



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
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MEMORANDUM

Date: August 1, 2018
To: Council
From: Staff
Subject: *Illex* Issues

There are several *Illex* fishery issues for the August 2018 meeting:

1. The Council indicated in its 2018 Implementation Plan that if time allows, staff should begin development of an action to review and potentially modify the current limited access/moratorium permit system for the *Illex* fishery. Staff may be able to begin work on this action in late 2018, likely with several scoping hearings as a first step. The 2021 fishing year would be the implementation goal. At the request of the Council, NMFS previously published a new control date of August 2, 2013 notifying the public that the Council may consider an action to limit the number of participants in the *Illex* fishery. If the Council intends to potentially use this control date for *Illex*, re-notifying the public of this intent preserves the function of the control date (to discourage speculative entry and investment). The Council does not have to use a control date when taking final action, but the alternatives may treat landings after a control date differently, or not use them for permit qualification purposes.
2. Some industry participants have asked NMFS and Council staff whether the current *Illex* quota could be increased in **2018**. Current regulations state that NMFS may make in-season adjustments to the MSB specifications, in consultation with the Council during the fishing year by publishing notification in the Federal Register. Potential rationales for increasing the *Illex* quota that have been put forth to staff include the SSC's rationale for the current 24,000 MT Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) ("landings of 24,000-26,000 mt do not appear to have caused harm to the *Illex* stock, based on indices and landings in years following..."), the rapid pace of landings in 2017/2018 (Figures 1 and 2 below), and the high NEAMAP survey indices in 2017/2018 (Figure 3 below). The August 2018 Council meeting would serve as an opportunity for NMFS to consult with the Council, but NMFS would ultimately have to determine there was sufficient justification to diverge from the current ABC. The Council should consider recommending an in-season adjustment/increase to the *Illex* ABC to 26,000 MT. Increasing the ABC to 26,000 MT would increase the quota by 1,910 MT to 24,825 MT (worth about \$1.9 million based on 2018 prices to date) after discards are deducted. Any action would unlikely be completed before mid-September at the earliest.

3. Some industry participants have also asked whether the *Illex* quota could be increased for **2019**. Related to the same observations for 2018 noted above, the Council could remand the 2019 ABC for *Illex* back to the SSC for reconsideration. Depending on the SSC's review, a decision to make such a request could involve a moderate amount of extra staff time, possibly pushing back commencement (and completion) of the *Illex* permit action (i.e. #1 above).

Figure 1. 2016 (Orange) and 2017 (Blue) *Illex* Fishery week by week preliminary monitoring.

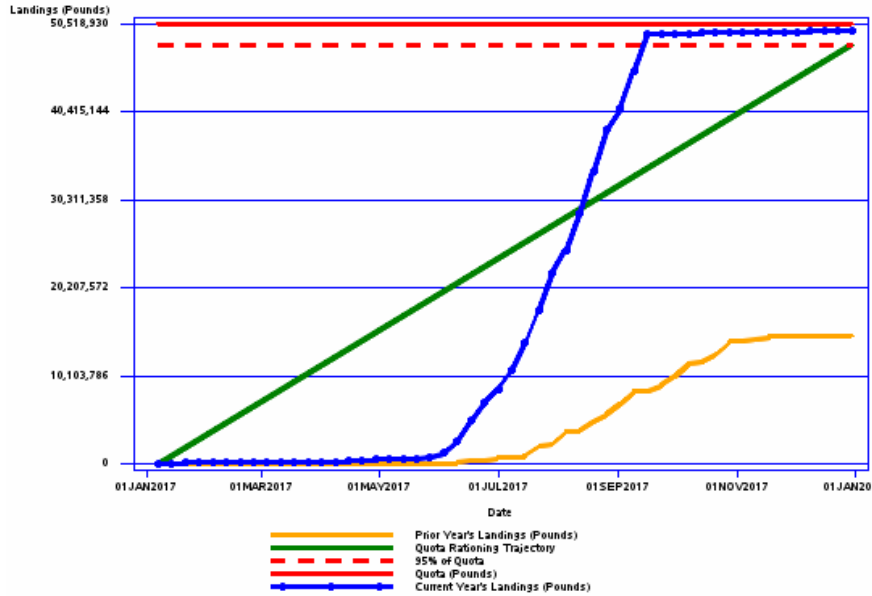


Figure 2. 2017 (Orange) and 2018 (Blue-through late-July) *Illex* Fishery week by week preliminary monitoring. 2018 landings are about 3 weeks ahead of 2017 landings.

