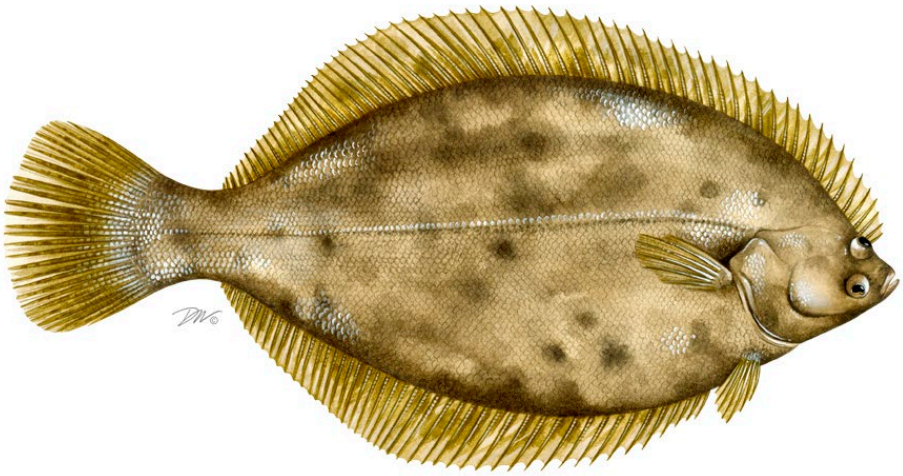
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

REVIEW OF THE INTERSTATE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

FOR WINTER FLOUNDER
(Pseudopleuronectes americanus)

2024 FISHING YEAR



Prepared by the Plan Review Team
Approved February 2026

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

Table of Contents

I. Status of Fishery Management Plan

Date of FMP Approval	Original FMP (October 1988)
Amendments	Amendment 1 (November 2005)
Addenda	Addendum I (May 1992) Addendum II (February 1998) Addendum I to Amendment 1 (May 2009) Addendum II to Amendment 1 (October 2012) Addendum III to Amendment 1 (May 2013)
Management Units	Three stocks units: Gulf of Maine (GOM), Southern New England/ Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA), and Georges Bank (GBK). Commission participates in management of GOM and SNE/MA stocks.
States with Declared Interest	Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey
Active Boards/Committees	Winter Flounder Management Board, Advisory Panel, Technical Committee, Plan Review Team

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) and the New England Fishery Management Council (Council) manage winter flounder in state and federal waters. The Commission participates in the management of two inshore winter flounder stocks: 1) the Gulf of Maine (GOM) stock, which consists of waters north of Cape Cod; and 2) the Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) stock, which consists of waters south of Cape Cod to the Delaware-Maryland border. The decision to consider only inshore stocks of winter flounder was based upon the Commission's focus on fisheries in state waters, and the differences in biological characteristics from the offshore stock in Georges Bank.

Interstate Fishery Management Plan (1988)

The Commission authorized development of the first Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Winter Flounder (*Pseudopleuronectes americanus*) in October 1988. The purpose of the plan was to: 1) address management of inshore stocks of winter flounder; and 2) prominently consider habitat and environmental quality as factors affecting the condition of the resource. The original FMP and Addendum I called for reductions in fishing mortality on winter flounder. It allowed states the flexibility to achieve those reductions based on the life history characteristics of the particular stocks inhabiting each region. Implementation of the plan required cooperation between state fishery management agencies, NOAA Fisheries, the Council, and the Commission.

Although all states submitted plans that were approved by the Winter Flounder Management Board (Board), results from a 1995 stock assessment concluded that none of the states achieved a fishing mortality rate corresponding to F_{30}. Subsequent analyses in early January 1997 indicated that fishing mortality on a coastwide basis was slightly higher than the F_{30} target for the SNE/MA stock complex. Fishing mortality in the GOM stock was presumed to be higher than in the SNE/MA stock, and the spawning stock biomass was estimated to be at a low level, indicating that the GOM unit might be in greater need of rebuilding than the SNE/MA unit.

In February 1998, the Board approved Addendum II to the FMP. Addendum II adjusted the implementation schedule for management measures by the participating states and called for plans to reach the target fishing mortality goal for rebuilding (F_{40}).

Amendment 1 (2005)

In May 1999, the Board acknowledged that it was necessary to update the Interstate FMP for Inshore Stocks of Winter Flounder through an amendment. The original plan and addenda did not prove successful in rebuilding inshore winter flounder populations. In addition, the FMP did not reflect the goals and objectives of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (ACFCMA), which was established in 1993 after the original FMP was approved. The Board further noted that an upcoming stock assessment would likely provide new information on the status of winter flounder stock complexes. After the assessment was completed in late 2002, the Commission began development of Amendment 1 in February 2003.

Amendment 1 to the Interstate FMP for Inshore Stocks of Winter Flounder, approved in November 2005, replaced all previous Commission management plans. It focused on joint management of winter flounder between the Commission and Council, and was designed to rebuild and maintain spawning stock biomass at or near target biomass levels. In addition, Amendment 1 prioritized restoration and maintenance of essential winter flounder habitat.

Amendment I required a minimum size limit of 12 inches for commercial and recreational fisheries for both GOM and SNE/MA stock units. Recreational creel limits were ten (10) fish in the SNE/MA stock area and eight (8) fish in the GOM. There were no required closed recreational seasons in the GOM, while a closed season of 20 days during March and April was required in SNE/MA. The 60-day open season for recreational winter flounder fishing could be split into no more than 2 blocks. States were required to implement a minimum size of 6.5 inches square or diamond mesh for the cod-end in both GOM and SNE/MA inshore waters. Additionally, a 100-pound trip limit was required if smaller mesh was being used in the SNE/MA. This “mesh trigger” was intended for the landing of a small amount of winter flounder as bycatch in small-mesh fisheries.

Addendum I to Amendment 1 (2009)

Addendum I was approved in May 2009, following the 2008 GARM III stock assessment which indicated that the SNE/MA spawning stock biomass was only 9% of the target and the GOM stock was likely to be overfished and experiencing overfishing. For the GOM commercial

fishery, Addendum I established a maximum possession limit of 250 pounds per vessel. This limit was estimated to reduce 2006-2007 harvest levels by 31% for state water fishing vessels. For the GOM recreational fishery, Addendum I required states to implement regulations to reduce fishing mortality by 11% from the average of 2006-2007 levels. This 11% reduction was estimated to reach F_{MSY}. States were allowed to achieve reductions through possession limits, seasons, or a combination of both, and also had the option to submit conservation equivalency proposals to achieve the necessary reductions through alternative management measures, subject to approval by the Board.

For SNE/MA, Addendum I's management measures were designed to reach the lowest fishing mortality (F) rate possible with minimal economic and social impacts. The Addendum also sought to reduce dead discards and prevent an influx of effort into state waters. Non-federally permitted commercial vessels were allowed to possess a maximum of 50 pounds of winter flounder. This F rate was projected to reduce harvest by 65%, and was intended solely to allow for bycatch. Recreational fishermen were permitted to possess a maximum of two (2) winter flounder from inshore waters of the SNE/MA stock area. This bag limit was established with the expectation that it would reduce harvest by 46%.

