



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Joint Meeting of MAFMC & ASMFC Bluefish, and Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Boards

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

Joint Meeting of the MAFMC & ASMFC Bluefish, and Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Boards

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Meeting Summaries, Press Releases and Motions

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MAFMC & ASMFC BLUEFISH, AND SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP AND BLACK SEA BASS MANAGEMENT BOARDS (AUGUST 8, 2022)

Meeting Summary

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) met jointly with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s (ASMFC’s) Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board (Board) and Bluefish Management Board (Bluefish Board) to review previously adopted 2023 specifications for all four species. The Council and Boards considered recommendations from the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), Monitoring Committees, and Advisory Panels, as well as comments from members of the public.

The Council and Board’s recommendations for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass reflect changes to the commercial and recreational allocations which were approved by the Council and Board in December 2021. The revised allocations are expected to be implemented by January 1, 2023. Additional information is available on the [Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass Commercial/Recreational Allocation Amendment](#) page.

The table below summarizes commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits (RHLs) for all four species (2022 values are provided for comparison purposes). 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 for shore) to NOAA Fisheries for final approval. The sections below provide additional details about the recommendations for each species.

Species	Commercial Quota millions of pounds		Recreational Harvest Limit millions of pounds	
	2022	2023	2022	2023
Summer Flounder	15.53	15.27	10.36	10.62
Scup	20.38	14.01	6.08	9.27
Black Sea Bass	6.47	4.80	6.74	6.57
Bluefish	3.54	4.29	13.89	14.11

Summer Flounder 2023 Specifications

The Council and Board approved a revised summer flounder commercial quota of 15.27 million pounds and a revised RHL of 10.62 million pounds for 2023. These specifications reflect the new summer flounder allocations, which will allocate 55% of the acceptable biological catch (ABC) to the commercial sector and 45% to the recreational sector beginning in 2023.

Scup 2023 Specifications

The Council and Board approved a revised scup commercial quota of 14.01 million pounds and a revised RHL of 9.27 million pounds for 2023. These revisions reflect the new scup allocations, which will allocate 65% of the ABC to the commercial sector and 35% to the recreational sector beginning in 2023.

Black Sea Bass 2023 Specifications

The Council and Board approved a revised black sea bass commercial quota of 4.8 million pounds and a revised RHL of 6.57 million pounds for 2023. These specifications reflect the new black sea bass

allocations, which will allocate 45% of the ABC to the commercial sector and 55% to the recreational sector beginning in 2023. The revised RHL also incorporates a change in the recreational discards projection method. The Council and Board considered input from the Monitoring Committee on two potential methods for projecting recreational dead discards and ultimately agreed to use an average of the two approaches.

The Council and Board also agreed to modify the process for the optional February recreational opening to specify that vessels landing black sea bass in a state with an approved Wave 1 recreational fishery are subject to the state regulations during that Wave 1 fishery. Under the current process, states participating in the optional February opening are required to match the federal waters measures. The Council and Board made this change to address challenges associated with the process used to waive federal waters recreational black sea bass measures starting with 2022. If approved by NOAA Fisheries, this change is expected to be implemented before February 2023.

Bluefish 2023 Specifications

The Council and Bluefish Board approved a revised bluefish RHL of 14.11 million pounds for 2023. This adjustment, which represents about a 36% decrease from the previously-approved RHL for 2023, is necessary to account for the 5.59 million pound recreational overage that occurred in 2021. The bluefish fishery management plan requires a pound-for-pound payback for annual catch limit (ACL) overages that occur when the stock is overfished. The revised RHL also incorporates updated discard information. However, due to the rebuilding plan currently in place, the 2023 RHL represents a 1.6% increase from the 2022 RHL even after the overage deduction. As such, the Council and Bluefish Board maintained status quo recreational management measures for 2023. The Council and the Bluefish Board also did not make any changes to the 2023 commercial quota or management measures.

EAFM Recreational Summer Flounder Management Strategy Evaluation

The Council and Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board received the final results of the recreational summer flounder management strategy evaluation (MSE). The MSE is part of the continued implementation of the Council's Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) guidance document to more fully incorporate ecosystem factors in the management process. The goals of the MSE were to identify potential management strategies that consider the biological and economic benefits of minimizing discards and converting those discards into landings in the recreational summer flounder fishery. Through a collaborative, stakeholder-driven, and science-based process, the MSE successfully met the project goals and developed a modeling framework unique to the Mid-Atlantic region to understand how recreational behavior responds to changing regulations and stock availability.

