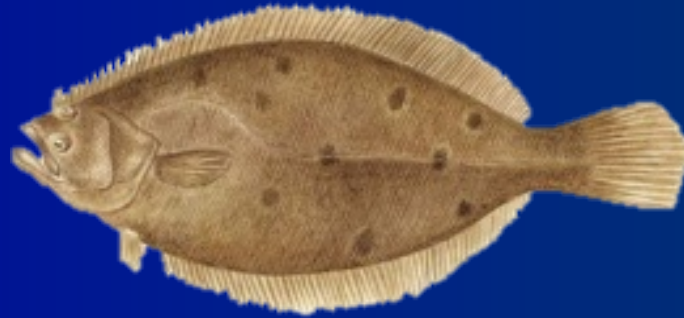


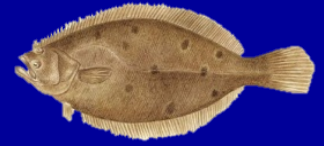
Summer Flounder



2021 Specifications Review
Council and Board

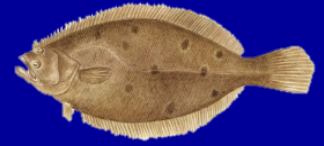
August 11, 2020

2019-2021 Specifications



- Summer flounder 2019 (revised) and 2020-2021 measures adopted in early 2019
 - Based on benchmark assessment peer reviewed at SAW/SARC 66, November 2018
- Council revised risk policy in Dec. 2019, SSC has revised 2021 ABC rec. accordingly

Objectives

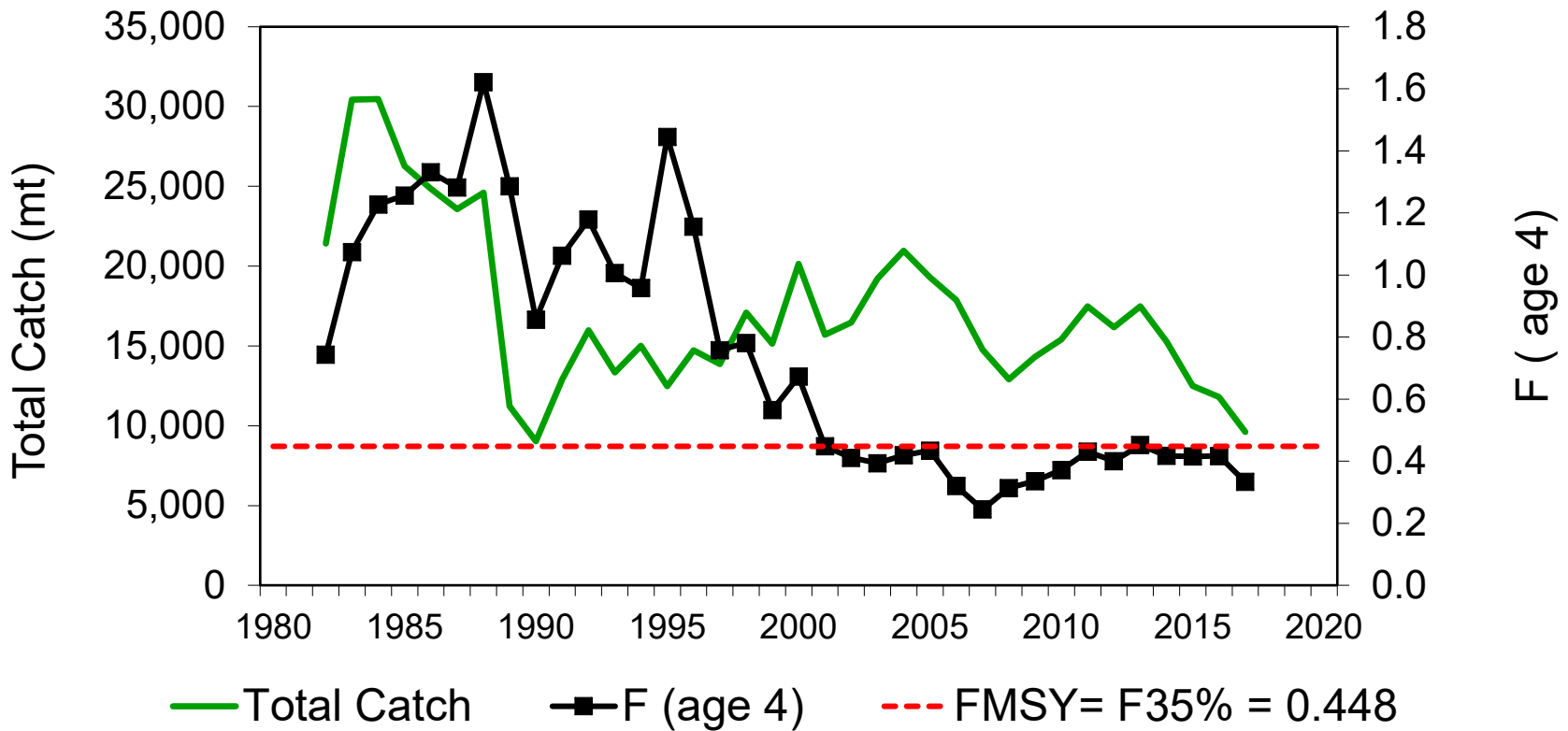


- Review 2021 catch and landings limits; consider changes based on revised 2021 ABC recommendation
- Review commercial management measures and recommend changes if warranted

