Black Sea Bass

Review of 2017 Specifications

August 9, 2016
Virginia Beach, VA
Outline

1. Stock Status and Data Update
2. Recent Fishery Performance
3. Advisory Panel Fishery Performance Reports
4. Regulatory Review
5. Staff Recommendation
6. SSC Recommendations
7. Monitoring Committee Recommendations
8. Advisory Panel webinar comments
Stock Status

- 2009: Last accepted benchmark: Data Poor Stock Working Group and Peer Review Panel
  - Statistical catch and length (SCALE) model

- 2012: Last assessment update
  - Not overfished and overfishing not occurring in 2011

- 2014, 2015, 2016: Data Updates
Fishing Mortality

2011 $F = 0.21$; below $F_{\text{MSY}} = F_{40\%} = 0.44$
2011 SSB = 24.57 m lb; 102% of SSB_{MSY} = 24.00 m lb
2016 Data Update

- 2015 commercial landings = 2.45 mil lb
  - ~11% over commercial quota = 2.20 mil lb

- 2015 recreational landings (north of Cape Hatteras) = 3.97 mil lb
  - ~70% over recreational harvest limit = 2.33 mil lb
Note on 2015 Recreational Landings

- Aug. 1: Notified of MRIP estimate revisions for 2013-2015
- New estimation approach to address low sample size issues and resulting outliers
- New data to be posted ~Aug. 15
2016 Data Update

- Black sea bass catch, ME-NC, 1989-2015

The bar chart shows the catch and discards of black sea bass from 1989 to 2015 in Maine (ME) and North Carolina (NC). The y-axis represents the catch, while the x-axis represents the years from 1989 to 2015. The chart includes data on discards and landings for each year.
2016 Data Update

- Length frequency of total catch, 2013-2015

![Graph showing length frequency of total catch for 2013, 2014, and 2015. The graph has a y-axis labeled 'Frequency (000s)' and an x-axis labeled 'Length (cm).']
2016 Data Update

For-Hire survey begun
NEFSC spring offshore 2015 index declined compared to 2014
2016 Data Update - Surveys

Recruitment index spring 2015 was below average but an increase over 2014 estimate
2016 Data Update - Surveys
Fishery Performance

- Commercial landings
- Recreational landings
- Total landings

Landings (mil lb)
# Fishery Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Comm. Landings (mil lb)</th>
<th>Comm. Quota (mil lb)</th>
<th>Comm. % Overage (+)/Underage(-)</th>
<th>Rec. Landings (mil lb)</th>
<th>Rec. Harvest Limit (mil lb)</th>
<th>Rec. % Overage (+)/Underage(-)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>-34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>+1%</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>+142%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>+4%</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>+9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>+59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>+11%</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>+70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-yr Avg.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+3%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+49%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Commercial Quota Monitoring
Environmental and Ecological Issues

- 2015 very cold water well into the summer, which impacted use of quota by trawlers vs. potters
- Generally, large abundance of sea bass observed in many areas
- Predation on other important species, e.g., lobster
General Management Issues

- Called for increased quotas
- Current quotas do not reflect apparent high biomass
Fishery Performance Report

Market and Economic Issues

- Commercial fishery is not able to meet high demand due to quotas
- Poaching and illegal sales are significant
Fishery Performance Report

Commercial Management Issues

- No need for minimum fish size given minimum mesh size
- Directing on black sea bass is limited under low quotas
- Request for quota rollover if underages occur
Fishery Performance Report

Recreational Management Issues

- Concern about accuracy of MRIP estimates
- Frustration regarding late release of final 2015 data
- Large increase in preliminary vs. final 2015 landings driven by unreasonable state/wave/mode estimates
Recreational Management Issues

- Serious consideration should be given to alternative methods of recreational data collection
- Advisors debated feasibility of voluntary or mandatory private angler reporting
Recreational Management Issues

- Non-compliance is a huge and growing problem given increasing lack of faith in the management system.

