



October 20, 2022

Dr. Christopher Moore
 Executive Director
 Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
 800 North State Street, Suite 201
 Dover, DE 1990

Dear Chris:

We recently completed the 2020 and 2021 summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass year-end catch accounting, and the final report is attached to this letter. Summary tables are provided below (Tables 1 and 2).

In 2020, there were no overages of the acceptable biological catches (ABC) or overfishing limits (OFL) for summer flounder and scup. Black sea bass catch exceeded the ABC, but not the OFL. There were no overages of the commercial annual catch limits (ACL) or quotas in 2020. The performance of the recreational fisheries was variable and is discussed further below.

Table 1: Fishing year 2020 summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass catch, OFLs and ABCs (amounts presented in metric tons (mt)).

Stock	Total Catch	OFL	Difference	ABC	Difference
Summer Flounder	11,234	14,034	-22%	11,354	-1%
Scup	14,735	18,674	-24%	16,227	-10%
Black Sea Bass	8,112	8,795	-8%	6,835	17%

In 2021, there were no overages of the ABCs or OFLs for summer flounder and scup. Black sea bass catch exceeded the ABC and the OFL. There were no overages of the commercial ACLs or quotas in 2021.

Table 2: Fishing year 2021 summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass catch, OFLs, and ABCs (amounts presented in metric tons (mt)).

Stock	Total Catch	OFL	Difference	ABC	Difference
Summer Flounder	9,646	14,367	-39%	12,297	-24%
Scup	15,512	16,012	-3%	15,791	-2%
Black Sea Bass	9,868	8,021	21%	7,916	22%

Black Sea Bass Overage

In 2021, the black sea bass OFL was 8,021 mt, and total catch was 9,871 mt, corresponding to a 21-percent overage. Although the catch exceeded the OFL, we do not yet have the information required to determine if overfishing was occurring. The status determination criteria for black sea bass make use of the annual fishing mortality rate (F) relative to a maximum fishing mortality rate (MFMT) to determine if overfishing has occurred. The 2022 data update from



the Center did not include estimates of fishing mortality. A research track and management track assessment for black sea bass will be available in 2023. The current status update did indicate that the relative abundance of black sea bass, derived from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center spring bottom trawl survey, has steadily increased since 2015. Age composition data also show above average 2015, 2016, and 2019 cohorts. When the updated stock assessments are available, we will determine if any additional action is required.

Recreational Annual Catch Limit Evaluation

To assess whether accountability measures were triggered for the recreational summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass fisheries, the three-year average recreational catch is compared to the three-year average recreational ACL. This comparison is provided in Tables 3, 4, and 5. We also note whether numbers were generated from the Coastal Household Telephone Survey (CHTS) or Fishing Effort Survey (FES).

Due to data gaps in 2020 and 2021, we were unable to perform the typical evaluation and estimation of recreational discards. To generate discard estimates, an ad hoc approach was used that applies the mean weight of a discarded fish from 2019 to the number of dead discards.

Table 3: Summer Flounder Three-Year Average Recreational Catch vs. ACL (2019-2021), in mt

Fishing Year	Landings	Discards	Total Catch	ACL	MRIP
2019	3,538	1,379	4,917	5,218	FES
2020	4,565	1,448	6,013	5,218	FES
2021	3,091	922	4,083	5,662	FES
		Average	5,004	5,366	

Table 4: Scup Three-Year Average Recreational Catch vs. ACL (2019-2021), in mt

Fishing Year	Landings	Discards	Total Catch	ACL	MRIP
2019	2,454	188 ¹	2,642	3,633	CHTS
2020	5,858	521	6,379	3,570	FES
2021	7,539	616	8,155	3,474	FES
		Average	5,725	3,559	

Table 5: Black Sea Bass Three-Year Average Recreational Catch vs. ACL (2019-2021), in mt

Fishing Year	Landings	Discards	Total	ACL	MRIP
2019	1,569	227	1,796	2,083	CHTS
2020	4,103	1,569	5,672	3,668	FES
2021	5,428	1,903	7,330	3,596	FES
		Average	4,933	3,116	

¹ The 2019 scup recreational discard estimate has been revised. The estimate in the January 15, 2021, GARFO to MAFMC letter was incorrect because it was based on the FES. The estimate should have been based on the CHTS because the 2019 ACL was based on an assessment that did not include the MRIP data update. This revised discard estimate is based on the CHTS. This correction does not change the fact that the recreational harvest, in 2019, was less than the recreational ACL.

