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MidAtlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting Summary 4/2019

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

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April 2019 Council Meeting Summary

April 8-11, 2019

Avalon, NJ

The following summary highlights actions taken and issues considered at the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's April 2019 meeting in Avalon, NJ. Presentations, briefing materials, and webinar recordings are available at: <http://www.mafmc.org/briefing/april-2019>.

Law Enforcement, HMS, and Tilefish Committee Meeting

In November 2018 the Council held a workshop which addressed several topics, including: (1) operator versus angler (client) responsibilities for fisheries violations that occur on for-hire vessels, (2) issues related to the sale of golden tilefish and tuna by recreational vessels that do not possess U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) vessel safety requirements for commercial vessels, and (3) complexity of fishing regulations impacting enforceability.

At the April 2019 Council meeting, the Law Enforcement, Tilefish, and Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Committees met jointly and reviewed recommendations from the workshop and further prioritized them for action by the Council. The Council approved these recommendations and agreed to follow up on several topics with the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, NOAA General Counsel, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the NOAA Fisheries HMS Division, the NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, the U.S. Coast Guard, the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office, and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. Further updates are planned for the June Council meeting.

Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Excessive Shares Amendment

The Council reviewed a draft public hearing document for the Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Excessive Shares Amendment and heard public testimony on the subject. The Council decided to have the committee meet again to provide additional input on the document prior to bringing it back to the Council for consideration and approval. The Council is considering a variety of approaches to ensure that no individual, corporation, or other entity acquires an excessive share of the Atlantic surfclam and ocean quahog individual transferrable quota (ITQ) privileges. In addition, the amendment considers revisions to the Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Fishery Management Plan (FMP) objectives. The amendment also includes alternatives to revise the process for specifying multi-year management measures, require periodic review of the excessive share cap level, and allow adjustments to be made under the frameworkable provisions of the FMP.

Atlantic Surfclam 2019-2020 Specifications

The Council revised its previous 2019 and 2020 Atlantic surfclam specification recommendations. In December 2018, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) revised their 2019 and 2020 Overfishing Limit and Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) recommendations for surfclams based on new analyses presented by a joint SSC/Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) working group. In response, at this meeting, the Council recommended a 2019 ACL of 56,419 mt and a 2020 annual catch limit (ACL) of 56,289 mt and retained the current annual catch target (ACT) of 29,363 mt and commercial quota of 26,218 mt for both years (2019 and 2020). The Council will send a letter communicating these recommendations to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Catch Share Program Review

The Council received a presentation and heard public comments on the Atlantic surfclam and ocean quahog ITQ program review report prepared by Northern Economics, Inc. This presentation marked the beginning of a 30-day public comment period which will end on May 8.

Blueline Tilefish 2020 Specifications

The Council reviewed their previously recommended blueline tilefish specifications for the 2020 fishing year. After considering recommendations from the SSC, Tilefish Monitoring Committee, and Tilefish Advisory Panel, the Council recommended no changes to their previously recommended 2020 specifications, summarized below.

Blueline Tilefish 2020 Specifications	
ABC	100,520 pounds
Recreational total allowable landings	71,912 pounds
Commercial total allowable landings	26,869 pounds
Commercial trip limit	500 pounds until 70% of quota is met, then 300 pounds

Golden Tilefish 2020 Specifications

The Council reviewed their previously recommended golden tilefish specifications for the 2020 fishing year. After considering recommendations from the SSC, Tilefish Monitoring Committee, and Tilefish Advisory Panel, the Council recommended no changes to their previously recommended 2020 specifications, summarized below.

Golden Tilefish 2020 Specifications	
ACL	1.636 million pounds
Commercial Quota - IFQ fishery	1.554 million pounds
Incidental Quota	72,398 pounds
Incidental Trip Limit	500 pounds
Recreational Trip Limit	8 fish

Commercial eVTR Omnibus Framework

The Council discussed alternatives for an omnibus framework action that considers requiring federally permitted commercial vessels to submit vessel trip reports (VTRs) to NMFS electronically. This action is not intended to change existing data types being collected and operators would have a choice of which NMFS-approved eVTR application to use. This action would affect all vessels with federal commercial permits for species managed by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council; however, the Monkfish and Spiny Dogfish plans would only be affected if joint action is taken with the New England Fishery Management Council. After considering Advisory Panel and Fishery Management Action Team recommendations, the Council approved a range of alternatives, including a no action alternative, an alternative to require electronic submission of VTRs, and four alternatives that could change the VTR reporting deadline to 24 hours, 48 hours, 72 hours, or 7 days. NMFS indicated that they would likely have an extended implementation deadline of up to a year after the final rule if the Council selects an alternative to require electronic reporting. Lastly, the Council discussed the desire for a demonstration of the different applications at a future meeting.

Mid-Atlantic State of the Ecosystem Report

Sarah Gaichas (NEFSC) presented the 2019 Mid-Atlantic State of the Ecosystem report developed by the NEFSC. This report is intended to provide ecosystem-scale information relevant to fishery management decisions. Ecosystem indicators evaluate the status and trends of ecological, environmental, economic, and social components of the Mid-Atlantic Bight ecosystem. The 2019 report included new information requested by the Council such as the inclusion of the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP) data and

new recreational fishery and estuarine habitat ecosystem indicators. Council members provided feedback and suggestions for continued refinement of future versions of the report.

EAFM Updates

Sarah Gaichas (NEFSC) provided an update on the Council's ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM) risk assessment report. Conducting a risk assessment is the first step in the Council's EAFM structured framework to account for and incorporate ecosystem considerations into management. The Council completed its first risk assessment in 2017 and used it to evaluate and identify ecosystem indicators of highest priority. The 2019 State of the Ecosystem report updated the risk assessment ecosystem indicators. The Council also received an update on development of a summer flounder conceptual model. Conceptual model development is the second step in the EAFM framework and is meant to ensure that key relationships throughout the system are accounted for and to help answer high priority management questions. A workgroup of science and management experts was formed and has begun development of a draft model that will consider key risk factors affecting summer flounder and its fisheries. This work will take place throughout 2019.

Update on Habitat Activities

The Council received an update on the Northeast Regional Marine Fish Habitat Assessment. In addition, Karen Greene of the NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office Habitat Conservation Division provided an update on projects of interest and other activities occurring in the mid-Atlantic region related to fish habitat.

Illex Permitting and Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan Goals Amendment

The Council held a scoping hearing on an amendment to consider modifications to the permitting system for *Illex* squid, as well as potential modifications to the FMP goals for all species in the FMP. The scoping comment period ended April 12, 2019. The Council will review scoping comments and discuss next steps at their June 2019 meeting.

ROSA Update and Meeting with UK Fishermen

The Council received an update on the formation of the Responsible Offshore Science Alliance (ROSA) and their plans regarding regional science and monitoring for offshore wind energy and fisheries interactions. In addition, fishermen from the United Kingdom presented their offshore wind experiences.

Next Council Meeting

Tuesday June 4 - Thursday June 6, 2019

Yotel Hotel
570 10th Ave.
New York, NY 10036
646-449-7700