

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

American Lobster Management Board

August 6, 2024
2:45 – 5:30 p.m.

Draft Agenda

The times listed are approximate; the order in which these items will be taken is subject to change; other items may be added as necessary

1. Welcome/Call to Order (*P. Keliher*) 2:45 p.m.
2. Board Consent 2:45 p.m.
 - Approval of Agenda
 - Approval of Proceedings from April 2024
3. Public Comment 2:50 p.m.
4. Progress Update on Benchmark Stock Assessment for American Lobster (*J. Kipp*) 3:00 p.m.
5. Plan Development Team Report on Conservation Measures for Lobster Conservation Management Areas 2 and 3 (*C. Starks*) 3:10 p.m.
 - Report from Lobster Conservation Management Team 3
6. Report on Colby College Economic Impact Analysis of a Lobster Gauge Increase (*A. Lindsay*) 3:45 p.m.
7. Review Discussions with Canada on Complementary Management Measures (*T. Kerns*) **Possible Action** 4:00 p.m.
8. Consider Addendum XXX on the Mitchell Provision for Final Approval **Final Action** 4:15 p.m.
 - Review Options and Public Comment Summary (*C. Starks*)
 - Consider Final Approval of Addendum XXX
9. Vessel Tracking Workgroup Report on the 24/7 Tracking Requirement of Addendum XXIX (*C. Starks*) 5:15 p.m.
10. Other Business/Adjourn 5:30 p.m.

The meeting will be held at The Westin Crystal City (1800 Richmond Highway, Arlington, VA; 703.486.1111) and via webinar; click [here](#) for details.

MEETING OVERVIEW

American Lobster Management Board

August 6, 2024

2:45 – 5:30 p.m.

Chair: Pat Keliher (ME) Assumed Chairmanship: 02/24	Technical Committee Chair: Tracy Pugh (MA)	Law Enforcement Committee Rep: Rob Beal (ME)
Vice Chair: Renee Zobel (NH)	Lobster Advisory Panel Chair: Grant Moore (MA) Jonah Crab Advisory Panel Chair: Sonny Gwin	Previous Board Meeting: April 30, 2024
Voting Members: ME, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, PA, DE, MD, DC, PRFC, VA, NMFS, NEFMC (12 votes)		

2. Board Consent

- Approval of Agenda
- Approval of Proceedings from April 2024

3. Public Comment – At the beginning of the meeting, public comment will be taken on items not on the agenda. Individuals that wish to speak at this time must sign-in at the beginning of the meeting. For agenda items that have already gone out for public hearing and/or have had a public comment period that has closed, the Board Chair may determine that additional public comment will not provide additional information. In this circumstance, the Chair will not allow additional public comment on an issue. For agenda items that the public has not had a chance to provide input, the Board Chair may allow limited opportunity for comment. The Board Chair has the discretion to limit the number of speakers and/or the length of each comment.

4. Progress Update on Benchmark Stock Assessment for American Lobster (3:00-3:10 p.m.)

Background

- The benchmark stock assessment for American lobster is in progress with results expected in 2025.
- The Assessment Methods Workshop was held in July 2024. The Assessment Workshop is scheduled for Fall 2024.

Presentations

- Progress Update on Benchmark Stock Assessment for American Lobster by J. Kipp

5. Plan Development Team Report on Conservation Measures for Lobster Conservation Management Areas 2 and 3 (3:10-3:45 p.m.)

Background

- In January the Board tasked the lobster Plan Development Team (PDT) to review the original goals and objectives of Addenda XXI and XXII and make recommendations for alternate measures to achieve those goals, considering recommendations from the LCMA 2 and 3 Lobster Conservation Management Teams (LCMTs).

- LCMTs 2 and 3 met to provide input to the Board on possible measures and impacts to the lobster fishery (**Briefing Materials**).
- The PDT compiled a report to characterize the changes in the lobster fishery and possible alternative management measures (**Briefing Materials**).

