



## Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Committee Recommendations Summary December 6, 2021

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog (SCOQ) Committee and Advisory Panel (AP) met jointly via webinar on December 6, 2021, to review the Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) draft white paper entitled, "Approaches to Address the Current Species Separation Requirements in the Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Fisheries." The following provides a summary of the Committee's Recommendations.

**Committee members present:** Peter Hughes (Committee Chair), Maureen Davidson (Committee Vice-chair), Joe Cimino, David Stormer, Kate Wilke, Jay Hermsen (GARFO). **Advisory Panel members present:** Tom Dameron, Peter deFur, Peter Himchak, Samuel Martin, David O'Neill, Jeffrey Pike, Monte Rome, Guy Simmons, and Dave Wallace. **Others present:** Michael Luisi (Council Chair), John Almeida (NOAA General Council), Jessica Coakley and José Montañez (Council staff), Doug Potts, and Sharon Benjamin (GARFO).

Peter Hughes made introductory remarks and reviewed the agenda. Staff presented contents of the draft white paper, FMAT recommendations, and meeting materials. Question and discussion followed. Members of the AP indicated they were supportive of an approach like Option #3 (Modify Regulations to Require Onboard Sorting and Allow Mixed Trips) as a first step, which would require manual onboard sorting and separation of clams by species (surfclam or quahog) when cages are filled on board the vessel, and then taking a research and development (R&D) approach to look at other longer term solutions (like Option #6 or other options that address long-term monitoring). The Committee was supportive of this type of approach.

**The Committee passed the following motion by unanimous consent:** "I move that the Committee forward the recommendation of the AP and Committee as discussed Dec 6 (i.e., proposal of option 3 and longer-term R&D such as EM type of solution), to the full Council for consideration (Wilke/Cimino)."

In addition, the Committee discussed the letter received on the Great South Channel Habitat Management Area and concerns of members of the surfclam industry in terms of the impacts on their businesses/operations, and their desire to revisit the science related to the siting of these access areas. The Committee noted that enough time has passed since implementation of the NEFMC Omnibus Habitat Amendment 2 and Framework related to surfclam access. **The Committee recommended** there be a leadership level discussion that is prioritized between the NEFMC and MAFMC EDs, Chairs, and respective Habitat and SCOQ Committee Chairs about the history of this issue and current state of the data, management, and other issues related to it.