



## 2017 Planned Council Meeting Topics

April 11-13, 2017 – Icona Golden Inn, Avalon, NJ

- Chub mackerel amendment - *Review scoping plan and amendment development*
- ~~Black sea bass accountability measures framework – Framework meeting 2, final action (moved to August)~~
- Golden tilefish 2018-2020 specifications – *Adopt*
- Blueline tilefish 2018-2020 specifications – *Adopt*
- Industry-Funded Monitoring Omnibus Amendment – *Review New England action*
- EAFM risk assessment – *Review risk matrix*

May 10, 2017 – Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Spring Meeting, The Westin Alexandria, Alexandria, VA

- Joint meeting of the Council and the Commission’s Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board
  - Scup commercial quota period framework and addendum – *Framework meeting 2, final action*
  - Summer flounder amendment – *Review and approve range of alternatives for commercial fishery and FMP goals and objectives*
  - Wave 1 experimental black sea bass fishery – *review white paper outlining a potential recreational Wave 1 fishery in 2018*

June 6-8, 2017 – The Main, Norfolk, VA

- Atlantic mackerel 2018 specifications - *Review*
- Squids and butterfish 2018-2020 specifications - *Adopt*
- Squid amendment – *Final action*
- Butterfish, river herring, and shad caps – *Review performance*
- River herring and shad – *Progress update*
- Atlantic surfclam and ocean quahog 2018-2020 specifications – *Adopt*
- Atlantic surfclam and ocean quahog excessive shares amendment – *Review scoping plan*
- Risk policy framework – *Framework meeting 1*
- EAFM risk assessment – *Review and approve risk analysis*

August 8-10, 2017 – Courtyard Marriott, Philadelphia, PA

- ~~Swearing in of new and reappointed Council members (moved to October)~~
- Election of Officers
- Summer flounder 2018 specifications - *Review*
- Scup 2018 specifications - *Review*
- Bluefish 2018 specifications - *Review*

- Summer flounder amendment – *Approve public hearing document and draft EIS for commercial alternatives and FMP goals and objectives*
- ~~Chub mackerel amendment – Review scoping comments and AP and Committee input (moved to December)~~
- Black sea bass amendment – *Initiate*
- Risk policy framework – *Framework meeting 2 (review)*
- Black sea bass accountability measures framework (inclusion of summer flounder and scup) – Framework meeting 2, final action
- Black sea bass specifications (*review*)

October 10-12, 2017 – Hyatt Long Island East End, Riverhead, NY

- Spiny dogfish 2018 specifications - *Review*
- ~~Chub mackerel amendment – Approve range of alternatives for public hearings, adopt ABC (postponed)~~
- Golden tilefish Individual Fishing Quota program review – *Review*
- Bluefish amendment - *Initiate*
- EAFM risk assessment – Approve possible items for inclusion in 2018 Implementation Plan
- Development of 2019-2023 strategic plan – *Initiate*
- Swearing-in of new and reappointed Council members

December 11-14, 2017 – Westin Annapolis, Annapolis, MD

- 2018 recreational management measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass - *Adopt*
- 2018 implementation plan - *Review and approve*
- Risk policy framework – *Final action*
- Chub mackerel amendment – *review scoping comments and recommendations from FMAT, AP, and Committee*

**Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council**

800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901  
Phone: 302-674-2331 | FAX: 302-674-5399 | [www.mafmc.org](http://www.mafmc.org)  
Michael P. Luisi, Chairman | G. Warren Elliott, Vice Chairman  
Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director

## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** March 20, 2017  
**To:** Chris Moore, Executive Director  
**From:** Brandon Muffley, Staff  
**Subject:** Update – Commercial Black Sea Bass AM Framework

In February, the Council held the first framework meeting to discuss modifying the Accountability Measures (AMs) in the commercial black sea bass fishery. This framework was initiated by the Council in December 2016 in response to the implementation of an AM in 2017. This AM resulted from an overage of the 2015 commercial ACL, and specifically discards, which reduced the 2017 commercial quota by 31 percent. In the Federal Register in which the AM for 2017 was implemented, NMFS indicated the AM would be reevaluated based on any new information available regarding the stock and the 2015 catch as a result of the benchmark stock assessment. The Monitoring Committee (MC) recommended not applying the commercial AM triggered in 2017 for 2015 overages and provided a detailed justification for this recommendation. During the discussion at the February meeting, the Council, while not formally voting, supported the MC recommendation and requested NMFS modify the existing AM measures by not applying them to the 2017 commercial specifications.

Since the meeting, Council staff has been in continual contact with GARFO regarding their reevaluation of the AM and the timing of when a Federal Register publication addressing the AM may be published. Recent discussions with GARFO indicate there is a high probability the commercial black sea bass AM will be addressed given the new information regarding the sea bass stock and the justification provided by the MC. This reevaluation and decision regarding the AM will be published in the Federal Register as part of a mid-year adjustment to the 2017 sea bass specifications and establishment of 2018 specifications. It is anticipated this publication will occur sometime this spring (i.e. April 2017).

