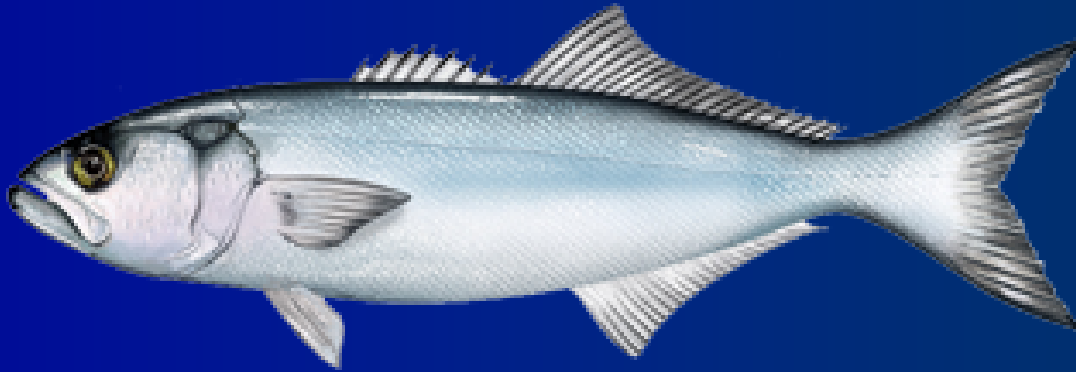




# Atlantic Bluefish



Council Meeting

December 13, 2021

# Meeting Objective



- Approve bluefish recreational management measures for 2022-2023
  - Recent fishery performance
  - Other relevant information

