
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

PRESS RELEASE



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NMFS Solicits Proposals for MAFMC 2012 Research Set-Aside Program

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announced that it is accepting proposals under the Mid-Atlantic Council's Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program for research activities to be conducted in 2012. Applications must be received by NMFS on or before **5 p.m. EST on March 7, 2011**.

The Council, in coordination with NMFS and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, may set aside up to 3 percent of the total allowable landings (TAL) in certain Mid-Atlantic fisheries to be used for research endeavors. The RSA program provides a mechanism to fund research and compensate vessel owners through the sale of fish harvested under the research quota. Vessels participating in an approved research project may be authorized by the NMFS Northeast Regional Administrator to harvest and land species in excess of any imposed trip limit or during fishery closures. Landings from such trips are sold to generate funds that help defray the costs associated with the approved research projects. No Federal funds are provided for research under this notification.

NMFS is soliciting proposals for research activities concerning the summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, *Loligo* squid, *Illex* squid, Atlantic mackerel, butterfish, bluefish, and tilefish fisheries. NMFS and the Council will give priority to funding proposals addressing the research needs as follows:

2012 Research Priority List

Spanning Multiple Species

- Fishery independent surveys for all Mid-Atlantic species, especially in the near shore zone (as provided by the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program-NEAMAP).

Interactions Between *Loligo* Squid, Butterfish, Atlantic Mackerel & River Herring

- Evaluate potential improvements to observer sampling procedures on catches of butterfish and River Herring in the *Loligo* fishery, and River Herring in the mackerel fishery.
- Mesh selectivity studies involving *Loligo* squid retention and butterfish escapement (both summer and winter).
- Test gear modifications (in addition to mesh size) in the *Loligo* squid fishery to reduce bycatch of butterfish and other species. One example would be the use of 'Fishing Circle Mesh.'
- Study mortality rates of *Loligo* squid that pass through trawl mesh.
- Use of videography in documenting *Loligo* catches without any or minimal butterfish bycatch.
- Investigate accuracy and precision of observer monitoring of (at-sea and/or port) catches of butterfish, river herrings, and shads in the Atlantic mackerel and squid fisheries.

Summer Flounder

- Evaluate the size distribution of landed and discarded fish in the summer flounder recreational fishery by sex. This could be considered for all catch components, which would include the commercial fishery.

Bluefish

- Evaluate amount and length frequency of discards from the commercial and recreational fisheries.
- Collect size and age composition of the fisheries by gear type and statistical area.
- Initiate fishery-dependent and independent sampling of offshore populations of bluefish during the winter months (consider migration, seasonal fisheries and unique selectivity patterns resulting in a bimodal partial recruitment pattern; consider if the migratory pattern results in several recruitment events).
- Develop bluefish index surveys (proof of concept), including abundance/biomass trend estimates for the offshore populations in winter.

Black Sea Bass

- Validate methods used to age black sea bass (scales vs. otoliths).
- Studies focused on life history and reproductive behaviors such as changes in sex ratio as a function of age and size or the evaluation of the sizes of territories in relation to mating or reproduction.
- Increase age sampling across all components of the commercial and recreational fisheries.
- Increase sea sampling to verify information from commercial logbooks toward providing better estimates of discards.
- Develop a fixed gear survey of black sea bass similar to the one developed for scup.

Scup

- Develop indices for scup ages 2+.
- Estimate the fishery components used to calculate scup mortality (commercial and recreational landings, and discards).
- Expand age sampling of scup from commercial and recreational catches, with special emphasis on the aging of large specimens.

Illex squid

- Determine size and age-at-maturity and growth parameters for *Illex* squid.

Tilefish

- Effect of hook size on tilefish size selectivity in the longline fishery.

Complete Details and to Apply

For complete details and information on how to apply, please visit the Grants.gov web site (<http://www.grants.gov>). Click on the 'Grant Search' Quick Link on the upper right-hand corner of the page under FOR APPLICANTS and then search for Funding Opportunity Number:

NOAA-NMFS-NEFSC-2012-2002892

After clicking on the '2012 Mid-Atlantic Research Set-Aside' link under Opportunity Title, click on the 'Full Announcement' link in the middle of the bar at the top of the page. On the next page click on the 'Full Announcement' next to the Description 'Full Opportunity' to open or save the full text of the Announcement (21 pp) to your hard drive.