Given this information, the second framework meeting originally scheduled for the April 2017 Council meeting, will be pushed back until later in 2017 – either the June or August meeting. The Council also indicated an interest in expanding the application of the framework to also include summer flounder and scup. However, there was concern about the timing and implications if there was a delay in the implementation of the framework by including the other species and when a determination would be made by NMFS to implement the AM for the 2017 commercial black sea bass fishery. This delay will allow time for staff to conduct additional analyses and evaluate the alternatives and impacts for all three species that would now be included in this framework action.



## Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

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Phone: 302-674-2331 | FAX: 302-674-5399 | [www.mafmc.org](http://www.mafmc.org)  
Michael P. Luisi, Chairman | G. Warren Elliott, Vice Chairman  
Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director

March 24, 2017

Mr. Tom Nies  
New England Fishery Management Council  
50 Water Street, Mill 2  
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear Tom:

In June of last year, the New England Fishery Management Council adopted a motion, and sent a letter to the GARFO Regional Administrator, requesting joint management of summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass by the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils. In response to the letter, the Mid-Atlantic Council proposed an alternative that was later rejected by the New England Council. Since then, we have had several conversations at the NRCC and respective Council meetings on the topic.

At our recent February Council meeting, the Council discussed the issue again and agreed by consensus that two additional New England Council members should be added to our Demersal Committee in lieu of joint management. They based their decision on the following:

- The Mid has 2 seats and represent 15% of the membership on the New England Groundfish Committee (2/13)
- The Mid has 2 seats and represent 18% of the membership on New England Scallop Committee (2/11)
- However, New England has 1 seat and represents 6% of the membership of the Demersal Committee's voting members (1/17).
- As such, adding 2 voting members (for a total of 3) from New England to our Demersal Committee increases their representation to 16% of the membership of the Demersal Committee's voting members which is in line with our participation on the groundfish and scallop committees.

Please discuss this with your Council at your earliest convenience to determine if they agree with this approach. We expect to convene the Demersal Committee more frequently over the coming year as we continue development of our Summer Flounder amendment and would like to have the full committee formed as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

cc: M. Luisi, W. Elliott, J. Bullard, K. Dancy



# ***Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission***

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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*ASMFC Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
February 3, 2017

PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger  
703.842.0740

### **ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board Approves Regional Management for 2017 Recreational Summer Flounder Fisheries**

Alexandria, VA –The Commission’s Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved Addendum XXVIII to the Summer Flounder and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan, maintaining regional management for the 2017 recreational summer flounder fishery. Specifically, the Addendum requires a one-inch increase in size limit and reduced possession limits to stay within the 2017 recreational harvest limit (RHL). These measures are broadly applied across all states to reduce harvest and provide for more coastwide consistency in regulations. The summer flounder regions, which are continued from 2016, are: Massachusetts; Rhode Island; Connecticut through New York; New Jersey; Delaware through Virginia; and North Carolina.

In August 2016, the Board and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council approved an approximate 30% reduction in catch limits for both the commercial and recreational fisheries in response to the 2016 stock assessment update, which indicated the resource is experiencing overfishing but is not overfished. In order to not exceed the reduced 2017 RHL, a 41% reduction relative to the 2016 preliminary harvest estimates is needed. To achieve the reduction, the Addendum implements a one-inch increase in size limit from 2016 measures for all regions with the exception of North Carolina. Additionally, all regions are required to constrain their possession limits to 4 fish or less and maintain 2016 season lengths. The approved management program also allows for the continuation of the Delaware Bay specific management measures for New Jersey anglers west of the COLREGS line. In 2016, New Jersey had separate management measures for anglers east and west of the Delaware Bay COLREGs line.

“The Board’s decision took into account the findings of the 2015 and 2016 stock assessment updates, both of which found summer flounder abundance is declining and is experiencing overfishing; the need to take harvest reductions to end overfishing immediately through our joint management process with the Mid-Atlantic Council and as prescribed by the Magnuson-Stevens Act; and with the recognition that the confidence intervals around the harvest estimates limit our ability to precisely project the impacts of

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The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species.

1050 N. Highland Street – Suite 200 A-N – Arlington, VA 22201  
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differing management measures,” stated Mike Luisi, Board Chair. “By our action, we struck a balance between the need to reduce harvest, while taking into account the socioeconomic impacts to our stakeholders. “

In its report to the Board, the Technical Committee (TC) supported the 2013 summer flounder benchmark stock assessment and its updates through 2016 as the best available science. Further, it agreed with the findings of the recent stock assessments, indicating the resource is declining in abundance and that associated management changes are needed to address this issue; in this case, a reduction in the RHL. The TC recommended uniform adjustments from 2016 management measures (as were approved in the Addendum) to reduce harvest and fishing mortality in an equitable manner.

Once the states have selected final management measures, the Commission will submit a letter to NOAA Fisheries detailing how the measures will constrain fishing to the 2017 RHL. The Commission annually submits this letter as part of the conservation equivalency process that allows for federal coastwide management measures to be waived and for state management measures to be applied in both state and federal waters.

