

American Eel Technical Committee Report on Board Tasks



May 6, 2026

- Board Tasks:

1. 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
 - To inform the Board in considering exempting Florida from the glass eel survey compliance requirement

- **Summary of issue:**

- Single YOY survey site at Guana River Dam, no viable alternatives
- Persistent low/zero catches
 - Other monitoring trends do not agree with recruitment failure
- High cost per sample, FWC prioritizing other monitoring

TC Discussion on FL YOY Survey

- TC met on December 15, 2025 and January 13, 2026
- Overview of TC discussion:
 - Concern about losing the southernmost YOY site
 - Concern about discontinuing survey without gaining new source of information on recruitment
 - Possibility of using FL electrofishing and age data
 - FL YOY survey performed well in assessment power analysis
 - Should use the assessment criteria for accepting fishery independent data sets to evaluate YOY survey
 - Noted YOY surveys currently used to understand local recruitment trends; not currently used for management

TC Discussion on FL YOY Survey

- **Next Steps:**
- Gather input from the SAS, 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
 - Why FL electrofishing and age data were not used in assessment
 - Potential for using electrofishing and age data 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

TC Discussion on FL YOY Survey

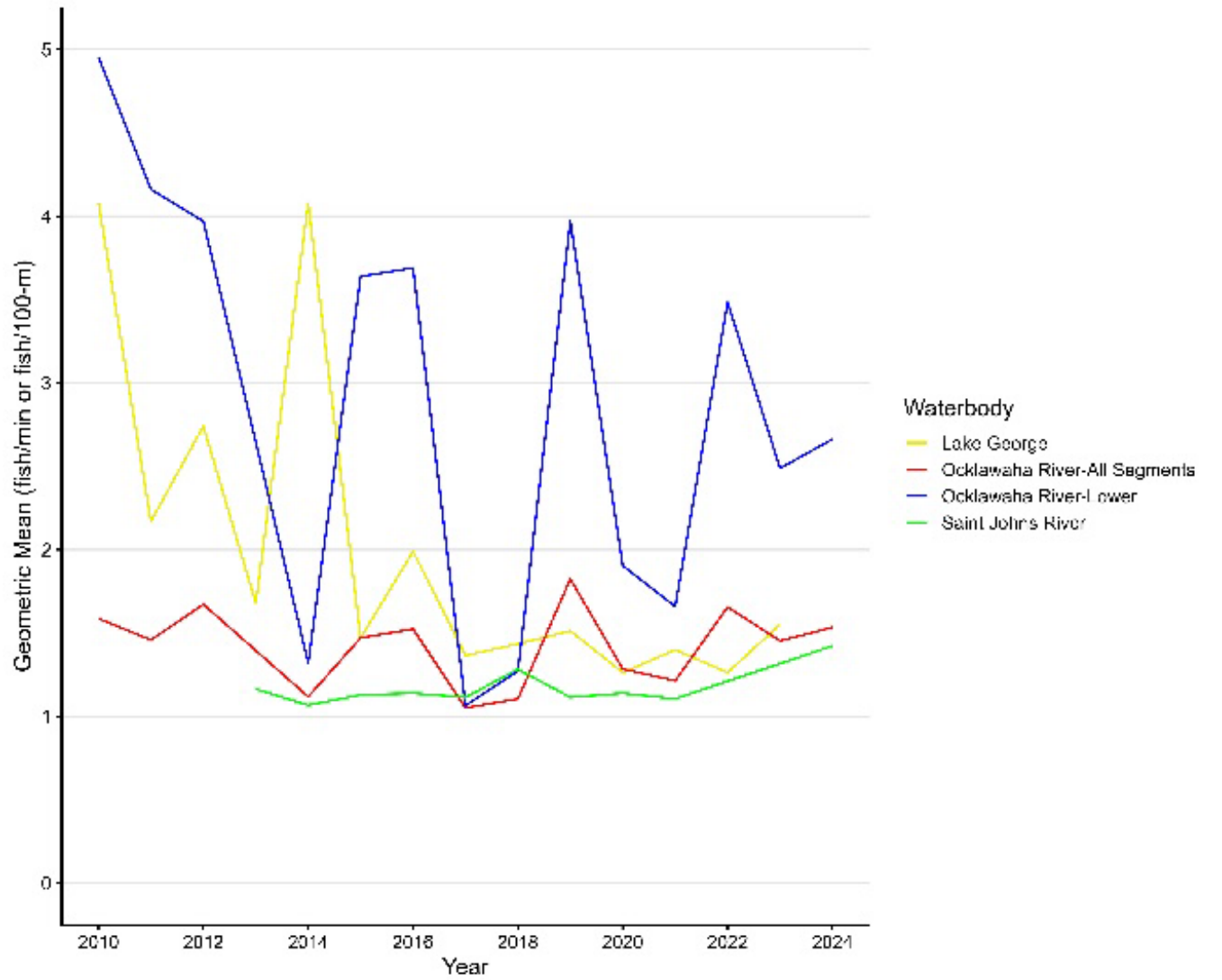
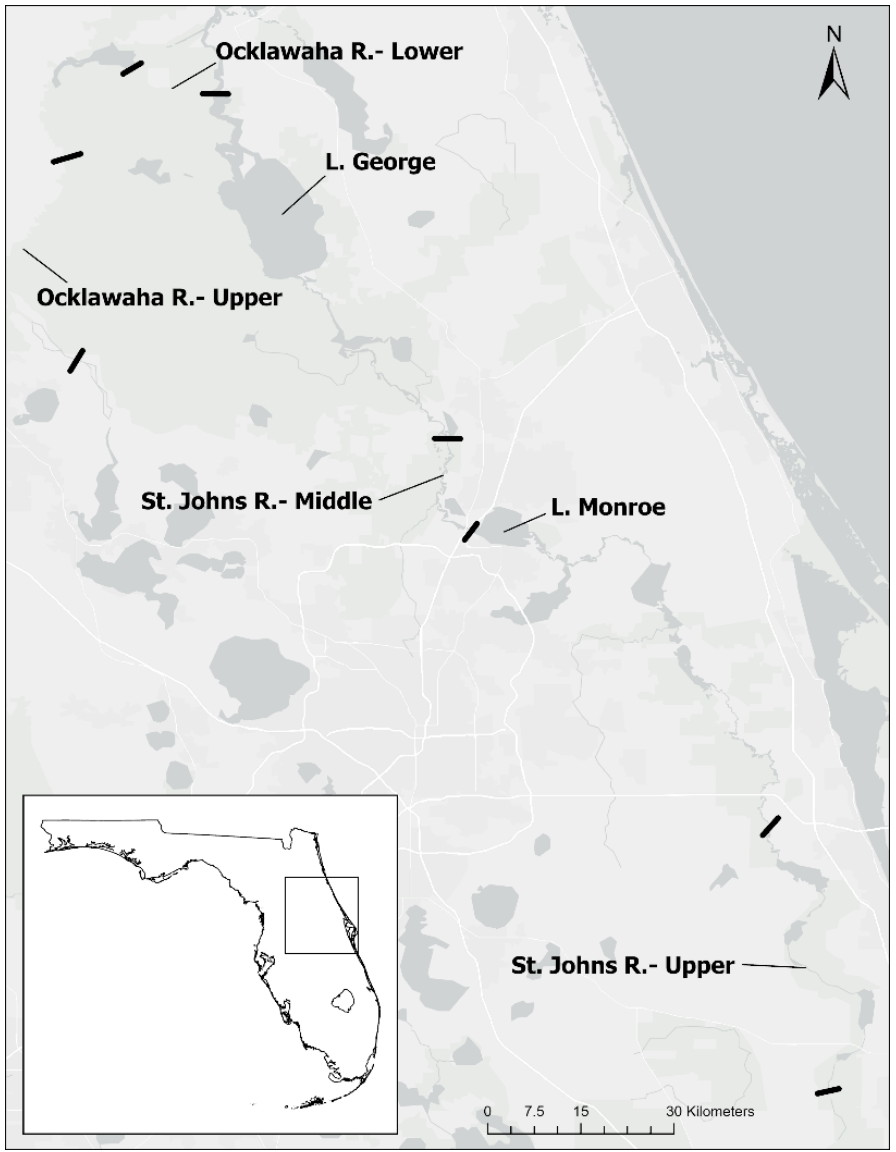
- **Next Steps:**
- Gather input from the SAS, including
 - Utility of the FL YOY survey in terms of variability and power, and in comparison to other surveys
 - Impacts of not having the FL YOY survey data for future assessments
 - Why FL electrofishing and age data were not used in assessment
 - Potential for using electrofishing and age data 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

