



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## Council Meeting Summary

June 11-13  
Eatontown, New Jersey

### Omnibus Recreational Accountability Measure Amendment

[Open related meeting materials](#)

The Council voted on final measures to include in the Omnibus Recreational Accountability Measure Amendment and approved the amendment for submission to the Secretary of Commerce. The Council's recommendations would result in several major changes to the way the Council identifies and responds to estimated recreational overages.

First, the Council recommended changes to the accountability measure (AM) "trigger" for stocks that are not overfished and where overfishing is not occurring. Under the proposed amendment, a recreational Annual Catch Limit (ACL) would be evaluated by comparing the three year averages of the ACL for that fishery to the 3-year average of the lower confidence limits (defined as point estimate minus one standard error) for the catch estimates. A reactive AM would only be triggered when the entire average of the confidence interval was above the average recreational ACL.

Second, the Council recommended that paybacks only be required in certain cases, such as when the stock is overfished or when both the overfishing limit has been exceeded and the stock has fallen below a certain level. If these conditions are not met, then accountability measures would consist of adjustments to the bag limit, size limit, and season to prevent future overages. When paybacks are required, the Council recommended replacing pound-for-pound paybacks with scaled paybacks that take the current condition of the stock in to account. This change would mean that the payback amount required for an overage in an overfished fishery would be greater than the payback amount for an equivalent overage in a non-overfished fishery.

In addition, the Council voted to eliminate in-season closure authority. This alternative reflects the Council's preference for addressing recreational overages in subsequent fishing years, so that necessary catch reductions can be addressed at the coastwide level rather than imposing an early closure which tends to disproportionately penalize states that fish in the EEZ later in the year. The Council also voted to maintain the current method for specifying Annual Catch Target (ACT) determination.

*Additional details about specific management measures included in the Omnibus Recreational AM Amendment can be found in the related meeting materials link noted above.*

#### *Species and Issues Considered*

- Omnibus Recreational Accountability Amendment
- Surfclams and Ocean Quahogs
- Strategic Plan
- Mackerel, Squid, & Butterfish
- Ecosystem-Approach to Fisheries Management
- Atlantic sturgeon
- Deep Sea Corals

#### *More Information*

Meeting materials, audio files, and presentations related to the topics summarized in this report are available at

[www.mafmc.org/briefing-books](http://www.mafmc.org/briefing-books)

#### *Contact Us*

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## Atlantic Surfclams and Ocean Quahogs

[Open related meeting materials](#)

### Specifications

The Council recommended the following specifications for Atlantic surfclams and Ocean quahogs for 2014-016:

#### Atlantic Surfclam Specifications

Year	Allowable Biological Catch (ABC)	Annual Catch Limits (ACL)	Annual Catch Target (ACT)	Commercial Quota
2014	60,313 mt	60,313 mt	29,364 mt (3.8 million bushels)	26,218 mt (3.4 million bushels)
2015	51,804 mt	51,804 mt	29,364 mt (3.8 million bushels)	26,218 mt (3.4 million bushels)
2016	48,197 mt	48,197 mt	29,364 mt (3.8 million bushels)	26,218 mt (3.4 million bushels)

#### Ocean Quahog Specifications

Year	Allowable Biological Catch (ABC)	Annual Catch Limit (ACL)	Annual Catch Target (ACT)	Commercial Quota
2014-2016	26,100 mt	26,100 mt (5.7 million bushels)	Maine ACT: 524 mt	Maine Quota: 499 mt (100,000 ME bushels)
			Non-Maine ACT: 25,511 mt	Non-Maine Quota: 24,296 mt (5.3 million bushels)

\*mt=metric tons

The Council also recommended that the Regional Administrator suspend the minimum shell length for surfclams in 2014 and that NMFS conduct an analysis of small clam areas prior to surfclam and ocean quahog specifications every 3 years. The Council also requested the NRCC coordinate with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center to schedule and conduct a benchmark assessment on ocean quahogs.

### Data Collection

The Council passed a motion to approve the data collection protocol developed by the Surfclam and Ocean Quahog data collection Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT). The protocol will be submitted to the Northeast Regional Office of NMFS for them to initiate a regulatory Amendment to implement a data collection program for the surfclam/ocean quahog fishery under the authority detailed in section 402A of the Magnuson Stevens Act.

## Strategic Plan

[Open related meeting materials](#)

The Council reviewed the draft 5-year strategic plan developed by a working group of Council members and stakeholders and approved the plan for public comment. The draft plan, which outlines the Council's vision, mission, and strategic goals for 2014-2018, is the culmination of the Council's two-year long Visioning and Strategic Planning Project. Comments from the public will be accepted through July 19, 2013 and reviewed by the Council at its August 13-15 meeting in Wilmington, DE.

The Draft 2014-2018 Strategic Plan is available on the [Council's website](#) along with additional background information about the Visioning and Strategic Planning Project. Comments on the plan can be submitted directly through the Council's website or via mail, email, or fax. Instructions are posted [here](#).

## Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish

[Open related meeting materials](#)

### *Specifications*

For 2014, mackerel, longfin squid, and *Illex* squid will continue to operate under status-quo, multi-year specifications. The Council set 9,100 mt as the 2014 butterfish acceptable biological catch (ABC), consistent with the recommendation of its Scientific and Statistical Committee. This should allow some additional directed butterfish fishing opportunities in 2014. The butterfish cap on the longfin squid fishery would remain the same, keeping longfin closures unlikely as long as discarding of butterfish is relatively low.

### *River herring and shad cap*

The Council approved a 236 mt cap on incidental catch of river herring and shad in the Atlantic mackerel fishery for 2014. Under the new cap, the mackerel fishing fleet—which is primarily composed of trawlers—will risk early closure if they are unable to successfully avoid river herring and shad. The catch cap is one of several protective measures slated to take effect next year as part of Amendment 14 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan.

### *Other Issues*

The Council asked NMFS to establish a new control date for *Illex* squid. The new date is likely to be published in July 2013 and could be used to determine current and historical participation if consideration of additional access controls, such as a permit re-qualification, becomes warranted in the future.

The Council also recommended allowing vessels fishing for *Illex* to retain up to 15,000 pounds of longfin squid during longfin squid closures in Trimester 2. Details will be described to permit holders, but this should reduce regulatory discarding of longfin squid that can occur during *Illex* fishing if/when the longfin squid fishery closes in Trimester 2.

## Executive Committee

[Open related meeting materials](#)

The Executive Committee received an update from staff on the development of an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) guidance document. Staff reviewed the outcome of the Forage Fish Workshop held in conjunction with the April council meeting. The Forage Panel concluded that forage or low trophic species warrant special management consideration given their critical role(s) within ecosystems. The panel suggested a number of approaches to forage fish management and stressed the need to clearly delineate scientific issues from policy considerations.

Following a discussion of the revised timeline for EAFM guidance document development, the Committee tasked the EAFM Working Group with the following:

- 1) Develop definition of forage fish,
- 2) Develop a list of Mid-Atlantic forage species (managed and unmanaged) and where possible, describe past and present status (abundance) of each species,
- 3) Develop and analyze a list of options for ABC control rule protocols for forage species incorporating M2 (predation mortality) considerations,
- 4) Assess current state of forage base in Mid-Atlantic and explore definition/description of functional groups for use in maintenance of adequate forage base within the ecosystem and,
- 5) Develop an analytical framework to assess food web dynamics in the Mid-Atlantic.

Following the EAFM update, the Committee received a presentation on issues related to wind farm siting in the United Kingdom.

## Atlantic Sturgeon Update

[Open related meeting materials](#)

The Council received an update on the Atlantic Sturgeon Biological Opinion from the recent Section 7 Consultation for seven northeast fisheries. The consultation, which was undertaken by NMFS partially in response to the ESA-listing of five distinct population segments of Atlantic sturgeon, assessed the potential adverse impacts of the continued operation of these fisheries on ESA-listed species. The results indicated that these fisheries may adversely affect, but are not likely to jeopardize any of the five DPSs of Atlantic sturgeon. In response to these findings, NMFS has proposed four Reasonable and Prudent Measures (RPMs) to minimize the take of Atlantic sturgeon, the Gulf of Maine population segment of Atlantic salmon, and sea turtles. The Draft BiOp is posted online at [http://nero.noaa.gov/mediacenter/2013/05/draft\\_fmp\\_batch\\_biop.html](http://nero.noaa.gov/mediacenter/2013/05/draft_fmp_batch_biop.html) and will be available for public comment through July 19, 2013.

## Deep Sea Corals

[Open related meeting materials](#)

The Council approved a final version of a Memorandum of Understanding regarding broad-scale coordination of deep-sea coral protections between the New England Fishery Management Council, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

## Listening Session

[Open related meeting materials](#)

During the listening session, John Bullard presented the main themes from a series of more than 20 meetings he held with constituents during his first six months as Regional Administrator. The themes were summarized in a report of "Listening Session Highlights" published by NOAA Fisheries last month. The Listening Session Highlights are divided into ten main themes, including science and data, ecosystem and climate change, management issues, Mid-Atlantic concerns, and more.

## ASMFC Annual Awards of Excellence

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) presented Annual Awards of Excellence to Captain Mark Canale, Conservation Officer Craig James, Conservation Officer Jeremy Trembley, and Lieutenant Karl Yunghans for their roles in a 5-year investigation of oyster trafficking which recently culminated with the conviction of seven defendants on 37 counts of trafficking in illegal oysters. The awards are presented each year to individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the success of fisheries management. Four other individuals not in attendance at the meeting received awards for their roles in the investigation.



**Next Meeting: August 13-15, 2013**

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