Wahoo

The Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Dolphin and Wahoo Fishery off the Atlantic States was partially approved on December 23, 2003. The intended effects of the FMP were to conserve and manage dolphin and wahoo off the Atlantic states (Maine through the east coast of Florida), and to ensure that no new fisheries for dolphin and wahoo would develop.

Table 1 shows the regulations that went into effect in 2004 for the Dolphin-Wahoo FMP, and other relevant regulations under the Snapper-Grouper FMP, that might have affected fisheries for dolphin and wahoo as well.

Table 1. History of management.

Regulation	Effective Date	Plan or Amendment
(1) A 20-inch fork length minimum size limit for dolphin off the coasts of Georgia and Florida with no size restrictions elsewhere. (2) Prohibition of longline fishing for dolphin and wahoo in areas closed to the use of such gear for highly migratory pelagic species. (3) Allowable gear to be used in the fishery (hook-and-line gear including manual, electric, and hydraulic rods and reels; bandit gear; handlines; longlines; and spearfishing (including powerheads) gear. (4) The management unit and designations of stock status criteria for the unit. (5) A fishing year of January 1 through December 31. (6) A 1.5 million pound (or 13% of the total harvest) cap on commercial landings of dolphin. (7) Establishment of a framework procedure by which the Council may modify its management measures. (8) Designations of Essential Fish Habitat and Essential Fish habitat-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern.	6/28/2004	Dolphin-Wahoo FMP
(1) Owners of commercial vessels and/or charter vessels/headboats must have vessel permits and, if selected, submit reports. (2) Dealers must have permits and, if selected, submit reports. (3) Longline vessels must comply with sea turtle protection measures. (4) A recreational bag limit of 10 dolphin and 2 wahoo per person per day, with a limit of 60 dolphin per boat per day (headboats are excluded from the boat limit). (5) Prohibition on recreational sale of dolphin and wahoo caught under a bag limit unless the seller holds the necessary commercial permits. (6) A commercial trip limit of 500 pounds for wahoo.	9/24/2004	Dolphin-Wahoo FMP

Regulation	Effective Date	Plan or Amendment
(1) Operators of commercial vessels, charter vessels and headboats that are required to have a federal vessel permit for dolphin and wahoo must display operator permits.	11/23/2004	Dolphin-Wahoo FMP
(1) Snowy grouper commercial: Quota (gutted weight) = 151,000 lbs gw in year 1, 118,000 lbs gw in year 2, and 84,000 lbs gw in year 3 onwards. Trip limit = 275 lbs gw in year 1, 175 lbs gw in year 2, and 100 lbs gw in year 3 onwards. Recreational: Limit possession to one snowy grouper in 5 grouper per person/day aggregate bag limit. (2) Golden tilefish commercial: Quota of 295,000 lbs gw, 4,000 lbs gw trip limit until 75% of the quota is taken when the trip limit is reduced to 300 lbs gw. Do not adjust the trip limit downwards unless 75% is captured on or before September 1. Recreational: Limit possession to 1 golden tilefish in 5 grouper per person/day aggregate bag limit. (3) Vermilion snapper commercial: Quota of 1,100,000 lbs gw. Recreational: 12" size limit. (4) Black sea bass commercial: Commercial quota (gutted weight) of 477,000 lbs gw in year 1, 423,000 lbs gw in year 2, and 309,000 lbs gw in year 3 onwards. Require use of at least 2" mesh for the entire back panel of black sea bass pots effective 6 months after publication of the final rule. Require black sea bass pots be removed from the water when the quota is met. Change fishing year from calendar year to June 1 – May 31. Recreational: Recreational allocation of 633,000 lbs gw in year 1, 560,000 lbs gw in year 2, and 409,000 lbs gw in year 3 onwards. Increase minimum size limit from 10" to 11" in year 1 and to 12" in year 2. Reduce recreational bag limit from 20 to 15 per person per day. Change fishing year from the calendar year to June 1 through May 31. (5) Red porgy commercial: Specify a commercial quota of 127,000 lbs gw and prohibit sale/purchase and prohibit harvest and/or possession beyond the bag limit when quota is taken and/or during January through April. Increase commercial trip limit from 50 lbs ww to 120 red porgy (210 lbs gw) during May through December. Recreational: Increase recreational bag limit from one to three red porgy per person per day.	10/23/06	Snapper-Grouper Amendment #13C
1. Establish eight deepwater Type II marine protected areas (MPAs) to protect a portion of the population and habitat of long-lived deepwater snapper-grouper species.	02/12/2009	Snapper-Grouper Amendment #14
(1) Define interim allocations for gag based on landings at 51% commercial and 49% recreational. (2) Establish a January through April spawning season closure for gag for both commercial and recreational sectors where no fishing for and/or possession of gag would be allowed. In addition, during the closure no fishing for and/or possession of the following species would be allowed - black grouper, red grouper, scamp, red hind, rock hind, yellowmouth grouper, tiger grouper, yellowfin grouper, graysby, and coney. (3) Establish a directed commercial gag quota of 352,940 pounds (gutted weight). (4) Reduce the current 5-grouper aggregate recreational bag limit to a 3-	07/29/2009	Snapper-Grouper Amendment #16