Addendum XXVIII will be available on the Commission website, [www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org). For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [krootes-murdy@asmfc.org](mailto:krootes-murdy@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

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# Public Comment

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## Public Comment on Specific Issues

Public comments are solicited during the development of management actions. NMFS' Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office lists public notices with comment opportunities relevant to Mid-Atlantic and New England Fisheries. [Click here](#) for a listing of current public comment opportunities.

## Council Meeting Comments

The Council accepts written comments before, and oral comments during, Council meetings. General testimony on issues not related to specific agenda items is taken at all Council meetings during the "Continuing and New Business" portion of the agenda.

**Briefing Book Deadline:** Comments submitted by two Wednesdays before each Council meeting will be included in the Council Meeting briefing book.

**Supplemental Comment Deadline:** Comments received after the briefing book deadline but by 5:00 pm on the Thursday before the start of the Council meeting will be compiled and posted to the website as supplemental materials.

**Late Comments:** Individuals who wish to submit comments after the supplemental comment deadline must use the online comment form. Comments will be automatically available for viewing in a spreadsheet linked from the Council meeting page. A link to the online comment form will be provided in the section below and on the individual meeting pages once the supplemental comment deadline has passed.

### Council Meeting Public Comment Deadlines

*April 2017 Council Meeting: April 11-13, 2017 (Avalon, New Jersey)*

- **Briefing Book Deadline:** Wednesday, March 29, 2017, 11:59 p.m.
- **Supplemental Comment Deadline:** Thursday, April 6, 2017, 5:00 p.m.
- **Online Comment Form:** This link will be posted on April 6, after the supplemental comment deadline has passed.

### Stay Informed

[Subscribe to the Council's email list](#)

[Sign up for the NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Office email list](#)

[Sign up for daily Federal Register updates](#) - Council-relevant notices are listed under "National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration"

### Submit Comments

#### Mail

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
Suite 201, 800 North State St.  
Dover, DE 19901

#### Email

Email comments may be sent to the Executive Director, Dr. Chris Moore at [cmoore@mafmc.org](mailto:cmoore@mafmc.org)

#### Phone/Fax

Phone: (302) 674-2331  
Toll Free: (877) 446-2362  
Fax: (302) 674-5399



# MID-ATLANTIC

## FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

### PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 3, 2017

PRESS CONTACT: Mary Sabo  
(302) 518-1143

#### **Mid-Atlantic Council to Hold Public Hearings for Squid Amendment**

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council will hold nine public hearings in April and May 2017 to solicit public input on the Squid Amendment to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan. The Council is also soliciting written comments on the amendment through 11:59 pm on **May 18, 2017**.

The amendment considers measures to reduce latent longfin and *Illex* squid permits. Currently, a relatively small portion of vessels with limited access (“moratorium”) squid permits account for the majority of landings in most years. The Council is concerned that activation of latent permits in the squid fisheries could lead to excessive fishing effort, potentially resulting in shortened seasons and increased catch of non-target species.

The amendment also considers measures to modify the management of longfin squid during Trimester 2 (May-August). The Council is considering this action because there is concern that the productivity of the longfin squid stock may be negatively impacted if excessive fishing in Trimester 2 does not allow sufficient spawning and/or successful egg hatching from egg mops.

#### ***Hearing Schedule***

1. **April 24, 2017, 5:00 – 7:00 PM:** The Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce, 12320 Ocean Gateway, Ocean City, MD 21842, 410-213-0144.
2. **April 25, 2017, 5:00-7:00 PM:** Holiday Inn by the Bay, 88 Spring St., Portland, ME 04101, 207-775-2311.
3. **April 26, 2017, 5:00-7:00 PM:** Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, Annisquam River Marine Fisheries Station, 30 Emerson Ave, Gloucester, MA 01930, 978-282-0308.
4. **May 2, 2017, 5:00-7:00 PM:** Congress Hall, 200 Congress Place, Cape May, NJ 08204, 609-884-8421.
5. **May 3, 2017, 5:00-7:00 PM:** DoubleTree by Hilton Tinton Falls, 700 Hope Road, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724, 732-544-9300.
6. **May 4, 2017, 6:00-8:00 PM:** Webinar, <http://mafmc.adobeconnect.com/squid2017/> 800-832-0736, Rm: \*7833942#. A listening station will be available at Virginia Marine Resources Commission, 2600 Washington Avenue, 3rd Floor, Newport News, VA 23607, (757) 247– 2200.
7. **May 8, 2017, 5:00-8:00 PM:** University of Rhode Island, Corless Auditorium, Watkins Building, 218 Ferry Rd., Narragansett, RI 041-874-6222.
8. **May 9, 2017, 4:30 – 7:00 PM:** Doubletree by Hilton Cape Cod – Hyannis, 287 Iyannough Rd., Hyannis, MA 02601, 508-771-1700.
9. **May 11, 2017, 5:00-7:00 PM:** Hyatt Place Long Island/East End, 431 East Main St., Riverhead, NY 11901, 631-208-0002.



### ***Written Comments***

Written comments may be sent through mail, email, fax, or online through 11:59 pm on Thursday, May 18, 2017.

