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After Harsh Winter, Delayed Start, and Under Strict Management, Maine Glass Eel Season Ends Below Quota

WASHINGTON (American Eel Sustainability Association) -- June 1, 2015 -- After a delayed start following a lingering, record-breaking winter, the 2015 Maine glass eel season ended on Sunday. Preliminary landings estimates indicate that glass eel harvesters have fallen far short of their allowable quotas for the year. According to the American Eel Sustainability Association (AESAs), the winter weather that slowed down much of the region prevented fishermen from reaching their full potential. AESAs notes that the low harvest also illustrates the strength of the precautionary management system established by the state of Maine and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC).

“It’s pretty clear that after such heavy snowfall this past winter, the glass eels arrived much later in the spring than they usually do,” said Matthew Probert, a member of AESAs, an organization which promotes the long-term sustainability of the American eel through responsible fishery management. “Many eels are starting to show up now, even after the season has closed. But we’re not going to have a chance to catch them.”

The limited duration of the eel season is one of several input controls that limit fishing effort in the glass eel fishery. Others include gear limitations, a ban on fishing the middle third of the river, and a prohibition on weekend fishing. These measures ensure that a certain percentage of glass eels remain free from fishing pressure, whether or not the quotas are reached.

While fishermen are naturally frustrated by input measures that prevent them from achieving maximum harvest, AESAs recognizes that they are an important factor contributing to the future sustainability of this species. The Association cautions that this season’s low numbers should not be misinterpreted as an indicator of low stocks or as a sign of poor recruitment, but rather as proactive, precautionary management at work.

“Even though fishermen are understandably disappointed by this season’s harvests, the glass eel market remains robust and demand remains strong,” said AESAs director, Mitchell Feigenbaum, noting that glass eels were selling at an average of \$2,000 per pound this season. “With an established market and sustainable management, AESAs is confident that the fishery maintains a strong foundation for a successful future.”

[About the American Eel Sustainability Association](#)

By providing the industry and interested parties with essential information and fostering innovative partnerships, AESAs provides science-based solutions to achieving eel sustainability. AESAs works collaboratively with partners in U.S. government agencies, foreign government fisheries management departments, private companies, international organizations, fishermen, and individual members of the public.