



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC American Lobster Board Approves Draft Addendum XXV for Public Comment

Addendum Seeks to Address Southern New England Stock Declines

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s American Lobster Management Board approved Draft Addendum XXV to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster for public comment. The Draft Addendum seeks to address the depleted condition of the Southern New England (SNE) stock while preserving a functional portion of the SNE lobster fishery. The document presents a suite of management measures to increase egg production and lower fishing mortality through a combination of management tools including gauge size changes, season closures, and trap reductions.

The Draft Addendum responds to the results of the 2015 American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment which found the SNE stock is severely depleted and experiencing recruitment failure. Declines in population abundance were most pronounced in the inshore portion of the stock where environmental conditions have remained unfavorable to lobster since the late 1990s. These stock declines are largely in response to adverse environmental conditions, including increasing water temperatures over the last 15 years, combined with continued fishing mortality.

Draft Addendum XXV focuses on increasing egg production so that, if environmental conditions become favorable, the SNE stock can benefit from a strong recruitment year. The Draft Addendum includes six issues. The first proposes four targets to increase egg production, ranging from 20% to 60%, with an additional option for status quo. The second issue seeks input on proposed management tools to increase egg production and whether these tools should be used independently or in conjunction with one another. The third issue addresses the effects of proposed measures on the recreational fishery. The fourth issue explores the implementation of season closures and potential impacts to the Jonah crab fishery. The fifth issue examines whether management measures should be uniform across Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMA) in SNE. The sixth issue asks how management measures should be applied to the offshore waters of LCMA 3, which spans both the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank and SNE stock units.

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.

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The Draft Addendum will be available on the Commission website, www.asmfc.org (under Public Input) by February 20, 2017. It is anticipated that the majority of states from Massachusetts through Virginia will be conducting public hearings; the details of those hearings will be released in a subsequent press release. The Board will review submitted public comment and consider action on the Addendum at the Commission's Spring Meeting in May 2017.

In other business, the Board initiated development of Draft Addendum XXVI to respond to the need for improved harvest reporting and biological data collection in state and federal waters. The Draft Addendum seeks to utilize the latest technology to improve reporting, increase the spatial resolution of harvester data, collect greater effort data, and advance the collection of biological data offshore. The Board will receive an update on the development of Draft Addendum XXVI at the Commission's Spring Meeting in May 2017.

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