Presentations

- Plan Development Team Report by C. Starks

6. Report on Colby College Economic Impact Analysis of a Lobster Gauge Increase (3:45-4:00 p.m.)

Background

- In April the Board reviewed an Economic Impact Analysis on the minimum gauge size increase for LCMA 1 (**Briefing Materials**).
- A review of this study was carried out by Dr. Amanda Lindsay, Assistant Professor of Economics at Bates College. Dr. Lindsay specializes in bioeconomic modeling and management of marine fisheries (**Briefing Materials**).

Presentations

- Report on Colby College Economic Impact Analysis of a Lobster Gauge Increase by A. Lindsay

7. Review Discussions with Canada on Complementary Management Measures (4:00-4:15 p.m.) Possible Action

Background

- Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts fishery lobster managers and industry members met with Canadian lobster fishery managers and industry members to discuss complementary management between the US and Canada (**Supplemental Materials**).

Presentations

- Review Discussions with Canada on Complementary Management Measures by T. Kerns

8. Consider Addendum XXX on the Mitchell Provision for Final Approval (4:15-5:15 p.m.) Final Action

Background

- In January 2024, the Board initiated Draft Addendum XXX. The Addendum is being considered to clarify how the measures of Addendum XXVII, approved in May 2023, will apply to foreign imports of American lobster (**Briefing Materials**).
- Two virtual public hearings were held in April and May. The public comment period ended on June 3, 202 (**Briefing Materials**).

Board actions for consideration at this meeting

- Addendum XXX Final Approval and Public Comment Summary by C. Starks

Board actions for consideration at this meeting

- Consider Final Approval of Addendum XXX

9. Vessel Tracking Workgroup Report on the 24/7 Tracking Requirement of Addendum XXIX (5:15-5:30 p.m.)

Background

- Responding to industry concerns over privacy related to the tracking requirements of Addendum XXIX, the Board tasked the Vessel Tracking Workgroup, with input from the law enforcement committee, to investigate modifications to the 24/7 vessel tracking requirement which still ensure monitoring of fishing activity while acknowledging that fishermen also use boats for personal/nonfishing reasons, and reviewing existing processes for when Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) devices can be turned off.
- The Vessel Tracking Workgroup compiled a report on possible solutions, impacts to data collection, law enforcement considerations, and VMS regulations (**Briefing Materials**).

Presentations

- Vessel Tracking Workgroup Report by C. Starks

10. Other Business/Adjourn (5:30 p.m.)



Canada/United States Dialogue on Lobster Management
Delta Hotel – Saint John
June 27-28, 2024
DRAFT

<i>Participants</i>	
Doug Wentzell	Regional Director-General, DFO Maritimes Region
Jacinta Berthier	Regional Director, Fisheries Management, DFO
Adam Cook	DFO Science
Verna Docherty	DFO Fisheries Management
Noel d'Entremont	DFO SWNB Area Director
Robert MacDougall	DFO SWNB Area Office
Dwayne Surette	DFO SWNS Area Office
Lillian Mitchell	DFO SWNB Area Office
Beth Lomax	DFO SWNB Area Office
Leigha Thurber	DFO SWNB Area Office
Robert Harris	LFA 34 Advisory Committee Co-chair
Bernie Berry	LFA 34, Coldwater Lobster Association
Wendy Narvey	Mi'gmawe'l Tplu'taqnn Incorporated (MTI)
Justin Martin	Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn- Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative
Alexa Meyer	Peskotomuhkati Nation at Skutik PNS
Judith Maxwell	Scotia-Fundy Inshore Fishermen's Association
Jessica Matthews	Scotia-Fundy Inshore Fishermen's Association
Amanda Johnson	Fundy North Fishermen's Association
Emily Blacklock	Fundy North Fishermen's Association
Bonnie Morse	Grand Manan Fishermen's Association
Melanie Sonnenberg	Grand Manan Fishermen's Association
Terry Hatt	Province of New Brunswick
Cyril Boudreau	Province of Nova Scotia
Laurent Law	Province of Nova Scotia
Dainelle Deonarine	PNS Programs Coordinator
Patrick Keliher	Commissioner, Maine Department of Marine Resources and Chair of the ASMFC Lobster Board
Dan McKiernan	Director, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries
Cheri Patterson	Director, New Hampshire Fish and Game Department-Marine Fisheries and Vice Chair of the ASMFC Lobster Board



