



December 2014 Council Meeting Report

December 8 – 11, 2014

Baltimore, Maryland

The following summary highlights Council actions and issues considered at the December 2014 Council Meeting in Baltimore, MD. Presentations, briefing materials, and audio recordings are linked from the relevant sections below. Additional information about the meeting is available at www.mafmc.org/briefing/december-2014.

- [Agenda](#)
- [Complete Briefing book](#)
- [Meeting Motions](#)

Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass

The Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board (Board) met jointly to discuss the [Comprehensive Summer Flounder Amendment](#) and to set 2015 recreational management measures for Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass.

Comprehensive Summer Flounder Amendment

Council and Commission staff presented a summary of public input provided during scoping for the Comprehensive Summer Flounder Amendment. Comments were provided by more than 200 individuals at fourteen scoping hearings and 100 individuals and groups who submitted written comments. After considering this input, the Council and Board identified four categories of issues to be addressed in the amendment: (1) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) goals and objectives, (2) quota allocation between the commercial and recreational sectors, (3) commercial management measures and strategies, and (4) recreational management measures and strategies. In addition, the Council and Board agreed to address issues related to discards, ecosystems, and catch monitoring under the umbrella of the categories listed above. Next steps for the amendment will include a Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) meeting early next year and establishment of issue-specific working groups. Additional information, updates, and background documents about the amendment are available at <http://www.mafmc.org/actions/summer-flounder-amendment>.

- [Briefing Materials](#)
- [Presentation](#)
- [Webinar Recording](#)

2015 Recreational Management Measures

In August 2014, the Council and Board reviewed previously implemented commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass for the 2015 fishing year. At the August 2014 meeting, the Council and Board recommended no changes to the current 2015 specifications. However, the Council also voted to suspend the Research Set-Aside (RSA) program in 2015 and redistribute the 3% portion of the quota normally withheld from each species' quotas, resulting in adjustments to the previously specified recreational harvest limits (RHL) for 2015. Details on the commercial quota and RHL for each species are available in the [final rule](#) published May 22, 2014.

Summer Flounder: The Council and Board recommended the use of conservation equivalency to achieve the 2015 summer flounder RHL of 7.38 million pounds. Conservation equivalency allows individual states or multi-state regions to develop customized recreational measures that, in combination, will achieve the coastwide harvest limit. The combination of these measures would be equivalent to the non-preferred coastwide alternative approved by the Council and Board, which includes a four fish possession limit, an 18-inch total length (TL) minimum size, and an open season from May 1 through September 30. In addition, a precautionary default

measure of a two fish possession limit, a 20-inch TL minimum size, and an open season of May 1 - September 30 was approved for states or regions that do not develop management measures consistent with the conservation equivalency guidelines. The Commission’s [Draft Addendum XXVI](#) includes several options for summer flounder recreational management under conservation equivalency in 2015.

- [Briefing Materials](#)
- [Presentation](#)
- [Webinar Recording](#)

Scup: To achieve the 2015 scup RHL of 6.80 million pounds, the Board voted to continue using a regional management approach, and the Council and Board recommended a 9-inch minimum fish size (TL), a 50 fish possession limit, and an open season from January 1 through December 31 in federal waters.

- [Briefing Materials](#)
- [Advisory Panel meeting summary](#)
- [Presentation](#)

Black Sea Bass: The Council and Board recommended recreational management measures to achieve the 2.33 million pound RHL for black sea bass in 2015. Based on projected 2014 landings, this will require a 28% reduction in landings. The Board voted to continue the provisions of Addendum XXV, which includes options for ad hoc regional management of black sea bass in state waters. If the combination of measures in state waters addresses the required reduction, then federal measures would include a 15 fish possession limit, a 12.5-inch TL minimum fish size, and an open season from May 15 through September 21, and October 22 through December 31. The Council and Board also adopted a set of backup coastwide management measures representing the most restrictive size, possession, and seasonal limit across all states that would be implemented only if the ad hoc regional measures do not address the necessary reduction. These measures include a 14-inch TL minimum size, a 3 fish possession limit, and an open season from July 15-September 15 in both state and federal waters.

- [Briefing Materials](#)
- [Advisory Panel meeting summary](#)
- [Presentation](#)

Summary of Proposed 2015 Recreational Management Measures

	Recreational Harvest Limit	Type of Measures	Minimum Fish Size (TL)	Possession Limit	2015 Season
Summer Flounder	7.38 million pounds	State/ Federal	Conservation equivalency - Measures will be developed by state or region and approved at the Commission's February meeting		
Scup	6.80 million pounds	State	Regional Management Approach – State-specific measures will be developed through the Commission's process and voted on in February.		
		Federal	9 inch	50 fish	Jan 1 – Dec 31
Black Sea Bass	2.33 million pounds	State	Regional management approach - State-specific measures will be developed through the Commission's process and voted on in February.		
		Federal¹	12.5 inch	15 fish	May 15 – Sept. 21 Oct 22 – Dec 31

Forage Management

The Executive Committee received a presentation on a forage fish white paper that was developed to inform the Council’s ongoing development of an Ecosystem Approaches to Fisheries Management (EAFM) guidance document. After discussion by the Executive Committee and the full Council, the Council voted to initiate a

¹ Subject to the northern states addressing the required reduction.

regulatory action to prohibit the development of new, or expansion of existing, directed fisheries on unmanaged forage species until adequate scientific information is available to promote ecosystem sustainability.

