Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

ISFMP Policy Board

November 12, 2026
8:00– 11:00 a.m.

Draft Agenda

The times listed are approximate; the order in which these items will be taken is subject to change; other items may be added as necessary

1. Welcome/Call to Order *(D. McKiernan)* 8:00 a.m.

2. Board Consent 8:00 a.m.
   - Approval of Agenda
   - Approval of Proceedings from May 2026

3. Public Comment 8:05 a.m.

Joint Discussion with the MAFMC

4. Discuss Sector Separation Amendment Stakeholder Workshop Results (*T. Bauer, C. Tuohy, K. Dancy*) **Possible Action** 8:15 a.m.
   - Provide Direction to the PDT/FMAT on Amendment Options

5. Executive Committee Report *(D. McKiernan)* 9:45 a.m.

6. Update on the Marine Recreational Information Program Fishing Effort Survey Estimates (*K. Papacostas)* 9:55 a.m.

7. Update on Recreational Angler Partnership Improvement Directive (*A. DiJohnson*) 10:25 a.m.

8. Committee Reports 10:35 a.m.
   - Habitat Committee (*S. Kaalstad*)
   - Atlantic Coast Fish Habitat Partnership (*S. Kaalstad)*
   - Law Enforcement Committee (*K. Blanchard*)

9. Stock Assessment Updates (*K. Drew*) 10:50 a.m.

10. Review Noncompliance, If Necessary **Action** 10:55 a.m.

11. Other Business/Adjourn 11:00 a.m.

The meeting will be held at The Viking (One Bellevue Avenue, Newport, RI; 401.847.330) and via webinar; click here for details.

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

MEETING OVERVIEW

ISFMP Policy Board
Thursday November 12, 2026
8:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Chair: Dan McKiernan (MA) Assumed Chairmanship: 10/25	Vice Chair: Doug Haymens (GA)	Previous Board Meetings: August 6, 2026
Voting Members: ME, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, PA, DE, MD, DC, PRFC, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL, NMFS, USFWS (19 votes)		

2. Board Consent

- Approval of Agenda
- Approval of Proceedings from August 2026

3. Public Comment – At the beginning of the meeting public comment will be taken on items not on the agenda. Individuals that wish to speak at this time must sign-in at the beginning of the meeting. For agenda items that have already gone out for public hearing and/or have had a public comment period that has closed, the Board Chair may determine that additional public comment will not provide additional information. In this circumstance the Chair will not allow additional public comment on an issue. For agenda items that the public has not had a chance to provide input, the Board Chair may allow limited opportunity for comment. The Board Chair has the discretion to limit the number of speakers and/or the length of each comment.

This Agenda Item will be Joint with the MAFMC

4. Discuss Sector Separation Amendment Stakeholder Workshop Results (8:15 – 9:45 a.m.) Possible Action

Background

- The Sector Separation Amendment is being developed jointly by the Policy Board and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. The Amendment explores options/alternatives for managing the for-hire (charter/headboat) and private recreational fishing modes separately for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish, as well as options for for-hire permitting and reporting.
- In December 2025, recognizing that additional stakeholder input was needed, the Policy Board and Council agreed to delay the development of a Draft Amendment Document to conduct a stakeholder workshop in 2026 to further refine the amendment options/alternatives.
- The Sector Separation Stakeholder Workshop was held September 23-24, 2026, in Baltimore, Maryland, bringing together diverse perspectives from across the recreational fishing community to explore management approaches that reflect the unique needs and priorities of different recreational fishing modes. (**Briefing Materials**).

- Draft options/alternatives are scheduled for approval at the Commission's Winter Meeting in late January 2027, with final action tentatively scheduled for August 2027 (**Briefing Materials**).

Presentations

- Staff will present summary recommendations from the stakeholder workshop

Board action for consideration at this meeting

- Provide Direction to the PDT/FMAT on Amendment Options

5. Executive Committee Report (9:45 -9:55 a.m.)

Background

- The Executive Committee will meet on November 11, 2026

Presentations

- D. McKiernan will provide an update of the Executive Committee's work

Board action for consideration at this meeting

- None

6. Update on the Marine Recreational Information Program Fishing Effort Survey Estimates 9:55 - 10:25 a.m.)

Background

- NOAA updated its Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) Fishing Effort Survey (FES) design in 2026 to address overreporting in private boat and shore fishing trips. NOAA modified the order of fishing recall questions (asking about 12-month activity before 2-month periods) and increased survey frequency from bi-monthly to monthly to reduce reporting errors and illogical responses. The revised FES design corrects past overreporting, resulting in systematically lower recreational effort and total catch estimates with smaller margins of error.

Presentations

- NOAA will present the recently published updated recreational fishing effort and catch estimates focusing on ASMFC species

Board action for consideration at this meeting

- None

7. Update on Recreational Angler Partnership Improvement Directive (RAPID) Initiative (10:25 – 10:35 a.m.)

Background

- In April 2026, NOAA Fisheries introduced RAPID as a core component of its updated National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy. RAPID is designed to modernize the way saltwater recreational fishing data is collected and managed by transforming the existing Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP)

Presentations

- A. DiJohnson will present an update on the progress of the initiative

Board action for consideration at this meeting

- None

8. Committee Reports (10:35 – 10:50 a.m.) Action

Background

- The ACFHP will meet on November 9 and 10,2026
- The Habitat Committee will meet on November 11, 2026
- The Law Enforcement Committee will meet on November 9 and 10, 2026

Presentations

- S. Kaalstad will present the work of the ACFHP and Habitat Committees
- K. Blanchard will present the work of the Law Enforcement Committee

Board action for consideration at this meeting

- None

9. Stock Assessment Updates (10:50 – 10:55 a.m.)

Background

- The Atlantic sturgeon and Cobia stock assessments are on-going.

