



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

*Working towards healthy, self-sustaining populations of all Atlantic coast fish species, or successful restoration
well in progress by the year 2015*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 10, 2005

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ASMFC Approves Winter Flounder Amendment 1 Plan Seeks to Rebuild Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Stock and Sustain Gulf of Maine Stock

Alexandria, VA – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Inshore Stocks of Winter Flounder. The Amendment revises management goals, objectives, biological reference points, and rebuilding goals for winter flounder populations in the inshore portions of the Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) and Gulf of Maine (GOM) stock areas. The Amendment also updates commercial and recreational management measures for both stock components.

Amendment 1 responds to the latest stock assessment information and is the product of extensive preparation, deliberation, and public comment. Scientific advice indicates that the SNE/MA stock of winter flounder is overfished and overfishing is occurring. Further, a reduction in fishing mortality is needed to rebuild the spawning stock biomass to sustainable levels. While the GOM stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring, reports of localized depletion in inshore areas north of Massachusetts remain a concern.

Amendment 1 establishes the following biological reference points to restore the SNE/MA stock and maintain the status of the GOM stock:

Reference Points	SNE/MA	GOM
F Target	$F_{msy}=0.24$	$F_{msy}=0.32$
F Threshold	$F_{msy}=0.32$	$F_{msy}=0.43$
SSB Target	$B_{msy}=30,100$ mt	$B_{msy}=4,100$ mt
SSB Threshold	$\frac{1}{2}SSB_{msy}=15,050$ mt	$\frac{1}{2}SSB_{msy}=2,050$ mt

For the SNE/MA stock, recreational measures include a 12-inch minimum size limit, a 10-fish creel limit, and a 60-day open season. Twenty days of March and April must be closed and the 60-day open season cannot be divided into more than two periods. For the GOM stock, recreational measures include a 12-inch minimum size limit, an eight-fish creel limit, and no requirements for closed seasons.

Amendment 1 anticipates a large reduction in fishing mortality for the offshore commercial fishery with implementation of the New England Fishery Management Council's Amendment 13 to Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish. To complement these actions in state waters, Amendment 1 establishes commercial management measures of a 12-inch minimum size limit and a minimum 6.5-inch diamond or square

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species.

mesh size for the SNE/MA stock. States in the region must also retain their existing commercial season closures. Additionally, states have the option to impose more conservative regulations.

For the GOM stock, the Amendment establishes a 12-inch minimum size limit, a mesh size consistent with that in the EEZ adjacent to state waters (currently 6.5-inch diamond or square mesh), and maintenance of existing commercial season closures.

States have until March 15, 2005 to submit their proposals for plan implementation. The Board will meet in May 2005 to review Technical Committee comments on the proposals and discuss their approval. Implementation of the provisions of Amendment 1 will be required by July 31, 2005. Annual compliance reports will be due on November 1 of each year, beginning in 2006. Copies of Amendment 1 are available via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org or by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400. For more information, please contact Lydia Munger, FMP Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 or lmunger@asmfc.org.