

APPROVED DECEMBER 2023

MID-ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

2024 Implementation Plan



MID-ATLANTIC
FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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INTRODUCTION

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council is responsible for the conservation and management of more than 65 fish and shellfish stocks that are found within the federal 200-mile limit of the mid-Atlantic region (North Carolina through New York).

The Mid-Atlantic Council was established in 1976 by the Fishery Conservation and Management Act (later renamed the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, or MSA). The MSA created a 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone and charged eight regional councils with management of fishery resources in the newly expanded federal waters.

The Council develops fishery management recommendations which must be approved by the Secretary of Commerce before they are finalized and implemented by NOAA Fisheries. All of the Council's fishery management recommendations must be consistent with the ten national standards as defined by the MSA and must be developed in an open, public process as prescribed by law.

Fifteen species are directly managed with specific fishery management plans (FMPs). These include summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, Atlantic bluefish, Atlantic and chub mackerel, *Illlex* and longfin squids, butterfish, Atlantic surfclam, ocean quahog, golden and blueline tilefish, spiny dogfish (joint with the New England Council), and monkfish (joint with the New England Council). In addition, more than 50 forage species are managed as "ecosystem components" in all seven FMPs.

The Council partners with other fishery management organizations, including the New England and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, to ensure that fisheries are managed effectively across jurisdictional boundaries.

About This Document

The Council's work is guided by a five-year strategic plan. The [current plan](#), for the years 2020-2024, is organized around five goal areas: Communication, Science, Management, Ecosystem, and Governance.

Each year, the Council develops an annual implementation plan which describes the specific fishery management actions, deliverables, and other activities planned for the upcoming year. The implementation plan is designed to provide a comprehensive and realistic framework for merging the Council's ongoing projects with new initiatives while ensuring progress toward the goals and objectives identified in the strategic plan.

The 2024 Implementation Plan is organized into two main parts:

- 1 The **Proposed Actions and Deliverables** section provides an overview of activities planned for each fishery management plan and topic area.
- 2 The **Strategic Plan Framework and 2024 Activities** section organizes the Council's planned actions and deliverables within the context of the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan's five goal areas and 21 objectives. This section also highlights select ongoing/routine activities that address strategic plan objectives.

The *Appendix* provides additional background information and details about the proposed actions and deliverables included in the 2024 Implementation Plan.

2020-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

Mission: The Council manages fisheries in federal waters of the Mid-Atlantic region for their long-term sustainability and productivity consistent with the national standards of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Council is committed to the stewardship of these fisheries, and associated ecosystems and fishing communities, through the collaborative development of effective, science-based fishery management plans and policies.

Vision: Healthy marine ecosystems and thriving, sustainable fisheries and fishing communities that provide the greatest overall benefit to the nation.

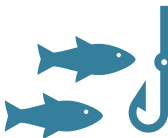
Strategic Goals



Communication: Engage stakeholders and the public through education and outreach that foster sustained participation in, and awareness of, the Council process.



Science: Ensure that the Council's management decisions are based on timely and accurate scientific information and methods.



Management: Develop effective management strategies that provide for sustainable fisheries and healthy marine ecosystems while considering the needs of fishing communities and other resource users.



Ecosystem: Support the ecologically sustainable utilization of living marine resources in a manner that maintains ecosystem productivity, structure, and function.



Governance: Ensure that the Council's practices accurately represent and consider the interests of fisheries, fishing communities, and the public through a transparent and inclusive decision-making process.

Visit www.mafmc.org/strategic-plan to download the full strategic plan.

2024 PROPOSED ACTIONS AND DELIVERABLES

This section provides an overview of the activities, amendments, frameworks, specifications, and other projects the Council expects to initiate, continue, or complete during the year. These activities are organized by Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and topic area. See the Appendix for additional details about the proposed deliverables.

Note: Asterisks () denote contractor-supported projects.*

SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP, BLACK SEA BASS

1. 2025 black sea bass specifications
2. 2025 summer flounder and scup specifications review
3. 2025 black sea bass recreational management measures
4. 2025 summer flounder and scup recreational management measures review
5. Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda (continuing)
6. Recreational Sector Separation and Recreational Catch Accounting Amendment (continuing)
7. Advisory panel fishery performance reports
8. Black sea bass management track assessment support
9. Summer Flounder commercial mesh exemption framework
10. Scup bycatch prediction and avoidance modeling and research*

BLUEFISH

11. 2025 bluefish specifications review
12. 2025 bluefish recreational management measures review
13. Advisory panel fishery performance report

Note: Items 5 and 6 in the previous section will also address bluefish recreational management issues

GOLDEN AND BLUELINE TILEFISH

14. 2025-2027 golden tilefish specifications
15. 2025 blueline tilefish specifications
16. Advisory panel fishery performance reports
17. Update on private recreational tilefish permitting and reporting performance
18. Development of strategies to improve compliance with recreational tilefish permitting and reporting requirements*
19. Blueline tilefish operational assessment support
20. Golden tilefish research track assessment support
21. Golden tilefish management track assessment support
22. South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey expansion into Mid-Atlantic waters*

MACKEREL, SQUID, BUTTERFISH (MSB)

