

ASMFC American Lobster Advisory Panel

November 19, 2003

Meeting Summary

AP Members:

Bob Baines
Steve Train
Dave Cousens
Jon Carter
George Doll
John Sorlien
Bro Cote

Bonnie Spinazzola– proxy for Greg Hansen
Bob Nudd
Arthur Sawyer
Todd Jesse
David Spencer
Angelo Correnti
Nick Crismale

Other Attendee's:

John German
Bill Adler

Bob Glenn
Carrie Selberg

1. Stock Assessment:

C. Selberg and B. Glenn updated the AP on recent Board and TC discussions regarding the stock assessment. The Board has decided to delay the scheduled turn of the crank assessment for 2003 and schedule a benchmark assessment for 2004. This benchmark will repeat the last assessment with new data as well as consider new models, input parameters such as natural mortality and new reference points.

C. Selberg stepped through the various Technical Committee Subcommittee responsibilities and an overall timeline. The stock assessment subcommittee, modeling subcommittee, and technical committee will all be involved and active in the next year working on the assessment. The AP asked staff to keep them informed of meetings about the assessment.

The TC will be asking the Management board at the December meeting if they should be reconsidering the stock assessment area boundaries. B. Glenn indicated that the TC had an initial discussion about changing these boundaries at the last meeting but no firm decisions have been made. The AP discussed the potential impacts this could have on the management areas.

2. If necessary clauses:

C. Selberg indicated that the PRT has been asked by the Management Board Chair to develop a report about the 'If Necessary' clauses in Addendum III. The PRT will be reviewing the record and making a recommendation to the Board indicating if these measures are necessary in absence of a stock assessment. The AP discussed their recollections of how these clauses were interpreted in their various LCMT discussions. Area 6 members expressed concern because they are the first area to have a clause in 2004.

AP Recommendation to the Board on If Necessary Clauses:

Some AP members believe that if necessary clauses are necessary unless deemed otherwise by a future stock assessment and that the Area's would not reach F10% without these measures. They are concerned that they will not meet the conservation goals by 2008 without these measures. Therefore in the absence of the stock assessment these measures are necessary.

Other AP members believe that these measures should not be put in place until there is a stock assessment and it indicates that they are necessary. They believe conditions have changed from 1998 and this should be taken into account and a stock assessment should be completed before these decisions would be made. Therefore in the absence of a stock assessment they do not believe these measures should be mandatory.

The whole AP is concerned that a stock assessment is not completed to provide the necessary information to make these decisions.

3. MA Outer Cape Cod:

C. Selberg updated the AP on the Outer Cap Cod management program. MA withdrew their conservation equivalency proposal for the other management areas but is still pursuing conservation equivalency for the outer cape cod management area. They have held public hearings presenting both the program outlined in Addendum III as well as an alternative. Massachusetts has indicated their intent to either request conservation equivalency or implement Addendum III Outer Cape Program at the December Board meeting.

4. Lobster Health:

The AP discussed lobster health concerns throughout the range. In LIS, they are seeing lots of egg bearing lobsters but not a lot of legal sized lobsters. They are concerned about the eggs on the egg bearing lobsters and about pesticide impacts on lobsters. The AP discussed a recent article by B. Adler about sampling and the concern that current sampling does not accurately reflect stock conditions. Lance Stewart outlined some concerns about pesticides and lobster health in LIS.

In Area 2, AP members believe shell disease to be about at the same levels as last year. There are reports of shell disease of 25% by a Maryland lobsterman. In Buzzards Bay, shell disease is at about 25% before the shed and then it goes down. In NH, the spring run had about 25% shell disease but they did not seem to be their normal lobsters because they were getting very high catches and the lobsters were larder. There was a normal run of lobsters after the spring run and very little shell disease now. The lobster institute continues to look into this.

The AP discussed the false positive test results for lead in lobsters being sold in Europe. The lobster institute is testing lobsters now and sending results to the FDA.

5. Draft Addendum IV

Vent Sizes:

The AP reviewed the vent size section of draft Addendum IV, reviewed preliminary public comment, and discussed the proposed changes. Several people have concerns about circular vents and do not think they work relative to the rectangular vents. Some AP members expressed

concern about having to continually buy new vents and change the vents in their traps and these changes are made while other AP members indicated that is just a fact of going up on gauge sizes and it is important to leave lobsters on the bottom. One AP member indicated that it is more important to address overall effort in the lobster fishery rather than changes in vent sizes.

Overall, the AP recommends adopting the proposed changes.

Most Restrictive Rule:

The AP reviewed the most restrictive rule section of the draft Addendum IV, reviewed preliminary public comment, and discussed the proposed changes. The AP would like clarification on how this would impact the NH conservation equivalency passed several years ago and staff indicated she would look into that prior to the Board meeting. The AP discussed a public comment made at the NJ public hearing about an individual fishing in two history-based systems simultaneously. The AP recommends further thought and review about this particular concern. **Overall, the AP recommends adopting the proposed changes.**

Area 3 Management Measures:

The AP reviewed the Area 3 section of draft Addendum IV, reviewed preliminary public comment, and discussed the proposed changes. Some AP members were concerned about the timing of the proposal because Area 3 is currently going through the allocation process. Area 3 AP members indicated that because of the delay between ASMFC approval and NOAA fisheries implementation they wanted to make this proposal now and that there would be further public hearings through NOAA fisheries. The AP supports the LCMT process and therefore supports proposals from the Area 3 LCMT. **Overall, the AP supports the proposed management measures for Area 3.**

Area 2 Management Measures:

The AP reviewed the Area 2 section of draft Addendum IV, reviewed preliminary public comment and discussed the proposed changes. The AP has several concerns with this section of the Addendum. First, the AP is concerned about the italicized statements throughout the document that indicate that the TAL and management measures may change. They believe it is difficult to comment on measures that may change. Second, the AP strongly supports the LCMT process and is concerned that the document includes options not developed by the LCMT. However, the AP does believe that the LCMT needs to develop proposals that meet the conservation goals outlined for the Area. **Therefore, the AP recommends that Board delay action on this section of the Addendum IV (but not the other three sections). The LCMT and Board should continue to work together to develop management program for Area 2. The Board should more clearly define the goals for Area 2 and the LCMT should submit a proposal, which meets these goals by a deadline in the near term defined by the Board.**