

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission  
Lobster Conservation Management Team (LCMT) Area 2  
Meeting – January 22, 2025

LCMT Members present: L. Dellinger (chair), A. Eagles, B. Thibeault, T. Field

Other LMA 2 harvesters present: P. Brodeur

Summary

The LCMT for Area 2 met virtually on January 22, 2025 at 4:30 pm. The basis of the meeting was to discuss the Plan Development Team’s summer 2024 analysis, provide input on the management measures implemented in NOAA Fisheries’ interim rule for LCMA 2, and provide recommendations for management measures moving forward.

Overall, the Team maintained its perspectives from the April 2024 LCMT 2 meeting regarding measures implemented in the NOAA interim rule, which include ownership caps and trap cap reductions corresponding to measures implemented in the Commission’s Addenda XXI and XXII (2013). The LCMT’s perspective is that the fishery has already responded to the reduced size of the lobster biomass, as indicated in the PDT analysis showing the reduced effort and landings for the LCMA 2 fishery since the Addenda were approved. One harvester also noted that the increased targeting of Jonah crab has removed some of the fishing pressure from lobster, further reducing lobster fishery effort beyond what is reflected in the overall number of traps fished. Given these points, the group feels there is no need for the measures put forth in the Interim Rule.

The LCMT expressed a need to allow harvesters to bank traps beyond their 800 actively fished traps. With the reduction in the size of the fishery, the few harvesters remaining should have increased flexibility in operating their businesses. This includes having the ability to bank traps in case of future trap allocation reductions. The group also unanimously agreed that the sunset clause should be removed completely. The group supports *status quo* management measures for the LCMA 2 fishery (i.e., maintenance of regulations in place prior to the federal interim rule).

LCMT 2 members highlighted the need for consistency between federal and state regulations moving forward. For state regulations, they support maintaining existing owner-operator rules for Rhode Island and Massachusetts, with a cap of 800 actively fished traps and an allowance for each state permit to bank up to an additional 800 traps. For federal regulations to be consistent with state regulations, they recommend maintaining the existing federal cap of 800 active traps per federal vessel permit with a federal entity ownership cap at 1600. With these rules, if an individual owned one federally permitted vessel, they could own and fish up to 800 traps, but also accumulate up to an additional 800 “banked” traps. In cases where a vessel owner had two boats with two separate federal permits under the same LLC or entity, they would be limited to the entity ownership cap of 1600 traps overall. Owners of two or more federal vessel permits could include them in the same entity as long as they do not exceed the entity ownership cap. The Team members specified that there should be no limit on the number of federal licenses an

individual could own; this flexibility is needed because it might require the purchase of more than one permit with few traps to build up a full allocation.

There were suggestions to allow individuals to transfer traps within an entity and not pay a transfer tax. This would allow owners of multiple boats to rearrange trap allocations among vessels without a tax, offering improved adaptability in cases of breakdowns, vessel upgrades, or other changes in fishing businesses. One member also mentioned that the 10% transfer tax should be eliminated completely.