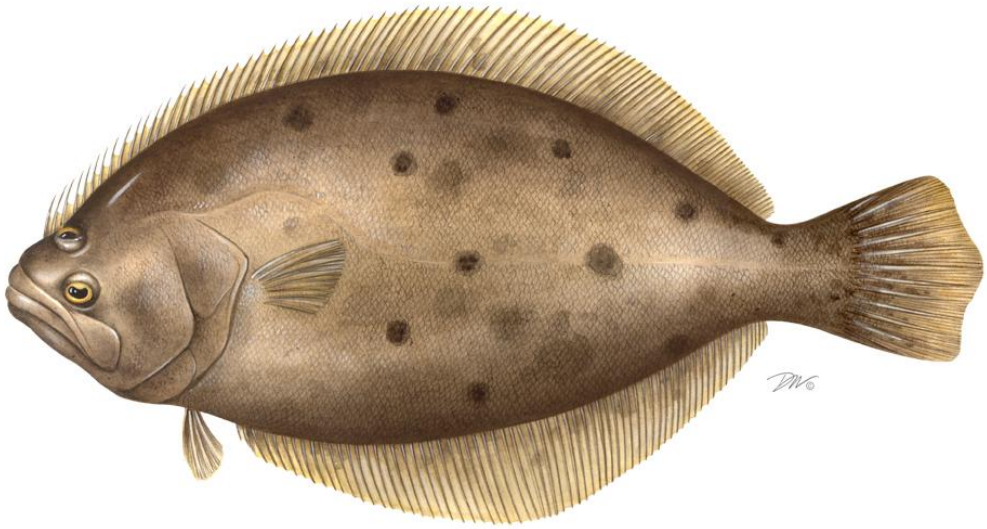
# ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

## REVIEW OF THE INTERSTATE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

### FOR SUMMER FLOUNDER
### *(Paralichthys dentatus)*

### 2024 FISHING YEAR



Prepared by the Plan Review Team

**Approved August 13, 2025**

*Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries*

**2024 Review of the ASMFC Fishery Management Plan for Summer Flounder**

## I. Status of the Fishery Management Plan

The summer flounder (*Paralichthys dentatus*) fishery of the Atlantic Coast is managed jointly by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC or Commission) Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board (Board) and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC or Council). The original Commission Fishery Management Plan (FMP), established in 1982, recommended a 14" minimum size limit. The 1988 joint MAFMC-ASMFC Plan established a 13" minimum size limit. Since then, twenty-three amendments have been developed and approved; it should be noted, most but not all amendments have been implemented jointly by the Commission and Council.

The FMP goals and objectives for summer flounder include:

- Goal 1: Ensure the biological sustainability of the summer flounder resource in order to maintain a sustainable summer flounder fishery.
    - Objective 1.1: Prevent overfishing, and achieve and maintain sustainable spawning stock biomass levels that promote optimum yield in the fishery.
- Goal 2: Support and enhance the development and implementation of effective management measures.
    - Objective 2.1: Maintain and enhance effective partnership and coordination among the Council, Commission, Federal partners, and member states.
    - Objective 2.2: Promote understanding, compliance, and the effective enforcement of regulations.
    - Objective 2.3: Promote monitoring, data collection, and the development of ecosystem-based science that support and enhance effective management of the summer flounder resource.
- Goal 3: Optimize economic and social benefits from the utilization of the summer flounder resource, balancing the needs and priorities of different user groups to achieve the greatest overall benefit to the nation.
    - Objective 3.1: Provide reasonable access to the fishery throughout the management unit. Fishery allocations and other management measures should balance responsiveness to changing social, economic, and ecological conditions with historic and current importance to various user groups and communities.

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 - Canada 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 the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). A Commission Plan Review Team (PRT), Technical Committee (TC), Plan Development Team/Fishery Management Action Team (PDT/FMAT), Management Board (Board), and Council are actively working on this plan.

Amendment 2 (approved in August 1993) provided a strategy for reducing fishing mortality to the fishing mortality threshold, while avoiding unreasonable impacts on fishermen and women. Commercial management measures included a moratorium on federal commercial permits, vessel and dealer permitting and reporting requirements, an annual commercial quota, minimum mesh requirements with a possession threshold that triggers the minimum mesh requirements and an exemption program. Recreational fishery measures include open access for-hire permit requirements, minimum size limits, possession limits, and seasonal closures.

The management system established under Amendment 2 has been modified by the following amendments, framework actions, and addenda. Amendment 3 (approved in July 1993) revised the mesh requirement exemption program and modified the poundage thresholds for the mesh requirements (change to two seasonal thresholds instead of year-round 100 pounds). Amendment 4 (approved in September 1993) revised the state-specific shares of the coastwide commercial quota allocation in response to a reporting issue in Connecticut. Amendment 5 (approved in December 1993) allows states to transfer or combine their commercial quota shares. Amendment 6 (approved in May 1994) allows properly stowed nets with a codend 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. The Commission and the Council adopted the Scup and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plans into the Summer Flounder FMP through Amendment 8 (approved March 1996) and Amendment 9 (approved October 1996), respectively.

Amendment 10, approved by the Board in August 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 size for any portion of the net; 2) require 5.5" diamond or 6" square mesh in the entire net of trawls; 3) continue the federal moratorium on commercial 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 NOAA Fisheries; and 9) allow states to implement a summer flounder fillet at sea permit system. The amendment also considered 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 existing state-by-state allocation formula. Ultimately, the Board and Council decided to maintain the current state-by-state quota allocation system.

Amendment 11, approved by the Board August 1998, modified provisions related to vessel upgrades and replacements, fishing history and permit transfer, establishment of vessel baselines, and voluntary relinquishment of permit eligibility, permit splitting, and permit renewal.

Amendment 12, approved by the Board in October 1998, was developed to bring the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan into 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 NOAA Fisheries on April 28, 1999, with the disapproved measures mostly relating to concerns with essential fish habitat measures that were later addressed.

