

AP Comments on the 2024 River Herring Benchmark Stock Assessment

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Presented to ASMFC Shad and River Herring Board
August 6, 2025

At the August 2024 meeting, the Management Board accepted the 2024 River Herring Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report for management use. Following this meeting, the AP convened via webinar on October 7 to review the assessment findings and provide recommendations. AP members felt strongly that we needed more time for thoughtful discussion and to develop consensus recommendations, so an additional meeting was held on December 2.

- Goals:
 1. to continue discussing the results of the 2024 River Herring Benchmark Assessment
 2. receive an update on the progress of the New England Fishery Management Council's (NEFMC) Atlantic Herring Amendment 10.

River Herring Benchmark Assessment

- Overall, AP members were concerned that river herring populations are not recovering despite the actions taken through Amendment 2 that resulted in the closure of most state fisheries. The AP discussed the contrast in the assessment results between Northern New England and Southern New England, particularly considering that the report notes both regions have significant restoration programs.
- **AP Consensus Recommendations**
 - The Board task the TC to document the numbers of commercial fisheries by state over time and use those trends to identify and evaluate attributes of effective management programs, including assessing the impact of the Atlantic Herring Area 1A seasonal closures on the relative success of Maine river herring runs
 - Prioritize genetic sampling of river herring at-sea bycatch, particularly with portside sampling programs, as well as the development of a uniform ageing protocol between states to reduce uncertainty in the assessment results.

- Other Assessment Comments
 - Increasing harvest for either species is concerning given the results of the assessment; one member suggested that the lack of a significant positive trend coastwide since the moratorium in 2009 represents an emergency.
 - The 2009 reference year represents a greatly depleted stock and comparisons to 2009 do not fully convey the losses that the stock has had over the full time series. This should be made clear to the public.
 - The assessment cannot evaluate the stocks at small enough scales for suitable management.
 - Recent bycatch values are artificially low due to the lack of observer coverage.

- The AP received an update on the progress of the New England Fishery Management Council's (NEFMC) Atlantic Herring Amendment 10. The AP had planned to meet this year to review the management alternatives in Draft Amendment 10 and prepare recommendations.
- **AP Consensus Recommendation**
 - The AP recommends the Commission support the development of management alternatives to consider time/area closures, incidental catch caps, and improvements to incidental catch monitoring accuracy and precision in Atlantic Herring Amendment 10.

The potential actions that had been proposed through Amendment 10 remain applicable to the assessment findings.

Bycatch Comments

- There was general agreement among AP members that there needs to be greater monitoring of offshore fisheries and that more of the burden of sustainability should be placed on offshore fisheries that have a high incidence of river herring bycatch rather than in-river fisheries.
- Portside sampling was seen as the most efficient method to acquire the data necessary to evaluate the possibility of disproportionate effects of bycatch on different systems.
- Support for coastal buffer zones in the Atlantic herring and mackerel fisheries to reduce river herring bycatch
- Support for exploring catch caps that are more responsive to existing river herring stock conditions by genetic sub-regions as defined by Reid et al. (2018), while also formulating time area closures based on bycatch probability such as those developed by Roberts et al. (2023)
- There should be a rapidly growing focus on funding in-river monitoring efforts along with any other herring specific surveys (e.g., acoustics, tagging) to look at population level responses to reduced Atlantic herring and mackerel effort.

Management and Assessment

- **AP Consensus Recommendations**

- The AP recommends the Board identify mechanisms for improving public access and transparency of data between stock assessments.
- The AP recommends the Board investigate the use of external collaborators for data collection.

