

Comprehensive Summer Flounder Management Amendment

Scoping Guide

September 2014



WHAT IS SCOPING?

Scoping is the process of identifying issues, potential impacts, and reasonable alternatives associated with a particular management issue. It provides the first and best opportunity for the public to make suggestions or to raise issues and concerns before development of an amendment begins.

This is the public's opportunity to inform the Council and Commission about changes observed in the fishery, actions the public feels should or should not be taken in terms of management, regulation, enforcement, research, development, enhancement, and any other concerns the public has about the resource or the fishery.

Your comments early in the amendment development process will help us identify management priorities and develop effective alternatives that address issues of public concern in a thorough and appropriate manner.

What is Scoping Not?

The measures outlined in this document are not a list of "preferred alternatives" or measures that will necessarily be included in the amendment. No management measures have yet been analyzed for their effectiveness or impacts. Please comment on which management measures may or may not be useful or practical and explain your rationale. Please also comment on any other issues that should be addressed in the amendment. The list of relevant issues may be expanded as suggestions are offered during the scoping process.

INTRODUCTION

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission have proposed to develop a Comprehensive Summer Flounder Amendment. The amendment will involve a review of all aspects of the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP) related to summer flounder. Specifically, the Council and Commission will consider whether modifications to the FMP's goals, objectives, and management strategies for summer flounder are needed.

The Council and Commission would like your input on the range of issues and information that should be considered during development of this amendment, including the specific issues identified in this document, as well as any other issues that might be of concern to you regarding summer flounder management.

AMENDMENT OBJECTIVES

- 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 the FMP goals and objectives for summer flounder management, and
- Modify management strategies and measures as necessary to achieve those goals and objectives.

WHY IS THIS ACTION BEING PROPOSED?

Stakeholder Input

A number of issues and concerns relative to summer flounder management have been raised by Commission and Council members, advisors, and other interested stakeholders. The Council received significant input on summer flounder management during the Council's Visioning and Strategic Planning process, conducted from 2011-2013. During this process, input gathered from surveys, port meetings, and other comment opportunities indicated that there was significant stakeholder interest in re-examining and updating many of the management strategies and measures currently in place.

Changing Fishery Conditions

In addition, the Commission and Council have also proposed this action to evaluate the need for management response to changing conditions in the summer flounder fishery. This includes addressing apparent shifts in the distribution and center of biomass for the summer flounder stock (possibly related to the effects of rebuilding and/or climate change), as well as changing social and economic drivers for these fisheries.

LEARN MORE

Find additional information and background documents about the amendment at:

www.mafmc.org/actions/summer-flounder-amendment

POTENTIAL ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Public comment is sought on a range of issues that may be considered in the draft amendment. The public is encouraged to submit comments on the issues listed below as well as any other issues that should be addressed in the amendment. Please refer to the full scoping document for complete details and about each option (<http://www.mafmc.org/s/Summer-Flounder-Scoping-Document.pdf>).

1. FMP Goals and Objectives

The amendment may consider revisions to some or all of the objectives current management objectives for the FMP, listed below:

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.

2. Quota Allocation between the Commercial and Recreational Fisheries

The amendment may consider revisions to the existing quota allocations, which are set at 60% for the commercial fishery and 40% for the recreational fishery.

3. Commercial Management Measures and Strategies

Commercial management measures may be considered for revision, including, but not limited to:

- Commercial fishing gear requirements and restrictions
- Minimum fish size requirements
- Possession limit and trigger requirements
- Time/area closures and exemption programs
- Licensing, permitting, and fleet capacity relative to stock size
- Commercial quota allocation strategies
- Landings flexibility (regional, coastwide, other)

4. Recreational Management Measures and Strategies

Recreational management measures may be considered for revision, including, but not limited to:

- 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 and/or management strategies specific to private recreational anglers
- Recreational quota allocation strategies (by state, fishing sector, other)

5. Discards in the Commercial and Recreational Fisheries

To address concerns over discard rates as raised by managers and stakeholders, this amendment may consider measures to reduce discards in the commercial and recreational fisheries.

6. Other Issues

- **Ecosystem, Habitat, Bycatch, and Protected Species Issues:** This amendment may consider measures to address ecosystem, habitat and protected species issues associated with the summer flounder fishery.
- **Data Collection Requirements and Protocols:** To address developments in technology and communication systems, this amendment may consider changes to data collection requirements and protocols.

