



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board Approves Regional Management for 2016 Recreational Summer Flounder and Black Sea Bass Fisheries

Alexandria, VA –The Commission’s Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved Addendum XXVII to the Summer Flounder and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan. The Addendum continues the use of regional management for the 2016 summer flounder and black sea bass recreational fisheries, with a modification to the summer flounder regions. The modified summer flounder regions are intended to provide more equity in recreational harvest opportunities along the coast, especially between New Jersey and Delaware in the Delaware Bay. The approved summer flounder regions are Massachusetts; Rhode Island; Connecticut through New York; New Jersey; Delaware through Virginia; and North Carolina. For black sea bass, the Board approved the continuation of management measures by northern (Massachusetts – New Jersey) and southern regions (Delaware – North Carolina).

Addendum XXVII was initiated to address the discrepancy in management measures between New Jersey and Delaware in the Delaware Bay. In recent years, the difference in size limit, which has been as great as 2-inches, has been cited as having an economic impact on southern New Jersey anglers. The approval of the New Jersey Delaware Bay region will allow New Jersey to pursue, through its regulatory process, the following management measures for New Jersey waters west of the COLREGS line in the Delaware Bay: a 17-inch minimum size, 4 fish possession limit, and a 128 day season. For New Jersey anglers east of the COLREGS line and north along the New Jersey coast, the state will seek to maintain 2015 management measures in 2016, namely, a 18-inch minimum size, 5 fish possession limit, and a 128 day season. The latter measures are consistent with those of New York and Connecticut. Management measures for the remaining states remain unchanged from 2015. The adaptive regional management approach for summer flounder has been approved for the 2016 fishing year only.

For black sea bass, the Board approved the continuation of ad hoc regional management measures for the northern (Massachusetts – New Jersey) and southern regions (Delaware – North Carolina). This approach has been used since 2011 and offers some advantages over coastwide regulations, which can disproportionately impact states within the management unit. States in the northern region, which are responsible for approximately 97% of the total recreational harvest, will reduce their harvest by 23% to achieve the 2016 recreational harvest limit. Based on the recommendations of the Technical Committee, the Board approved management proposals and methodologies submitted by the northern states. The northern states will finalize their black sea bass management measures by the spring of 2016.

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.

States in the southern region will implement measures consistent with federal regulations (current recommended federal measures are a 12.5 inch TL minimum fish size, 15 fish possession limit, and open season from May 15 – September 21 and October 22 – December 31). Combined, the regulations of the two regions are expected to achieve the required coastwide harvest reduction in order to not exceed the 2016 recreational harvest limit. The Board approved the ad hoc regional measures approach for the 2016 fishing year with the option of extending it through 2017 by Board action.

The Board also approved the maintenance of 2015 scup recreational measures for the 2016 fishing season. Addendum XXVII will be available on the Commission website by the end of February 2016. For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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