- SAS formally sent Florida a data and analysis request for electrofishing and age data
- Stock Assessment Subcommittee met on April 6, 2026
 - Utility of the FL YOY Survey for the Stock Assessment
 - Utility of the FL YOY Survey for Management
 - Evaluation of FL Electrofishing Survey for Assessing Recruitment Trends

- Utility of the FL YOY Survey for the Stock Assessment
 - Despite relatively high power, trends may not reflect recruitment
 - Unusual survey methodology compared to other surveys
 - Likely random correlations with other surveys
 - Concern over changes to lake management that can impact catches unrelated to recruitment
 - Conclusion: SAS did not feel FL survey would impact future analyses/management but concerned over losing others and ability to detect coast-wide recruitment failure

- Utility of the FL YOY Survey for Management
 - FL YOY survey is not currently used to inform management, coast-wide or within the state
 - Florida does not have glass eel harvest and yellow eel harvest is limited by coastwide harvest cap
 - Landings ~1.2% of coastwide cap (518,281 lbs) from 2020–2024

- Evaluation of FL Electrofishing Survey for Assessing Recruitment Trends
 - Previous concerns about methodology and changes to protocol over time
 - 2026 data request was limited to Atlantic drainages (multiple systems and river stretches in St. Johns River basin)
 - Data collected as part of a statewide long-term monitoring program
 - Standard EF survey of fish community
 - Conclusion: Recommend consideration of this survey in next benchmark assessment and collection of age data when possible



- Additional comment
 - SAS plans to address utility of coastwide YOY surveys for use in future stock assessments in 2027 update

