



# Blueline Tilefish



Council  
June 6, 2023

# Outline and Objectives



- Specification process
- Stock status
- Review of recent fishery performance
- Update on survey work planned for 2023
- Advisory Panel Fishery Performance Report
- Review 2024 SSC and MC recommendation

## Meeting objective

- Review previously adopted specifications and recommend changes as warranted

# Overview



2022-2024 Specification	Recreational	Commercial
ABC	100,520 lbs.	
ACLs	73,380 lbs.	27,140 lbs.
ACTs	73,380 lbs.	27,140 lbs.
TALs	71,912 lbs.	26,869 lbs.

## ■ Commercial

- Season: year-round or until 100% of the TAL is caught
- Trip limit: 500 lbs. gutted weight → 300 lbs. once 70% of the TAL has been landed

## ■ Recreational

- Season: May 1 – Oct. 31
- Trip limit: 3/5/7 (Private/Uninspected for-hire/Inspected for-hire)

# Stock Status



- SEDAR 50 (2017)
- Split the stock into North and South of Cape Hatteras
  - South of Cape Hatteras: Not overfished, overfishing not occurring
  - North of Cape Hatteras: Unknown
    - Data Limited Toolkit used to estimate ABCs
- No data update available
  - However, data that would have been provided is reported in the Fishery Information Document

# Upcoming Stock Assessment

YEAR	SA Team			
	1	2	3	4
2020	Scamp RT	Snowy Grouper U	Gag Grouper OA	Tilefish OA
2021		Red Snapper OA		
2022	Scamp OA		Black Sea Bass OA	Spanish Mackerel OA
2023	Gray Triggerfish RT	Vermilion OA		Red Grouper OA
2024		White Grunt RT		Blueline Tilefish OA
2025				Snowy Grouper/ Tilefish
2026				

- Will be conducted through the SEDAR process – SAFMC/SEFSC
- Tentative operational assessment (2024)
  - Available to management in 2025