Regulation	Effective Date	Plan or Amendment
grouper aggregate bag limit and reduce the existing bag limit from 2 gag or black grouper to 1 gag or black grouper combined. (5) Exclude the captain and crew on for-hire vessels from possessing a bag limit for vermilion snapper or species in grouper aggregate. (6) Define interim allocations for vermilion snapper based on landings of 68% commercial and 32% recreational. (7) Establish a directed vermilion snapper commercial quota of 315,523 lbs gutted weight (January-June); 302,523 lbs gutted weight (July-December). (8) Reduce the vermilion snapper recreational bag limit from 10 fish to 5 fish per person per day. (9) Establish a vermilion snapper recreational closed season November through March. (10) Use of dehooking tools as necessary to reduce bycatch mortality.		

During 1999-2009, 95% of all commercial annual landings of wahoo were from the South Atlantic region, and 5% from Mid-Atlantic and New England regions (Table 2). Recreational landings of wahoo for the same time period show a similar trend, with the South Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic regions responsible for 96% and 4%, respectively (Table 2). There were no reported recreational landings for the New England region (Table 2). Headboat recreational landings (for South Atlantic only) comprised of 0.4% of the total recreational effort, but 1.0% of the total For-Hire effort (Tables 2 and 3). In the For-Hire portion of the recreational sector, the South Atlantic region again dominated landings with 96%, a minimal 3% for the Mid-Atlantic, and no reported landings in the New England region (Table 3).

Commercial landings of wahoo in the South Atlantic region held steady from 2000-2004 (the year when the Dolphin-Wahoo FMP went into effect), decreased in 2005 and 2006, rose again in 2007, and declined in 2008 (Figure 1). MRFSS data show a decrease in recreational landings of wahoo from 2002-2006, a peak in 2007, and a decrease in 2008 (Figure 2). Headboat landings show mixed trends, and are at a much smaller scale (Figure 3). Overall, during 1999-2009, recreational (non-headboat) landings dominated the wahoo fishery (Figure 4).

Table 2. Annual landings of wahoo by region, 1999-2009.

