



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 21, 2017

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MAFMC & ASMFC Set Black Sea Bass Specifications for 2017 and 2018

Benchmark Assessment Finds Resource Not Overfished & Overfishing Not Occurring

Kitty Hawk, NC – The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) have approved revised specifications for the 2017 black sea bass fishing year as well as specifications for the 2018 fishing year for the Northern black sea bass stock (Cape Hatteras, North Carolina to the US-Canadian border). The revised specifications are based on the results of the 2016 benchmark stock assessment, which found the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. The approved limits are consistent with the recommendations of the Council’s Science and Statistical Committee. The Commission’s actions are final and apply to state waters (0-3 miles from shore). The Council will forward its recommendations for federal waters (3 – 200 miles from shore) to NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Administrator for final approval.

The table below summarizes commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits (RHL) for black sea bass in 2016, 2017 and 2018. Please note specifications for 2018 may be adjusted based on changes in the fishery or new scientific information.

Species	Year	Commercial Quota (millions of pounds)	Commercial Minimum Fish Size (TL)	Commercial Mesh Size	Recreational Harvest Limit (millions of pounds)
Black Sea Bass	2016	2.70	11"	4.5"	2.82
	2017	4.12	11"	4.5"	4.29
	2018	3.52	11"	4.5"	3.66

In considering 2017 recreational management measures, the Commission and Council maintained status quo measures in federal waters and in state waters from Delaware through North Carolina. These include a 12.5 inch TL minimum size, 15 fish possession limit, and open seasons from May 15 - September 21 and October 22 - December 31 (note: measures for federal waters are not final until approved by NOAA). Northern region states (Massachusetts through New Jersey) have the flexibility to continue 2016 management measures or develop new measures that will collectively constrain harvest to the 2017 RHL. Recognizing the favorable stock condition and the difficulty of precisely projecting the impacts of recreational management measures on overall harvest, the Commission and Council maintained status quo measures for 2017. Preliminary 2016 recreational harvest is estimated at 4.67 million pounds, roughly 380,000 pounds above the 2017 RHL. As additional 2016 harvest estimates become available, the Commission may review these data and consider the potential impacts to achieving the 2017 RHL.

Additional Information:

- [SAW 62 Assessment Summary Report](#)
- [February 2017 Briefing Materials – 2017 Black Sea Bass Specifications](#)