



Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Advisory Panel Webinar

November 10, 2020

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council's) Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Advisory Panel (AP) met jointly with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (Commission's) Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass AP via webinar on November 10, 2020. The objectives of this meeting were to review and provide feedback on staff recommendations for 2021 recreational measures for these three species.

Please note: Advisor comments described below are not necessarily consensus or majority statements. Some advisors also provided written comments which are included in the briefing materials for the December 2020 joint Council and Board meeting (available at: <http://www.mafmc.org/meetings>).

Council Advisory Panel members present: Katie Almeida (MA), Carl Benson (NJ), Bonnie Brady (NY), Jeff Deem (VA), James Fletcher (NC), Carl Forsberg (NY), Howard King (MD), Michael Pirri (CT), Michael Plaia (CT)*, Bob Pride (VA), Chris Spies (NY), Harvey Yenkinson (PA), Doug Zemeckis (NJ)

Commission Advisory Panel members present: Frank Blount (RI), Paul Caruso (MA), Joseph Huckemeyer (MA), Michael Plaia (CT)*, Buddy Seigel (MD)

*Serves on both Council and Commission Advisory Panels.

Others present: Chris Batsavage, Julia Beaty, Cory Blount, Dustin Colson Leaning, Karson Coutr , Kiley Dancy, Tony DiLernia, Steve Doctor, Michelle Duval, Emily Keiley, Savannah Lewis, Matt Seeley, Mike Waine, Hannah Welch, Meredith Whitten, Angel Willey

Scup

Six advisors voiced support for the staff recommendation of *status quo* recreational measures in 2021 and none in attendance expressed opposition to the recommendation. One advisor expanded on their support saying that the scup biomass is high, and the 2020 recreational data is too uncertain for changes.

One AP member felt it was an issue that MRIP estimates the number of trips and not the number of anglers. Private angler reporting would provide a better understanding of what is being caught by individual recreational anglers. He added that Bluefin Data created an application for North Carolina anglers and the Council and Board should expand that to all recreational anglers. One Council member and staff responded that multiple reporting applications are being developed for private anglers in other regions or for individual species; however, there is more work to be done before an electronic reporting application could be successfully used on a broad scale for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass throughout this region.

Black Sea Bass

Six advisors expressed support for the staff recommendation of maintaining *status quo* recreational management measures in 2021. One advisor did not support this recommendation and said measures should be liberalized as they have been too restrictive for too long. For example, the season in New York should not start so late in the year.

One advisor asked if recruitment data from 2020 will be available. Staff explained that black sea bass recruitment estimates are informed by multiple state and federal fisheries-independent surveys, which were all impacted to different degrees by Covid-19. Some information from 2020 should be available in the future, though it may be less comprehensive than previous years. This advisor added that fishing pressure in both the commercial and recreational sectors was likely reduced in 2020. He also asked how a potential reduction in discard mortality rates resulting from increased use of descending devices and other less lethal gear types might influence future recreational harvest limits (RHLs). Staff noted that the 15% assumed discard mortality rate currently used in the stock assessment would need to change for this to impact the RHL.

One advisor claimed that most private anglers fish from private docks, where they are not sampled by MRIP intercepts and are therefore not accurately accounted for in the data.

Summer Flounder

At least six advisors expressed support for the staff recommendation of continued regional conservation equivalency for summer flounder in 2021 with *status quo* associated measures. A few noted that they would expect summer flounder harvest to be down this year due to Covid-related restrictions earlier this year, in particular for the for-hire sector. Several advisors supported the argument that given data gaps this year, modifications to measures would be associated with too much uncertainty.

One advisor questioned whether NMFS would be able to approve conservation equivalency this year given the lack of state harvest data for 2020 and associated percent standard errors (PSEs). He stated that given the uncertainties associated with this year's data, he would expect state PSEs to be very high and that implementing conservation equivalency would thus not be based on best available science. Staff responded that we do not have state level data or PSEs for 2020, and this is part of the reason for the *status quo* recommendation. The current measures are associated with a level of projected harvest that would not require major adjustments based on the proposed 2021 RHL. Adjusting the measures would be associated with more uncertainty given the difficulty in predicting outcomes without 2020 harvest data.

One advisor commented that the current May-September season in most states does not account for discards of caught fish during closed seasons and that these discards need to be accounted for. Staff responded that these discards are accounted for the same way discards are accounted for the rest of the season through the MRIP intercept and effort survey processes. Another advisor agreed that commercial and recreational discards in general are a substantial problem that the Council and Board need to address, on the order of millions of pounds per year, and that managers need to identify methods to get them under control.