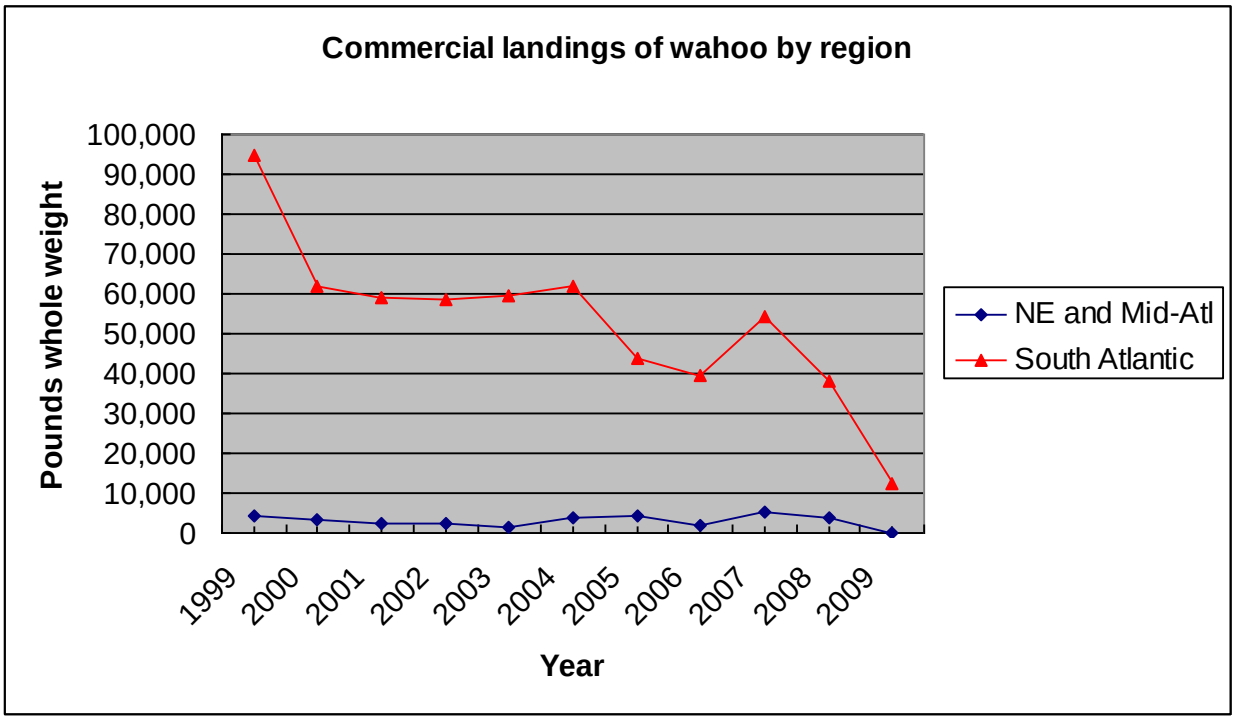
	Commercial			Recreational (MRFSS & Headboat)					
Year	NE and Mid Atl	South Atl	Total Comm	MRFSS NE	MRFSS Mid-Atl	MRFSS South Atl	MRFSS Total	*Headboat	Total Rec
1999	4,504	94,655	99,159	0	232,779	1,167,516	1,400,295	5,358	1,405,653
2000	3,514	61,769	65,283	0	44,275	1,033,979	1,078,254	5,467	1,083,721
2001	2,231	58,842	61,073	0	0	1,049,762	1,049,762	863	1,050,625
2002	2,344	58,359	60,703	0	0	1,239,973	1,239,973	4,881	1,244,854
2003	1,316	59,404	60,720	0	0	1,098,636	1,098,636	623	1,099,259
2004	3,575	61,910	65,485	0	21,665	923,231	944,896	5,216	950,112
2005	4,102	43,642	47,744	0	1,689	808,367	810,056	5,790	815,846
2006	2,120	39,419	41,539	0	3,448	756,696	760,144	3,001	763,145
2007	5,428	54,130	59,558	0	94,163	1,819,904	1,914,067	10,425	1,924,492
2008	3,588	37,998	41,586	0	1,889	626,869	628,758	2,767	631,525
2009	0	12,296	12,296	0	0	297,090	297,090	0	297,090
Total	32,722	582,424	615,146	0	399,908	10,822,023	11,221,931	44,392	11,266,323
Average	2,975	52,948	55,922	0	36,355	983,820	1,020,176	4,036	1,024,211
%	5.32	94.68	100.00	0.00	3.55	96.06	99.61	0.39	100.00

Source: Commercial dolphin landings for VA north are from SEFSC. Commercial landings for NC to FL are from ALS (except 2009).
Data for 2009 are incomplete. *Headboat data are from South Atlantic only.

Table 3. Annual landings of wahoo in the recreational sector by region, 1999-2009.

