Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

2026 Atlantic Croaker Benchmark Stock Assessment



CJ Schlick, PhD

Stock Assessment Sub-Committee Chair

November 9, 2026

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Acknowledgments

Stock Assessment Subcommittee

CJ Schlick, PhD, SCDNR, Chair

Tracey Bauer, ASMFC

Margaret Finch, SCDNR

Jeff Kipp, ASMFC

Brooke Lowman, PhD, VMRC

Trey Mace, PhD, MDDNR

Samara Nehemiah, PhD, ASMFC

Harry Rickabaugh, MDDNR

Support: Laura Lee, USFWS

Technical Committee

Margaret Finch, SCDNR, Chair

Ingrid Braun, PRFC

Tracey Bauer, ASMFC

Dawn Franco, GADNR

Jeff Kipp, ASMFC

Samara Nehemiah, PhD, ASMFC

Halie OFarrell, FL FWRI

Willow Patten, NCDMF

Harry Rickbaugh, MDDNR

Devon Scott, DEDFW

Stacy VanMorter, NJDFW

Catherine Wilhelm, VMRC

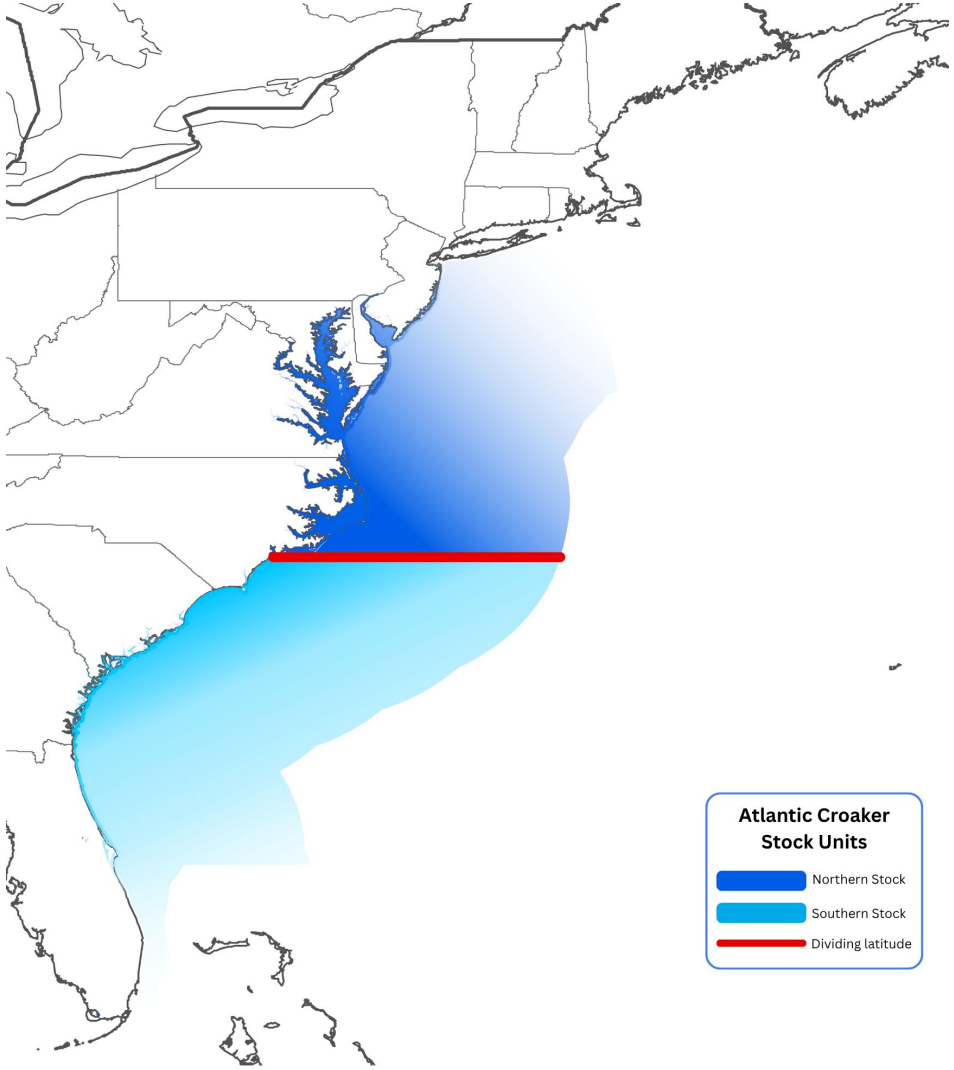
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

History and Stock Definition

- History:
  - 2005: Two stocks split at SC/NC border
  - 2010: Single coastwide stock
  - 2017: Single coastwide stock

  - Regional structure for traffic light analysis (TLA) used for current management advice, but action applied to coastwide population

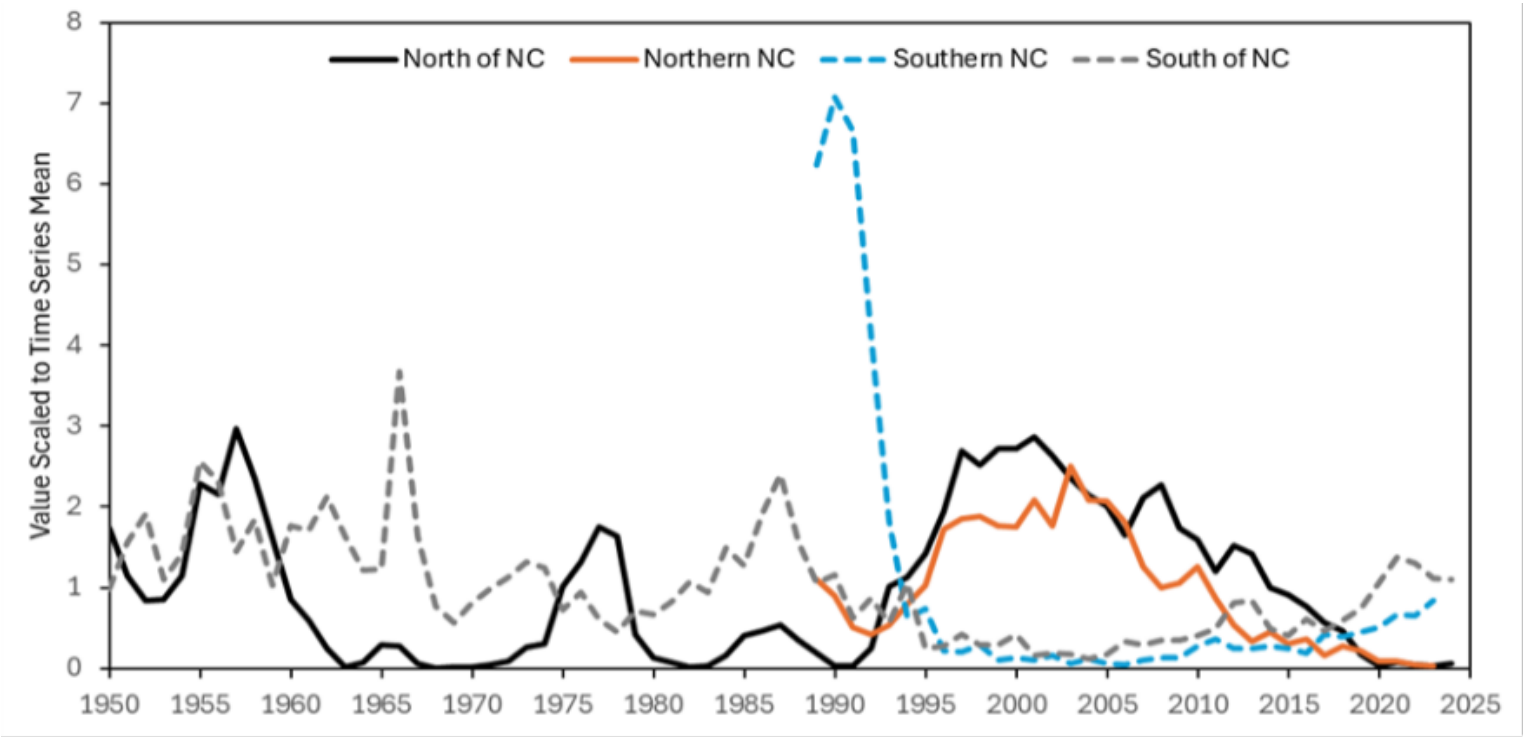
- 2026: Two stocks split at Carteret and Onslow Counties (≈Cape Lookout)



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Stock Definition

- Genetics
- Parasite compositions
- Life history
- Data trends:
  - FI trawl surveys
  - commercial and recreational total catch
  - recreational positive intercepts
  - FD CPUE (section 5.2)
- Physical Oceanography



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

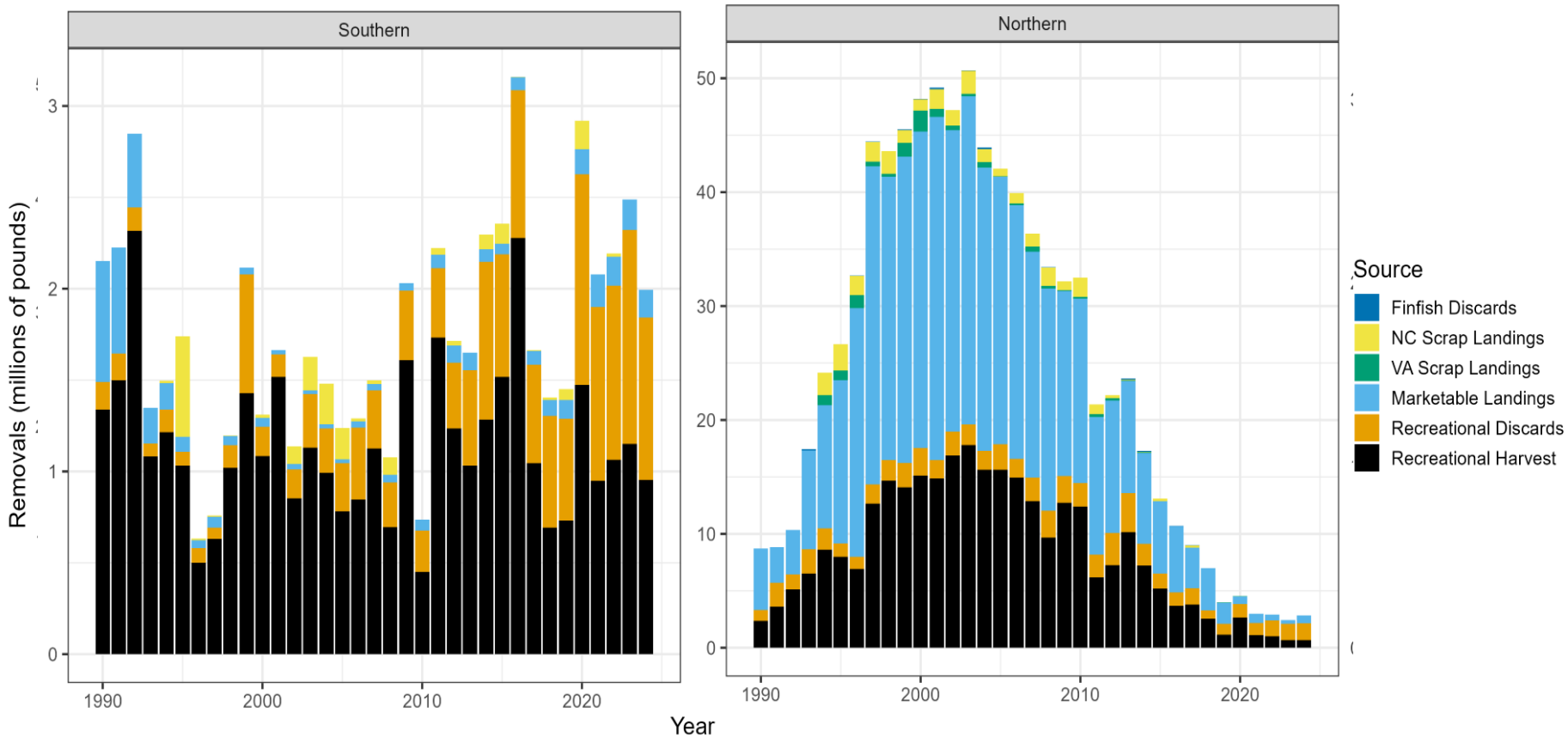
Fishery Dependent

Commercial Fisheries

- Targeted fisheries: Marketable landings, scrap/bait landings & dead discards
- Bycatch fishery: dead discards (**largest source of fishery removals**)

Recreational Fisheries

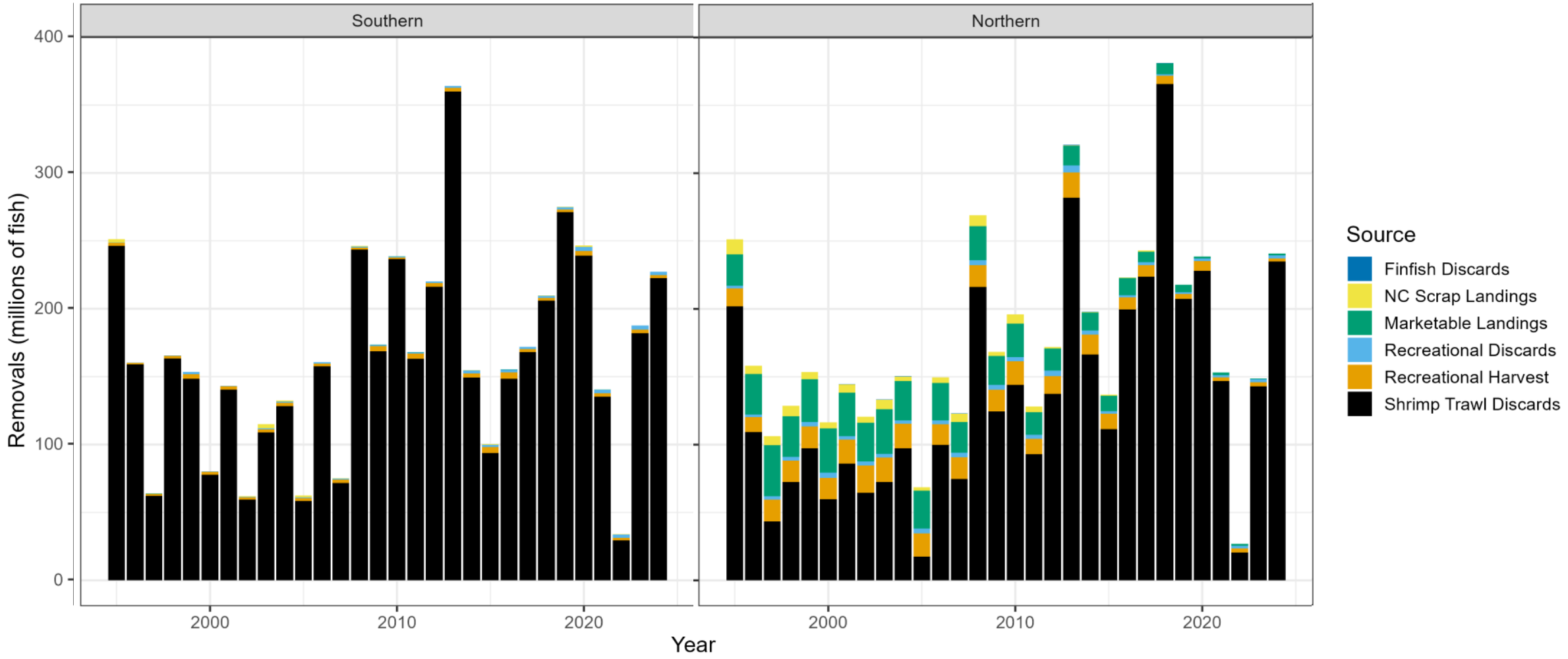
- Harvest & dead discards



Southern Stock (Onslow County, NC and South) | Northern Stock (Carteret County, NC and North)