Framework Adjustment 2 to the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass FMP, adopted by the Council in January 2001, provided the information and analyses necessary to implement a system of conservation equivalency based upon the RHL for the recreational summer flounder fishery. Addendum III (approved by the Board in January 2001) corresponds with Framework 2, and allows states to customize summer flounder recreational management measures to address issues associated with the availability of summer flounder on spatial and temporal scales. Addendum III established specifications for the 2001 recreational summer flounder fishery.

In August 2002, the Board 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 had no impact on the summer flounder fishery.

The Board 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, which was the last year in which states were under a common set of management measures.

The Board approved Addendum XIII in August of 2004. This addendum modifies the FMP such that, within a given year, landings limits for the summer flounder, scup, and/or black sea bass can be specified for up to three years. Multi-year limits do not have to be constant from year to year, but instead are based upon expectations of future stock conditions as indicated by the best available scientific information during the year in which specifications are set.

The Board approved Addendum XV in December of 2004. The addendum was developed to allow for a change in the allocation scheme for the increased commercial quota from 2004 to 2005, approximately 1.3 million pounds, as well as the additional quota from 2004 to 2006, approximately 1.6 million pounds. For the fishing years 2005 and 2006, the associated quota increases were allocated to the following states as a bycatch allocation: 75,000 pounds of summer flounder were allocated each to Maryland, New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts;

15,000 pounds were allocated to Delaware, 5,000 pounds to Maine, and 90 pounds to New Hampshire.

The Board approved Addendum XVII in August of 2005. Addendum XVII established a program wherein the Board could combine state-by-state recreational allocations into voluntary regions. This is an additional management tool in the management toolbox. This addendum also allowed the averaging or combining of multiple years of data (i.e. landings-per-angler, length-frequency distributions) in analyses to determine the impacts of proposed recreational management programs. The programs also included minimum fish sizes, possession limits, and fishing seasons. The averaging of annual harvest estimates is not allowed if the regional approach is used (i.e. the 1998 based allocations cannot be averaged across multiple years to create new allocations; multi-year averaging can be used to assess management measures).

The Board approved Addendum XVIII in February of 2006. The addendum sought to stabilize recreational fishing rules close to those that existed in 2005, in part, to minimize the drastic reductions that the three states were facing at the time. The addendum allowed the three states (NY, CT, and MA) facing large reductions in their harvest targets to capitalize on harvest opportunities that were foregone by states that chose to maintain their 2005 recreational fishing rules in 2006.

Addendum XIX, approved in August 2007, broadened the descriptions of stock status determination criteria contained within the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP to allow for greater flexibility in those definitions, while maintaining objective and measurable status determination criteria for identifying when stocks or stock complexes covered by the FMP are overfished. It established acceptable categories of peer-review for stock status determination criteria. When these specific peer-review metrics are met and new or updated information is available, the new or revised stock status determination criteria may be incorporated by the Board directly into the annual management measures for each species, rather than requiring a modification to the FMP.

The Board approved Addendum XXV in February of 2014. The addendum implemented regional conservation equivalency for the 2014 fishing year, and sought to respond to the unintended consequence of using conservation equivalency (e.g., state-specific recreational management measures) such as different measures between neighboring states and across the coast. The addendum established new regional measures that in combination would constrain harvest to coastwide recreational harvest limit. For 2014, the regions were the following: Massachusetts; Rhode Island; Connecticut through New Jersey; Delaware through Virginia; and North Carolina. All states within a region have the same minimum size, bag limit, and season length. A continuation of Addendum XXV was codified in Addendum XXVI by the Board in February 2015.

The Board approved Addendum XXVII in February 2016. The addendum addressed 2016 recreational summer flounder and black sea bass fisheries management, continuing regional management measures for 2016 and addressing discrepancies in summer flounder management measures within Delaware Bay. The 2016 recreational fishery was divided into six

management regions, the same five regions as under Addendum XXV and XXVI, but with New Jersey separated out from New York and Connecticut into its own region, with states within the same region required to implement the same bag, size limits, and season length. By separating New Jersey into its own region, the addendum allowed the state to make regulations different in Delaware Bay than in the rest of the state. Outside of the Delaware Bay, New Jersey regulations stayed consistent with those in New York and Connecticut. Within the Bay, New Jersey regulations consisted of a similar size limit as in Delaware, the same possession limit as Delaware, and the same season as the rest of New Jersey. The line of demarcation for regulation implementation was the COLREGS Demarcation Line.

In February 2017, ASMFC's Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved Addendum XXVIII, maintaining regional management for the recreational summer flounder fishery through 2017. This Addendum required a one-inch increase in size limit and lowered possession limits to 4 fish or less to reduce fishing pressure on the stock, which was experiencing overfishing.

After New Jersey submitted a conservation equivalency proposal which was not accepted, the Commission found New Jersey to be out of compliance with Addendum XXVIII in June 2017. ASMFC passed on its recommendation of noncompliance to the Secretary of Commerce. However, the Secretary of Commerce did not agree with the Commission's recommendation and found New Jersey to be in compliance with Addendum XXVIII. This is the first time that the Secretary of Commerce has not agreed with the Commission's recommendation for noncompliance.

Addendum XXXI was approved by the Board in December 2018. Coupled with the Council's complementary Framework 14, this Addendum adds to the suite of tools available for managing summer flounder, scup and black sea bass, and enhances the compatibility of state and federal regulations. The Commission recommended NOAA Fisheries implement transit provisions in Block Island Sound, allowing non-federally permitted recreational and commercial vessels to transit federal waters while in possession of summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass legally harvested from state waters.

The Council's Framework 14 also allows for the use of maximum sizes in addition to minimum sizes, commonly referred to as slot limits, to control catch in the summer flounder and black sea bass recreational fisheries.

Approved by the Board in December 2018, Addendum XXXII established an annual specifications process for developing recreational management measures for summer flounder and black sea bass. In relation to summer flounder, the Board approves regional measures in early spring each year, based on TC analysis of stock status, resource availability, and harvest estimates. Public input on specifications will be gathered by states through their individual public comment processes. The specifications process will provide the Board more flexibility in adjusting measures, if necessary, to constrain harvest to the annual coastwide RHL. Further, the

process will enable the Board to consider a host of factors, including: regional equity; regulatory stability; species abundance and distribution; and late-breaking recreational harvest estimates.

