



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
One Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2298

December 18, 2006

AMERICAN LOBSTER
ADVANCE NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING

Today, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published in the Federal Register an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) regarding Federal American lobster management in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). NMFS announces that it is considering and seeking public comment on the implementation of further minimum carapace length (gauge) increases, escape vent size increases, and trap reductions in the offshore American lobster fishery, consistent with recommendations for Federal action in the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (Commission) Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster (ISFMP) and pending management actions of the Commission's American Lobster Management Board (Board).

A similar announcement, published in the Federal Register on December 13, 2005 (70 FR 73717), notified the public that NMFS was considering and requesting comment on gauge and escape vent size increases in multiple lobster conservation management areas (LCMAs). However, since the publication of that notice, many LCMA-specific Commission recommendations were modified in response to information in an updated peer-reviewed stock assessment published January 2006. Subsequent Commission deliberations resulted in the Board making changes to the fishery management plan, adding and repealing measures, such that many of the newer plan elements focused primarily on LCMA 3. Some measures relevant to this action, still under Board consideration, are included within the scope of this rulemaking.

Accordingly, NMFS announces that this present ANPR revises the December 13, 2005, ANPR and invites public comment on changes to the ISFMP, either formally approved by the Board or pending approval. Any repealed measures, having previously been raised in the December 13, 2005, ANPR, will remain within the scope of this present ANPR, although the Board's repeal is notable and NMFS invites comment on the Board's withdrawal of the measures.

A complete copy of the ANPR follows (3 pages). Written comments will be accepted until 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on or before Wednesday, January 17, 2007.

Mail Comments to:

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E-mail comments to: Lob1106@noaa.gov. Subject line "Lobster ANPR Comments"; or via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal at www.regulations.gov.

FAX Comments to: (978) 281-9117

Attachment

