

Marine Resources Administration Monthly Report

FEBRUARY 2025

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

MEETING SUMMARIES

- **Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program-ACCSP**
 - Staff participated in two conference calls with the ACCSP Funding Subcommittee. The goals were to discuss updates to the RFP ranking criteria to give socioeconomic proposals a more level footing. After practice rerankings of a previous year's proposals were analyzed, the group developed language for a recommendation to be submitted to the Operations and Advisory Committees for consideration at their April meeting. Discussion of Administrative Grant proportion of funds and ACCSP priorities was postponed.
- **Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission-ASMFC**
 - The Striped Bass Plan Development Team (PDT) met for the first time to begin development of draft Addendum III which will consider 2026 recreational and commercial management changes to increase the probability of rebuilding the stock by 2029. The draft addendum will also consider changes to the commercial tagging program and consider establishing a consistent method of measuring total length. First steps will be to evaluate additional data sources and available MRIP data to help characterize the recreational fishery and ultimately address equity issues when developing seasonal closure options.
 - Administration staff participated as a panelist in an Assessment Oversight Panel. The panel reviews work plans from assessment leads and assign levels of review for each species. Species reviewed included summer flounder, black sea bass, scup, and bluefish (all expected to be reviewed in ~2 hours); Atl mackerel was the first species reviewed through the AOP process approved for changing model types (reviewed in ~1 day). Finally, shortfin squid (*Illex*) was approved for direct delivery to the MAFMC scientific and statistical committee (no external review). All reviews will take place in June and will be used as the basis for catch advice in 2026-2027.
 - Administration staff participated in a call of the Ecological Reference Point Working Group (ERP-WG). The main topics of discussion included an update on final data & model inputs (including menhaden natural mortality), cursory model update reviews, and a review of the timeline. The ERP-WG is meeting in person in March to discuss model runs in depth. The assessment appears on track for review in mid-August, in time for presentation of results to the Policy Board at their late October meeting. If approved for management use, this assessment will produce biological reference points for menhaden management that account for menhaden's role as a forage fish.
 - Staff attended the American Lobster Stock Assessment Workshop virtually from February 11-13. The workshop was held to discuss potential additional data sources to incorporate in the upcoming 2025 Benchmark Stock Assessment. Incorporation of these data will be decided in the next few weeks, leading up to the final Stock Assessment workshop this summer.
 - Staff attended the Biological Review Panel Annual Meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to update the biological priority sampling matrix for FY 2026.
 - Staff attended Winter Flounder Working Group Call via webinar February 7. The meeting was focused on Term of Reference 1, ecosystem & climate influence on stocks, in preparation for the current research track assessment.
- **Miscellaneous**
 - Staff virtually attended the Striped Bass Survey Assessment and Habitat Connection workshop hosted by the Chesapeake Bay Program's Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee to

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investigate factors contributing to the low recruitment of striped bass. The workshop aimed to review current survey approaches and identify future research needs.

- Staff attended a virtual meeting organized by the Hudson Estuary Program (HEP) on February 28. The purpose of the meeting was for HEP grantees to discuss their community glass eel projects. Each grantee will be working with students and other volunteers to collect glass eels in various locations throughout North Jersey. Staff was on hand to provide expert knowledge of American eels and the management process.
- Staff met with MATES school staff to discuss participating in and the evaluation of setting up tank trials to monitor commercial crab pot, blue crab and diamondback terrapin interaction. These tank trials include fitting commercial crab pots with experimental BRD's and to view how both species interact with the BRD and pot. Trials will continue through at least late spring.
- Staff attended the IRA Workshop 3 - Developing GulfFIN Recreational Data Standards and Data Warehouse. Developing GulfFIN Recreational Data Standards and Data Warehouse. The purpose through various presentations and discussions over the course of two days, was to develop minimum standards that all partners would be striving for in recreational data collection. The focus is on the minimum data elements and formats required for both federal and state science and management. The primary focus is private recreational and state for-hire catch and effort data standards. Standards should apply to shore, private, and state for-hire fishing modes. The three terms of reference were:
 - Review the adequacy of the NOAA Fisheries OST National Recreational Data and Survey Standards as a starting point for developing regionally specific GulfFIN Recreational Data Standards.
 - Define the criteria needed to create a GulfFIN standardized database that could house all of the Gulf state survey data.
 - Prepare a Workshop Summary Report describing key workshop discussions and recommendations and addressing each Term of Reference.

