

Marine Resources Administration Monthly Report

MAY 2023

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

MEETING SUMMARIES

- **Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program-ACCSP**

- Staff met with ACCSP, federal and state partners to discuss data collected from electronic reporting. The purpose of the meeting was to create and implement standards are electronic reporting. Another key aspect is to make sure that the same QA/QC process is being followed as is with paper reports.
- Staff attended an ACCSP Recreational Technical Committee meeting on May 31. Amber Johnson was officially assigned to the committee as NJ's representative. The main focus of the meeting was the Discards Subcommittee update on progress towards a discard data collection survey proposal for the ACCSP RFP to gauge approval on next steps/direction and to answer questions.

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

- Administration staff presented projection results to the Striped Bass management board at their spring meeting. Results of projections incorporating updated catch estimates indicated a dramatically reduced probability of rebuilding SSB to the SSB target by 2029. On May 2nd, the Striped Bass Management Board voted to take emergency action in response, imposing a coastwide 28" to 31" slot for striped bass to protect the 2015-year class and support stock rebuilding. States have until July 2nd to implement this regulation.
- The ASMFC Tautog Technical Committee (TC) met via webinar on May 16, 2023, to review results from the tagging program survey and to make recommendations for stock assessment scheduling. The surveys revealed that each region within the Tautog Fishery Management Plan was experiencing problems with tags attached to the fish's operculum. The TC recommended conducting new studies focused on possible changes to tagging locations on the fish, tag size and tag type, especially within the states with strong live markets. After an overview of the stock assessment timeline from ASMFC staff, the TC recommended targeting 2025 for the next update assessment and 2028 for the next benchmark stock assessment. This schedule will allow for the inclusion of new fisheries-independent survey data to be included in the next benchmark assessment.
- The ASMFC Spot and Croaker Technical Committee (TC) and Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) held a virtual data workshop for the current benchmark stock assessments from May 15 through May 17. The TC members from each state presented their data including both fishery-dependent and -independent research and biological sampling programs. The SAS created subgroups to take on index standardization and modelling analyses and assigned assessment report write-ups. The SAS subgroups will meet via conference calls over the summer with the first of two assessment workshops meeting virtually in September.
- Administration staff participated in a three-day meeting of the Ecological Reference Points Working Group (ERP-WG). The goal of the meeting was to review, in advance of a scheduled 2025 benchmark peer review, the work the group did for the last review and begin to make decisions about what models to pursue in an effort to help us craft meaningful data requests. The meeting was a success with a clear plan going forward.

- **Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council-MAFMC**

- A Joint Monkfish and Dogfish Advisory Panel webinar was held on Tuesday, May 16th to discuss: recommendations from the Sturgeon Bycatch Fishery Management Action Team/Plan development Team; potential measures to reduce bycatch of Atlantic sturgeon in the monkfish and spiny dogfish gillnet fisheries; and the range of alternatives recommended to the Joint Monkfish and Dogfish

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Committee to be considered for reducing bycatch of Atlantic sturgeon in the monkfish and spiny dogfish gillnet fisheries. The consensus from the Monkfish fishermen was to do away with the option of low-profile net, not look at statistical areas but focus on inshore-vs-offshore instead, and that soak time limitations were an option as long as caveats were included for bad weather and other reasons that may impede pulling of the nets.

