

# NMFS News Release



**Northeast Regional Office  
One Blackburn Drive  
Gloucester, MA 01930**

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## Black Sea Bass Regulations

Date: December 4, 1996

Dear Vessel and Dealer Permit Holder:

On December 16, 1996, comprehensive management measures for the black sea bass fishery in the management unit defined as the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) north of 3515.3' N. latitude -- the latitude of Cape Hatteras Light, Cape Hatteras, North Carolina -- will become effective. As you read this, please note that the effective date for some provisions is December 16, 1996, but for others it is June 1, 1997. This letter is a summary of the approved measures and requirements contained in the Fishery Management Plan for the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fisheries. It does not contain information on every regulation.

### **Fish size requirements - December 16, 1996**

The minimum fish size for both the recreational and commercial fisheries is 9 inches (22.9 cm). Dealers may not possess black sea bass that do not meet this size requirement unless they were harvested exclusively in state waters by a vessel not issued a Federal permit.

### **Mesh size requirement and other gear restrictions - December 16, 1996**

The minimum mesh size for otter trawl vessels possessing 100 or more pounds (45.4 or more kg) of black sea bass on board is a codend mesh of 4.0 inches (10.2 cm) diamond or 3.5 inches (8.9 cm) square. If a vessel possesses less than 100 pounds (45.4 kg), and is fishing with nets smaller than the minimum mesh size, you must keep the black sea bass separate from other species. The rollers on roller rig trawl gear can be no larger than 18 inches (45.7 cm) in diameter.

Black sea bass pots and traps fished in the EEZ must have hinges and fasteners made of degradable materials, and escape vents that meet one of the following minimum size requirements: rectangular = 1.125 inches (2.86 cm) by 5.75 inches (14.61 cm); circular = 2 inches (5.08 cm) diameter; or square = 1.5 inches (3.81 cm) sides, inside measure. Black sea bass traps or pots must also contain a panel (ghost panel) which measures at

least 3.0 inches (7.62 cm) by 6.0 inches (15.24 cm) and is affixed to the trap or pot with degradable fasteners.

### **Vessel and dealer permits - June 1, 1997**

Beginning June 1, 1997, in order to fish in the management unit for black sea bass, commercial vessels or charter/party vessels must have been issued a Federal black sea bass permit from the Northeast Regional Office. For commercial vessels, the permits will be issued *only* to qualifying vessels. The qualifying criteria are:

- (1) The vessel landed and sold black sea bass in the management unit between January 26, 1988, and January 26, 1993; or,
- (2) The vessel was under construction for, or was being rerigged for, use in the directed fishery for black sea bass on January 26, 1993, provided the vessel landed black sea bass in the management unit for sale prior to January 26, 1994; or,
- (3) The vessel is replacing such a vessel and meets the replacement restrictions.

We are currently identifying qualifying vessels through the National Marine Fisheries Service's Northeast Region (NMFS/NER) weighout database. You will receive further information about what you can do to apply for, and receive, one of these permits as this information becomes available. This fishery is NOT included on your annual permit renewal application. You will receive a separate application mailing for this permit in the spring of 1997. There are no qualifying criteria for party and charter boats. You may not sell the black sea bass caught by such vessels. In order to purchase black sea bass from federally permitted commercial vessels, all dealers must be issued a black sea bass dealer permit.

### **Vessel operator permit - June 1, 1997**

Black sea bass vessel operators must have in their possession by June 1, 1997, a valid vessel operator permit issued by NMFS/NER. Operator permits are issued from the NMFS/NER Permit Office, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. An application form for the vessel operator permit is attached and should be submitted as soon as possible with the required photos. If you have already obtained an operator permit for another NMFS/NER fishery, you do not need to get another one.

### **Recordkeeping and reporting requirement - June 1, 1997**

All persons holding a dealer or vessel permit for the black sea bass fishery must submit NMFS/NER-approved logbooks effective June 1, 1997. Moratorium and party/charter permit holders must complete daily log reports for all trips whether or not black sea bass are caught. Reports must be submitted monthly. Dealers must submit weekly reports of all fish purchases and annual reports of the "Employment Data" section of the Annual Processed Products Reports. If you did not fish, or purchase fish, during a month, you still have to submit a "negative" report to indicate that is the case.

### **Coastwide commercial quota - January 1, 1998**

The FMP specifies a coastwide commercial quota for January 1, 1998. This quota will be divided into four 3-month quarters. Landings made in any state from Maine through North Carolina by commercial vessels will count toward a quarter's quota. In the event that the quota for a particular quarter is harvested, federally permitted vessels may not fish commercially for, or land, black sea bass for the remainder of that quarter. NMFS/NER permitted dealers may not purchase black sea bass during a closure. Since this is a joint Fishery Management Plan with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), the states will take complimentary measures with regard to closures in state waters for state licensed vessels and dealers.

The following measures are not currently specified, but may be adopted for 1998: gear restrictions other than those currently in place, and recreational possession limit and season.

You are encouraged to obtain further information or a copy of the regulations by calling (508)281-9278. A copy of the regulations can also be obtained by accessing the NMFS Northeast Regional Offices's Web Site at: **<http://www.wh.who.edu/ro/doc/nero.html>**



[NERO Home Page](http://www.wh.who.edu/ro/doc/nero.html)