

Marine Resources Administration Monthly Report

SEPTEMBER 2023

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****MARINE FISHERIES/MRA****

ASMFC/MAFMC/COOP/NOAA/ACCSP

- Staff submitted the Atlantic Sturgeon Compliance Report for the 2022 fishing year to the ASMFC ahead of the October 1st deadline. New Jersey met all compliance requirements regarding Atlantic sturgeon in 2022.

MEETING SUMMARIES

• Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program-ACCSP

- Staff attended the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program Joint Operations and Advisory Committee Meeting in Portland, ME.
 - Eighteen FY24 proposals were reviewed and ranked by all committee members. Results were discussed and recommendations were compiled and submitted to the Coordinating Council for approval at the Annual ASMFC Meeting in October.
 - All members approved the SciFish Policies and support the launching of the SciFish Project Builder and application.
 - The Committees request that the Coordinating Council direct the Funding Subcommittee to be convened to review and potentially update the available point ranges of program priorities in the ranking process with consideration of the increased importance of socio-economic data in recent years.
 - Both Committees approved the addition of the Electronic Monitoring Standards to the Atlantic Coast Standards with the Commercial Technical Committee to review the standards annually for the next 5 years.

• Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission-ASMFC

- The ASMFC Atlantic Croaker Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) met via webinar during September 11 through September 14 for the first assessment workshop of the current benchmark assessment. Data inputs were summarized and reviewed and included fisheries landings and discards, commercial catch-per-unit-effort, biological data, and fisheries-independent survey indices. Preliminary model runs were reviewed which included traffic light analysis and index-based methods, but the SAS reached consensus on pursuing the use of Stock Synthesis as the preferred model. Follow-up tasks were assigned, and check-in calls were scheduled for October and November.
- The ASMFC Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Subcommittee and the Delaware Bay Ecosystem Technical Committee (DBETC) met via webinar on September 26 to review survey results of horseshoe crab and red knot abundances and their incorporation into the ARM model. Results from the ARM model run for 2023 were examined, and the resulting harvest specifications for fishing year 2024 will be recommended to the ASMFC Management Board during their October meeting.
- Staff participated via webinar in multiple meetings of the Cobia TC to address tasks assigned by the Board at their last meeting and develop a roadmap for an upcoming stock assessment. The TC developed recommendations for the Board in regard to recreational management measures for the next quota block, 2024-2026, discussed a potential review of fishery data needs for a report to the Board, and worked on assigning tasks within the roadmap for the upcoming stock assessment.
- Staff met via webinar on September 29, 2023 to receive an update on the 2024 River Herring Benchmark Stock Assessment and provide feedback for the habitat model to be used in the assessment. The Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) recommended extending the timeline for the assessment to present to the Management Board at the 2024 Spring Meeting and provided an

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updated timeline of tasks for the TC to begin reviewing the draft report. Additionally, the TC reviewed the new method for defining stock structure by region, rather than by state, that will be in addition to coastwide metapopulation and mixed stock structures. Additionally, the TC met to review planned changes to Maryland's fishery dependent and independent surveys.

