

Final Mid-Atlantic Council RSA Program
2013 Research and Information Priorities List - Multi-Year Specification
(As approved by Council on August 18, 2011)

Spanning Multiple Species

- Conduct 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 at-sea observer and port sampling procedures and investigate accuracy and precision of at-sea observer and port sampling based estimates of catches of butterfish and alosine species in the *Loligo* fishery and alosine species in the mackerel fishery.
- Test gear modifications (in addition to mesh size) and/or alternative gear types (e.g., jigging) in the *Loligo* squid fishery to reduce bycatch of butterfish and other species.
- Study mortality rates of *Loligo* squid that pass through trawl mesh to evaluate effects of mesh regulations on fishing mortality of *Loligo* by size/age.
- Evaluate use of videography to document *Loligo* catches without any or minimal butterfish bycatch.
- During the spring, conduct exploratory sampling for SMB species in deep water beyond the range of the current NEFSC spring survey.

Summer Flounder

- Evaluate the length, weight, and age compositions of landed and discarded fish in the summer flounder fisheries (recreational and commercial) by sex. Focus age sampling on summer flounder 24 inches or larger in total length.

Bluefish

- Evaluate amount and length, weight, and age compositions of discards from the commercial and recreational fisheries.
- Collect size and age composition of the fisheries by gear type and statistical area.
- Develop a pilot program to determine the optimum sample size for a coastwide age-length key, and test the feasibility of state-level sampling combined with regional-level sampling consistent with the recommendations of the 2011 ASMFC Bluefish Ageing Workshop.
- 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).
- Perform 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 fishery independent indices.

Scup

- Develop fishery independent 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. Focus age sampling on scup 10 inches or larger in total length.

Illex squid

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

Tilefish

- Investigate the effects of hook size and other fishing practices (e.g., bait type and soak time) on catchability of tilefish by size in the longline fishery.