



# Northeast Region Bulletin

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## **LONGFIN SQUID FISHERY**

### Trimester 3 Information

#### Details about Trimester 3 and ongoing NMFS actions

Please be aware that two pending actions may have an effect on Trimester 3 of the 2012 longfin squid fishery.

Trimester 3 of the longfin squid fishery was scheduled to open on September 1, 2012. As of August 6, 2012, 112 percent of the butterfish mortality cap in the longfin squid fishery has been harvested. Therefore, the longfin squid fishery will likely not open for directed fishing in Trimester 3. However, we are working on two changes to the regulations that may allow us to keep the longfin squid fishery open for some or all of Trimester 3.

#### **Framework 6 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan (Framework 6):**

We are currently working on a rule change that would enable us to consider a higher butterfish catch limit and butterfish mortality cap for the longfin squid fishery for the remainder of 2012. This action was recommended by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council in Framework 6. Framework 6 would allow us to increase the quota for the directed butterfish fishery and butterfish mortality cap to the levels originally approved by the Council for the 2012 specifications (see below). We expect that we will make a decision on Framework 6 and the increase in the butterfish catch prior to the start of Trimester 3 on September 1, 2012.

#### **Final specifications for the 2012 butterfish fishery:**

If we approve Framework 6, we will publish a final rule for 2012 butterfish specifications in the Federal Register and send a letter to all longfin squid vessels and dealers describing the final 2012 butterfish quotas and management measures. Changes to the butterfish specifications would include: Increasing the directed butterfish fishery quota from 485 mt to 1,072 mt; the butterfish mortality cap from 1,436 mt to 2,445 mt; and raising the butterfish possession limit allowed using a 3-inch minimum codend mesh size in order to possess more than 2,000 lb of butterfish (increased from 1,000 lb).

#### **Will these potential changes happen before September 1, 2012, so that the Trimester 3 longfin squid fishery can open as scheduled?**

We have worked closely with the Council to develop these regulatory changes and we are making every effort to ensure our review is complete and we make a final decision by September 1. However, if we do not approve Framework 6, or we cannot implement both of these rule changes by September 1, 2012, the longfin squid fishery will not open on September 1, 2012, for Trimester 3. If Framework 6 is approved, and the final butterfish specifications are implemented

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before the end of the fishing year, we would re-open the longfin squid fishery for Trimester 3 as soon as the rulemakings are effective.

### **Review of the Butterfish Mortality Cap Methodology:**

#### **Is NMFS reviewing the way it estimates butterfish bycatch in the longfin squid fishery?**

Yes, we have reviewed whether the estimate of butterfish catch relative to the longfin squid fishery's butterfish mortality cap to determine if it adequately captures the behavior of the longfin squid fleet.

#### **Are you going to account for different catch rates in Trimester 2? If not, why?**

While we do see a change in the catch rate during different times of the 2012 fishing year, we have more work to do in order to determine what the cause is, and whether it supports a change in the way we estimate butterfish bycatch. Any changes to the way we estimate butterfish bycatch in the longfin squid fishery must be appropriate to account for changes in where and how much butterfish are found from year to year. In addition, any changes to the way we estimate bycatch must be consistent with the way we estimate bycatch in other Northeast fisheries.

#### **Are you going to change the way you estimate butterfish bycatch for this fishing year?**

While we will continue to look into whether we can support changes to the way we estimate butterfish bycatch in the longfin squid fishery, we will not put changes in place before the start of the 2013 fishing year, on January 1, 2013. However, we expect that if we increase the butterfish catch limits and butterfish mortality cap as described above, the current bycatch estimate method should allow the longfin squid fishery to remain open for the majority, if not all, of Trimester 3.

#### **Whom can I call for more information?**

We are aware that this information is confusing and apologize that the situation remains uncertain. Please call the Sustainable Fisheries Division of NMFS at 978-281-9315 for more information and ask to speak with someone who works on the longfin squid fishery.