



## October 2017 Council Meeting Report

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**October 10-12, 2017**

*Riverhead, New York*

The following summary highlights actions taken and issues considered at the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's October 2017 meeting in Riverhead, NY. Presentations, briefing materials, and webinar recordings are available on the Council website at [www.mafmc.org/briefing/october-2017](http://www.mafmc.org/briefing/october-2017).

### Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Goals and Objectives

The Council is considering potential revisions to the Surfclam and Ocean Quahog (SCOQ) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) goals and objectives. This was initiated in support of the Council's 2014-2018 Strategic Plan, which identified reviewing and updating FMP goals and objectives as a priority to ensure that they provide meaningful guidance and are consistent with today's fisheries and management context.

During the meeting, the Council was presented with a revised set of goals and objectives developed by the Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) in consultation with the Fisheries Leadership and Sustainability Forum (FF). After reviewing feedback from public scoping hearings, interviews with advisors and Committee members conducted by FF, and considering additional public testimony, the Council approved the revised goals and objectives for inclusion in a public hearing document for the SCOQ Excessive Share Amendment. The Council and public will have additional opportunities to provide input on this issue during the continued development of the amendment. Information and updates on this action are available at <http://www.mafmc.org/actions/scoq-excessive-shares-amendment>.

### Golden Tilefish Individual Fishing Quota Program Review

Council staff presented the results of a 5-year review of the golden tilefish Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program. The 2007 reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act included new requirements related to the monitoring and review of limited access privilege programs, which includes fisheries managed under IFQ programs. A Fishery Management Action Team that included staff from the Mid-Atlantic Council, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, and the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office was formed to conduct this review. The report provides the first comprehensive review of the progress of the Golden Tilefish IFQ Program towards achieving the stated goals of reducing overcapacity and eliminating the problems associated with derby fishing. In general terms, it was found that overcapacity has been reduced since the program was implemented, and it appears that derby-style fishing has subsided and that ex-vessel prices have improved under the IFQ system. The review also addresses recent administrative changes to the program, and summarizes future research needs and recommended changes to the program.

The Council agreed to postpone final approval of the report until December 2017 to allow an opportunity for the public to comment on the report. A link to the full report and an online comment form are available on the at <http://www.mafmc.org/comments/golden-tilefish-5yr-review>. Comments are due by November 17.

### Lobster Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology Framework

Following the New England Fishery Management Council's vote to approve final action on the Lobster Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) Framework, the Mid-Atlantic Council also selected Alternative 2 as its preferred alternative and approved the framework for submission to NMFS. The Council's preferred alternative would stipulate that SBRM New England and Mid-Atlantic lobster pot fleets include all active vessels that use this gear in federal waters. For more background information on this action, see the June 2017 Council Meeting Report: <http://www.mafmc.org/s/2017-06-Council-Report.pdf>.

## 2018 Spiny Dogfish Specifications

The Council reviewed spiny dogfish specifications for 2018, which will be year 3 of 2016-2018 multi-year specifications. After considering input from the Scientific and Statistical Committee, the Spiny Dogfish Advisory Panel, and the Spiny Dogfish Monitoring Committee, the Council made no changes to the previously-recommended specifications, which are described at the link below. The Council also briefly discussed the potential for a male-only fishery, which could be feasible after the completion of a benchmark stock assessment. The Council requested a spiny dogfish assessment update for 2018 and a benchmark stock assessment as soon as possible.

2016-2018 Spiny Dogfish Specifications:

<https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/nr/2016/August/16dogfish20162018specsphl.pdf>

## Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management Risk Assessment

The Council reviewed and approved a list of risk elements to include in an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) Risk Assessment. As background, in August 2016 the Council approved a guidance document to facilitate the transition to an ecosystem approach to fisheries management in the Mid-Atlantic. When fully implemented, EAFM will integrate multiple ecosystem considerations into decisions for Council-managed species. These considerations include predator/prey interactions, changing habitats, shifting species distributions, social and economic dynamics, and others. The first step in implementation of EAFM is completion of a risk assessment which will be used to analyze the highest risk interactions for each species and identify strategies for addressing these risks. The risk elements approved by the Council are defined as “aspects that may threaten achieving the biological, economic, or social objectives that the Council desires from a fishery.” For a complete list, go to [http://www.mafmc.org/s/EAFM-Risk-Elements\\_2017-11-11.pdf](http://www.mafmc.org/s/EAFM-Risk-Elements_2017-11-11.pdf).

