



Black Sea Bass

2023 Specifications Review



SSC Meeting
July 26, 2022

Overview



- Stock status
- Recent catch and landings
- Advisory Panel Fishery Performance Report
- Review 2023 ABC and consider if revisions needed
 - Staff recommend no changes

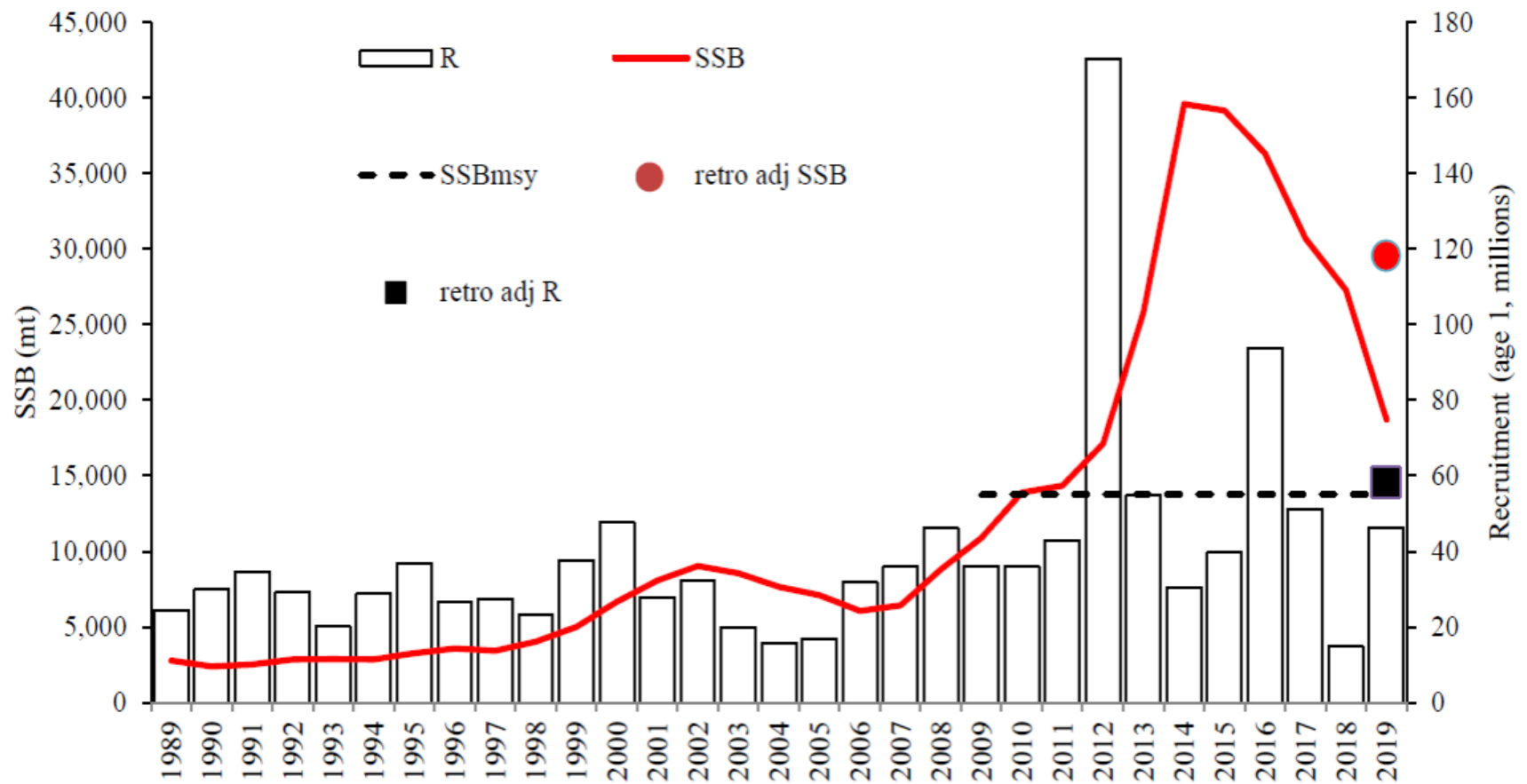
Stock Status

