



**NOAA
FISHERIES**

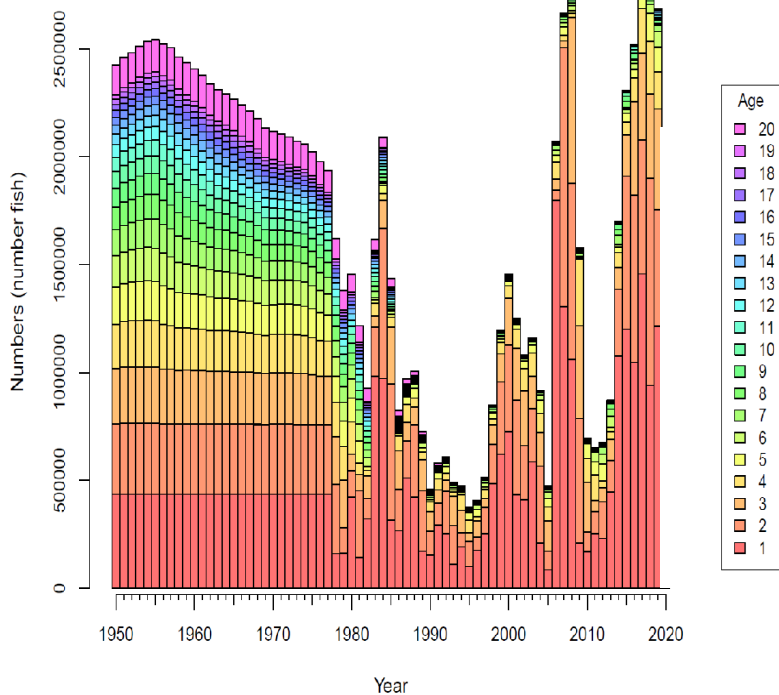
SERO

South Atlantic Red Snapper

Snapper-Grouper Committee
September 13, 2022

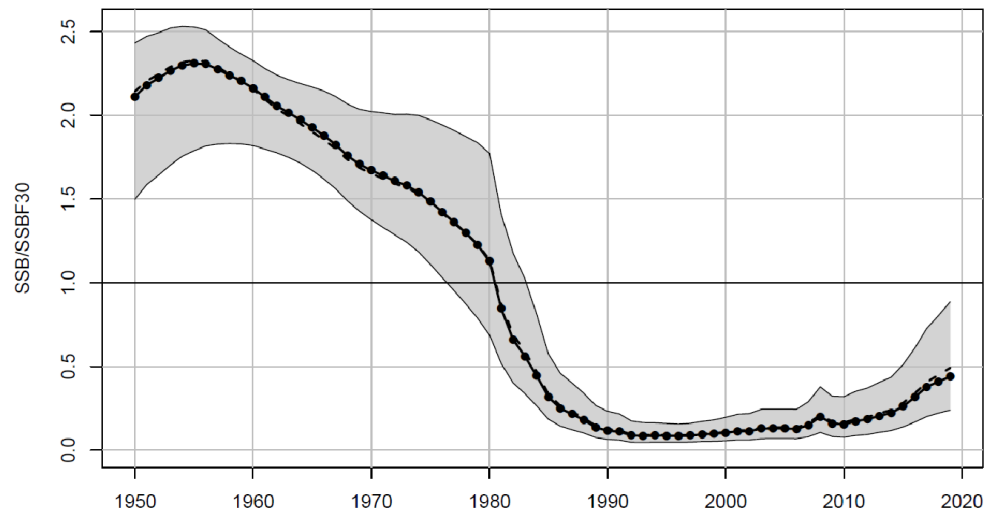
Andy Strelcheck
Regional Administrator
NOAA Fisheries SERO

