

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

American Eel Management Board

February 3, 2026
2:30 – 3:30 p.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>J. Hornstein</i>) | 2:30 p.m. |
| 2. Board Consent | 2:30 p.m. |
| • Approval of Agenda | |
| • Approval of Proceedings from October 2025 | |
| 3. Public Comment | 2:35 p.m. |
| 4. Update on Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species (<i>T. Kerns</i>) | 2:45 p.m. |
| 5. Technical Committee Report on Board Tasks (<i>K. Bonvechio</i>) | 2:55 p.m. |
| • Review of Aquaculture Plan Provisions | |
| • Review of Florida Young of Year Survey | |
| 6. Other Business/Adjourn | 3:30 p.m. |

The meeting will be held at The Westin Crystal City (1800 Richmond Highway, Arlington, VA; 703.486.1111) and via webinar; click [here](#) for details.

MEETING OVERVIEW

American Eel Management Board

February 3, 2026

2:30 – 3:30 p.m.

Chair: Jesse Hornstein (NY) Assumed Chairmanship: 10/25	Technical Committee Chair: Kim Bonvechio (FL)	Law Enforcement Committee Rep: Rob Beal (ME)
Vice Chair: VACANT	Advisory Panel Chair: Mitch Feigenbaum (PA)	Previous Board Meeting: October 28, 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 October 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. Update on Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species (2:45-3:00 p.m.)

Background

- The twentieth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP20) of the Convention in International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) convened November 23 to December 5 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.
- At the CoP, the Parties adopted a [Resolution On Trade, Conservation And Management Of Anguillid Eel Species](#) and rejected a proposal to include the genus *Anguilla* in Appendix II.

Presentations

- Update on CITES by T. Kerns

5. Technical Committee Report on Board Tasks (3:00-3:30 p.m.)

Background

- The Board tasked the Technical Committee (TC) with reviewing the criteria in Addendum V related to site selection for aquaculture harvest under a Board approved plan for glass eel aquaculture to determine if changes to the language or interpretation of these criteria should be considered.
- Florida submitted a proposal to discontinue the young-of-year (YOY) sampling survey. In October, the Board tasked the TC with evaluating the utility of continuing the Florida glass eel survey and its contribution to the Commission's management and assessment.

- The TC met several times to discuss these tasks and develop recommendations to the Board (**Briefing Materials**).

Presentations

- Technical Committee Report by K. Bonvechio

6. Other Business/Adjourn (3:30 p.m.)

American Eel

Activity level: Medium

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

Committee Task List

- TC – Board Task: Evaluate Florida Young-of-Year survey utility for assessment and management
- TC – July 2026 review of Maine's aquaculture proposal
- SAS – Summer 2026: Begin work for 2027 Stock Assessment Update
- 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**

**Hyatt Place Dewey Beach
Dewey Beach, Delaware
Hybrid Meeting**

October 28, 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.

TABLE OF CONTENT

Call to Order by Chair Kris Kuhn	1
Approval of Agenda	1
Approval of Proceedings from August 5, 2025.....	1
Public Comment	1
Consider Approval of Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance for 2024 Fishing Year	1
Consider Florida Proposal to Discontinue Young-of-Year Sampling	3
Other Business.....	6
CITES Update.....	6
Adjournment	7

INDEX OF MOTIONS

1. **Approval of agenda** by consent (Page 1).
2. **Approval of Proceedings of August 5, 2025** by consent (Page 1).
3. **Move to approve American Eel FMP Review 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** (Page 3). Motion by Heather Corbett; second by Steve Train. Motion approved by unanimous consent (Page 3).
4. **Move to direct the American Eel Technical Committee to evaluate the utility of continuing the Florida glass eel survey and its contribution to the Commission's management and assessment of the American eel stock, and report back to the Commission at the next American Eel Management Board meeting so the Board can consider exempting Florida from the glass eel survey compliance requirement** (Page 4). Motion by Erika Burgess; second by Doug Haymans. Motion approved by unanimous consent (Page 6).
5. **Move to adjourn** by consent (Page 7).

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ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Megan Ware, ME, proxy for Carl Wilson (AA)	John Clark, DE (AA)
Steve Train, ME (GA)	Roy Miller, DE (GA)
Renee Zobel, NH (AA)	Craig Pugh, DE, proxy for Rep. Carson (LA)
Doug Grout, NH (GA)	Carrie Kennedy, MD, proxy for L. Fegley (AA)
Dennis Abbott, NH, proxy for Sen. Watters (LA)	Russel Dize, MD (GA)
Dan McKiernan, MA (AA)	Joe Grist, VA, proxy for J. Green (AA)
Raymon Kane, MA (GA)	James Minor, VA (GA)
Sarah Peake, MA, proxy for Rep. Armini (LA)	Chris Batsavage, NC, proxy for K. Rawls (AA)
Phil Edwards, RI, proxy for J. McNamee (AA)	Brian Turner, NC, proxy for J. Mannen (GA)
David Borden, RI (GA)	Ben Dyar, SC, proxy for B. Keppler (AA)
Eric Reid, RI, proxy for Sen. Sosnowski (LA)	Malcolm Rhodes, SC (GA)
Matt Gates, CT (AA)	Mel Bell, SC, proxy for Sen. Cromer (LA)
Robert LaFrance, CT, proxy for B. Hyatt (GA)	Doug Haymans, GA (AA)
Jesse Hornstein, NY, proxy for M. Gary (AA)	Spud Woodward, GA (GA)
Emerson Hasbrouck, NY (GA)	Rep. Trey Rhodes, GA (LA)
Heather Corbett, NJ, proxy for J. Cimino (AA)	Erika Burgess, FL, proxy for J. McCawley (AA)
Jeff Kaelin, NJ (GA)	Gary Jennings, FL (GA)
Adam Nowalsky, NJ, proxy for Sen. Gopal (LA)	Rick Jacobsen, US FWS

