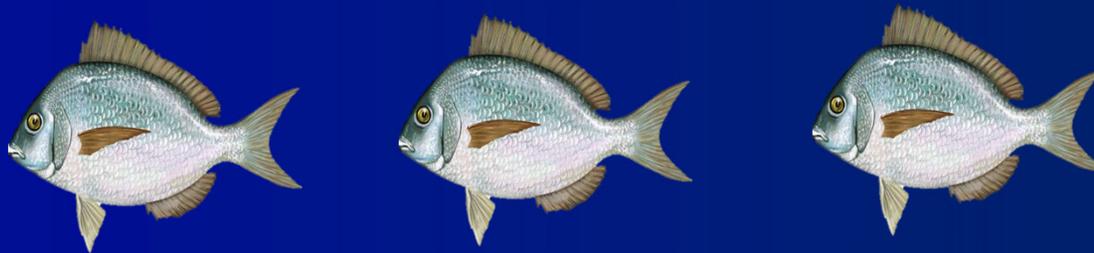




Scup VTR Analysis



Monitoring Committee
December 7, 2023

2024 Fed. Waters Recreational Season



- Joint Dec. 2022 meeting, the Council/Board agreed to:
 - Reduce possession limit to 40 fish; maintain 10 in. min. size
 - **Shorten the federal waters season to May 1 – Dec. 31**
- Throughout 2023, the May 1 – Dec. 31 season (i.e., Jan. 1 – April 31 closure) has come up at several Board and Council meetings
 - Concern about season disproportionately impacting some states, specifically southern states like NJ expressed importance of wave 1 and 2 to the for-hire industry
 - Northern states expressed need for season given those states took the bulk of the required 2023 reduction and desire for consistency between state/federal regs
 - Some concern with accuracy of wave 1 & 2 MRIP data

2024 Fed. Waters Recreational Season Continued



- When this topic came up at the joint August 2023 meeting
 - GARFO indicated that if the forthcoming rec. management measures setting process indicates the May 1 – Dec. 31 federal season is no longer needed; NOAA could publish a rule by the end of 2023 to modify the federal season for 2024
- **MC Feedback:**
 - Overall supportive of removing the federal waters season as it provides greater flexibility for states when setting measures
 - Limited data available to assess Wave 1&2 rec. harvest
 - Could consider mandatory permit or reporting requirements in the future during that time of year (like Feb. BSB fishery)
 - However, this would need to be discussed more in depth with consideration of what would be best for the scup fishery
 - Requested analysis of VTR to estimate total rec catch

Jan – April Catch Estimate Using VTR Data



Month	Total number of trips	Avg. number anglers per trip	Avg. # fish harvested per angler	Ave. annual harvested fish reported on VTRs (# fish)	Ave. annual for-hire harvest (lbs.) ^a	Estimated annual for-hire and private harvest in all waters (lbs.) ^b	Estimated annual for-hire and private harvest in federal waters only (lbs.) ^c
Jan	24	27	10	269	253	1,407	70
Feb	14	35	16	558	525	2,915	146
March	15	28	4	110	103	575	29
April	16	26	11	298	280	1,555	78
Jan – April	69	29	10	1,235	1,161	6,452	323

^a Represent total harvested fish as reported on VTRs multiplied by the average MRIP-estimated weight of landed fish for all modes in 2018-2022 (i.e., 0.94 pounds).

^b Values were calculated based on an assumption that total harvest was 18% for-hire, 82% private based on average wave 6 (November-December) MRIP data for 2018-2022.

^c Values were calculated based on an assumption that 5% of total harvest came from federal waters based on average MRIP data for 2018-2022.

MC Recommendations – *as of November*

- Recommended maintaining federal waters measures, with the exemption of the current federal waters Jan – April closure, and adjustments to state waters made through to Commission process to achieve the full 10% reduction
 - Federal waters measures would consist of a year-round (Jan – Dec) open season, 40 fish possession limit, and 10-inch size limit



AP Feedback on Fed. Waters Jan-April Closure/VTR Analysis



- Overall supportive of removing federal waters closure
 - Some were especially supportive of removal of season for for-hire sector
- Some agreed the VTR analysis was appropriate given wave 1&2 MRIP data limitations
 - Accurately represents the limited amount of harvest that occurs during those months
- One advisor noted federal VTR data does not capture harvest from state-only permitted vessels operating solely in state waters
- One advisor recommended adding 2023 VTR data to the analysis
- Another advisor questions the 0.94 average weight multiplier used to convert number of fish to pounds

Considerations/Discussion



- Is there a need to make any changes to the VTR analysis?
 - Is 2018-2022 VTR data the appropriate range of years to use?
 - Is the 0.94- average weight multiplier appropriate to convert number of fish to pounds? Based on average weight from annual 2018-2022 MRIP data.
 - Is the proportion of harvest by private vs. for-hire mode (82%/18%) appropriate? Based on 2018-2022 average wave 6 data only.
 - Is there a need to break down the rec. harvest estimate further to federal waters only? Based on average proportion from annual 2018-2022 MRIP data.
- Are there any modifications to the Nov. recommendation?