- **Other Comments**

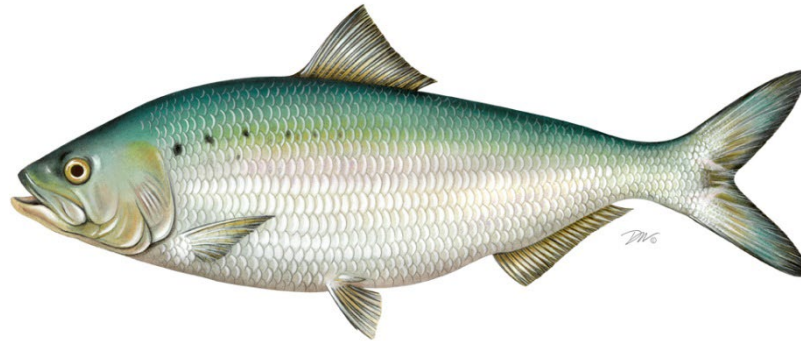
- Support for recreational personal use harvest in state Sustainable Fishery Management Plans
- Concern that the assessment process does not involve the AP before the assessment is approved for management use



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Questions?

New and Updated American Shad and River Herring SFMPs and AMPs



ASMFC Shad and River Herring Management Board

August 6, 2025

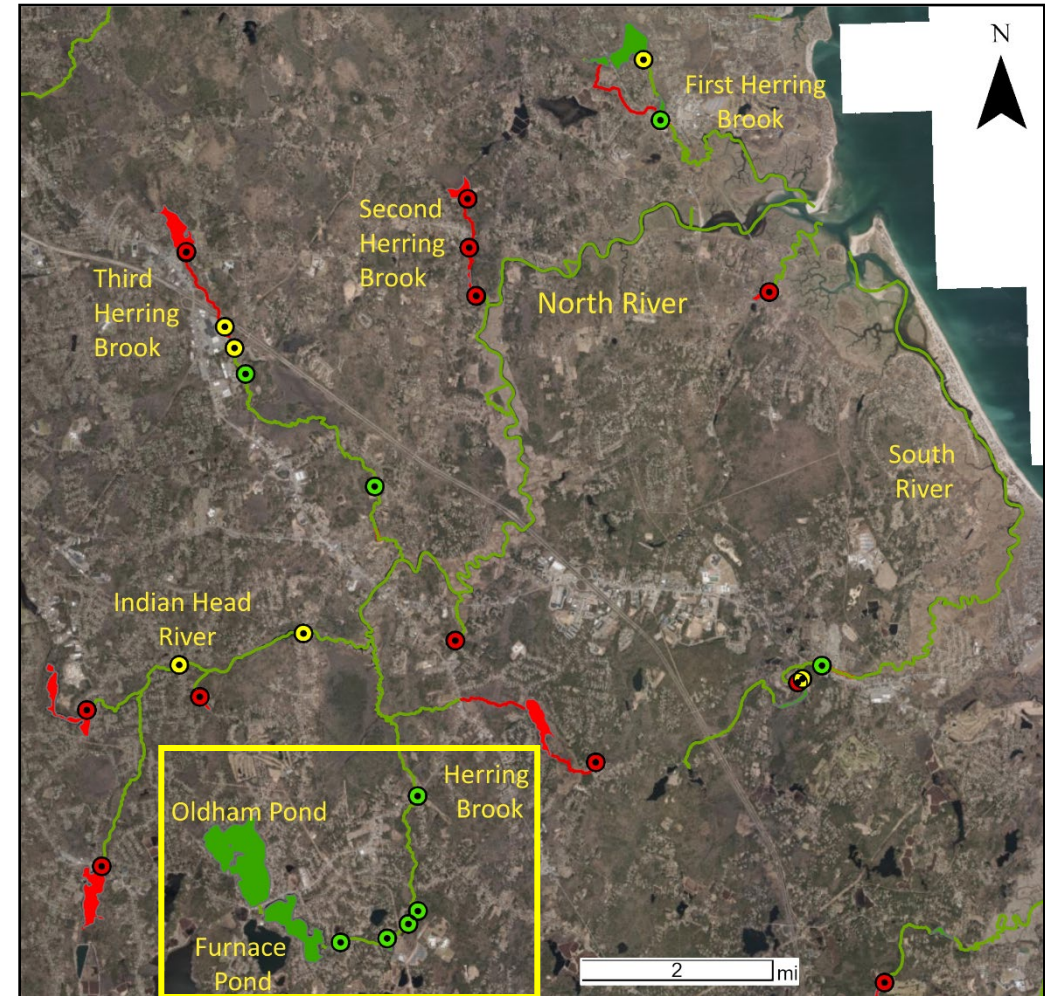
- Amendments 2 & 3 of the Shad and River Herring FMP require states wishing to have a fishery must submit a Sustainable Fishery Management Plan (SFMP) that will:
 - “demonstrate their stock could support a commercial and/or recreational fishery that will not diminish the future stock reproduction and recruitment”
- The Management Board can approve a proposed alternative management program (AMP) if the state or jurisdiction can show to the Management Board’s satisfaction that the alternative proposal will have the same conservation value as the measures contained in the FMP
 - May be appropriate for systems with no known harvest
- Plans are updated and reviewed every 5 years to reassess stock status and sustainability

