

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

March 5, 2019

Chris Moore, Executive Director  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
800 North State Street, Suite 201  
Dover, DE 19901

Robert Beal, Executive Director  
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission  
1050 N. Highland Street, Suite 200 A-N  
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Mr. Moore and Mr. Beal:

As the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) continue important work this week to address the need for changes to the allocation of commercial summer flounder among states along the eastern seaboard, we write to express our continued commitment to working with you to set appropriate state quotas as fish populations shift geographically. As you are already aware, the commercial summer flounder fishery is of considerable importance to Connecticut—landings in 2017 totaled 134,245 pounds, with an ex-vessel value of \$673,358. This is despite the fact that Connecticut is allocated a mere 2.24% of the coastwide quota.

We remain disappointed that the current summer flounder quota allocation system has not changed since 1993. As you know, in a 2007 report to Congress on council management required by the 2006 Magnuson-Stevens Act Reauthorization, the MAFMC reported that “issues arise when overlapping species are managed exclusively by one Council.” However, we believe that the MAFMC continues to shortchange New England states when it comes to commercial summer flounder quotas. Since that 2007 report, New England fishermen—including many of our constituents who have spent their lives fishing in southern New England waters—have consistently voiced their concerns regarding summer flounder quotas set by the MAFMC. Connecticut fishermen have met with our offices to share firsthand accounts of these fish stocks moving northward. Unfortunately, because of outdated state-by-state commercial allocations remaining so low, our fishermen must continue to throw catch overboard.


We recognize that summer flounder distribution and biomass have changed over the past 25 years. The Draft Summer Flounder Commercial Issues Amendment confirms what we have heard from Connecticut fishermen for years—the distribution of the exploitable biomass of summer flounder has trended northward. As ocean temperatures continue to increase, this trend will only continue to push the stock further north into New England waters. As changing environment and ecology have forced North Carolina vessels to venture farther north, the MAFMC continues to rely on data that is over 30 years old to set allocations—with only 32.5 percent of commercial summer flounder quota being allocated to the states of New York north to Maine.


This week, the MAFMC will be deliberating changes to the summer flounder commercial fishery and as the Council takes on this important task, we ask that new approaches to management


weigh heavily on better aligning quota allocation with shifts in resource distribution and abundance. At the MAFMC and ASMFC joint meeting, we join with our neighbors from Rhode Island and urge you to adopt the new proposal offered by the Rhode Island ASMFC Delegation. This proposal balances historical quotas with shifts in resource distribution. We believe that this proposal will modernize summer flounder management and may even create a framework for new management among other stocks that are being impacted by warming ocean temperatures. We strongly encourage the MAFMC and ASMFC to adopt this proposal for further review.

We appreciate your time to consider this important matter.

Sincerely,

  
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JOE COURTNEY  
Member of Congress

  
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RICHARD BLUMENTAL  
United States Senate

  
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CHRISTOPHER MURPHY  
United States Senate