



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015

MEMORANDUM

February 1, 2012

To: American Lobster Management Board
From: American Lobster Technical Committee
RE: Review of 10% Reduction Plans for SNE

The American Lobster Board convened Lobster Conservation Management Teams (LCMT) in Areas 2-6 to recommend methods of exploitation reduction consistent with the options in Draft Addendum XVII.

The Technical Committee (TC) reviewed the proposals submitted for each Lobster Conservation Management Area (LMCA) to ensure they met the criteria established by the American Lobster Management Board within draft Addendum XVII. They were not evaluated as to their efficacy of stock rebuilding for the SNE area.

As previously stated to the Board, the TC notes that closed season regulations are expected to cause shifts in effort and landings from closed to open seasons. Examples of lobster management in other areas have shown that a shortened fishing season results in fishing mortality rates comparable to a completely open season because the fishery is able to recoup all of their catch during the months open to harvest.

LCMA 6: Closed Season

Based on the landings data provided for LCMA 6, the proposal to close the fishery will achieve a nominal 10% reduction in landings on paper.

The TC recommends that closed seasons be accompanied with gear removal (to prevent untended traps) to increase the effectiveness of the closure and unintended mortality of target and non-targeted species. The TC recommends that the area has specific time periods to remove traps from the water and put the gear back in the water. By allowing traps to go into the water two weeks prior to the open season date, traps can inflict non-harvest mortality during the closed season. A concomitant validation program is necessary so that compliance is documented on July 1, 2014. The TC recommends that effort and landings patterns be assessed to document shifts resulting from the closed season.

The TC acknowledges the benefits to other species in the removal of traps from the water including short lobster, tautog, black sea bass, whelk, and scup.

LCMA 3: Change in the minimum gauge size

Based on the landings data provided for LCMA 3, the proposal to increase the gauge achieves a nominal 4.4% reduction in landings. The additional credit of a 5.6% reduction in landings from the previous vent increase does not meet the guidelines established by the Board. The Board stated that proposals must involve new measures only and that LCMA3s could not get credit for measures that had been previously implemented.

The LCMA will need an additional 5.6% reduction to meet the addendum requirements established by the Board.

LCMA 2: Mandatory V-notching

The proposal from LCMA 2 does not meet the guidelines established by the Board under draft Addendum XVII.

If LCMA 2 is considering this proposal as a conservation equivalency proposal then the TC offers the following review: The proposed v-notch plan by LCMA 2 could potentially reduce exploitation by 10% if sufficient participation in the program occurs based on the data provided in the proposal. The TC concurs that to achieve a 10% reduction in exploitation, a v-notching compliance rate of 50% of every legal egg-bearing lobster is necessary. A concomitant validation program, such as a detailed description of the proposed sea sampling program, is necessary so that compliance is documented on July 1, 2014. Spatial and temporal coverage of the fishery which documents a representative fraction of the landings is recommended.

In order to achieve observer coverage for a representative fraction of the fishery, Massachusetts and Rhode Island would need to continue its current sea sampling program to validate the proposed v-notching program. Additionally, provisions for meeting the criteria established by the Board (or other equivalent) should be included in the proposal if equivalency measures are not met.

The TC warns of implementing measures intended to rebuild the SNE stock that effectively increases the fishing pressure on male lobsters. For example, there are areas where females are in higher proportion than males. In these areas, a mandatory v-notching program will significantly reduce the future harvest in these areas as an increasing number of lobsters will be protected after they release their eggs. A plausible result of this action is that fishermen will shift their effort to areas with fewer females, thus increasing the pressure on male lobsters.

LCMA 4:

Proposal 1 for LCMA 4: Mandatory V-notching and season closure

The v-notching portion of the proposal from LCMA 4 does not meet the guidelines established by the Board under draft Addendum XVII.

If LCMA4 is considering this proposal as a conservation equivalency proposal then the TC offers the following review: The proposed v-notch plan by LCMA 4 could potentially reduce exploitation by 6.4% if sufficient participation in the program occurs based on the data provided in the proposal. The TC concurs that to achieve a 10% reduction in exploitation, a v-notching compliance rate of 100% of every legal egg-bearing lobster is necessary. A concomitant

validation program, such as a detailed description of the proposed sea sampling program, is necessary so that compliance is documented on July 1, 2014. Spatial and temporal coverage of the fishery which documents a representative fraction of the landings is recommended.

In order to achieve observer coverage for a representative fraction of the fishery, New York would need to increase its sea-sampling program and New Jersey would need to continue its current sea sampling program to validate the proposed v-notching program. Currently New York has conducted 1 sea-sampling trip annually in LCMA 4. New York should increase this effort to 6 trips annually at a minimum. Additionally, provisions for meeting the criteria established by the Board (or other equivalent) should be included in the proposal if equivalency measures are not met.

In order for LCMA 4 to achieve the recommended 10% reduction in harvest, a closed season is needed to accompany the v-notch program and should account for the absence of v-notching during this close period.

Based on the landings data provided for LCMA 4 the proposal to close the fishery will achieve an additional nominal 3.6% reduction in landings on paper. A concomitant validation program is necessary so that compliance is documented on July 1, 2014. The TC recommends that effort and landings patterns be assessed to document shifts resulting from the closed season.

The TC warns of implementing measures intended to rebuild the SNE stock that effectively increases the fishing pressure on male lobsters. For example, there are areas where females are in higher proportion than males. In these areas, a mandatory v-notching program will significantly reduce the future harvest in these areas as an increasing number of lobsters will be protected after they release their eggs. A plausible result of this action is that fishermen will shift their effort to areas with fewer females, thus increasing the pressure on male lobsters.

Proposal 2 for LCMA 4: Season Closure

Based on the landings data provided for LCMA 4 the proposal to close the fishery will achieve a nominal 10% reduction in landings on paper. A concomitant validation program is necessary so that compliance is documented on July 1, 2014. The TC recommends that effort and landings patterns be assessed to document shifts resulting from the closed season.

For both LCMA 4 proposals: The TC recommends that closed seasons be accompanied with lobster gear removal (to prevent untended traps) to increase the effectiveness of the closure and unintended mortality of target and non-targeted species. The TC recommends that the area has specific time periods to remove traps from the water and put the gear back in the water.

The TC acknowledges the benefits to other species in the removal of traps from the water including short lobster, tautog, black sea bass, whelk, and scup.

Unresolved Issues for the Board:

1. Which period of landings or measure of exploitation does the Board want to use to measure the effectiveness of the measures adopted in the addendum? The TC notes that

landings in most areas have continued to decline in the last five year prior to any actions having been taken.

2. The TC is concerned that dual permitted vessels will shift effort from one LCMA to another during closed fishing seasons. The Board should consider the most restrictive rule for dual permit holders under closed seasons that vary between adjacent LCMAs to prevent effort shifts.