Megan Ware	Director of External Affairs, Maine Department of Marine Resources
Lorraine Morris	Lobster Resource Coordinator, Maine Department of Marine Resources
Kathleen Reardon	Lobster Fishery Biologist, Maine Department of Marine Resources
Toni Kerns	Fisheries Policy Director, ASMFC
John Drouin	Lobster Zone A Chair
Richard Howland	Lobster Zone B Secretary
Jake Thompson	Lobster Zone C Chair
Mike Dawson	Lobster Zone D Chair
Andrew Hawke	Lobster Zone E Lobster Advisory Representative
Jeff Putnam	Lobster Zone F and Lobster Advisory Committee Chair
Kristan Porter	Maine Lobstermen’s Association President (Zone A)
Dustin Delano	New England Fishermen’s Stewardship Association, COO (Zone D)
Patrice McCarron	Executive Director, Maine Lobstermen’s Association

Agenda Items and Corresponding Discussion Notes/Actions

1. Welcome and Introductions	Doug Wentzell/Patrick Keliher
<p>Objective of this meeting is to build greater understanding of adjacent lobster stocks on both sides of the border, including current management measures and possible opportunities to strengthen those measures given current trends in population abundance and distribution throughout the broader Gulf of Maine.</p>	
<p>Action: No action items.</p>	

2. DFO Fisheries Management - Lobster Management	Verna Docherty
<p>Verna presented an overview of the legislative and policy frameworks used by DFO to make fisheries management decisions, the harvest control rules in place for the inshore lobster fishery, and a summary of current management measures in place in DFO’s Maritimes Region. She noted that the management measures outlined are specific to DFO’s Maritimes Region which covers from the tip of Cape Breton in Nova Scotia to the Bay of Fundy and the Canada/US boundary in New Brunswick. Other DFO Regions which fish the Atlantic coast were not in attendance, and have different measures in place, including different minimum legal sizes.</p>	



In response to a question, Verna noted that decision making is kept to the lowest/most local possible level but may be elevated depending on the impact of the decision or international considerations.

The harvest control rules in place for the fishery are a set of pre-agreed decision rules of actions to be taken when either the stock is below the upper stock reference (USR) or when fishing pressure exceeds the removal reference, the maximum acceptable removal rate. DFO is unlikely to impose new conservation measures unless either of these reference points is met.

Action: Provide a copy of the presentation

3. Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Megan Ware

Megan explained how the ASMFC and the Lobster Board operate and enact new regulations. Each jurisdiction gets one vote on the Board when considering a change in the fishery management plan. States are the implementing bodies of the Commission, meaning states use their regulatory authority to implement management changes in their waters. The Lobster Board also requests NOAA fisheries implement complementary measures in Federal waters. The US lobster stock is managed by two biological stocks and seven management areas. The minimum size for LCMA 1 fishery is 3 ¼”, LCMA 3 is 3 17/32”, and Outer Cape Cod is 3 3/8”.

Action:

4. Maine Department of Marine Resources

Kathleen Reardon

Detailed review of the stock assessment surveys completed by ME DMR. Recruit (71-80mm) stage indices were estimated from these surveys and these form the basis for the management trigger for the proposed gauge increase. The LMA1 fishery, and Maine in particular, accounts for the vast majority of US lobster landings and therefore is projected to produce the largest biological impact from a gauge size change. Western Maine catch and survey data has been relatively stable whereas the eastern catch and survey data indicate an increase to a peak in 2016, and a subsequent decrease across a range of metrics. The most recent stock assessment indicated the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

