

Marine Resources Administration Monthly Report

OCTOBER 2024

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

ASMFC/MAFMC/COOP/NOAA/ACCSP

- The Striped Bass Technical Committee (TC) and Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) finalized the 2024 Stock Assessment Update Report. In 2023, the stock was overfished. Fishing mortality (F) was above the F target, but below the F threshold, indicating overfishing was not occurring. These results trip the F target trigger in Amendment 7 and so management is required according to the FMP. There is a lot of uncertainty related to what removals will be in 2024 and beyond, and that translates to uncertainty regarding the exact reduction that will be required (range between 4 and 46%).
- Spanish mackerel compliance report was submitted for the October deadline.
 - NJ has requested to remain de minimis status
- The ASMFC American Eel PRT completed the FMP Review for fishing year 2023. Each member of the PRT reviewed several compliance reports and then finalized the review summary which was presented to the Board at the October meeting. Coastwide landings for 2023 were 295,934 pounds, which is well below the coastwide cap (518,281). These landings are down 10% from 2022. Maryland, Virginia and New Jersey accounted for 80% of the total landings. Five states applied for de minimis status, but Florida was not approved because their landings were more than 1% of the coastwide total. De minimis was approved for NH, PA, DC and GA.

MEETING SUMMARIES

- **Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program-ACCSP**
 - The Recreational Technical Committee met on October 30. Topics included: update on 2025 Discard Pilot Project proposal; request for increased FHTS Sampling in Wave 1 for southern states starting 2025; MFA Allocation Analysis from each state for 2025 sampling beginning Wave 2; potential modification to the “area fished” question on the APAIS presented by MA. The committee meets again virtually December 5.
- **Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission-ASMFC**
 - Administration staff participated in a meeting of the Striped Bass Technical and Stock Assessment Committees to review and approve the update stock assessment report, review possible reduction measures, and review whether methods associated with non-targeting could be applied to the ocean fishery. The groups agreed to an additional projection where fishing mortality declines after passage of a large year class through the fishery, generally agreed that traditional size, season, and bag limit options will not be helpful for the ocean fishery, though may be for the Chesapeake Bay, and agreed to apply non-targeting methods to the ocean fishery. All of this will be presented to the management board when they meet later in October.
 - Cobia TC met three times to discuss 2025 regulation changes to meet the required reduction as per the ASMFC guidance.
 - Two methods were proposed: A rolling average approach as well as a confidence interval approach.
 - On October 22, 2024 the ASMFC Board approved the Cobia Technical Committee methodology for developing recreational management options to meet the northern region reduction. States in the northern region will select a set of measures for 2025-2026 and submit implementation plans for Board consideration by January 1, 2025. States in the northern region must implement the new measures by April 1, 2025. If states in the northern region cannot come to a consensus on which measures to implement, a virtual Board meeting will be scheduled to select measures.

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- The Black Drum TC held a conference call on October 2 to review the second update to the species indicators. There was an update in Oct 2023 and the TC felt that there was nothing of concern and therefore no need to change the assessment schedule. The TC was tasked with creating a schedule moving forward (how often to update the indicators and when the next assessment should be). During the call, the TC reviewed the second update to the indicators (Oct 2024) and again felt that there was nothing of concern, but there was an increase to landings in the South Atlantic which the TC wants to keep an eye on. The TC drafted a memo for the Board recommending that the next update to the indicators be completed two years from now, in 2026, and that the stock assessment should be pushed back one year to 2028, stating that the stock assessment for black drum is data poor and there won't be any new data collected prior to the next assessment. The memo was presented to the Board at the October meeting.
- **Miscellaneous**
 - Staff attended a meeting via Zoom held by the NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program, which has been providing small grants for several American eel citizen science projects for the past few years. While reporting data to the NJ DEP is required as part of each participant's Scientific Collection Permit, the purpose of the meeting was for each grantee to present a summary of their 2024 sampling efforts. Most grantees are using eel mops (artificial collectors) to sample with students or members of local communities, in an effort to increase awareness of the health of New Jersey's waterways. Overall, very few eels were caught but all participants plan to continue their sampling efforts in 2025.

INDEPENDENT FISHERIES

- **Delaware River Seine Survey**
 - The Delaware River seine survey concluded 2024 sampling on October 23. During the index period of August through October, a total of 209 striped bass were caught, with 187 recorded as young of year (YOY). The preliminary 2024 YOY index (geometric mean) is 0.520, which is higher than the 2023 index of 0.260. The 2024 YOY index ranks 33rd in the 44-year data timeseries.
- **Eel Surveys**
 - After a long delay due to engine issues with the survey vessel, the fall portion of the 2024 Yellow Eel Pot Survey in Great Bay began on October 28. Instead of the typical 8-week sampling period, crews will sample for 4 weeks, concluding on November 22.
- **Herring Surveys**
 - The young of the year seine portion of the River Herring Monitoring Survey was completed on October 2 without any significant issues from the yearly sampling protocol. Staff are compiling and proofing data and will determine index values from target species on both the Maurice and Great Egg Harbor Rivers.
- **Horseshoe Crab Survey**
 - All 2024 data have been entered and are being proofed.
- **Ocean Trawl**
 - The October Ocean Trawl Survey has been suspended until further notice. Administrative difficulties with the contractor have resulted in delayed maintenance to the survey vessel. Initially scheduled to begin October 2nd, the start date is now uncertain until the necessary repairs have been made. A survey in October is unlikely and with a survey completion before the end of November critical to the continuity of the survey.
- **Raritan-Sandy Hook Bay Complex Inventory Project**
 - The Raritan Inventory Project began on October 3, 2024, and was completed in 6 days. All 16 otter trawl stations, 16 seine stations and 12 gillnet stations were completed.

