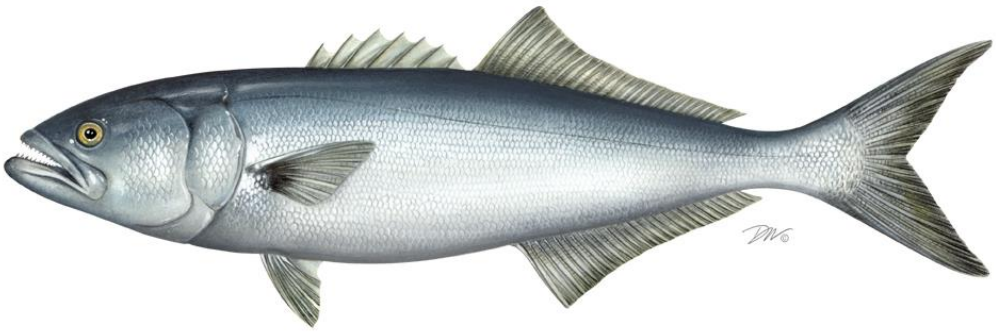
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

REVIEW OF THE INTERSTATE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

FOR BLUEFISH
(*Pomatomus saltatrix*)

2023 FISHING YEAR



Prepared by the Plan Review Team

Approved August 14, 2024

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

Executive Summary

Bluefish from Maine through Florida are jointly managed by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission in state waters (0-3 miles from shore) and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council in federal waters (3-200 miles from shore).

Based on the 2023 management track stock assessment, bluefish are not overfished and not experiencing overfishing relative to the updated biological reference points. The stock assessment incorporated data through 2022 and included calibrated estimates of recreational catch and effort from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). While the 2023 management track stock assessment provides the latest and best information available regarding the Atlantic bluefish stock, the 2021 management track stock assessment for bluefish, which found the stock to be overfished but not experiencing overfishing, was used to set specifications for the 2023 fishing year. While the bluefish stock is no longer overfished, the stock will remain under a rebuilding plan until it reaches the target level of spawning stock biomass.

2023 recreational bluefish harvest was estimated at 4.55 million fish weighing 11.03 million pounds (Tables 3 and 4). Recreational dead releases were estimated at 1.64 million fish based on the new recreational release mortality rate estimate of 9.4%. 2023 recreational landings were below the recreational harvest limit (RHL) of 14.11 million pounds and 2023 commercial bluefish landings were recorded at approximately 3.02 million pounds, which falls below the quota of 4.29 million pounds (Table 2).

In 2023, all states implemented management programs consistent with the intent of Amendment 1, Amendment 2, and Addendum I to the Bluefish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) (as updated in August 2021). Maine, South Carolina, and Georgia requested *de minimis* status for 2023. Maine, South Carolina, and Georgia all qualify for *de minimis* status because their commercial landings in 2023 were less than 0.1% of the coastwide commercial landings estimate.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents iii
I. Status of the Fishery Management Plan 1
II. Status of the Stock 4
III. Status of the Fishery 5
IV. Status of Research and Monitoring 6
V. Status of Management Measures and Issues 7
VI. Implementation of FMP Compliance Requirements for 2023 7
VII. Plan Review Team Comments and Recommendations 8
VIII. Research Recommendations 8
IX. References 9
X. Tables 10
XI. Figures 15

2023 REVIEW OF THE ASMFC FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR BLUEFISH *(Pomatomus saltatrix)*

I. Status of the Fishery Management Plan

Date of FMP Approval:	1989
Amendments:	Amendment 2 (2021), Amendment 1 (1998); Addendum II (2022), Addendum I (2012)
Management Unit:	Migratory stocks of bluefish in U.S. state and federal waters of the western North Atlantic
States with Declared Interest:	Maine through Florida, excluding Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia
Active Committees:	ASMFC: Bluefish Management Board, Technical Committee, Advisory Panel, Plan Review Team, and Plan Development Team MAFMC: Bluefish Committee, Monitoring Committee, Advisory Panel, Fishery Management Action Team, and Scientific and Statistical Committee

The Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Bluefish was adopted by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC or Commission) and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC or Council) in October 1989. It was the first FMP developed jointly by an interstate commission and a federal fishery management council. In 2023, bluefish were managed under Amendment 1, Amendment 2, and Addendum I to the FMP.

Approved in October 1998 and implemented in 2000, the goal of Amendment 1 is to conserve the bluefish resource along the Atlantic coast, specifically to:

1. Increase understanding of the stock and fishery
2. Provide highest availability of bluefish to U.S. fishermen while maintaining, within limits, traditional uses of bluefish
3. Provide for cooperation among the coastal states, the various regional marine fishery management councils, and federal agencies involved along the coast to enhance the management of bluefish throughout its range
4. Promote compatible management regulations between State and Federal jurisdictions
5. Prevent recruitment overfishing
6. Reduce the waste in both the commercial and recreational fisheries.

States and jurisdictions with a declared interest in the Bluefish FMP include all ASMFC member states and jurisdictions, with the exception of Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia. Management issues are addressed jointly through the ASMFC Bluefish Management Board

(Board) and the MAFMC (Council). ASMFC's Technical Committee (TC) and MAFMC's Bluefish Monitoring Committee (MC) conduct annual plan monitoring, which is reviewed jointly by the Council's and Board's Bluefish Advisory Panels (AP), all committee recommendations are then provided to the Board and Council for review. A working group, as constituted through the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) and Northeast Region Coordinating Council process, addresses stock assessment matters. The Board may implement changes to the FMP in state waters through the adaptive management process. The TC, Plan Review Team (PRT), Plan Development Team (PDT), and AP provide technical and industry advice to the Board throughout the adaptive management process.

