

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

PRESS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 23, 2010

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Council Approves Omnibus Amendment for Secretarial Submission

Council and Commission's Boards Adopt Management Measures for 2011

Council Chair and Vice Chair Reelected

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) met last week in Philadelphia, PA to approve the Omnibus Amendment for Secretarial submission; recommend 2011 management measures for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish; and, hold an election of officers.

After more than two years of careful deliberation, the Council voted to approve the Omnibus Amendment for submission to the Secretary of Commerce. This amendment, which amends all six of the Council's Fishery Management Plans, was developed to address the new requirements to prevent and end overfishing contained in the 2007 reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The amendment would establish a framework for the specification of annual catch limits (ACL) and accountability measures (AM) for all species under its management authority except *Loligo* and *Illex* squids (exempt because of their annual life cycle). In addition, the amendment would establish a policy to provide guidance on the specification of annual catch limits with regard to the risk of overfishing. As a result of this action, the Mid-Atlantic Council became the first regional Fishery Management Council in the Nation to approve measures to comply with the new Magnuson-Stevens Act ACL/AM requirements.

"I am very pleased with the Council's development and approval of the Omnibus Amendment," said Chairman Robins. "Since the Council's managed stocks were not subject to overfishing, we were able to address the ACL and AM measures in a unified omnibus action, which enabled the Council to take a cohesive approach to the key issues associated with scientific and management uncertainty. The final document includes robust measures to set catch limits at levels that appropriately reflect scientific uncertainty, the health of the stock, and important biological characteristics; as well as supporting accountability measures to ensure that catch limits are not exceeded. I anticipate that the new measures will enable the Council to build upon its successful record of managing sustainable fisheries in the Mid-Atlantic region."

The Council also met with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC) Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish Boards (Board) to adopt 2011 fishery management measures. The table below summarizes the recommended fishery management measures for 2011.

	Total Allowable Landings <i>(millions of pounds)</i>	Commercial Quota	Minimum Fish Size (TL)	Mesh Size	Recreational Harvest Limit	Research Set-Aside Quota
Summer Flounder	29.48	17.69	14"	5.5"	11.79	up to 3%
Scup	20.00	15.60	9"	5.0"	4.40	up to 3%
Black Sea Bass	3.60	1.76	11"	4.5"	1.84	up to 3%
Bluefish	27.29	9.41	---	---	17.88	up to 3%

The Council and Board recommended a (total allowable catch) TAC of 33.95 million pounds for the 2011 summer flounder fishery. The total allowable landings (TAL) would be 29.48 million pounds, an increase of about 7 million pounds compared to the 2010 level. If approved by NMFS, 17.69 million pounds would be allocated to the commercial fishery as quota and 11.79 million pounds as a recreational harvest limit for the 2011 fishing year.

Both the Council and Board recommended a TAC of 24.10 million pounds for scup. The associated TAL would be 20.00 million pounds, an increase of about 6 million pounds compared to the 2010 TAL. If approved, the scup commercial quota would be 15.60 million pounds and the recreational harvest limit would be 4.40 million pounds for 2011.

In regard to the specifications for the 2011 black sea bass fishery, the Council and Board recommended that the TAC be set at 4.50 million pounds. The associated TAL would be 3.60 million pounds which would result in a commercial quota of 1.76 million pounds and a recreational harvest limit of 1.84 million pounds if approved.

The Council and Board recommended a TAC of 31.74 million pounds for the 2011 bluefish fishery. The corresponding TAL is 27.29 million pounds, which is about a 2 million pound decrease from the 2010 TAL of 29.26 million pounds. Under the bluefish FMP, a transfer of landings from the recreational to the commercial fishery is allowed if there are sufficient landings available in the TAL above the expected landings amount in the recreational fishery. Since this is the case for 2011, the Council recommended a transfer of 4.77 million pounds resulting in a commercial quota of 9.41 million pounds and a recreational harvest limit of 17.88 million pounds.

A Research Set-Aside (RSA) of up to 3% of the TAL was also approved for each of the four species considered during the specification meetings. Under the RSA program, these landings would be used to fund research activities. The Council also approved the 2012 RSA Program Research Priorities List and approved the RSA Committee's Mission Statement which states the goal and core principles of the program.

The Council held its yearly election of officers and reelected Richard B. Robins, Jr. of Virginia as its Chairman and Dr. Lee G. Anderson of Delaware as its Vice-Chairman. The Council also swore in new Council member Stephen E. Linhard (Maryland) who will fill an at-large seat, re-appointed members Richard B. Robins and Erling A. Berg who will continue to fill at-large seats, and Dr. Lee G. Anderson who will continue to fill Delaware's obligatory seat.

Finally, the Squid, Mackerel, and Butterfish (SMB) Committee met to review the scoping comments for Amendment 14. The Committee approved river herring and shad monitoring and incidental catch minimization goals for the amendment and also received an update on the butterfish cap control mechanism being implemented for the *Loligo* fishery on January 1, 2011.

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