	MRFSS For-Hire					MRFSS Other Rec			
Year	NE	Mid-Atl	South Atl	*Headboat	Total For-Hire	NE	Mid-Atl	South Atl	Total Other Rec
1999	0	15,615	599,927	5,358	620,900	0	217,164	567,589	784,753
2000	0	0	438,367	5,467	443,834	0	44,275	595,612	639,887
2001	0	0	347,844	863	348,707	0	0	701,918	701,918
2002	0	0	595,632	4,881	600,513	0	0	644,341	644,341
2003	0	0	303,595	623	304,218	0	0	795,041	795,041
2004	0	0	363,666	5,216	368,882	0	21,665	559,565	581,230
2005	0	1,689	250,753	5,790	258,232	0	0	557,614	557,614
2006	0	3,448	210,383	3,001	216,832	0	0	546,313	546,313
2007	0	94,163	294,087	10,425	398,675	0	0	1,525,817	1,525,817
2008	0	1,889	195,206	2,767	199,862	0	0	431,663	431,663
2009	0	0	51,744	0	51,744	0	0	245,346	245,346
Total	0	116,804	3,651,204	44,392	3,812,400	0	283,104	7,170,819	7,453,923
Average	0	10,619	331,928	4,036	346,582	0	25,737	651,893	677,629
%	0.00	3.06	95.77	1.16	100.00	0.00	3.80	96.20	100.00

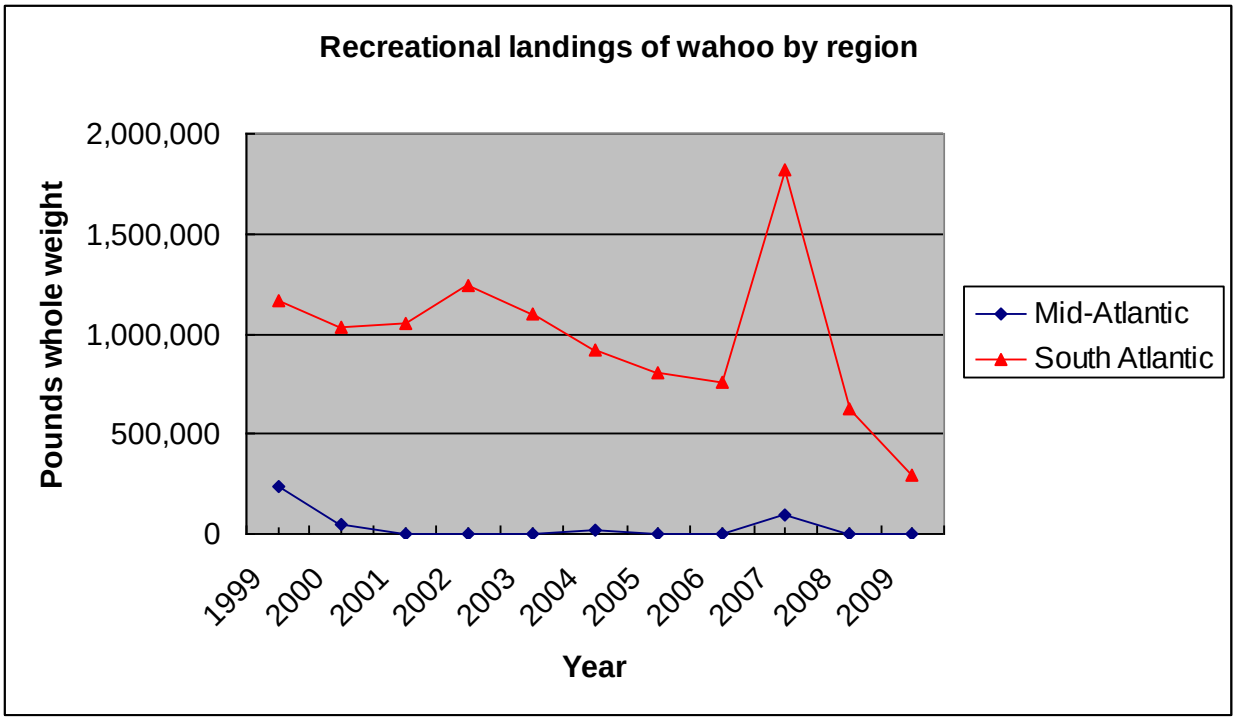
Source: MRFSS and NMFS Headboat Survey. Data for 2009 are incomplete. *Headboat data are from South Atlantic only.