Stock Status: 2018 Assessment



Total Catch and Fishing Mortality (F)

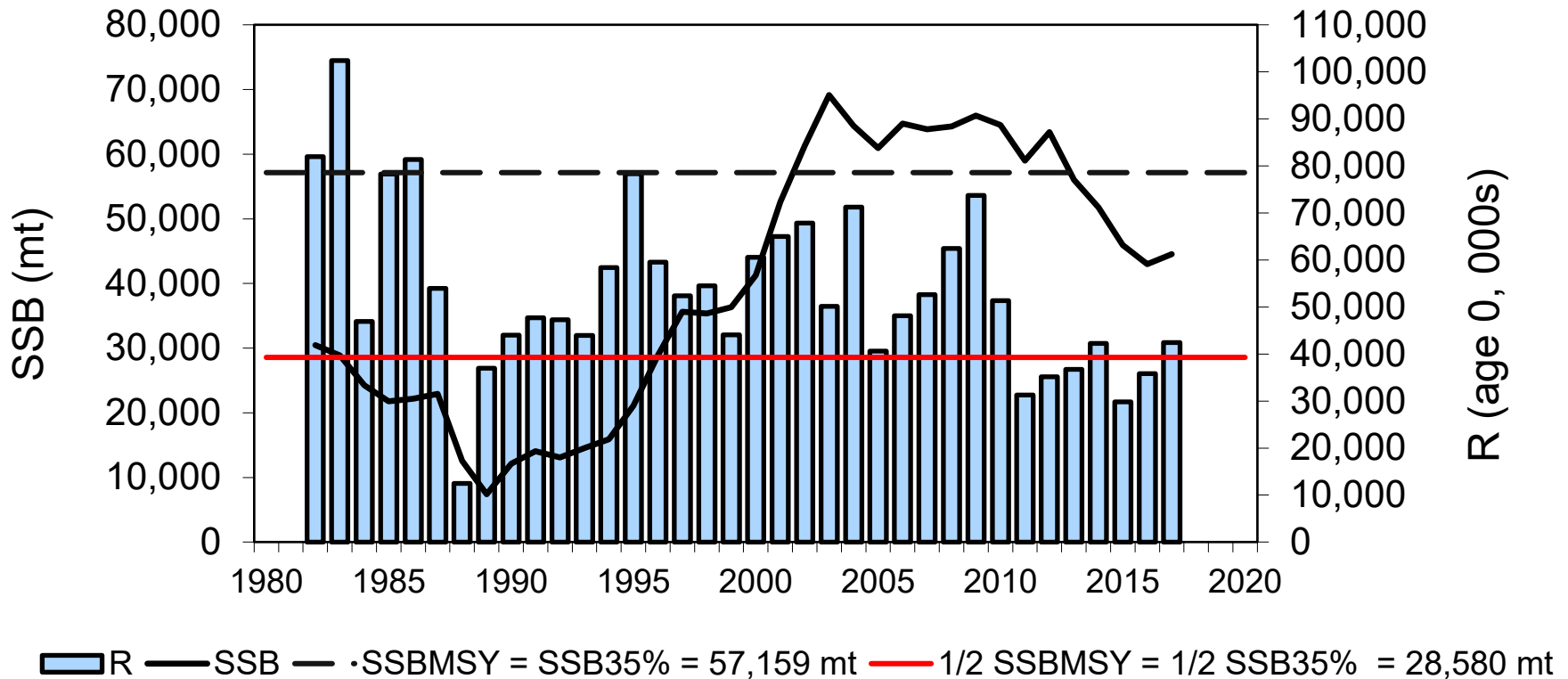


F in 2017 estimated at 25% below threshold (not overfishing)

