

**Didden, Jason T.**

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**From:** Aja Szumylo - NOAA Federal <aja.szumylo@noaa.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 06, 2013 12:43 PM  
**To:** Didden, Jason T.  
**Cc:** Darcy, George; Christopher, Peter  
**Subject:** Butterfish rebuilding and upcoming SSC meeting  
**Attachments:** Butterfish letter MAFMC 12-20-12 (2).pdf

Hi Jason-

Regarding the attached letter, I'm writing to clarify that the SSC's recommended butterfish ABC should result in a fishing mortality that falls within the requirements of the butterfish rebuilding plan. This means that the SSC needs to justify that, based on best available scientific information, the recommended ABC should result in an F of 0.1. Acknowledging the rebuilding plan throughout the Council process makes the ABC recommendation as defensible as possible.

Contact me if you'd like to discuss further...

Thanks!  
Aja

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
NORTHEAST REGION  
55 Great Republic Drive  
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

DEC 20 2012

Richard B. Robins, Jr., Chairman  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
Suite 201  
800 State Street  
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Rick:

As you are aware, we have revised the overfished status of butterfish from “overfished” to “unknown” based on the Northeast Fishery Science Center (NEFSC) butterfish stock assessment, conducted during the 49<sup>th</sup> Stock Assessment Workshop (SAW 49) in January 2010. The change in overfished status is based on the fact that the SAW 49 assessment was unable to determine biomass reference points for the butterfish stock. In addition, SAW 49 reviewed the results of the 2004 butterfish assessment (SAW 38) and found that SAW 38’s butterfish reference points and estimate of biomass are no longer appropriate.

Recall that SAW 38 was the assessment that initially determined that the butterfish stock was overfished, and that the Mid-Atlantic Council responded to this determination by establishing a 5-year butterfish rebuilding plan in Amendment 10 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan. The rebuilding plan specifies that, during the rebuilding period, the butterfish quota will be set through the specifications process, and that the butterfish acceptable biological catch (ABC) will be equal to the yield associated with applying a fishing mortality rate (F) of 0.1 to the most current estimate of stock biomass. We believe that, in spite of uncertainty about butterfish stock biomass, and the challenges associated with making management decisions with such uncertainty, the Council has made a strong effort to consider all available sources of scientific information in establishing annual catch levels consistent with the rebuilding plan.

Moving forward, we request that you continue to make catch level recommendations consistent with the rebuilding plan for the remainder of the rebuilding period. Though the requirements for the rebuilding plan were based on the now invalidated results of SAW 38, no valid reference points or estimates of stock biomass resulted from SAW 49. Therefore, butterfish must remain under its rebuilding plan until it is determined with reasonable confidence that stock size has reached an appropriate biomass target. This means that the Council will need to continue to justify, based on best available scientific information, how its ABC recommendations for the remainder of the rebuilding period are consistent with rebuilding plan.

The NEFSC is scheduled to conduct a benchmark stock assessment for butterfish in December 2013. Though the results will not be available in time for the specifications setting process for the 2014 fishing year, we can work together to ensure that any results of the 2013 assessment are incorporated into management measures through appropriate action.



If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact my staff in the Sustainable Fisheries Division at (978) 281-9315.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JKB', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

 John K. Bullard  
Regional Administrator

Cc: Dr. William Karp, Director, Northeast Fisheries Science Center  
Dr. Christopher Moore, MAFMC  
Jason Didden, MAFMC