

# **Marine Resources Administration Monthly Report**

***DECEMBER 2024***

## **Marine Resources Administration Staff:**

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## **\*\*MARINE FISHERIES/MRA\*\***

### **MEETING SUMMARIES**

- **Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission-ASMFC**

- The ASMFC Striped Bass Management Board (Board) initiated Draft Addendum III to consider changes to recreational and commercial measures for 2026 to support rebuilding the stock by 2029. The Board voted to maintain status quo measures for 2025. Therefore, 2025 recreational striped bass measures will remain: 1 fish @ 28" to 31". The 2025 Striped Bass Bonus Program will remain: 1 fish @ 24" to less than 28", with an open season from May 15 to December 31.
- Administration staff participated in a conference call of the ecological reference points working group (ERP). Main topics of the call focused on data and model updates completed since a November 2024 meeting of this same group, as well as related questions for the group regarding the same. The ERP will meet via conference call monthly through late winter in anticipation of a model workshop scheduled for early spring. Review of this assessment is scheduled for summer 2025 and if approved for management will form the basis for managing Atl menhaden.

- **Miscellaneous**

- New England Fisheries Management Council – Staff attended NEFMC December Council meeting via webinar, on 12/4/24. Draft alternatives for Framework Adjustment 69 were discussed. The meeting focused on management and regulatory changes surrounding four separate Atlantic cod stocks: Eastern Gulf of Maine, Western Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank, and Southern New England (SNE). There will be a 43% commercial reduction for Atlantic cod in New England States (667.4 mt to 382.9 mt). This has the potential to impact New Jersey as the discussion of a zero-possession limit for SNE passed; therefore, the Southern New England cod recreational possession limit is zero for all fishermen, charter/party, and private anglers alike, for fishing year 2025 and would remain in place until changed.
- The HSC Plan Development Team had its initial meeting to discuss changes to the addenda regarding multi-year harvest recommendations and female harvest. The team will continue to meet in January with the hopes of submitting the new addenda in February.

### **INDEPENDENT FISHERIES**

- **Delaware Bay Tagging**

- The survey vessel was taken in for service in preparation for the tagging survey to begin February 1.

- **Sturgeon Receivers**

- Receivers have been set in winter for the first time in survey history. Regular maintenance will resume in March and winter data will be submitted in the April data push from ACT.
- A total 272 unique tags were detected in 2024 with 128 Atlantic sturgeon, 1 American shad, 2 cownose rays, 4 rough tail stingrays, 121 sand tiger sharks and 10 sandbar sharks.

- **Ventless Trap Survey**

- The ventless trap survey completed the 2024 sampling year with a two-week trap haul on the Sea Girt and Little Egg Reef sites. Sampling started in December this year and ended by year's end on the two reefs with water temperatures in the low 40's. As expected, catches were dominated by invertebrates such as Atlantic Rock Crabs and Jonah Crabs as well as spider crabs in many traps. Also worthy of mentioning was the relative frequency of tautog observed in the traps similar to that during typical Novembers. Traps also produced fewer lobsters than our typical fall sampling period, however signs of movement inshore to offshore were present.

