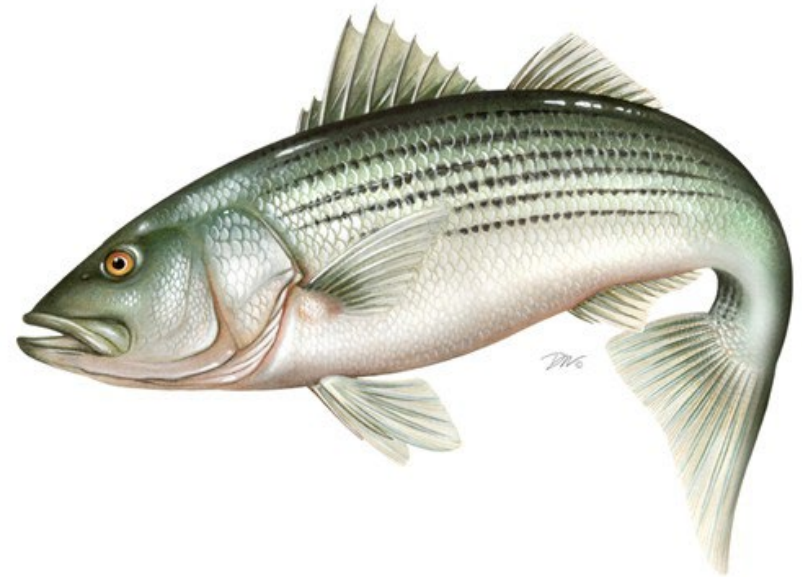




**Atlantic States
Marine Fisheries**
COMMISSION

Draft Letter to NOAA Fisheries Regarding Offshore Striped Bass Aquaculture

August 6, 2026



- In February 2026, NOAA Fisheries provided a draft technical memorandum *Charting A Course for Striped Bass: Science and Regulatory Innovation for Offshore Aquaculture*
- NOAA Fisheries seeking feedback from the Commission
- 8 Commissioners provided written feedback to ASMFC staff → those comments compiled into a draft letter for Striped Bass Board Review

Draft Letter/Comments

- Concern the draft memorandum does not adequately address significant economic, regulatory, enforcement, biological, and ecological issues associated with potential offshore striped bass aquaculture
- Concerns regarding risks to wild striped bass populations, commercial fisheries, seafood markets, protected species, and marine ecosystems as well as potential regulatory and financial obligations for states

- **Enforcement Concerns**

- Create additional enforcement responsibilities
- Since EEZ is currently closed to striped bass fishing, offshore striped bass aquaculture could be used as cover for illegal fishing
- Not enough detail on traceability, monitoring, compliance and enforcement
- Does not clearly identify which agencies would be responsible for enforcement/monitoring

- **Economic Concerns**

- Potential to flood seafood markets and reduce value of wild-caught striped bass → impacting wild fishery and harvesters
- Memo does not attempt to quantify these consequences
- Need analysis of market impacts

- **User Conflicts**

- Needs to be addressed in greater detail
- Access to traditional fishing grounds would be reduced
- Need more detail on what offshore farms would look like in practice and what uses would be allowed or restricted around the area

- **Project Siting**

- Underestimates the engineering and operational challenges of offshore striped bass net pens
- Changing ocean conditions would likely shift suitable production areas → how would regulatory framework address this
- Areas identified are highly susceptible to severe weather events → more information on measures to minimize damage, impacts
- Concern that potential sites are being proposed outside of Aquaculture Opportunity Areas process, and little information on public input

- **Aquaculture Industry Specifics**

- Ensure regulatory framework is informed by realistic operational practices and industry needs
- Need to evaluate the costs/scale required to support economic viability of striped bass aquaculture operations

- **Ecological Concerns**

- Does not address concern that forage fish would be part of feed
- Potential effect on EFH

- **Protected Species**

- Limited information on potential for entanglement and other interactions with protected species

- **Biological Risks**

- Concern about disease transmission, parasites, escapements, and genetic interactions with wild populations
- Concern about therapeutants/antibiotics/chemicals
- Need more information on implementing genetic tracking in practice
- Risk of escapement or catastrophic failure (e.g., due to weather) is real and should be given more consideration

- **Policy and Regulatory Roles**

- Regulatory concepts remain vague
- Further discussion on which agencies have oversight of biosecurity and potential impacts to wild stocks
- Role of the Commission/states?

