



# **Draft Addendum XXVII**

## ***Increasing Protection of Spawning Stock in the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank and Summary of Public Comment***



**May 2023**

# Outline



1. Addendum Timeline
2. Background
3. Addendum Objective
4. Proposed Management Options
  - Issue 1: Standardizing Measures in GOM/GBK
  - Issue 2: Measures to Increase Protection of Spawning Stock
5. Public Comment Summary
6. AP Report
7. Board Action

# Action Timeline



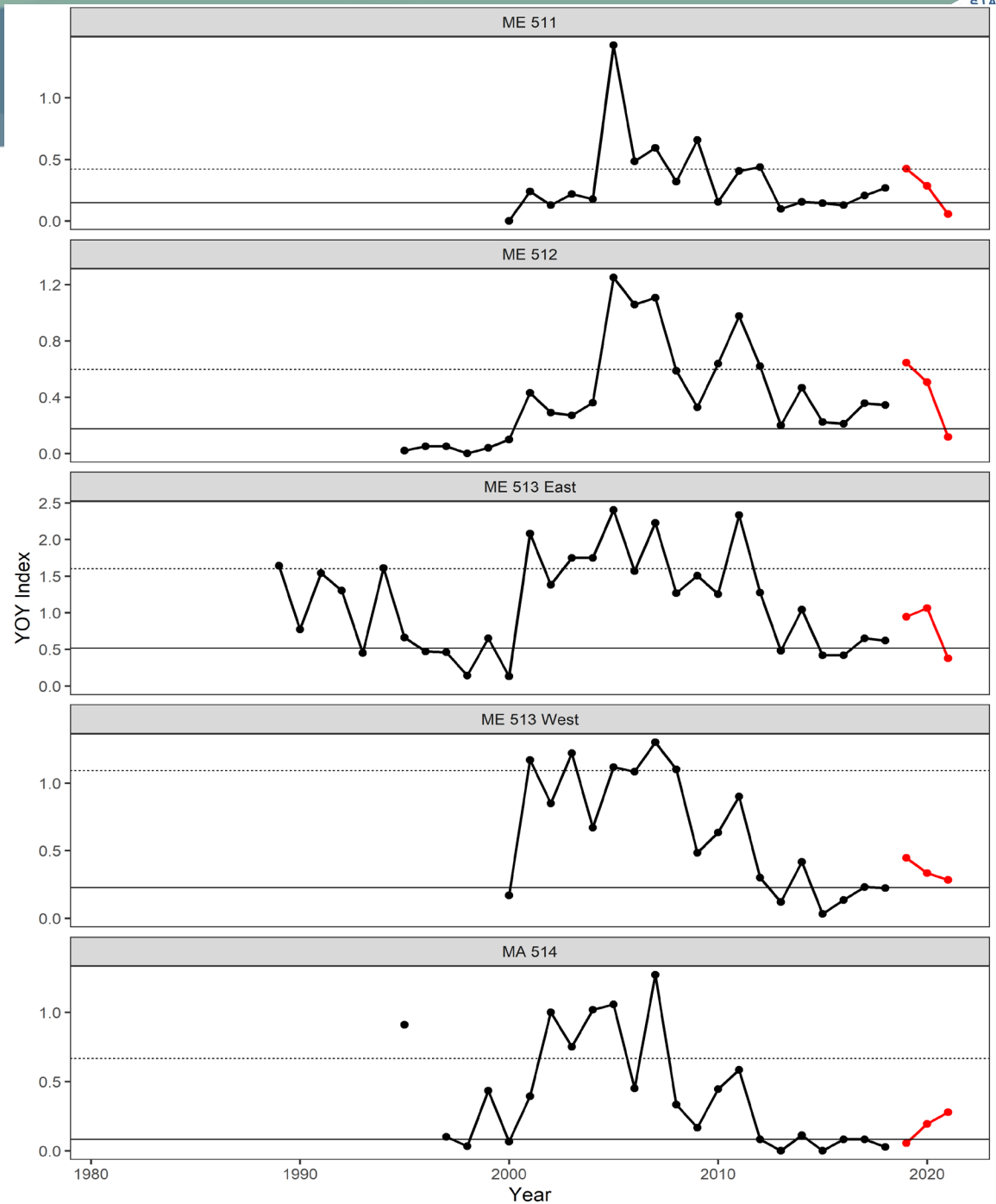
Date	Action
August 2017	Board initiated Draft Addendum XXVII ( <b>PAUSED</b> )
Feb 2021	Board reinitiated work on Draft Addendum XXVII
2021-2022	Plan Development Team developed Draft Addendum XXVII
Jan 2023	Board approved Addendum for Public Comment
March-April 2023	Public hearings and comment period
<b>May 2023</b>	<b>Board meeting to consider final approval of Draft Addendum XXVII</b>

