



The NOAA FISHERIES NAVIGATOR

Summer Flounder Update

Management and Current Status

- Summer flounder is jointly managed by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. NOAA Fisheries implements and enforces regulations. Currently, 60% of landings are allocated to the commercial fishery and 40% to the recreational fishery.
- While summer flounder is not overfished, the stock has been declining since 2010. Even though catch limits are generally not being exceeded, too many fish are being caught for the population to remain at sustainable levels. The amount of catch is fairly stable, but the number of fish available to reproduce is decreasing, which could impact sustainability.

Scientific Reviews

In 2018, NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center is conducting two reviews of summer flounder to ensure regulations are continually based on the best available science:

- The first is the annual **data update** that adds the latest catch estimates into the existing data set used for management. We will use the data update to set 2019 catch limits.
- The second is the comprehensive **benchmark assessment**, which considers all available information and approaches needed to understand stock status. This assessment will include updated recreational and commercial catch estimates and will be used to set catch limits for 2020 and beyond.

For more info, go to:
nefsc.noaa.gov/benchmark-assessments/

Recreational Catch Estimates

Each year, we use several methods to estimate recreational catch:

- Our Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) now uses a mailed Fishing Effort Survey to estimate the number of shore and private boat recreational fishing trips.
- As part of MRIP, we also conduct in-person interviews with anglers at the docks or on for-hire boats about how many fish they caught that day.
- Charter and party boat captains are surveyed separately and some submit vessel trip reports on their fishing effort.

New data on recreational catch estimates based on the new Fishing Effort Survey will be available in early July. Until they are incorporated into the benchmark assessment, we won't know how future catch limits and regulations will be affected.

When will the new recreational catch estimates be available to scientists?

The updated estimates will be available early this summer and will be incorporated into the benchmark assessment.

When will the Council and Commission recommend commercial and recreational catch limits for the 2019 fishing season?

Using information from the data update, the Council and Commission will recommend catch limits at their joint August meeting in Virginia Beach, VA.

Will the new benchmark assessment, which includes updated recreational data, be used to set catch limits for fishing year 2019?

The new benchmark assessment will **not** be used to set catch limits for the 2019 fishing year, since it will not be

completed until later this fall, after the Commission and Council make recommendations for 2019 specifications in August. If necessary, revisions to the 2019 catch limits may be made later in that fishing year based on the results of the benchmark assessment. The benchmark assessment will help set catch limits for the 2020 fishing year and beyond.

How can I make my voice heard about summer flounder issues?

Check the Council (mafmc.org) and Commission's (asmfc.org) websites often for meeting details and opportunities for public participation.

For more info, go to the Marine Recreational Information Program website:
st.nmfs.noaa.gov/recreational-fisheries/MRIP/

Study Fleet Uses Fishermen Data in Stock Assessment Process

Benchmark stock assessments provide an opportunity for new data, models, and methods to be considered and possibly incorporated into upcoming assessments. During the upcoming 2018 summer flounder benchmark assessment, data collected by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center's (NEFSC) Cooperative Research Study Fleet may contribute to measuring summer flounder stock abundance.

The Study Fleet specializes in collecting self-reported, haul-level catch and discard data from commercial vessels in several Northeast and Mid-Atlantic fisheries. It is a way for fishermen to directly participate in collecting scientific data.

For this assessment, from 2007 to 2017, all trawl tows made by the Study Fleet that caught one pound or more of summer flounder were included in this data set. Catch-per-unit effort (CPUE) measurements for these trawls can be an additional estimate of summer flounder abundance according to the time and the size of the area fished.

The CPUE was calculated over time by dividing the summer flounder total catch (both kept and discarded) by length of a tow. CPUE by area was calculated using an assumed tow speed of 3 knots, multiplying it by the distance towed, and incorporating headrope length to determine

the total area towed. During the assessment process, scientists can use changes in CPUE from various sources to indicate changes to the target species' overall abundance.

To examine CPUE differences between trips that targeted summer flounder, as well as those that didn't, CPUEs were developed for trips with 10, 25, or 40 percent summer flounder in their total catch. These served as proxies for "targeted and non-targeted trips" and allowed our scientists to make more precise estimates of effort.

