



MID-ATLANTIC

FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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COUNCIL MEETING SUMMARY

August 13-16, 2012
Philadelphia, PA

SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP, BLACK SEA BASS

SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The Council met jointly with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (Commission) Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board and Bluefish Board to establish commercial and recreational specifications and commercial management measures.

SUMMER FLOUNDER: The Council recommended summer flounder specifications for the 2013 and 2014 fishing years. This decision on the management timeframe was based on an indication from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center that a new, benchmark stock assessment will be completed in the summer of 2013. The Council and Board voted to set the following specifications:

Year	Commercial Quota (millions of pounds)	Recreational Harvest Limit (millions of pounds)
2013	11.44	7.63
2014	11.39	7.59

The Council did not recommend changes to the 14" commercial minimum fish size (TL) and the 5.5" commercial mesh size for summer flounder. Recreational measures will be developed later in the year when more information is available on the 2012 recreational landings and the effectiveness of the 2012 recreational regulations.

SCUP: The Council and Board voted to set the following scup specifications for 2013-2015:

Year	Commercial Quota (millions of pounds)	Recreational Harvest Limit (millions of pounds)
2013	23.53	7.55
2014	21.95	7.03
2015	20.60	6.60

The Council did not recommend changes to the 9" commercial minimum fish size and the 5" commercial mesh size. Recreational management measures will be recommended later in the year when more information is available on the 2012 recreational landings and effectiveness of the 2012 recreational regulations.

SPECIES AND ISSUES CONSIDERED

- Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass
- Bluefish
- Dogfish
- Special Management Zones
- Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish
- Research Set-Aside

MATERIALS ON THE WEB

Meeting materials related to the topics summarized in this report are available on the Council's website at www.mafmc.org. Audio files of the full meeting discussions will be posted at <http://mafmc.org/actions/audio/audio.htm>

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

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BLACK SEA BASS: Given the uncertainty associated with the status of the black sea bass stock, the Council and Board voted to set the following specifications for only one year, 2013:

Year	Commercial Quota (millions of pounds)	Recreational Harvest Limit (millions of pounds)
2013	1.78	1.85

The Council did not recommend changes to the 11" commercial minimum fish size and 4.5" commercial mesh size for black sea bass. Recreational management measures will be developed later in the year when more information is available on the 2012 recreational landings and effectiveness of the 2012 recreational regulations.

AMENDMENT 17

The Council reviewed a draft public hearing document for Amendment 17 to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP, which dealt with regional and spatial management tools for the recreational black sea bass fishery. The Council returned the document to staff to develop additional alternatives that would provide individual states with greater flexibility in determining state-specific or regional allocations.

SCUP ALLOCATION ANALYSIS REPORT

Brad Gentner, president of Gentner Consulting Group (GCG), presented the results of the Scup Allocation Report completed in July 2012. The purpose of the study was to examine the economic efficiency of the current scup allocations and the potential effects of shifts in these allocations in the scup fishery. As a result of the recent large increases in the allowable harvest levels of scup, the analysis was not able to derive optimal allocations between the commercial and recreational fisheries due to the recent large increases in the allowable harvest levels of scup. However, the framework developed by GCG will be more useful for future examinations of allocations under alternate harvest limit scenarios that may be more constraining.

SCUP ALLOCATION AMENDMENT

The Council and Board initiated an Amendment to further investigate the potential outcomes of adjusting the commercial and recreational scup allocations as well as the summer and winter I and II commercial fishing period allocations. Specifically, the Amendment will further explore the biological, social, and economic impacts of a broad range of alternative allocation scenarios. The upper end of the allocation ranges explored will include an overall 60 percent commercial and 40 percent recreational allocation, as well as period allocations with 50 percent of the quota allocated to the summer period, and the remaining 50 percent to Winter I and Winter II periods.

BLUEFISH

SPECIFICATIONS

The Council met with the Commission's Bluefish Board to establish Bluefish specifications for the next two fishing years. The Council recommended the following specifications for 2013-2014:

Year	Commercial Quota (millions of pounds)	Recreational Harvest Limit (millions of pounds)
2013	9.357	14.504
2014	8.942	14.504

Combined, these landings limits are about 16% lower than the 2012 limits. The decreases are due in part to weak 2009-2011 year classes.

SPINY DOGFISH

AMENDMENT 3

The Council approved a draft of Amendment 3 to the Spiny Dogfish FMP for public hearings. The Amendment addresses four issues: adding a research set-aside allowance, updating essential fish habitat (EFH) definitions, delays in

rulemaking, and modifying annual allocation of the quota to reduce conflicts with the ASMFC's geographic allocation scheme. The following public hearings will be held for the public to provide input on Amendment 3:

1. September 4, 7:00 p.m., Virginia Beach, VA
2. September 5, 7:00 p.m., Manahawkin, NJ
3. September 6, 7:00 p.m., Warwick, RI

ATLANTIC MACKEREL, SQUID, BUTTERFISH

SQUID SUMMIT

The Council discussed the development of a "Squid Summit" to bring squid fishermen together to develop better management approaches for squid management (both longfin and *Ilex*). Issues to be addressed could include real-time management, the butterfish cap, or anything that fishermen bring forward. The Council is currently considering one meeting in December 2012 that would focus on getting input from fishermen on problems and solutions, and a follow-up meeting in early 2013 to get input on potential regulatory changes related to the input from the first meeting.

