Dolphin

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. (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
(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

Regulation	Effective Date	Plan or Amendment
(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-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	07/29/2009	Snapper-Grouper Amendment #16

Regulation	Effective Date	Plan or Amendment
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, 90% of all commercial annual landings of dolphin were from the South Atlantic region, 10% from New England and the Mid-Atlantic region (Table 2). Recreational landings of dolphin for the same time period show a similar trend, with the South Atlantic region responsible for 96%, 3% from Mid-Atlantic, and 0.1% from 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 97%, 2% for the Mid-Atlantic, and negligible effort in the New England region (Table 3).

Commercial landings of dolphin in the South Atlantic region increased from 2002-2004, the year when the Dolphin-Wahoo FMP went into effect, decreased in 2005, rose in 2006-2007, and decreased in 2008 (Figure 1). In contrast, MRFSS data show a decrease in recreational landings of dolphin from 2002-2004, an increase from 2004-2007, and a decline in 2008 (Figure 2). Headboat landings show trends similar to MRFSS data, but at a much smaller scale (Figure 3). Overall, during 1999-2009, recreational (non-headboat) landings dominated the dolphin fishery (Figure 4).

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

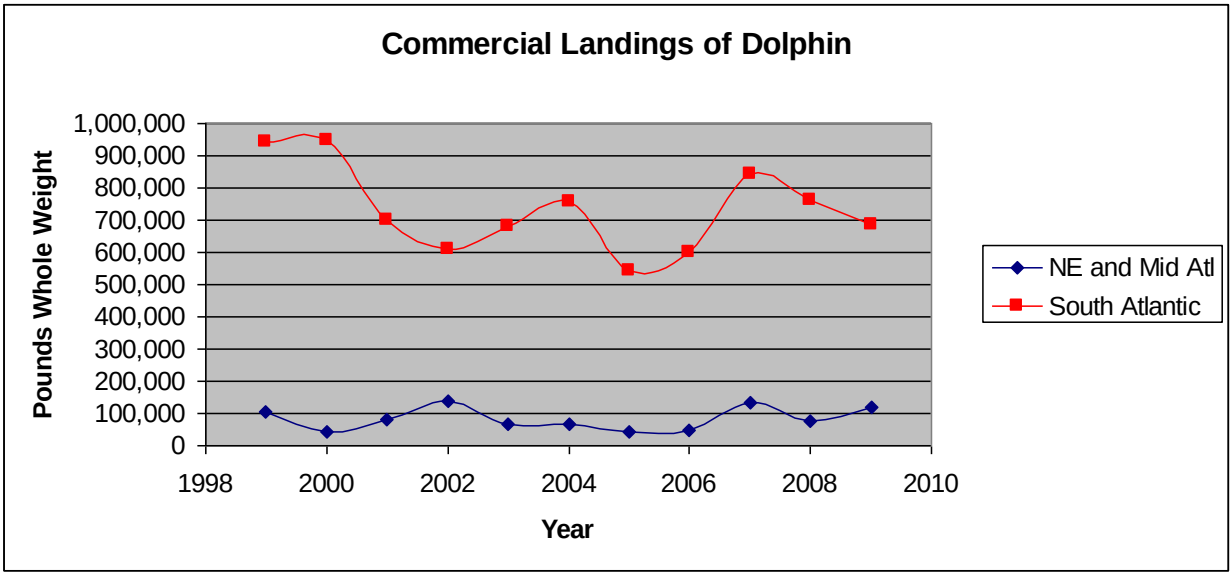
	Commercial			Recreational					
Year	NE and Mid Atl	South Atl	Total Comm	MRFSS NE	MRFSS Mid-Atl	MRFSS South Atl	MRFSS Total	*Headboat	Total Rec
1999	105,495	944,183	1,049,678	1,442	294,477	9,780,115	10,076,034	49,796	10,125,830
2000	42,596	948,127	990,723	0	656,349	12,411,764	13,068,113	69,888	13,138,001
2001	81,030	698,239	779,269	0	181,604	13,425,454	13,607,058	72,524	13,679,582
2002	136,047	610,411	746,458	123,339	573,785	10,616,966	11,314,090	39,236	11,353,326
2003	68,713	679,482	748,195	0	308,110	8,640,423	8,948,533	16,546	8,965,079
2004	66,543	755,222	821,765	0	388,188	6,915,222	7,303,410	26,973	7,330,383
2005	42,732	541,321	584,053	0	143,815	9,245,951	9,389,766	23,658	9,413,424
2006	47,399	598,216	645,615	0	518,597	8,999,462	9,518,059	25,903	9,543,962
2007	134,532	844,976	979,508	5,853	229,933	10,186,705	10,422,491	47,494	10,469,985
2008	74,336	761,070	835,406	0	254,157	7,980,409	8,234,566	12,825	8,247,391
2009	118,481	685,091	803,572	0	42,811	4,485,448	4,528,259	0	4,528,259
Total	917,904	8,066,338	8,984,242	130,634	3,591,826	102,687,919	106,410,379	384,843	106,795,222
Average	83,446	733,303	816,749	11,876	326,530	9,335,265	9,673,671	34,986	9,708,657
%	10.22	89.78	100.00	0.12	3.36	96.15	99.64	0.36	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 dolphin 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	78,631	3,839,970	49,796	3,968,397	1,442	215,846	5,940,145	6,157,433
2000	0	412	4,604,951	69,888	4,675,251	0	655,937	7,806,813	8,462,750
2001	0	51,054	3,551,862	72,524	3,675,440	0	130,550	9,873,592	10,004,142
2002	3,474	140,687	4,602,407	39,236	4,785,804	119,865	433,098	6,014,559	6,567,522
2003	0	13,616	1,884,944	16,546	1,915,106	0	294,494	6,755,479	7,049,973
2004	0	84,516	2,776,323	26,973	2,887,812	0	303,672	4,138,899	4,442,571
2005	0	63,199	4,712,965	23,658	4,799,822	0	80,616	4,532,986	4,613,602
2006	0	224,763	3,960,048	25,903	4,210,714	0	293,834	5,039,414	5,333,248
2007	0	81,046	4,041,184	47,494	4,169,724	5,853	148,887	6,145,521	6,300,261
2008	0	88,951	3,180,700	12,825	3,282,476	0	165,206	4,799,709	4,964,915
2009	0	36,546	1,046,237	0	1,082,783	0	6,265	3,439,211	3,445,476
Total	3,474	863,421	38,201,591	384,843	39,453,329	127,160	2,728,405	64,486,328	67,341,893
Average	316	78,493	3,472,872	34,986	3,586,666	11,560	248,037	5,862,393	6,121,990
%	0.01	2.19	96.83	0.98	100.00	0.19	4.05	95.76	100.00

