

For Immediate Release: September 12, 2013

**GOVERNOR CUOMO REQUESTS DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE REFORM  
OUTDATED FLOUNDER REGULATIONS THAT STIFLE NY FISHING INDUSTRY**  
*New York State Prepared to Sue if Bureaucratic Restrictions Aren't Changed*

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today called on the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) to undertake an immediate reassessment of regulations pertaining to the amount of summer flounder that may be legally caught by commercial or recreational fishermen. New York State is prepared to file suit in order to ensure that New York's fishermen get a fair deal.

The DOC's Fisher Management Plan (FMP) sets the amount of fish that may be caught and hauled to shore during a given year. The data used to determine New York's share of the fishery are incomplete and out of date, which hinders Long Island's fishermen and diminishes the fishing industry's competitiveness with neighboring states such as New Jersey that have significantly higher allocations under the FMP. As a result of New York's lower allocations, the State has been forced to raise size limits as high as 21 inches to comply with FMP requirements, while anglers in neighboring states can catch 17- to 18-inch fluke.

"The commercial and recreational fishing industries are a major economic engine in Long Island and New York State, but they are being unfairly limited by these outdated bureaucratic regulations," Governor Cuomo said. "The federal formula utilizes decade-old information, putting New York at a disadvantage to neighboring states and ignoring the communities and personal livelihoods of local fishermen who are losing money every day. The U.S. Department of Commerce needs to reform the status quo – and if they don't, our state will have no choice but to go to court to defend New York's commercial and recreational fishing industries."

Summer flounder is one of the most important species for commercial fishing in New York. In 2011, a total of 1.4 million pounds of summer flounder were landed in New York at a value of \$3.4 million. If New York's FMP allocation were the same as neighboring states, fishermen would have been allowed to land nearly 4 million pounds, resulting in \$9.8 million in revenue.

The federal government's FMP allocation is also detrimental to recreational fishing on Long Island. In 2011, recreational New York fishermen caught more than 7.5 million summer flounder. Due to the FMP's limitation on New York State, however, only about 375,000 of those caught that year could be harvested legally.

As a whole, New York State's fishing industry generates roughly \$1.8 billion in economic activity every year and supports nearly 17,000 jobs.

Attorney General Eric Schneiderman said, "Long Island's fishing industry is one of our state's proudest traditions, and a major source of jobs, income, and opportunity for people throughout the state. The federal quotas create an unfair, competitive disadvantage that jeopardizes a vital industry. When I became Attorney General, I committed to New Yorkers that I would fight for them. There should be one set of rules for everyone, and I will use every tool at my disposal to ensure an even playing field for our workers."

Congressman Tim Bishop, who represents Montauk, said, "Long Island's fishing industry, both recreational and commercial, is a critical economic driver and the unequal division of Fluke quotas robs our fishermen of their rightful share. I fully support Governor Cuomo's efforts to fix this longstanding injustice and I will continue to fight with him using every means at our disposal."

Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone said, "Suffolk County draws its cultural and economic identity from the oceans that surround us and we believe strongly in a sustainable, well-managed fishery. However, it's been known for years that the annual New York fluke allocation has been created in an unscientific and inaccurate manner. I thank Governor Cuomo for his leadership in calling on the DOC to take the appropriate steps to eliminate the arbitrary disparity between New York State's fluke catch allocation and our neighboring states fluke allocation."

Tony DiLernia, Director of Maritime Technology at Kingsborough Community College, Charter Boat Captain, and Voting Member of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, said, "For too many years, commercial and recreational fishermen on Long Island have struggled under the weight of an antiquated federal restriction. The current Fishery Management Plan is harmful to our industry, our economy, and our communities, and it must change. I am grateful to have the Governor's support on this issue, and strongly urge the federal government to reassess the FMP."

Laurie Nolan, Tilefish Vessel Onshore Manager and Voting Member of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, said, "I will continue to work with the process and hope for the outcome that provides relief for both the recreational and commercial industries of the state of New York. I feel confident that the efforts of both managing bodies, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council are making headway in a positive direction. It is reassuring to know that our Governor stands beside the industries of New York on this issue and will take necessary action if the process fails."

In order to reach a successful resolution, Governor Cuomo sent a letter to the DOC outlining the negative impact that the current FMP has on the fishing industry in New York State and calling on the agency to pursue new strategies for assigning state quotas. If action is not taken by the DOC to remedy the biased formula for the 2014 summer flounder season, the State is prepared to file suit against the federal government to ensure the implementation of a new, fair assessment.

[Click here](http://www.governor.ny.gov/assets/documents/flukeletter.pdf) ( <http://www.governor.ny.gov/assets/documents/flukeletter.pdf> ) to view the

Governor's letter to the U.S Department of Commerce.

###

Additional news available at [www.governor.ny.gov](http://www.governor.ny.gov)

New York State | Executive Chamber | [press.office@exec.ny.gov](mailto:press.office@exec.ny.gov) | 518.474.8418