



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

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MEMORANDUM

Date: November 6, 2015
To: Chris Moore, Executive Director
From: Kiley Dancy and Julia Beaty, Staff
Subject: Summer Flounder Recreational Management Measures for 2016

In August 2015, the Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (Commission's) Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board (Board) recommended multi-year commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits for summer flounder for the 2016-2018 fishing years, based on the advice of the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and Monitoring Committee. The final rule implementing the 2016 commercial quota and recreational harvest limit (RHL) has not yet published, but is expected to include a 2016 recreational harvest limit for summer flounder of 5.42 million lb.

The Monitoring Committee must recommend recreational management measures for 2016 that will constrain landings to the recreational harvest limit. The following is a review of recreational catch and landings data for the summer flounder fishery, as well as a staff recommendation as a starting point for discussion.

Recreational Catch and Landings

Recreational catch of summer flounder has fluctuated since 1981, from a peak of 32.06 million fish in 1983 to a time series low of 2.68 million fish in 1989. Landings have fluctuated from a peak of 27.97 million lb in 1983 to a low of 3.16 million lb in 1989. Landings were estimated to be 7.40 million lb in 2014 (Table 1), approximately 5.6% above the 2014 RHL of 7.01 million lb.

Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) data for 2015 are incomplete and preliminary. To date, only the first four waves (January through August) of catch and landings data for the current year are available. The Monitoring Committee reviews the MRIP data once wave 4 data are available because the Council and Commission agreed that recommendations need to be made late in the current year (i.e., 2015) to give the states enough time to enact changes in their regulations for the upcoming year (i.e., 2016). Preliminary data indicate that 10.35 million summer flounder have been caught and 1.45 million summer flounder have been landed through wave 4 in 2015. By weight, landings through wave 4 were 4.20 million lb, with the mean weight at approximately 2.90 lb (Table 2).

Preliminary wave 1-4 data for 2015 can be used to project catch and landings for the entire year by assuming the same proportion of catch and landings by wave in the previous year. These projections are

typically assumed to be overestimates for states with more restrictive seasonal measures in the current year, and underestimates for those with less restrictive seasonal measures. However, because state measures under regional conservation equivalency remained *status quo* between 2014 and 2015, the proportions by wave are not expected to differ substantially. Projected catch for 2015 is 11.64 million fish, and projected landings are 4.69 million lb or 1.65 million fish (Table 1).

Landings by state in recent years, in thousands of fish, are shown in Tables 4 and 5 (for waves 1-4 and all waves, respectively).

Past Harvest Limits and Management Measures

RHLs for summer flounder were first implemented in 1993. Since that time they have varied from a high of 11.98 million lb in 2005 to a low of 5.42 million lb proposed for 2016 (Table 5). Under the Council's typical risk policy, this proposed 2016 harvest limit would have originally been lower (approximately 4.20 million lb). However, the SSC, at the request of the Council, recommended a phase-in approach to reductions in catch and landings limits for 2016-2018. As a result, the Council and Board approved a 2016 RHL of 5.42 million lb.

Over the time period from 1993-2001, coastwide measures were in place for all states and federal waters, with possession limits ranging from 3-10 fish and size limits ranging from 14.0-15.5 inches. Starting in 2002, conservation equivalency was implemented, and has been used as the preferred management system each year since. Under conservation equivalency, individual states or multi-state regions set measures that collectively are designed to constrain landings to the coastwide harvest limit. Federal regulations are waived and all anglers are subject to the summer flounder regulations of the state in which they land.

Last December, the Council and Board adopted conservation equivalency for the summer flounder recreational fishery in 2015. Beginning in 2014 and continued in 2015, the Commission's Board approved the use of regional conservation equivalency, as opposed to state-by-state conservation equivalency adopted in previous years. Under this approach, each region adopts the same management measures, and the combination of regional measures is expected to constrain the coastwide harvest to the RHL. In 2015, region-specific possession limits ranged from 2-8 fish with size limits ranging from 15.0-18.0 inches, with various seasons (Table 6).

