



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Division of Marine Fisheries

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Marine Fisheries Advisory

### Public Scoping on 2023 Recreational Scup and Black Sea Bass Measures

The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries is holding a virtual public scoping meeting regarding the setting of 2023 recreational measures for scup and black sea bass as follows:

Monday, March 13, 2023  
6:30 PM

Zoom Registration Link:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_JN44Zvd9SByvCcKhJBC\\_nQ](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_JN44Zvd9SByvCcKhJBC_nQ)

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) recently voted to implement coastwide changes in recreational regulations for scup and black sea bass in 2023. Both species are subject to mandatory **10% recreational harvest reductions** based on projections that recreational harvest in 2023 will exceed established limits if the 2022 measures are left in place. The states of Massachusetts through North Carolina are following ASMFC regional management processes to develop state regulatory options to achieve the coastwide harvest reductions. The ASMFC will meet on March 2 to approve the states' range of options.

On March 13, DMF will collect public input on the ASMFC-approved range of options developed for Massachusetts' recreational scup and black sea bass fisheries to meet the required reductions. (Written comment may also be provided through March 15, as described below.) The Massachusetts Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission will provide DMF with feedback regarding a preferred management approach at its next business meeting on March 21. It is expected that DMF will be able to announce the anticipated rules shortly thereafter, which will be implemented by emergency rulemaking given the short timeline for state compliance for the 2023 fishing season.

**Scup (10% Reduction):** The ASMFC and MAFMC agreed to reduce the federal possession limit from 50 fish to 40 fish and shorten the open fishing season from year-round to May 1–December 31. These measures do not achieve the full 10% reduction, thus the states are expected to modify their state waters regulations to collectively achieve the full reduction. The states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York form the “Northern Region” for recreational scup management and have an informal agreement to implement uniform scup recreational regulations for the sake of interstate consistency. MA DMF has worked with corresponding agencies in the Northern Region to develop a consistent set of regulations for 2023 to achieve a regional 10% reduction. These revisions focus on achieving most of the required reduction through a size limit change, while also complementing the anticipated federal waters open season and possession limit.

SCUP	Fishing Mode	Minimum Size	Possession Limit	Open Season
2022 Measures and Proposed 2023 Revisions	Private Vessel	<del>10"</del> <b>10.5"</b>	30 fish/person (150 fish/vessel max.)	<del>Jan 1 – Dec 31</del> <b>May 1 – Dec 31</b>
	Shore	<del>10"</del> <b>9.5"</b>	30 fish/person	<del>Jan 1 – Dec 31</del> <b>May 1 – Dec 31</b>
	For-hire Vessel	<del>10"</del> <b>10.5"</b>	<del>30 fish/person</del>	Jan 1 – Apr 30
			<del>50 fish/person</del> <b>40 fish/person</b>	May 1 – Jun 30
			30 fish/person	Jul 1 – Dec 31

**Black Sea Bass (10% Reduction):** The ASMFC and MAFMC agreed to allow states to develop state-specific recreational regulations to each achieve the required reduction rather than implement uniform coastwide regulations. MA DMF has developed a range of options to achieve a 10% state-specific harvest reduction that focus on changing the size limit (Option 1) or the possession limit (Options 2-6), with resultant changes to the season length. All options include moving the season opening date one day earlier to maintain a Saturday start. Several options (4-6) consider “mode splits” that modify the private vessel and shore angler regulations while maintaining status quo regulations (other than the start date shift) for anglers aboard for-hire vessels.

BLACK SEA BASS	Fishing Mode	Minimum Size	Possession Limit	Open Season
2022 Measures	Private Vessel, Shore, and For-hire Vessel (“All”)	16”	4 fish	May 21 – Sep 4
Option 1	All	<b>16.5”</b>	4 fish	<b>May 20 – Sep 7</b>
Option 2	All	16”	<b>3 fish</b>	<b>May 20 – Sep 2</b>
Option 3	All	16”	4 fish	<b>May 20 – Jun 30</b>
			2 fish	<b>Jul 1 – Sep 11</b>
Option 4	Private Vessel/Shore	16”	<b>3 fish</b>	<b>May 20 – Aug 31</b>
	For-hire Vessel		4 fish	
Option 5	Private Vessel/Shore	16”	<b>2 fish</b>	<b>May 20 – Oct 24</b>
	For-hire Vessel		4 fish	<b>May 20 – Sep 4</b>
Option 6	Private Vessel/Shore	16”	<b>3 fish</b>	<b>May 20 – Jun 30</b>
			<b>1 fish</b>	Jul 1 – Aug 31
			<b>3 fish</b>	<b>Sep 1 – Oct 23</b>
	For-hire Vessel		4 fish	<b>May 20 – Sep 4</b>

### Directions for Providing Public Input

You must [register online](#) in advance to attend the virtual meeting on March 13; after registering, you will receive a confirmation e-mail containing information to join the meeting. Those unable to attend the meeting or preferring to submit written input can e-mail Director Daniel McKiernan at [marine.fish@mass.gov](mailto:marine.fish@mass.gov). Such e-mail must be received by Wednesday, March 15 to be considered by DMF in selecting the preferred management approach. For more information, please contact Nichola Meserve at [nichola.meserve@mass.gov](mailto:nichola.meserve@mass.gov).