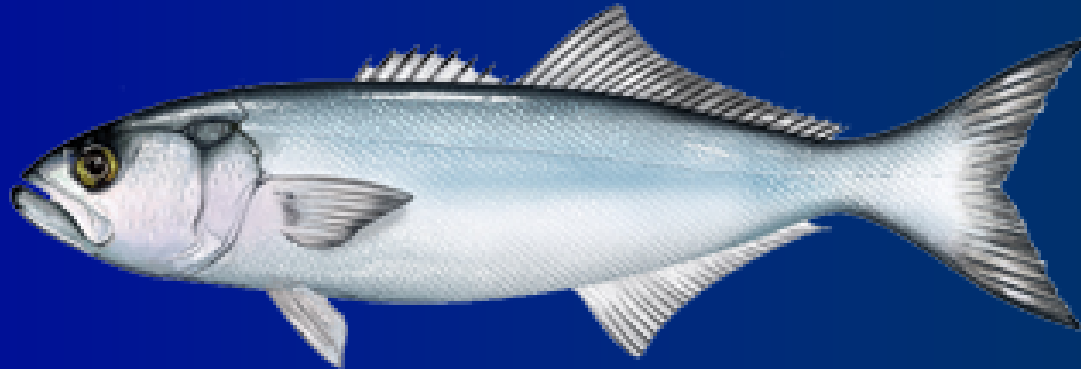


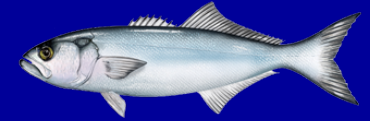


# Atlantic Bluefish



Joint Council and Board Meeting  
December 15, 2020

# Outline



- Specifications and Rec Measures Process
- Stock Status and Data Update through 2019
- Review recent fishery performance and regulations through 2019
- Review 2020 data and data gaps
- Review staff recommendation and AP comments
- Review MC recommended recreational management measures

# Recreational Measures Process

August 11

- Council/Board revise 2021 RHLs

November 12

- Advisory Panel meeting

November 17

- Monitoring Committee meeting

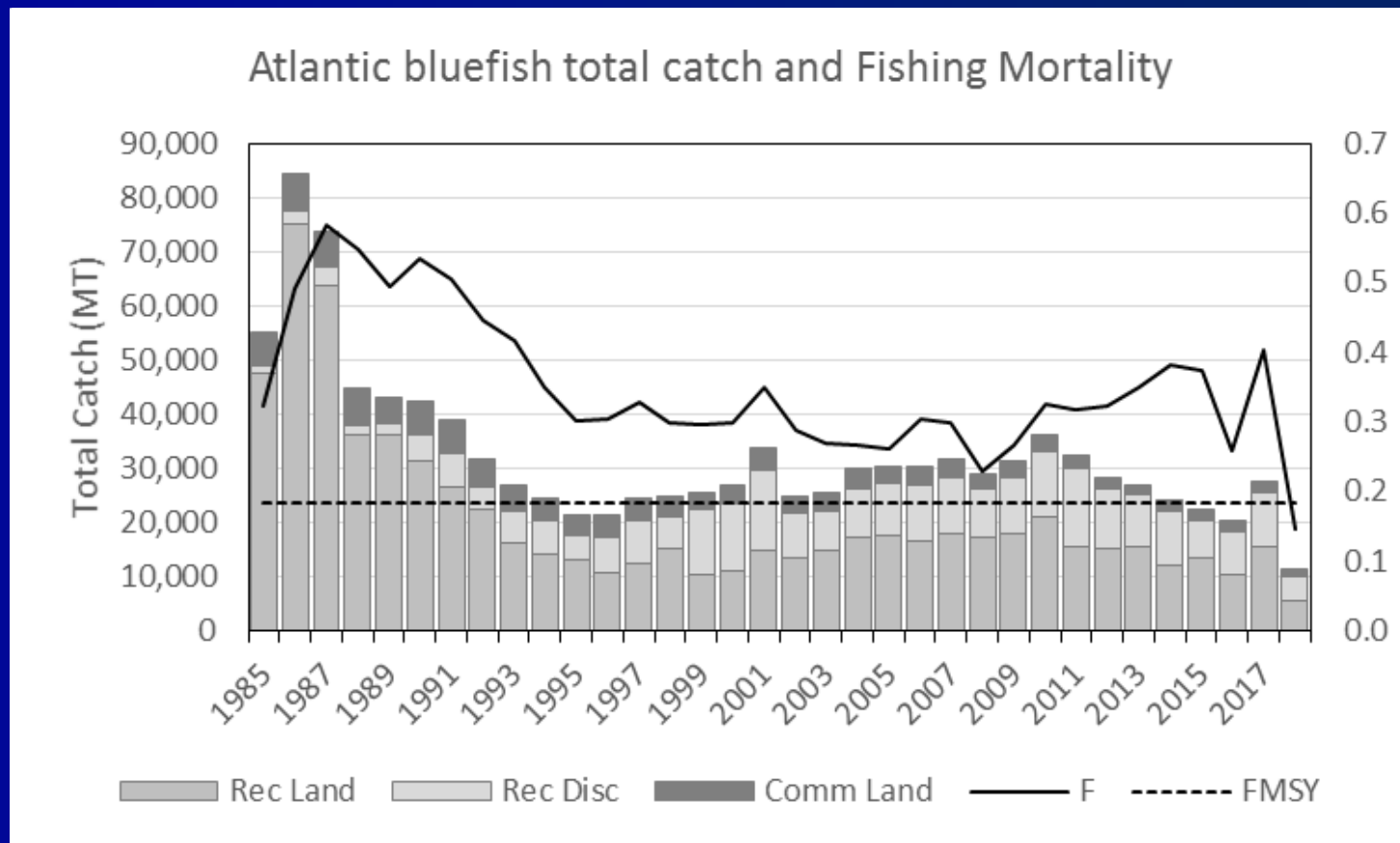
December 15

- Council and Board adopt federal waters measures or coastwide recreational measures

# Stock Status

- Last operational assessment: 2019
- Stock is overfished
- Overfishing is not occurring
- Next year (June 2021): NEFSC will conduct a management track assessment

