FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 17, 2016

This press release revises that of November 9, 2016 with the addition of details on a New York public hearing.

States Schedule Hearings on Jonah Crab Draft Addendum II

Arlington, VA – The Atlantic coastal states of Maine through Virginia have scheduled their hearings to gather public comment on Draft Addendum II to the Jonah Crab Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The details of the scheduled hearings follow.

Maine Department of Marine Resources
December 13, 2016; 6 PM
Casco Bay Lines Conference Room
56 Commercial Street
Portland, Maine
Contact: Terry Stockwell at 207.624.6553
*This hearing will precede the Menhaden PID hearing

New Hampshire Fish and Game Department
December 6, 2016; 7 PM
Urban Forestry Center
45 Elwyn Road
Portsmouth, New Hampshire
Contact: Doug Grout at 603.868.1095
* This hearing will precede the Menhaden PID hearing

Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries
December 12, 2016; 5 PM
Bourne Community Center, Room 1
239 Maine Street
Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts
Contact: Dan McKiernan at 617.626.1536
* This hearing will precede the Menhaden PID hearing

Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife
December 19, 2016; 6 PM
University of Rhode Island Bay Campus
Corless Auditorium, South Ferry Road
Narragansett, Rhode Island
Contact: Robert Ballou at 401.222.4700 ext: 4420
* This hearing will precede the Menhaden PID hearing

Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
December 14, 2016; 7 PM
CT DEEP Boating Education Center
333 Ferry Road
Old Lyme, Connecticut
Contact: David Simpson at 860.434.6043
* This hearing will follow the Menhaden PID hearing

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
December 5, 2016 at 7 PM
Cornell Cooperative Extension Office
423 Griffing Avenue
Riverhead, New York
Contact: Kim McKown at 631.444.0454

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species.
The Draft Addendum considers establishing a coastwide standard for claw harvest to address concerns regarding the equity of the current claw provision. Specific options include establishing a whole crab fishery or allowing for the harvest of claws coastwide. The Draft Addendum also considers establishing a definition of bycatch, based on a percent composition of catch, in order to minimize the expansion of a small-scale fishery under the bycatch allowance.

The FMP currently establishes a whole crab fishery with the exception of fishermen from NJ, DE, MD, and VA who have a history of claw landings prior to June 2, 2015. Following approval of the FMP, claw fishermen from NY and ME were identified. Currently, these fishermen are required to land whole crabs. As a result, jurisdictions have expressed concern regarding the equity of this provision as some fishermen with a history of claw landings are allowed to continue this practice while others must land whole crabs.

In order to address concerns regarding the expansion of a small-scale fishery, consideration of a bycatch definition was added as a second issue in the Draft Addendum. Addendum I established a bycatch allowance of 1,000 crabs per trip for non-trap gears and non-lobster trap gears (i.e., fish pots, crab pots, whelk traps). Fishermen using these gears are not required to have other species on Board when harvesting Jonah crab. As a result, fishermen harvesting Jonah crab under the bycatch limit may, in fact, directly target Jonah crab by landing 1,000 crabs per trip and nothing else. This does not reflect the intention of the bycatch allowance which is to account for Jonah crab caught while targeting another species.

Stakeholders are encouraged to provide input on Draft Addendum II either by attending state public hearings or providing written comment. The Draft Addendum can be obtained at http://www.asmfc.org/files/PublicInput/JonahCrabAddendumII_PublicComment.pdf or via the Commission’s website, www.asmfc.org, under Public Input. Public comment will be accepted until 5 PM (EST) on January 6, 2017 and should be forwarded to Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at mware@asmfc.org (Subject line: Jonah Crab Draft Addendum II).

The Board will review submitted public comment and consider final action on the Draft Addendum at the Commission’s Winter Meeting. For more information, please contact Megan Ware at mware@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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