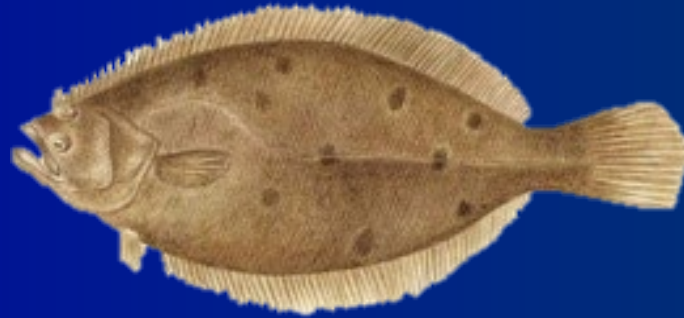




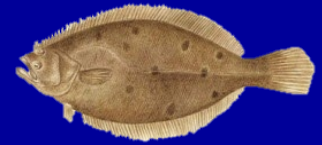
# Summer Flounder



Monitoring Committee  
2022-2023 Specifications

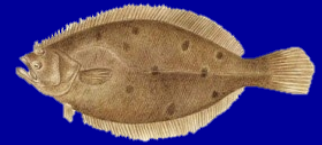
*July 27, 2021*

# Overview



- Review:
  - 2021 Management Track Assessment results
  - Recent fishery performance
  - Advisor comments
  - SSC recommendations
  - Staff recommendations
  
- MC Objectives:
  - Adopt recommendations for 2022-2023 ACLs, ACTs, comm. quotas, and RHLs
  - Review commercial management measures and recommend changes if warranted

# Stock Status: 2021 Management Track Assessment



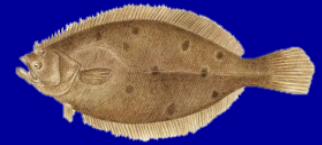
## SSB

- Not overfished in 2019
- 2019 SSB = 47,397 mt, 86% of  $SSB_{MSY}$  = 55,217 mt

