

Monkfish and Skate Staff Report

September 23, 2025
Gloucester, MA & hybrid

Monkfish and Skate Report Plan



Part A – Monkfish and Skate Staff Presentation

- a. Development of monkfish and skate FY 2026-2030 specifications
- b. Development of monkfish and skate effort controls (Monkfish Days-At-Sea, monkfish & skate possession limits)

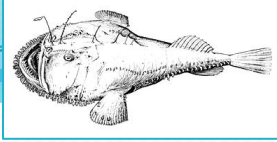
Part B – Council discussion/motions

- a. Final proposed action for Monkfish FW17
- b. Final proposed action for Skate Specifications

*Final action scheduled for today for Monkfish FW17 and Skate Specifications;
October 8th for MAFMC (for Monkfish FW17).*

Monkfish Framework 17

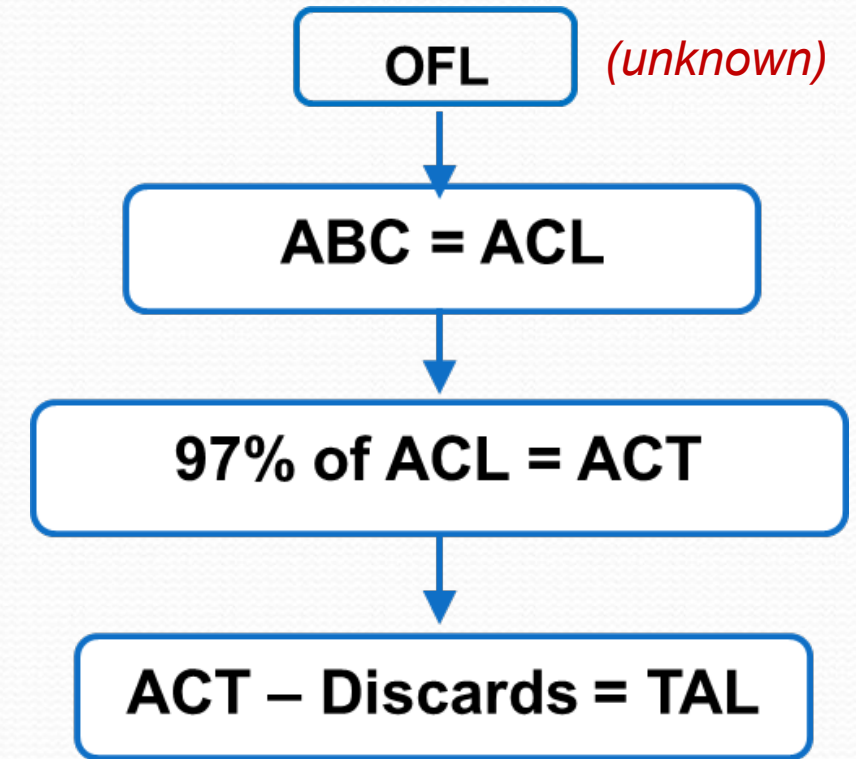
FY 2026-2030 Specifications



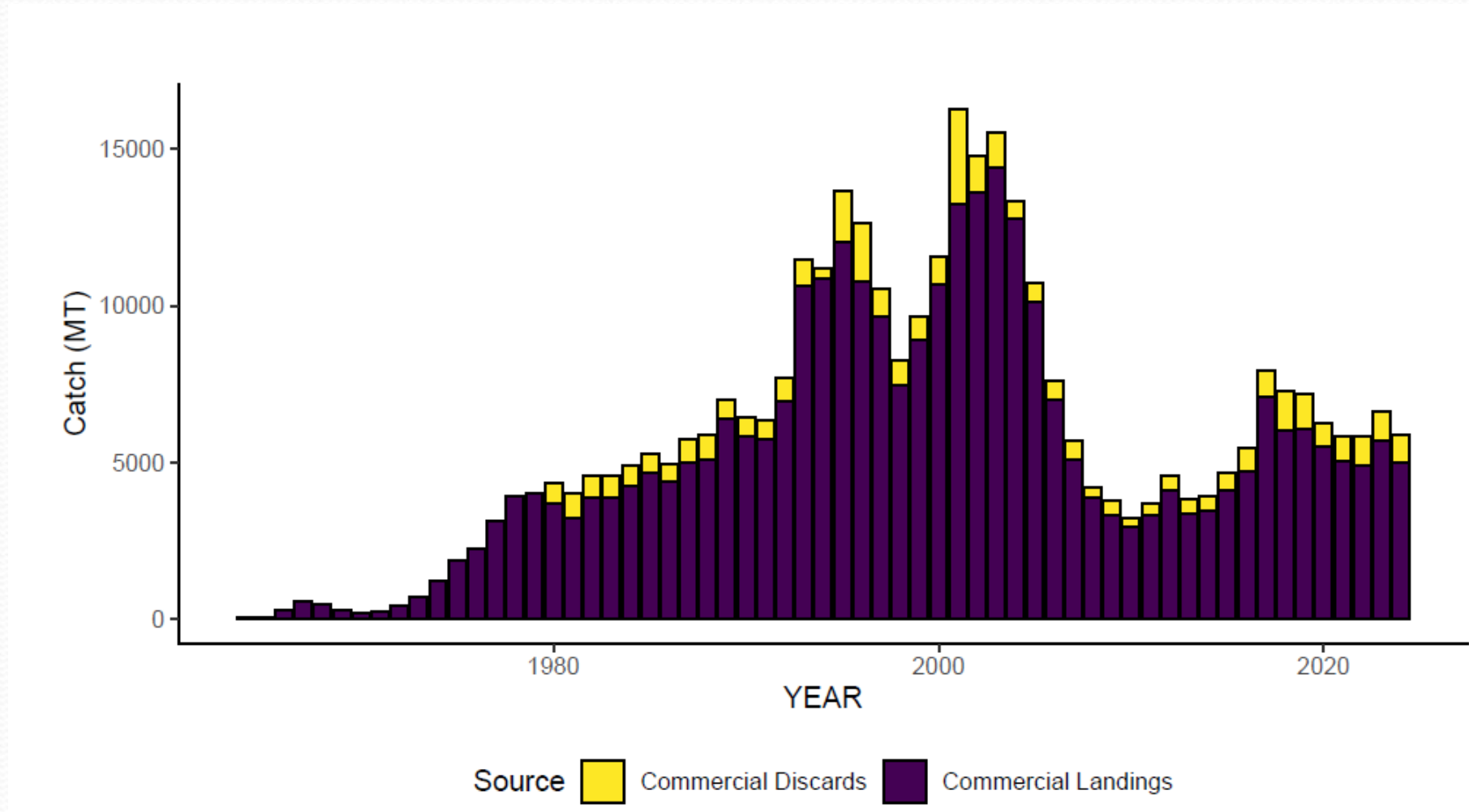
Monkfish Framework Adjustment 17: FY 2026-2030 Specifications

Actions:

- ❖ Overfishing limits for North and South
- ❖ Acceptable biological catches (ABC) & total allowable landings (TAL) for North and South for FY 2026-2030
- ❖ Effort controls (Days-At-Sea, possession limits)
- ❖ Accountability measure trigger authority