### **DEPENDENT FISHERIES**

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

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- FishDump data for November were reviewed and comments were submitted.
- The draw for December consisted of 141 site assignments and 3 completed head boat assignments that yielded a total of 184 intercepts (33 SH, 32 CH, 93 PR, 26 HB). There was 1 cancelled site assignment and 1 cancelled HB assignment in December.
- Staff continue to make updates to the Vessel Directory and Site Register in preparation for 2025 sampling.
- December mileage is being validated and submitted for reimbursement.
- 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
- Wave 6 Summary: 1086 intercepts: 306 SH, 126 CH, 582 PR, 72 HB
- **Artificial Reef**
  - Staff received the new research vessel R/V REEF BOUND from builder Peter Taylor this month. After a multi-year process, the vessel was delivered from Maine to NJ via over-the-road tractor trailer transport. After offloading the 36-foot inboard diesel boat, staff initiated the final outfitting process during the remainder of the week along-side the builder to ensure the vessel was prepared for use. Staff conducted a final sea trial with marine mechanic, passing with flying colors. Staff was able to use the RV for an abbreviated sampling period in December, serving as a shakedown test period. There have inevitably been adjustments needed and changes will continue to be made, but the 36 Calvin Beal hull will serve the MRA well for decades to come.
  - Staff deployed the previously sunk F/V Susan Rose on the Manasquan Inlet Reef site this month. Through contacts at the existing vessel salvage company and work with the USCG, staff and the salvors were able to reach an agreement and work plan that alleviated the need to raise, transport, and scrap the vessel. Instead, the vessel was inspected multiple times during reef preparation by NJDEP and USCG to ensure an efficient path forward for reefing was clearly identified for the salvor. Once completed, the vessel found its final resting place on the Manasquan Inlet Reef site on December 23, 2024.
  - Staff through collaboration with the NJ Economic Development Authority are moving forward with deploying approximately 6,000 tons of concrete on the Delaware Bay Reef site. This material is being donated by the EDA and the joint wind port project and will begin being deployed on the reef in mid-February. The duration of the project may be 4-6 weeks.
- **Biological**
  - Staff has continued to process NJ independent samples collected through biological sampling and surveys for stomach content analysis. To date, all samples from 2024 have been extracted, preserved, partially identified, and catalogued for data entry in the future.
- **Commercial Fisheries/Quota Management**
  - Summer flounder: The commercial 2024 Directed Season 6 ended on December 31. Preliminary annual harvest is 101.6% of the state's allocated quota.
  - Black Sea Bass: The commercial 2024 Directed Season 6 ended on December 31. Preliminary annual harvest is 96.4% of the state's allocated quota.
  - Menhaden: The commercial menhaden season ended on December 31. Quota designated to the "other gears" fishery is an estimated 50% harvested, while quota designated to the "purse seine" fishery is an estimated 92% harvested. to the lack of winter trawl fishery this year.
  - Bluefish: The commercial season ended on December 31. Preliminary harvest is 34% of the annual state quota.

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- Spiny dogfish: The 2024/25 commercial season began on May 1. Current harvest is 73% of the quota. Landings mirror 2023/24 harvest, which did not result so in a mid-season closure.
- **For-Hire Telephone Survey-FHTS**
  - December sampling included weeks 48-51. 116 vessels were drawn for the month. 42 responded, resulting in a response rate of 36.2%.
  - Staff continue to work in the NOAA vessel directory updating vessels when new changes are needed. The imports inbox was also sorted through merging existing vessels with HMS permits and creating new vessels for newly submitted permits.
- **NJ Saltwater Recreational Registry Program-NJSRRP/Volunteer Angler Survey-VAS**
  - As of December 30, 2024, there were 117,809 individual and 1,264 for-hire vessel registrations obtained with the New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry Program (NJSRRP) for 2024. (Last month: As of November 26, 2024, there were 116,939 individual and 1,254 for-hire vessels registered for 2024 in the NJFW ELS).
  - Registrations for 2025 became available December 1.
- **Striped Bass Bonus Program-SBBP**
  - The 2024 Striped Bass Bonus Program (SBBP) closed on December 31, 2024. The webpage was updated, and the public were notified via email and social media posts. A total of 11,632 individual anglers and 169 party/charter boats participated. The preliminary 2024 bonus harvest is 43,705 lbs. from 6,107 fish, which represents 21.8% of the quota. Individual anglers harvested 1,049 fish and party/charter boats harvested 5,058 fish. The 2024 harvest will likely increase as staff continue to enter reports and finalize the data.

### **OUTREACH**

- The editor provided comments and edits to Marine Fisheries' submissions for the 2025 Marine Digest. Feedback on those comments/edits were provided on December 23. All submissions have since been sent to the publisher and the first draft is expected sometime in January.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS (Marine Resources Administration)**

- **Wind Energy**
  - New Jersey Research and Monitoring Initiative (RMI)
    - Staff met with DSR staff and staff of the Responsible Offshore Science Alliance to discuss continuation of funding. Topics included the organizations' shared goals related to data standardization and governance, coordination of regional offshore wind and fisheries research, and the potential need for a state caucus to improve interstate collaboration. Staff will recommend that the RMI continues to provide funding to ROSA for operational costs.
  - Regional coordination
    - Staff attended the December meeting of the ROSA Advisory Council. A presentation on the progress of the Regional Funds Administrator for fisheries compensation described the responsibilities of the Governing Committees and general plans for the first four months. Joe Cimino has been working on this initiative for over a year and will continue to represent New Jersey as a state representative on the Design Oversight Committee. Presentations also included updates on efforts to support Atlantic surfclam and sea scallop fisheries, topics of great interest to NJ.
  - Stakeholder support
    - Staff met with OPPN and DSR staff to discuss making updates and improvements to the Department's offshore wind website. Staff will continue to compile FAQs and responses, such as scientifically sound publications and webpages.