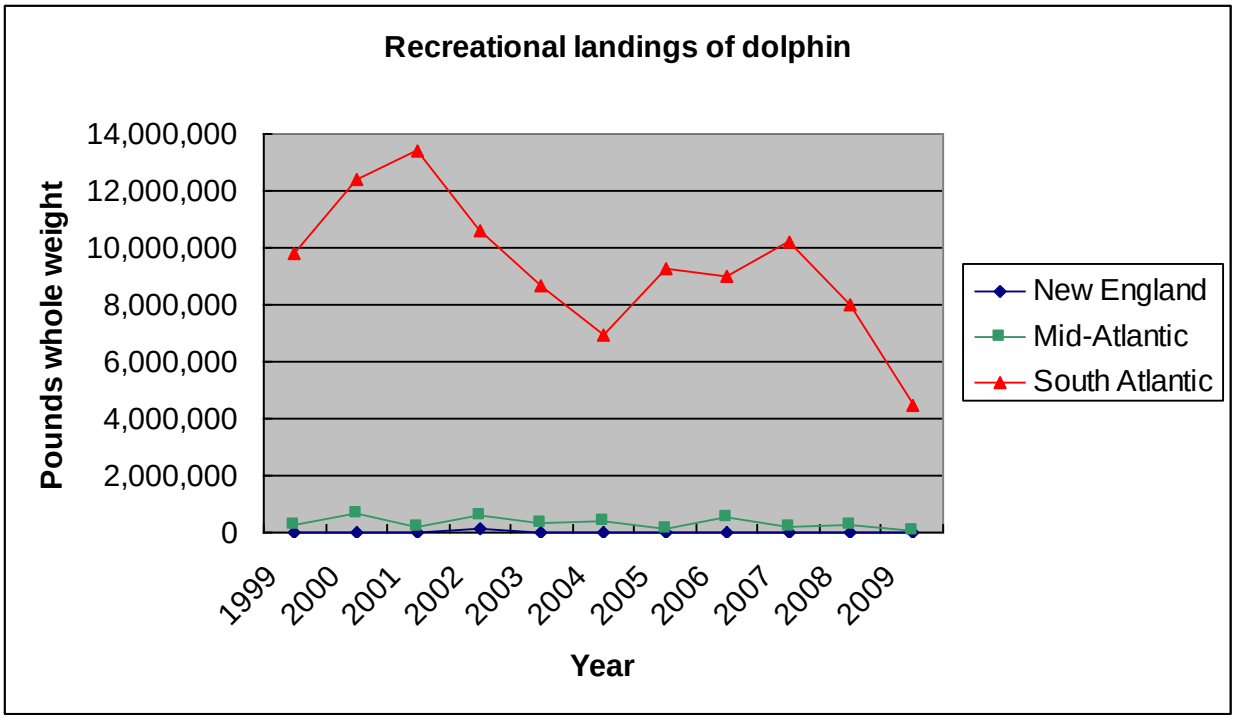
Source: MRFSS and NMFS Headboat Survey. Data for 2009 are incomplete. *Headboat data are from South Atlantic only.



