

REVIEW OF THE
INTERSTATE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR
SUMMER FLOUNDER
(Paralichthys dentatus)

2003 FISHING YEAR

Prepared by

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I. Status of the Fishery Management Plan

The summer flounder (*Paralichthys dentatus*) fishery of the Atlantic Coast is managed jointly by the ASMFC and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC). The original ASMFC Fishery Management Plan recommended a 14 inch minimum size and was approved in 1982. The MAFMC Plan, prepared in 1988 and based on the ASMFC plan, established a 13" minimum size. Since then, eleven amendments have been developed and approved, except Amendment 1 which would have required a 5–1/2" minimum mesh size in the codend of trawls and Amendment 11 which would have reallocated commercial quota shares.

Amendment Two (approved in August 1992) provided a strategy for reducing fishing mortality to F_{max} , balanced against reasonable impacts on the fishermen. Management measures included a federal (EEZ) moratorium on entry into the commercial fishery, vessel and dealer permitting and reporting requirements, an annual commercial quota, and minimum mesh requirements with an exemption program. Recreational fishery measures include size limits, possession limits, and seasonal closures.

The management system established under Amendment 2 has been modified by the following amendments. Amendment Three (approved in July 1993) revised the mesh requirement exemption program. Amendment Four (approved in September 1993) revised the state-specific shares of the coastwide quota allocation in response to a reporting issue in Connecticut. Amendment Five (approved in December 1993) allows states to transfer or combine their commercial quota shares. Amendment Six (approved in May 1994) allows properly stowed nets with a cod end mesh size less than that stipulated in the plan to be aboard vessels in the summer flounder fishery. Amendment 7 (approved May 1995) adjusted the stock rebuilding schedule and capped the 1996-1997 commercial quotas at 18.51 million pounds. There is no Amendment 8 or 9 to the ASMFC FMP. The MAFMC adopted Scup management measures as Amendment 8 and Black Sea Bass measures as amendment 9, while the ASMFC adopted separate Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Plans.

Amendment 10, approved by the ASMFC in May 1997, initially sought to examine the commercial quota management system. Its scope was expanded to address a number of federal and state issues in the fishery, including: 1) allow framework adjustments to the minimum mesh for any portion of the net; 2) require 5.5" diamond mesh between the wings and the codend of trawls; 3) continue the federal moratorium on entry; 4) remove the requirement that federally permitted vessels must land summer flounder every year; 5) modify the federal vessel replacement criteria; 6) implement state *de minimis* criteria; 7) prohibit transfer at sea; 8) require states to report summer flounder landings from state waters to the NMFS; and 9) allow states to implement a summer flounder filet at sea permit system. The amendment also proposed alternative commercial quota schemes, including 1) a trimester quota with state-by-state shares during summer, 2) a trimester coastwide quota of equal periods, and 3) a revision to the allocation formula. Ultimately, the Board and Council decided to maintain the current state-by-state quota allocation system.

Amendment 12, approved by the Commission in October 1998, was developed to bring the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Fishery management Plan in to compliance with the new and revised National Standards and other required provisions of the Sustainable Fisheries Act. Specifically, the amendment revised the overfishing definitions (National Standard 1) for summer flounder, scup and black sea bass and addressed the new and revised standards relative to the existing management measures (National Standard 8-consider effects on fishing communities, National Standard 9-reduce bycatch, National Standard 10-promote safety at sea). The Amendment also identified essential habitat for summer flounder, scup and black sea bass. Finally, Amendment 12 added a framework adjustment procedure that allows the Council to add or modify management measures through a streamlined public review process. Amendment 12 was partially approved by NMFS on April 28, 1999.

Framework Adjustment 2 to the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass FMP, adopted in January 2001, provided the information and analyses necessary to implement a system of conservation equivalency for the recreational summer flounder fishery. Based on a coastwide recreational harvest limit, Framework 2 allows states to customize summer flounder recreational management measures in order to address issues associated with the availability of summer flounder on spatial and temporal scales.

Addenda III and IV were approved on January 29, 2001. Addendum IV provides that, upon the recommendation of the relevant monitoring committee and joint consideration with the Council, the Board will make a decision concerning what state regulations will be rather than forward a recommendation to NMFS. The states will then be responsible for implementing the Board's decision. Addendum III established specifications for the 2001 recreational summer flounder fishery.

