



## **Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council**

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# **M E M O R A N D U M**

**Date:** September 26, 2024  
**To:** Executive Committee  
**From:** Chris Moore, Executive Director  
**Subject:** 2026 Implementation Plan – Draft Actions and Deliverables

The Executive Committee will meet in open session on Tuesday, October 8 at 10:30 a.m. to receive an update on the 2025 Implementation Plan and discuss proposed actions and deliverables for 2026. The Council will review and approve a complete 2026 Implementation Plan in December. The following items are enclosed for Committee review:

1. 2025 Implementation Plan – Status Updates
2. Draft 2026 Proposed Actions and Deliverables

# 2025 PROPOSED ACTIONS AND DELIVERABLES

## Status Updates

October 2025 Council Meeting – Executive Committee

The table below provides an update on the status of proposed actions and deliverables from the Council's 2025 Implementation Plan. This document reflects the expected status of each item by the end of 2025 (tasks may be marked as "Completed" if they will be addressed at the October or December meetings).

- **Completed:** The task is expected to be completed by the end of 2025. Amendments, frameworks, and specifications are considered "Completed" once the Council has taken final action.
- **In Progress:** The task is on track, and work will carry over into the following year.
- **Ongoing:** The task is part of the Council's routine activities and does not have an expected end point.
- **Delayed or Postponed:** The original timeline has shifted.

Notes:

- Asterisks (\*) denote contractor-supported projects
- (A) before an item signifies that it is an addition to the deliverables originally approved for 2025

Deliverable	Expected status by end of 2025	Notes
<b>Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass</b>		
1. Develop 2026-2027 specifications for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass	Completed	
2. Develop 2026-2027 recreational management measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass	Completed	To be addressed at December meeting
3. Support the management track assessments for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass	Completed	
4. Facilitate development of advisory panel fishery performance reports	Completed	
5. Complete the Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework	Completed	
6. Continue development of the Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment	In Progress	Renamed to "Recreational Sector Separation Amendment" following modification of scope. Development of a white paper on Recreational Data Collection and Use has been initiated.
7. Develop a white paper on sector-specific Overfishing Limits (OFL) and Acceptable Biological Catches (ABC) for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass (SSC tasking)	Completed	

Deliverable	Expected status by end of 2025	Notes
<b>Bluefish</b>		
8. Develop 2026-2027 specifications for bluefish	Completed	Submitted 2026-2027 Bluefish Specifications – Sept. 4, 2025
9. Support the management track assessment for bluefish	Completed	
10. Facilitate development of advisory panel fishery performance report	Completed	
<b>Golden and Blueline Tilefish</b>		
11. Develop 2026-2028 specifications for blueline tilefish	Completed (see note)	The SSC provided an ABC recommendation for a single year, so specifications were set for 2026 only.
12. Review 2026 specifications for golden tilefish	Completed	
13. Facilitate development of advisory panel fishery performance reports	Completed	
14. Participate in the SEDAR 92 operational assessment for blueline tilefish	Completed	
15. Review update on private recreational tilefish permitting and reporting	Completed	
16. Develop and implement strategies to improve angler compliance with permitting and reporting requirements	In Progress	
17. Initiate framework action to modify private recreational tilefish reporting requirements	In Progress	
18. Coordinate and support the 2025 golden tilefish survey*	Delayed	May be conducted in 2026
19. Support the continued expansion of the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey into Mid-Atlantic waters*	Ongoing	
(A) Convene joint SAFMC/MAFMC committee to discuss the allocation of blueline tilefish between the two jurisdictions	Completed	To be convened in late 2025.
<b>Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish (MSB)</b>		
20. Develop 2026-2028 specifications for <i>Illex</i> squid	Completed	
21. Develop 2026-2027 specifications for Atlantic mackerel	Completed	
22. Develop 2026-2028 specifications for chub mackerel	Completed	