Plans for Board Consideration

- The TC evaluated 4 plans
- New SFMP for Pembroke, Massachusetts (River Herring)
- SFMP update for Georgia (American Shad)
- AMP updates for Georgia (River Herring) and Florida (Shad & River Herring)
- **All 4 plans were recommended for approval by the Technical Committee**

Massachusetts SFMP

- New river herring SFMP for Herring Brook in the town of Pembroke, MA
- MA already has two approved river herring SFMPs for both the Nemasket and Herring rivers
 - No fishing has occurred on these rivers yet



- Herring Brook has a long history of dedicated river herring management by the Pembroke Herring Fisheries Commission and prior town entities
- The run is predominately alewife
- There have been substantial restoration efforts to Herring Brook following dam failures in early 2000s
 - New fishways
 - Fishway improvements
 - Stream restoration

- Spawning run is currently monitored through visual (13 years) and electronic counts (11 years)
- High counts the past 3 years
- Low run counts in 2021 and 2022, but no evidence of recruitment failure
 - Low counts were potentially due to downstream blockages

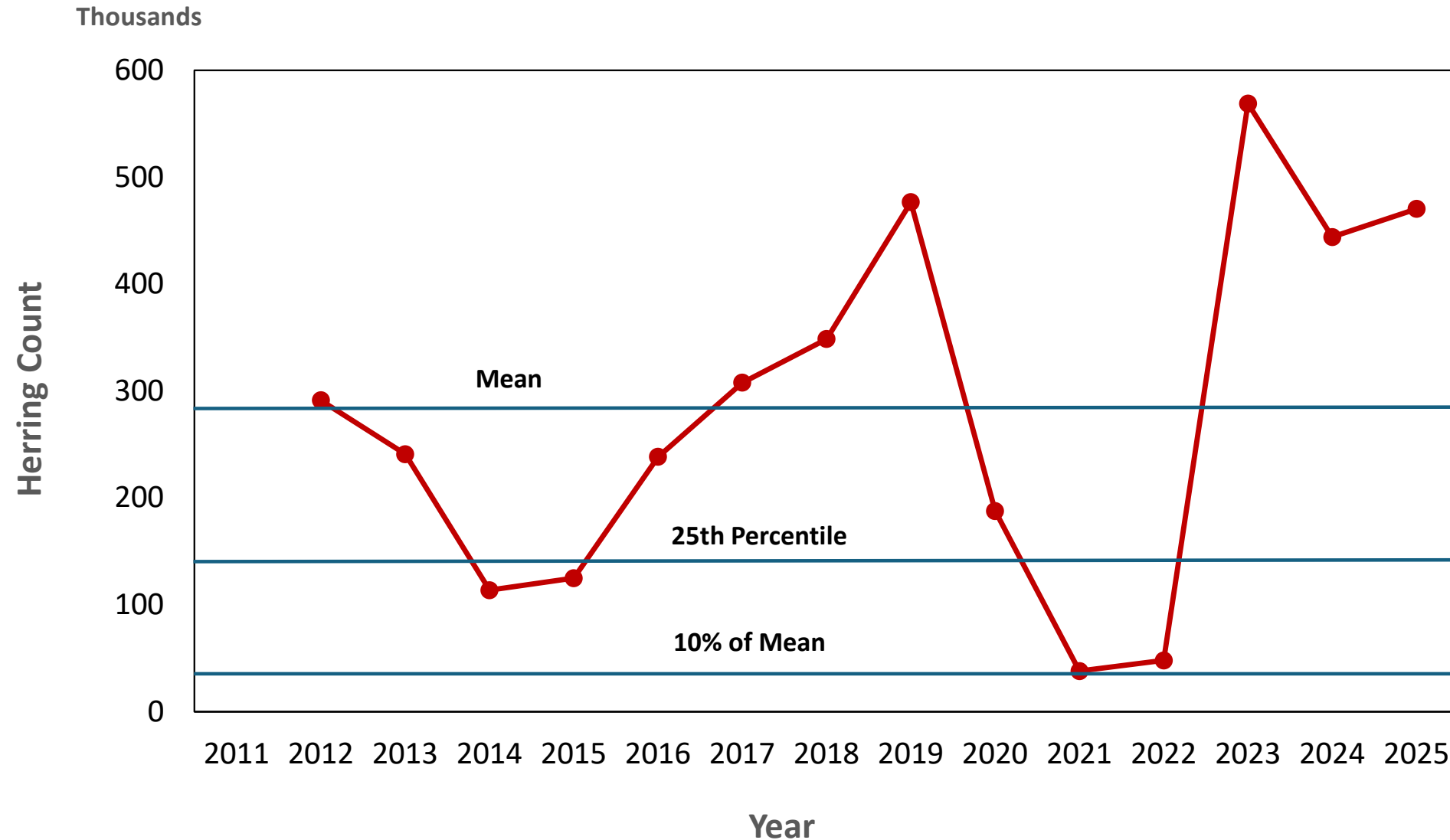
Table 1. River herring spawning run count data at Herring Brook, Pembroke. Volunteer visual counts began in 2012 at the Third Mill Pond Dam. Electronic counts began at the same location in 2015, with ten years of direct comparison.

