



August 2022 Council Meeting Summary

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council met August 8-11, 2022, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This was a hybrid meeting, with virtual and in-person participation options. Presentations, briefing materials, motions, and webinar recordings are available at <http://www.mafmc.org/briefing/august-2022>.

HIGHLIGHTS

During this meeting, the Council:

- Revised 2023 specifications for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass (revised limits reflect new commercial/recreational allocations)*
- Modified the process for the optional February opening of the recreational black sea bass fishery*
- Revised the 2023 bluefish recreational harvest limit to account for the 2021 recreational overage*
- Reviewed the results of the recreational summer flounder management strategy evaluation (MSE) and provided input on potential future uses of the MSE outcomes and modeling approaches*
- Approved 2023-2024 butterfish specifications
- Approved preliminary 2023 *Illex* squid specifications
- Discussed findings from a review of the *Illex* squid research track assessment process
- Received an update on the status of NOAA Fisheries' review of Amendment 22 to the Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish FMP (*Illex* Permits Amendment)
- Received an update on the East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning initiative, including an overview of the scenarios developed during the June 2022 Scenario Creation Workshop
- Discussed recommendations from the Ecosystem and Ocean Planning Committee and Advisory Panel regarding the proposed designation of the Hudson Canyon National Marine Sanctuary
- Received updates on recent developments in New England regarding monkfish, winter flounder, sturgeon, and the Great South Channel Habitat Management Area
- Reviewed and provided input on Draft Guidance for Mitigating Impacts of Offshore Wind Energy Projects on Commercial and Recreational Fisheries
- Received a presentation on Community Offshore Wind, a wind energy project planned for lease area OCS-A-0539 off New Jersey
- Bid farewell to departing Council member Kate Wilke
- Swore in new Council members Ken Neill and reappointed members Peter Hughes, Wes Townsend, and Scott Lenox
- Reelected Council Chair Mike Luisi and Vice-Chair Wes Townsend

** Items denoted with an asterisk (*) were undertaken during joint meetings with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Bluefish Management Board, Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass Management Board, or ISFMP Policy Board.*

Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish 2023 Specifications Review

The Council met jointly with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s (ASMFC’s) Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board (Board) and Bluefish Management Board (Bluefish Board) to review previously adopted 2023 specifications for all four species. The Council and Boards considered recommendations from the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), Monitoring Committees, and Advisory Panels, as well as comments from members of the public.

The Council and Board’s recommendations for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass reflect changes to the commercial and recreational allocations which were approved by the Council and Board in December 2021. The revised allocations are expected to be implemented by January 1, 2023. Additional information is available on the [Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass Commercial/Recreational Allocation Amendment](#) page.

The table below summarizes commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits (RHLs) for all four species (2022 values are provided for comparison purposes). The Council will forward its recommendations to NOAA Fisheries for final approval. The sections below provide additional details about the recommendations for each species.

Species	Commercial Quota millions of pounds		Recreational Harvest Limit millions of pounds	
	2022	2023	2022	2023
Summer Flounder	15.53	15.27	10.36	10.62
Scup	20.38	14.01	6.08	9.27
Black Sea Bass	6.47	4.80	6.74	6.57
Bluefish	3.54	4.29	13.89	14.11

Summer Flounder 2023 Specifications

The Council and Board approved a revised summer flounder commercial quota of 15.27 million pounds and a revised RHL of 10.62 million pounds for 2023. These specifications reflect the new summer flounder allocations, which will allocate 55% of the acceptable biological catch (ABC) to the commercial sector and 45% to the recreational sector beginning in 2023.

Scup 2023 Specifications

The Council and Board approved a revised scup commercial quota of 14.01 million pounds and a revised RHL of 9.27 million pounds for 2023. These revisions reflect the new scup allocations, which will allocate 65% of the ABC to the commercial sector and 35% to the recreational sector beginning in 2023.

Black Sea Bass 2023 Specifications

The Council and Board approved a revised black sea bass commercial quota of 4.80 million pounds and a revised RHL of 6.57 million pounds for 2023. These specifications reflect the new black sea bass allocations, which will allocate 45% of the ABC to the commercial sector and 55% to the recreational sector beginning in 2023. The revised RHL also incorporates a change in the recreational discards projection method. The Council and Board considered input from the Monitoring Committee on two potential methods for projecting recreational dead discards and ultimately agreed to use an average of the two approaches.

The Council and Board also agreed to modify the process for the optional February recreational opening to specify that vessels landing black sea bass in a state with an approved Wave 1 recreational fishery are subject to the state regulations during that Wave 1 fishery. Under the current process, states participating in the optional February opening are required to match the federal waters measures. The Council and Board made this change to address challenges associated with the process used to waive federal waters recreational black sea bass measures starting with 2022. If approved by NOAA Fisheries, this change is expected to be implemented before February 2023.

