



Lobster Tales

Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association

April 2017

SNE LOBSTER page 10



Photo courtesy of Rob Burcaw.

SKATE BAIT page 24



CORALS & MONUMENT page 3



Photo Credit: Nygren Canyon 2013, NOAA Okeanos Explorer Program.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Pg. 4 - New England fishermen challenge Obama's marine national monument



T-SHIRT WEATHER IS HERE

AOLA men's short sleeve 100% cotton t-shirts now available in navy blue. Contact Heidi to order yours.

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EVENTS

NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

April 18–20

Hilton Hotel, Mystic, CT

Apr. 18 - 1:15pm Skate Cmte., 2:15pm Habitat Cmte.

Visit www.NEFMC.org for web streaming details.

ATLANTIC LARGE WHALE TAKE REDUCTION TEAM

April 25-27

AOLA is a member of this team; David will be in attendance.

ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

May 8–11

Lobster Board: May 8, 2:45pm, continued May 9, 8am

Visit www.ASMFC.org for web streaming details.

Save the Date:

11TH INTL. CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP ON LOBSTERS

June 4 - 9

Industry Day on June 8th

Holiday Inn by the Bay, Portland, ME

<http://www.11thicwl.com/> - registration required

Save the Date:

WORKING WATERFRONT FESTIVAL

September 23

Steamship Pier and Fishing Heritage Center, New Bedford

REMINDERS

CAUGHT A TAGGED LOBSTER OR JONAH CRAB?

Call/text office at 603-828-9342

tagging line at 774-251-9454.

Email at heidi@offshorelobster.org

Please report: Tag #, date, and location.

Carapace size (or a photo next to a gauge),
egg & vnotch status also helpful.

Lobsters are tagged with yellow tbars.

Crabs have orange knuckle or green tbars.

FY 2017 DUES

May 1 is the start of the new fishing.
Monthly dues invoices have been adjusted
according to 2017 trap allocations. See
page 3 for details.

Thank You

to the companies that have donated to the
Association's monument legal fund.

STAFF VACATION Heidi will be on vacation April 21 - May 1. For immediate assistance, please contact David or Grant.

MONUMENT & CORALS

MONUMENT: Work continues on multiple fronts to modify or remove the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument.

On March 6th, Pacific Law Foundation filed suit on behalf of Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association, Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association, Long Island Commercial Fishing Association, Rhode Island Fisherman's Alliance, and Garden State Seafood Association. The lawsuit claims that President Obama exceeded Antiquities Act authority in siting the monument in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) which is not "lands owned or controlled" by the U.S. Government. Further, he defined boundaries that are not "confined to the smallest area" compatible with preserving the antiquity. A group of environmental organizations has petitioned the court to be involved in the suit in favor of the monument (see article link on page 37). The Trump Administration has until mid-June to respond to the lawsuit. For more details, see the press release on the next page.

We also continue to lobby Congress to use their legislative authority to amend the monument. On March 15th, the House of Representatives' Committee on Natural Resources held a hearing on the issue. AOLA submitted documentation for that hearing (see pages 6-7). The National Coalition for Fishing Communities also submitted a letter on which AOLA was a signatory.

Fisheries managers continue to argue that the authority to manage fisheries in federal waters, including within monuments, falls under the purview of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and related laws. The Council Coordinating Committee, a body com-

prised of the Regional Fishery Management Council Chairs and Executive Directors, recently sent a letter to the President stating such (see page 7).

CORALS: The New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) continues work on their Coral Amendment.

In early March the Council held two industry workshops to discuss the draft coral protection areas with fishermen directly. Most fishermen were in support of a coral action that freezes the footprint of current fishing, but does not close current fishing grounds.

Following the workshops, the Habitat Committee met to prepare for the April 18th habitat report to the full Council. At that meeting they selected, as a preferred alternative, a broad zone at 600 meters (~330 fathoms) with an exemption for the red crab fleet. This selection was in keeping with the goal of freezing the footprint of fishing. It is our understanding that the Committee opted against recommending any discrete zone. For the latest news check your email and/or listen to the Council proceedings on the 18th. See www.NEMFC.org for web streaming details.

HABITAT: NOAA has drafted proposed rule making language for the Habitat Amendment passed by the NEFMC last year. That language has been reviewed by the Council staff and should be published in the Federal Register shortly. The draft language includes gear separation language for eastern Georges Bank (currently Closed Area II), which excludes mobile gear in the summer/fall and fixed gear in the winter/spring, according to the agreements AOLA developed with the groundfish and scallop fleets.

2017 Vessel Membership Dues

The Association's vessel owner membership year starts on May 1, to coincide with the fishing year. Dues for fishing year 2017 (May 1, 2017 - April 30, 2018) are listed below.

FY 2016 Dues:

Highliner - \$3.00 per active trap
Multiple - \$1.00 per active trap
Standard - \$1.00 per active trap

FY 2017 Dues:

Highliner - \$3.10 per active trap
Multiple - \$1.05 per active trap
Standard - \$1.10 per active trap



New England fishermen challenge Obama's marine national monument

MARCH 7, *PACIFIC LEGAL FOUNDATION*

Creation of the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument exceeded the Antiquities Act, which authorizes monuments only on federal land, not the ocean

Boston, MA: March 7, 2017: A coalition of New England fishermen organizations filed suit today over former President Barack Obama's designation of a vast area of ocean as a national monument — a dictate that could sink commercial fishing in New England.

The organizations filing the lawsuit are the Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association, Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association, Long Island Commercial Fishing Association, Rhode Island Fisherman's Alliance, and Garden State Seafood Association.

They are represented, free of charge, by Pacific Legal Foundation, a watchdog organization that litigates nationwide for limited government, property rights, and a balanced approach to environmental regulations.

Watch a brief video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8G_bxQgxCU)

The lawsuit challenges President Obama's September 15, 2016, creation of the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, 130 miles off the coast of Cape Cod.

"By declaring over 5,000 square miles of ocean — an area the size of Connecticut — to be a national monument, President Obama set this entire area off-limits to most fishing immediately, with what remains of fishing opportunities to be phased out over the next few years," said PLF attorney Jonathan Wood. "This illegal, unilateral presidential action threatens economic distress for individuals and families who make their living through fishing, and for New England communities that rely on a vibrant fishing industry."

A monumental abuse of presidential power

President Obama claimed to be relying on the federal Antiquities Act. But as today's lawsuit makes clear, his decree far exceeded the authority granted to presidents by that 1906 statute. The Antiquities Act was enacted to protect ancient antiquities and human relics threatened by looting, giving the president broad powers to declare monuments consistent with that purpose.

However, the statute permits creation of national monuments only on "lands owned or controlled" by the federal government. Moreover, any designation must be "confined to the smallest area" needed to protect the artifacts or objects that the monument is intended to safeguard.

"President Obama violated both of those core requirements of the law when he created the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument," Wood noted. "Most fundamentally, the ocean, where the monument is located, is not 'land,' nor is it federally owned or controlled. The monument designation is also not confined to the smallest necessary area; on the contrary, its sprawling boundaries bear no relation to the underwater canyons and seamounts it is supposed to protect. In short, the designation of a vast area of ocean as a national monument was a blatant abuse of presidential power.

"Unfortunately, the Antiquities Act has morphed into a favorite tool for presidents to abuse," Wood continued. "Today, presidents use it to place vast areas of federal lands off limits to productive use with little input. Monument designations are particularly common at the end of a chief executive's term, once the president can no longer be held accountable.

"Former President Obama was the king of Antiquities Act abuse, invoking it more times than any prior president and including vastly more area within his designations than any predecessor," said Wood. "Our lawsuit is intended to rein in abuse of the Antiquities Act and underscore that it is not a blank check allowing presidents to do whatever they want. The creation of the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument is a clear example of a president exceeding his authority, and we are suing to make sure this edict is struck down and the rule of law prevails."

