

OVERVIEW

Spiny Lobster Committee Meeting

December 10, 2015

Doubletree by Hilton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront
2717 W. Fort Macon Road
Atlantic Beach, NC

Following approval of the agenda and minutes of their March 2015 meeting, the Spiny Lobster Committee will receive a report from SERO on (A) the status of commercial and recreational catches versus the spiny lobster annual catch limit (ACL). Next, Council staff will review (B) the notification from NFMS to the Councils concerning the 2014/15 spiny lobster landings. Council staff will then provide (C) a summary of spiny lobster landings and the (D) report on the recommendations from the Spiny Lobster Review Panel, which met on February 9, 2015, and plans for the joint Spiny Lobster Advisory Panel meeting in early 2016. The Committee will provide guidance to staff on future management actions for spiny lobster. Lastly, the Committee will address issues under Other Business if necessary.

A. Status of Landings for Spiny Lobster (Attachment 1)

The Committee will receive a status update on landings (commercial and recreational) for spiny lobster for the 2015/16 fishing year.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary.

B. Spiny Lobster Landings for 2014/15 (Attachments 2-4)

The Gulf and South Atlantic Councils received notification from NMFS that spiny lobster landings for 2014/15 had exceeded the spiny lobster ACT (6.59 mp) and the Councils are required to implement accountability measures for spiny lobster (**Attachment 2**). In February 2015, the Councils convened the Spiny Lobster Review Panel in response to 2013/14 landings exceeding the ACT and ACL. Council staff will review the letter, meeting report, and Panel recommendations. Additionally, the Committee will be briefed on initial plans to convene the Gulf and South Atlantic Spiny Lobster Advisory Panels in early 2016. The Committee will provide direction to staff on next steps for spiny lobster.

In Spiny Lobster Amendment 10 (2011), the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils recommended the spiny lobster ACL to be set at 7.32 million pounds (mp) with the annual catch target (ACT) set at 6.59 mp.

Action 4-2

Preferred Alternative 2: Set an Annual Catch Limit for the entire stock based on the Acceptable Biological Catch:
Preferred Option a: Annual Catch Limit = Acceptable Biological Catch (7.32 mp).

Action 4-3

Preferred Alternative 2: Set an Annual Catch Target for the entire stock.
Preferred Option a: Annual Catch Target = OY = 90% of ACL (6.59 mp).

For Action 4-3, the Councils chose **Preferred Alternative 2** because an ACT would provide a reference point if landings increased over recent average levels. Preferred Option a sets a buffer from the ACL, which means if the ACT is exceeded due to increasing landings, new measures could be implemented before the ACL is reached. Amendment 10 also included an action to establish the ACT as the accountability measure (AM) for spiny lobster:

Action 5

Preferred Alternative 4: Establish the ACT as the accountability measure for Caribbean spiny lobster (6.59 million pounds).

From Amendment 10:

(p. 5-13) If the ACT is exceeded the Councils will convene a review panel to determine if corrective action is necessary to prevent the ACL from being exceeded.

(Section 4.5.5; pp. 151-152) After considering the suite of AM alternatives presented and analyzed, the Councils chose to use the ACT of 6.59 mp as the harvest level that would trigger an AM. The ACT is based on 90% of the ACL, which is 7.32 mp. The ACL is equal to the ABC, which is derived using the ABC control rule adopted by the Gulf Council. The Councils felt an ACT that is 10% lower than the ACL would provide an adequate buffer between the target level of harvest and the annual limit on harvest. Additionally, the Councils considered new scientific information that indicates the majority of recruits come from areas outside the management area (Hunt and Tringali 2011), meaning any true biological benefits that may accrue in the Caribbean spiny lobster population found within the subject management area, as a result of implementing any one of the AMs considered, are likely to be negligible. The preferred alternative would result in the least socioeconomic impacts on the fishing community, while establishing the system of accountability required under the Magnuson-Stevens Act to ensure that overfishing does not occur. Under the preferred alternative, the level of harvest would be compared to the ACT and evaluated on an ongoing basis. **An exceedence of the ACT would automatically trigger an AM whereby the Councils will convene a review panel to assess whether or not corrective action is needed to prevent the ACL from being exceeded.** If corrective action is needed management measures could be modified expeditiously via framework action or emergency rule.

Spiny Lobster Amendment 10 is available online at:

http://www.safmc.net/Library/FMP/SpinyLobster/Final_Spiny_Lobster_Amendment_10_July_11.pdf

The ACL and ACT for spiny lobster went into effect on January 3, 2012. Spiny lobster landings (**Attachment 3**) did not exceed the ACT in the 2012/13 fishing year. In the 2013/14 fishing year, landings were 7,803,644 lbs, which exceeds the ACT, ACL, and OFL. In February 2015, the Spiny Lobster Review Panel convened in Key West, FL. The Panel is comprised of staff from the Gulf Council, South Atlantic Council, SERO, and FWC/FWRI, in addition to representatives from the Gulf Spiny Lobster Advisory Panel (AP), South Atlantic Spiny Lobster AP, and the South Atlantic Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). The Panel reviewed the landings and other information and provided recommendations to the Councils (**Attachment 4**). The overall recommendations from the Panel were as follows:

- The Panel does not recommend that a new stock assessment be conducted.
- The Panel discussed and concluded that the ACL is the wrong methodology to manage this fishery. It recommended that spiny lobster be considered as having a unique life history to be having an ACL.
- The Panel recommends that the OFL be redefined as MFMT.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary; provide direction to staff.