Bluefish 2023 Specifications

The Council and Bluefish Board approved a revised bluefish RHL of 14.11 million pounds for 2023. This adjustment, which represents about a 36% decrease from the previously approved RHL for 2023, is necessary to account for the 5.59 million pound recreational overage that occurred in 2021. The bluefish fishery management plan requires a pound-for-pound payback for annual catch limit (ACL) overages that occur when the stock is overfished. The revised RHL also incorporates updated discard information. However, due to the [rebuilding plan](#) currently in place, the 2023 RHL represents a 1.6% increase from the 2022 RHL even after the overage deduction. As such, the Council and Bluefish Board maintained status quo recreational management measures for 2023. The Council and the Bluefish Board also did not make any changes to the 2023 commercial quota or management measures.

EAFM Recreational Summer Flounder Management Strategy Evaluation

The Council and Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board received the final results of the [recreational summer flounder management strategy evaluation \(MSE\)](#). The MSE is part of the continued implementation of the Council's Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) guidance document to more fully incorporate ecosystem factors in the management process. The goals of the MSE were to identify potential management strategies that consider the biological and economic benefits of minimizing discards and converting those discards into landings in the recreational summer flounder fishery. Through a collaborative, stakeholder-driven, and science-based process, the MSE successfully met the project goals and developed a modeling framework unique to the Mid-Atlantic region to understand how recreational behavior responds to changing regulations and stock availability.

The performance of eight different recreational management strategies were tested under three different states of the world (scenarios) and assessed using a suite of biological, social, and economic performance metrics (e.g., stock biomass, fishing mortality, angler satisfaction, ability to keep a fish) across four different management objectives. The management scenarios considered different size limits (including slots), season length adjustments, coastwide options, and existing and different regional configurations. The results from the MSE demonstrate there are several management scenarios that achieve the overall management goals of reducing recreational discards and converting discards to increased harvest opportunities, while maintaining stock biomass above the threshold and avoiding overfishing. In addition, the results suggest these same management procedures also increase angler satisfaction, result in more fishing trips and higher expenditures on fishing, reduce harvest of females, and keep total summer flounder removals (commercial and recreational) relatively constant. These results were robust to the different scenarios that considered the potential bias in recreational catch and effort information and continued changes in the summer flounder stock distribution.

The Council and Board were very supportive and encouraged by the results of the MSE. They agreed to use the outcomes from the MSE to help inform potential recreational management options for summer flounder in 2023. In addition, they supported the use of the modeling approaches developed as part of the MSE to estimate recreational catch and harvest of summer flounder and other recreational species, such as black sea bass. The Council and Board agreed that these modeling approaches could be used to help evaluate and identify recreational management measures in 2023 under the recently approved recreational harvest control rule.

Butterfish 2023-2024 Specifications

The Council reviewed the stock status and performance of the butterfish fishery and adopted multi-year specifications for 2023-2024. Based on the SSC's recommendations, the Council recommended ABCs of 17,631 metric tons (MT) for 2023 and 16,096 MT for 2024. These ABCs are products of the Council's risk policy and recent butterfish research track and management track assessments that found the butterfish stock is in good condition, above its target biomass. The 2023 ABC represents a relatively small reduction from the 2022 ABC. After a 5% management uncertainty buffer and potential discards are deducted, the commercial quotas would be 11,271 MT

(24.8 million pounds) in 2023 and 9,844 MT (21.7 million pounds) in 2024 (substantially above recent landings). Other butterfish management measures would remain the same.

[Illex Squid Preliminary 2023 Specifications](#)

The Council reviewed the stock status and performance of the *Illex* squid fishery and adopted single-year specifications for 2023. Based on the SSC's recommendations, the Council recommended an ABC of 40,000 MT for 2023. While the recent *Illex* research track assessment failed to resolve biological reference points, the peer review agreed the stock was likely "lightly fished in 2019." The SSC utilized a series of indirect empirical analyses to determine that a 40,000 MT ABC would be consistent with the Council's risk policy for avoiding overfishing. After anticipated discards are deducted, the commercial quota would be 38,156 MT (84.1 million pounds). Other *Illex* management measures would remain the same. These specifications are preliminary in that the SSC and Council will review and may modify the 2023 ABC after reviewing updated data and related analyses (planned for March/April 2023).

[Report on Illex Squid Research Track Assessment Process](#)

The Council received a presentation from Consensus Building Institute (CBI) staff on findings from a review of the *Illex* squid research track assessment process. The review produced a number of recommendations based on the issues experienced by the assessment's working group. The Northeast Region Coordinating Council (NRCC), which coordinates regional scientific resources and planning, will review the recommendations and consider potential follow-up actions.

