



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

September 5, 2002

**ADVANCE NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING AND NOTICE OF INTENT TO
PREPARE AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR AMERICAN LOBSTER**

Dear Federal American Lobster Permit Holder:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) recently published a combined Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR), Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) relative to American lobster management in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The ANPR/NOI announces NMFS' intent to prepare an EIS to evaluate the management measures recommended for Federal implementation as recommended by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) in Addenda II and III to Amendment 3 of the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster (ISFMP), as well as alternative measures. NMFS is also soliciting comments in this notice on potential modifications to parts of the current Federal lobster regulations to clarify the existing rules and assist with their enforcement.

Addendum II adopted a revised egg production schedule, a series of minimum gauge size increases in five of the seven Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMA), a lobster trap escape vent size increase, a four-year lobster trap reduction schedule for LCMA 3, and a logbook requirement for LCMA 3 lobster vessels. Since then, the Commission adopted Addendum III which updates the Addendum II implementation dates for the minimum gauge size increases and includes new measures for the majority of the LCMAs. The measures included in Addendum III are summarized below:

LCMA 1 (Gulf of Maine): zero tolerance v-notch definition; mandatory v-notch requirement; escape vent size increase in 2007 (if necessary).

LCMA 2 (Southern New England): revised implementation dates for minimum gauge size increases.

LCMA 3 (Offshore): mandatory v-notching requirement north of 42° 30'N latitude; five-mile overlap zone along boundary with LCMA 5; choose and use provision; revised implementation dates for minimum gauge size increases.



LCMA 4 (Nearshore Northern Mid-Atlantic): revised implementation dates for minimum gauge size increases; maximum gauge size (if necessary).

LCMA 5 (Nearshore Southern Mid-Atlantic): revised implementation dates for minimum gauge size increases; maximum gauge size (if necessary); vessel upgrade limit.

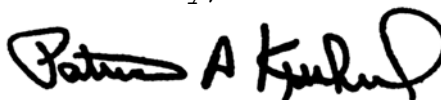
LCMA 6 (Long Island Sound): minimum gauge size increases (if necessary); escape vent size increase (if necessary).

Outer Cape Cod LCMA: revised implementation dates for minimum gauge size increases; additional minimum gauge size increases (if necessary); trap reduction schedule; annual trap transfer period; passive trap reductions.

NMFS requests public input on the management measures in Addenda II and III to Amendment 3 as well as the additional issues relative to the Federal lobster regulations as discussed in the ANPR/NOI. Written comments will be accepted until 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on October 7, 2002, and should be sent to: Harold C. Mears, Director, State, Federal, and Constituent Programs Office, Northeast Region, NMFS, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. You may also submit comments via fax to (978) 281-9117. Comments cannot be accepted via e-mail or Internet.

To receive a complete copy of the ANPR/NOI, please contact NMFS at **(978) 281-9278**, or access the document via the Northeast Regional Office web site at: "<http://www.nero.noaa.gov>".

Sincerely,



Patricia A. Kurkul
Regional Administrator