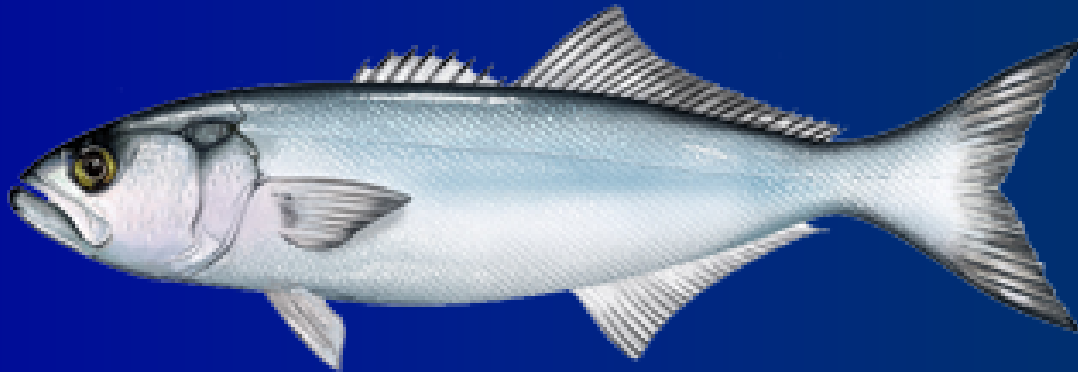


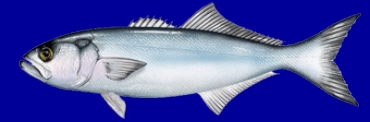
Atlantic Bluefish



Scientific and Statistical Committee
Meeting

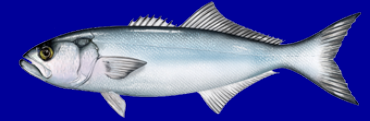
July 23, 2020

Outline



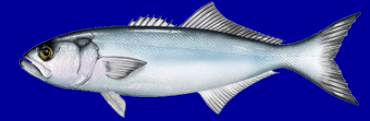
- Management overview
- Stock Status
- Data update
- Review recent fishery performance and fishery regulations
- Review of AP Fishery Performance Report
- ABC Recommendation

Meeting Objective



- Recommend a 2021 ABC
 - Recent Fishery Performance
 - Data update
 - On the water observations
 - Factors influencing recent catch and landings

