



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

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MEMORANDUM

Date: May 27, 2015
To: Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish (MSB) Committee/Council
From: Jason Didden *JDD*
Subject: June 9, 2015 MSB Committee of the Whole, Tab Intro

Related to the June 9 MSB agenda items, several documents follow this memo, as described below. A running underlined page number (bottom right) has been superimposed on the tab for ease of reference.

Section 1: MSB Specifications

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The SSC findings regarding MSB are provided in Tab 16, Committee Reports. The SSC did not suggest changes for the multiyear butterfish and squid specifications and lowered the mackerel acceptable biological catch (ABC) from 40,165 mt to 19,898 mt. A variety of background documents, including Fishery Information Documents for butterfish and the squids, are available at:

<http://www.mafmc.org/ssc-meetings/2015/may-13-14>. A summary of the current regulations for MSB fisheries is available at: <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/regs/infodocs/msbinfo sheet.pdf>.

Section 2: Squid Capacity Amendment Scoping

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2015 MSB Monitoring Committee Summary

Introduction

The Mackerel-Squid-Butterfish (MSB) Monitoring Committee (MC) met via webinar on May 21, 2015 to consider making recommendations regarding MSB specifications and associated management measures. Attendees included:

Monitoring Committee

Jason Didden (MAFMC)
Carly Bari (NMFS GARFO)
Jay Hermsen (NMFS GARFO)

Charles Adams (NMFS NEFSC)
Lisa Hendrickson (NMFS NEFSC)
Kiersten Curti (NMFS NEFSC)

Other

Gray Redding
Jeff Kaelin
Meghan Lapp
Erica Fuller

Greg DiDomenico
Pan Lyons Gromen
Joseph Gordon

Several documents/websites that the MC had available for review included the fishery quota monitoring reports from NMFS (http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/ro/fso/reports/reports_frame.htm), NEFSC Biological Updates, Staff Fishery Information Documents, Advisory Panel Fishery Performance Reports, and other documents used by the SSC (<http://www.mafmc.org/ssc-meetings/2015/may-13-14>).

The MC call began by noting that the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) had endorsed the previously-set multi-year (2015-2017) squid and butterfish specifications so no action was required for specifications for those species. The meeting thus focused on mackerel specifications and other MSB management issues.

Council Decision Point: Does the Council want to consider changes to squid and butterfish specifications?

Mackerel Specifications

The MC recommended the following specifications for mackerel, which build off of the Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) set by the SSC of 19,898 mt. The SSC's report is available at <http://www.mafmc.org/ssc-meetings/2015/may-13-14> and also in the Committee Report section of the Council Briefing Book.

2016-2018 (all numbers are in metric tons)	
Specification	Mackerel
Overfishing Limit (OFL)	Unknown
Total Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) from SSC	19,898
Canadian Deduction (Quota and 10% Management Uncertainty)	8,889
U.S. ABC = Annual Catch Limit (ACL) (Canadian catch deducted)	11,009
Recreational Allocation (6.2% of ACL)	683
Recreational Annual Catch Target (10% less than allocation to account for management uncertainty)	614
Commercial Allocation (93.8% of ACL)	10,327
Commercial Annual Catch Target (10% less than allocation to account for management uncertainty)	9,294
Landings or "Domestic Annual Harvest" (1.26% less than Annual Catch Target to account for expected discards)	9,177

Key discussion points on the above specifications included the following:

Canadian Deduction: The Canadians have set a 2015 quota of 8,000 mt (<http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/decisions/fm-2015-gp/atl-011-eng.htm>). Last year the MC recommended using the Canadian quota (10,000 mt for 2014) plus assumed discards (126 mt) plus 5,000 mt for possible unreported catch for a total Canadian deduction of 15,126 mt. During the SSC's discussions they did not think it appropriate to use the 5,000 mt assumed unreported catch in their calculations – the 5,000 mt was a rough estimate based on discussions between Jason Didden and the Canadian mackerel assessment lead, Francois Gregoire. The MC took the lead of the SSC in not using the 5,000 mt number, but as an acknowledgement that there is some uncertainty about Canadian catch, the MC recommends deducting 8,889 mt for Canadian catch, which is their quota plus the same ratio that the Council has used for management uncertainty for the U.S. fishery (90% of 8,889 mt = 8,000 mt). This results in a U.S ABC of 11,009 mt.

Recreational Allocation: This is a fixed percentage in the FMP. The MC noted that recreational catch harvest estimates have been above 683 mt in 7 of the last 10 years (2005-2014). In the years that harvest was above 683 mt, the average overage was 276 mt. The MC investigated where mackerel harvest was coming from, and it has been predominantly Massachusetts-Maine from May-October and

mostly (88% in 2014 and 90% 2013) in state waters. Therefore any federal regulations would likely have minimal impact. Given the overall structure of the specifications and recent landings it appears unlikely that a substantial enough overage would occur that triggered paybacks (pound for pound if the overall ACL is exceeded since the stock status is unknown) but the MC wanted to flag that this issue warrants close monitoring (adjusting the allocation/accounting for recreational catch would require a framework action).

Council Decision Point: What does the Council want to recommend for mackerel specifications?

River Herring/Shad Cap

The MC discussed the River Herring/Shad (RH/S) Cap for the mackerel fishery after reviewing the April 2015 RH/S Advisory Panel meeting summary. The MC noted that its perspective has not substantively changed from last year: given the lack of stock abundance information, a variety of cap options are likely justifiable as long as the Council clearly describes its rationale related to controlling incidental RH/S catch/bycatch - in situations like RH/S where biologically-based catch limits are unavailable, setting the cap is a policy choice. The MC noted that for any cap (and especially a constant cap), because it is not directly tied to RH/S abundance, possibilities exist that it may either become very hard for the fishery to avoid RH/S if their abundances increase, or if RH/S abundances decrease the fishery will not have to work hard to avoid RH/S because there will not be many RH/S around. The first situation would suggest that a cap increase may be warranted while the second would suggest a cap reduction may be warranted. Without better assessment information it is not possible to quantitatively determine the appropriateness of such changes however.

The Monitoring Committee also noted that last year the Council make several key decisions regarding the RH/S cap. One was that adding new years of data was not appropriate because it creates a situation of potentially penalizing the fishery with a shifting baseline for good performance (low catches in recent years would lower the cap over time). Thus the Council used 2005-2012 data rather than 2005-2013 data. Medians of 2005-2012 extrapolations established the 89 mt/155 mt two-phase cap while 2005-2013 data would have resulted in an 81 mt/132 mt two-phase cap. The monitoring committee shares the concern that using years when the cap has been operating potentially creates a shifting baseline that penalizes good fishery performance.

Another key Council decision was the two-phases, whereby the cap is 89 mt when lower mackerel catches (below 10,000 mt) have occurred and then 155 mt after 10,000 mt of mackerel catches have occurred. The rationale behind the two phases was to encourage RH/S avoidance even when mackerel catches are low. If the Council's policy rationale remains the same on both this and the baseline years issues, the MC noted that the only change necessary for the 2016-2018 RH/S cap would be to eliminate the second higher phase of the cap, since the fishery would only be operating in the "less than 10,000 mt" range given the recommended quota (9,177 mt). Since the Council already determined that an 89 mt RH/S cap was appropriate when mackerel catches were in this range it may still be appropriate to remain at the 89 mt level given the likely mackerel quotas for 2016-2018.

There was specific discussion of setting the cap for 3 years versus one year. Since the cap can be revisited each year, the MC saw no issues with setting the cap for 3 years especially since mackerel may be set for 3 years. GARFO will follow up, but it may be possible to set a cap that was automatically

hardwired to incorporate new data if the Council wanted to use data from years beyond 2012 in setting a multi-year cap. This concept is further explored in the Council's June 2015 briefing materials for RH/S.

(Council action on this will be later in the meeting)

Butterfish 3" Mesh Threshold

Longfin squid and butterfish fishery participants have requested that the 3-inch mesh requirement for retaining more than 2,500 lb of butterfish be eliminated or relaxed. The original intent was that directed butterfish fishing would not select small butterfish that might be likely discarded. However, butterfish and longfin squid (*Doryteuthis (Amerigo) pealeii*) co-occur (there is a butterfish discard cap for the longfin squid fishery). The longfin squid fishery is subject to a minimum codend mesh size that is much smaller than 3 in. ($1^{7/8}$ - $2^{1/8}$ in. diamond mesh, inside stretched mesh depending on the time of year). Industry reports that for some participants this limits opportunistic butterfish fishing during squid trips. Analysis of dealer data indicates that in 2014 (the first year of substantial directed butterfish fishing), trips landing more than 10,000 pounds of butterfish landed approximately 77% of the 2014 butterfish landings and trips greater than 100,000 pounds landed approximately 69% of the 2014 butterfish landings. However, the MC agreed that one year of data was insufficient to characterize butterfish discarding patterns in the longfin squid fishery in the context of the developing butterfish fishery. In addition, the size composition of butterfish discards from the much smaller codend mesh size of the longfin squid fishery would need to be considered. Consequently, the MC agreed that additional analyses (e.g., including observer data and more than a single year of data) would be necessary to determine whether increasing the 3 in. mesh threshold might have negative impacts on juvenile butterfish.

Council Decision Point: How would the Council like to proceed on the 3" mesh issue?

Butterfish Strengtheners

The regulations for butterfish state: *Owners or operators of otter trawl vessels possessing 2,500 lb (1.13 mt) or more of butterfish harvested in or from the EEZ may only fish with nets having a minimum codend mesh of 3 inches (7.62 cm) diamond mesh, inside stretch measure.* Industry participants have indicated they would like it clarified that like in the longfin squid fishery, strengtheners of at least 5 inches may be used, as is common practice by some fishery participants (often 5-inch diamond mesh scup nets are utilized as strengtheners). The MC concluded that this seems like a reasonable clarification to make initially to avoid regulatory/enforcement confusion, but that the MC will examine this issue in further detail in the future and may recommend a larger requirement for strengtheners for butterfish in the future. Given some fishery participants are known to use square mesh for their strengtheners, the regulations should indicate diamond or square mesh strengtheners 5 inches or greater are allowed.

Council Decision Point: How would the Council like to proceed regarding strengtheners?

Evaluation of Longfin Squid Codend Mesh Size Increase to 2 1/8"

Amendment 10 included language that the codend mesh size increase in the longfin squid fishery would be re-visited after several years. It was implemented September 13, 2010. Industry has also raised the issue of what this measure might be costing the fishery and for what benefit (e.g., increased escapement of juvenile butterfish and other finfish bycatch species that occur in the longfin squid fishery). This issue is on the list of deliverables for the Council for 2015 - while some preliminary analyses have been begun, there has not been time before specifications to fully analyze the impacts of the 2010 codend mesh size increase or any possible changes. Staff (Jason and Lisa) will continue to develop analyses regarding this issue during 2015.

Longfin PTNS

The Pre-Trip Notification System (PTNS) was implemented for longfin squid related to observer placement and the butterfish cap in Amendment 10. With the new SBRM, trips must be selected through SBRM and some vessels are using the PTNS waivers for refuse observers at the docks. This has led to problems meeting SBRM coverage targets, and vessels being inconvenienced with the 48-hour notice for no conservation benefit (actually a conservation cost). Accordingly, it would seem to make sense to at least suspend PTNS for longfin squid. The observer program supports this. The MSB regulations state: *"The Squid, Mackerel, and Butterfish Committee will review the recommendations of the Monitoring Committee. Based on these recommendations and any public comment received thereon, the Squid, Mackerel, and Butterfish Committee must recommend to the MAFMC appropriate specifications and any measures necessary to assure that the specifications will not be exceeded."* Given the importance of observer information from the longfin squid fishery for determining butterfish discards (as well as for other species), it seems reasonable that this issue should be able to be addressed in specifications (versus a framework/amendment). Not addressing this issue could lead to poorer information regarding butterfish discards, which could lead to the specifications being exceeded. The monitoring committee recommends this course of action subject to general counsel's concurrence that this action can be taken through specifications.

Council Decision Point: How would the Council like to proceed regarding PTNS?

Longfin Trimesters and Rollovers

The Council requested that the Trimester rollover provisions be investigated, in order to increase the Trimester II allocation, based on a request from Town Dock (RI). The MC evaluated this issue in 2013 and came to the following conclusion:

Longfin Squid Flexible Reserve Option

Fishery participants have requested additional flexibility to harvest squid during periods of high abundance. The current trimester structure (implemented based on historical landings) serves to generally spread landings out across the year (which may be useful biologically for squid), but can limit the fishery during seasons of high abundance and reduce fishing opportunities.

The proposal is to take 10% of the commercial quota (2,205 mt) and hold it as a reserve that could be tapped in any Trimester that neared its quota. Once a trimester quota neared 85% of its quota the reserve would be activated. Unused reserve in one trimester would be available for future trimesters within a year.

Regarding roll-over from Trimester 1 to 2, if landings go into the reserve then there would be no roll over since roll-overs occur when there is a substantial underage. If there is a substantial underage, quota would only be rolled over relative to the original quota (not including the reserve). The following table illustrates how either Trimester 1 or Trimester 2 could benefit from the reserve by allowing a higher Trimester quota compared to the status quo. In the rows illustrating the "Maximums," the fishery could not get every Trimester's maximum - the maximums assume that the previous Trimester caught little or no squid.

The Monitoring Committee had no objections to this measure given the current understanding about longfin squid abundance, productivity, and mortality from fishing. It did note that shifting longfin squid quota may alter how the butterfish cap is utilized throughout the year.

At the time, there was general consensus on the Advisory Panel that such a reserve was acceptable. Members of the Advisory Panel and public have since noted concerns about increasing the Trimester II quota allocation. For example, market/price issues related to higher longfin squid catches during Trimester II, and potential biological impacts (additional fishing effort on squid spawning grounds). Given these concerns, as well as other potential impacts from additional summer longfin squid effort (e.g. possible protected species/turtle interactions), the MC recommended that if the Council wants to pursue this issue, it would be more appropriately addressed through a two-meeting Framework Action so that the appropriate analyses could be conducted and so that the public has additional opportunity to be notified of potential changes as well as comment on any proposed measures before a Council action.

Council Decision Point: How would the Council like to proceed regarding trimester rollovers?

2015 Mackerel-Squid-Butterfish (MSB) Advisory Panel
(AP) Fishery Performance Reports (FPRs)

The Mackerel-Squid-Butterfish (MSB) Advisory Panel (AP) met April 27, 2015 to develop the Fishery Performance Reports (FPRs) below. These FRPs do not represent a consensus but rather a summary of the perspectives and ideas that were raised at the meeting.

The meeting was conducted via internet webinar and facilitated by Jason Didden, the MSB Fishery Management Plan (FMP) coordinator. The MSB advisors who participated were:

Lars Axelson	Peter Moore
Kristen Cevoli	Jeff Reichle
Eric Reid	Steve Weiner
Hank Lackner	Emerson Hasbrouck
Patrick Paquette	

Other participants included:

Jeff Kaelin	Anthony DiLernia
Tara Froehlich	Marin Hawk
Doug Vaughan	John Boreman
Dave Secor	Laurie Nolan
Eric Buck	Lee Anderson
Katie Almeida	Carly Bari
Meghan Lapp	Howard King
David Tomberlin	Greg DiDomenico
Doug Lipton	

The fishery performance reports' primary purpose is to contextualize catch histories for the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) because of the potential importance of catch histories for determining Acceptable Biological Catches (ABCs) in cases of fisheries with high levels of assessment uncertainty. The goal is to compare and contrast the most recent year's conditions and fishery characteristics with previous years. A series of trigger questions was posed to the AP. The questions are based on the discussion and results of the 2011 fishery performance meeting that focused on 2010 and prior catches. The primary intent of the questions is to generate discussion of direct observations of knowledgeable individuals involved in the fisheries in some fashion, especially as related to factors that may have influenced catches. The trigger questions were:

1. Are you aware of market issues that influenced MSB catches? For example: Fish prices, fuel prices, overall economy, etc...
2. Are you aware of environmental issues that influenced MSB catches? For example: Weather, sea temperature, climate, etc...
3. Are you aware of management issues that influenced MSB catches? For example: management induced effort shifts, management prohibiting directed fishing, etc...
4. Are you aware of other fishing behavior issues that influenced MSB catches? For example:

refrigerated sea water (RSW) vs. at-sea freezing activity, vessels focusing on other fisheries, etc...