Stock Status: 2018 Assessment



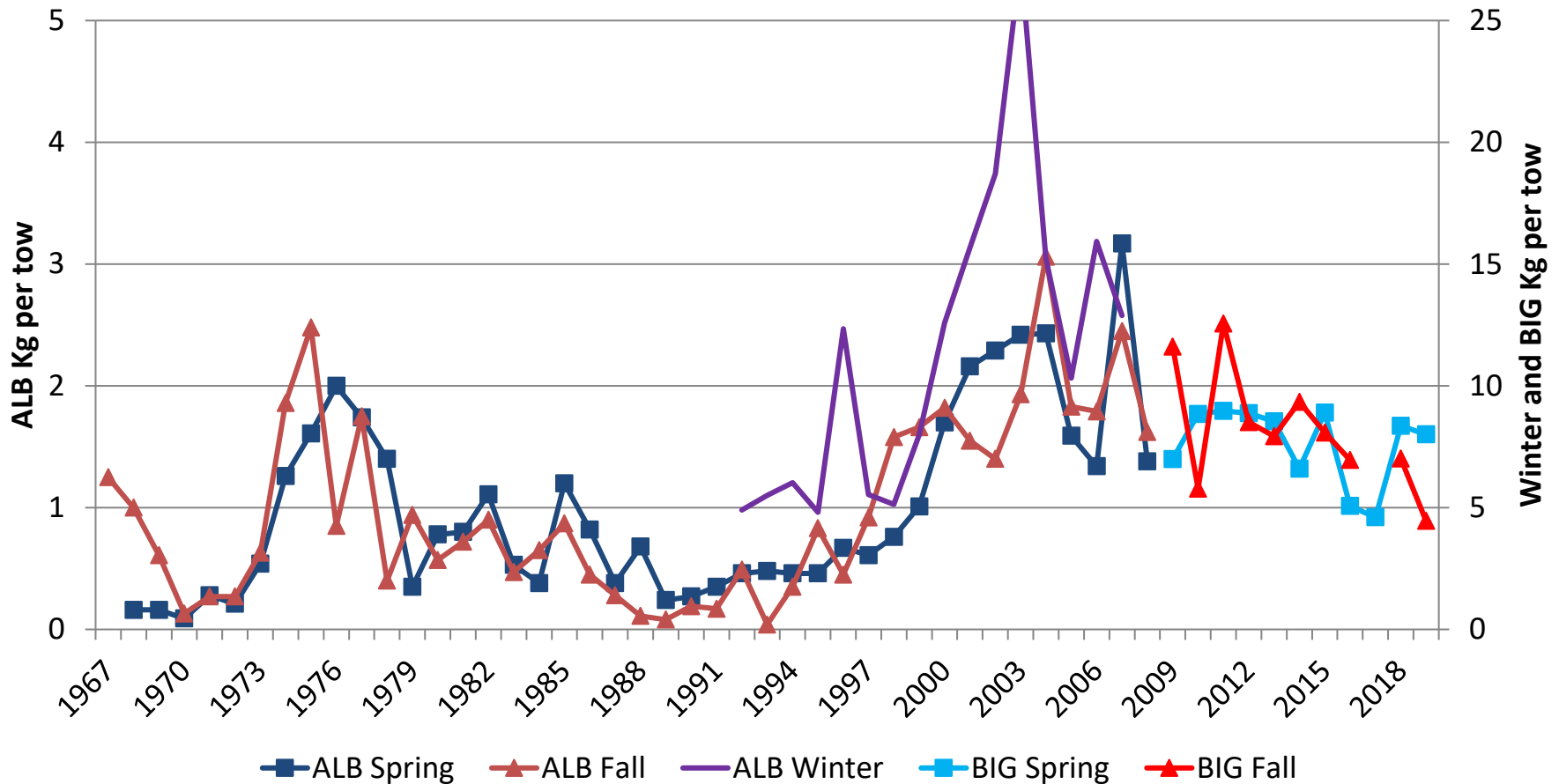
Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) and Recruitment (R)



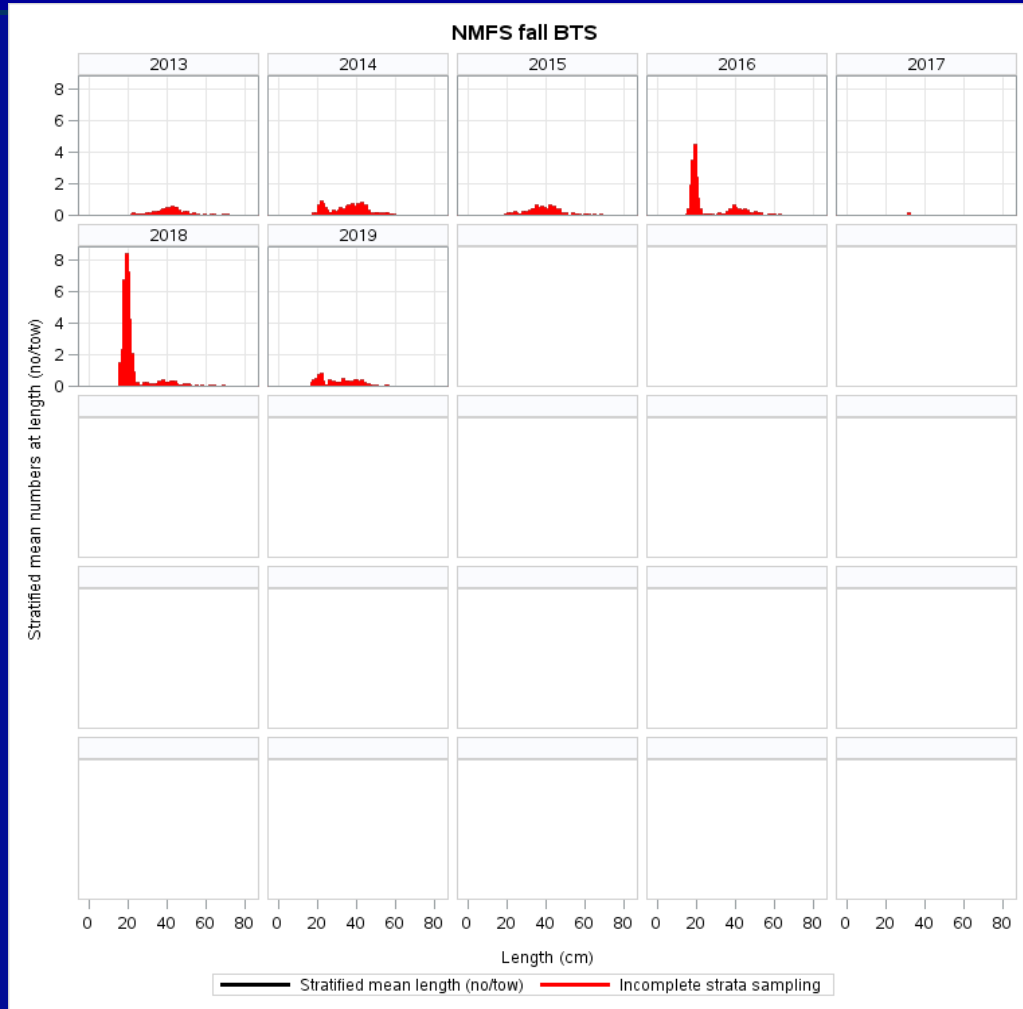
SSB in 2017 estimated at 78% of target (not overfished)

