

WEEKLY UPDATE: 12/16/11
NORTH CAROLINA FISHERIES ASSOCIATION
"Serving the Commercial Fishing Families of North Carolina since 1952"
Phone: (252) 745-0225 www.ncfish.org

MAFMC met in Virginia to discuss, among other things, reconsidering the increase in the summer flounder quota because of "new" information received by the Council's SSC. The increase will be less than expected because the new information showed the stock to have some problems not identified during the June meeting when the increase was voted on. The SSC made adjustments to the increase that will result in approximately a 30% reduction in the increase from the June numbers. The Council cannot recommend higher numbers than the SSC. There was a brief moment where the ASMFC flounder board voted a different set of numbers that would have been quite problematic for the commercial fishing sector, making it susceptible to both recreational overages, and federal permit problems when the federal fishery closed. A reconsideration of that motion reversed the ASMFC board's decision; finally they came into compliance with the Council. A good increase in scup was also voted upon by the Council and ASMFC board, the exact numbers will be posted when they are released by the Council.

Council Approves Changes to Black Sea Bass Management

Measures also slated for red grouper and wreckfish upon approval by the Secretary of Commerce

Members of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council approved management measures impacting federal fisheries for black sea bass, red grouper, and wreckfish through three separate amendments to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan during its meeting last week in Raleigh, NC. The amendments must now go through the Secretarial review process before any regulations go into place. The Council considered recommendations from its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), advisory panels, testimony received during public hearings, and written comments before making its final decisions on its preferred management alternatives within the amendments. A final public hearing was held during last week's meeting.

Proposed changes to the black sea bass fishery are designed to reduce the rate of harvest in order to help extend the current fishing year for both the commercial and recreational fisheries and include increases in the minimum size limit, a commercial trip limit, and the implementation of an endorsement program for the commercial black sea bass pot fishery. If approved by the Secretary of Commerce, Amendment 18A will increase the recreational size limit from 12" to 13" total length and the commercial size limit from 10" to 11" total length. The amendment would also implement a commercial trip limit of 1,000 pounds (for all gear types), limit the number of commercial pots that can be fished on a single trip to 35, and require all pots be retrieved at the end of each fishing trip. Amendment 18A would create an endorsement program for the commercial black sea bass pot fishery, reducing overcapacity by creating qualifying criteria based on average landings over a 12-year period. After reviewing public comment, the Council lowered the requirement for qualifying for an endorsement to an average of 2,500 pounds. Approximately 30 of the 50 commercial pot fishermen who reported landings in 2010 will qualify for endorsements under the new plan. You may submit comments by the following methods:

Electronic Submission: The Federal e-Rulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov> (select "Submit Comment", then type in NOAA-NMFS-2011-0282 in the "Keyword or ID" box). All comments received are part of the public record and will generally be posted to <http://www.regulations.gov> without change.

Mail: NOAA Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office Sustainable Fisheries Division
C/o Kate Michie 263 13th Avenue South St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

Comment Period Ends January 23, 2012

PROCLAMATIONS: Details of proclamations are on NCDMF's website www.ncdenr.org

RE: SPINY DOGFISH-COMMERCIAL FISHING OPERATIONS

Effective at **12:01 A.M. Sunday, January 1, 2012** the following restrictions will apply to the harvest of spiny dogfish in the waters of North Carolina. **I. HARVEST LIMITS, AREAS AND TRIP LIMITS**

During the period beginning at **12:01 A.M., Sunday, January 1, 2012 and ending at 6:00 P.M., Tuesday, January 31, 2012**, the following trip limits apply to these geographic areas: **A. BROWNS INLET - NORTH** – No commercial fishing operation, regardless of the number of people involved, may possess more than **4,000 pounds of spiny dogfish per day east and north of a line** beginning at a point 34° 37.0000'N – 77° 15.000'W; running southeasterly to a point 34° 32.0000'N – 77° 10.0000'W. **B. BROWNS INLET- SOUTH** – No commercial fishing operation, regardless of the number of people involved, may possess more than **500 pounds of spiny dogfish per day west and south of a line** beginning at a point 34° 37.0000'N – 77° 15.000'W; running southeasterly to a point 34° 32.0000'N – 77° 10.0000'W. <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/proclamation-ff-83-2011>

RE: SPOTTED SEATROUT COMMERCIAL

Effective **12:01 A.M., Monday, December 19, 2011**, the following will apply to spotted seatrout for commercial purposes: **I. SPOTTED SEATROUT RULE SUSPENSION**

North Carolina Marine Fisheries Rule 15A NCAC 03M .0504 (a) and (b) are suspended.

II. MINIMUM SIZE LIMIT It is unlawful to possess spotted seatrout (speckled trout) less than **14 inches** total length. **III. HARVEST RESTRICTIONS** A. It is unlawful for a commercial fishing operation to possess more than **75 spotted seatrout per day**. B. It is unlawful to possess more than four (4) spotted seatrout per person per day taken by hook and line in joint and coastal fishing waters of the state. C. It is unlawful for a commercial fishing operation to possess or sell spotted seatrout for commercial purposes taken from joint fishing waters of the state from **midnight on Friday to midnight on Sunday each week**. D. It is unlawful to set gill nets in the joint fishing waters of the state from **midnight on Friday to midnight on Sunday each week**. <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/proclamation-ff-84-2011>

Meetings: There are no meetings this week

For more information on any item in this update, contact the NCFA office (252) 745-0225. Also, visit NCFA Website for breaking news and other issues concerning our industry.
www.ncfish.org