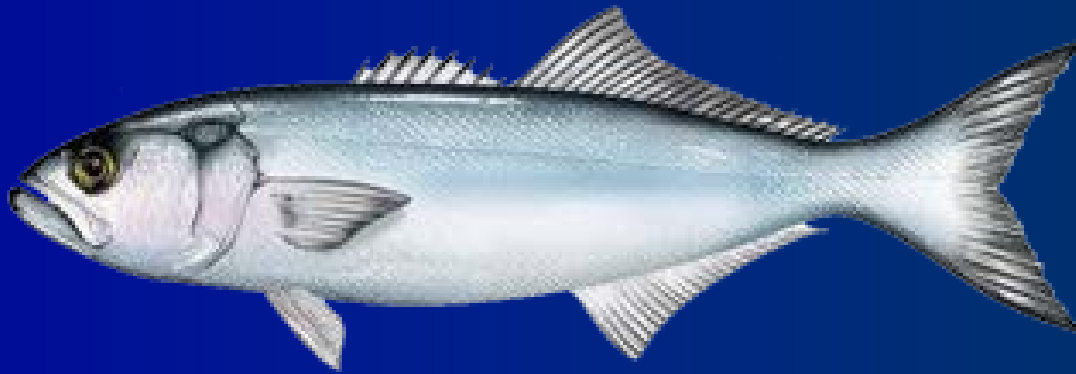




Atlantic Bluefish



Advisory Panel Meeting

July 28, 2021

Outline



- Objectives
- Management overview
- Stock Status
 - Management track assessment update
- Review recent fishery performance and regulations
- AP Fishery Performance Report
- Projections
- Staff and SSC Recommendations
- Monitoring Committee Action

Meeting Objective



- Welcome new AP members
- Review the AP, SSC, and MC recommend management measures for 2022-2023
 - Recent fishery performance
 - Management track assessment update
 - On the water observations
 - Factors influencing recent catch and landings

Purpose of Advisory Panels (APs)

- The AP process is designed to assure, to the greatest extent practicable, that all aspects of a fishery are considered in developing management plans, amendments, specifications, and other management measures.
- APs advise the Council on current fishery issues and trends including socioeconomic implications and effects of proposed management measures.
- APs provide input on topics including, but not limited to:
 - the capacity of commercial and recreational fishermen and processors to harvest and process each species under the Council's management
 - the social and economic effects of Council management measures
 - potential conflicts between user groups
 - potential enforcement problems specific to a particular fishery

AP Size (2018 Appointments)

AP	Number of Members
Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass	26
Bluefish	16
Tilefish	13
Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish	21
Surfclam and Ocean Quahog	10
Dogfish	16
River Herring and Shad	18
Ecosystem and Ocean Planning	21