INDEPENDENT FISHERIES

• Delaware Bay Tagging

- The 2025 Delaware Bay Striped Bass Tagging Survey began on February 10. Due to tough weather and wind conditions, staff only took five trips in February tagging 133 striped bass. Lengths, weights, and scale samples were taken from all tagged striped bass. The highest catch (48) took place on Feb 26. The survey will continue until the end of April.

• Delaware River Seine Survey

- Striped bass scale samples from the 2024 Delaware River Seine Survey were aged and all data was finalized. The complete database and associated files were uploaded to the V Drive. Survey data which will be included in the annual ASMFC Striped Bass compliance report was compiled and submitted on February 27. The full 2024 database was submitted to PSEG on February 28. As part of their scientific collection permit requirement, a summary of data was submitted to Delaware's Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control on February 27.

• Eel Surveys

- The 2025 Glass Eel Survey began on February 24 when the fyke net was set in Patcong Creek. An artificial collector was set in Nacote Creek on February 25. After 4 days of tending the net daily, the average number of glass eels caught per day was 4,448. Both the net and collector will be set and tended daily through the middle of April.

• Herring Surveys

- Staff began the preparations for starting the adult gillnet portion of the River Herring Survey slated to initiate during the first week of March including vessel sea trials, gear maintenance, and site

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scheduling. Staff are collaborating with faculty from the Monmouth University and staff from NOAA's James J. Howard Marine Sciences Laboratory at Sandy Hook to collect eDNA samples and live herring for presence/absence and tank studies.

DEPENDENT FISHERIES

• Access Point Angler Intercept Survey-APAIS

- Staff have completed mandatory trainings for fish identification and procedure updates. Training was held by ACCSP in New Bedford, MA on February 11-12; six staff attended. The remaining sampling staff completed training held in-state on February 22-23.
- All active APAIS sampling staff have signed the Non-Disclosure Agreement forms for 2025 sampling. These documents were submitted to ACCSP.
- All site, vessel and headboat pressure updates for Wave 2 were completed and March's assignment draw was released on February 14. All 60 site assignments and 3 headboat assignments were scheduled and released to the sampling staff.

• Artificial Reef

- Staff initiated and completed the construction of 12 concrete reef balls as an Eagle Scout project for a local NJ troop member. These 12 reef balls will be deployed on the Barnegat Light Reef using the NJ Aids to Navigation vessel Ocean Navigator. Deployment is targeted for the first week of March.

• Commercial Fisheries/Quota Management

- Summer flounder: The commercial 2024 Directed Season 1 ended on February 28. 92% of the seasonal quota was harvested.
- Black Sea Bass: The commercial 2024 Directed Season 1 ended on February 28. 86% of the seasonal quota was harvested.
- Menhaden: The commercial menhaden season began on January 1. The pair trawl fishery began harvesting on February 22. Harvest continues to be monitored closely to prevent overutilization of the "other gears" commercial quota.
- Bluefish: The commercial season began on January 1. Harvest remains low at <1% of the quota harvested.
- Spiny dogfish: The 2024/25 commercial season began on May 1. Current harvest is 75% of the quota. Landings mirror 2023/24 harvest, which did not result so in a mid-season closure.
- Marine Fisheries staff are working with 6 commercial gill netters out of Barnegat Light on weak rope / weak link study. These gill netters construct experimental gear to NMFS specifications, fish experimental gear alongside standard gear and submit reports on catch, effort, gear performance, protected species interactions. These fishermen are compensated for participation in this study. Staff have been reviewing reports and working with ASMFC to make sure participants are being paid for participating in the study.
- Staff have been busy reviewing and entering commercial harvest reports, along with making calls to verify information on commercial harvest reports. All reports from 2024 need to be submitted to ACCSP by March 10th.
- Staff completed and sent the spring participant load to ACCSP on February 10. The spring participant load consists of commercial harvesters and dealers' information.
- Staff approved 2 requests for confidential commercial data. These requests came from stock assessment scientists from various federal, state and academic agencies.
- Staff completed a commercial data validation for SEDAR 90 Atlantic Red Snapper stock assessment.