- **Mail** to Dr. Chris Moore, Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE, 19901 (please write “Squid Amendment Comments” on the outside of the envelope.)
- **Fax** to Dr. Chris Moore, Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council at 302-674-5399 (please include “Squid Amendment Comments” in the subject line.)
- **Email** to [squid@mafmc.org](mailto:squid@mafmc.org)
- **Online** at <http://www.mafmc.org/comments/squid-amendment-public-comments>

Additional information and relevant background documents are available on the Council’s website at <http://www.mafmc.org/actions/squid-capacity-amendment>. The public hearing document will be posted there by April 18, 2017.

Please direct any questions about the amendment to Jason Didden ([jdidden@mafmc.org](mailto:jdidden@mafmc.org), 302-526-5254).

**Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council**  
**Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Fishery Management Plan Goals and Objectives**

**Project Overview and Timeline**

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The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) is initiating a process to develop revised goals and objectives for the Surfclam and Ocean Quahog (SCOQ) Fishery Management Plan (FMP). This document provides a brief overview of the process and timeline for this initiative.

**Background**

The purpose of revisiting goals and objectives for the SCOQ FMP is to support the Council's 2014-2018 Strategic Plan and 2017 Implementation Plan.

- *Strategy 11.2: Review and update FMP objectives as appropriate to ensure that they remain specific, relevant, and measurable. (2014-2018 Strategic Plan)*
- *Review and revise surfclam and ocean quahog FMP goals and objectives (2017 Implementation Plan)*

FMP goals and objectives are a way to communicate the Council's high-level values and priorities for managing the SCOQ fishery. This initiative will allow the Council to revisit and "refresh" FMP goals and objectives to ensure that they are consistent with today's fishery and management context.

The Council will undertake a discussion of revised goals and objectives in conjunction with the Excessive Shares Amendment. **The reason for combining this initiative with the Excessive Shares Amendment is to take advantage of efficiencies in timing,** including Council discussions planned for June and October 2017 and a public scoping process planned for July 2017.

**Current FMP objectives**

The current SCOQ FMP objectives were adopted in 1988 through Amendment 8, which established an Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) system for the SCOQ fisheries.

1. Conserve and rebuild Atlantic surf clam and ocean quahog resources by stabilizing annual harvest rates throughout the management unit in a way that minimizes short term economic dislocations.

2. Simplify to the maximum extent the regulatory requirements of clam and quahog management to minimize the government and private cost of administering and complying with regulatory, reporting, enforcement, and research requirements of clam and quahog management.
3. Provide the opportunity for industry to operate efficiently, consistent with the conservation of clam and quahog resources, which will bring harvesting capacity in balance with processing and biological capacity and allow industry participants to achieve economic efficiency including efficient utilization of capital resources by the industry.
4. Provide a management regime and regulatory framework which is flexible and adaptive to unanticipated short term events or circumstances and consistent with overall plan objectives and long term industry planning and investment needs.

### **Project timeline and approach**

The Council has enlisted the services of the Fisheries Leadership & Sustainability Forum (Fisheries Forum), which provides policy neutral support to federal fishery managers. Fisheries Forum staff will coordinate with Council staff and the SCOQ Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) to help support the Council's consideration of revised SCOQ FMP goals and objectives, culminating in a short workshop at the October 2017 Council meeting. This work is intended to support the Council's process by providing additional focus and a starting point for Council discussion and public input.

1. Initial information gathering (March – July 2017)  
Fisheries Forum staff will conduct a series of planning conversations with members of the Council's SCOQ Committee, members of the SCOQ Advisory Panel, and additional state agency representatives from states involved in the fishery. The purpose of these conversations is to gather initial feedback on the potential content and structure of revised FMP goals and objectives in order to help focus and frame this issue.
2. Scoping meetings (July 2017)  
SCOQ industry stakeholders and the public will also have the opportunity to provide the Council with feedback on revised goals and objectives, in conjunction with scoping meeting scheduled for this summer. (Dates and locations to be announced.)
3. Synthesis and FMAT recommendations (August – September 2017)  
Fisheries Forum staff will synthesize the information gathered in (1) and (2) in the form of a short discussion document. The Council's FMAT will draw on this document to develop a set of "strawman" goals and objectives as a starting

point for the Council's discussion in October. The FMAT's recommendation will be incorporated into a final synthesis document that will be provided as briefing material for the October 2017 meeting.

4. Workshop (October 2017)

The Council will hold a short (approximately half day) workshop at the October 2017 Council meeting, October 10-12 in Riverhead, NY. At this meeting the Council will review and discuss the FMAT's recommendation, and determine what steps are appropriate to take at that time (e.g., develop revised goals and objectives, request additional clarification or analysis by the FMAT, etc.). If and when the Council approves revised goals and objectives for further consideration, there will be additional opportunities for public input as part of the amendment process.

