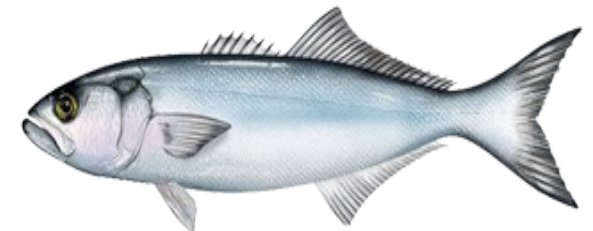
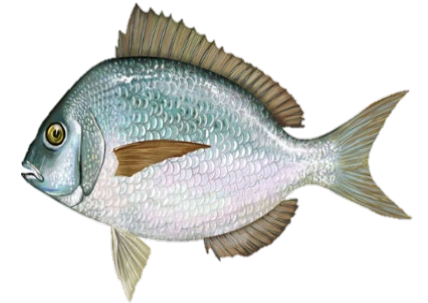




Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish

# Recreational Reform Initiative

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
March 3, 2025





## Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

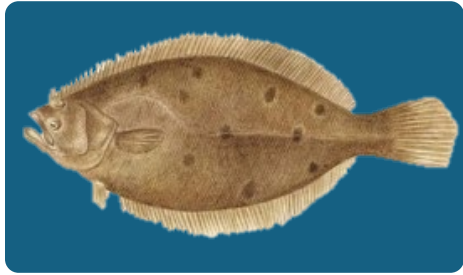
Federal waters measures



## Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

State waters measures

Work together to develop most aspects of the Fishery Management Plans



10.6 mil  
trips

22.9 mil  
fish caught



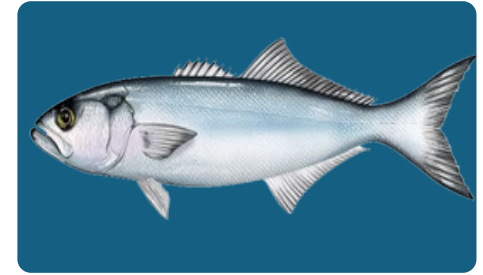
2.9 mil  
trips

27.0 mil  
fish caught



2.7 mil  
trips

40.2 mil  
fish caught



7.1 mil  
trips

22.7 mil  
fish caught

Stock status	Summer Flounder	Scup	Black Sea Bass	Bluefish
Overfished?	Not overfished	Not overfished	Not overfished	Not overfished
$B/B_{MSY}$	83%	246%	219%	60%
Overfishing?	Overfishing occurring	Overfishing not occurring	Overfishing not occurring	Overfishing not occurring
$F/F_{MSY}$	103%	52%	77%	64%
Under rebuilding plan?	No	No	No	Yes

# Challenges leading to Recreational Reform Initiative

---

Widespread angler dissatisfaction with some recreational management measures.

---

Stakeholder perceptions that measures are not reflective of stock status.

