



NOAA FISHERIES

Sustainable Fisheries

This summary provides a broad overview of restrictions and requirements; the regulations summarized here may be found at 50 CFR part 648. Please contact the Sustainable Fisheries Division at (978) 281-9315 for more information.

Updated March 1, 2016

Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Information Sheet

The Atlantic mackerel, longfin squid, *Illex* squid, and butterfish fisheries are managed in Federal waters by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council under a single fishery management plan. Collectively, these species fulfill both domestic and foreign markets for bait and food. These fisheries operate primarily in the Mid-Atlantic region from Massachusetts to North Carolina. The fishing year is from January 1 through December 31.

What Federal permits are available for Atlantic mackerel, squid, and butterfish?

Permit Type	Permit Category	Description
Open Access	SMB 2	Squid/Mackerel/Butterfish Charter/Party
	SMB 3	Squid/Butterfish Incidental
	SMB 4	Atlantic Mackerel Incidental
Limited Access	SMB 1	Longfin/Butterfish Moratorium
	SMB 5	<i>Illex</i> Squid Moratorium
	SMB T1	Tier 1 (T1) Mackerel
	SMB T2	Tier 2 (T2) Mackerel
	SMB T3	Tier 3 (T3) Mackerel

Vessels with a SMB 1, T1, T2, or T3 permit are required to have a vessel monitoring system. Open access permits SMB 3 and SMB 4 must be held in unison in order to retain incidentally captured squid, butterfish, **and** Atlantic mackerel. To obtain a permit application, contact our Permits Office at: www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/aps/permits/ or (978) 281-9370.

Vessels that are greater than 165 feet long, greater than 750 gross registered tons, or with a shaft horsepower greater than 3,000 shp may not receive one of the mackerel permits listed above and should contact the permits office.

What are the possession limits for each permit category?

Permit Category	Trip Limits (can only be landed once per day)			
	Mackerel	<i>Illex</i> Squid	Longfin Squid	Butterfish
SMB 2	Unlimited while carrying passengers for hire			
SMB 3	N/A	10,000 lb	2,500 lb	600 lb
SMB 4	20,000 lb	N/A	N/A	N/A
SMB 1	N/A	N/A	Unlimited	Unlimited/2,500 lb*
SMB 5	N/A	Unlimited	N/A	N/A
SMB T1	Unlimited	N/A	N/A	N/A
SMB T2	135,000 lb	N/A	N/A	N/A
SMB T3	100,000 lb	N/A	N/A	N/A

*See gear restrictions on page 2.

How is the commercial quota determined and monitored?

The annual quotas for mackerel, squid, and butterfish are based on recommendations from the Council. Seven percent of the annual landing limit for mackerel is reserved for vessels holding a Tier 3 Mackerel permit. A portion of the butterfish catch limit is reserved for a butterfish catch cap to account for the amount of butterfish caught as bycatch in the longfin squid fishery. Both the longfin squid and butterfish catch cap are divided into three trimesters: 43% for Trimester I (January-April), 17% for Trimester II (May-August), and 40% for Trimester III (September-December).

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) monitors the harvest of all mackerel, squid, and butterfish quotas. NMFS will announce closures of the directed fisheries for Atlantic mackerel, longfin squid, *Illex* squid, and butterfish when catch reaches a particular quota closure threshold (see the quota monitoring thresholds table below). Weekly landings reports are available at: <http://www.great-eratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/aps/monitoring/atlanticmackerel.html>.

What are the requirements for slipped catch?

Vessels carrying an observer with a limited access Atlantic mackerel (Tier 1, 2,

and 3) and/or a longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permit cannot slip their catch except for one of the following reasons: 1) safety concern; 2) mechanical failure, including gear damage; or 3) excessive catch of spiny dogfish. For vessels carrying an observer with a limited access Atlantic mackerel permit, if catch is slipped for one of the reasons listed above, the vessel operator must move and remain 15 nautical miles from where the slippage event occurred. If the catch was slipped for any other reason, the vessel operator must immediately terminate the fishing trip and return to port. Please see reporting requirements on page 5 for instructions on reporting a slippage event.

What is the river herring and shad catch cap?

River herring (alewife and blueback herring) and shad (American shad and hickory shad) are commonly caught as bycatch in the Atlantic mackerel fishery. The river herring and shad catch cap help further protect these species. When 95 percent of the river herring and shad catch cap is harvested, the directed Atlantic mackerel fishery will be closed and Atlantic mackerel vessels will be limited to the 20,000-lb incidental catch trip limit for the remainder of the fishing year.