The results of these analyses will be presented to the NEFSC Summer Flounder Working Group in late September to determine if and how this data can be used in the assessment. Outcomes will strengthen our understanding of how Study Fleet data may be considered in benchmark assessments for other species. This work may make better use of industry-dependent data at the haul-by-haul level, as Study Fleet data provide finer time and area information about catch than Vessel Trip Report data alone.

For more information on the NEFSC Cooperative research Study Fleet Program, visit: <https://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/read/popdy/studyfleet/>

To learn more about the upcoming summer flounder assessment, visit: <https://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/benchmark-assessments/>

THIS SUPPLEMENT PROVIDED BY NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE'S GREATER ATLANTIC REGIONAL OFFICE

Olivia Rugo • Managing Editor • 978-675-2167 • olivia.rugo@noaa.gov

Paid copy, materials provided by the sponsor.

COMMERCIAL FISHERIES NEWS • SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT • AUGUST 2018 • 1



The NOAA FISHERIES NAVIGATOR

Recommendations Made for Nearly \$9 Million in Federal Funding

For more than 40 years, NOAA has awarded grant funding under the Saltonstall-Kennedy (S-K) program to organizations across the country. Funds address needs of fishing communities, support economic opportunities, and build and maintain resilient and sustainable fisheries.

Demand for innovation, information, service and funding from federal agencies continues to grow. This year, we received 155 applications requesting nearly \$40 million. In order to better match research and development proposals with S-K goals and mission needs, this year's recommended projects fall into four priorities:

- Marine Aquaculture
- Adapting to Environmental Changes and Other

Long Term Impacts in Marine Ecosystems

- Promotion, Development and Marketing
- Territorial Science

Proposals underwent a rigorous three-phase evaluation process beginning with a Pre-Proposal Review in which internal and external subject matter experts reviewed 517 pre-proposals. We encouraged 150 of the top scoring applicants to submit a full application and accepted 155 full proposals. These moved to the second phase, the Technical Merit Review, in which each proposal underwent an extensive technical review by at least three subject matter experts. The top 87 scoring proposals moved on to the Constituent Panel Review, the third phase of the S-K review process. During this panel, 15 subject matter experts from the

fishing industry and community reviewed and scored each proposal, and recommended the top 38 for funding.

Of the 38 projects selected nationally, 13 projects were from the Greater Atlantic Region, and totaled approximately \$3 million in federal funding. These 13 projects represent 34% of the projects selected nationally and 34% of the \$8,997.6 million in funds available nationwide.

Greater Atlantic Region projects recommended for funding: (See chart below).

For more information, contact Susan Olsen, Operations and Budget Division, at 978-281-9330 or email her at Susan.Olsen@noaa.gov.

APPLICANT	PROJECT TITLE	FUNDING PRIORITY	REQUESTED FEDERAL SHARE
University of Rhode Island	Probiotics for bivalve aquaculture: Commercial production and hatchery implementation	Marine Aquaculture	\$300,000.00
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey	Superior Eastern Oyster Stocks for Enhancing Coastal Aquaculture	Marine Aquaculture	\$281,080.00
Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences	Do small female lobsters produce lower quality eggs?	Adapting to Environmental Changes and Other Long Term Impacts in Marine Ecosystems	\$285,740.00
Salem State University	Development Of Offshore Shellfish Aquaculture In Federal Waters Along The Atlantic Coast	Marine Aquaculture	\$296,045.00
Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance, Inc.	Overcoming the Last Hurdle of Dogfish: Changing the Name	Promotion, Development and Marketing	\$37,047.00
Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation	Development of a Marketable Seafood Product from Scup (<i>Stenotomus chrysops</i>), an Abundant, Low Value Species in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic USA	Promotion, Development and Marketing	\$281,394.00
Manomet, Inc	Investigating the viability of a soft-shell green crab industry in New England	Promotion, Development and Marketing	\$267,440.00
Coonamessett Farm Foundation, Inc.	Improving oceanographic models of bottom temperature within the Mid-Atlantic Bight through novel data assimilation and stakeholder input	Adapting to Environmental Changes and Other Long Term Impacts in Marine Ecosystems	\$257,534.00
Coonamessett Farm Foundation, Inc.	Using climate change scenarios to project loggerhead turtle distributions in the U.S. Mid-Atlantic	Adapting to Environmental Changes and Other Long Term Impacts in Marine Ecosystems	\$35,770.00
Northeastern University	The northern range expansion of Black Sea Bass: Understanding population dynamics and socioeconomic impacts of a rapid distribution shift	Adapting to Environmental Changes and Other Long Term Impacts in Marine Ecosystems	\$270,581.00
University of Maine	The Consequences of a Changing Environment to the health of American Lobsters	Adapting to Environmental Changes and Other Long Term Impacts in Marine Ecosystems	\$192,774.00
University of Maine	Optimizing production and products for scallop aquaculture	Marine Aquaculture	\$295,380.00
Virginia Institute of Marine Science	Understanding disease progression in polyploid eastern oysters	Marine Aquaculture	\$246,952.00

