

*Scientific and Statistical Committee
Report of March 15-16, 2022 Meeting*

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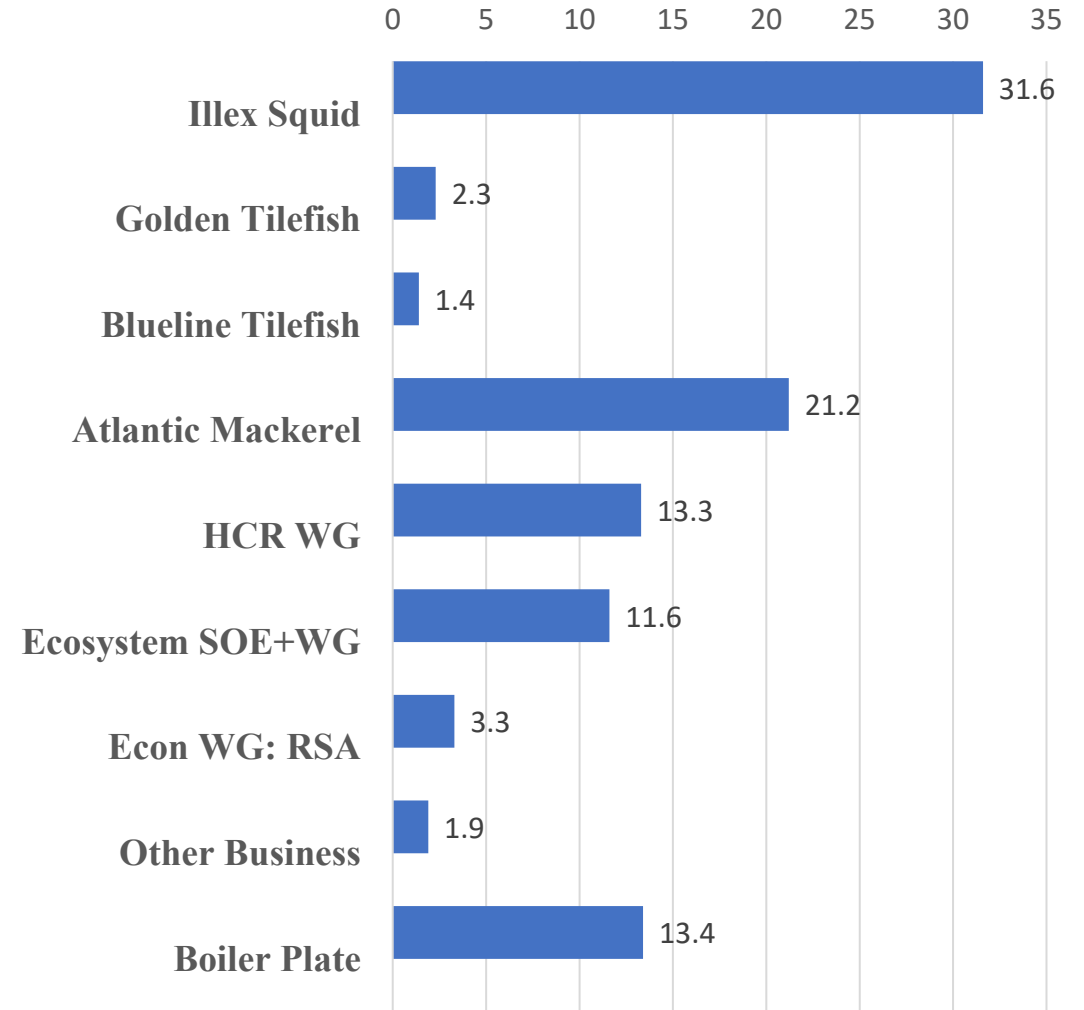
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

