

Marine Resources Administration Monthly Report

NOVEMBER 2023

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

ASMFC/MAFMC/COOP/NOAA/ACCSP

- Staff submitted a striped bass conservation equivalency proposal to ASMFC in order to maintain the Striped Bass Bonus Program for the next five years since management changes are being considered through draft Addendum II. The proposal incorporated feedback from stakeholder meetings. ASMFC's various striped bass committees will review the proposal and the Board will vote on management measures at their January 2024 meeting.

MEETING SUMMARIES

• Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission-ASMFC

- The Index Working Group within the ASMFC Horseshoe Crab Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) met via webinar on November 1 to review abundance indices completed from various fishery-independent research surveys conducted along the coast. Additional index work will be reviewed via email before presentation to the full SAS at the meeting scheduled for December 19.
- The ASMFC Atlantic Croaker Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) met via webinar November 28 for updates to various tasks including revised maturity curves, time-varying maturity, MRIP CPUE index, SEAMAP VAST indices with/without environmental covariates, shrimp trawl effort changes, correlation between landings and the North Atlantic Oscillation, and an environmental literature search. Updates to inputs and parameterizations for the stock synthesis assessment model were reviewed. The SAS will reconvene in early 2024 to review continuing work on the ongoing stock assessment.
- The ASMFC Horseshoe Crab Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Subcommittee (SC) met via webinar November 29 to discuss a task assigned to the ARM SC by the Horseshoe Crab Management Board (Board). During the October Board meeting, comments were submitted by EarthJustice including a review of the 2021 ARM Framework Revision by Dr. Kevin Shoemaker of the University of Nevada in which he raised 6 major concerns and criticisms of the Revision. As the review was made public and was highly critical of the ARM Revision, the Board requested the ARM SC compose a formal rebuttal. Various ARM SC members took on each of the 6 main points within the Shoemaker report to submit draft responses by early February 2024.
- Staff attended via webinar the fall meeting of the Atlantic Coast River Herring Collaborative Forum. Attendees received updates from ASMFC staff on the ongoing benchmark stock assessment for river herring, funding opportunities for fish passage projects through the USFWS, Mid-Atlantic council herring bycatch updates, and results from various river herring monitoring surveys along the coast.
- The American Eel Plan Development Team (PDT) met via conference call on November 2 and November 27. The purpose of both calls was to continue work on the draft yellow eel Addendum to the FMP, and to discuss mandatory harvester reporting requirements of the FMP. The PDT has tasked the Technical Committee (TC) with discussing the need for harvester reporting, given the fact that it is not used in stock assessments. The TC will be meeting on December 18 to discuss whether the PDT should make any changes to the reporting requirements in the new Addendum. The draft Addendum is expected to be presented to the Board for the late January meeting.
- The American Eel Plan Review Team reviewed compliance reports for the 2022 calendar year.
- The RMS F-based management subgroup met by conference call to discuss preliminary approaches to incorporate recreational fishing mortality into the RMS management reform system. Staff provided a brief overview of two approaches (striped bass and SSC), both of which will require

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additional consideration. A variety of questions arose regarding F-based approaches, and MAFMC/ASMFC staff are following up with the relevant people.

- The Ecological Reference Point WG met by conference call to discuss progress on a variety of tasks related to the 2025 benchmark assessment of ERPs. The group received updates on data availability for each major predator, major prey, proposed new predators (e.g., smooth dogfish and tuna), marine mammals and nearshore piscivorous birds. The group also received updates from a variety of subgroups tasked with addressing diet data, methods to combine survey indices, and model development updates. Work will continue into the new year for planned model building in summer 2024.
- **Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council-MAFMC**
 - The MAFMC/ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Monitoring and Technical Committee met November 13-14, 2023 to discuss commercial mesh size regulations and set recreational specifications for the 2024 fishing year. No recommended changes were made at this time for the commercial mesh size however the committee did recommend additional research to compare diamond versus square meshes. Recreationally, the committee recommended a 28 percent reduction to summer flounder, a ten percent reduction to scup, and status quo measures for black sea bass.
- **Marine Fisheries Council/Advisory Committees**
 - Administration staff participated in a meeting of the NJ Marine Fisheries Council's (MFC) striped bass Advisory committee. The goals were to solicit input on the MFC's interest in considering going out of compliance with the coastwide emergency action (EA) regulation, and to solicit information on possible changes to NJ's bonus program regulations. Advisors broadly supported staying in compliance with the EA, but had more diverse opinions related to bonus program regulations. Staff will consider advisor input and submit bonus program options to ASMFC for their consideration.
- **Public Hearings**
 - ASMFC held a virtual public hearing jointly for NJ and PA on draft Addendum II which considers striped bass management measures to reduce fishing mortality to the target and support stock rebuilding by 2029. A second in-person hearing was scheduled for December 5th.
- **Miscellaneous**
 - Staff attended via webinar a meeting of the Delaware River Cooperative's Creel Survey sub-committee to discuss ongoing efforts geared toward developing a creel survey to determine harvest of important gamefish species in the Delaware Basin including American shad, striped bass, smallmouth bass, and trout. Staff from the PA Fish and Boat Commission presented potential cost estimates for such a large-scale survey and committee members discussed what data they would like to see collected. The sub-committee will be meeting monthly with the goal of providing the COOP's Policy committee with a list of options to explore for the potential survey and how to fund it.

