



An Anglers Guide to Amendment 1 to the Winter Flounder Fishery Management Plan

Prepared by the Coastal Conservation Association

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO:

Attend your states public hearing (see page 11) and support the positions noted below. Write a letter, fax or e-mail to your ASMFC representatives stating that you support CCA's position on Amendment 1 to the Winter Flounder Fishery Management Plan. You can find the addresses for your state representatives beginning on pages 9-10. You can also attend a public hearing in your state – the list of is on page 8.

Here is what they are hoping to accomplish with this Amendment:

1. What is the management unit?

CCA Supports the present designation of 3 management units, recognizing the lack of data to support management in smaller areas. However, CCA urges that the States support additional work to identify and quantify smaller, localized "stocklets" to better account for localized depletion.

2. Define overfished and overfishing (i.e.: not enough fish in the spawning stock and catching too many fish).

CCA supports using mortality and spawning stock biomass control rules, specifically those preferred by the Winter Flounder Technical Committee.

3. If the stock is overfished, how long do we take to rebuild it?

CCA supports aggressive actions, rebuilding stocks in the minimum time feasible.

4. Recreational and Commercial fishing management measures.

CCA supports stock-area specific management measures, but urge them to be applied to the Gulf of Maine as well as Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic stock and ask for similar conservation management in the EEZ where the stocks mix together.

These points, and the important options in Amendment 1, are fully explained below in the body of the Anglers Guide.

An Anglers Guide to Amendment 1 to the Winter Flounder Fishery Management Plan

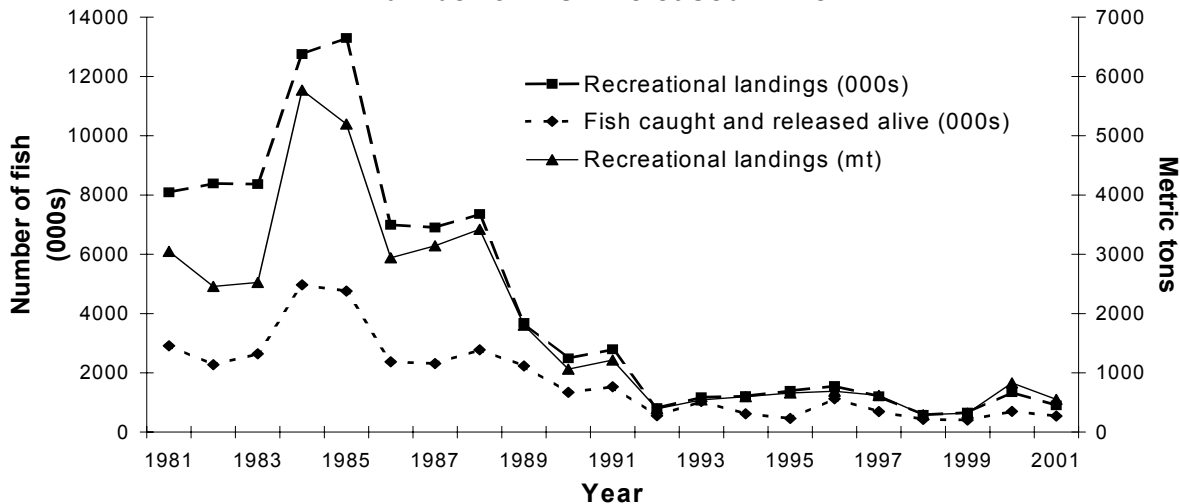
Prepared by the Coastal Conservation Association

What is happening?

The Atlantic States Marine Fishery Commission (ASMFC) is in the process of writing Amendment 1 to the Winter Flounder Fishery Management Plan (FMP). Amendment 1 is a lengthy document, totaling 110 pages. This guide is designed to help recreational anglers understand key portions of the proposed amendment so they can make informed decisions about the future of winter flounder management. In the assessment there are 2 designated stocks: The Gulf of Maine (GOM) stock, which is those winter flounder north of Cape Cod and the Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic stock, which is those fish south of Cape Cod to Maryland.

The ultimate problem from an angler's perspective is the loss of winter flounder in the New England and Mid-Atlantic estuaries in the spring. What was once an abundant stock and thus recreational fishery is now gone (see Figures 7 and 8 from the Draft FMP below).

Figure 7. Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Winter Flounder Recreational Landings and Number of Fish Released Alive



Recreational landings in numbers and metric tons for SNE/MA winter flounder. The number of fish caught and released alive is also shown. From the SARC 36 Advisory Report for SNE/MA Winter Flounder, NEFSC 2002.

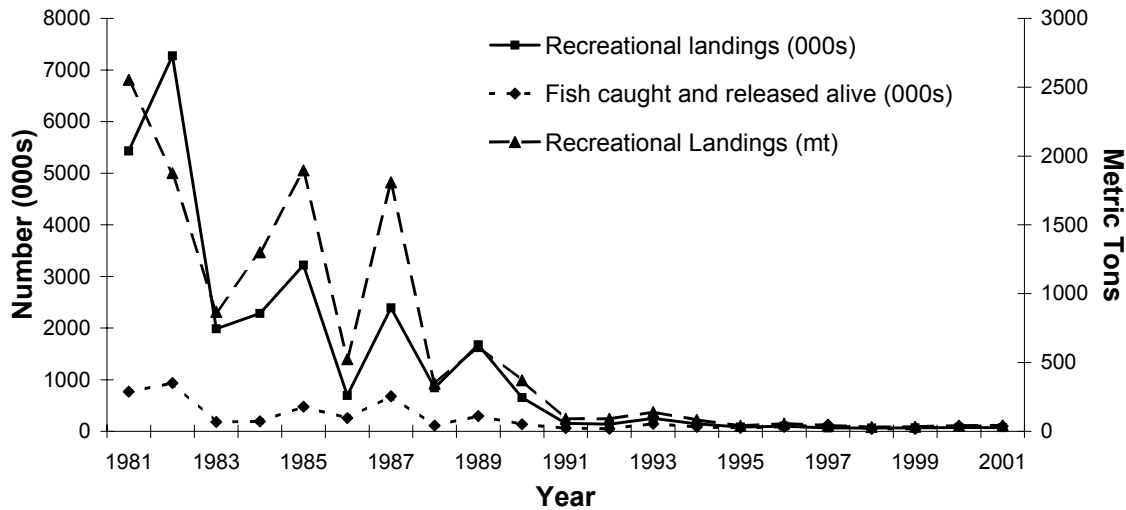
Recreational landings are generally accepted to be an indicator of abundance. That is, if fish are present anglers will catch them. If they are not, they won't. From the recreational landings data it is clear that winter flounder are seldom encountered by recreational fishermen anymore, and have not for nearly 13 years.

The stock assessment indicates the SNA/MA stock is overfished/overfishing, while the GOM stock is not. In our view, there has to be a problem with the latest assessment, since recreational landings are at historic low levels in the GOM management area (Figure 8). In order to be risk averse, we believe the ASMFC must implement conservative management measures in both management areas if there is any hope of rebuilding the inshore abundance of winter flounder. In addition, since it is thought winter flounder from estuaries mix in the offshore waters, conservative management in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is warranted to protect those fish that originate from less abundant estuaries. CCA urges that ASMFC express its concerns to the New England Fisheries Management Council (NEFMC). Protecting the flounder that are presently moving into estuaries is critical to restoring their abundance.

The purpose of managing winter flounder stocks is to ensure that the winter flounder resource can be utilized throughout its range by current and future generations of the fishing and non-fishing public. Effective management will require controls on mortality due to fishing and habitat degradation, as well as cooperation among the groups responsible for managing different areas utilized by winter flounder.

Historically, NEFMC and ASMFC management plans have chosen different approaches to managing winter flounder stocks. Since the majority of the winter flounder fishery takes place outside state waters, management regimes employed by the

**Figure 8. Gulf of Maine Winter Flounder
Recreational Landings and
Number of Fish Released Alive**



Recreational landings in numbers and metric tons for GOM winter flounder. The number of fish caught and released alive is also shown. From the SARC 36 Advisory Report for GOM Winter Flounder, NEFSC 2002.

NEFMC on the offshore winter flounder fishery has an enormous impact on the populations that return to state waters to spawn. The scientific community feels strongly that consistent measures must be employed in both the EEZ and State waters to give the most benefit to winter flounder stocks.

The most recent stock assessment (SARC 36), indicates the Gulf of Maine (GOM) stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring, however, the Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) stock complex is overfished and overfishing is occurring.

This draft amendment contains options for revisions in the overfishing definitions for both stocks and options for management measures designed to achieve the goals and objectives of this amendment. The final document will contain compliance criteria that each state will be required to implement.

The Anglers Guide To Amendment 1

Here is what they are hoping to accomplish with this Amendment:

1. What is the management unit?
2. Define overfished and overfishing (ie: not enough fish in the spawning stock and catching too many fish).
3. If the stock is overfished, how long do we take to rebuild it?
4. Recreational and Commercial fishing management measures.

The Draft Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery management Plan for Winter Flounder is the basis for most of this Angler Guide. You may reference the amendment itself as you follow this guide. It can be downloaded from www.asmfc.org. Page numbers direct you to the parts of the plan where options for adoption are presented.

2.2 GOALS (page 36)

The goals of Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Inshore Stocks of Winter Flounder are:

“To promote stock rebuilding and management of the winter flounder fishery in a manner that is biologically, economically, socially, and ecologically sound.”

“To promote rebuilding of the inshore and estuarine component of the winter flounder stock.”

2.3 OBJECTIVES (page 36-37)

In support of this goal, the following objectives are recommended for Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan:

1. Manage the fishing mortality rates for the Gulf of Maine and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Stocks to rebuild the stocks and provide adequate spawning potential to sustain long-term abundance of the winter flounder populations.
2. Manage the winter flounder stocks under an ASMFC rebuilding plan designed to rebuild and then maintain the spawning stock biomass above the target biomass levels and restrict fishing mortality to rates below the threshold.
3. Establish an interstate management program that complements the management system for federal waters.
4. Foster a management program for restoring and maintaining essential winter flounder habitat.
5. Establish research priorities that will further refine the winter flounder management program to maximize the biological, social, and economic benefits derived from the winter flounder population.
6. **Restore the winter flounder fishery so that inshore recreational and commercial fishermen can access it throughout its historical range and at the historic age structure. (CCA’s emphasis)**

2.4 SPECIFICATION OF MANAGEMENT UNIT

The management unit for winter flounder is defined as the range of the winter flounder resource within the US waters of the Northwest Atlantic Ocean. A relatively large variability in growth and maturity exists among stocks along the northwest Atlantic coast. The variability in biology, as well as current and historical exploitation patterns, necessitate the delineation of the range of winter flounder into stock units where growth, seasonal movement, and female maturity schedules are similar enough to be modeled as one group. Within these stock groups, winter flounder move across state boundaries and between state waters and the EEZ. **The extent to which winter flounder move between estuaries or inshore/offshore systems has not been fully documented (CCA’s emphasis).**

Issue 1. Define management units for inshore winter flounder populations. (page 37)

CCA Supports Option 1: Status quo

Based on these criteria, inshore winter flounder populations have been split into three stock units for management purposes. The Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) and Gulf of Maine (GOM) stocks are managed within state waters by the ASMFC, while the EEZ components of these stocks as well as the offshore Georges Bank stock are managed by the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC). CCA believes better management could result from smaller stock definitions, but realize the data is not adequate to accomplish it. CCA encourages the Management Board to support work to identify and quantify smaller, localized “stocklets” to better account for localized depletion.

The Winter Flounder Technical Committee recommends that the management units remain the same until new information comes forward regarding winter flounder management units.

Option 2: Smaller management units than those currently used

Based on these criteria, inshore winter flounder populations will be split into a number of smaller management units than the units used by the NEFMC. Units would be defined by the Winter Flounder Management Board with advice from the Winter Flounder Technical Committee and the Winter Flounder Advisory Panel.

This option is not recommended by the Winter Flounder Technical Committee. The TC does not have any new biological information that warrants changing stock definitions.

2.5 DEFINITION OF OVERFISHED AND OVERFISHING (page 40)

In fisheries management, a control rule is used to evaluate the need for management action. The control rule is an indicator of stock status and is based on 1) the level of exploitation or the fishing mortality rate (F), and 2) the level of stock biomass. Overfishing is defined as the relative rate of removals from the population and is determined by the fishing mortality on the stock. The level of spawning stock biomass, as the result of the fishing mortality rate, is the basis for determining if a stock has become overfished. A biomass target or threshold determines the desired condition of the stock whereas the target mortality rate determines how fast the population is moving toward achieving the appropriate level of biomass

The intent of this Amendment is to establish a control rule to accurately categorize the status of the stock by considering both fishing mortality and spawning stock biomass, simultaneously. This control rule establishes a target and threshold for spawning stock biomass and a target fishing mortality rate. The management program developed through this amendment is designed to achieve the target F and spawning stock biomass levels.

