



# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** American Lobster Management Board  
**FROM:** American Lobster Advisory Panel  
**DATE:** October 1, 2024  
**SUBJECT:** Advisory Panel Report

The American Lobster Advisory Panel (AP) met via webinar on Monday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024. The purpose of the meeting was 1) to present the annual data update for lobster abundance indicators to the AP, and 2) to review Draft Addendum XXXI to Amendment 3 to the American Lobster Fishery Management Plan and gather input from the lobster advisors on the proposed management options. The addendum considers postponing measures for Lobster Conservation and Management Area (LCMA) 1, 3 and the Outer Cape Cod (OCC) area that were triggered under Addendum XXVII.

### **Lobster AP Attendance**

Grant Moore (Chair, MA)  
Jon Carter (ME)  
Jeff Putnam (ME)  
Eben Wilson (ME)

Robert Nudd (NH)  
John Whittaker (CT)  
Arthur (Sooky) Sawyer (MA)  
Todd Alger (MA)  
John Fullmer (NJ)

The following is a summary of the AP discussions on each topic. **The AP members in attendance made a consensus recommendation to adopt Draft Addendum XXXI, Option B.**

### ***Annual Data Update***

The Technical Committee (TC) Chair, Tracy Pugh, presented the annual data update to the AP, followed by questions and discussion. Some advisors commented that there are areas the surveys do not cover that have a lot of lobsters, and they should be sampled. One advisor commented that there is too much focus inshore when there should be more sampling offshore.

The advisors also asked about the current status of the trigger index from Addendum XXVII. The TC Chair presented it, showing the 2023 value has declined further. It was clarified that there is no longer any management action associated with this index since Addendum XXVII has already passed and the trigger level was already reached last year.

### ***Draft Addendum XXXI***

AP members provided input on which of the proposed options in Draft Addendum XXXI they support and why. There was consensus among the advisors on the preferred management

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options. All advisors in attendance supported Option B, postpone implementation of the Addendum XXVII measures. Reasons given for this preference included significant concerns about the negative impacts of the gauge increase in LCMA 1 to the industry if smaller lobster can come in from Canada, a desire to see an economic analysis of the measures' impacts, and also that they have been observing much higher abundances of sublegal lobsters ranging across age classes and females with eggs, both inshore and offshore. Two advisors said the proposed delay is better than no delay, but they do not think the gauge needs to change at all.

Bobby Nudd described what he has been seeing where he fishes. He said he has seen a drastic increase in the number of sublegals and eggers, with the increase being larger in 2023. The lobsters represent a large range of sizes, not just one or two year classes. If all of these lobsters are showing up now, it means they had to have settled somewhere over the last few years, but the signal was not picked up in the settlement surveys. Grant Moore also said that offshore they have small lobsters spilling out of traps in quantities they have never seen before. They used to only catch very large lobster offshore, but now there are a range of ages out there, both on top of Georges Bank and in deeper water.

The advisors also discussed engagement with the Lobster Conservation Management Teams (LCMTs). They took issue with the fact that the LCMTs were not involved in developing management measures for the Gulf of Maine LCMA. The FMP established the LCMTs to get industry acceptance of lobster management by developing measures from the bottom up, but Addendum XXVII was developed top-down.