

# **RI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT**

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## **RI Marine Fisheries Council**

March 31, 2026





# Virtual Meeting Participation

- All participants will be muted throughout the meeting
- To make a comment or ask a question you must use the **Raise Hand** feature in the zoom webinar
- The meeting facilitator will un-mute one participant at a time to make their comment or ask their question, the participant will then be re-muted

**Please minimize background noise while unmuted! –  
Thank you**

# RIMFC Annual Report



## 2025 Highlights:

- Council met on five occasions: March 26; April 7; October 20; November 5; December 1
- Provided recommendations to the Director on a wide range of regulatory matters, which included forty-six individual recommendations
- The Director concurred with the Council on forty of these recommendations, or 87%.
- No change in Council membership in 2025
- SAP met on five occasions

# Striped Bass – 2026 Management



**Proposal 1 (Division):** Implement striped bass total length definition

**Proposed Rule** (section 1.10(NNNNN)):

"Total length" means the straight linear distance from the tip of the snout to the end of the tail of a finfish species. All finfish species' minimum sizes are measured as total length, except for coastal sharks and striped bass. The, in which minimum size for coastal sharks is measured by fork length. The minimum size for striped bass is measured as the greatest straight line length in inches as measured on a fish from the anterior most tip of the jaw or snout to the farthest extremity of the tail with the upper and lower fork of the tail squeezed together.

**NOTE: ASMFC FMP Requirement**

# Striped Bass – 2026 Management



## Public Comment Summary:

Support for:	Status Quo	Proposal 1	Other
Written	0	3	1
Hearing	0	0	0

# Striped Bass – Total Length Definition



## **Motion:**

Adopt Proposal 1 for a striped bass total length definition.

Approved by consent

# Bluefish - 2026 Recreational Management



- Recreational Harvest Limit (RHL) of 22.02 million lbs set for 2026, a **40% increase from the 2025 RHL**

## Current management:

Mode	Min. size	Season	Poss. limit
Private/Shore	N/A	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	3 fish/day
For-hire			5 fish/day

## Proposal 1 (Division): Increase recreational possession limit

Mode	Min. size	Season	Poss. limit
Private/Shore	N/A	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	<del>3</del> <u>5</u> fish/day
For-hire			<del>5</del> <u>7</u> fish/day

# Bluefish - 2026 Recreational Management



## Public Comment Summary:

Support for:	Status Quo	Proposal 1	Other
Written	6	0	0
Hearing	11	0	1

# Bluefish - 2026 Recreational Management



- Recreational Harvest Limit (RHL) of 22.02 million lbs set for 2026, a **40% increase from the 2025 RHL**

## Current management:

Mode	Min. size	Season	Poss. limit
Private/Shore	N/A	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	3 fish/day
For-hire			5 fish/day

## Proposal 1 (Division): Increase recreational possession limit

Mode	Min. size	Season	Poss. limit
Private/Shore	N/A	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	<del>3</del> <u>5</u> fish/day
For-hire			<del>5</del> <u>7</u> fish/day

# Bluefish - 2026 Recreational Management



## **Motion:**

Adopt Proposal 1 for an increased possession limit for 2026 recreational bluefish.

Motion made by Mr. Dangelo, seconded by Ms. Aiello

Motion passes unanimously

# Black Sea Bass - 2026 Recreational Management



## ASMFC management:

- The MAFMC and ASMFC voted for a 20% liberalization for recreational black sea bass at their December joint meeting.
- MA, RI, CT, and NY are part of a region, and the FMP encourages regulatory consistency among states in the region.
- The Northern region states collaboratively looked at proposals for the region as a whole that included:
  - Size limit reduction
  - Season extension
  - Bag limit increase
- At the time of noticing, the Division did not have information on what the exact % liberalization for the Northern region would be.
- Therefore, several proposals for 2026 recreational black sea bass were noticed that encompassed a variety of proposed changes.

