

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Winter Flounder Technical Committee Call

Draft Agenda

Wednesday January 6th, 2021

9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

The times listed are approximate; the order in which these items will be taken is subject to change; other items may be added as necessary.

Webinar URL: <https://www.gotomeet.me/ASMFCStaff2/winter-flounder-tc-call>

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- 1) **Welcome/Review draft agenda** (*P. Nitschke, Chair*) 9:00-9:05 a.m.
Assign note taker for the call
- 2) **Review Staff Memo** (*D. Colson*) 9:05-9:15 a.m.
 - Review updated assessment information for Gulf of Maine and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic stocks
 - Review New England Fishery Management Council state sub-component specifications
 - Review commercial and recreational fishery performance
- 3) **Discussion on winter flounder specifications** (Facilitator: *P. Nitschke*) 9:15-9:50 a.m.
Objective: determine if changes are needed for 2021 fishing year
 - Recreational fishery measures
 - Commercial fishery measures
- 4) **Public Comment** 9:50-9:55 a.m.
- 5) **Adjourn/other business** 9:55-10:00 a.m.



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • 703.842.0741 (fax) • www.asmfmc.org

MEMORANDUM

December 23, 2020

To: Winter Flounder Technical Committee

From: Dustin Colson Leaning, Winter Flounder FMP Coordinator

RE: Winter Flounder Specifications

Introduction

On December 2nd 2020, the New England Fishery Management Council (Council) recommended new winter flounder specifications for the 2021-23 fishing year. The recommended specifications were based off of the 2020 Management Track Stock Assessments for both the Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) and Gulf of Maine (GOM) winter flounder stocks and overfishing limit and acceptable biological catch recommendations from the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee. The sections below review the new specifications (specifically the state sub-component), GOM and SNE/MA stock status, recreational and commercial management measures, and recent recreational and commercial fishery trends.

Technical Committee Objective

Determine if changes to commercial or recreational measures are needed. Addendum III allows for winter flounder specifications to be set up to 3 years for the GOM and SNE/MA fisheries.

Stock Status

Based on the 2020 assessment, the GOM stock biomass status is unknown and overfishing is not occurring. Biomass (30+ cm mt) in 2019 was estimated to be 2,862 mt. The SNE/MA stock is overfished, but overfishing was not occurring in 2019. The SNE/MA stock biomass (SSB) in 2019 was estimated to be 3,959 (mt) which is 32% of the biomass target (12,261 mt), and 64% of the biomass threshold (6,130.5 mt) for an overfished stock. The stock is in a rebuilding plan with a rebuild date of 2023. However, a projection using assumed catch in 2020 and $F = 0$ through 2023 indicated about a 5% chance of reaching the SSB target. Both the SSC and the stock assessment peer review panel discussed the need to better characterize the role that environmental indicators and climatic shifts play in the SNE/MA stock's depleted stock status. Fishing pressure on the stock has significantly decreased, but recruitment remains at time series lows.

Specifications – State Subcomponent

The GOM sub-ACL was adjusted down by 2% and the SNE/MA sub-ACL was adjusted down by 47% to reflect the results of the 2020 management track stock assessments. The state subcomponents for both the GOM and SNE/MA stocks were adjusted to reflect average catch

for the years 2017-2019. In the case of the GOM state sub-component this represents a 40% increase, and for the SNE/MA state sub-component this represents a 42% decrease.

Table 1. GOM and SNE/MA Specifications and State Sub-component Average Catch.

Stock	Sub-ACLs		State Sub-component		
	FY20 (mt)	FY21 (mt)	FY20 (mt)	FY21 (mt)	2017-2019 average catch (mt)
GOM	287	281	139	194	195.6
SNE/MA	539	288	36	21	19.9

Commercial & Recreational Fishery Measures

The commercial and recreational fisheries regulations have remained status quo since the Winter Flounder Management Board approved Addendum II in 2012. Table 2 displays the commercial measures by state and table 3 displays the recreational measures by state. Table 4 displays recreational harvest for the years 2015-2019, and the average harvest during that time period is 116.1 mt.

Table 2. Commercial Winter Flounder Regulations.

State	Stock Unit	Size Limit	Trip Limit	Seasonal Closure (dates inclusive)	Min. Mesh Size
Maine	GOM	12"	500 lbs	May 1 – June 30	6.5"
New Hampshire	GOM	12"	500 lbs	April 1 – June 30	6.5"
Massachusetts	GOM	12"	500 lbs	Open all year	6.5"
	SNE/MA	12"	50 lbs	Open all year	6.5"
Rhode Island	SNE/MA	12"	50 lbs	Open all year	6.5"
Connecticut	SNE/MA	12"	50 lbs or 38 fish	March 1 – April 14	6.5"
New York	SNE/MA	12"	50 lbs	June 14 – Nov 30 (for all gear besides fyke nets, pound and trap nets)	6.5"
New Jersey	SNE/MA	12"	38 fish	June 1 – Nov 30 (all gear except for fyke nets) Feb 20 – Oct 31 (Fyke net)	6.5"

Table 3. Recreational Winter Flounder Regulations.

State	Stock Unit	Creel Limit	Size Limit	Seasonal Closure (dates inclusive)
Maine	GOM	8	12"	Open all year
New Hampshire	GOM	8	12"	Open all year
Massachusetts	GOM	8	12"	Open all year
	SNE/MA	2	12"	January 1- February 28
Rhode Island	SNE/MA	2	12"	January 1 – February 28
Connecticut	SNE/MA	2	12"	January 1 – March 31
New York	SNE/MA	2	12"	May 31 – March 31
New Jersey	SNE/MA	2	12"	January 1 – February 28
Federal Waters	GOM & SNE/MA	Unlimited	12"	Open all year

Table 4. Recreational Winter Flounder Harvest.

Year	Harvest (lb)	Harvest (mt)
2015	336,896	152.8
2016	203,185	92.2
2017	428,764	194.5
2018	223,355	101.3
2019	87,074	39.5
Average	255,855	116.1