Under conservation equivalency, the Council and Board must adopt two additional sets of measures: the non-preferred coastwide measures, and the precautionary default measures. The non-preferred coastwide measures are a set of measures that would be expected to constrain harvest to the RHL if implemented on a coastwide basis. The combination of state or regional measures under conservation equivalency is theoretically designed to be "equivalent" to this set of non-preferred coastwide measures. These coastwide measures are included in the federal regulations, but waived in favor of state- or region-specific measures. The non-preferred coastwide measures adopted in 2015 include a 4-fish possession limit, an 18-inch total length (TL) minimum size, and an open season from May 1 to September 30.

The precautionary default measures would be implemented in any state or region that failed to develop adequate measures to constrain or reduce landings as required by the conservation equivalency guidelines.

The precautionary default measures in 2015 include a 2-fish possession limit with a 20-inch TL minimum fish size and an open season from May 1 to September 30.

Accountability Measures

In 2013, the Council modified the recreational accountability measures (AMs) for Mid-Atlantic species via the Omnibus Recreational Accountability Measures Amendment. This amendment removed the in-season closure authority for the summer flounder recreational fishery that was previously held by the NMFS Regional Administrator. Additionally, in the event of a recreational Annual Catch Limit (ACL) overage, recreational accountability measures no longer necessarily include a direct pound-for-pound payback of the overage amount in a subsequent fishing year. Instead, accountability measures are tied to stock status, and though poundage paybacks may be required in some circumstances, any potential payback amounts would be scaled relative to biomass, as described below.

The modified recreational AMs are as follows: the 3-year recreational sector ACL is evaluated against a 3-year moving average of total catch. Both landings and dead discards are evaluated in determining if the 3-year average recreational sector ACL has been exceeded. If the recreational ACL is exceeded, the appropriate AM will be determined based on the following criteria:

1. If the stock is overfished ($B < \frac{1}{2} B_{MSY}$), under a rebuilding plan, or the stock status is unknown: The exact amount, in pounds, by which the most recent year's recreational ACL has been exceeded, will be deducted in the following fishing year, or as soon as possible once catch data are available.
2. If biomass is above the threshold, but below the target ($\frac{1}{2} B_{MSY} < B < B_{MSY}$), and the stock is not under a rebuilding plan:
 - a. If only the recreational ACL has been exceeded, then adjustments to the recreational management measures (bag, size, and seasonal limits) would be made in the following year, or as soon as possible once catch data are available. These adjustments would take into account the performance of the measures and the conditions that precipitated the overage.
 - b. If the Acceptable Biological Catch ($ABC = \text{recreational ACL} + \text{commercial ACL}$) is exceeded in addition to the recreational ACL, then a single year deduction will be made as a payback, scaled based on stock biomass. The calculation for the payback amount in this case is: $(\text{overage amount}) * (B_{msy} - B) / \frac{1}{2} B_{msy}$.
3. If biomass is above the target ($B > B_{MSY}$): Adjustments to the recreational management measures (bag, size, and seasonal limits) would be made in the following year, or as soon as possible once catch data are available. These adjustments would take into account the performance of the measures and the conditions that precipitated the overage.

Accountability measures have not been triggered for the recreational summer flounder fishery based on a comparison of average 2012-2014 catch to the 2012-2014 average ACL. Although there was an overage of the recreational ACL in 2014, recreational catch was below the recreational ACL in 2012 and 2013, resulting in a 3-year average of catch that is below the 3-year average ACL. Recreational performance for

2015 will be evaluated in 2016, once final catch estimates are available, and taken into account in next year's recreational specifications process if necessary.

Methodology

The Monitoring Committee must consider and recommend whether coastwide measures or conservation equivalency (state-by-state or voluntary regional) are appropriate for 2016 (Table 7). Specifically, the Committee must recommend measures that will ensure the recreational harvest limit is not exceeded in 2016. Based on the projected landings estimate of 4.69 million lb for 2015, landings would not have to be reduced to achieve the 2016 harvest limit of 5.42 million lb. Projected 2015 landings are approximately 13% lower than the 2016 harvest limit. As previously mentioned, these projections are typically sensitive to prior year landings proportions. However, given that measures remained *status quo* between 2014 and 2015, the proportions by wave are not expected to be substantially different.