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- Gillnet sampling consisted of primarily smooth dogfish (n = 7), but also caught horseshoe crab, Atlantic menhaden and spiny dogfish.
- Otter trawl sampling consisted of primarily bay anchovy (n = 403), spot (n = 16), Atlantic moonfish (n = 10) and brief squid (n = 6). Other species collected consisted of bluefish, smooth dogfish, scup, blue crab, lookdown and northern puffer.
- Seine sampling consisted primarily of Atlantic silversides (n = 706), striped killifish (n = 55) and white mullet (n = 16). Other species collected consisted of bluefish, spot, blue crab, smallmouth flounder and winter flounder.
- 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**
 - All receivers were retrieved and serviced.

DEPENDENT FISHERIES

- **Access Point Angler Intercept Survey-AP AIS**
 - FishDump data for September were reviewed and comments were submitted.
 - The draw for October consisted of 166 site assignments and 9 headboat assignments that yielded a total of 780 intercepts (286 SH, 92 CH, 342 PR, 60 HB).
 - There were 3 cancelled headboat assignments in October due to weather.
 - Staff continue to make updates to the Vessel Directory and Site Register in preparation for 2025 sampling.
 - October mileage has been validated and submitted for reimbursement.
 - Staff attended the 2024 Wave 5 Meeting on October 16 and 17.
 - All quality control visits for the current sampling year have been completed.
 - Wave 2 Summary: 489 intercepts: 185 SH, 15 CH, 243 PR, 46 HB
 - Wave 3 Summary: 1863 intercepts: 744 SH, 168 CH, 801 PR, 150 HB
 - Wave 4 Summary: 2805 intercepts: 1028 SH, 280 CH, 1099 PR, 398 HB
 - Wave 5 Summary: 1438 intercepts: 523 SH, 141 CH, 588 PR, 186 HB
- **For-Hire Telephone Survey-FHTS**
 - October sampling included weeks 40-43. 264 vessels were drawn for the month. 146 responded, resulting in a response rate of 55.3%.
 - Staff continue to work in the NOAA vessel directory updating vessels as needed. The imports inbox was also maintained, merging existing vessels with HMS permits and creating new vessels for newly submitted permits.
 - Staff virtually attended the ACCSP wave 5 meeting which ran October 16-17.
- **NJ Saltwater Recreational Registry Program-NJSRRP/Volunteer Angler Survey-VAS**
 - As of October 30, 2024, there were 114,574 individual and 1,233 for-hire vessel registrations obtained with the New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry Program (NJSRRP) for 2024. (Last month: As of September 30, 2024, there were 111,513 individual and 1,212 for-hire vessels registered for 2024 in the NJFW ELS).
- **Striped Bass Bonus Program-SBBP**
 - The application deadline for the 2024 Striped Bass Bonus Program (SBBP) was October 31, 2024. A GovDelivery email was sent, and the webpage was updated. Staff issued permits to 11,097 individual anglers and 166 party/charter boats. The current 2024 bonus harvest is 5,031 lbs. from 679 fish.
- **Tournament Sampling**

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- Staff measured and collected scale samples from 38 striped bass on the party boat Queen Mary of Point Pleasant on October 29. The fish ranged in size from 29” to 45”. Staff obtained racks from the four fish legally harvested from the 28” to 31” slot. The other 34 fish were larger than the slot and released alive.
- During 13 tournaments and four party/charter boat trips, staff measured over 170 summer flounder, 100 bluefish, 50 black sea bass, 39 striped bass, 19 spot, 18 black drum, nine blue crab, six white perch, two oyster toadfish, one Atlantic croaker, one northern searobin and one northern stargazer. Otoliths have been collected from over 100 bluefish, 50 black sea bass and 10 summer flounder. Scale samples have been collected from 38 striped bass.