• For-Hire Telephone Survey-FHTS

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- Staff completed all NOAA vessel directory changes needed before the wave 2 deadline of February 14. HMS 2025 permit renewals continue to populate the imports inbox of the NOAA vessel directory.
- Staff continue to address vessel issues and changes for the NOAA vessel directory in a timely manner.
- Staff started compiling and sending out the weekly mailings for the FHTS starting with week 10 (Fishing conducted March 3 -March 9).
- **NJ Saltwater Recreational Registry Program-NJSRRP/Volunteer Angler Survey-VAS**
 - As of February 28, 2025, there were 23,621 individual and 391 for-hire vessel registrations obtained with the New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry Program (NJSRRP) for 2025. (Last month: As of January 31, 2025, there were 17,841 individual and 263 for-hire vessel registrations obtained with the 2025 New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry Program).
- **Striped Bass Bonus Program-SBBP**
 - Staff continue to process individual logs and party/charter boat reports. The preliminary 2024 bonus harvest is 56,387 lbs. from 7,950 fish, which represents 28% of the quota. Individual anglers harvested 1,139 fish and party/charter boats harvested 6,811 fish. Currently, the 2024 bonus harvest (in numbers of fish) ranks 2 highest in the time series, with 2023 ranking the highest. The 2024 data will be finalized over the next few weeks.

OUTREACH

- A draft of the 2025 Marine Digest was sent to staff for review and all edits were provided to the editor on February 14. The next draft was sent to staff on February 26 and edits are due to the editor on March 4.

ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS (Marine Resources Administration)

- **Wind Energy**
 - State Updates
 - The BPU announced that no offshore wind projects will be awarded in Solicitation 4. Two of the three bidders dropped out. Atlantic Shores was the third. The future of ASOW Project 1, which was awarded in Solicitation 2 and rebid in Solicitation 4, is unclear following the withdrawal of both Shell and EDF Renewables from the Project.
 - Staff have been participating in meetings regarding the offshore wind industry's comments on transmission cable burial depth requirements in NJ REAL. The Industry has concerns about the cost and environmental effects of burying the cable deeper than what is recommended by the Cable Burial Risk Assessment that they are required to conduct. AC Jennifer Moriarty is the DEP lead.
 - New Jersey Research and Monitoring Initiative (RMI)
 - The RMI is funded by Solicitation awardees; no additional contributions from projects are anticipated this year. While the research projects that have been approved for funding will continue, most projects were planned in phases corresponding to pre-, during, and post-construction. Significant changes in scope will need to be made to continue these projects into the construction period without additional funds. Proposals for the 2024 RFP are in review. Staff have been discussing strategies for decision making related to these problems.
 - Staff continue to manage funded RMI studies by coordinating with the Principal Investigators. In January, several acoustic receivers had to be moved to accommodate sand dredging.
 - Federal Actions

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- All offshore wind leasing and environmental review in federal waters has been temporarily stopped by a Presidential Action.
- Regular meetings hosted by BOEM on the Central Atlantic 2 leasing are paused, however staff will continue to meet with other states.
- BOEM released their final draft of the Fisheries Mitigation Guidelines. The final Guidelines reflected some issues raised by stakeholders, including adjusting language related to the two-year limit on making a claim, the rigid stepdown in compensation, and the assumption that economic losses will decrease over time. Compensation is defined to include for-hire fisheries. Recommended formulae are included to calculate shoreside multipliers based on readily available economic data from NOAA's Fisheries Economics of the U.S. (FEUS) Reports. One concerning change is that the minimum cable burial depth decreased from 6 feet (consistent with NJ REAL) to 2 feet below stable seabed.
- Staff have been studying the potential economic impact of Empire Wind 1 on NJ fisheries and participating in calls with Chief of Staff Megan Brunatti and the Empire team to discuss the State's Memorandum of Agreement for fisheries compensation. Staff are reviewing data including the NOAA Fishing Footprints for the lease area, data sets from staff at NOAA GARFO, and the FEUS reports.
- The BPU's Offshore Wind Strategic Plan 2 has been paused, including the environmental components.
- Staff continue to work with ROSA, the RSWC, Community Offshore Wind, NYSERDA and other state agencies, and NOAA to understand the changing offshore wind landscape and support existing efforts to direct offshore wind research funds to marine resource management.

ADMINISTRATIVE/MISCELLANEOUS (Marine Resources Administration)

- **Grants**

- Staff submitted budget narratives and statements of work for the upcoming renewal of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Program. Proposals are due by March 14, with Segment 1 of the Program set to begin September 1, 2025.

