



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

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Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 24, 2023
To: Chris Moore, Executive Director
From: Jason Didden, staff
Subject: 2024-2025 Atlantic Mackerel Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC)

Staff's perspective has not changed from its [July 2023 memo](#) in which we stated that the assessment projections have been over-predicting biomass/rebuilding, and that an approach that limits directed fishing without creating excessive regulatory discards appears to be the most reasonable. This was also the rationale behind staff's recommendation that the Council request emergency action last August to limit additional 2023 directed mackerel fishing. As a result of that request, [an emergency action was implemented effective October 12, 2023](#). That emergency action should result in 2023 landings being 500-700 metric tons (MT) lower than what was assumed in the new projections.

Staff has noted to the Council that our current situation is the result of about 50 years of overfishing. Considering this overfishing and repeated inability to accurately project short term trends, it may take some time to "fix" mackerel's stock status and caution may be warranted if/when improving trends are first detected.

Given the variability observed in the sensitivity analyses associated with projections, staff's original ABC recommendation of 3,314 MT seems reasonable. Higher ABCs may not account for the recent trends observed in assessments. Lower ABCs may just increase discards rather than reduce catch. The effects of operating at generally incidental-level trip limits for the full year will also need to be regularly evaluated to ensure regulatory discarding does not become excessive.