



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

*Working towards healthy, self-sustaining populations of all Atlantic coast fish species, or successful restoration
well in progress by the year 2015*

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ASMFC Releases Summer Flounder Draft Addendum XXIV for Public Comment

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board has released Draft Addendum XXIV to the Summer Flounder Fishery Management Plan for public comment. The Draft Addendum proposes to stabilize 2013 recreational fishing rules for summer flounder close to those that existed in 2012 partly to minimize the reductions facing two states (e.g., New York and New Jersey) and partly to allow for the more equitable distribution of fishing opportunities in the 2013 season. The proposed approach is intended to allow states to capitalize on harvest opportunities that are foregone by states that choose not to fully utilize their 2013 harvest target.

Specifically, the Draft Addendum proposes a mechanism to allow states access to the summer flounder recreational harvest limit (RHL) that is projected to not be harvested in 2013. For example, following the implementation of each state’s measures, recreational harvest will be projected. This projected harvest will be compared to the total RHL (2.5 million fish) to determine the amount of fish available to the states. States may then make an appeal to the Board requesting access to the additional RHL. The request would include why the state has not been able to address its fisheries needs through the current management system, how the additional fish would impact the state’s 2013 fishery, and the amount of fish a state is requesting. The Board would ultimately decide the distribution of the additional RHL. It is important to note the states that do not utilize their full liberalization are not giving up their state portion of the 2013 RHL. The Draft Addendum proposes modification of the summer flounder specification process for 2013 only. The Board has established a subcommittee to address long-term solutions for the 2014 summer flounder recreational fishery and beyond. In 2014, the Commission would revert to the specification process used in previous years unless altered through a subsequent addendum.

The Draft Addendum responds to an unintended consequence of using conservation equivalency (e.g., state-specific recreational management measures) to stay within the annually established coastwide RHL for summer flounder. Although the shift away from coastwide management to state conservation equivalency addressed the interests of some states, it created difficulties for other states as overages occurred. While conservation equivalency provided greater flexibility for individual states to set their limits from year to year, state targets were based upon the 1998 estimate of harvest from the Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics Survey. No mechanism, outside of the addendum process, was included to allow for the adjustment of the mechanism to set the harvest target or the management strategy if

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species.

changes occurred in the fishery along the coast. This resulted in ever increasing size limits, reduced bag limits, and shorter seasons for most of the states while the stock was at a low level and recovering. However, the impact of these ever-restrictive measures seemed to affect New York the most, where the size limit reached 21 inches by 2009, which also saw a very short season including mid-season closure. In 2012, with a fully recovered stock, New York's minimum size (19.5 inches) was at least one inch higher than any other state, one and a half inches higher than its Long Island Sound bordering state, Connecticut and two inches greater than its ocean / New York Harbor bordering state, New Jersey.

Some states may be conducting public hearings on the Draft Addendum; information on those hearings will be released when it is finalized. Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft Addendum either by attending state public hearings or providing written comment. Copies of the Draft Addendum can be obtained via the Commission website (www.asmfc.org) under *Breaking News* or by contacting the Commission at 703.842.0740. Public comment will be accepted until 5:00 PM (EST) on April 12, 2013 and should be forwarded to Toni Kerns, ISFMP Director, at 1050 N. Highland St., Suite 200 A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or tkerns@asmfc.org (Subject line: Summer Flounder).

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