INDEPENDENT FISHERIES

- **Delaware Bay Tagging**
 - Staff began working on the tagging vessel in preparation of the 2024 tagging season which will begin in February.
- **Delaware River Seine Survey**
 - A summary update for survey years 2020-2022 was posted on the Fish and Wildlife website. The summary includes total number of fish caught, water quality data and other highlights from those years.
- **Eel Surveys**

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- The fall portion of the 2023 Yellow Eel Pot Survey was completed on November 17. Over a six-week period, strings of pots (four pots each) were set and tended 40 times. Preliminary catch totals and tagging data are not yet available.
- **Ocean Trawl**
 - The October Ocean Trawl Survey was completed on October 19th with 7 sampling days. Only one day was lost due to inclement weather. Catches were moderate in both size and diversity with some summer stragglers still hanging around, including some banded rudderfish and butterfly rays. Notable catches included a sandbar shark, several angel sharks, and 16 Atlantic sturgeon. One Atlantic sturgeon was a recaptured smaller fish caught off Atlantic City, but not tagged by the ocean trawl survey. Also of note was a recaptured tagged horseshoe crab off Wildwood.
- **Raritan-Sandy Hook Bay Complex Inventory Project**
 - The Raritan Inventory Project for October began sampling on October 25th and concluded on November 13th due to scheduling issues, lack of staff, and weather. The sampling was completed in 4 days between the dates mentioned. All 16 otter trawl stations, 16 seine stations and 12 gillnet stations were completed. Gillnet sampling encountered Atlantic menhaden (n = 2), striped bass (n = 1), hickory shad (n = 1), and a spider crab. Otter trawl sampling encountered primarily bay anchovy (n = 6,684), Atlantic silverside (n = 15), striped anchovy (n = 11), and also encountered black sea bass, bluefish, Atlantic croaker and winter flounder. Seine sampling encountered primarily Atlantic menhaden (n = 6,170), Atlantic silverside (n = 853), striped killifish (n = 156) and also encountered blue crab, tautog, black drum and winter flounder. Sixteen eDNA water samples were collected and filtered from otter trawl stations and sixteen eDNA water samples were collected and filtered from seine stations.
- **Sturgeon Receivers**
 - Staff hauled the acoustic receivers out of the bay for the year on November 15th. In 2023, 86 individual Atlantic sturgeon, 19 sand tiger sharks, 6 sandbar sharks, and 1 striped bass were identified from a total of 101,749 detections. 426 individual tags are yet to be identified.
- **Ventless Trap Survey**
 - MRA staff completed the 8th year of the ventless trap survey on NJ Artificial Reefs. In addition to the continuation of sampling the Sea Girt, Manasquan Inlet, and Little Egg Reefs, staff initiated exploratory sampling on the Atlantic City Reef during the fall sampling period. Catches were similar this fall compared to previous seasons with catches first dominated by black sea bass and American lobster during the early weeks in October and transitioning to unprecedented high catches of tautog on the Little Egg and Atlantic City Reefs. In the past, a 5–7 day soak of the fish traps would result in roughly 6 tautog with a dozen representing a very high catch. This year however, traps of 20 were common with some reaching quantities as high as 40. By all indications, tautog abundance in at least the southern region of the sampling area has increased. Conversely, catches in past years during the fall period showed high abundance of crab species such as spider crab, Jonah crab, and Atlantic rock crab whereas this year those species seemed to be in lower abundance in our sampling gear. Staff recorded dissolved oxygen (DO) levels between October 1 and November 5 on all reef sites and following the observed trend of low DO levels recorded by the Rutgers gliders, found low DO levels of 3-4 mg/l during the initial week of the survey which then returned to elevated levels between 7-8 mg/l from week 2-5 suggesting that the hypoxic conditions during the late summer/early fall have returned to normal conditions.

