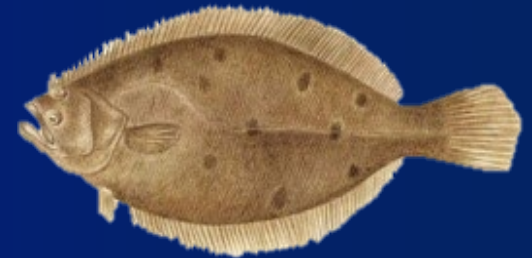


# Summer Flounder 2022 Recreational Measures

Council and Board  
December 14, 2021



# Recreational Measures Process

August 9

- Council/Board adopted 2022-2023 recreational harvest limit (RHL)

November 10

- Monitoring Committee meeting

November 18

- Advisory Panel meeting

December 14

- Council and Board adopt coastwide measures or conservation equivalency (summer flounder and black sea bass) or federal measures (scup)

~January-March

- ASMFC Technical Committee, Board, and states develop state waters measures

# Objectives



- Review recreational fishery data, current measures, and performance
- Review staff, Monitoring Committee, and Advisory Panel recommendations
- Adopt 2022 recreational measures (conservation equivalency or coastwide measures)

# Summer Flounder Measures



## Coastwide measures

- Same bag limit, size limit, and season in every state and federal waters

Or

## Conservation Equivalency

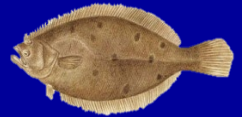
- Combined effect of individual state/regional measures is equivalent to a set of coastwide measures
- Federal measures waived; anglers subject to measures of state where they land

# 2020 Data Considerations



- 2020 MRIP estimates impacted by COVID
- Effort survey continued uninterrupted
- Shoreside intercept sampling (APAIS) suspended March/April 2020, resumed between May and August depending on state

# 2020 Data Considerations



- MRIP developed 2020 estimates by filling in gaps with proxy data from 2018-2019
- % imputed 2020 harvest data
  - 19% summer flounder
  - 25% scup
  - 17% black sea bass
- Adjustments to 2020 estimates may occur once final 2021 data are available (MRIP will review methods that use 2021 data)
- Recreational dead discard estimates in weight currently unavailable for 2020

# 2021 Recreational Measures



- Regional Conservation Equivalency
  - State measures control harvest; federal measures waived
- Non-preferred coastwide measures
  - Implemented in federal regulations, but waived
  - 19-inches, 4 fish, May 15-Sept. 15
- Precautionary default
  - “Deterrent” measures
  - 20-inch TL, 2 fish, July 1-August 31