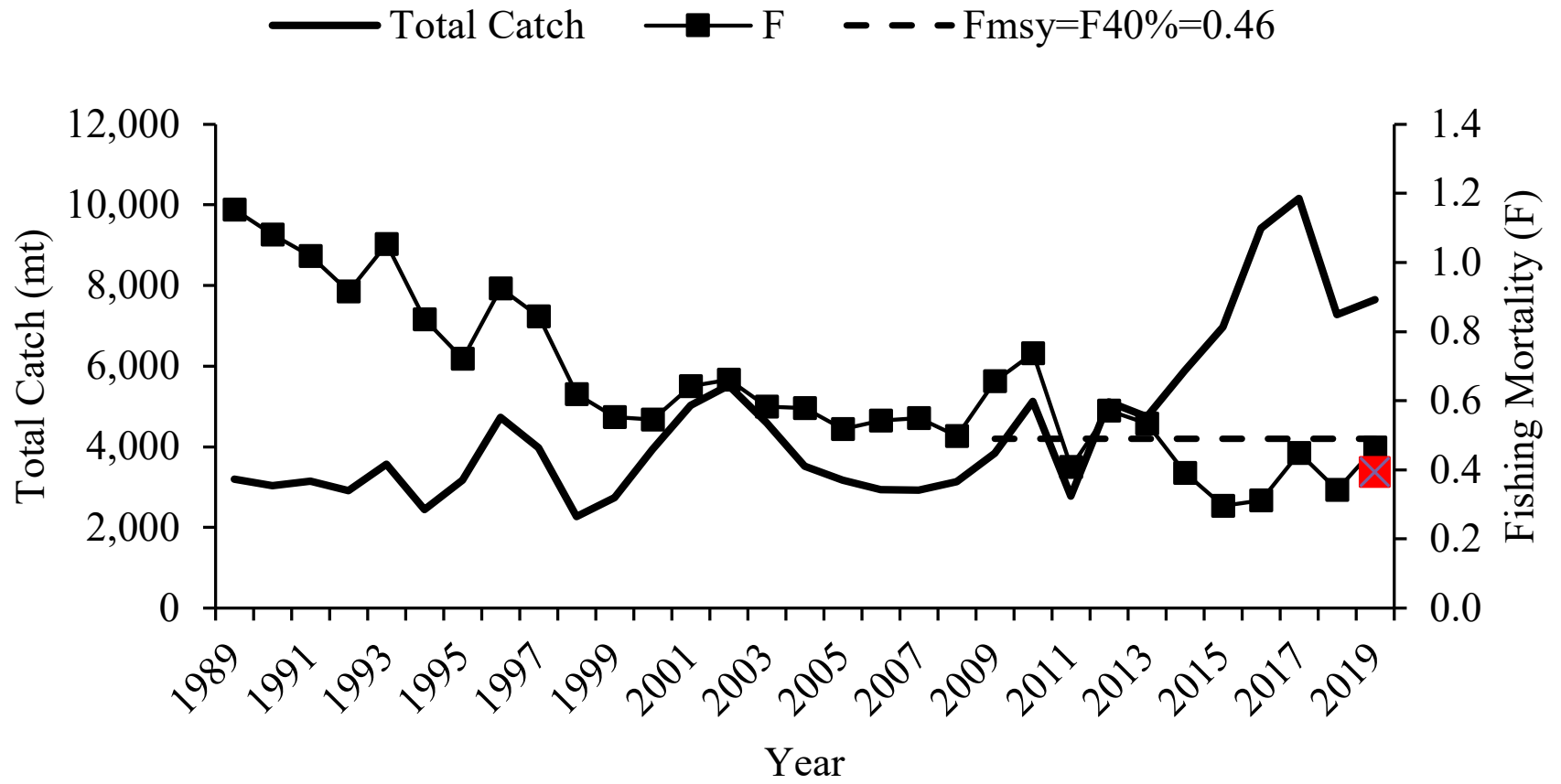


- **Not overfished in 2019**
- **Overfishing not occurring in 2019**

	SSB	F
Target	31.84 mil lb (14,441 mt)	N/A
Threshold	15.92 mil lb (7,221 mt)	0.46
Terminal year estimate (2019)	65.53 mil lb (29,769 mt) 2.1 times target level	0.39 15% below threshold level