No environmental justification

"Beyond its violation of the law, the monument designation also threatens to harm the environment by pushing fishermen to other, less sustainable fisheries, and increasing conflicts between their gear and whales," said Wood. "The president's proclamation cites protection of coral as one of the reasons for the monument. But the corals remain pristine after more than four decades of commercial fishing because fishermen know where the corals are, and carefully avoid them, out of environmental concern and because coral destroys their gear.

"Instead of punishing New England's fishermen — and shutting down their businesses — federal officials should be acknowledging their positive role as stewards of the ocean's environmental resources," Wood added. "This is shown in their laudable efforts to promote sustainability. PLF's clients, for instance, have spent years working to improve their methods and equipment and to retire excess fishing permits, knowing that these costly sacrifices will provide long-term benefits to their industry and the environment. The monument designation undermines those sustainability efforts, by depriving the fishermen of any reward for their sacrifices."

With a 'stroke of the pen,' Obama's illegal action 'puts men and women out of work'

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

U.S. House of Representatives

Committee on Natural Resources

Letter from Representatives to the President

MARCH 9, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Access to several of the Nation's key fisheries is in jeopardy -- through the establishment and expansion of Marine National Monuments. All of these marine monuments have been created by Presidential Proclamations under the Antiquities Act of 1906. In the U.S. Pacific Islands region, for example, over half of U.S. waters have been closed to commercial fishing by a stroke of the pen and without scientific evidence, socioeconomic analysis, or a deliberative and public processes as are mandated under the amended Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management of 1976 (MSA), the nation's primary fisheries law.

The loss of U.S. fishing grounds makes our consumers more dependent on foreign seafood sources, as only ten percent of the seafood consumed in the U.S. is domestically produced. Marine National Monuments created in the U.S. Pacific Islands resulted in the U.S. tuna purse-seine fleet losing access to historical fishing areas including all U.S. waters (0-200 miles) surrounding Jarvis Island, Wake Island, and Johnston Atoll, remote, uninhabited equatorial possessions of the United States, totaling 1,184,000 square miles. The Hawaii longline fleet also lost access to these areas as well as to two-thirds of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone around the Hawaii Archipelago. At the same time, U.S. government negotiators agreed to reduce significant access of the U.S. purse-seine vessels to the high seas within the Western and Central Pacific Ocean as well as catch limits for U.S. longline vessels. Such actions exemplify how a President and government bureaucracies can dispassionately decimate U.S. fishing industries.

The commercial fishing prohibitions of Marine National Monuments impact shore-side businesses and local economies of the U.S. In December 2016, for example, one of the two canneries in American Samoa, which represent over half of the local private sector workforce, and over half of the Territory's Gross Domestic Product, ceased operations due to lack of U.S. tuna supply. The remaining cannery has stated that it may close if the regulatory conditions do not change. Likewise, the loss of access to highly productive fishing grounds in the northeast has exacerbated the decline of many fishing ports in the region.

To remedy the impacts that face the U.S. fishing industry, you can act swiftly and effectively to remove all marine monument fishing prohibitions. The fisheries would continue to be managed under federal law (MSA), through Regional Fishery Management Councils and the Department of Commerce. U.S. fisheries support hundreds of thousands of di-

rect jobs, millions of indirect jobs, and billions of dollars in annual revenue. Removal of the fishing prohibitions stipulated in the monument proclamations and the return of U.S. fisheries management to the Regional Fishery Management Councils would continue to prevent overfishing and protect the marine environment as required by the MSA and other applicable laws, while allowing our fishing fleet to compete with their foreign competitors.

Using the Antiquities Act to close U.S. waters to domestic fisheries is a clear example of federal overreach and regulatory duplication and obstructs well managed, sustainable U.S. fishing industries in favor of their foreign counterparts. You alone can act quickly to reverse this travesty, improve our national security, and support the U.S. fishing industry that contributes to the U.S. economy while providing healthy, well-managed fish for American's tables.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Rob Bishop, Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources
Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen, Member of Congress

Pacific Law Foundation, continued from last page....

"We are fighting every day to keep the men and women in the commercial fishing industry working, but with one stroke of President Obama's pen — and his abuse of the Antiquities Act — they are out of work," said Beth Casoni, executive director of the Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association.

"The monument designation will have a negative rippling effect across the region as fishermen will have to search for new fishing grounds — only to find they are already being fished," she said. "The shoreside businesses will also feel the impacts, as fishermen have to go further and further to harvest their catch, leaving less funds to reinvest in their businesses.

"We are extremely grateful to have PLF at our side as we fight back against this legal travesty, which is causing so much hardship for the commercial fishing industry here in the Northeast."

The case is *Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association v. Ross*. More information, including the complaint, a video, photos, podcast, and an explanatory blog post, is available at: www.pacificlegal.org.

About Pacific Legal Foundation

Pacific Legal Foundation, America's most powerful ally for justice, litigates in courts nationwide for limited government, property rights, individual liberty, and a balanced approach to environmental regulations. PLF represents all clients free of charge.

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva,

I write to you in my capacity as the Executive Director of the Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association and member of the National Coalition for Fishing Communities regarding the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument. Thank you and the committee members for your efforts to address the problems associated with the use of the Antiquities Act to designate protected areas in marine waters; we very much appreciate your efforts to make this a transparent process. Our Association and the Coalition did extensive work on this issue with the prior Administration, attempting to mitigate the negative impacts to the fishing industry. Several of our members also participated in your hearing with Mayor Mitchell in New Bedford, Massachusetts and had an opportunity to talk to you directly.

For over a year, members of the offshore fishing industry worked tirelessly with State personnel, Governors' offices, Congressional offices, Mayors in major ports, and others to dissuade the prior Administration from closing vast areas in the Atlantic to commercial fishing. In our collective view, there was never a compelling reason or threat to the marine resources of the Atlantic that warranted the use of the Antiquities Act. However, with the mere stroke of a pen, President Obama closed approximately 5,000 square miles to fishing, immediately ejecting the trawl fishery, with a near-term phase out of other industries. This action was taken without formal public hearings, without cost benefit anal-

yses, without input from the most affected constituents, and counter to the spirit of the open government initiatives that the former President himself advocated. Although select leaders in the fishing industry had limited access to members of the White House staff, the public and fishing industry were, by and large, excluded. At no time prior to the Presidential announcement did we receive a written proposal detailing the specifics of the Monument designation and, further, the lack of transparency was appalling.

To assert my above comments, I herein submit to the March 15, 2017 committee hearing record copies of ten letters that our Association's members, staff, and related groups submitted to the prior Administration. These letters were submitted in the spirit of cooperation, with the intent of allowing the Monument process to continue, while reducing impacts on the environment and fishing industry. Our collective objections to the Monument designation process via the Antiquities Act, can be summarized as follows:

- There were no immediate threats to the marine resources that warranted the use of the Antiquities Act. Most documented corals are deeper than the areas fished and there are no active proposals for oil, gas, or mineral exploration. Monument supporters called the closure area "pristine" despite 40 years of fishing.
- Jurisdiction to manage fisheries in the Monument area is already contained in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, promulgated by regional Fishery

Councils/Commission and NOAA Fisheries. Those acts are subject to impact analyses (NEPA) and extensive public input. It is our belief that the advocates for the Monument proposal specifically used the dated requirements in the Antiquities Act to circumvent the public process, and curtail public input on a key issue affecting thousands of individuals, as we do not believe that the action would have been approved following the Magnuson-Stevens Act requirements.

- U.S. marine Economic Exclusive Zones are not land owned or controlled by the United States and should, therefore, fall outside of Antiquities Act authority.
- Various fishing interests provided detailed and highly confidential information to the White House Office of Environmental Quality in order to document the negative impacts on the fishing industry. We offered a range of different alternatives to the White House that would have avoided negative impacts, but none were adopted. This included a proposal for a closure 5.5 times larger than the one designated, which would have protected deep water coral from the U.S./Canadian border to the Frank R. Lautenberg Deep-Sea Coral Protection Area in the Mid-Atlantic.