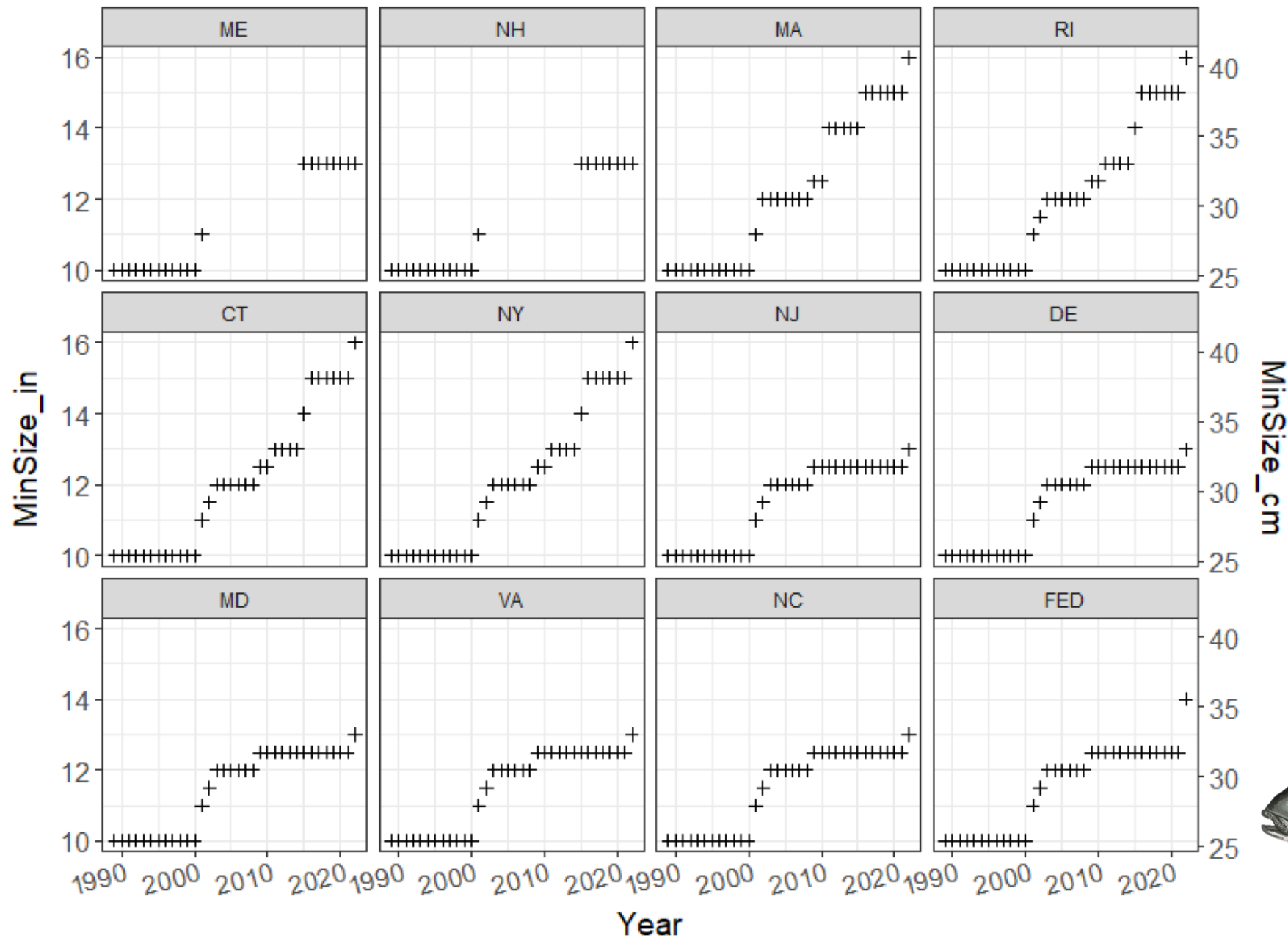
---

Concerns about how MRIP data are used when setting measures.