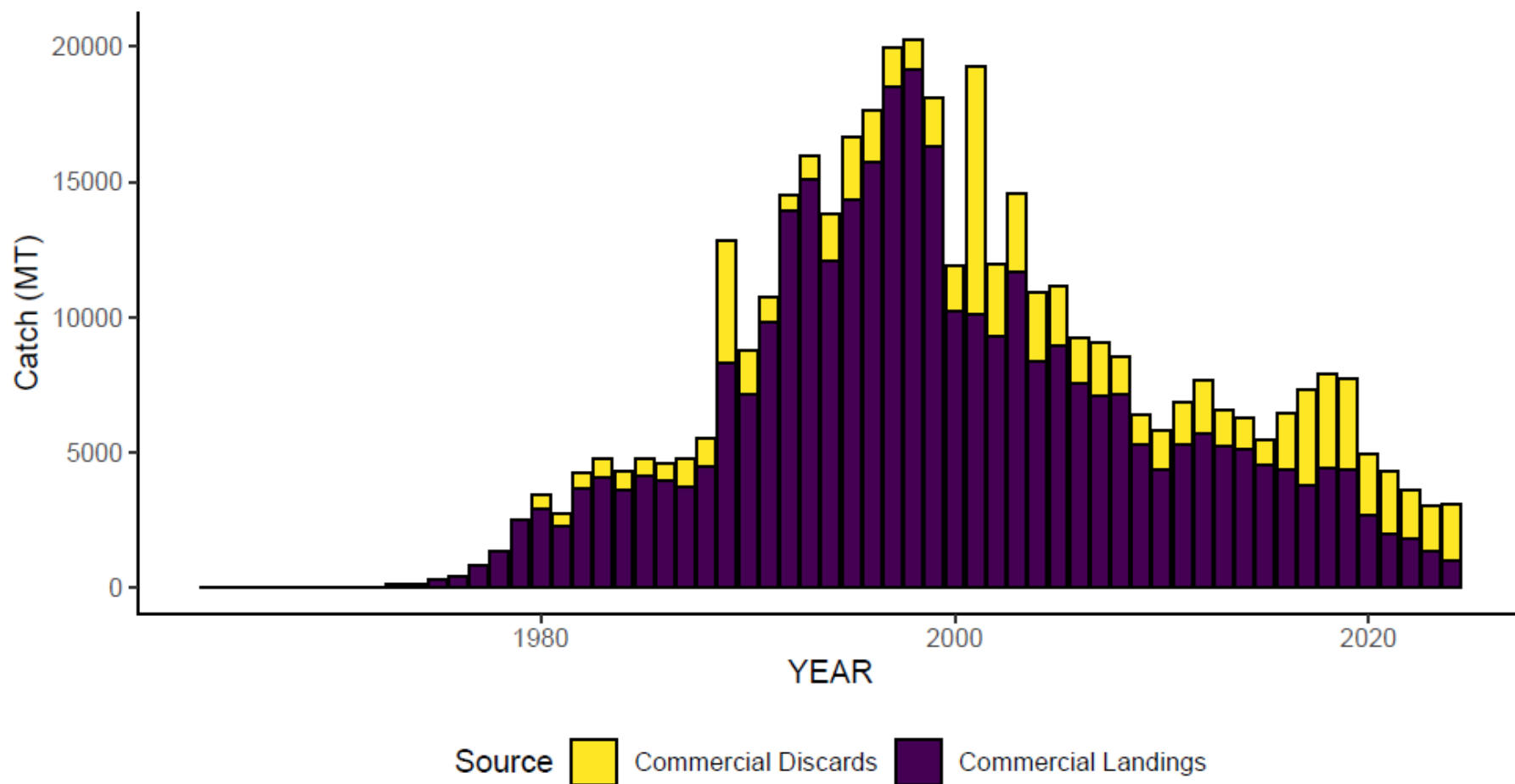


Monkfish landings (mt) and discards (mt) in the Northern Fishery Management Area from calendar year 1964 through 2024.

