Fisheries FOCUS

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ASMFC Honors 2026 Annual Award of Excellence Recipients

From left: AAE Recipients Fran McParland, John Clark, and Corporal Vinny Artrip

At the Spring Meeting the Commission proudly announced the recipients of its 2026 Annual Awards of Excellence, recognizing outstanding contributions to the management, policy development, enforcement, and public understanding of Atlantic coastal fisheries. This year's honorees represent excellence across four key areas: fisheries management and policy, legislative leadership, outreach, and law enforcement.

"These award recipients exemplify the dedication, expertise, and collaborative spirit necessary to sustain our nation's marine resources," said ASMFC Chair Daniel McKiernan of Massachusetts. "Their work strengthens not only their respective fields, but also the entire interstate fisheries management process."

Management & Policy Award

John Clark — Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife (Retired)

John Clark is honored for a distinguished career in fisheries management and policy, marked by more than a decade of service as Delaware's Administrative Commissioner to ASMFC. Since 2011, he has played a central role in guiding the Commission's work on complex and often contentious fisheries issues. Mr. Clark has chaired several key management boards, including those overseeing horseshoe crab, Atlantic menhaden, and American eel fisheries. He is widely respected for his fairness, efficiency, and ability to navigate technical and policy challenges while fostering productive dialogue among diverse stakeholders.

Continued on Page 3 »

READ MORE

Upcoming Meetings

July 1 (10 AM–Noon)
Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee

July 1 (1–2 PM)
Spiny Dogfish Plan Review Team & Technical Committee

July 8 (11:45 AM–1:45 PM)
Atlantic Menhaden Plan Development Team & Work Group

July 13 (10 AM–Noon)
Atlantic Striped Bass Stock Assessment WHAM Work Group

July 13 (11 AM–Noon)
Spiny Dogfish Advisory Panel

July 15 (10 AM–Noon)
Atlantic Striped Bass Plan Review Team

July 20 (10 AM–Noon)
Atlantic Striped Bass Stock Assessment Subcommittee Check-in

July 20 (1–4 PM)
Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Technical Committee and Monitoring Committee

July 21 (1–4 PM)
Bluefish Technical Committee

July 23 (11 AM –Noon)
Atlantic Sturgeon Data Webinar #1

July 27–31
Atlantic Croaker Benchmark Stock Assessment Peer Review, ASMFC, 1050 North Highland Street, Suite 200 A-N, Arlington, VA

July 28 (9 AM –Noon)
Atlantic Sturgeon Data Webinar #2

July 30 (1–4 PM)
Atlantic Sturgeon Data Webinar #3

August 4–6
ASMFC Summer Meeting, Westin Crystal City, 1800 Richmond Highway, Arlington, VA

August 10–13
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Westin Philadelphia. 99 South 17th Street, Philadelphia, PA

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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

The 15 member states of the Commission are: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

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Continued from page 1

His contributions to the development and application of innovative management tools, such as the horseshoe crab Adaptive Resource Management Framework model, have supported the recovery of important species and provided benefits across ecological, commercial, and biomedical sectors.

Prior to his administrative role, Mr. Clark built a strong foundation as a field researcher and scientist, contributing significantly to the understanding of fisheries and invertebrate ecology in Delaware waters.

His career reflects a rare combination of scientific expertise, policy leadership, and dedication to public service.

Congressional & Legislative Contributions Award

Alex Swanson — Legislative Assistant, Office of US Senator Chris Van Hollen

Alex Swanson is honored for her exceptional contributions to advancing fisheries policy and securing critical federal support for ASMFC priorities. As a Legislative Assistant, she has demonstrated a deep understanding of coastal and marine issues, as well as the complex intersection of science, policy, and funding.

In fiscal year 2026, under a highly constrained budget environment, Ms. Swanson played a leading role in securing funding for key initiatives, including the Chesapeake Bay menhaden study and an industry-based trawl survey pilot program. These efforts will help address longstanding

From Left: ASMFC Legislative Coordinator Alexander Law and AAE Recipient Alex Swanson

scientific questions, improve data collection, and support more effective fisheries management decisions.

Ms. Swanson's experience working in both New England and Mid-Atlantic Congressional offices has provided her with a broad perspective on interstate fisheries challenges. Her ability to translate technical needs into actionable legislative outcomes has made her an invaluable partner to ASMFC and its stakeholders.

Her leadership ensures that the needs of coastal communities, fisheries managers, and the scientific community are effectively represented at the federal level.

Outreach & Advisory Award

Francis "Fran" McParland — New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Francis "Fran" McParland is recognized for his innovative and impactful approach to fisheries outreach and public engagement. His work has significantly enhanced public understanding of marine resource management across New York's diverse marine environments, from Long Island Sound to the Atlantic Ocean and the Hudson River.

Through the development of creative, science-based communication strategies—including social media outreach and in-person engagement—Mr. McParland has successfully translated complex regulatory and scientific concepts into accessible and engaging messaging. His efforts have strengthened public trust in fisheries management and increased awareness of conservation priorities.

Mr. McParland regularly engages a wide range of stakeholders, including recreational and commercial fishing communities, educators, and youth groups. He has also organized and participated in hands-on events such as beach cleanups and environmental awareness initiatives, fostering a culture of stewardship and community involvement.

In addition to his outreach work, he has demonstrated leadership within the professional community, including serving as President of the New York Chapter of the American Fisheries Society. His contributions have had a lasting impact on both public engagement and professional collaboration in fisheries management.

