



National Marine Fisheries Service
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
Sustainable Fisheries Division
www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov



Status Report of Greater Atlantic Region Actions

Prepared for the June 14-16, 2016
Meeting of the
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

June 14, 2016

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New England Council Actions

Small-Mesh Multispecies

None at the time

Groundfish

None at this time

Scallops

Nantucket Lightship North Scallop Access Area Closure to Limited Access General Category Individual Fishing Quota Vessels

NMFS announced on June 14, 2016, that the Nantucket Lightship North Scallop Access Area will close on June 16, 2016, for Limited Access General Category (LAGC) Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) vessels for the remainder of the 2016 fishing year. The closure ensures that the fleet will not exceed its 2016 allocation of 485 trips into the area.

For additional information, please contact Shannah Jaburek at (978) 282-8456 or email at Shannah.Jaburek@noaa.gov.

Monkfish

None at this time

Herring

None at this time

Skate

Proposed Rule for Framework Adjustment 3 to the Northeast Skate Complex FMP

NMFS published a proposed rule for Framework 3 in the *Federal Register* on June 6, 2016, (81 FR 36521). The comment period closes on June 21, 2016. The proposed measures include new quotas for the skate wing (8,372 mt) and bait (4,218 mt) fisheries for the 2016 and 2017. All skate trip limits are proposed to remain unchanged from current levels. Framework 3 also proposes splitting the skate wing fishery quota into two seasons (May through August and September through April) to allow the directed fishery to be temporarily closed in-season if the seasonal quota is reached.

For additional information, please contact William Whitmore at (978)281-9182 or email at William.Whitmore@noaa.gov.

Atlantic Deep-Sea Red Crab

None at this time

Mid-Atlantic Council Actions

Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass

Proposed Rule for Recreational Management Measures for the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fisheries for Fishing year 2016

NMFS published a proposed rule in the Federal Register on May 23, 2016, for the 2016 recreational management measures. The comment period closed on June 7, 2016. There are no significant changes to the Federal management measures from 2015. NMFS is again proposing conservation equivalency for summer flounder, as well as, proposing a change to the commercial scup incidental possession limit, and two minor corrections to the summer flounder minimum mesh size regulations. The intent of the commercial scup regulatory change is to reduce unnecessary discards by allowing more incidentally caught scup to be retained by vessels. The regulatory corrections are intended to clarify the original purpose of the regulation.

For additional information, please contact Liz Scheimer at (978) 281-9236 or email at elizabeth.scheimer@noaa.gov.

Atlantic Bluefish

None at this time

Spiny Dogfish

None at this time

Surfclam and Ocean Quahog

Surfclam/Ocean Quahog Cost Recovery Amendment (Amendment 17)

This action implements a cost recovery program for the individual transferable quota (ITQ) fishery, revises the process for incorporating new biological reference points into the FMP, and removes the optimum yield range from the FMP. A final rule to implement this action will publish shortly. We approved Amendment 17 on behalf of the Secretary of Commerce on May 23, 2016.

For additional information, please contact Doug Potts at 978-281-9341 or email at Douglass.Potts@noaa.gov.

Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish

2016-2018 Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Specifications and Management Measures

NMFS published a final rule in the Federal Register on April 26, 2016, (81 FR 24504) finalizing the 2016-2018 specifications and management measures for the Atlantic mackerel, squid, and butterfish fisheries. This action implements the 2016-2018 catch levels for Atlantic mackerel, including the river herring and shad catch cap, as well as management measures for the squid and butterfish fisheries, including:

- Atlantic mackerel quota of 9,177 mt for the next three years;
- River herring and shad catch cap of 82 mt for the next three years;
- Increase in the trigger for when 3-inch mesh is required for longfin squid and butterfish moratorium permit holders from 2,500 lb to 5,000 lb of butterfish per trip;
- Clarifies that 5-inch (square or diamond) or greater mesh (or net) strengtheners may be used outside the 3-inch mesh to avoid breaking nets during large hauls; and
- Suspends indefinitely the pre-trip notification system (PTNS) requirement for longfin squid and butterfish moratorium permit holders.

The suspension of the PTNS requirement became effective immediately on April 26, 2016, and the remaining changes became effective on May 26, 2016.

For additional information, please contact Carly Bari at (978) 281-9224 or email at Carly.Bari@noaa.gov.

Tilefish

None at this time

Other Actions

Lobster

None at this time

Jonah Crab

None at this time

Blueline Tilefish

None at this time

Paperwork Reduction Act

NMFS published a notice in the Federal Register on April 1, 2016 (81 FR 18838), requesting comments on a renewal for collection of information requirements under the Paperwork Reduction Act. This collection of information involves the Greater Atlantic permit family of forms and VMS program. NMFS is seeking comments on whether the collection is necessary, if NMFS's estimate of costs and burden is accurate, and ways to reduce these costs and improve data collection. The comment period for the information collection ended on May 31, 2016, but NMFS will accept comments until January 30, 2017.