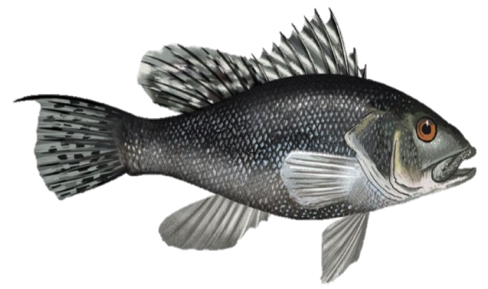
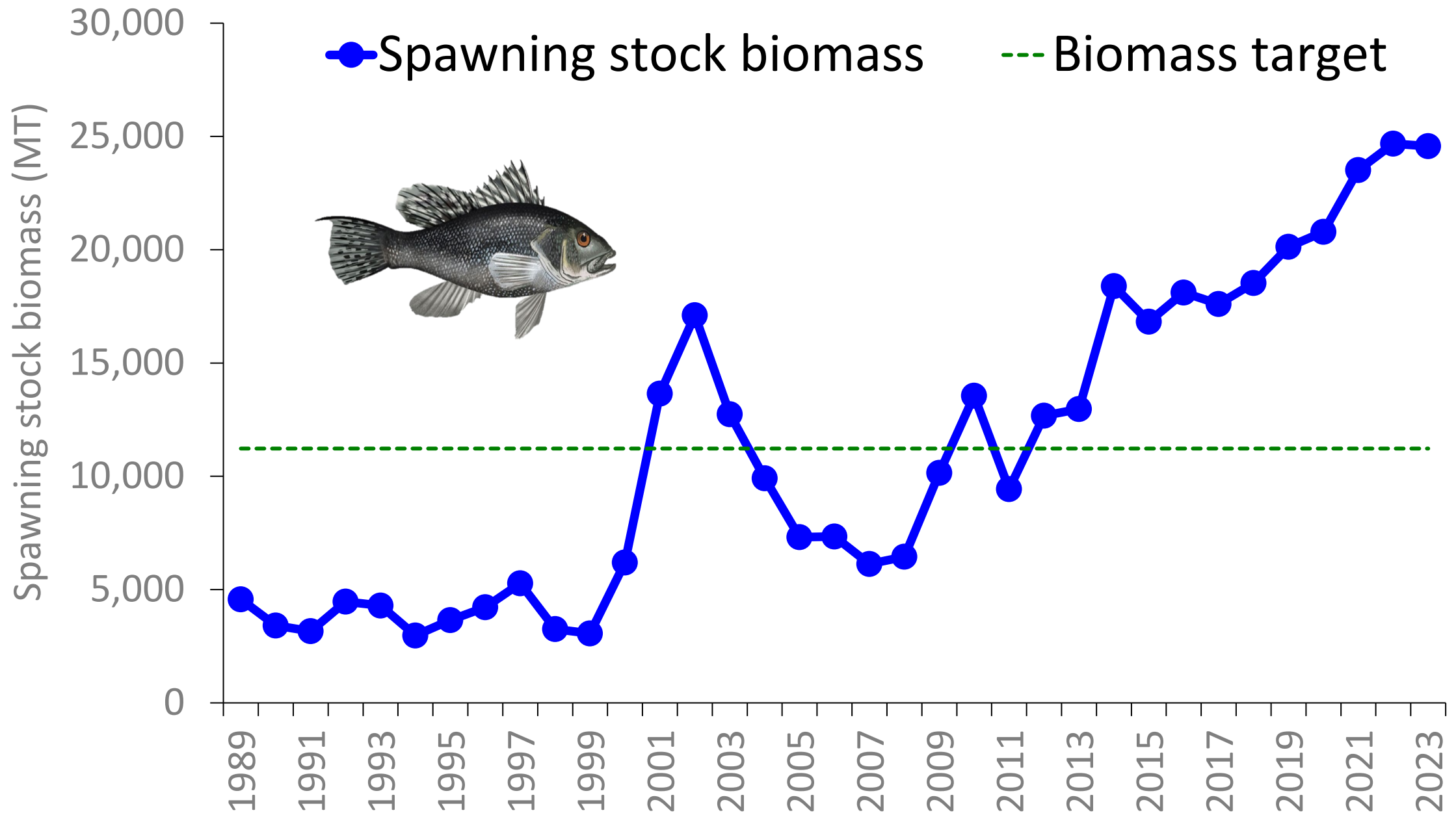
# Prior to 2023

- Measures set to achieve, but not exceed the rec. harvest limit (RHL).
- Set for one year at a time.
- Measures could change frequently.
- Direction of change often perceived as contrary to stock status.
- Methods relied on MRIP data and technical team expert judgement.





Source: Truesdell, S. and K. Curti. 2023. Black Sea Bass Recreational Catch. Working paper for 2023 Black Sea Bass Research Track Stock Assessment.





# Goals of Recreational Reform Initiative

---

Provide **stability** in recreational bag, size, and season limits.

---

Develop strategies to increase management **flexibility**.

---

Achieve **accessibility** aligned with availability and stock status.

# Recreational Reform Initiative Components



# Percent Change Approach

**Future RHL vs estimated  
harvest**

# Percent Change Approach

Future RHL vs estimated  
harvest

RHL is **within** the range  
(harvest expected to be close to  
the RHL)

# Percent Change Approach

Future RHL vs estimated harvest
RHL is <b>above</b> the range (harvest expected to be lower than the RHL)
RHL is <b>within</b> the range (harvest expected to be close to the RHL)

# Percent Change Approach

Future RHL vs estimated harvest
RHL is <b>above</b> the range (harvest expected to be lower than the RHL)
RHL is <b>within</b> the range (harvest expected to be close to the RHL)
RHL is <b>below</b> the range (harvest expected to exceed the RHL)

# Percent Change Approach

Future RHL vs estimated harvest	Biomass vs target level (SSB/SSB <sub>MSY</sub> )
RHL is <b>above</b> the range (harvest expected to be lower than the RHL)	
RHL is <b>within</b> the range (harvest expected to be close to the RHL)	<b>Very high</b> (above 150%)
	<b>High</b> (100% - 150%)
	<b>Low</b> (below 100%)
RHL is <b>below</b> the range (harvest expected to exceed the RHL)	

