



# ***Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission***

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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*Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries*

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### ***American Lobster Draft Addendum XXVII Approved for Public Comment Addendum Considers Measures to Increase Protection of Spawning Stock Biomass of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank Stock***

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s American Lobster Management Board approved Draft Addendum XXVII to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster for public comment. The Draft Addendum considers implementing management measures – specifically gauge and escape vent sizes – to provide additional protection to the spawning stock biomass (SSB) in the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank (GOM/GBK) stock. The Draft Addendum also considers immediate action upon final approval to standardize some management measures within and across the Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMAs) that include the GOM/GBK stock.

The Board initiated the Addendum as a proactive measure to improve the resiliency of the GOM/GBK stock. Since the early 2000s, landings in the GOM/GBK stock have exponentially increased. In Maine alone, landings have increased from 57 million pounds in 2000 to a record high of 132.6 million pounds in 2016. Maine landings have declined slightly but were still high at 97.9 million and 108.9 million in 2020 and 2021, respectively. However, since 2012, lobster settlement surveys throughout the GOM have generally been below the time series averages in all areas. These surveys, which measure trends in the abundance of juvenile lobsters, can be used to track populations and potentially forecast future landings. Persistent lower densities of settlement could foreshadow decline in recruitment and landings. In the most recent years of the time series, declines in other recruitment indices have also been observed.

Given the economic importance of the lobster fishery to many coastal communities in New England, especially in Maine, potential reductions in landings could have vast socioeconomic impacts. In addition, the 2015 Stock Assessment combined the GOM and GBK stocks into a single biological unit due to evidence of migration between the two regions. As a result, there are now varying management measures within a single biological stock. In response to these two issues, Draft Addendum XXVII considers the standardization of management measures across LCMAs. The purpose of considering more consistency in measures is to resolve discrepancies between the regulations for state and federal permit-holders, to

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The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and diadromous species.

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provide a consistent conservation strategy, and simplify enforcement across management areas and interstate commerce.

Draft Addendum XXVII considers two approaches for implementing changes to gauge and escape vent sizes to enhance protection of the GOM/GBK spawning stock. One approach would establish a trigger mechanism whereby pre-determined management changes would be implemented upon reaching a defined trigger level based on observed changes in recruitment abundance indices. The second approach would establish a schedule for implementing changes to the gauge and escape vent sizes. The proposed measures include an increase to the minimum gauge size and escape vent sizes in LCMA 1 (Gulf of Maine) and decreases to the maximum gauge size in LCMA 3 (offshore federal waters) and Outer Cape Cod. The proposed gauge and escape vent sizes are expected to increase the proportion of the population that is able to reproduce before being harvested by the fishery, and to enhance stock resiliency by protecting larger lobsters of both sexes.

The Draft Addendum will be posted to the website next week at <http://www.asmfc.org/about-us/public-input>. A subsequent press release will provide the details on the public hearing schedule and how to submit written comments. The Board will meet to review submitted comment and consider final action on the addendum in May 2023 at the Commission's Spring Meeting in Arlington, VA. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [cstarks@asmfc.org](mailto:cstarks@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.