



August 2023 Council Meeting Summary

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council met August 8-11, 2023, in Annapolis, MD. Presentations, briefing materials, motions, and webinar recordings are available at <http://www.mafmc.org/briefing/august-2023>.

HIGHLIGHTS

During this meeting, the Council:

- Set 2024-2025 specifications for summer flounder, scup, and bluefish and 2024 specifications for black sea bass*
- Reviewed an evaluation of commercial scup discards and scup GRAs and agreed to consider the issue further in 2024*
- Reviewed progress and provided input on a framework/addenda to consider revisions to the process for setting recreational management measures for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish*
- Discussed the findings of a recent pilot study that evaluated potential sources of bias in the Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey questionnaire*
- Set preliminary Atlantic mackerel specifications for 2024-2025 and requested that NOAA Fisheries take emergency action to limit directed fishing for mackerel in 2023
- Adopted a status quo river herring and shad cap for the Atlantic mackerel fishery in 2024-2025
- Reviewed the outcomes of the recently completed East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning Initiative and provided input on next steps for near-term and potential longer-term actions
- Discussed NOAA Fisheries' Draft Climate Governance Policy and directed staff to develop a letter based on the SSC and staff comments presented at the meeting
- Agreed to continue the suspension of the Research Set-Aside program and work with regional management partners to prioritize cooperative research and identify funding opportunities to support the Council's research needs
- Developed comments in response to the NOAA Fisheries Advanced Notice of Public Rulemaking regarding potential future changes to the guidelines for National Standards 4, 8, and 9
- Presented the MAFMC Award of Excellence to Dr. Lee Anderson
- Presented the Ricks A Savage award to Dr. Mark Terceiro
- Bid farewell to departing Council member Dewey Hemilright; swore in new Council member Robert Ruhle and reappointed members Sonny Gwin, Michelle Duval, Paul Risi, and Dan Farnham
- Elected Wes Townsend as Council Chair and Mike Luisi as Council Vice-Chair
- Received a presentation on the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Electronic Monitoring and Reporting Grant Program
- Reviewed comments from the Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Committee on several HMS management initiatives and directed staff to submit the comments to NOAA Fisheries.

** Items denoted with an asterisk (*) were undertaken during joint meetings with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Bluefish Management Board, Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass Management Board, or ISFMP Policy Board.*

Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish Specifications

The Council met jointly with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (Commission) Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board (Board) to set specifications and commercial measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. The Council also met jointly with the Commission's Bluefish Management Board to set specifications and recreational measures for bluefish. The table below summarizes commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits (RHL) for all four species (2023 values are provided for comparison purposes). The Council will forward its recommendations to NOAA Fisheries for final approval, while the Commission's actions for state waters are final. See the sections below the table for additional details about the recommendations for each species.

	Commercial Quota <i>millions of pounds</i>			Recreational Harvest Limit <i>millions of pounds</i>		
	2023	2024	2025	2023	2024	2025
Summer Flounder	15.27	8.79	8.79	10.62	6.35	6.35
Scup	14.01	21.15	18.80	9.27	13.18	11.84
Black Sea Bass	4.80	6.00	N/A	6.57	6.27	N/A
Bluefish	4.29	2.42	3.03	14.11	11.96	15.70

Summer Flounder 2024-2025 Specifications

The 2023 management track assessment indicated that the summer flounder stock was not overfished but overfishing was occurring in 2022. While the overfishing limit has not been exceeded in recent years, it appears the projections associated with the previous assessment were overly optimistic. The assessment has been slightly underestimating fishing mortality and overestimating stock biomass, the effect of which was compounded by adding three years of data to the assessment model (2020-2022). In addition, stock recruitment has been below average since 2011 and the high estimate of 2018 recruitment in the last assessment was revised downward to recent below-average levels with the new assessment results.

The Council and Board considered two approaches for setting the Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) for summer flounder – one with varying ABCs for each year, and one with a constant ABC across 2024-2025. The Council and Board reviewed Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommendations using both approaches and ultimately selected the constant approach, resulting in an ABC of 19.32 million pounds for both years. This represents a 42% decrease compared to the 2023 ABC. Under the recently revised commercial/recreational allocations, 55% of the ABC is allocated to the commercial sector, and 45% is allocated to the recreational sector. After accounting for each sector's expected discards, the Council and Board adopted a commercial quota of 8.79 million pounds and a RHL of 6.35 million pounds for 2024 and 2025.

