



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC Approves Black Sea Bass Draft Addendum XXX for Public Comment & ASMFC and MAFMC Initiate Bluefish Amendment

Annapolis, MD – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) met jointly to establish recreational specifications for black sea bass, scup, and summer flounder; consider approval of Black Sea Bass Draft Addendum XXX for 2018 recreational management; discuss the initiation of a new Bluefish Amendment; and jointly take action on several items related to all four species (detailed below). The Commission's actions are final and apply to state waters. The Council will forward its federal waters recommendations regarding summer flounder specifications to NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Administrator for final approval.

Black Sea Bass

As part of the discussion on black sea bass recreational specifications, the Commission approved Draft Addendum XXX to the Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for public comment. The Draft Addendum considers alternative regional management approaches for the recreational fishery, including options for regional allocation of the recreational harvest limit (RHL) based on historical harvest and exploitable biomass. A subsequent press release on the document's availability and the public hearing schedule will be distributed once hearings have been finalized. The Council recommended the following recreational measures for federal waters from February 1-28, 2018: a 12.5" minimum size limit and a 15 fish possession limit. Specifications for the remainder of 2018 fishing season will be determined in February.

The Commission and Council also initiated the development of an addendum/framework to address several recreational management issues. The addendum/framework will consider implementing a conservation equivalency management program for black sea bass similar to that used with summer flounder by allowing state or regional measures to be implemented in both state and federal waters; allow for a summer flounder, scup and black sea bass transit provision in federal waters around Block Island similar to the provision allowed for striped bass; and consider the possible implementation of slot limits in federal waters for summer flounder and black sea bass. This addendum/framework will be developed in 2018 with the goal of implementation prior to the 2019 recreational fishing seasons.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species.

Additionally, the Commission/Council reviewed draft alternatives for an addendum/framework to consider the opening of the Wave 1 recreational fishery in 2019 through a Letter of Authorization. Work on these documents will continue in 2018.

Bluefish

The Council and Commission initiated a new amendment to the Bluefish FMP. The intent of the Draft Amendment is to review and possibly revise commercial/recreational allocation of the resource, as well as the distribution of the commercial quota among the states. A Scoping Document will be released sometime in 2018.

Scup

For scup, Commission and Council maintained status quo recreational management measures in federal waters (e.g., 9-inch minimum size, 50 fish possession limit, and year-round open season). For state waters, the Commission approved the continued use of the regional management approach. Based on interest expressed by fishery managers and stakeholders, the Technical Committee will conduct an analysis on the potential impacts of lowering the size limit for northern region state waters on the 2018 coastwide harvest. The Technical Committee will present this analysis at the Commission's Winter Meeting in February.

Summer Flounder

For summer flounder, the Commission and Council extended the provisions of Addendum XXVIII, allowing for the use of conservation equivalency to achieve, but not exceed, the 2018 summer flounder RHL of 4.42 million pounds. Conservation equivalency allows individual states or multi-state regions to develop customized measures that, in combination, will achieve the coastwide RHL. Further, it was specified that any modifications to state measures in 2018 should result in no more than a 17% liberalization in coastwide harvest relative to the projected 2017 harvest of 3.23 million pounds. This maximum liberalization was set based on continued concern for the stock status of summer flounder. Additionally, information suggests 2017 appears to be an anomalous low year in terms of effort and harvest, raising concern that overages in 2018 may occur under a larger liberalization in regulations if catch and effort rates increase in 2018. In extending the provisions of Addendum XXVIII, the regional delineation for 2018 will be: (1) Massachusetts (2) Rhode Island (3) Connecticut-New York, (4) New Jersey, (5) Delaware-Virginia, and (6) North Carolina. Any state or region wishing to modify its management measures must submit proposals for Technical Committee review in January, and Board consideration in February.

The Commission and Council set non-preferred coastwide measures in the event that state conservation equivalency measures are not approved by NOAA Fisheries. These measures include a 4-fish possession limit, a 19-inch total length minimum size, and an open season of May 15 – September 15. The Council and Board also approved precautionary default measures (i.e., a 2-fish possession limit, a 20-inch total length minimum size, and an open season of July 1 – August 31), which will be implemented in any state or region that does not adopt measures consistent with the conservation equivalency guidelines.

Summer Flounder Amendment

Lastly, work continues on the development of a new Summer Flounder Amendment. The Commission and Council reviewed the latest revisions to the Draft Amendment, including FMP goals and objectives, and commercial alternatives. An updated draft document is scheduled to be released in 2018 for public comment.

For more information about black sea bass and bluefish, please contact Caitlin Starks, FMP Coordinator at cstarks@asmfc.org. For more information on summer flounder and scup, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior FMP Coordinator, at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org.

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Motions

Scup Recreational Specifications

Move that the Commission continue the regional approach to management in state waters with state measures to be finalized at the February 2018 Board meeting.

ASMFC: Motion made by Mr. Miller, and seconded by Mr. Fote. Motion passes by consent.

Summer Flounder Recreational Specifications

Move to manage the recreational summer flounder fishery under Conservation Equivalency in 2018.

ASMFC: Motion made by Mr. O'Reilly and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck. Motion carries (10 in favor, 1 opposed).

Council: O'Reilly/Mann (16/3/1). Motion carries.

Move that the summer flounder non-preferred coastwide measure in 2018 consist of a 19-inch TL minimum fish size, 4 fish possession limit, and an open season from May 15-September 15. In addition, the precautionary default measures would consist of a 20-inch TL minimum fish size, 2 fish possession limit, and an open season from July 1-August 31.

