

VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION
“PERTAINING TO SUMMER FLOUNDER”
EMERGENCY CHAPTER 4 VAC 20-620-10 ET SEQ.

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PREAMBLE

This chapter establishes limitations on the commercial and recreational harvest of summer flounder in order to reduce the fishing mortality rate and to rebuild the severely depleted stock of summer flounder. The limitations include a commercial harvest quota and possession limits, minimum size limits, and a recreational possession and season limit.

This chapter is promulgated pursuant to the authority contained in §§28.2-201, 28.2-210 and 28.2-204 of the Code of Virginia and amends and re-adopts, as amended, previous Chapter 4 VAC20-620-10 et seq. which was promulgated September 24, 2019 and made effective on September 25, 2019. The effective date of this emergency chapter, as amended, is January 29, 2020.

4 VAC 20-620-40. Commercial vessel possession and landing limitations.

A. It shall be unlawful for any person harvesting summer flounder outside of Virginia's waters to do any of the following, except as described in subsections B, C, D, E and F of this section:

1. Possess aboard any vessel in Virginia waters any amount of summer flounder in excess of 10% by weight of Atlantic croaker or the combined landings, on board a vessel, of black sea bass, scup, squid, scallops and Atlantic mackerel.
2. Possess aboard any vessel in Virginia waters any amount of summer flounder in excess of 1,500 pounds landed in combination with Atlantic croaker.
3. Fail to sell the vessel's entire harvest of all species at the point of landing.

B. Nothing in this chapter shall preclude a vessel from possessing any North Carolina or New Jersey vessel possession limit of summer flounder in Virginia; however, no vessel that possesses the North Carolina or New Jersey vessel possession limit of summer flounder shall offload any amount of that possession limit, except as described in subsection K of this section.

C. From February 24 through March 31, it shall be unlawful for any person harvesting summer flounder outside of Virginia waters to do any of the following:

1. Possess aboard any vessel in Virginia waters any amount of summer flounder in excess of the combined total of the Virginia landing limit described in subdivision 2 of this subsection and the amount of the legal North Carolina or New Jersey landing limit or trip limit.
2. Land in Virginia more than a total of 12,500 pounds of summer flounder.

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3. Land in Virginia any amount of summer flounder more than once in any consecutive five-day period.

D. From October 1 through November 15, it shall be unlawful for any person harvesting summer flounder outside of Virginia waters to do any of the following:

1. Possess aboard any vessel in Virginia waters any amount of summer flounder in excess of the total of the Virginia landing limit described in subdivision 2 of this subsection and the amount of the legal North Carolina or New Jersey landing limit or trip limit.

2. Land in Virginia more than a total of 10,000 pounds of summer flounder.

3. Land in Virginia any amount of summer flounder more than once in any consecutive five-day period.

E. From November 16 through December 31, it shall be unlawful for any person harvesting summer flounder outside of Virginia waters to do any of the following:

1. Possess aboard any vessel in Virginia waters any amount of summer flounder in excess of the total of the Virginia landing limit described in subdivision 2 of this subsection and the amount of the legal North Carolina or New Jersey landing limit or trip limit.

2. Land in Virginia more than a total of 10,000 pounds of summer flounder.

3. Land in Virginia any amount of summer flounder more than once in any consecutive five-day period.

F. From January 1 through December 31, any boat or vessel issued a valid federal Summer Flounder moratorium permit and owned and operated by a legal Virginia Commercial Hook-and-Line Licensee that possesses a Restricted Summer Flounder Endorsement shall be restricted to a possession and landing limit of 200 pounds of summer flounder, except as described in 4 VAC 20-620-30 F.

G. Upon request by a marine police officer, the seafood buyer or processor shall offload and accurately determine the total weight of all summer flounder aboard any vessel landing summer flounder in Virginia.

H. Any possession limit described in this section shall be determined by the weight in pounds of summer flounder as customarily packed, boxed and weighed by the seafood buyer or processor. The weight of any summer flounder in pounds found in excess of any possession limit described in this section shall be prima facie evidence of violation of this chapter. Persons in possession of summer flounder aboard any vessel in excess of the possession limit shall be in violation of this chapter unless that vessel has requested and been granted safe harbor. Any buyer or processor offloading or accepting any quantity of summer flounder from any vessel in excess of the

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possession limit shall be in violation of this chapter, except as described by subsection J of this section. A buyer or processor may accept or buy summer flounder from a vessel that has secured safe harbor, provided that vessel has satisfied the requirements described in subsection J of this section.

I. If a person violates the possession limits described in this section, the entire amount of summer flounder in that person's possession shall be confiscated. Any confiscated summer flounder shall be considered as a removal from the appropriate commercial harvest or landings quota. Upon confiscation, the marine police officer shall inventory the confiscated summer flounder and, at a minimum, secure two bids for purchase of the confiscated summer flounder from approved and licensed seafood buyers. The confiscated fish will be sold to the highest bidder and all funds derived from such sale shall be deposited for the Commonwealth pending court resolution of the charge of violating the possession limits established by this chapter. All of the collected funds will be returned to the accused upon a finding of innocence or forfeited to the Commonwealth upon a finding of guilty.

J. It shall be unlawful for a licensed seafood buyer or federally permitted seafood buyer to fail to contact the Marine Resources Commission Operation Station prior to a vessel offloading summer flounder harvested outside of Virginia. The buyer shall provide to the Marine Resources Commission the name of the vessel, its captain, an estimate of the amount in pounds of summer flounder on board that vessel, and the anticipated or approximate offloading time. Once offloading of any vessel is complete and the weight of the landed summer flounder has been determined, the buyer shall contact the Marine Resources Commission Operations Station and report the vessel name and corresponding weight of summer flounder landed. It shall be unlawful for any person to offload from a boat or vessel for commercial purposes any summer flounder during the period of 9 p.m. to 7 a.m.

K. Any boat or vessel that has entered Virginia waters for safe harbor shall only offload summer flounder when the state that licenses that vessel requests to transfer quota to Virginia, in the amount that corresponds to that vessel's possession limit, and the commissioner agrees to accept that transfer of quota.

L. After any commercial harvest or landing quota as described in 4VAC20-620-30 has been attained and announced as such, any boat or vessel possessing summer flounder on board may enter Virginia waters for safe harbor but shall contact the Marine Resources Commission Operation Center in advance of such entry into Virginia waters.

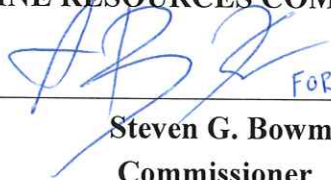
M. It shall be unlawful for any person harvesting summer flounder outside of Virginia waters to possess aboard any vessel, in Virginia, any amount of summer flounder, once it has been projected and announced that 100% of the quota described in 4VAC20-620-30A has been taken.

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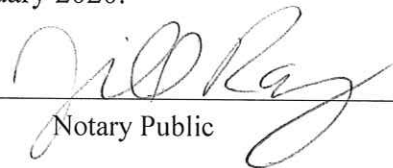
This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate copy of the chapter passed by the Marine Resources Commission, pursuant to authority vested in the Commission by §§28.2-201, 28.2-210 and 28.2-204 of the Code of Virginia, and recorded in the Commission's minute book, at meeting held in Hampton, Virginia on January 28, 2020.

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION

By:  FOR
Steven G. Bowman
Commissioner

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 29 day of January 2020.




Notary Public