



Black Sea Bass Fishery Information Document

June 2025

This document provides an overview of the biology, stock condition, management system, and fishery performance for black sea bass (*Centropristis striata*), with an emphasis on 2024. All information in this document is for the stock north of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. Data sources include unpublished National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Catch Accounting and Monitoring System (CAMS) data,¹ permit data, Northeast Fisheries Observer Program data, Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) data,² and stock assessment information. All 2024 data should be considered preliminary. Due to adjustments and corrections to the data over time, some values may differ from those used in previous years and from the values used for final catch accounting.

More information on black sea bass management, including previous Fishery Information Documents, is available at <http://www.mafmc.org/sf-s-bsb>.

Key Facts

- Black sea bass are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring, according to the draft 2025 management track stock assessment report. Spawning stock biomass in 2024 was estimated to be about 2.84 times the target level and fishing mortality was 27% below the level that defines overfishing.
- In 2024, about 5.16 million pounds of black sea bass were landed in the commercial fishery, an 11% increase compared to 2023.
- Commercial fish dealers paid an average of \$2.43 per pound of black sea bass in 2024.
- Recreational anglers harvested an estimated 5.46 million pounds of black sea bass in 2024, a 27% decrease from 2023.
- An estimated 2.33 million recreational trips targeted black sea bass as either the primary or secondary target species in 2024, about a 15% decrease compared to 2023.

¹ CAMS includes commercial dealer data, including federal and state permitted dealers, as well as federal vessel trip report data and expanded estimates of commercial dead discards. More information on CAMS is available at <https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/ro/fso/reports/cams/index.html>.

² In July 2018, MRIP released revisions to their time series of recreational catch and landings estimates based on adjustments for a revised angler intercept methodology and a transition from a telephone-based effort survey to a mail-based effort survey. The revised catch and landings estimates are higher than the previous estimates for shore and private boat modes. The revised MRIP estimates are used in this document except where otherwise noted. The MRIP program is currently evaluating additional potential revisions to the fishing effort estimation survey. Any potential future changes to the data will be implemented in 2026 at the earliest. More information is available at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/recreational-fishing-data/fishing-effort-survey-research-and-improvements>

Basic Biology

Black sea bass are distributed from the Gulf of Maine through the Gulf of Mexico. Genetic studies have identified three stocks within that range. The northern stock is found from the Gulf of Maine through Cape Hatteras, North Carolina and is the focus of this document. The stocks in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico are managed by the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Councils, respectively. They are assessed and managed separately from the stock managed by the Mid-Atlantic Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Adult and juvenile black sea bass are mostly found on the continental shelf. Young of the year (i.e., fish less than one year old) can be found in estuaries. Adults can show strong site fidelity during the summer and prefer to be near structures such as rocky reefs, coral patches, cobble and rock fields, mussel beds, and shipwrecks.

Black sea bass migrate to offshore wintering areas starting in the fall. During the winter, young of the year are distributed across the shelf and adults and juveniles are found near the shelf edge. During the fall, adults and juveniles off New York and north move offshore and travel along the shelf edge to as far south as Virginia. Most return to northern inshore areas by May. Black sea bass off New Jersey to Maryland travel southeast to the shelf edge during the late fall. Black sea bass off Virginia and Maryland travel a shorter distance due east to the shelf edge (Drohan et al. 2007, NEFSC 2017).

Black sea bass are protogynous hermaphrodites, meaning they are born female and some later transition to males, usually around 2-5 years of age. About 25% of black sea bass are male at 15 cm (about 6 inches), with increasing proportions of males at larger size classes, though up to 45% of individuals at sizes greater than 45 cm are still female (NEFSC 2023). Some males develop bright blue nuchal hump during the spawning season. These males are sometimes referred to as “dominant males” as they may aggressively defend groups of females against other dominant males during spawning seasons. Other males, sometimes referred to as “subordinate males” or secondary males may be visually indistinguishable from mature females (Keigwin et al. 2016). Results from a simulation model highlight the importance of subordinate/secondary males in the spawning success of this species. This, along with the presence of large females, increases the resiliency of the population to exploitation compared to other species with a more typical protogynous life history (Blaylock and Shepherd 2016). About half of black sea bass are sexually mature by 2 years of age and 21 cm (about 8 inches) in length. Black sea bass are thought to reach a maximum size of about 60 cm (about 24 inches) and a maximum age of about 12 years (NEFSC 2017).

Black sea bass in the mid-Atlantic spawn in nearshore continental shelf areas at depths of 20-50 meters. Spawning usually takes place between April and October. During the summer, adult black sea bass share habitats with tautog, hakes, conger eel, sea robins and other migratory fish species. Essential fish habitat for black sea bass consists of pelagic waters, structured habitat, rough bottom, shellfish, sand, and shell, from the Gulf of Maine through Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. Juvenile and adult black sea bass mostly feed on crustaceans, small fish, and squid. The NEFSC food habits database lists spiny dogfish, Atlantic angel shark, skates, spotted hake, summer flounder, windowpane flounder, and monkfish as predators of black sea bass (Drohan et al. 2007).

Status of the Stock

A management track stock assessment for black sea bass will be peer reviewed in June 2025. The information in this section is from the draft report which had not yet been peer reviewed at the time of finalizing this document. According to the draft report (NEFSC 2025), the black sea bass stock was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2024 (Table 1). Spawning stock biomass in 2024 was estimated to be about 2.84 times the target level (Figure 1). Fishing mortality in 2024 was estimated to be 27% below the threshold level that defines overfishing (Figure 2). Recruitment (i.e., the number of age 1 fish) has fluctuated over time. The estimated number of age 1 fish in 2024 is the lowest since 2018 (Figure 3).

Table 1: Black sea bass biological reference points and stock status from the draft 2025 management track stock assessment report (NEFSC 2025).

	Spawning stock biomass	Fishing mortality rate (F)
Target	23.98 mil lb (10,877 mt)	N/A
Threshold	11.99 mil lb (5,439 mt)	1.036
Terminal year estimate (2024)	68.11 mil lb (30,896 mt) 2.84 times target level	0.75 27% below threshold level
Status	Not overfished	Overfishing not occurring

