

## AMERICAN LOBSTER PROPOSED RULE - BROODSTOCK MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) announces its intent to consider revisions to the Federal American lobster (*Homarus americanus*) regulations in response to recommendations by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) and to clarify existing regulations. The proposed management measures would increase protection to American lobster broodstock throughout the stock's range as recommended to NOAA Fisheries by the Commission as part of the Commission's Addenda II and III to Amendment 3 of the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster.

### **The proposed lobster broodstock management measures would:**

- **revise the Egg Per Recruit overfishing target timeline** of F10 from the year 2005 to the year 2008;
- **increase the lobster minimum legal carapace size limit** from 3 1/4 inches (8.26 centimeters (cm)) to 3 3/8 inches (8.57 cm) in LCMA 2 (inshore Southern New England), LCMA 3 (offshore waters), LCMA 4 (inshore Northern Mid-Atlantic), LCMA 5 (inshore Southern Mid-Atlantic), and the Outer Cape Management Area;
- **increase the rectangular lobster trap escape vent size** from 1 15/16 inches x 5 3/4 inches (4.92 cm x 14.61 cm) to 2 inches x 5 3/4 inches (5.08 cm x 14.61 cm) in LCMAs 2, 3, 4, 5, and the Outer Cape;
- **increase the circular lobster trap escape vent size** from 2 7/16 inches (6.19 cm) to 2 5/8 inches (6.67 cm) in LCMAs 2, 3, 4, 5, and the Outer Cape;
- **implement a 5 1/4 inch (13.34 cm) maximum legal carapace size** on possession of female lobsters in LCMA 4, and 5 1/2 inches (13.97 cm) in LCMA 5;
- **require mandatory V-notching of female lobsters carrying eggs in LCMA 1** (Gulf of Maine) and in LCMA 3 above the 42°30' North latitude line;
- **require a zero tolerance definition of V-notched female lobsters in LCMA 1**; and
- **implement a 5 mile (8 kilometer) overlap boundary area** between LCMAs 3 and 5.

### **To clarify existing regulations, the proposed measures would:**

- **allow a change in the LMCA designations** of a fishing vessel with a Federal lobster permit upon sale, transfer, or within 45 days of the permit's effective date;
- **clearly reference other laws and regulations** applicable to Federal lobster permit holders;
- **clearly prohibit hauling or possession of lobster trap gear belonging to another vessel**;
- **exempt lobster trap gear retrieval from provisions of the exempted fishing regulations** by a substitute vessel if a Federally permitted vessel is inoperable or mechanically impaired.