

ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

REVIEW OF THE INTERSTATE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

FOR BLACK SEA BASS
(*Centropristis striata*)

2025 FISHING YEAR



Prepared by the Plan Review Team
Approved August 2026



Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

2026 Review of the ASMFC Fishery Management Plan for Black Sea Bass

I. Status of the Fishery Management Plan

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC or Commission) management of black sea bass was initiated as one component of a multi-species fishery management plan (FMP) addressing summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. In 1990, summer flounder was singled out for immediate action under a joint ASMFC and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC or Council) plan. Further action on the scup and black sea bass plan was delayed until 1992 to expedite the summer flounder FMP and subsequent amendments. The joint Black Sea Bass FMP was completed and approved in 1996. The MAFMC approved regulations for black sea bass as Amendment 9 to the Summer Flounder FMP in May 1996.

The management unit of the Black Sea Bass FMP includes all black sea bass in U.S. waters in the western Atlantic Ocean from Cape Hatteras, North Carolina north to the Canadian border. The Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board (or Board) and the MAFMC guide development of the FMP. New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina have declared an interest in black sea bass; Maine and New Hampshire declared interest in 2014, then declined interest in the fishery in 2017 and 2018, respectively. New Hampshire re-declared an interest in 2020 and rejoined the Board in 2021. The Black Sea Bass Plan Review Team conducts annual reviews and monitors compliance, and the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Advisory Panel provides industry input and advice. Technical issues are addressed through the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Technical and Monitoring Committees.

The objectives of the FMP are to reduce fishing mortality to ensure overfishing does not occur, reduce fishing mortality on immature black sea bass to increase spawning stock biomass, improve yield from the fishery, promote compatible regulations among states and between federal and state jurisdictions, promote uniform and effective enforcement, and minimize regulations necessary to achieve the stated objectives. The initial [black sea bass FMP \(1996\)](#) aimed to reduce fishing mortality using a coastwide commercial quota allocated into quarterly periods beginning in 1998, and a recreational harvest limit constrained through the use of minimum size, possession limit, and seasonal closures.

[Amendment 12](#) to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP was approved by the Commission and MAFMC in October 1998. The Amendment revised overfishing definitions, identified and described essential fish habitat, and defined the framework adjustment process.

[Addendum IV](#), approved in 2001, provides that upon the recommendation of the relevant Monitoring Committee and joint consideration with the Council, the Board will decide state regulations rather than forward a recommendation to NMFS. Addendum IV also made the states responsible for implementing the Board's decisions on regulations.

Starting in 1998, the fishery was subject to lengthy closures and had some significant quota overages in the commercial sector. Fishery closures occurring as a result of exceeded quotas resulted in increased discards of legal sized black sea bass in mixed fisheries for the remainder of the closed period. A significant financial hardship for the fishing industry resulted from a decrease in market demand caused by a fluctuating supply. To address these issues, the Board enacted a series of Emergency Rules in 2001 that established initial possession limits, triggers, and adjusted possession limits. These measures helped reduce the length of fishery closures, but the rapidly changing regulations confused fishermen and added significant administrative burden to the states. To simplify the process for all parties, the Board approved Addendum VI to provide a mechanism for initial possession limits, triggers, and adjusted possession limits to be set during the annual specification setting process without the need for further Emergency Rules.

[Amendment 13](#), approved by ASMFC and MAFMC in 2002, implemented a federal, annual coastwide commercial quota managed in state waters by ASMFC using a state-by-state allocation system. The Amendment was implemented for 2003 and 2004. Amendment 13 also removed the necessity for fishermen who have both a Northeast Region Black Sea Bass permit and a Southeast Region Snapper Grouper permit to relinquish their permits for a six-month period prior to fishing south of Cape Hatteras during a northern closure.

[Addendum XII](#), approved in 2004, continued the use of an annual coastwide commercial quota managed by the ASMFC through a state-by-state allocation system.