In December 2000, the Commission approved amendment 13. Although there were some management alternatives included in public hearing drafts of the document that could have resulted in changes to summer flounder management measures, none were approved for implementation. As a result, Amendment 13 will have no impact on the summer flounder fishery.

The commission approved addendum VIII in December of 2003. Under this addendum, state-specific targets for recreational landings are derived from the coastwide harvest limit based on each state's proportion of landings reported in 1998.

The objectives of the FMP have not changed and are to: 1) reduce fishing mortality of summer flounder to assure overfishing does not occur; 2) reduce fishing mortality on immature summer flounder to increase spawning stock biomass; 3) improve yield from the fishery; 4) promote compatible management regulations between State and Federal jurisdictions; 5) promote uniform and effective enforcement of regulations; and 6) minimize regulations to achieve the stated objectives.

The management unit includes summer flounder in US waters in the western Atlantic Ocean from the southern border of North Carolina northward to the US - Canadian border. States and jurisdictions with a declared interest in the summer flounder FMP include all those from North Carolina through Massachusetts except Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia, as well as NMFS and USFWS. An ASMFC plan review team, Technical Committee, and species board, and the MAFMC Demersal Species Committee are actively working on this plan. Annual framework adjustment advice is provided by a joint ASMFC-MAFMC Technical Monitoring Committee.

II. Status of the Stock

According to the Advisory Report of the 35th Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop (35th SAW) in June of 2002, the stock is not overfished and overfishing is occurring relative to the FMP overfishing definition. The NEFSC Southern Demersal Working Group met in June 2004 to update the summer flounder stock assessment. This assessment indicated the stock is not overfished but overfishing is occurring relative to the biological reference points detailed in Amendment 12. The fishing mortality rate estimated for 2002 is 0.29, a significant decline from the 1.32 estimated for 1994 and slightly above the threshold F of 0.26. The fishing mortality rate has declined from 1.32 in 1994 to 0.29 in 2002, above the current overfishing definition reference point of $F_{max} = 0.26$. Total stock biomass has increased substantially since 1991 to 149 million pounds in 2003, 27% above the biomass threshold. The average year class estimates for 1982 to 2003 is about 40 million, and 2002 year class was estimated above average at 51 million. The 2003 year class is currently estimated to be below average though the VPA tends to underestimate the abundance of age 0 fish for recent year classes.

III. Status of the Fishery

During the late 1980's landings declined dramatically, reaching a low of 9.3 million pounds in the commercial fishery in 1990 and 3.2 million pounds in the recreational fishery in 1989. Following these record lows, the commercial landings showed an increasing trend through 1995, but have varied without trend through 2003. For the past three years commercial landings have been over 13.8 million pounds, with 2004 landings at 14.24 million pounds.

Recreational landings in 1997 were 11.9 million pounds, double the estimate for 1995). The landings continued to increase through 2000, 16.5 million pounds. In 2002 landings dropped to 8.0 million pounds, but then increase to 11.6 million pounds in 2003. New York, New Jersey, and Virginia dominated the recreational fishery by landings in 2003.

IV. Status of Assessment Advice

A quantitative assessment (VPA) of commercial and recreational total catch at age (landings plus discards) was conducted in 2002. The 35th SAW externally reviewed this assessment in June 2002.

V. Status of Research and Monitoring

Several states and NMFS conduct seasonal sampling cruises using an otter trawl to assess the condition of summer flounder populations inshore and in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Massachusetts collects age and maturity samples and local abundance indices from spring and fall otter trawl surveys, as well as young of the year information in its winter flounder juvenile seine survey. The Commonwealth monitored the commercial fishery through the observation of six directed trawl fishery trips. Rhode Island monitors the commercial quota for summer flounder using an automated IVR system and dealers are required to provide weekly reports through the IVR of summer flounder landings. Connecticut commercial summer flounder landings are monitored through monthly commercial fishermen logbooks, and weekly and monthly dealer reports. These reports contain daily records of fishing and dealer purchase activity. There was no sea sampling or port sampling activity for summer flounder in 2001. New York conducts a survey of anglers on open boats on Great South Bay to collect data on age and size