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

Ex-Officio Members

Mitch Feigenbaum, Advisory Panel Chair

Rob Beal, Law Enforcement Committee Rep.

Staff

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

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The American Eel Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Ballroom East/West via hybrid meeting, in-person and webinar; Tuesday, October 28, 2025, and was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chair Kris Kuhn.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR KRISTOPHER M. KUHN: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission American Eel Board. I'm calling this meeting to order. I'm Kris Kuhn the Administrative Proxy for Pennsylvania and current Chair of the American Eel Management Board. This will be my last meeting as Chair, and our Vice-Chair, Jesse Hornstein from New York will be taking over at the next Board meeting.

The Technical Committee Chair remains vacant. Our Advisory Panel Chair is Mitch Feigenbaum from Pennsylvania, and our Law Enforcement Committee representative here to my left is Rob Beal from Maine. I'm joined at the front table by Caitlin Starks of the Commission, and we have a half an hour to consider two agenda items, as well as hear public comments, and consider any new business if there is any. Let's go ahead and get started, but before we do we have a message from Toni.

MS. TONI KERNS: I just want to let the Board know that Rick is online for Fish and Wildlife Service.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CHAIR KUHN: All right, thanks for that, Toni. To begin this morning's meeting is first the consent item, approval of the agenda. Are there any proposed modifications to the agenda? All right, seeing none do we have any hands online? The agenda is approved by consent.

APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

CHAIR KUHN: The next consent item is approval of the proceedings from the August 2025 American Eel Management Board. Are there any edits to the proceedings from the August Board meeting? Not seeing any here in the room, any hands online? Not seeing any; the August 2025 proceedings are approved by consent.

PUBLIC COMMENT

CHAIR KUHN: Moving on to public comments. Are there any members of the public either here or online that would like to make comments pertaining to items that are not on today's agenda? All right, not seeing any and there are no hands online, so we'll go ahead and jump right in. Moving to Item Number 4 on the agenda, which is to Consider Approval of the Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance for the 2024 Fishing Year. Caitlin Starks is going to lead us off with a presentation. Caitlin, we're ready for your presentation.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW AND STATE COMPLIANCE FOR 2024 FISHING YEAR

MS. STARKS: I'll go over the American eel FMP Review for the 2024 fishing year. I'll start with the status of the FMP then the status of the stock, status of the fishery, compliance review and the Plan Review Team's recommendation, as well as de minimis requests. To start, these are the FMP and addenda provisions that apply to all states with eel fisheries.

All states are required to implement a young of year survey and maintain regulations as strict or stricter than what was in place before the FMP was implemented. The FMP and addenda also require trip level CPUE data reporting, allow for developing a sustainable fishery management plan in order to deviate from the fishery management plan requirements, and also provide an aquaculture allowance of 200 pounds of glass eel per state with Board approval.

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For any alternative fishery management plan the state must scientifically demonstrate it will not increase the overall fishing mortality. For glass eel fisheries the FMP includes the maximum tolerance of 25 pigmented eel per pound of glass eel harvest. It establishes Maine's glass eel quota, which has been 90,688 pounds since 2015, and it requires daily trip level reporting.

Maine does this through their electronic monitoring program, which allows them to track landings from harvester to dealers and export. Maine is also required to collect data from the life cycle survey for all life stages. Then Addendum VI was approved in May, and this maintains the Maine glass eel quota, but there have been no other changes to the FMP requirements for glass eels.

For yellow eel the FMP requires a minimum size of 9 inches and a 1/2 inch by 1/2-inch minimum mesh size on eel pots. Addendum III required a recreational bag limit of 25 eels per day with an allowance of 50 fish per day for for-hire captains and crew. Addendum IV established the coastwide commercial harvest cap for yellow eel, which was updated by Addendum V and also established the 10% overage per year per management.

I just want to note here that the commercial harvest cap will decrease to 518,821 pounds starting in 2025 under Addendum VII. For silver eels the FMP established a closure from September 1st through December 31st, during which no eel take is allowed except for from baited traps or pots and spears. The Delaware River was granted an exemption from this requirement, but it is restricted to only 9 permits.

There have been no other changes recently to these requirements. Maine is currently the only state with an aquaculture plan and the first year of that was 2019 and in 2024 200 pounds were harvested for aquaculture in Maine, and Maine has submitted proposals for 2025 and 2026,

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which were approved for 200 pounds of glass eel, and they continue to allocate that to American Unagi.