# Background

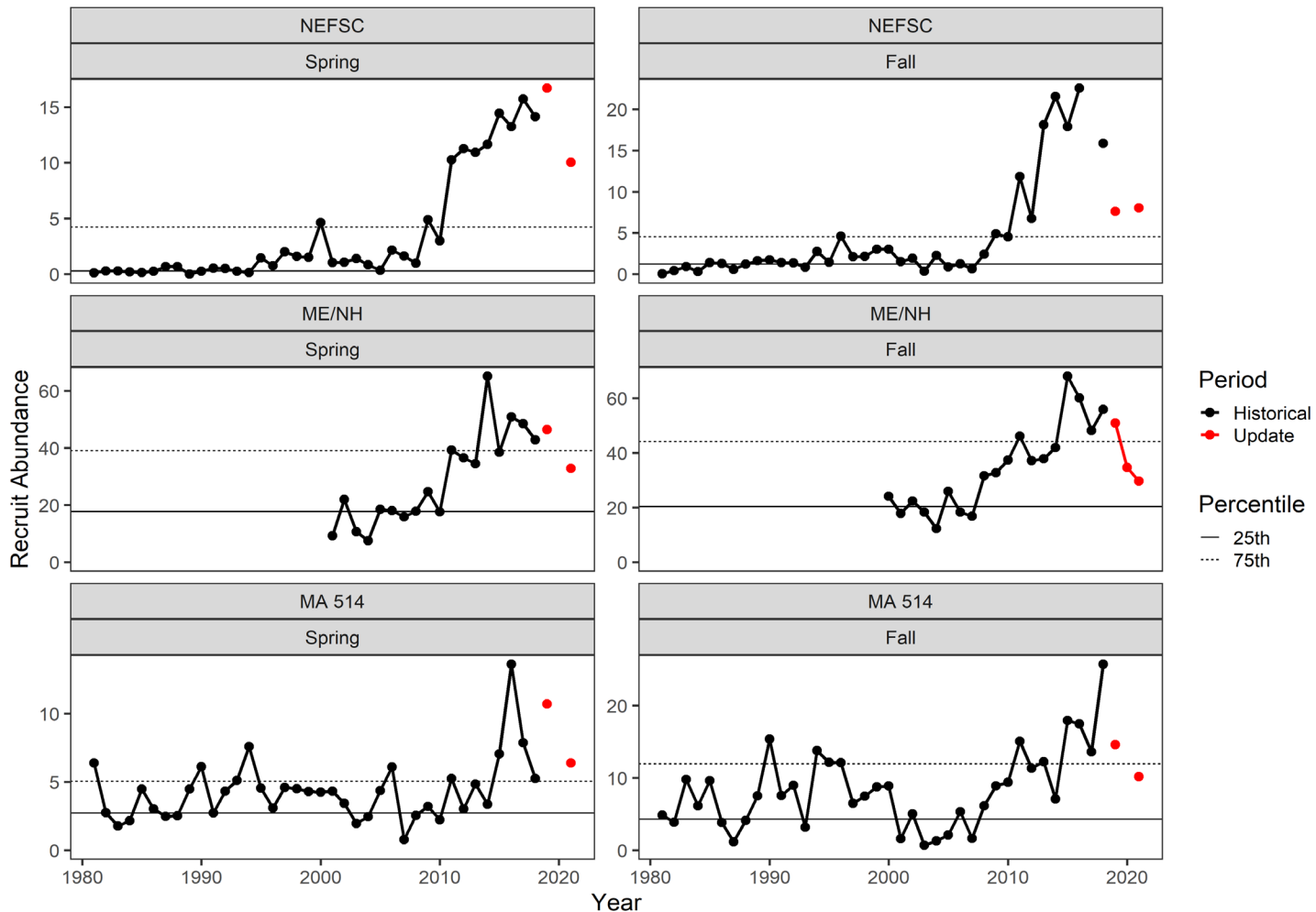


- August 2017: Board initiated Draft Addendum XXVII to increase the resiliency of the GOM/GBK stock
  - Response to concerns about reduced settlement indices, which have been showing declines since 2012
  - Focused on standardizing measures across LCMAs
- Following 2020 benchmark assessment, Board reinitiated work on Addendum XXVII
  - Settlement surveys over the past five years have consistently been below the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of time series
  - Declines in recruit abundance in ventless trap and trawl surveys for the GOM/GBK stock since 2020 assessment

# Young of Year indices for Gulf of Maine through 2021



# Recruit abundance from Gulf of Maine trawl survey through 2021



# Addendum Objective



***Given persistent low settlement indices and recent decreases in recruit indices, the addendum should consider a trigger mechanism such that, upon reaching the trigger, measures would be automatically implemented to increase the overall protection of spawning stock biomass of the GOM/GBK stock.***

# Addendum Objective



- Addendum XXVII also considers standardizing some existing management measures within the GOM/GBK stock
- Disparities in the current measures create challenges for stock assessment, law enforcement, and commerce
- Increasing consistency among the measures for the LCMAs within the stock could have benefits in each of these areas





# Proposed Management Options

# Proposed Management Options



- Proposed Options separated into two issues:

**Issue 1: Measures to be standardized upon final approval of Addendum XXVII**

**Issue 2: Implementing management measures to increase protection of spawning stock biomass (SSB )**

# Current Measures (GOM/GBK)



Mgmt. Measure	Area 1	Area 3	OCC
Min Gauge Size	3 1/4"	3 17/32"	3 3/8"
Vent Rect.	1 15/16 x 5 3/4"	2 1/16 x 5 3/4"	2 x 5 3/4"
Vent Cir.	2 7/16"	2 11/16"	2 5/8"
V-notch requirement	Mandatory for all eggers	Mandatory for all eggers above 42°30'	None
V-Notch Definition <sup>1</sup> (possession)	Zero Tolerance	1/8" with or w/out setal hairs <sup>1</sup>	State Permitted fisherman in state waters 1/4" without setal hairs; Federal Permit holders 1/8" with or w/out setal hairs <sup>1</sup>
Max. Gauge (male & female)	5"	6 3/4"	State Waters none; Federal Waters 6 3/4"
Season Closure			February 1-April 30

# Issue 1 Options



Issue 1: Measures to be standardized upon final approval of Addendum XXVII

<b>Option A</b>	<b>Status Quo</b>
<b>Option B*</b>	<b>Standardized measures to be implemented upon final approval of addendum</b>

\*Multiple sub-options may be selected

# Issue 1: Option B



## Issue 1: Option B

<b>Option B*</b>	<b>Standardized measures to be implemented upon final approval of addendum</b>
<b>Sub-option B1</b>	standardized measures within an LCMA (OCC maximum gauge size= 6 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> " & v-notch definition= 1/8" w/ or w/o setal hairs)
<b>Sub-option B2</b>	standard V-notch requirement across all LCMAs (mandatory v-notching for all eggers)
<b>Sub-option B3</b>	standard V-notch possession definition for LCMAs 1, 3, and OCC (1/8" with or without setal hairs)
<b>Sub-option B4</b>	standardize regulations to limit the issuance of trap tags to equal the harvester trap tag allocation for LCMAs 1, 3, and OCC