Dan: Increasing gauge size in Area 1, inshore fishery, would have the largest impact on recruitment and perhaps the overall fishery



Action:

5. DFO Science	Adam Cook
<p>Adam presented the methodology used by DFO-Science to determine stock status. Data presented ranged from 1995-2023. Fishery dependant Catch per Unite Effort if the primary metric for the assessments in most LFAs. Multiple fisheries independent trawl surveys are also completed where they use the “weight of Evidence” approach for advice (i.e. 2 of 4 survey indices above the Upper Stock Indicator indicates that the stock is healthy) All LFA’s in Maritimes Region are in the healthy zone and DFO Science data suggests that where we have exploitation rate indices and removal references overfishing is not occurring.</p>	
<p>Action:</p>	

6. Recent Discussion and Actions at ASMFC	Toni Kerns
<p>Toni presented an overview of Addendum XXVII and outlined the proposed gauge changes in LMA1. Addendum XXVII established a trigger mechanism to automatically implement management measures to provide additional protection of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank (GOM/GBK) spawning stock biomass. The trigger set by the Lobster Board was a 35% decline in the trigger index from 2016-2018 levels, which represent the last three years in the stock assessment. In October 2023, it was determined this trigger had been met (39.1% decline). The management response in LMA1 is an increase in the minimum gauge (Year 1: 3-5/16, Year 3: 3-3/8).</p> <p>Addendum XXX is proposed to clarify that the Mitchell provision within the Magnuson Stevens Act (MSA) should apply. The Mitchell provision prohibits shipping, transporting, offering for sale, selling, or purchasing whole live lobster smaller than the lowest minimum gauge size. The ASMFC see the clarification as necessary as Amendment 3 to the Lobster Fishery Management Plan specifies the minimum gauge size as 3 ¼”, despite the addendum saying otherwise.</p> <p>There will be an ASMFC Lobster Board meeting in August 2024 for the ASMFC to decide on Addendum XXX.</p>	



Action:

7. Begin Discussion in Support of Meeting Goal	All
<p>The approach to bonded product will fall in the hands of NOAA Fisheries. Would possibly require a legal opinion on the issue of bonded product as fitting the intent of sealed and passed through. Re-sorting would not be permitted. An agency legal opinion would look at that flow of commerce via bonded shipment but it will be reviewed in the examination of Mitchell Provision. Will be a NOAA decision but current practice allows bonded product provided repacking does not occur.</p> <p>Patrick: State of Maine is willing to consider a delay in implementing Addendum XXVII if Canada is interested in making a change similar to the US.</p> <p>In response to a question, Dan McKiernan noted that no further action would be required from NOAA if Addendum XXX is adopted. However, NOAA must promulgate regulations to match the new gauge size which can take time, e.g., 1-2 years. In the meantime, until NOAA makes the necessary adjustments, the states enforce the gauge size based on landing limits.</p> <p>Western Maine fishers – lobsters don't have passports, therefore there is a Canadian advantage on the Can/US border and especially in Area 38B. They would like to discuss options which satisfies everybody.</p> <p>Canadian Harvesters: Timeframe for Canada is not on track with the US. Canada just heard about the increase in the spring of 2024. For SWNS, the earliest availability for a gauge increase would be next June IF approved at the advisory committee. FNFA is the same. Have not discussed this with the LFA 36 fishers. It is low priority at the moment in that area as there are other issues they think require more attention. Joint agreement would be needed within Canada along LFA borders.</p> <p>Verna Docherty stated that the US gauge change has been brought to each LFA advisory committee in Maritimes Region as an information item, was an item at the Maritimes Region Lobster Advisory Committee (MRLAC) in September 2023 and would be a MRLAC agenda item again this fall. She further noted that, while DFO's precautionary approach triggers have not been met, that there are opportunities for each LFA to establish target reference points based on objectives which may be social, cultural, economic, etc. While the DFO-established reference points are intended to conserve the stock, there may be a desire to implement management measures earlier to ensure the sustainability of the fishery. Defining clear objectives for how the resources users want to manage while still in the healthy zone is a conversation that DFO is willing to support in all LFAs.</p> <p>Grand Manan Fisherman's Association requested further discussion with DFO on the MRLAC agenda item and how the information will be presented.</p>	



Maine fisher: the benefit is for the next generation but also for market value increases. Is there a want in the market for a larger lobster, this could be a selling point.