2020 Data Update

NEFSC Summer Flounder Biomass Indices

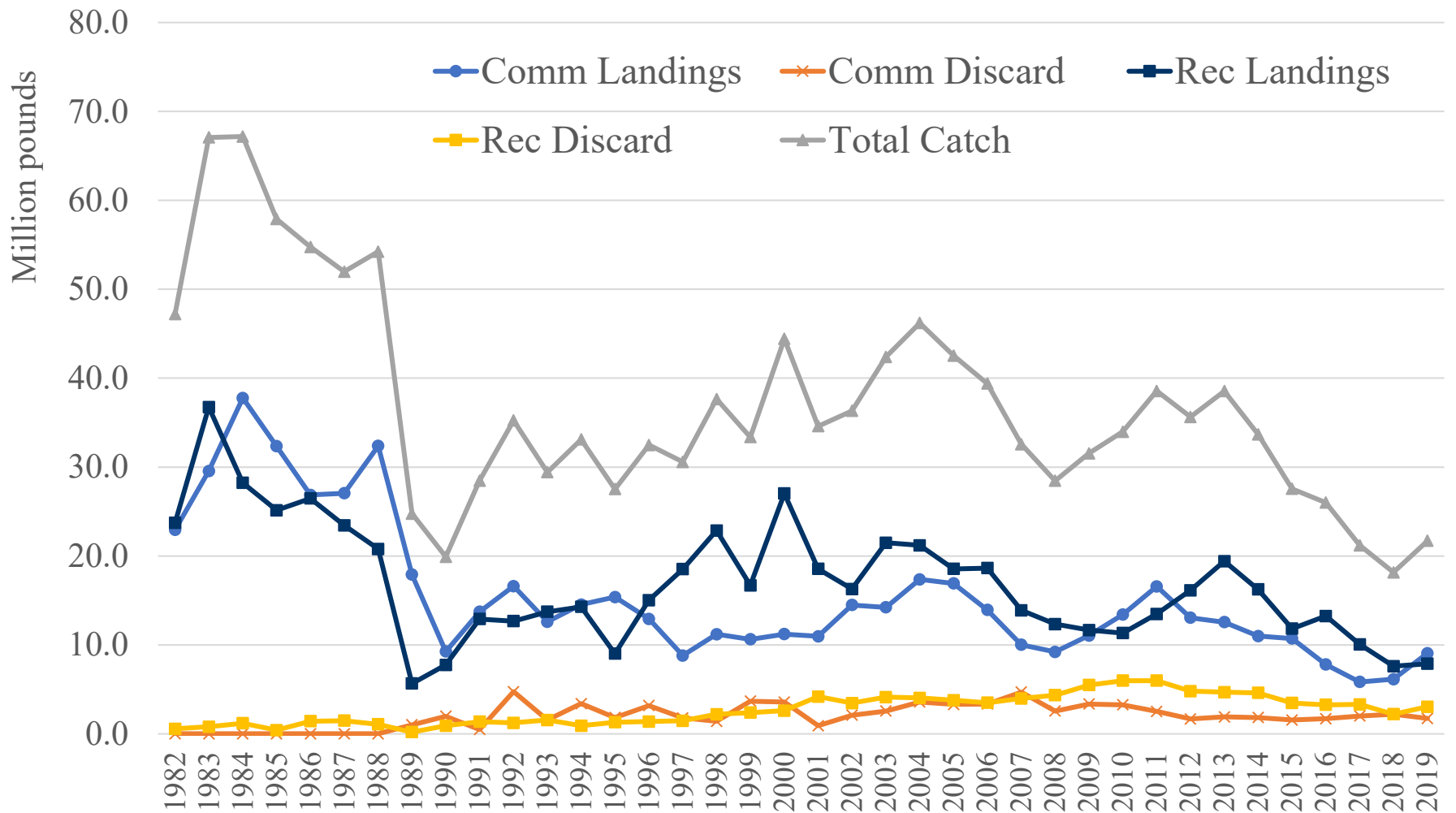
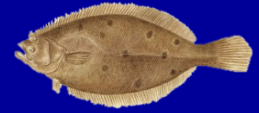


