
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

PRESS RELEASE



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Council to Develop Framework to Allow Multi-State Recreational Harvest Limits for Summer Flounder

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) met in Kill Devil Hills, NC last week and voted to initiate Framework 6 to its Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP). This framework is intended to be compatible with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC) Addendum XVII to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP. If adopted, this action would allow both management authorities to divide recreational harvest limits for summer flounder into two or more subregions of the east coast (Maine through North Carolina) for the 2006 fishing year and thereafter. In addition, this Framework would also make available to states the voluntary use of multi-year averaging of MRFSS harvest data for purposes of developing management measures for their summer flounder fisheries.

The Council held a scoping meeting to address the possible need for a controlled access system for the Atlantic mackerel fishery that is governed by the Council's Squid, Mackerel, and Butterfish FMP. Another such meeting will be held on March 28, 2005 in Newport, RI in conjunction with the New England Council's March meeting. Following scoping and review of public comments, the Council will determine how to address this issue and incorporate it into its Squid, Mackerel, and Butterfish FMP.

The first meeting related to Framework 1 of the Council's Dogfish FMP was also held to address the possibility of establishing multi-year specifications for spiny dogfish. At the Council's May meeting, the Council will convene a second meeting to further consider this framework and, if approved and adopted by the Council, Framework 1 will be submitted to the Secretary for approval.

In response to a letter from the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC), the MAFMC voted to notify the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) that joint planning for monkfish and dogfish be terminated, and that the NEFMC take sole responsibility for the Monkfish FMP and the MAFMC take sole responsibility for the Spiny Dogfish FMP. These changes in management responsibility would be contingent on the NEFMC adopting a like position. The MAFMC also voted to request from the Secretary that it be granted sole authority for the management of smooth dogfish.

The Council also identified 13 issues it considers to be of significance regarding the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA). These issues will be communicated to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for its use in developing the Administration's position on MSA reauthorization. The five highest priority issues of Council concern include: Individual Fishing Quotas (IFQs); Designation of commercial, recreational and environmental Council appointees; National Environmental Protection Act and its interaction with MSA; Separation of science and allocation; and, Saltwater licensing.

In addition to these actions, the MAFMC's Surfclam-Tilefish Committee conducted a pre-scoping meeting regarding Amendment 1 to the Tilefish FMP. The Squid, Mackerel, and Butterfish Committee met to review, revise, and adopt management measures proposed by the Committee's technical team. Adjustments to the various alternatives contained in the multiple options included in Amendment 9 were adopted and the revised schedule for production of the amendment's public hearing document was accepted.

The March Council meeting also served as a forum for two NMFS meetings. NMFS conducted a public hearing regarding its Draft Environmental Impact Statement on its proposed amendment to its Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan. NMFS also provided a review of the principal proposed management measures contained in Amendment 2 to the Secretary's FMP for Atlantic Tunas, Swordfish, and Sharks.