US dealers want to import the smaller Canadian lobsters for lower price. This would reduce the demand for US lobsters and decrease price. Canada would gain the market advantage.

Justin Martin: the data received from ASMFC was compelling. Would like to discuss with DFO Science on what it means and what/how this should inform lobster management. Would like this conversation to happen sooner than later. Is there a peer reviewed action being taken by DFO to make decisions effectively and timely? What is the significance of the data differences between the US and Canada stock assessments and does this need to be considered/changes made to ensure conservation?

Adam: trends are comparable therefore data integrity does not seem to be an issue. Target reference points do have socio economic metrics included. Stock assessments and updates have been peer reviewed.

FNFA: LFAs 35-38 does not have a removal reference so how can DFO say that overfishing isn't occurring. Also, the size of maturity hasn't been updated since the 1990s. Adam: prefaced his comments that where a removal references are established, fishing pressure remains below those points. Also, size of maturity was completed in 2023 with a tech report forthcoming.

Kathleen: Addendum XXVII commenced outside of the limit reference points. US regulators saw a concern which was not triggered by the management control rules and chose to take action.

Alexa (PRG): topic for tomorrow – difference between proactive approach and precautionary approach, why did they not trigger the same reaction?

Lillian:

Response: Dan – spearheaded by Maine, the strategy was to get out in front of a decline because of past experience with the Southern New England stock. Created the initiative to make these decisions outside of the management control rules for that purpose.

Doug and Patrick: recap and closing for the day.

Action:

8 Day 2 Can/US June 28th 0900 - Brief Recap of Day 1 Discussion

Doug /Patrick

Doug –



Canadian perspective good to learn about Addendum XXVII and XXX.

Key take away - to have good Canadian and US discussions. Good to see what our colleagues are planning and to learn about management changes in the US.

Patrick-

More collaborative science is the key.

Expand on dialogue – questions for folks to think about.

States and Commission is looking at allowing MRLAC to have the discussion and see what comes of it for consideration.

Action:

9. Discussion in support of meeting goal

All

Patrick and Doug suggested a few questions to reflect on to get the conversation started:

- What questions do you have, or what data do you need, to have an informed conversation on the best path forward?
- What could market impacts be for US and Canadian fishermen if:
- The min gauge increases in Maine but remains as is in Canada
- The min gauge is aligned in the Gulf of Maine
- How should we carry forward collaboration and communication on this topic?
- What is the best path forward to support conversations about this meeting with our respective industries?
- What outstanding questions do you have from yesterday’s conversation?

Dan,

What happens at MRLAC? What is the process to move forward on size increase?

Doug – MRLAC would be an opportunity to have the DFO Maritimes Region Indigenous rights holders and industry collected together to discuss. Further consultation with LFA-specific advisory committees would be needed as any decision may be made on an LFA basis. Consultation with Indigenous communities would also be required.

GMFA- Buyers and processors need to be part of the conversation. They could speak to economic impacts.

Kathleen Reardon – Department of Marine Resources.

-Presentation on size of maturity by stat area off Maine’s coast. In general, size at maturity is decreasing but it is still above the minimum gauge size.

-Presented catch per trap data from the Maine lobster fleet. Catch per trip is not an index used in the trigger mechanism but Maine DMR does look at this data. Recent information shows fishermen are



adapting fishing practices to potential declines in lobster landings and higher input costs by modifying effort, so CPUE has been fairly steady over the last decade.

- Presented projections on what the estimated long term impact would be from an increase in the minimum gauge size. In general, small increases in the minimum gauge are expected to produce large benefits in the spawning stock biomass. For fishermen it would increase the weight of catch and decrease the number of catch.

