

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Spiny Lobster-Stone Crab Committee Report and Full Council Motions
Courtyard Marriott
Coastal Ballroom
Gulfport, Mississippi
February 9, 2011 and February 10, 2011

Members:

Teehan, Chair
Gill, V. Chair
Sapp

Donaldson
Diaz

The agenda was adopted as written and the minutes of the October 27, 2010 meeting were approved with no modifications. Dr. Carrie Simmons summarized the Gulf SSC report that addressed the Caribbean spiny lobster stock assessment (**Tab I, No. 3**). The review panel rejected the stock assessment based on sufficient evidence that the spiny lobster stock cannot be assessed in isolation, due to the United States stocks largely depending on external recruitment from the upstream Caribbean populations. The SSC made two motions: one was to consider Caribbean spiny lobster a special case fishery and set OFL=7.90 mp and ABC=7.32 mp using Tier 3a of the Gulf ABC Control Rule. They also made a motion in support of the research recommendations from the Spiny Lobster Update Assessment Review which was to produce a Pan-Caribbean population-wide assessment.

Dr. Carrie Simmons then reviewed the actions and alternatives in the Draft Joint Spiny Lobster Amendment 10 Document in preparation for public hearings (**Tab I, No. 4**). The actions taken by the South Atlantic Council are reflected in the document/presentation and are available for review in **Tab I, No. 5**.

Action 1: Other species in the Spiny Lobster FMP

The committee recommends and I so move: **In Action 1: Other species in the spiny lobster FMP, to change our preferred alternative to Alternative 4:** Remove the following species from the Joint Spiny Lobster FMP: Option a: smoothtail spiny lobster; Option b: spotted spiny lobster; Option c: Spanish slipper lobster; and Option d: ridged slipper lobster.

The rationale for the committee decision was federal management for these species is not believed to be necessary and conservation may be greater under state management.

Action 2: Modify the Current Definitions of Maximum Sustainable Yield, Optimum Yield, Overfishing Threshold, and Overfished Threshold for Caribbean Spiny Lobster

The rationale for the committee's following three decisions was based on the rejected update stock assessment and that the previous benchmark assessment had no biomass estimates.

Action 2-1: Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY)

The committee recommends and I so move: **to add a new Alternative 4**, under Action 2-1: Maximum Sustainable Yield **that MSY proxy will be the OFL recommended by the Gulf SSC, 7.90 million pounds.**

The committee recommends and I so move: **in Action 2.1 Maximum Sustainable Yield, that the preferred alternative be Alternative 4.**

Action 2-2: Overfishing Threshold

The committee recommends and I so move: **in Action 2.2 Overfishing Threshold, that Alternative 4 be the preferred alternative, and to modify Alternative 4 to read that the overfishing threshold is the OFL defined by the Gulf SSC.**

Action 2-3: Overfished Threshold

The committee recommends and I so move: **in Action 2.3 Overfished Threshold, that we add a new Alternative 3, that MSST = (1-M) x B_{MSY}, and that be our preferred alternative.**

Action 3: Establish Sector Allocations for Caribbean Spiny Lobster in State and Federal Waters from North Carolina through Texas

The committee recommends and I so move: **in Action 3, that Alternative 1, be the preferred alternative.**

Alternative 1: No Action. Do not establish sector allocations.

The rationale for the committee decision was that the ACL will be set high enough that sector allocations are not necessary at this time.

Action 4: Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) Control Rule, ABC Level(s), Annual Catch Limits, and Annual Catch Targets for Caribbean Spiny Lobster

Action 4-1: Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) Control Rule

The committee recommends and I so move: **in Action 4.1, Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) Control Rule that the preferred alternative be Alternative 2b.**

Alternative 2: Adopt the following ABC control rule:

Option b: the Gulf Council's SSC ABC control rule.

The rationale for the committee decision was the update stock assessment was rejected and landings had to be used to by the SSC to recommend an ABC.

Action 4-2: Set Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) for Caribbean Spiny Lobster

The committee did not make any changes to their preferred alternative.

