



## Summer Flounder Commercial Mesh Size Exemptions Framework/Addendum Action Plan

As of March 22, 2024

**Framework/Addendum Goal:** This management action is being developed by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission)’s Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board (Board). This action will evaluate potential changes to two exemptions to the summer flounder commercial minimum mesh size requirements, including 1) the Small Mesh Exemption Program (SMEP), and 2) the flynet exemption. Consideration of these changes is intended to modernize these requirements with consideration of current fishing industry gear use and practices and to provide additional flexibility to fishery participants while continuing to meet the conservation objectives of the FMP.

**Alternatives to be Considered:** The Council and Board have identified the issues below for exploration through this action. They may also identify other alternatives to address the objectives of the action at future meetings.

- **Small Mesh Exemption Program Area Revisions:** This action will consider modifications to the area associated with the SMEP for summer flounder, including evaluating suggested revisions made by fishing industry representatives during the Fall 2023 review process for this exemption.
- **Flynet Exemption Gear Definition Updates:** This action will consider modifying the regulatory definition of a flynet as it relates to the flynet exemption to the summer flounder commercial minimum mesh size. Changes would be considered in light of changes in the use and configuration of commercial trawl gear since this exemption was put in place in the 1990s.
- **Other alternatives:** This action may consider other alternatives, as appropriate. For example, this could include potential revisions to the timing associated with the SMEP, or administrative requirements associated with either exemption.

### Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) / Plan Development Team (PDT)

An FMAT/PDT is being formed to assist with development and analysis of potential alternatives. FMAT/PDT members are listed in the table below. Other Council, Commission, and NOAA Fisheries staff, as well as other experts, will be consulted as needed.

FMAT/PDT Member Name	Agency	Role/Expertise
Kiley Dancy	Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council	FMAT/PDT Co-Chair
Chelsea Tuohy	Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission	FMAT/PDT Co-Chair
Hannah Hart	Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council	FMAT/PDT Co-Chair
Laura Deighan	NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	Fisheries policy and legal requirements
Emily Keiley	NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	Fisheries policy and legal requirements

Marianne Randall	NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	National Environmental Policy Act requirements
Sara Turner	NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	Analysis and Program Support
Sam Truesdell	NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center	Population dynamics
Debra Duarte	NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center	Fisheries Monitoring and Research Division
Lorena de la Garza	NC Division of Marine Fisheries	Monitoring/Technical Committee, NC
Corinne Truesdale	RI Department of Environmental Management	Monitoring/Technical Committee, RI

**Draft Timeline** – *Subject to change*

December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Council initiates framework action</li> </ul>
February 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Board initiates addendum (February 14 webinar meeting)</li> </ul>
January-March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● FMAT/PDT formed; first meetings</li> <li>● Development of range of alternatives and draft document for meeting 1</li> </ul>
April 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Public input meeting to provide feedback on draft alternatives</li> <li>● Framework/addendum meeting 1: approve range of alternatives</li> </ul>
April/May 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continued analysis and development of draft public hearing document</li> </ul>
Spring 2024 (timing TBD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Board approves draft document for public comment (via webinar Board meeting or joint meeting)</li> </ul>
June/July 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Public comment period (30 days minimum required for Commission addendum) and optional public hearings</li> <li>● Advisory Panel meeting(s) and/or other public meeting(s) to provide input</li> </ul>
August 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Framework/addendum meeting 2: final action</li> </ul>
Fall 2024/Winter 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Development, review, and revisions of framework/addendum document(s)</li> <li>● Federal rulemaking</li> </ul>
TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Effective date of implemented changes</li> </ul>