Addendum II to Amendment 1 (2012)

In response to updated stock status information and federal action to substantially increase the GOM winter flounder state waters subcomponent, the Board initiated Addendum II to Amendment 1 of the Winter Flounder Interstate FMP. This Addendum changed commercial and recreational management measures for the state waters component of the GOM stock only. Specifically, it increased the maximum possession limit for non-federally permitted commercial vessels to 500 pounds. It also removed the 11% reduction in F for the recreational fishery and allowed states the option to open their recreational fishing season year-round.

Addendum III to Amendment 1 (2013)

Addendum III established an annual specification process to set commercial and recreational management measures for the GOM and SNE/MA fisheries. Each year, with advice from the Winter Flounder Technical Committee, the Board can adjust trip limits, size limits, and seasons for the commercial fishery; the Board can also adjust size limits, bag limits, and seasons for the recreational fishery. The Addendum enables the Commission to quickly respond to federal actions and changes in the winter flounder fishery.

II. Status of Stocks

The most recent peer reviewed stock assessment for all three winter flounder stocks was conducted by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center in 2025. These management track stock assessments included data through 2024.

Gulf of Maine

The 2025 management track stock assessment determined that GOM winter flounder stock biomass status is unknown and overfishing is not occurring. 2024 biomass (30+ cm) was estimated to be 4,537 metric tons (mt) and the exploitation rate was estimated to be 0.044, which was 19% of the overfishing exploitation threshold proxy (Figures 1 & 2). The assessment noted that there have been significant declines in commercial and recreational removals since the 1980's. As catches continue to remain far below the overfishing level, the general lack of a response in survey indices and age/size structure has been a primary source of concern. However, recent increases in the overall biomass (2021-2024) could potentially be the beginning of a response to record low removals. Significant sources of uncertainty include the reliance of estimates of stock biomass on survey gear catchability and that biomass-based reference points cannot be determined. This 2025 management track did however incorporate a re-estimated catchability based on a sweep study for the NEFSC survey. (Source: Gulf of Maine Winter Flounder 2025 Assessment Update)

Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic

The SNE/MA management track assessment indicates the stock not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. However, spawning stock biomass has shown an overall declining trend in SSB over the time series, with the current estimate (2,787 mt) at the second lowest in the time series (Figure 3). The current SSB is 89% of the biomass target and 179% of the biomass threshold (Figure 4). Estimates of fishing mortality have been declining since 2015, and the current value (0.048) is among the lowest of the time series. Recruitment, an important indicator of the stock's ability to rebuild, has remained low and without trend in the last decade, with a slight increase at the end of the time series (Figure 5). During the 2022 management track assessment, the recruitment stanza was changed to use only the recruitment estimates since 2002 instead of the entire time series to make projections. The current stock size and productivity mean many of the historic recruitment estimates are nearly impossible to achieve, making the adjusted recruitment stanza more realistic. The lower median recruitment estimate from this shortened recruitment stanza in the long term biological reference point projection results in a much-reduced biomass target. While stock status has changed, the perception of the stock has not, and model results, continued low harvest, and fishery independent survey indices all reveal a poor stock condition for SNE/MA winter flounder. (Source: Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Winter Flounder 2025 Assessment Update)

III. Status of the Fishery

Stockwide

Across all stocks (GOM, SNE/MA, and GBK), the winter flounder fisheries are a fraction of their historic productivity. Specifically, commercial and recreational landings have declined since the early 1980s (Table 1, Figure 6). Landings are reported for the 2024 calendar year unless otherwise stated.

Commercial landings peaked at 18,279 mt (40.3 million lbs) in 1981, the highest since 1950, but have generally declined throughout the 1990's and 2000's. In 2024, commercial landings were 859.7 mt (1.89 million lbs), a 130% increase from 2023 landings of 372.9 mt (0.82 million lbs). A majority of the landings were taken in Massachusetts (98%; Table 2). It is important to note that management action has impacted yearly landings as annual catch limits increased in 2011 and 2012, and a moratorium was in place for the SNE/MA stock between May 2009 and April 2013. (Landings source: NMFS, State Compliance Reports)

Recreational harvest was 25.2 mt (0.055 million lbs) in 2024, a 66% decrease from 2023 harvest of 75.2 mt (0.16 million lbs; Table 1). These recent recreational harvest values represent a significant decrease from the 17,535 mt (38.6 million lbs) caught in 1981. In 2024, Massachusetts comprised the majority of coastwide recreational winter flounder landings, at 77.1%. Generally, the percentage standard error (PSE) values around each state's recreational data are very high (>50) and indicate very imprecise estimates (Landings source: MRIP).

Gulf of Maine

Commercial landings of GOM winter flounder have substantially declined since the early 1980s, with recent landings being roughly 10% of harvest levels in the 1980s. From 1964 through the mid-1970s, commercial landings were near 1,000 mt. Productivity peaked at nearly 2,793 mt in 1982, and steadily declined to 141 mt in 2010 and has remained low. In 2024, commercial landings in the GOM winter founder stock were 161 mt. The 2024 estimate for total commercial discards is 14 mt (Source: NEFSC 2025).

Recreational landings have declined significantly since their peak in the 1980s. During 2024, the estimate for recreational harvest in the GOM was 23 mt. Recreational dead discards make up a small portion of catch and were estimated at 0 mt for 2024 (NEFSC 2025).

Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic

Commercial landings of SNE/MA winter flounder generally declined throughout the time series from 1964 to 2024, with periodic peaks and dips. After reaching a historical peak of 11,977 mt in 1966 and then declining through the 1970s, total U.S. commercial landings again peaked at 11,176 mt in 1981. After 1981, SNE/MA commercial landings declined to 2,159 mt in 1994 and then increased to 4,672 mt in 2001. Commercial landings have decreased since the 2001 peak. Landings in 2024 were 76 mt, and total commercial discards was estimated to be 89 mt (Source: NEFSC 2025).

Recreational landings of SNE/MA winter flounder peaked in 1984 and have declined substantially since. During 2024, the estimate for recreational harvest in the SNE/MA stock was 2 mt. Recreational discards in 2024 were estimated at 2 mt (NEFSC 2025). The principal mode of fishing is private/rental boats, with most recreational landings occurring during May and June (Source: MRIP).

IV. Status of Research and Monitoring

Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Winter Flounder requires the following research and monitoring activities by certain states:

- Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New York are required to conduct annual surveys of juvenile recruitment to develop an annual juvenile abundance index.
- Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Jersey are required to conduct annual trawl surveys to develop an index of spawning stock biomass.

In 2024, states with a declared interest in the winter flounder FMP conducted the fisheries-independent surveys summarized below.

