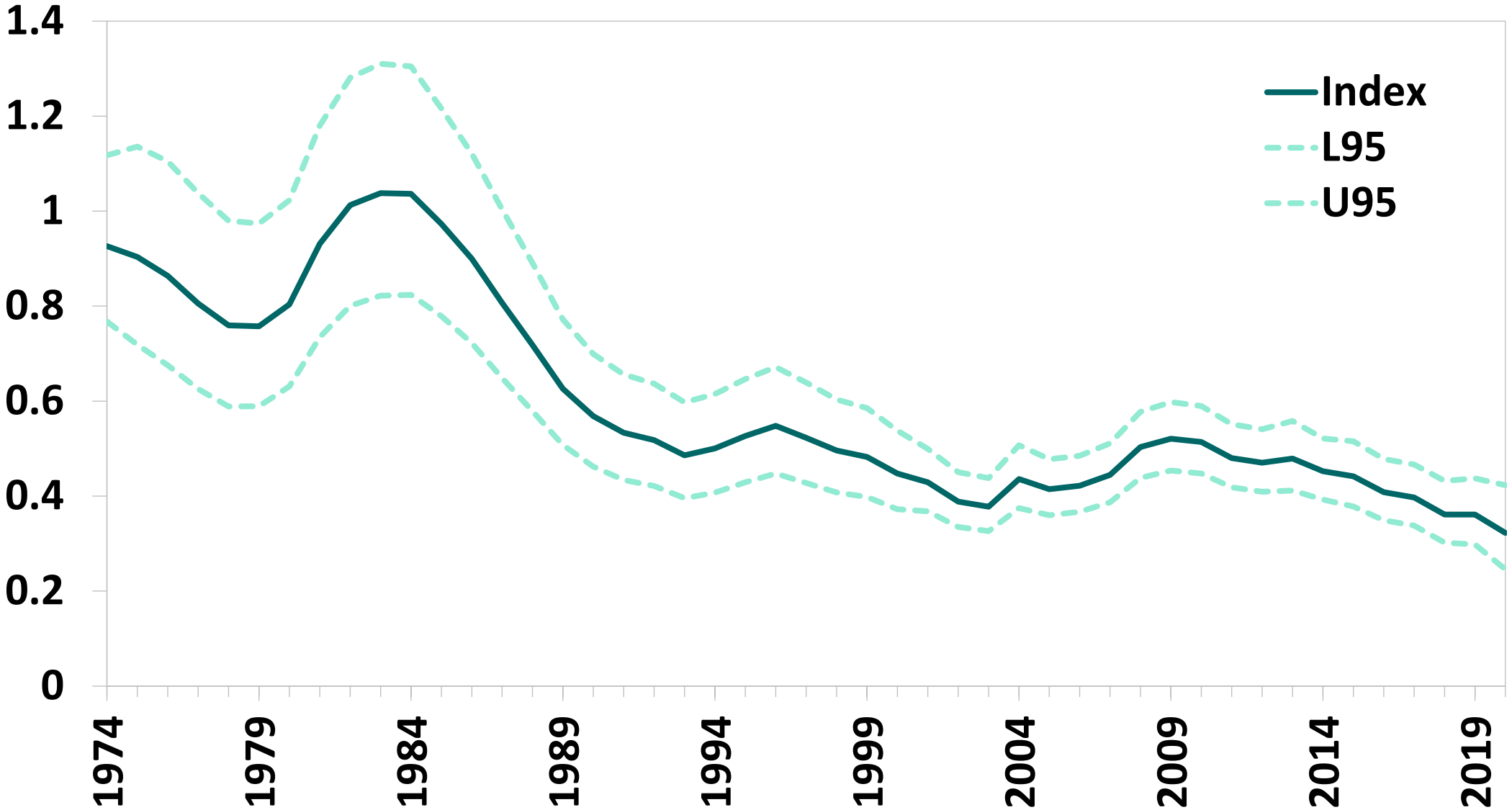
Yellow Eel Abundance Index



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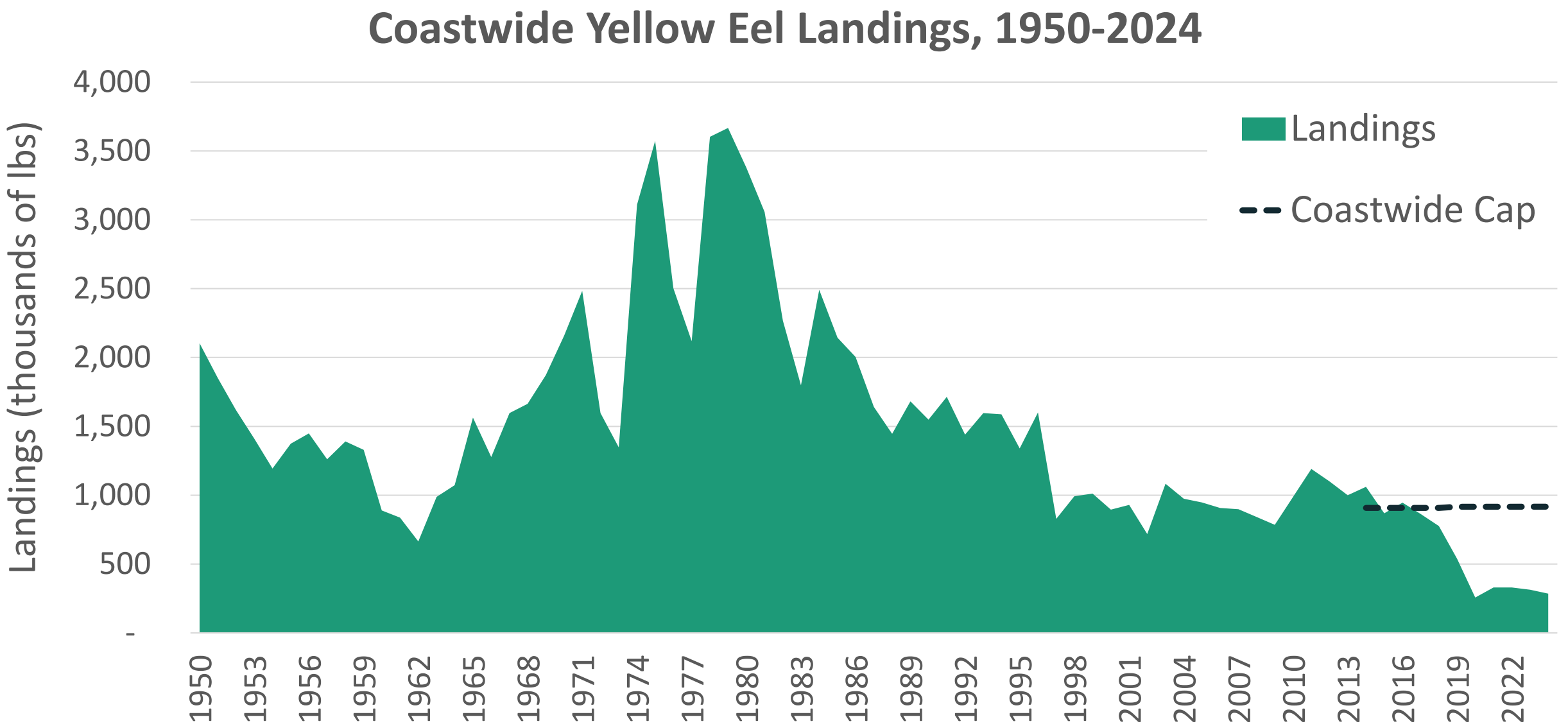
Status of the Fishery



Status of the Fishery

Commercial Landings

- State-reported landings of yellow/silver eels were ~284,625 lbs
  - 3.8% decrease from 2023
  - 32% of the coastwide cap
  - Maryland (70%), New Jersey (11%), and New York (6%) combined account for 87% of coastwide harvest

- Maine Glass Eels: 9,634 lbs in 2024
  - SC landings are confidential, < 750 pounds

