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Director

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

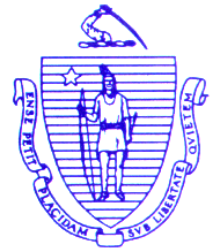
Division of Marine Fisheries

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March 21, 2018

Marine Fisheries Advisory

Recreational Fluke, Black Sea Bass, and Scup Management Options for Public Input

The Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) is seeking public input on potential regulations for Massachusetts' 2018 recreational fluke (summer flounder), black sea bass, and scup fisheries. Massachusetts is authorized to liberalize regulations for each species subject to requirements of the interstate fishery management plans.

Public input can be provided by either attending a March 28 Scoping Meeting or submitting written comment by April 4 (Midnight). Details are below.

Scoping Meeting

Wednesday, March 28, 2018

6:00 PM

Doubletree Hotel

287 Iyannough Road

Hyannis, MA

Written Comment (April 4 Deadline)

Address to: David Pierce, DMF Director

251 Causeway Street, 4th Floor

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Email: marine.fish@state.ma.us

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The Massachusetts Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission is scheduled to meet on April 12, and will review the Director's recommendation for 2018 recreational fluke, black sea bass, and scup regulations. The Division will announce the regulations soon thereafter. The fluke and black sea bass regulations could vary from the options provided below based on public input.

Fluke

Massachusetts is allowed to liberalize our recreational fluke regulations to increase projected harvest by 17% in 2018, relative to our preliminary 2017 harvest estimate (25,669 fish). DMF's preferred option includes increasing the possession limit by 1 fish (reversing the 1-fish decrease required in 2017) and adding 15 days to the open season thereby encapsulating both the Memorial Day Weekend and Columbus Day Weekend.

Possible (non-preferred) alternatives include a slightly different season at 5 fish and 17" (e.g., opening on May 19, the same as black sea bass), or remaining at 4 fish to gain 59 open days. A size limit decrease (back to the 16" allowed prior to 2017) was evaluated and found to exceed the allowed liberalization.

FLUKE	Open Season	Bag Limit	Minimum Size
2017	May 22–September 23 (125 days)	4 fish	17"
Proposed 2018	May 23–October 9 (140 days)	5 fish	17"
	May 19–September 22 (127 days)	5 fish	17"
	May 1–October 31 (184 days)	4 fish	17"

Black Sea Bass

Massachusetts is allowed to liberalize our recreational black sea bass regulations to increase projected harvest by 4.6%, relative to our preliminary 2017 harvest estimate (222,079 fish). We are part of a region with RI, CT, and NY that has been newly allocated 61.35% of the coastwide recreational harvest limit, which is decreasing 15% in 2018. The Northern Region faces an 11.7% harvest reduction this year; however, this has been distributed between the states in a manner designed to achieve more consistent measures and equitable access within the region, while accommodating local differences. RI, CT, and NY must implement -2.1%, -28.5%, and -5.8% harvest reductions, respectively.

DMF is committed to opening the fishery on May 19, representing the third Saturday in May, consistent with recent prior years. The total length of the season will be determined by the possession limit (or limits) selected. A change in the minimum size is not allowed.

BLACK SEA BASS	Open Season	Bag Limit	Minimum Size
2017	May 20–August 29 (102 days)	5 fish	15”
Proposed 2018	May 19–September 1 (106 days)	5 fish	15”
	May 19–September 8 (113 days)	4 fish	15”
	May 19–June 30	5 fish	15”
	July 1–September 8 (113 days)	3 fish	
	May 19–June 30	4 fish	15”
	July 1–September 24 (129 days)	2 fish	
	May 19–August 31	4 fish	15”
	September 1–September 10 (115 days)	2 fish	
	May 19–August 31	4 fish	15”
	September 1–September 16 (121 days)	1 fish	

Scup

For recreational scup management, the Northern Region of MA–NY strives for compatible regulations to achieve our harvest target, which is increasing 34% in 2018. A regional proposal has been approved by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, from which deviation at this point are impractical.

Given the already liberal season and bag limits, the Northern Region states prioritized a reduction in the minimum size to 9”, matching the federal waters size limit. This is projected to increase harvest by about 27% within the region.

SCUP	Mode	Open Season	Bag Limit	Minimum Size
2017	Private	May 1–December 31 (245 days)	30 fish	10”
	For-hire	May 1–June 30 July 1–December 31 (245 days)	45 fish 30 fish	10”
Proposed 2018	Private	May 1–December 31 (245 days)	30 fish	9”
	For-hire	May 1–June 30 July 1–December 31 (245 days)	45 fish 30 fish	9”

For more information, please contact DMF at 617-626-1520.

www.mass.gov/marinefisheries