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Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ASMFC & MAFMC Recommend Approval of Summer Flounder Commercial Issues Amendment *Amendment Implements New Commercial Quotas*

Virginia Beach, VA – The Commission’s Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board (Board) and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) recommended approval of the Summer Flounder Commercial Issues Amendment. The Amendment revises the management program’s goals and objectives specific to summer flounder and implements new state-specific commercial allocations.

The Amendment was initiated in December 2013, with joint work on the Amendment by the Board and Council beginning in 2014. Initially, the Amendment was to consider changes to both commercial and recreational summer flounder fisheries, but over time was refocused to address commercial issues and Fishery Management Plan (FMP) goals and objectives.

The revised management program’s goals and objectives focus on ensuring biological sustainability of the summer flounder 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.

The new state commercial allocations are based upon a 9.55 million pound trigger point. When the annual coastwide commercial quota is at or below 9.55 million pounds, the formula for allocating the quota to the states will remain status quo, i.e., the same state-specific percentages that have been in effect since 1993. When the annual coastwide quota exceeds 9.55 million pounds, 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 (see table below). As a result, state allocations will vary over time based on overall stock status and the resulting coastwide commercial quotas. For 2019-2021, the Board and Council approved an annual coastwide commercial quota of 11.53 million pounds. Depending on the timing of final rule-making by NOAA Fisheries, the new state allocation strategy could go into effect as early as January 2020.

Table 1: Summer Flounder State Allocations Under the 9.55 Million Pound Trigger Point

State	Allocation of baseline quota ≤ 9.55 mil lb	Allocation of <u>additional</u> quota beyond 9.55 mil lb	Revised state quota
ME	0.04756%	0.333%	Dependent on total annual coastwide quota; state percent shares vary with amount of "additional" quota in a given year
NH	0.00046%	0.333%	
MA	6.82046%	12.375%	
RI	15.68298%	12.375%	
CT	2.25708%	12.375%	
NY	7.64699%	12.375%	
NJ	16.72499%	12.375%	
DE	0.01779%	0.333%	
MD	2.03910%	12.375%	
VA	21.31676%	12.375%	
NC	27.44584%	12.375%	
Total	100%	100%	100%

In considering requalification criteria for federal permit holders, the Board and Council made no changes to the current permit qualification criteria, which were established via Amendment 2 to the FMP (1993) – namely, any commercial landings of summer flounder in the management unit between January 26, 1985 and January 26, 1990. The Council also moved to not add commercial landings flexibility as a framework issue in the Council's FMP at this time. The Board currently has the flexibility to implement landings flexibility policies without a full amendment process, and landings flexibility can be considered through state level agreements without Council action.

As next steps, the Council will forward its recommended approval of the Amendment to NOAA Fisheries for final consideration and implementation. The Commission will consider final approval of the Board-approved Amendment at its Spring Meeting in late April/early May of this year.

For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior Fishery Management Coordinator, at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org.

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