23. 2025-2026 butterfish specifications
24. 2025 Atlantic mackerel, chub mackerel, longfin squid, and *Illex* squid specifications review
25. Advisory panel fishery performance reports
26. Butterfish management track assessment support
27. Longfin squid research track assessment support*
28. Longfin squid biological sampling project*

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- 29. Squid modeling project*

RIVER HERRING AND SHAD (RH/S)

- 30. RH/S run data portal development project*
- 31. RH/S bycatch prediction and avoidance modeling and research*

SPINY DOGFISH

- 32. 2025 spiny dogfish specifications review
- 33. Advisory panel fishery performance report
- 34. Spiny dogfish ageing project*
- 35. Spiny dogfish ageing workshop
- 36. Joint framework action to reduce Atlantic sturgeon bycatch in the monkfish and spiny dogfish fisheries (final action)

SURFLAM AND OCEAN QUAHOG (SCOQ)

- 37. 2025 surfclam and ocean quahog specifications review
- 38. Advisory panel fishery performance reports
- 39. Atlantic surfclam management track assessment support
- 40. SCOQ electronic monitoring project*
- 41. Supplemental surfclam genetics project*
- 42. Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Species Separation Requirements Amendment (continuing)

SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

- 43. 2025-2029 Council research priorities
- 44. Updates to the SSC's Overfishing Limit (OFL) Coefficient of Variation (CV) Guidance Document
- 45. Supplemental port biological sampling*
- 46. Mid-Atlantic fish ageing project*
- 47. Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel (NTAP) coordination and facilitation

ECOSYSTEM AND OCEAN PLANNING/HABITAT

- 48. Joint Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Council offshore wind web page management
- 49. Council comments on habitat and fishery issues related to offshore energy development
- 50. 2024 Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) risk assessment report
- 51. National Fishing Effects Database project*
- 52. Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment (continuing)
- 53. Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment (NRHA) maintenance and integration of products
- 54. Comments on Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) applications for Forage Amendment Ecosystem Component species (e.g., thread herring EFP application review)

GENERAL

- 55. 2025-2029 Strategic Plan
- 56. Reappointment of all advisory panels
- 57. Update on commercial landings of unmanaged species (including consideration of possible landings thresholds for further evaluation for management)

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- 58. Participation on Council Coordination Committee Working Groups and Subcommittees (Habitat, Area-Based Management, Climate Change, Legislative, ESA/MSA Coordination, Equity and Environmental Justice, Council Member Ongoing Development)
 - 59. Participation on marine mammal take reduction teams and protected resources working groups
 - 60. Activities related to Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certifications/audits for Council-managed fisheries (i.e., respond to requests for information)
 - 61. Legislative issue tracking (including development of comments upon request)
 - 62. Review of Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) utility and its use for enforcement (in coordination with NEFMC)

CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND GOVERNANCE

- 63. Program review of Council/GARFO processes for fishery management action development*
- 64. Evaluation of Council committee structure, use, and decision making (in collaboration with other East coast Councils; addresses scenario planning potential action G1)
- 65. Activities related to Inflation Reduction Act funded-projects for climate-ready fisheries (proposal development and project management)

COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

- 66. Ongoing communication activities to support understanding and awareness of the Council and its managed fisheries (development of web resources, email announcements, press releases, YouTube videos, webinars, face-to-face meetings, printed and digital communication materials, etc.)
- 67. Outreach campaigns to increase stakeholder awareness and understanding of Council actions under development and opportunities for participation
- 68. Council website improvements (continuing)

STAFF WRAP-UP ON COMPLETED ACTIONS

The following actions have been, or are expected to be, approved by the Council by the end of 2023 but will require staff work in 2024 to finalize for submission to NMFS:

- 69. Completion/submission of any outstanding specifications packages for 2024

POSSIBLE ADDITIONS

To be considered for addition to the 2024 implementation plan if time and resources allow:

- 70. Action to authorize an experimental Atlantic surfclam fishery in the Great South Channel Habitat Management Area (HMA)
- 71. Development of spatial management options for Atlantic surfclam open water aquaculture in the New York Bight and central Atlantic
- 72. Framework to allow quota transfer between commercial and recreational sectors for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass
- 73. Action to implement "did not fish" reports for commercial, for-hire, and private tilefish permit holders
- 74. Coordination on Monkfish FMP actions initiated by the New England Council
- 75. Framework action to consider modifications to the commercial scup Gear Restricted Areas (GRA) or other measures to help reduce scup discards

STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK & 2024 PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

This section organizes the Council’s planned actions and deliverables within the context of the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan’s five goal areas and 21 objectives. A number of additional ongoing/routine activities are also included. Please note that the Timeframe column describes the *estimated* timeframe for completion of the activity/deliverable: “2024+” indicates that work is expected to extend beyond 2024, “Ongoing” indicates that this item is part of the Council’s routine activities and does not have an expected end point, and “Annually” indicates that this activity occurs on an annual basis). **See the Appendix for additional details about these activities.**



COMMUNICATION

Goal: Engage stakeholders and the public through education and outreach that foster sustained participation in, and awareness of, the Council process.