[Addendum XIII](#) and the MAFMC's complementary Framework 5, approved in 2004, modified the FMP so that Total Allowable Landings (TALs) for the summer flounder, scup, and/or black sea bass can be specified for up to three years.

[Addendum XIX](#), approved in 2007, continued the state-by-state black sea bass commercial management measures, without a sunset clause. This addendum, and the MAFMC's complementary Framework 7, also broadened the descriptions of stock status determination criteria contained within the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP to allow for greater flexibility in those definitions, while maintaining objective and measurable status determination criteria for identifying when stocks or stock complexes covered by the FMP are overfished. It established acceptable categories of peer-review for stock status determination criteria. When these specific peer-review metrics are met and new or updated information is available, the new or revised stock status determination criteria may be incorporated by the Commission directly into the annual management measures for each species, rather than requiring a modification to the FMP.

[Addendum XX](#), approved in 2009, set policies to reconcile commercial quota overages to address minor inadvertent quota overages. It streamlined the quota transfers process and established clear policies and administrative protocols to guide the allocation of transfers from states with underages to states with overages. It also allowed for commercial quota transfers to reconcile quota overages after the year's end.

Beginning in 2011 due to concerns about equitable access to the resource, a series of addenda replaced the use of uniform coastwide measures to manage the recreational fishery.

[Addendum XXI](#) established state shares of the recreational harvest limit (RHL) for 2011.

[Addenda XXII](#), [XXIII](#), [XXV](#), and [XXVII](#) implemented an ad hoc regional management approach for 2012-2017, whereby the northern region states of Massachusetts through New Jersey individually crafted state measures aimed at liberalizing or reducing harvest by the same percent to achieve the RHL, while the southern region states of Delaware through North Carolina largely set regulations consistent with the measures set for federal waters.

For 2018, [Addendum XXX](#) established a regional allocation of the coastwide RHL to address state concerns regarding equity and accountability in recreational black sea bass management. Based on a combination of exploitable biomass information from the latest stock assessment and historical harvest, the RHL was allocated to three regions: 1) Massachusetts through New York, 2) New Jersey as a state-specific region, and 3) Delaware through North Carolina. The 2018 state recreational measures were then revised in May 2018 following an appeal of the Addendum to the ISFMP Policy Board by Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut and New York.

In December 2018, the Board approved [Addendum XXXI](#) (and the Council approved corresponding Framework 14), which modified the FMP to allow federal conservation equivalency (i.e., waiving federal waters measures in favor of state waters measures) as an option for the recreational black sea bass fishery beginning in 2020, and implemented transit provisions for Block Island Sound for recreational and commercial fisheries for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass in the same area as the existing striped bass transit zone. The Council's framework action also modified the Council's FMP to allow a maximum size limit to be used in the recreational fisheries for summer flounder and black sea bass.

[Addendum XXXII](#), approved in December 2018, established a new process for developing recreational management measures for black sea bass and summer flounder whereby measures will be set annually through a specifications process, rather than addenda. The Board will approve measures in early spring each year, based on Technical Committee analysis of stock status, resource availability, and harvest estimates. To further aid in setting specifications, the Addendum established standards and guiding principles intended to structure the development of recreational measures on a regional basis. Public input on specifications will be gathered by states through their individual public comment processes.

In February 2021, the Board approved [Addendum XXXIII](#) and the Council approved Amendment 23 making changes to black sea bass commercial state allocations. Connecticut and New York's baseline allocations increased to 3% and 8% of the coastwide quota, respectively. State allocations will be calculated by allocating 75% of the coastwide quota according to new, adjusted baseline quotas. The other 25% of quota will be allocated to three regions (Maine-New York, New Jersey, and Delaware-North Carolina) based on the most recent regional biomass distribution from the stock assessment. All changes to the black sea bass commercial

state allocations in this Addendum went into effect on January 1, 2022 (Table 1). In August 2023, NMFS partially approved the Council's Amendment 23. NMFS approved changes to the commercial in-season quota trigger, but disapproved adding the state-by-state quota allocations to the Federal FMP and regulations. The modified state-by-state quota allocations for black sea bass remain in effect through the Commission's Addendum XXXIII.