# Percent Change Approach

Future RHL vs estimated harvest	Biomass vs target level (SSB/SSB <sub>MSY</sub> )
RHL is <b>above</b> the range (harvest expected to be lower than the RHL)	<b>Very high</b> (above 150%)
	<b>High</b> (100% - 150%)
	<b>Low</b> (below 100%)
RHL is <b>within</b> the range (harvest expected to be close to the RHL)	<b>Very high</b> (above 150%)
	<b>High</b> (100% - 150%)
	<b>Low</b> (below 100%)
RHL is <b>below</b> the range (harvest expected to exceed the RHL)	<b>Very high</b> (above 150%)
	<b>High</b> (100% - 150%)
	<b>Low</b> (below 100%)



# Percent Change Approach

Future RHL vs estimated harvest	Biomass vs target level (SSB/SSB <sub>MSY</sub> )	Required Change in Harvest
RHL is <b>above</b> the range (harvest expected to be lower than the RHL)	<b>Very high</b> (above 150%)	<b>Liberalization</b> % = difference between harvest estimate and RHL, <b>not to exceed 40%</b>
	<b>High</b> (100% - 150%)	<b>Liberalization</b> % = difference between harvest estimate and RHL, <b>not to exceed 20%</b>
	<b>Low</b> (below 100%)	<b>Liberalization: 10%</b>
RHL is <b>within</b> the range (harvest expected to be close to the RHL)	<b>Very high</b> (above 150%)	<b>Liberalization: 10%</b>
	<b>High</b> (100% - 150%)	<b>No liberalization or reduction: 0%</b>
	<b>Low</b> (below 100%)	<b>Reduction: 10%</b>
RHL is <b>below</b> the range (harvest expected to exceed the RHL)	<b>Very high</b> (above 150%)	<b>Reduction: 10%</b>
	<b>High</b> (100% - 150%)	<b>Reduction</b> % = difference between harvest estimate and RHL, <b>not to exceed 20%</b>
	<b>Low</b> (below 100%)	<b>Reduction</b> % = difference between harvest estimate and RHL, <b>not to exceed 40%</b>

- Bag/size/season limits set for 2 years at a time.
- Timing aligned with stock assessment updates.



# Recreation Demand Model

## Inputs

- MRIP data
- Availability of different sizes of fish
- Angler preference data

## Outputs

- Harvest
- Discards
- Angler welfare
- Number of trips
- Measures of uncertainty





- None of the Recreational Reform Initiative actions change rebuilding requirements.
- Rebuilding plans are required for overfished stocks.

# Criticisms and Legal Challenge

## Commercial fishery concerns

- Allows rec. fishery to exceed their allocation.
- May indirectly reduce the commercial quota.
- May result in overfishing.



## NRDC v. Raimondo lawsuit

- Argued that Percent Change Approach violates annual catch limit (ACL) provisions of MSA.
- Court rejected claims, ruled in favor of NOAA Fisheries.
  - Strikes balance between preventing overfishing and achieving optimum yield.
  - Measures do not need to be exclusively tied to the RHL or ACL.
  - Incremental adjustments bring harvest close to RHL over time.
  - Not a reallocation because ACL overages still trigger accountability measures.

# Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda

- Considers the process for setting rec. measures for 2026 and beyond.

## Alternatives under consideration:

- Maintain current Percent Change Approach.
- Improve upon the Percent Change Approach.
- Return to previous process of setting measures to achieve the RHL.
- Biomass and Fishing Mortality Matrix.



# Rec. Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment



## **Sector Separation**

Managing for-hire rec. fisheries separately from other rec. fishing modes



## **Data Collection**

Collection and use of rec. data, such as private angler reporting and enhanced for-hire vessel trip reporting requirements