In February 2012, the Board approved Addendum I to Amendment 1 to the Bluefish FMP. The Addendum establishes a coastwide biological monitoring program to improve the quantity and quality of information available for use in bluefish stock assessments. A summary of these findings from the most recent year are found in Section IV.

In August 2021, the Board approved Amendment 2 to the Bluefish FMP. The Amendment updated the FMP goals and objectives, initiated a rebuilding plan, established new allocations between the commercial and recreational sectors, implemented new commercial allocations to the states, revised the process for quota transfers between sectors, and revised how the management plan accounts for management uncertainty. The Amendment became effective on January 1, 2022.

The Board and the Council initiated Amendment 2 in December 2017 to consider revisions to the commercial and recreational fisheries allocations and the state-specific commercial allocations. In 2019, a management track stock assessment for bluefish indicated the stock was overfished, and the Board and Council subsequently incorporated the rebuilding plan in the Amendment.

Given the stock's overfished condition, Amendment 2 established a 7-year rebuilding plan to be achieved through a constant fishing mortality approach. The Amendment also revised sector allocations, increasing the recreational allocation from 83% to 86% of the acceptable biological catch and decreasing the commercial allocation from 17% to 14%. Catch data from 1981-2018 were used as the basis for sector allocations since this time series captures the cyclical nature of the fishery, while providing each sector with sufficient access to the resource considering historical usage.

Amendment 2 revised state-by-state commercial allocations to better reflect the current distribution of the stock and the needs of the states' commercial fisheries. The Amendment allocated a baseline quota of 0.1% to each state, and then allocated the rest of the commercial quota based on landings data from 2009 to 2018 (see Table 1). Recognizing that several states would lose quota during a time when the coastwide commercial quota was already at an historic low, the Amendment phased-in the allocation changes over 7 years in order to reduce short-term economic impacts to the affected commercial fishing industries. The Board and Council also agreed to review state allocations within 5 years of implementation.

Amendment 2 updated the sector transfer process to allow for quota transfers in either direction between the commercial and recreational sectors. Previously, quota could only be transferred from the recreational sector to the commercial fishery. The transfers are now capped at 10% of the acceptable biological catch for a given year.

The Amendment also revised the goals and management objectives of the FMP:

Goal 1: Conserve the bluefish resource through stakeholder engagement to maintain sustainable recreational fishing and commercial harvest.

Objective 1.1: Achieve and maintain a sustainable spawning stock biomass and rate of fishing mortality.
Objective 1.2: Promote practices that reduce release mortality within the recreational and commercial fishery.
Objective 1.3: Maintain effective coordination between the National Marine Fisheries Service, Council, and Commission and its member states by promoting compliance and to support the development and implementation of management measures.
Objective 1.4: Promote compliance and effective enforcement of regulations.
Objective 1.5: Promote science, monitoring, and data collection that support and enhance effective ecosystem-based management of the bluefish resource.

Goal 2: Provide fair and equitable access to the fishery across all user groups throughout the management unit.

Objective 2.1: Ensure the implementation of management measures provides fair and equitable access to the resource across all groups within the management unit.
Objective 2.2: Consider the economic and social needs and priorities of all groups that access the bluefish resource in the development of new management measures.
Objective 2.3: Maintain effective coordination with stakeholder groups to ensure optimization of economic and social benefits.

Finally, Amendment 2 modified the management uncertainty tool within the FMP to a sector-specific approach. It allows the Commission and Council to apply a buffer to either sector, in the form of a quota reduction, to account for management uncertainty during specifications. While this tool has not been used often, the modified approach allows managers to better target areas of uncertainty within one sector without reducing the quota or harvest limit in the other sector.

In June 2022, the Policy Board approved changes to the recreational fisheries management programs for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. The changes include a new process for setting recreational measures (bag, size, and season limits) and modifications to the recreational accountability measures. The Policy Board adopted the new process through Addendum II to the Bluefish FMP. However, the new process will not be implemented for bluefish until the stock is declared rebuilt. Approval of this new process is part of a broader

long-term effort by both the Council and Commission to improve recreational management of these four species. The new management program aims to provide greater stability and predictability in recreational measures from year-to-year while accounting for uncertainty in recreational catch estimates. Details on the new process may be found here. Given Addendum II will sunset in 2025, the Council and Commission have begun work on the replacement Addendum through the formation of a PDT. The PDT has begun work on the new Addendum, with the goal of implementation by the end of the 2025 sunset period for Addendum II.

2023 Annual Fishery Specifications

Commercial and recreational bluefish harvests are managed via sector-specific landings limits (i.e., a coastwide commercial fishery quota and a recreational harvest limit, or RHL). The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and Bluefish TC and MC annually review the best available information and make fishery specification recommendations to the Council and Board for the subsequent fishing year. Recommendations include commercial quota, RHL, research set-aside (RSA), and other management measures such as minimum size limits and bag limits. The Council and Board meet jointly (typically in August) to consider the SSC's and TC and MC's fishery specification recommendations and formalize commercial and recreational catch limits, and other management measures.

