



**Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Monitoring  
Committee Webinar Meeting Summary - Summer Flounder  
July 24, 2017**

**Monitoring Committee Attendees:** Tiffany Vidal (MA DMF), Greg Wojcik (CT DEEP), John Maniscalco (NY DEC), Peter Clarke (NJ F&W), Rich Wong (DE DFW), Steve Doctor (MD DNR), Joe Cimino (VMRC), Todd Daniel VanMiddlesworth (NC DMF), Kiley Dancy (MAFMC staff), Kirby Rootes-Murdy (ASMFC staff), John Carmichael (SAFMC staff), Mark Terceiro (NMFS NEFSC)

**Additional Attendees:** Morgan Brunbauer (NY DEC), Katie Almeida (Town Dock), Mike Ruccio (NMFS GARFO), Jim (no last name provided)

**General Comments**

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The Monitoring Committee (MC) does not currently have any formal control rules for the recommendation of Annual Catch Targets (ACTs). The MC recognizes the need to develop ACT control rules or guidelines for addressing management uncertainty in the future, which would be applicable to all three species.

**Summer Flounder Comments and Recommendations**

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The MC agreed with the staff recommendation for no changes to the currently implemented Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) and ACTs for 2018 (Table 1), based on the belief that the system is working as intended with catch generally constrained to the Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) and sector-specific ACLs. However, concerns were raised about the increased 2018 ACL/ACT given that overfishing is occurring, the stock is close to being overfished, and most of the coastwide indices show a decline in abundance. In addition, non-compliance in the New Jersey recreational fishery and the potential implications of the revised MRIP estimates are important sources of uncertainty for the performance of this fishery.

For the commercial fishery, the monitoring and fishery closure system is timely and has typically been successful in holding the landings close to the quota. States should continue to be diligent in managing their state quotas. The MC discussed whether commercial discards currently present management uncertainty issues that would warrant reconsideration of the commercial ACT. While the commercial discard estimates in the assessment are fairly precise, there are some uncertainties regarding whether fishing behavior differs during observed and unobserved trips, as well as the self-reported nature of Vessel Trip Report discards. The MC does not believe commercial discards represent a substantial management uncertainty concern at this time, but will continue to monitor commercial discards and evaluate fishery performance relative to the commercial ACL.

The MC also recommended maintaining no reduction from the recreational ACL to the recreational ACT for 2018. There was some discussion of recommending a reduced recreational ACT for 2018, given the variation in recreational landings over the past three years (2014-2016) under similar management measures, and additional elements of recreational management uncertainty. However, the MC noted that Accountability Measures (AMs) have not been triggered for the

recreational summer flounder fishery, and in addition, that recreational management uncertainty is best considered during the recreational measures setting process in the fall due to directional uncertainty with various management uncertainty elements.

The MC and Technical Committee (TC) will need to carefully consider development of recreational measures for 2018, given the low recreational harvest limit and the lack of in-season closure authority for the recreational fishery. The MC and TC continue to work toward improved approaches to developing recreational measures that account for the uncertainty inherent in the recreational data. In coordination with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Management Board, the MC and TC plan to continue developing a proposed policy of less reactionary recreational measures adjustments, providing for stability in the measures from year to year if projected harvest is within a to-be-determined measure of uncertainty from the following year's harvest limit. The MC will consider management uncertainty when recommending recreational measures this fall. For 2018 recreational measures, **the MC recommends that any potential liberalizations available not be taken.** The MC is also concerned with revisions to the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) time series and will need to carefully consider the management implications associated with those changes once more information is available about potential management impacts.

The MC agreed with the staff recommendation that no changes be made to the commercial minimum fish size (14-inch total length), gear requirements, and exemption programs.

**Table 1:** Currently implemented 2017-2018 summer flounder catch and landings limits. The SSC and Monitoring Committee recommend no changes to the implemented measures for 2018. Numbers may not add precisely due to unit conversions and rounding.

Management Measure	2017 (current)		2018		Basis for 2017-2018 Measures
	<i>mil lb.</i>	<i>mt</i>	mil lb.	mt	
<b>OFL</b>	16.76	7,600	18.69	8,476	Stock assessment projections
<b>ABC</b>	11.30	5,125	13.23	5,999	Stock assessment projections/SSC recommendation
ABC Landings Portion	9.43	4,278	11.05	5,010	Stock assessment projections
ABC Discards Portion	1.87	847	2.18	989	Stock assessment projections
<b>Commercial ACL</b>	6.57	2,982	7.70	3,491	60% of ABC landings portion (per FMP allocation) + 49% of ABC discards portion
Commercial ACT	6.57	2,982	7.70	3,491	Monitoring Committee recommendation: no deduction from ACL for management uncertainty
Projected Comm. Discards	0.92	415	1.07	485	49% of ABC discards portion, based on 2013-2015 average % discards by sector
<b>Commercial Quota</b>	5.66	2,567	6.63	3,006	Commercial ACT, less projected commercial discards
<b>Recreational ACL</b>	4.72	2,143	5.53	2,508	40% of ABC landings portion (per FMP allocation) + 51% of ABC discards portion
Recreational ACT	4.72	2,143	5.53	2,508	Monitoring Committee rec.; no deduction from ACL for management uncertainty
Projected Rec. Discards	0.95	432	1.11	504	51% of ABC discards portion, based on 2013-2015 average % discards by sector
<b>Recreational Harvest Limit</b>	3.77	1,711	4.42	2,004	Recreational ACT, less projected recreational discards