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Marine Fisheries Advisory

Anticipated 2026-2027 Recreational Black Sea Bass Measures

The Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) anticipates filing emergency regulations to amend Massachusetts’ recreational black sea bass fishing limits for 2026-2027. Compared to 2025, the anticipated limits will lower the minimum size by a half-inch and extend the season by six weeks at a 2-fish bag limit (Table 1). These changes will increase recreational anglers’ opportunity to harvest this abundant resource and curtail the number of fish released due to the size limit or season.

Table 1. Anticipated measures for recreational black sea bass in 2026-2027, compared to 2025.

Year	Open Season	Bag Limit	Minimum Size
2025	May 17–September 1	4 fish	16.5”
2026-2027	May 16–August 31 September 1–October 14	4 fish 2 fish	16”

Black sea bass are a coastwide species managed jointly by the Atlantic coastal states and federal partners. This year, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) authorized a 27% increase in harvest opportunity for the Northern Region of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York. These states then worked together to submit a proposed set of recreational measures to the ASMFC that would increase harvest, reduce discards, and better align access within the region. The ASMFC endorsed this set of regional measures earlier this month.

Due to the timing of the interstate management process, emergency rulemaking will be necessary for Massachusetts to implement the changes in time to affect the start of the fishing season. A public comment period and final rulemaking will follow. However, DMF conducted public scoping on stakeholders’ priorities for liberalizing the regulations earlier this year and this input aided in the selection of measures. DMF will announce when these anticipated measures have officially been adopted. We are putting out this notice now to benefit recreational fishers and for-hire operators in their seasonal planning.