



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Joint ASMFC/MAFMC Meeting Summary

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

Joint ASMFC/MAFMC Meeting Summary
Annapolis, MD
December 10 & 11, 2019

Toni Kerns, ISFMP, or
Tina Berger, Communications
For more information, please contact
the identified individual at
703.842.0740

Meeting Summaries, Press Releases and Motions

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

ASMFC SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP AND BLACK SEA BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD & MAFMC	2
<i>MEETING SUMMARY</i>	2
<i>MOTIONS</i>	3
ASMFC BLUEFISH MANAGEMENT BOARD & MAFMC	4
<i>PRESS RELEASE</i>	4
<i>MOTIONS</i>	5

ASMFC SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP AND BLACK SEA BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD & MAFMC

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board (Board) met jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) to set recreational management measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass for 2020, discuss Council involvement in considering changes to black sea bass commercial state shares, and consider approval of the Public Information Document for the joint Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Commercial/Recreational Allocation Amendment.

Summer Flounder

The Board approved status quo measures for the 2020 recreational summer flounder fishery to achieve, but not exceed, the 2020 recreational harvest limit (RHL) of 7.69 million pounds. States may make minor adjustments to their seasons' start and end dates but all other measures will remain the same in 2020. Any changes will be considered by the Board in early 2020 through an email ballot.

The Board and Council maintained the status quo non-preferred coastwide measures in federal waters, which will be waived in favor of state regulations once conservation equivalency is approved by NOAA Fisheries. The coastwide measures include a 4-fish possession limit, a 19-inch total length minimum size, and an open season of May 15 – September 15. The Board and Council also made no changes to the current precautionary default measures (i.e., a 2-fish possession limit, a 20-inch total length minimum size, and an open season of July 1 – August 31), which would be implemented in any state or region that does not adopt measures consistent with the conservation equivalency guidelines.

The Board and Council considered but did not adopt the staff recommendation to implement a coastwide slot limit in the summer flounder recreational fishery (allowing harvest of summer flounder only between 17-20 inches total length). Instead, they accepted the Monitoring Committee's recommendation to perform additional analyses that more thoroughly evaluate the potential impacts of slot limits on summer flounder before considering the measure for use in management.

Scup

The Board and Council reviewed recent recreational fishery performance and recommendations from staff, the Monitoring Committee (MC), and the Advisory Panel (AP) for 2020 recreational management measures. Consistent with the recommendations of the MC and AP, the Board and Council maintained status quo recreational management measures in state and federal waters in 2020. For state waters, recreational measures will remain unchanged from 2019 measures. Federal waters measures include a 9-inch total length minimum fish size, a 50 fish possession limit, and open season of January 1 - December 31.

Maintaining status quo management measures may result in an overage of the RHL. The Board and Council agreed the potential overage is unlikely to negatively impact the stock given that biomass is approximately twice the target level. They emphasized this is a short-term approach to allow more time for both bodies to consider how management should adapt to the revised recreational harvest estimates.

Black Sea Bass

The Board and Council reviewed recent recreational fishery performance and recommendations from staff, the MC, and AP for 2020 recreational black sea bass management measures. Consistent with the MC and AP recommendations, the Board and Council maintained status quo recreational management measures in state and federal waters in 2020. In federal waters, this includes a 12.5-inch total length minimum fish size, a 15 fish possession limit, and open seasons of February 1-28 and May 15-December 31. The Board agreed states should not modify their 2020 management measures, with the exception of states participating in the optional February recreational fishery. Virginia is the only state which indicated an interest in participating in 2020, therefore, Virginia may need to adjust its measures later in the year to account for February 2020 harvest.

The Board and Council discussed the possibility that maintaining status quo management measures may result in an overage of the RHL, but agreed these measures are unlikely to negatively impact the stock. As biomass is approximately 2.4 times the target level, the Council and Board found there is little justification for restricting management measures in 2020. However, the Board and Council emphasized this is a short-term approach to allow more time to consider how management should adapt to the revised recreational harvest estimates.

