



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 3, 2016

PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger
703.842.0740

ASMFC American Lobster Board Approves Jonah Crab Addendum I & Initiates Addendum to Establish a Coastwide Standard for Claw Landings

Alexandria, VA – The American Lobster Management Board approved Addendum I to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Jonah Crab. The Addendum establishes a bycatch limit of 1,000 pounds of crab/trip for non-trap gear (e.g., otter trawls, gillnets) and non-lobster trap gear (e.g., fish, crab, and whelk pots) effective January 1, 2017. In doing so, the Addendum caps incidental landings of Jonah crab across all non-directed gear types with a uniform bycatch allowance. While the gear types in Addendum I make minimal contributions to total landings in the fishery, the 1,000 crab limit provides a cap to potential increases in effort and trap proliferation.

The Addendum responds to concerns regarding the appropriateness of the 200 crab per calendar day/500 crab per trip incidental bycatch limit for non-trap gear established by the 2015 Jonah Crab FMP, as well as concerns regarding the lack of effort controls on non-lobster traps and the potential for trap proliferation. Data submitted by the New England Fishery Management Council and NOAA Fisheries illustrated less than 1% of non-trap gear incidentally harvested Jonah crab in excess of the FMP bycatch limits. Data from the VTR database also indicated that between May 1, 2013 and August 31, 2015, 194 trips landed Jonah crab with non-lobster gear such as whelk, crab, and fish pots.

The Board also initiated the development of an addendum to consider establishing a coastwide standard for claw landings in the Jonah crab fishery. The FMP currently specifies the fishery be strictly whole crab except for those individuals who can prove a history of claw landings in New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia; however, claw fishermen from New York and Maine have since been identified and these individuals are currently only allowed to land whole crabs. At the request of the Board, NOAA Fisheries provided regulatory guidance on implementation of the current exemption in federal waters, highlighting the exemption may not be consistent with National Standard 4 (measures shall not discriminate between residents of different states). As a result, the Board initiated a draft addendum to create a coastwide claw standard with options for a strictly whole crab fishery, a whole crab fishery with the allowance for a specific volume of detached claws per trip, and the unlimited landing of claws that meet a 2.5" minimum length. The draft addendum will be presented to the Board in August.

The Board also discussed potential management actions to address American lobster stock declines in Southern New England (SNE). It agreed to initiate the development of an addendum to address the poor

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.

condition of the SNE stock by lowering fishing mortality and increasing egg production through a combination of management tools including gauge size changes, season closures, area closures, and trap reductions. Underlying the Board's discussion was the shared belief that the condition of the SNE American lobster stock is serious and in need of action. Further, its depleted condition is due to a combination of environmental factors and fishing pressure. Lastly, the Board agreed not to pursue a moratorium in the SNE fishery. As a first step in the addendum process, the Board tasked the Technical Committee to review management measures which could achieve a 20%-60% increase in egg production. This analysis will be presented to the Board in August. In addition to taking action on SNE, the Board tasked the Technical Committee to explore a several issues regarding the long-term sustainability of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank stock given the past few years of poor recruitment. For more information, please contact Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator, at 703.842.0741 or mware@asmfc.org.

###