What are the gear restrictions for these fisheries?

Minimum mesh size

- **Mackerel:** There is no minimum mesh size for mackerel.
- **Butterfish:** Vessels fishing with otter trawl gear are limited in the amount of butterfish they can possess depending on the mesh size they are using. To utilize the higher possession limit, vessels must use nets that have a minimum codend mesh of 3 inches (76 mm) diamond mesh, inside stretch measure, applied through the codend for at least 100 continuous meshes forward of the end of the net. For codends with less than 100 meshes, one-third of the net must have a minimum mesh of 3 inches, measured from the back of the codend to the headrope.
- **Longfin squid:**
 - Codend – The minimum mesh sizes differ by Trimester (see mesh size table on the next page), but are required to be diamond mesh, inside stretch measure, applied throughout the codend for at least 150 continuous meshes forward of the terminus of the net. For codends less than 150 meshes, one-third of the net must be the minimum mesh measured from the terminus of the codend to the headrope. No net strengtheners, ropes, lines, or chafing gear can be

Quota Monitoring Thresholds		
Quota Species	When this percent of the quota is reached...	The possession limit will be reduced to this amount for the remainder of the fishing year or Trimester...
Mackerel	95%	20,000 lb per trip
Tier 3 Mackerel Allocation	90%	20,000 lb per trip (for Tier 3 vessels only)
Mackerel	100%	0 lb (possession prohibited)
Longfin Squid	90% in Trimesters I and II (95% after April 15 and August 15)	2,500 lb per trip
Longfin Squid	95% in Trimester III	2,500 lb per trip
Butterfish Catch Cap*	95% in each Trimester	2,500 lb of longfin squid per trip
<i>Illex</i> Squid	95%	10,000 lb per trip
Butterfish	1,411 mt less than 100%	5,000 lb per trip
Butterfish	100%	600 lb per trip

* Vessels using jigging gear to target longfin squid when the directed fishery is closed due to the butterfish catch cap will not be subject to the reduced possession limit and will be allowed to possess more than 2,500 lb of longfin squid, provided that all trawl gear is properly stowed.

used that reduce the mesh size.

Trimester	Minimum Mesh Size
Trimester I	2 1/8 inches (54 mm)
Trimester II	1 7/8 inches (48 mm)
Trimester III	2 1/8 inches (54 mm)

- Net strengtheners – Owners or operators of otter trawl vessels fishing for and/or possessing longfin squid may use net strengtheners (covers), splitting straps, and/or bull ropes or wire around the entire circumference of the codend, provided they do not have a mesh opening of less than 5 inches (12.7 cm) diamond mesh, inside stretch measure.
- **Illex squid:** Vessels fishing for *Illex* squid with otter trawl gear that possess longfin squid during June, July, August, and September seaward of the following coordinates (listed below and continued in the next column) are exempt from the longfin squid minimum mesh size requirements listed above, provided they do not have any net or piece of net with a mesh size less than 1 7/8 inches (48 mm) diamond mesh available for immediate use, when the vessel is landward of the line showed here. Regulations describing net stowage (“not available for immediate use”) can be found at §648.2.

43°20.0'	70°00.0'
42°45.0'	70°10.0'
42°13.0'	69°55.0'
41°00.0'	69°00.0'
41°45.0'	68°15.0'
42°10.0'	67°10.0'
41°18.6'	66°24.8'
40°55.5'	66°38.0'
40°45.5'	68°00.0'
40°37.0'	68°00.0'
40°30.0'	69°00.0'
40°22.7'	69°00.0'
40°18.7'	69°40.0'
40°21.0'	71°03.0'
39°41.0'	72°32.0'
38°47.0'	73°11.0'
38°04.0'	74°06.0'
37°08.0'	74°46.0'
36°00.0'	74°52.0'
35°45.0'	74°53.0'
35°28.0'	74°52.0'

Mid-water trawl gear

Vessels with a mackerel or squid permit must obtain a Letter of Authorization (LOA) to fish with mid-water trawl gear in the Gulf of Maine/George’s Bank (GOM/GB) Regulated Mesh Area, including Closed Area I, Closed Area II, the Nantucket Lightship Closed Area, and other areas closed for NE multispecies conservation.