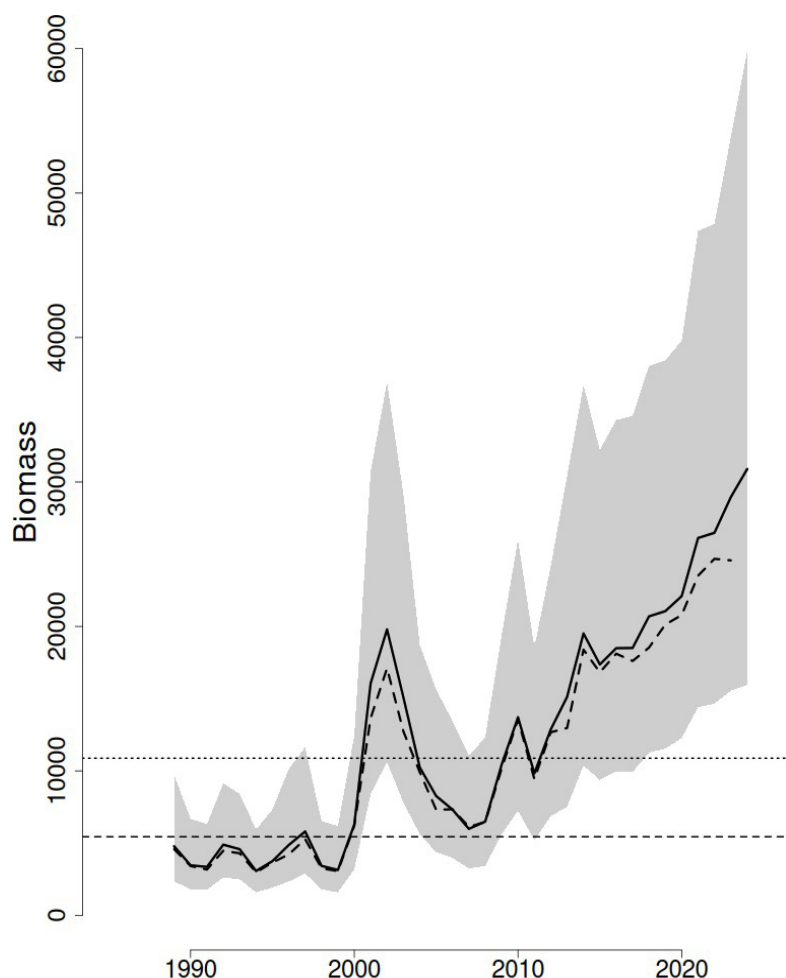


Figure 1: Black sea bass spawning stock biomass, 1989-2024 from the draft 2025 management track stock assessment (solid black line). The gray shading represents 95% confidence intervals. The dashed trend line shows estimates from the previous assessment (NEFSC 2024). The horizontal dotted line is the updated biomass target and the horizontal dashed line is the updated biomass threshold. When biomass is above the threshold, the stock is not overfished. Source: NEFSC 2025.

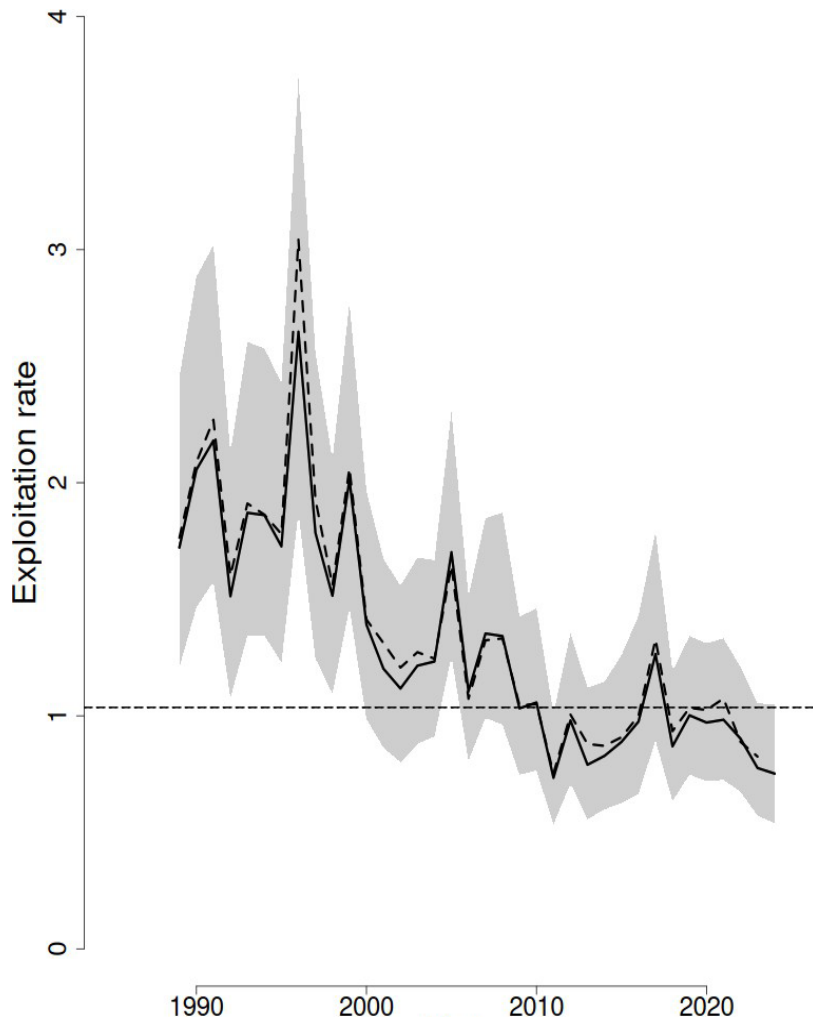


Figure 2: Trends in fully selected fishing mortality for black sea bass, 1989-2024, from the draft 2025 management track stock assessment. The gray shading represents 95% confidence intervals. The dashed trend line shows fishing mortality from the previous assessment (NEFSC 2024). The horizontal dotted line is the updated fishing mortality reference point. When fishing mortality is below the reference point, overfishing is not occurring. Source: NEFSC 2025.

