



NOAA
FISHERIES

2018 Summer flounder benchmark assessment

During a benchmark stock assessment, all data, models and methods are up for review.

The NEFSC has heard fishermen's concerns about recreational catch, length and sex differences, and ecosystem effects on summer flounder population and habitats. We are evaluating data that could address those concerns.

The results of this stock assessment will be available to managers for the 2019 fishing year.

Summer Flounder Benchmark Assessment Q&A



Fishers leaving a headboat after fishing for summer flounder in NJ. Photo credit: NOAA Fisheries

How is the health of the summer flounder stock?

Summer flounder are currently not overfished, but overfishing is occurring. The good news is we are seeing older ages present within the stock. We are concerned about the recent 6-year trend of below-average numbers of young fish entering the stock to replace older fish that die.

Are any new data included in this assessment?

In July 2018 we expect new estimates of recreational catch to be released for a range of fishery species NOAA helps manage, including summer flounder. These new catch estimates will be incorporated into the summer flounder stock assessment.

The Northeast Fisheries Science Center has also worked with the fishing industry through the Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel and the NEFSC Cooperative Research Branch to develop new estimates of 'efficiency' for the federal research trawl survey aboard the NOAA Ship *Henry B. Bigelow*. These new estimates will be included in the 2018 benchmark stock assessment.

Scientists will also be exploring models that include sex-specific catch and biological data, in an attempt to better reflect the size differences between males and females.

Data Evaluated in this Assessment

Fishery-Independent Data

- State survey data
- Federal survey data

Fishery-Dependent Data

- Commercial fishery observer data
- Vessel Trip Reports
- Marine Recreational Information Program data
- Biological data from commercial and recreational fishery samples

Benchmark Assessment Process

Summer Flounder Working Group

Model Meeting Jan 2018
 Data Meeting: Aug/Sept 2018
 Model meeting: Sept 2018
 Final Meeting: Oct 2018

Peer Review Panel

Nov 2018

Assessment available to managers

February 2019

What is fishing gear ‘efficiency’, and how does it affect summer flounder?

‘Efficiency’ is the measurement of how effectively a fishing gear catches the fish in its path. From 2015 to 2017 the NEFSC worked to estimate this efficiency for summer flounder during the federal resource survey conducted twice a year on the NOAA Ship *Henry B. Bigelow*. this work was done in partnership with commercial fishing vessels under the direction of the NEFSC Cooperative Research Branch and the Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel, an advisory body to the regional federal fishery management councils.

What is the range of summer flounder?

The summer flounder that are included in the northeast US stock range from the Gulf of Maine to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. The summer flounder that are found south of Cape Hatteras are assessed separately.

Are we seeing shifts in distribution within the summer flounder stock?

State and federal surveys have detected more summer flounder in the northern areas of their range over the last 10-15 years.

Recent Assessment History



For more information:

Check out the Northeast Fisheries Science Center’s website:
nefsc.noaa.gov/benchmark-assessments

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