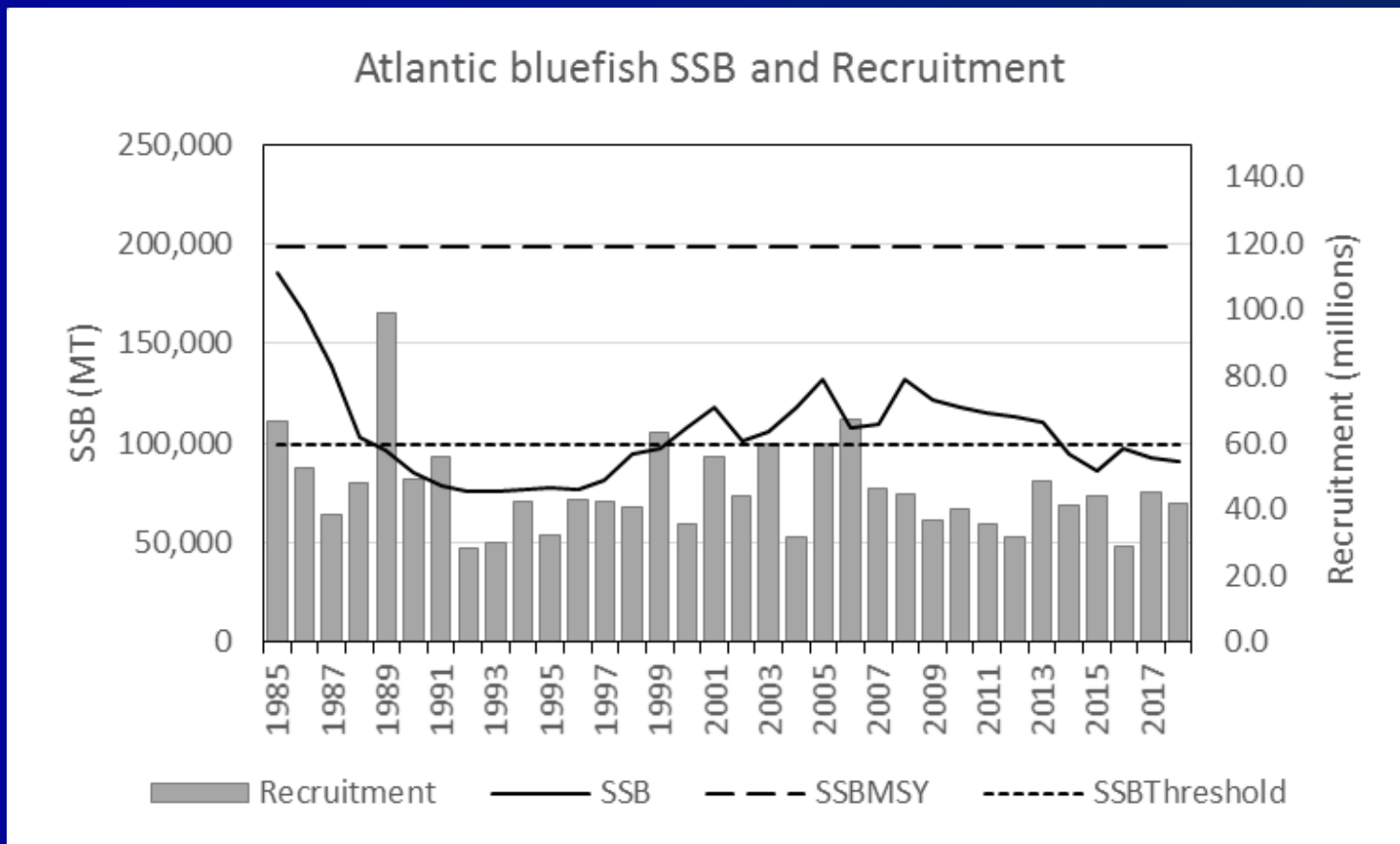
# Fishing Mortality – 2019 Operational Assessment



## Overfishing not occurring

(2018  $F = 0.146$ ; below  $F_{MSY \text{ proxy}} = F_{35\%SPR} = 0.183$ )