- The Monkfish and Dogfish Committees met jointly on Wednesday, May 17th to discuss: the Final Action Plan to Reduce Atlantic Sturgeon Bycatch in Federal Large-Mesh Gillnet Fisheries and any additional data or information needs to help inform the range of development of alternatives. The Monkfish Committee recommended to include in the range of alternatives for monkfish for area-based measures (NJ and SNE hotspot statistical areas) three options: by statistical area group, by 10-minute square, and straight line that approximates the shoreline. They also recommended to add options for monkfish soak time limits for 72 hours, to add alternatives for monkfish for time-area closures in one-week intervals up to four weeks for each of the three area-based options (NJ and SNE hotspot statistical areas): by statistical area group, by 10-minute square, and straight line that approximates shoreline. The joint Monkfish and Dogfish Committee recommended to the Councils that the Enforcement Committee(s) provide input on draft alternatives, specifically using soak time limits for managing gillnet fisheries and use of more refined areas beyond statistical area for time-area alternatives.
- **Marine Fisheries Council/Advisory Committees**
 - Staff gave a presentation at the May Marine Fisheries Council meeting regarding ASMFC's emergency action for striped bass. The MFC considered a Notice of Administrative Change to implement the ASMFC-mandated 28" to 31" slot. The MFC postponed final action on implementing the new slot to hold a Striped Bass Committee meeting to gather more public input. The MFC will hold a special meeting in June to consider final action on implementing the 28" to 31" slot.
 - Staff held a commercial Spiny Dogfish public meeting on May 25th. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss a 59.4% quota decrease for the 2023/24 fishing season. After deliberation, attendees recommended that the NJ Marine Fisheries Council decrease commercial daily trip limits to 4,000 pounds per day an attempt to prevent the premature harvest of the quota. The recommendation will be discussed at the Marine Fisheries Council meeting in July.
- **Public Hearings**
 - ASMFC held four public hearings to inform the public and take public comment on the Striped Bass Management Board's vote to take emergency action to implement a 28" to 31" slot coastwide for striped bass to protect the 2015-year class and support stock rebuilding. Staff attended all four public hearings.

INDEPENDENT FISHERIES

- **Delaware River Seine Survey**
 - Data on the V Drive was updated to include all 2022 survey data: V:\Marine Fish\Delaware Estuary Surveys DATA\Delaware River Seine Survey
 - A summary of 2022 survey data was submitted to Delaware's Division of Fish and Wildlife as part of their scientific collection permit requirements. A 2023 permit was obtained on May 31.
 - Preparation for the 2023 Delaware River Seine Survey is underway with an expected start date of June 19.
- **Herring Surveys**
 - The gill net portion of the of the River Herring Survey concluded on May 23. Catches for the month have been dominated by white perch. For the entire spring season 183 Alewife and 1 Blueback Herring were caught between the Great Egg and Maurice Rivers.

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- **Horseshoe Crab Survey**
 - The first two rounds of the HSC survey were successfully completed. Two more rounds will be scheduled in June.
- **Raritan-Sandy Hook Bay Complex Inventory Project**
 - The Raritan Inventory Project for May began sampling on May 3rd and was completed in 6 days within the month. All 16 otter trawl stations, 16 seine stations and 12 gillnet stations were completed. Gillnet sampling consisted of mostly of horseshoe crabs (n=11), but also caught one striped bass, one summer flounder, and two spider crabs. Otter trawl sampling consisted of primarily bay anchovy (n = 127), scup (n = 22), and spotted hake (n = 8). Other species caught in trawl sampling consisted of summer flounder, black sea bass, and crabs (blue crab, spider crab, and horseshoe crabs). Seine sampling consisted only of mostly Atlantic silverside (n = 6,271), striped killifish (n = 322), and bay anchovy (n = 29). Other species caught in seine sampling consisted of northern puffer, spot, northern pipefish and crabs (blue crab, rock crab, spider crab and lady crab). Sixteen eDNA water samples were collected and filtered from otter trawl stations and nine eDNA water samples were collected and filtered from seine stations.