**Contact information**

For questions or additional information about this process please contact:

Caitlin Hamer, Policy Analyst  
Fisheries Leadership & Sustainability Forum  
[caitlin.hamer@duke.edu](mailto:caitlin.hamer@duke.edu) / (978) 239-6434

Dr. José Montañez, Fishery Management Specialist  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
[jmontanez@mafmc.org](mailto:jmontanez@mafmc.org) / (302) 526-5258

Jessica Coakley, Fishery Management Specialist  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
[jcoakley@mafmc.org](mailto:jcoakley@mafmc.org) / (302) 526-5252



# MID-ATLANTIC

FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

## PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
March 22, 2017

PRESS CONTACT: Mary Sabo  
(302) 518-1143

### **Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council to Offer Training on Electronic Vessel Trip Reports for the For-Hire Community**

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) is hosting two workshops in late April to help the for-hire community prepare for submitting Vessel Trip Reports (VTRs) electronically. The Council approved a measure last year that will phase out the current paper-based reports over the coming year. For-hire vessel operators/owners who must report VTRs for species managed by the Mid-Atlantic Council will need to report using their mobile device or personal computer in order to be in compliance. Such options are already available on a voluntary basis.

While all options for electronic reporting will be briefly discussed, the workshops will focus on hands-on training for the *eTrips/mobile* and *eTrips/PC* system, a free program developed by the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP). Instruction and guidance will be led by Rick Bellavance, Owner/Operator of Priority Fishing Charters in Point Judith, Rhode Island, and ACCSP staff.

#### **When:**

**April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 pm** at the Hilton Mystic Hotel 20 Coogan Blvd., Mystic CT 06355. Phone: (860) 572-0731.

**April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.** at the Doubletree by Hilton Baltimore-BWI Airport, 890 Elkridge Landing Rd, Linthicum Heights, MD 21090. Phone: (410) 859-8400.

**Participation is limited to 30 individuals per workshop!**

**Registration:** To register for one of the workshops, visit <http://www.mafmc.org/forms/evtr-workshop-registration>.

**What to Bring:** It would be extremely helpful to bring an electronic tablet or laptop capable of connecting to the internet via W-Fi. For the mobile-based version, participants will need either a Google account (for Android systems) or an iTunes account (for Apple systems) to download the *eTrips/mobile* app. This will allow you to work along with the instructors and be set up and ready to begin electronic reporting once you leave the workshop.

Please direct any questions to workshop coordinator Andrew Loftus ([aloftus@andrewloftus.com](mailto:aloftus@andrewloftus.com); 410-295-5997).



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
GREATER ATLANTIC REGIONAL FISHERIES OFFICE  
55 Great Republic Drive  
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

MAR - 2 2017

Christopher Moore, Ph. D.  
Executive Director  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
800 North State Street, Suite 201  
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Chris:

Thank you for your letter regarding the 2017 windowpane flounder accountability measure (AM). We have considered a number of approaches to reduce or eliminate the impact of the southern windowpane AM on Mid-Atlantic fishermen. In the short term, there are limited options that would allow us to eliminate or modify the AM.

Because the 2015 annual catch limit (ACL) was exceeded by more than 20 percent, the large AM areas for trawl vessels will be in effect in fishing year 2017. There are several measures implemented in Framework 52 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan that allow for flexibility in the windowpane AM; however these measures only apply to groundfish vessels. Another Council action would be required to extend these exemptions to non-groundfish vessels. The New England Council limited the scope of the AM flexibilities to groundfish vessels because previously the AM had only been triggered for groundfish vessels. The measures available to the groundfish fishery are summarized below.

The size of the windowpane AM area can be reduced if the stock is rebuilt and the biomass criterion is greater than the most recent catch. The biomass criterion is defined as the most recent 3-year average of catch per tow from the fall surveys multiplied by 75 percent of  $F_{MSY}$  (fishing mortality at maximum sustainable yield). The fall survey is used exclusively for this calculation and the stock assessment because the spring survey is not considered an appropriate index for the stock. Because southern windowpane flounder is rebuilt, we reviewed the biomass criterion for this stock. Based on the 2014-2016 fall surveys, the most recent 3-year average catch per tow is 0.33 kg, and when applied to 75%  $F_{MSY}$  (1.52), results in 500 mt, which is less than the 2015 catch. As a result, the biomass criterion is not met, and the size of the AM cannot be reduced for southern windowpane flounder.

Under certain circumstances, we can remove an AM mid-year. We can remove the windowpane AM area restriction after September 2017 if we determine the 2016 total catch is below the ACL. As of January 31, 2017, 91 percent of the southern windowpane catch limit has been caught, based only on catch estimates for the groundfish and scallop fisheries. When the fishing year 2016 catch data is finalized in fall 2017, and we incorporate catch information for other non-groundfish fisheries, we will determine if removal of the AM for groundfish vessels is possible.





We will continue to investigate potential management measures for windowpane flounder, and we encourage both the Mid-Atlantic and New England Council to collaborate on the development of other measures that may alleviate the impact of southern windowpane catch limits on all fisheries. Modification of the current AMs and consideration of the mixed-stock exception or ecosystem component species provisions in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act are worth exploration. The New England Council set a 2017 priority related to this issue; investigation of the "reclassification of both windowpane flounder stocks as Ecosystem Component Species, or other approaches that will improve flexibility".

