Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC American Lobster Board Approves Addenda XXVI/III to the American Lobster/Jonah Crab FMPs

Arlington, VA – The Commission's American Lobster Management Board (Board) approved American Lobster Addendum XXVI/Jonah Crab Addendum III (Addenda) to the American Lobster and Jonah Crab Fishery Management Plans (FMPs). The Addenda improves the spatial resolution of harvester data collection, expands the required harvester reporting data elements, establishes a timeline for increased harvester reporting in the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries, and prioritizes the development of electronic harvester reporting. In addition, the Addenda includes recommendations for improved reporting and biological sampling in federal waters.

The Addenda responds to two concerns: 1) the current requirements for harvester reporting are insufficient to respond to external management actions; and 2) while the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries continue to expand offshore, most of the biological sampling occurs inshore or nearshore. In particular, the Board expressed concern the spatial resolution of harvester data is too coarse to respond to finer-scale management issues. As a result, the Addenda improves the spatial resolution of data by requiring fishermen to report via 10 minute squares, which further divide the existing statistical areas. In addition, the addenda establishes a one year pilot program to explore electronic tracking devices in the fishery which would address the special resolution and enforcement concerns. The addenda requires additional data elements in harvester reports including number of traps per trawl and number of buoy lines in order to collect information on gear configurations. Finally, the Addenda establishes a deadline that, within five years, states are required to implement 100% harvester reporting, with the prioritization of electronic harvester reporting development during that time. In the interim, jurisdictions not at 100% harvester reporting should redistribute the current effort associated with harvester reporting to focus on active, as opposed to latent, permit holders.

The Addenda also improves the biological sampling requirements by establishing a baseline of ten sampling trips per year in the American lobster/Jonah crab fishery and encourages states with more than 10% of coastwide landings in either the American lobster or Jonah crab fisheries to conduct additional sampling trips.

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 anadromous species.

Finally, the Addenda provide three recommendations for actions in federal waters. Specifically, a harvester reporting requirement be established for federal lobster permits in order to collect information from the growing offshore fishery; a fixed-gear VTR form be created to improve data collection in the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries; and a biological sampling program be established in federal waters in order to address current data gaps in the assessment. These recommendations will be forwarded to NOAA Fisheries.

For more information, please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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