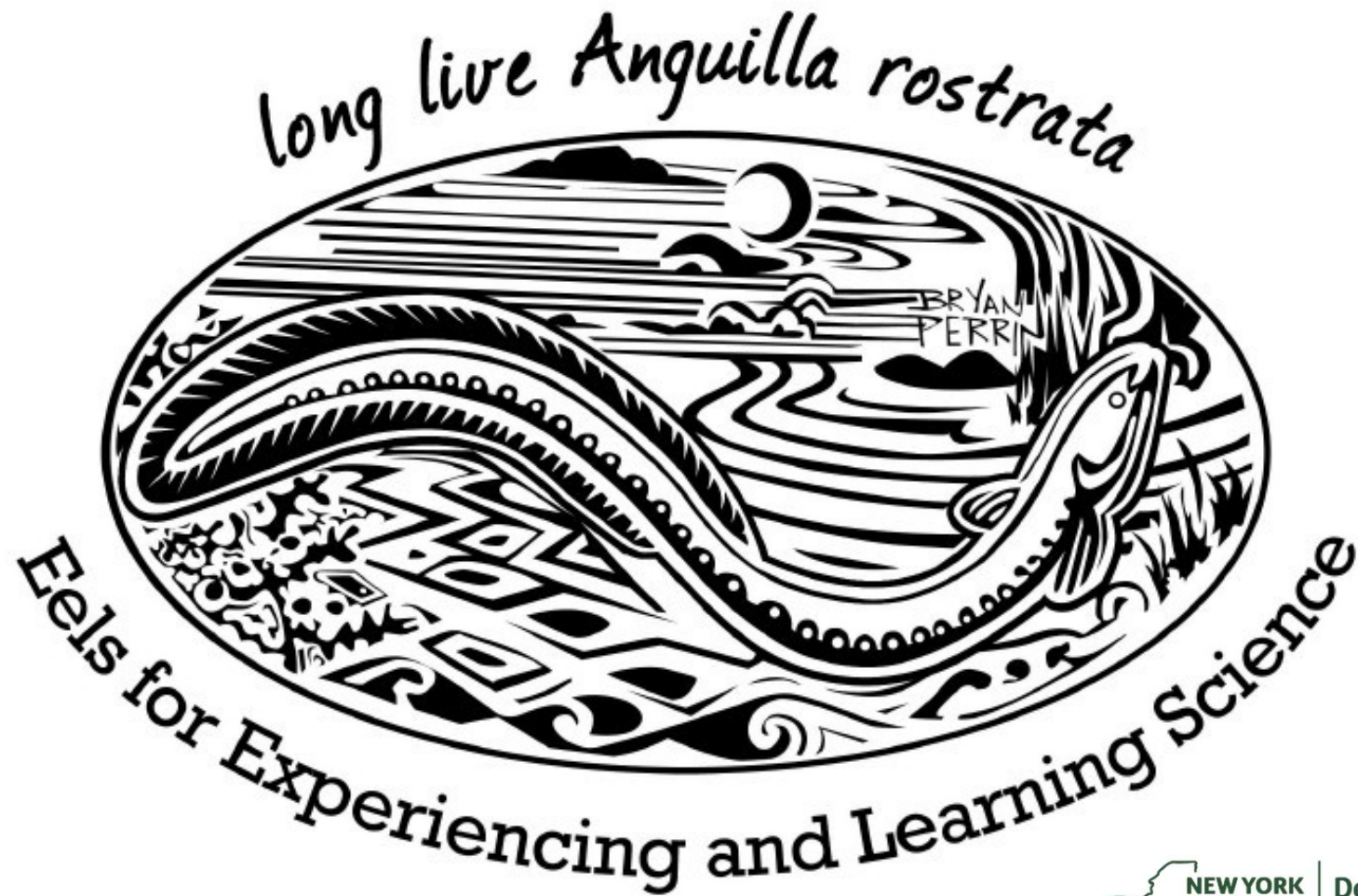


The Eel Project: Everyone is Part of Busting Barriers



Chris Bowser chris.bowser@dec.ny.gov



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

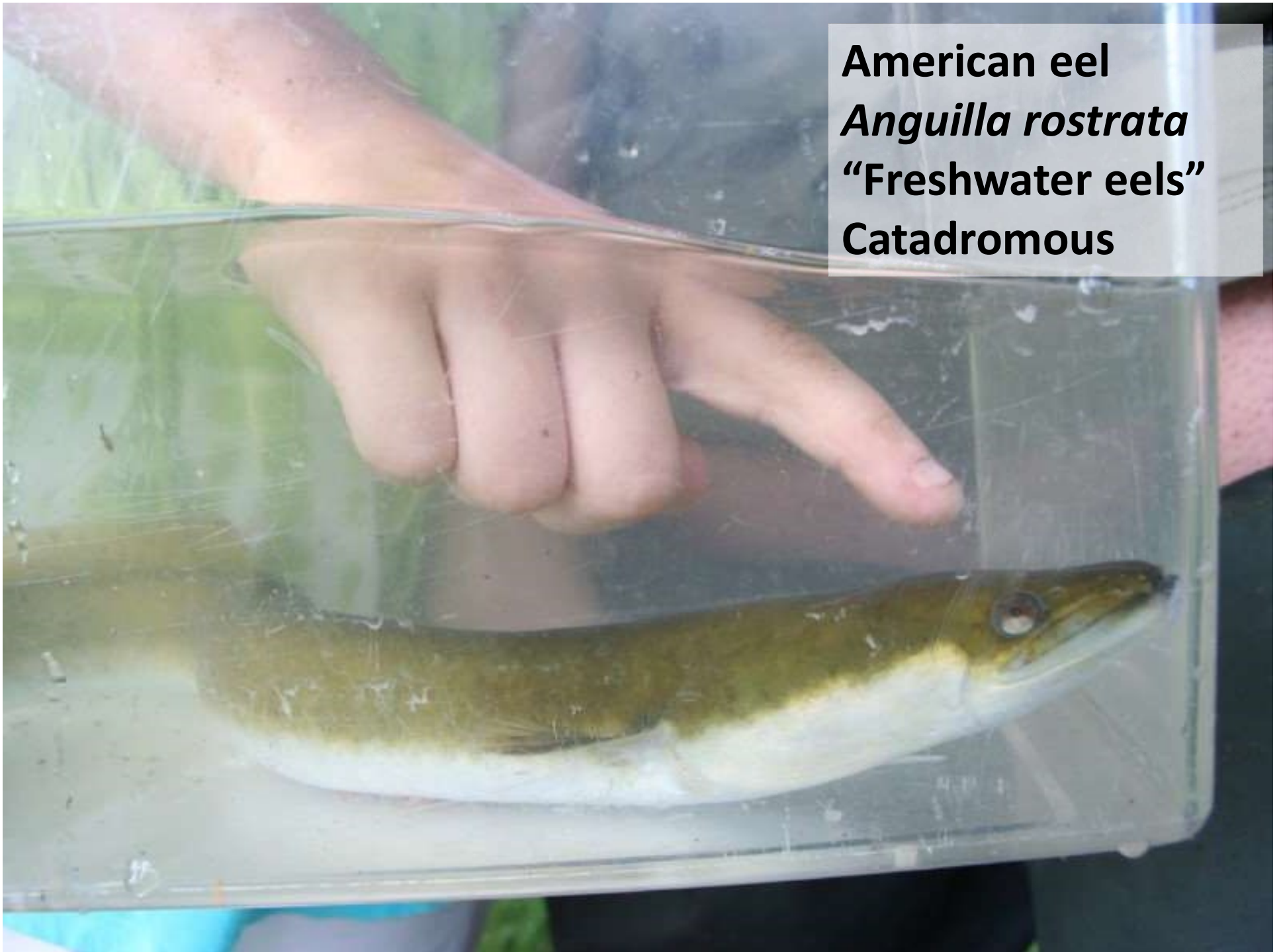


**The next 15
minutes...**

- 1. Eels**
- 2. People**
- 3. Love**
- 4. Rivers**



American eel
Anguilla rostrata
“Freshwater eels”
Catadromous





Eels grow for many years in rivers and streams



Adult silver eels return to the Atlantic to spawn



Glass eels arrive in estuaries

Larvae move north on Gulf Stream currents



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Sargasso Sea
American eels
(*Anguilla rostrata*)
possibly hatch here



