

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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To: Lobster Board
From: Lobster Technical Committee (TC) (majority recommendation not full consensus)
Re: Addendum X Conservation Equivalency Proposal Review

Currently, Addendum X to Amendment 3 of the ASMFC FMP requires that dealers report NMFS statistical area fished for lobster transactions. The intent of this requirement was to account for where landings were occurring (in cases where 100% trip level harvester reporting was not occurring). Having the dealers record the NMFS statistical area would place the landing in the proper biological stock assessment area for assessment purposes. For assessment purposes it is important for the TC to attribute landing to the appropriate biological stock assessment unit.

The TC reviewed proposals from Maine and Massachusetts that requested the data requirement of dealers reporting NMFS statistical area fished be collected in alternate methods. The Maine DMR seeks conservation equivalency of the dealer reporting requirement by assigning landings from dealers based on the dealer location relative to adjacent statistical areas. The Massachusetts DMF seeks conservation equivalency of the dealer reporting requirement by using the current data collection system that accounts for all permit holders through its annual recall log. The MA annual recall log attributes area fished and landings on a monthly basis and is submitted to the agency annually. The TC found these alternate methods acceptable for purposes of identifying the statistical area fished. In Maine, the majority of the statistical areas fished fall within the Gulf of Maine biological stock assessment unit. In Massachusetts there are lobster fisheries in all three stock units, however fishermen must choose one LCMA on their permit and are required to report their landings by statistical area. These two data elements allow the TC to account for landings to the appropriate biological stock assessment unit. The TC recommends approving the proposals from both states.

The TC continues to emphasize the importance of their recommendation to the Board in May of 2007 regarding harvester reporting. At that time the TC presented analytical results demonstrating that landings data will be inaccurately expanded to total harvest if less than 30% of actively fishing harvesters report their landings. Expansions based on less than 25% reporting is unacceptably imprecise unless all licensed harvesters are carefully stratified by area fished (such as ME zones) and fishing history (such as high effort, low effort, inactive). It is strongly recommended that, regardless of the percent chosen, mandatory reporting be randomly distributed over all of these strata.

The TC is concerned with the sources of funding for state lobster data collection (sea sampling, port sampling, and ventless trap surveys). Funding for the majority of data collection has been from lobster health grants and "plus up" funding. These funding sources will be completed at the end of 2008. No new funding sources have been identified for years beyond 2008. The TC emphasizes that with limited data collection, any new assessments would be impossible.