5. What other issues/concerns does the AP want to highlight? For example: lack of U.S. mackerel allocation, forage concerns, calibration issues, fishery conflicts, regulatory concerns, etc...

The charge to the AP was thus to provide input on factors that have influenced catch levels over time as well as any other observations and ideas that could prove useful to the SSC and/or Council as catch levels and specifications for 2016 and beyond are considered. For organizational purposes, the summary is broken down by species and several thematic categories (per the above trigger questions), which begin on the following page. Some general points were also raised by AP members, as noted immediately below. Like the fishery specific summaries, these do not necessarily reflect a consensus.

Many ideas are carried forward from last year. Such items are marked with "***".

General

-The AP appreciated the Biological Updates provided by the NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) as a concise summary of what is known (or not known) about the status of each of the species.**

-Dogfish (spiny), given their prevalence, could be severely impacting MSB and other species, in terms of abundance or as an ecological barrier (e.g. maybe mackerel or squid won't go into areas with high dogfish concentrations, which means pretty much everywhere). As dogfish have come back it seems like everything else has gone down and this issue should be an important component of ecosystem management. Dogfish also have made fishing for MSB species difficult just because of continually loading the nets with dogfish.**

-Consumption of forage stocks by marine mammals likely dwarfs mortality from fishing.**

-Staff noted that some management issues raised by the AP are out of the scope of specifications and/or this call, and that they should write to the Council or talk to their Council members to have such issues considered by the Council.**

Mackerel

The key points (not necessarily consensus positions) were:

Market Issues

-Fuel costs discourage searching but mackerel prices are sufficient to stimulate directed activity if fish are available. While effort was high initially in 2012-2014, a variety of factors (especially fuel prices) contributed to a reduction in searching for and exploration of potentially fishable areas.**

-Price is mostly driven by world prices and world supply is high.**

Environmental Issues

-Availability is the primary driver for catches, and availability is likely highly variable and highly sensitive to external environmental factors, making catch a poor indicator of stock status.**

-Can't catch what's not here - and mackerel that did appear in 2014 were far north. Can't hurt a stock that's not here - need to figure out where it is (ctenophore research, Labrador Current, etc.). The fish are not gone, just not swimming here.**

-Both availability and the size of fish have been low in recent years, both offshore and inshore. The size issue appears to apply to other forage species like Atlantic Herring and *Illlex*, possibly due to warming waters - see Ohlberger 2013, Kingsolver & Huey 2008, Conover et. al. 2002, Forster et. al. 2012).**

-There has been a lack of mature mackerel. Some of the advisors have provided size information to the NEFSC. 1999/2000 seemed to be a turning point, with small mackerel dominating catches since.**

-Late 2014 saw a run of larger fish.

-Ecological needs in terms of mackerel as forage should be factored in explicitly by the SSC when setting ABCs. The low landings and Canadian assessment should give pause for concern and warrant consideration of a lower ABC.**

-The survey appears to have no connection to landings. More science needs to be conducted to figure out what is really going on with mackerel, including communicating with Iceland about mackerel's recent abundance there.**

-Based on the size of mackerel seen in Canada (larger) and U.S. (smaller) and presumed migration pattern (Canada to U.S.), it appears that the Canadian and U.S. stocks are different (fish don't shrink).**

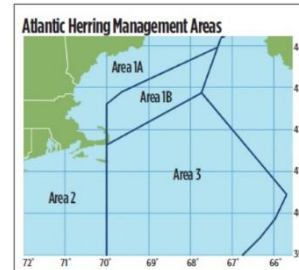
Management Issues & Management Induced Effort Shifts

-The February 2012 closure of Atlantic herring in southern New England in 2012 reduced the ability of participants to target mackerel because of mixing of these two species. There were some vessels that would have continued to fish/search for mackerel but what the end result of that searching would have been can never be known.**

-The same was true in 2013 but to a lesser degree as Atlantic Herring closed in April 2013. Better information on the interaction between Atlantic herring fishing and Atlantic mackerel fishing would allow further analysis of this issue and continued/additional coordination between these fisheries is important.

-No early 2014 herring closures occurred.

-Had a good run in late 2014 which has been rare. Size was also better this year than in a long time. The northern fishery were also limited in late 2014 by herring closures and groundfish gear restrictions in the north that reduced access to northern fish. For herring, Area 1A was closed on October 26, 2014, Area 1B was closed on May 24, 2014, and Area 3 was closed on Sept 23, 2014.



-Also had an extended run of some mackerel in 2015 to the south (2 cold winters), but they were mixed with menhaden and because of menhaden limits in NJ, boats could not land menhaden, so they couldn't target mackerel (January into April).

-The observer call-in requirements may limit opportunistic fishing.**

-Need to leave some amount of mackerel quota so that fishery can capitalize on availability when it occurs. There is a concern that once a quota is reduced it will never be restored given the current state of mackerel science. Recent catches of mackerel should not be used as an indicator of what the catch should be next year.**

Other Fishing Behavior Issues

-In recent years much of the mackerel catch has been retained incidental catch from herring fishing.**

-With high fuel prices, high catches of mackerel will only occur if fish are abundant (gas price not as substantial this year - 2015). Economics will self-regulate this fishery and the fishery has not impacted the mackerel stock.

Other Issues for Council/SSC Consideration as Appropriate

-Despite reluctance by the Canadians, joint research should be pushed and U.S. research should proceed where appropriate relative to the 2010 TRAC recommendations (especially on the influence of environmental factors and on mackerel's stock structure).**

-In terms of buffering against U.S. ACL overages, a 15% buffer seems excessive given the monitoring that occurs in the mackerel fishery and the apparently low level of mackerel discarding.**

-There is concern about what exactly an MSE means and consists of.

-Specifications should consider allowing a roll-over of unused quota in a similar fashion as occurs with Atlantic Herring.**

Illex Squid

The key points (not necessarily consensus positions) were:

Market Issues

-Price and demand are mostly dependent on S. Atlantic (e.g. Falkland Islands) landings, which drive world trade prices and/or demand for US *Illex*. Availability has to be sufficient to overcome any market/fuel price issues to drive interest in fishing for *Illex* for most vessels. Strong dollar may impact price/sales/demand going forward.

-Falkland squid landings continue to be very strong with low prices.**

-Availability was higher in 2014, but with small squid and low prices on small squid, this reduces the incentive to fish for *Illex* to some degree.**

Environmental Issues

-Availability changes from year to year and also very quickly within a year (waves of squid “come up onto the bank” in an unpredictable fashion). Real-time assessment would be optimal. 2014: Availability was higher than 2013 – fish stayed farther south.

-Understanding migration is key to understanding *Illex*, and we don't fully understand the migration behavior.**

-Ecological needs in terms of *Illex* as forage should be factored in explicitly by the SSC when ABCs are recommended. The recent low landings and decline in indices should give the SSC some pause for concern.**

Management Issues & Management Induced Effort Shifts

Deep-Sea Coral measures may strongly impact ability of vessels in fishery to operate going forward, especially if considerations are not made for deployment and haul-back of gear in varying weather/current conditions.

Other Fishing Behavior Issues

-For refrigerated sea water vessels to participate, they need high densities to fish to drive participation because they have to return to the dock within two days of starting to put *Illex* in the tank due to spoilage issues.**

Other Issues for Council/SSC Consideration as Appropriate

-Research should continue into how to determine *Illex* productivity as current management is not sensitive to actual *Illex* productivity. The fishing community should be an integral part of this effort, which should proceed in a very methodical fashion. "If it ain't broke don't fix it." Proceed carefully before you make any changes.**

-Summer & fall longfin closures can lead to discarding of longfin in the *Illex* fishery. A higher incidental limit for *Illex* vessels during longfin closures or a more gradual slowing of longfin fishing could avoid regulatory longfin discarding. The new higher limit in 2014 is better but may not totally solve this problem.**

-Concern was reiterated about re-entry of latent permits. Entry of latent effort could disrupt smooth operation of the fishery.**

Longfin Squid

The key points (not necessarily consensus positions) were:

Market Issues

-Recent ex-vessel prices are sufficient to drive increased effort if squid are available. Prices the last few years have been decreasing, possible causes could include: lower quality and high quantity of summer squid, stronger dollar, and lower prices for imported cleaned squid.

-High effort in summer causing closures and high landings volume/gluts. Concern by at least one advisor that it is being exacerbated by high capacity.

Environmental Issues

-Longfin squid has variable productivity and availability both within a year and between years and between inshore and offshore.**

-Effort was very high in the summer of 2012 because of the high squid availability both inshore and offshore. Not repeated in 2014 (squid was inshore but not also offshore).

-Ecological needs in terms of longfin squid as forage should be factored in explicitly by the SSC when ABCs are recommended.**

-End of 2014 and beginning of 2015 were very windy.

-Dogfish continue to make some areas unfishable and are a reason why landings can turn off. Believe that restraint on dogfish fishery correlates with lower squid landings.

Management Issues & Management Induced Effort Shifts

-Scup, Tilefish, and Fixed/Mobile Gear Restricted Areas (GRAs) have made *Longfin squid* fishing more difficult/less profitable, likely leading to somewhat less effort overall. Staff noted there is an ongoing action to consider modifications to the scup GRAs.**

-The butterfish cap has created a disincentive to even bother with longfin squid. There is more discussion about where not to fish because of butterfish than where to fish because of longfin squid. The observer notification requirement (even 48 hours) limits opportunistic fishing if a trip has not been notified. Both of these lead to lost revenues/fishing opportunities – especially critical for narrow winter weather windows.**

-The mistaken April 2012 closure may have substantially impacted 2012 Trimester 1 landings because landings were on the upswing immediately prior to the closure.**

-Annual landings would have been higher in some years if not for the Trimester 2 closures. Any seasonal closures likely depress annual landings (there were no seasonal closures in 2013).**

-The 2 1/8" mesh requirement may be harming productivity and causing the relatively low landings in recent years (landings have been lower since 2007). Squid that go through 2 1/8" are marketable and likely have high mortality. 2 1/8" may appear practicable for fishery but may be increasing squid mortality and is unlikely to allow substantial escapement of other fish. Should be examined in detail. Staff later researched that the mesh increase was September 13, 2010. Multiple AP members questioned the value of the 2 1/8" mesh. Some fishery participants would prefer 1 7/8" year round.

-Need to find out if landing more squid (normal trimester plus Trimester 1 roll-over) in summer is negatively impacting fall/winter productivity.

-There was concern about what the new VMS reporting requirements are being used for. Staff will incorporate additional details into future information documents.

Other Fishing Behavior Issues

-Some vessels have been focusing on other species (other quotas have been increasing - e.g. summer flounder & scallops; some vessels were retrofitted for pelagic fishing). Several recently active participants left the fishery and those vessels are unlikely to return.**

Other Issues for Council/SSC Consideration as Appropriate

-Research should continue into how to determine longfin productivity as current management is not sensitive to actual longfin productivity. The fishing community should be an integral part of this effort, which should proceed in a very methodical fashion.**

-The lack of proper NMFS notification for the 2012 Trimester 2 longfin closure needs to be avoided in the future.**

-Concern was reiterated about reentry of latent permits. Entry of latent effort could disrupt smooth operation of the fishery.**

-The issue of additional flexibility between trimesters was raised again, and staff noted that this is an issue being considered this year. Related concerns that were voiced included:

- Consider squid capacity issues before considering additional trimester issues.

- Need to consider fairness and access issues. For example, there is a smaller group of vessels that can access state waters in NY.

- Want quota caught, but do it right way – higher effort in spawning areas not good for fishery.

-There are times of substantial local directed recreational effort and catch, which may not be reflective of overall abundance. Recreational catch is likely very small compared to the overall quota.**

-Sense that recreational fishery is increasing. See more squid tackle in stores. There is also a traveling recreational contingent that uses social media/internet to spread the word about varying local availability. 2014 spring fishery in MA drove towns to enact regulations to address high participation. May be approaching a level that needs to be accounted for.

Butterfish

The key points (not necessarily consensus positions) were:

Market Issues

-Low butterfish availability/abundance resulted in low landings in the 1990s and it was very difficult to re-establish a market given the low quotas. It might take several years to re-establish export markets, but there are some indications that demand may be higher than anticipated. Traditional export food markets want fish caught in December-March (fat/roe/feed issues).**

-Boats have been increasing fresh butterfish production relatively slowly so as to not crash the price. Fresh market has been absorbing surprising quantity of fish without price dropping.

-Early 2015 sizes are very good and the fish are of high quality.

-It is too early to determine how the markets will respond to U.S. butterfish in the long run, but participants remain cautiously optimistic.**

Environmental Issues

-Winter of 2014/early 2015 had very poor fishing weather.

-Abundance has been relatively high in the last few years compared to the early 2000s, both inshore and offshore. Maybe higher now than last year if anything.

-Ecological needs in terms of butterfish as forage should be factored in explicitly by the SSC when ABCs are recommended. Management needs to account for the high consumption of butterfish by predators in a precautionary fashion. Precaution is warranted given butterfish's important role in the ecosystem as part of the forage base and given butterfish catches have been very low compared to recent projection results.**

-There remains some concern about the age structure of butterfish.** What is age range of recent butterfish catches? Staff will ask center staff when next round of aging will be done.

-Dogfish continue to interfere with MSB fishing.**

Management Issues & Management Induced Effort Shifts

-Mesh requirement is holding landings back and causing regulatory discards.** Need an analysis of any discards to determine cause – regulatory discarding may be a primary cause of discarding. The 2,500 pound trip limit for using <3-inch mesh is causing regulatory discarding. If you are out squid fishing and happen to come across some butterfish, having to discard does not make any sense. Should be eliminated or at least substantially increase the threshold where 3-inch is necessary. Focused butterfish fishing will probably use 3-inch mesh anyway. Less than 3-inch mesh is probably targeting something else and hitting butterfish incidentally - why not keep?

-The directed butterfish fishery did not begin until a few weeks into 2013 (missing December 2012 and early January 2013 contributed to a slow resumption of directed activity). Fish that were found at that point were too small and/or not of optimal quality, and other fishing options were available. Exporters need high quality fish to re-enter markets.**

-Fishery was also concerned about exceeding quota in 2014 at one point and voluntarily restricted fishing because it was unclear if/when NMFS was going to transfer quota from the discard cap to landings. Fishery did not want to get a “black eye” for having a quota overage when it wasn’t sure what NMFS was going to do. Would have seen higher landings if key participants had not held back.

Other Fishing Behavior Issues

-When they could get out in early 2013, some vessels found lots of butterfish but smaller butterfish and stopped fishing for them because they didn't want to discard lots of small butterfish in order to get a marketable quantity of acceptably sized fish.**

-2014 saw moderate catch increases as predicted by AP relative to 2013.

Other Issues for Council/SSC Consideration as Appropriate

-For short lived, tightly schooling fish you need a targeted & dedicated survey - this is how the rest of the world assesses these kinds of stocks.**

-Some but not all advisors think butterfish should qualify for an exemption to ACLs.**

-Looking at only the Bigelow’s area sample misses a substantial amount of butterfish habitat.**

-The need for a discard cap on the longfin squid appears questionable given the current butterfish ABC.**

-The ability to balance quotas (and increase butterfish landings if a substantial part of the discard cap has not been used) late in the year is important since good quality butterfish start being available in December. (Framework 8, now implemented, allows this and it was used in 2014)

-Cornell is examining mesh issues – preliminary data suggest 8cm square mesh and 8cm T-90 mesh could be productive for eliminating small butterfish. More information pending further data collection and analysis.

-Squid trawl network still providing information on butterfish availability – negative reports are also very important for operation of the avoidance network.