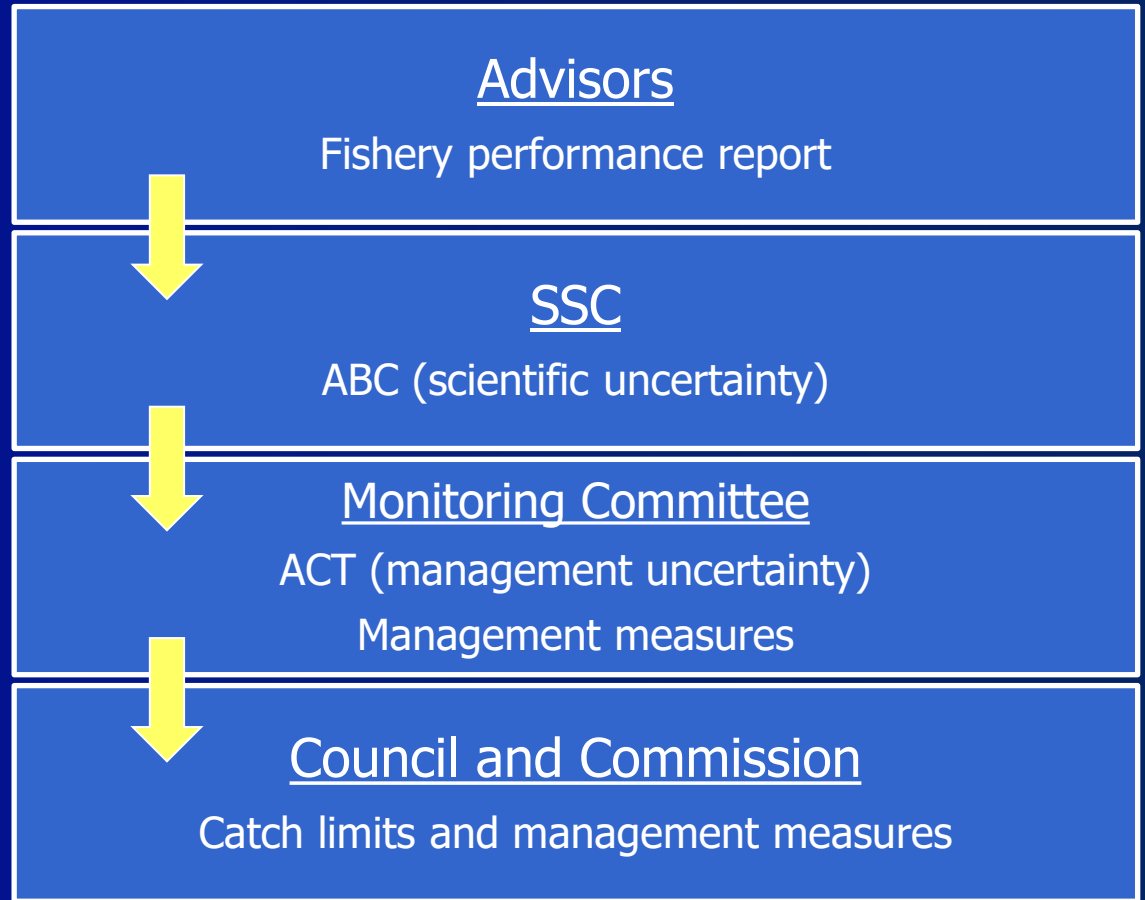
Specifications Process



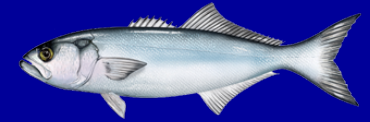
Bluefish Specifications

2020

2021

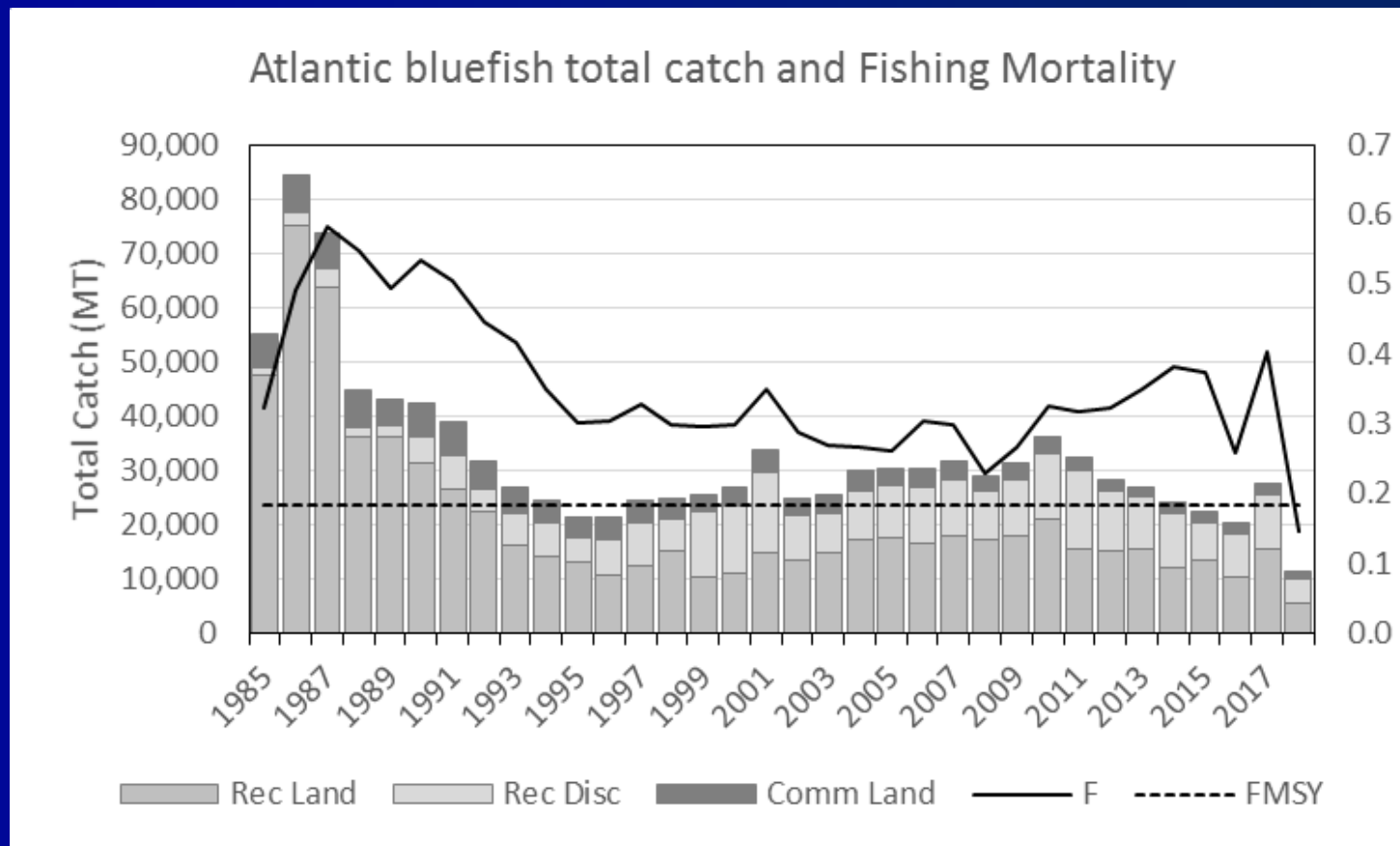


Stock Status



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

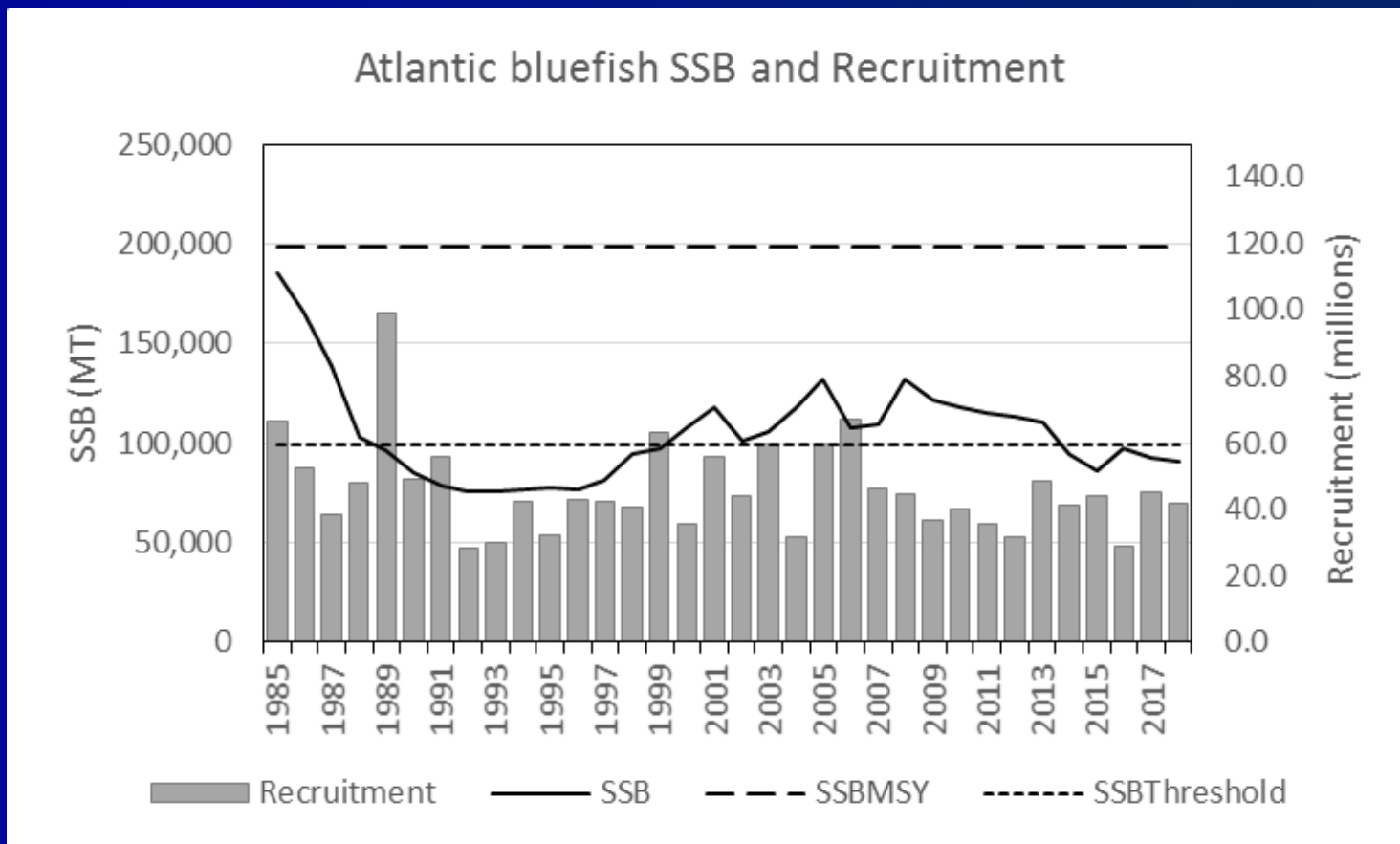
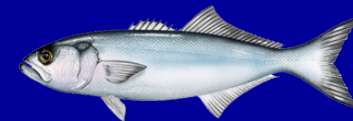
Fishing Mortality – 2019 Operational Assessment