If you have any questions on the report, please contact Sarah Heil, Groundfish Team Supervisor, at (978) 281-9257.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JB', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

John K. Bullard  
Regional Administrator

cc: Tom Nies, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council

Enclosures

**COUNCIL COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**The Ritz-Carlton, Pentagon City - Arlington, Virginia**  
**February 28-March 1, 2017**

**Agenda**  
**Tuesday, February 28, 2017**

<b><u>Time</u></b>	<b><u>Discussion Item</u></b>	<b><u>Presenter(s)</u></b>
8:30 – 9:00	Welcome/Introductions	John Quinn Samuel Rauch
9:00 – 9:30	NMFS Update & FY17 Priorities	Samuel Rauch
9:30 – 10:15	Management and Budget update	Paul Doremus Brian Pawlak
10:15 – 10:30	<b>Break</b>	
10:30 – 11:30	Legislative Outlook	Christopher Holmes Congressional Staff CCC
11:30 – 12:30	MSA Reauthorization & CCC Comments	Gregg Waugh Tom Nies
12:30 – 1:45	<b>Lunch on your own</b>	
1:45 – 2:15	Council Member Conflict of Interest and Recusal National guidance update	Adam Issenberg
2:15 – 3:15	National Standard 1 Guidelines: Questions and Clarifications	Samuel Rauch Emily Menashes CCC
3:15 – 3:30	<b>Break</b>	
3:30 – 4:00	National Bycatch Reduction Strategy Update	Emily Menashes
4:00 – 5:15	Marine National Monuments and Fishing Restrictions	Kitty Simonds CCC
5:15	<b>Adjourn for the day</b>	



**Wednesday, March 1, 2017**

<b><u>Time</u></b>	<b><u>Discussion Item</u></b>	<b><u>Presenter(s)</u></b>
9:00 – 10:00	NMFS Science Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stock Assessment Improvement Plan</li><li>• Regional Climate Action Plans</li><li>• Stock Assessment Prioritization</li><li>• BSIA</li></ul>	Cisco Werner
10:00 –10:30	EBFM Roadmap Implementation	Sam Rauch
10:30 –10:45	<b>Break</b>	
10:45 – 11:45	National Academies of Science MRIP Review and Recommendations	NAS Co-Chairs
11:45 –12:15	MRIP Strategic Plan	Ned Cyr
12:15 – 1:30	<b>Lunch on your own</b>	
1:30 – 2:00	Report to CCC on 2016 FAO Meeting	Rick Robins
2:00 – 2:30	Update on the Scientific Coordination Committee meeting (SCS-6)	Chuck Tracey
2:30 –2:45	<b>Break</b>	
2:45 – 3:15	Other business, review CCC decisions and work group tasking	John Quinn Tom Nies
3:15 – 3:30	Wrap up and next meeting	John Quinn Tom Nies
<b>3:30</b>	<b>Adjourn meeting</b>	

hearing, please contact Ms. Long at the above number.

If you have questions concerning the January 19, 2017, proposed action, please contact Ms. Gobeil McKinley, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards (OAQPS), Air Quality Planning Division (C539-01), Research Triangle Park, NC 27711, telephone (919) 541-5246, email address [mckinley.gobeil@epa.gov](mailto:mckinley.gobeil@epa.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The proposal for which the EPA is holding the public hearing was published in the **Federal Register** on January 19, 2017 (82 FR 6509), and is available at: <http://www.epa.gov/ozone-pollution/2008-ozone-national-ambient-air-quality-standards-naaqs-section-176a-petitions> and also in Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2016-0596. The public hearing will provide interested parties the opportunity to present data, views, or arguments concerning the proposal. The EPA may ask clarifying questions during the oral presentations, but will not respond to presentations at that time. Written statements and supporting information that are submitted during the comment period will be considered with the same weight as any oral comments and supporting information presented at the public hearing. Written comments must be postmarked by the last day of the comment period.

The public hearing will convene at 9:00 a.m. and end at 6:00 p.m. Eastern Time (ET) or at least 2 hours after the last registered speaker has spoken. The EPA will make every effort to accommodate all individuals interested in providing oral testimony. A lunch break is scheduled from 12:00 p.m. until 1:00 p.m. Please note that this hearing will be held at a U.S. government facility. Individuals planning to attend the hearing should be prepared to show valid picture identification to the security staff in order to gain access to the meeting room. The REAL ID Act, passed by Congress in 2005, established new requirements for entering federal facilities. These requirements took effect on July 21, 2014. If your driver's license is issued by Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina or the state of Washington, you must present an additional form of identification to enter the federal building where the public hearing will be held. Acceptable alternative forms of identification include: Federal employee badges, passports, enhanced driver's licenses and military identification cards. For additional information for the status of your state

regarding REAL ID, go to <http://www.dhs.gov/real-id-enforcement-brief>. In addition, you will need to obtain a property pass for any personal belongings you bring with you. Upon leaving the building, you will be required to return this property pass to the security desk. No large signs will be allowed in the building, cameras may only be used outside of the building, and demonstrations will not be allowed on federal property for security reasons.