The Council and Board recommended no changes to the commercial measures for 2024. These include a 14" minimum fish size, minimum mesh size (5.5" diamond or 6.0" square mesh), and mesh exemption programs. Staff and a contractor are currently working to evaluate the commercial minimum mesh size exemption programs and the commercial minimum mesh size regulations. A final report is expected in December 2023. Any potential changes adopted as a result of these evaluations would likely be effective in 2025 or later. Recreational bag, size, and season limits for upcoming years will be discussed during the December 2023 Council and Board meeting.

Scup 2024-2025 Specifications

The 2023 management track assessment found that scup was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2022. For 2024, the Council and Board approved an ABC of 43.82 million pounds. This represents a 48% increase compared to the 2023 ABC. Under the recently revised commercial/recreational allocations, 65% of the ABC is allocated to the commercial sector and 35% is allocated to the recreational sector. After accounting for each sector's expected discards, this ABC results in a commercial quota of 21.15 million pounds and an RHL of 13.18

million pounds. For 2025, the Council and Board approved an ABC of 39.74 million pounds, resulting in a commercial quota of 18.80 million pounds and an RHL of 11.84 million pounds. The Council and Board agreed that no changes are needed to the commercial management measures, which can be modified through the specifications process. Recreational bag, size, and season limits for upcoming years will be discussed during the December 2023 Council and Board meeting.

Black Sea Bass 2024 Specifications

No updated stock assessment information is available for black sea bass this year; therefore, the SSC agreed to set the 2024 ABC equal to the 2023 ABC. The Council and Board made no changes to the annual catch limits or annual catch targets compared to 2023. They approved a 2024 commercial quota of 6.00 million pounds, a 25% increase from 2023, and a 2024 RHL of 6.27 million pounds, a 5% decrease from 2023. While these values are based on the same methodology used to set the 2023 measures, updated dead discard projections for each sector led to a change in the quota and RHL. An updated management track stock assessment is anticipated to be available in 2024 for setting 2025-2026 specifications.

The Council and Board also set a black sea bass commercial in-season closure buffer for the first time. Previously, the commercial black sea bass fishery has been required to close in-season once the coastwide quota is projected to be landed. Under changes to the regulations made through Amendment 23, which are expected to be effective on January 1, 2024, the entire commercial fishery would close in-season once landings are projected to exceed the coastwide quota plus an additional buffer of up to 5%. The intent of this buffer is to minimize negative economic impacts when coastwide quota is reached before all states have fully harvested their allocations. The Council and Board agreed to use a 5% commercial in-season closure buffer for 2024. Given recent patterns in the fishery, an in-season closure is not expected for 2024; however, the Council and Board agreed that in the unlikely event that it is needed, a 5% buffer could have some socioeconomic benefits with little risk to stock status.

The Council and Board agreed that no changes are needed to the other commercial measures which can be modified through the specifications process. Recreational bag, size, and season limits for 2024 will be discussed during the December 2023 Council and Board meeting.

Bluefish 2024-2025 Specifications

The 2023 management track assessment found that bluefish was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2022. However, the stock was not fully rebuilt to the biomass target. Based on the results of this assessment, bluefish remains under the Council and Commission's approved 7-year rebuilding plan, which began in 2022, due to the stock's previously overfished status.

Based on the SSC's recommendation, the Council and Bluefish Board approved an ABC of 17.48 million pounds for 2024 and 21.83 million pounds for 2025. These ABCs are about 43% and 29% lower than the 2023 ABC, respectively. Members of the Council and Bluefish Board supported the Monitoring Committee's progress on the development of a tool to convert qualitative and quantitative sources of management uncertainty into a quantitative value. This tool is intended to help the Monitoring Committee determine whether uncertainty buffers are needed each year between the Annual Catch Limits and the Annual Catch Targets for each sector. For 2024-2025 the Council and Board agreed with the Monitoring Committee's recommendation that no buffer for management uncertainty is needed. After accounting for each sector's expected discards, the Council and Bluefish Board adopted a commercial quota of 2.42 million pounds in 2024 and 3.03 million pounds in 2025 and an RHL of 11.96 million pounds for 2024 and 15.70 million pounds for 2025.

