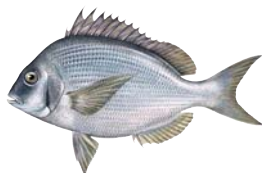


## THE WATCH: (from page 3)

### Scup

The 2021 scup management track stock assessment concluded the stock was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2019. Spawning stock biomass was estimated to be about 2 times the biomass target. The assessment indicated the stock experienced very high recruitment in 2015 and below-average recruitment during 2016-2019. Based on the SSC's recommendation, the Board and Council approved an ABC of 32.11 million pounds for 2022 and 29.67 million pounds for 2023. After accounting for expected discards, the ABCs result in a commercial quota of 20.38 million pounds and an RHL of 6.08 million pounds in 2022, and a commercial quota of 17.87 million pounds and an RHL of 5.41 million pounds in 2023. Compared to 2021 landings limits, the new limits represent a slight decrease in the commercial quota and a minor increase in the RHL in 2022.



### Black Sea Bass

The 2021 black sea bass management track stock assessment concluded the stock was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2019. Spawning stock biomass was estimated to be about 2.1 times the target level in 2019 and the fishing mortality rate was 15% below the threshold level that defines an overfished condition. Based on the SSC's recommendation, the Board and Council approved an ABC of 18.86 million pounds for 2022, which, after accounting for expected discards, results in a commercial quota of 6.47 million pounds and an RHL of 6.74 million pounds. These landings limits represent a 6% increase compared to the 2021 landing limits. The 2023 ABC was set at 16.66 million pounds, resulting in a 2023 commercial quota of 5.71 million pounds and an RHL of 5.95 million pounds.



### Bluefish

The 2021 bluefish management track assessment concluded spawning stock biomass was still overfished but overfishing

was not occurring in 2019. Based on the SSC's recommendation, the Bluefish Board and Council adopted an ABC of 25.26 million pounds and 30.62 million pounds for 2022 and 2023, respectively. The 2022 ABC results in a commercial quota of 3.54 million pounds and an RHL of 13.89 million pounds, and represents a 28% increase in the commercial quota and a 67% increase in the RHL from 2021 levels. The 2023 ABC results in a commercial quota of 4.29 million pounds and an RHL of 22.14 million pounds. Historically, a portion of the total allowable landings above the expected recreational harvest have been transferred from the recreational fishery to the commercial fishery. However, because the stock is currently overfished and the recreational and commercial sectors are both anticipated to fully harvest their limits, the Bluefish Board and Council did not authorize any quota transfers.



### Closing Suggestions

In closing, I want to say that it is my opinion that in RI waters, **black sea bass are currently underutilized as a recreational species** and recreational regulations should be relaxed for black sea bass to help take some pressure off species such as fluke and striped bass where populations are in much poorer shape.

The recreational **season should be opened earlier** (May instead of late June) and the Allowable Catch Limit for RI should be increased. This is a relatively easy fish to catch, that is delicious to eat, and can be found from shore out to 150 feet of water depth.

Please see the MAFMC Information Document on black sea bass for more information:

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/511cdc7fe4b00307a2628ac6/t/60e48e0984aa98094ae673b9/1625591306568/BSB\\_fishery\\_info\\_doc\\_2021.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/511cdc7fe4b00307a2628ac6/t/60e48e0984aa98094ae673b9/1625591306568/BSB_fishery_info_doc_2021.pdf)

### JOIN RISAA LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

All RISAA members are welcome to join the RISAA Legislative Committee. If you are interested or if you have any questions, you can contact me by email at [hittinger@risaa.org](mailto:hittinger@risaa.org)



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