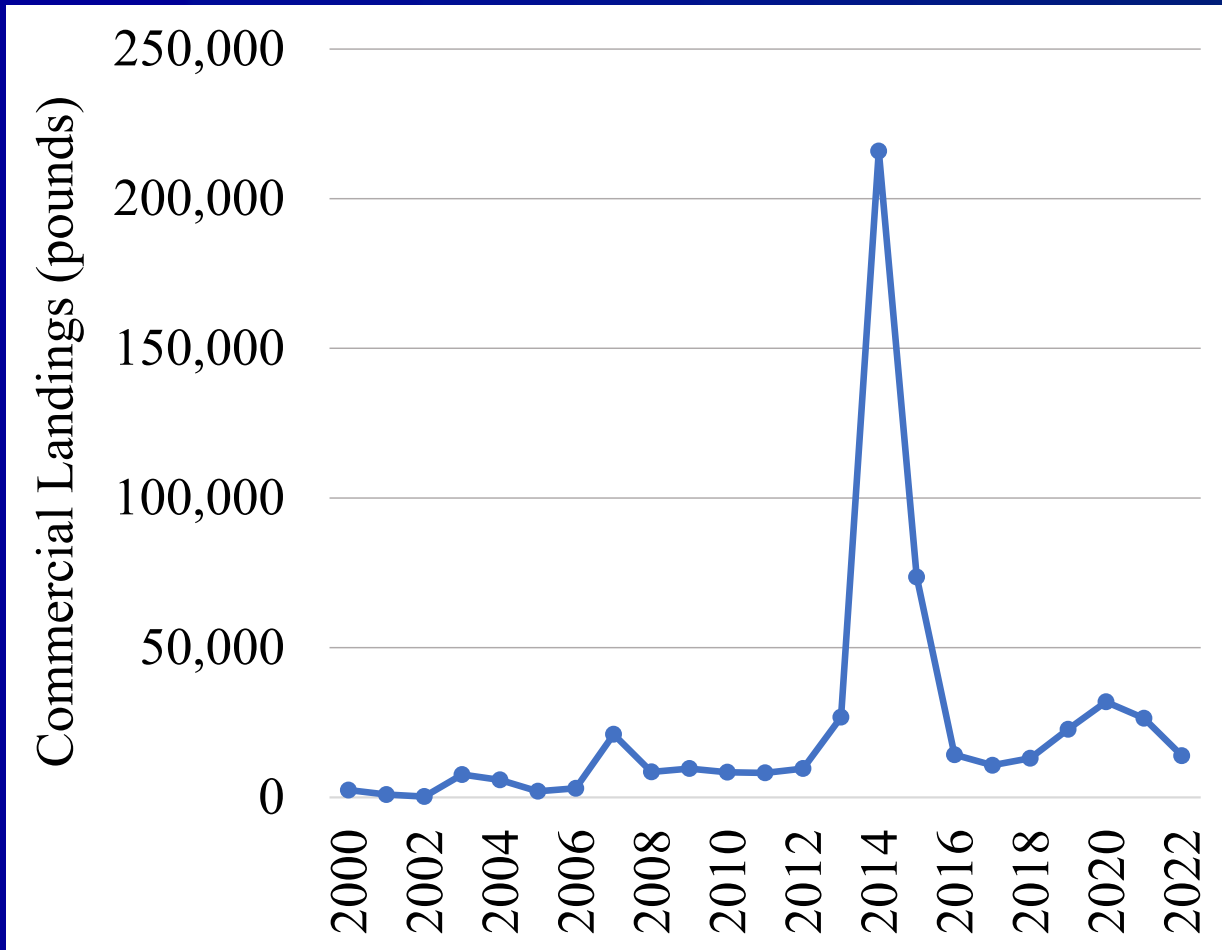


# Specification Process



- 2017 assessment made no ABC recommendations for region north of Cape Hatteras
  - MAFMC/SAFMC/NEFSC/SEFSC subcommittee developed ABCs
    - ABC has remained status quo since
- In 2022: Council approved a 3-year Specification Cycle
  - 2024 is the final year of cycle
- This year the SSC (May 10), MC (May 24), Council (June 6)
  - Review 2024 specifications