# Questions/Discussion



Julia Beaty

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

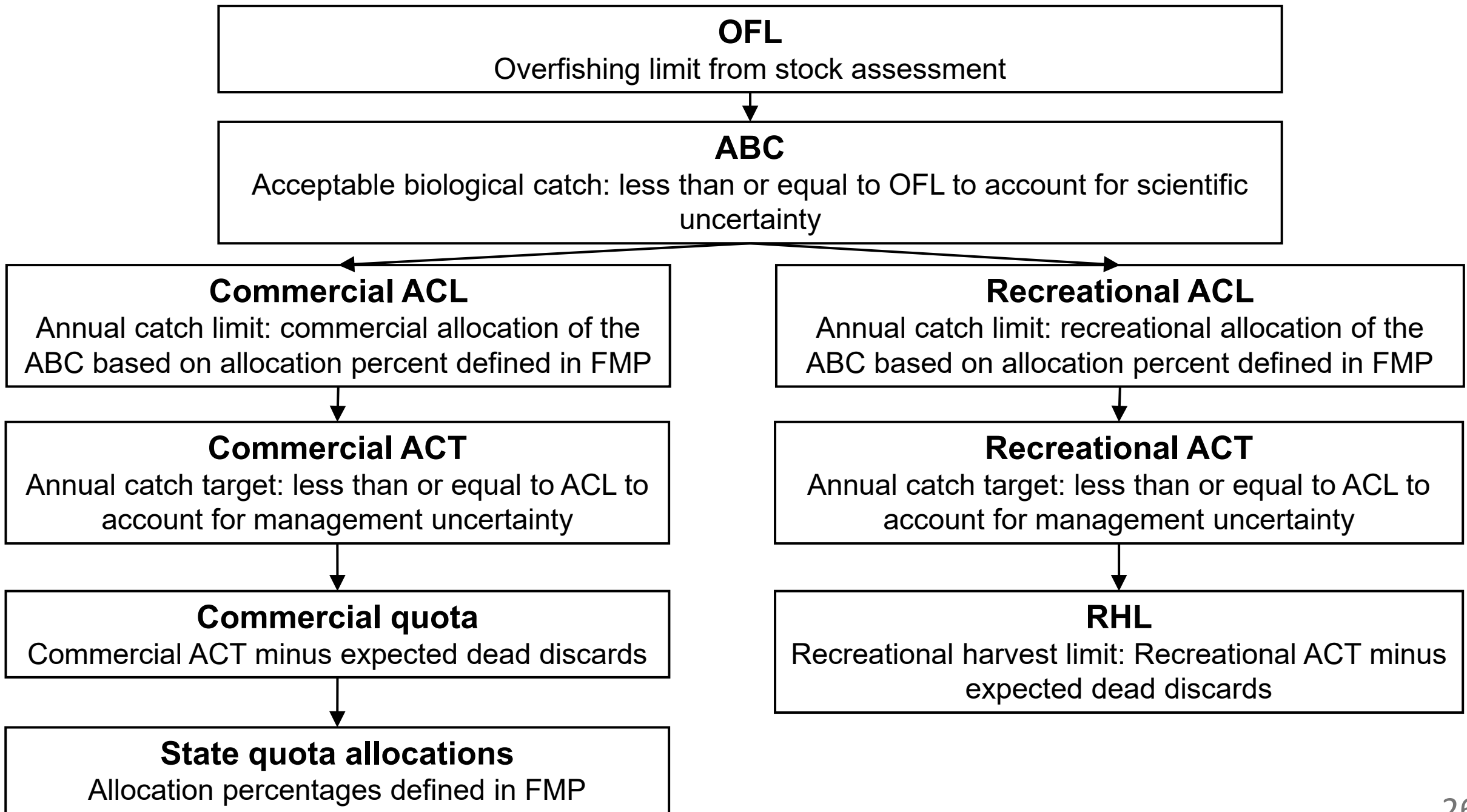
[jbeaty@mafmc.org](mailto:jbeaty@mafmc.org), 302-526-5250

<https://www.mafmc.org/actions/recreational-reform-initiative>



# Extra Slides

---



# Current Accountability Measures

Biomass Level	AM Response
Overfished, under rebuilding plan, or unknown stock status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Payback exact overage amount</b></li> </ul>
At least 50% of the target, but less than 100%, and not in a rebuilding plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If only ACL exceeded: <b>Adjust rec. measures</b></li> <li>• If <math>F &gt; F_{MSY}</math>: <b>Scaled payback</b>            Payback amount = (overage amount) * <math>(B_{MSY} - B) / \frac{1}{2} B_{MSY}</math></li> </ul>
Above the biomass target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Adjustments to rec. measures will be made</b></li> </ul>

# Potential Revisions to Accountability Measures

Biomass Level	AM Response
Overfished, under rebuilding plan, or unknown stock status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Payback exact overage amount</li> </ul>
At least 50% of the target, but less than <b>90%</b> <del>100%</del> , and not in a rebuilding plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If only ACL exceeded: <del>Adjust rec. measures</del> <b>No AM response needed</b></li> <li>• If <math>F &gt; F_{MSY}</math>: Scaled payback Payback amount = (overage amount) * <math>(B_{MSY} - B) / \frac{1}{2} B_{MSY}</math></li> </ul>
<del>Above</del> <b>At least 90%</b> of the biomass target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>Adjustments to rec. measures will be made</del></li> <li>• <b>If only ACL exceeded: No AM response needed</b></li> <li>• <b>If <math>F &gt; F_{MSY}</math>: Adjustments to measures may be made. If liberalization allowed, the scale of the liberalization may be reduced to account for the AM.</b></li> </ul>



