



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

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ASMFC Winter Flounder Board Initiates Addendum *Addendum Considers Increases to Commercial Trip Limit & Expansion of Recreational Season for Gulf of Maine State Waters Fisheries*

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s Winter Flounder Management Board has initiated the development of Draft Addendum II to Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for the Inshore Stocks of Winter Flounder. The Draft Addendum will propose changes to the commercial and recreational management requirements for the Gulf of Maine (GOM) stock in response to updated stock status information and recent federal action to significantly increase the GOM winter flounder state waters annual catch limit (ACL) subcomponent.

A peer reviewed stock assessment (SAW/SARC 52) of GOM winter flounder was completed in 2011, which changed the stock’s status to not experiencing overfishing, although the overfished status could not be determined. NOAA Fisheries responded to this finding by more than doubling the ACL for the remainder of 2011 fishing year. The ACL was nearly doubled again for the 2012 fishing year. The state waters ACL-subcomponent for 2012 fishing year has increased to 272 mt, a 450% increase from 60 mt in 2010.

The Commission manages winter flounder under Addendum I. Approved in May 2009, the Addendum required an 11% reduction in fishing mortality for the recreational sector and a 250 pound possession limit for non-federally permitted commercial fishermen (estimated 31% reduction in harvest). Recreational reductions were achieved through a combination of possession limits, seasons, or other measures. These actions were taken in response to the results of the 2008 benchmark assessment which determined the GOM stock was likely to be overfished with overfishing likely to be occurring. The Addendum’s provisions were also intended to complement federal management measures on groundfish stocks, including winter flounder, in offshore waters (3 – 200 miles).

Given the significant increase in state waters ACL-subcomponent for the 2012 fishing year, the Draft Addendum will consider modifying Addendum I’s GOM winter flounder requirements by increasing the commercial trip limit from 250 pounds to 500 pounds limit and expanding the recreational season to a year-round fishery. The Draft Addendum will include an annual specifications process to allow the Board to respond to changes in stock condition. The Board tasked the Technical Committee with evaluating the impacts of relaxing the recreational and commercial measures on state water landings. The Board will review the Technical Committee Report prior to action to approve the Draft Addendum for Public Comment in the next few weeks. For more information, please contact Toni Kern, Acting ISFMP Director, at tkerns@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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 diadromous species.