Overfishing not occurring

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

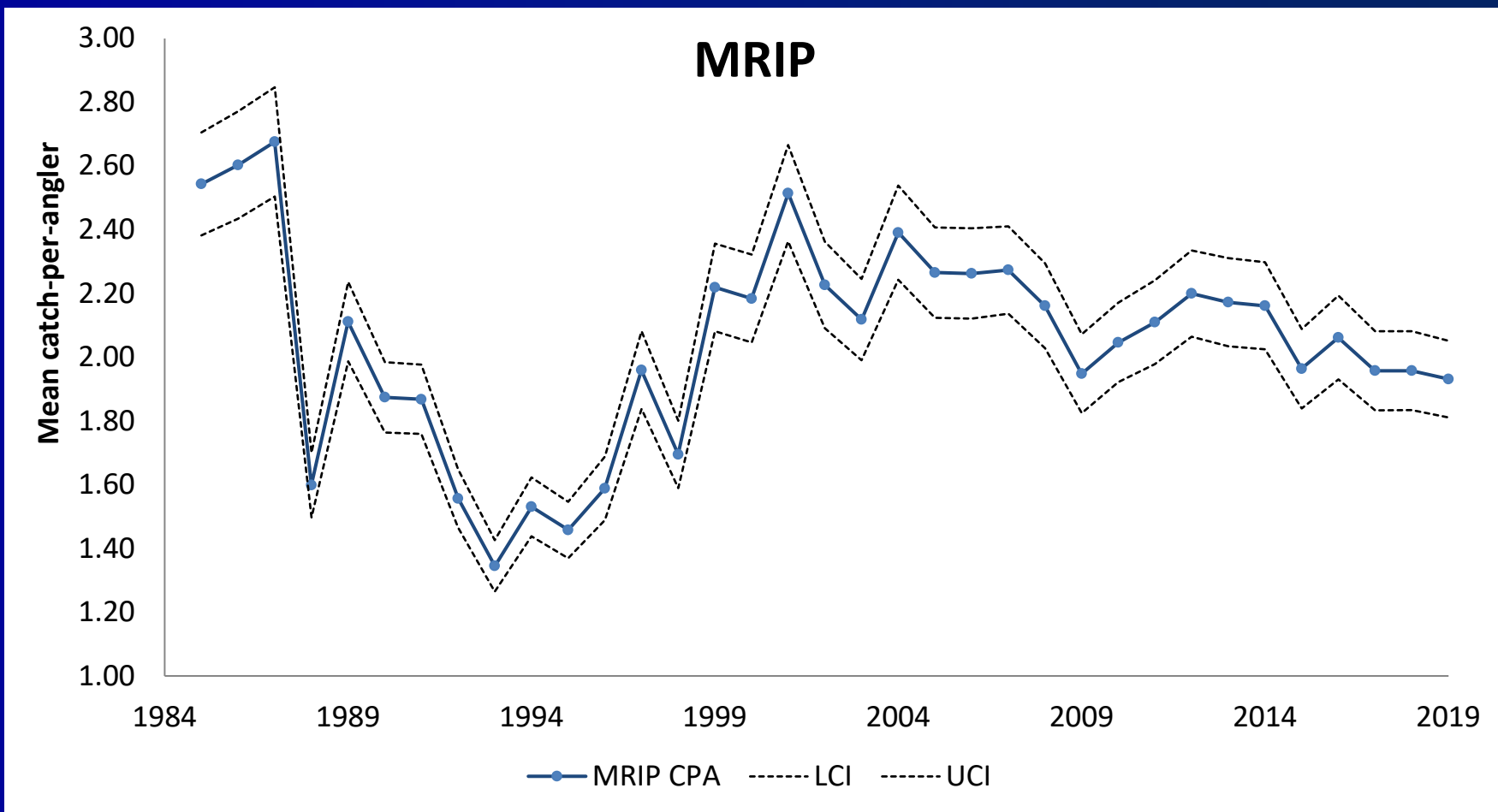
Biomass – 2019 Operational Assessment



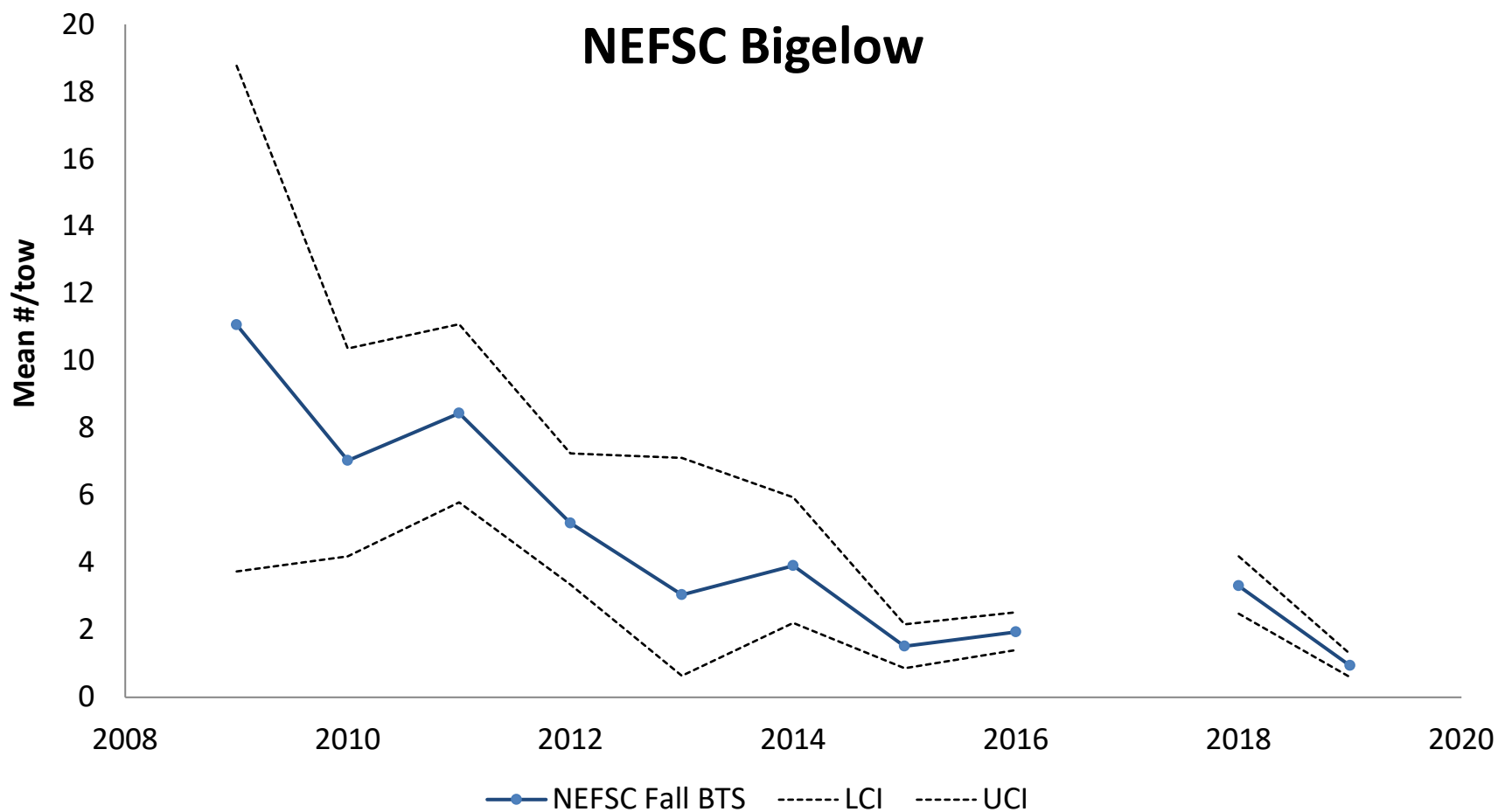
Overfished

2018 SSB (91,041 mt) \approx 8% below SSB_{Threshold} (99,359 mt)

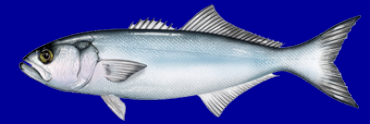
Indices of Abundance



Indices of Abundance

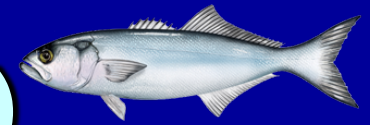


Management Measures

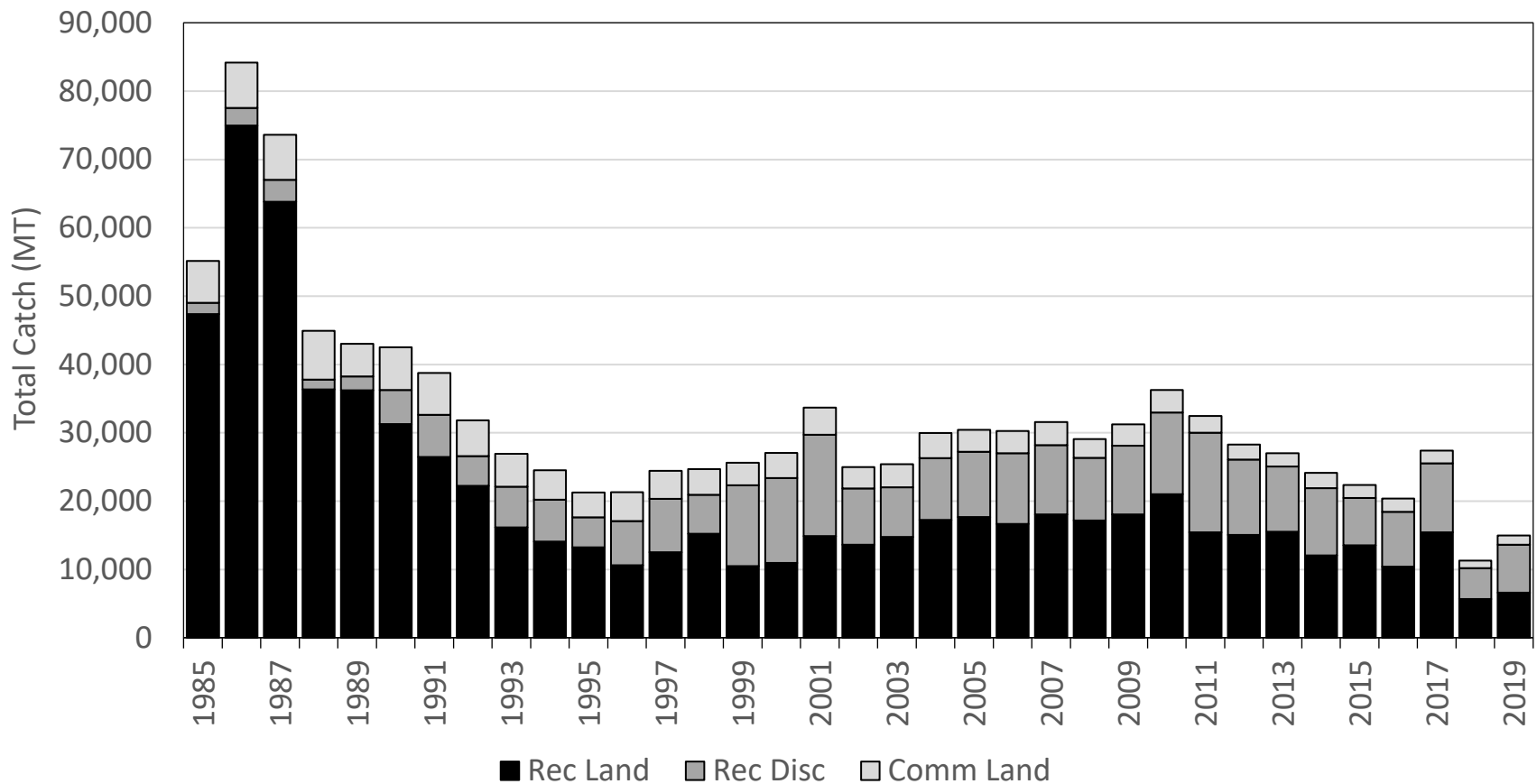


