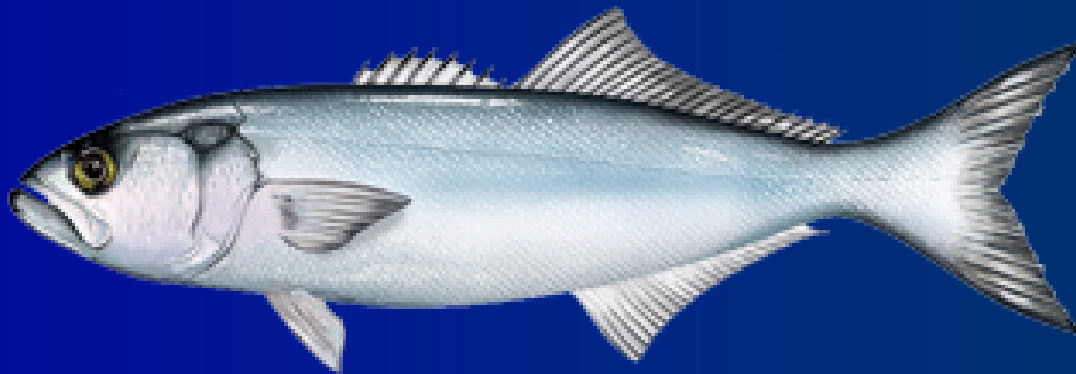


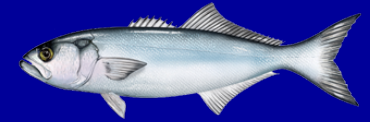


# Atlantic Bluefish



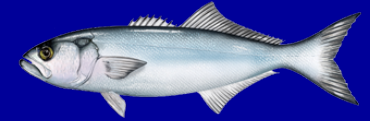
Joint Council/Board Meeting  
August 11, 2020

# Outline



- Management overview
- Stock Status
- Data update
- Review recent fishery performance and fishery regulations
- Review of AP Fishery Performance Report
- SSC ABC Recommendation
- Review of MC recommended management measures

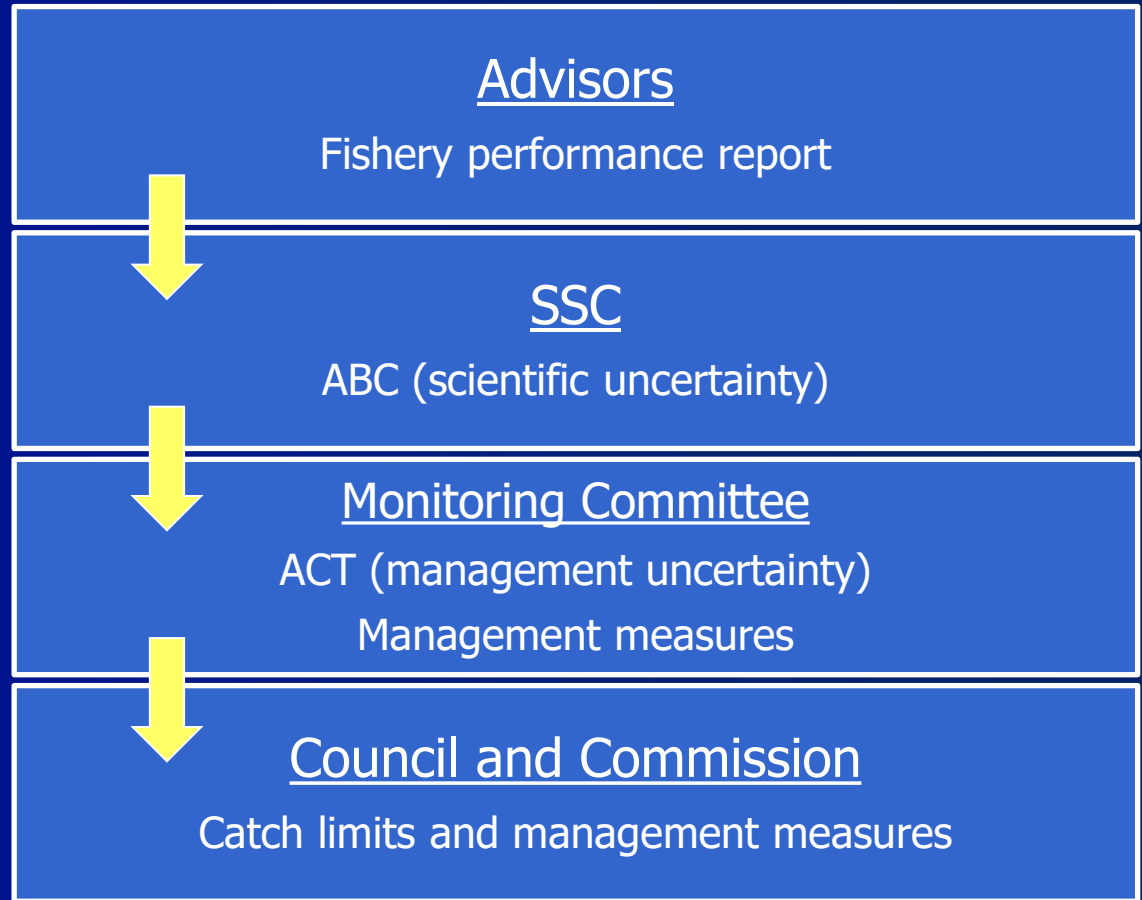
# Specifications Process



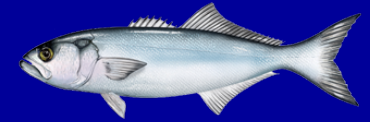
## Bluefish Specifications

2020

2021

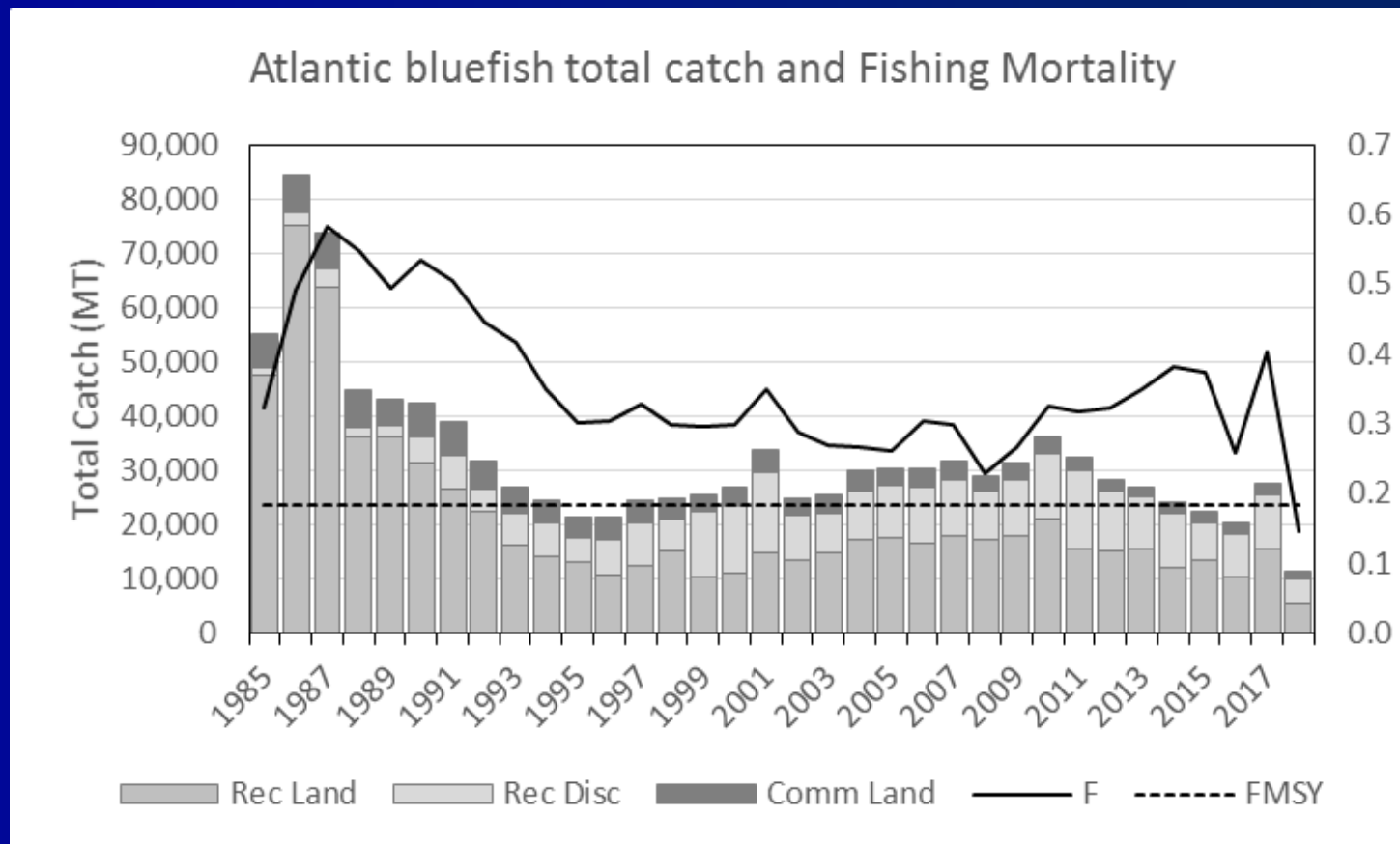
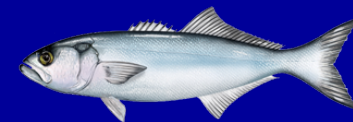