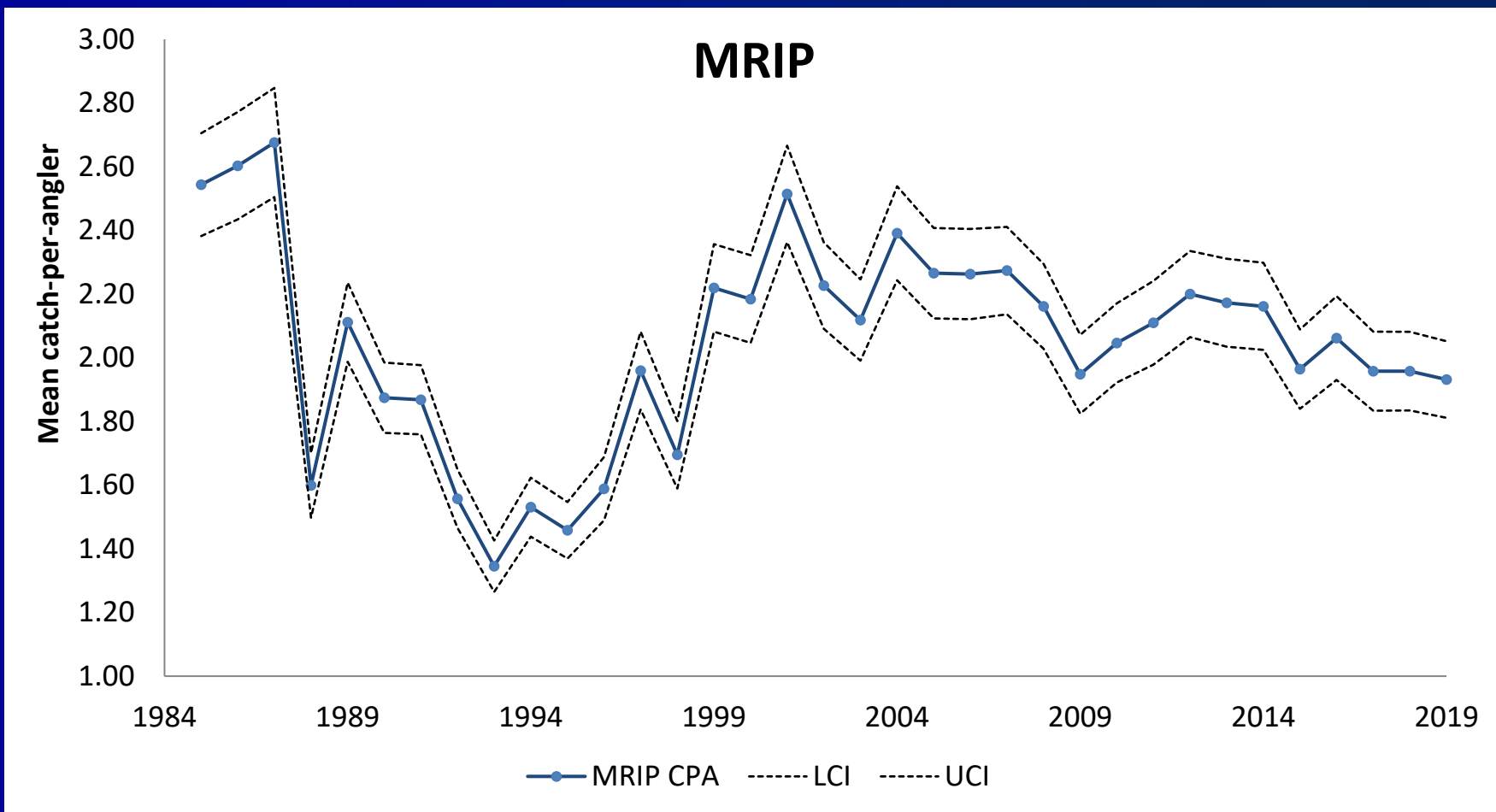
# Biomass – 2019 Operational Assessment



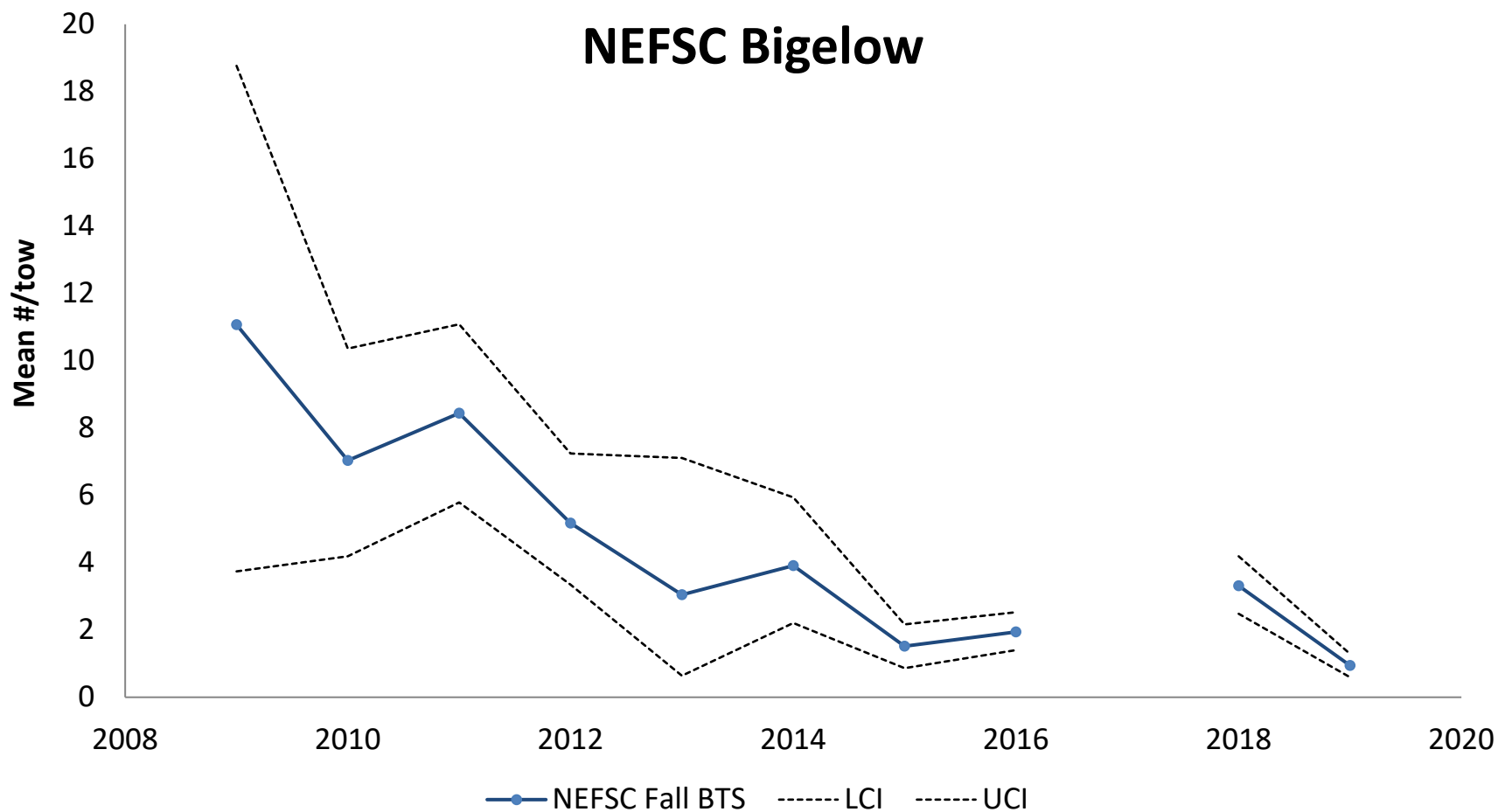
## Overfished

2018 SSB (91,041 mt)  $\approx$  8% below SSB<sub>Threshold</sub> (99,359 mt)

# Indices of Abundance



# Indices of Abundance

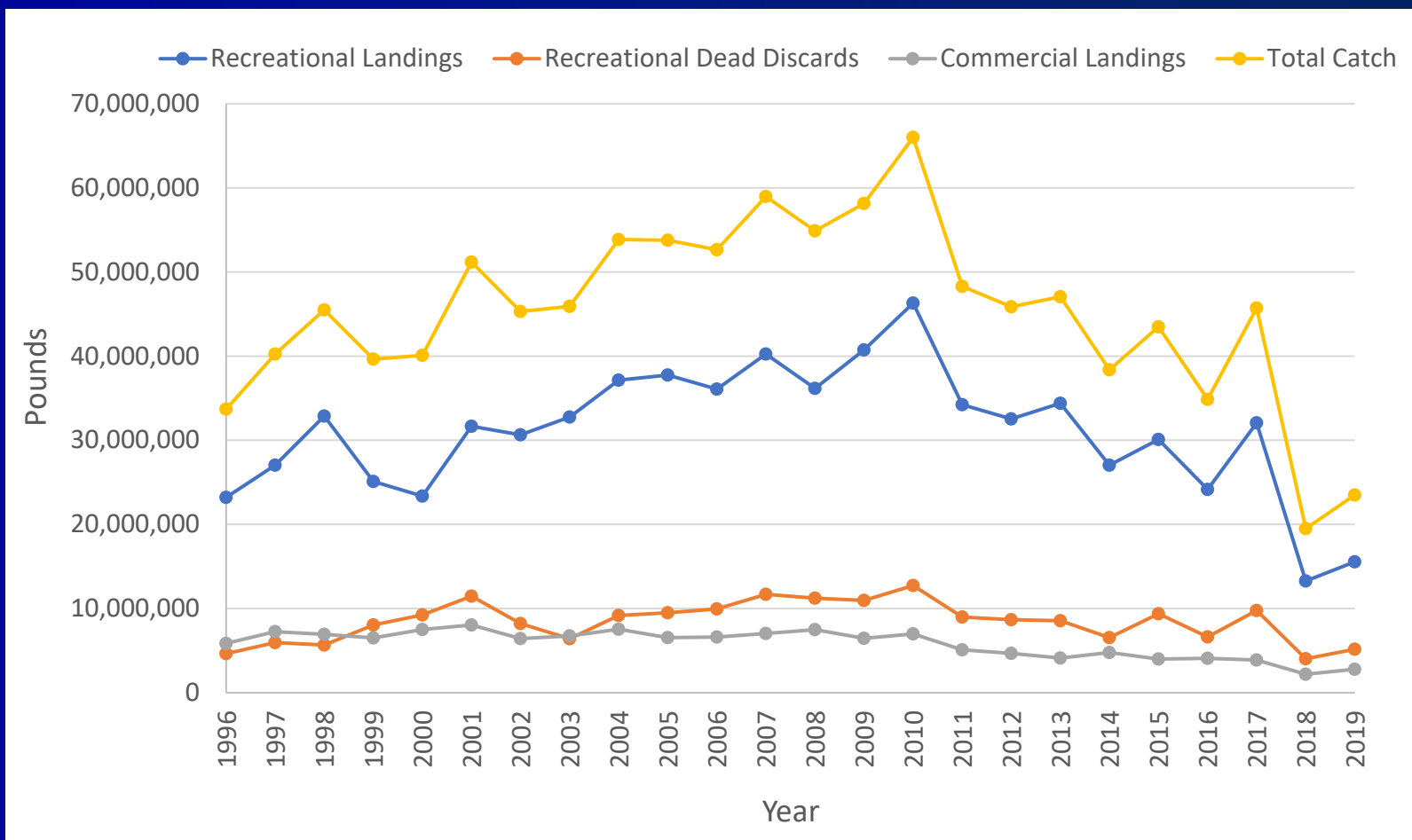




# Management Measures

Management Measures	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
TAC/ABC	21.54	19.45	20.64	21.81	<b>21.81</b>	16.28	16.28
TAL	18.19	16.46	18.19	18.82	<b>19.33</b>	12.25	11.11
Comm. Quota	5.24	4.88	8.54	7.24	<b>7.71</b>	2.77	2.77
