

## Mid-Atlantic Bottom Trawl Fishery

**Fishing gear type:** Trawl

**Current category:** Category II\*

**Basis for current classification on the LOF:** The total mortality and serious injury of common dolphins (Western North Atlantic [WNA] stock), long-finned pilot whales (WNA stock), and short-finned pilot whales (WNA stock) in this fishery is greater than 1% and less than 50% of the stocks' PBR.

**Current list of marine mammal species/stocks injured/killed (a <sup>(1)</sup> indicates those stocks driving the fishery's classification):** Common dolphin, Western North Atlantic (WNA)<sup>(1)</sup>; Long-finned pilot whale, WNA<sup>(1)</sup>; Short-finned pilot whale, WNA<sup>(1)</sup>; White-sided dolphin, WNA.

**Estimated number of current participants:** >1,000

**Take Reduction Teams/Plans that affect this fishery:** Atlantic Trawl Gear Take Reduction Team (ATGTRT).

**Year added to the LOF:** 1996

**Category when originally listed:** Category III

**Basis for original classification on the LOF:** This fishery was listed as Category III because there was no observer, logbook, or stranding data available for the fishery at the time.

**Estimated number of participants when originally listed:** >1,000

**Past names, if any:** Mid-Atlantic mixed species trawl until 2005.

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**Gear description/method for fishing:** This fishery uses bottom trawl gear. While the gear characteristics for the mixed groundfish bottom trawl gear have not yet been determined, the *Illex* and *Loligo* squid fisheries are dominated by small-mesh otter trawls.

**Target species:** Target species include, but are not limited to: bluefish, croaker, monkfish, summer flounder (fluke), winter flounder, silver hake (whiting), spiny dogfish, smooth dogfish, scup, black sea bass, Atlantic cod, haddock, pollock, yellowtail flounder, witch flounder, windowpane flounder, summer flounder, American plaice, Atlantic halibut, redfish, red hake, white hake, ocean pout, skate spp, Atlantic mackerel, *Loligo* squid, *Illex* squid, and Atlantic butterfish. Atlantic butterfish are mainly caught as bycatch in the directed squid and mackerel fisheries and observer data has suggested that there is a significant amount of butterfish discarding that occurs at sea.

**Spatial/temporal distribution of effort:** The fishery occurs year-round from Cape Cod, Maine, to Cape Hatteras, NC, in waters west of 72° 30'W. long. and north of a line extending due east from the North Carolina-South Carolina border. The *Loligo* fishery occurs mostly offshore near the edge of the continental shelf during fall and winter months (October-March) and inshore during spring and summer (April-September), though landings of *Loligo* squid are also taken by inshore pound nets and fish traps in the spring and summer. The fishery for *Illex* squid occurs offshore, mainly in continental shelf and slope waters during summer months (June-September). The U.S. domestic fishery for Atlantic Mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*) occurs primarily in the Southern New England and mid-Atlantic waters between the months of January and May (Clark 1998). An Atlantic Mackerel Trawl Fishery also occurs in the Gulf of Maine during the summer and fall months (May-December) (Clark 1998).

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\* The fishery is classified based on mortalities and serious injuries of a marine mammal stock greater than 1% and less than 50% (Category II) of the stock's Potential Biological Removal (PBR) level.

- **Levels of observer coverage each year<sup>†</sup>:**
- From 1996-2007, the estimated observer coverage (measured in trips) for the Mixed Groundfish bottom trawl was 0.24%, 0.22%, 0.15%, 0.14%, 1%, 1%, 1%, 1%, 3%, 3%, 2%, and 3%, respectively.
- From 1996-2007, the estimated observer coverage (measured in trips) for the *Illex* fishery was 3.7%, 6.21%, 0.97%, 2.84%, 11.11%, 0%, 0%, 8.74%, 5.07%, 6%, 15%, and 14%, respectively.
- From 1996-2007, the estimated observer coverage (measured in trips) for the *Loligo* fishery was 0.37%, 1.07%, 0.72%, 0.69%, 0.61%, 0.95%, 0.42%, 0.65%, 5.07 %, 4%, 3%, and 2%, respectively.
- From 1997- 2007, estimated observer coverage (measured in trips) for the domestic Atlantic Mackerel fishery was 0.81%, 0%, 1.14%, 4.90%, 3.43%, 0.97%, 5.04%, 18.61%, 0%, 3%, and 2%, respectively.
- Mandatory 100% observer coverage is required on any Joint Venture (JV) fishing operation. The most recent Atlantic Mackerel JV fishing activity occurred in 1998 and 2002.