OUTREACH

- Staff have begun working on the 2025 Marine Digest. A template with comments regarding layout and proposed changes was submitted to the editor on October 2. Assignments for all portions of the 2025 digest were given during the first week of October. Most first drafts are due to Jen on November 8, with a final deadline of all materials due to the editor on November 22.
- Staff attended an outdoor field trip for fifth and sixth grade students from the Jordan Road School in Somers Point on October 18. The purpose of the event was to teach students about their local environment. For the fifth graders, staff provided an overview of the purpose of MRA and recreational fishing surveys, highlighting the APAIS. Students learned how to identify local saltwater species and collect biological data (lengths and weights). Students also learned what kind of data is collected during the APAIS, what it is used for and how they (the public) are an important part of the data collection process. The sixth graders toured the Fish and Wildlife educational trailer and completed a scavenger hunt which had questions about Marine Fisheries and other Bureaus within F&W.

ADMINISTRATIVE/MISCELLANEOUS (Marine Resources Administration)

- **Regulatory/Legislative**
 - 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 DOL.
 - 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
 - A4816, Donlon (D11), Prohibits requirement for beach tag for surfers and fishermen for access to beach below mean high tide line. Introduced and referred to Assembly Tourism, Gaming and the Arts Committee on September 19, 2024.
 - Legislative Activity – Federal
 - H.R. 10010, the “Protect American Fisheries Act of 2024”, (Rep. Mace, R-South Carolina), a bill to amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to add an economic cause as an allowable cause to declare a fishery resource disaster. Introduced October 18, 2024, and referred to the House Natural Resources Committee.
 - H.R. 5009 (Rep Joyce, R-OH), WILD Act: a bill to reauthorize wildlife habitat and conservation programs, and for other purposes. This bill reauthorizes through FY2028 and revises several conservation programs for wildlife species and their habitats, including the

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program as well as programs that provide financial assistance for African elephants, Asian elephants, rhinoceroses, tigers, great apes, and marine turtles. Introduced on July 27, 2023, and referred to the House Natural Resources Committee. Passed Senate with an amendment by Voice Vote on 9/25/2024. (text of amendment in the nature of a substitute: CR S6380-6381)

- S.Res. 862 (Se. Baldwin, Tammy, D-WI)/H.Res. 1496 (Rep. Huffman, Jared, D-CA) A resolution designating October 23, 2024, as "National Marine Sanctuary Day". Referred to the Committee on the Judiciary on September 23, 2024 and House Committee on Natural Resources on September 24, 2024.
- H.R. 9912 (Rep. Bonamici, Suzanne, D-OR, To require the Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology of the National Science and Technology Council to establish the Interagency Working Group on Coastal Blue Carbon, require the Interagency Working Group to produce a national map and inventory of coastal blue carbon ecosystems, require the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to carry out pilot programs to protect intact and restore degraded coastal blue carbon ecosystems, require the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution to establish the Coastal Carbon Data Clearinghouse, require the Administrator to seek to enter into an agreement with the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine to conduct an assessment regarding geologic stores of carbon dioxide, require the Administrator to establish the Coastal Blue Carbon Inventory Program, and require the Administrator to conduct a national assessment to quantify the carbon sequestration potential of coastal blue carbon ecosystems. Introduced in the House and referred to the Committee on Natural Resources in addition to the Committees on Science, Space, and Technology, House Administration, and Energy and Commerce on October 4, 2024.
- Introduced in House and referred to the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology on October 25, 2024. To authorize the Director of the National Science Foundation to carry out a grant program regarding ocean science and ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes waters, and for other purposes. Introduced in House and referred to the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology on October 25, 2024.
- S3791/H.R. 8811 (Rep Wittman, Robert J., R-VA) America's Conservation Enhancement Reauthorization Act of 2024. May 8, 2024 passed the Senate (15 co-sponsors. None from NJ) September 9, 2024 substituted in House Committee on Natural Resources (5 co-sponsors. None from NJ)

- **Section 10**

- Staff worked throughout the month with staff from the states of Delaware and New York to prepare and submit a Section 6 funding proposal. If the grant is awarded, funds will be used to hire a consultant to develop a regional Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for Atlantic sturgeon, shortnose sturgeon and sea turtles. The HCP plan is required to be completed in support of each State's Section 10 Permit application. A full proposal and budget narrative was submitted ahead of the due date on October 31.

- **Scientific Collection Permits**

- Ninety-six scientific collecting permits have been issued in 2024.

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

SEPTEMBER

Offshore Wind, Restoration, Enhancement, Mitigation, and Habitat

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- **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.
 - Stout's Creek Restoration Project, Upper Barnegat Bay WMA LMR
 - The project proposed the removal of a deteriorated berm and the filling of a borrow ditch on State-owned land to facilitate the restoration of 109 acres of salt marsh habitat.
 - MRA reviewed the project materials and provided comments.
 - Berkeley Complex Dredging Project
 - The dredging project proposed to dredge ~170,180 cubic yards of material to a depth of -5' to -6' MLW plus one foot of allowable over-dredge via a hydraulic dredge. Placement options included either Stout's Creek Restoration site or Oyster Creek CDF.
 - The project consisted of maintenance dredging within 12 State navigation channels located in Berkeley and Lacey Township, Ocean County. The MRA reviewed the application materials and provided comments.
- Staff met with NOAA staff on a waterfront development project in Cape May County, for the construction of a new marina.
 - Staff advised NOAA staff on how shellfish mitigation is generally considered/implemented within the state. Staff will discuss requirements further with DLRP staff and NOAA staff as needed.
- Staff reviewed comments in response to Cliffwood Beach shoreline restoration project.
- Staff worked with DLRP on several mapping interpretations.
- Staff reviewed the results of an SAV survey related to a marina project located in Barnegat Bay.