Law Enforcement Award

Corporal Vincent "Vinny" Artrip — Maryland Natural Resources Police

Corporal Vincent "Vinny" Artrip is recognized for his exceptional

leadership and effectiveness in fisheries law enforcement along Maryland's Atlantic coast. Assigned to one of the region's most active coastal districts, Corporal Artrip has demonstrated extensive expertise in both recreational and commercial fisheries enforcement, handling complex cases involving species managed under overlapping state and federal regulations.

Over the past year, his enforcement efforts have addressed violations involving key Atlantic species such as striped bass, black sea bass, flounder, tautog, as well as federally managed pelagic species including bluefin tuna and billfish. His work requires a high level of technical knowledge and the ability to navigate evolving regulatory frameworks.

A deputized officer under the Joint Enforcement Agreement program, Corporal Artrip works closely with NOAA Fisheries and federal enforcement partners to ensure alignment with national fisheries management objectives. He also maintains strong working relationships with neighboring state agencies, supporting coordinated enforcement efforts across jurisdictional boundaries.

In addition to his operational work, Corporal Artrip has contributed to regulatory development discussions, assisted with the transition to federal reporting systems for highly migratory species, and delivered training to fellow officers and partner agencies. His efforts have enhanced both compliance and interagency coordination, making a lasting impact on fisheries enforcement in the region.

ASMFC Summer Meeting at a Glance

The agenda is subject to change and reflects the current estimate of time required for scheduled Board meetings. The Commission may adjust this agenda in accordance with the actual duration of Board meetings. ***At these meetings, action may be taken on any agenda item, including, but not limited to, reports from staff, technical committees, stock assessment committees, peer reviews, Law Enforcement Committee, advisory panels, plan review teams, and plan development teams.*** **Also of note, the Commission will be considering changes to its Rules and Regulations regarding guidelines on states declared interest on species management boards. Go here for more details.**

Tuesday, August 4

10 – 11 a.m. Atlantic Herring Management Board

- Review 2025 Benchmark and 2026 Management Track Assessments

11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. American Lobster Management Board

- Update on Steering Committee Progress
- Report from Lobster Conservation Management Team 5 on Proposed Closure Changes
- Reports from Gulf of Maine States on Industry Surveys and Meetings
- Update on NOAA's Request for Information on Alternative Gear Marking Framework

1 – 4 p.m. Committee on Economics and Social Sciences (CESS)

- Updates on Ongoing Tasks
- Updates from Atlantic Striped Bass Recreation Demand Model Modelers
- Discuss AI and Economics
- Discuss Process for Better Utilizing CESS Expertise
- Outline Risk and Uncertainty Changes for the Risk and Uncertainty Work Group

1:30 – 2:30 p.m. Winter Flounder Management Board

- Consider Technical Committee Report on Potential Impacts of Increasing Bag Limit in Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic
- Review New England Fishery Management Council's Groundfish Specification Process

2:45 – 4:45 p.m. Tautog Management Board

- Consider Approval of Draft Addendum I for Public Comment: *Measures to Address Changes in Stock Status for New Jersey-New York Bight and Delaware-Maryland-Virginia Stock Units*
- Review Risk and Uncertainty Decision Tool Scores

5 – 6 p.m. **ASMFC Public Outreach (Westin Lobby)**

- Informational Exchange among Commission Members, Staff, and Meeting Attendees; All are Welcome; Light Snacks

Wednesday, August 5

8 – 9 a.m. **Executive Committee**

8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. **CESS (continued)**

9:45 – 11 a.m. **Spiny Dogfish Management Board**

- Consider Northern Region Conservation Equivalency Proposal
  - Proposed Weekly Trip Limit
- Review Accountability Measures Proposed Rule
- Review CESS Report

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. **Coastal Pelagics Management Board**

- Set Cobia Fishery Specifications
- Update on Benchmark Stock Assessment
- Consider Cobia Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance Reports for 2025 Fishing Year

12:30 – 2 p.m. **Luncheon for Legislative and Governor Appointee Commissioners**

2 – 5:30 p.m. **Atlantic Menhaden Management Board**

- Consider Approval of Draft Addendum II for Public Comment: *Modifying the Chesapeake Bay Reduction Fishery Cap*
- Review Work Group and Technical Committee Report on Board Task
- Review CESS Report on Board Task
  - Impacts to Bait Fishery from Changes in Chesapeake Bay Reduction Fishery Cap
- Consider Guidance to Technical Committee on 2027-2029 Specifications

Thursday, August 6

8:30 – 9:30 a.m. **Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board**

- Consider Comments to NOAA Fisheries on its Document: *Charting A Course for Striped Bass: Science and Regulatory Innovation for Offshore Aquaculture*
- Consider Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance Reports for 2025 Fishing Year

9:45 – 11:45 a.m. **Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board**

- Review Commission Guiding Documents
- Discuss *De Minimis* Guidance
- Committee Reports: Assessment Science Committee and CESS
- Update on Recreational Angler Partnership Improvement Directive (RAPID)
- Review Noncompliance Findings, if necessary

11:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. **Commission Business Session**

- Consider Changes to Commission Rules and Regulations
- Consider Noncompliance Recommendations, if necessary

NOTE: For additional information on how to provide public comment prior to and at board meetings, please go **here** (and open the comment gudielines accordion).

ASMFC & MAFMC Continue Their Efforts to Reform Recreational Fishery

Highly valued by both commercial fishermen and recreational anglers from Massachusetts to North Carolina, summer flounder are often considered the most important flounder along the Atlantic coast. In addition to commercial fishing, enterprises such as recreational charters, party boats, bait and tackle stores, and any number of businesses associated with boating and angling view summer flounder as an essential component of their livelihood. Because of this importance, there has been considerable debate and concern over the status of the resource and the need for management to respond to changing conditions in the summer flounder fishery.

The Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council), which jointly manage summer flounder, set the 2026 and 2027 specifications at an 8.79 million pound recreational harvest limit (RHL) and a 12.78 million pound commercial quota. Both represent an increase from the 2025 fishing season and respond to the results of the most recent management track stock assessment completed in 2025, which indicates the resource is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing. While the recreational harvest limit was increased in 2026 and 2027 compared to 2025, recreational management measures will remain status quo as outlined by the Percent Change Approach, the method used to set recreational management measures and approved by the Commission and Council in April 2025.

Photo (c) Open Boat Laura Lee

Atlantic Coastal Management

The Commission approved the first **Fishery Management Plan** (FMP) for Summer Flounder in 1982, followed by a similar FMP approved by the Council in 1988. Since then, both organizations have made significant

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Paralichthys denatatus

Stock Status: Not overfished nor experiencing overfishing.

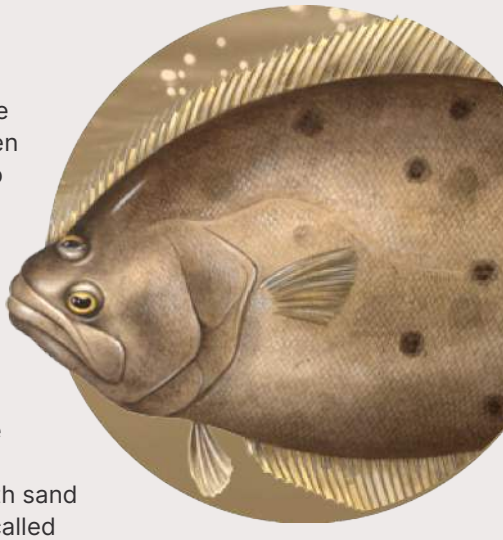
Management Unit: Massachusetts through North Carolina

Maximum Size: Males grow to more than 2 feet in length and females grow up to 3 feet.

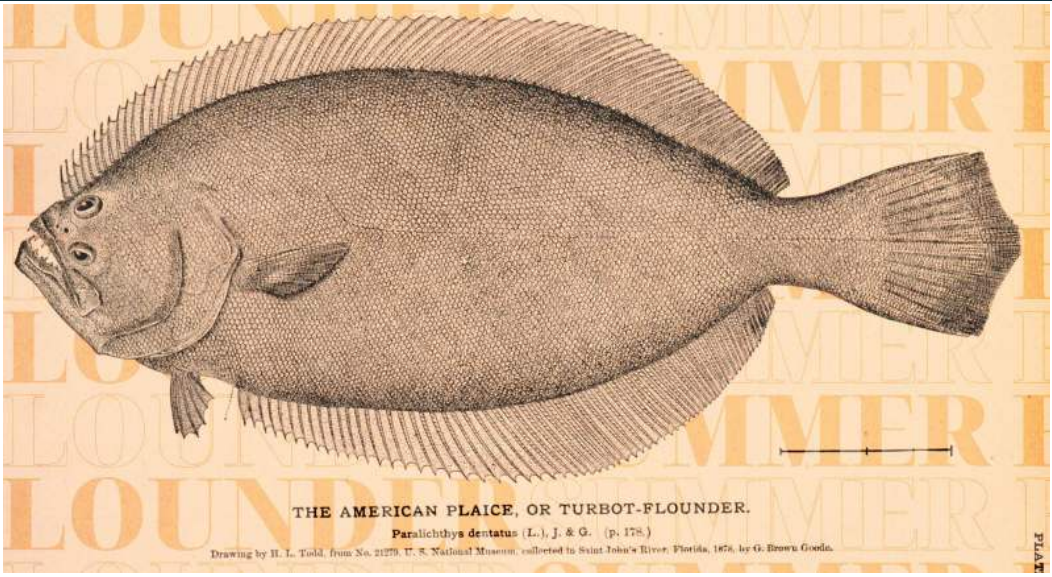
Life Span: Summer flounder grow fast and have a relatively short life, about 12 to 14 years.

Interesting Facts

- Left-eyed flatfish; both eyes are on the left side of the body when viewed from above with the top fin facing up.
- They begin life with their eyes on both sides of their body; the right eye migrates to the left side in 20-32 days.
- Summer flounder are called chameleons of the sea because they can change color to match their surroundings, blending with sand or mud using specialized cells called chromatophores.



revisions to the plan, increasing the protection of juvenile fish and ensuring the maintenance of an adequate spawning population. This increased protection has been implemented through larger minimum size limits across all sectors, increased mesh sizes, and decreased recreational possession limits. Cumulatively, these changes have contributed to conserving the resource while maintaining important commercial and recreational fisheries.



Recreational management has garnered a lot of attention in recent years. Under the current process, the Board and Council determine whether to implement coastwide measures or enact conservation equivalency. Conservation equivalency allows recreational management measures in federal waters to be waived and instead requires recreational anglers to abide by the measures of the state in which they land their catch.

Under the conservation equivalency process established by **Addendum XXXII** (2018) to set the annual specifications, the Board approves regional measures in early spring of specifications setting years. Public input on specifications is gathered by states through their individual public comment processes. The specifications process provides the Board more flexibility in adjusting measures, if necessary, to constrain harvest to the annual coastwide recreational harvest target. Further, the process enables the Board to consider a host of factors, including regional equity, regulatory stability, species abundance and distribution, and late-breaking recreational harvest estimates.

The **Summer Flounder Commercial Issues Amendment**, approved in 2019, revised the management program's goals and objectives and established new state-specific commercial allocations. The revised goals and objectives focus on ensuring biological sustainability of the resource, supporting and enhancing development of effective management measures, and optimizing social and economic benefits from the resource. These revisions were made to reflect current priorities in sustainably managing the resource.

