Lobster Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology

Omnibus Framework Adjustment: Meeting 1

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council - June 6, 2017
Background

- SBRM uses VTR data to measure activity.
- Federal lobster permit does not require VTR.
- Only lobster boats with another federal permit are in the SBRM.
- May not reflect the lobster pot fishery as a whole.
- Increased sea days in 2015 highlighted this issue.
Background

• ASMFC, NEFSC, States, and GARFO staff developed expanded sampling frame using permit and dealer data to address issue.

• But SBRM Omnibus Amendment specifically says it does not apply to lobster-only boats without VTR.

• Return to original sampling frame until we implement a permanent solution through the public process.
Proposed Goal

- To better meet the Magnuson-Stevens Act requirement for FMPs to establish a standardized reporting methodology to assess the amount and type of bycatch occurring in the fishery.
- This action would reduce potential sources of bias in sampling and discard estimates for the New England and Mid-Atlantic lobster pot fleets, as soon as practical, while minimizing the administrative burden on these vessels.
Proposed Actions/Solutions/Alternatives

• No Action.

• Stipulate the SBRM lobster pot fleets include all active vessels that fish with this gear in Federal waters. (Could use the expanded sampling frame already devised, and could be modified in the future without further Council action.)

• Require all Federal lobster vessels to submit VTRs for all trips. (May not be consistent with the proposed goal of this action.)
**Likely Impacts**

- Action is administrative.
- Effectively removes the conflicting sentence from the SBRM Amendment.
- Clarifies the Councils’ intent to include all active Federal lobster pot vessels in the SBRM.
- Would not increase or decrease the number of observer sea days.
- Spreads coverage over a larger number of vessels.
- Lobster permit holders already required to carry an observer.
- Therefore, this action is not anticipated to result in any changes to the operation of the lobster pot fishery, including where, when, or how they fish.
Timeline

• June 2017 – Framework meeting #1. Councils review/approve proposed action plan, goals, and alternatives for consideration.
• August/September 2017 – Councils take final action.
• Fall/Winter – GARFO completes any remaining analysis and rulemaking.
• April 2018 – 2018 NEFOP observer year begins, using sea day schedule based on new sampling frame.
Questions