If you would like to present oral testimony at the hearing, please notify Ms. Pamela Long, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards (OAQPS), Air Quality Planning Division (C504-01), Research Triangle Park, NC 27711, telephone (919) 541-0641, fax number (919) 541-5509, email address [long.pam@epa.gov](mailto:long.pam@epa.gov), no later than 4:00 p.m. ET on April 11, 2017. Ms. Long will arrange a general time slot for you to speak. The EPA will make every effort to follow the schedule as closely as possible on the day of the hearing.

Oral testimony will be limited to 5 minutes for each commenter. The EPA encourages commenters to provide the EPA with a copy of their oral testimony electronically (via email) or in hard copy form. The EPA will not provide audiovisual equipment for presentations unless we receive special requests in advance. Commenters should notify Ms. Long if they will need specific equipment. Commenters should also notify Ms. Long if they need specific translation services for non-English speaking commenters.

Prior to the hearing, the hearing schedule, including the list of speakers, will be posted on the EPA's Web site at: <http://www.epa.gov/ozone-pollution/2008-ozone-national-ambient-air-quality-standards-naaqs-section-176a-petitions>. Verbatim transcripts of the hearing and written statements will be included in the docket for the action.

#### How can I get copies of this document and other related information?

The EPA has established a docket for the proposed action "Response to December 9, 2013, Clean Air Act Section 176A Petition from Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont" under Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2016-0596 (available at: <http://www.regulations.gov>). The EPA has made available information related to the proposed action on the EPA's Web site at: <http://www.epa.gov/ozone-pollution/2008-ozone-national-ambient-air-quality-standards-naaqs-section-176a-petitions>.

Dated: March 16, 2017.

**Stephen Page,**

*Director, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards.*

[FR Doc. 2017-06120 Filed 3-27-17; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6560-50-P

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 648

#### RIN 0648-BG42

### Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Provisions; Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Mid-Atlantic Unmanaged Forage Fish Omnibus Amendment

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Notice of availability of a fishery management plan amendment; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS announces that the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council has submitted its Unmanaged Forage Omnibus Amendment to the Secretary of Commerce for review and approval. We are requesting comments from the public on this amendment. This amendment would implement an annual landing limit, possession limits, and permitting and reporting requirements for certain previously unmanaged forage species and species groups within Mid-Atlantic Federal waters. The purpose of this action is to prevent the development of new, and the expansion of existing, commercial fisheries on certain forage species until the Council has adequate opportunity and information to evaluate the potential impacts of forage fish harvest on existing fisheries, fishing communities, and the marine ecosystem.

**DATES:** Comments must be received on or before May 30, 2017.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2017-0013, by any of the following methods:

- **Electronic Submission:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov)#!/docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2017-0013, click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

• *Mail:* John K. Bullard, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope, "Comments on Mid-Atlantic Forage NOAA."

*Instructions:* Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NMFS. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).

The Council prepared an environmental assessment (EA) for the Unmanaged Forage Omnibus Amendment that describes the proposed action and other alternatives considered and provides a thorough analysis of the impacts of the proposed measures and alternatives considered. Copies of the Unmanaged Forage Omnibus Amendment, including the EA, the Regulatory Impact Review, and the Regulatory Flexibility Act analysis, are available from: Christopher Moore, Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Suite 201, 800 State Street, Dover, DE 19901. The EA and associated analysis is accessible via the Internet at <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/> or <http://www.mafmc.org>.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Douglas Christel, Fishery Policy Analyst, 978-281-9141; fax 978-281-9135.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Background

Mid-Atlantic Council stakeholders identified managing forage species as a key concern for future action during a 2011 strategic planning and visioning process. Forage species are generally considered small, mostly pelagic schooling species that serve as prey for larger species. In 2014, the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) developed a white paper on forage species. The paper indicated that forage species facilitate the transfer of energy from the lowest levels of the food chain to higher levels, highlighting the importance of forage species in maintaining the productivity of marine ecosystems. The Council recognized

that although it already manages several forage species that are the target of directed commercial fisheries (Atlantic mackerel, longfin and *Illex* squid, and butterfish), there are other unmanaged species that serve as prey for species important to commercial and recreational fisheries managed within the Mid-Atlantic. However, the Council was concerned that insufficient information existed to assess the amount of unmanaged forage species currently being harvested and associated impacts to other marine resources. Due to the importance of forage species to the marine ecosystem and the health of important commercial and recreational fisheries, the Council sought to prevent the further expansion of commercial fishing effort on forage species. Therefore, the Council wanted to maintain existing commercial fisheries at recent levels until it could collect more detailed information to evaluate the potential impacts of forage fish harvest on existing fisheries, fishing communities, and the marine ecosystem. On December 8, 2014, the Council initiated an action to begin protecting previously unmanaged forage species in each fishery management plan (FMP) under its jurisdiction. The purpose of this action is to prevent the development of new, and the expansion of existing, commercial fisheries on certain forage species. Scoping meetings were held from Rhode Island through North Carolina in September and October 2015. These meetings sought public input on the type of action to undertake, which forage species to address, the geographic scope of the action, data needs, possible measures to prevent the expansion of commercial fisheries on forage species, and processes to evaluate the development of commercial fisheries in the future. After further developing proposed measures, the Council conducted public hearings in May and June 2016 to solicit additional input on the range of alternatives under consideration by the Council, with public comments accepted through June 17, 2016. At its August 2016 meeting, the Council adopted final measures under the Unmanaged Forage Omnibus Amendment. On November 23, 2016, the Council submitted the amendment and draft EA to NMFS for preliminary review. The Council submitted the final forage amendment on March 20, 2017. The Council reviewed the proposed regulations to implement these measures, as drafted by NMFS, and deemed them to be necessary and appropriate, as specified in section 303(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery

Conservation and Management Act on March 10, 2017.