# Commercial Fishery Performance

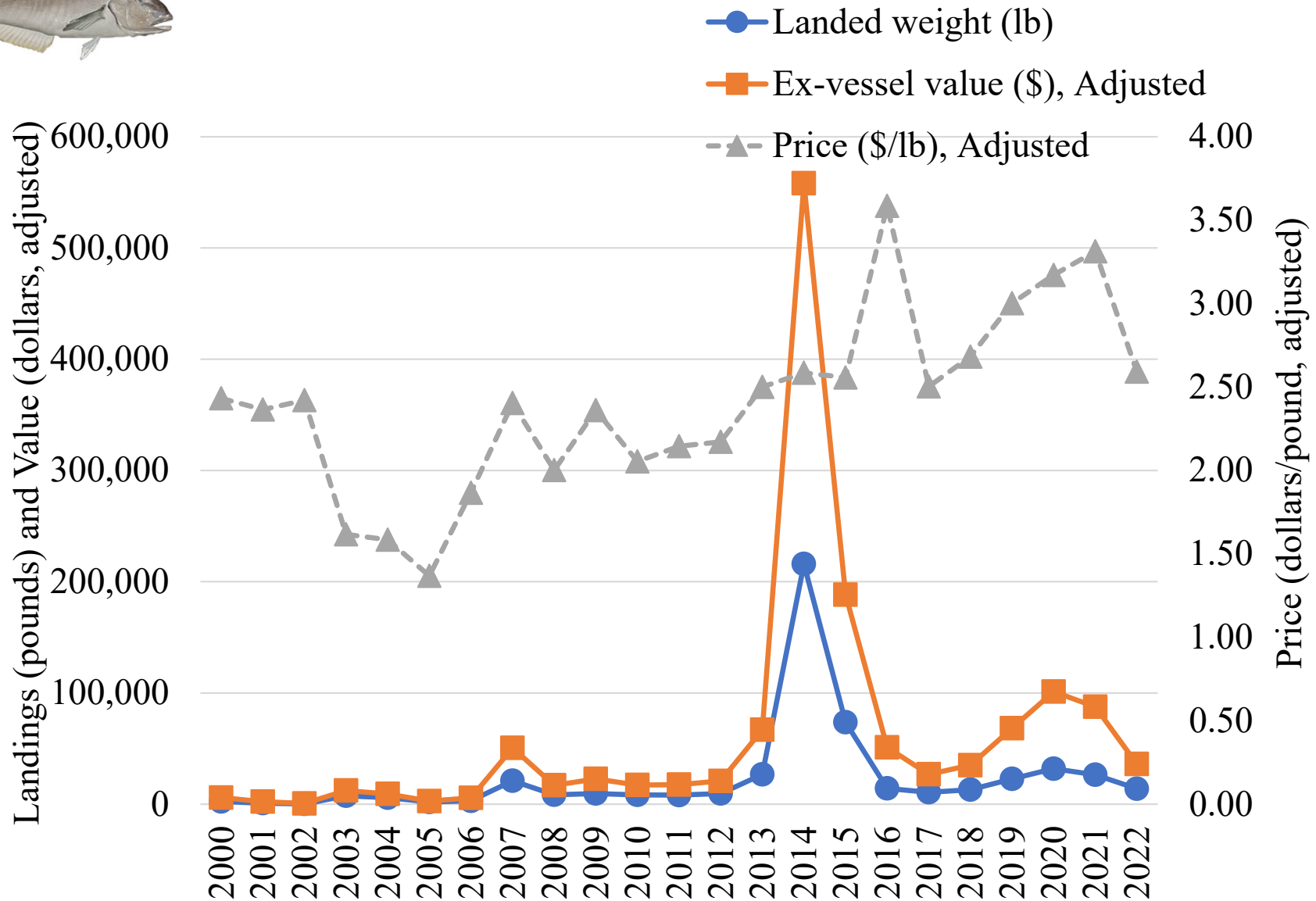


Year	Landings (lbs.)
2013	26,781
2014	215,928
2015	73,644
2016	14,235
2017	10,734
2018	13,068
2019	22,759
2020	31,918
2021	26,446
2022	13,943

State	2022 (lbs.)
RI	3,905
CT	C
NY	2,117
NJ	5,623
MD	1,304
VA	915
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,943</b>