- Administration staff met with the Recreational Measures Setting FMAT (formerly HCR) to discuss specific indicator thresholds and management response to be analyzed using the summer flounder MSE model. The group discussed that due to time and MSE constraints an efficient list will be required (i.e., it will not be possible to test everything). Some of the larger decision points to be tested include using total removals rather than total harvest as a trigger in the harvest control rules. Lots of discussion also centered on the use of fishing mortality as part of the control rules. The Council and Policy Board will meet in early/mid-December to receive updates and provide additional direction to the FMAT. The current timeline specifies Council/Policy Board approval of final range of alternatives for public hearings in August 2024.
- Administration staff participated with a subgroup of the ERP-WG to discuss results of investigations related to ecological indicators. The subgroup met with modelers to determine whether any of the indicators could be fed directly or indirectly into ERP models. The subgroup was not keen on standalone indicators for management review without a direct link to management action. The subgroup will present their results to the full ERP when they meet in a few weeks; at or after this meeting, the subgroup will also draft a memo to the Management Board related to their findings as well (esp in light of recent interest in osprey fledglings as an ERP).
- Staff participated in a meeting of the ASMFC's ASC. Major topics of discussion centered on: 1) MRIP publicly-accessible data concerns, 2) guidelines on how to handle survey issues in stock assessment updates, 3) guidance on retrospective patterns in menhaden assessment, 4) Atlantic cobia stock assessment, 5) some proposed changes to the upcoming stock assessment schedule, and 6) MRIP FES changes.
- In August, in response to the benchmark assessment findings, the American Eel Management Board (Board) initiated an addendum to consider changes to the coastwide yellow eel harvest cap. The assessment proposes a new tool, called ITARGET for setting the coastwide cap based on abundance indices and catch. The Plan Development Team (PDT) was tasked with developing a draft addendum that considers using this tool to recommend a range of coastwide caps and management options. The PDT met twice in September to discuss potential management options for consideration in the addendum. Preliminary recommendations include:
 - One catch cap based on the stock assessment recommended configuration of ITARGET (1984-1987 reference period, 1.25 multiplier, and 0.8 threshold) and another option using the 1988-1999 reference period with different multipliers and thresholds.
 - Options for a management response to exceeding the catch cap, in addition to status quo from Addendum V.
 - Reevaluating no sooner than three years after implementation.

The PDT is also interested in exploring options for states to pursue glass eel harvest as an alternative to yellow eel harvest in order to reduce mortality on the yellow eel life stage. This idea is grounded in the understanding that the glass eel fishery could withstand a greater amount of fishing mortality than the yellow eel fishery in part due to the greater natural mortality that glass eels experience compared to yellow eels. In conclusion, the PDT is seeking guidance from the Board on the development of draft management options and their interest in a glass eel harvest proposal. A list of questions will be included in the memo to the Board.

INDEPENDENT FISHERIES

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- **Delaware River Seine Survey**
 - SAV data and biological samples collected from the Delaware River Seine Survey from 2018-2022 was compiled and submitted to the Bureau of Marine Habitat and Shellfisheries.
 - A new Suzuki 140 horsepower engine was installed on the Privateer!
- **Eel Surveys**
 - Preparation was completed for the Fall portion of the Yellow Eel Pot Survey in Great Bay, including installation of protective plates on the port side gunwale of the Maycraft. These plates will protect the fiberglass when setting and tending pots. The first day of the survey will be October 2. Over the eight-week survey period, staff will tag and release a percentage of each catch. A reminder was sent to all partner agencies with PIT tag scanners in an effort to collect recapture data outside of this survey.
- **Herring Surveys**
 - The young of year seine sampling portion of the River Herring Survey continues to see extremely low numbers of alewife and blueback herring. If this trend continues, 2023 will be, by far, the lowest total catches of young of year river herring in the survey's time series.
- **Horseshoe Crab Survey**
 - The 2023 Horseshoe Crab Spawning Survey data has been entered, proofed, and submitted to Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife for analysis.
- **Ocean Trawl**
 - The Ocean Trawl Survey began August 26th and was completed September 8th with a total of 8 full sampling days. Several days were lost due to weather and minor mechanical issues which were quickly resolved. Catches were relatively large, very mixed, and consisted of large amounts of spot, scup, and croaker. A hypoxic event seems to be occurring in the northern strata north of Brigantine with bottom dissolved oxygen being as low as 1 mg/L. Catches were similarly very low in that area. The Raritan Inventory has subsequently reported similar measurements in their survey area as well. The survey caught its first spinner shark; a common species off the coast, but never previously sampled in the trawl survey.
- **Raritan-Sandy Hook Bay Complex Inventory Project**
 - The Raritan Inventory Project for September began sampling on September 5th and was completed in 6 days of which one day of seine sampling was performed on October 4th due to lack of staff in September and bad weather. All 16 otter trawl stations, 16 seine stations and 12 gillnet stations were completed. Gillnet sampling consisted of mostly of Atlantic menhaden (n = 40), smooth dogfish (n = 57), and bluefish (n = 25), but also caught butterfish, blue crab, Spanish mackerel, weakfish, summer flounder, and cownose rays. Otter trawl sampling consisted of primarily Bay anchovy (n = 2,792), weakfish (n = 129), and scup (n = 47). Other species caught in trawl sampling consisted of spot, blue crab, black sea bass, Atlantic menhaden, Atlantic moonfish, and summer flounder. Seine sampling consisted only of mostly Atlantic silverside (n = 1,306), striped killifish (n = 127), and striped anchovy (n = 23). Other species caught in seine sampling consisted of permit, bluefish, Atlantic menhaden, blue crab, northern kingfish, and black drum. Sixteen eDNA water samples were collected and filtered from otter trawl stations and nine eDNA water samples were collected and filtered from seine stations.
- **Sturgeon Receivers**
 - Staff successfully downloaded data from the acoustic receivers from the Delaware Bay on Tuesday, September 12th. So far this year, there have been 90,288 detections representing 86 individual Atlantic sturgeon, 18 sand tiger sharks, 6 sandbar sharks, and 1 striped bass.

