

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1444 Eye Street, N.W., 6th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

**JOINT MEETING OF THE AMERICAN EEL TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
AND THE STOCK ASSESSMENT SUBCOMITTEE**

September 18-20, 2006
Providence, Rhode Island

Attendees:

Steve Gephard (Chair, CT)	Allan Hazel (SC)	Matt Cieri (SASC Chair, ME)
Pat Geer (GA)	Brad Chase (MA)	Laura Lee (SASC, RI)
John Clark (DE)	Keith Whiteford (MD)	Jeff Brust (SASC, NJ)
Vic Vecchio (NY)	Heather Corbett (NJ)	Patrick Kilduff (ASMFC)
Mike Potthoff (NC)	Lewis Gillingham (VA)	Erika Robbins (ASMFC)
Michelle Burnett (RI)	Clare McBane (NH)	Bob Beal (ASMFC)
Rich Maney (NMFS)	Marty Hale (FL)	

Monday, September 18, 2006

Addendum I Implementation Plans – Bob B.

See July 10, 2006, memo to the Board from the Technical Committee; the memo reflects TC approval of state implementation plans. Delaware will now require dealers to weigh their catch daily instead of allowing them to wait to weight their catch upon the sale of the eels. Maine has addressed their issues, but this still needs to be reviewed by the ASMFC. An update will be provided to the Board at the October Annual Meeting. ***Please forward updates to Erika R. (erobbins@asmfc).*** Apparently, there has been a problem with getting CPUE from states.

YOY Sampling Workshop – Bob B.

There is money in the ASMFC budget for a YOY sampling workshop this year; however, it is possible to roll over the money so that the workshop could be held in the next year. The SASC confirms that the data is valuable and Steve G. will convey this to the Board.

Note that DC and Pennsylvania have proposed backpack electrofishing as a new method for collecting YOY samples. The TC is skeptical about this method.

The TC would like to have a 2-½ day YOY workshop that includes people from outside the TC and SASC that would be able to help with survey design. The TC would like the workshop to cover the following topics:

1. Laura Lee's PowerPoint presentation

2. How to transition from one sampling site to another or from one gear type to another
3. Issues that individual states are having with sampling and how individual states can make their surveys better
4. When each state should start their sampling as well as how to use environmental clues to recognize when sampling should begin
5. SASC presentation of an overview of glass eel biology
6. SASC presentation of the potential issues that could arise from various ways of performing the survey
7. SASC overview of data challenges and the areas that need to be improved
8. Discussion on the standardization of data collection
9. Question and answer session
10. Decide what metrics we want to get out of the survey
11. Matt, Laura, and others will share what they learned during the YOY sampling workshop from the previous week
12. Overview of estuarine biology, possibly by Jim McCleave

Invitations should be extended to:

1. David Cairns (DFO)
2. David Secor
3. Jim McCleave (ME)
4. Eel gear expert
5. Peer review panel member
6. All TC members
7. SASC encouraged to attend

Please let Erika know if you have other people that you would like to invite. People are encouraged to let the TC know what questions they have before the meeting so that others can prepare a response. There is a possibility that people could bring raw data and that the group could look at it. The TC expressed interest in having the workshop in Charleston, Raleigh or Tampa.

Look at the TC Addenda for changes to data collection procedures – Erika R.

Erika and Laura L. will have a phone call to go over each state's reporting to make sure that everyone is consistently reporting the required information. This topic will be brought up again at the YOY workshop

Great Lakes Fisheries Commission/Canada – Bob B.

Bob attended the GLFC meeting a year ago and they expressed an interest in working together on management. Not a lot of interest at that point (possibly not prepared to ask questions). No contact until a month ago when Bob received an email from John Dettmers. The email is open-ended and we are unsure in what direction they would like to head. Maybe the ASMFC can provide guidance to the GLFC. The Canada Eel Working Group will meet this October and Laura L. will attend the meeting. The TC will address how they would like to work with GLFC and Canada on Wednesday.

2007 Fish Passage Workshop – Bob B.

This was first brought up at a Board meeting. Right now, we have general ideas of what we would like to do. ASMFC would like to include American shad and river herring, Atlantic sturgeon, and striped bass. The workshop would be sponsored by ASMFC to discuss fish passage for these managed species. Bob feels like this workshop should have more of a technical focus rather than a policy focus.

It is a concern that many fish passage projects are sponsored/advocated by State's inland fisheries agencies that may not have a responsibility for managing these species. Marine fisheries agencies need to understand the process and technology of fish passage. Ideas for the workshop include: general sessions applicable to all species' TC members (e.g., how do you get involved in the FERC process, who do you work with, fishway prescriptions, etc.). We could have species-specific sessions on the technical challenges for providing fish passage to that species, as well as provide case studies.

The TC discussed who they would like to attend the workshop. The invitees are:

USFWS Region 5 engineers
Utility company representatives
Management Board
Doug Dixon
Gail Wippelhauser (ME DNR)
Alex Haro (USGS/Conte Lab)
Steve Gephard (CT DEP)
Kevin McGrath

The TC feels that a steering committee should be formed with representatives from each species' TC and possibly habitat. The steering committee would develop an agenda and invitation list. The staff will forward these thoughts to the other TCs. The TC needs to make a recommendation to the Board to include this in the 2007 Action Plan/Budget.

