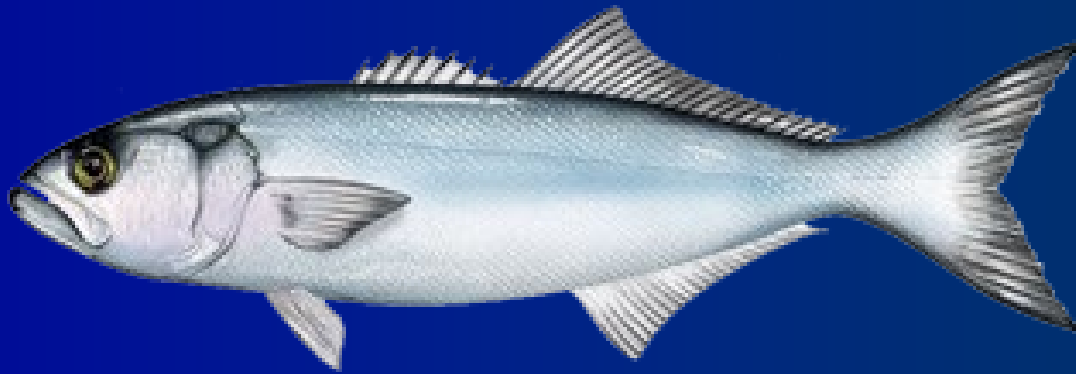




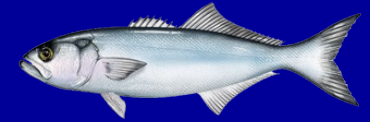
Atlantic Bluefish



Scientific and Statistical
Committee Meeting

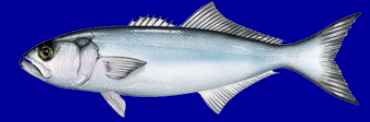
July 23, 2021

Outline



- Objectives
- Management overview
- Stock Status
 - Management track assessment update
- Review recent fishery performance and regulations
- AP Fishery Performance Report
- Projections
- Staff Recommendation

Meeting Objective



- Recommend ABCs for 2022-2023
 - Recent fishery performance
 - Management track assessment update
 - On the water observations
 - Factors influencing recent catch and landings

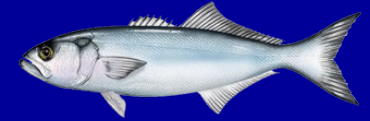
Management Overview



- Cooperatively managed by:
 - Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council)
 - Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC)
 - National Marine Fisheries Service (federal implementation and enforcement)



