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Marine Fisheries Advisory

Revised Recreational Fishing Season for Black Sea Bass

The Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) announces additional liberalizations to Massachusetts' 2018 recreational black sea bass rules. DMF successfully appealed a prior decision of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) to secure additional access to this abundant resource. The revised rules are as follows:

2018 Recreational Black Sea Bass Limits		
Open Season	Possession Limit	Minimum Size
May 19–September 12	5 fish	15"

These rules add an additional 11 days to the tail end of the season compared to that previously announced. Compared to 2017 (May 20–August 29), the season is 15 days longer, and maintains the third Saturday in May opening date. The possession limit and minimum size are unchanged from 2017 and that previously announced for 2018.

Under Addendum XXX to the interstate management plan for black sea bass, adopted in February, the Northern Region of MA–NY was required to reduce regional harvest by nearly 12% compared to 2017, while states farther to the south were afforded liberalizations. The Northern Region states submitted a joint appeal arguing that this outcome was inconsistent with the intent of the addendum to address inequities in the regulations and did not adequately considering changes in the resource's distribution.

Based on the appeal, on May 3 the ASMFC approved an alternative approach to setting measures for 2018 that, in light of expected resource availability this year, allows the Northern Region to increase its regional harvest by roughly 4% without impacting the remaining states. Regulations within the region were negotiated by the states, per the addendum's guidelines. Massachusetts' regulations represent a projected 15.5% liberalization, a substantial increase from the 4.6% increase originally established for MA.

The ASMFC also committed to adopting a new recreational management approach for 2019 and initiated the development of a white paper to consider the impacts of changes in black sea bass abundance and distribution on management of the recreational and commercial fisheries.

These 2018 recreational black sea bass measures have been implemented by emergency action and are now in effect. Public comment is being collected prior to adoption by final regulation. Refer to the [Public Hearing Notice](#) for additional details on submitting comment.

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