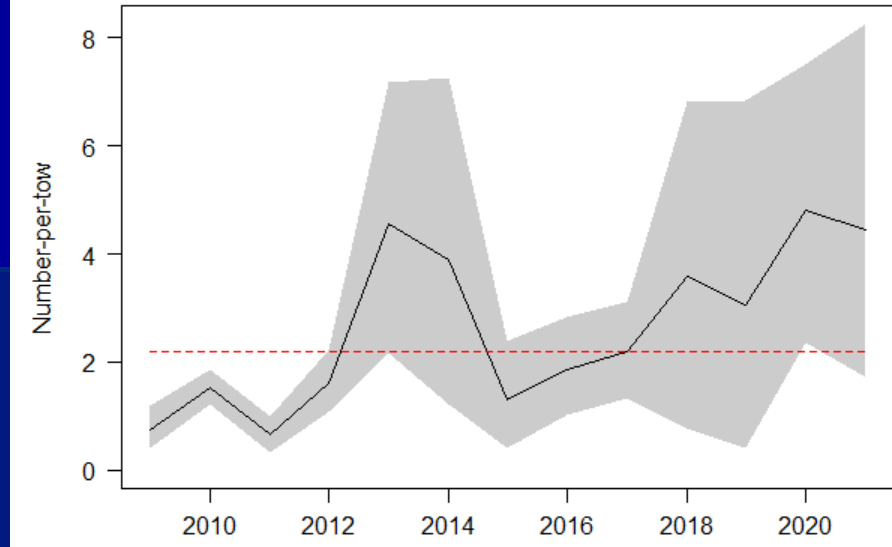
Terminal year estimates are adjusted for retrospective pattern in stock assessment.



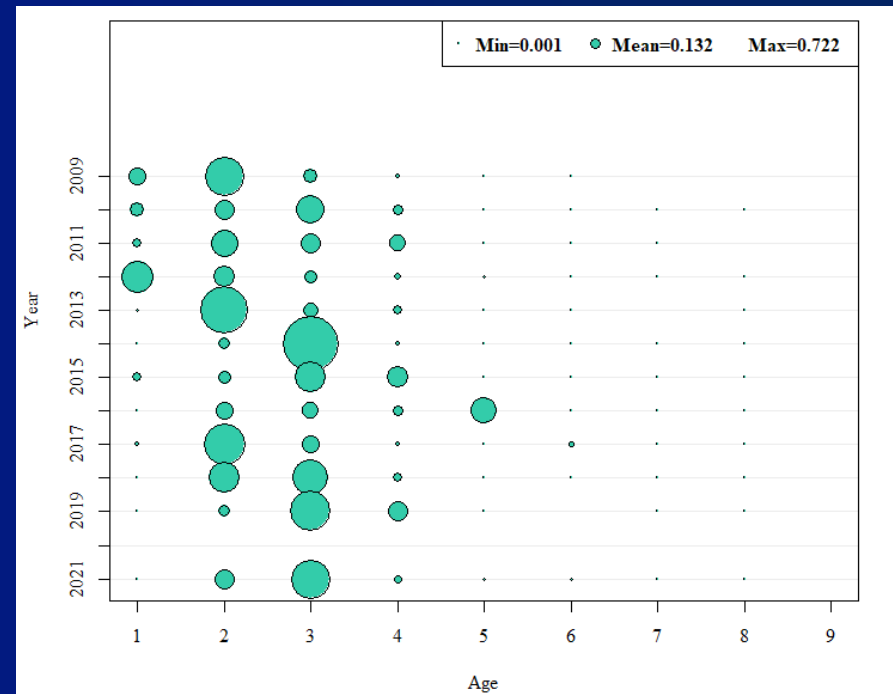


2022 Data Update

- NEFSC spring bottom trawl survey relative abundance has steadily increased since 2015.
 - 2020 index based on an incomplete survey.
- Aggregate index and/or age comps show above average 2011, 2015, 2016, and 2019 year classes.