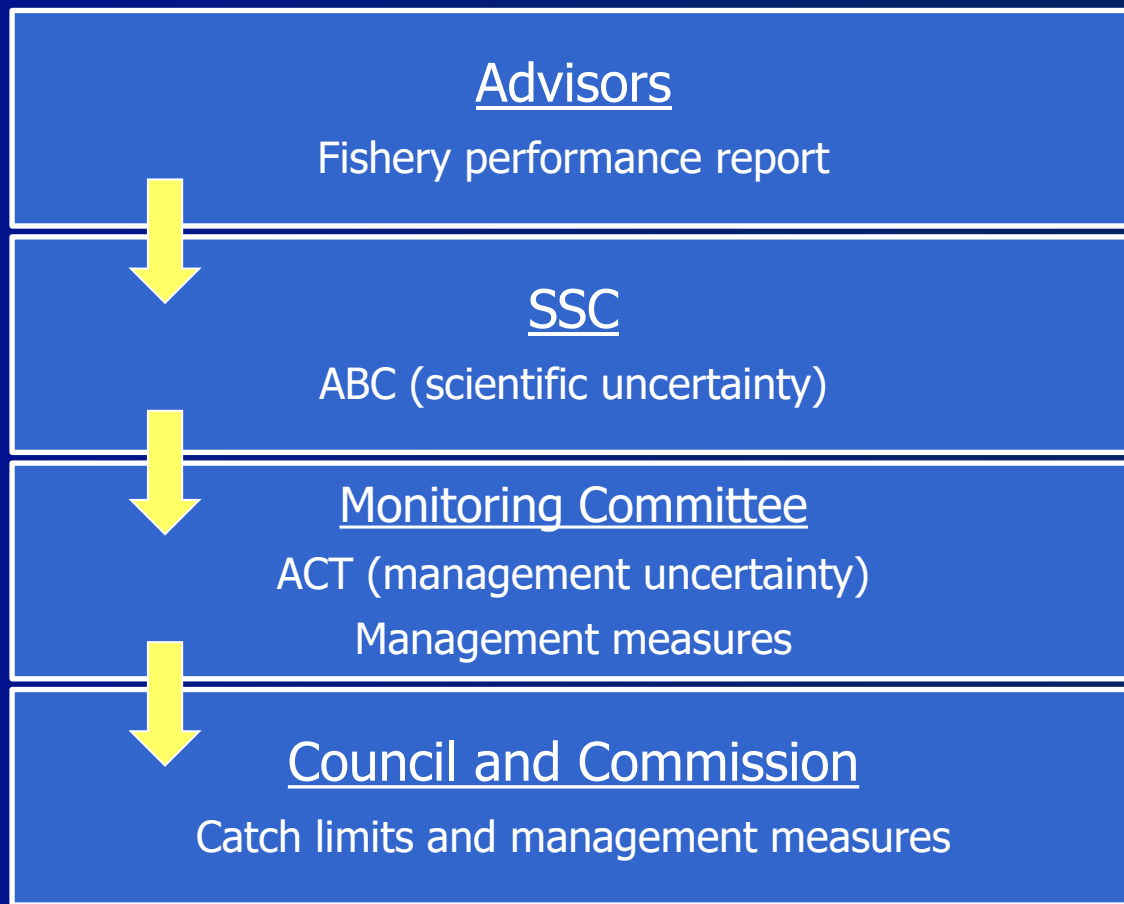
# Specifications Process



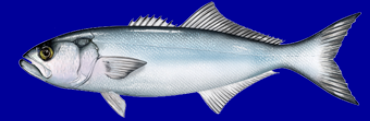
## Bluefish Specifications

2022

2023

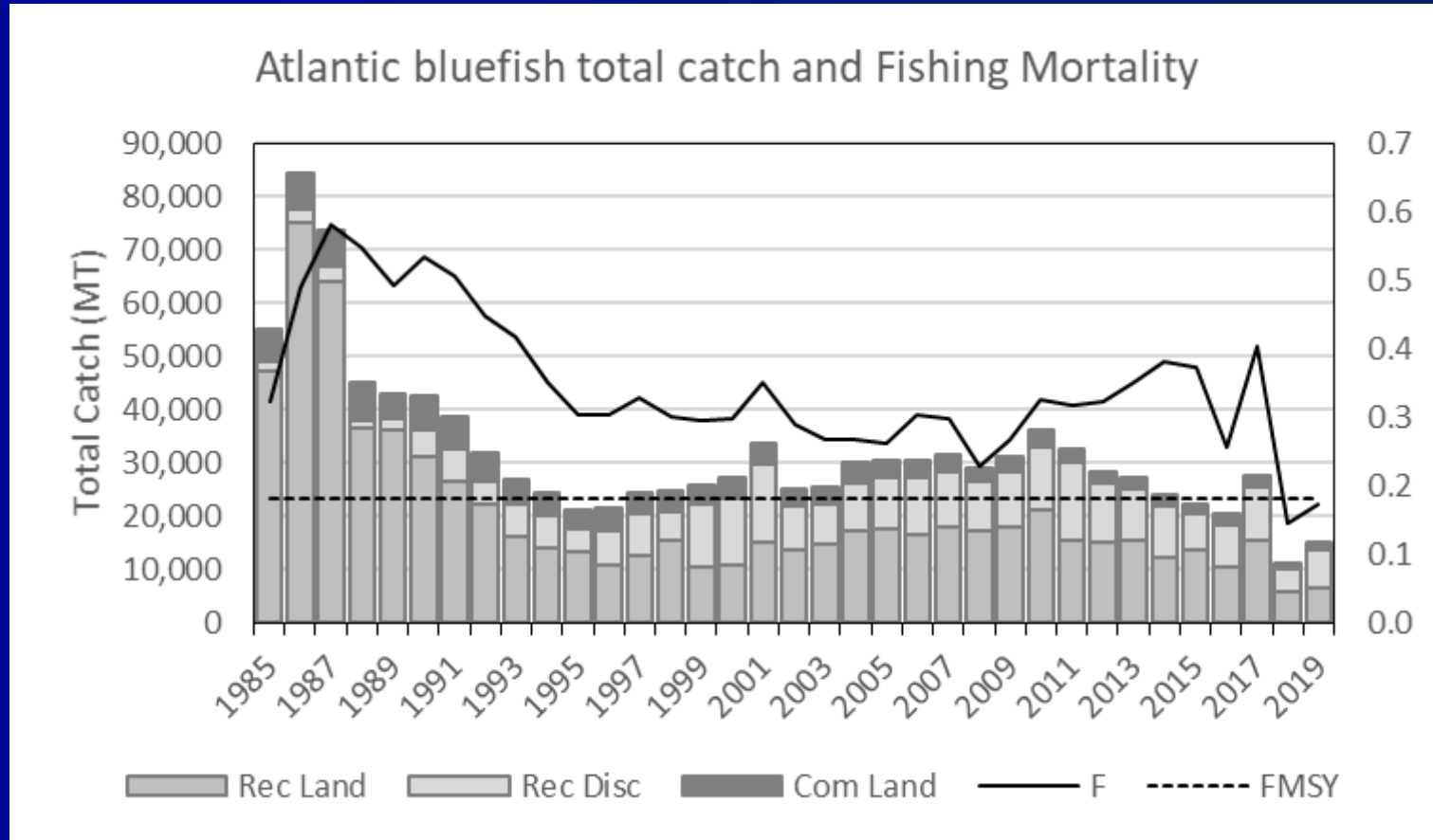


# Stock Status



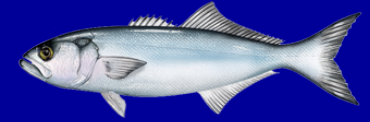
- Last operational assessment: July 2021
- **Stock is overfished**
- **Overfishing is not occurring**
- Research track assessment in 2022
  - Will inform the 2024-2025 specifications cycle

