



*Illex*  
**Fishery Performance Report**  
**February 2023**

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Mackerel-Squid-Butterfish (MSB) Advisory Panel (AP) met via webinar on February 24, 2023 to review the *Illex* squid Fishery Information Document and develop the following Fishery Performance Reports. The primary purpose of the report is to contextualize recent catch history for the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) by providing information about fishing effort, market trends, environmental changes, and other factors. The trigger questions below were posed to the AP to generate discussion, which began by reviewing the separate *Illex* “fishery information document.” The AP comments summarized below are not necessarily consensus or majority statements.

**Advisory Panel members present: Eleanor Bochenek, Katie Almeida, Gerry O' Neill, Meghan Lapp, Sam Martin, Dan Farnham Jr, and Greg DiDomenico.**

**Others present: Jason Didden, Peter Hughes, Carly Bari, Mike Waine, Tom Miller, Alissa Wilson, and Haley Clinton.**

**Trigger questions:**

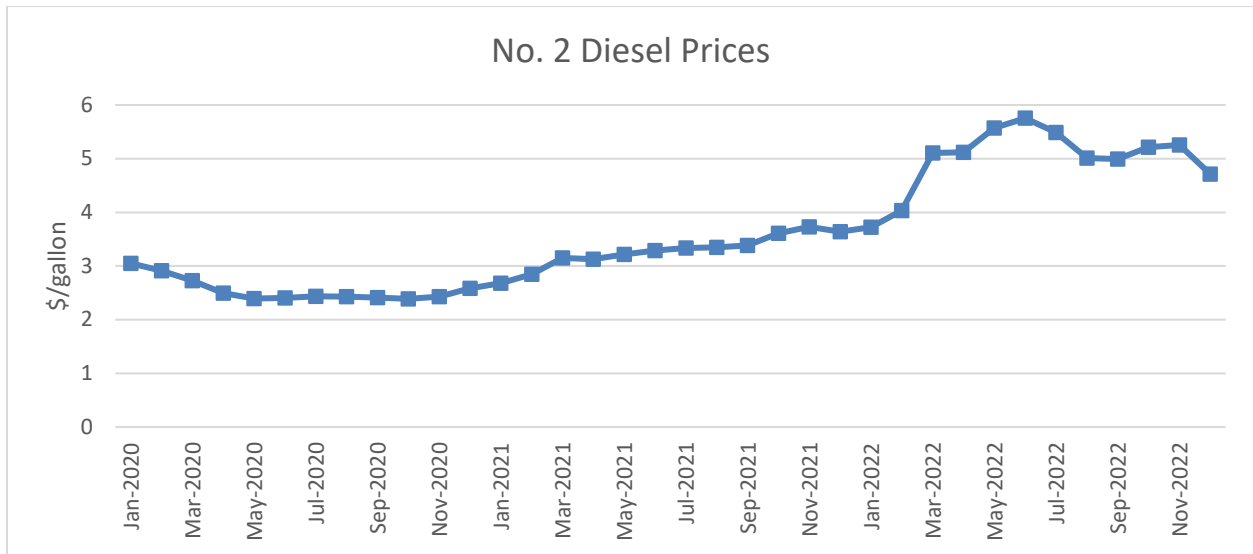
1. What factors have influenced recent catch (markets, environment, regulations, etc.)?
2. Are the current fishery regulations appropriate? How could they be improved?
3. What would you recommend as research priorities?
4. What else is important for the Council to know?

## *Illex* Squid

### Market/Economic Conditions

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

Fuel prices were an extreme deterrent to participation in 2022, especially combined with good longfin squid fishing near the beach. AP member conversations with other fishery participants indicated many folks did the math and chose to fish longfin instead, closer in. After the call staff downloaded 2020-2022 No. 2 Diesel prices from the U.S. Energy Information Administration ([www.eia.gov](http://www.eia.gov)) for reference.



Market conditions/prices specific to *Illex* seemed relatively similar in 2022 as 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 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**

Gulfstream did not shift inward in 2022 like previous years – An AP member noted an article that Spain has caught our *Illex* species.

For *Illex* we need a shift in thinking versus just “what happened last year.” We have good years and bad years. 2022 just demonstrates typical variability – wasn’t out of the ordinary.

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

## **Other Issues**

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

## **Research Priorities**

See environmental considerations section above.

## **Additional Public Input**

Staff noted that the Council will be addressing potential follow-up to the disapproved *Illex* permit action at the April 2023 meeting.