

The Watch (cont'd from page 3)

Last year the minimum size was 19" with a nice long season from May 1 to December 31 and a four fish/person/day limit.

The door is open for a possible bag limit increase in 2018 due to recreational fishing under-harvesting the limit last year.



Jason McNamee

Jason McNamee, DEM's Chief of Marine Resource Management, said, "We have a fifteen percent increase in quota for 2018, but this increase does not give Rhode Island much to work with in the way of liberalization of a minimum size decrease, but we could consider a bag limit adjustment."

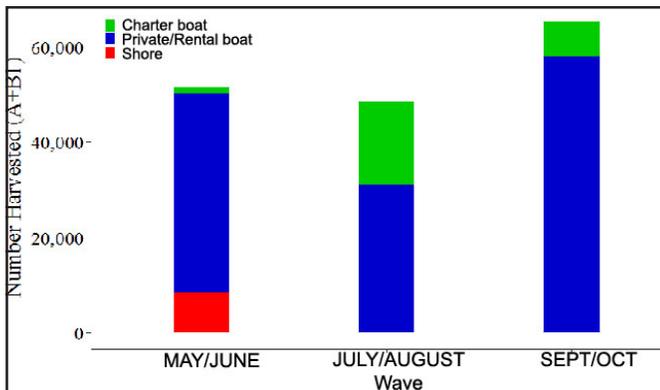
BLACK SEA BASS

Black sea bass (BSB) regulations are expected to be similar to last year with a 15 inch minimum size. However, an adjustment in the split season is possible.

Capt. Rick Bellavance, president of the Rhode Island Party & Charter Boat Association said, "We are advocating keeping the black sea bass season open from September 22 to October 21 when the Federal fishery is closed. Our boats target and catch black sea bass during the start of the tautog season. Often this is all we have to fish on this time of year."

To accommodate an open recreational season when the Federal fishery is closed, it would likely mean reducing or eliminating most of the Spring BSB season. Last year the black sea bass season opened on May 25 which allowed shore and bay anglers (see bar chart) to harvest BSB in the spring when the water in the Bay is cooler and the bait and fish are there as well as when anglers were summer flounder fishing in the spring.

2017 RECREATIONAL BLACK SEA BASS PERFORMANCE



When the season opened last year on May 25 there was a three fish/person/day possession limit until August 31 when the limit jumped to seven fish, closing on September 22 when the Federal fishery closed. The season reopened on October 22 and ran until December 31 with a seven fish/person/day limit.

Black sea bass are managed by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and at press time their BSB Addendum XXX was still out for public review. Decisions on harvest limit options with regional configurations and management units were all out for review. So, decisions on BSB will be made sometime in February.

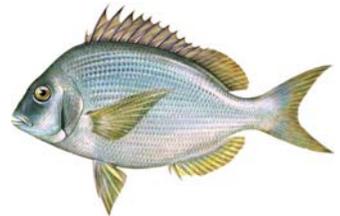


COD

RISAA member Steve Brustein of Portlane, Maine (above) with a cod caught off Block Island last December. Cod regulations are expected to remain the same in 2018: 22 inch minimum size, ten fish per person/day.

SCUP

Scup are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. The stock is in good shape with fishing mortality estimated to be .139, below the threshold F reference point of .22.



Additionally, the spawning stock biomass is above the threshold, so a large increase in scup quota is expected for 2018.



Possible options being discussed include a reduction in the minimum size to nine inches (was ten inches in 2017). Additionally, a reduction to eight inches in special shore conditional areas is being considered.

(to page 36)