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 30, 2015
To: Dr. Chris Moore, Executive Director
From: Jason Didden *JDD*
Subject: Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish (MSB) ABCs and River Herring/Shad Cap

Summary

This memo supports the May 2015 SSC meeting for:

- Review of ongoing *Illex* Squid, longfin squid, and butterfish multiyear specifications (2015-2017)
- Setting mackerel specifications for up to three years (2016-2018)
- Providing input on the Council's river herring and shad (RH/S) cap on the mackerel fishery

Introduction

The Magnuson Stevens Act (MSA) as currently amended requires each Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) to provide, among other things, ongoing scientific advice for fishery management decisions, including recommendations for acceptable biological catches (ABCs). The SSC recommends ABCs to the Council that address scientific uncertainty such that overfishing is unlikely to occur. The Council's ABC recommendations to NMFS for the upcoming fishing year(s) cannot exceed the ABC recommendation of the SSC. As such, the SSC's ABC recommendations form the upper limit for catches of Council-managed species.

Once the SSC meets and decides on the ABCs, the Squid-Mackerel-Butterfish Monitoring Committee will meet (May 21) to discuss if changes to other management measures should be recommended per the ABCs from the SSC and other management considerations. These measures include Annual Catch Limits (ACLs), Annual Catch Targets (ACTs), and Accountability Measures (AMs). Based on the SSC's and Monitoring Committee's recommendations, the Council will make recommendations to the NMFS Northeast Regional Administrator. Based on NMFS' evaluation of the Council's recommendations, NMFS will publish a Proposed Rule for specifications and then a Final Rule, which may change from the Proposed Rule based on public comment.

Illex Squid, Longfin Squid, and Butterfish

Illex squid, longfin squid, and butterfish are currently in year 1 of multi-year specifications for 2015, 2016, and 2017. The SSCs recommendations, available here: <http://www.mafmc.org/s/SSC-2014-May-Report.pdf>, document the SSC's previous rationale and also summarize the major sources of scientific uncertainty. The NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center provided data updates for *Illex* squid, longfin squid, and butterfish, which are posted at: <http://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2015/ssc/may-13-14>, along with staff informational documents for Advisory Panel Fishery Performance Report development and links to previous assessment documents. The MSB Advisory Panel met before this memo was submitted and the Fishery Performance Report will be posted by May 1, 2015. Based on a review of this information, staff recommends no changes to these multi-year specifications – the relevant data continue to vary within expected ranges. In 2016 the ABCs for these species will be reviewed again and in 2017, the SSC and Council will consider specifications for 2018 and beyond.

Atlantic Mackerel

Summary

-The status of mackerel is currently “unknown” with respect to both fishing mortality rates and stock size. The next assessment timing is being determined but will likely be 2016 or 2017.

-For 2016-2018, staff recommends starting with an ABC of 18,245 mt (estimated 2014 catch), with a trigger that the ABC would increase by 5,000 mt following any year the directed fishery would close.

-A summary of updated biological information is available in a document provided by the NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center ("NEFSC Mackerel Biological Update"), available at: <http://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2015/ssc/may-13-14>. That page also has links to recent assessment documents.

-A landings history and other fishery information are provided in the fishery information document, also available at: <http://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2015/ssc/may-13-14>.

-The 2014 SSC recommendations, available here: <http://www.mafmc.org/s/SSC-2014-May-Report.pdf>, document the SSC's previous rationale and also summarize the major sources of scientific uncertainty.

-A Fishery Performance Report meeting designed to inform the specifications process from the perspective of the MSB Advisory Panel has taken place and a report will be available at <http://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2015/ssc/may-13-14> by May 1.

Regulatory Review

The 2015 ABC for mackerel is 40,165 mt, which translates into a domestic ACL of 25,039 mt after Canadian catch is accounted for. The fishery operates under a tiered limited access system. The primary directed commercial fishery closes at 95% of domestic annual harvest (DAH = 20,872 mt). Incidental trip limits of 20,000 pounds are allowed if the directed fishery closes. A recreational fishery exists but generally catches a small amount of mackerel relative to the commercial fishery. Directed Canadian mackerel harvests have been limited to 10,000 mt recently, though there are also substantial unrecorded bait and recreational fisheries (pers com Francois Gregoire, DFO Canada) - 15,126 mt are deducted to cover reported and unreported Canadian catches. A river herring and shad cap can close the mackerel fishery if observer and landings data estimate that 89 mt of combined river herring and shad

are caught by trips landings 20,000 pounds or more mackerel before the fishery has landed 10,000 mt of mackerel. The cap increases to 155 mt after the mackerel fishery has landed 10,000 mt. Unlike most MAFMC-managed fisheries, the performance of the mackerel fishery (mostly a winter/spring fishery) in one year is generally known before specifications are made for the next year. This means that a change in abundance or other issues can be reacted to relatively quickly (i.e. for the next year) through the standard specifications process.

Biological Reference Points, Stock Status, and Projections

The full mackerel stock was last assessed in 2010 (utilizing data through 2008) via a joint U.S. - Canadian Transboundary Resource Assessment Committee (TRAC). The TRAC was unable to resolve uncertainties in the analyses to an acceptable degree so there are no accepted reference points. The previous assessment was also deemed unreliable. Accordingly, the status of mackerel is currently “unknown” with respect to mortality rates or stock size. No projections are available. A recent (2014 with 2013 data) Canadian assessment of the Canadian mackerel contingent recommended that catch be limited to 800 mt. Links are provided at <http://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2015/ssc/may-13-14>.

Catch and Landings

Mackerel's landing history is characterized by high foreign catches in the 1970s (up to 400,000 mt or almost 900 million pounds) followed by domestication of the fishery with lower catches. Following the highpoint of the domestic fishery (which was still a fraction of the foreign fishery) in the mid-2000s, the domestic fishery experienced a sharp decline from 2006 to almost nothing in 2011. U.S. and Canadian total reported catches have been low in recent years, but stable near 13,000 mt over 2011-2014. 2015 also appears likely to be a year of relatively low landings from the U.S. perspective (Canadian landings occur later in the year and U.S. landings can also occur later in the year). Discards are believed to be just a few percent of catch and are accounted for within the overall ABC. The most recent information (April 29, 2015 database query) indicates 2014 U.S. mackerel landings were 5,906 mt. Assuming a 1.29% discard ratio relative to landings (ratio from sums of last five years from TRAC data) equates to 76 mt of discards. Recreational landings in 2014 were estimated to be 786 mt (U.S. total = 6,768 mt). While preliminary, the most recent information from Canada is that they had 6,394 mt of landings, the lowest since 1961 (personal communication, Martin Castonguay, DFO Canada). Applying the same discard approach results in 82 mt of Canadian discards. Communications with Francois Gregoire last year (Canadian DFO, now retired) suggested that there could be around 5,000 mt of unreported Canadian bait and recreational harvest (Canadian total = 11,476 mt). Total 2014 U.S. and Canadian catch is thus estimated to be about 18,245 mt.

2016-2018 Mackerel OFL/ABC Recommendations

OFL - An overfishing level likely cannot be determined given the uncertainty involved with this stock.

ABC

For 2015 the SSC set a mackerel ABC of 40,165 mt, which was the median catch (U.S. plus Canadian) from 1978-2013. The SSC also requested that a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) be conducted for mackerel by extending previous work (Wiedenmann, et al. 2013). Dr. John Wiedenmann conducted this work under contract for the Council, and his report has been posted at <http://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2015/ssc/may-13-14>. The MSE conducted by Dr. Wiedenmann

suggests that recent catches have been unlikely to be causing overfishing, and the average of OFLs across applicable model runs and control rules equals 23,893 mt for an over-exploited stock, 87,016 mt for a fully-exploited stock, and 298,904 mt for a lightly exploited stock (Table 7 - http://www.mafmc.org/s/Mackerel_ABC_reportOpt-k89s.pdf).

The available evidence leads staff to conclude that mackerel abundance will remain at low levels until favorable environmental conditions lead to either a high recruitment event or migration of mackerel back into U.S. waters. Both the TRAC and recent Canadian assessments suggest that high mackerel catches have been associated with an occasional strong year class. If this is the case, and only occasionally strong year classes are expected, it would seem appropriate to limit initial fishing mortality on such year classes since mackerel can live up to 17 years. If the issue is primarily distributional, it may still make sense to limit fishing mortality on the pioneers that first return to U.S. waters. As such, staff recommends an incremental approach to ABCs starting with recent catch, as further described below.

While the MSB Advisory Panel did note some encouraging signs (more mackerel were available and caught at the end of 2014 compared to previous fall seasons, and in early 2015 more mackerel were available farther south than recent years), most signs point to very low mackerel abundance and/or availability. These include the Canadian assessment, the NEFSC trawl survey, and catches.

Staff sees two possible interpretations of the landings history. One is that the fishery has taken advantage of several periods of higher productivity/access/interest in the fishery, principally in the early-1970s, and then to a lesser degree in the late-1980s, and the mid-2000s. Alternatively, it seems plausible that the 1970s constituted substantial overfishing as well as the smaller peaks of catches in the late-1980s and mid-2000s.

Staff concludes that it is worth maintaining relatively low total catches (compared to historical catches) to see if higher and more stable mackerel productivities can be achieved in the future, and only make incremental catch increases if catch improves. Accordingly, for 2016-2018, staff recommends a total (U.S. plus Canada) ABC of ABC of 18,245 mt (estimated 2014 catch), with a trigger that the ABC would increase by 5,000 mt following any year the directed fishery would close. Staff is recommending an incremental approach such that landings cannot be increased rapidly if mackerel become available. The hypotheses this recommendation would test is that a strong year class will appear at some point, and if fishing on that age class is restricted as suggested, there could be eventual gains for both the stock and the fishery.

It is possible that the resulting catches could be unnecessarily restrictive for fishermen or insufficiently protective of the stock, but such is the nature of the present information-poor situation for almost any ABC. Given the landings history, the MSE analysis from Dr. Wiedenmann, the high uncertainty with the mackerel stock, and the majority of signs pointing toward low mackerel abundance and/or availability, this incremental approach appears most reasonable to staff.

The 2015 landings quota is 20,872 mt. Staff recommends that the trigger approach also apply to 2015/2016 but use 5906 mt (2014 landings) as the trigger for potentially adding 5,000 mt to the initial 18,245 mt for 2016. So the ABC for 2016 would be 18,245 mt unless the commercial fishery caught at

least 5,906 mt in 2015, in which case it would increase to 23,245 mt in 2016. The rationale for the 5,000 mt increase interval is that even if three increases occur, the total in 2018 would be 33,245. Staff has previously noted that 33,400 is the approximate average total (U.S. plus Canada) catch from 1992-2001, a period of 10 years when catch was relatively stable and spawned the 1999 year class that facilitated more robust catches in the early- and mid-2000s. So even if catch ramped up, it could only increase to approximately the 1992-2001 stable level, and only if the U.S. fishery was consistently catching higher amounts.

River Herring and Shad (RH/S) Cap for the Mackerel Fishery

Since 2013 there has been a RH/S cap on the mackerel fishery and setting the cap is a term of reference for the RH/S Committee of the Council:

- c. Develop RH/S cap recommendations for the Council and regularly evaluate the overall operation of any Mid-Atlantic (or joint) RH/S catch caps including: cap determination, monitoring, data needs, enforcement, data interpretation, etc.

Another term of reference is to move from a cap that is based on historical catch ratios to a cap(s) based on the biology of the species involved:

- a. Develop approaches to recommending RH/S catch caps that are based on and appropriate for the abundance and/or population dynamics of RH/S rather than historic catch rates of RH/S.
 - Part of understanding this question will likely involve investigating the relative effects of catch in federal fisheries on RH/S stock health compared to other sources of mortality (habitat issues, inshore catch, climate, predation, etc.)
 - The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will be engaged for this term of reference.

Accordingly, this memo is introducing the current procedures for setting the RH/S cap, and seeking SSC advice on moving forward. A summary of the current assessment and management situation with RH/S is available at: <http://www.asmfc.org/species/shad-river-herring>. Given the complex nature of the issue and species involved, it may be appropriate to develop an SSC workgroup for this topic.

The current procedures for setting the cap are described in the environmental assessment for the 2015 specifications, which are excerpted here: <http://www.mafmc.org/s/RHS-Cap-Specs-EA.pdf>. A worksheet that was used to calculate the current cap is also posted at <http://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2015/ssc/may-13-14>.

The goal for this meeting is to begin a dialogue on the RH/S cap topic and identify potential ways to move forward. Given NMFS and ASMFC have a Technical Expert Working Group (TEWG) looking at River Herring conservation (including a stock-status subgroup), it might also be useful for an SSC member to participate in the river herring TEWG.

Mackerel AP Informational Document - APRIL 2015

Jason Didden

****Note - Data Sources for the following are generally from unpublished NMFS Survey, Dealer, VTR, Permit, and MRFSS databases unless noted...everything should be considered preliminary.**

Basic Biology

Atlantic mackerel is a pelagic, schooling species distributed between Labrador (Newfoundland, Canada) (Parsons 1970) and North Carolina (Anderson 1976a). Sette (1943; 1950) identified two distinct groups consisting of a northern contingent and a southern contingent. The two contingents overwinter primarily along the continental shelf between the Middle Atlantic and Nova Scotia, although it has been suggested that overwintering occurs as far north as Newfoundland. With the advent of warming shelf water in the spring, the two contingents begin migration, with the northern contingent moving along the coast of Newfoundland and historically into the Gulf of St. Lawrence for spawning from the end of May to Mid-August (Berrien 1982). The southern contingent spawns in the Mid-Atlantic and Gulf of Maine from mid-April to June (Berrien 1982) then moves north to the Gulf of Maine and Nova Scotia. In late fall, migration turns south and fish return to the over-wintering grounds. Biochemical studies (Mackay 1967) have not established that genetic differences exist between the two groups and precise estimates of the relative contributions of the two groups cannot be made (ICNAF 1975). Atlantic mackerel in the northwest Atlantic are assessed as a unit stock and are considered one stock for fishery management purposes. *In the past some of the Council's advisers who mackerel fish have questioned if the historical patterns described above are reasonable and/or being maintained currently.* Several efforts are underway that may provide additional information on mackerel stock structure but no results are available yet.

Mackerel are 0.1" long at hatching, grow to about 2" in two months, and reach a length of 8" in December, near the end of their first year of growth (Anderson and Paciorowski 1978). During their second year of growth they reach about 10" in December, and by the end of their fifth year they grow to an average length of 13" FL. Fish that are 10-13 years old reach a length of 15-16" (Grosslein and Azarovitz 1982). MacKay (1973) and Dery and Anderson (1983) have found an inverse relationship between growth and year class size. All Atlantic mackerel are sexually mature by age 3, while about 50% of the age 2 fish are mature. Average size at maturity is about 10.5-11" FL (Grosslein and Azarovitz 1982). The maximum age observed is 17 years (Pentilla and Anderson 1976).

Atlantic mackerel are opportunistic feeders that can ingest prey either by individual selection of organisms or by passive filter feeding (Pepin *et al.* 1988). Larvae feed primarily on zooplankton. Juveniles eat mostly small crustaceans such as copepods, amphipods, mysid shrimp and decapod larvae. They also feed on small pelagic molluscs (*Spiratella* and *Clione*) when available. Adults feed on the same food as juveniles but diets also include a wider assortment of organisms and larger prey items. For example, euphausiid, pandalid and crangonid shrimp are common prey; chaetognaths, larvaceans, pelagic polychaetes and larvae of many marine species have been

identified in mackerel stomachs. Immature mackerel begin feeding in the spring; older fish feed until gonadal development begins, stop feeding until spent and then resume prey consumption (Berrien 1982).

Atlantic mackerel is an important prey species and is known to be preyed upon by many pelagic and demersal fish species, as well as by marine mammals and seabirds (Smith and Gaskin 1974; Payne and Selzer 1983; Overholtz and Waring 1991; Montevecchi and Myers 1995; Scott and Tibbo 1968; Maurer and Bowman 1975; Stillwell and Kohler 1982, 1985; Bowman and Michaels 1984). The recent TRAC estimated mortality for a subset of key finfish predators (www.mar.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/science/trac/tsr.html) but estimates for marine mammals and seabirds are not available.