In 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 recent 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. This created a mismatch between the data that were used to set the allocations and the data currently used in management for setting catch limits. Additional information about this amendment is available **here**.

In 2022, the Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board (Policy Board) and the Council approved a process for setting recreational measures (bag, size, and season limits), referred to as the Percent Change Approach, as well as modifications to the recreational accountability measures for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. This process sets recreational management measures on a two-year timeline in line with information received through biennial stock assessments. The Policy Board adopted these changes through **Addendum XXXIV to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP** and Addendum II to the Bluefish FMP. The Council and Policy Board also agreed to continue to work on developing an improved approach to setting recreational measures for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. The Percent Change Approach was implemented in 2023, and sunset at the end of 2025.

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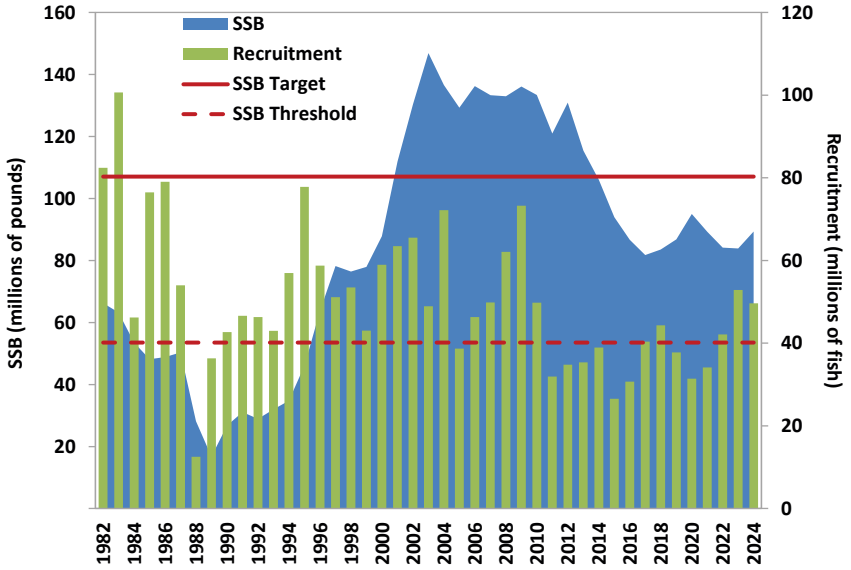
In April 2025, the Policy Board and Council adopted **Addendum XXXVI**, making further modifications to the process for setting recreational measures and accountability measures for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. The changes, which include modifications to the Percent Change Approach based on lessons learned over the past few years, will be implemented in two phases.

The first phase of changes aims to better account for stock status when setting measures and will create more opportunities for stability in management measures. These changes took effect with the setting of recreational measures for 2026 and 2027.

Summer Flounder Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) and Recruitment
Source: Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 2025



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 – which focuses on achieving a specific level of predicted harvest – 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 to measures.

Currently, Policy Board and Council efforts for recreational reform continue through ongoing work on the **Sector Separation Amendment**. The Amendment will consider options for managing for-hire vessel recreational fishing separately from other recreational fishing modes (i.e., private/rental vessel and shore-based) as well as options related to for-hire vessel permitting requirements for the summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish recreational fisheries.

Stock Status

The **2025 management track stock assessment** indicates summer flounder is not overfished and is not experiencing overfishing. Spawning stock biomass (SSB) is estimated at 89 million pounds, approximately 83% of the SSB target of 107.1 million pounds. Fishing mortality is estimated to be 0.35, approximately 74% of the fishing mortality threshold of 0.47. Recruitment was estimated at 50 million fish at age 0, the same as time series average. The 2025 assessment found lower recruitment since 2010 and noted decreasing weight and maturity at age relative to the early 2000s.

Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Summer flounder are one of the most sought after commercial and recreational fish along the Atlantic coast, with total landings at approximately 14.5 million pounds in 2024. Using baseline data from 1980 to 1989, the current plan allocates the summer flounder quota on a 55/45 percent basis to commercial and recreational fisheries, respectively.

Two major commercial trawl fisheries exist — a winter offshore and a summer inshore. Summer flounder are also taken by pound nets and gillnets in estuarine waters. Throughout the 1980s, commercial landings ranged from 17.9 to 37.7 million pounds. In 1993, the coastwide quota was implemented for the first time. Commercial landings (which are limited by the quota) have ranged from 5.8 million pounds to 17.4 million pounds since 1993. Commercial landings reached a time series low of 5.8 million pounds in 2017, but have since increased to 9 million pounds in 2024.

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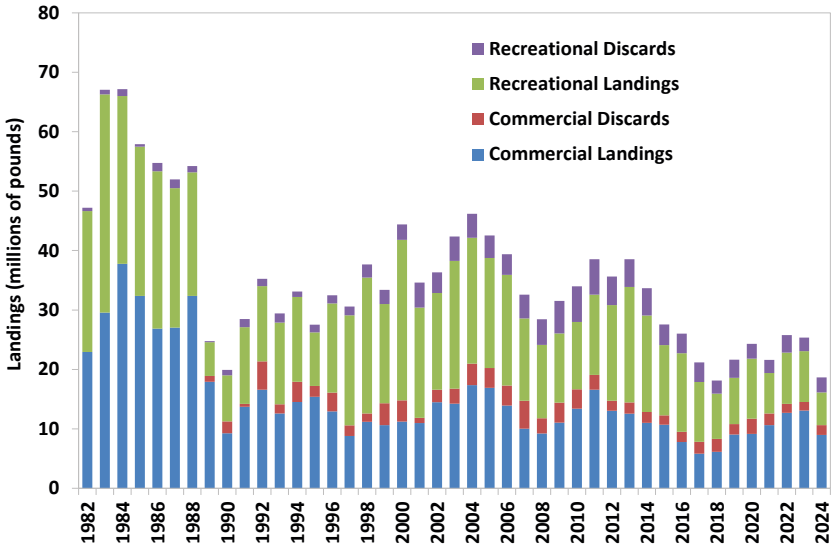
Commercial discard losses in the otter trawl and scallop dredge fisheries are estimated from observer data, and an 80% commercial discard mortality rate is assumed.