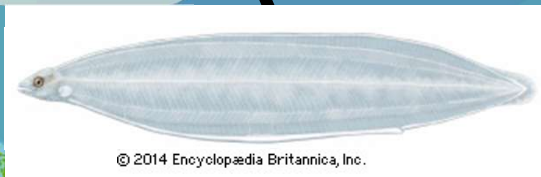
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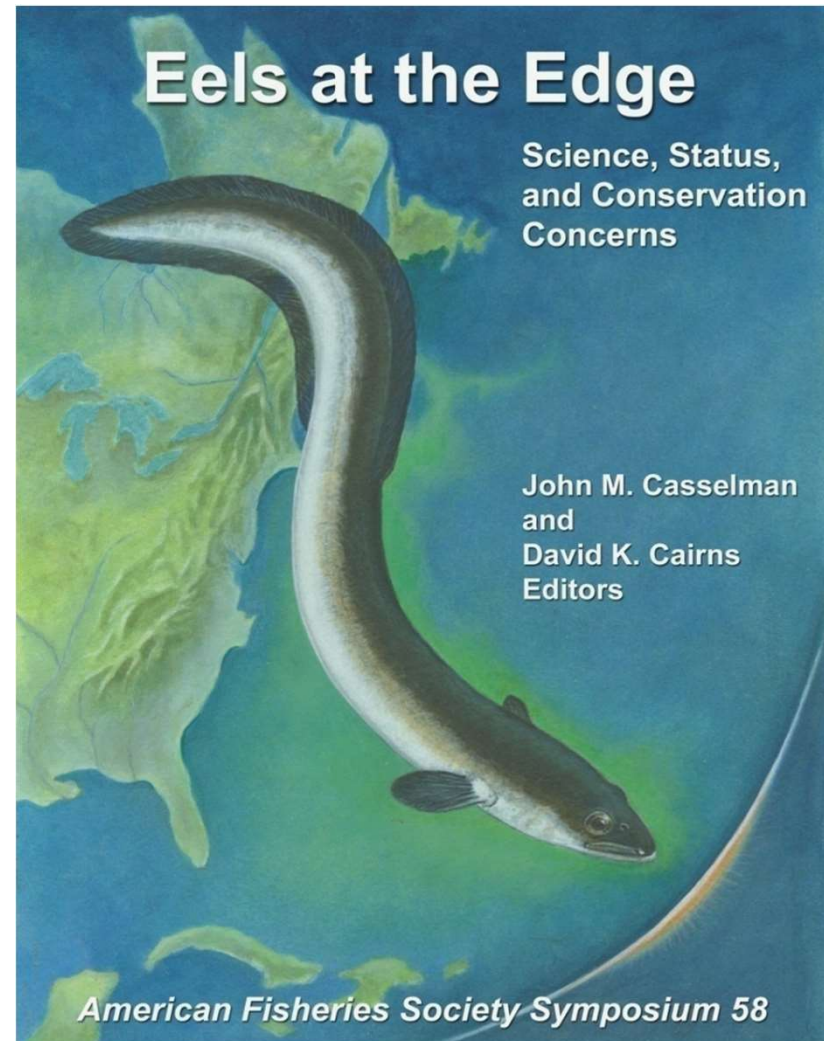
Eel numbers went down ☹️

Sargasso Sea
America
(*Anguilla rostrata*)
possibly hatch here

Possible Factors Causing Recent Eel Declines

Historic order of impact:

1. Habitat loss
2. Dams and barriers
3. Water pollution
4. Overfishing
5. Hydroelectric turbines
6. Climate change
7. Food web changes
8. Parasites

