



**Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Monitoring
Committee Webinar Meeting Summary - Black Sea Bass
July 24, 2017**

Monitoring Committee Attendees: Tiffany Vidal (MA DMF), Greg Wojcik (CT DEEP), John Maniscalco (NY DEC), Peter Clarke (NJ F&W), Rich Wong (DE DFW), Steve Doctor (MD DNR), Joe Cimino (VMRC), Todd Daniel VanMiddlesworth (NC DMF), Kiley Dancy (MAFMC staff), Kirby Rootes-Murdy (ASMFC staff), John Carmichael (SAFMC staff), Mark Terceiro (NMFS NEFSC)

Additional Attendees: Morgan Brunbauer (NY DEC), Katie Almeida (Town Dock), Mike Ruccio (NMFS GARFO), Jim (no last name provided)

General Comments

The Monitoring Committee (MC) does not currently have any formal control rules for the recommendation of Annual Catch Targets (ACTs). The MC recognizes the need to develop ACT control rules or guidelines for addressing management uncertainty in the future, which would be applicable to all three species.

Black Sea Bass Comments and Recommendations

The MC agreed with the staff recommendation for no changes to the currently implemented ACLs and ACTs for 2018 (Table 1). These measures were implemented earlier in 2017, and there is no data to suggest that changes are necessary at this time. In January 2017, the MC recommended no reduction in catch from the recreational and commercial ACLs, such that the ACTs are set equal to the ACLs.

At the January 2017 meeting, the MC noted that commercial landings have been very close to the commercial quotas in recent years. For the recreational fishery, the MC noted that recent large recreational overages occurred due to a rapidly expanding stock and very high availability, at a time when there was no approved stock assessment for black sea bass and the recreational harvest limits were not reflective of the large and increasing stock abundance. The new benchmark stock assessment should improve evaluation of fishery performance in future years. The MC and TC will continue to evaluate management uncertainty in the recreational fishery, the predictability and uncertainty in recreational catch estimates, and the influence of recreational regulations on harvest.

As stated in the January 2017 MC report, the group plans to closely evaluate actual 2017 discards compared to projected discards, given the substantial increase in quotas implemented in mid-2017 (82 FR 24078, May 25, 2017). During the January meeting, the MC had considered adjusting the projected commercial discards for 2017 due to the expectation that discards will decrease with an increase in quota. However, the MC noted the uncertainty associated with the discard estimates, as well as a potential for increased discards of undersized fish due to a potentially large 2015 year class. Therefore, the MC believed that the 3-year average used as a basis for discard projections is appropriate to account for this uncertainty.

The MC agreed with the staff recommendation that no changes be made to the commercial minimum fish size (11-inch total length) and gear requirements.

Regarding the potential for opening the wave 1 recreational fishery in 2018, the MC reiterated past comments that if the recreational fishery is open during January and February, there should be sampling and/or reporting requirements in place to produce catch estimates. It is important to document removals occurring from the fisheries, and wave 1 recreational catch (for states other than North Carolina) is currently not incorporated into final catch estimates or the stock assessments. In addition, the MC noted that an open wave 1 fishery for black sea bass may increase discards of other demersal species with closed seasons at that time. Specifically, if the Council and Board decide to open the black sea bass fishery in wave 1, consideration should be given to opening scup in wave 1 as well (in states where wave 1 is currently closed). The MC notes that given recent overages and high catch estimates in the recreational black sea bass fishery, the Council and Board should carefully consider the potential implications of opening wave 1 on the rest of the year's management measures.

Table 1: Currently implemented black sea bass catch and landings limits for 2017-2018. The SSC and Monitoring Committee recommend no changes to the implemented measures for 2018. Numbers may not add precisely due to unit conversions and rounding.

Management Measure	2017		2018		Basis
	<i>mil lb.</i>	<i>mt</i>	mil lb.	mt	
OFL	<i>12.05</i>	<i>5,467</i>	10.29	4,669	Stock assessment projections
ABC	<i>10.47</i>	<i>4,750</i>	8.94	4,057	Stock assessment projections/staff recommended application of Council risk policy
ABC Landings Portion	<i>8.41</i>	<i>3,814</i>	7.18	3,258	80.3% of ABC, based on average 2013 – 2015 % landings portion of total catch
ABC Discards Portion	<i>2.06</i>	<i>936</i>	1.76	799	19.7% of ABC, based on average 2013 – 2015 % discards portion of total catch
Commercial ACL	<i>5.09</i>	<i>2,311</i>	4.35	1,974	49% of ABC landings portion (per FMP allocation) + 47.2 % of ABC discards portion
Commercial ACT	<i>5.09</i>	<i>2,311</i>	4.35	1,974	Commercial ACL, less deduction for management uncertainty
Projected Commercial Discards	<i>0.97</i>	<i>442</i>	0.83	377	47.2% of ABC discards portion, based on 2013-2015 average % discards by sector
Commercial Quota	<i>4.12</i>	<i>1,869</i>	3.52	1,596	Commercial ACT, less discards
Recreational ACL	<i>5.38</i>	<i>2,439</i>	4.59	2,083	51% of ABC landings portion (per FMP allocation) + 52.8 % of ABC discards portion
Recreational ACT	<i>5.38</i>	<i>2,439</i>	4.59	2,083	Recreational ACL, less deduction for management uncertainty
Projected Recreational Discards	<i>1.09</i>	<i>494</i>	0.93	422	52.8 % of ABC discards portion, based on 2013-2015 average % discards by sector
Recreational Harvest Limit	<i>4.29</i>	<i>1,945</i>	3.66	1,661	Recreational ACT, less discards