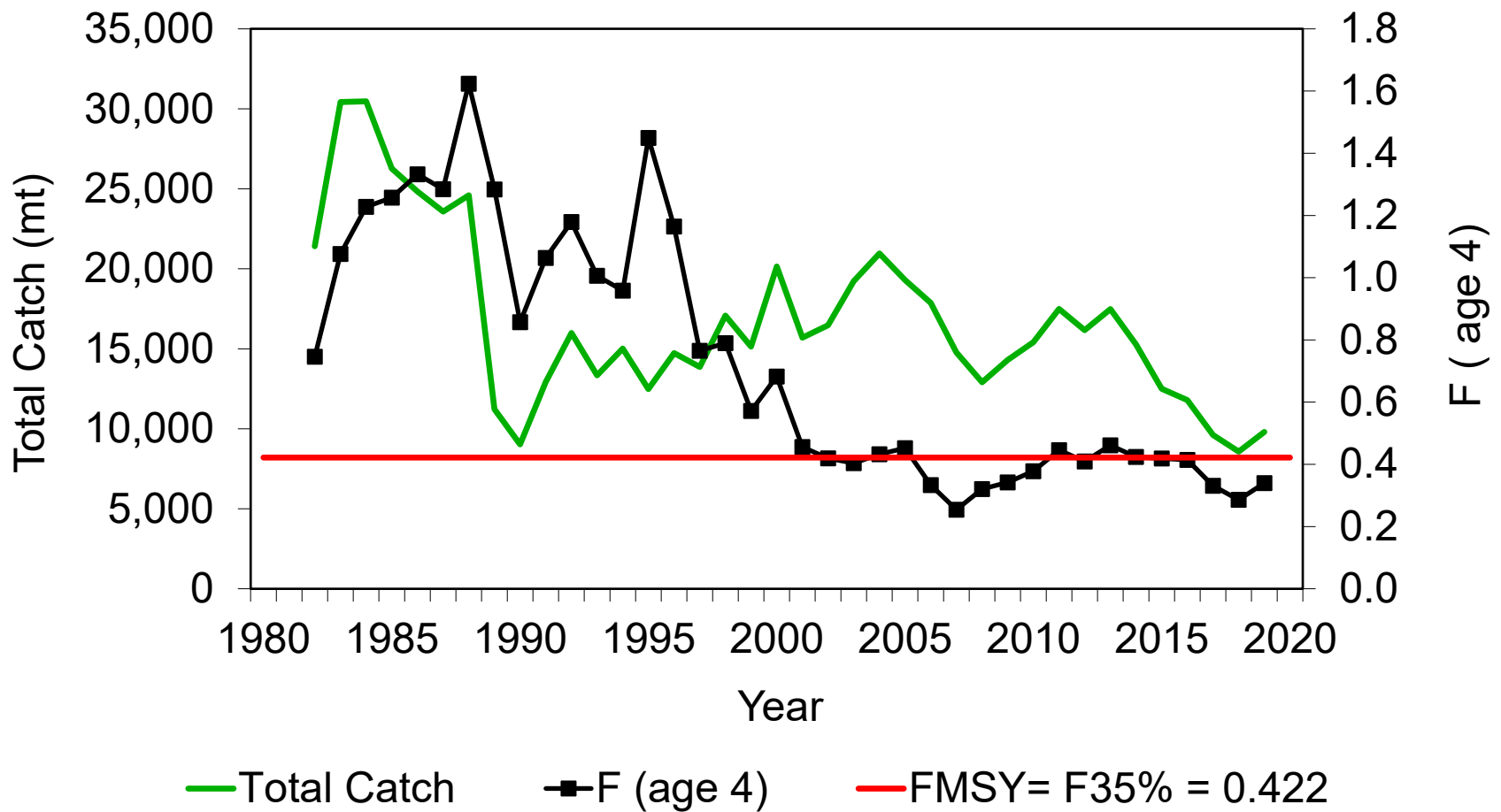
## F

- Overfishing not occurring in 2019
- 2019  $F = 0.340$ , 81% of  $F_{MSY}$  proxy = 0.422

# Fishing Mortality 2021 MTA



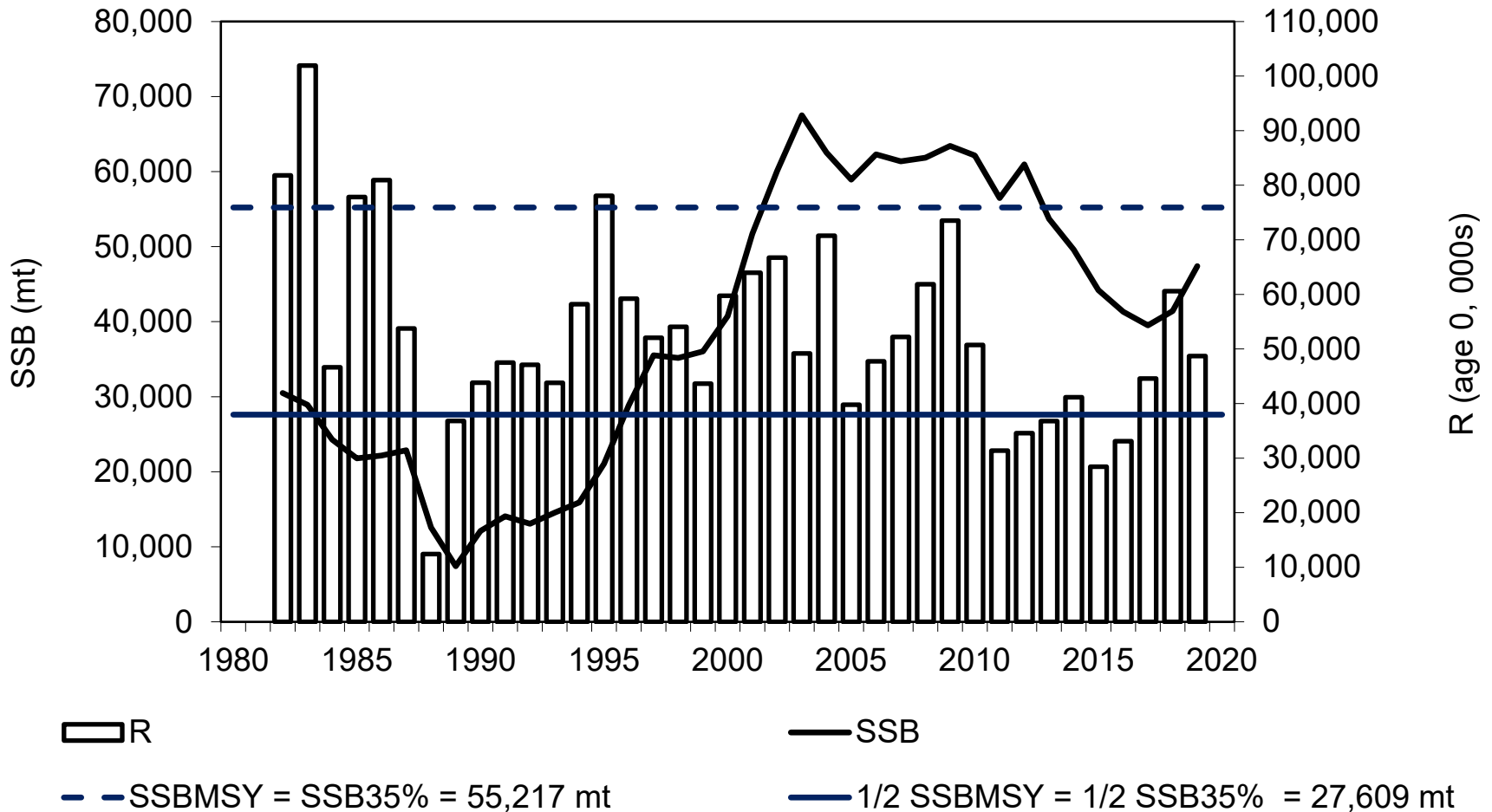
## Total Catch and Fishing Mortality (F)