Presentations

- K. Drew will present an update on species assessment whose management board did not meet during summer meeting (Atlantic sturgeon and AMG Cobia)

Board action for consideration at this meeting

- None

10. Review Non-Compliance Findings, if Necessary Action

11. Other Business

12. Adjourn

UPDATED Marine Recreational Information Program Estimates

Greater Atlantic Highlights

AUGUST 2026

NOAA FISHERIES



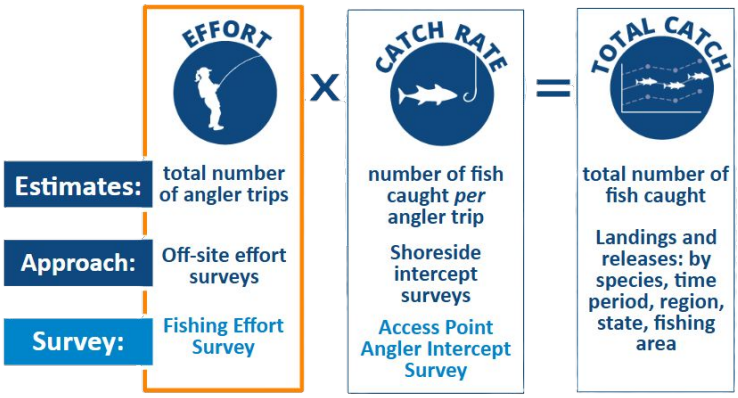
Photo: Atlantic cod (gadus morhua).
Credit: Joachim S. Müller

Updated Marine Recreational Information Program Estimates

NOAA Fisheries has updated recreational fishing effort and catch estimates dating back to 1981. These updated estimates reflect the improved 2026 Fishing Effort Survey (FES) design. The FES estimates the number of recreational saltwater fishing trips taken from private boats and shore. For-hire effort estimates are calculated using other methods and are not impacted by this update.

2026 Fishing Effort Survey Revisions

We revised the fishing activity question order and increased the frequency of the mail survey administration from every two months to monthly. The new design addresses overreporting of private boat and shore fishing trips and generally produces lower effort estimates.



The FES effort estimates are multiplied by the catch-per-trip estimates from in-person dockside interviews from the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey to calculate total catch. The APAIS design did not change in 2026.

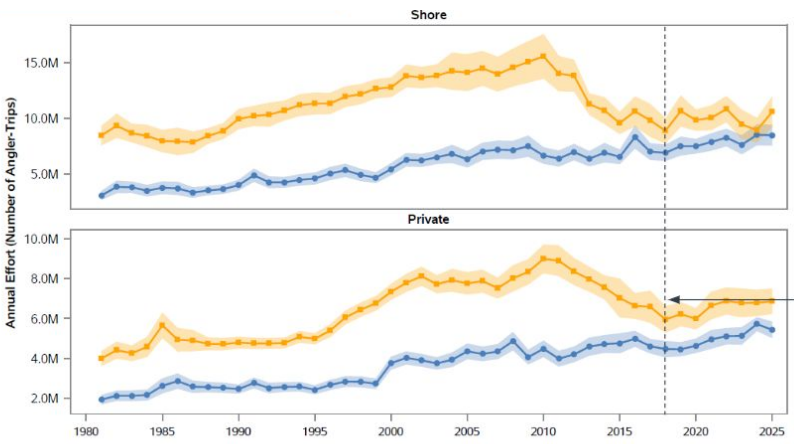
Key Takeaways

1. While the updated total recreational catch estimates are systematically lower, historical trends remain largely the same
2. The magnitude of the reduction in total catch estimates varies by species because the updated effort estimates differ by state, fishing mode (shore vs. private boat), and time of year
3. Reductions are larger for fisheries occurring in low-activity months via private boat
4. Data outliers across the time series are reduced

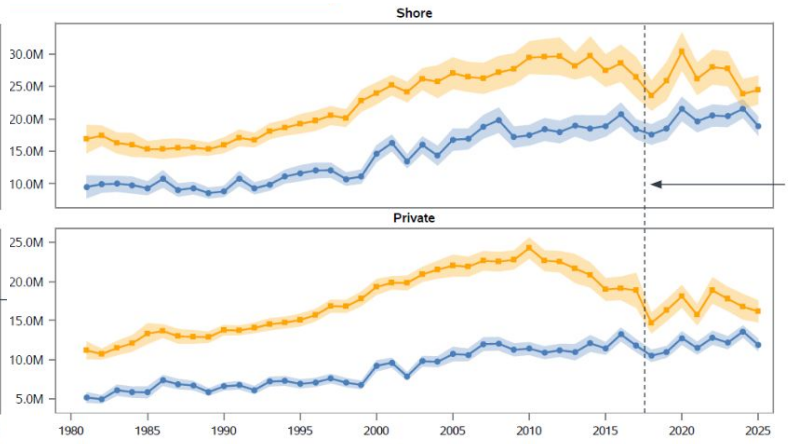
Why Did We Make These Changes?

