

OVERVIEW

Limited Access Privilege Program Committee

March 2, 2009
Jekyll Island Club Hotel
371 Riverview Drive
Jekyll Island, GA 31527

At this meeting of the Limited Access Privilege Program Committee, the Committee needs to: (A) hear an update on new LAP programs in the U.S.; (B) review of letter from golden crab fishermen summarizing a Golden Crab meeting that took place February 2, 2009 in Key Largo, FL; and C) hear a summary of scoping comments, discuss, and provide direction to staff.

A. Update on New LAP Programs in the U.S.

Council staff will provide the Committee with a brief update on new and revised U.S. LAP programs.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: None

B. Summary Report of a Meeting with Golden Crab Fishery Participants **(Attachment 1)**

At the December 2008 meeting of the Limited Access Privilege Program Committee, Council staff relayed a request from three Golden Crab fishermen for a meeting with Council staff to discuss a possible Limited Access Privilege program for the South Atlantic Golden Crab fishery. The LAP Program Committee requested that Tony Iarocci and Kate Quigley speak with the golden crab fishermen to find out why they would like to consider a LAP program. A meeting was hosted by Environmental Defense in Key Largo, FL on February 2, 2009 at the request of the golden crab fishermen.

Meeting Participants:

Tony Iarocci, Council member
Howard Rau, golden crab fisherman and Golden Crab AP member
Bill Whipple, golden crab fisherman and Golden Crab AP Chair
Randy Manchester, golden crab fisherman and Golden Crab AP member
Eileen Dougherty, Environmental Defense Fund
Sarah Hagedorn, Environmental Defense Fund
Kate Quigley, Council staff economist

The meeting consisted of: 1) discussion of issues and concerns in the golden crab fishery; 2) update on Council amendments, current timelines, and requirements under the reauthorized

MSA; 3) discussion of stock assessment information on golden crab; 4) overview of LAPs and other alternative management options; 5) discussion of how LAPs and other methods might address golden crab fishermen’s concerns; and 6) discussion of future actions. After the meeting, the golden crab fishermen wrote a letter to the Chairman of the Council which includes a summary of the meeting, reasons for wanting to explore the option of LAP management, and requests to the Council. This letter is included in the second briefing book as Attachment 1.

Background Information on Golden Crab

The Golden Crab Fishery Management Plan went into effect beginning on August 27, 1996 and established three golden crab fishing zones. The Northern Zone is defined as the EEZ north of 28 degrees N. latitude. The Middle Zone is contained within the EEZ between 25 degrees North and 28 degrees North latitude. The Southern Zone extends south from 25 degrees North latitude within the South Atlantic Council’s EEZ. Federal permits are issued for a specific zone and fishing is allowed only in that zone for which the permit is issued.

In the South Atlantic region initially 35 vessels were granted permits to operate in this fishery: 27 permits were issued for the southern zone; 6 permits were issued for the middle zone; and 2 permits were granted to vessels for the northern zone. Other management regulations imposed by the golden crab FMP included: dealer and vessel permitting and reporting; limitations on the size of vessels; prescribing allowable gear (including escape gaps and escape panels); and prohibiting possession of female crabs (see the FMP for a complete list of measures).

Number of Participants

The number of permit holders that land golden crab has fluctuated from year to year (**Table 1**). The greatest number of vessels making landings since 1995 was 14 (**Table 2**). In recent years, only 5 to 6 vessels have landed any golden crab. The majority of vessels currently fishing for golden crab have Middle Zone permits. In 1997, 1998, and 2000, there were more vessels fishing for golden crab with Southern Zone permits than Middle Zone permits. Only in 2006 and 2007 have vessels with Northern Zone permits participated in the fishery. **Figure 1** shows average golden crab landings per vessel.

Table 1. Numbers of active permit holders and vessels landing golden crab, 1995-2007.
Source: SEFSC, 2008.

Year	Permit Holders	Vessels Making Landings	Average Landings Per Vessel
1996	34	4	130,790
1997	35	14	258,612
1998	29	14	129,579
1999	11	8	170,556
2000	10	10	210,437
2001	8	6	195,285
2002	12	7	125,194
2003	14	6	89,772
2004	12	5	69,584
2005	11	5	108,212