Objectives and Priority Activities for 2024	Deliverable	Timeframe
1. Use a wide range of communication tools and methods tailored to engage target audiences.		
Continue ongoing and develop new communication/outreach initiatives to support understanding and awareness of the Council and its managed fisheries	66	Ongoing
Continue to develop and refine the Council’s website content and structure to increase usefulness and functionality	68	Ongoing
Coordinate communication efforts with management partners	--	Ongoing
2. Increase stakeholder participation in the Council process.		
Conduct outreach to promote stakeholder awareness of 2024 advisory panel reappointment process	56	2024
Conduct outreach to increase stakeholder awareness and understanding of Council actions under development and opportunities for participation	67	Ongoing
Develop outreach materials to facilitate constructive stakeholder input on proposed management actions (e.g., scoping guides, video presentations, etc.)	--	Ongoing
Schedule, advertise, and conduct meetings and public hearings in a manner that encourages and enables stakeholder attendance and participation	--	Ongoing
Utilize webinars, conference lines, and other technology to expand remote access to and/or participation in Council and advisory body meetings	--	Ongoing
3. Broaden the public’s understanding and awareness of the Council and its managed fisheries.		
Develop fact sheets and outreach materials on current fisheries issues and topics of public interest	--	Ongoing
Conduct outreach to improve awareness of, and compliance with, private recreational tilefish reporting requirements	18	2024+
Collaborate with science partners to develop outreach materials related to stock assessments for Council-managed species	--	Ongoing
Collaborate with partners to promote relevant educational opportunities	--	Ongoing
Ensure that Council documents use plain language.	--	Ongoing



SCIENCE

Goal: Ensure that the Council's management decisions are based on timely and accurate scientific information and methods.

Objectives and Priority Activities for 2024	Deliverable	Timeframe
4. Collaborate with science partners and research institutions to ensure that the Council's science priorities are addressed.		
Support stock assessments for Council-managed species, including staff participation on research track working groups	8, 19, 20, 21, 26, 27, 39	Ongoing
Coordinate and facilitate the Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel	47	Ongoing
Manage and/or support planned and ongoing projects that address Council research priorities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scup bycatch prediction and avoidance modeling and research • Longfin squid biological sampling project • Squid modeling project • RH/S run data portal development project • RH/S bycatch prediction and avoidance modeling and research • Spiny dogfish ageing project and workshop • Supplemental port biological sampling • Mid-Atlantic fish ageing project 	10, 28, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35, 45, 46	Varies. See Appendix for details
5. Support the use of collaborative research to meet the Council's science, data, and information needs.		
Support expansion of South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey expansion into Mid-Atlantic waters	22	2024+
Identify research needs that can be addressed using collaborative approaches with commercial, for-hire, and recreational fishery participants	--	Ongoing
Continue to support development of cooperative research programs that use "vessels of opportunity" from all sectors to address science and research needs	--	Ongoing
6. Promote efficient and accurate data collection, monitoring, and reporting systems.		
Continue to support the Fishery Dependent Data Initiative (GARFO lead)	--	Ongoing
Review performance of private recreational tilefish permitting and reporting	17	Annually
Oversee SCOQ Electronic Monitoring Project	40	2024+
7. Promote the collection of relevant social and economic data and on-the-water observations.		
Collaborate with the Northeast Regional Coordinating Council (NRCC) Stock Assessment Communications Group to facilitate increased stakeholder involvement in (and awareness of) the stock assessment process	--	Ongoing
Engage the Council's SSC to identify existing studies or other sources of social and economic information that could be used to inform management decisions	--	Ongoing
8. Identify and prioritize the Council's research needs.		
Develop 2025-2029 Council research priorities	--	2024



MANAGEMENT

Goal: Develop effective management strategies that provide for sustainable fisheries and healthy marine ecosystems while considering the needs of fishing communities and other resource users.

Objectives and Priority Activities for 2024	Deliverable	Timeframe
9. Strengthen state, federal, and interstate partnerships to promote coordinated, efficient management of fishery resources.		
Manage program review of Council/GARFO processes for fishery management action development	63	2024
Evaluate Council committee structure, use, and decision making (in collaboration with other East coast Councils)	64	2024
Participate on Council Coordination Committee (CCC) Working Groups	58	Ongoing
Continue to use the NRCC process as a forum for Atlantic coast management entities to enhance communication, coordination, and pursue shared objectives	--	Ongoing
10. Adapt management approaches and priorities to address emerging issues and changing fishery conditions.		
Continue development of Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda	5	2024+
Continue development of Recreational Sector Separation and Recreational Catch Accounting Amendment	6	2024+
Complete development of joint framework action to reduce Atlantic sturgeon bycatch in the monkfish and spiny dogfish fisheries	36	2024
Continue development of Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Species Separation Requirements Amendment	42	2024+
Continue development of Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment	52	2024+
Develop proposals and manage projects funded under Inflation Reduction Act funding for climate-ready fisheries	65	2024+
Initiate framework action to consider modifications to the commercial scup Gear Restricted Areas (GRA) or other measures to help reduce scup discards	Error! Reference source not found.	2024+
11. Ensure that management decisions consider social, economic, and community impacts and opportunities.		
Respond to requests for information associated with Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification or audits for MSC-certified fisheries	--	Ongoing
Participate on CCC Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) Working Group (WG)	--	Ongoing

Continued on the following page

Specification-Setting Activities

In addition to the activities associated with specific management objectives, the Council will also develop new or review existing specifications for each of its managed species. These activities are listed below. The associated deliverable is indicated in parentheses.