Direct all written comments to Jennifer Jessup, Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 6616, 14th and Constitution Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20230 (or via email at JJessup@doc.gov).

Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument and instructions should be directed to Elizabeth Scheimer, Fishery Management Specialist, at (978) 281-9236 or email at elizabeth.scheimer@noaa.gov.

Protected Resources Actions

None at this time

Research Document Applications Under Review

NMFS submitted a notice in the Federal Register that will publish soon to solicit public comment on Exempted Fishing Permits (EFP) that would allow a private fisherman to conduct a pilot study jigging for pollock in the Western Gulf of Maine Closed Area. Plans for observer coverage and data collection are currently under review. For additional information, please contact Liz Scheimer at (978) 281-9236 or email at elizabeth.scheimer@noaa.gov

The Shoals Marine Laboratory (SML) submitted an application for an EEAA on May 13, 2016 for a re-authorization of educational fishing activity to be conducted on board four vessels. Fishing activity will include a 16-ft otter trawl, bottom dredge, long lines, handlines, hagfish traps, and rod-and-reel gear. SML expects to make up to 15 tows that are 15-30 minutes across all trips. Some living animals will be retained to support further educational activities (i.e., dissection and species ID). For additional information, please contact Liz Scheimer at (978) 281-9236 or email at elizabeth.scheimer@noaa.gov.

On May 6, 2016, NMFS received a request for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) from the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MADMF) to test the use of standard raised-footrope trawl to target whiting before the current start date of the exempted fishery seasons within sub-areas of Small Mesh Area I (SMA1) in Ipswich Bay and the Western Raised Footrope Exemption Area (Western RFEA) off the tip of Cape Cod. This EFP would allow five vessels to conduct research fishing within SMA1 during July 1-14, 2016, and four vessels within the Western RFEA area during August 18-31, 2016. The participating vessel would be exempt from minimum mesh size gear requirements found at 50 CFR 648.80(a)(3) while conducting research under this EFP. For additional information, please contact Reid Lichwell at (978) 281-9112 or email at Reid.Lichwell@noaa.gov.

Research Document Application Review Completed

On April 19, 2016, NMFS issued Letter of Acknowledgement (LOA) to the University of Maryland Eastern Shore to collect Alcyonaceans (gorgonian corals) in the DelMarva region of the Mid-Atlantic. The objective of this research is to determine the degree and nature of interactions between fishing gears and corals, sponges, and other structure forming invertebrates. For additional information, please contact Liz Scheimer at (978) 281-9236, or email at Elizabeth.scheimer@noaa.gov.

On June 3, 2016, NMFS issued an LOA to CoastalVision, LLC in collaboration with SeaPlan, LLC to conduct an American lobster abundance study at the construction site of the Block Island Wind Farm (BIWF), located within Lobster Conservation Management Area 2. Four study sites will be sampled twice monthly from June through October. No lobster or fish will be landed for sale. All lobsters caught during the sampling activity will be promptly returned to the water after sampling data are collected and all bycatch species will be immediately returned to sea. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180, or email at Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov.

On June 2, 2016, NMFS issued Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs) to Rutgers University and the University of Massachusetts to conduct compensation fishing under the 2016/2017 Monkfish Research Set-Aside Program. There has been 500 monkfish days-at-sea (DAS) allocated for the 2016 fishing year to be divided between the award recipients and sold to fishermen to fund approved research projects. Rutgers University and the University of Massachusetts have each received 250 monkfish DAS for the 2016 fishing year. Vessels authorized to fish under these EFPs are exempt from DAS landing limit restrictions within the Monkfish Northern and Southern Fishery Management Areas found at 50 CFR 648.94(b)(1) and (2). For additional information, please contact Reid Lichwell at (978) 281-9112 or email at Reid.Lichwell@noaa.gov.

On April 29, 2016, NMFS issued an EFP to the University of New England to assess injuries and mortality of Atlantic cod captured in lobster traps while fishing for lobster. This EFP allows commercial fishing vessel to retain cod captured in lobster traps to assess injuries and to tag cod with acoustic transmitters to assess mortality after their capture. This EFP exempts the vessel from the prohibition on landing NE multispecies established under 50 CFR 648.14(k)(l)(i)(B). Vessels will be allowed to retain a total of 60 cod for sampling and all legal lobsters will be retained and sold. For additional information, please contact Reid Lichwell at (978) 281-9112 or email at Reid.Lichwell@noaa.gov.