Black Sea Bass Commercial Allocation Addendum/Amendment

In October 2019, the Board initiated a Board-only addendum to consider modifications to the state shares of the black sea bass commercial quota. During the December 2019 joint meeting, the Council concluded this should be a joint action to allow the Council to have a voting role in any potential changes to the state allocations, and to consider including them in the Council's FMP. The Council voted to move forward with an amendment to complement the Board's addendum.

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

The Council and Board reviewed and approved a scoping document for a joint amendment to reconsider allocations between the commercial and recreational sectors for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. The scoping document provides background information on each fishery and seeks public input on potential management strategies. Scoping hearings will be scheduled for early 2020 and a revised scoping document will be posted once available at: <http://www.mafmc.org/actions/sfsbsb-allocation-amendment>.

For more information on summer flounder and scup, please contact Dustin Colson Leaning, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at dleaning@asmfc.org. For more information on black sea bass, please contact Caitlin Starks, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org.

Motions

Summer Flounder

Move to adopt conservation equivalency for 2020 summer flounder recreational management, with non-preferred coastwide measures including a 19-inch minimum size, 4 fish possession limit, and open season from May 15-September 15. In addition, the precautionary default measures would include a 20-inch minimum size, 2 fish possession limit, and open season from July 1-August 31.

Board: Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Borden. Motion passes without objection. (Roll Call: In favor – MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, DE, MD, PRFC, VA, NC, NOAA Fisheries).

Council: Motion made by Mr. Cimino and seconded by Mr. Batsavage. Motion passes. 18-0-1abs.

Scup

Main Motion

Move to adopt a 40 fish bag limit, 9-inch minimum size, and open season for Jan 1 to December 31 in federal waters in 2020

Council: Motion made by Ms. Nolan and seconded by Mr. DiLernia.

Board: Motion made by Mr. Borden and seconded by Mr. Kane.

Motion to Substitute

Move to substitute, recommend status quo in state and federal waters for the scup recreational fishery in 2020

Board: Motion made by Dr. McNamee and seconded by Dr. Davis. Motion passes without objection. (Roll Call: In favor – MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, DE, MD, VA, NC; Abstentions – NOAA Fisheries, PRFC).

Council: Motion made by Mr. Heins and seconded by Mr. Hughes. Motion passes 14-3-1abs.

Main Motion as Substituted

Move to recommend status quo in state and federal waters for the scup recreational fishery in 2020

Board: Motion passes without objection. (Roll Call: In favor – MA, RI, CT, NJ, DE, MD, VA, NC; Abstentions – NOAA Fisheries, PRFC; Null – NY).

Council: Motion passes. 18-0-1abs.

Black Sea Bass

Move to maintain status quo state and federal waters recreational measures for black sea bass in 2020, including a federal waters minimum size limit of 12.5 inches, a 15 fish federal waters possession limit, and open federal waters seasons of Feb 1-28 and May 15-Dec 31.

Board: Davis/McNamee - Motion carries without objection and with 1 abstention from NOAA Fisheries

Council: Cimino/Heins (19/0/1)

Motion carries

Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass

Move to approve the scoping/public information document for the summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass commercial/recreational allocation amendment as modified today.

Council: DiLernia/deFur - Motion carries by consent

Board: Clark/Allen - Motion carries by consent

ASMFC BLUEFISH MANAGEMENT BOARD & MAFMC

Press Release

Council and Commission Recommend Recreational Bluefish Management Measures for 2020

ANNAPOLIS, MD – Last week, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) recommended and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) approved new recreational fishing regulations for the 2020 Atlantic bluefish fishery from Florida to Maine. These measures, which include a

3-fish bag limit for private anglers and shore-based fishermen and a 5-fish bag limit for for-hire fishermen, represent a substantial reduction compared to the federal 15-fish bag limit that has been in place since

2000. The Commission's actions are final and apply to state waters (0-3 miles from shore), while the Council will forward its recommendation for federal waters (3 – 200 miles from shore) to the NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Administrator for final approval.