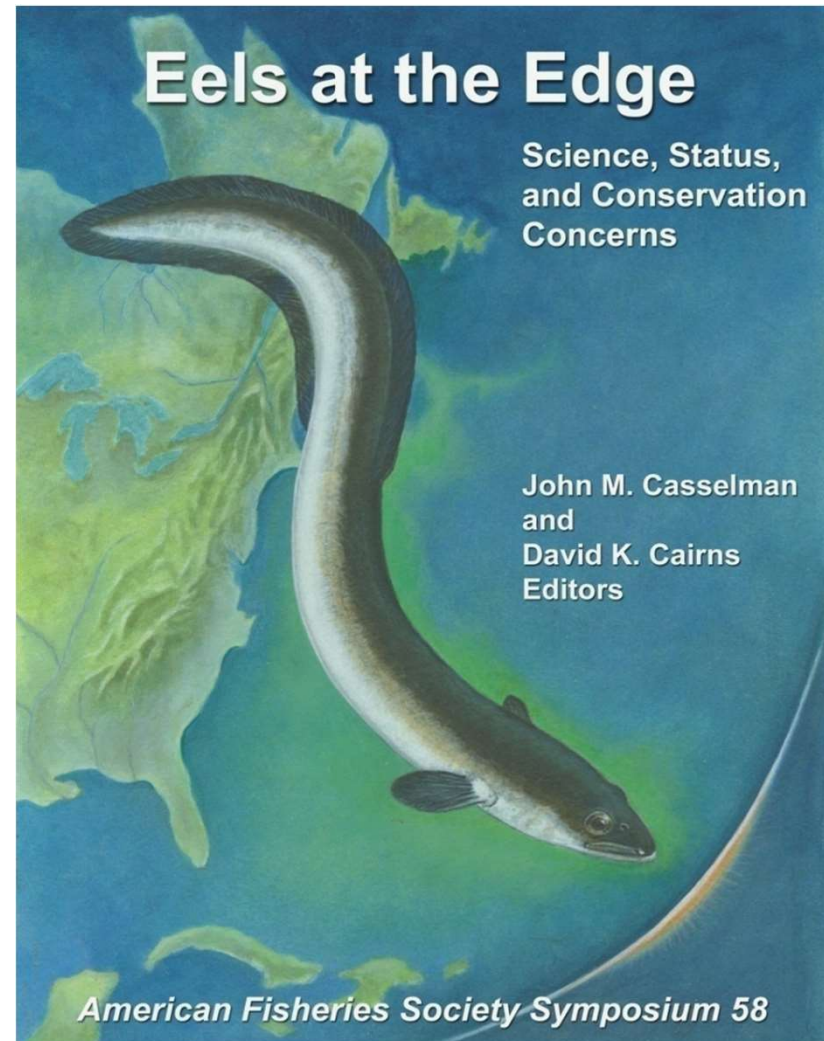


(adapted from John Casselman, Queens University)

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(adapted from John Casselman, Queens University)



When and where are glass eels arriving?



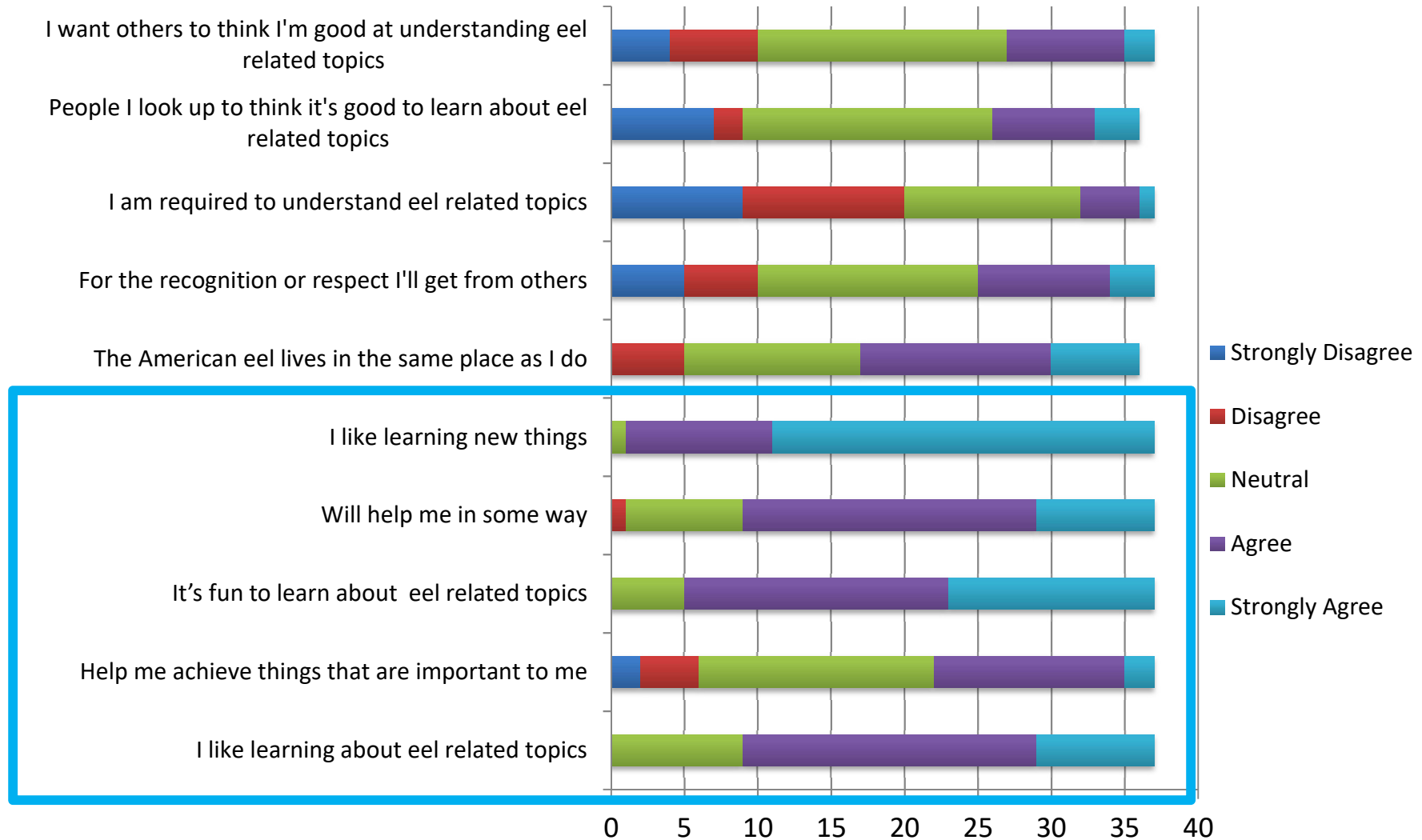
- Each spring, nets are placed in the mouths of streams
- Teams of trained volunteers catch, count, and release eels
- Project follows coast-wide scientific protocols



