

Atlantic Bluefish Data Update for 2022

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Commercial bluefish landings data were provided directly by the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP). Commercial landings in 2020 were 1,112 MT (2.45 million lbs), and slightly decreased to 1,090 MT (2.40 million lbs) in 2021, which was 80% of the 2021 commercial quota (1,255 MT, 2.77 million lbs). Estimated recreational landings in 2020 were 6,160 MT (13.58 million lbs), and decreased to 5,653 MT (12.46 million lbs) in 2021, which was 131% of the 2021 recreational harvest limit (4,301 MT, 9.48 million lbs). Total recreational discards (assuming 15% mortality, and calculated using NEFSC methodology from SARC60) were 3,747 MT = 8.3 million lbs in 2020, and 5,709 MT = 12.6 million lbs in 2021. Total bluefish catch in 2020 was 11,019 MT (24.29 million lbs), and in 2021 was 12,452 MT (27.45 million lbs), Figure 1).

A recreational catch-per-unit-effort index was updated through 2021 from the MRIP intercept data. This index is an important index incorporated into the stock assessment and shows a slight increase from the 2020 estimate. In addition, the NEFSC Fall bottom trawl survey was updated through 2021, noting that there is no survey value for 2017 due to incomplete sampling (vessel issues) and no information for 2020 due to COVID. The 2021 NEFSC fall index value of 1.54 is an increase from the 2019 value of 1.13, which was the lowest of the time-series (Figure 2). The NEFSC fall survey length frequency distributions show a typical peak of smaller fish centering around 20 cm and the historical bi-modal pattern was not present in 2021 (Figure 3).

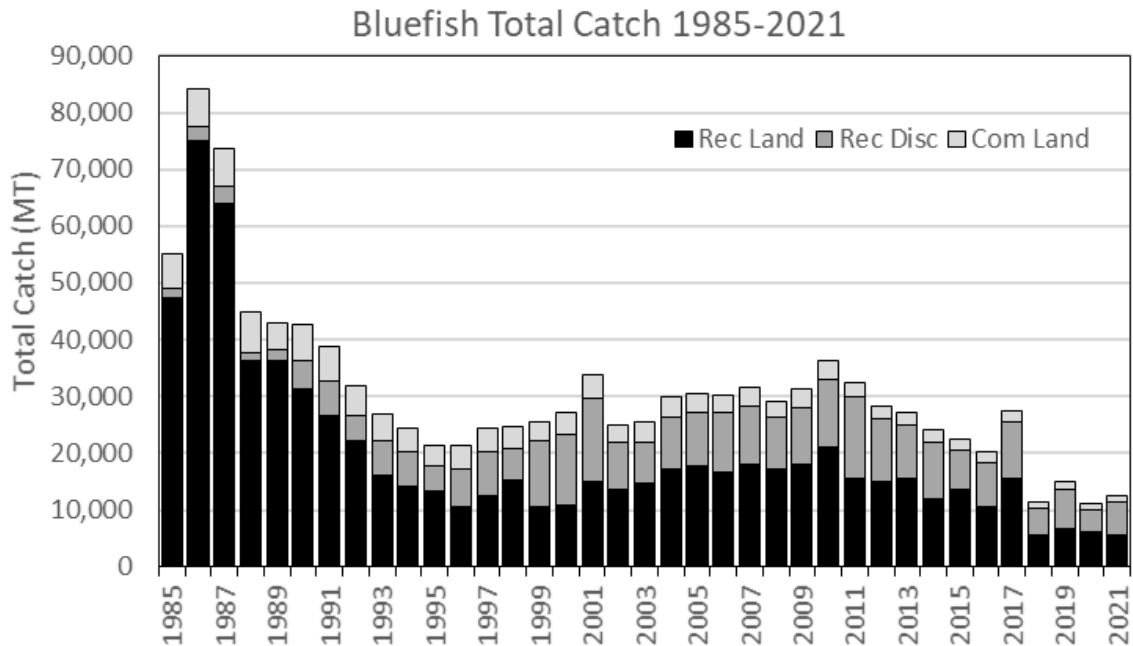


Figure 1. Atlantic bluefish fishery total catch.

