



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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American Eel Technical Committee Meeting Summary

July 7, 2016

Attendance: Tim Wildman (CT), Troy Tuckey (VIMS), Phil Edwards (RI), Kirby Rootes-Murdy (ASMFC), Jordan Zimmerman (DE), Jason Rock (NC), Kim Bonvechio (FL), Robert Eckert (NH), Carol Hoffman (NY), Keith Whiteford (MD), Derek Orner (NOAA), Lindsey Aubart (GA), Josh Newhard (USFWS), Jen Pyle (NJ), Wilson Laney (USFWS), Brad Chase (MA), Kristen Anstead (ASMFC)

Members of the public: Dick Stone (AEF) and Zoemma Warshafsky (VIMS)

The American eel Technical Committee (TC) met via conference call July 7th, 2016, to review and make recommendations regarding an updated aquaculture plan from North Carolina, review a quota proposal from New York, and discuss agenda items for an upcoming TC meeting in the fall.

1) **NC Update to Eel Aquaculture Plan & Discussion**

Addendum IV to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for the American Eel includes a provision for states to submit an Aquaculture Plan to allow for the harvest of glass eels. In December 2015, NC submitted an aquaculture plan for 2016 which was reviewed by the TC. After amending the plan to reflect the recommendations of the TC, it was presented to the American Eel Management Board and approved in February 2016. Due to delays in NC permitting, fishing began late in the season and no glass eels were captured. Therefore, NC amended the plan for the TC to consider as a second year pilot program for 2017. Changes in the proposal were outlined by Jason Rock, including a change in harvest dates, an additional primary harvest site, additional reporting of weight and CPUE guidelines, a change in the amount of permit holders and mates, and the removal of warrantless inspections and searches. The TC asked questions and discussed the changes. The addition of the White Oak River as an additional site was received favorably since there has been some previous research in this site that could compliment the data set from the aquaculture plan and could additionally serve as a permanent YOY survey site. The other changes were also accepted by the TC contingent on the following Recommendations:

- 1. A YOY survey should be developed at one of the sites in conjunction with the aquaculture plan (year 3, 2018)**

2. Fyke net mortality should be addressed during the months of January and February when the twenty-four (24) hour soak times are allowed. The use of a live car attached to the fyke net cod end was discussed to alleviate this potential issue.

2) NY Eel Quota proposal

The TC also reviewed a proposal from NY presented by Carol Hoffman to address the quota allocation in Addendum IV. The harvest records that determined NY's quota were based on incomplete data resulting in a potential inequality in allocation to that state. Concerns were expressed from several TC members regarding the reporting of landings from all states and it was reiterated that TC members need to confirm reference period landings in the Addendum IV table. Additionally, there was concern that NY's revised landings could include silver eels from the Delaware River weir fishery, thus overinflating their need for yellow eel allocation. There are no data to address this issue for historical data currently, but NY is working on parsing out the numbers of silver eels for annual landings moving forward. In the meantime, the state-by-state landings data will be updated and revised, if need be, during the 2017 stock assessment update. The TC concluded that a discussion of expanding the coastwide cap, in light of NY situation, should be set aside until the update is performed. The TC made the following Recommendation:

States need to review landings numbers and figures provided in the accompanying document by Hoffman, and communicate any discrepancies by COB Tuesday July 12th

Update on TC tasks from May 2016 and Begin initial planning of September 2016 TC Meeting

The TC members reviewed the tasks they developed in May 2016, confirming most required data have been provided. Additionally, potential agenda items were discussed for an in-person TC meeting during the week of September 12th 2016. TC members recommended that the goals, changes in gear type, and sampling sites of the YOY surveys be revisited and that a protocol for moving sites should be developed. Reevaluating yellow eel abundance surveys was also suggested as a possible topic. Members requested that during the TC meeting that they get updates from Maine on the life cycle survey if possible, CITIES regarding the listing of American eel, and state representatives who are conducting larval surveys, such as NC's Beaufort Bridge Net Survey. Finally, a timetable needs to be constructed for the 2017 stock assessment update. These topics will be explored by the TC chair, vice-chair, SAS chair, and staff in order to develop a productive agenda for the TC meeting in September. Two follow up tasks from this discussion:

- Kirby will send out the updated list of state surveys filled out from May 2016. Please review to ensure it's fully updated and correct.

- Kirby will follow up with Laura Lee for planning the September 2016 meeting and review of YOY surveys.
- Lastly, it was noted that **Compliance reports are due September 1**. Kirby will send out a compliance reminder memo soon.