

POSSIBLE CHANGES TO REGULATIONS FOR SHEEPSHEAD

Recreational anglers have asked the department to consider changing the creel limit for sheephead (*Archosargus probatocephalus*).

The department has been managing sheephead in accordance with NOAA Fisheries South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. NOAA fisheries identified sheephead as a species that do not need federal management and were therefore removed from the federal Snapper-Grouper Fishery Management Plan. This requires states to manage this species.

Currently, in the Code of Maryland Regulations sheephead are grouped with 46 other species as part of the snapper grouper complex. A person cannot keep more than 20 of any one or combination of the species in that group. Meaning, someone could keep 20 sheephead per day. Anglers have expressed concerns about local depletion of sheephead in state waters. The department is considering the following options:

- 1) 4 fish per person per day — consistent with Virginia rules
- 2) 2 fish per person per day — recommended by some anglers
- 3) 10 fish per person per day — similar to other states in the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
- 4) No change