



# 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*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **ASMFC & Mid-Atlantic Council Approve Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass and Bluefish Specifications and Terms of Reference for 2014 Bluefish Benchmark Stock Assessment**

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 2014 fishing season and beyond. The Commission’s actions are final, while the Council will forward its recommendations to NOAA Fisheries’ Northeast Regional Administrator for final approval. The table below summarizes quotas and limits (2013 values are provided for comparison purposes). Please note that specifications for years beyond 2014 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	2013	11.44	14"	5.5"	7.63
	2014	10.51	14"	5.5"	7.01
	2015	10.74	14"	5.5"	7.16
Scup	2013	23.53	9"	5"	7.55
	2014	21.95	9"	5"	7.03
	2015	20.60	9"	5"	6.60
Black Sea Bass	2013	2.17	11"	4.5"	2.26
	2014	2.17	11"	4.5"	2.26
	2015	2.17	11"	4.5"	2.26
Bluefish	2013	8.67	---	---	14.07
	2014	7.49	---	---	13.59

\*Values for years 2014 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 10.51 million pounds and the recreational harvest limit of 7.01 million pounds for the 2014 fishing year, a decrease from 2013 levels. The reduction responds to the findings of the 2013 benchmark stock assessment and peer review which increased the spawning stock biomass (SSB) target level (now 137.6 million pounds) and estimated a decrease in spawning stock biomass (112.9 million pounds in 2012). While SSB has dropped below the new target it is well above the new SSB threshold (68.8 million pounds), with the stock still considered to be rebuilt. The Commission approved and the Council recommended specifications for 2014 and 2015 in response to industry's request for increased stability in management measures from year to year.

Last year, both the Commission and Council approved multi-year specifications extending through 2015 for the scup fishery; those quotas have not changed. The 2014 commercial quota is 21.95 million pounds and the recreational harvest limit is 7.03 million pounds. This represents a decrease of 1.58 and 0.52 million pounds, respectively, compared to 2013 levels due to a slight decrease in SSB. Additionally, the Commission approved and the Council recommended an increase in the scup possession limit for the 2014 Winter II commercial season (November 1 – December 31) from 2,000 to 12,000 pounds. The rollover provision from the Winter I fishery still remains intact.

For black sea bass, the Commission approved and Council recommended a commercial quota of 2.17 million pounds and 2.26 million pounds for the recreational fishery in 2014 and 2015. This is a continuation of the specifications set for the 2013 quota due to little change in the scientific information for black sea bass.

Finally for the bluefish fishery, the Commission approved and the Council recommended a commercial quota of 7.49 million pounds and 13.59 million pounds for 2014. These levels represent a decrease from 2013 to account for scientific uncertainty regarding age-length key data and retrospective bias, which underestimates recruitment. These issues will be evaluated in the upcoming benchmark stock assessment. The Commission also approved the Fishery Management Plan Review for the 2012 fishing year and the Terms of Reference for the 2014 Bluefish Benchmark Stock Assessment.

For all four species, the approved and recommended actions are consistent with the recommendations of the Council's 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 2013 commercial management measures for all four species, with the exception of the scup commercial Winter II trip limit and approved a Research Set-Aside (RSA) quota of up to three percent for each fishery.

For more information about summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, or bluefish please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, FMP Coordinator, at [krootes-murdy@asmfc.org](mailto:krootes-murdy@asmfc.org).

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