



## April 2015 Council Meeting Report

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April 14-16, 2015

*Long Branch, New Jersey*

The following summary highlights Council actions and issues considered at the April 2015 meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council in Long Branch, New Jersey. Presentations, briefing materials, and audio recordings are available at [www.mafmc.org/briefing/april-2015](http://www.mafmc.org/briefing/april-2015).

### Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management

The Council reviewed a second draft of a white paper on Climate Change and Variability and received two presentations related to climate change and fisheries. The first presentation, by Dr. Malin Pinsky, provided an overview of predicted climate change impacts on fisheries and associated management tools that can facilitate adaptation to these. The second presentation, by Dr. Bonnie McCay, explored the relationship between climate change, fisheries, and communities.

Council staff also presented five regulatory alternatives to address unmanaged forage fisheries in the Mid-Atlantic. The Council voted in December 2014 to initiate a regulatory action to "...to prohibit the development of new, or expansion of existing, directed fisheries on unmanaged forage species until adequate scientific information is available to promote ecosystem sustainability." The Council discussed and provided feedback on the approach recommended by staff, which would involve amending a fishery management plan (FMP) to include ecosystem component species and updating the list of approved fisheries and gear types. Staff will proceed with clarifying the intent of the action, developing alternatives, establishing a timeline, and forming an FMAT. Additional information is available at [www.mafmc.org/actions/unmanaged-forage](http://www.mafmc.org/actions/unmanaged-forage).

### Golden Tilefish

#### **2016 Specifications**

The Council reviewed golden tilefish specifications for the 2016 fishing year, which were established in 2014 as part of multi-year specifications for the 2015-2017 fishing years. After considering recommendations from its Scientific and Statistical Committee, Tilefish Monitoring Committee, and Tilefish Advisory Panel, the Council recommended no changes to the following 2016 specifications:

- **Allowable Catch Limit (ACL):** 1.898 million pounds
- **Total Allowable Landings (TAL):** 1.887 million pounds
  - *TAL for the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) fishery:* 1.793 million pounds
  - *TAL for the Incidental Fishery:* 94,357 pounds

#### **Framework 2**

Council staff also provided an update on the timeline and issues to be addressed in Framework 2 to the Golden FMP. In addition to the original list of five issues approved by the Council at the December 2014 meeting, the Council voted to also consider developing qualifiers for the incidental permit category. This issue was added to address concerns about the use of incidental permits on directed fishing trips, particularly by non-trawl vessels and/or non-commercial fishermen.

## Blueline Tilefish

The Council voted to initiate scoping for the management of Blueline Tilefish and/or a deepwater complex in the Mid-Atlantic. This decision follows the Council's request earlier this year for an emergency rule to restrict commercial and recreational catch of blueline tilefish in the Mid-Atlantic. The Council recommended this action given recent evidence that commercial and recreational landings of blueline tilefish in the Mid-Atlantic are increasing rapidly and the species' biological characteristics make it highly susceptible to depletion.

During the meeting, the Council discussed the advantages and disadvantages of different long-term management approaches, including adding blueline tilefish to the existing fishery management plan (FMP) for golden tilefish or developing a new FMP for blueline tilefish and possibly for other species in the deepwater complex such as blackbelly rosefish, wreckfish, and snowy grouper. After extensive discussion, the Council decided to gather public input during scoping hearings before deciding whether to develop an amendment or a new FMP.

## ABC Control Rule Clarifications

The Council approved modifications to its ABC control rule proposed by the staff and Scientific and Statistical Committee. The revisions are intended to clarify how the regulations describe the assessment tiers so that the regulatory language aligns more closely with the intent of the Council's Omnibus ABC/Annual Catch Limit Amendment.

## Industry Funded Observer Amendment

The Council received a presentation on the Industry Funded Observer Omnibus Amendment, including an update on the feasibility of adding provisions for electronic monitoring (EM) and portside monitoring for the Atlantic herring/mackerel fisheries. The Council voted to add two alternatives to the amendment. The first alternative would require electronic monitoring/portside monitoring for midwater trawl vessels only. The second additional alternative would add a 100% mid-water trawl fleet-observer coverage option to the mackerel alternatives.

## Proposed Rule - National Standards 1, 3, and 7

The Council received a presentation from Deb Lambert (National Marine Fisheries Service) on proposed revisions to the National Standards 1, 3, and 7 guidelines. The Council provided some initial comments and agreed to develop formal comments for submission by the June 30 deadline. A draft comment letter will be discussed at the June 2015 Council meeting.

## Presentations and Other Business

### ***Listening Session: Squid Capacity Amendment Scoping***

The listening session was the fourth in a series of six scoping hearings that were held in April to gather public input for a Squid Capacity Amendment. This amendment will review the performance of the longfin squid and *Illex* squid fisheries and consider options for controlling or limiting capacity of the fleets. During the hearing, Council staff provided a brief presentation, followed by an opportunity for meeting attendees and webinar participants to provide comments on the scope of issues that should be addressed in the Amendment. Updates related to this action will be available at <http://www.mafmc.org/actions/squid-capacity-amendment>.

### ***River Herring Technical Expert Working Group***

The Council received an update on the River Herring Technical Expert Working Group (TEWG), including the working group's process, timeline, and work products, as well as an update on NOAA Fisheries and ASMFC's development of a river herring conservation plan.

### ***Delaware Shad Recreational Fishery***

John Punola, a member of the Council's River Herring and Shad Advisory Panel, gave an informational presentation on the Delaware shad fishery.

### ***Bycatch Reduction in Summer Flounder Recreational Fishery***

Dr. Jim Salierno and Carl Benson presented the findings of their research on bycatch reduction in the summer flounder recreational fishery. Funded through the Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program (BREP), their project aimed to quantitatively determine the optimal hook sizes for anglers to land legal summer flounder, reduce discards, and reduce the incidence of deep hooking associated with catch and release. Their findings indicated that using larger hook sizes increased the ratio of legally landed fish (greater than the 18 fish minimum size), reduced overall discards, and decreased potential discard mortality. These results suggest that hook size guidelines could potentially be used to increase recruitment and stock size in the summer flounder fishery.

### ***Statement of Operating Practices and Procedures***

The Council reviewed and approved proposed modifications to its Statement of Organization, Practices, and Procedures. The revised version can be found at:

<http://www.mafmc.org/s/MAFMC-SOPPS-Revised-4-16-2015.pdf>.

## Next Meeting

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***June 8 – 11, 2015: Virginia Beach, VA***

Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront

3001 Atlantic Ave Virginia Beach, VA, 23451

Telephone: 757-213-3000