Summer flounder are also highly prized in the recreational fishery. Anglers catch summer flounder from the shore, piers, and boats with hook and line. From 1981 through 2004, recreational landings varied widely from a high of 36.7 million pounds in 1983 to a low of 5.7 million pounds in 1989. Starting in 1993, harvest limits were implemented for the recreational fishery. Recreational harvest in 2024 was 5.5 million pounds, marking a time series low since 1982. In 2025, recreational harvest increased slightly to about 6.9 million pounds.

Summer Flounder Commercial and Recreational Landings & Dead Discards
Source: Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 2025



For more information, please contact **Chelsea Tuohy**, FMP Coordinator.

Photo (c) Don Byrne, NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife

Photo (c) ASMFC

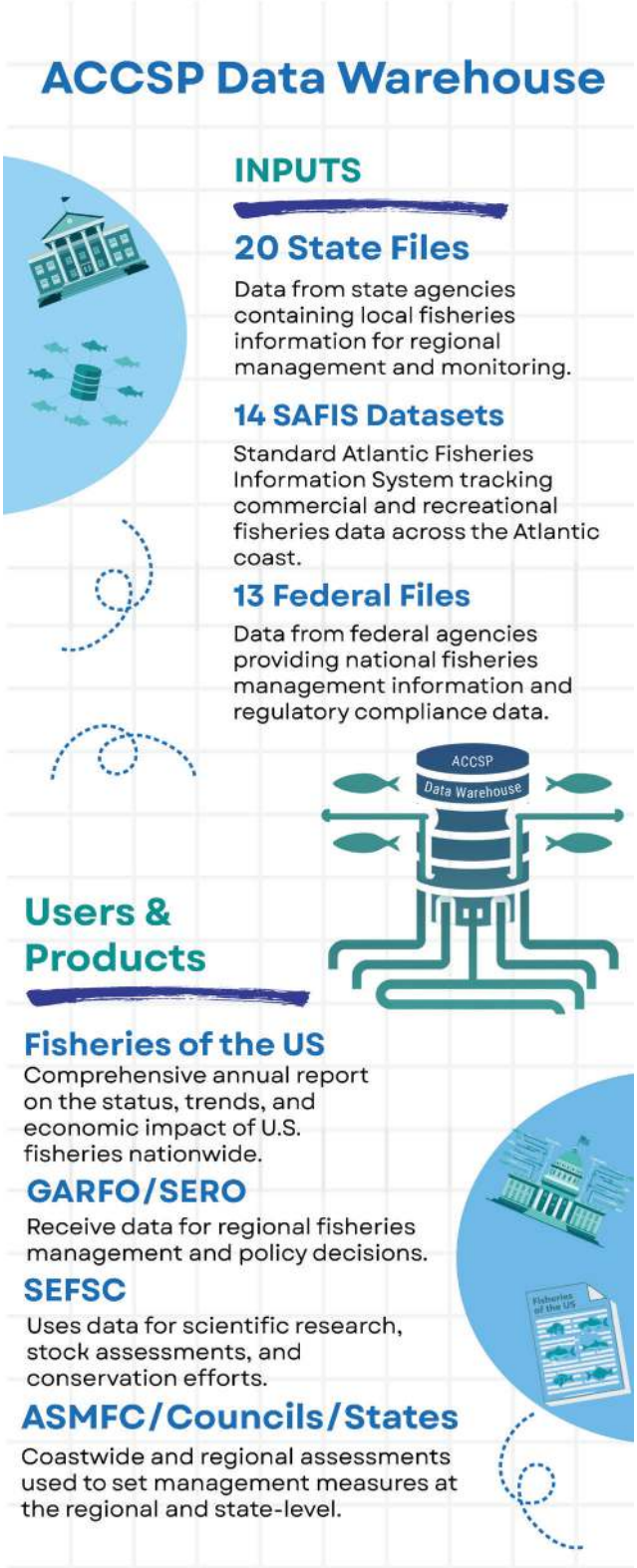
Life History

Summer flounder (*Paralichthys dentatus*) are found in inshore and offshore waters from Nova Scotia, Canada to the east coast of Florida. In the US, they are most abundant in the Mid-Atlantic region from Cape Cod, Massachusetts to Cape Fear, North Carolina.

Summer flounder usually begin to spawn at age two or three, at lengths of about 10 inches. Spawning occurs in the fall while the fish are moving offshore. Spawning migration is linked to sexual maturity, with the oldest and largest fish migrating first. As in their seasonal migrations, spawning summer flounder in the northern portion of the geographic range spawn and move offshore (depths of 120 to 600 feet) earlier than those in the southern part of the range. Larvae migrate to inshore coastal and estuarine areas from October to May. The larvae, or fry, move to bottom waters upon reaching the coast and spend their first year in bays and other inshore areas. At the end of their first year, some juveniles join the adult offshore migration.

Adults spend most of their life on or near the sea bottom burrowing in the sandy substrate. Flounder lie in ambush and wait for their prey. They are quick and efficient predators with well-developed teeth allowing them to capture small fish, squid, sea worms, shrimp, and other crustaceans.