In December 2021, the Commission and Council took final action on the [Amendment 22](#) which modified the allocations between the commercial and recreational sectors for the three species. The Board and Council agreed to modify the commercial and recreational black sea bass allocations from landings-based 49% commercial and 51% recreational to catch-based 45% commercial and 55% recreational. This action aimed to address the allocation-related impacts of the revised recreational catch and landings data provided by MRIP. These allocation changes took effect January 1, 2023.

In June 2022, the Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board (Policy Board) and the Council approved [Addendum XXXIV](#) and Council Framework 17 which modified the process for setting recreational measures and made minor modifications to the recreational accountability measures. The selected process, the Percent Change Approach, gave greater consideration to stock status when determining whether recreational measures should be restricted, liberalized, or remain unchanged for the upcoming two years (Table 2). The new process was used starting in 2023 and sunset at the end of 2025.

In April 2025, the Policy Board and Council approved [Addendum XXXVI](#) and Council Framework 19 which further modified the process for setting recreational measures, in addition to additional modifications to the recreational accountability measures. The Policy Board and Council selected a modified version of the Percent Change Approach, which better accounts for stock status when setting measures and creates more opportunities for stability in management measures. The addenda and framework will be implemented in two phases. During the first phase starting in 2026, a harvest-based target will continue to be used, which focuses on achieving a specific level of predicted harvest. The second phase of modifications, which will be implemented for setting 2030 recreational measures and beyond, will update the process to use a catch-based target. Unlike the current process, a catch-based approach aims to achieve a target level of total dead catch, including both harvest and dead discards. This approach will allow for more explicit consideration of how measures affect discards. The Council and Policy Board delayed the transition to a catch-based target until 2030 to allow time for additional analysis on the potential impacts of a catch-based target to measures. The Council and Policy Board also approved changes to the recreational accountability measures, to be in effect starting in 2026. Under these revisions, when an accountability measure is triggered due to recent overages of the recreational annual catch limits, managers will also consider if those overages contributed to overfishing when determining the appropriate response.

II. Status of the Stock

The most recent research track stock assessment for black sea bass was peer reviewed in December 2023. The assessment modeling framework was a multi-region extension of the Woods Hole Assessment Model (WHAM) that partitioned the resource into two spatial sub-units separated at approximately Hudson Canyon.

A management track assessment that incorporated fishery-dependent and -independent data through 2024 in the spatially explicit WHAM assessment model was peer reviewed and accepted in June 2025¹. The 2025 management track assessment found that the black sea bass stock north of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2024. Spawning stock biomass (SSB) in 2024 was 68.1 million pounds, 284% of the biomass target (i.e., $SSB_{MSY\ proxy} = 24.0$ million pounds). The fully selected fishing mortality was estimated to be 0.75, 73% of the overfishing threshold proxy (i.e., $F_{MSY\ proxy} = 1.03$). Age-1 recruitment (R) in 2024 was estimated to be 27.8 million fish.

III. Status of the Fishery

The principal gears used in the black sea bass commercial fishery are otter trawls, fish pots (or traps), and handlines. After peaking at 21.8 million pounds in 1952, commercial landings markedly decreased in the 1960s and have ranged from 1.14 to 4.50 million pounds since 1981. In 1998, a commercial quota system was incorporated into management and state-by-state shares were introduced in 2003. From 2006-2016 commercial landings ranged between 1.14 million pounds in 2009 to 2.53 million pounds in 2016 (Tables 3 and 4). From 2017-2024, higher quotas resulted in commercial landings ranging between 3.34 million pounds in 2018 to a time series high of 5.15 million pounds in 2022. Commercial landings remained high in 2025 at 4.85 million pounds, but over a million pounds under the coastwide quota of 6.0 million pounds (Tables 3 and 4)².

