

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

PRESS RELEASE



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Council and Board Adopt 2010 Recreational Management Measures

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) met in Wilmington, Delaware from December 8 through December 10, 2009. The Council met with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC) Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Board (Board) on December 8 and adopted the following 2010 recreational fishery management measures:

	Summer Flounder	Scup	Black Sea Bass
2010 Harvest Limit	8.59 m lbs	3.01 m lbs	1.14 m lbs
Possession Limit	state-specific	10 fish (EEZ)	25 fish
Minimum Fish Size	state-specific	11 inch TL (EEZ)	12.5 inch TL
Open Season	state-specific	Jan. 1 - Feb. 28 and June 12 - Sept. 26	June 1 - June 30 and Sept. 1 - Sept. 30

The above 2010 recreational harvest limits are consistent with the National Marine Fishery Service's (NMFS) proposed rule (November 4, 2009) which accounts for the research set-aside (RSA) deductions being applied to the recreational sectors' initial quota allocations. For the recreational summer flounder fishery, the Council and Board adopted the conservation equivalency alternative in lieu of a coastwide option. This decision requires states to develop state-specific management measures (i.e., possession limits, size limits, and seasons) to achieve state-specific harvest limits. States will develop management proposals and submit them to the Commission for approval at its February 2010 meeting. As a non-preferred alternative, the Council and Board adopted a coastwide daily bag limit of two fish with a 19.5 inch total length (TL) minimum size requirement, and an open season from May 1 until September 30, 2010. In addition, a precautionary default measure of a 21.5 inch TL minimum fish size, a two fish possession limit, and a coastwide season from May 1 to September 30, 2010 was also approved. This measure would be imposed on any state that does not develop and implement conservation equivalent management measures.

For the 2010 recreational scup fishery, the Board voted to adopt conservation equivalency for state waters. Like summer flounder, states will develop state-specific management measures for approval at the Commission's February 2010 meeting. For federal waters, the Council voted for a 10 fish possession limit and an 11 inch TL minimum fish size in 2010. The federal season would be open January 1 through February 28 and June 12 through September 26, 2010.

For the 2010 recreational black sea bass fishery, the Council and Board voted to adopt a 12.5 inch TL minimum fish size and maintain the current 25 fish possession limit. The season would be open June 1 through June 30 and September 1 through September 30. In addition, the Council voted to convene a joint meeting of the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and the Black Sea Bass Monitoring Committee to share available data and relevant information regarding the 2010 black sea bass recommendations for purposes of allowing the Regional Administrator to consider whether it would be appropriate to adjust the black sea bass quota through an emergency action.

The Council and the Board also voted to initiate a review of the RSA process to determine the effectiveness of NMFS monitoring of RSA recreational fishery catches and landings for party/charter boats. This review will also address reconciliation of RSA recipients' landing levels with their purchased quotas.

The Council also adopted quota and management measures for the 2010/2011 Spiny Dogfish fishing year. A commercial quota of 12.0 million pounds was approved and would be divided into two semi-annual quota periods. Period 1 (May 1 - September 30, 2010) would be allocated 57.9% of the quota, i.e., 6,948,000 pounds, Period 2 (October 1, 2010 - April 30, 2011) would be allocated 42.1% which equates to 5,052,000 pounds. Commercial trip limits (daily possession limits) for the 2010/2011 fishing year would be set at 3,000 pounds. Additionally, in anticipation of the Spiny Dogfish TRAC assessment, the Council voted to include a commercial quota of 29.0 million pounds (derived from the application of $F_{\text{target}} = 0.284$) as a non-preferred alternative in order to provide a sufficient range of alternatives for the Regional Administrator to implement measures that are responsive to the best available data at the time of final rulemaking. The New England Council had already recommended a quota of 21.0 million pounds based on an F rate of 0.20 which will also be analyzed as a possible quota level.



Pictured left is Laurie Nolan receiving the Ricks E Savage Award from Rick Robins, Chairman (on right).

Pictured right is Jeff Deem receiving the Council's Fisheries Achievement Award from Rick Robins, Chairman (on right).