# 2019-2021 State Measures



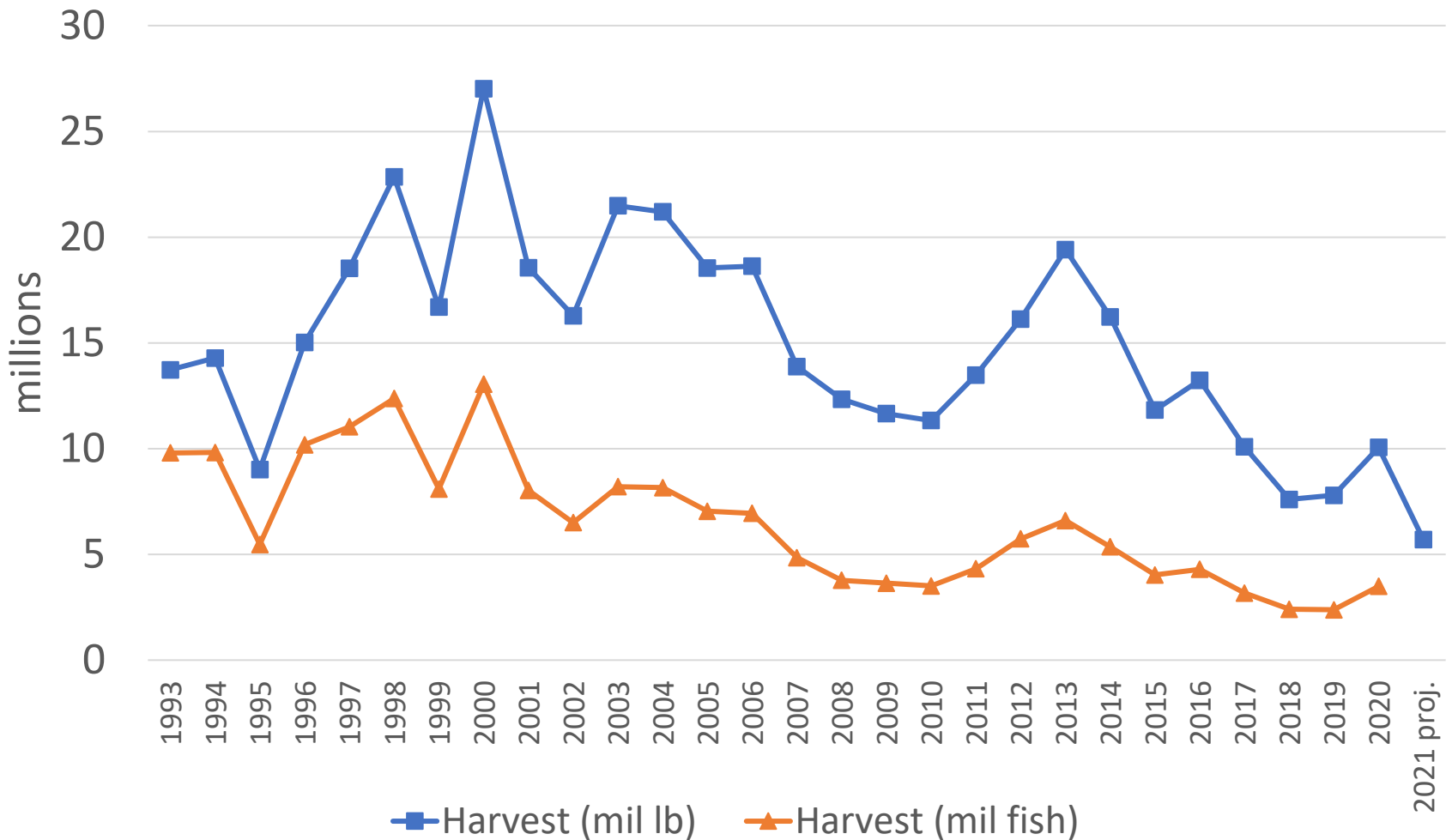
	Min. Size (in)	Bag Limit	Season
MA	17	5	May 23-October 9
RI	19	6	May 3-December 31
RI SHORE	19	4 <sup>a</sup>	
	17	2 <sup>a</sup>	
CT	19	4	May 4- September 30
CT SHORE SITES	17		
NY	19		
NJ	18	3	<b>2019:</b> May 24-September 21 <b>2020-2021:</b> May 22-September 19
NJ SHORE SITE	16	2	
NJ DE BAY	17	3	
DE, MD, PRFC, VA	16.5	4	January 1- December 31
NC <sup>b</sup>	15	4	<b>2019:</b> January 1- September 3 <b>2020:</b> August 16-September 30 <b>2021:</b> September 1-14

<sup>a</sup> Combined limit of 6 fish, no more than 2 at 17 inches

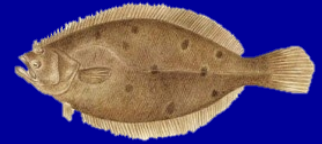
<sup>b</sup> Season restrictions in each year to reduce mortality on southern flounder