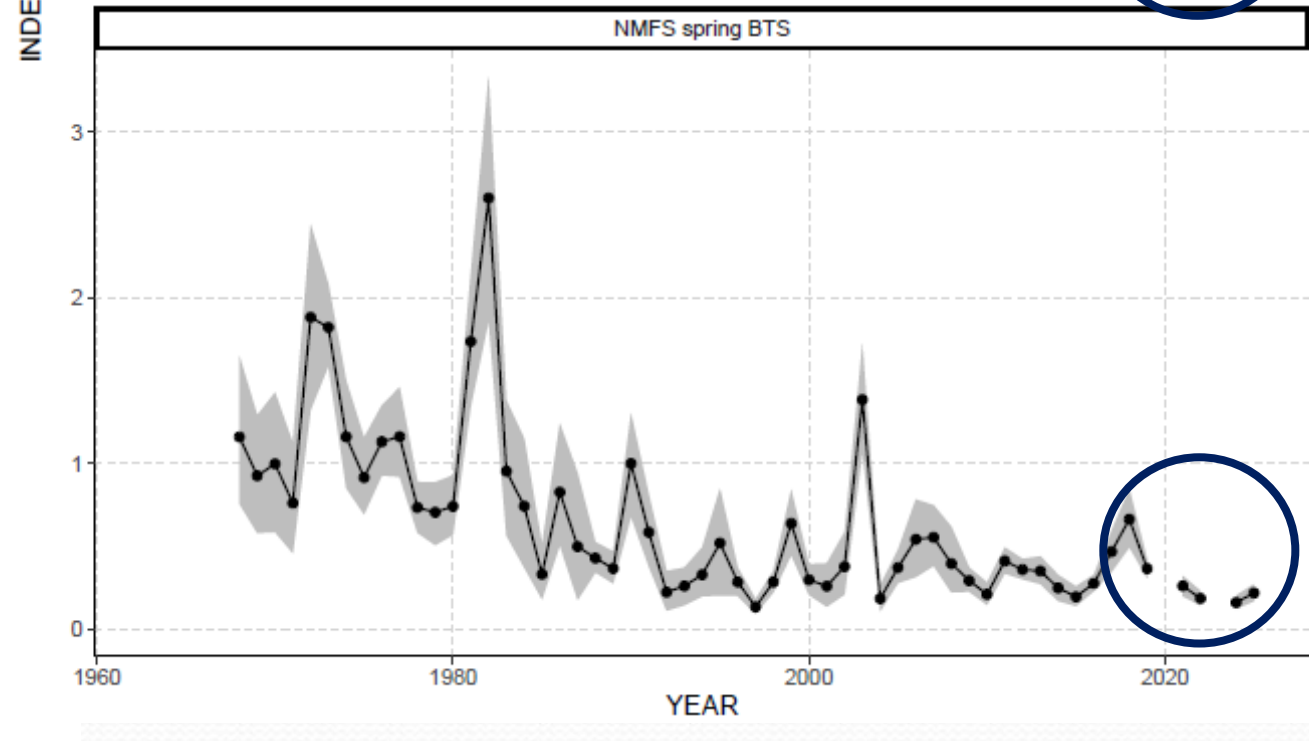
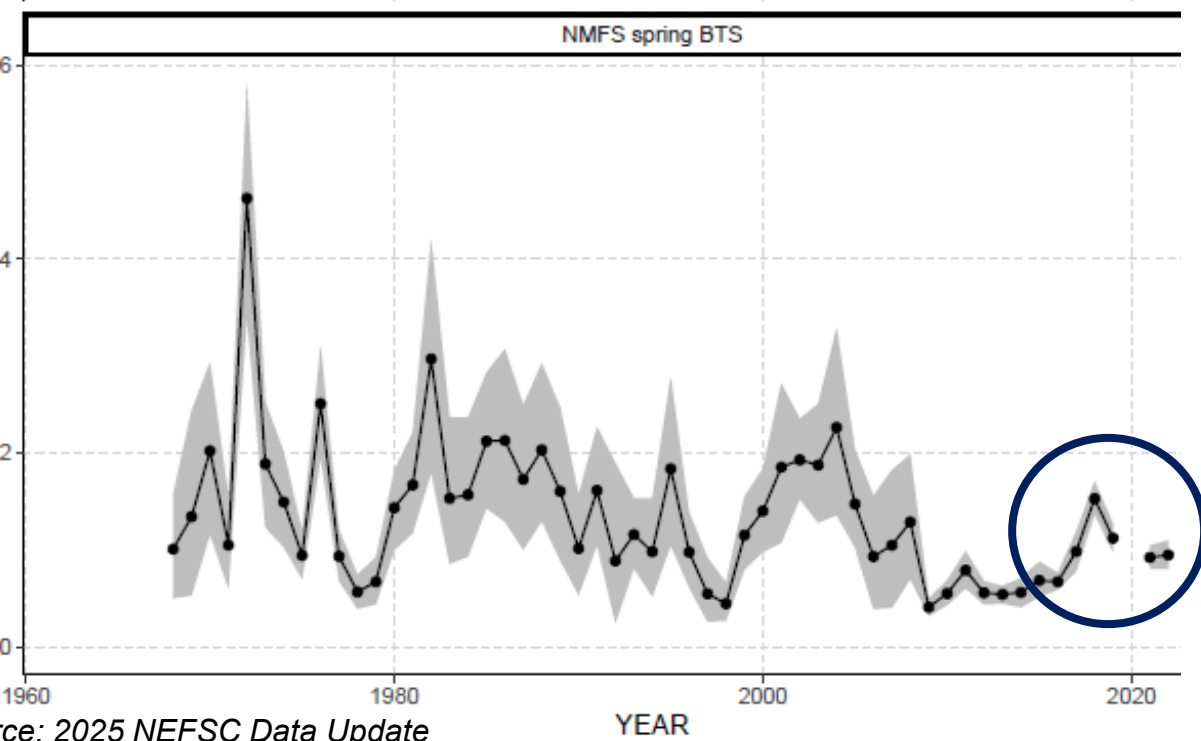
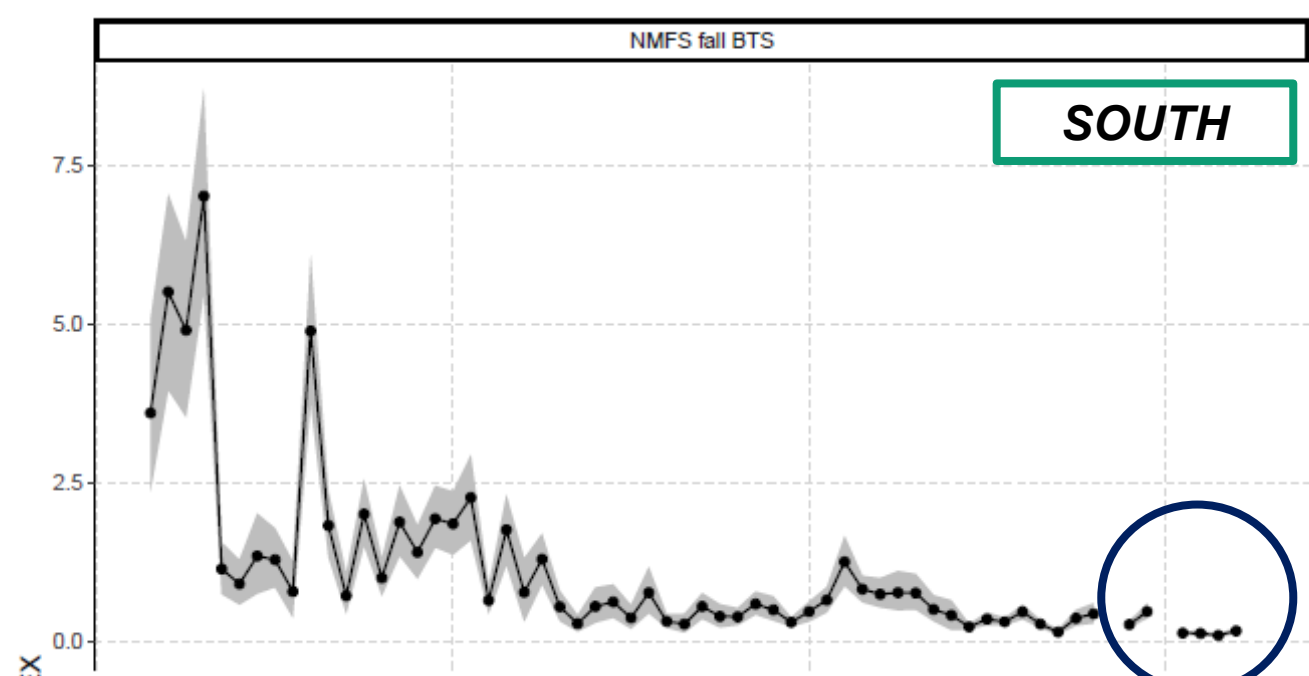
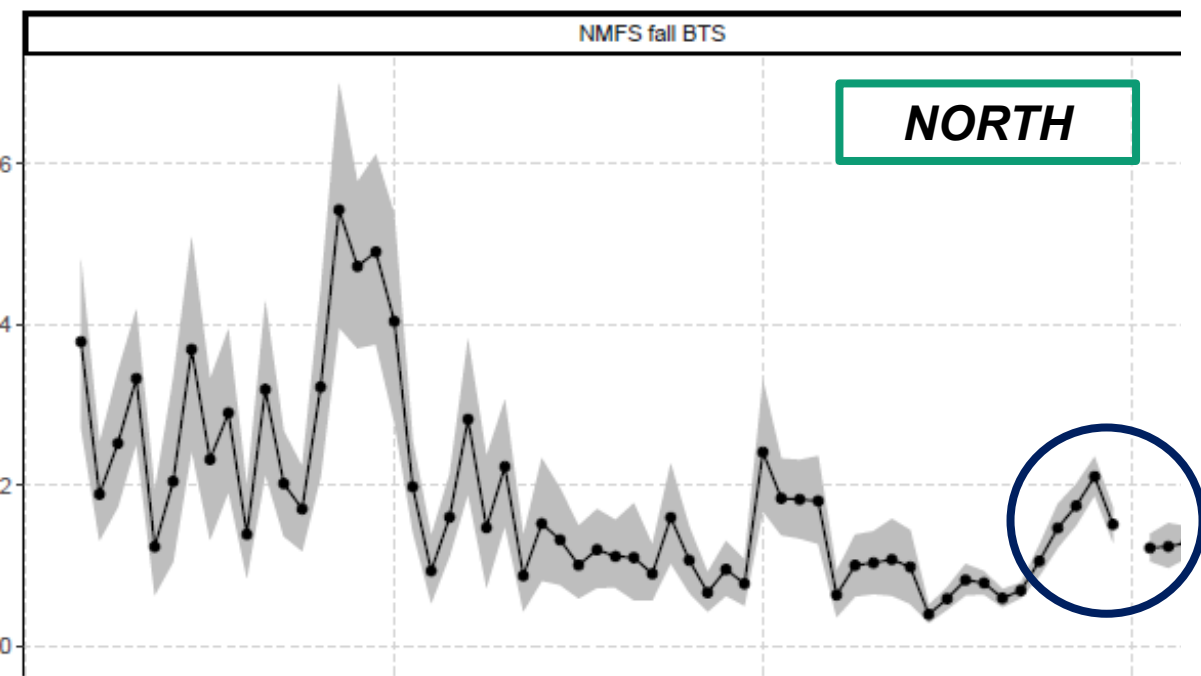


Source: 2025 NEFSC Data Update

Monkfish landings (mt) and discards (mt) in the **Southern** Fishery Management Area from calendar year 1964 through 2024.



