



ROY COOPER  
*Governor*

MICHAEL S. REGAN  
*Secretary*

STEPHEN W. MURPHEY  
*Director*

February 13, 2018

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Marine Fisheries Commission

**FROM:** Chris Batsavage and Michelle Duval

**SUBJECT:** Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Meeting (Feb. 6-8 2018)

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The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) met Feb. 6-8, 2018 in Arlington, Virginia. Attached is the meeting summary compiled by Commission staff which includes a summary of each of the species management board meetings and motions, as well as associated press releases.

Items that may be of particular interest include:

- **Black Sea Bass:** The Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved Addendum XXX to the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan. The Addendum establishes a regional allocation of the coastwide recreational harvest limit to address state concerns regarding equity and accountability in recreational black sea bass management. Accounting for geographic differences in the stock and fishery interests, Addendum XXX uses a combination of exploitable biomass information from the latest stock assessment and historical harvest to regionally allocate the coastwide recreational harvest limit. The three regions are Massachusetts-New York, New Jersey, and Delaware-North Carolina (north of Cape Hatteras). The Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Technical Committee will develop regional recreational measures for the Board to review and approve in March.
- **Weakfish:** The Weakfish Management Board discussed the biological sampling requirements of Addendum I to Amendment 4 to the Fishery Management Plan. States have had difficulty fulfilling the biological sampling requirements of Addendum I through fishery-dependent sampling due to the low commercial and recreational harvest limits and due to the low availability of weakfish in much of their range, so some states have used fishery-independent samples to fulfill their sampling requirements. While Addendum I does not explicitly prohibit the use of fishery-independent samples, language in Addendum I indicates that sampling requirements are intended to characterize the fishery. The Board determined that fishery-independent samples are not appropriate for fulfilling length sample requirements, but fishery-independent samples may be appropriate for fulfilling age sample requirements, depending on whether the length distribution and capture location of fishery-independent samples are reflective of the weakfish fishery. The Board also tasked the Weakfish Technical Committee with reviewing commercial weakfish discard data, analyzing landings data to see if the occurrences of commercial trips approaching the 100-pound trip limit have increased, and characterizing the fisheries with substantial weakfish discards to see if different trip limits could be implemented to turn discards into landings and/or if fishing modifications could be made to minimize discards. This request was in response to reports of weakfish discards in the ocean gill net fishery offshore of Oregon Inlet targeting Atlantic croaker. This review will give the Board a better understanding of the extent and

magnitude of commercial weakfish discards along the coast to see if any management changes are needed.

- American Eel: The American Eel Management Board approved Draft Addendum V for public input and review. The addendum was initiated to address a number of concerns related to the management program established under Addendum IV, in particular the potential for implementation of state-by-state quotas for the yellow eel fishery. The draft addendum includes proposed alternatives for the existing coastwide landings cap, modifications to the triggers that would lead to implementation of state-by-state quotas, options to revise the state quotas developed under Addendum IV, and revisions to the transfer provisions for the yellow eel commercial fishery. The draft addendum also includes a proposed modification to the aquaculture provisions of the fishery management plan that would allow up to three contiguous states to pool their potential 200 pound glass eel allocations for a maximum of 600 pounds; however, any such plan would still require technical committee review and management board approval. Final action on Addendum V is expected in May 2018.
- Cobia: The South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board reviewed and approved state implementation plans for 2018 as recommended by the Cobia Technical Committee. As noted in the briefing materials, two options for the recreational fishery were submitted for technical review in North Carolina's implementation plan. Option 1, which was proposed by the Marine Fisheries Commission, was not recommended by the technical committee for management board approval because it exceeded the harvest target of 236,313 pounds. Option 2, a three-fish vessel limit for for-hire vessels, a one-fish vessel limit for private vessels and no season, was recommended for board approval. Since last week's board meeting, division staff have developed an additional option to address stakeholder concerns that will be submitted for technical review prior to the April 1 implementation deadline. This option will be presented to the Marine Fisheries Commission on Feb. 14 during the staff update on cobia recreational reporting.