



MEMORANDUM

Item 5e

TO: California Ocean Protection Council
FROM: Valerie Termini and Craig Shuman
DATE: November 21, 2013
RE: Spiny Lobster Fishery Management Plan (FMP)

A spiny lobster Fishery Management Plan (FMP) is being developed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) in collaboration with staff from the Fish and Game Commission (FGC) and the OPC. The development of an FMP for California spiny lobster is critically important at this time, to protect the existing commercial and recreational fisheries as well as the role the lobster plays in the southern California kelp forest ecosystem. This FMP builds on a number of key actions the OPC has taken to advance the development of sustainable fisheries and fishing communities in California, including utilizing innovative partnerships to complete FMPs.

The spiny lobster FMP project uses a collaborative approach involving state and federal agencies, commercial and recreational fishermen, scientists, environmental NGOs, the California Wildlife Foundation and members of the public. As a result of this approach, DFW staff assembled a Lobster Advisory Committee (LAC) from the aforementioned stakeholder groups to provide guidance and formulate recommendations that improve management and the behavior of the fisheries. These recommendations will be submitted to the Fish and Game Commission for consideration along with harvest control rules to ensure long term sustainability of the fishery.

Spiny lobsters are native to Southern California and are a moderately fast growing species reaching sexual maturity at 3-5 years, with a maximum age range of 30-50 years. Lobsters are the target of both a popular commercial and recreational fishery in southern California and are subject to an unknown level of illegal take. The high price being paid for spiny lobster has led to an increase in the amount of commercial trap gear being used, while the maximum number of participants is fixed. With the advent of conical hoop nets, recreational effort and catch has increased overall, but recreational dive effort has been steadily decreasing as a result of declining interest in scuba diving. The LAC was tasked with developing recommendations that improved management and also protected the important role that lobster plays ecologically and economically in California. Recently, the LAC achieved consensus on a number of possible regulations for the Fish and Game Commission to consider for adoption, notably they include:

- Trap limits in the commercial fishery
- Switch to the Federal Rule allowing commercial traps up to a 7-day soak time
- Changing the timing of the opener of the lobster season to 6:00 A.M. on Saturday instead of 12:01 a.m. on Saturday
- Hoop net floats should be marked with a unique ID
- Tail clipping sport harvested lobster
- Mechanized pullers are only to be used recreationally by individuals with disabilities or other medical issues

The Spiny Lobster FMP process may prove to be a successful example of a cooperative FMP model may help to pave the way for additional FMPs. This process has capitalized on many years of investment from DFW, fishery participants, academics, stakeholders and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to encourage more creative, collaborative, and progressive approaches to advancing sustainable fisheries.