



**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Council Approves Changes to Management of *Illex* Fishery**

Last week the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council approved an amendment that proposes modifications to the permitting and management of the *Illex* squid fishery. These changes are intended to both reduce excess capacity in the fishery and mitigate the rapid use of the quota seen in recent years. The amendment also revises the goals and objectives of the Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish (MSB) Fishery Management Plan (FMP). 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 and the Council’s preferred alternatives.

***Illex* Permitting**

In June 2017, the Council considered, but did not adopt, revisions to *Illex* squid permits as part of Amendment 20 to the MSB FMP. Since then, effort and landings have substantially increased, and the fishery closed early in 2017-2019 after harvesting the *Illex* squid quota. Given recent fishery performance, the Council initiated this amendment to evaluate whether permitted access to the *Illex* fishery should be modified based on present and historical participation, and/or other considerations. The amendment considered a range of permitting alternatives, including various time periods and thresholds for permit re-qualification and options for a tiered permitting system.

During last week’s meeting, the Council reviewed analyses and public comments and heard additional public testimony from fishery participants both in favor of, and opposed to, potential changes to *Illex* permitting. The Council ultimately voted to implement a tiered permitting system. The proposed tiers, qualification criteria, and trip limits are described in the table below.

	<b>Qualification Criteria</b>	<b>Trip Limit</b>
<b>Tier 1</b>	<p><i>Either:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landed at least 500,000 pounds in one year between 1997 and 2013</li> </ul> <p><u>OR</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchased and installed a refrigerated seawater system, plate freezing system, or blast freezer between January 1, 2012 and August 2, 2013 and landed a minimum of 200,000 pounds of <i>Illex</i> in the 2013 fishing year</li> </ul>	None
<b>Tier 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landed at least 100,000 pounds in one year between 1997 and 2018</li> </ul>	62,000 pounds
<b>Tier 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landed at least 50,000 pounds in one year between 1997 and 2018</li> </ul>	20,000 pounds

Under this tiered permitting system, of the 75 current limited access moratorium permits, it is estimated that 35 would qualify for Tier 1, 13 would qualify for Tier 2, 2 would qualify for Tier 3, and 25 would not qualify for any Tier. The Council acknowledged that this action would have positive and negative

economic consequences for some fishery participants but ultimately concluded that the selected alternative best balanced the needs of historic participants, present participants, and dependent fishing communities.

***Other Illex Management Measures***

The Council also voted to require that Tier 1 permit holders obtain a baseline measurement of their vessel fish hold volume. These permit holders would then be subject to a 10% upgrade restriction. This measure is intended to help freeze the footprint of the fishery and avoid additional over-capitalization. The amendment would also clarify that daily catch reporting of *Illex* is required via Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) for vessels with limited access *Illex* permits.

***Next Steps and Additional Information***

The Council will submit this amendment to the Secretary of Commerce for approval and implementation. Updates will be posted on the Council's website at <http://www.mafmc.org/actions/illex-permitting-msb-goals-amendment>. For additional information about this action, contact Jason Didden at [jdidden@mafmc.org](mailto:jdidden@mafmc.org) or (302) 526-5254.