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# Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

# PRESS RELEASE

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## Agreement Reached on Recreational Management Measures for Fishing Year 2006

ATLANTIC CITY, NJ - The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) together with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass (Board) met on December 7 to discuss 2006 recreational fishery management measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. The Council and Board adopted the following recreational management measures for 2006:

	<b>Summer Flounder</b>	<b>Scup</b>	<b>Black Sea Bass</b>
<b>2006 Harvest Limit</b>	9.30 m lbs	4.14 m lbs	3.99 m lbs
<b>Possession Limit</b>	state-specific	50 fish (EEZ)*	25 fish
<b>Minimum Fish Size</b>	state-specific	10" (EEZ)*	12"
<b>Open Season</b>	state-specific	Jan. 1-Feb. 28 Sep. 18-Nov. 30*	Jan. 1-Dec. 31

\* For state waters, the Board will develop a conservation equivalency system for scup in 2006.

For the 2006 summer flounder fishery, the Council and Board adopted the conservation equivalency alternative. This decision requires the states to develop state-specific management measures (i.e., possession limits, size limits, and seasons) to achieve state-specific harvest limits. The states will develop management proposals and submit them to the Board for approval at its February 2006 meeting. As a non-preferred alternative, the Council and Board adopted a coastwide 17-inch total length (TL) minimum fish size, a 4 fish possession limit, and an open season all year. They also adopted a precautionary default measure of an 18-inch TL minimum fish size, a 1 fish possession limit and an open season all year. This measure would be imposed on any state that did not develop and implement conservation equivalent management measures. However, the Board is also considering maintaining its 2005 rules for 2006 if the 2005 coastwide target is not exceeded. In the event the 2005 coastwide target is exceeded, then CT, NY, and MA would adopt more restrictive regulations to meet the 2006 coastwide harvest limitation.

The 2006 scup recreational fishery will be managed under separate regulations for state and federal waters. In federal waters, the Council and Board adopted a coastwide management measure of a 10-inch TL minimum fish size, a 50 fish possession limit, and open seasons from January 1-February 28 and September 18-November 30. The Board agreed upon a conservation equivalency system to manage scup in state waters.

For black sea bass, the Council and Board approved a 12-inch TL minimum fish size, a 25 fish possession limit, and an open season from January 1-December 31. These measures would apply to the recreational fishery in both state and federal waters.

The Council also finalized its position on the management systems for monkfish and spiny dogfish. But for one dissenting vote, the Council supported continuation of joint management with the New England Council for both species. A letter to this effect will be provided to the National Marine Fisheries Service and the New England Council.

The Council presented its 2005 Fisheries Achievement Award to three recipients: Conservation Officer Sean Reilly of New York's Department of Environmental Conservation, the officers and crew of the United States Coast Guard Cutter IBIS, and the officers and personnel of the United States Coast Guard Station Manasquan Inlet. The award is designed to recognize individuals and/or entities that exhibit outstanding professionalism, diligence, and effort to protect living marine resources. Conservation Officer Reilly was recognized for his dedicated efforts to detect and halt illegal harvesting of surfclams. Both the Coast Guard Cutter IBIS and the Manasquan Inlet Station were recognized for their work to minimize gear impacts in the "mud hole" area off of New Jersey and New York, and to provide a highly visible enforcement presence on or adjacent to the Mid-Atlantic fishing grounds.



Conservation Officer Sean Reilly receiving congratulations from New York's Marine Resources Director Gordon Colvin.

The Council, in cooperation with the Board, agreed to move forward with Amendment 14 to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan. This Amendment would address the mandated development of a scup rebuilding plan, and measures to reduce bycatch in the scup fishery. The Council also agreed to move forward with a scoping process for Amendment 15. This will be a major Amendment that will consider all three Fishery Management Plan species during the scoping process. Scoping will be used to determine what potential actions are needed to modify the plan and address the concerns of constituents impacted by the plan.

The Council also directed staff to write a letter to Congressmen Weldon, Saxton, Allen, and Farr indicating that the Council looks forward to working on the "Oceans Conservation, Education and National Strategy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act" after the Magnuson-Stevens Act is reauthorized.