This amendment would prevent the development of new, and the expansion of existing, commercial fisheries on certain Mid-Atlantic forage species until the Council can collect the information necessary to more fully evaluate the potential impacts of forage species harvests on existing fisheries, fishing communities, and the marine ecosystem. To do this, the Council would limit catch of certain forage species to recent levels and implement administrative measures necessary to more accurately record the catch of these species within Mid-Atlantic Federal waters. Specifically, this action proposes the following measures:

- Designate 15 species and species groups as ecosystem component species of FMPs under the Council's jurisdiction;
- Specify a 1,700-lb (771-kg) combined possession limit for ecosystem component species within Mid-Atlantic Federal waters;
- Set an annual catch limit of 2.86 million lb (1,297 mt) for Atlantic chub mackerel (*Scomber colias*);
- Specify a 40,000-lb (18,144-kg) chub mackerel possession limit within Mid-Atlantic Federal waters (*i.e.*, from New York through Cape Hatteras, NC, an area referred to as the "Mid-Atlantic Forage Species Management Unit") once the chub mackerel annual landing limit is reached;
- Require that all vessels possessing ecosystem component species and chub mackerel in Mid-Atlantic Forage Species Management Unit be issued a Federal commercial fishing vessel permit from the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office and comply with existing reporting requirements;
- Allow vessels that catch ecosystem component species and chub mackerel outside of the Mid-Atlantic Forage Species Management Unit to transit through the area to land these species at other ports;
- Develop appropriate codes to record the catch of these species in vessel trip reports and dealer reports;
- Establish a Council policy requiring an exempted fishery permit and sufficient Council review before further development of any fishery for ecosystem component species; and
- Expand framework provisions in the all of the Council's FMPs to allow future changes to annual landing limits and possession limits for Mid-Atlantic forage species.

As proposed, the proposed chub mackerel measures are temporary, and would expire in 3 years. This would allow the Council to develop long-term

measures and the scientific information necessary to formally integrate this chub mackerel as a stock in the fishery under the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish FMP. The Council initiated a separate action to develop these long-term measures at its February 2017 meeting for implementation by 2020, if approved.

Public comments are being solicited on the Unmanaged Forage Omnibus Amendment and its incorporated documents through the end of the

comment period specified in the **DATES** section of this notice of availability (NOA). Following NMFS's review of the amendment under the Magnuson-Stevens Act procedures, a rule proposing to implement measures outlined in this amendment may be published in the **Federal Register** for public comment. All comments received by the end of the comment period on the NOA, whether specifically directed to the NOA or the proposed rule, will be considered in the approval/

disapproval decision. Comments received after the end of the comment period for the NOA will not be considered in the approval/disapproval decision of this action.

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: March 23, 2017.

**Karen H. Abrams,**

*Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

[FR Doc. 2017-06114 Filed 3-27-17; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**



**Request for Proposals (RFP) - Closing Date: March 31, 2017**

**Catch Share Program Review for the  
Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog  
Individual Transferrable Quota Fisheries**

**Purpose**

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) is accepting proposals to conduct a Catch Share Program Review of the present and past social and economic conditions in the Atlantic surfclam and ocean quahog (SCOQ) fisheries which are managed using individual transferrable quotas (ITQs). Section 303A(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) includes requirements for the regular monitoring and review of the operations of catch share programs by the Council and the Secretary of Commerce.

**Background**

The Council is one of eight regional councils in the U.S. responsible for developing fishery management plans to prevent overfishing and rebuild overfished fisheries in federal waters. The Councils were established in 1976 following the passage of the MSA, and have played an important role in restoring the health of the nation's fisheries.

In 1977, the Council developed a fishery management plan for the Atlantic surfclam and ocean quahog fisheries in federal waters. These fisheries were initially managed using a combination of limited entry restrictions, fishing quotas, and time limits to constrain landings and distribute fishing effort throughout the fishing year. In 1990, the Council developed an ITQ program that was implemented by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries. The fisheries have been operating under this program since then.

Several studies have been done to characterize various aspects of these fisheries including fleet profiles, demographic profiles of fishery participants, economic performance, and community profiles. In 2016, there were approximately 100 allocation holders in the SCOQ ITQ fisheries that include those who fish their allocations, hire others to fish their allocations, or lease their allocations to others. Beginning in 2016, ITQ holders were required to complete an ownership declaration form. That information is now available to more clearly identify current participants in the fishery.