Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ASMFC American Lobster Board Approves Jonah Crab Draft Addendum II for Public Comment

Bar Harbor, ME – The Commission's American Lobster Management Board approved Draft Addendum II to the Jonah Crab Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for public comment. The Draft Addendum considers establishing a coastwide standard for claw harvest to address concerns regarding the equity of the current claw provision. Specific options include establishing a whole crab fishery or allowing for the harvest of claws coastwide. The Draft Addendum also considers establishing a definition of bycatch, based on a percent composition of catch, in order to minimize the expansion of a small-scale fishery under the bycatch allowance.

The FMP currently establishes a whole crab fishery with the exception of fishermen from NJ, DE, MD, and VA who have a history of claw landings prior to June 2, 2015. Following approval of the FMP, claw fishermen from NY and ME were identified. Currently, these fishermen are required to land whole crabs. As a result, jurisdictions have expressed concern regarding the equity of this provision as some fishermen with a history of claw landings are allowed to continue this practice while others must land whole crabs.

In order to address concerns regarding the expansion of a small-scale fishery, consideration of a bycatch definition was added as a second issue in the Draft Addendum. Addendum I established a bycatch allowance of 1,000 crabs per trip for non-trap gears and non-lobster trap gears (i.e., fish pots, crab pots, whelk traps). Fishermen using these gears are not required to have other species on Board when harvesting Jonah crab. As a result, fishermen harvesting Jonah crab under the bycatch limit may, in fact, directly target Jonah crab by landing 1,000 crabs per trip and nothing else. This does not reflect the intention of the bycatch allowance which is to account for Jonah crab caught while targeting another species.

The Draft Addendum will be available on the Commission website, www.asmfc.org (under Public Input) by mid-November. It is anticipated that the majority of states of Maine through Maryland will be conducting public hearings; the details of those hearings will be released in a subsequent press release. The Board will review submitted public comment and consider final action on the Draft Addendum at the Commission's Winter Meeting in February. For more information, please contact Megan Ware at mware@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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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 anadromous species.

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