



Summer Flounder



2017 Recreational Measures

December 14, 2016

Baltimore, MD

2017 Rec. Measures Process



Today's Objective



- Recommend 2017 recreational management strategy that will constrain landings to 3.77 million lb RHL
 - Coastwide measures OR conservation equivalency
 - If CE: Non-preferred coastwide and precautionary default measures

Conservation Equivalency vs. Coastwide Measures

- Annually in December, Council/Board choice between coastwide measures OR conservation equivalency
- Coastwide: identical measures in all states and federal waters
- Conservation equivalency: Board develops state- or region-specific measures through Commission process, following CE guidelines

Conservation Equivalency vs. Coastwide Measures

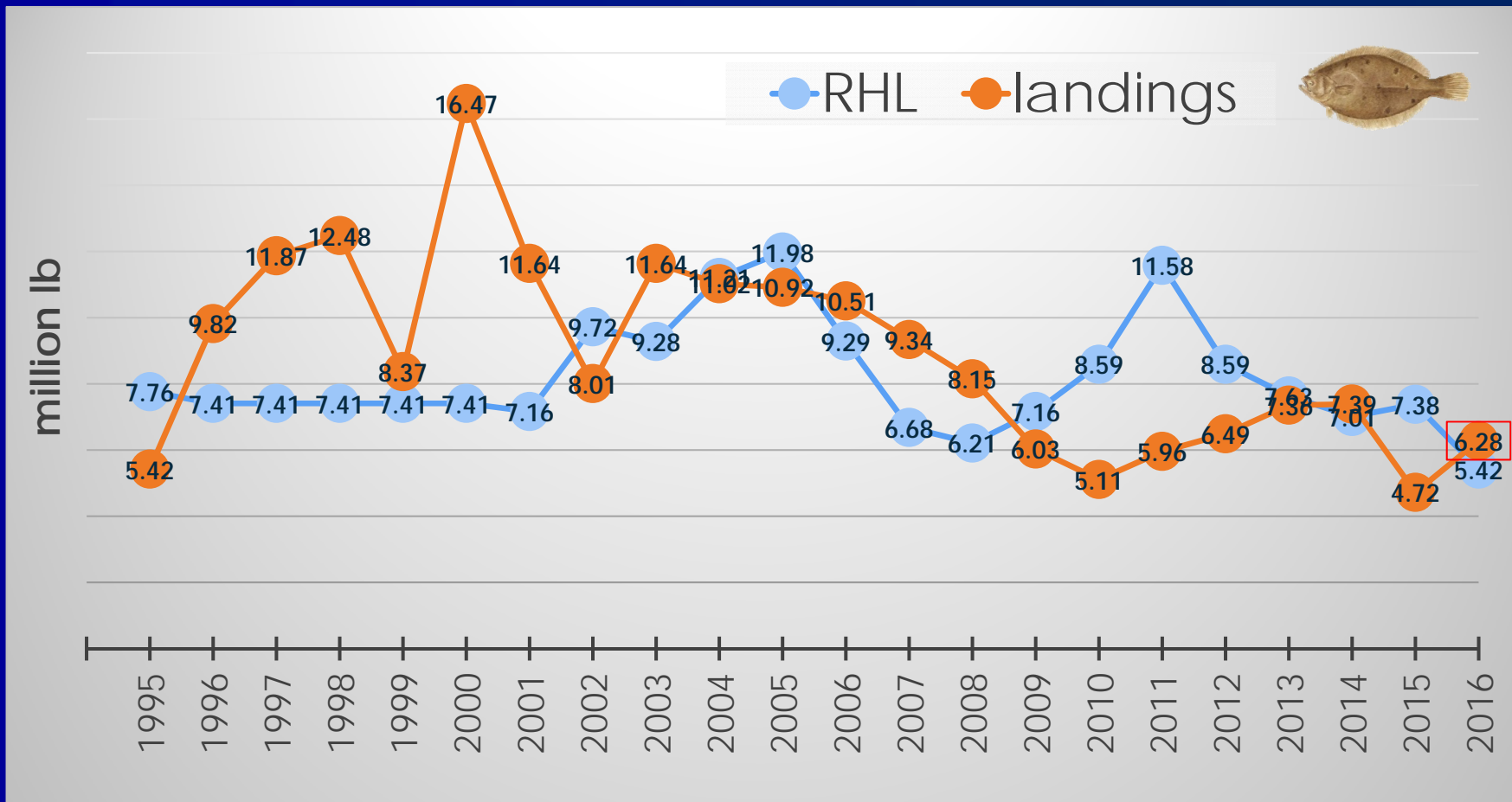
- With conservation equivalency, need approval of associated measures:
 - Non-preferred coastwide measures: “Baseline” measures; written into federal regulations but waived in favor of state regulations
 - Precautionary default measures: Deterrent measures: would be implemented ONLY in states that do not adhere to CE guidelines/take necessary reduction

