



Mid-Atlantic Council Solicits Public Input on Essential Fish Habitat Amendment

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council will hold five public hearings to gather public input on a draft amendment to modify Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) designations and descriptions for 14 of the Council's managed species. Hearings will be held between **December 2, 2025** and **February 3, 2026**, and written comments will be accepted through **February 11, 2026**.

EFH is defined as "those waters and substrates necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity." Regional fishery management councils are required to identify and describe EFH for each species managed under a federal FMP. Once Councils have identified EFH, federal agencies must consult with NOAA Fisheries regarding whether their actions may adversely affect EFH.

In April 2025, the Council completed a review of EFH designations in collaboration with the New England Fishery Management Council. Based on the information and methods developed during this review, the Council is proposing to revise EFH designations and descriptions for its entire portfolio of managed species. These updates incorporate fish abundance data from multiple inshore and offshore surveys, as well as environmental data from several sources. Additional details can be found in the in the [Public Hearing Document](#) and on the [Amendment Webpage](#).

Members of the public are invited to comment on any aspect of the draft amendment. Following a review of comments received, the Council will select a preferred alternative and submit the amendment to NOAA Fisheries for review and rulemaking.

Public Hearings

Comments may be submitted at any of the following public hearings. Two of the hearings will focus on specific species, while others will be "all species" sessions. If you are only interested in a particular species, we encourage you to join one of the species focus webinars.

1. **December 2, 2025, 6:00 p.m.** [Webinar Registration](#). *All Species: Open Discussion.*
2. **December 9, 2025, 6:00 p.m.** [Webinar Registration](#). *Focus: Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, Bluefish, and Spiny Dogfish.*
3. **January 6, 2026, 6:00 p.m.** [Webinar Registration](#). *Focus: Mackerels, Squids, Butterfish, Tilefishes, Surfclam, and Ocean Quahog.*
4. **January 13, 2026, 6:00 p.m.** [Webinar Registration](#). *All Species: Open Discussion.*
5. **February 3, 2026, 6:30 p.m.** In-Person: Westin Crystal City (1800 Richmond Hwy, Arlington, VA 22202). *All Species: Open Discussion.*

Written Comments

Written comments may be submitted by any of the following methods. Comments must be received by Tuesday, February 11, 2026.

- Email to jcoakley@mafmc.org (use subject "EFH Amendment")
- Online at <https://www.mafmc.org/comments/efh-amendment>
- Mail to Chris Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901. Mark the outside of the envelope "EFH Amendment."

For more information, contact Jessica Coakley at jcoakley@mafmc.org or (302) 526-5252.