composition from which mortality rates are calculated. New Jersey collects data from the commercial trawl fishery and conducts an ocean trawl survey from which data on summer flounder are collected and catch-per-unit-of-effort and distribution information are generated for juveniles and adults. Delaware's commercial landings are monitored through a mandatory monthly harvest report from all state-licensed fishermen. Maryland constructs a juvenile index from trawl data collected in the ocean side bays and is also compiling data on population age, sex, and size from summer flounder taken in pound nets. In 2002 there will be a voluntary angler survey conducted statewide that will record the lengths of the first 20 fish and the total number of legal flounder caught. Virginia prepares a young-of-the-year index from data collected from beach seine and trawl surveys. North Carolina conducts two otter trawl surveys for juvenile fluke, conducts tagging programs to determine migrations and to assess mortality, and collects information on age and growth and catch-per-unit-of-effort for the winter trawl fishery, the estuarine gill net fishery, pound net fisheries, the ocean sink net fishery and the long haul seine fishery.

VI. Status of Management Measures and Issues

Management measures imposed upon harvesters of summer flounder include an annual commercial quota and recreational harvest limit, minimum sizes, minimum mesh requirements for trawls, permits and administrative fees for dealers and vessels, a moratorium on entry into the fishery, mandated use of sea samplers, monitoring of sea turtles in the southern part of the management unit, and collection of data and record keeping by dealers and processors. Fishing mortality has been controlled by a Total Allowable Landings (TAL) since 1983, allocated into a commercial quota (60% of the TAL) and a recreational harvest limit (40% of the TAL). The commercial quota is allocated to each state based on landings during a baseline period (Table 3), and any overages are subtracted from a state's quota for the following year.

Summer Flounder Compliance Criteria

The state of New York was found out of compliance by the ASMFC and the NMFS in 2004 for implementing recreational measures that were not consistent with the conservational equivalency program of the FMP. On July 30, 2004, New York implemented new regulations to bring them back into compliance with both the ASMFC and the NMFS.

COMMERCIAL FISHERY

The following measures may change annually. The 2002 measures are indicated.

Minimum size: 14"

Minimum mesh and threshold: 5.5 diamond, 6" square

Regulation of mesh beyond the codend: 5.5" throughout the mesh

2003 Commercial quota: 13.87 million pounds

In 1998 the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board recommended that 15% of each state allocation must be set aside to mitigate discards after closure of the directed summer flounder commercial fishery. To be eligible to land this 15%, the state must adopt appropriate trip limits sufficiently restrictive to allow bycatch landings for the entire year without exceeding the state quota. Additionally, either the state or the fishermen must participate in collection of additional discard data.

The Commission and the Council are not recommending any changes to the commercial minimum size limit or the minimum mesh size for 2003.

The following measures are not subject to annual adjustment.

Quota management provisions: States are required to adopt appropriate measures to manage their quota shares. States may transfer or combine their quota shares as specified in Amendment 5. States must document through a vessel and dealer reporting system all landings that are not otherwise included in the federal monitoring of permit holders. States are required to forward all landings information to the NMFS for inclusion in quota reporting.

Transfer at Sea: States must prohibit permitted summer flounder vessels from transferring summer flounder from one vessel to another at sea. (As specified in Amendment 10)

De minimis status: States having commercial landings less than 0.1% of the coastwide total will be eligible for *de minimis* status. (As specified in Amendment 10)

RECREATIONAL FISHERY

The Management Board chose to adopt conservation equivalency for the 2003 recreational fishery under the provisions of Framework 2. The following measures are the coastwide non-preferred alternative that the Council recommended to NMFS as required by the FMP:

Minimum size of possession: 17"

Possession limit: 4

Seasonal closure: Open Season

The Board and Council also recommended precautionary default measures of an 18" minimum size and one fish possession limit in the event that any state failed to implement conservationally equivalent measures.

OTHER MEASURES

Filet at sea permit: Party or charter vessels in state waters will be allowed to filet at sea if they obtain a state issued permit allowing such activity. (As specified in Amendment 10)

Reporting:

1. States must submit a commercial fishery management proposal by October 1 of each year. The proposal must detail the specific management measures that the state intends to use to manage their commercial quota allocation. The proposal must be reviewed and approved by the Management Board.

2. States must submit an annual compliance report to the Chairman of the Summer Flounder Plan Review Team by June 1 of each year. The report must detail the state's management program for the current year and establish proof of compliance with all mandatory management measures and all framework changes specified for the current year. It should include landings information from the previous year, and the results of any monitoring or research program.

