



*Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan  
Draft Amendment 2*

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Marine Fisheries



Marine Fisheries Commission | Michael S. Loeffler and Anne L. Markwith | August 2019



## *Issue*

Select final management strategies and vote on adoption of Amendment 2.



# *Marine Fisheries Commission Preferred Management Strategy*

On June 6, 2019 the Marine Fisheries Commission selected its preferred management strategy for Amendment 2 to reduce fishing mortality in the commercial and recreational fisheries to a level that ends overfishing within two years and allows the SSB to increase to between the threshold and the target within 10 years via a 62% reduction ( $F=0.26$ ) in total removals in 2019 and beginning in 2020, via a 72% reduction ( $F=0.18$ ) in total removals.



# *Marine Fisheries Commission Preferred Management Strategy: Commercial Fishery*

The commercial harvest season will close by proclamation following the August 2019 MFC meeting and will re-open with the following seasons:

- 2019 commercial seasons (62% reduction)
  - Northern – Sept. 15 through Oct. 13;
  - Central – Sept. 15 through Oct. 17; and
  - Southern – Sept. 15 through Nov. 2.
- 2020 commercial seasons (72% reduction)
  - Northern – Sept. 15 through Oct. 6;
  - Central – Sept. 15 through Oct. 11; and
  - Southern – Sept. 15 through Oct. 20.



# *Marine Fisheries Commission Preferred Management Strategy: Commercial Fishery*

Removal of all gears that target southern flounder from the water (e.g., commercial and Recreational Commercial Gear License anchored large mesh gill nets, gigs) or make them inoperable (flounder pound nets) is necessary in areas and times outside of seasons implemented where southern flounder discards are likely to occur, with exceptions for the shad and catfish fisheries.



# *Marine Fisheries Commission Preferred Management Strategy: Recreational Fishery*

- 2019 recreational seasons (62% reduction)
  - The recreational hook-and-line and gig harvest season will close by proclamation following the August 2019 MFC meeting and will not re-open until the identified season in 2020.
  - Upon the closure of the recreational hook-and-line fishery, the RCGL large mesh gill net harvest season will also close as the recreational and commercial seasons must both be open to allow this gear.
- 2020 recreational seasons (72% reduction)
  - Allow an Aug. 16 through Sept. 30 recreational hook-and-line and gig harvest season;
  - Allow RCGL large mesh gill nets to operate from Sept. 15 through Sept. 30.





# *Marine Fisheries Commission Preferred Management Strategy: Non-quantifiable Measures*

The Marine Fisheries Commission preferred management strategy also includes the following non-quantifiable measures:

- Reduce commercial anchored large-mesh gill net soak times to single overnight soaks where nets may be set no sooner than one hour before sunset and must be retrieved no later than one hour after sunrise the next morning in the Neuse, Tar/Pamlico rivers and the Albemarle Sound areas that have previously been exempt;
- Reduce the maximum yardage allowed in the commercial anchored large mesh gill net fishery by 25% for each Management Unit; allowing a maximum of 1,500-yards in Management Units A, B, and C, and a maximum of 750-yards in Management Units D and E unless more restrictive yardage is specified through adaptive management through the sea turtle or sturgeon Incidental Take Permits; and
- Prohibit use of any method of retrieving live flounder from pound nets that cause injury to released fish (no picks, gigs, gaffs, spears, etc.).



# *Marine Fisheries Commission Preferred Management Strategy: Carry Forward from Amendment 1*

The following management measures from Amendment 1 will be incorporated upon adoption of Amendment 2.

- Management measures, including restrictions that limit the number of days per week and the amount of yardage allowed for large mesh gill nets in various areas of the state;
- A minimum distance (area dependent) between gill net and pound net sets, per rule 15A NCAC 03J .0103 (d); and
- A recreational minimum size limit of 15 inches total length.





# *Marine Fisheries Commission Preferred Management Strategy: Carry Forward from Supplement A*

The following management measures from Supplement A to the Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan Amendment 1:

- A commercial minimum size limit of 15 inches;
- A minimum mesh size of 6-inch stretch mesh to harvest southern flounder from a gill net; and
- A minimum mesh size of 5.75-inch stretch mesh for flounder pound net escape panels.



## *Marine Fisheries Commission Preferred Management Strategy: Carry Forward from Addendum XVIII*

The following management measures from the N.C. Fishery Management Plan for Interjurisdictional Fisheries to maintain compliance with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan Addendum XXVIII:

- The recreational bag limit of no more than four flounder per person per day is maintained in Amendment 2.



## *Plan Implementation and Next Steps*

- After adoption of Amendment 2 the division will implement the selected management strategy through the director's proclamation authority.
- Adoption of Amendment 2 authorizes development of Amendment 3 to begin immediately after adoption of Amendment 2.
- Amendment 3 will be developed with the Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan Advisory Committee.
- Draft Amendment 3 to the Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan is scheduled to be presented to the Marine Fisheries Commission in 2020 for approval to send out for advisory committee review and public comment.
- Final adoption of Amendment 3 is scheduled for 2021.



# Questions?