# Issue 2



## Issue 2: Implementing management measures to increase protection of SSB

- Consider changes to the minimum and maximum gauge sizes along with corresponding escape vent sizes
- Proposed measures are expected to
  - 1) increase SSB, and
  - 2) result in the minimum gauge size increasing to meet or exceed the size at 50% maturity (L50) for each LCMA

# Issue 2 Options



## Issue 2: Implementing management measures to increase protection of SSB

<b>Option A</b>	<b>Status Quo</b>
<b>Option B</b>	<b>Gauge size changes triggered by X% decline in trigger index</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Trigger Level Options</li><li>- Management Measures Options</li></ul>
<b>Option C</b>	<b>Scheduled changes to gauge and escape vent sizes</b>

# Issue 2: Option B



## Option B: Gauge and vent size changes triggered by a defined change in trigger index

- Board establishes a trigger level (based on recruit abundance indices)
- Board chooses management measures to be implemented when that trigger level is reached

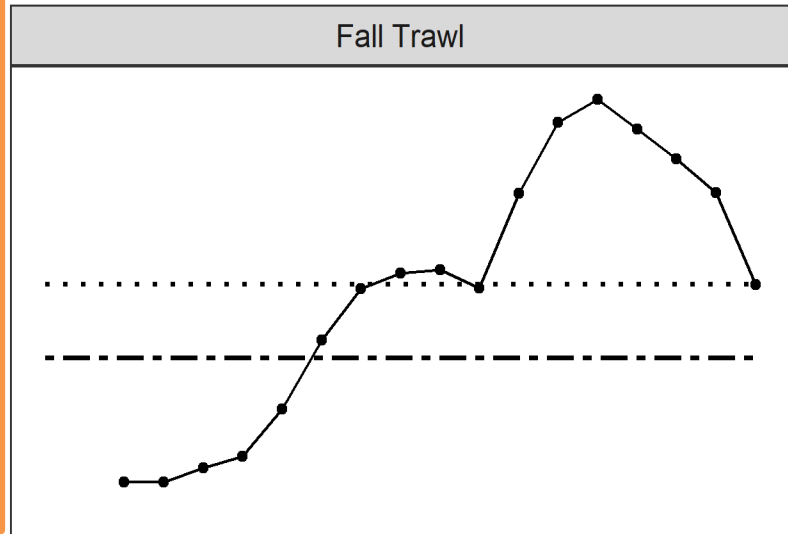
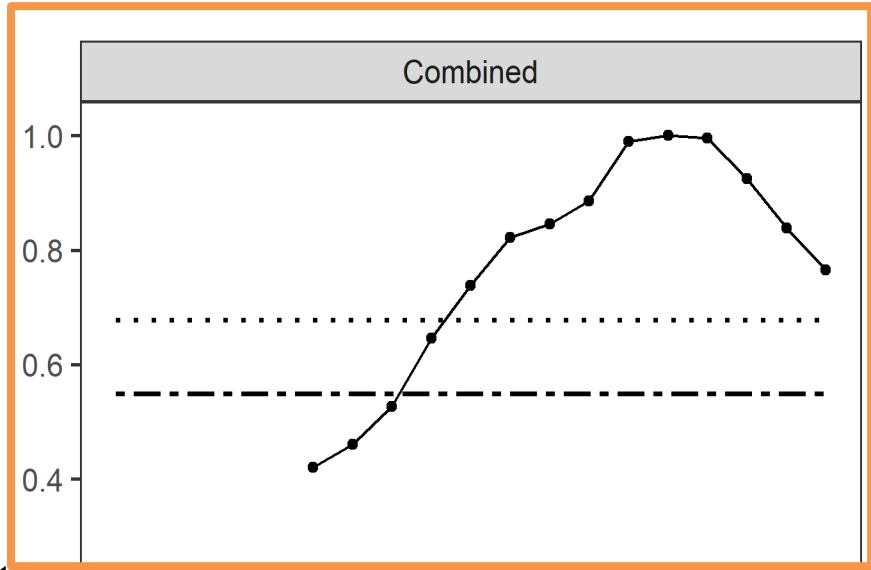