Develop and approve new specifications:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2025 black sea bass specifications and recreational management measures (1, 3)• 2025-2027 golden tilefish specifications (14)• 2025 blueline tilefish specifications (15)• 2025-2026 butterfish specifications (23)
Review specifications and recommend changes if needed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2025 summer flounder and scup specifications and recreational management measures (2, 4)• 2025 bluefish specifications and recreational management measures (11, 12)• 2025 Atlantic mackerel, chub mackerel, longfin squid, and Illex squid specifications (24)• 2025 spiny dogfish specifications review (32)• 2025 surfclam and ocean quahog specifications review (37)



ECOSYSTEM

Goal: Support the ecologically sustainable utilization of living marine resources in a manner that maintains ecosystem productivity, structure, and function.

Objectives and Priority Activities for 2024	Deliverable	Timeframe
12. Implement the Council's Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) as described in the EAFM Guidance Document.		
Review 2024 EAFM risk assessment report	50	2024
13. Collaborate with management partners to develop ecosystem approaches that are responsive to the impacts of climate change.		
Oversee program review of Council/GARFO processes for fishery management action development	63	2024+
Develop proposals and manage projects funded under Inflation Reduction Act funding for climate-ready fisheries	65	2024+
14. Identify, designate, and protect habitat using an ecosystem approach.		
Continue development of Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment	52	2024+
Manage National Fishing Effects Database project	51	2024+
Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment (maintenance and integration of products)	53	Ongoing
15. Engage in the offshore energy development process to address impacts to Council-managed species and associated habitats.		
Develop comments on habitat and fishery issues related to offshore energy development	49	Ongoing
Manage joint Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Council offshore wind web pages	48	Ongoing
Engage offshore wind developers to support effective communication and outreach with the fishing industry	--	Ongoing
16. Support the maintenance of an adequate forage base to ensure ecosystem productivity, structure, and function.		
Review report on commercial landings of unmanaged species and respond to changes if necessary	57	Annually
Comment on Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) applications for Forage Amendment Ecosystem Component species (e.g., thread herring EFP application review)	54	Ongoing
Consider and account for, to the extent practicable, the impact of Council-managed fisheries on the forage base	--	Ongoing
Consider and account for, to the extent practicable, the role of Council-managed species in the ecosystem, including roles as prey, predator, and food for humans	--	Ongoing

17. Develop management approaches that minimize adverse ecosystem impacts.

Participate on marine mammal take reduction teams and protected resources working groups, and initiate necessary actions in response to protected resource issues	59	Ongoing
Participate on CCC Working Group Addressing Integration of ESA Section 7 with MSA processes	58	Ongoing
Review Mid-Atlantic State of the Ecosystem Report	--	Annually



GOVERNANCE

Goal: Ensure that the Council's practices accurately represent and consider the interests of fisheries, fishing communities, and the public through a transparent and inclusive decision-making process.

Objectives and Priority Activities for 2024	Deliverable	Timeframe
18. Maintain an open, accessible, and clearly defined process.		
Develop 2025-2029 Strategic Plan	55	2024
Review updates to the SSC's Overfishing Limit (OFL) Coefficient of Variation (CV) Guidance Document	44	2024
Provide an update on Council activities and a summary of implementation Plan progress	--	Annually
Provide conference lines or Webinar access to Council and advisory body meetings whenever feasible	--	Ongoing
Review and revise the Council Statement of Organization Processes and Procedures as needed	--	Ongoing
19. Engage management partners to promote effective collaboration and coordination.		
Participate on CCC Working Groups and Subcommittees	58	Ongoing
Track relevant MSA/fisheries legislation and develop comments as requested	61	Ongoing
Evaluate Council committee structure, use, and decision making	--	2024
20. Ensure that stakeholder interests are understood and addressed.		
Facilitate development of advisory panel fishery performance reports	7, 13, 16, 25, 33, 38	Annually
Complete the 3-year reappointment process for all Council Advisory Panels	56	2024
<i>See Objective 2 for additional related activities</i>		
21. Provide training and development opportunities for Council members and staff to enhance organizational performance.		
Support the Council Coordination Committee's Council Member Ongoing Development (CMOD) program	58	Ongoing
Support the ongoing professional development of Council staff	--	Ongoing
Continue to participate in staff-to-staff meetings and collaborate with GARFO, NEFSC, and ASMFC on other initiatives	--	Ongoing

APPENDIX: 2024 PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

This appendix provides additional background information and details about the proposed actions and deliverables included in the *2024 Implementation Plan*. Details in this Appendix are subject to change. Item numbers in the far-left column are associated with the deliverable numbers in the *Proposed Actions and Deliverables* section of the implementation plan.