- Presents slides on percentage of catch of legal lobsters caught by mm.

83 mm=11%

84mm=9%

85mm=8%

86mm=9%

87mm=9%

This would represent the short-term, year 1 impact from the first increase in the minimum gauge. By weight, the impact is about an 8% loss in average trip weight in Year 1 of the gauge increase. Impacts can vary by Maine Lobster Zone.

Adam Cook – DFO Science - See presentation.

Presented by LFA size percentage

LFA 34 - 84 mm=16%

LFA 33 and 34 would not meet same threshold (trigger index 35%) as US. we are at 20%
Size at maturity

On average, a lobster at 82.5mm = 0.97lbs, after one molt the lobster will be 93.8mm = 1.44lbs.

Question -if minimum size was increased to 84mm, what would the impact be to the LFA's?
Adam will provide.

Patrick –

what do we need for data?

- Market side of the equation needs to be provided.
- Data on size at maturity and independent information. What size required for each LFA .
- Removal reference in LFA 35, 36, 38.
- Market impacts on increased size.

Q. What happens if Addendum XXX does not pass? Could each state have different regulations?

A. Yes, lots of variables. States have the authority to control what comes in and out of state.

Q. Is there concern on price if US does not take small lobsters?

Bernie - China or Asia will absorb it, however, price may suffer.



Has NOAA requested legal advice on lobster moving across border in bond? The commissioners are not aware that advice has been sought.

Q. How should we move forward on conversations?

GMFA- all fisherman should be involved in the discussion...our fisherman are fishing today and were not able to attend.

Patrick- we need better planning

US fisherman - We are not here to strong arm anyone into doing this. Just sharing what we are doing. Timing of the implementation is key, strategic timing.

Melanie- we need to bring in all LFA's . NFLD is now catching more lobsters and they are being shipped somewhere. There are many other districts in Atlantic Canada that are not represented here today.

Robert Harris- May help Canadian interest to be proactive when we see troubling trends.

Patrick – the ASMFC Lobster Board is looking at long term stability.

Bernie-

Canadians are still in the driver's seat, we can take it back and begin to have conversations. Better communications in the future are required so that conversation and start early. Expectations- LFA 32 to LFA 12 would not entertain this.

GMFA-under siege by many issues: marine protected areas, whales, wind turbines. We are in the healthy zone, market implications is a hard sell to over 200 fisherman.

US Rep – we are all frustrated, grateful to our Canadian colleagues, Canada needs its own conversations. We need more time to figure out the issues.

Justin- I build consensus in first nations. Bring information for harvesters to understand how this affects their business at an individual level.

Megan- more communication on US side to get answers on the Addendum XXX

Will ASMFC put a pause on the increase so that Canada can have these conversations.

Judith-more time for discussion, many fisherman have no idea this is even being talked about.

US fisherman- More whale rules are coming in the next few years, not sure where it ends.

FNFA- is this happening in January?

Patrick- that is the course right now. We will be having conversations so stay tuned.



We are willing to have further discussion on the implementation time line.
Vote for addendum XXX is Aug 6th in the afternoon.

Doug and Patrick thanked everyone for attending and gave closing remarks.

Action:

10. Next Steps

The ASMFC Lobster Board is scheduled to vote on Addendum XXX at their August Board meeting and the public is encouraged to listen via webinar. There will also be a discussion regarding the timing of the minimum gauge size increase in LMA1 and an updated on this conversation.

There will be a MRLAC meeting in September where this topic will be an agenda item. It would likely be helpful to have industry meetings within the LFAs over the summer to present information related to this topic.

There is an opportunity for greater cross-border science on the lobster resource and this should be a focus moving forward.

Action:

Adjournment:



July 29, 2024

Dear Commissioners:

East Coast Seafood is a Maine lobster dealer, a Massachusetts lobster processor and a Canadian lobster dealer writing to express our opposition to Addendum 27. Maine based dealers cumulatively purchase upward of 150 million pounds of lobster annually, employ thousands of Mainers, and contribute millions of dollars to state coffers in taxes.

