

SNAPPER GROUPE COMPLEX — Sheepshead Size Limit and Combined Catch Limit

What is being considered?

The Department is considering implementing a minimum size for sheepshead and would like feedback on a minimum size of either 12 or 14 inches in all tidal waters of the state. The Department is considering applying this size limit to both the recreational and commercial fisheries. The Department is also considering establishing a limit of no more than 10 fish of any one species listed in [Code of Maryland Regulations 08.02.05.29A\(3\)](#). The overall combined catch limit of 20 total fish of the species listed in that regulation would remain the same.

Why is this change necessary?

This change is necessary to allow sheepshead an opportunity to reproduce before being harvested. After their first year, sheepshead in South Carolina average 10 inches, at which less than 50% are sexually mature. Most sheepshead mature at age 2 (12 inches fork length) and all sheepshead are mature by ages 3 to 5 (14 inches fork length).

Who will this affect?

Recreational and commercial fishermen who fish for sheepshead.

When would this be effective?

The Department projects that this change could be effective in the spring/summer of 2024. However, the exact date cannot be determined. The Department will follow our normal proposal procedures if this concept moves forward.

Has this change been discussed with stakeholders?

A minimum size was discussed at the April 2023 Coastal Recreational Fisheries Forum.