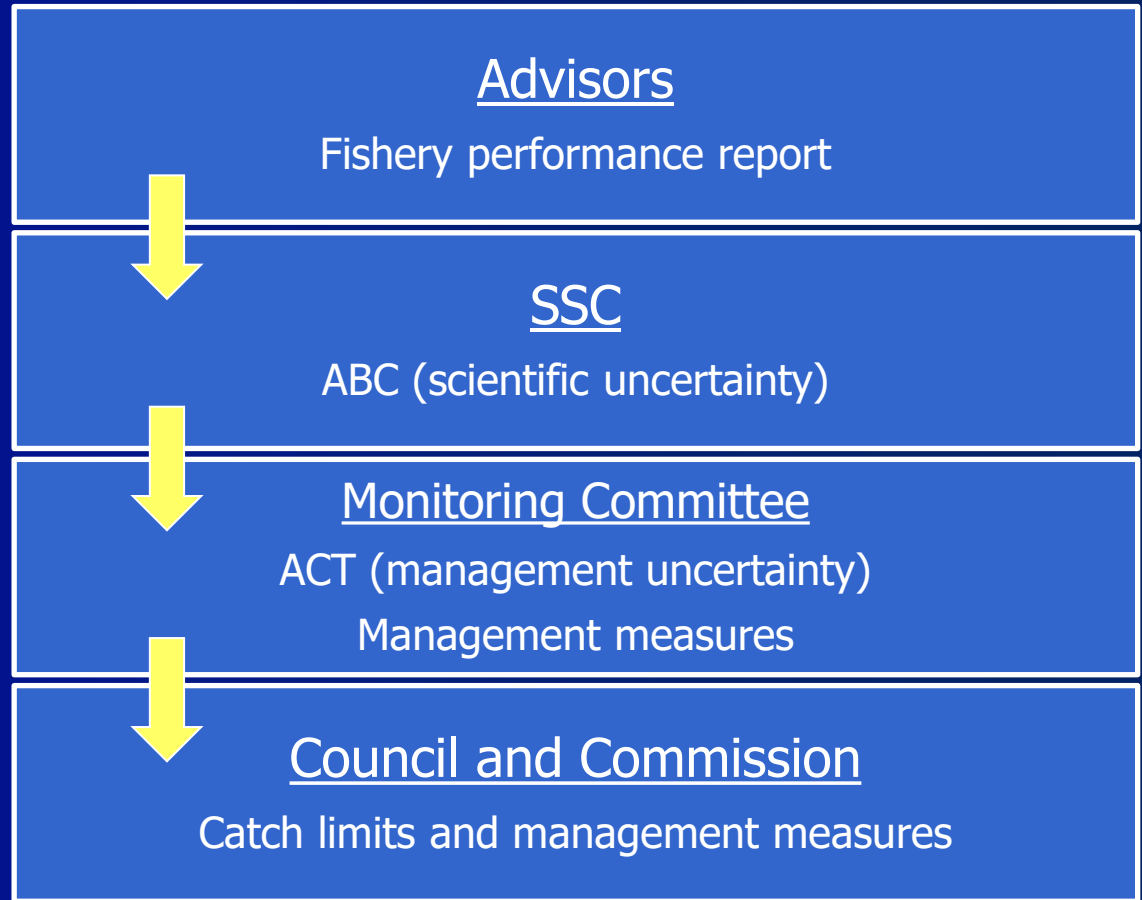
Specifications Process



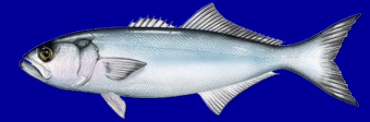
Bluefish Specifications

2022

2023

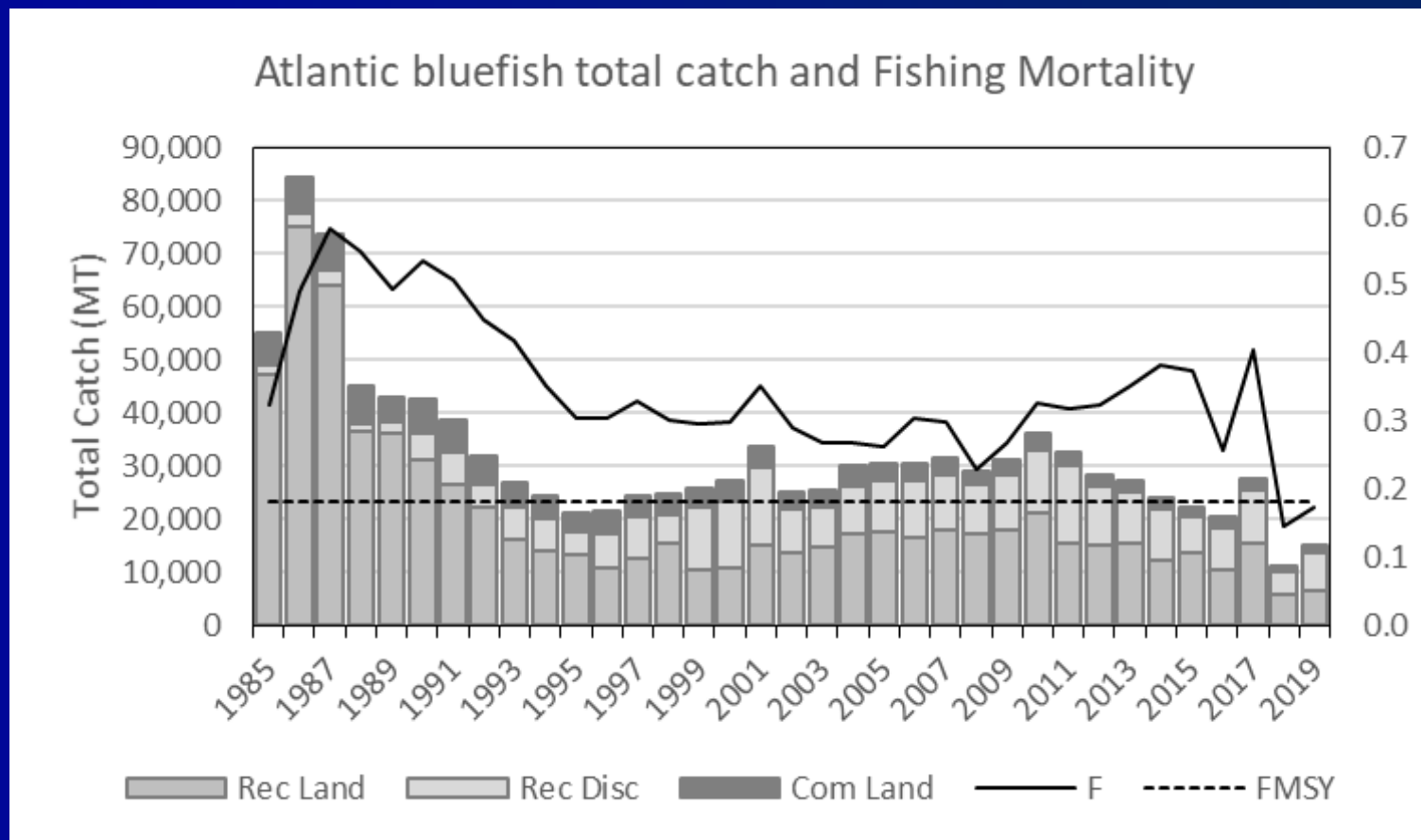


Stock Status



- Last operational assessment: July 2021
- Stock is overfished
- Overfishing is not occurring
- Research track assessment in 2022
 - Will inform the 2024-2025 specifications package

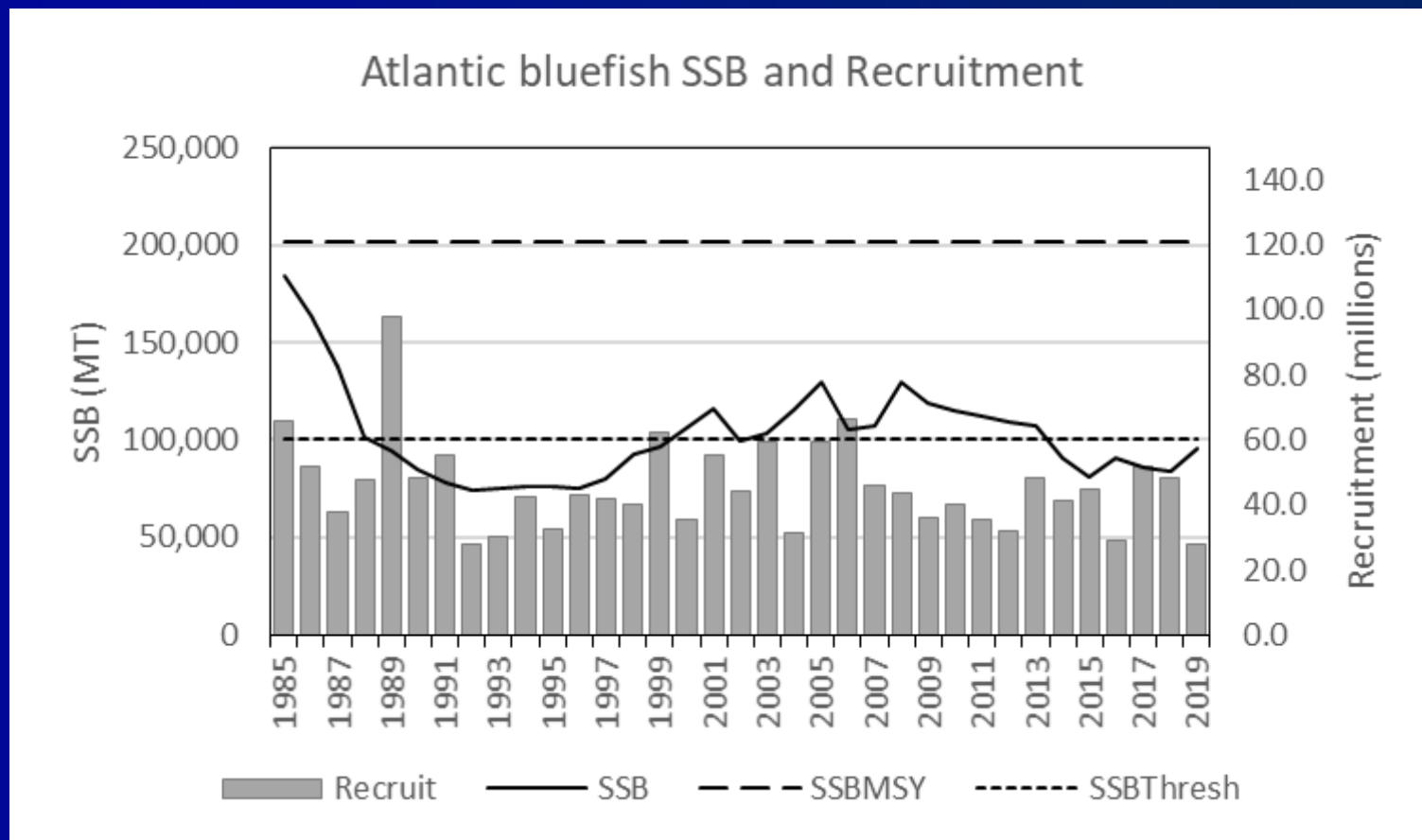
Fishing Mortality – 2021 Management Track Assessment