## 2018 Recreational Black Sea Bass Wave 1 Fishery

The Council reconsidered the potential opening of the recreational Wave 1 (January-February) black sea bass fishery in 2018. The issue was first considered in August at a joint meeting of the Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board (Board). Although the Council and Board considered several options for a Wave 1 fishery, none were approved at the time (see the [meeting report](#) for details). Following the August meeting, a new option was proposed which would include a season from February 1 - 28, 2018, a 15-fish possession limit, and a 12.5-inch minimum size. After extensive deliberation, the Council approved these measures for federal waters. The Council also stipulated that the 2018 recreational harvest limit that applies to the remainder of the fishing year will be reduced by 100,000 pounds to account for expected harvest during the February season and that any adjustments to the 2018 recreational management measures to account for this harvest will only be required of those states that participate in the February fishery. This option will now be considered by the Board at their meeting on October 18, 2017. If approved by the Board, these measures would be in place for 2018 while the Council and Board consider the implementation of a Letter of Authorization (LOA) program for the 2019 recreational black sea bass Wave 1 fishery.

## Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Commercial Accountability Measures Framework

The Council met for the first framework meeting to consider modifying the commercial accountability measures (AMs) for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. The framework considers adding flexibility in the commercial accountability measures for these species based on stock status, similar to the AMs in place for the Council’s recreational species. Although the framework was only intended to address black sea bass when it was initiated in December 2016, the Council later decided to also include summer flounder and scup. The framework presents alternatives to the existing AMs with a focus on evaluating and accounting for commercial discards with options for both (1) evaluation of ACL overages and (2) responses to non-landing overages to account for the latest information and current stock status.

The Council reviewed initial staff analyses and evaluations of the draft alternatives. The Council supported the draft alternatives offered for consideration and the continued development of the framework. Final action on this framework is expected in early 2018.

## 2019-2023 Strategic Plan

In 2018 the Council will enter the final year of the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan and will need to develop a new plan to guide its activities for the next five years. During the meeting, the Council reviewed and provided feedback on a proposed timeline and approach for development of the next strategic plan. The approach proposed by staff will build upon the considerable data gathering and synthesis that led to the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan and will be augmented by additional outreach and public engagement. The Council expects to begin stakeholder outreach and data gathering in December 2017. Updates on this process will be posted to <http://www.mafmc.org/strategic-plan> as they become available.

## Executive Committee – 2018 Implementation Plan

The Executive Committee met to receive an update on 2017 Implementation Plan progress and to review a draft list of priorities and activities for the 2018 implementation plan. The Committee recommended adding two items to the draft list of deliverables for 2018, including (1) an evaluation of incidental permit issues in the blueline and golden tilefish fisheries, and (2) ongoing involvement in relevant offshore energy issues in the Mid-Atlantic. The Committee also recommended the addition of several items under the category of “Possible Additions.” Council staff will incorporate the Committee’s recommendations and present a revised draft for Council consideration at the December meeting.

## Other Business

### ***Swearing in of New and Reappointed Council Members***

The Council swore in new Council members Sonny Gwin of Maryland and Steve Heins of New York (Heins was recently appointed as an obligatory member after previously serving as a designated state official). The Council also swore in reappointed members Laurie Nolan of New York, Warren Elliott of Pennsylvania, and Dewey Hemilright of North Carolina.



### ***Election of Officers***

During the yearly election of officers, the Council reelected Mike Luisi as Council Chairman and Warren Elliott as Vice-Chairman. Mr. Luisi is the director of the Fisheries Monitoring and Assessment Division at the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Mr. Elliott serves as the Pennsylvania Citizen Representative to the Chesapeake Bay Commission and as a member of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.



*Reelected Council Leadership: Chairman, Mike Luisi (right) and Vice-Chairman, Warren Elliott (left)*

***Regional Planning Body - Draft Vessel Monitoring System, Communities at Sea, and Ecologically Rich Areas Data Presentation***

Nick Napoli presented an update on several data development activities associated with the Mid-Atlantic regional ocean action plan. His briefing included updates on the Ecologically Rich Area (ERA) data development process, draft 2015-2016 Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) data products, and draft Communities at Sea (CAS) data products.

***2018 Council Meetings***

The schedule of 2018 Council meetings available on the Council website at [www.mafmc.org/meetings](http://www.mafmc.org/meetings).

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## Next Meeting

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**December 11-14, 2017**

*Westin Annapolis*

*100 Westgate Circle, Annapolis, MD 21401*

*(410) 972-4300*