

ASMFC Lobster Advisory Panel

January 27, 2003

Warwick, RI

Meeting Summary

Meeting Participants:

AP Members:

Bob Nudd	Stephen Train (P)	James Fox
David Spencer	Angelo Correnti	George Doll
Robert Baines	Arthur Sawyer	Bro Cote
Jon Carter	John Sorlien	
David Cousens (P)	Nick Crismale	

ASMFC Commissioners, Staff, and Technical Committee members:

Pat White	Carrie Selberg
Bill Adler	Bob Glenn

Public:

Robert Smith	John German	Bonnie Spinazzola
Mike Theiler	John P Davi Jr.	

Summary of Meeting and Recommendations to the Lobster Board:

April 2002 Minutes

The meeting summary from April 2002 was approved as drafted.

ASMFC Management Update

Staff updated the AP on Amendment 4, Addendum IV and recent Board discussions on the most restrictive rule. Staff explained that Amendment 4 had been indefinitely tabled and that in order for those issues to be revisited, a new Amendment process would need to begin. Staff also explained that two LCMT proposals had been submitted for possible inclusion in a future Addendum IV. No particular timeline had been set for this Addendum but a new Area 2 proposal may lead to action this year.

The AP discussed recent Board activities on the most restrictive rule. The AP indicated that this is an unresolved issue that needs considerable attention. **The AP recommends that the Board form a subcommittee to address outstanding issues related to the most restrictive rule.** They anticipate this subcommittee outlining these outstanding issues and providing the Board with a proposal of how to address these. A subcommittee of the AP was formed including one AP member from each area (B. Baines, J. Sorlein, D. Spencer, and N. Crismale). The AP would like several Board members to be a part of this subcommittee as well.

Technical Committee Update

Bob Glenn, TC Chair, updated the group on the model used for evaluation of the v-notching criteria. P White explained that the MA Lobstermen's Association was now participating in the ME association's long standing v-notching survey and asked if this could be incorporated into this evaluation. B. Glenn indicated that it could especially because the ME results have mirrored the ME sea sampling information. The AP also heard about the Lobster Database that will house all of the historical lobster data in one location and cut down on the time needed to update stock assessments. The AP supports any work that cuts down on the time needed to do assessments and noted that this hopefully will lead to management responding more quickly to any concerns raised in these assessments.

Lobster Operating Procedures

Staff updated the AP on the revised operating procedures that formalize the relationship between the LCMT and the states. LCMT proposals now should be forwarded by the States to the Lobster Board instead of the LCMT forwarding the proposal directly to the Board. Some AP members expressed concern that the states would alter the proposal before the Board meeting but other AP members explained that this new process should lead to better communication early in the process so LCMT members are aware of any limitations states have while they are developing their proposals rather than at a later date.

MA Proposal

The AP reviewed the MA proposal submitted to the ASMFC outlined in a memo from Paul Diodati dated December 31, 2003. B. Glenn reviewed the content of the proposal and staff outlined the preliminary discussions of the Technical Committee the week prior.

The AP made several assumptions about the MA proposal that are not clearly outlined in the proposal including that only licensed individuals can buy traps, that no partial transfers are allowed, that this only applies to state waters, and that area specific licenses would still be used.

There was consensus among the AP members that they strongly believe in the LCMT process and believe this comanagement between the states and industry is the best way to establish management measures. Therefore, the AP has serious concerns that the MA proposal was developed outside of the LCMT process. The AP recommends that the LCMT in Area 1 meet along with the jurisdictions involved (ME, NH, and MA) to work out concerns with the v notching definitions to address law enforcement concerns raised by MA. However, the AP would like all of the Area plans originally approved to move forward as developed as quickly as possible and do not want this suggestion to slow down the implementation process in any way.

The AP also believes it is important that the MA proposal be conservation equivalent to the Area plans as outlined in Addendum 3. Most AP members raised concern that the MA proposal is not equivalent. Some specific concerns raised by various AP members include:

- Using different gauge sizes (between recreational and commercial fisheries) in the same area would lead to the savings from the larger recreational gauge size would be taken by the commercial fishermen.

- The 50% cut for the recreational fishermen would not lead to a 35% reduction as described in the proposal because there is an assumption that recreational licenses remain constant.
- They question the statement that the coastwide definition only protects the lobsters for one molt and therefore question the figure in the MA proposal that only 18,000 lobsters are protected by the zero tolerance definition.
- In the past, industry has been told that trap reductions would have to be cut drastically in order to meet the rebuilding goals.
- Effort shifts may occur between the various areas in MA if transfers are allowed between areas.

Several AP members did indicate that they believe that the plan does a good job of capping commercial effort at historic levels and expressed support for capping effort overall.

Finally the AP discussed whether there is a true disincentive to be out of compliance with the Lobster management measures. Many AP members believe that without true disincentives there are delays to implementation of various management measures. The AP began this discussion and will continue it in the future.

Area 2 Concerns

B. Glenn gave a presentation to the AP on the Technical Committee report about stock declines in Area 2. Staff updated the AP on an Area 2 Board Subcommittee that had met several weeks earlier and was recommending that the Lobster Board take Emergency Action. The TC is developing a Total Allowable Catch for Area 2 that is intended to be a soft TAC and not a quota. LCMT 2 will be meeting to develop management measures for Board consideration that meet this TAC.

The AP had a general discussion about what is leading to the stock declines and expressed concern with overfishing, shell disease, increasing water temperatures, and pesticides. The AP noted that because of the decline in both legal lobsters and recruits that environmental conditions must be impacting the stock. **The AP agreed that this should be addressed through the LCMT process and that there are both economic and biological considerations that need to be addressed.** Some AP members indicated that the Board needs to be flexible and open minded when addressing these concerns.

Other Area Concerns

AP members in Area 6 outlined the serious problems they are facing in Long Island Sound. Representatives from Area 2 and Area 6 compared their situations and stressed the importance of continued research into the use of pesticides and shell disease. AP members were told about a meeting on March 7th in CT reviewing the research that has been taking place in Long Island Sound addressing some of these issues.

AP members from Area 3 indicated there continues to be a problem with the timely implementation of management measures by the NMFS. Other Area 3 members expressed concern that problems in Area 2 and 6 may lead to increased effort in Area 3.

Transferability

Staff updated the AP on the Transferability workshop held in August 2002. This workshop included several general presentations and case studies as well as discussion by the participants on several key questions. Most AP members who attended the workshop indicated they thought it was informative and a good opportunity to educate everyone on transferability.

The Board met earlier in January to discuss transferability again and staff stepped through a document they had prepared which includes what the Board feels are necessary components on a transferability proposal. The AP reviewed this list and agreed that this was a good list.

Whale Issues

The AP had a general discussion about whale issues. Many AP members expressed frustration that other causes of whale deaths were not being pursued more actively and that the regulations on the lobster industry are considerable and not well thought out.