



Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan Amendment 3

Draft Amendment 3 Overview

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Marine Fisheries

MFC Meeting | Michael S. Loeffler and Anne L. Markwith | November
2021



Presentation Outline

- Draft Amendment 3
 - Goal and Objectives
 - Overview of Fishery
 - Issue Paper Overview
 - Timeline
- Action Item
 - Vote to send draft Amendment 3 for public and MFC Advisory Committee review



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:

- 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.
- Restore, enhance, and protect habitat and environmental quality necessary to maintain or increase growth, survival, and reproduction of the southern flounder population.
- Use biological, environmental, habitat, fishery, social, and economic data needed to effectively monitor and manage the southern flounder fishery and its ecosystem impacts.
- 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.
- Promote the restoration, enhancement, and protection of habitat and environmental quality in a manner consistent with the Coastal Habitat Protection Plan.

Biological and Management Unit

- Biological Unit

- North Carolina
- South Carolina
- Georgia
- east coast of Florida

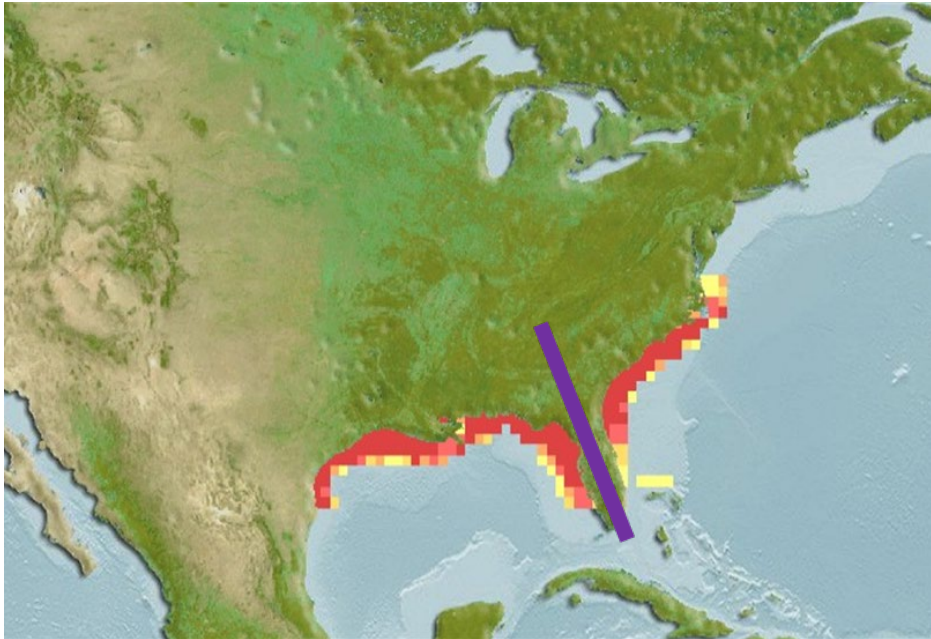


- Management Unit

- North Carolina
 - Inland
 - Coastal
 - Ocean



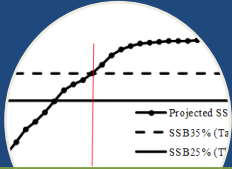
Coast-wide Stock Assessment: Stock Status North Carolina through the East-Coast of Florida



- Stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring
- Minimum of 52% reduction to rebuild
- MFC selected in Amendment 2
 - 62% reduction in 2019
 - 72% reduction starting 2020
- Amendment 3 maintains the 72% reduction

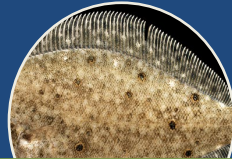


Amendment 3: Issue Paper Overview



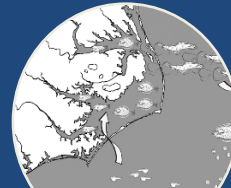
Sustainable Harvest

- ▶ Commercial Quota
- ▶ Commercial Sub-allocation
- ▶ Recreational Quota
- ▶ Commercial Trip Limits
- ▶ Recreational Bag Limits
- ▶ RCGL
- ▶ Commercial and recreational quotas determined by MFC allocation decision. Changes to recreational bag limits may offset risk of overages.