Comm. Landings	4.02	4.1	3.64	2.20	<b>2.78</b>		
Rec. Harvest Limit	12.95	11.58	9.65	11.58	<b>11.62</b>	9.48	8.34
Rec. Landings, Old MRIP	11.67	9.54	9.52	3.64	<b>N/A</b>		
Rec. Landings, New MRIP	30.10	24.16	32.07	13.27	<b>15.56</b>		
Rec. Possession Limit (# fish)	15	15	15	15	<b>15</b>	3: Private 5: For-Hire	TBD
Total Landings	15.69	13.64	13.16	5.84	<b>18.34</b>		
Overage/Underage	-2.5	-2.82	-5.03	-12.98	<b>N/A*</b>		
Total Catch	18.65	16.09	15.65	6.96	<b>23.50</b>		
Overage/Underage	-2.89	-3.36	-4.99	-14.85	<b>N/A*</b>		

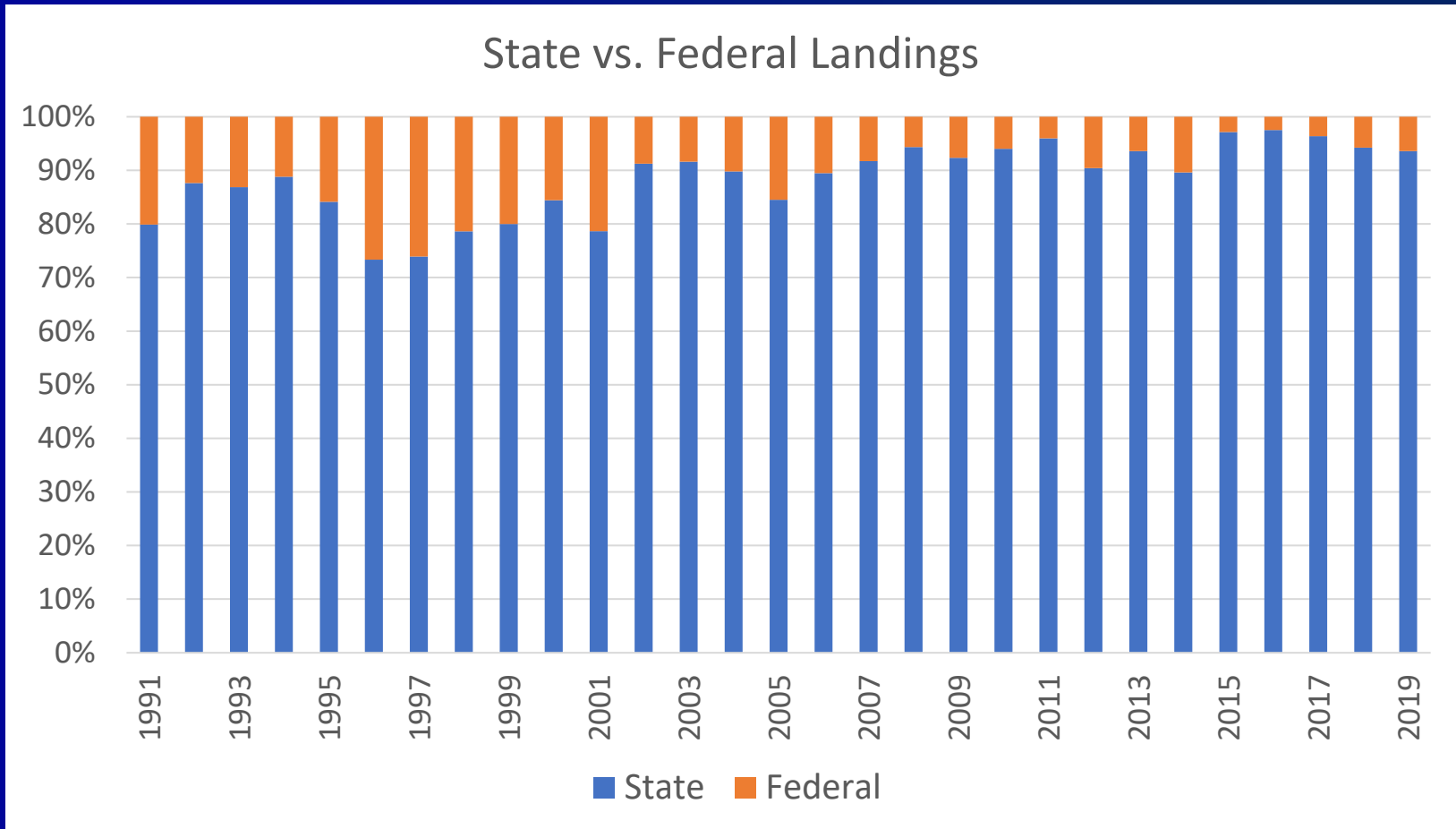
# Total Removals (Landings and Discards)



