



# Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

# PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
August 13, 2007

PRESS CONTACT: Daniel T. Furlong  
(302) 674-2331 x19

## Good News, Bad News

For the first time in the past three years the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC) Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass and Bluefish Boards (Board) achieved consensus on their recommendations regarding proposed fishing regulations for those species for the upcoming fishing year - that's the good news. Now the bad news, for the third year in a row the Council and the Board recommended decreases in the total allowable landing levels (TAL) for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. Bluefish was again the single bright spot as its quota was increased by about a half a million pounds.

The table below summarizes the recommended fishery management measures for 2008:

	<b>Total Allowable Landings</b> <i>(millions of pounds)</i>	<b>Commercial Quota</b>	<b>Minimum Fish Size</b> <b>(TL)</b>	<b>Mesh Size</b>	<b>Recreational Harvest Limit</b>	<b>Research Set-Aside Quota</b> <i>(in pounds)</i>
<b>Summer Flounder</b>	15.77	9.46	14"	5.5"	6.31	up to 3%
<b>Scup</b>	7.34	5.46	9"	5.0"	1.88	up to 3%
<b>Black Sea Bass</b>	4.22	2.07	11"	4.5"	2.15	up to 3%
<b>Bluefish</b>	28.16	8.88	---	---	19.28	up to 3%

The situation presented to the Council at its August meeting was that it has only five years to double the spawning stock biomass of summer flounder. Despite the greatest abundance of summer flounder in the past twenty five years, the requirements of law (rebuild the stock by 2013) and best science (achieve a yet to be realized target that will produce the maximum sustainable yield) compelled the Council to recommend the lowest quota level in the history of its summer flounder management program. Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis once commented that "The logic of words should yield to the logic of realities". Faced with the dual realities of an abundant resource and a very recently peer-reviewed model that indicates the stock can double if fishing mortality is aggressively controlled over the next five years, the Council (and Commission) recommended a reduction of 1.34 million pounds from the current year quota for summer flounder to 15.77 million pounds for 2008.

For the scup fishery both the Council and the Board recommended a TAL of 7.34 million pounds. This is nearly a 40% reduction from the current year federal TAL of 12.00 million pounds. Amendment 14 to the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP) will take effect later this month and initiate a seven-year rebuilding plan for scup effective January 1, 2008. Hence, to achieve the scup target associated with the rebuilding schedule to be implemented through Amendment 14, the Council recommended a quota level consistent with the FMP's rebuilding design. Moreover, as scup continues to suffer from the lack of a current assessment both management authorities elected to take a risk-adverse approach in establishing the 2008 TAL for scup.

For black sea bass it was recommended that TAL be reduced from the 5.0 million pound quota currently in effect for the federal sector to 4.22 million pounds in 2008. This equates to about a 16% reduction for 2008.

The Council and Board adopted a TAL of 28.16 million pounds for bluefish of which 8.875 million pounds would be allocated to the commercial fishery and 19.281 million pounds would be allocated to the recreational sector. Possession limits would not change in the recreational sector, i.e. the bag limit would remain at 15 fish. In recent years recreational landings have increased, but the overall TAL for the fishery has not been exceeded. For bluefish, as well as the other three species addressed during this meeting, a research set-aside quota of up to 3% was approved for 2008.

Amendment 9 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid and Butterfish FMP was approved for submission to the Secretary of Commerce for his action. Although key measures dealing with bycatch were "slipped" into Amendment 10 (which will be addressed at the Council's October 2007 meeting), Amendment 9 if approved will allow for multi-year specifications for all four species, extend the moratorium on the *Illex* squid fishery indefinitely, revise biological reference points for *Loligo* squid, designate essential fish habitat (EFH) for *Loligo* eggs, create area closures to reduce gear impacts on essential fish habitat (EFH) and limit the possession of *Loligo* squid by *Illex* squid vessels when the *Loligo* fishery is closed.

Amendment 15 to the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass FMP was also re-addressed to ensure that the Council and Commission would review and consider the same management issues. The Council agreed to address all 18 management issues that the Commission had previously recommended for consideration. These include: user allocations for summer flounder and scup; commercial allocations by state for all three species; review of fishing capacity in both sectors for all three species; for-hire management for all three species; management of the summer flounder and scup recreational fisheries; data collection requirements and protocols; rollover of unused quota; and, limitation on vessel replacement upgrades.

The Council received an update for its consideration regarding the development of Amendment 1 to the Tilefish FMP from its Tilefish Committee. Various systems to collect royalties (including auctions) under a tilefish IFQ system were discussed. Consistent with the recommendations from the tilefish fishery management action team (FMAT), the Committee recommended that a system to collect royalties from the tilefish fishery not be implemented at this time. Based on the Committee's recommendation, the Council selected this "no action" alternative for inclusion in the amendment.

The Council also received a report from its Squid, Mackerel, and Butterfish Committee regarding Amendment 10 to that FMP. Based on Committee recommendations, the Council approved the base years of 1994 through 1998 for determining butterfish bycatch allocation, the incorporation of the Rutgers University mesh selectivity study following its peer review by the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee, and delayed sector implementation in this FMP until it can be more adequately addressed in a future amendment or other management action.

It was also moved and approved by the Council that a letter be sent to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and New England coastal states requesting that talks be initiated to establish a process whereby NMFS could issue an FDA approved permit to implement the current protocol to test for paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP).



Departing Council members received thanks and appreciation from their colleagues at a recognition dinner in their honor during the August meeting (left to right: Dan Furlong, Executive Director, departing members Fran Puskas, Ron Smith, Michelle Peabody, and Pete Jensen, Council Chairman).