Source: 2025 NEFSC Data Update



Comparison of status quo (FYs 2023-2025) and the proposed action (FY 2026-2030) for the **Northern** Fishery Management Area

	ABC (=ACL)	ACT (97% of ACL)	Estimated Discards (10-year median)	Federal TAL (ACT – discards)	% Difference in TAL from Status Quo
Status quo	6,224 mt	6,038 mt	729 mt	5,309 mt	0%
Proposed Action for FY 2026-2030	6,224 mt	6,038 mt	863 mt	5,174 mt	-3%

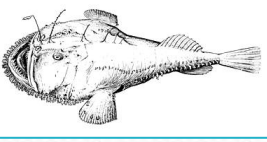
Proposed


Comparison of status quo (FYs 2023-2025) and the proposed action (FYs 2026-2030) for the **Southern Fishery Management Area**

	ABC (=ACL)	ACT (97% of ACL)	Estimated Discards (10-year median)	Federal TAL (ACT – discards)	% Difference in TAL from Status Quo
Status quo	5,861 mt	5,685 mt	2,205 mt	3,481 mt	0%
Proposed Action for FY 2026-2028	5,861 mt	5,685 mt	2,198.5 mt	3,487 mt	0%
Proposed Action for FY 2029-2030	3,766 mt	3,653 mt	2,198.5 mt	1,455 mt	-58%

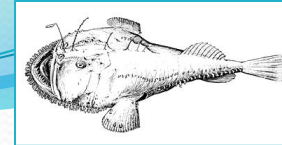
Proposed





Monkfish Accountability Measure (AM) trigger authority

- Monkfish FW17 would eliminate the requirement for the Councils to take action to implement the ACT adjustment (50 CFR 648.96(d)(2)(i)); would not change what the AM does or how it is triggered
- → Responsibility to take action to implement the ACT adjustment would fall only to NMFS; would identify any overage via year-end catch accounting
- = Reduces the administrative burden necessary for NMFS and the Councils to coordinate



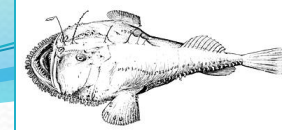
FY2024 Monkfish ACL Accounting

NORTH

FY2024 Northern Monkfish Catch (ACL = 6224 mt)

Region	Source	Pounds	Metric Tons	Percent ACL
NORTHERN	Commercial landings	11,697,881	5,306	85.3
NORTHERN	State-permitted only vessel landings	80,558	37	0.6
NORTHERN	Estimated dead discards	1,838,711	834	13.4
NORTHERN	Recreational dead discards	3,021	1	0.0
NORTHERN	Recreational kept	0	0	0.0
NORTHERN	TOTAL CATCH	13,620,171	6,178	99.3

Note: Total catch does NOT include recreational landings as the ACL does not include recreational landings; Source: CAMS, Observer Program, & MRIP accessed 9/2/2025



FY2024 Monkfish ACL Accounting

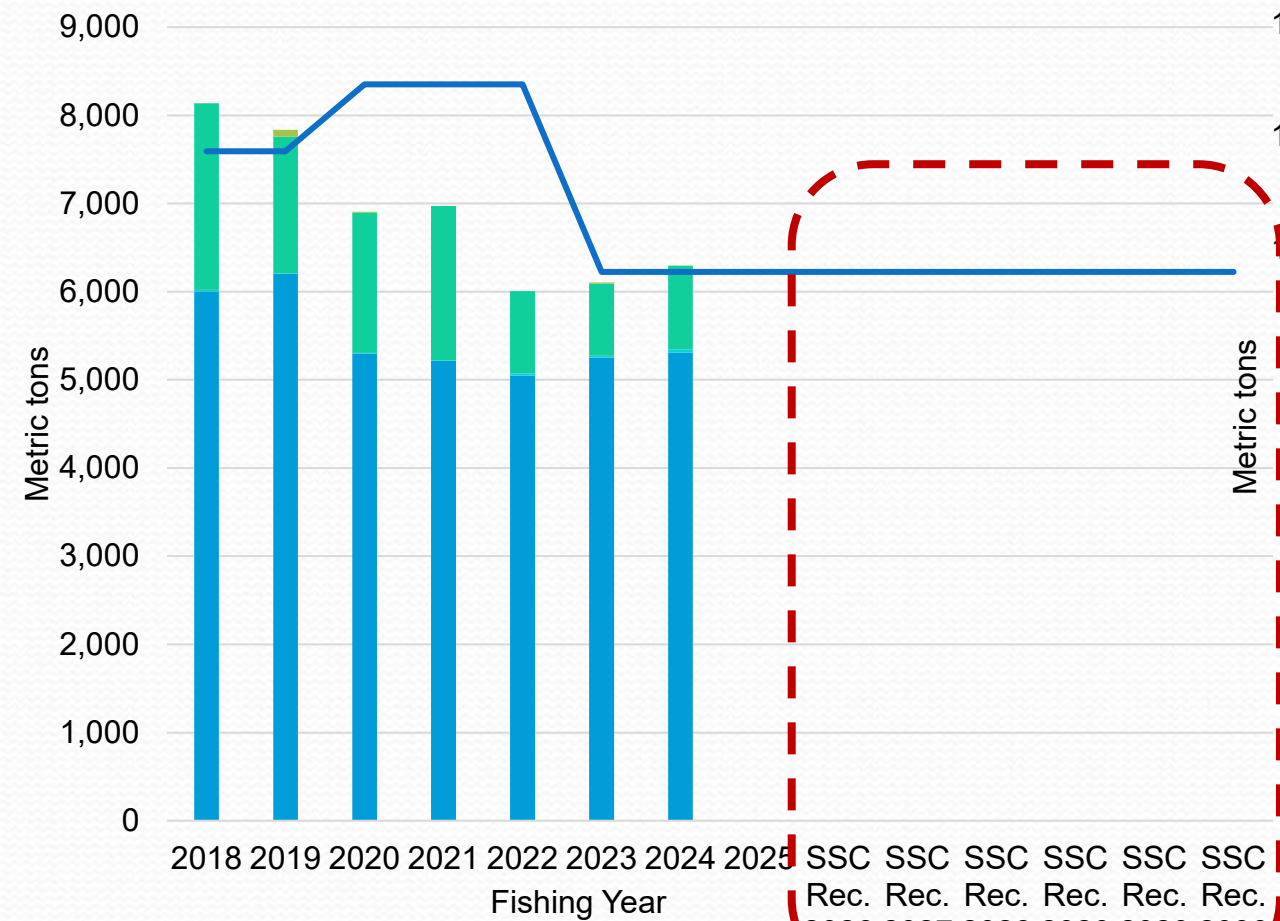
SOUTH

Region	Source	Pounds	Metric Tons	Percent ACL
SOUTHERN	Commercial landings	1,814,282	823	14.0
SOUTHERN	State-permitted only vessel landings	5,331	2	0.0
SOUTHERN	Estimated dead discards	3,374,178	1,531	26.1
SOUTHERN	Recreational dead discards	21,558	10	0.2
SOUTHERN	Recreational kept	166	0	0.0
SOUTHERN	TOTAL CATCH	5,215,349	2,366	40.3

