

**Representing Over 7,500 Recreational Anglers**

**RI & MA request different measures; delays in black sea bass & fluke rules pending**

Summer flounder (fluke) and black sea bass are jointly managed by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). For summer flounder, the ASMFC at its January meeting, agreed to maintain the current regional management system between states, a one-inch increase in size limit and a reduction in possession limit to no more than four fish per day across all states to help constrain the fishery in 2017.

Both Rhode Island and Massachusetts have proposed alternative management measures that differ from the ASFMC rules. A conference call meeting of the ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board to consider the RI and MA proposals was scheduled for March 30.

A similar conference call meeting may be held in April for black sea bass.

**2017 R.I. Recreational Saltwater Regulations Still Not Set**

*As of press time, black sea bass and summer flounder regs still undecided*

The public hearing was held in February for the fishing community to weigh in on proposals for the 2017 recreational regulations for several species.

This was followed two weeks later by the R.I. Marine Fisheries Council (Council) meeting at which time they voted on recreational fishing regulation recommendations. The Council recommendations, all public hearing input and Marine Fisheries staff recommendations were then sent to **Janet Coit**, DEM director, for the department's final ruling on 2017 regulations.

Here's how the Council voted.

**The summer flounder (fluke)** option approved by the Council was a minimum size of 19", six fish/person/day, with a season running from May 19 to December 31. This option meets required reduction levels established by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Council (ASMFC). A declining summer flounder Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) has made it necessary for a 30% reduction in harvest limits to rebuild the stock.



At press time, a challenge to the Magnuson-Stevens Act and NOAA's authority to manage summer flounder is underway by New Jersey. The species has been struggling. For six years the SSB has been on the decline and overfishing is occurring relative to biological reference points.

**The black sea bass** stock assessment is indicating that we have a healthy black sea bass fishery, however, we did overfish harvest limits last year.

Like last year the council approved a 15" minimum size and a split season limit. Starting a month earlier the Council approved a three fish/person/day between March 25 to August 31 and a seven fish/person/day limit from September 1 to September 21 and then a closure when the federal black sea bass season closes. The season would then open again with a seven fish limit on October 22 and run to December 31. **(to page 39)**



**JACK BOSCH**  
CAUGHT THIS STRIPER ON AN EEL WHILE FISHING OFF BLOCK ISLAND ON AN OVERCAST MORNING LAST JUNE.



**Recreational fishing is worth \$208 MILLION to the Rhode Island economy and over 1,900 jobs!**