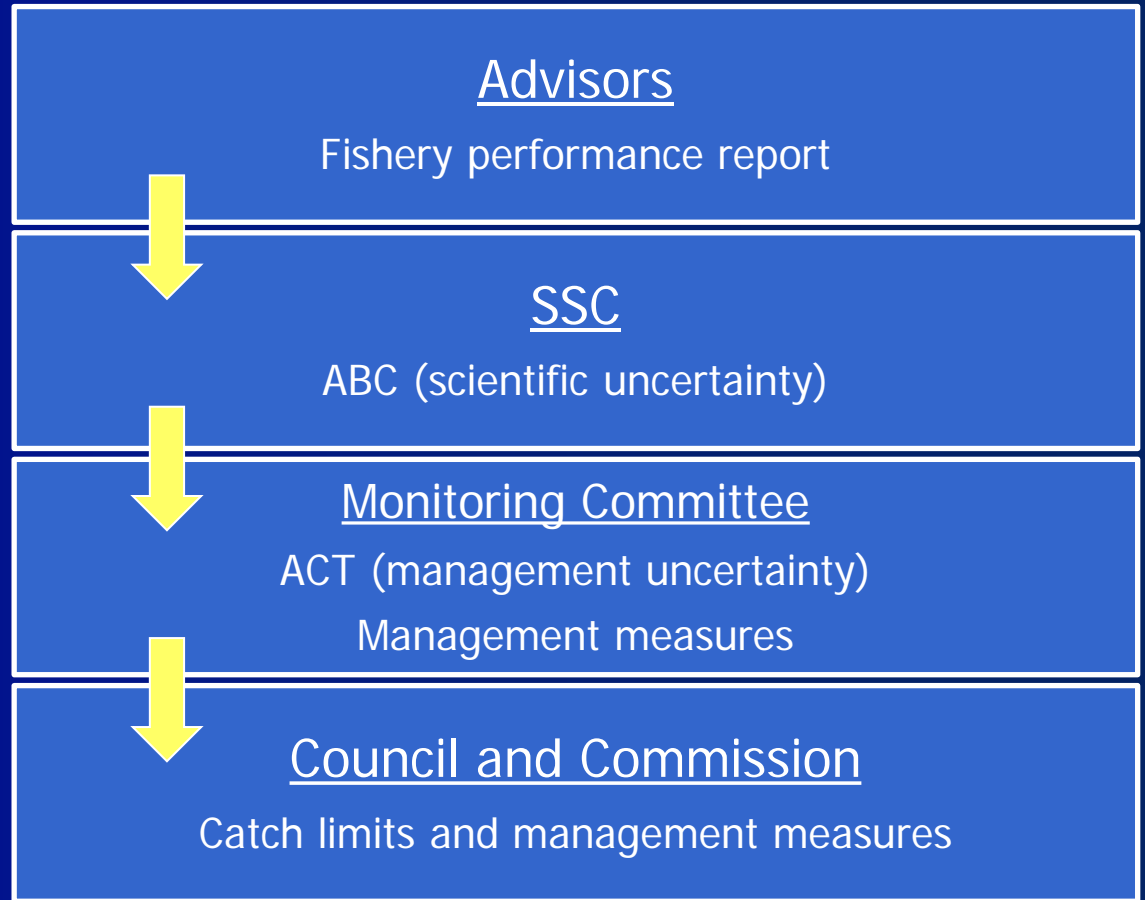
Management Overview



- 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

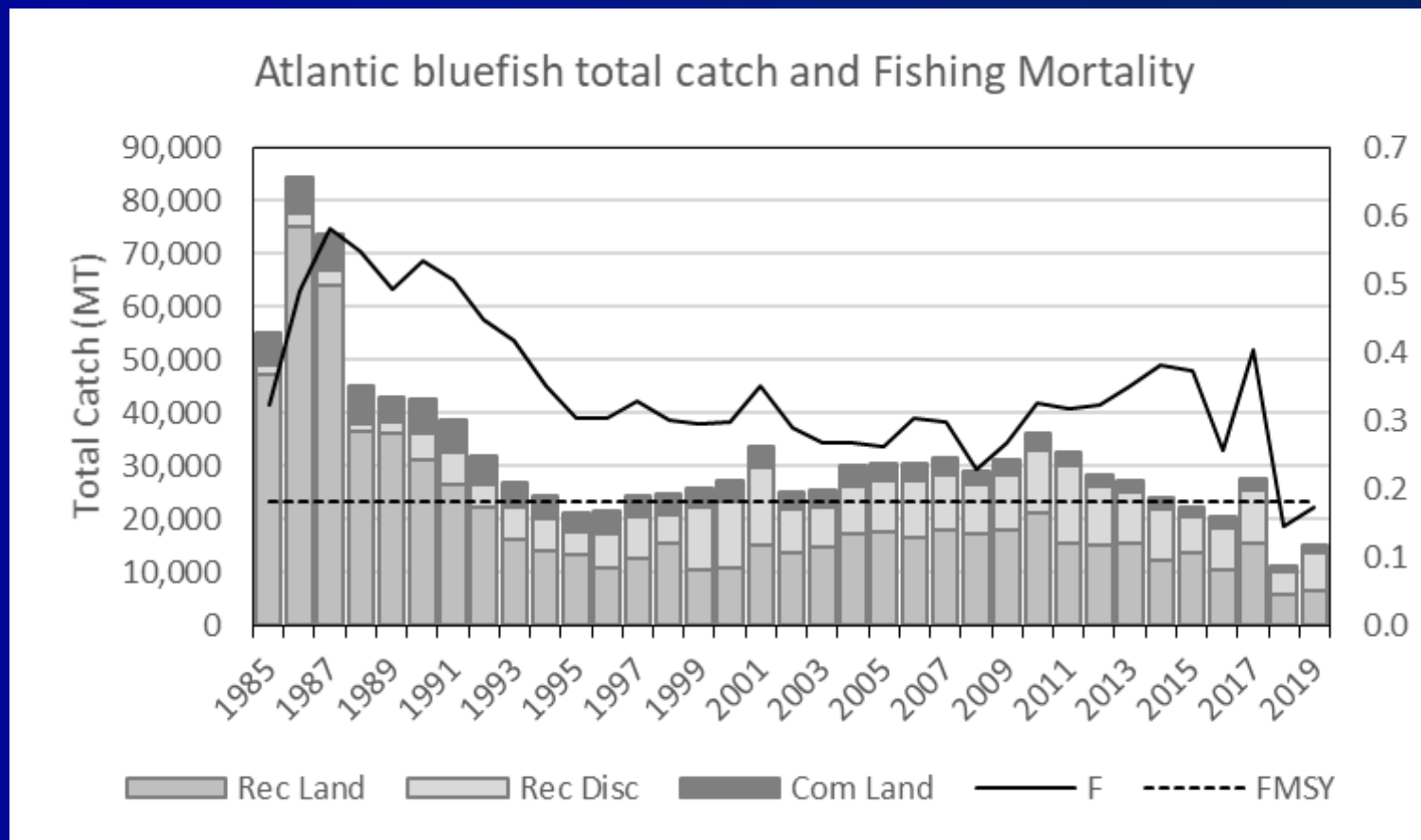


Stock Status



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

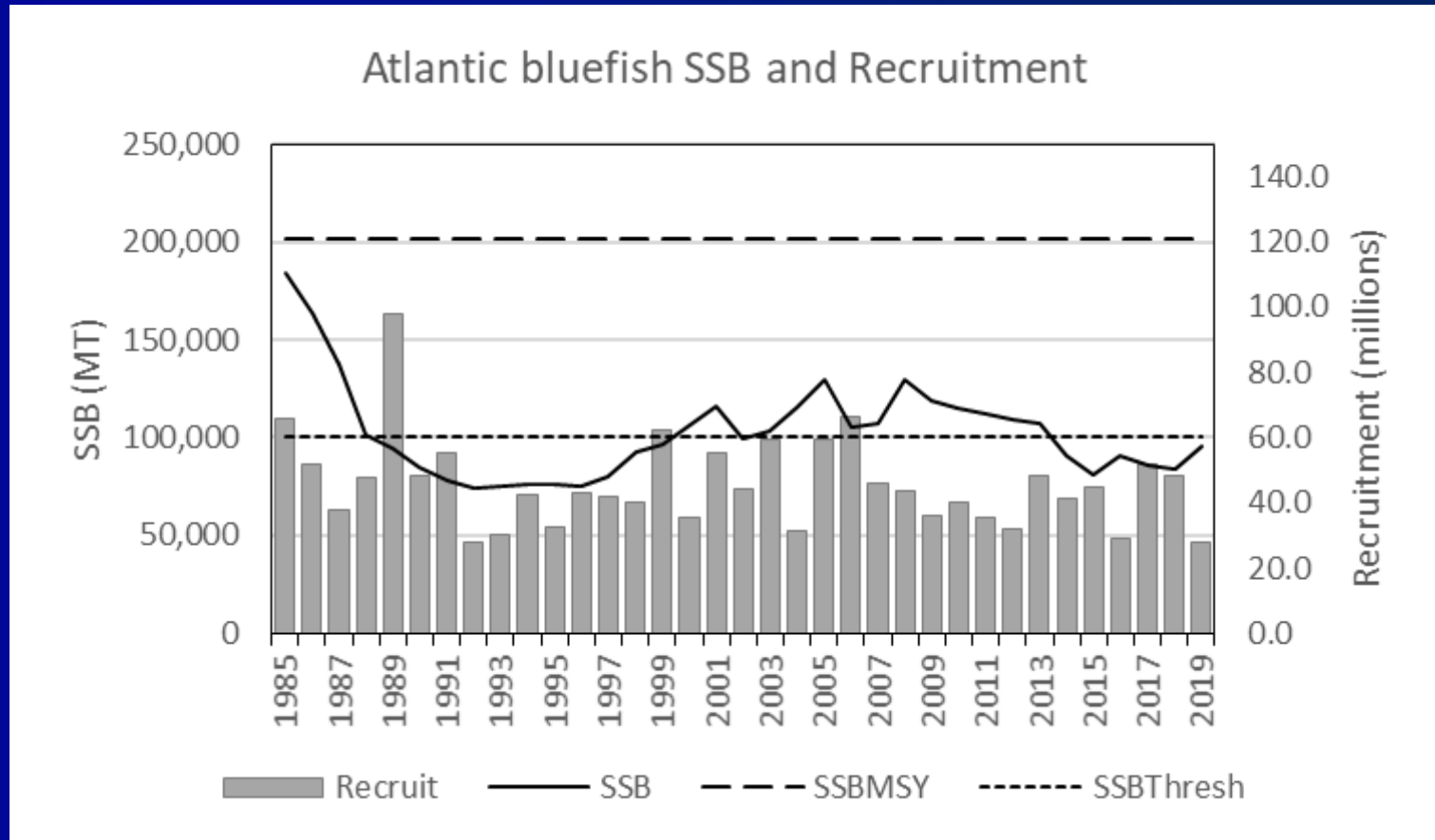
