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# Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

# PRESS RELEASE

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PRESS CONTACT: Kathy Collins  
(302) 674-2331 x14

## Council and Board Set 2010 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 Alexandria, VA last week and achieved consensus on their recommendations regarding proposed fishing regulations for 2010. The table below summarizes those recommendations:

	<b>Total Allowable Landings</b> <i>(millions of pounds)</i>	<b>Commercial Quota</b>	<b>Minimum Fish Size (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>	22.13	13.28	14"	5.5"	8.85	up to 3%
<b>Scup</b>	13.50	10.53	9"	5.0"	2.97	up to 3%
<b>Black Sea Bass</b>	2.30	1.13	11"	4.5"	1.17	up to 3%
<b>Bluefish</b>	29.26	4.97	---	---	24.29	up to 3%

The Council and Board voted to increase the 2010 summer flounder total allowable landings (TAL) to 22.13 million pounds, an increase of 3.68 million pounds when compared to the 2009 quota level. This would yield a commercial quota of 13.28 million pounds and a recreational harvest limit of 8.85 million pounds for the 2010 fishing year if approved by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). This recommendation was consistent with the Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC's) acceptable biological catch (ABC) recommendation.

For the 2010 scup fishery both the Council and Board recommended a TAL of 13.50 million pounds, an increase of 2.32 million pounds when compared to 2009. The commercial sector would have a quota of 10.53 million pounds and the recreational sector would have a harvest limit of 2.97 million pounds. This recommendation was consistent with the SSC's ABC recommendation.

For the 2010 black sea bass fishery it was recommended by both the Council and Board that the TAL remain at the status quo level, i.e., 2.30 million pounds. This recommendation provides for a commercial quota of 1.13 million pounds and a recreational harvest limit of 1.17 million pounds. This recommendation was also consistent with the SSC's ABC recommendation.

The Council and Board adopted a TAL of 29.26 million pounds for bluefish for 2010 which is a small decrease from the 2009 quota of 29.36 million pounds. Under the current fishery management plan (FMP), the commercial fishery would be allocated 4.97 million pounds and 24.29 million pounds would be allocated to the recreational sector. Later this year when recreational landings are available, a transfer from the recreational sector of up to 5.39 million pounds could occur which would increase the commercial sector's initial TAL of 4.97 million pounds. In recent years recreational landings have increased, but the overall TAL for the fishery has not been exceeded. This TAL recommendation was consistent with the SSC's ABC recommendation.

For all four species addressed during this specification meeting, a Research Set-Aside (RSA) quota of up to 3% was approved for each 2010 fishery. RSA quota allocations will reduce the above TALs and related allocations, and will be adjusted as appropriate for 2010 prior to the start of the new fishing year.

While addressing the Omnibus Amendment for Annual Catch Limits (ACL) and Accountability Measures (AM), the Council discussed management alternatives to establish ABCs, ACLs, and AMs for each of the Council's FMPs' species. Staff and the Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) for this Amendment will continue to develop various alternatives for species committee review later this year.

The Council voted to include the following Gear Restricted Areas (GRA) to be included as Marine Protected Areas (MPA): Scup Northern and Southern GRAs; and Tilefish GRAs in Oceanographer, Lydonia, Veatch, and Norfolk Canyons.

The Council voted to begin the scoping process for Amendment 14 to the Squid, Mackerel, and Butterfish FMP. This Amendment will address river herring monitoring and/or mortality reduction strategy, and catch shares for the *Loligo* and *Illex* fisheries. The Council also reaffirmed May 20, 2003 as the *Loligo* control date.

The Council approved the 2011 RSA program research priority list. It also agreed that the list will now be designated for multi-year periods to facilitate development of multi-year NEPA and ESA analyses which will help expedite future RSA awards. The Council will continue to have the ability to add priorities during this interval. In anticipation of completion of a NMFS programmatic review of all four northeastern RSA programs, the Council has directed staff to initiate development of a framework process to address exempted fishing permit issues that have come to pass during the review process.

The Council voted to split Amendment 5 to the Monkfish FMP so that ACLs, AMs, specifications, and trip limit adjustments only are included in Amendment 5. All other management measures and actions recommended by the Plan Development Team (PDT) are to be deferred to the next management action for monkfish. The Council also agreed to write a joint letter with the New England Council to NMFS in support of the Monkfish Oversight Committee's request for NMFS assistance in developing a catch share management program in the next monkfish management action.

During this meeting, the Council received a report from Dr. Weinberg of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center regarding the 48<sup>th</sup> Stock Assessment Review which included Ocean Quahogs and Tilefish. The Council also received an update on US Coast Guard Activities in the 5<sup>th</sup> District by its new Commander, Rear Admiral Wayne Justice. Lieutenant Commander Tim Brown of the 5<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District gave a presentation regarding Vessel Stability. The Council also received a presentation given by Karyl Brewster-Geisz of NMFS Highly Migratory Species Division regarding the proposed rule for Amendment 3 to the Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) FMP. The comment period for Amendment 3 closes on September 25, 2009 and the Council will develop and provide comments on this Amendment prior to the closing of the comment period.

The Council approved forwarding comments to the National Marine Fisheries Service regarding its Proposed Rule concerning its Sea Turtle Strategy. The Council also agreed to develop a letter to NMFS transmitting the Council's multi-year research priorities for 2010-2014. The meeting served as a forum for the following committees to conduct business during this Council meeting: Protected Resources; Research Set-Aside; Ecosystems and Ocean Planning; Bycatch and LAPP; Squid, Mackerel, Butterfish; and, Executive Committees.



Departing Council members received thanks and appreciation from their colleagues at a recognition dinner in their honor during the August Council meeting held in Alexandria, VA (From Left to Right: Dennis Spitsbergen of NC with Chairman Rick Robins and Executive Director Dan Furlong; Laurie Nolan of NY with Chairman Rick Robins and Executive Director Dan Furlong; Jeff Deem of VA with Chairman Rick Robins and Executive Director Dan Furlong; and, Ed Goldman of NJ with Chairman Rick Robins).

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 2009 award through September 30, 2009. The Council will evaluate nominations during its October 2009 Council meeting and present the award at its December 2009 or February 2010 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 also available by contacting Kathy Collins at 302-674-2331, Extension 14.