



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

251 Causeway Street, Suite 400, Boston, MA 02114

p: (617) 626-1520 | f: (617) 626-1509

www.mass.gov/marinefisheries



CHARLES D. BAKER
Governor

KARYN E. POLITO
Lt. Governor

KATHLEEN A. THEOHARIDES
Secretary

RONALD S. AMIDON
Commissioner

DANIEL J. MCKIERNAN
Director

March 25, 2022

Marine Fisheries Advisory

Expected 2022 Recreational Black Sea Bass, Summer Flounder, and Scup Measures

On March 10, the Division of Marine Fisheries and the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission reviewed potential recreational fishing limits for black sea bass, summer flounder, and scup for 2022. It was determined that DMF would move forward with the following anticipated limits:

	Open Season	Possession Limit	Size Limit
Black Sea Bass	May 21–September 4	4 fish	16” minimum
Summer Flounder	May 21–September 29	5 fish	16.5” minimum
Scup, Private Vessels & Shore	January 1–December 31	30 fish (150 fish/ vessel maximum)	10” minimum
Scup, For-hire Vessels	January 1–April 30	30 fish	10” minimum
	May 1–June 30	50 fish	
	July 1–December 31	30 fish	

Overview: Black sea bass, summer flounder, and scup are managed under the interstate fishery management plan of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and federal fishery management plan of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC). Recreational measures along the Atlantic coast are set annually to achieve but not exceed each species’ coastwide Recreational Harvest Limit (RHL); these limits are calculated to prevent overfishing by the recreational sector. Recent year(s) coastwide harvest estimates are compared to the coming year’s RHL to determine if a harvest increase or decrease is warranted on a coastwide basis. How such changes are distributed amongst the states is established in the interstate management plans and by additional deliberations of the ASMFC and MAFMC.

Black Sea Bass: Coastwide harvest in recent years has been above the 2022 RHL of 6.74 million pounds, requiring each recreational black sea bass region (MA–NY, NJ, DE–NC) to restrict its regulations to achieve a projected 20.7% decrease in recreational harvest this year. Within our MA–NY region, it was decided that each state would adopt a 16” minimum size (a uniform 1” increase) and pursue additional possession limit and season changes that best suite each state’s fishery to achieve a 20.7% reduction per state. Given wide-ranging preferences for how many fish can be retained and when in Massachusetts, DMF determined a 1-fish bag reduction and minor adjustment to the season would be the least disruptive to the fishery as a whole. By taking

three days off the front end of the season—allowing for the traditional opening of the fishery on the third Saturday of May—only four days need to come off the back end of the season (previously May 18–September 8) when combined with the other changes.

Summer Flounder: Coastwide harvest in recent years has been below the 2022 RHL of 10.36 million pounds, allowing for each recreational summer flounder region (MA, RI, CT-NY, NJ, DE–VA, and NC) to relax its regulations to achieve a projected 16.5% increase in recreational harvest this year. In recognition of the high release rate of summer flounder due to the minimum size limit, DMF focused on reducing the state’s minimum size. Due to the expected availability of fish at 16.5”, the ½-inch reduction is projected to increase harvest by nearly 22%. Accordingly, the season (previously May 23–October 9) is being shortened slightly to accommodate this change, and also aligned to open on the same day as black sea bass. The 5-fish possession limit is unchanged from 2021.

Scup: Coastwide harvest in recent years has been well above the 2022 RHL of 6.08 million pounds, such that not exceeding the 2022 RHL would require a coastwide harvest reduction of over 50% this year. Given the expected socio-economic impact of such a large reduction amidst healthy stock status and a probable commercial quota underage, the ASMFC and MAFMC decided to require a 1” minimum size increase in all states and recommended the same for federal waters, which is projected to achieve a 33% reduction coastwide. For Massachusetts waters, this means a new size limit of 10” for scup, while the season and possession limits remain unchanged. Note that federal waters rules will be set by NOAA Fisheries and may differ from the MAFMC recommendation.

For updates, review DMF’s Recreational Saltwater Fishing Regulations webpage before you go fishing:
www.mass.gov/service-details/recreational-saltwater-fishing-regulations