Source: Commercial dolphin 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 dolphin by region, 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.

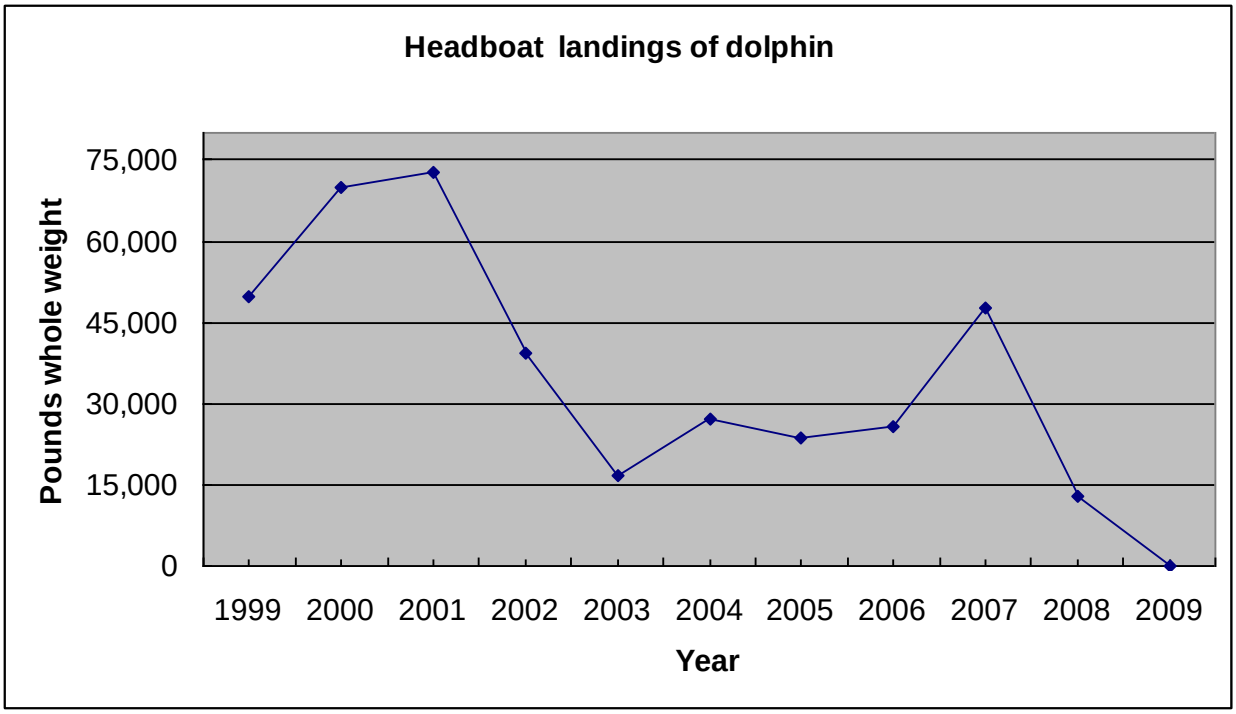
Note: 20" FL minimum size limit off FL and GA, and a 1.5 million lb (or 13% of the total harvest) cap on commercial landings was implemented in 2004. No changes have occurred in the Dolphin-Wahoo FMP since 2004. Snapper-Grouper Amendment 13C went into effect in October, 2006, Amendment 14 in February, 2009, and Amendment 16 in July, 2009.