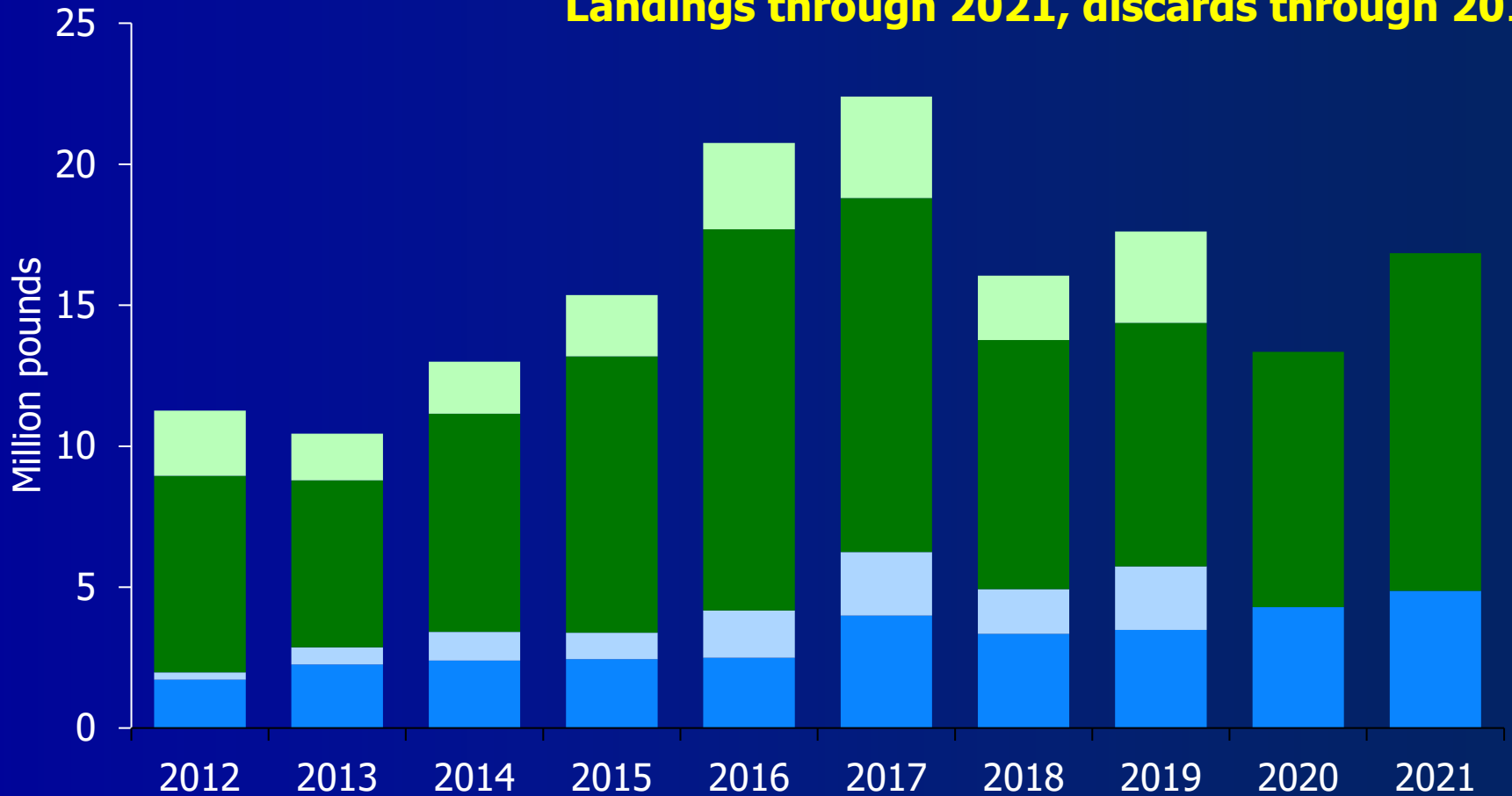
Stratified mean #/tow w/90% CI for 2009-2021, spring only.



Proportion at age, NEFSC spring survey, 2009-2021.

