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Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

# PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Squid, Mackerel, Butterfish Amendment 11 Delayed ACL/AM Omnibus Amendment Approved for Public Hearings**

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and four of its Committees met in Duck, North Carolina from April 13 until April 15, 2010. Submission of Amendment 11 to the Squid, Mackerel, and Butterfish (SMB) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Secretarial approval was delayed. The Public Hearing Document for the Omnibus Annual Catch Limits (ACL) and Accountability Measures (AM) Amendment was approved by the Council.

The SMB Committee reviewed public comments and recommended adoption of Amendment 11 alternatives concerning Essential Fish Habitat (EFH), a recreational/commercial mackerel allocation, and at-sea mackerel processing restrictions. The Committee requested that the Amendment 11 Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT), the SMB Advisory Panel, and the SMB Committee meet again regarding mackerel limited access to resolve ongoing historical participation issues. Participation issues led the Committee to recommend delaying adoption of Amendment 11's alternative regarding mackerel limited access. The Committee will recommend further action pending the results of the above requested meeting. The SMB Committee also approved a Scoping Document for Amendment 14 which may address implementation of catch share systems for *Loligo* and *Illlex* squid fisheries as well as bycatch of river herring (blueback and alewife) and shad (American and Hickory) in the SMB fisheries. Scoping meetings will be announced once scheduled. The Council subsequently adopted motions consistent with all the SMB Committee's recommendations.

The Council voted to approve the Omnibus ACL/AM Public Hearing Document. This Amendment addresses the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) requirements for ACLs and AMs. Management issues include the development of control rules as described in National Standard 1 guidelines to specify acceptable biological catch, a formal Council risk policy, and ACLs and AMs. This action would amend the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish FMP, the Bluefish FMP, the Dogfish FMP, the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP, the Tilefish FMP, and the Surfclam and Ocean Quahog FMP. This Amendment will affect all Council managed species except *Loligo* and *Illlex* squids which are exempted by the MSA. There will be four public hearings held to receive public input on the document (see Council website [www.mafmc.org](http://www.mafmc.org) for more information). The hearings will be held May 3 at the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) meeting in Alexandria, VA; May 10, at the Virginia Marine Resource Commission in Newport News, VA; May 12 at New York Department of Environmental Conservation in East Setauket, NY; and, May 18 at Stockton College, Lakeside Lodge, Pomona, NJ. All hearings will begin at 7 p.m.

The Council also approved final measures for Amendment 5 to the Joint Monkfish FMP which will be forwarded to the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC). Amendment 5 would bring the Monkfish FMP into compliance with National Standard 1 guidance for ACLs and AMs; establish management reference points in accordance with the revised guidelines; adopt multi-year catch targets; specify trip limits and days-at-sea for the directed fishery; and make adjustments to the Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program.

The Joint Spiny Dogfish Committee met to review the updated Transboundary Resource Assessment Committee's (TRAC) assessment which was presented by Dr. Paul Rago of National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) Northeast Fisheries Science Center. The final TRAC report will provide a biomass target for the federal FMP and is expected to indicate that the biomass of spiny dogfish stock is above that target. The Council will send a comment letter to the Regional Administrator recommending that the rebuilt status of the stock be considered in the final rule establishing the commercial quota for 2010. The Committee also discussed NMFS management of smooth dogfish under Amendment 3 to the Highly Migratory Species (HMS) FMP. The Council will send a letter to NMFS requesting that a study be initiated to analyze the fin to carcass ratio for smooth dogfish such that an appropriate ratio can be established for harvest regulations.

As a follow-up to the RSA Workshop held at the February 2010 meeting in Cambridge, MD, the RSA Committee met to discuss possible ways to improve the RSA program. The Workshop was held to bring the Council up to date on the program and request ways the program could be improved. Enforcement of award conditions and monitoring of catch appear to be the biggest problems associated with the Council's RSA program. The Committee agreed to update its mission statement to address these problems as well as issues such as grant administration, long term funding of NEAMAP, and quality control measures of projects.

The Executive Committee met to review and consider the Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC) recommended changes to the Council's Statement of Operating Practices and Procedures (SOPPs). Dr. John Boreman, Chairman of SSC, presented the Council with suggested changes to the operating procedures for the SSC. The Committee also discussed the Draft Summary of the Catch Share Workshop held in March. It was agreed that an ad hoc committee would be established to review interjurisdictional issues related to catch shares and a visioning process would be initiated by the Council to survey stakeholders to identify management challenges and opportunities within the Council's managed fisheries.

The Council voted to send a letter to NMFS, upon receipt of NMFS' black sea bass proposed rule, to support adoption of the ASMFC 2010 Black Sea Bass recreational measures of a 3.7 million pound total allowable landings (TAL), a 12.5" minimum fish size, a 25 fish possession limit, and a season of May 22 through September 12.

The Council received an update from Jim Lecky, NMFS, Director of Office of Protected Resources, regarding NMFS' proposed change in the listing status for loggerhead sea turtles, i.e., from threatened to endangered, under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Council SSC member Dr. Rob Latour summarized the recent butterfish assessment. Dr. Latour chaired the Peer-Review Committee for the assessment (SAW/SARC 49: <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/saw/>), which concluded that the butterfish stock status is unknown but likely in some state of decline. The assessment suggested that fishing mortality (landings and discards) has been low and that other factors may be primarily contributing to the decline of butterfish.



Pictured Left: Dan Furlong, Executive Director (*left*), LCDR Tim Brown (*center*), and Rick Robins, Council Chairman (*right*)

Lieutenant Commander (LCDR) Tim Brown has been reassigned from the 5<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District to the 9<sup>th</sup> District and will be relocating to Michigan. Lieutenant Kevin Saunders, Deputy Enforcement Chief and Fisheries Law Enforcement Officer, will be replacing LCDR Brown and representing the 5<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District for Rear Admiral Wayne Justice starting at the June Council meeting in New York.