



## Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901  
Phone: 302-674-2331 | Toll Free: 877-446-2362 | FAX: 302-674-5399 | www.mafmc.org  
Richard B. Robins, Jr., Chairman | Lee G. Anderson, Vice Chairman  
Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director

# MEMORANDUM

**Date:** November 29, 2012  
**To:** Chris Moore, Executive Director  
**From:** Jessica Coakley, Staff  
**Subject:** Black Sea Bass Notes: The Numbers and Next Steps

The following is a summary of recent recreational black sea bass information including recreational annual catch limits (ACLs) and annual catch targets (ACTs), recreational harvest limits (RHLs), and landings information, that staff has compiled for consideration by the Council. Possible next steps are also included.

### Black Sea Bass Catch Limits

**2012** - Rec. ACL is 2.52 mil lb, Rec. ACT is 1.86 mil lb and the RHL 1.32 mil lb.

**2013** - Rec. ACL = Rec. ACT is 2.37 mil lb, and the RHL 1.85 mil lb.

The Rec. ACL and Rec. ACT include landings and dead discards, RHL landings only.

### Black Sea Bass Landings (not projected)

**2012** - preliminary MRFSS wave 1-4 landings = 2.55 mil lb.

**2012** - preliminary MRIP wave 1-4 landings = 2.20 mil lb.

**2012** - projected MRIP waves 1-6 landings (projecting waves 5 and 6) = 3.61 mil lb.

Note: Waves 4 and 5 tend to be dominant waves for this fishery.

MRIP data will be finalized for the year (waves 1-6) in April 2013. Estimates may change slightly when finalized.

**2013 MRIP Based Overage adjustment based on wave 1-6 projections (assumes 2012 observed discards will equal projected discards):**

2012 Catch = projected landings (3.61 mil lb) + projected discards (0.52 mil lb) = 4.13 mil lb.

2012 Catch (4.13 mil lb) - 2013RecACL (2.37 mil lb) = 1.76 mil lb overage.

Revised 2013 RHL = 1.85 mil lb - 1.76 mil lb = 0.09 mil lb RHL.

### **Black Sea Bass Discards**

Calculated and provided by NEFSC through stock assessments. Data through 2011 are included in the July 2012 assessment update.

### **2013 and 2014 Specifications**

Submitted package includes an analysis of 2013 recreational harvest limits (landings-only) ranging from 1.14-1.85 mil lb.

Submitted package includes an analysis of 2014 recreational harvest limits (landings-only) ranging from 1.14-4.05 mil lb. Council did not choose a 2014 harvest limit for black sea bass but a range of limits was included for analysis purposes.

### **Next Steps:**

**1) 2013 Fishing Year** - Council may request a reconsideration of the approach the SSC has taken to classify the stock assessment tier for all the Council-managed species. In particular, has the approach to tier stocks been consistently applied and have consistent standards been used for uncertainty classification with respect to assessment inputs and reference points, uncertainty in the data, models, and projections.

**2) No Catch Limit Rollover into 2014** - Because of the requirements to have catch limits implemented by January 1, the Council would need to take action in the first half of 2013 (February Council Meeting) to ensure a catch limit is in place for January 1, 2014. Staff may need to develop a supplemental EA depending on the catch limits proposed.

**3) 2014 Fishing Year** - The results from a black sea bass operational assessment update (provided in Summer 2013), could be considered by the SSC in September and Council in October, to consider catch limits for the 2014 fishing year.

The operational assessment would allow for the incorporation of additional data and modeling approaches, as approved by an oversight committee comprised of representatives from the NEFSC staff, Council staff, and SSC leadership. This group would ensure changes were not so great that a CIE review is needed, but allowing for additional work to be incorporated into the assessment.

A data workshop could be held in Spring 2013 to supply additional information on stock structure, non-uniform F, and state surveys, etc. This would be worthwhile for the operational assessment, but could also help in addressing longer-term assessment needs.

**4) 2015 Fishing Year and Beyond** - The black sea bass benchmark/research assessment is scheduled for a SAW in June 2014. This will provide information for the 2015 fishing years (possibly 2016, 2017).