We aim to continuously improve our survey methods and data through conducting thorough research and listening to partner and industry feedback. An independent peer review panel found the revised FES to be a substantial improvement that produces more accurate fishing trip data. The calibration model used to rescale the historical estimates was also favorably, independently peer reviewed.

Annual Effort Comparisons – New England



Annual Effort Comparisons – Mid-Atlantic



Using Improved FES

Using Original FES

Dotted Line: In 2018, we transitioned to the original FES from the Coastal Household Telephone Survey due to declining landline phone use. In terms of magnitude, the updated estimates are generally somewhere in-between the estimates from the original FES and the estimates from the CHTS.

How Will These Changes Impact Management?

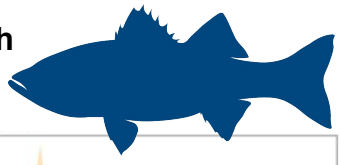
- This data revision does not trigger immediate fisheries management changes or adjustments to catch limits.
- NOAA Fisheries and regional partners will begin integrating the improved data into upcoming stock assessments to help determine the health of stocks and provide new management advice through standard regional fishery management councils, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), and NOAA Fisheries public processes.
- Incorporation of the revised data into stock assessments may affect estimates of stock size, fishing mortality, biological reference points, and stock status, which could eventually lead to changes in stock status, acceptable biological catches, annual catch limits, other management measures, and sector allocations.
- We can't predict specific fishery stock assessment or management outcomes from the catch estimate update, including the direction and magnitude of stock status change; there are other sources of data, such as biological and commercial fishing information, which also influence outcomes and decisions.
- Effects will vary among species depending on how important recreational catch is to the fishery and to the stock assessment.
- Allocations are often dependent on the historical time series of catch data. The New England and Mid-Atlantic regional fishery management councils and ASMFC may review existing allocations depending on how the allocation was established and the extent of the catch history changes. Any allocation change would require a separate management action.

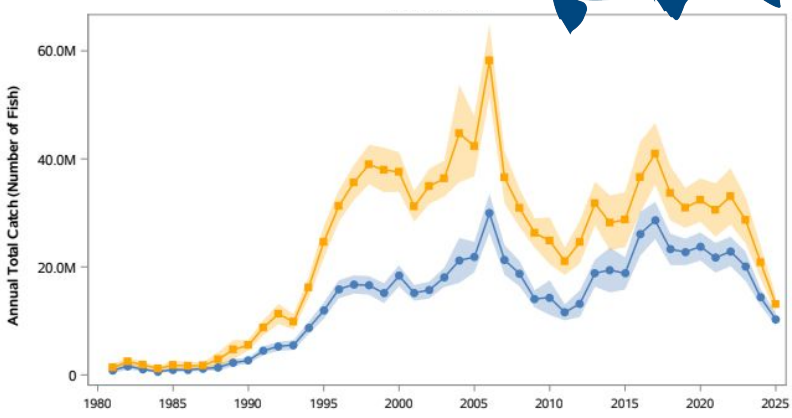
Impacts to For-Hire and Highly Migratory Species Data

- For-hire effort estimates in the Greater Atlantic come from the For-Hire Survey and permit-based Vessel Trip Reports, not FES, so for-hire effort estimates from these programs are unaffected by this revision.
- The revision will have minimal impact to recreational HMS fishery management in the Northeast as this data is mostly derived from the Large Pelagics Survey, which is not affected by this action. However, this revision will update information for Atlantic coastal shark species, including the sandbar shark.

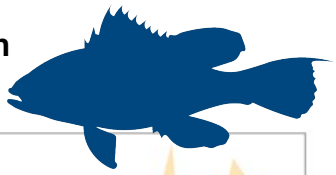
Snapshots of Estimate Comparisons for Key Regional Fisheries (All Modes)

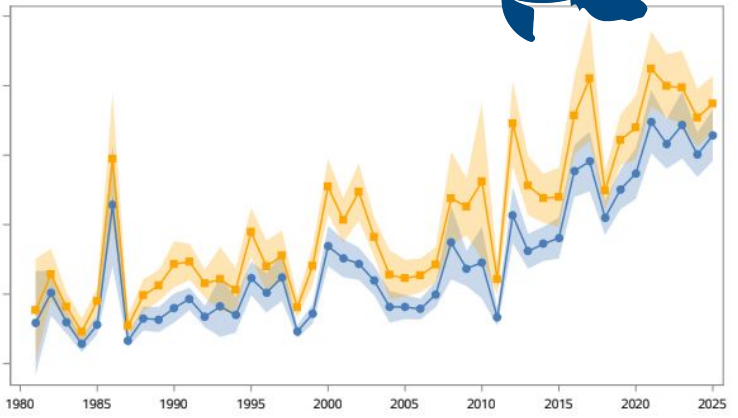
Greater Atlantic Total Catch
Striped Bass