Annual fishery specification recommendations are typically developed as follows: final commercial quota and RHL recommendations are derived from commercial and recreational annual catch limits (ACLs), where 14% of the acceptable biological catch (ABC) is allocated to the commercial sector ACL and 86% to the recreational sector ACL. The FMP defines ACLs as equal to the allowable biological catch (ABC), and when combined, the ACLs are equal to or less than an overfishing limit (OFL). The stock's OFL is a catch level that corresponds to the stock's maximum sustainable yield, which is determined through the most recent stock assessment. After accounting for management uncertainty, the resulting value provides the commercial and recreational annual catch targets (ACTs). Discard estimates are deducted from ACTs to derive commercial and recreational total allowable landings (TALs). If the recreational fishery or the commercial fishery is not expected to land its respective TAL, then at the discretion of the Board and Council, quota may be transferred between sectors, not to exceed 10% of the ABC. The final commercial quota is then allocated to the states of Maine through Florida with the percentage allocations based on average commercial landings during 2009-2018. The state-specific shares are detailed in Table 2.

II. Status of the Stock

In 2023, bluefish specifications were informed by the 2021 management track stock assessment which found bluefish to be overfished, but not experiencing overfishing in 2019, the terminal year of the assessment.

In 2022, a research track stock assessment for bluefish made a number of notable data and model changes designed to improve the assessment and reduce uncertainty. These changes

were incorporated into the 2023 management track stock assessment which found the stock was not overfished nor experiencing overfishing in 2022[1].

Although the stock is no longer overfished, bluefish will remain in the rebuilding plan outlined in Amendment 2 until the stock rebuilds to the target level of spawning stock biomass (SSB). SSB in 2022 was estimated to be 116 million pounds, which is 60% of the SSB target of 194 million pounds. Fishing mortality in 2022 was estimated to be 0.152, below the fishing mortality threshold of 0.239. Although fishing mortality was below the its threshold between 2018-2022, fishing mortality exceeded its threshold, meaning overfishing had occurred, throughout the majority of the time series. The largest recruitment event occurred in 1985, and recruitment was lowest in 2016. Excluding 2022, recruitment has been below the time series average over the past 10 years. Recruitment has increased each year since 2019 and was above average in 2022. The next management track stock assessment for bluefish is scheduled for 2025.

III. Status of the Fishery

From 2014-2023, recreational catch (harvest plus fish caught and released) of bluefish in U.S. waters of the Atlantic coast averaged 36.45 million fish annually (Table 3). In 2023, recreational catch was estimated at 22.01 million fish which is a 32% decrease relative to 2022. In 2023, recreational anglers harvested an estimated 4.55 million fish weighing 11.03 million pounds (5,001 metric tons). Harvest during 2018-2023 was exceptionally low compared to the ten-year average of 19.05 million pounds (Table 4). The 2023 average weight of landed fish is 2.42 pounds, which is larger than the ten-year average of 1.98 pounds. The majority of the recreational harvest (pounds) came from New York (28%), North Carolina (14%), and Massachusetts (13%). In 2023, recreational dead releases (9.4% of released alive fish) were estimated at 1.64 million fish (Table 3). In 2022, the recreational release mortality rate for bluefish changed from 15% of discarded fish to 9.4% based on an analysis of the literature and updated information since the last stock assessment. Figure 2 displays trends in recreational harvest, catch, and releases over the 1985-2023 time series.

From 1985-1999, annual commercial landings of bluefish in U.S. waters of the Atlantic coast averaged 11.31 million pounds (5,129 metric tons). After the implementation of the Amendment 1 quota system, from 2000-2023 commercial landings of bluefish have averaged 5.38 million pounds (2,440 metric tons) annually (Figure 3). In 2023, commercial landings were 3.02 million pounds (1,368 metric tons), an increase of 35% relative to 2022 landings and a 30% underage of the 2023 commercial quota (4.29 million pounds). The majority of commercial landings came from North Carolina (55%), New York (15%), Massachusetts (10%), and Rhode Island (7%). Commercial discards are considered negligible with an assumed discard mortality rate of 32%.

[1] More information about the 2023 Bluefish Management Track Assessment can be found through the Northeast Fishery Science Center's Stock Assessment Support Information query tool: https://apps-nefsc.fisheries.noaa.gov/saw/sasi.php

IV. Status of Research and Monitoring

Many states, as well as the NEFSC, the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP), and the Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP) conduct fishery-independent surveys. New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina (SEAMAP) provide indices of juvenile bluefish abundance for stock assessments, and NEFSC, Virginia (NEAMAP, ChesMMAP), and North Carolina provide indices of adult abundance. Year class strength is monitored through a number of fishery-independent surveys (NEFSC, 2015). Although not included in the 2023 management track assessment, Massachusetts, Delaware, Georgia, and Florida also maintain indices of abundance from surveys that encounter bluefish.

Commercial landings information is collected by most states from dealer or fisherman reporting programs, which is provided to the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program's (ACCSP) Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS). Fishermen fishing in federal waters are required to report their landings to NOAA Fisheries. Recreational catch and harvest are monitored by the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP).

Addendum I to Amendment 1 (2012) implemented a biological monitoring program to enhance age and length data used in bluefish stock assessments. Under Addendum I, states that accounted for more than 5% of total coastwide bluefish harvest (recreational and commercial combined) for the 1998-2008 period are required to collect a minimum of 100 bluefish ages (50 from January through June, 50 from July through December). Those states were Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Virginia, and North Carolina. In February 2021, the Board revised the sampling requirement threshold to any state with greater than 4% of the coastwide removals (defined as the sum of recreational and commercial landings and dead discards) for the period 2010-2019. This added Florida to the states required to collect samples. In addition, the 50 fish sample seasonal requirement was changed to a target, while maintaining the 100 fish annual sampling requirement. The TC report from September 2020 outlines more details regarding state-by-state sampling targets for reference.