On April 29, 2016, NMFS issued an LOA to Rutgers University to collect surfclams in support of a laboratory spawning study. The participating vessel will utilize a hydraulic clam dredge to harvest approximately 700 surfclams to be transported to a laboratory at Rutgers University for use in a spawning study. For additional information, please contact Reid Lichwell at (978) 281-9112 or email at Reid.Lichwell@noaa.gov.

Status Report of Greater Atlantic Region Regulatory Actions

On May 27, 2016, NMFS issued an EFP to the Coonamessett Farm Foundation (CFF) in support of research associated with a 2016 Scallop RSA project. The project will test a modified flounder cookie sweep on the outer bale bars of the scallop dredge and film fish-dredge interactions to monitor the effectiveness of the gear modification in reducing flatfish bycatch. For additional information, please contact Shannah Jaburek at (978) 282-8456 or email at Shannah.Jaburek@noaa.gov.

On May 27, 2016, NMFS issued an EFP to CFF in support of research that will test gear modifications in an attempt to reduce finfish bycatch in the dredge fishery. The gear modifications that will be tested adhere to current scallop gear regulations and include: A no-chaffing gear dredge bag; a five-row apron without chaffing gear and a 1.5:1 twine top hanging ratio; and a “daylight skirt,” which would replace the rings in the skirt with three rows of 12-inch square mesh and chain. All trips will take place in scallop fishing areas open to the entire Atlantic sea scallop fishery. The EFP must be used in conjunction with Letters of Authorization issued to CFF for 2016 Scallop RSA compensation fishing trips. For additional information, please contact Shannah Jaburek at (978) 282-8456 or email at Shannah.Jaburek@noaa.gov.

On May 27, 2016, NMFS issued Letters of Authorization to the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS), Arnie’s Fisheries, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute (WHOI), and CFF for vessels to participate in compensation fishing trips under the sea scallop RSA program to generate the revenue to fund their associated research project awarded under the 2016 RSA program. The letters of authorization allow the vessels to fish outside of the sea scallop days-at-sea program and access area possession limits while on a declared RSA trip. For additional information, please contact Shannah Jaburek at (978) 282-8456 or email at Shannah.Jaburek@noaa.gov.

On May 27, 2016, NMFS issued an EFP to National Fisheries Institute (NFI) to add 20 additional tows over the course of two limited access days-at-sea (DAS) to an EFP issued on April 30, 2015, for a 2014 scallop RSA project titled, “Determining Incidental Discard Mortality of Atlantic Sea Scallops, *Placopecten magellanicus*, in the Scallop Dredge Fishery in the Mid-Atlantic Bight.” The additional days will support research for a study assessing the incidental mortality of scallops passing through the 4-inch rings of a 12-foot Turtle Deflector Dredge (TDD) on sandy and hard (gravel) substrates off the coast of New Jersey. For additional information, please contact Shannah Jaburek at (978) 282-8456 or email at Shannah.Jaburek@noaa.gov.

On April 18, 2016, NMFS issued an LOA to VIMS for a 2016 Scallop RSA project to study natural mortality, growth, and movement of scallops by conducting a mark-recapture study on the exceptionally large cohort of two year old scallops that settled in the Elephant Trunk Closed Area. The project will consist of two research cruises. For additional information, please contact Shannah Jaburek at (978) 282-8456 or email at Shannah.Jaburek@noaa.gov.

On April 18, 2016, NMFS issued an LOA to VIMS for a 2016 Scallop RSA project that supports scallop management by conducting a fine scale, high resolution stratified dredge survey that will provide a timely and detailed assessment of the abundance, distribution, and biomass of scallops in the Mid-Atlantic Bight area ranging from the Virginia/North Carolina border to Block Island. This study will build upon information collected during the 2015 survey in the same area. For additional information, please contact Shannah Jaburek at (978) 282-8456 or email at Shannah.Jaburek@noaa.gov.

Status Report of Greater Atlantic Region Regulatory Actions

On April 18, 2016, NMFS issued an LOA to VIMS for a 2016 Scallop RSA project that supports scallop management by conducting a fine scale, high resolution stratified dredge survey that will provide a timely and detailed assessment of the abundance, distribution, and biomass of scallops in the Nantucket Lightship Closed Area and surrounding region. For additional information, please contact Shannah Jaburek at (978) 282-8456 or email at Shannah.Jaburek@noaa.gov.

On June 7, 2016, NMFS issued an LOA to VIMS for a 2016 Scallop RSA project that supports scallop management by conducting a fine scale, high resolution stratified dredge survey that will provide a timely and detailed assessment of the abundance, distribution, and biomass of scallops in the Georges Bank Closed Area II and surrounding region. For additional information, please contact Shannah Jaburek at (978) 282-8456 or email at Shannah.Jaburek@noaa.gov.