GET INVOLVED

ATTEND A SCOPING HEARING

Public scoping hearings will be held on the following dates:

Date and Time	Location	Contact
Monday September 29, 2014 6:30 p.m.	Kingsborough Community College 2001 Oriental Blvd., Building T3, Room 303, Brooklyn, NY 11235	Kirby Rootes-Murdy
Monday September 29, 2014 6 p.m.	Somers Point City Hall 1 West New Jersey Avenue, Somers Point, NJ 08244	Kiley Dancy
Tuesday September 30, 2014 5:30 p.m.	Montauk Library 871 Montauk Highway, Montauk, NY 11954	Kirby Rootes-Murdy
Tuesday September 30, 2014 6 p.m.	Belmar Municipal Court 601 Main St. Belmar, NJ 07719	Kiley Dancy
Wednesday October 1, 2014 7 p.m.	CT DEEP Marine Headquarters Boating Education Center (Bldg 3), 333 Ferry Rd, Old Lyme, CT 06371	Kirby Rootes-Murdy
Wednesday October 1, 2014 6:30 p.m.	NYDEC Bureau of Marine Resources 205 North Belle Mead Road, Suite 1, East Setauket, NY 11733	Kiley Dancy
Thursday October 2, 2014 6 p.m.	Ocean Pines Library 11107 Cathell Rd, Berlin, MD 21811	Kiley Dancy
Thursday October 2, 2014 5 p.m.	Bourne Fire Station, #3 Meeting Room 53 Meetinghouse Lane, Sagamore Beach, MA 02561	Kirby Rootes-Murdy
Monday October 6, 2014 6 p.m.	DNREC Auditorium 89 Kings Hwy, Dover, DE 19901	Kiley Dancy
Wednesday October 8, 2014 6 p.m.	University of Rhode Island Bay Campus Corless Auditorium South Ferry Rd, Narragansett, RI 02882	Kiley Dancy
Tuesday October 14, 2014 6 p.m.	Virginia Marine Resources Commission 4th Floor Meeting Room, 2600 Washington Avenue, Newport News, VA 23607	Kiley Dancy
Wednesday October 15, 2014 6 p.m.	NCDMF Pamlico District Office 943 Washington Square Mall, Highway 17, Washington, NC 27889	Kiley Dancy
Tuesday October 21, 2014 6 p.m.	Washington Marriott at Metro Center 775 12 th St NW, Washington, DC 20005	Kiley Dancy
Wednesday October 22, 2014 6 p.m.	Internet webinar: Connect to the webinar by going to http://mafmc.adobeconnect.com/summerflounder_scoping/ and selecting "enter as guest."	Kirby Rootes-Murdy

SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS:

In addition to providing comments at any of the fourteen scheduled scoping hearings, you may submit written comments by **11:59 PM, Eastern Standard Time, on October 31, 2014**. Written comments may be sent by any of the following methods:

1. EMAIL: nmfs.gar.FlukeAmendment@noaa.gov
2. MAIL or FAX:

Chris Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
North State Street, Suite 201
Dover, DE 19901
FAX: 302.674.5399

Bob Beal, Executive Director
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1050 North Highland Street, Suite 200A-N
Arlington, VA 22201
FAX: 703.842.0741

3. ONLINE: www.mafmc.org/comments/summer-flounder-amendment

Please include "Summer Flounder Amendment Scoping Comments" in the subject line if using email or fax or on the outside of the envelope if submitting written comments.

All comments, regardless of submission method, will be compiled into a single document for review and consideration by both the Council and Commission. **Please do not send separate comments to the Council and Commission.**

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Following the initial phase of information gathering and public comment, the Council and Commission will evaluate potential management alternatives for inclusion in the amendment.

The Council and Commission will then develop a draft amendment, incorporating the identified management alternatives, for public review. The Council will also prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to analyze the impacts of the management alternatives being considered as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). A draft EIS will be distributed for public review.

During a 45-day comment period which will include public hearings, the public may comment on any aspect of the draft EIS. Following a review of the comments, the Council will then choose preferred management measures for submission with the Final EIS to the Secretary of Commerce for publishing a proposed and then final rule, both of which have additional comment periods.