# Fishing Mortality – 2021 Assessment

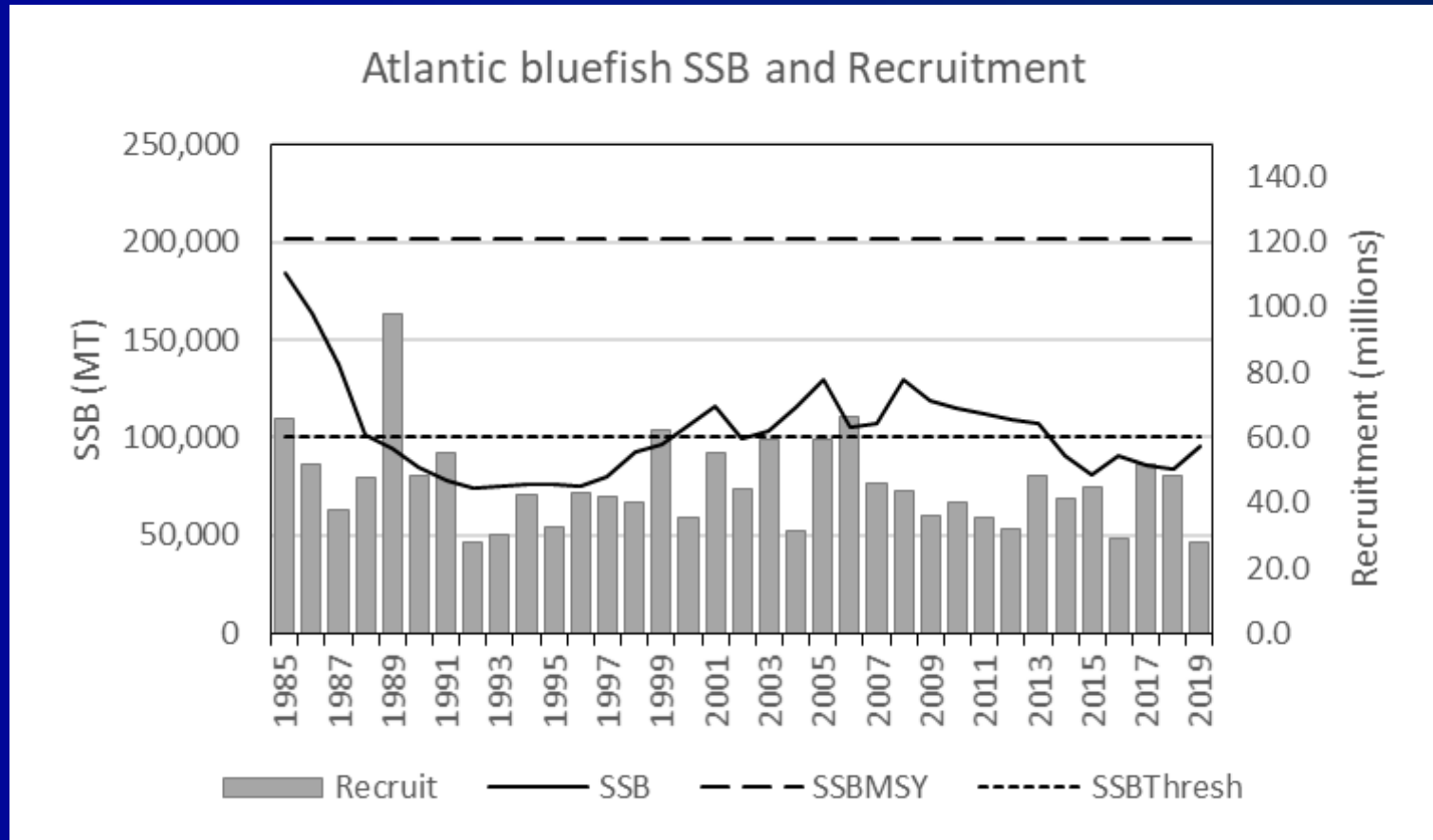


## Overfishing not occurring

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



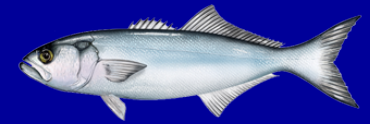
# Biomass – 2021 Assessment



## Overfished

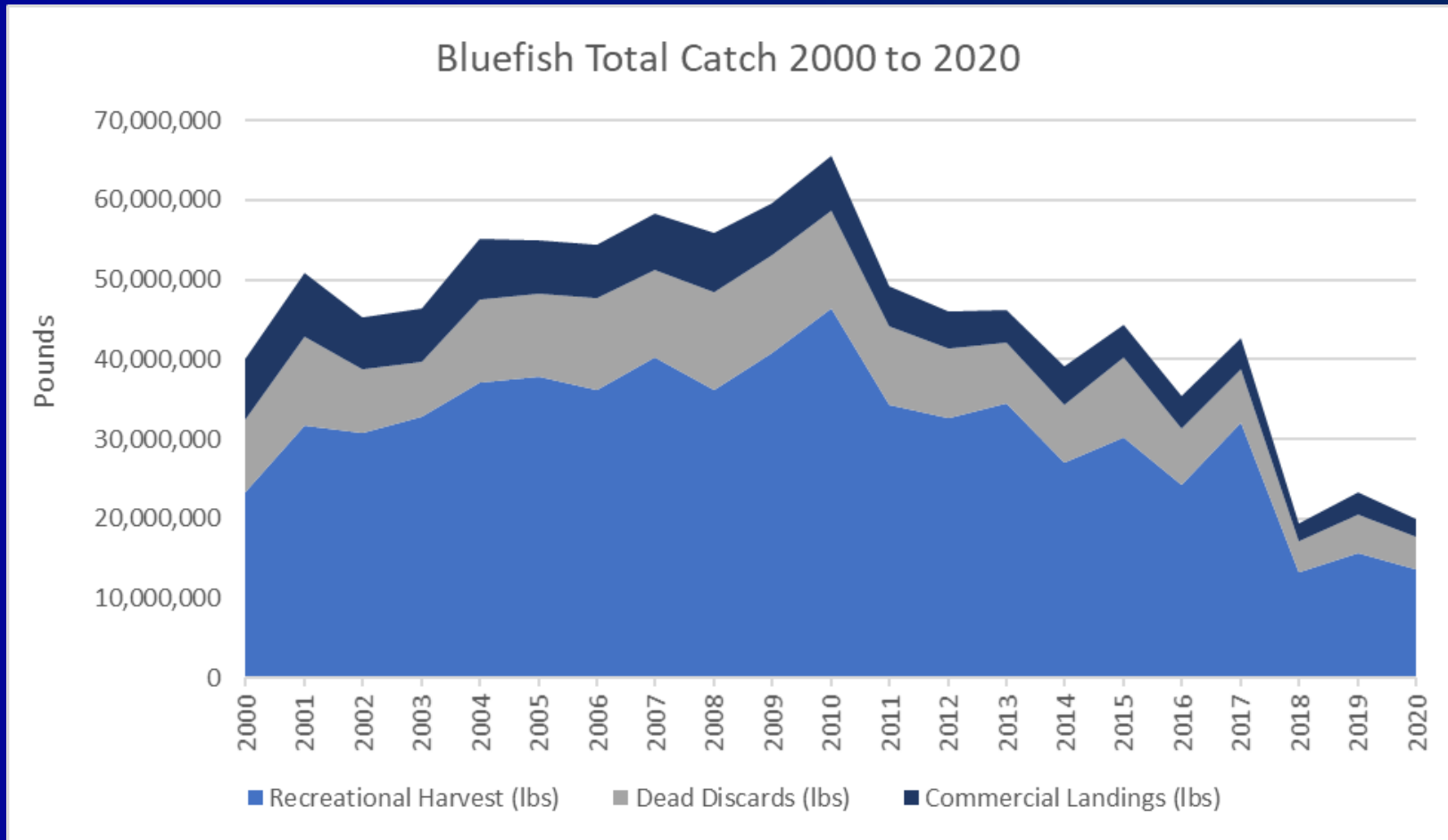
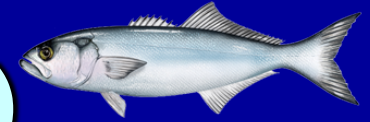
2019 SSB (95,742 mt)  $\approx$  5% below SSB<sub>Threshold</sub> (100,865 mt)