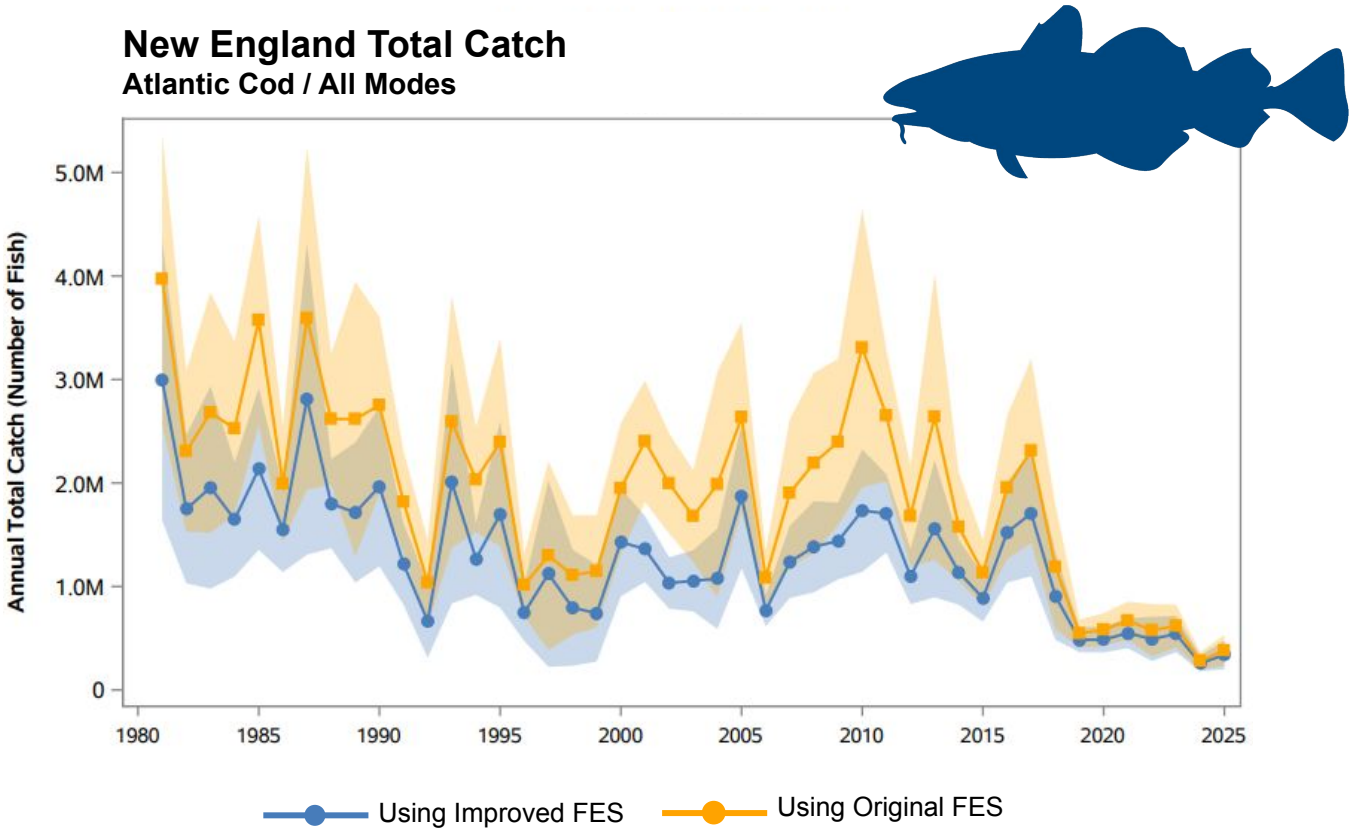


Greater Atlantic Total Catch
Black Sea Bass





Using Improved FES Using Original FES



Timing

- Management changes will occur over time, and not all fisheries will be affected at the same time. Timing will vary depending on assessment schedules, management processes, and when updated scientific advice becomes available.
- **2026:** In the Greater Atlantic, the only 2026 stock assessment that will incorporate the revised data is for the sandbar shark, which is scheduled for late 2026. The revised data will not be incorporated into stock assessments already underway with recreational components, including haddock, because data inputs must be finalized several months prior to the scheduled assessment.
- **2027:** In the Greater Atlantic, several stocks are scheduled for assessments in 2027 using the new data, including Atlantic cod, striped bass, Atlantic migratory group cobia, Atlantic mackerel, bluefish, summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. The Recreational Demand Model, which is a management and decision support tool for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass, as well as Northeast Multispecies Atlantic cod and haddock, will be updated following completion of their assessments to help set recreational management measures.
- Management advice is generally made for the year following completion of a stock assessment. Therefore, the new data will not impact projected 2027 catch limits or established 2027 recreational management measures.
- **2028-2029:** First round of management measures will be set based on the new stock assessments.
- View the Northeast Region Coordinating Council schedule and the ASMFC schedule for the full assessment lists, timelines, and responsible management bodies.

The Recreational Angler Partnership Improvement Directive will further improve recreational fisheries data collection through a partnership-driven approach that will allow for greater regional flexibility.

