

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

**ADDENDUM X TO AMENDMENT 3 TO THE AMERICAN
LOBSTER FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN**



ASMFC Vision Statement:

Healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015.

February 2007

1.0 Introduction

American lobster management authority lies with the coastal states and is coordinated through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission). Responsibility for compatible management action in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) from 3-200 miles from shore lies with the Secretary of Commerce through Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act in the absence of a federal fishery management plan (FMP). American lobster has been managed by the states under the Commission's FMP, amendments, and addenda since December 1997. American lobster is currently managed under Amendment 3 to the FMP, which was approved in December 1997. The plan is designed to minimize the chance of population collapse due to recruitment failure. The goal of Amendment 3 is to have a healthy American lobster resource and a management regime that provides for sustained harvest, maintains appropriate opportunities for participation, and provides for cooperative development of conservation measures by all stakeholders.

This document establishes a much-needed consistent coastwide monitoring and reporting criteria for the lobster fishery. Insufficient data is the primary limitation on managers' ability to manage the fishery.

2.0 Background

Amendment 3 required that all states maintain at least their current reporting and data collection program. Action was deferred until the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) developed a coastwide statistics program. Addendum II to Amendment 3 encouraged all state fisheries management agencies adopt the monitoring and reporting standards outlined in Sections 3.1.1 and 3.2.1 of the Addendum, but did not require any changes to the monitoring and reporting system.

Addendum VIII included data collection and monitoring provisions for all states. The provisions within the Addendum improved the lobster data collection program; however, it did not meet ACCSP standards or all of the recommendations from the 2005 stock assessment peer review. The Board determined that a more rigorous data collection program is warranted to assess and manage the valuable lobster resource. Table 1 shows the current data collection program for each of the states and agencies.

3.0 Statement of the Problem

The collection and accurate interpretation of both fisheries-dependent and fisheries-independent data are fundamental to our knowledge of lobster. It will allow us to gain a full understanding of the nature of changes in the magnitude of landings and productivity of the lobster resource.

Fisheries-dependent data, such as landings, sea sampling, and port sampling, are collected in concurrence with harvesting. These data are influenced by many variables specific to how fishermen harvest their catch (area fished, number of fishermen, fishing effort, gear, experience fishing, and the lobster availability). Accurate and comparable landings are the principal data needed to assess the impact of fishing on lobster populations. The quality of current landings data is not consistent spatially or temporally. Standardized mandatory reporting of landings data coastwide would improve the lobster stock assessment. Aligning stock management areas with area designations for landings is necessary. Enhanced sea sampling and port sampling to create a

more complete record of biological characteristics of the catch and harvest would also improve the usefulness of these data. Sea sampling is especially needed in offshore waters.

Fishery-dependent information (data collected by scientific surveys) is also important. Such data are needed to accurately assess marine fish populations and are used in conjunction with fisheries-dependent data for estimating total population size and mortality rates. There is a need to develop consistent techniques that monitor distribution and abundance of lobster independent of the fishery. Current methods (e.g. trawls) are limited in area (gear conflicts) and habitat sampled (unable to access complex bottom). Additional methodologies should be investigated that cover a wide range of sizes and habitats.

The 2004 Lobster Model Review Panel and the 2005 Stock Assessment Peer Review Panel found the data available are woefully inadequate for the management needs of the lobster fishery, and it is the primary limitation on the ability to manage the fishery. Throughout the world most well managed fisheries spend at least 2-5% of the landed value on data collection and analysis. For the Gulf of Maine component of this fishery alone this would suggest an annual investment of \$4-10 million. Estimates indicate the current investment is much less.

4.0 Management Program

4.1 Expanded coastwide mandatory reporting and data collection program.

This option replaces section 4.0 Monitoring and Reporting of Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster.

Dealer and Harvester Reporting

1. 100% mandatory dealer reporting and at least 10% of active harvesters reporting (with the expectation of 100% of license holders reporting in time)
2. Two-ticket system (verification): dealer and harvester landings information (trip level reporting). Harvesters report trip data and catch estimates (in pounds) and dealers report landing weights (in pounds).
 - a. Harvester reports include: a unique trip id (link to dealer report), vessel number, trip start date, location (NMFS Statistical Area), traps hauled, traps set, quantity (lbs), trip length
 - b. Dealer reports include: unique trip id (link to harvester report), species, quantity (lbs), state and port of landing, market grade and category, areas fished (NMFS Statistical Area), price per pound

A one-ticket system can also be used to collect the above information. In a one-ticket system, both dealer and fisherman report different data on a single form.

3. Harvesters and dealers are required to report standardized data elements for each trip by the tenth of the following month.
4. Permit holders are linked to federal vessel or individual permit/license level reporting for lobsters using ACCSP protocol (<http://www.accsp.org/cfstandards.htm>)
5. ACCSP stores this information.

At-sea sampling program:

Biological characteristics:

1. Collect information to characterize the commercial catch: length, sex, v-notched, egg bearing status, legal-size discards, and cull status
 - a. Other biological information that can be collected but are not a part of the minimum standards include: tissue for genetic or toxicity analyses, stomach contents for food habit assessments, gonads for maturity schedule confirmation.
2. Weight sampling intensity by areas and season to match 3-year average of area's seasonal commercial catch.
3. Fishery Effort: Fishing location (NMFS Statistical Area), total trawls, or traps sampled.

Port sampling Program:

Biological characteristics:

1. Collect information to characterize commercial landings: length, sex, cull status, and market category
 - a. Other biological information that can be collected but are not a part of the minimum standards include: tissue for genetic or toxicity analyses, stomach contents for food habit assessments, gonads for maturity schedule confirmation.
2. Set minimum number to be sampled per unit landings by area and season

Sufficient at-sea sampling can replace port sampling.

Fishery Independent Data

All statistical areas should be sampled by at least one of the following: annual trawl survey (seasonally standardized), ventless trap survey, and a young-of- year survey.

These surveys should be based on cooperative work between states for inshore and offshore characterization of the stock units.

4.2 Implementation

States must implement, at minimum, the monitoring and data collection measures contained section 4.1 of this document by January 1, 2008.

5.0 Recommendations for Actions in Federal Waters

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission believes that the measures contained in Amendment 3 and Addenda I-X are necessary to limit the expansion of effort into the lobster fishery, to rebuild stocks to recommended levels. The Commission recommends that the federal government promulgate all necessary regulations to implement the measures contained in the management options section of this document.

Table 1. Current reporting for dealer and harvesters by state for the lobster commercial fishery and state biological sampling.

	ME	NH	RI	MA	CT	NY	NJ	NMFS
Dealer	Voluntary through SAFIS	SAFIS (keyed in by state)	SAFIS	SAFIS	SAFIS	SAFIS*	SAFIS	SAFIS
Harvester	None	SAFIS (VTR)*	SAFIS (VTR)	Annual reporting of monthly summaries	Trip Level State Logbooks (SAFIS*)	NERO Codes (VTR)	None, except for federal vessels with Multi-species permits	SAFIS (Only vessels with Multi-species permits report using VTRs)
Biological Sampling	Port/ Sea	Port / Sea	Sea/ port in offshore	Sea/ port in offshore	Sea	Sea (low in '05-'06/ Port in ocean only)	None	Some Port and Sea
* States will come on-line with this reporting on January 1, 2007								
SAFIS- Trip level reporting consistent with ACCSP standards								
VTR- Vessel Trip Report (trip level reporting)								