# Management Measures



Management Measures	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
TAC/ABC	19.45	20.64	21.81	21.81	16.28	16.28	25.26	30.62
TAL	16.46	18.19	18.82	19.33	12.25	12.25	17.42	26.43
Comm. Quota	4.88	8.54	7.24	7.71	2.77	2.77	3.54	4.29
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	13.89	22.14
Rec. Landings, Old MRIP	9.54	9.52	3.64	N/A	N/A	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	TBD	TBD
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)





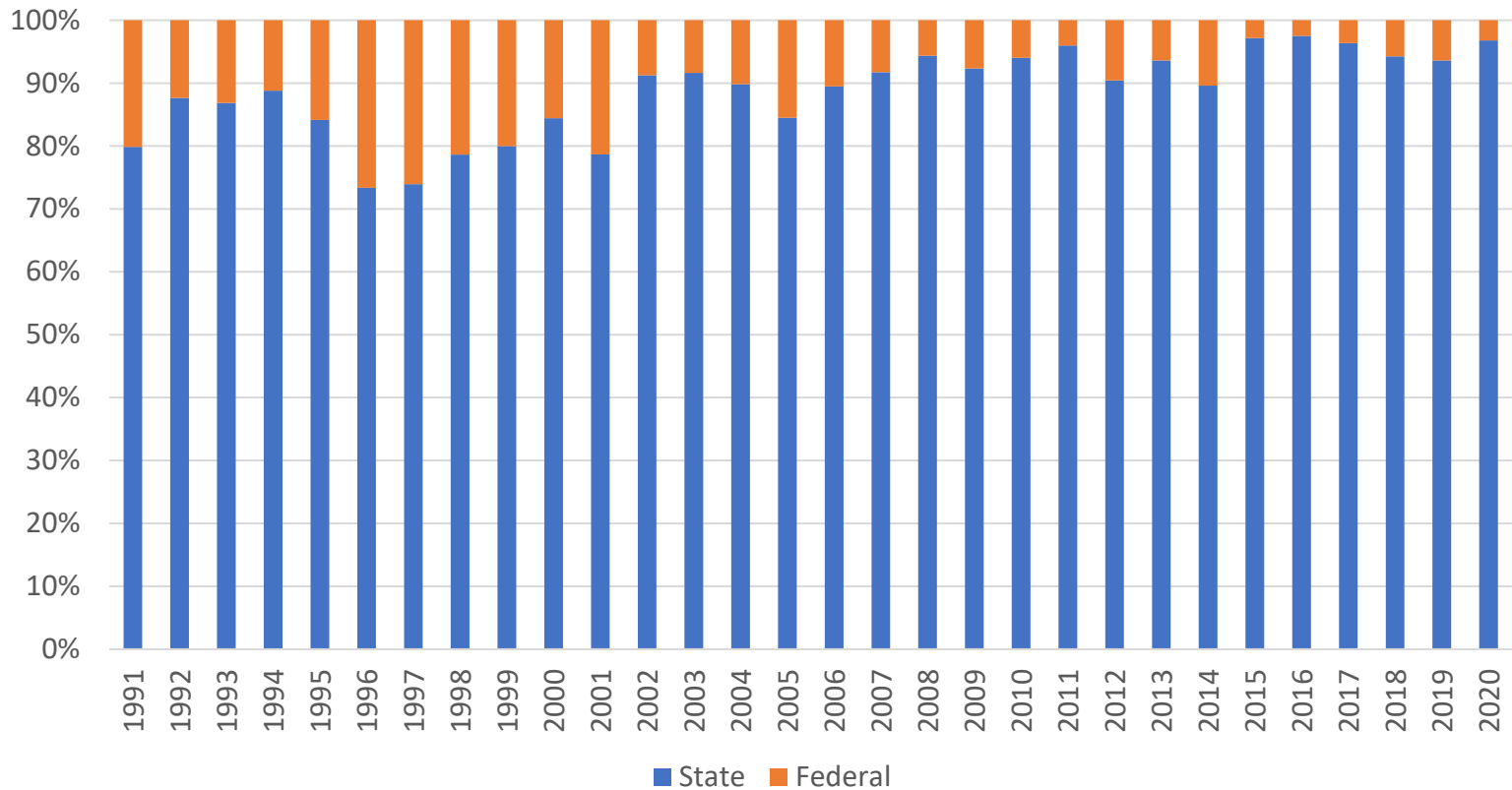
# 2020 Rec Landings by State

State	Harvest			Catch	Released Alive	Dead Discards
	Pounds	Number	Average Weight <sup>1</sup> (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
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,581,217</b>	<b>9,336,221</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>30,681,825</b>	<b>21,345,604</b>	<b>3,201,841</b>