Year	Visual Count (No.)	Electronic Count (No.)	Comparison Ratio (%)	Adjusted Count (No.)
2012	99,035			291,279
2013	81,902			240,888
2014	38,663			113,715
2015		125,010		125,010
2016	130,619	238,410	0.55	238,410
2017	114,350	307,832	0.37	307,832
2018	119,662	348,634	0.34	348,634
2019	180,414	476,609	0.38	476,609
2020	75,150	187,776	0.40	187,776
2021	2,519	38,117	0.07	38,117
2022	5,808	48,057	0.12	48,057
2023	190,177	568,877	0.33	568,877
2024	201,331	444,075	0.45	444,075
2025	200,679	470,380	0.43	470,380
Mean	110,793	295,798	0.34	278,547
Median				266,084
25th Percentile				140,702
10% of Mean				27,855

- Harvest will be capped at 10% of the run count time series mean (TSM)
 - 26,379 fish
- Offer up to 300 harvest permits
 - (225 town residents/ 75 non-residents)
- Fishing season will be 5 weeks, open for 3 days per week
- Harvest will occur at Herring Brook Park and will be monitored by Town Herring Wardens
- 15 fish per permit holder per week
- Maximum harvest under the proposed scenario would be 16,875 fish

- **Sustainability Measure** – ongoing spawning run counts
- **Sustainability Target** – harvest cap of 10% of TSM
- **Primary Action Threshold** – 25th percentile of run count time series
- **Management Actions**
 - Exceedance of the Sustainability Target in a single year will result in management review
 - 2 consecutive years below the 25th percentile
 - Sustainability Target reduced to 5% of the TSM for the following year
 - 3 consecutive years below the 25th percentile
 - Minimum 3-year closure
 - Opening threshold would be 3 consecutive years above the TSM

