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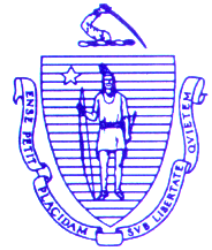
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Marine Fisheries Advisory

2016 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 2016. The fluke and scup regulations are unchanged from 2015; however, the regulations for black sea bass have been amended to achieve a mandatory 23% harvest reduction. The revisions for black sea bass are being implemented via emergency rule-making in order for them to take effect prior to the season's onset. A public hearing will be held later this year.

	Mode	Season	Possession Limit	Size Limit
Black Sea Bass*	Private & For-Hire	May 21–August 31	5 fish	15"
Fluke	Private & For-Hire	May 22–September 23	5 fish	16"
Scup*	Private	May 1–December 31	30 fish (up to 150 fish/ vessel with 5 or more anglers aboard)	10"
	For-Hire	May 1–June 30	45 fish	10"
		July 1–December 31	30 fish	10"

* Black sea bass and scup may be filleted but not skinned while at-sea. No more than two fillets per allowed fish may be possessed.

Regarding black sea bass, each state from Massachusetts through New Jersey is required to implement the 23% harvest reduction because their existing regulations are estimated to produce harvest in excess of the 2016 recreational limit (2.82 million pounds coastwide). The interstate plan encourages the states to synchronize regulations where possible, but consistency is not required.

The Division held a scoping meeting and collected written input last month on possible options to achieve the mandatory reduction. Due to seasonal distribution and abundance patterns of black sea bass in Massachusetts waters and varied angler preferences for season length and timing versus possession limit cuts, the Division was challenged to find a set of regulations that would not have profound negative impacts on some segment of the fishery without also raising the minimum size limit. As a consequence of raising the size limit from 14" to 15" and reducing the possession limit from eight fish to five fish, we are able to maintain season length, including the May 21 start date requested by a large segment of the for-hire fishery while still remaining open throughout most of the summer as favored by the majority of private anglers and other for-hire businesses that commented on the proposed options.

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