DEPENDENT FISHERIES

- **Access Point Angler Intercept Survey-APAIS**
 - The draw for May consisted of 177 site assignments and 7 head boat assignments that yielded a total of 937 intercepts (283 SH, 92 CH, 474 PR, 88 HB). Two site assignments and two HB assignments were cancelled in May. The site assignments cancellations were due to FI illness/injury with no coverage and the HB assignments due to weather/lack of patrons.
 - Staff continue to make updates to the Vessel Directory and Site Register in preparation for Wave 4.
 - May mileage has been validated and submitted for reimbursement; April mileage reimbursements have been received.
 - Four new hourlies started on May 20th. They have all passed the required tests for APAIS sampling and are interviewing in the field independently.
 - One full time ASMFC employee started on the APAIS project as of May 16th. They have passed the required tests for APAIS sampling and are interviewing in the field independently.
 - Data for the April Fishdump were reviewed and necessary edits were submitted.
- **Biological**
 - Staff finished ageing 2022 striped bass scales. 246 striped bass samples were aged.
 - Staff finished processing Ocean Trawl Samples from the April 2023 cruise. In total, 179 samples were collected for age structures and/or diet. Stomach samples that were collected are currently being analyzed for contents.
- **Commercial Fisheries/Quota Management**
 - Summer flounder: The commercial 2023 Directed Season 3 began on May 1st, with current harvest at 21% of the Seasonal quota.
 - Black Sea Bass: The commercial 2023 Directed Season 1 began on May 1st, with current harvest at 34% of the Seasonal quota.
 - Menhaden: The commercial menhaden season began on January 1st. Quota designated to the “other gears” fishery is an estimated 57% harvested.
 - Bluefish: The commercial bluefish season began on January 1st. Landings remain low at 4% of the annual quota harvested.
 - Scup: The Summer scup season began on May 1st. Harvest remains expectedly low at 3% of the seasonal quota. The Winter I season concluded with an estimated 79% of the coastwide quota harvested.

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- Spiny dogfish: The 2023/24 commercial season began on May 1st. Current harvest is 11% of the quota.
- Staff approved 1 confidential access request. The applicants are from a state, federal partners and contractors and were receiving initial or renewal of their access.
- Staff provided state and ACCSP staff with commercial landings for Atlantic croaker, blue crab, bluefish, cobia, horseshoe crab, red drum, spiny dogfish and spot.
- **For-Hire Telephone Survey-FHTS**
 - May included sampling weeks 17-21. There were 274 vessels drawn for the month with 111 vessels who responded. This resulted in a response rate of 40.5%. All weekly mailings for May were sent out to the proper vessel representatives. Staff successfully printed letters and log sheets for June's weekly mailings.
 - Staff continue to work in the vessel directory making updates as needed. HMS permits were successfully filtered and processed in the imports inbox.
- **NJ Saltwater Recreational Registry Program-NJSRRP/Volunteer Angler Survey-VAS**
 - As of May 30, 2023, there were 82,406 individuals and 568 for-hire vessels registered with the New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry Program (NJSRRP) for 2023. (Last month: April 30, 2023, there were 60,837 individuals and 495 for-hire vessels registered for 2023).
- **Striped Bass Bonus Program-SBBP**
 - The 2023 Striped Bass Bonus Program opened on May 15th. Staff have issued permits to 9,108 individual anglers and 131 party/charter boats. Individual angler applications have increased by 33% compared to June 1, 2022. Staff expect SBBP participation to increase in 2023 due to the ASMFC emergency action. The current 2023 Bonus harvest is 1,195 lbs. from 176 fish.
- **Tournament Sampling**
 - Staff were scheduled for seven weigh-ins during the month of May. Unfortunately, most weigh-ins were cancelled due to bad weather or lack of angler participation.

OUTREACH

- Staff conducted an interview with NJ 101.5. The interview consisted of recreational blue crabbing during the summer season in New Jersey. Rules, regulations, equipment, and technique were discussed. Staff also provided information on common crab species found in New Jersey.
- The 2023 Marine Digest has arrived online and in print!

ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS (Marine Resources Administration)

- **Wind Energy**
 - New Jersey Research and Monitoring Initiative (RMI).
 - Staff participated in weekly Department internal RMI meetings.
 - Additional meetings were held to discuss projects and concepts in development including surfclam fishery enhancement, archival and real-time passive acoustic monitoring for large cetaceans, satellite tagging of humpback whales, socio-economic impacts of offshore wind on recreational fisheries, aerial acoustic surveys for large whales, and sea turtle tracking.
 - Staff identified reviewers for the sea turtle proposal and sent it out for review.
 - Staff met with DSR and the BPU to discuss criteria for funding mitigation-specific research for offshore wind.
 - Permitting support
 - Biweekly permitting meetings were held with Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind (ASOW) and Ocean Wind 1 and 2 (OW1 and OW2).

