
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

PRESS RELEASE



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Annual Catch Limits and Accountability Measures Workshop ACL/AM Omnibus Amendment Moving Forward

The Mid-Atlantic Council convened a one-day workshop on July 14, 2009 in Philadelphia, PA to have each of its species Committees address the development of annual catch limits (ACLs) and associated accountability measures (AMs). The outcome from the workshop will be used to provide guidance to the Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) that is involved with the development of the Council's Omnibus Amendment for ACLs, AMs, and related control rules.

The workshop was focused on addressing the Council's specification setting process following receipt of fishing level recommendations (acceptable biological catch - ABC) from its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). The reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) requires the Council's SSC to provide a fishing level recommendation that accounts for scientific uncertainty. Once the SSC advises the Council as to a stock's ABC level, then the Council is charged to establish an ACL that can be equivalent to or less than the ABC provided by the SSC. Under the new Secretarial guidelines associated with National Standard 1, the Council is to address management uncertainty. It is also to develop control rules to account for scientific and management uncertainty.

The workshop addressed management uncertainty surrounding each of the Council's species by evaluating the fishery management plans' (FMP) performance in terms of historical quota overages, the control measures used in the FMPs, and the timeliness of data to address both landings and discards. The Council also considered potential "management frameworks" to be used for each of its managed species and which AMs should be used to govern the ACL.

Each of the Council's species committees met to consider which ACL structure would be best suited to individual fisheries. The species committee recommendations will guide the development of the ACL/AM Omnibus Amendment as the Council's Fisheries Management Action Team (FMATs) continues to develop the amendment. The committees' recommendations will not preclude consideration of other alternatives currently under consideration in the document, but will inform and focus the FMATs efforts to analyze the options and develop the document.

The Surfclam/Ocean Quahog Committee's preference was that the ACL be equal to the ABC and that an annual catch target (ACT) be utilized to provide a buffer between that level of fishing mortality and the ACL. Given that management uncertainty was deemed to be low for these two species owing to the ITQ nature of these fisheries, the preliminary recommendation for AMs would be to develop such measures at the individual ITQ permit level.

The Tilefish Committee recommended that the ACL be set equal to the ABC level and it is anticipated that when Amendment 1 to the Tilefish FMP is implemented, management uncertainty will be very low.

Therefore, options for AMs in addition to those already in place for the tiers and incidental fisheries, will be developed at the overall fishery level.

The Dogfish Committee also recommended that the ACL be set equal to the ABC level and that ACT be utilized for purposes of addressing management uncertainty. It also recommended that reactive AMs should be developed at the fishery level and that the options for specifying the ACT should be further developed.

Under the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP, the Demersal Committee recommended that the ACL be set equal to the ABC and that management uncertainty be accounted for within each sector (commercial and recreational) by establishing ACTs for all three species. The offset for management uncertainty between the ACL and the sector ACT will be developed later. In addition, AMs are to be developed at the sector level.

The Bluefish Committee recommended that the ACL be set equal to the ABC and that the management uncertainty be addressed by each sector (commercial and recreational) when establishing ACTs. AMs for bluefish should be developed at the fishery level owing to the complexities associated with transferring quota between the recreational and commercial sectors.

The Squid, Mackerel, and Butterfish Committee recommended that mackerel and butterfish ACLs be set equal to the ABC level (*Illex* and *Loligo* Squid are exempt from National Standard 1 guidelines owing to their short life history). Management uncertainty will be addressed in the mackerel fishery by using sectors to differentiate uncertainty associated with the commercial and recreational sector and offsets associated with the ACT will be developed as the plan moves forward. It was also suggested that AMs be developed for the sector responsible for any of the overages. Butterfish should likewise have its ACL equal to its ABC. The ACT is to be used to address management uncertainty related to catch, particularly catch associated with discards.

The Monkfish Committee agreed to follow the New England Council's (the lead Council for this FMP) approach, i.e., it recommended that the ACL be set equal to the ABC and that management uncertainty be accounted for by establishing ACTs. Accountability measures will be developed for each stock governed by the plan.

At the conclusion of the meeting it was recommended that staff provide the Committees' advice and suggestions developed during this workshop to the FMAT so that the FMAT would be aware of the Council's preliminary recommendations regarding development of the Council's Omnibus Amendment.

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