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VIRGINIA LOBSTER FISHERY

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Approximately 100% of lobsters landed in Virginia are caught 60 to 80 miles off the coast. Prior to 1971 lobsters landed in Virginia were caught offshore by otter trawlers either incidental to finfish catch or by trawlers specifically in search for lobsters. Several companies and several independent lobstermen have been fishing lobster traps since then. Few lobsters are now landed in Virginia by trawlers.

Since 1971 Virginia lobster potters have concentrated their effort 60 to 80 miles offshore on the continental shelf and slope at depths of 40-180 fathoms from Baltimore Canyon to waters off Oregon Inlet, N. C. (Table 1, Fig. 1).

Total Virginia lobster landings, value and per cent of U.S. total, 1969-1973, are shown in Table 2. Virginia lobster landings by gear, 1969-1976, and number of gear, 1969-1973 are shown in Table 3.

An unreported catch (except 1972) of lobsters incidental to the sea bass trap fishery occurs about 15-20 miles off the coast of Virginia at depths of 15 to 20 fathoms (Table 2). Also, the surf clam dredge (unreported catch), scallop dredge, and scallop trawl fisheries have landed incidental catches of lobsters (Table 3). The scallop fishery is located 30 to 50 miles offshore at depths of 30 to 40 fathoms. The surf clam fishery is located approximately 15-35 miles offshore at depths of about

15-25 fathoms.

From August 1975 through April 1976, 177 lobsters were examined for intestinal parasites. The lobsters were caught in Norfolk and Washington canyons and on the continental shelf and slope between and adjacent to those canyons at depths of from 40 to 220 fathoms.

The larval nematode Ascarophis sp., an offshore lobster population discriminator (Uzmann 1967), infested 31 (17.5%) of 177 lobsters examined. This rate of infestation (17.5%) seems similar to the rate (25%) of lobsters infested by nematodes shown by Uzmann (1967) in samples from Hudson, Block, Veatch and Corsair canyons.

Only one (0.6%) lobster (86 mm female) was infested with acanthocephalan cysts, Corynosoma sp., a coastal lobster stock discriminator, according to Uzmann (1970). This lobster was caught in Norfolk Canyon (depth unknown) in August 1975. Mixing of offshore and alongshore stocks (not necessarily inshore) is apparently rare.

A lobster tagging study will be conducted by Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) personnel in the spring of 1977. One thousand lobsters will be tagged and released in and around Norfolk, Washington and Baltimore canyons. We hope to gain growth, mortality, and migration data. The migration data may provide answers to questions about independence and/or mixing of lobster populations off the mid-Atlantic coast.

Table 1. Subdivision of continental shelf and slope, offshore lobster fishery study sites, Lobster Management Area Four.

<u>VIMS</u> <u>Study</u> <u>Area</u>	<u>NMFS</u>			<u>Units</u>	<u>Geography</u>
	<u>Area</u>	<u>Degrees</u> <u>Lat. Long.</u>			
I	636	35	74	11-13 21-23	Oregon Inlet
II	632	36	74	23-26 31,32	South of Norfolk Canyon between Canyon and Inlet
III	626	37	74	26,36	Norfolk Canyon
IV	626	37	74	35,45	Between Norfolk and Washington canyons
V	626	37	74	34,44	Washington Canyon
VI	626	37	74	42,43 53,61,62	Between Washington and Baltimore canyons
VII	622	38	73	15,16,26	Baltimore Canyon

Table 2. Total Virginia lobster catch in pounds and dollars, 1969 - 1973, and per cent of U.S. totals. Source: NMFS, Fisheries Statistics of U.S.

	<u>1969</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1971</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1973</u>	<u>5 yr. total</u>	<u>5 yr avg.</u>
lbs.	180,500	229,200	233,900	884,200	199,300	1,727,100	345,420
% of U.S.	0.5	0.7	0.7	2.7	0.7		1.1
Dollars	122,820	148,882	200,261	1,027,964	284,656	1,784,583	356,916
% of U.S.	0.4	0.4	0.6	2.6	0.7		1.0

Table 3. Virginia lobster landings by gear, 1969-1976, and number of gear, in parentheses, 1969-1973. 1969-1973 data from NMFS, Fisheries Statistics of U. S. 1974-1976 data from NMFS landings reports.

	<u>1969</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1971</u>	<u>1972</u>
<u>Otter trawls</u>				
<u>Fish</u>				
(lbs)	-0-	130,600(57)	122,300(52)	6,100(49)
(\\$)	-0-	85,106	101,741	5,863
<u>Lobster</u>				
(lbs)	180,500(7)	98,600(9)	-0-	-0-
(\\$)	122,820	63,776	-0-	-0-
<u>Scallop</u>				
(lbs)	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
(\\$)	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
<u>Traps</u>				
<u>Fish</u>				
(lbs)	-0-	-0-	-0-	900(7,902)
(\\$)	-0-	-0-	-0-	1,008
<u>Lobster</u>				
(lbs)	-0-	-0-	111,600(3,200)	877,200(6,000)
(\\$)	-0-	-0-	98,520	1,021,093
<u>Dredges</u>				
<u>Scallop</u>				
(lbs)	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
(\\$)	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-

Table 3, cont'd.

