



Regulation Considerations 2025

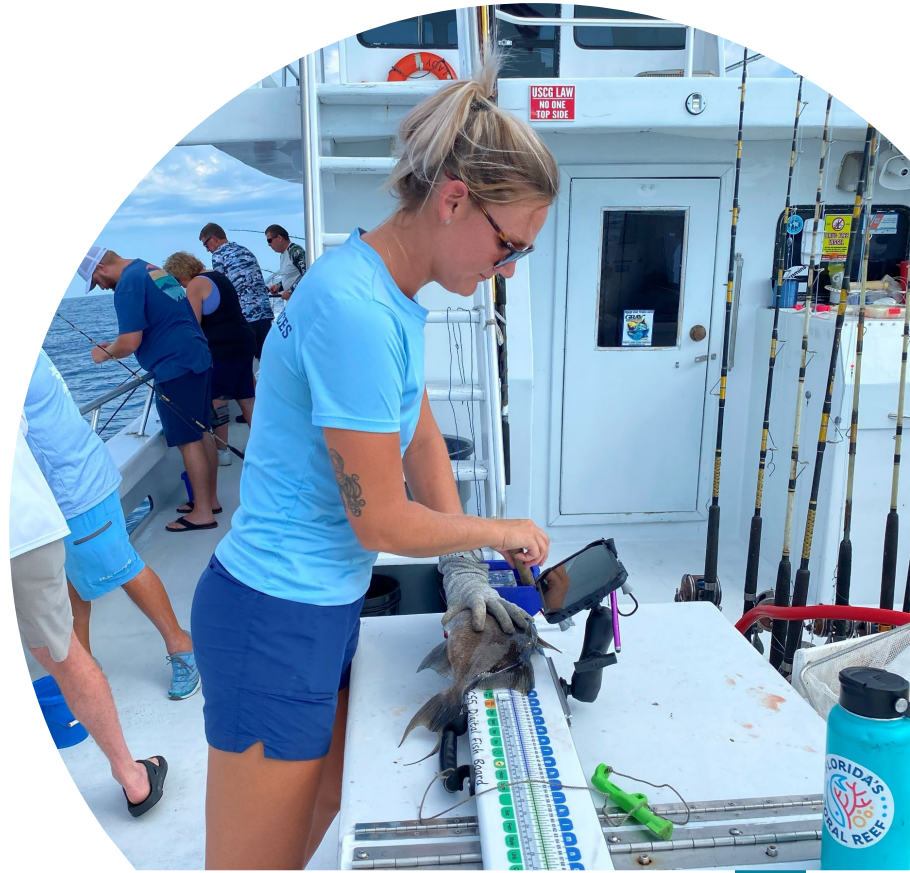
Alabama Department of
Conservation and
Natural Resources-
Marine Resources Division





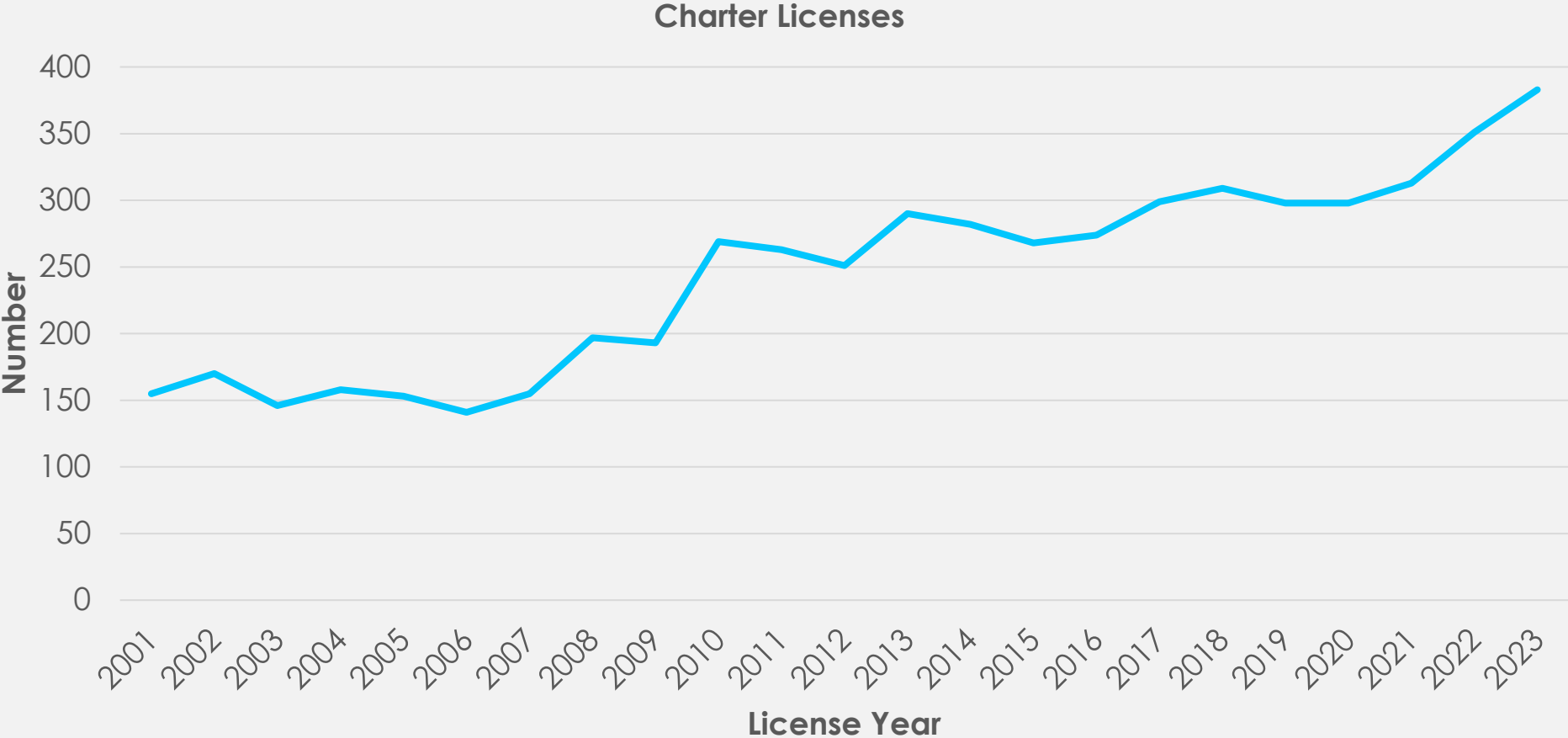
State For-Hire Captain and Crew Provision

Currently captain and crew are allowed to keep a daily bag limit during one trip per day.

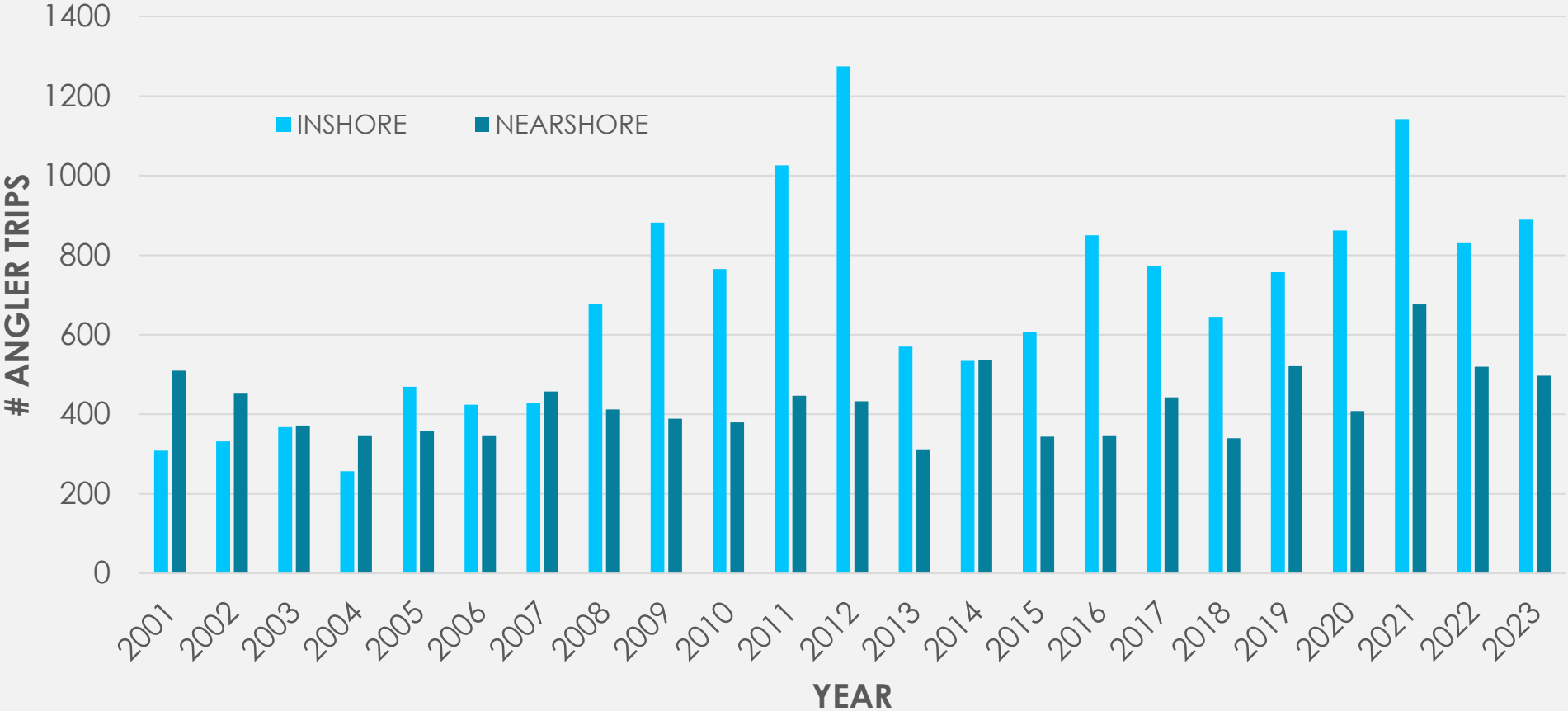


Background

Charter licenses and trips increasing.

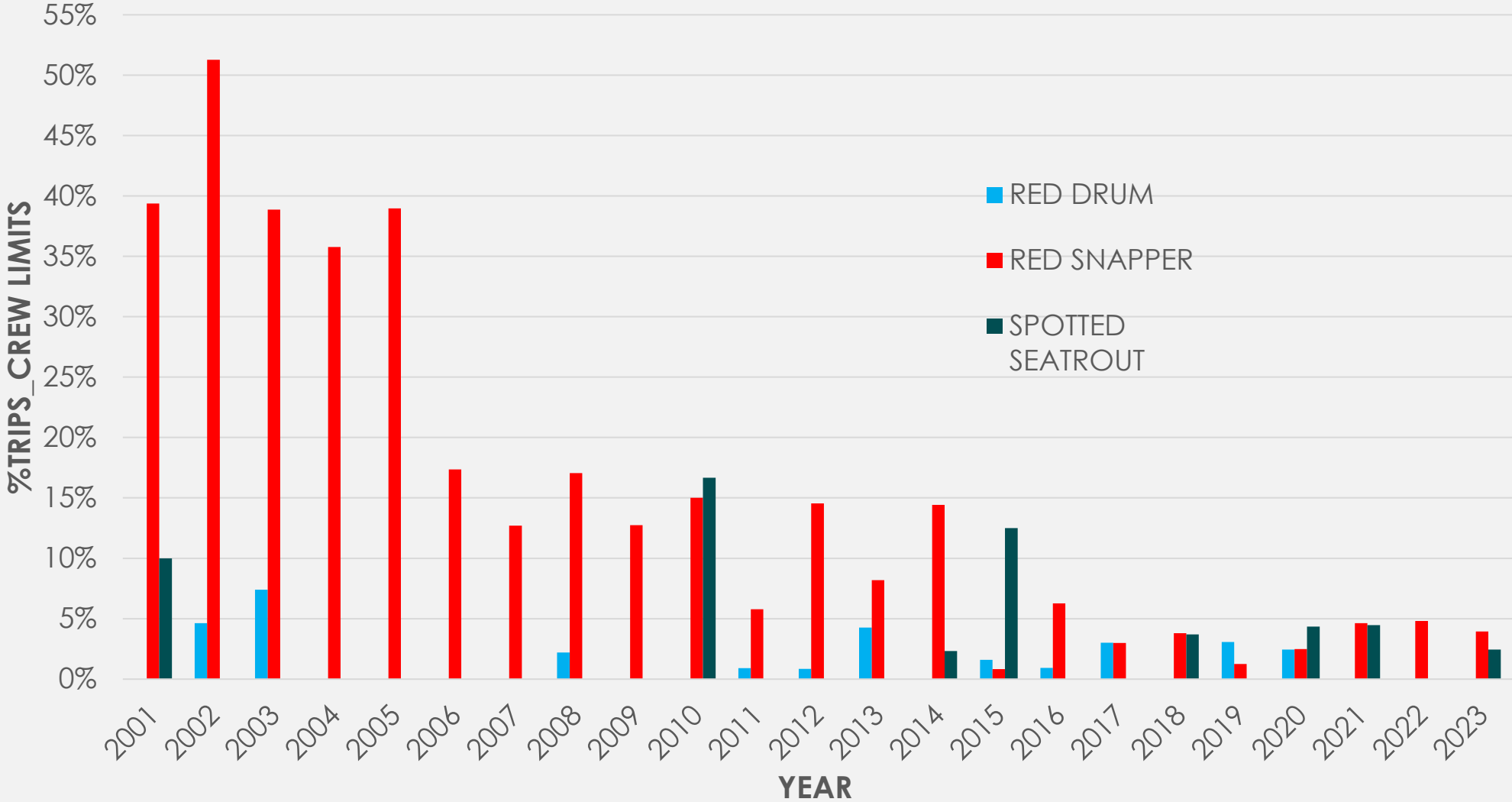


Background



Background

For-Hire trips that the crew retained fish in addition to paying customers.



Potential Actions – Captain and Crew

- No Action
- Prohibited Captain and Crew limits?
- Other concerns?
- Questions

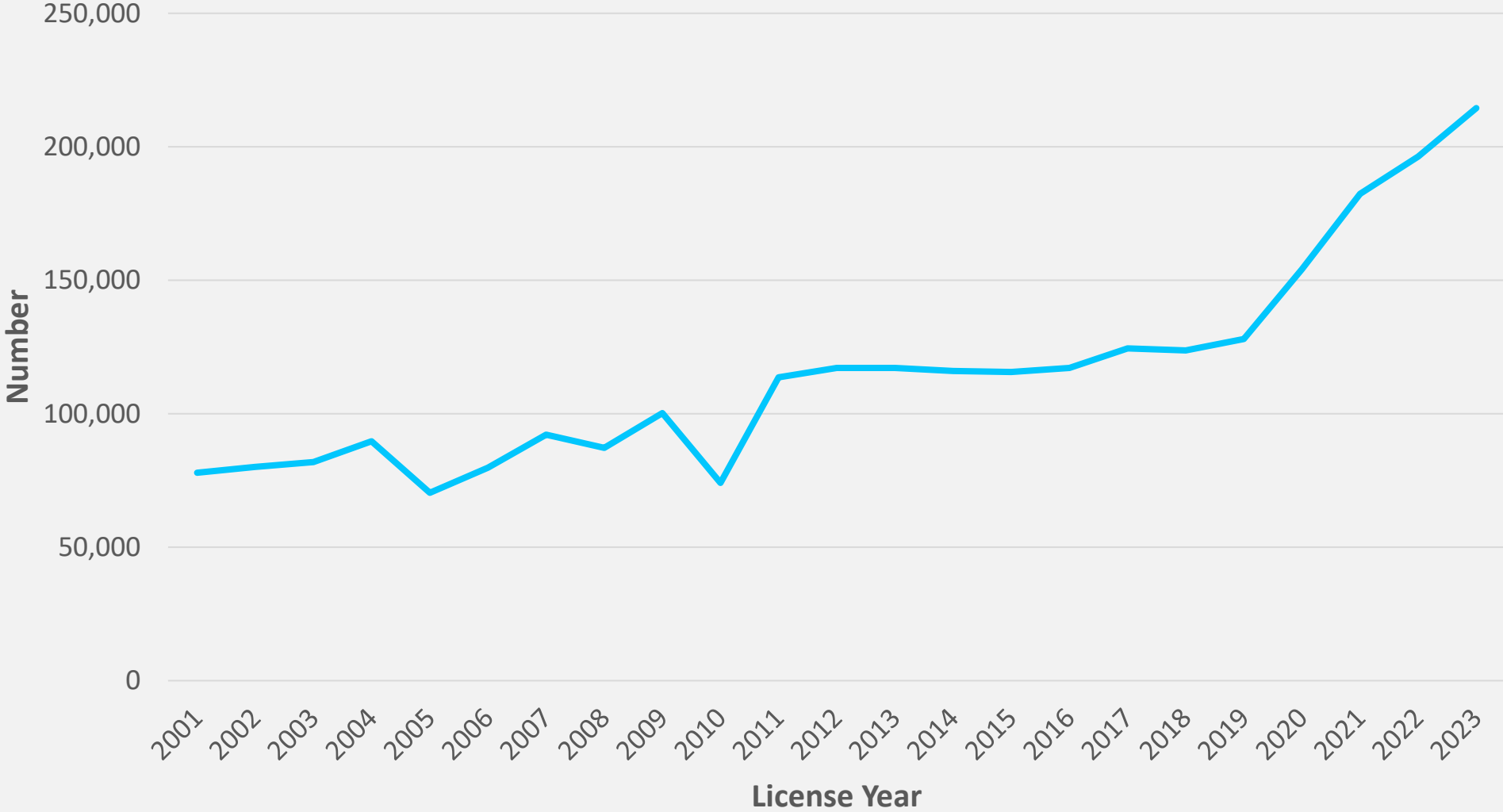




Potential Creel Changes

Background

Recreational Saltwater Licenses.