Maine

Maine Department of Marine Resources (MEDMR) conducts spring and fall bottom trawl surveys in cooperation with the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NHFG). The Maine-New Hampshire (MENH) Inshore Trawl Survey collects length, weight, maturity stage, and age samples for winter flounder. In 2024, 4,081 winter flounder were caught with 357 taken for maturity samples during the spring survey. There has been an increasing trend in winter flounder mean catch and weight in the spring survey, with mean weight at its highest index to date, almost tripling since 2021. In 2024, the analysis of a backlog of 7,585 winter flounder otoliths that had been collected since 2002 was completed. Age-length keys and other ageing statistics are in the process of being created, with hope of publishing findings in 2026. In the fall survey, 4,034 winter flounder were caught, but none were taken for maturity samples. Winter flounder mean catch and weight have varied over time, but indices have remained greater than the time series average since 2021, particularly in terms of weight.

New Hampshire

NHFG conducts an annual seine survey of juvenile fish in its estuaries from June through November. Winter flounder encountered in the survey during 2024 ranged in size from 2.3 to 18.9 cm total length with a mean of 6.23 cm total length. The survey produces an index of relative abundance for each species encountered using a geometric mean catch per seine haul. The 2024 index value (0.65) for winter flounder increased from 2023 but is below the average (1.08) since 1997; the index has been highly variable. In addition, NHFG has worked with MEDMR since the fall of 2000 to conduct an inshore trawl survey off Maine and New Hampshire. Winter flounder are regularly caught in this survey.

Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MA DMF) has conducted a biannual trawl (spring and fall) survey covering MA territorial waters since 1978, except for in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For the GOM, fall survey abundance and biomass increased from 2023 to 2024, and percent occurrence remained the same at 100%. However, spring survey biomass and abundance decreased from 2023 to 2024, while percent occurrence remained the same. All indices were above their time series mean except spring biomass and abundance. The spring

GOM indices depict a declining trend through about 2010, followed by an increasing trend since then. The fall indices' trends are more variable around the mean but show a steadily increasing trend post-2000. Percent occurrence of winter flounder in the GOM surveys is very high; routinely 100% with few exceptions in the spring and generally 90-100% in the fall.

For SNE, all indices decreased from 2023 to 2024 except for percent occurrence in the spring. All 2024 indices were still below their time series means. The spring indices depict a steadily declining SNE stock since the beginning of the time series, while the fall indices' trends have generally declined but are more variable around the mean. Percent occurrence of winter flounder in the SNE surveys is much lower than the GOM, with the spring averaging 83% and the fall only 36%, and both showing overall declining trends. Typically, the spring indices are thought to be more representative for inshore surveys when winter flounder undertake seasonal migrations to spawn.

From June 12 – July 3, 2024, MA DMF conducted the 49th Nantucket Sound Estuarine Winter Flounder Young-of-the-Year (YOY) Seine Survey. The survey covers six Nantucket Sound estuaries on the south side of Cape Cod: Great Pond, Waquoit Bay, Cotuit Bay, Lewis Bay, Bass River and Stage Harbor. The 2024 pooled (all estuaries combined) winter flounder YOY index (0.201 YOY / m^2) is a decline from 2023 and below the timeseries mean of 0.245 YOY/m^2.

To enhance habitat understanding, DMF continued its eDNA research in 2024, building on an initial 2021–2022 pilot study with the Gloucester Marine Genomics Institute (GMGI). To build on the initial pilot study, a dual eDNA-fyke net survey was initiated in Waquoit Bay in 2023 and continued in 2024 to provide eDNA validation and direct observation of winter flounder spawning status. Four fyke nets were monitored weekly from December to April, with all flounder measured, assessed for reproductive status, tagged if above 12 inches, and released alive. Biweekly water samples were collected from 13 stations for eDNA analysis by GMGI. Catch peaked in January–February, aligning with active spawning, but sharply declined in March–April. In summer 2024, DMF collected eDNA samples during its YOY seine survey in Waquoit Bay in July, archiving samples for later analysis. eDNA analysis of 2024 Waquoit Bay samples and submission of a manuscript detailing the initial eDNA pilot study are both planned for 2025.

In 2024, DMF Fisheries Research and Monitoring continued to track movements of adult winter flounder and document immigration, emigration, and residence time inside the Boston Harbor estuary and movements around northern Massachusetts state and federal waters. Adding to the 151 tagged Boston Harbor winter flounder, researchers conducted two tagging trips on Gloucester and Scituate Massachusetts-based commercial fishing vessels and tagged an additional 98 winter flounder. A 19-receiver array in Boston Harbor and a 40-receiver costal array was maintained throughout the year. This array, along with Marine Fisheries Large Pelagic Program's array, provided comprehensive coverage of Massachusetts state waters and was instrumental in tracking year-round movements of adult winter flounder. This information will also be valuable to help inform future winter flounder time of year restrictions and will be used as leverage to obtain future funding.

Rhode Island

Rhode Island Division of Marine Fisheries (RI DMF) conducts five surveys to monitor juvenile and adult winter flounder in its state waters; spring and fall seasonal trawl surveys, a monthly trawl survey, a Narragansett Bay juvenile finfish seine survey, a coastal pond seine survey, and a coastal pond winter flounder spawning stock survey. The seasonal demersal trawl survey samples 42 fixed and random stations in the spring and fall. The spring seasonal trawl survey had a 2024 catch per unit effort (CPUE) of 2.55 winter flounder per tow. The survey's values remain very low and well below the time series median. The fall seasonal trawl survey had a 2024 CPUE of 0.34 winter flounder per tow, which is the lowest value of the time series thus far. The monthly demersal trawl survey samples 13 fixed stations each month. CPUE from this survey in 2024 was 0.83 winter flounder per tow; the index remains very low and well below the time series median. The Narragansett Bay juvenile finfish seine survey samples 18 stations once a month from June through October. The 2023 CPUE was 0.3 winter flounder per seine haul, which was the lowest index value in the time series. The coastal pond seine survey samples 24 stations in 8 coastal ponds from May through October. The 2024 survey had a CPUE of 5.6 winter flounder per seine haul. The survey index remains low and below the time series median. The coastal pond winter flounder spawning stock survey samples 6 stations with fyke nets from January to May in Potter and Ninigret Pond. The 2024 survey had a CPUE of 4.0 winter flounder per fyke set, which is a slight increase from 2023, and near the time series median. The overall trend in winter flounder abundance for all surveys indicates continued low abundance of this species in Rhode Island waters.

Connecticut

Winter flounder have been monitored through the Long Island Sound Trawl Survey (LISTS) since 1984. Spring and fall surveys are conducted each year. The 2024 LISTS spring (April-May) index (geometric mean fish/tow) for all ages of winter flounder was 2.18, the fifth lowest value in the 40-year time series (lowest value = 0.76 in 2017). Similarly, the 2024 spring index for age-4+ winter flounder was 0.41, the fourth lowest value in the time series. Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection also conducts a fall estuarine seine survey that provides an index of abundance for young-of-year winter flounder. The geometric mean fish/tow in 2024 was 0.53, which increased 47.2% from the previous year.