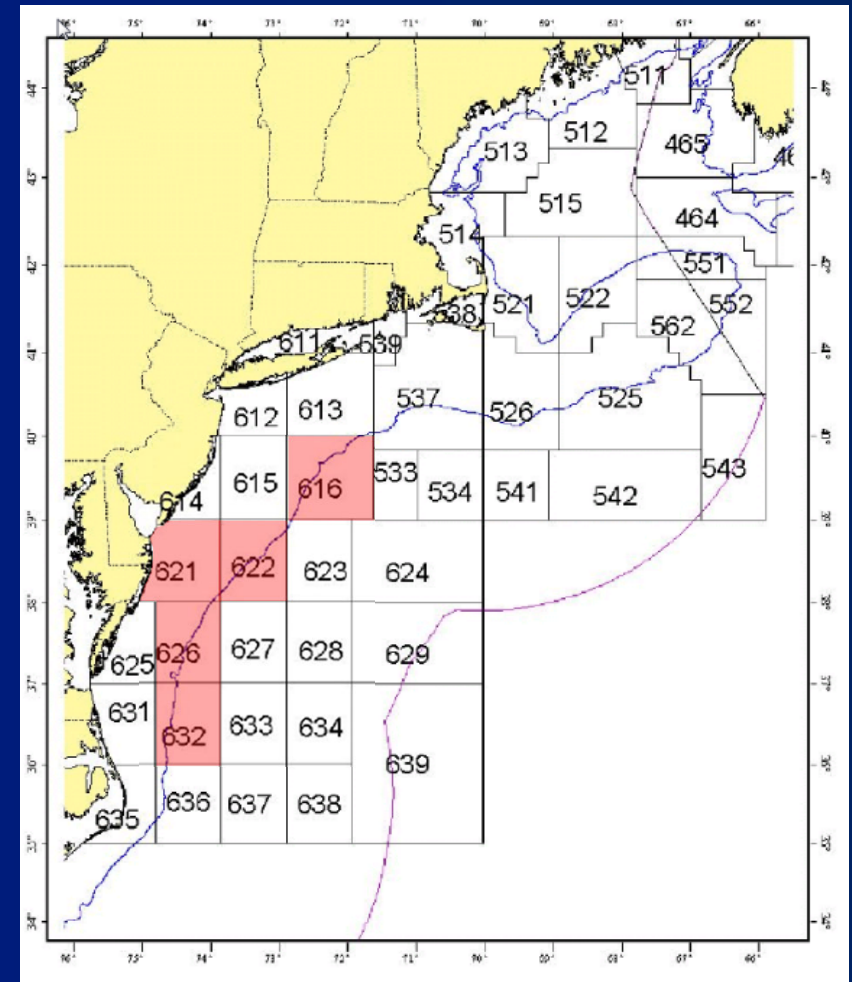
# Commercial Fishery Performance



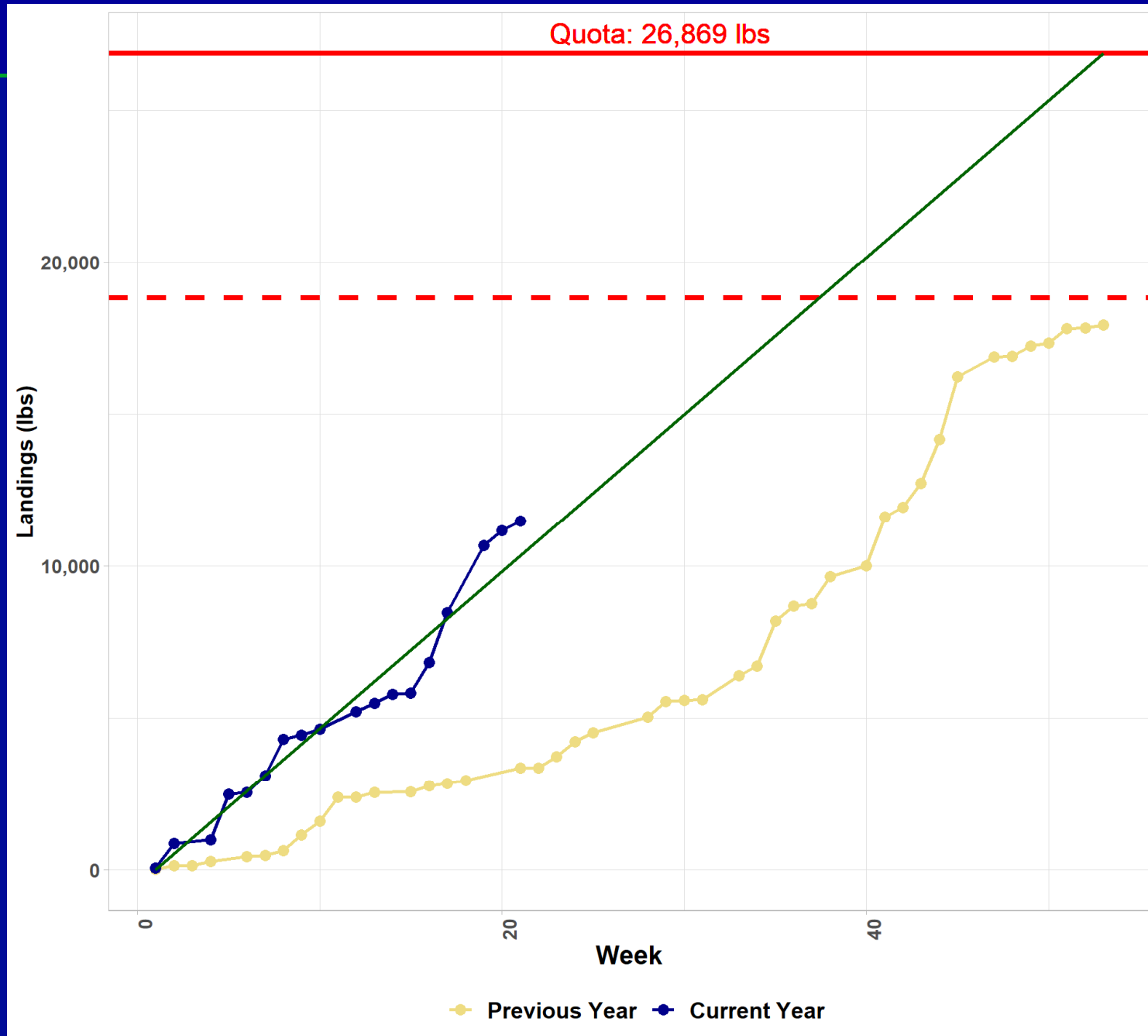


# Commercial Fishery Performance

Gear	2022	
	Landings (pounds)	Proportion of total landings
Trawl	7,650	55%
Longline	5,246	37%
Handline	901	6%
Other/ Unknown	226	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,023</b>	<b>100%</b>



# Commercial Fishery Performance



# Private Recreational Permitting/Reporting



- Requirement implemented in August 2020
- 2020:
  - Permits: 340
  - Reported trips: 8 (84 fish)
- 2021:
  - Permits: 814
  - Reported trips: 34 (319 fish)
- 2022:
  - Permits: 790
  - Reported trips: 33 (396 fish)

*More details about permitting and reporting requirements:*  
<https://www.mafmc.org/rec-tilefish-evtr>

# Recreational Fishery – MRIP



Year	Landings (#of fish)	PSE (Landings)	Discards (#of fish)	PSE (Discards)	Mode
<b>2018</b>	6	94.5	5	100	Party
<b>2018</b>	2,083	112.85	310	75.3	Charter
<b>2018</b>	2,989	107.8	0	-	Private/Rental