DEPENDENT FISHERIES

- **Access Point Angler Intercept Survey-APAIS**

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- The draw for November consisted of 154 site assignments and 4 completed head boat assignments that yielded a total of 953 intercepts (259 SH, 95 CH, 543 PR, 56 HB).
 - There was one cancelled site assignment in November due to staffing availability.
 - There was one cancelled HB assignment in November due to weather.
- Staff continue to make updates to the Vessel Directory and Site Register in preparation for 2024 sampling.
- November mileage is being validated and submitted for reimbursement. October mileage has been dispensed and received.
- Data for the October Fishdump were reviewed and necessary edits were submitted.
- **Biological**
 - Staff have completed samples from the 2023 Ocean Trawl Survey. Approximately 1,115 samples have been processed for age and diet purposes. 453 stomachs have been analyzed for 2023.
- **Commercial Fisheries/Quota Management**
 - Summer flounder: The commercial 2023 Directed Season 6 began on November 1st. Current directed harvest is at 85% of the quota. A transfer is in progress with the states of Virginia and North Carolina to prevent a mid-season closure.
 - Black Sea Bass: The commercial 2023 Directed Season 6 began on November 1st. Current seasonal harvest is at 97% of the seasonal quota. A transfer is in progress with the state of North Carolina to prevent a mid-season closure.
 - Menhaden: The commercial menhaden season began on January 1st. Quota designated to the “other gears” fishery is an estimated 63% harvested, while quota designated to the “purse seine” fishery is an estimated 39% harvested.
 - Bluefish: The commercial bluefish season began on January 1st. Current harvest is at 27% of the adjusted quota.
 - Scup: The Winter II scup season started on October 1st. Current coastwide harvest is 58% of the seasonal quota, with NJ accounting for 10% at 297,327 pounds.
 - Spiny dogfish: The 2023/24 commercial season began on May 1st. Current harvest is 63% of the quota.
- **For-Hire Telephone Survey-FHTS**
 - October included weeks 44-47. There were 120 vessels drawn for the month with 35 of those vessels responding. This resulted in a response rate of 29.1%. All weekly mailings were sent out to the proper vessel representatives.
 - Few vessel updates in the NOAA vessel directory were completed since most HMS permits for the calendar year 2023 have already been processed.
 - Staff began to look into what vessel directory changes need to be made in the winter before the 2024 survey season.
- **NJ Saltwater Recreational Registry Program-NJSRRP/Volunteer Angler Survey-VAS**
 - As of November 30, 2023, there were 140,275 individuals and 674 for-hire vessels registered with the New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry Program (NJSRRP) for 2023. (Last month: As of October 31, 2023, there were 137,282 individuals and 668 for-hire vessels registered for 2023).
 - Staff have been working on the migration of the Saltwater Registry to the NJFW licensing system. This includes development and testing. Live date is scheduled for December 15.
- **Striped Bass Bonus Program-SBBP**
 - The 2023 Striped Bass Bonus Program (SBBP) will remain open until December 31. A total of 12,463 individual anglers and 159 party/charter boats are enrolled. The current 2023 bonus harvest is 41,388 lbs. from 6,400 fish, which represents 19.2% of the quota. Individual anglers have harvested 1,041 fish and party/charter boats have harvested 5,360 fish.

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- **Tournament Sampling**
 - Tournament and party/charter boat sampling has finished for 2023. Data will be finalized in the coming months.

OUTREACH

- The final drafts of the feature article and all updateable digest portions were completed. All will be submitted to I&E once the 2024 template is received from the publisher and all Marine Fisheries submissions can be downloaded to the document.
- Staff is working to prep articles from older Marine Digests (2022 and earlier) for future posting on the F&W website. A list of article titles and authors will be available, and each title will link directly to the individual article.