- **Conclusion**

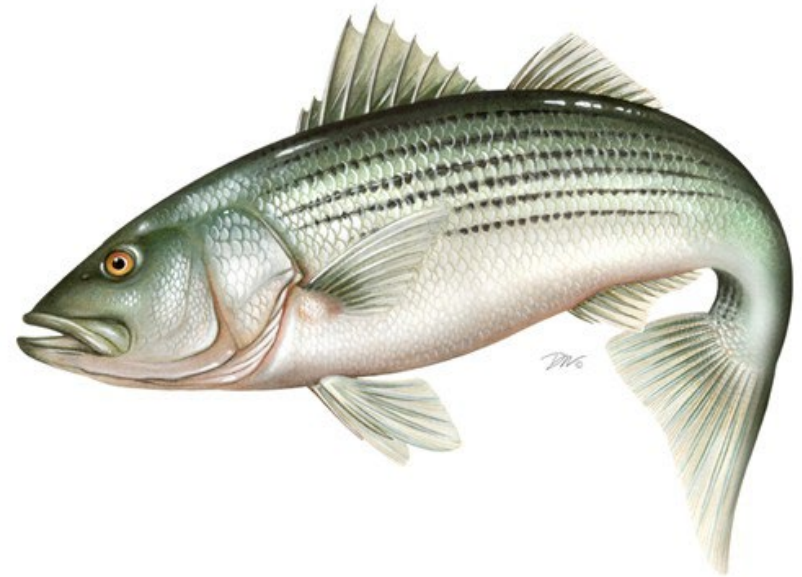
Questions?



**Atlantic States
Marine Fisheries**
COMMISSION

FMP Review for Atlantic Striped Bass 2025 Fishing Year

August 6, 2026



- Status of the Stock
- Status of the FMP
- Status of the Fishery
- PRT Comments and Recommendations

- 2024 Stock Assessment Update: overfished but not experiencing overfishing
 - Data through 2023
- 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment in progress
 - Data through 2025

- **Addendum II to Amendment 7 implemented since May 2024**
 - Commercial: Quotas -7% reduction; no change to size limits
 - Rec. Ocean: 1 fish at 28" to 31"; no change to seasons
 - Separate rec measures for NY Hudson River, PA Delaware River spring slot, DE Delaware River/Bay summer slot
 - Rec. Chesapeake Bay: 1 fish at 19" to 24"; no change to seasons
 - Rec. Filleting: retain racks and no more than 2 fillets per fish₄

- **Addendum III to Amendment 7**

- Maryland can change recreational season baseline
- TL definition by January 1, 2027
- Commercial tagging by first point of landing by end of 2028



Status of the Fishery

Status of the Fishery

- 2025 total removals = 3.0 million fish
- 25% decrease from 2024 removals

Year	Commercial		Recreational	
	Harvest	Dead Discards	Harvest	Release Mortality
2021	12%	2%	36%	50%
2022	9%	1%	51%	39%
2023	11%	<1%	47%	42%
2024	15%	<1%	42%	42%
2025	18%	<1%	47%	35%