Eel Life Stage Definitions – Steve G.

The Management Board requested that the TC develop clearer definitions to describe the life stages of American eel, especially the silver eel life stage. Steve G. circulated a draft definition of glass eel, elver, yellow eel, and silver eel. The definitions were extensively discussed and modified. The modified definitions are as follows:

Glass eel: An un-pigmented or partially pigmented miniature eel less than 1.8 to 2.5 inches (4.8 to 6.5 cm) long and with an elongated, rounded body.

Elver: A wholly pigmented eel less than 6 inches (15.25 cm) long with an elongated, rounded body, possessing all of the characteristics of a yellow eel.

Yellow eel: An eel commonly found in brackish and inland waters with lengths typically greater than 6 inches (15.25 cm) with dark to olivaceous green backs and yellowish bellies.

Silver eel: A sexually maturing eel actively migrating to the ocean between summer and fall that are commonly greater than 16 inches (40.5 cm) but may be of variable lengths and is often characterized by dark (almost black) coloration on the back, white on the bottom, bronze or silver on the sides, and enlarged eyes.

The TC was not completely satisfied with these definitions, as they did not think that they would be helpful enough for law enforcement and that they were not precise (although they agreed that the silver eel was hard to define). Steve G. will forward these definitions to experts (i.e., McCleave, Haro, Oliveria, et al.) for comment. Vic V. will provide photos to help aid in description.

TC Chair – Steve G.

John Clark, the current Vice Chair, will become the next TC Chair. Steve G. proposed that he remain TC Chair until the end of the calendar year. The TC accepted Steve's proposal. The TC needs to think about Vice Chair nominations.

Listing of American eel by the USFWS – Erika R.

Erika has been in contact with Heather Bell of USFWS. They have completed their draft and it has been sent to DC to be reviewed and put in the Federal Register. Heather expects that it will be published by October 18. The document will be approximately 40 pages long. The USFWS would like to work with us to integrate their findings with our work.

Compliance Reports – Erika R.

The PRT has not yet met to go over the reports. The NY Compliance Report is still outstanding. Many states failed to address planned management for the next 5 years (they overlooked the requirement 3.4.1.3.C). The following are highlights found in the Compliance Reports:

ME – 95% of glass eel entered within 7 days

NH – Many people are licensed but do not fish.

MA – Requesting *de minimis*. Lowest since beginning of mandated reporting.

RI – No commercial or recreational landings.

CT – No recreational landings.

PA – Requesting *de minimis*. No commercial license.

DE – Fifth in size of harvest. Second lowest landings since 2000.

MD – Third highest since 1999. Smaller sizes. Bait fishery not included in landings.

PRFC – Questions the efficacy of YOY survey, wants *de minimis* status.

DC – No elvers captured, proposes to change to electrofishing (TC has a problem with this).

VA – Harvest was lowest in 2005 since 1993.

NC – Eel capture from RCGL survey too insignificant to estimate recreational catch.

SC – 2-5 permitted harvesters of fish, for total landings of 13 pounds.
GA – *De minimis* request.
FL – *De minimis* request. Most eels that are harvested are females.

In 2005, NH, SC, and DC had *de minimis* but they have not requested it for 2006. The states of MA, GA, FL, and PA requested *de minimis* for 2006. For *de minimis*, a State's landings need to account for less than 1% of coast-wide landings for the life stage.

Laura Lee's Presentation

Laura Lee's report has eight slides that will be expanded. They show some preliminary analysis of data from the YOY surveys. The YOY survey has more value than just as a stock assessment data set. The YOY survey allows researchers to notice trends in the species' abundance and behavior.

SASC Presentation – Matt C.

Matt Cieri began the SASC presentation, introducing the SASC's response to the peer reviewer's comments.

Tuesday, September 19, 2006

SASC Presentation – Matt C.

The new report will be entitled "Update of the American Eel Stock Assessment Report 2006" and Attachment 1 will be the original report. There was a discussion of management reference points. The TC and SASC agreed that creating management reference points goes beyond a stock assessment. Such reference points could not be considered biological reference points, but the peer reviewers called for them.

The TC feels that they should work with other agencies/jurisdictions to develop reference points, but how ASMFC conducts management based on those reference points will be up to ASMFC. This falls in with the need for American eel to be recognized as a trans-boundary stock. The SASC and TC would like to work with Canada, GLFC and GSMFC on future stock assessments, developing reference points, and identifying possible management goals.

THE TC DRAFTED LANGUAGE FOR THE SASC REPORT:

The American Eel Management Board and Committees should confer with Canada, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission on conducting future stock assessments, developing manage reference points, and identifying possible management goals.

There was discussion about whether or not to call out VA in the report. There were several who felt that the way the report was written did call out VA. Doing so may cause the Board to be focused on that specific area, which may have negative consequences for other areas.

The SASC has the option to include a table that lists specific states that need to be closely monitored (i.e., VA). Members of the TC would like the table to say that those states in the table need to have their fishery-independent and dependent surveys monitored.

There were several other word, grammar, and editorial changes that were made. Given that these corrections are made, the TC approves the SASC report. **Additional comments** are due to Matt Cieri, Erika Robbins, and Patrick Kilduff by **October 2, 2006**.

Meeting Adjourned