

ASMFC Lobster Advisory Panel

*April 21, 2006
Conference Call*

Meeting Summary

Meeting Participants

AP Members: David Spencer (chair), John Whittaker, Jack Fulmer, Bro Cote, David Cousens, Bob Baines (vice-chair), Arthur Sawyer, Lanny Dellinger
ASMFC Staff: Toni Kerns

Recommendations to the Board

- 1. Move forward to adopt the new reference points in addendum VIII (targets and thresholds)**
- 2. Adopt a monitoring and reporting system in each state and agency, but allow states flexibility in implementing their plan**
 - a. Adopt a monitoring and reporting system that would collect data from a representative sample of industry members.**
- 3. Move toward a single uniform data collection form that is consistent in each state and agency. State and federal agencies should work cooperatively to ensure there is no dual reporting, including industry members that can be identified as dealers and harvesters.**
- 4. Continue the forward progress of the transferability committee to discuss uniform measures in adopting transferability in management plans.**

Addendum VIII Discussion

Staff reviewed the management issues included in addendum VIII. A member of the AP was concerned with the changes in the biological stock unit areas. He felt that the unique lobster stock of areas Long Island Sound should not be in the same stock area as the inshore and offshore waters of what used to be a part of the Georges Bank and South stock. Staff explained the areas were changed based on lobster distribution and abundance, patterns of migration, location of spawners, growth and maturation rates, and the dispersal and transport of larvae. Also, a review of new maturity-at-size data for offshore Southern New England indicates that maturity-at-size in offshore Southern New England is more similar to inshore Southern New England than Georges Bank.

AP members were also concerned that the stock assessment did not take into account the increases in natural mortality (M) in some areas. Staff explained that an increase in M was taken into account in the SNE stock, but there was not enough evidence of a change in M in other stock areas. AP members were also concerned the assessment does not take into account predation of lobsters by striped bass, cod, and dogfish to name few.

Reference Points Discussion

There was general agreement that the new reference point of targets and thresholds should be adopted. These reference points are more transparent than the old F10, in fact many fishermen never understood the mechanics of the F10. By moving forward with the new reference points fishermen will be more trustworthy of the management system because they can understand how they work. The new reference point coincides with what the industry is seeing on the water.

Monitoring and Reporting

The AP agreed that data collection is important, but the only data that should be collected is data that is needed for science and not for management. There is a general mistrust of data collection in Maine after what happened in the groundfish fishery. After all the public hearings in Maine, some of the fishermen would like to propose Maine collecting data from a representative sample of fishermen (% to be determined by the TC). The intent would be over time the percent of fishermen sampled would increase until there is 100% reporting. By implementing a tiered system, there can be trust gained by fishermen in the system and it will allow the state to build an infrastructure to collect and collate the data. Some members of the TC do not feel harvesters need to report landings if they are already being reported by dealers and others feel that it would be good to have a check and balance of a two-ticket system. A few members of the AP suggested states have the flexibility to create data collection forms would not tie the fishermen's identity to it (meaning name)

The AP agreed there should be a uniform data collection form coastwide. It is essential for managers (both state and federal) to work together so there is no dual reporting. It is a waste of industry and managers time to have dual reporting as there is currently. Managers also need to take steps to have the non-trap sector report. A program should also be established to collect data from recreational lobstermen.