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COUNCIL MEETING SUMMARY

April 9-11, 2013
Raleigh, North Carolina

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council considered a broad range of issues at its meeting earlier this month in Raleigh, North Carolina. The following report summarizes the major decisions and topics of discussion during the meeting.

TILEFISH MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The Council reviewed the 2013-2014 tilefish management measures recommended by the Council in 2012 as part of a multi-year management measure package. Staff reported that neither the SSC nor the Tilefish monitoring committees recommended a change in the 2014 ABC during their meetings earlier this year. The SSC's recommendations were based on updated CPUE and size distribution data which indicated continued stability in the fishery. The monitoring committee noted that commercial landings performance has been in line with expectations and that tilefish landing were reported accurately.

After reviewing the SSC and monitoring committee recommendations, the Council decided to maintain the management measures originally adopted for the 2014 fishing year:

2014 TILEFISH MANAGEMENT MEASURES

- ABC = ACL = ACT = 2.013 M lb
- TAL = 1.995 M lb; IFQ = 1.895 M lb
- Incidental quota = 0.099 M lb
- Incidental trip limit = 500 lb (gutted weight)
- 8-fish per angler per trip bag limit
- No Research Set-Aside

OMNIBUS RECREATIONAL AMENDMENT

The Council approved the alternatives presented by staff for inclusion in the Omnibus Recreational Accountability Measure Amendment with the addition of two alternatives. The amendment was initiated in December 2012 to consider modifications to existing accountability measures for MAFMC-managed recreational fisheries. On April 29, Council staff will hold the first in a series of five public hearings from Virginia Beach, VA to Warwick, RI to collect public input on the draft amendment. Additional information about the public hearings and the ongoing development of the amendment will be posted on our website at: <http://www.mafmc.org/actions/omnibus/recreational-accountability>

SPECIES AND ISSUES CONSIDERED

- 2014 Tilefish Management Measures
- Omnibus Recreational Amendment
- Research Set-Aside
- Squid Workshop
- Magnuson-Stevens Act
- Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM)
- Forage Fish Management

MATERIALS ON THE WEB

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

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

June 11-13, Eatontown, NJ
August 13-15, Wilmington, DE
October 8-10, Philadelphia, PA
December 12-14, Annapolis, MD

RSA COMMITTEE

The Research Set-Aside Committee met to review the National Marine Fisheries Service's letter that was sent in response to the Council's suggestions regarding the effectiveness of the Council's Research Set Aside Program. In general, NMFS supported Council suggestions to improve the scientific, monitoring and enforcement aspects of the program. With respect to improving the quality of RSA science, the Council will be taking steps to more fully integrate its Scientific and Statistical Committee in the research prioritization process and the peer review of RSA proposals and interim and final reports. NMFS also agreed to implement additional notification and reporting requirements designed to improve monitoring and enforcement of RSA quota including a pre-landing call-in notification of intent to land RSA quota. NMFS will continue to evaluate the Council request to consider options to contract with a third party to conduct auctions of RSA quota. In addition, NMFS agreed to work with the Council to develop an annual report to describe research activities and performance of the RSA Program in the interest of public transparency.

The Committee will continue to evaluate the use of tags to track RSA landings as well as the concept of allocating party/charter RSA quota on a per trip basis (i.e., RSA quota would be converted to an equivalent number of trips). Finally, the Committee agreed to consider funding supplemental at-sea observations and stock assessment activities under the RSA Program.

SQUID MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

The Council received a summary of the January 2013 Squid Management Workshop (<http://www.mafmc.org/s/squid-workshop-summary.pdf>) that was held in Riverhead, NY. In response, the Council directed staff to hold two port meetings to discuss potential management changes with fishery participants in Cape May, NJ and Pt. Judith, RI and to develop a range of modifications to the trimester system for 2014 specifications. The Council also requested that NMFS establish a new control date for the longfin squid fishery. Given that potential changes to squid assessments may require changes to data collection procedures, staff will also work with the NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center to further illustrate the kinds of data that would best facilitate continued improvements to squid assessments.

MAGNUSON-STEVENSON FISHERY CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ACT

The Council discussed a range of topics related to a potential reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Council moved to recommend that the possibility of a sustainability certification program for U.S. caught seafood be recommended for discussion at the upcoming Managing Our Nation's Fisheries 3 (MONF3) conference. The Council also discussed issues related to the National Standards and how they are interpreted, ecosystem and habitat concerns, funding for the Councils, and the National Ocean Policy.

STANDARDIZED BYCATCH REPORTING METHODOLOGY

Following a presentation by Doug Potts of the Northeast Regional Office, the Council approved for public hearings a draft environmental assessment for the Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) Omnibus Amendment. The purpose of the SBRM Amendment is to address deficiencies related to the prioritization process.

As background, the 2007 SBRM Omnibus Amendment was developed to address the requirement of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to establish a standardized bycatch reporting methodology. A legal challenge was filed by Oceana that eventually resulted in the Amendment being remanded to the agency in 2011. The Northeast Region Coordinating Council subsequently established a joint Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) to develop modifications to the prioritization process in the Omnibus Amendment as well as make additional improvements in response to the 3-year review of the SBRM.

LISTENING SESSION

Rob Andrews from NOAA Fisheries presented an overview of recent and upcoming changes to the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), particularly the new methods for conducting catch and effort surveys. Approximately 30 members of the public attended in person and via webinar to ask questions and to make comments on the new data collection methods. Additional information is available on the MRIP website and in the MRIP 2012-2013 Implementation Plan.

FORAGE WORKSHOP

The Council convened a workshop on April 11 to discuss the key issues relevant to forage fish assessment and management under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. During the workshop, a panel of experts discussed the role of forage species within ecosystems and best practices with respect to the harvest of forage species, taking their role(s) within ecosystems into account.

The workshop concluded with a discussion of next steps in the development of a Council forage fish management policy. Incorporation of consumption estimates by predators and species interactions in stock assessments could be accomplished through the addition of ecosystem terms of reference at the stock assessment level. The Council also discussed modification of its ABC control rules and risk policy with respect to forage species. Based on the outcome of the discussion at the workshop, the Council will begin the development of a forage fish policy which will guide Council decision making at the FMP level as part of its ecosystem approach to fisheries management guidance document.

**NEXT COUNCIL MEETING:
JUNE 11-13, 2013
EATONTOWN, NJ**