Informational Meeting on American Lobster
December 21, 2010
Center for Independent Experts
Overall Conclusions:

- SNE lobster stock is “in a poor state”
- Sea temperature and disease incidence provide strongest evidence that current conditions are different than those prevailing in the early 1980’s (when landings were similar to today).
- CIE agrees w/ TC: recruitment decline is environmentally driven (one reviewer thought overfishing a more likely cause)
- Significant action is needed immediately to maximize chances of rebuilding the stock (Moratorium, 75%, 50%)
Next ASMFC Steps

- Plan Development Team to draft Addendum for next Board meeting with specific options for achieving 50% and 75% reduction in exploitation (landings).

- PDT Meeting Expected early January 2011

- Next Board Meeting March 2011 (or earlier)
Low Stock Productivity: Under high natural mortality and poor recruitment projections suggest even the new (lower) abundance targets cannot be maintained even with no fishing.
What can we hope to accomplish in the Next 5 Years?
1. Stabilize the population
2. Improve the chances of stock growth
3. Improve the chances for a more robust fishery in the future
4. Do enough conservation to make the sacrifice worthwhile
Potential Goals for the Fishery

Social and economic:
1. **Maintain a limited open fishery that preserves fishery infrastructure (dockage, vessels), the heritage of fishing and the basis from which the industry can rebound should resource condition improve.**
2. **Allow fishermen more flexibility to make business decisions**
3. **Maintain public ownership of resource**
4. **Allow market forces to play a larger role in shaping the fishery**
5. **Achieve balance with strategies to prevent excessive consolidation**
Tonight

- Chance to consider:
  - The best level of management to pursue: State, Lobster Mgmt Area (LIS) or SNE stock wide (MA-NC)
  - The best management approach for CT lobstermen
- Share New Information (Hand Outs)
- TC Nov. Memo on management options
- Recent press on SNE Lobster issue
- LIS/CT statistics
Tonight

- Management Approaches for 50% reduction in exploitation (landings). (Assuming same approach needed to reach 75%).
- EXPECT a Compliance Requirement to actually achieve the target reduction in landings. (a catch QUOTA of some sort)
- Consider “Recoupment” (ability to make up for lost landings especially due to area/season closures)
- Consider Goals for this fishery
CT Lobster Landings & Value 1983-2009
& target landings under 50% reduction

Lobster Landings from All Connecticut Ports
(All Gears, Regardless Where Caught)
Note: 2009 value is a preliminary estimate

Target 50% of 2007-09 average landings (233k lb)

3.7 m lb, $12.1 m
440k lb, $2.2 m
Management Options

BY STATE or LMA or SNE?

Current Approaches

1. Limit Participation
2. Trap Limits
3. Gauge increase / max gauge
4. V-notch / Male only
Management Options

BY STATE or LMA or SNE?

New Approaches

5. Closed Seasons

6. Closed Areas

7. Quota
   a. Annual/Seasonal
   b. Individual
Management Options

1. Limit Participation (further)

- **PROS**
  - Remaining fishermen near status quo mgmt
  - Latent effort removed from fishery
  - Participants remaining could be extremely few (7)

- **CONS**
  - 94% of current participants eliminated from fishery (or all FT)
  - No new entry
  - Industry loses social significance with such low numbers
  - Early fishery closures likely
  - “Race to fish”
Number of fishermen 1979-2010

Landings are not related to number of fishermen. See next slide.
Very few fishermen account for most of the catch.
Management Options
2. Trap Limits (further)

• PROS
  ➢ Latent effort removed from fishery
  ➢ Current participants can (theoretically) remain in fishery
  ➢ Fishery more efficient
  ➢ Minimizes bycatch mortality

• CONS
  ➢ Very large reduction (90%) in actively fished traps likely required
  ➢ Many fishermen will be allocated too few traps to be viable
  ➢ Early fishery closures likely
  ➢ “Race to fish”
Traps fished lags behind abundance. Trap Limits an ineffective control on fishing.
To achieve 50% reduction in exploitation might mean 5,000-8,000 total trap limit.
Management Options

3. Gauge Increase / Max Gauge

• PROS
  - Current fishing practices (generally) maintained
  - Easy to enforce
  - Traditional

• CONS
  - Inefficient for industry
  - Uneven conservation burden by area
  - Likely to require annual increases to maintain exploitation rate target
  - Bycatch mortality
Management Options
4. Male Only / V-notch

• **PROS**
  - Female biomass fully protected
  - Current fishing practices (generally) maintained
  - Easy to enforce

• **CONS**
  - Unknown impact on mating/reproductive dynamics
  - Inefficient for industry
  - Uneven conservation burden by area
  - Bycatch mortality
Management Options

5. Closed Seasons

• **PROS**
  - Easy to enforce
  - Could reduce bycatch mortality

• **CONS**
  - Closed season needs to be long
  - Summer closure hurts some more than others (vice versa)
  - “Race to fish”
  - Early closures likely
  - “Deadliest Catch”
Management Options
6. Closed Areas

• PROS
  - Could apply conservation where needed most

• CONS
  - Closed areas need to be very large
  - Impacts some fishermen, not others
  - Gear conflicts from displaced fishermen
Management Options
7a. Annual/Seasonal Quotas

- **PROS**
  - All fishermen can continue to fish
  - Minimize bycatch mortality

- **CONS**
  - “Race to fish”
  - Inefficient
  - Difficult for fishermen to plan their business
  - Price impacts?
  - Expect very short open seasons/frequent closures
Management Options
7b. Individual Quotas

• **PROS**
  - Allow fishermen full flexibility in fishing practices
  - Time fishing to maximize profit
  - Minimize bycatch mortality
  - Allow broad participation at various levels

• **CONS**
  - Change from current system
  - Time required to develop/implement
Next Steps

• FISHERMEN: Consider options and send me your comments

• COMMISSIONERS/DEP: Work to include approaches CT fishermen can support are in the Addendum

• ALL: Work on details of promising options
Contact Information

Send Comments to:
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CT DEP Long Island Sound Trawl Survey
Indices of Lobster Abundance 1984-2009

Geometric Mean Catch/Tow vs Year

- Spring
- Fall
- Spring median
- Fall median