Fishing Mortality – 2021 Management Track Assessment



Overfishing not occurring

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

Biomass – 2021 Management Track Assessment



Overfished

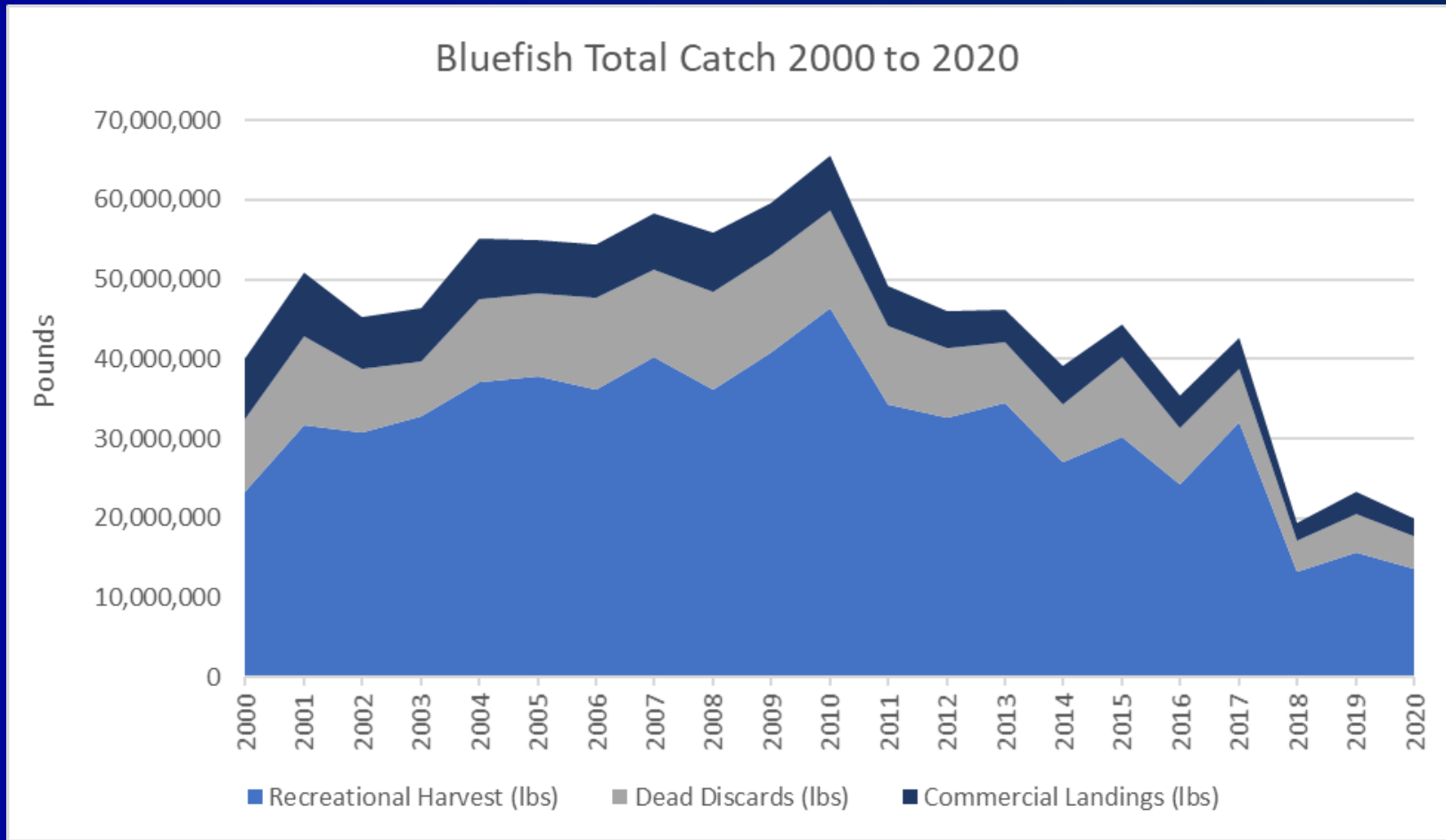
2019 SSB (95,742 mt) \approx 5% below SSB_{Threshold} (100,865 mt)