# Stock Status



- Last operational assessment: 2019
- Stock is overfished
- Overfishing is not occurring
- Next year (June 2021): NEFSC will conduct a management track assessment

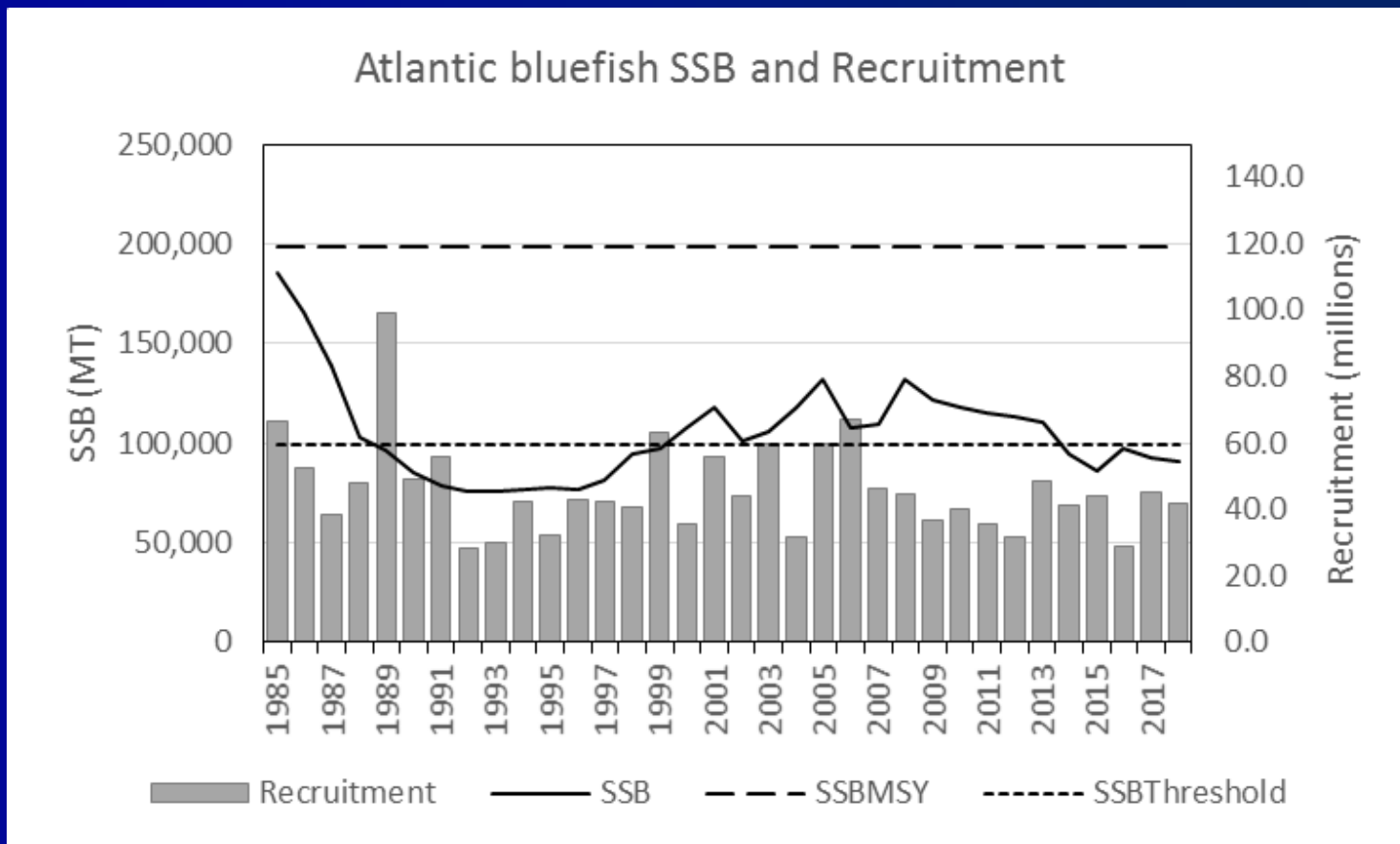
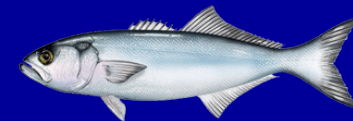
# Fishing Mortality – 2019 Operational Assessment



## Overfishing not occurring

(2018  $F = 0.146$ ; below  $F_{MSY \text{ proxy}} = F_{35\%SPR} = 0.183$ )

