

## June 2025 Council Meeting Summary

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council met June 3-5, 2025, in Virginia Beach, VA. The following is a summary of actions taken and issues considered during the meeting. Presentations, briefing materials, motions, and webinar recordings are available on the Council's [June 2025 meeting page](#).

### HIGHLIGHTS

During this meeting, the Council:

- Adopted 2026 specifications for blueline tilefish
- Reviewed previously adopted 2026 specifications for golden tilefish and recommended no changes
- Maintained status quo chub mackerel specifications for 2026-2028
- Reviewed and recommended no changes to previously adopted 2026 specifications for butterfish
- Reviewed and recommended no changes to previously adopted 2026 specifications for longfin squid
- Reviewed and recommended no changes to previously adopted 2026 specifications for Atlantic surfclam and ocean quahog
- Adopted a range of alternatives to be considered as part of the Spiny Dogfish Accountability Measures Framework
- Received an update on development of the Joint New England and Mid-Atlantic Council Omnibus Alternative Gear Marking Framework Adjustment
- Received an update on development of a white paper on the scientific considerations of developing separate overfishing limits and acceptable biological catch limits for the commercial and recreational sectors of the summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass fisheries
- Received a presentation on the Northeast Fisheries Science Center Cost Survey for Commercial Fishing Businesses
- Received an update on ocean modeling products being developed using the Modular Ocean Model 6 via NOAA's Changing Ecosystems and Fisheries Initiative
- Reviewed Executive Order 14276: "Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness" and briefly discussed next steps for developing a response
- Discussed a For-Hire Letter of Authorization concept proposal

### 2026 Blueline Tilefish Specifications

The Council reviewed the most recent data limited model toolkit (DLM toolkit) for blueline tilefish north of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina recently conducted through the Southeast, Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) 92 process. The Council also adopted 2026 specifications for the blueline tilefish fishery north of the North Carolina/Virginia border. Specifications were set for a single year given the Scientific and Statistical Committee's recommendation for a single year Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC). The discussion highlighted several sources of uncertainty identified by the SSC, including the absence of stock status, uncertainty associated with the sustainability of recent catch, and high variability and percent standard error (PSE) in private recreational catch estimates. The Council's recommendations are summarized in the table below.

Summary of Blueline Tilefish 2026 Specifications	
Acceptable Biological Catch	452,200 pounds
Recreational Total Allowable Landings	323,504 pounds

<b>Recreational Trip Limits</b>	Private vessel: 3 fish USCG uninspected for-hire vessel: 5 fish USCG inspected for-hire vessel: 7 fish
<b>Commercial Total Allowable Landings</b>	109,885 pounds
<b>Commercial Trip Limits</b>	500 pounds (until 70% of quota met, reduced to 300 pounds)

### 2026 Golden Tilefish Specifications Review

In 2026, golden tilefish will be in year 2 of multiyear specifications previously adopted for the 2025-2027 fishing years. After reviewing updated fishery information and considering recommendations from its SSC, Tilefish Monitoring Committee, Advisory Panel, and staff, the Council recommended no changes to the 2026 specifications. Additional details about these specifications are provided in the [August 2024 Meeting Summary](#).

### 2026-2028 Chub Mackerel Specifications

After considering recommendations and input from the SSC, Monitoring Committee, and Advisory Panel, the Council agreed to maintain status quo chub mackerel specifications for 2026-2028. These specifications have remained unchanged since they were first implemented in 2020. The total allowable landings limit for 2026-2028 will remain at 4.50 million pounds, which is well above recent landings.

### 2026 Butterfish Specifications Review

The Council recommended no changes to the previously adopted 2026 specifications for butterfish. The ABC and commercial quota are planned to decrease in 2026 compared to 2025, but the commercial quota (8,051 metric tons) would still be several times higher than recent annual landings. These specifications are described in detail in the [proposed rule](#) published May 13, 2025. The Council recommended no changes to other management measures.

### 2026 Longfin Squid Specifications Review

The Council recommended no changes to the previously adopted 2026 specifications for longfin squid. The ABC and commercial quota (22,894 metric tons) are planned to stay the same in 2026 compared to 2025. These specifications are described in detail in the [final rule](#) published July 23, 2024. The Council recommended no changes to other management measures.

### 2026 Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Specifications Review

The Atlantic surfclam and ocean quahog fisheries are approaching the sixth year of multi-year specifications previously set for the 2021-2026 fishing years. During this meeting, the Council reviewed recent information for both stocks and considered whether any changes to 2026 specifications are warranted. The Council recommended no changes for either species. To maintain the current measures, the Council voted to recommend the Regional Administrator suspend the minimum shell length for surfclam in 2026. These specifications are described in detail in the [final rule](#) published May 13, 2021.