Stock status for eel is based on the benchmark stock assessment, that was peer reviewed in 2022 and accepted for management in 2023, and the assessment concluded the stock remains depleted or at or near historically low levels due to a range of factors. It also noted that the yellow eel abundance has continued to decline since the last stock assessment, and it does not provide an overfishing or overfished status for eel. The board responded to the assessment results through Addendum VII, which lowered that coastwide cap for yellow eel. This graph shows the abundance index from the benchmark assessment for yellow eel would be upper and lower 95% confidence intervals. These are the annual landings estimates dating back to 1950 for eel. The coastwide cap is shown by the dashed blue lines starting in 2013 when it was established through 2024, and next year we will see that decrease in the cap from Addendum VII.

Commercial landings in the FMP Review are from state compliance reports and so they are still considered preliminary, but for 2024 the coastwide yellow eel landings were about 284,000 pounds, which is a 3.8% decrease from 2023 and that is 31% of the current coastwide harvest cap. Landings from Maryland make up 70% of that harvest and the next highest harvest come from New Jersey, with 11% in New York with 6% together accounting for 87% of the coastwide total.

For glass eel Maine harvested 9,634 pounds of glass eels in 2024 and South Carolina also has a glass eel fishery, but their harvest is confidential. The PRT reviewed the state compliance reports and they found no issues with implementation of the glass eel requirements. Regarding yellow eel provisions, the PRT noted that New York has now implemented regulations for a minimum mesh size that are consistent with the requirements of Addendum III, resolving the issue that was raised last year.

For silver eel the PRT continued to note two minor issues that have been addressed in previous years

reports, which are that Delaware and Florida have not implemented regulations preventing the harvest of eels from pound nets from September 1st through December 31st, but neither state is aware of any active pound net fishery.

Then the PRT noted one issue with regard to reporting, which is that in the compliance report this year Rhode Island did not provide the CPUE for commercial harvest, harvest by life stage or harvest by gear type, which are required under Addendum III. Then as of Addendum VII, to qualify for de minimis status for eel, a states average landing for the preceding three years must be under 1% for a particular life stage.

The de minimis requests this year are from New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, D.C., and Georgia, and they all qualify for de minimis status for yellow eel. The PRT recommends the Board approve these de minimis requests. Then additional recommendations from the PRT are that the Board should reevaluate the requirements that the states provide estimates on the percent of harvest that goes to food versus bait, as noted in previous years, just given this information is not currently used.

The PRT continues to recommend the Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service work together to annually compare the domestic landings data to export data for American eel across all life stages. That wraps up the FMP Review, so the Board action for consideration is to approve the FMP Review for the 2024 fishing year for eel, state compliance reports and de minimis status requests. I can take any questions.

CHAIR KUHN: Are there any questions for Caitlin? Any hands online? Assuming there is no Board discussion, if there is any let's entertain it now. All right; do we have anyone prepared to make a motion? Heather Corbett. Second Steve Train.

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MS. HEATHER CORBETT: Move to approve American Eel FMP Review 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.

CHAIR KUHN: Okay, apparently, I'm really trying to stick to our 30 minutes and go right past reading the motion into the record, so now I'll take a second. Steve Train. Steve, any comments? No, alright, let's go ahead and try and do this easy way. **Is there any opposition to the motion? All right, seeing none; the motion passes by consent.**

CONSIDER FLORIDA PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE YOUNG-OF-YEAR SAMPLING

CHAIR KUHN: Moving on to Item Number 5, which is to Consider Florida's Proposal to Discontinue American eel Young-of-Year Sampling and for that I will turn it over to Erika Burgess, who is going to provide us with an overview of the proposal. Erika, the floor is yours.

MS. ERIKA BURGESS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I will be brief, as brief as I can for the sake of the time of the meeting, and I'm happy to elaborate on anything if there are questions. As Caitlin just reviewed, the FMP requires states to conduct annual young of year sampling, and there was a change to that requirement in Addendum VII, but that was only to remove length and pigment survey requirements.

Florida is requesting that the Board consider an exemption to our state for the glass eel survey and I'll present why. We have limited eel young of year sampling locations in our state, based on the nature of our coastline and lack of restriction areas or checkpoints for eels. In the last two decades we've identified only one location in our entire state where we could possibly get glass eels, that is up at Guana River Dam, which was put in place for a waterfowl impoundment just north of Saint Augustine, Florida.

All of the locations in our state the eels have grown past the glass eel stage by the time they reach that. We've determined that passive gear does not effectively sample glass eels and we have instead looked into and are funding and doing other eel sampling for other life stages doing various methods.

When FWC chose to stop doing the glass eel surveys directly, we contracted the University of North Florida to do the annual sampling. In that time period catches have declined to less than 20 individuals per year. That brings the cost for each individual sample to over \$700.00. We have as an agency decided not to renew that contract with the University of North Florida and reallocated those funds to other American eel research in our state to collect information on age and growth, parasites and yellow eel movement.

We are requesting that the Board consider an exemption, but not straight out today. I'll offer a motion instead to ask the TC to evaluate Florida's request and to provide the Board their determination on the utility of Florida's glass eel survey before the Board makes a final decision on that. We will in the meantime continue to survey other eel life stages in Florida, using those funds to support eel research.