- **Commercial Fishery in 2025**

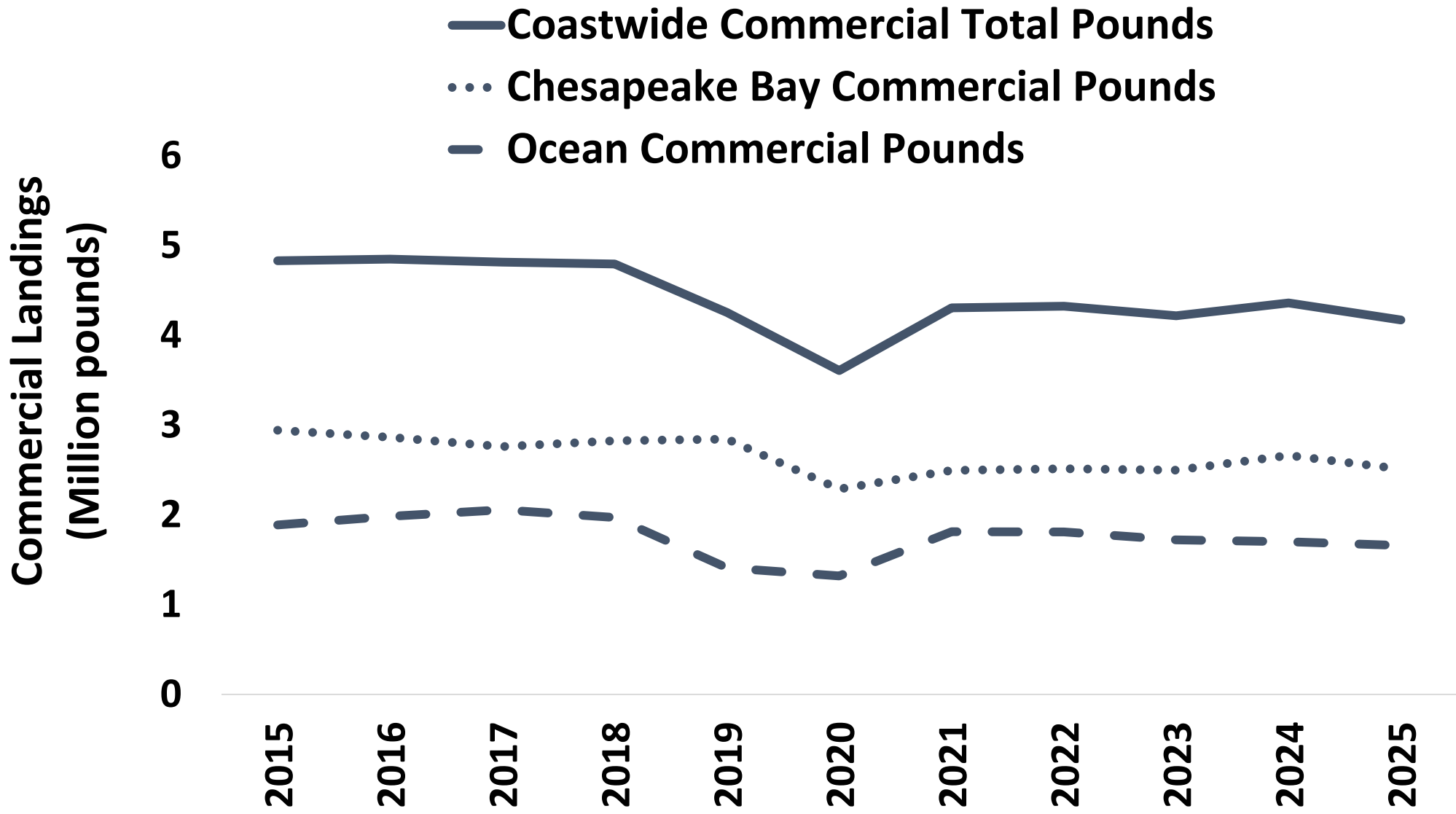
- Harvested 4.2 million lbs. (~543,000 fish)
- Decrease from 2024 (-11% by number; -4% by weight)

- **Commercial Quota Utilization in 2025**

- Ocean utilization of 75% (underutilization due to lack of availability in NC and no commercial fishing in some states)
- Most Ocean states allowing harvest used >95% of their quotas
- Chesapeake Bay utilization of 89%
- No state quota overages



Commercial Fishery

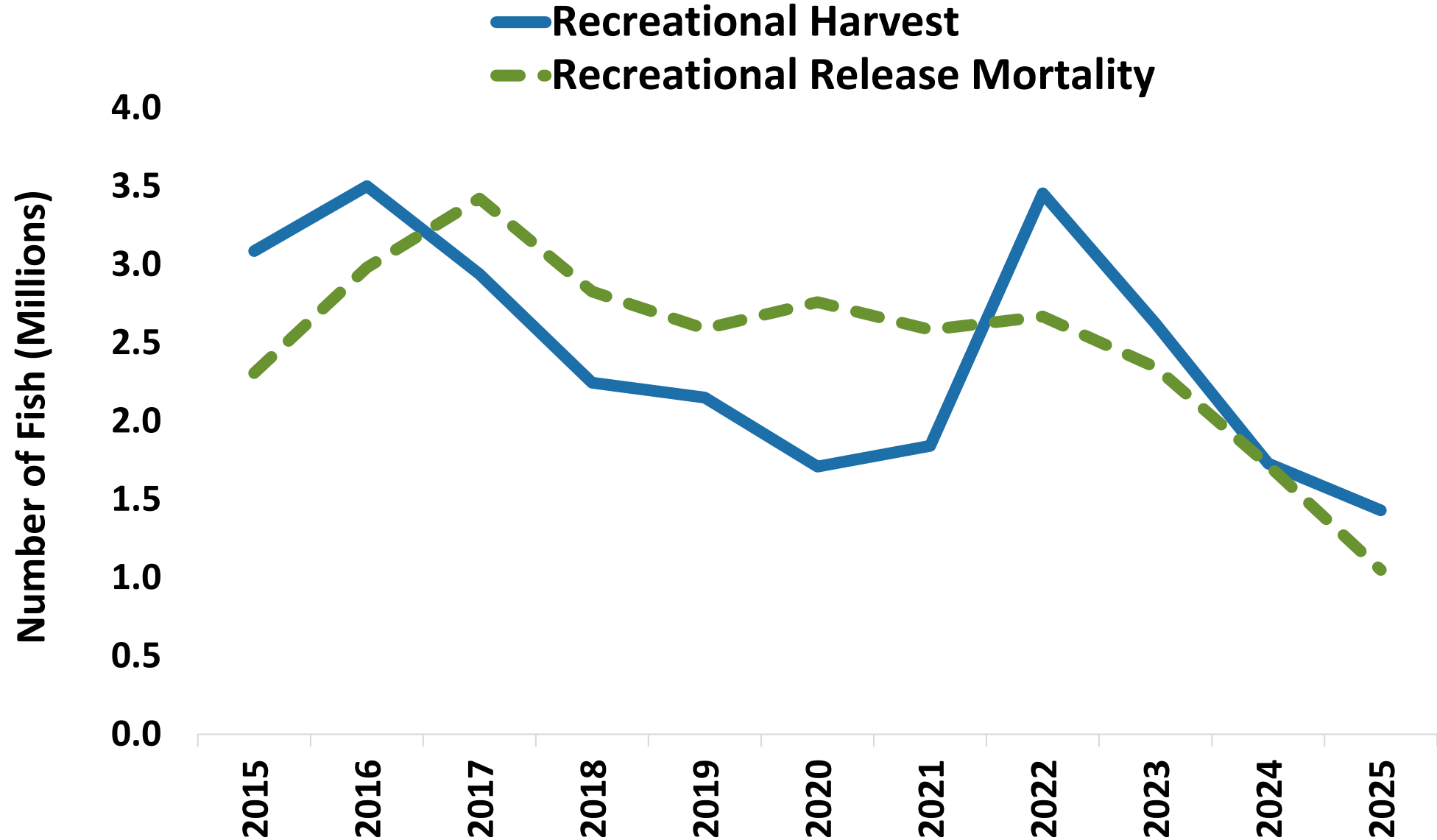


- **Recreational Fishery in 2025**

- Harvested 1.4 million fish (11.2 million pounds)
- Harvest decreased by 17% from 2024 by number (-27% by weight)
- Released alive 11.7 million fish → 1.0 million fish assumed to have died
- Released alive decreased by 39% from 2024