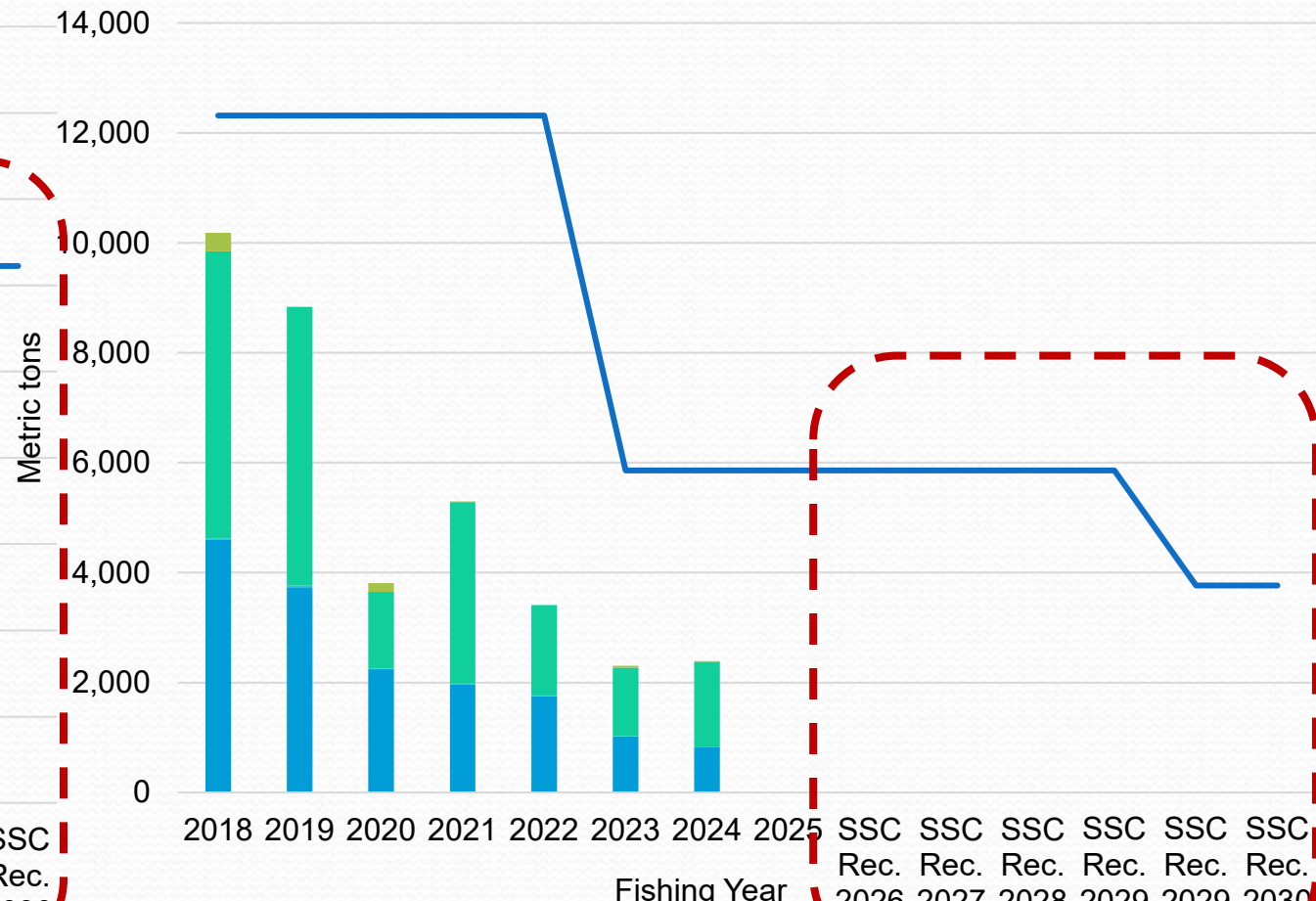
Note: Total catch does NOT include recreational landings as the ACL does not include recreational landings; Source: CAMS, Observer Program, & MRIP accessed 9/2/25

Monkfish Fishery Performance

**North: Monkfish Catch Relative to ACL, FY 2018-2024,
with SSC Recommendations for FY 2026-2030**



**South: Monkfish Catch Relative to ACL, FY 2018-2024,
with SSC Recommendations for FY 2026-2030**



Monkfish PDT Recommendations

- Unknown overfishing limits for northern & southern areas
- SSC recommendations on ABCs for northern & southern areas
- The revised specifications would not warrant changes to monkfish effort controls (i.e., monkfish possession limits and Monkfish day-at-sea (DAS) allocations) in either region
 - Even for FY 2029-2030 in the southern area with the reduced ABC: total allowable landings not substantially different from recent catch (FY 2023-2025) → unlikely to trigger Accountability Measure
- Desire to make step-wise changes in changes to coordinated monkfish and skate effort controls → increase skate possession limits first and assess any changes to monkfish landings/constraints

Impacts: Monkfish Specifications & Effort Controls

Valued Ecosystem Component (VEC)	Expected Impacts
<i>Target Species</i>	Uncertain to slight + • Unknown stock status; large reductions in ABCs via Monkfish FW13 relative to FY20-22 → unlikely overfishing is occurring • More precautionary in the south for FY29-30 due to lower survey indices & recent catch similar to lower TAL; current effort controls have kept landings within TALs
<i>Non-Target Species</i>	Moderate + • Stock status not expected to change; catch controlled through other FMPs
<i>Protected Species</i>	Slight – to moderate + • Depends on status of species, gear type, interaction risk
<i>Physical Environment/ Essential Fish Habitat</i>	Slight – • Gillnets (in south) do not cause adverse effects to EFH; trawls (in north) do, though minimal changes in fishing effort relative to recent years
<i>Human Communities</i>	Slight + to +: • Unlikely to constrain fishing effort or trigger accountability measures → similar landings and revenue as FY23-25 → preventing economic disruption