Upcoming Fish Passage Projects

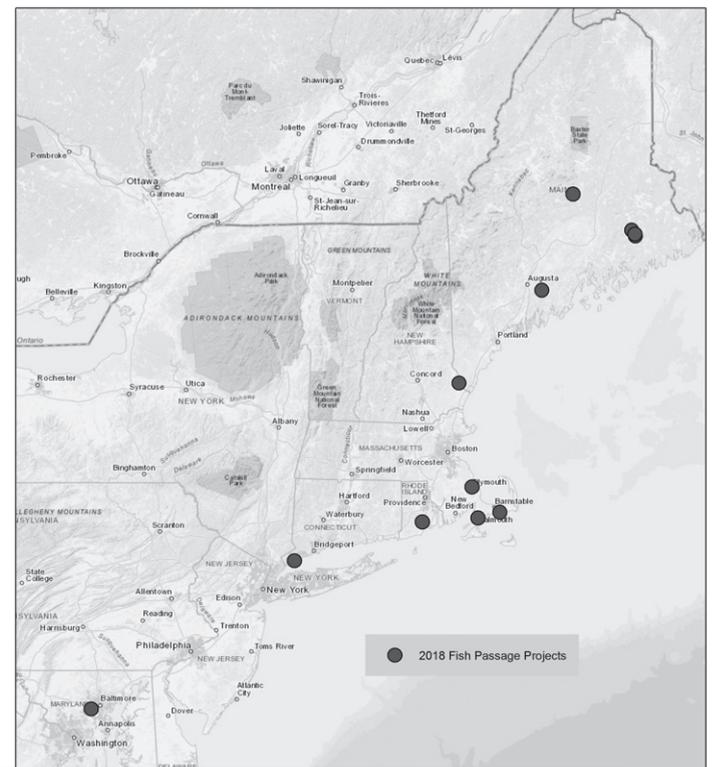
Diadromous fish species are fish that spend portions of their life cycles partially in fresh water and partially in salt water. Restoration of their habitat by dam removal, culvert replacements, and other improvements to fish passage is a high priority for NOAA's Habitat Restoration Center. Dams and other structures have significantly reduced access to migratory fish species spawning, rearing, and nursery grounds, and are a major factor in their population decline.

Several diadromous fish in our region face uncertain futures, such as Atlantic salmon and shortnose sturgeon, which are currently listed as threatened or endangered. Historically, certain species of diadromous fish, such as Atlantic herring, were recreationally and commercially fished throughout the region, and while this fishing pressure has decreased to enable population growth, they are still an important food source for other

commercially valuable species like bluefish, tuna, lobster and striped bass. By providing financial and technical assistance, and working with multiple partners, we are supporting the construction of several fish passage projects this summer and fall throughout our region to improve habitat for these threatened and endangered species and others.