New York

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has been conducting a small mesh trawl survey targeting juvenile finfish since 1987. The weekly survey runs from May through October in Peconic Bay using a small mesh sixteen-foot semi-balloon shrimp trawl. In 2024, the YOY CPUE of winter flounder from June through July was 1.29, the highest CPUE of YOY since 2011. Two age-1 winter flounder were caught in 2024. No age 2+ winter flounder were caught during 2024.

The Department also conducts a seine survey in western Long Island bays, which has been ongoing since 1986, using a 200-foot ¼ inch mesh seine. Sampling is conducted at multiple stations twice a month within Jamaica Bay, Manhasset Bay, Little Neck Bay, Hempstead Harbor,

and Oyster Bay from May through October. Winter flounder catch per seine for all ages, aggregated for all 5 bays, was 3.816 for 2024. 846 of the total 851 winter flounder caught were YOY, and 5 were age-1+.

New Jersey

The Bureau of Marine Fisheries has conducted an Ocean Trawl program in nearshore ocean waters since 1988. Winter flounder are most abundant in New Jersey during April, and data from this survey cruise are used to develop an index of relative abundance in New Jersey waters. Otolith samples have been collected from the Ocean Trawl Survey's April cruise from 1993 to 2018, and all cruises since 2022. Age structures were collected from 112 winter flounder in 2024.

V. Status of Management Measures and Issues

The Winter Flounder Management Board set status quo specifications for the 2023-2025 fishing years. The recreational and commercial regulations listed in Tables 3 and 4 have remained consistent since 2014. The TC's 2018 commercial measures analysis indicates the SNE/MA region is essentially a bycatch fishery. Any further restriction in measures would likely increase regulatory discards and have a limited impact on fishing mortality. The Board intends to continue to work collaboratively with the Council to determine the best path forward in improving understanding of the biology of the winter flounder stock and determining the right management approach for this depleted stock.

Conservation Equivalency

There is currently one conservation equivalency plan in effect, for the Massachusetts GOM commercial winter flounder fishery, which was approved by the Board in 2024. Massachusetts' Groundfish Consecutive Daily Trip Limit Pilot Program, initiated in September 2024, allows participants to possess and land up to 1,000-lb of GOM winter flounder caught over two consecutive fishing days with each day subject to the 500-lb per day limit, with the goal of improving the economic viability of the state groundfish fisheries in this area. The program requires fishermen to hold a limited entry state waters groundfish permit and an annually issued Letter of Authorization (LOA). Other program requirements include no more than one limit is taken in a single day, and completion of a DMF-issued logbook of trip level catch. The FY2024 program had a requirement that catch from the first day must be stored in a container sealed shut with a DMF-issued tag; however, starting in FY2025, conditions were slightly modified to no longer require each day's catch to be sealed with a DMF issued tag but still to be clearly and accurately labeled. The Winter Flounder Plan Review Team will continue to monitor and evaluate this program through Massachusetts' annual compliance reports.

VI. Implementation of FMP Compliance Requirements and *De Minimis*

De Minimis

Amendment I allows a state to be granted *de minimis* status if their fishery constitutes less than 1% of the coastwide commercial or recreational landings for the preceding three years for which data are available. A state that qualifies for *de minimis* status based on their commercial landings will qualify for exemptions in the commercial fishery only, and a state that qualifies for *de minimis* based on their recreational landings will qualify for exemptions in their recreational fishery only. States that apply for and are granted *de minimis* status are exempted from biological monitoring/sub-sampling activities for the sector for which *de minimis* has been granted.

Request for *de minimis* status

New Jersey has requested *de minimis* status for its commercial fishery. New Jersey commercial landings have remained well below 1% of coastwide landings for the years 2022-2024, which meets the *de minimis* criteria.

State Compliance

All the states with a declared interest in the management of winter flounder have implemented commercial and recreational regulations that are consistent with ASMFC's Winter Flounder FMP (Tables 3 and 4).

VII. Research and Monitoring Recommendations

The 2025 Management Track Stock Assessments noted several data needs that would improve future population estimates.

Gulf of Maine

- Additional studies on state survey gear efficiency
- Additional studies quantifying winter flounder abundance and distribution among habitat types, especially within estuarine environments
- Consider applying year specific catchability estimates instead of averaging the full time series
- Develop a state space analytical model to incorporate process error

Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic

- Additional studies on maximum age
- Improved recreational discard length information
- Investigation of localized structure/genetics of the stock
- Shift to the state space Woods Hole Assessment Model (WHAM) could provide the ability to model environmental influences on recruitment and mortality, and help develop more informed population projections

VIII. Plan Review Team Comments and Recommendations

- The PRT finds that all states implemented regulations consistent with the Winter Flounder FMP.
- The PRT recommends several questions be added to the winter flounder compliance report template for all states to help the PRT track how often overages occur on commercial trips:

  Gulf of Maine

  - [Insert State] commercial fisherman reported landing winter flounder on [x number of trips] trips, with [x number of trips] trips catching exactly 500 pounds of winter flounder in 2025.
  - [Insert State] commercial fisherman reported landing more than 500 pounds of winter flounder on [x number of trips] trips, with a combined overage of [x] pounds in 2025.
  - No commercial fishing trips in [Insert State] exceeded 500 pounds of winter flounder in 2025.

  Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic

  - [Insert State] commercial fisherman reported landing winter flounder on [x number of trips] trips, with [x number of trips] trips catching exactly 50 pounds of winter flounder/38 fish in 2025.
  - [Insert State] commercial fisherman reported landing more than 50 pounds of winter flounder/38 fish on [x number of trips] trips, with a combined overage of [x] pounds/fish in 2025.
  - No commercial fishing trips in [Insert State] exceeded 50 pounds of winter flounder/38 fish in 2025.

- The PRT has the following comments and/or recommendations regarding Massachusetts' CE program:
  - The PRT recognizes the FY2024 Massachusetts compliance report only reports on the performance of the program for a portion of year, as the program was not implemented until September 2024, so there is interest on how it will perform in its first full year.
  - In the future, it may be useful to consider the types of socioeconomic data that could be gathered to evaluate a CE program's performance. For example, socioeconomic data could be helpful to determine if Massachusetts' CE program is meeting the goals and objectives put forward by Massachusetts in their CE proposal. The proposal stated: "DMF is making this request as a Conservation Equivalency proposal on socio-economic and fleet greening grounds. The intent of the pilot program is not to increase landings, such as a trip limit increase would achieve, but to allow the fleet to achieve the current level of landings more efficiently, both from a cost and emissions standpoint."
  - The PRT expressed some concern with Massachusetts dropping FY2024's requirement for each day's catch to be sealed with a DMF issued tag, instead requiring each day's catch to be "clearly and accurately labeled". Following the meeting, Massachusetts clarified why the change was being made and that they did not anticipate additional enforcement issues resulting from this change. Daily

limits can still be adequately monitored and enforced through segregation, labeling, and review of logbook information.

