



June 2018 Council Meeting Summary

June 5 - 7, 2018

Philadelphia, PA

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

Surfclams and Ocean Quahogs

Excessive Shares Amendment

The Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Committee met to review the draft recommendations on alternatives for the [Excessive Shares Amendment](#) developed by the Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) (available [here](#)). The Committee recommended an additional alternative to be added to the set of alternatives developed by the FMAT and instructed the FMAT to continue development of the alternatives for inclusion in the Public Hearing Draft. The Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Advisory Panel (AP) members will have an opportunity to comment on the Public Hearing Draft before the Council meets again to approve this document for public hearings.

2019 Specification Review

Next year the surfclam and ocean quahog fisheries will be in the second year of multi-year specifications previously set for the 2018-2020 fishing years. The Council reviewed updated catch and landings information for both stocks, as well as recommendations from staff, the surfclam and ocean quahog AP, and the SSC, and determined that no changes are warranted. The Council also voted to recommend suspending the minimum shell length for surfclams in 2019. These specifications are described in detail in the final rule published February 6, 2018:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/02/06/2018-02321/fisheries-of-the-northeastern-united-states-atlantic-surfclam-and-ocean-quahog-fishery-2018-2020>

Atlantic Mackerel Closure Framework

The Council met for a second meeting to discuss and take final action on the [Atlantic Mackerel Closure Framework](#). This framework was initiated in April 2018 in response to concerns about the possible effects of an Atlantic mackerel closure on the herring fishery. Currently, the Atlantic mackerel fishery is projected to reach 100% of its quota at some point in late 2018. Under current regulations, a zero-possession limit will take effect once the quota is reached. During this meeting, the Council voted to recommend that NOAA Fisheries implement a 5,000 pound trip limit when 100% of the commercial quota is reached. This limit appears likely to minimize negative impacts from a zero-possession limit on the Atlantic herring fishery while likely avoiding an ACL overage for the Atlantic mackerel fishery.

Chub Mackerel Amendment

The Council received an update on the [Chub Mackerel Amendment](#) and reviewed a fishery performance report developed by the Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish (MSB) Advisory Panel. The Council also reviewed recommendations from the FMAT, the MSB Advisory Panel, and the MSB Committee regarding amendment goals and objectives and other issues being considered as part of this action. The Council approved two modifications to the draft goals and objectives recommended by the Committee. These goals and objectives will be included in a public hearing document.

Summer Flounder Commercial Issues Amendment

The Council approved a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the [Summer Flounder Commercial Issues Amendment](#). The Council and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission had previously approved a public hearing document at their [joint meeting in April 2018](#). The amendment DEIS will be submitted to NMFS for review, followed by public hearings tentatively scheduled to begin in September 2018.

Atlantic Herring Amendment 8

The New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) hosted a public hearing on Amendment 8 to the Atlantic Herring FMP. Amendment 8 addresses several goals: (1) To account for the role of Atlantic herring within the ecosystem, including its role as forage; (2) To stabilize the fishery at a level designed to achieve optimum yield; and (3) To address localized depletion in inshore waters. NEFMC staff presented an overview of the amendment and the alternatives being considered, followed by an opportunity for Council members and members of the public to provide oral comments. Additional information about this amendment is available on the NEFMC website at <https://www.nefmc.org/library/amendment-8-2>.

Regulatory Review

On July 7, 2017, NOAA published a notice on “Streamlining Regulatory Processes and Reducing Regulatory Burden,” which solicited public input on identifying existing regulations and processes that can be further streamlined consistent with law. During the meeting, the Council reviewed a list of regulations identified by staff that may be appropriate for streamlining. These include both general recommendations as well as FMP-specific regulations that appear outdated, unnecessary, and/or ineffective. After a brief discussion the Council approved the list of regulations recommended by staff for streamlining.

Presentations

Estimating and Reducing Black Sea Bass Discard Mortality

Douglas Zemeckis (Rutgers University) presented the results of a research project on black sea bass discard mortality. Funded by the Council’s 2016-2017 Collaborative Fisheries Research Program, this project aimed to estimate the discard mortality rate of black sea bass following capture with rod-and-reel fishing gear at a deepwater offshore shipwreck in the Mid-Atlantic and identify the capture-related factors that influence discard mortality.

Northeast Observer Program

The Council received an update on the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program from Amy Martins, Branch Chief of the Fisheries Sampling Branch with NOAA Fisheries Northeast Fisheries Science Center. The presentation included an overview of observer activities and accomplishments from the past year and upcoming activities in the current year.

NMFS Climate Strategy

Vincent Saba (NOAA Fisheries Northeast Fisheries Science Center) presented an overview of climate change research within NOAA’s Northeast Fisheries Science Center. Much of this work falls under the umbrella of the NOAA Fisheries Climate Science Strategy. Current research indicates that the Northeast shelf has warmed faster than most other coastal waters globally and that continued distribution shifts of valuable commercial species are highly likely. Future research will focus on incorporating climate variables into ecosystem models and evaluating the impacts of climate change to inform stock assessments and management. For additional information, visit:

<https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/ecosystems/climate/national-climate-strategy>.

Mid-Atlantic Coastal Acidification Network Monitoring Plan

Sherilyn Lau (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) presented on the Mid-Atlantic Coastal Acidification Network’s (MACAN) Draft Monitoring Plan. The plan highlights existing monitoring of ocean acidification, best available technology, and optimization to improve understanding of carbonate chemistry variability while monitoring in an efficient way. Following the presentation, Council members had an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the draft plan.

Aquaculture in the Northeast

The Council received a presentation on aquaculture in federal waters from Kevin Madley, Aquaculture Coordinator for NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office. Mr. Madley provided an overview of current trends in global aquaculture production, aquaculture operations in the Atlantic exclusive economic zone (EEZ), and U.S. research and innovation in aquaculture. The presentation also covered different regional approaches to aquaculture management in the EEZ.

Next Council Meeting

Monday, August 13, 2018 – Thursday, August 16, 2018

Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront
3001 Atlantic Ave.
Virginia Beach, VA 23451
757-213-3000