



# NEWS FROM NOAA

## NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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### **NOAA ISSUES REVISED GUIDANCE FOR 2007 FLUKE QUOTA**

After completing an independent peer review of fluke (summer flounder) biology and assessment information, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has confirmed that the 23.6 million-pound annual harvest quota must be substantially reduced in 2007 to end overfishing and meet the 10-year rebuilding requirement. Under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, rebuilding of the stock began in 2000 and must be completed by 2010.

Fluke, a species primarily found off the northeast coast, is rebuilding because of management measures such as size and catch limits, gear restrictions, limited access permits and annual quotas. To-date, the fishery has rebuilt to 53 percent of its target population size. The stock will be fully rebuilt when the weight of spawning fish in the population reaches 197 million pounds. Six years into the rebuilding plan, the spawning population currently weighs 104 million pounds.

"Fluke is one of our management successes because we're seeing the stock rebound," said Bill Hogarth, director of NOAA Fisheries Service. "With the help of commercial and recreational fishermen, we've increased the stock substantially from its low point in 1982 of 15 million pounds. Now we have to stop overfishing so we can achieve a fully rebuilt, sustainable stock that will provide even greater benefits to all fishing sectors."

The peer review was conducted by a three-person panel comprising eminent scientists with no ties to the northeast region. Their review pointed out a number of technical recommendations for this and future fluke assessments. The full review results and background documents are available at: <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/nefsc/saw/2006FlukeReview>.

Based on this review, scientists have determined that a quota of about 13 million pounds will result in a 75 percent probability of rebuilding success by 2010, and a 14-million-pound quota will result in a 50 percent probability of rebuilding success by 2010. Based on a stock assessment conducted earlier this year, forecasts of the 2007 quota had previously ranged from 5.2 to 7.7 million pounds to meet conservation goals.

Fluke, also known as summer flounder, live in coastal waters from Maine to Florida. The bottom fish, important to both recreational and commercial fishermen, is managed jointly by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, with oversight from NOAA for federal regulations in waters from three to 200 miles offshore. The Council previously recommended a 19.9-million-pound quota for federal fisheries in 2007, and the Commission will decide the States' total quota later this month. NOAA will take the Council's recommendation into consideration, along with the Commission's decision and the scientific advice, before establishing a quota for federal fisheries that will result in achieving rebuilding success by 2010.

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NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

In 2007 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, celebrates 200 years of science and service to the nation. From the establishment of the Survey of the Coast in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson to the formation of the Weather Bureau and the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries in the 1870s, much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 60 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

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On the Web:

NOAA Fisheries: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>

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