Economic impacts were not analyzed. Using confidential industry

- information we estimate financial impacts on the lobster, crab, squid, mackerel and butterfish fisheries to be approximately \$30 million directly and \$100 million when multiplied across the economy.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

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- Habitat and social impacts were not analyzed. The Monument closure forces fishing effort into neighboring shallower waters that are inhabited by endangered right whales and forces larger vessels inshore, competing with small, community based, day boat fisheries.

Similarly themed correspondences which require future Administrations were additionally submitted to the Administration by representatives of local, state, and regional governments and organizations.

In conclusion, we ask that you and your committee update the requirements of the Antiquities Act, and at a minimum formulate recommendations

to follow an open and transparent process. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,
David Borden,
Executive Director

Council Coordination Committee letter to the President, MARCH 1

Dear Mr. President:

The Nation's eight Regional Fishery Management Councils (Councils) are charged under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) with managing, conserving, and utilizing fishery resources throughout the entire Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the United States. In implementing this charge, the Councils are required to take into account the effects of management actions on United States fishermen and fishing communities.

The Council Coordination Committee-which consists of the senior leaders of these Councils-wrote to President Obama in 2016 to raise concerns with the designation of marine monuments under the Antiquities Act of 1906 and the effects of those designations on the Nation's fisheries and on domestic fisheries management.

Under the requirements of the MSA, the Councils protect essential fish habitat, minimize bycatch, and comply with protections for species listed under the Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act and other mandates within the U.S. EEZ. Through implementation of the MSA, the United States is the global leader in the successful conservation and management of fishery resources and associated ecosystems in a proactive sustainable manner. Spatial management, such as the use of marine protected areas, is one of the tools utilized by the Councils. Through the Council process, more than 1,000 individual spatial habitat and fisheries conservation measures have been implemented protecting more than 72 percent of the Nation's ocean waters. The Councils use a public process, in a transparent and inclusive manner, and rely on the best scientific information available as required by the MSA.

As a result, we not only meet conservation objectives but also ensure sustainable seafood for U.S. consumers, pro-

mote the economies of coastal communities, and maintain the social-cultural fabric of our Nation's recreational, commercial, and subsistence fishing communities.

Designations of marine national monuments that prohibit fishing have disrupted the ability of the Councils to manage fisheries throughout their range as required by MSA and in an ecosystem-based manner. Our experience with marine monument designations to date is that they are counterproductive to domestic fishery goals, as they have displaced and concentrated U.S. fishing effort into less productive fishing grounds and increased dependency on foreign fisheries that are not as sustainably managed as United States fisheries. The removal of American fishing vessels from U.S. waters eliminates their ability to act as watchdogs over U.S. fishing grounds threatened by foreign fishing and other incursions. For all of these reasons and more, we believe fisheries management decisions should be made through the robust process established by the MSA and successfully used for over forty years to ensure the opportunity for sustainable American fisheries to exist.

Attached to this letter is a resolution approved by the Council Coordination Committee in 2016 regarding the successes of the MSA. The resolution notes that decisions to close areas of the EEZ through Executive action under authorities such as the Antiquities Act of 1906 may not take into account the MSA statutory requirements to achieve Optimum Yield (OY) from the Nation's fishery resources and may negatively affect domestic fishing jobs and recreational fishing opportunities and undermine the Regional Fishery Management Councils' efforts to develop and implement ecosystem-based management.

America has made significant progress in curbing illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing and minimizing our nation's dependence upon seafood imports. We hope you will continue to support our nation's sustainable fisheries and fishing jobs by safeguarding fishery resources in the U.S. EEZ and their management through the MSA.

Respectfully, Council Chairs



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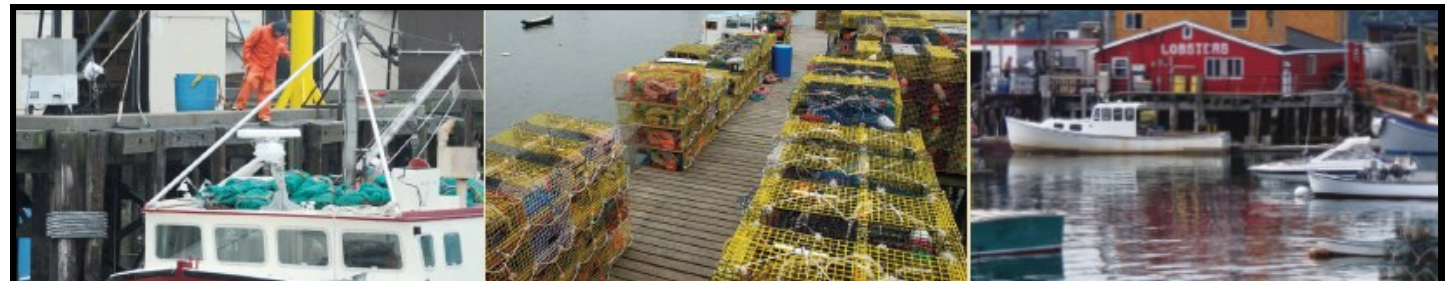
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LOBSTER & CRAB MANAGEMENT

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission will convene in early May for their spring meeting. The Lobster Board is scheduled for a split session on the afternoon of May 8th (2:45 - 5:15pm) and the morning of May 9th (8 - 10:15am). The draft agenda includes:

1. Consideration of Addendum XXV for final approval
2. Continued development of Addendum XXVI (improved data collection)
3. A report from the GOM/GB subcommittee
4. Discussion of the NEFMC's coral amendment

The meeting will be streamed online; visit www.ASMFC.org for details.

SNE LOBSTER: At the May meeting, the Lobster Board will review public comments gathered during the public hearings and written comment period. They are expected to select preferred alternatives and approve Addendum 25. The Association submitted comments, see pages 14-15. The Area 3 Lobster Conservation Management Team (LCMT) also submitted comments, which are on page 18.

If the Board opts to increase egg production in SNE, the LCMTs will be convened to develop area specific plans responding to the selected target. AOLA will also host meetings; we expect an iterative process between the two groups, as has been the case in the past. Grant Moore is currently AOLA President and Area 3 LCMT Chair and many AOLA members serve on the LCMT. LCMT plans are expected to be due to the Lobster Board ahead of the August meeting, with implementation as early as 2018.

TRAP CAP: As we have noted in previous *Lobster Tales*, there is a disparity between ASMFC'S and NOAA GARFO'S Area 3 trap caps. When the Commission passed Addendum 18 in 2012 and Addendum 22 in 2013, they outlined 5 years of permit allocation reductions with corresponding reductions in the maximum trap cap. On the other hand, GARFO implemented allocation reductions without changing the federal trap cap, citing complications with the active trap cap, single permit cap (banking), and aggregate ownership cap defined in Addendum 22. The Commission's plan proscribes the following annual active trap caps: 1900, 1805, 1715, 1629, 1548, for fishing years (FYs) 2016 to 2020, respectively. The federal cap is currently static at 1945 traps.

Last July, GARFO informed the Commission they had officially shelved Addendum 22 rulemaking, pending the outcome of Addendum 25. In response, AOLA submitted a letter to GARFO staff imploring them to correct the trap cap disparity before fishing year 2018 transfer applications are accepted this summer, otherwise a correction won't be implemented until at least fishing year 2019.

The higher federal cap is undermining the trap reduction plan and is allowing for higher permit allocations and more traps in the water. When the FY 2017 fishing year starts on May 1, there will be 27 Area 3 permits with allocations above the ASMFC's proscribed cap. Collectively, this amounts to over 3,000 extra traps.

GARFO's response to our letter is reprinted on the following page. To re-read AOLA's letter to GARFO, see the February 2017 issue of *Lobster Tales*.



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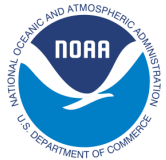


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Letter to AOLA regarding trap cap

FEBRUARY 27, NOAA GARFO

Dear Grant,

Thank you for your letter dated January 13, 2017, requesting that we implement the Area 3 trap limits set forth in Addenda XXI and XXII of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster.