The most recent operational assessment of the Atlantic bluefish stock concluded that the stock is overfished but not experiencing overfishing. During their joint meeting in October, the Council and Commission adopted a recreational harvest limit (RHL) of 9.48 million pounds for 2020 and 2021, which is an 18% decrease compared to the 2019 RHL. Using the current regulations, the recreational sector is projected to land 13.27 million pounds, which will exceed the RHL by 28.56%. Therefore, the Council and Commission met last week to approve new recreational management measures to constrain harvest to the reduced RHL.

The Council and Commission considered several combinations of bag limits and minimum size limits, including options to set a single set of regulations for all fishing modes or different regulations for shore/private modes and the for-hire mode. Although the Council's Bluefish Monitoring Committee recommended a coastwide 3-fish bag limit, the majority of comments from the public and Bluefish Advisory Panel (AP) members expressed opposition to this option, noting that it would have severe economic consequences for the for-hire sector, which was only responsible for 3.6% of coastwide landings from 2016 to 2018. Additionally, AP members and the public emphasized that these proposed reductions come at a challenging time for for-hire stakeholders as they are also facing new restrictions on striped bass, black sea bass, summer flounder, and scup.

After an extensive discussion and thorough consideration of public comments, the Council recommended and Commission approved a 3-fish bag limit for private and shore modes and a 5-fish bag limit for the for-hire mode. No restrictions were made to minimum fish size or seasons.

"For many years, bluefish has been one of our most abundant recreational fisheries," said Council Chairman and ASMFC Board member Mike Luisi. "The Council and Commission are fully committed to the effective conservation and management of this stock, but we also recognize that a sudden change in regulations could have severe socioeconomic consequences for some stakeholders. After evaluating a wide range of options and considering numerous comments from the public, we feel that this approach is the most fair and effective way to achieve the necessary reduction in harvest next year."

The Council and Commission are continuing to work on development of a rebuilding plan as part of the Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment. Additional information and updates on this action are available at <http://www.mafmc.org/actions/bluefish-allocation-amendment>

###

Motions

Main Motion

Move to adopt 2020 coastwide recreational bluefish management measures with a 3-fish bag limit for the shore and private mode and a 5-fish bag limit for the for-hire mode.

Board: Motion made by Dr. Davis and seconded by Mr. Maniscalco.
Council: Motion made by Mr. Heins and seconded by Ms. Davidson.

Motion to Amend

Move to amend a 5-fish bag limit for the for-hire uninspected boat (6 or less passengers), a 10-fish bag limit for the inspected for-hire boat (7+ passengers), and 16" minimum size (TL) limit for all for-hire vessels.

Council: Motion made by Mr. DiLernia and seconded by Mr. deFur. Motion fails 4-14-1abs-0.

Board: Motion made by Mr. Hasbrouck and seconded by Mr. Clark.

Motion to Amend

Move to amend: 3-fish for private/rental and shore, 5-fish for uninspected (6 or less passengers) for-hire vessels, and a 7-fish limits for inspected (7+ passengers) for-hire vessels.

Board: Motion made by Mr. Hasbrouck and seconded by Ms. Hart. Motion fails 5-5.

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

Main Motion

Move to adopt 2020 coastwide recreational bluefish management measures with a 3-fish bag limit for the shore and private mode and a 5-fish bag limit for the for-hire mode.

Board: Motion passes (7 in favor, 3 opposed, 2 abstentions). Roll call: In favor – MA, RI, CT, NY, DE, MD, VA; Opposed – NJ, PRFC, FL,; Abstentions – NC, NOAA Fisheries).

Council: Motion passes 9-8-2abs