



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

Southeast Regional Office

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JAN 19 2018

Mr. Charles Phillips, Chair
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201
North Charleston, South Carolina 29405

Charlie
Dear Mr. Phillips:

This letter is to inform the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council) that the spiny lobster stock in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic exceeded its annual catch target (ACT) of 6.59 million pounds in the 2016/2017 fishing season. Spiny lobster is managed jointly with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council).

Amendment 10 to the Fishery Management Plan for Spiny Lobster in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic (Spiny Lobster FMP) set the annual catch limit (ACL) and the ACT for spiny lobster. The ACL was set equal to the acceptable biological catch (ABC), which was based on the Gulf Council's ABC control rule, where the ABC is equal to the mean landings during the 2000/2001-2009/2010 fishing seasons plus 1.5 standard deviations of the mean. The ACT was set at 90% of the ACL. All harvest parameters are for both the commercial and recreational sectors combined. The accountability measure for spiny lobster requires the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils to convene a review panel if the ACT is exceeded.

Review panels were convened in 2015 and 2016 because landings for the 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 fishing seasons exceeded the ACT. The 2016 review panel recommended re-calculating the ACL based on a longer time series, 1991/1992-2015/2016, to account for high variability in landings for this fishery. The Gulf Council's Statistical and Scientific Committee (SSC) voted to revise the spiny lobster overfishing limit using this longer time series plus 1.5 standard deviations and adhere to Tier 3a of the Gulf Council's ABC control rule. The South Atlantic Council's SSC agreed, and the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils developed and approved Regulatory Amendment 4 to the Spiny Lobster FMP (Regulatory Amendment 4) to revise the ACL and ACTs based on the review panel recommendation. Regulatory Amendment 4 is currently in rulemaking. Therefore, I do not believe that a review panel needs to be convened because the issue is already being addressed.

Sincerely,

Roy E. Crabtree, Ph.D.
Regional Administrator