Management Measures	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
TAC/ABC	21.54	19.45	20.64	21.81	21.81	16.28
TAL	18.19	16.46	18.19	18.82	19.33	12.25
Comm. Quota	5.24	4.88	8.54	7.24	7.71	2.77
Comm. Landings	4.02	4.1	3.64	2.20	2.78	
Rec. Harvest Limit	12.95	11.58	9.65	11.58	11.62	9.48
Rec. Landings, Old MRIP	11.67	9.54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

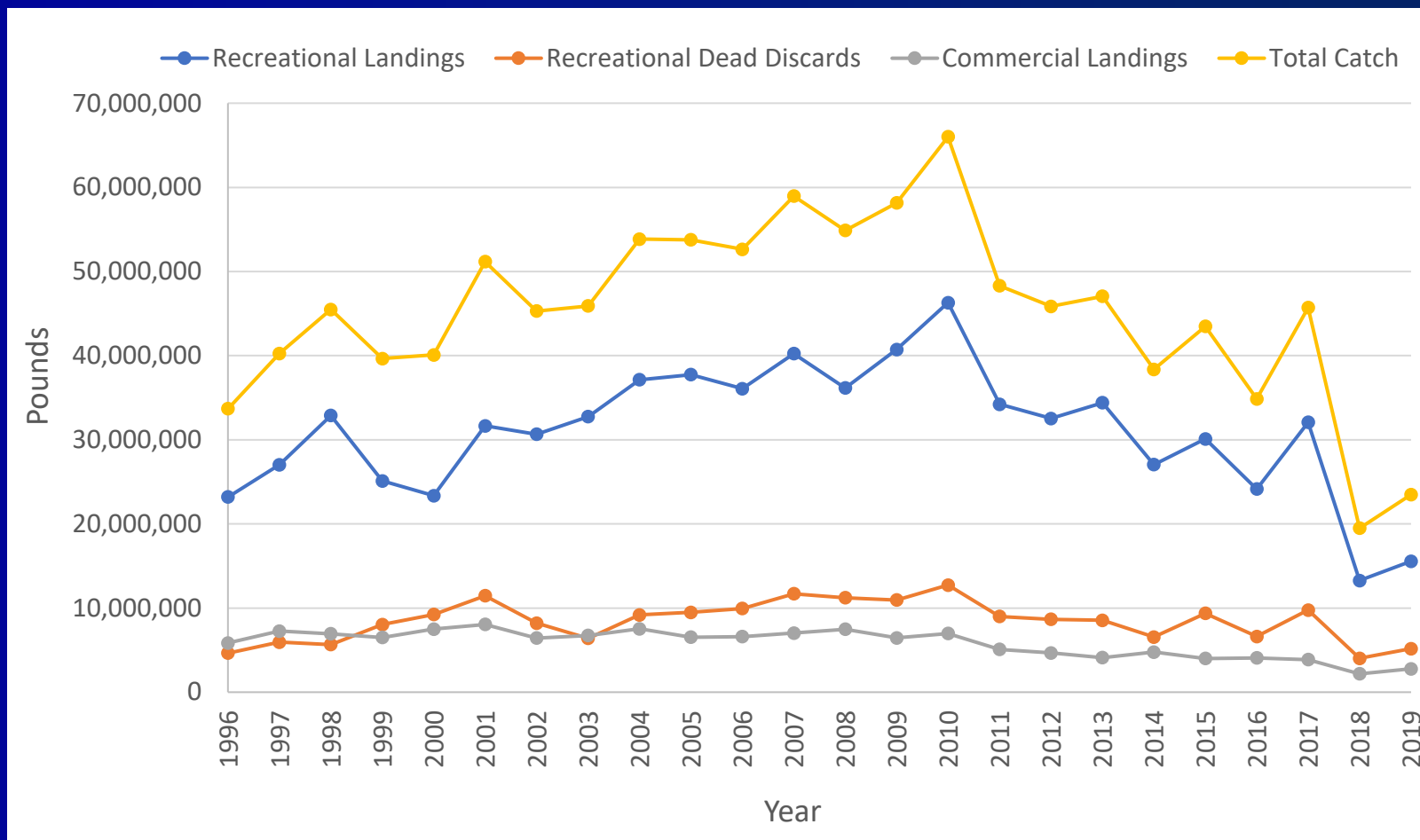
Catch (landings and discards)