<b>2019</b>	0	0	7	22.5	Party
<b>2019</b>	2,272	88.6	21	107.8	Charter
<b>2019</b>	4,839	85.9	0	-	Private/Rental
<b>2020*</b>	41	94.8	47	66.8	Party
<b>2020*</b>	1,061	119.4	10	123.9	Charter
<b>2020*</b>	481	104.1	0	-	Private/Rental
<b>2021</b>	5,773	78.1	2,887	38.1	Charter
<b>2021</b>	4,4200	87.65	4,595	91	Private/Rental
<b>2022</b>	0	0	7	16.8	Party
<b>2022</b>	25,382	57.45	83	107	Charter
<b>2022</b>	65,714	74.55	19,871	85.4	Private/Rental

\* 2020 MRIP estimates were likely impacted by limited sampling efforts due to the COVID-19 pandemic

# Recreational Fishery – Party/Charter VTRs

Year	Number of Trips	Landings (Num. of Fish)	Reported Discards (Num. of Fish)	Estimated Discards <sup>a</sup> (Num. of Fish)
2016	158	15,493	246	310
2017	129	10,164	115	203
2018	221	12,432	99	249
2019	167	10,711	176	214
2020	149	9,670	174	193
2021	222	13,610	69	272
2022	236	13,183	63	264

<sup>a</sup> For-hire discards are calculated as 2% of total landings.