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

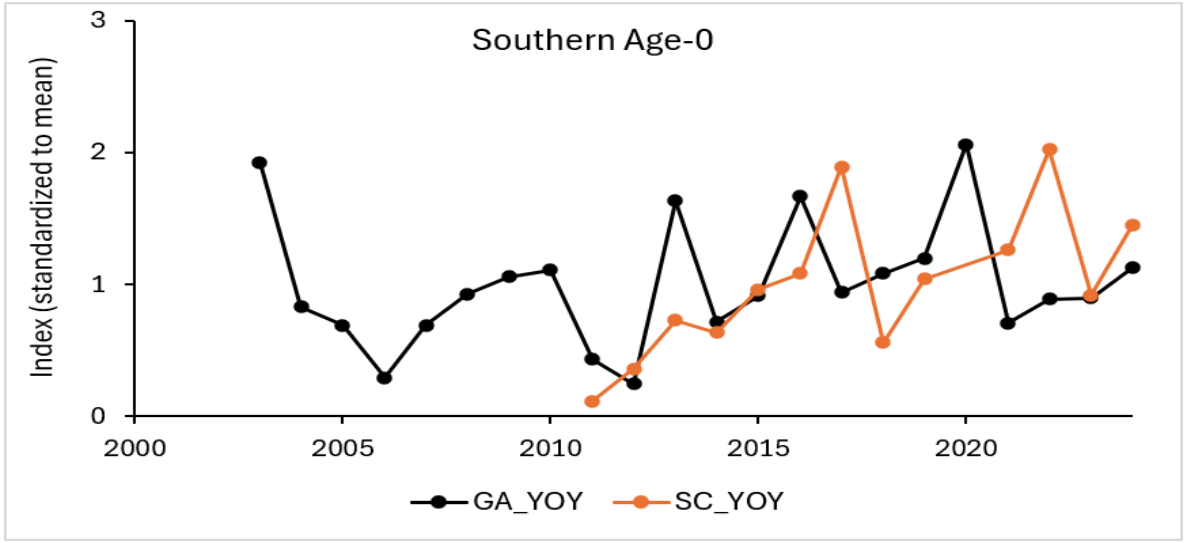
Fishery Dependent in Numbers

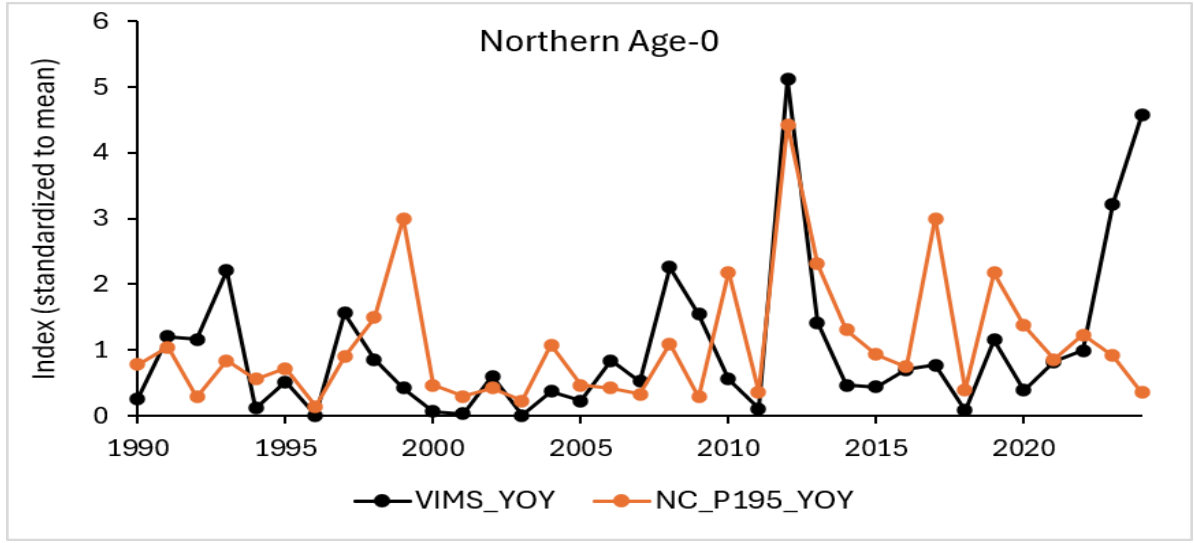


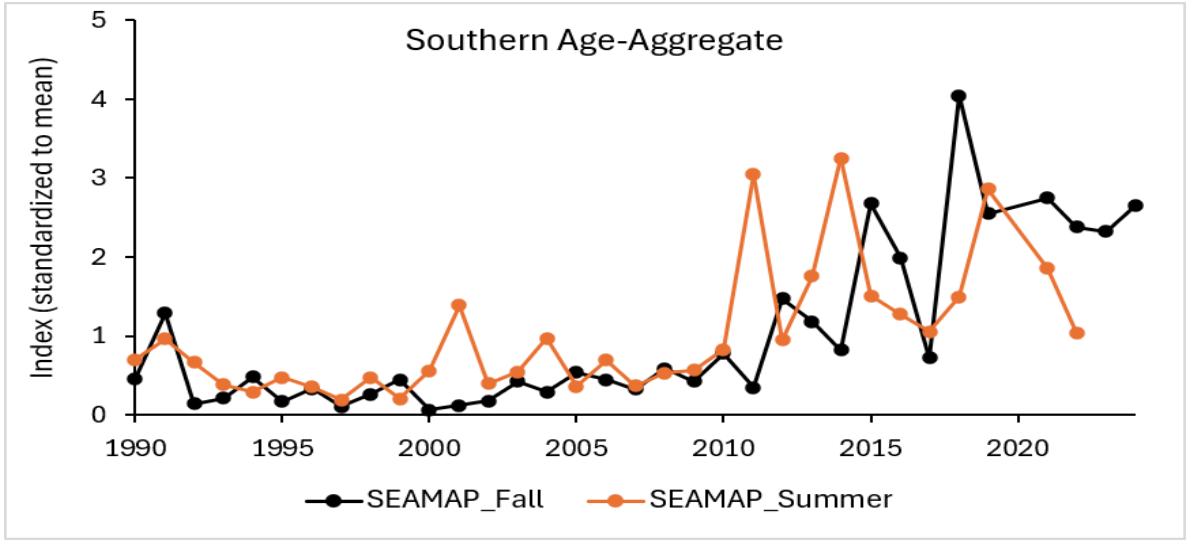
Southern Stock (Onslow County, NC and South) | Northern Stock (Carteret County, NC and North)

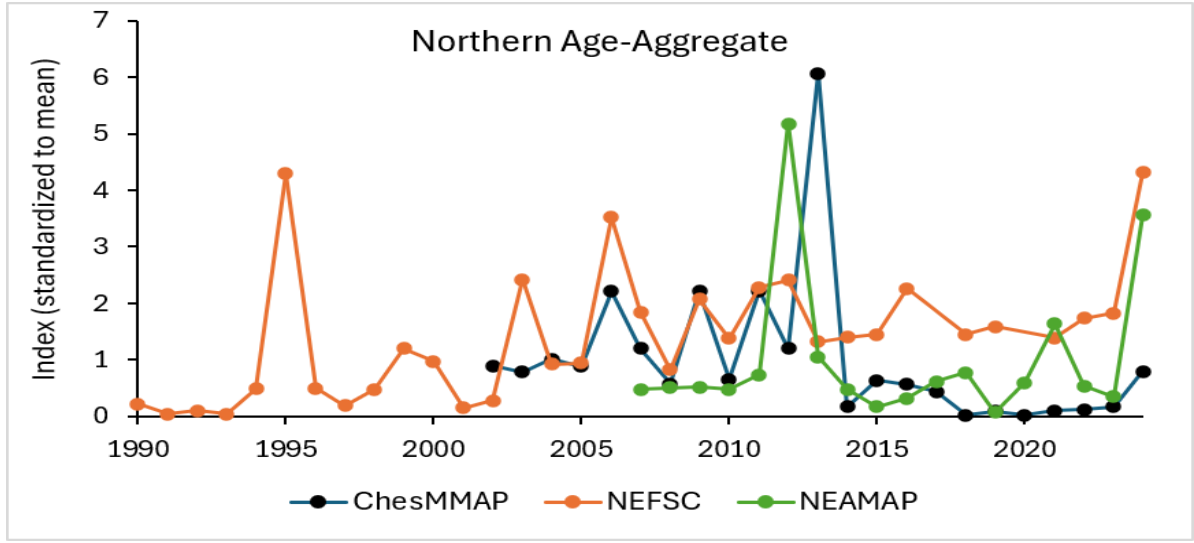
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Fishery Independent





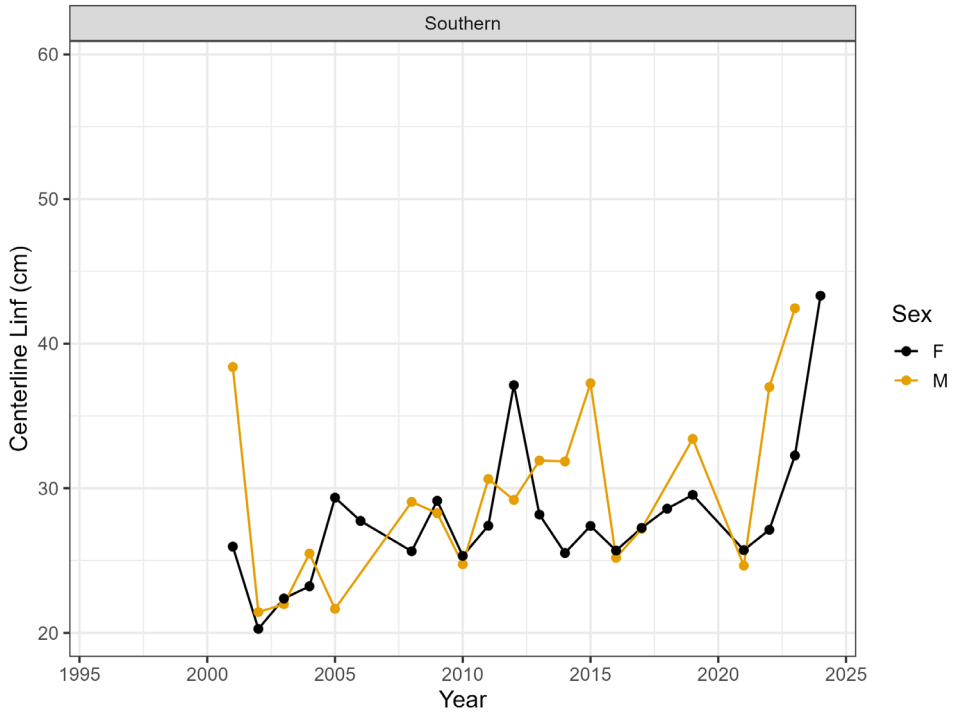


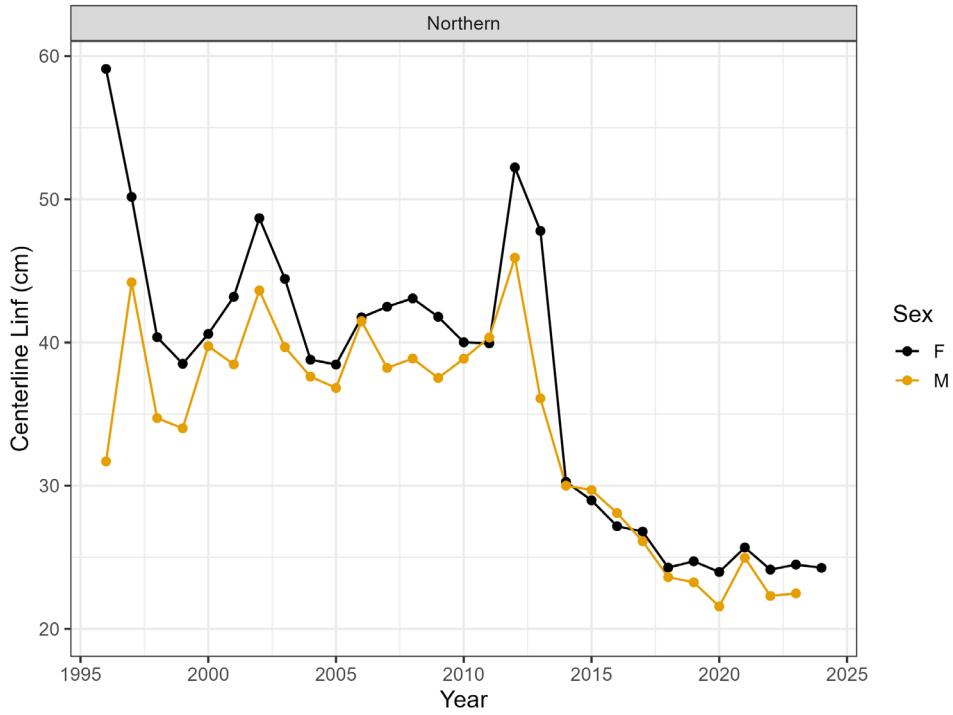


Southern Stock (Onslow County, NC and South) | Northern Stock (Carteret County, NC and North)

Growth Rate

- Faster, larger in northern stock prior to 2014 (early)
- Similar between stocks since 2014 (late)
  - Linf = 41cm (northern early), 26.5cm (northern late) & 28.1cm (southern all)





Southern Stock (Onslow County, NC and South) | Northern Stock (Carteret County, NC and North)

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Reference Points

- Threshold SPR of 25%
- Target SPR between 35% and 45% TBD

with management board consultation

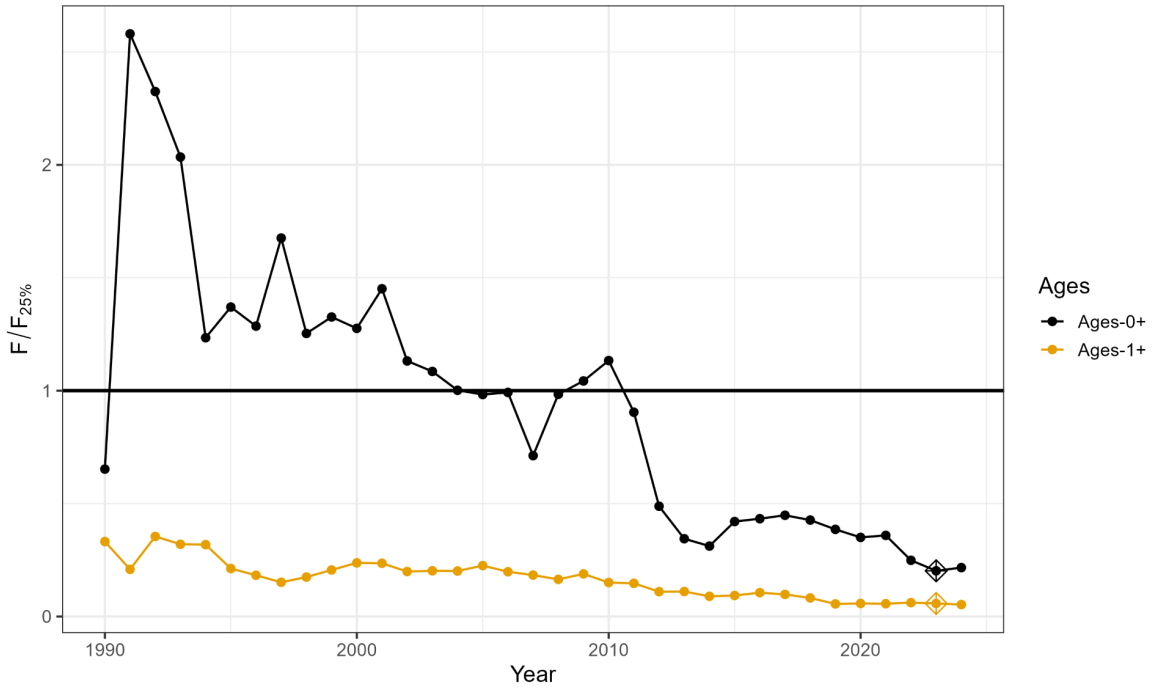
- Fishing mortality status:
  - F_{A0} = average F all ages, F_{A1} = average F ages-1+
  - $F_{A1}/F_{A1_25\%} > 1 > F_{A0}/F_{A0_25\%}$ = overfishing of adult fish
  - $F_{A1}/F_{A1_25\%} < 1 < F_{A0}/F_{A0_25\%}$ = overfishing of age-0 fish
  - $F_{A1}/F_{A1_25\%} > 1 < F_{A0}/F_{A0_25\%}$ = overfishing of all ages
  - $F_{A1}/F_{A1_25\%} < 1 > F_{A0}/F_{A0_25\%}$ = overfishing is not occurring

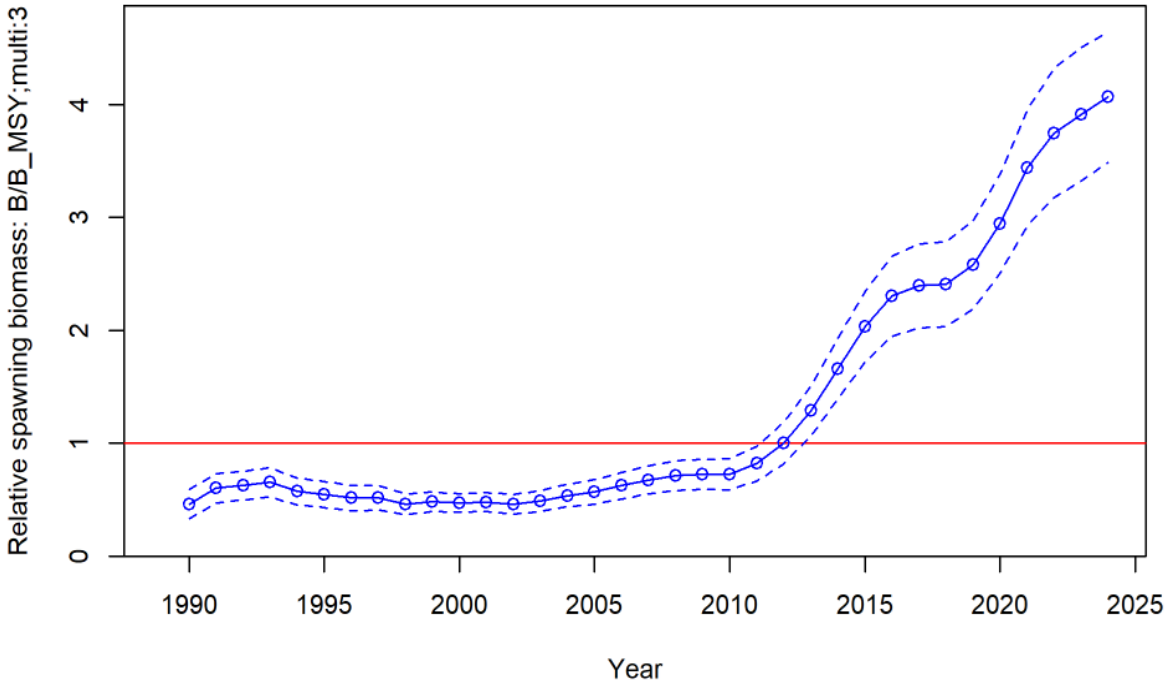
- Spawning stock biomass status:
  - $SSB/SSB_{25\%} < 1$ = overfished or depleted
  - $SSB/SSB_{25\%} \geq 1$ = not overfished

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Southern Stock Status

- **<u>Overfishing not occurring</u>** on any age groups
- **<u>Not overfished</u>**
- No concerning signs at this time

