Black Sea Bass
2023 Specifications Review

SSC Meeting
July 26, 2022
Overview

- Stock status
- Recent catch and landings
- Advisory Panel Fishery Performance Report
- Review 2023 ABC and consider if revisions needed
  - Staff recommend no changes
Stock Status

- Not overfished in 2019
- Overfishing not occurring in 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SSB</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target</strong></td>
<td>31.84 mil lb (14,441 mt)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Threshold</strong></td>
<td>15.92 mil lb (7,221 mt)</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Terminal year estimate (2019)** | 65.53 mil lb (29,769 mt) | 0.39  
|                          | 2.1 times target level             | 15% below threshold level |

Terminal year estimates are adjusted for retrospective pattern in stock assessment.
Total Catch

F

Fmsy=F40%=0.46

Year

Total Catch (mt)

Fishing Mortality (F)
2022 Data Update

- NEFSC spring bottom trawl survey relative abundance has steadily increased since 2015.
  - 2020 index based on an incomplete survey.
- Aggregate index and/or age comps show above average 2011, 2015, 2016, and 2019 year classes.
Recent Fishery Landings & Discards

Landings through 2021, discards through 2019

Million pounds

- Recreational dead discards
- Recreational landings
- Commercial dead discards
- Commercial landings

## Recreational Fishery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rec. land. old MRIP</th>
<th>Rec. land. new MRIP</th>
<th>RHL</th>
<th>RHL overage/underage</th>
<th>Rec. dead catch old MRIP</th>
<th>Rec. dead catch new MRIP</th>
<th>ACL</th>
<th>ACL overage/underage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>13.52</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>+84%</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>16.59</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>+82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>12.55</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>+5%</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>16.15</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>+7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>8.84</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>+4%</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>11.12</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>+7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>8.63</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>-5%</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>11.87</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>-14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>9.06</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>+56%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>8.09</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>11.98</td>
<td>6.34</td>
<td>+89%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>7.93</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Commercial Fishery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Com. landings</th>
<th>Com. quota</th>
<th>Quota overage/underage</th>
<th>Com. dead catch</th>
<th>ACL</th>
<th>ACL overage/underage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>-8%</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>+32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>-3%</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>+23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>-5%</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>+13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>+32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>-23%</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>6.98</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>6.09</td>
<td>-20%</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>9.52</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2022 Commercial Landings

Quota: 6,470,000 lbs

Previous Year  Current Year
General Comments (Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass)

- Much higher costs in 2022 (gas, bait, packing boxes, ice, equipment, etc.).
  - Biggest issue facing com. and rec. fisheries this year.
  - Struggling to pay crew.
  - Reduced private and for-hire rec. fishing effort.
  - For-hire businesses charging more per trip to cover costs.
  - For-hire clients taking fewer trips (cost of trip, gas, etc.).
  - Compounding effects of more restrictive rec. measures for scup and BSB in 2022.
General Comments (Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass)

- Life returning to “normal” with current state of COVID.
  - Less concern with social gatherings and indoor activities.
  - Reduced recreational fishing effort compared to past two years when fishing was viewed as a relatively low-risk activity.
  - More gatherings may not mean greatly increased seafood demand given current state of economy.

- Imports negatively impact the market for US-caught fish.
General Comments (Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass)

- Concern that MRIP does not provide an estimate of total number of anglers in EEZ.
- Recommend electronic reporting to improve recreational data.
- Concern that Harvest Control Rule won’t prevent overfishing and will negatively impact commercial sector.
- Consider com. min. trawl mesh size of 5” for all 3 species during Nov-April.
  - Another advisor supported but preferred 4” and a reduced com. minimum fish size for all 3 species.
  - One advisor opposed reduced min. fish size for scup.
Environmental conditions

- Outer Banks, NC may eventually wash away with sea level rise and storms.
- Concern about impacts of chemicals, including disinfectants related to COVID.
- Influence of environmental cycles on fish abundance and behavior should be evaluated.
Black Sea Bass

- Price in NY has not fully recovered from COVID, likely due to important role of restaurants.
- Recommendation for 7,500 lb federal waters trip limit to prevent large ITQ trips from negatively impacting price for all vessels.
Black Sea Bass

- Availability to rec. anglers remains very high.
- Reduced rec. effort, but those who are fishing are doing very well with black sea bass.
- Management will always struggle to constrain the rec. fishery when availability is so high. May see overages even with reduced effort this year.
- Fishery should be less restricted when biomass is high.
Black Sea Bass

- Reducing future harvest in response to past overages is counterproductive for abundant stocks. Will make them even more abundant.
  
  - (Note that AMs only require paybacks when biomass is <150% target.)

- Min. size limits increase harvest of male BSB, which should not be overly detrimental to the stock.

- With current high costs, for-hire vessels may not be able to stay in business with bag limits of 8 or lower and with reduced availability of summer flounder.

- Observation of a large (8-10 lb) female BSB. Can they transition from female to male and back to female?
Additional AP Email Comments

- Recreational restrictions in 2022 a “travesty.”
- Concern about discard mortality with increased min. size implemented for 2022.
- Rec. fishermen have noted times when BSB are present, but won’t bite hooks. Not sure why.
- Research recommendation: When, where, and age of spawning. Lockjaw related to spawning? Will distribution shift away from DE in future?
Previous SSC Recommendation

- 100% OFL CV.
- Projections assumed 2021 RHL overage, resulting in assumed ABC overage.
- Could only recommend varying 2022-2023 ABCs to keep $p^*$ below 0.5 in all years.
- Staff recommend no changes to 2023 ABC. Available info. suggests stock conditions have not notably changed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>OFL MT</th>
<th>OFL Mil. lb</th>
<th>ABC MT</th>
<th>ABC Mil. lb</th>
<th>ABC F</th>
<th>ABC $p^*$</th>
<th>SSB MT</th>
<th>SSB Mil. lb</th>
<th>SSB/SSB$_{MSY}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>8,735</td>
<td>19.56</td>
<td>8,555</td>
<td>18.86</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>22,637</td>
<td>49.91</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>7,716</td>
<td>17.01</td>
<td>7,557</td>
<td>16.66</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>19,538</td>
<td>43.07</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions/Discussion