Increased Recreational Access

- ▶ Creating a Recreational Ocellated Flounder Season
- ▶ Connectivity between Increased Recreational Access and Sustainable Harvest. Adopting Increased Recreational Access can't undermine sustainable harvest



Inlet Corridors

- ▶ Evaluating Inlet Corridors and their utility in Southern Flounder Conservation
- ▶ Inlet Corridors have no known quantifiable impact on southern flounder sustainable harvest at this time



Adaptive Management

- ▶ Developing the infrastructure that will direct changes to management in the Southern Flounder Fishery

Amendment 3: Issue Paper Overview



Sector Allocations

- ▶ Determined by the MFC, March 2021
- ▶ 70/30 in 2021-2022
- ▶ 60/40 in 2023
- ▶ 50/50 beginning in 2024



Slot Limits

- ▶ Evaluate slot limits for the recreational fishery



Phasing Out Large-Mesh Gill Nets

- ▶ Provides information about the commercial and recreational large-mesh gill net fishery

Recreational And Commercial Sector Allocation



- March 2021
 - MFC selects allocation:
 - 70-30 2021/2022
 - 60-40 2023
 - 50-50 2024 and onward
 - Used to develop Issue Papers

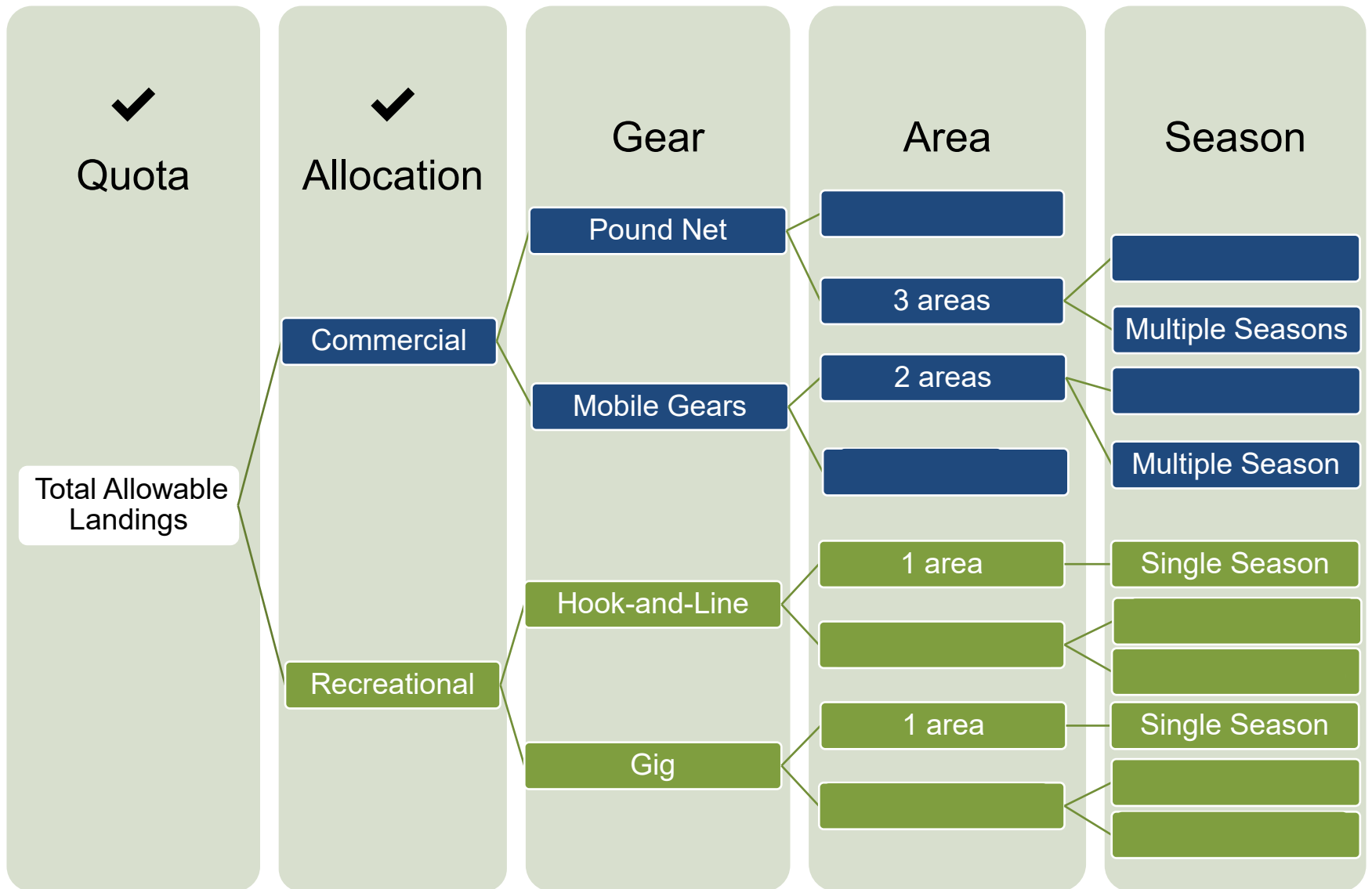


Achieving Sustainable Harvest in the North Carolina Southern Flounder Fishery

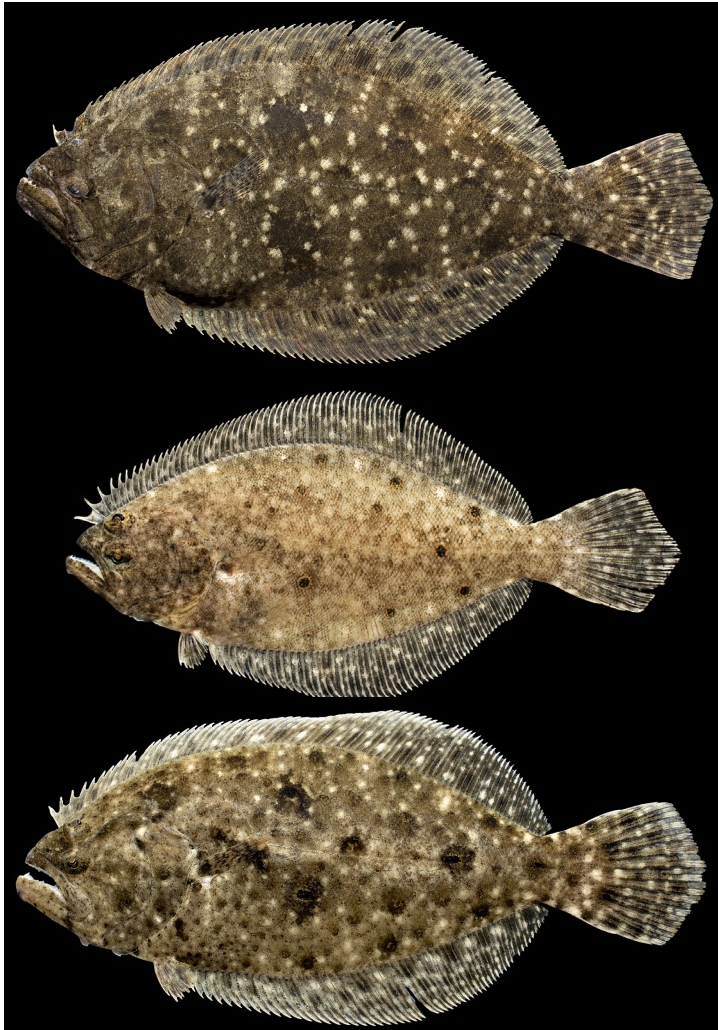
- Management measures projected to meet rebuilding timeline
- Include current size limit, gear configurations, soak times and daytime restrictions
- Reductions applied to dead discards and landings
- Total dead discards available at the end of season
- Additional measures improve stock and provide flexibility

