

OVERVIEW

Spiny Lobster Committee Meeting

June 16, 2016

Hilton Cocoa Beach Oceanfront

1550 N. Atlantic Avenue

Cocoa Beach, Florida

Following approval of the agenda and December 2015 minutes, the Spiny Lobster Committee will receive (A) a summary of spiny lobster landings, including preliminary landings for 2015/16. Council staff will review (B) recommendations from the Spiny Lobster Review Panel, and from the joint meeting of the South Atlantic and Gulf Spiny Lobster Advisory Panels. The Committee will provide guidance to staff on potential actions to address landings exceeding the annual catch target for spiny lobster in recent years.

Next, Jessica McCawley will provide (C) a summary of results from a study by the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) on compliance with trap prohibitions in closed areas. This will be followed by (D) an update on recent clarification in the federal regulations on gear specifications for traps outside of Florida. Lastly, the Committee will address issues under (E) Other Business if necessary.

A. Landings for Spiny Lobster (Attachment 1)

Council staff will present an overview of landings (commercial and recreational) for spiny lobster from the 1991/1992 fishing year through 2014/2015, and preliminary landings for the 2015/2016 fishing year. Spiny lobster harvest in the EEZ off Florida and in Florida waters is closed from April 1 through August 5, except for the two-day recreational sport season at the end of July. Spiny lobster harvest in the EEZ off Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina is open all year.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary.

B. Recommendations from the Spiny Lobster Review Panel and Advisory Panel

(Attachments 2 and 3)

The Gulf and South Atlantic Councils received notification from NMFS that spiny lobster landings for 2014/2015 had exceeded the spiny lobster ACT (6.59 mp) and the Councils are required to implement accountability measures for spiny lobster (http://safmc.net/sites/default/files/meetings/pdf/Council/2015/12-2015/T9-Lob/Att2_NMFSLetter2014_15_LobsterLandings.pdf). The accountability measure for spiny lobster is to convene a panel to review landings and provide recommendations to the Council on any necessary corrective action. Landings in 2013/2014 exceeded the ACT, annual catch limit, and the overfishing level. Preliminary landings for 2015/2016 also exceed the ACT.

In March 2016, the Spiny Lobster Review Panel convened for a second time, via webinar, to discuss landings and if corrective action was necessary. Additionally, the Gulf and South Atlantic Spiny Lobster Advisory Panels (APs) met jointly in Key Largo on April 25, 2016. Council staff will review the Review Panel and AP reports and recommendations. Bruce Irwin,

Chair of the South Atlantic Spiny Lobster AP, will provide more information on the AP recommendations. The Review Panel and the APs utilized a tool developed by Gulf Council staff to review potential ACLs based on different time periods, available here:

<http://portal.gulfcouncil.org/SpinyLobster/>.

The current spiny lobster ACL is 7.32 million pounds (mp) with the annual catch target (ACT) set at 6.59 mp, which was established in Amendment 10 and effective in January 2012

([http://safmc.net/Library/FMP/SpinyLobster/Final Spiny Lobster Amendment 10 July 11.pdf](http://safmc.net/Library/FMP/SpinyLobster/Final_Spiny_Lobster_Amendment_10_July_11.pdf)).

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

C. Compliance of Trap Prohibitions in Closed Areas in the Florida Keys (Attachment 4)

At the joint meeting of the Gulf and South Atlantic APs, FWRI staff provided a presentation on a compliance and education study to evaluate the number of traps in closed areas in the Florida Keys. Closed areas include state-designated areas (Pennekamp State Park), no-take zones within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and coral areas that were closed through Spiny Lobster Amendment 11 to protect elkhorn and staghorn coral. The study found that closed areas that are marked with buoys have higher compliance with fishing prohibitions than unmarked areas (the coral areas), and improved compliance with education and outreach efforts. Jessica McCawley will provide a summary of the study and results.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary.

D. Regulations for Spiny Lobster Traps outside of Florida (Attachment 5)

In April 2016, NMFS issued specifications for gear marking for recreational harvest of spiny lobster with traps outside of Florida. SERO staff will review the request and the specifications.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary.

E. Other Business

The Committee will address items under Other Business as appropriate.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary