N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Preferred Management Options
Draft Amendment 2 to the N.C. Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan

Final approval of Amendment 2 is scheduled to take place at the Marine Fisheries Commission’s Aug. 21-23, 2019 business meeting, after review by the Secretary of the Department of Environmental Quality and legislative committees. These measures would stay in place until Amendment 3 of the plan is adopted.

The following management measures from Amendment 1 and Supplement A to Amendment 1 will be incorporated upon adoption of Amendment 2.

• From the Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan Amendment 1:
  – Management measures, including restrictions that limit the number of days per week and the amount of yardage allowed for large mesh gill nets in various areas of the state;
  – A minimum distance (area dependent) between gill net and pound net sets, per rule 15A NCAC 03J .0103 (d); and
  – A recreational minimum size limit of 15 inches total length.

• From Supplement A to the Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan Amendment 1:
  – A commercial minimum size limit of 15 inches;
  – A minimum mesh size of 6-inch stretch mesh to harvest southern flounder from a gill net; and
  – A minimum mesh size of 5.75-inch stretch mesh for flounder pound net escape panels.

• From N.C. Fishery Management Plan for Interjurisdictional Fisheries to maintain compliance with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan Addendum XXVIII:
  – The recreational bag limit of no more than four flounder per person per day is maintained in Amendment 2.

Reduce fishing mortality in the commercial and recreational fisheries to a level that ends overfishing within two years and allows the SSB to increase to between the threshold and the target within 10 years via a 62% reduction ($F=0.26$) in total removals in 2019 and beginning in 2020, via a 72% reduction ($F=0.18$) in total removals.

• The commercial and recreational harvest seasons will close by proclamation immediately following the August 2019 Marine Fisheries Commission meeting and will re-open with the following schedule:
  – 2019 (62% reduction)
    ▪ Commercial
      ◦ Northern – Sept. 15 through Oct. 13;
      ◦ Central – Sept. 15 through Oct. 17; and
      ◦ Southern – Sept. 15 through Nov. 2.
    ▪ Recreational Hook and Line and Gig Fishery
      ◦ Will not reopen in 2019
    ▪ Recreational Commercial Gear License Gill Net Fishery
      ◦ Will not reopen in 2019
- 2020 (72% reduction):
  - Commercial
    - Northern – Sept. 15 through Oct. 6;
    - Central – Sept 15 through Oct. 11; and
  - Recreational hook and line and gig fishery
    - Aug. 16 through Sept. 30
  - Recreational Commercial Gear License Gill Net Fishery
    - Sept. 15 through Sept. 30 (the recreational and commercial seasons must both be open to allow this gear)

- Remove all gears that target southern flounder from the water (e.g., commercial and Recreational Commercial Gear License anchored large mesh gill nets, gigs) or make them inoperable (flounder pound nets) in areas and times outside of seasons implemented where southern flounder discards are likely to occur, with exceptions for the shad and catfish fisheries.

- Adoption of Amendment 2 authorizes concurrent development of Amendment 3 and more robust management strategies.

- The following non-quantifiable measures:
  - Reduce commercial anchored large-mesh gill net soak times to single overnight soaks where nets may be set no sooner than one hour before sunset and must be retrieved no later than one hour after sunrise the next morning in the Neuse, Tar/Pamlico rivers and the Albemarle Sound areas that have previously been exempt;
  - Reduce the maximum yardage allowed in the commercial anchored large mesh gill net fishery by 25% for each Management Unit; allowing a maximum of 1,500-yards in Management Units A, B, and C, and a maximum of 750-yards in Management Units D and E unless more restrictive yardage is specified through adaptive management through the sea turtle or sturgeon Incidental Take Permits; and
  - Prohibit use of any method of retrieving live flounder from pound nets that cause injury to released fish (no picks, gigs, gaffs, spears, etc.).