

## INTERSTATE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### *Jonah Crab*



#### **Species Range and Stock Units**

Biological range and management unit: ME – VA

#### **Stock Status**

The status of the Jonah crab resource is relatively unknown and no range-wide stock assessment has been conducted.

A benchmark stock assessment is scheduled for completion in 2023.

#### **Involved States and Jurisdictions**

ME, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, DE, MD, VA, NEFMC, NMFS

#### **Active Boards/Committees**

American Lobster Management Board, Jonah Crab Technical Committee, Jonah Crab Stock Assessment Subcommittee, Jonah Crab Advisory Panel, Jonah Crab Plan Development Team, and Plan Review Team

#### **Chairs**

Board Chair – Jason McNamee (1/2022); Vice-Chair – Pat Keliher

Technical Committee Chair – Derek Perry

Advisory Panel Chair – Earl Gwin

#### **Staff Lead**

Caitlin Starks, [cstarks@asmfc.org](mailto:cstarks@asmfc.org)

#### **Management Plan History**

##### [Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Jonah Crab \(August 2015\)](#)

Jonah crab is managed under the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP), which was approved by the American Lobster Management Board in August 2015. The goal of the FMP is to promote conservation, reduce the possibility of recruitment failure, and allow the full utilization of the resource by the industry. The plan lays out specific management measures in the commercial fishery. These include a 4.75" minimum size with zero tolerance and a prohibition on the retention of egg-bearing females. The FMP also specifies the fishery be strictly whole crab except for those individuals who can prove a history of claw landings in the states of New Jersey through Virginia. To prevent the fishery from being open access, the FMP states that participation in the directed trap fishery is limited to lobster permit holders or those who can prove a history of crab-only pot fishing. All others must obtain an incidental permit. In

the recreational fishery, the FMP sets a possession limit of 50 whole crabs per person per day and prohibits the retention of egg-bearing females. Due to the lack of data on the Jonah crab fishery, the FMP implements fishery-dependent data collection. The Plan requires both harvester and dealer reporting along with port and sea sampling.

#### [Addendum I \(May 2016\)](#)

The Addendum establishes a bycatch limit of 1,000 pounds of crab/trip for non-trap gear (e.g., otter trawls, gillnets) and non-lobster trap gear (e.g., fish, crab, and whelk pots) effective January 1, 2017. In doing so, the Addendum caps incidental landings of Jonah crab across all non-directed gear types with a uniform bycatch allowance. While the gear types in Addendum I make minimal contributions to total landings in the fishery, the 1,000 crab limit provides a cap to potential increases in effort and trap proliferation.

#### [Addendum II \(January 2017\)](#)

The Addendum establishes a coastwide standard for claw harvest. Specifically, it permits Jonah crab fishermen to detach and harvest claws at sea, with a required minimum claw length of 2.75" if the volume of claws landed is greater than five gallons. Claw landings less than five gallons do not have to meet the minimum claw length standard. The Addendum also establishes a definition of bycatch in the Jonah crab fishery, whereby the total pounds of Jonah crab caught as bycatch must weigh less than the total amount of the targeted species at all times during a fishing trip. The intent of this definition is to address concerns regarding the expansion of a small-scale fishery under the bycatch limit.

#### [Addendum III \(February 2018\)](#)

Addendum III addresses deficiencies in the harvester reporting and biological data collection requirements for the lobster and Jonah crab fisheries. Specifically, the Addendum improves the spatial resolution of data by requiring fishermen to report via 10 minute squares, which further divide the existing statistical areas. In addition, the Addendum establishes a one year pilot program to explore electronic tracking devices in the fishery. Regarding harvester trip reports, the Addendum requires additional data elements including 'number of traps per trawl' and 'number of buoy lines' in order to collect information on gear configurations. The Addendum also requires the states to implement 100% harvester reporting within a five year deadline, with the prioritization of electronic harvester reporting development during that time. In the interim, jurisdictions with less than 100% harvester reporting should redistribute the current effort associated with harvester reporting to focus on active, as opposed to latent, permit holders. Finally, the Addendum improves the biological sampling requirements by establishing a baseline of ten sampling trips per year in the lobster/Jonah crab fishery and encourages states with more than 10% of coastwide landings in either the American lobster or Jonah crab fisheries to conduct additional sampling trips.

### [Addendum IV \(March 2022\)](#)

Draft Addendum IV implements electronic tracking requirements for federally-permitted vessels in the American lobster and Jonah crab vessels with commercial trap gear area permits for LCMAs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and Outer Cape Cod. Specified permit holders would be required to install an approved electronic vessel tracking device to their vessels prior to beginning a fishing trip to collect and transmit spatial data.

### **Annual Events**

- Compliance reports are due August 1
- PRT reviews compliance and prepares FMP Review prior to the next meeting