Source: Commercial wahoo landings for VA north are from SEFSC. Commercial landings for NC to FL are from ALS (except 2009).

Figure 1. Annual commercial landings (lbs whole weight) of wahoo in the Atlantic, 1999 – 2009. Data are inclusive of all the states within the jurisdiction of the New England, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils. Data are not reported by state due to confidentiality concerns. Data for 2009 are incomplete.

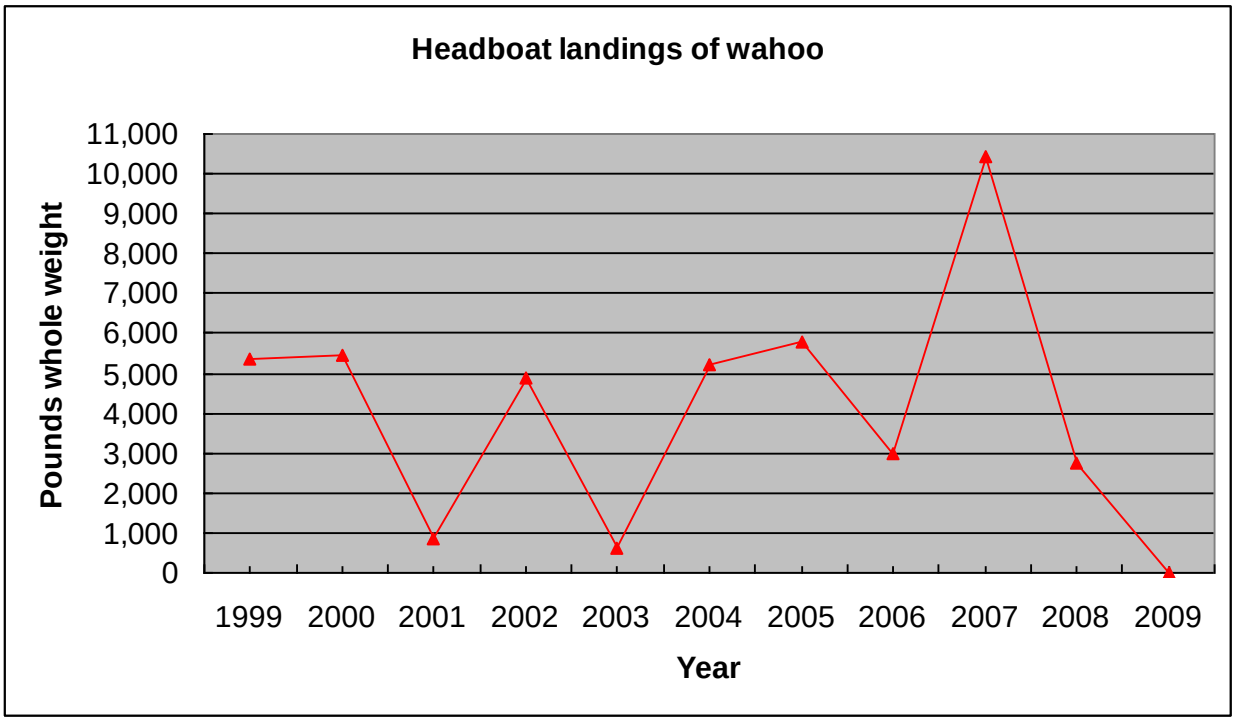
Note: A 500 lb trip limit was implemented in 2004. No changes have occurred in the Dolphin-Wahoo FMP since 2004. Snapper-Grouper Amendment 13C went into effect in October, 2006, Amendment 14 in February, 2009, and Amendment 16 in July, 2009.



Source: MRFSS web site.

Figure 2. Annual recreational landings (lbs whole weight) of wahoo in the Atlantic, 1999 – 2008. Data are inclusive of all the states within the jurisdiction of the New England, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils. There are no reported landings for New England. Data are not reported by state due to confidentiality concerns. Data for 2009 are incomplete.