2023 Alabama Sheepshead

Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Marine Resources Division

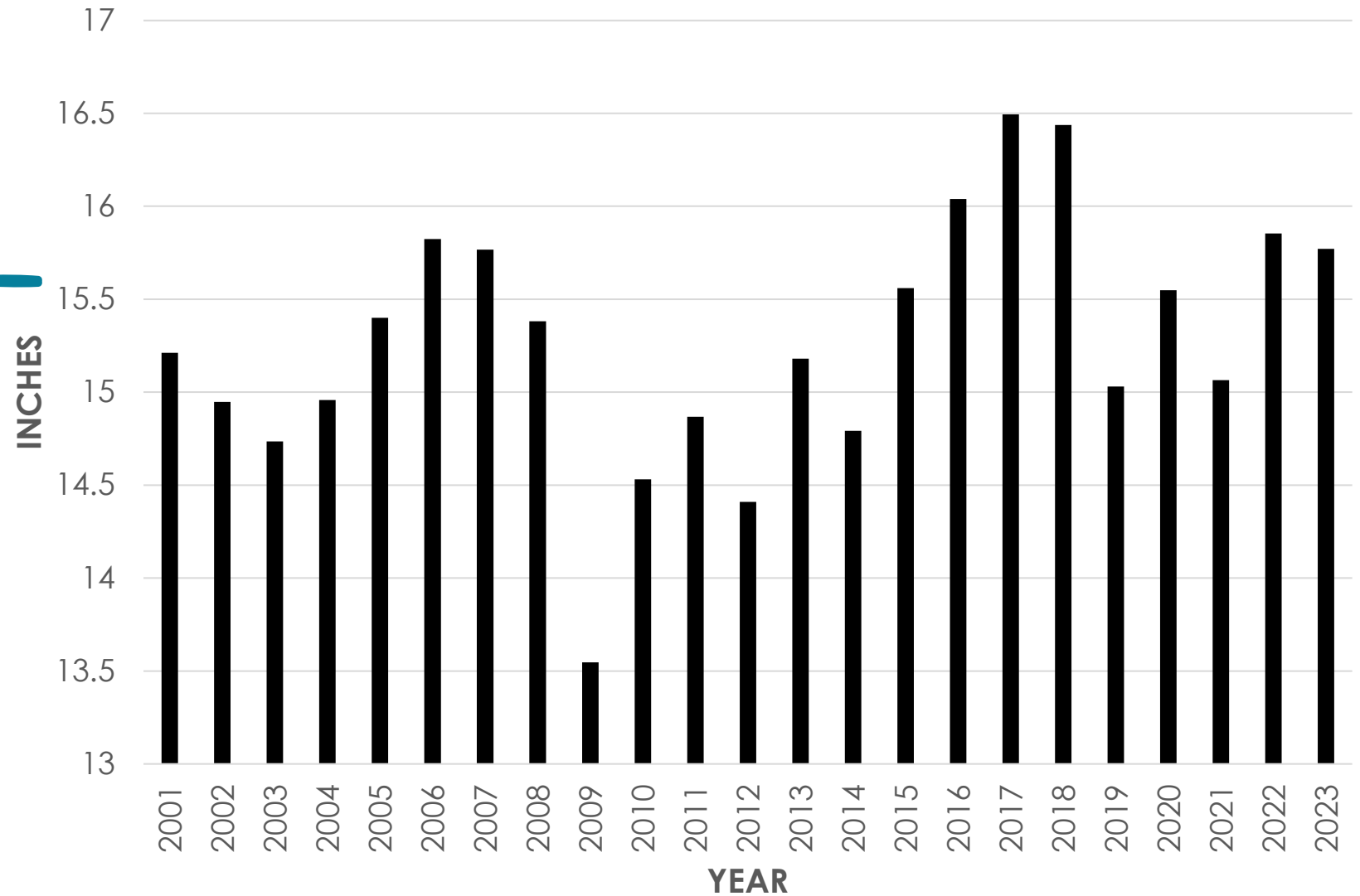


Background

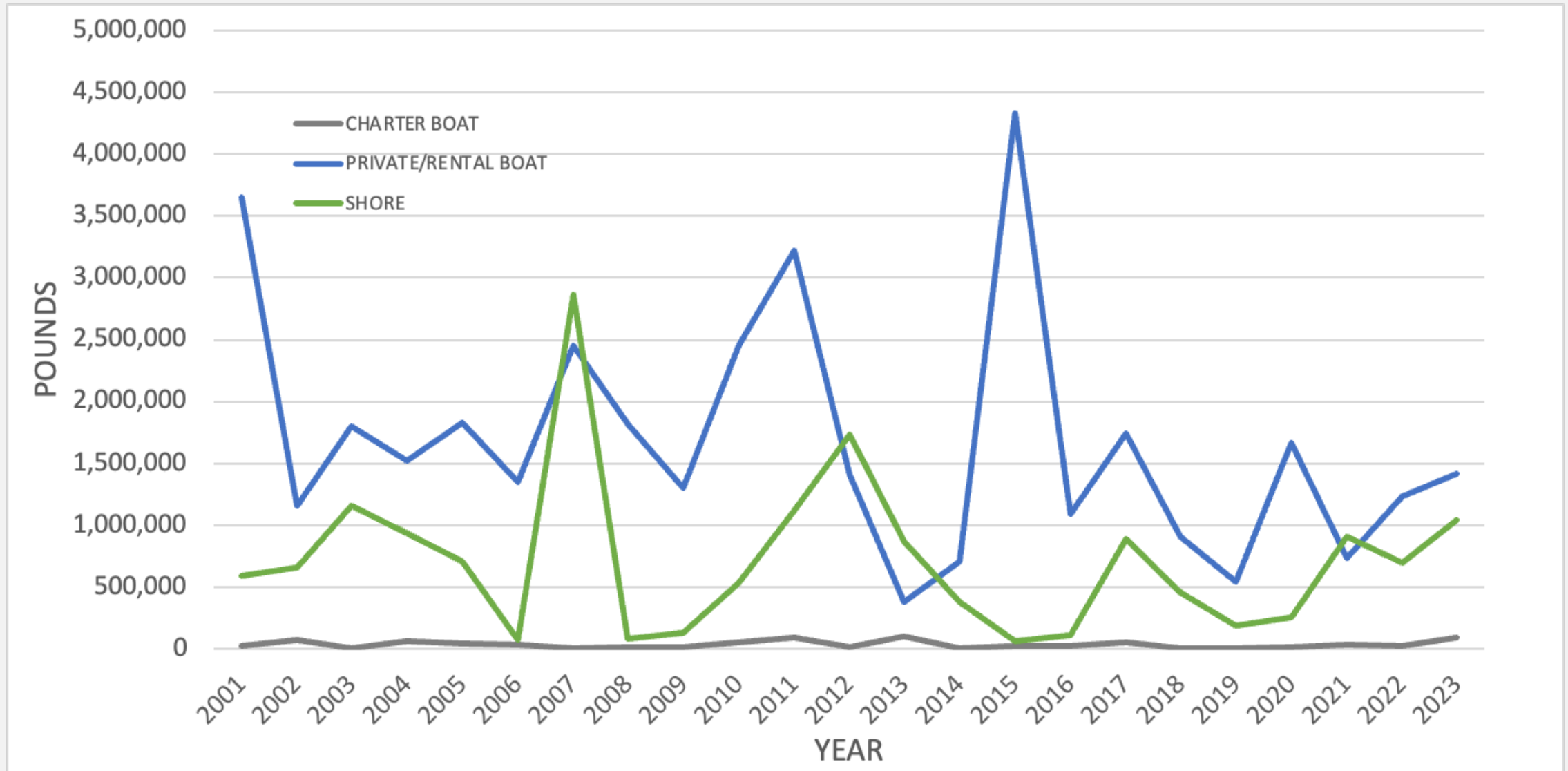
- Sheepshead in Alabama were previously profiled in 2011 and 2022.
- The 2011 profile estimated that 50% maturity of females occurred at 12" FL.
- Regulations of 2012 enacted a 12" FL and 10 fish/ person creel limits.
- Average recreational length of Sheepshead increased from 2012-2018.
- Recreational catch per unit of effort were trending down since 2015
- Commercial landings were also declining.

Average length of Recreational Sheephead

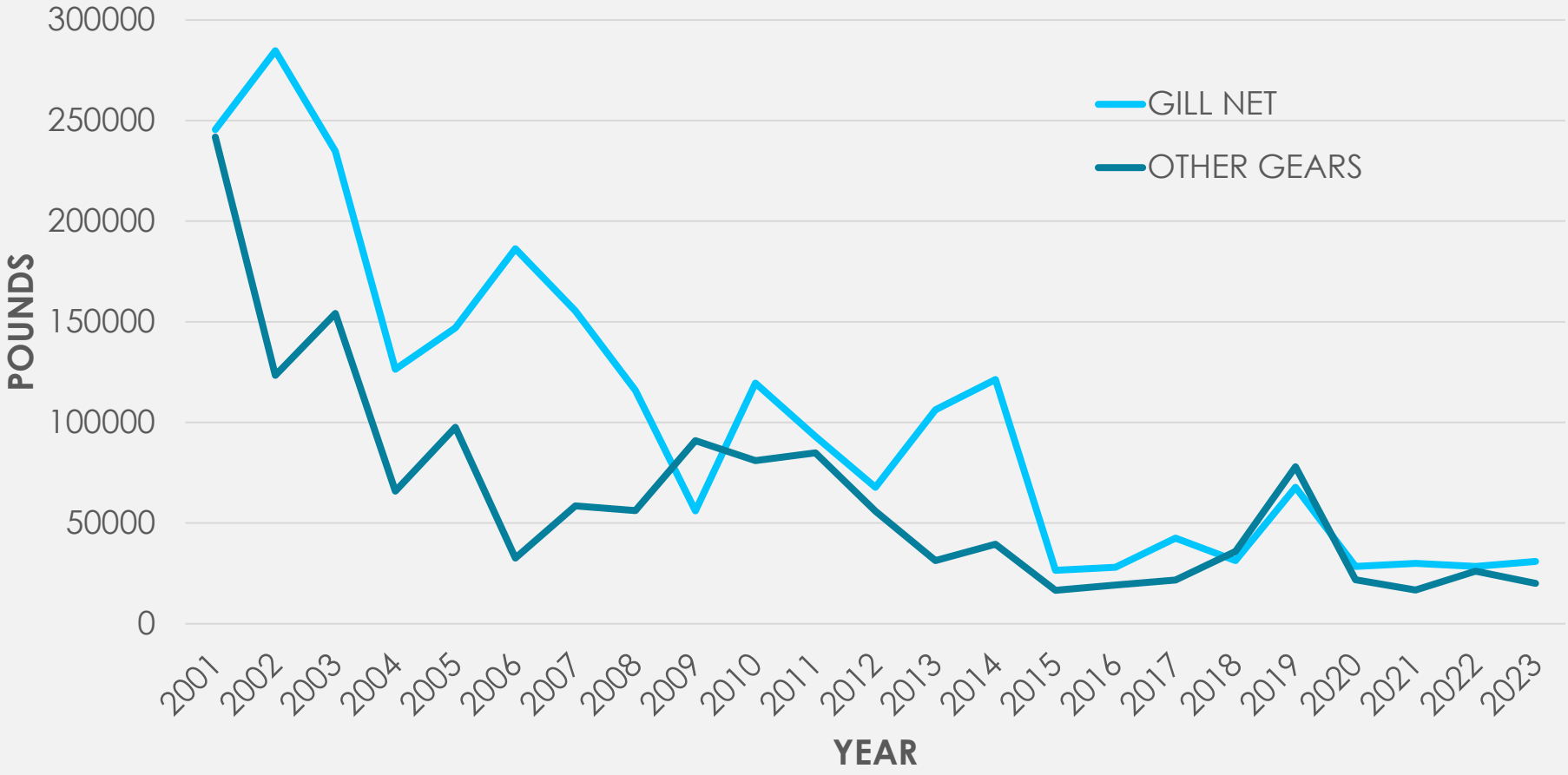
- Recent three-year average is about 15.5" FL