Action 4-3: Set Annual Catch Targets for Caribbean Spiny Lobster

The committee recommends and I so move: **in Action 4.3, Set Annual Catch Targets for Caribbean Spiny Lobster, to add a new Alternative 2, Option c, to set the annual catch target at 6.0 million pounds, and that it be the preferred option.**

The rationale for the committee decision to set ACT at 6.0 mp was this level is slightly below maximum landings in the past 5 years.

Action 5: Accountability Measures (AMs) by Sector

The committee recommends and I so move: in Action 5 ~~2.5~~, that the preferred alternative be Alternative 3, Option c, sub-option i:

Alternative 3: Establish post-season accountability measures:

Option c: Recreational and commercial combined accountability measures

Sub-option i: Adjust season length for both recreational and commercial harvest of spiny lobster in the fishing season following an ACL overage.

Substitute motion: The committee recommends and I so move: **in Action 5, to add a new Alternative 4, that the accountability measure for spiny lobster be the annual catch target and that it be the preferred alternative.**

Action 6: Develop or Update a Framework Procedure and Protocol for Enhanced Cooperative Management for Spiny Lobster

The committee recommends and I so move: **in Action 6, that Alternative 4, Option a, be the preferred alternative.**

Alternative 4: Revise the current Regulatory Amendment Procedures to create an expanded Framework Procedure:

Option a: Adopt the base Framework Procedure.

Action 7: Modify Regulations Regarding Possession and Handling of Short Caribbean Spiny Lobsters as “Undersized Attractants”. The committee did not modify their preferred alternative.

Mr. Grimes reviewed the definition of bycatch in the Magnuson Act for the use of undersized attractants. Based on this definition, undersized attractants are considered bycatch because they are obtained for business use rather than personal use. However, in light of new science documenting external recruitment and the impact of undersize attractants on the lobster trap efficiency, there is additional basis for the current Gulf preferred alternative to be practicable.

Dr. Crabtree suggested that if undersized attractants are limited then lobster traps would have to soak longer to achieve the equivalent catch levels, which could potentially result in increased total bycatch.

Action 8: Modify Tailing Requirements for Caribbean Spiny Lobster for Vessels that Obtain a Tailing Permit. The committee did not modify their preferred alternative.

Action 9: Limit Spiny Lobster Fishing in Certain Areas in the EEZ off Florida to Protect Threatened Staghorn and Elkhorn Corals (Acropora)

The committee recommends and I so move: **in Action 9, that the preferred alternative be Alternative 3, Option a.**

Alternative 3: Expand existing and/or create new closed areas to prohibit spiny lobster trapping in the EEZ off Florida.

Option a: Create 25 – large closed areas to protect threatened *Acropora* corals.

The committee decision was to concur with the South Atlantic Council due to all proposed closed areas falling within their jurisdiction.

Action 10: Require Gear Markings so all Spiny Lobster Trap Lines in the EEZ off Florida are Identifiable

The committee recommends and I so move: **in Action 10 Require Gear Markings so all Spiny Lobster Trap Lines in the EEZ off Florida, that the preferred alternative be Alternative 2.**

Alternative 2: Require all spiny lobster trap lines in the EEZ off Florida to be COLOR, or have a COLOR marking along its entire length. All gear must comply with marking requirements no later than August 2014.

The rationale for the committee decision was the other alternative seemed to labor intensive for the fishery.

Action 11: Allow the Public to Remove Derelict or Abandoned Spiny Lobster Traps Found in the EEZ off Florida

The committee did not make any changes to their preferred alternative.

The committee recommends and I so move: **to send the Joint Spiny Lobster Amendment 10 to public hearing.**

At full Council they made the following motion:

To schedule a workshop in the Clearwater/St. Petersburg area in April 2011 to take public input on Joint Spiny Lobster Amendment 10 and to recommend that we send staff or a Council member to South Atlantic workshops in Marathon and Key West.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my report.