2020 Data Update

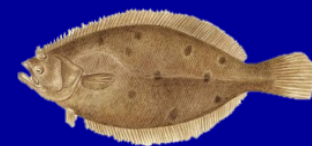


Signs of above-average 2018 year class

Fishery Catch



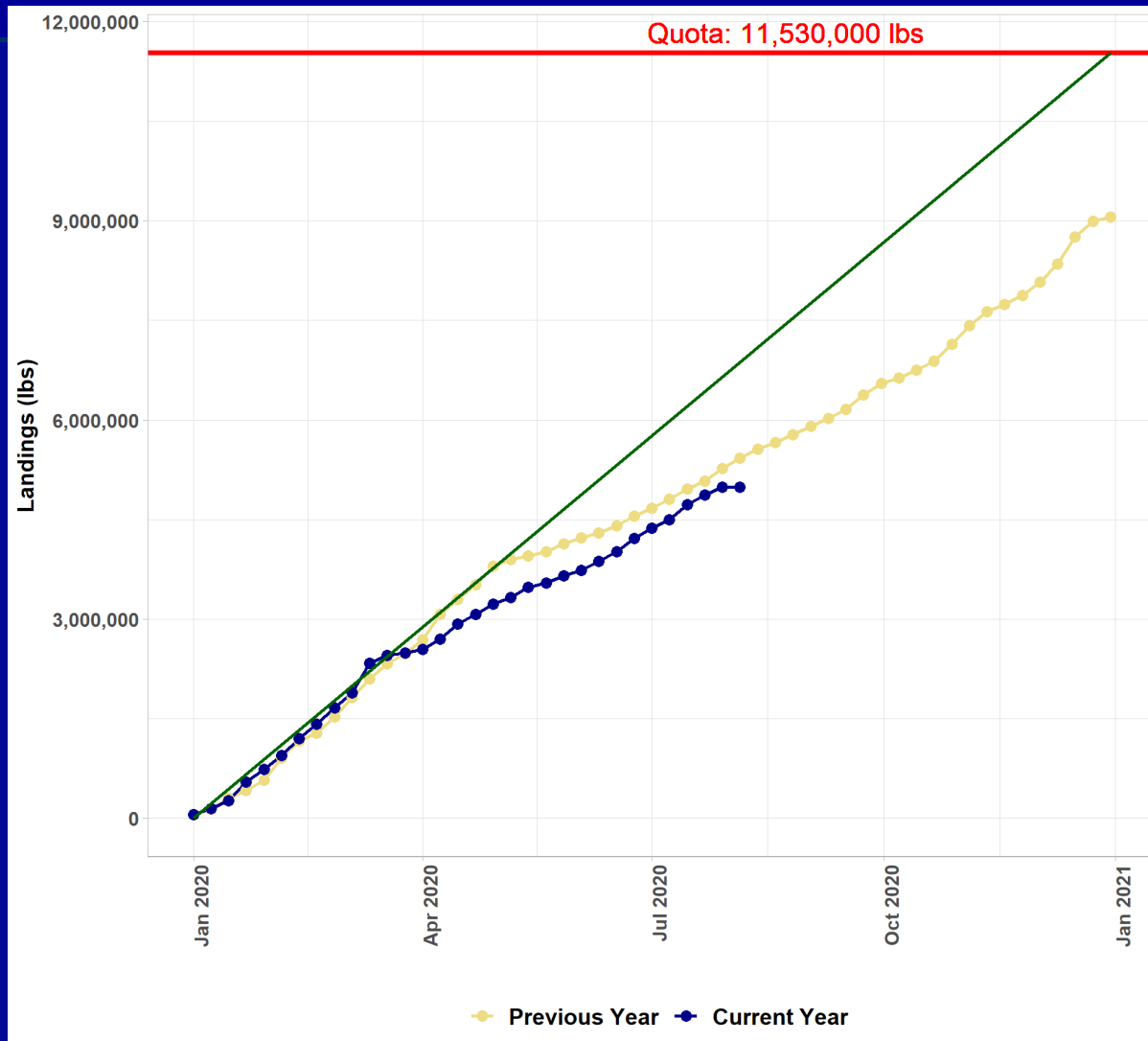
Fishery Performance



Year	Comm. Landings (mil lb)	Comm. Quota (mil lb)	Comm. % Over/Under	Rec. Harvest – OLD MRIP (mil lb)	RHL (mil lb)	Rec. % Over/Under*	Rec. Harvest – NEW MRIP (mil lb)
2015	10.68	11.07	-4%	4.72	7.38	-36%	11.83
2016	7.81	8.12	-4%	6.18	5.42	+14%	13.24
2017	5.83	5.66	+3%	3.19	3.77	-15%	10.06
2018	6.14	6.44	-5%	3.35	4.42	-24%	7.60
2019	9.06	10.98	-17%	--	7.69	1%	7.80
5-yr Avg.			-5%			-6%	

*2015-2018 evaluated using old MRIP data; 2019 with revised MRIP data

2020 Commercial Landings



Commercial landings through August 5, 2020

AP Fishery Performance Report

General Management Issues (All 3 Species)

- Covid-19 impacts
 - For-hire industry attempting to recover from lost opportunities from earlier in season
 - Bait & tackle industries under pressure to make up for lost business before fall
 - For-hire industry tackle shortages
 - Commercial markets & ex-vessel prices down due to restaurant closures

AP Fishery Performance Report

General Management Issues (All 3 Species)

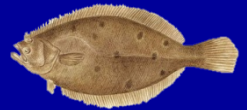
- Additional restrictions on menhaden have increased prey for sharks; increased shark populations possibly impacting abundance and distribution of rec target species
- Concerns with the accuracy of MRIP data
- One questioned methods MRIP uses to scale up effort estimates
- One requested adoption of mandatory private angler electronic recreational reporting

AP Fishery Performance Report

Email Comments (All 3 Species)

- Discard ban/total retention should be implemented; commercial fisheries should be managed based on dollar value per year based on vessel length
- Explore ocean ranching & stock enhancement
- Recreational fisheries should be managed in numbers of fish instead of pounds to increase fish kept and angler satisfaction
 - Evaluate ways to increase angler satisfaction under existing conservation constraints

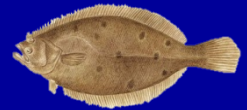
AP Fishery Performance Report



Market and Economic Issues

- Summer flounder ex-vessel price is down due to covid and restaurant closures
 - One report of ~\$1/lb in NY compared to \$3-4 coastwide avg. in recent years
 - Has not been worth it for many vessels to go fishing
 - NY more beholden to fresh fish market than other states
- Email comment: prices stable, markets available