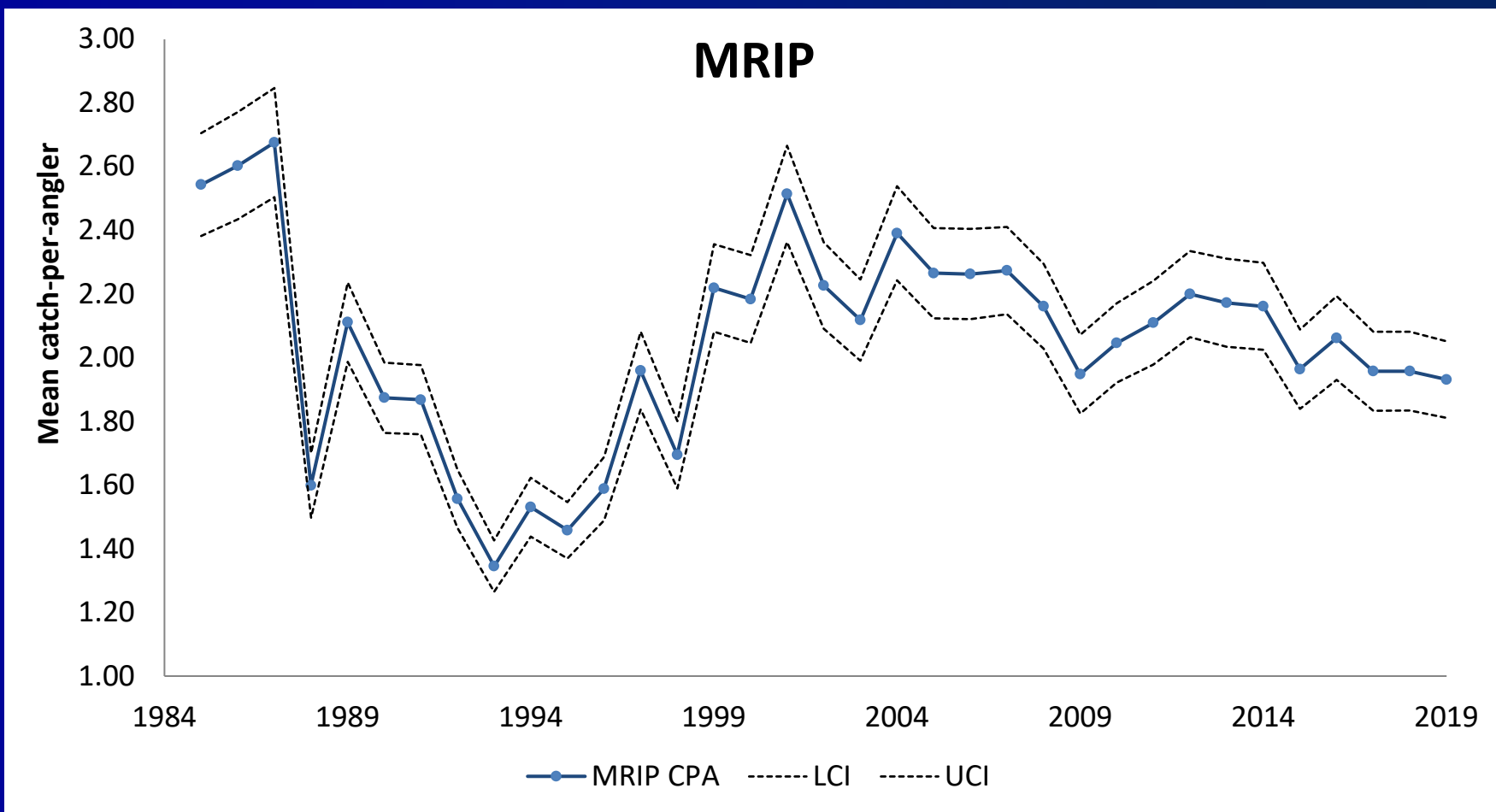
# Biomass – 2019 Operational Assessment



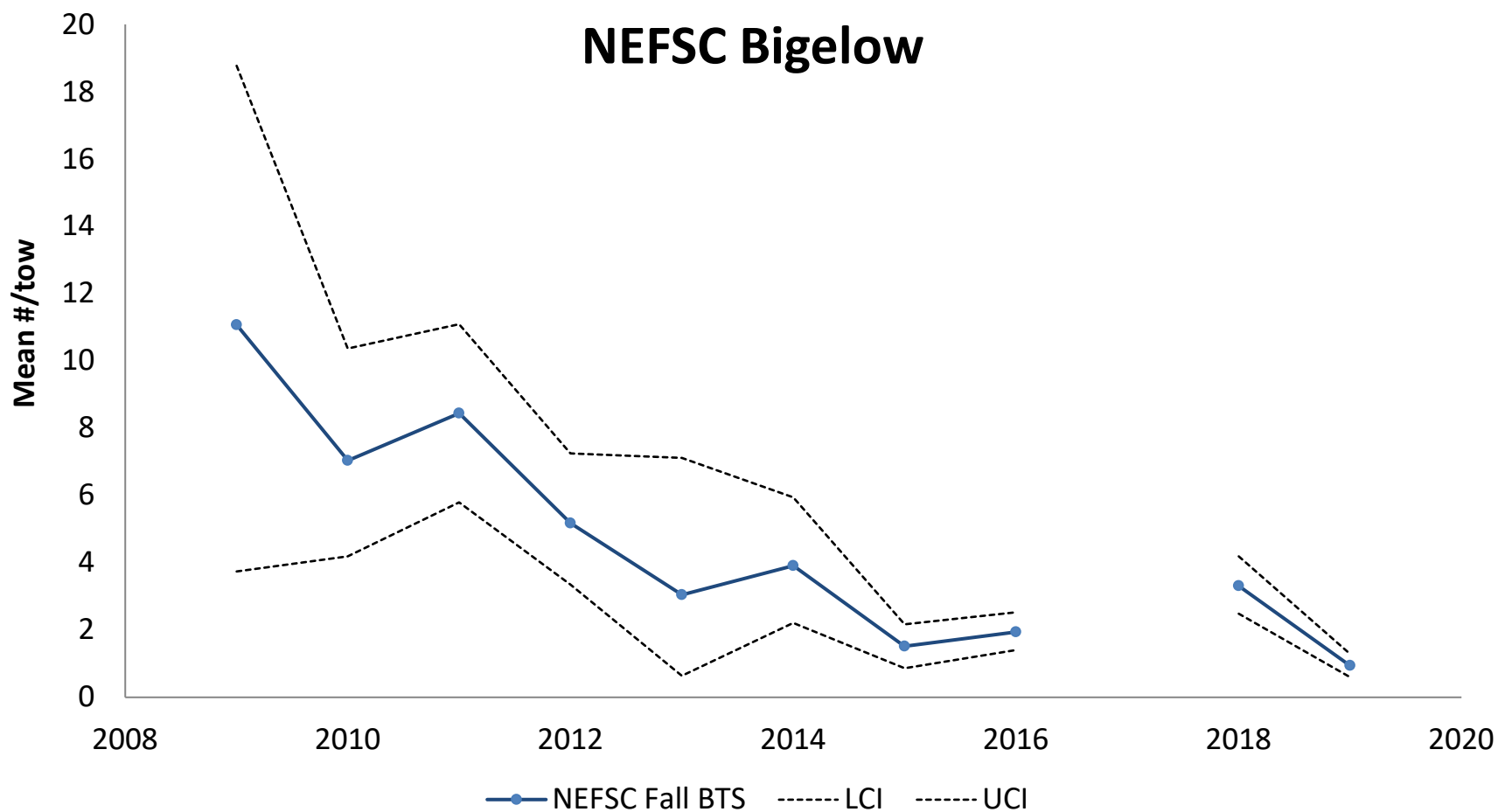
## Overfished

2018 SSB (91,041 mt)  $\approx$  8% below SSB<sub>Threshold</sub> (99,359 mt)

# Indices of Abundance

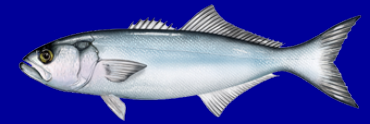


# Indices of Abundance



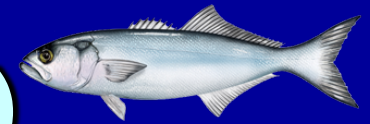


# Management Measures

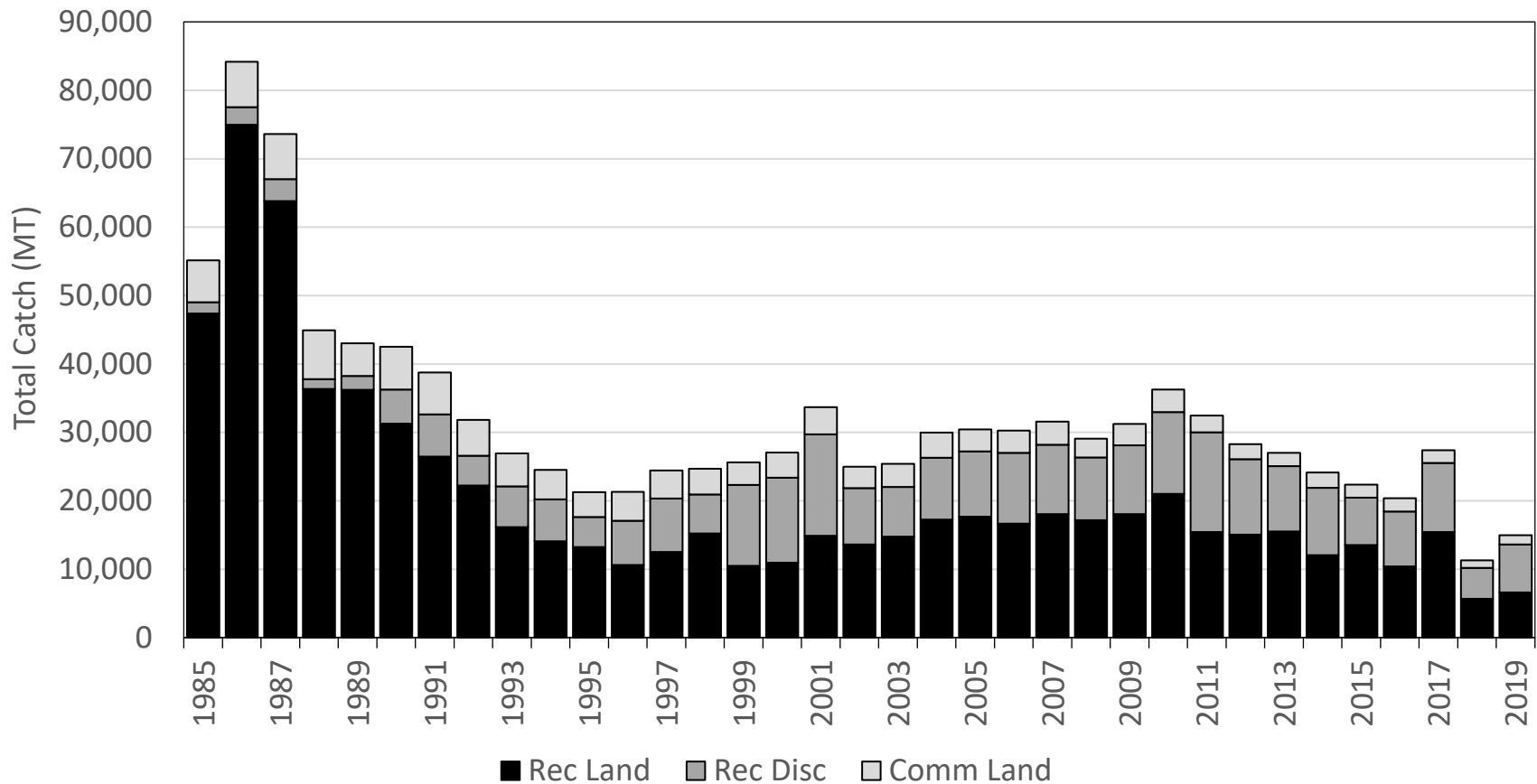


Management Measures	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
TAC/ABC	21.54	19.45	20.64	21.81	<b>21.81</b>	16.28
TAL	18.19	16.46	18.19	18.82	<b>19.33</b>	12.25
Comm. Quota	5.24	4.88	8.54	7.24	<b>7.71</b>	2.77
Comm. Landings	4.02	4.1	3.64	2.20	<b>2.78</b>	
Rec. Harvest Limit	12.95	11.58	9.65	11.58	<b>11.62</b>	9.48
Rec. Landings, Old MRIP	11.67	9.54	9.52	3.64	<b>N/A</b>	
Rec. Landings, New MRIP	30.10	24.16	32.07	13.27	<b>15.56</b>	
Rec. Possession Limit (# fish)	15	15	15	15	<b>15</b>	3: Private 5: For-Hire
Total Landings	15.69	13.64	13.16	5.84	<b>18.34</b>	
Overage/Underage	-2.5	-2.82	-5.03	-12.98	<b>N/A*</b>	
Total Catch	18.65	16.09	15.65	6.96	<b>23.50</b>	
Overage/Underage	-2.89	-3.36	-4.99	-14.85	<b>N/A*</b>	

