



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

PRESS RELEASE

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Amendment 10 Approved

The Council met in Kill Devil Hills, NC October 14-16, 2008 and approved Amendment 10 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish (MSB) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for submission to the Secretary of Commerce. Amendment 10 is designed to rebuild and maintain the long-term health of the butterfish stock, and, to the extent practicable, generally minimize bycatch and bycatch mortality in the MSB fisheries.

For preferred alternatives, the Council voted that in 2010, a 2-1/8" minimum codend mesh requirement would be implemented in the Loligo fishery in Trimesters 1 and 3 (the previously considered fishing circle mesh requirement was removed). The Council also voted to include a seasonally allocated butterfish mortality cap for the Loligo fishery starting in 2011 (i.e. the Loligo fishery would be closed when it caught a pre-specified amount of butterfish). The directed Loligo fishery would be allocated 75% of the butterfish ABC specified for a given year and the cap would be monitored based on existing levels of NMFS observer coverage (the previously considered industry-funded observer program was removed). The allocation of butterfish mortality would be: Trimester 1=65%; Trimester 2 = 3.3%; and, Trimester 3 = 31.7%. There would be no in-season closures in Trimester 2 due to difficulties in tracking the relatively small bycatch amount allocated to the Trimester 2 Loligo fishery, but overages and/or underages would be accounted for in Trimester 3. If Trimester 2 bycatch levels increase and reduce the cap amount available in Trimester 3, the Council could activate the in-season closure mechanism for Trimester 2 in future years. The Amendment would also include a 72 hour notification requirement before Loligo vessels could make a directed Loligo trip, primarily for the purpose of observer placement. If a vessel is selected to take an observer, the vessel would have to carry an observer (if available). Vessels would always have to notify NMFS when a trip is cancelled (even if the vessel is not selected to take an observer). If a vessel cancels a trip after being selected, the vessel would be assigned an observer on its next trip for which an observer is available.

The Council also voted to include a provision in Amendment 10 that the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will annually review the performance of the butterfish mortality cap program during the specification process and make recommendations on any additional measures necessary to the success of the butterfish rebuilding program. If the Council does not adopt SSC recommendations, then NMFS would implement measures through the MSB annual specifications process to aid the rebuilding of the butterfish stock, consistent with existing MSB regulations.

The Council held its yearly election of officers and elected Richard B. Robins, Jr. of Virginia as its Chairman and Dr. Lee G. Anderson of Delaware as its Vice-Chairman. Mr. Robins owns a whelk processing company on the Virginia eastern shore and manages Chesapeake Bay Packing, a seafood exporting operation. He is also an avid offshore angler. Mr. Robins said he looks forward to working with Council members, staff, scientific advisors, and constituents to build upon the Council's record of achievement in sustainable fisheries management and pledged to work diligently to come to terms with the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act.

Dr. Anderson is Harrington Professor of Marine and Earth Studies at the University of Delaware. He studies the bioeconomics of fisheries management and has worked actively in both the classroom and with various management agencies around the world for the last thirty eight years. Dr. Anderson previously served on the Mid-Atlantic Council. He said he looks forward to working with Chairman Robins, Council members, staff, and the National Marine Fisheries Service so as to achieve sustainable and profitable fisheries.

In addition to the election of officers, three individuals were sworn in as new Council members and two members were reappointed. Howard King will occupy the obligatory seat for Maryland, Jule Wheatly will occupy the obligatory seat for North Carolina, and John McMurray will occupy the obligatory seat for New York. Pat Augustine was reappointed to fill the at-large seat for New York and Dr. Gene Kray was reappointed to retain the obligatory seat for the state of Pennsylvania.

The Council approved Framework 2 to the joint Spiny Dogfish FMP for submission to the Secretary of Commerce. Framework 2 will redefine the stock status determination criteria (biological reference points for spiny dogfish). The New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) will meet in November to discuss and vote on submission of Framework 2. If the NEFMC adopts identical measures as the Mid-Atlantic Council, Framework 2 will be submitted to the Secretary by the end of this year.

The Council received a report from Dr. Jim Weinberg of NMFS' Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) on the recent Groundfish Assessment Review Meeting (GARM). The GARM was a regional scientific peer review process of benchmark assessments for the 19 groundfish stocks managed by the New England Fishery Management Council under the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan. The GARM Report is available at: www.nefsc.noaa.gov/nefsc/publications/series/crdlist.htm.

The Council also received two presentations during the meeting. The first presentation was by Karyl Brewster-Geisz of the Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Division of NOAA on the consolidated HMS Fishery Management Plan. The presentation focused mainly on issues in Amendment 3 regarding the current status of small coastal sharks. The presentation also touched on information for producing Amendment 4 pertaining to the Caribbean region which would include issues such as improving permitting and data collection and enhancing enforcement of regulations.

The second presentation was given by Tanya Dobrzynski of National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Office of Protected Resources regarding NMFS proposed rule for use of turtle excluder devices (TEDS) in all trawl fisheries throughout the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. Specific changes NMFS is considering include increasing the size of the TED escape opening currently required in the summer flounder fishery; requiring the use of TEDs in the flynet, whelk, calico scallop, and Mid-Atlantic sea scallop trawl fisheries; and moving the current northern boundary of the Summer Flounder Fishery-Sea Turtle Protection Area off Cape Charles, Virginia, to a point farther north. The objective of the proposed measures would be to effectively protect all life stages and species of sea turtles in Atlantic trawl fisheries where they are vulnerable to incidental capture and mortality.

The Council's HMS Committee recommended the Council support Alternatives 2 and 3 in the Draft Amendment 1 to the Consolidated HMS FMP. Alternative 2 would designate a Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC) for spawning bluefin tuna in the Gulf of Mexico while maintaining current HAPCs. Alternative 3 would establish new EFH boundaries based on the 95% probability boundary which includes 95% of the data points and provides a standardized, reproducible, and predictable method for establishing EFH boundaries.

The Ecosystems Committee met and agreed to change their title to the Ecosystems and Ocean Planning Committee. Four other committees of the Council also met during this meeting, i.e., Bycatch/Limited Access, Research Set-aside, Law Enforcement and Executive, to review and develop issues pertaining to their respective charges.

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