IX. References

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Commercial Fisheries Statistics Tool. Access: http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/commercial-fisheries/commercial-landings/annual-landings/index

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Marine Recreational Fisheries Program: Recreational Fisheries Statistics Tool. Access: http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/recreational-fisheries/access-data/run-a-data-query/index

Northeast Fisheries Science Center. 2025. Gulf of Maine Winter Flounder 2025 Management Track Assessment Report, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, Woods Hole, Massachusetts. US Department of Commerce, NOAA Fisheries; 7 p. Available online at https://asmfc.org/resources/stock-assessment/2025-gulf-of-maine-winter-flounder-management-track-assessment/

Northeast Fisheries Science Center. 2025. Southern New England Mid-Atlantic Winter Flounder 2025 Management Track Assessment Report, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, Woods Hole, Massachusetts. US Department of Commerce, NOAA Fisheries; 9 p. Available online at https://asmfc.org/resources/stock-assessment/2025-southern-new-england-mid-atlantic-winter-flounder-management-track-assessment/

Figures and Tables

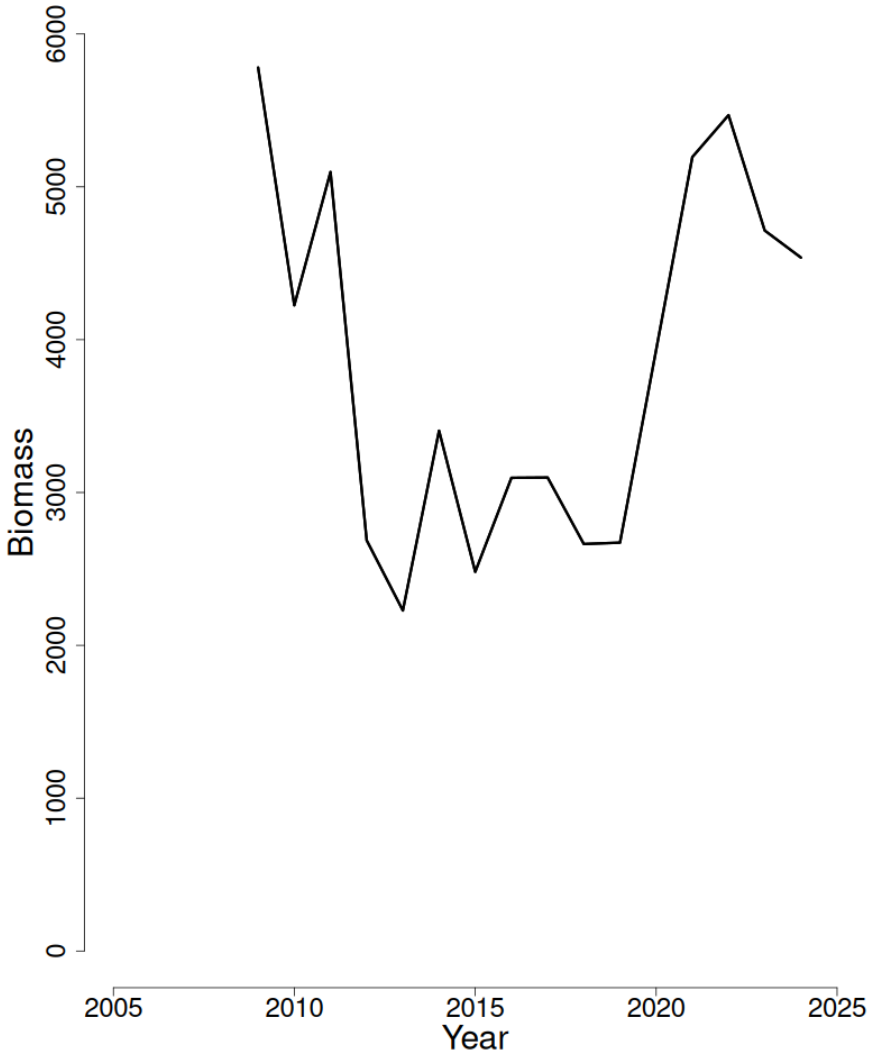


Figure 1. Estimates of exploitable biomass (30+ cm) for Gulf of Maine winter flounder between 2009 and 2024 as estimated from the fall MENH, MDMF, and NEFSC trawl surveys. (Source: 2025 Assessment Update of Gulf of Maine Winter Flounder)