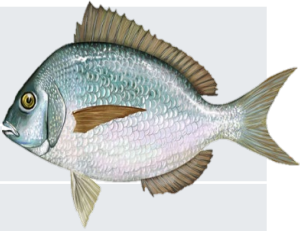
State	Min size (in)	Bag limit	Season
MA	17.5	5 fish	5/24-9/23
MA Shore	16.5		
RI	19	6 fish	4/1-12/31
RI designated shore sites	19	4 fish <sup>a</sup>	
		17	
CT	19	3 fish	5/4-8/1
	19.5		8/2-10/15
CT designated shore sites	17		5/4-10/15
NY	19	3 fish	5/4-8/1
	19.5		8/2-10/15
NJ	18	3 fish	5/4-9/25
NJ designated shore site	16	2 fish	
NJ Delaware Bay	17	3 fish	
DE, MD	16	4 fish	1/1-5/31
PRFC, VA	17.5	4 fish	6/1-12/31
NC	Closed <sup>b</sup>		

<sup>a</sup> Combined possession limit of 6 fish, no more than 2 fish at 17-inch minimum size limit.

<sup>b</sup> Closed due to restrictions necessary for southern flounder.



State	Size Limit	Bag Limit	Open Season
ME	13"	10 fish	May 19-Sept 21; Oct 18-Dec 31
NH	16.5"	4 fish	Jan-Dec 31
MA	16.5"	4 fish	May 18-Sept 3
RI private & shore	16.5"	2 fish	May 22-Aug 26
		3 fish	Aug 27-Dec 31
RI for-hire	16"	2 fish	Jun 18-Aug 31
		6 fish	Sept 1-Dec 31
CT private & shore	16"	5 fish	May 18-June 28; Jul 8-Nov 28
CT for-hire		5 fish	May 18 – Aug 31
		7 fish	Sept 1-Dec 31
NY	16.5"	3 fish	Jun 23-Aug 31
		6 fish	Sept 1-Dec 31
NJ	12.5"	10 fish	May 17-Jun 19
		1 fish	Jul 1-Aug 31
		10 fish	Oct 1- 31
		15 fish	Nov 1-Dec 31
DE, MD, NC north of Hatteras	13"	15 fish	May 15-Sept 30; Oct 10-Dec 31
Virginia	13"	15 fish	Feb 1-29, May 15-Jul 15, Aug 4-Dec 31



State/ Mode	Size Limit	Possession Limit	Open Season
MA Shore	9.5"	30 fish	May 1 – Dec 31
MA Private	11"		
MA For-Hire	11"	40 fish	May 1 – Jun 30
		30 fish	Jul 1 – Dec 31
RI Shore	9.5"	30 fish	May 1 – Dec 31
RI Private	11"		
RI For-Hire	11"	30 fish	May 1 – Aug 31
		40 fish	Sept 1 – Oct 31
		30 fish	Nov 1 – Oct31
CT Shore	9.5"	30 fish	May 1 – Dec 31
CT Private	11"		
CT For-Hire	11"	30 fish	May 1 – Aug 31
		40 fish	Sept 1 – Oct 31
		30 fish	Nov 1 – Dec 31
NY Shore	9.5"	30 fish	May 1 – Dec 31
NY Private	11"		
NY For-Hire	11"	30 fish	May 1 – Aug 31
		40 fish	Sept 1 – Oct 31
		30 fish	Nov 1 – Dec 31
NJ	10"	30 fish	Jan 1-June30; Sept 1-Dec 31
DE, MD, VA, NC north of Hatteras	9"	30 fish	Jan 1 – Dec 31

State	Bag Limit	Season	Size Limit
ME	3 fish	All year	None
NH	Private/Shore 3 fish For-hire 5 fish	Jan 1 - Sept 30	None
MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, DE, PRFC, VA, NC, SC	Private/Shore 3 fish For-hire 5 fish	All year	None
MD	Private/Shore 3 fish For-hire 5 fish	All year	8"
GA	15 fish	Jan 1 - Feb 29; May 1 - Dec 31	12"
FL	3 fish	All year	12"