# Option B: Trigger Level Options



- If Option B is selected, the Board must establish a trigger level
  - **Trigger Option 1:** 32% decline in the trigger index
    - Approximates a decline in abundance to where the regime shifted from moderate to high abundance
  - **Trigger Option 2:** 45% decline in the trigger index
    - Approximates abundance decline to the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of moderate abundance regime

# Trigger Index through 2021

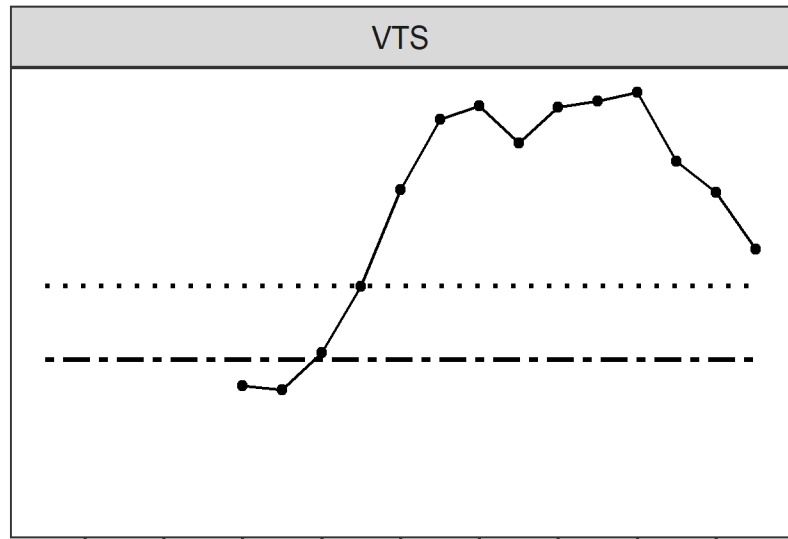
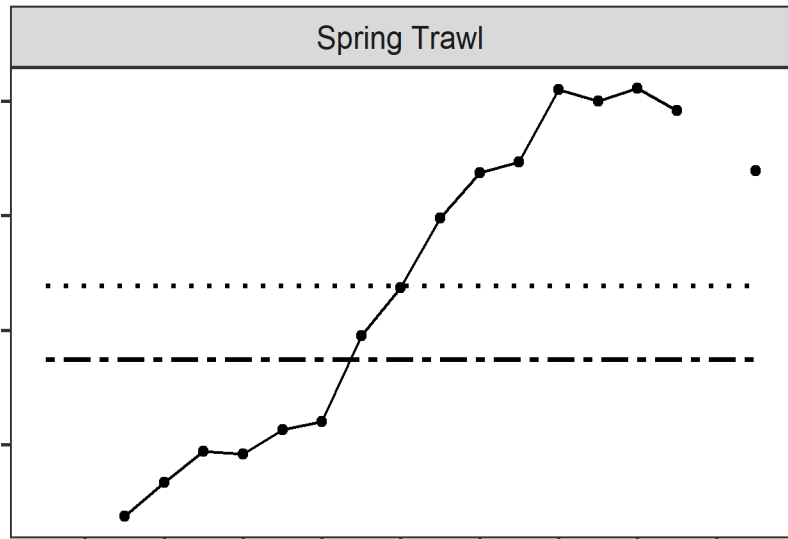


Decline

··· 32%

- - - 45%

Index



2004 2006 2008 2010 2012 2014 2016 2018 2020

2004 2006 2008 2010 2012 2014 2016 2018 2020

Year

# Option B: Measures Options



- If Option B is selected, the Board will select biological management measures that would be automatically implemented in the GOM/GBK stock when the trigger level is reached
  - **Measures Option 1:** Changes to gauge and escape vent sizes occur in a single year
  - **Measures Option 2:** Gradual changes to gauge and escape vent sizes over several years