Source: MRFSS web site.

Figure 2. Annual recreational landings (lbs whole weight) of dolphin by region, 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.

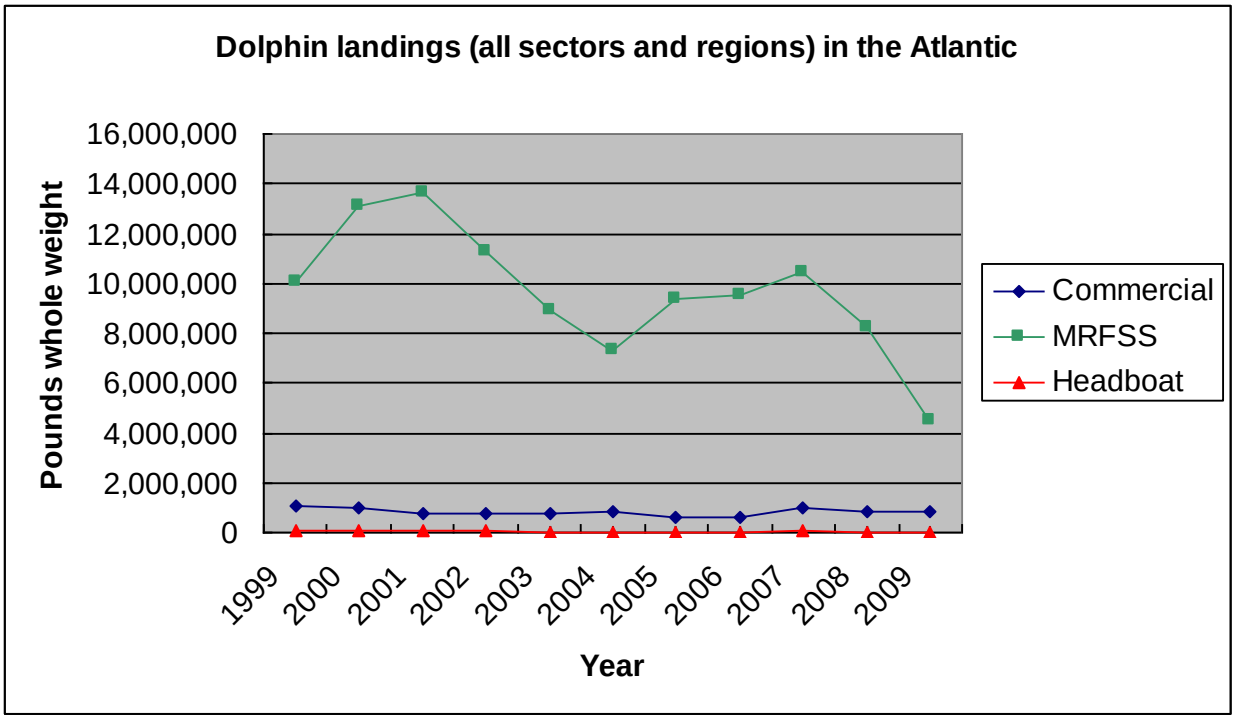
Note: 20" FL minimum size limit off FL and GA, a recreational bag limit of 10 dolphin per person per day, and 60 dolphin per boat per day (headboats excluded from the boat limit), was implemented in 2004. No changes have occurred in the Dolphin-Wahoo FMP since 2004. Snapper-Grouper Amendment 13C went into effect in October, 2006.



Source: NMFS Heaboat Survey.

Figure 3. Annual headboat landings (lbs whole weight) of dolphin 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. Data for 2009 are incomplete.

Note: 20" FL minimum size limit off FL and GA, a recreational bag limit of 10 dolphin per person per day, and 60 dolphin per boat per day (headboats excluded from the boat 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.



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 Beaufort Lab.

Figure 4. Annual commercial, MRFSS, and headboat landings (lbs whole weight) of dolphin 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.