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## ADMINISTRATIVE/MISCELLANEOUS (Marine Resources Administration)

### ▪ Regulatory/Legislative

- Notice of Administrative Change (NOAC)
  - A NOAC implementing the 2025 commercial summer flounder and black sea bass trip limits was approved by the Marine Fisheries Council at its 11/7/2024 meeting and was filed with the Office of Administrative Law on 12/8/2024, for publication in the 1/21/2025 NJ Register.
  - A NOAC modifying the recreational cobia management measures has been drafted for review at the January 9, NJ MFC meeting.
- 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
  - A5078 (Calabrese, D36)/S3914 (Cruz-Perez, D5, Steinhardt, R23), Prohibits aquaculture of any species of octopus for the purpose of human consumption. A5078 introduced and referred to Assembly Commerce, Economic Development and Agriculture Committee on 12/9/2024. S3914 introduced and referred to Senate Economic Growth Committee on 12/5/2024.
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  - S3943 (Vitale, D19, Diegnan, D18)/A5121 (Katz, D8, Egan, D17, Collazos-Gill, D27, Vitale, D19, Diegnan, D18) Appropriates \$49.5 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 Budget and Appropriations Committee on 12/5/2024, reported out of committee on 12/9/2024, substituted by A5121 on 12/19/2024. A5121 passed Senate and sent to Governor 38-0 on 12/19/2024.
- Nominations – State
  - Shellfisheries Council
    - Edward Gaine, of Dorothy, to replace John Maxwell, set to expire March 24, 2025. Advise and Consent by Senate on 12/19/2024.
  - Marine Fisheries Council
    - John Tiedemann, of Lakewood, to replace James Alexis, set to expire January 7, 2027. Advise and Consent by Senate on 12/19/2024.
- Legislative Activity – Federal
  - H.R. 2950, (Rep. Huffman, D-California)/S1381 (Sen. Cardin (D-MD) This Act may be cited as the “Fishery Improvement to Streamline untimely regulatory Hurdles post Emergency Situation Act” or the “FISHES Act”. To require the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to approve or deny spend plans within a certain amount of time, and for other

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purposes. The term “spend plan” means a spend plan submitted to the Secretary under section 312(a)(6)(D) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1861a(a)(6)(D)) by a requester with an affirmative fishery resource disaster determination. On December 21, 2024, the Senate passed the bill. On December 27, 2024, the bill was presented to the President.

- S.2248 (Sen. Hassan, D-New Hampshire) the “Vessel Tracking for Sanctions Enforcement Act of 2023” a bill to require a pilot program on the use of big data analytics to identify vessels evading sanctions and export controls and to require a report on the availability in the United States of emerging and foundational technologies subject to export controls. On December 9, 2024, the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee reported the bill with amendments and the bill was placed on the Senate Legislative Calendar.
- H.R. 6235, (Rep. Bonamici, D-Oregon) “Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Amendments Act of 2023” ), 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. On December 10, 2024, the report to accompany the bill was filed.
- H.R. 2950, (Rep. Huffman, D-California) the “Coastal Habitat Conservation Act of 2023”, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior, through the Coastal Program of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, to work with willing partners and provide support to efforts to assess, protect, restore, and enhance important coastal landscapes that provide fish and wildlife habitat on which certain Federal trust species depend, and for other purposes On December 11, 2024, the bill was signed by the President and became P.L. 118-138.
- H.R.7408 (Rep. Westerman, R-AR)To amend the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act to make supplemental funds available for management of fish and wildlife species of greatest conservation need as determined by State fish and wildlife agencies, and for other purposes. On December 18, 2024, the report to accompany the bill was filed and the bill was placed on the Union Calendar.
- S. 3791(Sen. Carper, D-Delaware)/H.R. 8811 (Rep Wittman, Robert J., R-VA) The “America’s Conservation Enhancement Reauthorization Act of 2024” a bill to reauthorize the America’s Conservation Enhancement Act, and for other purposes. On December 3, 2024, the bill passed the House of Representatives. On December 18, 2024, the Senate agreed to the House amendments. On December 23, 2024, the bill was presented to the President.
- H.R. 1395 (Rep. Fitzpatrick, R-Pennsylvania) “Delaware River Basin Conservation Reauthorization Act of 2023”, a bill to amend the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act to reauthorize Delaware River Basin conservation programs, and for other purposes On December 10, 2024, the report to accompany the bill was filed and the bill was placed on the Union Calendar.
- H.R. 10545 (Rep. Cole, Tom, R-OK) "American Relief Act, 2025" This Continuing Resolution funds federal agencies through March 14, 2025 and includes \$300,000,000 for fisheries disaster assistance. Introduced in House on 12/20/2024. Passed House (366-34) on 12/20/2024. Passed Senate (85-11) on 12/21/2024. Signed by President Biden and became Public Law No: 118-158 on 12/21/2024.
- S. 5649 (Sen. Sullivan, R-Alaska) "Save our Seas 2.0 Amendments Act” a bill to amend the Marine Debris Act to improve the administration of the Marine Debris Program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to improve the administration of the Marine Debris Foundation, and for other purposes. Introduced on December 21, 2024, and referred to the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. On December 23, 2024, the Senate passed the bill and sent it to the House.

