



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC American Lobster Board Approves Use of Electronic Trackers for Federally-permitted American Lobster & Jonah Crab Vessels

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s American Lobster Management Board approved Addendum XXIX to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for American Lobster and Addendum IV to the Jonah Crab FMP. The Addenda establish electronic tracking requirements for federally-permitted vessels in the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries, with the goal of collecting high resolution spatial and temporal effort data to support a number of ongoing efforts.

The Board initiated the Addenda in August 2021 to address several challenges facing the fishery, including stock assessment limitations, protected species interactions, marine spatial planning efforts, and enforcement in federal waters. Given the critical need for enhanced spatial and temporal data in the offshore fishery to address these issues, the Addenda require federally-permitted American lobster and Jonah crab vessels with commercial trap gear area permits to collect location data via an approved electronic tracking device. Specifically, electronic tracking devices will be required for vessels with commercial trap gear area permits for Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMAs) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and Outer Cape Cod. LCMA 6 (Long Island Sound) and the Area 5 waiver permit, which allows Area 5 permit holders to target black sea bass with un-baited traps, are excluded from the tracking requirements.

The data collected through electronic tracking under the Addenda will greatly improve the stock assessment’s ability to estimate exploitation and abundance for American lobster by providing size composition data at a finer resolution than what is currently available. Additionally, the models used to assess the location of vertical lines in the fishery and their associated risk to endangered right whales will be substantially improved, which could have an impact on federal risk reduction requirements for the fishery. With a better understanding of the spatial footprint of the U.S. lobster and Jonah crab fisheries, managers will be better positioned to minimize and mitigate the impacts of other ocean uses such as aquaculture, marine protected areas, and offshore energy development on the fisheries. Furthermore, vessel tracking data will enhance the efficiency and efficacy of offshore law enforcement efforts.

The Addenda establish minimum criteria that must be met by tracking devices and vendors to be approved for use in the fishery, including a data reporting rate of one ping per minute, technical specifications, and

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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customer service standards. To identify devices and vendors that meet these criteria, the Commission will form a work group to review and approve tracking technologies, and provide information on available options to the states.

States, in conjunction with Commission staff, will work to develop an implementation plan, including a standard operating procedure and a request for quotes from vessel tracking companies. The Commission is requesting that NOAA Fisheries implement the requirements of the Addenda through the federal rulemaking process by May 1, 2023.

Answers to some frequently asked questions about the electronic tracking program can be found [here](#). For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.