



Joint Meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board and Bluefish Management Board

August 6, 2020

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 (ASMFC) Bluefish Management Board and Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board on August 6, 2020. This meeting was conducted by webinar due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Presentations, briefing materials, and webinar recordings are available at:

<http://www.mafmc.org/briefing/august-6-2020>

Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment

The Council met jointly with the Bluefish Management Board (Board) to discuss draft alternatives for the Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment.

The Council and Board reviewed progress on the amendment and recommendations from the Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT). Consistent with the FMAT recommendation, the Council and Board removed trigger based sector allocation alternatives and the refereed transfer approach. The Council and Board also decided to remove recreational sector separation from the amendment. Council and Board members agreed that recreational sector separation could be considered more comprehensively in a multi-species action. The ongoing Recreational Reform Initiative will provide an opportunity for thorough consideration (see the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Meeting Summary for more details). Approaches retained for further consideration include fishery management plan goals and objectives, recreational/commercial allocations, commercial allocations to the states, commercial allocations to the states with minimum default allocations, regional commercial quotas, rebuilding plan, recreational/commercial sector transfers, sector specific management uncertainty, and de minimis provision to relieve states from having to adopt fishery regulations.

The Council and Board expect to approve a final range of alternatives during their December joint meeting, with a Draft Amendment expected to be considered for release for public comment by February 2021. Additional information regarding the amendment process and timeline can be found at <https://www.mafmc.org/actions/bluefish-allocation-amendment>.

Black Sea Bass Allocation Amendment

The Council met jointly with the ASMFC's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board (Board) to review and consider a public hearing document for the Council's amendment on commercial black sea bass state allocations and the ASMFC's corresponding Draft Addendum XXXIII.

The Council and Board reviewed draft management options included in the Amendment and Draft Addendum XXXIII. The amendment and addendum will consider changes to the state allocations of the black sea bass commercial quota and potential changes to Federal management of commercial black sea bass fisheries. After considering the pros and cons of moving forward with this action concurrently with development of the joint recreational and commercial sector reallocation amendment, the Council and Board approved the document for public comment.

The Council hearing document and Draft Addendum includes a variety of management options for changes to the black sea bass commercial state allocations. These include status quo, increasing Connecticut's allocation to 5%, dynamic allocations partially based on regional stock distribution, a trigger-based approach, and distributing a percentage of coastwide quota using initial allocations and the remaining proportion differently. Options are also included to consider changes to federal management of commercial black sea bass, including adding state commercial allocations to the Council fishery management plan, paybacks of state quota overages, and federal in-season closures.

A subsequent press release will announce the availability of the Council's Amendment and the ASMFC's corresponding Draft Addendum XXXIII, as well as the public hearing schedule (expected to take place in fall 2020).

For more information, visit <http://www.mafmc.org/actions/bsb-commercial-allocation>.

Recreational Reform Initiative

The Council and the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board reviewed topics which may be addressed through the Recreational Reform Initiative. This initiative addresses recreational stability and flexibility for all four jointly managed recreational species, including summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. Staff provided information on what type of management action, if any, would be necessary to implement the ideas discussed. Most topics discussed could be addressed through an addendum/framework. However, some changes would likely be significant enough to require an amendment (e.g., private angler reporting, mandatory tournament reporting, and recreational sector separation).

It was noted that upcoming discussions on the ongoing recreational and commercial allocation amendment may produce additional topics to consider as part of this initiative. Therefore, the Council and Board agreed to postpone initiating an action for recreational issues until after their next joint meeting on August 11-12, 2020.

For more information, visit <https://www.mafmc.org/actions/recreational-reform-initiative>.