



August 2019 Council Meeting Summary

August 13-15, 2019

Philadelphia, PA

The following summary highlights actions taken and issues considered at the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's August 2019 meeting in Philadelphia, PA. Presentations, briefing materials, and webinar recordings are available at: <http://www.mafmc.org/briefing/august-2019>.

Joint Meeting of the Council and Scientific and Statistical Committee

The Council and its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) met jointly to discuss a variety of topics of mutual interest. The joint meeting provided a unique opportunity to foster increased dialogue and relationships. Topics discussed by the Council and the SSC included the role of the SSC in the Council process, increased utilization of social and economic science advice from the SSC, communication policies and procedures, and future SSC membership needs and expertise. The Council provided feedback on topics and issues for development and agreed to hold future joint meetings, possibly on an annual basis, to ensure open and continued communication regarding the Council's science priorities and needs.

Summer Flounder Recreational MSE Project

The Council received a presentation on the results of a Council-funded summer flounder recreational Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for F-based recreational management. The project includes two major components: a recreational fleet dynamics model, which expands on previous work to forecast how changes in recreational measures impact changes in harvest; and a forecasting simulation model, which tests the performance of current and alternative management approaches (including *status quo* and F-based management, both with and without incorporating estimates of uncertainty). A final report on this model is still in preparation. The recreational fleet dynamics model will be used this fall by the Monitoring Committee to assist in developing recreational measures for 2020, and the Monitoring Committee, Council, and Board may revisit the final project results later this fall to determine whether an alternative management strategy should be pursued for summer flounder through a fishery management plan (FMP) action.

Council Risk Policy - Framework Meeting 1

The Council held the first meeting for the Omnibus Risk Policy Framework Action. The risk policy specifies the acceptable level of risk (i.e., probability of overfishing) the Council is willing to accept for its managed species. The Council first initiated this framework in 2017, but development was postponed until after the completion of additional analyses to more fully consider social and economic impacts and trade-offs of different risk policy alternatives. The Council reviewed and approved nine different draft alternatives for further evaluation and analysis. It is expected the Council will take final action on the framework at the December 2019 meeting.

Black Sea Bass Commercial and Recreational Issues

The Council received a brief update on recent Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) discussions regarding potential changes to the state-by-state commercial black sea bass quota allocations, as well as an update on a joint Council and ASMFC initiative on recreational management reform. A management action has not yet been initiated to address either topic. Both topics will be discussed in more detail at the October 2019 Council meeting, which will include a joint meeting with the ASMFC's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board.

River Herring & Shad Update and Cap Review

The Council voted to maintain the 129 metric ton (MT) river herring and shad cap in the mackerel fishery for 2020. The Council also voted to remove an 89 MT trigger that is in effect before the mackerel fishery lands 10,000 MT of mackerel. This approach should provide for some additional opportunity for the mackerel fishery while also limiting the overall amount of river herring and shad caught by the fishery to the same maximum amount, 129 MT. The 129 MT cap will maintain a high incentive for the fleet to avoid river herring and shad. In order to land most of the mackerel quota in 2020, the fishery will have to substantially reduce its interaction rate with river herring and shad compared to 2019. The Council also voted to initiate a framework action to establish a long-term strategy for biologically-relevant river herring and shad catch caps in the mackerel fishery.

Allocation Review Criteria for All FMPs

The Council discussed [NMFS Policy Directive 01-119](#), which provides guidance to the Regional Fishery Management Councils on reviewing allocations. This policy directs each Council to identify criteria that will be used to trigger reviews of allocations within their Fishery Management Plans. The Council adopted an allocation review policy indicating that relevant allocations will be reviewed at least every 10 years, with the possibility of more frequent review based on public interest or other factors. While the policy does not apply to allocations to individuals or vessels under Individual Transferable Quota and Individual Fishing Quota (ITQ/IFQ) programs, other allocations under these fisheries would be reviewed as part of periodic catch share reviews. The Council will develop a review schedule in connection with its 5-year strategic plan and annual implementation plans. The full description of allocation review criteria adopted by the Council, including a list of the allocations it applies to, can be found [here](#).

Research Steering Committee

The Research Steering Committee met to discuss and develop recommendations on several topics. Council staff, in conjunction with NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, provided presentations on Committee requests and recommendations, RSA-related violations, and an overview of the MAFMC and NEFMC Research Set-Aside (RSA) programs. The Committee discussed options for the RSA program, which has been suspended since 2014, and recommended that the Council convene an RSA Workshop in 2020 to identify the need for an RSA program and consider a range of program design alternatives. The Committee also had a general discussion about the future role of the Research Steering Committee and agreed that in addition to addressing RSA-related issues, the Committee should have a role in evaluating research proposals and contracts submitted in response to RFPs. On the topic of whether the Committee should review Council-funded project reports, the Committee agreed that final reports and presentations should be provided to the full Council and ASMFC at joint meetings. Finally, the Committee discussed whether to pursue any formal partnerships with research organizations. The Committee did not recommend any such relationships at such time but noted that the SCeMFIS Board may be an option for future consideration.

2020-2024 Strategic Plan

The Council reviewed a draft framework for its 2020-2024 Strategic Plan and approved a vision, mission, and goal statements. Staff will present a complete draft strategic plan for Council consideration at the October 2019 meeting.

Offshore Wind Update

The Council received a brief update on offshore wind development activities in the northeast region and discussed how they can most effectively participate in the offshore wind development process to ensure that impacts to Council-managed fisheries are minimized. The Council agreed to continue providing strategic comment letters to the Bureau of Ocean Energy and Management, maintaining a webpage on offshore wind and fisheries (<http://www.mafmc.org/northeast-offshore-wind>), and participating in various groups, including the Responsible Offshore Science Alliance.

Hab in the Mab: Characterizing Black Sea Bass Habitat in the Mid-Atlantic Bight

Bradley Stevens (University of Maryland Eastern Shore) presented a final report on a project funded by the Council through the Atlantic Coast Fish Habitat Partnership. The project, entitled “Hab in the Mab,” sought to characterize black sea bass habitat in the mid-Atlantic Bight. The full report is available [here](#).

Other Business

Council Policies

Council staff provided an overview of Council policies on public comment deadlines, webinars, and Fishery Management Action Teams (FMATs). These documents can be found at <http://www.mafmc.org/council-policies>.

Swearing in of New and Reappointed Council Members

The Council swore in two new members: Kate Wilke of Virginia and Scott Lenox of Maryland. The Council also swore in two reappointed members: Peter Hughes of New Jersey and Wes Townsend of Delaware.

Election of Officers

During the yearly election of officers, the Council reelected Mike Luisi as Council Chairman and Warren Elliott as Vice-Chairman. Mr. Luisi is the director of the Fisheries Monitoring and Assessment Division at the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Mr. Elliott serves as the Pennsylvania Citizen Representative to the Chesapeake Bay Commission and as a member of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

Next Council Meeting

Monday, October 7, 2019 – Thursday, October 10, 2019

Meeting: Durham Convention Center
301 W. Morgan St., Durham. NC 27701
919-956-9404

Lodging: Durham Marriott Center City
201 Foster St., Durham, NC 27701
919-768-6000

<http://www.mafmc.org/council-events/october-2019-council-meeting>