The Council and Bluefish Board also reviewed recent recreational harvest trends and recommended status quo 2024 recreational management measures given that recent recreational harvest has been very close to the 2024 RHL. The status quo measures include a 5 fish bag limit for the for-hire sector and a 3 fish bag limit for private anglers. Because bluefish is still under a rebuilding plan, the percent change approach under the recreational harvest control rule was not applied.

Scup Commercial Discards Report and Other Management Issues

The Council and Board reviewed an evaluation of commercial scup discards and the scup gear restricted areas (GRA). First implemented in 2000 and 2001, the Northern and Southern GRAs are intended to reduce scup discards in small mesh fisheries during certain times of the year. GRA regulations and boundaries have been reviewed and modified several times over the years. The following are several key findings from the report:

- Although commercial scup discards have decreased since a peak in 2017 and represent a small percentage of annual scup biomass, absolute discards in recent years remain relatively high compared to other periods since implementation of the GRAs.
- The GRAs appear to have contributed to the rebuilding of the scup stock since the early 2000s. However, given the more recent spatial patterns of scup discards, consideration of alternative measures or modifications to the GRAs may be warranted.
- Continued use of GRAs should consider changes that have high probability of reducing where discards **will be** rather than reacting to where they **have been**.

Following the report, the Council tasked the SSC with reviewing and providing feedback on the commercial discard report. The Council also asked the SSC to provide input on potential analysis or modeling approaches that could examine the predictability of scup bycatch using environmental data or any other alternative approaches to reduce scup discards. The Council agreed that the identified research as well as a related Framework action to consider GRA modifications, or other measures to further reduce scup discards, should be added to the Council's 2024 Implementation Plan. Given the Council's decision, the Board recommended the Commission add this topic to its 2024 Action Plan.

During this agenda item, the Council and Board also discussed a motion to initiate a framework/addendum to consider bi-directional quota transfers between the commercial and recreational sectors for the summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass fisheries. While some Council and Board members felt that the issue should be prioritized given the recent recreational overages for scup and black sea bass, others expressed concern that the public had not been given notice or an opportunity to provide comments on the potential initiation of a framework/addendum. The Council's Executive Director also noted that new actions generally need to be planned for during the development of each year's annual implementation plan to ensure that staff time and resources are allocated appropriately. After a lengthy discussion, the motion ultimately failed. However, the action will likely be considered during the October 2023 Council Meeting when the Executive Committee begins development of the Council's 2024 Implementation Plan.

Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda

The Council and the Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board (Policy Board) met to review progress and discuss next steps for a framework/addenda to consider revisions to the process for setting recreational management measures for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. This is a follow-on action to the Harvest Control Rule Framework/Addenda, which implemented the Percent Change Approach for setting recreational measures. The Percent Change Approach was used for the first time to set 2023 bag, size, and season limits for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. It may be used for bluefish once that stock is no longer under a rebuilding plan. In taking final action on the previous framework/addenda, the Council and Policy Board agreed that the Percent Change Approach should sunset by the end of 2025 with the goal of implementing a longer-term process for setting recreational measures starting with the 2026 measures.

During this meeting, the Council and Policy Board agreed to change the name of this new management action from "Harvest Control Rule Framework/Addenda 2.0" to "Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda" to better describe the scope of the action. They also provided staff with guidance on further development of alternatives within this action, including further development of options to refine the Percent Change Approach, consideration of the appropriate starting point for measures under all alternatives, and greater

consideration of the fishing mortality rate resulting from the recreational fishery when setting measures. They agreed that further consideration should be given to the implications of the alternatives for management uncertainty buffers, as currently defined in the Fishery Management Plan. The Council and Policy Board supported the plans to use the Summer Flounder Management Strategy Evaluation model to assist with development of this action. They also agreed that the SSC should assist with development of this action. The Council will develop specific terms of reference for SSC involvement at a later date with input from the Policy Board.