MISCELLANEOUS (Marine Resources Administration)

- **Regulatory/Legislative**
 - Notices of Administrative Changes (NOACs)
 - A draft NOAC modifying the recreational scup season was approved by NJ Marine Fisheries Council at their November 2, 2023, meeting. Final approval of the scup season will occur at the December MAFMC meeting.
 - A draft NOAC modifying commercial summer flounder and black sea bass trip limits was approved by NJ Marine Fisheries Council at their November 2, 2023, meeting. The NOAC is currently under review with OLA.
 - 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.
 - A rulemaking proposal to expand the Commissioner's authority to modify rules via NOAC to expeditiously comply with any management requirement established under an approved fishery management plan. The proposal is currently under review with OLA and DAG.
 - 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
 - S4165/A5806, Senator Greenstein (D14), Senator Oroho (R24)/Assemblyman Moriarty (D4), Appropriates \$48 million from constitutionally dedicated CBT revenues to DEP for State acquisition of lands for recreation and conservation purposes, including Blue Acres projects, and Green Acres Program administrative costs. Introduced and referred to Senate Environment and Energy Committee on 11/30/2023.
 - S4138/A5807, Senator Johnson (D37), Senator Schepisi (R39)/Freiman (D16), Appropriates \$58 million from constitutionally dedicated CBT revenues for recreation and conservation purposes to DEP for State capital and park development project. Introduced and referred to Senate Environment and Energy Committee on 11/30/2023.
 - A5720, Assemblyman Sauickie (R12), requires cultural competency training for certain State, county, or municipal public employees who routinely interact with public. Introduced and referred to Assembly State and Local Government Committee on 11/20/2023.
 - Legislative Activity – Federal
 - H. Res. 881, (Rep. Beyer, D-Virginia), a resolution commemorating the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Introduced on November 21, 2023 and referred to the House Natural Resources Committee.

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- H.R. 6447, (Rep. Case, D-Hawaii), a bill to prohibit certain actions with respect to certain marine reef species, and for other purposes. Introduced on November 17, 2023, and referred to the House Natural Resources Committee, and in addition to the House Ways and Means Committee, and the House Foreign Affairs Committee, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.
- H.R. 6393, (Rep. Waltz, R-Florida), a bill to amend the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to allow certain activities to be conducted with respect to sturgeon held in captivity or in a controlled environment in the United States, and for other purposes. Introduced on November 13, 2023, and referred to the House Natural Resources Committee.
- S. 3277, (Sen. Sullivan, R-Alaska), a bill to amend the Marine Debris Act to reauthorize the Marine Debris Program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Introduced November 9, 2023, and referred to the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee.
- H.R. 6235, the “Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Amendments Act of 2023”, (Rep. Bonamici, D-Oregon), a bill to amend the Harmful Algal Blooms and Hypoxia Research and Control Act of 1998 to address harmful algal blooms, and for other purposes. Introduced on November 6, 2023, and referred to the House Science, Space, and Technology, and in addition to the House Natural Resources Committee, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.
- H. R. 6215, the “No American Climate Corps Act”, (Rep. Good, R-Virginia), a bill to prohibit Federal funds from being made available for the Justice40 Initiative or for the American Climate Corps. Introduced on November 3, 2023, and referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and in addition to the House Natural Resources Committee, the House Education and the Workforce Committee, and the House Oversight and Accountability Committee, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.
- H. R. 6129, the “Studying NEPA’s Impact on Projects Act”, (Rep. Yakym, R-Indiana), a bill to require the Council on Environmental Quality to publish an annual report on environmental reviews and causes of action based on compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and for other purposes. Introduced on November 1, 2023, and referred to the House Natural Resources Committee.
- S. 2182, the “Wild USA Seafood Act of 2023”, (Sen. Murkowski, R-Alaska), a bill to amend the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 to establish a label designating fish harvested in the United States exclusive economic zone or navigable waters as wild USA seafood, and for other purposes. Introduced on June 22, 2023, and referred to the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee.
- H.R. 6008, the “Requiring Integrity in Conservation Efforts Act” or as the “R.I.C.E.’s Whale Act”, (Rep. Graves, R-Louisiana), a bill to prohibit the implementation of certain documents until the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries of the National Marine Fisheries Service issues documents relating to the Rice’s whale was ordered to be reported on Wednesday, November 8, 2023. Mark-up held on November 8, 2023.
- **Scientific Collection Permits**
 - One hundred scientific collecting permits have been issued in 2023 and two for 2024. An additional three applications have been reviewed and will be processed upon receipt of all required materials.

