



MID-ATLANTIC

FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

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PRESS CONTACT: Mary Sabo
(302) 518-1143

Mid-Atlantic Council Approves Squid Amendment

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council approved the Squid Amendment to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan during a meeting last week in Norfolk, Virginia. The amendment includes measures to reduce latent (unused) permits in the longfin squid fishery and modify management of longfin squid during Trimester 2.

After considerable discussion and consideration of public comments, the Council selected preferred alternatives and adopted the amendment for Secretarial review and implementation. Below are summaries of the issues addressed and the Council's preferred alternatives.

Longfin Squid Moratorium Permit Requalification

In recent years, a relatively small portion of vessels with limited access ("moratorium") squid permits have accounted for most of the landings. Some fishery participants have expressed concern that activation of latent permits could lead to excessive fishing effort. The amendment considered options for removing latent permits from the directed fishery to limit derby fishing.

Under the alternative selected by the Council, current longfin squid/butterfish limited access moratorium permits would be allowed to retain their permit if they landed at least 10,000 pounds of squid in one year from 1997 to 2013. This would reduce the number of moratorium squid permits by more than 40% but would not affect vessels that have been historically active in the fishery. However, moratorium permit holders that do not requalify to retain the longfin squid moratorium permit would be eligible for a permit that allows a 5,000-pound longfin squid trip limit when the fishery is open. In addition, the Council recommended separating the butterfish part of the longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permit to allow current moratorium permits the opportunity to continue to target and land butterfish.

The Council also approved a one-time "permit swap" opportunity which would allow owners of multiple longfin squid moratorium permits as of May 26, 2017 to swap active requalifying and non-requalifying moratorium permits among their vessels.

Longfin Squid Incidental and Open Access Permits

The Council voted to replace the current open access incidental longfin squid permit with a limited access incidental permit. Qualifying vessels must have landed at least 5,000 pounds of longfin squid in one year from 1997 to 2013. Currently about 1,400 vessels possess open access incidental permits, and about 325 are expected to qualify for the limited access incidental permit. The daily trip limit for the incidental permit would remain at 2,500 pounds. In addition, to minimize regulatory discarding of squid bycatch, non-qualifying vessels would still be able to obtain an open access permit that would allow up to 250 pounds of longfin squid per trip.

Trimester 2

The amendment also includes measures to modify management of longfin squid during Trimester 2. Currently, the trip limit in Federal waters after a Trimester closure is 2,500 pounds. Directed fishing after a closure can lead to substantial trimester quota overages, such as in 2016 when a 48% overage occurred. Because fishing during Trimester 2 occurs on the inshore spawning grounds for longfin squid, excessive fishing effort during Trimester 2 may adversely affect the overall productivity of the longfin squid stock by reducing spawning or egg hatching. To avoid future excessive longfin squid catch during Trimester 2, the Council voted to reduce the longfin squid trip limit to 250 pounds per day, a 90% reduction, for all permits once the Trimester 2 quota has been reached. The Council will also continue to work with relevant states to encourage them to match this limit after such a closure.

Illex Squid Moratorium Permit Requalification

Based on recent low landings and low participation in the *Illex* squid fishery, the Council recommended no changes to the current limited access permit system for this species.

For more information about this amendment, contact Jason Didden (jdidden@mafmc.org, 302-526-5254) or visit <http://www.mafmc.org/actions/squid-capacity-amendment>.