Summary of dolphin size data and reductions from changes to the minimum size limit

Table 4. Reduction in harvest achieved with change in minimum size limit. Does not consider release mortality but factors non-compliance. Data are for east FL to North Carolina. Based on data from 2004-2008.

	Estimated Harvest Reductions			
Sector	21 inch	22 inch	23 inch	24 inch
Headboat	8.8	17.8	24.8	32.1
Charter	6.4	13.3	24.3	30.4
Private	8.5	17.1	26.7	34.0
Comm	5.6	13.0	19.6	25.2

Table 5. Mean fork length (inches) for dolphin in the South Atlantic.

Year	HB	MRFSS charter	MRFSS private	comm
1986	23.63	26.10	26.00	28.97
1987	21.28	22.20	23.40	26.99
1988	23.21	24.20	24.20	23.02
1989	22.61	24.70	24.10	23.76
1990	24.12	23.90	25.10	24.23
1991	28.18	23.00	26.20	28.24
1992	29.14	23.80	24.20	31.53
1993	24.07	23.80	24.30	27.96
1994	22.10	25.10	26.80	27.09
1995	25.87	26.80	29.50	31.75
1996	23.43	26.40	25.10	29.07
1997	24.42	29.70	27.60	27.98
1998	24.41	27.10	25.50	27.23
1999	24.55	27.80	26.30	28.97
2000	22.51	28.10	25.90	28.05
2001	22.24	27.60	30.60	28.28
2002	23.71	28.70	28.10	29.40
2003	24.19	29.30	27.90	28.47
2004	24.48	28.00	26.40	29.29
2005	28.59	28.50	28.10	28.56
2006	24.80	29.40	26.90	31.61
2007	26.54	30.00	29.20	33.83
2008	26.05	28.10	25.50	28.86

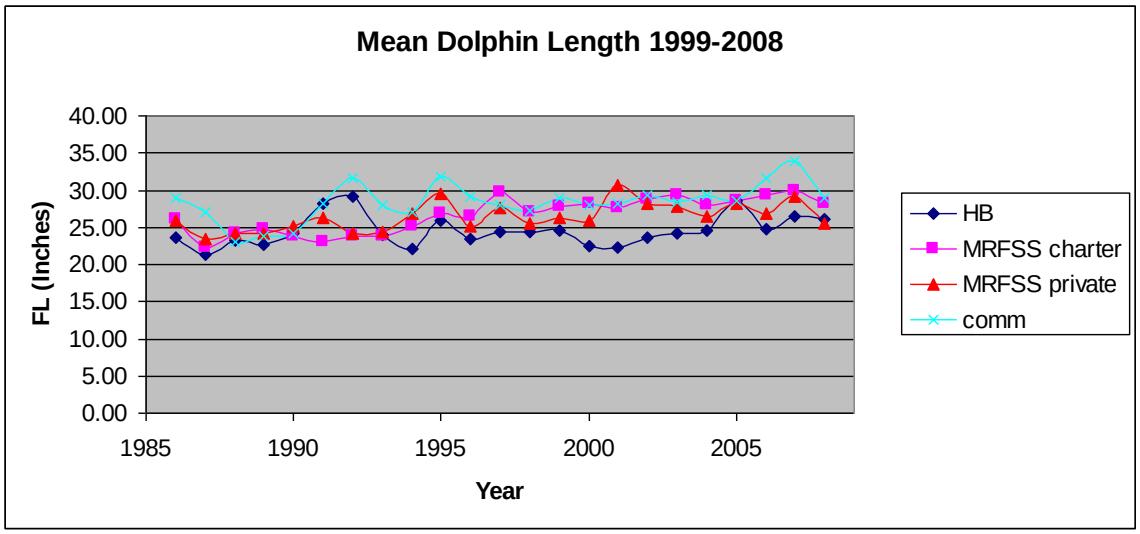


Figure 5. Mean FL of dolphin from east FL to NC during 1999-2008.

Table 6. Mean fork length (inches) by state during 1999-2008.

state	HB*	Charter	Private	Comm
FL	23.37	25.60	25.70	28.24
GA	28.20	30.80	24.50	28.92
SC	27.43	33.00	34.50	33.71
NC	24.06	28.90	28.90	27.87

*GA data are confidential for HB. GA are expressed as GA and North Florida for headboat.