Bluefish Total Catch 1985-2019



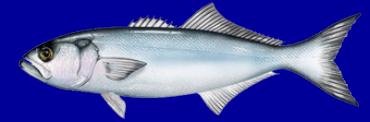
Total Removals (Landings and Discards)



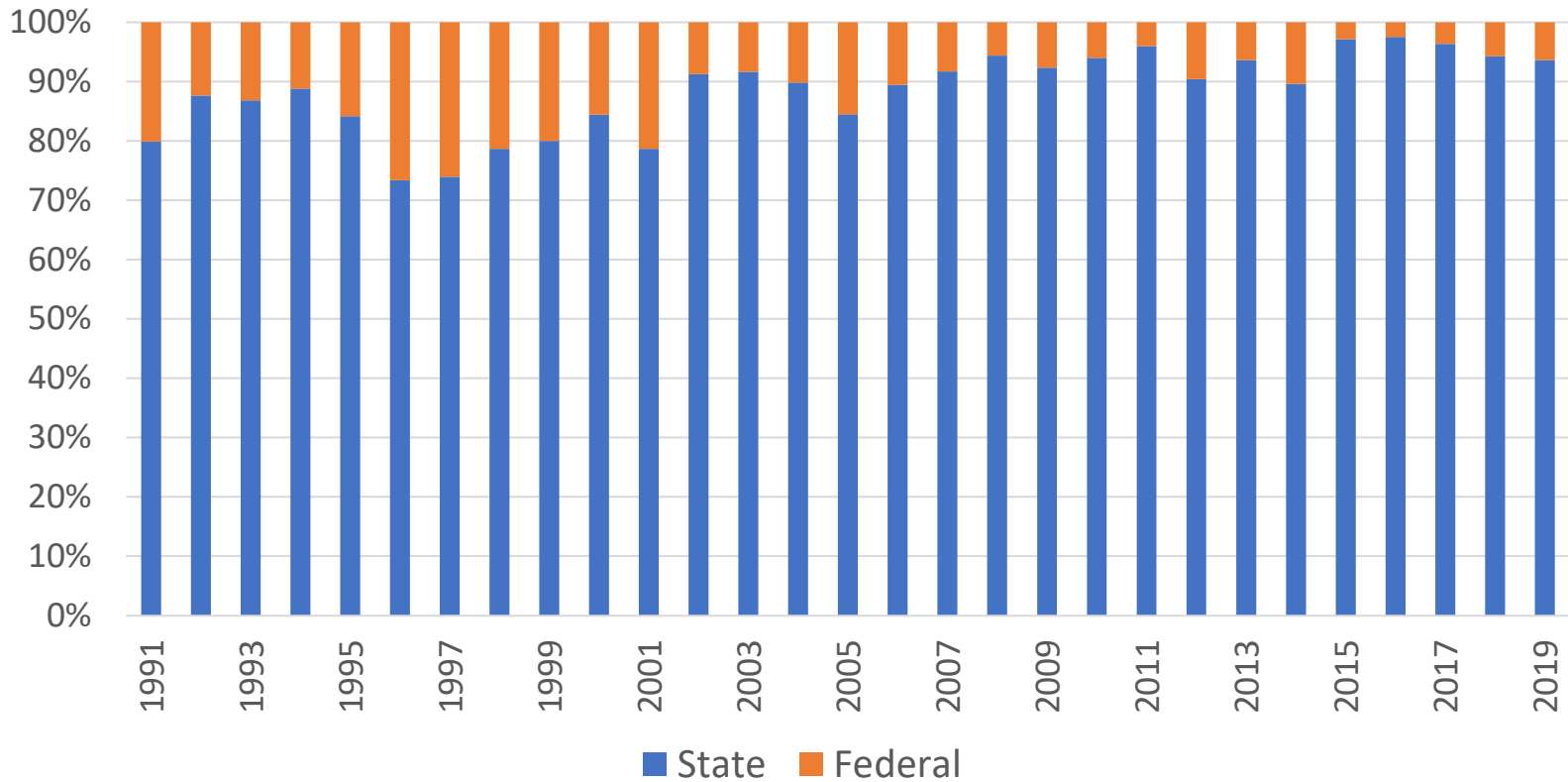
2019 Rec Landings by State

State	Harvest			Catch
	Pounds	Number	Average wt. (lbs)	Number
MRIP (New) Estimates				
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

