

**Spiny Lobster Review Panel Summary
Webinar
March 8, 2016
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

Review Panel

Susan Gerhart
Doug Gregory
Bill Kelly
Kari MacLauchlin
Sherry Larkin
Bill Mansfield
Tom Matthews

Council Staff

Morgan Kilgour
Phyllis Miranda
Carrie Simmons
Gregg Waugh

NMFS Staff

Nikhil Mehta
Roy Crabtree

Others in Attendance

Jim Atack
Heather Blough
Erika Burgess
Clair Crowley
Robert Gaitanis
Ryan Gandy
Bob Gill
Erin Schnettler
George Sedberry
Simon Stafford

Summary

In Spiny Lobster Amendment 10 (2011), the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils recommended the spiny lobster annual catch limit (ACL) to be set at 7.32 million pounds (mp) with the annual catch target (ACT) set at 6.59 mp. The overfishing threshold (yield at the maximum fishing mortality threshold) was specified as the overfishing level (OFL) and was designated at 7.9 mp.

The ACL and ACT for spiny lobster went into effect on January 3, 2012. In the 2013-14 fishing year, landings were 7,923,969 lbs, which exceeded the OFL, ACL, and ACT; thus, a review panel was convened per the accountability measure outlined in Amendment 10. The spiny lobster review panel met to discuss the 2013-2014 OFL overage in Key West, FL in February, 2015.

In the 2014-15 fishing year, landings were 7,057,322 lbs, which exceeded the ACT, but not the ACL or OFL. The review panel (Panel) met via webinar to discuss the 2014-2015 ACT overage on March 8, 2016. Tom Matthews provided an overview of the spiny lobster fishery, including the landings history, number of permits, effort, value of the fishery and biological factors affecting the fishery. He also presented several alternatives for calculating the ACL, but noted that FWC did not recommend or prefer any specific alternative to the current ACL.

It was discussed that the spiny lobster fishery is likely growth overfished, and that allowing the lobster to achieve one more molt before harvest would build the stock. FWC has been working with other countries to only target legal-sized lobsters and the import size regulation has helped with this effort.

Mr. Matthews also briefed the Panel on commercial reporting requirements. Trip tickets must be submitted by the end of the month, and then the information is processed by FWC. Landings data may not be available until up to ninety days after the reports are submitted to FWC. Fifty percent of the data is from daily electronic reporting, and the other fifty percent comes from manual trip tickets.

The Panel discussed the current ACT overage. As in the previous Panel meeting, Panel members concluded that spiny lobster is not the best candidate for quota management and that the methods used to calculate the ACT, ACL and OFL are not working. To capture the dynamics of the stock and to utilize all landings information available, the Panel approved the following motion:

Motion: to calculate the ACL based on the landings from 1991 through the most recent landings (2015-2016).

Motion carried with one opposed.

There was discussion that a rolling average could be appropriate as the dynamics of the stock fluctuate. There was concern that the ACL is supposed to set a limit, and if the limit is constantly changing because the landings are changing, then a limit is not really being set. Additionally, responses to declines in the fishery would be slow and trailing after actual declines. The Panel discussed that if the rolling average was over five to ten years then aberrations in landings would be softened.

Motion: To examine setting the annual catch limit based on a rolling average.

Motion carried with two opposed and one abstained.

The Panel discussed the possibility of including fishing effort data into the ACL trigger calculation in lieu of the availability of a stock assessment to determine the ACL. Fishing effort data is an important part of the stock assessment and could be used in a similar fashion to calculate or assess the ACL trigger. The Panel also discussed the trigger to the ACL and felt that that metric should also be reevaluated.

Motion: Examine setting the ACL trigger based on landings and the landings to effort index.

Motion carried.

The Panel discussed a potential stock assessment for spiny lobster. Currently, there is no plan for a new stock assessment, but there is new genetic information that up to forty percent of spiny lobster in Florida is from Florida stock. It was noted that fisherman are seeing changes in lobster movement and behavior based on salinity and nutrients.

The meeting concluded at 12:10 p.m.