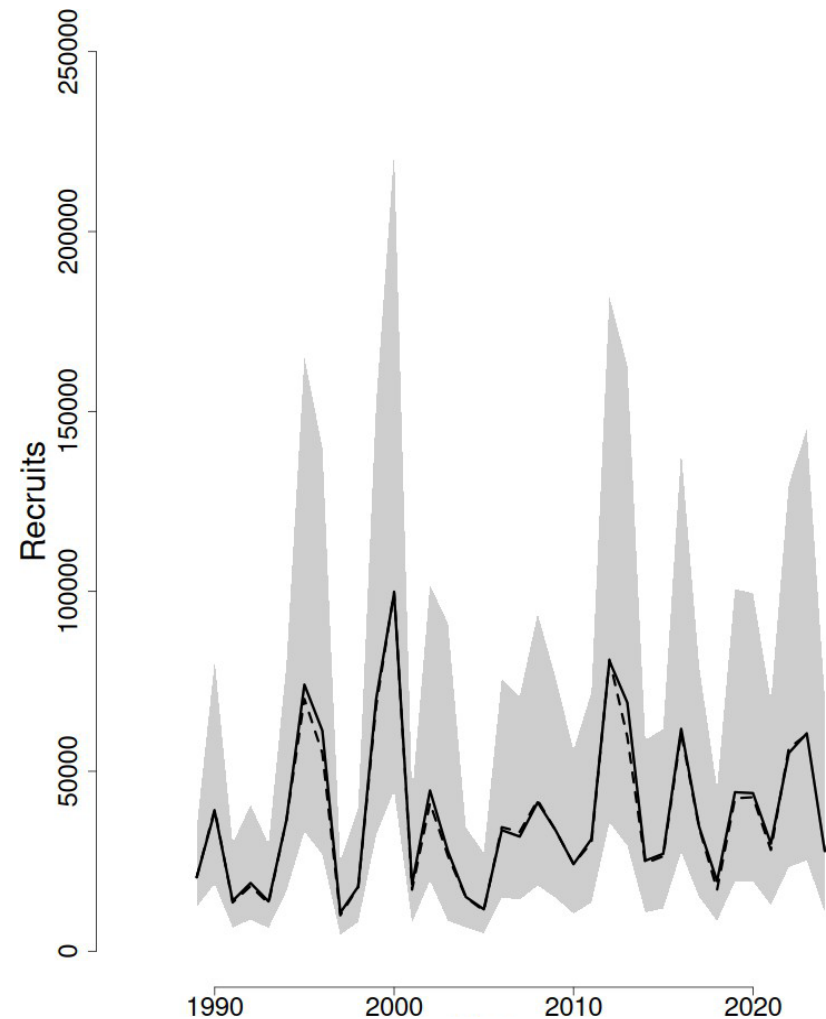


Figure 2: Trends in black sea bass recruitment (i.e., age 1 fish), 1989-2024 from the draft 2025 management track stock assessment with 95% confidence intervals in gray shading. Estimates from the 2024 management track stock assessment (NEFSC 2024) are shown with the dashed trend line. Source: NEFSC 2025.

Management System and Fishery Performance

Management Overview

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) work cooperatively to develop commercial and recreational fishery regulations for black sea bass from Maine through Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. The Council and Commission work with NMFS, which serves as the federal implementation and enforcement entity. This cooperative management system was developed because a significant portion of the catch is taken from both state waters (0-3 miles offshore) and federal waters (3-200 miles offshore). The joint management program began in 1996 with the approval of Amendment 9 to what then became the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The original FMP and subsequent amendments and framework adjustments are available at: www.mafmc.org/fisheries/fmp/sf-s-bsb.

Commercial and recreational black sea bass fisheries are managed using catch and landings limits, minimum fish sizes, open and closed seasons, gear restrictions, permit requirements, and other regulations.

The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommends overfishing limits (OFLs) and annual Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) levels for black sea bass. The Council must either approve the ABC recommended by the SSC or a lower ABC. Through 2022, 49% of the total allowable landings (calculated by subtracting total expected dead discards from the ABC) were allocated to the commercial fishery as a commercial quota and 51% was allocated to the recreational fishery as an RHL. Starting with 2023, the ABC is now allocated 45% to the commercial fishery as a commercial annual catch limit (ACL) and 55% to the recreational fishery as a recreational ACL.³

The Council and Commission also approve commercial and recreational annual catch targets (ACTs), which are set equal to or less than the respective ACLs to account for management uncertainty. To date, the black sea bass ACTs have always been set equal to the ACLs. The ABC, ACLs, and ACTs are catch limits which account for both landings and discards, while the commercial quota and recreational harvest limit (RHL) are landing limits. The commercial quota and RHL are calculated by subtracting expected discards from the respective ACTs (Figure 4).

³ For more information on the commercial/recreational allocation revisions, see <https://www.mafmc.org/actions/sfsbsb-allocation-amendment>.

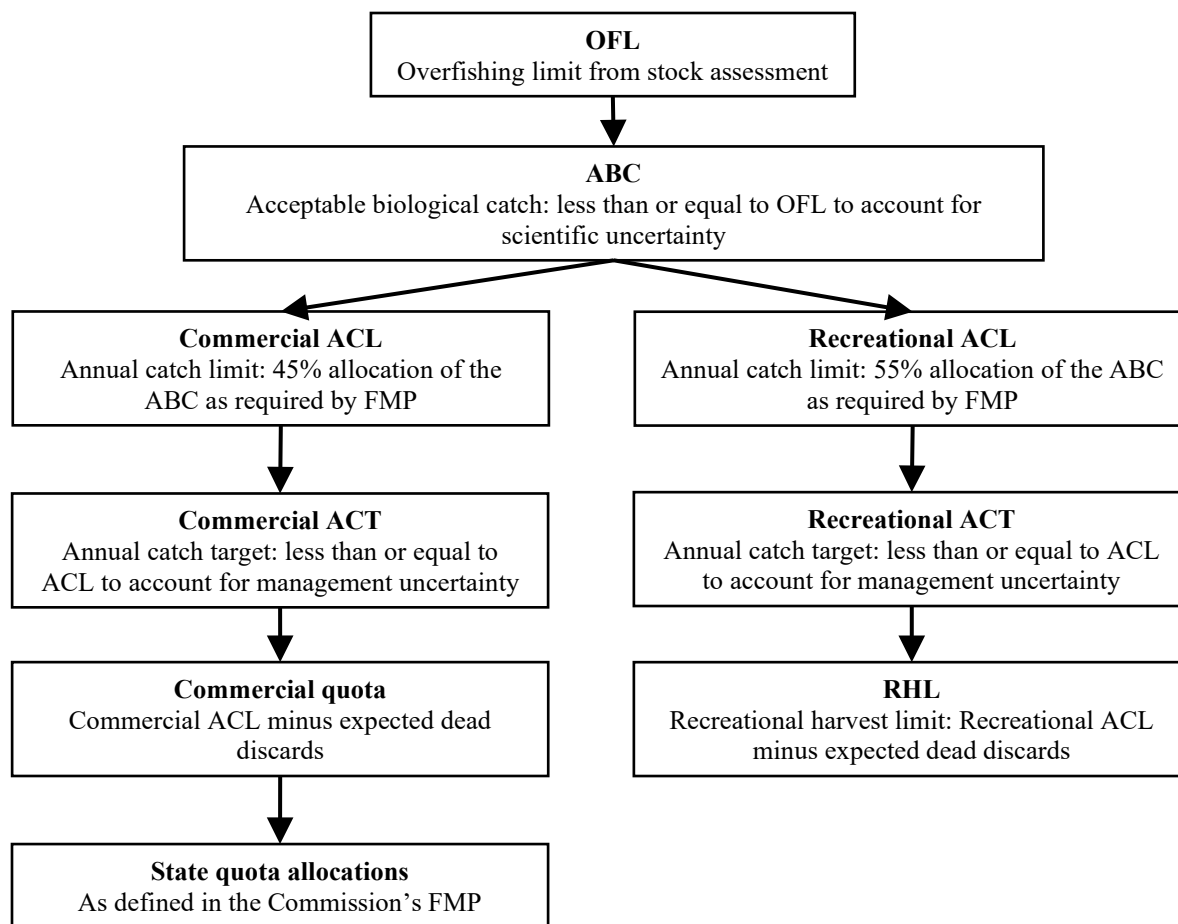


Figure 3: Black sea bass catch and landings limits, reflecting the revised commercial/ recreational allocations which became effective in 2023.