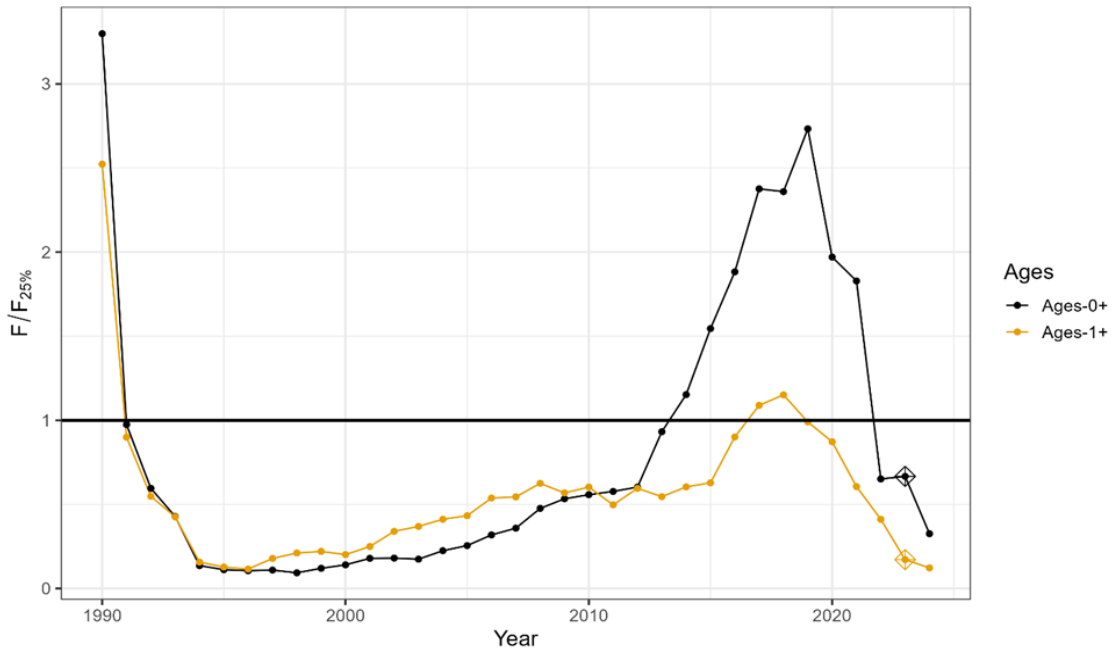


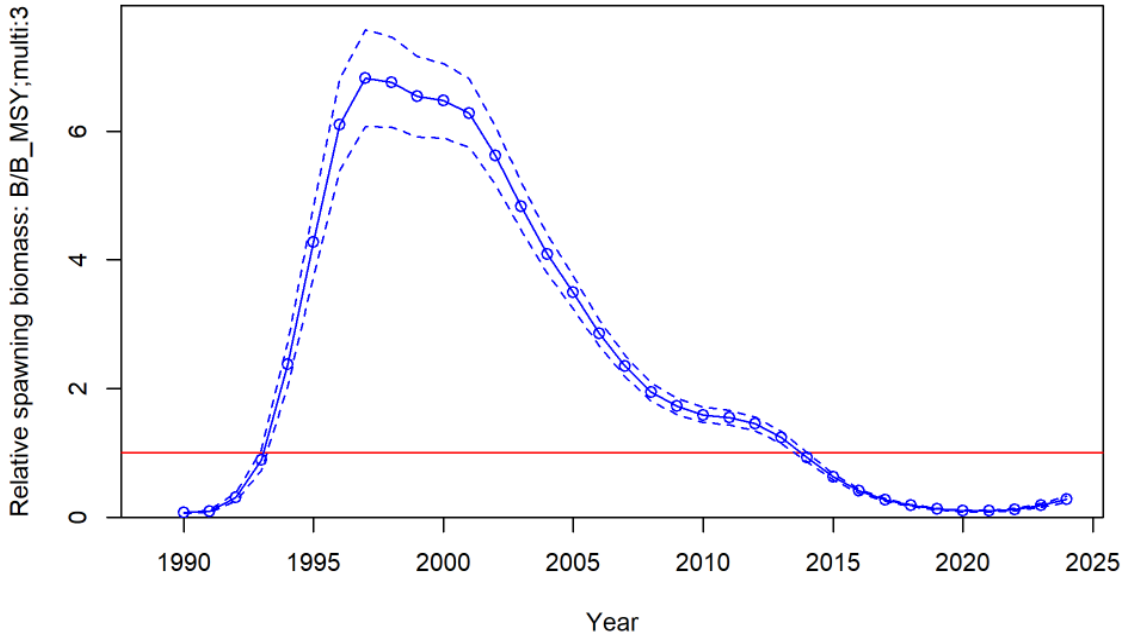


Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Northern Stock Status

- **Overfishing not occurring** on any age groups
- **Depleted** – F trends do not support F as primary driver of SSB declines in 2000s
- **Recommend action to protect the remaining SSB and promote resiliency and rebuilding**
  - Period of overfishing of all ages after decline may have exacerbated SSB status and prevented rebuilding
  - Continued truncated size and age structure relative to 2000s, reduced growth

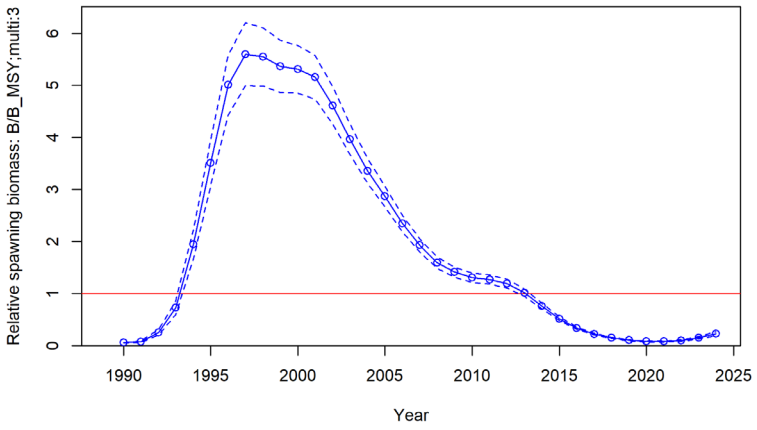




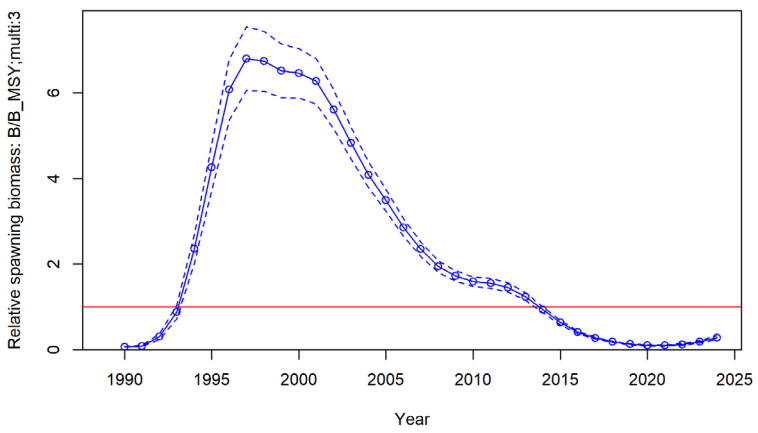
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Stock Growth Patterns

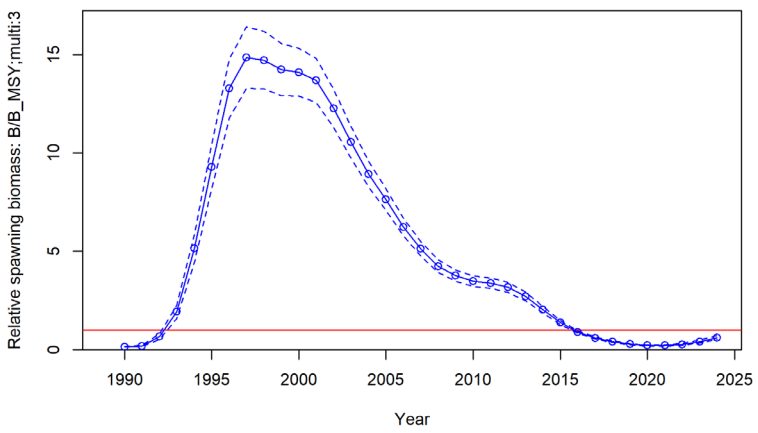
1990 (early)



1990-2023 (base)



2023 (late)



- Reference points and stock status determination are dependent on growth

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Traffic Light Analysis (TLA)

- Purpose: Qualitative comparison to preferred assessment approach

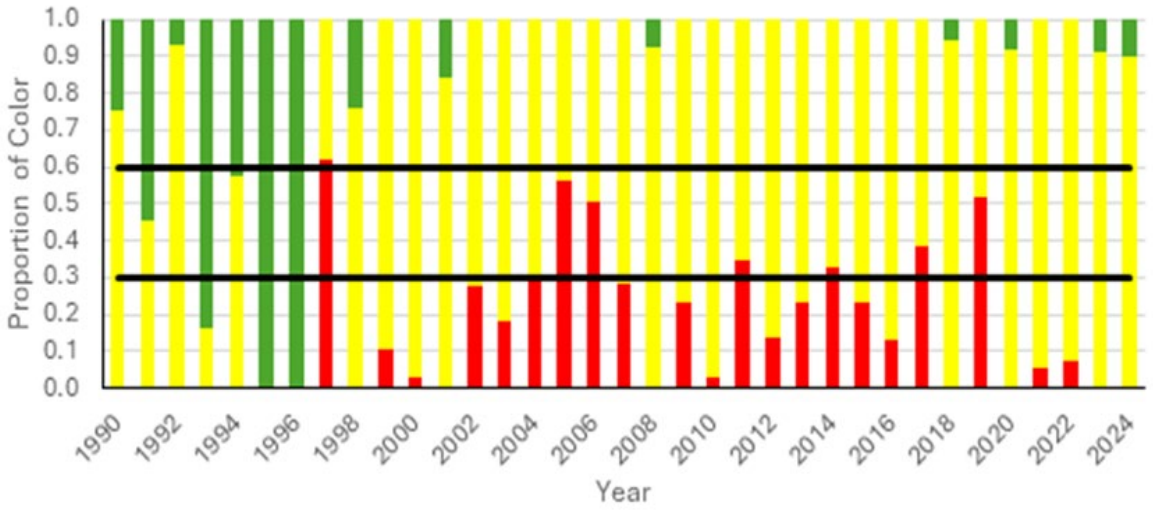
- Revisions to current TLA to align with assessment decisions
  - Regional split now Onslow/Carteret County rather than NC/VA
  - Survey data set alignment with assessment
    - Northern: ChesMMAP + NEFSC → ChesMMAP only
    - Southern: SCDNR Trammel + SEAMAP Spring → SEAMAP Summer + SEAMAP Fall
    - All ages rather than 2+ only
  - Add recreational dead discards to harvest metric
  - Reference period region-specific
    - Northern: unchanged (2002-2012)
    - Southern: update based on separate stock condition informed by data sets (2009-2019)

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

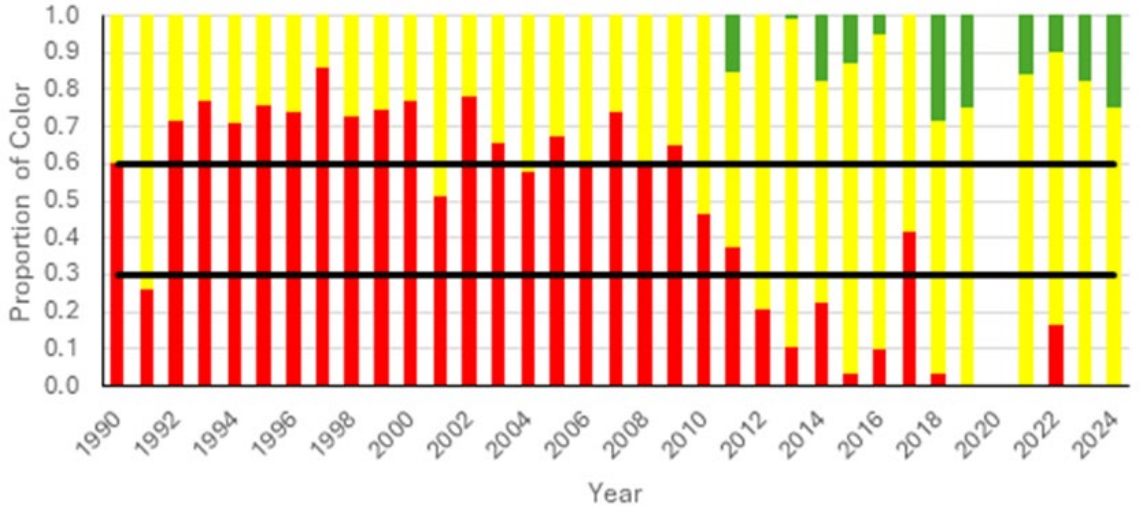
Southern Stock TLA

South Atlantic/southern analyses provide similar terminal year conclusions (improving abundance/biomass status, no need for action)

Removals



FI (SEAMAP Summer & Fall)

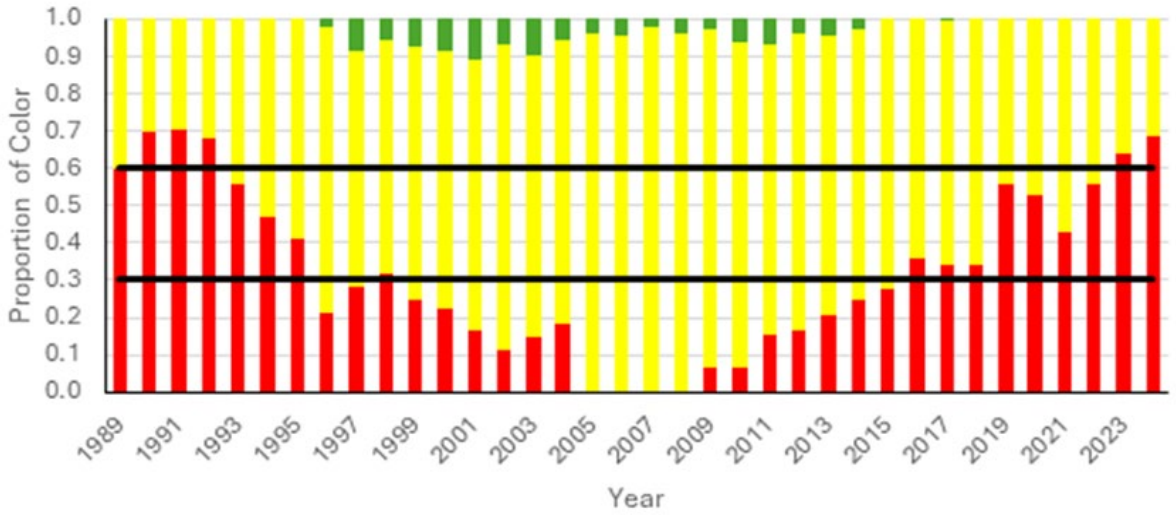


Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

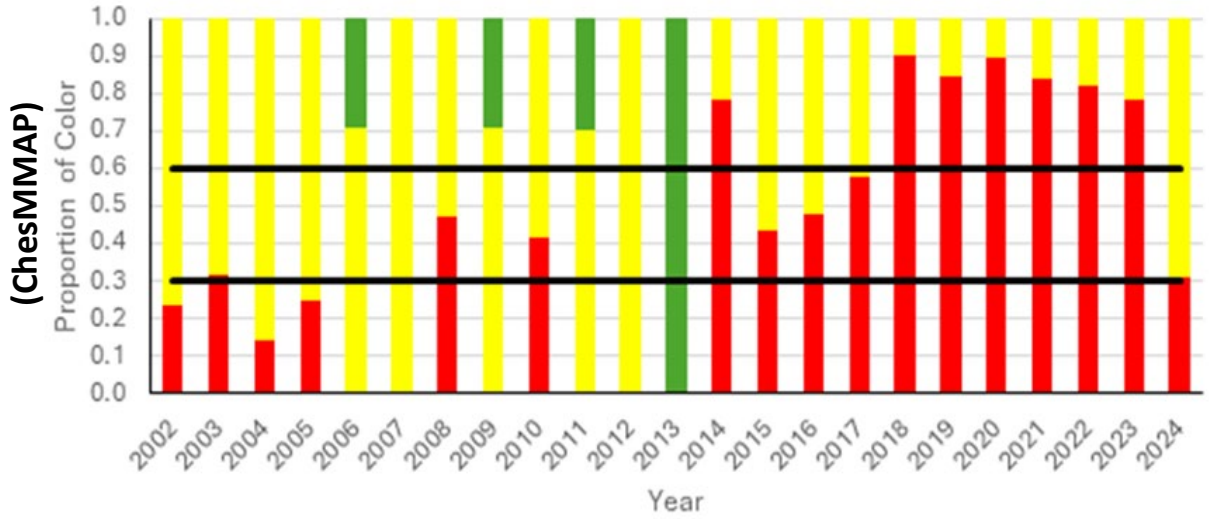
Northern Stock TLA

Mid-Atlantic/northern analyses provide similar terminal year conclusions (poor abundance/biomass status)

Removals



FI (ChesMMAP)



Research Priorities

Priority Tier 1

- Increase discard information from shrimp trawl fishery (ongoing)
  - More robust/higher intensity observer coverage
  - Mortality rates of discarded individuals
  - Size/age composition of discards
- Seasonal models in future assessments (short-term)
  - Prolonged spawning
  - Allow for multiple settlements
  - Characterize proportion of annual recruitment that occurs at different time steps
- Tagging study to estimate natural and fishing mortality as a verification (long-term)
  - Consider seasonal time steps (summer versus overwintering)

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Future Assessments

SAS recommends:

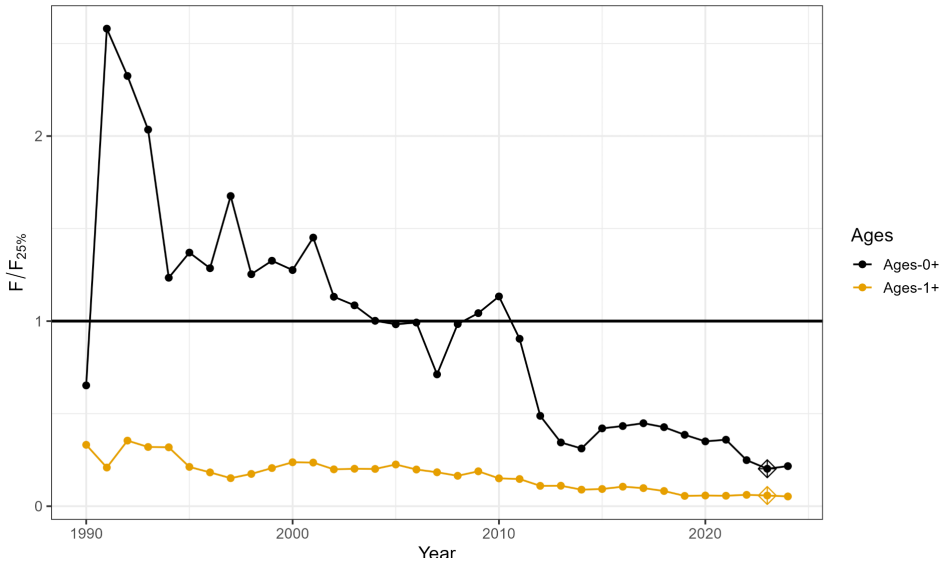
- An assessment update in three years (2029)
- A benchmark stock assessment in six years (2032)

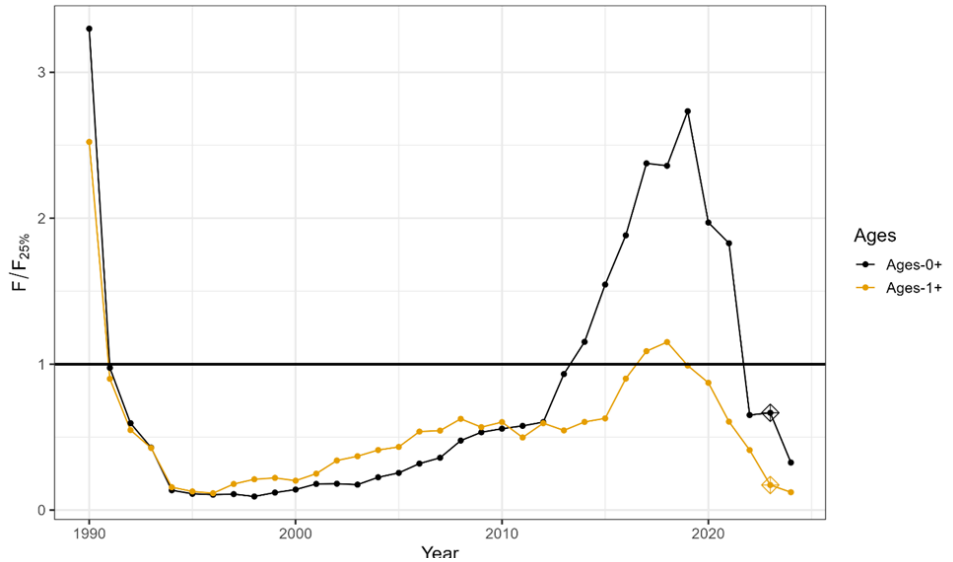
TC recommends:

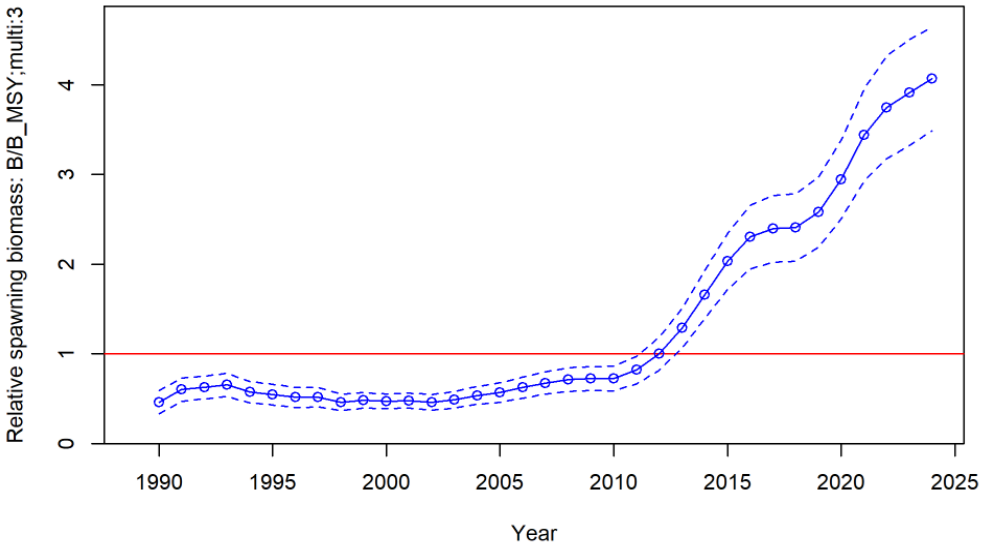
- Using the SAS recommendations for assessment timing
- Replace TLA with Stock Assessment results
- No longer conducting the TLA

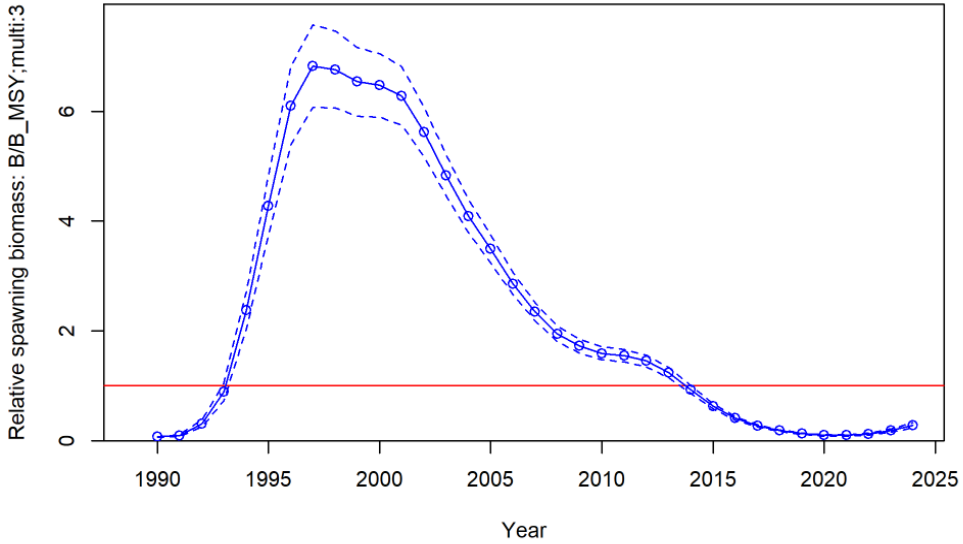
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Questions





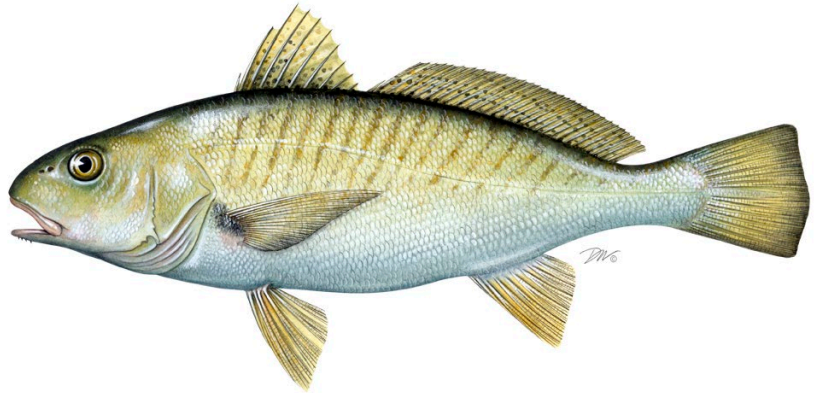




Southern Stock (Onslow County, NC and South) | Northern Stock (Carteret County, NC and North)

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Atlantic Croaker Stock Assessment Peer Review Report



Sciaenids Fishery Management Board

November 9, 2026

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Stock Assessment Peer Review Process

- Croaker Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee developed new stock assessment

- Peer Review Workshop: July 27-30, 2026, Arlington, VA

- Scientific review of data inputs, analytical methods, results, and overall quality of stock assessment

Products

- ASMFC Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report
- https://asmfc.org/species/atlantic-croaker/



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Stock Assessment Peer Review Process

Scientific Review Panel

Chair + two additional Technical Reviewers, with expertise in

- Sciaenids ecology and population dynamics
- Stock assessment methods
- Stock Synthesis modeling platform
- Bycatch estimation

Dr. Dave Chagaris (Chair), University of Florida, Nature Coast Biological Station

Dr. Shannon Cass-Calay, NOAA Southeast Fisheries Science Center (retired)

Erik Lang, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Assessment Peer Review TOR 1

✓ **ToR 1: Evaluate the population structure used in the assessment**

Conclusions

- The Review Panel concludes the SAS fully met this term of reference
- Multiple lines of evidence (growth and maximum size, parasites, regional abundance and catch trends, oceanography) support a two-stock structure divided at the Carteret/Onslow County line (Cape Lookout); genetics alone a weaker delineation
- Boundary not a sharp biological divide; mixing across the Cape Lookout transition zone uncertain

Recommendation 1: Expand tagging, genetics, otolith chemistry, and larval transport studies to quantify connectivity between the stocks

Recommendation 2: In future assessments, evaluate spatially explicit two-area models that estimate age-dependent mixing



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Assessment Peer Review TOR 2

✓ **ToR 2: Evaluate new life history information and environmental analyses**

Conclusions

- The Review Panel concludes the SAS fully met this term of reference
- Life history data comprehensive and adequate; maturity (histological) and natural mortality (longevity-based, age-specific) appropriately developed for each stock
- Northern growth shifted around 2012 (modeled as two time blocks) with no driver identified; Southern growth relies on SEAMAP data with few fish > 30 cm sampled



Recommendation 1: Investigate drivers of change in Northern growth, and evaluate environmental effects on growth and natural mortality

Recommendation 2: Collect age and growth information from Florida recreational fishery (fish > 30 cm)



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Assessment Peer Review TOR 3

✓ **ToR 3: Evaluate the selection and treatment of data sets used in the assessment**

Conclusions

- The Review Panel concludes the SAS fully met this term of reference
- Fishery-dependent and fishery-independent data thoroughly considered and appropriately treated, including index standardization, uncertainty inputs, and decisions to exclude or pool data (8 of 21 surveys used)
- Improved estimation of shrimp trawl bycatch is a notable strength relative to previous assessments

Recommendation 1: Increase shrimp trawl observer coverage and croaker length sampling

Recommendation 2: Improve recreational discard mortality estimates and length/age data from recreational discards



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Assessment Peer Review TOR 4

✓ **ToR 4: Evaluate the assessment methods and models**

Conclusions

- The Review Panel concludes the SAS fully met this term of reference
- Stock Synthesis is an appropriate modeling platform; parameterization is consistent with best practices; two separate stock models resolved coastwide model convergence issues
- Updated Traffic Light Analysis results consistent models' results; not MSE-vetted; the Panel recommended suspending TLA; use the 2026 assessment models' results to inform management
- Parameterization was appropriate; three areas warrant further investigation
    - Natural mortality is tied to growth but did not vary with Northern growth blocks; a time-varying M run did not converge
    - Initial conditions: Northern model estimated very high initial F (initial age structure ~1% of unfished) followed by five years of high recruitment; initial F absorbs other processes needed to fit start year data (1990); alternative initial catch and F bounds gave similar results
    - NEFSC trawl survey trends conflict with other indices; random-walk catchability needs stronger justification



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Assessment Peer Review TOR 4

✓ **ToR 4 (continued): Evaluate model parameterization and specification**

Recommendation 1: Formally evaluate the TLA, or any index-based management procedure, through Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) before it is used

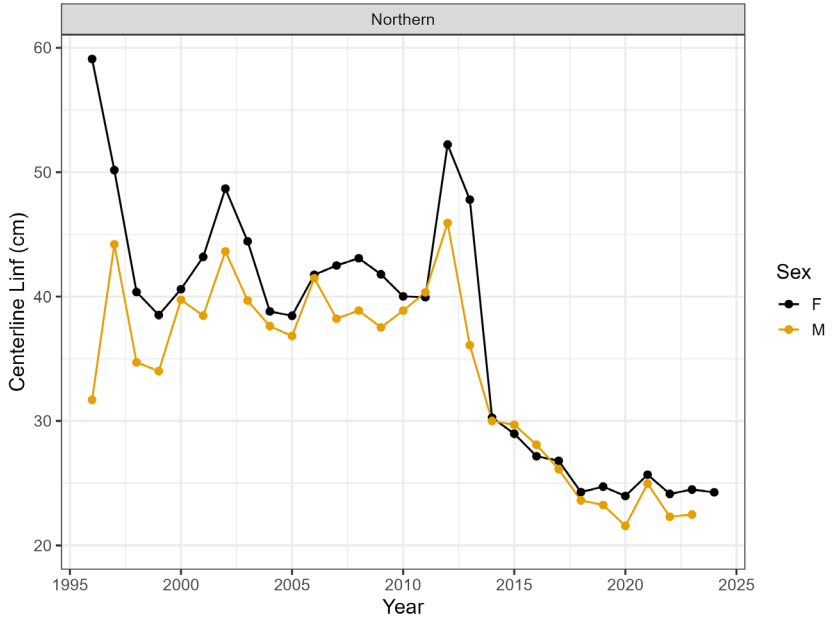
Recommendation 2: Consider spatially explicit two-area models in future assessments, once movement and mixing can be estimated via tagging studies

Recommendation 3: Re-examine natural mortality with time-varying growth; investigate seasonal structures (growth platoons)

Recommendation 4: Investigate the high initial F before the next benchmark

Recommendation 5: Evaluate alternative start years; a 2008 start improved the Northern retrospective pattern

Recommendation 6: Justify time-varying NEFSC survey catchability



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Assessment Peer Review TOR 5

✓ **ToR 5: Evaluate model diagnostics, including sensitivity and retrospective analyses**

Conclusions

- The Review Panel concludes the SAS fully met this term of reference
- Both models performed adequately in standard diagnostics (convergence, correlations, jitter, likelihood profiles, retrospectives, sensitivity runs); status conclusions robust to plausible alternatives
- Southern diagnostics were cleaner (no retrospective pattern); Northern model had a retrospective pattern and greater sensitivity to starting values

Recommendation 1: Examine growth-block assumptions and data weighting as potential causes of the Northern retrospective pattern

Recommendation 2: Evaluate seasonal model structures to better represent size-at-age, particularly in the Southern stock



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Assessment Peer Review TOR 6

✓ **ToR 6: Evaluate the methods used to characterize uncertainty**

Conclusions

- The Review Panel concludes the SAS fully met this term of reference
- Asymptotic standard errors, likelihood profiles, jitter, retrospective, and sensitivity analyses were provided; northern CVs were low (SSB 0.10, F 0.11) and southern CVs larger (SSB 0.15, F 0.31)
- True uncertainty likely larger; estimates conditional on assumed natural mortality, steepness, growth blocks, and selectivity; structural uncertainty remains unquantified

Recommendation 1: Continue developing uncertainty characterization (e.g., bootstrapping, Monte Carlo simulations) as needed for management

Recommendation 2: Portray uncertainty in stock status, and assessments tables and plots



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Assessment Peer Review TOR 8

✓ **ToR 8: Recommend best estimates of stock biomass, abundance, and exploitation**

Conclusions

- The Review Panel concludes the SAS fully met this term of reference
- Both models provide the best available estimates of biomass, abundance, and exploitation for management
- Northern: abundance peaked in 1993 and declined to ~10% of peak by the late 2010s; SSB peaked in 1996 and has been below the threshold since 2014, with modest recent increases; F exceeded thresholds for all ages in 2013–2019 and for ages 1+ in 2017–2018
- Southern: SSB and recruitment increased since ~2010 to time-series highs as F declined, especially shrimp trawl bycatch of age-0 fish

Recommendation 1: Interpret recent Northern recruitment and signs of rebuilding with caution; terminal-year recruitment is poorly estimated

Recommendation 2: Maintain recruitment indices; invest in shrimp trawl bycatch observers



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Assessment Peer Review TOR 9

✓ **ToR 9: Evaluate the choice of reference points and estimation methods; recommend stock status determination**

Conclusions

- The Review Panel concludes the SAS fully met this term of reference
- SPR-based reference points are appropriate because the stock-recruit relationship is not reliable; the Panel supported a 25% SPR threshold and a 35–45% SPR target range
- Two F reference points were supported: all ages (including age-0 shrimp trawl bycatch, outside ASMFC jurisdiction) and ages 1+ (ASMFC-managed fisheries)

Recommendation 1: Board to select an SPR target within 35-45%, based on risk tolerance and management objectives

Recommendation 2: Use both F reference points to decide whether corrective action should address bycatch, targeted removals, or both



Assessment Peer Review TOR 9

✓ **ToR 9 (continued): Recommend stock status determination**

Conclusions

- Northern Stock: depleted (SSB below threshold since 2014) but not experiencing overfishing (both F ratios well below 1); robust across sensitivity runs
    - "Depleted" rather than "overfished": SSB fell much faster (2000–2014) than F rose, dropping below the threshold before F on ages 1+ exceeded its threshold, suggesting factors other than F (e.g., environment) contributed to the initial decline
- High all-age F from 2013 suggests shrimp trawl bycatch contributed to further declines; SSB has not recovered despite low recent F, owing to slower growth since ~2012
- Southern Stock: not overfished and not experiencing overfishing; robust across sensitivity runs

Recommendation 1: Present Northern SSB ratios against benchmarks from each growth period (early, late, all years)

Recommendation 2: Convey that SSB targets based on early, faster-growth sizes-at-age may not be attainable under current slower growth; projections must assume whether slow growth persists



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Assessment Peer Review TOR 10

✓ **ToR 10: Review and prioritize future Atlantic croaker research**

Conclusions

- The Panel supports Research Priorities provided by the SAS, and suggested additional priorities
- Also emphasized: recreational length/age data and discard mortality; sampling of bait and scrap catches in VA and NC; tagging for mortality and movement

Priority 1: Increase shrimp trawl discard information (largest source of removals): observer coverage, discard mortality, and size/age composition

Priority 2: Evaluate natural mortality in relation to Northern growth change; investigate growth change drivers

Priority 3: Develop seasonal models that allow multiple recruitment settlements within a year



Assessment Peer Review TOR 11

✓ **ToR 11: Recommend timing of future stock assessments**

Conclusions

- Panel agreed with SAS recommendation - assessment update every 3 years (2029) and benchmark assessment every 6 years (2032)
- Address priority research items before next benchmark: natural mortality and growth, initial conditions, NEFSC survey catchability, seasonal structure
- In the interim, use 2026 assessment results to inform management rather than the Traffic Light Analysis the Panel recommended suspending



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Overall Review Panel Conclusions

- 2026 benchmark a substantial advance over previous assessments: separate Northern and Southern Stock Synthesis models resolved conflicting regional trends; the assessment is well documented, technically rigorous, and responsive to prior peer review
- Status: the Northern stock is **depleted but not experiencing overfishing**; the Southern stock is **not overfished and not experiencing overfishing**; Conclusions represent best available science for management; model estimates and SPR-based reference points should be adopted
- Remaining uncertainties (stock mixing, natural mortality with time-varying growth, high initial F, NEFSC catchability, recruitment and environmental drivers, historical shrimp trawl bycatch) were appropriately acknowledged and do not alter the principal conclusions or management advice but should be addressed again during the next assessment
- Continued investment recommended in stock identification, recruitment monitoring, shrimp trawl bycatch observer programs, and environmental influences on growth, recruitment, and natural mortality; and explore alternative model configurations (2 areas, seasons)



Questions?