These projects will benefit a variety of diadromous species, including Atlantic salmon, blueback herring, alewife, and American eel. When completed, these 12 projects will open 124 miles of free flowing stream and river habitat, and enable access to more than 1,300 acres of spawning habitat for alewife.

For more information, contact John Catena, Habitat Restoration Center, at 978-281-9251 or John.Catena@noaa.gov



2018 FISH PASSAGE PROJECTS IN THE NORTHEAST				
State	Town	River	Project Name	Construction Schedule
Maine	T34 MD	Narraguagus	West Branch Brook	Summer 2018
Maine	Brownville	Pleasant	Front Street culvert removal	Summer 2018
Maine	Devereaux Township	Narraguagus	Rocky Brook	Summer 2018
Maine	Devereaux Township	Narraguagus	Sinclair Brook	Summer 2018
Maine	Whitefield	Sheepscot	Coopers Mills	Summer 2018
New Hampshire	Dover	Bellamy	Sawyer's Mill	August 2018
Massachusetts	Falmouth	Coonamessett	Middle Dam	Fall/winter 2018
Massachusetts	Plymouth	Town Brook	Holmes Dam	September 2018
Massachusetts	Yarmouth	Parkers River	Parkers River restoration	Fall 2018
Rhode Island	North Kingstown	Mattatuxet	Shady Lea dam removal	Summer 2018
Connecticut	Darien	Noroton	Noroton nature-like fishway	Summer 2018
Maryland	Ilchester	Patapsco	Bloede dam	Fall 2018

Electronic Vessel Trip Reporting in For-hire Fisheries

As of March 12, 2018, owners and operators of vessels issued a charter/party permit for a Mid-Atlantic managed fishery are required to submit electronic vessel trip reports (eVTRs) when carrying passengers for hire. Fishermen must submit reports electronically, but may still fill out a paper VTR at sea and then report those VTRs electronically within 48 hours of landing. Paper forms from these trips **do not** need to be mailed to us.

eVTRs may be submitted for any type of fishing trip. Please remember to submit VTRs for private recreational trips as well as commercial and for hire trips. This



year, the use of eVTRs for reporting has increased dramatically. In May and June of last year, fishermen filed less than 1,000 eVTR reports. However, this year in May and June, we received approximately 7,000 new eVTR reports.

To report electronically, fishermen may choose from a number of apps and online options. Our Fish Online app is compatible with iPhones and iPads, while eTrips Mobile is compatible with Android tablets and iPads. Other approved systems are available for Windows based tablets and computers. More information about these options is available on our [eVTR web site](#).

We are working to improve the eVTR apps

available to fishermen, and appreciate user feedback. There are a number of ways that you can reach us:

Call our Industry Support Line at 978-281-9188 to get your Fish Online password, for assistance installing the app, and to learn how to use FOL.

For general eVTR assistance reach out to your local GARFO Port Agent by searching online for "GARFO Port Agent".

Check out our recreational fisheries webpage at <https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable/recfishing/>

For eVTR reporting regulation questions, contact Daniel Luers, Sustainable Fisheries Division, at 978-282-8457 or email him at Daniel.Luers@noaa.gov



NOAA Fisheries Proposes to Implement International Atlantic Bluefin Tuna and Northern Albacore Quotas

A final action is forthcoming, after NOAA Fisheries evaluates public feedback on our proposal to change the baseline annual U.S. quotas and subquotas for Atlantic bluefin tuna and northern albacore. The proposed quota changes are based on recommendations from the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

Our action also proposes allowing fishermen to

retain shark-bitten tuna that are above the minimum size limit, provided certain criteria are met. We hope to have a final rule issued sometime before the end of September, and have proposed that these changes go into effect for the 2018 quota season.

Atlantic bluefin tuna and northern albacore are managed internationally by ICCAT. The United States is a member of ICCAT, and U.S. law authorizes us to make regulations, as may be necessary and

appropriate, to implement ICCAT's recommendations. ICCAT adopted new recommendations for management of bluefin tuna and northern albacore at its annual meeting in November 2017.