Age samples are primarily collected from fishery-dependent sources (e.g., party/charter boats, fishing tournaments, and volunteer anglers), although samples collected from fishery-independent sources are sometimes utilized as needed to fulfill this requirement. In 2023, most states were able to collect the minimum of 100 age samples (Table 5), and all states made a good effort to collect 50 age samples from both spring and fall. Florida collected 144 samples, but has not yet aged the samples. Rhode Island made an effort to collect 100 samples, but fell shy of the requirement collecting a total of 84 samples. In Rhode Island, bluefish samples are typically collected through the for-hire fleet. However, only 58 samples were received in 2023 due to the for-hire fleet working on species other than bluefish. Rhode Island attempted to supplement the for-hire samples through the commercial fishery, but still fell short of the 100 samples.

V. Status of Management Measures and Issues

The Board and Council recommend adjustments to the commercial quota and RHL annually using the specification setting process detailed in Amendment 1 (Section 3.1.1.6) and in Section I of this report. In 2023, the recreational fishery was allocated 86% of the ACL, and 14% was allocated to the commercial fishery. In 2023, the coastwide commercial quota was allocated to the states via state-specific percentage shares based on landings from 2009-2018 (Table 2).

The 2023 ACL was 30.62 million pounds (13,890 metric tons), the commercial quota was 4.29 million pounds (1,945 metric tons), and the RHL was 14.11 million pounds (6,400 metric tons). 2023 commercial bluefish landings were recorded at approximately 2.58 million pounds, which falls below the quota. 2023 recreational landings were 11.03 million pounds, which does not exceed the RHL of 14.11 million pounds. NOAA Fisheries has not yet released their final catch accounting data for 2023, but the sum of 2023 recreational and commercial landings and dead discards is expected to fall below the fishery-level ACL. Therefore, federal accountability measures will not be triggered for 2023. 2023 state-specific commercial shares and landings, and initial 2023 state-specific shares are listed in Table 2.

Law Enforcement Reporting:
States are asked to report and summarize law enforcement cases that occurred the previous season in annual compliance reports. In 2023, reported law enforcement cases (e.g., the number of warnings and citations) remain low and were similar to those reported in previous years, though some states note that there are no specific enforcement reporting requirements.

VI. Implementation of FMP Compliance Requirements for 2023

These states and jurisdictions are required to comply with the provisions of the Bluefish FMP: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Potomac River Fisheries Commission, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. The following are specific FMP compliance requirements for 2023:

- Each state must restrict the possession of bluefish to no more than three fish per day for recreational anglers and five fish per day for those fishing with for-hire operators, or have an ASMFC-approved equivalent conservation program.
- Each state must restrict its commercial fishery to the quota adopted under procedures specified in the FMP.
- These states are required to collect a minimum of 100 age samples per Addendum I to Amendment 1: Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Virginia, North Carolina, and Florida.
- Each state is required to implement and maintain a permit system for commercial fishermen, commercial dealers and for-hire operators who land, sell, and catch fish in state waters.
- States must submit annual compliance reports verifying that the above listed FMP requirements have been implemented. Compliance reports should also include an overview

of permitting requirements for commercial and party/charter vessels and commercial dealers.

Based on the annual state compliance reports, the PRT determined all states and jurisdictions implemented a management program in 2023 consistent with the intent of the Bluefish FMP (Amendments 1 and 2, and Addendum I). With the exception of Georgia, all states implemented the recreational measures of three fish for private anglers and five fish for for-hire operators. In December 2021, the Board determined that Georgia's proposal to enact a closure during wave 2 (March-April), implement a 15 fish bag limit, and a minimum size of 12 inches was conservationally equivalent to the coastwide recreational measures.

While not all states were able to meet the 100 fish biological sampling requirement, every state made a good faith effort to do so. Rhode Island only collected a total of 86 samples due to the for-hire fleet working on species other than bluefish. Rhode Island Division of Marine Fisheries staff have indicated that there was an emphasis on bluefish sampling in 2023 and greater incentives for for-hire fleet participation. Refer to Table 5 for state monitoring and reporting requirements, Table 6 for fishery regulations by state in 2023, and Table 2 for commercial quota monitoring and harvest.

Maine, South Carolina, and Georgia requested *de minimis* status for 2023. Maine, South Carolina, and Georgia qualify for *de minimis* status because their commercial landings from the most recent year were less than 0.1% of the coastwide commercial landings estimate (Table 2).

VII. Plan Review Team Comments and Recommendations

- The PRT noted that in 2022, the recreational release mortality rate was changed from 15% to 9.4%, yet some states included the old rate in state compliance reports. In 2025 and beyond, states should incorporate the new mortality rate of 9.4% into annual compliance reports. Additionally, this information should be included in future compliance report reminders sent by Commission staff.
- Rhode Island made an attempt to collect the required 100 biological samples, but failed to do so with only 86 samples collected. The PRT determined that Rhode Island made a good faith effort to complete the biological sampling requirement in 2023.
- Maine, South Carolina, and Georgia requested and meet the requirements for *de minimis* status.
- The PRT found that all states implemented regulations consistent with the intent of Amendment 1, Amendment 2, and Addendum I of the Bluefish Interstate FMP.

