

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

April 10, 2008

To: American Lobster Management Board

From: American Lobster Technical Committee

RE: Review of CT V-notch Program Changes

The Lobster Technical Committee (TC) evaluated the Connecticut proposal to extend the v-notch program evaluation date by one month and to include “shorts and eggings” in the v-notched calculations. The TC is not opposed to extending the evaluation date by one month. The TC also is not opposed to the formula Connecticut has developed to count “shorts” and eggings as a part of the v-notch program.

As stated in their report to the Board in August of 2007, the TC continues to have reservations on the v-notching program for LCMA 6. The majority of the TC had found that the CT v-notching proposal had the potential to be equivalent to the gauge increase. The TC said they would evaluate the program annually to ensure F has been reduced by 20 to 24 % on females and 10-12% on the total population. F can not be calculated until a years worth of catch data are available.

Also the TC continues to support the following as stated in their report from August of 2007, there is a concern that the program, as a whole, undermines the comprehensive management program established by Addendum XI. This comprehensive program was established as a common biological management strategy. The common biological measures strategy is consistent with advice given to the Board in 2004 by the American Lobster Stock Assessment Subcommittee report: Model Technical Review: Terms of Reference & Panel Report (December 2004)

The scale of the assessments and the scale of management actions are seriously mis-matched. A kaleidoscope of management regulations takes place on a different scale from the assessments. The assessments need to be done at the same spatial scale as the regulations, or a spatially explicit model needs to be used that can consider management regulations at the actual scale they are implemented. The Panel is quite concerned that reference points are being calculated from assessments that combine management areas with different size limits or V-notching regulations. This concern ties directly into the data limitations, where catches cannot be assigned to management areas. The spatial scale of data, regulations and models needs to be unified.

This difference in definitions between adjacent management areas erodes the effectiveness of the management measure in the LCMA that has the more conservative definition. A lobster that must be released in LCMA 2 under the higher size limit can be harvested in adjacent LCMA 6. This minimizes the conservation benefit of the higher size limit in area 2, whereby a lobster that would have been protected through at least one molt is still subject to harvest in an adjacent LCMA within the same stock unit.