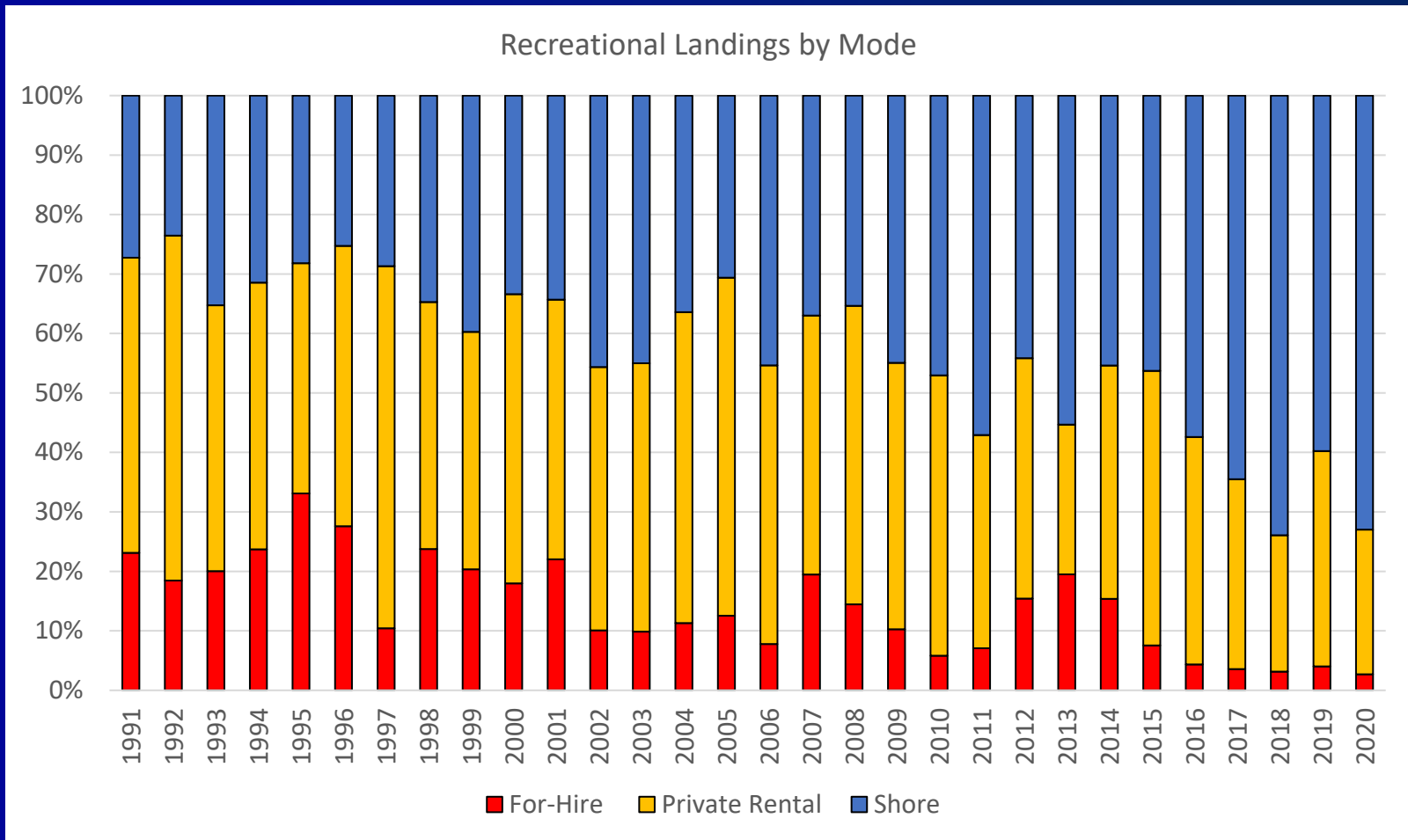
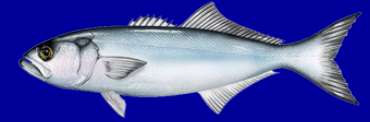
# Recreational Fishery