Following the Flow of Fisheries Data



Behind every fisheries report, management decision, and regional analysis is a steady flow of data. The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) brings 23 partner datasets together, turning complex fisheries records into a reliable, organized, and accessible dataset that can be used by managers, researchers, fishing businesses, and the public.

Since 2007, the ACCSP Data Warehouse (Warehouse) has brought together Atlantic commercial fisheries data in two annual data loads, organizing key details such as species, gear, and fishing area. Each spring, ACCSP performs a major consolidation of partner datasets from the previous year and updates those data in the fall. The Spring Data Load merges landing records with trip and dealer reports from state and federal partners, and the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS). This results in a cohesive coastwide commercial dataset in the Warehouse the is used by the ASMFC, councils, states and NOAA Fisheries offices such as the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO), Southeast Regional Fisheries Office (SERO), and Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) (see figure for details). The Fall Data Load provides updates to the Warehouse dataset, increasing the accuracy and completeness of the coastwide data.

The annual spring and fall data loads help carry out the ACCSP's vision of being the principal source of marine fishery-dependent statistics for the Atlantic coast. The Warehouse provides consolidated commercial landings data to support regional data needs for stock assessments and management in the New England, Mid-Atlantic, and Southeast regions. These data are available in the Warehouse and are included as the Atlantic commercial contribution to NOAA's annual publication, **Fisheries of the United States**. For users who need information beyond the standard reports, ACCSP also provides custom data requests. Together, these tools help partners and the public gain a clearer picture of fisheries along the Atlantic coast.

ACCSP is a cooperative state-federal program focused on the design, implementation, and conduct of marine fisheries statistics data collection programs and their integration into a single system. For further information please visit **accsp.org**.

Exploring Management Strategy Evaluations

Management strategy evaluations (MSEs) are simulation-based processes that are becoming more common in fisheries management as a way to test how different management approaches might perform before applying them on the water. MSEs are particularly useful in fisheries management because fisheries are complex systems affected by many variables such as fishing activity, environmental conditions, market forces, and changes in species abundance. This complexity makes it difficult to predict how a management strategy will affect a fishery over a long period of time and how the strategy's effectiveness compares to alternative management strategies. MSEs help to address this challenge by creating a simulated version of the fishery where different management approaches can be tested under a variety of possible future conditions. The simulation process is used to determine which proposed management strategies are most likely to meet management objectives while considering uncertainty about the fishery or the environmental factors that influence the fishery.

Management strategies are compared using performance metrics, which are data produced during the simulations that quantify how well an objective was achieved. For example, if a management objective is stable harvest, the variation in simulated annual catch could serve as a performance metric linked to this objective. What elevates an MSE above a technical simulation analysis is stakeholder involvement, which is critical to the success of the process. Stakeholders are often directly involved throughout the MSE process, including in the development of management objectives, performance metrics, and identifying important uncertainties.

One of the main benefits of an MSE is that it allows managers to explore different options without risking unintended consequences in the actual fishery. Managers may want to test a new harvest strategy, stock assessment method, monitoring program, or combination of these. Instead of implementing the strategy change immediately, MSE can evaluate how the strategy performs in the simulation first. MSEs are also useful for understanding trade-offs among management objectives as different stakeholder groups often have different priorities for a fishery. Commercial harvesters may want stable catch opportunities, recreational anglers may prioritize access, and conservation groups may focus on ecosystem impacts. An MSE helps compare how different strategies

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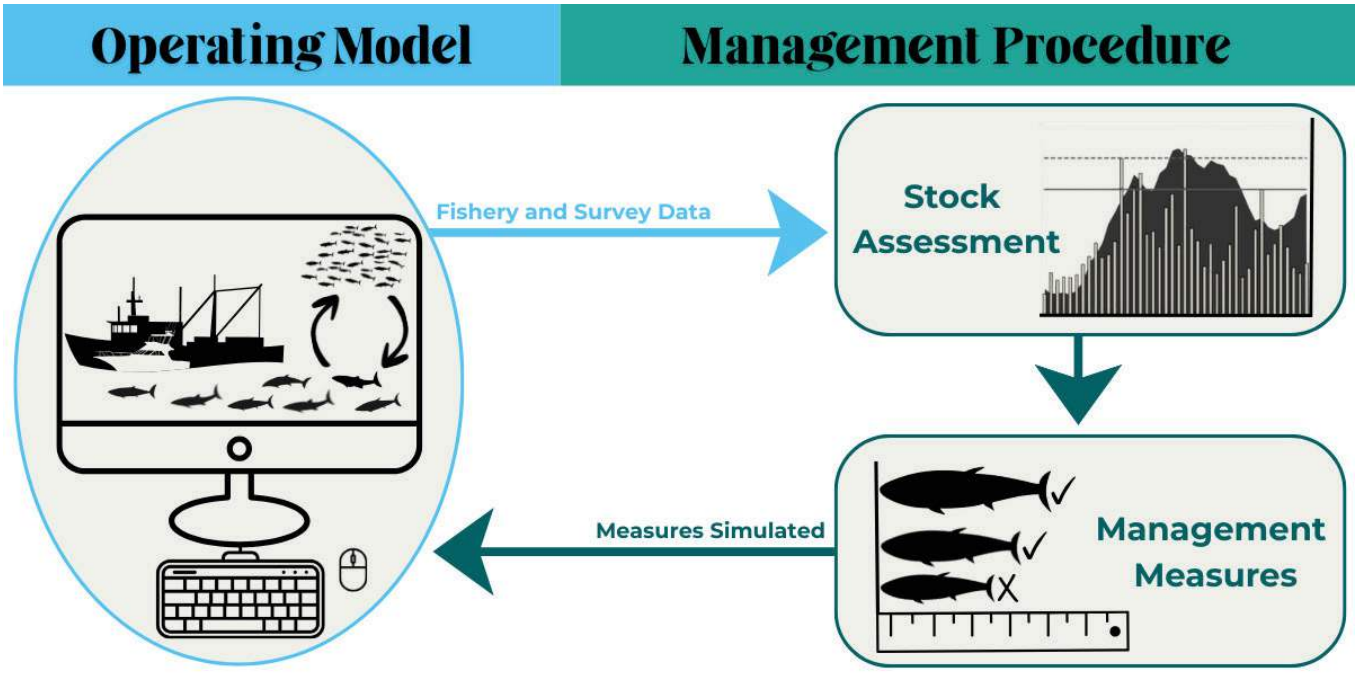