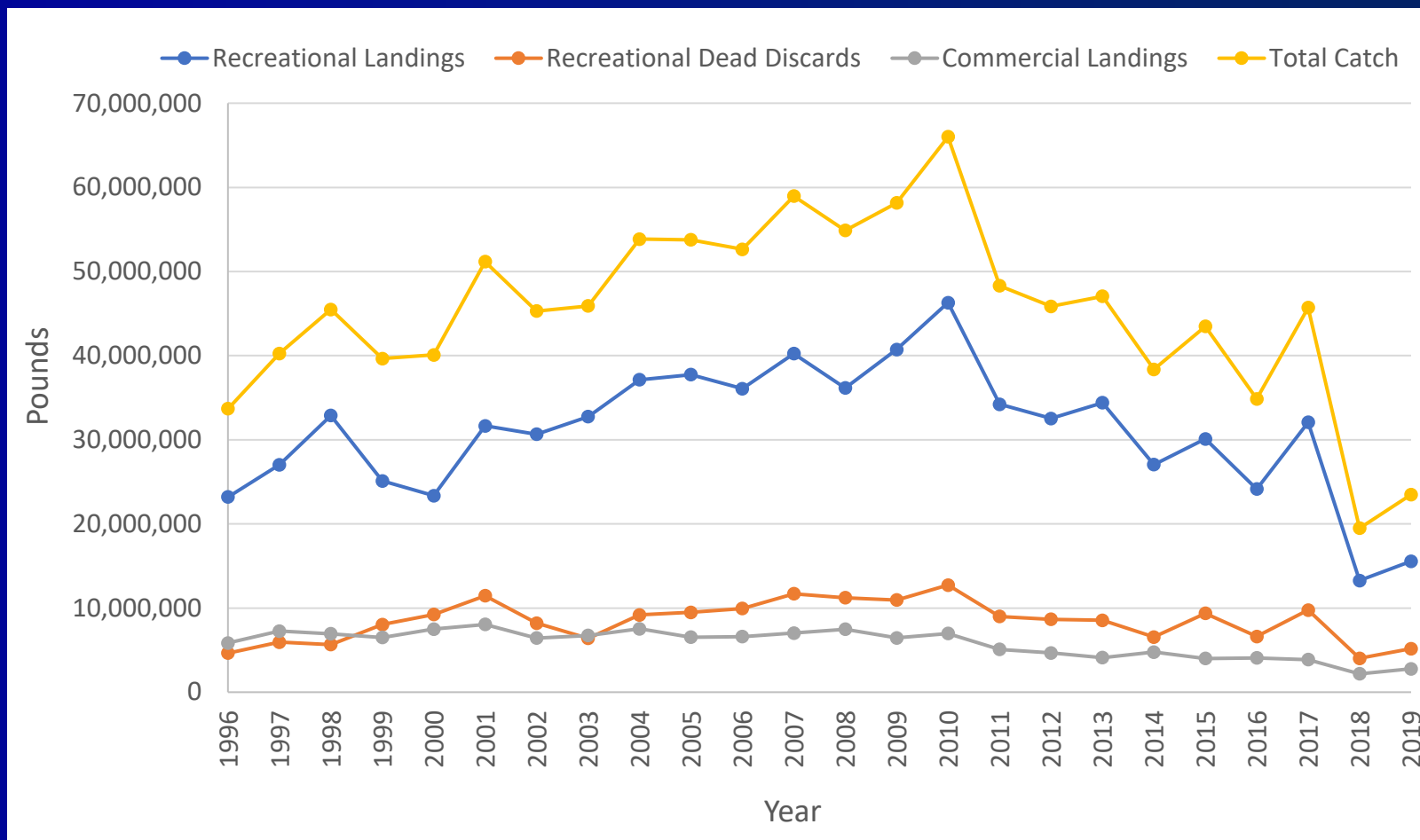
# Catch (landings and discards)



Bluefish Total Catch 1985-2019



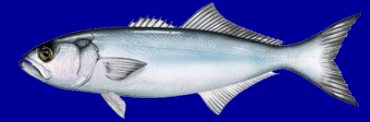
# Total Removals (Landings and Discards)



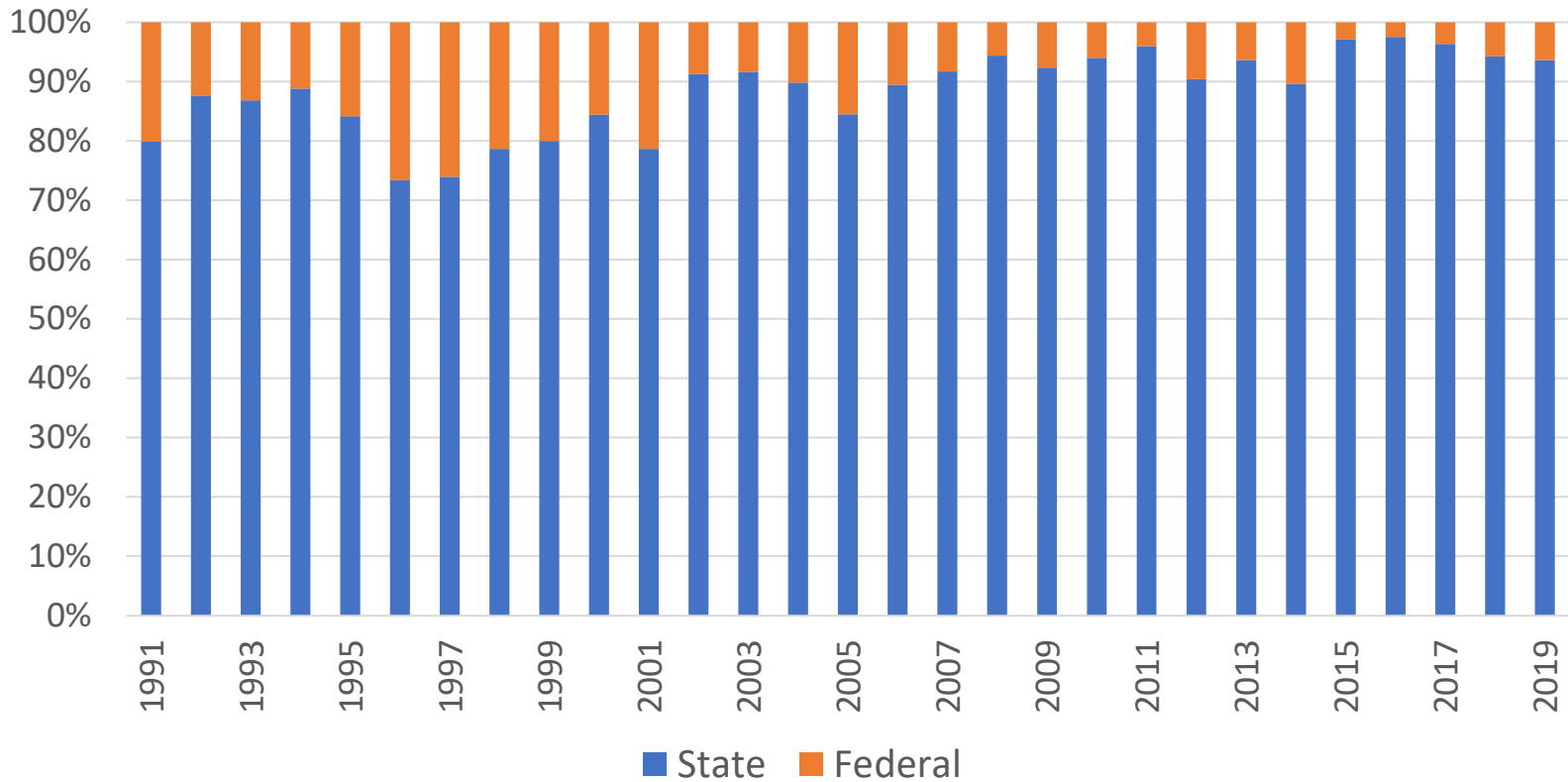
# 2019 Rec Landings by State

State	Harvest			Catch
	Pounds	Number	Average wt. (lbs)	Number
<b>MRIP (New) Estimates</b>				
ME	0	0	0	0
NH	0	0	0	0
MA	719,130	265,628	2.7	736,761
RI	931,991	379,715	2.5	991,593
CT	1,161,103	670,401	1.7	1,490,095
NY	3,521,431	3,037,380	1.2	6,376,431
NJ	1,660,208	741,722	2.2	3,310,648
DE	415,267	151,469	2.7	581,840
MD	154,451	111,769	1.4	338,737
VA	581,458	756,717	0.8	1,882,000
NC	3,011,480	2,752,589	1.1	9,915,020
SC	502,699	877,372	0.6	6,448,797
GA	21,886	26,364	0.8	273,400
FL	2,874,785	2,366,165	1.2	6,286,615
Total	15,555,889	12,137,291	-	38,631,937