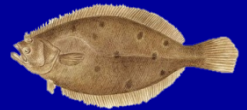
AP Fishery Performance Report



Market and Economic Issues

- One advisor: Medium size summer flounder set market price
 - Imports tend to fit size consumers want and current size limits disadvantage fluke markets
 - Supported lowering minimum size below 14"

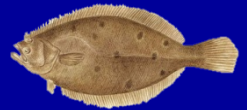
AP Fishery Performance Report



Environmental and General Fishing Trends

- Mixed reports from Long Island
 - Commercial fishermen on north side of Long Island seeing few fish; catch per day is down
 - One member of public disagreed, for-hire season has been good in Long Island Sound (but poor for southern shore and west end)
- Fishing in Rhode Island is slow, poor catch rates
- Eastern shore of VA rec. fishing had slow start due to weather and covid, but effort and catch high in recent weeks

AP Fishery Performance Report



Environmental and General Fishing Trends

- Email comment: Regional depletions of fluke seen in New Jersey and elsewhere (due to concentrated fishing effort?); disparate access to fishery
 - Need better knowledge of migration patterns
 - Rec fishing in NJ good this spring, believe due to covid-related reduced commercial harvest
- Email comment: 2019 recreational fishing in MA was even worse than 2018; few legal size fish inside of 23+ miles

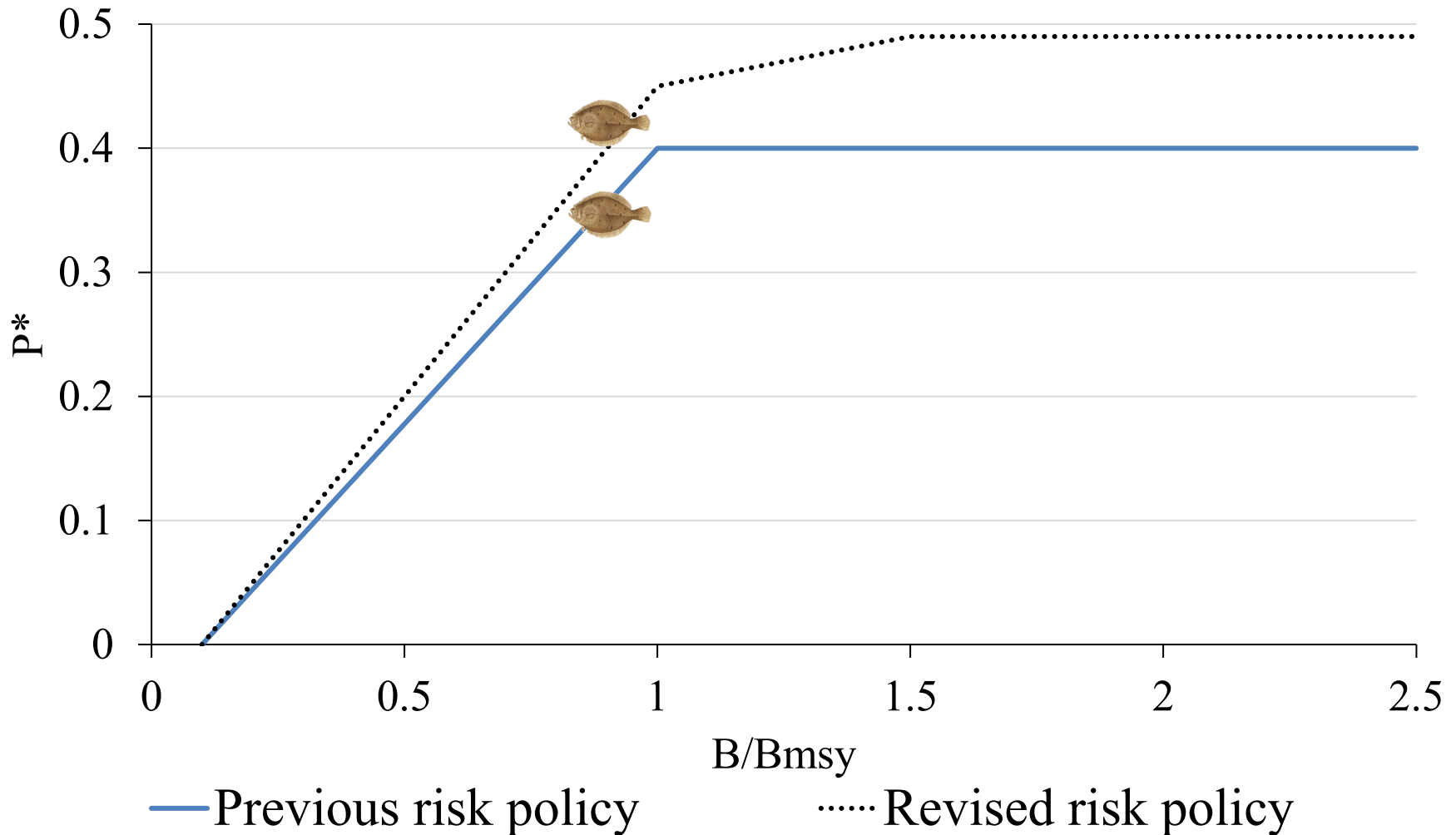
AP Fishery Performance Report



Management Issues

- Questioned MRIP data on landings by recreational mode
 - One said shore mode estimate is too low; two others said they believe it's too high
- One request for consideration of a recreational total length limit for summer flounder with mandatory retention
- Email comment: comm. quota increase will decrease discards