Status of the Stock

The mackerel stock was most recently assessed via a Transboundary Resource Assessment Committee in 2010 (TRAC 2010), which analyzed data through 2008 (www.mar.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/science/trac/tsr.html). A number of different models and model formulations were evaluated. Given the uncertainty in the assessment results, the TRAC agreed that short term projections and characterization of stock status relative to estimated reference points would not be an appropriate basis for management advice at this time. Since the 2010 TRAC also identified substantial technical issues with the preceding assessment, the status of mackerel is currently classified as "unknown" with respect to stock status and/or overfishing.

Given indications of reduced productivity and lack of older fish in the survey and catch, the TRAC recommended that annual total catches not exceed the average total landings (80,000 mt) over the last three years (2006-2008) until such time that new information suggests that a different amount is appropriate.

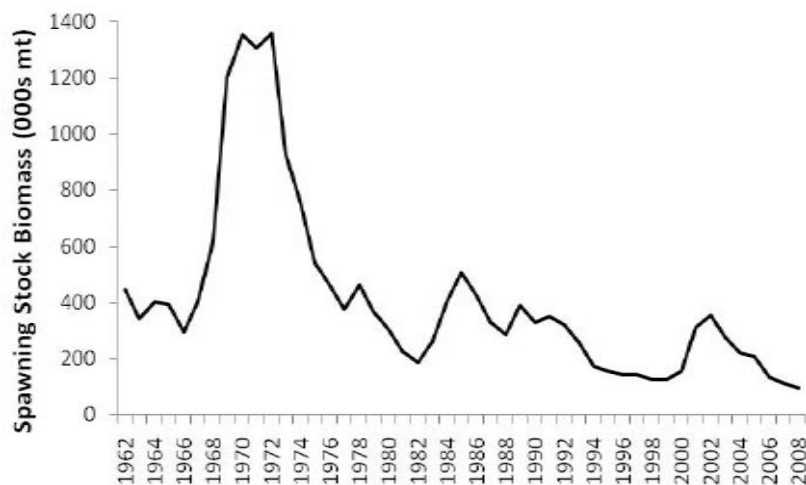


Figure 1. 2010 Mackerel TRAC SSB final model output.

The NMFS Northeast Science Center has provided updates regarding mackerel indices and recent biological data, including a summary of a recent assessment of the Canadian mackerel contingent conducted by Canada (<http://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2015-msb-ap>). This

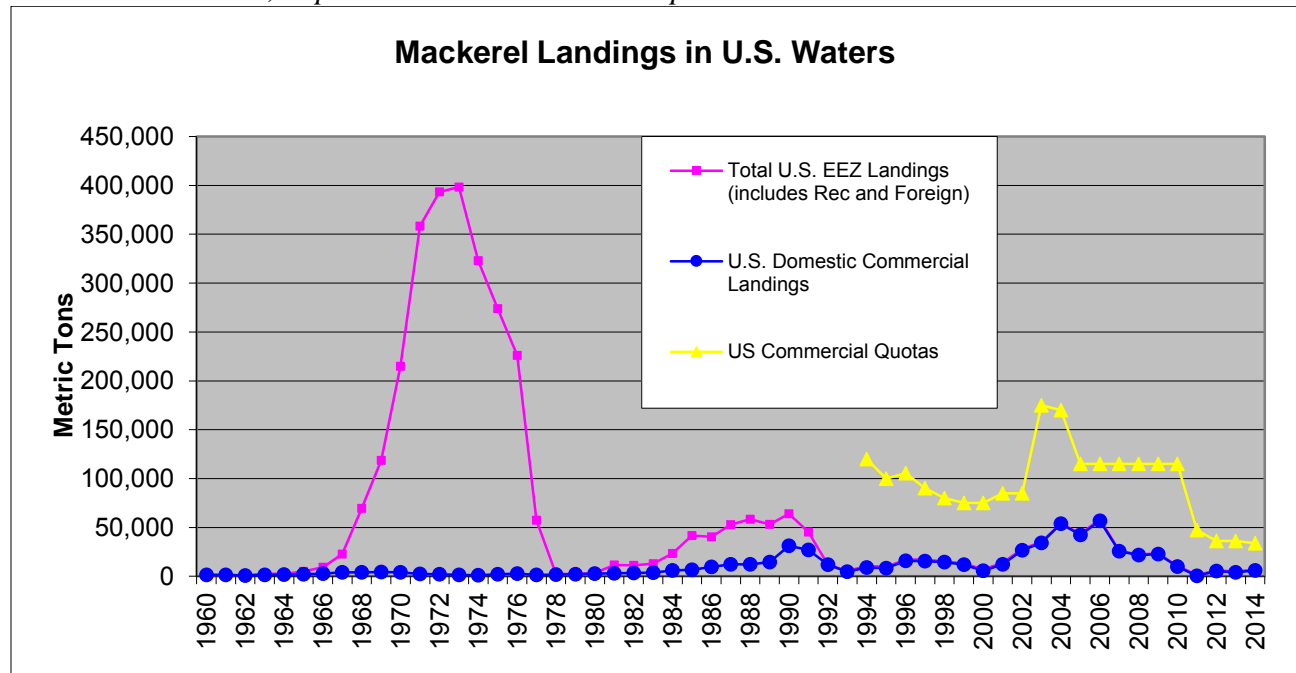
document should be read in conjunction with the Center's mackerel update and information from that document is not repeated in detail here.

Fishery Performance

Joint Venture Issue – It remains hard to pin down the exact nature of how JV landings have been handled in NMFS databases. It appears that JV transfers were added to domestic landings to get a "U.S. Commercial Landings" number, suggesting that about 1/2 of the blue line domestic landings from 1983-1991 in Figure 2 were related to JV transfers. The distance from the blue line to the pink line represents foreign catch (at the same time US vessels were delivering to foreign vessels, the foreign vessels were also catching mackerel) plus minor recreational harvest. Discussions with a few of the primary mackerel processors have supported this conclusion. Like the assessment, the figures/tables below that include the full historical data use the higher value for a total. However, when landings are broken down by state or month further below, only the dealer data is used, which would not include JV catches except for 1998, 2002, and 2003.

Atlantic mackerel were heavily exploited by distant water fleets during the late 1960s-early 1970's. Total landings averaged over 300,000 mt during 1970-1976 but decreased to less than 50,000 mt during 1978-1984. US waters' harvest increased during 1985-1991 with the advent of a joint venture fishery in the Mid-Atlantic region. The domestic fishery was encouraged to expand in the early 2000s, especially in the realm of shoreside processing. Domestic landings peaked in 2004-2006 and declined to near none in 2011. 2012-2014 landings have been approximately between 4,000 and 6,000 metric tons (mt).

Figure 2. Atlantic mackerel landings within 200 miles of U.S. Coast (2014 Preliminary).
Source: TRAC 2010, unpublished NEFSC dealer reports



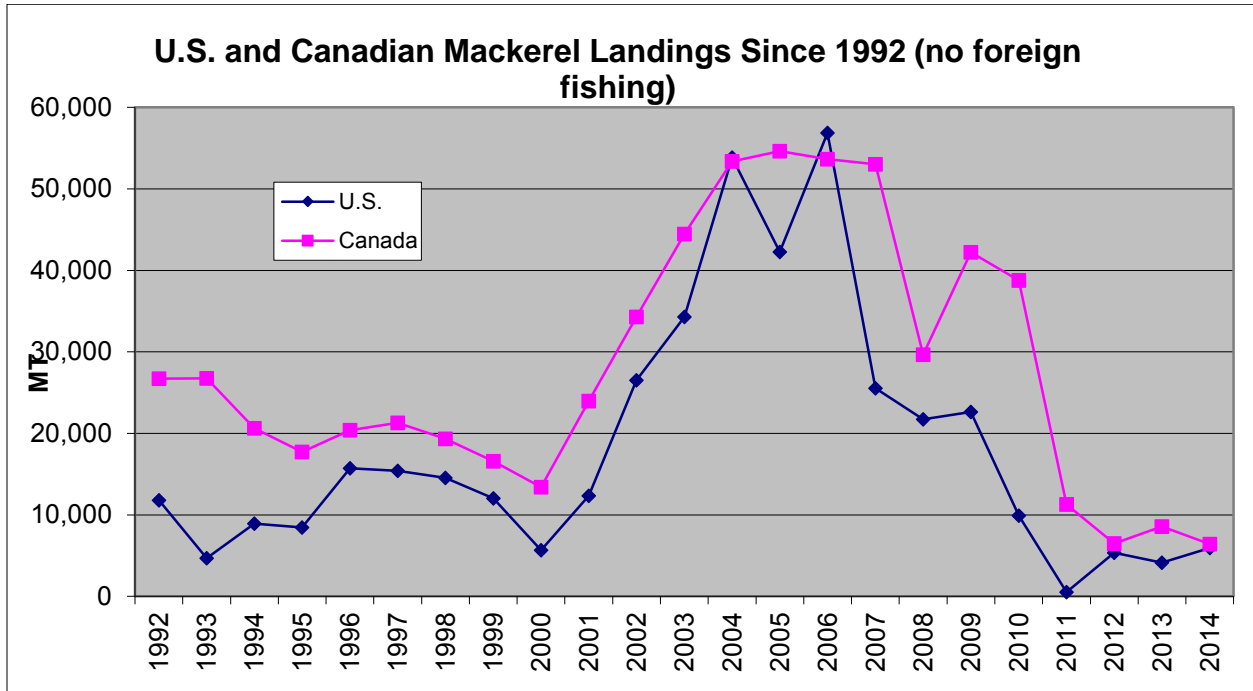


Figure 3. US and Canadian Atlantic mackerel landings (2014 Preliminary).
 Source: unpublished NEFSC dealer reports; Perscom Martin Castonguay, Can. DFO)
 (Reported 2014 Canadian landings preliminary and approximate)

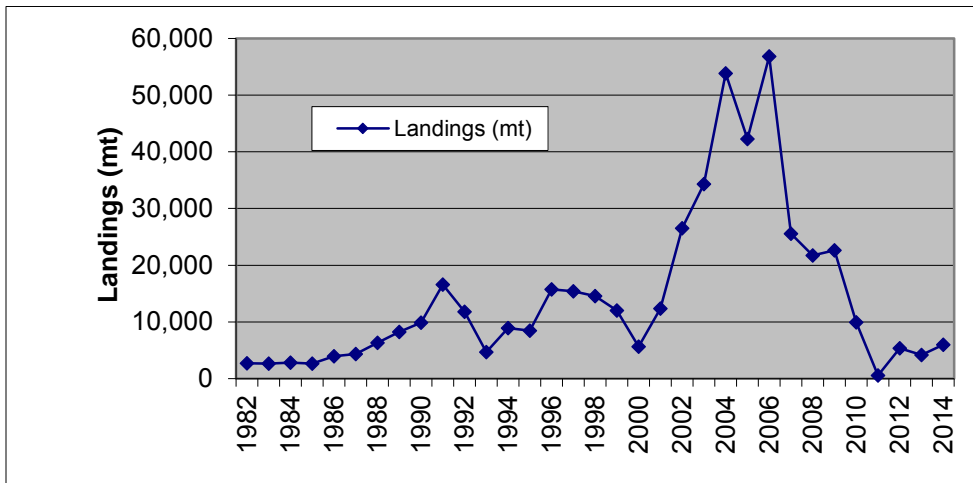


Figure 4. U.S. Atlantic mackerel landings.
Source: unpublished NEFSC dealer reports

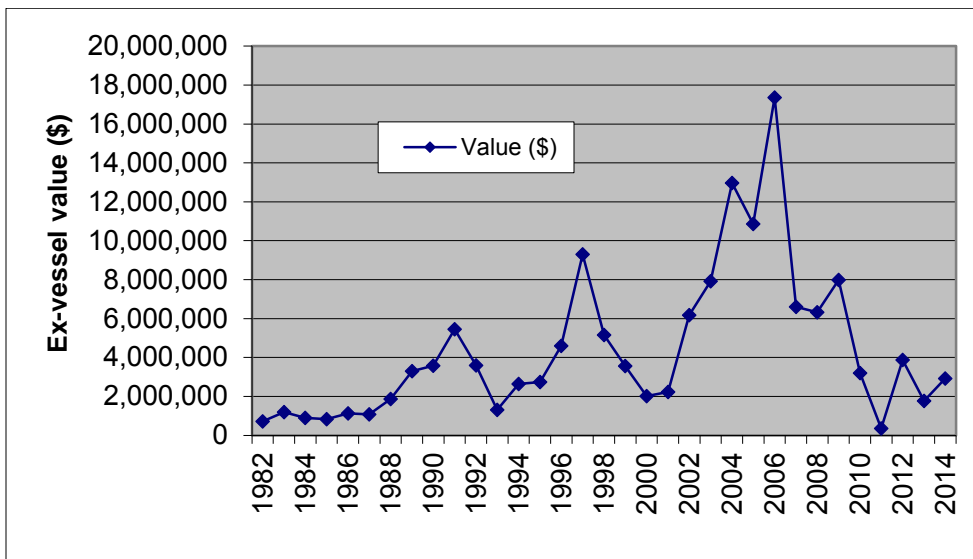


Figure 5. U.S. Atlantic mackerel ex-vessel revenues (nominal)
Source: unpublished NEFSC dealer reports

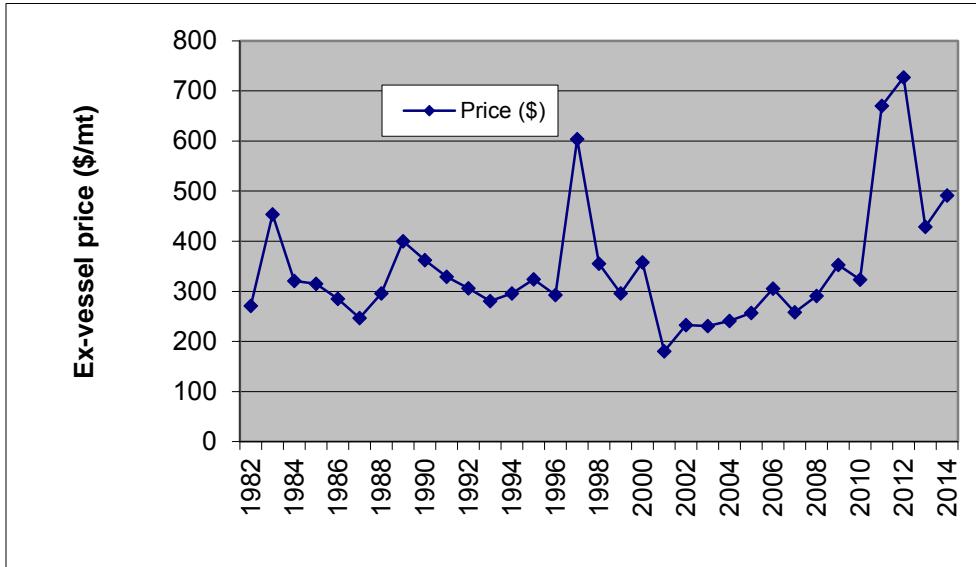


Figure 6. U.S. Atlantic mackerel ex-vessel prices (Nominal)
Source: Unpublished NMFS dealer reports

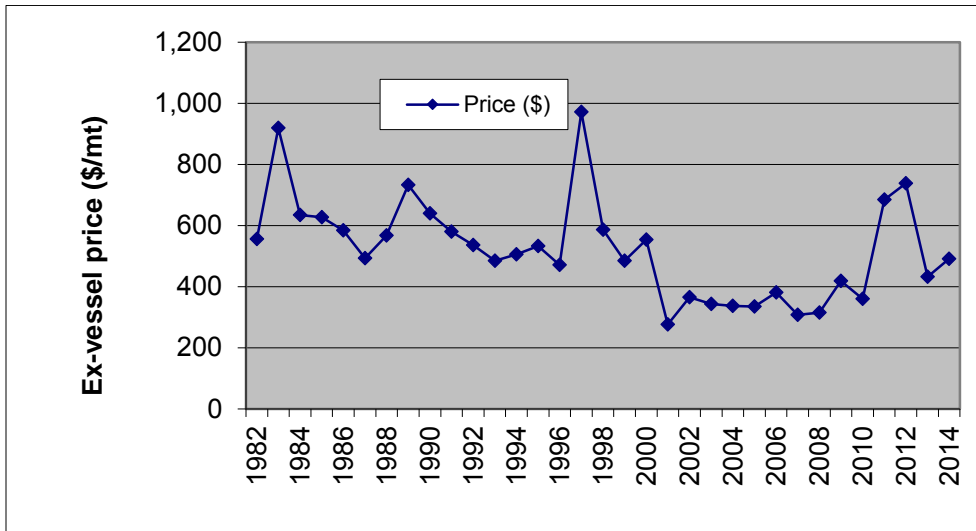


Figure 7. U.S. Atlantic mackerel ex-vessel prices (Producer Price Index adjusted, 2014 dollars)
Source: Unpublished NMFS dealer reports