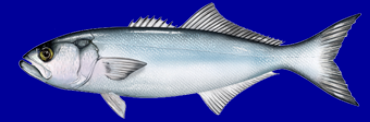
State vs. Federal Landings, 1991-2020



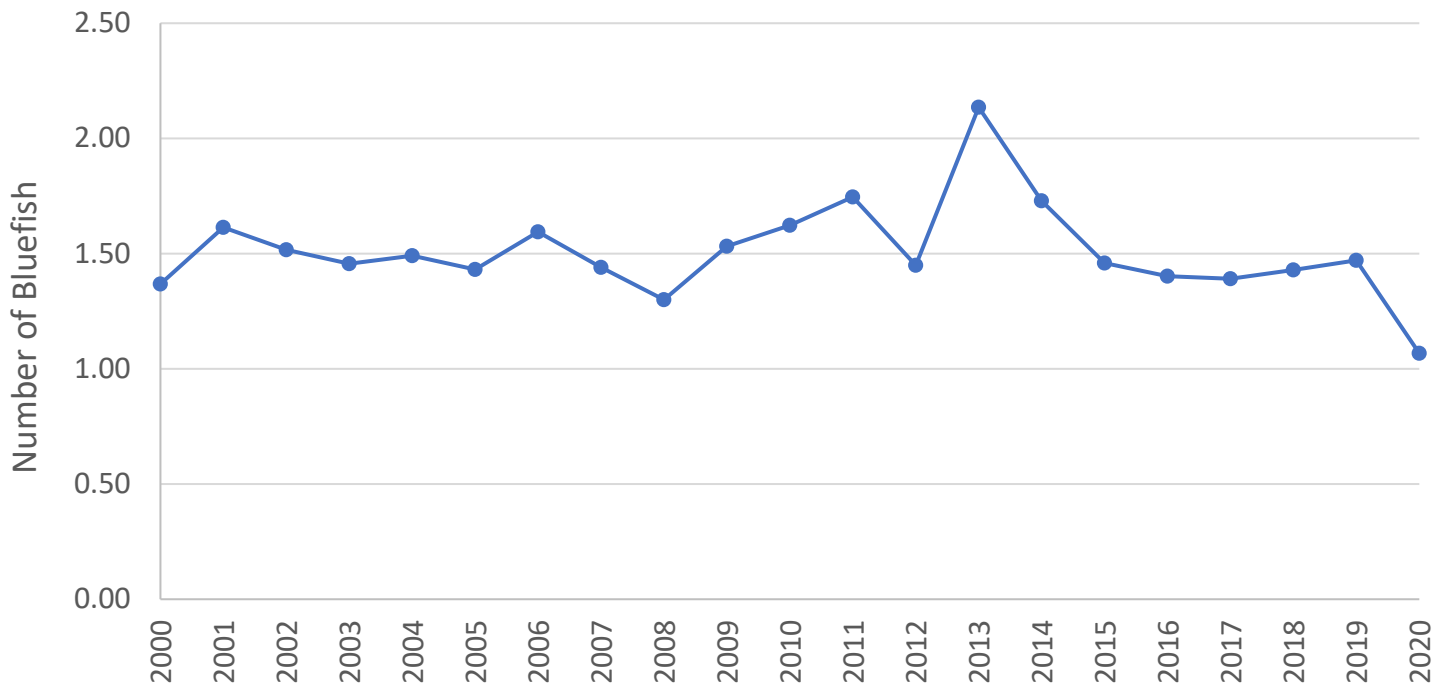
# Recreational Fishery



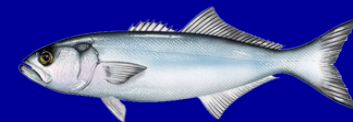
# Recreational Fishery



Recreational landings per “bluefish” trip



# Federal permits/activity



- 2020 Federally Permitted Statistics
  - 863 (851) p/c vessels
  - 258 (278) p/c vessels landed bluefish (VTR)

\* 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



## Market/Economic Comments

- COVID-19 has greatly impacted the for-hire and commercial sectors



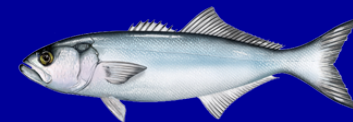
# AP Fishery Performance Report



## 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



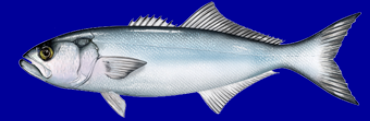
## Research, Environmental and Other Comments

