



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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COUNCIL MEETING SUMMARY

December 10-13, 2012
Baltimore, MD

SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP, BLACK SEA BASS

BLACK SEA BASS ISSUES

The Council took several actions at its meeting last week in response to the early closure of the recreational black sea bass fishery this year. The fishery closed on November 1, 2012 after preliminary landings estimates indicated that the quota had been exceeded. The overage was expected to be deducted from the recreational harvest limit for 2013, but the Council determined last week that an accountability measure for this year's overage cannot be applied until 2014 at the earliest.

The Council voted to request that the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reconsider their recommendation for the 2013 allowable biological catch (ABC) limit in light of the most recent black sea bass landings and stock information. The Council will discuss any changes to the ABC at its meeting in February. The Council also requested that the NEFSC conduct an operational assessment for black sea bass in the coming year. This assessment would follow a data workshop conducted with state scientists to review any available information on black sea bass. The assessment results will be reviewed in October 2013 when the Council develops management recommendations for 2014.

To address concerns related to accountability measures for black sea bass and other recreational fisheries, the Council voted to initiate development of an omnibus amendment that would consider alternative accountability measures for all Mid-Atlantic fisheries. The amendment is expected to be completed by June 2013—in time to have any new regulations in place by January 2014.

[Black Sea Bass Meeting Materials](#)
[View the Full Press Release on Black Sea Bass](#)

SPECIES AND ISSUES CONSIDERED

- Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass
- Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish
- Special Management Zones
- 2013 Council Priorities
- 2013-2017 Research Priorities
- Hurricane Sandy

MATERIALS ON THE WEB

Meeting materials related to the topics summarized in this report are available on the Council's website.

- Meeting Materials
- Audio Files

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2013 MEETING SCHEDULE

February 10-12, Hampton, VA
April 10-12, Raleigh, NC
June 11-13, Eatontown, NJ
August 13-15, Wilmington, DE
October 8-10, Montauk, NY
December 12-14, Annapolis, MD

SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The Council met with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board (Board) to establish recreational management measures for 2013.

SUMMER FLOUNDER: The Council and Board recommended the use of conservation equivalency to achieve the recreational harvest limit of 7.63 million pounds for the 2013 summer flounder fishery. Conservation equivalency would allow individual states to develop recreational measures (i.e., possession limits, size limits, and seasons) to

achieve a state-specific harvest level. As a non-preferred alternative, the Council and Board adopted a coastwide daily bag limit of two fish with an 18 inch total length (TL) minimum size requirement, and an open season from May 1 through September 30, 2013. In addition, a precautionary default measure of a 20 inch TL minimum fish size, a two fish possession limit, and a coastwide season from May 1 through September 30, 2013 was approved for states that do not develop and implement conservation equivalent management measures.

[Meeting Materials for Summer Flounder Management Measures](#)

SCUP: The Board voted to adopt conservation equivalency in state waters for the scup fishery 2013. For federal waters, the Council voted to recommend a 10 inch TL minimum fish size, a 30 fish possession limit, and an open season from January 1 through December 31, 2013. The states will develop state-specific management measures for approval at the Commission's February meeting.

[Meeting Materials for Scup Management Measures](#)

BLACK SEA BASS: The Board voted to develop an addendum to allow for state-specific or regional approaches for managing the recreational black sea bass fishery in state waters in 2013. The Board also voted to give states the option to have January and February open with a 20 fish possession limit and a 12.5 inch minimum fish size. The Council recommended measures for federal waters that will be implemented if the addendum is adopted. These measures would be a 20 fish possession limit, a 12.5 inch TL minimum fish size, and an open season from January 1 through February 28, May 19 through October 14, and November 1 through December 31, 2013.

[Meeting Materials for Black Sea Bass Management Measures](#)

ATLANTIC MACKEREL, SQUID, BUTTERFISH

AMENDMENT 15 (RIVER HERRING AND SHAD)

Council staff presented the results of Amendment 15 scoping for river herring and shad. Four scoping hearings were held between November 14 and 20 to gather public input on the range of issues and information that should be considered. Amendment 15 will consider adding river herrings (blueback and alewife) and shads (American and hickory) as Council-managed species. After reviewing the comments, the Council approved moving forward with amendment development.

