
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

PRESS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Framework 7 Approved for Secretarial Submission

The Mid-Atlantic Council and six of its Committees met April 17-19, 2007 in Ocean City, Maryland. The Council voted to approve Framework 7 to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Secretarial submission. Framework 7 is an administrative action that would allow the Council to adjust biological reference points during the FMP's annual specification setting process in lieu of the more protracted amendment or framework process currently required. Reference points are used to determine whether or not any of the FMP's stocks are overfished or experiencing overfishing. If approved, the Council - by incorporating the best science available following a new or revised stock assessment - would have the ability to adjust the biological reference points in a timelier manner when such changes were warranted for stock status determination. Necessarily, this framework also describes the scientific peer review mechanism that is to be used in developing the scientific advice to change the stock status determination criteria.

The Council approved a motion from its Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Committee to form an Industry Advisory Mackerel Group with the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The purpose of the group will be to meet and develop recommendations and strategies for Council consideration relative to management of the Transboundary Mackerel Resource. The Group will meet and formalize industry recommendations in advance of any discussions with representatives of the Canadian government.

In another administrative matter, the Council ratified the establishment of a Council Coordinating Committee as called for in Section 302, (I) of the recently enacted Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act of 2006.

During the Ecosystems Committee meeting, Bill Figley (a retired fisheries biologist from New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection) gave a presentation regarding Reef Habitat Along the New Jersey Coast. The Committee reviewed the outcome of a staff survey of member states regarding the need for Special Management Zones (SMZ) for state authorized artificial reefs in the US Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The Committee decided that the Council's Demersal Committee should be the contact point for such requests as it has the authority to initiate and investigate the establishment of such zones under the provisions of Amendment 9 to the Black Sea Bass section of the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP.

The Protected Resources Committee met to discuss sea turtle conservation efforts in the Mid-Atlantic and New England areas. Staff will develop a comment letter to NMFS regarding potential amendments to regulatory requirements for Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) based on guidance developed and discussed at this meeting.

The Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Committee reviewed cost recovery options for those fisheries and solicited input from its advisors regarding 2008, 2009, and 2010 quota specifications. Quota specifications will be established at the Council's June meeting.

The Executive Committee reviewed the outcomes from the March meeting of NMFS' Northeast Region officials regarding regional impacts of the Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act of 2006. The Committee also reviewed the status of the Council's FY2007 budget, and results from a recent survey of advisory panel members.

The Council received a presentation from Dr. Eric Powell of Rutgers University on the National Fisheries Institute's Scientific Monitoring Committee concerning results from its Supplemental Finfish Surveys and Loligo Net-Testing Studies.

Leslie-Ann McGee of the NEFMC conducted a public hearing on Phase 1 of the New England Council's Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Omnibus Amendment Number 2. Phase 1 is a set of proposed changes to the essential fish habitat components of the fishery management plans under the NEFMC's jurisdiction. Phase 1 includes a review and update of EFH designations and consideration of Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs) designations, an update of prey species list, and an update of non-fishing impacts. The Omnibus Amendment document is available on the New England Council's website at www.nefmc.org/habitat/index.html or by calling the New England Fishery Management Council office at 978-465-0492.

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