Year	Allocation	Total Allowable Landings	
		Commercial	Recreational
2021	70/30	372,646	159,706
2022	70/30	372,646	159,706
2023	60/40	319,411	212,941
2024	50/50	266,176	266,176

Achieving Sustainable Harvest in the North Carolina Southern Flounder Fishery



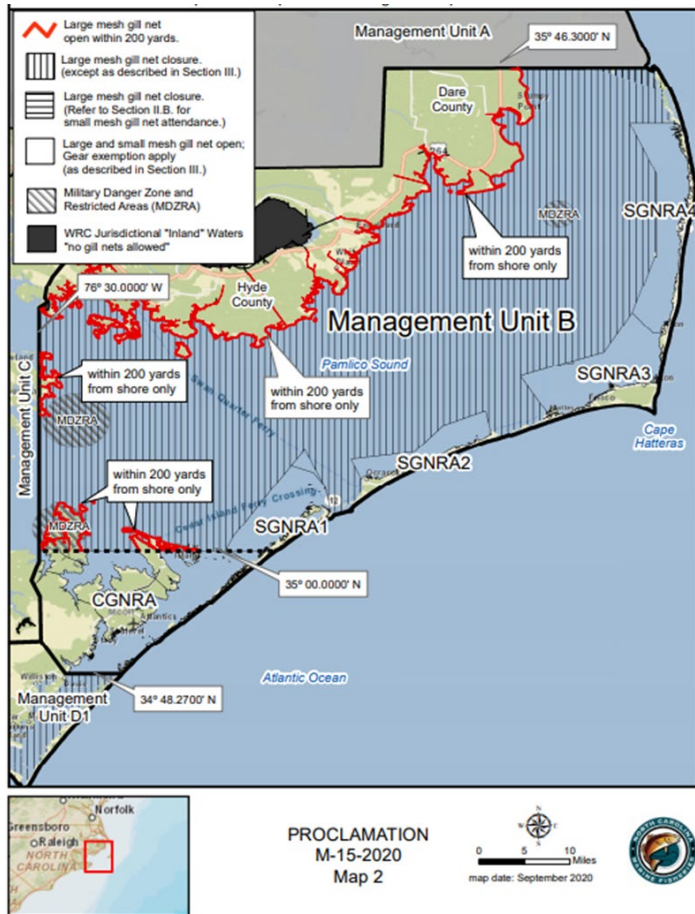
Increased Recreational Access by Managing Southern Flounder Separately From Other Flounder Species



- Harvest must be accounted for
- Conservation equivalency necessary for MAFMC/ASMFC
- Allows limited access outside fall season
- Education and Outreach critical
 - Catch-U-Later app
 - Flounder Identification Guide
 - DMF outreach



Inlet Corridors As A Management Tool To Increase Southern Flounder Escapement



- Seasons closed before spawning migration peaks
- Research is ongoing
- Movement over a short period of time
- High energy areas limit use of gill nets and pound nets
- Inlets used by hook-and-line and giggers
- Inlet protections go beyond southern flounder

