

2014 Maryland FMP Report (August 2015)

Section 16. Scup (*Stenotomus chrysops*)

Over the past few years there has been a notable increase in scup landings from the Maryland winter trawl fishery. Scup commercial harvest in Maryland was minimal and highly variable from the late 1960's through 2012 compared to other Atlantic Coast states. Scup are rarely caught by recreational anglers in recent years from Maryland offshore or inshore. However, scup is a major recreational fishery along the northeastern Atlantic coast.

Fishery Management Plans (FMPs)

No Chesapeake Bay Program fishery management plan (FMP) has been developed for scup. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources' authority to manage scup as a species in need of conservation was established in 1994.¹

Scup are jointly managed by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC). The ASMFC manages scup fisheries in state waters (out to three miles) while the MAFMC manages scup fisheries in federal waters (3-200 miles offshore). Scup were incorporated into the ASMFC and MAFMC summer flounder FMPs in 1996. Since then, a series of amendments and addenda have been implemented to modify management measures.

ASMFC Addendum IV (2001) established procedures that simplified, clarified, and expedited the setting and implementation of fishery specifications. Addendum V (2002) established state-specific quota for the summer fishery. Addenda III (2001), VII (2002), IX (2003), XI (2004), and XIII (2004) implemented catch and minimum size limits for recreational fisheries. Addendum XVI (2005) established measures to ensure prompt implementation of compliance requirements. Addendum XX (2009) clarified the procedures for state-to-state quota transfers. MAFMC established an initial overfishing definition with Amendment 12 in 1999. In 2007, the MAFMC established a rebuilding plan with Amendment 14, established annual catch limits and

accountability measures with Amendment 15 (2011), and modified the measures with Amendment 19 (2014). Several frameworks (addenda) have been implemented since 1996. Amendment 17 (2015) was passed by the MAFMC. This amendment ensures that all FMPs of the Greater Atlantic Region, developed under the jurisdiction of the New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils, comply with the standardized bycatch reporting methodology (SBRM) requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The amendment (1) Explains the methods and processes by which bycatch is currently monitored and assessed for Greater Atlantic Region fisheries; (2) Determines whether these methods and processes need to be modified and/or supplemented; (3) Establishes standards of precision for bycatch estimation for all Greater Atlantic Region fisheries; and (4) Documents the SBRMs established for all fisheries managed through the FMPs of the Greater Atlantic Region.²

Stock Status

The ASMFC 2012 scup stock assessment determined that as of 2011, scup are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring relative to the revised biological reference points (BRPs).³ The current BRPs are a threshold fishing mortality ($F_{40\%}$) of 0.177 and a target spawning stock biomass ($SSB_{40\%}$) of 203 million pounds. Fishing mortality in 2011 was estimated to be 0.034. Spawning stock biomass was estimated to be 420 million lbs. in 2011.³ The 2011 year class (age-0) was estimated to be 150 million fish, which is above the time series average.³ The Scup Benchmark Stock Assessment Report was completed in August 2015. New reference points were defined in the assessment. Based on the new assessment, scup is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. For more specific information, go to: <http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/55d238fb2015ScupBenchmarkStockAssessment.pdf>

Current Management Measures

The ASMFC/MAFMC determine a total annual quota that is divided between the commercial and recreational fisheries. The majority of coastwide scup harvest is allocated to the commercial fishery (78%). The remaining 22% of harvest is allocated to the recreational fishery.³

Maryland's commercial fishery is open all year with a minimum size limit of 9" in state waters and 9" in Federal waters.⁴ All commercial harvesters in federal waters must have a federal permit.

The annual coastwide commercial quota is divided among three fishing seasons: January-April (Winter I = 45%), May-October (Summer = 39%), and November- December (Winter II = 16%). Winter fisheries are managed with trip limits. Winter I is 50,000 pounds per trip until 80% of quota is caught at which point it will drop to 1,000 pounds per trip.⁵ Winter II landings were set at 18,000 pounds per trip.⁶ The summer fishery in state waters is managed by quota; Maryland's allocation is 0.012%.^{7, 8} There are no state quotas for federal waters. Fishing gear mesh size and escape panel regulations have been enacted for the commercial fishery.

Recreational harvest regulations differ between state and federal waters. In Maryland and states south of Delaware, the minimum size limit is 8" with a possession limit of 50 fish per person per day.⁶ In 2015, scup limits were 50 fish per day with a 9" size limit in federal waters.

The Fisheries

In Maryland, the commercial scup harvest occurs in winter as part of the mixed black sea bass/scup/summer flounder fishery. Scup are primarily harvested by trawl, although, juveniles are often caught in black sea bass pots. Scup harvest can be highly variable among years (Figure 1). Commercial scup harvest was 54,200 pounds in 2011; 8,260 pounds in 2012; 315,400 pounds in 2013 and 527,953 pounds in 2014 (Figure 1).¹⁰ However, available commercial scup landings are limited because some of the data are confidential. The recent increase in harvest is due to several boats from New Jersey landing in Maryland and not a change in local abundance of fish.