- **Regulatory/Legislative**

- Notice of Administrative Change (NOAC)
 - A NOAC modifying the recreational cobia management measures was reviewed by the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) and pending Commissioner approval.
- 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 with OLA and DOL.
 - 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; Torrissi, R8)/S4158 (Gopal, D11), Prohibits requirement for beach tag for access to beach below mean high tide line for recreational purposes. Reported out of committee with committee amendments, 2nd reading in Assembly on 2/13/2025.

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- AR177 (Inganamort, R24; DiMaio, R23)/SR124(Space, R24), Commemorates 75th anniversary of Sport Fish Restoration Program. Introduced and referred to Assembly Tourism, Gaming and the Arts Committee on 2/20/2025.
- S1029(Greenstein, D14; Smith, D17), "Invasive Species Management Act"; prohibits sale, distribution, import, export, and propagation of certain invasive species; establishes NJ invasive Species Council. Introduced and referred to Senate Environment and Energy Committee on 1/9/2024. Reported out of committee with committee substitute, 2nd reading in Senate on 01/14/2025. Amended on Senate floor, 2nd reading in Senate by voice vote (Ruiz) on 02/25/2025.
- A5343 (Atkins, D20; McCann Stamato, D31)/S 4136 (Sarlo D 36; Bucco, R 25), Authorizes public bodies to continue using newspapers for required public notices and legal advertisements until certain specified date regardless of format. (2024:A 5343). Trans Asm Appropriations. Reported w/amend, 2nd rdg in Asm. on 2/20/2025./Reported w/amend, 2nd rdg in Sen. on 2/20/2025.
- SJR152(Space, R24), Designates first full week of June of each year as "New Jersey Fishing and Boating Week." Introduced and referred to Senate Environment and Energy Committee on 2/20/2025.
- A5230 (Barlas, R40; DePhillips, R40)/S4099 (Corrado, R40; DePhillips, R40; Fantasia, R24) Requires automatic voter registration to be available when applying for certain licenses and permits. Introduced and referred to Assembly State and Local Government Committee on 1/27/2025. Introduced and referred to Senate State Government, Wagering, Tourism and Historic Preservation Committee on 2/3/2025.
- H.R. 512, the "Imported Seafood Safety Standards Act", (Rep. Higgins, R-Louisiana), a bill to establish a fund to promote the inspection and consumption of shrimp and products containing shrimp or shrimp parts. Introduced on January 16, 2025, and referred to the House Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the House Agriculture 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.
- S4092(Amato, R9), Prohibits enforcement of certain trapping violations in areas subject to law enforcement investigation. This bill would prohibit the Department of Environmental Protection or any other person authorized to enforce provisions of chapter 4 of Title 23 of the Revised Statutes, or the State Fish and Game Code, from issuing a violation to a trapping licensee for failure to check a trap within the required time period if the trap is located in an area subject to a law enforcement investigation and the licensee has been instructed by a federal, State, or local law enforcement agent to vacate the area. Current State Fish and Game Code regulations, at N.J.A.C. 7:25-5.12(i), require that all traps set or in use must be checked, tended, and maintained at least once per calendar day for the trapping of semi-aquatic species in tidal areas, and at least once in every 24 hours for all other trappings. Introduced and referred to Senate Environment and Energy Committee on 2/3/2025.
- Nominations – State
 - Marine Fisheries Council
 - Gregory Hueth, of Sea Girt, to replace Sergio Radossi, set to expire January 7, 2025. Advise and Consent by Senate on 2/25/2025.
- Legislative Activity – Federal
 - S. 283, the "Illegal Red Snapper and Tuna Enforcement Act", (Sen. Cruz, R-Texas), a bill to require the Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology and the Administrator of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to develop a standard

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methodology for identifying the country of origin of seafood to support enforcement against illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, and for other purposes. Introduced on January 8, 2025, and referred to the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee.

02/05/2025 Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. Ordered to be reported without amendment favorably.

