



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 8, 2024

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American Lobster Board Initiates Addendum to Postpone Implementation of Addendum XXVII Measures and Approves Addendum XXX

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s American Lobster Management Board initiated Draft Addendum XXXI to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster. The Draft Addendum will consider postponing the implementation of the measures from Addendum XXVII. The Board also approved Addendum XXX, which addresses how the measures of Addendum XXVII will apply to foreign imports of American lobster once implemented.

Draft Addendum XXXI considers postponing the implementation of management measures under Sections 3.1 and 3.2 of Addendum XXVII until July 1, 2025. Addendum XXVII was adopted in May 2023 and established a trigger mechanism to automatically implement management measures to provide additional protection of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank (GOM/GBK) spawning stock biomass. Changes to the current gauge and escape vent sizes in Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMAs) 1, 3, and Outer Cape Cod (OCC) were triggered based on observed changes in recruit abundance indices in October 2023 with the inclusion of 2022 survey data in the trigger index. The Board then extended the implementation date of the series of changes to gauge and vent size to begin January 1, 2025 to allow 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 these changes.

A meeting was held between US and Canadian lobster fishery managers and industry members in June 2024 to discuss the management structures and stock assessments of the two countries. Based on this meeting, the Board determined that postponing implementation of Addendum XXVII’s biological measures to July 1, 2025 would reduce negative impacts to the US and Canadian lobster industries in 2025 and allow Canada more time to consider implementing complementary management measures. Specifically, Draft Addendum XXXI will consider postponing the changes in minimum gauge size for LCMA 1 (inshore Gulf of Maine), and the measures under Section 3.1 of Addendum XXVII to create a common size limit for state-only and federal permit holders fishing in OCC to July 2025. The Draft Addendum will not consider postponing regulations prohibiting the issuance of 10% additional trap tags in Areas 1 and 3 above the trap limit or allocation. Draft Addendum XXXI will be released for public comment later this year.

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.

The Board also approved Addendum XXX, which clarifies the Commission's intent for how the measures of Addendum XXVII will apply to foreign imports of American lobster once implemented. The Addendum recommends to NOAA Fisheries that the Mitchell Provision of the Magnuson-Stevens Act apply to foreign imports of whole live lobster, meaning the smallest minimum size for foreign imports would match the smallest minimum size in effect for the US industry. The current smallest LCMA minimum gauge size in effect is 3¼ inches, and when the LCMA 1 gauge size increases, this will change to 3 ⁵/₁₆ inches. Foreign imports smaller than the new minimum gauge size would be prohibited. These size restrictions do not apply to lobsters travelling in-bond through the US.

Addendum XXX will be available on the Commission website, www.asmfc.org, on American lobster webpage by next week. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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