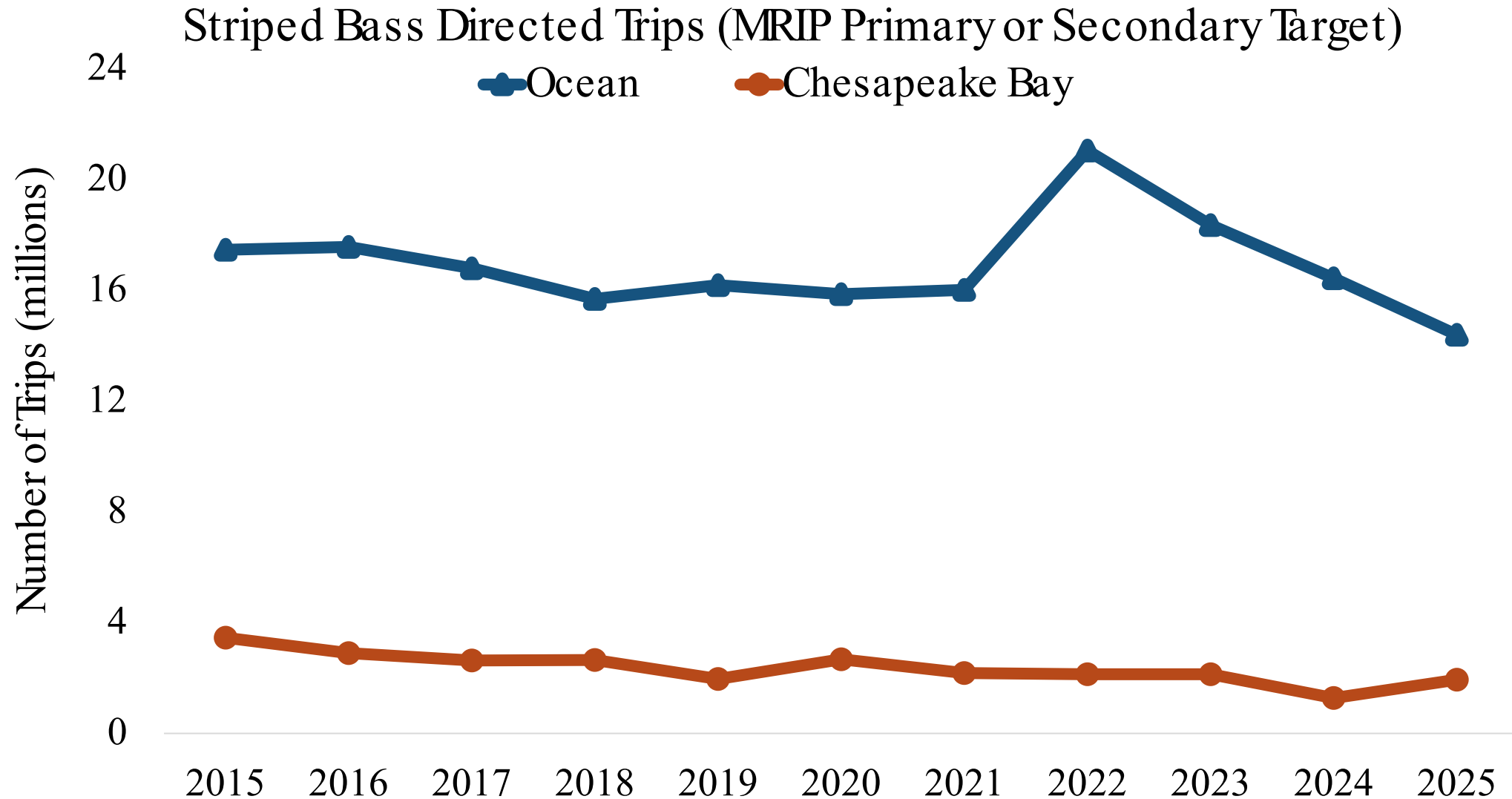
Recreational Fishery



- **Recreational Directed Trips in 2025**
 - Directed trips 16.3 million trips (MRIP primary or secondary target)
 - Decrease by 8% from 2024
 - Coastwide directed trips lowest in the past decade



Recreational Fishery



Status of the Fishery

- Several factors likely contribute to catch/effort levels including management measures, year class availability, angler behavior, weather, stock abundance, nearshore availability, etc.
- 2025 Ocean Rec: bad weather and high winds (early fall) and lack of available slot size fish during peak season likely contributed to low harvest in NY and NJ, which drove the Ocean decrease
- 2025 Chesapeake Bay Rec: lack of strong year classes in recent years and Addendum II measures implemented in 2024 likely contributed to low 2024-2025 harvest

North Carolina A-R Fisheries

- 2022 NC A-R Stock Assessment Update: stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring along with very low juvenile recruitment for several consecutive years
- North Carolina implemented a harvest moratorium in the Albemarle Sound and Roanoke River Management Areas effective January 2024