Addendum 27 will have crippling effects on our businesses, Maine's economy, the tax base, and our work force. We are writing to ask that you defeat, or at least defer, this proposal to protect an industry essential to our state's economy and identity.

As you are aware, we are gravely concerned the proposed gauge adjustment will deprive harvesters, dealers, and processors alike of some of our most popular products. For example, the so-called chicken lobster in the 1 to 1.15 lb range is in high demand among restaurants, wholesalers, and European markets. We will lose this product entirely once Addendum 27's gauge increases are triggered.

Another product the gauge increases threaten are lobster tails in the three-to-fourounce range. Major buyers such as cruise lines and restaurant chains, including Red Lobster, prize this product for "surf and turf" offerings. These tails are harvested from lobsters below Addendum 27's minimum allowable catch size.

The chicken lobster and the three-to-four-ounce lobster tails represent a significant portion of our businesses, which have an uncertain future thanks to Addendum 27. The variability in our regulatory environment is especially unwelcome in maritime communities east of Casco Bay, where we cumulatively employ thousands of Mainers and constitute a large portion of the tax base. We fully expect that declines in revenue owing to Addendum 27 will lead to layoffs and a decline in our tax contributions.

It is no answer to reply that Addendum 27 is in the industry's best interests. First and most importantly, Addendum 27 does not protect industry by protecting stocks. Indeed, there is no guarantee that Addendum 27 will have any positive impact on lobster stocks. All a gauge increase does is increase egg production, and there is no evidence that more eggs will lead to more lobsters down the road.

Maine lobstermen have been true leaders in conservation and sustainability with the most restrictive regulations on carapace length and v-notching in all of New England and neighboring Canada. Surveys along the Maine coast remain healthier than those to the south, likely from the due diligence of conservation measures enacted by Maine lobstermen.



Support Letter to ASMFC
July 29, 2024
Page Two

This past year saw an uptick in the young of year lobster population according to two separate monitoring programs conducted by the University of Maine and the Maine Department of Marine Resources. There is no question that our fishery is healthy and robust. Nor are there alternative products that could sustain the industry at current levels. For example, lobsters in the 1.25 lb range are popular, but have been recently selling at historically low prices. This is an especially inopportune moment for our businesses to abandon our core offerings and pivot to a cheap alternative.

We thank you for your attention to this matter and hope you will prioritize the heritage and economic vitality of our fisheries.

Sincerely,
East Coast Seafood, LLC

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Robert L. Blais".

Robert L. Blais
Chief Executive Officer



New England Fishermen's Stewardship Association
500 Southborough Dr. Suite 204
South Portland, ME 04106

July 26, 2024

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator
1050 N Highland St, Suite 200 A-N
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Commissioner,

On behalf of the New England Fishermen's Stewardship Association (NEFSA), I am writing today to thank you for your efforts in considering a delay of implementation of the gauge increase in Addendum 27. We understand that our ask for a delay is unusual and unprecedented, however, lobster fishermen and dealers want to ensure the most minimal impacts on markets, trade, and their own financial security.

Unfortunately, NEFSA does not have comments on the record in opposition to Addendum 27. When the addendum passed ASMFC in May of 2023, NEFSA was just being formed. With over 900 active members, the New England Fishermen's Stewardship Association is the fastest growing fishing advocacy group in New England. Guided by fishermen at the helm, NEFSA is rooted in Maine and has a board of directors compiled of fishermen from all over New England. Our mission statement reads:

“NEFSA is an alliance of the wild harvesters of the waters off of New England, dedicated to educating the public about how best to manage our seafood resources through sound science and best practices at conservation used by fishermen, with a view toward economic well-being, ecosystem sustainability and US food security.”