- Commercial advisors concerned with lack of pound-for-pound paybacks for recent overages.
Fishery Performance Report

Research Needs

- Alternative methods of recreational data collection
- Additional tagging studies to further explore the possibility of separate population segments within management unit
Advisor Written Comments

- Some frustrated with ad hoc regional management/differing regulations by state
- High size limits will increase discards and non-compliance
- 50 lb commercial NY quotas cause high discards
Advisor Written Comments

- Virginia fishery is different than northern states
  - Would like winter fishery back

- Recommend *status quo* measures – especially given attempt to align with blueline season
Advisor Written Comments

- Mesh size for sea bass should be raised to be the same as scup
Regulatory Review

- SSC did not accept the OFL from the assessment
- Assessment Level: OFL cannot be specified given current state of knowledge
Regulatory Review

- SSC has used alternative ABC recommendation approaches since 2010

2010-2015: Constant Catch

- 2010 – 2013 (initial) = 4.50 million lb (2,041 mt)
- 2013 (revised) – 2015 = 5.50 million lb (2,494 mt)
Regulatory Review

September 2015: SSC adopted new methodology for ABC recommendations for stocks without an accepted OFL
- Uses MSE approach as developed by Carruthers et al. 2014

Revised 2016-2017 ABC = 6.67 mil lb or 3,024 mt
No reduction in commercial or recreational ACL to ACT for management uncertainty
No changes to:

- Minimum fish size (11”)
- Minimum mesh size (4.5” diamond)
- Seasonal mesh size thresholds (500 lb Jan 1-Mar 31; 100 lb Apr 1-Dec 31)
- Pot and trap escape vent and ghost panel requirements
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<td>ABC</td>
<td>6.67 mil lb (3,024 mt)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial ACL=ACT</td>
<td>3.15 mil lb (1,428 mt)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreational ACL=ACT</td>
<td>3.52 mil lb (1,597 mt)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Quota</td>
<td>2.71 mil lb (1,230 mt)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreational Harvest Limit</td>
<td>2.82 mil lb (1,280 mt)</td>
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Staff Recommendation

- Maintain implemented 2017 limits at this time, given Dec. 2016 benchmark
- Revise as necessary in early 2017 based on assessment results
Staff Recommendation

- No changes to commercial measures at this time
- Further exploration of issues raised at Dec. Council/board meeting
  - Mesh size standardization
  - Summarizing past gear studies
SSC Recommendation

- No change to 2017 ABC
  - Will review in early 2017 with assessment results

- Concerns about catch overages, illegal catches, and under-reporting
No change to 2017 ACLs and ACTs

No changes to commercial measures at this time

– Will explore issues raised at Dec. Council/Board meeting
## Current Catch & Landings Limits

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**Black Sea Bass 2016 & 2017**

**ABC = 6.67 mil lb**
September 2015 SSC Recommendation

**Landings portion = 5.53 mil lb**
2012 projections/2014 proportions (83%)

- **Commercial landings = 2.71 mil lb**
  49% of ABC landings portion (per FMP)

- **Recreational landings = 2.82 mil lb**
  51% of ABC landings portion (per FMP)

**Commercial ACL = 3.15 mil lb**
Commercial landings plus commercial discards

**Commercial ACT = 3.15 mil lb**
Recommended by Monitoring Committee; equal to or reduced from ACL to account for management uncertainty

**Commercial Quota = 2.71 mil lb**
ACT minus commercial discards

**Discards portion = 1.13 mil lb**
2012 projections/2014 proportions (17%)

- **Commercial discards = 0.44 mil lb**
  39% of ABC discards portion (avg. % of total discards attributable to commercial fishery 2012-2014)

- **Recreational discards = 0.70 mil lb**
  62% of ABC discards portion (avg. % of total discards attributable to recreational fishery 2012-2014)

**Recreational ACL = 3.52 mil lb**
Recreational landings plus recreational discards

**Recreational ACT = 3.52 mil lb**
Recommended by Monitoring Committee; equal to or reduced from ACL to account for management uncertainty

**Recreational Harvest Limit = 2.82 mil lb**
ACT minus recreational discards

**State Quotas**
July 29 Webinar

- Frustration with lack of responsiveness to advisor comments & suggestions
- Widespread lack of confidence in MRIP; estimates should not be used for management
Frustration regarding late publication of final rule

- Concerned with possible adjustment to measures; would disproportionately impact southern states
- Difficulty making business decisions