# Harvest 1993-2021 (proj.)



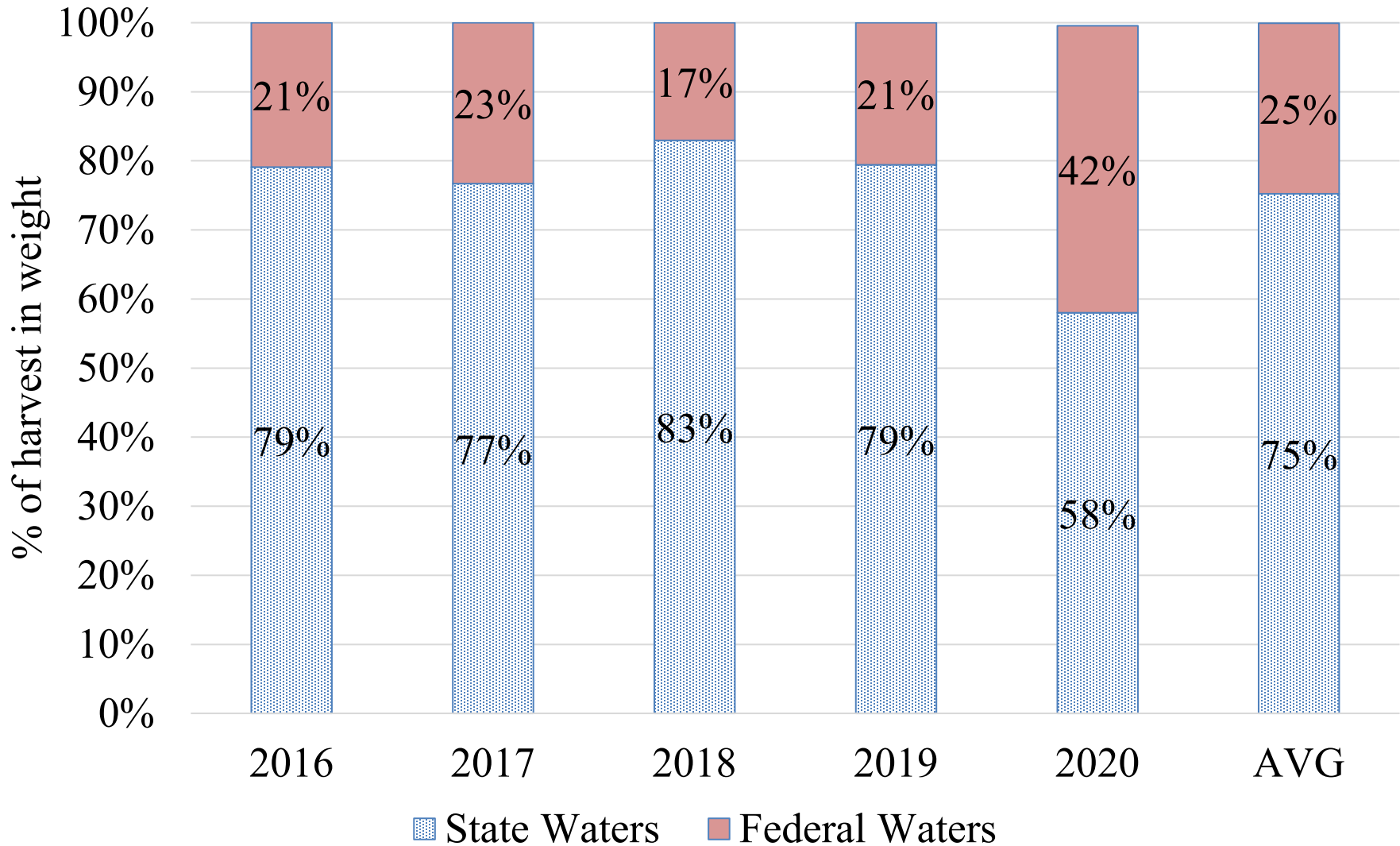
# RHL Performance



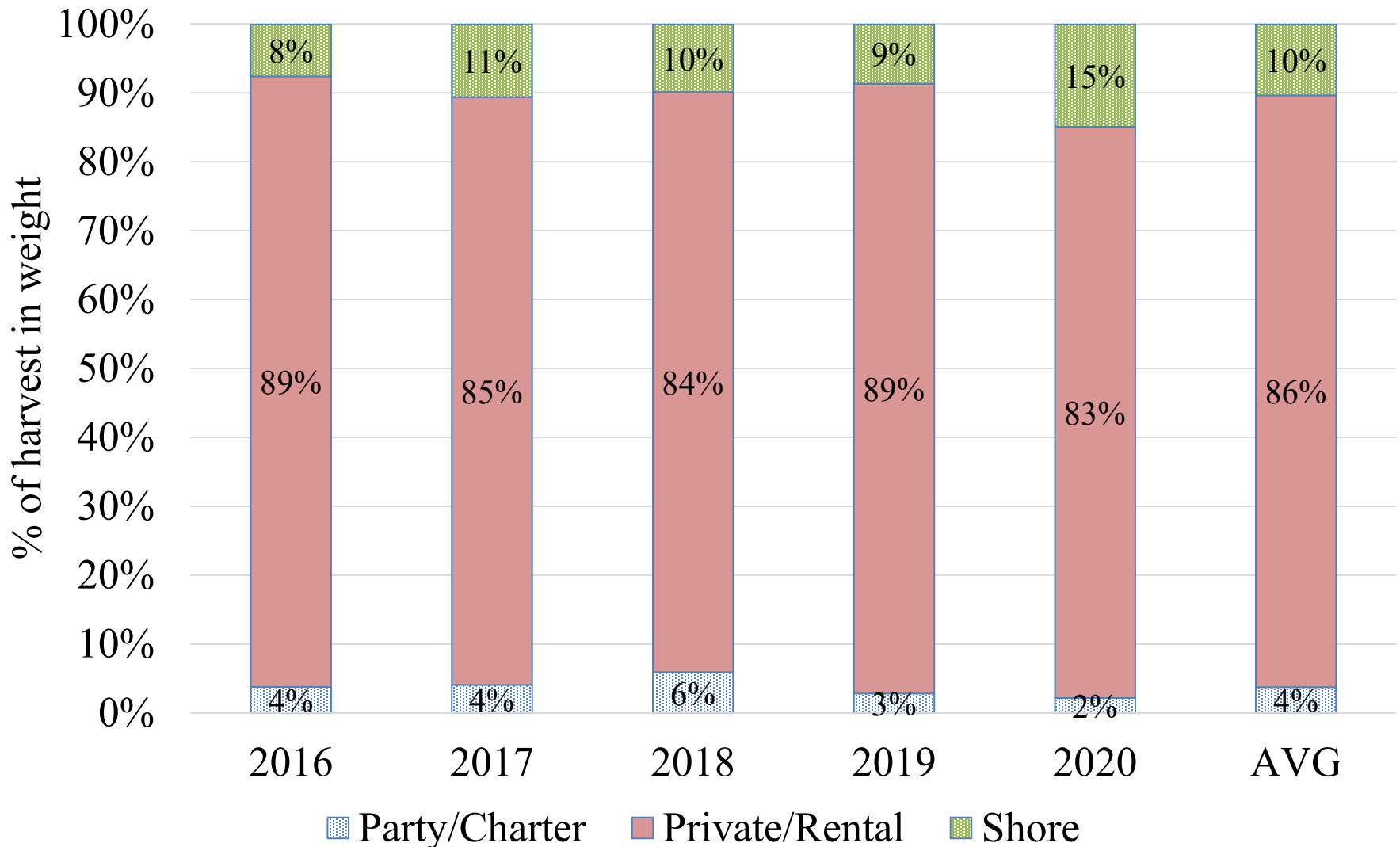
Year	Rec. Harvest <b>OLD MRIP</b> (mil lb)	Rec. Harvest <b>NEW MRIP</b> (mil lb)	RHL (mil lb)	Rec. % Over/ Under*
<b>2016</b>	6.18	13.24	5.42	<b>+14%</b>
<b>2017</b>	3.19	10.06	3.77	-15%
<b>2018</b>	3.35	7.60	4.42	-24%
<b>2019</b>	--	7.80	7.69	<b>+1%</b>
<b>2020</b>	--	10.06	7.69	<b>+31%</b>
<b>2021</b>	--	--	8.32	--
<b>5-yr Avg.</b>				<b>-2%</b>

\*RHL comparison uses old MRIP through 2018; new MRIP 2019-2020.