# Delphi Approach

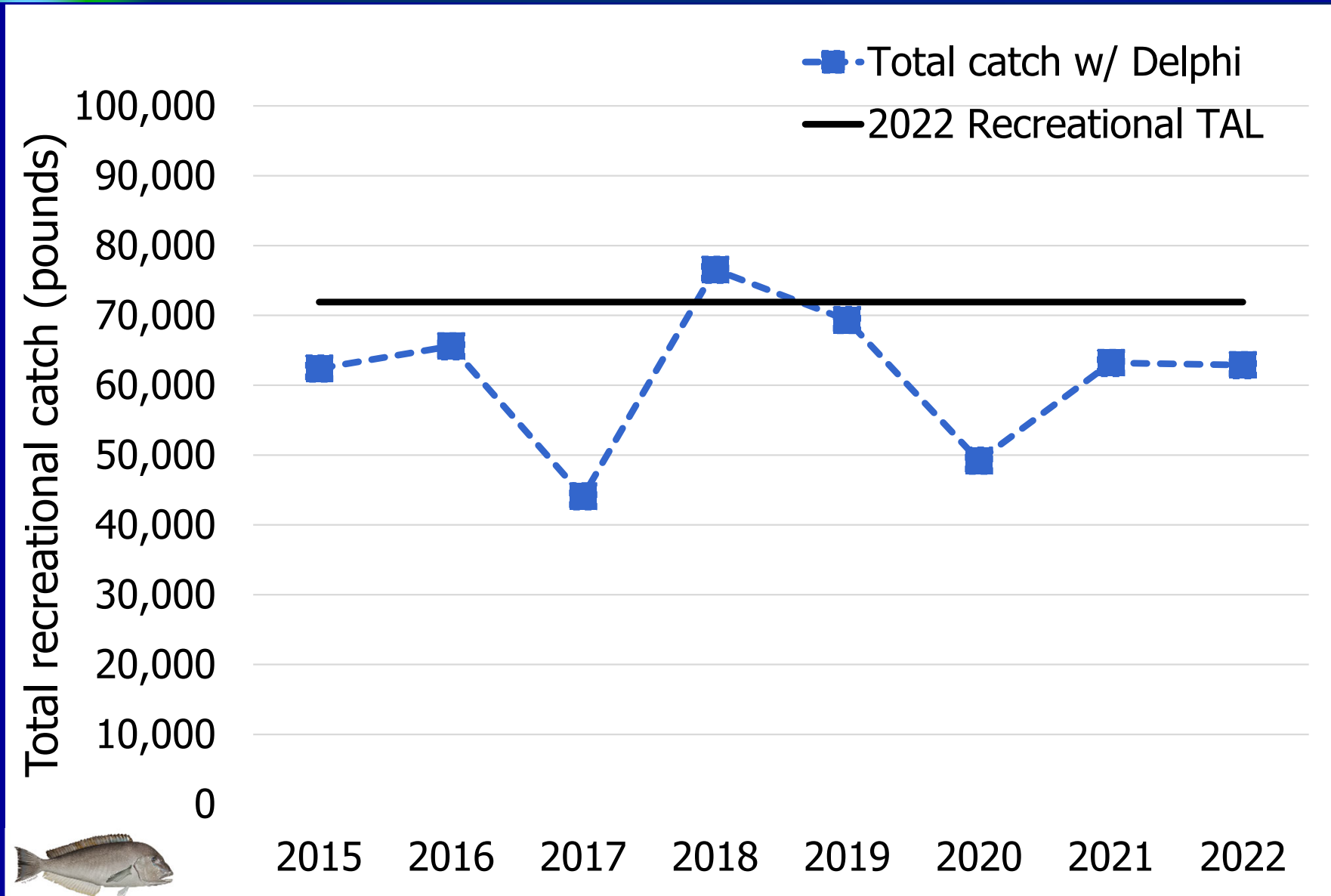
- Initially developed and used in 2016
- Was peer reviewed and accepted as best available science through SEDAR 50
- Applies 105.16% to Charter VTR data to estimate private recreational landings/catch
- Recommended approach by MC since 2016
- Past MC feedback:
  - Interim fix to not having robust private rec. estimates
  - Should be considered for use until more data is available or an improved method is developed