One advisor questioned why NMFS, the Council, and the Board have not seriously pursued mandatory private angler electronic reporting given that there are currently apps available that

would allow for this. He indicated that we are not getting accurate data from the private/rental component of the fishery, especially those that are returning to private docks. This advisor also expressed frustration that a total cumulative length limit (i.e., a limit on the cumulative length of all retained fish) with mandatory retention of all fish was not being considered for recreational summer flounder management.

One advisor noted that he was hopeful that reduced fishing effort earlier this year during the spawning season would lead to improved recruitment this year.

Another advisor questioned the MRIP estimates of summer flounder harvest by recreational fishing mode and indicated that 3% from shore and 10% from for-hire vessels is laughable.

One advisor requested that the Council ask the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) to evaluate the possibility of releasing billions of summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass larvae into estuaries to enhance their populations. He believes this would notably increase the amount of adult fish available to be harvested. This advisor also noted that on the issue of commercial/recreational allocation, it is unclear why the recreational fishery, as a small percentage of the US population, should get the majority of allocation. He indicated that there is a need to get a better estimate of the number of anglers in addition to the number of recreational trips, so that the proportion of the US population that recreationally fishes can be better estimated.

One member of the public asked about the current state of MRIP estimation for the rest of 2020 and whether intercept sampling had resumed. Staff indicated that to their knowledge, intercept sampling had partially or fully resumed in some states, but may be limited by factors such as higher interview refusal rates. The same individual asked if there had been any decisions on how missing 2020 recreational angler intercept data would impact the assessments or assessment schedules. Staff responded that these issues are currently in discussion by the Northeast Regional Coordinating Council.

Kiley Dancy

From: James Fletcher <bamboosavefish@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 22, 2020 10:21 AM
To: Kiley Dancy
Subject: Fwd: Re: where can I find slide of sound to ocean migration of southern Flounder or summer flounder used in your inlet corridor presentation on internet?

Kiley: trying to find sketch showing flounder leaving estuaries & going to sea to spawn then larva returning to estuaries.

Question: why couldn't management spawn billions of larva to place in estuaries; either southern or summer flounder. What agency is opposed to culturing larva for release? NOAA, NMFS or Council? NOAA & NMFS seems to have endorsed targeting the females of both species.

Can advisors discuss raising & releasing larva as less expensive [it is known how to change color patterns to prove success] in releasing larva; LARVA NOT DEVELOPED FISH!

----- Forwarded Message -----

Subject: Re: where can I find slide of sound to ocean migration of southern Flounder or summer flounder used in your inlet corridor presentation on internet?
Date: Thu, 22 Oct 2020 13:39:30 +0000
From: Didden, Jason <jdidden@mafmc.org>
To: Fletcher, James <unfa34@gmail.com>, lee.paramore@ncdenr.gov <lee.paramore@ncdenr.gov>, Kiley Dancy <kdancy@mafmc.org>

Kiley may have something, I do not.
Jason

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: James Fletcher <bamboosavefish@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 22, 2020 9:37:05 AM
To: lee.paramore@ncdenr.gov <lee.paramore@ncdenr.gov>; Didden, Jason <jdidden@mafmc.org>
Subject: where can I find slide of sound to ocean migration of southern Flounder or summer flounder used in your inlet corridor presentation on internet?

My cell is 757 435 8475
Jason would you know where to acquire a inshore off shore migration depiction?

--

James Fletcher
United National Fisherman's Association
123 Apple Rd.
Manns Harbor, NC 27953
252-473-3287

From: [James Fletcher](#)
To: [Beaty, Julia](#)
Subject: Re: Materials for Tuesday's AP meeting
Date: Thursday, November 5, 2020 1:14:32 PM

THANKS FOR REMINDER! Could we discuss releasing Billions of fertilized eggs from species? for instance Chesapeake bay tunnel Has island in middle bay. Oregon Inlet will section of ols bridge, Delaware Bridge has location. Spawn fish & let eggs fertilize, then release on flood tide with on shore wind.
let us discuss something to increase population!

--
James Fletcher
United National Fisherman's
Association 123 Apple Rd.
Manns Harbor, NC 27953
252-473-3287

Kiley Dancy

From: Dustin C. Leaning <DLeaning@asmfc.org>
Sent: Monday, November 9, 2020 7:40 PM
To: PAUL G. CARUSO
Cc: Kiley Dancy; Beaty, Julia; Starks, Caitlin; Coutre, Karson; Savannah Lewis
Subject: RE: [External] Re: Materials for Tuesday's Advisory Panel Meeting

Hi Paul,

Thank you for letting us know. We look forward to you joining us tomorrow for whatever portion of the call you can!