Success: Stock is Rebuilding

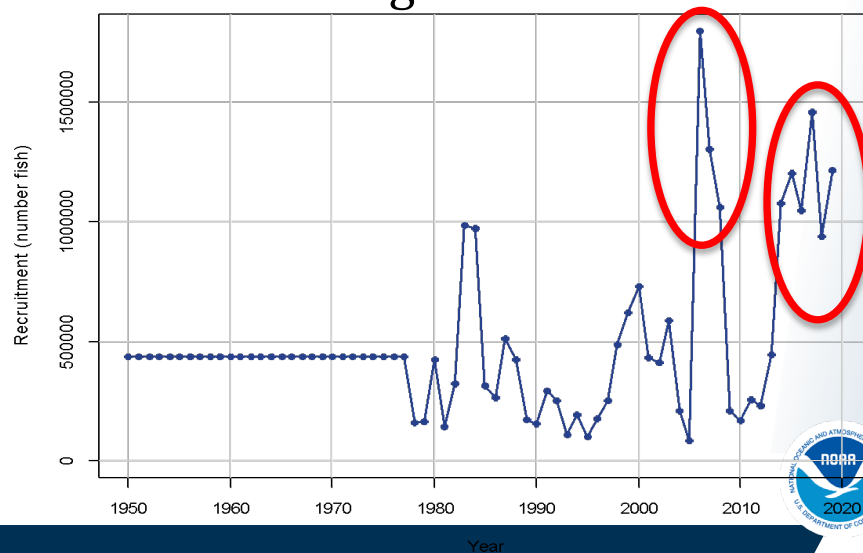


Abundance (numbers of fish)
at high levels, but driven by
age-1 recruitment

Spawning Stock Biomass
(fecundity) below rebuilt level



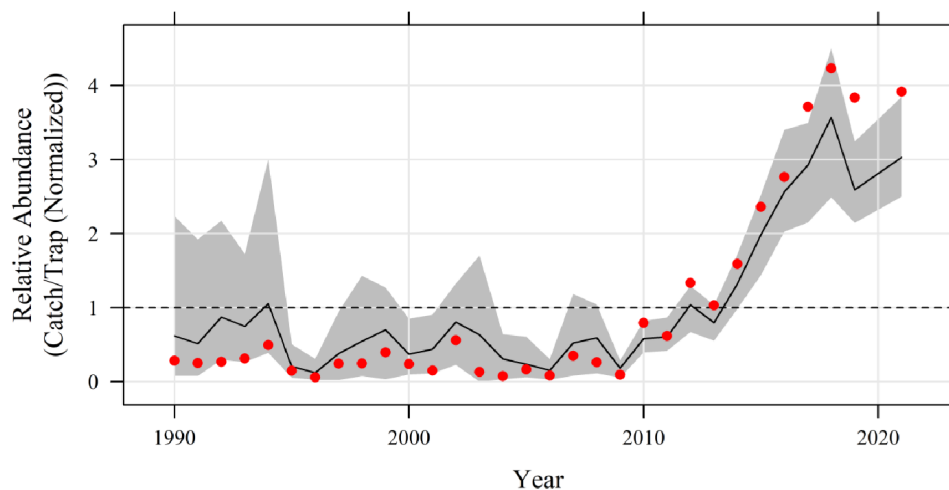
Recent High Recruitment



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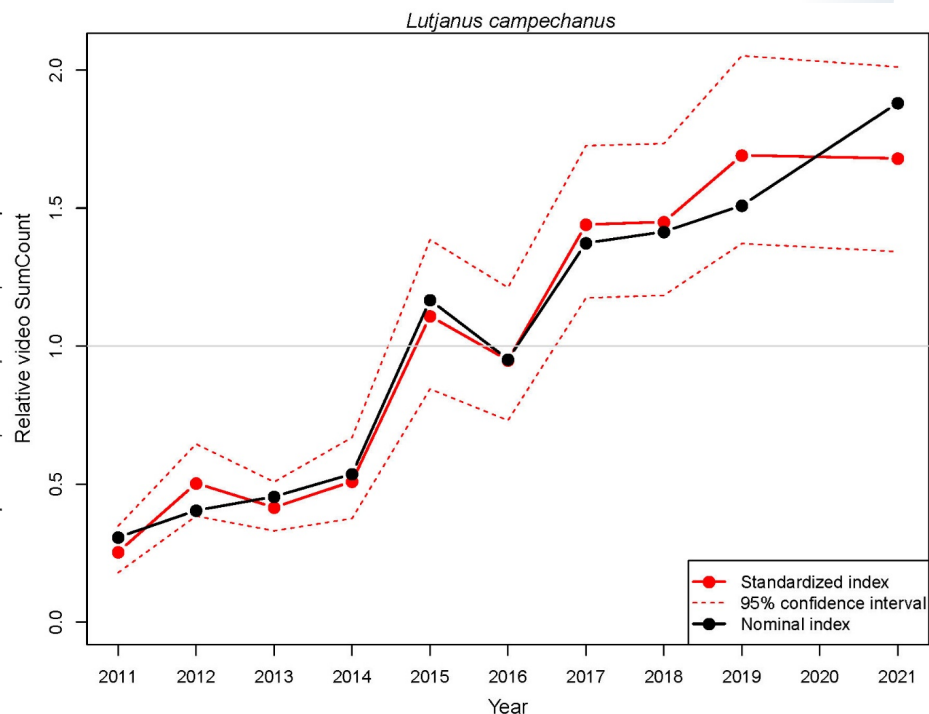
Good News: Indices Are Increasing