In February 2015, the Board approved an Addendum to the Commission's FMP to allow regional conservation equivalency in 2015 with the option to extend this management regime into 2016. If conservation equivalency (state-by-state or regional) is adopted at the December Council and Board joint meeting, the Commission's staff will project 2015 landings by state/region when 2015 wave 5 data become available, prior to the development of state/regional proposals.

The Monitoring Committee must make recommendations for non-preferred coastwide measures and precautionary default measures that would be applied under conservation equivalency. The methodology detailed in Framework 2 (Addendum III) to the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass FMP and Framework 6 to the FMP (Addendum XVII) can be used to develop state-specific or regional regulations to meet the state-specific or region-specific targets (Table 7).

Because of the long-term implementation of state-specific regulations, the use of a coastwide reduction table (for minimum size and possession limits) to analyze coastwide regulations is no longer feasible. Staff note that the level of precision of annual harvest estimates from MRIP data depend on the survey sample sizes, the frequency of sampled angler trips that caught the species, and the variability of numbers caught among those trips. Harvest estimates are always progressively less precise at lower levels of stratification; annual estimates are more precise than bimonthly estimates, coastal estimates are more precise than regional estimates, and regional estimates are more precise than state estimates. For the development of 2015 measures, states used a variety of data sources to analyze the effects of adjustments at the state and regional levels, including state-specific data sources.

The Monitoring and Technical Committees held a workshop in October 2015 to address methods and data used to evaluate recreational measures. The Committees have identified several areas of improvement for recreational specifications, and will continue to work to develop these approaches.

Fishing Trips and Year Class Effects

Table 8 provides an overview of coastwide recreational fishery performance and estimates of the number of trips where summer flounder was reported as the primary target. A comparison of summer flounder directed trips to total trips suggests that summer flounder trips continue to be a substantial component of total angler trips, ranging from about 13-20 percent of total trips from 1995-2015 (Table 8). Predicting the

number of summer flounder trips that might be taken in 2016 is complicated because many factors affect the demand for angler fishing trips. Changes in angler behavior are also complex and difficult to predict, and may violate the assumptions associated with specific sets of regulations and their anticipated results.

Year-class effects, in terms of fish availability, can influence the expected impacts of management measures and should be considered. The stock assessment update for 2015¹ indicates that several consecutive years of poor recruitment have been observed for summer flounder (2010-2013), resulting in a decline in biomass over the past several years. Despite constant recreational measures between 2014 and 2015, a substantial reduction in both catch and landings has been observed in 2015. Although total stock biomass is projected to increase slightly in 2016, summer flounder year classes expected to become available to the fishery in 2016 are estimated to be below average. Staff do not expect availability of summer flounder to increase on a coastwide basis during this time.

2016 Staff Recommendation

For 2016, staff recommend continued use of regional management under conservation equivalency. The current combination of regional measures is projected to result in 2015 landings below both the 2015 harvest limit (by ~ 36%) and the 2016 RHL (by ~13%), based on preliminary MRIP data and prior year proportions by wave. Fishery performance by state and region should be evaluated once additional 2015 data become available. Despite a decrease in the RHL from 7.38 million lb to 5.42 million lb between 2015 and 2016, it appears likely that the current regional conservation equivalency approach would constrain landings to the harvest limit in 2016, given apparent declines biomass and availability.

Staff caution against making adjustments to the current management measures, in particular any liberalizations, given the substantial decrease in the harvest limit in 2016 and uncertainties associated with availability. From a technical perspective, it is also beneficial to have several years of stable management measures to more accurately evaluate the effectiveness of those measures. Many stakeholders have indicated that they value stability in recreational management measures, particularly from a business perspective for for-hire operators.