Recent Fishery Landings & Discards

Landings through 2021, discards through 2019



Recreational dead discards

Recreational landings

Commercial dead discards

Commercial landings

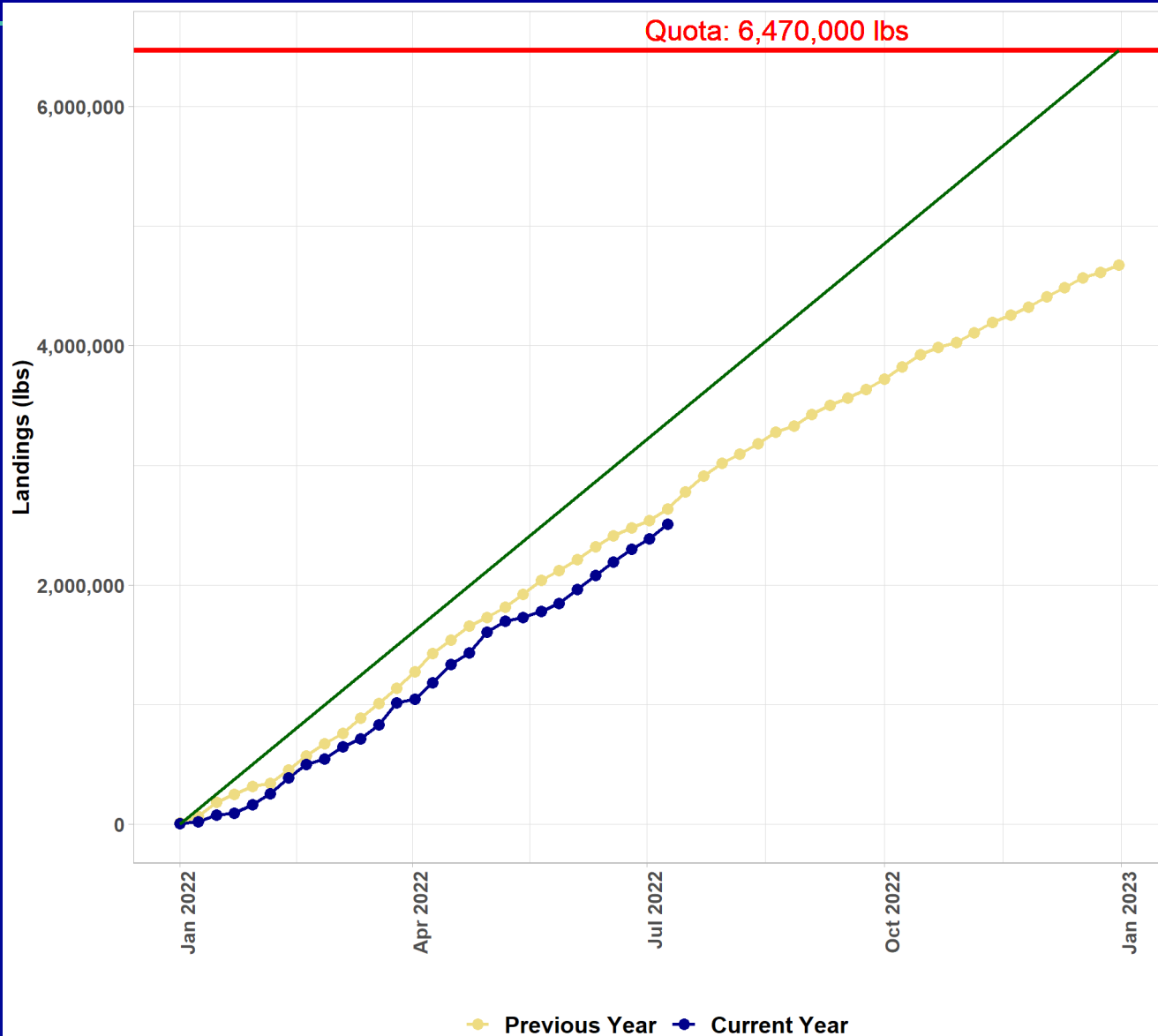
Recreational Fishery

Year	Rec. land. old MRIP	Rec. land. new MRIP	RHL	RHL overage/ underage	Rec. dead catch old MRIP	Rec. dead catch new MRIP	ACL	ACL overage/ underage
2016	5.19	13.52	2.82	+84%	6.40	16.59	3.52	+82%
2017	4.50	12.55	4.29	+5%	5.77	16.15	5.38	+7%
2018	3.82	8.84	3.66	+4%	4.92	11.12	4.59	+7%
2019	3.46	8.63	3.66	-5%	3.96	11.87	4.59	-14%
2020	NA	9.06	5.81	+56%	NA	TBD	8.09	TBD
2021	NA	11.98	6.34	+89%	NA	TBD	7.93	TBD