VIII. Research Recommendations

- The PRT recommends that the Board strongly encourages states to develop or expand recreational release length data collection programs, taking advantage of existing software and technology as possible. Generating reliable discard length data from recreational

anglers, especially from southern states, could greatly improve the robustness of stock assessments moving forward.

IX. References

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASFMC). 2021. Amendment 2 to the Bluefish Fishery Management Plan; *Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment*.

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States. Atlantic Bluefish Fishery; 2023 Specifications. 50 CFR Part 648. Vol 87, No. 244. Wednesday, December 21, 2022.

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States. Atlantic Bluefish Fishery; 2024 and Projected 2025 Specifications. 50 CFR Part 648. Vol 89, No. 34. Wednesday, December 26, 2023.

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASFMC). 1998. Amendment 1 to the Bluefish Fishery Management Plan.

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASFMC). 2012. Addendum 1 to the Bluefish Fishery Management Plan.

Northeast Fisheries Science Center. 2015. 60th Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop (60th SAW) Assessment Summary Report. US Dept Commer, Northeast Fish Sci Cent Ref Doc. 15-07; 36 p. doi: 10.7289/V5D21VKV

Northeast Fisheries Science Center. 2021. Atlantic Bluefish Management Track Assessment for 2021. 11 p. Prepublication copies prepared for use by Fishery Management Council staff and SSC. Available at https://apps-nefsc.fisheries.noaa.gov/saw/sasi.php.

Northeast Fisheries Science Center. 2023. Atlantic Bluefish Management Track Assessment for 2023. 9 p. Prepublication copies prepared for use by Fishery Management Council staff and SSC. Available at https://apps-nefsc.fisheries.noaa.gov/saw/sasi.php.

X. Tables

Table 1. Revised state allocation percentages of the bluefish commercial quota based on 2009-2018 landings data with a minimum default allocation of 0.1%. Previous allocations are provided for comparison purposes.

State	Previous Allocations Under Amendment 1	Revised Allocations to be Phased in Over 7 Years
Maine	0.67%	0.11%
New Hampshire	0.41%	0.22%
Massachusetts	6.72%	10.12%
Rhode Island	6.81%	9.61%
Connecticut	1.27%	1.09%
New York	10.39%	19.76%
New Jersey	14.82%	13.85%
Delaware	1.88%	0.49%
Maryland	3.00%	1.92%
Virginia	11.88%	5.87%
North Carolina	32.06%	32.03%
South Carolina	0.04%	0.10%
Georgia	0.01%	0.10%
Florida	10.06%	4.78%

Table 2. 2023 and 2024 state-specific shares of commercial bluefish quota and 2023 harvest in weight (lbs.). Landings data source: state compliance reports. C = landings values are confidential.

State	% of Federal Quota*	2023 Initial Quota	2023 Transfers	2023 Final Quota	2023 Landings	Overages	% Quota Used	% Coastwide Total	2024 Initial Quota
ME	0.51%	21,807		21,807	C		C	C	10,388
NH	0.36%	15,331		15,331	C		C	C	7,975
MA	7.69%	329,578		329,578	310,850		94.3%	10.3%	198,025
RI	7.61%	326,165	40,000	366,165	208,175		56.9%	6.9%	194,025
CT	1.22%	52,094		52,094	44,953		86.3%	1.5%	28,821
NY	13.06%	560,031	-25,000	535,031	454,677		85.0%	15.1%	348,947
NJ	14.54%	623,295	-60000	563,295	147,427		26.2%	4.9%	348,898
DE	1.48%	63,572	-40,000	23,572	7,133		30.3%	0.2%	31,139
MD	2.69%	115,409	-50000	65,409	17,399		26.6%	0.6%	61,471
VA	10.16%	435,625	-130000	305,625	98,812		32.3%	3.3%	225,380
NC	32.05%	1,374,077	265000	1,639,077	1,658,817	19,740	101.2%	55.0%	776,452
SC	0.05%	2,344		2,344	C		C	C	1,561
GA	0.04%	1,544		1,544	C		C	C	1,194
FL	8.55%	366,585		366,585	67,265		18.3%	2.2%	188,899
TOTAL^	**100%**	**4,287,109**	**0**	**4,287,109**	**3,015,516**	**0**	**70.34%**		**2,422,880**

^ totals in table may not match listed quotas due to rounding.

* State allocation percentages are associated with the 2023 fishing year. 2024 state allocations may differ according to the 7-year phase-in process for revised allocations under Amendment 2.

Table 3. Estimated bluefish recreational harvest (A + B1), releases (B2), dead releases (9.4% of B2), total catch (A+B1+B2), and total removals (Harvest + Dead Releases) in numbers of fish by marine recreational anglers, 2014 to 2023. Source: MRIP. These estimates may differ from MRIP estimates depending on query date (data queried July 2024).

