10-2-2020

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission News Release Summer Flounder 3/11/2019

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 11, 2019

PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger
703.842.0740

ASMFC & MAFMC Set Summer Flounder 2019-2021 Specifications

Benchmark Assessment Finds Resource Not Overfished & Overfishing Not Occurring

Virginia Beach, VA – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) approved revised specifications for the 2019 fishing season and set new specifications for 2020 and 2021. The revised specifications are based on the results of the 2018 benchmark stock assessment, which found the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. The new limits are consistent with the recommendations of the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee. The Commission's actions are final and apply to state waters (0-3 miles from shore). The Council will forward its recommendations for federal waters (3 – 200 miles from shore) to NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Administrator for final approval. The table below summarizes commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits (RHL).

Species	Year	Commercial Quota (millions of pounds)	Commercial Minimum Fish Size (TL)	Commercial Diamond Mesh Size	Recreational Harvest Limit (millions of pounds)
Summer Flounder	2019	11.53	14"	5.5"	7.69
	2020	11.53	14"	5.5"	7.69
	2021	11.53	14"	5.5"	7.69

The Council and Commission decided to set commercial quotas and RHLs for all three years, with the intent to maintain regulatory stability. The revised commercial quota was approximately a 49% increase over the previously set 2019 quota.

While the revised RHL represents an approximate 49% increase over the previously set 2019 RHL, the Commission chose to maintain status quo recreational measures, which are projected to achieve a harvest level close to the revised RHL based on the calibrated recreational harvest data from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). As a result, regions established under Addendum XXXII may submit proposals to make minor adjustments to their 2019 recreational measures, such as adjusting the start and end dates of the season, but must hold projected 2019 harvest at 2018 levels. These proposals will require Technical Committee review and Board approval. Additionally, the Commission and Council

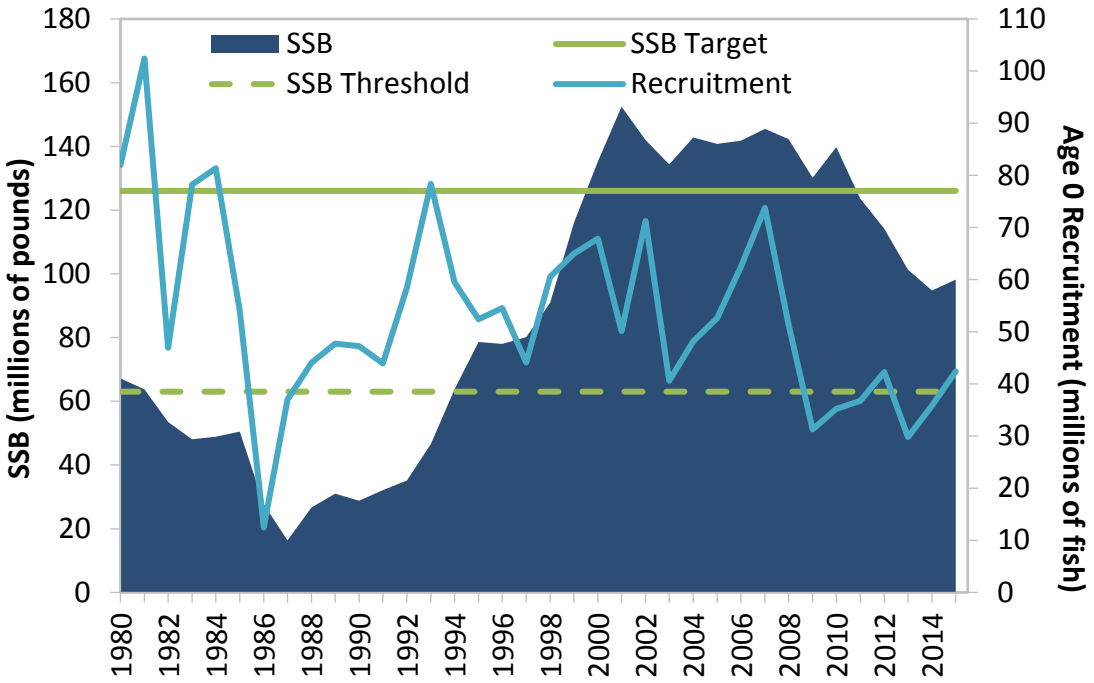
approved the use of conservation equivalency, allowing state measures to be extended into federal waters, pending acceptance of final state measures by the Regional Administrator.