2006	12	6	149,844
2007	11	6	125,573

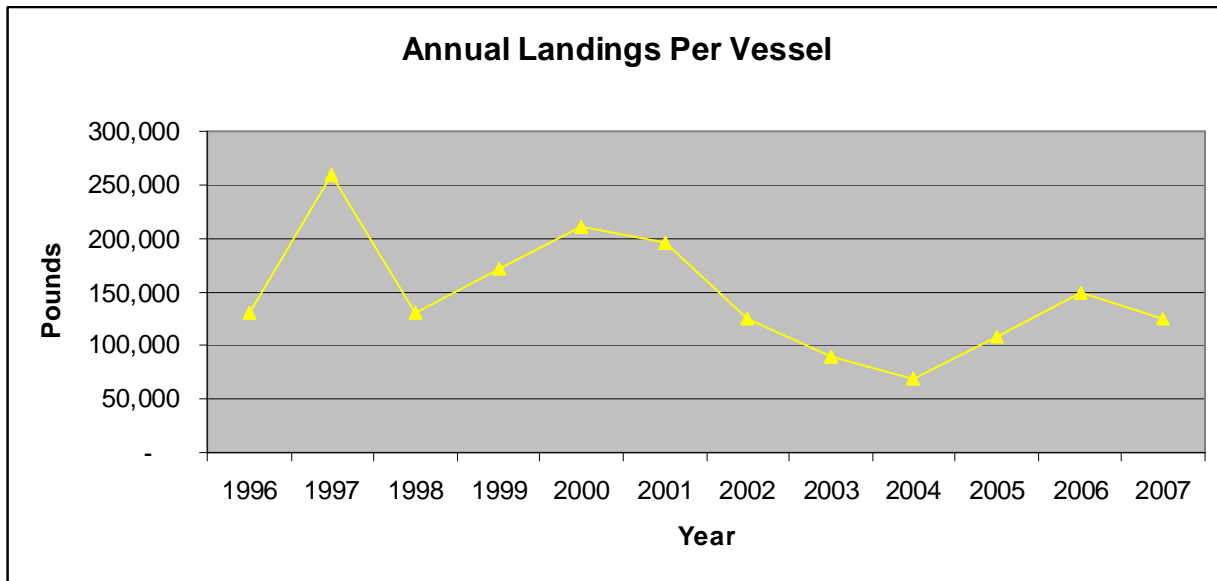


Figure 1. Annual Landings per Vessel. Source: Logbook and ALS data.

Table 2. Number of vessels making landings by Zone, 1995-2007.
Source: SEFSC, 2008.

Year	Northern	Middle	Southern
1995	0	confidential	0
1996	0	4	0
1997	0	5	9
1998	0	7	7
1999	0	6	confidential
2000	0	4	6
2001	0	4	confidential
2002	0	5	confidential
2003	0	5	confidential
2004	0	confidential	confidential
2005	0	5	0
2006	confidential	4	confidential
2007	confidential	5	0

Information on the golden crab fishery participation was taken from logbook data (SEFSC 2008), and Accumulative Landings System (ALS) data.

Annual and Monthly Landings

Total landings and landings by zone of golden crab are shown in **Table 3**. **Figure 2** shows these data in chart form. Golden crab landings reached a peak of over 1 million pounds in 1997.

Since then, landings have averaged about 550,000 pounds annually. However, the trend shows an average of 665,000 pounds from 1998-2002 and 355,000 pounds from 2003-2006.

The overwhelming majority of landings in recent years have come from the Middle Zone (90-100%) (Table 3). However, historically, a significant portion of landings came from the Southern Zone (up to 36%). Only in the past two years have any landings at all come from the Northern Zone. Landings from the Middle Zone have averaged around 470,000 pounds since 1996 with a high of about 662,000 pounds in 1997. Landings from the Southern Zone were significant 1997 through 2001. Landings peaked at about 373,000 pounds in 1997.

Table 3. Landings of golden crab by Zone, 1995-2007.

Source: SEFSC, 2008.

Year	Northern Zone	Middle Zone	Southern Zone	Total
1995	0	confidential	confidential	61,660
1996	0	523,160	0	523,160
1997	0	661,896	372,551	1,034,447
1998	0	361,480	156,836	518,316
1999	0	confidential	confidential	682,224
2000	0	584,130	257,617	841,747
2001	0	confidential	confidential	781,138
2002	0	confidential	confidential	500,774
2003	0	confidential	confidential	359,087
2004	0	confidential	confidential	278,336
2005	0	432,846	0	432,846
2006	Confidential	566,780	confidential	599,374
2007	Confidential	confidential	0	502,292

