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# Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

# PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## Butterfish Rebuilding Action Approved

The Council met in New Bern, NC October 16-18, 2007 and approved Amendment 10 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the purpose of taking it to public hearing. Amendment 10 is designed to develop a rebuilding program that will allow the butterfish stock to rebuild in the shortest amount of time possible (but not to exceed ten years) and permanently protect the long-term health and stability of the rebuilt stock; and, to minimize both bycatch and the fishing mortality of unavoidable bycatch. To achieve these goals, proposed management actions include:

- Developing a butterfish mortality cap program for the *Loligo* fishery to allow the butterfish stock to rebuild to  $B_{MSY}$  and protect the long-term health and stability of the rebuilt stock;
- Adjusting *Loligo* minimum codend mesh size to reduce discards of butterfish and other non-targeted fish;
- Eliminating some exemptions for *Illex* vessels from *Loligo* minimum codend mesh requirements (so as to reduce discards of butterfish and other fish); and
- Establishing seasonal gear restricted areas (GRAs) to reduce the discarding of butterfish and other non-target fish.

Each management action has a number of alternatives associated with it to achieve the desired outcome, but at this point in time the Council has not selected preferred alternatives for any of the four management actions. Public hearings will be held in early 2008 for this Amendment.

Based on an update of the Spiny Dogfish stock status, the Council reviewed and approved specifications for the May 1, 2008 through April 30, 2009 fishing year only. The Council approved and will recommend to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) an incidental take allowance of 8 million pounds of Spiny Dogfish to be sub-allocated into two six-month periods, i.e., 4,632,000 pounds for the period May 1 through October 31, and 3,368,000 pounds for the November 1 through April 30 period. A trip limit of 600 pounds for both periods was approved and will likewise be recommended to NMFS.

In addition to the Council's actions on butterfish and spiny dogfish, by acclamation the Council re-elected its current officers for the new Council year. Pete Jensen will continue as the Council's Chairman and Dr. Gene Kray will continue as its Vice-Chairman. In addition to the election of officers, three individuals were sworn in as new Council members. Dr. Lee Anderson will occupy the obligatory seat for Delaware (replacing Ron Smith), Erling Berg will occupy an at-large seat for New Jersey (replacing Fran Puskas), and Rick Robbins will also occupy an at-large seat for Virginia (replacing Michelle Peabody). Further, Larry Simms of Maryland was reappointed to an at-large seat for his third term.

Four of the Council's Committees also met during this meeting, i.e., Joint Spiny Dogfish, Research Set-aside, Law Enforcement and Executive, to review and develop issues pertaining to their respective charges.

On Wednesday, October 17 the Council received an oral report from Dr. Jim Weinberg of NMFS' Northeast Fisheries Science Center on the recent Monkfish stock assessment. Following this presentation, the Council discussed the need for adjustments to the current plan and recommended that the New England Council be notified that the Mid-Atlantic Council supports their initiation and development of Framework 5 to the Monkfish FMP.

The Council also received oral reports from Dr. Mike Fogarty of NMFS' Northeast Fisheries Science Center on the Center's current activities in support of developing an ecosystems based approach to fisheries management, and Preston Pate, Chairman of the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) Operations Team, regarding NMFS' activities in support of developing a MRIP to improve recreational data collection and analyses. Elements of the current Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) program will likely be replaced by the MRIP.

It was also announced that the Council, in consultation with the New England Council, had completed and submitted the Congressionally mandated report on "Council Management Coordination" to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation prior to the established deadline. A copy of the report is available on line at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/msa2007>.