- **Shell Recycling Program**

- Staff continue to coordinate with Shell Recycling Program participants for weekly shell collection and investigate additional venues. New venues are being pursued in both Atlantic and Cape May Counties.
 - Staff collected 354 bushels of recycled shell in the month of September.
- Staff received the additional shell recycling bins that were purchased using the recently awarded NOAA grant funds. The additional bins will help facilitate the programs expansion into Cape May County.

- **Shell Recycling Program Grant**

- Staff worked with American Littoral Society staff, and Pennsylvania Avenue School staff to develop a plan and timeline for educational programming for the grant.
- Staff drafted an article on the Shell Recycling Program, and its expansion for the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Habitat Hotline. The draft will be submitted at the end of October for publication.

- **Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) ("Seagrass Conservation Program")**

- Staff continued drafting an SAV Program Plan/"Seagrass Conservation Program Plan" to establish set goals, timelines, and outcomes for all future submerged aquatic vegetation work including mapping projects, enhancement/restoration, research, outreach, etc.
- Staff communicated with the contract team on two contracted projects for seagrass, including:

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- (1) a remote sensing effort utilizing data from the 2023 mapping of Barnegat Bay to Little Egg Harbor
- (2) a mapping of New Jersey's northern rivers planned for the Spring and Summer of 2025

Aquaculture and Shellfish Leases

- **Aquaculture Development Zone**
 - Staff continue to keep a presence at the ADZ and are making plans for pulling the buoys and other maintenance to be done during the winter months.
 - Staff conducted lease investigation at the ADZ as well as other aquaculture leases close to shore
- **Shellfish Biological Survey**
 - Staff completed a biological assessment survey in Ludlum Bay on September 10.
 - This assessment report will be added to the Shellfish Council agenda at the next available Council meeting and the Lessee's will be notified as their attendance is required.
- **Shellfish Lease Investigation**
 - Staff met with members of the Bureau of GIS within the department to explore the capabilities of ArcGIS Field Maps to be utilized with field investigations.

State Fisheries and Quota Management

- **Atlantic Coast Shellfish Council Meeting**
 - A hybrid council meeting was held in person (and online) at the Stafford Township Firehouse (133 Stafford Ave, Manahawkin NJ 08050) on September 16.
 - 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 August 2024 \$1,021.36
 - Shellfisheries Law Enforcement Fund \$110.00
 - Presentation of August 19, 2024 minutes for approval.
 - Application for consideration:
 - 6 applications in Scull Bay
 - 2 applications in Ludlum Bay
 - Application for decision:
 - 7 applications in Graveling Point
 - All the applicants were in attendance fulfilling their requirements and attended one of two Council meetings.
 - Approved application for transfer:
 - 2 transfer application in Dry Bay
 - 5 transfer application in Swan Point
 - 1 transfer application in Middle Island
 - Topics of note included:
 - Old Business
 - Regulatory Committee
 - NJ REAL
 - New Business
 - Surf Clam Quota 2024-2025
 - 2025 Lease Renewal

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- **Delaware Bay Section of the NJ Shellfisheries Council**

- Staff drafted the July meeting minutes which were sent to the Council to review.
- A meeting was held September 10 in person & online with TEAMS.
- The next meeting is scheduled for November 12, 2024.

- **Direct Market Harvest Program – 2024 – Delaware Bay Oyster Dredge Fishery**

- Season opened April 1 and closes Nov 22, 2024, or when quota is harvested
- The starting quota was 491 bu. (39,237 bu.) and a second increase occurred May 13 with additional quota of 344 bu. for a final individual quota of 835 bu.
- Tag sales area as follows:

Month	Single (\$2)	Cage (\$48)	Revenue
Mar	1,865	311	\$18,658.00
Apr	2,435	410	\$24,550.00
May	4,930	683	\$42,644.00
Jun	1,734	155	\$10,908.00
Jul	1,819	266	\$16,406.00
Aug	1,391	159	\$10,414.00
Sep	690	180	\$10,020.00
Total	14,864	2,164	\$ 133,600.00

- Staff continue to regularly proof and review harvest report data as it is received to keep the records up to date.
- As of 8/30/2024, 30.3% of harvest was reported from the Bennies oyster bed, which comprised of 53.7% of the High Mortality management region's harvest.
- Ship John oyster bed received 92.8% of the harvest from the Medium Mortality region which consists of two beds.
- The regional quota for the High Mortality region was met and the region was closed to harvest starting July 8, 2024. The Shell Rock and Medium Mortality regions remain open until the season ends or their regional quotas are harvested.
- Harvest by bed and region is shown below:

Bed	Region	Boat Days	Harvest	CPUE	% of Region	% of Total
Cohansey	MMM	19	1,856	97.7	7.2%	3.2%
Ship John	MMM	113	11,547	102.2	92.8%	19.9%
Shell Rock	SR	73	11,623	159.2	100.0%	20.1%
Bennies Sand	HMM	41	8,391	204.7	25.2%	14.5%
Bennies	HMM	107	17,531	165.3	53.7%	30.3%
Nantuxent	HMM	53	6,901	130.2	21.1%	12%
Region Total	MMM	132	13,403	101.5		23.2%
Region Total	SR	73	11,623	159.2		20.1%
Region Total	HMM	201	32,823	163.3		56.7%

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Total		406	57,849	142.5		
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Surveys & Laboratory Work

- **Delaware Bay Juvenile Finfish Trawl Survey**
 - The 2024 Delaware Bay Juvenile Finfish Trawl Survey started in April and will run through October. In September, staff sampled all 11 stations for the survey. The stations are located in shallow, nearshore waters from the Cohansey River south to the Villas, NJ.
 - Staff continued drafting a script to film a video with I&E in October highlighting the survey.
 - In September, HR staff joined for a day of sampling.
- **Sturgeon Receiver Project**
 - The sturgeon receiver project was conducted on September 12.
 - The receivers will be deployed through November and will be maintained and have data downloaded from the units monthly.
 - The receivers listen for acoustically tagged species that are in the vicinity of the receiver and log data which can be used to determine what species was logged and from where it was tagged.
- **Dermo Monitoring and Shell Plant and Transplant Site Monitoring**
 - Staff in partnership with Rutgers Haskin Shellfish Lab staff conducted oyster sampling from the Delaware Bay oyster reefs for Dermo monitoring on September 16.
 - Staff also sampled in partnership to survey the Bureau's shellfish enhancement sites including the shell plant program and transplant program on September 23. Both sampling efforts started in April and will run through the end of November.
- **Estuarine Inventory Raritan/Sandy Hook Bay**
 - Staff successfully completed the 2024 Estuarine Inventory in Sandy Hook Bay. Staff sampled 98 stations as a part of a federal grant to characterize the shellfish habitat within the Raritan and Sandy Hook Bay complex.
 - Staff will begin processing data this coming winter.
- **Mullica River Spat Bag & Water Quality Monitoring**
 - Staff continues to replace spat bags deployed at the 4 sites on the Mullica River.
 - Staff continues to analyze spat samples from the Mullica sites and recorded the number of spat and measured 50 individuals to track growth.
 - Spat bags will remain deployed through the Fall to assess if a Fall spawning event occurs in the system.
- **Side Scan Sonar**
 - Staff continues to create a User Manual for use of the Side Scan Sonar and its software for guidance purposes while out on the water

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. The Joseph had hydraulic repairs and upgrades started in June, which are scheduled to be completed in September.
 - Bureau staff continue to maintain state vehicles with routine and scheduled service.

Administrative/Miscellaneous

- **License Sales**
 - Revenue collected from the Delaware Bay Office totaled \$14,970.00 for September 2024.

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License Type	Total	License Type	Total
Oyster Tags	\$10,020.00	Commercial Crab Pot	\$200.00
Rutgers Charters	\$4,000.00	AC Dredge	\$300.00
Nets	\$702.00	DB Dredge	\$300.00

- **Monthly Meetings**

- CHARRM Workgroup, ACFHP Science & Data SAV Webinar
- Staff attended a meeting to discuss MRA's role in New Jersey's State Wildlife Action Plan (NJSWAP). MRA staff will develop action statements related to marine species and habitats for submittal in October. **MRA Outreach, Communications and Education Program**
- Staff provided updates to the MRA Outreach Coordinator for the existing Estuarine Inventory/Hard Clam Stock Assessment survey website and drafted social media posts about the recent 2024 survey located in Sandy Hook Bay.

OCTOBER

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.
 - 96th Street Bridge Stone Harbor
 - The MRA reviewed project materials and provided comments for a bridge rehabilitation located at 96th street over Great Channel in Stone Harbor.
 - Dredge Material Restoration Barnegat Lighthouse
 - The MRA reviewed project materials for a dredge material placement located at Barnegat Lighthouse.
 - Woodbridge Township Living Shoreline
 - The MRA received and reviewed project materials for a proposed construction of a living shoreline at Woodbridge Township, Middlesex County.
 - The proposed project involves the installation of a 470 linear foot marsh sill, as well as the creation of approximately 0.5 acres of salt marsh. The marsh will consist of seven, 50-foot-long trapezoidal prism-shaped sections interspersed with 15-foot-long breaks. Each section will be ~6.5 ft tall and 19.3 ft and composed of rock. Geotextile material overtopped with 6 inches of bedding stone will be placed beneath the sill to prevent settling. Stacked coir logs will be placed perpendicular to the northern most and southern most marsh sill segments.
 - The MRA provided comments related to marine resources.
 - Borough of Highlands Living Shoreline
 - The MRA received project materials to create a living shoreline, including an installation of a seawall.
 - The project consists of (a) native vegetation, (b) stone sill with riprap, (c) coir logs, and (d) precast eco-concrete tide pools. Construction of a sheet pile bulkhead and new wood deck are also proposed.
 - The MRA provided comments.
- Staff worked with DLRP on several mapping interpretations.