Overfishing not occurring

(2019 $F = 0.172$; below $F_{MSY\ proxy} = F_{35\%SPR} = 0.181$)

Biomass – 2021 Management Track Assessment



Overfished

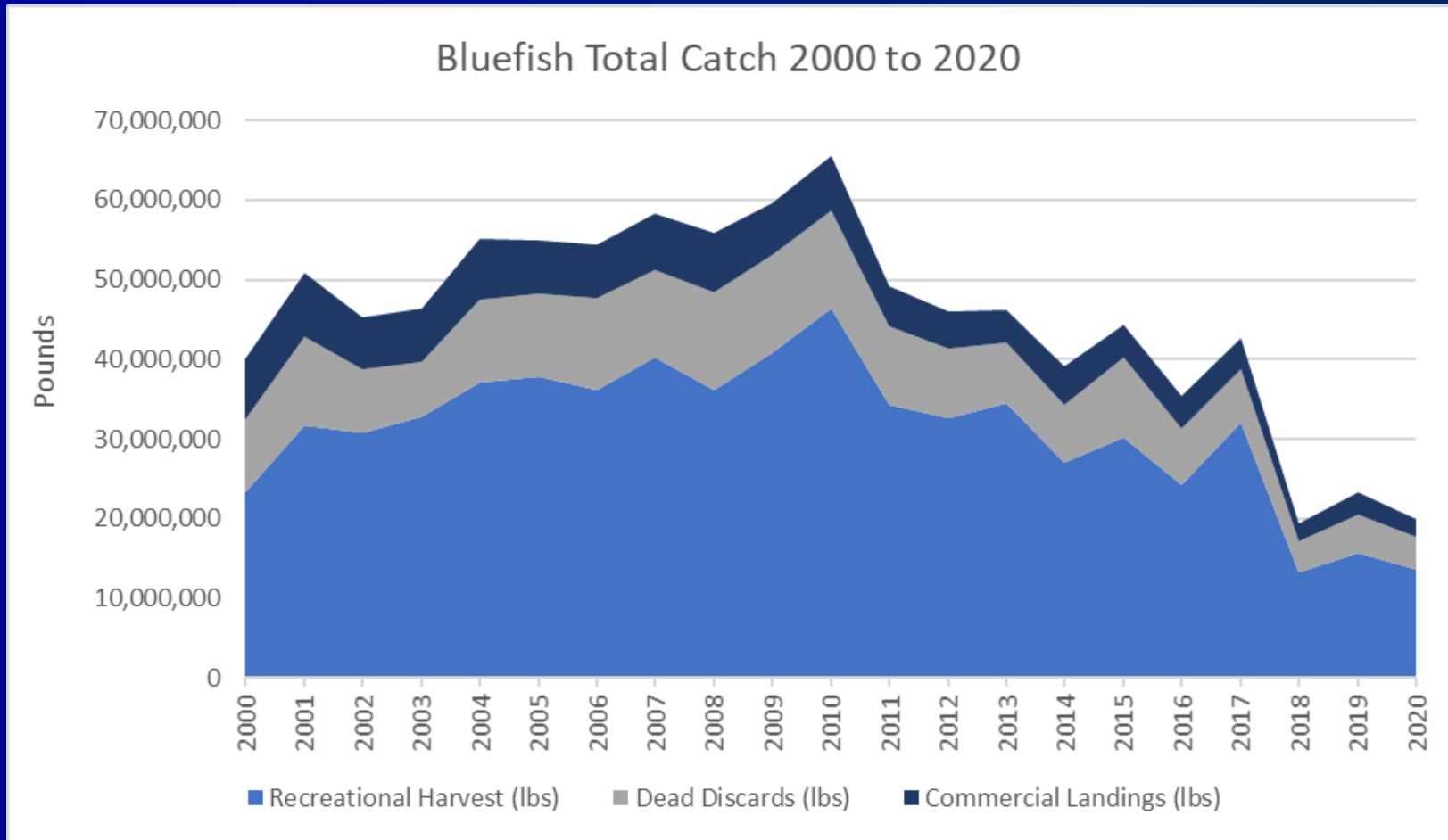
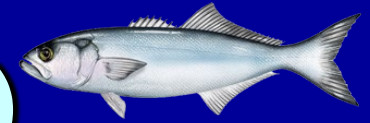
2019 SSB (95,742 mt) \approx 5% below SSB_{Threshold} (100,865 mt)

Management Measures



Management Measures	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
TAC/ABC	19.45	20.64	21.81	21.81	16.28	16.28
TAL	16.46	18.19	18.82	19.33	12.25	12.25
Comm. Quota	4.88	8.54	7.24	7.71	2.77	2.77
Comm. Landings	4.1	3.64	2.20	2.78	2.16	
Rec. Harvest Limit	11.58	9.65	11.58	11.62	9.48	8.34
Rec. Landings, Old MRIP	9.54	9.52	3.64	N/A	N/A	N/A
Rec. Landings, New MRIP	24.16	32.07	13.27	15.56	13.58	
Rec. Possession Limit (# fish)	15	15	15	15	3: Private 5: For-Hire	3: Private 5: For-Hire
Total Landings	13.64	13.16	5.84	18.34	15.74	
Overage/Underage	-2.82	-5.03	-12.98	N/A*	3.49	
Total Catch	16.09	15.65	6.96	23.50	19.93	
Overage/Underage	-3.36	-4.99	-14.85	N/A*	3.65	