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

MRIP Fishing Effort Survey Calibrations and Projection Guidance for Atlantic Croaker



CJ Schlick, PhD

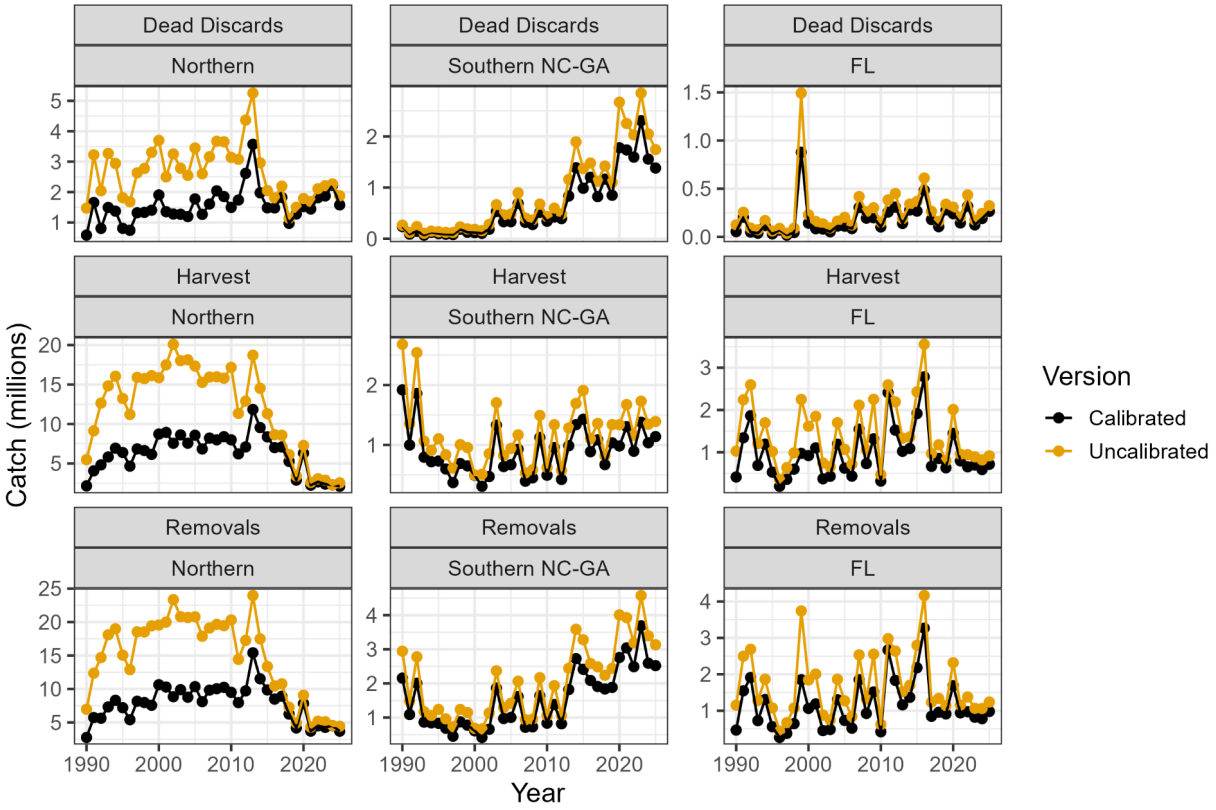
Stock Assessment Sub-Committee Chair

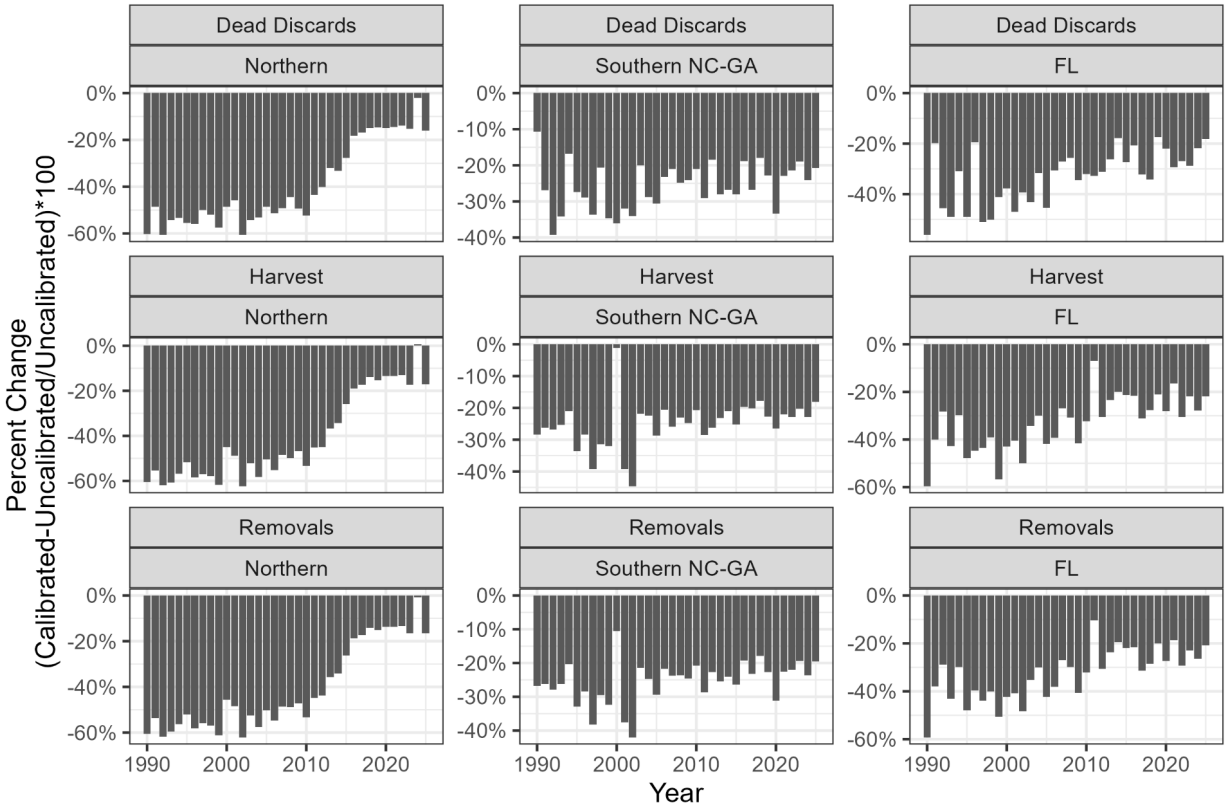
November 9, 2026

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

MRIP Calibration

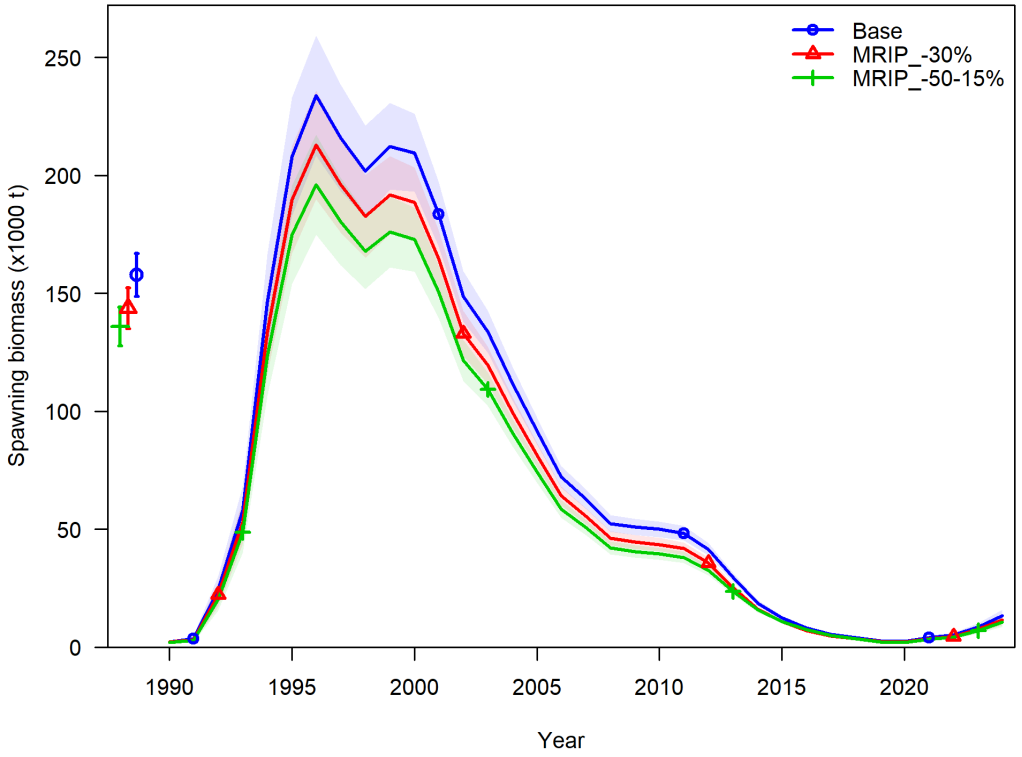
- Atlantic croaker benchmark stock assessment passed peer review in July 2026
- MRIP calibrated catch estimates released August 2026

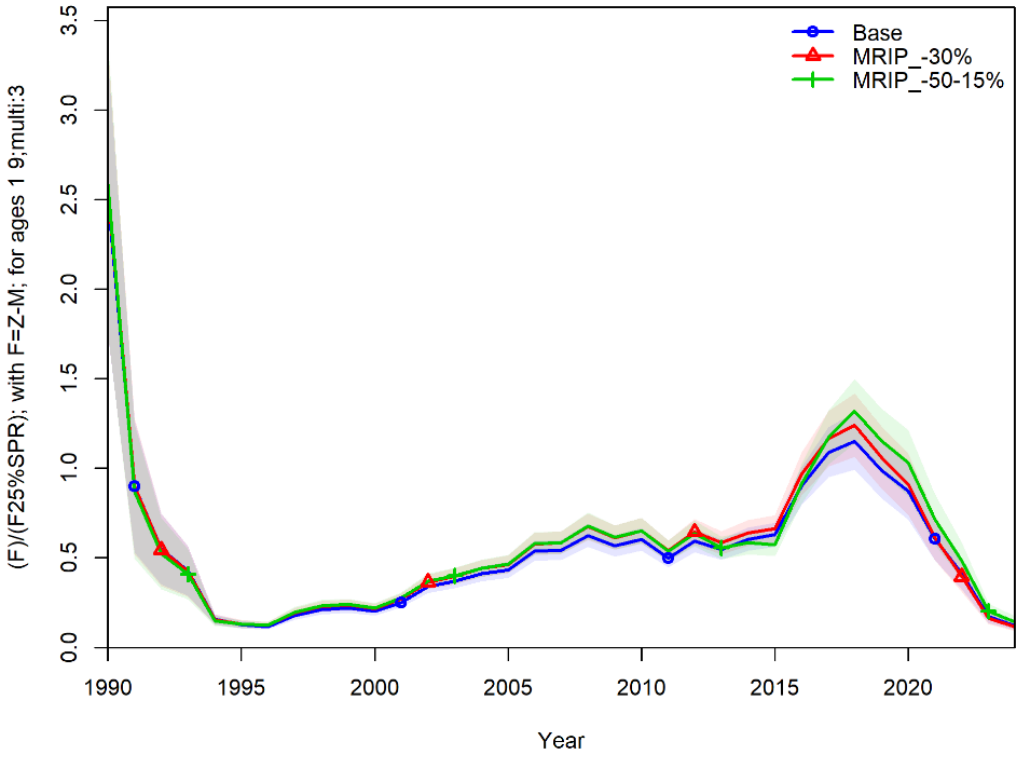




MRIP Calibration

Additional sensitivity analyses conducted to match trends seen in the MRIP calibrations for the Northern Stock





Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

MRIP Calibration

TC recommended approach: No additional model analyses of the historical time series

Alternative approach: Uncalibrated estimates would be replaced with calibrated estimates for years included in the stock assessment (1990-2024) and the models rerun to generate update population estimates

The TC believes the cost of delaying the spot assessment and response to the unfavorable croaker stock status outweighs the benefit of swapping data

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Projection Specifications

TC requests Board guidance on:

- Target reference points
- Rebuilding details
- Several projection specifications

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Reference Points

Spawning potential ratio (SPR) reference points recommended by SAS

- Threshold SPR of 25% for stock status determination
- Target range between 35% and 45%
    - 35% allows higher access to fishery and higher risk of poor stock conditions
    - 45% allows lower access to fishery and lower risk of poor stock conditions

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Rebuilding Specifications

- Rebuilding schedule

  What schedule should the TC use for projections?

- Probability of achieving targets
  - Default would be central tendency
  - Could be set to different probability level

  What probability of achieving target should be used?

**ASC will be recommending to ISFMP Policy Board that croaker be next trial species for risk & uncertainty tool*

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Technical Projection Specifications

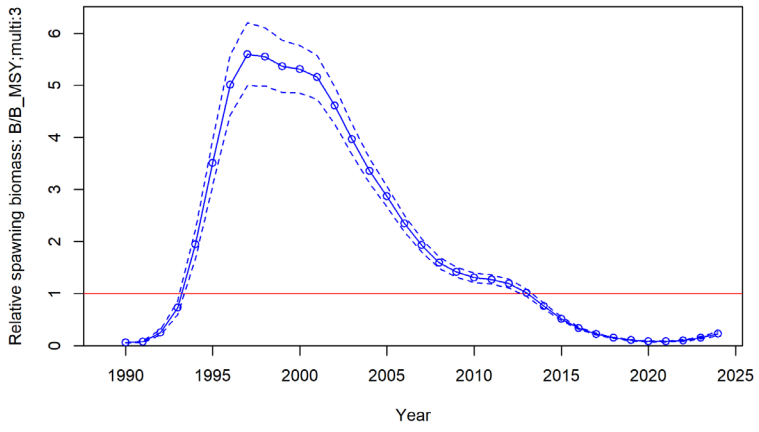
Additional TC recommendations:

- Northern stock only
- Full recruitment time series
- Shrimp trawl fleet fishing mortality
  - Reference period starting no earlier than 2019
- Recent growth patterns

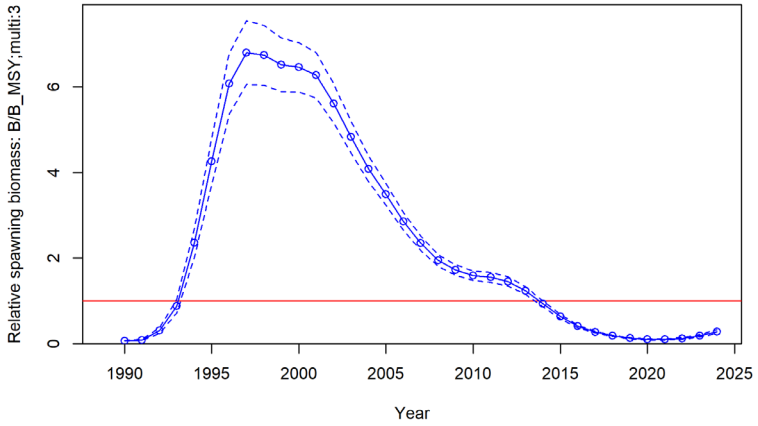
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Stock Growth Patterns

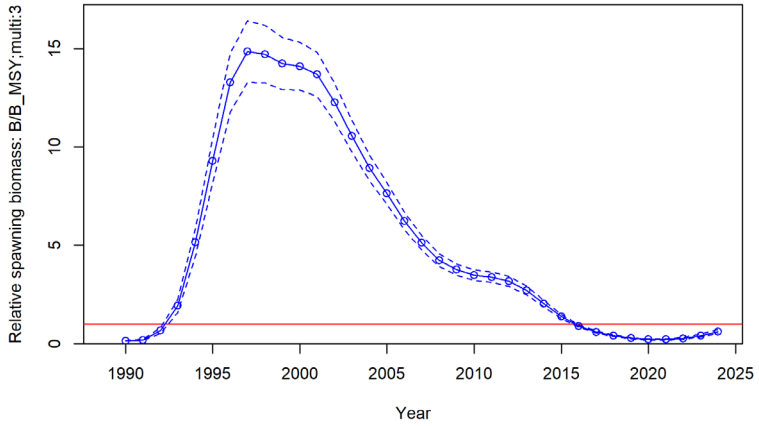
1990



1990-2023 (base)



2023



- Current reduced growth makes for challenging rebuilding conditions

Other Considerations for Next Steps

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Next Steps

- **Consider tasking TC with projections**
  - How does the Board want to proceed with the calibrated MRIP data?
  - What target level should the TC use for projections (between 35-45%)?
  - What sort of rebuilding schedule should the TC use for projections?
  - Does the Board desire to achieve a specific probability of achieving $SSB_{SPRXX\%}$?
  - Does the Board agree with the recommendations by the TC regarding the technical projection specifications?