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)



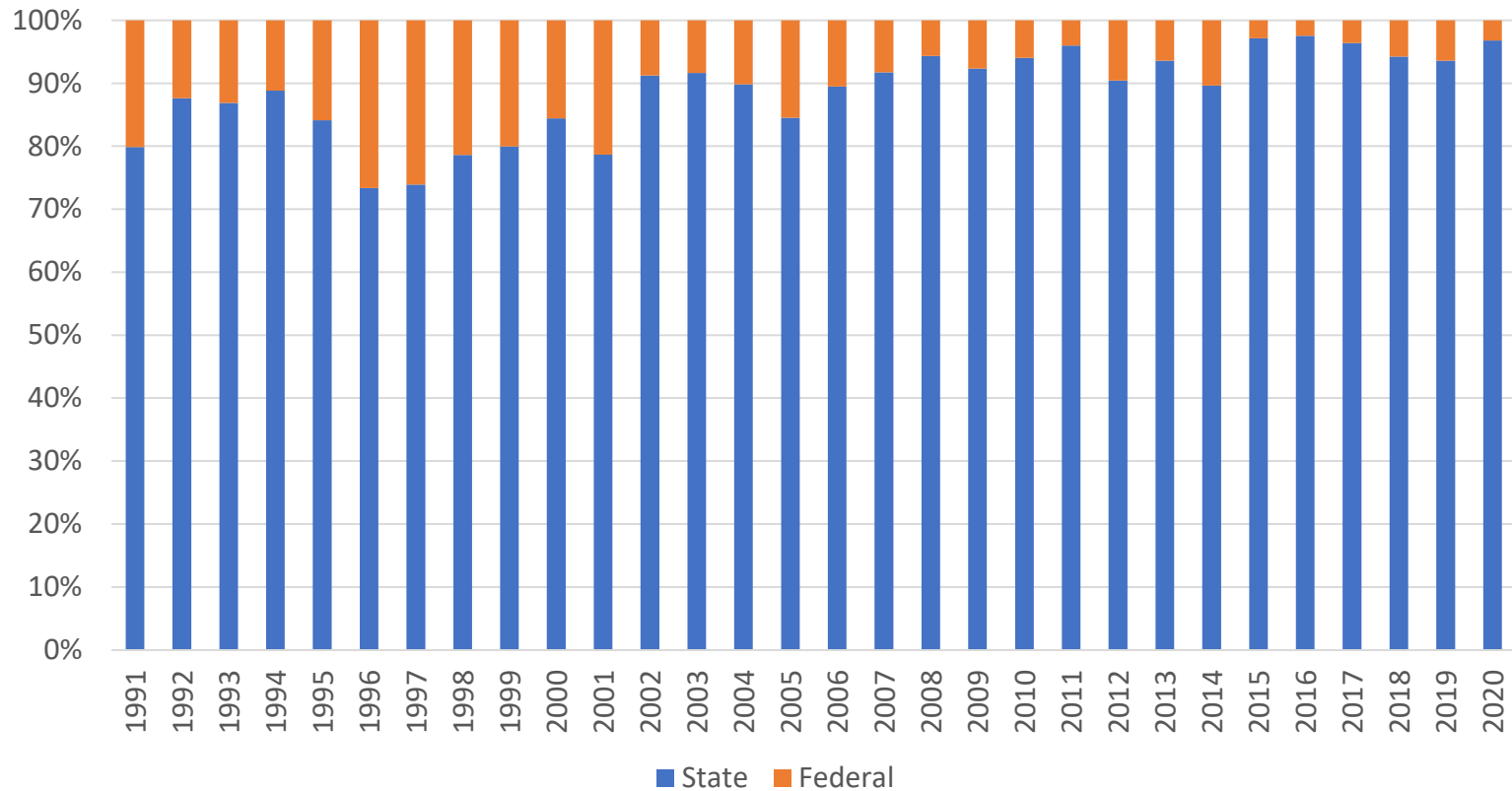
2020 Rec Landings by State

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

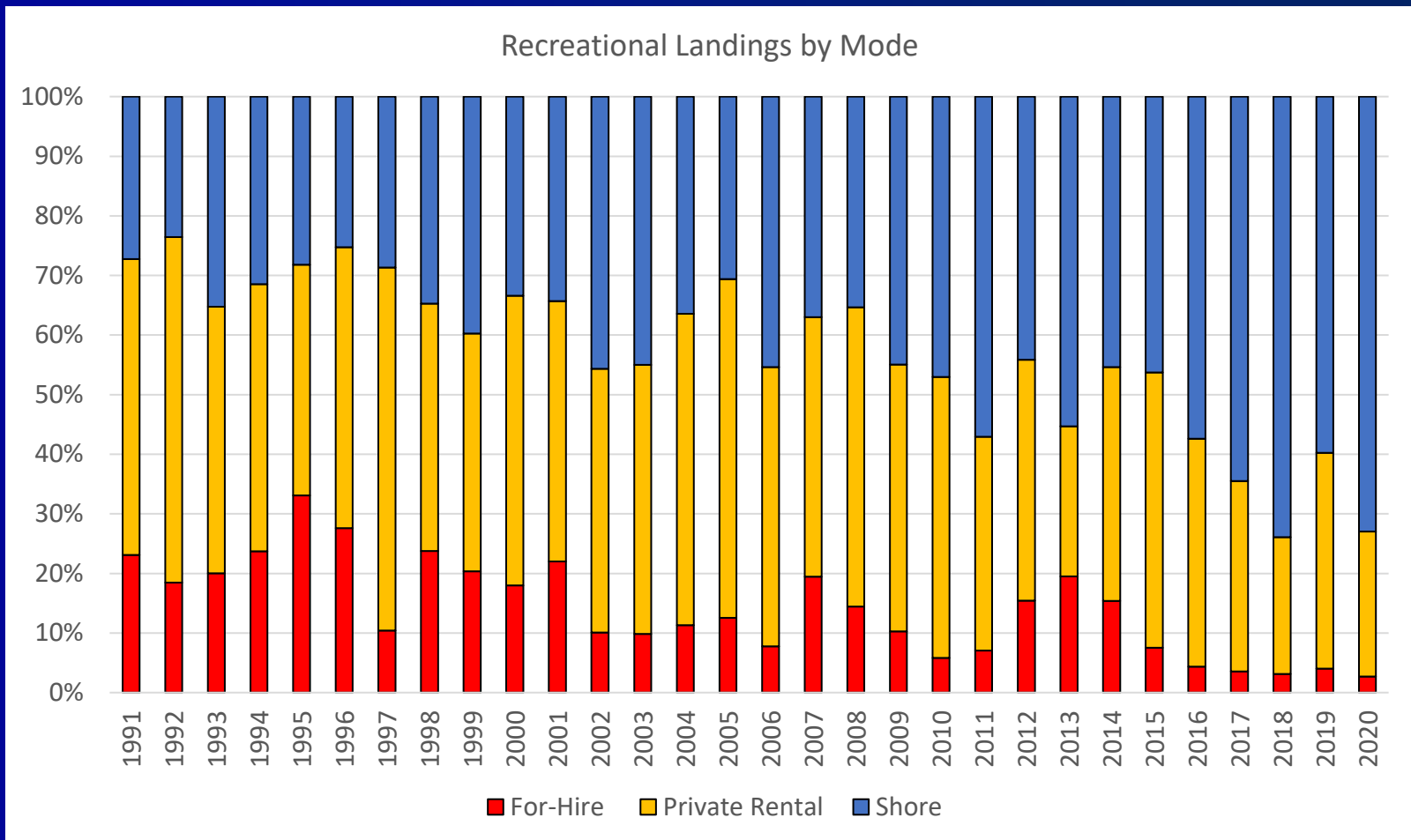
Recreational Fishery



