

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Marine Resources Headquarters

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Marine Resource Advisory Council (MRAC)
FROM: James Gilmore
RE: 2016 Recreational Black Sea Bass Regulations
DATE: January 13, 2016

ISSUE: Black sea bass recreational harvest is projected to exceed 2015 limits in the northern region. New York (along with all states from Massachusetts to New Jersey) is required to develop more restrictive rules governing recreational black sea bass fishing in order to restrain harvest to the 2016 limits. The required reduction is currently estimated by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission at around 23%, but this number is preliminary and based on projections, as the MRIP Wave 6 data are not yet available.

The purpose of this memo is to provide Councilors with some idea of what the required reduction could look like in terms of regulatory adjustments so that they can begin to discuss the matter with constituents and provide the BMR with feedback.

Wave 6 of 2015 had mild weather and according to reports black sea bass fishing was good, so there is potential for substantial harvest. In the preliminary options below, it is assumed that Wave 6 harvest was equal to the 15 year maximum (~56,000 fish) but MRIP doesn't always pick up fishing in Wave 6 well. After Wave 6 harvest estimates become available in mid-February, the required reduction and possible options may be adjusted after considering feedback from MRAC and the public.

Compliance with the minimum size limit in 2015 was poor and *changes to the minimum size will not be considered for 2016.*

Options provided below are subject to change and approval by the ASMFC Technical Committee and Management Board.

2015 (current) Regulations:

14" minimum size limit, 8 fish from July 15 – Oct. 31, 10 fish from Nov. 1 – Dec. 31.

Note: Federal Wave 5 closure in 2016 will be Sept. 22 – Oct. 21

Preliminary 2016 Options:

14" min. size, 4 fish from July 15 – Oct. 21

14" min. size, 4 fish from July 25 – Dec. 31

14" min. size, 5 fish from July 30 – Dec. 31

14" min. size, 5 fish from July 15 – Oct. 9

14" min. size, 4 fish from July 15 – Sept. 26 and Oct. 22 – Dec. 31

14" min. size, 5 fish from July 18 – Sept. 21 and Oct. 22 – Dec. 31

14" min. size, 5 fish from July 15 – Sept. 21 and Oct. 22 – Dec. 5

DATA:

MONTHS	MAY-JUN	JUL-AUG	SEP-OCT	NOV-DEC
WAVE	3 (CLOSED)	4	5	6 (15 YR MAX)
2015 NEW YORK HARVEST (IN FISH)	1,189	472,415	237,090	55,754
REDUCTION PER DAY	-	-1.28%	-0.51%	-0.12%

POSSESSION LIMIT	REDUCTION
3	-22.6%
4	-14.5%
5	-8.4%
6	-4.8%

Notes:

1. All data used and shown here is from MRIP website queries and downloads
<http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/recreational-fisheries/index>

2. Reduction value from season loss is not additive with reduction value from decreased possession limit. Simply adding up bag limit changes and days lost will have you close, but over-estimate the actual reduction by ~2-3%.

3. NYS currently has an increased possession limit during Wave 6. Calculating reduction changes with a "split bag" is time consuming and this can be done after Wave 6 data is available in mid-February 2016 if there is interest. If harvest during Wave 6 is high, it will cost more to keep the higher possession limit and more will be gained by decreasing it.