# 2019 Rec Landings by State

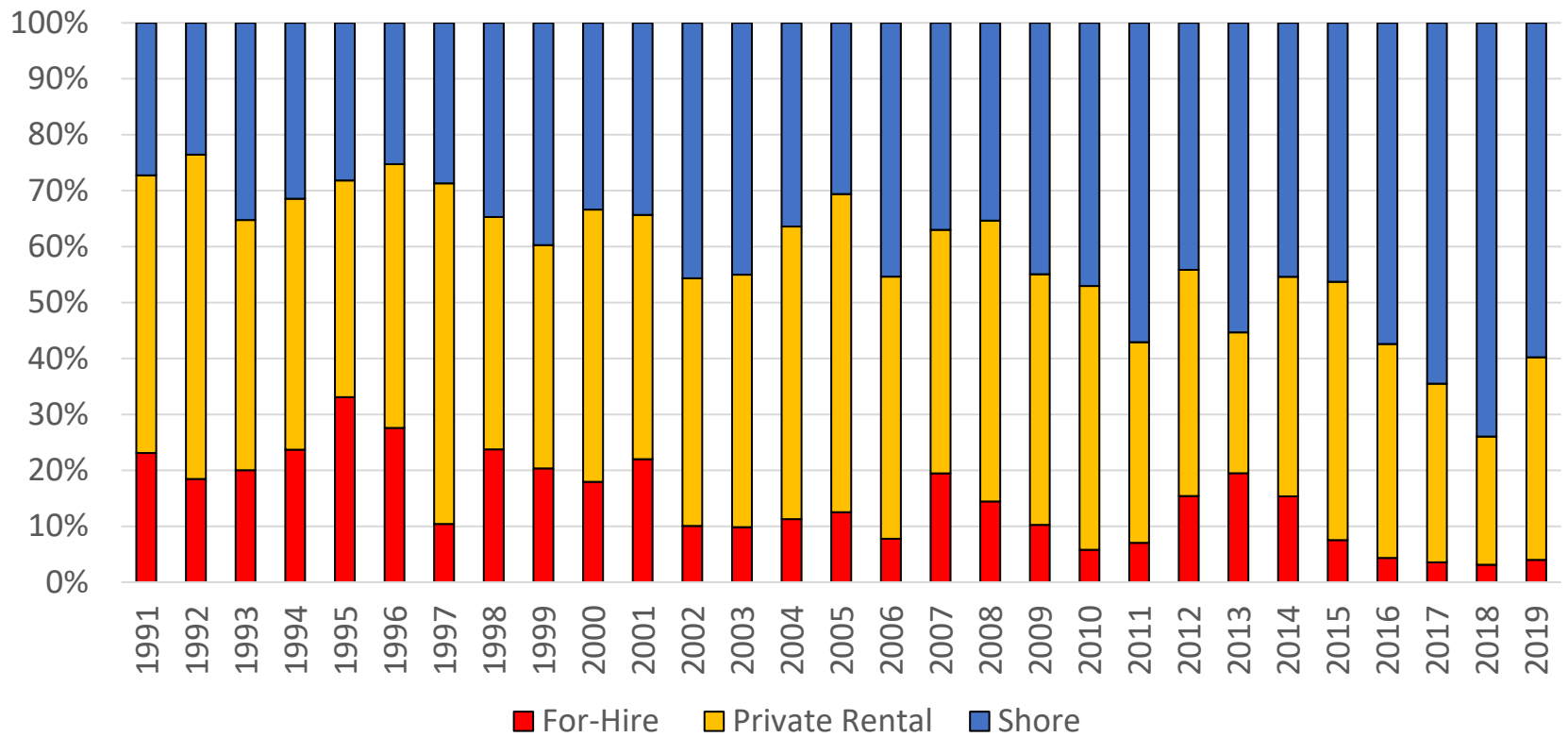
State	Harvest			Catch
	Pounds	Number	Average wt. (lbs)	Number
<b>MRIP (New) Estimates</b>				
ME	0	0	0	0
NH	0	0	0	0
MA	719,130	265,628	2.7	736,761
RI	931,991	379,715	2.5	991,593
CT	1,161,103	670,401	1.7	1,490,095
NY	3,521,431	3,037,380	1.2	6,376,431
NJ	1,660,208	741,722	2.2	3,310,648
DE	415,267	151,469	2.7	581,840
MD	154,451	111,769	1.4	338,737
VA	581,458	756,717	0.8	1,882,000
NC	3,011,480	2,752,589	1.1	9,915,020
SC	502,699	877,372	0.6	6,448,797
GA	21,886	26,364	0.8	273,400
FL	2,874,785	2,366,165	1.2	6,286,615
Total	15,555,889	12,137,291	-	38,631,937

# Recreational Fishery



# Recreational Fishery

## Recreational Landings by Mode



# 2020 Recreational Data Gaps

- Typically, current year harvest projections are developed using MRIP wave 1-4 data (Jan-Aug)
  - Evaluated against next year's RHL to determine adjustments (if any) needed
- This year, recreational data gaps due to COVID-19 mean 2020 projections are not possible

# 2020 Recreational Data Gaps

- Within MRIP, Access Point Angler Intercept Sampling (APAIS) data largely unavailable for waves 2-4 due to COVID-19 restrictions
  - Wave 1 only generated for FL and NC
- Effort data are available, but APAIS data needed for:
  - Harvest & discard rates
  - Weight/size of landed and discarded fish
  - Area fished (impacts estimated weights)
  - Target species
  - Etc.