Fishery Catch Summary

Table 2 shows the black sea bass ABCs from 2015 through 2024, as well as the overfishing limit (OFL), from which the ABC is derived when possible. The ABC is set less than or equal to the OFL to account for scientific uncertainty. As shown in Table 2, ABC overages occurred for many years through 2021. However, OFL overages have been rare and neither the ABC nor the OFL were exceeded by more than 1% during 2022-2024. Depending on the year, past ABC overages were driven by higher than anticipated discards in one or both of the commercial and recreational sectors and/or recreational harvest exceeding the RHL (Table 3, Table 9). The Council and Commission have taken steps in recent years to better account for discards when setting catch and landings limits. Changes have also been made to the process for setting recreational measures, as described in more detail below.

Figure 5 shows commercial and recreational black sea bass landings and dead discards from 1996 through 2024. Total dead catch (landings and dead discards) from 2016-2024 are higher than in prior years, likely influenced by a combination of increased biomass (Figure 1) and increased catch limits (Table 2). After reaching a peak in 2021, total dead catch has declined each year. Total estimated dead catch in 2024 was 16.61 million pounds, a 2% decrease from 2023.

Table 2: Total dead catch (i.e., commercial and recreational landings and dead discards) compared to the OFL and ABC, 2015-2024. All values are in millions of pounds. The recreational contribution to total dead catch is based on data in the “old” MRIP units through 2019 and the revised MRIP data starting in 2020. Catch limits did not account for the revised MRIP data until 2020.

Year	Total dead catch ^a	OFL ^b	OFL overage/underage	ABC ^b	ABC overage/underage
2015	7.81	NA	NA	5.50	+42%
2016	10.24	NA	NA	6.67	+54%
2017	11.57	12.05	-4%	10.47	+10%
2018	10.96	10.29	+7% ^c	8.94	+23%
2019	9.71	10.29	-6%	8.94	+9%
2020	17.31	19.39	-11%	15.07	+15%
2021	21.36	17.68	+21%	17.45	+22%
2022	18.62	19.56	-5%	18.86	-1%
2023	16.90	17.01	-1%	16.66	+1%
2024	16.61	17.01	-2%	16.66	0%

^a See Table 3 and Table 9 for the commercial and recreational data contributing to the total catch estimates.

^b An OFL was not used and the ABC was set based on a constant catch approach during 2010-2015 due to the lack of a peer reviewed and accepted stock assessment. The 2016 ABC was set based on a data limited methodology. Starting with 2017, the ABC has been set based on a peer reviewed and approved stock assessment.

^c Use of CAMS data for commercial dead discards, compared to NEFSC assessment estimates in prior documents, resulted in an OFL overage shown here where previous documents showed an underage.

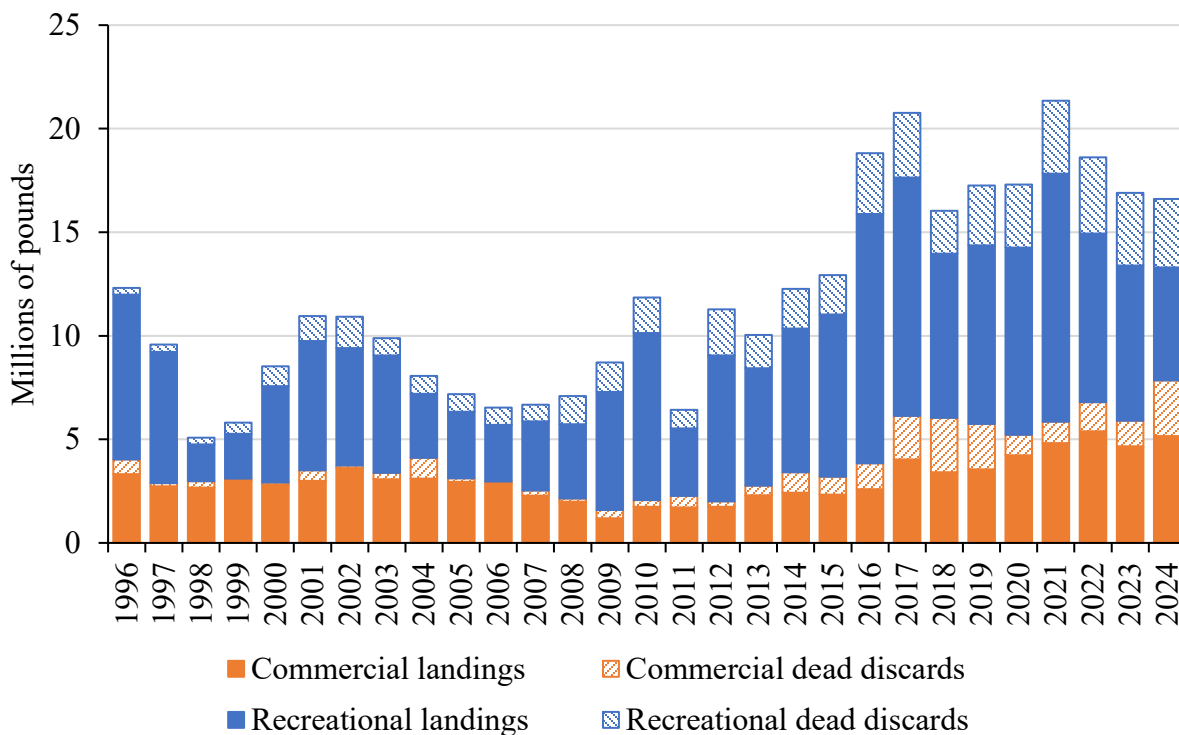


Figure 4: Commercial and recreational black sea bass landings and dead discards in millions of pounds, Maine – Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, 1996-2024. Commercial landings are from

CAMS. Commercial dead discards are from the draft 2025 management track assessment report (NEFSC 2024) for 1996-2017 and from CAMS for 2018-2024. Recreational harvest is from MRIP. Recreational dead discards are from the draft 2025 management track assessment report.

Commercial Fishery

Unless otherwise noted, all data in this section are from CAMS.

In 2024, about 5.16 million pounds of black sea bass were landed in the commercial fishery, an 11% increase compared to 2023. Landings were 14% below the commercial quota in 2024. Total commercial dead catch (i.e., landings plus dead discards) exceeded the 2024 commercial ACL by 5% due to discards exceeding the amount used to set the quota. This is the first time the commercial ACL has been exceeded since 2019. ACL overages were more common prior to 2020 (Table 3). The catch limits increased in 2020 and improvements were also implemented to the methods used to predict discards when setting the quota. Both of these changes likely contributed to catches close to or below the commercial ACL since 2020.

