



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC American Lobster Board Initiates Draft Addendum XXVIII

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s American Lobster Management Board initiated Draft Addendum XXVIII to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster. The Draft Addendum considers reducing the number of vertical lines in the water in response to concerns about the North Atlantic right whale population and the potential impacts of whale conservation measures on the conduct of the lobster fishery.

“With this proposed action, the Board is entering uncertain waters,” stated Maine Commissioner Pat Keliher. “However, as the lead management authority for American lobster, we have a responsibility to ensure the viability of the lobster fishery. Through the active engagement of the states and the lobster industry in our management process, we believe the Board is best suited to navigate the growing challenges facing the lobster fishery.”

A key focus of the Board meeting was the intersection of lobster management and the conservation of protected resources. While the Commission is primarily a forum for the Atlantic coast states to cooperatively manage fish and shellfish species, the Board noted several factors associated with North Atlantic right whale conservation which could substantially impact the economic and cultural future of the lobster fishing industry. These include future recommendations of the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team and the anticipated Biological Opinion being developed under the Endangered Species Act. Given the high economic value of the lobster fishery and its social significance to coastal communities, the Board agreed it is important to ensure the implementation of measures to conserve North Atlantic right whales takes place in a way that maintains the sustainability and culture of the lobster fishery.

Draft Addendum XXVIII will propose options to reduce vertical lines from zero to 40%, to be achieved by trap limits, gear configuration changes, seasonal closures, and/or the acceleration of currently planned trap reductions. The Board noted reductions will consider ongoing state and federal management actions, including trap reductions and trap caps, which have already reduced vertical lines. By initiating this action, states can continue to cooperatively participate in the management of this species during ongoing discussions on the conservation of North Atlantic right whales. In addition, those who are most familiar with the intricacies of the lobster fishery, including industry, can provide input on future regulations. For more information, please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, 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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