The Council appointed two members to a new work group of Council members and Commissioners. The purpose of this work group is to serve as a liaison between the Council/Policy Board and the technical team which has been formed to assist with development of management alternatives (i.e., the Fishery Management Action Team/Plan Development Team). The Council and Policy Board also agreed that further consideration should be given to the best ways to involve recreational fishery stakeholders throughout development of this action.

Marine Recreational Information Program Pilot Study

Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) staff provided a brief update on findings of a recent pilot study that evaluated potential sources of bias in the recreational Fishing Effort Survey (FES) questionnaire for shore and private boat modes. The FES currently asks respondents to report their fishing activity over a 2-month period and then over a 12-month period. In the pilot study, conducted over the course of 6 months, the order of these questions was reversed so respondents were asked first about their fishing trips in the previous 12 months. This study found switching the sequence of questions resulted in fewer reporting errors and effort estimates that were generally 30 to 40 percent lower for shore and private boat modes than estimates produced from the current design. However, results varied by state and fishing mode. These results are based on a pilot study that had a limited time frame and geographic scope, and much more extensive work needs to be done to determine the true impacts of the survey design. MRIP is planning a larger-scale follow-up in 2024. The follow-up study will further evaluate the order of the questions, as well as asking about 1-month periods, rather than the current 2-month periods. The revised survey design will be administered alongside the current design, and then potential modifications for future surveys and calibrations for past estimates will be evaluated.

Atlantic Mackerel 2024-2025 Specifications

The 2023 management track stock assessment for Atlantic mackerel found that the stock remains overfished, with spawning stock biomass estimated to be at about 12% of the biomass target. Although the assessment found that overfishing was no longer occurring in 2022 (likely due to the low U.S. catch in 2022 and the near-total closure of the Canadian commercial fishery), the stock is not rebuilding as projected. Because the assessment is scheduled for additional peer review in September 2023, the Council agreed to set preliminary 2024-2025 specifications which will be revisited in December 2023 after the SSC considers the peer review (the Council also asked for 2024-2025 rebuilding ABCs that approximate an average of the calculated 2024-2025 ABC sequence and would still support a 61% chance to rebuild mackerel by 2032).

Based on the recommendations of the SSC, the Council adopted ABCs of 2,726 metric tons (MT) for 2024 and 3,900 MT for 2025. After accounting for expected Canadian catch, U.S. recreational catch, and U.S. commercial discards, the Council recommended setting the commercial quota at 394 MT for 2024 and 1,568 for 2025. The 2024 quota represents an 89% reduction from the already-low 2023 quota. No changes to recreational measures are currently being considered.

To constrain catch to the very low quotas while avoiding excessive discarding, the Council recommended setting an initial trip limit of 20,000 pounds for limited access permits and 1,000 pounds for open access permits. Once 80% of the quota has been landed, the limited access trip limit would be reduced to 1,000 pounds.

Projections indicate that landing the full 2023 quota will likely lead to overfishing in 2023. Given this information, the Council requested that NOAA Fisheries take emergency action to limit directed fishing for mackerel in 2023 as

soon as possible via trips limits of 20,000 pounds for limited access permits and 5,000 pounds for open access/incidental permits.

Council discussion acknowledged the negative impacts on fishing communities due to the depleted status of mackerel and agreed that if any states pursue fishery disaster declarations/relief, Council staff will assist with those applications.

River Herring and Shad (RH/S)

After reviewing a staff update on river herring and shad (RH/S), the Council adopted a status-quo RH/S cap of 129 metric tons (MT) for 2024-2025 on the Atlantic mackerel fishery. While the RH/S Committee recommended an 89 MT cap to maintain incentive for the mackerel fishery to avoid RH/S, due to mackerel's depleted status there will not be substantial directed fishing for mackerel in 2024-2025. The Council will revisit potential changes to the RH/S cap once there is sufficient quota for a substantial directed mackerel fishery. The Council will also consider exploration of modeling approach for shad and river herring bycatch avoidance approaches during 2024 priorities discussions.