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

Offshore Wind, Restoration, Enhancement, Mitigation, and Habitat

October

• 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.
 - NJDEP Island Beach State Park Living Shoreline
 - MRA staff provided additional comments relating to a living shoreline project at Island Beach State Park.
 - Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Site Inspection
 - MRA staff visited a site in close proximity to mapped submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV). MRA staff performed a site inspection to determine if the proposed project location had any SAV or SAV habitat present.
 - Baypoint Shoreline Restoration New Sweden
 - MRA staff provided comments relating to a shoreline restoration in New Sweden.
 - MRA staff worked with DLRP staff on several mapping interpretations.

• Shell Recycling Program

- Staff continue to coordinate with Shell Recycling Program participants for weekly shell collection and investigate additional venues.
- Staff collected 324 bushels of recycled shell in the month of October.
- Staff continue to work with other MRA staff to coordinate the purchase of a barge for the annual shell planting efforts. Staff have developed the specifications of the barge and will work with treasury and procurement to start the purchasing process.
- Staff gave a presentation on the Shell Recycling Program to students at Absegami High School. Students from AP science classes, and culinary classes both attended the event to learn about the program and a unique intersection between marine science, conservation and culinary.
- Staff gave a similar presentation on the Shell Recycling Program and shellfish management to science students at Cedar Creek High School.
- The Shell Recycling Program National Seafood Month video launched on NJDEP Fish and Wildlife YouTube and social media channels and was well received by all partners.
- Staff is working with Viking Yachts, who has an interest in partnering on the Shell Recycling Program. Staff will work with Viking representatives to see where they can best assist with the program.

• ROCS-Net 2024 Event

- Staff attended the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) ROCS-Net event in Corvallis and Newport, Oregon. Staff collaborated with other participants from Region 2 and presented on 'Seagrass in a Changing Climate.'
- Staff toured labs and facilities at both locations and had the opportunity to speak with scientists and participants from various regions.

• Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV)

- BioSonics Barrel Island
 - Staff used BioSonics to survey around Barrel Island in Little Egg Harbor for submerged aquatic vegetation. Maps were generated to assess the density of SAV beds present around the island and overlaid in GIS with DEP Nearmap Imagery. SAV presence and absence was

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verified in the field. This equipment provides the opportunity for new maps to be generated and insight into these mapping techniques in comparison to traditional aerial flight imagery.

- **Miscellaneous**

- Staff attended a meeting on the NRCS and Ocean County Soil Conservation District COASTAL project.
- Staff attended a Shellfish Working Group meeting hosted by the Barnegat Bay Partnership. The group comes together on a quarterly basis and is made up of industry, NGOs, and State and Federal representatives. Staff provided an update on the current status of the Shell Recycling Program.
- Staff began the travel approval process to attend the Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow workshop. The workshop is a five-day hunting/angling awareness and conservation education workshop designed for natural resource professionals. The program prepares resource professionals to better interact and relate to agency stakeholders.
- 2024 Marine Digest Submission
 - Staff finalized and submitted a draft article on submerged aquatic vegetation for the 2024 Marine Digest.

November

- **Environmental Review/Waterfront Development**

- MRA staff did not receive any applications from the Office of Environmental Review in the month of November.
 - MRA staff worked with DLRP staff on several mapping interpretations.

- **Shell Recycling Program**

- Staff continue to coordinate with Shell Recycling Program participants for weekly shell collection and investigate additional venues.
 - Staff collected 275 bushels of recycled shell in the month of November.
- Staff continue to work with other MRA staff to coordinate the purchase of a barge for the annual shell planting efforts. Staff continues to work with treasury and procurement to start the purchasing process.
- Staff were invited to and began developing a full proposal for the Coastal Zone Management Habitat Protection and Restoration Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Competition. The project is entitled “*Restoring Oyster Reef Habitat in the Mullica River-Great Bay Estuary through an Expanded Atlantic City Shell Recycling Program, Atlantic County, New Jersey.*” If funded, the project will expand the existing shell recycling and shell planting programs significantly and add an educational component to Atlantic City schools. This would include the addition of 15 restaurant partners, 3 public drop-off locations, and educational programs at a minimum of 3 schools in Atlantic City. The program would aim to plant 25,000 bushels of shell annually over the 3 year grant period. The proposal will be submitted in December for consideration. Staff will
- Staff submitted final specifications of the intended barge build to treasury and procurement. Staff will continue to coordinate with purchasing staff throughout the bidding process once it is opened.

