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# Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

# PRESS RELEASE

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

## Status Quo

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) met in Atlantic City, New Jersey from June 9 to June 12. The Council adopted recommendations regarding fishery management measures for the 2009 Atlantic mackerel, *Loligo* and *Illex* squids and butterfish fisheries and for the surfclam and ocean quahog fisheries for 2009 and 2010. But for a small increase of quota for the *Loligo* fishery, the council supported perpetuating the current quota levels for the 2009 fishing year in the six species reviewed by the Council at this meeting.

For the 2009 fishing year, the Council adopted the following specifications for Atlantic mackerel: allowable biological catch (ABC) = 156,000 metric tons (mt); initial optimum yield (IOY) and domestic annual harvest (DAH) = 115,000 mt; domestic annual processing (DAP) = 100,000 mt; joint venture processing (JVP) = 0 mt; and, total allowable level of foreign fishing (TALFF) = 0 mt. The DAH specification includes an allocation of 15,000 mt to the recreational mackerel fishery. When 90% of the OY is landed or projected to be landed, the directed fishery for mackerel will close. If 90% of OY is reached prior to June 1, a 20,000 pound trip limit would go into effect for the balance of the fishing year. If 90% of OY is reached on or after June 1, a 50,000 pound trip limit would go into effect for the balance of the fishing year. OY may be increased during the year through an in-season adjustment, but not to exceed ABC (156,000 mt). The Council also recommended that up to 3% of the DAH for mackerel be set aside for scientific research in 2009.

For *Loligo* squid, the Council adopted the following specifications for 2009: maximum optimum yield (Max OY) of 32,000 mt and ABC, IOY, DAH, and DAP would all be set at 19,000 mt, with the stipulation that if Amendment 9 is not approved by NMFS, the specification recommendation would revert to the 2008 level, i.e., Max OY of 26,000 mt; ABC, IOY, DAH, DAP would be set at 17,000 mt. The Council supported the continued use of trimesters for 2009 and recommended the following quotas by trimester: Trimester I (January through April): 43% of the annual quota (8,170 mt); Trimester II (May through August): 17% of the annual quota (3,230 mt); and, Trimester III (September through December): 40% of the annual quota (7,600 mt). Overages or underages from Trimesters I and II will be added to or deducted from Trimester III. During Trimesters I and II, when 90% of the allocation is landed or projected to be landed the fishery will be closed and a 2,500 pound trip limit will be implemented for the remainder of that Trimester's period. Vessels which possess *Loligo* incidental catch permits may land up to 2,500 pounds per trip at all times. When 95% of the total annual quota is harvested (18,050 mt), a 2,500 pound trip limit will be implemented for the rest of the fishing year. The Council also recommended that up to 3% of the ABC, IOY, DAH and DAP for *Loligo* be set aside for scientific research in 2009.

For *Illex* squid, the Council adopted the following quota specifications for 2009: Max OY, ABC, IOY, DAH, and DAP would all be set at 24,000 mt. The directed fishery for *Illex* will remain open until 95% of ABC is taken, or is projected to be taken (22,800 mt), at which time a 10,000 pound trip limit would be implemented for the remainder of the fishing year. Vessels which possess *Illex* incidental catch permits may land up to 10,000 pounds per trip at all times. The Council also recommended that up to 3% of the ABC, IOY, DAH and DAP for *Illex* be set aside for scientific research for 2009.

For the 2009 butterfish specifications the Council adopted the following: Max OY would be set at 12,175 mt, ABC would be set at 1,500 mt and IOY, DAH, and DAP would all be set at 500 mt. If mackerel TALFF is specified then bycatch TALFF would equal zero, otherwise a bycatch TALFF equal to 0.08% of the mackerel TALFF is to be specified based on the current FMP. The Council agreed to maintain the trip limit for 2009 at 5,000 pounds for

moratorium butterfish permits, and maintain the threshold level for triggering the required use of a minimum mesh size (i.e., 3 inches) will remain at 1,000 pounds. The Council also voted to maintain the threshold level for directed butterfish fishery closure at 80% of DAH. If 80% of DAH is reached prior to October 1, a 250 pound daily trip limit would be imposed. If 80% of DAH is reached on or after October 1, a 600 pound daily trip limit would be imposed. Incidental catch limits have a 600 pound trip limit that will be reduced to 250 pounds if the directed fishery closes before October 1. The Council also recommended that up to 3% of the ABC, IOY, DAH and DAP for butterfish be set aside for scientific research in 2009.

The Council voted to maintain the 2008 regulations for surfclams and ocean quahogs for the 2009 fishing year. The regulations provide for a quota of 3.4 million bushels for the surfclam fishery, 5.333 million bushels for the ocean quahog fishery, and 100,000 bushels for the Maine ocean quahog fishery. It was also recommended by the Council that the current exemption from the minimum size requirement for surfclams (i.e., at least 4 ¾ inches) be continued for the next two fishing years.

The Council voted to postpone work on Amendment 15 to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP so as to address required actions relating to Annual Catch Limits (ACL) and Accountability Measures (AM). The Council also voted to move forward with Framework 2 to the Spiny Dogfish FMP which is intended to improve the administrative process for adjusting biological reference points.

A public hearing was held for Amendment 10 to the Squid, Mackerel, and Butterfish FMP. The Amendment is intended to rebuild the overfished butterfish fishery and to do so it addresses four possible management alternatives: 1) Develop a butterfish mortality cap program for the *Loligo* fishery; 2) Increase the *Loligo* minimum codend mesh size; 3) Eliminate exemptions for *Illex* vessels from *Loligo* minimum codend mesh requirements, and, 4) Establish seasonal gear restricted areas (GRAs). There are two more hearings to be held. One meeting will be on June 17 in Warwick, RI and the other on June 18 in Riverhead, NY. There was also a Scoping meeting held for Amendment 4 to the New England Council's Atlantic Herring FMP.

The Council received a presentation by Steve Leathery of the National Marine Fisheries Service regarding the Proposed Rule to Integrate National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements into the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA). The meeting also served as a forum for the Council's Squid, Mackerel, Butterfish Committee; Demersal Committee; Law Enforcement Committee; Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Committee; Scientific and Statistical Committee with the Research Set-Aside Committee; Bycatch / Limited Access Privilege Program Committee; Joint Spiny Dogfish Committee; and, Executive Committee. All of these Committees conducted business during this Council meeting.

NMFS NEFSC Director Dr. Nancy Thompson announced that sea days for NOAA's R/V Delaware II have been reduced from 201 to 122 days. This reduction of 79 sea days eliminates the scheduled Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Survey that is critical for the stock assessment reviews that are scheduled for 2009. The Council requested that NOAA reconsider this action and a letter to this effect will be sent to Admiral Conrad Lautenbacher, NOAA Administrator.

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council is seeking nominations for its annual Fishery Achievement Award. This award recognizes individuals, entities, and fishermen in the Mid-Atlantic region who exhibit professionalism, diligence, and effort to protect the living marine resources through partnership, public education, and enforcement actions. Anyone can submit a nomination and any person or organization can be nominated. The Council will accept nominations for the 2008 award through August 31, 2008. The Council will evaluate nominations during its October Council meeting and present the award at its December or February meeting. To receive a copy of the nomination form, visit the Council's website at: [www.mafmc.org](http://www.mafmc.org). Printed copies of the nomination forms are available by contacting Jan Bryan at 302-674-2331, Extension 18.