- [Briefing Materials](#)
- [Presentation: Forage Fish White Paper](#)
- [Webinar Recording](#)

Ecosystem and Ocean Planning Committee

Habitat Project Update

Council staff provided an update on the Habitat Pilot Project and other Committee Priority Activities. The Habitat Pilot Project is intended to support the development of overarching fish habitat objectives for the EAFM Document. The project involves several elements, including production of a report on current practices and objectives used in the identification of critical habitat areas in the US and abroad, the development of policy statements on anthropogenic impacts on fish habitat, and the development of multi-species Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs). Since the last update, an Oversight Team has been formed and a contractor has been selected. The Habitat Practices Report and background/policy documents are currently under development. This phase of the project is expected to wrap up in spring 2015.

- [Briefing Materials](#)
- [Webinar Recording](#) (Habitat Project Updates)
- [Presentation: Habitat Project Update](#)

New England Fishery Management Council Public Hearing – Omnibus EFH Amendment 2

New England Council staff conducted a public hearing on its draft Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Amendment 2. Following the public hearing, the Council developed comments focused on the EFH and Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC) Alternatives, and Spatial Management Alternatives proposed within the Amendment. The Council agreed to send a letter with these comments to the NEFMC.

- [Presentation: EFH Amendment 2 Hearing](#)
- [Webinar Recording](#) (Part 1 – Presentation and Public Comments)
- [Webinar Recording](#) (Part 2 - Ecosystem Committee Comments)

GARFO Strategic Plan

Harry Mears, Assistant Regional Administrator of NOAA Fisheries' Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO), presented a draft of [GARFO's 2015-2019 strategic plan](#). The plan identifies objectives associated with seven primary strategic goals: sustainable fisheries; protected resources; habitat conservation; community resiliency; aquaculture; organizational excellence; and customer service. The Council provided comments on the draft and agreed to submit additional input in a letter later this month.

- [Briefing Materials](#)
- [Presentation](#)
- [Webinar Recording](#)

Tilefish White Paper

The Council discussed a number of issues presented in the Tilefish White Paper developed by staff. The Council passed a motion to include the following items in the Framework 2 to the Tilefish FMP: 1) change the specification process to account for separate discards in the IFQ and incidental portions of the fishery; 2) deal with possible elimination of the IVR system; 3) require tilefish be landed with head attached (i.e., head-on gutted or whole); 4) prohibit vessels from fishing for more than one IFQ allocation at a time; and, 5) prohibit the use of mini-long lines in the recreational fishery.

- [Briefing Materials](#)
- [Presentation](#)
- [Webinar Recording](#)

Other Business

Listening Session: The topic of the listening session was deep sea corals in the Mid-Atlantic. Dr. Martha Nizinski, a zoologist with NOAA Fisheries National Systematics Lab, gave a presentation on recent explorations of deep sea habitats in the Northeast. Her presentation was followed by an informal discussion with Council members and the public.

- [Briefing Materials](#)
- [Webinar Recording](#)

2015 Implementation Plan: The Council reviewed and approved the 2015 Implementation Plan, which was revised to incorporate input from the Executive committee at the October meeting. The implementation plan will guide the Council's activities and priorities through 2015 and beyond.

Blueline Tilefish: The Council voted to send a letter to mid-Atlantic and Southern New England states requesting the states adopt consistent incidental commercial trip limits and recreational bag limits for blueline tilefish to prevent the unmanaged expansion of this data-poor fishery.

2015 Council Meeting Schedule

February 10-12, 2015: Raleigh, North Carolina

Doubletree by Hilton Raleigh Brownstone University
1707 Hillsborough St.
Raleigh, NC 27605
919-828-0811

April 14-16, 2015: Long Branch, New Jersey

Ocean Place Resort
1 Ocean Blvd.
Long Branch, NJ 07740
732-571-4000

June 9-11, 2015: Virginia Beach, Virginia

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

August 11-13, 2015: New York City, New York

Holiday Inn Midtown
440 West 57th Street
New York City, New York 10019
212-581-8100

October 6-8, 2015: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Doubletree Philadelphia Center City
237 S. Broad St.
Philadelphia, PA 19107
215-893-1600

December 8-10, 2015: Annapolis, Maryland

The Westin Annapolis
100 Westgate Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401
410-972-4300