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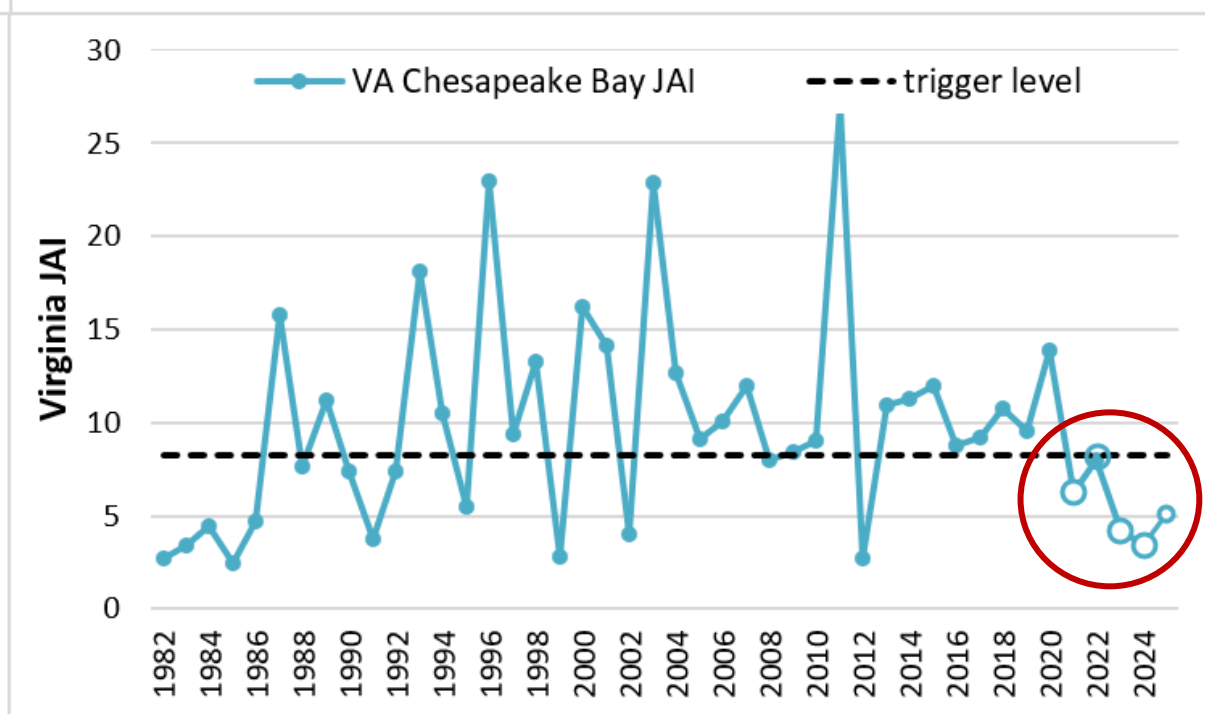
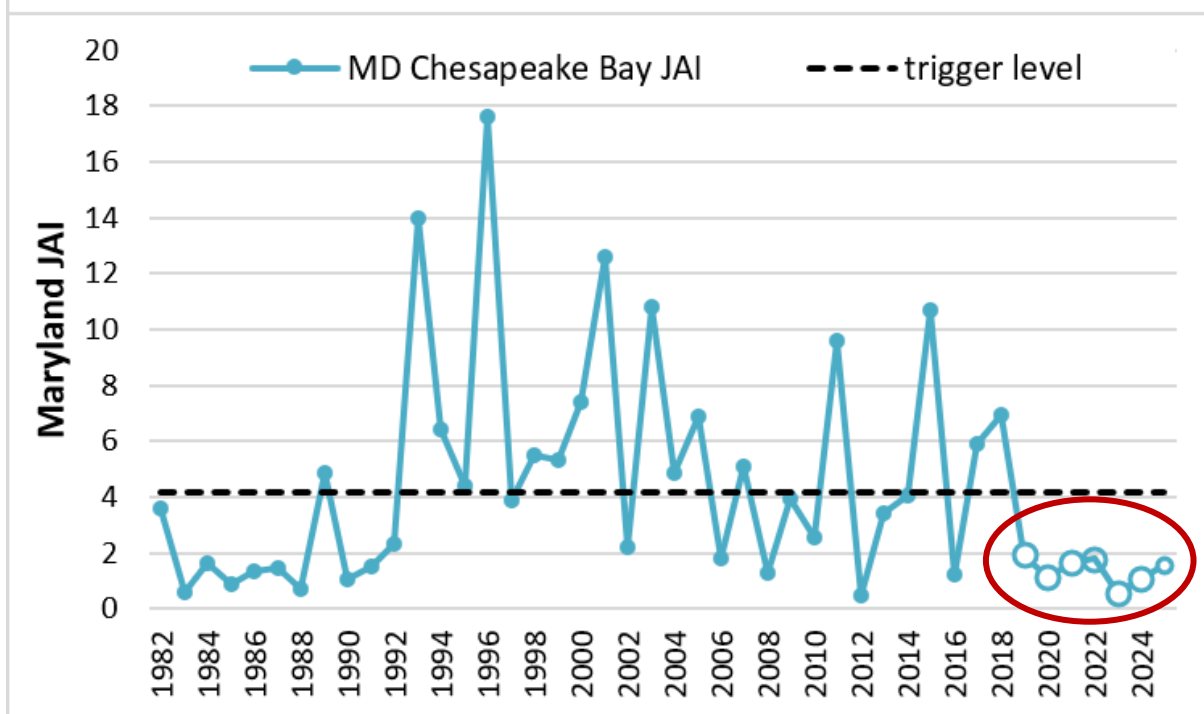
