



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 7, 2024

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Please note: This release revises the February 5th press release with a change in the Delaware hearing format, moving from in-person only to a hybrid format to allow comments to be provided both in-person and via webinar.

States Schedule Public Hearings on American Eel Draft Addendum VII *Draft Addendum Considers Changes to Commercial Yellow Eel Coastwide Harvest Cap*

Arlington, VA – The majority of Atlantic coastal states from New Hampshire through Virginia have scheduled hearings to gather public input on Draft Addendum VII to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Eel. Draft Addendum VII considers management measures to reduce the commercial yellow eel coastwide harvest cap in response to the 2023 benchmark stock assessment, which found the stock remains depleted. The Draft Addendum also considers options to modify monitoring requirements based on recommendations from the stock assessment and Technical Committee. Some hearings will be conducted in-person, and some hearings will be conducted via webinar, or in a hybrid format. ***If your state does not hold a hearing, or you are unable to participate in your state’s scheduled hearing, you are welcome to participate in any of the virtual or hybrid hearings.*** The public hearing details follow:

Date and Hearing Format	State/Agency	Contact
Tuesday, February 20 Webinar Hearing 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.	New Jersey Dept. of Environmental Protection <i>The webinar registration link is available here, and additional webinar instructions are below.</i>	Joe Cimino 609.748.2063
Tuesday, February 27 Webinar Hearing 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.	New Hampshire Fish and Game Dept. <i>The webinar registration link is available here, and additional webinar instructions are below.</i>	Cheri Patterson 603.868.1095

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.

Date and Hearing Format	State/Agency	Contact
Tuesday, March 5 Webinar Hearing 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.	New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation <i>The webinar registration link is available here, and additional webinar instructions are below.</i>	Jesse Hornstein 631.444.0714
Thursday, March 7 In-person Hearing 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.	Virginia Marine Resources Commission Hearing Location: Virginia Marine Resources Commission 380 Fenwick Road, Building 96 Fort Monroe, VA, 23651	Shanna Madsen 757.247.2247
Tuesday, March 12 In-person Hearing 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.	Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources Hearing Location: Tawes State Office Building, C-1 580 Taylor Avenue Annapolis, MD 21401	Keith Whiteford 443.758.6547
Wednesday, March 13 Hybrid Hearing 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.	Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife <i>The webinar registration link is available here, and additional webinar instructions are below.</i> Hearing Location: Dover Public Library 35 Loockerman Plaza Dover, DE 19901	John Clark 302.739.9108

The Board initiated Draft Addendum VII in August 2023 in response to findings of the 2023 Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report. The results of the assessment indicate the stock is at or near historically low levels due to a combination of historical overfishing, habitat loss, food web alterations, predation, turbine mortality, environmental changes, and toxins, contaminants, and disease. The assessment and peer review recommend reducing fishing mortality on the yellow eel life stage, while also recognizing that stock status is affected by other factors. The benchmark assessment proposed a new index-based tool for setting the yellow eel coastwide cap, since there is no statistical model for estimating the population size of American eel. This tool, called I_{TARGET} , is an index-based method that needs only catch and abundance data from surveys to provide management advice on coastwide landings.

Draft Addendum VII also proposes options to reduce the requirements for biological sampling during young-of-year surveys conducted by the states, based on the stock assessment finding that individual length and pigment stage data are not useful for evaluating population trends. In addition, it considers changing the requirements for the collection of trip-level harvester data on catch per unit effort, and the policy used to determine if a state qualifies for *de minimis* status and can be exempt from implementing fishery regulations and monitoring requirements.

Webinar Instructions

In order to provide comment at any virtual or hybrid hearings, you will need to use your computer (voice over internet protocol) or download the GoToWebinar app for your phone. Those joining by phone only will be limited to listening to the presentation and will not be able to provide input. In those cases, you can send your comments to staff via [email](#) or US mail at any time during the public comment period. To attend the webinar in listen only mode, dial 562.247.8422 and enter access code 796-096-508. ***If your state does not hold a hearing, or you are unable to participate in your state's scheduled hearing, you are welcome to participate in any of the virtual or hybrid hearings.***

For all virtual or hybrid hearings, please click [HERE](#) and select the hearing(s) you plan to attend from the dropdown menu to register for a public hearing webinar. Hearings will be held via GoToWebinar, and you can join the webinar from your computer, tablet or smartphone. If you are new to GoToWebinar, you can download the software by ([clicking here](#)) or via the App store under GoToWebinar. We recommend you register for the hearing well in advance of the hearing since GoToWebinar will provide you with a link to test your device's compatibility with the webinar. If you find your device is not compatible, please contact the Commission at info@asmfc.org (subject line: GoToWebinar help) and we will try to get you connected. We also strongly encourage participants to **use the computer voice over internet protocol (VoIP)** so you can ask questions and provide input at the hearing.

Hearing Presentation Recording

For those who cannot attend any in-person or virtual hearings, the Commission will also post a recording of the hearing presentation on the Commission's YouTube page so that stakeholders may watch the presentation and submit comment at any time during the comment process. This recording will be available by mid-February.

Submitting Comments

The Draft Addendum is available at https://asmfc.org/files/Science/AmEelDraftAddendumVII_YellowEelCap_PublicComment_Feb2024.pdf or via the Commission's website at <http://www.asmfc.org/about-us/public-input>. All those interested in the management of American eel are encouraged to provide input either by participating in public hearings, which may be conducted via webinar, or providing written comment. Public comment will be accepted until **11:59 PM (EST) on March 24, 2024** and should be sent to Caitlin Starks, Senior FMP Coordinator, at 1050 N. Highland St., Suite 200 A-N, Arlington, Virginia 22201; or at comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Yellow Eel Harvest Cap Draft Addendum).

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