



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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Marine Fisheries Advisory

Expected 2023 Recreational Black Sea Bass and Scup Measures

On March 21, the Division of Marine Fisheries and the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission reviewed potential recreational fishing limits for scup and black sea bass for 2023. It was determined that DMF would move forward with the following anticipated limits:

	Fishing Mode	Open Season	Possession Limit	Minimum Size
Black Sea Bass	Shore, Private Vessel & For-hire Vessel	May 20–September 7	4 fish	16.5"
Scup	Shore	May 1–December 31	30 fish	9.5"
	Private Vessel	May 1–December 31	30 fish (150 fish/ vessel maximum)	10.5"
	For-hire Vessel	May 1–June 30	40 fish	10.5"
July 1–December 31		30 fish		

Overview: Black sea bass and scup are managed under the interstate fishery management plan of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and federal fishery management plan of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. Recreational measures along the Atlantic coast are set annually to achieve but not exceed each species’ established harvest limit; these limits are calculated to prevent overfishing by the recreational sector. For 2023, it was determined that 10% coastwide recreational harvest reductions were needed for both black sea bass and scup. These rule changes reflect Massachusetts’ contribution to achieving the coastwide harvest reduction and sustaining the high biomasses of these natural resources.

Black Sea Bass: To achieve a state-specific 10% harvest reduction, Massachusetts’ black sea bass recreational minimum size will increase ½" to 16.5" for 2023. This is projected to achieve slightly more than the required reduction, so the season will be extended by four days, including opening on a Saturday. The possession limit will remain unchanged at 4 fish per angler.

Scup: To achieve a regional 10% harvest reduction for 2023, the states of Massachusetts through New York agreed to increase the scup minimum size limit for anglers fishing from vessels (private and for-hire) by ½" to 10.5", close the fishery from January–April, and decrease the possession limit during the for-hire vessel “bonus season” (May–June in Massachusetts) to 40 fish. This is projected to achieve slightly more than the required reduction, so the minimum size limit for anglers fishing from shore, where larger scup are less available, will be decreased by ½" to 9.5". Except for the for-hire bonus season, the possession limit remains unchanged at 30 fish per angler (with a cap of 150 fish per private vessel).

Refer to the DMF website for a full list of 2023 recreational saltwater fishing regulations:
<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/recreational-saltwater-fishing-regulations>