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Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Amendment 14 Alternatives Considered for Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish FMP *Council Recommends Increase in Butterfish ABC for 2011***

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) met in New Bern, North Carolina on February 8-10 to discuss the progress of Amendment 14 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). At the meeting, the Council discussed and adopted a wide range of measures to monitor and reduce the catch of river herrings and shads in the mackerel and *Loligo* fisheries, including catch caps. An alternative for 100 percent observer coverage of directed trips targeting *Loligo* and mackerel was also added to the list of considered alternatives for future analysis by the Fishery Management Action Team. After careful consideration, the Council decided not to add a provision for annual forage set-asides for mackerel, squids, and butterfish. Instead, the Council noted that the recent Omnibus Annual Catch Limit Amendment already allows harvest reductions due to forage concerns and concluded that formal set-asides would be better considered after the Council develops ecosystem level goals and objectives that are informed by the ongoing work of the ecosystem subcommittee of the Scientific and Statistical Committee. The Council also removed alternatives for port-side sampling because an independent port-side sampling program that covers most mackerel landings is already in place. NOAA Fisheries had also indicated that it would be unable to provide resources to support such a program.

In another action related to the *Loligo* fishery, the Council voted to recommend a 21% increase to the 2011 butterfish allowable biological catch (ABC) from 1,500 metric tons to 1,811 metric tons. This action was facilitated by an updated ABC recommendation from the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Pending emergency action by NOAA Fisheries, the Council's recommendation will increase the *Loligo* fishery's butterfish cap and provide for additional *Loligo* fishing opportunities in 2011.