



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 & Mid-Atlantic Council Approve Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass and Bluefish Annual Specifications and Initiate Development of Draft Amendment to the Scup FMP

Philadelphia, PA – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) have established commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish for the 2013 fishing season and beyond. The Commission’s actions are final and apply to state waters (0-3 miles from shore). The Council will forward its recommendations to NOAA’s Northeast Regional Administrator for final approval. The table below summarizes those actions/recommendations (2012 values are provided for comparison purposes). Please note that specifications for years beyond 2013 may be adjusted based on changes in the fishery or new scientific information.

Species	Year	Commercial Quota (millions of pounds)	Commercial Minimum Fish Size (TL)	Commercial Mesh Size	Recreational Harvest Limit (millions of pounds)
Summer Flounder	2012	12.73	14"	5.5"	8.49
	2013	11.44	14"	5.5"	7.63
	2014	11.39	14"	5.5"	7.59
Scup	2012	27.91	9"	5"	8.45
	2013	23.53	9"	5"	7.55
	2014	21.95	9"	5"	7.03
	2015	20.60	9"	5"	6.60
Black Sea Bass	2012	1.71	11"	4.5"	1.32
	2013	1.78	11"	4.5"	1.85
Bluefish	2012	10.32	---	---	17.46
	2013	9.08	---	---	14.07
	2014	8.67	---	---	14.07

*Values for years 2013 and beyond include the maximum 3% Research Set Aside deductions. Prior to the start of the new fishing year, the above commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits may increase if the full RSA quota is not utilized.

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 diadromous species.

For summer flounder, the Commission approved and Council recommended a commercial quota of 11.44 million pounds and the recreational harvest limit of 7.63 million pounds for the 2013 fishing year, a decrease from 2012 levels. This decrease is in part due to the drop in the spawning stock biomass estimate in the most recent assessment. Both groups set multi-year (2 years) specifications in response to industry's request for increased stability in management measures from year to year.

For the 2013 scup fishery, the Commission approved and Council recommended a commercial quota of 23.53 million pounds and a recreational harvest limit of 7.55 million pounds, a decrease of 3.97 and 0.76 million pounds respectively, compared to 2012 levels. Both groups set multi-year (3 years) specifications.

For black sea bass, the Commission approved and Council recommended a commercial quota of 1.78 million pounds and 1.85 million pounds for the recreational fishery, slightly higher than the 2012 quota due to differences in the recent discard estimates. The Commission and Council deferred setting multi-year specifications until the completion of the 2014 benchmark stock assessment.

Finally for the bluefish fishery, the Commission approved and the Council recommended a commercial quota of 9.08 million pounds and 8.67 million pounds, respectively for 2013 and 2014, and a 14.07 million pound recreational harvest limit for 2013 and 2014. These levels represent a decrease from 2012 levels due in part to the poor year classes observed in the most recent stock assessment update.

For all four species, the approved and recommended actions are consistent with the recommendations of the Scientific and Statistical Committee regarding acceptable biological catch, which is the level of total removals that cannot be exceeded based on the best available scientific information. The Commission and Council maintained the 2012 commercial management measures for all four species and approved a Research Set-Aside (RSA) quota of up to three percent for each fishery.

The Commission and Council also initiated the development of a draft amendment to the Scup Fishery Management Plan to consider revisions to seasonal and sector allocations. Proposed measures will include options to modify the commercial/recreational allocation, currently set at 78%/22%, and options to move a portion of the Winter I & II Period allocation to the Summer Period (currently at 38.95% of the quota). The Commission and Council set an upper limit for the amount of allocation distributed to the recreational sector at 40%. For the seasonal allocation, both groups set a maximum percentage of allocation distributed to the Summer Period at 50%. These measures are being considered to maximize the overall benefits of the available total allowable catch.

For more information about summer flounder, scup, or black sea bass, please contact Toni Kerns, Acting ISFMP Director, at tkerns@asmfc.org. For more information about bluefish, please contact Mike Waine, FMP Coordinator, at mwaine@asmfc.org.

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