

Meeting Summary
American Lobster Technical Committee
Portsmouth, NH
January 17, 2002

Participants: Heather Stirratt, Alison Sirois, Kevin Kelly, Bill Andrews, Charles Lynch, Joe Idoine, Tom Angell, Bob Glenn, Bruce Estrella, Penny Howell, Carl LoBue, Clare McBane, Vic Crecco, Peter Burns, Bonnie Spinazzola, Scott Tribbie, Tom Fazio, Geoff White

The meeting was called to order by Carl Wilson.

Reminders and updates on the Lobster Management Board Activity was presented by H. Stirratt.

- American Lobster Annual Compliance Reports (see memo dated January 7, 2002, from H. Stirratt) are due **March 1, 2002**. The standard compliance form must be followed. The PRT will review these reports within 2-4 weeks after the deadline. Current state regulations must be submitted with this report. Information from previous years may be referenced.

- The 2002 American Lobster Work Plan was discussed. Fiscal resources amounting to \$17,750 are available for 2002. This document is meant for guidance only. Wilson indicated that the Lobster Board should be made aware that some documents may take longer to complete (couple of months past the deadline) to provide a high quality product.

- The ASMFC Management Science Committee is in the process of developing a detailed document which will address the role of technical committees and how to increase the productivity of meetings. It was mentioned that voting on issues by a technical committee may not be allowed. In this situation, if there is not a unanimous consensus, a minority report is to be written.

a.) Amendment 4.

Amendment 4 identified two issues: 1.) Conservation equivalency for V-notching and 2.) Conservation equivalency for limits on landings by non-trap gear.

The motion to approve Amendment 4 failed at the Lobster Board meeting (October 2001), but it was not rejected. As a result, Amendment 4 could be raised again at future Lobster Board meetings.

b.) Addendum III

Addendum III addressed the alternative management measures presented by the LCMTs to the Lobster Board for the purposes of meeting $F_{10\%}$ by calendar year 2008. Public comments are being compiled and will be presented to the Lobster Board at its next meeting in February 2002. As it stands, if Addendum III passes, March 1, 2002 will be the date for implementation of all rules and gauge size increases will begin July 1, 2002 and proceed through the following years on this date. Inconsistencies found between Addenda I, II and III are being addressed.

c. Addendum IV

Addendum IV includes a LCMT Area 2 proposal addressing a cap to the total number of traps fished and the reduction of fishing effort. George LaPointe suggested that the Technical Committee take an initial look at it today and give comments to the Lobster Board. ASMFC would like Addendum IV to begin being developed. Further discussion of Addendum IV is found later in these meeting minutes.

Technical Committee Review of Trawl Survey Trends 2001

Discussion

Wilson stated that trawl survey trends should be looked at yearly. Stirratt stated that in the absence of a yearly assessment, there should be a review of the trends and any “red flags” should be considered. Stirratt further stated that the Management Board is not looking for a “mini-assessment.” Glenn brought up the fact that a standard protocol is needed so that comparisons can be made between states. Standardization will not be set today, but will be on the agenda in the future. The month of January may not be the best month for these trawl survey trends to be presented. States should contact Stirratt or Wilson on this issue. A summary of the state survey trends will be provided by Wilson to the Board.

Stirratt asked that all states send electronic files to her. There was discussion as to how much to send to the Lobster Board (figures, etc.) and the concern that not all the data can be presented. Carl LoBue suggested that the highlights from the surveys should be bulleted and figures could be sent to the Lobster Board. Dates of importance are as follows:

January 30, 2002 - Three highlights are to be bulleted from each 2001 state trawl survey and sent to Wilson. Wilson will compile these bullets and provide a summary document and send it to Stirratt.

February 6, 2002 - Stirratt will release Wilson’s report to the Technical Committee for review and comments.

February 13, 2002 - State Technical Committee comments are to be sent from Carl Wilson to Stirratt by this date. Stirratt will distribute a final copy to the Technical Committee members.

a. ME/NH. The results of the 2001 ME/NH trawl survey was presented by Wilson and it is not complete at this time. Funding of this survey comes from the NE Consortium for a 3 year period. Wilson stated that meetings with the industry are needed in the hopes of achieving more cooperation.

b. MA. Glenn presented the results of the MA trawl survey. The 2001 MA Gulf of Maine fully-recruited (83+mm) lobster indices were well below their respective time series means, and were close to the lowest values in the 20 year time series for both males and females.

