



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

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Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Allocation Review in Response to Revised MRIP Data

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MAFMC-managed fisheries with major recreational components include summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish, all of which are jointly managed with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission). Stock assessments incorporating the revised MRIP data for these species were recently peer reviewed and are now being used in the management process to set annual specifications. A summer flounder assessment was peer reviewed and accepted by the Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Review Committee (SARC) in November 2018 and accepted for management use by the Council's SSC in February 2019. Summer flounder 2019 specifications were revised mid-year to reflect the new assessment results. Operational stock assessments for black sea bass, scup, and bluefish were peer reviewed in August 2019 and accepted by the SSC in September 2019 for use in developing 2020-2021 specifications. The Council adopted 2020-2021 catch and landings limits based on these operational assessments in October 2019.

The Council and Commission are in the process of developing joint FMP amendments that will include re-evaluation of the commercial/recreational allocations for these species, in large part to consider the allocation impacts of the revised MRIP data. A Bluefish Allocation Amendment initiated in December 2017 will resume development now that a stock assessment with the revised MRIP data is available. The Council and Commission also initiated an FMP amendment in October 2019 to reconsider the commercial/recreational allocations for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. Scoping for this amendment will take place in early 2020.

Both amendments will include evaluation of a broad range of alternatives for sector allocation, including but not limited to updating the existing allocation base years with revised MRIP data. It is expected that both actions will take at least 2 years to complete. Regardless of whether allocations are ultimately revised through these actions, in the long term, the Council's recently approved allocation review policy¹ states that all relevant FMP allocations will be reviewed at least every 10 years; however, the Council may choose to conduct reviews more frequently based on public interest or other factors.

MAFMC fisheries with smaller recreational components include Atlantic mackerel, chub mackerel, and spiny dogfish. Atlantic mackerel and spiny dogfish have annually varying amounts deducted from the total allowable landings to account for expected recreational harvest rather than a set percentage allocation. An assessment update for Atlantic mackerel incorporating revised MRIP data is expected in Spring 2020, while a research track assessment for spiny dogfish is planned for 2022. There are currently no plans to reconsider the commercial/recreational split for these species. An amendment to add chub mackerel as a MAMFC managed species is pending NMFS approval. If approved, the commercial and recreational fisheries would be managed with shared catch limits (i.e., no sector allocation).

¹ Available at: http://www.mafmc.org/s/MAFMC-Fishery-Allocation-Review-Policy_2019-08.pdf.