Commercial Fishery

Year	Com. landings	Com. quota	Quota overage/ underage	Com. dead catch	ACL	ACL overage/ underage
2016	2.50	2.71	-8%	4.17	3.15	+32%
2017	3.99	4.12	-3%	6.25	5.09	+23%
2018	3.34	3.52	-5%	4.93	4.35	+13%
2019	3.48	3.52	-1%	5.74	4.35	+32%
2020	4.29	5.58	-23%	TBD	6.98	TBD
2021	4.87	6.09	-20%	TBD	9.52	TBD

2022 Commercial Landings



AP Fishery Performance Report

General Comments (Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass)

- Much higher costs in 2022 (gas, bait, packing boxes, ice, equipment, etc.).
 - Biggest issue facing com. and rec. fisheries this year.
 - Struggling to pay crew.
 - Reduced private and for-hire rec. fishing effort.
 - For-hire businesses charging more per trip to cover costs.
 - For-hire clients taking fewer trips (cost of trip, gas, etc.).
 - Compounding effects of more restrictive rec. measures for scup and BSB in 2022.

AP Fishery Performance Report

General Comments (Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass)

- Life returning to “normal” with current state of COVID.
 - Less concern with social gatherings and indoor activities.
 - Reduced recreational fishing effort compared to past two years when fishing was viewed as a relatively low-risk activity.
 - More gatherings may not mean greatly increased seafood demand given current state of economy.
- Imports negatively impact the market for US-caught fish.

AP Fishery Performance Report

General Comments (Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass)

- Concern that MRIP does not provide an estimate of total number of anglers in EEZ.
- Recommend electronic reporting to improve recreational data.
- Concern that Harvest Control Rule won't prevent overfishing and will negatively impact commercial sector.
- Consider com. min. trawl mesh size of 5" for all 3 species during Nov-April.
 - Another advisor supported but preferred 4" and a reduced com. minimum fish size for all 3 species.
 - One advisor opposed reduced min. fish size for scup.

AP Fishery Performance Report

General Comments (Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass)

- Environmental conditions
 - Outer Banks, NC may eventually wash away with sea level rise and storms.
 - Concern about impacts of chemicals, including disinfectants related to COVID.
 - Influence of environmental cycles on fish abundance and behavior should be evaluated.

AP Fishery Performance Report

Black Sea Bass

- Price in NY has not fully recovered from COVID, likely due to important role of restaurants.
- Recommendation for 7,500 lb federal waters trip limit to prevent large ITQ trips from negatively impacting price for all vessels.

AP Fishery Performance Report

Black Sea Bass

- Availability to rec. anglers remains very high.
- Reduced rec. effort, but those who are fishing are doing very well with black sea bass.
- Management will always struggle to constrain the rec. fishery when availability is so high. May see overages even with reduced effort this year.
- Fishery should be less restricted when biomass is high.

AP Fishery Performance Report

Black Sea Bass

- Reducing future harvest in response to past overages is counterproductive for abundant stocks. Will make them even more abundant.
 - (Note that AMs only require paybacks when biomass is <150% target.)
- Min. size limits increase harvest of male BSB, which should not be overly detrimental to the stock.
- With current high costs, for-hire vessels may not be able to stay in business with bag limits of 8 or lower and with reduced availability of summer flounder.
- Observation of a large (8-10 lb) female BSB. Can they transition from female to male and back to female?

Additional AP Email Comments

- Recreational restrictions in 2022 a “travesty.”
- Concern about discard mortality with increased min. size implemented for 2022.
- Rec. fishermen have noted times when BSB are present, but won't bite hooks. Not sure why.
- Research recommendation: When, where, and age of spawning. Lockjaw related to spawning? Will distribution shift away from DE in future?

Previous SSC Recommendation

- 100% OFL CV.
- Projections assumed 2021 RHL overage, resulting in assumed ABC overage.
- Could only recommend varying 2022-2023 ABCs to keep p^* below 0.5 in all years.
- Staff recommend no changes to 2023 ABC. Available info. suggests stock conditions have not notably changed.

Year	OFL		ABC		ABC F	ABC p^*	SSB		SSB/ SSB _{MSY}
	MT	Mil. lb	MT	Mil. lb			MT	Mil. lb	
2022	8,735	19.56	8,555	18.86	0.41	0.49	22,637	49.91	1.57
2023	7,716	17.01	7,557	16.66	0.41	0.49	19,538	43.07	1.35

Questions/Discussion

