



# Stakeholder Scoping - Input on Summer Flounder Recreational Management

\* Required

## Introduction

Thank you for your interest in helping the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) better understand stakeholder perspectives regarding current concerns and future management of the recreational summer flounder fishery. The Council is collecting this information as part of the continued implementation of its Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) decision framework (see: <https://www.mafmc.org/eafm> for more information). This process seeks to better incorporate ecosystem considerations into the evaluation of policy choices and trade-offs as they affect Council-managed species and the broader ecosystem.

The next step in the Council's EAFM process is to conduct a management strategy evaluation (MSE), which is a method of evaluating different management approaches within an ecosystem context to determine if those approaches achieve management goals and objectives. Specifically, this MSE will evaluate the biological and economic benefits of different management alternatives designed to minimize discards (dead and alive) in the recreational summer flounder fishery.

As a first step in the development of this MSE, the Council is seeking input from a diverse group of interested stakeholders regarding discards in the recreational summer flounder fishery. We are asking you to please take 10-15 minutes to answer a few questions to aid our planning of this MSE process. Your answers will be kept confidential and, if you choose, can be completely anonymous. The information collected will be used by Council staff, facilitators, and a technical work group to help guide model development and plan future stakeholder workshops.

In addition, we are identifying candidates and soliciting interest in potential participation in future stakeholder workshops. In the comment form you will have an opportunity to suggest individuals, including yourself, who would be valuable participants in these workshops.

Thank you again for your participation and for taking the time to complete this scoping comment form. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Brandon Muffley – [bmuffley@mafmc.org](mailto:bmuffley@mafmc.org) or at (302) 526-5260.

## Problem Definition

An important first step in the MS process is to identify the decision to be made, often called a problem definition. The Council's current working definition of the problem to be addressed through this MS process is that the Council will decide what regulatory changes to make to account for the effects of discarding on the summer flounder recreational fishery.

In order to make this decision this MS process will:  
 "value the biological and economic benefits of minimizing discards (dead and alive) and converting discards into landings in the recreational summer flounder fishery and identify management strategies to effectively realize these benefits."

Your responses in the section will help us understand what the current issues are and what concerns are driving a desire to improve management of recreational discards in the summer flounder fishery. We will use these responses to help guide our MS process toward addressing the most pressing concerns and desired outcomes.

1. How concerned are you about the following discard related impacts in the recreational summer flounder fishery? \*

Mark only one oval per row.

	Unsure	Not concerned	Minor concern	Moderate Concern	Major concern
Reduced ability for anglers to retain fish due to regulations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reduced angler satisfaction due to regulations and discarding rates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reduced interest in participation in the fishery due to high regulatory discard rates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reduced patronage of for-hire vessels due to high regulatory discard rates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
High discard rates and discard mortality of larger female summer flounder and potential negative impacts to stock	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall extent of recreational discard mortality and negative impacts to stock	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Belief that assumed summer flounder recreational discard	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

mortality rate  
(currently 10%) is  
incorrectly  
estimated

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Negative effects of  
recreational discard  
estimates on future  
harvest limits  
and/or regulations

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Lack of robust and  
trusted data for  
recreational  
discards

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Lack of angler  
knowledge of  
proper discarding  
techniques to  
reduce mortality

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Lack of angler  
knowledge of gear  
configurations (e.g.,  
hook sizes) that  
reduce mortality

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Lack of  
fairness/inequitable  
access among  
states

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Noncompliance  
with the regulations  
due to frustration  
over discards,  
desire to keep fish,  
etc.

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Measures to reduce  
discards may lead  
to other restrictions  
such as reduced  
seasons or bag  
limits

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Management is not responsive to new information and changes to stock conditions

Management is not responsive to stakeholder input on recreational management and ways to reduce discards

2. Please provide any other concerns regarding recreational discards that were NOT mentioned above.

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3. Please provide any other concern(s) you may have regarding the recreational summer flounder fishery. For example, loss of shore based access or harvesting too many females.

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**Inputs to the MSE process**

Now that we have defined the problem and identified concerns, the next step of the MSE process is to elicit fishery objectives (i.e., what does a successful fishery that minimizes discards look like) and then identify strategies or alternatives that might be implemented to achieve those objectives (i.e., how do we get there).

MSE processes are intentionally value focused and rely on participant input to determine what management strategies (alternatives) to evaluate and what they should accomplish (objectives). Your responses to the questions in this section will help us ensure a wide range of participant perspectives and proposed strategies are included. We will use the responses here to jump start further development and refinement of the objectives and alternatives evaluated later on in this process.

Lastly, this section will also help insure we are aware of all available data sources and important uncertainties to account for when predicting expected outcomes.

4. The results of this MSE process may impact the fishery due to possible changes to future management approaches. From your perspective what management objectives are most critical to achieve from this MSE process? That is, I would like this process to... \*

Select your top 5 objectives.

