

# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

## Winter Flounder Technical Committee Call

### Draft Agenda

January 11, 2023

1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

The times listed are approximate; the order in which these items will be taken is subject to change; other items may be added as necessary.

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|--|-----------|
| 1. Welcome/Review agenda ( <i>R. Balouskus</i> )   | 1:00 p.m. |
| 2. Staff Memo ( <i>T. Bauer</i> )  | 1:05 p.m. |
| a. Review updated assessment information for Gulf of Maine and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic stocks        |           |
| b. Review New England Fishery Management Council state sub-component specifications                            |           |
| c. Review commercial and recreational fishery performance  |           |
| 3. Discussion on winter flounder specifications (Facilitator: <i>R. Balouskus</i> )                            | 1:15 p.m. |
| Objective: determine if changes to commercial and recreational measures are needed for 2024-2025 fishing years |           |
| 4. Public Comment  | 1:50 p.m. |
| 5. Adjourn/other business  | 1:55 p.m. |



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## MEMORANDUM

December 20, 2022

**To: Winter Flounder Technical Committee**

**From: Tracey Bauer, Winter Flounder FMP Coordinator**

**RE: Winter Flounder Specifications**

### Introduction

On December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022, the New England Fishery Management Council (Council) took final action on new winter flounder specifications for the 2023-2025 fishing years through Framework 65. The recommended specifications were based off of the 2022 Management Track Stock Assessments for both the Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) and Gulf of Maine (GOM) winter flounder stocks and overfishing limit and acceptable biological catch recommendations from the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee. The sections below review the new specifications (specifically the state sub-component), GOM and SNE/MA stock status, recreational and commercial management measures, and recent recreational and commercial fishery trends.

### Technical Committee Objective

Determine if changes to commercial or recreational measures are needed for FY 2024 or 2025. Addendum III allows for winter flounder specifications to be set up to 3 years for the GOM and SNE/MA fisheries. Management measures for 2023 have already been set as status quo the last time specifications were reviewed in 2021.

### Stock Status

Based on the 2022 assessment, the GOM stock biomass status is unknown and overfishing is not occurring. Biomass (30+ cm mt) in 2021 was estimated to be 5,093 mt. The 2021 30+ cm exploitation rate was estimated to be 0.033 which is 14% of the overfishing exploitation threshold proxy (0.23). Overall, indices of GOM winter flounder abundance have not demonstrated any positive response to the large declines in commercial and recreational removals since the 1980s. However, there were increases in the fall 2021 and spring 2021 and 2022 area-swept biomass estimates, which, if they continue, could be the beginning of a response to continued low fishing effort.

The SNE/MA stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring in 2021. The SNE/MA stock biomass (SSB) in 2021 was estimated to be 3,353 mt which is 101% of the biomass target (3,314 mt), and 202% of the biomass threshold (1,657 mt) for an overfished stock. This change in stock status is due to a change in the years of recruitment estimates that were used to complete the projections to estimate biological reference points. Instead of drawing upon the entire time

series of recruitment estimates, the projections now only use recruitment estimates from the last 20 years (2002-2021). The winter flounder stock is most likely not capable of achieving the high levels of recruitment prior to 2000; therefore, using a truncated recruitment time series of only the last 20 years better reflects the current state of the stock. Despite a change in stock status, the perception of the stock has not changed; trends in survey indices and model estimates all continue to indicate the stock is in poor condition.

### **Specifications – State Sub-component**

The GOM sub-ACL was adjusted up by 116% and the SNE/MA sub-ACL was adjusted up by 53% to reflect the results of the 2022 management track stock assessments. The state subcomponents for both the GOM and SNE/MA stocks were adjusted to reflect average catch for the years 2017-2021. In the case of the GOM state sub-component this represents a 20% decrease, and for the SNE/MA state sub-component this represents a 10% decrease.

**Table 1. GOM and SNE/MA Specifications and State Sub-component Average Catch.**

Stock	Sub-ACLs		State Sub-component		
	FY22 (mt)	FY23 (mt)	FY22 (mt)	FY23 (mt)	2017-2021 average catch (mt)
GOM	281	607	194	153	151.4
SNE/MA	288	441	21	19	17.2

### **Commercial & Recreational Fishery Measures**

The commercial and recreational fisheries regulations have remained status quo since the Winter Flounder Management Board approved Addendum II in 2012. Table 2 displays the commercial measures by state and Table 3 displays the recreational measures by state. Table 4 displays recreational harvest for the years 2017-2021, and the average harvest during that time period is 90.0 mt.

**Table 2. Commercial Winter Flounder Regulations.**

State	Stock Unit	Size Limit	Trip Limit	Seasonal Closure (dates inclusive)	Min. Mesh Size
Maine	GOM	12"	500 lbs	May 1 – June 30	6.5"
New Hampshire	GOM	12"	500 lbs	April 1 – June 30	6.5"
Massachusetts	GOM	12"	500 lbs	Open all year	6.5"
	SNE/MA	12"	50 lbs	Open all year	6.5"
Rhode Island	SNE/MA	12"	50 lbs	Open all year	6.5"
Connecticut	SNE/MA	12"	50 lbs or 38 fish	March 1 – April 14	6.5"
New York	SNE/MA	12"	50 lbs	June 14 – Nov 30 (for all gear besides fyke nets, pound and trap nets)	6.5"
New Jersey	SNE/MA	12"	38 fish	June 1 – Nov 30 (all gear except for fyke nets) Feb 20 – Oct 31 (Fyke net)	6.5"

**Table 3. Recreational Winter Flounder Regulations.**

State	Stock Unit	Creel Limit	Size Limit	Seasonal Closure (dates inclusive)
Maine	GOM	8	12"	Open all year
New Hampshire	GOM	8	12"	Open all year
Massachusetts	GOM	8	12"	Open all year
	SNE/MA	2	12"	January 1- February 28
Rhode Island	SNE/MA	2	12"	January 1 – February 28
Connecticut	SNE/MA	2	12"	January 1 – March 31

State	Stock Unit	Creel Limit	Size Limit	Seasonal Closure (dates inclusive)
New York	SNE/MA	2	12"	May 31 – March 31
New Jersey	SNE/MA	2	12"	January 1 – February 28
Federal Waters	GOM & SNE/MA	Unlimited	12"	Open all year

**Table 4. Recreational Winter Flounder Harvest.**

Year	Harvest (lb)	Harvest (mt)
2017	428,764	194.5
2018	223,355	102.3
2019	87,074	39.5
2020	140,609	63.8
2021	112,676	51.1
Average	198,496	90.0