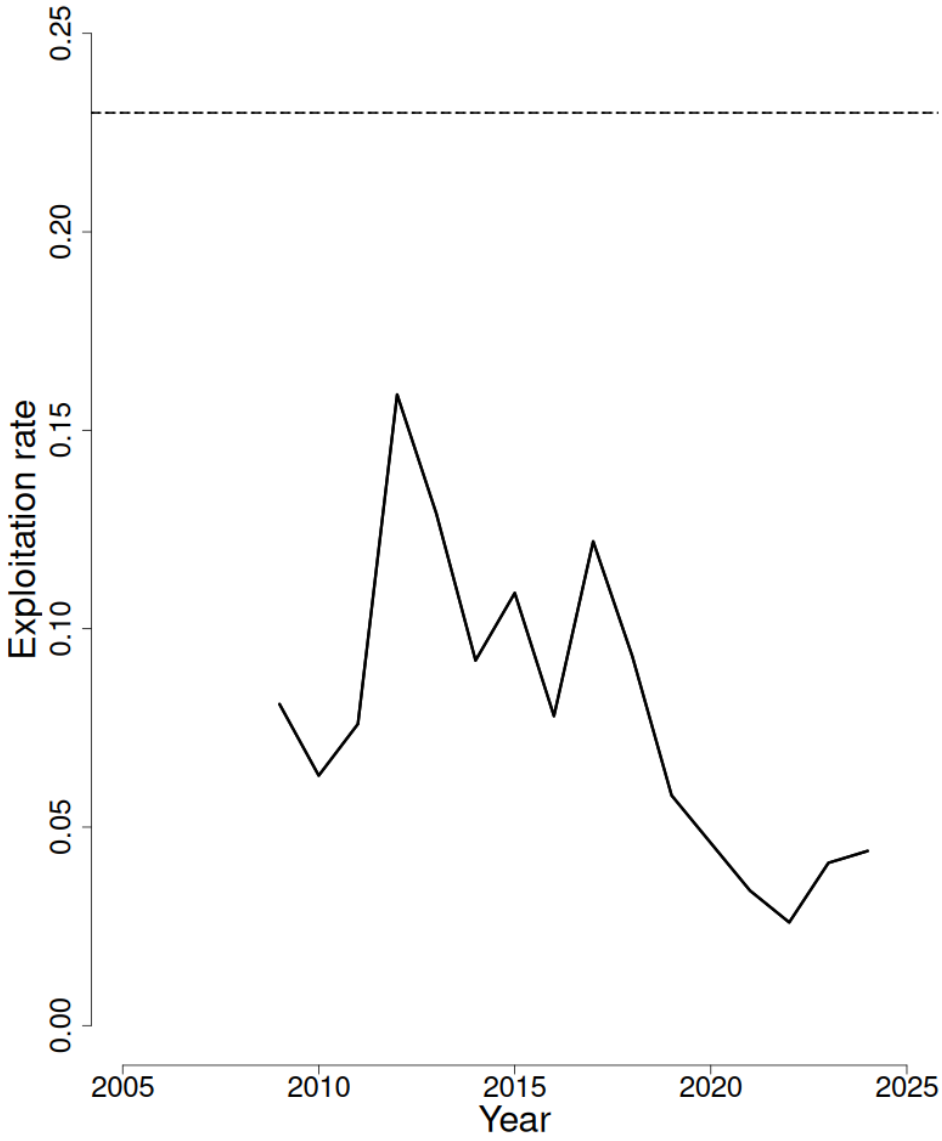


Figure 2. Gulf of Maine winter flounder exploitation rate between 2009 and 2024. The dashed line represents the corresponding F-Threshold from the 2025 assessment. (Source: 2025 Assessment Update of Gulf of Maine Winter Flounder)

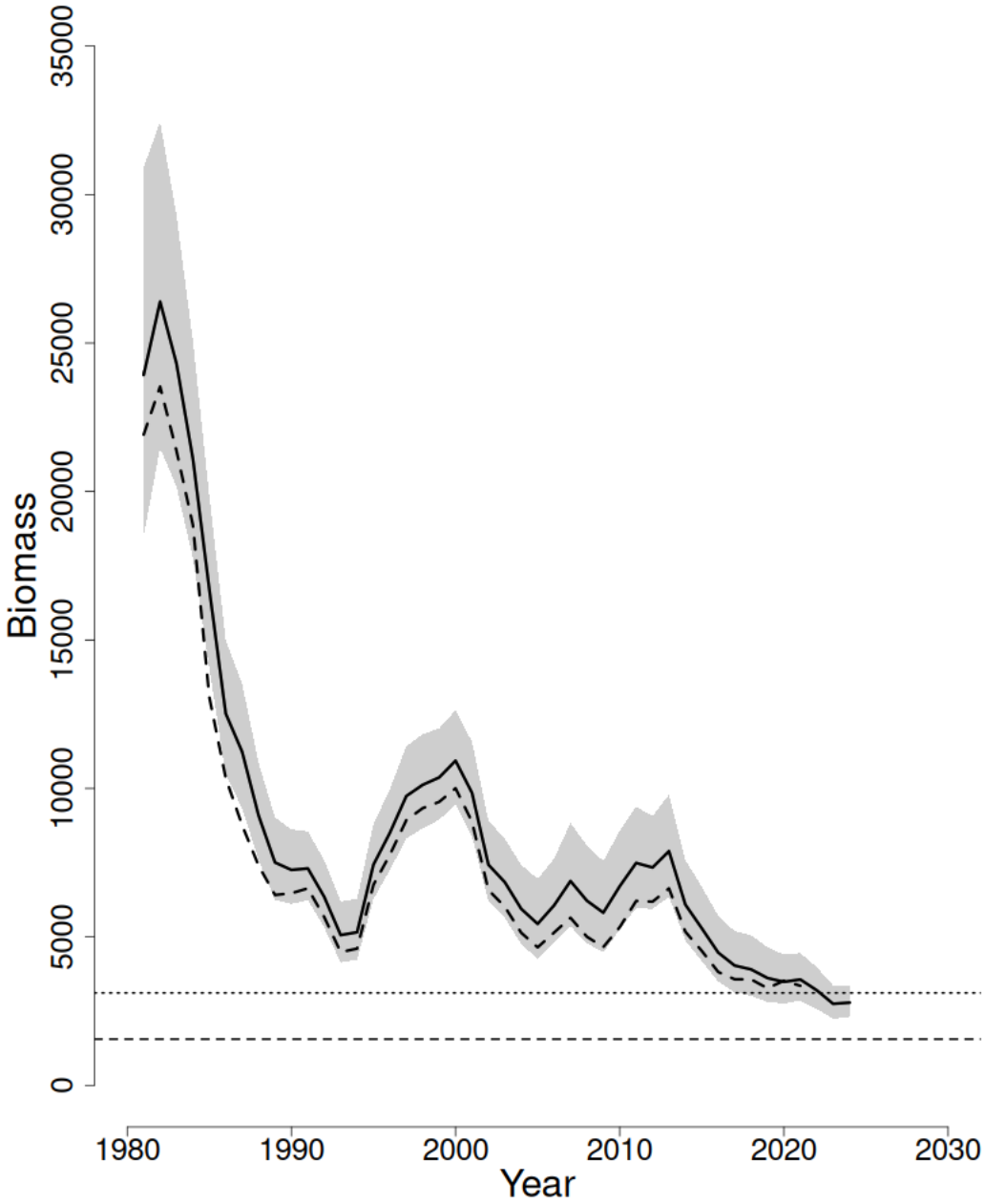


Figure 3. Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic winter flounder spawning stock biomass between 1981 and 2024. The solid line represents results of the current assessment and the dashed line represents results from the previous assessment. The horizontal dotted line is the SSB-target and the horizontal dashed line is the SSB-threshold based on the 2025 assessment. The 90% confidence intervals are shown in grey. (Source: 2025 Assessment Update of Southern New England Mid-Atlantic Winter Flounder)

