

**Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
Summer Flounder Fishery Goals and Objectives**

**Project Overview and Timeline**

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**Overview**

In December 2014, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission identified revised Fishery Management Plan (FMP) goals and objectives as one of four priority issues for a comprehensive review of summer flounder management. This document describes a proposed process for supporting an in-depth examination of management goals and objectives, culminating in a facilitated half-day workshop at the Council and Commission's joint meeting in December 2015. An overview of this process will also be presented at the Council and Commission's joint meeting August 11-13, 2015, New York, NY.

The Council has enlisted the services of the Fisheries Leadership & Sustainability Forum (Fisheries Forum), which provides policy neutral facilitation and support to federal fishery managers. Fisheries Forum staff will coordinate with Council and Commission staff and the Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) to support this process.

For questions or additional information about this process please contact:

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- Kiley Dancy, FMP Coordinator, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council ([kdancy@mafmc.org](mailto:kdancy@mafmc.org); (302) 526-5257)

**Background and context**

The current FMP objectives were identified through Amendment 2 in 1993:

1. Reduce fishing mortality in the summer flounder fishery to assure that overfishing does not occur.
2. Reduce fishing mortality on immature summer flounder to increase spawning stock biomass.
3. Improve the yield from the fishery.
4. Promote compatible management regulations between State and Federal jurisdictions.
5. Promote uniform and effective enforcement of regulations.
6. Minimize regulations to achieve the management objectives stated above.

The Council and Commission will revisit these FMP objectives, with the intent of developing a revised set of goals and/or objectives that reflect the current status of the stock and attributes of the summer flounder fishery. These revised management goals should be focused enough to communicate the Council and Commission's overarching priorities for management of the summer flounder fishery. They should also be broad enough to accommodate the range of objectives and strategies that may be considered for addressing the other priorities for the comprehensive summer flounder amendment (quota allocation between recreational and commercial sectors, and commercial and recreational management measures and strategies.)

### **Approach and timeline**

The Fisheries Forum will lead a three-part process to provide additional information and context in support of the Council and Commission's discussion of revised FMP goals and objectives in December 2015.

#### **1. Interviews (September – October 2015)**

Fisheries Forum staff will conduct a series of informal interviews with approximately 20 members of the Council's Demersal Committee and the Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, & Black Sea Bass Board. The purpose of these interviews is to obtain in-depth feedback and perspectives on both the content and structure of revised FMP goals and objectives. These interviews are not intended to be comprehensive, or to assess the level of support for particular management goals or objectives; the purpose is to support a rigorous and well-informed discussion of goals and objectives in December. Council and Commission staff will assist with the development of draft interview questions and the identification of interview candidates.

#### **2. Synthesis and development of draft goals (October – November 2015)**

Fisheries Forum staff will synthesize the results of these interviews, and share findings with Council and Commission staff and the FMAT. Fisheries Forum will work with the FMAT to develop an initial "strawman" set of goals and objectives as a starting point for discussion by the Council and Commission at their December 2015 meeting. A final short synthesis document will be provided prior to the meeting that will include themes identified through interviews, the FMAT's draft set of goals and objectives, a set of trigger questions for discussion, and workshop agenda.

#### **3. Facilitated discussion (December 2015)**

The Council and Commission will hold a short (estimated half day) workshop in conjunction with the joint December 2015 meeting in Annapolis, MD. The purpose of this workshop will be to refine and potentially approve a draft set of management goals and objectives for further consideration. The workshop will include background presentations and a series of facilitated discussions, followed by a handoff to the Council and Commission to determine the appropriate next steps.



**Summer Flounder Amendment Draft Action Plan (updated as of 4/9/15)**

Comprehensive Summer Flounder Amendment to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan

**Council:** Mid-Atlantic (with Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission)

**Title of Action:** Comprehensive Summer Flounder Amendment to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP

**Applicable Fisheries:** Summer Flounder (commercial and recreational)

**Purpose and Need:** The purpose of this amendment is to complete a comprehensive review of all aspects of the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP related to summer flounder. This will include revisiting and updating the goals and objectives of the plan for summer flounder, as well as re-examining and modifying as necessary any and all fishery management strategies necessary to achieve those goals and objectives.

**Type of NEPA Analysis Expected:** EIS

**Additional Expertise Sought:** The Fisheries Management Action Team (FMAT) for this action will be composed of Council staff and management partners from the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, with input from other organizations as appropriate. The FMAT will serve as the primary team for amendment development and analysis, but will work with several working groups to address specific issues.