In March 2019, the Board and Council approved the Summer Flounder Commercial Issues Amendment. The Amendment revised the management program's goals and objectives specific to summer flounder and implemented new state-specific commercial allocations. The new state commercial allocations were based upon a 9.55 million pound trigger point. When the annual coastwide commercial quota is at or below 9.55 million pounds state-specific allocation percentages are based on allocations established in Amendment 2[1]. When the annual coastwide quota exceeds 9.55 million pounds, the first 9.55 million pounds is distributed according to the previous allocations, and the additional quota above 9.55 million pounds will be distributed as follows: 0.333% to the states of Maine, New Hampshire and Delaware and 12.375% to the remaining states (Table 1). As a result, state allocations will vary over time based on overall stock status and the resulting coastwide commercial quotas. These changes were implemented by the National Marine Fisheries Service on December 14, 2020, and took effect on January 1, 2021.

In August 2021, the Board approved Addendum XXXIII and the Council approved Amendment 23 making changes to black sea bass commercial state allocations.

In December 2021, the Board and Council jointly approved changes to the commercial and recreational allocations of summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. These changes were intended to better reflect the current understanding of the historic proportions of catch and landings from the commercial and recreational sectors. The Board and Council developed this amendment in response to changes in how recreational catch is estimated by the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), which resulted in a revised time series of recreational data going back to the 1980s. For summer flounder, the revised catch-based allocations provide a 55% share of the acceptable biological catch to the commercial fishery and a 45% share to the recreational fishery. These new changes took effect January 1, 2023.

In June 2022, the Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board (Policy Board) and the Council approved Addendum XXXIV and Council Framework 17 which modified the process for setting recreational measures and made minor modifications to the recreational accountability measures. The new process gives greater consideration to stock status when determining whether recreational measures should be restricted, liberalized, or remain unchanged for the upcoming two years (Table 2). The new process for setting recreational management measures began in 2023 and will sunset no later than the end of 2025 with a goal of implementing an improved process by the beginning of 2026.

[1] Amendment 2 established state-specific quota allocations based on 1980-1989 landings. Amendment 4 later revised the quota allocations because the original allocations were calculated based on incomplete historic landings data.

Addendum XXXV, approved by the Board and Council in October 2024, made modifications to two exemptions from the summer flounder commercial minimum mesh size requirements, the Small Mesh Exemption Program and the flynet exemption. For the Small Mesh Exemption Program, Addendum XXXV expands the exemption area by moving the boundary of the northern portion of the area approximately five miles west, then connecting the western boundary to the southern scup Gear Restricted Area. Additionally, the Board and Council also voted to implement a tiered monitoring approach for the Small Mesh Exemption Program. For the flynet exemption, the Board and Council approved a revised definition of the term "flynet" which encompasses similar high-rise net types which have very large mesh in the wings, with mesh size decreasing through the body of the net.

In April 2025, the Policy Board and Council approved Addendum XXXVI and a corresponding Council Framework which further modified the process for setting recreational measures outlined in Addendum XXXIV. Additionally, Addendum XXXVI made modifications to the recreational accountability measures. The Policy Board and Council selected a modified version of the Percent Change Approach, which better accounts for stock status when setting measures and creates more opportunities for stability in management measures. The addendum will be implemented in two phases. During the first phase starting in 2026, a harvest-based target will be used, which focuses on achieving a specific level of predicted harvest. The second phase of modifications, which will be implemented for setting 2030 recreational measures and beyond, will update the process to use a catch-based target. Unlike the current process, a catch-based approach aims to achieve a target level of total dead catch, including both harvest and dead discards. This approach will allow for more explicit consideration of how measures affect discards. The Council and Policy Board delayed the transition to a catch-based target until 2030 to allow time for additional analysis on the potential impacts of a catch-based target to measures.

While this FMP overview pertains only to joint and Board actions, there are additional Council only actions that are summarized at https://www.mafmc.org/sf-s-bsb. A summary of ongoing actions in development may be found below.

## II. Status of the Stock

In 2024, summer flounder specifications were developed using information from the 2023 management track stock assessment. The 2023 management track stock assessment found the stock was not overfished, but experiencing overfishing in 2022, the terminal year of the assessment. Spawning stock biomass (SSB) was estimated to be 40,994 mt in 2022, 83% of the biomass target reference point $SSB_{MSY}$ proxy = 49,561 mt (Figure 1). Fully selected fishing mortality was 0.464 in 2022, which was 103% of the updated fishing mortality threshold reference point $F_{MSY}$ proxy = $F_{35\%}$ = 0.451.

The average recruitment from 1982 to 2022 was 51 million fish at age 0. Recruitment was below average during 2011-2022, ranging from 27 to 43 million and averaging 36 million fish.

The assessment noted changes in trends of growth, maturity, and recruitment; however, SSB is projected to remain stable in the short term at current fishing rates.

The June 2025 management track stock assessment for summer flounder contains the latest and best information available regarding the status of the summer flounder stock. This assessment incorporated data through 2024, will inform specifications for the 2026 and 2027 fishing years[2], and found the stock to be not overfished and not experiencing overfishing in 2024.

## III. Status of the Fishery

Commercial landings peaked in 1984 at 37.77 million pounds, and declined to 8.81 million pounds in 1997. Since then, commercial landings have been variable, with two peak years of 17.37 million pounds in 2004 and 16.57 million pounds in 2011. After 2011, landings declined in part due to annual quota limits set in response to the condition of the resource. The decline continued until 2017 reaching a time series low of 5.83 million pounds of landings. In 2019 through 2023 landings increased, largely due to an increase in the commercial quota following the 2018 benchmark stock assessment. Summer flounder commercial landings in 2024 totaled 8.77 million lbs. Table 3 displays state by state commercial landings from 2015-2024. Table 4 displays the 2024 quota, landings, transfers, and overages, which are based on preliminary landings at the time of this report. The Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) address any overages once landings values are validated. States with the largest share of commercial landings in 2024 were North Carolina (25.35%), Virginia (22.06%), New Jersey (17.27%), and Rhode Island (15.91%). The principal gear used in the fishery is the bottom otter trawl. Commercial discard losses in the otter trawl and scallop dredge fisheries are estimated from observer data, and an 80% commercial discard mortality rate is assumed.