# SSB and Recruitment 2021 MTA



Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) and Recruitment (R)



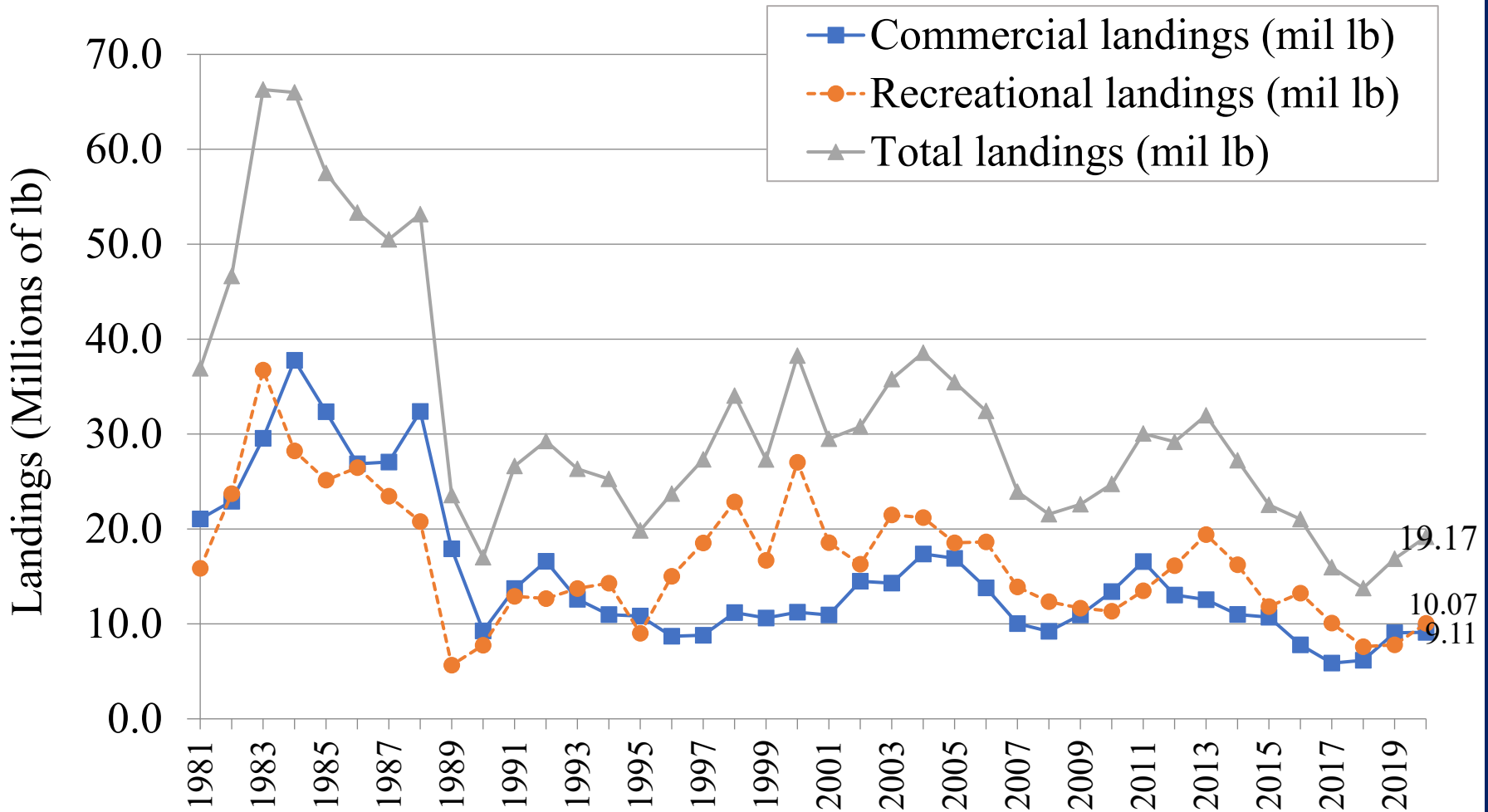
# COVID Related 2020 Data Gaps: Commercial

- Commercial effort/markets affected, but commercial landings data collection continued as normal
- Commercial dead discard estimates for 2020 unavailable due to suspension of observer program (mid-March through mid-August 2020)
- Unclear at this time if other methods will be used to generate 2020 dead discard estimates

