

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

**ADDENDUM XXXII TO AMENDMENT 3 TO THE AMERICAN
LOBSTER FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Repealing Addendum XXVII Gauge and Vent Size Measures



Approved May 5, 2025



Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

Table of Contents

1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
2.0 OVERVIEW	1
2.1 Background	1
2.2 Statement of the Problem	2
3.0 MANAGEMENT PROGRAM	2
4.0 COMPLIANCE.....	2
5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIONS IN FEDERAL WATERS	2
6.0 REFERENCES	3

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) has coordinated the interstate management of American lobster (*Homarus americanus*) from 0-3 miles offshore since 1996. American lobster is currently managed under Amendment 3 and Addenda I-XXXI to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP). Management authority in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) from 3-200 miles from shore lies with NOAA Fisheries. The management unit includes all coastal migratory stocks between Maine and Virginia. Within the management unit there are two lobster stocks and seven management areas. The Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank (GOM/GBK) stock (subject of this draft addendum) is primarily comprised of three Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMAs), including LCMAs 1 (GOM), 3 (federal waters), and Outer Cape Cod (OCC). There are three states (Maine through Massachusetts) which regulate American lobster in states waters of the GOM/GBK stock; however, landings from the GOM/GBK stock occur from Rhode Island through New York and these states regulate the landings of lobster in their state.

In February 2025, the Board passed the following motion:

Move to initiate an Addendum to repeal all gauge and vent size changes in Addendum XXVII. The other sections of Addendum XXVII will remain in effect.

This Addendum repeals the gauge and escape vent size changes in section 3.1 and 3.2 of Addendum XXVII. The Addendum does not repeal v-notch regulations nor regulations prohibiting the issuance of 10% additional trap tags in Areas 1 and 3 above the trap limit or allocation.

2.0 OVERVIEW

2.1 Background

Addendum XXVII was approved on May 2023, establishing a trigger mechanism to automatically implement management measures to provide additional protection of the GOM/GBK spawning stock biomass. Under Addendum XXVII, changes to gauge and escape vent sizes LCMAs 1, 3, and OCC would be initiated based on an observed decline in recruit abundance indices of 35% from the reference level (equal to the three-year average from 2016-2018). This was a proactive approach responding to declines in young-of-year settlement and recruitment abundance indices (abundance of lobsters just below the legal minimum size), although the 2020 Benchmark Stock Assessment indicated the GOM/GBK stock was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring. A new benchmark stock assessment is in progress, and results are expected to be presented to the Board in October 2025 to provide more current information on the status of the stock.

In October 2023, the American Lobster Technical Committee reported that with the inclusion of 2022 data in the index time series, the trigger index had declined by 39%, surpassing the trigger point of a 35% decline. The original implementation date for the series of required gauge and vent size changes, starting with the first decrease to the LCMA 1 minimum gauge size, was June

1, 2024. However, in October 2023 the Board delayed the implementation of the measures in Addendum XXVII to January 1, 2025. The extension aimed to provide the Gulf of Maine states the opportunity to coordinate with Canada regarding possible trade implications and give the industry and gauge makers additional time to prepare for the changes.

In October 2024, the Board approved Addendum XXXI, which postponed implementation of the biological management measures (OCC maximum gauge size, v-notch definition, and LCMA 1 gauge and vent sizes) of Addendum XXVII an additional six months to July 1, 2025. The additional delay was intended to reduce negative impacts to the US and Canadian lobster industries in 2025 and allow Canada more time to consider implementing complementary management measures. For LCMA 1 and 3 permit holders, Addendum XXVII required states to implement regulations to limit the issuance of trap tags to equal the harvester trap tag allocations unless trap losses are documented. Implementation of this measure was required by January 1, 2025.

2.2 Statement of the Problem

Following the approval of Addendum XXXI in October 2024, lobster industry members in the states of Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts expressed significant concern regarding the potential economic impacts of increasing the minimum gauge size in LCMA 1 and about the uncertainty surrounding the implications for trade with Canada. The Board agreed that consideration of alternative management measures was warranted to address these concerns. Concurrently with this action, the Gulf of Maine states will hold scoping discussions with their lobster industries to identify alternative conservation strategies to protect the long-term health of the resource.

3.0 MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The following management program modifies Sections 3.1 and 3.2 of Addendum XXVII, specifically gauge and escape vent size provisions for LCMAs 1, 3, and OCC.

Addendum XXXII repeals all changes to gauge and escape vent sizes established by Addendum XXVII, including the change to the maximum gauge size required in OCC established in Section 3.1 and the minimum and maximum gauge size changes triggered under Section 3.2. In LCMA 3 and OCC, the minimum gauge is $3 \frac{3}{8}$ " and the maximum gauge is $6 \frac{3}{4}$ ". The minimum gauge in LCMA 1 is $3 \frac{1}{4}$ " and the maximum gauge is 5".

4.0 COMPLIANCE

Addendum XXXII is effective June 30, 2025.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIONS IN FEDERAL WATERS

The management of American lobster in the EEZ (3 – 200 miles from shore) is the responsibility of the Secretary of Commerce through the National Marine Fisheries Service. With the approval of Addendum XXXII, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission withdraws its

recommendations to the federal government to promulgate regulations to implement measures repealed by this addendum.

6.0 REFERENCES

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). 1997. [Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster](#).

ASMFC. 2023. [Addendum XXVII to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster](#).

ASMFC. 2024. [Addendum XXXI to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster](#).