Recreational harvest peaked in 1983 at 36.74 million pounds, and declined to a time series low of 5.66 million pounds in 1989. A more recent review of recreational fishery performance from 2015 to present reveals an average of 9.01 million pounds with a high of 13.24 million pounds in 2016. Recreational harvest in 2024 was at a ten-year low and estimated at 5.50 million pounds, a decrease of 36.7% from the prior year's harvest (Table 5). The total recreational catch (harvest plus live and dead releases) of summer flounder in 2024 was 29.99 million fish, higher than the ten-year average of 29.06 million fish (Table 6). The assumed discard mortality rate in the recreational fishery is 10%. In 2024, an estimated 81.5% of the harvest (in numbers of fish) originated from private/rental boats, while shore-based anglers and party/charter boats accounted for an average of 14.4% and 4.1% of the harvest, respectively (Figure 2). In addition, 76.2% of summer flounder harvested by recreational fishermen (in numbers of fish) were caught in state waters and about 23.8% in federal waters (Figure 3).

[2]Additional information about the 2025 Summer Flounder Management Track Assessment can be found through the Northeast Fishery Science Center's Stock Assessment Support Information query tool: https://apps-nefsc.fisheries.noaa.gov/saw/sasi.php

## IV. Status of Research and Monitoring

Several states and NOAA Fisheries 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. Massachusetts collects trip-level commercial landings data from both harvesters and primary buyers, and the commercial quota is monitored via weekly reports of dealer transactions by the Division of Marine Fisheries Statistics Program.
- The Rhode Island Division of Marine Fisheries operates a spring and fall seasonal trawl survey, as well as a monthly trawl survey, which produce mean number and weight per tow for summer flounder.
- Connecticut collects indices of abundance from its spring and fall otter trawl survey in Long Island Sound. Connecticut monitors commercial summer flounder landings through monthly commercial fishing logbooks and weekly and monthly dealer reports.
- New York conducts a survey of recreational anglers on open boats throughout the marine district to collect additional data on size composition of kept and discarded fish. New York also conducts port/market sampling trips gathering sex and length data. New York maintains both a small mesh otter trawl survey in the Peconic Bay that samples summer flounder, and a nearshore trawl survey from Breezy Point to Block Island Sound in the winter, spring, summer and fall. New York requires trip level reporting from all of its commercial industry participants and monitors quota through a combination of trip reports and dealer reports.
- New Jersey monitors landings relative to the commercial quota for summer flounder using the SAFIS reporting system. New Jersey collects data from the commercial trawl fishery and conducts an ocean trawl survey from which age, length and sex 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 and women. Additionally, two trawl surveys are conducted annually in Delaware's estuarine waters to assess relative abundance of both adult and juvenile finfish.
- Maryland constructs a juvenile index from trawl and beach seine data collected in coastal bays and also collects length data from commercial trawlers in near shore coastal waters. A statewide voluntary angler survey is conducted that records location, time spent fishing, number of fish caught, number kept, and lengths of the first 20 fish caught.
- The Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) Biological Sampling Program collects length and weight data from Virginia's commercial and recreational fisheries. A sub sample provides scales for aging. Virginia also prepares a young-of-the-year index from data collected from beach seine and trawl surveys. Virginia also monitors summer flounder landings from federal waters through the SAFIS reporting system and from state waters through the VMRC Mandatory Harvest Reporting Program, which requires trip level reporting. The Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP) Trawl Survey

samples summer flounder from the near-coastal ocean waters of Virginia. This program generates coastwide age-specific and aggregate age class biomass indices, and summer flounder is caught off the Virginia coast in both the spring and fall surveys.

- North Carolina annually conducts two otter trawl surveys to sample juvenile fluke in the Pamlico Sound. North Carolina also collects information on age and growth and catch-per-unit-of-effort for the winter trawl fishery, estuarine gill net fishery, pound net fishery, the ocean gill net fishery, commercial gig, and the long-haul seine fishery.

## V. Status of Management Measures and Developing Issues

Recreational Reform Initiative topics, agreed upon in December 2022 by the Board and Council for further development include a framework/addenda and amendment. The Board and Council took final action on the Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda (Addendum XXXVI to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP) in April 2025 and work on the amendment is ongoing. The Recreational Sector Separation Amendment will consider management options for recreational sector separation, including mode management, as well as consideration of for-hire permitting and reporting requirements. Final action on the amendment is tentatively scheduled for summer/fall 2026. The issue of enhancing recreational data collection will be explored separately through a white paper to help the Policy Board and the Council clarify goals for potential future action.

Updates on ongoing recreational reform work can be found here.

## VI. Summer Flounder Compliance Criteria

***Commercial Fishery***

Management measures imposed upon harvesters of summer flounder include an annual commercial quota, minimum sizes, minimum mesh requirements for trawls, permits and administrative fees for dealers and vessels, a moratorium on entry into the commercial fishery, mandated use of sea samplers when assigned, monitoring of sea turtles and the use of turtle excluder devices in a portion of the southern part of the management unit, and collection of data and record keeping by dealers and processors. In 2024, the commercial quota was allocated to each state based on the allocation process outlined in Table 1, and any overages are subtracted from a state's quota for the following year. The state-by-state quota totals for 2024 are included in Table 1 and Table 4.

The following measures may change annually. The 2024 measures are indicated.

Minimum size: 14"

Minimum mesh and threshold:
*Mesh:* 5.5" diamond, 6" square
*Thresholds:* 200 pounds in the winter (Nov 1-Apr 30) and 100 pounds in the summer (May 1-October 31)

Regulation of mesh beyond the codend: 5.5" diamond or 6" square throughout the mesh

2024 commercial quota: 8.79 million pounds

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 NOAA Fisheries 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). Delaware has requested de minimis status and meets the requirements with 2024 commercial landings totaling 0.01% of the coastwide total (Table 4).