- H.R. 347, (Rep. Keating, D-Massachusetts), a bill to require the Secretary of Commerce to establish the Sea Turtle Rescue Assistance Grant Program. Introduced on January 13, 2025, and referred to the House Natural Resources Committee.
- S.688 (Sullivan, R-AK), A bill to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing at its sources globally. Senate - 02/24/2025 Read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.
- S.216 (Sen. Sullivan R-AK), 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. 02/05/2025 Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. Ordered to be reported without amendment favorably.
- H.R.745 (Rep. Arrington, R-TX), Abundant American Resources Act of 2025: To direct the Director of the Bureau of Land Management and the Chief of the United States Forest Service to conduct a study of onshore mineral values and the Director of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to conduct a study of offshore mineral values. House - 01/28/2025 Referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources.
- H.R. 674 (Rep. Golden (D-ME), Rep. Van Drew, R-NJ), Northeast Fisheries Heritage Protection Act of 2025: To prohibit commercial offshore wind energy development in Lobster Management Area 1 in the Gulf of Maine, and for other purposes. House - 01/23/2025 Referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources.
- H.R.261 (Rep. Carter, R-GA), Undersea Cable Protection Act of 2025: To amend the National Marine Sanctuaries Act to prohibit requiring an authorization for the installation, continued presence, operation, maintenance, repair, or recovery of undersea fiber optic cables in a national marine sanctuary if such activities have previously been authorized by a Federal or State agency. 01/09/2025 Introduced and referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources. 01/21/2025 Referred to the Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries. 01/23/2025 Subcommittee Hearings Held.
- H.R. 207, the “Supporting the Health of Aquatic systems through Research Knowledge and Enhanced Dialogue Act of 2025” or the “SHARKED Act of 2025”, (Rep. Wittman, R-Virginia), a bill direct the Secretary of Commerce to establish a task force regarding shark depredation, and for other purposes. Introduced on January 3, 2025, and referred to the House Natural Resources Committee. On January 21, 2025, the bill passed the House of Representatives under suspension of the rules. Senate - 01/22/2025 Received in the Senate and Read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.
- S. 93, the “Harmful Algal Blooms and Hypoxia Research and Control Act”, (Sen. Sullivan, R-Alaska), a bill to amend the Harmful Algal Blooms and Hypoxia Research and Control Act of 1998 to address harmful algal blooms, and for other purposes. Introduced on January 14, 2025, and referred to the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. On February 5, 2025, the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation ordered to be reported without amendment favorably.
- Staff drafted a proposed American shad quota based fishery in the current Reef Multispecies Rule Proposal. The change from an unlimited fishery to a quota based one is required by the ASMFC and

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was developed in response to the 2020 American Shad Benchmark Stock Assessment that found American shad stocks to be depleted on a coastwide basis and adult mortality currently at unsustainable levels in the Delaware Basin.

- **Scientific Collection Permits**

- Sixty nine scientific collecting permits have been issued for 2025. Three additional applications have been reviewed and will be processed upon receipt of all required materials.

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

JANUARY

Offshore Wind, Restoration, Enhancement, Mitigation, and Habitat

- **Environmental Review/ Waterfront Development**

- Staff reviewed and provided comments as it pertains to marine resources.
- NJSWAP Actions
 - ERG staff received an action review spreadsheet for the New Jersey State Wildlife Action Plan (NJSWAP). Staff rated actions and provided feedback as necessary for their assigned rules/species.
- Staff worked with DLRP on several mapping interpretations.
- Staff attended the January Joint Permit Processing (JPP) meeting for the USACE Delran project and a Nellie Bennet Marsh Restoration project on January 8.
- Staff attended a Diamond Alkali OU4 Fish Studies Consultation Meeting on January 21.
- Staff attended the Army Corps NJ Back Bays Coastal Storm Risk Management Study Meeting on January 22.
- Staff reviewed the Waterfront Development Guidance Manual and provided comments. Staff plan to meet soon internally to discuss comments and feedback prior to sending it out to the Environmental Review Group (ERG) for final feedback.

- **Shell Recycling Program**

- Staff continue to coordinate with Shell Recycling Program participants for weekly shell collection and investigate additional venues.
- Staff collected 254 bushels of recycled shell in the month of January.
 - Staff continue to work with program partners to facilitate the expansion of the Shell Recycling Program as a part of the NOAA Coastal Zone Management Program BIL grant received.
- The education portion of the grant which will be visiting schools beginning in February looks to educate students in the Atlantic City area on marine science concepts, including the importance of oyster reefs and shell recycling while introducing their role in environmental stewardship.
 - The education arm has been named Project S.H.E.L.L (Strengthening Habitats through Environmental Learning & Leadership)
- Staff hired an additional hourly employee for the Shell Recycling Program who will serve as a Program Ambassador by going into the partnered schools to educate students on the program and broaden marine science concepts.

