



PRESS RELEASE

Recreational Fishing Alliance

5724 N. Route 9, New Gretna, NJ 08224

P: 888-564-6732 F: 609-294-3812

For Immediate Release
Contact: Jim Hutchinson, Jr.

August 18, 2010
888 564-6732

RFA ALERT – COUNCIL VOTES TO INCREASE FLUKE & PORGY LIMITS Mid-Atlantic Representatives Meet In Philly To Plan for 2011

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) voted today to increase the 2011 commercial and recreational harvest levels of both scup and summer flounder, welcome news for a beleaguered Atlantic Coast fishing community.

Following input from the Scup Monitoring Committee, the MAFMC, which met jointly today with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) management boards, voted to increase the total allowable catch for scup (porgy) from this year's 17.09 million pounds of quota to a catch of 24.1 million pounds in 2011. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) had recommended an acceptable biological catch as high as 51.7 million pounds, which would've represented a near 200% increase in quota if enacted.

Council members heard various recommendations from the monitoring committee, in addition to public comment from recreational and commercial fishing interests who traveled to Philadelphia to attend today's meetings, but voted on a more precautionary 41% increase in total allowable catch for next season. For the recreational sector, the total allowable catch of 24.1 million pounds will result in a 4.4-million-pound harvest for the year.

On the summer flounder front, the MAFMC voted to increase the total allowable catch from this season's 25.48 million pounds to an increased quota of 33.95 million pounds in the year ahead. The new total allowable landings for 2011 represent the highest allowable catch debated by the MAFMC today. Recreational fishermen are hopeful that this increase in quota means improved summer flounder regulations for 2011, but that still rests in the hands of the Marine Recreational Fishing Statistical Survey (MRFSS) for 2010.

"The recreational fishermen won't know what this means in terms of regulations until November at the very least," said Capt. Adam Nowalsky, chairman of the Recreational Fishing Alliance's New Jersey Chapter (RFA-NJ). "As anglers have come to recognize year after year, now we have to wait for this season's landings information to come through from MRFSS to forecast how that compares to the 2011 recreational allowable landings."

"Some of the reasons for this success should go to the science that was contributed by the grassroots efforts of the local fishing community," said Ray Bogan, legal counsel for the RFA. "There has been an extraordinary contribution by the anglers, which makes up a significant portion of the scientific effort in the summer flounder assessments," he said. Bogan noted that private funding through the Save the Summer Flounder Fishery Fund, United Boatmen, and RFA, along with non-federal inshore survey analysis by the North East Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP) have helped lead to improved summer flounder assessments, which in turn has led to improved access for anglers.

A letter from Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY) to the New York council members overnight was distributed amongst MAFMC members, in which the senator urged council members to provide increased access to summer flounder and scup resources for both recreational and commercial fishermen. "As the Council knows, these species are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring," Sen. Schumer said in his letter, adding "Fishermen have patiently waited for these stocks to rebuild and were promised relief when they were healthy again. Now is that time."

"The scup biomass is rebuilt by around 200% and yet it seems that our quota is going to be raised only marginally," said Capt. Paul Forsberg of the Viking Fleet out of Montauk, NY, who attended today's meeting. "How high must the biomass go before we can achieve maximum sustainable yield?"

Despite pleas from fishermen to increase the porgy quota by 55% to a total allowable catch of 26-1/2 million pounds, a 9-8 council vote put the porgy limit at a more modest 41% increase. “Given the spirit and intent of Sen. Schumer’s letter to recognize the science and support the fishing communities in their quest to see a representative increase in porgy, I’m somewhat dismayed at some council members for not cheerleading a more robust 55% increase,” said RFA’s Jim Hutchinson. “I am thankful of course that the council voted to go for the total allowable increase in fluke quota in the season ahead, our coastal communities really need this boost for next season.”

The MAFMC will reconvene on Thursday morning at 8 a.m. at the Holiday Inn in the Historic District at 400 Arch Street in Philadelphia, with a presentation regarding the recreational data collection status beginning at 8:30 a.m. For details, visit www.mafmc.org.

#####

The Recreational Fishing Alliance is a national, grassroots political action organization representing recreational fishermen and the recreational fishing industry on marine fisheries issues. RFA’s Mission is to safeguard the rights of saltwater anglers, protect marine, boat and tackle industry jobs, and ensure the long-term sustainability of our Nation’s saltwater fisheries. For more information, call 888-JOIN-RFA or visit www.joinrfa.org.