When fishing north of 42°20’ N. Latitude, the vessel may only fish for, possess, or land Atlantic herring, blueback herring, or Atlantic mackerel. When fishing south of 42°20’ N. Latitude, the vessel may only fish for, possess, or land Atlantic herring, blueback herring, Atlantic mackerel, or squid.

Purse seine gear

Vessels with a mackerel permit must obtain an LOA to fish with purses seine gear in the GOM/GB Regulated Mesh Area. The vessel may only fish for, possess, or land Atlantic mackerel, Atlantic herring, blueback herring, or menhaden.

To request an LOA from the Regional

Administrator, contact the Greater Atlantic Region Permit Office at (978) 281-9370.

Are there restricted areas of fishing for Atlantic mackerel, squid, and butterfish?

Yes, Atlantic mackerel, squid, and butterfish permitted vessels cannot fish with bottom trawl gear in the Oceanographer or Lydonia Canyons. Vessels may transit these areas if bottom trawl gear is stowed and not available for immediate use.

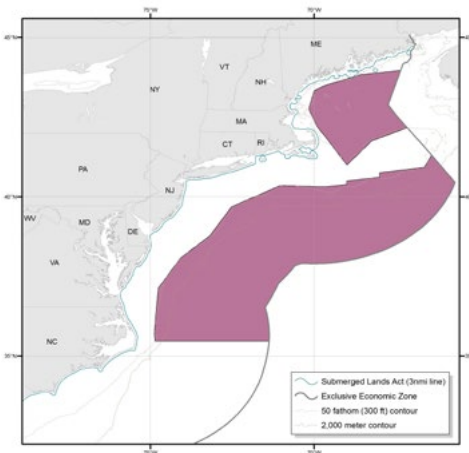
Oceanographer Canyon	
N. Lat.	W. Long.
40°10.0'	68°12.0'
40°24.0'	68°09.0'
40°24.0'	68°08.0'
40°10.0'	67°59.0'
40°10.0'	68°12.0'

Lydonia Canyon	
N. Lat.	W. Long.
40°16.0'	67°34.0'
40°16.0'	67°42.0'
40°20.0'	67°43.0'
40°27.0'	67°40.0'
40°27.0'	67°38.0'
40°16.0'	67°34.0'

Scup Gear Restricted Areas (GRA) (Map and coordinates on next page)

- Vessels fishing for longfin squid, black sea bass, or whiting in the Northern GRA from November 1 through December 31, or in the Southern GRA from January 1 through March 15, (see list of coordinates on next page) must have a minimum mesh size of 5-inch diamond mesh applied throughout the codend for at least 75 continuous meshes forward of the terminus of the net, and all other nets properly stowed.
- For trawl nets fishing in the Scup GRAs with codends (including the extension) of fewer than 75 meshes, the entire trawl net must have a minimum mesh size of 5 inches throughout the net.
- Vessels may transit these GRAs provided that net codends of smaller mesh

Illex Squid Exemption Area



N. Lat.	W. Long.
43°58.0'	67°22.0'
43°50.0'	68°35.0'
43°30.0'	69°40.0'

Continued at top of next column

are properly stowed and not available for immediate use.

Southern GRA	
N. lat.	W. long.
39°20'	72°53'
39°20'	72°28'
38°00'	73°58'
37°00'	74°43'
36°30'	74°43'
36°30'	75°03'
37°00'	75°03'
38°00'	74°23'
39°20'	72°53'

Northern GRA	
N. lat.	W. long.
41°00'	71°00'
41°00'	71°30'
40°00'	72°40'
40°00'	72°05'
41°00'	71°00'

Can you transfer fish at sea?

A vessel with a valid longfin squid, *Illex* squid, and/or butterfish permit must apply for an LOA from the Regional Administrator to transfer and receive longfin squid, *Illex* squid, and/or butterfish at sea. If the vessel has been issued a valid incidental squid and butterfish permit, it may transfer these species at sea, consistent with the applicable possession limits, but may not receive them. Current valid incidental possession limits are: 2,500 lb of longfin squid, 600 lb of butterfish, and 10,000 lb of *Illex* squid per trip.

What are the record keeping and reporting requirements?

Pre-Trip Observer Notification

Vessels with longfin squid permits that intend to land greater than 2,500 lb of longfin squid must request an observer at least 48 hours before the start of a trip. Vessels must provide

the following information to the observer program: Vessel name, vessel permit number, contact name for coordination of observer deployment, telephone number for contact, and the date, time, port of departure, and approximate trip duration.