The 2001 MA Gulf of Maine pre-recruit (71-82mm) lobster indices were well below their respective time series means, and were the second lowest values in the 20 year time series for both males and females.

The 2001 MA Southern New England fully-recruited (83+mm) lobster indices were well below there respective time series means for both males and females.

The 2001 MA Southern New England pre-recruit (71-82mm) lobster indices were near time series lows, and have remained well below levels observed in the later 1980's and early 1990's for both males and females.

c. RI. Angell presented the results of the RI trawl survey. Anecdotally, shell disease is prevalent, but perhaps there is a slight decrease in state waters. LoBue will forward PowerPoint slides used in a presentation by Don Landers at the Lobster Health Symposium to the Technical Committee.

d. CT. The results of the CT trawl survey were presented by Crecco.

Estrella asked how the buyback of lobster traps was proceeding. LoBue discussed the buyback program and the possible changes in the numbers of traps allowed to be bought back for different segments of the fishery.

Crecco indicated that the number of recruits and pre-recruits in the figures is adjusted to the numbers in that particular year based on the legal gauge size for that year.

e. NJ. The NJ 2001 trawl survey was presented by Andrews.

f. NMFS. The NMFS 2001 trawl survey was presented by Idoine.

Subcommittee Updates on Work to Date

a. Database SC - Presentation by Fazio of ICF Consulting and White of ASMFC.

Fazio presented the draft Logical Data Model Review and Confirmation of the ASMFC American Lobster Stock Assessment Database.

Items presented included the work completed by date, the conceptual system architecture (operational, reconciliation and informational layers), assessment data version control, how the database supports the assessment process, overviews of the data models (trawl survey logical data model and stock assessment logical data model), implementation plan timeline, and key questions for the Technical Committee to consider.

Discussion was interspersed throughout the presentation. The logical data model is designed to provide the needed input data for the lobster stock assessment with a plan to use the data models for different species in the future. To LoBue's question of whether tag recapture data was to be used in the models, he was told that the models are not presently formatted for this data.

The draft logical data model distributed to the Technical Committee on January 3, 2002 was reviewed and the structure of several "fact tables" (dimension) was described. Access to the database will be similar to a Windows-like format (drag and drop). Database versions are able to be separated. Idoine pointed out that with this system, there will not be a problem with "afterthoughts" because the system will prompt users for documentation of changes to the data. Idoine indicated that the last assessment most likely can not be reproduced due to insufficient archival of employed data.

Multiple versions will not slow the process of using the logical data model. Crecco stated that he felt that development of the last assessment was long due not to the lack of data or the compilation of data, but due to not knowing what questions to ask of the data. Glenn disagreed and stated that if a system such as the one presented here was available, the assessment process could have been cut down by one year. White stated that this database logical model will give the Technical Committee the time to ask the needed questions instead of expending so much time finding the data. LoBue asked if White is envisioning actual data or summaries of harvest inputs. White indicated that there will be a combination of trip reports (if the state has these) or a summary from each state in the reconciliation layer but the assessment database will contain summarized information. LoBue asked that White send to him a template form indicating the format for NY data. White indicated that he would.

Fazio indicated for those who wanted more detail to contact him and offered his business card to those interested.

Thomas S. Fazio, Vice President;
ICF Consulting
9300 Lee Highway

Fairfax, VA 22031
Phone: 703-934-3817
Fax: 703-934-3974
Cell: 301-526-1438
e-mail: tfazio@icfconsulting.com

White directed the Technical Committee to pay particular attention to the presented “key questions” which he indicated came from the last assessment. Fazio asked the Technical Committee to review the design document (ASMFC lobster database - Draft Logical Data Model) and provide comments and suggestions by **January 25, 2002** to White and cc. to Stirratt in order for Phase 1 (deliverable of the final logical model) of the implementation plan to be completed by the end of January 2002.