April 7, 2022

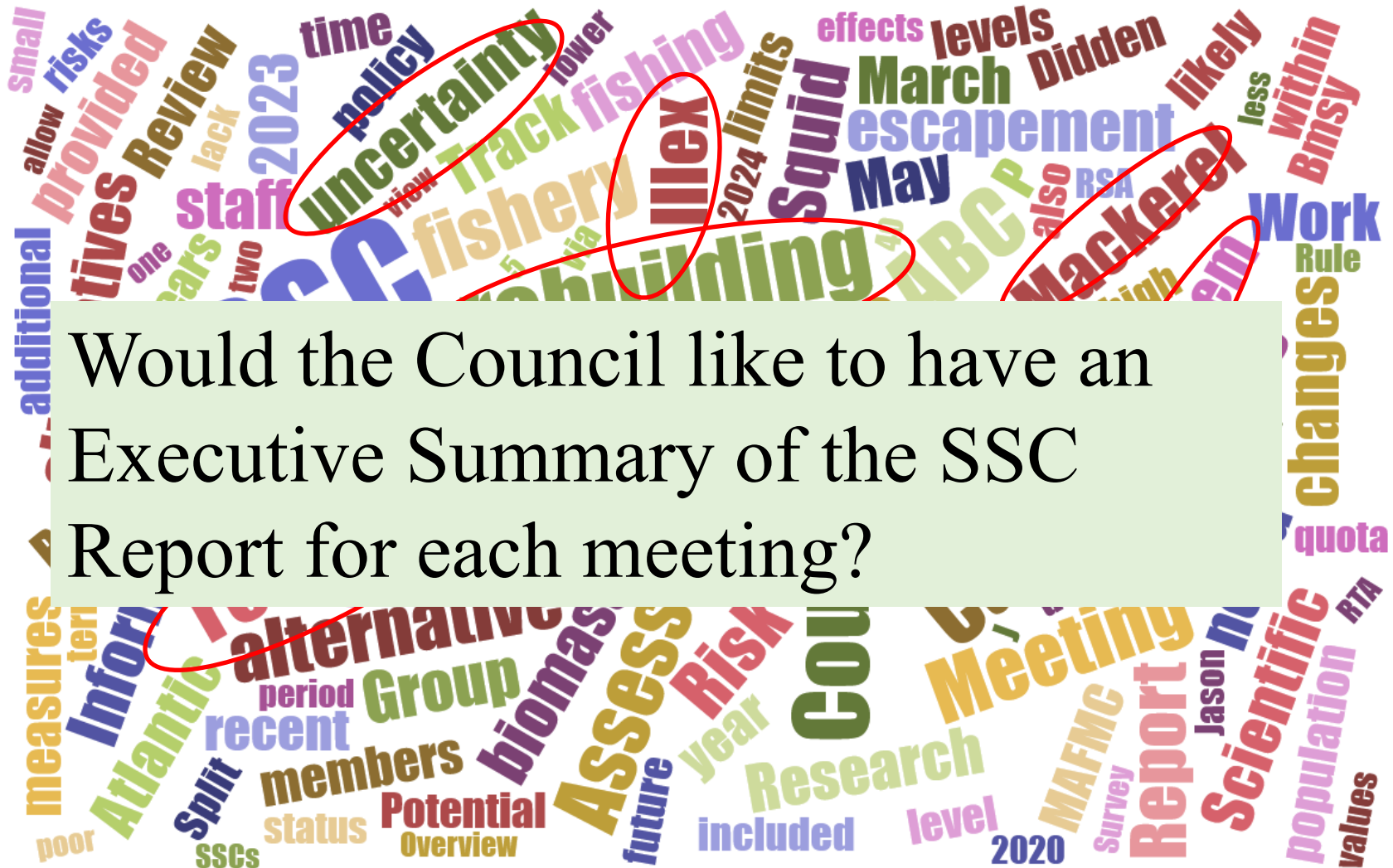
tab 10

Primary Topics (Word Count %)

- **Illex Squid**
- **Atlantic Mackerel**
- **Golden Tilefish**
- **Blueline Tilefish**
- Harvest Control Rule WG
- Ecosystem SOE + WG
- Economics Working Group
- Other Business
- Boilerplate



*Word Salad Version of SSC report:
Size proportional to square root of frequency*



Summary of SSC Stock Assessment Recommendations

- **Golden Tilefish**—“continuation of previously specified ABC for 2023”
- **Blueline Tilefish** —“Council staff recommended no changes to the existing ABC of 105,520 lb and the SSC concurred with this recommendation”
- **Illex Squid**—“an ABC of 33,000 mt is no longer warranted. Instead, the SSC recommends an ABC for 2022 of 40,000 mt.”
- **Atlantic Mackerel**—“reviewed all alternatives and recommends the P* approach with the maximum fishing mortality threshold equal to the Fmsy proxy.”

Harvest Control Rule—Council Request

- *Request that the SSC provide a qualitative evaluation, in time for final action at the June 2022 Council/Policy Board meeting, regarding the potential effect of each of the five primary alternatives in the Harvest Control Rule Addendum/Framework on the SSC's assessment and application of risk and uncertainty in determining ABCs. The intent is to provide the Council and Policy Board with information to consider the tradeoffs among the different alternatives with respect to the relative risk of overfishing, increasing uncertainty, fishery stability, and the likelihood of reaching/remaining at B_{msy} for each approach at different biomass levels (e.g., for $\frac{1}{2} B_{msy} < B < B_{msy}$, the relative risk among alternatives is (highest to lowest) $E > C > B > A > D$).*

Harvest Control Rule—Rationale

- Motivated by real and perceived uncertainties in the MRIP estimates of catch and perceptions that recent regulations are inconsistent with true stock size, rendering them ineffective.
- HCR is a set of alternative algorithms that define a basis for adjusting regulations in response to changes in stock condition.
- Specific measures (e.g., bag limits, size limits, or seasons) are not defined.
- Measures will be defined during the specifications process by the appropriate technical groups familiar with the fisheries and jurisdictions.