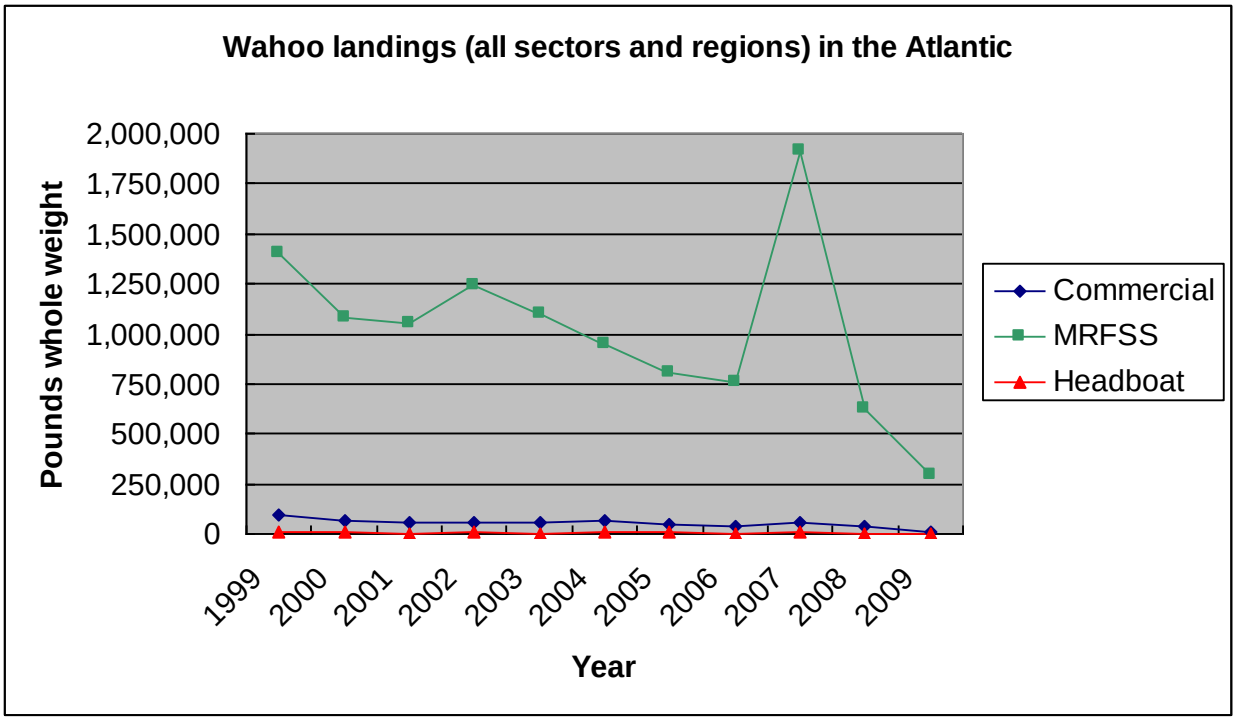
Note: A recreational bag limit of 2 wahoo per person per day was implemented in 2004. No changes have occurred in the Dolphin-Wahoo FMP since 2004. Snapper-Grouper Amendment 13C went into effect in October, 2006.



Source: NMFS Headboat Survey.

Figure 3. Annual headboat landings (lbs whole weight) of wahoo in the Atlantic, 1999 – 2009. Data are for the South Atlantic region, with no data available for the Mid-Atlantic and New England regions. Data are not reported by state due to confidentiality concerns.

Note: A recreational bag limit of 2 wahoo per person per day was implemented in 2004. No changes have occurred in the Dolphin-Wahoo FMP since 2004. Snapper-Grouper Amendment 13C went into effect in October, 2006.



Source: Commercial dolphin landings for VA north are from SEFSC. Commercial landings for NC to FL are from ALS (except 2009). MRFSS data are from the MRFSS web site. Headboat data are from NMFS Headboat Survey.

Figure 4. Annual commercial, MRFSS, and headboat landings (lbs whole weight) of wahoo in the Atlantic, 1999 – 2009. Data are inclusive of all the states within the jurisdiction of the New England, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils. Data are not reported by state due to confidentiality concerns. Data for 2009 are incomplete. Headboat data are from the South Atlantic region.