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Director

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

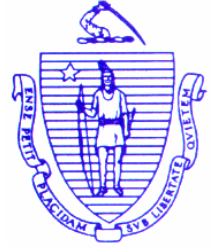
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Marine Fisheries Advisory

March 21, 2005

ASMFC TO HOLD HEARINGS ON AMERICAN EEL PID –

Hearing in Massachusetts on April 19th

ASMFC recently announced the availability of the American Eel Public Information Document (PID) for public comment. *Marine Fisheries* will host a hearing in Massachusetts on April 19th at the Annisquam River Marine Fisheries Station in Gloucester. See the ASMFC press release below for further information.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MARCH 18, 2005

PRESS CONTACT
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American Eel PID Available for Public Comment
States Schedule Hearings for April & May

The Commission's American Eel Management Board has approved the Public Information Document (PID) on American Eel for public review and comment. Atlantic coastal states from Maine through North Carolina will be holding hearings on the PID throughout April and May. The specific details follow:

Maine Department of Marine Resources

April 18, 2005; 6:00 PM
Gulf of Maine Research Institute
Third Floor Board Room
350 Commercial Street
Portland, Maine
Contact: Lewis Flagg at 207/624-6548

And

April 21, 2005; 6:00 PM
Eastern Maine Technical College
Rangeley Hall, Room 501A
Sylvan Road
Bangor, Maine
Contact: Lewis Flagg at 207/624-6548

Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries

April 19, 2005; 7:00 PM
Annisquam River Marine Fisheries Station
30 Emerson Avenue
Gloucester, Massachusetts
Contact: Mike Armstrong at 978/282-0308

Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife

April 21, 2005; 6:00 PM
URI Narragansett Bay Campus
Corless Auditorium, South Ferry Road
Narragansett, Rhode Island
Contact: Jason McNamee at 401/423-1943

Connecticut Dept. of Environmental Protection

April 20, 2005; 7:00 PM
Marine Headquarters Office Education Center
333 Ferry Road
Old Lyme, Connecticut
Contact: Steve Gephard at 860/434-6043

New York Dept. of Environmental Conservation

May 19, 2005; 7:30 PM
Bureau of Marine Resources Headquarters
205 North Belle Meade Road
East Setauket, New York
Contact: Vic Vecchio at 631/444-0476

And

May 18, 2005; 7:30 PM
Upper Delaware Council
311 Bridge Street
Narrowsburg, New York
Contact: Vic Vecchio at 631/444-0476

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

May 5, 2005; 7:00 PM
Atlantic County Library
306 East Jimmie Leeds Road
Absecon, New Jersey
Contact: Bruce Freeman at 609/633-2408

Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife

May 17, 2005; 7:00 PM
Dept. of Natural Resources & Environmental
Control
Richardson and Robbins Building Auditorium
89 Kings Highway
Dover, Delaware
Contact: Roy Miller at 302/739-3441

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

May 16, 2005; 7:00 PM
Tawes State Office Building-C-1, Conference
Room,
580 Taylor Avenue
Annapolis, Maryland
Contact: Keith Whiteford 410/643-4601

Potomac River Fisheries Commission

May 4, 2005; 7:00 PM
John T. Parran Hearing Room
222 Taylor Street
Colonial Beach, Virginia
Contact: A.C. Carpenter at 804/224-7148

Virginia Marine Resources Commission

April 18, 2005; 6:00 PM
Fourth Floor Conference Room
2600 Washington Avenue
Newport News, Virginia
Contact: Jack Travelstead at 757/247-2247

North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries

April 13, 2005; 6:00 PM
943 Washington Square Mall
Washington, North Carolina
Contact: Mike Potthoff at 252/946-6481

In March 2004, the American Eel Management Board authorized development of a PID to begin an informational scoping process in response to concerns regarding coastwide declines in eel abundance. Canadian and US data show 2003 commercial landings are the lowest on record since 1945 and there are indications of localized recruitment failure in the Lake Ontario/St. Lawrence River system. The International Eel Symposium at the 2003 American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting reported a worldwide decline of eel populations, including the Atlantic coast stock of American eel.

The PID provides an overview of our current knowledge of American eel, including stock status, a description of commercial and recreational fisheries, and a suite of research and management issues for public comment. These issues include potential changes to the management programs for recreational and commercial fisheries, an evaluation of non-fishing sources of mortality (e.g., habitat and predation), and a review of the plan's current monitoring requirements.

Depending upon the public's reaction and comment on the issues presented in the PID, the Management Board may decide to pursue an addendum to the American Eel FMP, or proceed with the development of an amendment. An addendum would allow the Board to rapidly address specific issues that the public feels require immediate attention, while the amendment process would allow the Management Board to conduct additional fact-finding and outreach activities for public participation and comment on broader issues.

The Management Board may also decide to proceed on both an addendum and an amendment to the FMP simultaneously. Through such a process, certain issues would be resolved expeditiously via an addendum. Likewise, other issues that require more information (e.g., data expected from the pending stock assessment or federal status review) or are otherwise inappropriate for an addendum may be more thoroughly examined over a longer period of time via an amendment.

Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the PID either by attending public hearings or providing written comments. Copies of PID are available via the Commission's website at www.asmf.org under Breaking News or by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400. Public comment will be accepted no later than 5 PM on June 10, 2005, and should be forwarded to Lydia Munger, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, 1444 Eye Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC 20005; (202) 289-6051 (fax) or comments@asmfc.org (subject line: American Eel). For more information, please contact Lydia Munger at (202)289-6400 or lmunger@asmfc.org.