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- Staff reviewed the results of an SAV survey related to a marina project located in Barnegat Bay.
- Staff provided comments for Round 3 (Action Creation) for the New Jersey SWAP.
- **Shell Recycling Program**
 - Staff continue to coordinate with Shell Recycling Program participants for weekly shell collection and investigate additional venues.
 - Staff collected 343 bushels of recycled shell in the month of October.
- **Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) (“Seagrass Conservation Program”)**
 - Staff continued drafting an SAV Program Plan/”Seagrass Conservation Program Plan” to establish set goals, timelines, and outcomes for all future submerged aquatic vegetation work including:
 - Mapping projects, monitoring, enhancement and restoration, research, outreach, etc.
 - Staff began drafting outreach materials such as infographic/brochure ideas, logo design, and interactive activities for outreach events.
 - Staff continued to communicate with the contract team on two contracted projects for seagrass, including:
 - (1) a remote sensing effort utilizing data from the 2023 mapping of Barnegat Bay to Little Egg Harbor
 - (2) a mapping of New Jersey’s northern rivers planned for the Spring and Summer of 2025. Staff drafted and submitted a Scope of Work (SOW) for the 2025 mapping of northern rivers to the contracting team.

Aquaculture and Shellfish Leases

- **Aquaculture Development Zone**
 - Staff continue to keep a presence at the ADZ and are making plans for pulling the buoys and other maintenance to be done during the winter months.
- **Shellfish Hydrographic Survey**
 - Staff completed a hydrographic survey for all the lease lots located in Stites Sound.
 - Notification letters were mailed out to all lease holders prior to the survey and notified following the survey’s completion.
 - An update on the lease area was provided to the NJ Shellfish Council during the October meeting.
- **Shellfish Biological Survey**
 - Staff completed a biological assessment survey in Little Egg Harbor Bay on October 30.
 - This assessment report will be added to the Shellfish Council agenda at the next available Council meeting and the Lessee’s will be notified as their attendance is required.
- **Shellfish Lease Renewal**
 - On October 16, 2024 front office staff have begun to assist aquaculture growers seeking to renew their shellfish lease lots for 2025. The renewal process will end on December 31, 2024.
 - Staff anticipates a high volume of aquaculture growers visiting the Nacote Creek research station over the next 3 months and have taken all necessary preparation to ensure a smooth renewal process.
- **Suspension at High bar Harbor**
 - On 10/4/2024 the shellfish growing area at High Bar harbor, Barnegat Bay, was suspended from harvest due to downgrades in water quality. Many shellfish aquaculture growers were affected by this suspension. Staff assisted growers by answering questions and providing information to help them during this trying time.

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- The suspension here affected 221.9 ac of the bay at High Bar Harbor.
- **Suspension at Ludlum Bay**
 - On 10/4/2024 another section of shellfish growing area at Ludlum Bay, Sea Isle City, was suspended from harvest due to downgrades in water quality. Many shellfish aquaculture growers were affected by this suspension. Staff assisted growers by answering questions and providing information to help them during this trying time.
 - The suspension here affected 33.7 ac of the bay at Ludlum Bay.

State Fisheries and Quota Management

- **Atlantic Coast Shellfish Council Meeting**
 - A hybrid council meeting was held in person (and online) at the Ocean City Public Library (1735 Simpson Ave, Ocean City, NJ 08226) on 10/21/2024.
 - 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 May 2024 \$1,923.34
 - Shellfisheries Law Enforcement Fund \$64.00
 - Presentation of September 16, 2024 minutes for approval.
 - Application for consideration:
 - Application for decision:
 - 6 applications in Scull Bay
 - 2 applications in Ludlum Bay
 - All but 1 of the applicants were in attendance fulfilling their requirements and attended one of two Council meetings.
 - Approved application for transfer:
 - 1 transfer application in Dry Bay
 - 2 transfer application in Great Bay
 - 1 transfer application in Ludlum Bay
 - 1 transfer application in Little Egg Harbor Bay
 - 1 transfer application in Rose Cove
 - 1 transfer application in Broad Creek
 - Topics of note included:
 - Old Business
 - Regulatory Committee
 - NJ REAL
 - 2025 Lease Renewal
 - Great Egg Harbor Lease
 - Hard Clam Management Plan Update
 - Mullica River Shell Plant Update
 - New Business
 - Hydrographic Survey Update – Stites Sound
 - Notice of Suspension for Shellfish Harvest
 - High Bar Harbor (221.9 acres)
 - Ludlam Bay (33.7 acres)
 - Leasing Committee
- **Delaware Bay Section of the NJ Shellfisheries Council**
 - Staff drafted the July meeting minutes which were sent to the Council to review.