# State vs. Federal Waters Harvest (lb)



# Harvest (lb) by mode



# Rec. Accountability Measures

- 1. If the stock is overfished, under a rebuilding plan, or stock status is unknown:** Exact overage amount must be paid back as soon as possible.
- 2. If biomass is above the threshold, but below the target, and the stock is not under a rebuilding plan:**
  - **If only the ACL exceeded:** Adjust bag/size/season, taking into account performance of the measures and conditions that precipitated the overage.
  - **If the ABC is also exceeded:** Single year deduction will be made as a payback, scaled based on biomass, where  $\text{payback} = (\text{overage amount}) * (B_{msy} - B) / \frac{1}{2} B_{msy}$ .
- 3. If biomass is above the target:** Adjustments to bag/size/season will be made, taking into account the performance of the measures and conditions that precipitated the overage.

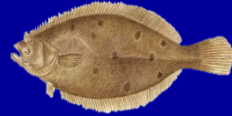
# ACL Evaluation



- Dead discard information not available for 2020
- 2017-2019 evaluation below; 2017-2018 based on old MRIP

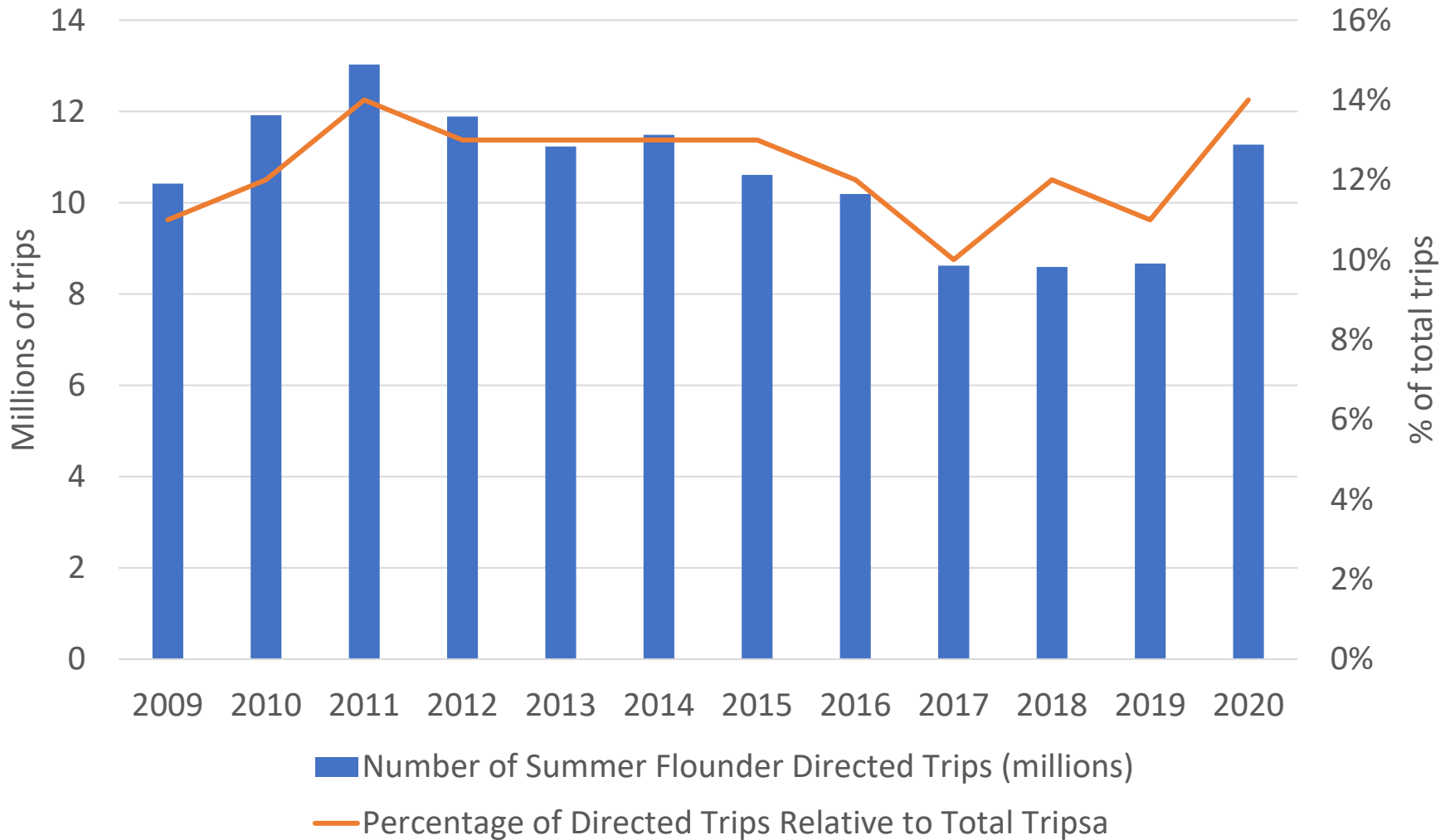
	<b>Rec. Harvest (mil lb)</b>	<b>Rec. Dead Discards (mil lb)</b>	<b>Dead Rec. Catch (mil lb)</b>	<b>Rec. ACL (mil lb)</b>	<b>% Over/ Under ACL</b>
<b>2017 (old MRIP)</b>	3.19	0.94	4.13	4.72	-13%
<b>2018 (old MRIP)</b>	3.35	0.97	4.32	5.53	-22%
<b>2019 (new MRIP)</b>	7.80	3.04	10.84	11.51	-6%
<b>2020 (new MRIP)</b>	10.06	Not available	Not available	11.51	Not available