[Update on Illex Permit Amendment](#)

The Council received an update on Amendment 22 to the Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish FMP, also referred to as the [MSB Goals and Objectives and Illex Permit Amendment](#). An approval/disapproval decision by NMFS is expected in early September 2022. The Council will be updated on NMFS' decision at the October Council meeting.

[Climate Change Scenario Planning Update](#)

The Council received an update on recent and upcoming activities for the [East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning initiative](#). In June 2022, a group of approximately 75 stakeholders and support staff convened in Arlington, VA to explore how climate change might affect the future of East Coast fisheries from now until 2042. Through a series of exercises and conversations, workshop participants created a draft scenario framework that described different ways that the future might play out. The next step in this process will include two [Scenario Deepening Webinars](#) to be held on August 17 and 23, which will serve as an opportunity for all interested stakeholders to review, validate, and add details to the draft scenarios. The outcome of the two webinars will be a more detailed set of scenarios that will be used as a platform for later stages of the process, looking specifically at how fishery management and governance must change to be prepared for a future of climate change. Additional information, including a report from the June 2022 Scenario Creation Workshop, a summary of the current draft scenarios, and information about the upcoming webinars are available on the [East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning](#) page.

[Ecosystem and Ocean Planning Committee Report: Hudson Canyon Marine Sanctuary Proposal](#)

The Council received a report from the July 21 joint meeting of the Ecosystem and Ocean Planning Committee and Ecosystem and Ocean Planning Advisory Panel (AP). The Committee and AP provided comments to inform development of scoping comments on the potential designation of Hudson Canyon Marine Sanctuary. A [comment letter](#) was reviewed by the full Council via email and submitted on the comment deadline of August 8. The Council will have future opportunities to comment on the sanctuary designation process, including an opportunity to consult with NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries on whether additional fishing regulations are needed

in the area. Based on a suggestion from the Committee and AP, a webpage has been created to provide updates on the designation process: <https://www.mafmc.org/actions/hudson-canyon>.

Update on New England Fishery Management Council Activities Affecting Mid-Atlantic

The Council reviewed [recent developments](#) in New England regarding monkfish, winter flounder (could affect longfin squid), sturgeon (could affect dogfish/monkfish), and the Great South Channel Habitat Management Area (could affect surfclam/ocean quahog). Relevant upcoming meetings were highlighted (see the [NEFMC calendar](#)), and Council staff will continue to track these issues.

BOEM Guidance for Mitigating Impacts of Offshore Wind Energy Projects on Commercial and Recreational Fisheries

The Council received a presentation from staff with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) on [Draft Guidance](#) for Mitigating Impacts of Offshore Wind Energy Projects on Commercial and Recreational Fisheries. Council staff also summarized a draft comment letter on this topic which is being developed jointly with the New England and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils. Council members provided suggestions for additional recommendations to include in the comment letter.

Community Offshore Wind Project

The Council received a presentation on [Community Offshore Wind](#), a wind energy project planned for lease area OCS-A-0539 off New Jersey. The presentation summarized impacted fisheries, which include commercial scallop and surfclam fisheries, as well as recreational fisheries for many species. The Community Offshore Wind fisheries team is currently developing a draft Fisheries Communications Plan.

Other Business

Departing Council Members Council Members

The Council bid farewell to departing member Kate Wilke (Virginia). During her three-year term, Ms. Wilke served in the roles of vice-chair and chair of the Ecosystem and Ocean Planning Committee, vice-chair of the River Herring and Shad Committee, and liaison to the NEFMC's Ecosystems and Habitat Committees. Ms. Wilke was thanked for her dedicated service to the Council.

New and Reappointed Council Members

Newly appointed Council member Dr. Ken Neill was sworn in to begin a three-year term on the Council. Dr. Neill, is a dentist and recreational angler from York County, Virginia. Also sworn in were Peter Hughes (New Jersey), Wes Townsend (Delaware), and Scott Lenox (Maryland). Mr. Hughes and Mr. Townsend are both beginning their third terms on the Council, and Mr. Lenox is beginning his second term.

Officer Elections

During the yearly election of officers, Council members re-elected Mike Luisi as Council Chair and Paul Weston (Wes) Townsend as Vice Chair. Mr. Luisi has served as Maryland's designated state official since 2010 and has served as Council Chair since 2016. Mr. Townsend is currently in his third term as an appointed member holding Delaware's obligatory seat. He is the owner/operator of the F/V PAKA out of Indian River Inlet in Delaware and has extensive experience with commercial fishing in state and federal waters.

Next Meeting

The next Council meeting will be held **October 4-6, 2022 in Dewey Beach, Delaware**. A complete list of upcoming meetings can be found at <https://www.mafmc.org/council-events>.