



***Illex* Squid Fishery Performance Report**

April 2024

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Mackerel-Squid-Butterfish (MSB) Advisory Panel (AP) met via webinar to review the MSB Fishery Information Documents and develop Fishery Performance Reports. Separate reports were created for each species/fishery. The primary purpose of the report is to contextualize catch histories for the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) by providing information about fishing effort, market trends, environmental changes, and other factors. AP member comments are not consensus or majority statements – the summary below may represent the perspective of one or multiple AP members. Some staff follow-up information has been added and noted where applicable.

Advisory Panel members present: Jeff Kaelin, Dan Farnham, Jr, Emerson Hasbrouck, Greg DiDomenico, Katie Almeida, and Meghan Lapp.

Others present: Jason Didden, Julia Beaty, Tom Miller, Conor Davis, Gavin Fay, Maria Fenton, Rich Malinowski, Will Poston, and Alan Bianchi.

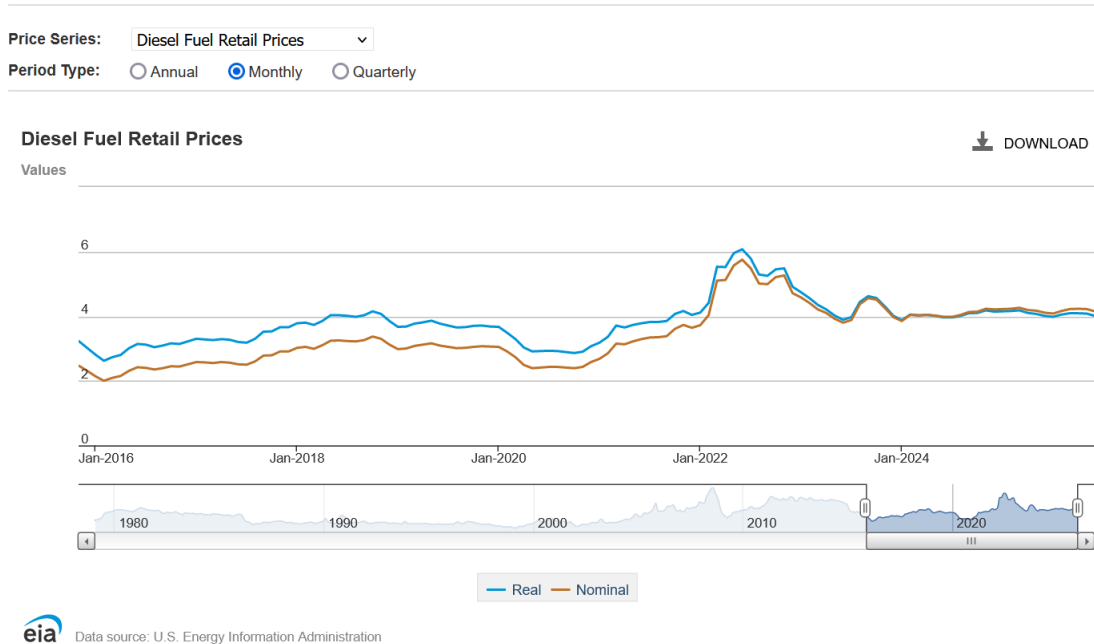
Trigger questions posed to the AP to generate discussion:

1. What factors have influenced recent catch (markets, environment, regulations, etc.)?
2. Are the current fishery regulations appropriate? How could they be improved?
3. What would you recommend as research priorities?
4. What else is important for the Council to know?

Market/Economic Conditions

Freezer boats always fish *Illex* in the summer - 2023 was no different. Freezer boats fished all summer long. Fishing was not as good as recent years before 2022, but freezer boats still caught *Illex*.

It's expensive to hold frozen product and expensive to ship, affecting price that processors can offer to vessels. Diesel prices were very high in 2022, affecting costs for both vessels and processors. Diesel prices have decreased somewhat but are still elevated (staff added EIA diesel chart on next page).



Market conditions/prices specific to *Illex* seemed relatively similar in 2023 as 2022/2021/2020.

U.S. suppliers continue to invest in infrastructure to regularly produce quality product. Steady supply from U.S. producers has helped with marketing – especially focusing on product quality. Think of it in terms of three aspects: efficiency, quality, and speed.

AP notes the potential to also get price increases through season as squid get bigger (higher prices for bigger squid)...if the fishery stays open.

U.S. *Illex* catches do not drive the price of *Illex* – Argentinian *Illex* and Japanese flying squid affect prices. Argentinian *Illex* are in international waters and the Chinese fleet catches high volumes – the world market dominates price. U.S. landings are a small component. Staff previously noted 2019 FAO catch of Argentine shortfin squid was listed as about 250,000 metric tons.

Environmental Conditions

For *Illex* we need a shift in thinking versus just “what happened last year.” We have good years and bad years. 2022/2023 just demonstrate typical variability – weren’t out of the ordinary from a big-picture perspective.

It is critical to continue to involve fishermen in work to understand environmental linkages (e.g. the Squid Squad – see <https://www.mafmc.org/briefing/february-2023>).

Longliners saw signs in *Illex* in coral zones (conditions appear to not have pushed *Illex* onto the shelf as much again in 2023).

Management Issues

Management should consider ways to achieve 100% of the quota if in future years the current closure threshold appears to be unnecessarily constraining.

The availability/abundance of *Illex* should be taken into account when considering closures, as abundance appears to be considered when dealing with potential overages in other fisheries such as black sea bass (e.g. Harvest Control Rule procedures for recreational sector). *Illex* and commercial fisheries in general should not be treated differently than other participants.

Status-quo measures are appropriate in terms of overall specifications (all AP'ers on call concurred).

Other Issues

The allowance for swordfish retention in the *Illex* fishery was mentioned. Increasing the current incidental limits (15/trip) has not been a hot topic recently but there is occasional interest in revisiting that limit.

Both squids were re-certified by MSE, reflecting on the sustainable management of longfin/*Illex* including scientific advances.

Research Priorities

Staff will be following up with the AP via email regarding research priorities but the AP noted that industry cooperative work with the Squid Squad is ongoing.

Additional Public Input

No additional input was provided.