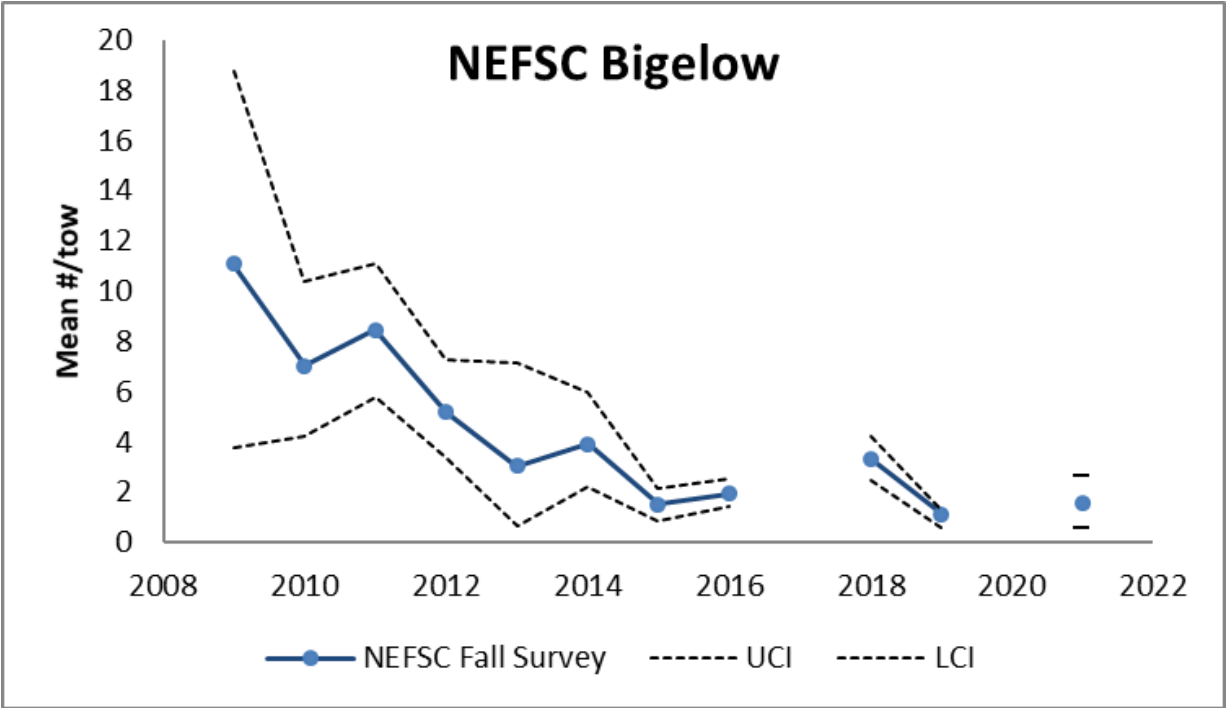
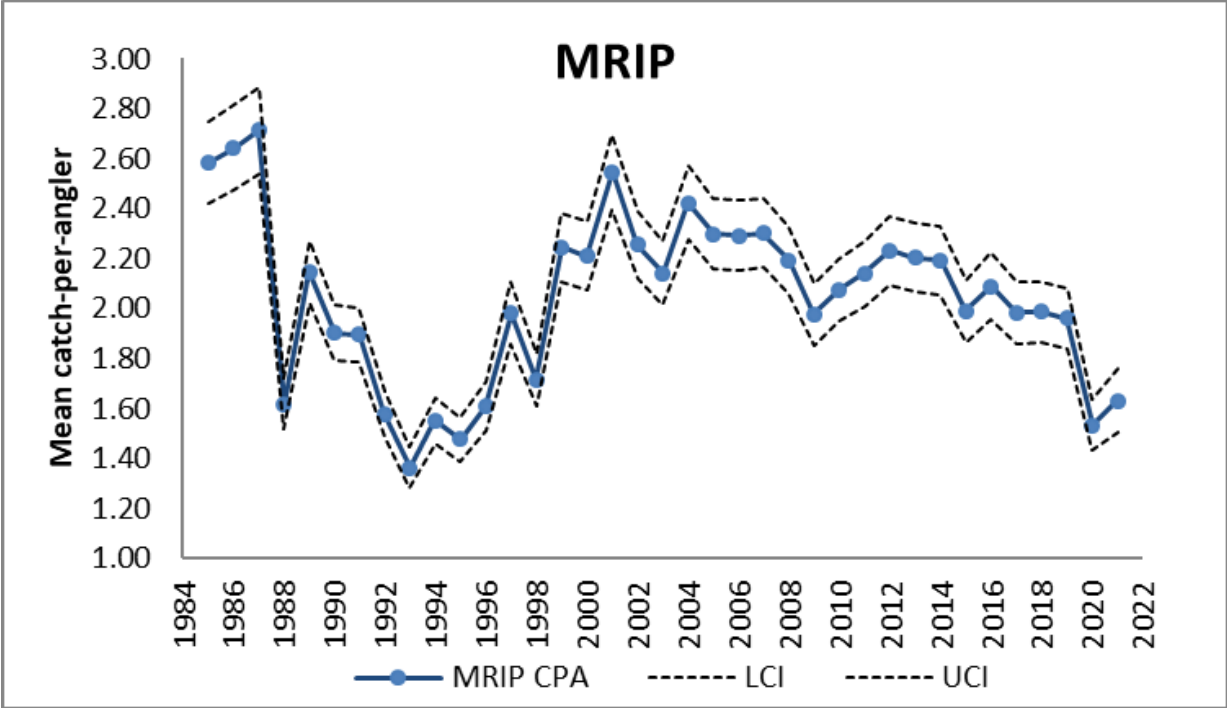