Longfin Squid 2024-2026 Specifications

The Council adopted near status-quo longfin squid specifications for 2024-2026. Slightly more squid were set aside for potential discards, resulting in a commercial quota of 22,894 metric tons (approximately 51 million pounds) for these years. The Council notes that a research track stock assessment for longfin squid is beginning later this year and is scheduled to be reviewed in early 2026. A follow-up management track assessment would then be conducted and used to determine catches for 2027 and beyond.

Illex Hold Baseline Framework

The Council continues development of a framework to consider a volumetric vessel hold baseline requirement and upgrade restriction for all *Illex* limited access permits. A similar volumetric requirement is in place for the directed mackerel fishery, and most regional limited access programs have other baselines (horsepower and length) to control increases in fishing power/capacity. About 30 of the current 76 *Illex* limited access permits already have this requirement and upgrade restriction due to their mackerel limited access permits, so this action would affect the other 46 permits. The Council reviewed the draft alternatives and discussed several technical issues related to implementation of such a baseline. The Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Committee will meet before the Council takes final action later in 2023. Additional information and updates are available on the [Illex Hold Baseline Framework](#) page.

East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning

The Council reviewed the outcomes of the recently completed [East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning Initiative](#), including two documents summarizing the main themes and potential actions that emerged through the process. These documents include a report of the East Coast Scenario Planning Summit meeting held in February 2023, as well as a Potential Action Menu that expands on, clarifies, and prioritizes the governance and management actions identified during the summit. The Potential Action Menu is intended to serve as a living document that will continue to guide collective and individual priorities for East Coast management organizations for potential actions identified through the scenario planning process.

The Council also reviewed staff recommendations for near-term and potential longer-term actions for the Mid-Atlantic Council to undertake in response to the scenario planning process. Based on the Council's feedback, several actions will be added to the draft 2024 implementation plan for consideration by the Executive Committee in October. In addition, an East Coast Climate Coordination Group has been formed consisting of leadership from all participating East Coast management organizations. This group will be responsible for tracking progress on the scenario planning actions, estimating resources needed, and supporting coordinated implementation of actions.

The group will meet this fall to identify possible collective priorities for addressing potential actions that require coordination among multiple groups.

NOAA Fisheries Climate Governance Policy

The Council discussed development of comments on a draft NOAA Fisheries procedural directive titled “Guidance on Council Authority for Preparing Fishery Management Plans for Stocks that May Extend across the Geographic Areas of more than one Council, pursuant to MSA §304(f)” (also referred to as the “Fisheries Climate Governance Policy”). The draft policy is intended to provide guidance on when and how the Secretary of Commerce will review and assign management authority over fisheries found across more than one Council jurisdiction. NOAA Fisheries has invited the regional fishery management councils to provide comments on the draft policy, with a deadline of November 17, 2023.

During this meeting, the Council discussed [SSC comments](#) and [preliminary staff comments](#) on the draft policy, both of which highlight a number of serious concerns about the policy itself and its potential implications for Mid-Atlantic fisheries and stakeholders. The following are several key points that were discussed by the Council:

- The draft policy is overly prescriptive, lacks specific objectives, and does not adequately describe the problem that it is attempting to address.
- The draft policy treats changes in Council management authority as a first course of action for addressing shifting stock distributions. Revisions of management authority could be extremely disruptive and should be exercised as a last resort when other approaches to address governance and representation concerns (such as those identified through the East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning Initiative) have been deemed inadequate.
- The proposed process could lead to near-constant reviews for some species, creating the possibility of frequent changes in management authority.
- Some of the review criteria are potentially problematic and/or unclear in their underlying intent, rationale, and technical justification. The heavy reliance on commercial revenue and recreational fishing effort, as well as the inclusion of “certain Council actions” as a review trigger, are particularly concerning.
- The draft policy does not acknowledge the complexities of evaluating changes in stock distribution and does not explain how such analyses would utilize the best scientific information available and what kind of peer review would be conducted.
- The draft policy is poorly organized, difficult to follow, and lacks critical details needed to ensure consistent and predictable implementation of the policy.

The Council generally expressed support for the staff and SSC comments and directed staff to draft a letter for submission to NOAA Fisheries. The Council also agreed to solicit public comments on the draft policy to be submitted to NOAA Fisheries separately. Additional information and updates are available on the Council’s [Climate Governance Policy](#) page.