# 2020 Recreational Data Gaps

- MRIP is evaluating possible methods for generating 2020 catch estimates
  - e.g., Modeling, imputation, data proxies
- Unclear at this point what will be possible; will take time to develop
  - Any estimates for 2020 are not likely to be available until at least early 2021



# 2020 MRIP Harvest Data

## 2020 Recreational Harvest by Wave

Estimate Status	Year	Wave	State	Common Name	Harvest (A+B1) Total Weight (lb)	PSE
PRELIMINARY	2020	JANUARY/FEBRUARY	FLORIDA	BLUEFISH	1,154,459	22.4
PRELIMINARY	2020	JANUARY/FEBRUARY	NORTH CAROLINA	BLUEFISH	7,140	86.7

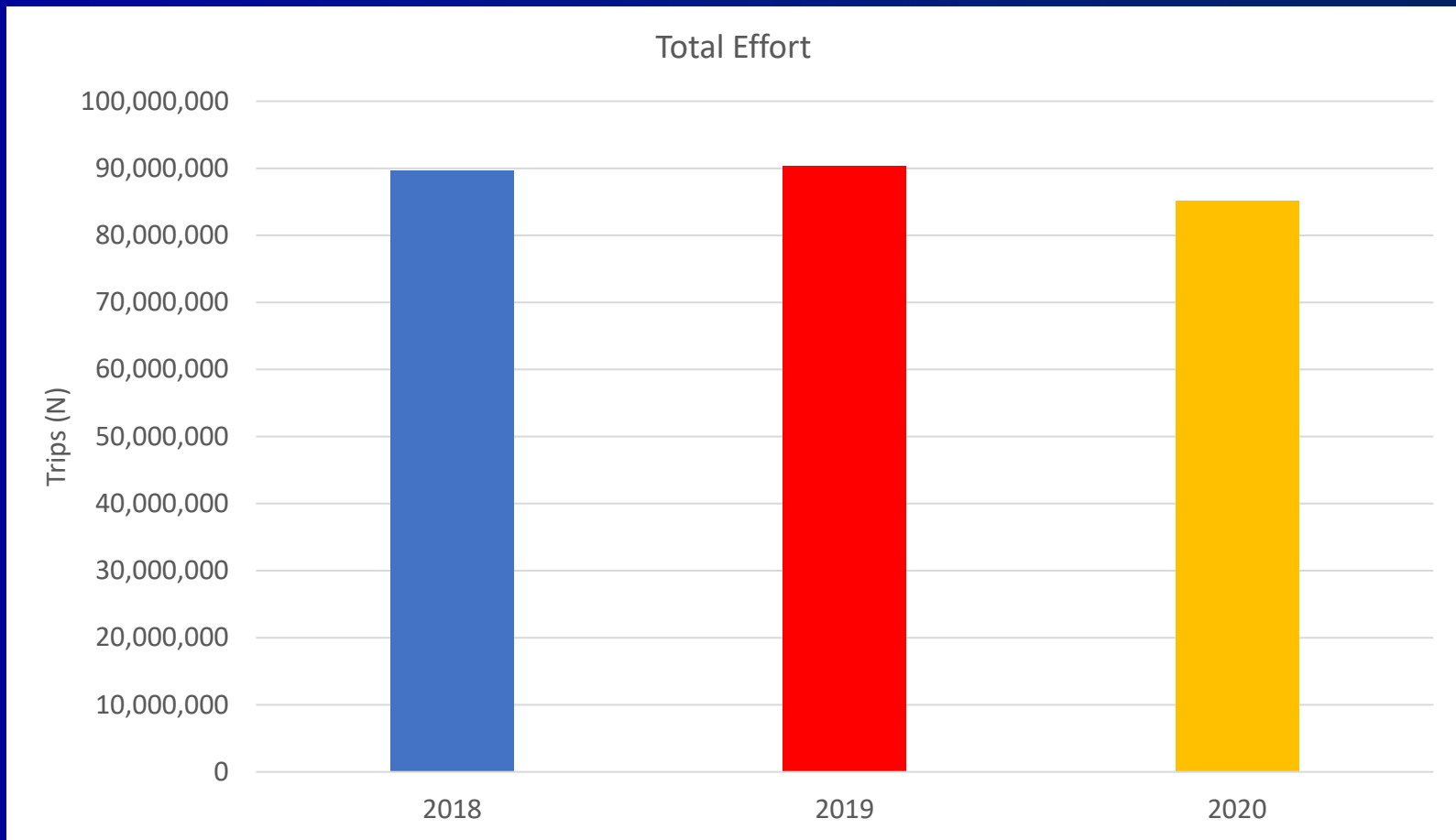
## 2020 Recreational Harvest by Wave and Mode

Estimate Status	Year	Wave	State	Common Name	Fishing Mode	Harvest (A+B1) Total Weight (lb)	PSE
PRELIMINARY	2020	JANUARY/FEBRUARY	FLORIDA	BLUEFISH	SHORE	1,136,178	22.7
PRELIMINARY	2020	JANUARY/FEBRUARY	FLORIDA	BLUEFISH	CHARTER BOAT	1,306	25.9
PRELIMINARY	2020	JANUARY/FEBRUARY	FLORIDA	BLUEFISH	PRIVATE/RENTAL BOAT	16,975	61.1
PRELIMINARY	2020	JANUARY/FEBRUARY	NORTH CAROLINA	BLUEFISH	PRIVATE/RENTAL BOAT	7,140	86.7