Skate FY 2026-2030 Specifications

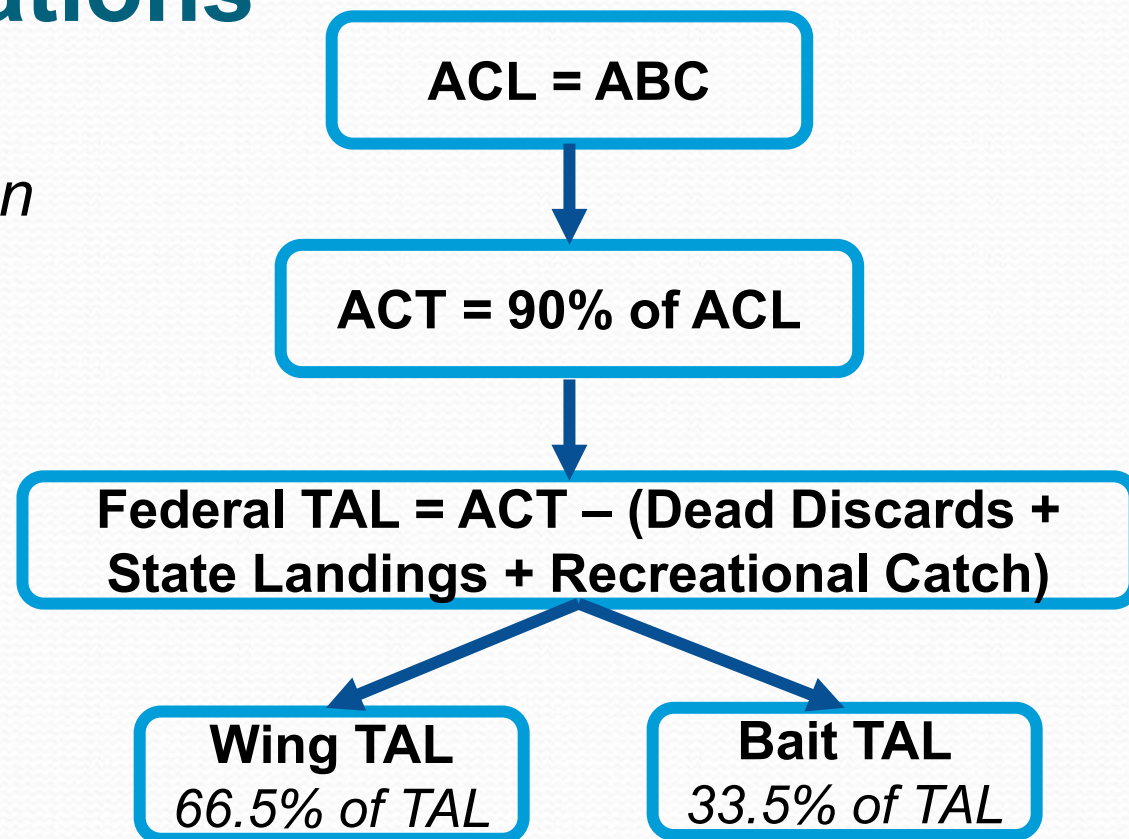


FY 2026-2030 Skate Specifications

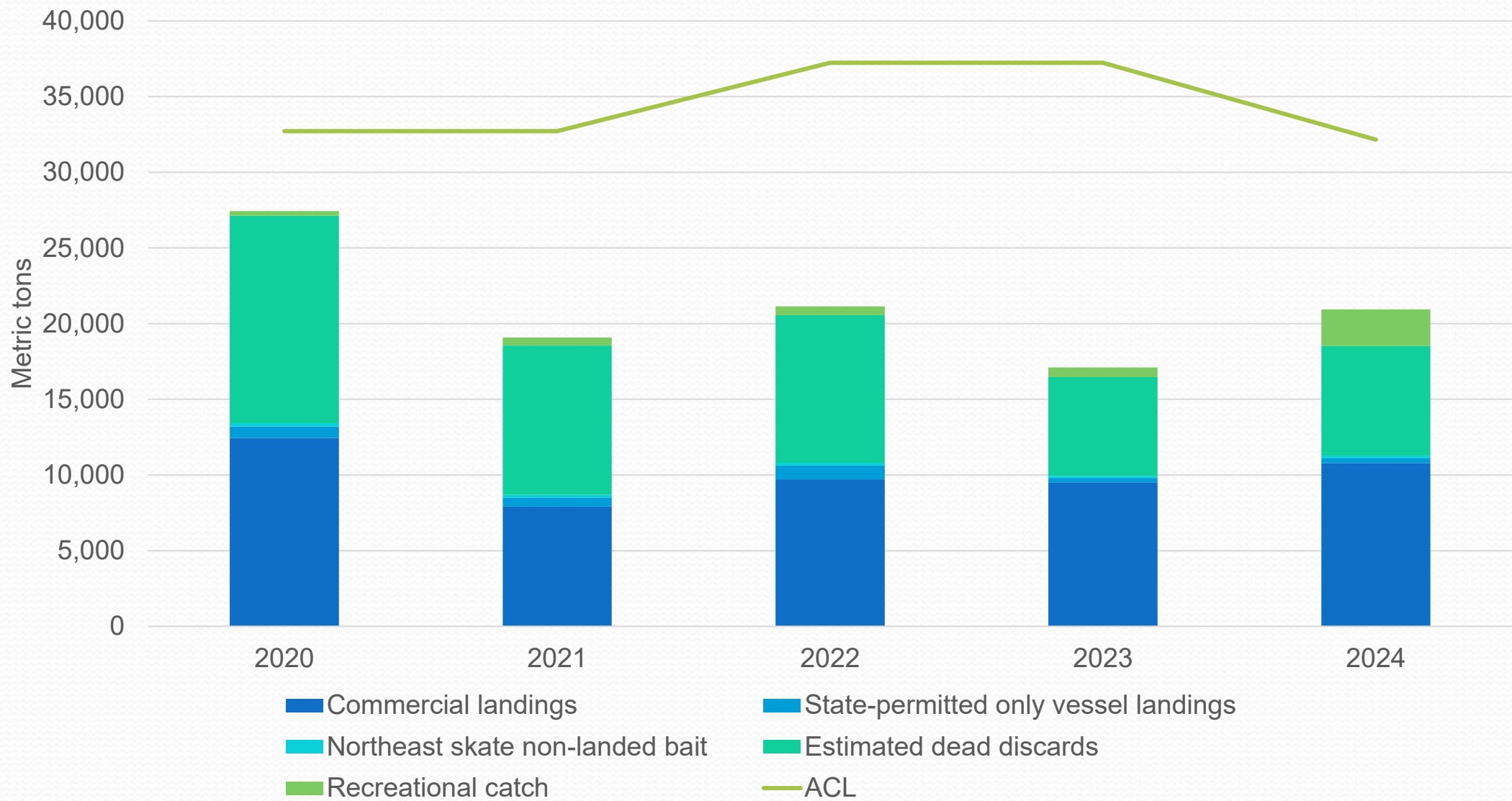
Type of document: *Supplemental Information Report (SIR)*

Scope of action:

- ❖ Specifications (ABCs, TALs)
- ❖ Wing and bait seasonal possession limits, trigger for reducing in-season possession limit to incidental levels



Skate ACL vs Catch



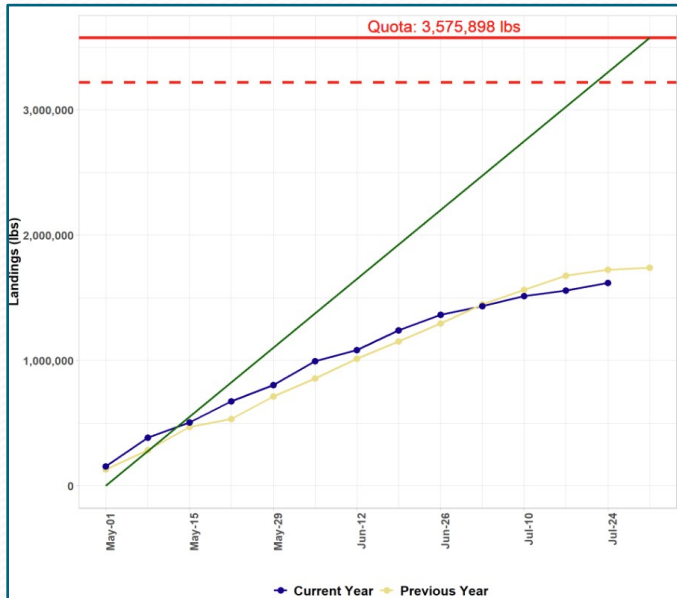
Skate TAL vs Landings

- In FY 2020-2024,
 - Wing TAL: 42-77% landed/year
 - Bait TAL: 45-65% landed/year