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State Compliance

Glass Eel Fishery Regulations

- No noted issues on glass eel regulations from state compliance reports

Yellow Eel Fishery Regulations

- New York implemented minimum mesh regulations consistent with Addendum III

State Compliance

Silver Eel Fishery Regulations

- DE 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
  - DE will address this issue as part of any future changes to the eel regulations

- FL does not have a regulation preventing harvest of eels from pound nets from September 1 through December 31
  - FL is unaware of any active pound net fishery in the past 10-15 years

State Compliance

Reporting Requirements

- RI did not report CPUE for commercial harvest, harvest by life stage, or harvest by gear type, which are required under Addendum III.

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De Minimis Requests

- Standard: Most recent 3-year average landings of a life stage constitute less than 1% of the coastwide commercial landings for that life stage
- *De minimis* states are exempted from commercial and recreational fishery regulations for relevant life stage
- NH, MA, PA, DC, GA requested and qualify for *de minimis* status for yellow eel fisheries
- The PRT recommends the Board approve the *de minimis* requests

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PRT Recommendations

- Consider state compliance notes
- Reevaluate requirement to report catch disposition
  - % bait vs % food
- Work with USFWS to compare landings and export data

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Board Action for Consideration

- Consider approval of the American eel FMP Reviews for the 2024 fishing year, state compliance reports, and *de minimis* status for Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, District of Columbia, and Georgia for yellow eel.

Questions?

Florida Proposal to Discontinue Glass Eel Sampling

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

2025 Annual ASMFC Meeting

American Eel Sampling Requirement

ASMFC American Eel FMP

- Requires states conduct annual young-of-year (YOY) abundance surveys
- Addendum VII only removed length and pigment survey requirements

Florida is requesting that the board consider an exemption on the glass eel survey

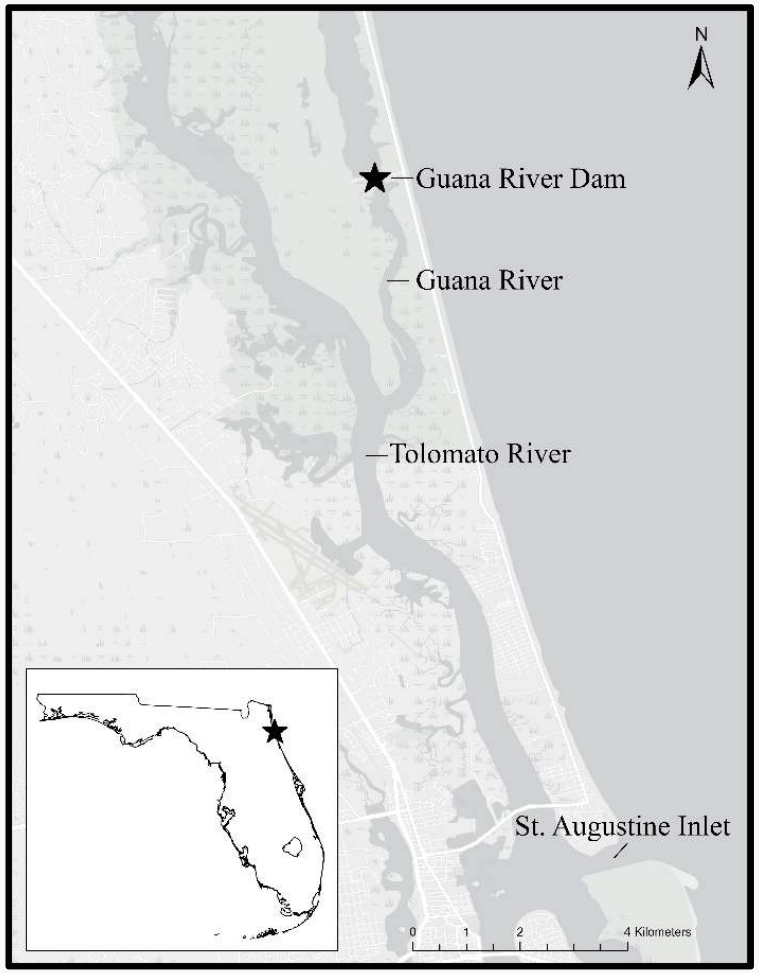
American Eel Surveys in Florida

Glass eel

- Limited eel YOY sampling locations
  - One long-term sampling site
  - Alternative sites deemed not suitable
- Passive gear does not effectively sample
- Limited locations and catch likely does not provide accurate recruitment estimates