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- A meeting was held September 10 in person & online with TEAMS.
- The next meeting is scheduled for November 12, 2024.

- **Direct Market Harvest Program – 2024 – Delaware Bay Oyster Dredge Fishery**

- Season opened April 1 and closes Nov 22, 2024 or when quota is harvested
- The starting quota was 491 bu (39,237 bu.) and a second increase occurred May 13 with additional quota of 344 bu. for a final individual quota of 835 bu.
- Tag sales area as follows:

Month	Single (\$2)	Cage (\$48)	Revenue
Mar	1,865	311	\$18,658.00
Apr	2,435	410	\$24,550.00
May	4,930	683	\$42,644.00
Jun	1,734	155	\$10,908.00
Jul	1,819	266	\$16,406.00
Aug	1,391	159	\$10,414.00
Sep	690	180	\$10,020.00
Oct	0	0	0
Total	14,864	2,164	\$ 133,600.00

- Staff continue to regularly proof and review harvest report data as it is received to keep the records up to date.
- As of 8/30/2024, 30.3% of harvest was reported from the Bennies oyster bed, which comprised of 53.7% of the High Mortality management region's harvest.
- Ship John oyster bed received 92.8% of the harvest from the Medium Mortality region which consists of two beds.
- The regional quota for the High Mortality region was met and the region was closed to harvest starting July 8, 2024. The Shell Rock and Medium Mortality regions remain open until the season ends or their regional quotas are harvested.
- Harvest by bed and region is shown below:

Bed	Region	Boat Days	Harvest	CPUE	% of Region	% of Total
Cohansey	MMM	19	1,856	97.7	7.2%	3.2%
Ship John	MMM	113	11,547	102.2	92.8%	19.9%
Shell Rock	SR	73	11,623	159.2	100.0%	20.1%
Bennies Sand	HMM	41	8,391	204.7	25.2%	14.5%
Bennies	HMM	107	17,531	165.3	53.7%	30.3%
Nantuxent	HMM	53	6,901	130.2	21.1%	12%
Region Total	MMM	132	13,403	101.5		23.2%
Region Total	SR	73	11,623	159.2		20.1%
Region Total	HMM	201	32,823	163.3		56.7%
Total		406	57,849	142.5		

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Surveys & Laboratory Work

- **Delaware Bay Juvenile Finfish Trawl Survey**
 - The 2024 Delaware Bay Juvenile Finfish Trawl survey concluded at the end of the month and the 2025 survey will begin in April.
 - Staff began entering 2024 trawl data and plans to begin data analysis and report composition this winter.
 - Staff met with I&E staff to record interviews for an upcoming video highlighting the survey.
- **Dermo Monitoring and Shell Plant and Transplant Site Monitoring**
 - Staff in partnership with Rutgers Haskin Shellfish Lab staff conducted oyster sampling from the Delaware Bay oyster reefs for Dermo monitoring on October 21
 - Staff also sampled in partnership to survey the Bureau's shellfish enhancement sites including the shell plant program and transplant program on October 28. Both sampling efforts started in April and will run through the end of November.
- **Environmental Review Site Investigation**
 - The MRA performed a field investigation on October 8 in response to a request by DLRP staff to determine if a site located in Margate was considered shellfish habitat.
 - Four rake samples were collected in addition to water quality data.
- **Hard Clam Dredge/ patent tong efficiency**
 - Staff began sampling efforts within the Mullica River- Great Bay Estuary to compare sampling methods of the hydraulic clam dredge and patent tongs.
 - Sampling was being performed at documented sites that contained moderate and high-density hard clams.
 - The goal of the sampling is to assess the number of tons necessary to equate to a 100' dredge tow and gain practical experience in using the equipment.
 - Staff completed the first part of the sampling effort, sampling 8 stations within Great Bay with the Hydraulic clam dredge.
 - Staff intends to sample those same sites using the patent tongs. Counts and measurements will be performed for each gear type, and staff will work with MRA research scientist staff to assess the results.
- **Mullica River Oyster Monitoring**
 - Staff completed October monitoring on the 2024 shell plant site, along with the shell plant sites from 2021, 2022 and 2023 within the Mullica River.
 - Staff continues to see a successful spawning event at the 2024 shell plant site.
 - The site contained over 1,500 spat per bushel.
 - Staff will continue to monitor the site through November.
 - Staff will coordinate with Rutgers's Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory to collect and drop off oyster samples from the Mullica River oyster reefs for disease analysis.
- **Mullica River Spat Bag & Water Quality Monitoring**
 - Staff removed spat bags for the remainder of the year. The collected bags will be processed to identify if there was a fall spawning event.
 - Initial results from previous collections indicate a second event in late summer.
 - Staff will plan to implement spat bags in early summer 2025 to continue to track recruitment in the system.
- **SAV (Little Egg Harbor and Barnegat Bay)**
 - On October 25, staff conducted seagrass monitoring alongside Stockton University at two sites located in Little Egg Harbor and Barnegat Bay.