Fishery-independent Trap Survey



Nominal (red dot) and standardized (black line)

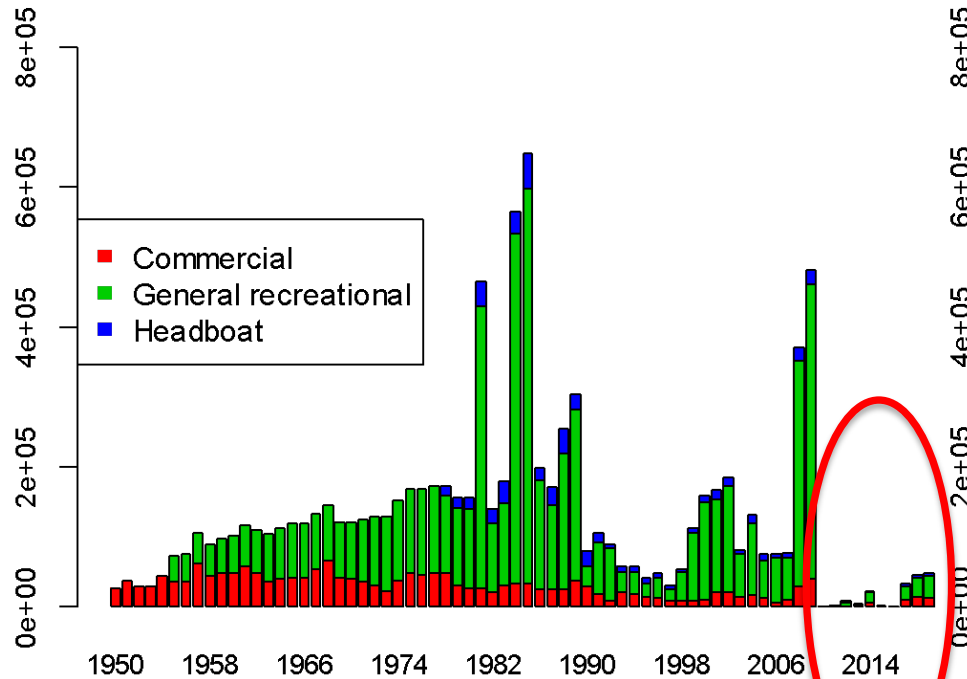
Fishery-independent Video Survey



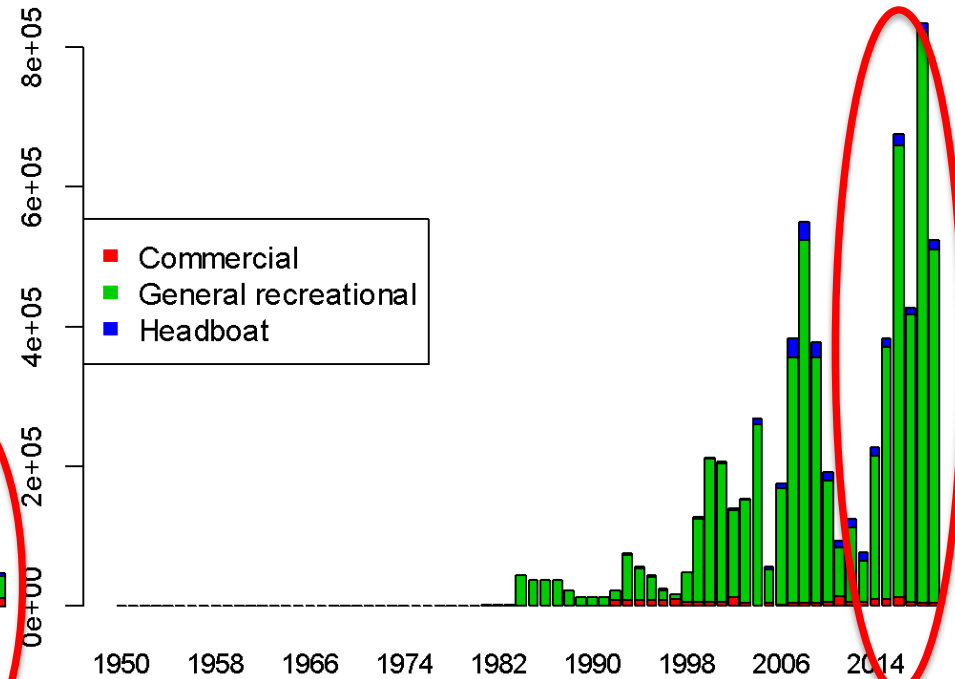
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Challenge: Low Landings and High Discards