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- Staff met with Leading Light Wind to review Leading Light Wind's proposed routing into NJ.
- Staff met with Queensboro Renewable Express regarding an offshore transmission system which will connect an offshore wind lease area to New York and through approximately 10 miles of NJ state waters.
- Staff met with other programs in the Department to discuss the siting of export cables through the Sea Girt area.
- Stakeholder Engagement
 - Staff hosted the monthly Surfclam Research for offshore wind meeting.
 - Staff worked on plain language information for the Department's offshore wind website. A draft of Frequently Asked Questions and answers was provided to OPPN, and staff met with that program to discuss.
 - Staff made a presentation for the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissioners for their Climate Miniseries. The subject was whales and offshore wind, and staff's presentation was about how research needs are identified, and what cetacean research has been initiated by the RMI.
 - Staff sent email updates to the Marine Resource Council's Offshore Wind Committee on
- Board of Public Utilities
 - Staff met with BPU to follow up on the Q1 quarterly BMP meetings for the 2nd Solicitation awardees. Staff continued to work with the BPU to encourage developers to be proactive on fisheries and environmental monitoring and mitigation.
 - Staff attended pre-bid meetings with developers, including Community Offshore Wind, Atlantic Shores, Leading Light, Bluepoint Wind, and Attentive Energy.
 - Staff participated in the review committee for the NJ Offshore Wind Strategic Plan request for quotes and reviewed proposals.
- Federal Permitting
 - MRA staff met to discuss reviewing the draft Environmental Impact Assessment for Atlantic Shores South.
 - Staff worked with the Bureau of Coastal Permitting on the Empire Wind Federal Consistency determination.
- Regional coordination
 - Staff participated in the final evaluation for proposal review for NYSERDA's call for proposals for offshore wind research projects.
 - Staff attended two meetings of the NYSERDA Offshore Wind Deep Water Master Plan meeting of the Environmental Sensitivity Project Advisory Committee.
 - Staff attended the monthly offshore wind coordination meeting between the Department and NYSERDA.
 - Staff attended RWSC Subcommittee Meetings in May, including the Marine Mammal, Technology, Habitat & Ecosystem, and Sea Turtle subcommittees.
 - Staff attended a meeting of the NYSERDA Environmental Technical Working Group's Regional Synthesis committee to discuss their draft document Responsible Practices for Regional Wildlife Monitoring and Research in Relation of Offshore Wind Energy Development.
 - Staff attended the monthly Interstate Wind Fisheries Group and initiated a discussion of coordination of project monitoring between states.

MISCELLANEOUS (Marine Resources Administration)

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- **Regulatory/Legislative**

- Notices of Administrative Changes (NOACs)
 - The ASMFC's Atlantic Striped Bass Board approved an emergency action to implement a 31-inch maximum size limit for the Atlantic Striped Bass recreational fishery. A NOAC was drafted to implement the mandated changes to the size limit. At the May 11, 2023, NJ Marine Fisheries Council (MFC) meeting, the MFC reviewed the draft NOAC. The NOAC was tabled until a MFC subcommittee was held to allow public comment and input from advisors. A special meeting will be held on June 20, 2023, where the MFC will review and vote on the NOAC.
- Rulemakings
 - MRA rule team continues to develop a new multispecies rule proposal amending N.J.A.C. 7:25-18.5A Artificial Reefs, along with other subchapters and sections pertaining to marine fisheries. The first draft proposal is currently under review.
 - Another rulemaking proposal is underway to allow modifications via NOAC to expeditiously comply with any management criteria approved by NOAA or the applicable regional management body. Under this rulemaking all Marine Fisheries-related rules will be reorganized under N.J.A.C. 7:25B.
- Legislative Activity – State
 - SR120/Sen O'Scanlon (R-13), Sen. Durr (R3), Urges immediate moratorium on sonar testing and wind turbine mapping due to recent unexplained deaths of marine life off the coast of New Jersey. Introduced on 5/8/2023 and referred to Senate Environment and Energy Committee.
 - SJR73/Sen. Oroho (R24), Sen Gopal (D11), Designates first full week of June each year as "New Jersey Fishing and Boating Week." 5/22/2023 Passed in Senate 36-0.
 - A5566/Asm. Scharfenberger (R13), Asm. Flynn (R13), Directs DEP to establish sonar testing permit program. Introduced on 6/5/2023 and referred to Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee.
- Legislative Activity – Federal
 - S.1756/Sen. King, Jr. (I-ME), a bill to amend the Farm Credit Act of 1971 to support the commercial fishing industry. Introduced on 5/30/2023 and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.
 - H.R. 676, the "Coastal Communities Ocean Acidification Act of 2023", (Rep. Pingree, D-Maine) - a bill to amend the Federal Ocean Acidification Research And Monitoring Act of 2009 to require the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to collaborate with State and local governments and Indian Tribes on vulnerability assessments related to ocean acidification, research planning, and similar activities, and for other purposes – passed the full House of Representatives on May 9, 2023 by a vote of 351-58.
 - H.R. 886, the "Save Our Seas 2.0 Amendments Act", (Rep. Bonamici, D-Oregon) - a bill to amend the Save Our Seas 2.0 Act to improve the administration of the Marine Debris Foundation, to amend the Marine Debris Act to improve the administration of the Marine Debris Program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and for other purposes – passed the House Natural Resources Committee (amended) on May 17, 2023.
 - H.R. 3614, (Rep. Scott, D-Virginia), a bill to direct the Comptroller General of the United States to submit to Congress a report on offshore wind development vessels, and for other purposes. Introduced on May 23, 2023, and referred to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, and in addition to the House Natural Resources Committee, and the House