Year	Catch	Harvest	Releases	Dead Releases	Total Removals
2014	55,093,765	21,510,651	33,583,114	3,156,813	24,667,464
2015	42,148,962	13,725,106	28,423,856	2,671,842	16,396,948
2016	42,528,745	14,899,722	27,629,023	2,597,128	17,496,850
2017	42,163,131	13,845,805	28,317,326	2,661,829	16,507,634
2018	30,928,703	10,245,711	20,682,992	1,944,201	12,189,912
2019	38,631,937	12,137,291	26,494,646	2,490,497	14,627,788
2020	30,681,825	9,336,221	21,345,604	2,006,487	11,342,708
2021	28,069,018	6,090,890	21,978,128	2,065,944	8,156,834
2022	32,283,618	6,353,078	25,930,540	2,437,471	8,790,549
2023	22,009,690	4,553,594	17,456,096	1,640,873	6,194,467
Average	**36,453,939**	**11,269,807**	**25,184,133**	**23,673,08**	**13,637,115**

Table 4. Bluefish Commercial Landings and Recreational Harvest (A + B1) by weight (metric tons, pounds), 2014-2023. Source: ACCSP Data Warehouse (personal correspondence with Joseph Myers), 2024 state compliance reports and MRIP. Estimates may differ from source websites depending on query date (commercial data queried June 2024; recreational data queried July 2024).

Year	Commercial		Recreational		Total	
	MT	Pounds	MT	Pounds	MT	Pounds
2014	2,251	4,962,921	12,267	27,044,276	14,518	32,007,197
2015	1,917	4,226,300	13,653	30,098,649	15,570	34,324,949
2016	1,946	4,289,401	10,957	24,155,304	12,902	28,444,705
2017	1,876	4,136,503	14,548	32,071,433	16,424	36,207,936
2018	1,105	2,435,814	6,020	13,270,862	7,125	15,706,676
2019	1,359	2,996,323	7,056	15,555,889	8,415	18,552,212
2020	1,112	2,450,557	6,160	13,581,217	7,272	16,031,774
2021	1,090	2,402,027	5,607	12,361,982	6,697	14,764,009
2022	1,017	2,241,587	5,150	11,354,536	6,167	13,596,123
2023	1,368	3,015,516	5,001	11,026,225	6,369	14,041,741
Average	**1,504**	**3,315,695**	**8,642**	**19,052,037**	**10,146**	**22,367,732**

Table 5. Status of compliance with monitoring and reporting requirements, 2023 (Y = compliance standards met, N = compliance standards not met, NA = not applicable).

State/ Jurisdiction	Fishery-independent monitoring		Fishery-dependent monitoring		Annual Reporting Status
	Survey(s)	Status	Type(s)	Status (num. of processed age samples)	
ME*	NA	NA	Rec and Com harvest	NA	Y
NH	Juvenile	Y	Rec and Com harvest	NA	Y
MA	Juvenile	Y	Rec and Com harvest, Age Samples	Y (104)	Y
RI	Juvenile, Adult	Y	Rec and Com harvest, Age Samples	Y (86)**	Y
CT	Juvenile, Adult	Y	Rec and Com harvest, Age Samples	Y (243)	Y
NY	Juvenile	Y	Rec and Com harvest, Age Samples	Y (158)	Y
NJ	Juvenile, Adult	Y	Rec and Com harvest, Age Samples	Y (286)	Y
DE	Juvenile, Adult	Y	Rec and Com harvest	NA	Y
MD	Juvenile	Y	Rec and Com harvest	NA	Y
PRFC	Juvenile	Y	Rec and Com harvest	NA	Y
VA	Juvenile, Adult	Y	Rec and Com harvest, Age Samples	Y (297)	Y
NC	Adult	Y	Rec and Com harvest, Age Samples	Y (1,170)	Y
SC*	NA	NA	Rec and Com harvest	NA	Y
GA*	NA	NA	Rec and Com harvest	NA	Y
FL	Juvenile, Adult	Y	Rec and Com harvest, Age Samples	Y (144)	Y

*granted *de minimis* for 2023 fishing season

** Rhode Island did not meet the sampling requirement, but made a good faith to collect 100 samples.

Table 6. Fishery regulations by state, 2023. Minimum size are in total length (TL) except for GA and FL are in fork length (FL).

State/ Jurisdiction	Recreational			Commercial	
	Bag Limit	**Season**	**Size Limit**	**Trip and Size Limit**	**Open Season**
ME	3 fish	All year	None	No Restrictions	All year
NH	Private/Shore 3 fish; For-hire 5 fish	January 1 - September 30	None	No Restrictions	July 1 - September 30
MA	Private/Shore 3 fish; For-hire 5 fish	All year	None	16" minimum size; 5,000 lbs/day or trip (whichever is longer)	All year
RI	Private/Shore 3 fish; For-hire 5 fish	All year	None	18" min size limit; 1000 lbs/bi-week (January 1 - April 30), 6000 lbs/wk (May 1 - November 15), 500lbs/week (November 16-December 31)	All year
CT	Private/Shore 3 fish; For-hire 5 fish	All year	None	9" min size limit; 1200 lbs/trip	All year
NY	Private/Shore 3 fish; For-hire 5 fish	All year	None	9" min size; Trip Limit: 1,000 lbs (January - April); 500 lbs (May – June 5) 1,500 lbs (June 6 – August) 5,000 lbs (September – December)	All year
NJ	Private/Shore 3 fish; For-hire 5 fish	All year	None	9" min size	Closed to H&L from January 1 - June 15 and August 8 - December 31

DE	Private/Shore 3 fish; For-hire 5 fish	All year	None	No Restrictions	All year
MD	Private/Shore 3 fish; For-hire 5 fish	All year	8” min size	8” min size	All year
PRFC	Private/Shore 3 fish; For-hire 5 fish	All year	8” min size	Trip limits after 80% of VA-MD quota is landed	All year
VA	Private/Shore 3 fish; For-hire 5 fish	All year	None	No Restrictions	All year
NC	Private/Shore 3 fish; For-hire 5 fish	All year	None	No Restrictions	All year
SC	Private/Shore 3 fish; For-hire 5 fish	All year	None	No directed fishery	All year
GA	15 fish	January 1 - February 29; May 1 - December 31	12" min size	12" min size; 15 fish	January 1 - February 29; May 1 - December 31
FL	3 fish	All year	12” min size	12" minimum size; 7,500 lbs/day	All year