As described above, if conservation equivalency is selected by the Council and Board, a set of non-preferred coastwide measures must be identified, along with a set of precautionary default measures. The non-preferred coastwide measures must consist of a minimum fish size, possession limit, and season for 2016 that if implemented on a coastwide basis, would be expected to constrain harvest to the harvest limit in 2016. Under conservation equivalency, these measures are written into the federal regulations, but waived in favor of the state- or region-specific measures. Staff recommend the same set of non-preferred coastwide measures that were approved for the past three years, including an 18-inch minimum size, a 4-fish possession limit, and an open season from May 1-September 30.

The precautionary default measures are defined as the set of measures that would achieve at least the highest percent reduction in landings for any state. These measures are intended to be unappealing for any state to implement, to deter states from deviating from the conservation equivalency guidelines. The Commission would require adoption of the precautionary default measures by any state that either does

¹ http://www.mafmc.org/s/Summer_flounder_2015_Assess_Update.pdf

not submit a summer flounder management proposal to the Commission's Summer Flounder Technical Committee, or submits measures that are inconsistent with the conservation equivalency guidelines. Staff recommend that the precautionary default measures remain unchanged from 2015, and consist of a 20-inch TL minimum size, a 2-fish possession limit, and a coastwide season from May 1-September 30, 2016. This default is likely to be more restrictive than any measure an individual state would implement in 2016.

In summary, staff recommend that the summer flounder recreational fishery be managed under regional conservation equivalency in 2016. Staff recommend non-preferred coastwide measures that include an 18-inch TL size limit, a 4-fish possession limit, and an open season from May 1-September 30, 2016, as well as precautionary default measures that include a 20-inch TL minimum size, 2 fish possession limit, and open season from May 1-September 30, 2016.

Table 1: Summer flounder recreational catch and landings by year, Maine through North Carolina, 1981-2015, all waves. The number of fish released is presented as a proportion of the total catch (% Released).^a

Year	Catch (‘000 fish)	Landings (‘000 fish)	Landings (‘000 lb)	% Released	Mean weight of landed fish (lb)
1981	13,579	9,567	10,081	30%	1.05
1982	23,562	15,473	18,233	34%	1.18
1983	32,062	20,996	27,969	35%	1.33
1984	29,785	17,475	18,765	41%	1.07
1985	13,526	11,066	12,490	18%	1.13
1986	25,292	11,621	17,861	54%	1.54
1987	21,023	7,865	12,167	63%	1.55
1988	17,171	9,960	14,624	42%	1.47
1989	2,677	1,717	3,158	36%	1.84
1990	9,101	3,794	5,134	58%	1.35
1991	16,075	6,068	7,960	62%	1.31
1992	11,910	5,002	7,148	58%	1.43
1993	22,904	6,494	8,831	72%	1.36
1994	17,725	6,703	9,328	62%	1.39
1995	16,308	3,326	5,421	80%	1.63
1996	18,994	6,997	9,820	63%	1.40
1997	20,027	7,167	11,866	64%	1.66
1998	22,086	6,979	12,477	68%	1.79
1999	21,378	4,107	8,366	81%	2.04
2000	25,384	7,801	16,468	69%	2.11
2001	28,187	5,294	11,637	81%	2.20
2002	16,674	3,262	8,008	80%	2.45
2003	20,532	4,559	11,638	78%	2.55
2004	20,336	4,316	11,022	79%	2.55
2005	25,806	4,027	10,915	84%	2.71
2006	21,400	3,950	10,505	82%	2.66
2007	20,732	3,108	9,337	85%	3.00
2008	22,897	2,350	8,151	90%	3.47
2009	24,085	1,806	6,030	93%	3.34
2010	23,722	1,501	5,108	94%	3.40
2011	21,559	1,840	5,956	91%	3.24
2012	16,528	2,272	6,490	86%	2.86
2013	16,151	2,534	7,387	84%	2.92
2014	19,457	2,459	7,399	87%	3.01
2015 (proj.)^b	11,639	1,646	4,692	86%	2.85

^a Source: Pers. Comm. with the National Marine Fisheries Service, Fisheries Statistics Division, October 23, 2015. 1981-2003 data are from MRFSS, 2004-2013 data are from MRIP.