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Education and the Workforce Committee, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

- H. Res. 430, (Rep. Beyer, D-Virginia), a resolution expressing the need for protecting and conserving at least 50 percent of the land, freshwater, and ocean ecosystems in the United States and encouraging diplomatic community efforts to achieve this goal worldwide. Introduced on May 22, 2023, and referred to the House Natural Resources Committee, and in addition to the House Foreign Affairs Committee, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.
- H.R. 3494, (Rep. Grijalva, D-Arizona), a bill to create dedicated funds to conserve butterflies in North America, plants in the Pacific Islands, freshwater mussels in the United States, and desert fish in the Southwest United States, and for other purposes. Introduced on May 18, 2023, and referred to the House Natural Resources Committee.
- H. Res. 423, (Rep. Dingell, D-Michigan) Supporting the designation of May 19, 2023, as "Endangered Species Day". Introduced on May 18, 2023, and referred to the House Natural Resources Committee.
- H.R. 3390, (Rep. Velazquez, D-New York), a bill to require a study relating to the consolidation of certain grant programs currently available to insular areas and the suitability of such consolidation for Puerto Rico, and for other purposes. Introduced on May 16, 2023, and referred to the House Natural Resources Committee.
- S. 1552, (Sen. Coons, D-Delaware), a bill to establish the Coastal Management Fellowship and the Digital Coast Fellowship, and for other purposes. Introduced on May 11, 2023 and referred to the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee.
- H.R. 3256, (Rep. Pfluger, R-Texas), "Preventing Executive Climate Overreach Act" - a bill to provide that Executive Order 14096 shall have no force or effect. Introduced on May 11, 2023, and referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and in addition to the House Natural Resources Committee, and the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.
- S. 1508, (Sen. Reed, D-Rhode Island), a bill to amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to add Rhode Island to the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and for other purposes. Introduced on May 10, 2023, and referred to the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee.
- H.R. 3187, (Rep. Magaziner, D-Rhode Island), a bill to amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to add Rhode Island to the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. Introduced on May 10, 2023, and referred to the House Natural Resources Committee.
- S. 1416, the "NWR Modernization Act of 2023", (Sen. Cantwell, D- Washington), a bill to provide guidance for and investment in the upgrade and modernization of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Radio All Hazards network, and for other purposes. Introduced on May 3, 2023, and referred to the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. Passed the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee on Wednesday, May 10, 2023.
- Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries Hearing: On Tuesday, June 6, 2023, at 10:15 a.m., the House Natural Resources Committee's Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries will hold an oversight budget hearing titled "Examining the Impacts of the National Oceanic and

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Atmospheric Administration's proposed changes to the North Atlantic Right Whale Vessel Strike Reduction Rule." On August 1, 2022, NOAA published the proposed rule amending the North Atlantic Right Whale Vessel Strike Reduction Rule (87 Fed. Reg. 46921-46936). The proposed rule extends the applicability of the speed restriction rule to include boats measuring 35 feet and longer, expands the seasonal management areas (renamed as seasonal speed zones and shown in Figure 2), makes dynamic management areas mandatory (renamed as dynamic speed zones), and changes how the current safety deviations can be used. NOAA is currently reviewing the over 20,000 public comments submitted for the proposed rule. While there is no official timeline, NOAA anticipates a final rule by the end of the year.

