

**AMENDMENT #3 TO THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN
FOR THE
SURF CLAM AND OCEAN QUAHOG FISHERIES
AND
SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

April 1981

**Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
in cooperation with the
National Marine Fisheries Service
and the
New England Fishery Management Council**

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Abbreviations and Definitions Used In This Document

Act or **MFCMA** - The Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.

bushel (bu) - a standard unit of measure presumed to hold 1.88 cubic feet of surf clams or ocean quahogs in the shell (1 bu. of offshore surf clams = 17 lbs. of meats) (1 bu. of ocean quahogs = 10 lbs. of meats).

cage - a standard unit of measure presumed to hold 32 bu. of surf clams or ocean quahogs in the shell. The outside dimensions of a standard cage generally are 3' wide, 4' long, and 5' high.

CFR - Code of Federal Regulations.

cm - centimeter.

Council - the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

cu - cubic.

FCZ - Fishery Conservation Zone - the zone contiguous to the territorial sea of the US, the inner boundary of which is a line coterminous with the seaward boundary of each of the coastal States and the outer boundary of which is a line drawn in such a manner that each point on it is 200 nautical miles from the baseline from which the territorial sea is measured.

GRT - gross registered ton.

in - inch.

Mid-Atlantic Area - that portion of the FCZ south of the line that begins at 41°18'16.249" north latitude and 71°54'28.477" west longitude and proceeds S 37°22'32.75" E to the point of intersection with the outward boundary of the FCZ.

MSY - maximum sustainable yield.

NEFC - the Northeast Fisheries Center of the NMFS.

New England Area - that portion of the FCZ north of the line that begins at 41°18'16.249" north latitude and 71°54'28.477" west longitude and proceeds S 37°22'32.75" E to the point of intersection with the outward boundary of the FCZ.

NMFS - the National Marine Fisheries Service of NOAA.

NOAA - the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the US Dept. of Commerce.

OY - Optimum Yield.

Regional Director - the Regional Director, Northeast Region, NMFS.

Secretary - the Secretary of Commerce.

II. SUMMARY

The original Fishery Management Plan for the Atlantic Surf Clam and Ocean Quahog Fisheries (Plan) was approved by the Secretary of Commerce in November, 1977, for the period through September 1979. Amendment #1 extended it through 31 December 1979, and revised reporting requirements to bring them in compliance with the amended Act. Amendment #2 extended it through the end of calendar year 1981. Amendment #3 extends the Plan indefinitely and revises it.

The objectives of the Plan are:

1. Rebuild the surf clam populations to allow eventual harvest approaching the 50 million pound level, which is the estimate of maximum sustainable yield over the range of the resource, based on the average yearly catch from 1960 to 1976.
2. Minimize economic dislocation to the extent possible consistent with objective 1 and encourage efficiency in the fishery.
3. Prevent the harvest of ocean quahogs from exceeding maximum sustainable yield and direct the fishery toward achieving Optimum Yield.
4. Provide the greatest degrees of freedom and flexibility to all harvesters of these resources consistent with the attainment of the other objectives of this Plan.
5. Optimize yield per recruit.
6. Increase understanding of the conditions of the stocks and fishery.

The management unit remains unchanged and is all surf clams (Spisula solidissima) and all ocean quahogs (Arctica islandica) in the Atlantic FCZ.

Alternatives for Amendment #3 are:

1. Take no action at this time.
2. Continue the provision to close areas with large numbers of small surf clams, impose a 5.5" surf clam size limit in both the Mid-Atlantic and New England Areas, continue annual and quarterly quotas, and continue the effort restrictions in the current Plan. The ocean quahog regime would be continued unchanged.
3. Remove effort restrictions.
4. Revise the fishing week, bad weather make-up day, and effort restrictions.
5. Institute a permit limitation system in the surf clam fishery.
6. Create two Mid-Atlantic surf clam management areas.
7. Create separate management areas for reopened surf clam areas.
8. Continue the provision to close areas with small surf clams, impose a 5.5" surf clam size limit, continue annual quotas, and institute a vessel allocation system in the surf clam fishery.
9. Continue the provision to close areas with large numbers of small surf clams and impose a 5.5" surf clam size limit. The ocean quahog regime would continue unchanged.

The alternatives adopted are 2, 4, 5a, and 7. This includes an indefinite extension of the Plan with annual and quarterly quotas for surf clams, an annual quota for ocean quahogs, and a 5.5" minimum size limit for surf clams in the Mid-Atlantic Area. The New England surf clam management area is continued. In the Mid-Atlantic Area, surf clam quarterly quotas are equal. The bad weather make-up days will be in effect during November through April. The fishing week begins at 6:00 am