

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 21, 2015

Richard B. Robins, Jr., Chairman  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
800 North State Street, Suite 201  
Dover, DE 19901

Dr. John Boreman, Chairman  
Scientific and Statistical Committee  
800 North State Street, Suite 201  
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Chairmen Robins and Boreman:

We write today regarding preliminary summer flounder management measures for 2016. According to a preliminary memorandum prepared by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC), a 25% reduction in the Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) for summer flounder is being proposed for 2016. As you review this recommendation, we urge the MAFMC and its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) to further evaluate their options for the upcoming summer flounder fishing year and to minimize any potential negative impacts on the commercial and recreational fishing industry in New Jersey when finalizing any final specifications.

The preliminary memorandum cites poor recruitment and evidence of illegal harvest as major factors for the reduction, while noting that catch of summer flounder in recent years has not been substantially over the ABCs. New Jersey's fishing economy is still rebounding from Superstorm Sandy, and our fear is that a reduction of this magnitude will have a serious negative impact on commercial and recreational fishermen in New Jersey.

There continues to be a troubling lack of confidence among fishermen and many fisheries managers in the data that guide stock assessments. As Congress considers reauthorization of the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the reliability of data collection remains one of our primary concerns. The 2006 amendments to the act included requirements to develop an improved recreational data collection program, now the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). Yet there is still concern that random sampling is heavily relied upon by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and that the estimates produced are inaccurate. In fact, NOAA has acknowledged this shortcoming and is working to transition to mail surveys from phone surveys because they reach more anglers and provide more accurate information.

Recreational and commercial fishing directed at summer flounder is a critical component of our state's economy. Commercial and recreational fisherman throughout New Jersey specifically target summer flounder and derive a significant portion of their income from this species. They are dependent upon sufficient summer flounder quota to remain active in this fishery and maintain their businesses.

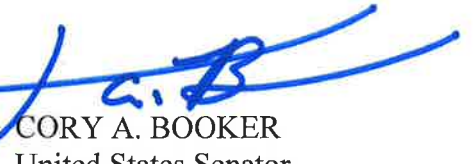
We respectfully urge the MAFMC and its SSC to further evaluate their options for the upcoming summer flounder fishing year and to approve final specifications that minimize any

potential negative impacts to New Jersey's fishing industry. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

  
FRANK PALLONE, JR.  
Member of Congress

  
ROBERT MENENDEZ  
United States Senator

  
CORY A. BOOKER  
United States Senator