Your letter highlights the discrepancy between the current Area 3 trap limit and the active and aggregate trap limits adopted by the Commission in Addendum XXII. The issue is important and the points you make are interesting. Certainly, state-federal regulatory consistency is an oft-stated goal of our agency. Events, however, have undermined our ability to expedite this goal.

As you are aware, the status of the Southern New England (SNE) lobster stock has been a principle concern of the Commission's Lobster Board for years now. That concern recently became acute in late 2015, when new scientific information revealed that an 85-percent reduction in fishery exploitation would be necessary to sustain the stock at its current condition. This stock status revelation forced the Board to re-think its previous strategies and propose a new lobster addendum (Addendum XXV) that contains alternatives that potentially supersede and nullify previously recommended management measures. For that reason, the Board recommended that NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service hold off on implementing new SNE lobster measures, at least until such a time that Addendum XXV is enacted and the Board's new strategy becomes clear.

The Area 3 active and aggregate trap limit proposal is one of the pending issues caught up in the delay. The proposal was part of a suite of measures recommended by the Board to amend its Trap Transfer Program. The Board proposed these new measures in Addenda XXI and XXII in 2013, before the new scientific information on the SNE stock was available. Among other things, the addenda revised the Trap Transfer Program by establishing aggregate traps limits, formerly known as trap banking. The new system would allow permit holders to purchase Area 2 and Area 3 trap allocation in excess of the active trap caps and use those additional traps to offset annual trap reductions established under Addendum XVIII. Clearly, it seems imprudent to enact a new rule allowing for the activation of latent (banked) traps when potential Addendum XXV measures could soon require the permanent removal of active traps.

At its October 2016 meeting, the Board discussed the issue and decided to wait and reassess these measures after the finalization of Addendum XXV, when it will have a better understanding of which elements of Addenda XXI and XXII will fit in with the overall management program. The Board could make a decision on the final elements of Addendum XXV as early as May 2017. Given the uncertainty of the outcome of Addendum XXV, we agree with the Commission's approach. We recognize, however, that the annual reductions in the Area 3 active trap limits may be worthy of consideration separately from the other measures in Addenda XXI and XXII, such as trap banking, and could be evaluated concurrently with a rulemaking action in response to Addendum XXV.

Thank you for your interest in this important fishery,

Sincerely,

John K. Bullard

Cc: Robert Beal, ASMFC

Looking for vessels to carry crab sampler...

AOLA has partnered with MA Division of Marine Fisheries (MA DMF) on a Jonah crab tagging and data collection project. To make this project successfully, we need to deploy 40,000 tags! All crews willing to carry a sea sampler from MA DMF to tag crabs, please contact Heidi. Crews will be compensated for food costs as well as paid market value for all legal crabs that are tagged. MA DMF can also help with Insurance, if needed.

Tags are being deployed in SNE, GB, and GOM, so everyone should be on the lookout for tagged crabs.

Please call or text Heidi with recapture reports (see reporting details on page 2.)



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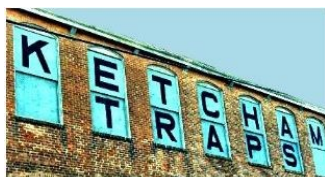
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Dear Megan,

The Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association (AOLA) submits the following comments toward Draft Addendum XXV to the American Lobster Fishery Management Plan. As noted in the Draft Addendum, the principal challenge facing lobster in Southern New England is increased natural mortality, because of climate warming and predation. While we understand that the Lobster Board is committed to responding to the 2015 stock assessment, we urge Board Members to balance increased management with the Addendum's stated goal of "preserving a functional fishery".

As is noted in the Draft Addendum's introductory comments, the SNE fishery has already reduced active permits, active traps, and landings compared to the 1990s peak. Depending on the metric, these reductions range from 42 to 84 percent (Draft Addendum, Tables 2, 3 and 4). Most of this attrition has taken place inshore, in response primarily to resource and economic drivers and secondarily to management measures. In the offshore waters of Area 3, landings have remained relatively stable across the 1982-2012-time series, except for a modest boom in the 1990s (Draft Addendum, Table 6). Anecdotally, in recent years SNE offshore lobstermen report improved catch per unit effort, larger lobsters, and increased abundance of both juveniles and ovigerous females.

We offer the following management option preferences:

Issue 1 – Target Increase in Egg Production: Many AOLA members support "Option A: 0% Increase in Egg Pro-

duction", citing the following reasons: 1) the primary drivers of the poor stock are climatic and environmental, not fisheries based and 2) the fishery independent data on which the assessment is based come from waters of less than 200 feet, whereas most of the fishery is now conducted in deeper offshore waters (Draft Addendum, Figure 4). Offshore landings have been stable or increasing in the last 10+ years, with the average lobster size well above the minimum gauge; many lobstermen feel past stock problems offshore have been rectified, but the dataset used to inform the stock assessment does not capture rapidly changing conditions.

Recognizing that the Board may feel obligated to act, the Association's preferred action alternative is "Option B: 20% Increase in Egg Production" with a phased implementation of 10% per year for two years. Selecting an egg production target larger than 20% would be contrary to the Addendum's goal of "preserving a functional fishery" by putting marginal fishermen out of business, or forcing relocation to the GOM/GBK stock. Implementing regulation over multiple years will help maintain a viable lobster industry in SNE. Relatedly, the Association supports the use of "Recent Years" to calculate trap reduction impacts on egg production, since this reference period more accurately reflects stock conditions (Draft Addendum, Table 12).

Issue 2 – Management Tools: The Association supports "Option A, Management Tools Can Be Used Independently". This option gives LCMTs and States the most flexibility to select from the analyzed management tools to craft

area specific plans that will meet the goals of this Addendum.

Issue 3 – Recreational Fishery: The Association supports "Option A, Recreational Fishery Must Abide by Management Actions Taken in This Addendum". This option is equitable and simplifies rulemaking and enforcement. If this is a stock-wide problem, as espoused by the stock assessment, all user groups in all geographic areas, including commercial traps in every LCMA, recreational traps, recreational diving, and commercial bycatch fisheries, should be held to equivalent standards.

Issue 4 – Season Closures: The Association supports "Option B with Sub-Option B, No Possession of Lobsters While Fishing, Most Restrictive Rule Does Not Apply". Importantly, this option will allow for alternative trap fisheries, which are of increasing importance to SNE fishermen and consistent with the Addendum's intent to preserve a functional SNE fishery. This option also simplifies operational logistics and enforcement. The Most Restrictive Rule should not apply, because in this circumstance it would be discriminatory to treat multi-area permit holders differently than single-area permit holders. It would also be discriminatory to close overlap areas to only a subset of fishermen. Further, we caution that Option C may violate NOAA's National Standard 4 by discriminating based on State residency.

Issue 5 – Uniform Regulations: The Association supports "Option A, Regulations Are Not Uniform Across LCMAs". While we feel there are bene

Continued from last page...

fits to standardizing regulations, uniform regulations will disadvantage specific LCMAs. We don't believe standardization should be mandated, nor do we wish to speak to specific regulations for areas other than LCMA 3. The area management process should be allowed to operate without constraint.

Issue 6 – Implementation of Management Measures in LCMA 3:

The Association supports "Option A: Maintain LCMA 3 as a Single Area (Status Quo)". We appreciate the Board's inclusion of options in the public document targeting regulations to the SNE portion of Area 3 only, however, after considerable discussion, the membership predominately prefers operating under a single set of regulations. We worry that a demarcation line in Area 3 would have unintended consequences for the fishery and permit market. Effort would likely redirect to the GOM/GB stock causing gear conflict and possible increased whale/gear interaction, and the value of permits with SNE only history could depreciate.

Issue 7 - Management Action in De Minimis States:

The Association does not have a preference on this issue. However, we caution that an exemption (Option 2) may be in violation of National Standard 4, as it would apply differential regulations in federal waters based on state residency. Option 2 also provides the possibility of conversion of latent effort to active effort in these states.