This summary of compliance criteria is intended to serve as a quick reference guide. It in no way alters or supersedes compliance criteria as contained in the Summer Flounder FMP and Amendments thereto.

2003 Management Measures Summary

The TAL was set at 23.3million pounds for 2003, resulting in an initial commercial quota of 13.98 million pounds and a recreational harvest limit of 9.32 million pounds. After adjusting for overages from 2002, the commercial quota dropped to 13.87 million pounds. To meet the recreational harvest limit in 2002, states chose to implement a conservation equivalency program specific to their states 2002 recreational landings.

Developing Issues

Alternative Management Schemes

Despite failed efforts to change the quota management system in Amendment 10 and the reallocation proposed for Amendment 11, few are satisfied with the current state of summer flounder management. The Summer Flounder Advisory Panel continues to demand that a more equitable system be enacted to manage this resource. In the past few years a number of approaches have been proposed to change this allocation scheme, including:

- Disproportionately distributing the increase in quota as the population of summer flounder increases
- Developing a regional quota system
- Developing a days-at-sea program
- Establishing different permit categories
- A planning group composed of

Multi-year management program

The current management program requires that the Board and Council develop the management specifications for summer flounder on an annual basis. This annual process demands a great deal of time from Board and Council members, as well as Council, Commission, and NMFS Staff. The Board and Council have discussed implementing a multi-year management program to reduce the burden of the annual specification process. A multi-year management program would give fishermen the opportunity to know what management measures will be implemented for a number of years in advance. This should allow them to make better, long-term business decisions. Managers would need to address the uncertainty in the future projections when establishing the multi-year specifications. The council approved a multi-year TAL program under framework 5 in the summer of 2004. The ASMFC is currently exploring a multi-year TAL specification program through Addendum XIII.

Stakeholder Collaboration

A multi-sector roundtable of summer flounder stakeholders was convened in May 2001 with a goal to create and foster stakeholder collaboration, clarify issues and develop policy options. The participants worked to arrive at a common understanding of how the process presently works, how it might be improved and how differences might be resolved. A planning meeting was held in November 2002 to plan the second phase of the roundtable. Staff with the H. John Heinz Center for Science, Economics and the Environment will begin work on Phase II by researching two areas identified during the planning meeting: improving the credibility of fisheries science and optimizing the distribution of fisheries management authority.

VII. Current State by State Implementation of FMP Requirements

1997 - 2003 Summer Flounder FMP Compliance Schedule

COMMERCIAL:

14" minimum size	3/1/97
5.5" codend mesh	1/1/98
Ability to regulate mesh in any portion of the net	1/1/98
5.5" mesh, body	6/3/98
Prohibition of transfer at sea	1/1/98
Mandatory reporting to NMFS of landings from state waters	1/1/98

RECREATIONAL

Conservation Equivalency to achieve a 40% reduction 2003 management measures (possession and seasons TBD)	TBD
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GENERAL

Submission of annual commercial management plan	10/1/97, annually thereafter
Submission of annual landings and compliance report	6/1/98, annually thereafter

SARC Research Recommendations

Expand the NEFSC sea sampling program collection of data for summer flounder, with special emphasis on a) comprehensive areal and temporal coverage, b) adequate length and age sampling, c) continued sampling after commercial fishery areal and seasonal quotas are reached and fisheries are limited or closed, and d) sampling of discard in the scallop dredge fishery. Maintaining adequate sea sampling will be especially important in order to monitor a) the effects of implementation of gear and closed/exempted area regulations, both in terms of the response of the stock and the fishermen, b) potential continuing changes in “directivity” in the summer flounder fishery, as a result of changes in stock levels and regulations, and c) discards of summer flounder in the commercial fishery once quota levels have been attained and the summer flounder fishery is closed or restricted by trip limits.

