Council Sets Specifications for 2005
Squid, Atlantic Mackerel, Butterfish, Surfclam, and Ocean Quahog Fisheries

June 25, 2004

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) met in Hershey, Pennsylvania this week to adopt fishery management measures for the squid, Atlantic mackerel, butterfish and surfclam and ocean quahog fisheries for 2005. The Council also discussed the need to finalize the public hearing document regarding Amendment 9 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan so as to have it available for the Council to approve it at its October, 2004 meeting. It was also agreed that real time data collection and management of the Illex fishery needed to be acted upon following Amendment 9 actions.

In the long-finned squid (Loligo) fishery, the Council agreed to maintain the second year (2005) of the 2004-2006 annual quota specifications implemented last year by setting a maximum optimum yield (Max OY) at 26,000 metric tons (mt) and an allowable biological catch (ABC), initial optimum yield (IOY), domestic annual harvest (DAH), and domestic annual processing (DAP) at 17,000 mt. The 17,000 mt annual quota would be divided into quarterly allocations as follows: 1st quarter - 5,649 mt (33.2%); 2nd quarter - 2,994 mt (17.6%); 3rd quarter - 2,941 mt (17.3%); 4th quarter - 5,416 mt (31.9%). When 80 percent of the directed fishery in the 1st through 3rd quarters is taken, vessels would be restricted to a 2,500 pound trip limit for the remainder of these quarters. When 95 percent of the total annual quota is taken (i.e., 16,150 mt) the trip limit would be reduced to 2,500 pounds and would remain in effect for the rest of the fishing year. Quarterly overages would be deducted as follows: 1st quarter overages will be deducted from the 3rd quarter; 2nd quarter overages will be deducted from the 4th quarter. If the 1st quarter landings are less than 80 percent for the 1st quarter allocation, the underage below 80 percent would be added to the 3rd quarter. Underages from the 2nd and 3rd quarters would be added to the 4th quarter until 95 percent of the annual quota is taken and the fishery is closed.

In the short-finned squid (Illex) fishery, the 2005 specifications would set the Max OY, ABC, IOY, DAH, and DAP at 24,000 mt. The directed fishery for Illex would remain open until 95 percent of the ABC is taken (i.e., 22,800 mt). When the directed fishery is open, the trip limit for non-moratorium vessels would be set at 10,000 pounds. When 95 percent of the quota is reached, the directed fishery would be closed and a 10,000 pound trip limit would take effect for the remainder of the fishing year.

The butterfish specifications for the 2005 fishing season would set Max OY at 12,175 mt; ABC at 4,545 mt; and IOY, DAH, DAP at 1,681 mt.

Atlantic mackerel specifications for 2005 would set ABC at 335,000 mt; DAP at 150,000 mt; and IOY at 165,000 mt. The DAH includes 150,000 mt for DAP and 15,000 mt for the recreational fishery. The Council approved a 2005 research set-aside of 255.4 mt for Loligo squid.

The Council voted to work with the Regional Office and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center to develop a real time data collection and management process for Illex fishery, but maintain Amendment 9 to Atlantic mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan as its first priority.

In the surfclam fishery, the Council approved a quota of 3.4 million bushels for 2005, 2006, and 2007. In addition, the Council voted to continue the suspension of the surfclam minimum size limit of 4.75 inches for the next three years.

The Council approved the following quotas for ocean quahogs: 5.333 million bushels for 2005; 5.666 million bushels for 2006; and, 6.000 million bushels for 2007. The Council also voted to maintain the Maine
The Research Set-Aside Committee met and discussed the merits of restructuring the RSA program so that quota is first converted into cash and then placed in a ‘Research Trust Fund.’ Research projects could then be submitted requesting a grant of dollars, rather than fish. It was noted that such a restructuring could be of benefit in meeting the Committee’s goal of increasing the recreational fishing community’s ability to participate in the RSA program. The Committee also expressed an interest in holding a workshop in which members of the public would be able to discuss research concepts and application procedures prior to the next research set aside cycle.

The Council also voted to continue its position of meeting its fishery management plan responsibilities to update essential fish habitat descriptions and identifications when appropriate and necessary in lieu of a five year review frequency.

A number of Council members and staff took advantage of the meeting location to visit the Pennsylvania State Capitol Building in Harrisburg. They were greeted by Representative Curt Schroder (R-Chester County) who welcomed them to the Capitol and expressed his gratitude for the good job the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission were doing managing Mid-Atlantic fishery resources. A subsequent tour of the building confirmed President Theodore Roosevelt’s opinion: “The handsomest Capitol I ever saw.”

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