Agency	Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) Role	Person(s)
MAFMC	Fisheries Management (Plan Coordinator)	Kiley Dancy
ASMFC	Fisheries Management (Plan Coordinator; ISFMP Director)	Kirby Rootes-Murdy; Toni Kerns
NMFS GARFO	Sustainable Fisheries (Plan Coordinator)	Moira Kelly
NMFS GARFO	NEPA	Katherine Richardson
NMFS GARFO	Habitat	David Stevenson
NMFS NEFSC	Stock Assessment/Technical	Mark Terceiro
NMFS NEFSC	Socioeconomics	Scott Steinback
NMFS GARFO	General Counsel (consulted as needed)	Kevin Collins

**Working Groups:** The FMAT will work with several topic-specific working groups that will be formed to complete work or analyses related to specific aspects of summer flounder management. The composition of each working group has yet to be determined, but will include representatives with a wide range of expertise and experience with issues to be addressed in the amendment. Issues to be addressed by each working group have yet to be determined, but will relate to issues described below under "types of measures expected to be considered."

**Types of Measures Expected to be Considered:** At this time, the FMAT will be developing a wide range of management options for the Council to consider. These could include alternatives to address issues including, but not limited to:

- FMP goals and objectives for summer flounder
- Commercial summer flounder management measures and strategies:
  - Commercial fishing gear requirements and restrictions, including, but not limited to: mesh requirements, net dimensions, bycatch reduction devices, head and footrope lengths
  - Minimum fish size requirements
  - Possession limit and trigger requirements
  - Time/area closures and exemption programs
  - Licensing
  - Commercial quota allocation strategies
  - Landings flexibility (regional, coastwide, other)
- Recreational summer flounder management measures and strategies:
  - Recreational bag limits, size limits, and seasonal limits
  - Recreational fishing gear requirements and restrictions
  - Inter-jurisdictional management processes and strategies (including use of state-by-state or regional Conservation Equivalency vs. Coastwide measures)
  - Management strategies specific to the party/charter (for-hire) recreational fleet
  - Management strategies specific to private recreational anglers
  - Recreational quota allocation strategies (by state, fishing sector, other)
- Quota allocation between the commercial and recreational fisheries
- Summer flounder discards in the commercial and recreational fisheries
- Ecosystem, habitat, bycatch, and protected species issues
- Data collection requirements and protocols

**Applicable laws/issues:**

Magnuson-Stevens Act	Yes
Administrative Procedures Act	Yes
Regulatory Flexibility Act	Yes
Paperwork Reduction Act	Possibly; depends on data collection needs
Coastal Zone Management Act	Possibly; depends on effects of the action on the resources of the coastal states in the management unit
Endangered Species Act	Possibly; level of consultation, if necessary, depends on the actions taken
E.O. 12866 (Regulatory Planning and Review)	Yes
E.O. 12630 (Takings)	Possibly; legal review will confirm
E.O. 13123 (Federalism)	Possibly; legal review will confirm
Essential Fish Habitat	Possibly
Information Quality Act	Yes

**Current Amendment Timeline (as of 4/9/15; subject to change):**

December 2013	Council initiates amendment
April-June 2014	Draft action plan developed; Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) formed
June 2014	Council's Demersal Committee meets to discuss scoping process
August 2014	Joint Council and Commission draft scoping document developed; Council and Commission review and approve draft document for public comment
September/ October 2014	Scoping hearings and public comment period
December 2014	Council and Commission identify priority issues for inclusion in the amendment
April 2015	FMAT meeting (webinar)
Summer 2015	Issue-specific working groups established; FMAT and working group meetings
August 2015	Status update at August Council meeting (joint with Commission); Joint discussion of FMP Goals & Objectives
Fall 2015/Winter 2016	FMAT begins development of range of alternatives, with input from working groups, Council/Commission, and Advisory Panel
Spring/Summer 2016	FMAT and working groups continue development of alternatives; Council and Commission review FMAT and working group recommendations; Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) development begins
Late 2016	Range of options refined and approved; analysis of alternatives; DEIS development continues
Winter 2017	Council and Commission select preferred options; public hearings
Spring/Summer 2017	Council and Commission consider public comments; final action; Final Environmental Impact Statement developed; rulemaking and comment periods (5-7 months)
Late 2017/Early 2018	Final rule effective