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- **Access Point Angler Intercept Survey-AP AIS**
 - The draw for September consisted of 167 site assignments and 10 head boat assignments that yielded a total of 627 intercepts (207 SH, 42 CH, 302 PR, 76 HB).
 - 5 Site Assignments and 4 Head boat Assignments were cancelled due to tropical storm Ophelia and its wind/flooding effects.
 - Staff continue to make updates to the Vessel Directory and Site Register in preparation for Wave 6.
 - Wave 2 Summary: 646 intercepts: 206 SH, 51 CH, 355 PR, 34 HB
 - Wave 3 Summary: 2168 intercepts: 760 SH, 219 CH, 1014 PR, 175 HB
 - Wave 4 Summary: 2563 intercepts: 764 SH, 319 CH, 1145 PR, 335 HB
 - Fishdump data for August was reviewed and edits were submitted.
- **Commercial Fisheries/Quota Management**
 - Reported 2022 landings from New Jersey's American eel commercial reporting totaled 52,543 pounds of American eel. Jersey landings increased in 2022, with landings over 26,000 pounds more than 2021. Estimated harvest catch per unit effort (pounds per trip) for 2022 was 169.49. This is higher than the 2021 CPUE of 134.52 but lower than the time series average of 177.7. In 2022, 75.2% of yellow eels caught were commercially harvested as food, while 18.1% were harvested for bait. Disposition was unknown for 3,529 pounds.
- **For-Hire Telephone Survey-FHTS**
 - September included weeks 35-38. There were 260 vessels drawn for the month with ~126 of those vessels responding. This resulted in a response rate of ~48.4%. All weekly mailings for May were sent out to the vessel representatives.
 - ACCSP and NOAA moved wave deadlines from October 14th to September 28th in preparation for a possible federal government shutdown. All necessary vessel updates and HMS permit records in the imports inbox were successfully completed before the new deadline. The new deadline will allow NOAA and ACCSP to prepare the wave 6 draw sooner than normal to avoid any potential delays.
- **NJ Saltwater Recreational Registry Program-NJSRRP/Volunteer Angler Survey-VAS**
 - As of September 28, 2023, there were 133,266 individuals and 658 for-hire vessels registered with the New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry Program (NJSRRP) for 2023. (Last month: of August 30, 2023, there were 128,500 individuals and 647 for-hire vessels registered for 2023).
 - Work is underway to move the Registry Program under the NJFW licensing system.
- **Striped Bass Bonus Program-SBBP**
 - The Striped Bass Bonus Program will remain open until December 31, 2023. Staff have issued 11,010 individual anglers and 141 party/charter boats. The current 2023 Bonus harvest is 434 fish.
- **Tournament Sampling**
 - No tournament sampling occurred in September due to limited available tournaments compiled with unfavorable weather conditions and lack of staff.

OUTREACH

- Staff presented to the Hooks and Anchors Fishing Club on Tuesday, October 5th. The presentation highlighted the Administration's fishery independent surveys, how we collect the data, and how that data is used in fisheries management. After the presentation staff fielded many questions from the members of the fishing club and they expressed interest in having staff come out for future meetings.
- A theme was chosen for the 2024 Marine Digest: NJ's changing environment, specifically changes observed during MRA surveys. The layout will be similar to the 2023 Digest, with the feature article consisting of several different sections that flow from one to the next. Numerous contributors will work together to form one cohesive feature article. Assignments were appointed on September 14 with a first draft due date of

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October 27. Annual updates to additional portions of the Digest are due on November 11. All first draft documents will be submitted to the Editor (I&E) on November 15.

ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS (Marine Resources Administration)

• Wind Energy

- New Jersey Research and Monitoring Initiative (RMI).
 - Staff participated in weekly Department internal RMI meetings.
 - Additional meetings were held to discuss projects and concepts in development including the whale aerial survey contract, the sea turtle tagging proposal, surfclam stock enhancement, benthic habitats, archival and real-time passive acoustic monitoring for large cetaceans.
 - Staff attended the update meeting for Project WOW.
- Permitting support
 - Biweekly permitting meetings were held with Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind (ASOW) and Ocean Wind 1 and 2 (OCW1 and OCW2). OCW2 has put meetings on hold for the next 6 months.
 - Staff attended weekly interdepartmental meetings to coordinate on the Federal Consistency determination for Empire Wind and provided final comments to the Bureau of Coastal Permitting.
 - Staff coordinated a reply to the request for marine resource information on the Delaware Bay to an offshore wind developer that is considering an export cable from the Central Atlantic Area through the Bay.
- Board of Public Utilities
 - Staff continued review of applications for NJ's 3rd Solicitation for Offshore Wind, met with the internal DEP team and the BPU, and submitted comments on all 4 applications on fisheries use of lease areas and evaluations of the proposed Fisheries Protection Plans.
 - Staff attended the Kick Off Meeting for the Strategic Plan update.
- Stakeholder Support
 - Staff provided updates to the Marine Fisheries Council.
 - Staff assisted Deputy Chief of Staff Megan Brunatti and OPPN with planning the October Environmental Resources Working Group meeting.
- Regional coordination
 - Staff attended two State Sector Caucus Meetings and the Habitat and Ecosystem Subcommittee meeting for the Regional Wildlife Science Consortium.
 - Staff met with NYSERDA to coordinate on several offshore wind topics.
 - Staff continued monthly meetings with Community Offshore Wind to discuss fishery stakeholder engagement and coordination of monitoring.
 - Staff attended the September meeting of the Interstate Wind Fish group.
 - Staff hosted the monthly Central Atlantic Offshore Wind and Fisheries Group.
 - Staff continued to work with the Responsible Offshore Science Alliance on reevaluating goals and requirements for project specific and regional monitoring and research for offshore wind, including attending the ROSA Advisory Council meeting.
 - Staff attended the meeting of the NYSERDA F-TWG to review the results of the Environmental Analysis that was done as part of the NY Master Plan 2.0 for offshore wind.
- Other Topics of Interest
 - Staff made a brief presentation to the review committee for the 312 Evaluation Session for the Coastal Zone Management program on the utility of the Mid Atlantic Data Portal for offshore wind research and communication.

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- Staff attended a presentation on a pilot study of a new type of offshore wind turbine foundation that does not require pile driving and sent comments to the OPPN.

MISCELLANEOUS (Marine Resources Administration)

• Grants

- Staff submitted performance period update reports for both the Shad Bycatch and DNA project and the Sturgeon Receiver Project.

• Regulatory/Legislative

- Notices of Administrative Changes (NOACs)
 - A NOAC establishing commercial spiny dogfish trip limits was published in the September 5, 2023, NJ Register.
 - A NOAC modifying Atlantic cod minimum size limit, season, possession limit and fillet size limit was filed with the Office of Administrative Law on September 7, 2023, for publication in the October 2, 2023, NJ Register.
- Rulemakings
 - MRA rule team continues to develop a new multispecies rule proposal amending N.J.A.C. 7:25-18.5A Artificial Reefs, along with other subchapters and sections pertaining to marine fisheries. The first draft proposal is currently under review.
 - Another rulemaking proposal is underway to allow modifications via NOAC to expeditiously comply with any management criteria approved by NOAA or the applicable regional management body. The proposal is currently under review. A Proposal Launch Meeting has been scheduled for October 26, 2023.
 - An additional multispecies rulemaking is underway and will incorporate a reorganization of all Marine Fisheries-related rules under N.J.A.C. 7:25B.
- Legislative Activity – State
 - No activity (summer recess)
- Legislative Activity – Federal
 - S. Res.351 (Sen. King, I-ME), Designating September 25, 2023, as “National Lobster Day.” Introduced and Passed in the Senate on 9/19/2023.
 - H.R. 886 (Rep. Bonamici, D-OR), Save Our Seas 2.0 Amendments Act. This bill revises provisions governing the administration of the Marine Debris Foundation and the Marine Debris Program. Reported by the Committee on Natural Resources on 9/8/2023.
 - H.R. 615 (Rep. Wittman, R-VA), Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act of 2023, To prohibit the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture from prohibiting the use of lead ammunition or tackle on certain Federal land or water under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture, and for other purposes. Reported by Committee on Natural Resources on 9/20/2023.