Other Comments

1. In addition to the ongoing 25% trap allocation reduction and 10% transfer tax conservation, the LCMA 3 fleet proactively reduced traps by close to 30% in the early 2000s. Per the Technical Committee's (TC) analysis, these proactive reductions improved egg production, however they never received management credit. Conversely, other LCMAs have taken more recent action, which will be credited to this Addendum. This is grossly unfair and places more of the conservation burden on the offshore fleet, despite the stock assessment's focus on in-shore populations. We ask that the Board enact policies that ensure all geographic areas and all fisheries contribute equally to egg production targets.

2. Recent research by the University of Rhode Island indicates that the vent sizes which have been in place since 2010 release more legal lobsters than calculated by the TC. This research should be reviewed and higher release rates factored into any action by the Commission.

3. The Lobster Board agreed that all user groups should contribute to egg production targets. However, as it stands, only a subset of the management tools would apply to commercial trawl and gillnet fisheries. To apply impacts equitably, we recommend reducing the 100/500 bycatch allowance in proportion with trap fishery effort reductions.

Sincerely,
J. Grant Moore, President



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Area 3 LCMT Draft Addendum

XXV Comments - APRIL 6, 2017

Dear Megan,

The Area 3 Lobster Conservation Management Team met on April 3, 2017 in person at the MADMF office in New Bedford, MA and via conference call.

The following LCMT members were in attendance: Grant Moore – Chair, Peter Brown (phone), Roy Campanale, Marc Palombo, and James Violet. The following additional Area 3 lobstermen were in attendance: Dennis Colbert and Ted McCaffrey (phone). The following support staff were in attendance: David Borden – Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen’s Assn. and ASMFC Lobster Board, Dan McKiernan – MADMF and ASMFC Lobster Board, Bob Glenn – MADMF, Tracy Pugh – MADMF and ASMFC Lobster Technical Committee, Stormy Reed – MADMF, Burton Shank – NOAA NMFS NEFSC and ASMFC Lobster Technical Committee, Heidi Henninger – Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen’s Assn. (phone). LCMT members Gary Mataronas, Mike Sarpochillo, and Robert Burcaw did not attend, but submitted written comments.

The Area 3 Lobster Conservation Management Team offers the following management preferences by consensus.

Issue 1 – Target Increase in Egg Production: The LCMT supports “Option A: 0% Increase in Egg Production” for LCMA 3. Offshore landings have been stable or increasing in the last 10+ years, with the average lobster size well above the minimum gauge; many lobstermen feel past stock problems offshore have been rectified, but the dataset used to inform the stock assessment does not capture rapidly changing conditions. The LCMT supports status quo in Area 3 until Addendum 26 data improvements are implemented and the 2018 stock assessment is complete.

Should the Board feel obligated to act, the LCMT’s preferred action alternative is “Option B: 20% Increase in Egg Production” with a phased implementation

of 10% per year for two years. The LCMT urges the Board to consider awarding conservation credit for past, proactive measures by Area 3 lobstermen, including, but not limited to the first round of 30% trap cuts in the 2000s. If credit is not given to these prior efforts an unfair conservation burden will again be shouldered by the offshore fleet, despite the stock assessment’s focus on inshore populations. The LCMT strongly feels that Area 3 should not be primarily responsible for improving egg production.

Issue 2 – Management Tools: The LCMT supports “Option A, Management Tools Can Be Used Independently”. This option allows for much needed management flexibility to craft area specific plans that will meet the goals of this Addendum.

Issue 3 – Recreational Fishery: The LCMT supports “Option A, Recreational Fishery Must Abide by Management Actions Taken in This Addendum”. This option is equitable and simplifies rule-making and enforcement. All user groups, including the commercial fishery, recreational traps, recreational diving, and commercial bycatch fisheries, should be held to equivalent standards.

Issue 4 – Season Closures: The LCMT supports “Option B with Sub-Option B, No Possession of Lobsters While Fishing, Most Restrictive Rule Does Not Apply”. This option allows for alternative trap fisheries, which are of increasing importance to SNE fishermen and consistent with the Addendum’s intent to “preserve a functional SNE fishery”. This option also simplifies operational logistics and enforcement. The Most Restrictive Rule should not apply, because in this circumstance it would be discriminatory to treat multi-area permit holders differently than single-area permit holders.

Issue 5 – Uniform Regulations: The LCMT supports “Option A, Regulations Are Not Uniform Across LCMAs”. We don’t believe standardization should be mandated, nor do we wish to speak to specific regulations for areas other than LCMA 3.

Issue 6 – Implementation of Management Measures in LCMA 3: The LCMT supports “Option A: Maintain LCMA 3 as a Single Area (Status Quo)”. The LCMT polled much of the active Area 3 fleet and the predominant preference is for equity across the fleet. Further, LCMT members worry that a demarcation line, even if implemented on an annual basis, could trigger redirection of effort into the GOM/GB stock, causing gear conflicts and possible increased interactions with large whales.

Issue 7 - Management Action in De Minimis States: The LCMT does not have a preference on this issue.

Other Comments:

1. The LCMT recommends additional management options be included in Addendum 25, such as mandatory v-notching and credit for conservation achieved via the current vent sizes.
2. This is a data poor fishery, particularly in Area 3 waters. The LCMT supports efforts to develop, for Addendum 26, a wide range of options to improve data collection and fully utilize existing industry datasets.
3. The LCMT is concerned about the disparity between ASMFC’s trap cap reduction plan (Addendum 22) and NMFS’s static trap cap. The uncertainty regarding future federal rulemaking to address trap cap/transferability provisions previously approved by ASMFC is severely hindering the fleet’s ability to make sound business plans.
4. If the Board opts to act to increase egg production, the LCMT recommends that the remaining years (FYs 2017–2020) of ongoing Area 3 trap reductions be accelerated to complete all reductions within the management timeframe outlined in final Addendum 25 language. This includes federal action to resolve the trap cap disparity; to resolve this disparity, the LCMT recommends consideration of a trap cap of 1800, but all permits allocations in excess of the original ASMFC approved trap cap (1548) would be subject to a higher transfer tax.

Sincerely,

J. Grant Moore, LCMT Area 3 Chair



NOAA Invites Public Comment on the draft National Charting Plan

FEBRUARY 28, NOAA GARFO



Low-Cost, Real-Time Oceanographic Data Transmission Systems in Development

The NOAA FISHERIES NAVIGATOR

NOAA invites public comment on the recently released National Charting Plan. Comments are due by midnight, June 1, 2017. The National Charting Plan is a strategy to improve NOAA nautical chart coverage, products, and distribution. It describes the evolving state of marine navigation and nautical chart production, and outlines actions that will provide the customer with a suite of products that are more useful, up-to-date, and safer to navigate with. It is not a plan for the maintenance of individual charts, but a strategy to improve all charts.

Since the introduction of electronic navigational charts (ENCs) thirty years ago, the size of commercial vessels has increased four-fold and navigation systems have become more sophisticated. Additionally, there are now over 15 million recreational boat users in the U.S. and many have joined professional mariners in using electronic chart displays and NOAA digital chart products when navigating. User groups of all types are increasingly expecting more precise, higher resolution charts, and greater timeliness and ease-of-access to chart updates. This plan presents strategies to meet the growing demand.

The National Charting Plan outlines several improvements to chart content, such as:

- Reducing unwarranted alarms in the electronic chart display and information system (ECDIS) used by large commercial vessels and Improving the differentiation between dangerous and non-dangerous wrecks.
- Resolving uncertainties about 'reported,' 'existence doubtful,' and 'position approximate' dangers.
- Creating an orderly layout for ENC charts that will replace the current set of 1,182 irregularly shaped ENC cells compiled at 131 different scales with a regular gridded framework of cells compiled at a few dozen standard scale.
- Strengthening partnerships with the U.S. Coast Guard by developing methods to ingest changes to the database of USCG maintained aids to navigation directly into Coast Survey's chart production system. This will save time and avoid any chance of data being entered incorrectly by hand.

