



Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish (MSB) Committee and Advisory Panel (AP) Meeting Summary

August 6, 2021 Webinar

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Committee met on August 6, 2021 from 9am to 1pm. The meeting's purpose was to provide recommendations regarding Atlantic mackerel, potentially including: 2021/22 emergency action, future specifications, and/or rebuilding plan modifications and options.

MSB Committee Attendees: Peter Hughes (Chair), Sara Winslow (Vice-chair), Michelle Duval, Adam Nowalsky, Dan Farnham, Emily Gilbert, Eric Reid, Ellen Bolen, and Joe Cimino.

MSB AP Attendees: Jeff Kaelin, Dan Farnham Jr, Katie Almeida, Gerry O' Neill, Meghan Lapp, Greg DiDomenico, and Pam Lyons Gromen.

Other Attendees: Michael Luisi (Council Chair) Jason Didden, Mary Beth Tooley, Doug Christel, Alissa Wilson, Aly Pitts, David Stormer, Zoe Goozner, James Fletcher, Deirdre Boelke, and John Almeida.

Jason Didden presented summaries of the recent mackerel assessment, current management, the AP Fishery Performance Report, and the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommendations. Following a question and answer session after each summary, the Committee and AP discussed potential emergency action and mackerel rebuilding. Motions and key discussion points for each are below.

Emergency Action

I move that the Committee recommend to the Council that the Council move forward with Option 2 for Atlantic Mackerel emergency action as presented.

Reid/Farnham: (7-0-1) Motion Passes

Key Discussion points:

-Reid's rationale was that mackerel fishery is under stress, but was also concerned that this action will delay the *Illlex* Amendment (and that fishery is also exhibiting stress).

-Discussion noted that with low herring quotas/research set aside, it is unlikely that a more substantial fall mackerel fishery occurs than did in 2018-2019 (i.e. 300-600 metric tons).

-GARFO encouraged Council recommendations to focus on what is best for the fishery rather than various implementation challenges.

-Adding recreational measures into an emergency action would delay implementation since recreational measures have not been previously contemplated.

-GARFO votes no on any emergency action to preserve the Secretary's flexibility.

-AP input supported Option 2 as something that would provide something for participants but were concerned about slowing down progress on the *Illex* permit action. [GARFO noted they would try to move all actions as fast as possible, but an emergency action generally takes precedence and they have fixed resources.]

-Public comment supported Option 2 given the dominant impact of recruitment.

Atlantic Mackerel Rebuilding

1. I move that the Committee recommend to the Council that the Council request analysis/alternatives for 50%/60%/75% rebuilding probabilities associated with a 10-year rebuilding timeline.

Duval/Reid: Motion passes by consent without opposition.

Key Discussion points:

-Duval's rationale was that some options above the standard median 50% probability appear warranted.

2. I move that the Committee recommend to the Council that the Council request the SSC perform additional analyses regarding recruitment assumptions and reference points to inform rebuilding decisions.

Reid/Duval: Motion passes by consent without opposition.

Note: Staff's interpretation of this is that the SSC would be asked whether the best available science supports a particular recruitment assumption as most probable over the course of rebuilding, and if that can't be determined, to provide information on the relative risk of using different recruitment assumptions. In terms of reference points, the question would be at what point would a regime change be apparent to trigger a revision of reference points.

3. I move that the Committee recommend to the Council that the Council consider and analyze an alternative that would mimic the butterfish regulations for the mackerel fishery (3-inch + minimum mesh required to retain more than 5,000 pounds).

Reid/Farnham: (6-0-0) Motion Passes

Key Discussion points:

- Reid Rationale: Allow some smaller fish to escape to build mackerel recruit numbers over time.
- Staff would add typical specification measures that apply to rebuilding quotas based on standard practices.

4. I move that the Committee recommend to the Council that the Council include an alternative and analysis of a 10-inch Atlantic mackerel minimum size limit for the recreational fishery (in addition to measures described in staff memo).

Reid/Farnham: Motion passes by consent without opposition.

Key Discussion points:

- Reid Rationale: Similar to Canada's 26.8 cm limit which is based on maturity data.
- Would be in addition to potential federal waters closure.
- Homework: Could same be done with chub mackerel given similar appearance?
- Ask states for feedback on potential state actions (pending a request to consider something).
Staff note: ME, NH, MA (the majority of Atl. mackerel catch) indicated they could potentially do measures in roughly a 3-4 month time range depending on other scheduling and requested being included in any relevant discussions.

5. River Herring and Shad (RH/S) Cap

I move that the Committee recommend to the Council that the Council include an alternative and analysis of using no less than 129 MT for the RH/S cap throughout the rebuilding timeline.

Reid/Farnham: 7-0-0

Key Discussion points:

- Reid's rationale was that at cap amounts lower than 129 MT, the cap would be unrealistic, unmonitorable, and ineffective.
- Current scaling process (up or down) would also be included as an option.
- AP members noted the likely lower scale of RH/S catches at lower mackerel/herring quotas, that the New England Council maintained RH/S caps when herring quotas were reduced, and that the Mid Atlantic's cap to date has been designed as an incentive to avoid RH/S at any quota level.