# Black Sea Bass - 2026 Recreational Management



## Regional management approach:

- The ASMFC Board approved a 27% liberalization for the Northern region at their February 4<sup>th</sup> meeting
- The ASMFC Board approved Northern Region Option 2 at their March 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- Northern Region Option 2 is different than Proposals 1 – 4, and the example Northern Region Proposal discussed at the Public Hearing.
- **Northern Region Option 2 is the only ASMFC Board approved option.**

# Black Sea Bass - 2026 Recreational Management



## Northern Region Option 2 Approved by ASMFC Board:

Mode	Min. size	Season	Poss. limit
Gen. Rec	16.5"	Jan. 1 – <del>May 21</del> <u>May 15</u>	Closed
		<del>May 22</del> <u>May 16</u> – Aug. 26	<u>3</u> <del>2</del> fish/person/day
		Aug. 27 – Dec. 31	3 fish/person/day
Party/Charter	16.0"	Jan. 1 – <del>June 17</del> <u>May 15</u>	Closed
		<del>June 18</del> <u>May 16</u> – Aug. 31	<u>4</u> <del>2</del> fish/person/day
		Sept. 1 – Dec 31	6 fish/person/day

# Black Sea Bass - 2026 Recreational Management



**Proposal 1 (Division):** Change general recreational minimum size and party/charter season

Mode	Min. size	Season	Poss. limit
Gen. Rec	<del>16.5</del> <u>16.0</u> "	Jan. 1 – May 21	Closed
		May 22 – Aug. 26	2 fish/day
		Aug. 27 – Dec. 31	3 fish/day
Party/Charter	16.0"	Jan. 1 – <del>June 17</del> <u>May 21</u>	Closed
		<del>June 18</del> <u>May 22</u> – Aug. 31	2 fish/day
		Sept. 1 – Dec 31	6 fish/day

# Black Sea Bass - 2026 Recreational Management



**Proposal 2 (Division):** Increase the summer possession limit from 2 fish to 3 fish for both general recreational and licensed party and charter vessels

Mode	Min. size	Season	Poss. limit
Gen. Rec	16.5"	Jan. 1 – May 21	Closed
		May 22 – Aug. 26	<del>2</del> <u>3</u> fish/person/day
		Aug. 27 – Dec. 31	3 fish/person/day
Party/Charter	16.0"	Jan. 1 – June 17	Closed
		June 18 – Aug. 31	<del>2</del> <u>3</u> fish/person/day
		Sept. 1 – Dec 31	6 fish/person/day

# Black Sea Bass - 2026 Recreational Management



**Proposal 3 (Division)**: Decrease the recreational minimum size for licensed party and charter vessels

Mode	Min. size	Season	Poss. limit
Gen. Rec	16.5"	Jan. 1 – May 21	Closed
		May 22 – Aug. 26	2 fish/person/day
		Aug. 27 – Dec. 31	3 fish/person/day
Party/Charter	<del>16.0</del> <u>15.5"</u>	Jan. 1 – June 17	Closed
		June 18 – Aug. 31	2 fish/person/day
		Sept. 1 – Dec 31	6 fish/person/day

# Black Sea Bass - 2026 Recreational Management



**Proposal 4 (Division):** Change the start date of the summer general recreational season

Mode	Min. size	Season	Poss. limit
Gen. Rec	16.5"	Jan. 1 – <del>May 21</del> <u>May 17</u>	Closed
		<del>May 22</del> <u>May 18</u> – Aug. 26	2 fish/person/day
		Aug. 27 – Dec. 31	3 fish/person/day
Party/Charter	16.0"	Jan. 1 – June 17	Closed
		June 18 – Aug. 31	2 fish/person/day
		Sept. 1 – Dec 31	6 fish/person/day

# Black Sea Bass - 2026 Recreational Management



## Example Northern Region Proposal from Public Hearing:

Mode	Min. size	Season	Poss. limit
Gen. Rec	<del>16.5</del> <u>16.0</u> "	Jan. 1 – <del>May 21</del> <u>May 15</u>	Closed
		<del>May 22</del> <u>May 16</u> – Aug. 26	<del>2</del> <u>3</u> fish/person/day
		Aug. 27 – Dec. 31	3 fish/person/day
Party/Charter	16.0"	Jan. 1 – <del>June 17</del> <u>May 15</u>	Closed
		<del>June 18</del> <u>May 16</u> – Aug. 31	<del>2</del> <u>3</u> fish/person/day
		Sept. 1 – Dec 31	6 fish/person/day