***Recreational Fishery***

The Board chose to adopt regional management through conservation equivalency for the 2024 recreational fishery under the provisions of Framework 2[3]. As such, the Federal recreational bag limit and minimum fish size were waived and the fishing season and anglers were subject only to the regulations in their states (see Table 7 for state measures).

2024 recreational harvest limit: 6.35 million pounds.

***Other Measures***

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

Reporting: States must submit an annual compliance report to the Chair 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

[3] Past FMP Reviews are available on the Commissions' summer flounder webpage, which contain prior year's recreational measures.

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.*

1993 - 2024 Summer Flounder FMP Compliance Criteria Timeline

***Commercial Fishery***

| | |
|---|---|
| 14" minimum size | 3/1/97 |
| Ability to regulate mesh in any portion of the net | 1/1/98 |
| 5.5” diamond or 6” square mesh throughout entire net | 6/3/98 |
| Prohibition of transfer at sea | 1/1/98 |
| Mandatory reporting to NMFS of landings from state waters | 1/1/98 |
| Small mesh exemption program | 1/21/93 |
| Flynet minimum mesh size exemption | 1/21/93 |

***Recreational Fishery***

| | |
|---|---|
| Regional Management Measures under conservation equivalency | 2/2017 |

***General***

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

**VII. Plan Review Team Comments and Recommendations**

- The PRT notes that after reviewing state compliance reports, most states’ regulations are consistent with the FMP requirements with only a few issues identified.
    - New Jersey did not include in their state compliance report regulations outlining prohibition of transfers at sea. This is the fifth year these issues have been flagged by the PRT. New Jersey currently has provisions in place that mandate state permitted vessels can only transfer catch to a licensed dealer and are only able to transfer the daily trip limit; a vessel that lands above the trip limit is subject to an over the limit infraction. Federal permit holders landing summer flounder in New Jersey are prohibited from transfers at sea. New Jersey staff have indicated that the rulemaking package that contains an update to prohibit transfers at sea is still being processed.
    - Based on commercial landings information collected from state compliance reports, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and Virginia all exceeded their respective

2024 commercial quotas. For overage values, see Table 4. Please note 2024 commercial landings are still preliminary.

- With the two exceptions noted above, the PRT determined that all states have implemented regulations consistent with the FMP requirements.
- Delaware requested *de minimis* status and meets the requirements for 2024.

**VIII. Research Recommendations**

Research recommendations were identified during the 2018 Summer Flounder Benchmark Stock Assessment at the 66th SAW (pg. 106)

**IX. References**

Northeast Fisheries Science Center. 2023. Prepublication copy of the June 2023 management track stock assessment report prepared for the Council and the SSC. Available at: https://apps-nefsc.fisheries.noaa.gov/saw/sasi.php

Northeast Fisheries Science Center. 2025. Prepublication copy of the June 2025 management track stock assessment report prepared for the Council and the SSC. Available at: https://apps-nefsc.fisheries.noaa.gov/saw/sasi.php

## X. Tables and Figures

**Table 1.** 2024 state-specific shares of commercial summer flounder quota.

| State | Allocation of baseline quota ≤ 9.55 mil lb | Allocation of additional quota beyond 9.55 mil lb | 2024 Initial Quota |
|---|---|---|---|
| **ME** | 0.05% | 0.33% | 4,180 |
| **NH** | 0.00% | 0.33% | 40 |
| **MA** | 6.82% | 12.38% | 599,507 |
| **RI** | 15.68% | 12.38% | 1,378,507 |
| **CT** | 2.26% | 12.38% | 198,394 |
| **NY** | 7.65% | 12.38% | 672,157 |
| **NJ** | 16.72% | 12.38% | 1,470,098 |
| **DE** | 0.02% | 0.33% | 1,564 |
| **MD** | 2.04% | 12.38% | 179,233 |
| **VA** | 21.32% | 12.38% | 1,873,707 |
| **NC** | 27.45% | 12.38% | 2,412,443 |
| **Total** | 100% | 100% | 8,789,830 |

**Table 2.** Process for determining the appropriate percent change in harvest when developing 2024 management measures.

| Future RHL vs Harvest Estimate | Stock Size $SSB/SSB_{MSY}$ | Change in Harvest |
|---|---|---|
| Future 2-year avg. RHL greater than upper bound of harvest estimate confidence interval | > 1.5 | Liberalization percent equal to difference between harvest estimate and 2-year avg. RHL, not to exceed 40% |
| | 1 – 1.5 | Liberalization percent equal to difference between harvest estimate and 2-year avg. RHL, not to exceed 20% |
| | < 1 | 10% Liberalization |
| Future 2-YR avg. RHL within confidence interval of harvest estimate | > 1.5 | 10% Liberalization |
| | 1-1.5 | 0% |
| | < 1 | 10% Reduction |
| Future 2-YR avg. RHL less than lower bound of harvest estimate confidence interval | > 1.5 | 10% Reduction |
| | 1-1.5 | Reduction percent equal to difference between harvest estimate and 2-year avg. RHL, not to exceed 20% |
| | < 1 | Reduction percent equal to difference between harvest estimate and 2-year avg. RHL, not to exceed 40% |

**Table 3.** Summer flounder commercial landings by state (2015-2024) in pounds.
Source: Commercial landings summaries for 2015-2023 – non-confidential; using ACCSP Data Warehouse, Arlington, VA. and state compliance reports for 2024 data (July 2025).

