

Symposium on “Are the eels climbing back up the slippery slope?”

2013/3/SSGEF01 A Symposium on “Are the eels climbing back up the slippery slope?” will be held during 17-21 August 2014, at Québec City (Canada) with Martin Castonguay (Canada), John Casselman (Canada) and Willem Dekker (Sweden) as Conveners. This symposium will be jointly organised by ICES and the American Fishery Society AFS.

A Scientific Steering Group will be established between AFS and ICES, in order to assist the Conveners in planning the Symposium.

Supporting Information

Priority: ICES has a key role in the development and post-evaluation of the (European) eel protection plan, but the scientific background comes into focus only from time to time. Given the rapid progress in the implementation of the European recovery plan for the eel and in ICES assessment procedures for the status of the stock, now is the time to evaluate scientific progress, to synchronise with our twin species (Atlantic and other), and to evaluate the adequacy of the science and management process.

Scientific justification: Main linkage to the third theme of ICES' Science Plan, entitled 'Development of options for sustainable use of ecosystems', with special emphasis on 'living resource management tools', 'operational modelling combining oceanographic, ecosystem, and population processes' and 'contributions to socio-economic understanding of ecosystem goods and services and forecasting the impact of human activities'.

Following half a century of slow decline to a historically low stock abundance of the European eel, management and protection of this iconic species have now been established across the European continent. In N-America and other temperate regions, parallel trends have been observed in other eel species, and protection programmes have been initiated. In the absence of adequate data and assessment methodology for eel, ICES advice to manage and protect the stock has been based on precautionary grounds (from 1999 onward). Recently intensified monitoring and a novel framework for international assessment now yield more insight into overall stock dynamics, though some major anthropogenic impacts remain unquantified.

In 2012 (national) and 2013 (international), the eel protection plans have been post-evaluated. Has the implementation of management measures led to an adequate protection level? What is adequate? Addressing this question brings us back to the core issue: What is really happening to the eel populations? It is time to evaluate what scientific progress has been achieved since the 2006 Theme Session "Is there more to eels than Slime?" What new insights in stock dynamics and the causes of the decline have been found? How effective is the achieved protection and has the response by the science and management processes been adequate and appropriate? These questions are equally relevant to the European and American eel, and so of course are the answers.

Resource requirements:	<p>The practical organisation of the symposium will be embedded in the organisation of the annual meeting of AFS.</p> <p>Organising a joint symposium avoids the duplication of effort that would come from both sides of the Atlantic organising their own scientific evaluations of their respective species, and allows us to exchange experiences. On a practical level, the hosting by AFS ensures a professional and efficient organisation. ICES' practical involvement is rather restricted – but ICES' support will be the key to European participation and hence to the relevance for ICES' involvement with eels.</p>
Participants:	<p>Marine and freshwater biology, stock assessment and its methodology, socio-economics, sociology and political science, etc. Participation from US and Canada (AFS), all European countries (ICES), eastern Asia, New-Zealand, and the rest of the world.</p>
Secretariat facilities:	<p>Almost no support from the Secretariat will be needed for the organisation of the Symposium – being held within the AFS setting. For the Proceedings, however, support might be required – see below.</p>
Financial:	<p>The symposium being jointly organised by ICES and AFS, but hosted at the AFS annual meeting. Financial support is sought to cover travel and subsistence costs of keynote speakers and ICES Convenors, and to support early career scientists.</p>
Linkages to advisory committees:	<p>Direct linkage to ACOM and WGEEL..</p>
Linkages to other committees or groups:	<p>Relevant to Sustainable Use of Ecosystems SSGSUE, and SSGEF and others.</p>
Linkages to other organizations:	<p>WGEEL is a joint working group of ICES, the European Inland Fishery and Aquaculture Advisory Committee EIFAAC of FAO and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean GFCM of FAO. The co-organisation with AFS reflects the strong parallels between the two Atlantic eel species. The parallels to other (temperate) species is not reflected in formal links to other organisations.</p>
Publication of proceedings	<p>Given the complexity of the topic, its world-wide significance, the multitude of management bodies and research institutes involved, we expect a huge participation and an immense number of paper submissions. Both AFS and ICES have their standards for symposium proceedings, but we suggest to aim for a joint publication of the jointly organised symposium - in the ICES Journal. The standard page-limit of 250 pp will probably not suffice.</p> <p>Pending the adoption of this proposal for a joint symposium, and pending the establishment of a steering committee between the parent organisations, no budget for the extensive publication has been sought yet.</p> <p>The symposium being a milestone along the slippery road of understanding and managing eel stocks across the world, a 15-month period for marking that milestone is acceptable.</p>