- Current Management Measures

Area	LCMA 1	LCMA 3	OCC
Current Measures	Minimum gauge: 3 ¼" Maximum gauge: 5" Vent rect: 1 15/16 x 5 ¾" Vent circ: 2 7/16"	Minimum gauge: 3 <sup>17</sup> / <sub>32</sub> " Maximum gauge: 6 ¾"	Minimum gauge: 3 3/8" Maximum gauge: 6 ¾"

# Option B: Measures Option 1



- **Measures Option 1:** Change to gauge and escape vent sizes in single year

## Issue 2, Option B: Management Measures Option 1

Area	LCMA 1	LCMA 3	OCC
<b>Measures Triggered by X% decline in index</b>	<p><b>Minimum gauge: 3 <math>\frac{3}{8}</math>" (86 mm)</b></p> <p>Maximum gauge: status quo</p> <p><b>Vent size: 2 x 5 <math>\frac{3}{4}</math>" rectangular; 2 <math>\frac{5}{8}</math>" circular</b></p>	<p>Minimum gauge: status quo</p> <p><b>Maximum gauge: 6"</b></p> <p>Vent size: status quo</p>	<p>Minimum gauge: status quo</p> <p><b>Maximum gauge: 6"</b></p> <p>Vent size: status quo</p>

# Option B: Measures Option 2



- **Measures Option 2:** Changes to gauge and escape vent sizes over several years

## Issue 2, Option B: Management Measures Option 2

Area	LCMA 1	LCMA 3	OCC
Initial gauge size changes (Triggered by X% decline in index)	<b>Min. gauge: 3 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>" (84 mm)</b> Max gauge: status quo Vent size: status quo	Min gauge: status quo <b>Max gauge: 6 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"</b> Vent size: status quo	Minimum gauge: status quo Maximum gauge: 6 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> " Vent size: status quo
Intermediate gauge sizes (Year 3)	<b>Min gauge: 3 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" (86 mm)</b> Max gauge: status quo <b>Vent rect: 2" x 5 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"</b> <b>Vent circ: 2 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"</b>	Min gauge: status quo <b>Max gauge: 6 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"</b> Vent size: status quo	Minimum gauge: status quo <b>Max gauge: 6 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"</b> Vent size: status quo
Final gauge and vent sizes (Year 5)	Min gauge: 3 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>8</sub> " Max gauge: status quo Vent size: status quo	Min gauge: status quo <b>Max gauge: 6"</b> Vent size: status quo	Min gauge: status quo <b>Max gauge: 6"</b> Vent size: status quo

# Issue 2: Option C



## Option C: Scheduled changes to gauge and escape vent sizes

Issue 2, Option C			
	LCMA 1	LCMA 3	OCC
Step 1: Implement no later than 2026 fishing year	<b>Min gauge:</b> <b>3 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>" (84 mm)</b> Max gauge: status quo Vent size: status quo	Min gauge: status quo <b>Max gauge: 6 ½"</b> Vent size: status quo	Min gauge: status quo <b>Max gauge: 6 ½"</b> Vent size: status quo
Step 2: Implement one year after initial measures		Min gauge: status quo <b>Max gauge: 6 ¼"</b> Vent size: status quo	Min gauge: status quo <b>Max gauge: 6 ¼"</b> Vent size: status quo
Step 3: Implement two years after initial measures	<b>Min gauge:</b> <b>3 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> (86 mm)</b> Max gauge: status quo <b>Vent rect: 2" x 5 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"</b> <b>Vent circ: 2 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"</b>	Min gauge: status quo <b>Max gauge: 6"</b> Vent size: status quo	Min gauge: status quo <b>Max gauge: 6"</b> Vent size: status quo

# Management Measures in LCMA 3



- Measures selected by the Board pertaining to LCMA 3 would apply to all LCMA 3 permit holders, including those that fish in the SNE stock.





