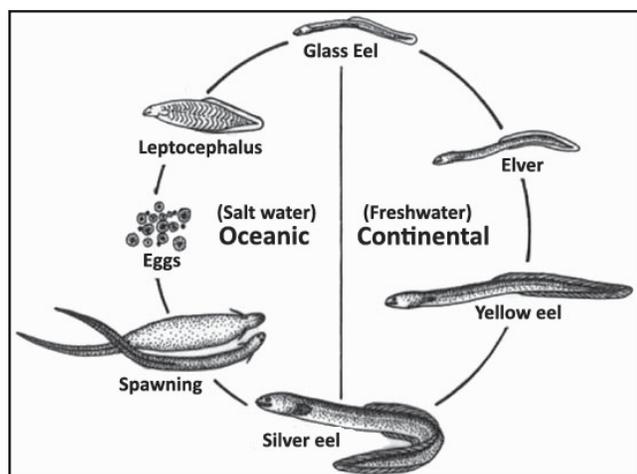


AMERICAN EEL (from page 26)

American eel were petitioned for listing as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 2010. At that same time, the Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans conducted a stock assessment on American eel in Canadian waters and found that region-specific status indices show abundance relative to the 1980s is very low for Lake Ontario and upper St. Lawrence River stock, and either unchanged or increasing in the Atlantic Provinces. Furthermore, in 2014 the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) listed American eel as endangered on the IUCN Red List. In October 2015, the US Fish and Wildlife Service made a determination that ESA listing for American eel was not warranted at this time due in part to current management program in place through the Commission. In October 2016 at the Conference of the Parties (CoP) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the European Union requested that more information be collected on the international trade and stock condition of *Anguilla* species, including American Eel, due in part to the increased international market demand and threats to conservation.



American eel life cycle

Atlantic Coastal Management

American eel pose unique conservation and management challenges on a coastwide basis as they are a slow growing, late maturing, semelparous species (meaning they spawn once and then die) that migrate between the high seas and inland estuaries and riverine systems, as well as through international, federal, state, and local jurisdictions. Through the Commission, Atlantic coastal states from Maine to Florida manage American eel in their territorial seas and inland waters. Each state is responsible for implementing management measures within its jurisdiction to ensure the sustainability of the American eel population residing within state boundaries. Increasing demand for eel by Asian markets and domestic bait fisheries, coupled with concern about the status of eel abundance and limited assessment data, spurred development of the first Interstate Fishery Management Plan in the mid-1990s.

Through Addenda III and IV, the Commission and the states sought to reduce mortality and increase conservation of American eel stocks across all life stages. Addendum III,

approved in 2013, increased the commercial yellow eel minimum size to 9 inches, reduced the recreational bag limit to 25 fish/day, prohibited silver eel fisheries except in the Delaware River (NY), and implemented fishery-independent and fishery-dependent monitoring requirements. Addendum IV, approved in 2014, established the first ever coastwide quota for yellow eel fisheries, set at 907,671 pounds, along with specific management action if the quota is exceeded. Specifically, the Addendum establishes two management triggers: (1) exceeding coastwide quota by more than 10% in a given year, or (2) exceeding the coastwide quota for two consecutive years regardless of the percent overage. If either one of the triggers are met then states would implement state-specific allocation based on average landings from 2011-2013. Addendum IV also specifies that Maine will maintain its daily trip level reporting and require a pound-for-pound payback in the event of quota overages in its glass eel fishery. Additionally, the state has implemented a fishery-independent life cycle survey covering glass, yellow and silver eels within at least one river system. The Addendum specifies these requirements would also be required for any jurisdiction with a commercial glass eel fishery harvesting more than 750 pounds.

Addendum IV also provides opportunities for a limited glass eel harvest for domestic aquaculture purposes. In 2016 and 2017, North Carolina implemented an aquaculture plan approved by the Board that allowed up to 200 pounds of glass eels to be harvest for aquaculture. At the upcoming 2017 August Meeting, the Board will consider a proposal from North Carolina to continue this program for 2018 and beyond.

Looking Ahead

In fall 2017, the stock assessment update for American eel will be completed and the Board will consider whether management action is needed in response to the results. While the update will include additional years of data to the coastwide and regional trend analyses, stock status determination cannot be made until more information about the species is collected from the full extent of the species range, including the Great Lakes, Canadian Atlantic Provinces, and the Gulf of Mexico.

• UPDATE • UPDATE • UPDATE • UPDATE •

At the ASMFC Annual Meeting on October 17, the American Eel Management Board reviewed the results of the 2017 American Eel Stock Assessment Update, which indicates the resource remains depleted.

Based on this update, the Management Board passed two unanimous motions:

- That Maine's glass eel quota for 2018 remain at status quo from 2015-2017 (9,688 pounds)
- To initiate an addendum to consider alternative allocations, management triggers, and coastwide caps relative to the current management program for both yellow and glass eel commercial fisheries starting with the 2019 season.

For a detailed view of the new stock assessment go to http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/59e8c077AmericanEelStockAssessmentOverview_Oct2017.pdf