2015 Fishery Performance



2015 RHL	7.38 mil lb
2015 Landings	4.72 mil lb
% Over/Under	-36%

Harvest Limits and Landings



(2016 landings projected using data through wave 4)

Accountability Measures



- Comparison of 3-year average rec. ACL with 3-year average rec. catch
- No AM triggered based on evaluation of 2013-2015

	2013	2014	2015	3-Year Average
Rec ACL	10.23	9.07	9.44	9.58
Total Rec Catch	9.06	9.45	6.11	8.21
% Over/Under	-11%	+4%	-35%	-14.3%

2016 Measures



- Regional Conservation Equivalency with...
- *Non-preferred coastwide measures*
 - 18-inch TL, 4 fish, May 1-Sept. 30
- *Precautionary default measures*
 - 20-inch TL, 2 fish, May 1-Sept. 30

2016 State Measures



State	Min. Size	Poss. Limit	Season
MA	16	5 fish	May 22-September 23
RI	18	8 fish	May 1-December 31
CT	18 16 (45 designated shore sites)	5 fish	May 17- September 21
NY	18	5 fish	May 17- September 21
NJ	18 16 (1 shore site) 17 (NJ DE Bay)	5 fish 2 fish 4 fish	May 21-September 25
DE	16	4 fish	January 1- December 31
MD	16	4 fish	January 1- December 31
PRFC	16	4 fish	January 1- December 31
VA	16	4 fish	January 1- December 31
NC	15	6 fish	January 1- December 31

2016 Harvest Projections



2016 RHL	5.42 mil lb
Landings through wave 4, 2016	5.69 mil lb
2016 Proj. Landings*	6.28 mil lb
2017 RHL	3.77 mil lb
2017 Coastwide reduction	40% (in lb)

