



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Division of Marine Fisheries

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### Marine Fisheries Advisory

## **ASMFC Initiates Draft Addendum XXXII to Consider Repealing All Lobster Gauge Size Adjustments and Escape Vent Size Increases Implemented by Addendum XXVII**

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) has initiated Draft Addendum XXXII to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for American Lobster. The Addendum considers repealing all Addendum XXVII measures pertaining to carapace size and escape vent size limits. This responds to a recent decision by the state of Maine, and then later New Hampshire, to not move forward with these aspects of Addendum XXVII due to concerns about the potential economic impacts of an increase to the minimum gauge size in the Gulf of Maine on harvest and uncertainty regarding impacts on trade with Canada.

The ASMFC Lobster Board (“Board”) will consider the approval of Draft Addendum XXXII for public comment in March 2025. This schedule allows for the new addendum, if approved in May 2025, to supersede Addendum XXVII before its implementation date. Should the Board approve Addendum XXXII, DMF will take a complementary action to rescind existing state regulations that implement affected aspects of Addendum XXVII. This includes the recently adopted increases to the minimum carapace size and escape vent size for Lobster Conservation Management Area (LCMA) 1 and decreases to the maximum carapace size for the Outer Cape Cod LCMA and LCMA 3. See our December 19, 2024 [advisory](#) for more details.

Please note that Draft Addendum XXXII will not consider repealing those aspects of Addendum XXVII that restricted the issuance of 10% additional trap tags in LCMAs 1 and 3 above the trap limit or allocation, nor the v-notch possession standard for the Outer Cape Cod LCMA. Accordingly, no action will be taken by DMF to repeal these aspects of the state’s existing regulations.

The Board debated—but ultimately rejected—a request from members of the Massachusetts delegation to repeal the v-notch standardization measures for the Outer Cape Cod LCMA in Addendum XXVII and allow state only permit holders to continue to retain, possess, and land lobsters with a sharp v-notch up to ¼” depth without setal hairs. Consequently, effective July 1, 2025, there will be a consistent v-notch standard of 1/8” depth with or without setal hairs among state-only and dual (state & federal) permit holders fishing within the Outer Cape Cod LCMA. Seafood dealers will consequently be prohibited from purchasing lobsters with a v-notch with a depth greater than 1/8” (with or without setal hairs), but may continue to possess such lobsters through September 30, 2025, provided they were lawfully purchased on or before June 30, 2025.

Through this action, the v-notch possession standard of  $\frac{1}{8}$ " depth with or without setal hairs becomes nearly uniform throughout the state's commercial and recreational fisheries—except for the commercial fishery in LCMA 1, where a more restrictive standard remains (i.e., any v-shaped notch with or without setal hairs). This standardization will allow more lobsters—that have been previously identified as sexually mature females by a commercial harvester who marked them with a v-notch and released them—to mate and produce eggs through at least another molt.

With regards to trap tag issuance, DMF will continue to limit the annual issuance of trap tags to trap fishers in Lobster Conservation Management Areas 1 and 3 to no more than the permitted trap limit or allocation. This eliminates the practice of issuing an additional 10% to pre-emptively cover trap loss. Should gear loss occur, fishers should file a [gear loss report](#) and contact Kerry Allard at DMF ([kerry.allard@mass.gov](mailto:kerry.allard@mass.gov)) to start the process to acquire replacement trap tags.

For more information, view the ASMFC's [press release](#) and visit their [website](#) for American lobster.