Over 1.6 million eels released above barriers since 2008

Why do volunteers participate in the eel project?

Why do you choose to learn and understand eel related topics?



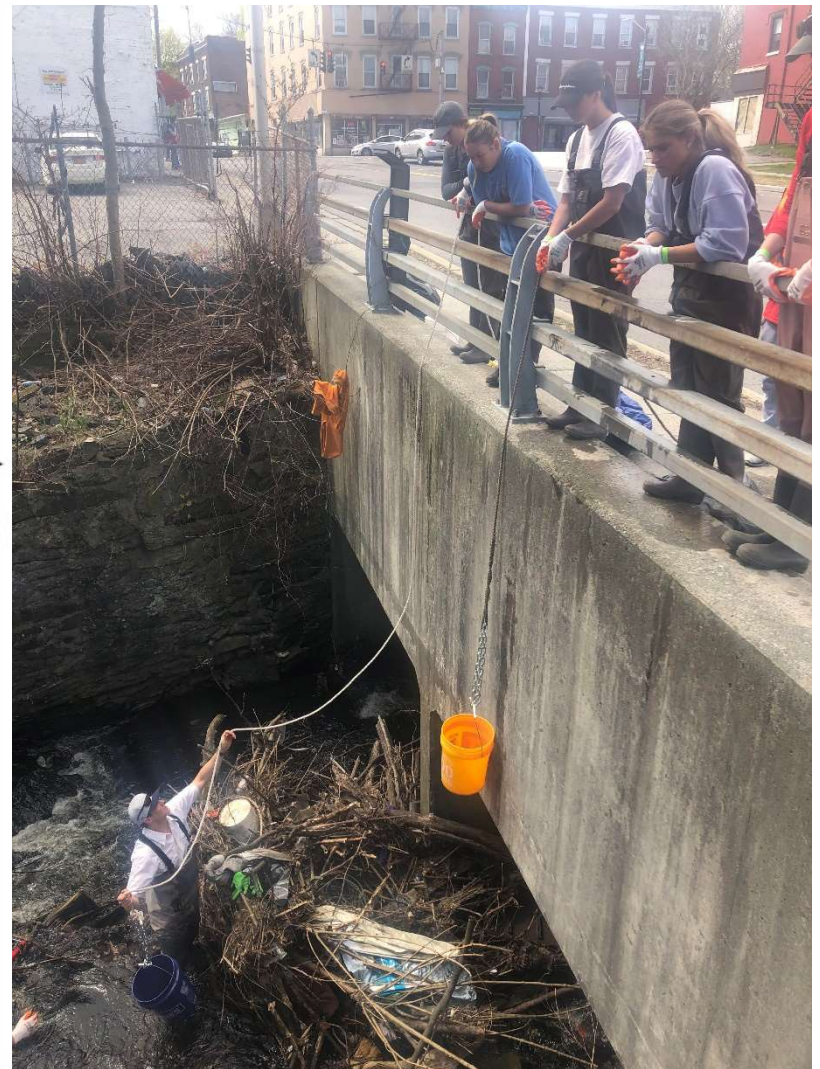
Internal motivators matter more than external ones.