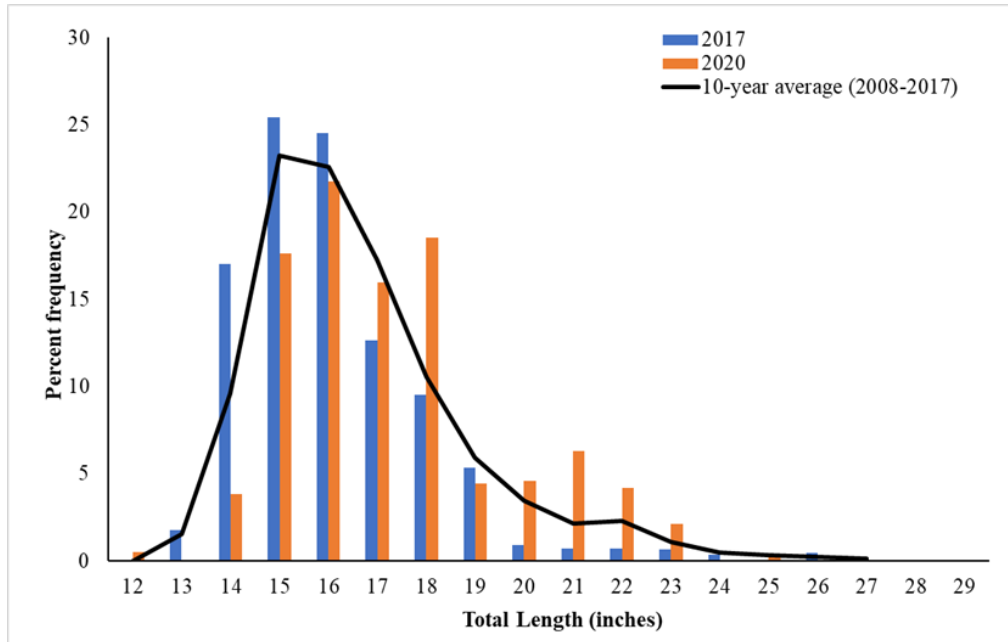


Adaptive Management Strategy For The North Carolina Southern Flounder Fishery

- Based on biological reference points
- Increased likelihood of success in achieving sustainability
- Provides greater flexibility



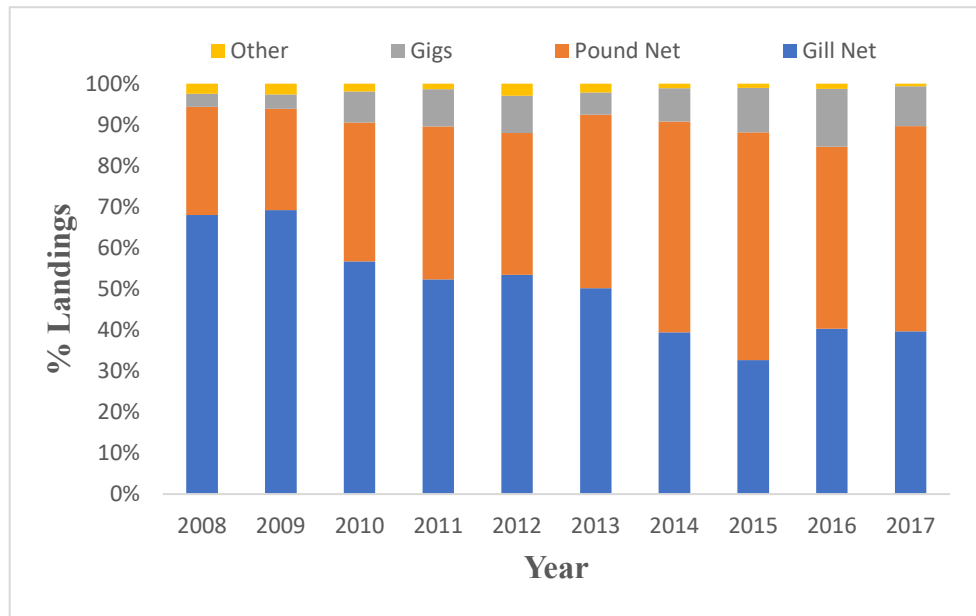
Implementing A Slot Limit in the Southern Flounder Fishery



- Shift in sizes landed
- Size landed will change as stock increases and limited fishing
- Does not allow increased bag limit
- May buffer TAL overages
- Larger fish do not mean older fish
- Increases discards of larger more fecund fish



Phasing Out Anchored Large-Mesh Gill Nets In The North Carolina Southern Flounder Fishery