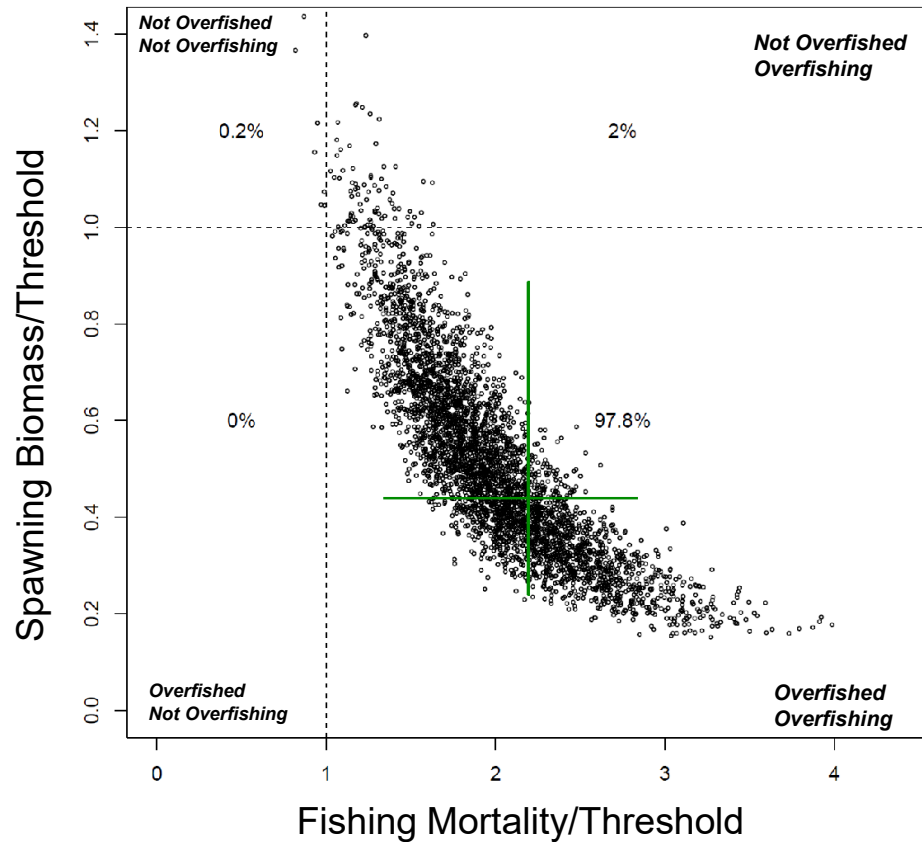
Landings in numbers (fish)



Dead discards in numbers (fish)



And there is Scientific Uncertainty



Model Uncertainty

Data Uncertainty:

- Commercial Discards
- Recreational Discards

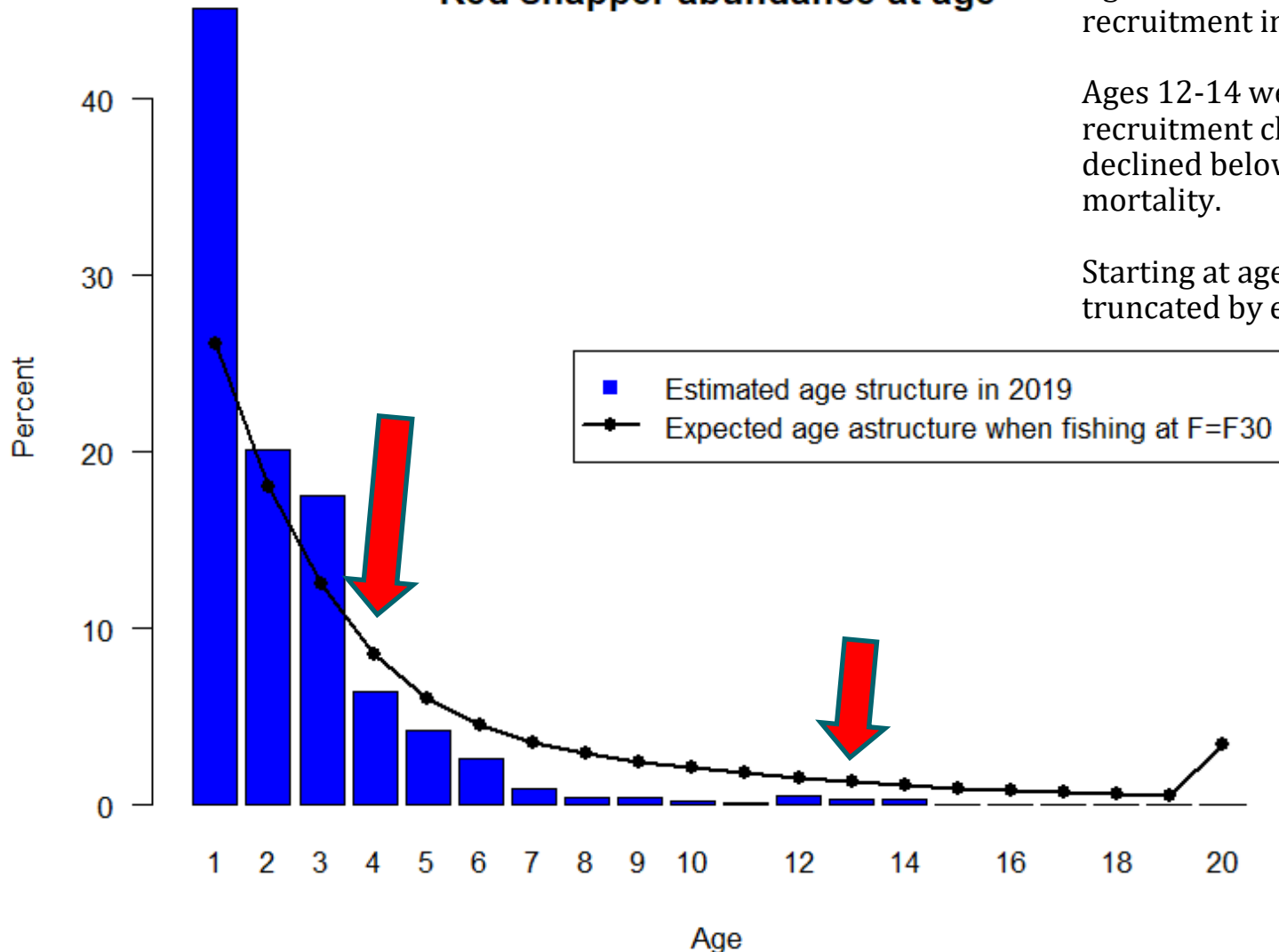
Population Dynamic Uncertainty:

- Sources of Recruitment
- Environmental Changes

14 other sensitivity runs – all concluded stock was overfished; 1 hypothetical run with low discards indicated overfishing was not occurring

So How Can the Stock be Undergoing Overfishing?