# 2021 Harvest Projections



- 2021 wave 1-4 data (through August) used to project harvest in pounds for full year
- Typically, prior year harvest proportions by wave used to project current year
  - Given imputation for 2020 estimates, MC used **2019-2020** average proportion of harvest by wave, and coastwide projections instead of summed state projections
- Total 2021 projected harvest = **5.71 mil lb**

# Directed Effort Trends





# Year Class Considerations



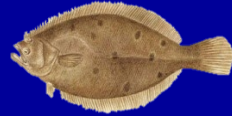
- Below average summer flounder recruitment 2011-2017
- **2018 recruitment above average**
  - Largest year class since 2009
  - Will be age 4 in 2022 (variable in size, generally 15-23 in)
- **2019 recruitment below average**

# Staff Recommendation: Expected 2022 Harvest and Percent Liberalization

- Variation in harvest despite nearly constant measures, 2018-2021
- Unusually low harvest projection for 2021
- Council staff recommended using average 2018-2021 (proj.) harvest as baseline for adjustment to measures

Year	Harvest estimate or projection (mil lb)
2018	7.60
2019	7.80
2020	10.06
2021 (projected, using coastwide wave 1-4 proportion from 2019-2020)	5.71
Average	<b>7.79</b>
Percent liberalization from average harvest to 10.36 mil lb RHL	<b>33%</b>

# 2022 Staff Recommendation



- Council staff recommended consideration of size limit decreases at state/regional level
  - Stakeholder concerns with high minimum size limits (e.g., low retention rates, high regulatory discards, and potential influence on sex ratio/reproductive potential of stock)

# Staff Recommendation: Non-Preferred Coastwide Measures



- Currently 19", 4 fish, May 15-September 15
- Limited ability to analyze coastwide measures due to years of CE
- Staff recommended dropping minimum size to 18" from 19"
  - Analysis indicates approximately 33% increase in harvest in numbers; 25% increase in weight