Issue 1: Choosing a fishing mortality rate target and threshold (page 41)

The options listed below contain a range of target and threshold values.

For all options listed, the Technical Committee recommendation is that winter flounder management decisions be derived from the same set of reference points for both the NEFMC and the ASMFC.

Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic winter flounder

Option 1: Status quo

The status quo option means that the targets, thresholds, and rebuilding goals set in Amendment 1 would be the same as those in Addendum II. Overfishing is defined as a mortality rate greater than $F_{25\%}=0.3$. The target fishing mortality for rebuilding is $F_{40\%}=0.21$. This option does not define biomass targets or thresholds. This options would implement a fishing mortality target of $F_{40}=0.21$, as currently stated in Addendum II to the winter flounder FMP.

The Technical Committee does not recommend this option due to the discrepancy between these status determination criteria and those used by the NEFMC. This option is not preferred by the ASMFC because it does not meet the goals and objectives of Amendment 1 as stated in sections 2.2 and 2.3.

CCA Supports: Option 2: SARC 36 (NEFSC 2002) criteria

This option would set a fishing mortality threshold of $F_{msy}=0.32$ fully recruited, with a target at 75% of $F_{msy}=0.24$. The $F_{rebuild}$ under this definition is $F_{msy}=0.24$.

This option is recommended by the 36th Stock Assessment Review Committee (NEFSC 2002), and is also recommended by the ASMFC Winter Flounder Technical Committee.

Gulf of Maine winter flounder

Option 1: Status quo

The status quo option means that the targets, thresholds, and rebuilding goals set in Amendment 1 would be the same as those in Addendum II. Overfishing is defined as a mortality rate greater than $F_{25\%}=0.3$. The target fishing mortality for rebuilding is $F_{40\%}=0.21$. This option does not define biomass targets or thresholds. This options would implement a fishing mortality target of $F_{40}=0.21$, as currently stated in Addendum II to the winter flounder FMP.

This option is not recommended by the Technical Committee or preferred by the ASMFC because it does not meet the goals and objectives of Amendment 1 as stated in sections 2.2 and 2.3.

CCA Supports Option 2: SARC 36 (NEFSC 2002) criteria

Fishing mortality threshold of $F_{msy}=0.43$ fully recruited, with a target at 75% of $F_{msy}=0.32$ fully recruited.

This option is recommended by the 36th Stock Assessment Review Committee (NEFSC 2002), and is also recommended by the ASMFC Winter Flounder Technical Committee

Issue 2. Choosing a spawning stock biomass target and threshold level. (page 43)

Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic winter flounder

Option 1: Status quo

Under the current winter flounder FMP and addenda, there is not a spawning stock biomass target or threshold for winter flounder.

CCA Supports Option 2: SARC 36 (NEFSC 2002) criteria

This option sets the biomass target, $B_{msy}=30,100$ mt SSB for the SNE/MA winter flounder stock. Under this option, the biomass threshold would be set at $\frac{1}{2}SSB_{msy}=15,050$ mt SSB.

This option is recommended by the 36th Stock Assessment Review Committee (NEFSC 2002), and is also recommended by the ASMFC Winter Flounder Technical Committee.

Option 3: Step Increase from Amendment 9 to SARC 36 criteria

This option appeared as one of the options in the NEFMC draft Amendment 13 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP, but was not recommended by the NEFMC.

Gulf of Maine winter flounder

Option 1: Status quo

Under the current winter flounder FMP and addenda, there is not a spawning stock biomass target or threshold for winter flounder.

CCA Supports: Option 2: SARC 36 (NEFSC 2002) criteria

This option sets $B_{msy}=4,100$ mt SSB for the GOM winter flounder stock. Under this option, the biomass threshold would be set at $\frac{1}{2}SSB_{msy}=2,050$ mt SSB.

This option is recommended by the 36th Stock Assessment Review Committee (NEFSC 2002), and is also recommended by the ASMFC Winter Flounder Technical Committee.

