



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.