perform relative to the objectives enabling managers to better understand the benefits and risks of each approach.

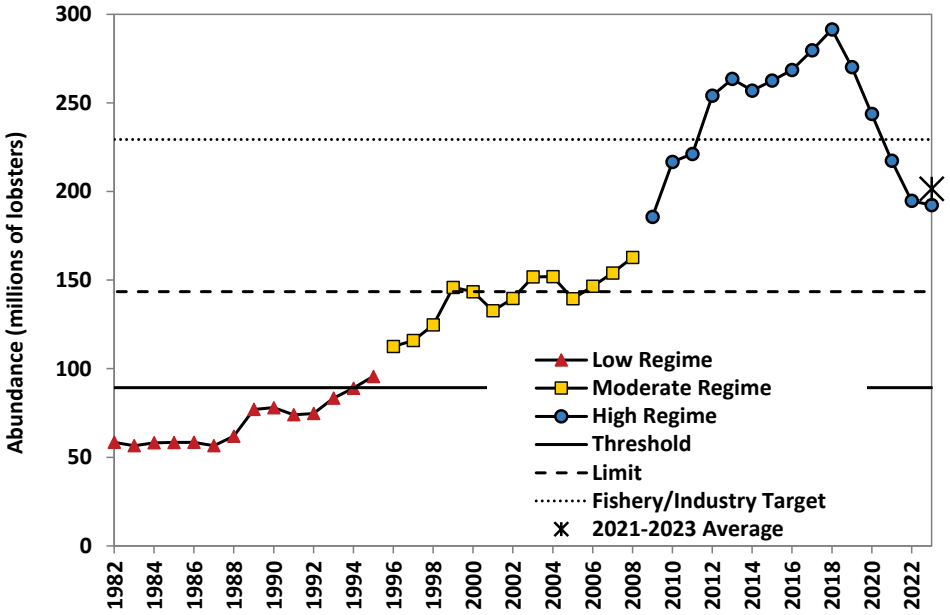
Another important feature of MSEs is their ability to account for uncertainty. Fisheries management decisions are often made with incomplete information, and future conditions can change quickly due to factors like changing ocean conditions, market trends, or shifts in recruitment. MSEs can test management tools across a range of possible scenarios to identify approaches that perform well under multiple scenarios and are more likely to remain effective under changing conditions.

An MSE generally includes two parts: an operating model and a management procedure. The operating model simulates the fishery itself, including the fish population and fishing activity. The management procedure represents steps to manage the fishery including monitoring programs that collect data, stock assessments to evaluate population conditions from these data, and management measures for long-term sustainable populations. Together, these parts create a feedback loop that can be repeated multiple times to allow evaluation of the management strategy performance over both the short and long term.

American Lobster Management & the MSE Process

American lobster sustains one of the most economically valuable fisheries in the US. The fishery has created complex networks among Northeastern coastal communities leading to high socioeconomic dependence on the species and its well-being.

American Lobster GOM/GBK Stock Abundance
Source: 2025 Amercan Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment & Peer Review Report



GOM/GBK stock abundance (line with symbols) compared to the fishery/industry target (dotted line), abundance limit (dashed line), and abundance threshold (solid line) reference points based on detected low (period with triangle symbols), moderate (period with square symbols), and high (period with circle symbols) regimes. The asterisk is the three-year (2021-2023) average abundance used for status determination.

In 2023, declining lobster recruitment (i.e., new lobsters available for harvest by the fishery) triggered gauge and vent size changes under Addendum XXVII. However, these changes were repealed in 2025 due to significant industry concern regarding the potential economic impacts of the management strategy, particularly minimum gauge size changes.

Shortly after, the American Lobster Management Board received the results of the **2025 American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report**. The assessment found the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank (GOM/GBK) stock abundance was above threshold levels but had rapidly declined from record highs at the end of the previous assessment (2018) to below the fishery/industry target abundance level in the current assessment. This target is intended to signal that economic conditions of the lobster industry may degrade as a result of decreased abundance. However, there is uncertainty about what is considered "ideal economic conditions" across all stakeholders and how well the fishery/industry target represents these conditions. The results of the 2025 assessment also showed the first sustained decline in recruitment of new lobsters to the fishery after