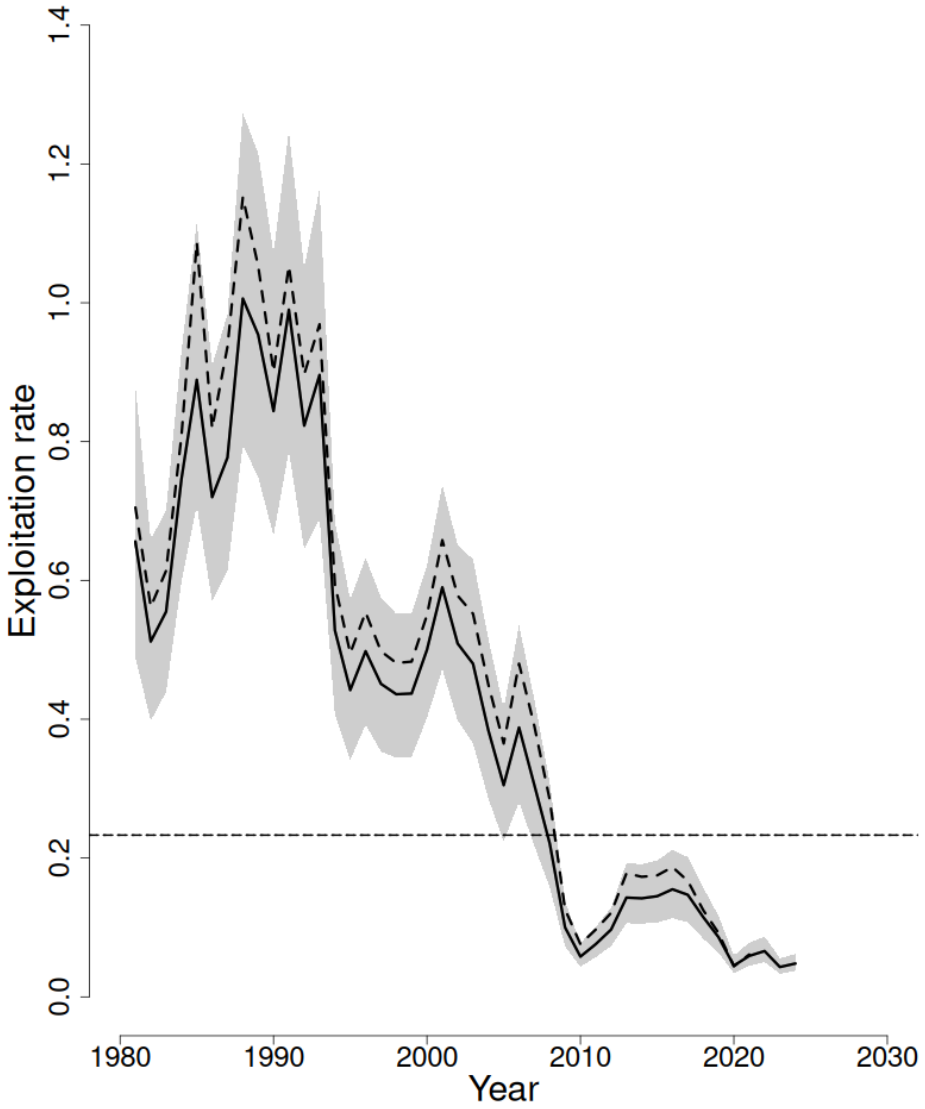


Figure 4. Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic winter flounder fishing mortality between 1981 and 2024. The solid line represents results of the current assessment and the dotted line represents results from the previous assessment. The horizontal dashed line is the F-threshold based on the 2025 assessment. The 90% confidence intervals are shown in grey. (Source: 2025 Assessment Update of Southern New England Mid-Atlantic Winter Flounder)

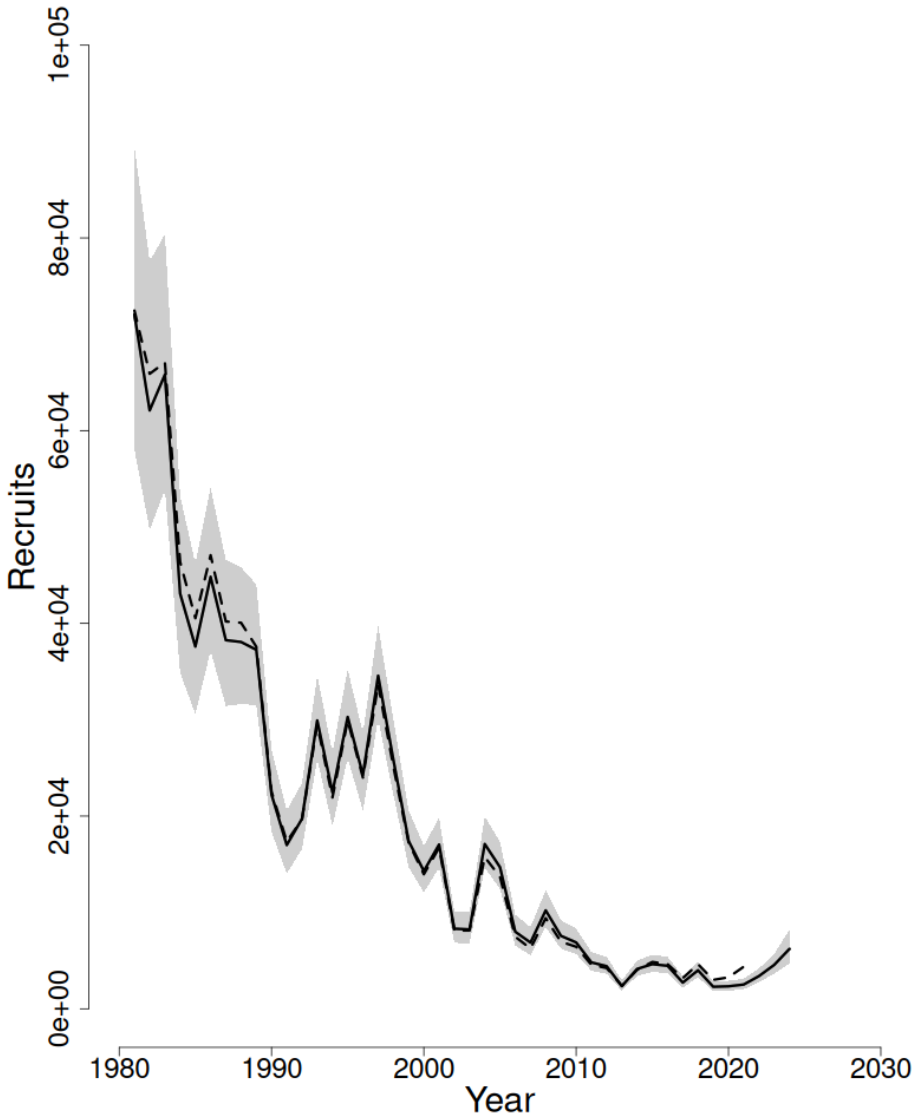


Figure 5. Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic winter flounder trends in recruits (000s) between 1981 and 2024. The solid line represents results of the current assessment and the dotted line represents results from the previous assessment. The 90% confidence intervals are shown in grey. (Source: 2025 Assessment Update of Southern New England Mid-Atlantic Winter Flounder)

Figure 6. Commercial and recreational winter flounder landings.

