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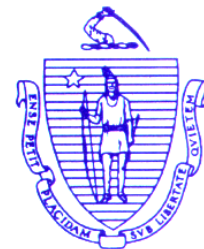
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Marine Fisheries Advisory

2015 Recreational Regulations for Black Sea Bass, Fluke, and Scup

The table below provides Massachusetts' recreational regulations for black sea bass, fluke (summer flounder), and scup for 2015. The fluke and scup regulations are unchanged from 2014, whereas the open season for black sea bass has been reduced to achieve a 33% harvest reduction required by the interstate management plan. Due to late breaking management decisions at the interstate level, the revision for black sea bass is being implemented via emergency rule-making in order for it to take effect prior to the season's onset.

| | Mode | Season | Bag Limit | Size Limit |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Black Sea Bass | Private & For-Hire | May 23 – August 27 | 8 fish | 14" |
| Fluke | Private & For-Hire | May 22 – September 23 | 5 fish | 16" |
| Scup | Private | May 1 – December 31 | 30 fish | 10" |
| | For-Hire | May 1 – June 30 | 45 fish | 10" |
| | | July 1 – December 31 | 30 fish | 10" |

Regarding black sea bass, each state from Massachusetts through New Jersey is required to implement this harvest reduction because their existing regulations are estimated to produce harvest 33% above the 2015 limit. Our evaluation of Massachusetts' 2014 fishery indicated that a reduction in season length was the preferred means to decrease harvest in the Commonwealth.

The selected season begins one week later and closes two and a half weeks earlier compared to 2014. Its selection took into consideration factors including the seasonal distribution pattern of black sea bass, socio-economic impacts, and anticipated compliance with regulations.

We are aware that the later season start date will have economic impacts on any for-hire (charter and party) businesses that have already booked mid-May trips assuming, or hoping for, a season opening similar to last year. However, opening the season on May 16 would have necessitated closing the fishery on August 2, or instituting a mid-season closure, such as during the last two weeks of June. We assessed these alternatives to have a greater socio-economic impact considering that June and August are within the peak fishing and tourism period along our mainland and islands' coast. By waiving one week in May when black sea bass may or may not be starting to arrive in Massachusetts, almost four

weeks in August (when black sea bass will unquestionably be caught) can remain open to harvest. The agency carefully considered the suggestion from some for-hire operators for a late June closure instead of the one-week delay in May, but determined it would have an inordinate impact on the tens of thousands of anglers fishing from private vessels as well as the shore and piers. Their participation in our recreational fisheries has great importance to Massachusetts' shore-side business including tackle shops and hotels.

In addition, compliance with a mid-season closure in June or throughout most of August was a major concern. Law Enforcement officers advised against the mid-season closure in particular. Recreational fishing effort during these times is at or near peak, and closures at these times would exacerbate existing levels of non-compliance among uninformed anglers and increase the risk of further regulatory restrictions next year.