Deliverable	Expected status by end of 2025	Notes
23. Review 2026 specifications for butterfish and longfin squid	Completed	
24. Facilitate development of advisory panel fishery performance reports	Completed	
25. Support the management track assessments for <i>Illex</i> squid and Atlantic mackerel	Completed	
26. Participate on 2026 longfin squid research track assessment working group*	Completed	
27. Support the squid length-based assessment modeling project*	Completed	
28. Support the longfin squid biological sampling project*	Completed	
(A) Initiate and complete Atlantic mackerel rebuilding framework	Completed	
<b>River Herring and Shad (RH/S)</b>		
29. Develop 2026-2027 RH/S cap for the Atlantic mackerel fishery	Completed	
30. Review biennial RH/S update	Completed	
<b>Surfclam and Ocean Quahog (SCOQ)</b>		
31. Review 2026 specifications for surfclam and ocean quahog	Completed	
32. Facilitate development of advisory panel fishery performance reports	Completed	
33. Support the surfclam/ocean quahog electronic monitoring project*	Completed	
<b>Spiny Dogfish</b>		
34. Develop 2026-2027 specifications for spiny dogfish	Completed	
35. Facilitate development of advisory panel fishery performance report	Completed	
36. Initiate framework to modify spiny dogfish accountability measures	Completed	
37. Support the spiny dogfish ageing project*	Completed	
38. Support the sturgeon bycatch reduction project*	Completed	

Deliverable	Expected status by end of 2025	Notes
(A) Initiate and complete the Spiny Dogfish Accountability Measures Framework	Completed	
<b>Monkfish</b>		
39. Develop 2026-2028 specifications for monkfish	Completed	
40. Support the management track assessment for monkfish	Dropped	The NRCC agreed to a monkfish data update in 2025.
41. Support the 2027 monkfish research track assessment	Postponed	The NRCC agreed to postpone the monkfish research track assessment through 2026.
<b>Ecosystem and Ocean Planning/Habitat</b>		
42. Continue development of the Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment	In Progress	
43. Track offshore wind development activities in the region and develop comments as needed	Ongoing	
44. Manage the joint MAFMC/NEFMC offshore wind web pages	Ongoing	
45. Review and provide feedback on the 2025 Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) risk assessment report	Completed	
46. Review and provide feedback on the 2025 Mid-Atlantic State of the Ecosystem Report	Completed	
47. Review annual report on commercial landings of unmanaged species	Completed	
48. Continue to maintain and improve Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment (NRHA) products	Ongoing	
<b>Science and Research</b>		
49. Coordinate the Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel (NTAP)	Ongoing	
50. Support development of an Industry-Based Survey Pilot Project	Ongoing	Funding for a Phase 1 was identified and is expected to be conducted Fall 2025/Spring 2026
51. Review and approve Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) membership	Completed	
<b>Climate and Governance</b>		
52. Coordinate, support, and track progress on Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funded projects	In Progress	

Deliverable	Expected status by end of 2025	Notes
53. Coordinate with New England and South Atlantic Councils on IRA funded projects with cross-Council implications, including participating on relevant groups for their projects where needed	In Progress	
54. Participate on the East Coast Climate Coordination Group (E3CG) and Climate Core Team	In Progress	Group names changed to East Coast Coordination Group and East Coast Core Team
55. Provide support for addressing E3CG action items and 2025 priorities	In Progress	
56. Participate on the Climate, Ecosystems and Fisheries Initiative (CEFI) Regional Decision Support Team	Ongoing	
<b>General</b>		
57. Respond to requests for information related to Marine Stewardship Council certifications/audits for Council-managed fisheries	Ongoing	
58. Track legislative issues and develop comments as requested	Ongoing	
59. Participate on the Council Coordination Committee (CCC) and its working groups and subcommittees	Ongoing	
60. Participate on the Northeast Region Coordinating Council (NRCC)	Ongoing	
61. Participate on take reduction teams and protected resource working groups	Ongoing	
62. Participate on the Hudson Canyon Sanctuary Advisory Council	Ongoing	
63. Participate on the Marine and Coastal Area Based Conservation Federal Advisory Committee	Completed	Charter Terminated
64. Develop comments on relevant Highly Migratory Species (HMS) actions (as needed)	Ongoing	
65. Develop comments on relevant Exempted Fishing Permit applications (as needed)	Ongoing	The Council submitted 5 EFP letters in 2025.
66. Engage with the New England Council's On-Demand Fishing Gear Conflict Working Group and initiate/coordinate on any joint actions as appropriate	In Progress	