- **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.

- **Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV)**

- ROCS-Net Event
 - Staff presented on the ROCS-Net Event experience and takeaways on November 16, 2023.
- Marine Resources Administration Staff Meeting

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- Staff presented on submerged aquatic vegetation current and future plans and efforts to staff from the Marine Resources Administration (MRA).

Aquaculture and Shellfish Leases

October

- **Atlantic Coast Lease Renewal**
 - Lessees have begun to schedule applications with front office staff to renew and sign the new Lease Agreement.
- **2024 Lease Renewal**
 - Delaware Bay Office had 9 leases renewed.
- **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.

November

- **Atlantic Coast Lease Renewal**
 - Lessees continue to visit the Nacote creek office to renew and sign the new Lease Agreement.
- **2024 Lease Renewal**
 - Delaware Bay Office had 20 leases renewed.
- **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

October

- **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 License 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
 - Call-in documenting on water activities to Delaware Bay Shellfisheries Office required.
 - Weekly Harvest & Dealer Reports required.
 - Oyster Dredge Boat License Consolidation (10:1)
 - 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
 - 1 Active Designated Harvest Vessels with 9 Consolidated licenses
 - 1 Active Designated Harvest Vessels with 8 Consolidated licenses
 - 2 Active Designated Harvest Vessels with 7 Consolidated licenses

Total = 71 Licenses

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- 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	Oct	Total
Single (\$2)	3,200	1,304	4,356	2,680	2,446	2,216	1,474	236	17,912
Cage (\$48)	500	379	749	720	214	307	288	90	3,247
Revenue	\$30,400	\$20,800	\$44,664	\$39,920	\$15,164	\$19,168	\$16,772	\$4,792	\$191,680
Harvest (bu)	N/A	15,480	18,209	14,888	15,924	10,676	6,389		81,566

- Delaware Bay Oyster Tonging Fishery**

October

- Bushel tags were ordered for the 2023-2024 tonging season
- Water Classification Charts were delivered by Bureau of Marine Water Monitoring
- Season opens Nov 1 - April 30
- Weekly Harvest & Dealer reports required

	Oct
Single (\$2)	100
Revenue	\$200
Weekly Reported Harvest (bu)	N/A
Dealer Reported Harvest (bu)	N/A

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- Effective November 6, 2023, Medium Mortality beds were closed. High Mortality and Shell Rock are open.
- Effective November 16, 2023, High Mortality beds are closed.

• Season Tag Sale and Harvest Highlights:

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Total
Single (\$2)	3,200	1,304	4,356	2,680	2,446	2,216	1,474	236	0	17,912

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Cage (\$48)	500	379	749	720	214	307	288	90	0	3,247
Revenue	\$30,400	\$20,800	\$44,664	\$39,920	\$15,164	\$19,168	\$16,772	\$4,792	0	\$191,680
Harvest (bu)	N/A	15,480	18,209	14,888	15,924	10,676	6,389			81,566

November

- Delaware Bay Oyster Tonging Fishery**

- Bushel tags were ordered for the 2023-2024 tonging season.
- Water Classification Charts were delivered by Bureau of Marine Water Monitoring
- Season opens Nov 1 - April 30
- Weekly Harvest & Dealer reports required.

