



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Report

A report published by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council - April 2011

The Council Report summarizes major issues voted on or discussed at each regularly scheduled MAFMC meeting. The Council met most recently on April 12-14 in Annapolis, MD.

At its April meeting, the Council addressed issues related to Atlantic mackerel, squid, butterfish, spiny dogfish, monkfish, ecosystem and ocean planning, highly migratory species, shad, and river herring.

Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish (includes River Herring & Shad Issues)

Amendment 14 Measures

The Council continued development of Amendment 14 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan. In addition to providing direction to staff on related river herring/shad catch analyses, the Council added an option that would facilitate streamlined implementation of incidental catch caps for river herring and shads in the future via a framework action. In line with the final recommendations from the Ad-Hoc River Herring and Shad Committee, the Council retained consideration of adding river herring and/or shads as "stocks in the fishery" within Amendment 14. Also as a result of the Ad-Hoc Committee's work, the Council will be writing a letter to the Atlantic Stated Marine Fisheries Commission outlining specific reporting relationships on significant issues that impact the river herring/shad and will request that the Commission reciprocate. The Council also endorsed a Committee recommendation to call for additional applications to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Advisory Panel.

Spiny Dogfish

Amendment 3 Action Alternatives Identified

The Council identified five action alternatives to be included in Amendment 3 to the Spiny Dogfish FMP. The alternatives are: 1) include in the specifications process, an RSA provision of up to 3% of the annual TAL; 2) review and update, as necessary, essential fish habitat (EFH) definitions and fishery impacts to EFH as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act; 3) for year-end rollover of management measures, extend existing management measures into the new fishing year until the measures specified for that year are implemented; 4) a coastwide annual quota with no seasonal, geographic or other allocation, or regional and/or state allocation scheme as established by Addendum 3 by the ASMFC; and, 5) have the FMAT explore possible action alternatives regarding administrative solutions within the open access system and extent of spiny dogfish federal permit dropping and need for limited access (may maintain open access or implement moratorium permit, catch shares, sector, other), and no action.

Monkfish

Amendment 6 Update

The Council received an update on Amendment 6 to the Monkfish FMP in which the Mid-Atlantic and the New England Councils are considering catch shares management for the monkfish fishery. At the Oversight Committee meeting on March 29, the Committee tasked the PDT with developing a White Paper which would document the issues involved in having different and separate management approaches in the two management areas (north and south). This could occur either within the existing

FMP or through two separate, independent FMPs with the northern area being managed by the NEFMC and the southern area being managed by the MAFMC. The white paper is expected to be reviewed by the Committee prior to the next (June) Council meeting such that Committee recommendations can be developed for the Councils.

Committees and Other Business

Ecosystem/Ocean Planning

The Council adopted 5 short-term recommendations as priorities from the December 2010 Habitat-Ecosystem Workshop which are to continue and expand discussion to include groups and issues not represented in the first workshop; to identify pilots for specific action using existing knowledge, staff, and funds; to participate with regional Restoration Center staff in regional prioritization efforts; to work with the regional Restoration Center to develop funding proposals and projects of mutual interest; and, to request NMFS habitat and stock assessment scientist to work with managers to initiate a demonstration project.

Highly Migratory Species (HMS)

Rick Pearson of NMFS, HMS Division, presented the proposed rule to modify retention of incidentally caught HMS in Atlantic trawl fisheries. The proposed rule considers modifications to the permitting requirements and allowance for incidentally caught HMS in trawl gears to: reduce regulatory dead discards of HMS in trawl gears; improve fishery data collection; provide additional opportunities for US swordfish quota to be attained; and, accommodate traditional gears that occasionally capture North Atlantic swordfish and smoothhound sharks (i.e., trawls) while maintaining landings at incidental levels.

Regarding North Atlantic swordfish, the Council agreed to the alternative to establish a new permit for *Illex* squid moratorium permit holders to retain up to 15 swordfish as the preferred option and agreed to the alternative to establish a new permit, or an exemption for the *Loligo* squid moratorium permit holders to retain swordfish. The Council agreed to support the alternative to allow the retention of smoothhound sharks caught incidentally in trawl gear, (an amount not to exceed 25% of the total catch by weight) on board or offloaded from the vessel. They also suggested that NMFS explore a 5,000 pound trip limit as an alternative to the percentage as recommended by ASMFC.

Executive

The Executive Committee discussed the Council Budget, the process and timeline for 2012 specifications for SMB and SFSCBSB, the Advisory Panel Fishery Performance Report, ecosystem based fisheries management goals and objectives, the Advisory panel composition and governance, the NRCC meeting, and communication issues related to updating the Council Brand (identification/logo) and website.

Other

In addition to the Committee meetings and regular Council business, the Council received a presentation by Dr. Paul Rago of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center regarding the 3-Year Standard Bycatch Reporting Methodology Report. Additional information on this report can be found at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center Sampling Branch's homepage at: <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/fsb/>.

The Council also received presentations from Ted Boling, Brian Hooker, and Erin Trager of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE), regarding an overview of Offshore Wind Energy, an introduction to the *Smart from the Start* Energy Initiative, and an overview of the proposed Mid-Atlantic Wind Energy Areas. BOEMRE is responsible for alternative energy development in the outer continental shelf.

The Council held their first Public Listening Session the evening of April 13. Council and NMFS representatives were on hand to answer questions and take comments on a host of issues related to Council and NMFS management from those in attendance as well as webinar participants.

Materials on the Web

Meeting materials related to the above issues and any presentations that accompanied the briefings provided to the Council at its April meeting are located on the Council's website at www.mafmc.org. Audio files of the full meeting discussions will be posted at <http://mafmc.org/actions/audio/audio.htm>.

**Next Council Meeting - June 14-16, 2011
Port Jefferson, New York**