



Massachusetts Request

Table 2. MRIP Estimates of Massachusetts Recreational Summer Flounder Harvest (Numbers of Fish)

| Year | Harvest (#) | PSE | Estimate Status |
|-------------|--------------------|------------|------------------------|
| 2014 | 112,840 | 41.1 | Final |
| 2015 | 79,109 | 34.5 | Final |
| 2016 | 56,642 | 20 | Preliminary |

Proposal

- Massachusetts' 2017 summer flounder recreational fishery:
 - 17" minimum size,
 - 5-fish possession limit, and
 - 125-day season from May 22–September 23
- In terms of projected harvest, these regulations are conservationally equivalent to the Addendum XXVIII requirements for Massachusetts (17" minimum size, 4-fish possession limit, and 125-day season).
- *Marine Fisheries* is requesting this implementation plan be considered for approval prior to ASMFC submitting its conservation equivalency letter to NOAA Fisheries.

Option 5: More Coastwide Consistency

| Region | Minimum Size Limit, Possession Limit & Season (# days) | | | | |
|----------------------|---|----|---|--------|-----|
| MA | 16 | 17 | 5 | 4 fish | 125 |
| RI | 18 | 19 | 8 | 4 fish | 245 |
| CT–Cape May | 18 | 19 | 5 | 3 fish | 128 |
| NJ Portion of DE Bay | 17 | 18 | 4 | 3 fish | 128 |
| DE–VA | 16 | 17 | 4 | 4 fish | 365 |
| NC | 15 | 15 | 6 | 4 fish | 365 |

2016 Mass Rec Harvest

- Massachusetts' estimated recreational harvest for 2016 is 56,642 fish, according to preliminary data from MRIP.
- This estimate continues a declining trend of recreational harvest in Massachusetts since the implementation of regional management in 2014 under which Massachusetts had largely status quo regulations.
- Only difference being in 2014 when the season was seven days longer at May 22–September 30.

2016 MRIP Harvest Estimate

- Massachusetts' 2016 MRIP harvest estimate is based, in part, on an average catch rate determined from 72 in-person intercepts from the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey in which summer flounder were harvested (includes shore, private/rental vessel, charter boat, and party boat intercepts).
- Of note, there were zero intercepts where the average harvest per angler was the possession limit of five fish.
- Average value is 1.6 fish harvested per angler, and median value is 1.0 fish harvested per angler.
- There were two non-compliant trips intercepted with 6 and 10 fish harvested

Table 3. Distribution of 2016 APAIS Intercepts by the Average Number of Summer Flounder Harvested/Angler for Trips with Summer Flounder Harvested

| Average Harvest/Angler | <1 fish | 1 fish | 2 fish | 3 fish | 4 fish | 5 fish | 6+ fish | Total |
|-------------------------------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|-------|
| # Intercepts | 10 | 41 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 72 |

DMF Rationale

- Regulations result in the same projected harvest for 2017 and associated reduction rate as the Addendum XXVIII requirements
- Conservationally equivalent due to infrequency at which anglers harvested the 5-fish limit in 2016, resulting in zero 5-fish MRIP intercepts.
- The 1" size limit increase for 2017 further decreases likelihood of anglers harvesting 5 fish in the coming season.

DMF Rationale

- Furthermore, 31% reduction rate association with these proposed regulations for Massachusetts is consistent with the projected coastwide reduction rate of Option 5.
- Consider that Massachusetts' harvest in 2016 was just 2.7% of the coastwide (MA–NC) harvest, indicating little risk of this implementation plan impacting the coast's ability to achieve the 2017 recreational harvest limit under Option 5.
- With the decline in the summer flounder stock and Massachusetts' location in the species' range, it is also likely that Massachusetts' harvest will continue to decline in 2017 of its own accord.

Note

As Massachusetts is the only state within its region, this implementation plan does not necessitate coordination with any other state to meet the Addendum XXVIII requirement for all states within a region to implement the same regulations.

- Yes, Massachusetts implementing a 5-fish possession limit is inconsistent with the language in Addendum XXVIII requiring a 4-fish limit and its approach of applying “*broad action across all states to reduce harvest and provide for more coastwide consistency in regulations.*”
- However.....

Addendum 28: “broad action across all states to reduce harvest and provide for more coastwide consistency in regulations.”

- Whether Massachusetts’ final possession limit for 2017 is four fish or five fish, we will **still have inconsistent regulations with our nearest neighbor, Rhode Island.**
- The minimum size and season lengths for these adjacent states (whose waters some anglers will fish both during the same trip) will differ substantially—by 2" and 120 days.
- Even under the Addendum XXVIII requirements, state regulations on a coastwide basis will differ by as much as 4", 240 days, and one fish.
- *A slightly higher possession limit for Massachusetts will do little to erode the “consistency” achieved through the addendum.*

Table 4. Projected 2017 Harvest in Massachusetts under the Addendum XXVIII Requirements vs. Massachusetts' Implementation Plan

| | Min. Size Limit | Possession Limit | Season | 2017 Projected Harvest | Reduction Rate |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Addendum 28 Requirements | 17" | 4 fish | May 22–Sept. 23 (125 days) | 39,083 fish | -31% |
| Massachusetts Plan | 17" | 5 fish | May 22–Sept. 23 (125 days) | 39,083 fish | -31% |



Technical Committee Review of Massachusetts and Rhode Island proposals for summer flounder recreational management in 2017

Greg Wojcik, TC Chair

ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black
Sea Bass Board Conference Call

March 30, 2017

Presentation Outline



- Brief review of proposed measures from Massachusetts and Rhode Island
- **Technical Committee discussion & summary**
- Questions

Addendum XXVIII



- Board approved Addendum XXVIII for 2017 specifying management measures for each state.
- Massachusetts and Rhode Island submitted proposals to implement different measures for 2017
- MA: propose to increase size limit by 1 inch, **maintain 2016 possession limit (5 fish)**, and season length from 2016
- RI: propose to increase size limit by 1 inch, **reduce possession limit to 6 fish**, and reduce season by 18 days from 2016 season length (later season start)

TC Call 3.13.2017



- TC was in agreement that the proposals used the current standard methodology
 - No issue with technical analysis or data
- TC was also in agreement that neither stated contributed significant harvest to coastwide total in 2016
 - Harvest estimates are variable year to year and vary from 2014-2016 differently for each state
 - 2014-2016: 4.5% to 12.7% of coastwide harvest for RI; 2-3 % of coastwide harvest for MA

TC Call 3.13.2017 cont'd



- TC disagreed on whether approval of the proposals would contradict previous points made by the TC on standard method limitations.
 - Standard methodology was used in developing the approved option in Addendum XXVIII
 - Broad increases in size limits and more uniform possession limits are more likely to achieve a 30% reduction than the other options achieving a 40% reduction

TC Call 3.13.2017 cont'd



- Approved measures in Addendum XXVIII will likely increase discarding from 2016 levels while reducing harvest.
- Increases size limits have a greater impact in reducing harvest than possession limit reduction.
- TC reiterated that conservation equivalency measures are important for addressing regional differences and meeting the needs of the state's fishery.

TC Call 3.13.2017 cont'd



- Continued discussion in moving away from the current standard methodology
 - Possibility of developing a workshop with TC/MC members and MRIP representatives
- CORRECTION: Commission staff noted annual process for conservation equivalency. If NOAA Fisheries finds measures not ‘conservation equivalent’ to coastwide measures, NOAA Fisheries could implement a set of non-preferred coastwide measures in federal waters (not state waters).



Questions