In 2024, total ex-vessel value was \$12.10 million and the average price per pound was \$2.43. This is the lowest price per pound since 1996 (based on a comparison of adjusted prices to count for inflation). The average annual price per pound has generally decreased as landings have increased over time (Figure 6). Prices are impacted by many factors in addition to landings. The relationship between landings and price varies at the regional, state, and sometimes port level based on market demand, state-specific regulations (e.g., seasonal openings), or individual trawl trips with high landings, all of which can be inter-related.

Over 200 commercial dealers from Maine through North Carolina purchased black sea bass in 2024. More dealers purchased black sea bass in New York than in any other state (Table 4).

Statistical area 616 was responsible for the largest percentage (22%) of commercial black sea bass landings in 2024, followed by statistical areas 538 (14%) and 539 (13%). All other statistical areas accounted for less than 10% of 2024 commercial black sea bass landings in 2024 (Figure 7, Table 5). When excluding trips with less than 50 pounds of black sea bass landings, likely representing mostly incidental landings, statistical area 539 had the highest number of trips with commercial black sea bass landings in 2024 (2,375 trips), followed by statistical areas 538 (2,350 trips) and 611 (2,119 trips; Table 5).

Figure 7 shows the contribution of each statistical area to commercial black sea bass landings in five-year time blocks for the past 25 years. Across these time periods, most landings have generally come from statistical areas off New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and south of Massachusetts.

In 2024, most commercially harvested black sea bass were landed in New Jersey (23%), followed by Massachusetts (18%), Rhode Island (16%), and New York (13%). All other states from Maine through North Carolina each accounted for less than 10% of commercial landings in 2024. The percentage of landings by state is highly influenced by the state commercial quota allocations. States set measures to achieve their state-specific commercial quotas. These allocations were first implemented in 2003 and were recently revised such that they are now

based partially on the original state allocations and partially on recent biomass distribution information. The revised allocations were first effective in 2022.⁴

At least 100,000 pounds of black sea bass were landed in 16 ports in 8 states in 2024. These ports accounted for about 73% of all commercial black sea bass landings in 2024 (Table 6).

Since 1997, a moratorium permit has been required to fish commercially for black sea bass in federal waters. In 2024, 581 of these permits were issued.⁵

A minimum commercial black sea bass size limit of 11 inches total length has been in place in federal waters since 2002. Any federally-permitted vessel using otter trawl gear and catching more than 500 pounds of black sea bass from January through March, or more than 100 pounds from April through December, must use nets with a minimum mesh size of 4.5-inch diamond mesh applied throughout the codend for at least 75 continuous meshes forward of the end of the net. There is no federal waters black sea bass possession limit for trawl gear with mesh greater than 4.5-inches; however, many states have set possession limits for state waters.

Pots and traps used to commercially harvest black sea bass must have two escape vents with degradable hinges in the parlor. The escape vents must measure 1.375 inches by 5.75 inches if rectangular, 2 inches by 2 inches if square, or have a diameter of 2.5 inches if circular.

About 45% of commercial black sea bass landings in 2024 were caught with bottom otter trawl gear, 39% with pots/traps, and 14% with hand lines. All other gear types accounted for less than 2% each of 2024 commercial landings.

The most commonly caught non-target species in the commercial black sea bass fishery were identified based on raw data from Northeast Fisheries Observer Program observed trips from 2019-2023 where black sea bass made up at least 75% of the landings by weight. Using this definition of a directed trip, the most common non-target species in the black sea bass fishery include spiny dogfish, scup, sea robins (northern and striped), and little skate (Table 7).

⁴ The revised commercial state allocations were implemented through Addendum XXXIII to the Commission's FMP, available at <https://asmfc.org/species/black-sea-bass>.

⁵ Based on data accessed from <https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/public/public/web/NEROINET/aps/permits/data/index.html>. The number of permits listed above does not include permits in "confirmation of permit history," which allows permit holders to maintain the landings history of the permit without owning a vessel (e.g., for vessels that have sunk, been destroyed, or sold to another person without its permit history).

Table 3: Black sea bass commercial landings and dead catch compared to the commercial quota and commercial ACL, 2015-2024. All values are in millions of pounds.

Year	Com. landings ^a	Com. quota	Quota overage/ underage	Com. dead discards ^c	Com. dead catch	ACL	ACL overage/ underage
2015	2.33	2.21	+5%	0.87	3.20	2.60	+23%
2016	2.60	2.71	-4%	1.24	3.84	3.15	+22%
2017	4.04	4.12	-2%	2.10	6.14	5.09	+21%
2018	3.41	3.52	-3%	2.63	6.04	4.35	+39%
2019	3.56	3.52	+1%	2.19	5.75	4.35	+32%
2020	4.23	5.58	-24%	0.99	5.22	6.98	-25%
2021	4.81	6.09	-21%	1.04	5.85	9.52	-39%
2022	5.39	6.47	-17%	1.41	6.80	10.10	-33%
2023	4.67	4.80	-3%	1.23	5.90	7.50	-21%
2024	5.16	6.00	-14%	2.68	7.84	7.50	+5%
2025	--	6.00	--	--	--	7.50	--

^a CAMS data.

^c Discards from 2015-2017 are from the draft 2025 black sea bass management track assessment (NEFSC 2025). Values for 2018-2024 are from CAMS.

