

States Schedule Hearings on Draft Addendum XIX to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP

States from Massachusetts through North Carolina have scheduled their hearings to gather public comment on Draft Addendum XIX to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The dates, times and locations of the scheduled meetings follow:

New York Dept. of Environmental Conservation

June 26, 2007; 7:00 PM

205 North Belle Mead Road, Suite 1

East Setauket, New York

Contact: Steve Heins at 631/444-0436

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

July 2, 2007; 6:30 PM

Ocean County Administrative Building

101 Hooper Avenue

Public Hearing Room #119

Toms River, New Jersey

Contact: Peter Himchak at 609/633-2408

The Draft Addendum addresses three issues under the current management programs for summer flounder, scup and black sea bass. These are the black sea bass commercial management strategy for 2008, the summer flounder recreational allocation strategy, and the stock status determination criteria for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass.

Black Sea Bass Commercial Management Strategy

Since 2003, the black sea bass commercial fishery has been managed through a state-by-state allocation system, with each state allocated a percentage of the coastwide quota. Under this system, states are provided the flexibility to manage their quota for the greatest benefits of their commercial fishing industries, with the goal of ensuring a continuous and steady supply of black sea bass over the fishing season and equitable distribution of black sea bass to fishermen who have traditionally landed black sea bass in the state. This management strategy is set to expire by December 31, 2007. If the strategy is not revised or extended by a new addendum, the system will revert back to the quarterly quota system established by the FMP. ***Draft Addendum XIX presents options to extend the current management strategy by two years, five years, 10 years, or indefinitely.***

Summer Flounder Recreational Allocation Strategy

Currently, summer flounder state recreational allocations are based on the proportion of state landings to coastwide landings reported in 1998. Managers have raised concern that a single year allocation may not be the most effective method to manage the summer flounder recreational fishery. This system also provides states the flexibility to develop state-specific conservation equivalent management measures to achieve the coastwide recreational harvest limit. ***Draft Addendum XIX considers modifying the present system of conservation equivalency to allow for the formation of alternative state-by-state shares in the recreational fishery.***

Stock Status Determination Criteria

Currently, the Board must undertake a new addendum or plan amendment in order to incorporate new stock status determination criteria (i.e., changes to biological reference points) that may result from updated, peer-reviewed science. Since the development and implementation of a new addendum or amendment can take some time (six months in the case of an addendum and 12 to 16 months in the case of an amendment), there can be a considerable lag in the incorporation of the biological reference points in the annual specification setting process for all three species. ***Draft Addendum XIX proposes allowing the Board and Council to adjust biological reference points during the species' annual specification setting process in lieu of the more protracted addendum/amendment process currently required.*** Reference points are used to determine whether or not any of the FMP's stocks are overfished or experiencing overfishing.

Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft Addendum either by attending public hearings or providing written comments. Copies of Draft Addendum XIX can be obtained via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News or by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400. Public comment will be accepted until **5:00 PM on July 11, 2007** and should be forwarded to Toni Kerns, Senior Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator for Management, at 1444 'Eye' Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC 20005; (202)289-6051 (fax) or tkerns@asmfc.org (Subject line: Addendum XIX). For more information, please contact Toni Kerns at (202) 289-6400 or tkerns@asmfc.org.

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ASMFC Vision: Healthy, self-sustaining populations of all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015.