



# Reducing Snapper Grouper Release Mortality and Revising Red Snapper Catch Levels

## *Regulatory Amendment 35*



**April 2022**

**Michael Schmidtke, SAFMC Staff**

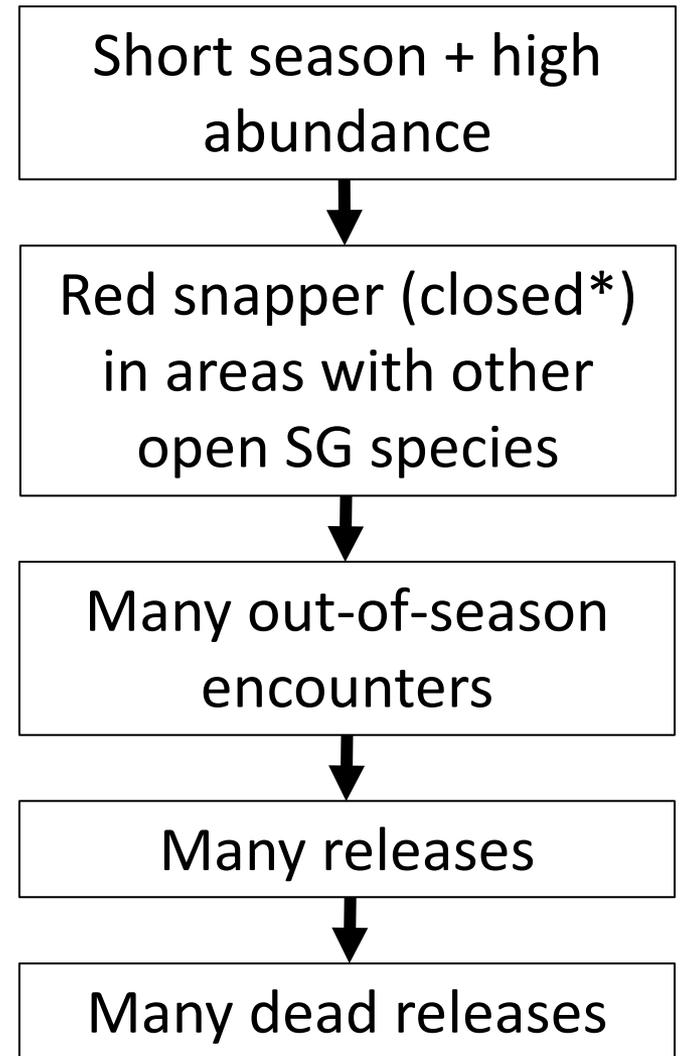
# SEDAR 73

- SEDAR 73 (2021) determined South Atlantic Red Snapper are still overfished and overfishing is still occurring
  - Stock is making progress toward being rebuilt
  - Estimated biomass in 2016-2020 is largest value observed since the 1980s; numbers at age show recent increase in recruitment
  - Corroborates anecdotal information of high red snapper abundance



