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*Marine Fisheries Advisory*

### **ASMFC Public Hearings & Comment Period on Recreational Black Sea Bass Management**

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The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) is seeking public comment on Draft Addendum XXX to the Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan. The Draft Addendum proposes regional management options for black sea bass recreational fisheries for 2018 and beyond. The document and a full schedule of public hearings are available at [www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org). Massachusetts' hearing will be held:

**January 9, 2018 at 6 PM**  
**Bourne Community Center**  
**239 Main Street**  
**Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts**

Draft Addendum XXX was initiated to consider alternative management approaches for the recreational fishery, including options for regional allocation of the recreational harvest limit (RHL) based on historical harvest and exploitable biomass. The Draft Addendum also includes an option for coastwide management of black sea bass recreational fisheries should a regional approach not be approved for management.

In recent years, challenges in the black sea bass recreational fishery have centered on providing equitable access to the resource in the face of uncertain population size, structure, and distribution. Since 2012, the recreational fishery has been managed under an ad-hoc regional management approach, whereby the states of Massachusetts through New Jersey have individually crafted measures aimed at reducing harvest by the same percent, while the states of Delaware through North Carolina have set their regulations consistent with the federal waters measures. While this approach allowed the states flexibility in setting measures, some states expressed concerns about equity and accountability in constraining harvest to coastwide catch limits. Additionally, the 2016 Benchmark Stock Assessment provided information on the abundance and distribution of the resource along the coast that was not previously available to include in the management program.

Draft Addendum XXX proposes two approaches for regional allocation of the RHL in the black sea bass recreational fishery: (1) allocation based on a combination of stock biomass and harvest information, or (2) allocation based solely on historical harvest. The regional allocation options offer advantages over coastwide regulations by addressing geographic differences in the stock (size, abundance, and seasonality) while allowing for more uniformity in measures between neighboring

states. The Draft Addendum also proposes an option for evaluating harvest and adjusting measures against the annual catch limit, which aims to reduce year to year changes in management measures.

The Draft Addendum is available at

[http://www.asmfc.org/files/PublicInput/BSBDraftAddendumXXX\\_PublicComment.pdf](http://www.asmfc.org/files/PublicInput/BSBDraftAddendumXXX_PublicComment.pdf) and can also be accessed on the Commission website ([www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org)) under *Public Input*.

Stakeholders are encouraged to provide input on Draft Addendum XXX either by attending a state public hearing or providing written comment. To aid the submission of public comment, please refer to the decision tree found in Appendix III on PDF page 23, which outlines the management options being considered. **Public comment will be accepted until 5:00 PM (EST) on January 22, 2018** and should be forwarded to Caitlin Starks, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St., Suite 200 A-N, Arlington, Virginia 22201; 703.842.0741 (fax) or at [comments@asmfc.org](mailto:comments@asmfc.org) (Subject line: Draft Addendum XXX).

Action on the Draft Addendum is scheduled to occur on February 8, at the ASMFC 2018 Winter Meeting in Arlington, VA. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks of the ASMFC, at [cstarks@asmfc.org](mailto:cstarks@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740; or Nichola Meserve of MA DMF at [nichola.meserve@state.ma.us](mailto:nichola.meserve@state.ma.us) or 617-626-1531.