**Management and regulations:** There are at least two distinct components to this fishery. One is the mixed groundfish bottom trawl fishery. It is managed by several federal and state FMPs that range from Massachusetts to North Carolina. The relevant FMPs include, but may not be limited to, Monkfish (FR 68(81), 50 CFR Part 648); Spiny Dogfish (FR 65(7), 50 CFR Part 648); Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass (FR 68(1), 50 CFR part 648); and Northeast Skate Complex (FR 68(160), 50 CFR part 648). The second major component is the squid, mackerel, butterfish fishery. This component is managed by the federal Squid, Mackerel, Butterfish FMP. The *Illex* and *Loligo* Squid Fisheries are managed by moratorium permits, gear and area restrictions, quotas, and trip limits. The Atlantic Mackerel and Atlantic Butterfish Fisheries are managed by an annual quota system.

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## History of Changes on the LOF

### 2009 LOF:

- White-sided dolphin (WNA) added the list of species/stocks killed/injured in this fishery based on information provided in the 2007 SAR stating that one Atlantic white-sided dolphin incidental take was observed in 1997 and another in 2005
- Modified the fishery description based on a public comment received on the 2008 LOF that the “Mid-Atlantic mid-water trawl fishery” was inaccurately characterized as targeting *Illex* squid, *Logligo* squid, and Atlantic butterfish. NMFS determined that the gear targeting these species is better characterized by this fishery, the “Mid-Atlantic bottom trawl fishery.” Therefore, NMFS replaced the fishery description with: “The Category II ‘Mid-Atlantic bottom trawl fishery’ uses bottom trawl gear to target species including but not limited to: bluefish, croaker, monkfish, summer flounder (fluke), winter flounder, silver hake (whiting), spiny dogfish, smooth dogfish, scup, black sea bass, Atlantic cod, haddock, pollock, yellowtail flounder, witch flounder, windowpane flounder, summer flounder, American plaice, Atlantic halibut, redfish, red hake, white hake, ocean pout, skate spp, Atlantic mackerel, *Loligo* squid, *Illex* squid, and Atlantic butterfish. These fisheries occur year round from Cape Cod, MA, to Cape Hatteras, NC, in waters west of 72° 30’ W. long. and north of a line extending due east from the NC/SC border. While the gear characteristics for the mixed groundfish bottom trawl gear have not yet been determined, the *Illex* and *Loligo* squid fisheries are dominated by small-mesh otter trawls. The *Loligo* fishery occurs mostly offshore near the edge of the continental shelf during fall and winter months (October to March) and inshore during spring and summer (April-September) though landings of *Loligo* are also taken by inshore pound nets and fish traps in the spring and summer. The fishery for *Illex* occurs offshore, mainly in continental shelf and slope waters during summer months (June-September). The *Illex* and *Loligo* fisheries are managed by moratorium permits, gear and area restrictions, quotas, and trip limits. Atlantic butterfish are mainly caught as bycatch in the directed squid and mackerel fisheries and observer data has suggested that there is a significant amount of butterfish discarding that occurs at sea.”

2006 LOF: Added a superscript “1” IN Table 2 after common dolphin (WNA), long-finned pilot whale (WNA), and short-finned pilot whale (WNA), indicating that these stocks are driving the categorization of the fishery.

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<sup>†</sup> Observer coverage levels include the latest information reported in the most current final Stock Assessment Report (SAR).

2005 LOF:

- Elevated this fishery from a Category III to a Category II based on interactions with common dolphins (WNA) and long- and short-finned pilot whales (WNA). The serious injury and mortality rate, along with the PBR levels, were calculated for both long- and short-finned pilot whales (WNA) as one species/stock because observers cannot reliably identify which species is killed/injured as a result of the similarity in appearance. From 1997-2001, the level of serious injury and mortality for pilot whales (WNA) in this fishery was 46 animals/year, or 48.59% of PBR (PBR=108). The level of serious injury and mortality for common dolphins (WNA) in this fishery was 19 animals/year, or 8.37% of PBR (PBR=227).
- Added to the list of species/stocks killed/injured in this fishery: Common dolphin (WNA), long-finned pilot whale (WNA), and short-finned pilot whale (WNA) based on observer documented mortalities and serious injuries were more than 1% but less than 50% of each stock's PBR.
- Renamed this fishery from the "Mid-Atlantic mixed species trawl" to the "Mid-Atlantic bottom trawl" to encompass similar bottom trawl fisheries operating in the region.

2001 LOF: Incorporated the Category III "Bluefish, croaker, flounder trawl fishery" as part of this fishery because bluefin, croaker, and flounder may not always be the target species of that fishery. Incorporating the "Bluefish, croaker, flounder trawl fishery" into this more general trawl fishery ensured that this fishing activity was covered by the LOF.