

[SpLobScoping@safmc.net](mailto:SpLobScoping@safmc.net)

Robert Mahood and Council Staff,

I feel that it is absolutely essential to have federal size limits for spiny lobster importation in place as soon as possible.

There are obvious biological, ecological and economic reasons for this to happen. As far back as the early 90's it was known that undersized lobsters were being harvested in Central and South America. But since there was little data to confirm US recruitment from that far away, no immediate flags were raised.

Now that the Gulf currents and larval distribution are better understood, it is obvious that our US fishery is dependent upon the sustainability of populations farther to the south. If those lobster populations decrease because of overfishing, it will certainly have an adverse effect on our fishery. It simply makes no sense to allow importation of lobsters that do not meet the size limitations of our own fishery, which were established for sound scientific reasons.

I recommend that anyone undecided about this issue view Tom Mathew's presentation to the Spiny Lobster Committee/Advisory Panel joint meeting in June of 2007 entitled "The International Imperative in the Caribbean Spiny Lobster Fishery." It is a quantitative and graphic presentation of the science behind the need for these regulations.

Beyond the scientific and economic reasons, there is also a humanitarian reason to address this issue. Because the \$40 million-dollar lobster industry in Nicaragua has depleted the lobster population in shallow water, divers are now being forced farther offshore into deeper water with disastrous results. According to National Geographic, it is estimated that within the past 5 years over 800 divers have been killed or suffered debilitating injuries from being forced to make up to 15 dives/day for up to 12 consecutive days. Please see the article by Max Block and Shana Vickers in National Geographic News, October 1, 2002:

([http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2002/10/1001\\_021001\\_lobsterdivers.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2002/10/1001_021001_lobsterdivers.html)).

Size limits on importations would help dry up the demand for this type of activity. There are sound scientific, economic and humanitarian reasons to go forward with this proposal, and the future of our Spiny Lobster Fishery may depend on this action.

Bill Mansfield

SAFMC Spiny Lobster Advisory Panel

[billman@ec.rr.com](mailto:billman@ec.rr.com)

910-471-0159

<http://home.ec.rr.com/divingphotos>