# Northeast Region Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Regional Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930

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<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/>  
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## **Recreational Black Sea Bass Fishery Closure**

*Effective Date: November 1, 2012*

The 2012 black sea bass recreational harvest limit has been reached. Effective 0001 hours, November 1, 2012, no one may fish for or possess black sea bass in Federal waters for the remainder of the 2012 calendar year, unless issued a commercial moratorium permit and fishing commercially. This closure also applies to vessels issued a Federal party/charter permit fishing in state waters. Vessel owners issued Federal permits are reminded that they must continue to complete and submit vessel logbooks.

*For small entity compliance guides, this bulletin complies with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement and Fairness Act of 1996. This notice is authorized by the Regional Administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Region.*



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
Northeast Fisheries Science Center  
166 Water Street  
Woods Hole, MA 02543-1026

November 5, 2012

Mr. Richard B. Robins, Jr.  
Chairman  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
5103 Mariners Cove  
Suffolk, VA 23435

Dear Rick:

As discussed at the October meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, the preliminary estimates of black sea bass recreational landings through Wave 4 (July-August) suggest that the 2012 recreational harvest limit has already been exceeded. The MRIP estimate shows that nearly 2.2 million pounds of sea bass have been landed. Additionally, based on landings patterns in 2011, Waves 5 and 6 in 2012 may account for an additional 40% or 880,000 pounds, resulting in a potential total recreational black sea bass harvest in 2012 of 3 million lbs. Given the 2012 recreational harvest limit of 1.32 million pounds, this clearly presents a problem.

If landings in 2012 are reflective of abundance, the population of black sea bass is quite healthy. Both the 2011 and 2012 assessment updates indicated that the stock was not overfished and that overfishing was not occurring. These assessments also indicated that spawning stock biomass was above  $SSB_{MSY}$ , and that fishing at  $F_{MSY}$  would generate annual catches of about 6 million pounds. However, given the uncertainty in the assessments, the Council set TALs of 3.61 and 3.6 million pounds for 2012 and 2013, respectively, and set recreational harvest limits of 1.36 and 1.85 million pounds for these two years, respectively.

The very precautionary approach used by the Council (and its SSC) in setting ABCs and quotas for black sea bass will continue to produce quota overages. Changes in fishing practices, perhaps due to current fuel costs, have resulted in a greater targeting of black sea bass. As abundance increases and targeting continues or increases, overages will persist. Under current management practices, when the quota is exceeded, the overage is deducted from the next year's quota.

The Center fully supports the work of the MAFMC and recognizes the management success associated with almost all Mid-Atlantic species. We believe that the quality of the scientific information provided to the Council has contributed to these successes. We also recognize that there are important gaps in our understanding of the biology of black sea bass which can only be



elucidated through continued research. Nevertheless, our analyses are assessing the condition of the stock with relatively low uncertainty. While the SSC has categorized the stock as a Level 4 assessment, we suggest that they be asked to reconsider this determination. In the vent that the SSC does reconsider, and recategorizes the stock as Level 3, ABCs and annual quotas for black sea bass would be based on the assessment results (and the BRPs associated with these results).

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to give me a call.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William Karp". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

William A. Karp, Ph.D.  
Science and Research Director

cc: R. Brown  
F. Serchuk  
P. Rago  
G. Shepherd  
G. Darcy



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Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director

November 28, 2012

Dr. William Karp  
Director, Northeast Fisheries Science Center  
166 Water Street  
Woods Hole, MA 02543-1026

Dear Dr. Karp: *Bill*:

As you are aware, the relatively data poor nature of the black sea bass assessment combined with their special life history characteristics have made the specification of ABC for black sea bass challenging. As such, the Mid-Atlantic Council requests that an operational assessment update for black sea bass be conducted by the NEFSC. We request that the update be provided in July 2013 so that the results could be considered by our SSC in September and the Council in October to develop recommendations on management measures for the 2014 fishing year.

An operational assessment would allow for the incorporation of additional data and modeling approaches. These data and approaches would be approved by an oversight committee comprised of representatives from the NEFSC, Council, ASMFC, and SSC. In addition, a data workshop could be held in early spring 2013 to consider information on a number of issues including stock structure, a possible non-uniform F, and state surveys, to help inform the operational assessment update.

We look forward to our future discussions with you regarding black sea bass and thank you for your consideration of this request. Please call if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Christopher M. Moore, PhD.  
Executive Director

cc: Anderson, Beal, Boreman, Bullard, Robins