Recreational Harvest of Sheephead

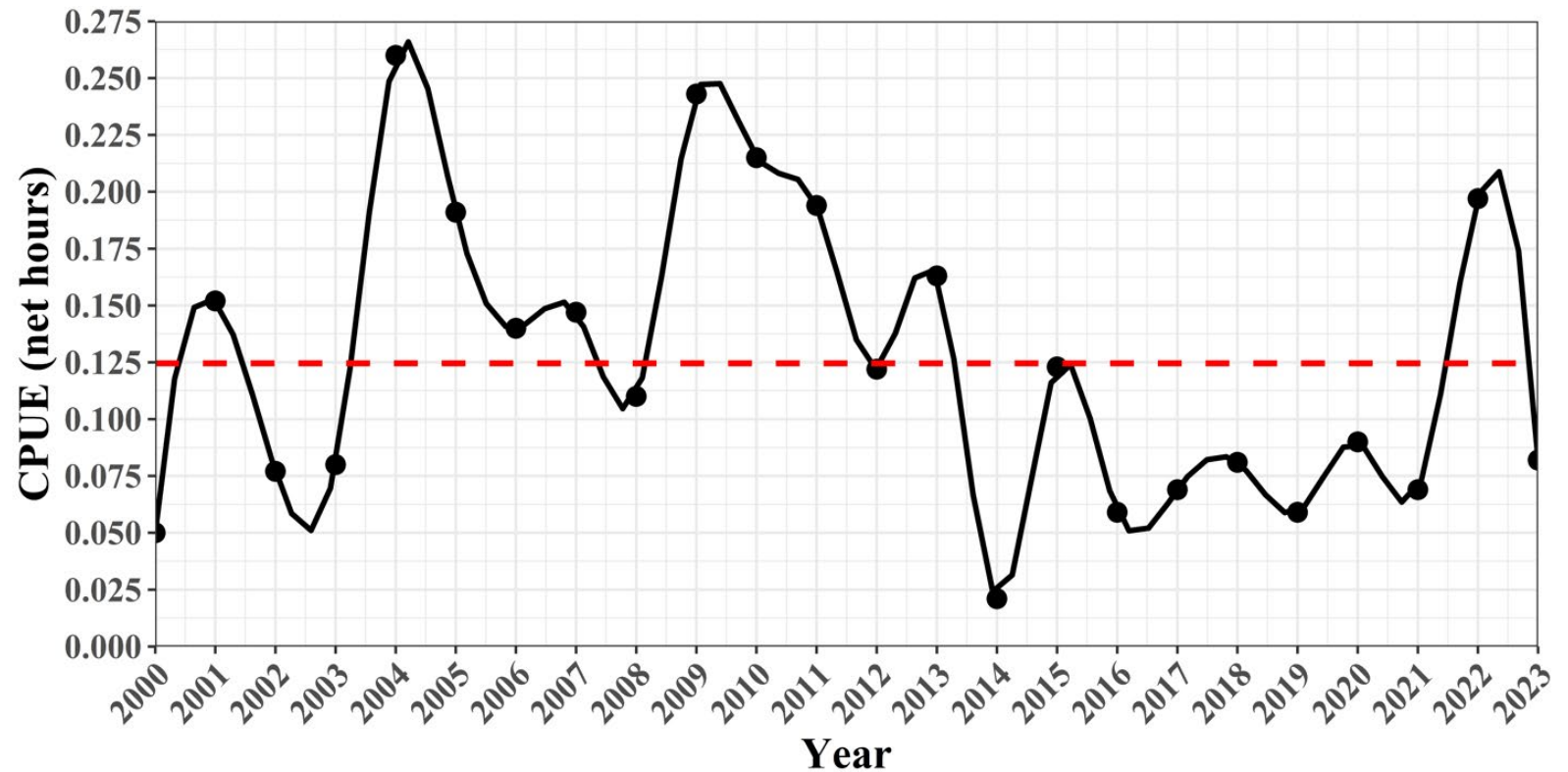


Commercial Harvest of Sheephead



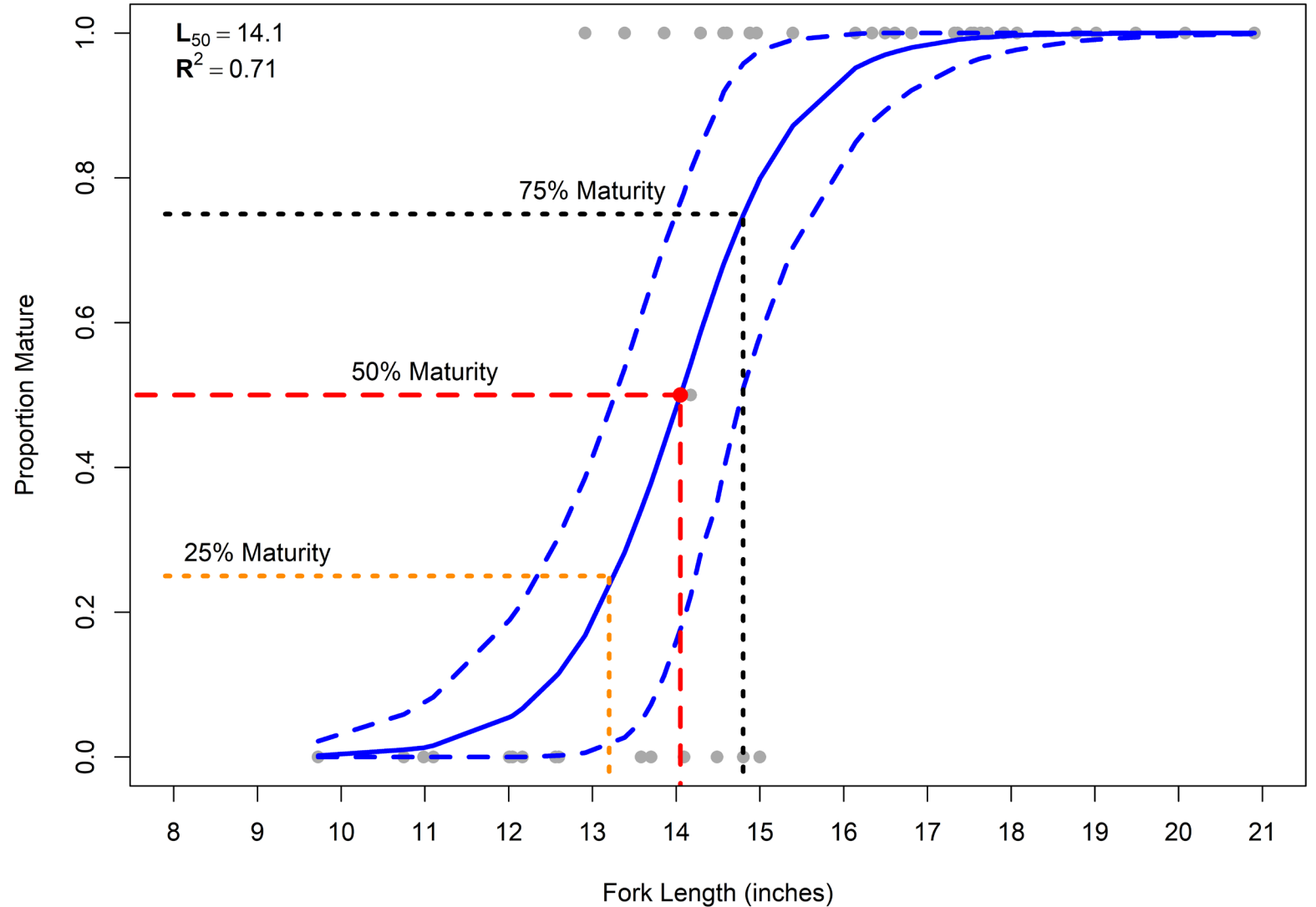
MRD Research Gill Net Catch Rates

- 240 random net sets annually (>30< fish)
- Program began in 2000



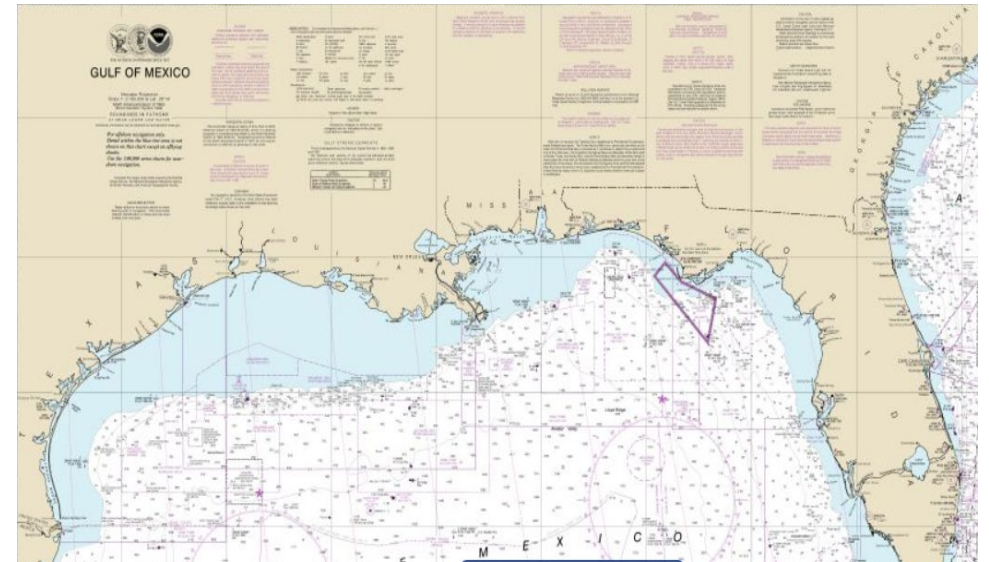
Maturity Profile for Sheephead

- Current MRD data estimates that 50% maturity of females occurs at 14" FL.



Current Sheephead Regulations

- Alabama: 12" FL @ 10 / person per day
 - Mississippi: 14" TL @ 15 / person per day
 - Texas: 15" TL @ 5 / person per day
 - Louisiana: Not Regulated
 - Florida: 12" TL @ 8 / person per day
- * 14" TL ~ 12.75" FL
- * 15" TL ~ 13.65" FL



Conclusion

- Regulations are designed to be effective on an annual basis. Effort during spawning season the most likely cause impacting the stock's spawning success.
- To properly maintain and help the Sheephead stock the potential changes include either:
 - **Increasing minimum size limit**
 - **Decrease in bag limits**

Increase size limit

- An increase in the minimum size from 12" to 14" or 15" will not significantly increase SSB.
 - Average size is at 15.5" FL

Conclusion

- To properly maintain and help enrich the Sheephead stocks. The recommended changes include either:
 - **Increasing minimum size limit**
 - **Decrease in bag limits**

Decrease in Bag Limits

- A lower bag limit would allow for more fish to be released and potentially increase the overall spawning stock and reproductive output.
- Questions

Red Drum Concerns

Recreational fishing

Recreational harvest today of Gulf of Mexico Red Drum now surpasses the high point of 1980's commercial harvest.

Inshore harvest of juveniles may be unsustainable. Target Red Drum one to less than four years of age between 16 -26" TL.

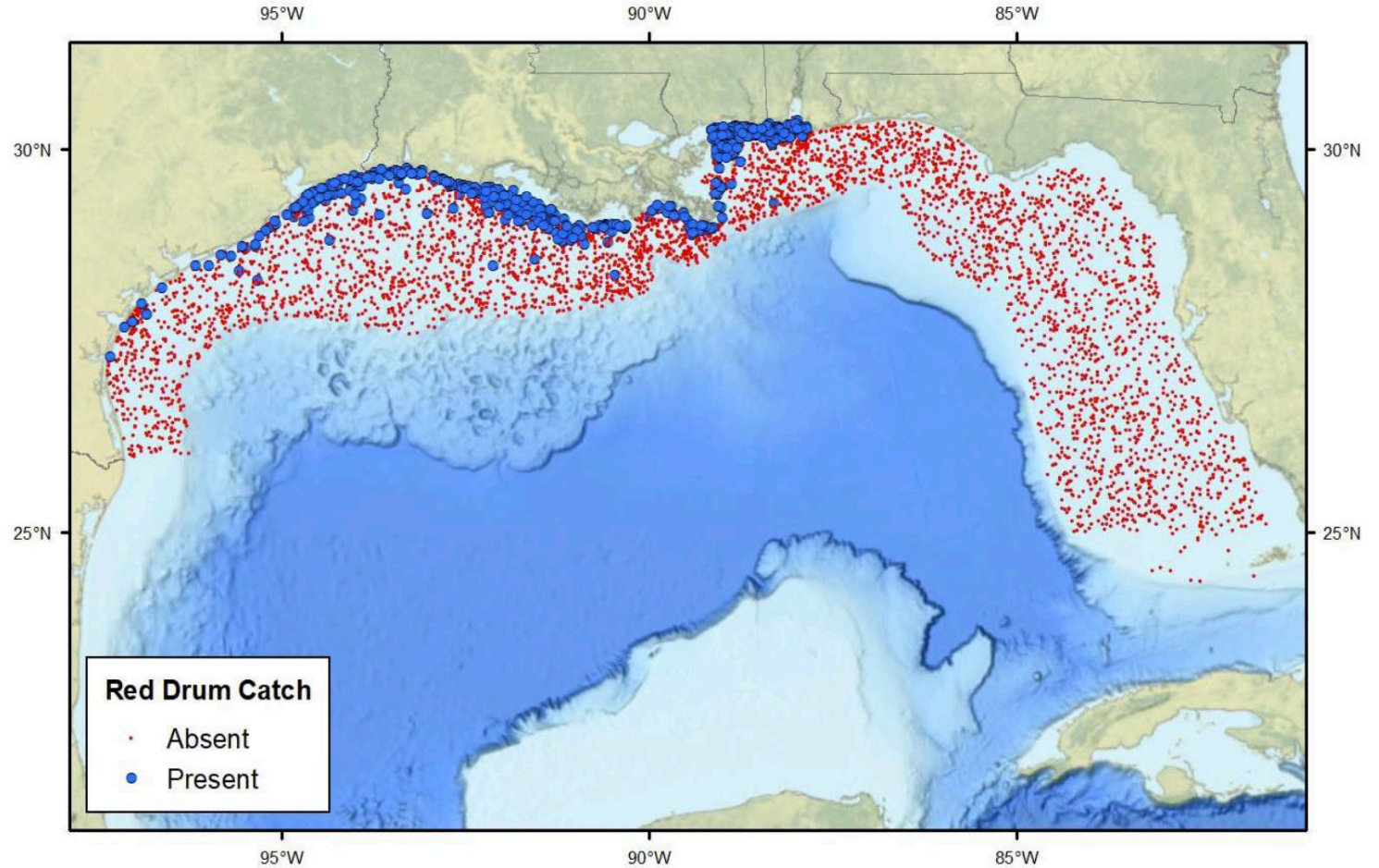
50% maturity at 27.5" total length

Red Drum Concerns

Recreational fishing

Federal Moratorium

A University of South Alabama study has determined that the “Offshore” population is found primarily in state and not federal waters. Recent spatial analysis of 5,432 bottom long line scientific sets (1995-2019) also supports this finding that Red Drum are primarily in near shore waters (Blue dots).



Concerns



Spawning Stock

Comprised of nearshore schools from Florida to Mississippi.

Are there enough fish to produce enough eggs to sustain or increase the population?

15% (37K fish) of harvest is of oversized Red Drum.

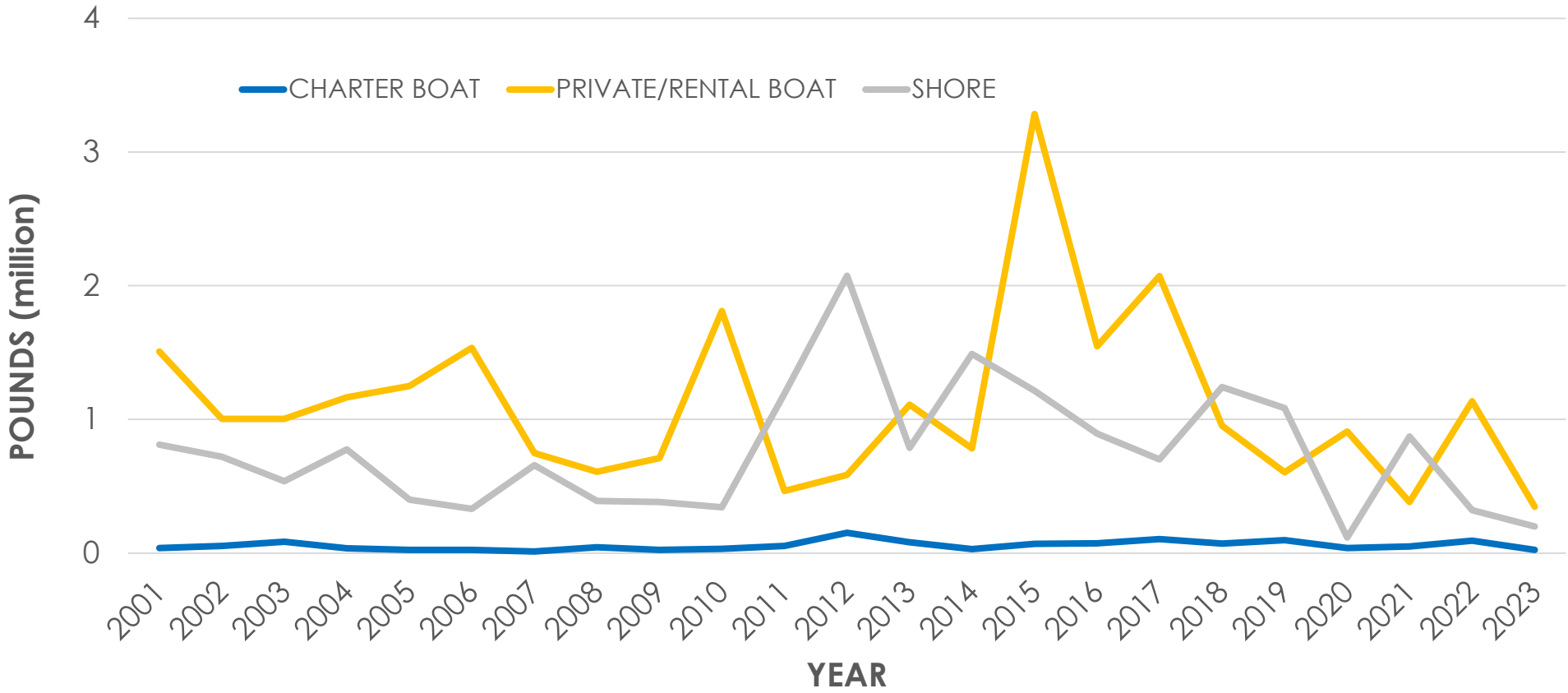
Escapement

Current mandate is 30% of juveniles survive the inshore fishery to join the nearshore spawning stock.