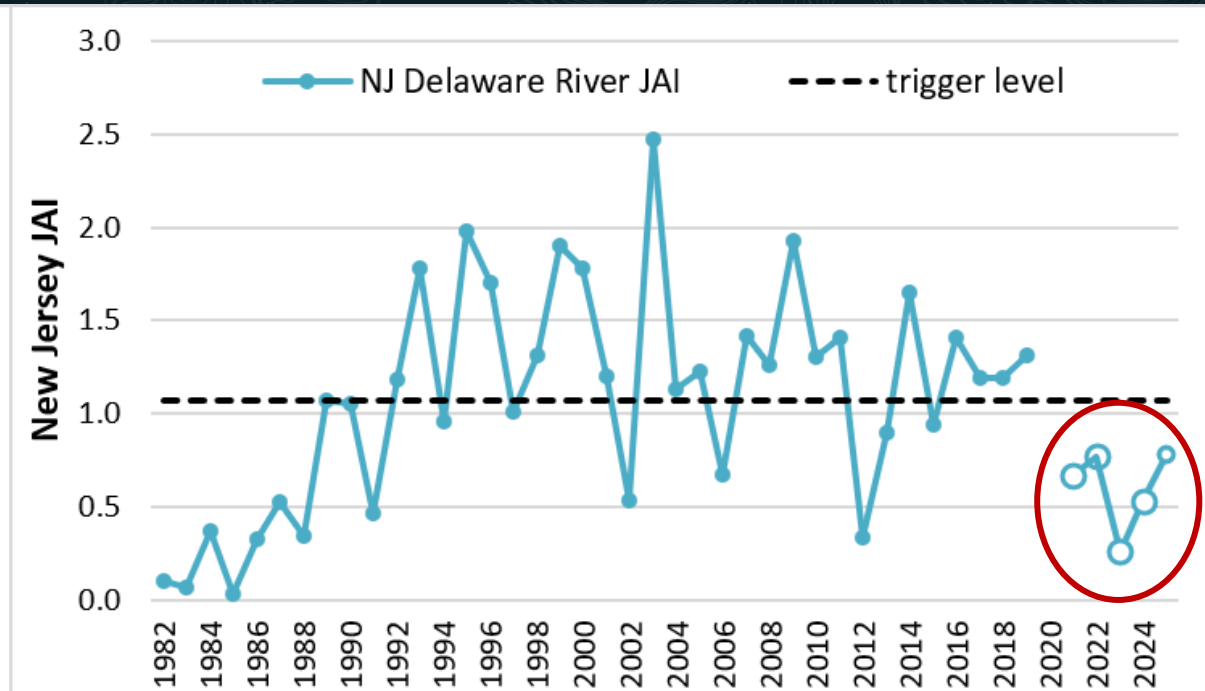
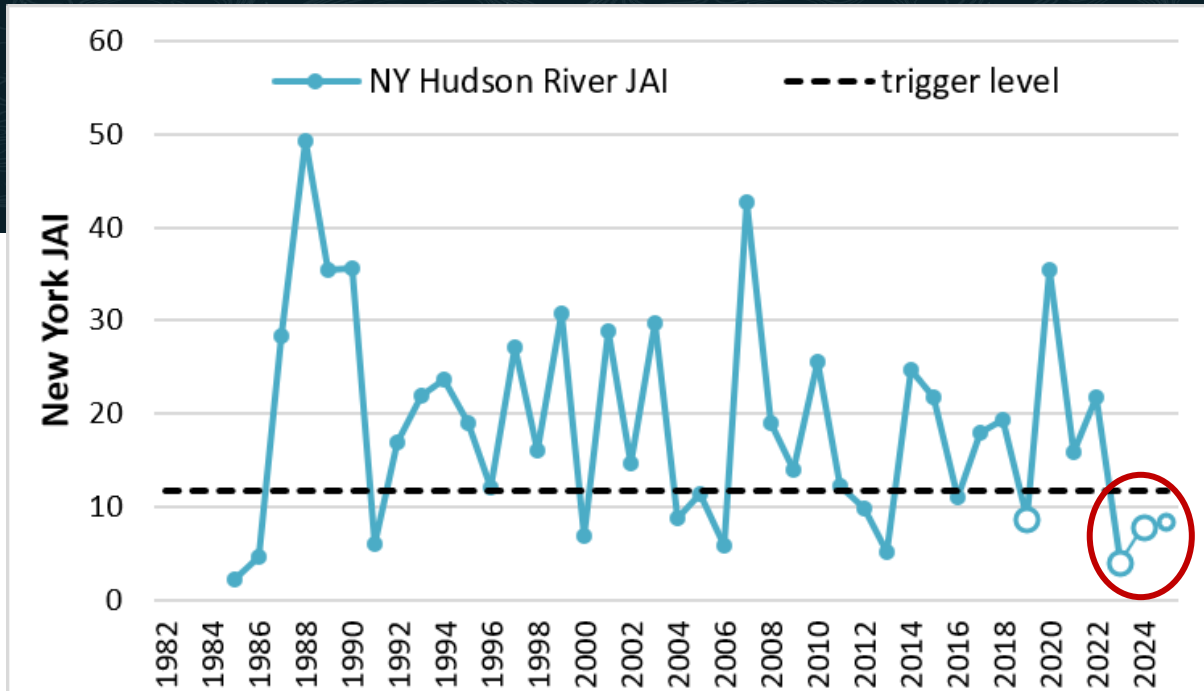
Recruitment Trigger