- **Scientific Collection Permits**

- Eighty-five scientific collecting permits have been issued in 2023. An additional application has been reviewed and will be processed upon receipt of all required materials.

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

MRA Outreach, Education, and Communications

- **MRA Website Committee**

- The MRA Website Committee members continue to work on creating and updating content for various MRA webpages.

- **MRA Event Committee**

- Committee members continue to plan for attendance at 2023 events.

- **Outreach Events**

- MRA staff participated in the [Ocean Fun Days Events](#) at Island Beach State Park, Seaside Park and NJ Sea Grant Consortium, Sandy Hook NJ. Exhibits highlighted various MRA surveys, projects and regulatory information.
- MRA staff participated at the [Berkeley Striper Club, Fisherman's Flea Market Event](#) held in Seaside Park NJ.

- **Presentations**

- Staff presented on the pilot living shoreline project at Sedge Island during a CHARRM meeting (hosted by USFWS and NMFS). Participants in the meeting were pleased to see experimental work in non-plastic materials for living shoreline projects. The Bureau raised the issue of using plastic shell bags in reef and living shoreline projects when such projects first became popular in the state and it was considered an unwelcome and unpopular opinion. However, it seems the message has finally gotten through, as more entities previously in favor of such plastic materials are investigating non-plastic alternatives.

Offshore Wind, Restoration, Enhancement, Mitigation, and Habitat

- **Restoration and Enhancement**

- Staff coordinated with hatcheries for the pickup of hard clam seed for planting. Staff executed the planting of over four hundred thousand hard clam seed within the Sedge Island Marine Conservation Zone. Staff will continue to coordinate with New Jersey hatcheries for subsequent hard clam plantings this fall.
- Staff coordinated with NJ based hatcheries on the purchase of hard clam seed to be grown out by ReClam the Bay. The seed will be grown in ReClam's upwellers and used for educational purposes. The seed will be planted at locations designated by the Bureau this fall.

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- Staff successfully contracted a barge company for the annual Mullica River shell planting set to take place beginning the week of June 19th.
- Staff continues preparations for the 2023 Mullica River shell plant. Staff intends to plant approximately a combined seven thousand bushels on the reefs, including recycled and purchased shell.
- **Shell Recycling Program**
 - Staff continues to coordinate with Shell Recycling Program participants for weekly shell collection and investigate additional venues.
 - Staff collected **329 bushels** of recycled shell in the month of May.
 - Staff continues to coordinate with the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority to get appropriate contacts to additional venues for shell recycling within the Atlantic City area.
 - Staff continues to coordinate with CRDA staff to develop a public drop-off location for shell recycling in Atlantic City. CRDA has compiled a list of potentially suitable locations. Staff is reviewing the locations and hopes to establish a drop-off before summer.
- **Environmental Review/ Waterfront Development**
 - Staff reviewed and provided comments to the Office of Environmental Review on several pre-applications, Land Management Reviews, and waterfront development permit applications. These reviews include:
 - Island Beach State Park Living Shoreline
 - Staff received a request to construct a living shoreline at Island Beach State Park using four stone T-groins with sandfill and plantings. The MRA provided comments and requested more information to provide an appropriate timing restriction.
 - Liberty Island
 - Staff received a request for repairs to Liberty Island Pier and applied an appropriate timing restriction.
 - ACOE Dredging of the Shrewsbury/Navesink River
 - Staff received a request for dredging of the Navesink and Shrewsbury rivers, with the material being placed for beach renourishment. MRA provided comments and applied appropriate timing restrictions.
 - McCracken
 - Staff received a request for bulkhead maintenance and PWC lift installation for a single-family home. MRA provided comments for this project.
 - Community Drive
 - Staff received a request to construct a pier extension with a dock section and installation of a boat lift at a single-family home. MRA provided comments for this project.
 - MRA staff worked with the Office of Environmental Review on various timing restrictions throughout the month.
- **Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV)**
 - Staff continued to work on updates to the Natural Working and Lands Strategy's (NWLS) blue carbon targets for SAV.
 - Staff continued to draft an SAV guidance manual to be used for future SAV mitigation, enhancement, and restoration efforts. As part of the NWLS, staff are hoping to provide this manual to the public within the next few years.
 - Staff continued preparations for SAV fieldwork to take place in late May and throughout the month of June.
- **SAV Aerial Mapping and Field Validation Survey**