2.6 STOCK REBUILDING PROGRAM

Should the stock be defined as overfished or depleted, the Management Board will take action to recover the stock to the desired target level (in terms of spawning stock biomass). Should it be determined that overfishing is occurring, the Management Board will take action to reduce the fishing mortality on the stock to at least the desired target level. If fishing mortality exceeds the threshold level and SSB is less than the proposed threshold level, the Management Board must act immediately to reduce fishing mortality to the desired target level or lower.

2.6.1 Stock Rebuilding Targets and Schedules

If the stock becomes overfished or overfishing is occurring, the [Sciaenids] Management Board will determine a stock rebuilding target and schedule.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Potential Timeline

Today	Consider tasking TC with projections
Winter meeting 2027	Receive update on projection work
Spring meeting 2027	Receive projection results and consider initiating addendum
Summer meeting 2027?	Check-in with Board
Annual meeting 2027?	Approval of addendum for public comment
Winter meeting 2028?	Final Action

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Additional questions for consideration

- Is the Board interested in managing the two stocks separately?

- What is the future of the TLA for Atlantic croaker?
  - Does the Board want to continue to conduct the TLA between assessments?
  - Do the management measure triggers in Addendum III need to be revised?

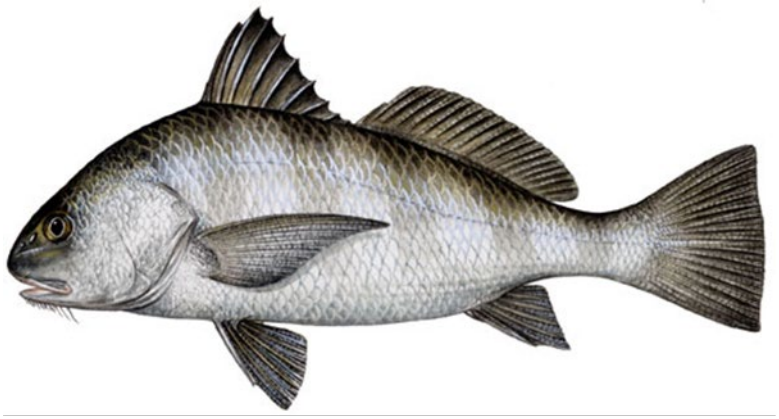
1.3.1 Management Area

The mid-Atlantic and south-Atlantic management regions are eliminated from the management area. Stock status will be assessed and management measures implemented on a coastwide basis.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

2026 Black Drum Indicator Update

November 9, 2026



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Data Update Process

- Black drum stock determined to not be overfished nor experiencing overfishing in 2020
  - Empirical indicators overall did not appear negative
- Lack of contrast in black drum data sets coupled with high uncertainty in model-based estimates
- TC recommended monitoring of empirical stock indicators annually between stock assessments
  - Timeline revised to every two years in 2024
- Next assessment update in 2028, but TC may recommend expediting based on data update
- All recreational values are from the most recent MRIP recalibration

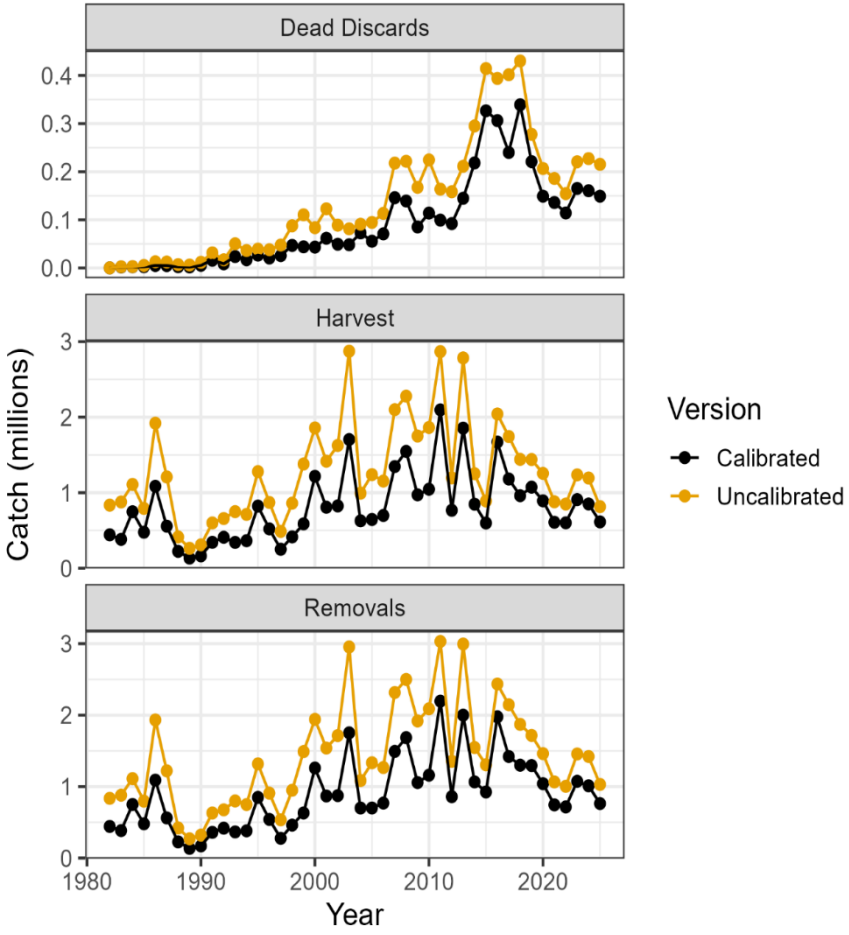
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

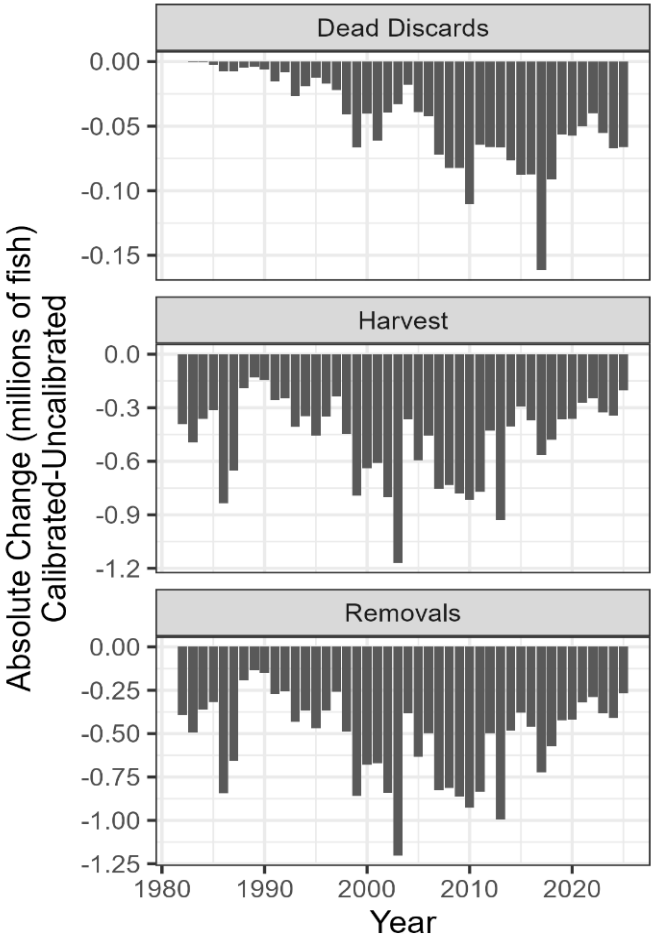
MRIP Calibrations

- Presented as an appendix to the indicator update memo
- Comparison at the fleet level for impacts to data as they go into the assessment model
  - Mid-Atlantic states for waves 1-4 (MA_early)
  - Mid-Atlantic states for waves 5-6 (MA_late)
  - South Atlantic states all waves (SA)
- Comparison at the coastwide level for overall impacts to the stock
- Dead discards estimated assuming 8% mortality rate

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

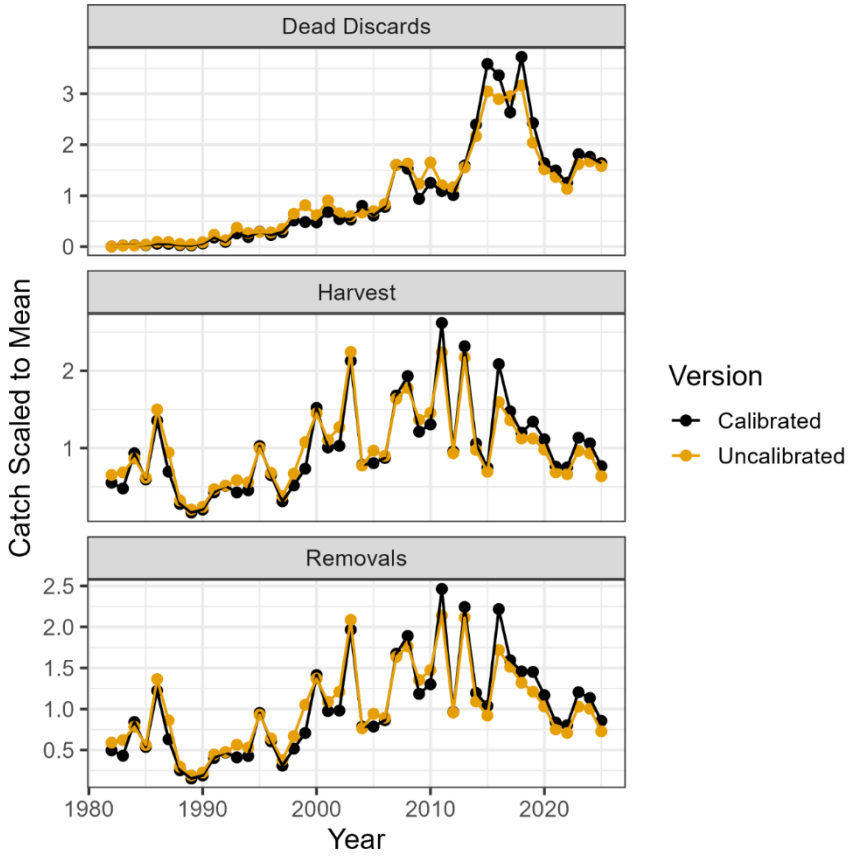
Absolute Catch Comparison

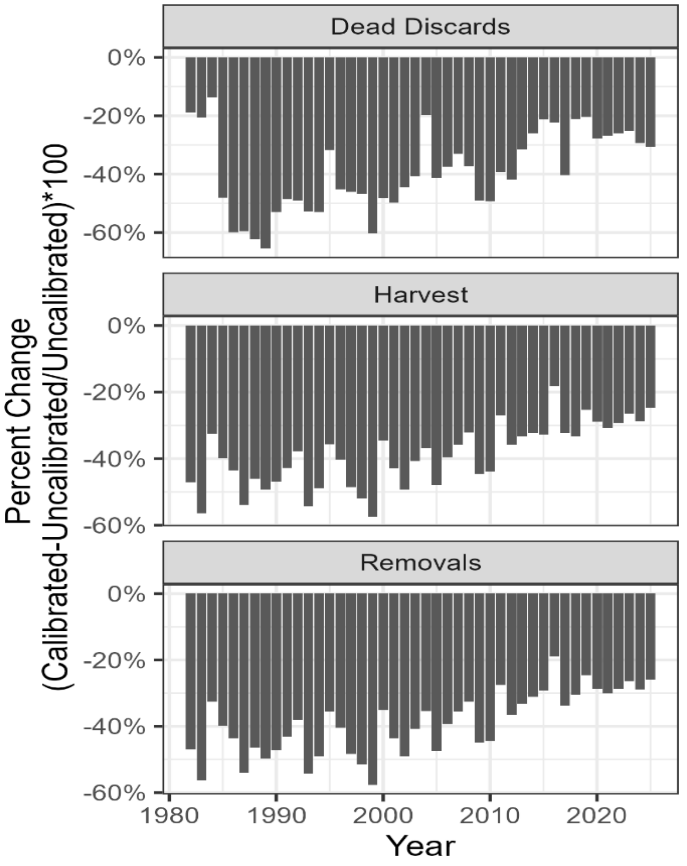




Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

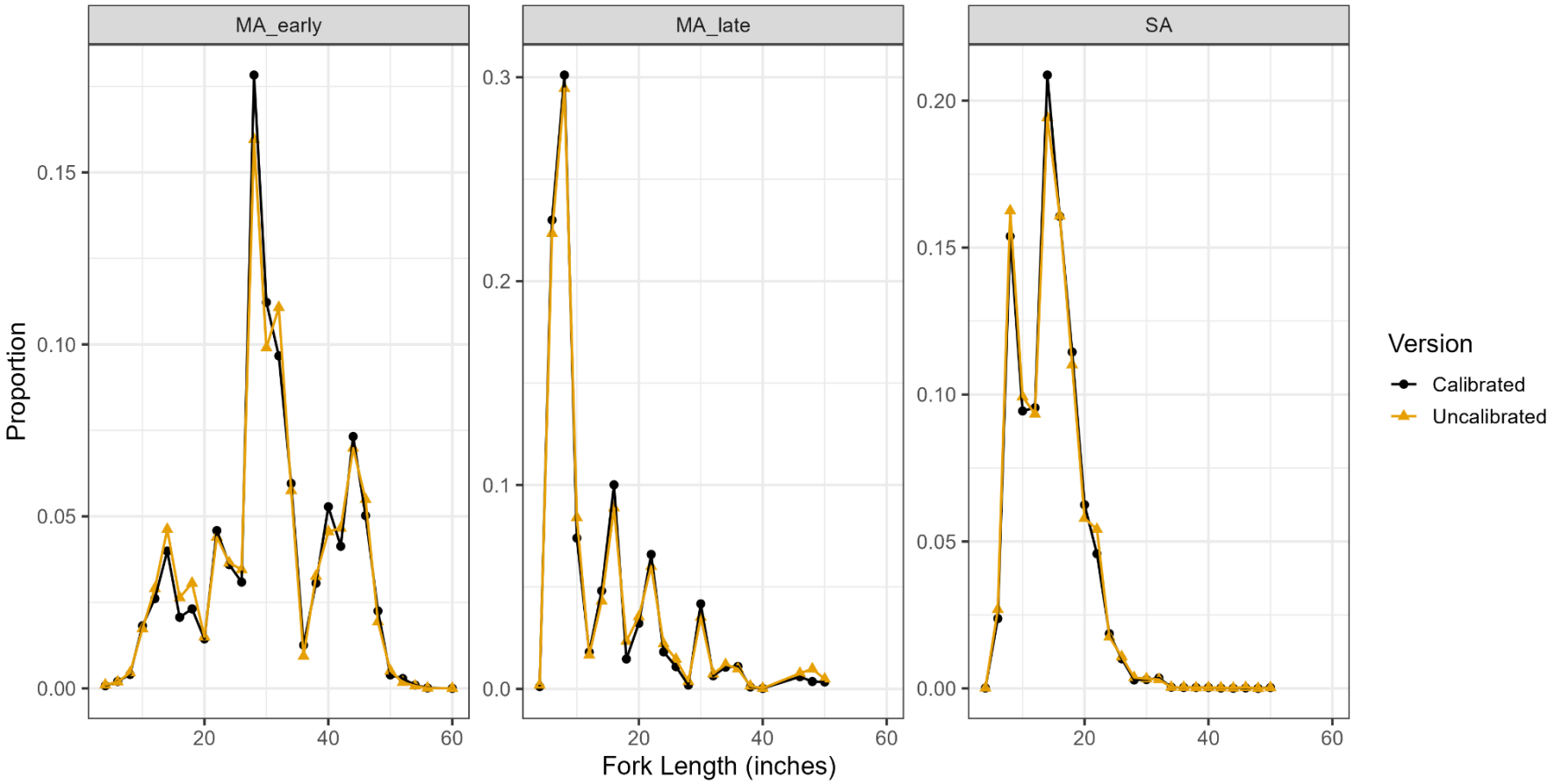
Catch Trend Comparison





Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Length Composition Comparison