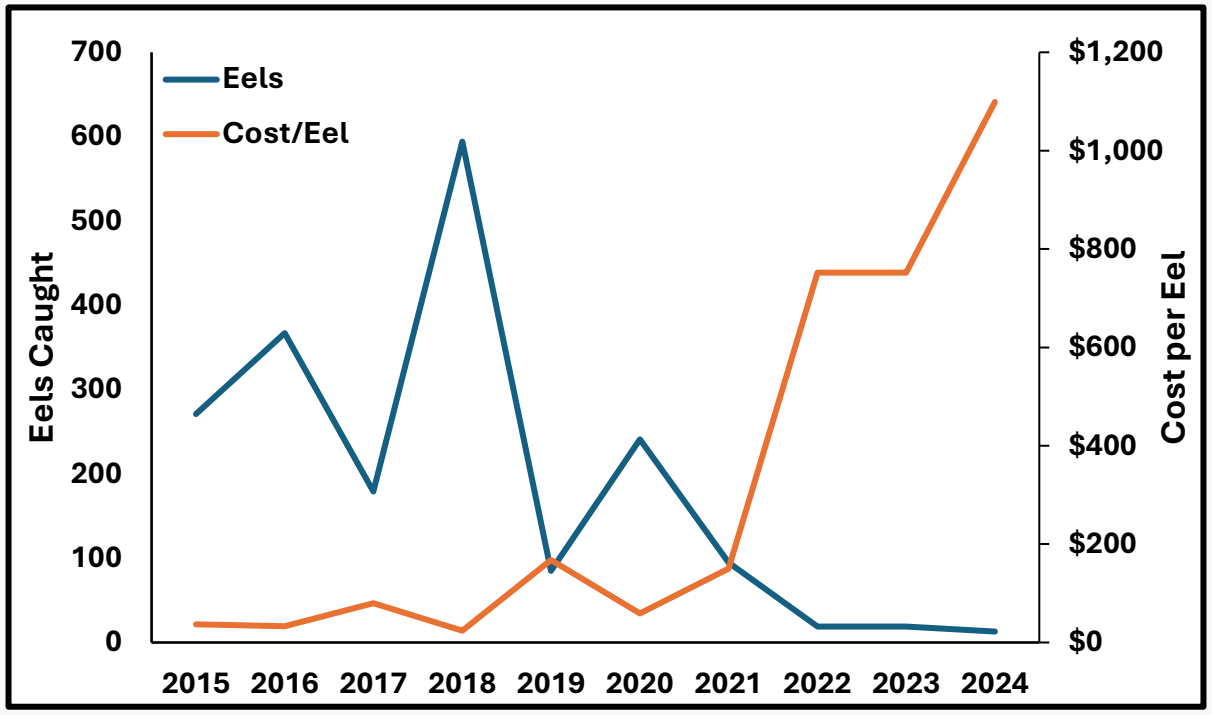
Other eel sampling

- FWC regularly monitors other eel life stages using several methods



Glass Eel Sampling Cost

- FWC contracts UNF to conduct annual sampling
  - Catches have declined to less than 20 individuals per year
  - Cost per glass eel collected equates to over $700
- FWC uses limited funding to support eel research on:
  - Age and growth
  - Parasite prevalence
  - Yellow eel movement



Florida's Request to the American Eel Board

Florida is requesting that the board consider an exemption on the glass eel survey requirement starting in 2025

- FWC will continue to survey other eel life stages in Florida waters
- Limited funds will be used to support American eel research
- UNF may conduct some voluntary glass eel sampling
    - Will request funds from other sources for 2026