Figure 2. A. MRIP CPUE index and B. NEFSC trawl survey index for bluefish. The Bigelow did not sample southern strata in 2017 and there was no 2020 survey due to COVID.

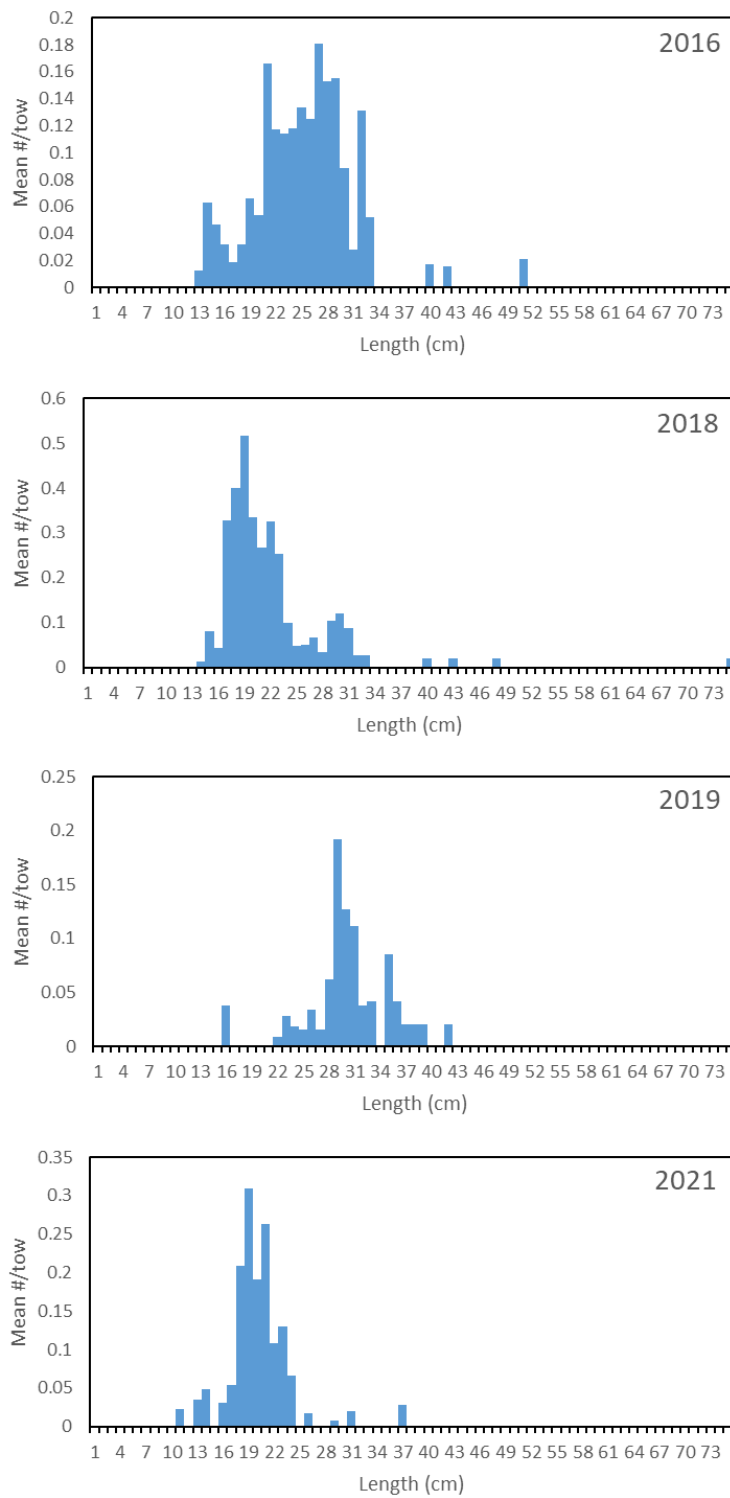


Figure 3. Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) fall trawl survey indices at length. There is no valid fall 2017 or 2020 index for bluefish.