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- S. 5629, (Sen. Schatz, D-Hawaii)/H.R. 10471, (Rep. Bonamici, D-Oregon) a bill to support marine carbon dioxide removal activities, and for other purposes. Introduced on December 19, 2024, and referred to the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. Introduced on December 18, 2024, and referred to the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, and the House Natural Resources Committee.
- S. 5601, (Sen. Cantwell, D-Washington) a bill to improve the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's weather research, support improvements in weather forecasting and prediction, expand commercial opportunities for the provision of weather data, and for other purposes. Introduced on December 18, 2024, and referred to the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee.
- S. 5599, (Sen. Cruz, R-Texas) a bill to require the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere to conduct a project to improve forecasts of coastal marine fog. Introduced on December 18, 2024, and referred to the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee.
- H.R. 10508, (Rep. Tonko, D-New York) a bill to amend the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act to support the responsible development of offshore renewable energy projects, establish the Offshore Power Administration, and for other purposes. Introduced on December 18, 2024, and referred to the House Natural Resource, and in addition to the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee.
- H.R. 10493, (Rep. Kelly, R-Mississippi) a bill to support the national defense and economic security of the United States by supporting vessels, ports, and shipyards of the United States and the U.S. maritime workforce. Introduced on December 18, 2024, and referred to the House Armed Services Committee, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, the House Ways and Means Committee, the House Energy and Commerce Committee, the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the House Oversight and Accountability Committee, the House Education and the Workforce Committee, the House Financial Services Committee, the House Judiciary Committee, the House Natural Resources Committee, the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, and the House Veterans' Affairs Committee
- H.R. 10491, (Rep. Huffman, D-California) a bill to require the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to establish a Blue Carbon Program to conserve and restore blue carbon ecosystems, and for other purposes. Introduced on December 18, 2024, and referred to the House Natural Resources Committee and the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee
- H.R. 10489, (Rep. Huffman, D-California) a bill to prohibit drilling in the outer Continental Shelf, to prohibit coal leases on Federal land, and for other purposes. Introduced on December 18, 2024, and referred to the House Natural Resources Committee.
- H.R. 10390, (Rep. Dingell, D-Michigan) a bill to amend the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act to make supplemental funds available for management of fish and wildlife species of greatest conservation need as determined by State fish and wildlife agencies, and for other purposes. Introduced on December 12, 2024, and referred to the House Natural Resources Committee, and the House Budget Committee
- S. 5509, (Sen. Welch, D-Vermont) a bill to require the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to provide support to State governments in the production by those governments of quadrennial State climate assessments, and for other purposes. Introduced on December 12, 2024, and referred to the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee.

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- H.R. 10292, (Rep. Matsui, D-California) a bill to require the Secretary of Commerce to produce distribution maps for certain species of whales, and for other purposes. Introduced on December 4, 2024, and referred to the House Natural Resources Committee.
- **Scientific Collection Permits**
  - Fifteen scientific collecting permits have been issued for 2025. Thirteen additional applications have been reviewed and will be processed upon receipt of all required materials.
- **HOT TOPICS/Miscellaneous**
  - Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MADMF) has been conducting multiple phases of research on striped bass release mortality since 2020. MRA engaged NJ anglers to encourage participation in the Citizen Science phase of the study this fall which resulted in a significant increase in NJ-specific data and participation in the study. MRA staff met with staff from MADMF and Pelagic Strategies to discuss potential ways to engage NJ anglers in the final phase of the research later this winter.
  - Marine Fisheries collected and donated \$310 to the Community Food Bank of New Jersey in December!