Last month NEFSA's Chief Operating Officer, Dustin Delano, attended meetings in Saint John, New Brunswick which included members of the ASMFC Lobster Board, DFO, lobstermen, and several other industry groups from both sides of the border. The conversation was productive and lead to the conclusion that both countries should be exchanging dialogue much more frequently to improve communication and understanding within the lobster fishery of which each country significantly relies upon. Much conversation was had around lobster catch, science, and the importance of a unified lobster gauge—specifically between LMA1 and the bordering Canadian LFA's. From those meetings, DFO expressed willingness to engage in conversations with Canadian fishermen on the topic of maintaining a unified gauge across the area.

NEFSA is asking for a further pause to allow time for the Canadians to have conversations and decide on their path forward with a gauge change. It is crucial for the survival of our members, dealers, and all fishermen that we work in lock step with our Canadian counterparts. A pause until July 1, 2025 would give our Canadian neighbors more time for discussion and also allow dealers to continue processing through the months of May and June without possession hurdles during peak landings. Allowing time to conduct proper conversations ensures the original proactive intention from Addendum 27 is achieved.

The lobster fishery and business plans surrounding it are incredibly volatile. Lessening the economic impacts for which the commission creates through regulation is absolutely crucial to ensure prospering businesses within a viable and sustainable fishery. With that said, beyond the time extension, NEFSA also asks commissioners to consider a more gradual increase in the gauge to 1/32nd increases rather than 1/16th. The impact would be much less of a burden to both harvesters and dealers if the lobster board followed the previous increase increment from 1989.

NEFSA greatly appreciates the efforts made by the commission to begin conversations with Canada. We also send a sincere thank you to Commissioners Cheri Patterson, Dan McKiernan, and Pat Keliher for taking time out of their busy schedules to participate in the two day meeting regarding the gauge in Saint John. We respectfully ask that you all consider a further pause in the gauge increase until July 1, 2025.

Thank you,

Dustin W. Delano
Chief Operating Officer
New England Fishermen's Stewardship Association



Maine Lobstering Union

Local 207



150 Bar Harbor Rd, Trenton, ME 04506

American Lobster Management Board,

We, the Maine Lobstering Union are asking this body to again push the pause button on the Lobster gauge increase. While no fishermen want to see the lobster stock fall or our landings go down, pulling the trigger before we have had time to figure out the implications of this increase with bordering countries like Canada will not improve our stocks. This year we are seeing more juvenile lobsters than we have in previous years, some years they move inshore with greater numbers than others, as fishermen we know this and see it happening. For this reason, we request a more robust sampling with the Department of Marine Resources and fishermen working together. If we don't improve the data we collect and our communication with Canada, Maine fishermen will conserve a lobster that can be harvested and landed in Canada when they are fishing directly beside Maine fishermen, now what does that preserve? It does not benefit the Maine Lobstermen; it does give our market to Canada just as the tariff did. Maine lobstermen are stewards of the sea, they pride themselves on protecting the sustainability of the waters that they fish. We have been v-notching the egg-bearing females for years, along with past measure increases when warranted, long before others. If lobstermen are sounding the alarm that this gauge increase is coming too early, trust in that.

In 2020 Woods Hole Oceanographic (WHOI) conducted a study on the effects that sonar used in offshore wind had on the lobster population. This study's findings were published in 2021 showing that the noise produced by the windmills is the same frequency (hertz) 100-200 that lobsters use to mate, move and interact with other male lobsters. This was detrimental to the lobster larvae study points off of Boothbay and would have affected the lobster population reported in 2021-2022.

This gauge increase is being bought on without considering all available science. For the past few years, we have observed lobsters spawning in deeper waters, not where they are trawling and setting ventless traps. This is the very reason science needs fishermen to collaborate on these issues together. We have been fishing the ocean bottom and observing the movement of lobsters our entire lives. We know our industry, yet it appears that our knowledge and input are not considered and disregarded.

Thank you for considering our viewpoint.

The Maine Lobstering Union

If you have any questions please call, text or email: 207-240-0556, volsen@district4.net