White pointed out the need for data source contact information and data needed. This information is to be sent to White on the schedule below.

- Data source contact information due by **January 17, 2002**.
- Fisheries dependent empirical data due by **March 30, 2002**.
- Fisheries independent empirical data due by **April 30, 2002**.

Data information should be through the Year 2000. Stirratt indicated that ASMFC will be asking the Lobster Board to have the states make the above data gathering a priority. White will take the format of the data that the states send him and will try to convert it to a standard format. Fazio concluded that ICF and White will likely have to work one on one with Technical Committee members. It is important to keep the formatting standard between the years, even if changes occurred to individual surveys or data storage. White predicted that in Spring, 2002 data inputs will be examined.

b. Socio-economic SC

Stirratt presented a memorandum from the Socio-economic Sub-committee regarding Addendum III. Comments are to be sent to Stirratt by **January 30, 2002**.

The Socio-economic Subcommittee, in their memo dated January 16, 2002 to the Lobster Board, requested the continuation of its review of lobster industry governance issues. As indicated in this memo, a UME/Clark U graduate student was asked to summarize important issues (with examples) on fisheries governance issues. The second draft has been submitted to the Socio-economic Subcommittee but the members of this Committee do not agree whether this draft should be submitted to the Technical Committee. Some believe that there is a narrow focus to the report and they would like to take 2-3 months to expand on the points that the graduate student addressed. Stirratt is waiting to hear from J. Wilson as to how to proceed. It is questionable whether or not

this draft will be presented to the Lobster Board at their meeting in February 2002. Submit comments on the January 16, 2002 memo to Stirratt by **January 30, 2002**.

Stirratt stated that the Technical Committee is an oversight committee and therefore is given the opportunity to review Sub-committee reports but does not have veto power over a subcommittee report.

c. Model Development SC

Stirratt indicated that she has talked with George LaPointe and at the February 2002 Lobster Board meeting there will be an agenda requesting deadlines for the Model Development Subcommittee. Mark Gibson is the Chair of the Model Development SC. This Subcommittee is reviewing the currently used models, the overfishing definition of $F_{10\%}$ and alternate models. Stirratt also indicated that the Lobster Board anticipates every 3-5 years an update to the stock assessment and every 5 years a peer reviewed assessment.

LoBue indicated that he has found books, etc. for matrix modeling. He will send websites to the Technical Committee by e-mail.

Crecco gave an update of the Subcommittee. Crecco claimed that the information just has to be pieced together and it will be ready for review. In his update, Crecco indicated that through the years, the stock doesn't appear to be affected by the fishery. He is interested in another Technical Committee member to take a look at the information. Crecco does not see the connection between exploitation rates and the fishery and landings seem to be determined by the ability of the stock to increase or decline. LoBue suggested that the Subcommittee should explore what Canada has done with its modeling. Wilson pointed out that Canada does not have good trawl surveys and sea sampling is not up to US standards. Glenn further stated that comparing exploitation rates with Canada would likely not be successful because of the lacking Canadian trawl surveys. LoBue suggested that for some of the models, the Technical Committee may need to use combined sexes because one sex is lacking in some sampled areas.

d. Stock Assessment Subcommittee Nominations

Stirratt indicated that members of the Stock Assessment Subcommittee had not officially been chosen by the Technical Committee. She shared a previous list of possible Stock Assessment Subcommittee members, which included Vic Crecco, Mark Gibson, Joseph Idoine, Larry Jacobson and Carl Wilson.

Stirratt reviewed the ASMFC American Lobster Management Program Operating Procedures. Included in the procedures for the Stock Assessment Subcommittee there is a maximum limit of 6 members. Much discussion followed.

Crecco commented that anyone can attend a meeting of this Subcommittee. Stirratt pointed out that it is the Chair's decision if comments from the audience are to be

included in the deliberations of the subcommittees. Estrella pointed out that it would be difficult to decide who would be on this list of participants, since Mark Gibson and Larry Jacobson were not at the present Technical Committee meeting. Wilson asked to add Young Chen to the list of possible members. Estrella stated that there might be a conflict of interest with Mark Gibson, since he is a member of the Lobster Board. Estrella nominated Bob Glenn to be on this Subcommittee. Wilson indicated that he would contact Gibson and Jacobson and the other 5 possible members. Carl agreed to notify the Technical Committee of their interests in serving on the Subcommittee.