Evaluate the amount of observer data needed to reliably estimate discards of summer flounder in all components of the fishery. Conduct research to determine the discard mortality rate of recreational and commercial fishery summer flounder discards. Develop a program to annually sample the length and age frequency of summer flounder discards from the recreational fishery. RIDFW monthly fixed station survey length frequencies are currently converted to age using length cut-off points. Investigate the utility of applying the appropriate NEFSC or MADMF age-length keys to convert the RIDFW monthly fixed station survey length to age. Explore the possibility of weighting survey indices used in VPA calibration by the areal coverage (e.g., in square kilometers) of the respective seasonal surveys. Explore the sensitivity of the VPA calibration to the addition of 1 and/or a small constant to values of survey series with “true zeros.” Statistically analyze changes in mean weights at age in the catch and NEFSC surveys. Determine if using mean weights at age in the survey are more appropriate for estimating the B_{msy} proxy. Explore the sensitivity of the mean weights of the catch and partial recruitment pattern from a longer time series (1997 to 2001) to the re-estimated B_{msy} proxy. As the NEFSC fall survey age structure expands, investigate the use of survey mean weights at age for stock weights at age in yield per recruit, VPA, and projection analyses. Monitor changes in life history (growth and maturity) as the stock rebuilds. Evaluate use of a forward calculating age-structured model for comparison with VPA. Forward models would facilitate use of expanding age/sex structure and allow inclusion of historical data. If sex-specific assessments are explored, the implications on YPR should also be investigated. Explore the sensitivity of the VPA results to separating the summer flounder stock in to multiple components. Evaluate trends in the regional components of the NEFSC surveys and contrast with the state surveys that potentially index components of the stock.

Table 1. Summer flounder commercial landings in pounds by state, 1991-2002 (comm w/ NMFS)

State	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
ME	167	164	6,023	4,857	5,318	8,226	2,835	5,626	5,778	6,922	22,052	0	
NH	87	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	0	
MA	1,121,811	1,383,283	902,786	1,048,901	1,127,995	800,704	745,171	709,387	812,540	788,998	693,982	938,842	
RI	1,672,565	2,531,506	1,942,45	2,570,819	2,365,465	1,766,482	1,557,86	1,716,463	1,636,528	1,703,593	1,798,740	2,266,174	
CT	420,800	494,600	224,620	370,413	306,404	278,776	247,258	262,732	245,219	245,148	278,737	339,079	
NY	731,484	1,239,488	849,376	1,270,012	1,248,078	940,313	815,741	823,093	803,903	811,917	752,348	1,044,988	
NJ	2,340,745	2,870,945	2,466,45	2,413,761	2,298,303	2,369,134	1,319,44	1,862,800	1,917,973	1,848,119	1,745,488	2,429,919	
DE	4,100	11,900	6,403	3,635	3,072	7,917	5,187	11,205	7,917	12,345	7,483	1,450	
MD	233,678	318,944	254,081	160,380	136,167	264,886	214,948	250,786	193,624	0	190,475	253,935	
VA	3,712,559	5,171,856	3,052,13	3,100,801	3,355,838	2,274,457	2,305,98	2,615,750	2,195,832	2,206,715	2,659,581	2,849,421	
NC	3,516,000	2,576,000	2,894,83	3,571,188	4,566,766	4,227,052	1,673,34	2,987,996	2,870,234	3,386,592	2,784,751	3,811,472	
TOTAL	13,753,996	16,598,700	12,599,16	14,514,767	15,413,406	12,937,947	8,887,783	11,245,838	10,689,548	11,010,34	10,933,659	13,935,280	

Table 2. Summer flounder recreational landings in pounds by state ('000 lbs), 1985-2002

State	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
ME	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NH	0	2	2	8	16	48	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.99
MA	88	2,500	583	281	36	64	79	118	203	243	227	213	277	776	509	916	412	449	362
RI	317	2,604	320	253	167	91	132	121	220	263	236	578	419	786	830	1,945	719	609	566
CT	339	775	434	170	97	31	141	192	129	475	395	432	362	448	389	778	450	283	411
NY	1,880	2,300	2,436	3,003	689	1,458	1,502	989	1,735	2,645	1,068	1,316	2,207	2,348	1,715	4,068	2,018	1,889	4,302
NJ	7,936	7,632	5,880	6,723	796	1,805	3,759	3,891	4,269	3,843	1,895	5,058	6,057	4,790	3,075	5,916	4,266	2,407	4,163
DE	230	162	188	752	208	167	205	401	524	338	193	721	332	387	293	676	379	290	292
MD	95	202	730	958	309	222	358	374	336	117	216	191	87	299	445	482	319	156	121
VA	742	522	1,400	1,866	557	724	1,547	804	949	943	1,022	1,448	1,758	2,161	827	1,223	2,668	1,710	1,294
NC	863	1,164	196	610	283	533	234	258	466	461	251	362	357	481	282	463	406	216	126
Total	12,490	17,861	12,167	14,624	3,158	5,143	7,961	7,148	8,831	9,327	5,503	10,319	11,856	12,476	8,365	16,467	11,637	8,008	11,638

Table 3. Summer flounder commercial quota shares, initial quota allocations 1995-2001, and adjusted 2002 quota as of November 2002.

