



MID-ATLANTIC
FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

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Mid-Atlantic Council Announces Policies on Non-Fishing Activities that Threaten Fish Habitat

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council has released a series of policy documents focused on non-fishing activities that threaten fish habitat. These documents outline the Council's positions on five anthropogenic (human) activities: wind energy, offshore oil, marine transport, liquefied natural gas, and coastal development.

Productive commercial and recreational fisheries are inextricably linked to healthy habitat. Multiple factors are contributing to the degradation or destruction of fish habitat, such as coastal development, land-based pollution, and dams and other blockages that restrict the movement of migratory fish species and can alter the delivery of freshwater to estuaries.

The Council is limited in its ability to address these threats, as its authority is largely restricted to the development of fishing regulations. However, the Council is involved in a range of habitat management and conservation initiatives through collaboration with its partners in the Greater Atlantic region.

Development of habitat policy documents is one component of the Council's ongoing *Habitat Pilot Project*, which was initiated in July 2014 with support from NOAA Fisheries. The project is focused on strengthening the use of existing habitat authorities and tools to address threats to fish habitat more effectively.

"Habitat is essential to the health and productivity of our marine fisheries, and is susceptible to a wide range of anthropogenic impacts, and emerging risks, including oil and gas development in the Mid-Atlantic region," said Rick Robins, Council Chairman. "The Council's habitat conservation policies recognize the foundational importance of habitat to our marine fisheries and the coastal communities that depend on a healthy marine ecosystem."

Policy development was spearheaded by the Council's Ecosystem and Ocean Planning (EOP) Committee in conjunction with input from members of the public, the Council's EOP Advisory Panel, and subject matter experts on state coastal zone management, energy issues, and habitat.

By clearly communicating its positions on anthropogenic activities, the Council hopes to work more effectively with its management partners to mitigate and avoid adverse impacts to fish habitat. The Council is currently developing an additional set of policies focused on fishing impacts on fish habitat.

The habitat policies can be downloaded at [this link](#). Individual policy sections and supporting documents are available on the Council's website at www.mafmc.org/habitat.