The University of North Florida has let us know that they would like to voluntarily continue some sampling, but it's not guaranteed and it won't happen at the levels it happened previously. They will be seeking funds elsewhere to do that research at the University. That wraps me up, so I'll pause for questions.

CHAIR KUHN: Any questions for Erika? John Clark.

MR. JOHN CLARK: Thank you for the presentation, Erika. Just curious, when you say Florida is a huge state and I'm just wondering how that could be the only spot to sample glass eels, when we've seen in recent years there has

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been a huge amount of glass eel smuggling coming out of the Dominican Republic, other spots in the Caribbean. Is it something where you can say that Florida has looked for other spots and just not found any place that it's just a matter of access?

MS. BURGESS: Kim Bonvechio has been the lead on our eel research with the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute. She served on the Technical Committee for 20 years. She has thoroughly investigated the entire state looking for points, and because we don't have much barriers to fish passage there is not a good single-point site to collect glass eels.

MR. JOHN CLARK: If I can just follow up for a second. I'm just curious, because as I said, it's a big area. Have you seen, has it got anything to do with the currents there? I'm just wondering how they could get so many of them in the Caribbean and yet they are not going into Florida at that point.

MS. BURGESS: I'm not an expert on the Caribbean, so I can't answer that, John.

CHAIR KUHN: All right, any more questions for Erika? Any discussion on her presentation? I think I heard, Erika, you're ready to make a motion. Could you read that into the record?

MS. BURGESS: Yes, I would like to **move to direct the American Eel Technical Committee to evaluate the utility of continuing the Florida glass eel survey and its contribution to the Commission's management and assessment of the American eel stock, and report back to the Commission at the next American Eel Management Board meeting so that the Board can consider exempting Florida from the glass eel survey compliance requirement.**

CHAIR KUHN: Second by Doug Haymans. Doug, would you like to provide any further rationale?

MR. DOUG HAYMANS: No, I just am supporting Florida's motion, having lived there for a number of years. I understand their issue and am willing to support it.

CHAIR KUHN: All right, is there any discussion on the motion? John Clark.

MR. CLARK: I certainly understand Florida's situation there. I was on the Technical Committee years ago with Kim, and I know the effort she put into find glass eels there. As we know going back to when this requirement went into the FMP back in, what was it 2000, 1999, many states have wanted to get exempted from the glass eel samplings. Before we go down this route, if we are to approve a motion like this, I would like to add to it, or I think we should add to it as a Board some requirement that Florida, you know as Erika said, Florida has said they will continue these other yellow eel sampling programs. But I think it needs to be actually put into writing that that is part of their requirement is to continue the other. I'm just curious as to whether Florida would accept the motion to be amended to require some of the other sampling, they said they would do.

CHAIR KUHN: Caitlin, you have a question?

MS. STARKS: I guess I just want to clarify Mr. Clark's intention here. Would your preference be to amend this motion or to have the Technical Committee report back on this, and then if the Board considers exempting Florida, based on that Technical Committee guidance, make sure in that motion it would include a requirement to continue alternative sampling.

MR. CLARK: Right, I'm sorry, yes, I'm getting ahead of myself here, because this is simply to have the TC look at that. I would say that at that point, just to put it on the record that I would just like to see if the Board would, maybe we don't need a motion to do so, but just that the Board acknowledge that Florida will be required to do some eel sampling if the TC says the glass eel sampling can be discontinued.

CHAIR KUHN: Saw another hand, Matt Gates.

MR. MATTHEW GATES: Erika, thanks for that presentation. I'll support the motion on the board. I think is the right way to proceed with a request to discontinue monitoring is to have the scientific community evaluate it. Thanks, nice job.

CHAIR KUHN: Is there any other further discussion on the motion? All right; at this time, I will go to the public to see if there are any comments on the motion.

MR. MITCH FEIGENBAUM: My hand is up, Mitch Feigenbaum.

CHAIR KUHN: Yes, Mitch, your hand is up.

MR. FEIGENBAUM: Yes, thanks Erika for the presentation and my complements also to Kim Bonvechio, who I know has been working hard for two decades on eel science in Florida. I know the motion wouldn't have been made or this request wouldn't be made unless she really was unable to find suitable locations.

My main comment is that I would appreciate if the Technical Committee could communicate with the Advisory Panel for input before making any final recommendations to the Board. The AP had serious discussion about the issue about the continuance of YOY surveys when at the last addendum I believe there was even a recommendation by the TC to scale back or eliminate the YOY surveys altogether, and the AP had strong feelings about that.

But we do understand that if you can't find the glass eels it's pretty hard to do a survey. I did want to very quickly comment. It's my understanding that some state young of year surveys are not geared towards glass eels, or at least in the past some of the YOY surveys were actually targeting Year 1 pigmented fingerlings. I do wonder if that would be a possibility for Florida to think about. Finally, I just want to remind the Commissioners that years ago Wilson Laney of the Fish and Wildlife Service, when eel stock concerns were really a hot issue at ASMFC. He and others worked together to make proposals suggesting that rather than having statewide YOY surveys going forward that the Board consider the

possibility of creating really just two, three or four, small handful of coastwide surveys, you know representative of different regions.