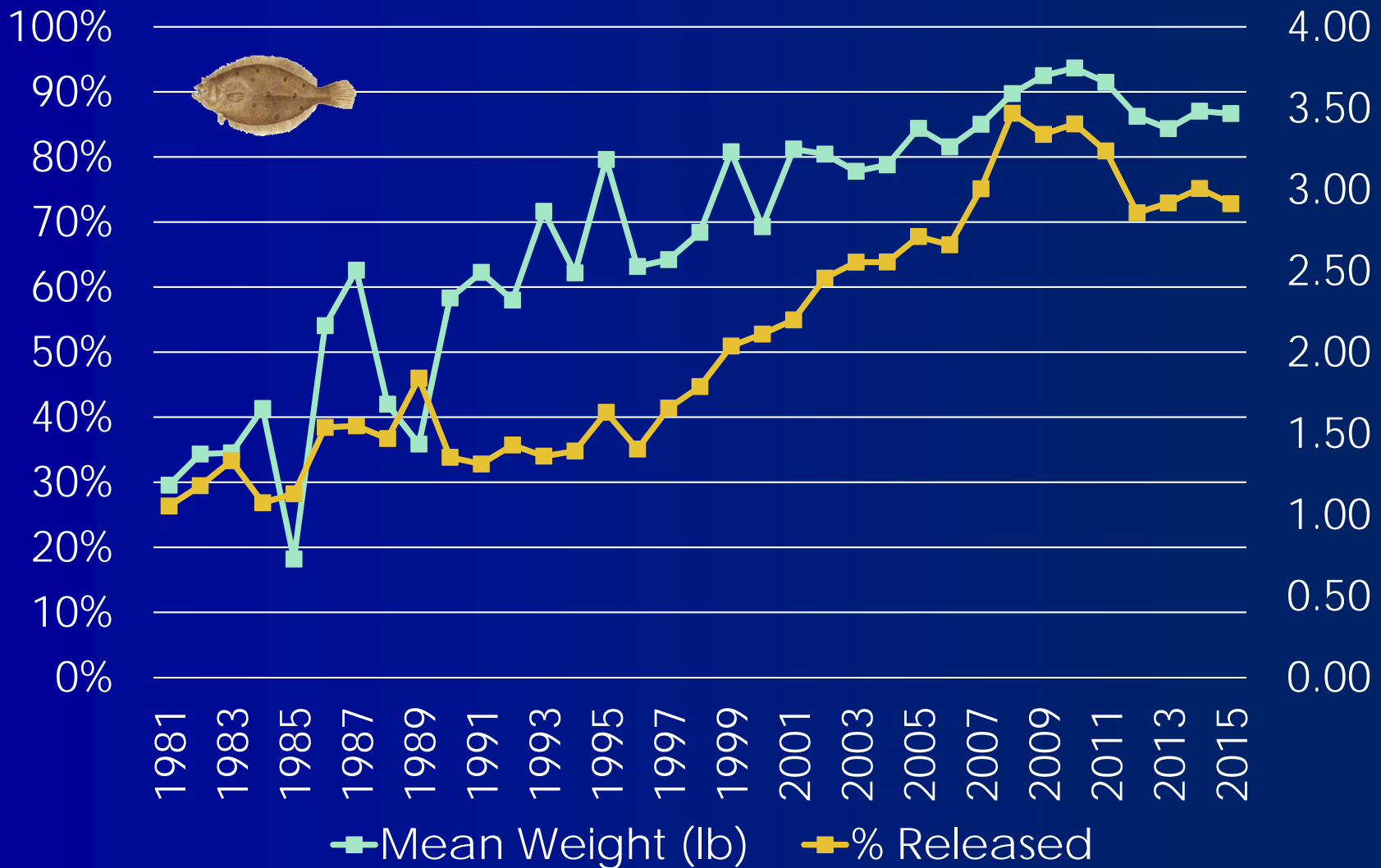
*Projected using % landings by wave in 2015