Recreational landings data are not available for much of the 1980s and 1990s (Figure 2). The Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) estimated that recreational anglers harvested 18 scup in 2010, 11 scup in 2011, and 0 scup through 2014⁹ (Figure 2). The mean

proportional standard error (PSE) for these harvest data was 71. A PSE value greater than 50 indicates a very imprecise estimate.

Issues/Concerns

Maryland commercial scup harvest has not returned to pre-1970 levels. Scup landings occur offshore and are highly variable. The MAFMC is currently reviewing commercial measures which may result in another amendment.

Figure 1. The commercial harvest of scup in Maryland since 1950.⁹ Harvest data is not available for the years 1996, 2001-2003, and 2006-2008.

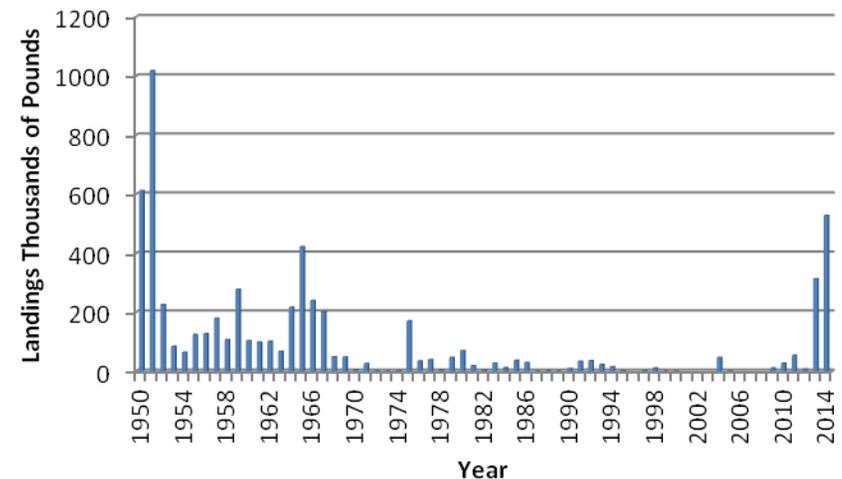
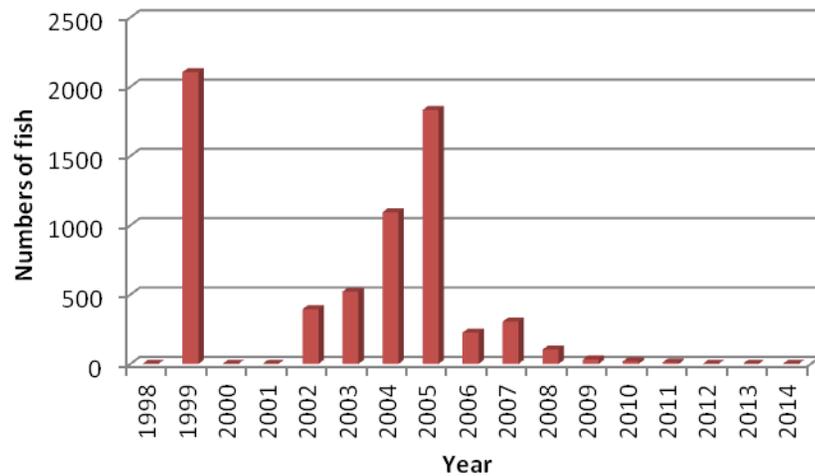


Figure 2. The recreational scup harvest in Maryland since 1998.¹⁰



References

- ¹Maryland Office of the Secretary of the State. COMAR 08.02.12.03. Retrieved July 25, 2011: <http://www.dsd.state.md.us/comar/comarhtml/08/08.02.12.03.htm>
- ²Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council 2015. Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology An Omnibus Amendment to the Fishery Management Plans of the Mid-Atlantic and New England Regional Fishery Management Councils
- ³Terceiro M. 2012. Stock Assessment of Scup for 2012. US Dept. Commerce, Northeast Fisheries Science Center Ref Doc. 12-21;148p. Available from: National Marine Fisheries Service, 166 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA 02543-1026, or online at <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/publications/crd/>
- ⁴Doctor, S. 2015. Maryland's 2014 annual compliance report for scup. Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Stevensville, MD.

- ⁵Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. 2013. Scup Advisory Panel Information Document. <http://static.squarespace.com/static/511cdc7fe4b00307a2628ac6/t/52444638e4b0bb95409582fb/1380206136186/Scup%20AP%20FPR%20Info%20Doc%20August%202013.pdf>
- ⁶Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service. (2014). Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fisheries; 2014 Summer Flounder Specifications; 2015 Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Specifications; 2014 Research Set-Aside Projects (Federal Register No. 79(61)).
- ⁷Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. 2002. Addendum V to the scup fishery management plan: Summer period commercial scup allocation. Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Washington, DC.
- ⁸Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. 2009. Addendum XX to the summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass fishery management plan: Commercial quota transfer provisions for black sea bass and scup (summer period only). Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Washington, DC.
- ⁹Personal communication from the NOAA Fisheries, Northeast Regional Office. June 25, 2015: http://www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/fso/reports/reports_frame.htm
- ¹⁰Personal communication from the National Marine Fisheries Service, Fisheries Statistics Division. June 25, 2015: <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/recreational-fisheries/index>.