Idoine pointed out that there are 2 members from NMFS on this list, and the likelihood that they will both remain on the Subcommittee is unclear. He also stated that he would like Technical Committee Chair or Vice Chair (ex-officio) placed on the list instead of Wilson. Idoine commented that information on the work assignments is needed and by late fall 2002 the Subcommittee should be established.

The amount of work involved and the time commitment needed for the members of the Stock Assessment Subcommittee is unknown, but important in the decision of participation. Stirratt stated that the process of outlining how a stock assessment is completed is very difficult and she is interested in outlining this process.

Crecco felt that more people than 6 are needed on this Subcommittee. Stirratt recommended concerned members of the Technical Committee contact Susan Shipman or George LaPointe on this issue.

Stirratt relayed the process of committee designation. The Technical Committee makes nominations. Those nominated are asked if they are interested and have the time needed for completion of the task by a reasonable date. If the Lobster Board Chair and Technical Committee Chair agree on the nominations, then those that are nominated become members of the subcommittee.

There was interest in allowing non-subcommittee members of the TC to participate in stock assessment discussions, if possible.

e. General Subcommittee Business

Stirratt indicated that people on the subcommittees must be more involved (active) with their subcommittee. She feels the process of completion is too open-ended and there needs to be an organized time frame leading to the final product. Crecco pointed out that Wilson (Chair, Technical Committee) or the Chair of the Lobster Board should be the one(s) to encourage completion of the products. LoBue suggested a phone conference with the Lobster Board Chair, Technical Committee Chair, Commission staff and the Chair of a subcommittee to discuss the above issue.

Review of Area 2 Proposal

Estrella reviewed the LCMT Area 2 proposal for trap reductions and transferable traps. The purpose of this Area 2 plan addendum, in conjunction with the other measures already implemented for LCMT 2, is to meet the eleven objectives of Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster and help insure that the benefits of the existing gauge increase schedule are not eroded by uncontrolled effort. Specifically objective #2 within Amendment 3 calls for the development of flexible regional programs to control fishing effort and regulate fishing morality rates. Estrella pointed out that there are concerns in Area 2 that traps have escalated beyond an acceptable level and landings have declined and this plan Addendum seeks to cap the total number of traps fished and reduce fishing effort through both active and passive measures. It also seeks to control arial expansion of effort within and between adjacent management areas. He noted that the addendum is presented as a recommendation for federal waters of Area 2 and recognizing competing demands across jurisdictions, it is only suggested as a template for RI and MA in developing their respective effort reduction plans. It was also noted that for some transferability is a controversial issue. Angell indicated several (non-LCMT 2) RI fishermen will propose an alternate plan (for federal waters). The LCMT Area 2 plan will be submitted to the Lobster Board in February 2002.

George LaPointe asked the Technical Committee to make preliminary comments before the next Lobster Board meeting. Wilson suggested that the Socio-economic Subcommittee before the Lobster Board meeting review this plan. It was decided that the plan would be sent to the individuals on that Subcommittee and the members of the Subcommittee would decide if they had the time to develop a report to the Lobster Board. If they feel that there is a time limitation, individual comments are to be sent to their state representatives on the Lobster Board. Similarly, Stirratt suggested that individual Technical Committee comments should be sent to their state Lobster Board representative. Bruce Estrella requested that all comments also be cached to Jim Fair and Mark Gibson.

Assignment for Research Needs

Stirratt asked that the Technical Committee rank the prioritized research needs by L, M, H (low, medium, high) prioritization by **February 28, 2002**, and send it to her. If there are additional needs, these should be listed for next year's list. Those research needs that have been fulfilled should be indicated as such.

Other Business

Wilson asked for the Technical Committee members involved with Area 1 to have a conference call in February, March or before May (Glenn) to decide how to measure V-notching as 100% (remember that 100% V-notching means that every egged female that comes over the boat is V-notched).

Crecco raised the question as to how to get values for offshore landings. LoBue indicated that every state does it differently.