

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT – SPINY LOBSTER COMMITTEE
December 10, 2015
Atlantic Beach, NC

The Committee adopted the agenda and approved the minutes of the March 2015 meeting.

Status of Spiny Lobster Catch vs. ACL

The fishing year for spiny lobster starts on August 6. At this time, the commercial landings data may be incomplete, and there was no presentation on spiny lobster landings for the 2015/16 fishing season.

Spiny Lobster Landings for 2014/15

Council staff reviewed the letter from NMFS in regards to 2014/15 spiny lobster landings exceeding the ACT, followed by a presentation on spiny lobster landings in recent years. In February 2015, the Spiny Lobster Review Panel met to review landings and other fishery information, but did not make any recommendations for additional management measures for spiny lobster.

The Committee discussed options for spiny lobster management that could reduce the level of harvest in recent years. NMFS advised that spiny lobster does not meet the requirements to be allowed an exemption from annual catch limits under the current language in the MSA.

Roy Crabtree inquired why the FWC could not do another stock assessment. Jessica McCawley, the FWC representative, noted that since the last Spiny Lobster committee meeting that the FWC is considering additional management actions relative to the bully net portion of the fishery that has been expanding in recent years. She also noted that the FWC recently reduced the sizes of the throats for stone crab traps as they were being used to target lobsters. Thus, this change should reduce the catchability of lobsters in stone crab traps.

The Gulf Council is coordinating a joint meeting of the Gulf and South Atlantic Spiny Lobster Advisory Panels for April, to get input and recommendations from the Advisory Panels. The Spiny Lobster Review Panel will be convened after the joint AP meeting by the Gulf Council.

The Committee did not make any motions.