^b Projected using proportion by wave from 2014 MRIP data and 2015 MRIP wave 1-4 data.

Table 2: Summer flounder recreational catch and landings for waves 1-4 (January-August), Maine through North Carolina, 1981-2015.^a

Year	Catch (‘000 fish)	Landings (‘000 fish)	Landings (‘000 lb)	Mean Weight of landed fish (lb)
1981	11,774	8,071	8,899	1.10
1982	20,108	12,599	15,289	1.21
1983	26,979	17,128	22,523	1.31
1984	26,355	14,614	15,245	1.04
1985	10,626	8,535	9,691	1.14
1986	21,321	8,885	13,274	1.49
1987	18,749	6,656	10,393	1.56
1988	13,906	7,918	11,728	1.48
1989	2,120	1,465	2,715	1.85
1990	7,277	3,025	4,125	1.36
1991	13,977	5,186	6,796	1.31
1992	9,830	3,992	5,688	1.42
1993	17,636	4,750	6,553	1.38
1994	15,052	5,499	7,603	1.38
1995	14,315	2,765	4,629	1.67
1996	17,206	6,175	8,685	1.41
1997	14,466	4,657	7,636	1.64
1998	19,015	5,944	10,568	1.78
1999	19,113	3,629	7,441	2.05
2000	22,131	6,867	14,148	2.06
2001	25,661	4,810	10,651	2.21
2002	14,442	2,842	7,008	2.47
2003	18,177	4,123	10,615	2.57
2004	17,998	3,931	10,088	2.57
2005	22,874	3,630	9,800	2.70
2006	20,515	3,685	9,813	2.66
2007	18,659	2,898	8,803	3.04
2008	21,792	2,277	7,951	3.49
2009	23,482	1,758	5,905	3.36
2010	22,725	1,428	4,902	3.43
2011	19,347	1,708	5,511	3.23
2012	14,390	1,968	5,680	2.89
2013	14,642	2,305	6,759	2.93
2014	17,214	2,206	6,704	3.04
2015	10,350	1,450	4,200	2.90

^a Source: Pers. Comm. with the National Marine Fisheries Service, Fisheries Statistics Division, October 23, 2015. 1981-2003 data are from MRFSS, 2004-2015 data are from MRIP.

Table 3: Summer flounder recreational landings (in thousands of fish) by state for waves 1-4 (January-August), 2005-2015.^a

State	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
ME	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NH	-	<1	-	<1	-	-	-	<1	-	-	-
MA	258	211	138	232	50	45	33	74	29	113	65
RI	153	261	173	203	71	118	152	103	126	184	154
CT	130	128	111	146	45	35	47	62	268	115	81
NY	1,082	743	844	609	298	331	349	482	501	491	457
NJ	1,187	1,475	1,040	752	817	551	719	905	1,095	1,046	452
DE	60	82	101	33	78	50	56	44	49	86	42
MD	98	32	44	34	64	14	10	19	36	27	36
VA	602	674	342	243	275	235	301	249	171	118	136
NC	61	77	104	25	59	50	40	31	30	25	28

^a Source: Pers. Comm. with the National Marine Fisheries Service, Fisheries Statistics Division, October 23, 2015.

Table 4: Summer flounder recreational landings (in thousands of fish) by state for all waves (January-December), 2005-2015.^a

State	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 (proj) ^b
ME	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NH	-	<1	-	<1	-	-	-	<1	-	-	-
MA	267	239	138	232	50	45	58	76	31	113	65
RI	165	264	176	204	72	118	161	103	128	185	154
CT	157	138	112	146	45	35	47	63	270	120	84
NY	1,163	752	866	609	299	334	376	509	518	509	474
NJ	1,300	1,556	1,067	762	825	552	737	1,130	1,244	1,175	508
DE	73	88	108	35	87	54	67	45	58	93	45
MD	117	37	104	58	65	25	15	23	53	80	104
VA	684	763	397	260	289	260	318	260	187	139	160
NC	101	112	139	44	75	77	60	63	45	46	53

^a Source: Pers. Comm. with the National Marine Fisheries Service, Fisheries Statistics Division, October 23, 2015.