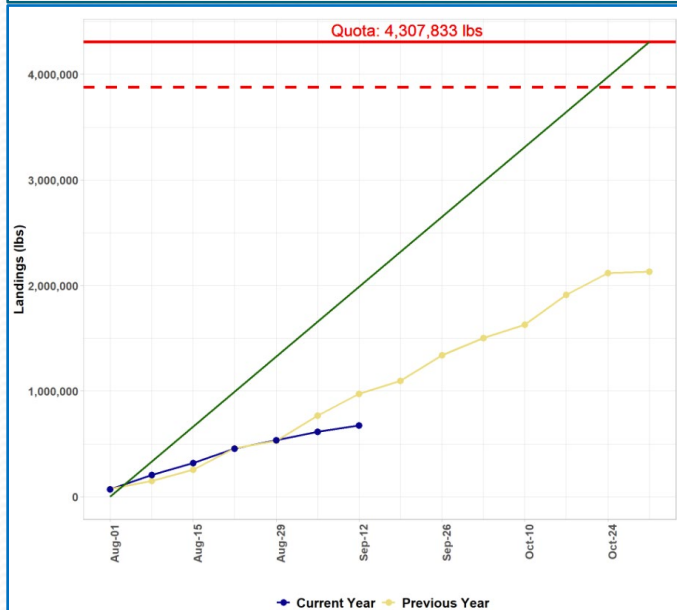


Bait FY 2025

Season 1
(May-July)
45% landed



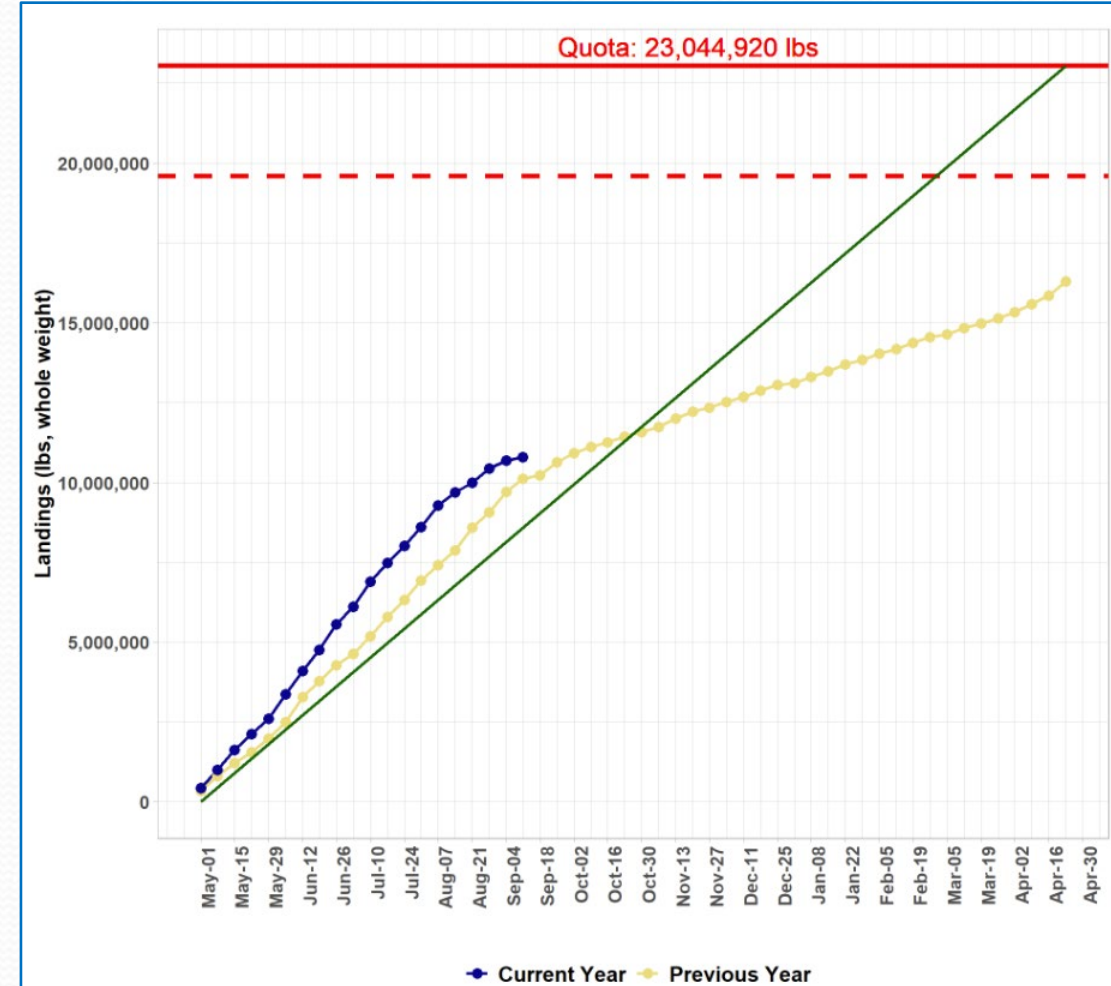
Season 2
(Aug-Oct)
17% landed



Wing FY 2025

Season 1
(May-Aug)
76% landed

Total
(May-April)
47%

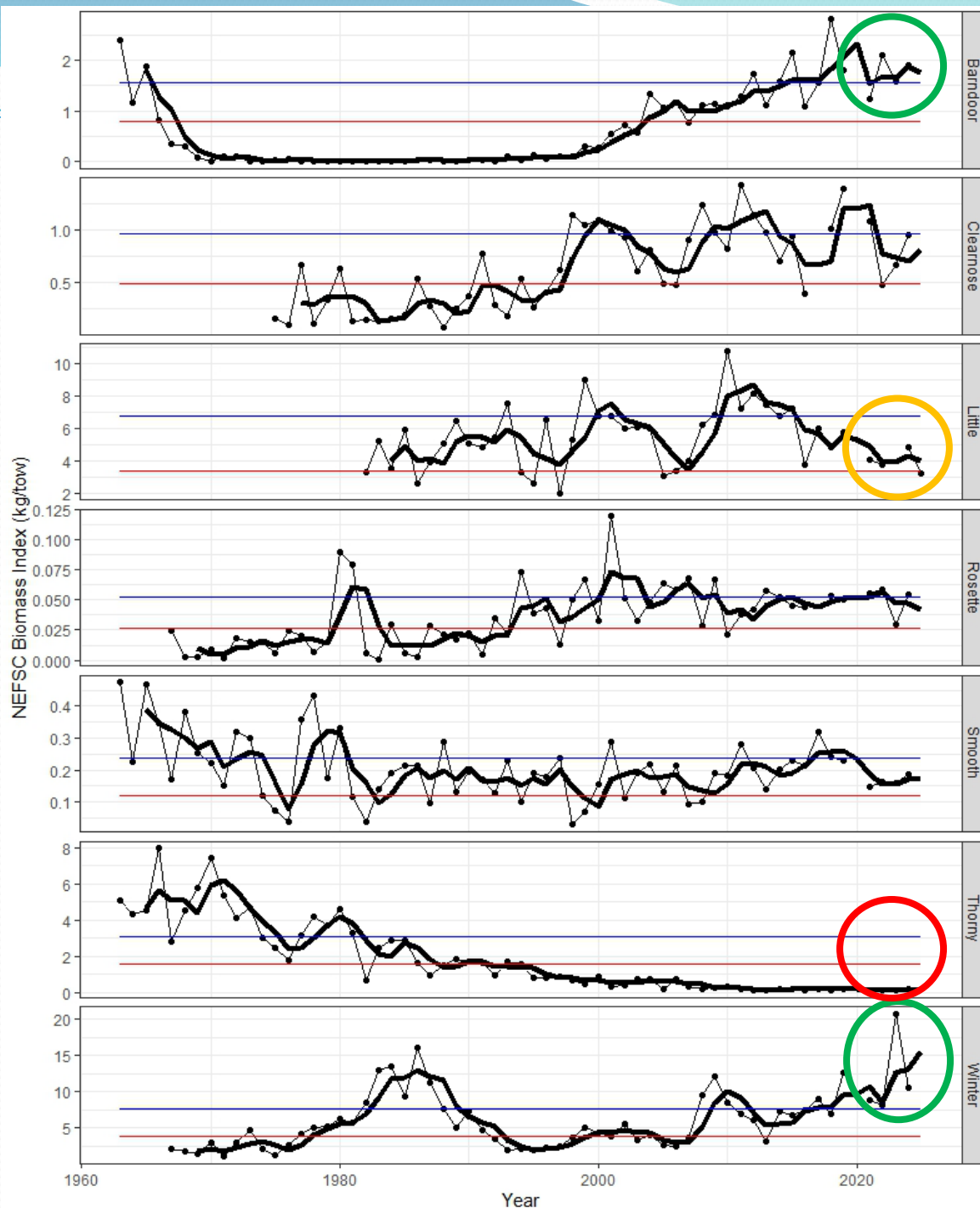


Survey Biomass Indices



Overfishing
is not
occurring

— Btarget
— Bthreshold



Barndoor > Btarget



Thorny < Bthreshold = **OVERFISHED**

Winter > Btarget, highest index

Skate Specifications

ABC Control Rule

1. For each species:

$$\text{Median long-term} \frac{\text{Catch (kg)}}{\text{Biomass (kg/tow)}} * \text{Latest 3-year average Biomass (kg/tow)} = \text{ABC}$$

Assessment considered a few time periods;
used 1981-2022, added recreational.

used = 2021-2022

2. Sum over all species = ABC for complex

	FY 2024-2025		SSC Recommendation			
			FY 2026-2027		FY 2028-2030	
	(mt)	(lb)	(mt)	(lb)	(mt)	(lb)
ABC = ACL	32,155	70,889,640	41,282	91,010,864	37,154	81,910,451
ACT (90% of ACL)	28,940	63,801,779	37,154	81,909,777	33,439	73,719,406
Expected Dead Discards	12,149	26,783,960	15,486	34,140,485	13,937	30,726,689
Expected State Landings	756	1,666,695	547	1,206,662	547	1,206,662
Recreational Catch	316	696,661	154	340,073	154	340,073
Federal TAL	15,718	34,652,258	20,966	46,222,558	18,800	41,445,982
Wing TAL (66.5% of TAL)	10,453	23,044,920	13,943	30,738,001	12,502	27,561,578
	*4,605	*10,152,287	*6,142	*13,540,970	5,507	12,141,664
Bait TAL (33.5% of TAL)	5,266	11,609,543	7,024	15,484,557	6,298	13,884,404

*This value is in wing weight. Otherwise, all values are in whole weight.

