



April 2017 Council Meeting Report

April 11 – 13, 2017

Avalon, New Jersey

The following summary highlights actions taken and issues considered at the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's April 2017 meeting in Avalon, NJ. Presentations, briefing materials, and webinar recordings are available on the Council's website at www.mafmc.org/briefing/april-2017.

Golden Tilefish Specifications

After reviewing recommendations from its Scientific and Statistical Committee, Tilefish Monitoring Committee, and Tilefish Advisory Panel, the Council adopted golden tilefish management measures for the 2018-2020 fishing years.

For 2018, 2019, and 2020, the Council set an annual catch limit (ACL) of 1.636 million pounds. Framework 2 to the Tilefish FMP, which is currently under review by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) would modify the structure of the golden tilefish catch and landings limits flow chart to allow for discards to be deducted from the specific component of the commercial sector (Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) fishery and/or incidental fishery) generating them. Because the action is still under review, the Council adopted catch and landings limits based on the current process and on the process described in Framework 2. Under the current process, after accounting for discards, total allowable landings (TAL) would be set at 1.626 million pounds, resulting in allocations of 1,545,115 pounds to the IFQ fishery and 81,322 pounds to the incidental fishery. Under the process described in Framework 2, the IFQ quota would be set equal to the IFQ TAL at 1,554,038 pounds. The incidental TAL would be reduced by 0.07 million pounds, resulting in an incidental quota of 72,398 pounds.

Blueline Tilefish Specifications

The Council approved 2018 specifications for blueline tilefish, maintaining the 2017 catch limits of 63,533 pounds for the recreational fishery and 23,498 pounds for the commercial fishery. The Council will revisit some recreational measures at the June Council meeting, particularly the merits of higher trip limits for vessels that take multi-day trips. A proposed rule on the Blueline Tilefish Amendment is expected soon, which will facilitate the standard implementation of 2017/2018 specifications.

Chub Mackerel Amendment

The Council reviewed a draft scoping document for the Chub Mackerel Amendment. The amendment considers adding Atlantic chub mackerel (*Scomber colias*) as a stock in the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). Through this action, the Council will consider various management alternatives aimed at preventing overfishing of and achieving optimum yield for Atlantic chub mackerel in U.S. waters. The Council made several suggestions for improving the scoping document, including adding additional descriptions of recreational chub mackerel landings and the potential implications of a commercial chub mackerel fishery for recreationally important prey species such as tunas and billfish. The Council approved the scoping document, pending these edits, and approved the scoping plan. Additional information about the amendment, including the scoping hearing schedule, is available at <http://www.mafmc.org/actions/chub-mackerel-amendment>.

Hudson Canyon Sanctuary Proposal

The Council received a presentation from Merry Camhi, from the Wildlife Conservation Society's (WCS) New York Aquarium, on a proposal to designate the Hudson Canyon as a National Marine Sanctuary. The New York

Aquarium submitted the proposal in November 2016, and it is currently under review by NOAA. The proposal states that sanctuary designation is intended to “preclude such inconsistent uses as oil, gas, and mineral extraction in the Hudson Canyon” and recommends that fishing should not be prohibited. However, the Council discussed concerns that sanctuary designation could still result in future restrictions on commercial and recreational fishing in the canyon and that the Council would not have a clear role in future management decisions once the area is designated as a sanctuary. Several members of the commercial and recreational fishing industries also voiced opposition to the proposal. Although the Council considered a motion to refer the issue to the Ecosystem and Ocean Planning Committee for consideration, the Council ultimately voted to submit a comment letter stating that it does not support the proposal and recommends that it be denied.

Update on Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology

The Council received an update on 2016 Sea Day accomplishments from Elizabeth Chilton, acting branch chief for the Fisheries Sampling Branch of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center. The presentation provided an overview of the Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology process and highlighted several challenges which contributed to the under accomplishment of Sea Days in 2016. The Council provided feedback on several proposed ideas for improving Sea Day accomplishments in the future.

River Herring and Shad Committee

The River Herring and Shad Committee reviewed draft metrics for tracking river herring and shad conservation efforts and received an update on the results of those conservation efforts. Staff will refine the metrics based on the Council’s input for follow-up at a subsequent meeting.

Industry Funded Monitoring (IFM) Amendment

The Council revisited and reaffirmed its previous decision to postpone further action on the Industry-Funded Monitoring Amendment until completion of an ongoing electronic monitoring pilot project, which is scheduled to conclude in November 2017. The project is expected to provide critical information about the cost and utility of electronic monitoring in the Atlantic mackerel and Atlantic herring fisheries.

State of the Ecosystem and EAFM

Dr. Sarah Gaichas presented a report on the state of the Mid-Atlantic portion of the Northeast Large Marine Ecosystem. The purpose of this report is to provide ecosystem-scale information for fishery managers to consider along with existing species-scale analyses. The Council had an opportunity to provide feedback, ask questions, and discuss how the findings of the report can be incorporated into the Council’s ongoing development of an ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM) risk matrix.

Highly Migratory Species / Law Enforcement

The Council reviewed recommendations from a joint meeting of the Highly Migratory Species (HMS) and Law Enforcement Committees. The committees met to review Atlantic HMS for-hire reporting/permitting issues and develop recommendations on related management measures for the NMFS HMS Division and HMS Advisory Panel. Currently, vessels fishing under the HMS Charter/Headboat Permit can take for-hire passengers fishing for highly migratory species. With this permit, catch may also sometimes be sold depending on the species and the types of other permits held by the vessel. Concerns have been raised that substantial landings/sales of HMS catch in the for-hire sector may be unreported.

Based on the Committees’ recommendations, the Council voted to recommend that the HMS Party/Charter permit be partitioned into two permits: Party/Charter No Sale (pure recreational) and Party/Charter Sale (mixed recreational/commercial). Party/Charter Sale would require operators to supply their U.S. Coast Guard safety inspection decal number to acquire a permit. The Council also voted to recommend that HMS require logbook or vessel trip report (VTR) reporting for HMS Charter/Headboat and General Category permits so there is a more uniform system for tracking HMS sales.

Ricks E Savage Award

Dr. Lee Anderson was named this year's recipient of the Ricks E Savage Award. The award is given each year to a person who has added value to the Council's process and management goals through significant scientific, legislative, enforcement, or management activities. Dr. Anderson served two nine-year terms on the Council, from 1986 to 1995 and from 2007 to 2016. During his time on the Council, Dr. Anderson served for three years as Council Chairman and a total of ten years as Vice-Chairman. He also participated on numerous Council Committees, serving as chairman of seven of them. During the presentation of the award, Council Chairman Mike Luisi noted that he could not think of anyone more deserving of it than Dr. Anderson. After his departure from the Council in June 2016, Dr. Anderson was appointed to the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee.

Other Business

Potential Approaches for Managing Marine Fisheries in a Changing Climate

The Council received a presentation from Dr. Wendy Morrison, from NMFS Office of Sustainable Fisheries, on a literature review of potential approaches for managing marine fisheries in a changing climate.

Offshore Drilling in the Atlantic

The Council agreed to send a letter to Secretary Zinke reiterating the Council's position on offshore drilling and seismic surveying and highlighting the Council's policies on non-fishing activities that threaten fish habitat.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, May 10, 2017

Joint Meeting with ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Boards

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