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The **Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA)** is the main law that governs fishing in U.S. federal waters, ranging from 3 to 200 miles offshore. First passed in 1976, the MSA established a 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and created eight regional fishery management councils to manage our nation's marine fishery resources. This unprecedented management system gives fishery managers the flexibility to use local level input to develop management strategies appropriate for each region's unique fisheries, challenges, and opportunities.

The **Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council** (also known as the Council, Mid-Atlantic Council, or MAFMC) is one of the eight regional fishery management councils. The seven states that comprise the Council are New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina (North Carolina is also on the South Atlantic Council).

## What fisheries does the Council manage?

The Mid-Atlantic Council manages more than 64 species with seven fishery management plans (FMPs). Fourteen species are directly managed with specific FMPs. These include summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, Atlantic bluefish, Atlantic mackerel, *Illlex* and longfin squids, butterfish, Atlantic surfclams, ocean quahogs, golden and blueline tilefish, spiny dogfish, and monkfish (spiny dogfish and monkfish are managed jointly with the New England Fishery Management Council). In addition, more than 50 forage species are managed as "ecosystem components" in all seven FMPs. The Council sets possession and landing limits to prevent the expansion of directed fisheries on these forage species in the Mid-Atlantic.



Because fish move between state and federal waters without regard for boundaries, the Council's plans are coordinated with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and adjacent Councils (New England and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils) to implement a compatible conservation management system within the EEZ as well as state waters. Federal regulations generally apply only in federal waters, but there are instances where they may also apply in state waters.

## Who's Involved?

Council members are trustees for the fisheries, which are common property of all U.S. Citizens. The 21 voting members of the Council include:

- **Thirteen private citizens** who are knowledgeable about the region's fisheries, such as commercial and recreational fishermen, industry leaders, environmentalists, academics, and other interested stakeholders. These individuals are nominated by each state's Governor and appointed by the Secretary of Commerce for three-year terms;
- **Seven state officials** representing each of the Mid-Atlantic states' fish and wildlife agencies; and
- **The regional administrator** for the National Marine Fisheries Service's Greater Atlantic Regional Office.

The four non-voting members of the Council represent the Coast Guard, State Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

The Council receives input and recommendations from its advisory panels, fishery management action teams, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and other committees. These bodies provide guidance and advice on fishery management issues being considered.

The Council also has a staff that supports the Council by providing information for management decisions, informing the public about Council activities, coordinating meetings, creating fishery management documents, and assisting advisory groups. The Council staff consists of an Executive Director, a technical staff, and an administrative staff.

## What are the Council's responsibilities?

The Council develops fishery management plans and recommends management measures to ensure the long-term sustainability of Mid-Atlantic fisheries. Specific responsibilities of the Council include:

- **Developing and amending fishery management plans** for approval/implementation by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on behalf of the Secretary of Commerce
- **Setting annual catch limits and management measures** based on the best available science
- **Developing research priorities** with scientists and stakeholder/industry partners
- **Conducting public hearings** and gathering public input on proposed fishery management actions

The Council's fishery management decisions are guided by the ten National Standards established by the MSA. The National Standards require that all FMPs must:

1. Achieve optimum yield while preventing overfishing;
2. Be based on the best available scientific information;
3. Manage stocks as a unit;
4. Ensure that allocations are fair and equitable;
5. Consider efficiency in the utilization of the resource;
6. Consider and allow for variations and contingencies;
7. Minimize costs and avoid unnecessary duplication;
8. Consider the importance of fishery resources to fishing communities and minimize adverse economic impacts on such communities;
9. Minimize bycatch and the mortality of unavoidable bycatch;
10. Promote the safety of human life at sea.

## Get Involved

The Council makes fishery management decisions through a public, transparent process with opportunities for stakeholder involvement during all stages of decision-making.

**Learn More:** The first step to getting involved in the Council process is to learn about it. Knowing how the Council system works, the background of the issues that interest you, and the terminology used to describe fisheries biology and management will make your input more effective. Some suggestions for learning more:

- Visit the Mid-Atlantic Council website at [www.mafmc.org](http://www.mafmc.org)
- Subscribe to the Council email list at <http://www.mafmc.org/email-list>
- Contact the Council office at (302) 674-2331 or (877) 446-2362

**Attend a Meeting:** All regular Council meetings, SSC meetings, advisory panel meetings, public hearings, and scoping meetings are open to the public. Upcoming meetings are listed on the Council's website at <http://www.mafmc.org/council-events/> and are also published in the Federal Register.

**Comment:** Most meetings include opportunities for public comment, and individuals may also submit written comments for Council consideration. Go to <http://www.mafmc.org/public-comment/> for information on how and when to submit comments.