



## DEC Announces 18th Year of Juvenile Eel Monitoring

### Area Volunteers, Teachers, and Students Join DEC to Count Hudson River Eels

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) today announced that all along the Hudson River estuary, teachers, students, and volunteers are donning waders and venturing into tributary streams to participate in ongoing research on migrating juvenile American eels (*Anguilla rostrata*). Now in its 18<sup>th</sup> year, the project was initiated by DEC's Hudson River Estuary Program and the Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve to gather data for multi-state management plans for eel conservation.

"DEC is grateful to the volunteers that keep the Hudson River Eel Project going year after year," **DEC Region 3 Director Kelly Turturro said.** "Connecting students and communities with nature while gathering valuable data to inform future study of this species and its role in our ecosystem helps ensure New York can remain home to significant habitat critical to the life cycle of many migratory fish species."

American eels have one of the most unusual life cycles of any fish. The eels hatch in the Sargasso Sea in the Atlantic Ocean, and every spring arrive in estuaries like the Hudson River as translucent, two-inch long "glass eels." DEC and volunteers check 10-foot, cone-shaped nets (fyke nets) specifically designed to catch these small eels during this life stage. Volunteer and student researchers then count and release the glass eels back into the water and record environmental data on temperature and tides. DEC releases most of the eels above dams, waterfalls, and other barriers so the eels have better access to habitat. Eels will live in freshwater rivers and streams for up to 30 years before returning to the sea to spawn.

Eel collection takes place at most sites daily from March through mid-May. Since the project began, volunteers have caught, counted, and released more than two million juvenile eels into upstream habitat. This spring, students, local volunteers, DEC staff, and partner organizations will monitor glass eels at 12 streams from the New York Harbor to the Capital Region.

Coastal states from Florida to Maine monitor the young-of-the-year migrations of American eels, using the protocols of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). Hudson River Eel Project participants are trained in these field collection protocols to ensure useful data is collected. In 2023, the Hudson River Eel Project's volunteer-collected data was included in the ASMFC's American eel benchmark stock assessment, demonstrating that community scientists contribute valuable data to scientific research and management. Stock assessments are important as they inform fishery management plans.

Those interested in volunteering for the eel project can email [eelproject@dec.ny.gov](mailto:eelproject@dec.ny.gov) and include preferred location for a nearby site. For more information on the project, visit the eel project [website](#).