| State | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **MA** | 748,432 | 582,778 | 420,714 | 428,610 | 551,267 | 700,390 | 715,347 | 876,156 | 981,608 | 640,663 |
| **RI** | 1,716,095 | 1,306,386 | 896,048 | 1,022,615 | 1,661,068 | 1,704,496 | 1,893,347 | 2,080,744 | 2,254,206 | 1,394,864 |
| **CT** | 286,890 | 191,133 | 134,611 | 177,454 | 290,519 | 370,467 | 713,608 | 904,035 | 898,214 | 198,382 |
| **NY** | 829,929 | 603,522 | 491,433 | 462,678 | 866,403 | 870,876 | 1,051,597 | 1,370,058 | 1,468,722 | 686,908 |
| **NJ** | 1,683,068 | 1,296,913 | 961,840 | 1,045,566 | 1,598,740 | 1,907,392 | 1,907,973 | 2,405,343 | 2,309,502 | 1,514,505 |
| **DE** | 1,349 | 2,236 | 1,438 | 677 | 1,260 | 608 | 929 | 1,083 | 702 | 542 |
| **MD** | 188,163 | 159,176 | 138,458 | 143,649 | 155,974 | 200,915 | 349,820 | 410,166 | 435,955 | 175,434 |
| **VA** | 2,276,292 | 1,664,400 | 1,255,794 | 1,256,607 | 1,919,231 | 1,589,592 | 1,789,911 | 2,162,716 | 2,558,628 | 1,934,291 |
| **NC** | 2,878,549 | 2,124,231 | 1,563,221 | 1,654,651 | 2,025,763 | 1,779,924 | 2,093,591 | 2,190,186 | 2,096,536 | 2,223,062 |
| **Total** | 10,608,767 | 7,930,775 | 5,863,558 | 6,192,507 | 9,070,225 | 9,124,659 | 10,516,123 | 12,400,486 | 13,004,074 | 8,768,651 |

*2024 Landings are preliminary, and pulled from state compliance reports.

**Table 4.** 2024 state-specific shares of commercial summer flounder quota and harvest by weight (lbs).
Source: 2024 State Compliance Reports.

| State | 2024 Initial Quota | 2024 Transfers | 2024 Final Quota | 2024 Landings | Overages | % Quota Used | % Coastwide Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ME | 4,180 | -4,000 | 180 | 0 | | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| NH | 40 | | 40 | 0 | | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| MA | 599,507 | 20,054 | 619,561 | 640,663 | **21,102** | **103.41%** | 7.31% |
| RI | 1,378,507 | 17,754 | 1,396,261 | 1,394,864 | | 99.90% | 15.91% |
| CT | 198,394 | | 198,394 | 198,382 | | 99.99% | 2.26% |
| NY | 672,157 | | 672,157 | 686,908 | **14,751** | **102.19%** | 7.83% |
| NJ | 1,470,098 | 32,200 | 1,502,298 | 1,514,505 | **12,207** | **100.81%** | 17.27% |
| DE | 1,564 | | 1,564 | 542 | | 34.65% | 0.01% |
| MD | 179,233 | | 179,233 | 175,434 | | 97.88% | 2.00% |
| VA | 1,873,707 | 16,535 | 1,890,242 | 1,934,291 | **44,049** | **102.33%** | 22.06% |
| NC | 2,412,443 | -82,543 | 2,329,900 | 2,223,062 | | 95.41% | 25.35% |
| **TOTAL^** | **8,789,830** | | **8,789,830** | **8,768,651** | | **99.76%** | |

*Totals in table may not match listed quotas due to rounding.

**Table 5.** Recreational summer flounder harvest by state (2015-2024) in weight (pounds).
Source: Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). These estimates may differ from MRIP estimates depending on query date (data queried July 2025).

| State | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **NH** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,594 | 0 |
| **MA** | 385,987 | 239,844 | 171,922 | 142,540 | 145,203 | 175,590 | 120,806 | 198,199 | 311,114 | 176,194 |
| **RI** | 790,640 | 340,528 | 596,905 | 603,752 | 837,107 | 479,590 | 163,105 | 330,908 | 288,602 | 256,598 |
| **CT** | 998,509 | 1,023,887 | 402,529 | 549,268 | 292,453 | 387,741 | 465,969 | 411,598 | 277,231 | 283,126 |
| **NY** | 5,010,599 | 5,744,430 | 4,214,222 | 2,385,310 | 2,441,732 | 2,389,690 | 1,156,832 | 2,840,199 | 1,931,498 | 1,879,550 |
| **NJ** | 3,245,895 | 4,717,501 | 3,601,688 | 3,154,540 | 3,229,057 | 5,491,680 | 3,780,045 | 3,552,155 | 4,038,788 | 2,336,685 |
| **DE** | 270,174 | 435,174 | 253,703 | 205,380 | 224,528 | 534,247 | 272,108 | 253,283 | 366,576 | 210,889 |
| **MD** | 251,325 | 98,357 | 171,499 | 121,760 | 206,373 | 187,228 | 192,796 | 185,647 | 151,535 | 34,296 |
| **VA** | 719,288 | 528,706 | 528,350 | 345,064 | 368,955 | 381,165 | 636,394 | 839,164 | 1,150,089 | 320,208 |
| **NC** | 157,437 | 110,392 | 147,426 | 92,032 | 52,872 | 37,935 | 27,492 | 22,151 | 34,192 | 0 |
| **Total** | 11,829,854 | 13,238,819 | 10,088,244 | 7,599,646 | 7,798,280 | 10,064,866 | 6,815,547 | 8,633,304 | 8,553,219 | 5,497,546 |

**Table 6.** Estimated summer flounder recreational harvest, releases, dead releases, total catch, and total removals in numbers of fish by marine recreational anglers, 2015 to 2024.
Source: MRIP. These estimates may differ from MRIP estimates depending on query date (data queried July 2025).

| Year | Total Catch (A+B1+B2) | Harvest (A+B1) | Released (B2) | Dead Releases (10% of B2) | Total Removals (Harvest + Dead Releases) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2015 | 34,140,115 | 4,034,036 | 30,106,079 | 3,010,608 | 7,044,644 |
| 2016 | 31,238,379 | 4,301,669 | 26,936,710 | 2,693,671 | 6,995,340 |
| 2017 | 28,952,168 | 3,174,950 | 25,777,218 | 2,577,722 | 5,752,672 |
| 2018 | 22,668,930 | 2,412,514 | 20,256,416 | 2,025,642 | 4,438,156 |
| 2019 | 30,743,493 | 2,383,228 | 28,360,265 | 2,836,027 | 5,219,255 |
| 2020 | 33,254,607 | 3,494,607 | 29,760,000 | 2,976,000 | 6,470,607 |
| 2021 | 22,727,155 | 2,318,610 | 20,408,545 | 2,040,855 | 4,359,465 |
| 2022 | 29,011,327 | 3,375,473 | 25,635,854 | 2,563,585 | 5,939,058 |
| 2023 | 27,865,289 | 3,164,938 | 24,700,351 | 2,470,035 | 5,634,973 |
| 2024 | 29,993,104 | 1,842,669 | 28,150,435 | 2,815,044 | 4,657,713 |
| 10 YR AVG | 29,059,457 | 3,050,269 | 26,009,187 | 2,600,919 | 5,651,188 |