Recreational catch of scup and black sea bass exceeded their respective ACLs, triggering the accountability measure. When biomass is above the target, as it is for both scup and black sea bass, the accountability measure does not require a pound-for-pound payback, or specific percent reduction. The accountability measure requires that adjustments to the recreational management measures, taking into account the performance of the measures and conditions that precipitated the overage, will be made in the following fishing year, or as soon as possible thereafter, once catch data are available, as a single-year adjustment. Knowing that recreational overages were likely, the Council and Board took proactive action and implemented reductions to recreational measures in 2022 for both scup and black sea bass. The Council and Board also adopted revised commercial and recreational allocations and a new approach to setting recreational management measures, with a continued commitment to improving the management of the recreational fisheries. Given all of the steps the Council and Board have recently taken, we have determined that no additional action is required to address the overages.

If you have any questions on the report, please contact Emily Keiley at (978) 281-9116.

Sincerely,



Michael Pentony
Regional Administrator

cc: Dr. Jon Hare, Science and Research Director, Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Enclosure

Table 1. FY21 Summer Flounder Annual Catch Limit and Commercial Quota Accounting

	Pounds	Metric tons	Percent of ACL (6,635 mt)
summer flounder commercial landings	9,636,437	4,371	65.9%
summer flounder state-permitted only vessel landings	838,743	380	5.7%
summer flounder estimated dead discards	1,789,896	812	12.2%
summer flounder commercial catch	12,265,076	5,563	83.8%

Source: commercial fisheries dealer accessed on October 5, 2022 and observer reports accessed on October 5, 2022.

	Pounds	Metric tons	Percent of Commercial quota (5,663 mt)
summer flounder commercial landings (including commercial RSA landings)	10,475,180	4,751	83.9%
summer flounder commercial RSA landings	0	0	0%
summer flounder commercial landings (excluding commercial RSA landings)	10,475,180	4,751	83.9%

Source: commercial fisheries dealer reports database and Research Set-Aside landings database, accessed on October 5, 2022.

Table 2. FY21 Scup Annual Catch Limit and Commercial Quota Accounting

	Pounds	Metric tons	Percent of ACL (12,317 mt)
scup commercial landings	10,736,043	4,870	39.5%
scup state-permitted only vessel landings	2,350,659	1,066	8.7%
scup estimated dead discards	3,130,299	1,420	11.5%
scup commercial catch	16,217,001	7,356	59.7%

Source: commercial fisheries dealer accessed on October 5, 2022 and observer reports accessed on October 5, 2022.

	Pounds	Metric tons	Percent of Commercial quota (9,299 mt)
scup commercial landings (including commercial RSA landings)	13,086,702	5,936	63.8%
scup commercial RSA landings	0	0	0.0%
scup commercial landings (excluding commercial RSA landings)	13,086,702	5,936	63.8%

Source: commercial fisheries dealer reports database and Research Set-Aside (RSA) landings database, accessed on October 5, 2022.

Table 3. FY21 Black Sea Bass Annual Catch Limit And Commercial Quota Accounting

	Pounds	Metric tons	Percent of ACL (4,320 mt)
black sea bass commercial landings	3,619,795	1,642	38.0%
black sea bass state-permitted only vessel landings	1,072,802	487	11.3%
black sea bass estimated dead discards	902,844	410	9.5%
black sea bass commercial catch	5,595,441	2,538	58.8%

Source: commercial fisheries dealer database accessed on October 5, 2022 and observer reports accessed on October 5, 2022.

