



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
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Michael P. Luisi, Chairman | G. Warren Elliott, Vice Chairman
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MEMORANDUM

Date: 2/1/18
To: Chris Moore
From: Jason Didden
Subject: Atlantic Mackerel Rebuilding Initial Approach

Given the findings of the recent mackerel assessment, plans are underway to implement a rebuilding program for Atlantic mackerel. This will be the first rebuilding plan initiated since the Council's Risk Policy has been in effect.

The current plan is to use a framework action with meetings in April and August. Preliminary projections indicate that with a 10-year rebuilding schedule, the Acceptable Biological Catches (ABCs) in the rebuilding plan may not need to be lowered from the current 19,898 mt ABC. Catch limits had already been reduced by 95% between 2005 and the ABC set for 2016-2018 of 19,898 mt.

The Council's current Risk Policy states that the SSC should provide an ABC that is the lower of an ABC from the standard P* approach or the ABC consistent with a rebuilding plan. This policy could exclude the possibility of using a 5-10 year rebuilding plan to account for the needs of fishing communities, because the standard P* approach may result in ABCs that are substantially lower. Accordingly, since changes to the risk policy are frameworkable, staff plans to include for Council consideration an option that would modify the Council's Risk Policy only for this particular rebuilding plan so that the Council has the option of using a rebuilding plan in the 5-10 year range. This change would allow using the ABCs associated with a rebuilding plan that is proceeding along successfully rather than always using the P* approach when the P* ABCs are lower.

Council staff will bring a range of preliminary rebuilding options to the Council in April for framework meeting #1. Once the Council identifies a set of rebuilding options for the framework, Council staff will request the SSC in May to confirm that the rebuilding options utilize the best available science. A completed framework document will then be presented to the Council in August for final action.

The current plan is for the framework to include the mackerel specifications for the first 3 years of the rebuilding timeline, along with the specifications for the river herring and shad cap, which typically is set when mackerel specifications are set.