2016 Projected Landings by State

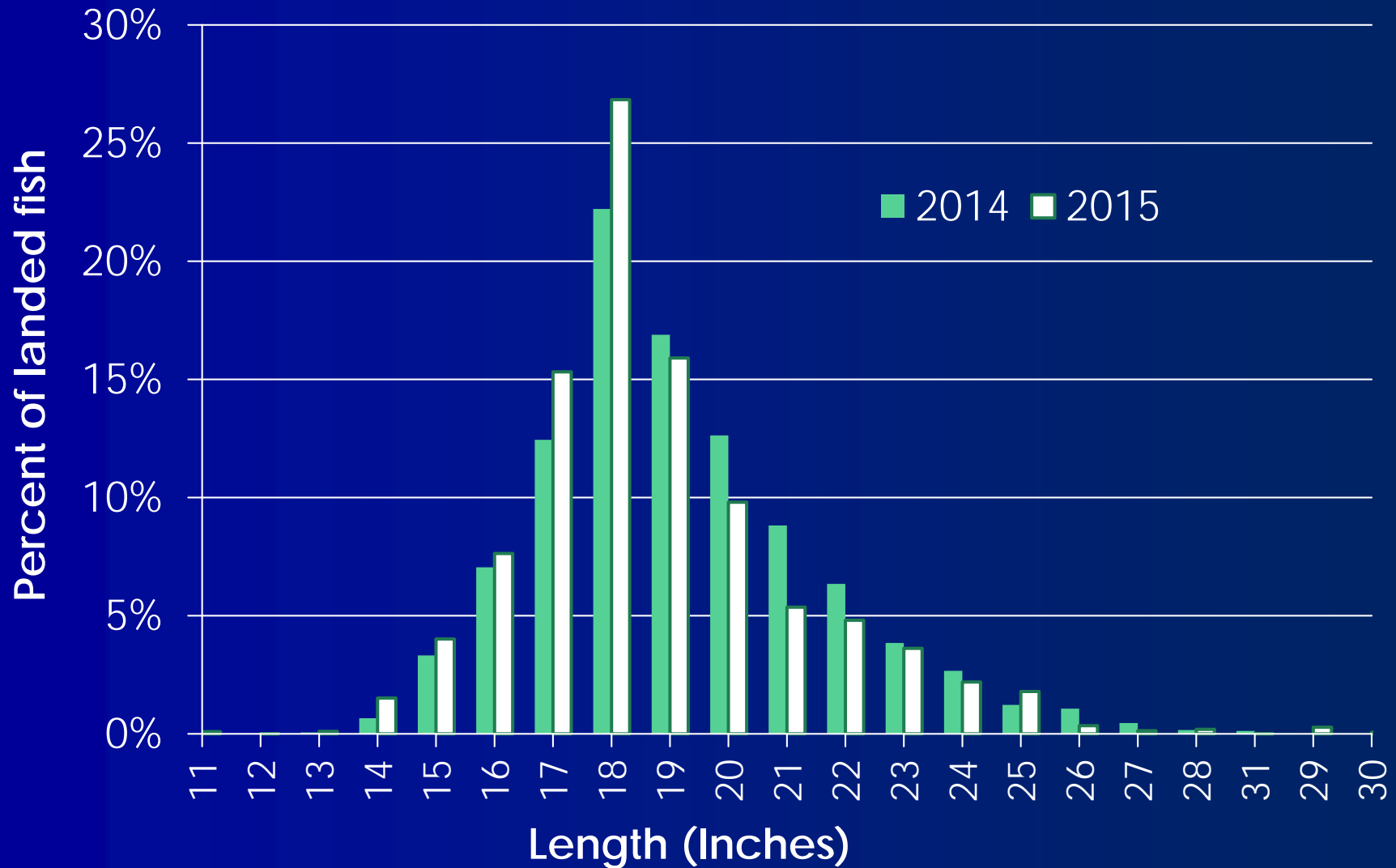
	Min. Size (in.)	Poss. Limit	Open Season	2016 Proj. Landings ('000 fish)
MA	16	5 fish	May 22-Sept. 23	64
RI	18	8 fish	May 1-Dec. 31	92
CT	18	5 fish	May 17- Sept. 21	239
	16 (45 designated shore sites)			
NY	18	5 fish	May 17- Sept. 21	796
NJ	18	5 fish	May 21-Sept. 25	656
	16 (1 shore site) 17 (NJ Del. Bay)	2 fish 4 fish		
DE	16	4 fish	Jan. 1- Dec. 31	96
MD	16	4 fish	Jan. 1- Dec.31	19
VA	16	4 fish	Jan. 1- Dec. 31	89
NC	15	6 fish	Jan. 1- Dec. 31	14

*Projected using % landings by wave in 2015

Mean Weight and Percent Released



Length Frequencies



Staff Recommendation Context

- Concern and frustration with high size limits, high discard rates, high pressure on large females
- Many requests for alternatives to single minimum size, in particular slot limits (single or split)

Staff Recommendation



- Under current FMP: cannot implement slot limits (maximum size) under coastwide measures
- GARFO could approve under conservation equivalency

Staff Recommendation



- Continue Regional Conservation Equivalency
- Pursue alternatives for split slot limits at state/regional level
 - e.g., 2 fish 14-18"; 1 fish above 18"
 - Additional analyses/options would be necessary to demonstrate that needed reduction would be achieved

Staff Recommendation

- For measures associated with conservation equivalency:
 - *Non-preferred coastwide measures*
 - 19-inches TL, 3 fish bag, June 1-September 15
 - *Precautionary default measures*
 - 21-inches TL, 2 fish bag, July 1-August 31

Monitoring Committee

- Agrees with staff recommendation for regional conservation equivalency
 - Board draft addendum with various 2017 CE options
- Given substantial (30%) coastwide RHL reduction, MC recommends that reduction burden be dispersed across regions (not necessarily equally)

Monitoring Committee

- Conservation equivalency associated measures:
 - *Non-preferred coastwide measures*
 - 19-inches TL, 3 fish bag, June 1-September 15 (same as staff rec)
 - *Precautionary default measures*
 - 20-inches TL, 2 fish bag, July 1-August 31 (modified staff rec)