- **Shellfish Estuarine Inventory**

- Staff drafted and submitted the Semi-Annual performance report covering work performed on the Shellfish Estuarine Inventory project in Raritan & Sandy Hook Bays from July through the end of December 2024.
- Staff began plans for the fifth and final survey in Raritan Bay. Sampling will begin in late August of 2025.

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- Staff began developing plans for estuarine inventory work in southern NJ. These bays have not been sampled previously, and present challenges with very shallow depths. Survey plans will be developed to run the survey on the Bureau's shallow water vessel, R/V Vadum. Gear testing will commence this Spring to further develop survey plans.
- **Seagrass Conservation 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 coastal rivers planned for the Spring and Summer of 2025.
 - Staff finalized the logo for the Seagrass Conservation Program (SCP). Staff began working on outreach materials ahead of planned events for the Spring and Summer.
 - Staff received and reviewed final draft maps from Rutgers Center for Remote Sensing and Spatial Analysis (CRSSA) for the 2023 mapping of submerged aquatic vegetation in Barnegat Bay-Little Egg Harbor. A final report and map layers are expected to be delivered soon.
 - Staff met with EPA Region 2 and the NYDEC Seagrass Coordinator for a Quarterly Check-in on January 28 to discuss collaborative opportunities

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.
 - At the January 7 meeting of the Delaware Bay Shellfisheries Council the two leases were presented for the Council's consideration. A decision will be made by the council at the March 4 meeting.
- **Shellfish Lease Renewal**
 - 178/182 Lessees renewed
 - 4 vacant by non-payment (8 lease lots)
 - All were reapplied for via Council extension
- **Aquaculture Leasing Database**
 - Staff continue to work 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.

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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 1/13/2025.
- 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 \$12,382.03
 - Shellfisheries Law Enforcement Fund \$4,674.00
 - Total Revenue for December 2024 \$19,730.21
 - Shellfisheries Law Enforcement Fund \$6,232.00
- Presentation of November 18, 2024 minutes for approval.
- 8 leases were vacated due to non-payment
 - Lessee's will be eligible for a renewal extension that may be granted by the council
 - Any lease lots will be eligible for application on 1/27/2025.
 - Following the 1/13/2025 council meeting
- The last relay lease in the Great Bay relay lot was vacated by the lessee
 - There is 1 remaining relay lot remaining on the Atlantic Coast that is located in the Tuckerton relay lot.
- The bureau was notified of a change in corporation membership during the renewal period
 - The new lessee renewed all the leases under the corporation during the 2024 renewal period.
- Application for decision:
 - There were 3 applications for decision
- Approved application for transfer:
 - There were 2 applications for transfer
 - 1 of the 2 applicants for transfer held 43 leases on the Atlantic Coast and was changing corporation name.
- Topics of note included:
 - Old Business
 - Regulatory Committee
 - Leasing Committee
 - Hard Clam Management Committee
 - New Business
 - 2025 Relay Suspension
 - Notice of Rule Proposal: NJ Fish & Wildlife Rules N.J.A.C. 7:25-4A – Endangered and Nongame Species

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

- The meeting was held on 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.

• **Oyster Tonging Fishery, 2024-2025 Season**

- Tonging season November 1 - April 30 .
- January harvest was reported for one harvester.

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- Season Tag Sales and Harvest Highlights:

	Nov	Dec	Jan	Total
Single (\$2) Tags	200	250	50	500
Revenue	\$400	\$500	\$100	\$1,000.00
Wkly Harvest	105	171	93	369 bushels
Dealer Harvest	105	175	88	368 bushels

- **Direct Market Harvest Program – 2025– Delaware Bay Oyster Dredge Fishery**
 - Season opens April 1 - November
 - Quotes received from Tyden Brooks and Dickey Mfg Co for harvest tags.
 - Approximate delivery time is three weeks
 - DPA paperwork is being updated
 - PO setup
 - Justification updated
 - First quota dependent on Stock Assessment Workshop (SAW) Feb 3-4, 2025
- **27TH Delaware Bay Oyster Stock Assessment Workshop**
 - Staff reviewed oyster abundance, disease, mortality and harvest data that will be presented at the Stock Assessment Workshop (SAW).
 - The SAW will take place February 3 and 4, and findings will be presented to the Delaware Bay Shellfish Council members. The Council members in consultation with the Commissioner will determine the Direct Market Harvest Quota for the 2025 season.