Atlantic Mackerel Quota Monitoring Report

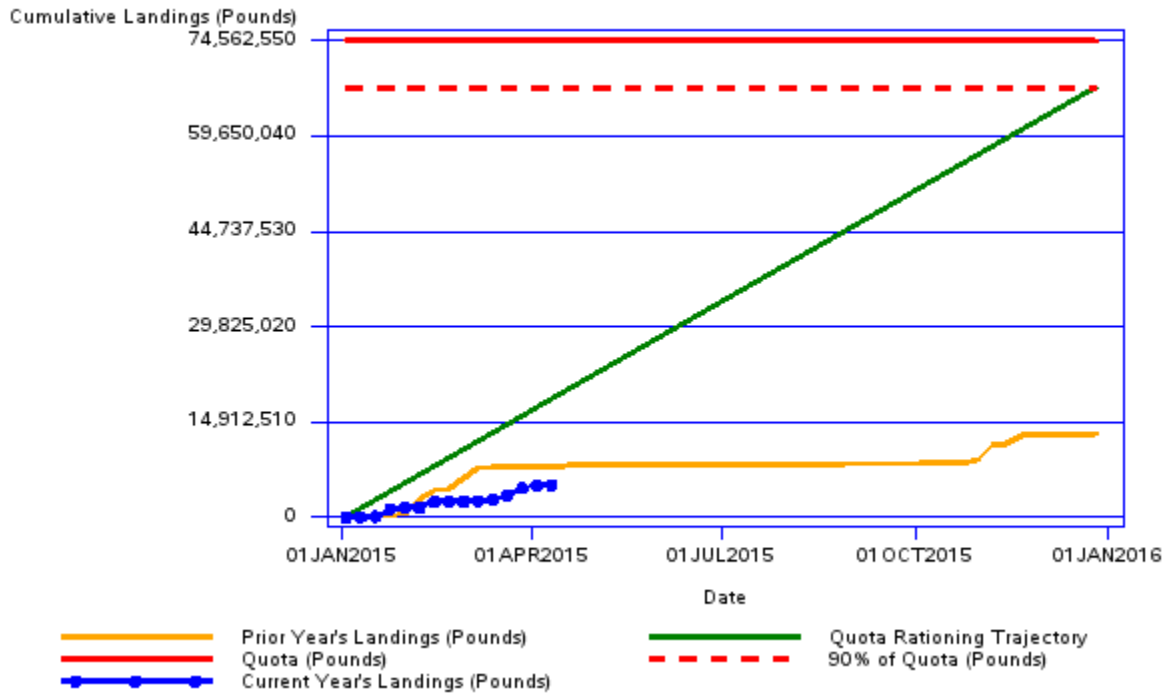


Figure 8. 2015 Landings to Date (Through April 15, 2015). Blue = 2015, Orange = 2014.

source: http://www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/fso/reports/reports_frame.htm

Specification Performance

The principle measure used to manage mackerel within a year is commercial monitoring via dealer weighout data that is submitted weekly. The dealer data triggers in-season management actions that institute relatively low commercial trip limits when 95% of the commercial quota is landed. A small amount of mackerel quota is set aside for assumed discards, which observer data have demonstrated to be low to date. There are no restrictions on the recreational fishery. Table 1 lists the performance of the mackerel fishery (commercial and recreational together) compared to the quota (and recreational allocation for 2012-2014). There have been no overages. The 2015 mackerel quota is 20,872 mt and the SSC will be setting a new ABC/quota for 2016.

Table 1. Mackerel Quota Performance. (mt)

Year	Harvest (mt) (Commercial and Recreational)	Quota (mt) (Rec+Com)	Percent of Quota Landed
2004	54,298	170,000	32%
2005	43,275	115,000	38%
2006	58,352	115,000	51%
2007	26,142	115,000	23%
2008	22,498	115,000	20%
2009	23,235	115,000	20%
2010	10,739	115,000	9%
2011	1,478	47,395	3%
2012	6,015	36,264	17%
2013	5,029	36,264	14%
2014	6,726	33,821	20%

Source: Unpublished NMFS dealer reports

Table 2. 2014 Atlantic mackerel landings (mt) by state for states with more than 25 mt.

State	Records	Metric Tons	Percent
MA	1330	4,924	83%
ME	57	622	10%
RI	471	245	4%
NH	140	68	1%
NY	267	57	1%

Source: unpublished NEFSC dealer reports

*Percent may not add to 100% since states with low landings are not included.

Table 3. 2014 Atlantic mackerel landings (mt) by month.

MONTH	Metric Tons	Percent
1	109	2%
2	2,560	43%
3	936	16%
4	67	1%
5	21	0%
6	13	0%
7	29	0%
8	33	1%
9	42	1%
10	61	1%
11	1,958	33%
12	111	2%

Source: unpublished NEFSC dealer reports

Table 4. Vessels active in various annual landing ranges (pounds per vessel)

YEAR	Vessels 1 mil +	Vessels 100,000 - 1mil	Vessels 50,000 - 100,000	Vessels 10,000 - 50,000
1982	0	10	10	43
1983	0	10	5	26
1984	0	11	14	29
1985	0	12	10	28
1986	1	10	5	37
1987	1	15	8	31
1988	2	20	8	40
1989	6	17	8	27
1990	6	16	7	39
1991	13	18	1	38
1992	9	17	13	48
1993	0	16	11	55
1994	2	27	14	44
1995	4	24	11	50
1996	7	45	15	53
1997	6	30	20	46
1998	9	16	6	39
1999	6	15	9	37
2000	5	3	0	26
2001	5	3	2	20
2002	12	3	1	22
2003	14	6	5	23
2004	18	6	1	14
2005	15	11	4	16
2006	20	12	5	10
2007	16	12	2	20
2008	15	5	1	17
2009	15	6	6	18
2010	10	9	2	14
2011	0	3	3	17
2012	3	9	1	9
2013	4	3	3	13
2014	6	5	1	14

Source: unpublished NEFSC dealer reports

Table 5. Number of Vessels to reach 75% and 95% of annual landings.

	This # of vessels accounted for about 75% of landings	This is the number that accounted for about the next 20%	The total of the first 2 columns equals the number of vessels that accounted for about 95% of landings
1997	11	48	59
1998	9	21	30
1999	6	25	31
2000	4	18	22
2001	3	4	7
2002	7	4	11
2003	8	6	14
2004	8	7	15
2005	10	6	16
2006	11	8	19
2007	10	10	20
2008	8	6	14
2009	10	5	15
2010	9	7	16

Source: unpublished NEFSC dealer reports

Note: Due to the low 2011-2014 landings this table was not updated for 2011-2014.

Table 6. Species Composition (by value) by the 11 vessels that accounted for 75% of total mackerel harvest by weight 2006-2010.

Species	For Primary Mackerel Vessels, percent of total revenue that came from various species.
Atlantic Herring	41%
Atlantic Mackerel	32%
Illex	19%
Loligo	4%
Other	1%

Source: unpublished NEFSC dealer reports

Note: Due to the low 2011-2014 landings this table was not updated for 2011-2014.

Table 7. Species Composition (by value) by the 11 vessels that accounted for 75% of total mackerel harvest by weight 2001-2005.

Species	For Primary Mackerel Vessels, percent of total revenue that came from various species.
Atlantic Herring	43%
Atlantic Mackerel	42%
Illex	9%
Squid	4%
Other	2%

Source: unpublished NEFSC dealer reports

DEALER INFORMATION

Table 8. Dealer Dependence on Mackerel 2008-2010 by dealers purchasing at least \$1,000 mackerel over 2008-2010.

Number of Dealers	Relative Dependence on Mackerel	Average Mackerel Purchased
62	<5%	\$5,456
3	5%-10%	\$360,526
2	10%-25%	\$834,519
4	25%-50%	\$547,148
2	50%-75%	\$268,757

Source: unpublished NEFSC dealer reports

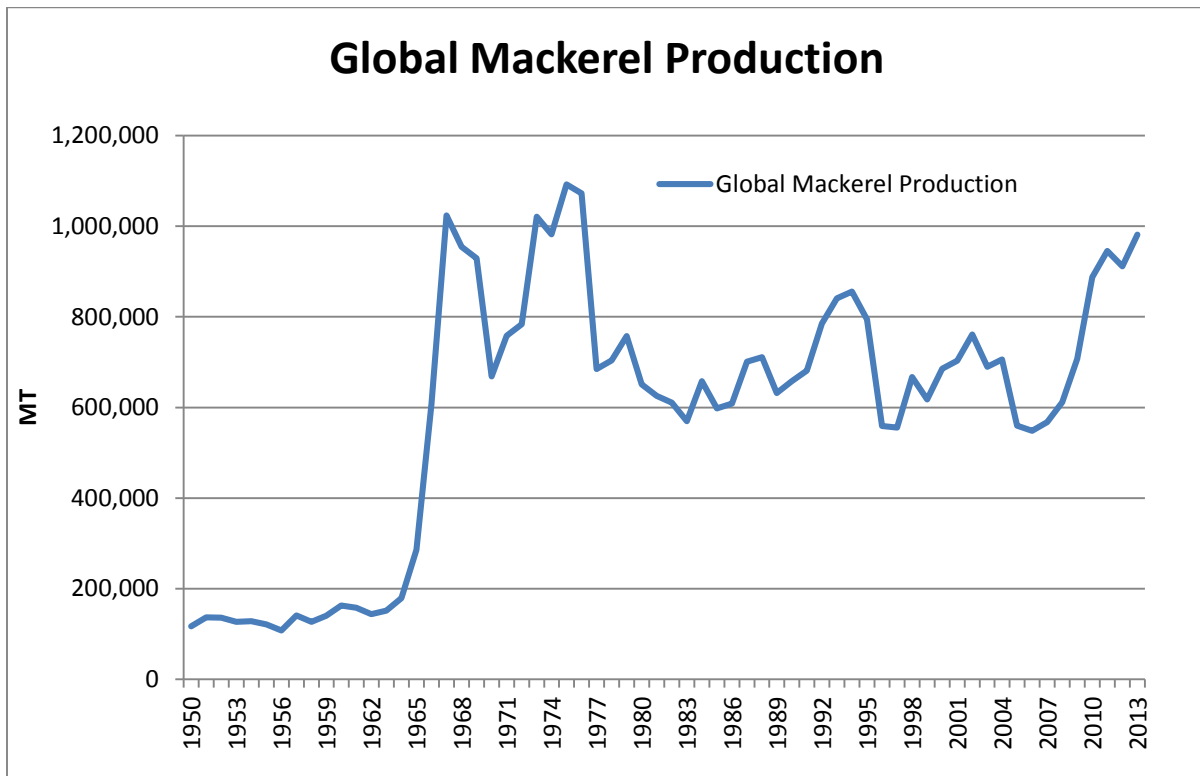
Note: Due to the low 2011-2014 landings this table was not updated for 2011-2014.

Recreational Fishery

Recreational Atlantic mackerel estimates have relatively high uncertainty. Recreational catches in recent years have been primarily in MA, NH, and Maine during the summer months. A median value indicates that half of the catches are above that value and half of the catches are below that value. The long term median (1981-2014) for mackerel is 1,314 mt and the 5-year median is 845 mt. Estimates have ranged from 284 mt to 4,223 mt. The estimate for 2014 was 786 mt.

6.6.1.5.1 World Production and Prices

The nature of future mackerel supply depends largely on the future production of the European mackerel stock, which is much greater than the U.S./Canadian stock.



Source: FAO. <http://www.fao.org/fishery/statistics/global-production/en>

Figure 9. World production of Atlantic mackerel, 1950-2013 based on FAO (2014).

Squid Capacity Scoping Comments

The Council is scheduled to review the scoping comments for the Squid Capacity Amendment and decide if and how to proceed regarding the scope of the amendment. Following this page are summaries of the public hearings and individual comments that were received during the scoping period. The scoping document can be viewed at <http://www.mafmc.org/actions/squid-capacity-amendment>.

2015 Squid Capacity Amendment Scoping Hearing Summaries

Introduction

This document summarizes the comments received at the 5 scoping hearings for the Squid Capacity Amendment that were held in April 2015. Council staff (Jason Didden) provided an overview of the scoping document at each hearing, and then for most hearings a Council Member opened up the floor for comments. A summary for each hearing follows – the hearings involved a substantial amount of discussion between the public and Council staff – only the comments directly regarding the Amendment are included below. Other discussion included questions and answers regarding information in the scoping document and an informal update for the attendees on ongoing Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish-related management issues/actions. All of the comments provided were from commercial participants or their representatives except for one charter boat captain during the webinar.

Narragansett, RI at Superior Trawl. April 6, 2015

Attendees

Jason Didden (MAFMC)
Laurie Nolan (MAFMC)
Walter Anoushian (NOAA)
Meghan Lapp
Don Fox
George Ainsworth
Fred Mattera
Mike Roderick
Katie Almeida
Eric Reid

Chris Roebuck
Troy Sawyer
Jerry Caivallio
Joel Hovanesian
Brian Loftes
Einar Barlow
James Jordan
John Ainsworth
Jon Knight
Ryan Clark

Summary: While not everyone who attended spoke, everyone who spoke was in favor of no action and appeared to constitute a clear majority. There was particular opposition to catch shares for the squid fisheries. Comments made included:

- This is an attempt to fragment industry and get fishermen fighting among themselves.
- If it isn't broke don't try to fix it. We don't see a problem - there's no indications of problems.
- It appears that participation is stable or even declining - If groundfish issues were going to cause an influx of effort it would have occurred already. We don't see an influx occurring.
- The control dates can be used if there is an influx of effort and a problem develops.

- The control dates that are set now will work if needed, but might not if we have to update control dates five years from now - the history developed to date should not be discounted.
- People have been investing based on the control dates and changing permits' value disrupts business planning.
- Changing management systems can hurt the squid fishery and businesses/employment cannot recover from disruptions.
- You can't point out success stories with catch shares.
- It is an insult to this community to tell fishermen that the best way to operate is to get fish for themselves now and not share it with anyone in the future. This proposal is about capitalizing on selfishness and disadvantaging other fishermen, not achieving a vision. This approach destroyed groundfish. It's like one fisherman feeding off another.
- This is part of a concerted effort to eliminate the fishing industry for the benefit of other interests (energy).
- Government involvement has repeatedly led to failure – more and more imported seafood.
- Catch shares have destroyed mixed-vessel-size fishing communities and not led to the promised benefits. The previous system was working. Give us a quota and let the fishermen work it out – don't change the system and eliminate small vessels.
- Catch shares will squeeze out working fishermen for special interests who pick out thresholds and years to benefit themselves.
- Flexibility is needed for survival and this will take flexibility away. Inflexibility is slowly being squeezed in from multiple angles, all of which needs to be considered. The herring/mackerel/squid/river herring requirements and Coast guard/safety regulations demonstrate this.
- No one wants to be a fishermen but we are stuck. There will not be anyone left in 15 years if you keep taking things away. There's nothing but aggravation even on the water since we have to carry observers who watch us work.
- It used to be that everyone did different things and we were self-regulated by abundance. Now the entire fleet does the same thing because of regulations that don't allow anything else. This has destroyed prices and destroyed the supply chain of supplying a variety of products consistently.
- The regulations have driven up imports which are harvested in countries where there is no conservation. This is an insane system.
- Good fishermen will always succeed and if people can't make it they will leave the fishery on their own.