### **\*\*MARINE HABITAT & SHELLFISHERIES/MRA\*\***

#### **NOVEMBER**

##### **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.
    - Dredging Referral
      - The MRA received and reviewed a proposed dredging project located at a private residence.
    - Dredging Referral
      - The MRA received and reviewed a permit for a lagoon dredging and the authorization of an existing docking facility located at a private residence.
    - Chemours Refinery Works
      - The MRA received and reviewed a renewal of an existing cooling water intake structure at the Salem Canal. MRA provided comments on the renewal.
    - Staff worked with DLRP on several mapping interpretations.
    - Staff reviewed the Nature Based Solutions Workgroup Adaptive Management and Monitoring Guidance document and provided comment at the monthly meeting.
    - Staff attended a meeting relating to an Aurora Fiber Optic Cable project located in Monmouth County.
- **Shell Recycling Program**
  - Staff continue to coordinate with Shell Recycling Program participants for weekly shell collection and investigate additional venues.
    - Staff collected 269 bushels of recycled shell in the month of November.
  - Staff continued efforts to recruit new restaurant partners to the Shell Recycling Program.
  - Staff met with NJDEP Fish & Wildlife Grant staff to ensure subawards from the CZM NOAA Grant were moving along and to assist with any communication with partners to get subawards finalized.



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- Staff met with a representative from Sysco, the wholesale food distributor, after they expressed an interest in assisting with the Shell recycling Program. Staff and Sysco staff identified areas where Sysco may be able to assist and will regroup in January after the holidays to investigate a formal partnership.
- Staff met with Rutgers Cooperative Extension staff to seek assistance in school recruitment for the education portion of the Shell Recycling Program grant. Staff will continue to coordinate with the extension as recruitment continues.
- Staff met with Great Egg Harbor Regional High School District (GEHRHS) staff to discuss opportunities for the Shell Recycling Program, and the Marine Resources Administration as a whole to partner with the school for educational opportunities and presentations within the school system. Staff intends to establish the first presentation on the Shell Recycling Program for GEHRHS students in the Spring of 2025.
- Staff met with NOAA Coastal Zone Management Staff as a part of regular quarterly check ins on the Shell Recycling Program grant. Staff will continue to coordinate with NOAA as the program expands per grant specifications.
- **Seagrass Conservation Program (SAV)**
  - Staff met to discuss outreach ideas and plans. Staff began drafting a logo for the program.
  - 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 and (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.
  - Staff met with Rutgers to check in on the progress of the 2023 SAV survey map creation.
  - Staff attended a meeting discussing the state of Delaware's SAV seed turbulator design, function, and results for restoration efforts.

### **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 picked up a buoy that broke free during rough weather and washed ashore as well as checked the grounds.
  - Staff has assisted individuals interested in ADZ lease grounds in understanding the process, fees, and responsibilities.
- **Shellfish Lease Renewal**
  - As of November 30, the Atlantic Coast office has 63 lease holders have yet to renew.
    - There are 182 lessees on the Atlantic coast
  - Delaware Bay office has had approximately 50% of lease holders come in to renew their leases.
- **NearMap Image Review**
  - Staff compiled and examined the low altitude flight images for the Shellfish Lease lot located in Swan Point, Barnegat Bay NJ
    - The flights examined look back to 2014 and were conducted in the early spring and late summer.
    - A PowerPoint presentation was created to visualize the rise in floating aquaculture gear present at Swan Point and present to other NJ-DEP agencies and State legislative representatives.

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## State Fisheries and Quota Management

### • **Atlantic Coast Shellfish Council Meeting**

- A hybrid council meeting was held in person (and online) at the Nacote Creek Research Station
- (360 N New York Road, Port Republic NJ) on 11/18/2024.
- 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 November 2024 \$4,781.58
  - Shellfisheries Law Enforcement Fund \$1,388.00
- Presentation of October 21, 2024 minutes for approval.
- Application for consideration:
  - 1 application in Scull Bay
  - 1 application in Great Bay
  - 1 application in Little Egg Harbor Bay
- Application for decision:
  - There were 0 applications for decision
- Approved application for transfer:
  - There were 0 applications for transfer
- Topics of note included:
- Old Business
  - Regulatory Committee
  - Leasing Committee
  - Hard Clam Management Committee
  - NJ REAL
  - 2025 Lease Renewal
  - Notice of Suspension of Shellfish Harvest
    - High Bar Harbor
    - Ludlam Bay
- New Business
  - 2025 Council Schedule
    - January 13
    - February 10
    - March 17
    - April 21
    - May 19
    - June 16
    - July 21
    - August 18
    - September 15
    - October 20
    - November 17

### • **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 November 12 in person & online with TEAMS.
- The next meeting is scheduled for December 17, 2024.