# Staff Recommendation: Precautionary Default Measures



- *Status quo* precautionary default measures of **2 fish, 20 inches, July 1-August 31**
- Sufficiently restrictive in all states

# Monitoring Committee Recommendations



- Agreed with regional conservation equivalency using same regions as 2021

# Monitoring Committee Recommendations



- Supported 2021 harvest projections, but concerned with very low wave 1-4 estimates compared to recent years
  - Could indicate problems with availability in 2021, consistent with stakeholder feedback to MC members in some states

# Monitoring Committee Recommendations



- 2021 is unlikely to be appropriate proxy for 2022 harvest under status quo measures
- Large variation in harvest estimates 2018-2021 under similar measures
- Uncertainty regarding fishery effort and effects of above-average 2018 year class in 2022



# Monitoring Committee Recommendations



- Not comfortable with staff recommendation for 33% liberalization
- Prefer status quo measures for summer flounder given many uncertainties and concerns with 2021 data
- If Council and Board choose to liberalize, recommend max. increase of 16.5% (half of 33%)

# Monitoring Committee Recommendations



- Non-preferred coastwide measures
  - Prefer status quo: 19", 4 fish, May 15-September 15
  - If liberalizations desired: 18.5", 4 fish, May 15-September 15
    - Length frequency analysis using 2019 data indicates a 1/2" decrease results in an approximate 11% increase in harvest in weight; 14% in numbers of fish

# Monitoring Committee Recommendations



- Agree with staff recommendation for no changes to precautionary default measures of **2 fish, 20 inches, July 1-August 31**

# Advisory Panel Comments

- Several supported separate party/charter regulations
  - e.g., higher bag limit or small fish slot allowance
- 1 supported small fish slot allowance for all, e.g., one fish at 15-16 inches
- 1 NJ fisherman supported status quo measures early in the season, moving to slot limit later in season

# Advisory Panel Comments

- One expressed skepticism about low 2021 MRIP estimates given above average 2018 year class, and trend of increased harvest for scup and BSB
  - Concerned about variation in harvest under same measures
- Several agreed MRIP does not seem reliable (for 2021 and/or in general)

# Advisory Panel Comments

- 1 request that Council/Board explore minimum hook size requirement to reduce discard mortality
- 1 commercial advisor seeing more medium fish instead of jumbo this fall, in agreement with high recruitment a few years back

# Advisory Panel Comments

- 3 advisors supported continuing conservation equivalency in 2022
  - Measures need to be tailored by region given differences in availability along coast
- 2 commercial advisors concerned with accountability in recreational fishery; supported status quo rec. measures

# Email/Phone Comments (AP and general public)

- 2 comments in support of hook size regulations
- 1 request for total length limit with mandatory retention
- 1 supported status quo, “fluke may be in trouble”
- 3 concerned with rec measures focusing mortality on large breeding females



# Decision Points

- Coastwide measures or CE
- If CE:
  - Non-preferred coastwide measures
    - MC recommends status quo: 19 inches, 4 fish, May 15-Sept. 15
  - Precautionary default measures
    - MC recommends status quo: 20 inches, 2 fish, July 1-Aug 31
  - Guidance on degree of change in measures allowed by states/regions for 2022
    - MC recommends status quo; or if Council/Board want to liberalize, max. 16.5%

# Addendum XXXII: Summer Flounder and Black Sea Bass Recreational Measure Setting Process Timeline



- **December:** Board/Council decide whether to specify coastwide measures to achieve the coastwide RHL or conservation equivalent management measures.
- **January:** TC meets to recommend guidelines for the states to use in developing regional proposals
- **January-February:** States collaborate to develop regional proposals.
- **January Commission Meeting:** Board approves a methodology for the states to use in developing regional proposals
- **February:** TC reviews proposals.
- **February/March SFSBSB Board Meeting:** Board reviews state proposals, TC recommendations, and establishes final measures.
- **March:** Commission sends a letter to the Regional Administrator certifying the Board-approved measures, in combination, will achieve but not exceed the RHL.