Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass
Framework and Addendum on
Conservation Equivalency, Block Island Sound Transit, & Slot Limits

Council and Board Meeting
August 15, 2018
Objectives

- Council and Board
  - Review alternatives and initial impacts analysis
  - Approve range of alternatives

- Board only:
  - Approve Draft Addendum XXXI for public comment
Alternatives/Options

- Set 1: Black sea bass conservation equivalency (CE)
- Set 2: Summer flounder CE
- Set 3: Block Island Sound transit
- Set 4: Slot limits (Council-only)
BSB Conservation Equivalency

- 1A: No action
- 1B: Allow BSB recreational conservation equivalency (CE) using summer flounder process
- 1C: Allow BSB recreational CE using summer flounder process and allowing CE to rollover from one year to next
Summer Flounder CE process

- **Dec:** Council/Board - coastwide measures or CE?
  - If CE:
    - Non-preferred coastwide measures
    - Precautionary default measures

- **Jan:** States/regions submit proposals, TC reviews

- **Feb:** Board considers proposals for approval

- **Apr:** Commission sends letter to NMFS certifying that state/regional measures will constrain harvest to RHL

- **May:** NMFS waives federal waters measures through Dec 31
CE Rollover

- Federal waters measures typically waived in May – expires Dec 31
- From Jan 1 – May, non-preferred coastwide measures are in effect in federal waters
- For CE to roll over (1C), non-preferred coastwide and precautionary default measures would need to be appropriate for RHL in both years
Summer Flounder CE Rollover

- 2A: No action
- 2B: Allow summer flounder CE to rollover from one year to next
CE Alternatives/Options

- This action does not
  - Implement BSB CE
  - Define the approach for determining state/regional measures (RHL allocations, data to be used, methodology, etc.)

- Details of CE in any given year will be determined through future ASMFC actions

- Current summer flounder process allows for state-by-state or regional measures – BSB alternatives would also allow that
Fishermen must abide by federal regulations when returning to the mainland from state waters around Block Island.

Recent fall BSB rec. closure in federal waters, but open in state waters.
Block Island Sound Transit

All alternatives are for

- Summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass only
- Only state permit holders (fed permit holders still bound by most restrictive reg)

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Block Island Sound Transit

- 3A: No action
- 3B: Transit for RI state-only commercial and recreational permit holders in RI transit corridor
  - Would apply to differences in state and federal
    - Seasons
    - Possession limits
    - Min. fish sizes
Block Island Sound Transit

3C: Transit for RI, CT, NY, and MA permit holders in striped bass transit area

- Permit holders:
  - 3C-1: Only recreational OR
  - 3C-2: Recreational & commercial

- Applying to differences in state and federal
  - 3C-3: Fishing seasons AND/OR
  - 3C-4: Possession limits AND/OR
  - 3C-5: Minimum fish sizes
Slot Limits

- 4A: No action
- 4B: Update Council’s FMP to allow use of a maximum size limit
  - Would allow for regular slots, split slots, and trophy fish

- Council-only
- No change needed to ASMFC FMP
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alts/Options</th>
<th>SF, S, BSB</th>
<th>Socio-economic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No action (1A)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSB CE (1B &amp; 1C)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CE rollover for BSB and SF (1C and 2B)</td>
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<tr>
<td>No action (3A)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RI-specific corridor (3B)</td>
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<td>Mostly +</td>
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<tr>
<td>Striped bass corridor (3C and all sub alts/options)</td>
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<td>Mostly +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No action (4A)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Mostly -</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allow use of max size (4B)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+ and -</td>
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Potential Impacts of BSB CE

*Impacts to black sea bass*

- Fishing effort/mortality primarily constrained by RHL
- RHL based on best available science, intended to prevent overfishing = positive impacts
- CE won’t have different impacts than RHL
Potential Impacts of BSB CE

Positive socio-economic impacts

- Federal waters measures would not be different than state waters.
- State waters regs can be tailored to fishery characteristics in individual states/regions (vs uniform coastwide measures in fed waters).
- Potential for increased angler satisfaction, decreased confusion and non-compliance.
Potential Impacts of CE Rollover

- Administrative in nature – no impacts to black sea bass or summer flounder stocks
- Positive socio-economic impacts
  - Would not need rule-making to waive fed measures each year (time and cost savings)
  - Would not have different fed/state measures for only part of the year
  - Reduced potential for angler confusion
Impacts to summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass

- Slight increase in fishing effort in state waters around Block Island
- Degree of increase depends on alternative(s) selected
- Fishing effort/mortality will continue to be primarily constrained by the RHL and quota
- RHL/quota based on best available scientific info, intended to prevent overfishing = positive impacts
Socio-economic impacts

- Slight increase in fishing effort in and harvest from state waters around Block Island
- Increased fishing opportunities, revenues = positive socio-economic impacts
- Enforcement challenges (vary by alternative) = negative socio-economic impacts
Slot Limit Impacts

- In theory, slot limits should have positive impacts on recruitment by protecting larger fish which contribute more to spawning than smaller fish.
- Previous analysis for summer flounder.
- No analysis for scup and black sea bass.
2009 MC Slot Analysis

- Slot limits would increase number of fish harvested
- Discards may increase, but total removals would likely increase
- Increased removals in numbers of fish = increased fishing mortality rate
- Marginal benefits to SSB under some specific slot limits
- Trophy fish eliminated SSB benefits
Small reduction in total number of female summer flounder harvested

Increased harvest per angler (in #s of fish)

Generally lower harvest in weight and more discards in weight

Higher and more frequent ACL overages
Slot Limit Impacts

- Negative impacts to summer flounder, especially under current stock status
  - Increased removals in numbers of fish
  - Increased fishing mortality rate
  - Any increases in SSB may be minor

- Negligible or slight negative impacts to scup?
  - Females and males have similar growth rates
  - Not a particularly long-lived species
  - Potential increased fishing mortality rate
  - Biomass above target
Slot Limit Impacts

- Negligible or slight negative impacts to black sea bass?
  - Males tend to be larger than females
  - Stock is likely resilient to the removal of large males due to contribution of secondary males to spawning
  - Concerns about discard mortality for larger fish due to barotrauma
  - Potential increased fishing mortality rate
  - Biomass above target
Slot Limit Impacts

Mixed socio-economic impacts

- **Positive**
  - Higher removals in numbers of fish (increased angler satisfaction)

- **Negative**
  - Low RHLs may require narrow slots
  - Required discarding of large fish (decreased angler satisfaction)
• Conservation equivalency
  – How can regional measures be compared against a coastwide standard?

• Block Island Sound transit
  – RI should extend their state waters so no federal waters separate Block Island from the mainland
  – RI-specific alternative discriminates against other states, possibly illegal
  – Multiple advisors support use of striped bass transit zone
AP Comments

**Slot limits**
- Many concerned about negative impacts, especially discard mortality
- Potential non-compliance
- Slot limits not necessary for scup
- Discard prohibition would be more beneficial
Other Comments

- 6 email comments asking for consideration of slot limits or a slot + trophy fish
Next Steps

- **Council and Board:** Approve or modify alternatives

- **Board only:**
  - Consider approval of Draft Addendum XXXI for public comment
  - Public hearings September-November?

- **Final action at December 2018 joint meeting**
Actions Needed Today

- **Council and Board:** approve range of alternatives
- **Board:** approve Addendum XXXI for public comment