### Spiny Dogfish Accountability Measures and 2026-2027 Specifications Framework

The Council adopted a range of alternatives to be considered as part of the [Spiny Dogfish Accountability Measures Framework](#). The Spiny Dogfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) currently requires pound for pound paybacks of any Annual Catch Limit (ACL) overages as an accountability measure. This framework adjustment will consider if there are some circumstances where modified/relaxed payback accountability measures may be sufficient. This action aims to avoid unnecessary paybacks of ACL overages and minimize associated fishery disruptions in the spiny dogfish fishery. The Council agreed to include 2026-2027 specifications, which had been

planned as a separate action, in the framework. The Council also included a request to its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) to include catch recommendation options based on both the Council's standard Risk Policy (lowers catches to reduce the risk of overfishing) and based on setting catches at the highest legal level (i.e., up to the overfishing limit). The New England Fishery Management Council will review the action in late June 2025. Final action by the Councils is anticipated in October/December 2025 after the Spiny Dogfish Advisory Panel and the Joint Spiny Dogfish Committee meet (likely in August/September) to provide recommendations.

### [Gear Marking/On-Demand Gear Framework](#)

The Council received an update from Caroline Potter (GARFO, Sustainable Fisheries Division) on development of the Joint New England and Mid-Atlantic Council Omnibus [Alternative Gear Marking Framework](#) Adjustment. This action considers revisions to gear marking regulations to allow the use of fixed gear without a persistent buoy line in fixed-gear fisheries in the Greater Atlantic Region; this would reconcile fishery management plan regulations with recent and potential future changes to Marine Mammal Protection Act regulations. [PDT/FMAT Meeting 5](#) is scheduled for July 8, 2025. Both the New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils initiated action in April 2025; the Councils are expected to take final action in September 2025 and October 2025, respectively.

### [Unmanaged Commercial Landings Report](#)

The Council reviewed an [annual report](#) that summarizes commercial landings of species in locations where they are not managed at the state or federal level with a possession limit, size limit, seasonal closure, or limited access. The report also summarizes commercial landings of the species designated as Ecosystem Components through the Council's Unmanaged Forage Omnibus Amendment. The goal of this report is to look for signs of developing commercial fisheries for unmanaged species or Ecosystem Component species. Council staff suggested that none of the landings in this year's report suggest immediate concern. However, it may be worth continuing to monitor Atlantic cutlassfish and conch/whelk landings as they have exceeded 1 million pounds in recent years and are concentrated in the Mid-Atlantic. The Council did not express any concerns with the landings trends shown in this year's report.

### [White Paper on Separate Overfishing Limits \(OFLs\) and Acceptable Biological Catch Limits \(ABCs\) for Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass](#)

The Council received an update on progress made by the SSC to develop a white paper on the scientific considerations of developing separate OFLs and ABCs for the commercial and recreational sectors of the summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass fisheries. The Council reviewed potential approaches identified by the SSC, as well as several associated implications. The Council agreed that the work carried out thus far is sufficient to form the basis for the white paper. The SSC will review and approve a final white paper at an upcoming meeting in 2025. The Council discussed that legal requirements and other additional considerations beyond what will be addressed in the white paper would need to be further evaluated before any of these approaches could be used in management.

### [Northeast Fisheries Science Center Cost Survey for Commercial Fishing Businesses](#)

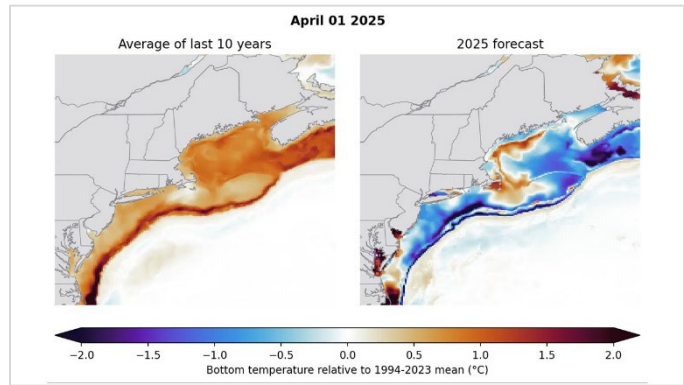
The Council received a presentation from Gregory Ardini (Social Science Branch of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC)) on the 2023 Northeast Commercial Fishing Vessel Cost Survey that collected costs incurred by vessel owners during 2022. Cost surveys are routinely conducted by the NEFSC to collect commercial fishing business costs from vessel owners in the Greater Atlantic Region. Collected data is used in a number of ways, including understanding cost trends, tracking economic performance of fleets, and generating analysis

that informs management decisions. For additional information, see the Cost Survey Project page found [here](#) and the Cost Data Visualization Tool found [here](#).

## 2025 Modular Ocean Model (MOM) 6 Presentation

The Council received an update on ocean modeling products being developed using the Modular Ocean Model 6 (MOM6) via NOAA's [Changing Ecosystems and Fisheries Initiative](#) (CEFI). This initiative supports the development of high resolution regional ocean modeling products, including hindcast simulations, seasonal forecasts (out to 1 year), decadal projections (out to 10 years), and long terms projections (out to year 2100).