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- Staff began training and field validation alongside Dr. Lacey at Stockton University for an SAV mapping project being conducted by Dr. Lathrop at Rutgers University. The field validation portion of this project is conducted by visiting sites previously surveyed from the 2003 and 2009 SAV mapping conducted by Lathrop & Haag (2011) and placing an L-shaped grid to estimate percent cover of *Zostera marina* (eelgrass), *Ruppia maritima* (widgeon grass), and macroalgae. Results of the survey will demonstrate how SAV coverage has changed since the survey was last conducted.

GIS Data Development

- F&W OIS confirmed that Atlantic Coast estuarine inventory data was finalized and sent to BGIS for publication. The data included in this push was:
 - 1963 statewide hard clam and associated species distribution
 - 1979 statewide SAV distribution
 - 1980s-present hard clam, associated species, and SAV distribution
 - “Associated species” refers both to commercially/recreationally important bivalves (Eastern oyster, bay scallop, soft clam, surf clam, blue mussels) collected in the hard clam survey and selected non-commercial species of interest, such as blue crabs, horseshoe crabs, and whelks. It is important to note that the associated species data indicates ‘presence’ only and does not necessarily reflect a population estimate for management purposes.
 - As new estuarine inventories are conducted (hard clam stock estimates) the GIS data will be forwarded to F&W OIS for inclusion in the database. The next anticipated datasets will be Great Bay (2016), Raritan Bay (2021), and Sandy Hook Bay (2022).

Hard Clam Stock Assessments

- Stock assessment data analysis for the 2021 and 2022 surveys of Raritan and Sandy Hooks Bays (respectively) began in earnest. This also included training of additional Bureau staff in completing the surveys in the future.

Aquaculture and Shellfish Leases

- **Commercial Shellfish Aquaculture Website Committee**
 - Bureau of Marine Habitat and Shellfisheries staff in partnership with other agencies continue to work on managing the [NJ Commercial Shellfish Aquaculture website](#).
- **NJEMS Shellfish Lease Development**
 - Staff continue to provide data, testing, and feedback on the development of incorporating the leasing database into the NJEMS program. Staff is also working with the Bureau of GIS to allow GIS to input data directly into the NJEMS system.
- **Aquaculture Development Zone**
 - Staff deployed hazard buoys maintained by the Bureau to demarcate the inshore ADZ-4 site adjacent to the Dennis Creek WMA.

State Fisheries and Quota Management

- **Direct Market Harvest Program – 2023**
 - Harvest Season April 3 – November 24, 2023
 - Post-Transplant Quota:
 - Medium Mortality Market Region – 28,556 bu.
 - Shell Rock Region – 25,598 bu.
 - High Mortality Region – 41,645 bu.
 - Individual quota was increased by 398 bushels after the transplant and is 1,198 bu. per license

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- 80 Dredge boat licenses
- Between 5-7 active dredging vessels
- Weekly Harvest & Dealer Reports required
- Oyster Dredge Boat License Consolidation (10:1)
 - Requires Oyster Dredge Vessel License Consolidation Application and Administrative Consent Order (ACO) to allow up to 10 licenses to be harvested from 1 vessel.
 - 3 Active Designated Harvest Vessels with 10 Consolidated licenses
 - 2 Active Designated Harvest Vessels with 8 Consolidated licenses
- Season Tag Sales and Harvest Highlights:

	Mar	Apr	May	Total
Single Tags (\$2)	3,200	1,304	4,356	8,860
Cage (\$48)	500	379	749	1,628
Revenue	\$30,400	\$20,800	\$44,664	\$97,492
Harvest (bushels)	N/A	15,400	18,208	33,608