For information on how to provide written comments about this plan, see the Federal Register Notice or go to: <https://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/mcd/docs/NationalChartingPlan.pdf>

For the past year and a half, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center's Oceanography and Cooperative Research Branches, partnering with fishermen, have been leveraging funds and opportunities to develop and test low-cost methods to transfer real-time oceanographic data from fishing vessels. Two successful technology systems have been developed so far: the first combines modifications to GLOBASTAR transmitters (used previously on ocean drifters), recently-developed wireless temperature/depth recorders, and Windows software running on a laptop computer; the second, in final testing stages, involves a less expensive microcomputer, a new locally-developed temperature/depth recorder and an IRIDIUM satellite transmitter.

As fishermen haul their gear with a wireless temperature sensor attached, the onboard computer system automatically sends the time, latitude and longitude, and average temperature and depth for the fishing effort to the satellite system. Within minutes, the data arrives at the lab in Woods Hole, which posts it on a website for the participating fishermen and collaborating scientists to view. This real-time transmission of oceanographic data can allow the data to be used by ocean researchers immediately, and allow for quick feedback to fishermen that they can use to fish more selectively and avoid unwanted bycatch.

We have collected and transmitted bottom temperature data from more than 1,750 hauls since the beginning of the project. Once fully developed, fishermen using these systems can report catch information and other data at a fraction of the cost of commercial ship-to-shore transmission. Additional sensors are being developed, including some that report directly to a smartphone instead of a shipboard computer. The systems are also being developed to deploy on unmanned sailboats, moored buoys, and drifters. Next steps also include investigating the possibility of extracting the temperature/depth feeds from existing net mensuration systems with temperature sensors, such as those made by NOTUS and Simrad. All of these advancements will enhance the data available to better understand ocean dynamics and drivers of fish distribution. For more information on this data telemetry work, please contact James.Manning@noaa.gov.

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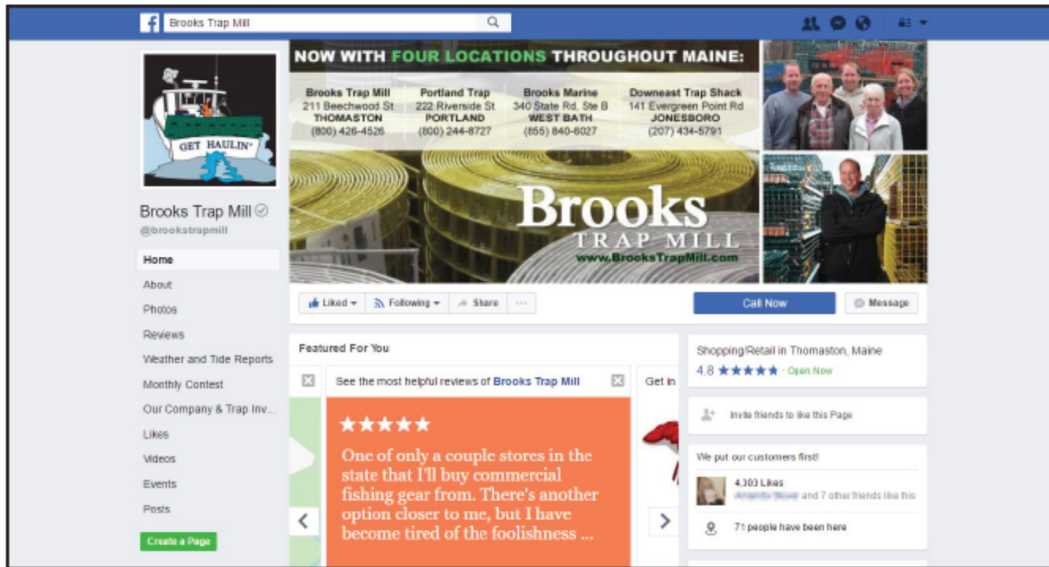


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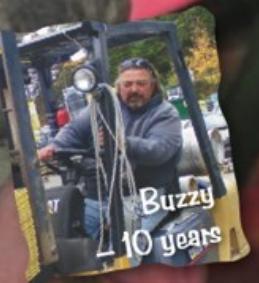
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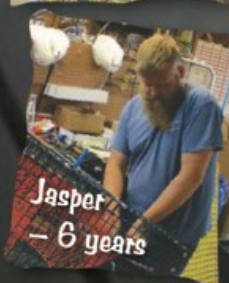
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NEWS *briefs*

SKATES

The Skate Advisory Panel and Oversight Committee both met in early April and discussed the de facto skate closure last winter, with the AP recommending that the Council start a Framework specifically to address FY 2017 possession limits. This recommendation was formalized into a motion at the Committee level. The Committee's motion will be considered by the full Council on April 18th.

Assuming the Council approves, a Framework will be developed this summer, with the hope of having new regulations in place before next winter. New regulations would be aimed at keeping the fishery open and bait available throughout the year, likely through more gradual reductions in trip limits, if/when the catch is nearing the cap.

The Skate Committee is also developing an Amendment which could limit entry into the skate fishery and a second Framework for FY 2018 specifications, which will hopefully increase catch limits in future years.

In March, the Association submitted a letter to the NEFMC about this issue. That letter is copied on the next page.

We are saddened to report of the passing of David Dubois, founder and owner of Marine Safety Consultants of Fairhaven, MA.

Sincere condolences to his family, friends, and the many in the fishing community who worked with Dave over the years.

MAHI/DOLPHIN FISH

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) has added an option to Dolphin Wahoo Draft Amendment 10 related to possession of mahi onboard properly permitted lobster vessels. This action is a result of a letter the Association sent to the SAFMC in 2016 after we were notified of a little known clause in federal regulation that makes it illegal to possess mahi during a trip where non-authorized gear is used to target another species (e.g. pot fishing).

In March the Dolphin Wahoo Committee decided to include the following alternatives in the draft Amendment. They will review the draft Amendment again in June, select preferred alternatives at that time, and approve for a public comment period in July. The Amendment should be finalized and approved in August.

- 1) Status Quo - "The following are the only authorized gear types in the fisheries for dolphin and wahoo in the Atlantic EEZ: Automatic reel, bandit gear, handline, pelagic longline, rod and reel, and spearfishing gear (including powerheads). A person aboard a vessel in the Atlantic EEZ that has on board gear types other than authorized gear types may not possess a dolphin or wahoo."
- 2) *(Alternate that AOLA provided, which defines a specific exemption for lobster)* - "The following are the only authorized gear types in the fisheries for dolphin and wahoo in the Atlantic EEZ: Automatic reel, bandit gear, handline, pelagic longline, rod and reel, and spearfishing gear (including powerheads). A vessel in the Atlantic EEZ that possess both an Atlantic Dolphin/Wahoo Commercial Permit and valid Federal commercial American lobster permit endorsed for trap fishing only is authorized to target dolphin/wahoo with rod and reel while fishing for lobsters. A person aboard a vessel in the Atlantic EEZ that has on board gear types other than authorized gear types may not possess a dolphin or wahoo."

AOLA to NEFMC - SKATE BAIT CONCERNS - March 15, 2017

Dear Chairman Quinn,

This letter follows on our March 13th discussion of the skate fishery and recent actions by NOAA. The regulatory actions caused major problems for the offshore lobster and Jonah crab fleet because skates are a popular bait product. Bait prices skyrocketed and far worse, for a short period, there were literally no skates available. This situation also affected northern New England inshore lobstermen who use skates as bait in areas with high concentrations of slime eels, where few other baits hold up. To be clear, NOAA did what the skate FMP required.

In addition to the lobster and Jonah crab industry, NOAA's action had negative impacts on many other New England fishing fleet, including the monkfish and directed skate bait fisheries. For example, most of the vessels in the small boat (30-50 foot) SNE monkfish large mesh gillnet fishery encounter significant quantities of skate as a bycatch when they target monkfish in nearshore areas. However, the size of these vessels limits the fleets' ability to move offshore in winter months to avoid skates. This left them with three options; fish inshore and discard large quantities of skates, terminate fishing all together, or fish offshore in areas that their vessels are not equipped to operate. None of these desirable from operational, safety, and fishery management perspectives. Therefore, I ask that NEFMC consider amending the FMP to avoid similar regulatory actions in the future.

