



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

ASMFC & MAFMFC Joint Meeting Webinar

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

MAFMC & ASMFC Boards for Bluefish, and Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass & ISFMP Policy Board
August 9 & 10, 2021

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Meeting Summaries, Press Releases and Motions

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Press Release

**ASMFC & MAFMC Set Specifications for Jointly Managed Species
Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish**

The Commission’s Management Boards for Bluefish and Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass met jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) to adopt 2022-2023 specifications for all four species. The Boards and Council reviewed the results of the June 2021 management track stock assessments for the four species, which incorporated fishery catch and fishery-independent survey data through 2019. They also considered recommendations from the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), Monitoring Committees and Advisory Panels, as well as comments from members of the public regarding the specifications for each species.

The table below summarizes commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits (RHL) for all four species (2021 values are provided for comparison purposes). No changes were made to the commercial management measures for any of the species. The Commission’s actions are final and apply to state waters (0-3 miles from shore); the Council will forward its recommendations for federal waters (3 – 200 miles from shore) to the NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Administrator for final approval.

2022-2023 Commercial Quotas and Recreational Harvest Limits for Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish (2021 values are provided for comparison purposes)

	Commercial Quota <i>millions of pounds</i>			Recreational Harvest Limit <i>millions of pounds</i>		
	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023
Summer Flounder	12.49	15.53	15.53	8.32	10.36	10.36
Scup	20.50	20.38	17.87	6.07	6.08	5.41
Black Sea Bass	6.09	6.47	5.71	6.34	6.74	5.95
Bluefish	2.77	3.54	4.29	8.34	13.89	22.14

Note: Commercial quotas shown in the table may change slightly since they do not include any deductions for past overages

Summer Flounder

The 2021 summer flounder management track stock assessment concluded the stock was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2019. Spawning stock biomass was estimated to be about 86% of the biomass target. The 2018 year class was above average at an estimated 61 million fish, the largest estimate of recruitment since 2009, while the 2019 year class is below average at 49 million fish. Based on the SSC’s recommendation, the Board and Council approved an acceptable biological catch (ABC) of 33.12 million pounds for 2022 and 2023. After accounting for expected discards, the ABC results in a commercial quota of 15.53 million pounds and an RHL of 10.36 million pounds. These landing limits represent a 24% increase in the commercial quota and a 25% increase in the RHL from 2021 levels.

Scup

The 2021 scup management track stock assessment concluded the stock was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2019. Spawning stock biomass was estimated to be about 2 times the biomass target. The assessment indicated the stock experienced very high recruitment in 2015 and below-average recruitment during 2016-2019. Based on the SSC's recommendation, the Board and Council approved an ABC of 32.11 million pounds for 2022 and 29.67 million pounds for 2023. After accounting for expected discards, the ABCs result in a commercial quota of 20.38 million pounds and an RHL of 6.08 million pounds in 2022, and a commercial quota of 17.87 million pounds and an RHL of 5.41 million pounds in 2023. Compared to 2021 landings limits, the new limits represent a slight decrease in the commercial quota and a minor increase in the RHL in 2022. The Board and Council discussed an industry proposal to increase or eliminate the commercial possession limit during the winter I quota period and decrease the minimum size from 9 inches to 8 inches in total length. After reviewing the Monitoring Committee recommendation and input from the Advisory Panel, the Board and Council determined that changes to current commercial measures were not warranted at this time.

Black Sea Bass

The 2021 black sea bass management track stock assessment concluded the stock was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2019. Spawning stock biomass was estimated to be about 2.1 times the target level in 2019 and the fishing mortality rate was 15% below the threshold level that defines an overfished condition. Based on the SSC's recommendation, the Board and Council approved an ABC of 18.86 million pounds for 2022, which, after accounting for expected discards, results in a commercial quota of 6.47 million pounds and an RHL of 6.74 million pounds. These landings limits represent a 6% increase compared to the 2021 landing limits. The 2023 ABC was set at 16.66 million pounds, resulting in a 2023 commercial quota of 5.71 million pounds and an RHL of 5.95 million pounds.