# COVID Related 2020 Data Gaps: Recreational

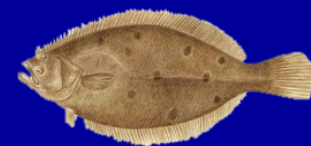
- As discussed earlier:
  - APAIS (shoreside intercept) sampling disrupted
  - MRIP developed 2020 estimates by filling in gaps with proxy data from 2018-2019
  - Adjustments to 2020 estimates may occur once 2021 data are available (MRIP will review methods that use 2021 data)
  - Recreational dead discard estimates in weight currently unavailable for 2020

# Fishery Landings 1981-2020





# Fishery Performance

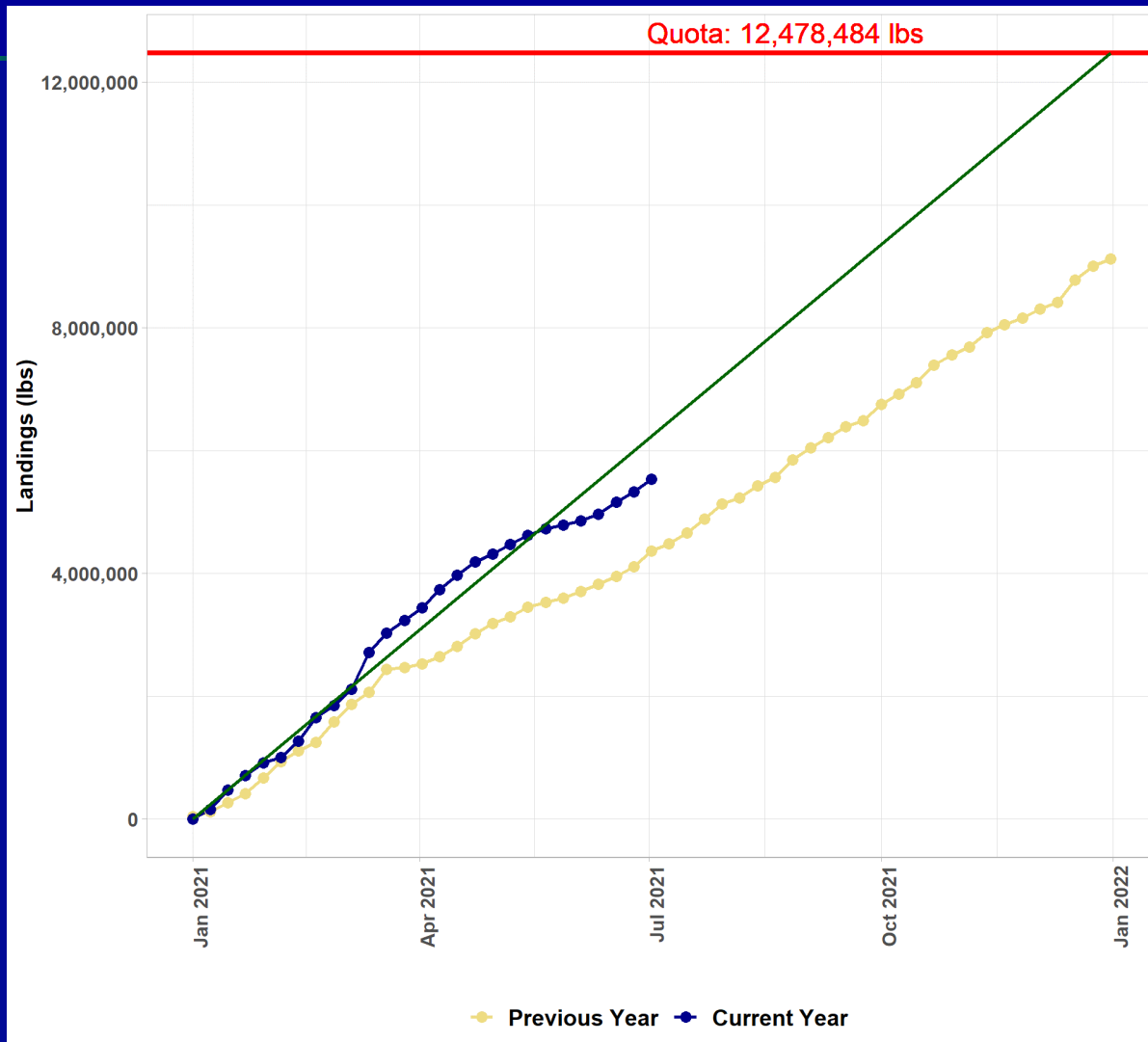


Year	Comm. Land. (mil lb)	Comm. Quota (mil lb)	Comm. % Over/ Under	Rec. Harvest – OLD MRIP (mil lb)	Rec. Harvest – NEW MRIP (mil lb)	RHL (mil lb)	Rec. % Over/ Under <sup>a</sup>
<b>2016</b>	7.81	8.12	-4%	6.18	13.24	5.42	<b>+14%</b>
<b>2017</b>	5.83	5.66	<b>+3%</b>	3.19	10.06	3.77	-15%
<b>2018</b>	6.14	6.44	-5%	3.35	7.60	4.42	-24%
<b>2019</b>	9.06	10.98	-17%	--	7.80	7.69	<b>+1%</b>
<b>2020</b>	9.11	11.53	-21%	--	10.06 <sup>b</sup>	7.69	<b>+31%</b>
<b>Avg.</b>			<b>-9%</b>				<b>+7%</b>