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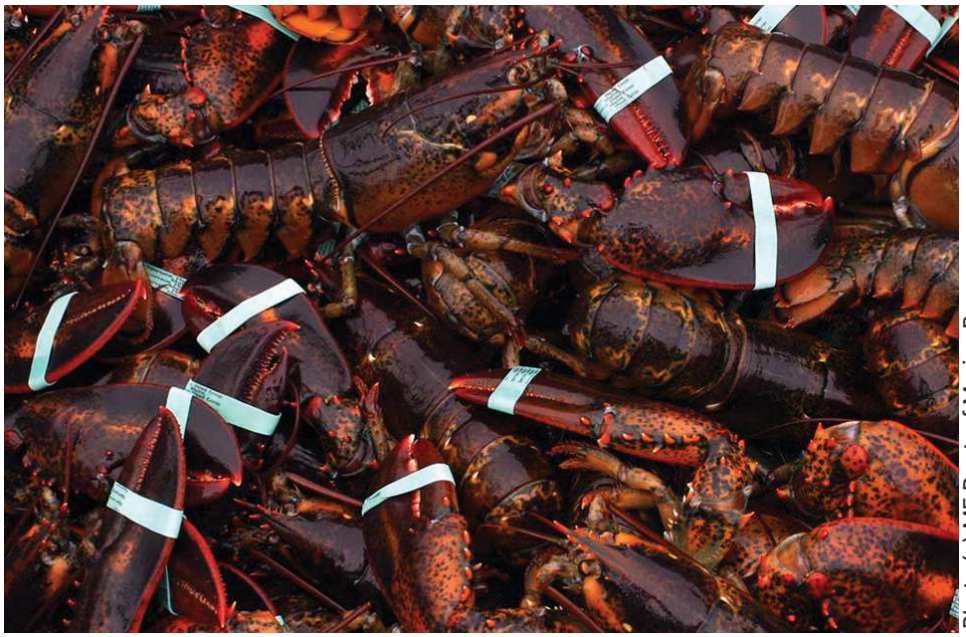
steady or increasing recruitment for the previous 35 years, corroborating the recruit abundance signals that triggered management action under Addendum XXVII. Lobsters are highly sensitive to environmental conditions and recent changes in the environment (e.g., temperature, ocean currents) have contributed to observed lobster population changes, but the degree of these contributions is uncertain.

Given the findings of the assessment, the Technical Committee recommended the American Lobster Board initiate an MSE for lobster to clearly identify management objectives, better understand socioeconomic status and concerns, and identify potential management tools that would have buy-in from industry and prevent further declines towards biological thresholds. This recommendation reflects the value of MSEs in evaluating trade-offs and uncertainties across potential management strategies, and the importance of incorporating economic and socioeconomic considerations in management advice.

In February 2026, the Board initiated the first step in moving towards conducting a formal MSE. The Board formed a Steering Committee tasked with outlining a management objectives process that would engage stakeholders to identify management goals and objectives for the future management of the GOM/GBK lobster stock. The



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Steering Committee will report back to the Board at its November meeting, at which time the Board will decide whether it wants to move forward with the management objectives part of the process. If it does, the process will likely include a series of meetings with industry representatives from all areas that operate within the stock boundaries of Maine to Massachusetts. Once this phase is done and management objectives have been finalized, the Board would decide if it will proceed with the subsequent steps of an MSE, including development of performance metrics and testing management strategies with simulation analyses.

As discussion on the use of MSEs for American lobster continues, stakeholder participation will play an important role. Interested parties are encouraged to follow along by attending upcoming **American Lobster MSE Steering Committee meetings** and the Commission's **Summer Meeting**. All meetings will be open to the public and accessible through the Commission's website. Those wishing to stay informed of future meetings can sign up for American lobster news alerts through the Commission's **Contact Us** page or request to be added to the email distribution list by contacting **info@asmfc.org**.

For more information, please contact **Caitlin Starks**, Senior FMP Coordinator.

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Comings & Goings

Senator Monica Martinez

In March, New York State Senator Monica R. Martinez was appointed the state's Legislative Commissioner to ASMFC. She has dedicated her career to protecting the vulnerable and advocating for a sustainable future. As a leading voice in environmental conservation, she has championed legislation such as the Suffolk County Water Quality Restoration Act, which protects the region's surface and ground waters from pollution as well as other key investments that preserve the state's natural resources.

Monica currently serves as the Chair of the Senate's Committee on Local Government, where she works with the state's municipalities to advance meaningful legislation to better meet the needs of their residents. She also serves on a number of standing committees, including Commerce, and Economic Development and Small Business. She is a member of the New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus, the Women's Legislative Caucus, and is Co-Chair of the New York Legislative Aviation Caucus. Monica holds a Bachelor of Arts in History from Binghamton University, a master's degree in secondary education from New York University, and an Educational Leadership certification from Stony Brook University.

Delegate Adele McClure

In May 2026, Delegate Adele McClure was appointed the Commonwealth's Legislative Commissioner to the ASMFC. She proudly represents the 2nd District in the Virginia House of Delegates. She is the daughter of a resilient early childhood educator and a Filipino immigrant and veteran. Adele was raised in Northern Virginia, where her lived experiences highlighted the systemic issues facing those in poverty and made her a fierce advocate for vulnerable populations.

As Delegate, Adele works with advocates, community leaders, residents, and other stakeholders to pass and implement legislation that breaks down barriers, expands human rights, and improves access to critical services for people in Arlington and across the Commonwealth of Virginia. She is both the first Black person since Reconstruction and the first Asian person to represent Arlington County in the Virginia General Assembly.

Adele has a Bachelor of Science in Economics from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Joseph Grist

In June, with Joseph Grist's appointment as Commissioner of the Virginia Marine Resource Commission (VMRC), he also became the Commonwealth's Administrative Commissioner to ASMFC. At VMRC, Joe brings extensive experience in natural resources management, fisheries policy, environmental compliance, and public administration, along with many years of service to the Commonwealth and VMRC. Joe has held several leadership positions within VMRC's Fisheries Management Division, as well as natural resource management and scientific roles with the VA Dept. of Environmental Quality, the City of Newport News, ASMFC, and the NC Division of Marine Fisheries. Joe received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Biology from Christopher Newport University in 1996 and a Master of Science Degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Science from Virginia Tech in 2002.