Research Set-Aside Program Redevelopment Update

The Council received an update on the status of the potential redevelopment of the Council’s Research Set-Aside (RSA) program. In 2014, the Council voted to suspend the RSA program due to a number of concerns associated with the program that included administrative, oversight, enforcement, and science issues. In June 2022, the Council reviewed and supported the continued development of a redesigned RSA program framework that would try to address the issues of the original program. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) and state partners would play a critical role in the dockside administration and enforcement components of a redesigned program, particularly for jointly managed species.

Given the importance of Commission and state partner cooperation, the Council requested feedback from the ASMFC regarding their interest in redeveloping the RSA program. The Commission’s Policy Board met in July and

recommended the Council only consider an RSA program for those species that are not jointly managed with Commission (i.e., summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, bluefish, and spiny dogfish would not be part of an RSA program). The Policy Board suggested that this approach would address monitoring and enforcement issues, minimize the administrative burden on the states, and allow the Council to potentially continue redevelopment of an RSA program.

However, the Council noted that without the support and participation from the Commission and state partners, and with the loss of revenue generated from jointly managed species (historically accounted for 95% of all RSA revenue) to support research, implementing a successful RSA program would be extremely challenging and potentially impossible. Given these challenges, the Council agreed to continue the suspension of the RSA program and work with regional management partners to prioritize cooperative research and identify funding opportunities to support the Council's research needs.

National Standard 4, 8, and 9 Guidelines

The Council developed comments in response to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Advanced Notice of Public Rulemaking (ANPR) regarding potential future changes to the guidelines for National Standards 4 (allocation), 8 (communities) and 9 (bycatch). It's been 25 years since the guidelines for the National Standard 4 were last revised and 15 years for National Standard 8 and 9 guidelines. Given the amount of time since the last revisions and an increasing number of management challenges, NMFS is seeking comment on those areas that may benefit from further review and/or update with a focus on climate-related impacts, including changes in stock distribution, and equity and environmental justice (EEJ) considerations.

The Council identified a range of comments for each National Standard, but overall felt that the existing guidelines provide the Council with sufficient direction to address current management challenges, including those related to climate change, and include enough flexibility to consider future issues and priorities and, as such, should remain largely unchanged. Staff will develop a comment letter for NMFS consideration to be submitted by the comment period deadline of September 12, 2023.

Council Awards

Award of Excellence

The Council presented its Award of Excellence to Dr. Lee Anderson in recognition of his outstanding contributions to fisheries science, management, and policy in the Mid-Atlantic region. The award was established in 2016 and has only been given one other time. Dr. Anderson has been involved in the Mid-Atlantic Council process for almost the entirety of the Council's 47-year history. He was one of three economists appointed to the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee when it was first formed in 1976. He was later appointed to the Council, holding Delaware's obligatory seat from 1986 to 1995 and 2007 to 2016. He served for three years as Council Chair (1992-1995) and a total of ten years as Vice-Chair (1990-1992, 2008-2016). After his departure from the Council in 2016, he was reappointed to the SSC and served until early 2023.

Throughout his years on the Council and SSC, Dr. Anderson brought a wealth of knowledge that helped the Council understand and account for the economic forces that shape fisheries management decisions. His expertise and leadership were particularly instrumental in the Council's development of an individual transferable quota program (ITQ) system for the Atlantic surfclam and ocean quahog fisheries, which was the first catch share program in the United States.



In addition to his contributions to the Council, Dr. Anderson is a true pioneer in the study of the economic principles that govern fisheries management. His book, *The Economics of Fisheries Management*, has served as an important learning tool for fisheries economists nationally and internationally. He has written or edited six books and over sixty scientific papers on fisheries economics and the economics of fisheries management. Over the course of his career, he acted in an advisory capacity to a wide range of fishery management organizations, federal agencies, and international governments.