I think that we would be well served to have three or four young of year surveys that are really robust bringing in big numbers or able to catch good numbers per year, rather than a greater number of surveys that may be of lesser quality. These are topics we would be happy to talk; I know the AP would like to share its thoughts with the AP and we will appreciate that opportunity.

CHAIR KUHN: Okay, thank you, Mitch. Mitch indicated that he would like the AP to be involved in the review of this proposal. If that is to occur, the Board would need to direct the AP to do so. Do we need a motion on that? Is there anybody in opposition? We don't need a motion on it, but is there any opposition to having the AP weigh in on this proposal?

Seeing none; so, we can move to, I believe a decision point on this proposal. **Are there any oppositions to the proposal? All right, the motion passes by consent.** That wraps up our business on the agenda.

OTHER BUSINESS

CHAIR KUHN: Is there any other business to come before the American Eel Board today? John Clark.

MR. CLARK: It's not really other business, I was just wondering if we can get an update on what's going on with the CITES process.

CHAIR KUHN: Yes, Caitlin.

CITES UPDATE

MS. STARKS: Nothing new has happened since our last meeting. The CITES meeting is still scheduled for November/December of this year, at which point they will consider whether to list American eel under CITES Appendix II or really any appendix at this point. We do not

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have an indication from the U.S. on its vote on that, so I can't really provide any additional updates until later on. There was a comment period, if this is part of your interest, on whether or not.

MR. CLARK: If I could just interrupt for a second, Caitlin. That is the part I was curious about. Who votes? How many nations vote on the CITES proposal? Is this going to be a big operation?

MS. STARKS: All of the parties to CITES, but I do not know how many exactly there are. There are only two countries that are not parties to CITES is what Toni is saying, so a lot. I guess I will add that the proposal that was put forward by the EU did include a delay in when the listing would go into effect, so it wouldn't be immediate, it would be, I believe 18 months I think, was the delay that they had in their proposal. If they did approve the EU proposal as is, it wouldn't be until 2027 that it would go into place.

CHAIR KUHN: I'm going to go online to Mitch Feigenbaum.

MR. FEIGENBAUM: Yes, I see the time, I'll be really quick. I just wanted to share on this topic. Caitlin is being a little bit modest. Since the last ASMFC meeting the Fish and Wildlife Service actually had a public session to take comment on the CITES proposal. As good fortune would have it, Caitlin was the first person in D.C. to put her name on the list to speak that day, and I was second.

Although the input session was geared to multiple species of flora and fauna that are being proposed for CITES listing, in fact the first 10 or 15 minutes of public comment from Caitlin and I were devoted singularly to the question of eel populations, and we definitely had the attention of the new Fish and Wildlife Service Director, as well as his two chiefs that were accompanying him at that meeting.

I definitely feel that Caitlin did a great job conveying the views of the Commission, and I was glad to be there to hear that and to offer some views myself. We really, I feel did a great job educating the Service in a short period of time about the importance of this issue. Well done, Caitlin.

CHAIR KUHN: Thanks for that update, Mitch, and appreciate Caitlin and Mitch's participation in the comment period. Back to John Clark, one more comment.

MR. CLARK: If I could just make another real brief question. I just wondered if Maine could give us an update on the American Unagi bankruptcy and how that will affect the aquaculture plan going forward.

MS. MEGAN WARE: I don't have any information to share, John. I probably know just as much as you do from the news, sorry.

ADJOURNMENT

CHAIR KUHN: All right, so I think that wraps up the business to the American Eel Management Board here this morning. Do we have a motion to adjourn? Doug Grout. Second, Ray Kane. Okay, We're not quite adjourned yet. I was just made aware that we have a hand online that may speak to John Clark's question. Sara Rademaker.

MS. SARA RADEMAKER: Sara Rademaker with American Unagi. Just an update, as far as American Unagi. We're proceeding with a sale of the company and the business is continuing operations. I expect under new ownership that applications under the company will continue for the aquaculture quota.

CHAIR KUHN: All right, thank you, Sara. We had a motion to adjourn and a second, so this meeting is now adjourned.

(Whereupon the meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, October 28, 2025)

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Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

TO: American Eel Management Board
FROM: American Eel Technical Committee
DATE: January 19, 2026
SUBJECT: Technical Committee Guidance on Interpretation of Addendum V Aquaculture Site Selection Criteria

Background

The American Eel Fishery Management Plan (FMP) allows for states and jurisdictions to develop Plans to allow glass eel collection for aquaculture purposes. Under an approved Aquaculture Plan, states and jurisdictions may harvest a maximum of 200 pounds of glass eels annually from within their waters for use in domestic aquaculture facilities. Addendum V added the following language to the aquaculture plan provisions related to the selection of sites for aquaculture harvest:

“Site selection for harvest will be an important consideration for applicants and reviewers. Suitable harvest locations will be evaluated with a preference to locations that have:

1. Established or proposed glass eel monitoring;
2. Are favorable to law enforcement; and
3. Watershed characteristics that are prone to relatively high mortality rates.

Watersheds known to have features (ex. impassible dams, limited area of upstream habitat, limited water quality of upstream habitat, and hydropower mortality) that would be expected to cause lower eel productivity and/or higher glass eel mortality will be preferred targets for glass eel harvest. This is not an exclusive requirement, because there will be coastal regions with interest in eel aquaculture where preferred watershed features do not occur or are not easily demonstrated. In all cases, the applicant should demonstrate the above three interests were prioritized and considered.”