Massachusetts SFMP





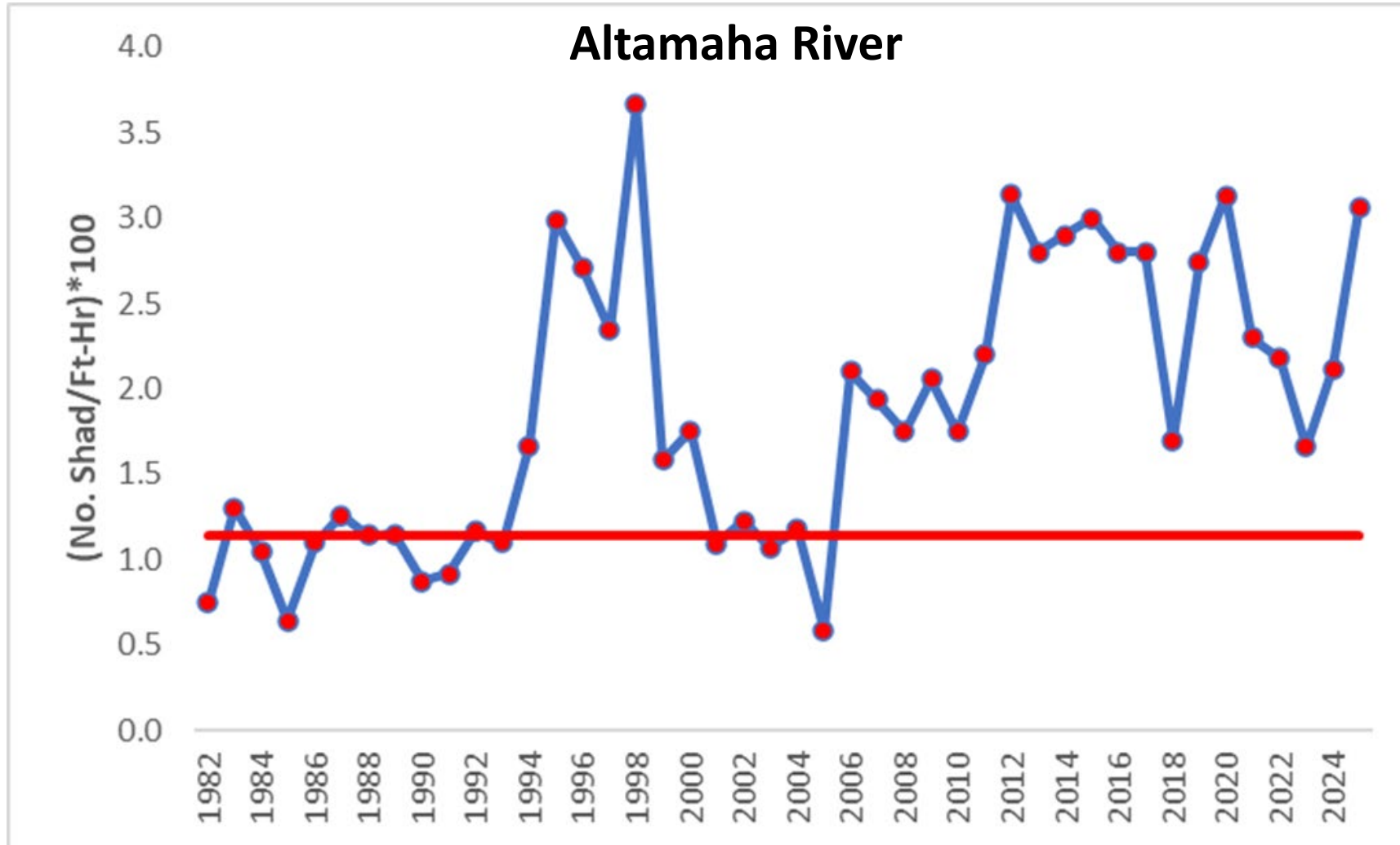
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- Update to Georgia's American shad SFMP
- Was last approved in 2020
- Commercial harvest allowed in select portions of the Savannah and Altamaha rivers from January–March
- Commercial landings provided by fishermen
 - Landings and efforts have declined in recent years
- 8 fish recreational creel limit throughout Georgia
- Shad populations are monitored through a FI gill net survey, FI electrofishing surveys, YOY seine surveys
 - FI gill net survey and electrofishing surveys used as management benchmarks and triggers

- Updates to SFMP
- 2025 plan has updates to sustainability metrics
 - Benchmark values, which are calculated as the 25th percentile of the TSM, were updated to include data through 2023
- Suspension of GADNR Ogeechee River Creel Survey due to funding constraints
 - Survey was used to monitor recreational harvest
 - River still monitored through FI electrofishing and YOY surveys