Harvest Control Rule—SSC Comments

- Management measures do not always have their intended effects.
 - HCR may address the uncertainty of such measures but responsiveness may conflict with desired stability of regulations.
- Lack of fully worked examples?
 - Balance between specificity and general principles underlying each alternative.
 - Simulation studies to compare the efficacy of alternatives NOT planned.
 - Stock assessments should consider using recreational and commercial “fleets” separately.
- Economic and social concerns include angler responses to alternative measures.
 - Angler discontent with current regulations is high in the Mid-Atlantic; this introduces additional uncertainty into the selection of options.
 - MRIP is designed to capture broad trends at an annual time step over multi-state regions. Partitioning such data into smaller domains decreases the precision of estimates.
 - Low precision and potential bias will continue unless recreational data collection efforts are increased.

Harvest Control Rule—Formation of WG

- {Tom Miller (Chair), Cynthia Jones, Alexei Sharov, Lee Anderson, Brian Rothschild, and Paul Rago}.
- Focus
 - How do approaches to slow down the rates of change in RHL affect the uncertainty measures used by the SSC?
 - Feedback effects of this uncertainty?
 - Identify options least likely to increase uncertainty.
 - Consensus, rather than analytical approaches
- Timeline
 - Meetings: March 25, April 13, + Correspondence
 - Presentation at SSC in May
 - Delivery to Council at its June 7-9 meeting.

Ecosystems-State of Ecosystem

- Sarah Gaichas presented the NEFSC's State of the Ecosystem report that included over 60 contributors.
- Focused on information relevant to the Council's decision-making process.
- When possible, links to the underlying methodology and data are provided
- New indicators introduced in 2022 for Community & Social Vulnerability. Highly engaged and reliant communities are generally less vulnerable to Environmental Justice impacts. Recreational communities tend to be less vulnerable to Environmental Justice issues.
- SSC expressed appreciation for the comprehensive and synthetic report, the open processes for further investigation of the underlying data and methodologies, and the responsiveness of the team to suggestions for improvement.

Ecosystems—Working Group (1)

- Expanding and clarifying the ecosystem portion of the SSC OFL CV determination process (short term objectives)
 - Possible Adjustments to OFL
 - Focus on Summer Flounder and Atlantic Mackerel
 - MSE work by John Wiedenmann and Mike Wilberg
- Collaborating with SSC species leads, stock assessment leads, and relevant working groups in developing stock-specific Ecosystem and Socio-economic Profiles (ESP) process to specify stock-specific Ecosystem ToRs that can be integrated into assessments (moderate-term objective)
- Developing prototype processes to provide multispecies and system-level scientific, especially where there are tradeoffs linking to economic and social outcomes (long term objective)
 - NEFSC has secured funding for additional analytical support.
 - Results may allow for direct incorporation of uncertainty into the OFL CV
 - Potential for ecosystem level reference points.

Ecosystems—Working Group (2)

- Participation in Bluefish and Black Sea Bass RTAs in 2022
- Timing of information flows is critical in the stock assessments
- SSC expressed interest in receiving information from Research Track Working Groups prior to stock assessment results. For example, get results of the Research Track Assessments for *Illex* and Butterfish in May prior to results of the Management Track Assessments for these species in July.

Economics—Working Group 2021-2022

- Work with Research Steering Committee (RSC) on the feasibility of re-starting the Research Set Aside
- Contributed to four day-long workshops
 - Identification of research topics
 - Application of economic theory for various funding options
 - Enforcement and tradeoff issues
 - Development of a decision tree for creating a comprehensive RSA process.
- Goals of RSA
 - Quality peer-reviewed research that maximizes benefits to public and Council by enhancing understanding of its managed resources
 - Ensure monitoring, accountability and enforcement of RSA quota
 - Generate resources to fund projects aligned with Council priorities
 - Foster collaboration and trust among science, industry and Council.

Economics—Working Group

- Successful, value added projects
- Future requests for assistance expected
- Work group will continue to support
 - Summer Flounder MSE project
 - EAFM risk assessment
 - Terms of reference for stock assessments and other reviews.
- Capacity of the SSC to address economic issues is ultimately limited—Will need to focus future efforts

SSC Other Business

- The Scientific Coordination Subcommittee. August 15th-17th in Sitka, AK. Sarah Gaichas presenting a keynote address. Up to three members of the SSC will participate. Focus= inclusion of ecosystem information in stock assessments.
- Multi-year average ABCs can be problematic for Council's risk policy, if the population is decreasing from high level or increasing from low level.
 - A small group will be convened to address approaches for averaging ABCs.
 - SSC will be seeking clarification from Council regarding objectives for multi-year specifications.
- May 10-11 meeting of the SSC will be in Baltimore (hybrid).

Questions?