Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog (SCOQ)

June Council Meeting

June 7, 2022
Today’s Review (2023 Measures)

- Surfclam fishery info doc
  - Fishery data update, no survey data
  - Received Level 3 SC and Level 1 OQ Management Track Assessments in 2020
- Fishery performance report (both species)
- Staff recommendations for surfclam
- SSC recommendations for surfclam
- Repeat for ocean quahog...
Surfclam Biomass

The chart illustrates the biomass of surfclams over the years from 1980 to 2020. It shows two lines representing the target and threshold levels. The target line is marked with a dotted line, while the threshold is indicated by a solid line. The biomass values are shown vertically on the y-axis, ranging from 0 to 7, and the years are marked on the x-axis.

Target

Threshold
Surfclam Fishing Mortality

![Graph showing exploitation rate over years with a threshold line.](image-url)
2021: 41 vessels (2 fewer than 2020)

8 processors/dealers SCOQ in 5 states

Increase in overall ex-vessel value
- $24 million in 2021
- Up $1 million from 2020
Surfclam Landings (thru May 26)

Quota: 3,400,000 bushels

- Current Year
- Previous Year
Fisheries Performance Report

- Covers both SCOQ
- Advisors met April 19, 2022
- Asked series of trigger questions
- AP identified several “Critical Issues”
- Also note, advisors would like status quo quotas (quota stability = fishery/market stability)
Fisheries Performance Report

- Regulations for shellfish safety have been updated by FDA.
- NOAA Fisheries has not addressed these changes on Georges Bank - preventing access to fishing areas unnecessarily.
- NOAA Fisheries/GARFO has not yet acted to modify these unnecessary shellfish safety area closures in a timely manner.
- AP requests Council send a letter to NOAA Fisheries and the appropriate public health safety groups (in NOAA and FDA).
A. COVID-19:

- Sales to restaurants (foodservice) was low for 2020 and in 2021.
- Clam industry has seen a ramp up in food service demand, so COVID not a huge issue for 2022 in this sector.
- Demand is high but limitations in terms of the amount of product available (i.e., able to sell more than can be produced).
- Industry anticipates that as if inventories grow, they would be able to sell the addition product.
Fisheries Performance Report

B. Research:

- Important Council support research in Great South Channel Habitat Management Area (Nantucket Shoals/Southern New England area)

- Lack of access in this area is challenge for industry and has negatively impacted catch rates.

- Advisors would like to see Councils work on issue.

- Industry members are frustrated with their lack of ability to work through Exempted Fishing Permit program.
B. Research:

- Time components of the GSCHMA access areas (seasonal restrictions for cod) should be revisited.
- AP recognizes that Councils have taken initial steps, but industry does not feel it is being addressed.
- AP requests the MAFMC make this issue a priority under their responsibilities to SCOQ Fishery Management Plan.
- AP also recommends the MAFMC follow up with NEFMC to conduct a cross Council workshop on the issue.
Other Important Issues:

- The SCOQ AP would like to request that surfclam and ocean quahog AP members have two seats on Fishery Management Action Teams (FMATs) for issues related to these fisheries.
Atlantic Surfclam Flowchart

- Overfishing Limit (OFL)
- Scientific Uncertainty
- Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) = Annual Catch Limit (ACL) = Total Allowable Catch (TAC)
- Management Uncertainty
- Annual Catch Target (ACT)
## Surfclam SSC/Council Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>OFL</th>
<th>ABC</th>
<th>ACL</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>Commercial Quota</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>51,361 mt</td>
<td>47,919 mt</td>
<td>47,919 mt</td>
<td>29,363 mt</td>
<td>26,218 mt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>48,202 mt</td>
<td>44,522 mt</td>
<td>44,522 mt</td>
<td>29,363 mt</td>
<td>26,218 mt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>45,959 mt</td>
<td>42,237 mt</td>
<td>42,237 mt</td>
<td>29,363 mt</td>
<td>26,218 mt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2024</td>
<td>44,629 mt</td>
<td>40,946 mt</td>
<td>40,946 mt</td>
<td>29,363 mt</td>
<td>26,218 mt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2025</td>
<td>44,048 mt</td>
<td>40,345 mt</td>
<td>40,345 mt</td>
<td>29,363 mt</td>
<td>26,218 mt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2026</td>
<td>43,886 mt</td>
<td>40,264 mt</td>
<td>40,264 mt</td>
<td>29,363 mt</td>
<td>26,218 mt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Surfclam ABC for 2023