Action/Deliverable	Staff Lead(s)	Description
1. 2025 black sea bass specifications	Beaty	Results of the 2024 management track assessment will inform 2025 specifications. Measures to be considered include commercial and recreational catch and landings limits and commercial management measures. Specifications will only be set for one year given that an additional management track assessment should be available in 2025 for setting 2026-2027 specifications.
2. 2025 summer flounder and scup specifications review	Dancy, Hart	Summer flounder and scup specifications and recreational management measures were previously set for the 2024-2025 fishing years. The Council will review updated information for both stocks and determine if any changes are needed for 2025.
3. 2025 black sea bass recreational management measures	Beaty	2025 recreational management measures will be set following the process described in the Recreational Harvest Control Rule Framework. Measures will only be set for one year given that an additional management track assessment should be available in 2025 for setting 2026-2027 measures.
4. 2025 summer flounder and scup recreational management measures review	Dancy, Hart	See #2
5. Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda (continuing)	Beaty	The Recreational Harvest Control Rule Framework modified the process for setting recreational management measures for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. The new "Percent Change Approach" will sunset no later than the end of 2025. Through this action, the Council is developing a new process to be implemented in time for use in setting 2026 recreational measures.
6. Recreational Sector Separation and Recreational Catch Accounting Amendment for summer flounder, scup, black sea	Dancy, Hart	This amendment considers (1) options for managing for-hire recreational fisheries separately from other recreational fishing modes and (2) options related to recreational catch accounting, such as private angler reporting and enhanced vessel trip report

Action/Deliverable	Staff Lead(s)	Description
bass, and bluefish (continuing)		requirements for for-hire vessels. The Council and Policy Board initiated this action in October 2020. Limited progress has been made due to prioritization of other actions.
7. Summer flounder, scup, black sea bass advisory panel fishery performance reports	Dancy, Hart, Beaty	The Council's advisory panels develop Fishery Performance Reports (FPR) each year to provide the Council and Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) with an annual description of the factors that influenced fishing effort and catch within each of the Council's fisheries. These reports are intended to summarize fishermen's "on-the-water" perspectives, including information about fishing effort, market trends, and environmental changes, and other factors that may not be fully accounted for in the stock assessment process. To support development of FPRs, Council staff develop a Fishery Information Document (FID) for each species managed under the fishery management plan. The purpose of the FID is to summarize the most recent catch, landings, and effort data.
8. Black sea bass management track assessment support	Beaty	Management track (MT) assessments provide routine, scheduled, updated advice to directly inform management actions. MT assessments are designed to be simpler, quicker, and more efficient than research track assessments. Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) assessment scientists have primary responsibility for planning and carrying out management track assessments. Council staff involvement typically includes attending assessment meetings/calls, tracking assessment progress, and communicating assessment results to advisory bodies.
9. Summer flounder mesh exemption framework	Dancy	This framework adjustment will address several issues related to the summer flounder commercial fishery, specifically: To consider moving the western boundary of the Small-Mesh Exemption Area; to clarify the regulatory definition of a flynet; to clarify the requirements of enrolling in the Small-Mesh Exemption Program; and to ensure meaningful and effective evaluation criteria for the Small-Mesh Exemption Program and the use of the flynet exemption.
10. Scup bycatch prediction and avoidance modeling and research*	Hart, Didden, Kentner	The Council may initiate contract work to examine the predictability of scup bycatch and evaluate alternative approaches to reduce scup

Action/Deliverable	Staff Lead(s)	Description
		discards. Note: SSC provided feedback on possible future analysis – see Sept SSC report.
11. 2025 bluefish specifications review	Cisneros	Bluefish specifications and recreational management measures were previously set for the 2024-2025 fishing years. The Council will review updated information and determine if any changes are needed for 2025.
12. 2025 bluefish recreational management measures review	Cisneros	See #11
13. Bluefish advisory panel fishery performance report	Cisneros	See #7
14. 2025-2027 golden tilefish specifications	Montañez, Hart	Results of the 2024 MT assessment will inform 2025-2027 specifications for golden tilefish.
15. 2025 blueline tilefish specifications (revised from draft list of 2024 deliverables in briefing materials)	Montañez, Hart	Blueline tilefish specifications will only be set for one year because the operational assessment results will not be available until late 2024. The Council will review the assessment results in 2025 when setting 2026-2027 specifications.
16. Golden and blueline tilefish advisory panel fishery performance reports	Montañez, Hart	See #7
17. Update on private recreational tilefish permitting and reporting performance	Montañez, Hart	In August 2020 NOAA Fisheries implemented new permitting and reporting requirements for all recreational vessels targeting or retaining golden or blueline tilefish from Virginia to Maine. The Council will receive an update on numbers of issued permits, landings, reporting systems used, and lessons learned since the requirement was initially implemented.
18. Development of strategies to improve compliance with recreational tilefish permitting and reporting requirements*	Montañez, Hart, Sabo, contract	Council staff will work with a contractor to (1) conduct outreach to increase angler awareness of permitting and reporting requirements, (2) evaluate the recreational tilefish permitting/reporting program as a whole, and (3) develop strategies to increase compliance.
19. Blueline tilefish operational assessment support	Hart	An operational assessment for blueline tilefish through the Southeast Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR) process is expected to start in 2024 and be available for management in 2025. Council staff will participate in the SEDAR process and working group and coordinate Mid-Atlantic/Northeast efforts and support with the NEFSC.
20. Golden tilefish research track assessment support	Montañez	Research track (RT) assessments evaluate new datasets that can either inform or be used in new or existing stock assessment models. These

