



MID-ATLANTIC
FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

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PRESS CONTACT: Mary Clark
(302) 674-2331 (ext. 261)

Recreational Black Sea Bass Closure Effective November 1, 2012

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announced yesterday that the recreational black sea bass fishery will close on November 1, 2012. The fishery will remain closed to recreational fishermen in federal waters (3-200 miles from shore) through the end of the year.

The early closure was prompted last week by the release of recreational catch data that indicated the recreational harvest limit for black sea bass had been exceeded. In addition to a shortened season, the recreational fishery will face reduced catch limits in 2013 or 2014 to account for the overage. This is the first season in which the recreational black sea bass fishery will have to pay back a harvest overage.

Although the most recent assessment update for black sea bass indicated that the stock was not overfished and that overfishing was not occurring, the fishery continues to present substantial management challenges due to multiple issues with scientific uncertainty.

“The Council’s management of black sea bass has been constrained by scientific uncertainty in the assessment and quota-setting process. The apparent performance and health of the fishery raises important scientific and management issues that need to be resolved,” said Council Chairman Rick Robins. “We understand that the closure will have serious implications for the recreational fishing community and are committed to working closely with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, the NMFS regional office, the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and the ASMFC to address the scientific and management issues in the black sea bass fishery as quickly as possible.”

The closure, which applies to both private anglers and party/charter vessels, prohibits fishing for or possessing black sea bass in Federal waters for the remainder of 2012. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is expected to discuss the harvest of black sea bass in state waters at its annual meeting this week.

Read the full announcement from NOAA Fisheries here:

<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/nr/doc/12/12bsbclosurerecphl.pdf>

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) is one of eight regional councils established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976. The Council has primary responsibility for twelve species of fish and shellfish in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) between 3 and 200 miles off the Mid-Atlantic coast. Member states include New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. For more information, visit our website: www.mafmc.org.