State	%	1995 initial	1996 initial	1997 initial	1998 initial	1999 initial	2000 initial	2001 initial	2002 initial	2002 adjusted
ME	0.04756	6,987	5,284	5,284	5,284	5,284	5,284	3,956	6,934	6,901
NH	0.00046	67	51	51	51	51	51	51	67	67
MA	6.82046	1,001,953	757,841	757,841	757,841	757,841	757,841	710,493	994,423	989,649
RI	15.68298	2,303,894	1,742,583	1,742,583	1,742,583	1,742,583	1,742,583	1,742,566	2,286,578	2,275,600
CT	2.25708	331,574	250,791	250,791	250,791	250,791	250,791	244,085	329,082	327,502
NY	7.64699	1,123,374	849,680	849,680	849,680	849,680	849,680	849,672	1,114,931	1,109,578
NJ	16.72499	2,456,969	1,858,363	1,858,363	1,858,363	1,858,363	1,858,363	1,794,540	2,438,504	2,426,796
DE	0.01779	2,614	1,977	1,977	1,977	1,977	1,977	1,977	2,594	2,581
MD	2.0391	299,551	226,570	226,570	226,570	226,570	226,570	194,564	297,301	295,873
VA	21.31676	3,131,519	2,368,569	2,368,569	2,368,569	2,368,569	2,368,569	2,293,410	3,107,984	3,093,062
NC	27.44584	4,031,905	3,049,589	3,049,589	3,049,589	3,049,589	3,049,589	3,049,560	4,001,603	3,982,391
Total	100.0	14,690,407	11,111,298	11,111,298	11,111,298	11,111,298	11,111,298	10,884,874	14,580,000	14,510,000

State	2003 Initial	2004 initial
ME		
NH		67
MA		1,001,953
RI		2,303,894
CT		331,574
NY		1,123,374
NJ		2,456,969
DE		2,614
MD		299,551
VA		3,131,519
NC		4,031,905
Total		14,690,407

Table 4. Summary of summer flounder management measures and landings in millions of pounds, 1993-2002.

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
TAL	20.73	26.68	19.40	18.52	18.52	18.52	18.52	18.52	17.91	24.3	28.2
Commercial Quota	12.35	15.60*	14.61*	10.80*	8.38*	10.56*	10.73	10.88	10.06	14.46	13.87
Commercial Landings	12.54	14.51	15.41	12.94	8.98	11.25	10.69	11.25	10.891	13.89	
Recreational Harvest Limit	8.38	10.67	7.76	7.04	7.41	7.41	7.41	7.41	7.16	9.72	9.32
Recreational Landings	8.83	9.32	5.50	10.32	11.86	12.48	8.37	16.47	11.64	7.96	

* Corrected for prior year overages. 1995 also includes 3.05 m lb. added by court order.

Table 5. State compliance with required commercial management measures as of August 1998.

COMMERCIAL		
State	14" size	5 1/2" Mesh
ME	Y	Y
NH	Y	NA
MA	Y	Y
RI	Y	Y
CT	Y	Y
NY	Y	Y
NJ	Y	Y
DE	Y	Y
MD	Y	Y
VA	Y	Y
PRFC	Y	Y
NC	Y	Y

Table 6. 2003 Summer Flounder recreational regulations by state

STATE	Minimum Size (inches)	Possession Limit	Open Season
Massachusetts	16.5	7 fish	All Year
Rhode Island	17.5	7 fish	April 1-December 31
Connecticut	17	6 fish	All year
New York	17	3 fish	May 15 – September 6
*New regs 7/30/2004	18	3 fish	May 15-September 6
New Jersey	16.5	8 fish	May 8-October 11
Delaware	17.5	4 fish	All Year
Maryland	16	3 fish	All Year
PRFC	16	3 fish	All year
Virginia	17	6 fish	March 29 -December 31
North Carolina	14	8 fish	All Year