

AMENDMENT 3 DRAFT 1 - SUBJECT TO CHANGE

INTRODUCTION

This is Amendment 3 to the N.C. Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The last review of the plan (Amendment 2) was approved by the MFC in August 2019 and implemented 62% reductions in total removals in 2019 and 72% reductions beginning in 2020 until Amendment 3 is approved. Amendment 2 followed a peer review workshop evaluating the 2018 coast-wide stock assessment. At the end of the peer review workshop, the Southern Flounder Review Panel accepted the pooled-sex run of the ASAP model presented at the Review Workshop as a valid basis of management for at least the next five years, with the expectation that the model will be updated with data through 2017 to provide the best, most up to date estimate of stock status for management. Results of the update indicate the stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring (Flowers et al. 2019). Analyses that provided projections of reductions to fishing mortality necessary to end overfishing and to determine what reductions would be necessary to rebuild the spawning stock biomass and end the overfished status were completed.

Amendment 2 was expedited to begin rebuilding of the stock immediately. Due to the shortened time frame for development, Amendment 2 incorporated a seasonal approach for reductions while more comprehensive management strategies would be developed during Amendment 3. In Amendment 3, the management strategy is updated to include a quota-based fishery for both the commercial and recreational sectors. The quota will be implemented through an adaptive management framework and will remain in place until an update of Amendment 3 is completed.

To see further details on past FMP amendments, supplements, or revision through time go to the latest annual FMP update (<http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/stock-overview>).

DEFINITION OF MANAGEMENT UNIT

The management unit includes southern flounder (*Paralichthys lethostigma*) and its habitats and fisheries in North Carolina coastal waters.

MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

All management authority for the North Carolina southern flounder fishery is vested in the State of North Carolina. The NCMFC adopts rules and policies and implements management measures for the southern flounder fishery. The joint ASMFC/MAFMC Summer Flounder, Black Sea Bass, Scup FMP impacts southern flounder management in ocean waters off North Carolina with ASMFC impacting the state waters and MAFMC impacting the federal EEZ waters. Approval of changes by ASMFC is not required if the changes are expected to be more restrictive than the management measures already approved by ASMFC. Changes to the summer flounder fishery in EEZ waters off North Carolina may be impacted by the MAFMC and NMFS until conservation equivalencies are approved by NMFS.

See [link] to the E-doc providing further information on fishery management in North Carolina.

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GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Goal: Manage the southern flounder fishery to achieve a self-sustaining population that provides sustainable harvest using science-based decision-making processes. The following objectives will be used to achieve this goal.

Objectives:

1. Implement management strategies within North Carolina and encourage interjurisdictional management strategies that maintain/restore the southern flounder spawning stock with expansion of age structure of the stock and adequate abundance to prevent overfishing.
2. Restore, enhance, and protect habitat and environmental quality necessary to maintain or increase growth, survival, and reproduction of the southern flounder population.
3. Use biological, environmental, habitat, fishery, social, and economic data needed to effectively monitor and manage the southern flounder fishery and its ecosystem impacts.
4. Promote stewardship of the resource through increased public outreach and interjurisdictional cooperation throughout the species range regarding the status and management of the southern flounder fishery, including practices that minimize bycatch and discard mortality.
5. Promote the restoration, enhancement, and protection of habitat and environmental quality in a manner consistent with the Coastal Habitat Protection Plan.

LITERATURE CITED

Flowers, A. M., S. D. Allen, A. L. Markwith, and L. M. Lee (editors). 2019. Stock assessment of southern flounder (*Paralichthys lethostigma*) in the South Atlantic, 1989–2017. Joint report of the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Georgia Coastal Resources Division, Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, and Louisiana State University. NCDMF SAP-SAR-2019-01. 213 p.