

The Regulations that have already affected the Black Sea Bass rebuilding.

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Abstract

The Black sea bass fishery has changed due to the regulations in the last few years. These changes may have a great impact on the rebuilding of the stock already. The Quotas and June start dates, the circle hook mandate, and the effort shift and fish practices have all contributed to stock improvement.

Black Sea Bass

First of all, the BSB pot fishery has been limited by Quotas the last two years. The season in 2009 lasted from June till December, 5 months the pots were removed from the water. The season in 2010 lasted from June till October, 7 months the pots were removed from the water. Both time frames that the pots were remove occurred during their spawning seasons, which allowed for undisturbed spawning. This has a big effect on the recruitment stock, I would believe. Also the traps were commonly left offshore rather than brought in but since the Quota, this practice no longer occur. This helps from fish being killed by entering the pot and not harvested, due to weather.

Secondly the hook and line fishery has gone through changes that may have affected the BSB stock. The Commercial hook and line fishery (80-350ft) traditionally occur offshore of the BSB pot fishery(40-80ft). This would show that the center of abundance of BSB being mainly an inshore species. The hook and line fisherman just got mandated to use Circle hooks in the South Atlantic, this could reduce the hooking mortality in discarded fish. The hook and line fishery has become more of a avoidance fishery than a targeting fishery. Fisherman now fish inshore when the BSB season is open then fish offshore when the BSB season ends. It's a waste of time to have to catch and release fish that can't be sold. During the winter months (January thru March) hook and line fishery is forced offshore due to the cold water that typically moves in. Also in the last two years, the Quota for Vermillion has been in early March leaving the hook and line fishery not very profitable. Since the only fish that can be harvested is triggerfish, grunt, and joltheads, most fishermen now don't even fish till May when grouper opens back up

So with all the new regulations that have affected the effort, the hooking mortality, and the spawning time, it is easy to see that the stock has already been on a rebuilding plan. How all this can be quantified I don't know but I'm seeing the BSB on ledges farther offshore and in areas that they were never in. This makes me happy to see since I want the fish stock to recover too.

References: This is observation that I've witnessed as 15 year Owner/ Captain of FV Raw Bar. Also as a member of the Snapper Grouper Advisor Panel member and an attendee of the last 12 SAMFC council meetings, Plus my involvement with Stock assessments, observer coverage, Sea Grant studies, and

UNCW marine science center. It has been 26years since my first Snapper grouper fishing trip, so my knowledge is more current than historical.