



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • 703.842.0741 (fax) • www.asmf.org

MEMORANDUM

October 10, 2017

To: South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board
From: Black Drum Technical Committee
Subject: Black Drum TC Review of Maryland Proposal

In September, 2017, the Black Drum Technical Committee (TC) met via conference call to review a proposal from the state of Maryland that would reopen Maryland's commercial fishery for black drum in Chesapeake Bay. After discussion outlined in the attached Call Summary, the TC finds that reopening of this historic fishery would not likely lead to overfishing of the stock. **Therefore, the TC recommends that the Board considers approval Maryland's request to reopen their commercial black drum fishery in Chesapeake Bay.** To improve data used to assess stock status, the TC recommends Maryland conduct biological monitoring of black drum caught by Maryland's commercial fishery in Chesapeake Bay.

Enc: Black Drum TC Sept 29, 2017, Call Summary

M17-103

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Black Drum Technical Committee

Call Summary

September 29, 2017

9:30 -11:00 a.m.

Technical Committee: Harry Rickabaugh (Chair) (MD), Jordy Zimmerman (DE), Ryan Jiorle (VA), Chris Stewart (NC), Chris McDonough (SC), Ryan Harrell (GA)

ASMFC Staff: Mike Schmidtke, Jeff Kipp

1) Welcome & Introductions

2) Review of MD Proposal

- Harry Rickabaugh presented Maryland's proposal to re-open their commercial fishery in Chesapeake Bay. This fishery was historically executed until the late 1990s, when the state of Maryland closed the fishery to conduct a tag and release program that collected life history, migration, and recreational harvest data. After the program was completed, the fishery was not reopened, as it was not considered a high-priority fishery. While the closure was in effect, in 2013, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved the interstate FMP for Black Drum, which required states to maintain current management measures, continuing Maryland's commercial closure in the Chesapeake Bay.
- Maryland is proposing to reopen the Chesapeake Bay commercial black drum fishery with a ten fish per vessel per day harvest limit and a 28 inch minimum total length size limit, equating to an effective daily trip limit of approximately 500 pounds.
- TC Discussion
 - Jordy Zimmerman confirmed some details of the proposal and asked if this proposal would apply to all gears. Harry replied that the proposal would apply to all gears, but realistically this fishery would be mostly pound nets with some hook and line.
 - Chris McDonough asked what monitoring would be conducted. Harry replied that normal commercial monitoring requirements would apply for black drum.

- Chris McDonough asked about comparability to the Virginia commercial fishery. Ryan Jiorle and Chris M discussed the Virginia fishery, in which there is a small directed commercial fishery executed primarily from the Eastern Shore in which black drum are caught via gill nets, pound nets, or hook and line. In Virginia, any commercial license holder can harvest up to one black drum per day, and with an additional permit, black drum larger than a minimum size limit may be harvested without a possession limit.
- Ryan offered to provide data from Virginia's biological monitoring program as supportive material for Maryland's proposal.
- The group discussed the timeframe of the fishery. Although the fishery would legally be open year-round, due to seasonal movements of black drum, this fishery would typically be executed about 4-6 weeks per year. Black drum typically spawn before entering Maryland's portion of Chesapeake Bay, so this fishery likely would not catch spawning females.
- Jordy asked about the number of fishermen that would participate. Harry replied that no specific license would be required, but gill nets would be cost-prohibitive for this fishery (they wouldn't catch many black drum due to maximum size restrictions on Atlantic striped bass caught in gill nets) and the pound net fishery in Maryland is capped with limited entry (and is actually shrinking).
- The group discussed potential levels of dead discards. Harry commented that current monitoring efforts show minimal dead discards in the Maryland pound net fishery. The group discussed the potential for death due to overcrowding, but agreed that this was not likely for this fishery.
- Chris M asked about the level of black drum bycatch during the moratorium in the Bay. Harry replied that the pound net fishery starts in May-June, typically catching Atlantic croaker, menhaden, or other migratory fish, but may see 1-5 black drum in a net.
- The group discussed the current market for black drum and potential for this fishery to reach levels seen before the closure. Several group members agreed that black drum are not heavily valued for market such that pound net fishermen would change their behavior, particularly with a ten fish bag limit. Jordy commented that this fishery would occur near the end of the Delaware fishery, in which 45 cents per pound is a typical price for black drum. Jordy commented that as is, the black drum market can quickly become oversaturated, driving the price per pound down. Adding Maryland harvest may increase this oversaturation, resulting in lowered demand

and shortened effective seasons for this fishery. Harry commented that while the Maryland commercial Chesapeake Bay black drum fishery was operating without restriction, average annual landings were about 11,500 pounds, and the fishermen were typically good about monitoring the market. Due to the difficulty of handling large black drum, commercial fishers typically do not want to handle these fish unless they can sell them for a decent price.

- The group discussed the potential for biological monitoring of this fishery. Harry commented that biological sampling of pound nets is already conducted for other species in Maryland, so adding black drum to the species sampled could be looked into. Jordy suggested that fish could be bought directly from the fishery to more easily identify catch location.

****The Black Drum TC recommends that the Maryland proposal to reopen their commercial black drum fishery in the Chesapeake Bay be approved, as reopening of this historic fishery would not likely lead to overfishing of this stock. The TC further recommends that biological monitoring of black drum caught in this fishery be conducted to collect information such as size, age, etc.****

3) Other Business/Adjourn

- Jeff Kipp commented that the next benchmark stock assessment for black drum is scheduled for 2020. Jeff and Mike Schmidtke will review data since the last assessment to summarize progress that has been made on research recommendations. This summary will help inform the TC on whether to recommend, on a later call, keeping the assessment as currently scheduled or delaying until more information is collected.

4) Black Drum FMP Review (Black Drum PRT)

- The Black Drum PRT reviewed state compliance with the Black Drum FMP for 2016. Their recommendations are found in the 2017 Black Drum FMP Review.