



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

Southeast Regional Office

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Dr. Michelle Duval
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201
North Charleston, South Carolina 29405

M. Duval
Dear Dr. Duval:

This letter is to inform the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council) that the spiny lobster stock in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic exceeded the annual catch target (ACT) of 6.59 million pounds and the annual catch limit (ACL) of 7.32 million pounds in the 2015/2016 fishing season. Spiny lobster is managed jointly with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council).

Amendment 10 to the Fishery Management Plan for Spiny Lobster in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic set the ACL and the ACT for spiny lobster. The ACL was set equal to the acceptable biological catch (ABC), which was based on the Gulf Council's ABC control rule, where the ABC is equal to the mean landings during the 2000/2001-2009/2010 fishing seasons plus 1.5 standard deviations of the mean. The ACT was set at 90 percent of the ACL. All harvest parameters are for both the commercial and recreational sectors combined.

The accountability measure for spiny lobster requires the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils to convene a review panel if the ACT is exceeded. Further, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act states that if an ACL is exceeded more than once in a four-year period, the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils should consider changes to management measures to constrain catch below the ACL.

Review panels were convened in 2015 and 2016 because landings for the 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 fishing seasons exceeded the ACT. The 2016 review panel recommended re-calculating the ACL based on a longer time series, to account for high variability in landings for this fishery. At their most recent meeting, the Gulf Council's Statistical and Scientific Committee (SSC) voted to revise the overfishing limit and ABC for spiny lobster using this longer time series. If the South Atlantic SSC agrees, the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils could revise the ACL and ACT based on the review panel recommendation.

Sincerely,

Roy E. Crabtree, Ph.D.
Regional Administrator