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- Staff assisted in the collection of sediment cores containing seagrass shoots and assisted in the sorting and processing of aboveground and belowground biomass of widgeon grass and eelgrass samples back at the Stockton Marine Field Station.
 - This opportunity provided training to conduct similar work in collaboration with the Barnegat Bay Partnership (BBP) in the future.
- **Side Scan Sonar**
 - Staff continues to create a User Manual for use of the Side Scan Sonar and its software for guidance purposes while out on the water
 - Delaware Bay staff continued using the side scan sonar most recently to map the Delaware Bay Reef for NOAA in preparation for structure to be deployed as well as starting on scanning the tributaries of the Delaware Bay.
 - Staff used the side scan sonar to map the Moss Point oyster reef in the Mullica River.
- **Sturgeon Receiver Project**
 - The sturgeon receiver project was conducted on October 23.
 - The receivers will be deployed through November and will be maintained and have data downloaded from the units monthly.
 - The receivers listen for acoustically tagged species that are in the vicinity of the receiver and log data which can be used to determine what species was logged and from where it was tagged.

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. The Joseph had hydraulic repairs and upgrades started in June, which are scheduled to be completed in November.
 - Bureau staff continue to maintain state vehicles with routine and scheduled service.
 - 300 hour routine maintenance was completed on the R/V Vadum.
 - Staff replaced rotted boards on large trailer.

Administrative/Miscellaneous

- **License Sales**
 - Revenue collected from the Delaware Bay Office totaled \$8,784.50 for October 2024.

License Type	Total	License Type	Total
Lease Fees	\$4,012.50	Commercial Shellfish	\$400.00
Assigned Fees	\$1,200.00	AC Dredge	\$300.00
Nets	848.00	DB Dredge	\$300.00
Commercial Crab Pot	\$700.00	Otter Trawl	\$102.00
Menhaden	\$406.00	Map Sales	\$70.00
Possession in Excess	\$400.00	Application Fees	\$46.00

- **Monthly Meetings**
 - CHARRM Workgroup, ACFHP Science & Data SAV Webinar
 - Staff Meeting at Batsto, October 16

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- Staff attended a Joint Permit Processing Meeting (JPPM) on October 9th for a new groin construction located in Island Heights.
 - Staff provided comment as it pertained to marine resources.
- NJCMP 309 Assessment and Strategy Internal Kickoff Meeting, East Coast SAV Collaborative Meeting
- **Miscellaneous**
 - Staff met with Pew Charitable Trusts to discuss the Supporting Oyster Aquaculture and Restoration Program (SOAR) plans for 2025.
 - Staff will continue to coordinate with Pew Staff to establish suitable methods/enhancement locations as needed.
 - Staff attended the Restore America's Estuaries Coastal and Estuarine Summit in Washington D.C. from Oct. 6 through Oct 10.
 - The Summit is a biennial gathering for estuarine restoration, research, and management professionals across all disciplines, with interactive sessions, talks, workshops, and networking events.
 - Staff participated in several sessions covering research and application of restoration science and nature-based solutions, while networking with colleagues in academia, federal government, and the private sector.
 - Staff also attended the US Army Corps of Engineers *Engineering With Nature* Workshop, discussing numerous approaches to nature-based restoration in the coastal environment.
 - Staff attended the American Fisheries Society (AFS) Mid-Atlantic Chapter (MAC) – Northeast Division (NED) Joint Meeting on Oct. 28 and 29 in New Brunswick, NJ.
 - The MAC-AFS annual meeting occurs each year as a New Jersey-Delaware fisheries symposium and networking event; highlighting academic, state and federal agency, and private sector research in fisheries and aquaculture.
 - This year's joint meeting featured gathering of the entire Northeast Division, which includes the Chapters ranging from Canadian Maritimes, New England states, and New York. Staff attended events and presentations both days and interacted with academic, agency, and private sectors partners, colleagues, and students.
- **MRA Outreach, Communications and Education Program**
 - Staff attended the Stockton Coast Day located at Stockton's Atlantic City campus.
 - Staff represented the MRA's Shell Recycling Program, engaging with K-8, high school, and college students and promoting SRP's upcoming Ambassador Program.
- **Fish and Wildlife Staff Experience**
 - Bureau Staff hosted new Fish and Wildlife staff for the Delaware Bay Shellfish Staff Experience.
 - Staff presented a brief overview of the survey work conducted within the Delaware Bay before departing on the R/V James W. Joseph for a field demonstration
 - Staff from different departments and bureaus got to see how the state collects and records finfish data from the Delaware Bay Trawl Survey, bathymetry data collected using the Klein Side Scan Sonar Unit, and how to use and assess oyster bed health using an oyster dredge.
- **ArcGIS FieldMaps**
 - Staff met with BGIS staff and started planning the implementation of the field app ArcGIS FieldMaps intended to be used on a variety of surveys and upcoming projects.