

## ALLOCATION MORASS (from page 9)

Today, the situation has changed. Biologists at the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) recognize that “the [summer flounder’s] range may be extending farther north. In addition, warmer water temperatures have resulted in the fish moving to the North and the East. These changes may also be driven by a stronger population now that the stock is rebuilt... The population itself is likely distributed with about 50 percent North of Hudson Canyon and the other 50 percent to the South. Approximately 70% of the allocation is to the states from New Jersey to North Carolina, which sets up a bit of an overfishing situation in the southern areas.”

Such circumstances seem to demand a reallocation of summer flounder quota among the states. But reallocation, no matter how compelling the circumstances, is never a quick nor an easy process.

At its December 2013 meeting, the MAFMC decided to initiate a new amendment to its Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan. Such amendment was to consider four issues, including the states’ commercial allocations. However, despite the clear changes in the fishery, the reallocation idea was not well received by commercial participants on the MAFMC’s Summer Flounder Advisory Panel.

One advisor argued that, “some states (especially New York) have been left out of the current system,” and that as a result, “this system went against Magnuson National Standard 8,” which is intended to protect fishing communities.

Most of the comments supported the status quo even though conditions had changed.

Advisors argued that “the industry... had been built on this system over the last 25 years,” and that “changes to this system will present significant economic and management losses.”

Not surprisingly, the greatest resistance came from fishermen enjoying the largest shares of the quota, who said that, “The summer flounder commercial fishery is very important to Virginia and North Carolina; it is their bread and butter fishery since they do not have much else to target... Now interest in landing summer flounder in New England is increasing because there is no groundfish. Virginia and North Carolina should not be punished because of that.”

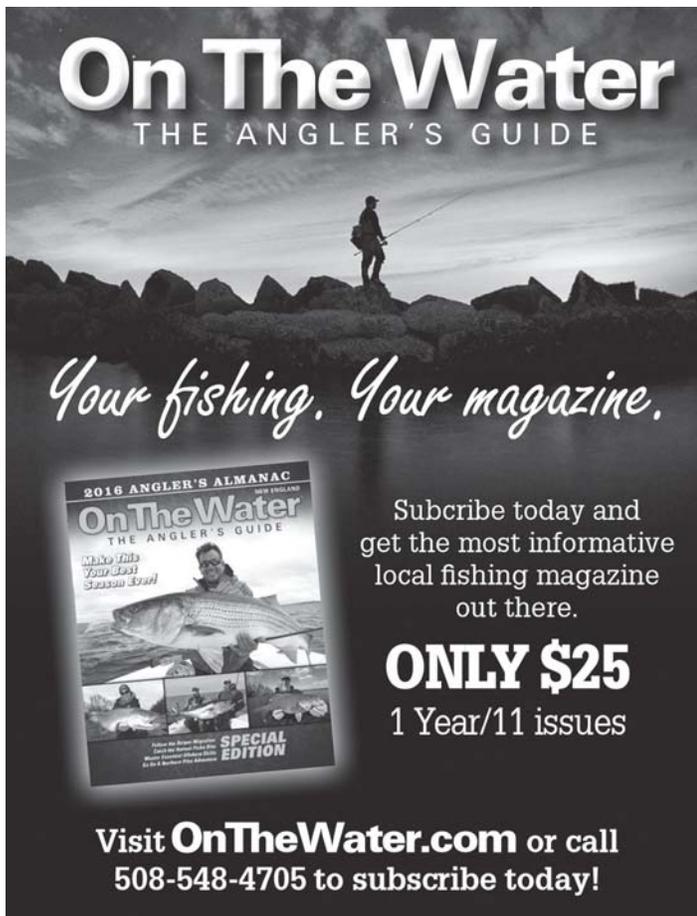
More than four years later, the debate continues. The MAFMC is yet to prepare a draft amendment that can be sent out for public review.

### Things are no smoother on the recreational side

In 2003, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) decided to allocate recreational summer flounder landings among the states, based on each state’s landings in 1998, a year when the stock was still overfished, overfishing was still occurring, and the recreational sector exceeded its landings target by nearly 70%. Such allocation gave New Jersey anglers 39.09% of the recreational quota; neighboring New York, allocated 17.63%, received the next-largest share.

But as the stock recovered, waters warmed and summer flounder moved north, the old allocation stopped making sense.

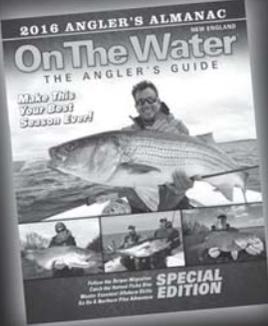
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