I suggest that any amendment to the skate plan work to slow down landings gradually, avoid accountability measures that inadvertently create discards which then trigger ACL reductions, and consider decoupling wing and

bait fishery regulatory responses. As the plan currently stands, the required regulatory action taken by NOAA likely triggered additional discards, which will be deducted from future year's allocations, setting up a downward spiral in which ACL goes down, each time regulatory discards go up. In discussions with the directed bait industry, they relate that nuances in the current regulations require NOAA to take simultaneous action in both the wing and bait fisheries. However, the directed bait industry seems to be in favor of actions that slow the fishery down rather than actions that trigger de-facto closure.

Finally, as we both know, there will be many different and competing perspectives to consider ahead of initiating a regulatory change, including staff time, Council priorities, NOAA flexibility, timing, and legal constraints. Therefore, rather than have this issue addressed by the Council as a whole, I suggest it would be more efficient to request the Executive Committee, in consultation with NOAA staff, discuss this issue and formulate a strategy for Council consideration.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this request, and happy to discuss such by phone or provide contact information for others who were negatively affected.

Best Regards,

David Borden, Executive Director

cc:

John Bullard, Regional Administrator, NOAA NMFS GARFO
Michael Pentony, Asst. Reg. Admin., NOAA NMFS GARFO
Tom Nies, Executive Director, NEFMC
J. Grant Moore, President, AOLA

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SAFETY



Senate Letter regarding Coast Guard 2018 Budget

Dear Director Mulvaney:

Reports have surfaced that there is a proposed \$1.3 billion reduction to the United States Coast Guard's Fiscal Year 2018 Presidential budget request. We strongly urge you to refrain from any such cuts. The Coast Guard budget has suffered a steady decline since 2010, which resulted in negative impacts to Coast Guard missions, infrastructure, delays in necessary recapitalization efforts, and has generally constrained Coast Guard operations. We are concerned that the Coast Guard would not be able to maintain maritime presence, respond to individual and national emergencies, and protect our nation's economic and environmental interests.

The Coast Guard is a lean service with 41,700 active duty members supporting 11 statutory missions worldwide. In 2016, the Coast Guard prevented a record breaking 416,000 pounds of illegal drugs worth nearly \$5.6 billion from entering the United States. Central resources for preventing illicit drugs from pouring into the United States are the Coast Guard's aging fleet of High Endurance Cutters, Medium Endurance Cutters, and Island Class Patrol Boats. Although the Coast Guard has continued to demonstrate the ability to accomplish more with less, the service's operational tempo is unsustainable as its infrastructure continues to age and becomes technologically obsolete. For years, administration budget requests have demonstrated poor support of Coast Guard acquisitions and asset recapitalization. Between 2010 and 2015, the acquisition budget decreased by 40 percent. In 2016, Congress restored funding for acquisitions, but we have a long way to go. The Coast Guard acquisition budget continues to constrain needed investments for priority platforms such as polar icebreakers, national security cutters, offshore patrol cutters, fast response cutters, and Great Lakes icebreakers.

The proposed reduction of the Coast Guard's budget by 11.8 percent would directly contradict the priorities articulated by the Trump Administration, in particular the President's priorities regarding enhanced maritime security needs and desire to invest in our nation's military. As one of five branches of the Armed Forces, the Coast Guard plays a vital role in our national security. Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly, in his previous role as Com-

manding Officer of United States Southern Command, testified before Congress in support of recapitalization of the Coast Guard's deteriorating cutter fleet. This recapitalization effort could not be carried out under the proposed budget cut. He also attested to the fact that the most effective non-violent means to interdict drugs is through our maritime borders. It is much more difficult for the United States to seize illegal drugs that are being trafficked by land once our southern border is crossed— it is better to intercept the drugs closer to their source before they are dispersed. Without the operational platforms, resources, and personnel to carry out these missions, the Coast Guard will be unable to adequately secure our maritime borders.

The proposed disestablishment of the Maritime Safety and Security Teams (MSST) and the Maritime Security Response Team (MSRT) would significantly reduce the Coast Guard's ability to conduct port security, anti-terrorism force protection, and maritime infrastructure protection operations. These units are a cornerstone of the Coast Guard's statutory missions of Port and Waterways Security and National Defense. Disestablishing them would be negligent and detrimental to our national security.

The United States is facing a potential eight-year gap in heavy icebreaking capability between when the Polar Star retires and when a new heavy icebreaker will be commissioned. It is irresponsible to continue to kick the can down the road, denying the Coast Guard the assets needed to meet mission requirements in the polar regions. Decreases in Arctic sea ice have resulted in increased vessel traffic in the Arctic, upping the need for consistent Coast Guard presence summer through fall. In August 2016, the passenger cruise ship *Crystal Serenity*, with more than 1,700 passengers onboard, became the largest commercial cruise ship to navigate the Northwest Passage. Recognizing the opportunity in the Arctic, many nations have made significant investments in polar icebreakers. For example, Russia currently has a fleet of 41 icebreakers with 11 more in the planning and construction process. In December 2016, China began construction on its first domestically built polar icebreaker which will have an operational range of 20,000 nautical miles and is forecasted for final completion by 2019. Yet, as the race to the Arctic is well underway, the United States icebreaker fleet remains woefully inadequate to meet emerging transportation, security, and scientific support demands.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

SAFETY

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29 Wentworth Road, New Castle, NH

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17 Harbor Loop, Gloucester, MA

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May 19 | 8:00 am to 4:00 pm

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Continued from last page...

Driven by Presidential directives and national military and maritime strategies, over the past three years, the Coast Guard has published its Arctic, Western Hemisphere, Cyber, and Human Capital strategies. Unfortunately, with a stagnant operating budget, the growing mission requirements resulting from these strategies force the Coast Guard to make significant tradeoffs—trade-offs that negatively impact the quality of life of Coast Guard members and their families. In particular, very little has been done to support the health care needs of Coast Guard families assigned to geographic regions with an absence of sufficient military and civilian health care networks. The Coast Guard is far behind in making investments in family support services, such as childcare services that are already offered to Department of Defense members and families.

We are acutely aware of the budget constraints facing our nation, however we believe that the men and women serving in the Coast Guard deserve operational assets, stable infrastructure, and the tools they need to do their jobs and support their families. We urge you to restore the \$1.3 billion dollar cut to the Coast Guard budget, which we firmly believe would result in catastrophic negative im-

pacts to the Coast Guard and its critical role in protecting our homeland, our economy and our environment.

Sincerely,

Maria Cantwell, U.S. Senator
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 Gary Peters, U.S. Senator
 Roger Wicker, U.S. Senator
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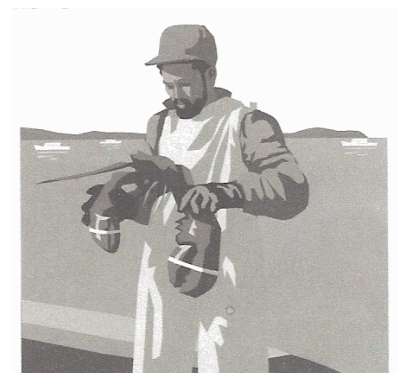
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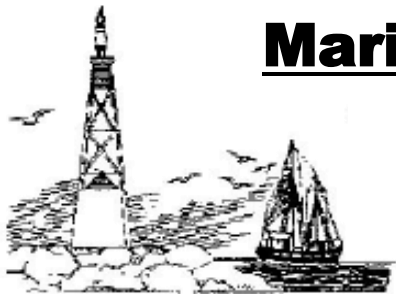


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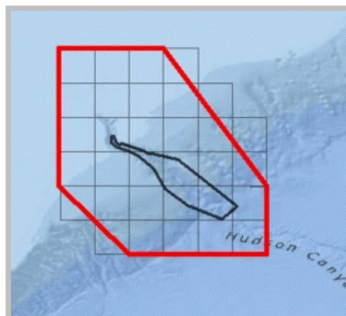
In the February issue of *Lobster Tales* we reported the proposed marine sanctuaries at Norfolk and Baltimore Canyons have been indefinitely postponed or removed, respectively. However, they just keep coming...