Bluefish

The 2021 bluefish management track assessment concluded spawning stock biomass was still overfished but overfishing was not occurring in 2019. Based on the SSC's recommendation, the Bluefish Board and Council adopted an ABC of 25.26 million pounds and 30.62 million pounds for 2022 and 2023, respectively. The 2022 ABC results in a commercial quota of 3.54 million pounds and an RHL of 13.89 million pounds, and represents a 28% increase in the commercial quota and a 67% increase in the RHL from 2021 levels. The 2023 ABC results in a commercial quota of 4.29 million pounds and an RHL of 22.14 million pounds. Historically, a portion of the total allowable landings above the expected recreational harvest have been transferred from the recreational fishery to the commercial fishery. However, because the stock is currently overfished and the recreational and commercial sectors are both anticipated to fully harvest their limits, the Bluefish Board and Council did not authorize any quota transfers.

For more information on the Commission's actions pertaining to summer flounder, scup, and bluefish, please contact Dustin Colson Leaning, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator at dleaning@asmfc.org and contact Savannah Lewis at slewis@asmfc.org for more information pertaining to the Commission's actions on black sea bass.

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Meeting Summary

Under Commission Board action only, the Bluefish, and the Summer Flounder, Sup and Black Sea Bass Management Boards reviewed and approved Fishery Management Plan Reviews for the 2020 fishing seasons for bluefish, scup, and summer flounder. *De minimis* requests were approved for Maine, South Carolina, and Georgia for bluefish and Delaware for summer flounder and scup.

For more information on summer flounder, scup, and bluefish, please contact Dustin Colson Leaning, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator at dleaning@asmfc.org, and contact Savannah Lewis at slewis@asmfc.org for more information on black sea bass.

Motions

Bluefish 2022-2023 Specifications

Main Motion

Move to adopt, based on the Council-preferred rebuilding plan and SSC/MC recommendations, a 2022 and 2023 bluefish ABC of 25.26 M pounds and 30.62 M pounds, respectively. This results in a 2022 commercial quota of 3.54 M pounds and an RHL of 13.89 M pounds. For 2023, this results in a commercial quota of 4.29 M pounds and an RHL of 22.14 M pounds.

Council: Motion made by Mr. Cimino and seconded by Ms. Davidson.

Board: Motion made by Mr. Cimino and seconded by Dr. Davis.

Motion to Amend

Move to amend to reduce the 2022 recreational ACL (21.73 M pounds) by 1% (217,279 pounds) for management uncertainty.

Council: Motion made by Mr. deFur and seconded by Ms. Wilke.

Board:

Motion fails for lack of a motion by members of the Board.

Main Motion

Move to adopt, based on the Council-preferred rebuilding plan and SSC/MC recommendations, a 2022 and 2023 bluefish ABC of 25.26 M pounds and 30.62 M pounds, respectively. This results in a 2022 commercial quota of 3.54 M pounds and an RHL of 13.89 M pounds. For 2023, this results in a commercial quota of 4.29 M pounds and an RHL of 22.14 M pounds.

Council: Motion carries (18 in favor, 2 abstentions)

Board: Motion carries (15 in favor).

Summer Flounder 2022-2023 Specifications

Move to adopt the following specifications for summer flounder based on the constant ABC approach:

For 2022 and 2023, the recreational ACL=ACT=14.64 mil lb, resulting in an RHL of 10.36 mil lb. The commercial ACL = ACT = 18.48 mil lb, resulting in a commercial quota of 15.53 mil lb.

Council: Motion made by Mr. Cimino and seconded by Mr. DiLernia. Motion carries by consent with 2 abstentions by Mr. deFur and Mr. Farnham.

Board: Motion made by Mr. Borden and seconded by Ms. Meserve. Motion carries by consent.

Scup 2022-2023 Specifications

Move to adopt the following specifications for scup:

- For 2022, the recreational ACL = ACT = 7.06 mil lb, resulting in an RHL of 6.08 mil lb. The commercial ACL = ACT = 25.05 mil lb, resulting in a commercial quota of 20.38 mil lb.
- For 2023, the recreational ACL = ACT = 6.53 mil lb, resulting in an RHL of 5.41 mil lb. The commercial ACL = ACT = 23.15 mil lb, resulting in a commercial quota of 17.87 mil lb.

Council: Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. DiLernia. Motion carries by consent.

Board: Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Borden. Motion carries by consent.