# SEDAR 73

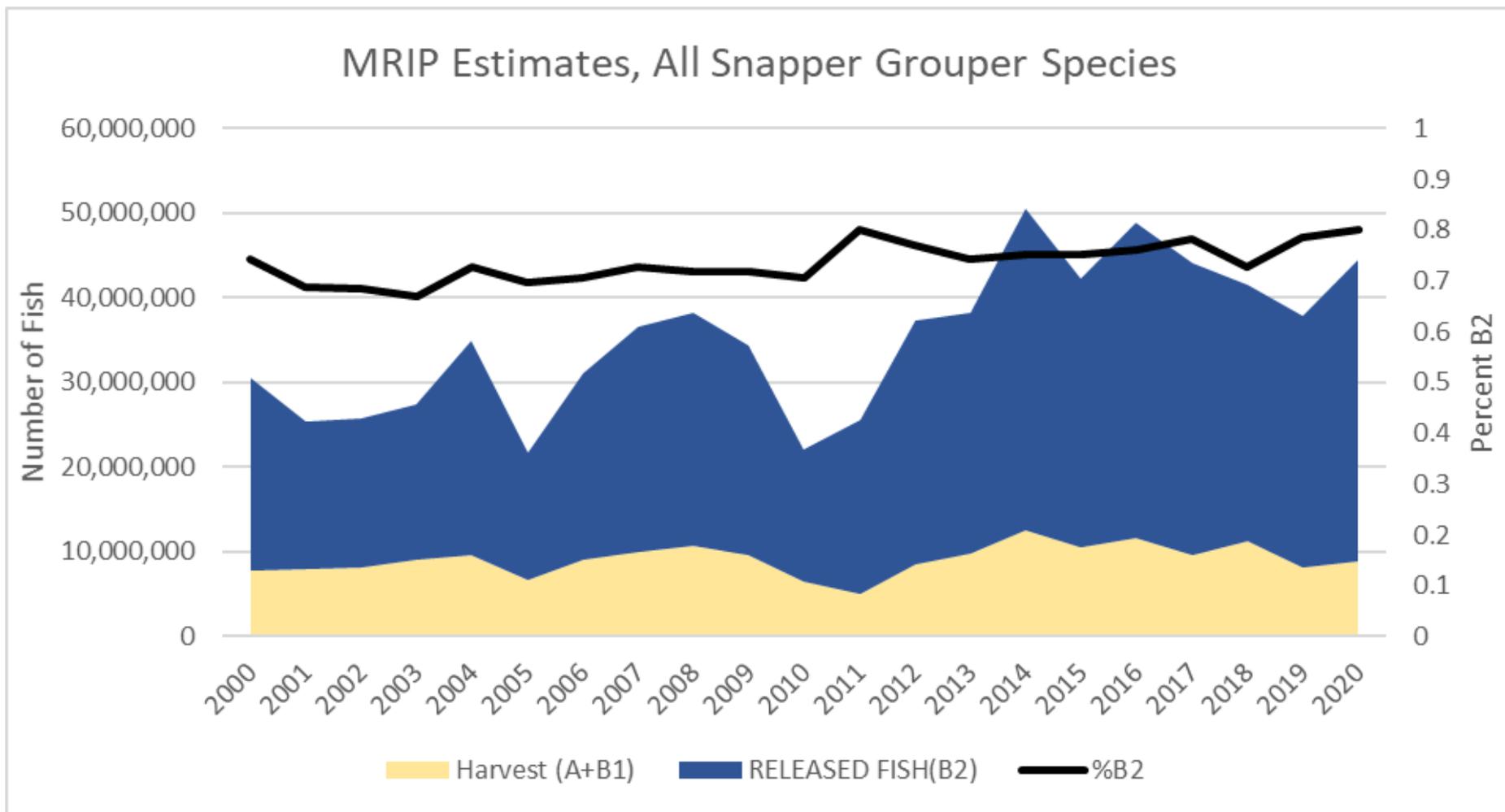
- SEDAR 73 (2021) determined South Atlantic Red Snapper are still overfished and overfishing is still occurring
  - Greatest source of fishing-related mortality is from release mortality
  - This despite reduction in the release mortality rate due to increased use of best practices including descending devices



\*most of the year



# Not Just Red Snapper...



# Not Just Red Snapper...

## 18 High Impact Species

>50% Released + Releases > 500,000 fish + Harvest > 500,000 fish\*  
93% of harvest, 99% of the releases

- BLACK SEA BASS
- GRAY SNAPPER
- YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER
- RED SNAPPER
- TOMTATE
- LANE SNAPPER
- MUTTON SNAPPER
- ATLANTIC SPADEFISH
- WHITE GRUNT
- RED GROUPE
- GAG
- VERMILION SNAPPER
- GRAY TRIGGERFISH
- SAILORS CHOICE
- BLACK GROUPE
- GREATER AMBERJACK
- ALMACO JACK
- BAR JACK

Overfished Stocks

Assessed Stocks (9 of 18)

\*Values are 2000-2020 Total



# The Problems

- Red snapper release mortality is too high
  - Limits number of fish available for harvest
  - Limits number of fish available to rebuild the stock
  - Frustrating for fishermen observing high abundance that is inaccessible
- Snapper grouper releases are high
  - Reflects low fishing efficiency
  - Can impact catch limits, rebuilding timelines



# Proposed Responses

- Management strategy evaluation (MSE) process to consider large-scale changes to the snapper grouper fishery (we'll talk about this in a future meeting)
- Reg Am 35 – Implement a management measure to reduce the number of dead releases for the snapper grouper fishery, with focus on red snapper
  - Request reconsideration of the red snapper ABC recommendation based on estimated difference in number of dead releases



# Reg Am 35

- Council is considering temporal, spatial, &/or depth-based closures of multiple snapper grouper species
- **Current step: Staff is data-gathering so Council can develop options**
- Later step: Request SSC review of considered options and estimated impacts to stock projections and ABC recommendation



# Discussion Questions

- Discuss uncertainty of proposed mechanisms for reducing discards. What data or analyses could improve efforts to quantify the impact of regulations directed at reducing releases and discard losses?
- Would reducing the number of Red Snapper that are discarded dead provide an opportunity for increased harvest?
  - If yes,
    - How would shifting yield from discards to harvest affect assessment uncertainties and efforts to prevent overfishing?
    - Are additional projections required for the SSC to provide an updated ABC that reflects the change in discard removals?
  - If no, explain.

