



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger
703.842.0740

ASMFC American Lobster Board Releases Draft Jonah Crab FMP for Public Comment: *States Schedule Hearings*

Arlington, VA – The states of Maine through Rhode Island and Maryland have scheduled their public hearings to gather input on the Draft Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Jonah Crab. The details of those hearings follow.

Maine Department of Marine Resources

July 6, 2015; 6-8 PM

Casco Bay Lines Conference Room
56 Commercial Street
Portland, Maine
Contact: [Terry Stockwell](#) at 207.624.6024

Rhode Island Dept. of Environmental Management

July 9, 2015; 5:30 – 9 PM

University of Rhode Island Bay Campus
Corliss Auditorium
South Ferry Road
Narragansett, Rhode Island
Contact: [Mark Gibson](#) at 401.423.1935

New Hampshire Fish and Game Department

July 7, 2015; 7:30 PM

Urban Forestry Center
45 Elwin Road
Portsmouth, New Hampshire
Contact: [Doug Grout](#) at 603.868.1095

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

June 30, 2015; 4:30 – 7 PM

Ocean Pines Library
1106 Cathell Road
Ocean Pines, Maryland
Contact: [Craig Weedon](#) at 410.643.4601 ext. 2113

Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries

July 8, 2015; 5 – 9 PM

Fairfield Inn and Suites
185 MacArthur Boulevard
New Bedford, Massachusetts
Contact: [Dan McKiernan](#) at 617.626.1536

The Jonah Crab FMP was initiated in response to concern about increasing targeted fishing pressure for Jonah crab, which has long been considered a bycatch in the lobster fishery. However, growing market demand has increased landings by 6.48 fold since the early 2000s. The majority of crab are harvested by lobstermen using lobster traps. With the increase in demand for crab, a mixed crustacean fishery has emerged that can target both lobster or crab or both at different times of year based on slight legal modifications to the gear and small shifts in the areas in which

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species.

traps are fished. The mixed nature of the fishery makes it difficult to manage a Jonah crab fishery completely separate from the American lobster fishery without impacting the number of vertical lines and traps capable of catching lobster in state and federal waters. A complete picture of the Jonah crab fishery in federal and state waters is difficult to ascertain due to the mixed nature of the fishery. In the absence of a comprehensive management plan and stock assessment, increased harvest of Jonah crab may compromise the sustainability of the resource.

The Draft Jonah Crab FMP presents management objectives, proposed regulations to the commercial and recreational fisheries, monitoring requirements, and recommendations for federal waters fisheries. The proposed options seek to address the following issues:

- The crab resource is not directly regulated in federal waters but is rather regulated incidentally by the American lobster regulations. There are no crab specific regulations in federal waters or permit/license requirements.
- There are no minimum size protections for Jonah crab, nor are there regulations to protect spawning biomass, including restrictions on the harvest of females or egg carrying females.
- Supermarkets and other major buyers are positioning to discontinue selling processed and whole Jonah crab unless it is managed sustainably which would impact the ex-vessel price.
- A lack of universal permit and reporting requirements makes it difficult to characterize catch and effort to the full extent in order to manage the fishery
- A Jonah crab trap is not distinguishable from a lobster trap making it difficult to independently manage crab and lobster fisheries.
- Because crab traps are similar in design and function to lobster traps, but are not specifically regulated, there may be implications with the lobster fishery and marine mammal interactions compromising the effectiveness of the Large Whale Take Reduction and Lobster plans.

Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft FMP either by attending public hearings or providing written comments. The Draft FMP can be obtained at http://www.asmfc.org/files/PublicInput/DraftJonahCrabFMP_PublicComment.pdf or via the Commission's website, www.asmfc.org, under *Public Input*. Public comment will be accepted until **5:00 PM (EST) on July 24, 2015** and should be forwarded to Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Jonah Crab FMP). For more information, please contact Megan Ware at mware@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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