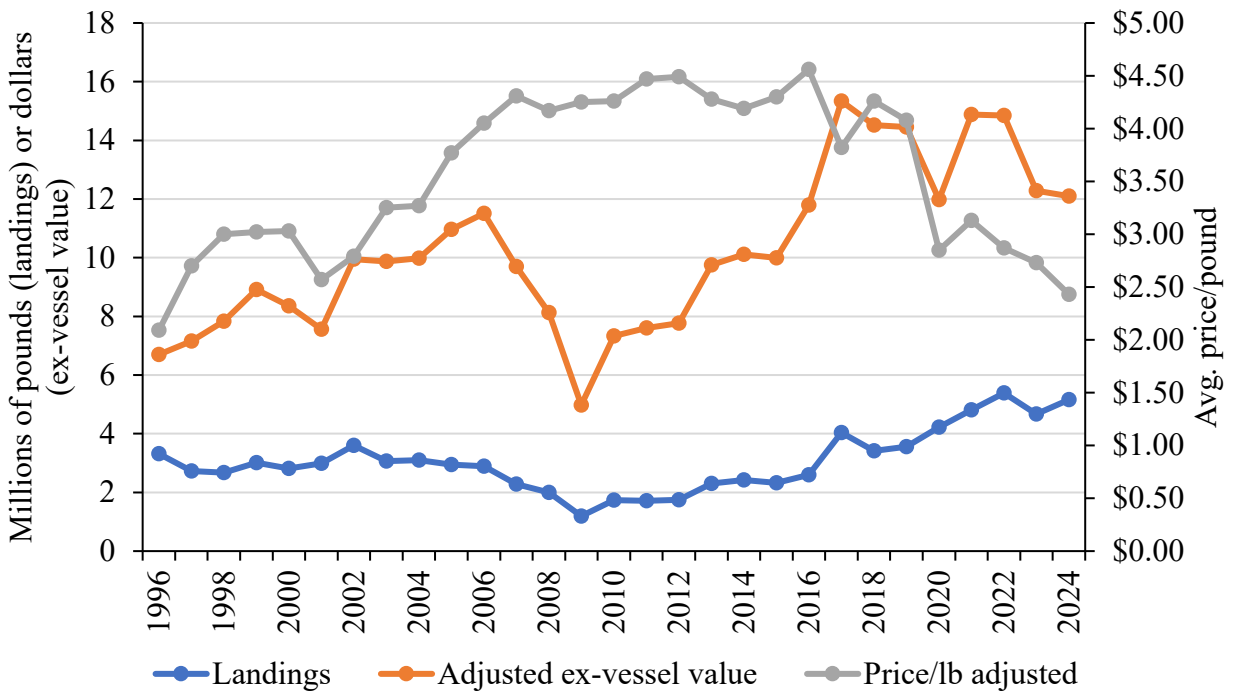


Figure 5: Landings, ex-vessel value, and average price per pound for black sea bass, Maine – North Carolina, 1996-2024 based on CAMS data. Ex-vessel value and price are inflation-adjusted to 2024 dollars using the Gross Domestic Product Price Deflator.

Table 4: Number of commercial dealers, by state, reporting purchases of black sea bass in 2024.
Source: CAMS.

State	ME	NH	MA	RI	CT	NY	NJ	DE	MD	VA	NC
Number of dealers	0	0	39	35	13	60	23	4	6	16	13

Table 5: Statistical areas that accounted for at least 5% of the total commercial black sea bass landings in 2024 with associated number of trips, based on CAMS data, which includes both state and federal dealer data as well as federal VTR data. For number of trips only, the values shown are for trips with at least 50 pounds of black sea bass landings to exclude trips with low amounts of what are likely mostly incidental landings.

Statistical Area	Percent of 2024 Commercial Black Sea Bass Landings	Number of Trips
616	22%	472
538	14%	2,350
539	13%	2,375
611	9%	2,199
621	7%	166
537	6%	743
615	6%	174
613	5%	596

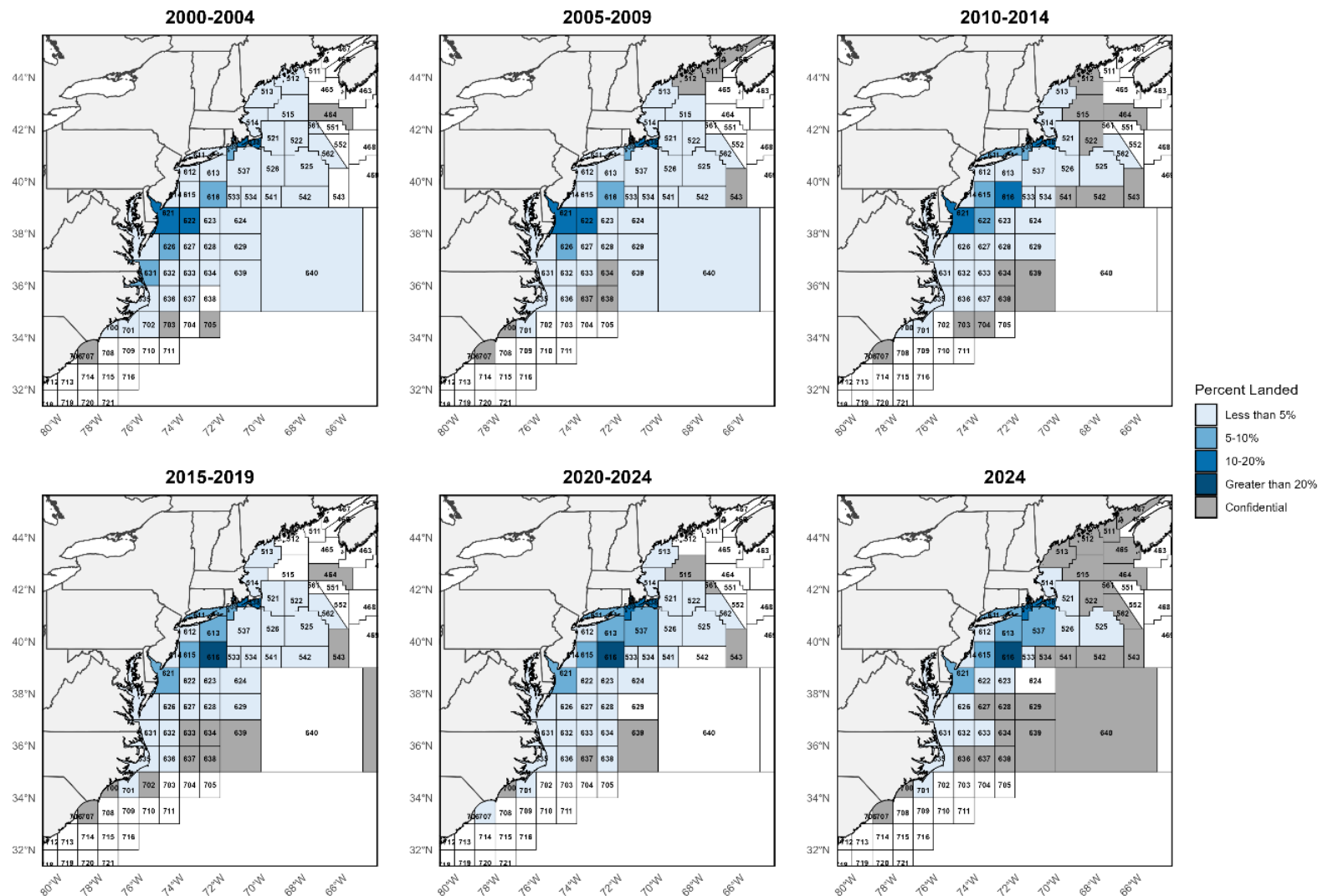


Figure 6: Commercial black sea bass landings by statistical area, 2000-2024. Landings are shown as the percentage of the total within each map. The amount of landings that make up the percentages vary, sometimes substantially, across the time blocks. Confidential data amounts to 1% or less of the total within each map. Source: CAMS.

Table 6: Ports reporting at least 100,000 pounds of black sea bass landings in 2024, associated number of vessels, and percentage of total commercial landings. Five additional ports also had more than 100,000 pounds of commercial black sea bass landings in 2024; however, the values are confidential as they are associated with fewer than three vessels and/or dealers.

