



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger
703.842.0740

ASMFC American Lobster Board Initiates Draft Addendum XXIX

The Commission's American Lobster Management Board initiated Draft Addendum XXIX to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster. The Draft Addendum considers implementing electronic tracking requirements for federally-permitted vessels in the American lobster and Jonah crab fishery, with the goal of collecting high resolution spatial and temporal effort data.

"In my opinion, this is the single most important thing the American Lobster Board can do to ensure the viability of the American lobster fishery," stated Board Chair Dan McKiernan from Massachusetts. "Through the proposed action, the Board seeks to significantly improve our understanding of stock status, identify areas where lobster fishing effort might present a risk to endangered North Atlantic right whales, and provide important information to help reduce spatial conflicts with other ocean uses, such as wind energy development and aquaculture."

A number of challenges facing the fishery (e.g., rising water temperatures, protected species interactions, reduced recruitment) present a critical need for the collection of enhanced spatial and temporal data via electronic tracking devices in the offshore fishery. The stock assessment models that estimate exploitation and abundance for American lobster could be greatly improved with these data, as they would provide size composition data at a finer resolution than what is currently available. Additionally, the models used to assess the location of vertical lines in the fishery and their associated risk to endangered right whales could be substantially improved with vessel tracking data, which could impact federal risk reduction requirements for the fishery. Better understanding the footprint of the U.S. lobster fishery will also be vital to ocean planning efforts to minimize spatial conflicts with other ocean uses such as aquaculture, marine protected areas, and offshore energy development, as well as provide fishery managers tools to help maintain industry fishing grounds. Furthermore, vessel tracking could improve the efficiency and efficacy of offshore law enforcement efforts.

Draft Addendum XXIX will propose specifications for tracking devices to ensure the collected data meet both management and assessment needs. These specifications include data reporting rates, preferred technologies, and minimum standards for tracking devices. Implementation timelines, as well as budgetary and staff resource needs will be further discussed as the Draft Addendum is developed. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740. PR21-14

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 diadromous species.