



## October 2016 Council Meeting Report

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**October 4 – 6, 2016**

*Galloway, New Jersey*

The following summary highlights actions taken and issues considered at the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's October 2016 meeting in Galloway, New Jersey. Presentations, briefing materials, and audio recordings are available on the Council's website at [www.mafmc.org/briefing/october-2016](http://www.mafmc.org/briefing/october-2016).

### River Herring and Shad

The Council met to develop recommendations on whether to develop an amendment to consider adding RH/S as Council-managed stocks. Based on a comprehensive review of existing and planned conservation and management efforts, the Council determined that management of river herring and shad (RH/S) through a Council fishery management plan (FMP) is not warranted. However, the Council reaffirmed its commitment to participating with partners in the conservation and management of RH/S, noting that it will continue to protect RH/S stocks by proactively using the tools provided in the recently-approved Ecosystem Approaches to Fisheries Management (EAFM) Guidance Document. The Council will also continue to use catch caps to incentivize harvesters to reduce river herring and shad bycatch.

The Council's decision not to add these stocks to the fishery management plan for Atlantic mackerel, squid, and butterfish was largely based on the fact that RH/S are already managed by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and that the catch caps set by the Council have kept incidental catch very low compared to historic levels. There is no evidence that RH/S are targeted in Federal fisheries, and the Council concluded that an FMP would not substantially improve the condition of RH/S stocks.

More details about this decision can be found in the press release at [http://www.mafmc.org/s/pr16\\_16\\_RHS-Management.pdf](http://www.mafmc.org/s/pr16_16_RHS-Management.pdf). For additional background information and documents about river herring and shad, go to <http://www.mafmc.org/rhs/>.

### Spiny Dogfish – 2017 Specifications

The Council reviewed spiny dogfish specifications for 2017, which will be year 2 of 2016-2018 multi-year specifications. After considering input from the Scientific and Statistical Committee and the Spiny Dogfish Advisory Panel and Monitoring Committee, the Council made no changes to the previously-recommended specifications, which are described at:

<https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/nr/2016/August/16dogfish20162018specsphl.pdf>.

### Blueline Tilefish Framework

The Council met at the first framework meeting to consider modifying the recreational measures for blueline tilefish. The measures previously selected by the Council for 2017 are a season of May-October with a possession limits of 7 fish per-person for inspected for-hire vessels, 5 fish for uninspected for-hire vessels, and 3 fish for private vessels. During the meeting, staff presented an overview of possible options. The Council confirmed that it wants to proceed with development of the framework and requested that staff develop a range of alternatives that include a 5-fish uniform limit, extending the season later in the year, and/or a higher possession limit for multi-day trips by inspected for-hire vessels.

### New Jersey Special Management Zone Consideration

In November 2015 the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) petitioned the Council to designate 13 artificial reef sites as Special Management Zones (SMZs) in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) under provisions of Amendment 9 to the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass FMP. The justification for

this request was based on the need to ameliorate gear conflicts between hook and line fishermen and fixed pot/trap gear at those sites.

During the meeting the Council received a report from the SMZ Monitoring Team (MT), which was formed to evaluate the NJDEP request. The report concluded that the designation of the NJDEP 13 reef sites appears to be compatible with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable federal laws. Based on evaluation of all relevant factors, the MT recommended that the Council designate all 13 New Jersey's artificial reefs located in the EEZ as SMZs. This designation would stipulate that no fishing vessel or person on a fishing vessel may fish in the 13 New Jersey Special Management Zones with any gear except hook and line and spear fishing (including the taking of fish by hand). The MT analysis indicated that commercial fishing vessels deploying pot/trap gear off the coast of New Jersey would likely face minimal to no losses in ex-vessel revenue if the artificial reefs are designated as SMZs. The Council discussed the MT's recommendations and decided to hold public hearings in November 2016 in NJ and NY to solicit public comments on the NJ SMZ request. The Council will review the public comments and take final action at its December 2016 meeting.

### **Draft Environmental Assessment for Amendment 10 to the Highly Migratory Species FMP**

The Council received a presentation on Draft Amendment 10 to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan. Draft Amendment 10 would update and revise existing HMS EFH, modify existing HAPCs or designate new HAPCs for several species, and analyze fishing and non-fishing impacts on EFH by considering environmental and management changes and new information since 2009. NMFS will conduct public hearing conference calls and webinars to allow for opportunities for interested members to submit verbal comments on Draft Amendment 10. Instructions for providing written comments are available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2016-21621>.

### **Communication and Outreach**

Council staff presented an overview of the Council's communication and outreach program and a proposed list of additional activities to be undertaken in 2017 and 2018. The Council provided input and suggestions which will be incorporated into a formal communication plan.

### **Executive Committee – 2017 Implementation Plan**

The Executive Committee reviewed a draft list of priorities and activities for the 2017 implementation plan. The Committee recommended adding two items to the list of "Possible Additions." These include an action to address squid trimester issues and an action to change harvest regulations in the surfclam and ocean quahog fisheries. Council staff will incorporate the Committee's recommendations and present a revised draft for Council consideration at the December meeting. As part of this discussion, the Council reviewed a document which outlines the general process and timeline for development of an original FMP or amendment. This document is available on the Council's website at <http://www.mafmc.org/s/FMP-Work.pdf>.