Surveys & Laboratory Work

- **Delaware Bay Juvenile Finfish Trawl Survey**
 - Staff continued data analysis and report composition for the 2024 survey year. The 2025 survey will begin in April.
- **Dermo Monitoring and Shell Plant and Transplant Site Monitoring**
 - 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 continue planning to implement a spat bag monitoring program in Delaware Bay and its Tributaries for 2025.
- **Sturgeon Receiver Project**
 - 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.
 - Staff are coordinating with staff from the Bureau of Marine Fisheries to finalize the project schedule for the 2025 season.

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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.
 - R/V James W. Joseph was hauled at Boat World Marina for the winter months in early January
 - During its time at the marina the James W. Joseph will be prepped for the upcoming field season and get new hydraulic lines were deemed 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 in YSI for annual preventative service.

Administrative/Miscellaneous

- **License Sales**

Revenue collected from the Delaware Bay Office totaled \$3,562.00 for January 2025

License Type	Total	License Type	Total
Nets	\$1,314.00	Otter Trawl	\$102.00
Commercial Crab Pot	\$800.00	Tonging Tags	\$100.00
AC Crab Dredge	\$400.00	Area 1, 2&3	\$84.00
DB Crab Dredge	\$300.00	Application Fees	\$54.00
Possession in Excess	\$200.00	Dredge Boat Renewal	\$20.00
Menhaden	\$178.00	Recreational Shellfish	\$10.00

Monthly Meetings

- CHARRM, Nature Based Solutions, East Coast SAV Collaborative.
- **ArcGIS FieldMaps**
 - Department GIS Staff have completed the application to house lease investigation data and other shellfish leasing field data
 - Staff are working on obtaining 2 field tablets to run this application on field surveys
 - Staff hope to have this database tool up and running for the 2025 season

FEBRUARY

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

Marine Resources Administration Monthly Report

- 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 261 bushels of recycled shell in the month of February.
 - The education program -Project S.H.E.L.L (Strengthening Habitats through Environmental Learning & Leadership conducted its inaugural school visit at the Pennsylvania Avenue School in Atlantic City.
 - The first lesson focused on watersheds, and human interactions with them. Program ambassadors are set to visit the school for lesson 2 in early March.
 - Bureau staff continued to coordinate with local municipalities to develop plans for shell recycling public drop-off locations.
 - Staff received the Shell Recycling Program's second dump trailer that will be used for the expansion of additional restaurant partners throughout the Atlantic and Cape May Counties.
 - The trailer is equipped with a hydraulic lift arm and will be branded in the coming weeks.
- **Shellfish Estuarine Inventory**
 - Staff began working on the budget and statement of work for the 2026-2030 IFA grant cycle for the Raritan and Sandy Hook Bay Estuarine Inventory.
 - Staff continue planning for the fifth and final survey in Raritan Bay. Sampling will begin in late August of 2025.
- **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.
 - At the January 7 meeting of the Delaware Bay Shellfisheries Council the two leases were presented for the Council's consideration. A decision will be made by the council at the March 4 meeting.

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- **Aquaculture Leasing Database**

- Staff have completed a lease utilization layer in ArcPro that will be very beneficial for visualizing data and generating reports and graphs.
 - The Bureau has many regulatory and leasing committee meetings this year in which this data will prove to be vital.
 - This data was generated from the utilization reports submitted by the lessee during the lease renewal period.
 - It is supported by NearMap verification, annual CSAP report, and staff knowledge of known active industry members.

- **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.
 - Areas that will be prioritized include: Middle Island, Scull Bay, and Brigantine
 - Staff plan to have these areas completed by April
- Staff have 4 outstanding Biological surveys that will be completed by April.