Catch (landings and discards)



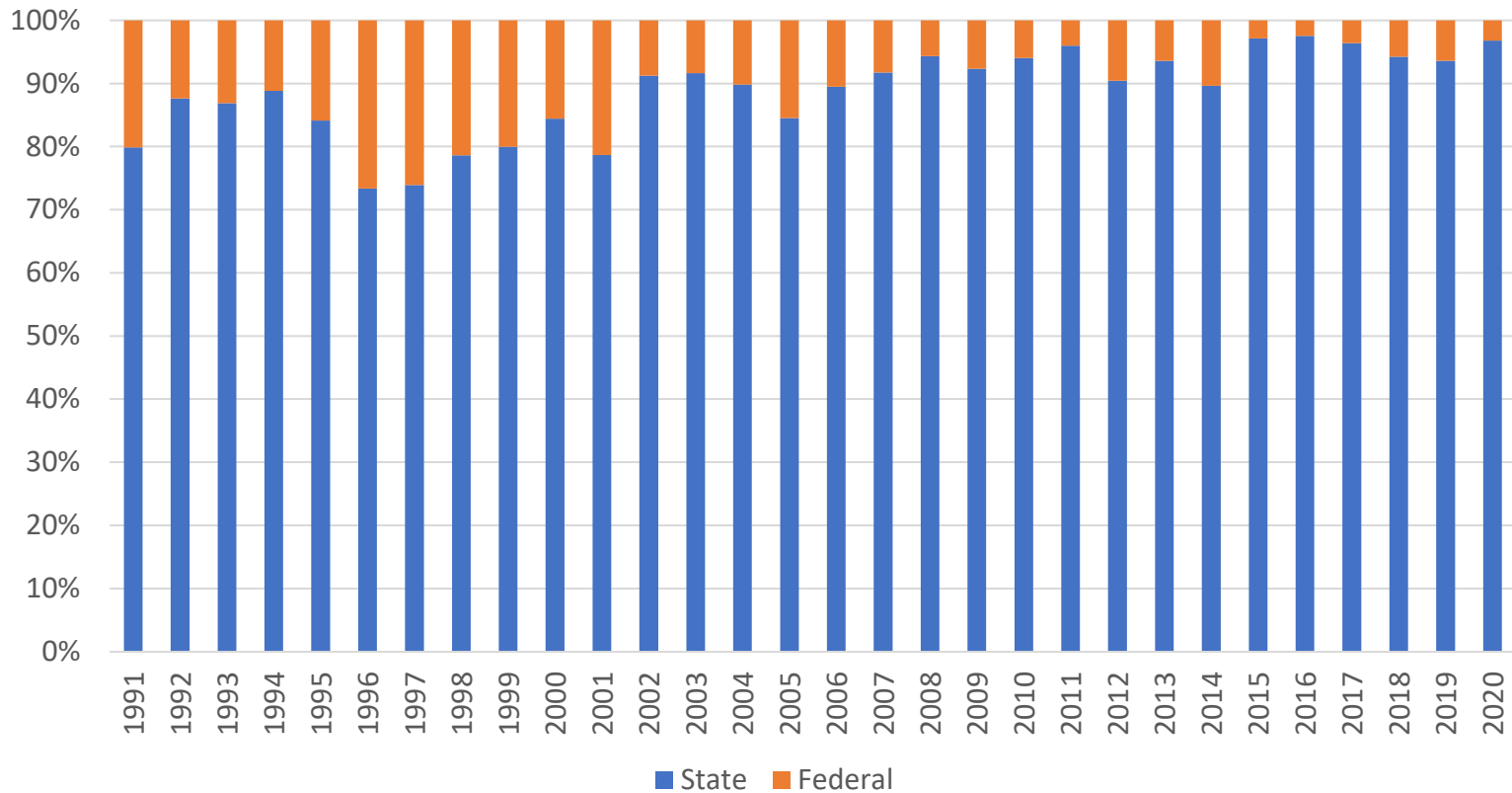
2020 Rec Landings by State

State	Harvest			Catch	Released Alive	Dead Discards
	Pounds	Number	Average Weight ¹ (pounds)	Number	Number	Number
ME	0	0	0	0	0	-
NH	1,800	376	4.8	376	0	-
MA	553,242	162,128	3.4	906,269	744,141	111,621
RI	508,227	220,556	2.3	1,089,449	868,893	130,334
CT	594,546	298,383	2.0	1,407,730	1,109,347	166,402
NY	1,478,719	885,517	1.7	3,701,474	2,815,957	422,394
NJ	1,808,548	595,103	3.0	3,372,216	2,777,113	416,567
DE	94,901	53,751	1.8	219,288	165,537	24,831
MD	214,991	173,846	1.2	494,214	320,368	48,055
VA	305,092	395,751	0.8	1,172,803	777,052	116,558
NC	2,124,224	2,108,296	1.0	8,666,047	6,557,751	983,663
SC	154,420	289,339	0.5	2,187,307	1,897,968	284,695
GA	9,902	10,795	0.9	187,272	176,477	26,472
FL	5,732,605	4,142,380	1.4	7,277,380	3,135,000	470,250
Total	13,581,217	9,336,221	-	30,681,825	21,345,604	3,201,841