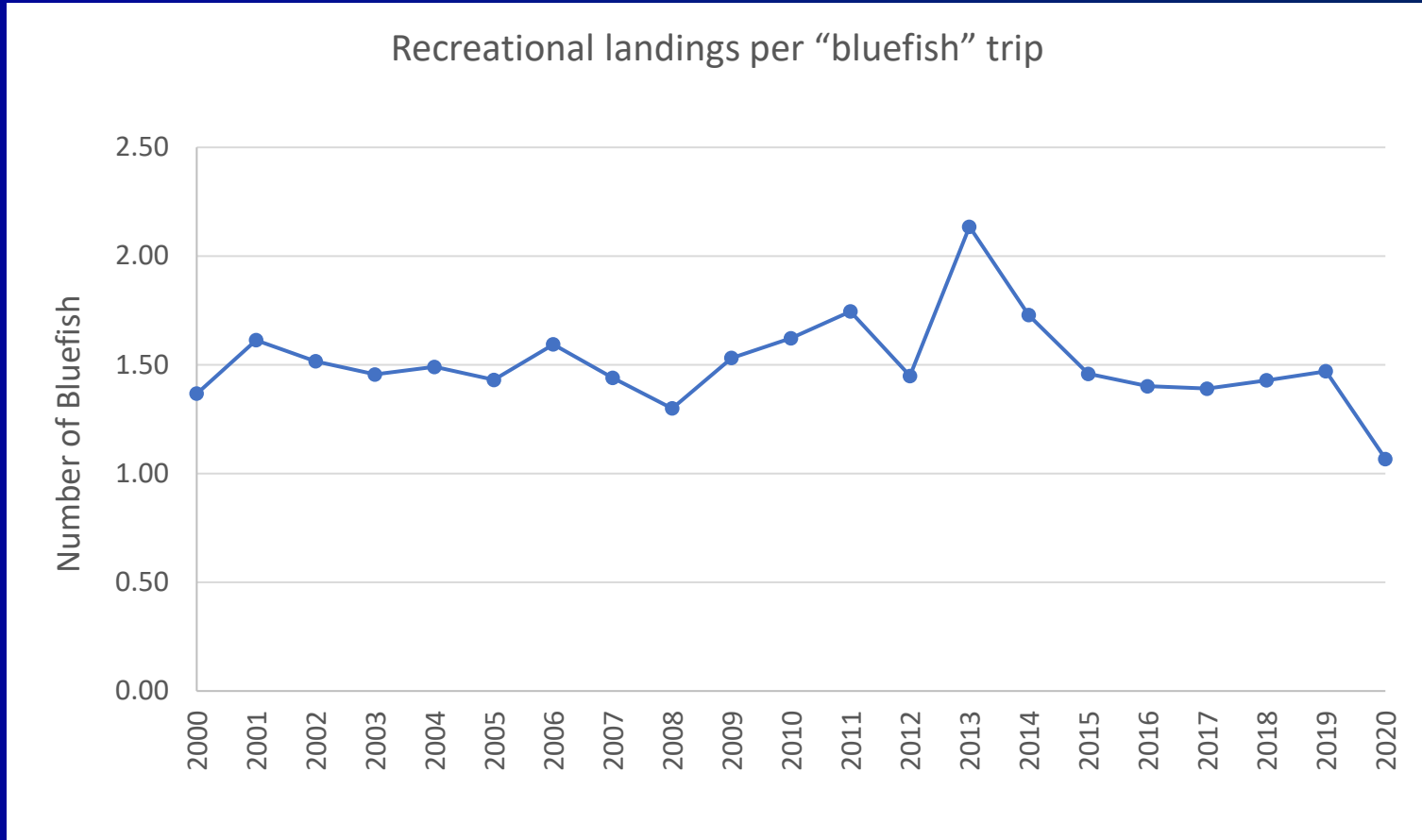
State vs. Federal Landings, 1991-2020



Recreational Fishery



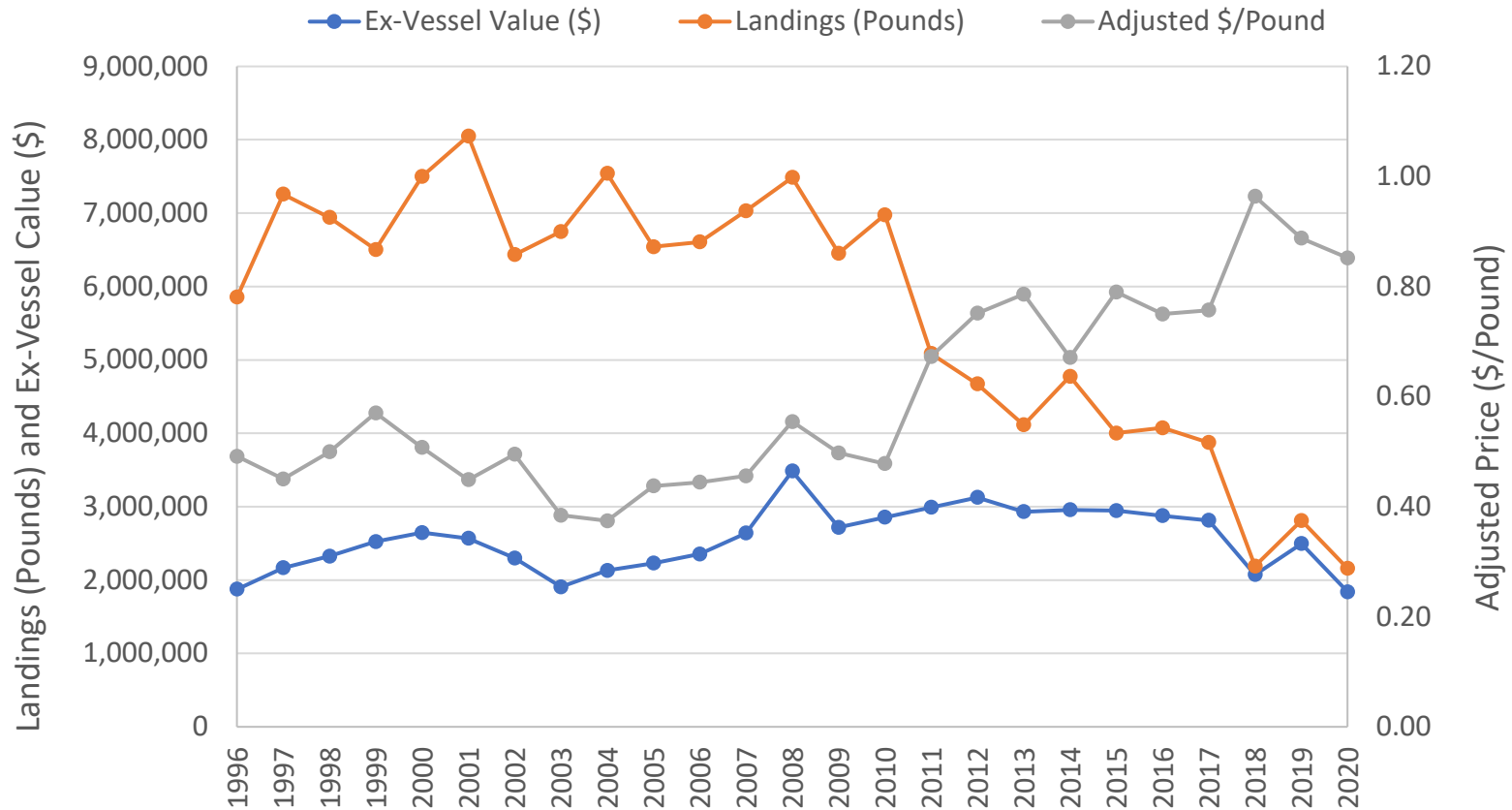
Recreational Fishery



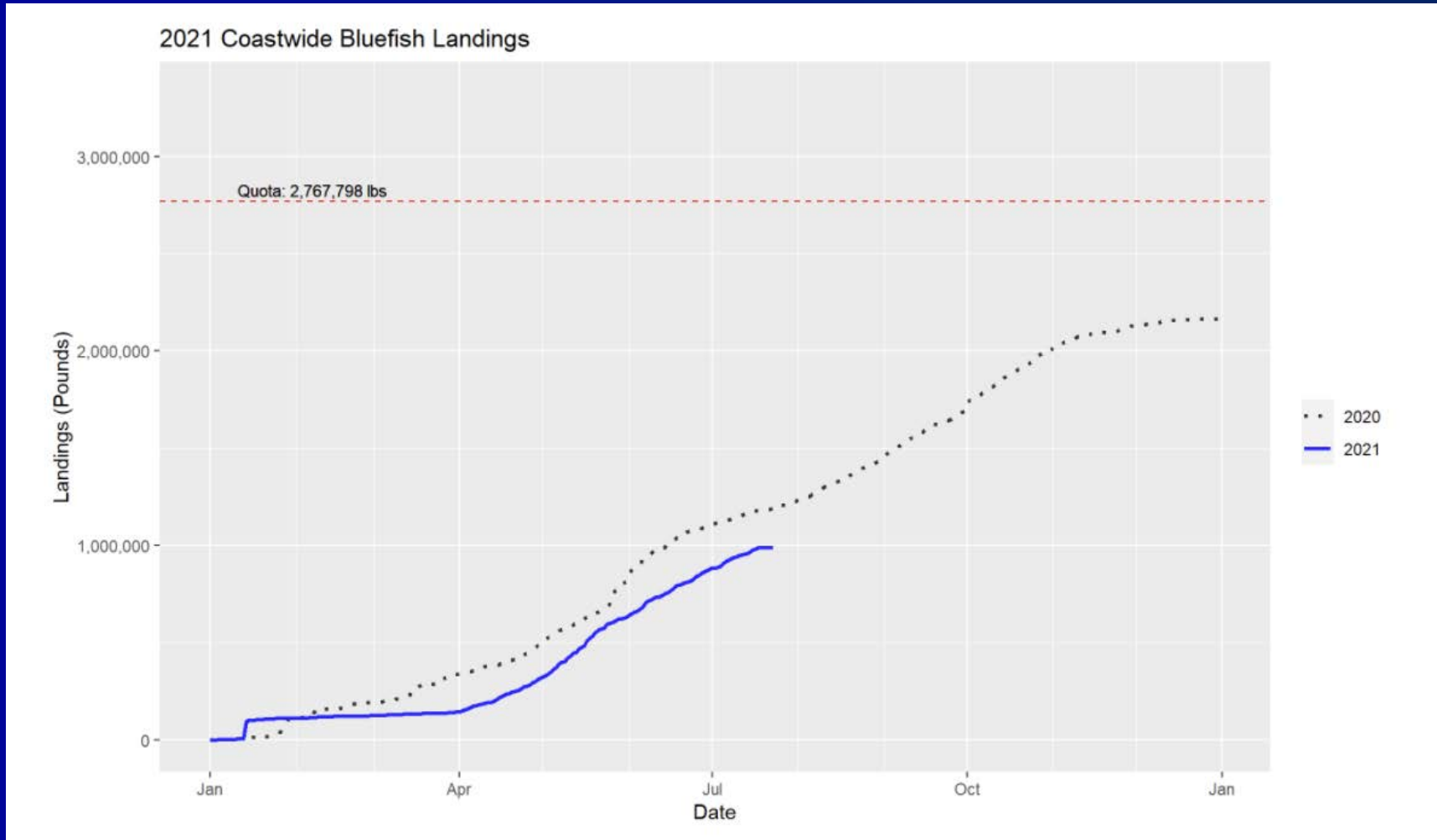
Commercial Fishery



Bluefish Landings, Value and Price



Commercial Fishery

