



MID-ATLANTIC
FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

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Council Revises 2012 Harvest Limits, Recommends Liberalization of Recreational Management Measures

Summer Flounder Stock Rebuilt

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council met jointly with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board last week in Williamsburg, VA to set catch and harvest limits for summer flounder and scup. Although the Council had set limits for the 2012 fishing year in August, the Council received updated stock assessments in October that indicated the previous recommendations for summer flounder and scup were too high. They also recommended recreational management measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass for 2012.

The Council and Board adopted a recreational harvest limit of 8.76 million pounds for the summer flounder fishery and conservation equivalency. Conservation equivalency would allow individual states to develop recreational measures to achieve a state-specific harvest limit. Although the proposed 2012 harvest limit represents a 26% decrease from the 2011 limit, landing estimates indicate that the recreational fishery only landed 5.61 million pounds in 2011. As a result, some states may liberalize regulations in 2012.

During the meeting, the Council received notice that the summer flounder stock was rebuilt in 2010 ([Letter from NMFS](#)). "An important milestone for the Council and our management partners has been reached" stated Rick Robins, Council Chairman. "The sacrifices of the Mid-Atlantic's coastal fishing communities, together with our commitment to rebuild this stock, will allow for a highly productive summer flounder fishery into the future."

The Council and Board also recommended a recreational harvest limit of 8.31 million pounds for the scup fishery--nearly double the 2011 limit of 4.40 million pounds. The Council recommended a 10.5 inch minimum size, 20 fish possession limit, and an open season all year for federal waters. The Board approved conservation equivalency for state waters enabling the use of state specific measures.

The Council and Board recommended management measures to achieve the 1.32 million pound recreational harvest limit they had adopted in August for the 2012 black sea bass fishery. For federal waters, the Council recommended an open season of January 1 through February 29 with a 12.5 inch minimum fish size and a 15 fish possession limit; and an open season of May 19 through October 14 and November 1 through December 31 with a 12.5 inch minimum fish size and a 25 fish possession limit.

"The Council's 2012 recommendations are expected to in result in improved recreational landings and access in the scup fishery, and also clear the way for more liberal recreational management measures for summer flounder" stated Rick Robins. "The Council and Commission worked to create an option for an opening of the recreational black sea bass fishery during January and February, 2013. This could provide important opportunities for this fishery during those winter months as well."

A more detailed summary of the Council meeting can be found by visiting the Council website at: <http://www.mafmc.org/>.