The recommendations included quota increases of 17.5% for western Atlantic bluefin tuna, and 20% for northern albacore. Domestic implementation of these recommendations is consistent with the advice of ICCAT's scientific body (the Standing Committee

on Research and Statistics), the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

Using the Federal rulemaking process, we are implementing the ICCAT recommended quotas of 1,272.9 metric tons for bluefin tuna and 632.4 for northern albacore tuna. Proposed bluefin tuna category suballocations are calculated using the process (i.e., the formulas) established in Amendment 7 to the 2006 Consolidated Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan. The accompanying table, at left, shows the current annual baseline suballocations compared with the suballocations in the proposed rule.

In this action, we also proposed minor modifications to the Atlantic tunas size limit regulations to allow retention, possession, and landing of bigeye and yellowfin tunas damaged by shark bites. We implemented similar measures for shark-damaged swordfish in 1996. Our proposed change would allow fishermen to retain, possess, and land tunas for which a fork length (FL) measurement may not be possible because of shark damage, provided that the remainder of the tuna meets the applicable minimum size of 27 inches FL for yellowfin and bigeye tunas. The action also proposes that no tissue may be cut away from or other alterations made to the shark-damaged area of the fish, for enforcement purposes, to preserve evidence that the carcass was shark-bitten.

For more information, contact Sarah McLaughlin, Highly Migratory Species Division, at (978) 281-9260 or email her at Sarah.McLaughlin@noaa.gov.

U.S. Bluefin Tuna Quota Categories	Current Annual Baseline Quota (mt)	Proposed Annual Baseline Quota (mt)
<i>Suballocations:</i>		
<i>General category</i>	466.7	555.7
<i>Harpoon category</i>	38.6	46.0
<i>Longline category</i>	148.3	163.6
<i>Trap category</i>	1.0	1.2
<i>Purse Seine category</i>	184.3	219.5
<i>Angling category</i>	195.2	232.4
<i>Reserve category</i>	24.8	29.5
<i>Baseline U.S. quota</i>	1,058.8	1,247.9
<i>Northeast Distant gear restricted area (NED) set-aside (for use by Longline category)</i>	25.0	25.0
<i>Total U.S. quota</i>	1,083.8	1,272.9
Northern Albacore Tuna Quota	527.0	632.4

Monkfish Research Set Aside Program Awards

Under our Monkfish Research Set Aside (RSA) Program, the Regional Fishery Management Councils set aside 500 days-at-sea each year for use by researchers working to address the Council's monkfish research priorities. These days are awarded through a federal grant competition. Proceeds from the sale of monkfish harvested during RSA days pays for the research and compensates participating vessels.

This year, we selected three monkfish research proposals for support under the 2018/2019 Monkfish Research Set Aside (RSA) Program:

The Coonamessett Farm Foundation will use 296 monkfish RSA days-at-sea to conduct a two-year study to use safe ultrasonic techniques and hormone analysis to determine sex and maturity stages of monkfish. This information will create a reproductive profile of monkfish and enhance our understanding of the health of the monkfish fishery.

With 303 monkfish RSA days-at-sea in two years, Cornell University Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County will evaluate a modified gillnet designed to reduce skate catch and regulatory discards.

The University of New England will use 401

monkfish RSA days-at-sea to build on previous research also completed under our Monkfish RSA program. This two-year study applies ageing techniques that have proven effective in other species to monkfish. The research team will also collect reproductive data to estimate monkfish age and size at maturity.

Our RSA programs support projects that respond to the research priorities set by the Regional Fishery Management Councils, inform resource management decisions, and improve stock assessments. Currently, we have three RSA programs for the Monkfish, Atlantic sea scallop and Atlantic herring fisheries. Our role is to manage the grant competition, oversee research activities, and monitor the use of RSA days-at-sea. Federal funds are not used for this research and we do not keep any funds from the sale of research set-aside days-at-sea.

For more information, go to the Northeast Cooperative Research RSA Program web site at https://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/coopresearch/rsa_program.html. You may also contact Ryan Silva, Sustainable Fisheries Division, at 978-281-9326 or Ryan.Silva@noaa.gov



Above, student Amelia Weissman tags a monkfish.