In 2018, recreational harvest estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) were recalibrated based on the new Fishing Effort Survey (FES). In general, the recalibration resulted in higher harvest estimates throughout the time series, with more divergence in recent years. All recreational harvest and discard estimates in this document are based on the recalibrated MRIP data. After a peak in 1986 at 11.19 million pounds, recreational harvest averaged 5.02 million pounds annually from 1987 to 1997. Recreational harvest limits were put in place in 1998 and harvest generally increased from 1.92 million pounds in 1998 to 9.06 million pounds in 2015 (Table 5). In 2016 and 2017 harvest jumped up to 12.05 and 11.48 million pounds, respectively; however, the 2016 and 2017 estimates are regarded as implausibly high outliers by the Technical Committee. Recreational harvest for black sea bass from Maine to Cape Hatteras peaked again in 2021, at an estimated 11.97 million pounds, then declined from 2022 through 2024, to 5.4 million pounds, which is the lowest recreational

¹ The final report for the 2025 management track assessment can be accessed here: <https://apps-nefsc.fisheries.noaa.gov/saw/sasi.php>

² Commercial landings for 2025 are preliminary and are derived from state compliance reports.

harvest since 2011. In 2025, recreational harvest increased slightly to 6.7 million pounds. Recreational total (i.e., live and dead) discards as a proportion of total catch have generally increased over the time series, averaging 46% in the 1980s, and 87% over the last decade. According to MRIP, total recreational discards from Maine through Cape Hatteras, North Carolina were 33.8 million fish in 2025. Assuming 15% hook and release mortality, estimated recreational discard losses in 2025 were estimated to be 5.0 million fish, equal to 55% of the total recreational removals (harvest plus dead discards).

Starting in 2018, the Council and Commission have provided states the opportunity to open their recreational black sea bass fisheries during the month of February under specific conditions. States must opt into this fishery, and participation in this fishery must be approved by the Board. Participating states may need to adjust their recreational management measures during March-December to account for expected February harvest to help ensure that the participation in this optional opening does not increase the likelihood of coastwide total annual harvest increasing beyond the target level. Only Virginia participated in 2025. Estimated February 2025 harvest was 28,175 pounds for Virginia. As part of the 2025 conservation equivalency (CE) proposal, Virginia forfeited 9 days from their season to account for the recreational landings that occurred in February of that year.

IV. Status of Assessment Advice

A management track stock assessment was peer reviewed in June 2025, and was accepted for management use. According to the assessment, the black sea bass stock north of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2024.

V. Status of Research and Monitoring

Commercial landings information is collected by the Vessel Trip Reporting (VTR) system and dealer reports. States are also required to collect and report landings data. Commercial discards are estimated through a standardized methodology as part of the Catch Accounting and Monitoring System (CAMS) developed by the NEFSC and GARFO. The NEFSC weigh-out program provides commercial age and length information. Recreational landings and discards were estimated through the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) until it was replaced by MRIP, which has provided recreational landings and discards from 2008 to present. In 2018, MRIP released recalibrated harvest estimates derived from a new mail-based fishing effort survey (FES), rather than the Coastal Household Telephone Survey. Recreational discards in weight are estimated by the NEFSC. New York conducts fishery-dependent surveys of the recreational and commercial fishery, and North Carolina conducts dockside commercial sampling.

Fishery-independent surveys are conducted by Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. The Virginia Game Fish Tagging Program has targeted black sea bass since 1997. Recruitment and stock abundance data are also provided by the NEFSC trawl survey.

VI. Status of Management Measures and Developing Issues

In December 2022, the Policy Board and Council agreed to further develop a framework/addenda, which final action was taken on in April 2025, and an amendment, which began development in December 2024. Information on the completed Addendum XXXVI can be found on page 4 of this document.

Following additional feedback from the Council and Policy Board in April 2025, further development of the amendment will focus on management options for recreational sector separation, including mode management, as well as consideration of for-hire permitting and reporting requirements. The amendment is now referred to as the Recreational Sector Separation Amendment. The issue of recreational data collection improvement will be explored further through a white paper to help the Policy Board and MAFMC clarify goals for potential future action. The current timeline for the amendment has final action tentatively scheduled for August 2027.