	Oct	Nov	Total
Single (\$2)	100	200	300
Revenue	\$200	\$400	\$600
Weekly Reported Harvest (bu)	N/A	55	55
Dealer Reported Harvest (bu)	N/A	76	76

- Atlantic Coast Shellfish Council Meeting**

October

- A hybrid council meeting was held in person (and online) at the Atlantic County Library - Galloway Twp Branch on 10/16/2023.
- Various Dep reps were in attendance, along with the Atlantic coast council members in addition to the public.
- Revenue Totals for each month
 - Total Revenue for September 2023 \$622.72
 - Shellfisheries Law Enforcement Fund \$12.00
- Lease Ground Transfers and lease ground applications up for decision attached for council approval.
 - Approved application for consideration:
 - Thomas Glenn. Lot 1114, Great Sound
 - Approved application for decision:
 - Raymond D'amico Jr. Lot 2534 Scull Bay
 - Approved application for transfer:
 - Santo Rando. Lots 2221 and 2339, Dry Bay to Parsons Mariculture LLC Dale S. Parsons
 - Santo Rando. Lot 2236.1, Dry Bay to Ron Hammell
 - Delaware Hood. Lots 2257 & 2278, Dry Bay to Parsons Mariculture LLC Dale S. Parsons
 - Thomas Glenn. Lot 2547, Scull Bay to Joe McGee.
- Topics of note included:
 - Old Business
 - 2024 Lease Renewals – October 16th

November

Marine Resources Administration Monthly Report

- A hybrid council meeting was held in person (and online) at the Atlantic County Library - Galloway Twp Branch on 11/13/2023.
- Various Dep reps were in attendance, along with the Atlantic coast council members in addition to the public.
- Revenue Totals for each month
 - Total Revenue for September 2023 \$4,389.32
 - Shellfisheries Law Enforcement Fund \$1,087.00
- Lease Ground Transfers and lease ground applications up for decision attached for council approval.
 - Approved application for consideration:
 - Robert & Susan Torre. Lots 409.1 & 410, Great Bay
 - Approved application for decision:
 - Thomas Glenn. Lot 1114, Great Sound
 - Approved application for transfer:
 - N/a
- Topics of note included:
 - Old Business
 - 2024 Lease Renewals – Reminder
 - 2024 Council Meeting Schedule

Surveys & Laboratory Work

October

- **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 10/3/23 and 10/5/23. 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 10/17/23. 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 continue 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.
- **Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Site Inspection**
 - MRA staff planned to visit a site in close proximity to mapped submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV). MRA staff planned to perform a site inspection to determine if the proposed project location had any SAV or SAV habitat present.
- **Shell Plant and Intermediate Transplant Site Monitoring**

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- On 10/23/23, 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 10/10/23.
- **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.

November

- **2023 Field Schedule**
 - Staff continue to utilize the living Gantt chart document to plan the 2023 field season.
- **Delaware Bay Trawl Survey**
 - Completed in 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 11/20/23. 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 continue 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 11/21/23, staff had planned to monitor enhancement sites from projects conducted by the Bureau from the current year and previous two years, this was pushed back into December due to weather.
 - 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 11/15.
- **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

October

- **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.

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- Bureau staff continue to maintain state vehicles with routine and scheduled service.

November

• 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.

MRA – MHS Outreach

October

- Bureau staff participated in Stockton University's Coast Day held in Atlantic City on October 20th, 2023. Staff shared information with students, faculty, and guests about coastal monitoring, enhancement efforts, and the Shell Recycling Program.

Administrative/Miscellaneous

October

• License Sales

- Revenue collected from the Delaware Bay Office totaled \$11,722.50 for Oct 2023

License Type	Total	License Type	Total
Comm Crab Pot	\$900.00	Menhaden	\$206.00
Nets	\$1,524.00	Commercial SF	\$350.00
Application Fees	\$64.00	Assigned Fees	\$905.00
Oyster Tags	\$4,792.00	Lease Fees	\$2,181.50
Crab Dredge	\$600.00	Tonging Tags	\$200.00

November

• License Sales

- Revenue collected from the Delaware Bay Office totaled \$29,179.00 for Nov 2023

License Type	Total	License Type	Total
Comm Crab Pot	\$1,700.00	Menhaden	\$310.00
Nets	\$2,407.00	Commercial SF	\$750.00
Application Fees	\$102.00	Recreational SF	\$20.00
Crab Dredge	\$2,800.00	Assigned Fees	\$13,000.00
Dealer/Shucker	\$400.00	Lease Fees	\$7,290.00
Tonging Tags	\$400.00		

• E-Library

October & November

- 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

- MRA staff attended Sedge Island Meeting 10/4/23.
- MRA staff attended Stone Harbor Wetlands Institute Meeting 10/24/23