<sup>a</sup> 2015-2018 evaluated using old MRIP data; 2019-2020 with revised MRIP data

<sup>b</sup> 2020 harvest estimated using imputation methods with 2018-2019 data in addition to limited 2020 data

# 2021 Commercial Landings



Commercial landings through July 14, 2021

# AP Fishery Performance Report

## *General Management Issues (All 3 Species)*

- Concerns with the accuracy of MRIP data
  - One added an accurate count of all saltwater rec. anglers is needed to comply with MSA/better manage the fishery
  - Concerns with 2020 rec. estimates using imputation methods
- COVID-19: major impacts on commercial and recreational fishing effort in 2020, negative impacts on commercial markets and prices.
- One advisor: should be a common commercial minimum mesh size for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass

# AP Fishery Performance Report

## *Environmental Issues (All 3 Species)*

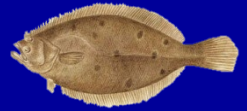
- More sharks due to overabundance of menhaden, increased predation on bluefish and striped bass, potentially also impacting BSB and SF
  - Predator/prey dynamics are not properly factored into current catch estimate data
- Need to address chemicals in the water, such as surfactants, that may negatively impact fish populations

# AP Fishery Performance Report

## *Email Comments (all 3 species)*

- Need to research fertilizers and pesticides in the water and the negative impacts to fish
- Need to understand effects of windmills, their construction, and seismic blasting on fish
- Due to Covid-19, 2020 data should be eliminated from evaluation methods

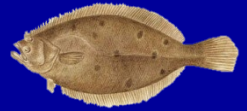
# AP Fishery Performance Report



## *Market and Economic Issues*

- COVID-19 had major impacts on comm. and rec. fisheries
- Effort notably down in commercial fishery as low prices did not justify trip costs
- Restaurant closures had big impact on markets & prices
- Some vessels did not fish all year
- Some noted difficulty finding reliable crew labor

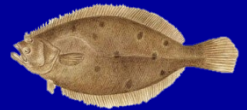
# AP Fishery Performance Report



## *Market and Economic Issues*

- Commercial size limits resulted in markets for smaller fish being lost to imports
  - Market would be better for smaller fish that fit on plates/are better for single servings
  - Request for lowering commercial minimum size below 14" to allow targeting smaller fish

# AP Fishery Performance Report

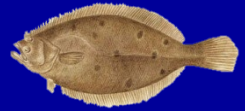


## *Market and Economic Issues*

- Mixed comments on recreational catch and effort in 2020:
  - Reduced participation in marinas – does not match with MRIP data that shows an increase in rec. catch
  - Charter industry in VA shut down for good part of season; does not believe that private boat effort was actually up as indicated by managers
  - Overall recreational effort for all species seemed to be up in 2020



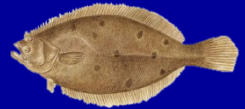
# AP Fishery Performance Report



## *Environmental and General Fishing Trends*

- Summer flounder fishing “off” last year; many commercial and rec. fishermen not targeting or catching very few
- Showed up late in the season (August instead of April or May)
  - Due to sharks keeping fish offshore?

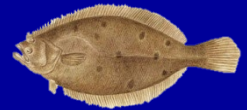
# AP Fishery Performance Report



## *Management Issues*

- Concerns with 2020 MRIP estimates using 2018-2019 data given differences in fisheries in these years
  - 2018-2019 “boom year”; 2020 “bust year”
- Question about whether regulatory discards are counted against catch limits despite being unavoidable for vessels
- Request for consideration of recreational total length limit with mandatory retention

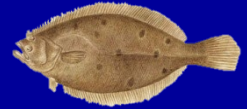
# AP Fishery Performance Report



## *Email Comments (Summer Flounder)*

- Virtually no summer flounder rec. fishery inshore anymore (MA)
- Summer flounder comm. minimum size should be lowered to 13"
  - Turn discards into landings; discarded fish are not spawning
- Request for changes to small mesh exemption program (will cover later in presentation)

# 2022-2023 SSC ABC Recommendations



- Provided annually varying and constant recs. (policy decision for Council and Board)
- Applied 60% OFL CV; sampled R from recent below-average time series; assumes catch = ABC in each year

	Varying				Constant			
	OFL (mt)	OFL (mil lb)	ABC (mt)	ABC (mil lb)	OFL (mt)	OFL (mil lb)	ABC (mt)	ABC (mil lb)
<b>2022</b>	16,458	36.28	15,403	33.96	16,458	36.28	15,021	33.12
<b>2023</b>	15,759	34.74	14,639	32.27	34.98	15,865	15,021	33.12