Action/Deliverable	Staff Lead(s)	Description
		assessments are carried out over longer time frames and with fewer requirements for using the most recent data. The research track is intended to be the opportunity for extensive and comprehensive research and analysis. The Council staff lead for a species typically participates on the assessment working group (WG) which is responsible for carrying out and making decisions about the stock assessment and addressing the assessment terms of reference. The golden tilefish research track assessment will be peer reviewed in the spring of 2024.
21. Golden tilefish management track assessment support		See #8
22. South Atlantic Deepwater Longline (SADL) Survey expansion into Mid-Atlantic waters*	Montañez, Hart	In 2023 the Council began collaborating with the NOAA Fisheries' Southeast and Northeast Fisheries Science Centers and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council to expand the SADL survey north to include areas off Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and New Jersey. The SADL survey currently uses industry fishing vessels to collect information on a variety of deepwater species, such as golden and blueline tilefish, from the Florida Keys to the NC/VA border. The expansion of the survey will allow scientists and managers to monitor potential distribution shifts of deepwater species and collect information on blueline tilefish throughout its range.
23. 2025-2026 butterfish specifications	Didden	Results of the 2024 MT assessment will inform 2025 -2026 specifications for butterfish.
24. 2025 Atlantic mackerel, chub mackerel, longfin squid, and <i>Illex</i> squid specifications review	Didden, Beaty	Multi-year specifications were previously set for Atlantic mackerel (2024-2025), <i>Illex</i> squid (2024-2025), longfin squid (2024-2026), and chub mackerel (2023-2025). The Council will review updated information for these stocks and determine if any changes are needed for 2025.
25. MSB advisory panel fishery performance reports	Didden, Beaty	See #7
26. Butterfish management track assessment support	Didden	See #8
27. Longfin squid research track assessment support*	Didden, contract	See #20 for general description. A RT assessment for longfin squid is scheduled to be peer reviewed in March 2026. The Council has engaged a contractor with expertise in quantitative stock assessment to participate on the assessment workgroup (WG). The

Action/Deliverable	Staff Lead(s)	Description
		contractor will conduct data analyses and develop analytical models in support of the WG efforts. Council staff will also participate on the WG.
28. Longfin squid biological sampling project*	Didden, contract	A variety of data needs have been identified regarding longfin squid aging, growth, and seasonal productivity. In collaboration with the NEFSC, the Council has contracted with A.I.S, INC. to process biological samples from longfin squid collected on commercial fishing vessels. Statoliths will be sent to Spain under a contract to estimate ages. The data collected via this project will be analyzed in this upcoming longfin squid RT assessment.
29. Squid modeling project*	Didden, contracts	The Council is supporting an effort, led by Michael Wilberg and Geneviève Nesslage (University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science), to develop and test length-based assessment models for U.S. east coast squid. The project is primarily a NOAA Fisheries' Stock Assessment Improvement grant but the Council is partially supporting the project and Council staff is participating.
30. RH/S run data portal development project*	Didden, contract	The Council has contracted with Manomet to build a portal for centralizing information on river herring runs. The primary purposes of this platform are to serve as a communications tool to build a greater shared understanding of the status of river herring coast-wide, and to provide managers with an annual view of the status of the stock in between regular stock assessments.
31. RH/S bycatch prediction and avoidance modeling and research*	Didden, contract	During the August 2023 Council meeting, the Council agreed to consider exploration of modeling for shad and river herring bycatch avoidance approaches during 2024 priorities discussions. This work would be carried out by a contractor, building on a recent related paper (Roberts et al 2023).
32. 2025 spiny dogfish specifications review	Didden	Spiny dogfish specifications were previously set for the 2024-2026 fishing years. The Council will review updated information and determine if any changes are needed for 2025.
33. Spiny dogfish advisory panel fishery performance report	Didden	See #7
34. Spiny dogfish ageing project*	Didden, contract	In collaboration with the NEFSC, the Council has contracted with A.I.S, INC. to process spiny dogfish spine samples from several sources.