# Recreational Fishery



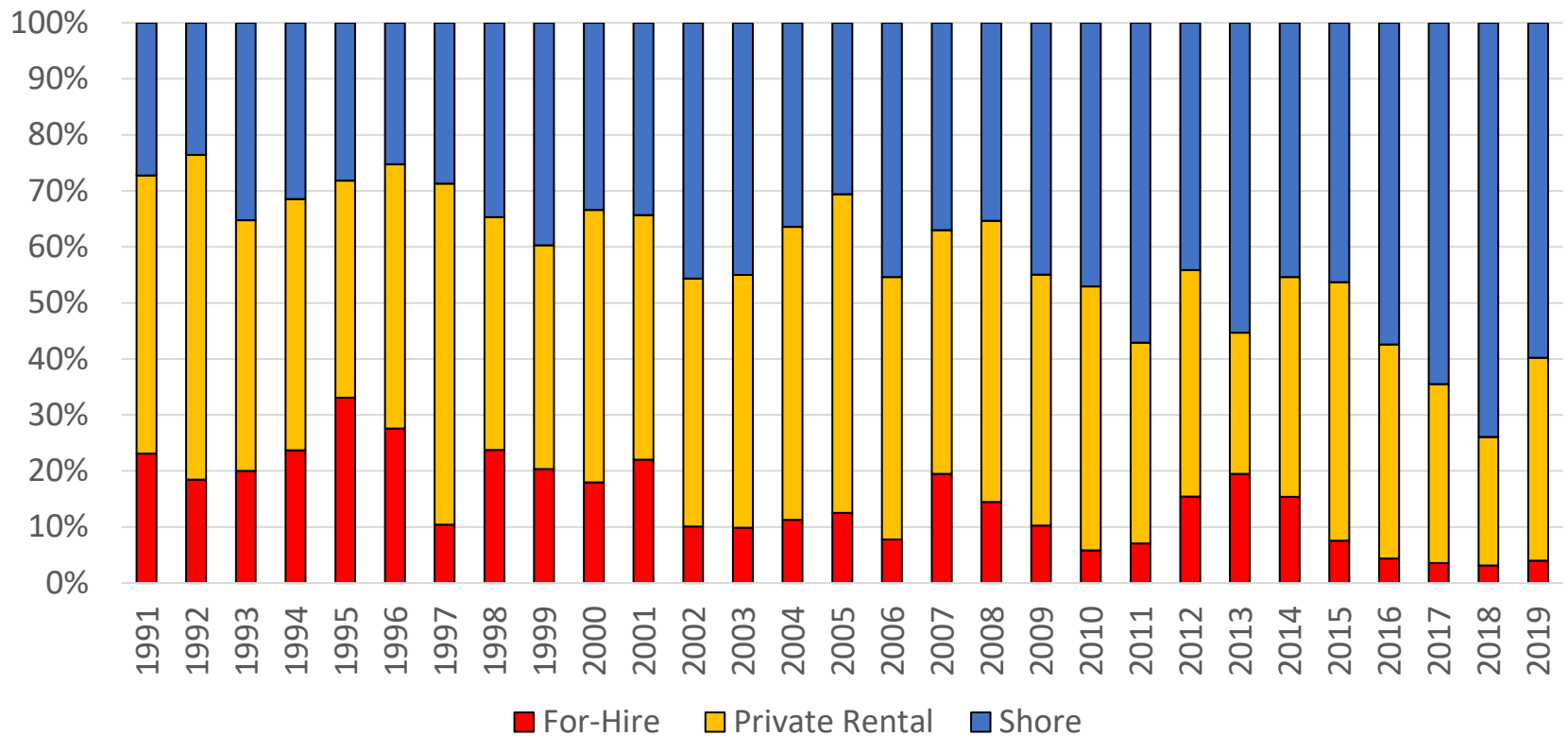
State vs. Federal Landings, 1991-2019



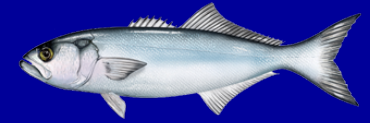
# Recreational Fishery



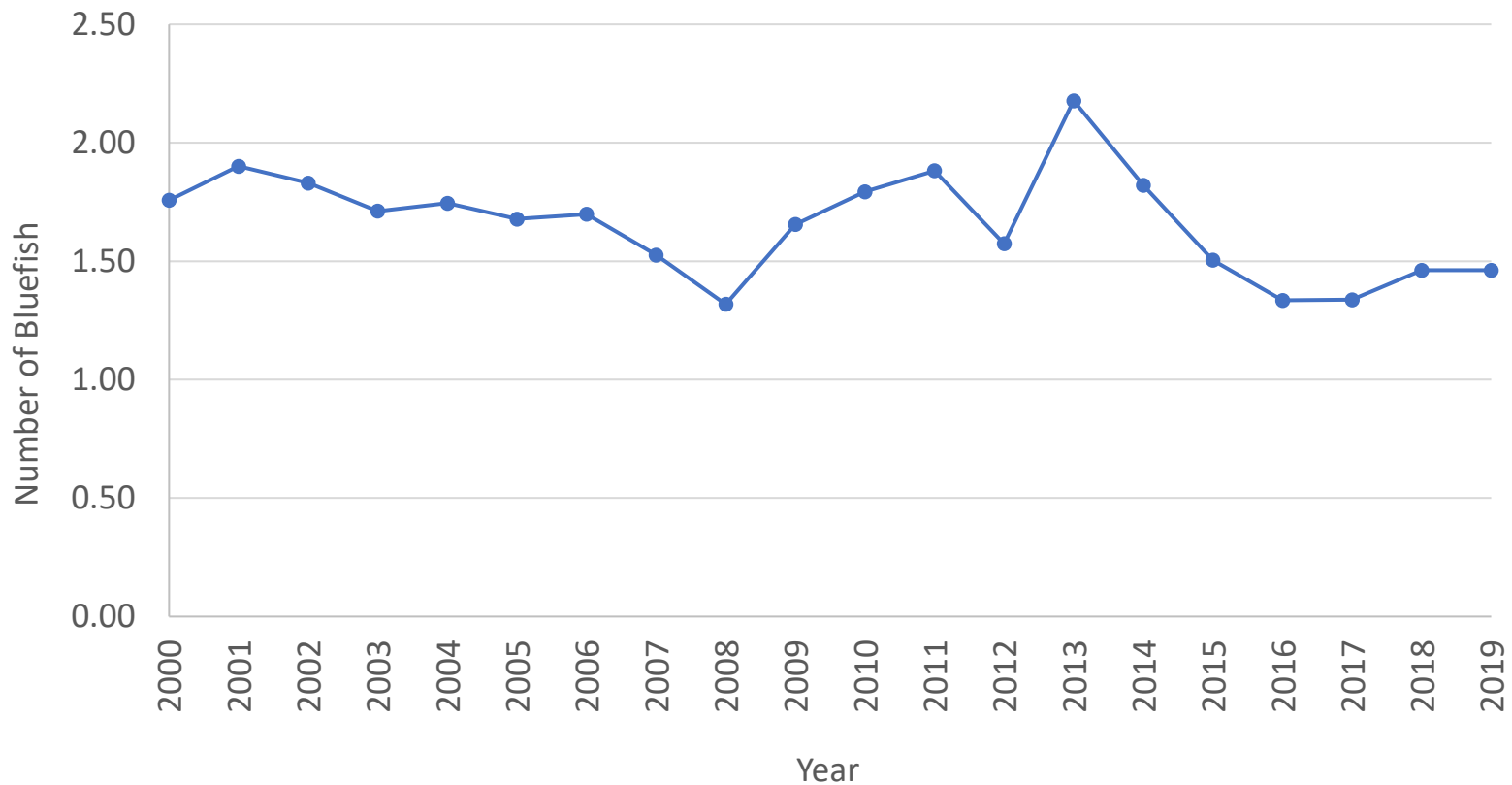
## Recreational Landings by Mode



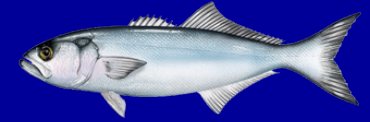
# Recreational Fishery



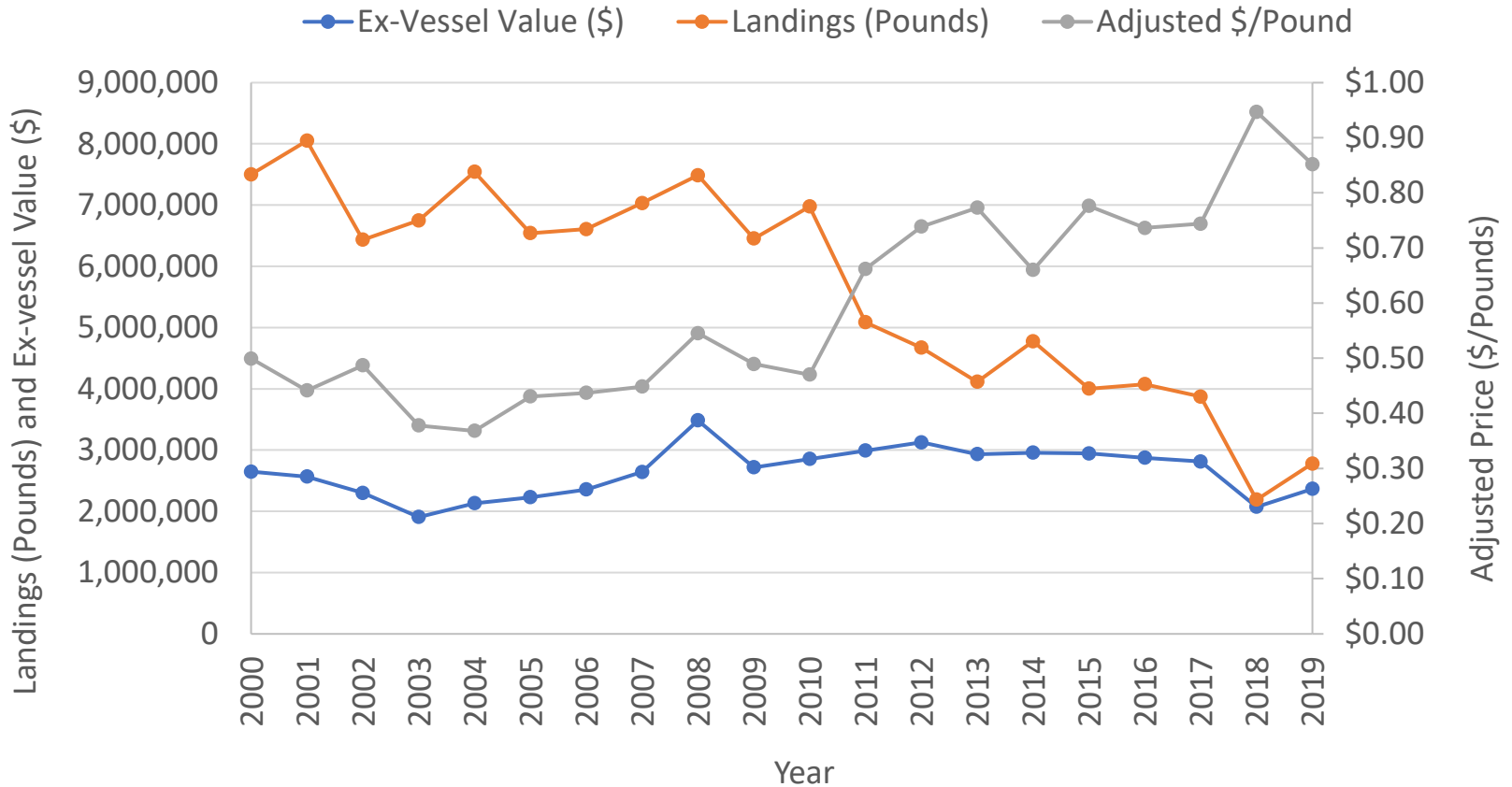
Recreational landings per “bluefish” trip



