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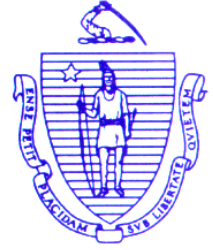
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MarineFisheries Advisory

2013 MASSACHUSETTS RECREATIONAL BLACK SEA BASS, FLUKE, AND SCUP LIMITS APPROVED BY ASMFC

Massachusetts' 2013 recreational fishing regulations for black sea bass, fluke, and scup have been approved by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). Due to the late timing of this approval, the Division of Marine Fisheries (*MarineFisheries*), with the consent of the Massachusetts Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission, is in the process of implementing these regulations on an emergency basis – final action is pending.

Black Sea Bass

In February, the ASMFC approved an addendum to the interstate fishery management plan that allows the states from Massachusetts through New York to adjust their 2013 recreational black sea bass limits on a regional or state-by-state basis. As Massachusetts is unique in that its fishery is most active in the late spring and early summer months, *MarineFisheries* moved to address its black sea bass limits unilaterally.

Each state in the region must implement regulations to reduce its recreational black sea bass harvest by 32% compared to 2012. This is because the fishery's estimated coastwide harvest of 2.99 million pounds in 2012 exceeds the 2013 harvest limit (2.26 million pounds). Nearly 1.1 million pounds of the coastwide 2012 harvest is attributable to Massachusetts.

According to recreational fishery statistics, 72% of Massachusetts 2012 recreational black sea bass fishery occurred during May and June. To accommodate a 32% reduction, *MarineFisheries* either had to substantially limit fishing opportunities during this time period or make substantial reductions to the per angler bag limit throughout the entire fishing season. *MarineFisheries* is aware that the late spring and early summer is critical to the recreational fishery and opted to reduce bag limits rather than the season. However, while drafting this proposal, it came to our attention that a certain segment of the for-hire industry would be severely disadvantaged by low bag limits. Accordingly, *MarineFisheries* developed an alternative fishery proposal for interested for-hire operators that would exempt them from lower bag limits provided they adhere to additional closed periods that are estimated to reduce their harvest by 32%. The ASMFC has approved our implementing one set of regulations for both the private angler and for-hire fisheries, while allowing interested for-hire operators to opt into the alternative (closed season) regulations.

For 2013 the following recreational limits will apply for **black seas bass**:

| Mode | Season | Bag Limit | Minimum Size |
|--|--------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Private Angler | May 11 – October 31 | 3 fish | 14 inches |
| For-Hire | May 11 – October 31 | 3 fish | 14 inches |
| Closed Season For-Hire (LOA required*) | May 11 – June 14 | 10 fish | 14 inches |
| | July 1 – August 11 | 20 fish | 14 inches |
| | September 1 – October 10 | 20 fish | 14 inches |

* To participate in the Closed Season For-Hire Black Sea Bass Fishery, permit holders must apply for a Letter of Authorization (LOA) from *MarineFisheries* by no later than May 1, 2013. Click this [link](#) to see the conditions that will apply and to request an LOA.

Fluke

The ASMFC manages fluke on a state-by-state basis. For 2013, Massachusetts' recreational harvest target for fluke was reduced by 10% to 137,307 fish. Nonetheless, Massachusetts may liberalize its regulations because our estimated 2012 harvest (77,375 fish) is below the 2013 harvest target. Based on past comment from recreational fishermen, *MarineFisheries* proposed, and the ASMFC approved, reducing the minimum size from 16.5 inches to 16 inches.

For 2013 the following recreational limits will apply for **fluke**:

| Mode | Season | Bag Limit | Minimum Size |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Private Angler | May 22 – September 30 | 5 fish | 16 inches |
| For-Hire | May 22 – September 30 | 5 fish | 16 inches |

Scup

The ASMFC manages scup on a regional basis, with the states from Massachusetts through New York composing one region. In 2013, the region's recreational harvest target was reduced by roughly 200,000 fish to 6.78 million fish. However, similar to fluke, recreational fishing limits throughout the region may be liberalized because the region's estimated 2012 harvest (3.37 million fish) is below the 2013 target. In response, the region developed, and the ASMFC approved, an approach that would increase the recreational bag limits for private anglers and anglers on for-hire vessels from 20 to 30 fish and decrease the minimum size to 10 inches. In addition, the period when anglers on a for-hire vessel may possess 45 fish was extended by just over two weeks to cover all of May and June.

For 2013, the following recreational limits will apply for **scup**:

| Mode | Season | Bag Limit | Minimum Size |
|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Private Angler | May 1 – December 31 | 30 fish (150 fish vessel maximum) | 10 inches |
| For-Hire Bonus | May 1 – June 30 | 45 fish | 10 inches |
| For-Hire Regular | July 1 – December 31 | 30 fish | 10 inches |

A subsequent public hearing and comment period will be announced at a later date. For further information, contact *MarineFisheries* at 617-626-1520 or visit our website at www.mass.gov/marinefisheries.