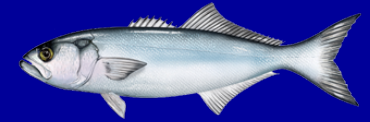
Recreational Fishery



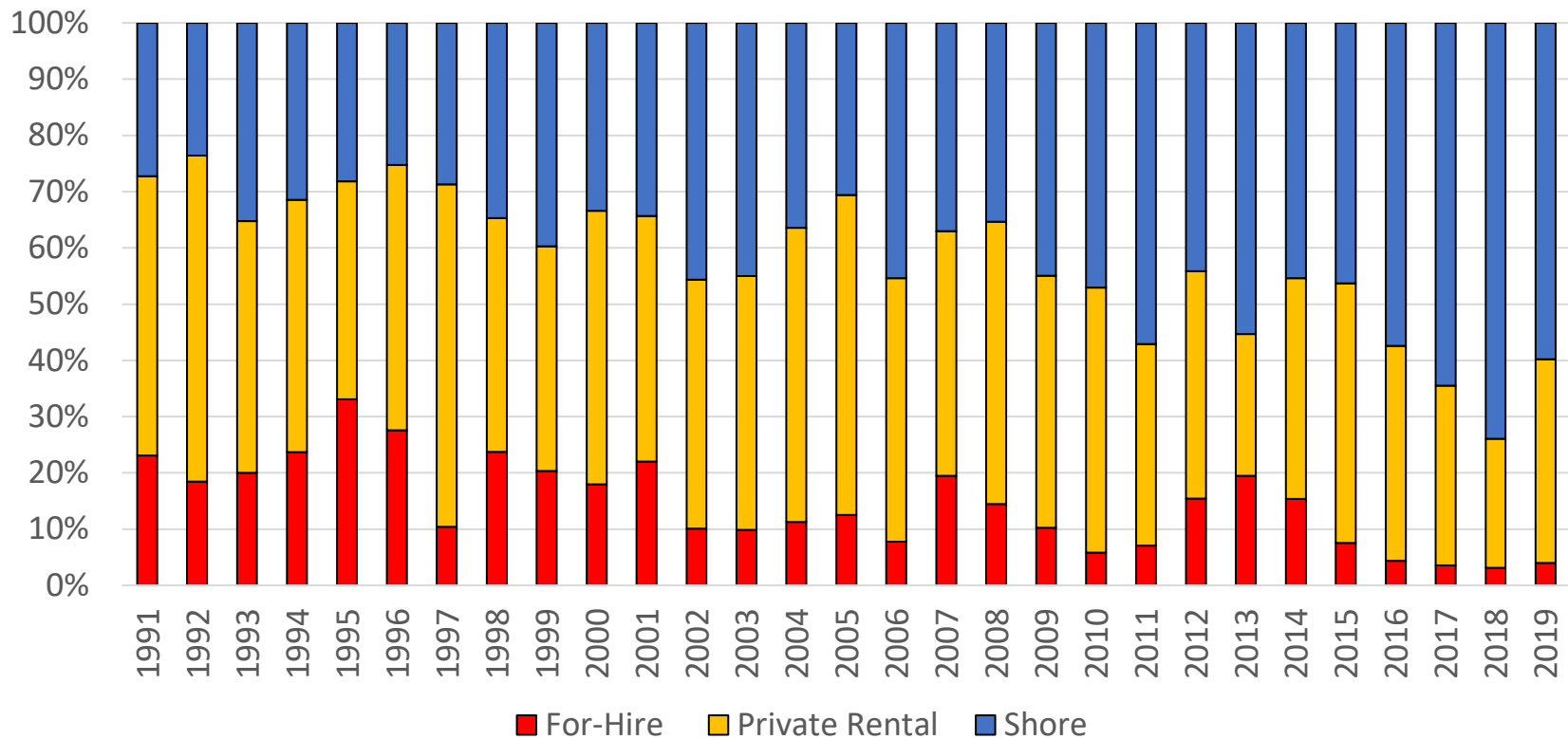
State vs. Federal Landings, 1991-2019



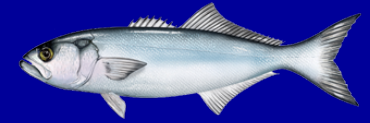
Recreational Fishery



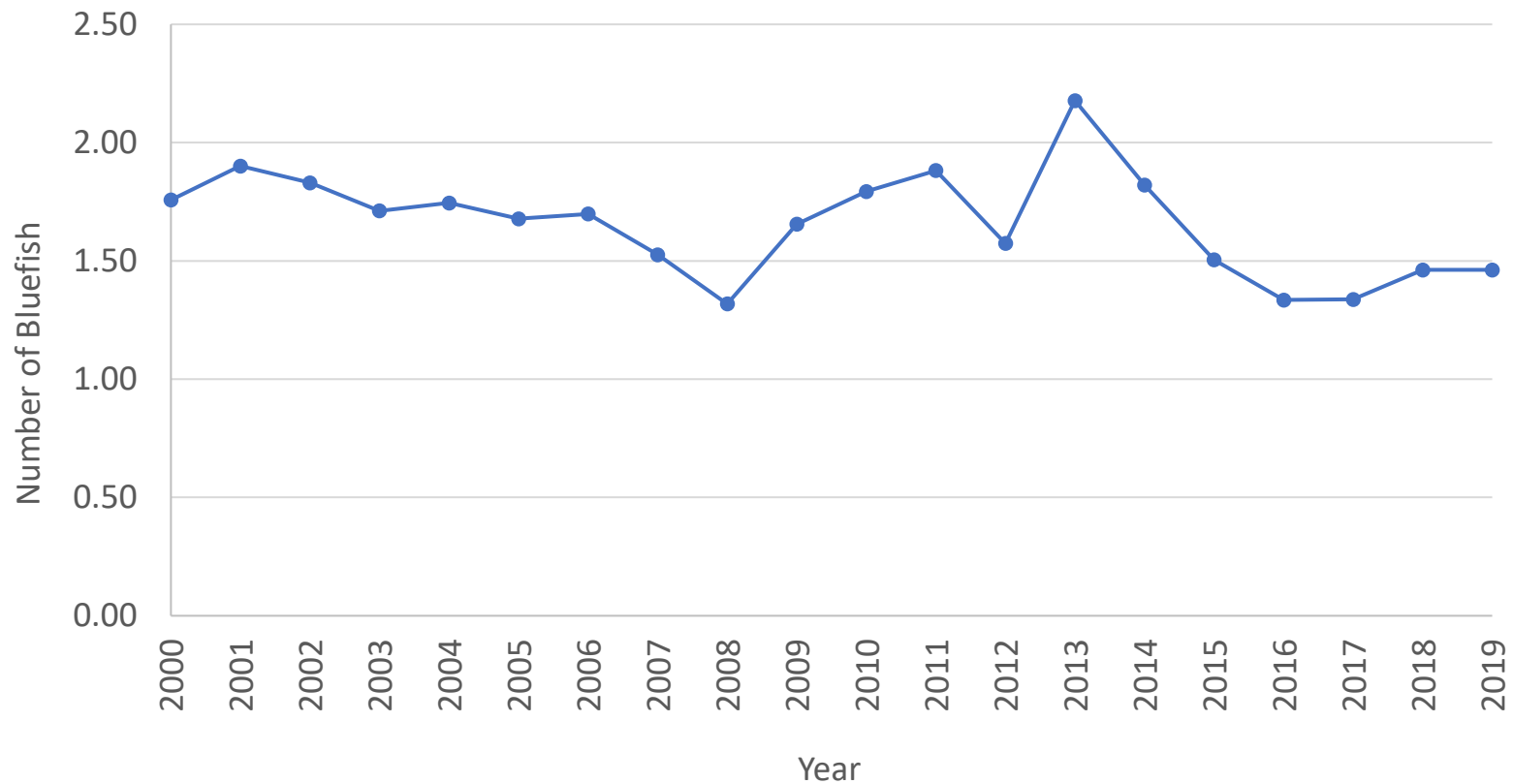
Recreational Landings by Mode