# 2022-2023 Sector-Specific Limits

- Commercial/recreational allocation amendment pending final action Dec. 2021
  - Would impact 2023 sector catch and landings limits if allocations were modified

# Summer Flounder

## Generic Specifications Flowchart

**OFL**  
From stock assessment projections

**ABC**  
SSC Recommendations

**Landings portion of ABC**  
ABC projections from NEFSC

**Discards portion of ABC**  
ABC projections from NEFSC

**Comm. landings**  
60% of ABC landings  
portion (current FMP  
allocation)

**Rec. landings**  
40% of ABC landings  
portion (current FMP  
allocation)

**Projected comm. discards**  
% of total expected discards  
based on 3-year moving  
average by sector

**Projected rec. discards**  
% of total expected discards  
based on 3-year moving  
average by sector

**Commercial ACL**  
Commercial landings allocation plus  
proj. commercial discards

**Recreational ACL**  
Recreational landings allocation plus  
proj. recreational discards

**Commercial ACT**  
ACL minus deduction for management  
uncertainty

**Recreational ACT**  
ACL minus deduction for management  
uncertainty

**Commercial Quota**  
ACT minus commercial discards and  
any applicable overage deductions

**State  
Quotas**

**Recreational Harvest Limit**  
ACT minus recreational discards and any  
applicable overage deductions

# Deriving 2022-2023 ACLs (mil lb)

	Varying 2022	Varying 2023	Constant 2022-2023	Basis
<b>ABC</b>	33.96	32.27	33.12	SSC recs
<b>ABC Landings</b>	26.48	25.29	25.89	ABC projections (avg. approach includes averaged 2022-2023 expected landings)
<b>ABC Discards</b>	7.48	6.99	7.23	ABC projections (avg. approach includes averaged 2022-2023 expected disc.)
<b>Comm. Discards</b>	3.05	2.85	2.95	<b>41% of ABC dead discards portion (2017-2019 average % dead discards by sector)</b>
<b>Rec. Discards</b>	4.43	4.14	4.28	<b>59% of ABC dead discards portion (2017-2019 average % dead discards by sector)</b>
<b>Comm ACL</b>	18.94	18.02	18.48	60% of ABC landings portion (FMP allocation) + expected commercial dead discards
<b>Rec ACL</b>	15.02	14.25	14.64	40% of ABC landings portion (FMP allocation) + expected rec. dead discards

# 2022-2023 ACTs

- Monitoring Committee should consider whether to recommend a deduction from the commercial and/or recreational ACL to account for management uncertainty



# Considerations for Commercial ACTs

- Commercial landings well monitored/controlled; in-season closure authority
  - Underages in 2019-2020 due to mid-year quota revision and COVID-19
- Commercial discards caused overages of commercial ACLs in 2016-2018 (2%-21%), likely due to low quotas
- Under higher limits since 2019, less of a concern: 2019 commercial catch under ACL by 20%

# Considerations for Recreational ACTs

- Recreational performance variable
  - Evaluated with old MRIP data through 2018; new MRIP data since 2019
  - New MRIP: 2019 harvest was 1% over RHL; 2020 estimated at 31% over RHL
- AMs triggered by evaluation of 3-year dead catch vs. 3-year ACL average
  - Not triggered for 2021 based on 2017-2019
  - 2020 catch info not available


# Considerations for Recreational ACTs

- Council and Board currently considering many possible changes to recreational management through Recreational Reform Initiative that could better address recreational management uncertainty

# ACT Recommendation

- Staff recommend continued application of ACLs=ACTs; no reduction applied for management uncertainty

# Current (2021) and Possible 2022-2023 Catch and Landings Limits (mil lb)

	Current	Varying		Constant
	2021	2022	2023	2022-2023
OFL	31.67	36.28	34.74	36.28 (2022) 34.98 (2023)
ABC	27.11	33.96	32.27	33.12
Commercial ACL = ACT	14.63	18.94	18.02	18.48
Recreational ACL = ACT	12.48	15.02	14.25	14.64
Commercial Quota	12.49	15.89	15.17	15.53
Recreational Harvest Limit	8.32	10.59	10.12	10.36

# Staff Recommendation: Mesh and Fish Size Regulations

- **No changes to:**
  - Minimum fish size (14")
  - Seasonal mesh size possession thresholds (200 lb Nov 1-Apr 30; 100 lb May 1-Oct 31)

# Mesh Size Regulations & Exemptions

- MC has previously identified additional work & industry input needed to evaluate mesh regulations & exemptions for all 3 FMP species
  - Council/Board identified as lower priority given other actions
  - Unable to address this in 2021 due to other priorities
  - Staff recommend seeking contractor for additional policy analysis of SF/scup/BSB mesh regulations in 2022

