



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 13, 2020

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Mid-Atlantic Council to Hold Scoping Hearings for Black Sea Bass Commercial State Allocation Amendment

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold two scoping webinars to gather public input on a management action to consider potential modifications to the allocations of the black sea bass commercial quota among the states of Maine through North Carolina. Scoping webinars will be held on Monday, May 11 and Thursday, May 14, 2020. Written comments will be accepted through May 31, 2020.

The Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) jointly manage black sea bass from Maine through Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. The Council develops regulations for federal waters while the Commission develops regulations for state waters. The black sea bass commercial quota is managed on a coastwide basis in federal waters. In state waters, it is allocated among the states of Maine through North Carolina using percentages loosely based on historical landings from 1980-2001. Under the current allocations, 67% of the annual coastwide quota is divided among the states of New Jersey through North Carolina, and 33% is divided among the states of New York through Maine.

The most recent black sea bass stock assessment shows that spawning stock biomass in the northern region (approximately Maine through Hudson Canyon) has greatly increased since 2002, when the state allocations were first approved, while the amount of biomass in the southern region (approximately south of Hudson Canyon through Cape Hatteras) has not experienced significant change. Some northern region states have noted that changes in availability and distribution have made it increasingly difficult to constrain landings to their current allocations. The Council and Commission initiated this action to consider whether changes should be made to the state allocations and whether these allocations should be managed under both the Commission and Council Fishery Management Plans (FMPs), rather than only under the Commission's FMP as is currently the case.

The scoping period is an important opportunity for members of the public to provide input on the range of management alternatives that should be considered in this action. Scoping comments will help the Council and Commission ensure that public concerns are addressed in a thorough and appropriate manner. An additional public comment period will be held later in 2020 to solicit input on preferred alternatives.

Hearing Schedule

Both scoping hearings will be conducted by webinar.

1. **Monday May 11, 2020**, 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm EDT
2. **Thursday May 14, 2020**, 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm EDT

To join the webinar, go to <http://mafmc.adobeconnect.com/bsb-com-allocation-scoping/>. Audio connection instructions appear upon connecting, or you can call 800-832-0736 and enter room number 5068871#.

Written Comments

In addition to providing comments at either of the scoping hearing webinars, you may submit written comments by 11:59 pm EDT on **Sunday May 31, 2020**. Written comments may be sent by any of the following methods:

1. **ONLINE:** <http://www.mafmc.org/comments/bsb-com-allocation-amendment>
2. **EMAIL:** jbeaty@mafmc.org
3. **MAIL or FAX:** Dr. Christopher Moore, Executive Director
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
800 North State Street, Suite 201
Dover, DE 19901
FAX: 302.674.5399

Please include "Black Sea Bass Commercial Allocation Amendment" in the subject line if using email or fax, or on the outside of the envelope if submitting written comments. All comments, regardless of submission method, will be shared with the Commission and Council and will be made publicly available on their respective websites. It is not necessary to submit the same comments to both the Council and Commission or through multiple channels.

Learn More

For additional information and updates on development of this action, please visit <http://www.mafmc.org/actions/bsb-commercial-allocation>. A scoping document containing background information and details on potential management approaches is available on this web page.

Contact

Please direct any questions about the amendment to Julia Beaty, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, at jbeaty@mafmc.org or (302) 526-5250.