Monitoring Committee

- Slot limits: MC has explored in past and will explore further; some reservations for 2017
- Previous analyses indicated an expected increase in landings under most slots
 - Would likely need small slot + restrictive bag and season
 - Given 40% reduction for 2017: difficult to develop palatable slot measures
 - Could revisit past analyses and explore with recent data

Monitoring Committee

- Additional concern with slot limits due to overfishing status
 - Expected to increase total number of removals → increases fishing mortality rate
 - Additional analysis needed to evaluate
- In 2017, staff will work with MC to revisit previous studies and update analyses

Advisory Panel Comments



- Several expressed concern with data used for management
 - MRIP (low precision/low sample size issues)
 - Trawl surveys
- 40% reduction in harvest would have devastating impacts on recreational businesses

Advisory Panel Comments



- Several argued that given skepticism regarding data, measures should remain status quo until new assessment is available
- One suggestion to use 2018 ABC instead of 2017

Advisory Panel Comments



- Mixed opinions on regional management
 - 2 recommended returning to state-by-state
 - 1 opposed including NJ in region with NY and CT
 - One advisor thanked Commission for developing separate NJ Delaware Bay measures

Advisory Panel Comments



- Several comments expressing concern regarding non-compliance/illegal harvest
 - Compliance will decline with more restrictive measures

Advisory Panel Comments



- Several favor exploring alternatives to min. size; other strategies to reduce discards.
Suggestions:
 - Slot limit (w/ 1 or more size limit slots)
 - Cumulative length limit
 - Bag limit only
 - Prohibition on all discards (w/ bag or cumulative length limit)
 - Gear requirements (barbless hooks, min. hook size, circle hooks)
 - Handling and release education

Email Comments



- Fluke fishing continues to be very poor in southern NJ; economic losses are apparent
 - “Clear state of decline”
- Concern about regional depletion; requests consideration of temporary commercial closures, esp. in peak spawning areas/times
 - One response: concern with this proposal, would just concentrate effort outside closed areas

Email Comments



- Several comments echoing concerns about MRIP reliability and quality of estimates
 - One request for mandatory smartphone reporting
 - Another suggested “temper MRIP results with Delphi technique survey of active fishermen”
- Mixed opinions on regional management
- Concern with increasing minimum size
- Support for slot limit from group of NY captains

Email Comments



- One suggestion for mid-week closures throughout peak season to allow longer season overall (e.g., close Wed.-Thurs. every week)
 - One response: would be confusing and potentially costly; should stay *status quo* until next assessment

Email Comments



- Additional comments regarding increasing non-compliance under more restrictive measures
- General frustration expressed regarding management consideration of and response to advisor comments

Council/Board Decision Points



- Joint action:
 - Conservation equivalency vs. coastwide measures
 - If coastwide: specific measures
 - If conservation equivalency: non-preferred coastwide and precautionary default measures
- Board action:
 - Approve draft Addendum XXVIII for public comment

Research Surveys Summary

- Nearly all ongoing surveys (expressed as aggregate N) have declined since their most recent peak (generally in 2009-2012) to 2015
- NEFSC Spring -5%; NEFSC Fall -41%
- MADMF Spring -70%; **MADMF Fall +31%**
- RIDFW Fall -33%; RIDFW Monthly -72%; URIGSO -58%
- CTDEEP Spring -57%; CTDEEP Fall -46%
- NYDEC -44%
- NJDFW -32%
- DEDFW -22%
- VIMS ChesMMAP -97%
- NEAMAP Spring -46%; NEAMAP Fall -69%
- Most of the YOY indices suggest 'good' recruitment in 2008-2009, with average to below average recruitment since then

SSC Remand Criteria

The Council may remand back to the Committee its ABC recommendation based on the following criteria:

- a) failure of the Committee to follow the terms of reference provided to it by the Council;
- b) an error, in fact or omission, in the materials provided to the Committee;
- c) an error in fact in the calculations, if any, undertaken by the Committee in developing its ABC recommendation; and
- d) failure of the Committee to follow its standard operating procedures.