



April 2018 Council Meeting Report

April 10-12, 2018

Montauk, New York

The following summary highlights actions taken and issues considered at the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's April 2018 meeting in Montauk, New York. Presentations, briefing materials, and webinar recordings are available on the Council website at www.mafmc.org/briefing/april-2018.

Atlantic Mackerel and Squid Issues

Atlantic Mackerel Rebuilding

A recent stock assessment found Atlantic mackerel to be overfished with overfishing occurring. The Council intends to address rebuilding through a framework action to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). During this first framework meeting, the Council reviewed an initial range of alternatives and endorsed further development of catch options that are projected to rebuild Atlantic mackerel in 3, 5, or 7 years, along with associated management measures. Depending on the timeframe, catches in future years could increase or decrease. The Council will receive an update in June 2018 and is scheduled to take final action at the August 2018 Council meeting.

Atlantic Mackerel-Atlantic Herring Issue

The Atlantic mackerel fishery is projected to reach 100% of its quota at some point in early December 2018. Under current regulations, a zero-possession limit will take effect once the quota is reached. The possibility of a total mackerel closure in 2018 has raised concerns about possible effects on the herring fishery. The Council considered management options that could allow for the continued operation of the herring fishery without resulting in an overage of the mackerel annual catch limit (ACL). The Council ultimately decided to address possible adjustments to the 2018 Atlantic mackerel regulations through a separate framework action which will consider recommending that NOAA Fisheries implement a 5,000 or 10,000 pound trip limit when 100% of the commercial quota is reached. Any overages incurred while with this reduced trip limit in place are expected to be constrained within the existing 2.3 million pound management uncertainty buffer. Final action will be considered at the June 2018 Council meeting.

Blueline Tilefish

2019-2021 Specifications

After reviewing recommendations from its Scientific and Statistical Committee, Tilefish Monitoring Committee, and Tilefish Advisory Panel, the Council adopted blueline tilefish management measures for the 2019-2021 fishing years. For 2019, 2020, and 2021 the Council set an annual catch target (ACT) equal to the annual catch limit (ACL) of 100,520 pounds in the Mid-Atlantic jurisdiction. The recreational fishery is allocated 73% of the ACT, resulting in a recreational total allowable landings (TAL) of 71,912 pounds. The commercial fishery is allocated 27% of the ACT, resulting in a commercial TAL of 26,869 pounds.

Summary of Blueline Tilefish 2019 – 2021 Specifications	
ACT = ACL = ABC	100,520 pounds
Recreational TAL	71,912 pounds
Commercial TAL	26,869 pounds
Commercial trip limit	500 pounds (until 70% of quota is met, then reduced to 300 pounds)

Several issues related to monitoring and reporting of blueline tilefish were discussed. The Council recommended that Council staff work with GARFO to develop size range bins for blueline tilefish similar to the way dealers report golden tilefish. The Council also suggested that other options should be considered for monitoring the recreational ACL (other than the Delphi output or MRIP).

Golden Tilefish

2019 Specifications Review

The Council reviewed golden tilefish specifications for the 2019 fishing year, which were established in 2017 as part of multi-year specifications for the 2018-2020 fishing years. After considering recommendations from its Scientific and Statistical Committee, Tilefish Monitoring Committee, and Tilefish Advisory Panel, the Council recommended no changes to the 2019 specifications summarized below.

Summary of Golden Tilefish 2019 Specifications	
Allowable Catch Limit (ACL):	1.636 million pounds
Commercial Quota: <i>Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) fishery</i>	1.554 million pounds
Incidental Quota	72,398 pounds
Incidental Trip Limit	500 pounds
Recreational Trip Limit	8 fish

Illegal and Unreported Landings of Golden Tilefish

The Council discussed concerns about non-IFQ tilefish vessels targeting golden tilefish under the golden tilefish incidental fishery regulations. This issue was partly addressed by Framework 2 to the Tilefish FMP, which established a new requirement that incidental golden tilefish landings cannot exceed 50% of the total weight of all combined species landed. Industry members have requested that additional work be done to better understand available tilefish permit information. The Council agreed to convene a group composed of members of the Council's Tilefish, Highly Migratory Species, and Law Enforcement Committees to discuss these concerns and determine whether Council action is warranted.

Shortfin Mako Shark

Guy Dubeck (National Marine Fisheries Service) presented on the development of management measures to address overfishing of North Atlantic shortfin mako sharks. The most recent stock assessment for shortfin mako sharks found the stock to be overfished with overfishing occurring. NOAA Fisheries has already implemented management measures to address overfishing through an emergency rule effective March 2, 2018. NOAA Fisheries is developing a regulatory amendment to the 2006 Consolidated HMS Fishery Management Plan that will consider and evaluate conservation and management options to address overfishing when the interim rule has expired. NOAA Fisheries has scheduled scoping hearings and is requesting public comments on commercial and recreational management options. Additional information about this action is available at:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/bulletin/submit-comments-options-address-overfishing-north-atlantic-shortfin-mako-sharks>.

State of the Ecosystem Report

Sarah Gaichas (NOAA Fisheries Northeast Fisheries Science Center) reported on the ongoing development of a report on the state of the ecosystem in the Mid-Atlantic bight. The purpose of this report is to provide ecosystem-scale information for fishery managers to consider along with existing species-scale analyses. Council members provided feedback and suggestions for future development of the report.

Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass Mesh Selectivity Study

Emerson Hasbrouck presented the results of a research project on selectivity and optimum mesh size for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. Funded by the Council's 2016-2017 Collaborative Fisheries Research Program, this project compared the catch composition, retention efficiency, and size selectivity parameters of five different codends in the commercial bottom trawl fishery within the Mid-Atlantic region.

Upcoming Council Meetings

April 30, 2018

*Joint Meeting with ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup,
and Black Sea Bass Board*
The Westin Crystal City
1800 S. Eads Street
Arlington, VA 22202
Telephone: 888-627-8209

June 5-7, 2018

Doubletree by Hilton
237 South Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA, 19107-5686
Telephone: 215-893-1600