



Longfin Squid Fishery Performance Report

April 2022

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Mackerel-Squid-Butterfish (MSB) Advisory Panel (AP) met via webinar on April 26, 2022 to review the Fishery Information Document and develop the following Fishery Performance Report. The meeting also addressed chub mackerel, but a separate report was generated for chub mackerel. The primary purpose of the report is to contextualize catch histories for the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) by providing information about fishing effort, market trends, environmental changes, and other factors. The trigger questions below were posed to the AP to generate discussion. The AP comments summarized below are not necessarily consensus or majority statements.

Advisory Panel members present (7 of 16): Sam Martin, Emerson Hasbrouck, Katie Almeida, Greg DiDomenico, Dan Farnham Jr, Gerry O'Neill, Jeff Kaelin.

Others present: Carly Bari (GARFO), Julia Beaty (MAFMC staff), Jason Didden (MAFMC staff), Michelle Duval (MAFMC member), Gavin Fay (SSC member), Damiana Hartley, Mark Holliday (SSC member), Peter Hughes (MAFMC MSB Committee Chair), Mary Beth Tooley.

Discussion Questions:

1. What factors have influenced recent catch (markets, environment, regulations, etc.)?
2. Are the current fishery regulations appropriate? How could they be improved?
3. What would you recommend as research priorities?
4. What else is important for the Council to know?

General

Shifting thermal habitat suitability is impacting the distribution and/or productivity of MSB species, and needs to be taken into account by assessments/management.

There is concern that assessments will be hurt if surveys are limited by wind development. Similar concern exists regarding data gaps due to COVID-19.

Tariffs affect prices and profitability, and therefore trade. If a buyer is in China, that buyer may try to negotiate price based on what they know they will have to absorb in tariffs.

Management and research track assessments are upcoming (Management Track in 2023 and Research Track in 2026). Management Track input: The Council needs to communicate early with the Center so that fishery participants know what to expect and/or how they can participate or provide data. Research Track input: Having a facilitator was important for *Illex*, and would be good for longfin also. Data issues need to be addressed early as well.

Market/Economic Conditions

COVID-19 had drastic impacts on 2020 longfin demand. Retail trade provided an outlet for some longfin squid products. COVID-19 will continue to increase market uncertainties for the foreseeable future. Ex-Vessel prices dropped 40%-50% from early 2020 to April 2020. 2021 prices for Towndock were nearly the same as pre-Covid prices.

Supply/distribution issues (and increasing shipping costs) are also affecting all seafood markets. EU regulations and market preferences (squid size sorting requirements) also limit ability to re-shuffle squid products into Europe.

Fuel conditions in 2022 are a factor currently affecting the decision whether it's worth going after longfin, or how far participants are willing to travel.

Environmental Conditions

See point above in general section about shifting thermal habitat.

The low catches/effort in summer 2020 presented a natural experiment about laying off squid in the summer – had hoped for a productivity bump in late 2020/early 2021 (was not a boom).

Management Issues

Area/gear limitations negatively affect fishing/landings. Scup, Tilefish, and Fixed/Mobile Gear Restricted Areas (GRAs) have made longfin squid fishing more difficult. Large mesh requirements on George's Bank also restrict targeting of longfin squid in an areas where fishermen have been seeing signs of longfin squid. Until mid-2020, the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine Monument may have also negatively impacted access to areas where longfin squid could have been caught. Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine Monument restrictions have been back in place since October 8, 2021. It's still not clear what impacts have been created by the Monument for MSB – could warrant additional analysis (the Monument also acts as a fence because you'd have to spend the time and fuel to get to the other side).

Other Issues

Appears observers starting to be aware of use of large mesh belly panel – is not clear how this may be being used for discard extrapolation. It's also a new gear designation for VTRs and we may need some outreach that this is a new VTR gear code. Same for observers to ensure gear types are matched correctly.

Upcoming potential for Turtle TEDs needs to consider/research how the new large mesh belly panel gear may interact with Turtle TEDs – research presented to date has been with older gear – potential effectiveness may be different with the current gear. (Cornell has submitted some related proposals, is collaborating with NMFS and proposals are under review.)

Windfarm development continues to be a major concern for the longfin squid fishery given expanding potential overlap between potential wind farm areas and squid fishery areas. Concerns involve **both** fleet displacement and effects on squid mortality/behavior from installation and/or operation of turbines/facilities.

Research Priorities

Investigate NEFSC survey catchability for longfin.

It needs to be more clearly described how the existing evidence supports two primary cohorts (which happen to align with the surveys).