Port name	Pounds of black sea bass landed	% of total commercial black sea bass landed	Number of vessels landing black sea bass
Point Judith, RI	626,222	13%	315
Point Pleasant, NJ	551,779	11%	40
Montauk, NY	376,862	8%	169
Ocean City, MD	307,732	6%	8
New Bedford, MA	289,277	6%	200
Cape May, NJ	215,601	4%	30
Newport News, VA	114,972	2%	15
Westport, MA	108,499	2%	30
Barnegat Light, NJ	105,426	2%	8
Hampton Bays, NY	105,385	2%	31
Chincoteague, VA	104,029	2%	9

Table 7: Percent of non-target species caught in observed trawls where black sea bass made up at least 75% of the observed landings, 2019-2023. Only those non-target species comprising at least 2% of the aggregate catch are listed.

Species	% of total catch on black sea bass observed directed trips, 2019-2023 ^a
Spiny dogfish	12%
Scup	6%
Northern sea robin	3%
Striped sea robin	3%
Little skate	2%

^a Percentages are aggregate totals over 2019-2023 and do not reflect the percentages of non-target species caught on individual trips. This analysis describes only observed trips and has not been expanded to the fishery as a whole.

Recreational Fishery

Black sea bass are a popular recreational fish. Total recreational catch (i.e., harvest plus live and dead releases) from Maine through Cape Hatteras, North Carolina exceeded 35 million fish each year for the most recent four years. Due to fishery regulations and other factors, most of these fish are released. For example, in 2024, an estimated 35.65 million black sea bass were caught, but only 3.11 million black sea bass were retained in the recreational fishery.

Total recreational harvest in weight in 2024 was about 5.46 million pounds (Figure 8, Table 9). This is the first time since 2019 that harvest was below the RHL. Recreational dead catch (i.e., harvest plus dead discards) in 2024 was also below the recreational ACL for the first time since 2019 (Table 9).

Prior to 2023, recreational bag, size, and season limits were set with the goal of allowing harvest to meet but not exceed the RHL. Starting in 2023, recreational measures are now set based on a

process called the Percent Change Approach which considers both expected harvest under status quo measures compared to the upcoming RHL, as well as the most recent estimate of biomass compared to the target level when determining if and how measures should change. The Percent Change Approach can require measures to achieve a level of expected harvest that is equal to, less than, or higher than the RHL, depending on the considerations of expected harvest under status quo measures and biomass compared to the target level.

Recreational bag, size, and season limits (also referred to as recreational measures) for black sea bass remained virtually unchanged from 2018-2021. Measures were restricted in 2022, and again in 2023. In 2024 and 2025, recreational measures were left unchanged with the exception of a few minor season adjustments in some states. State waters recreational measures for 2025 are shown in Table 10. Federal waters recreational measures have been waived since 2022 following the process implemented through Framework 14 to the FMP.

An estimated 2.33 million recreational trips from Maine through North Carolina targeted black sea bass as either the primary or secondary target species in 2024. This represents about a 15% decrease compared to 2023 (2.74 million trips).

In 2024, 43% of black sea bass harvested by recreational fishermen from Maine through North Carolina (in numbers of fish) were caught in state waters and 57% in federal waters (Table 11). Most recreational harvest in 2024 was landed in New Jersey (40%), followed by New York (24%; Table 12).

For-hire vessels carrying passengers in federal waters must obtain a federal party/charter permit. In 2024, 993 vessels held a federal party/charter black sea bass permit.⁶

About 87% of the recreational black sea bass harvest in numbers of fish in 2024 came from anglers fishing on private or rental boats, about 11% from anglers aboard party or charter boats, and 2% from anglers fishing from shore (Table 13).

Brust et al. (2023) used a species guild approach to identify other species commonly caught with black sea bass in the recreational fishery. The top five species with highest correlations with black sea bass in Maine – New York during 2010-2021 were scup, smooth dogfish, unclassified dogfish, northern puffer, and sea robins. The top five correlated species in New Jersey – North Carolina were gray triggerfish, scup, red hake, pigfish, and cunner.

⁶ Based on data accessed from <https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/public/public/web/NEROINET/aps/permits/data/index.html>

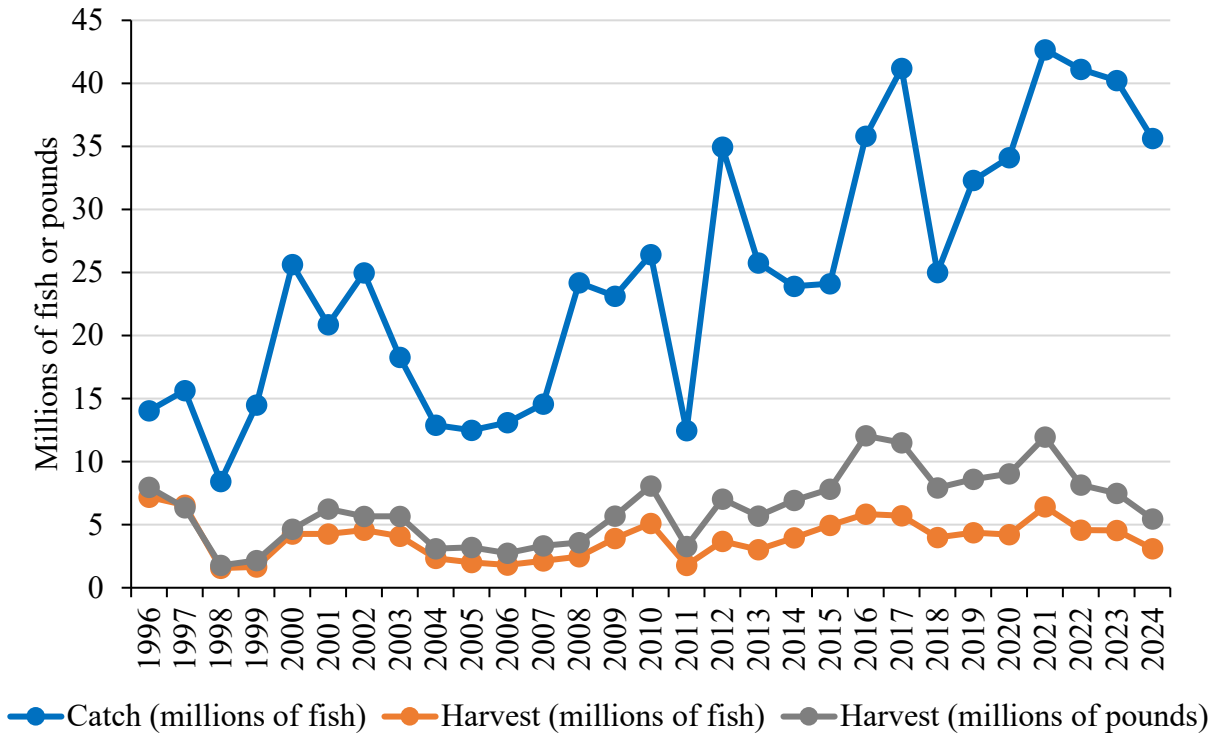


Figure 7: Estimated recreational black sea bass catch (harvest and live and dead discards) and harvest from Maine through Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, 1996-2024.