- 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

# Council approved bluefish specifications for 2022-2023

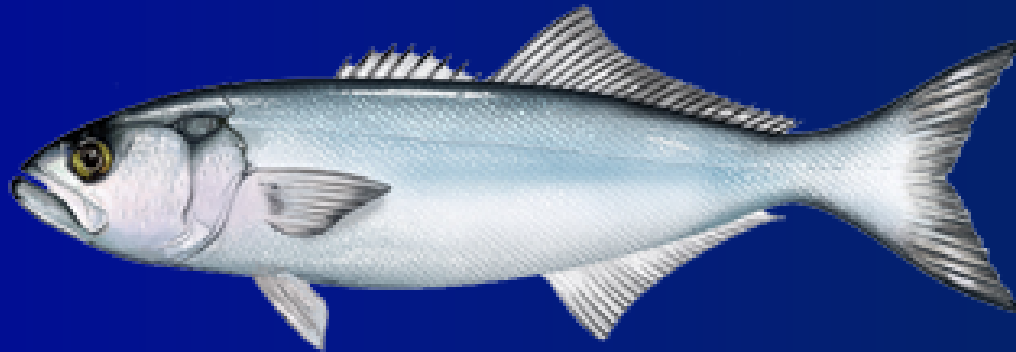
Management Measure	2022		2023		Basis
	mil lb.	mt	mil lb.	mt	
<b>Overfishing Limit (OFL)</b>	40.56	18,399	45.17	20,490	Stock assessment projections
<b>ABC</b>	25.26	11,460	30.62	13,890	Derived by SSC; Follows the rebuild plan through NEFSC projections
<b>ACL</b>	25.26	11,460	30.62	13,890	Defined in FMP as equal to ABC
<b>Commercial ACL</b>	3.54	1,604	4.29	1,945	ABC x 14%
<b>Commercial Management Uncertainty</b>	0	0	0	0	Derived by the Monitoring Committee
<b>Commercial ACT</b>	3.54	1,604	4.29	1,945	(ACL – Commercial Management Uncertainty) x 14%
<b>Recreational ACL</b>	21.73	9,856	26.34	11,945	ABC x 86%
<b>Recreational Management Uncertainty</b>	0	0	0	0	Derived by the Monitoring Committee
<b>Recreational ACT</b>	21.73	9,856	26.34	11,945	(ACL – Recreational Management Uncertainty) x 86%
<b>Recreational AMs</b>	3.65	1,656	0	0	2022 only: 2020 ABC overage
<b>Commercial Discards</b>	0	0	0	0	Value used in assessment
<b>Recreational Discards</b>	4.19	1,901	4.19	1,901	2020 GARFO-estimated (MRIP) discards
<b>Commercial TAL</b>	3.54	1,604	4.29	1,945	Commercial ACT - commercial discards
<b>Recreational TAL</b>	13.89	6,298	22.14	10,044	Recreational ACT - recreational discards Rec AMs
<b>Combined TAL</b>	17.42	7,903	26.43	11,989	Commercial TAL + Recreational TAL
<b>Transfer</b>	0	0	0	0	No transfer while overfished or overharvested
<b>Expected Recreational Landings</b>	13.58	6,160	13.58	6,160	2020 Recreational Landings
<b>Commercial Quota</b>	3.54	1,604	4.29	1,945	Commercial TAL +/- transfer
<b>RHL</b>	13.89	6,298	22.14	10,044	Recreational TAL +/- transfer

# MC Discussion: Rec Measures



- **Recommendation: Status quo recreational management measures**
  - 3-fish for private and shore modes and 5-fish for the for-hire mode with no restrictions to minimum fish size or seasons
- There is still a high degree of uncertainty associated with the bluefish discard estimates
- The current recreational management measures were not implemented by all states until mid-late 2020
- The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted MRIP sampling in 2020, which led to imputations being developed for part of the fishing year. The imputations used 2018 and 2019 data to estimate 2020 harvest, which were years where the 3 and 5-fish bag limits were not in place
- Bluefish is entering a 7-year rebuilding plan in 2022
- Research track assessment in 2022

# Questions?



# Draft Motion

- Move to maintain status quo state and federal waters recreational measures for bluefish in 2022 and 2023, 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.