

# **New Jersey Marine Fisheries Council Recreational Black Sea Bass Advisory Committee Report**

March 29, 2022

A meeting of the NJ Marine Fisheries Council's Recreational Black Sea Bass Advisory Committee was held via webinar on March 29, 2022 to discuss management options for the New Jersey recreational black sea bass fishery for the 2022 fishing year.

## **2022 Season**

At their March 2022 meeting, the ASMFC approved the State of New Jersey's conservation equivalency proposal methodology for the 2022 black sea bass season. Under this proposal, New Jersey is required to reduce harvest by 20.7 percent as required by the ASMFC's accountability measures since New Jersey has exceeded our harvest allocation 3 out of the last 4 years. The current 2021 New Jersey recreational black sea bass regulations are an open season from May 15 – June 22 with a 10-fish possession limit and a 12.5 inch size limit, July 1 – July 31 with a 2-fish possession limit and a 12.5 inch size limit, October 8 – October 31 with a 10-fish possession limit and a 12.5 inch size limit, and November 1 - December 31 with a 15-fish possession limit and a 13 inch size limit. The Committee reviewed 7 options, developed 9 more options during the meeting and ultimately trimmed 16 potential options to following 4 options;

1. Open Season from May 17 – June 19 with a 8-fish possession limit and a 12.5 inch size limit; July 15 – August 31 with a 2-fish possession limit and a 12.5 inch size limit, October 1 – October 20 with a 8-fish possession limit and a 12.5 inch size limit, and November 1 – December 24 with a 10-fish possession limit and a 13 inch size limit.

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2. Open Season from May 20 – June 19 with a 8-fish possession limit and a 12.5 inch size limit; July 1 – August 31 with a 2-fish possession limit and a 12.5 inch size limit, October 11 – October 31 with a 8-fish possession limit and a 12.5 inch size limit, November 1 – November 11 with a 8-fish possession limit and a 13 inch size limit, and December 9 - December 31 with a 8-fish possession limit and a 13 inch size limit.
3. Open Season from May 17 – June 19 with a 10-fish possession limit and a 13 inch size limit; July 1 – August 31 with a 2-fish possession limit and a 13 inch size limit, October 12 – October 31 with a 10-fish possession limit and a 13 inch size limit, November 1 – December 31 with a 15-fish possession limit and a 13 inch size limit.
4. Open Season from May 17 – June 19 with a 10-fish possession limit and a 13 inch size limit; July 1 – August 26 with a 2-fish possession limit and a 13 inch size limit, October 7 – October 30 with a 10-fish possession limit and a 13 inch size limit, November 11 – December 30 with a 14-fish possession limit and a 13 inch size limit.

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		Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6		
Preferred	1	Bag	0	0	8	2	8	10	% Change / Days
		Size	0	0	12.5	12.5	12.5	13	-20.7%
		Days	0	0	34	48	20	54	156
	Season			5/17-6/19	7/15-8/31	10/1-10/20	11/1-12/24		

		Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6		
Second	2	Bag	0	0	8	2	8	8	% Change / Days
		Size	0	0	12.5	12.5	12.5	13	-20.7%
		Days	0	0	31	62	21	38	152
	Season			5/20-6/19	7/1-8/31	10/11-10/31	11/1-11/15 and 12/9-12/31		

		Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6		
Third	3	Bag	0	0	10	2	10	15	% Change / Days
		Size	0	0	13	13	13	13	-21.0%
		Days	0	0	34	62	20	61	177
	Season			5/17-6/19	7/1-8/31	10/12-10/31	11/1-12/31		

		Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6		
Fourth	4	Bag	0	0	10	2	10	14	% Change / Days
		Size	0	0	13	13	13	13	-20.7%
		Days	0	0	34	57	24	50	165
	Season			5/17-6/19	7/1-8/26	10/7-10/30	11/11-12/30		

The committee's preferred option is number 1. Advisors and Council recognized the many obstacles presented to the anglers of New Jersey under a 20.7 percent required reduction. The options that were developed did not come easily and several hours of deliberation took place. Several comments were made with concern of increasing the size limit from 12.5 inches to 13 inches due to the increased discard mortality that would occur and ultimately be included with the New Jersey harvest potentially requiring yet another reduction in the future. Dates of concern included ensuring that Memorial Day and Father's Day were open in the Spring. Advisors and Council felt preserving the 2-fish possession limit in the summer was critical and

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decreasing other seasonal possession limits to anything less than 8 would be detrimental to the fishery and the anglers that prosecute it. Council felt including an example of an increased size limit illustrated the effect of increasing the size limit and subsequent days open. Concern was discussed about decreasing the possession limit for 2022 and demonstrated later that if New Jersey is given an opportunity to liberalize the black sea bass fishery in the future, increasing the possession limit would be available. It should be noted that advisors requested consideration of splitting management options between sectors moving forward where private anglers and vessels would have different measures than for-hire vessels. The committee recommends adopting the measures proposed in Option 1 for New Jersey's 2022 recreational black sea bass fishery.