The performance of eight different recreational management strategies were tested under three different states of the world (scenarios) and assessed using a suite of biological, social, and economic performance metrics (e.g., stock biomass, fishing mortality, angler satisfaction, ability to keep a fish) across four different management objectives. The management scenarios considered different size limits (including slots), season length adjustments, coastwide options, and existing and different regional configurations. The results from the MSE demonstrate there are several management scenarios that achieve the overall management goals of reducing recreational discards and converting discards to increased harvest opportunities, while maintaining stock biomass above the threshold and avoiding overfishing. In addition, the results suggest these same management procedures also increase angler satisfaction, result in more fishing trips and higher expenditures on fishing, reduce harvest of females, and keep total summer flounder removals (commercial and recreational) relatively constant. These

results were robust to the different scenarios that considered the potential bias in recreational catch and effort information and continued changes in the summer flounder stock distribution.

The Council and Board were very supportive and encouraged by the results of the MSE. They agreed to use the outcomes from the MSE to help inform potential recreational management options for summer flounder in 2023. In addition, they supported the use of the modeling approaches developed as part of the MSE to estimate recreational catch and harvest of summer flounder and other recreational species, such as black sea bass. The Council and Board agreed that these modeling approaches could be used to help evaluate and identify recreational management measures in 2023 under the recently approved recreational harvest control rule.

Motions

Move to revise the 2023 recreational harvest limit to 14.11 million pounds for bluefish to account for the pound for pound payback needed from the 2021 recreational ACL overage of 5.59 million pounds and updated discards.

Board: Motion made by Mr. Maniscalco and seconded by Ms. Meserve. Motion carries by unanimous consent (Roll Call: In favor – ME, MA, RI, NY, NJ, DE, MD, VA, NC, GA, SC, NMFS).

Council: Motion made by Dr. Duval and seconded by Ms. Wilke. Motion carries by consent.

Move to revise the 2023 specifications for summer flounder, such that the recreational ACL=ACT=14.90 million pounds and the RHL=10.62 million pounds. In addition, the commercial ACL=ACT=18.21 million pounds and the commercial quota=15.27 million pounds.

Board: Motion made by Mr. Cimino and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck. Motion carries by unanimous consent (Roll Call: In favor – NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, DE, MD, PRFC, VA, NC, NMFS).

Council: Motion made by Mr. Cimino and seconded by Dr. Duval. Motion carries by consent.

Move to revise the 2023 specification for scup, such that the commercial ACL=ACT=19.29 million pounds and the commercial quota=14.01 million pounds. The Recreational ACL=ACT=10.39 million pounds and the RHL=9.27 million pounds.

Board: Motion made by Mr. Cimino and seconded by Ms. Meserve. Motion carries (Roll Call: In favor – NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, DE, MD, VA, NC, NMFS; Abstain – PRFC).

Council: Motion made by Mr. Cimino and seconded by Mr. Geer. Motion carries by unanimous consent.

Move to revise the 2023 black sea bass specifications, such that the recreational ACL=ACT=9.16 million pounds and the RHL=6.57 million pounds. The commercial ACL=ACT=7.50 million pounds and the commercial quota=4.80 million pounds.

Board: Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Mr. Cimino Motion carries. (Roll call: In favor – MA, VA, RI, DE, NY, NJ, NH, MD, CT, PRFC; Opposed – NC; Abstain – NMFS).

Council: Motion by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Cimino. Motion carries (16 in favor, 2 opposed, 1 abstention).

Move to modify the February black sea bass recreational opening process to specify that vessels landing black sea bass in a state with an approved Wave 1 recreational fishery are subject to the state regulations during that Wave 1 fishery.

Board: Motion made by Mr. Geer and seconded by Mr. Fote. Motion passes by unanimous consent with one abstention by NMFS.

Council: Motion made by Mr. Geer and seconded by Mr. Feller. Motion passes by unanimous consent with one abstention by NMFS.

ASMFC BLUEFISH, AND SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP AND BLACK SEA BASS MANAGEMENT BOARDS
(August 8, 2022)

Meeting Summary

Under Commission Board action only, the Bluefish Board and the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Board reviewed and approved the summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish FMP Reviews for the 2021 fishing year and state compliance reports. *De minimis* requests were approved from Delaware for summer flounder and scup, and from Maine, South Carolina, and Georgia for bluefish.

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

Motions

Move to approve the Bluefish FMP Review for the 2021 fishing year, state compliance reports, and *de minimis* requests from Maine, South Carolina and Georgia.

Motion made by Mr. Hasbrouck and seconded by Mr. Miller. Motion passes with unanimous consent.

ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board

Move to approve the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP Reviews for the 2021 fishing year, state compliance reports, and *de minimis* requests from Delaware for Summer Flounder and Scup.

Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Ms. Meserve. Motion passes by unanimous consent with one abstention by NMFS.