



Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Framework/Addendum on Conservation Equivalency, Block Island Sound Transiting, and Recreational Slot Limits June 2018

Background

In December 2017, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (Commission's) Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board (Board) initiated development of a joint framework and addendum to address three topics: conservation equivalency for black sea bass, Block Island Sound transit provisions for all three species, and use of slot limits in the recreational fisheries for all three species. The Council and Board further refined the alternatives in May 2018.

Alternatives

The management alternatives currently under consideration through this framework and addendum are outlined below. For more details, see the [briefing materials](#) for the April 30, 2018 joint meeting of the Council and Board.

- **Alternative set 1: Conservation equivalency for black sea bass.**
 - **Alternative 1.A: No action** - Conservation equivalency cannot be used for black sea bass. This means the federal waters measures cannot be waived in favor of the measures of the states where anglers land their catch.
 - **Alternative set 1.B: Update the Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) to allow conservation equivalency for black sea bass.**
 - Alternative 1.B.i: Use the current summer flounder conservation equivalency process for black sea bass.
 - Alternative 1.B.ii: Use the current summer flounder conservation equivalency process for black sea bass and allow conservation equivalency to roll over from one year to the next.
- **Alternative set 2: Summer flounder conservation equivalency rollover.**
 - **Alternative 2.A: No action** - Conservation equivalency for summer flounder cannot roll over from one year to the next.
 - **Alternative 2.B: Allow summer flounder conservation equivalency to roll over from one year to the next when appropriate.**
- **Alternative set 3: Block Island Sound transit provisions.**
 - **Alternative 3.A: No action** - When the fishing season is closed in federal waters but open in state waters, vessels may not transit federal waters, including Block Island Sound, with fish caught in state waters.
 - **Alternative set 3.B: Block Island Sound transit provisions for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass** (alternatives 3.B.i and 3.B.ii could both be selected)
 - **Alternative 3.B.i: Rhode Island-specific transit area for commercial and recreational state-only permit holders.** Under this alternative, a transit zone from Block Island north to the Rhode Island main land would be established. When federal waters are closed for summer flounder,

scup, and/or black sea bass fishing and Rhode Island state waters are open, Rhode Island state-only permit holders (both commercial and recreational) would be able to pass through this area with summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass caught in federal waters. Fishing would not be allowed in the transit area when federal waters are closed.

- **Alternative 3.B.ii: Transiting allowed for RI, CT, NY, and MA permit holders in the same area as the striped bass transit area.** This alternative would allow transiting in a larger area than the previous alternative and would apply to fishermen permitted in multiple states. Unlike the previous alternative, this alternative could address situations where the bag limit and/or minimum fish size is more restrictive in federal waters than in state waters, in addition to situations where federal waters are closed but state waters are open. One option from each of the two sub-alternatives would be selected.
 - **Alternative set 3.B.ii.a: Permit holders subject to transit provisions.**
 - Alternative 3.B.ii.a.i: Only recreational permit holders.
 - Alternative 3.B.ii.a.ii: Recreational and commercial permit holders.
 - **Alternative set 3.B.ii.b: Measures addressed by transit provisions.**
 - Alternative 3.B.ii.b.i: Differences in state and federal fishing seasons.
 - Alternative 3.B.ii.b.ii: Differences in state and federal possession limits.
 - Alternative 3.B.ii.b.iii: Differences in state and federal minimum fish sizes.
- **Alternative set 4: Recreational slot limits**
 - **Alternative 4.A: No action** - Slot limits cannot be used in federal recreational summer flounder, scup, or black sea bass fisheries because the Council's FMP does not allow for specification of a maximum size limit.
 - **Alternative 4.B: Modify the Council's FMP to allow use of a maximum size limit for recreational summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass fisheries.** This would allow for use of regular slot limits, split slot limits, and trophy fish. Slot limits can already be used through the Commission process.

Next Steps

In August 2018, the Council and Board plan to review a draft analysis of the impacts of the alternatives and approve the draft framework/addendum for public hearings. The Commission will carry out public hearings in the fall of 2018. Final action is planned for December 2018.