Red snapper abundance at age



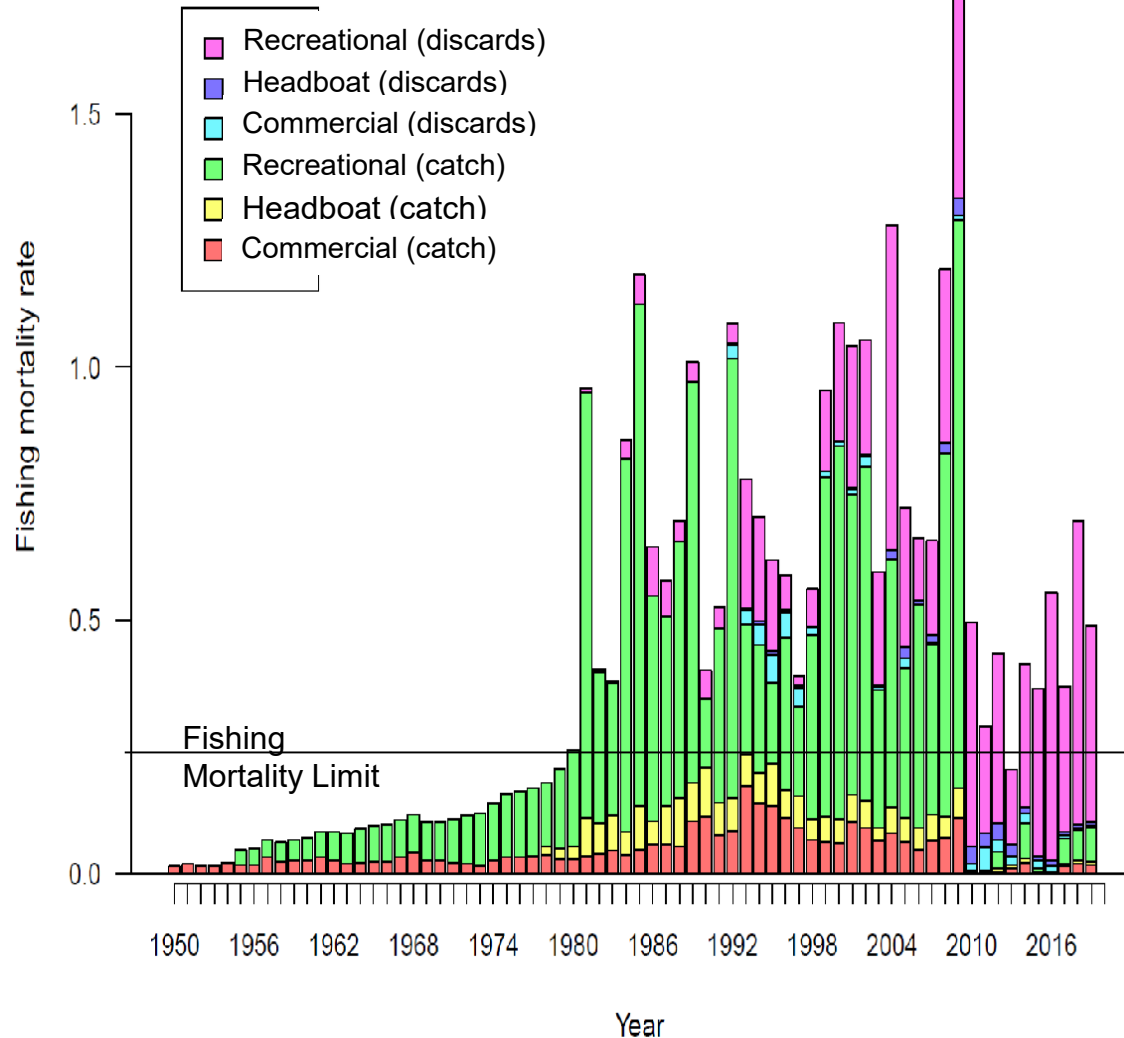
Ages 1-3 indicate above target recruitment in 2016-2018.

Ages 12-14 were above average recruitment classes and have since declined below target due to high mortality.

Starting at age 4, age structure becomes truncated by excessive mortality.

Fishing Mortality Rate Has Declined But Remains Above Limit

Majority of mortality from recreational discards



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Legal requirements and NS guidance

- Implement regulations to end overfishing immediately and rebuild the stock
- Evaluate the cause of overfishing and address the issue that caused the overfishing
- Set catch limits at a level that prevents overfishing and does not exceed the SSC's ABC
- Minimize bycatch and bycatch mortality to the extent practicable



Moving forward

Will preferred approach achieve management goals and legal requirements?