• Scientific Collection Permits

- Ninety-seven scientific collecting permits have been issued in 2023.

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****MARINE HABITAT & SHELLFISHERIES/MRA****

Offshore Wind, Restoration, Enhancement, Mitigation, and Habitat

• Environmental Review/ Waterfront Development

- Staff reviewed and provided comments to the Office of Environmental Review on several pre-applications, Land Management Reviews, and waterfront development permit applications. These reviews include:
 - LMR Heislerville Living Shoreline
 - MRA staff gave approval of the project with conditions. MRA provided comments and requested to obtain more information as the project develops.
 - Transco Pipeline Shellfish Mitigation
 - MRA staff reviewed project plans and met with project members to discuss plans for shellfish mitigation relating to a pipeline maintenance project in the Lower New York Bay.
 - MRA staff worked with DLRP staff on several mapping interpretations.
- Submerged Aquatic Vegetation and Shellfish Training
 - On September 25, 2023, MRA staff provided an in-person training introduction to submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV), identification of SAV species, and SAV/Shellfish mapping to DEP staff. The training took place at Island Beach State Park's Interpretive Center. MRA staff sent out a survey and received good feedback on the training. A virtual recording and guidance materials were also provided to all attendees.

• Ocean Acidification Team (OA Team)

- Staff met with an OA Team representative to discuss an upcoming OA workshop meeting. Staff collaborated on surveys relating to knowledge about ocean acidification and New Jersey OA Action Plan goals.

• Shell Recycling Program

- Staff continue to coordinate with Shell Recycling Program participants for weekly shell collection and investigate additional venues.
- Staff collected 281 bushels of recycled shell in the month of September.
- Staff coordinated with Fish & Wildlife's Information & Education staff to finalize the creation of a video to promote the Shell Recycling Program and its restaurant partners for National Seafood Month (October).
 - The video contains interviews with restaurant partner owners/ staff. The video is expected to be posted to social media platforms in October.
- Staff continue to work with other MRA staff to obtain quotes and coordinate the purchase of a barge for the annual shell planting efforts.

• Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV)

- FY 42 SAV Mapping Barnegat Bay – Little Egg Harbor
 - Staff met with partners from Stockton University, Rutgers Center for Remote Sensing and Spatial Analysis, and the Barnegat Bay Partnership to discuss current efforts relating to the 2023 mapping of SAV in the Barnegat Bay to Little Egg Harbor estuary. Final project deliverables are anticipated in the Spring of 2024. Partners also discussed plans to map SAV in New Jersey's northern coastal rivers, which is anticipated to take place in the Summer of 2024.
- ROCS-Net Event

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- Staff met with other ROCS-Net participants to collaborate on a poster presentation discussing challenges and plans for submerged vegetation within the region. The event will be held in Corvallis and Newport, Oregon. Staff are expected to present on current challenges within the state, meet with biologists from other states, hear from SAV experts, and tour labs at two different facilities within the state. The event will take place October 31st-November 2nd.
- 2024 Marine Digest Article
 - Staff began drafting a short article relating to submerged aquatic vegetation to be included in the 2024 Marine Digest.

Aquaculture and Shellfish Leases

• Commercial Shellfish Aquaculture Committee

- Staff meet with various departments to discuss the changes to the issuing and processing of the Commercial Shellfish Aquaculture Permit.
 - These changes include checking if the applicant has all of the necessary permits for structure aquaculture before issuing the CSAP permit.
 - These changes should help verify and streamline the compliance issues seen in previous years.