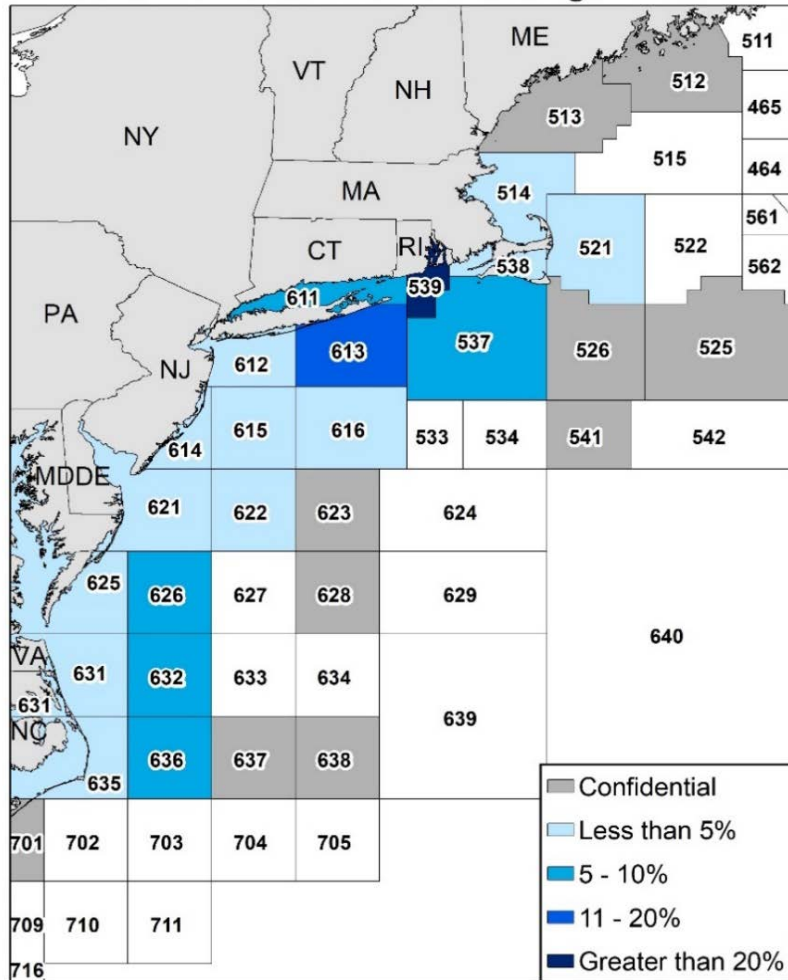


July 26, 2021

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)
- 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 and 2023, staff recommends an acceptable biological catch (ABC) of 25.26 million pounds (11,460 mt) and 30.62 million pounds (13,890 mt), respectively – Option 2.
 - Option 2 treats the total catch value from the 7-year constant fishing mortality rebuilding plan as an OFL proxy instead of an ABC.
 - Accounts for the uncertainties present in the fishery.