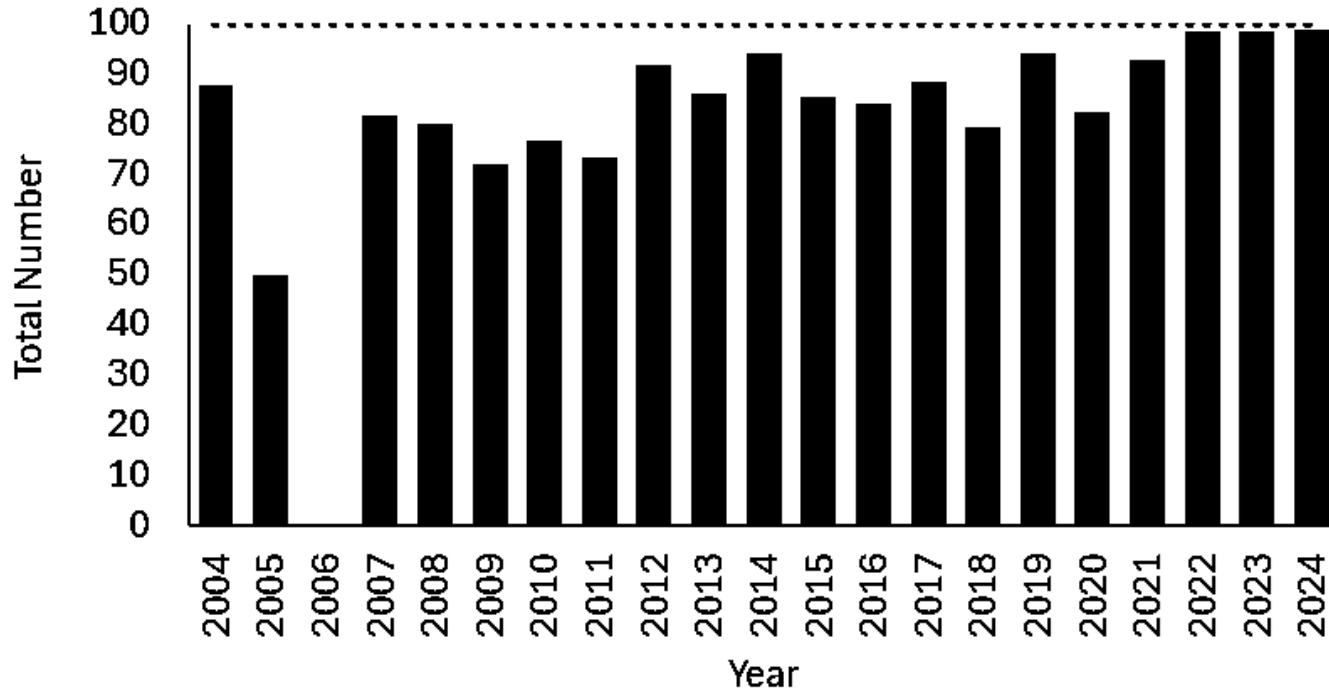
TC Discussion on FL YOY Survey

- **Next Steps:**

- Gather input from the SAS, 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
 - Why FL electrofishing and age data were not used in assessment
 - Potential for using electrofishing and age data 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

Zero Catches in FL YOY Survey

% Zero Catches in Dip Net Sweeps
Guana River Dam



- **Summary:**

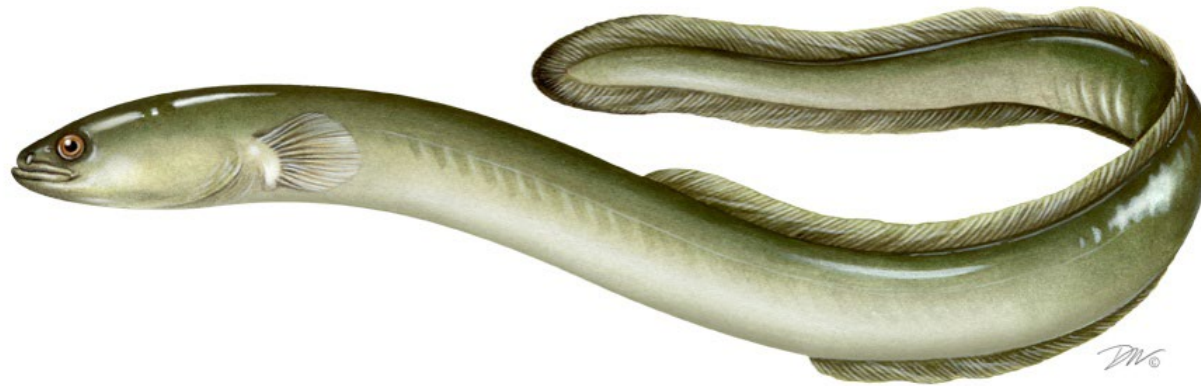
- Generally >70% of dip nets have no eels
- ~99% of dip net sweeps (N=3,574 out of 3,624 sweeps in all) contained no eels in the last 3 years
- Considerable changes to lake and water management following work on Guana River Dam in 2018

Questions?



Yellow Eel

Preliminary 2025 Landings



May 6, 2026

- Addendum V (2018) Coastwide Cap: 916,473 pounds
- Addendum VII (2024) Coastwide Cap: 518,281 pounds
 - Using index-based method, I_{TARGET}
- Management trigger:
 - If coastwide cap is exceeded by 10% for 2 consecutive years, states with landings >1% of the coastwide landings in the year(s) when the management trigger is tripped will be responsible for reducing landings to achieve the coastwide cap in the subsequent year

Preliminary Landings

Year	2023	2024	2025*
Maine	1,104	C	C
New Hampshire	Time series average of less than 400		
Massachusetts	896	C	NA
Rhode Island	2,859	1,928	1,067
Connecticut	1,468	3,448	1,205
New York	13,860	15,439	9,476
New Jersey	48,683	30,387	26,408
Delaware	11,090	8,910	5,868
Maryland	135,266	198,973	183,523
PRFC	20,229	11,316	704
Virginia	50,970	6,206	31,025
North Carolina	1,109	2,469	1,072
South Carolina	Time series average of less than 400		
Georgia	Time series average of less than 400		
Florida	1,960	2,080	999
TOTAL	312,674	281,156	260,348

19% decrease
from 2024
landings

50% of
coastwide cap

Questions?