	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976*</u>
<u>Otter trawls</u>				
<u>Fish</u>				
<u>(lbs)</u>	10,200(55)	400	200	24
<u>(\$)</u>	12,306	565	341	24
<u>Lobster</u>				
<u>(lbs)</u>	6,800(1)	-0-	-0-	-0-
<u>(\$)</u>	8,298	-0-	-0-	-0-
<u>Scallop</u>				
<u>(lbs)</u>	-0-	-0-	-0-	1177
<u>(\$)</u>	-0-	-0-	-0-	2437
<u>Traps</u>				
<u>Fish</u>				
<u>(lbs)</u>	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
<u>(\$)</u>	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
<u>Lobster</u>				
<u>(lbs)</u>	182,300(6,400)	273,600	90,300	69,805
<u>(\$)</u>	264,052	502,675	163,918	141,337
<u>Dredges</u>				
<u>Scallop</u>				
<u>(lbs)</u>	-0-	500	-0-	-0-
<u>(\$)</u>	-0-	1000	-0-	-0-

*Data from December 1976 not available.

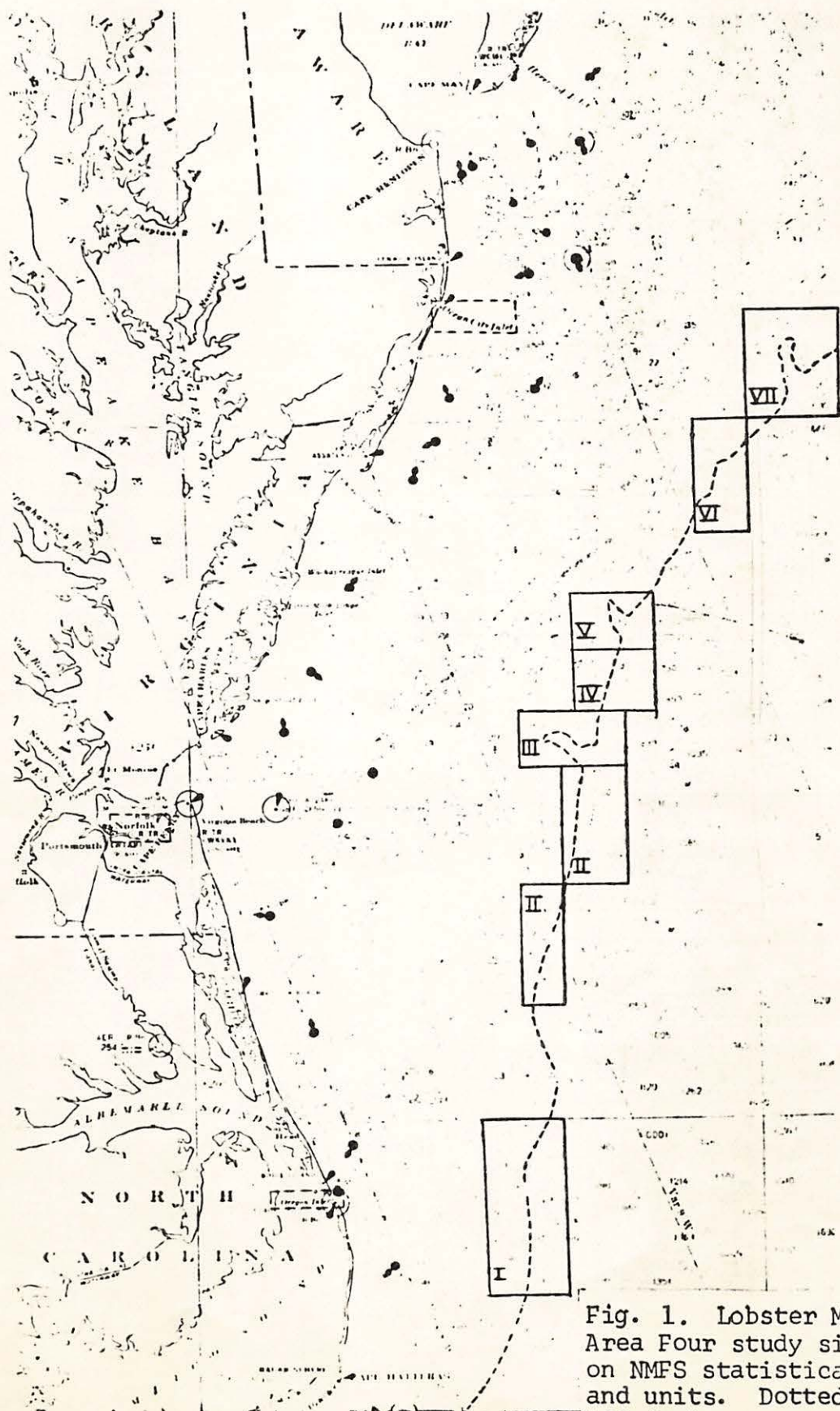


Fig. 1. Lobster Management Area Four study sites, based on NMFS statistical areas and units. Dotted line is 100 fathom curve.

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