	Pounds	Metric tons	Percent of Commercial quota (2,764 mt)
black sea bass commercial landings (including commercial Research Set-Aside landings)	4,692,597	2,129	77.0%
black sea bass commercial Research Set-Aside landings	0	0	0.0%
black sea bass commercial landings (excluding commercial Research Set-Aside landings)	4,692,597	2,129	77.0%

Source: commercial fisheries dealer reports database and Research Set-Aside landings database accessed on October 5, 2022.

Table 4. FY21 Summer Flounder Landings By State

<u>State</u>	<u>Commercial Landings (lbs)</u>
MA	715,353
RI	1,889,594
CT	717,427
NY	1,047,951
NJ	1,907,813
DE	930
MD	348,552
VA	1,787,958
NC	2,059,600
NH	2

Source: commercial fisheries dealer reports accessed on October 5, 2022.

Table 1. FY2020 summer flounder Annual Catch Limit And Commercial Quota Accounting

	Pounds	Metric tons	Percent of ACL (6,136 mt)
summer flounder commercial landings	8,280,871	3,756	61.2%
summer flounder state-permitted only vessel landings	843,222	382	6.2%
summer flounder estimated dead discards	2,387,189	1,083	17.6%
summer flounder commercial catch	11,511,282	5,221	85.1%

Source: commercial fisheries dealer accessed on November 3, 2021 and observer reports accessed on October 4, 2021.

	Pounds	Metric tons	Percent of Commercial quota (5,229 mt)
summer flounder commercial landings (including commercial RSA landings)	9,124,093	4,139	
summer flounder commercial RSA landings	0	0	
summer flounder commercial landings (excluding commercial RSA landings)	9,124,093	4,139	79.1%

Source: commercial fisheries dealer reports database and Research Set-Aside (RSA) landings database, accessed on November 3, 2021.

	Pounds	Metric tons	Percent of RACL (5,218 mt)
summer flounder recreational landings	10,064,869	4,565	87.5%

Source: MRIP website queried on September 16, 2021.

Table 2. FY2020 scup Annual Catch Limit And Commercial Quota Accounting

	Pounds	Metric tons	Percent of ACL (12,657 mt)
scup commercial landings	11,495,116	5,214	41.2%
scup state-permitted only vessel landings	2,125,928	964	7.6%
scup estimated dead discards	4,801,437	2,178	17.2%
scup commercial catch	18,422,481	8,356	66.0%

Source: commercial fisheries dealer accessed on November 3, 2021 and observer reports accessed on September 30, 2021.

	Pounds	Metric tons	Percent of Commercial quota (10,083 mt)
scup commercial landings (including commercial RSA landings)	13,621,044	6,178	
scup commercial RSA landings	0	0	
scup commercial landings (excluding commercial RSA landings)	13,621,044	6,178	61.3%

Source: commercial fisheries dealer reports database and Research Set-Aside (RSA) landings database, accessed on November 3, 2021.

	Pounds	Metric tons	Percent of RACL (3,570 mt)
scup recreational landings	12,913,808	5,858	164.1%

Source: MRIP website queried on September 16, 2021.

Table 3. FY2020 black sea bass Annual Catch Limit And Commercial Quota Accounting

	Pounds	Metric tons	Percent of ACL (3,167 mt)
black sea bass commercial landings	3,310,117	1,501	47.4%
black sea bass state-permitted only vessel landings	899,669	408	12.9%
black sea bass estimated dead discards	1,170,085	531	16.8%
black sea bass commercial catch	5,379,871	2,440	77.1%

Source: commercial fisheries dealer database accessed on November 3, 2021 and observer reports accessed on September 29, 2021.

	Pounds	Metric tons	Percent of Commercial quota (2,530 mt)
black sea bass commercial landings (including commercial RSA landings)	4,209,786	1,910	
black sea bass commercial RSA landings	0	0	
black sea bass commercial landings (excluding commercial RSA landings)	4,209,786	1,910	75.5%

Source: commercial fisheries dealer reports database and Research Set-Aside (RSA) landings database accessed on November 3, 2021.

	Pounds	Metric tons	Percent of RACL (3,668 mt)
black sea bass recreational landings	9,059,916	4,110	112.0%

Source: MRIP website queried on September 16, 2021.