Fish Kills

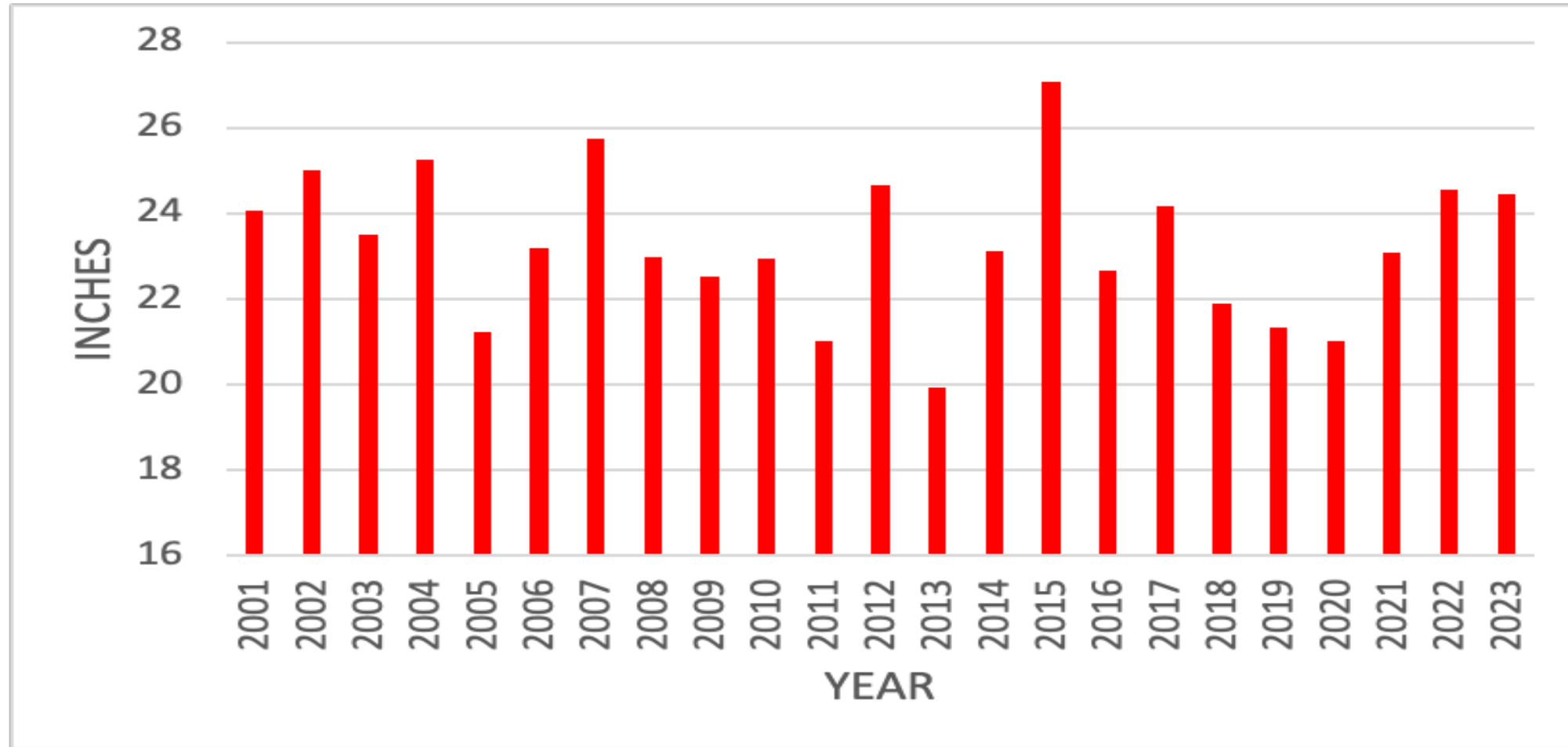
Recent spring fish kills (2020, 2022, 2023) have added additional removals from the spawning stock

Red Drum Recreational Landings



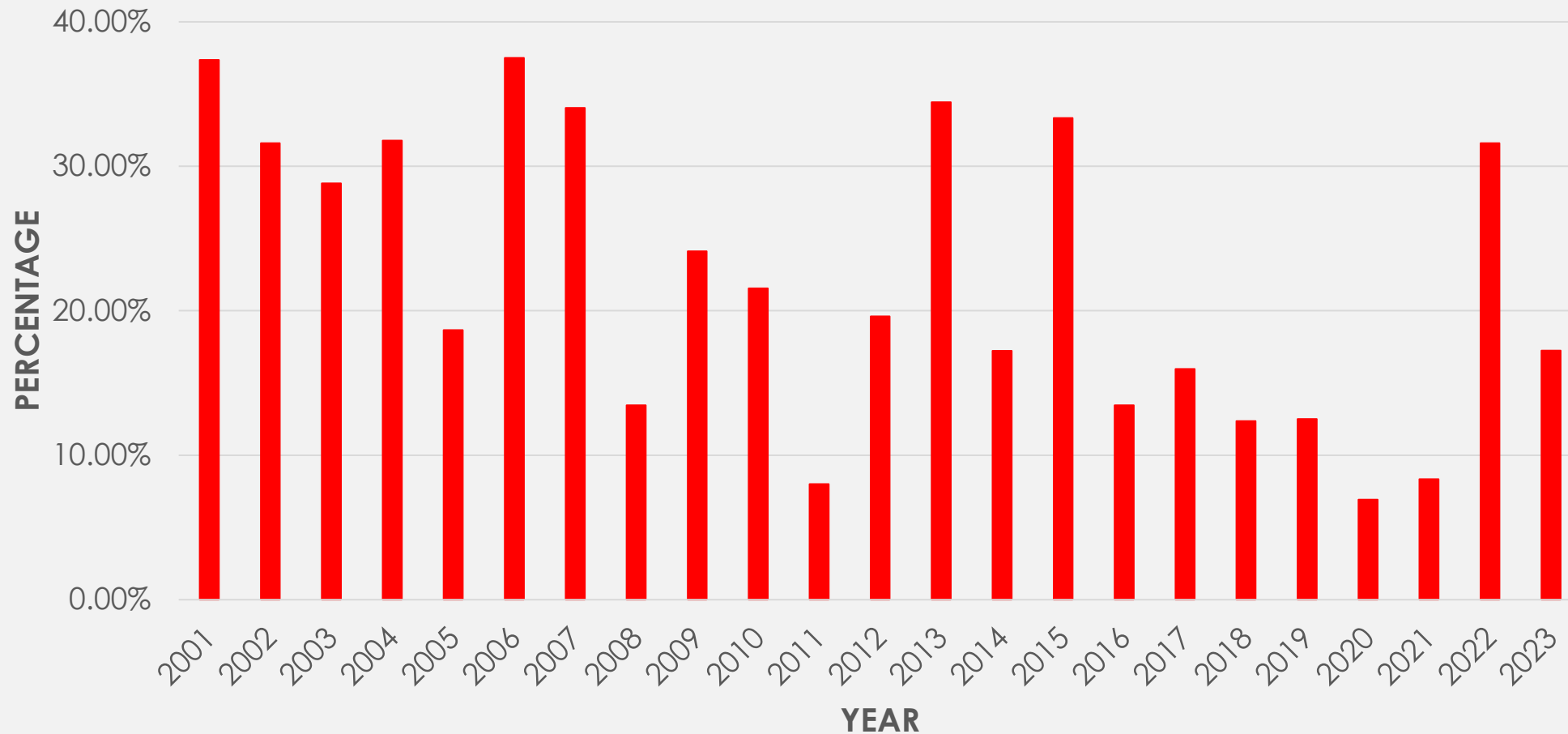
Average length of Recreational Red Drum

Long term (2006-2023) average is 23.3" TL.



Percent of observed landings over the slot limit

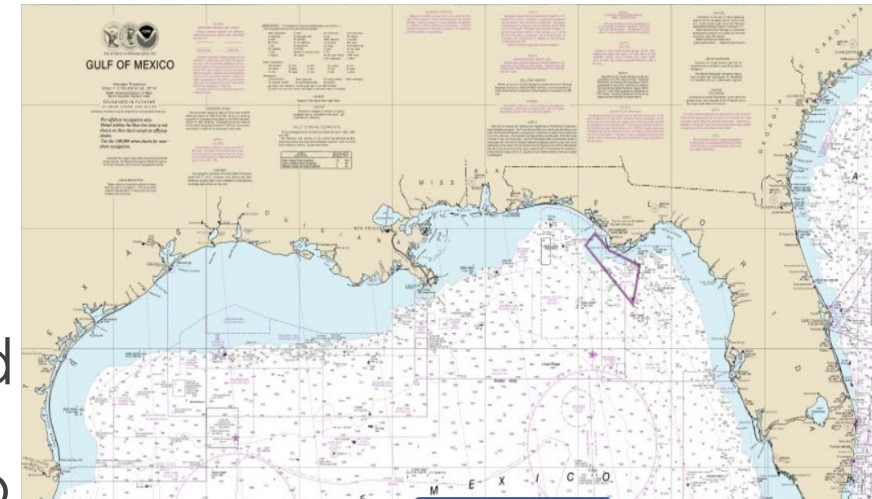
Recent average (2016-2023) is 15%.



Current Red Drum Regulations

- Alabama: 16-26" TL @ 3 / person and 1 oversized per day
- Mississippi: 18-30" TL @ 3 / person and 1 oversized per day
- Texas: 20-28" TL @ 3 / person and 1 oversized annually*
- Louisiana: 18-27" TL @ 4 / person and no oversized
- Florida: 18-27" TL @ 1 / person and 4 / vessel, no oversized

* Texas issues a tag for the one oversized



Potential Action

- Prohibit the harvest of Oversized
- Eliminating the harvest of oversized Red Drum would increase the number of age 1 recruits by 1.6 million.
- Other thoughts?
- Questions



Snook

- Initial reports from mid-2010s of small juveniles. Not thought to have over-wintered in AL waters.
- Reports of occurrence and size have increased over time.
- 2024 state record 7lb 4 oz. 27"TL
 - We know that we don't know a lot about Snook.
 - Current FL regulation 28-33"TL @ 1 / person.
- Snook aggregate to spawn and become easy targets for anglers.
- **Considering 24" TL @ 1 / person**



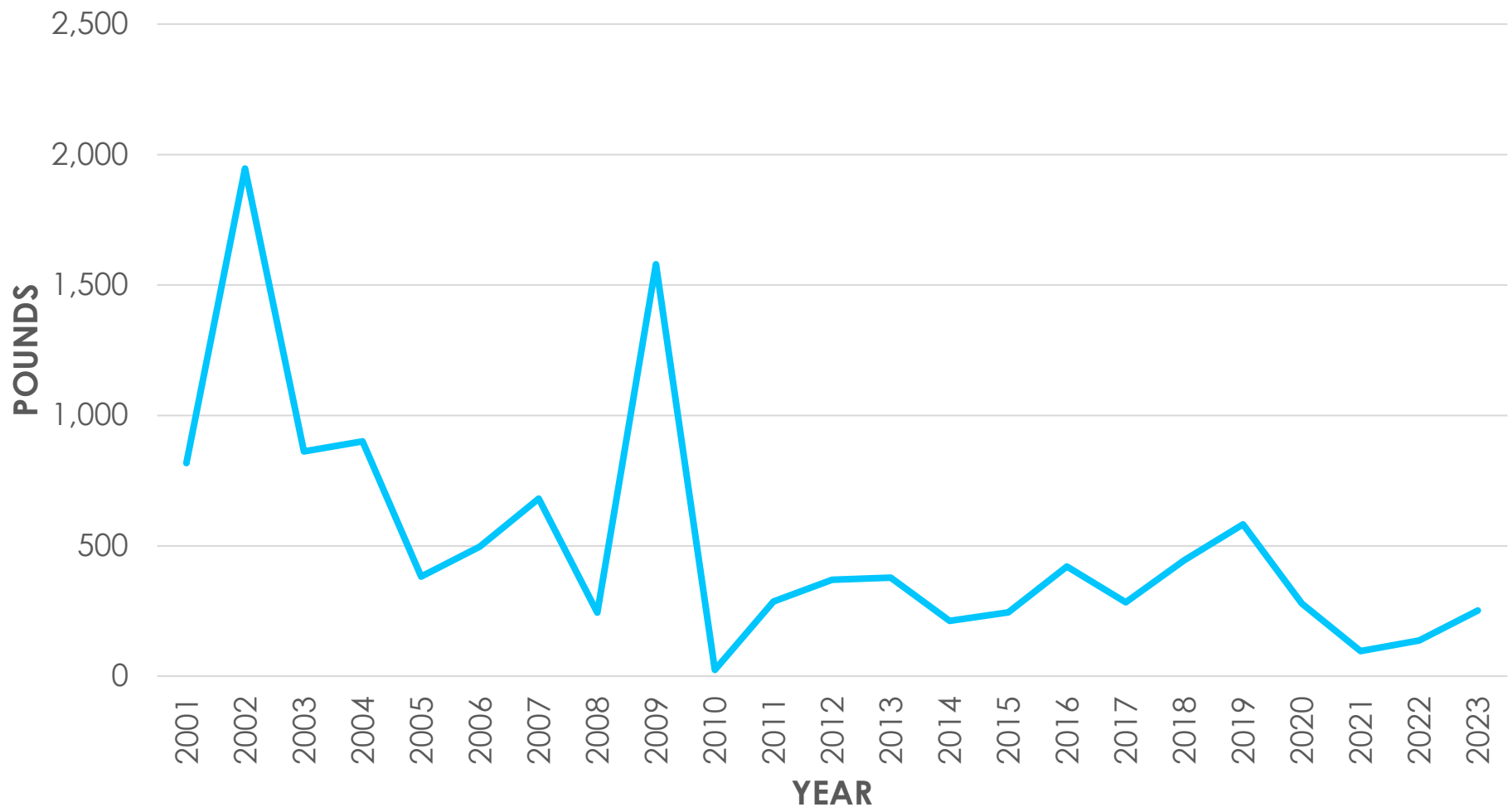
Tripletail

- Species is not managed at the federal level.
- Increased comments of concern for the stock.
- All States have enacted creel limits.