• Hydrographic Survey

- Staff prepare the necessary equipment and field gear for a hydrographic survey on all the lease grounds in Stites Sound.
- Staff plan to push this survey off into next month following the lease renewals surge.

• 2024 Lease Renewal

- Staff meet on 9/21 to discuss and prioritize the necessary steps for the upcoming lease renewal process that will begin on 10/16/2023.
- Staff have been working diligently on preparing a checklist, lease agreement, lease renewal, and an additional form packet for the front office staff.
- This packet and checklist will help to make this year's in-person renewal process organized and streamlined.
- Staff sent out a notification letter to all lease holders on September 26th to formally notify them about the changes to the upcoming renewal process.

• NJEMS Shellfish Lease Development

- Staff continue to provide data, testing, and feedback on the development of incorporating the leasing database into the NJEMS program. Staff are also working with the Bureau of GIS to allow GIS to input data directly into the NJEMS system.

State Fisheries and Quota Management

• Direct Market Harvest Program – 2023

- Harvest Season April 3 – November 24, 2023
- Post-Transplant Quota:
 - Medium Mortality Market Region – 28,556 bu.
 - Shell Rock Region – 25,598 bu.
 - High Mortality Region – 41,645 bu.
 - Individual quota was increased by 398 bushels after the transplant and is 1,198 bu. per license.
- 80 Dredge boat licenses
- Two-Three active dredging vessels
- Weekly Harvest & Dealer Reports required.
- Oyster Dredge Boat License Consolidation (10:1)

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- Requires Oyster Dredge Vessel License Consolidation Application and Administrative Consent Order (ACO) to allow up to 10 licenses to be harvested from 1 vessel.
 - 4 Active Designated Harvest Vessels with 10 Consolidated licenses
 - 2 Active Designated Harvest Vessels with 8 Consolidated licenses
 - 2 Active Designated Harvest Vessels with 7 Consolidated licenses

- **Vibrio Control Plan**

Dates of Harvest	Max hours to refrigeration	Start of Harvest
June 1 – June 14	7	Sunrise
June 15 - July 14	6	Sunrise
July 15 - August 31	7	Sunrise

- Effective Monday, July 24, 2023, Shell Rock and the High Mortality beds were temporarily closed to all oyster harvesting as part of the 2023 season regional management scenario. These beds will reopen once the Medium Mortality Market regional quota is harvested.

- **Season Tag Sale and Harvest Highlights:**

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
Single (\$2)	3,200	1,304	4,356	2,680	2,446	2,216	1,474	17,676
Cage (\$48)	500	379	749	720	214	307	288	3,157
Revenue	\$30,400	\$20,800	\$44,664	\$39,920	\$15,164	\$19,168	\$16,772	\$186,888
Harvest (bu)	N/A	15,480	18,209	14,888	15,924	10,676	6,389	81,566

- **Delaware Bay Shellfish Council Meeting**

- Meeting held Sep 5, 2023
- Letter to Secretary of State
- Agenda Letter from State/Fed Reps
- Meeting held in person at the Rutgers Haskin Shellfish Lab and by webinar/conference call. Log in instructions posted to NJ Fish & Wildlife webpage <https://www.nj.gov/dep/fgw>
- Oyster Resource Development Account printouts reviewed
- Revenue Totals for August
- Lease Ground Transfers & Vessel transactions attached for council approval
- Updated Shellfish Lease Agreement will be presented
- 2024 Vibrio Plan will be reviewed

- **Atlantic Coast Shellfish Council Meeting**

- A hybrid council meeting was held in person (and online) at the Atlantic County Library - Galloway Twp Branch on 9/13/2023.
- Various Dep reps were in attendance, along with the Atlantic coast council members in addition to the public.
- Revenue Totals for each month
- Lease Ground Transfers and lease ground applications up for decision attached for council approval.
- Topics of note included:
 - Old Business

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- Shellfish Lease Agreement
- 2024 Lease Renewals – October 16th
- New Business
 - 2023-2024 Surf Clam Quota
 - Shellfish Retail Training
- The October meeting will be held both in-person and virtually at the Rutgers Cooperative Extension in Toms River.