Black Sea Bass 2022-2023 Specifications

Move to adopt the following specifications for black sea bass:

- For 2022, the recreational ACL = ACT = 8.76 mil lb, resulting in an RHL of 6.74 mil lb. The commercial ACL = ACT = 10.10 mil lb, resulting in a commercial quota of 6.47 mil lb.
- For 2023, the recreational ACL = ACT = 7.74 mil lb, resulting in an RHL of 5.95 mil lb. The commercial ACL = ACT = 8.93 mil lb, resulting in a commercial quota of 5.71 mil lb.

Board: Motion made by Mr. Cimino and seconded by Ms. Madsen. Motion carries by consent.

Council: Motion Made by Mr. Cimino and Seconded by Ms. Wilke. Motion carries by consent.

Board Only

Move to approve the Bluefish FMP Review for the 2020 fishing year, state compliance reports, and *de minimis* requests from Maine, South Carolina, and Georgia.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Luisi. Motion carries by consent.

Move to approve the Summer Flounder FMP Review for the 2020 fishing year, state compliance reports, and *de minimis* request from Delaware.

Motion made by Mr. Batsavage and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion carries by unanimous consent, without objection and no abstention (all jurisdictions minus USFWS present).

Move to approve the Scup FMP Review for the 2020 fishing year, state compliance reports, and *de minimis* request from Delaware.

Motion made by Mr. Fote, and seconded by Mr. Borden. Motion carries by unanimous consent without abstention (all jurisdictions minus USFWS present).

MAFMC & ISFMP POLICY BOARD (August 10, 2021)

Meeting Summary

The Council and the Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board (Policy Board) reviewed a range of draft alternatives for further development through a Recreational Harvest Control Rule Framework/Addendum. The overarching goal of the harvest control rule is to rely less on expected fishery performance compared to a catch or harvest limit and to establish a more holistic approach for recreational fisheries management with a greater emphasis on stock status indicators and trends. The alternatives consider changes to the methodology used to set recreational possession limits, fish size restrictions, and open/closed seasons for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. The Council and Policy Board agreed the full range of draft alternatives presented should be further developed. They also expressed a desire to use a harvest control rule approach when setting recreational management measures for 2022 but acknowledged that this timeline is very ambitious. Throughout the fall, the Fishery Management Action Team/Plan Development Team will continue to develop the alternatives and plan public workshops to gather input from stakeholders.

For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, Fisheries Policy Director, at tkerns@asmfc.org.

Motions

No motions made.

MAFMC & SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP AND BLACK SEA BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD (August 10, 2021)

Meeting Summary

Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) Summer Flounder Management Strategy Evaluation

The Council and the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board (Board) reviewed and approved management objectives and strategies to be evaluated and analyzed as part of the EAFM summer flounder management strategy evaluation (MSE). The MSE will evaluate the biological and economic performance and trade-offs of management alternatives to minimize discards (live and dead) in the recreational summer flounder fishery. The primary focus of the discussion was to consider the extensive stakeholder and public input received, including from the core stakeholder group, regarding the project goals, management objectives, and potential alternatives and strategies that could be considered for implementation. Based on the stakeholder input, the Council and Board approved 5 different management objectives and 14 different alternative categories concerning angler experience as well as biological, economic, and social sustainability. The Council and Board will review interim analysis and results in December 2021. Final results for potential management action are anticipated in late spring of 2022. For more information, visit <https://www.mafmc.org/actions/summer-flounder-mse>.

Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Commercial/Recreational Allocation Amendment

The Council and Board also reviewed additional proposed allocation alternatives for the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Commercial/Recreational Allocation Amendment.

Four Council and Board members proposed four new allocation alternatives for each species. Their proposal responded to concerns raised over equity and fairness during the amendment's public comment process. Some stakeholders had voiced concerns over existing allocation alternatives essentially rewarding recreational overages, as they are based on years when the recreational sector's landings exceeded the RHL. The first set of newly proposed alternatives use 2004-2018 catch and landings data while excluding years with RHL overages. The second set of alternatives is a 50/50 weighting of the 2004-2018 base years with RHL overage years excluded and the historical base years upon which the current allocations are based. Staff presented an analysis demonstrating that the impacts of these new alternatives fall within the range of the existing alternatives already under consideration.

The Council and Board approved these alternatives for inclusion in the final range of alternatives, with both bodies scheduled to meet jointly in December 2021 to consider final action on the amendment.

For more information on summer flounder and scup, please contact Dustin Colson Leaning, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator at dleaning@asmfc.org, and contact Savannah Lewis at slewis@asmfc.org for more information on black sea bass.