^b Projected using proportion by wave from 2014 MRIP data and 2015 MRIP wave 1-4 data.

Table 5: Summary of federal management measures for the summer flounder recreational fishery, 1993-2016.

Measure	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
ABC (m lb)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Recreational ACL (land+disc; m lb)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Harvest Limit (m lb)	8.38	10.67	7.76	7.41	7.41	7.41	7.41	7.41	7.16	9.72	9.28	11.21
Landings (m lb)	8.83	9.33	5.42	9.82	11.87	12.48	8.37	16.47	11.64	8.01	11.64	11.02
Possession Limit	6	8	6/8	10	8	8	8	8	3	a	a	a
Size Limit (TL in)	14	14	14	14	14.5	15	15	15.5	15.5	a	a	a
Open Season	5/15 - 9/30	4/15 - 10/15	1/1 - 12/31	1/1 - 12/31	1/1 - 12/31	1/1 - 12/31	5/29 - 9/11	5/10 - 10/2	4/15 - 10/15	a	a	a
Measure	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016 ^c
ABC (m lb)	-	-	-	-	21.50	25.50	33.95	25.58	22.34	21.94	22.57	16.26
Recreational ACL (land+disc; m lb)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11.58	10.23	9.07	9.44	6.84
Harvest Limit (m lb) - landings only	11.98	9.29	6.68	6.22	7.16	8.59	11.58	8.49	7.63	7.01	7.38	5.42
Landings (m lb)	10.92	10.51	9.34	8.15	6.03	5.11	5.96	6.49	7.01	7.40	-	-
Possession Limit	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	b	b	-
Size Limit (TL in)	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	b	b	-
Open Season	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	b	b	-

^a State-specific conservation equivalency measures.

^b Region-specific conservation equivalency measures.

^c Proposed.

Table 6: Summer flounder recreational management measures and landings (in number of fish; 2015 projected) by state and region, 2014 and 2015.

Region	State	2014				2015			
		Min. Size (in)	Poss. Limit	Open Season	Landings ('000 fish)	Min. Size (inches)	Poss. Limit	Open Season	Proj. Landings ('000 fish)
1	MA	16	5 fish	May 22-Sept. 30	113	16	5 fish	May 22-Sept. 23	65
2	RI	18	8 fish	May 1-Dec. 31	185	18	8 fish	May 1-Dec. 31	154
3	CT	18	5 fish	May 17- Sept. 21	120	18	5 fish	May 17- Sept. 21	84
		16 (45 designated shore sites)				16 (45 designated shore sites)			
	NY	18	5 fish	May 17- Sept.21	509	18	5 fish	May 17- Sept. 21	474
	NJ	18	5 fish	May 23- Sept. 27	1,175	18	5 fish	May 22- Sept. 26	508
16 (1 pilot shore site)		2 fish	May 23-Sept. 27	16 (1 shore site)		2 fish	May 22-Sept. 26		
4	DE	16	4 fish	Jan. 1- Dec. 31	93	16	4 fish	Jan. 1- Dec. 31	45
	MD	16	4 fish	Jan. 1- Dec.31	80	16	4 fish	Jan. 1- Dec.31	104
	PRFC	16	4 fish	Jan. 1- Dec.31	--	16	4 fish	Jan. 1- Dec.31	--
	VA	16	4 fish	Jan. 1- Dec. 31	139	16	4 fish	Jan. 1- Dec. 31	160
5	NC	15	6 fish	Jan. 1- Dec. 31	46	15	6 fish	Jan. 1- Dec. 31	53

Table 7: Procedures for establishing summer flounder recreational management measures.