# Commercial Fishery

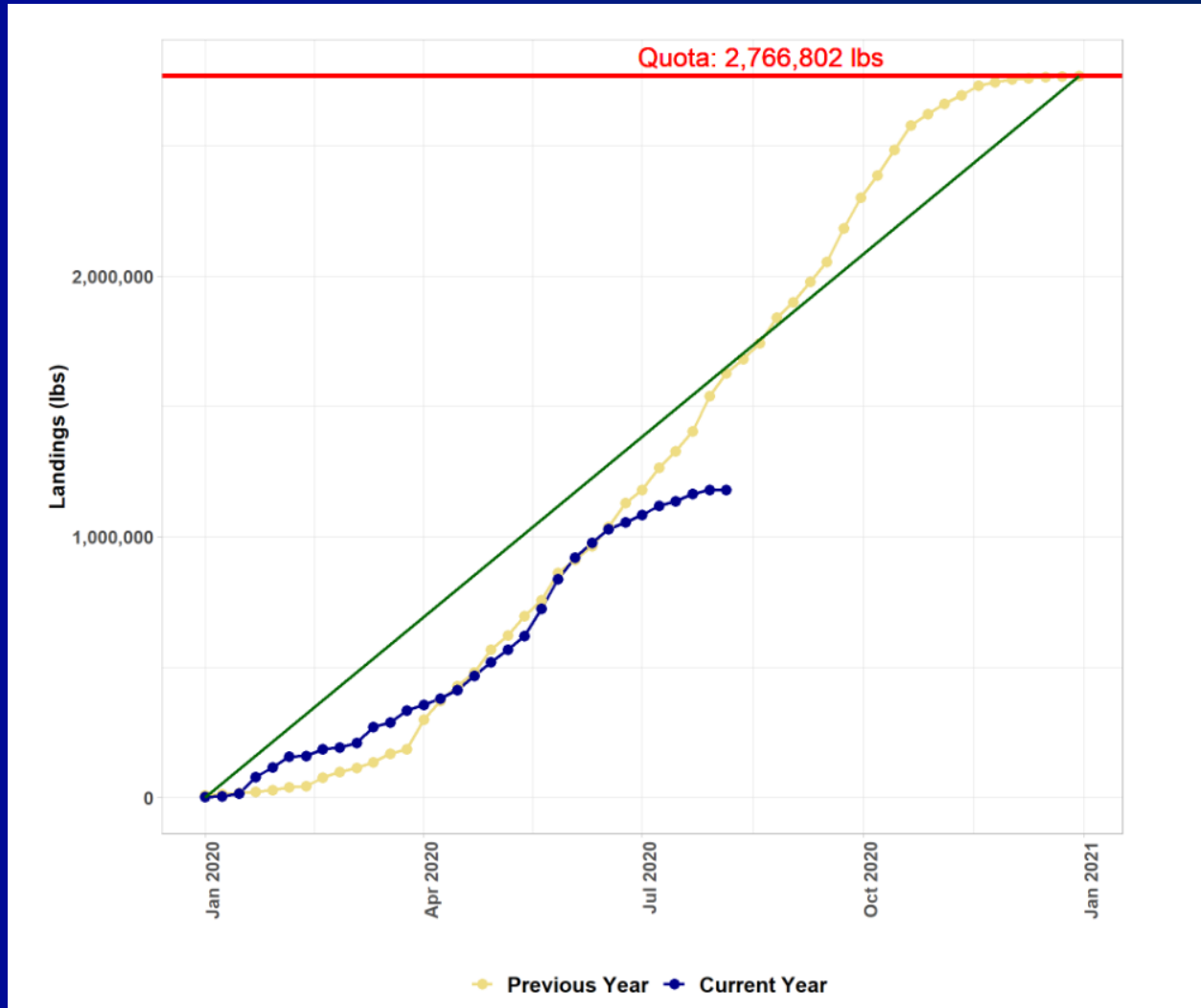
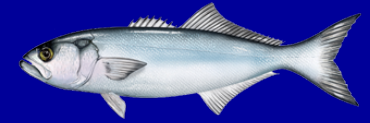


## Bluefish Landings, Value, and Price

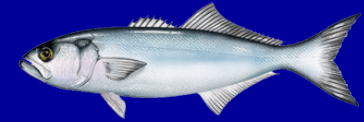




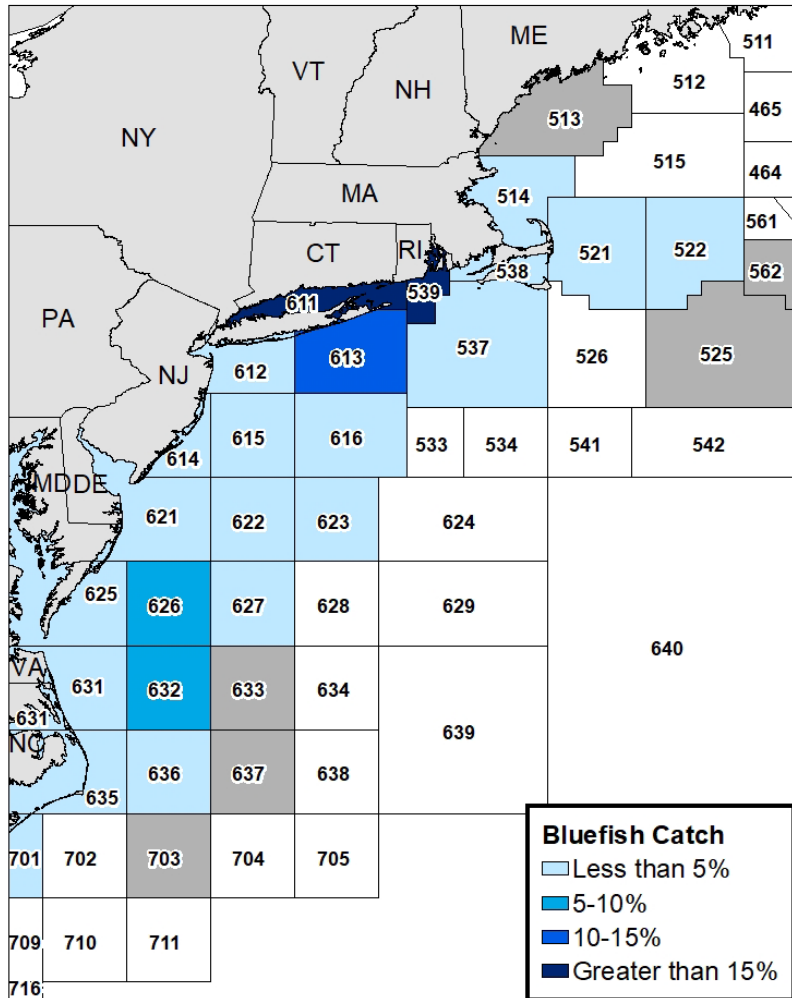
# Commercial Fishery



# Commercial Fishery



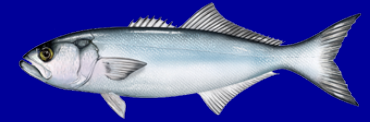
2019 Commercial Bluefish Catch - VTRs



## Landings by Gear - Dealer Data 2019

- Gillnet (44%)
- Unknown (28%)
- Otter trawl, bottom fish (12%)
- Other (11%)
- Handline (5%)

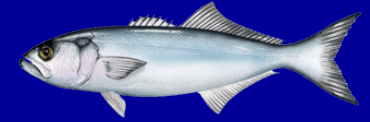
# Commercial Fishery



## Top Commercial Bluefish Ports

Port	Pounds	% of Total Comm. Bluefish Landings	# vessels
Hatteras, NC	393,056	14%	8
Point Judith, RI	283,941	10%	99
Wanchese, NC	273,277	10%	25
Montauk, NY	269,418	10%	78
Hampton Bays, NY	147,959	5%	30
Little Compton, RI	111,107	4%	14

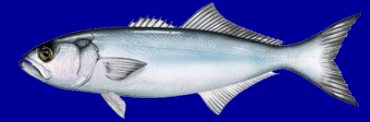
# Federal permits/activity



- 2019 Federally Permitted Statistics
  - 2,442 (2,439) commercial vessels
  - 851 (834) p/c vessels
  - 389 (407) dealers
  
  - 483 (476) commercial vessels landed bluefish
  - 278 (270) p/c vessels landed bluefish (VTR)
  - 146 (149) dealers purchased bluefish

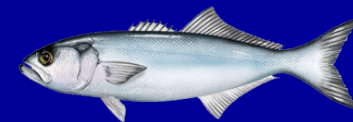
\* Parentheses indicate numbers from 2018

# Advisory Panel Discussion



- What factors influenced recent catch and landings?
  - Markets/economy?
  - Environment?
  - Fishery regulations?
  - Other factors?
- What research recommendations do you have for bluefish?
- What else is important for the Council/Commission to know about?