2019 Council Risk Policy Revisions



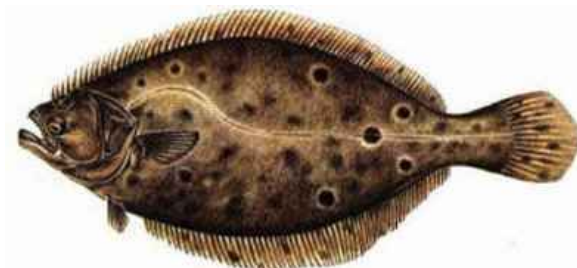
SSC ABC Recommendation



- Recommended revising previously adopted 2021 ABC based on revisions to Council risk policy
- Same OFL, continued 60% CV, proj. 2021
 $B/B_{msy} = 0.88$

	2021: Current	2021: SSC Rec
OFL	31.67 mil lb (14,367 mt)	31.67 mil lb (14,367 mt)
ABC	25.03 mil lb (11,354 mt)	27.11 mil lb (12,297 mt)
P*	0.34	0.39

Summer Flounder (60% OFL CV)



- **Highlights**

- Preliminary indications of an above average 2018 year class
- ABC recommendation of **12,297 mt** in 2021
- Change in Council Risk Policy led to 8% increase in ABC over previous 2021 recommendation
- Increasing abundance of males. Previously few males >10yr old. Now up to 19 yr.
- Summer Flounder MSE promising

- **Uncertainties**

- 2018 Year class and potential effects on stock abundance and discards
- Projections are based on most recent seven years of recruitment in 2018 assessment

- **Considerations for 2021 Management Track Assessment**

- Endorse research recommendations from SAW 66 benchmark review
- Verify strength of 2018 year class using a synthesis of various surveys
- Quantify size, magnitude and uncertainty of discards. Discards may increase in 2020 and 2021 if 2018 year class is above average.

Summer Flounder

2021 Measures – SSC and MC Recommendations

OFL = 31.67 m lb
From stock assessment projections

ABC = 27.11 m lb
Recommended by SSC based on prior 2021 rec. with updated Council risk policy

Landings portion = 20.81 m lb
Same proportion from prior NEFSC provided projections

Discards portion = 6.30 m lb
Same proportion from prior NEFSC provided projections

Commercial landings = 12.49 m lb
60% of ABC landings portion (FMP)

Recreational landings = 8.32 m lb
40% of ABC landings portion (FMP)

Projected commercial discards = 2.14 m lb
34% of ABC discards portion, based on 2015-2017 average % of total discards by sector (revised MRIP)

Projected recreational discards = 4.16 m lb
66% of ABC discards portion, based on 2015-2017 average % of total discards by sector (revised MRIP)

Commercial ACL = 14.63 m lb
Commercial landings allocation plus proj. commercial discards

Recreational ACL = 12.48 m lb
Recreational landings allocation plus proj. recreational discards

Commercial ACT = 14.63 m lb
Staff rec, Set equal to ACL; no deduction for management uncertainty

Recreational ACT = 12.48 m lb
Staff rec, Set equal to ACL; no deduction for management uncertainty

Commercial Quota = 12.49 m lb
ACT minus commercial discards (before overage deductions)

State Quotas

Recreational Harvest Limit = 8.32 m lb
ACT minus recreational discards

Annual Catch Targets

- MC recommended keeping ACTs = ACLs with no deduction for management uncertainty given recent fishery performance

Current vs. Recommended 2021 Catch and Landings Limits

 2021 Current (mil lb)	2021 SSC & MC Recs. (mil lb)	% Change	
OFL	31.67	31.67	0%
ABC	25.03	27.11	+8%
Commercial ACL = ACT	13.53	14.63	
Recreational ACL = ACT	11.51	12.48	
Commercial Quota	11.53	12.49	
Recreational Harvest Limit	7.69	8.32	

Commercial Allocation Revisions Pending Implementation for Jan. 1

State	Existing Allocations		Revised Allocation System (Pending NMFS Approval and Implementation)		
	Allocation (%)	Status Quo Quotas under 11.53 mil lb quota (2020)	Allocation of baseline quota ≤9.55 mil lb (%)	Allocation of additional quota beyond 9.55 mil lb (%)	State Quotas under revised alloc. and 12.49 mil lb quota (2021 staff rec)
ME	0.04756	5,484	0.04756	0.333	14,342
NH	0.00046	53	0.00046	0.333	9,844
MA	6.82046	786,399	6.82046	12.375	1,015,179
RI	15.68298	1,808,248	15.68298	12.375	1,861,550
CT	2.25708	260,241	2.25708	12.375	579,376
NY	7.64699	881,698	7.64699	12.375	1,094,113
NJ	16.72499	1,928,391	16.72499	12.375	1,961,062
DE	0.01779	2,051	0.01779	0.333	11,499
MD	2.03910	235,108	2.03910	12.375	558,559
VA	21.31676	2,457,822	21.31676	12.375	2,399,576
NC	27.44584	3,164,505	27.44584	12.375	2,984,903
Total	100	11,530,000	100	100	12,490,001

