



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

TO: American Lobster Management Board
FROM: Jonah Crab Advisory Panel
DATE: April 12, 2016
SUBJECT: AP Recommendations on Draft Addendum I to the Jonah Crab FMP

The Advisory Panel (AP) met via conference call on April 5, 2015 to comment on Draft Addendum I to the Jonah Crab Fishery Management Plan. Below is a summary of the meeting.

Advisory Panel Attendees

Todd Richard Ellis (NH) commercial
Brian Thibeault (RI) commercial

Sonny Gwin (MD) commercial
Staff
Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator

Issue 1: Incidental Bycatch for Non-Trap Gear

The AP unanimously favored increasing the bycatch limit for non-trap gear to 1,000 crabs per trip (Option B). The AP felt that this option would cap effort in the Jonah crab fishery without restricting the harvest rates of current participants.

Issue 2: Incidental Bycatch Limit for Non-Lobster Traps

AP members were in favor of establishing a bycatch limit of 1,000 crabs per trip for non-lobster traps (Option D) because it would cap effort while allowing current participants to continue business as usual; however, the AP expressed several concerns regarding trap proliferation. Comments on this issue included:

- Setting a 1,000 crab bycatch limit could cause effort in non-lobster trap fisheries to expand as current fishermen increase their harvest to meet the bycatch allowance. This could result in a significant increase in the number of traps in the water, especially in the conch fishery where traps can be easily converted to target Jonah crab. The AP felt that some level of trap proliferation could occur at any bycatch level presented in Draft Addendum I, albeit to different degrees, as pot fishermen harvest more Jonah crabs. This is particularly concerning to lobster fishermen in LCMAs 2 and 3 who are going through significant trap reductions.
- The AP believes that unlimited catch by non-lobster traps (Option A) would lead to increased effort and trap proliferation and should not be adopted by the Board.
- Trap limits in the pot fisheries would be a more effective effort control; however, the AP recognizes that this may be out of the regulatory authority of the Lobster Board.
- The bycatch allowances for non-trap gear and non-lobster trap gear should be uniform to ensure simplicity in the regulations and improve enforcement.