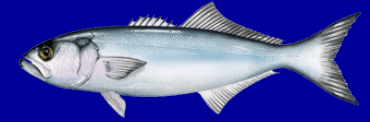
# AP Fishery Performance Report



## Recreational Fishery Comments

- Increase in abundance coastwide from 2018 to 2019 (2018 was the worst year in recent history)
  - More so from NY-south
- Reports of larger bluefish further offshore
- For-hire fleet does not go far enough offshore to target the large biomass
- Abundance of bait has led to a better bluefish year
- Smaller bluefish were seasonally available from shore

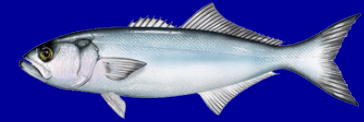
# AP Fishery Performance Report



## Commercial Fishery Comments

- Larger bluefish are offshore and available to commercial fishermen (NY/NJ)
- If current trends continue, the commercial quota will be too low
- 2019 was a difficult year for FL fishermen due to a lot of bad weather early in the season

# AP Fishery Performance Report

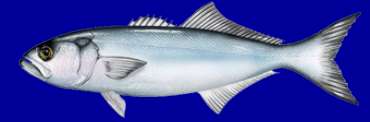


## Market/Economic Comments

- COVID-19 has greatly impacted the for-hire and commercial sectors
  - Bluefish may not be hit as hard as other species because there are less for-hire passengers on the boats
  - Not targeted as often as other species
- Bluefish demand has remained high
  - FL: The price per pound reached \$1.00, which is much higher than the recent prices of around \$0.30



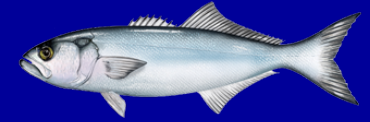
# AP Fishery Performance Report



## Management/Fishery Regulations Comments

- The for-hire fleet believes the 5-fish bag limit is too low (NY/NJ)
- Need to further explore for-hire sector separation
- AP members (NY) are very optimistic of the future years due to the current abundance of bait
- The future for bluefish may be better than anticipated

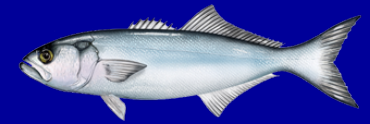
# AP Fishery Performance Report



## Research, Environmental and Other Comments

- How does the harvest of fish in the south early in the season affect abundance in the north?
- Need to better understand bait abundance and the relationship with bluefish
- AP members prefer regulations and management measures that remain stable.

# Staff ABC Recommendation

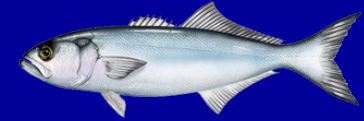


- For 2021, staff recommends a status quo acceptable biological catch (ABC) of 16.28 million pounds (7,385 mt).
  - No update to the 2021 ABC with the new risk policy as changes are minimal and rebuilding projections are set.
  - Management track stock assessment in 2021.
  - Research track stock assessment in 2022.

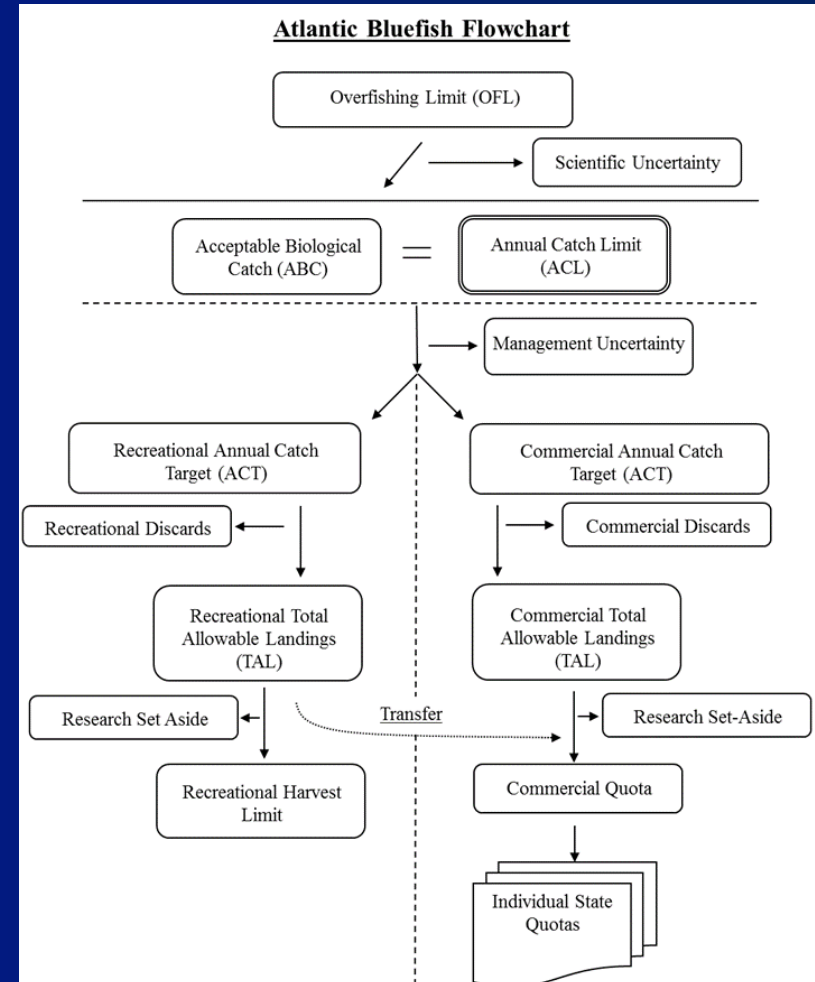
# SSC Recommended ABCs

	2020		2021	
	Mil lb.	mt	Mil lb.	mt
<b>OFL</b>	37.98	17,228	37.98	17,228
<b>ABC</b>	16.28	7,385	16.28	7,385

# Necessary MC Action



- Management Uncertainty – ACL to ACTs
  - Uncertainties surrounding recreational and commercial discards
  - Prior year or average to estimate discards?
- Discards – ACTs to TAL
  - MRIP (mean wt.) or NEFSC (wt. at length, season)
  - Commercial: Negligible?
- Commercial Measures
  - 2021 CQ: 2.77 M lbs
  - 2019 CL: 2.78 M lbs
  - States dictate trip limits
- Transfers
- Expected Rec. Landings
  - Prior years landings or projections
- Discuss: Rec measures to constrain harvest to the RHL



# Discard Estimates

Year	MRIP: Dead Discards (pounds)
2017	9,769,478
2018	4,033,183
2019	5,166,456
Average 2017-2019	<b>6,323,039</b>

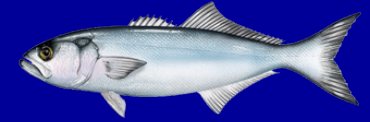
Year	NEFSC: Dead Discards (pounds)
2017	22,290,939
2018	9,896,551
2019	15,415,689
Average 2017-2019	15,867,726

# MC Recommended Measures

Management Measure	2020 (Measures set in 2019)		Basis for 2021 Staff Recommendation	2021 (Staff recommended)	
	M lbs	mt		M lbs	mt
OFL	37.98	17,228	Stock assessment projections	37.98	17,228
ABC	16.28	7,385	Derived by SSC, based on old Council risk policy (2019)	16.28	7,385
ACL	16.28	7,385	Defined in FMP as equal to ABC	16.28	7,385
Mgmt. Uncertainty	0	0	Derived by the Monitoring Committee	0	0
Comm. ACT	2.77	1,255	(ACL – Management Uncertainty) x 17%	2.77	1,255
Rec. ACT	13.51	6,130	(ACL – Management Uncertainty) x 83%	13.51	6,130
<b>Comm. Discards</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>Value used in assessment</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Rec. Discards</b>	<b>4.03</b>	<b>1,829</b>	<b>Avg. 2017-2019 MRIP discards</b>	<b>6.32</b>	<b>2,868</b>
Comm. TAL	2.77	1,255	Commercial ACT – commercial discards	2.77	1,255
Rec. TAL	9.48	4,301	Recreational ACT – recreational discards	7.19	3,261
Combined TAL	12.25	5,556	Commercial TAL + Recreational TAL	9.96	4,517
<b>Transfer</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>Calculated so Expected Rec. Landings = RHL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Expected Rec. Landings</b>	<b>13.27</b>	<b>6,020</b>	<b>2019 Recreational Landings?</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Comm. Quota</b>	<b>2.77</b>	<b>1,255</b>	<b>Commercial TAL + transfer</b>	<b>2.77</b>	<b>1,255</b>
<b>Rec. Harvest Limit</b>	<b>9.48</b>	<b>4,301</b>	<b>Recreational TAL – transfer</b>	<b>7.19</b>	<b>3,261</b>

\*mt may be slightly off due to rounding

# Questions/Next Steps



- We will have another MC meeting in November to identify rec measures for Council/Board approval at the Dec. meeting.
- **Goal:** Constrain recreational harvest to the RHL.
  - Bag limits
  - Seasonal closures (waves, days, etc.)
  - Gear restriction
- Implications of COVID-19...
- Consider when 2020 management measures went into effect.



# Back Up Slides

# Uncertainty in Recreational Management Measure Performance

- Switching from old to new MRIP
- The last state to implement bag limits occurred in July/August
- Uncertain on effort in 2020
- Limited MRIP sampling
- COVID-19
- Accountability Measures?

# Motion

- Move that, based on the SSC, staff, and MC recommendations, the bluefish 2021 ABC=ACL=16.28 mil lbs. Using **average MRIP discards from 2017-2019 (6.32 M lbs)**. and including no transfer to the commercial fishery, the **RHL=7.19 M lbs**. With commercial discards set to 0, the commercial quota=2.77 M lbs.
- Move that, based on the SSC, staff, and MC recommendations, the bluefish 2021 ABC=ACL=16.28 mil lbs. Using **MRIP discards from 2019 (5.17 M lbs.)** and including no transfer to the commercial fishery, the **RHL=8.34 M lbs**. With commercial discards set to 0, the commercial quota=2.77 M lbs.
- Move that, based on the SSC, staff, and MC recommendations, the bluefish 2021 ABC=ACL=16.28 mil lbs. Using status quo **MRIP discards (2018 – 4.03 M lbs.)** and including no transfer to the commercial fishery, the **RHL=9.48 M lbs**. With commercial discards set to 0, the commercial quota=2.77 M lbs.

