

# Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

# PRESS RELEASE



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## Recreational Management Measures Decided for Fishing Year 2008

Secaucus, NJ - The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) together with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass (Board) met on December 11 and adopted the following 2008 recreational fishery management measures:

	<b>Summer Flounder</b>	<b>Scup*</b>	<b>Black Sea Bass</b>
<b>2008 Harvest Limit</b>	6.21 m lbs	1.82 m lbs	2.11 m lbs
<b>Possession Limit</b>	state-specific	15 fish (EEZ)	25 fish
<b>Minimum Fish Size</b>	state-specific	10.5" (EEZ)	12"
<b>Open Season</b>	state-specific	Jan. 1-Feb. 29 and Oct. 1-Oct. 31	Jan. 1 - Dec. 31

\* For state waters, the Board will develop Regional conservation equivalency measures for the states New York through Massachusetts.

The above summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass recreational harvest limits for 2008 are consistent with the National Marine Fishery Service's (NMFS) proposed rule for these species and reflect the appropriate allocation of the initial total allowable landings (TAL) limit of 15.77 million pounds, 7.34 million pounds, and 4.22 million pounds for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass fisheries, respectively. For the summer flounder fishery, the Council and Board adopted the conservation equivalency alternative in lieu of a coastwide option. This decision requires the states to develop state-specific management measures (i.e., possession limits, size limits, and seasons) to achieve state-specific harvest limits. The states will develop management proposals and submit them to the Board for approval at its February 2008 meeting. As a non-preferred alternative, the Council and Board adopted a coastwide daily bag limit of three fish with a 19-inch total length (TL) minimum size requirement, and an open season from May 23 until September 1, 2008. They also adopted a precautionary default measure of a 20-inch TL minimum fish size, a two fish possession limit and an open season from May 23 to September 1, 2008. This measure would be imposed on any state that does not develop and implement conservation equivalent management measures.

In addressing the monkfish fishery, the Council passed a motion to adopt and submit to the Secretary the same preferred alternatives selected by the New England Council for Framework 5 to the Joint Monkfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). If approved, Monkfish Framework 5 would establish new biological reference points based on the most recent Data Poor Stocks Working Group Assessment, i.e.

	<b>B2006 (mt)</b>	<b>Btarget(mt)</b>	<b>Bthreshold (mt)</b>
<b>NFMA</b>	118,700	92,200	65,200
<b>SFMA</b>	135,500	122,500	96,400
<b>Btarget = average of total biomass 1980 - 2006</b>			
<b>Bthreshold = lowest value of total biomass 1980 - 2006</b>			

The framework would also reduce the Days at Sea (DAS) carry over level from ten to four, eliminate the three-hour trip accounting mechanism by requiring that all gill net trips of less than 15 hours be counted as 15 hours, establish a new lower incidental landing limit for vessels using large mesh and eliminate the letter of authorization requirement for certain VMS (vessel monitoring system) vessels while maintaining such a requirement for non-VMS vessels.

In its vote to support Framework 5, the Council also included language recommending the development of Framework 6 as a single-issue action to remove - prior to the start of the 2009 fishing year - the default backstop provision established in Framework 4. The Council also requested that the New England Council consider, as a priority for 2009, reviewing the current management measures and the latest monkfish stock assessment to determine if any adjustments to total allowable catch (TAC) and related trip limits are warranted. The Council also expressed its support of New England Council's draft letter to the NMFS' Regional Administrator regarding VMS requirements, i.e., concerns regarding the impact on the monkfish fishery of the VMS requirement established in Framework 42 of the Multispecies FMP.

The Council took action to increase the number of members on its Science and Statistical Committee (SSC) from 12 up to as many as 20 members. Although no new appointments were made during this Council meeting an Ad Hoc Committee was established and charged with the assignment to modify the current Statement of Operation, Practices and Procedures (SOPPs) to conform to the new Magnuson Stevens Act (MSA) requirement regarding use of the SSC for providing advice. Part of this assignment will be to ensure that the SSC will have appropriate disciplines, credentials, and independence.

The Council posthumously recognized Stewart Tweed with its 2007 Fisheries Achievement Award (FAA). The award was presented to Gail Tweed on behalf of the Tweed family and it is designed to recognize individuals who exhibit outstanding professionalism, diligence, and effort to protect living marine resources. Mr. Tweed was recognized for his personal efforts to protect and enhance living marine resources. Stewart's long term commitment and dedication as a Marine Agent for the State of New Jersey from 1977 until 2005 - first as part of the Rutgers University's Sea Grant Cooperative Extension Program and then later with the New Jersey Sea Grant Extension Program - are the overarching contributions for this recognition by the Council. So as to revitalize New Jersey's oyster industry, Stew supported the use of the best available science to enhance oyster populations - both natural and cultured. In addition, he helped create the first crab shedding facility that survived as a successful commercial enterprise, he directly contributed to securing the commercial fishing community's buy-in and subsequent compliance with the ever changing federal rules and regulations developed by the Mid-Atlantic Council, and he was a true leader in providing safety training programs for commercial and recreational fishermen. All these contributions and related activities represent a body of work that merited this recognition.



*Gail Tweed receiving the Council's Fisheries Achievement Award from Pete Jensen, Chairman (left), Gene Kray, Vice-Chairman, and Dan Furlong, Executive Director (right) on behalf of her husband and family.*

On Monday December 10 the Council held a well attended public workshop on the impact of new MSA requirements on the Council. Senior officials from NMFS (Sam Rauch, NOAA Fisheries' Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs and Pat Kurkul, Northeast Region, Regional Administrator.) provided attendees with national and regional perspectives on the status of actions related to implementing the new requirements contained in the MSA, and Council staff (Dan Furlong, Executive Director and Jessica Coakley, Fishery Management Specialist) provided Council staff perspectives on how the new requirements would impact the Council's specification setting process with particular emphasis on how the summer flounder specification setting process would be affected. Information presented during the workshop is available and can be received by requesting it through the Council's office.

In addition to the workshop and Council meeting, three Council committees also met. The Council's section of the Joint Monkfish Committee met to review New England Council action on Frameworks 5 and 6 to the FMP for monkfish and develop its position for Council consideration and action. The Squid, Mackerel, and Butterfish (SMB) Committee met to review limited entry for the Atlantic mackerel fishery which the Council will be considering as part of Amendment 11 to the SMB FMP. The Council's Bycatch and Limited Access Committee met to receive a presentation on the NMFS' Draft National Bycatch Report and address its charge and goals concerning bycatch reduction and integration of such measures into fisheries governed by the Council.