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Marine Fisheries Advisory

ASMFC Public Hearing on American Lobster Management: March 23, 2017

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is seeking public comment on Draft Addendum XXV to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster. The full schedule of public hearings is available [here](#). Massachusetts' hearing will be held:

March 23, 2017 at 6 PM
MA Maritime Academy Admiral's Hall
101 Academy Drive
Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts

The Draft Addendum seeks to address the depleted condition of the Southern New England (SNE) stock while preserving a functional portion of the SNE lobster fishery. The document presents a suite of management measures to increase egg production and lower fishing mortality through a combination of management tools including gauge size changes, season closures, and trap reductions.

The Draft Addendum responds to the results of the 2015 American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment which found the SNE stock is severely depleted and experiencing recruitment failure. Declines in population abundance were most pronounced in the inshore portion of the stock where environmental conditions have remained unfavorable to lobster since the late 1990s. These stock declines are largely in response to adverse environmental conditions, including increasing water temperatures over the last 15 years, combined with continued fishing mortality.

Draft Addendum XXV focuses on increasing egg production so that, if environmental conditions become favorable, the SNE stock can benefit from a strong recruitment year. The Draft Addendum includes seven issues. The first proposes four targets to increase egg production, ranging from 20% to 60%, with an additional option for status quo. The second issue seeks input on proposed management tools to increase egg production and whether these tools should be used independently or in conjunction with one another. The third issue addresses the effects of proposed measures on the recreational fishery. The fourth issue explores the implementation of season closures and potential impacts to the Jonah crab fishery. The fifth issue examines whether management measures should be uniform across Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMA) in SNE. The sixth issue asks how management measures should be applied to the offshore waters of LCMA 3, which spans both the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank and SNE stock units. The seventh issue asks whether *de minimis* states should be exempt from management action taken in the addendum.

Stakeholders are encouraged to provide input on Draft Addendum XXV either by attending a state public hearing or providing written comment. The Draft Addendum can be obtained [here](#) or via the Commission's website, www.asmfc.org, under *Public Input*. Public comment will be accepted until **5PM (EST) on April 7, 2017** and should be forwarded to Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite 200 A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703-842-0741 (FAX) or at mware@asmfc.org (Subject line: Draft Addendum XXV).

The American Lobster Management Board will review submitted public comment and consider action on the Addendum at the Commission's Spring Meeting in May 2017. For more information, please contact Megan Ware, ASMFC Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org or 703-842-0740; or Dan McKiernan, DMF Deputy Director, at dan.mckiernan@state.ma.us or 617-626-1536.