

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

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

**August 5, 2025**

**Approved October 28, 2025**

TABLE OF CONTENT

Call to Order, Chair Kristopher Kuhn .....1

Approval of Agenda .....1

Approval of Proceedings from October 22, 2024 .....1

Public Comment .....1

Update on CITES Proposal to List American Eel under Appendix II.....1

Review and Consider Maine Aquaculture Plan for 2026 Fishing Year .....7

    Technical Committee Report .....8

Adjournment .....9

## INDEX OF MOTIONS

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).

## **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	

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

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

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

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.



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.

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.

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.

## 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.

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)