2.6.1 Stock Rebuilding Targets

Each of the options below refer to the biomass target and threshold established in Section 2.5.

Option 1: Rebuild the biomass to the target level within the timeframe established in Section 2.6.2

Option 2: Rebuild the biomass to the threshold level within the timeframe established in Section 2.6.2

Option 3: Rebuild the biomass to a point halfway between the target and threshold within the timeframe established in Section 2.6.2

2.6.2 Stock Rebuilding Schedules

The Winter Flounder Technical Committee recommended that the Winter Flounder Management Board consider the implications of various rebuilding schedules. The TC notes that the longer the rebuilding time frame, the higher the fishing mortality that is allowed over the duration of the time frame. This could mean that more steps toward fishing mortality reduction can be taken and the longer the amount of time the industry has to adapt to fishing mortality reduction measures. A shorter rebuilding time frame means a lower fishing mortality over time, lower risk to the stock, and potentially greater socioeconomic costs.

Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic winter flounder

CCA Supports: Option 1: Amendment 13 recommended MSY control rule

Fishing mortality is calculated to rebuild to B_{msy} in 10 years when $\frac{1}{2}B_{msy}<B<B_{msy}$. When stock size is less than the threshold biomass the fishing mortality rate will be as established by the formal rebuilding program.

This option has a high probability of preventing stock collapse, providing the greatest benefit to the stock of all the options presented in this draft amendment. Therefore, this option is likely to produce greater socioeconomic benefits in the long term when compared to options 2 and 3. In the short term, socioeconomic costs can be expected to be somewhat high with this option.

This option is the option recommended to NOAA Fisheries by the NEFMC in draft Amendment 13. This option is also recommended as the preferred option by the Winter Flounder Technical Committee. This option would ensure that the

fishing mortality rates and rebuilding time frames in Amendment 1 remain consistent with those recommended by the NEFMC in Amendment 13.

Option 2: Take immediate action to reduce F when the stock is overfished or overfishing is occurring

If the stock is determined to be overfished or overfishing is occurring, the Winter Flounder Management Board MUST take action during the upcoming year to reduce fishing mortality below the target F rate.

This option has a high probability of preventing stock collapse, providing the greatest benefit to the stock of all the options presented in this draft amendment. Therefore, this option is likely to produce greater socioeconomic benefits in the long term when compared to Options 1 and 3. In the short term, socioeconomic costs can be expected to be somewhat high with this option.

This is one of three options developed by the Winter Flounder Technical Committee as an alternative to the options presented by the NEFMC in the draft Amendment 13. However, this option is not recommended by the Winter Flounder Technical Committee because it is inconsistent with the control rule recommended by the NEFMC in Amendment 13. In addition, while this option does work to end overfishing, it will likely take longer to rebuild under this option than under Option 1.

Option 3: Limit on the amount of time spent between the target and threshold levels

This option involves deciding upon a specified amount of time that biomass and/or fishing mortality can fall between the threshold and target levels. At the end of this time period, action must be taken to reduce fishing mortality below the threshold. By specifying a time limit that the biomass could remain between the threshold and target, a rebuilding fishing mortality rate would be calculated to rebuild to the biomass target within the specified time frame.

This option provides adequate flexibility to Option 1 for cases when the stock is not overfished (biomass is above the threshold but below the target) and overfishing is not occurring (the fishing mortality rate is below the threshold but above the target), but target biomass and fishing mortality levels have not yet been attained. This option adopts the same strategy as the other options of reducing F to achieve the target and ensure rebuilding of the stock. This option incorporates a delay in achieving the target if the thresholds have not been exceeded, which may ease the socioeconomic impacts to the fisheries and increase the risks to the stock.

If Option 3 for spawning stock biomass target and threshold is approved, the SNE/MA stock would fall within this category (biomass above threshold, but below target). Fishing mortality is above the threshold. The Board would need to decide how to apply this option, for example by reducing fishing mortality to 0.32 for a specified number of years, and at the end of that period reducing fishing mortality to the target. The Board may have to set a fishing mortality to rebuild the stock to the biomass target within a specified time.

This is one of three options developed by the Winter Flounder Technical Committee as an alternative to the options presented by the NEFMC in the draft Amendment 13. However, this option is not recommended on its own by the Winter Flounder Technical Committee. This option may be more appropriate as a subset to one of the other options listed here.