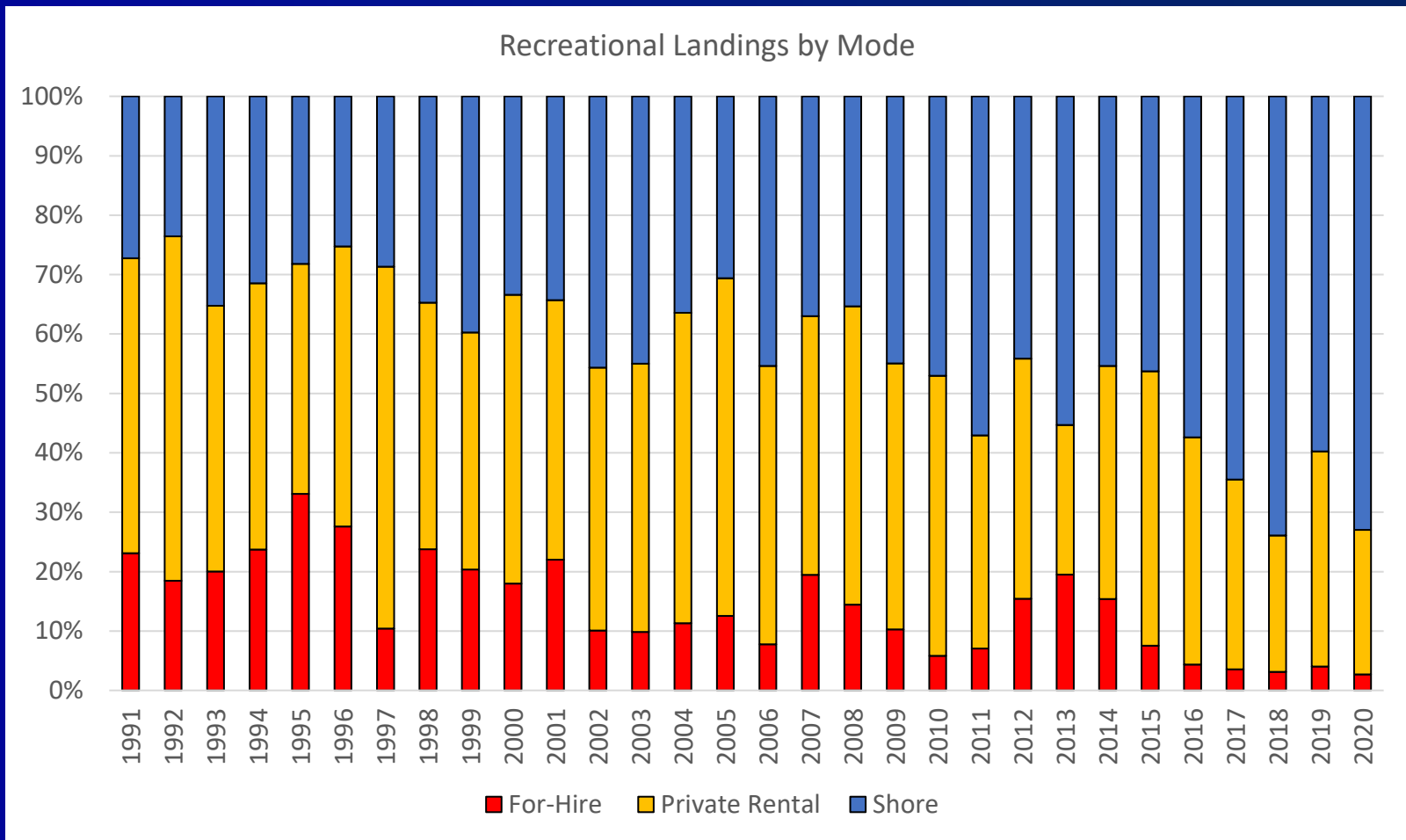
Recreational Fishery



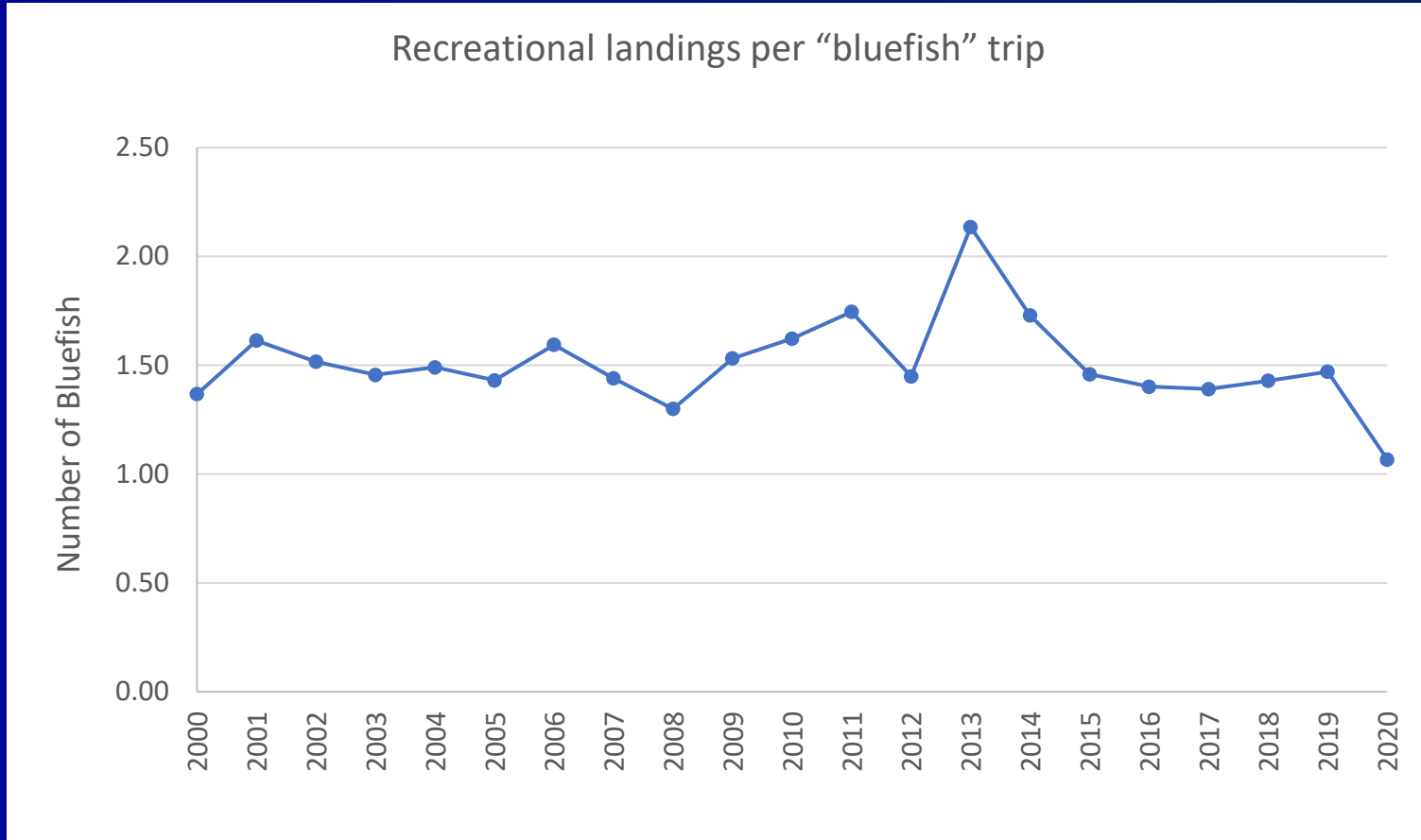
State vs. Federal Landings, 1991-2020



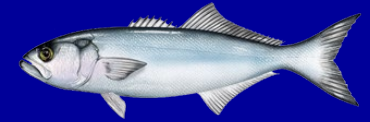
Recreational Fishery



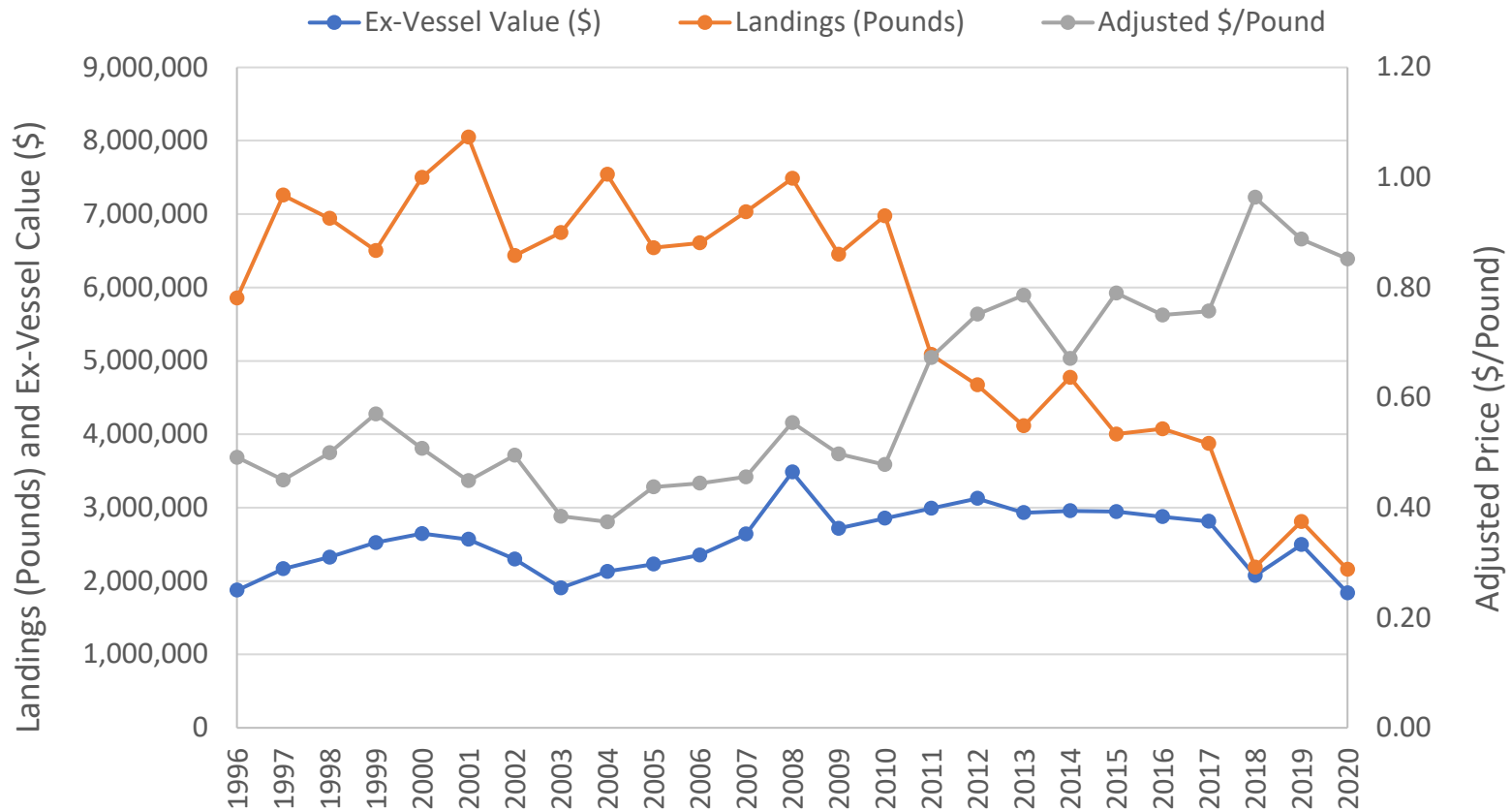
Recreational Fishery



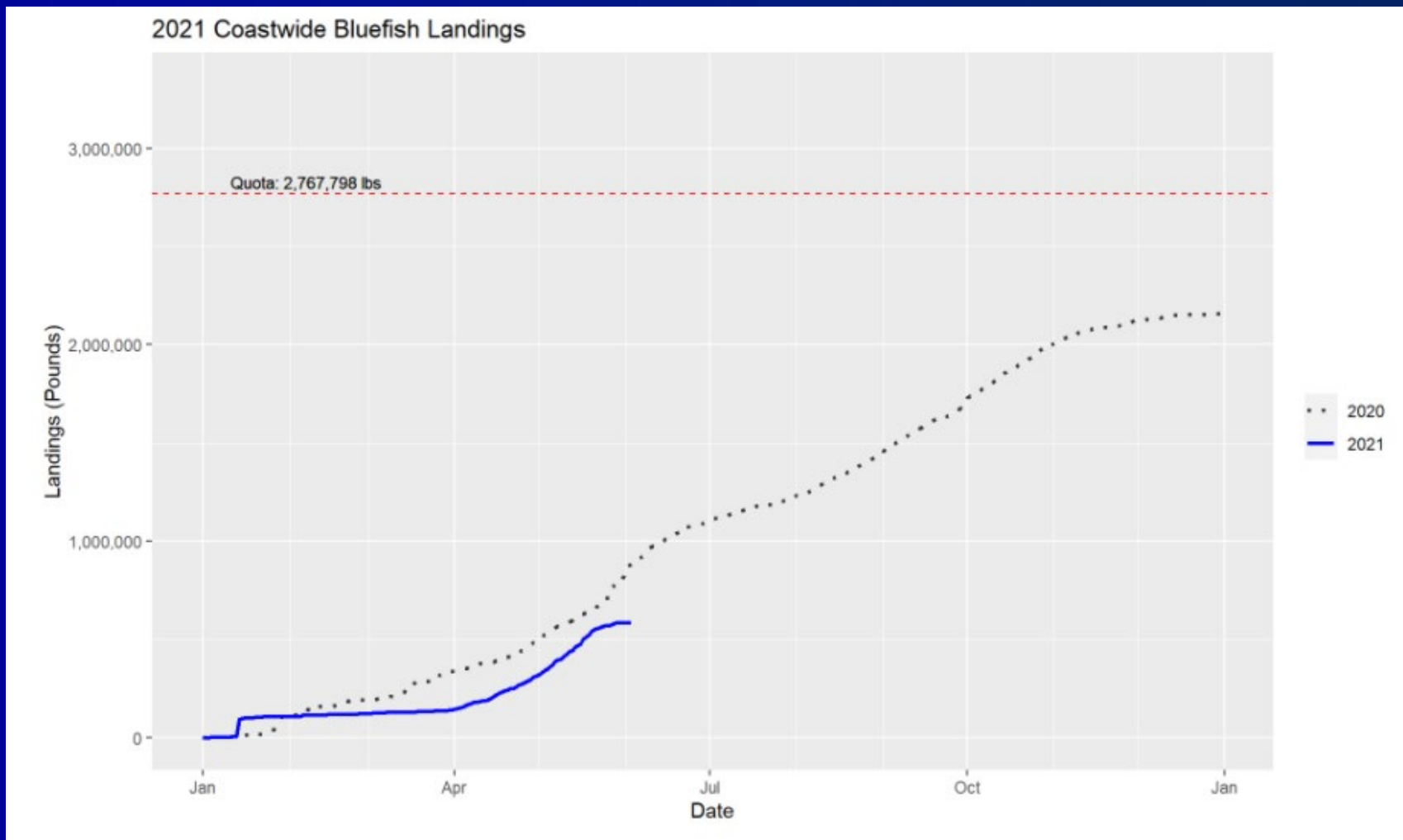
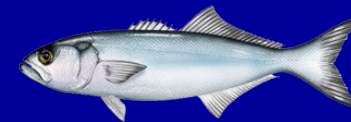
Commercial Fishery



Bluefish Landings, Value and Price

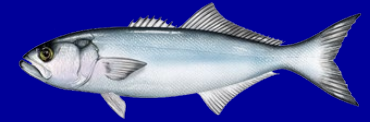