Ricks E Savage Award

Dr. Mark Terceiro was presented with the Council's Ricks E Savage award. The award is given each year to a person who has added value to the Council process and management goals through significant scientific, legislative, enforcement, or management activities. Dr. Terceiro began his career in 1986 with the Population Dynamics Branch of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center. During that entire time, he has served as the lead assessment biologist for summer flounder, a species that supports economically and socially important commercial and recreational fisheries throughout the region. He also served as the lead assessment biologist for bluefish early in his career and as the lead assessment biologist for scup since the early 2000s.

Dr. Terceiro has been a member of the Council's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Monitoring Committee for much of his career, and has patiently, consistently, and effectively explained complex assessment results to Council members and the public. Dr. Terceiro captured his vast institutional knowledge of the history of science, management, and politics of this fishery in "The Summer Flounder Chronicles," a three-part series published in 2001, 2010, and 2018 in the journal *Reviews in Fish Biology and Fisheries*. He has worked tirelessly to improve the science that supports the management process, and the Council has benefitted from his long tenure with the Science Center.



Council Membership and Leadership

Departing Council Member

The Council bid farewell to departing Council member Captain Dewey Hemilright. Capt. Hemilright is a commercial fisherman based in Wanchese, North Carolina. He was appointed to the Council in 2012 to fill a mid-term vacancy and went on to serve three additional full terms, for a total of 11 years. Capt. Hemilright participated on most of the Council's Committee during his time on the Council, including serving for seven years as chair of the HMS Committee. He also served as liaison to the South Atlantic Council and as Council representative on the NOAA Fisheries HMS Advisory Panel. Capt. Hemilright was thanked for his dedicated service to the Council.



New and Reappointed Council Members

The Council welcomed one new Council member: Captain Robert Ruhle of Wanchese, North Carolina. Capt. Ruhle owns and operates the F/V Darana R along with his father, James Ruhle, who previously served three terms on the Mid-Atlantic Council. Robert has been fishing commercially since 1994. Over the course of his career, he has

been active in numerous Mid-Atlantic and New England fisheries and has fished from Hatteras to Canada, primarily focusing on *Illex* squid, Longfin squid, Atlantic Mackerel, Atlantic herring, Atlantic Croaker, and Butterfish. He also participates in the Summer Flounder, Black Sea Bass, and Scup fisheries. Capt. Ruhle has served multiple terms as an advisor, and currently is an Advisor for the Mid-Atlantic Council, serving on Atlantic Mackerel/Squid/Butterfish, Summer Flounder/Scup/Black Sea Bass, River Herring/Shad, and Ecosystems and Ocean Planning Advisory Panels.

The Council also swore in four reappointed members: Sonny Gwin (Maryland, 3rd term), Michelle Duval (Pennsylvania, 2nd term), Paul Risi (New York, 2nd term), and Danny Farnham (New York, 2nd term).

Election of Officers

During the yearly election of officers, Council members elected Paul Weston (Wes) Townsend as Council Chair and Mike Luisi as Vice Chair. Mr. Townsend is currently in his third term as an appointed member holding Delaware's obligatory seat. He is the owner/operator of the F/V PAKA out of Indian River Inlet in Delaware and has extensive experience with commercial fishing in state and federal waters. He previously served as Council Vice Chair from 2020 to 2023. Mr. Luisi has served as Maryland's designated state official since 2010 and previously served as Council Chair from 2016 to 2023.

Other Business

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Electronic Monitoring and Reporting Grant Program

The Council received a presentation on funded projects and opportunities through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Electronic Monitoring and Reporting Grant Program. These projects focus on voluntary collaborative projects in areas that advance sustainable fisheries through data modernization and innovative technologies in fisheries data collection. NFWF is [currently soliciting full proposals](#) for the 2023 Electronic Monitoring and Reporting Grant Program with an application deadline of October 16th.

Highly Migratory Species (HMS)

Based on Council direction at the June 2023 meeting, the Council's HMS Committee met on July 11, 2023, to discuss and develop comments in response to multiple NOAA HMS management initiatives. The Council reviewed a summary of the Committee's discussion and recommended the comments be submitted to NOAA HMS leadership on behalf of the Council.

Next Meeting

The next Council meeting will be held **October 3-5, 2023, in New York City, NY**. A complete list of upcoming meetings can be found at <https://www.mafmc.org/council-events>.