



Joint Meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Policy Board and Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board

February 1, 2021

The following summary highlights actions taken and issues considered at the joint meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (Commission) Policy Board and Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board on February 1, 2021. Presentations, briefing materials, and webinar recordings are available at: <https://www.mafmc.org/briefing/winter-2021-joint-meeting>.

Recreational Reform Initiative

The Council met jointly with the Commission's Policy Board to receive an update on the Recreational Reform Initiative and discuss next steps. This joint initiative of the Council and Commission considers improvements to the management of recreational fisheries for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. As part of this initiative, the Council and Commission are developing a joint framework/addendum and a joint amendment, each of which will consider several topics. During the meeting, the Council and Policy Board agreed to focus on the Harvest Control Rule proposal put forward by six recreational organizations as an immediate next step. Council and Commission staff will first work with NOAA Fisheries staff to consider how this proposal may need to be modified to comply with Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requirements to implement annual catch limits and prevent overfishing.

Black Sea Bass Commercial State Allocation Amendment/Draft Addendum XXXIII

The Council and Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board (Board) jointly approved several changes to the management program for black sea bass commercial fisheries. These changes include modifying the state allocations of the commercial black sea bass quota, adding the state allocations to the Council's Fishery Management Plan (FMP), and modifying the regulations for federal in-season closures. The Board adopted the new allocations through Addendum XXXIII to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP, while the Council recommended these changes through an amendment to its FMP. These actions address significant changes in the distribution of black sea bass that have occurred since the original allocations were implemented under Amendment 13 in 2003 and also account for the historical dependence of the states on the black sea bass fishery.

Under the approved changes, Connecticut's baseline allocation will increase from 1% to 3% of the coastwide quota to address its disproportionately low allocation compared to the increased availability of black sea bass in state waters. The state allocations will then be calculated by allocating 75% of the coastwide quota according to the new baseline allocations (historical allocations modified to account for Connecticut's increase to 3%) and 25% to three regions based on the most recent regional biomass distribution information from the stock assessment (see Table 1). The three regions are: 1) Maine-New York, 2) New Jersey, and 3) Delaware-North Carolina. The regional allocations will be distributed among states within a region in proportion to their baseline allocations, except Maine and New Hampshire will each receive 1% of the northern region quota. Because the allocations are based in part on the regional biomass distribution from the stock assessment, they will be adjusted if a new assessment indicates a

change to the biomass distribution. The Board and Council committed to reevaluating the approved state allocation system within 5 years.

The Council and Board agreed to add the state allocations to the Council’s FMP. As a result, future modifications to the allocations will require a joint action of the Board and Council. Additionally, they approved a change to the federal regulations such that the entire black sea bass commercial fishery will close in-season for all federally permitted vessels and dealers once landings are projected to exceed the coastwide quota plus an additional buffer of up to 5%. The buffer aims to minimize negative economic impacts of coastwide closures on states that have not fully harvested their quotas. The Council and Board considered, but did not adopt, changes to the regulations for paybacks of state quota overages; states will only be required to pay back overages of their state quota if the coastwide quota is exceeded.

Table 1. Revised state allocation percentages of the black sea bass commercial quota based on the most recent regional biomass distribution information.

State	Allocations under Amendment 13	New Allocations Using Most Recent Biomass Distribution*	Difference from Amendment 13 to New Allocations
ME	0.50%	0.40%	-0.10%
NH	0.50%	0.40%	-0.10%
MA	13.00%	15.64%	+2.64%
RI	11.00%	13.23%	+2.23%
CT	1.00%	3.67%	+2.67%
NY	7.00%	8.57%	+1.57%
NJ	20.00%	20.10%	+0.10%
DE	5.00%	4.11%	-0.89%
MD	11.00%	8.88%	-2.12%
VA	20.00%	16.14%	-3.86%
NC	11.00%	8.88%	-2.12%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	

*These allocations are based on the results of the 2019 Operational Stock Assessment and will be updated if future assessments indicate a change to the biomass distribution.

Addendum XXXIII’s measures are final for state waters (0-3 miles from shore) and become effective January 1, 2022. The Council will submit their amendment to NOAA Fisheries for review, approval, and implementation. Addendum XXXIII will be available on the Commission website, www.asmfc.org, on the black sea bass webpage by the end of February. Updates on the Council’s amendment will be posted at <https://www.mafmc.org/actions/bsb-commercial-allocation>.

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Next Council Meeting

February 10-11, 2021 (Webinar)

<https://www.mafmc.org/briefing/february-2021>