



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

*Working towards healthy, self-sustaining populations of all Atlantic coast fish species, or successful restoration
well in progress by the year 2015*

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ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Board Approves Black Sea Bass Addendum XXIII & Initiates Draft Addendum on 2013 Summer Flounder Recreational Harvest Limit

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved Addendum XXIII to the Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The Addendum allows for the use of regional measures to manage the 2013 black sea bass recreational fishery. The FMP, adopted in the 1996, only allowed for the use of coastwide measures. However, the application of coastwide measures (minimum size, possession limit, and seasons) given the wide geographic range of this species and its varying size composition and availability by state/region has the potential to effect states in different ways. The Addendum seeks to address this issue by providing the states with the necessary management flexibility to implement regional measures for the 2013 fishery.

The states of Delaware to North Carolina (North of Hatteras), which predominantly fish in federal waters, have indicated their intention to adopt the identical measures proposed for federal waters (12.5” minimum size limit and a season of May 19 - October 14 and November 1 - December 31) which remain unchanged from 2012 with the exception of a bag limit reduction from 25 to 20 fish. The northern states (Massachusetts to New Jersey) will be developing regional regulations to achieve a 32% reduction in harvest, with the intention of implementing consistent regulations throughout the region. The Board will meet by conference call to finalize the northern state measures; information on the meeting will be posted to the Commission’s website (www.asmfc.org) under Meetings when it becomes available.

In a related action, the Board increased the 2013 black sea bass acceptable biological catch (ABC) from 4.5 million pounds to 5.5 million pounds, with a recreational harvest limit (RHL) of 2.26 million pounds and a commercial quota of 2.17 million pounds. This action was based in part on recent past fishery performance and a favorable stock response in terms of maintaining or increasing abundance. Based on the 2012 stock assessment update, black sea bass is rebuilt and is not subject to overfishing; spawning stock is currently at 102% of the management program’s target. The action is consistent with that of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. This increase in ABC helped to alleviate the required reductions in the recreational fishery.

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.

The Board also initiated the development of Draft Addendum XXIV to the Summer Flounder FMP. The Draft Addendum will propose a mechanism to allow states access to RHL that is projected to not be harvested in 2013. For example, following the implementation of each state's measures, recreational harvest will be projected. This projected harvest will be compared to the total RHL (2.5 million fish) to determine the amount of fish available to the states to allow for the more equitable distribution of fishing opportunities in the 2013 summer flounder recreational fishery while accounting for regional differences in fish size and availability.

Finally, the Board adopted use of the following measures by states in the northern region (Massachusetts – New York) for the 2013 scup recreational fishery: a 45 fish bag limit for the party and charter boat bonus season for one Wave (two month period); a 10" minimum size limit for all anglers; a 9" minimum size limit for shore-based anglers at approved designated sites in Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut; a 30 fish bag limit for all anglers outside of party and charter boat bonus season. The season remains at May 1 to December 31. For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, ISFMP Director, at tkerns@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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