# Public Comment Summary

# Public Comment Period



- Public comment period from March – April 8, 2023
- Eight state public hearings (4 virtual, 4 in person)
  - 214 hearing attendees
  - 159 comments
- 67 total written comments
  - 6 letters from organizations

# Public Comments



Public Hearings	# Attendees	# Comments
ME 1	13	2
ME 2	41	11
ME 3	29	19
NH	16	9
MA 1	70	25
MA 2	35	26
RI	6	0
NY	4	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>159</b>

Total Written Comments Received	
Total Form Letters	0
Organization Letters	6
Individual Comments	61
<b>Total Written Comments</b>	<b>67</b>

# Public Comments



Management Options	Written Comments	Public Hearings					Total
		ME	NH	MA	RI	NY	
Issue 1, Option A (Status quo)	34	3	0	35	0	0	72
Issue 1, Option B	13	0	1	2	0	0	16
Sub-option B1	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Sub-option B2	9	0	0	0	0	0	9
Sub-option B3	10	0	0	2	0	0	12
Sub-option B4	5	0	1	0	0	0	6
Issue 2, Option A (Status quo)	39	20	8	38	0	0	105
Issue 2, Option B	5	1	0	0	0	0	6
Trigger Option 1	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Trigger Option	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Measures Option 1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Measures Option 2	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Issue 2, Option C	4	3	0	0	0	0	7

# Prevailing Themes



- Concern about economic impacts of Canadian imports smaller than US minimum size if LCMA 1 min gauge is increased
- Support for standardizing the v-notch definition, preference for zero-tolerance
- Preference for gradual changes to measures
- Unique situation of the Outer Cape Cod fishery is not adequately considered

# Issue 1: Status Quo



- Concerns that changing measures will hurt the lobster industry and lobster population
  - Increased restrictions on commercial harvest
  - Financial strain caused by requiring new gear
- Belief that the current measures are working and do not need to be changed
- Belief that standardization is not needed because it will not benefit the stock, only law enforcement

# Issue 1: Standardizing Measures



- Standardizing and increasing the strictness of v-notch requirements across all LCMAs will benefit the stock
- It is a problem that lobsters that have to be thrown back in one area can be harvested in another
- States should not issue surplus trap tags unless trap loss is documented
  - Important to reducing lost and derelict gear

# Issue 2: Status Quo



- Market/economic concerns
  - Market advantage to Canada over the US
- Outer Cape would be disproportionately harmed by gauge changes
  - unique catch demographics and market (large lobster)
  - higher costs of living
- Stock condition is good and changes are not yet needed



# Issue 2: Option B (Trigger)



- Preference for gradual gauge changes over a single change
- Proposed changes will increase the overall health of the stock, bring a higher quality product to market, fetch a higher price, and provide more value to the marketplace
- Support for minimum gauge size increase over maximum size decrease because of magnitude of impact
  - Decreasing maximum gauge results in permanent loss of landings

# Issue 2: Option C (Scheduled)



- Changing the measure as soon as possible will be better for the stock
- A minimum gauge increase is essential for the fishery to remain viable in the years ahead
- The last gauge increase benefitted the stock, and we should act now while there is still time to reverse the trend



# Advisory Panel Report

# AP Input on Draft Addendum XXVII



- AP met virtually on April 10, 2023
- 10 advisors attended
- There was not consensus on preferred management options

# AP Input on Draft Addendum XXVII



- Areas of agreement:
  - Desire to look after the lobster resource
    - Do not want to see a similar outcome to SNE
  - v-notching has a positive impact on the stock, support the standardization of v-notch definition across LCMAs
  - Economic impacts of LCMA 1 minimum size change
    - Disadvantage to the US lobster fishery

# AP Input on Draft Addendum XXVII



- Issue 1
  - 5 advisors supported Option B, sub-option B3
  - 1 also supported sub-options B1, B2, and B4
- Issue 2
  - 5 advisors supported status quo
  - 2 advisors were torn
  - If changes must be made, the majority prefer the trigger approach



# Consider Final Action

# Board Action



- Selection of management program
  - Select Issue 1 options
  - Select Issue 2 options
  - Consider modifications to management options
- Consider final action on Draft Addendum XXVII





**Questions?**