Amend. 7 Recruitment Trigger

- IF any of the four JAIs used in the assessment (NY, NJ, MD, VA) is below 75% of all values from 1992-2006 (high recruitment period) for three consecutive years...
- THEN interim F reference points calculated using the low recruitment assumption will be implemented
- Already operating under the low recruitment assumption for current reference points from 2024 assessment

Amend. 7 Recruitment Trigger

- Recruitment trigger tripped again this year
- Reviewed 2023, 2024, 2025 JAI values → NY, NJ, MD, VA trip the trigger
- Already operating under the low recruitment assumption for current reference points from 2024 assessment





PRT Comments and Recommendations

All states in 2025 implemented management and monitoring program consistent with the provisions of the FMP.

- PRT notes the issue of determining commercial quota overages based on preliminary harvest estimates
- Final harvest estimates may not be available to determine the full quota overage when planning for next year's fishery
 - 2024 overages in NY and MD
 - NY and MD adjusted their 2025 quotas based on preliminary harvest estimates
 - Final 2024 harvest estimates indicated additional overage amount which states planned to pay back in 2026

- PRT notes the issue of determining quota overages based on preliminary harvest estimates
 - New York reduced 2025 commercial quota based on preliminary 2024 overage amount (15,561 pounds). Final data indicated additional 604 pounds overage. New York noted it was under quota in 2025 by more than the total 2024 overage (15,561+604), so no additional quota reduction was taken in 2026.
 - Maryland reduced 2025 commercial quota based on preliminary 2024 overage amount (5,840 ocean and no overage for Ches. Bay). Reduced 2026 quotas based on additional overage amount (213 ocean and 43,910 for Ches. Bay).

PRT Note on NJ SBBP Tags

- NJ allocates its commercial quota to recreational SBBP through CE
- Participants can harvest 1 fish at 24" to <28" per SBBP permit
- 14% of issued SBBP permits were used in 2025
- PRT discussed what happens to unused SBBP tags: for-hire participants must return tags while private anglers are not required to return them
- PRT notes this is inconsistent with strict tag return requirements for the commercial fishery
- NJ indicated there is ongoing discussion on how to improve reporting from private anglers related to tag use

Questions?