

## Opening Statement:

For those of you that I have not met before, I am Julie Crocker with the Protected Resources Division of the National Marine Fisheries Service and current Chair of the interagency Atlantic salmon Management Board. On behalf of the management board, thank you to everyone for joining today. The Management Board is part of the Collaborative Management Strategy or CMS, for the Gulf of Maine DPS of Atlantic salmon. The CMS aims to align our interagency governance structure with the Atlantic salmon Recovery Plan and address the challenges associated with communications and decision making across agencies and mandates. The fundamental goals of the CMS are to support the recovery of Atlantic salmon and the ecosystems on which they depend by helping to manage the people and resource sides of recovery. The goals of the CMS include providing clarity on roles and responsibilities, to provide clarity on where decisions are made, to increase the speed of decision making, to increase accountability and transparency, and to provide more opportunities to incorporate external partners and stakeholders.

The CMS process kicked off in late 2019 and we were all excited about the prospect of bringing our many partners and stakeholders together in person for our first annual meeting. Last spring we had to abandon plans for an in-person meeting and held a successful virtual event. I never thought that we would need to meet virtually for our 2021 Annual Meeting. The COVID pandemic has affected so much about how we work, but one of the bright spots has been our increased comfort in meeting virtually and the increased accessibility this allows for meetings like this. Last spring, the COVID response resulted in changes to fishway and hatchery operations and impacted the ability to get out in the field. Through the CMS, we worked to increase communication among the agencies and to develop emergency ad hoc groups to facilitate rapid decision making.

Rather than focus on the challenges of 2020, I'd like to take a moment to highlight the accomplishments that have been made under the umbrella of the CMS over the last year.

First and foremost, I want to call attention to the hard work and patience of the SHRU teams and the SHRU team chairs over the last year and to thank everyone who has participated in SHRU Team meetings. The SHRU teams are the heart of the CMS process and provide an opportunity for anyone to get involved. It has been exciting to see the teams come together to try to tackle challenging issues and to see the dedication to ensuring that we give salmon their best chance for recovery and restoration. The SHRU teams hit the floor running in developing the first annual progress report that was completed in May of 2020, and then the second annual report that we will hear about

today. These annual reports detail the Status of Atlantic salmon in each of the three SHRUs and the progress that has been made over the last year towards implementing recovery actions. These reports can be found on the [Atlanticsalmonrestoration.org](http://Atlanticsalmonrestoration.org) website.

The SHRU Teams have also worked hard towards developing 5-year work plans. These work plans identify the highest priority actions that can be taken over the next 5 years that are necessary to move the needle for the species recovery in each SHRU. These work plans aim to identify priority actions for funding as well as assist the agencies in understanding what needs to happen on the ground to see meaningful change for salmon in their SHRUs. When the teams were tasked with developing these plans, we asked that they think outside the box about what is really needed to move the needle for recovery, and not constrain their ideas based on the limited pool of resources that are currently available to us. Although we recognized that we may not have all the resources necessary to implement all the actions identified in these work plans, we recognize that it is equally important to emphasize the work that isn't getting done due to a lack of resources, as much as it is to emphasize the work that is getting done. Over this coming year we will see the SHRU Teams move from developing these plans to working to implement them. At the management board, we will be working to understand and address resource needs and competing priorities, while working not to lose sight of the bottom line of recovering Atlantic salmon.

I also want to remind folks that when we started the CMS process, we agreed to a one year pilot. At the end of a year we would evaluate how the process was working and make any necessary adjustments needed to move forward. Well, when COVID hit, we decided to postpone the one year review until June of 2021 as we believed more time was needed to adequately evaluate the CMS process. June is quickly approaching, and we are in the process of developing a survey that will be distributed among agency staff as well as stakeholders to seek input on what parts of the CMS are working well, and what parts may still need some work. It is likely that the survey will not be distributed until July, but upon doing so, I would like to strongly encourage everyone to take the time to complete it. This will provide us valuable information necessary to ensure we are effective in achieving the goals of the CMS. This includes improved communications, increased accountability and transparency, increasing the speed of decision making, and increased opportunities for community and stakeholder involvement.

We have about 85 people on the line today, representing tribes, state and federal agencies, academia, NGOs and other groups. One of the greatest challenges of salmon recovery is maintaining the interest and engagement of our partners and the public and I

want to thank you again for doing your part. I look forward to hearing from the SHRU teams on the progress that has been made in the past year.