



# **Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

*Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries*

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### **ASMFC American Lobster Board Initiates Addendum to Increase Resiliency of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank Stock**

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s American Lobster Management Board initiated Draft Addendum XXVII to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster. The Draft Addendum seeks to increase the resiliency of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank (GOM/GBK) stock by considering the standardization of management measures across Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMAs). This is a proactive management action and is in response to signs of reduced settlement. Initiating an addendum charges the Plan Development Team (PDT) with developing management alternatives for consideration in the Draft Addendum.

The American lobster fishery is one of the largest and most valuable fisheries along the Atlantic coast. In 2016, over 158 million pounds were landed coastwide totaling \$666 million in ex-vessel value. The vast majority of harvest occurs within the GOM/GBK stock area, with over 130 million pounds landed in Maine alone. Since 2012, settlement surveys for the GOM/GBK stock have indicated a consistent decreasing trend in young-of-year lobster. This decrease could foreshadow a decline in recruitment and landings. Given the high value of the fishery and the economic importance of the fishery to coastal communities throughout New England, the Board initiated Draft Addendum XXVII as a proactive response to build resiliency in the stock.

The Draft Addendum will consider, to the extent possible, the development of consistent management measures for the GOM/GBK stock, including gauge size and v-notch definitions. Currently, disparate regulations allow lobsters protected in one LCMA to be harvested in another LCMA. A uniform set of regulations would add an additional biological buffer to the stock through the protection of spawning stock biomass across LCMAs. In addition, this action may address enforcement concerns, particularly regarding the sale and transfer of lobsters across state lines which are subject to different minimum gauge sizes. The PDT will provide an update on the development of Draft Addendum XXVII at the Commission’s Annual Meeting in October.

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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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Regarding the Southern New England stock, the Board decided to not move forward with Addendum XXV for management use at the current time. After considering the proposals put forth by the Lobster Conservation Management Teams (LCMTs) and Technical Committee input, the Board was divided in its support of the Draft Addendum. Some members felt the proposed measures did not go far enough to protect the stock, while others were concerned the majority of LCMT proposals would not achieve the required 5% increase in egg production. Others believed significant reductions have already occurred in the fishery and no further action was needed. Ultimately, the Board decided to establish a Workgroup to discuss ways to manage SNE lobster.

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