Best,
Dustin

From: PAUL CARUSO [mailto:pkcaruso@comcast.net]
Sent: Monday, November 9, 2020 4:13 PM
To: Dustin C. Leaning <DLeaning@asmfc.org>
Subject: [External] Re: Materials for Tuesday's Advisory Panel Meeting

Hi Dustin, I will be logging in a little tardy for tomorrows webinar (1:45 PM ish), but may call in from the road a bit before that. As of this moment and given our lack of recreational catch and harvest estimates for 2020 I fully concur with staff recommendations that regulations remain status quo for 2021 for all three species under consideration. Many thanks for your's and MAFMC staffs good work. Sincerely, Paul Caruso

Kiley Dancy

From: Dustin C. Leaning <DLeaning@asmfc.org>
Sent: Tuesday, November 10, 2020 1:17 PM
To: Blount, Frank
Cc: Coutre, Karson; Beaty, Julia; Kiley Dancy; Savannah Lewis
Subject: RE: [External] Re: Materials for Tuesday's Advisory Panel Meeting

Hi Frank,

Thank you for checking in! I see you on the webinar now, so hopefully your connection and audio is working well enough for you to participate. Otherwise we can go with the comments you provided below.

Best,
Dustin

From: Francesflt [mailto:francesflt@aol.com]
Sent: Tuesday, November 10, 2020 12:38 PM
To: Dustin C. Leaning <DLeaning@asmfc.org>
Subject: [External] Re: Materials for Tuesday's Advisory Panel Meeting

Dustin

I will be on the call at 1pm. I am on a boat so may not have the best connection. If by chance I drop the call I am fine with Status Quo for all three species. I would like to add that head boat landings in RI are "WAY" down this year do to COVID. If there is any way to increase landings for the head boat sector it would be a huge help as we have been struggling during these difficult times.

Thanks and stay safe.

Frank

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Kiley Dancy

From: Dustin C. Leaning <DLeaning@asmfc.org>
Sent: Monday, November 16, 2020 2:00 PM
To: JACK CONWAY
Cc: Kiley Dancy; Beaty, Julia; Savannah Lewis; Coutre, Karson
Subject: RE: AP Meeting Summary

Thanks for the input Jack!

All the best,
Dustin

From: Conway Jr, JACK D [mailto:jack.d.conway.jr@lmco.com]
Sent: Monday, November 16, 2020 9:00 AM
To: Dustin C. Leaning <DLeaning@asmfc.org>
Subject: [External] RE: AP Meeting Summary

The call feel off my calendar, I was looking forward to it. Status quo works out fine for anglers fishing in CT. Keeping things “the same” during these troubling times makes a great deal of sense.

Jack Conway

From: Dustin C. Leaning <DLeaning@asmfc.org>
Sent: Monday, November 16, 2020 8:45 AM
To: SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP, & BLACK SEA BASS ADVISORY PANEL <sfsbsb_ap@asmfc.org>
Subject: EXTERNAL: AP Meeting Summary

Good morning Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Advisors,

Please see attached for a draft summary of your comments and recommendations from our meeting last week. We have also attached to the summary a few comments received by email. For edits to the attached AP summary or additional comments for the Council and Board, **please let us know by the end of Wednesday 12/2**, which is the public comment deadline for the December briefing book.

Thanks!

Dustin Colson Leaning
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Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

November 23, 2020

To: Julia Beaty (MAFMC staff)

From: Captain Steve Withuhn (AP member)

Subject: Comments in Reference to Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Advisory Panel Webinar Meeting on November 10, 2020

Additional comments provided by advisor Steven Withuhn (NY) to Council staff over the phone following the November 10, 2020 Advisory Panel Webinar meeting:

- Support the approach of status quo recreational management measures in 2021.
 - Very limited data collected in 2020.
 - Hopefully things will get back on track next year.
- Concerns about VTR accuracy.
 - Many for-hire captains accurately report what they keep, but not what they discard. They fear discards will be used against them.
 - Often have to discard many fish to get a decent amount of keepers.
 - It's very important to get accurate data on discards.
 - How can we build confidence in the science and management so the for-hire sector is motivated to report accurately?
 - VTRs should include information such as depth at which the fish were caught, if released fish were immediately eaten by predators, and other information.
- Good availability of black sea bass in 2020. Lots of young of year.
- Good scup availability, but not as many jumbos. Lots of smaller fish. Charter boats prefer the larger fish.
- In the commercial fishery, very low prices for black sea bass this year (e.g., \$1.20/pound). With restaurant closures, very low demand and packhouses don't want more fish. Fishermen have to work harder for less money.