Gulf of Maine winter flounder

Option 1: Amendment 13 recommended MSY control rule

Fishing mortality is calculated to rebuild to B_{msy} in 10 years when $\frac{1}{2}B_{msy} < B < B_{msy}$

When stock size is less than the threshold biomass the fishing mortality rate will be as established by the formal rebuilding program.

This option has a high probability of preventing stock collapse, providing the greatest benefit to the stock of all the options presented in this draft amendment. Therefore, this option is likely to produce greater socioeconomic benefits in the long term when compared to options 2, 3, and 4. In the short term, socioeconomic costs can be expected to be somewhat high with this option.

This option is the option recommended to NOAA Fisheries by the NEFMC in draft Amendment 13. This option is also recommended as the preferred option by the Winter Flounder Technical Committee. This option would ensure that the fishing mortality rates and rebuilding time frames in Amendment 1 remain consistent with those recommended by the NEFMC in Amendment 13.

Option 2: Take immediate action to reduce F when the stock is overfished or overfishing is occurring

If the stock is determined to be overfished or overfishing is occurring, the Winter Flounder Management Board MUST take action during the upcoming year to reduce fishing mortality below the target F rate.

This option has a high probability of preventing stock collapse, providing the greatest benefit to the stock of all the options presented in this draft amendment. Therefore, this option is likely to produce greater socioeconomic benefits in the long term when compared to Options 2, 3, and 4. In the short term, socioeconomic costs can be expected to be somewhat high with this option.

This is one of three options developed by the Winter Flounder Technical Committee as an alternative to the options presented by the NEFMC in the draft Amendment 13. However, this option is not recommended by the Winter Flounder Technical Committee because it is inconsistent with the control rule recommended by the NEFMC in Amendment 13. In addition, while this option does work to end overfishing, it will likely take longer to rebuild under this option than under Option 1.

The Technical Committee notes that in the short term, this option has the same socioeconomic impacts as the previous option. While the current F target (75% of $F_{msy}=0.24$) is currently in line with the $F_{rebuild}$ in Amendment 13 (0.24), this coincidence does not guarantee that these numbers will be consistent when the status of the stock is re-evaluated at the halfway point of the rebuilding period. As the progress of the stock is evaluated during the rebuilding period, this inconsistency may require the ASMFC to take smaller or larger reductions than those required by Amendment 13.

Option 3: Limit on the amount of time spent between the target and threshold levels

This option involves deciding upon a specified amount of time that biomass and/or fishing mortality can fall between the threshold and target levels. At the end of this time period, action must be taken to reduce fishing mortality below the threshold. By specifying a time limit that the biomass could remain between the threshold and target, a rebuilding fishing mortality rate would be calculated to rebuild to the biomass target within the specified time frame.

This option provides adequate flexibility to Option 1 for cases when the stock is not overfished (biomass is above the threshold but below the target) and overfishing is not occurring (the fishing mortality rate is below the threshold but above the target), but target biomass and fishing mortality levels have not yet been attained. This option adopts the same strategy as the other options of reducing F to achieve the target and ensure rebuilding of the stock. This option incorporates a delay in achieving the target if the thresholds have not been exceeded, which may ease the socioeconomic impacts to the fisheries and increase the risks to the stock.

This is one of three options developed by the Winter Flounder Technical Committee as an alternative to the options presented by the NEFMC in the draft Amendment 13. However, this option is not recommended on its own by the Winter Flounder Technical Committee. This option may be more appropriate as a subset to one of the other options listed here.

2.6.3 Maintenance of Stock Structure

(The Winter Flounder Technical Committee will develop a methodology to monitor and maintain the desired stock structure based on the selected option for the overfishing of targets and thresholds that have been selected in Section 2.5)

If an individual stock exceeds threshold limits for exploitation or falls below the threshold limits for biomass, the Board should consider management changes for that stock.

2.8 IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

The Winter Flounder Management Board will establish a schedule that will fully implement Amendment 1 by a date selected by the Management Board. This section will be drafted to reflect the implementation schedule following the selection of management measures.

4.1 RECREATIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Option 1: Status quo

This option would require states to retain their current winter flounder regulations. A state would need to obtain approval from the Winter Flounder Management Board if it wishes to implement more liberal regulations.

