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Amendment 11 to the Fishery Management Plan for Spiny Lobster in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic

Comment On: NOAA-NMFS-2011-0223-0004
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Document: NOAA-NMFS-2011-0223-0006
Comment from Ron Rincones

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General Comment

There has been a noticeable decline in the lobster population over the past 5 to 7 years, between Fort Pierce and Port Canaveral.

I have been commercially diving for lobsters off East Central Florida in depths from 10' to 100' since 1982. I believe I have an excellent depth of knowledge regarding lobsters in this area. Two things have changed. One is an increase in pressure, and the second is the dramatic increase in the jewfish population.

In the 1990s through the early 2000s it was somewhat rare to see more than a couple during the entire lobster season, running from August through March. That is not the case any longer. Now we see several every trip. If you see several jewfish it's prudent to abort the dive as there will be no lobsters for several hundred feet in all directions.

The jewfish has made such a significant recovery that they are now a severe detriment to the lobster population.

As a closing note I hear reports that jewfish are destroying lobster traps in the Keys. Jewfish have taken over many of the bomb craters in the Gulf that use to hold nice lobster populations.