



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 22, 2013

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Council Meeting Summary

October 7-10, 2013
Philadelphia, PA

Meeting Materials, Presentations, and Audio Files are available online at www.mafmc.org/briefing/october-2013.

Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish

2014-2015 Specifications

The Council met jointly with the [Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's](#) (Commission) Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board and Black Sea Bass Board to establish commercial and recreational specifications and commercial management measures for 2014 and beyond. The Council and Commission voted to set the following specifications for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass:

	Year	Commercial Quota	Recreational Harvest Limit	Commercial Minimum Size (TL)	Commercial Mesh Size
		<i>Millions of Pounds</i>			
Summer Flounder	2014	10.51	7.01	14"	5.5" diamond/ 6" square
	2015	10.74	7.16	14"	5.5" diamond/ 6" square
Scup	2014	21.95	7.03	9"	5"
	2015	20.60	6.60	9"	5"
Black Sea Bass	2014	2.17	2.26	11"	4.5"
	2015	2.17	2.26	11"	4.5"
Bluefish	2014	7.494	13.59	---	---
	2015	---	---	---	---

Please note that 2015 specifications are subject to adjustment in 2014.

After reviewing the results of the 2013 benchmark stock assessment for summer flounder, the Council and Board voted to revise the 2014 harvest limits that were set in 2012 as part of two-year specifications for the fishery. The revised 2014 specifications will reduce the commercial harvest limit by .88 million pounds and the recreational harvest limit by .62 million pounds from the original harvest limits set for 2014. No changes were made to the 14" minimum size (TL) and 5.5" diamond/6" square mesh size for the commercial fishery. The Council and Board also voted to allocate up to 3% of the total allowable landings (TAL) be allocated for the Research Set-Aside (RSA) program in 2014 and 2015.

For the scup fishery, the Council and Board voted did not recommend any changes to the multi-year specifications set last year for 2013-2015, resulting in a commercial quota of 21.95 million pounds in 2014 and 20.60 million pounds in 2015 and a recreational harvest limit of 7.03 million pounds in 2014 and 6.60 million pounds in 2015. No changes were made to the existing 9" commercial minimum size (TL) and 5" mesh size. The Council recommended that the possession limit be increased to 12,000 pounds for the Winter II commercial scup fishery. In addition, if a transfer of quota occurs between Winter I and Winter II, the Winter II possession limit will increase at 1,500 pound intervals for every 500,000 pounds of scup transferred. No changes were made to the 3% RSA allocation for 2014.

For the black sea bass fishery, the Council and Board recommended that 2014 and specifications be set equal to the 2013 specifications, resulting in a 2.17 million pound commercial quota and a 2.26 million pound recreational harvest limit for both years. No changes were made to the 11" commercial minimum size (TL) or 4.5" mesh size. The Council and Board also approved an allocation of up to 3% of the TAL for the RSA program in 2014 and 2015.

For the bluefish fishery, the Council recommended a commercial quota of 7.5 million pounds for 2014 and 13.6 million pounds for 2015. Combined, the commercial and recreational limits are about 10% lower than the limits previously specified for 2014. The decreases are due to a reduced bluefish ABC determination from the SSC following the latest stock assessment update.

Recreational management measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass will be developed later in the year when more information is available on the 2013 recreational landings and effectiveness of the 2013 recreational regulations.

Spiny Dogfish

The Council adopted the following management measures for the spiny dogfish fishery in 2014 and 2015:

Year	Allowable Catch Limit (ACL)	Commercial Quota		Research Set-Aside (RSA) <i>Millions of Pounds</i>	Trip Limit
		Millions of Pounds			
2014	60.695	49.037		1.471	4,000 lb
2015	62.270	50.612		1.518	4,000 lb

Based on Amendment 3 to the spiny dogfish fishery management plan (FMP), the Council recommended that up to 3% of the commercial quota be allocated for RSA in 2014 and 2015. The New England Council will develop management measure recommendations at its November meeting.

Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish

Amendment 15—River Herring and Shad

The Council voted to address additional conservation of river herring and shad through an interagency working group. Once abundant throughout the region, river herring (alewives and blueback) and shad (American and hickory) populations have declined to historic lows in recent decades as a result of habitat loss, overfishing, and other factors. In June 2012, the Council approved a suite of measures designed to reduce and monitor incidental catch of river herring and shad in the longfin squid and Atlantic mackerel fisheries, including a cap to directly limit river herring and shad catch in the mackerel fishery. At the same meeting, the Council voted to consider adding river herring and shad as stocks managed under the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). After extensive discussion, public testimony, and consideration of more than 37,000 public comments during this week's meeting, the Council determined that additional management of river herrings and shads under an FMP was neither required nor appropriate at this time. Instead, the Council adopted a motion to establish a working group composed of regional, state, and Federal management partners that will work to comprehensively address river herring and shad mortality and stock status throughout their range.

The Council will review the progress of the working group on a regular basis, with the first review occurring at the June 2014 Council meeting. In three years, the Council will conduct a formal evaluation of the effectiveness of the approved working group approach and determine if it is appropriate, or if a different strategy is required to protect river herring and shad.

Monkfish

Framework 8

The Council adopted the range of alternatives for Framework Adjustment 8 to the Monkfish FMP, which was initiated by the New England in June to implement revised specifications of DAS and trip limits for FY2014-2016. Following an updated monkfish assessment, ACTs in 2014-2016 will remain constant and days-at-sea (DAS) and trip limits will be adjusted in the Northern Management Area (NMA) and Southern Management Area (SMA) based on performance of the fishery in 2011-2013. Because the ACTs were under-harvested in both areas, the alternatives in Framework 8 allow either DAS or trip limits to increase. Additionally, in the Framework, the northern operating limit for vessels with monkfish H permits can be moved to the NMA-SMA boundary. Finally, the Framework allows for flexibility in the use of monkfish DAS for vessels in the SMA that have both monkfish

and groundfish DAS. The adoption of preferred alternatives and final action on the Framework will occur at the Mid-Atlantic Council's December 2013 meeting and the New England Council's January 2014 meeting.

Executive Committee

2014 Implementation Plan Review

At its August 2013 meeting, the Council approved a strategic plan for the years of 2014-2018. The plan defines four overarching goals and 18 objectives in the areas of communications, science, management, and governance. Following approval of the final strategic plan, Council staff developed a draft implementation plan which will guide the Council's management activities over the next five years in order to achieve the goals and objectives established in the plan. The plan includes a list of activities and projects related to the strategic plan which the Council will begin or continue working on in 2014. The plan will be reviewed, updated, and expanded on an annual basis to include new projects for the coming year. During the October 2013 meeting, the Executive Committee reviewed the draft implementation plan and provided feedback and suggestions for revision. Council staff will revise the draft plan based on the Executive Committee's input and solicit public comments prior to final review of the implementation plan by the full Council in December.

Research Set-Aside

2015 Research Priorities

The Council approved a list of research priorities for the 2015 Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program. The RSA program provides a mechanism to fund research through the sale of fish harvested under a research quota. The set-asides may range from 0 to 3 percent of each species' total allowable landings. The Council establishes research priorities annually to assist NMFS in the select of future research projects for funding. While the Council established research priorities for 2015 which address a broad range of data and research needs, the Council reaffirmed funding of the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program as its top priority. Other research projects will be considered pending availability of RSA funds.

Other Business

Level 2 Assessment Framework

The Council moved to initiate a framework or amendment to refine the definition of Level 2 stock assessments in the Council's ABC control rules and to develop protocols for setting ABCs for level 2 stocks.

Multi-Year Specification Flexibility Framework

The Council also voted to initiate a framework to evaluate the feasibility of allowing the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and Council to base ABC on constant catch during a multi-year period. If approved, the framework would likely establish a bandwidth within multi-year specifications to allow catches and specifications to remain constant during a multi-year period if updated OFL values are within a prescribed tolerance.

Omnibus Observer Coverage Amendment Planning

The Council approved a motion to prioritize planning for an Omnibus Amendment focusing on observer coverage in regional fisheries consistent with Regional Administrator Bullard's letter to MAFMC and NEFMC on 9/20/2013.

Next Meeting: December 10-12, 2013

The Westin Hotel
100 Westgate Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Go to www.mafmc.org/briefing-books to view the full 2014 meeting schedule.