Updates on ongoing actions can be found [here](#).

VII. Black Sea Bass Compliance Criteria

2025 Commercial Fishery Requirements

Minimum size of possession: 11"

Minimum mesh: Nets must possess a minimum of 75 meshes of 4.5" diamond mesh in the codend, or the entire net must have a minimum mesh size of 4.5" throughout; for codends with fewer than 75 meshes, the entire net must have 4.5" diamond mesh or larger throughout

Threshold to trigger minimum mesh requirements: 500 lbs for January-March and 100 lbs for April-December

Maximum roller rig trawl roller diameter: 18"

Pot and trap escape vents: 2 ½" for circular, 2" for square, and 1-3/8 x 5-3/4" for rectangular. Must be 2 vents in the parlor portion of the trap.

Pot and trap degradable fastener provisions: a) untreated hemp, jute, or cotton string 3/16" (4.8 mm) or smaller; b) magnesium alloy timed float releases or fasteners; c) ungalvanized, uncoated iron wire of 0.094" (2.4mm) or smaller. The opening covered by a panel affixed with degradable fasteners is required to be at least 3" x 6".

Commercial quota: 6.00 million lbs.

Pot and trap definition: A black sea bass pot or trap is defined as any pot or trap used by a fisherman to catch and retain black sea bass.

2025 Recreational Fishery Requirements

Recreational harvest limit: 6.27 million lbs.

2025 recreational measures were set status quo to 2024. However, several states were allowed to make minor adjustments to their season to maintain a Saturday opening. Virginia also adjusted their season to account for the additional harvest from their black sea bass February fishery. See Table 6 for 2025 state recreational measures.

Other Measures

Reporting: States are required to submit an annual compliance report to the Chair of the Black Sea Bass Plan Review Team by June 1st. The report must detail the state's management program for the current year and establish proof of compliance with all mandatory management measures. It should include landings information from the previous year and the results of any monitoring or research programs.

Black Sea Bass FMP Compliance Schedule*

<u>Commercial</u>	
11" Size Limit	1/1/02
4.5" diamond minimum mesh throughout codend and threshold provisions	1/1/02
Pot and trap escape vents and degradable fasteners	1/1/97
Maximum 18" roller diameter restriction	1/1/97
States must report to NMFS all landings from state waters	1/1/98
<u>Recreational</u>	
Size Limit	1/1/97
Harvest Limit	1/1/98
Ability to implement possession limits and seasonal closures	1/1/98
<u>General</u>	
Annual compliance report	Annually, 6/1

*This summary of compliance criteria is intended to serve as a quick reference guide. It in no way alters or supersedes compliance criteria as contained in the Black Sea Bass FMP and any Amendments thereto. Management measures may change annually.

VIII. Status of Implementation of FMP Requirements

For 2025, states and jurisdictions required to comply with the provisions of the Black Sea Bass FMP are: New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Potomac River Fisheries Commission, Virginia, and North Carolina.

All states appear to have regulations consistent with the FMP provisions for fishing year 2025 with two exceptions. One state is in the process of rectifying past issues via direct regulation change, Connecticut. Connecticut regulations do not include the requirement of two escape vents in the parlor portion of the trap/pot. This direct regulation change will go into effect within a year. In addition, Commission and New Jersey staff are currently looking into New Jersey trawl regulations, which allow 4.0-inch square mesh in addition to the FMP standard of a 4.5-inch minimum diamond mesh. The FMP does not include information on square mesh size. New Jersey will be requested to disallow 4.0-inch square mesh if past justification for this regulation is not found.

Therefore, the PRT determined that all states have made a good faith effort to implement regulations that are consistent with the requirements approved by the Board.

IX. Research Recommendations

Research recommendations were identified in the [2023 Report of the Black Sea Bass \(*Centropristis striata*\) Research Track Stock Assessment Working Group](#) (pg. 109) and in the [Summary Report of the Black Sea Bass Research Track Stock Assessment Peer Review](#) (pg. 17).