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### • Direct Market Harvest Program – 2024 – Delaware Bay Oyster Dredge Fishery

- Season opened April 1 and closed Nov 22, 2024
- 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
<b>Oct</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,864</b>	<b>2,164</b>	<b>\$ 133,600.00</b>

- Staff began preparing the finalized Direct Market Harvest data in preparation for the 27 Delaware Bay Oyster Stock Assessment.
- The regional quota for the High Mortality region was met and the region was closed to harvest starting July 8, 2024.
- The Medium Mortality region quota was met and the region closed to harvest starting October 11, 2024.
- The Shell Rock region quota was not prior to the closure of harvest on November 22, 2024.
- Harvest by bed and region is shown below:

Bed	Region	Boat Days	Harvest	CPUE	% of Region	% of Total
Cohansey	MMM	20	2,053	102.7	12.8%	3.1%
Ship John	MMM	137	13,931	101.7	87.2%	21.0%
Shell Rock	SR	112	17,862	159.5	100.0%	26.9%
Bennies Sand	HMM	42	8,310	197.9	25.5%	12.5%
Bennies	HMM	107	17,414	162.7	53.4%	26.2%
Nantuxent	HMM	53	6,901	130.2	21.1%	10.4%
Region Total	MMM	157	15,984	101.8		24.0%
Region Total	SR	112	17,862	159.5		26.9%
Region Total	HMM	202	32,625	161.5		4.91%
Total		471	66,471	141.1		

### • Oyster Tonging Fishery – 2024-2025 Season

- Tonging season opened November 1
- November harvest was reported for two harvesters
- Season Tag Sales and Harvest Highlights

## Marine Resources Administration Monthly Report

	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
Single (\$2)	200					200
Revenue	\$400					\$400
Harvest (bu)	105					105

### 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 reviewed and provided feedback on a draft video produced by I&E to highlight the survey.
  - Staff continued entering 2024 data and plans to begin data analysis and report composition next month.
  - Staff submitted the first draft article for the 2025 Marine Digest highlight the survey.
  - Staff updated the Delaware Bay Juvenile Finfish Trawl Survey webpage ahead of the video release.
- **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 Nov 18
  - Staff also sampled in partnership to survey the Bureau's shellfish enhancement sites including the shell plant program and transplant program on Nov 25. Both sampling efforts started in April and will run through the end of November.
- **Shellfish Estuarine Inventory Program**
  - Staff began to compile data from the September 2024 sampling effort in Sandy Hook Bay.
    - The data will be preliminarily compared to the 2021 sampling effort in Sandy Hook Bay and updated in the Semi-Annual progress report due to NOAA at the end of January.
  - Staff began planning for spring of 2025 for the testing of gear in preparation for estuarine inventories to be performed in southern shallow estuaries where a mechanical dredge cannot operate. Gear testing will take place in early spring
- **Mullica River Oyster Monitoring**
  - Staff conducted oyster sampling from the Mullica River oyster reefs for disease monitoring on November 18, 2024.
    - The samples were collected and sent to the Rutgers Haskin Shellfish Research laboratory for processing.
  - Histopathology reports are expected to be available in early January.
- **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 two tributaries of the Delaware Bay on November 7.
  - Staff used SonarWiz to post process data taken from the Moss Point oyster reef in the Mullica River to create maps.
- **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.

## Marine Resources Administration Monthly Report

- 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.
- R/V Zephyrus was pulled from the water, the propeller was replaced, and the boat was returned to the water.

### Administrative/Miscellaneous

- **License Sales**

- Revenue collected from the Delaware Bay Office totaled \$24,088.50 for November 2024.

License Type	Total	License Type	Total
Lease Fees	\$10,440.50	Possession in Excess	\$400.00
Assigned Fees	\$6,200.00	Tonging	\$400.00
Nets	\$2,033.00	Menhaden	\$310.00
AC & DB Dredge	\$1,900.00	Dealer License	\$100.00
Commercial Crab Pot	\$1,400.00	Application Fees	\$95.00
Commercial Shellfish	\$800.00	Recreational Shellfish	\$10.00

- **Monthly Meetings**

- Regulatory Committee Meeting held November 14 at Rutgers Haskin Lab 5PM
- Ocean Acidification Team, Nature Based Solutions Workgroup

- **MRA Outreach, Communications and Education Program**

- **Seagrass Conservation Program**

- Staff met to discuss outreach ideas and plans. Staff began drafting a logo for the program.
- 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 and (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.