UPDATED Marine Recreational Information Program Estimates

Southeast Highlights

AUGUST 2026

NOAA FISHERIES



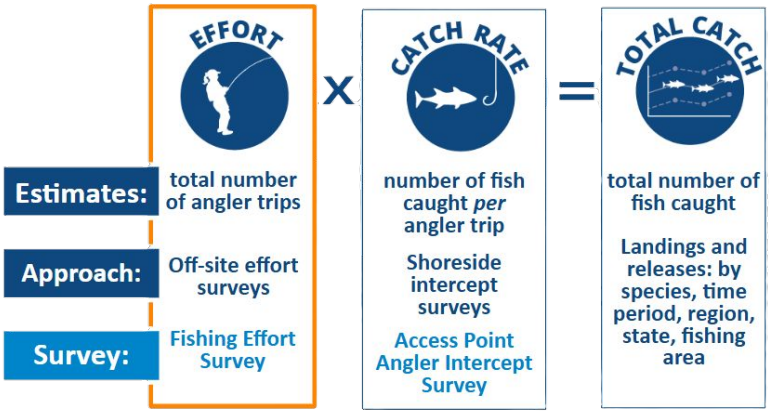
Photo: Anglers identify signs of barotrauma on a red snapper.
Credit: Return ‘Em Right

Updated Marine Recreational Information Program Estimates

NOAA Fisheries has updated recreational fishing effort and catch estimates dating back to 1981. These updated estimates reflect the improved 2026 Fishing Effort Survey (FES) design. The FES estimates the number of recreational saltwater fishing trips taken from private boats and shore. For-hire effort estimates are calculated using other methods and are not impacted by this update.

2026 Fishing Effort Survey Revisions

We revised the fishing activity question order and increased the frequency of the mail survey administration from every two months to monthly. The new design addresses overreporting of private boat and shore fishing trips and generally produces lower effort estimates.



Key Takeaways

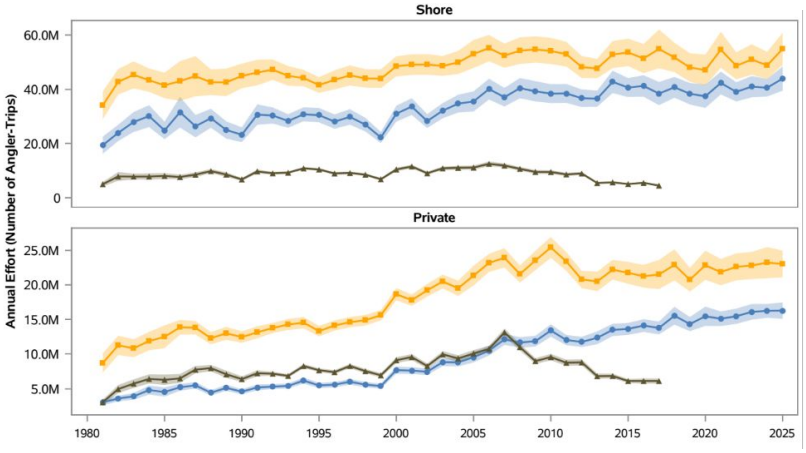
1. While the updated total recreational catch estimates are systematically lower, historical trends remain largely the same
2. The magnitude of the reduction in total catch estimates varies by species because the updated effort estimates differ by state, fishing mode (shore vs. private boat), and time of year
3. Reductions are larger for fisheries occurring in low-activity months via private boat
4. Data outliers across the time series are reduced

In the states where both the FES and the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) are conducted, the FES effort estimates are multiplied by the APAIS catch-per-trip estimates to calculate total catch, which is used alongside other sources of data to inform stock assessments and management. The APAIS design did not change in 2026.

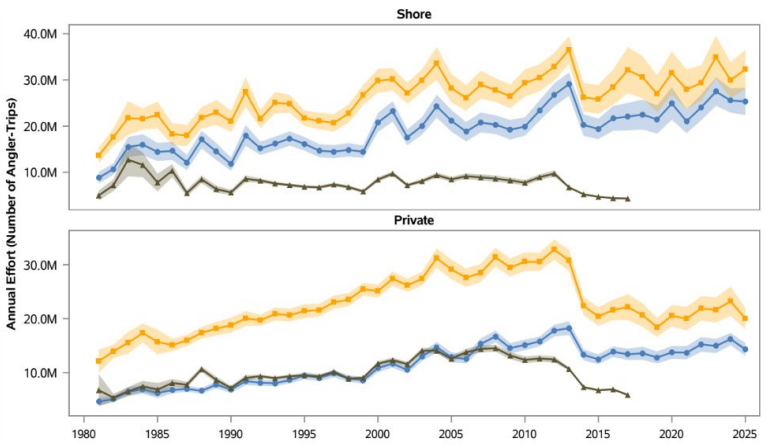
Why Did We Make These Changes?

We aim to continuously improve our survey methods and data through conducting thorough research and listening to partner and industry feedback. An independent peer review panel found the revised FES to be a substantial improvement that produces more accurate fishing trip data. The calibration model used to rescale the historical estimates was also favorably, independently peer reviewed.

Annual Effort Comparisons – South Atlantic



Annual Effort Comparisons – Gulf of America



Using Improved FES
Using Original FES
Using CHTS

In 2018, we transitioned to the original FES from the Coastal Household Telephone Survey as a result of declining landline phone usage. As landline phone use declined, the fishing effort estimates from the CHTS also lowered due to survey coverage issues. Additionally, in the Gulf of America, the termination of the FES in Louisiana likely explains the decrease in overall effort beginning in 2014.