- Total reported harvest for May was from Bennies (32,617 bu.), Bennie Sands (291 bu.), Nantuxent (528 bu.) and New Beds (172 bu.)
- [Vibrio Control Plan](#) starts June 1 – August 31. All harvest will be required to be in refrigeration within 7 hours of the start of harvest including transport time. Vessels are allowed to start harvest at sunrise.
- **Intermediate Transplant Program – 2023**
 - The ITP began Monday, April 24 and ended Thursday, May 11. On Friday, May 12, one vessel conducted a separate transplant for the tonging industry from Cohansey to Nantuxent tongers areas.
 - Two vessels participated
 - The project cost \$3.25 per deck bushel transplanted, which was paid from the industry funds from the Oyster Resource Development Account to go towards enhancement efforts for the oyster resource.
 - SARC Recommended and Council Approved Transplant Parameters:
 - Very Low Mortality Transplant Region to a region TBD – 2,562 bu.
 - Low Mortality Transplant Region to Shell Rock and/or Medium Mortality Market Region – 19,906 bu.
 - Medium Mortality Transplant Region to High Mortality Market Region – 18,681 bu.
- **Delaware Bay Shellfish Council Meeting**
 - Meeting held May 16, 2023
 - Letter to Secretary of State
 - Agenda Letter from State/Fed Reps
 - Meeting held in person at the Rutgers Haskin Shellfish Lab and by webinar/conference call. Log in instructions posted to NJ Fish & Wildlife webpage <https://www.nj.gov/dep/fgw>
 - Oyster Resource Development Account printouts reviewed
 - Revenue Totals for each month
 - Lease Ground Transfers attached for council approval
- **Great Bay Hard Clam Stock Assessment**
 - Staff returned to the data analysis, chart production, and report composition of the 2016 hard clam stock assessment of Great Bay. A handful of stations were not surveyed as was intended in 2016, due to weather and vessel problems. Consequently, the standing stock estimate of 2016 cannot be truly compared with the one completed in 1988. Nevertheless, the 2016 work offers multiple

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insights into a more modern status of the stock, its distribution, and other characteristics. A full report will be available shortly.

Surveys/Laboratory

- **2023 Field Schedule**
 - Staff continue to utilize the living Gantt chart document to plan the 2023 field season.
- **Delaware Bay Trawl Survey**
 - Staff sampled all 11 stations for the survey in May. The stations are in shallow, near shore waters from the Cohansey River south to the Villas, NJ. The survey started in April and will run through October.
- **Dermo Disease Monitoring**
 - Staff worked alongside Rutgers Haskin Lab staff and successfully sampled oysters from the Delaware Bay seed beds to monitor the oyster disease dermo on 5/15/22. This year's sampling started in April and will be conducted through November.
- **Shell Plant and Intermediate Transplant Site Monitoring**
 - On 5/23/22, staff monitored enhancement sites from projects conducted by the Bureau from the current year and previous two years. These sites include the Intermediate Transplant Program and the Shell Plant Program. Sampling will be conducted monthly through November. Staff worked with Rutgers Haskin Lab staff.
- **Sturgeon Acoustic Receiver Project**
 - MRA staff continue to monitor, maintain, and download data from the acoustic receiver array within Delaware Bay, NJ waters.
- **Raritan Bay Sediment Sample Collection**
 - Staff collected sediment samples in Raritan Bay as a part of the hard clam stock assessment. A select few stations within the Naval Weapons Station Earle security zone still need to be collected. Staff will work with the staff at the Naval station to get approval to enter the security zone and collect the remaining samples.

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.

Administrative/Miscellaneous

- **License Sales**
 - Revenue collected from the Delaware Bay Office totaled \$47,894.00 for May 2023.
- **E-Library**
 - Staff continued work on an e-library (Zotero) to store literature for reference. Once complete, the e-library will provide easy access for Bureau staff to all literature. It will also enable staff to add future literature as needed.
- **Miscellaneous**
 - A new hourly employee, primarily focused on the Shell Recycling Program, began on May 22nd. Staff will continue to train and work with this employee for all Bureau programs and field projects.