

Habitat Committee Meeting Summary

Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, Newburyport, Massachusetts

November 14, 2018

Committee Members: Russ Babb (NJ), Michelle Bachman (NEFMC), Josh Carloni (NH), Lou Chiarella (NMFS-GARFO), Wilson Laney (USFWS-SE), Dawn McReynolds (NY), January Murray (GA), Jimmy Johnson (NC), Mark Rousseau (MA), Eric Schneider (RI), Graham Sherwood (Gulf of Maine Research Institute), Phil Colarusso (USEPA), Kent Smith (FL), Marek Topolski (MD), and Kate Wilke (TNC)

ASMFC Staff: Lisa Havel and Toni Kerns

Other Participants: Jill Carr (Massachusetts DMF), Bob Groskin (Newburyport resident and ACFHP member), Kevin Madley, (NMFS GARFO Aquaculture Coordinator), Aaron Kornbluth (Pew), Deke Tompkins (ASMFC)

The Habitat Committee (HC) met on November 14 at the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge in Newburyport, Massachusetts. Lisa Havel provided an update on ACFHP activities. The ACFHP website and southeast fish habitat prioritization are close to completion, and the northeast fish habitat prioritization will begin in 2019. January Murray provided an update on the Artificial Reef Committee, which is working on a guidance document for reefing materials, as well as compiling state monitoring protocols.

Michelle Bachman presented updates on the New England Fishery Management Council's habitat management and modeling efforts. The Council is working on a Clam Dredge Exemption Framework and Fishing Effects Model. They also created a deepwater coral conservation amendment. Deke Tompkins presented background information on the Living Shorelines Act via conference call, and answered questions from the HC on the Act. The Act would authorize \$25 million per year for living shorelines projects. The HC decided to provide recommended revisions to the Act's language, which Deke will pass on to Congressional staffers.

Toni Kerns updated the HC on the ASMFC's new Action Plan and Vision, which is designed to be more user-friendly. She reviewed Goal 4 of the Action Plan, which relates to habitat. In this Action Plan, ASMFC staff would like the HC to engage more with Commissioners, and better integrate our habitat work with the issues that are being tackled by the rest of the Commission. The HC discussed ideas on how to improve coordination and communication for 2019, including listening to Board meetings, changing the Habitat Hotline, and being more reactionary to Commission issues.

Kevin Madley gave a presentation on NOAA's aquaculture program, and some of their projects related to fish habitat. Current initiatives include the NOAA 2019 – 2023 Marine Aquaculture Action Plan, reviewing NOAA's Internal Aquaculture Science Programs, developing the Aquaculture Gear Structural Integrity Guide, and increasing aquaculture communications.

Russ Babb and Lisa updated the HC on the status of the *Aquaculture* Habitat Management Series document, and the HC decided to develop a survey for resource managers to help refocus the document. Lisa also provided updates on the *Acoustic Impacts to Fish Habitat* Habitat Management Series document, and the Fish Habitats of Concern document.

Marek Topolski was elected the new Chair of the HC, as January has taken a position with NOAA in Baton Rouge. Jimmy Johnson was elected Vice Chair.