How to expand volunteer engagement



Stepping Stones of Stewardship



Ashawna Abbott, Aidan Mabey, Martice Smith

Eels and River Barriers



Eel ladders to get elvers past dams







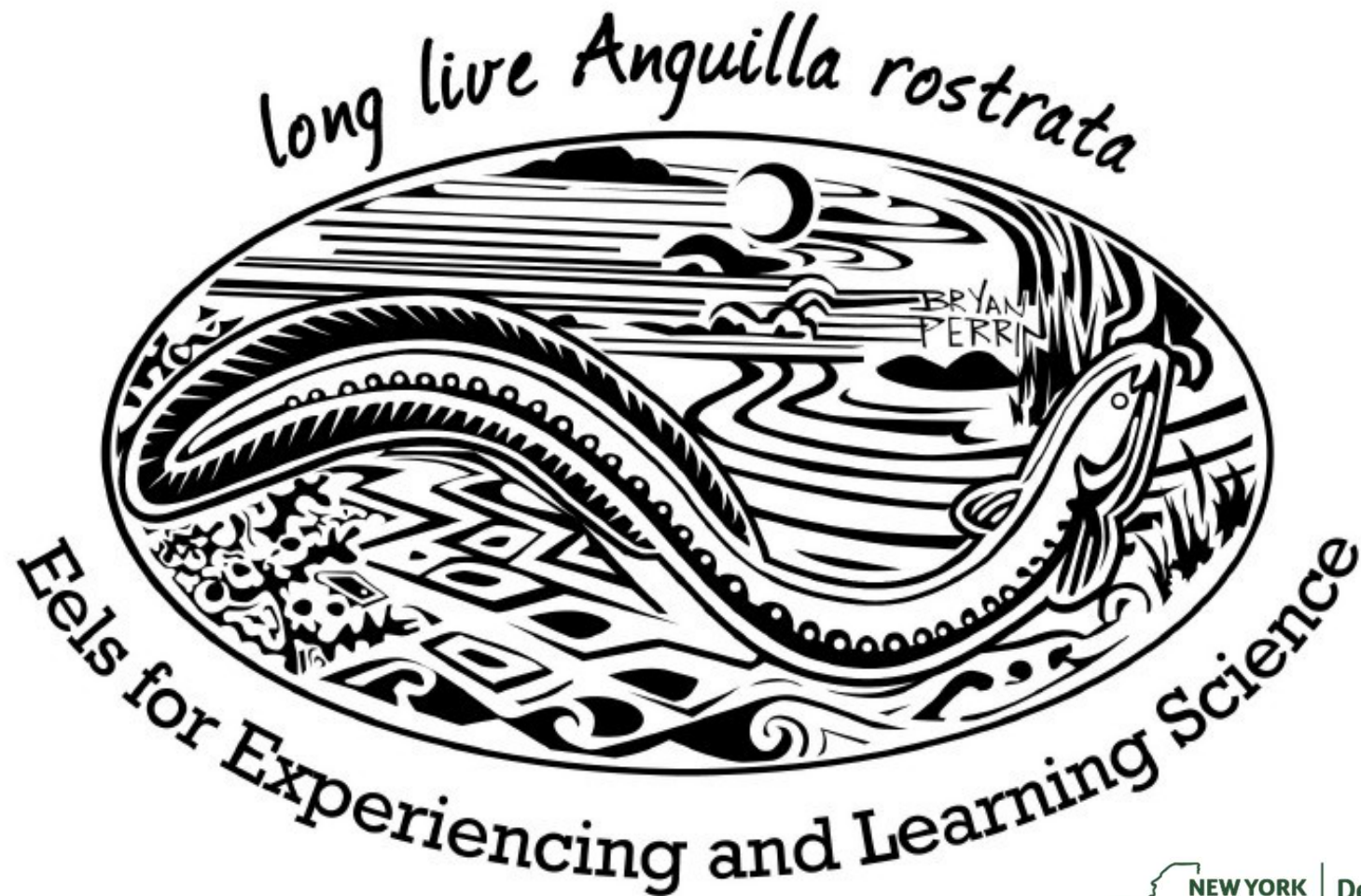
What are the ingredients for a good community-science project?

- **#1: Partners**
- **The “ooh” factor**
- **Wide range of habitats**
- **Diverse volunteers**
- **Limited sampling season**
- **Frequent data points**
- **Clear methods**
- **Feedback & Challenge**
- **Conservation need**
- **HEROES**

Eels + People + Love + Rivers = SUCCESS!



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