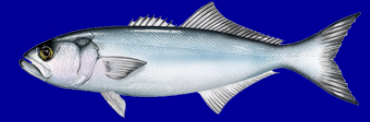
Recreational Fishery



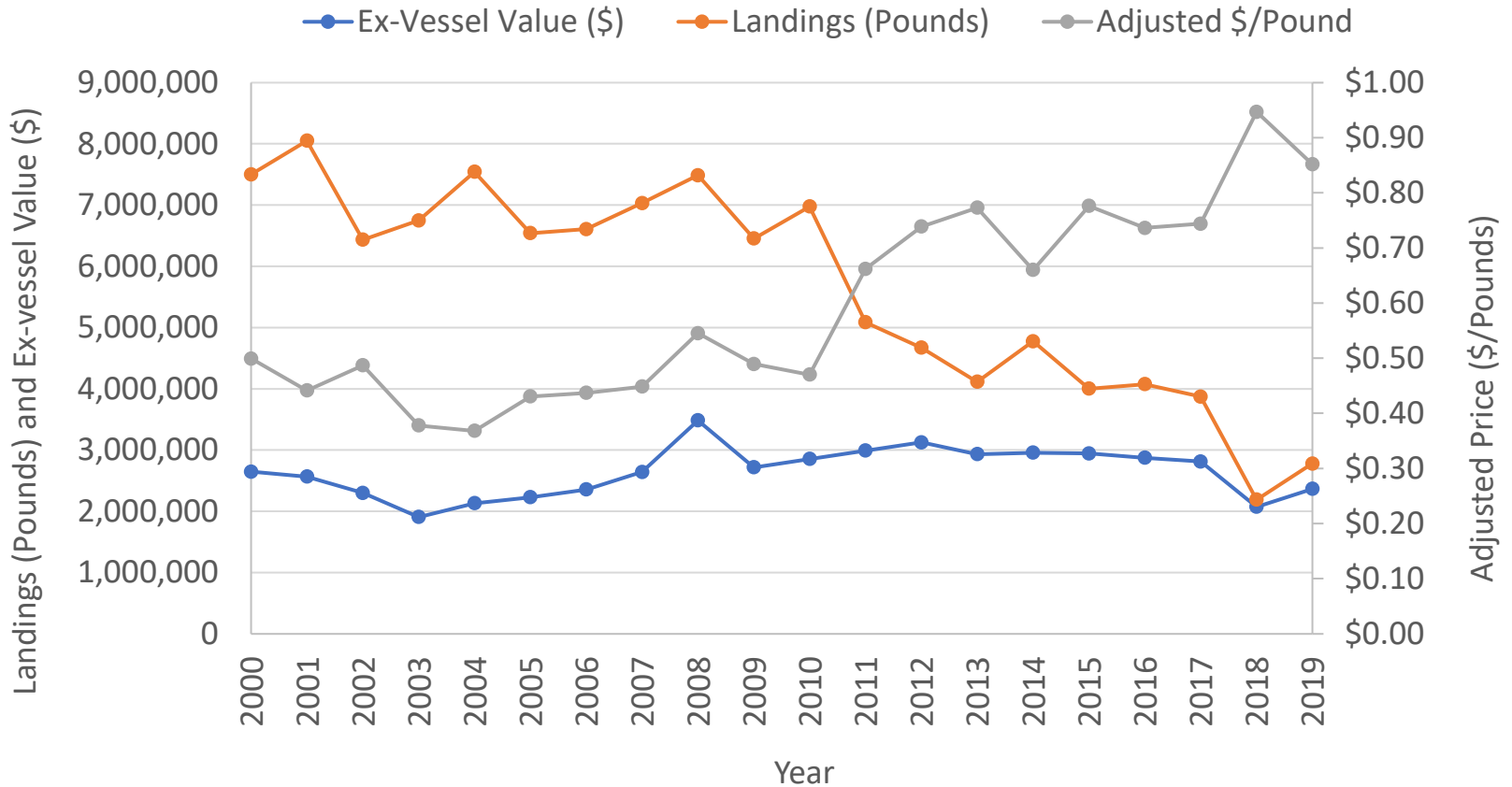
Recreational landings per “bluefish” trip



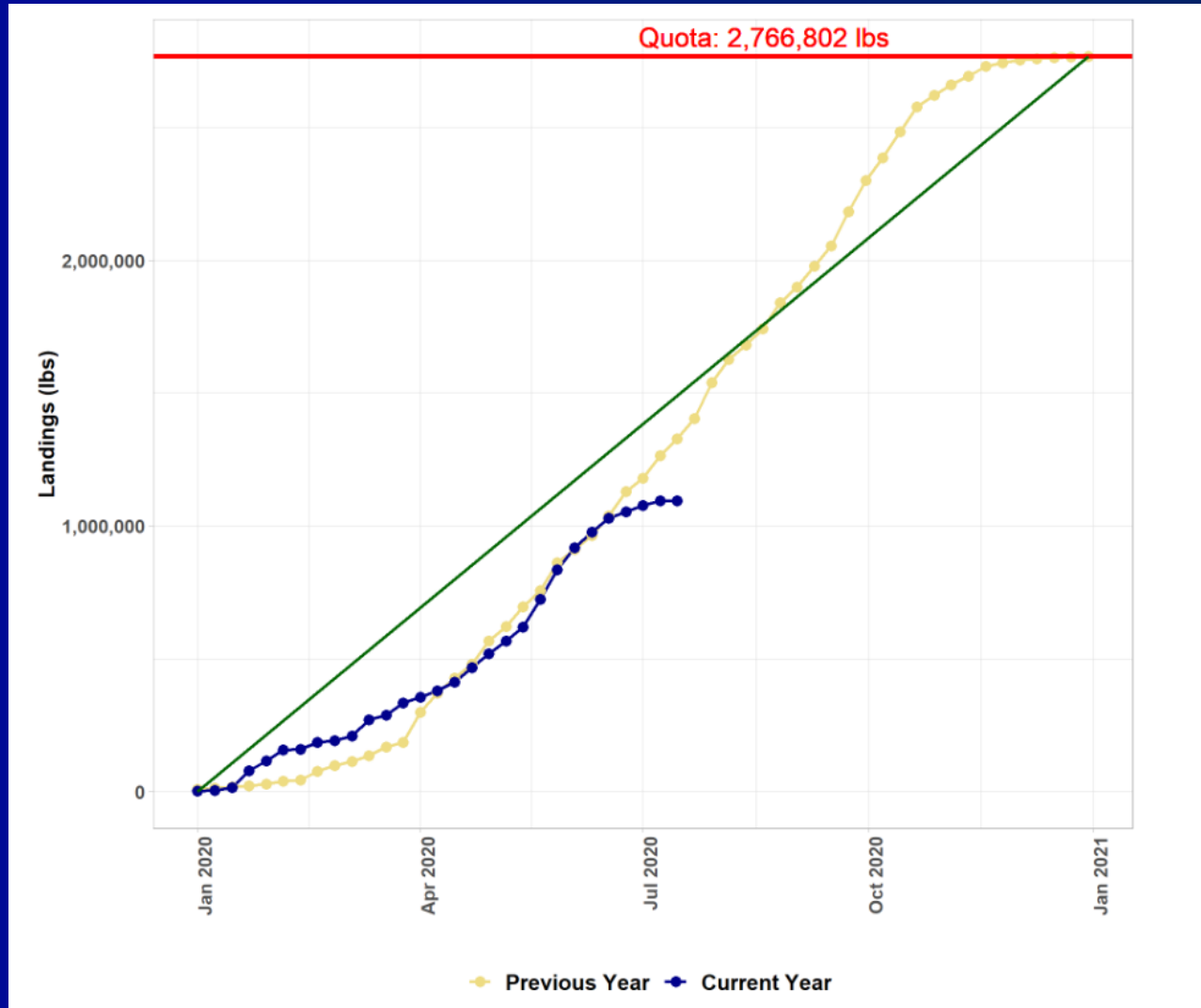
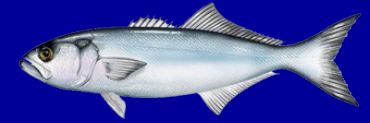
Commercial Fishery