How Will These Changes Impact Management?

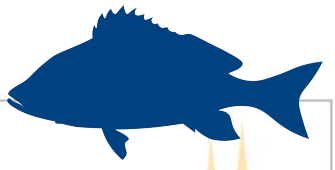
- This data revision does not trigger immediate fisheries management changes or adjustments to catch limits.
- Management advice is currently set using original FES estimates or Coastal Household Telephone Survey estimates depending on the species. These species will continue to be monitored and managed in the prior units until the updated estimates can be integrated into stock assessments and management advice set in the same scale.
- NOAA Fisheries and regional partners will begin integrating the improved data into upcoming stock assessments to help determine the health of stocks and provide new management advice through standard regional fishery management council, states, interstate marine fisheries commissions, and NOAA Fisheries public processes.
- Incorporation of the revised data into stock assessments may affect estimates of stock size, fishing mortality, biological reference points, and stock status, which could eventually lead to changes in stock status, acceptable biological catches, annual catch limits, other management measures, and sector allocations.
- We can't predict specific fishery stock assessment or management outcomes as a result of the catch estimate update, including the direction and magnitude of stock status change, as there are other sources of data, such as biological and commercial fishing information, which also influence outcomes and any needed decisions.
    - Effects will vary among species depending on how important recreational catch is to the fishery and its stock assessment.
- Sector allocations are handled separately and exist for several managed stocks. Regional fishery management councils are responsible for reviewing and recommending allocation decisions for individual stocks. Any allocation change would require a separate management action.

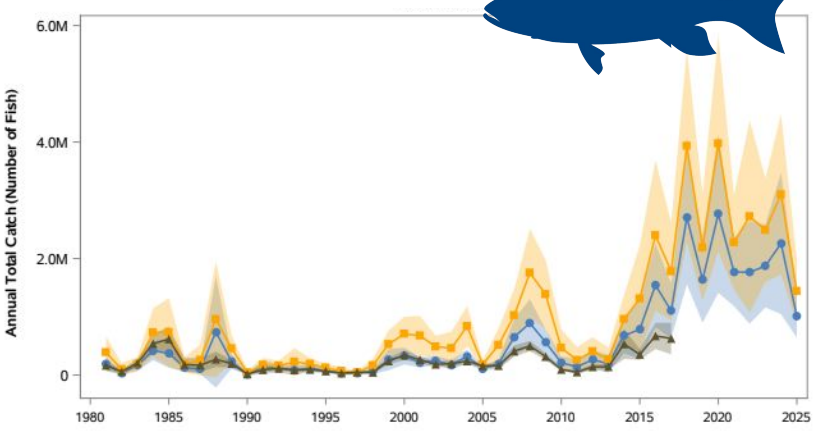
Impacts to Highly Migratory Species Data

- These updated estimates are the agency's primary data source for monitoring landings of yellowfin, bigeye, and skipjack tuna in this region. The United States does not have assigned quotas for these fisheries, so management impacts should be minimal.
- The large-scale MRIP surveys provide the primary data necessary for the management of recreational coastal shark fisheries in the Atlantic and Gulf of America, including sandbar sharks. Sandbar sharks are historically one of the top species in the commercial shark fishery and one of the most commonly encountered sharks in depredation events.

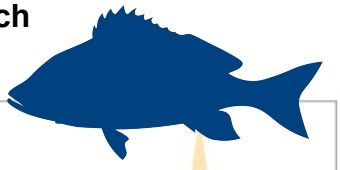
Snapshots of Estimate Comparisons for Key Regional Fisheries

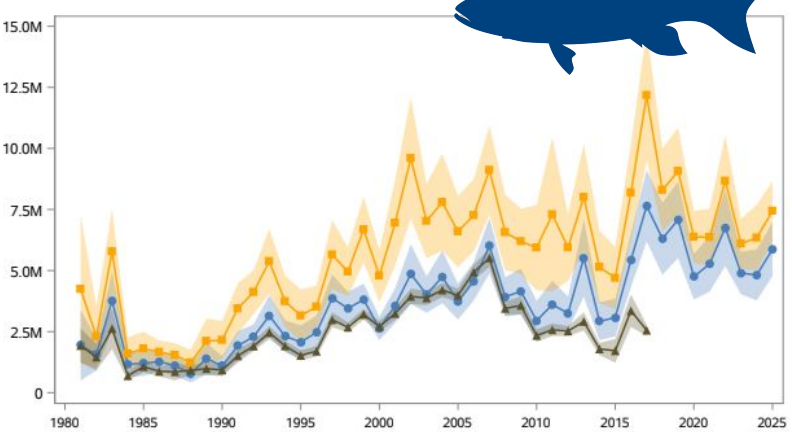
South Atlantic Total Catch
Red Snapper, All Modes



