



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
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Michael P. Luisi, Chairman | G. Warren Elliott, Vice Chairman
Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

Date: August 2, 2019
To: Chris Moore, Executive Director
From: Julia Beaty, staff
Subject: Black Sea Bass Commercial and Recreational Issues

During their August 2019 meeting, the Council will receive an update on recent Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) discussions regarding state-by-state commercial black sea bass quota allocations, as well as an update on a joint Council and ASMFC initiative on recreational management reform. The Council will then discuss next steps on both topics. Background information is provided below.

The Council will meet jointly with the ASMFC's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board (Board) in October 2019 in Durham, NC. These topics may be discussed in more detail during that meeting.

ASMFC Consideration of Changes to State-by-State Commercial Quota Allocations

The ASMFC formed a Black Sea Bass Plan Development Team to analyze potential modifications to the current state-by-state quota allocations to address changes in stock distribution and abundance.

The approaches supported by the Board for further development include 1) a dynamic approach (referred to as TMGC) that gradually shifts allocations over time based on a combination of historical landings and current biomass distribution, 2) a trigger-based allocation approach, and 3) hybrid approaches. Additional options were submitted for consideration by Connecticut. These additional options are variations on approaches listed above and address Connecticut's 1% quota allocation. The Board will discuss all options during their meeting on Wednesday August 7, 2019 in Arlington, VA. Details on these approaches are provided in the briefing materials for the Board meeting: <http://www.asmfc.org/home/2019-summer-meeting>.

The Board has not yet initiated a management action to consider modifications to the state-by-state commercial black sea bass quota allocations. They may consider doing so during their meeting on August 7, 2019.

The state-by-state commercial black sea bass allocations are not included in the Council's Fishery Management Plan; therefore, joint action with the Council is not required to modify

them. However, the Council was closely involved in the initial development of these allocations, as summarized in a February 2019 memo from Council staff (see pages 15-18 of tab 6 of the briefing materials for the March 2019 Council meeting: <http://www.mafmc.org/briefing/march-2019>). The Council also initiated an amendment in March 2019 solely for the purposes of allocating staff time to this effort and in consideration of alternatives that could include federal involvement. The Council agreed to postpone development of management alternatives until later in the year to allow the Commission's Plan Development Team to further develop options that may warrant consideration in a federal Fishery Management Plan amendment.

Joint MAFMC/ASMFC Recreational Reform Initiative

At the March 2019 joint Council and Board meeting, the two bodies agreed to establish a joint initiative to develop strategies to increase management flexibility and stability for recreational fisheries. The initiative is focused on black sea bass, but will also consider implications for summer flounder, scup, and bluefish. A steering committee with representation from the Council, ASMFC, and NOAA Fisheries was formed and has met twice to discuss potential pathways to achieving this objective. To date, the steering committee has largely focused on the potential for using control rules to determine when *status quo* measures are justified (e.g., based on indicators such as stock status, recruitment estimates, survey indices, and/or variance in recreational catch and harvest data) and potential alternative timelines for annual decision making.

It is anticipated that an additional working group will be formed at a later date to carry out technical and policy analysis of potential strategies generated by the steering committee. Depending on the changes recommended for consideration, a joint amendment or framework action may be required.