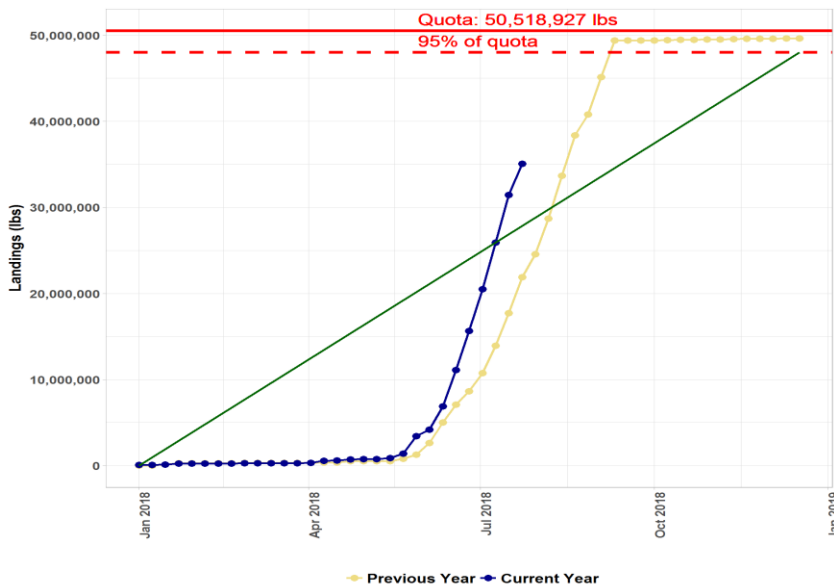
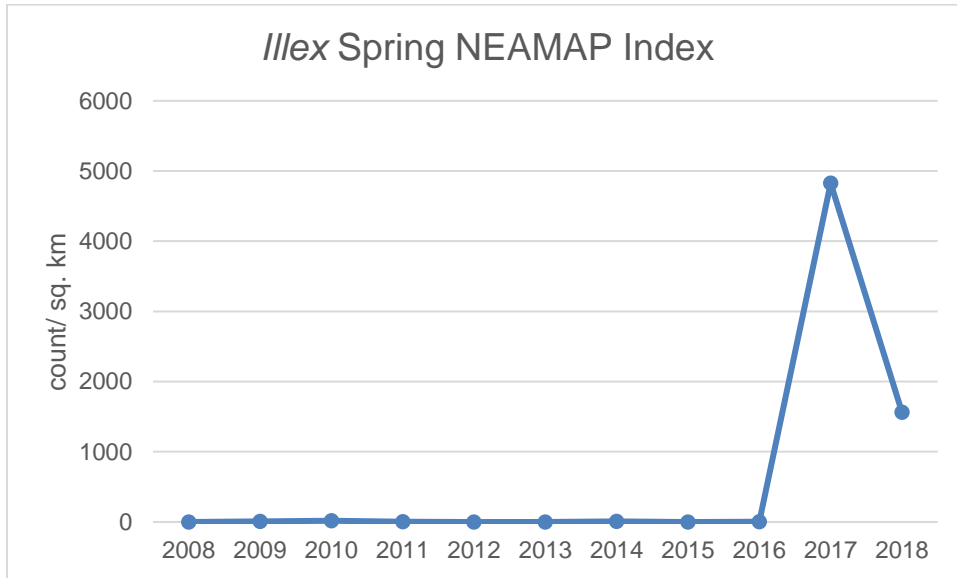


Figure 3. Spring NEAMAP Index for *Illex* Squid



Notes from VIMS/NEAMAP staff: Includes all survey regions in which *Illex* have ever been caught on a NEAMAP spring cruise (Rhode Island Sound down to the mouth of the Delaware Bay), so no positive tows for *Illex* were thrown out. The index is a CPUE, where catch is in count, and effort is area swept (in square km) for each tow. So the CPUE is count/sq km. The CVs are very high (all greater than 250%). The 2008-2016 count numbers are all less than 17/sq km.