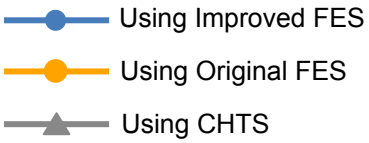


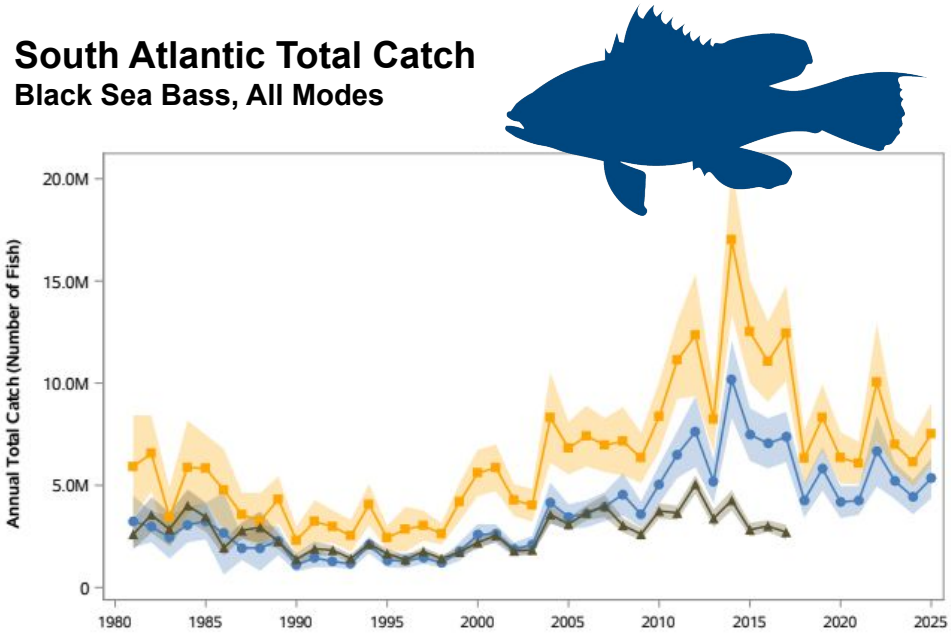
Gulf of America Total Catch
Red Snapper, All Modes





Using Improved FES Using Original FES Using CHTS





Timing

- Management changes will occur over time, and not all fisheries will be affected or affected at the same time. Timing will vary depending on assessment schedules, management processes, and when updated scientific advice becomes available.

- **Anticipated Stock Assessments in 2026 and 2027:**
  - **South Atlantic** - red snapper, dolphinfish management strategy evaluation, sandbar shark, Atlantic cobia (Rhode Island to Georgia, ASMFC assessment), black sea bass, Spanish mackerel, gag grouper, king mackerel, red grouper, and bull sharks
  - **Gulf of America** - king mackerel, gray triggerfish, red snapper, tilefish, gag grouper, sandbar shark, gray snapper, greater amberjack, scamp, and bull sharks
- Management advice is generally made for the year following completion of a stock assessment. Therefore, the new data will not impact projected 2027 catch limits or established 2027 recreational management measures.
- **2028-2029:** First round of management measures will be set based on the new stock assessments.
- View the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review schedule for the full list and timelines.

Fisheries in the Gulf of America

- The improved FES provides a baseline of effort data across the region while several Gulf of America states transition to their own survey programs and work to enhance the comparability of regional estimates.
- Mississippi transitioned to its creel survey program in 2026, and Alabama plans to fully transition to its creel program by 2027. NOAA Fisheries certified both of these programs in 2026 through an independent peer review that found them to produce statistically valid sources of data to inform recreational fishery management. The APAIS and FES will only be administered in Florida in the Gulf of America starting in 2027.
- Since the data to assess, manage, and monitor fisheries must be at the same scale, NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Center is coordinating with Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama state partners to develop a standardized, scientific calibration approach, which will be needed until new state survey data can be incorporated into stock assessments.
- The Recreational Angler Partnership Improvement Directive will further improve recreational fisheries data collection through a partnership-driven approach that will allow for greater regional flexibility.

Note: The recreational fishing estimates used in stock assessments and management support analyses may differ from estimates published within the Marine Recreational Information Program Query Tool. Depending on the stock assessment, regional fishery scientists may make adjustments to MRIP survey data based on species-specific or regional needs. This might include partitioning data by stock areas or sub areas within states, separating and calibrating for-hire estimates, combining estimates with state surveys, applying multi-survey estimates of average fish weights, smoothing survey response outliers, using unweighted length data, and creating additional variables like open and closed-season estimates. Final estimates incorporated into regional stock assessment models are made publicly available in the stock assessment reports and on the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review site.

Changes to the Stock Assessment Schedule:

- Jointly Managed Species (NRCC):
    - The 2028 scup benchmark assessment has been removed.
    - An assessment update is planned for 2027 for black sea bass, bluefish, scup, and summer flounder.
        - 2029 updates would have been likely under the previous frequency of NRCC assessment but the 2029 schedule is not confirmed yet and the SSC is currently debating on changing the frequency of assessments. For this reason, 2029 update assessments have been removed from the schedule.
    - The 2027 spiny dogfish and winter flounder assessments have been removed from the schedule.
- Jointly Managed Species (SEDAR):
    - Cobia will now receive a full benchmark assessment by May 2027 instead of an update assessment for this year.
- The black drum update assessment has been moved from 2027 to 2028.
- The 2030 American shad benchmark may be removed after consulting with the Shad and River Herring Management Board.