The Council recognized Laurie Nolan of New York with its 2009 Ricks E Savage award. This award is intended to honor individuals who add value to the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's process and goals through significant conservation and management activities. Laurie was a dedicated member of the Council for nine years. As an active member of a fishing family, she was able to benefit the Council by bringing practical knowledge, fishing experience, and an understanding and appreciation for problems facing the fishing industry to the Council's decision-making process. During her term as Chairwoman of the Squid, Mackerel, and Butterfish Committee, Laurie built a coalition of support amongst the Council's membership so as to encourage the Council to adopt Tilefish Amendment 1. By adopting Tilefish Amendment 1, the Council was able to implement a "catch share" program that created conservation and management measures which promote safety of human life at sea; account for the importance of the tilefish fishery to fishing communities; provide those communities with sustained participation while minimizing adverse economic impacts; and, effectively end the race to fish.

The Council also recognized Jeff Deem of Virginia with its 2009 Fisheries Achievement Award (FAA). The FAA is designed to recognize individuals who exhibit outstanding professionalism, diligence, and effort to protect living marine resources. As former Chairman of the Council's Bycatch and Limited Access Committee, Jeff was responsible for developing the Council's Catch and Release brochure which highlights how recreational anglers can help reduce bycatch mortality associated with the release of unintended catch or regulatory discards.

The Surfclam, Ocean Quahog, and Tilefish Committee; the Dogfish Committee; the Squid, Mackerel, and Butterfish Committee; the Demersal and Coastal Migratory Committee; and, the Monkfish Committee met to discuss and recommend draft accountability measures to be included in the Omnibus Amendment dealing with Annual Catch Limits and Accountability Measures. Recommendations developed by each Committee will be forwarded to the Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) for its review and analysis.

The Executive Committee met to review and recommend standards to be used by the Council to remand annual biological catch (ABC) recommendations back to the SSC for reconsideration of its ABC recommendations. The SSC also agreed that a set of SSC operating procedures should be developed. The Council subsequently voted to add four new members to the SSC. They are: Michael G. Frisk, Assistant Professor for Marine Sciences Research Center at Stony Brook University; Jason S. Link, NMFS' Northeast Fisheries Science Center; Douglas W. Lipton, Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of Maryland; and, David H. Secor, Professor, Chesapeake Biological Lab, University of Maryland. The Council also voted to approve the revised Five Year Research Plan for 2009-2013 developed by Council staff with assistance and approval of the SSC.

The Council received a presentation on Draft NOAA Catch Share Policy from Ms. Pat Kurkul, Regional Administrator of the NMFS' Northeast Regional Office. The draft policy concluded that "...catch share programs have proven to be powerful tools to manage fisheries to sustainable levels and improve their economic performance." The policy would encourage "...well-designed catch share programs to help rebuild fisheries and sustain fishermen, communities and vibrant working waterfronts..." The policy is available for viewing and comment at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/domes_fish/catchshare/index.htm. The Council also agreed to convene a Mid-Atlantic Council Catch Share Workshop during the first quarter of 2010 to explore the appropriateness of implementing additional catch share programs for fisheries managed by the Council.

The Council held a public comment period to solicit input regarding the Council's selection of sites as marine protected areas (MPA). The Council subsequently voted to nominate the Tilefish Gear Restricted Areas (GRAs), i.e., Oceanographer, Lydonia, Veatch, and Norfolk Canyons. The Council will forward this request to NMFS' Regional Office to become part of the national registry of MPAs. The Council chose not to include the Scup Northern and Southern GRAs which were nominated at the start of this process.

The Council will write a letter of support to NMFS regarding its Proposed Rule for Atlantic Bluefin Tuna that increases the general category maximum daily retention limit; that allows the general category season to remain open until the January sub-quota is reached; and, that increases the harpoon category daily retention limit. The Council also voted to have staff to the Protected Resources Committee draft a comment letter to NMFS regarding its Proposed Rule dated November 18, 2009, i.e., Annual Determination for Sea Turtle Observer Requirement. This rule would require selected commercial fisheries to take observers (upon NMFS' request) to learn more about sea turtle interactions in a given fishery, to evaluate existing measures to reduce or prevent turtle takes, and to determine whether additional measures may be necessary to address prohibited sea turtle takes.

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