



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

*Working towards healthy, self-sustaining populations of all Atlantic coast fish species, or successful restoration
well in progress by the year 2015*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 10, 2004

PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger
(202) 289-6400

ASMFC American Eel Board Calls for Development of Amendment 1 to the Interstate Plan *Plan to Address Continued Stock Declines*

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s American Eel Management Board authorized development of Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Eel to address concerns regarding coastwide declines in 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.

“In initiating the development of an amendment, the Board recognizes the necessity of taking additional action to protect the coastwide stock of American eel from further decline,” stated Board Chair, Jack Travelstead of Virginia. “The amendment is just one approach. The Board is also committed to working with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to ensure coordinated management.”

Issues to be addressed by the amendment include changes in the management programs for recreational and commercial fisheries, an evaluation of non-fishing sources of mortality, and a review of the plan’s current monitoring requirements. The American Eel Technical Committee recommended these items for consideration by the Board. The Board may move more quickly to address some of these issues through an addendum.

Additionally, the Board requested the Commission co-sponsor a workshop on American eel passage. The Commission also recommended that the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) consider American eel in the Lake Ontario/St. Lawrence River/Lake Champlain/Richelieu River system as a candidate for listing as a Distinct Population Segment under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Board also recommended that the USFWS and the NMFS consider designating the entire coastwide stock as a candidate for listing under the ESA.

For more information, please contact Lydia Munger, American Eel Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or <lmunger@asmfc.org>.

###

PR04-06

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 anadromous species.

1444 Eye Street, N.W. -- Sixth Floor -- Washington, D.C. 20005
(202) 289-6400 (phone) (202) 289-6051 (fax) www.asmfc.org