**Table 7.** Summer flounder state-by-state recreational management measures for 2024 and 2025.

| STATE | Mode | Size Limit | Possession Limit | Open Season |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **MASSACHUSETTS** | Private & For-Hire | 17.5” | 5 fish | May 24 – September 23 |
| | Shore | 16.5” | | |
| **RHODE ISLAND** | All | 19” | 6 fish | April 1 – December 31 |
| **Rhode Island Shore Program (7 designated shore sites)** | Shore | 19” | 4 fish[1] | |
| | | 17” | 2 fish[1] | |
| **CONNECTICUT** | All | 19” | 3 fish | May 4 – August 1 |
| | | 19.5” | | August 2 – October 15 |
| **Connecticut Enhanced Opportunity Shore Fishing Sites (45 designated shore sites)** | Shore | 17” | 3 fish | May 4 – October 15 |
| **NEW YORK** | All | 19” | 3 fish | May 4 – August 1 |
| | | 19.5” | | August 2 – October 15 |
| **NEW JERSEY** | All | 18” | 3 fish | May 4 – September 25 |
| **New Jersey Shore Program Site (IBSP)** | Shore | 16” | 2 fish | |
| **New Jersey Delaware Bay and Tributaries** | All | 17” | 3 fish | |
| **DELAWARE, MARYLAND, & VIRGINIA** | All | 16” | 4 fish | January 1 – May 31 |
| | | 17.5” | | June 1 – December 31 |
| **NORTH CAROLINA** | All | 15” | 1 fish | August 16 – September 30[2] |

[1] Combined possession limit of 6 fish; no more than 2 fish at 17-inch minimum size limit.

[2] Season subject to become more restrictive pending southern flounder management needs.

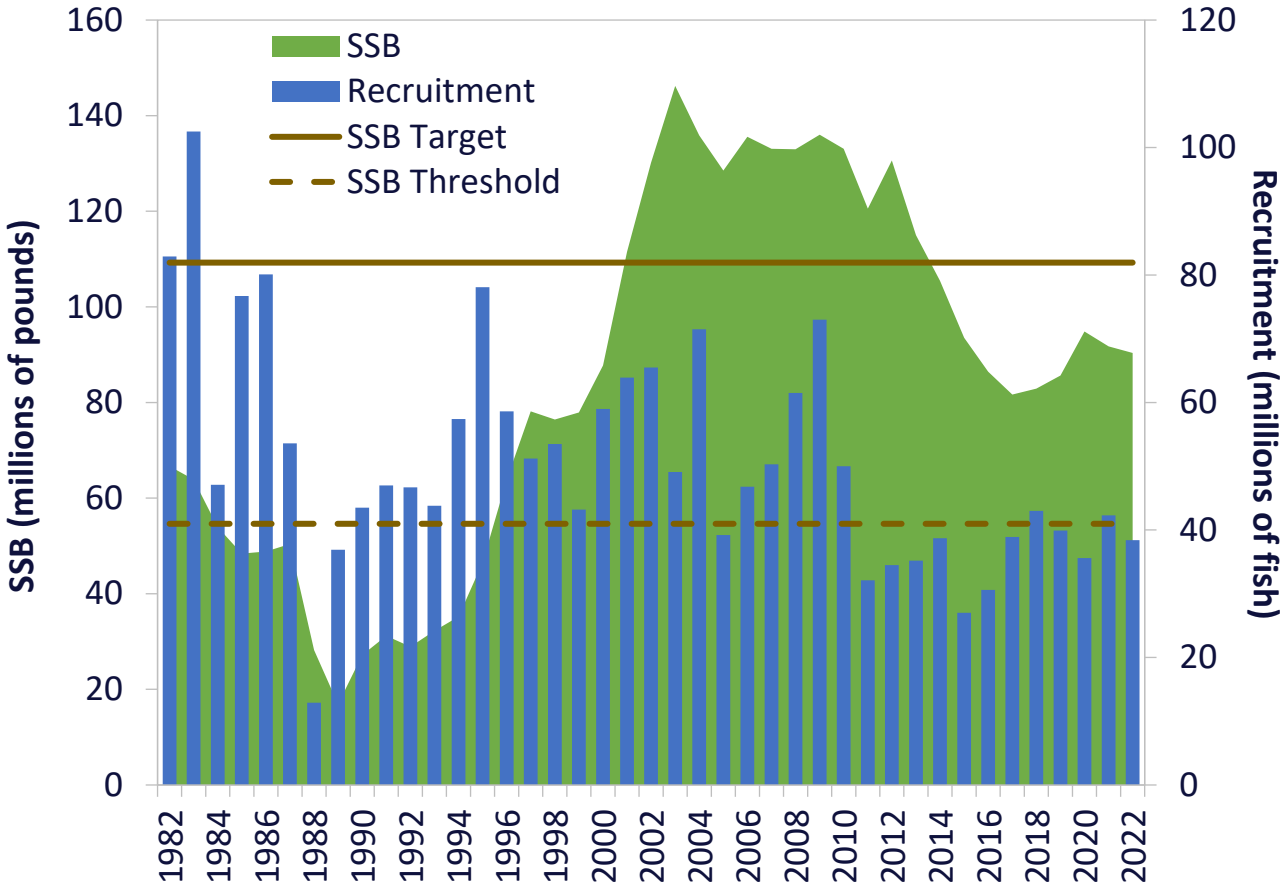



**Figure 1.** Summer flounder spawning stock biomass and recruitment.
Source: Summer Flounder Management Track Stock Assessment, 2023.