With the implementation of Amendment 13 requiring reductions in fishing mortality in federal waters, this option creates the potential for fishing effort to be re-focused in state waters, thereby increasing the mortality on the inshore portion of the winter flounder population.

This option is not recommended by the Winter Flounder Technical Committee as the status quo regulations have not yet been sufficient to reduce fishing mortality in the SNE/MA stock to the ASMFC-defined F40% reference point. The TC notes that the current ASMFC targets and thresholds have not been obtained for the SNE/MA stock under the status quo regulations.

Option 2: Inshore reductions in fishing mortality

This option entails a reduction in fishing mortality inshore to parallel the reduction achieved in federal waters by Amendment 13. The exact percent reduction in fishing mortality will depend on the F target and threshold levels selected by the Winter Flounder Management Board. The reduction would only be necessary in the states that fall within the SNE/MA winter flounder stock. One complication with this option is that it is difficult to determine how a reduction will be made in states whose waters include multiple stocks. One example of this is in Massachusetts, where landings include fish from each of the SNE/MA, GOM, and Georges Bank stocks.

If this option is selected, the states within the SNE/MA stock area will develop proposals designed to achieve the desired reduction in fishing mortality for the inshore recreational fishery. This will allow states to tailor their proposals to unique situations.

Option 3: Hard quota for winter flounder landings

CCA believes this option is inappropriate for managing the recreational fishery.

CCA Supports: Option 4: Stock area-specific management measures

This option entails implementing management measures specific to the entire stock unit area when overfishing is occurring. Execution of this option will be dependent upon the reference points that are selected by the Winter Flounder Management Board during the final approval process for Amendment 1. This option is preferred by the Winter Flounder Management Board because it provides the Board with maximum flexibility in determining the most appropriate management measures for a stock based on the reference points that are approved by the Board in the final Amendment.

The tools available to the Winter Flounder Management Board include trip limits, changes in mesh size regulations, a stockwide catch or effort quota, changes to the minimum size limit, establishing a maximum size limit, imposing season and/or area restrictions, and implementing vessel size or other gear restrictions. Under this option, selected management measures would be implemented on a stockwide basis, not a state-by-state or other basis. For example, if the reference points recommended by the 2002 stock assessment and the Winter Flounder Technical Committee are selected, management measures would be implemented to reduce fishing mortality for the Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic winter flounder stock. The selected management measures would be the same throughout the entire SNE/MA winter flounder stock. **CCA urges similar reductions in the GOM area, despite the latest stock assessment, in order to protect the remaining winter flounder still utilizing estuarine areas.**

4.2 COMMERCIAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Option 1: Status quo

This option would require states to retain their current winter flounder regulations. A state would need to obtain approval from the Winter Flounder Management Board if it wishes to implement more liberal regulations.

With the implementation of Amendment 13 requiring reductions in fishing mortality in federal waters, this option creates the potential for fishing effort to be re-focused in state waters, thereby increasing the mortality on the inshore portion of the winter flounder population.

This option is not recommended by the Winter Flounder Technical Committee as the status quo regulations have not yet been sufficient to reduce fishing mortality in the SNE/MA stock to the ASMFC-defined F40% reference point. The TC notes that the current ASMFC targets and thresholds have not been obtained for the SNE/MA stock under the status quo regulations.

Option 2: Inshore reductions in fishing mortality

This option entails a reduction in fishing mortality inshore to parallel the reduction achieved in federal waters by Amendment 13. The exact percent reduction in fishing mortality will depend on the F target and threshold levels selected by the Winter Flounder Management Board. The reduction would only be necessary in the states that fall within the SNE/MA winter flounder stock. One complication with this option is that it is difficult to determine how a reduction will be made in states

whose waters include multiple stocks. One example of this is in Massachusetts, where landings include fish from each of the SNE/MA, GOM, and Georges Bank stocks.

If this option is selected, the states within the SNE/MA stock area will develop proposals designed to achieve the desired reduction in fishing mortality for the inshore commercial fishery. This will allow states to tailor their proposals to unique situations.

Option 3: Hard quota for winter flounder landings

This option entails implementing a hard quota or Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for landings of winter flounder. A quota has the potential to reduce fishing mortality from the EEZ and within state waters by limiting the amount of winter flounder that may be landed from all areas. The Winter Flounder Management Board would determine specifics such as setting the quota/specifications, how often to update the specifications, how to deal with overages if the quota is exceeded, trip limits, and other specific points of a winter flounder quota.