Deliverable	Expected status by end of 2025	Notes
<b>Communication and Outreach</b>		
67. Continue to conduct public outreach and develop communication products to support understanding and awareness of the Council, its managed fisheries, and current management issues	Ongoing	
68. Organize and expand the Council's photo library, and refresh photos on the Council website	In progress	
69. Continue to serve as webmaster for the joint regional council website and manage the joint Council meeting calendar	Ongoing	
70. Collaborate on joint Council communication efforts related to the 50 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Magnuson-Stevens Act	In progress	
71. Participate in Marine Resource Education Program (MREP) planning, outreach, and execution	Ongoing	
72. Support and participate in NOAA Fisheries' annual training course for newly appointed Council members	Completed	
<b>Staff Wrap-Up on Completed Actions</b>		
73. Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Species Separation Requirements Amendment	Ongoing	
74. Summer Flounder Commercial Mesh Exemption Framework	Completed	
75. 2025 specifications packages	Completed	
<b>Possible Additions</b>		
76. If the bluefish stock is rebuilt based on the 2025 management track assessment, develop 2026-2027 bluefish recreational measures using the process established through the Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda		
77. Develop a white paper on the pros and cons of initiating an amendment to the Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology, to re-prioritize observers, including evaluation of: 1) mid-water trawl fishery coverage and, separately, 2) information on sturgeon bycatch in federal fisheries		
78. Initiate working group on data reporting improvements		

Deliverable	Expected status by end of 2025	Notes
79. Coordinate with NOAA Fisheries and other relevant Councils to provide input and recommendations on any reviews conducted pursuant to MSA § 304(f) for Council-managed stocks and/or other relevant stocks		
80. Develop guidance to address circumstances under which the Council could consider suspension of its Risk Policy		
81. Develop a white paper to explore potential Council and NOAA Fisheries involvement in surfclam stock enhancement efforts in the New York Bight and Central Atlantic		



# 2026 PROPOSED ACTIONS AND DELIVERABLES

Draft for Executive Committee Review – October 2025 Council Meeting

This document provides an overview of the activities, amendments, frameworks, specifications, and other projects the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) expects to initiate, continue, or complete in 2026. These activities are organized by Fishery Management Plan and topic area.

*Note: Asterisks (\*) denote contractor supported projects.*

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## SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP, BLACK SEA BASS

1. Review 2027 specifications for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass
2. Conduct scup winter I quota period landings threshold analysis and consider initiating management action (EO 14276)
3. Review 2027 recreational management measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass
4. Facilitate development of advisory panel fishery performance reports
5. Complete the Recreational Sector Separation Amendment (EO 14276)
6. Complete white paper on improvements to recreational data collection and use
7. Review outcomes of the scup gear restricted areas project and consider initiating a framework to modify scup gear restricted areas (EO 14276)

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## BLUEFISH

8. Review 2027 specifications for bluefish
9. Facilitate development of advisory panel fishery performance report

*Note: Deliverables 5 and 6 in the previous section will also address bluefish recreational management issues.*

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## GOLDEN AND BLUELINE TILEFISH

10. Develop 2027-2029 specifications for blueline tilefish
11. Review 2027 specifications for golden tilefish
12. Facilitate development of advisory panel fishery performance reports
13. Review GARFO update on private recreational tilefish permitting and reporting
14. Complete the Recreational Tilefish Reporting Framework (EO 14276)
15. Coordinate and support the 2026 golden tilefish survey
16. Support the continued expansion of the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey into Mid-Atlantic waters

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## MACKEREL, SQUID, BUTTERFISH (MSB)

17. Develop 2027-2029 specifications for longfin squid
  18. Develop 2027-2029 specifications for butterfish
  19. Evaluate alternative trip limits for butterfish and solicit advisory panel input on other measures to increase butterfish quota utilization (EO 14276)
  20. Review 2027 specifications for *Illex* squid, Atlantic mackerel, and chub mackerel
  21. Facilitate development of advisory panel fishery performance reports
  22. Support research and management track assessments for longfin squid
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## SURFLAM AND OCEAN QUAHOG

23. Develop 2027-2028 specifications for surfclam and ocean quahog
24. Facilitate development of advisory panel fishery performance reports
25. Develop white paper on surfclam/quahog ITQ program improvements\* (EO 14276)