The Board tasked the American Eel Technical Committee (TC) with reviewing the criteria in Addendum V to determine if changes to the language or interpretation of these criteria should be considered.

Recommendations

The TC does not recommend any changes to the FMP provisions for Aquaculture Plans. However, the TC provided the following guidance for interpreting the site selection criteria when evaluating proposed plans and making recommendations for Board approval.

1. With regard to Criterion 1, the TC notes that the consideration of glass eel monitoring efforts in site selection may vary depending on whether a site proposed for aquaculture harvest also has commercial glass eel harvest. In sites where glass eel commercial harvest is already occurring, there could be concerns about that harvest impacting monitoring efforts. Thus, aquaculture site selection should also take the location of monitoring efforts into account, and vice versa. In some cases, it may be preferable for glass eel monitoring to occur at an alternative location.
2. Regarding Criterion 3, Addendum V states, “watersheds known to have features (ex. impassible dams, limited area of upstream habitat, limited water quality of upstream habitat, and hydropower mortality) that would be expected to cause lower eel productivity and/or higher glass eel mortality will be preferred targets for glass eel harvest.” The TC added that watershed characteristics that are prone to relatively high mortality or that otherwise make the watershed unlikely to produce large numbers of adult eels could also include steep gradients, multiple dams, or a small drainage area.
3. Overall, aquaculture proposals should include clear descriptions of how each of the Addendum V criteria were considered and prioritized in selecting harvest sites.
4. The intent of the Addendum V language was not that all three criteria must be met for the TC to recommend approval of a proposed Aquaculture Plan, but the information provided in the Plan with regard to these criteria will be considered and used to inform TC recommendations.



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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American Eel Technical Committee Meeting

December 15th, 2025

1:00 pm – 3:00 p.m.

Technical Committee Attendance: Kim Bonvechio (FL), Ingrid Braun-Ricks (PRFC), Brad Chase (MA), Casey Clark (ME), Caitlin Craig (NY), Sheila Eyler (USFWS), Corinne Flora (NY), Shakira Goff (VA), Matt Lee (NH), Todd Mathes (NC), Pat McGee (RI), Kevin Molongoski (USGS), Jim Page (GA), Alexis Park (MD), Eddy Perri (USFWS), Mike Porta (PA), Jen Pyle (NJ), Troy Tuckey (VIMS), Ellen Waldrop (SC), Tim Wildman (CT), Chris Wright (NOAA), Jordan Zimmerman (DE)

Commissioners in Attendance: Erika Burgess (FL), Jesse Hornstein (NY, Board chair)

AP Member Attendance: Mitch Feigenbaum (AP Chair)

Staff: Caitlin Starks (FMP Coordinator), Samara Nehemiah (stock assessment scientist)

Discussion of Aquaculture Plan Criteria

The Board tasked the Technical Committee (TC) with reviewing the criteria for selecting aquaculture harvest sites in Addendum V. In reviewing the Maine aquaculture plan in July 2025, the TC felt some of these criteria were not met and that some of the language should be reviewed. C. Clark of ME suggested that some of the language of the criteria as written may not apply to Maine because there is already a commercial glass eel fishery in place. ME noted that as a state they would still want to see recommendations kept coastwide but made some suggestions on the criteria.

C. Starks noted that there are two options for addressing any concerns with the current Addendum V language: 1) modify the language in the addendum, which would require a new addendum, would be a longer process, and may not be necessary at this stage; or 2) develop a TC memo that outlines how the TC recommends these criteria be evaluated in various scenarios. There was large support for a memo instead of an addendum process, and the TC agreed to draft a memo that clarifies the interpretation of the criteria in the addendum for the Board to consider at its February meeting.

Criterion 1

ME recommended that criterion 1 (establish glass eel monitoring) be removed entirely for all proposals for consistency. The TC discussed this suggestion and S. Eyler and B. Chase expressed opposition to removing criterion 1. S. Eyler noted that this was an important criterion for evaluating NC's aquaculture harvest and that it provides an opportunity to collect more information in scenarios where there is not a lot of information already. She suggested allowing for caveats but not to remove this criterion entirely. B. Chase noted that the language of

'preference' in Addendum V was intended to allow for exemptions and highlighted the need for monitoring if states want to establish new harvest.

S. Eyler suggested that the criterion could note that glass eel monitoring should occur in the jurisdiction covered by an aquaculture plan. So, if the state is already doing monitoring, then nothing additional needs to be done.

There was also some discussion on what indices could be used for monitoring. M. Lee asked if harvest in a system could be used in lieu of monitoring program to understand effects of aquaculture. C. Clark thinks it could potentially be done but would require some further thought and discussion. In the case of ME, most harvest for aquaculture is taken after the commercial harvest, so there may not be a direct relation.

Criterion 2

ME recommended criterion 2 remain as is. This was generally supported and the TC did not have much discussion on this criterion.

Criterion 3

ME suggested the following language for criterion 3: "Watershed characteristics that are prone to relatively high mortality or that otherwise make the watershed unlikely to produce large numbers of adult eels. Characteristics could include steep gradient, multiple dams, or small drainage area." This language suggests that high mortality of glass eels would lead to fewer adult eels.

