

**REPORT OF THE
SPINY LOBSTER COMMITTEE
Wilmington, North Carolina
December 2, 2008**

The Spiny Lobster Committee met on Tuesday, December 2, 2008 in Wilmington, North Carolina.

Phil Steel, NMFS, reported on the status of the Import Amendment: the proposed rule has been published and the comment period closes on December 15, 2008. Two comments have been received thus far.

Mark Robson reviewed the status of potential actions by the State of Florida. The Commission is meeting this week and will be evaluating continuing the trap reduction program. The goal is 400,000 traps and there are currently 490,000 traps, down from a historical level of 800,000 – 850,000 traps. Final action is planned for their February 2009 meeting. The Florida Legislature is examining potential changes to permit fees for the recreational stamp and making it easier to take back trap tags when they have not been paid for; the time to pay for tags would be reduced from 3 to 2 years. Recommendations from an industry work group may contain other items.

Tony Iarocci reported that fishermen are working on a trap clean-up program and are also working on a trap design to minimize trap losses.

The Committee discussed the ACL amendment and it was noted that the Gulf Council will be addressing this in a Generic ACL and AM Amendment. According to their schedule, the Gulf Council will discuss this in January 2009, conduct scoping in April 2009, and look at options in June 2009.

The Committee discussed items for scoping and approved items shown in a motion below. It was agreed that the two Councils could conduct separate scoping meetings and if the Gulf Council wanted to include additional items, a joint scoping meeting could be held in the Florida Keys.

The Committee approved the following motion:

MOTION: PROCEED WITH SCOPING THE ABOVE ITEMS FOR SPINY LOBSTER
ACCORDING TO THE TIMING IDENTIFIED
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

[Note: The list of items and timing are shown below in “Directions To Staff”.

In addition, the committee provided the following direction to staff:

The following list of items, as they apply to species not undergoing overfishing, will be in the ACL Comprehensive Amendment. Annual crops that are not in an overfished state are exempt from these requirements.

1. Annual Catch Limits
2. Annual Catch Target
3. Accountability Measures
4. Allocations between the commercial, for-hire, and recreational sectors
5. Regulations to limit total mortality (landings and discards) to the Annual Catch Target. Management regulations may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a) Commercial quotas and recreational allocations
 - b) Trip limits
 - c) Vessel limits
 - d) Size limits
 - e) Bag limits
 - f) Closed areas
 - g) Closed seasons
 - h) Permit endorsements
 - i) Fishing year
6. Impacts from traps on elk horn and stag horn corals
7. Tailing permit
8. Federal 50-short rule
9. The northern fishery
10. Updating the Council/State of Florida process

Comprehensive ACL Amendment Timeline

The following is the anticipated timeline:

1. Scoping – approve for scoping at the December 2008 meeting; scoping January/February 2009
2. Appoint Team Members
3. Committee/Council review scoping comments and options paper at March and June 2009 meetings.
4. Approve document for public hearings – September 2009.
5. Public Hearings – November (1st & 2nd weeks) 2009.
6. Review Public Hearing Input & Approve – December 2009.
7. Final Approval (if necessary) – March 2010.
8. Send for Secretarial Review – March 2010/June 2010 @ latest.

Public hearings/scoping meetings are scheduled as follows:

- (1) January 26, 2009 in Charleston, SC
- (2) January 27, 2009 in New Bern, NC
- (3) February 3, 2009 in Key Largo, FL
- (5) February 4, 2009 in Cape Canaveral, FL
- (5) February 5, 2009 in Pooler, GA