August	
Council/Commission's Board recommend recreational harvest limit.	
October	
MRIP data available for current year through wave 4.	
November	
Monitoring Committee meeting to develop recommendations to Council:	
Overall % reduction required.	
Use of coastwide measures or state conservation equivalency.	
*Precautionary default measures.	
**Coastwide measures.	
December	
Council/Board meeting to make recommendation to NMFS	
State Conservation Equivalency	
or	
Coastwide measures	
<i>State Conservation Equivalency Measures</i>	<i>Coastwide Measures</i>
Late December	Early January
Commission staff summarizes and distributes <u>state-specific and multi-state conservation equivalency</u> guidelines to states.	Council staff submits recreational measure package to NMFS. Package includes:
	-Overall % reduction required.
	-Coastwide measures.
Early January	February 15
Council staff submits recreational measure package to NMFS. Package includes:	NMFS publishes proposed rule for recreational measures announcing the overall % reduction required and Coastwide measures.
- Overall % reduction required.	
- Recommendation to implement conservation equivalency and precautionary default measures (Preferred Alternative).	
-Coastwide measures (Non-preferred Alternative).	
States submit conservation equivalency proposals to ASMFC.	April
	NMFS publishes final rule announcing overall % reduction required and Coastwide measures.
January 15	
ASMFC distributes <u>state-specific or multi-state conservation equivalency proposals</u> to Technical Committee.	
Late January	
ASMFC Technical Committee meeting:	
-Evaluation of proposals.	
-ASMFC staff summarizes Technical Committee recommendations and distributes to Board.	
February	
Board meeting to approve/disapprove proposals and submits to NMFS within two weeks, but no later than end of February.	
March 1 (on or around)	
NMFS publishes proposed rule for recreational measures announcing the overall % reduction required, <u>state-specific or multi-state conservation equivalency</u> measures and precautionary default measures (as the preferred alternative), and coastwide measures as the non-preferred alternative.	
March 15	
During comment period, Board submits comment to inform whether conservation equivalency proposals are approved.	
April	
NMFS publishes final rule announcing overall % reduction required and one of the following scenarios:	
- <u>State-specific or multi-state conservation equivalency</u> measures with precautionary default measures, or -Coastwide measures.	
	*Precautionary default measures - measures to achieve at least the % required reduction in each state, e.g., one fish possession limit and 15.5 inch bag limit would have achieved at least a 41% reduction in landings for each state in 1999.
	**Coastwide measures - measure to achieve % reduction coastwide.

Table 8: Number of summer flounder recreational fishing trips, harvest limit, landings, and fishery performance (i.e., percent overage or underage) from Maine through North Carolina, 1995 to 2016.

Year	Number of Summer Flounder Directed Trips (millions) ^a	Percentage of Directed Trips Relative to Total Trips ^{a,b}	Recreational Harvest Limit (million lb) ^c	Recreational Landings of Summer Flounder (million lb) ^d	Percentage Overage (+)/ Underage(-)
1995	4.68	17.2%	7.76	5.42	-30%
1996	4.89	17.9%	7.41	9.82	+33%
1997	5.60	18.8%	7.41	11.87	+60%
1998	5.27	20.5%	7.41	12.48	+68%
1999	4.22	16.8%	7.41	8.37	+13%
2000	5.80	16.7%	7.41	16.47	+122%
2001	6.13	16.6%	7.16	11.64	+63%
2002	4.56	14.8%	9.72	8.01	-18%
2003	5.62	16.0%	9.28	11.64	+25%
2004	4.86	14.3%	11.21	11.02	-2%
2005	5.85	16.0%	11.98	10.92	-9%
2006	4.99	13.6%	9.29	10.51	+13%
2007	5.49	14.5%	6.68	9.34	+40%
2008	4.93	13.4%	6.21	8.15	+31%
2009	4.60	15.6%	7.16	6.03	-16%
2010	4.45	15.1%	8.59	5.11	-41%
2011	4.50	16.8%	11.58	5.96	-49%
2012	4.24	16.4%	8.59	6.49	-24%
2013	3.73	14.6%	7.63	7.39	-3%
2014	4.06	15.6%	7.01	7.40	+6%
2015	NA	NA	7.38	NA	NA
2016	NA	NA	5.42	NA	NA

^a Estimated number of recreational fishing trips (expanded) where the primary target species was summer flounder, Maine through North Carolina. Source: Pers. Comm. with the National Marine Fisheries Service, Fisheries Statistics Division, October 23, 2015.

