



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

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AMERICAN LOBSTER
PROPOSED RULE – REQUEST FOR COMMENTS

Today, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published in the Federal Register a Proposed Rule regarding Federal American lobster management in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The proposed rule supports the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (Commission) Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster (ISFMP) and responds specifically to the Commission's recommendations for Federal action in Addenda X and XI to Amendment 3 of the ISFMP. NMFS requests public comments on this action which, subsequent to the publication in the Federal Register of an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (72 FR 53978, September 21, 2007), proposes new Federal lobster regulations that would implement:

Mandatory Federal lobster dealer electronic reporting. All Federal lobster dealers would be required to submit trip-level electronic reports of all lobster and other seafood purchases on a weekly basis to create a consistent reporting program for all Federal seafood dealers.

Changes to lobster maximum carapace length regulations. This action would implement a 5 1/4-inch (13.34 cm) maximum carapace length restriction in Area 2 (Southern New England) and Area 6 (Long Island Sound), neither of which are restricted by a maximum size limitation in the current Federal regulations. It would revise the maximum carapace length in Areas 4 and 5 (nearshore mid-Atlantic) from 5 1/4 inches (13.34 cm) and 5 1/2 inches (13.97 cm), respectively, to 5 1/4 inches (13.34 cm) in both areas, applicable to both male and female lobster. The current Federal measures apply the maximum sizes in these specific areas only to female lobster. NMFS proposes a new maximum carapace length requirement in both Area 3 (offshore) and the Outer Cape Lobster Management Area of 6 7/8 inches (17.46 cm) effective July 2009, reduced to a terminal maximum size of 6 3/4 inches (17.15 cm) in July 2010.

Revision to the definition of a standard v-notched lobster. This action proposes to modify the definition of a standard v-notch lobster from a 1/4-inch v-notch (0.64 cm) with no setal hairs to a 1/8-inch v-notch (0.32 cm) with or without setal hairs. If implemented the revised definition would apply to Areas 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and the Outer Cape Management Area.

A copy of the Proposed Rule and the associated draft Environmental Assessment may be obtained from the Northeast Regional Office web site at www.nero.noaa.gov. All comments will be accepted until 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on or before **November 20, 2008**.

Mail Comments to: Harold C. Mears, Director
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E-mail comments to: Submit electronic comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal at www.regulations.gov.

FAX Comments to: (978) 281-9117