XI. Figures

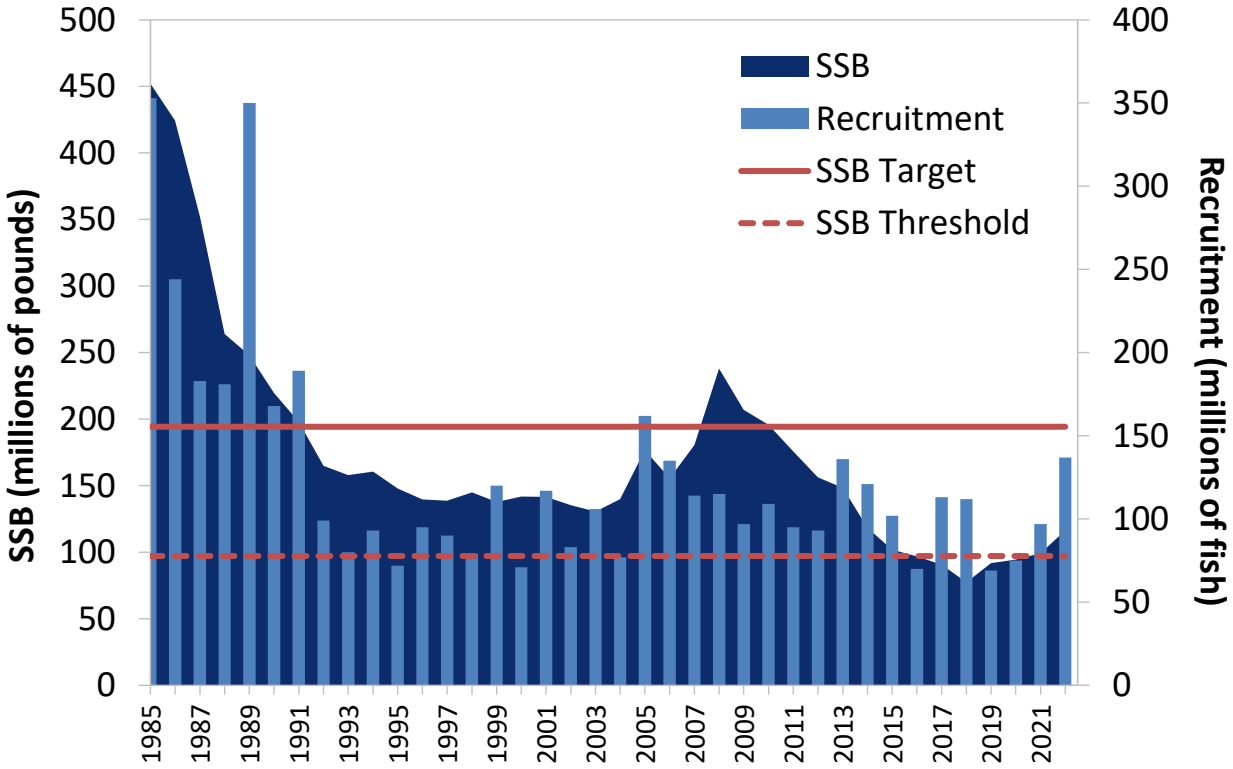


Figure 1. Bluefish spawning stock biomass and recruitment. Source: 2023 Management Track Assessment Prepublication Report, Northeast Fisheries Science Center.