It was also noted that they see a lot of mortality through cannibalism in ME. B. Chase agreed with the suggestions for criterion 3 put forth by C. Clark. He also noted that it could be worthwhile to include language to suggest that one or two of these criteria can be relaxed if a plan can demonstrate that harvest won't have future impacts on stock recruitment.

T. Mathes provided an example for NC's previous proposal, which was initially held to strict criteria. In their proposal, they provided information on water quality and distance of water bodies, among other variables. T. Tuckey suggested that future proposals be clear on why there are high mortality rates in that system.

Other discussion

TC members also discussed the utility of YOY monitoring across states including the management decisions that are made due to the YOY samples. J. Zimmerman asked whether there is any information or support that can be put in the memo that help the Board and the TC understand how monitoring helps drive management decisions. C. Clark suggested that fishery-independent monitoring helps ME understand the bigger picture regarding eel population more than harvest information. He suggested it helps inform seasonal changes (e.g., temperature) and how that may affect glass eels at specific locations, and helps understand harvest impacts through comparisons of locations with and without harvest. Overall, C. Clark noted ME's monitoring program is representative of the entire state dynamics, but that these programs could be site-specific depending on the conditions of the system they operate in.

B. Chase noted that MA's YOY surveys are fit into sampling for other surveys so that there is no additional cost. He thought their survey did have value as a signal of recruitment failure and has become an index of abundance in stock assessment. T. Tuckey also noted that in many of the years throughout most surveys' time series, programs have been monitoring eels under very low abundance regime. Therefore, we do not have information about what recruitment looks like when abundance is high and this should be kept in mind for long-term monitoring. Additionally, the stock assessment shows that recruitment is highly variable along the coast and there is value to having numerous sites along the coast to be able to understand coast wide trends.

Some members expressed interest in developing clarification on the monitoring requirements going forward. Additionally, M. Feigenbaum noted that if the TC should have conversations about the viability of the YOY surveys, the AP would like to participate in those conversations.

Consider Florida Proposal to Discontinue Young-of-year Sampling

K. Bonvechio gave a presentation on FL's proposal to discontinue the YOY sampling. FL has only one sampling site in NE FL (Guana River) that is free flowing at high tide, and she noted they only collect glass eel with active gears (e.g., dip netting every 30 min) rather than passive gears. FL had some concerns with the utility of this sampling program as they typically catch much fewer eels than other states (<20 eels a year). Therefore, it was suggested that their catch rates may not provide an accurate estimate of recruitment. Due to the high costs per eel, FL has prioritized funding sampling efforts for other eel life stages that could potentially be more useful for management. They noted that the University of North Florida (UNF), who conducts the survey, did secure outside funds for the 2026 sampling season but this is not a guaranteed funding source.

FL noted that they conduct other surveys (e.g., electrofishing surveys) that target other life stages, which are provided to the stock assessment subcommittee annually, but their surveys have not previously been considered in the stock assessment. E. Burgess added that there is a strong financial strain right now and FWC's evaluation is that there are better ways to invest their money in eel monitoring.

There were some concerns raised about potentially losing this survey as it is the most southern YOY survey along the coast. B. Chase noted that the index from this survey performed well in the power analysis during the last benchmark but also recognized there is a high cost to FWC to continue. A. Park would like to see the survey continued because of location of the survey and because it could reflect more trends that are affecting this region that should be explored.

The TC also recognized that there are some reasons to discontinue the survey. Some TC members recognized that it is difficult for a state to justify continuing a survey that isn't producing significant results. Additionally, members recognized that the high cost per eel may be unsustainable without understanding the utility of the survey. GA noted that they also had a survey that was ineffective, which they decided to discontinue for a more productive survey. However, S. Eyler noted that surveys that see 0's in their catches are not necessarily unproductive and could highlight a trend in the area. J. Zimmerman was concerned about the implications of coastwide monitoring requirements if the TC were to support ending a survey in

one state. TC members were interested in how FL's electrofishing surveys could be used to replace information lost by the YOY survey.

Overall, TC members felt they needed more time to evaluate FL's data given that it performs well in the power analysis. Members suggested that the TC should look at the stock assessment contributions and management use of Florida's surveys compared to all coastwide YOY surveys. B. Chase suggested the TC evaluate the stock assessment report to evaluate the impacts of the coastwide surveys. Additionally, TC members suggested a data prioritization exercise to help states better prioritize their sampling efforts going forward.

The TC decided to meet again to continue the discussion on this task and develop a recommendation on FL's YOY survey. Thus, the TC noted that it will not have a recommendation at the February meeting.

Discuss Sampling Changes at Gardy's Millpond

T. Tuckey discussed changes to YOY sampling at Gardy's Millpond after a dam breach. The pond now has two entry points for the glass eels. T. Tuckey asked for guidance on how to continue sampling at this site as they have 25 years of data and wanted suggestions on whether they should seek out another site along the Potomac River. However, it was noted that finding an alternative site would be difficult.