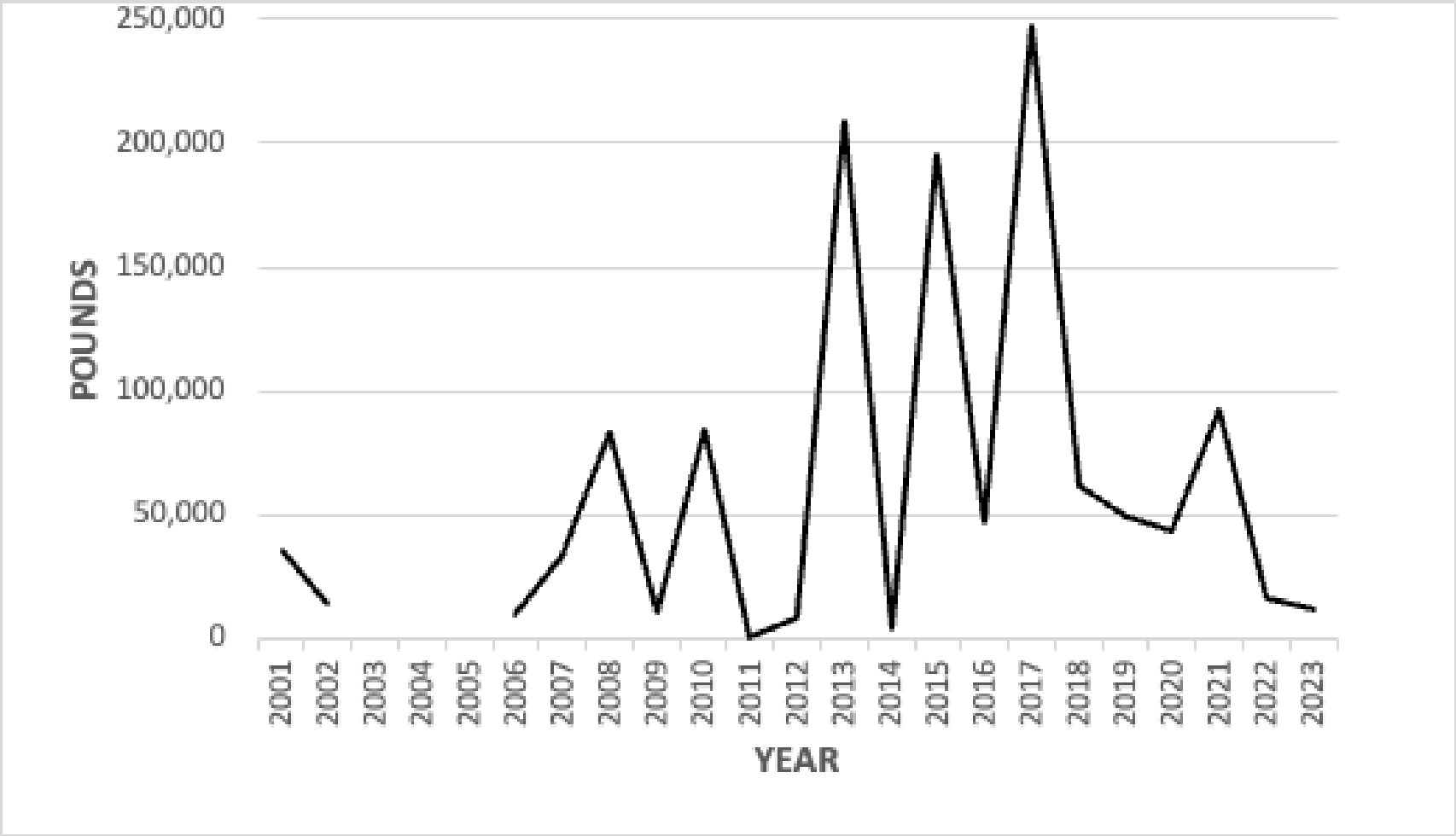
Tripletail

COMMERCIAL LANDINGS



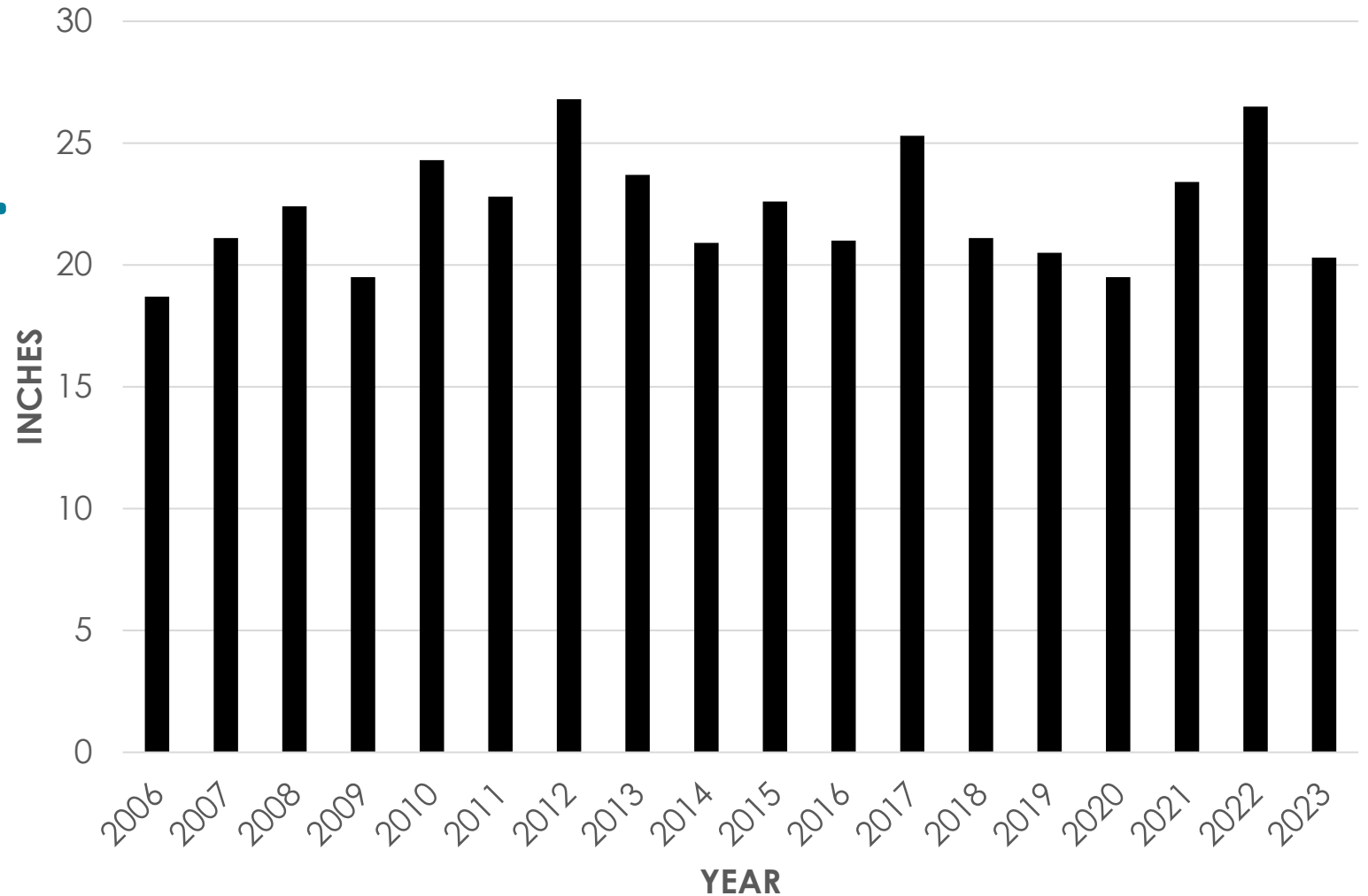
Tripletail

RECREATIONAL LANDINGS



Average length of Recreational Tripletail

- Long term (2006-2023) average is 22.2" TL.



Current Regulations

- Alabama; 18" TL @ 3 / person
 - Commercial; 18" TL @ 3 / person (2001)
- Mississippi; 18" TL @ 3 / person
- Texas; 17" TL @ 3 / person
- Louisiana; 18" TL @ 5 / person
- Florida; 18" @ 2 / person

- Questions?



Skates and Rays

Concerns

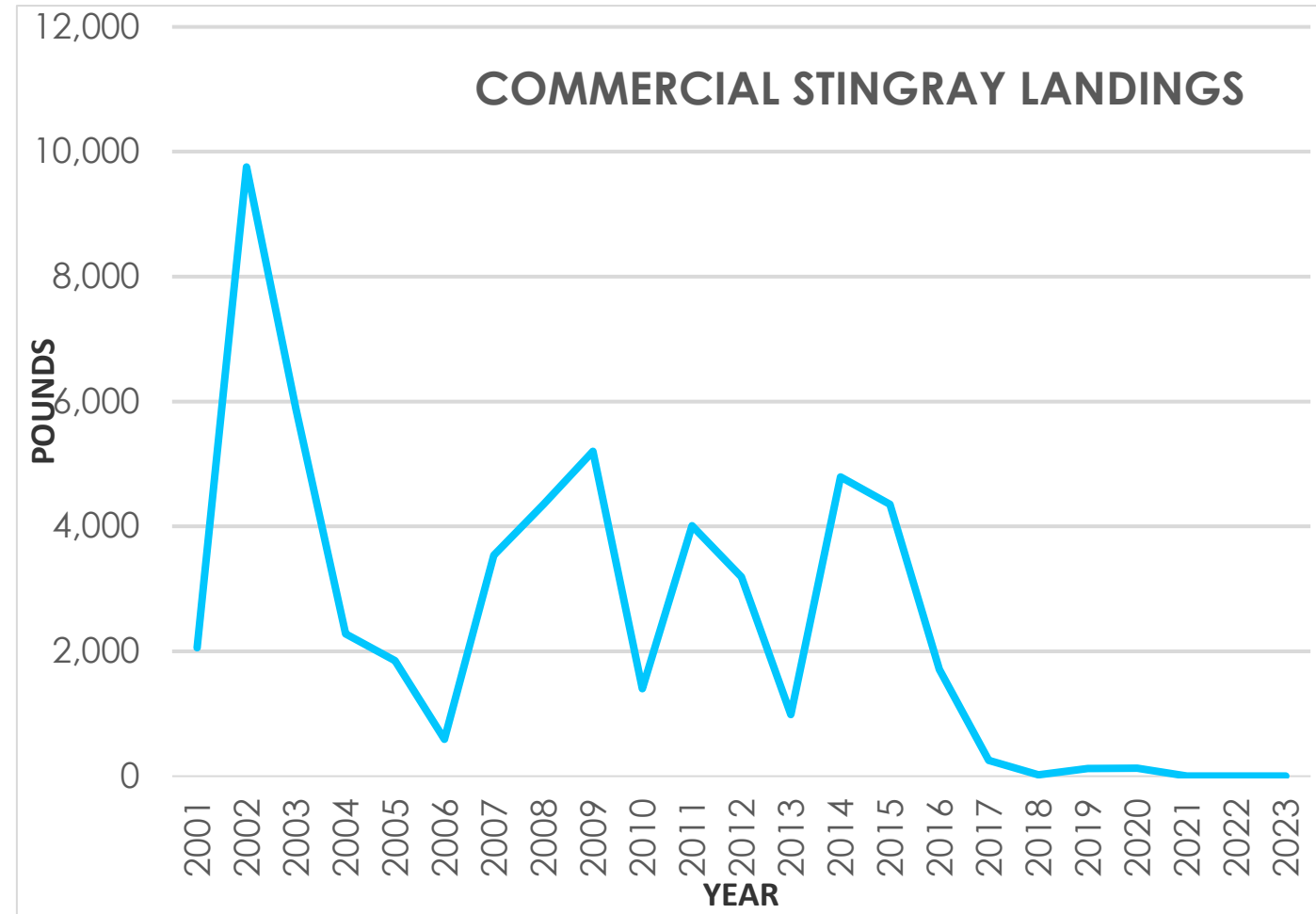
- Unregulated at Federal and State levels
- Have low reproductive capacity
 - Slow population growth
- Increasing target by bow fishing
- Potential regulations would address
 - Concern of collecting tails
 - Delayed mortality
 - Unregulated harvest



Skates and Rays

Background

- Atlantic Stingray embryos (4) development 4 months
- Southern Stingray embryos (10) development up to 11 months
- Cownose Ray embryos (6) development up to 11-12 months
- Clearnose skate egg (66) development 3 months, eggs incubate for 12 weeks.
*Mermaids purse



Potential Actions

- Recreational Bag limit of 2 per person
- Prohibited to separate all or portion of the tail
- 100% retention if using a gig, spear, or shot with an arrow
- Other concerns?
- Questions



Sharks



Background



Currently Prohibited

It shall be unlawful to use any snag line, trot line, long line or other hook and line device containing more than five (5) hooks in any waters of Alabama under the jurisdiction of the Marine Resources division as provided by Rule 220-2-.42

Trotlines

Permitted from 12:01 a.m., January 1 to 12:00 midnight April 30 of each year.

Trotlines may be used to take legal species other than saltwater gamefish

East of the Mobile Ship Channel and north of a line running from Mobile Ship Channel Marker 78 eastward to Blakely River Channel Marker 2, and then due east to the shoreline.

“Trotline” means any setline which is less than 300 feet in length with no more than 50 hooks

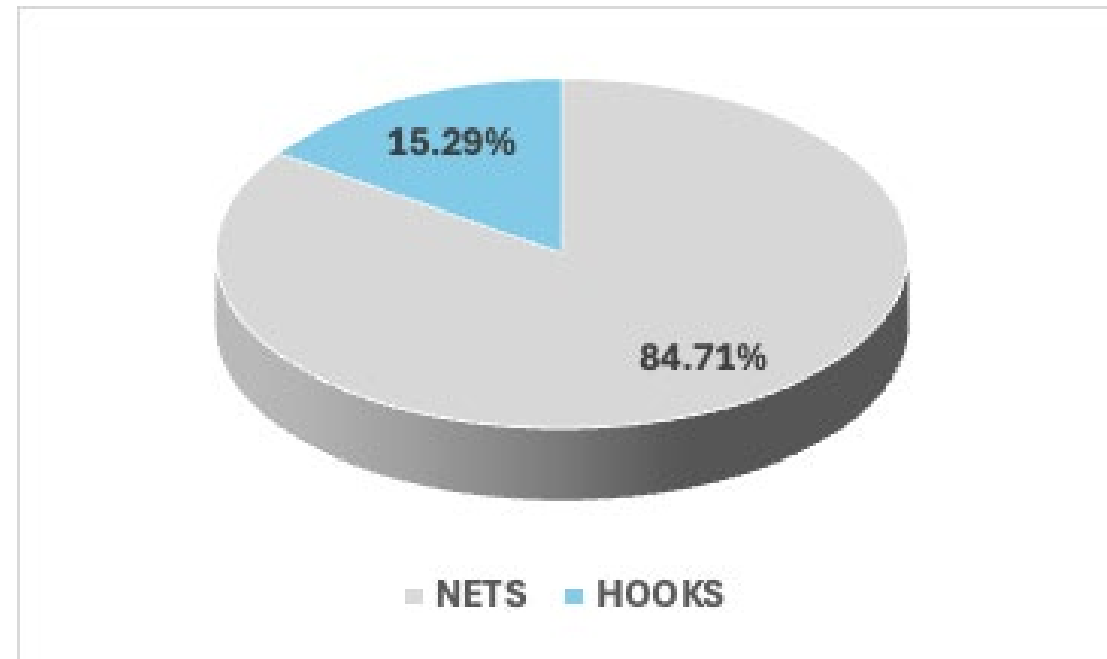
Background

Shark Season

When federal waters adjacent to Alabama waters are open to the commercial harvest of a shark species the Alabama waters of Mobile Bay, Bon Secour Bay, Mississippi Sound, and the Gulf of Mexico **south of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway** and **west of Little Lagoon Pass**

Landings

**2001-2023 ~ 3.7
million lb**



Consideration

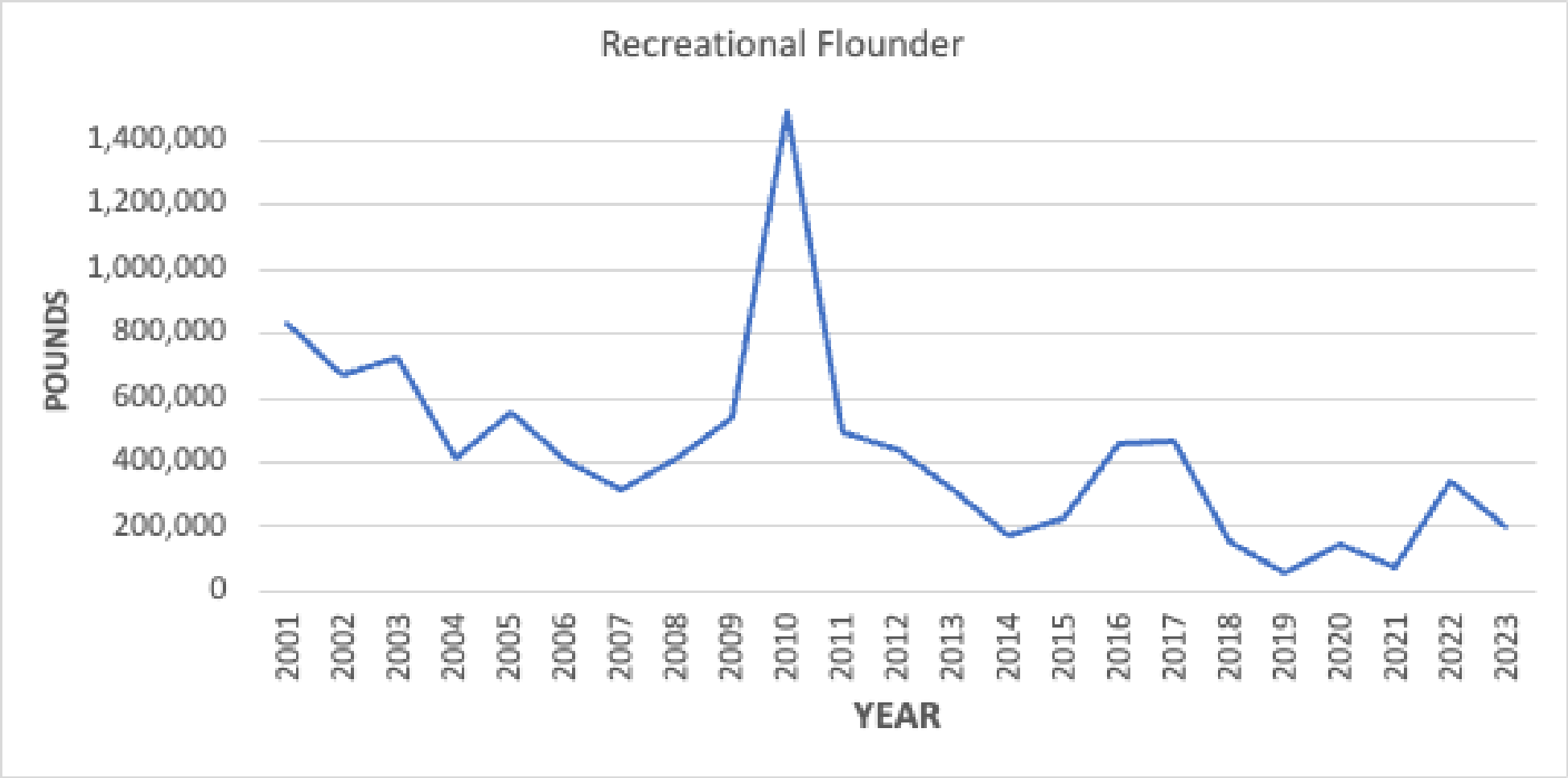
- Amend the commercial Shark regulation to allow for the capture of more sharks
 - 2400 feet of line and 50 hooks (15/0 non-stainless circle hooks)
 - Weighted mainline and marked buoys
 - One hour soak time (last hook in)
 - Prohibit squid as bait
 - Must remain in attendance of gear
- Bycatch concerns
- Thoughts?
- Questions