Montauk, NY at the Montauk Library. April 7, 2015

Attendees

Jason Didden (MAFMC)
Katie Almeida
Mike Decker
Wesley Peterson
Paul Beckwith
Terence Wallace Jr
Mark Lofstad
Dave Lofstad
Ray Lofstad

Dan Farnham
Daniel Farnham
Charles Morici Jr
Charles Morici Sr
Kevin Maguire
Gary Stone
Bonnie Brady
Sara Frisby

Summary: While not everyone who attended spoke, there appeared to be a consensus that catch shares were a bad idea. Most individuals who spoke were in favor of some sort of elimination of latent capacity but there were concerns about disadvantaging small operators and pitting fishermen against each other. Comments made included:

- People are actively pursuing buying squid permits, which indicates interest in squid fishing.
- Lack of access to fisheries has been destroying livelihoods, especially for larger vessels.
- Catch shares will do us in like they did northern vessels.
- It should be easy to identify who has been catching squid and who has not been catching squid.
- We won't feel the impact of groundfish issues until the first good year of squid – the quota will get filled that much faster.
- New entrants will lead to additional issues with other sub-ACLs (e.g. windowpane).
- The Council will need to look at a variety of years and qualifying thresholds if considering reducing capacity. Need to consider that fishermen jump around – need to look at a wide timeframe to account for periodic participation.
- Should consider system that weights sustained participation higher.
- If vessels are removed from the directed fishery they should maintain some kind of lower level of access.
- If nothing is done now to reduce permits we will regret it - we need to restrict inactive or recently active vessels. I'm in favor of developing a tiered access system for squid.
- A tiered system (to be further developed) could avoid knocking out the small participants while protecting the primary participants.
- Having lots of small participants fishing every day could still add up.
- For incidental permits, should have some amount of other fish on board or some way to ensure that it is a truly incidental fishery. Should also consider making the current 2,500 pound incidental permit a limited access permit.

- The permits have become a commodity but they keep taking permits that fishermen paid for.
- We were a mixed fishery but have to protect squid fishermen now who count on it because other species have been taken away - first eliminate inactive permits, especially from permit banks.
- Vessels that have not been participating should be removed to preserve access for those who depend on the squid fishery since those who depend on squid don't have anything else to do.
- Is it legal to remove vessels in confirmation of permit history (CPH)? Wasn't the whole idea behind CPH to preserve access?
- How many squid permits are in permit banks? Maybe eliminate permits from CPH too but NMFS advised that CPH permits would be protected (a permit would come out of CPH with all permits intact).
- If vessels haven't been active they shouldn't maintain access.
- Industry would need to be further consulted on details of any potential system.
- The government is pitting fishermen against each other and it makes me sick. We're like the buffalo and going down a dead-end road.
- We will be stuck with what happens – the government will not give back anything it takes.

New Bedford, MA at the Fairfield Inn. April 8, 2015

Attendees

Jason Didden (MAFMC)
Howard King (MAFMC)
Joyce Rowley (CFN)
Ronald Borjeson
Katie Almeida

Paul Weckesser
Meghan Lapp
Bill Rocha
Mike Walsh
Joshua Peters

Summary: While not everyone who attended spoke, everyone who spoke was in favor of no action and appeared to constitute a majority. There was particular opposition to catch shares for the squid fisheries. Comments made included:

- Sectors (catch shares) will ruin the fishery.
- Eliminating permits will reduce opportunities – fishermen can't do multiple things 100% at the same time which causes losses of permits when catch histories are used.
- Making the permit system more rigid reduces flexibility, and may interfere with efforts to move toward ecosystem-based management.
- If you do move forward, set the bar low enough so that folks who have been forced into other fisheries but do have some squid landings won't lose access.
- Everyone has settled into their niches and you won't see large effort transfers anymore.
- You should look at baselines of apparently inactive vessels – they are not all large vessels – you need to look deeper than just the sheer number of permits to understand capacity.
- If there's a chance that people who currently own permits might lose their permits, there should not be new permits granted (e.g. Maine request).

Cape May, NJ at Congress Hall. April 13, 2015

Attendees

Jason Didden (MAFMC)
Jeff Kaelin (MAFMC)
Tom Baum (MAFMC, NJ DFW)
Josh O'Connor (NOAA)
Benny Rose
Keith Laudeman
Wayne Reichle
David Wiscott
Bill Miller
Jake Wiscott

Sam Martin
Charles Martin
Michael Cox
Lauren Hunsen
Eleanor Bochenek
Brady Lybarger
Dan Axelson
Rick Hoff
Stefan Axelson

Summary: Comments were mixed with several commenters against and two commenters supporting reducing capacity.

Against

-This doesn't seem fair that I'm going to lose my permits because some folks who can move into other fisheries are worried that I might start squid fishing.

-In a fishery where the quota is not taken, it does not seem to make sense to limit participation and take away permits from folks who have been participating in other fisheries. Just talking about it might encourage participation.

-Problems with groundfish have been ongoing for years and doesn't seem to be any effort/participation ramp-up.

-To take my permit seems wrong. I may have to go back squidding from scalloping and you're taking away an option for me to feed my family.

Supporting

-We need to be proactive not reactive and I know that there have been groundfish vessels that jumped into the summer squid fishery.

-New vessels may cause issues with choke species that shut the fishery down.

-Latent fishing power will come out of the woodwork if the squid are available and the price is right. There is way more capacity out there than there is fish for everybody to remain profitable if the squid show up. Latent effort will choke the fishery/current participants.

-The problem is that the initial qualifier was too low. So far the fishery has fortunately regulated itself.

-Some vessels only have two species to fish on and I depend on the squid.

-Should have to prove how you have depended on these fish over the last few years to retain access.

Long Branch, NJ at the Ocean Place Resort (April Council Meeting Listening Session).
April 15, 2015

This scoping hearing took place during the listening session after regular business was concluded for the day during the April 2015 Council meeting. Three members of the public made comments:

Jim Lovgren, representing 11 boats at his dock, including the original joint venture vessels:

- We have not had access to squid in recent years – they have been far south or north.
- Summer closures have limited NJ access to fish.
- No one is in favor of catch shares.
- Oppose tiered system because of tendency to use most recent five years which will eventually shove everyone into just one fishery.
- Need to include historical participants as far back as you can or you will take the permits of those who created this fishery but have been bouncing among fisheries.
- You do not have many small owner-operators on the advisory panel in terms of who is providing input.
- The qualifying threshold is also key for NJ participants who have not had access to squid in recent years.

R. Isaksen for Belford Seafood Cooperative

- A lot of our boats were big into squid but have not have access in recent years and won't have landings.
- Not for taking anyone's permit to benefit a few larger vessels.
- This is like stealing – if you take our permits you take our life and we'll be out of business
- We need to be able to jump from one fishery to another to survive in the long run

James Fletcher (via webinar)

- If squid only live a year how will management help in boom year?
- How will chemicals from WW1 munitions affect squid population? How many squid were killed from Mudhole pollution?
- What will loss of southern packing plant in Wanchese NC affect landings?
- The science from trawl survey is incorrect by 80% what is used for science to determine squid population?
- Mid-Atlantic is attempting to discriminate against NC & VA fishermen. Due to lack of landings from MAFMC lowering flounder trips

**Webinar with a Listening Station at Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC),
Newport News, VA. April 21, 2015**

Attendees

Jason Didden (MAFMC)
Rob O'Reilly (VMRC)
Peter Kaizer
Meade Amory

Michael Ireland
Michelle Peabody
Fella Daniels

Summary

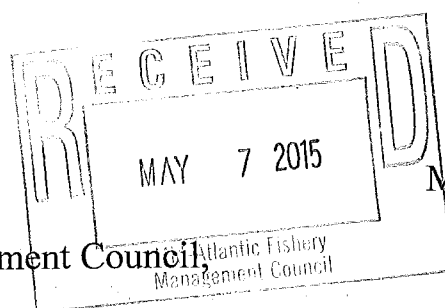
-Peter Kaizer (Althea K Charters) (Webinar) noted increased near-shore fishing effort off Massachusetts and a dramatic decline in coastal longfin squid around Nantucket Sound and would like the amendment to consider buffer zones (e.g. 10 miles/20 fathoms) beyond state waters to allow squid to enter Nantucket Sound and successfully spawn.

-Participants in the room at VMRC were in favor of no action, making the following points:

-The catch information shows that the quotas are not being achieved.

-There is an apparent lack of change over the last 10 years – no need to change anything now, perhaps consider changes once the quotas begin to get caught. Can also consider other options if quotas begin to get caught rather than restricting participation.

-Unless permit splitting occurs we will not see much additional squid effort. The control date is in place and unless poor recruitment occurs several years in a row should maintain status quo.



May 2, 2015

Dear Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council,

This letter is in regard to the Squid Capacity Amendment. As a Fisherman, I have a few concerns I would like to have addressed which are based from the scoping outline presented. It also needs to be stated that some of the Northeast states want the government to get involved because they now decided they want Squid permits. I bought/qualified for my permits. If they want to obtain permits then like everyone they need buy/qualify for them. Nothing is just free. Allowing certain states to dictate and demand a license will cause a ripple effect with other states wanting the same.

Requalification of Permits:

- If a Fisherman has a Federal Squid License he has qualified and/or purchased in the past why should it now be taken away? If your fishing other species you should not be punished if you didn't fish for Squid that trimester or year. Its equivalent to me buying a piece of property and not building on it for 5 years. Does this mean the government can take it away without prior warning? Once a Fisherman already has a permit/permits they should be able to keep them not lose them.
- Squid, like all fish, fluctuates in demand. Fisherman fish where the demand and price are so they can feed their families.
- There is no issue with the lack of fishable Squid.
- Any information or control dates for landings need to be placed in Commercial Magazines. There should be ample warning given prior to control dates starting. This needs to be done prior to starting the control dates NOT after.
- Control dates were implemented over concern with Butterfish closing the Squid fishing too early. This is not the case. Butterfish is more plentiful then first thought. Squid are also not over fished.
- All control dates need to be public notice. Most fisherman don't check the NOAA. If there is to be a requirement it needs to be brought to the Fisherman's attention so they have the opportunity to meet the requirements and not jeopardize with losing their license.
- Control dates should to be corresponding to the Squid fishing trimesters. Different fish have different dates they are able to be fished. The dates should correlated so its easier for the Fisherman to remember the start of the control date. They should not be randomly picked.

- If control dates are implemented then notice should be given prior to the start of the date. It should clearly be stated that if you don't use the permit within a period time then there's a possibility you may lose it. This is a better alternative than just picking a random past control date.
- Having 1 man influence the fishing market to increase their profit and creating a monopoly isn't the answer. This will put other hard working fisherman out of business.

Tiered Limited Access and Limited Access Privilege Program:

- Having these approaches could cause a monopoly.
- Someone only fishing Squid would prefer to have these approaches so they can control more of the market eliminating other hard working Fisherman.
- Having a quota system would only allow the wealthy to participate. It would easily eliminate 95% of the Fisherman fishing Squid creating the monopoly.

Thank you for your time in these very important matters. These are issues of great concerns and need to be addressed. The decisions you make could greatly affect many Fisherman's families.

Sign and Date:

Donald Meyer
Jessie Leather 310898
Capt Travis 330845



PAUL R. LEPAGE
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES
21 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0021

PATRICK KELIHER
COMMISSIONER

April 28, 2015

Mr. Chris Moore, Executive Director
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
800 North State Street, Suite 201
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Chris,

The Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils (MAFMC) scoping on the Squid Capacity Amendment. DMR understands that the MAFMC is considering this action because there is considerable latent capacity in both the longfin squid and *Illex* squid fisheries, and that the activation of latent capacity in these fisheries could lead to excessive fishing effort and increased catch of non-target species.

In recent years Maine has experienced a significant increase of squid abundance but has no regional allocation. While this amendment will consider a variety of approaches for reducing capacity such as a requalification of permits, a tiered limited access system, and/or individual fishing quotas, DMR comments that the development of this amendment is the right time to consider new allocations to the northern states due to changes in the stock distribution as a likely result of climate change. Should the MAFMC decide to move forward with an amendment, a range of new allocation alternatives should be developed for analysis and additional public comment.

DMR references the conclusion of the 'East Coast Climate Change and Governance Workshop' report that states: "Workshop discussions demonstrated that initiating a management response to climate change is also a leadership challenge that will require confronting tradeoffs and questions for which there is no template or simple answer." This amendment offers the opportunity for the MAFMC to collaborate with the New England Fishery Management Council and the northern states to accommodate governance challenges and to propose alternatives for adapting and responding to climate change.

As always, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Terry Stockwell
Director of External Affairs

Seafreeze Ltd.

100 Davisville Pier
North Kingstown, R.I. 02852 U.S.A.
Tel: (401) 295-2585 Telex: 325114
FAX: (401) 295-5825



Dr. Christopher Moore, Executive Director

May 11, 2015

Mid Atlantic Fisheries Management Council

800 North State St. Suite 201

Dover, DE 19901

Re: Squid Capacity Amendment Scoping Document

Dr. Moore,

In order to consolidate and clarify various comments made with respect to the squid capacity amendment and upcoming squid specifications, Seafreeze submits the following:

1. Currently, we support status quo. Although we support status quo at this time, we strongly support maintaining the current 2013 control date as the control date for all future actions in order to protect current/historic fishery participants. We do not support refreshing the 2013 control date at a later time. A mechanism to activate this control date could be created, in the event that latent effort becomes a problem in the future.
2. We do not support letting any new squid pilot programs, state or otherwise, into the squid fishery. This would create new active effort that could jeopardize current limited access permit holders.
3. We support flexibility that enables current participants to continue to fish effectively. Therefore we do not support any system that may introduce trip limits to vessels currently producing. We do support removing the PTNS, which would increase flexibility of operations. With the introduction of SBRM, the PTNS does not serve any purpose but continues to restrict vessel activity. We also support clarifying the regulations to specify that a 5 inch or greater cover bag may be used as a strengthener over the 3 inch butterfish liner/codend, in accordance with current fishing practices. Based on the healthy status of the butterfish stock, we also support the removal of the butterfish bycatch cap. This would promote greater operational flexibility, as well as reduce discarded bycatch. National Standard 9 of the Magnuson Stevens Act states that management measures should

minimize the mortality of bycatch, which the butterflyfish cap does not accomplish. Regulations that create regulatory discards of marketable fish should be removed. A standard minimum mesh size should be used throughout the year for ease of enforcement and compliance.

4. We do not support further increasing effort in the second loligo trimester. The seasonal allocations of trimesters have been adjusted over time to allow for an additional rollover of unused Trimester I quota into Trimester II, up to an amount equal to 50% of the Trimester II quota, to accommodate vessels fishing during that period. However, part of the original debate over setting the trimester quotas focused on the fact that loligo spawn inshore during the months of May, June and July. The lower tonnage of Trimester II provided some relief to the spawning stock. Increasing effort in this trimester when the squid are spawning may result in stock decline, which would harm rather than help the fishery.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Meghan E Lapp".

Meghan Lapp, Fisheries Liaison, Seafreeze Ltd.

Meghan@Seafreezeld.com

ATTN: Jason Didden

To whom it may concern,

My name is Hank Lackner, I am a full time, year round, squid fisherman from Montauk NY. I participate in both the long fin and illex squid fisheries. As an **ACTIVE** squid fisherman, I could not attend any of the scoping meetings. I am writing this letter to express my opinions regarding capacity issues in both the Long Fin and Illex squid fisheries. It is my belief that the council must take immediate action to **PROTECT** its historical participants. We must become proactive not reactive. We must act before it is too late.

I have been a squid fisherman for over 25 years and as a result of this I have lost a lot of my other permits ..I have lost my mackerel permit, most of my ground fish allocation, as well my herring permit. I also lost out on a scallop permit. One might wonder why?? The answer is quite simple, **COUNCILS TOOK APPROPRIATE ACTION IN ADDRESSING LATENT EFFORT IN THOSE FISHERIES.** Squid pays my bills!!