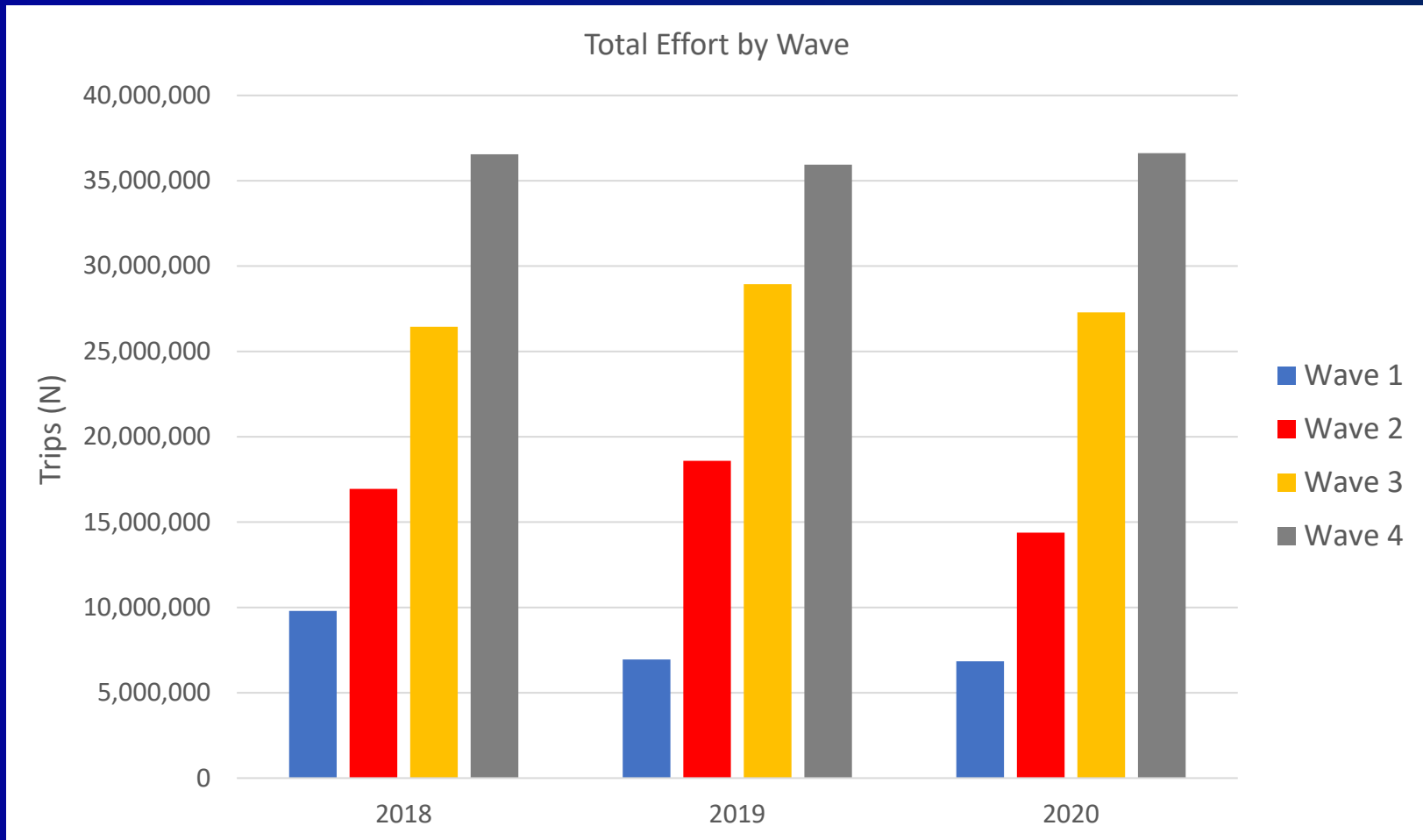
# 2020 Effort Data

- Effort data (angler trips) available comparing waves 1-4 from 2018-2020
- Not species-specific
- Given lack of APAIS data, cannot be used to make inferences about 2020 harvest in weight or numbers of fish

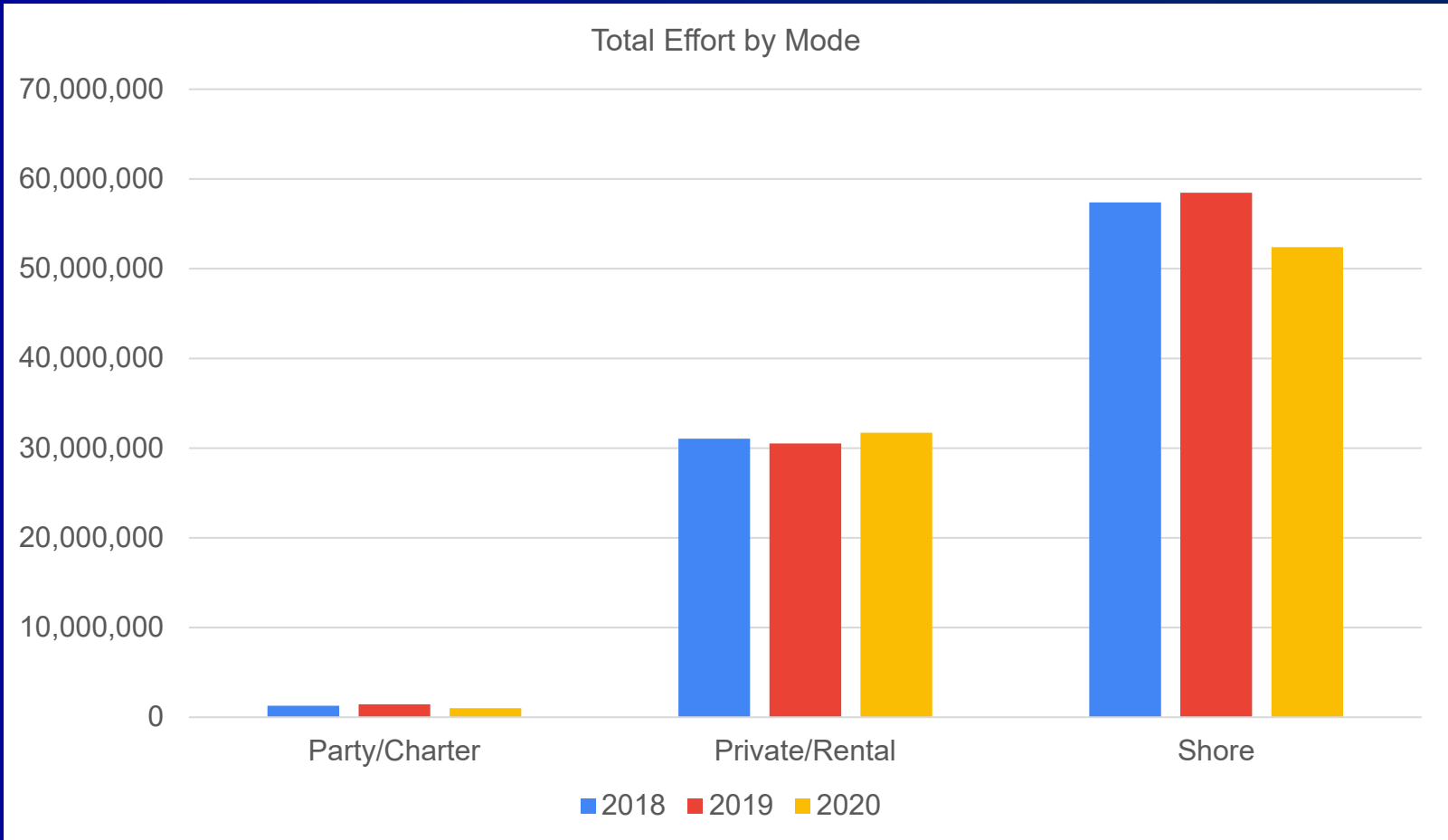
# 2020 Effort Data: ME-FL



# 2020 Effort Data: ME-FL by Wave



# 2020 Effort Data: ME-FL by Mode



# Current Recreational Measures by State

State/ Jurisdiction	Recreational		
	Bag Limit	Season	Size Limit
ME	3 fish	All year	None
NH	3 fish private angler/5 fish for-hire	All year	None
MA	3 fish private angler/5 fish for-hire	All year	None
RI	3 fish private angler/5 fish for-hire	All year	None
CT	3 fish private angler/5 fish for-hire	All year	None
NY	3 fish private angler/5 fish for-hire	All year	None
NJ	3 fish private angler/5 fish for-hire	All year	None
DE	3 fish private angler/5 fish for-hire	All year	None
MD	3 fish private angler/5 fish for-hire	All year	8" min size
PRFC	3 fish private angler/5 fish for-hire	All year	8" min size
VA	3 fish private angler/5 fish for-hire	All year	None
NC	3 fish private angler/5 fish for-hire	All year	None
SC	3 fish private angler/5 fish for-hire	All year	None
GA	15 fish	Closed 3.1 – 4.30	12" min size
FL	3 fish	All year	12" min size