There is a third marine sanctuary being proposed by the environmental community, Hudson Canyon. The Wildlife Conservation Society submitted a nomination packet to NOAA late last year, which NOAA deemed sufficient to meet the criteria required for sanctuary consideration. The Hudson Canyon Sanctuary proposal is now part of an "inventory" of sites that NOAA *could* consider for future designation. If NOAA's Ocean Service decides to take this proposal off the shelf for consideration, they would initiate a multi-year public process to gather input from stakeholders regarding if a sanctuary should be designation and, if so, what activities should be allowed/prohibited.

The sanctuary sponsors, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), presented at the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's April meeting. The WCS staff stressed that they proposed this area to protect against possible energy extraction, not to restrict fishing. They recommended repeatedly in their nomination packet that fisheries continue to be managed by the Council, however they also note that poorly managed fisheries present the greatest risk to the area. When asked by Council members, they repeated that they are not seeking a ban on commercial fishing, but there was considerable concern in the room about sanctuary regulations usurping fisheries management.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Council moved to submit a letter to NOAA opposing sanctuary designation. This is just the first step; the nomination is now part of NOAA's inventory so the issue will need to be monitored by the fishing community. Heidi will circulate the MAFMC letter once it becomes public.

Right: Proposed sanctuary boundary in red. Black boundary is the MAFMC's coral discrete zone.



SNE DATA COLLECTION OPPORTUNITY

Burton Shank, NMFS lobster biologist, has secured funds to do a small scale image and acoustic survey for lobster habitat near Alvin and Atlantis Canyons in late May. This will be part of the larger, annual scallop HABCAM survey.

Burton is looking to speak to those of you who fish in that area to make sure he avoids gear conflicts and targets his survey on the lobster habitat, to the extent possible. I encourage you to contact Burton directly at 508-495-2363 or Burton.Shank@noaa.gov, or if you prefer you can reach out to Heidi. This could be a great opportunity to further document juvenile lobsters offshore in Southern New England. If you fish these canyons, please do your part to make this data collection effort successful.



NOAA Fisheries Declines to List Thorny Skate as Threatened or Endangered FEBRUARY 23, *GARFO*

In making a determination as to whether distinct population segments of thorny skate exist, we considered the best available information on thorny skate distribution, genetics, and behavior. We considered whether the information supported the distinct population segments as identified in the petition or if other distinct population segments exist.

We determined that the information does not support the existence of distinct population segments of thorny skate as they mix throughout the North Atlantic. Therefore, we also assessed whether listing the full species was warranted.

Based on a comprehensive status review report, which included an Extinction Risk Analysis, we determined that the species is not currently in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range, nor is it likely to become so within the foreseeable future, so listing is not warranted at this time.

Thorny skate are at low abundance in U.S. waters compared to historical levels, primarily due to overfishing. However, declines have been halted throughout most of the species' full range, and the species remains abundant throughout the North Atlantic, with hundreds of millions of individuals in the Northwest Atlantic alone.

What have we been reading?

To Read: click on the links or search online using the article title

Lobster Market

- * [RI fishing industry looks to grow local demand amid changing regulations](#), *RI NPR*
- * [Maine lobstermen figured out how to make more money off their catches](#), *BDN Maine*, Apr. 11
- * [Maritime economy outpacing other sectors](#), *Gloucester Times*, Apr. 4
- * [Maine fishermen see warning signs in lobster surge](#), *The Forecaster*, Mar. 23
- * [Lobster exports to China boom](#), *Ellsworth American*, Mar. 23
- * [Lobster industry fears lost sales from ramped-up Canadian exports](#), *Portland Press Herald*, Mar. 19

White House & Budget

- * [Senators still wary of Coast Guard budget cuts](#), *WorkBoat*, Mar. 23
- * [Could fisheries policy change under Trump and Commerce Secretary Ross?](#), *Seafood Source*, Mar. 15
- * [We need the resources of the Coast Guard](#), *Gloucester Times*, Mar. 13
- * [White House proposes steep budget cuts to \[NOAA\]](#), *The Washington Post*, Mar. 3
- * [White House to eject its environmental advisers...](#), *Washington Post*, Feb. 23

Monuments & Ocean Planning

- * [Fishermen not on board with Hudson Canyon sanctuary](#), *Asbury Park Press* Apr. 7
- * [Nature groups want role in suit challenging marine monument](#), *The News Tribune*, Mar. 30
- * [Trump staff reviewing Obama's designation of ... national monument sites](#), *Portland Press Herald*, Mar. 5
- * [Dream of Offshore U.S. Wind Power May Be Too Ugly for Trump](#), *Bloomberg*, Feb. 23

Research

- * [Long-term study planned in ocean south of Martha's Vineyard](#), *Cape Cod Times*, Apr. 10
- * [Skate liver oil could boost fishing industry](#), *Wicked Local Cape Cod*, Mar. 12
- * [Researchers: Where are all the right whales?](#), *USA Today Network*, Feb. 23
- * [DMC researchers test technique to determine lobster's age](#), *Phys Org*, Feb. 20

Other

- * [Congressman Moulton introduces young fishermen's development act](#), *Press Release*, Apr. 10
- * [Cape gray seal population estimated at up to 50k](#), *Cape Cod Times*, Apr. 6
- * [Drop in herring a mystery in Maine as bait price booms](#), *AP*, Mar. 12
- * [Federal agency must revisit listing for blueback herring](#), *Maine Public*, Mar. 27

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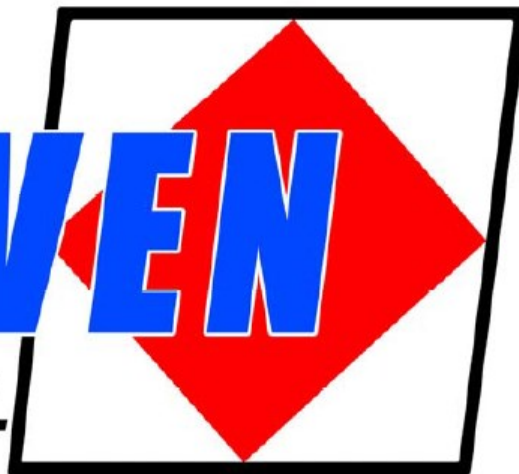
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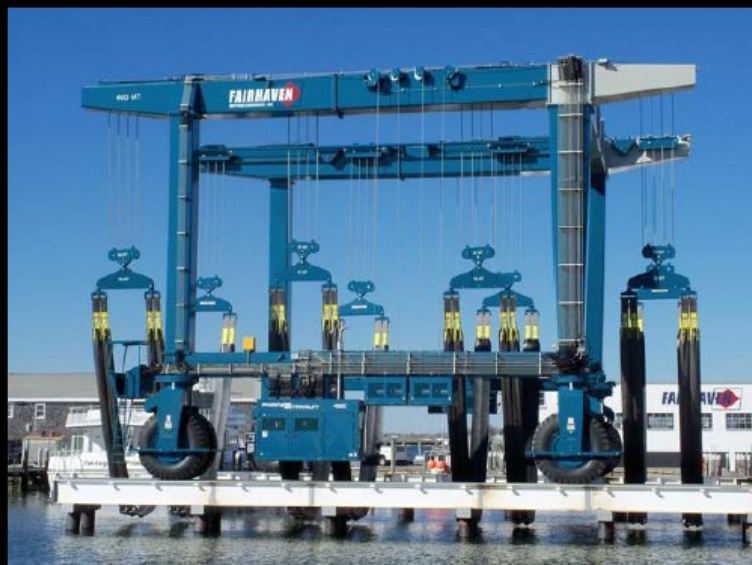
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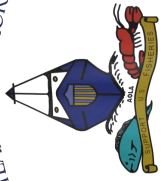
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