[View Scoping Comments](#)

FRAMEWORK 8

The Council took action to institute butterfish cap closure authority in trimester 2, so as to ensure a trimester 3 fishery will be maintained. The Council also voted to give NMFS the discretion to shift butterfish cap and landings back and forth at the end of the year to optimize fishing opportunities.

SQUID MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

Staff provided an update on the squid management workshop which is scheduled for January 15-17, 2013. The purpose of the workshop is to connect Mid-Atlantic fishery managers, scientists, and industry participants in order to consider whether real-time management is a feasible strategy for optimizing yield and/or addressing challenges in the longfin and *Illex* squid fisheries. A full draft workshop agenda is available in the meeting materials linked below.

[Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish Meeting Materials](#)

SPECIAL MANAGEMENT ZONES

SPECIAL MANAGEMENT ZONE (SMZ) ALTERNATIVES

The Council approved a list of alternatives for public hearings relative to the request by Delaware to have its five reef sites in the EEZ designated as Special Management Zones (SMZs) under provisions of Amendment 9 to the Summer flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass FMP. The alternatives for consideration at public hearings ranged from no action to the designation of all five of Delaware's reef sites in the EEZ as SMZs year round. The Council will convene three public hearings (one each to be held in New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland) in January 2013 to receive public comment on

the proposed alternatives. The Council will review a public comments received on this issue at its February 2013 meeting.

[SMZ Meeting Materials](#)

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES

AMENDMENT 5 TO THE HMS PLAN FOR MANAGEMENT OF ATLANTIC SHARKS

Peter Cooper of the National Marine Fisheries Service presented an overview of the Draft Amendment 5 to the Consolidated Highly Migratory Species Plan for Management of Atlantic Sharks. The draft amendment includes several measures to prevent overfishing and rebuild overfished stocks of several species, including Sandbar, dusky, Atlantic blacknose, and scalloped hammerhead sharks. The amendment could affect commercial fishermen who use pelagic or bottom longline gear, recreational fishermen who catch sharks of any species, and dealers who buy or sell sharks or shark products. Comments on the amendment are being accepted through February 5, 2013 and can be submitted in one of several ways:

- <http://www.regulations.gov>, Keyword - "NOAA-NMFS-2012-0161"
- **Fax:** 301-713-1917, Attn: Peter Cooper
- **Mail:** NMFS SF1, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (**Please identify comments with NOAA-NMFS-2012-0161**)

For more information go to: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/> or contact Peter Cooper at peter.cooper@noaa.gov or **301-427-8503**

[Amendment 5 Meeting Materials](#)

COMMITTEES AND OTHER BUSINESS

2013 COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The Executive Committee reviewed and approved a draft list of Council priorities for 2013. In addition to the normal cycle of specifications and management measures, the 2013 priorities include 8 amendments, a 10-year strategic plan, an Ecosystem Based Fishery Management Plan, fishery performance reports for all species, special management zones for Delaware reefs, a strategic communication plan, a comprehensive research priorities plan, among other items. A comprehensive list of priorities can be found in the Executive Committee meeting materials.

[Executive Committee Meeting Materials](#)

FIVE YEAR RESEARCH PLAN

The Committee reviewed and approved a Five Year Research Plan for 2013 through 2017. The plan, which outlines both general and fishery-specific research and information needs, was developed by the Council in consultation with its SSC. The plan is based on needs which have been identified in stock assessments, Council FMP/Amendments documents, and through the Council's RSA program

[MAFMC Five Year Research Plan](#)

HURRICANE SANDY

The Council held a public listening session to discuss the impacts of Hurricane Sandy on the region's fisheries. Representatives from the National Marine Fisheries Service gave an overview of the agency's role in estimating the storm's economic impacts and providing assistance and relief. Members of the public were invited to make comments or ask questions of Council members and NMFS representatives.

On the following day, the Council passed a resolution in support of the federal fisheries disaster declaration in the Mid-Atlantic region affected by Hurricane Sandy. The full resolution, along with additional information and resources for those affected by the storm, will be available on the Council's website in the days to come.

**NEXT COUNCIL MEETING:
FEBRUARY 12-14, 2013
HAMPTON, VA**