# Rec Measures: Discussion

- **Goal:** Constrain recreational harvest to the RHL.
  - 2018: Recreational landings: 13.27 M lbs
  - 2019: 3 (private) and 5-fish (for-hire) bag limits
    - 13.27 M lbs (2018 Landings) → 9.48 M lbs (2020 RHL)
  - 2020: Minimal recreational data
    - 15.56 M lbs (2019 Landings) → 8.34 M lbs (2021 RHL)
  - For 2021: How to set measures?
    - 2019 landings are not a good proxy (15-fish bag limit)
    - Use reductions for 2019 and apply to 2021 (~12.03% decrease in RHL)

# Staff Recommendation

- The RHL of 8.34 M lbs is ~12.03% lower than the 2020 RHL of 9.48 M lbs. However, due to:
  1. Limited MRIP angler intercept data in 2020 (no 2021 projections)
  2. Transition between new and old MRIP estimates (2019 not a good proxy)
  3. Initiation of a rebuilding plan
  4. Timing of when state-specific bag limit went into effect in 2020

State	ME	NH	MA	RI	CT	NY	NJ	DE	MD	VA	NC	SC	GA	FL
Date Implemented in 2020	1/1	1/29	5/1	4/2	3/26	5/1	4/1	5/15	2/1	3/1	2/1	2/28	CE: closed Wave 2	10/26

- *Coastwide 3 (private) and 5-fish (for-hire) bag limits with no restrictions to minimum fish size or seasons.*



# Advisory Panel Comments

## ■ NC

- MRIP effort data should not be interpreted coastwide.
- Shore fishing effort seemed higher than normal due to great weather.
- SQ measures are appropriate given the current circumstances.

## ■ MA/RI

- Early COVID-19 waves greatly impacted fishing communities through shutdowns.
- The spring run was late because it stayed cold longer into the season, however, this led to great fall fishing.

# Advisory Panel Comments

- MD, Chesapeake Bay
  - More anglers targeting bluefish should use circle hooks because they are still very effective and reduce discard mortality.
  - Coastwide, the for-hire sector has taken a huge hit with the reductions in bag limit and now COVID-19.
  - Certain advisors depend on bluefish because of the lack of other species. Given the current circumstances, we support the status quo recommendation.
- NY (Public Comment)
  - Had great weather and few bait issues, but the lower bag limit is hurting the for-hire community.
  - Bluefish were absent at times due to warmer water temperatures.
  - For-hire sector needs a separate allowance, not necessarily sector separation (7-8 fish).

# Monitoring Committee Discussion

1. Lack of recreational harvest estimates in 2020.
2. High level of uncertainty in developing harvest projections to compare to the 2021 RHL.
3. Timing of when the current 3 and 5-fish bag limits for private and for-hire anglers, respectively, went into effect.
4. Lack of support for the 2019 recreational landings being used as a proxy for expected 2021 recreational landings – RHL overage is likely
  - 2017-2019 avg. landings = 20.3 M lbs (2019 = 15.6 M lbs)
  - 20.3 M lbs with 28.56% reduction = 14.5 M lbs
  - 14.5 M lbs would lead to a 73.86% overage of the 8.34 M lbs RHL

# Monitoring Committee Recommendation

- The MC unanimously supported the 2021 staff recommendation for *status quo* recreational management measures for bluefish.
  - Coastwide 3 (private) and 5-fish (for-hire) bag limits with no restrictions to minimum fish size or seasons.

# Motion

- Move to maintain status quo state and federal waters recreational measures for bluefish in 2021, including a 3-fish and 5-fish bag limit for private and for-hire anglers, respectively. This includes conservation equivalency measures for Georgia state waters, which includes a 15 fish bag limit, minimum size of 12 inches, and a closed season of March 1st through April 30th.

# Extra: 2020 Effort Data: ME-FL by Wave and Mode

	2018	2019	2020
<b>Wave 1 (Jan/Feb)</b>	9,794,626	6,956,121	6,844,439
<b>Party/Charter</b>	16,226	28,310	20,484
<b>Private/Rental</b>	2,579,137	2,379,076	1,932,303
<b>Shore</b>	7,199,263	4,548,735	4,891,652
<b>Wave 2 (Mar/Apr)</b>	16,942,405	18,586,878	14,384,533
<b>Party/Charter</b>	100,049	103,150	33,791
<b>Private/Rental</b>	4,989,171	5,457,253	5,578,898
<b>Shore</b>	11,853,185	13,026,475	8,771,844
<b>Wave 3 (May/Jun)</b>	26,439,389	28,938,541	27,282,401
<b>Party/Charter</b>	473,934	484,870	356,581
<b>Private/Rental</b>	9,486,056	9,776,746	9,290,736
<b>Shore</b>	16,479,399	18,676,925	17,635,084
<b>Wave 4 (Jul/Aug)</b>	36,544,417	35,941,434	36,615,014
<b>Party/Charter</b>	695,369	823,439	601,759
<b>Private/Rental</b>	13,989,712	12,909,112	14,904,586
<b>Shore</b>	21,859,336	22,208,883	21,108,669
<b>Total</b>	89,720,837	90,422,974	85,126,387

# Extra: 2020 Effort Data: ME-FL by Wave and Mode (%)

	2018	2019	2020
	<b>Wave 1 (Jan/Feb)</b>		
<b>Party/Charter</b>	0.17%	0.41%	0.30%
<b>Private/Rental</b>	26.33%	34.20%	28.23%
<b>Shore</b>	73.50%	65.39%	71.47%
	<b>Wave 2 (Mar/Apr)</b>		
<b>Party/Charter</b>	0.59%	0.55%	0.23%
<b>Private/Rental</b>	29.45%	29.36%	38.78%
<b>Shore</b>	69.96%	70.08%	60.98%
	<b>Wave 3 (May/Jun)</b>		
<b>Party/Charter</b>	1.79%	1.68%	1.31%
<b>Private/Rental</b>	35.88%	33.78%	34.05%
<b>Shore</b>	62.33%	64.54%	64.64%
	<b>Wave 4 (Jul/Aug)</b>		
<b>Party/Charter</b>	1.90%	2.29%	1.64%
<b>Private/Rental</b>	38.28%	35.92%	40.71%
<b>Shore</b>	59.82%	61.79%	57.65%