



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 11, 2008

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Council and Board Set 2009 Specifications

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC) Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass and Bluefish Boards (Board) met in Philadelphia, PA last week and achieved consensus on their recommendations regarding proposed fishing regulations for 2009. The table below summarizes those recommendations:

| | Total Allowable Landings <i>(millions of pounds)</i> | Commercial Quota | Minimum Fish Size (TL) | Mesh Size | Recreational Harvest Limit | Research Set-Aside Quota <i>(in pounds)</i> |
|------------------------|--|-------------------------|---|------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Summer Flounder | 18.45 | 11.07 | 14" | 5.5" | 7.38 | up to 3% |
| Scup | 7.34 | 5.55 | 9" | 5.0" | 1.79 | up to 3% |
| Black Sea Bass | 2.30 | 1.13 | 11" | 4.5" | 1.17 | up to 3% |
| Bluefish | 29.36 | 4.99 | --- | --- | 24.37 | up to 3% |

The Council and Board voted to increase the 2009 summer flounder total allowable landings (TAL) 2.68 million pounds. The recommended increase in TAL is due to information from the June 2008 Stock Assessment Workshop. Owing to a new stock assessment model and related assumptions, the rebuilding target for summer flounder was reduced from a spawning stock biomass target of 197.1 million pounds to 132.4 million pounds. This change in biological reference point means that summer flounder are not overfished nor is overfishing occurring.

In addition to recommending the 2009 summer flounder specifications, the Council will request the Northeast Fisheries Science Center to expand the commercial study fleet to include summer flounder vessels from all states and to implement a process to incorporate CPUE (catch per unit effort) data for consideration in future summer flounder projections.

For the scup fishery both the Council and the Board recommended a TAL of 7.34 million pounds, i.e., status quo for 2009. Amendment 14 to the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP) initiated a seven-year rebuilding plan for scup which became effective on January 1, 2008. In order to achieve the scup target associated with the rebuilding schedule implemented through Amendment 14, the Council recommended a quota level consistent with the FMP's rebuilding design. Management of scup continues to suffer from the lack of a current stock assessment.

For black sea bass, it was recommended that the 2009 TAL be reduced to a 2.30 million pound quota. The 2009 fishing year is the last year of the rebuilding period for this fishery.

The Council and Board adopted a TAL of 29.36 million pounds for bluefish for 2009 which is an increase of 1.20 million pounds from 2008. Under the current fishery management plan, the commercial fishery would be allocated 4.99 million pounds and 24.37 million pounds would be allocated to the recreational sector. This initial allocation is based on historic landings for the period 1981 through 1989. Later this year when recreational landings are available,

a transfer of quota (not to exceed a maximum commercial allocation of 10.5 million pounds) will likely occur so as to increase the commercial sector's TAL. 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 2009.

The Council continued to refine its preferred alternatives for Amendment 10 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish FMP. The purpose of Amendment 10 is to rebuild the butterfish stock to B_{MSY} and protect the long-term health and stability of the rebuilt butterfish stock. The proposed management actions include the possibility of implementing a butterfish mortality cap program for the *Loligo* fishery; increasing the *Loligo* minimum codend mesh sizes; eliminating exemptions for *Illex* vessels from *Loligo* minimum codend mesh requirements; and, establishing seasonal gear restricted areas (GRAs). For the preferred alternatives, the Council voted to support using a 2-1/8" mesh with an 8" or greater fishing circle during trimesters 1 and 3 in conjunction with a bycatch cap program (yet to be developed) in the *Loligo* fishery; no action for eliminating current exemptions for *Illex* vessels from the *Loligo* minimum codend mesh requirements; and, no action to establish seasonal gear restricted areas for butterfish.

The Council reviewed alternatives to adjust stock status determination criteria in Framework 2 to the Spiny Dogfish FMP. The purpose of Framework 2 is to improve the timeliness and efficiency of incorporating the best available scientific information available, consistent with National Standards 1 and 2, into the annual specification process for this stock.

The Council approved proposed draft comments to the National Marine Fisheries Service regarding its Proposed Rules on: National Standard 1 Guidelines (ACLs and AMs); NMFS integration of NEPA procedures into one environmental impact assessment procedure pursuant to MSA; and, the National Recreational Fishing Registry. The Council also approved sending a letter to NMFS transmitting the Council's multi-year research priorities for 2009-2013.

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 2008 or February 2009 meeting. To receive a copy of the nomination form, visit the Council's website at: www.mafmc.org. Printed copies of the nomination forms are available by contacting Kathy Collins at 302-674-2331, Extension 14.



Departing Council members received thanks and appreciation from their colleagues at a recognition dinner in their honor during the August Council meeting held in Philadelphia, PA (left to right: Vice Chairman, Dr. Gene Kray, departing members Scott Holder, Jimmy Ruhle, Pete Jensen, and Dan Furlong, Executive Director).