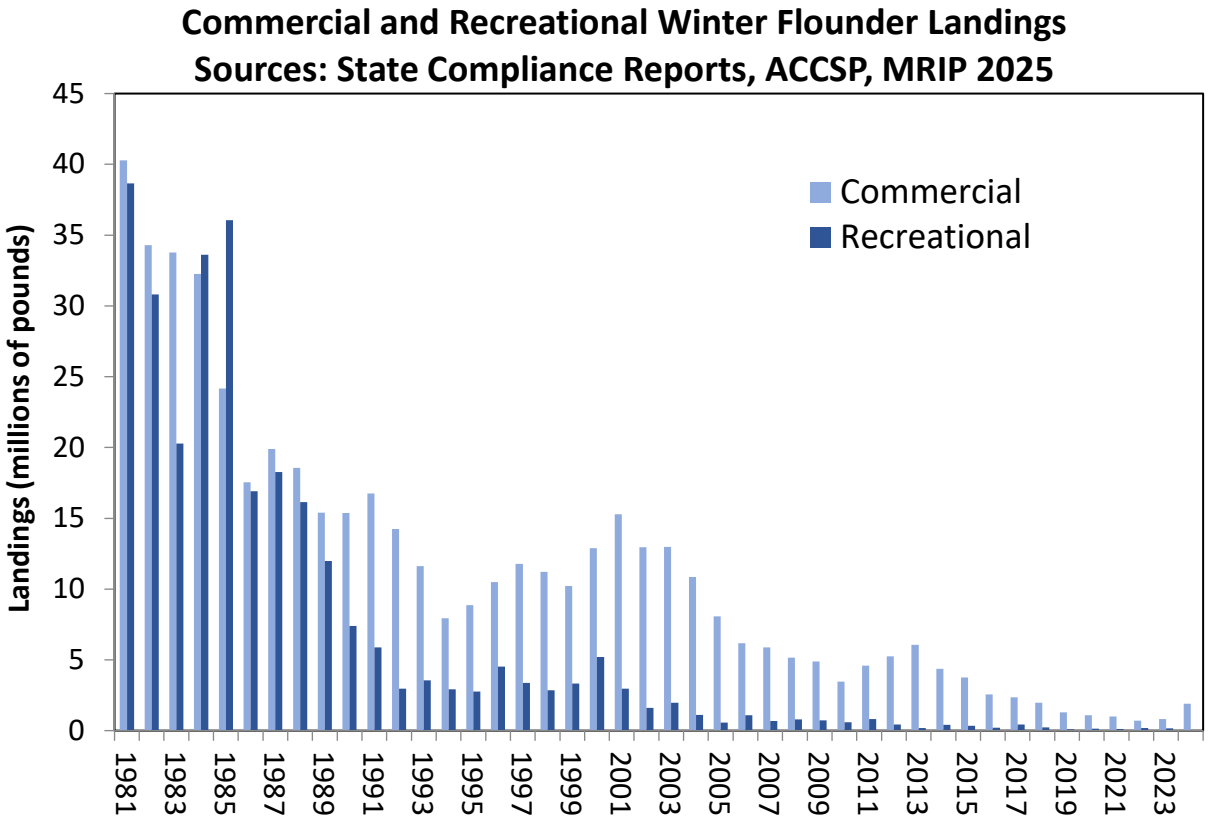


Table 1. Coastwide commercial and recreational landings of winter flounder.
Source: ACCSP, MRIP.

Year	Commercial Landings (lbs)	Recreational Landings (lbs)	Total Harvest (lbs)
1981	40,281,800	38,658,240	78,940,041
1982	34,287,800	30,800,886	65,088,685
1983	33,762,300	20,270,442	54,055,083
1984	32,259,500	33,619,053	65,878,553
1985	24,169,500	36,044,271	60,236,129
1986	17,551,600	16,910,804	34,462,404
1987	19,900,600	18,267,160	38,263,989
1988	18,558,400	16,152,719	34,724,190
1989	15,403,400	11,984,077	27,388,876
1990	15,375,295	7,388,964	22,764,259
1991	16,755,114	5,879,856	22,634,970
1992	14,232,802	2,952,663	17,185,467
1993	11,618,074	3,556,271	15,184,307
1994	7,934,950	2,918,614	10,855,524
1995	8,869,168	2,752,809	11,621,978
1996	10,489,726	4,533,524	15,023,249
1997	11,774,996	3,369,650	15,164,882
1998	11,213,153	2,861,094	14,077,436
1999	10,219,341	3,323,925	13,543,267
2000	12,876,176	5,190,358	18,066,533
2001	15,274,384	2,961,872	18,236,255
2002	12,955,503	1,611,635	14,567,138
2003	12,986,593	1,967,619	14,954,212
2004	10,854,383	1,118,236	11,972,618
2005	8,074,650	575,650	8,650,300
2006	6,149,946	1,087,320	7,237,266
2007	5,882,975	677,000	6,559,975
2008	5,158,100	787,911	5,946,010
2009	4,877,566	715,732	5,593,298
2010	3,452,445	600,397	4,052,841
2011	4,593,883	805,448	5,399,331
2012	5,238,701	427,191	5,665,892
2013	6,054,017	191,785	6,245,801
2014	4,375,270	415,101	4,790,371
2015	3,752,672	336,896	4,089,568
2016	2,561,793	203,185	2,764,978
2017	2,347,429	428,764	2,776,587
2018	1,976,173	223,355	2,199,529
2019	1,286,817	87,074	1,373,891
2020	1,078,525	140,609	1,219,134
2021	991,501	112,676	1,104,177
2022	692,503	178,908	871,411
2023	822,502	165,969	988,471
2024	1,895,633	55,668	1,951,321

Table 2. 2024 Winter flounder commercial landings and recreational harvest (A + B1) by weight (lbs) by state. "C" denotes confidential landings. (Source: State compliance reports, ACCSP, and MRIP)

	Commercial		Recreational		
State	**Pounds**	**Percent**	**Pounds**	**PSE**	**Percent**
Maine	C	C	4,793	75.3	8.6%
New Hampshire	2,377	0.13%	2,420	57.9	4.3%
Massachusetts	1,858,478	98.04%	42,941	68.4	77.1%
Rhode Island	26,988	1.42%	170	62.7	0.3%
Connecticut	2,782	0.15%	797	103.9	1.4%
New York	1,842	0.10%	1,594	82.9	2.9%
New Jersey	C	C	2,953	57.8	5.3%
Maryland	C	C	0	-	0.0%
Total	1,895,633		55,668		

Table 3. Commercial winter flounder regulations.

State	Stock Unit	Size Limit	Trip Limit	Seasonal Closure (dates inclusive)	Recruitment Assessment	SSB Assessment	Min. Mesh Size	*De minimis Request*
Maine	GOM	12"	500 lbs	April 1 – June 30	N/A	N/A	6.5”	No
New Hampshire	GOM	12"	500 lbs	April 1 – June 30	N/A	N/A	6.5”	No
Massachusetts	GOM	12"	500 lbs	Open all year	N/A	Bottom Trawl Survey (May, Sept)	6.5”	No
	SNE/MA	12"	50 lbs	Open all year	YOY Seine Survey (June)	Bottom Trawl Survey (May, Sept)	6.5”	No
Rhode Island	SNE/MA	12"	50 lbs	Open all year	Narragansett Bay Juvenile Finfish Survey	Bottom Trawl Surveys	6.5”	No
Connecticut	SNE/MA	12"	50 lbs or 38 fish	March 1 – April 14	YOY Fall Estuarine Seine Survey	Long Island Sound Trawl Survey	6.5”	No
New York	SNE/MA	12"	50 lbs	June 14 – Nov 30 (for all gear besides fyke nets, pound and trap nets)	Small Mesh Trawl Survey, Seine Survey	N/A	6.5”	No
New Jersey	SNE/MA	12"	38 fish	June 1 – Nov 30 (all gear except for fyke nets) Feb 20 – Oct 31 (Fyke net)	N/A	Ocean Trawl Survey	6.5”	Yes

Table 4. 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