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

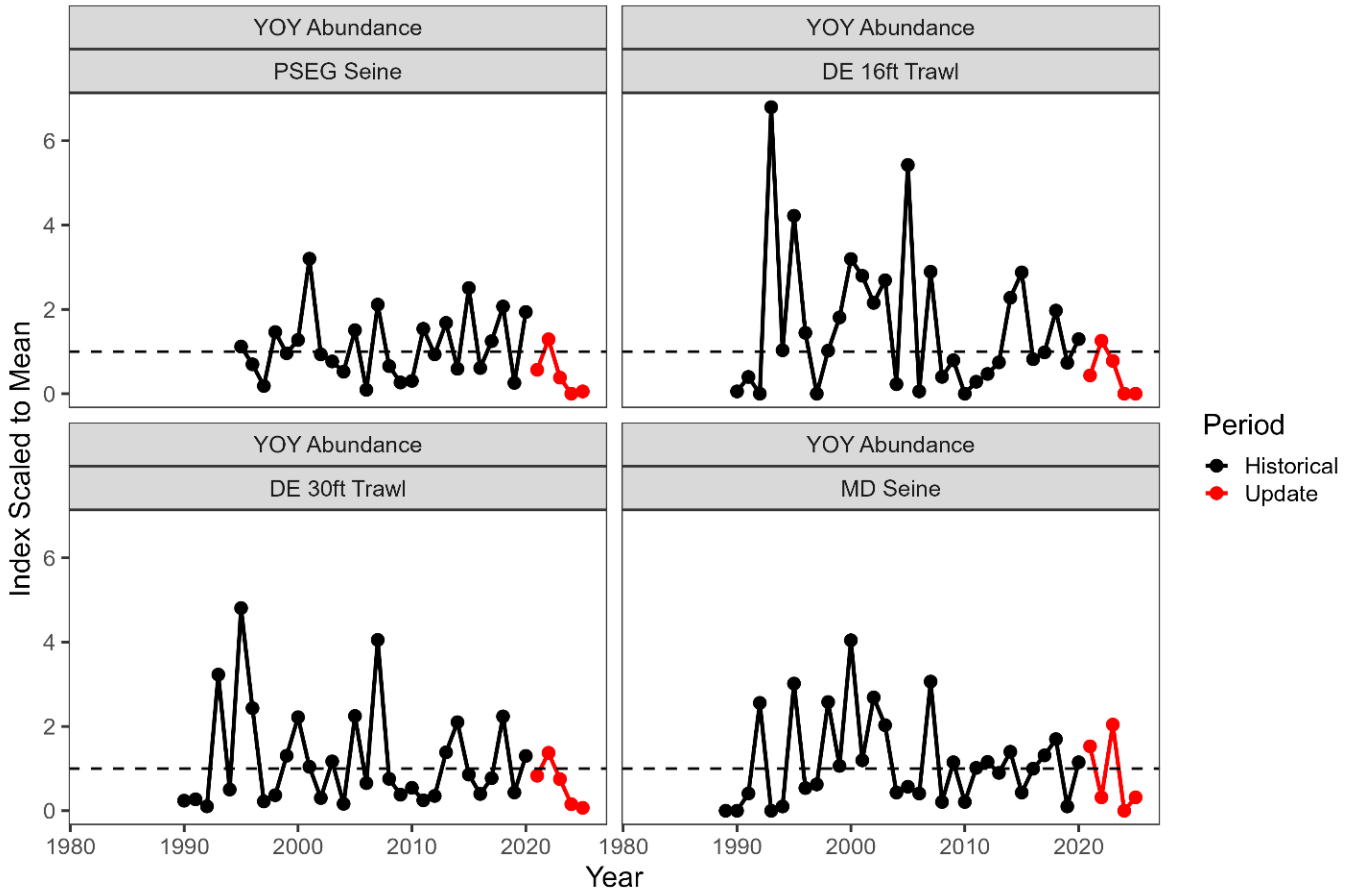
Data Update Process

- Recommended indicators:
  - Abundance
    - YOY, age 0-1, subadult, exploitable abundance
  - Range expansion
  - Fishery catch
    - Recreational harvest and live releases
    - Commercial landings
- Most indicators split into Mid-Atlantic (NY-VA) and South Atlantic (NC-FL) regions
- Last Data Update was in 2024 with data through 2023
- Current Data Update includes addition of 2024 and 2025 data

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Mid-Atlantic Abundance

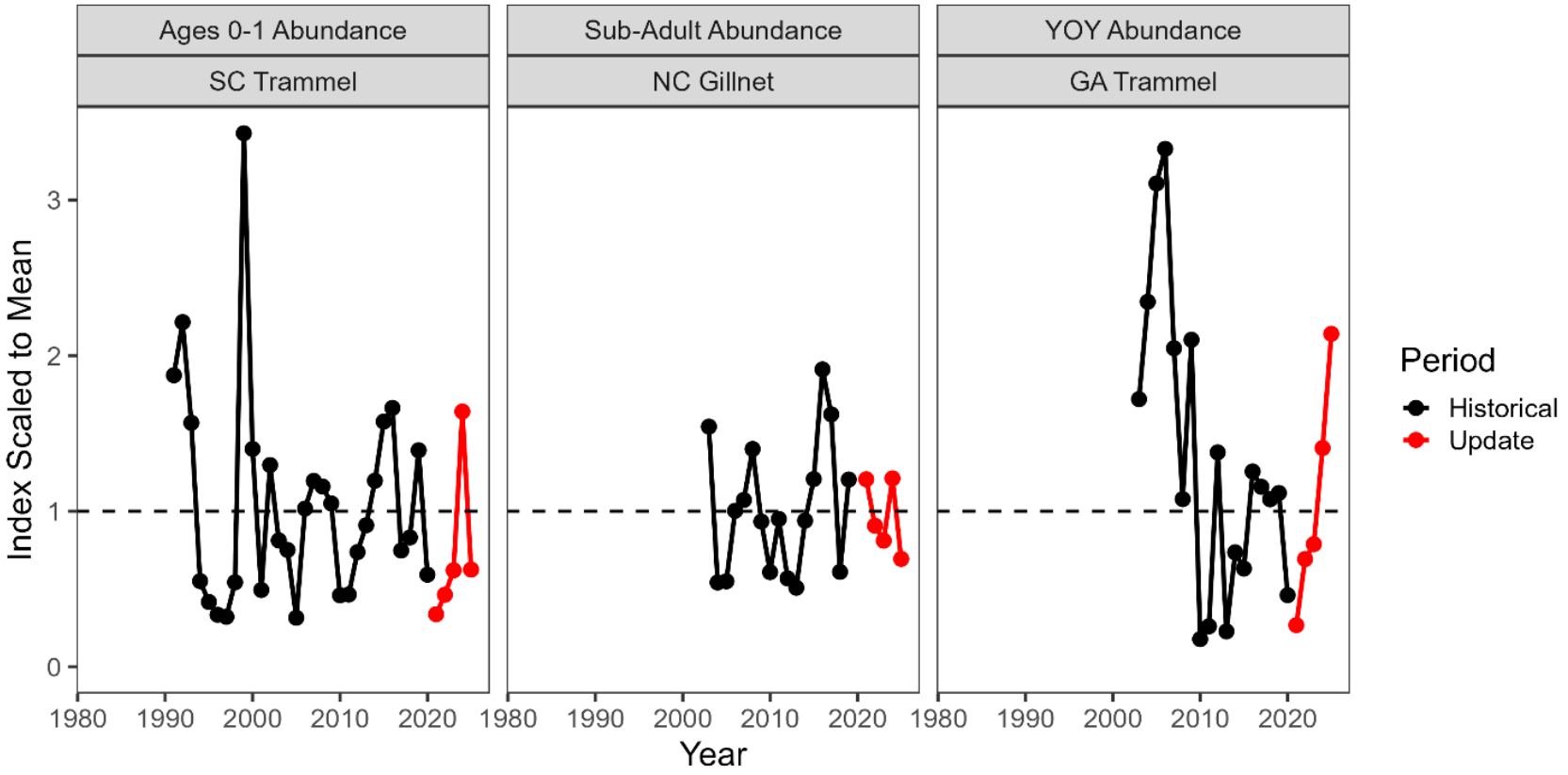
- Primarily below time series means since the assessment, including 2024 and 2025 across all four indicators



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

South Atlantic Abundance

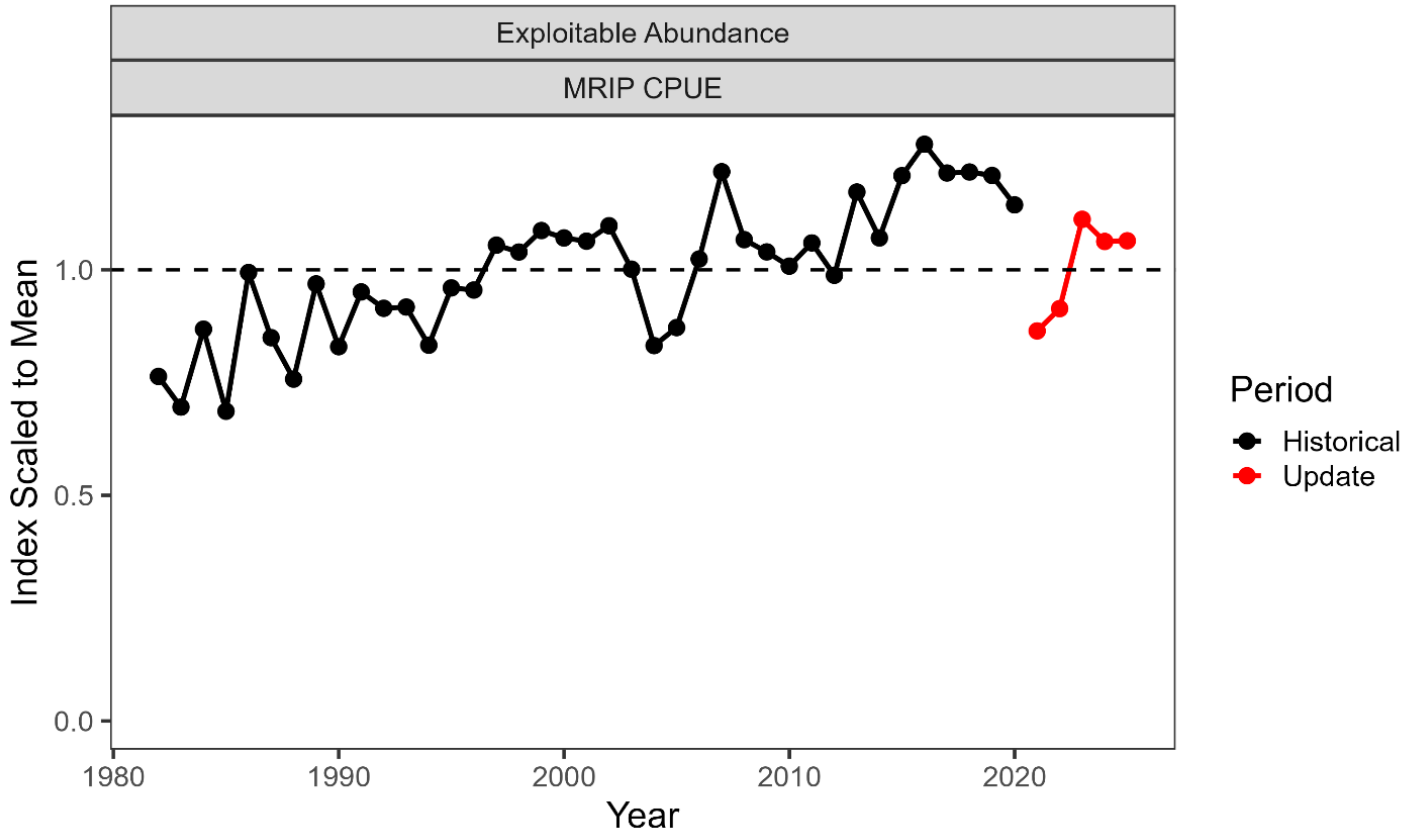
- All above average in 2024, while two decrease and one increases in 2025



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Exploitable Abundance

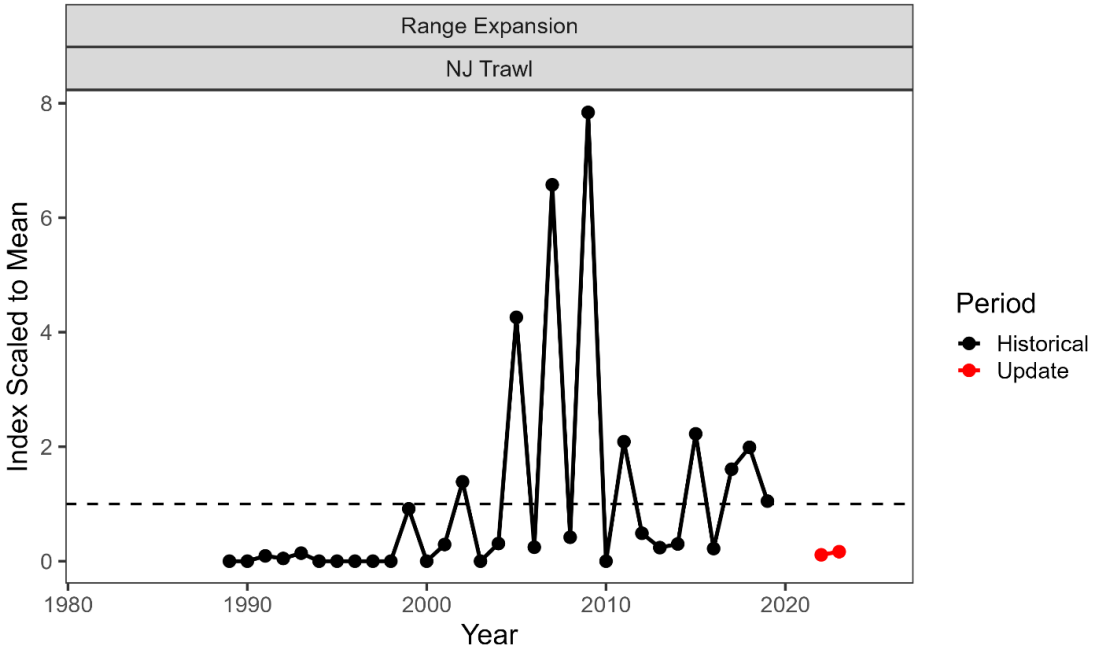
- Remains below highs observed at the end of the assessment, but has remained above average for the last three years



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Range Expansion

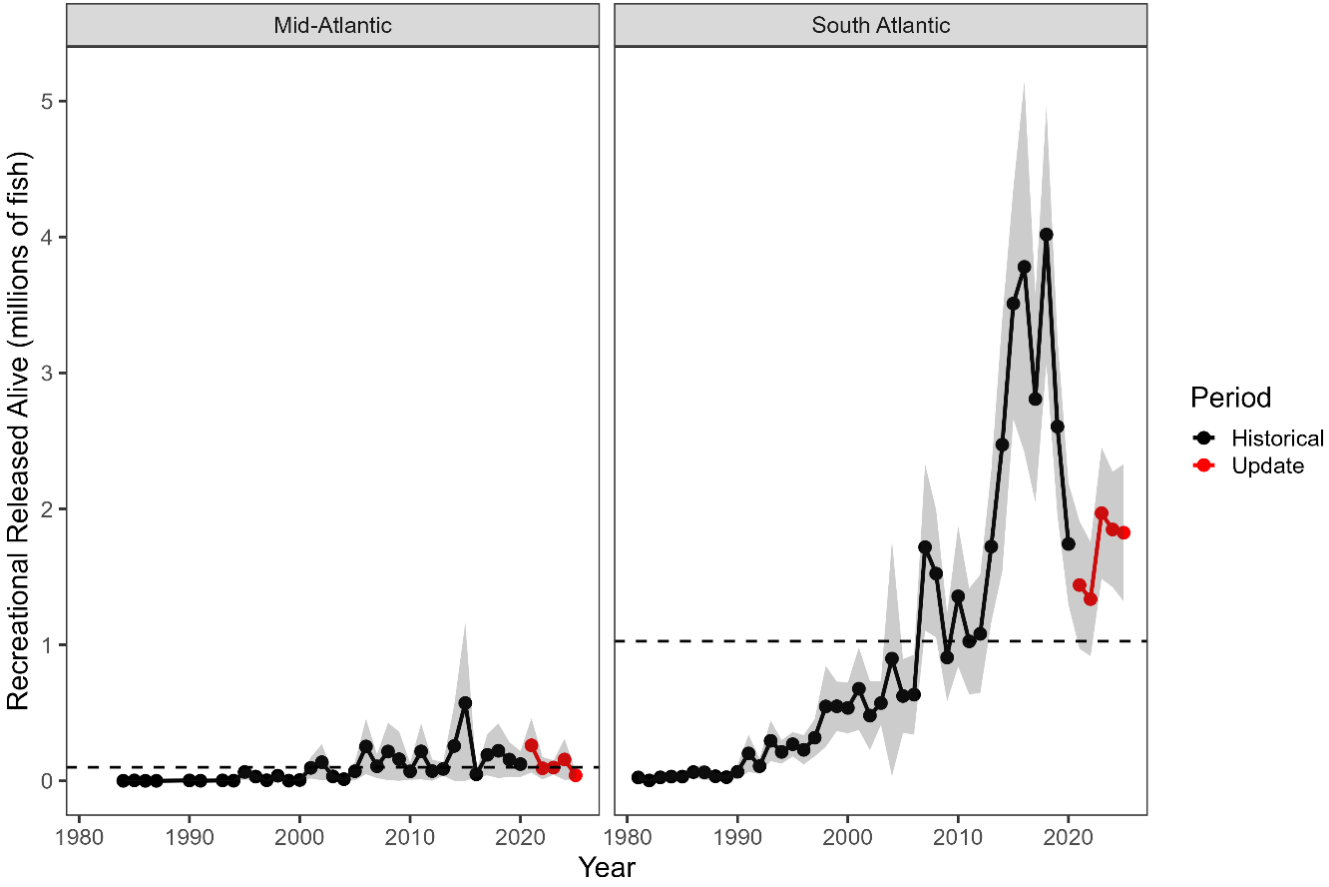
- Remained below the time series mean in 2022 and 2023
- Not available in 2021, 2024 and 2025 due to lack of October sampling