The scoping process is a great way to get started, giving evryone the opportunity for public comment. Please do not get caught up in just the comments alone.. Remember ,109 boats catch 95% of the long fin squid landings. There are 337 longfin squid pemits , plus 64 in CPH. The 109 boats that actively fish and catch are the minority. Thus, if popular vote (I am assuming that is going to be no action) is deemed the correct way to proceed, the fisherman who really need protection will be **BADLY HURT**.. The last few summers the quota has been caught and the fishery was closed.. To me, this signals that the fishery already is at full capacity, and in fact, maybe too many boats.. Another important thing to remember is, we do not know the effects that the summer fishery is having on the fall and winter fishery. Summer is a known spawning period for long finned squids. Analysis needs to be done before new entrants are considered.

Jason's document states that there has not been a lot of new entrants into the fishery. But what his document does not address is the CPUE of the existing fleet.. Most of the historical participants are now spending way more time chasing squid because they too have lost their other permits. His document is a series of numbers, but does not represent if there was an actual change in vessel composition. As an active squid fisherman I have seen vessels participating in the squid fishery that I have never layed eyes on before.

Both squid fisheries face bycatch hurdles (choke species). If it's not butterfish, it's yellowtail flounder or sturgeon or turtles or even marine mammals. New participants can easily get the fishery shut down..Whether it be from a lack of knowledge or just not enough bycatch quota.. If the squid fishery does close, we then have to ask ouselves how is this going to effect the other species that we manage.

I hope the council considers recent developements in New England that can impact the vessels here in the Mid Atlantic.. Massive closures in the groundfish industry as well as recent cut backs to the scallop fleet can and will have direct impacts on squid boats. I am also very concerned with permits that

are being stored in permit banks by various states.

Council members should be asking themselves : Why were control dates for Illex and Long fin Squid established, and reaffirmed, if we never had any intentions of using them. **The controls dates made in 2013 should not be left to go STALE....** It will NOT take a very large increase of vessels to dramatically alter the current dynamics of these fisheries.

I believe the council should immediately get RID OF ALL PERMITS THAT HAVE ZERO LANDINGS HISTORY in both fisheries. The thought of a catch share program is not plausible. Remember it was a total failure in New England. The council should then proceed on developing either a two tiered or three tiered approach limited access system based upon landings history for the long fin fishery and the same for illex squid.

A two tiered approach might look like this -you are either full time or incidental.. no trip limit for full time access and 2500 lbs. for incidental

A three tiered approach might mirror the plan the council selected for mackeral. that is incidental(2,500lbs), part time (10,000lbs) and full time(no landing limit).

As for the illex fishery a similar approach could easily be developed.

As for landings criteria for any of these plans, I believe more data needs to be seen.

Thanks ,

Hank Lackner

Dr, Christopher Moore, Executive Director

Mid Atlantic Fisheries Management Council

Squid Capacity Amendment Scoping

LOLIGO SQUID

We would support Status Quo at this time, however, our main concern is addressing the potential that latent effort has in disrupting the Loligo Fishery in the future. Over the last 10 years only 106 vessels (average) have accounted for 95% of the total Loligo landings. A mechanism to protect this portion of the fleet from the potential effects of the additional 296 vessels/permits that could enter this fishery in the future is paramount.

The Council must develop a strategy to acknowledge the past efforts of the historical Loligo fishery participants. This can be done by establishing the current Control Date “in perpetuity”. This method will provide a safeguard to those who built this valuable Fishery and guarantee their access in the future.

We are also in favor of eliminating the Butterfish Bycatch Cap and the 2500 lb trip limit for butterfish in the Loligo fishery. The 3” or greater mesh requirement to possess more than 2500 lbs/trip of butterfish while loligo fishing does not take into account the nature of either fishery and does nothing but create regulatory discards of marketable fish. The current Butterfish stock is not in jeopardy and both of the above regulations are unwarranted.

Finally, we do not support any strategy that would increase the current Trimester 2 loligo quota. Protection for what is historically a spawning season was, and is, the basis for that trimester quota. We must remain vigilant with regards to increased effort in that trimester until the effects on the Fishery as a whole are better understood.

ILLEX SQUID

This fishery is conducted by larger, highly specialized vessels in deep water. Over the last 10 years only 11 vessels (average) out of a permitted 81 have been involved in actual fishing activities. Latent effort poses a significant issue in the future. As with Loligo, the current control date fixed “in perpetuity” would be the most effective tool in protecting the historical participants moving forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the issues for both the Loligo and Illex Squid fisheries.

Kind regards,

Eric Reid, General Manager

Seafreeze Shoreside, Inc.

Narragansett, RI

MSB Advisory Panel Member

Gabby G. Fisheries Inc.
F/V Gabby G.
May 9, 15

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in response to the MAFMC's request for comments on a Squid Capacity Amendment. The majority of my comments below will be in regards to the Longfin Squid Fishery, but could also be applied to the Illex Fishery as well.

In the Longfin Squid Fishery there are currently 337 active permits, with an additional 64 permits in CPH. The data on historical landings shows that there is considerable latent effort in the industry. In the ten years prior to the control dates established in 2013, which is from years 2003-2013, an average 107 vessels accounted for 95% of landings with 50 of those vessels accounting for 75% of landings. This data shows that while a large number of vessels have access to the fishery only a small number of those vessels are truly active participants. It is these active participants who are the true stakeholders in the Longfin Industry.

An effective management plan for the Longfin Industry must take into account the nature of the species in conjunction with industry inputs. Longfin Squid are relatively short lived. This short lifespan can lead to large fluctuations in the fish stock in a relatively short amount of time. It also makes a true stock assessment difficult. At the same time the quota has been relatively stable year-to-year. The active participants in the fishery have been able to catch the quota in years of good fishing when the squid have been plentiful, and landings have been less than the quota in years when fishing is not as good. I believe not catching the full quota in some years is beneficial to both the species and the Industry. If more of the latent effort entered into the industry then the quota would be caught more quickly in years of good fishing, effectively flooding the market and driving down prices. Once the quota is reached these vessels would move their effort into another sector of the industry driving down prices for other species. Increased industry participation could also lead to the quota being caught even in years when fishing is poor, possibly when the biomass of the species can't sustainably support the current quota level.

Another important point to take into account is the level of bycatch in the industry, specifically in regards to choke species such as yellowtail flounder and butterfish. Current participants in the industry have put a lot of time and effort into developing gear and techniques to mitigate bycatch issues. New participants will not have the same level of experience and could create a spike in bycatch that could easily get the fishery shutdown.

The Fishery Management Councils have in the past taken permits for other species away from vessels with little to no landing history. Many of the active participants in the squid fisheries lost their groundfish and scallop permits among others. This occurred because these vessels had not historically participated in those fisheries because they focused on squid fishing. This is a historical precedent that should be carried over to the regulation of the squid fishery. This would protect the historical participants of the industry.

The industry has a potential overcapitalization problem, and I am in favor of removing inactive permits. Action that could be taken would be a requalification for permits based on the landings history in the 10 years prior to the control dates set in 2013. This would get rid of all permits with little to no landing history. In addition a two or three-tiered approach could be instituted, which would inhibit historically minor participants from significantly expanding their exploitation of the stock beyond their historical levels.

Sincerely,
Daniel J. Farnham
F/V Gabby G.

From: [Clark, Mary](#)
To: [Didden, Jason](#)
Subject: FW: Form Submission - Squid Latent Capacity
Date: Thursday, April 23, 2015 2:51:10 PM

From: Squarespace [mailto:no-reply@squarespace.com]
Sent: Thursday, April 23, 2015 2:37 PM
To: Clark, Mary
Subject: Form Submission - Squid Latent Capacity

Name: Genevieve Kurilec McDonald

Email Address: genevieve.kurilec@maine.edu

If you are representing an organization or a group of people other than yourself, please indicate below:

Comments: I am a commercial lobster fisherman in Stonington, Maine. And although I do not submit commentary on their behalf, I am the Downeast Region Representative on the Maine Lobster Advisory Council.

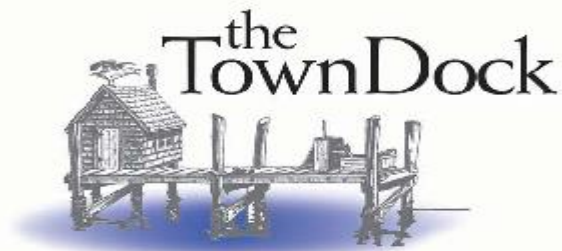
In recent years we have seen an increase of squid in the Gulf of Maine. As water temperatures rise I expect to see this trend continue. As a young fisherman I am always looking for opportunities to diversify my fishing operation. As you are most likely aware, Maine is exceptionally single species dependent, especially for younger fishermen who do not have the opportunity to enter closed fisheries such as scallops.

If the Mid-Atlantic Council chooses to address latent effort in the longfin and illex squid fishery, and is willing to reissue those permits, I request that 5 permits come to Maine so that we may land squid to be caught and sold in the state of Maine.

Thank you.

Genevieve Kurilec McDonald
F/V Hello Darlin'
Stonington, Maine

(Sent via [Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council](#))



May 8th, 2015

Dr. Christopher M. Moore
Executive Director
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
800 North State Street
Suite 201
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Dr. Moore,

We greatly appreciated the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council holding a scoping meeting here in Point Judith, Rhode Island. Although many fishermen were out fishing, a good amount of industry members were able to attend. Ms. Nolan and Mr. Didden were able to listen to the concerns and ideas of the local industry first hand regarding this Amendment. Those who spoke seemed to be in favor of the status quo position. Our company supports this position. In regards to a tiered system or a limited access privilege program for Longfin and/or Illex squid we would not be inclined to support either at this time.

Recently we proposed the idea of increasing the amount of Trimester II quota to the Council. This issue is of great importance to our company as it would aim to allow us to fish longer in the summer and to better utilize the squid quota, which over the recent years, has not been met. We are in favor of exploring the following options and any other the Council might bring to the table:

- A. Eliminate or relax the provision where Trimester II can only increase by 50%.
- B. Increase Trimester II's share of the rollover from Trimester I.
- C. Implementation of a buffer system. The buffer system would take a determined percentage off the top of the yearly T.A.C at the beginning of the season that could be drawn upon if a Trimester is close to being shut down. This would allow industry to keep fishing activity steady.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposed Amendment.

Sincerely,

Katie Almeida
Fishery Policy Analyst

May 11, 2015

Dr. Christopher M. Moore
Executive Director
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
800 North State Street
Suite 201
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Dr. Moore,

We thank the Council for hosting a meeting here in Point Judith, RI to take into account our opinions and concerns regarding the Squid Capacity Amendment.

We respectfully request that the Council consider the following position while proceeding with the Squid Capacity Amendment. At this time we do not see any need to restrict capacity and do not consider it an issue, therefore we support Status Quo.

The industry members whose names, affiliations, and signatures set out on the attached list support this position.

Thank you for your consideration,

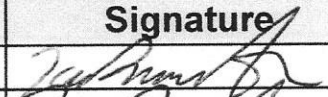
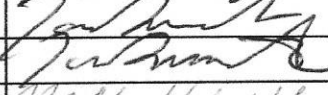
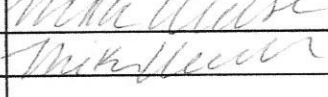
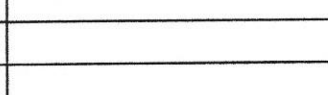
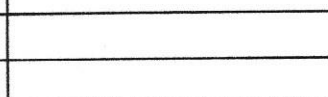
The signed petitioners of the Southern New England Fishing Industry

We, the undersigned, propose that the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council consider our stance of Status Quo while proceeding with the Squid Capacity Amendment.

#	Name	Affiliation	Signature	Date
1	RADOU M. G. LA L		[Signature]	5/4/15
2	DRUCK KNAPP	F/V CONCOR + MICHAEL	[Signature]	5/4/15
3	Thomas Danna	F/V BEBERCA MARY	[Signature]	5/4/15
4	DAVID BARBERA	Shoreside Processor	[Signature]	5/5/15
5	MICHAEL A. PARASCANDOLA	Town Dock	[Signature]	5/5/15
6	Rodney M. Avila	Hercules S.H.A	[Signature]	5/5/15
7	William B. PPS	SKIPPER	[Signature]	5/5/15
8	Peter A. Reposa	OWNER	[Signature]	5/5/15
9	James West	SKIPPER	[Signature]	5/5/15
10	Steve Taber	Shoreside	[Signature]	5/5/15
11	GEORGE NAZ	MISTRESS	[Signature]	5/5/15
12	Bob V. Chianzi	Zilz Victorin	[Signature]	5-5-15
13	Katie Almeida	Town Dock SPD	[Signature]	5-5-15
14	STEVE JAROSKY	Town Dock	[Signature]	5-5-15
15	Aaron J. Ferri	Town Dock	[Signature]	5/5/15
16	CHRIS ROEBUCK	F/V KAREN ELIZABETH AUSTIN	[Signature]	5/5/15
17	John Ainsworth	F/V Hope & Sydney	[Signature]	5/5/15
18	Samuel Nordean	F/V Hope & Sydney	[Signature]	5/5/15
19	Joseph Matteo	F/V Travis & White	[Signature]	5/5/15
20	Craig Humbley	F/V ALEXIS MANTINIA	[Signature]	5-6-15
21	Ernie H. BARLOW	F/V LENA PEARL	[Signature]	5/6/15
22	Robert S. D'Arcy	F/V LINDA MARIE	[Signature]	5-6-15
23	James F. Hartzel	F/V JAMES MATTHEW	[Signature]	5-6-15
24	Joel Houanciar	F/V DEFIANT	[Signature]	5/6/15
25	Jeff Laffredo	Shoreside Processing	[Signature]	5-6-15
26	Matt Kimball	Shoreside Processing	[Signature]	5-6-15
27	Chris Moulou	Shoreside Processing	[Signature]	5-6-15
28	Bruce Harvey	F/V RAY DILLON	[Signature]	5-6-15
29	CATHY HARVEY	Shoreside Support	[Signature]	5-6-15
30	Maggie McRobert	Shoreside Support	[Signature]	5/6/15
31	Joseph Burk	Shoreside Support	[Signature]	5/6/15
32	Mike Roderick	Shoreside Processor	[Signature]	5/6/15

33	Laura Papi	Seaside Supplier	Laura	6 MAY 15
34	Robert Mitchell Sr	CHAMPLIN'S SEAFOOD	Robert Mitchell Sr.	5/6/15
35	NOAH G. CLARK	F/V SHEELA L	John	6 MAY 15
36	FRED MATTERA	NESTCO	John	5/6/15
37	Jonathan Knight	Superior Trawl	John	5/6/15
38	Joseph Stanc	Superior Trawl	John	5/6/15
39	Timothy Carroll	Seaside Fuel Inc	John	5/6/15
40	BRETT WOODH	Seaside Fuel Inc	Brett Woodh	5/6/15
41	Charles R. Fox	Mattie + Nabeu	Charles R. Fox	5/6/15
42	Steve Follett	FV Heather Lynn	Steve Follett	5/7/15
43	Philip MERRIS	FV EXCALIBUR	Philip M	5/8/15
44	David Monahan	John Elm Ridge Fish	David Mon	5/8/15
45	DONALD FOX	FV Lightning Bay	Donald Fox	5/8/15
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We, the undersigned, propose that the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council consider our stance of Status Quo while proceeding with the Squid Capacity Amendment.

#	Name	Affiliation	Signature	Date
1	Tory Bramante	F/V America		5/8/15
2	Tory Bramante	F/V American Pride		5/8/15
3	Tory Bramante	F/V Padre Pio		5/8/15
4	Mike Walsh	F/V Guardian		5/8/15
5	Mike Walsh	F/V Atlantic Prince		5/8/15
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5/8/2015

F/V Megan Marie
26 Green and Wood Pier
New Bedford, MA 02740

Mr. Christopher M. Moore
Executive Director, MAFMC

Dear Mr. Moore,

My name is Robert Conrad and I am a part owner and one of the Captains of the F/V Megan Marie which predominantly fishes for whiting, scup and loligo squid out of New Bedford MA. I believe that the MAFMC should address the issue of latent effort in the squid fisheries and remove the truly inactive permits.