- Staff met with Rutgers to check in on the progress of the 2023 SAV survey map creation.
- Staff attended a meeting discussing the state of Delaware's SAV seed turbulator design, function, and results for restoration efforts.

- **ArcGIS FieldMaps**

- Staff continue to meet 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.
- Staff expect this project to be completed by late January (2025) so that it may be implemented in the 2025 field season.

### DECEMBER

# **Marine Resources Administration Monthly Report**

## **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.
  - Moore's Beach Oyster Reefs Heislerville Land Management Review
    - The MRA received a Land Management Review from the American Littoral Society (ALS). ALS is proposing the creation of an intertidal oyster reef slightly offshore of Moore's Beach in Heislerville, Cumberland County, NJ. The MRA provided comments.
  - Barnegat Lighthouse Request Beach Habitat Restoration
    - MRA received project materials for a beach habitat restoration project located at Barnegat Light State Park in Barnegat Light Borough, Ocean County. MRA provided comments in a timely manner.
  - Draft Surface Water Renewal Permit Action - Phillips 66 Bayway Refinery
    - MRA received a draft Surface Water Renewal Permit and provided comments from Marine Fisheries staff.
  - PSE&G Greenbank Geotechnical Borings and Testing Pit LMR
    - MRA received application materials for a PSE&G geotechnical borings and testing project. The project was land-based, so MRA did not provide comments.
- Staff worked with DLRP on several mapping interpretations.
- Staff attended the December Joint Permit Processing (JPP) meeting for a redevelopment program that would include the demolition of the existing structure and development of a new modern facility at the Wetlands Institute in Stone Harbor, NJ.
- Staff met to discuss Environmental Review Group (ERG) previous and new roles.

### **• 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 October.

### **• Seagrass Conservation Program**

- Staff worked with DLRP on several mapping interpretations.
- Staff attended the December Joint Permit Processing (JPP) meeting for a redevelopment program that would include the demolition of the existing structure and development of a new modern facility at the Wetlands Institute in Stone Harbor, NJ.
- Staff met to discuss Environmental Review Group (ERG) previous and new roles.

## **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 retrieved the ADZ buoys for the season on December 11
- Staff continue to assist individuals interested in ADZ lease grounds in understanding the process, fees, and responsibilities. Two new applications have been received, one for the ADZ-4 and the other for the ADZ-2.

### **• Shellfish Lease Renewal**

- As of December 16, the Atlantic Coast office has 33 lease holders have yet to renew.
  - There are 182 lessees on the Atlantic coast, and they will have until December 31 to renew their lease at the Nacote Creek office.

## Marine Resources Administration Monthly Report

- Staff will issue letters to any leaseholder who does not renew their lease and notify them that they can attend the January 13 meeting and request an extension.
- Any vacated leases will be eligible to be applied for after 10 business days following the January Council meeting.
- Delaware Bay office had one lease that was willingly relinquished during the renewal period. All others were successfully renewed before the December 31, 2024 deadline.
- **Aquaculture Leasing Database**
  - Staff are working on an ArcGIS Pro database to contain all of the 2024 Shellfish Lease Utilization data collected during the renewal period.
    - Staff will work on creating an Arc layer to display the 2024 data so that it is easy to visualize lease utilization for determining future leasing decisions.
  - Staff will also update the current General Permit–30 (GP-30) gear type and location for all Shellfish leases that contain structures requiring a GP-30.
- **2025 Lease Field Work**
  - Staff have begun to plan out what leasing areas are top priority for Hydrographic Surveys in the 2025 field season.
    - The bureau has numerous outstanding survey applications (dating back over a decade) that will take priority this field season.

### State Fisheries and Quota Management

- **Atlantic Coast Shellfish Council Meeting**
  - There was no Atlantic Coast Shellfisheries Council Meeting held for December 2024.
- **Delaware Bay Section of the NJ Shellfisheries Council**
  - A special meeting was held on December 17 with Senator Testa and staff to discuss Shell and Transplant, Funding, Harvest Hours, and Legislative Concerns.
  - Staff drafted the November 12, 2024 meeting minutes.
  - The next meeting is scheduled for January 7, 2025.
  - Staff in partnership with the council have acquired 13 vessel tracking systems for the Delaware Bay oyster harvesting fleet to drive enhancement programs.
    - Staff will be reaching out in January to start implementing the units on each of the oyster harvesting vessels.
- **Direct Market Harvest Program – 2024 – Delaware Bay Oyster Dredge Fishery**
  - Season opened April 1 and closed Nov 22, 2024
  - The starting quota was 491 bu (39,237 bu.) and a second increase occurred on May 13 with additional quota of 344 bu. for a final individual quota of 835 bu (66,800).
  - Tag sales:

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

## Marine Resources Administration Monthly Report

<b>Oct</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,864</b>	<b>2,164</b>	<b>\$ 133,600.00</b>

- Staff finalized and submitted the harvest data for the 2024 Direct Market Harvest season in preparation for the 27th Annual Stock Assessment on February 3 and 4 of 2025.
- The regional quota for the High Mortality region was met and the region was closed to harvest starting July 8, 2024.
- The Medium Mortality region quota was met and the region closed to harvest starting October 11, 2024.
- The Shell Rock region quota was not prior to the closure of harvest on November 22, 2024.
- Harvest by bed and region is shown below:

<b>Bed</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Boat Days</b>	<b>Harvest</b>	<b>CPUE</b>	<b>% of Region</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
Cohansey	MMM	20	2,053	102.7	12.8%	3.1%
Ship John	MMM	137	13,931	101.7	87.2%	21.0%
Shell Rock	SR	112	17,862	159.5	100.0%	26.9%
Bennies Sand	HMM	42	8,310	197.9	25.5%	12.5%
Bennies	HMM	107	17,414	162.7	53.4%	26.2%
Nantuxent	HMM	53	6,901	130.2	21.1%	10.4%
Region Total	MMM	157	15,984	101.8		24.0%
Region Total	SR	112	17,862	159.5		26.9%
Region Total	HMM	202	32,625	161.5		49.1%
Total		471	66,471	141.1		

### • Oyster Tonging Fishery – 2024-2025 Season

- Tonging season opened November 1.
- November harvest was reported for two harvesters.
- Season Tag Sales and Harvest Highlights:

	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>	<b>Total</b>
Single (\$2)	200	250				450
Revenue	\$400	\$500				\$900
Harvest (bu)	105	81				186

### Surveys & Laboratory Work

#### • Delaware Bay Juvenile Finfish Trawl Survey

- The 2024 Delaware Bay Juvenile Finfish Trawl Survey concluded at the end of October. The 2025 survey will begin in April.
- Staff met throughout the month to proof and analyze data for the 2024 trawl report. The report is to be completed and submitted prior to the due date in March

#### • Dermo Monitoring and Shell Plant and Transplant Site Monitoring



## Marine Resources Administration Monthly Report

- The 2024 Dermo Monitoring and Shell Plant and Transplant Site Monitoring concluded at the end of November and will resume in April.
- **Delaware Bay Spat Bag & Water Quality Monitoring**
  - Staff began planning to implement a spat bag monitoring program in Delaware Bay and its Tributaries for 2025.
- **Side Scan Sonar**
  - Staff attended a SonarWiz training in Nashville, TN to learn how to use all the functions available in the program when post-processing the data gathered from the side scan sonar unit.
  - 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.
- **Sturgeon Receiver Project**
  - The sturgeon receiver project was conducted on December 3 and December 17.
    - Staff removed the float lines to sink the receivers to obtain data over the winter months.
    - 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.
  - Bureau staff continue to maintain state vehicles with routine and scheduled service.
  - Repairs on the R/V Vadum's ECM were completed.
- **Equipment Maintenance**
  - Staff sent YSI for annual preventative service.

### Administrative/Miscellaneous

- **License Sales**
  - Revenue collected from the Delaware Bay Office totaled \$40,357.24 for December 2024.

License Type	Total	License Type	Total
Assigned Fees	\$12,200.00	Menhaden	\$1,290.00
Nets	\$ 8,046.00	Tonging	\$ 500.00
Lease Fees	\$ 6,982.24	Dealer/Shucker/Planter	\$ 400.00
Commercial Crab Pot	\$ 4,300.00	Application Fees	\$ 308.00
DB Crab Dredge	\$ 2,515.00	Dredge Boat Renewal	\$ 36.00
AC Crab Dredge	\$ 2,000.00	Recreational Shellfish	\$ 30.00
Commercial Shellfish	\$ 1,750.00		

- **Monthly Meetings**
  - Regulatory Committee Meeting held on December 5 at Rutgers Haskin Lab 3PM
  - New Jersey Bay Islands Workgroup
- **ArcGIS FieldMaps**
  - Staff continue to meet 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.
    - Staff expect this project to be completed by late January (2025) so that it may be implemented in the 2025 field season.