



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

PRESS RELEASE

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Council Sets 2007 Specifications for Six Species

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) met in Wilmington, Delaware last week to adopt recommendations regarding fishery management measures for the 2007 Atlantic mackerel, *Loligo* and *Illex* squid and butterfish fisheries; and, for the surfclam and ocean quahog fisheries. In addition, the meeting also served as a forum for the Council's Committees on law enforcement, spiny dogfish, and the Magnuson Stevens Act reauthorization.

The Council recommended no action be taken to change the current regulations for surfclams and ocean quahogs. The current regulations provide for a 2007 quota of 3.4 million bushels for the surfclam fishery, 5.333 million bushels for the ocean quahog fishery, and 100,000 bushels for the Maine ocean quahog fishery. The current exemption from minimum size requirements for surfclams is also perpetuated for 2007.

The Council adopted the following specifications for Atlantic mackerel: allowable biological catch (ABC) = 186,000 metric tons (mt), initial optimum yield (IOY) = 115,000 mt, domestic annual harvest (DAH) = 115,000 mt, domestic annual processing (DAP) = 100,000 mt, joint venture processing (JVP) = 0 mt and total allowable level of foreign fishing (TALFF) = 0 mt. The DAH specification includes an allocation of 15,000 mt to the recreational mackerel fishery. The proposed 2007 specification for ABC represents a reduction compared to previous years and reflects the results of the recently updated stock assessment for Atlantic mackerel which recommended significant reductions in the biological reference points for this stock. However, the Atlantic mackerel stock remains in good condition and the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

For *Loligo* squid, the Council voted to maintain the same quota specifications in 2007 as applied in 2006. This means the maximum optimum yield (Max OY) would be 26,000 mt and ABC, IOY, DAH, and DAP would all be set at 17,000 mt. The Council voted to allocate the 2007 quota into three four month quota periods (trimesters), but could not come to agreement on the quota allocation for each period. The Council will review and consider additional analyses so as to make a final determination regarding these trimester allocations at its meeting in August. The Council also approved a measure to limit incidental catch permit holders to landing the incidental catch amount specified for *Loligo* to once per calendar day. To reduce the potential for regulatory discard of *Loligo* in the *Illex* fishery (should the directed *Loligo* fishery be closed in August 2007), the Council approved a measure to allow *Illex* moratorium vessels to possess up to 10,000 pounds of *Loligo* during such a *Loligo* closure. The Council also recommended that up to 3% of the ABC, IOY, DAH and DAP for *Loligo* may be set aside for scientific research in 2007.

For *Illex* squid, the Council adopted the following quota specifications in 2007: Max OY, ABC, IOY, DAH, and DAP would all be set at 24,000 mt. The directed fishery for *Illex* will remain open until 95% of ABC is taken (i.e., 22,800 mt). When 95% of ABC is taken, the directed fishery will be closed and a 10,000 pound trip limit will remain in effect for the remainder of the fishing year. Trip limits for non-moratorium vessels will be set at 10,000 lbs for 2007 during the open season. The Council also recommended that up to 3% of the ABC, IOY, DAH and DAP for *Illex* may be set aside for scientific research for 2007.

For butterfish, the Council adopted the following quota specifications for 2007: Max OY would be set at 12,175 mt, ABC would be set at 4,545 mt and IOY, DAH, DAP would all be set at 1,681 mt.

The Magnuson Stevens Act (MSA) Committee reviewed various provisions of a number of Bills that would reauthorize the MSA. However, owing to Senate passage by unanimous consent of a modified version of S. 2012 the day before the Council's MSA Committee met, the MSA Committee decided to postpone taking any action until it had the opportunity to review the passed version of S.2012. The MSA Committee will reconvene at the August Council meeting to provide final comment to Congress on behalf the Council regarding MSA reauthorization.

The Mid-Atlantic section of the Joint Spiny Dogfish Committee met to discuss the proposed final rule for fishing years 2006 through 2008 in light of the preliminary stock assessment results for dogfish. It was emphasized that the stock assessment information was preliminary and no action should be taken at this time owing to the likelihood for change. The dogfish stock assessment report will be presented by a NMFS official to the Council at its August meeting. The Committee was also assured by a NMFS representative that should the final rule for dogfish be implemented for three years, the Council has the authority to address modifying multi-year measures on an annual basis should information become available necessitating such action. The possibility of developing a male only fishery was also discussed, but not enough data were available at the meeting to draw conclusions as to the likelihood of successfully prosecuting such a fishery, especially in the context of not increasing the incidental take of adult females. The issue of a male only fishery was held over for a future meeting.

The Law Enforcement Committee met to address promoting this year's Fishery Achievement Award (FAA) efforts.

Advisory Panel Membership Available

The Council is seeking nominations for membership on its Tilefish Advisory Panel. Advisors should be people who are actually engaged in the harvesting or processing of tilefish, or who are knowledgeable and interested in the conservation and management of tilefish. The Council believes that its Advisory Panels should reflect expertise and interest from the standpoint of geographical distribution, industry, environment and other user groups, and the economic and social groups encompassed in the Council's geographical area of concern. If you are interested, visit the Council's web site (www.mafmc.org) and download an industry advisor application form. You may also get this form by contacting the Council directly at the above phone number and requesting one. Completed forms should be forwarded to the attention of Dr. Jose Montanez (Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 300 S. New Street, Dover, DE 19901-6790) by no later than July 31, 2006.