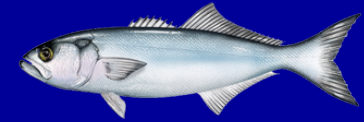
Bluefish Landings, Value, and Price



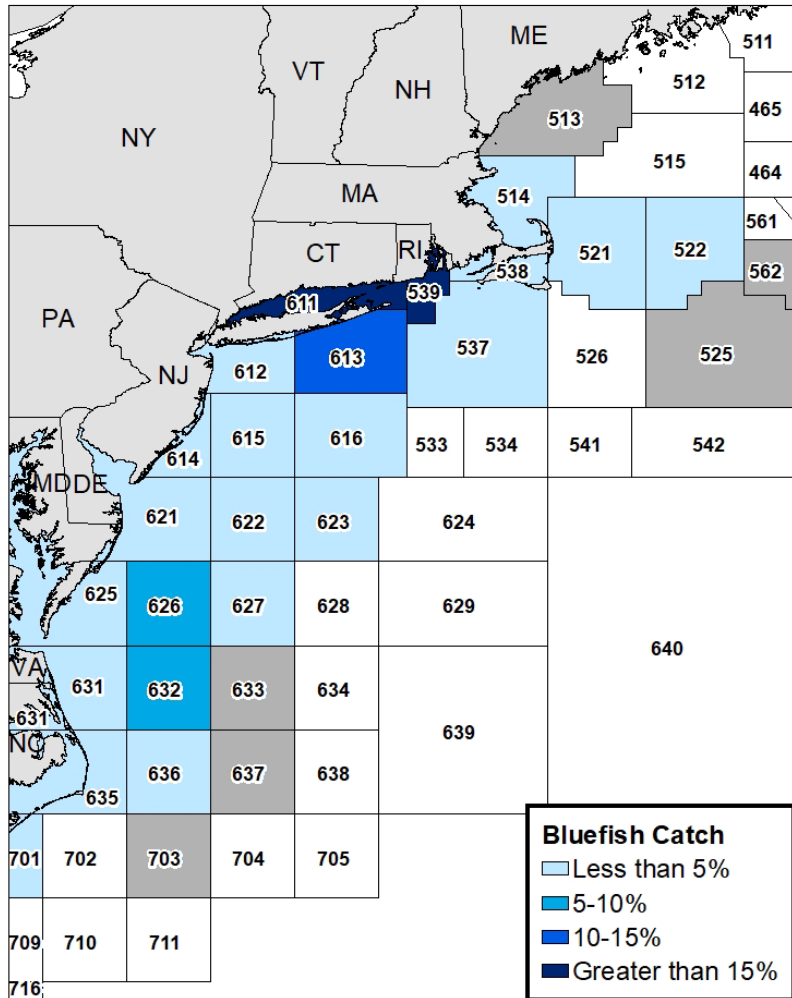
Commercial Fishery



Commercial Fishery



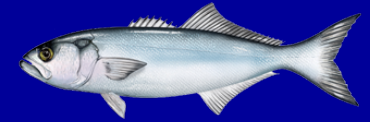
2019 Commercial Bluefish Catch - VTRs



Landings by Gear - Dealer Data 2019

- Gillnet (44%)
- Unknown (28%)
- Otter trawl, bottom fish (12%)
- Other (11%)
- Handline (5%)

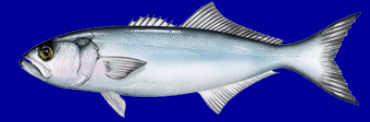
Commercial Fishery



Top Commercial Bluefish Ports

Port	Pounds	% of Total Comm. Bluefish Landings	# vessels
Hatteras, NC	393,056	14%	8
Point Judith, RI	283,941	10%	99
Wanchese, NC	273,277	10%	25
Montauk, NY	269,418	10%	78
Hampton Bays, NY	147,959	5%	30
Little Compton, RI	111,107	4%	14

Federal permits/activity

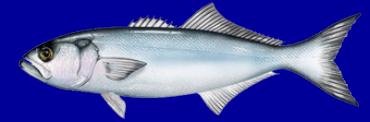


- 2019 Federally Permitted Statistics
 - 2,442 (2,439) commercial vessels
 - 851 (834) p/c vessels
 - 389 (407) dealers

 - 483 (476) commercial vessels landed bluefish
 - 278 (270) p/c vessels landed bluefish (VTR)
 - 146 (149) dealers purchased bluefish

* Parentheses indicate numbers from 2018

Advisory Panel Discussion



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

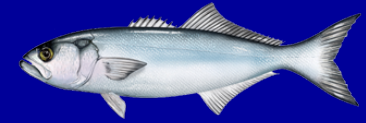
AP Fishery Performance Report



Recreational Fishery Comments

- Increase in abundance coastwide from 2018 to 2019 (2018 was the worst year in recent history)
 - More so from NY-south
- Reports of larger bluefish further offshore
- For-hire fleet does not go far enough offshore to target the large biomass
- Abundance of bait has led to a better bluefish year
- Smaller bluefish were seasonally available from shore

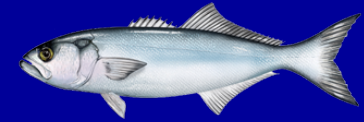
AP Fishery Performance Report



Commercial Fishery Comments

- Larger bluefish are offshore and available to commercial fishermen (NY/NJ)
- If current trends continue, the commercial quota will be too low
- 2019 was a difficult year for FL fishermen due to a lot of bad weather early in the season

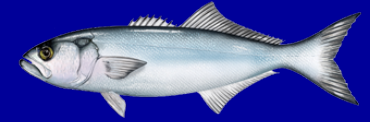
AP Fishery Performance Report



Market/Economic Comments

- COVID-19 has greatly impacted the for-hire and commercial sectors
 - Bluefish may not be hit as hard as other species because there are less for-hire passengers on the boats
 - Not targeted as often as other species
- Bluefish demand has remained high
 - FL: The price per pound reached \$1.00, which is much higher than the recent prices of around \$0.30

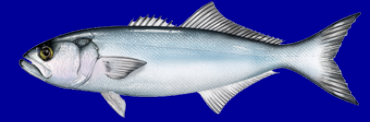
AP Fishery Performance Report



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
- The future for bluefish may be better than anticipated

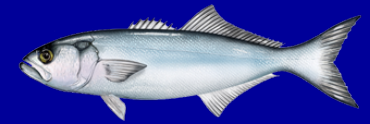
AP Fishery Performance Report



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.

Staff ABC Recommendation



- For 2021, staff recommends a status quo acceptable biological catch (ABC) of 16.28 million pounds (7,385 mt).
 - No update to the 2021 ABC with the new risk policy as changes are minimal and rebuilding projections are set.
 - Management track stock assessment in 2021.
 - Research track stock assessment in 2022.

Recommended ABCs

	2020		2021	
	Mil lb.	mt	Mil lb.	mt
OFL	37.98	17,228	37.98	17,228
ABC	16.28	7,385	16.28	7,385