# Recreational Fishery Performance

Year	Party (Number of fish)	Charter (Number of fish)	Private Rental (MRIP 2015-2019 and 2021-2022, VTR 2020-2022; Number of fish)	Private Rental (Delphi; Number of fish)	Total catch- Party/charter VTRs and Delphi estimates (Number of fish)
<b>2016</b>	13,746	2,057	116,833	2,163	17,966
<b>2017</b>	8,735	1,632	12,122	1,716	12,083
<b>2018</b>	4,796	7,885	2,989	8,291	20,972
<b>2019</b>	3,247	7,679	4,839	8,075	19,000
<b>2020</b>	6,045	3,625	MRIP = 481* Private VTR = 86	3,812	13,482
<b>2021</b>	10,112	3,510	MRIP = 48,795 Private VTR = 333	3,691	17,313
<b>2022</b>	9,337	3,846	MRIP = 85,585 Private VTR = 404	4,044	17,227



# Recreational Fishery Performance





# Recreational Season Feedback – *Prior to AP meeting*



- Suggest shifting blueline tilefish recreational start date to align with black sea bass
  - Not uncommon to catch black sea bass when targeting bluefish
  - Aligning the season start dates would reduce discards
  - Suggested bluefish season: **May 15 – November 15**
  - Black sea bass season varies by state, but in most states where bluefish are also caught season start May 15

# Recreational Season – VTR data



**During first two weeks of May when the BSB season is closed and BLT is open (2018-2022)**

<b>Number of trips</b> (all states)	17
<b>Number of trips</b> (states with post May 15 BSB season)	14
<b>Number of trips catching BLT and BSB</b>	6
<b>Total BSB discards (number of fish)</b>	496
<b>Total BLT landed (number of fish)</b>	1,011
<b>Proportion of BSB caught</b>	33%

**During last two weeks of May when both the BSB and BLT seasons are open (2018-2022)**

<b>Number of trips</b> (all states)	66
<b>Number of trips landing both species</b>	37
<b>Total BSB landed (number of fish)</b>	2,429
<b>Total BLT landed (number of fish)</b>	4,093
<b>Proportion of BSB caught</b>	37%
<b>Total BSB discard (number of fish)</b>	460
<b>Proportion of BSB discard</b>	16%

# Survey Updates



- South Atlantic Deepwater Longline (SADL) survey
  - Cooperative survey that targets several deepwater snapper/grouper species, including tilefish, in waters from the NC/VA border – FL Keys
  - Survey objective: generate indices of abundance and collect biological information to support stock assessments
  - 2023 SADL survey will be expanded north to about Wilmington Canyon
    - Support collection of information on blueline tilefish throughout range as well as monitor potential distribution shifts of other deepwater species

# AP Fishery Performance Report

## *Blueline Tilefish – Factors Influencing Catch*

- Low quotas and trip limits constrain effort/landings for both commercial and recreational sectors
- Low trip limits discourages directed fishing effort
  - Most trips catching bluelines are:
    - Trips targeting other species and incidentally catching bluelines
    - Trip targeting multiple species



# AP Fishery Performance Report

## *Blueline Tilefish – Market/Economic*



- Price of blueline tilefish is good enough to drive commercial effort as seen by 2013-2015 landings
  - However, since management was established, blueline activity is represented by “fill-in” trips or incidental catch
  - Directed blueline trips not financially feasible
- One AP member expressed market/economics cannot be considered a condition driving the fishery due to the constraining quota/trip limits
- Industry participants may put together trips targeting multiple species, but that activity can be hindered by other regulations

# AP Fishery Performance Report



## *Blueline Tilefish – Recreational Fishery Issues*

- General concern with MRIP estimates and suggestion to use with caution or not at all
  - One AP member fishes for both blueline and golden tilefish in areas where they co-occur and expressed that in these areas they do not commonly interact with other anglers
- Another AP member expressed concern with Large Pelagic Survey estimates for both tilefish species given feedback above
- One member commented recreational effort may also be limited by cost of trips (fuel, bait, etc.)