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Recreational Live Releases

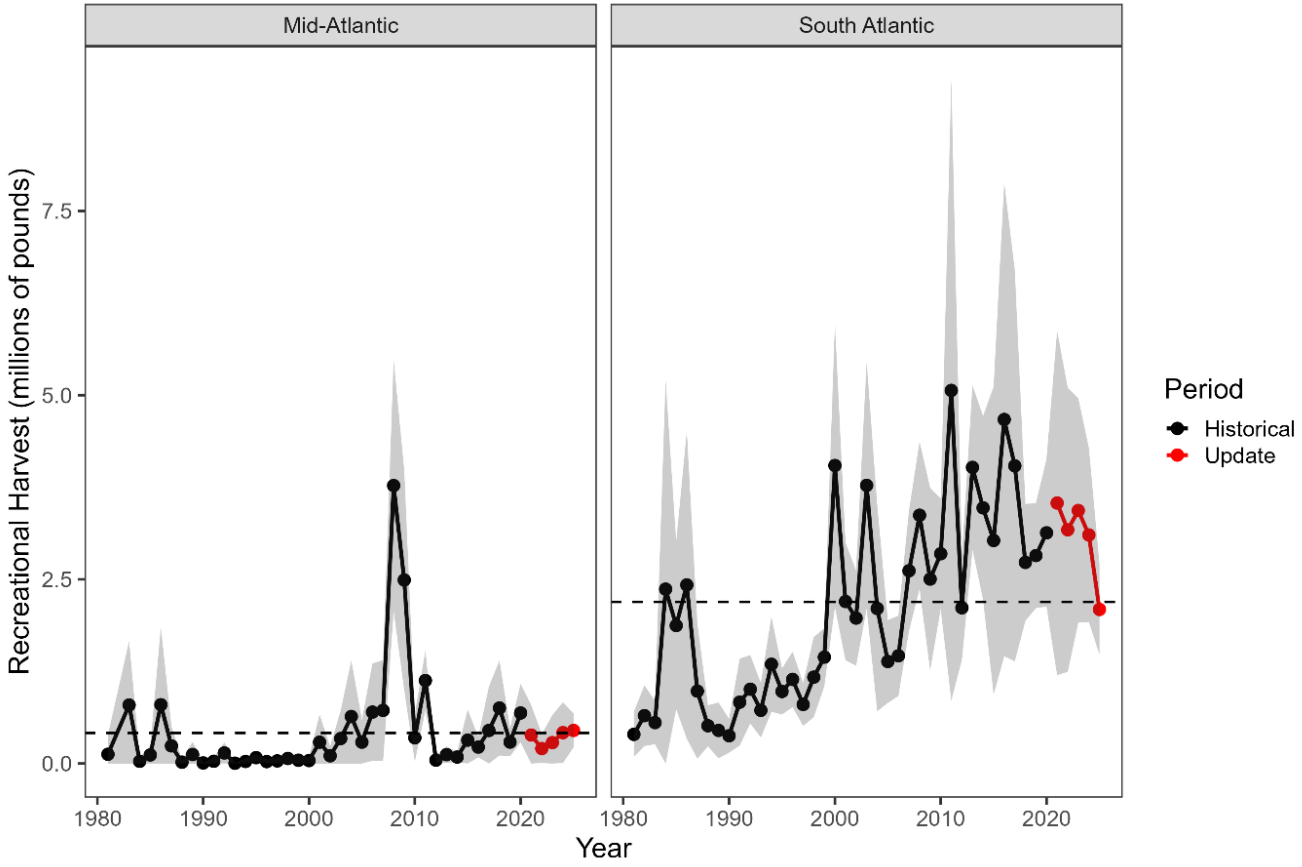
- Varied around time series mean in MA
- Below highs near the end of the assessment in SA but have remained above the time series average since the assessment



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Recreational Harvest

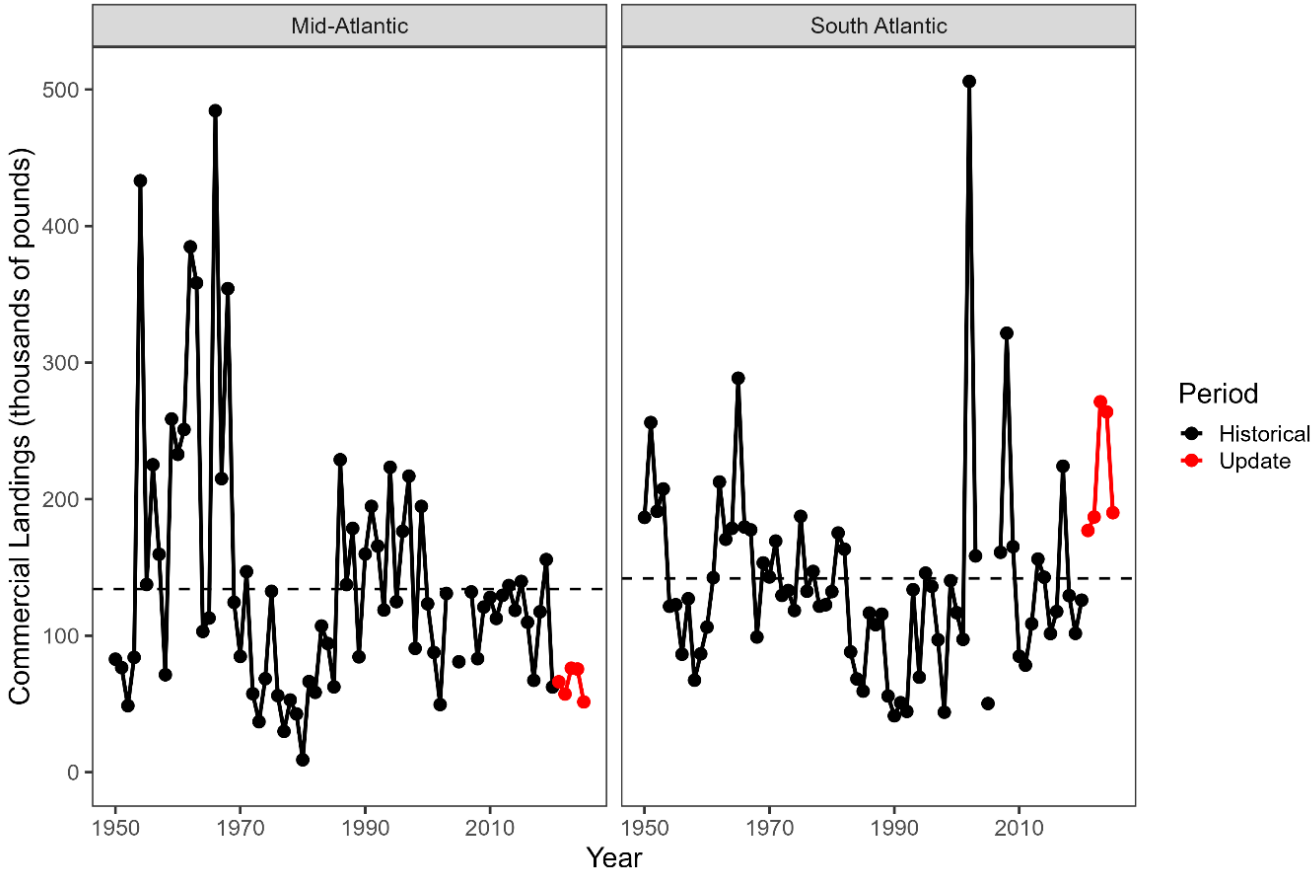
- Relatively stable since assessment with exception of 2025 in SA
  - Near the time series mean in the MA
  - Below time series mean in the SA



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Commercial Landings

- Remained well below the time series mean in MA
- Remained well above the time series mean in SA



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

2024 Data Update

- Overall, indicators showed similar conditions to the terminal year of the assessment
- Indicator changes were variable with no consistent pattern, except lower recent YOY abundance in the Mid-Atlantic region
- Increased catch in the South Atlantic is likely driven by increased effort in response to tighter regulations on other recreational species
- Decreased commercial landings in Mid Atlantic likely due to reduced market demand and a corresponding drop in effort

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

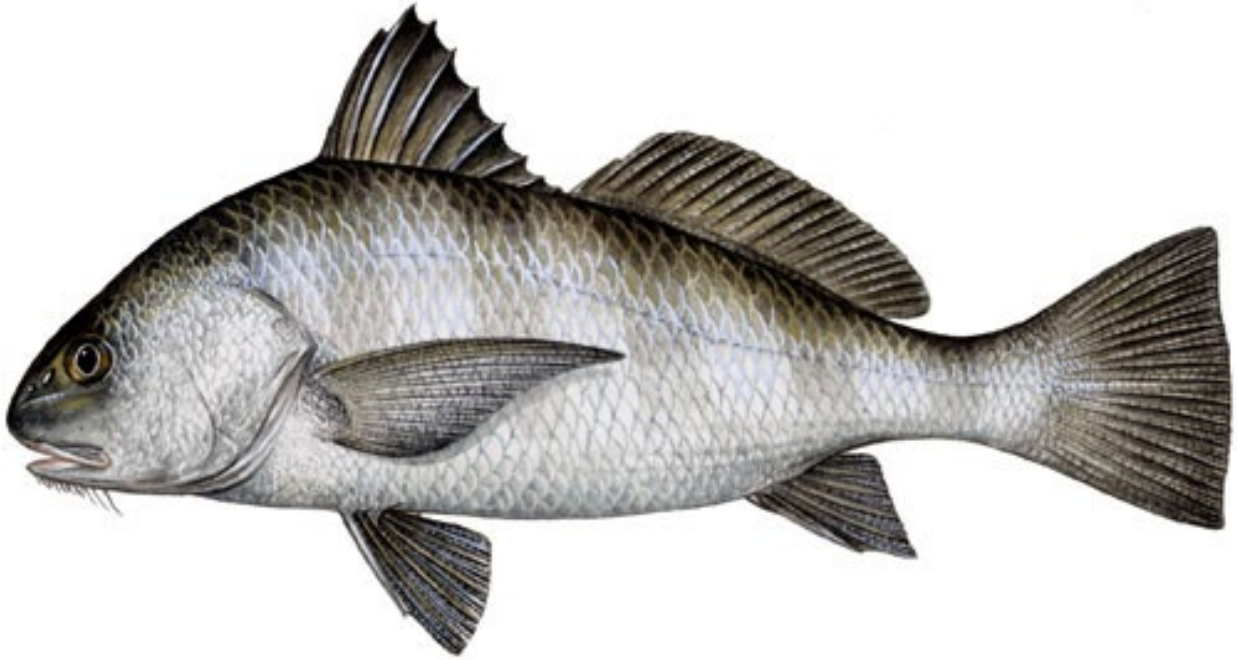
TC Recommendations

- An advanced assessment timeline is not currently needed
  - The TC did not observe any concerning trends relative to stock status
- The next stock assessment update should be conducted as scheduled in 2028
  - Incorporate the new calibrated MRIP estimates
  - Potential increased targeting due to more restrictive measures on other species

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Questions

????



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Timing of Future Red Drum TLA Updates

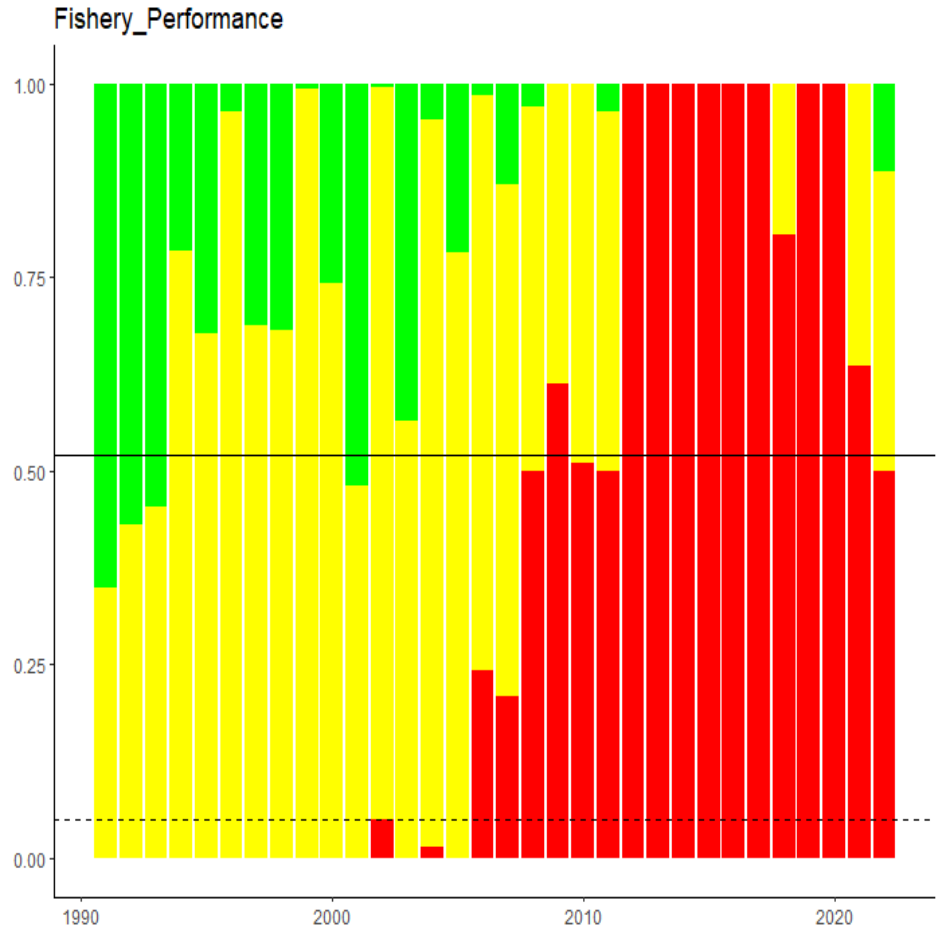
Sciaenids Management Board

November 9, 2026

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Background

- 2024 Benchmark Stock Assessment included Traffic Light Analyses of indicators for both stocks
  - Primary analysis for northern stock
  - Complementary analysis for southern stock
- SAS recommended TLAs be updated between assessments to monitor stock status and indicator trends
- Next ASMFC assessment tentatively scheduled for 2033
  - Florida state-specific assessment scheduled for 2027



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

2024 Assessment TLA Results

- Northern stock
  - Not experiencing overfishing and not overfished
  - Fishery performance yellow for last three years indicates increasing fishing mortality

- Southern stock
  - Experiencing overfishing and not overfished
  - Two additional concerning scenarios:
    - Both fishery performance and adult abundance annual indicators were red or yellow during last three years
    - Recruitment was red during last five years and adult abundance was yellow during last three years

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

TC Update Recommendation

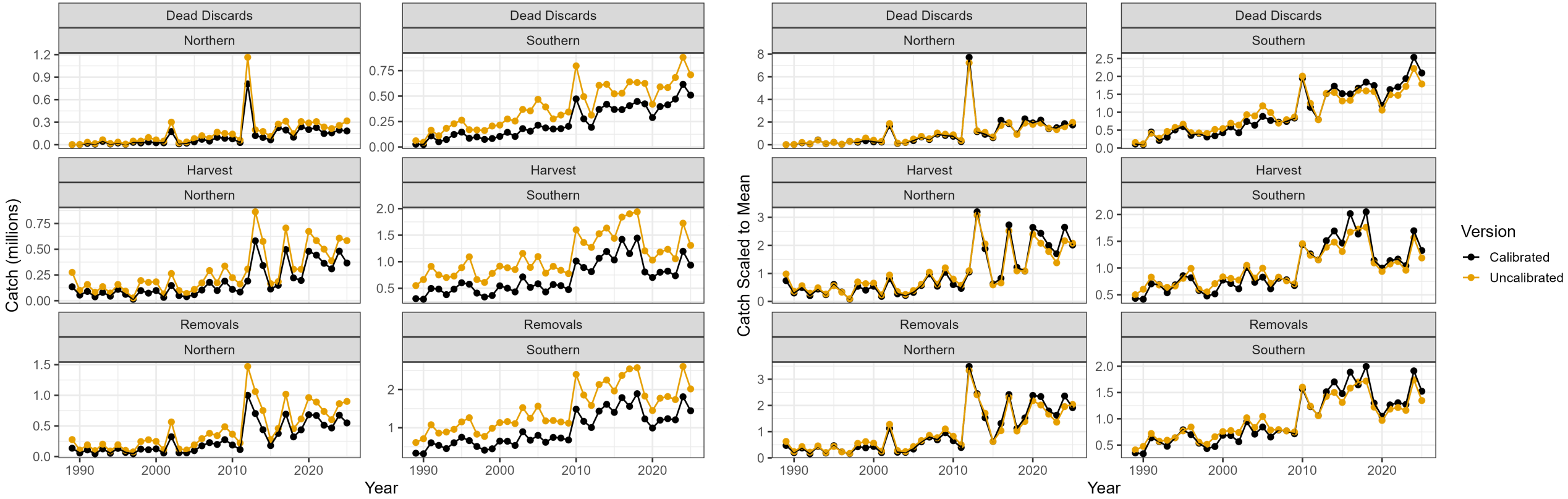
- TC meeting 6/2/2025 to discuss PDT questions including TLA update schedule

- Update TLA through 2025 fishing year (Sept-Aug)
  - Use preliminary MRIP estimates for Jan-Aug 2026
  - Preliminary Jul-Aug 2026 MRIP estimates expected ≈ Dec 15, 2026
  - Final 2026 MRIP estimates expected ≈ Apr 15, 2027
  - Update completed with preliminary data by Spring Meeting 2027

- Update TLA through 2028 fishing year
  - Preliminary Jul-Aug 2029 estimates expected ≈ Oct 15, 2029
  - Update completed by Winter Meeting 2030

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

MRIP Calibrations



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Board Guidance

- Does the Board desire TLA updates for Spring Meeting 2027?

- If so, which stock(s)?

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Progress Update on 2028 Spot Benchmark Stock Assessment

Sciaenids Management Board

November 9, 2026

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Background

- Assessment decoupled from joint assessment with croaker fall 2023
  - Conduct spot assessment following completion of croaker assessment

- Spot assessment work restarted following July peer review of croaker
  - SAS repopulated
    - Trey Mace (MD)
    - Harry Rickabaugh (MD, TC Chair)
    - Brooke Lowman (VA)
    - Matt Zink (NC)
    - Keyaira Morgan (SC)
    - Eddie Leonard (GA)
    - Halie OFarrell (FL)
    - Jeff Kipp (ASMFC)

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Progress to Date

- Additional 2023-2025 data submitted by August 28

- Introduction meetings
  - August 31 and September 3
  - Reviewed data sets submitted for 2023 Data Workshop
  - Identified tasks and timeline
  - Reviewed and discussed potential modeling approaches

- Stock structure meeting
  - October 30
  - Reviewed information relevant to stock structure recommendation
  - Made recommendation on stock structure for assessment

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Remaining Timeline

- Data Review/Methods Workshop: February 2027
- Assessment Workshop: July 2027
- TC Assessment Review: October 2027
- Peer Review Workshop: November 2027
- Present Assessment and Peer Review to Sciaenids Board: February 2028

Questions?

