
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

PRESS RELEASE



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Council and Board Adopt 2009 Recreational Management Measures

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) together with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC) Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Board (Board) met on December 9, 2008 in Montauk, NY and adopted the following 2009 recreational fishery management measures:

	Summer Flounder	Scup	Black Sea Bass
2009 Harvest Limit	7.16 m lbs	1.74 m lbs	1.17 m lbs
Possession Limit	state-specific	25 fish (EEZ)	25 fish
Minimum Fish Size	state-specific	12" (EEZ)	12.5"
Open Season	state-specific	Jan. 1-Feb. 28 and Oct. 1-Oct. 31	Jan. 1 - Dec. 31

The above summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass recreational harvest limits for 2009 are consistent with the National Marine Fishery Service's (NMFS) proposed rule (October 28, 2008) which account for research set-aside (RSA) deductions being applied to the recreational sector's initial quota allocations. For the recreational summer flounder fishery, the Council and Board adopted the conservation equivalency alternative in lieu of a coastwide option. This decision requires the states to develop state-specific management measures (i.e., possession limits, size limits, and seasons) to achieve state-specific harvest limits. The states will develop management proposals and submit them to the Board for approval at its February 2009 meeting. As a non-preferred alternative, the Council and Board adopted a coastwide daily bag limit of two fish with a 20 inch total length (TL) minimum size requirement, and an open season from May 1 until September 30, 2009. In addition, a precautionary default measure of a 21.5 inch TL minimum fish size, a one fish possession limit, and an open season from July 4 to September 7, 2009 was also approved. This measure would be imposed on any state that does not develop and implement conservation equivalent management measures. For states that exceed their 2008 target, the Board passed a motion that would require those states to implement seasonal closures to achieve a minimum of 50 percent of the required harvest reduction, and directs the ASMFC Technical Committee to reevaluate the application of performance measures for evaluation of state conservation equivalency proposals.

For the 2009 recreational scup fishery, the Board voted to adopt conservation equivalency for state waters. For Federal waters, the Council voted to increase the possession limit from 15 fish to 25 fish in 2009, and increase the minimum fish size from 10.5 inches to 12 inches in 2009. The season would be open January 1 through February 28 and October 1 through October 31, 2009.

For the 2009 recreational black sea bass fishery, the Council and Board voted to increase the minimum fish size from 12 inches to 12.5 inches in 2009 and maintain the current 25 fish possession limit. The TL measurement would not include the tendril. The season would be open January 1 through December 31, 2009. The Council and Board also voted that if the Wave 5 data results indicate that a 10 percent reduction is not needed, then the measures approved at this meeting would revert to the 2008 management measures (12 inch TL minimum fish size, a 25 fish possession limit, and an open season all year).

The Council also adopted quota and management measures for the 2009/2010 Spiny Dogfish fishing year. A commercial quota of 12.0 million pounds was approved and would be divided into two semi-annual quota periods: Quota period 1 (May 1-September 30, 2009): 57.9% equaling 6,948,000 pounds, Quota period 2 (October 1-April 30, 2010): 42.1% equaling 5,052,000 pounds. Commercial trip limits (daily possession limits) for the 2009/2010 fishing year would be set at 3,000 pounds.

The Council also voted to confirm its April 2008 action regarding Tilefish Amendment 1 Gear Restricted Areas (GRA). The Council agreed that the GRA interpreted by and provided by the NMFS Northeast Regional Office are indeed consistent with its intent to minimize the effect of bottom trawling on the tilefish Essential Fish Habitat (EFH).



Pictured left is Donna Ruhle receiving the Council's Fisheries Achievement Award and the Ricks E Savage Award from Rick Robins, Chairman (right), on behalf of her late husband, Philip Ruhle. James Ruhle (center) also received the Council's Fisheries Achievement Award.

The Council recognized Captain James Ruhle and, posthumously, Captain Philip Ruhle with its 2008 Fisheries Achievement Award (FAA). Captain Philip Ruhle was also honored with the Ricks E Savage Award. The FAA is designed to recognize individuals who exhibit outstanding professionalism, diligence, and effort to protect living marine resources. The Ricks E Savage award is intended to honor individuals who add value to the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's process and goals through significant conservation and management activities.

James Ruhle was recognized for being an outstanding advocate for sustainable fishing practices, sustainable marine fisheries, and viable fishing communities. In 2005 when Hurricane Katrina devastated Gulf of Mexico fisheries he provided hope to many in despair by providing relief directly to fishing families by engaging individuals and organizations to distribute food and funds to impacted fishing families. Through his many efforts, the monkfish plan was finally modified to allow six fishermen to regain entry to the monkfish fishery after they had been wrongfully excluded by virtue of an administrative change in the fishery's southern boundary line. Mr. Ruhle's other accomplishments include a "High Liner" award recognition from North Carolina in 2000, another "High Liner" award in 2004 from National Fishermen magazine and the Ricks E Savage Award from this Council in 2006. He has made a positive difference in the fishing community.

Philip Ruhle was posthumously recognized for his contributions to the preservation of marine fisheries. He was honored by the World Wildlife Fund in November 2007 for the development of a net called "The Eliminator" which has since been renamed by NMFS as the Ruhle Trawl instead of the Haddock Rope Trawl. In 2003, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) named Phil an "Environmental Hero" for his work in improving their trawl survey practices. This award honors NOAA volunteers for their "tireless efforts to preserve and protect our nations' environment." In 2006, he assisted in the development of the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation of Rhode Island. All of Mr. Ruhle's hard work and dedication to fisheries merited this recognition.

Six Council committees also met during the meeting. The Council's Omnibus Annual Catch Limits and Accountability Measures Committee (ACL/AM) met to review Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) requirements for ACL/AMs, Council's comments on National Standard 1 proposed rule, Council's prior position on ACL/AM approach, and developed a timeline/plan of action to address ACL/AM requirements. The Research Set-Aside Committee met to review final reports of recently released closed out RSA awards. The Ecosystems and Ocean Planning Committee met to prioritize future committee activities. The Squid Mackerel, Butterfish Committee met to review and clarify management alternatives for mackerel limited entry program, EFH designations, at-sea processing issues, and ACL/AM regarding Amendment 11. The Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Committee met to review market power analyses for the excessive shares issue and to discuss FMP's objectives and need for changes. The Executive Committee met to report on the October Northeast Region Coordination Council meeting and to address the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) membership. The Council subsequently elected four new members to the SSC, i.e., Michael J. Wilberg, Yan Yao, Scott Crossen, and John Boreman.

On Thursday, December 11, the Council received a presentation by Robert Brock of NMFS on its Research and Management Strategic Plan for Deep Sea Corals and Sponges. The Plan is a 5-year strategic plan that identifies goals, objectives, and approaches to guide NOAA's deep-sea coral and sponge research, management, and international activities for Fiscal Years 2009 through 2013. The primary goal of the Plan is to improve research, conservation, and management of deep-sea coral and sponge ecosystems.