# Black Sea Bass - 2026 Recreational Management



## Public Comment Summary:

Support for:	Status Quo	Proposal 1	Proposal 2	Proposal 3	Proposal 4	Updated ASMFC Proposal	Other
Written	0	1	0	1	1	6	12
Hearing	0	0	0	0	0	1	1

# Black Sea Bass - 2026 Recreational Management



## Northern Region Option 2 Approved by ASMFC Board:

Mode	Min. size	Season	Poss. limit
Gen. Rec	16.5"	Jan. 1 – <del>May 21</del> <u>May 15</u>	Closed
		<del>May 22</del> <u>May 16</u> – Aug. 26	<u>3</u> <del>2</del> fish/person/day
		Aug. 27 – Dec. 31	3 fish/person/day
Party/Charter	16.0"	Jan. 1 – <del>June 17</del> <u>May 15</u>	Closed
		<del>June 18</del> <u>May 16</u> – Aug. 31	<u>4</u> <del>2</del> fish/person/day
		Sept. 1 – Dec 31	6 fish/person/day

# Black Sea Bass - 2026 Recreational Management



## **Motion:**

Adopt Northern Region option 2 for 2026 recreational black sea bass as noticed and recommended by the ASMFC board.

Motion made by Mr. Vespe, seconded by Mr. Dangelo

Motion passes 6-0-1

# Atlantic Bonito & False Albacore



## Proposal 1 (Industry):

### 3.36.1 Recreational

- A. Minimum size: Sixteen inches (16").
- B. Season: January 1 through December 31.
- C. Possession limit: Three (3) fish per person per day combined.

# Atlantic Bonito & False Albacore



## 3.36.2 Commercial

A. Possession limit: The harvest, landing, and possession of Atlantic Bonito and False Albacore in the marine waters of Rhode Island is prohibited while fishing commercially.

### *NOTE on Industry Proposal 1 Commercial:*

- Proposed that commercial fishery landings for both Atlantic Bonito (AB) and False Albacore (FA) be capped at the **3-year average**:
  - 13,189 lbs for AB
  - 1,707 lbs for FA
- Proposal modified to add an option to be capped at the **5-year average** :
  - 11,658 lbs for AB
  - 4,628 lbs for FA
- In both scenarios (3-year and 5-year averages), for both species, the poundage is too small for DMF to manage, and staff could not determine a season and possession limit to notice.

# Atlantic Bonito & False Albacore



**Proposal 2 (Division):** In response to workshop comments.

## **3.36.1 Recreational**

- A. Minimum size: Sixteen inches (16”).
- B. Season: January 1 through December 31.
- C. Possession limit: Five (5) fish per person per day combined.

## **3.36.2 Commercial**

- A. Minimum size: Sixteen inches (16”).
- B. Season: January 1 through December 31.

# Atlantic Bonito & False Albacore



## Public Comment Summary:

Support for:	Written	Oral
16" Min. Size Rec.	56	16
16" Min. Size Comm.	53	14
3 Fish Poss. Limit Rec.	47	13
5 Fish Poss. Limit Rec.	10	9
Comm. landing Cap/Annual Limit/Quota (unspecified or based on average or maximum landings prior 3-5 yrs)	48	13
Support for new rules/"guardrails" w/o specifics	14	15
Status quo (no new rules now)	15	2
Other	15	10

# Atlantic Bonito & False Albacore



## **Motion:**

Maintain status quo for Atlantic Bonito & False Albacore management.

Motion made by Mr. Dangelo, seconded by Ms. Eagan

Motion passes 4-3

# List of Common Species



**Proposal 1 (Division):** Add two new common species

**Proposed Rule** (section 1.12):

- “Atlantic Bonito” means *Sarda sarda*.
- “False Albacore” means *Euthynnus alletteratus*, little tunny.

# List of Common Species



## Public Comment Summary:

Support for:	Status Quo	Proposal 1	Other
Written	0	1	0
Hearing	0	0	2

# List of Common Species



## **Motion:**

Adopt proposal 1 to add Atlantic Bonito (*Sarda sarda*), & False Albacore to the list of common species.

Approved by consent

End of Slides!