The TC discussed the benefits of retaining this site, given the long time series. TC members suggested looking for correlations of new two-entry site dynamics with historical data. It was also suggested to install eel ramps below both "spillways". Overall, there was consensus to maintain the data stream at this location, but to make note of the changes to the system and potential survey impacts.

Elect TC Chair and Vice Chair

The TC elected K. Bonvechio as Chair with no opposition. K. Bonvechio will serve in this role until the end of 2027.

There were no nominations for Vice Chair. C. Starks will follow up with TC members regarding nominations for this position.

Next Steps

C. Starks will schedule a follow-up meeting in January 2026 to look at FL data and YOY surveys. At this meeting the TC will look at the data considered in benchmark assessment, how data sources were used in the assessment, how surveys rank compared to other YOY surveys, and how similar YOY surveys are to other surveys in the region.

The TC will develop a memo regarding the aquaculture criteria. C. Starks will draft the memo and send it to the group with a meeting summary. The TC will aim to have edits back by January 9th.



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American Eel Technical Committee Meeting

January 13th, 2026
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Technical Committee Attendance: Kim Bonvechio (Chair, FL), Alexis Park (MD), Brad Chase (MA), Caitlin Craig (NY), Casey Clark (ME), Chris Adriance (DC), Chris Wright (NOAA), Eddie Perri (FWS), Jen Pyle (NJ), Jim Page (GA), Jordan Zimmerman (DE), Kevin Mongoloski (USGS), Matt Lee (NH), Mike Porta (PA), Pat McGee RI), Shakira Goffe (VA), Sheila Eyler (FWS), Todd Mathes (NC), Wendy Morrison (NOAA)

Commissioners in Attendance: Erika Burgess (FL)

Staff: Caitlin Starks (FMP Coordinator), Samara Nehemiah (stock assessment scientist)

Public: Jason Dotson, Jeff Renchen

The Technical Committee (TC) met via webinar to continue addressing a Board task. The Board directed the TC to evaluate the utility of continuing the Florida glass eel survey and its contribution to the Commission's management and assessment of the American eel stock, and report back to the Commission at the next American Eel Management Board meeting so the Board can consider exempting Florida from the glass eel survey compliance requirement.

Discussion of Florida YOY Survey

After reviewing information on the Florida YOY survey available from the 2023 stock assessment, the TC asked questions about the survey to better understand the site suitability, issues, and limitations, as well as other sampling efforts in the state that capture American eel.

FL noted that they have made extensive efforts to improve the YOY survey by trying other gears, searching for alternative sites, but there are not any other viable options. They also commented that sampling and collecting age data in other areas across the state is showing a healthy age composition for yellow eels, which does not align with the trends in the YOY survey showing very low numbers of recruits for a number of years. While the persistent low catches in the YOY survey are suggestive of recruitment failure, other monitoring efforts do not agree with that, which raises concerns about the ability of the YOY survey to accurately capture trends in recruitment. FL expressed that they believe the long-term statewide electrofishing efforts combined with age data would provide a better understanding of eel recruitment than the YOY survey.

The TC discussed that the FL electrofishing data were reviewed for the stock assessment, but not used for analysis due to sampling issues, but it was not clear what those issues were. To evaluate whether these data could be used as suggested by FL, the TC agreed that it would be helpful to

ask for input from the Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS). FL noted that they have a standardized protocol for the sampling, and additional years of data that may improve the usefulness of the dataset, along with age data.

One TC member pointed out the criteria for determining whether fishery independent data can be used in the stock assessment, which include that surveys should operate with gear that is capable of catching American eel, and only surveys that operate during a time and place where American eels are available for capture should be considered. The criteria also note that examining the precision or proportion of zero catches of American eels in a survey can be tools for evaluating this. Thus, the TC recommended that the YOY survey be analyzed for the proportion of zero catches to compare it to this criterion.

Ultimately, the TC expressed concern with discontinuing the YOY survey without gaining any other information. The TC agreed the following next steps should be completed before a decision is made as to whether the YOY survey should be discontinued:

- Gather input from the SAS on the Florida surveys, including
 - Utility of the FL YOY survey in terms of variability and power, and in comparison to other surveys
 - Impacts of not having the FL YOY survey data for future assessments
 - FL electrofishing and age data and why they were not used in the recent assessment
 - Whether electrofishing data and age data can be used in the future to assess recruitment; what could be done to improve the survey for eel assessment use
- Analyze the YOY time series to calculate the proportion of zero catches of American eels

It was noted that the YOY sampling will occur this season, conducted by the University of North Florida (UNF). UNF has agreed to follow the state's monitoring protocol for consistency, but the amount of effort may be reduced. It was also noted that a stock assessment update is scheduled for 2027, and as part of that process the SAS could do a deeper investigation of all YOY datasets and develop recommendations for how they could be considered in the next benchmark stock assessment.

While YOY surveys are evaluated in the stock assessment and used to understand local trends in recruitment, they are not currently used for the development of fishery regulations in the Commission's management program.

Elect Vice Chair

The TC elected Jen Pyle as Vice Chair with no opposition.

Next Steps

S. Nehemiah will work with the SAS to complete a data request to Florida for their full YOY and electrofishing datasets for eel. C. Starks will schedule a meeting with the SAS to review the FL data and comment on possible methods for evaluating recruitment or abundance at other life stages.