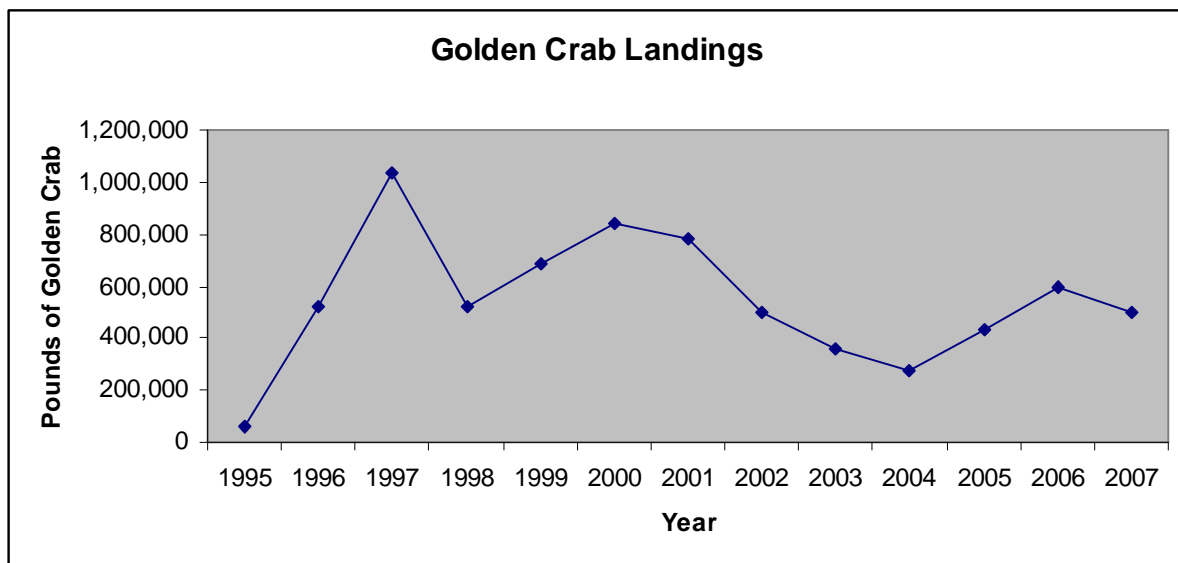


Figure 2. Landings of Golden Crab, 1995-2007. Source: SEFSC 2008.

Figure 3 shows monthly golden crab landings from 2003 to 2007. Golden crab landings have varied widely from month to month over the past 5 years. In general, more golden crab are landed from May to December than in the first half of the year due to Keys fishermen entering the fishery in the second half of the year after the spiny lobster season winds down. On average, from 1996 to 2007, 45% of total golden crab landings were made between January and May while 55% of landings were made between May and December.

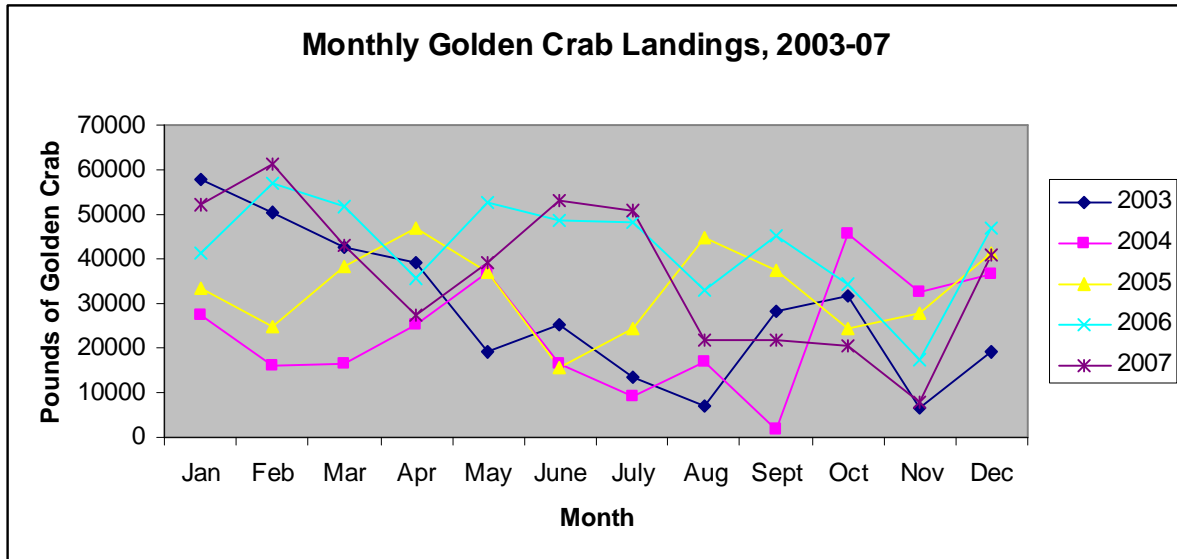


Figure 3. Monthly golden crab landings, 2003-2007. Source: ALS data.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: The LAP Committee has the option to make motions requested by the Golden Crab fishermen in their letter (Attachment 1).

B. Summary of Scoping Comments for Amendment 18 (Attachments 2 & 3)

Scoping meetings for Amendment 18 were held January 26 – Feb 4, 2009 and comments were accepted through February 6, 2009. Council staff will present a summary of scoping comments for the actions scoped for that propose possible LAP programs (Golden Tilefish and Black Seabass) or changes to LAP programs already in place (Wreckfish ITQ Program). The LAP Committee will discuss and provide direction to staff on possible alternatives.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Provide guidance to staff as appropriate.