



## *Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission*

# NEWS RELEASE

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*Working towards healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species, or successful restoration  
well in progress by the year 2015*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **Winter Flounder Board Approves Addendum I to Initiate Stock Rebuilding of Inshore Stocks**

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s Winter Flounder Management Board approved Addendum I to Amendment 1 the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for the Inshore Stocks of Winter Flounder. The Addendum establishes harvest reductions for both the Gulf of Maine (GOM) and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) inshore stocks of winter flounder (0 – 3 miles).

This action is taken in response to the findings of the 2008 Groundfish Assessment Review Meeting (GARM III), which estimates that the SNE/MA stock is at 9% of the target biomass (overfished) with overfishing occurring and that the GOM stock is likely to be overfished with overfishing likely to be occurring. The Addendum’s provisions are also intended to complement federal management measures on groundfish stocks under the final interim rule, which will significantly reduce fishing mortality on federally-managed groundfish stocks, including winter flounder, in offshore waters (3 – 200 miles).

For the GOM, Addendum I requires an 11% reduction in fishing mortality for the recreational sector and a 250 pound possession limit for non-federally permitted commercial fishermen (estimated 31% reduction in harvest). Recreational reductions may be achieved by using possession limits, seasons, or other measures. Commercial measures under the final interim rule are intended to achieve at least an 11% reduction in fishing mortality.

For the SNE/MA, the Addendum establishes a two fish recreational bag limit with current size limits and seasons maintained and a 50 pound possession limit for non-federally permitted commercial fishermen. Both measures will allow for the consistent application of management measures in state water fisheries and are intended to complement the federal interim rule which prohibits any take of SNE/MA winter flounder from offshore waters (an estimated 62% reduction in fishing mortality). The Board set bag and possession limits that are low enough to discourage directed fishing but allow fishermen to keep their winter flounder bycatch. The two fish recreational bag limit is estimated to achieve approximately a 50% reduction in harvest, while the 50 pound commercial possession limit is estimated to achieve approximately a 65% reduction in harvest.

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The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species.

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Cooperative management between state and federal waters on winter flounder is particularly important because of the unique migration patterns and spawning site fidelity of this species. When winter flounder migrate to inshore state water spawning grounds, they become concentrated in certain areas, making it easy for anglers to locate and remove a substantial portion of them. Concentrated fishing effort on spawning females, which are the most productive part of the population, can result in a larger net loss to the population than the landings may suggest. The Addendum's measures seek to enhance stock rebuilding efforts throughout the species range by reducing fishing related mortality on inshore spawning stocks.

States are required to submit proposals to meet the required harvest reductions by mid-June. The Board will meet in August to review the Technical Committee's evaluations of state proposals and take final action. States will be required to implement their regulations by November 1, 2009. For more information, please contact Christopher Vonderweidt, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 or [cvonderwiedt@asmfc.org](mailto:cvonderwiedt@asmfc.org).

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