

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

January 28, 2021

Mr. Chris Moore
Executive Director
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
800 North State Street, Suite 201
Dover, DE 19901

Mr. Robert E. Beal
Executive Director
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1050 N. Highland Street, Suite 200-A-N
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Mr. Moore and Mr. Beal:

In advance of the February ASMFC meeting, we write to request strong support for two potential methodologies which would provide urgently needed fairness to Connecticut fishermen with respect to commercial black sea bass harvest allocations.

As we expressed to you in the letter we sent on this topic in December, the black sea bass population in the Southern New England region has increased significantly for several decades due to changes in ocean temperatures. Unfortunately, Connecticut's quota has not been updated to reflect the northward expansion of black sea bass and remains at only 1% of the entire coastwide quota – a quota which has not been changed in almost 18 years. It is unconscionable that Connecticut fishermen still have a quota five times smaller than the state with the next smallest allocation (Delaware) given the unprecedented abundance of sea bass off our coast.

To this end, we again request that the ASMFC and MAFMC increase Connecticut's black sea bass allocation to 5 percent of the coastwide quota. We firmly believe that increasing Connecticut's quota to 5 percent, equal to the allocation assigned to the next lowest state, remains the fairest approach taking into account the growth of the sea bass population in the Northeast in comparison to the more stable numbers in southern regions.

We do understand that these conversations have been difficult, and are aware of opposition to this proposal from a number of states. While we continue to believe that an immediate 5 percent allocation to Connecticut is the most equitable path forward, we also understand that there is another option being discussed that we feel is worth considering should the 5 percent allocation not receive the votes necessary to move forward. This is a "trigger" approach, in which the trigger would be set at either 3.0 or 3.5 million pounds, per tradition, with any given year's quota above the trigger being used first to increase Connecticut's quota to 5 percent and New York's to 9 percent, and then for the remaining quota to be allocated proportionally among the states. This approach would achieve a number of admirable objectives – Connecticut's concerns would be dealt with fairly, northern states would benefit from the expanding population of black sea bass in their waters, and southern regions would have their historic allocation protected and would continue to benefit from the overall growth of the sea bass population. In order for this approach to be equitable it is essential that the trigger to be set at 3.5 million pounds or less as this amount is reflective of historical quota allocations. Implemented thusly, this bifurcated approach would

provide fairness to our fishermen, and we believe should be seriously considered if the ASMFC and MAFMC cannot reach a consensus on giving Connecticut 5 percent of the quota outright.

We appreciate your consideration of this fundamentally important issue to our region. Should you need supporting documentation or information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate



ROSA L. DELAURO
Member of Congress



JOHN B. LARSON
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