Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

July 22, 2015

To: American Lobster Management Board

From: Jonah Crab Advisory Panel

RE: Advisory Panel Recommendations on Draft Jonah Crab FMP

The Advisory Panel (AP) met in person on July 22, 2015 in Providence, Rhode Island to comment on the Draft Jonah Crab Fishery Management Plan. Below is a summary of their meeting.

Advisory Panel Attendees
Todd Richard Ellis (NH) commercial
Jan Horecky (MA) commercial
William Purtell (MA) commercial
Brian Thibeault (RI) commercial
Staff
Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator

Other Attendees
Jeff Mercer (RI DEM)
John Williams
Dick Allen (Little Bay Lobster)
Grant Moore (F/V Director)
Bob Glenn (MA DMF)
David Borden (Commissioner)

3.4.1 Fishery Dependent Data Collection

- AP members were in favor of harvester and dealer reporting along with port and sea sampling (Option 3). While a specific level of harvester reporting was not discussed, the AP members did note that their states require 100% harvester reporting and they support the continuation of this practice.

4.1 Commercial Fishery Permits

- The AP members were in consensus that the best option is the one which ties participation in the Jonah Crab fishery to the lobster permit, or requires an incidental permit (Option 5). Comments on this option included:
    - Tying the Jonah crab fishery to the lobster fishery caps effort to those with a lobster license
    - Option 5 prevents the proliferation of traps. If traps get added through the creation of a separate Jonah crab fishery, this could prompt further trap reductions in the lobster fishery according to the Large Whale Take Reduction Plan

4.1 Commercial Fishery Minimum Size and Tolerance

- Minimum size and tolerance received the most discussion at the meeting. The AP members felt these two issues could not be discussed separately and are therefore presented together. A consensus was not reached on these issues and the various opinions are presented below.

- One member was in favor of a 4.75" minimum size and tolerance (either 5% or 10%). He noted that tolerance is particularly important in the infancy of the management plan.
- Another AP member favored a 4.75" minimum size, citing the 5" market standard. He did not support a tolerance because he questioned its enforceability.
- The third AP member in attendance favored a 4.5" minimum size with no tolerance. The 4.5" was presented as a starting point so that, if adjustments are made in the future, the fishery isn't pigeon hold into a minimum size that provides no leeway.
- Finally, there was also support for a 4.5" minimum size with a 5% tolerance. This option was said to provide flexibility for future changes in market demand (ie: if a market for females develops).

4.1 Commercial Fishery Crab Part Retention

- AP members did not favor either of the options currently presented in the Draft FMP and, instead, proposed a third option which maintains the status quo. This alternative option would allow those who currently participate in the claw fishery to continue to fish and would institute a maximum claw count to cap effort in this portion of the fishery. Some of the AP members felt that if a minimum size is instituted in the whole crab fishery, there should be some cap in the claw fishery.

4.1 Commercial Fishery Retention of Egg-Bearing Females

- All AP members in attendance were in favor of a prohibition on the retention of egg-bearing females (Option 2) to protect the spawning stock.

4.1 Bycatch Limit for Non-Trap Gear

- The AP was in consensus that there should be a bycatch limit (Option 2); however, instead of a weight limit, the AP suggested a count limit. A specific limit proposed was 200 crabs per day or 500 crabs per trip. The AP supported ASMFC using a three day trip to calculate a bycatch limit (rather than a five day trip).

4.2. Recreational Possession Limit

- All AP members in attendance supported a recreational possession limit (Option 2). The AP suggested that the limit read as 50 whole crabs and not include the 100 claw limit.

4.2 Recreational Retention of Egg-Bearing Females

- There was consensus that there should be a prohibition on the retention of egg-bearing females (Option 2) in the recreational fishery.

4.3.3 *De Minimis* Criteria

- The AP did not have any comments on how *de minimis* criteria should be set.