Action/Deliverable	Staff Lead(s)	Description
35. Spiny dogfish ageing workshop	Didden	Linked to the ageing project, this workshop will bring together individuals familiar with ageing spiny dogfish from several locations – East Coast, West Coast, Europe
36. Joint framework action to reduce Atlantic sturgeon bycatch in the monkfish and spiny dogfish fisheries (final action)	Cisneros, Didden	This action was initiated due to the 2021 Biological Opinion (BiOp) that considered the effects of ten FMPs on ESA listed species. The BiOp requires that sturgeon bycatch be reduced in federal large mesh gillnet fisheries, however it does not prescribe specific measures or a target percentage of bycatch reduction. It is anticipated that the Council will take final action on this framework in 2024.
37. 2025 surfclam and ocean quahog specifications review	Coakley	Atlantic surfclam and ocean quahog specifications were previously set for the 2021-2026 fishing years. The Council will review updated catch and landings information for both stocks and determine if any changes are needed for 2025.
38. Surfclam/quahog advisory panel fishery performance reports	Coakley	See #7
39. Atlantic surfclam management track assessment support	Coakley	See #8
40. Surfclam and quahog electronic monitoring project*	Coakley	This project is an initial test of the ability of machine learning and image analysis to differentiate the species and determine the length of the two primary clam species caught commercially in federal waters in the Northeast Atlantic. This project will fund placement of cameras and image recording equipment onboard the vessel contracted to conduct the NEFSC clam survey. The survey is conducted from, and operates like, a typical commercial clam fishing vessel.
41. Supplemental surfclam genetics project*	Coakley	In 2019 the Council contracted with Cornell researchers to investigate distributions of <i>Spisula solidissima similis</i> and <i>Spisula solidissima solidissima</i> in the nearshore waters of the US Northwest Atlantic. Cancellation of surveys during the pandemic prevented inclusion of recent samples from the continental shelf off Delmarva. This supplemental study will analyze population genomic variation in surfclams collected by the 2022 federal survey, including collections from Long Island to Delmarva.

Action/Deliverable	Staff Lead(s)	Description
42. Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Species Separation Requirements Amendment (continuing)	Coakley, Montanez	As surfclams have shifted toward deeper water in recent years, catches including both surfclams and ocean quahogs have become more common. Current regulations do not allow the two species to be landed on the same trip or in the same tagged cage. The Council is developing an Amendment to consider changes to species separation requirements in these fisheries.
43. 2025-2029 Council research priorities	Muffley	The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that each of the eight regional councils develop a five-year research priorities document. The research priorities developed by the Council should address “fisheries, fisheries interactions, habitat and other areas of research that are necessary for management purposes.” In 2024, the Council will develop and approve a research priorities document for 2025-2029.
44. Updates to the SSC’s Overfishing Limit (OFL) Coefficient of Variation (CV) Guidance Document	Muffley	First developed in 2019, the OFL CV guidance document is intended to provide a clear, consistent, and transparent process in documenting SSC conclusions regarding the scientific uncertainty of the OFL estimate. The process has evolved over the past few years and become more complex as more factors have been included. In 2024, the SSC will work on reviewing and updating the OFL CV guidance document.
45. Supplemental port biological sampling*	Didden	In collaboration with the NEFSC, the Council has contracted with A.I.S, INC. to collect additional lengths from commercial catches as well as samples for later ageing. These data are critical for standard age and/or length-based quantitative assessments.
46. Mid-Atlantic fish ageing project*	Coakley	Aging technicians (2) will process and age samples for a variety of MAFMC species, including any back-logged samples and those acquired through supplemental port biological sampling (see #45 above). These data will support stock assessments and inform the scientific basis for determining of species stock status, biological reference points, and catch limits.
47. Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel (NTAP) coordination and facilitation	Hart	The NTAP is a joint advisory panel of the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils. It is comprised of Council members, as well as fishing industry, academic, and government and non- government fisheries experts who provide advice and direction on

Action/Deliverable	Staff Lead(s)	Description
		the conduct of trawl research. The Mid-Atlantic Council serves as the administrative lead for NTAP.
48. Joint Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Council offshore wind web page management	Beaty, Sabo	The Council maintains a joint offshore wind page in coordination with the New England Council to communicate updates on offshore wind energy development with interested stakeholders.
49. Council comments on habitat and fishery issues related to offshore energy development	Beaty, Coakley	The Council will track offshore energy developments and develop comments as appropriate.
50. 2024 Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) risk assessment report	Muffley	The first EAFM risk assessment was completed in 2017 and has been updated annually since then. The 2024 risk assessment report will reflect the revisions and updates identified by the Council and EOP Committee as part of the comprehensive review completed in 2023 and include the most up-to-date information and indicators developed in the 2024 Mid-Atlantic State of the Ecosystem report.
51. National Fishing Effects Database project*	Coakley, Kentner	The Mid-Atlantic Council will work with the New England Council and NOAA Fisheries to develop a national fishing effects database to support fishery management councils essential fish habitat (EFH) reviews as well as fishing effects consultations. The National Fishing Effects Database will be online, searchable, and publicly accessible.
52. Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment (continuing)	Coakley, Kentner	This action is an opportunity to utilize the best available fish habitat science to improve EFH designations and support the Council's fish habitat conservation efforts while supporting the EFH consultation process. The consultation process plays an important role in addressing the impacts of non-fishing projects (such as wind energy projects) on fish habitat. This action will concurrently conduct the 5-year EFH review required under the Magnuson Stevens Act while amending fishery management plans for the Council, as needed.
53. Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment (NRHA) maintenance and integration of products	Kentner, Coakley	From 2019 to 2022 the Council was engaged in the Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment – a collaborative effort to describe and characterize estuarine, coastal, and offshore fish habitat distribution, abundance, and quality in the Northeast. Core work products were completed in mid-2022 with the launch of the NRHA data explorer. Council staff continue to maintain and improve these products.