X. References

NEFSC (Northeast Fisheries Science Center). 2023. Report of the Black Sea Bass (*Centropristis striata*) Research Track Stock Assessment. Available at: <https://asmfc.org/resources/science/stock-assessment/report-of-the-black-sea-bass-research-track-stock-assessment-working-group-2023/>

NEFSC. 2025. Draft black sea bass 2025 management track assessment report. Available at: <https://apps-nefsc.fisheries.noaa.gov/saw/sasi.php>

Table 1. Revised black sea bass state-by state baseline allocation of annual commercial quota, as adopted by the Council and Board in February 2021 and implemented via Addendum 33 to the FMP, effective January 1, 2022. The final allocations are the baseline quota plus the regional biomass distribution based on the results of the most recent stock assessment.

State	Baseline Percent Allocation
ME	0.25%
NH	0.25%
MA	12.62%
RI	10.68%
CT	3.00%
NY	8.00%
NJ - N	9.71%
NJ - S	9.71%
DE	5.00%
MD	10.68%
VA	19.42%
NC	10.68%
Total	100%

Table 2. Process for determining the appropriate percent change in harvest when developing recreational management measures. This version of the process will no longer be used to set measures after 2025, and will be replaced by a modified version in 2026 and beyond.

Future RHL vs Harvest Estimate	Stock Size SSB/SSB_{MSY}	Change in Harvest
Future 2-year avg. RHL greater than upper bound of harvest estimate confidence interval	> 1.5	Liberalization percent equal to difference between harvest estimate and 2-year avg. RHL, not to exceed 40%
	1 – 1.5	Liberalization percent equal to difference between harvest estimate and 2-year avg. RHL, not to exceed 20%
	< 1	10% Liberalization
Future 2-YR avg. RHL within confidence interval of harvest estimate	> 1.5	10% Liberalization
	1-1.5	0%
	< 1	10% Reduction
Future 2-YR avg. RHL less than lower bound of harvest estimate confidence interval	> 1.5	10% Reduction
	1-1.5	Reduction percent equal to difference between harvest estimate and 2-year avg. RHL, not to exceed 20%
	< 1	Reduction percent equal to difference between harvest estimate and 2-year avg. RHL, not to exceed 40%

Table 3. Black Sea Bass Commercial Landings by State (2016-2025) in pounds. Source: State Compliance Reports & ACCSP (June 2026).

Year	ME	NH	MA	RI	CT	NY	NJ	DE	MD	VA	NC*	TOTAL
2016	0	0	354,031	294,343	29,236	184,529	525,647	96,794	271,512	553,491	225,405	2,534,987
2017	0	0	541,932	458,153	43,798	285,122	898,665	117,452	409,594	745,087	388,858	3,888,660
2018	0	0	481,146	374,637	37,912	274,114	700,130	172,180	373,991	606,240	315,983	3,336,459
2019	C	0	530,770	399,085	62,261	296,333	719,544	172,738	369,507	590,526	279,008	3,497,200***
2020	C	0	722,428	553,749	85,613	415,017	1,076,593	182,815	397,203	521,691	217,847	4,173,200***
2021	0	0	759,362	660,033	91,198	434,076	1,112,447	258,225	482,233	491,601	200,565	4,498,155
2022	0	0	916,027	824,345	275,696	647,943	1,223,726	241,929	385,762	522,175	108,991	5,146,594
2023	C	0	813,102	634,238	255,117	561,632	1,039,434	189,914	354,863	581,182	61,906	4,491,400***
2024	0	0	946,406	815,826	203,059	660,462	1,168,668	319,815	332,287	420,607	192,520	5,059,650
2025**	0	0	831,694	692,860	203,194	591,065	1,063,625	265,129	436,485	513,143	260,006	4,857,201

* Landings from NC are from north of Cape Hatteras

** 2025 landings are preliminary from state compliance reports

*** Totals do not include confidential landings and are rounded to maintain confidentiality

Maine landings in 2019, 2020, and 2023 are confidential.