Surveys & Laboratory Work

- **2023 Field Schedule**
 - Staff continue to utilize the living Gantt chart document to plan the 2023 field season.
- **Delaware Bay Trawl Survey**
 - Staff sampled all 11 stations for the survey between 9/6/23 and 9/7/2023. The stations are in shallow, near-shore waters from the Cohansey River south to the Villas, NJ. The survey started in April and will run through October.
- **Dermo Disease Monitoring**
 - Staff worked alongside Rutgers Haskin Lab staff and successfully sampled oysters from the Delaware Bay seed beds to monitor the oyster disease dermo on 9/20/23. This year's sampling started in April and will be conducted through November.
- **Mullica River Sampling**
 - Staff continue to use the Biosonics MX Habitat Echosounder to help further characterize the Mullica River oyster reefs. This equipment produces accurate bathymetry maps, as well as sediment typing.
 - Staff will continue to use the equipment over the next few months in combination with bottom grabs to ground truth. This will help to develop a more quantitative assessment of this resource and inform future shell planting efforts.
 - Staff post processed remote sensing data obtained and trained other MRA staff on the collection and post processing of this data.
 - Staff began taking patent tong bottom grabs to ground truth remote sensing data. The samples taken will be overlayed in the remote sensing imagery to help further characterize the reefs.
- **Shell Plant and Intermediate Transplant Site Monitoring**
 - On 9/25/23, staff monitored enhancement sites from projects conducted by the Bureau from the current year and previous two years.
 - These sites include the Intermediate Transplant Program and the Shell Plant Program. Sampling will be conducted monthly through November. Staff worked with Rutgers Haskin Lab staff.
- **Sturgeon Acoustic Receiver Project**
 - MRA staff continue to monitor, maintain, and download data from the acoustic receiver array within Delaware Bay, NJ waters 9/12.
- **Raritan Bay Sediment Sample Collection**
 - Staff continue to process sediment samples and record grain size analysis collected from the Raritan Bay as a part of the hard clam stock assessment.

Buildings, Grounds, Vessels, and Vehicles

- **Boat Maintenance**
 - Bureau staff continue to maintain the R/V James W. Joseph and R/V Zephyrus by performing regular maintenance, repairs, and equipment upgrades as necessary.
 - Bureau staff continue to maintain state vehicles with routine and scheduled service.

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- Staff replaced broken radio antennas on R/V Vadum.

MRA – MHS Outreach

- Staff attended the Downbeach Seafood Festival at Ski Beach, Ventnor NJ on 9/9 & 9/10.
 - The 2-day event helped promote the Shell Recycling Program to local seafood vendors and provided an in-person point of contact to connect our staff directly with potential participants.
 - Over the weekend, attendees were encouraged to place discarded shells from hard clam and oyster entrées into shell recycling bins provided by MRA staff.
 - The festival produced 17 bushels of shell.
- On 9/28/2023 I&E staff posted an Aquaculture of New Jersey post that was a collaborative effort between Delaware Bay and Nacote Creek shellfish staff.
- Staff began constructing a social media post with information on the Commercial Fishing Industries for seafood month (October).
- Staff also began working on an Oyster Monitoring/Transplant document that will later be added to the department's webpage.

Administrative/Miscellaneous

- **Rutgers on Water Classroom**
 - Delaware Bay staff alongside Rutgers Haskin Lab staff conducted an on-water classroom showing collection techniques including dredging, trawling and zooplankton catches.
- **License Sales**
 - Revenue collected from the Delaware Bay Office totaled \$18,848.00 for September 2023.

License Type	Total	License Type	Total
Comm Crab Pot	\$400.00	Menhaden	\$52.00
Nets	\$1,476.00	DB Crab Dredge	\$100.00
Application Fees	\$28.00	Shellfish N/R	\$20.00
Oyster Tags	\$16,772.00		

- **E-Library**
 - Staff continued work on an e-library (Zotero) to store literature for reference. Once complete, the e-library will provide easy access for Bureau staff to all literature. It will also enable staff to add future literature as needed.
- **Miscellaneous**
 - Bureau Staff Day at Pequest Trout Hatchery, Oxford, NJ on 9/14.