



PRESS RELEASE

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Council Approves Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Excessive Shares Amendment

ANNAPOLIS, MD – The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council approved the Excessive Shares Amendment to the Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Fishery Management Plan (FMP) during its meeting last week in Annapolis, Maryland. The Excessive Shares Amendment was developed to address the "excessive share" provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). The amendment also considered revisions to the multi-year specification setting process and modifications to the FMP goals and objectives. Below are summaries of the issues addressed and the Council's preferred alternatives.

Excessive Shares Cap and Review Timeframe

National Standard 4 (NS4) of the MSA mandates that allocations of fishing privileges must be "carried out in such manner that no particular individual, corporation, or other entity acquires an excessive share of such privileges." To be consistent with NS4, the Council was required to develop measures which specifically define what constitutes an excessive share in the surfclam and ocean quahog individual transferable quota (ITQ) program.

The Council considered a wide range of excessive shares cap alternatives, including options that would place limits on quota share ownership and options that would limit annual allocations based on both owned quota share and possession of cage tags. The Council ultimately selected an alternative which would implement a quota share ownership cap of 35% for surfclams and 40% for quahogs and an annual allocation cap (based on the possession of cage tags) of 65% for surfclams and 70% for ocean quahogs. The Council's preferred alternative represents a compromise on the part of the fishing industry and will allow for some additional efficiencies in the fisheries (through further consolidation). This option will allow a reasonable number of entities to exist if fully consolidated and will bring the FMP in to compliance with NS4. The Council specified that the excessive shares measures should be reviewed at least every 10 years or as needed.

Multi-Year Management Measures

Currently, surfclam and ocean quahog management specifications are set for up to 3 years. Through this amendment, the Council voted to allow specifications to be set for the maximum number of years consistent with the stock assessment schedule. As a result, based on the current stock assessment schedule, surfclam specifications would be set for four years and ocean quahog for six years.

FMP Goals and Objectives

Finally, the Council adopted a suite of revised goals and objectives recommended by the Fishery Management Action Team that better reflect the Council's long-term intent for these fisheries. These goals and objectives focus on sustainability, a simple and efficient management regime, managing for stability, management that is flexible and adaptive to changes, and the promotion of science and research.

Additional information and background documents related to this amendment are available at <http://www.mafmc.org/actions/scoq-excessive-shares-amendment>.