

ASMFC Lobster Advisory Panel

May 2, 2007

Meeting Summary

Meeting Participants	Arthur Sawyer (MA)	<i>ASMFC Staff:</i>
David Spencer (RI)(Chair)	Lanny Dellinger (RI)	Toni Kerns
Robert Baines (ME) (V-Chair)	Greg DiDomenico (NJ)	
Jack Fullmer (NJ)		

Recommendations to the Board:

The AP did not reach consensus on all of the issues. On issues where consensus was not reached, all options of support are listed.

Addendum XI for Public Comment

SNE Rebuilding Timeframe Non-Consensus

1. Support to end overfishing immediately. It is important to end overfishing right away to start making headway on rebuilding the abundance. Abundance cannot start to increase unless overfishing is not occurring.
2. There was also support to not end overfishing immediately. There is concern that measures will be too restrictive on fishermen to end overfishing immediately. Fishermen have faced a lot of cuts recently and the stock needs time to respond.
3. Support for a 10-year rebuilding time period. The bar should be set high so fishermen can get the benefits from conservation measures while they are still fishing. The longer the rebuilding period, the less opportunity there will be for current fishermen to see the benefits.
4. Support for a 15-year rebuilding time period. Given the life history of lobster, the fact that it takes 7-8 years for a lobster to grow from egg to legal size, and unknown natural mortality (environment, predation, disease), it may not be possible for a 10 year rebuilding timeframe; therefore 15 years is more realistic. The benefits of regulatory changes may not be detectable into the assessment process in a shorter period of time than 15 years. As long as fishing mortality is kept in check, the stock abundance should increase.

The AP requests that, at a minimum, a new stock assessment should be completed for all areas at least every three years. Management measures in each LCMA should be adjusted following the conclusion of each new assessment.

SNE Rebuilding Measures Non-Consensus

1. Support for a modified comprehensive management option to set a stock wide minimum management standard:

Minimum size of 3 3/8" except for all Area 3 permit holders who would still be bound by the schedule of minimum size increasing terminating at 3 1/2" in 2008.

Maximum Size for males and females of 5 1/4" for all vessels licensed to fish in the SNE stock

area with the exception of area 3. Both sexes should be protected by the maximum size, unless there is a valid scientific justification to only limit the protection to females. The maximum size in area 3 should be set at a size larger than 5 ¼". That area has already adopted minimum size increases that are more conservative than most other SNE inshore areas.

V-notch definition would be changed to 1/8 inch. Under this option a v-notched lobster would be defined as any female lobster that bears a notch or indentation in the flipper at least 1/8 inch deep, with or without setal hairs. "V-notched female lobster" also means any female that is mutilated in a manner which could hide, obscure or obliterate such a mark.

V-notching by fishermen of legal egg-bearing lobsters would be a mandatory measure, and notching of legal lobsters may be accomplished through paid-for mitigation programs.

LCMA –specific trap reductions would be studied for future implementation with LCMT input. The Plan Review Team (PRT) and the Technical Committee would examine the status and relative effectiveness of various effort control plans before future trap reductions are considered. Specifically, the PRT and Committee would study the degree of latent effort that remains in the fisheries as affected by current effort control plans in Areas 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. While effort control plans have been accomplished throughout Southern New England, the most recent plan in LCMA 2 may be the most restrictive because the eligibility period did not include the period of peak activity, but rather the years of low fishery performance to reflect attrition.

In addition to the modified comprehensive option, there was support for LCMA's to be more restrictive if they so chose. As an example, there was support for the modified comprehensive option, as well as the measures included in the LCMT proposal for Area 3, under option 4 of section 4.2.2.

2. The recreational sector supported to the recreational fishermen to take one female lobster over the maximum size limit. This would allow the recreational fishermen to have one trophy lobster. There is a concern by recreation fishermen in determining sex and v-notch size at depth.

Delayed Implementation Consensus

Support for option 3 LCMA Specific Closures. There is general support for the concept of delayed implementation with LCMA specific closures. The AP feels that this management strategy is not completely flushed out. The Board should consider how it would make recommendations in Federal waters? The Board should consider issues that could arise such as, if an area is closed for a month, would traps be allowed to stay in the water?

Other Issues

The AP would like to have the TC or the SAC Chair come to the next meeting to discuss stock assessment options.

There were several fishermen that did not receive notice that the Addendum XI public hearings were being held. The AP suggests that states do a one-time mailing to all lobster permit holders to let them know about the ASMFC interested party lobster mailing list. By signing up for this mailing list, a lobsterman would be informed of any ASMFC related lobster notice.