



June 2, 2020

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Mr. John Carmichael
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201
North Charleston, South Carolina 29405

RE: Extension of Flounder Regulations into Federal Waters

Dear Mr. Carmichael:

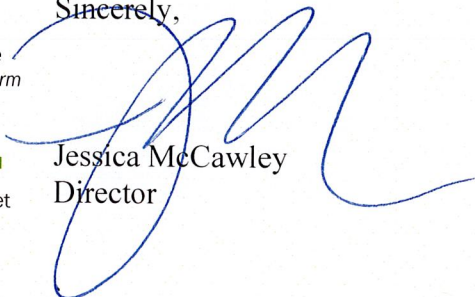
The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is evaluating the management of the flounder fishery including the possibility of extending state regulations into adjacent federal waters. This fishery is composed of multiple flounder species under a single set of regulations and includes *Paralichthys albigutta* (gulf flounder), *Paralichthys lethostigma* (southern flounder), *Paralichthys dentatus* (summer flounder), and *Etropus crossotus* (fringed flounder). A stock status update performed by FWC's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute suggests that the flounder fishery statewide has been in a general declining trend in recent years and is likely overfished and undergoing overfishing on the Atlantic coast of Florida. At this time, FWC is considering implementing further regulations for recreational and commercial harvest as well as extending these regulations into federal waters.

According to the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Title 16 U.S.C. Section 1856, a state has the ability to extend their regulations into federal waters if there is no federal fishery management plan or if there are no regulations for federal waters.

Staff will be presenting a draft rule proposal for flounder management as early as the July 22-23, 2020, FWC Commission Meeting. The draft rule will include the possibility of the extension of the proposed state regulations for flounder into adjacent federal waters.

It is our understanding that the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council has no imminent plans to consider managing flounder in federal waters. The FWC is committed to conserving these resources for the future in state and federal waters. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about this proposal.

Sincerely,


Jessica McCawley
Director