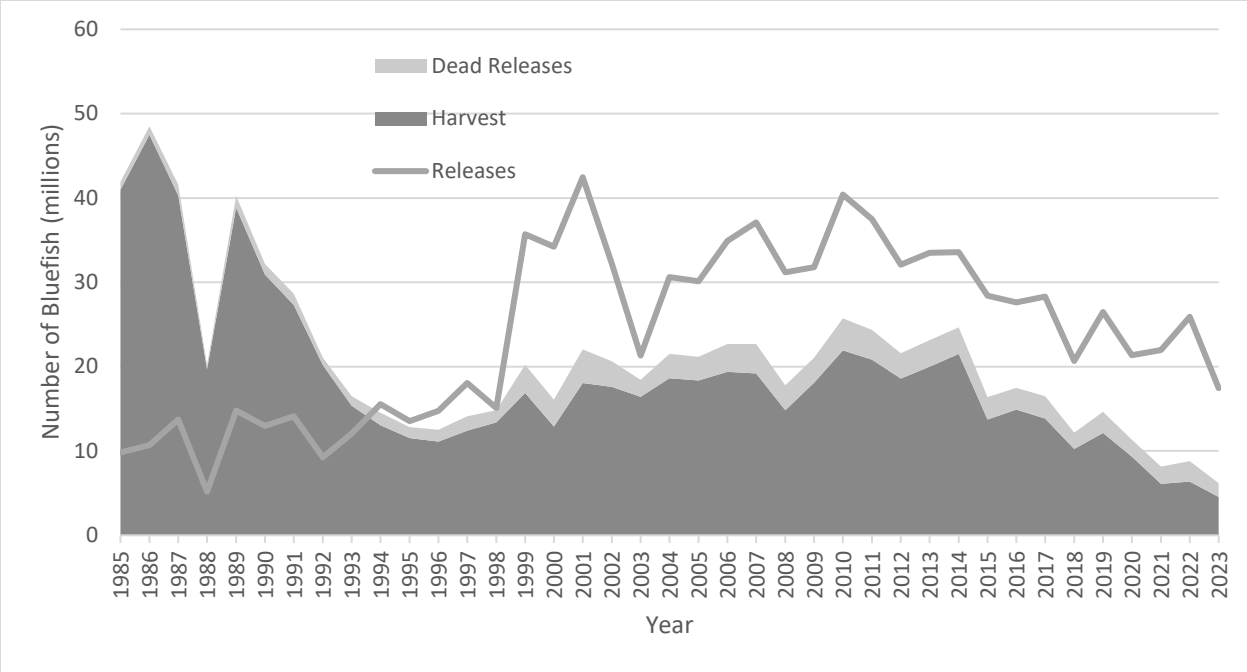


Figure 2. Estimated recreational bluefish harvest (A + B1), releases (B2) and dead releases by recreational anglers in numbers of fish, 1985-2023. Note: Harvest and dead releases are additive. Dead releases are estimated at the new recreational release mortality rate of 9.4%. Source: MRIP. Estimates may differ from source websites depending on query date (data queried July 2024).

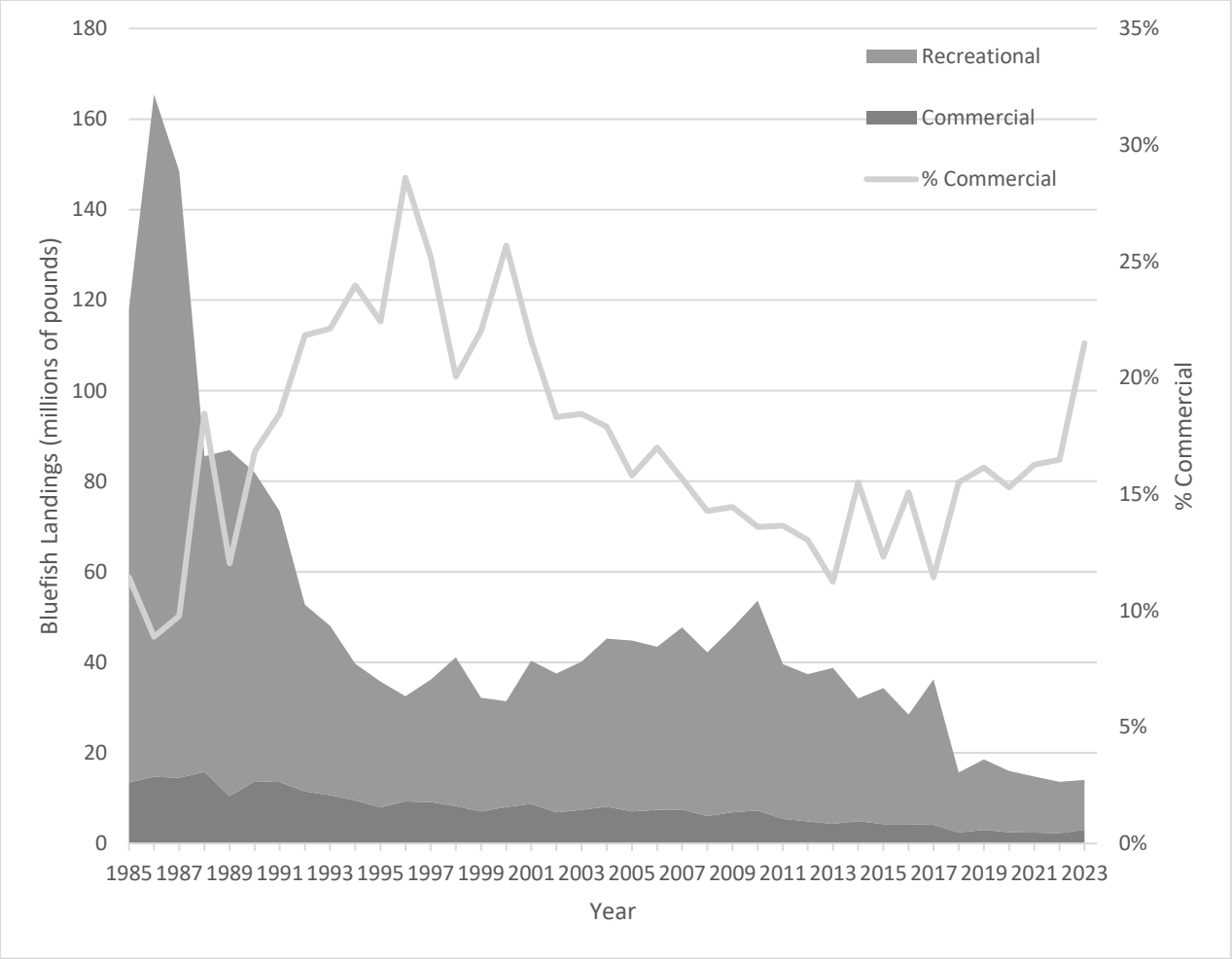


Figure 3. Bluefish recreational harvest and commercial landings by weight, 1985-2023. Source: ACCSP Data Warehouse (personal correspondence with Joseph Myers), 2024 state compliance reports, and MRIP. Estimates may differ from source websites depending on query date (commercial data queried June 2024).