There are three different options on how to request an observer:

- Use the Pre-Trip Notification System (PTNS) by going to fish.nefsc.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/PTNS/login.pl. The username is your permit number and the password is the same as used for Fish-On-Line.
- E-mail the following information to nefsc.ptns@noaa.gov:
 - Vessel permit number
 - Planned sail date and time
 - Fishery: Longfin squid
 - Estimated trip duration in whole days
 - Port of sail
 - Phone number, if new to using PTNS
- Call the NMFS PTNS at 1-855-FISHES1 at least 48 hours prior to departing on a trip. The line is staffed from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm on business days. Outside of these hours, the line is staffed by an answering service that is qualified to accept requests for observers and answer questions.

Vessel Trip Report (VTR)

You need to maintain on board the vessel and submit an accurate Federal VTR for all fishing trips. Instructions

for completing VTRs can be found at: www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/aps/evtr/index.html. For vessels with NE multispecies, Atlantic herring or Tier 3 Atlantic mackerel permits, VTRs must be submitted weekly and must be postmarked by the midnight of the Tuesday following the reporting week. For all other vessels, VTRs must be submitted monthly and must be postmarked within 15 days after the end of the reporting month. Copies of VTRs must be retained on board the vessel for 1 year after the date of the last entry on the log and otherwise retained for 3 years after the date of the last entry on the log.

If no fishing activity took place during a reporting period, then a VTR must be submitted stating that no fishing trips were taken (referred to as a 'Did Not Fish' (DNF) VTR). DNF VTRs may be submitted electronically up to 3 months in advance on the "Fish-On-Line" website at: www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/apps/login/login.

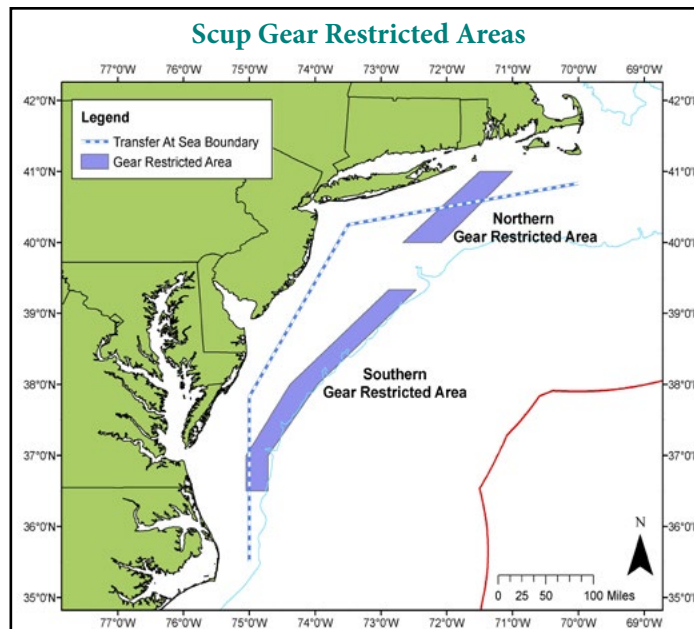
Any change in the permit information such as vessel name, vessel owner, address, etc., must be submitted in writing to the Regional Administrator within 15 days of the change, or the permit is not valid.

All federally permitted seafood dealers are required to report the purchase of Atlantic mackerel, squid, and butterfish to NMFS via computer, using one of the approved electronic means, unless

otherwise directed by the Regional Administrator. For more information on dealer reporting, please call the dealer electronic reporting help desk at (978) 281-9212 or contact your local NMFS Field Office: www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sed/portagents/index.html.

Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)

Vessels with a limited access Atlantic mackerel permit must declare into the mackerel fishery through VMS prior to leaving port. Additionally, if these vessels intend to land more than 20,000 lb of mackerel, you must



notify NMFS through VMS 6 hours prior to arrival or immediately upon leaving fishing grounds if fishing ends less than 6 hours before arrival.

Vessels with a limited access longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permit must declare into the longfin squid fishery through VMS prior to leaving port.

Vessels with a limited access Atlantic mackerel and/or a longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permit must complete, sign, and submit a Released Catch Affidavit following any slippage event. Via the VMS, vessels must complete the Atlantic mackerel and longfin squid daily catch report to report a slippage event. Vessels with a limited access Atlantic mackerel permit must complete the daily catch report at the time of the slippage event and before moving 15 nautical miles or returning to port.