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 2/10/2025.
- 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 \$2,078.30
- Shellfisheries Law Enforcement Fund \$592.00
- Presentation of January 13, 2025 minutes for approval.
- Application for consideration:
 - There was 1 application for consideration
- Approved application for transfer:
 - There were 3 applications for transfer
- Topics of note included:
- Old Business
 - Regulatory Committee
 - Leasing Committee
 - Hard Clam Management Committee
 - Council Comment Letter for Rule Proposal: NJ Fish & Wildlife Rules N.J.A.C. 7:25-4A – Endangered and Nongame Species
- New Business
 - Mullica River Sampling Update
 - John Maxwell Recognition for Council Service

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

- The next meeting will be held March 4, 2025.
- Staff in partnership with the council have acquired 13 vessel tracking systems for the Delaware Bay oyster harvesting fleet to drive enhancement programs.

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- Staff will be reaching out in January to start implementing the units on each of the oyster harvesting vessels.
- **Oyster Tonging Fishery, 2024-2025 Season**
 - Tonging season November 1 - April 30.
 - January harvest was reported for one harvester.
 - Season Tag Sales and Harvest Highlights:

	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Total
Single Tags (\$2)	200	250	50	150	650
Revenue	\$400	\$500	\$100	\$300	\$1,300.00
Wkly Harvest	105	177	93	61	436 bushels
Dealer Harvest	105	175	88	61	429 bushels

- **Direct Market Harvest Program – 2025– Delaware Bay Oyster Dredge Fishery**
 - Season opens April 7 - November
 - Tags are being ordered from Dickey Mfg Co. TydenBrooks are non-compliant AA/EEOC
 - Approximate delivery time is three weeks
 - DPA paperwork updated
 - PO, PB-119, justification and quote sent to Procurement
 - First quota dependent on Stock Assessment Workshop (SAW) Feb 3-4, 2025
- **27TH Delaware Bay Oyster Stock Assessment Workshop**
 - Staff reviewed oyster abundance, disease, mortality and harvest data that will be presented at the Stock Assessment Workshop (SAW).
 - Staff attended the SAW February 3 and 4, mortality, disease prevalence, and size class abundance per bed area were presented.
 - All findings and recommendations regarding quota and transplant will be presented to the Delaware Bay Shellfish Council members at the March 4 Council meeting. The Council members in consultation with the Commissioner will determine the Direct Market Harvest Quota for the 2025 season.

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**
 - 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 continue planning to implement a spat bag monitoring program in Delaware Bay and its Tributaries for 2025.
- **Side Scan Sonar**
 - Staff continue to create a User Manual for use of the Side Scan Sonar and its software for guidance purposes while out on the water.

Marine Resources Administration Monthly Report

- **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.
 - Staff are coordinating with staff from the Bureau of Marine Fisheries to finalize the project schedule for the 2025 season.

- **Mullica River/Great Bay Spat Bag & Water Quality Monitoring**

- Staff continue planning to implement a spat bag and water quality monitoring program in the Mullica River/Great Bay to complement the SRG shell planting efforts.

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.
 - Staff are finalizing repairs and upgrades to the R/V James W. Joseph before launching the vessel in early March.
- Bureau staff continue to maintain state vehicles with routine and scheduled service.
- Repairs on the R/V Vadum's ECM were completed.
- Staff changed filter on the R/V Zephyrus water pump along with additional routine maintenance.

- **Equipment Maintenance**

- Staff replaced one YSI and ordered and new YSI for the upcoming field season.
- Staff updated YSI SOP and maintenance/cleaning operations to reflect new YSI models
- Staff trained other pertinent bureau staff on maintenance/cleaning operations

Administrative/Miscellaneous

- **License Sales**

Revenue collected from the Delaware Bay Office totaled \$4,253.00 for February 2025

License Type	Total	License Type	Total
Nets	\$1,507.00	Commercial Shellfish	\$150.00
Commercial Crab Pot	\$1,300.00	AC Dredge	\$100.00
Menhaden	\$822.00	Application Fees	\$74.00
Tonging	\$300.00		

Monthly Meetings

- Regulatory Committee Meeting held on February 22 at Rutgers Haskin Lab 5PM

- **Coastal Restoration/Nature Based Solutions**

- Staff attended the Delaware Estuary Science and Environmental Summit on February 11-12 in Wilmington. Hosted by the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary.
 - The event offered numerous sessions, interactive talks, and professional networking opportunities related to coastal restoration research, resource management, and best practices.
 - Staff gained valuable region-specific knowledge on innovative restoration/nature-based approaches and important insights into primary issues associated with these efforts.