



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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January 13, 2022

Marine Fisheries Advisory

ASMFC Public Hearings on Lobster/Jonah Crab Electronic Tracking Requirements

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) is seeking public comment on Draft Addendum XXIX to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery management Plan (FMP) for American Lobster and Draft Addendum IV to the Jonah Crab FMP. The Draft Addenda consider implementing electronic tracking requirements for federally-permitted vessels in the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries, with the objective of collecting high resolution spatial and temporal effort data.

Six virtual public hearings are being held between January 12–20. Massachusetts' virtual public hearing will be held jointly with Rhode Island on **Thursday, January 20, 2022 at 6:30PM**. You may register for the hearing at: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/rt/59519183062316299>. The full schedule of hearings is available [HERE](#). See the *Webinar Instructions* below for more information.

The Draft Addenda include two options for proposed management programs. The first is status quo or no changes to the current program, and the second is to implement electronic tracking requirements for federally-permitted American lobster and Jonah crab vessels with commercial trap gear area permits for Lobster Conservation Management Areas 1 through 5 and Outer Cape Cod. Under this option, the specified permit holders would be required to install an approved electronic vessel tracking device to their vessel prior to beginning a fishing trip to collect and transmit spatial data. The devices would collect vessel locations every minute, which would allow for the distinction between transiting and fishing activity, as well as the estimation of traps per trawl. The Draft Addenda also describe administrative processes at the Commission, state, and federal levels for successful implementation of the management program to ensure the data collected meet the needs of state and federal partners.

The collection of enhanced spatial and temporal data via electronic tracking devices in the offshore fishery would support managers in addressing a number of challenges facing the fishery. Electronic tracking data would greatly improve the stock assessment's ability to estimate exploitation and abundance for American lobster, as the trackers would allow size composition data to be linked to harvest at a finer spatial resolution than what is currently possible. Additionally, the data could improve the models used to assess the location of vertical lines in the fishery and their associated risk to endangered North Atlantic right whales, which could impact federal risk reduction requirements for the fishery. Characterizing the footprint of the U.S. lobster fishery will also be critical to ocean planning efforts to minimize spatial conflicts

with other ocean uses such as aquaculture, marine protected areas, and offshore energy development, as well as provide fishery managers tools to help maintain industry fishing grounds. Last, the efficiency of law enforcement efforts could be significantly improved with data to help enforcement officials locate widely dispersed gear in the offshore fishery.

The Draft Addenda are available at

http://www.asmfc.org/files/PublicInput/LobsterDraftAdd_XXIX_JonahCrabDraftAdd_IV_PublicComment_Dec2021.pdf or via the Commission's website at <http://www.asmfc.org/about-us/public-input>. Members of the commercial fishing industry and other stakeholders are encouraged to provide input either by participating in public hearings, webinars, or providing written comment. **Public comment will be accepted until 5 PM (EST) on January 31, 2022** and should be sent to Caitlin Starks, FMP Coordinator, at 1050 N. Highland St., Suite 200 A-N, Arlington, Virginia 22201; 703.842.0741 (fax) or at comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Lobster Draft Addendum XXIX).

For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks at cstarks@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Webinar Instructions

To register for a public hearing webinar, please go to the following link and select the hearing(s) you plan to attend from the dropdown menu:

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/rt/59519183062316299>. (The Massachusetts-based hearing is on January 20.)

Hearings will be held via GoToWebinar, and you can join the webinar from your computer, tablet or smartphone. If you are new to GoToWebinar, you can download the software ([click here](#)) or via the App store under GoToWebinar. We recommend you register for the hearing well in advance of the hearing since GoToWebinar will provide you with a link to test your device's compatibility with the webinar. If you find your device is not compatible, please contact ASMFC at info@asmfc.org (subject line: GoToWebinar help) and staff will try to get you connected. We also strongly encourage participants to **use the computer voice over internet (VoIP)** so you can ask questions and provide input at the hearing. Those joining by phone only will be limited to listening to the presentation but will not be able to provide input during the hearing. In those cases, you can send your comments to staff via email, U.S. mail, or fax at any time during the public comment period. To attend a webinar in listen only mode, dial 1-877-309-2071 and enter access code 350-416-497.

The ASMFC has also posted a recording of the hearing presentation on its YouTube page so that stakeholders may watch the presentation and submit comment at any time during the comment process. To view the recording, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1IpRKDr0IY>