As reported in the [2025 State of the Ecosystem Report](#), Northeast US ocean temperature conditions in 2024 were cooler than the recent average. [Newly available short-term forecasts](#) for 2025 predict this trend will continue in much of the region, with notably cooler than average bottom temperatures [predicted for the Gulf of Maine](#) this spring and summer and may provide valuable insights on future stock productivity for fishermen and managers. However, this prediction is not uniform throughout the Greater Atlantic region, and the southern Mid-Atlantic Bight is expected to experience bottom temperatures that are much warmer than average during the same time period.



MOM6 Forecast for Bottom Temperature in the Northeast Region  
([click here to view animation](#))

Longer term forecasts predict that while sea surface temperatures will continue to experience an overall warming trend, this warming trend is expected to experience a temporary "pause" over the next decade due to natural fluctuations in ocean circulation patterns and a more southerly position of the Gulf Stream. In addition, on the water observations and data collection efforts with industry partners help inform and ground truth the model forecasting skills. Regional ocean model outputs, documentation, and additional information are available on the CEFI data portal at: [https://psl.noaa.gov/cefi\\_portal/](https://psl.noaa.gov/cefi_portal/).

## Offshore Wind Monitoring Standards Update

Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) staff presented a summary of an effort to develop standards for monitoring surveys that are used to evaluate the impacts of offshore wind energy projects on fishery species, protected species, and socioeconomic impacts. Currently, this monitoring is done on a project by project basis. Development of monitoring standards aims to achieve greater consistency in the methods used across projects to help allow for integration of data across projects and evaluation of regional-scale impacts. The Council agreed to provide additional feedback on the monitoring standards once a draft document is available later this summer.

## Other Business

### *Departing Council Members*

The Council bid farewell to four Mid-Atlantic Council members: Wes Townsend (Delaware), Ken Neill (Virginia), Peter Hughes (New Jersey), and Dan Farnham (New York). In addition, the Council recognized Rick Bellavance, who has served as the New England Council's liaison to the Mid-Atlantic Council for the past year. The Council expressed its sincere appreciation to each of these individuals for their dedication and service.

### ***Executive Orders***

The Council discussed several recent executive orders. Executive Order (EO) 14276: “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness” directs the Regional Fishery Management Councils to develop prioritized lists of recommended actions to reduce burdens on domestic fishing and increase production. The Council briefly discussed next steps for generating a list of recommendations. Staff also provided an update on the recommendations submitted by the Council in response to a similar EO in 2020. In the coming weeks staff will circulate feedback forms for the Council and members of the public to provide input. The Council will review input and develop a prioritized list of recommendations at the August Council Meeting.

Staff also provided a brief overview of EO 14192: “Unleashing Prosperity through Deregulation,” with a focus on potential implications for the Council. This EO requires each federal agency to repeal at least ten existing regulations or guidance documents for every new regulatory action. NMFS staff have indicated that the majority of council actions are considered deregulatory or are classified as “routine fishery management measures,” such as annual specifications, which are exempt from the 10-for-1 requirements. However, discretionary regulatory actions are subject to evaluation to determine whether they are regulatory or deregulatory. The Department of Commerce will compile a list of such actions each fall to assess compliance with the deregulatory targets. Given limited agency resources, any discretionary regulatory proposals will require prioritization and careful evaluation.

### ***Comment Letters***

The Council directed staff to submit comments in response to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) [Request for Information and Comments](#) on the Preparation of the 11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program. The Council’s comments were submitted on 6/11/25 and can be read [here](#).

Executive Director Chris Moore also noted that the following comment letters were submitted by the Council Coordination Committee (CCC) following their meeting in May:

- [CCC Letter to Secretary Lutnick Regarding FY2025 Council Funding](#) (05/27/25)
- [CCC Response to Representative Magaziner’s Inquiry Regarding the Current State of Fisheries](#) (05/29/25)

### ***For-Hire Letter of Authorization Concept***

Regional Administrator Mike Pentony presented a [Letter of Authorization \(LOA\) concept](#) for potential inclusion in the Recreational Sector Separation Amendment. He outlined how a voluntary federal LOA system could be implemented for federally permitted for-hire vessels targeting summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. Under this proposal, states would have the option to opt in each year, and only vessels from participating states could obtain an LOA. Participating vessels would be subject to separate federal measures and exempt from coastwide or conservation equivalency regulations, with the goal of providing more tailored and economically viable management options for the for-hire sector. Mr. Pentony noted that the private sector accounts for the majority of recreational catch, and the LOA concept could help support the economic viability of the for-hire industry. Council members generally expressed support for further consideration of the concept, noting that many operational details would require additional discussion. The Council is expected to revisit the LOA proposal during its joint meeting with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Policy Board in August, when the two bodies will review draft approaches for further development.

### ***Upcoming Meetings***

The next Council meeting will be held **August 11-14, 2025**, in Annapolis, Maryland. A complete list of upcoming meetings can be found at <https://www.mafmc.org/council-events>.