This option would likely be effective at reducing fishing mortality on the SNE/MA winter flounder stock. Indirect measures (e.g. mesh size changes, season/area closures) have not achieved the F and SSB targets and thresholds for the SNE/MA fishery. This option may have the effect of capping landings from the EEZ in addition to those from state waters, which could have a positive impact on all winter flounder stocks.

Challenges associated with this option include difficulties with setting and allocating a winter flounder quota, as well as difficulties in dealing with a state that records landings from multiple stock units (e.g., Massachusetts). This option also creates the potential for greater discards in the commercial fishery. Quota management will require a significant increase in monitoring in order to be able to assign landings to stock areas.

CCA Supports: Option 4: Stock area-specific management measures

This option entails implementing management measures specific to the entire stock unit area when overfishing is occurring. Execution of this option will be dependent upon the reference points that are selected by the Winter Flounder Management Board during the final approval process for Amendment 1. This option is preferred by the Winter Flounder Management Board because it provides the Board with maximum flexibility in determining the most appropriate management measures for a stock based on the reference points that are approved by the Board in the final Amendment.

The tools available to the Winter Flounder Management Board include trip limits, changes in mesh size regulations, a stockwide catch or effort quota, changes to the minimum size limit, establishing a maximum size limit, imposing season and/or area restrictions, and implementing vessel size or other gear restrictions. Under this option, selected management measures would be implemented on a stockwide basis, not a state-by-state or other basis. For example, if the reference points recommended by the 2002 stock assessment and the Winter Flounder Technical Committee are selected, management measures would be implemented to reduce fishing mortality for the Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic winter flounder stock. The selected management measures would be the same throughout the entire SNE/MA winter flounder stock. . **CCA urges similar reductions in the GOM area, despite the latest stock assessment, in order to protect the remaining winter flounder still utilizing estuarine areas.**

Under both recreational and commercial management measures we urge the ASMFC to express their concern over the status of winter flounder stocks to the NEFMC and ask that they implement similar conservation measures in the EEZ, where winter flounder mix together.

Public Hearing Schedule

July 12 (7:00 PM):

ASMFC Public Hearing on [Draft Amendment 1 to the Winter Flounder FMP](#), Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, 333 Ferry Road, Old Lyme, Connecticut. For more information, please contact David Simpson at 860-434-6043.

July 13 (7:00 PM):

ASMFC Public Hearing on [Draft Amendment 1 to the Winter Flounder FMP](#), New York Department of Environmental Conservation, 205 Belle Meade Road, East Setauket, New York. For more information, please contact Byron Young at 631-444-0436

July 15 (7:00 PM):

ASMFC Public Hearing on [Draft Amendment 1 to the Winter Flounder FMP](#), New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, Goodwill Hose Company Station, 610 7th Avenue, Belmar, New Jersey. For more information, please contact Bruce Freeman at (609)633-2408.

July 19 (6:00 PM):

ASMFC Public Hearing on [Draft Amendment 1 to the Winter Flounder FMP](#), Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife, URI Narragansett Bay Campus, Corless Auditorium, South Ferry Road, Narragansett, Rhode Island. For more information, please contact Najih Lazar at 401-423-1926.

July 20 (6:30 PM):

ASMFC Public Hearing on [Draft Amendment 1 to the Winter Flounder FMP](#), Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, Plymouth Public Library, 132 South Street, Plymouth, Massachusetts. For more information please contact David Pierce at (617)626-1532.

July 21 (7:00 PM):

ASMFC Public Hearing on [Draft Amendment 1 to the Winter Flounder FMP](#), Maine Department of Marine Resources, 194 Mckown Point Road, West Boothbay Harbor, Maine. For more information, please contact Lewis Flagg at (207)624-6548.

July 22 (7:00 PM):

ASMFC Public Hearing on [Draft Amendment 1 to the Winter Flounder FMP](#), New Hampshire Fish & Game, Urban Forestry Center, 45 Elwyn Road, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. For more information please contact John Nelson at (603)868-1095.

ASMFC Striped Bass Management Board Commissioners:

Maine

Director: George LaPointe
Maine Department of Marine
Resources

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