

June 2016 Council Meeting Report

June 13 – 16, 2016

Newark, Delaware

The following summary highlights actions taken and issues considered at the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's June 2016 meeting in Newark, Delaware. Presentations, briefing materials, and audio recordings are available on the Council's website at www.mafmc.org/briefing/june-2016.

Ecosystem and Ocean Planning Committee

The Ecosystem and Ocean Planning Committee met to discuss the Council's draft policy on fishing activities that impact habitat. After reviewing a summary of advisory panel comments on the draft policy, the Committee discussed questions such as what term to use to differentiate fished and less fished areas, whether to include state waters in the policy, and whether to address temporary habitat protections and/or habitat restoration in the policy. The Committee's input will be incorporated in to the draft as it is further refined for consideration by the full council at the August Council meeting. The Committee also received updates on other ongoing habitat activities, including formation of an EFH Review FMAT.

Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish Specifications

The Council reviewed performance of the Atlantic mackerel, squid, and butterfish fisheries and considered whether any changes to previously-recommended multi-year specifications are warranted. 2017 will be year 2 of 2016-2018 Atlantic mackerel specifications and year 3 of 2015-2017 squid and butterfish specifications. The Council recommended no changes to the previously recommended specifications, which are described in detail at the links below.

- Atlantic Mackerel: <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/regs/2016/April/16msb2016specsfr.pdf>
- Squid/Butterfish: <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/regs/2015/March/15smbspecs20152017fr.pdf>.

River Herring and Shad

The Council reviewed an annual River Herring and Shad (RH/S) progress update and an outline of a White Paper that will consider the impacts of adding or not adding RH/S as Council-managed fisheries. The White Paper will be presented to the Council by August, and the Council is scheduled to revisit whether to add RH/S as Council-managed stocks at the October 2016 meeting.

Squid Capacity Amendment

The Council provided feedback to staff on the development of the ongoing Squid Amendment, which considers the number of squid permits (longfin and *lllex*), longfin trimester allocations, and concerns about longfin squid effort just south of Martha's Vineyard/Nantucket. Staff will bring a variety of analyses and potential management measures to an Advisory Panel meeting later this year, which will be followed by additional consideration by the Council. The current timeline includes public hearings on potential management measures in early 2017, Council action in April 2017, and implementation of any new measures by January 1, 2018.

Industry-Funded Monitoring Amendment

The Industry-Funded Monitoring Amendment considers a process for establishing industry funded monitoring programs as well as specific monitoring targets for the Atlantic mackerel fishery that could be achieved through industry-funded monitoring. The Council approved a draft Environmental Assessment for public hearings and comments. Hearings are expected later in 2016.

Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Specifications

The Council adopted the following specifications for Atlantic surfclams and Ocean quahogs for 2017-2018:

		Annual Catch Limit (ACL)	Annual Catch Target (ACT)	Commercial Quota
Atlantic Surfclams	2017	44,469 mt	29,364 mt	26,218 mt
	2018	45,524 mt		
Ocean Quahogs	2017	26,100 mt	Non-Maine = 25,511 mt Maine = 524 mt	Non-Maine = 24,296 mt (5.3 million bushels)
	2018			Maine = 499 mt (100,000 ME bushels)

The Council also recommended that the Regional Administrator suspend the minimum size (shell length) for surfclams for 2017.

Blueline Tilefish 2017 Recreational Specifications

The Council considered revising the 2017 recreational blueline tilefish specification it had previously recommended at its April 2016 meeting. The issue was reopened in response to several public comments which expressed concern about the Council's recommendations for recreational specifications, which included an open season from May 1 – October 31 and per-person recreational bag limits of 7 blueline tilefish on for-hire inspected vessels, 5 blueline tilefish on for-hire uninspected vessels, and 3 blueline tilefish on private vessels. Concern was also expressed that there was insufficient opportunity for the public to comment on these measures. In response, the Council held a public webinar at June 9, 2016 and provided an additional public comment opportunity during the June 2016 meeting. After extensive discussion and consideration of additional public input, the Council voted to initiate a framework to consider recreational blueline tilefish specifications. The first framework meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 2016.

eVTR Framework – Meeting 1

The Council held the first of two meetings to consider development of an eVTR framework, which outlines options and justification for proposed mandatory electronic submission of VTRs by for-hire vessels with Federal permits for species managed by the Council. The requirement would begin on January 1, 2017. The second framework meeting will be held at the Council's August 2016 meeting in Virginia Beach, VA.

Other Business

Presentations

The Council received presentations on climate change and Mid-Atlantic fisheries from Jon Hare (NOAA Fisheries) and Malin Pinsky (Rutgers University) and a presentation on the Mid Atlantic Ocean Data Portal from Jay Odell.

BOEM's Renewable Energy Activities

The Council received an update from Brian Hooker (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management) on renewable energy activities in the Mid-Atlantic region. The presentation included an update on the status of Atlantic offshore renewable energy leases. The Council agreed to submit comments on the New York Wind Energy Proposed Lease Areas. The Council also received a brief update regarding the ongoing review of seismic testing permit applications.