*Check all that apply.*

- Maximize recreational fishery participation in all sectors (e.g., shore, private boat, for-hire)
- Maximize the chances a trip produces a legal sized summer flounder
- Maximize ratio of legal size to discarded size catches per trip
- Maximize regulatory compliance
- Maximize management flexibility to customize regulations by state
- Minimize discards per trip
- Minimize negative biological impacts to the summer flounder stock
- Minimize the differences in retention rates by fishing method (e.g., shore, private vessel, for-hire)
- Minimize the differences in regulations between neighboring states
- Minimize changes in regulations from year to year (maximize regulatory stability)
- Minimize additional regulatory restrictions (e.g., changes to season or possession limit) in order to reduce discards
- Minimize the mortality of released summer flounder
- Minimize risk of overfishing and risk of stock becoming overfished
- Minimize the regulatory burden on recreational businesses (e.g., for-hire, bait and tackle, boat rentals)
- Improve the quality of the recreational fishing experience
- Reduce harvest of female summer flounder

5. In addition to those listed above, please provide any additional objectives or desired outcomes you have.

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6. The MSE process will involve the evaluation of a management strategy, or combination of strategies, that achieve fishery objectives. From your perspective and based on your objectives provided above, what strategies do you believe should be evaluated? \*

Select your top 5 strategies

*Check all that apply.*

- Implement lower size limits
- Increase possession limits
- Establish slot size limits
- Modify or establish new gear requirements (e.g., hook size)
- Modify or establish new catch reporting requirements
- Expand the recreational season
- Expand use of electronic reporting and volunteer angler surveys to report discards
- Expand shore-specific recreational opportunities (e.g., lower size limits for designated shore sites) to increase shore mode retention opportunities
- Adjust regulations dynamically through time based on the status of the fishery
- Provide best practice recommendations to minimize recreational discard mortality
- Set differential regulations by sector (e.g., shore, offshore, for-hire)
- Adjust regulations by region that minimize discards based on regional differences in availability relative to size
- Create an outreach program to improve angler education on proper discarding techniques
- Conduct research to validate or update the current 10% recreational discard mortality rate

7. In addition to those listed above, please provide any other management strategies that you believe should be considered. This is an opportunity to be creative!

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8. Please identify any data sources you believe may be useful and help with model development and predicting the expected outcomes of proposed management strategies.

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9. Please identify any uncertainties (e.g., recreational data, changing/shifting distribution) you believe would aid in predicting the range of outcomes that could result from proposed management strategies.

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Next  
Steps in  
this  
MSE  
Process

In addition to this survey, we will be holding regional workshops (MA-CT, NY-DE, and MD-NC) in late February to solicit input on this MSE. Please keep your eye open for invitations to these regional workshops as an opportunity to provide additional input to the process.

The results of this survey and the regional workshops will feed into more focused stakeholder workshops. For these workshops, a small core group of stakeholder participants (10-15 in total) representing the range of fishery perspectives will help us more efficiently and effectively progress through the MSE process. While not everyone interested will be able to participate as a core group member, we encourage you to continue to provide input to the process by staying in contact with core group members and following the Council website ([www.mafmc.org](http://www.mafmc.org)).

### Workshop Participant Recommendations

Would you recommend anyone to participate as a core group member in future stakeholder workshops based upon their ability to represent your interests, work well with others, and their ability to aid and benefit the process?

Your responses to these questions will help us to select this core group of participants.

10. Please recommend, by listing first and last names, up to 5 individuals for possible participation in the core group for this MSE process.

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### Express Interest in Joining the Core Group \*

If you are interested in being a core group participant please express this interest by selecting 'Yes' in the dropdown below. Otherwise select 'No'.

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No *Skip to question 21*

Core  
Group  
Interest  
Questions

Please complete the questions here to express your interest in potential participation in future stakeholder workshops. We anticipate holding three stakeholder workshops throughout 2021 either via webinar and/or in-person. If in-person, the Council would cover all travel expenses related to your attendance at the workshop. There will also be some preparation and document review between meetings.

We will ask a few questions regarding your fishing and management experience, the stakeholder group(s) and state you would represent, and your ability and willingness to participate in these workshops. We anticipate completing these questions will take an additional 5 minutes.

Name \*

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Email Address \*

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11. To the best of their abilities, core group members will be asked to participate and attend all workshops, represent both your interests and those of the fishery, be open minded and collaborative, and support the outcomes of the MSE process. Given this information, do you believe you could be a productive core group member? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Unsure

12. Briefly describe your interest in participating as a core group member. \*

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13a. What role best describes your participation in Mid-Atlantic fisheries? \*

Select all that apply

*Check all that apply.*

- Commercial fisherman
- Recreational Shore Angler
- Private Boat Angler
- Charter Boat Captain/Owner
- Head Boat Captain/Owner
- Dealer and/or Processor
- Bait and Tackle, Boat Rental, or Other Secondary Market Group
- Fishery Manager
- NGO
- Academic Institution
- Scientist
- General Public

Other:  \_\_\_\_\_

13b. Please select your PRIMARY role in Mid-Atlantic fisheries which you would represent as a core group member. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Commercial Fisherman
- Recreational Shore Angler
- Private Boat Angler
- Charter Boat Captain/Owner
- Head Boat Captain/Owner
- Dealer and/or Processor
- Bait and Tackle, Boat Rental, or Other Secondary Market Group
- Fishery Manager
- NGO
- Academic Institution
- Scientist
- General Public
- Other

14a. What state would you represent as a participant in the process? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Massachusetts
- Rhode Island
- Connecticut
- New Yor
- New Jersey
- Delaware
- Maryland
- Virginia
- North Carolina
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

14b. Rate your ability to represent the interests of the state selected above. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Low	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	High

15. Please briefly describe your experience and activity in the summer flounder fishery, your knowledge of summer flounder management, and your engagement with other fishermen and recreational organizations. \*

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## Your Information

Optional

Your Name

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Your Email

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