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## SPINY DOGFISH

*(Joint MAFMC/NEFMC plan – MAFMC lead)*

26. Review 2027 specifications for spiny dogfish
27. Facilitate development of advisory panel fishery performance report

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## ECOSYSTEM AND OCEAN PLANNING/HABITAT

28. Complete the Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment
29. Develop white paper to review deep sea coral protection measures (EO 14276)
30. Develop 2026 Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management risk assessment report
31. Review 2026 Mid-Atlantic State of the Ecosystem Report
32. Develop annual report on commercial landings of unmanaged species
33. Continue to maintain and improve Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment products
34. Track offshore wind development activities in the region and develop comments as needed
35. Manage joint MAFMC/NEFMC offshore wind web pages

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## SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

36. Coordinate the Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel (NTAP)
37. Support the Regional Industry-Based Trawl Survey
38. Review and approve Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) membership

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## CLIMATE AND GOVERNANCE

39. Coordinate, support, and track progress on Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funded projects:
  - Project #1: An operational forecast to reduce bycatch of River Herring in the mid-water trawl fishery\*
  - Project #2: Collaborative strategies to adapt Scup GRAs to changing ocean conditions\*
  - Project #3: Operationalizing outcomes of MAFMC/GARFO program review and improving the use and structure of Council committees\*
  - Project #4: Climate-ready updates to the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) source documents: life history and habitat characteristics, for federally managed fish in the Northeast\*
  - Project #5: Operationalizing ecosystem and habitat indicators to support climate ready fisheries management in the Mid-Atlantic\*
  - Project #6: Evaluating the data needs and management strategies to support climate-ready fisheries management\*
  - Project #7: Developing a process and indicators to evaluate stock distribution changes and governance issues\*
  - Project #8: Advancing Scenario Planning Outcomes: Strategizing for Complex Actions\*
40. Coordinate with New England and South Atlantic Councils on IRA funded projects with cross-Council implications, including participating on relevant groups for their projects where needed
41. Participate on the East Coast Coordination Group (ECCG) and Core Team
42. Provide support for addressing ECCG action items and 2026 priorities

43. Participate on the Changing Ecosystems and Fisheries Initiative (CEFI) Regional Decision Support Team

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## GENERAL

44. Evaluate vessel baseline restrictions and consider initiating an omnibus management action in coordination with NEFMC (EO 14276)
45. Develop white paper to evaluate potential modifications to multi-year specification frequency for Council FMPs (EO 14276)
46. Respond to requests for information related to Marine Stewardship Council certifications/audits for Council-managed fisheries
47. Track legislative issues and develop comments as requested
48. Participate on the Council Coordination Committee (CCC) and its working groups and subcommittees
49. Participate on the Northeast Region Coordinating Council (NRCC)
50. Participate on take reduction teams and protected resource working groups
51. Participate on the Hudson Canyon Sanctuary Advisory Council
52. Develop comments on relevant Highly Migratory Species (HMS) actions (as needed)
53. Develop comments on relevant Exempted Fishing Permit applications (as needed)

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## OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION

54. Plan and implement MSA 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary campaign
55. Conduct public outreach and develop communication products to support understanding and awareness of the Council, its managed fisheries, and current management issues
56. Manage the regional fishery management council website and joint Council meeting calendar
57. Participate in Marine Resource Education Program (MREP) planning, outreach, and execution
58. Support and participate in NOAA Fisheries' annual training course for newly appointed Council members

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## STAFF WRAP-UP ON COMPLETED ACTIONS

*The following actions have been, or are expected to be, approved by the Council by the end of 2025 but may require staff work in 2026 to finalize for submission to NMFS:*

59. Spiny Dogfish Accountability Measures Framework (EO 14276)
60. Atlantic Mackerel Rebuilding and 2026-2027 Specifications Framework (EO 14276)
61. Alternative Gear Marking Framework
62. Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Species Separation Requirements Amendment
63. 2026 specifications packages

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## POSSIBLE ADDITIONS

*To be considered for addition to the 2026 implementation plan if time and resources allow:*

64. Develop white paper on the application of sector-specific management uncertainty buffers
65. Evaluate adaptive Illex quota system to increase U.S. quota when domestic fishery is strong and NAFO catches are below 5,000 mt.