- No new fishery independent data available.
- Atlantic Surfclam LPUEs have shown steady declines as the overall stock approaches Bmsy levels.
- Catches of Surfclams on Georges Bank and in Southern New England constitute an increasing fraction of landings since 2011.
- Catches continue to be below existing quotas.
- Stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.
- The SSC recommended continuation of previously approved quotas of 42,237 mt for Atlantic Surfclams for 2023.
Surfclam Staff/SSC Recommendations

- Staff (see Memo): No changes to measures for 2023
  - Note: Council will need motion to recommend RA suspend minimum size (required annually)

- SSC (see SSC Report): Continuation of previously recommended 2023 measures
Quahog Biomass

The graph shows the biomass of quahogs over the years from 1980 to 2020. The biomass is plotted on the y-axis, ranging from 0.0 to 3.0, and the years are marked on the x-axis. The line indicates the trend in biomass, with a target and threshold levels indicated by dotted lines. The trend suggests a decrease in biomass over the years, with the threshold level being consistently below the target.
Quahog Fishing Mortality
2021: 16 non-ME vessels, 3 ME

8 processors/dealers of SCOQ in 5 states

Increase in overall ex-vessel value
- $18 million in 2021
- Up $2 million from 2020
Quahog Landings – Non-Maine (thru May 26)

Quota: 5,333,000 bushels
Quahog Landings – Maine (thru May 26)
Ocean Quahog Flowchart

Overfishing Limit (OFL) → Scientific Uncertainty

Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) = Annual Catch Limit (ACL) = Total Allowable Catch (TAC)

Management Uncertainty

Annual Catch Target (ACT) Non-Maine Fishery

Annual Catch Target (ACT) Maine Fishery
## Quahog SSC/Council Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>OFL</th>
<th>ABC</th>
<th>ACL</th>
<th>ACT*</th>
<th>Commercial Quota*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>44,960 mt</td>
<td>44,031 mt</td>
<td>44,031 mt</td>
<td>25,924 mt</td>
<td>24,689 mt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>45,001 mt</td>
<td>44,072 mt</td>
<td>44,072 mt</td>
<td>25,924 mt</td>
<td>24,689 mt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>45,012 mt</td>
<td>44,082 mt</td>
<td>44,082 mt</td>
<td>25,924 mt</td>
<td>24,689 mt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2024</td>
<td>44,994 mt</td>
<td>44,065 mt</td>
<td>44,065 mt</td>
<td>25,924 mt</td>
<td>24,689 mt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2025</td>
<td>44,948 mt</td>
<td>44,020 mt</td>
<td>44,020 mt</td>
<td>25,924 mt</td>
<td>24,689 mt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2026</td>
<td>44,875 mt</td>
<td>43,948 mt</td>
<td>43,948 mt</td>
<td>25,924 mt</td>
<td>24,689 mt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For combined Maine and non-Maine quahog fishery.
Ocean Quahog ABC for 2023

• Previous model results for Ocean Quahog suggest stable abundance trends at about two times Bmsy since 1980.

• Overall LPUE trend consistent with this model result.

• Fishing patterns have shifted northward and eastward over time. Catches continued to be below existing quotas.

• No new fishery independent data were available. Stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

• The SSC recommended continuation of previously approved quotas 44,082 mt for 2023.
Quahog Staff/SSC Recommendations

- Staff (see Memo): No changes to measures for 2023
- SSC (see SSC Report): Continuation of previously recommended 2023 measures