



# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

## NEWS RELEASE

*Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries*

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## Patrick Keliher Named 2025 Captain David H. Hart Award Recipient

Arlington, VA – At its Winter Meeting in Arlington, Virginia, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) presented Patrick Keliher, former Commissioner with the Maine Department of Marine Resources (ME DMR), the Captain David H. Hart Award for 2025 for his longstanding contributions to and exceptional leadership towards the sustainable management of marine resources along the Eastern Seaboard.

Since becoming Commissioner with ME DMR and Administrative Commissioner to the ASMFC in 2012, Pat has worked tirelessly to support marine fisheries stakeholders, both in Maine and along the Atlantic coast. His unwavering work ethic extended well beyond the Commission table. He is a consummate professional – always prepared and expertly engaged in every setting with a straightforward, no-nonsense approach. This approach earned him the respect of all those who have worked with him.

From 2017 – 2023, Pat served in a leadership position with the Commission, helping address a wide range of issues. One of the most unique and challenging times during his tenure was guiding the Commission through the pandemic. This



From Left: ASMFC Executive Director Bob Beal, Hart Award Recipient Pat Keliher, and ASMFC Chair and Vice Chair Dan McKiernan and Doug Haymans, respectively

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and diadromous species.

was a time that truly reflected Pat’s steady leadership and deep commitment to the Commission. Throughout that period, he stayed closely connected with staff and fellow Commissioners, oversaw a seamless transition to virtual meetings, and consistently made decisions with the safety of Commissioners and staff in mind. Other notable accomplishments during this time include quick action by the states to end overfishing of Atlantic striped bass and implementation of ecological reference points to manage Atlantic menhaden.

On the home front, Pat has been credited with strengthening and sustaining Maine’s commercial fisheries through effective management, responsible policy, and improved enforcement. His collaborative effort to secure a six-year pause on federal whale regulations and to provide millions in federal funds for marine mammal research has benefited both Maine's lobster industry and the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale. During his tenure, DMR implemented enhanced management and enforcement measures to protect Maine’s valuable elver resource and fishery. His work to secure funding and establish strategic partnerships was instrumental in efforts to restore access to habitat for Maine’s sea-run fish species. Pat also oversaw the administration of state funding that has protected many vital working waterfront properties, and federal funds that provided much needed direct relief to industry and investments in critical infrastructure.

“I can’t think of a more deserving recipient of this honor,” said Department of Marine Resources Commissioner Carl Wilson. “Throughout his career, Pat has demonstrated a dedication to science-based decisions, effective policy, and strong enforcement necessary to protect our valuable marine resources and industries.”

“Pat’s strong advocacy for Maine's marine resources and fisheries was exceeded only by his commitment to the people who make their living on the water,” said Maine Governor Janet Mills. “Maine’s coastal economy, environment, and communities are stronger because of his leadership, and this award reflects his many career accomplishments.”

Prior to joining DMR, Pat served as Executive Director of the Atlantic Salmon Commission and Executive Director of the New England States of the Coastal Conservation Association, Greater New England.

The Commission instituted the Hart Award in 1991 to recognize individuals who have made outstanding efforts to improve Atlantic coast marine fisheries. The Hart Award is named for one of the Commission’s longest serving members, who dedicated himself to the advancement and protection of marine fishery resources, Captain David H. Hart, from the State of New Jersey.

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