Flounder

COMMERCIAL



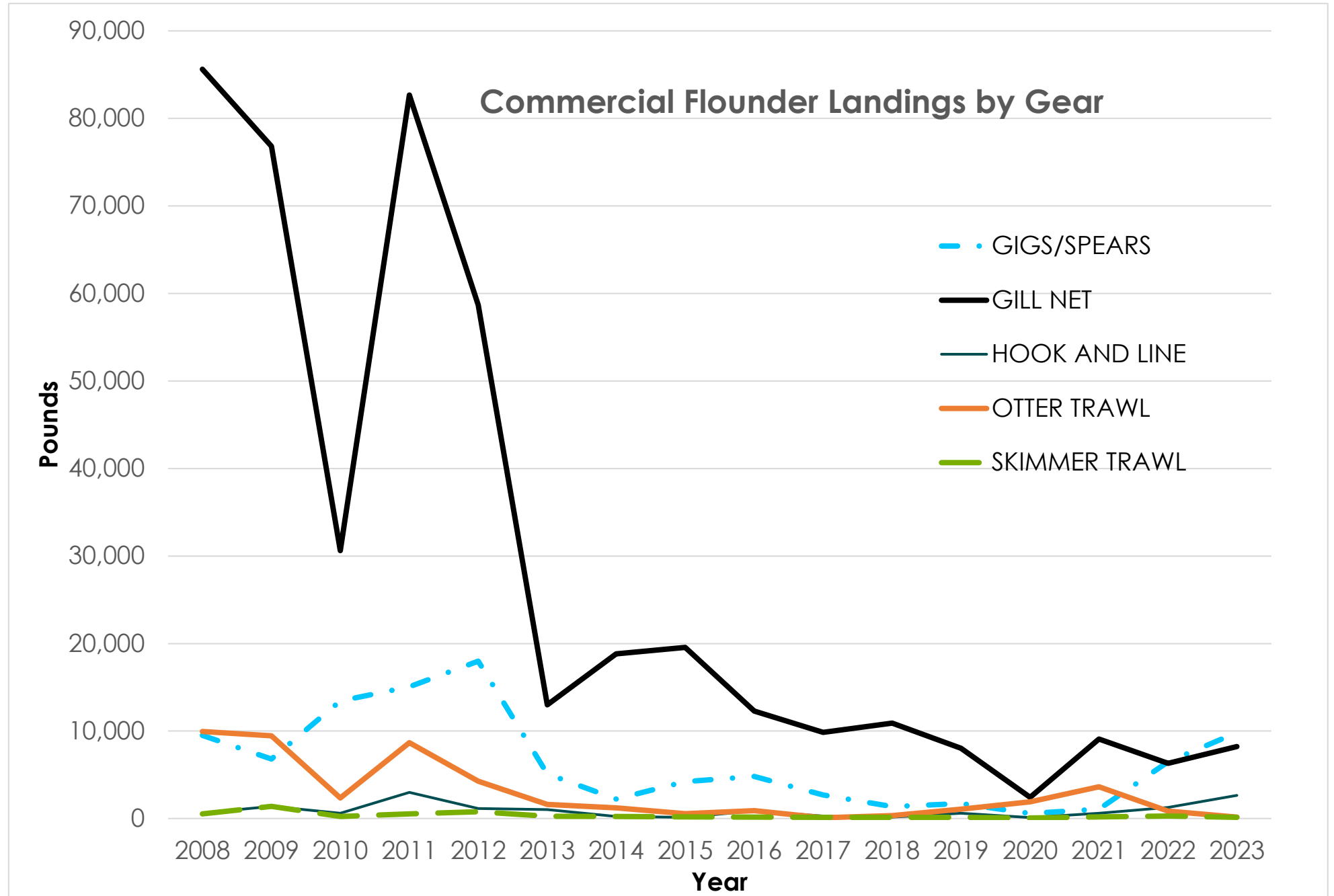
Flounder



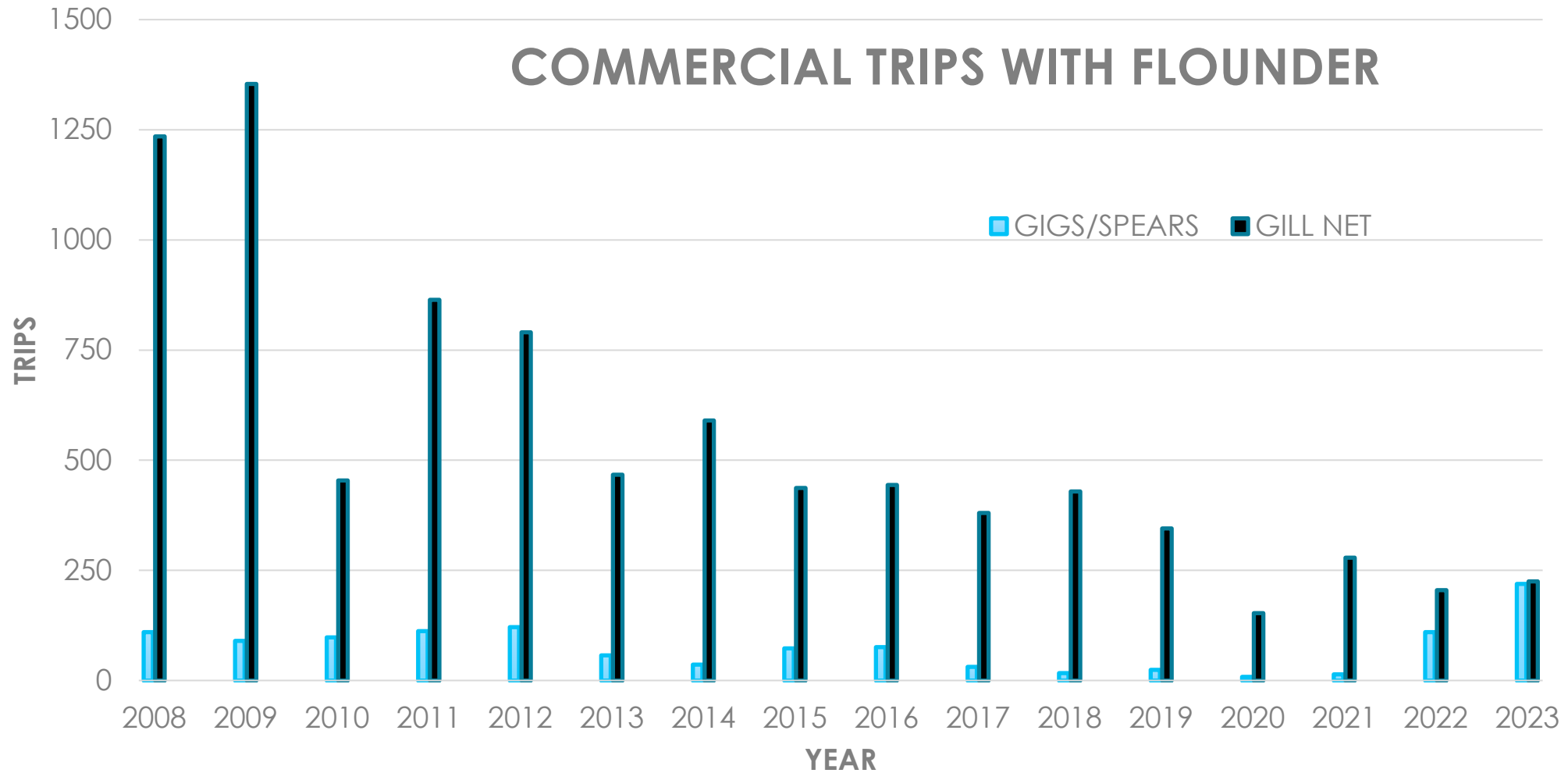
Flounder

- Primary Gears

- Gigs
- Gill Net



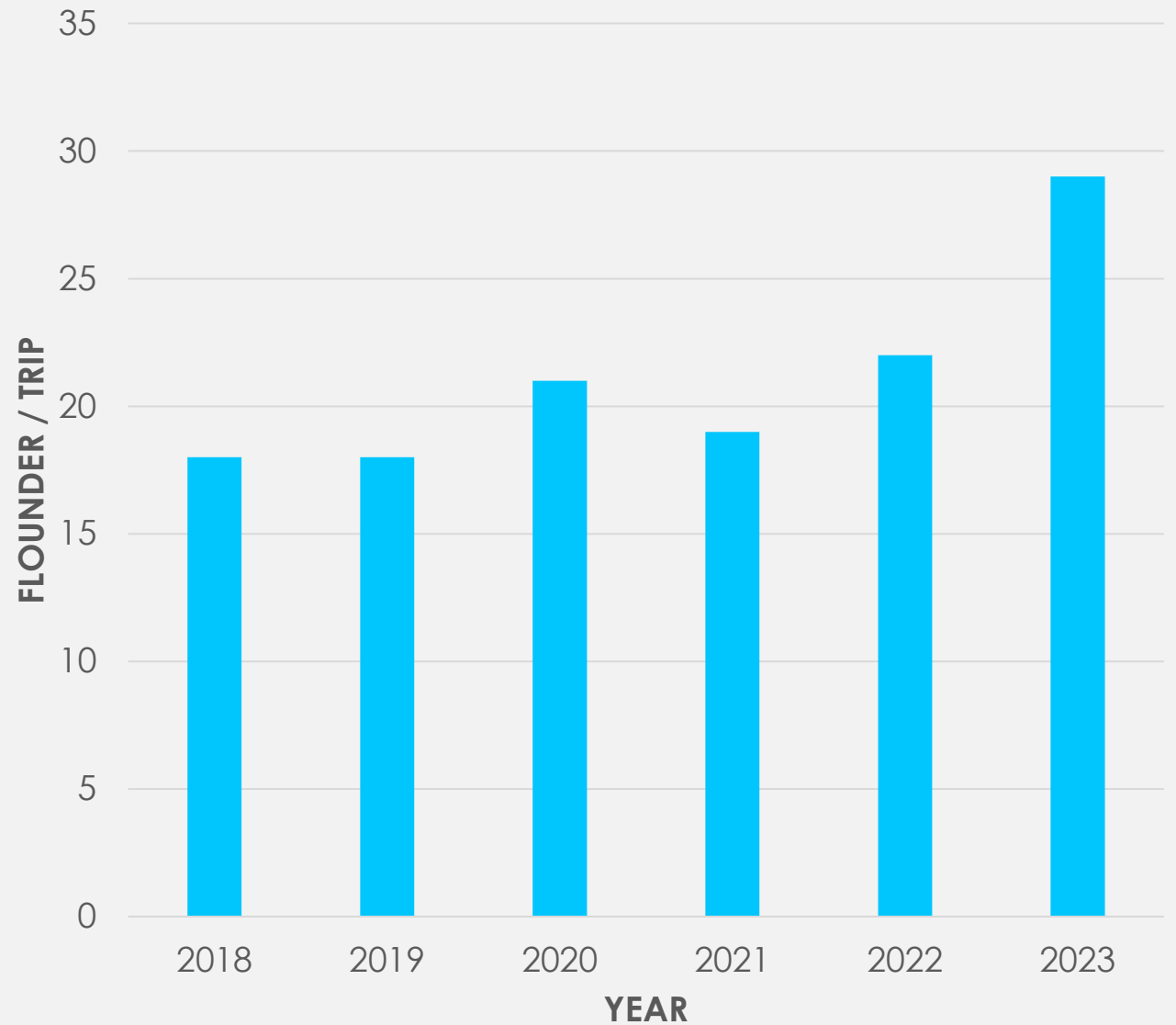
Flounder



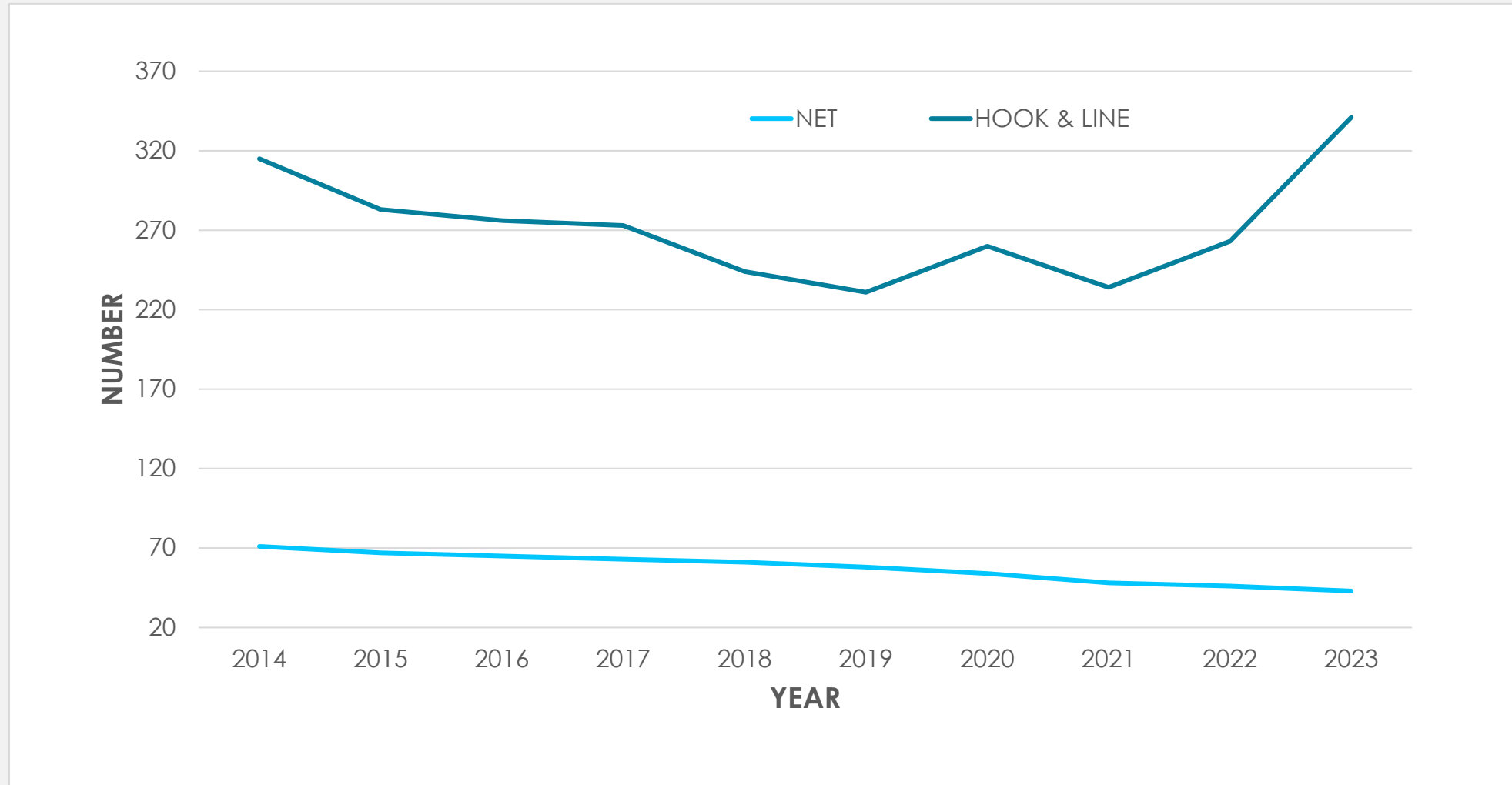
Flounder

Average number per commercial gillnet trip.

Weight of the catch divided by weight of 14" flounder.