Table 4. Commercial Landings and 2025 Black Sea Bass State by State Quotas (pounds). The final allocations (% Allocation below) are the baseline quota (Table 1) plus the regional biomass distribution based on the results of the 2025 recent stock assessment. Source: State Compliance Reports, June 2026.

State	% Allocation	2025 ASMFC Initial Quota	2025 Quota After Transfers	Preliminary 2025 Landings
Maine	0.52%	19,050	19,050	0
New Hampshire	0.52%	19,050	4,050	0
Massachusetts	14.61%	787,216	837,216	831,694
Rhode Island	12.37%	666,106	716,106	692,860
Connecticut	3.47%	187,104	202,104	203,194
New York	9.26%	498,945	623,945	591,065
New Jersey	19.64%	1,168,455	1,168,455	1,063,625
Delaware	4.33%	289,878	289,878	265,129
Maryland	9.24%	619,194	619,194	436,485
Virginia	16.80%	1,125,807	1,125,807	513,143
North Carolina	9.24%	619,194	394,194	260,006
Coastwide Total	100%	6,000,000	6,000,000	4,857,201

* Landings from North Carolina are from North of Cape Hatteras

Table 5. Black Sea Bass Recreational Harvest Estimates by State (2016-2025) in pounds.

Source: MRIP, 2026. NC estimates for North of Cape Hatteras and Virginia's landings from their February fishery included in Virginia's total are from compliance reports, June 2026.

State	ME	NH	MA	RI	CT	NY	NJ	DE	MD	VA	NC*	Coastwide
2016	0	0	1,765,705	1,124,414	1,364,242	6,547,541	693,808	127,182	274,441	148,818	1,591	12,047,742
2017	0	0	1,444,180	749,965	1,102,722	5,515,386	2,088,631	150,530	239,715	156,810	33,421	11,481,361
2018	0	0	1,818,682	1,628,875	873,055	1,726,555	1,440,761	109,365	189,711	129,143	9,494	7,920,435
2019	0	0	1,361,112	1,225,057	1,180,400	3,126,473	1,117,658	61,974	156,986	381,605	11,639	8,612,821
2020	0	3,388	1,537,990	1,480,782	905,145	2,808,726	1,147,599	188,978	103,461	810,289	74,149	9,199,643
2021	0	4,101	2,622,511	1,116,032	2,094,825	1,927,674	2,613,242	478,941	278,677	838,864	6,564	11,981,431
2022	0	193	895,844	618,968	863,167	2,682,422	2,011,517	250,347	198,383	564,208	57,252	8,142,301
2023	2,902	0	921,629	566,092	529,986	1,597,046	2,074,924	365,792	293,693	1,042,364	132,616	7,524,142
2024	0	0	755,312	602,637	493,979	1,514,163	1,604,438	130,995	205,481	152,860	24,556	5,484,421
2025	0	0	554,853	557,201	206,089	769,229	2,940,455	185,158	99,304	1,453,848	80,235	6,846,372

*Harvest is from north of Hatteras.

Figure 1. Black Sea Bass Total Recreational Harvest, Discards, and Percent Released for Maine through North Carolina, 1981-2025. The black line represents the percent of black sea bass that are caught and released out of the total catch (harvest + discards). Source: MRIP, June 2026. Note that this figure includes live and dead discards. It is assumed that 15% of all recreational black sea bass discards die.