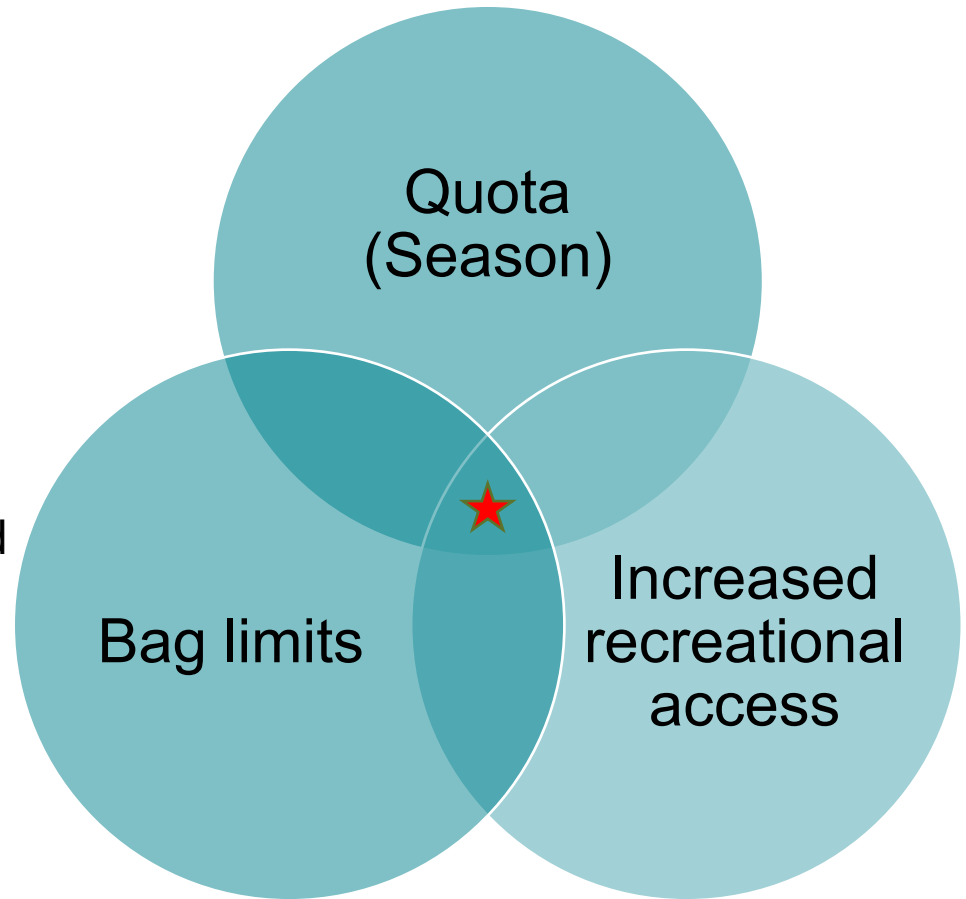
- Allow for increased harvest from other gear
- Decreased interactions of protected species
- May reduce user conflict
- Does not affect sustainability
- Unknown how gill net fishermen effort would shift



Additional Considerations

Decisions depend and build on others

- Quota impacts bag limits and increased recreational access
- Bag limits impact season length
- Increased access is impacted by both quota and bag limits
- Lower bag limits allow for increased access and reduces chances of excessive overages



Draft Amendment 3: Initial NCDMF Recommendations

<https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/marine-fisheries/hot-topics/information-southern-flounder-amendment-3>

Draft Amendment 3: Next Steps

• Division holds public scoping period

• Marine Fisheries Commission approve goal and objectives of FMP

• Division drafting FMP

• Division hold workshops to further develop draft FMP with plan advisory committee

• Division updating draft plan

• **Marine Fisheries Commission vote to send draft FMP for public and MFC advisory committee review**

Next Step

• Commission advisory committees meet to review draft FMP and receive public comment

• Marine Fisheries Commission review public comment and select preferred management options

• Department of Environmental Quality secretary and legislative review draft FMP

• Marine Fisheries Commission vote on final adoption of FMP

• Division and Marine Fisheries Commission implement management strategies



Draft Amendment 3: Action Item

Vote to send the Draft Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan Amendment 3 for public and Advisory Committee review.



Questions?

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