- Reducing the ABC will mean a shorter commercial and recreational seasons
- Gear modifications will reduce discards and discard mortality, but by themselves, likely won't be sufficient
- We need to explore new approaches to reduce discards and increase opportunities in the fishery as the stock rebuilds



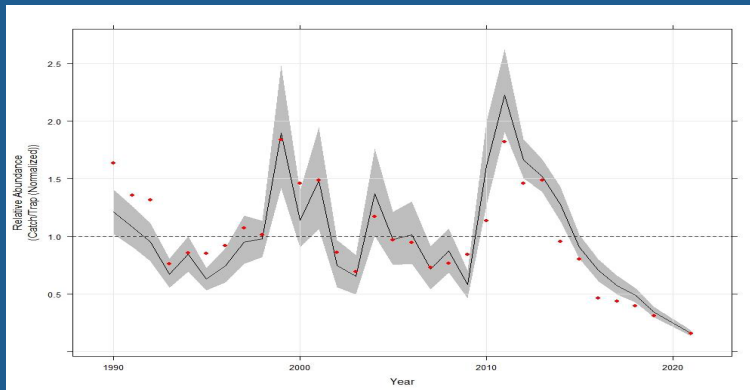
And We Should Keep in Mind that this is Bigger than Red Snapper

- Multi-species snapper grouper fishery
- High levels of fishing effort; overcapitalization
- Modern electronics
- Open access sectors

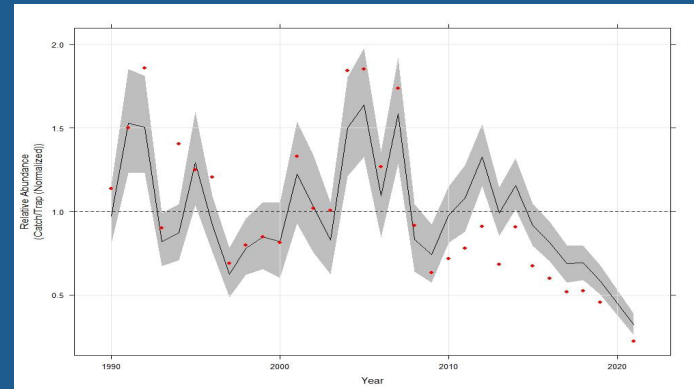


Abundance is declining for many other Snapper-Grouper species

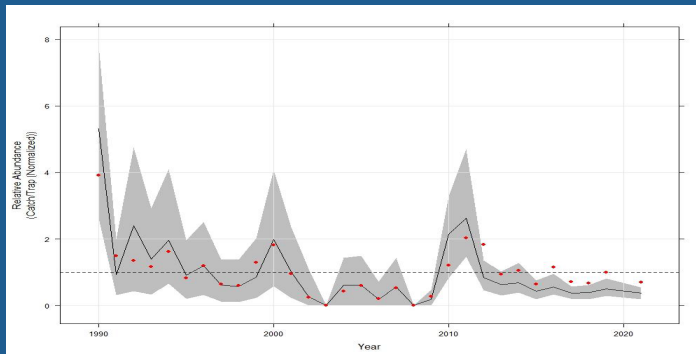
black sea bass



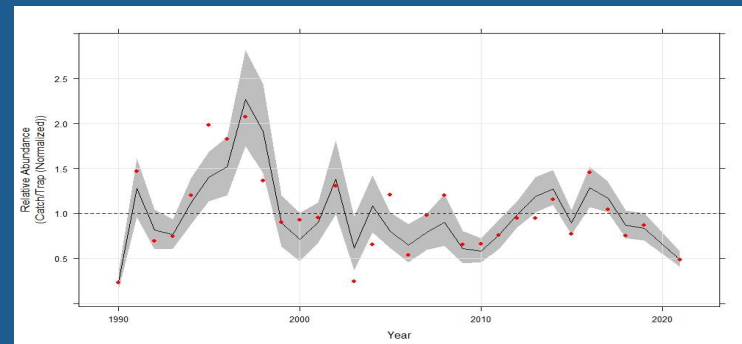
red porgy



gag



gray triggerfish



Southeast Reef Fish Survey

Options Going Forward: Snapper-Grouper

- Limit Catch – Adjust Catch Levels
- Technological Solutions to Reduce Encounters and Discard Mortality
- Limit Effort
- Limit Where/When Fishing Occurs
- A combination of all of these



Options Going Forward: Red Snapper

Short-term

- Close fishery to address overfishing
- Complete Reg Amendment 35 quickly

Mid-term

- Implement further actions to reduce discards
- Pilot studies/exempted fishing permits

Longer-term

- SA Red Snapper Count results + next assessment
- New science: Expanded observer coverage + FWC effort count
- Management Strategy Evaluation results





Thank you