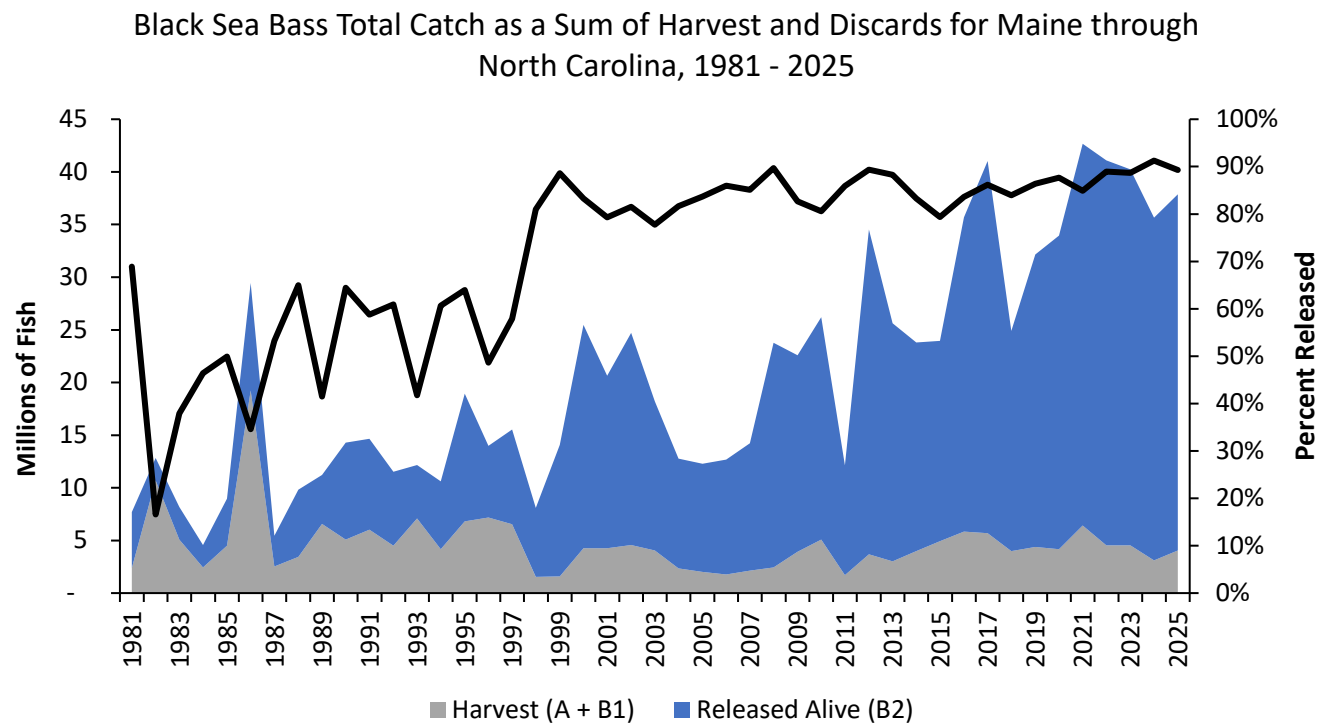


Table 6. 2025 Black Sea Bass Recreational Management Measures by State

State	Minimum Size (inches)	Possession Limit	Open Season
Maine	13	10 fish	May 19-September 21; October 18-December 31
New Hampshire	16.5	4 fish	January 1-December 31
Massachusetts	16.5	4 fish	May 17-September 3
Rhode Island (Private & Shore)	16.5	2 fish	May 22-December 31
		3 fish	August 27-December 31
Rhode Island (For-Hire)	16	2 fish	June 24-August 31
		6 fish	September 1-December 31
Connecticut (Private & Shore)	16	5 fish	May 17-June 28; July 8-November 28
CT (Authorized party/charter monitoring program vessels)		5 fish	May 17-August 31
		7 fish	September 1-December 31
New York	16.5	3 fish	June 23-August 31
		6 fish	September 1-December 31
New Jersey	12.5	10 fish	May 17-June 19
		1 fish	July 1-August 31
		10 fish	October 1-October 31
		15 fish	November 1-December 31
Delaware	13	15	May 15-September 30; October 10-December 31
Maryland			
Virginia			February 1-28; May 15-July 15; August 5-December 31
North Carolina, North of Cape Hatteras (N of 35° 15'N)			May 15-September 30; October 10-December 31