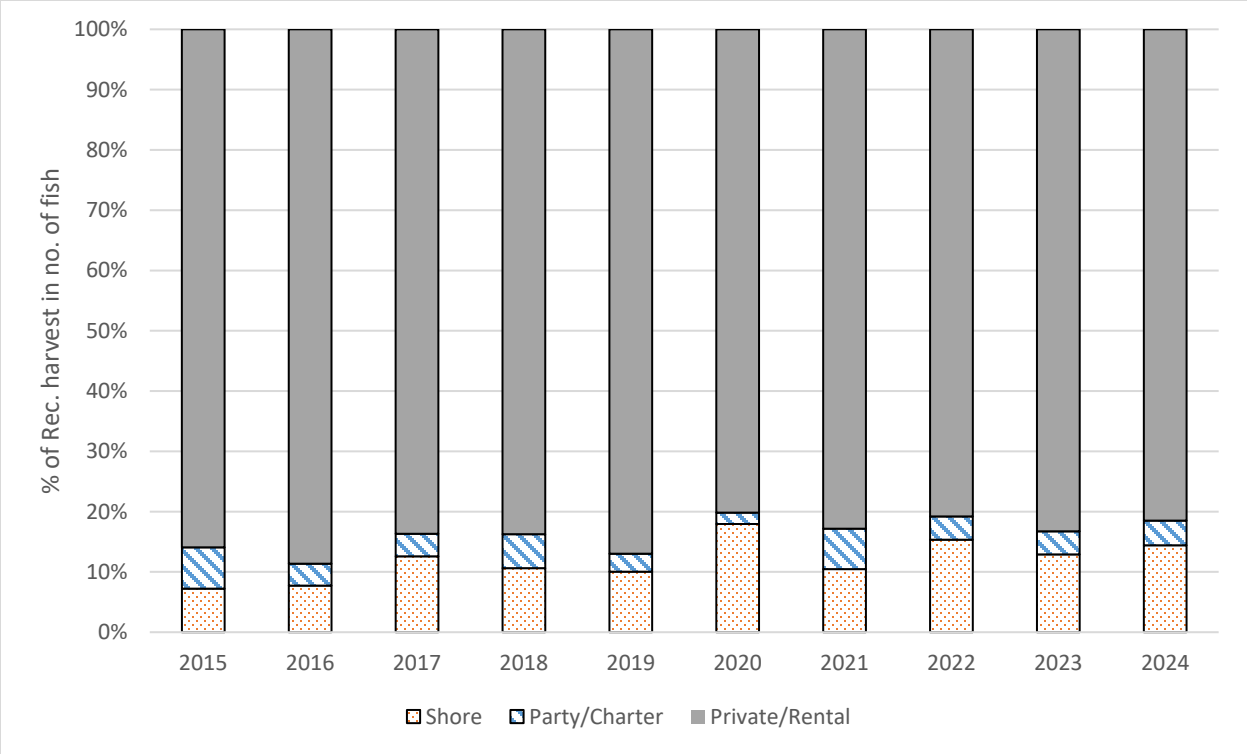



**Figure 2.** The percent of summer flounder harvested by recreational fishing mode in numbers of fish, Maine through North Carolina, 2015-2024.
Source: Source: MRIP. These estimates may differ from MRIP estimates depending on query date (data queried July 2025).

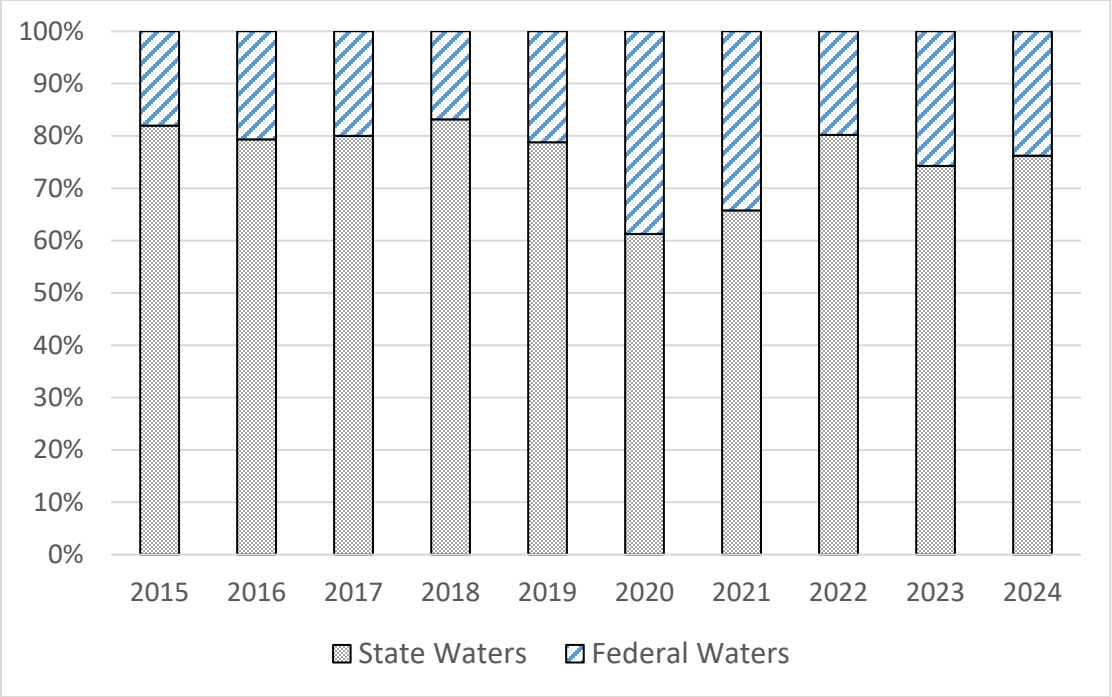



**Figure 3.** The percent of summer flounder recreational landings (numbers of fish) in state vs. federal waters, Maine through North Carolina, 2015-2024.
Source: Source: MRIP. These estimates may differ from MRIP estimates depending on query date (data queried July 2025).