



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1444 Eye St., NW, 6th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

MEETING SUMMARY

American Lobster Advisory Panel
Monday, April 2, 2001
4:00-8:00 PM

Participants:

Heather Stirratt	Angelo J. Correnti	John Sorlien	John German
Todd Jesse	David Cousens	Bob Baines	Bill Adler
Bob Nudd	Steve Train	George Doll	Pat White
David Spencer	Jon Carter	Arthur Sawyer	

Motions:

No motions were presented during the meeting.

Summary:

Public Information Document supporting Amendment 4 to the Lobster FMP

The Advisory Panel was requested to review the Public Information Document supporting Amendment 4 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American lobster. The two issues approved for consideration in Amendment 4 include conservation equivalency for the limits on non-trap gear and conservation equivalency for the protection of v-notched lobsters. Panel members opposed conservation equivalency approaches to the prohibition on possession of v-notched females for the following reasons:

1. Objective #1 in the FMP strives to conserve egg-bearing females. Conservation equivalency for protection of v-notched females would run counter to this objective in the plan.
2. The prohibition on possession of v-notched female lobsters is an ideal mechanism for rebuilding egg production as required under Addendum II.
3. Size distribution of the stock is enhanced by v-notching and adequate size distributions are necessary for healthy marine resources.
4. Large egg bearing lobsters are proven to have higher rates of viable egg production and better egg quality overall.

Panel members generally opposed, with one reservation, conservation equivalency approaches to the non-trap gear limits for the following reasons:

1. The 100/500 rule was originally adopted as a means to eliminate directed fisheries for lobster in the mobile gear sector. Exceptions to this rule would deviate from the original intent of this regulation.
2. Injury and mortality to lobsters during the shed, which is when draggers are targeting lobsters in Rhode Island, is significant.
3. If conservation equivalency is allowed and mobile gear types can again harvest lobsters, then redirection of effort from the groundfishing fleet onto lobsters may occur.

4. Allowing conservation equivalency in one state will open this option up to other states in all bodies of water.

Overall, the Panel agreed that there was strong consensus in support of Option 1 for both Issues outlined in the Public Information Document.

Arrival of Factory Trawlers

David Spencer provided an update on the arrival of factory trawlers, which are currently targeting red crab, to the northeast. He expressed concern that these vessels could shift effort into the Jonah crab fishery upon reduction of resource availability of red crab. David explained that the equipment utilized to process Jonah crabs has already been purchased and placed on the boats. David further explained that one these processors/trawlers currently holds a federal permit for lobstering. David raised these issues in an effort to survey advisors concern regarding bycatch of lobster, additional lines in the water column (i.e. possible marine mammal interactions), and other issues as appropriate.

The Panel wishes to express general concern about the entry of the processors/trawlers into northeast fisheries. The Panel has elected to watch this situation very carefully and reserve the right to forward comments as necessary on to the appropriate management agency in this regard.

Trap Tag Issues

The Advisory Panel was asked to provide comments on trap tag issues that they perceive as being problematic to the success of the trap tag program. The Panel offered substantial discussion and concern regarding ineffective enforcement of the trap tag program in all states with the exception of Maine. Specifically, the Panel felt that lobster management initiatives were being compromised by states that have not fully enforced the trap tag program. When industry members have requested additional enforcement, they have met with explanations of limited monetary resources and overwhelming enforcement responsibilities (i.e. enforcement responsibility for both wildlife and marine resources).

Section 5.2 of the FMP affirms “that all states are responsible for the full and effective implementation and enforcement of fishery management plans in areas subject to their jurisdiction. As such, the Panel recommends the following:

1. States should set aside part of the fee for trap tags to be applied for law enforcement, if possible. Note panel members are not in favor of providing any more money for business as usual approaches to enforcement.
2. Law enforcement agencies should seek separation from wildlife enforcement responsibilities.
3. Law enforcement of trap tag program should occur on the water.
4. Law enforcement officers should go fishing with local industry members to further understand how the gear should be reset when hauled for enforcement purposes.
5. Enforcement agencies and there employees should seek out regular interaction with those involved in the industry to have a proactive stance in lobster enforcement.

Transferability Workshop

The Panel was briefed on the Lobster Management Boards approval of a transferability workshop in 2002. It was explained to the Panel that this workshop would not be used a venue to endorse options transferability but rather the purpose of the workshop would be to educate, explore, and discuss options for transferring licenses or trap tag allocations. In order to initiate coordination of this workshop, the Panel has nominated the following individuals to serve on the transferability workshop sub-committee:

1. John Sorlein
2. Todd Jesse
3. George Doll
4. David Spencer

This sub-committee will assist ASMFC staff in coordinating the workshop and sub-committee discussions are anticipated to begin shortly.

Composition of the Advisory Panel

The Lobster Board approved new operating procedures at its June 6, 2000 meeting, which revise the Advisory Panel membership to 4 members from Maine and Massachusetts and 2 members from New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York and New Jersey.

Advisors were asked whether they had any reservations about this action. The Panel offered no further concerns about this reorganization.

Marine Protected Areas

The Panel briefly discussed the idea of marine protected areas as a tool for fisheries management. Pat White requested that the Panel look at this tool and consider three issues including: 1. Definition of a marine protected area, 2. Objectives of a marine protected area, and 3. What benefit(s) or cost(s) the use of marine protected areas might afford the lobster resource.

As a result of this discussion, the Panel is requesting that the Commission hold a workshop on marine protected areas as a tool for fisheries management.