Commercial Fishery

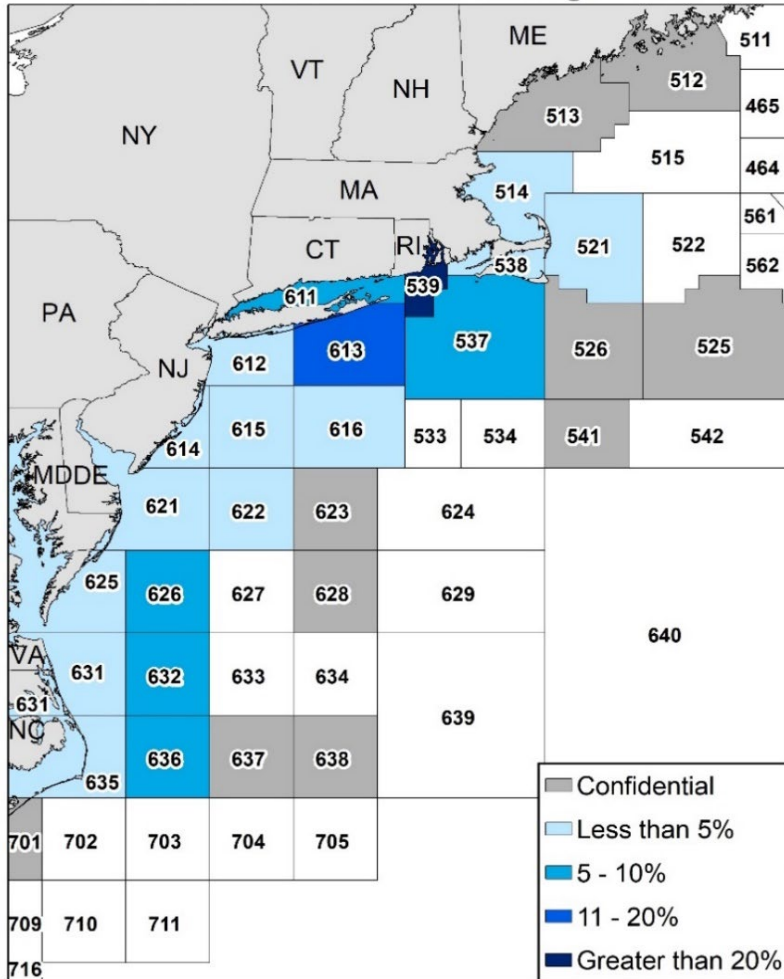


June 9, 2021

Commercial Fishery



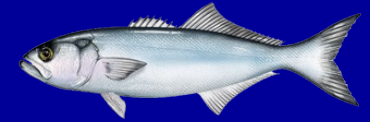
2020 Commercial Bluefish Landings - VTRs



Landings by Gear - Dealer Data 2020

- Gillnet (52%)
- Unknown (24%)
- Otter trawl, bottom fish (15%)
- Handline (5%)
- Other (4%)

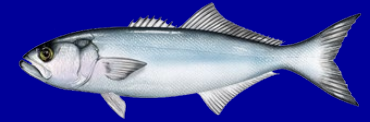
Commercial Fishery



Top Commercial Bluefish Ports

Port	Pounds	% of total commercial bluefish landings	# vessels
Wanchese, NC	368,942	17%	16
Hatteras, NC	269,655	12%	<10
Point Judith, RI	216,060	10%	99
Montauk, NY	151,200	7%	74
Little Compton, RI	105,941	5%	<10

Federal permits/activity



- 2020 Federally Permitted Statistics
 - 2,351 (2,442) commercial vessels
 - 863 (851) p/c vessels
 - 307 (389) dealers

 - 423 (483) commercial vessels landed bluefish
 - 258 (278) p/c vessels landed bluefish (VTR)
 - 107 (146) dealers purchased bluefish