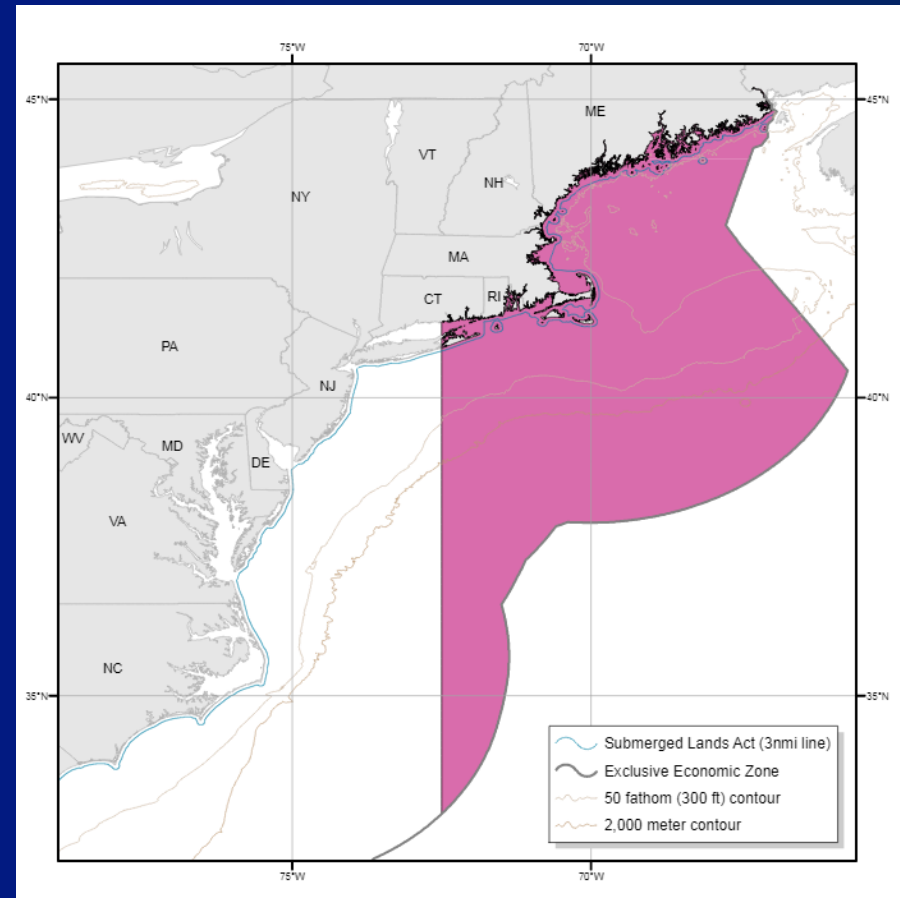
# Minimum Mesh Size

- Current requirement: 5.5" diamond or 6.0" square
- Mesh size study (Hasbrouck et al. 2018) results indicate 5.5" diamond/6.0" square may not be equivalent
  - 6.0" square appears closer to 5.0" diamond
  - Some past MC concern about retention of undersized fish with 6.0" square; recommendation to evaluate possible phase out of 6.0" square option



# Staff Recommendation: Small Mesh Exemption Program

- SMEP allows authorized small mesh vessels to land more than 200 lb of summer flounder east of longitude 72° 30.0'W, Nov. 1 - April 30
- FMP requires review of observer data to determine whether these vessels are discarding more than 10% of their summer flounder catch

