



Public Information & Comment Meetings

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Introductory Talk

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Good evening, and thank you for coming to the first public meeting for the development of the Spiny Lobster Fishery Management Plan! I'm Kristine Barsky, a senior marine biologist with the California Department of Fish and Game, and I am coordinating the development of the plan for the Department. Our meeting tonight is intended to introduce you to what goes into a fishery management plan, or "FMP", and how it's developed. We will answer your questions, and listen to your thoughts about what should be considered in the plan.

The Marine Life Management Act of 1998 requires the Department of Fish and Game to develop fishery management plans for all of California's fisheries. The Act specifies what needs to be included in the plan, and the way the plan should be developed. Kai Lampson will be discussing those details after me.

When you leave tonight, we hope you'll be feeling positive about this opportunity to develop a roadmap for the future management of the spiny lobster resource in California.

The Department has already completed an initial lobster stock assessment, which provides some of the information necessary to make sound choices about the lobster fisheries in southern California. The good news is that the current estimated harvest of lobster appears to be sustainable.

Many of you are probably thinking, "Well, if it's not broken, don't mess with it." The FMP process is our opportunity to take a close, hard look at how both the recreational and commercial fisheries are being managed, and see if anything should be improved or changed. If possible, the management plan will also provide guidance for how to respond to possible events in the future, such as a major drop in lobster harvest success, or domoic acid toxin occurring more frequently in the viscera of lobster, or a radical shift in commercial market demand. We all know that the world around us is constantly changing and becoming more interconnected by the day; the lobster resource and its fisheries are similarly being affected. However, with your help, we can develop an FMP that will provide us with the information & tools needed to respond to whatever the future might bring. The FMP process does not necessarily mean that our current management will change dramatically; but it will provide us with a process to consider how to manage better.

The development of a lobster FMP is a multi-year process. The current plan has the draft FMP being presented to the California Fish and Game Commission for adoption at the beginning of 2015. Any regulation changes that might be needed to improve management or implement the plan would also be considered at that time.

The lobster FMP is being put together by a small, core staff of Department biologists, including myself, Kai Lampson, Doug Neilson and Travis Buck. Tom Barnes is the manager for state-managed species. We are being assisted by other DFG staff as needed and several contractors.

The Department is a partner with the Ocean Protection Council, which is charged with coordinating the activities of state agencies that are involved in the protection and conservation of ocean ecosystems. The Ocean Protection Council has provided the Department with grant funds to contract out some of the tasks associated with the FMP under the Department's guidance. The California Wildlife Foundation is a non-profit organization that was established to support programs of the Department of Fish and Game, and they are acting as the Department's fund manager for the Ocean Protection Council grant.

One of the major tasks that we've contracted for is facilitation. The public process is critically important in the development of an FMP, and we want to make sure that everyone has an opportunity to participate, so that everyone can support the plan. The facilitators are here to make sure that everyone's voice is heard, and that the process remains objective.

The Department's "agenda" is that we produce the best management roadmap (FMP) possible in a fair and transparent manner. Our management objective is to develop a plan that allows for the sustainable harvest of lobster into the future. We intend to take all the comments and suggestions we receive and consider them as we develop the FMP, so it represents the best information and science available.

The Department felt that the creation of a Lobster Advisory Committee with representatives from all the critical constituencies would improve the FMP process. The Committee will provide us with advice, feedback, and recommendations regarding the issues and actions that need to be taken during the development of a FMP. We wanted to keep the Committee small and balanced to allow for in-depth conversations. The Committee members will be committing their time and energy to thoroughly reviewing the information that is contained in the FMP.

The Department has created a lobster FMP website to provide proceedings from all public meetings and meetings of the Lobster Advisory Committee to those that are interested. We intend to post draft chapters on the website as they're created. If you don't have access to a computer, we'll mail you the information.

There is no magic template for public involvement. If we're missing something, or there is another method, please let us know. The success of this FMP will not only ensure the sustainability of the lobster resource, but serve as a guide for producing management plans for other species. Without public input and support we won't be successful. Thank you for participating here tonight; giving up your personal time for a meeting is a reflection of your interest in California's lobster resource and fisheries. Thank you for being our valued partners in the FMP process!