



**Gulf of Maine
Council on the
Marine Environment**

Gulf of Maine Council

Press Release

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Booklet Available on the American Eel

February 16, 2007- The Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment has created a twelve-page booklet describing the American Eel and challenges and methods for restoration in the Gulf of Maine region.

The American eel presents challenges to conservation because its vast range spans political boundaries and habitats. Written for resource managers and other coastal decision makers in government, NGOs, and the private sector, the beautifully illustrated booklet includes maps, graphs and an extensive bibliography. Topics include the biology of eels, migration and life cycle, current state of the fishery, effects of ecosystem quality and challenges posed by non-native species and climate change. The booklet provides an in-depth look at this unique and complex animal.

In 2001 the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment (GOMC) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) formed the Habitat Restoration Partnership to promote and fund restoration projects.

This eel booklet is one example of the work supported by the GOMC-NOAA Habitat Restoration Partnership in its efforts to promote habitat restoration in the region. The Partnership also provides grants to support a strategic approach to marine, coastal, and riverine habitat restoration within Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Non-government organizations, community associations, civic groups, municipalities, schools, and tribal and state governments are eligible to compete for funding made available through the grants program.

In 2004, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) recommended that the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service consider protecting the Atlantic coastal stock of American eels. The USFWS agreed to conduct a formal review, sharing concern about the apparent decline of eel populations. Concurrently, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, and the ASMFC also reviewed the status of the American eel and considered management and recovery options.

After a comprehensive status review, the USFWS published its twelve-month finding in February 2007, concluding that the species should not be protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). "The eel population as a whole shows significant resiliency," said USFWS biologist Heather Bell. "If we look at eels over time, we see fluctuations in the population numbers, so a decreasing number of eels right now does not necessarily forecast an irreversible trend."

Nevertheless, the USFWS recognized that American eels have declined or been extirpated from portions of their native range, and though eels may not meet the criteria for listing under the ESA, the USFWS will continue to work with other agencies to protect and restore the species.

Currently the Eel booklet is available in pdf form to download from the GOMC website. A limited number of printed copies will be available spring 2007. If you are interested in a printed copy, watch the website for details on availability.

To download the booklet, <http://www.gulfofmaine.org/council/publications/>

For additional information on the Gulf of Maine Council/NOAA Habitat Restoration Partnership, <http://restoration.gulfofmaine.org/index.php>

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The mission of the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment is to maintain and enhance environmental quality in the Gulf of Maine to allow for sustainable resource use by existing and future generations.