# AP Fishery Performance Report

## *Blueline Tilefish – Recreational Fishery Issues Continued*

- One AP member expressed concern about the 3 fish private recreational possession limit
  - Discourages private recreational effort
  - Contributes to regulatory discards
- Two AP members supported modifying the rec. season to better match black sea bass season in most states
  - Commonly target both species on same trip
  - Will reduce black sea bass discards and help control temporal effort on both fisheries

# AP Fishery Performance Report



## *Blueline Tilefish – Recreational Fishery Issues Continued*

- One AP member suggested adding a question to the eFin Logbook on what other species anglers are catching when fishing for tilefish
- Support on staff's efforts to link to or reference tilefish permitting and reporting requirements on HMS permit renewal website
  - Believes every HMS angler is a potential tilefish angler
- Encouraged efforts to improve awareness of and compliance with permitting and reporting requirements



# AP Fishery Performance Report

## *Blueline Tilefish – Research Priorities*

- One AP member expressed support for the expansion of the SADL survey and looks forward to seeing the outcome of this work



## *Blueline Tilefish ABC for 2024*

- Blueline Tilefish will be assessed in a SEDAR benchmark assessment in 2024/5
- An expanded South Atlantic fishery independent deepwater longline survey will be conducted in 2023.
- Need a better basis for estimating private angler mode catches
- Angler reporting rate is very low. Of 1994 permits, only 75 trips and 799 fish reported. Needs further investigation of causes and solutions.
- In view of the low catches and the absence of any measures of relative abundance, **the SSC recommended continuation of the previously approved ABC of 45.6 mt (100,520 lb) for 2024.**

# Tilefish Incidental Open Access Commercial / Incidental Permits

- Past/recent comments – large number of Open Access Commercial/Incidental permits issued compared to number of reported tilefish landings
- Vessel activity similar across most mid-Atlantic open access permits

Fishery / Permit Category		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Tilefish, Open Access Commercial / Incidental (blueline & golden)	# permits issued	1,899	1,872	1,869	1,851	1,834	1,749
	# vessels that reported tilefish landings (b&g)	149	144	118	110	110	109
	Proportion of active vessels	8%	8%	6%	6%	6%	6%
Skates, Open Access General Category	# permits issued	2,049	2,033	2,032	1,997	1,965	1,868
	# vessels that reported skate landings	146	163	181	159	138	139
	Proportion of active vessels	7%	8%	9%	8%	7%	7%
Spiny Dogfish, Open Access General Category	# permits issued	2,378	2,335	2,306	2,268	2,247	2,136
	# vessels that reported spiny dogfish landings	240	197	165	150	147	140
	Proportion of active vessels	10%	8%	7%	7%	7%	7%
Atlantic Bluefish, Open Access Commercial	# permits issued	2,380	2,344	2,312	2,270	2,222	2,087
	# vessels that reported bluefish landings	499	384	391	323	325	293
	Proportion of active vessels	21%	16%	17%	14%	15%	14%



# MC Recommendation

- No change to previously recommended catch and landing limits for 2024

2022-2024 Specification	Recreational	Commercial
ABC	100,520 lbs.	
ACLs	73,380 lbs.	27,140 lbs.
ACTs	73,380 lbs.	27,140 lbs.
TALs	71,912 lbs.	26,869 lbs.

- No change to commercial measures
- Modify the recreational season from May 1-Oct. 31 to May 15 – Nov. 14



# Other MC Comments

- During the next multi-year specification process, should consider:
  - Additional data sources to derive an acceptable average weight to evaluate recreational catch
  - Review the Delphi approach and consider alternative methods



# Council Decision Points

- Consider MC recommendation and approve specifications for 2024
  - *No change to previously approved 2024 catch and landing limits*
  - *No change to commercial measures (trip limit, season)*
  - *Modify recreational season from May 1-Oct. 31 to May 15-Nov. 14*



# Questions/Discussion



Image: David Hoke