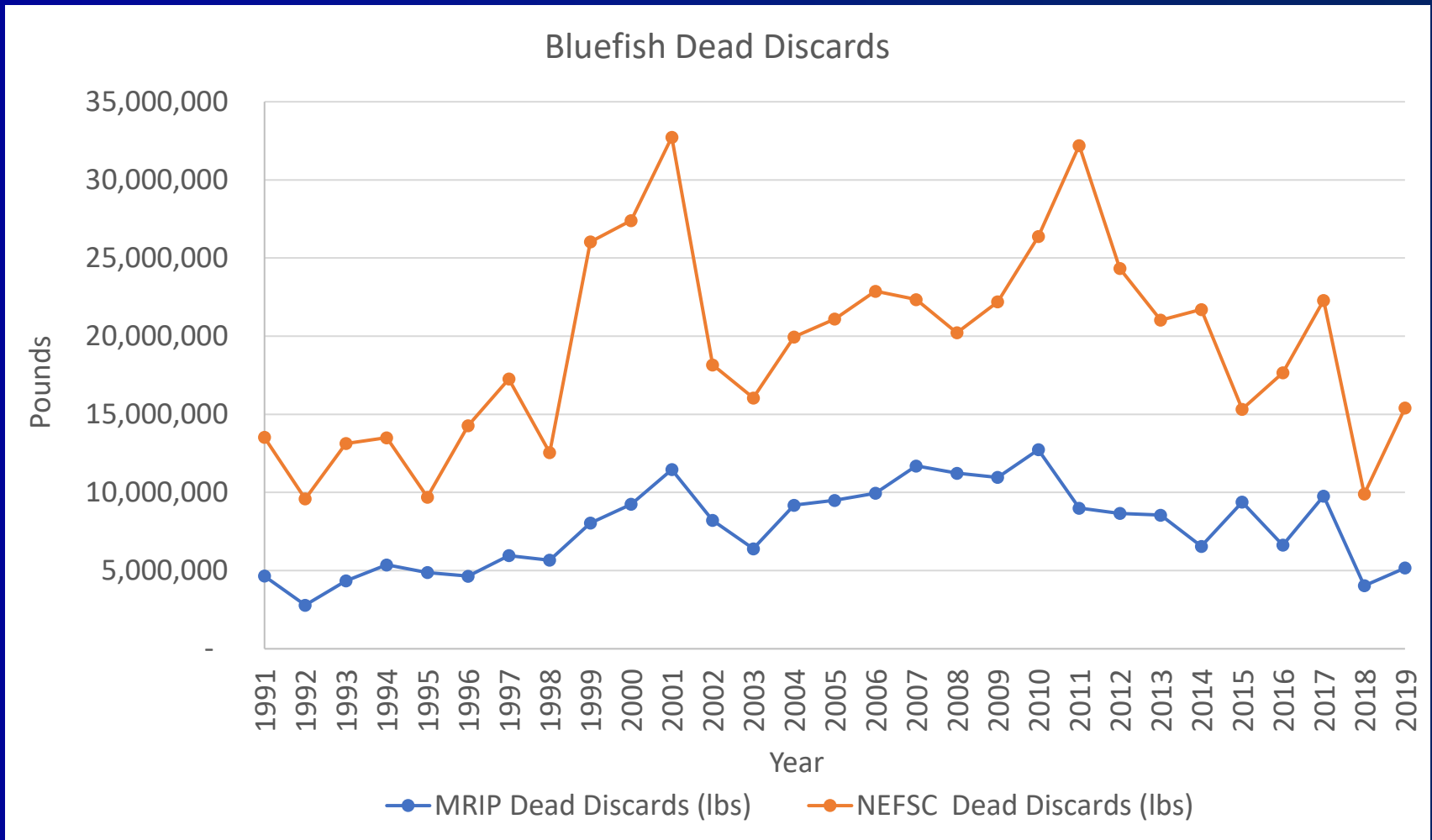
# Rec Measures Implemented

State	Date Implemented
ME	January 1 <sup>st</sup>
NH	January 29 <sup>th</sup>
MA	May 1 <sup>st</sup>
RI	April 2 <sup>nd</sup>
CT	March 26 <sup>th</sup>
NY	May 1 <sup>st</sup>
NJ	April 1 <sup>st</sup>
DE	May 15 <sup>th</sup>
MD	February 1 <sup>st</sup>
VA	March 1 <sup>st</sup>
NC	February 1 <sup>st</sup>
SC	February 28 <sup>th</sup>
GA	Conservation Equivalency (Closed wave 2)
FL	Approved at the July FWC meeting, effective date TBD <a href="https://myfwc.com/news/all-news/bluefish-comm-720/">https://myfwc.com/news/all-news/bluefish-comm-720/</a>

# Data Update: Discards

- GARFO and the MAFMC use the MRIP rounded average weight of a landed fish in pounds to calculate total discard weight.
- The assessment calculates discards weight using methodology that was peer reviewed at SARC60. Annual release length data from the American Littoral Society, the MRIP intercept survey, and volunteer angler surveys from RI, CT, and NJ are compiled and provide a release length distribution that is converted to weight using seasonal length-weight parameters from the NEFSC bottom trawl survey.
- The assessment does not use the average weight of a landed fish because there is evidence that the length distribution of discarded fish is larger than those that are landed (SARC60).

# Recreational Dead Discards



# Staff Recommended Measures

Management Measure	2020 (Measures set in 2019)		Basis for 2021 Staff Recommendation	2021 (Staff recommended)	
	M lbs	mt		M lbs	mt
OFL	37.98	17,228	Stock assessment projections	37.98	17,228
ABC	16.28	7,385	Derived by SSC, based on old Council risk policy (2019)	16.28	7,385
ACL	16.28	7,385	Defined in FMP as equal to ABC	16.28	7,385
Mgmt. Uncertainty	0	0	Derived by the Monitoring Committee	0	0
Comm. ACT	2.77	1,255	(ACL – Management Uncertainty) x 17%	2.77	1,255
Rec. ACT	13.51	6,130	(ACL – Management Uncertainty) x 83%	13.51	6,130
<b>Comm. Discards</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>Value used in assessment</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Rec. Discards</b>	<b>4.03</b>	<b>1,829</b>	<b>2019 MRIP discards</b>	<b>5.17</b>	<b>2,343</b>
Comm. TAL	2.77	1,255	Commercial ACT – commercial discards	2.77	1,255
Rec. TAL	9.48	4,301	Recreational ACT – recreational discards	8.34	3,782
Combined TAL	12.25	5,556	Commercial TAL + Recreational TAL	11.11	5,039
<b>Transfer</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>Calculated so Expected Rec. Landings = RHL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Expected Rec. Landings</b>	<b>13.27</b>	<b>6,020</b>	<b>2019 Recreational Landings</b>	<b>15.56</b> <b>Unknown?</b>	<b>7,056</b> <b>Unknown?</b>
<b>Comm. Quota</b>	<b>2.77</b>	<b>1,255</b>	<b>Commercial TAL + transfer</b>	<b>2.77</b>	<b>1,255</b>
<b>Rec. Harvest Limit</b>	<b>9.48</b>	<b>4,301</b>	<b>Recreational TAL – transfer</b>	<b>8.34</b>	<b>3,782</b>

\*mt may be slightly off due to rounding

Measure	Year	MC Recommendation	Council/Board Decision
Discards	2017	3-year Avg 2014-2016 (MRIP) (both were reported) – use NEFSC next cycle for 2018	*Recreational discards and TAL have also been updated from those outlined in the 2016–2018 specifications based on updated MRIP  2015 Discards?
	2018	2017 discards (MRIP) for 2019	2017 discards (MRIP) for 2019
	2019	3-year Avg 2016-2018 (NEFSC) for 2020-2021	2018 Terminal year (MRIP) for 2020-2021
Expected Rec. Landings (ERL)	2017	Set 2018 FY equal to 2014-2016 Landings	*Set 2018 FY equal to 2014-2016 Landings
	2018	2017 Landings	2017 Landings
	2019	3-year Avg 2016-2018	2018 Landings
Transfer	2017	4.55 Calculated so the ERL equal the RHL	*4.55 Calculated so the ERL equal the RHL
	2018	6.10 M lbs – Calculated so the ERL equal the RHL	4.00 M lbs – Set via a Council motion
	2019	0 – Calculated so the ERL equal the RHL	0 – Rec. sector was expected to meet RHL



State	Measures
ME	No Restrictions
NH	No Restrictions
MA	5,000 lbs/day or trip
	(whichever is longer)
RI	12" min size;
	1,000 lbs/bi-wk (1.1-4.30)
	8,000 lbs/wk (5.1-11.09)
	500 lbs/wk (11.10-12.31)
CT	9" min size;
	1,200 lbs/trip
NY	9" min size;
	Trip Limit: 5,000 lbs (Jan-April); 750 lbs (May-Aug); 500 lbs (Sept-Oct); 1,000 lbs (Nov-Dec)
NJ	9" min size
DE	No Restrictions
MD	8" min size
PRFC	Trip limits after 80% of VA-MD quota is landed
VA	No Restrictions
NC	No Restrictions
SC	No directed fishery
GA	12" min size;
	15 fish
FL	12" min size;
	7,500 lbs/day