^b Source of total trips for all species combined: Pers. Comm. with the National Marine Fisheries Service, Fisheries Statistics Division, October 26, 2015.

^c RHLs for 2003 through 2014 are adjusted for research set-aside.

^d Source: Pers. Comm. with the National Marine Fisheries Service, Fisheries Statistics Division, October 23, 2015.

NA = Data not available.

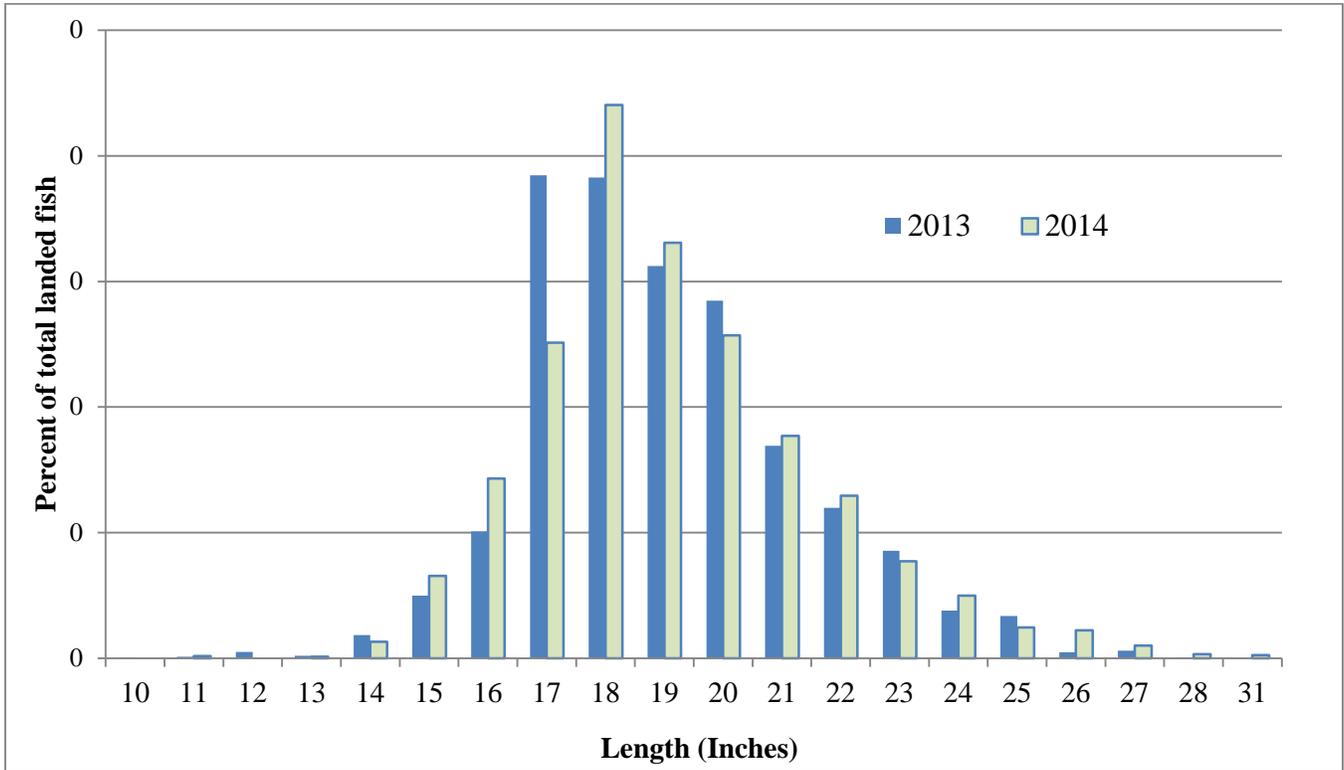


Figure 1: Expanded length frequencies of landed summer flounder from 2013 and 2014 MRIP data, as a percentage of total landed fish. Each length bin contains fish from X.0 to X.99 inches. Source: Pers. Comm. with the National Marine Fisheries Service, Fisheries Statistics Division, November 1, 2015.