BUTTERFISH CAP

The Council will be taking steps to determine if an increase in the Trimester 3 butterfish cap may be appropriate by A) investigating whether a transfer from landings to the cap may be warranted, and B) requesting clarification from the SSC regarding the 2012 butterfish ABC. The Council and SSC will meet via webinar in September to consider any changes.

SPECIAL MANAGEMENT ZONE MONITORING COMMITTEE

CONSIDERATION FOR DELAWARE ARTIFICIAL REEFS

The Council received a report from the Special Management Zone (SMZ) Technical Committee regarding a request from the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife to designate five artificial reef sites as SMZs under provisions of Amendment 9 to the Summer flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP. The request was made in response to gear conflicts between hook and line gear and fixed pot/trap gear on Delaware reef sites in the EEZ.

Based on the report's analysis of six factors relative to SMZ designation, the Monitoring Committee recommended that all five Delaware reef sites be designated as SMZs during the black sea bass recreational fishing season. The Demersal Committee will review the report and consider additional management options at the next Council meeting in October. Public hearings will be held for the public to comment on these options following the October Council meeting, and final Council action on Delaware's SMZ request is expected in December. Any Council recommendation will be sent to NMFS for review and possible implementation.

RESEARCH SET-ASIDE

PROPOSED CHANGES TO RSA PROGRAM

The Council received a report from the Research Set-Aside (RSA) Committee which included several recommendations for increasing the efficiency of the RSA program. The Council approved recommendations related to improving the scientific credibility of projects funded under the RSA Program. These changes would allow the SSC to play a greater role in the identification and prioritization of Council research needs and in the scientific review of proposed and completed projects.

In addition, the Council approved measures recommended by the Committee to improve the administrative oversight of the RSA program. One of the primary objectives of these measures is to create a better system for monitoring and reporting fish landed under RSA allocations. However, any action on RSA Committee recommendations concerning operation of auctions of RSA quota to support scientific research was deferred pending legal advice from the NOAA Office of General Counsel.

The Council also approved a list of research needs which will be submitted to NMFS and will form the basis for the request for proposals for potential funding under the 2014 RSA Program.

COMMITTEES AND OTHER BUSINESS

VISIONING AND STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKING GROUP

The Visioning and Strategic Planning Working Group met for the first in a series of meetings to develop a 10-year strategic plan for the Council. Participants in the working group include the Council's Visioning Committee members and a diverse group of stakeholders. Also in attendance were representatives from the NMFS Northeast Regional Office and Northeast Fisheries Science Center. The working group is expected to meet 3-4 more times between September and December to complete a draft plan by the end of 2012 for public comment and full Council review.

ECOSYSTEM AND OCEAN PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Ecosystem and Ocean Planning Committee voted to proceed with deep-sea coral protections via an amendment to the Squid, Mackerel, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan. The committee also reviewed and approved a draft Memorandum of Understanding regarding broad-scale coordination of deep-sea coral protections between the New England Fishery Management Council, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Council's Executive Committee received a progress update from staff on the development of an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) Guidance Document. This document, which is modeled after the Pacific Council's approach to ecosystems-based management, is envisioned as a non-regulatory umbrella document that will guide the Council to incorporate ecosystem considerations in the development of fishery management policies. To date the Council has adopted goal, purpose, and need statements and has also tentatively approved a protocol developed by the SSC for specifying the Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) for forage species.

The Council tasked staff to develop, in consultation with the SSC, an operational guide to implementing ABC and OY control rules which would take species interactions and other ecosystem related factors into account. The control rule framework will then be used to identify the components and scope of the EAFM guidance document.

OTHER

Dr. Russell Brown, Deputy Science and Research Director of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC or Center), gave an overview of the Center's draft strategic plan. The plan, which is largely focused on the center's plan to transition to ecosystem-based science, will guide priority-setting and decision-making within NEFSC over the next five years.

Four new and reappointed members were sworn in—Jeff Deem of Virginia, Tony Dilernia of New York, Preston Pate of North Carolina, and Chris Zeman of New Jersey. During Council Officer elections Mr. Rick Robins was reelected as Chairman, and Dr. Lee Anderson was re-elected as Vice-Chairman.

The Council also bid farewell to Joel MacDonald after 32 years of service as the representative of NOAA General Counsel to the Mid-Atlantic Council.

**NEXT COUNCIL MEETING:
OCTOBER 16-18, 2012
LONG BRANCH, NJ**