Commercial Resident Licenses



Commercial Flounder Regulations

- Alabama: 14" TL @ 40 fish / vessel (2019)
- Mississippi: 12" TL @ 74,000 lb quota
- Texas: 15" TL @ 30 fish / day
- Louisiana: N/A @ N/A
- Florida: 14" TL @
 - 150 fish / trip Dec. 1st – Oct 14th
 - 50 fish / trip Oct 15th – Nov. 30th

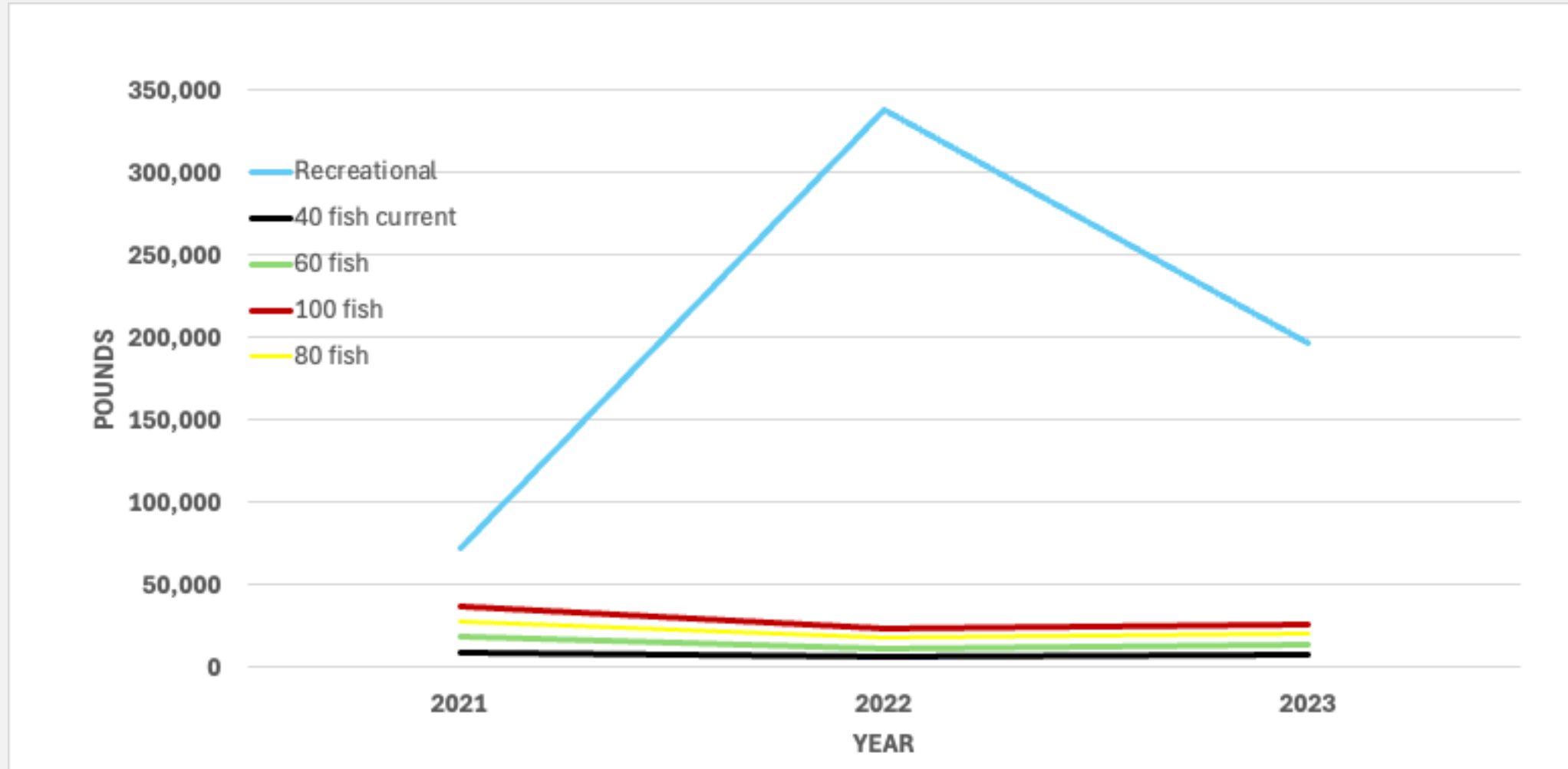
Seasons

- AL closed Nov 1st – Nov 30th
- LA closed Oct 15th – Nov 30th
- TX closed Nov 1st – Dec 15th
- FL closed Oct 15th – Nov 30th (Rec)

Potential Action

- Gill Net Only: Increase daily vessel limit to 60, 80, 100 flounder?

IMPACT OF INCREASING GILL NET DAILY LIMIT



Red Snapper

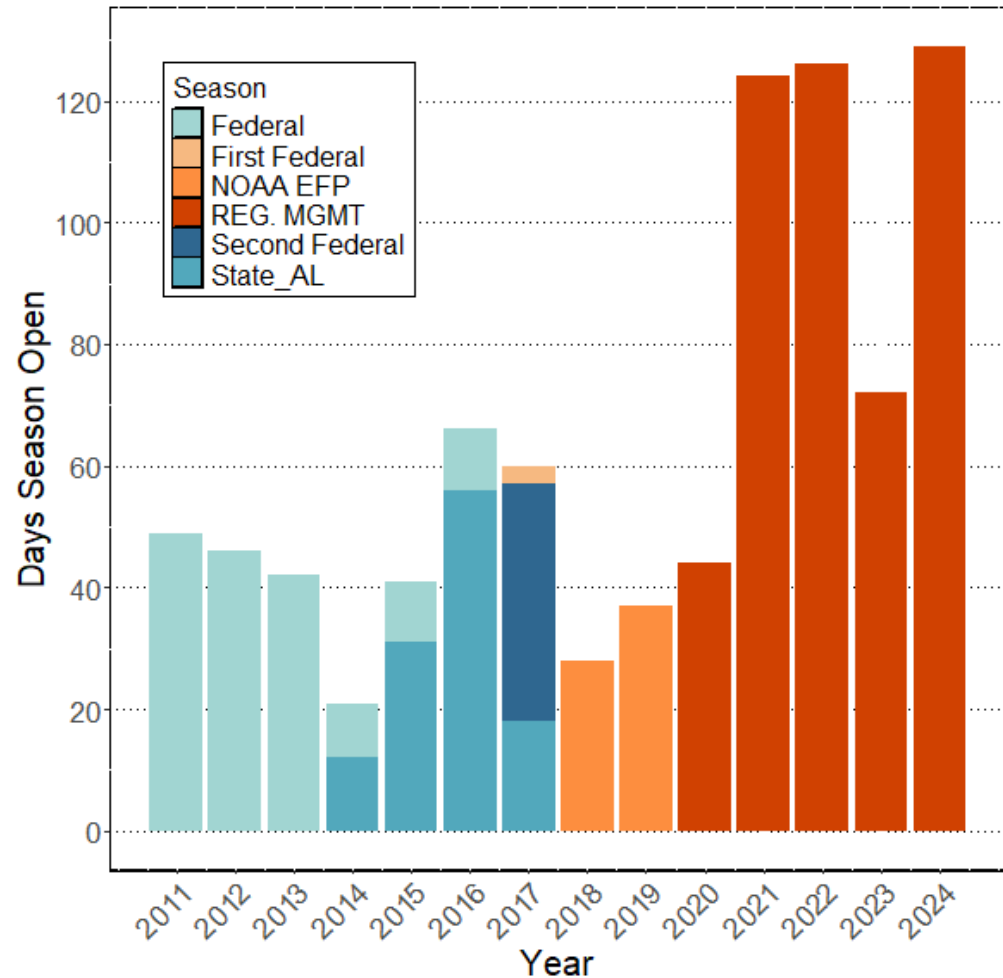
Summary of recent season lengths, Private and State charter angler harvests and catches and potential modification to the Private and State Charter angler season dates.



Background

Recent Private Recreational Management

- Decreasing Federal water seasons prior to 2018.
- Alabama State waters and Federal waters were open at different times prior to 2018.
- NOAA Fisheries Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) issued in 2018 to test new management providing greater flexibility to states.
- EFP transitioned to Regional Management in 2020.

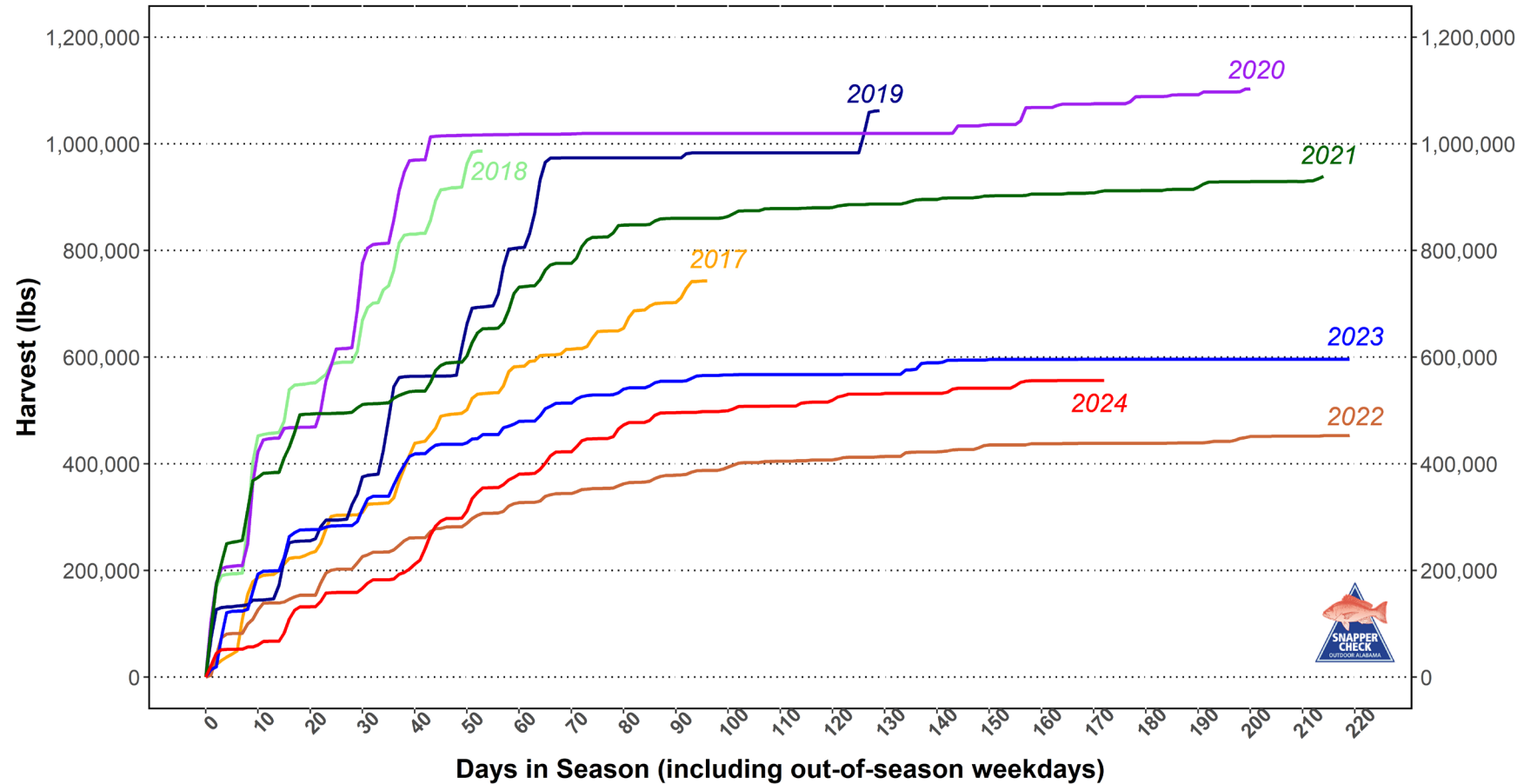


Season length for 2024 is projected.

Background

Recent Private Recreational Management

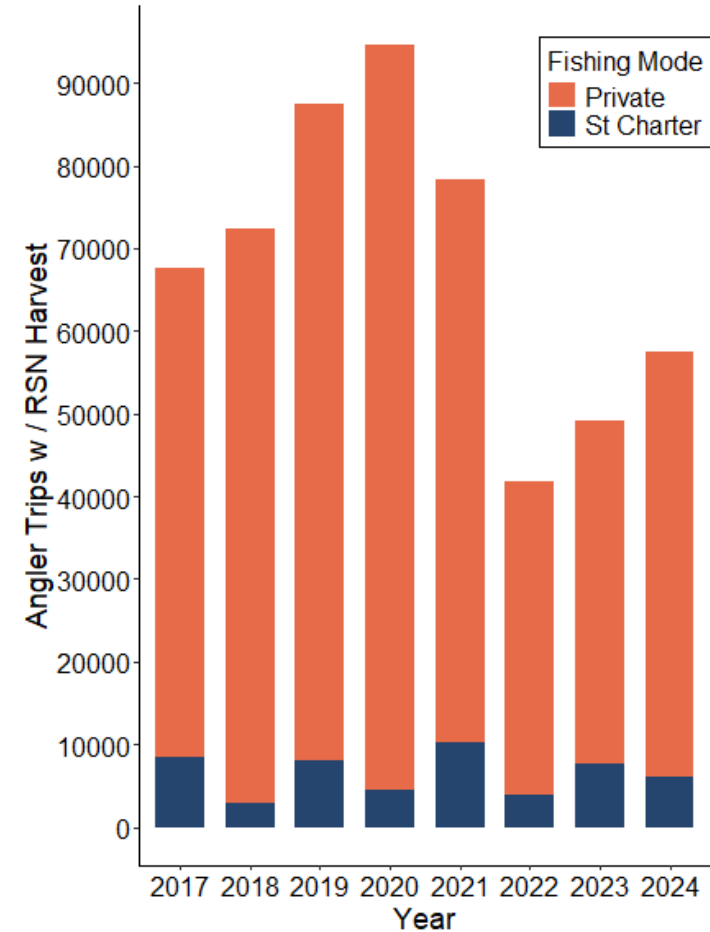
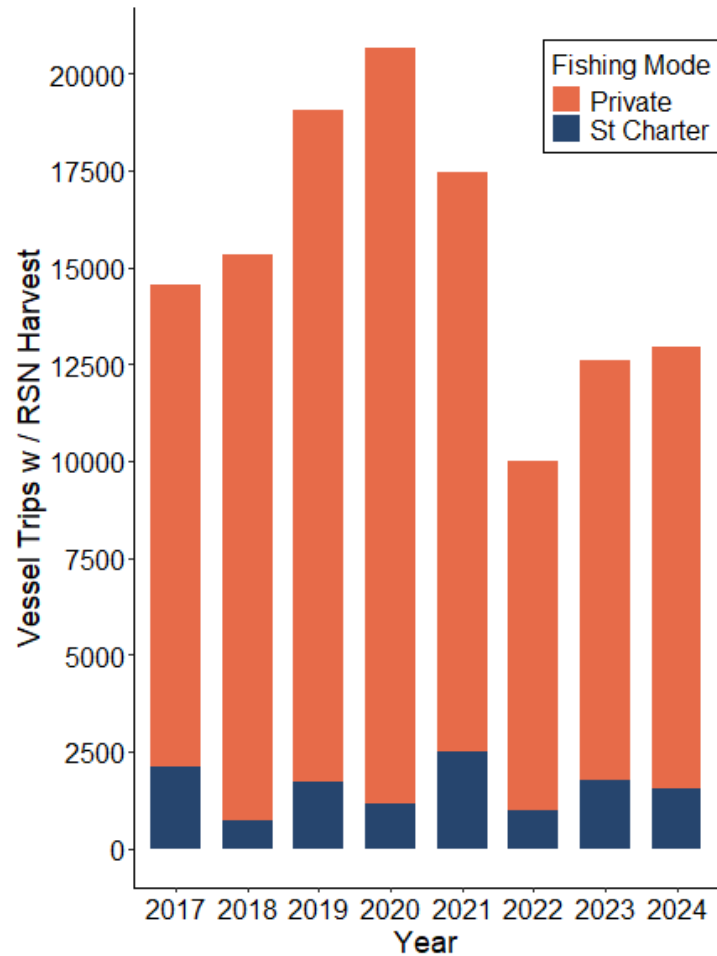
- Mandatory reporting requirement for recreational vessel operators to report landings of Red Snapper
- “Snapper Check” was implemented to monitor Alabama Red Snapper harvest (landing reports and dockside surveys)



Data for 2024 is through 11/11 and preliminary.