SSC Recommended ABCs

Frebuild Iterative Projection 2022-2026
Total Catch, Fishing Mortality (F)
Pstar and Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB)
Catches and SSB in metric tons

Year	OFL Total Catch	ABC Total Catch	ABC F	ABC P* value	ABC SSB
2020	14,727	9,041	0.093	0.230	112,864
2021	15,352	7,385	0.068	0.285	135,071
2022	18,399	11,460	0.094	0.320	149,387
2023	20,490	13,890	0.102	0.362	166,096
2024	22,773	16,960	0.113	0.391	177,910
2025	24,043	19,094	0.121	0.427	192,273
2026	25,787	22,103	0.131	0.451	204,244

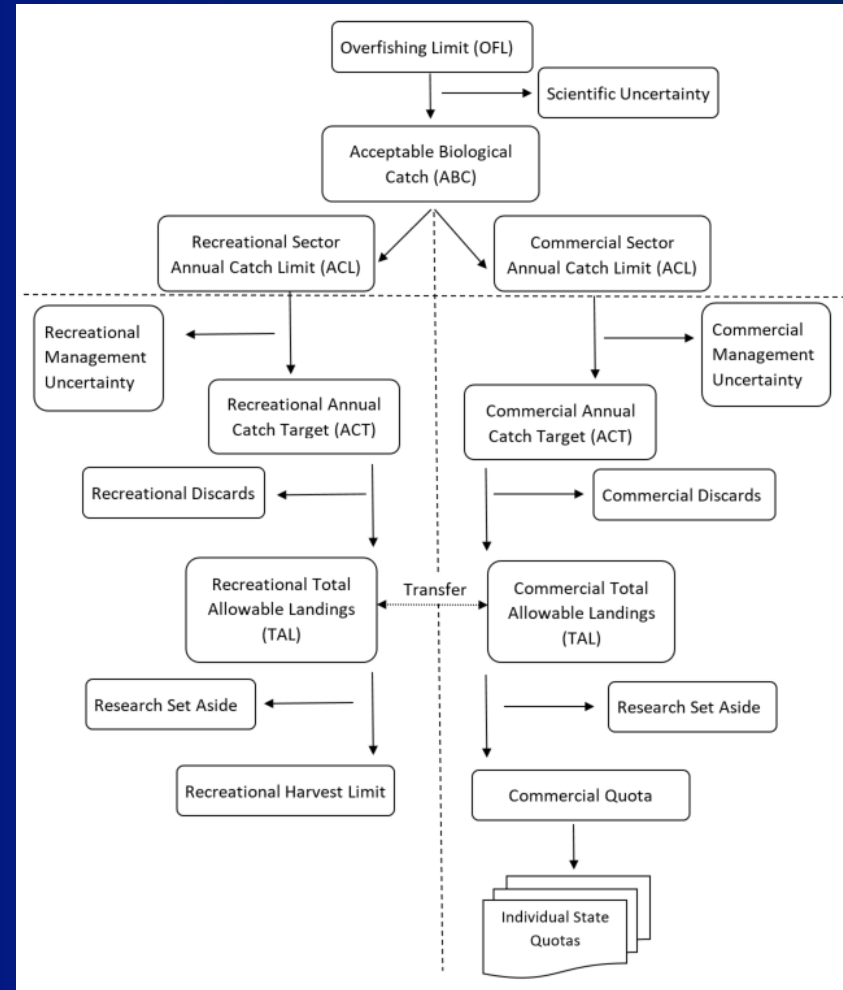
SSC Recommended ABCs

	2021		2022 2023 (Option 2)	
	Mil lb.	mt	Mil lb.	mt
OFL	37.98	17,228	40.56	18,399
			45.17	20,490
ABC	16.28	7,385	25.26	11,460
			30.62	13,890

Monitoring Committee Recommendations



- Management Uncertainty – ACL to ACTs
- Discards – ACTs to TAL
 - **MRIP (mean wt.)** or NEFSC (wt. at length, season)
 - **Terminal year** or 3-year average
 - Commercial: **Negligible**
- Commercial Measures
 - States dictate trip limits
- Transfers
- Expected Rec. Landings
 - Prior years landings (terminal year or 3- year average) and projections
- Recommend RHLs and CQs



Anticipated Management Measures Under Options 2

Management Measure	Option 2				Basis
	2022		2023		
	mil lb.	mt	mil lb.	mt	
Overfishing Limit (OFL)	40.56	18,399	45.17	20,490	Stock assessment projections
ABC	25.26	11,460	30.62	13,890	Derived by SSC; Follows the rebuilding plan through NEFSC projections
ACL	25.26	11,460	30.62	13,890	Defined in FMP as equal to ABC
Commercial ACL	3.54	1,604	4.29	1,945	ABC x 14%
Commercial Management Uncertainty	0	0	0	0	Derived by the Monitoring Committee
Commercial ACT	3.54	1,604	4.29	1,945	(ACL – Commercial Management Uncertainty) x 14%
Recreational ACL	21.73	9,856	26.34	11,945	ABC x 86%
Recreational Management Uncertainty	0	0	0	0	Derived by the Monitoring Committee
Recreational ACT	21.73	9,856	26.34	11,945	(ACL – Recreational Management Uncertainty) x 86%
Recreational AMs	3.65	1,656	0	0	2022 only: 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	3.54	1,604	4.29	1,945	Commercial ACT - commercial discards
Recreational TAL	13.89	6,298	22.14	10,044	Recreational ACT - recreational discards
Combined TAL	17.42	7,903	26.43	11,989	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	3.54	1,604	4.29	1,945	Commercial TAL +/- transfer
RHL	13.89	6,298	22.14	10,044	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