* Parentheses indicate numbers from 2019

Advisory Panel Discussion



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

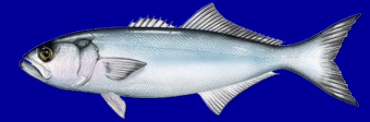
AP Fishery Performance Report



Recreational Fishery Comments

- Despite a decrease in MRIP estimates, AP members indicated abundance increased coastwide.
 - 2021 season seems to be following a similar pattern
- Reports of larger bluefish further offshore
- Phenomenal bluefish year in NY, NJ, and MA – tied to an abundance of bait.
- In NC, an abundance of small and medium fish are available – typically keep smaller fish (i.e., bait).
- 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)
- In NC, commercial landings are down because inlets are often not passable.
- If current trends continue, the commercial quota will be too low, especially given the reduction in commercial allocation.
- 2019 and 2020 were difficult years for FL fishermen due to a lot of bad weather early in the season

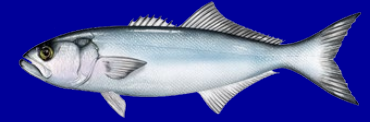
AP Fishery Performance Report



Market/Economic Comments

- Prices remain strong in the NY market (2-4 pounders often bring \$1.40/lb)
- In FL, when the weather is good, prices vary from \$1.35 (September 2020) to \$2.01 (March 2021)
- COVID-19 has greatly impacted the for-hire and commercial sectors
- Bluefish demand has remained high

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

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.

Bluefish Unknowns/Uncertainties

- Discard estimates
 - MRIP-estimated (GARFO) vs. NEFSC
 - 2019: MRIP = 4.88 M lbs, NEFSC = 15.41 M lbs
 - 2020: MRIP = 4.19 M lbs, no NEFSC estimate
- Recreational ACT overage of 3.65 M lbs
- 2020 recreational harvest estimates
 - 3 and 5-fish bag limit implemented in mid-2020
 - COVID-19: Imputations use 2018/2019 data
- Research Track Assessment in 2022 to inform 2024-2025 specifications

Council-Preferred Rebuilding Projections

- Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment
 - 4-year Constant Harvest
 - 5-year P* Risk Policy
 - 7-year Constant F

7-year F rebuild projection 2022-2028
 Total Catch, Fishing Mortality (F) and Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) in metric tons

Year	Total Catch	F	SSB
2020	9,041	0.093	112,892
2021	7,385	0.068	135,081
2022	18,463	0.154	146,103
2023	19,667	0.154	155,671
2024	21,113	0.154	161,005
2025	21,782	0.154	169,690
2026	23,081	0.154	178,163
2027	24,570	0.154	192,196
2028	25,646	0.154	202,299

Staff ABC Recommendation



- For 2022-2023, staff recommends an acceptable biological catch (ABC) of 19.44 million pounds (8,816 mt) – Option 2.
 - Option 2 treats the total catch value from the 7-year constant fishing mortality rebuilding plan as an OFL proxy.
 - Accounts for the uncertainties present in the fishery.

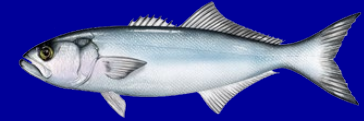
Recommended ABCs

	2021		2022-2023 (Option 2)	
	Mil lb.	mt	Mil lb.	mt
OFL	37.98	17,228	40.70	18,463
ABC	16.28	7,385	19.44	8,816

Anticipated Management Measures Under Options 1 and 2

Management Measure	Option 1		Option 2		Basis
	2022-2023		2022-2023		
	mil lb.	mt	mil lb.	mt	
Overfishing Limit (OFL)	40.70	18,463	40.70	18,463	Stock assessment projections
ABC	40.70	18,463	19.44	8,816	Derived by SSC; Follows the rebuilding plan through NEFSC projections
ACL	40.70	18,463	19.44	8,816	Defined in FMP as equal to ABC
Commercial ACL	5.70	2,585	2.72	1,234	ABC x 14%
Commercial Management Uncertainty	0	0	0	0	Derived by the Monitoring Committee
Commercial ACT	5.70	2,585	2.72	1,234	(ACL – Management Uncertainty) x 14%
Recreational ACL	35.01	15,878	16.71	7,582	ABC x 86%
Recreational Management Uncertainty	0	0	0	0	Derived by the Monitoring Committee
Recreational ACT	35.01	15,878	16.71	7,582	(ACL – Management Uncertainty) x 86%
Recreational AMs	3.65	1,656	3.65	1,656	2020 ABC overage
Commercial Discards	0	0	0	0	Value used in assessment
Recreational Discards	4.19	1,901	4.19	1,901	2020 GARFO-estimated (MRIP) discards
Commercial TAL	5.70	2,585	2.72	1,234	Commercial ACT - commercial discards
Recreational TAL	27.16	12,321	8.87	4,024	Recreational ACT - recreational discards
Combined TAL	32.86	14,906	11.59	5,259	Commercial TAL + Recreational TAL
Transfer	0	0	0	0	No transfer while overfished or overfishing
Expected Recreational Landings	13.58	6,160	13.58	6,160	2020 Recreational Landings, but remains TBD in December
Commercial Quota	5.70	2,585	2.72	1,234	Commercial TAL +/- transfer
RHL	27.16	12,321	8.87	4,024	Recreational TAL +/- transfer

Bluefish Amendment Preferred Alternatives



- Proposed FMP Goals and Objectives
- Sector Allocations
 - From: 83% Rec,
17% Comm
 - To: 86% Rec,
14% Comm
- Commercial Allocations to the States

State	Previous Allocations Under Amendment 1	Revised Allocations to be Phased in Over 7 Years
Maine	0.67%	0.11%
New Hampshire	0.41%	0.22%
Massachusetts	6.72%	10.12%
Rhode Island	6.81%	9.61%
Connecticut	1.27%	1.09%
New York	10.39%	19.76%
New Jersey	14.82%	13.85%
Delaware	1.88%	0.49%
Maryland	3.00%	1.92%
Virginia	11.88%	5.87%
North Carolina	32.06%	32.03%
South Carolina	0.04%	0.10%
Georgia	0.01%	0.10%
Florida	10.06%	4.78%

Bluefish Amendment Preferred Alternatives



- Rebuilding Plan: 7-year Constant Fishing Mortality
- Sector Transfers:
 - Bi-directional instead of just recreational to commercial
 - Transfer cap = 10% of ABC
- Management Uncertainty
 - Post-sector split
- *De minimis*
 - Status quo