ASMFC: Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion carries (11 in favor).

Council: Nowalsky/Michels (20/0/0). Motion carries.

Main Motion

Move to extend Addendum XXVIII through 2018, re-establishing regional conservation equivalency for the recreational summer flounder fishery, and direct the TC to analyze regional conservation equivalency proposals for 2018 provided that such measures result in no liberalization.

ASMFC: Motion made by Mr. O'Reilly and seconded by Mr. Luisi. Motion amended.

Motion to Amend

Move to amend such that the motion would end in "such measures result in up to a 17% liberalization."

ASMFC: Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion carries (7 in favor, 4 opposed).

Main Motion as Amended

Move to extend Addendum XXVIII through 2018, re-establishing regional conservation equivalency for the recreational summer flounder fishery, and direct the TC to analyze regional conservation equivalency proposals for 2018 provided that such measures result in up to a 17% liberalization relative to projected 2017 harvest (3.23 million pounds).

ASMFC: Motion carries (10 in favor, 2 opposed).

Summer Flounder Amendment

Move to adopt the Demersal Committee-recommended range of alternatives for commercial allocation for inclusion in a public hearing document, including the use of the revised NEFSC analysis and working group recommendation for configuration of Alternative 2B and additional analysis as requested today.

In addition, adopt the Demersal Committee-recommended refined range of alternatives for federal permit requalification criteria, for inclusion in a public hearing document. In addition, to adopt the Demersal Committee-recommended draft revisions to the FMP goals and objectives for summer flounder, for inclusion in a public hearing document.

ASMFC: Motion made by Mr. O’Reilly and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck. Motion carries by consent/.
Council: O’Reilly/deFur (Motion carries by consent)

Black Sea Bass Recreational Measures Motions

Move that the 2018 federal waters black sea bass measures include a 15 fish possession limit, 12.5 inch minimum size and season from May 15 – December 31. These measures assume the Commission process will develop measures to constrain harvest to the 2018 RHL. A backstop measure of 14 inches, 5 fish possession limit and a season from May 15 – September 15 would go into effect should the Commission not implement measures to constrain harvest to the 2018 RHL.

Board: Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Borden. Motion tabled.
Council: Nowalsky/DiLernia

Motion to Table

Motion to table until the February 2018 ASMFC Board and Council meetings.

ASMFC: Motion made by Mr. O’Reilly and seconded by Mr. Batsavage. Motion carries (11 in favor).
Council: deFur/Heins (19/0/0) Motion carries

2018 Wave 1 Black Sea Bass Fishery

Move that in accounting for 2018 Wave 1 harvest, we use the table presented today as a basis for states to modify their measures for the remainder of 2018.

State	Proportion of Wave 1 Catch	Allocation of Wave 1 100,000 lb
RI	0.29%	288
CT	0.06%	57
NY	9.41%	9,410
NJ	82.85%	82,850
DE	1.30%	1,297
MD	0.54%	541
VA	5.50%	5,496
NC	0.06%	62
Total	100.00%	100,000

Council: Nowalsky/Heins (20/0/0) Motion carries

ASMFC: Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. O’Reilly. Motion carries (11 in favor, 1 abstention).

ASMFC Draft Addendum XXX

Move to replace the last paragraph under section 3.1.2.1 Option A and tables A1 and A2 in Appendix 1 (Regional Allocation Scenarios) with the language and corresponding tables relative to options for regional allocation based on exploitable biomass under a 3-region split (MA-NY (North); NJ as a standalone region; and DE-NC (South)) as presented today.

Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion carries (11 in favor, 1 opposed).

Move to strike from section 3.1.3 Option B and any referring tables (Tables 5 and 6) to any 2 region options with New Jersey in the Southern Region from the addendum

Motion made by Mr. Miller and seconded by Mr. Luisi. Motion carries by consent

Move to include an option using the years 2006 to 2010 to determine proportional allocation of harvest.

Motion made by Mr. Brust and seconded by Mr. O'Reilly. Motion fails (4 in favor, 6 opposed, 2 abstentions).

Move to change the 3 fish in possession limit to 5 fish in possession limit in Option B of Section 3.1.5.

Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion fails (4 in favor, 7 opposed, 1 null).

Motion to approve draft Addendum XXX as modified today

Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Mr. Borden. Motion passes by unanimous consent

Black Sea Bass Amendment Motions

Move to initiate a framework/addendum to address the three topics (recreational conservation equivalency for black sea bass; transit provisions for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass; and slot limits for summer flounder and black sea bass) discussed today.

ASMFC: Motion made by Mr. Reid and second by Mr. O'Reilly. Motion passes by consent.

Council: Heins/Hughes Motion carries by consent

Bluefish Amendment

Move that the Council/Board initiate a bluefish amendment to review and if necessary revise allocations between the commercial and recreational fisheries, the commercial allocations to the states, review the goals and objectives and transfers

Council: Batsavage /Heins 17/2/1

ASMFC: Motion made by Mr. Batsavage and seconded by Mr. Reid. Motion carries (11 in favor).

Motion to Amend

Move to amend that the Council/Board initiate a bluefish amendment to review and if necessary revise allocations between the commercial and recreational fisheries, the commercial allocations to the states, review the goals and objectives and transfers and not conduct scoping hearings until new MRIP estimates are released.

Council: DiLernia/Nowalsky 5/15/0 motion fails

ASMFC: Motion made by Mr. DiLernia (proxy for Emerson Hasbrouck) and seconded by Mr. Estes. Motion fails.