Table 8: Black sea bass recreational landings, dead discards, and dead catch compared to the RHL and recreational ACL, 2015-2024. Values are provided in the “old” MRIP units for 2015-2019 and the “new” MRIP units for 2020-2024 as the ACLs and RHLs did not account for the revised MRIP data until 2020. Therefore, overage/underage evaluations must be based in the old MRIP units through 2019 and the new MRIP units starting in 2020. All values are in millions of pounds.

Year	MRIP version	Rec. harvest ^a	RHL	RHL over/ under	Rec. dead disc. ^b	Rec. dead catch	ACL	ACL over/ under
2015	Old MRIP (pre-revision)	3.79	2.33	+63%	0.82	4.61	2.9	+59%
2016		5.19	2.82	+84%	1.21	6.40	3.52	+82%
2017		4.16	4.29	-3%	1.27	5.43	5.38	+1%
2018		3.82	3.66	+4%	1.10	4.92	4.59	+7%
2019		3.46	3.66	-5%	0.50	3.96	4.59	-14%
2020 ^c	New MRIP (post-revision)	9.05	5.81	+56%	3.05	12.10	8.09	+50%
2021		11.97	6.34	+89%	3.54	15.51	7.93	+96%
2022		8.14	6.74	+21%	3.68	11.82	8.76	+35%
2023		7.49	6.57	+14% ^d	3.51	11.00	9.16	+20%
2024		5.46	6.27	-13% ^d	3.32	8.78	9.16	-4%
2025		--	6.27	--	--	--	9.16	--

^a Based on MRIP data for all years except 2018 and 2019. Estimates in the “old” MRIP units were not available for those years, but were necessary for comparing against the RHL. Therefore, NMFS used alternative methods to calculate the 2018 and 2019 estimates shown here.

^b Estimates for 2014-2017 are from a data update provided by the NEFSC in 2018 (most recent data from NEFSC in “old” MRIP units; NEFSC 2018). Estimates in the “old” MRIP units were not available for 2018-2019, but were necessary for comparing against the ACL. Therefore, NMFS used alternative methods to calculate the 2018 and 2019 estimates shown here. Estimates for 2020 – 2024 are from the draft 2025 management track assessment report (NEFSC 2025).

^c Recreational harvest estimates for 2020 were impacted by temporary suspension of shoreside intercept surveys due to COVID-19. NMFS used imputation methods to fill gaps in 2020 catch data with data collected in 2018 and 2019. For black sea bass, the 2020 harvest estimate for Maine-Virginia relied on approximately 17% imputed data. For more information on imputation methods see: <https://www.mafmc.org/s/1-2020-Marine-Recreational-Catch-Estimates-QA-52121.pdf>.

^d Recreational measures for 2023-2025 were set using the Percent Change Approach, as implemented through Framework 17. Under this process, measures are no longer set with the primary goal of allowing harvest to meet but not exceed the RHL. Instead, 2023 measures were set with the goal of achieving a 10% reduction in harvest compared to the expectation of 2023 harvest if 2022 measures had remained in place. Specifically, the recreational measures implemented in 2023 aimed to achieve a target of 7.14 million pounds of harvest. Measures for 2024-2025 remained virtually unchanged from 2023 and were not associated with a specific harvest target.

Table 9: 2025 state and federal waters recreational measures for black sea bass.

State	Size Limit	Bag Limit	Open Season
Maine	13"	10 fish	May 19-Sept 21; Oct 18-Dec 31
New Hampshire	16.5"	4 fish	Jan-Dec 31
Massachusetts	16.5"	4 fish	May 18-Sept 3
Rhode Island private & shore	16.5"	2 fish	May 22-Aug 26
		3 fish	Aug 27-Dec 31
Rhode Island for-hire	16"	2 fish	Jun 18-Aug 31
		6 fish	Sept 1-Dec 31
Connecticut private & shore	16"	5 fish	May 18-June 28; Jul 8-Nov 28
CT authorized for-hire monitoring program vessels		5 fish	May 18 – Aug 31
		7 fish	Sept 1-Dec 31
New York	16.5"	3 fish	Jun 23-Aug 31
		6 fish	Sept 1-Dec 31
New Jersey	12.5"	10 fish	May 17-Jun 19
		1 fish	Jul 1-Aug 31
		10 fish	Oct 1- 31
		15 fish	Nov 1-Dec 31
Delaware	13"	15 fish	May 15-Sept 30; Oct 10-Dec 31
Maryland	13"	15 fish	May 15-Sept 30; Oct 10-Dec 31
Virginia	13"	15 fish	Feb 1-28, May 15-Jul 15, Aug 5-Dec 31
North Carolina North of Cape Hatteras	13"	15 fish	May 15-Sept 30; Oct 10-Dec 31
Federal waters	Waived		

Table 10: Estimated percentage of black sea bass recreational harvest (in numbers of fish) in state and federal waters, from Maine through North Carolina, 2015-2024.

Year	State waters	Federal waters
2015	71%	29%
2016	59%	41%
2017	40%	60%
2018	61%	39%
2019	62%	38%
2020	56%	44%
2021	52%	48%
2022	54%	46%
2023	36%	64%
2024	43%	57%
2015-2024 avg	53%	47%

Table 11: State contribution to total recreational harvest of black sea bass (in number of fish), Maine through Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, 2022 – 2024.

State	2022	2023	2024	2022-2024 average
Maine	0%	<1%	0%	<1%
New Hampshire	<1%	0%	0%	<1%
Massachusetts	8%	9%	10%	9%
Rhode Island	6%	6%	9%	7%
Connecticut	8%	6%	7%	7%
New York	28%	18%	24%	23%
New Jersey	32%	36%	40%	36%
Delaware	4%	7%	3%	5%
Maryland	3%	5%	5%	4%
Virginia	8%	12%	2%	8%
North Carolina	1%	2%	<1%	1%

Table 12: Percent of total recreational black sea bass harvest (in numbers of fish) by fishing mode, Maine through North Carolina, 2015-2024. Some percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Year	Shore	Party/charter	Private/rental
2015	0%	11%	89%
2016	4%	8%	88%
2017	1%	9%	90%
2018	2%	12%	86%
2019	3%	17%	79%
2020^a	2%	11%	87%
2021	4%	12%	84%
2022	1%	9%	91%
2023	2%	9%	89%
2024	1%	16%	83%
2015-2024 avg	2%	11%	87%

^a Party and charter fishing was restricted in all states for part of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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