At this point there are far too many unused squid permits on large, high horsepower/ high-capacity fishing vessels in the northeast. The current active fleet has no problem catching the quota when the fish are available to catch. Recently the only time period that we have been catching the quota has been the summer period. Unfortunately, part of the problem during the rest of the year is the large bodies of dogfish that take over the traditional squid fishing grounds during the rest of the year. The presence of so many dogfish makes it almost impossible to fish in certain areas where we would normally find squid in the winter and spring months. If the dogfish population could be reeled in then there is no doubt that the existing fleet could catch the annual quota as we have done in the past.

In our fisheries I don't think that it should be a priority to catch the full quota every year anyway. The quota is worth more money in the fresh market if the landings are spread out over the entire year without any closures. Also, when the loligo fishery is shut down the directed squid boats then redirect their effort entirely on scup and whiting, which then causes the price of those species to drop, essentially making them unprofitable.

We have lost almost all of our other permits to latent effort reduction programs and therefore have no other options when it comes to fishing. If I can't go groundfishing because of my low level of groundfish history in the right years, why can a groundfish boat with an inactive squid permit still go squid fishing? The same goes for all of the other fisheries that have gone through permit requalification.

At this point in time I think that the council should go forward with the proposed Amendment to reduce capacity in the squid fisheries and use the existing 2013 control dates

Thank you,

Robert Conrad,
F/V Megan Marie

From: [Jessica Isaksen](#)
To: [Didden, Jason](#)
Subject: Fwd: Squid Amendment Scoping Comments
Date: Sunday, May 10, 2015 6:46:06 PM

Dear Council Members,

First I would like to say that any amendment the council makes will greatly affect my families future. I cannot afford to lose any of my fishing permits. My scallop permit was taken in the past because the council didn't go back far enough in history and I don't want that to happen with my squid permit. I am a third generation commercial fishermen, I started fishing when I was eight years old with my older brothers for our family fishing business. I've been fishing all my life. I have been the only financial provider for my wife and three daughters since 1981. At that time I was fishing on my fathers boat and was fishing for whatever was running, *most of time it was squid*. With fishing quotas being cut, I cannot afford to lose my squid permits. Over the years squid has slacked up in my area so I fished for whatever was running at that time. When the squid come back in my area, I will need my permit so I can catch them like I once did over 25 years ago. As far as I'm concerned I hope no changes will be made.

Thank You,

Robert Isaksen

May 11, 2015

I support leaving the squid control dates alone and staying away from a tiered system. I have been eliminated out of one fishery after another because I qualified and then the control dates were changed.

I lost out on the Illex fishery even though I was the only New York boat in it when it was joint ventures, no other New York boat even thought of Illex when I was doing it, I sat through all the meeting and was assured I qualified by the council. Then was told no I didn't qualify when it was too late.

Same thing with herring I qualified for the best permit then got bumped so that NOAA could add later entrants in. even though I had the landing the control date was changed to allow boats that didn't qualify in, even though I had put together 2 herring joint ventures in New York and again was the only New York boat catching large quantities of herring.

I developed a midwater fishery for bluefish and got about 6 years out of it then that was shut down ironically when NOAA wrote the plan it stated that only a few boats in Suffolk county New York would be impacted, so another fishery good bye.

So I support the status quo with squid because I don't want to lose another fishery and it seems like a fishery that stays within it's quotas and rarely is shut down because of getting close to it's quota.

Thank You,

F/V Illusion

Mark S Phillips

210 Atlantic Ave

Greenport NY 11944

From: [jean_public](#)
To: [Didden, Jason](#); [vicepresident@whitehous.gov](#); [americanvoices](#); [The Pew Charitable Trusts](#); [info@oceana.org](#); [Oceanic Preservation Society](#); [PETA Info](#)
Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT ON FEDERAL REGISTER
Date: Monday, March 23, 2015 9:20:09 AM

I CANNOT ATTEND THE MEETINGS BUT THINK THERE NEEDS TO BE RECOGNITION BY MAFMC OF THE HUGE AMOUNT OF STEALING THAT IS GOING ON AND OVERCATCHING OF FISH IN THE NJ AREA. THE STATE IS KNOWN AS THE MOST CORRUPT STATE IN THE ENTIRE COUNTRY, ALMOST EVERY BOAT COMING IN HAS OVERCATCH. WHAT IS THIS AGENCY DOING ABOUT THAT. AND WHY ARE QUOTAS SO VERY HIGH LEADING TO ALMOST EXTINCTION OF FISH SPECIES. THIS COMMENT IS FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD PLEASE REPLY. HOW ABOUT SOME LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CHECKING AND BOAT SEIZURES OF THOSE WHO STEAL FROM ALL OF US. AFTER ALL, UNDER THE PUBLIC TRUST DOCTRINE ALL OF US OWN THAT FISH AND WE ARE BEING STOLEN FROM DAILY. PLEASE REPLY. JEAN PUBLIC JEANPUBLIC1@YAHOO.COM

[Federal Register Volume 80, Number 55 (Monday, March 23, 2015)]
[Notices]
[Pages 15189-15190]
From the Federal Register Online via the Government Printing Office [www.gpo.gov]
[FR Doc No: 2015-06438]

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC); Fisheries of the
Northeastern United States; Scoping Process

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of public scoping meetings.

SUMMARY: The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council will hold six
scoping hearings in April 2015 for an Amendment to the Fishery
Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish
(MSB). The current focus of the amendment is to consider alternatives
to reduce the capacities of the longfin squid and Illex squid fleets as
defined by vessels with limited access permits. At the scoping hearings
the Council will also take any general comments on MSB fishery
management, which could inform future Council actions besides this
Amendment. There will also be a separate written comment period for
Amendment scoping, which will be described in an upcoming Federal
Register announcement as a "Notice of Intent (NOI)" to potentially
develop an EIS that accompanies the Amendment. That NOI will also
contain information regarding these scoping hearings, but to provide
the public with sufficient advance notice of the hearings, this notice
is being published now since the NOI will likely publish shortly before
the scoping hearings.

DATES: The meetings will be held over several weeks between April 6,
2015 and April 21, 2015. See SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION for specific
dates and times.

ADDRESSES: See SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION for specific locations of the
hearings.

Council address: Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 N.
State St., Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901; telephone: (302) 674-2331.

Comments: Comments will be taken at all scoping hearings. A
separate Federal Register announcement will be published soon that
provides additional information on how to make written comments.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D. Executive
Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council; telephone: (302)
526-5255. The Council's Web site, www.mafmc.org also has details on the
meeting locations, webinar access, and background materials. A scoping
document will be posted to the Council Web site no later than March 24,
2015.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: There will be six scoping meetings (each
lasting approximately 1-2 hours depending on attendance) with the
following dates/times/locations:

1. Monday, April 6, 2015, 4 p.m., Superior Trawl, 55 State Street,
Narragansett, RI 02882; telephone: (401) 782-1171.
2. Tuesday, April 7, 2015, 5 p.m., Montauk Library, 871 Montauk
Highway, Montauk, NY 11954; telephone: (631) 668-3377.



Phone: (609) 884 - 7600 Fax: (609) 884 - 0664 lundsfish@lundsfish.com
997 Ocean Drive, Cape May, New Jersey 08204, U.S.A.

Email to: jreichle@lundsfish.com

May 11, 2015

Dr. Christopher M. Moore
Executive Director
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
800 North State Street, Suite 201
Dover, DE
By email: cmoore@mafmc.org

Re: **Squid Capacity Amendment Scoping**

Dear Dr. Moore:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Squid Capacity Amendment Scoping Document, on behalf of the 250 employees of our family-owned processing facility and fishing vessels here in Cape May, NJ. I also want to thank you for holding a hearing on this scoping process in Cape May last month where my son, and company Vice President, Wayne Reichle, was able to provide oral comments. We appreciate the Council's recognition of the importance of the squid fisheries in the Port of Cape May by providing our fishermen and docks with a local hearing.

The document tells us that the Council is considering this action because there is considerable latent capacity in the squid fisheries, which could lead to excessive fishing effort, and that the Council could consider a variety of approaches for reducing capacity, such as a requalification of permits, a tiered limited access system and/or the creation of individual fishing quotas.

We are not in favor of the Council moving ahead with this Amendment, principally because neither the *Loligo* nor *Illex* fishery quotas are being harvested today and have not been for some time. Also, we do not believe that displaced multispecies vessels from New England represent a real threat of further capitalizing the squid fisheries in any significant way. No one makes a living solely as a squid fisherman, either today or in the past. Also, since the new control dates were established in the *Loligo* fishery and *Illex* fisheries, in 2013 – again, due to a perceived threat of displaced ground fishery vessels overcapitalizing the squid fisheries – the effort data available in the Scoping Document does not convince me that “latent effort” is a real threat to sustainable squid fisheries in the region.

Historically, and still the case today, vessels in the Mid-Atlantic region depend upon a variety of fisheries in order to make a year-around living and have a chance to be economically viable. We do not agree that “latent” Longfin Squid/Butterfish or *Illex* Squid Moratorium permits should be removed from vessel owners' suites of permits today, even if they have not fished for squid in more recent years.

We take this position because the loss of these permits will reduce the flexibility that is needed for Cape May, and other New Jersey commercial fishing vessels and shoreside facilities to access available fishery resources when and where they may be available both today and in the near future.

This concern is particularly relevant today, I believe, with the rapid change in the distribution of squid, fluke, black sea bass, and other species, that is, apparently, the result of the overall trend of increasing water temperatures in the region. With this added uncertainty about the future of commercial fishing in the region, the last thing we should do is create additional uncertainty for our fishing vessels, and the families that they sustain, by removing permits that may become valuable to them one day and thereby limit their potential for success.

Thank you for your attention to and your consideration of our perspectives on the proposed Amendment. We would be happy to provide you and your staff with any additional information that may be relevant to the Council's deliberations on the Amendment over the next few weeks.

With best regards,

Jeff Reichle

Jeffrey B. Reichle
President



RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI 02908-5767 Rhode Island Relay 711
Office of the Director

May 11, 2015

Christopher M. Moore
Executive Director, MAFMC
800 North State St., Suite 201
Dover, DE 19901

Re: Proposed Squid Capacity Amendment

Dear Dr. Moore:

On behalf of Janet Coit, Director of the RI Department of Environmental Management, I write to offer our comments on the proposal to develop a Squid Capacity Amendment.

First, I want to commend the Council for holding a scoping hearing on the proposed amendment in Rhode Island on April 6. The meeting was well-attended and provided an important opportunity for members of the RI industry to offer their views on the matter. Special thanks are due to Jason Didden of the Council staff and Laurie Nolan of the Council for taking the time to present the issues and take note of the sentiments expressed by the attendees.

Second, as reflected by the strong turnout at the scoping hearing, the squid fishery is of paramount importance to the State of Rhode Island. Together, longfin and *Illex* constitute Rhode Island's most valuable commercial fishery, with a total ex-vessel value of \$17.6 million in 2014. More squid are landed in Rhode Island than in any other state along the Atlantic Seaboard, making RI the squid capital of the East Coast. Generally, more than 50 percent of all squid landed along the East Coast are landed in RI.

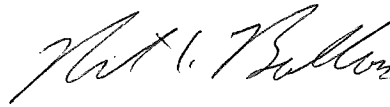
Against that backdrop, the RI commercial squid industry feels strongly that there is no need, at this time, to consider an amendment to reduce capacity in the fishery. Access to the fishery is currently controlled via a limited access permit system, and while there is a fair amount of latency, the level of participation in the fishery has been fairly level in recent years. What's more, annual quota levels are often not met. With a view to both allowing the fishery to grow, and affording flexibility to permit holders, we support the interests of our industry to maintain status quo, and not proceed with the development of a capacity-reduction amendment.

In the future, if there were an infusion of new effort into the fishery, and if such effort caused a surge in landings and associated closures, the two existing control dates – May 16, 2013 for the longfin fishery, and August 2, 2013 for the Illex fishery – are available for potential use for a management action to reduce effort.

As scoping continues for this fishery, and as the focus broadens beyond capacity, we urge the Council to seek comment on gear technology as a means for mitigating bycatch -- of juvenile squid and butterfish, as well as other species. While issues like mesh size are already part of the FMP, such issues warrant further exploration, given their potential to positively impact the value of the fishery.

Thank you again for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Ballou". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Robert Ballou
Assistant to the Director

Blue Water Fisheries Inc.
P O Box 2242
Montauk, NY 11954

05/08/2015

Mr. Christopher M. Moore
Executive Director, MAFMC
800 North State Street, Suite 201
Dover, DE. 19901

Dear Mr. Moore,

I am writing this letter in response to a request for comment on the Squid Capacity Amendment that the MAFMC is considering. I believe that the Council should address the issue of latent capacity in the squid fisheries for several reasons.

First and foremost is the issue of the number of permits that literally have no squid landings in recent years. There are a total of 346 longfin squid permits issued to active fishing vessels in 2014 and another 66 in CPH. Out of this total of 412 permits 289 had less than 10,000 lbs of longfin squid landings in 2014 with the majority having no landings at all. Since 2013 an average of 100 vessels, or 25% of the permits, have accounted for 95% of the annual longfin squid landings in any given year. That amount of excess capacity is staggering. In 2014 a total of 66 vessels landed over 100,000 lbs of squid each while another 57 had landings of between 10,000 and 100,000 lbs. These 123 vessels have the capacity to catch the longfin squid quota in any given year if the fishing is good, as they have done in the past. The illex fishery has similar issues with only 6 vessels out of 75 permits accounting for 95% of the landings in 2014.

Another thing to consider is the potential of choke species [yellow tail flounder, butterfish, window pain flounder, and any future species] to shut down the squid fishery. More effort in the squid fishery means more interaction with the different choke species especially when it comes from new entrants who don't have the expertise to avoid such interactions.

The capacity reductions that have taken place in other fisheries and the potential shift in effort from the distressed ground fishery in New England should also be considered. Many of the vessels in the squid fishery have lost their ability to fish in other fisheries [ground fish, scallops, herring, and mackerel] due to capacity reductions in those fisheries. Why then should vessels, without any history in the squid fishery, continue to be given the opportunity to go squid fishing?

Now is the time to address latent effort in these fisheries, before it becomes a problem, not after. I believe that the council should consider requalifying the permits in both squid fisheries based on landings history from 2003 to 2013. A qualifier of 10,000 or 20,000 lbs a year in three out of 10 years should remove the truly latent permits from the longfin fishery. If the council deems it necessary then a tiered approach could also be developed. A similar approach should also be used in the illex fishery.

Thank you,

Dan Farnham VP
Blue Water Fisheries Inc.

From: [Clark, Mary](#)
To: [Didden, Jason](#)
Subject: FW: Form Submission - Squid Latent Capacity
Date: Friday, May 01, 2015 11:10:13 AM

From: Squarespace [mailto:no-reply@squarespace.com]
Sent: Friday, May 01, 2015 8:43 AM
To: Clark, Mary
Subject: Form Submission - Squid Latent Capacity

Name: Keith Laudeman, Cold Spring Fish and Supply Company, Cape May, NJ 08204

Email Address: scallopman@comcast.net

If you are representing an organization or a group of people other than yourself, please indicate below:

Comments: Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Scoping Guide concerning the Squid Capacity Amendment and for holding a hearing here in Cape May, which I was able to attend.

My family has been in the fish business since 1922 and represent the third generation of my family in the business. Years ago, I ran commercial vessels for 5 years in the scallop, fluke and squid fisheries and it has long been important to maintain permits so that we can fish seasonally throughout the entire year. Today, as a shore side producer and fleet owner access to a variety of commercial fisheries, on a seasonal basis throughout the year, is just as important.

Our Longfin squid/butterfish commercial moratorium permits are very important to our vessels that hold them and we do not agree that removing "latent effort" in the squid fisheries should be something that the Council should pursue, specifically because neither the Longfin or Illex quotas are being harvested at this time.

In addition to the fact that the squid quotas are not being harvested today, we want to emphasize how important it is for our company to maintain the suite of permits that we hold so that our boats can be successful throughout the calendar year.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. The Loligo fishery is very important to our company and we do not want to lose access to it. Please contact me if I can provide you with additional information.

Sincerely,

Keith Laudeman
President
Cold Spring Fish and Supply Co.
609-884-3405

(Sent via [Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council](#))