Based of the findings of the 2018 Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review, the stock was not overfished nor experiencing overfishing in 2017. Spawning stock biomass (SSB) in 2017 was estimated to be 98 million pounds, approximately 78% of the biomass target of 126 million pounds. The fishing mortality rate was estimated to be 0.334 in 2017, below the fishing mortality threshold of 0.448.

Recruitment in 2017 was estimated at 42 million fish at age 0, below the time series average of 53 million fish at age 0. Recruitment has been below average since 2011.

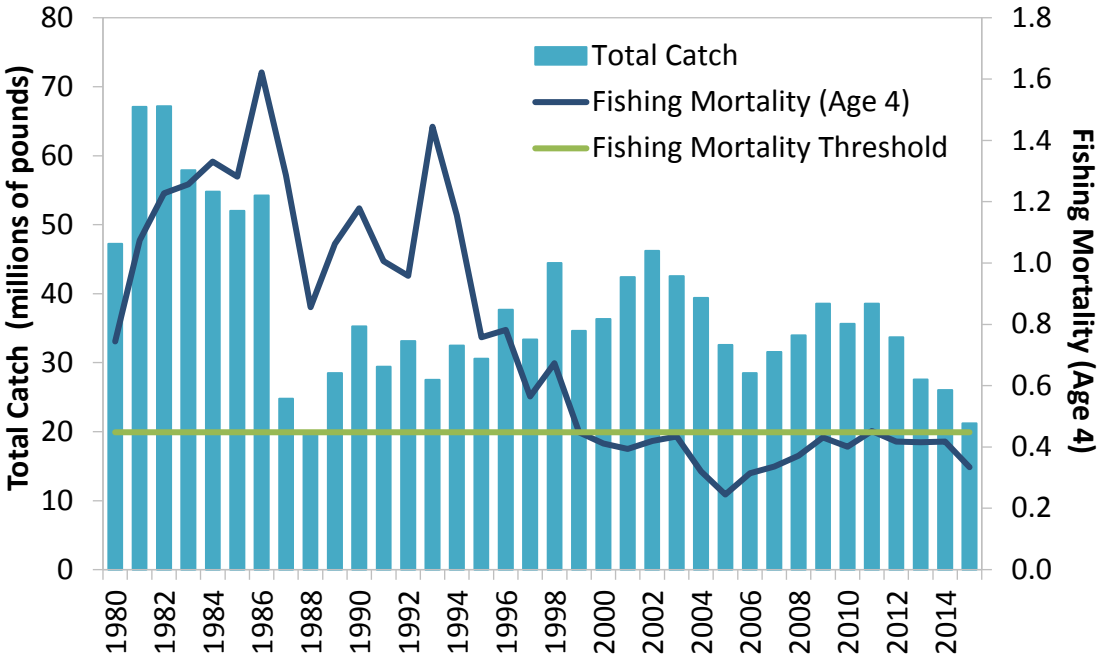
Summer Flounder Spawning Stock Biomass and Recruitment

Source: 66th Northeast Stock Assessment Workshop, 2018



Summer Flounder Total Catch and Fishing Mortality

Source: 66th Northeast Stock Assessment Workshop, 2018



Data analyzed by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center for the assessment indicate increasing relative abundance of older fish and an expanding age structure. However, the data also indicate a decrease in relative total abundance since the late 2000s, as well as decreasing trends in average lengths and weights at age for both sexes, suggesting slower growth and delayed maturity which impacts the biological reference points. The assessment shows current mortality from all sources is greater than recent recruitment inputs to the stock, which has resulted in a declining stock trend. Additionally, the assessment found the spatial distribution of the resource is continuing to shift northward and eastward.

A key attribute of the assessment is the incorporation of revised recreational catch data. In July 2018, MRIP revised the previous recreational catch estimates with a calibrated 1982-2017 time series that corresponds to the new MRIP survey methods. For comparison with the previous estimates, the revised estimates of 2017 recreational landings and discards are over three times the previous estimates. The revised recreational catch estimates increased the 1982-2017 total annual catch by an average of 29 percent, ranging from 11 percent increase in 1989 to 43 percent increase in 2017. The increase in estimated removals resulted in an increased population estimate compared to previous assessments.

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

###