Comprehensive Summer Flounder Amendment

Public Scoping Hearings
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2014
Overview

- Background on amendment purpose, process, and timeline
- Description of scoping process
- Issues that may be considered in the amendment
- Next steps
- Public comment
Background

- Summer flounder are **jointly managed** by:

  - Mid-Atlantic Fishery Mgmt. Council (federal waters)
  - Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (state waters)

- **Proposed amendment is a joint action to modify joint Fishery Management Plan (FMP)**

- **Scoping comments will be reviewed by both groups**
Amendment Purpose

- Perform a comprehensive review of all aspects of the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP) related to summer flounder

- Update FMP goals and objectives for summer flounder management

- Modify management strategies and measures as necessary to achieve those goals and objectives
Why was this action initiated?

- Issues & concerns raised by Council and Commission members, advisors, management partners, other stakeholders

- Stakeholder input from Council’s Visioning and Strategic Planning process

- Changing conditions in the summer flounder fisheries (biological, social, economic)
Amendment Process Overview

Amendment Initiated ➔ Scoping ➔ I.D. priority issues; Develop draft alternatives ➔ Development of Draft Amendment & EIS

- Public Comment on Draft Amendment ➔ Review of Public Comments ➔ Selection of Preferred Management Measures ➔ Submission to Secretary of Commerce
- Publication of Proposed Rule ➔ Public Comment on Proposed Rule ➔ Publication of Final Rule ➔ Implementation

- Current phase of development
- Council and/or Commission
- NMFS
## Amendment Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 2014</td>
<td>Scoping hearings &amp; public comment period</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter 2014/2015</td>
<td>Council/Commission identify priority issues for inclusion in amendment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring/Summer 2015</td>
<td>Development of options; input from issue-specific working groups and advisors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 2015/Winter 2016</td>
<td>Council and Commission review draft range of options</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring/Summer 2016</td>
<td>Range of options refined and approved</td>
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<td>Fall 2016</td>
<td>Council/Commission select preferred options; public hearings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter 2016/ Spring 2017</td>
<td>Council/Commission consider public comments; final action; rulemaking</td>
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Purpose of Scoping

- Early and open process for determining scope of issues to be addressed
- Informs development of a reasonable range of alternatives for further analysis
- First and best opportunity for the public to make suggestions or raise issues before amendment development
Scoping Process

1. 14 public scoping hearings
   - MA to VA; September 29 – October 22

2. Written comment period
   - Submit by email, web form, mail, or fax
   - To either the Council or Commission

Submit written comments by 11:59 p.m. Friday, October 31, 2014
Potential Amendment Issues

- List represents range of topics that may be considered

- Not a list of “preferred alternatives” or measures that will necessarily be included in the amendment

- Not limiting - anything related to summer flounder management could be considered during amendment process
Management Questions

- Is the existing **objective/allocation/management strategy** appropriate for managing the summer flounder fishery?

- If not, how should it be revised?

- What else should the Council and Commission consider with regard to this issue?
Issue 1: FMP Goals & Objectives

Current FMP Objectives:

• Reduce fishing mortality in the summer flounder fishery to assure that overfishing does not occur.
• Reduce fishing mortality on immature summer flounder to increase spawning stock biomass.
• Improve the yield from the fishery.
• Promote compatible management regulations between State and Federal jurisdictions.
• Promote uniform and effective enforcement of regulations.
• Minimize regulations to achieve the management objectives stated above.
Issue 2: Commercial/Recreational Allocation

Since Amendment 2 (1993), Total Allowable Landings (TAL) allocated 60% to commercial fishery and 40% to recreational fishery.
Issue 3: Commercial Management Strategies


- Since then, management actions have modified measures such as fishing seasons, gear requirements, permit requirements, etc.
Issue 3: Commercial Management Strategies

Potential modifications to:

- Gear requirements
- Possession limit and trigger requirements
- Time/area closures and exemptions
- Licensing, permitting, and fleet capacity
- Catch monitoring and validation
- Commercial quota allocation strategies
- Landings flexibility (regional, coastwide, other)
Issue 4: Recreational Management Strategies

- Amendment 2 (1993) introduced annual coastwide Recreational Harvest Limit (RHL)

- Under Conservation Equivalency, state-by-state shares of the RHL and subsequent state-by-state measures were first implemented in 2001

- Harvest targets based on proportion of 1998 landings by state
Issue 4: Recreational Management Strategies

Potential modifications to:

- Bag, size, seasonal limit requirements
- Gear requirements and restrictions
- Inter-jurisdictional management (incl. Conservation Equivalency)
- Strategies specific to for-hire and/or private angler sectors
- Recreational quota allocation strategies (by state, fishing sector, other)
Issue 5: Discards

- Discards persist in both the commercial and recreational fisheries
- Recreational discards have increased overall since 1981
- Commercial discards have constituted 8% of the total catch since 1982
- Discard losses in otter trawl & scallop dredge fisheries account for approx. 14% of the total commercial catch (assumed discard mortality rate of 80%)
Other Issues

- Ecosystem, Habitat, Bycatch, and Protected Species
- Data Collection Requirements and Protocols
Public Comments

We are seeking comments on:

- Current measures and strategies that should or should not be modified
- New measures and strategies that should or should not be considered
- Fishery trends that managers should consider
- Any other issues or concerns that should be considered or addressed in the amendment
Next Steps

- Written comments and hearing summaries will be compiled for review by both the Council and Commission.

- Joint meeting in late 2014 or early 2015 to review comments and identify priority issues for inclusion in the amendment.
Questions and Comments