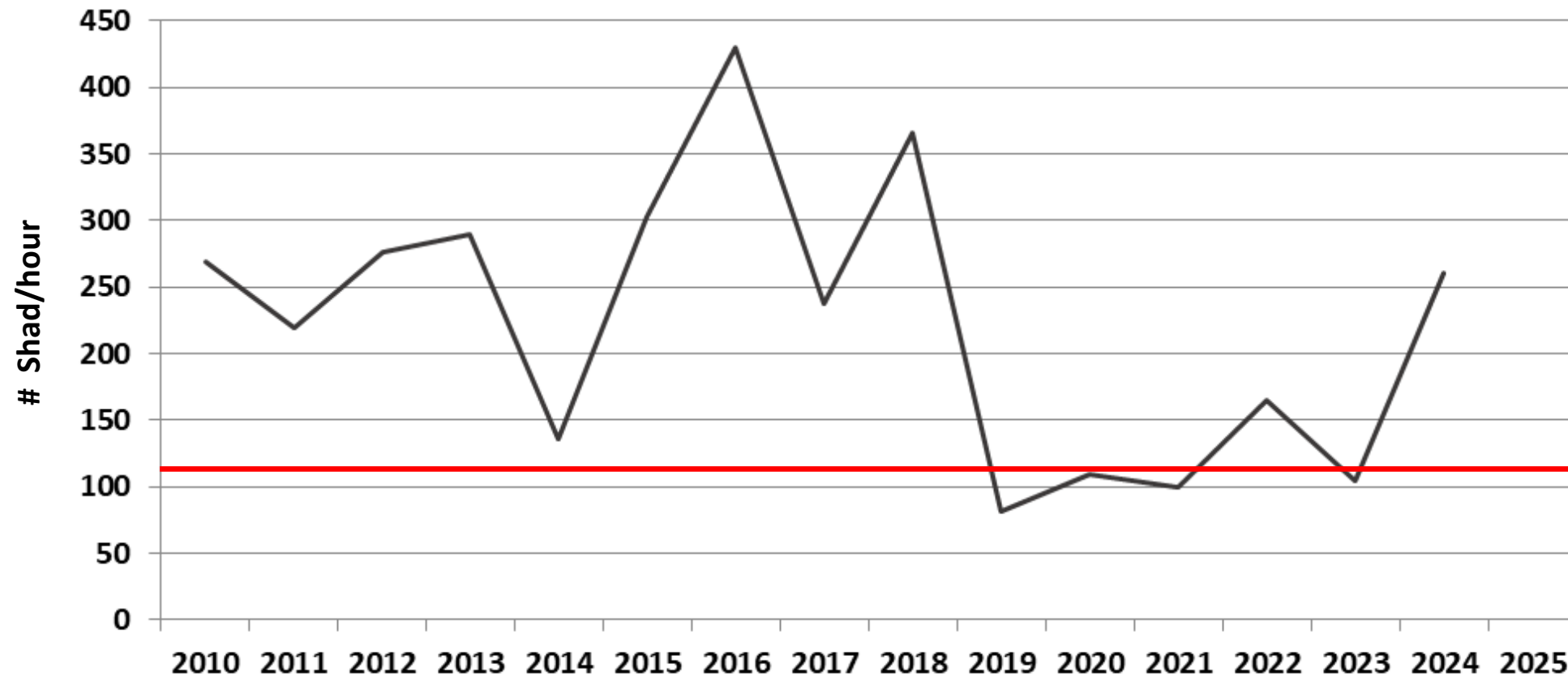
Georgia SFMP Update





Georgia SFMP Update

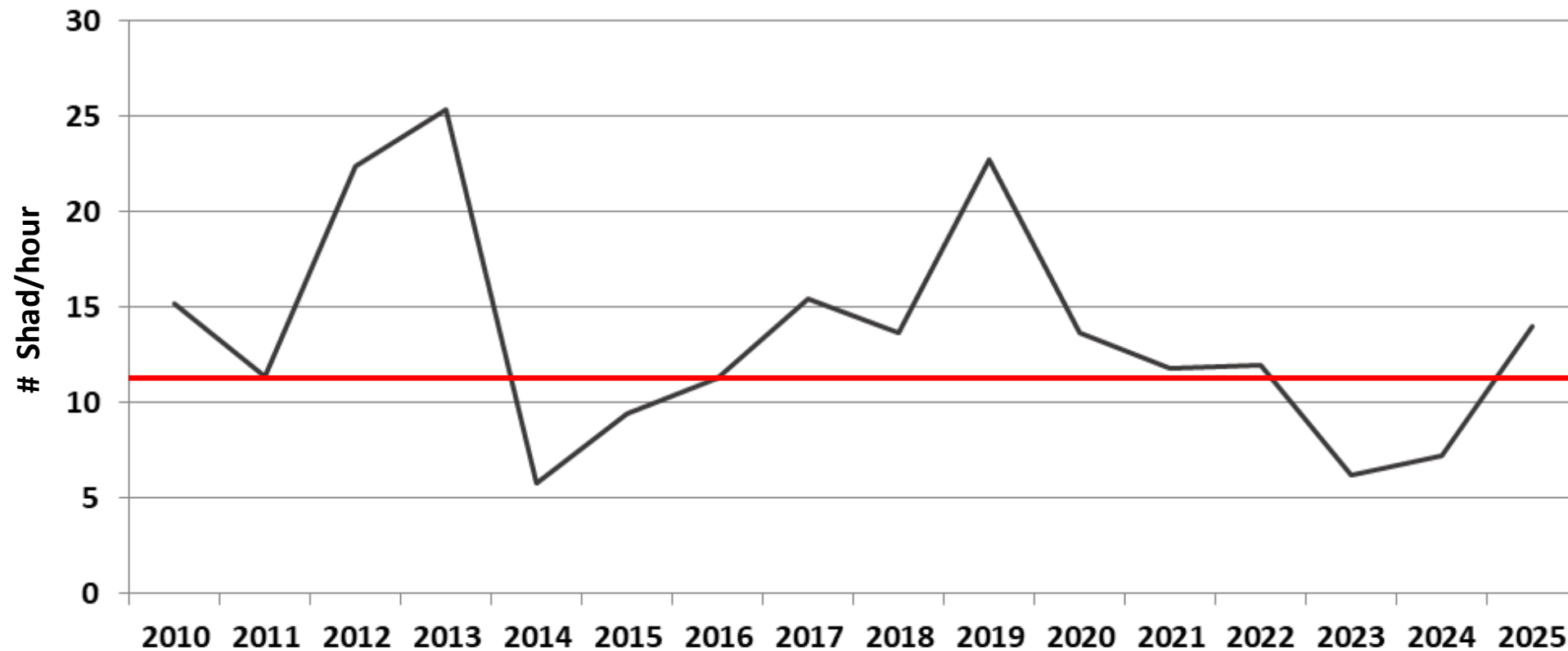
Savannah





Georgia SFMP Update

Ogeechee





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- No commercial river herring fishery
- Unregulated recreationally
- No known river herring fisheries
- Only 10 adult blueback herring caught across multiple electrofishing surveys since 2010
- Since 2011, only 391 juvenile blueback herring have been caught in the YOY seine survey, compared to over 18,000 juvenile American shad
- If any creel surveys indicate positive harvest of river herring for 3 consecutive years, GADNR will take the necessary steps to ensure sustainability for that river system

Florida AMP Update

- AMP for blueback herring in all Florida waters and American shad outside St. Johns River Basin
- *Alosa* species are functionally absent from the Nassau River, Pellicer Creek, and the Tomoka River
- Blueback herring occur in the St. Johns River system but there is no directed fishing or known harvest
- No commercial fisheries
- 10 fish daily bag limit for *Alosa* in aggregate
- If any source detects non-zero Blueback Herring harvest anywhere in Florida for three consecutive years or American Shad harvest outside the St. Johns River Basin, then Florida FWC will initiate a process to demonstrate sustainability for the river system or prohibit harvest



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