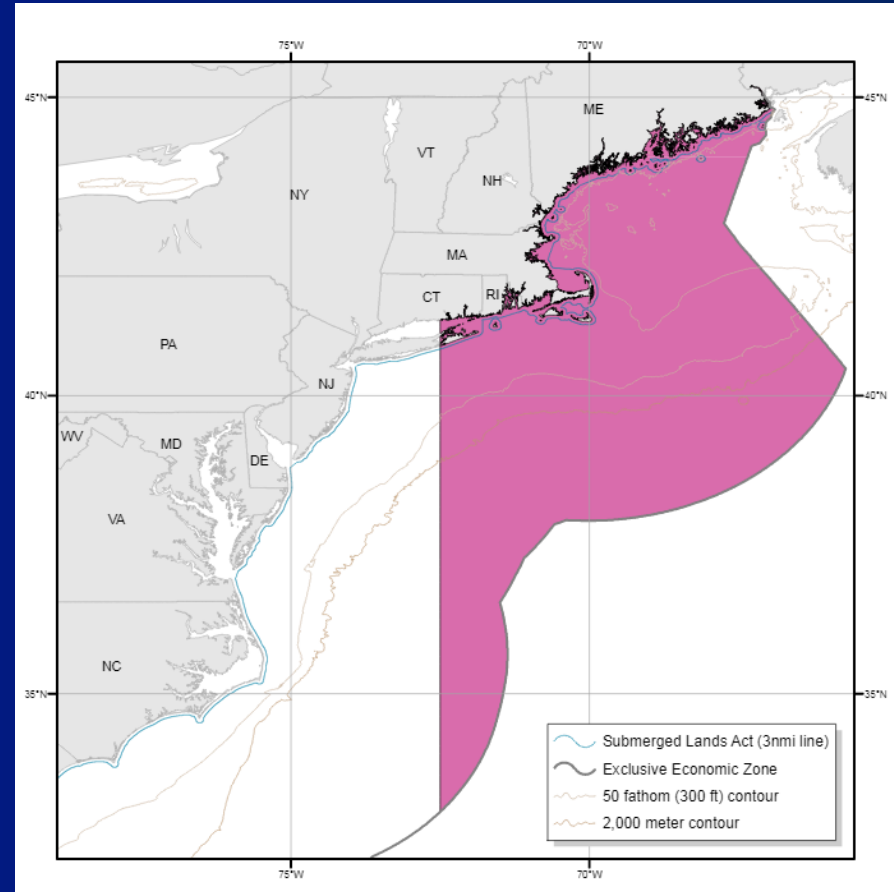


# Staff Recommendation: Small Mesh Exemption Program

Criteria		Nov. 1, 2014 – April 30, 2015	Nov. 1, 2015 – April 30, 2016	Nov. 1, 2016 – April 30, 2017	Nov. 1, 2017 – April 30, 2018	Nov. 1, 2018 – April 30, 2019	Nov. 1, 2019 ~March 19, 2020
A	Observed trips with at least one catch record east of 72° 30' W Longitude	401	391	555	724	646	397
B	That met the criteria in row A <u>and</u> used small mesh at some point during their trip	172	252	376	364	354	204
C	That met the criteria in rows A-B <u>and</u> landed more than 200 pounds summer flounder on whole trip	72	92	150	135	164	97
D	That met the criteria in rows A-C <u>and</u> discarded >10% of summer flounder catch east of 72° 30' W Longitude	21	18	36	47	53	24
E	% of observed trips with catch east of 72° 30' W Longitude that also used small mesh, landed >200 pounds of summer flounder, and discarded >10% of summer flounder catch (row D/row A)	5.20%	4.60%	6.50%	6.50%	8.20%	6.05%
F	Total summer flounder discards (pounds) from trips meeting criteria in A-D	14,579	16,470	14,640	33,868	18,186	11,672
G	Total summer flounder landings (pounds) from trips meeting criteria in A-D	15,224	23,295	25,472	76,780	59,960	29,540
H	Total catch (pounds) from trips meeting criteria in A-D	29,804	39,763	40,113	110,648	69,145	41,212

# Advisor Email Comment on Small Mesh Exemption

- Request to remove summer flounder small mesh exemption area line
  - Vessels should be allowed to possess up to 1,000 lb with small mesh regardless of fishing area
  - Directed trips over 1,000 lb should have 5" mesh requirement (vs. 5.5" diamond/6" square currently)
- MC comments on this request?



# Staff Recommendation: Flynet Exemption

- Vessels fishing with two-seam otter trawl flynet are exempt from the minimum mesh size requirements.
- Exempt flynets have large mesh in the wings that measure 8 to 64 inches, the belly of the net has 35 or more meshes that are at least 8 inches, and the mesh decreases in size throughout the body of the net, sometimes to 2 inches or smaller.

# Staff Recommendation: Flynet Exemption

- NC flynet fishery analyzed annually
- No summer flounder landed in NC flynet fishery in last 6 years
- General decrease in flynet landings in recent years largely due to shoaling at Oregon Inlet

# Flynet Exemption

- As discussed last year, one advisor noted in 2020 that flynet exemption is being used outside NC with “high rise” nets on multispecies trips
  - Requested change in definition to include 4-seam nets in addition to 2-seam nets
- Very few, if any SNE/Mid-Atlantic fishermen in offshore mixed winter trawl fishery use 2 seam nets
  - Most “high rise” are 4 seam nets: with side panels, box shaped

# Flynet Exemption

- Previous (2020) MC comments:
  - Need to better understand use and configuration of flynet and high-rise nets as related to this exemption
  - Possible compliance/enforcement issue if vessels believe they qualify for exemption but are not meeting regulatory definition (2 seam net)
  - Better understanding of 2 vs. 4 seam nets needed before commenting on whether expansion of regulatory definition is warranted

# Flynet Exemption: Staff Recommendation

- No changes for 2022
- Include in contractor review of mesh size/exemption regulations in 2022
  - Data analysis of specific trawl gear configurations if possible
  - Input from gear experts, industry, and enforcement on this issue



# MC Decision Points

- Recommend 2022-2023 ACLs, ACTs, commercial quota, and RHLs for both annually varying and constant ABCs
  - Recommendation for constant vs. varying approach?
- Review commercial management measures and recommend any changes to:
  - Commercial minimum fish size
  - Commercial minimum mesh size
  - Possession thresholds for minimum mesh size requirement
  - Mesh size exemptions (small mesh exemption program and flynet exemption)