Long-Term Stock Assessment Schedule (October 2026 Not Board-Approved)

Species	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025		2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
American Eel				Benchmark					Update			
American Shad	Benchmark											*Benchmark*
American Lobster	Benchmark					Benchmark (Q4)						*Benchmark*
Atlantic Croaker								Benchmark (Q3)				
Atlantic Menhaden			Update			Update (Q4)				Update		
Atl. Menhaden ERPs						Benchmark (Q4)						
Atlantic Sea Herring	Update		Update		Update (Q3)	Benchmark (Q2)		Update (Q3)		*Update*		*Update*
Atlantic Striped Bass			Update		Update (Q4)				Benchmark			
Atlantic Sturgeon					Update (Q3)					Benchmark		
Black Drum			Benchmark							Update		
Black Sea Bass		Update		Benchmark	Update (Q3)	Update (Q3)			Update			
Bluefish		Update	Benchmark	Update		Update (Q3)			Update			
Coastal Sharks	Benchmark			Benchmark				Benchmark				
Cobia									Benchmark			
Horseshoe Crab					Update (Q2)						Benchmark	
Horseshoe Crab ARM		Benchmark		Update	Update (Q4)	Update (Q4)				Update		
Jonah Crab				Benchmark						Update		
Northern Shrimp		Update				Update (Q1)						
Red Drum			Benchmark		Benchmark (Q4)							
River Herring					Benchmark (Q3)						Update	
Scup		Update		Update		Update (Q3)			Update			
Spanish Mackerel			Update						Update			
Spiny Dogfish			Benchmark	Update								
Spot									Benchmark (Q3)			
Spotted Seatrout												
Summer Flounder		Update		Update		Update (Q3)			Update			
Tautog		Update				Update (Q4)				Benchmark		
Weakfish						Update (Q3)					Benchmark	
Winter Flounder	Update		Update		Update (Q4)	Update (Q4)						

Number indicates quarter of presentation to the Board

Q1 Winter
Q2 Spring
Q3 Summer
Q4 Fall/Annual Meeting

ASMFC Peer Review
NRCC Peer Review (Research Track)
SEDAR Peer Review (Research Track)
Completed
**Italics = under consideration, not officially scheduled*

Notes:

Coastal Sharks	Sandbar assessment in 2026
Spotted Seatrout	States conduct individual assessments

WildFish LLC, 37 Boston Fish Pier, Boston, MA 02210
tel: 617 830 1672 fax: 857 496 1155
www.redsbest.com

November 2, 2026

Robert E. Beal
Executive Director, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1050 N. Highland Street, Suite 200 A-N
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Bob,

I am writing to ask the Commission to make full harvest of quotas a core goal of its work.

Every year, quotas for some species, such as black sea bass, that the science says can be safely caught go unharvested. At the end of the fishing year they simply expire. Those are healthy, American-caught fish that never reach American tables, while our country imports most of the seafood it eats. We spend public money to determine what can be sustainably harvested. We owe it to the American people to actually harvest it.

There will always be a constraint on harvest. In my experience it is one of five things:

1. Is there biomass?
2. Are there regulatory constraints?
3. Is there harvesting capacity?
4. Is there processing capacity?
5. Is there demand?

I am a seafood dealer who for almost two decades has worked tirelessly to develop markets for many fish and shellfish species, many undervalued, and these markets are both in Massachusetts and across the country. While the fishermen's job is to harvest the various fish species under the government quotas, it is my job (and that of other wholesale dealers) to increase demand which brings more value to the overall seafood economy.

We should be challenging ourselves to constantly find the binding constraint for each species and attack it, then find the next one and attack that, until we are harvesting our sustainable quotas and have rebuilt the American seafood sector. For many ASMFC species today, the fish are in the water, the boats exist, and buyers are ready. The binding constraint is regulatory.

Quota is allocated to the states, and whatever a state does not land expires at year end. A state loses nothing by holding onto quota it will not use, so there is no reason not to hoard it. States keep their share as insurance against a strong late season, transfers come late or not at all, and the unused fish are gone for good.

The Commission is well positioned to fix this. A few ideas:

1. **Roll over unused state quota.** Quota a state does not land should carry into the next year in a coastwide pool, available to states that can land it. Rolled-over pounds should come with a different utilization strategy, so the same constraint does not strand them twice.
2. **Make it safe to release quota.** By a set date each year, states should release the quota they do not expect to use into the pool. A state that releases quota and then goes over gets first dibs on next year's pool to pay back the overage, so no state has to worry about the crunch at the end of the season.
3. **Reward use, not possession.** Chronic underharvest by a state should be weighed in future allocation reviews.
4. **Encourage dynamic limits.** Encourage states to make daily and trip level limits dynamic, adjusting during the season toward the level needed to harvest the full quota instead of being fixed years in advance.
5. **Keep score.** Publish one annual report for every ASMFC species showing the quota, the landings, the percent harvested, and the constraint that held harvest back.

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None of this asks the Commission to catch a single fish beyond what the science allows. It asks that we stop letting sustainable quota expire. I would welcome the chance to discuss these ideas with you and Commission staff.

Sincerely,

Jared Auerbach
Founder & CEO, Red's Best