Action/Deliverable	Staff Lead(s)	Description
54. Comments on Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) applications for Forage Amendment Ecosystem Component Species (e.g., thread herring EFP application review)	Beaty	Lund's Fisheries, Inc., H&L Axelsson, Inc., and Axelsson Seiner, Inc. submitted an EFP application for an experimental purse seine thread herring fishery. Thread herring are listed as an ecosystem component species under the Council's Unmanaged Forage Omnibus Amendment. The EOP AP, EOP Committee, SSC, and Council discussed this application in 2021 and 2022. The applicants are in the process of completing additional analyses at the request of GARFO. If GARFO decides to move forward with this application and publish a Federal Register notice with an associated public comment period, the Council will consider developing and submitting comments.
55. 2025-2029 Strategic Plan	Sabo	The Council's strategic plan defines the Council's vision, mission, and goals and provides a framework for development of specific activities and priorities each year. The current strategic plan will expire at the end of 2024. In 2024 the Council will develop a new 5-year strategic plan for the years 2025 through 2029.
56. Reappointment of all advisory panels	Sabo	Council advisory panel (AP) members serve 3-year terms. Current AP members' terms will end on June 30, 2024. Advisors do not have term limits, but they must reapply to be considered for an additional term. The Council will begin the reappointment process in early spring 2024.
57. Update on commercial landings of unmanaged species (including consideration of possible landings thresholds for further evaluation for management)	Beaty	The Council will review an annual update on landings of unmanaged species compiled by GARFO. The intent is to look for signs of emerging unmanaged commercial fisheries. The EOP Committee will consider defining threshold levels of landings that trigger further consideration for potential management action.
58. Participation on Council Coordination Committee (CCC) Working Groups and Subcommittees	Staff	Staff currently participate on the CCC's Habitat Workgroup, Area-Based Management Subcommittee, Legislative Workgroup, ESA/MSA Coordination Workgroup, Climate Change Workgroup, and Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) Workgroup.
59. Participation on marine mammal take reduction teams and protected resources working groups	Cisneros	Council staff currently participate on several marine mammal take reduction teams (TRT), including the Atlantic Large Whale TRT (ALWTRT), Harbor Porpoise TRT, and Pelagic Longline TRT.

Action/Deliverable	Staff Lead(s)	Description
60. Activities related to Marine Stewardship Council certifications/audits for Council-managed fisheries (i.e., respond to requests for information)	Staff	The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is an independent, third-party fishery certification program. Council staff are periodically asked to provide information as part of the certification process or for audits of currently-certified fisheries.
61. Legislative issue tracking (including development of comments upon request)	Sabo	The Council will track relevant fisheries/ocean legislation and provide comments if invited to do so by a member of Congress. NOAA General Counsel has instructed the RFMCs that (1) there must be a documented request from Congress, and (2) comments should be limited to technical or factual presentation directly related to performance of the grant.
62. Review of Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) utility and its use for enforcement (in coordination with NEFMC)	TBD	The Council will coordinate with NEFMC to review the utility of VMS for enforcement purposes.
63. Program review of Council/GARFO processes for fishery management action development*	Coakley/Muffley/Dancy	In August 2023 the Council solicited proposals for a contractor to conduct a program review of the MAFMC and GARFO process of developing federal fisheries management regulations from early action considerations up to initiation of the rulemaking stage. It is anticipated that work will be carried out between November 2023 and July 2024. See the RFP for complete details. This deliverable addresses scenario planning potential action G4. See page 11 of the Potential Action Menu for details.
64. Evaluation of Council committee structure, use, and decision making (in collaboration with other East coast Councils)	Dancy	This deliverable addresses scenario planning potential action G1. See pages 7-8 of the Potential Action Menu for details.
65. Activities related to Inflation Reduction Act funded-projects for climate-ready fisheries (proposal development and project management)	Staff	The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) includes an allotment of \$20 million to the eight regional fishery Councils to support fishery management and governance actions related to climate ready fisheries and climate related fisheries management in support of underserved communities. Preliminary plans indicate that \$3 million will be distributed to the 8 Councils equally (each Council receiving \$375,000), by the end of 2023. Councils will be required to submit a grant proposal to detail the budget and activities supported by the funding. The remaining \$17 million will be distributed to the Councils through a competitive grant process (exact process and timing are TBD). In the

Action/Deliverable	Staff Lead(s)	Description
		context of the 2024 Implementation Plan, this task encompasses all work associated with the development of project proposals, managing funded projects, and addressing any other funding requirements.
66. Ongoing communication activities to support understanding and awareness of the Council and its managed fisheries	Sabo	A variety of communication platforms and tools are used to engage stakeholders, including the Council website, interested-parties email lists, press releases, YouTube recordings, webinars, face-to-face meetings, and a variety of printed and digital communication materials.
67. Outreach campaigns to increase stakeholder awareness and understanding of Council actions under development and opportunities for participation	Sabo	Outreach is conducted during the development of each Council action to ensure that interested and affected stakeholders are informed about potential management changes and aware of comment opportunities. Communication approaches and outreach products are often tailored to meet the needs of the target audience(s).
68. Council website improvements (continuing)	Sabo	Staff will continue efforts to streamline Council web pages, develop new content, and increase usability of the Council website.
69. Completion/submission of any outstanding specifications packages for 2024	Staff	