

**MAGNUSON - STEVENS ACT/NEPA PUBLIC HEARINGS
THE CARIBBEAN, GULF OF MEXICO, AND SOUTH ATLANTIC
COUNCILS' AMENDMENT TO ADDRESS THE IMPORTATION OF
SPINY LOBSTER PRODUCTS THAT DO NOT MEET U.S.
CONSERVATION STANDARDS**

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

JULY 2008

Three public hearings were held, and all hearings began at 5:30 pm. The following Council members were present: Eugenio Piñeiro-Soler (Chair, CFMC), George Geiger (Chair, SAFMC), and Robert Gill (GMFMC). The following Council staff was present: Gregg Waugh (SAFMC), Assane Diagne (GMFMC), and Phyllis Miranda (GMFMC).

Gregg Waugh reviewed the issues in the import amendment; copies of the import amendment and public hearing summary were provided to all members of the public.

A summary of the comments received is shown below:

I. Public Hearing #1. July 21, 2008; Radisson Hotel; 3820 N. Roosevelt Blvd.; Key West, Florida. There were three members of the public present for the spiny lobster public hearing.

Mr. Peter Backel, Owner of Stock Island Lobster Company and member of the Florida Spiny Lobster Advisor Board. Our company has been in business since 1953 and these changes are long overdue. We support the preferred alternatives of the South Atlantic Council and believe that one import size limit (3" carapace length and 5.5" tail length) is the way to go.

Mr. Scott Zimmerman, Executive Director of the Florida Keys Commercial Fishermen's Association. Our organization supports the amendment; it has great potential to reduce mortality of shorts and this would support further recruitment to Florida from the Pan-Caribbean lobster stock. Protecting Pan-Caribbean lobsters through this import amendment is important for our stock here in Florida.

Ms. Libby Featherston, Ocean Conservancy, read portions of a draft letter that will be submitted during the written comment period. She supports a prohibition of imports that do not meet our standards in terms of size, berried, and lobster meat. She supports Alternative 2 for Action 1 and Alternative 2 for Action 2 (SAFMC preferred alternatives).

II. Public Hearing #2. July 22, 2008; Banana Bay; 4590 Overseas Highway; Marathon, Florida. There were two members of the public present (Karl Lassard and Scott Zimmerman) for the spiny lobster public hearing and one provided comments.

Mr. Scott Zimmerman, Executive Director of the Florida Keys Commercial Fishermen's Association. We support the minimum size import limitation. We would request the Councils examine one part of Alternative 2a that specifies greater than 3" carapace length – this does not reflect the 3" size limit which is Florida law. He spoke with Jason at the NMFS SERO today. We will be providing written comments. We are currently importing millions of pounds of small lobster tails and this has a negative impact on our resource in Florida given the stock linkages.

III. Public Hearing #3. July 23, 2008; Doubletree Hotel; 2649 S. Bayshore Dr.; Miami, Florida. There were no members of the public present for the spiny lobster public hearing.

Summary of comments prepared by Gregg Waugh, July 30, 2008.