Background

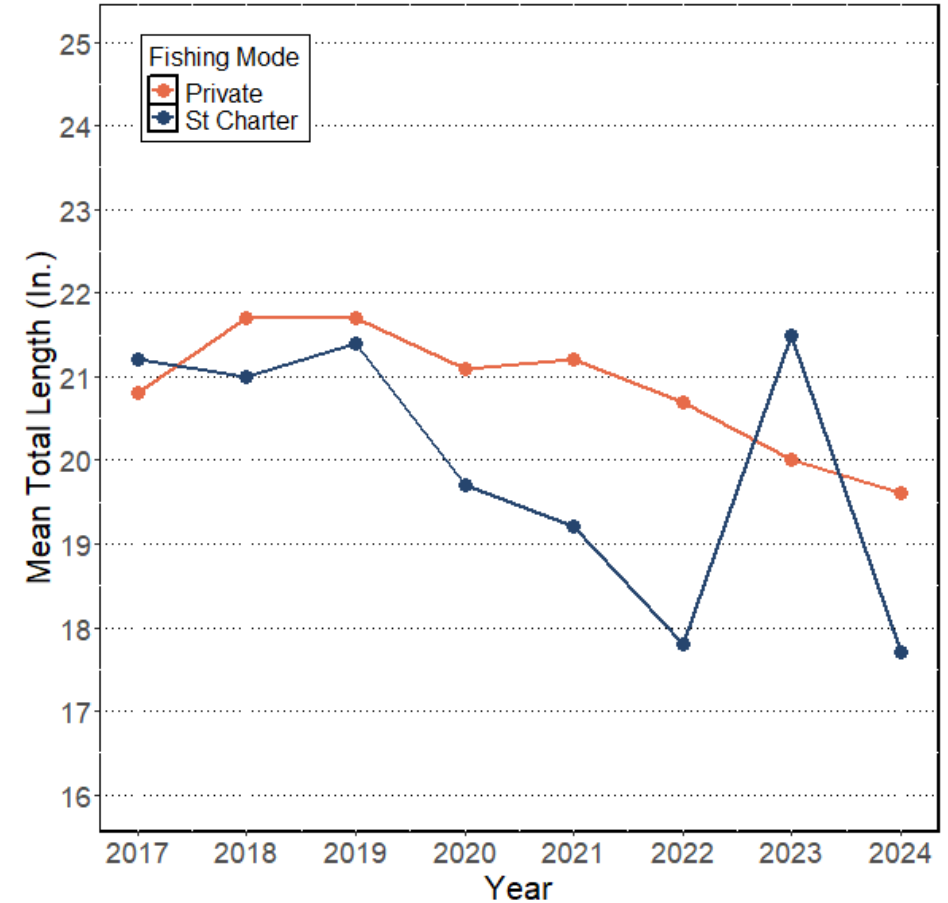
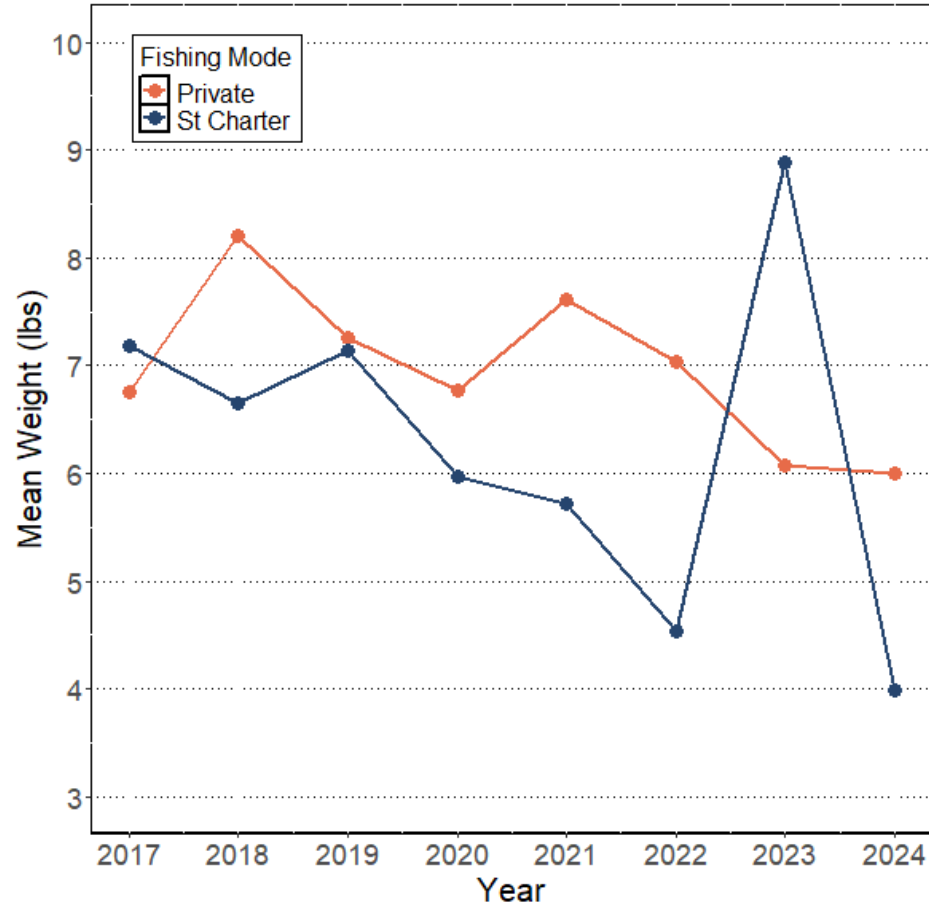
Snapper Check Summary



Data for 2024 is through 11/11 and preliminary.

Background

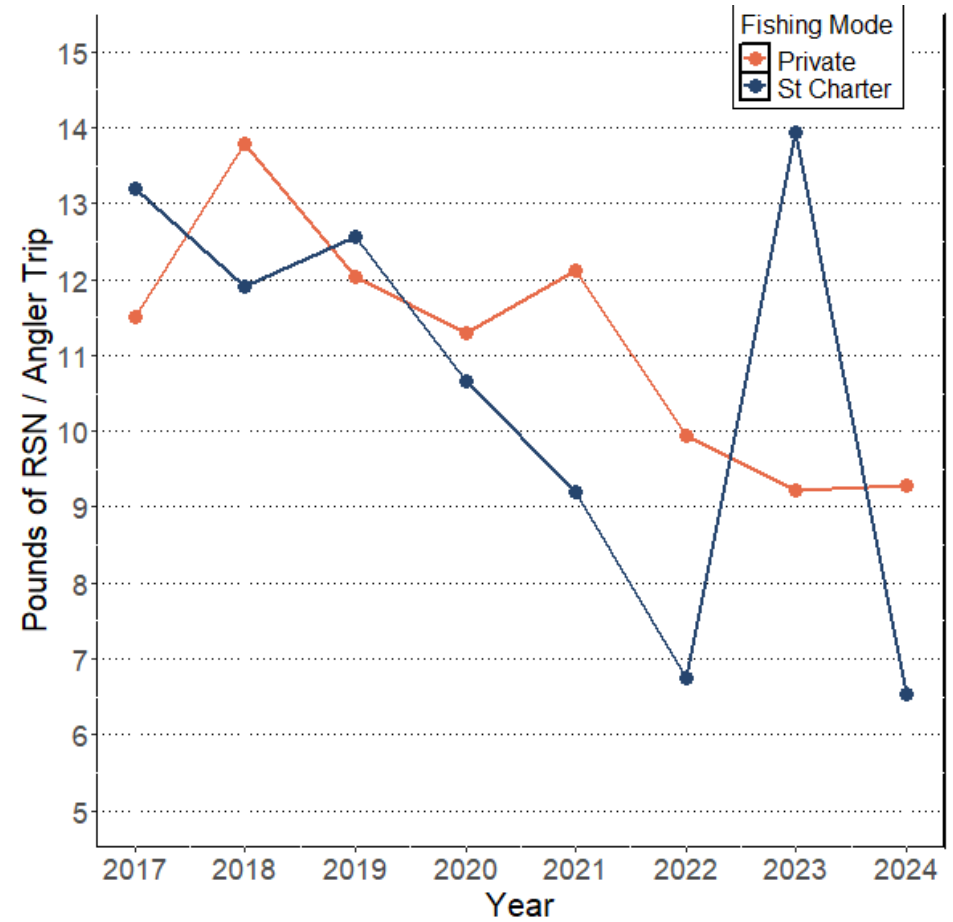
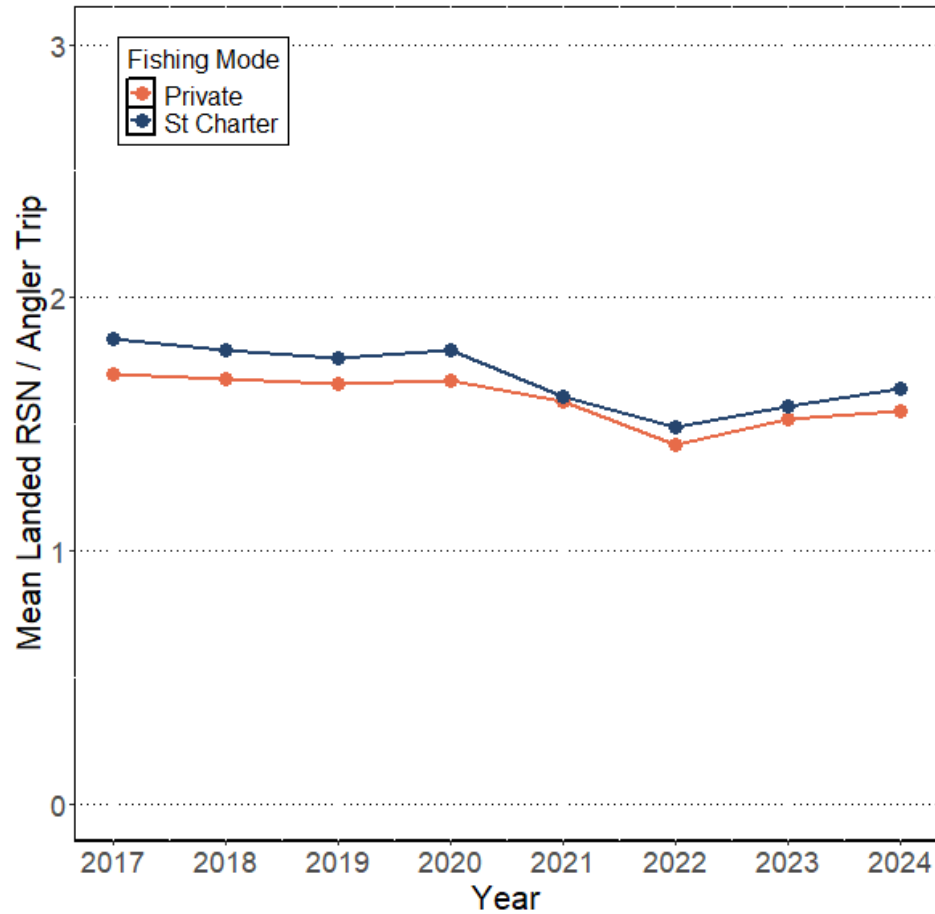
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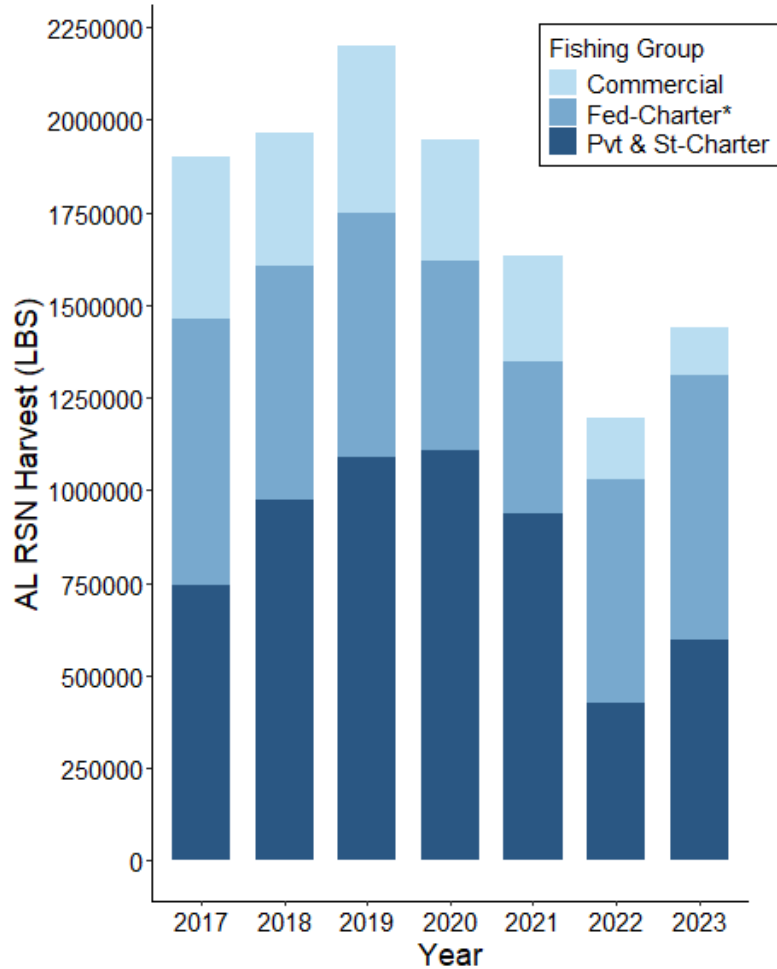
Background

Snapper Check Summary

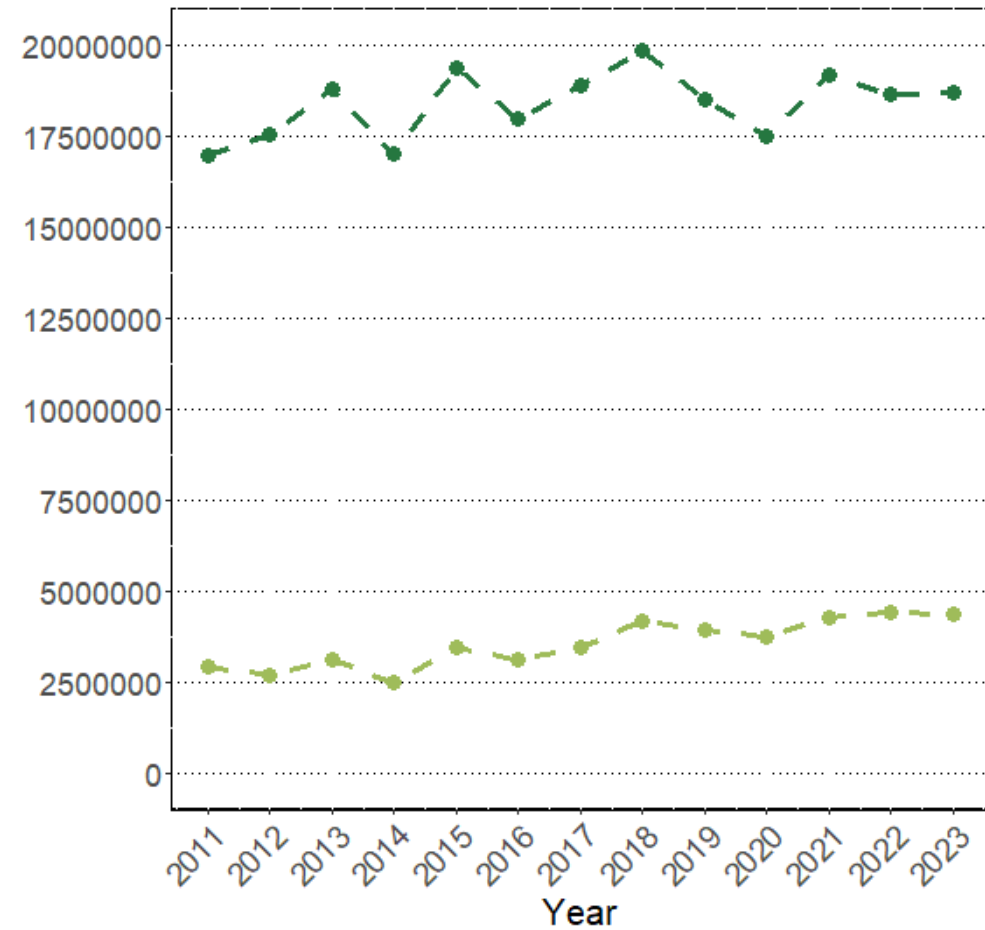


Data for 2024 is preliminary and through 11/11.

Harvest and Biomass Estimate



* - Does not include Headboat harvest



Habitat Survey Estimates ■ 2+ YO RSN ● LBS 2+ YO RSN

Summary and Considerations

- Regional management has provided additional access (days).
- Additional access has resulted in smaller size of landed fish and a slight reduction in the number of harvested fish per angler trip.
- Fishery-independent research suggests abundance is stable.
- Opportunity exists to modify the season structure while maintaining the ability to monitor catch levels to stay below the harvest limit.
- 2021-2024 season structure: Open the Friday before Memorial Day for four-day weekends (Fri-Mon) until the harvest limit is met.
- Suggested alternative season structure: Open Friday before Memorial Day – June 30 for 7 days/week and four-day weekends beginning July until the harvest limit is met.
- Other options?

Approve of eliminating Captain/crew bag limits on AL Commercial Party Boats in State waters? Y N

Sheepshead

Reduce bag limit from 10 fish to 8 fish per person? Y N

Increase size limit from 12" FL to 14" FL? Y N

Increase size limit from 12" FL to 15" FL? Y N

Combination of reduced bag limit and increased size limit? If yes, which size limit? _____

Red Drum

Approve of prohibiting harvest of red drum over 26" ? Y N

Snook

Approve of creating a bag and size limit for Snook? Y N

Skates and Rays

Approve of 2 fish per person bag limit? Y N

Approve of no cutting of tails and releasing? Y N

Approve of full retention of skates or rays taken with gig/spear/arrow? Y N

Flounder

Approve of increase in commercial gillnet limit from 40 fish to: no change 60 80 100

Sharks

Approve of allowing 2400' of line with no more than 50 hooks, anchored to the bottom, marked with buoys, 15/0 hooks, no squid for bait, soak time limited to one hour and must be constantly attended? Y N

Red Snapper Private angler/state party boat season

Would you like to fish from Friday before Memorial Day, 7-days a week through June and then 4-day weekends beginning in July until catch limit is met? Y N

Would you be less likely to cull/high grade legal sized fish if you could keep more than 2 fish per person? Y N

Tripletail

What are you seeing, would you like to see any changes? _____

**Comment Cards
or
Email comments to:
[marine.resources@dcnr.
alabama.gov](mailto:marine.resources@dcnr.alabama.gov)**

Questions?
Thank you!