MC Recommendations: Commercial Measures

- **No changes to:**

- Minimum fish size (14")
- Seasonal mesh size requirement poundage thresholds (200 lb Nov 1-Apr 30; 100 lb May 1-Oct 31)

Minimum Mesh Size Regulations

- Minimum mesh size (5.5" diamond/6.0" square)
 - MC recommends no changes for 2021
 - Supports **further evaluation in 2021** of phasing out or modifying 6.0" square mesh size, based on results of Hasbrouck et al. 2018 (as previously discussed by MC)
 - Concern about retention of undersized fish with 6.0" square
 - Additional analysis needed; Council/Board identified as lower near-term priority given other actions

Staff Recommendation: Small Mesh Exemption Program

- SMEP allows authorized small mesh vessels to land more than 200 lb of summer flounder east of longitude 72° 30.0'W, Nov. 1 - April 30
- FMP requires review of observer data to determine whether these vessels are discarding more than 10% of their summer flounder catch

Staff Recommendation: Small Mesh Exemption Program

Criteria		Nov. 1, 2012 – Apr. 30, 2013	Nov. 1, 2013 – Apr. 30, 2014	Nov. 1, 2014 – April 30, 2015	Nov. 1, 2015 – April 30, 2016	Nov. 1, 2016 – April 30, 2017	Nov. 1, 2017 – April 30, 2018	Nov. 1, 2018 – April 30, 2019
A	Observed trips with at least one catch record east of 72° 30' W Longitude	395	382	401	391	555	724	646
B	That met the criteria in row A <u>and</u> used small mesh at some point during their trip	139	113	172	252	376	364	354
C	That met the criteria in rows A-B <u>and</u> landed more than 200 pounds summer flounder on whole trip	63	35	72	92	150	135	164
D	That met the criteria in rows A-C <u>and</u> discarded >10% of summer flounder catch east of 72° 30' W Longitude	8	7	21	18	36	47	53
E	% of observed trips with catch east of 72° 30' W Longitude that also used small mesh, landed >200 pounds of summer flounder, and discarded >10% of summer flounder catch (row D/row A)	2.00%	1.80%	5.20%	4.60%	6.50%	6.50%	8.20%
F	Total summer flounder discards (pounds) from trips meeting criteria in A-D	1,472	2,140	14,579	16,470	14,640	33,868	18,186
G	Total summer flounder landings (pounds) from trips meeting criteria in A-D	4,342	5,876	15,224	23,295	25,472	76,780	59,960
H	Total catch (pounds) from trips meeting criteria in A-D	5,814	8,016	29,804	39,763	40,113	110,648	69,145

MC Comments: Small Mesh Exemption Program

- Increase in percent of observed SMEP trips discarding >10% of summer flounder likely driven by lower quotas in recent analyzed time frames
 - Likely that 2019-2021 quota increases will reduce discards
 - Data not yet available through April 2020 (will be incomplete due to covid)
 - Participation in program may be increasing, but amount of discards per trip appears stable
- Recommends no changes for 2021 but continue to monitor discard trends

Flynet Exemption

- Vessels fishing with two-seam otter trawl flynet are exempt from the minimum mesh size requirements.
- Exempt flynets have large mesh in the wings that measure 8 to 64 inches, the belly of the net has 35 or more meshes that are at least 8 inches, and the mesh decreases in size throughout the body of the net, sometimes to 2 inches or smaller.

Flynet Exemption

- NC flynet fishery analyzed annually
- No summer flounder landed in NC flynet fishery in last 5 years
- General decrease in flynet landings in recent years largely due to shoaling at Oregon Inlet
- No MC concerns with NC flynet fishery

Flynet Exemption

- Advisor comment from early 2020: flynet exemption is being used more commonly than understood by MC
- Used by many vessels to increase retention of fluke on multispecies trips, using “high rise” nets that fall under the flynet definition
- Requests change in definition to include 4-seam nets in addition to 2-seam nets

MC Discussion: Flynet Exemption

- Need to better understand gear configuration of flynet and high rise nets as related to this exemption
- Insight from Emerson Hasbrouck: Very few, if any SNE/Mid-Atlantic fishermen in offshore mixed winter trawl fishery use 2 seam nets
- May indicate possible compliance/enforcement issue if vessels using nets outside flynet definition are using exemption, but more info needed
- Expansion of definition to 4 seam nets may increase use of exemption; consequences should be explored
- MC supports further data evaluation; input from industry and gear experts before recommending changes

Advisory Panel Jul. 29 Comments (Specifications for All 3 Species)

- Concern with plan for dealing with NEFSC survey cancellations and lack of trawl survey data for 2020
 - Observers should not be required on boats at times when surveys are cancelled
- Discards should be addressed by lowering min. fish sizes paired with a universal 5" mesh net for all 3 species
- Risk policy should allow for even greater ABC increase to address recent E.O. on seafood production

Advisory Panel Email Comments (Specifications for All 3 Species)

- Total retention strategies should be used in comm. and rec fisheries
- Allow commercial sector to retain 13-inch fluke
- One opposed to lowering mesh sizes or lowering size limits (smaller fish for these species don't have great market value)

Recommendation Summary

- Revise 2021 catch limits using new risk policy for ABC; same basis for other limits
- No changes to 2021 commercial measures but further evaluation of mesh issues & exemptions

	2021 SSC & MC Recs. (mil lb)
OFL	31.67
ABC	27.11
Commercial ACL = ACT	14.63
Recreational ACL = ACT	12.48
Commercial Quota	12.49
Recreational Harvest Limit	8.32