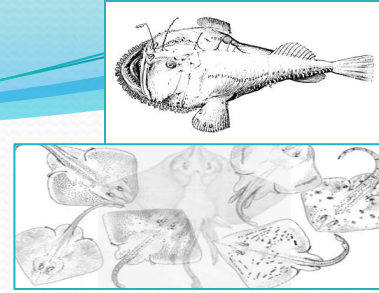


Skate Specifications Impacts Analysis

Valued Ecosystem Component (VEC)	Expected Impacts
Target Species	Slight positive • ABC increase is based on updated survey indices, would decrease in FY 2028-2030 as a precaution • ACT is substantially lower than the ABC to minimize risk of overfishing
Non-Target Species	Slight negative to slight positive (depending on stock status of species) • Catch is largely controlled through other FMPs
Protected Species	Slight negative to moderate positive • Depends on stock status of species/ risk of interacting with gillnet and/or bottom trawl gear
Physical Environment/ Essential Fish Habitat	Slight negative • Gillnets do not adversely affect EFH; bottom trawls have adverse effect
Human Communities	Slight positive • Increased TAL could lead to increased revenues • Unlikely to trigger AMs → no economic disruptions

Supporting Information re Monkfish and Skate Effort Controls

Joint AP input on fishery performance



Skate Bait

- No dramatic changes to landings or market.
- Vessels are adding 8 hours/trip in steam time to get around wind farms.

Skate Wing and Monkfish

- Agreed that wind development has displaced fishing and adult monkfish have left the area due to acoustic disturbance.
- Increasing winter skate catch in spring, filling nets and inhibiting monkfish catch until skates move northward out of fishing areas.
- Landing increased skate wing possession limits, now targeting skates.
- Skate prices faltering with increased landings. A strong, steady price is preferred over increased landings.
- Would help vessels if they could declare a skate overage and land a second limit rather than having to land skates and return to sea to finish hauling gillnets.
- No strong impact of how monkfish DAS calculation was changed, but like having north and south DAS separated.

Joint PDT Tasking



Several tasks to provide data on monkfish DAS use by monkfish permit type, management area; monkfish and skate landings by trip declaration and relative to possession limits → desire to understand fishing activity within components, overlaps, and trip constraints.

Takeaways - Monkfish:

- Most vessels underutilizing Monk DAS allocation (15-30 DAS), a few overages, general decline over time, highest DAS use in the south
- A & B permit vessels use more Monk DAS in south than north, less pronounced for C & D permits.
- 211 permits are currently in CPH
- North monk landings mostly from NMS sector trips, then MNK, some variation
- South monk landings mostly from MNK-only trips, then NMS sector, overall decline
- 45% monk DAS trips landed <75% of monk possession limit

Joint PDT Tasking



- Markets

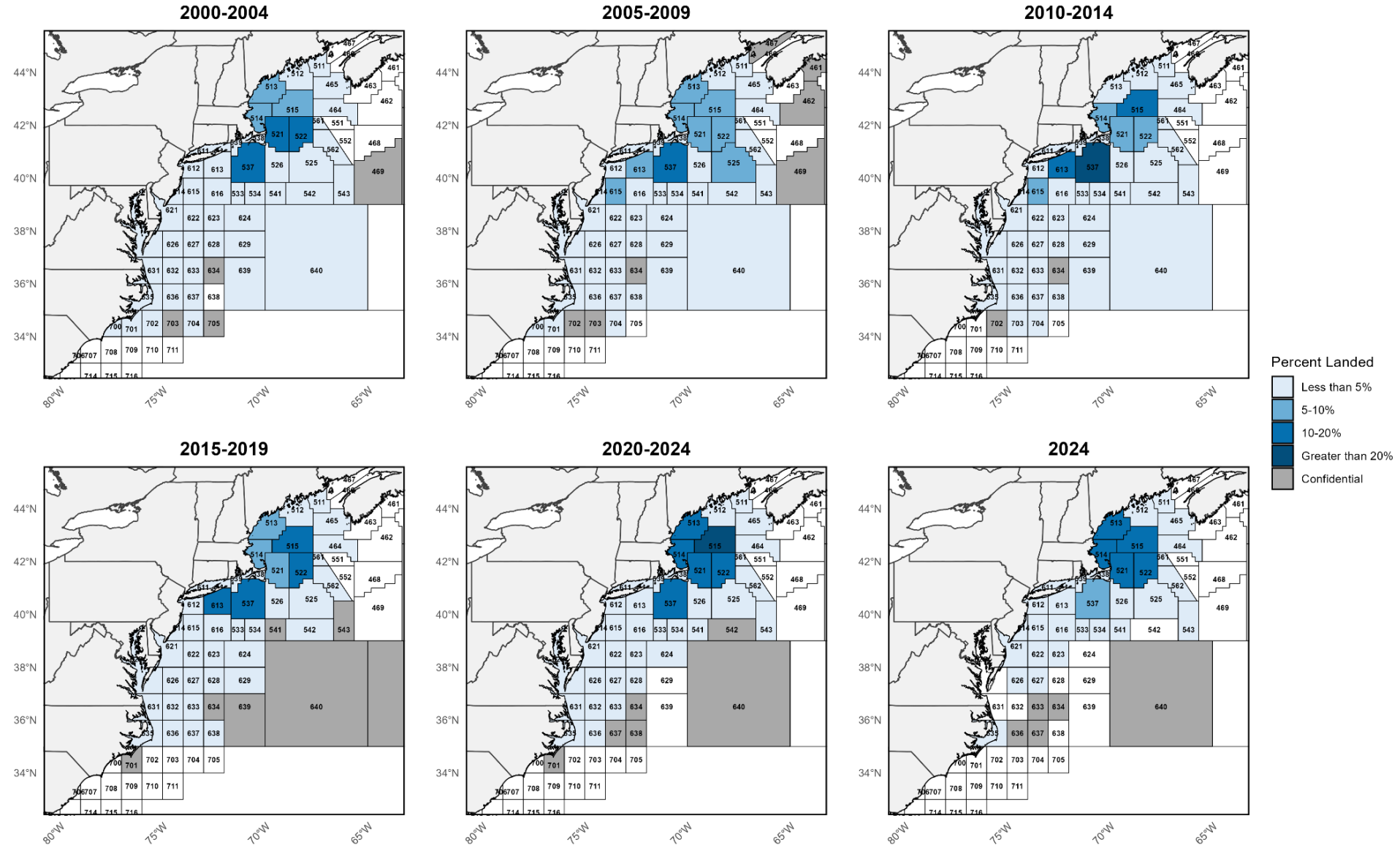
- Historically relied on foreign markets (mostly frozen) esp. S. Korea (whole fish) & Japan (livers, delicacy), & EU esp. France (tails, fillets); weak domestic markets; covid impacted foreign supply chains → replacements for American monkfish
- Monk landings/prices peaked in 1990s/early 2000s, fell in 2007, rose in 2011 but since declining
- NOAA Working Group goals: interdisciplinary research on structure/dynamics/impacts of seafood trade/markets; new dashboard tool expected in 2026

Monkfish commercial landings

Magnitude varies across time. Up to:

- 30 M lb 2000-04
 - Highest
- 20.3 M lb 2005-09
- 21.3 M lb 2010-14
- 18.7 M lb 2015-19
- 16.1 M lb 2020-24
 - Lowest

Monkfish Commercial Landings by Area



Patterns in species distribution are hard to detect across time periods & seasons

Joint PDT Tasking



Takeaways - Skate:

- Survey distribution
 - Winter & barndoor skates prevalent across NE and Mid-Atl. in spring, concentrated northward in the fall, generally increased in abundance;
 - Patterns for other species less pronounced.
- Fishing in Northern monkfish area:
 - Wing landings mostly from NMS sector trips, minor MNK, fluctuating.
 - Bait landings minor from NMS sector trips, decreasing.
- Fishing in Southern monkfish area:
 - Wing landings mostly from MNK and NMS sector, fluctuating. On Monk DAS trips, 69% landed 0-75% skate possession limit, 26% landed 75-100%, 5% landed over 100%. Consistent across monk permit category.
 - Bait landings mostly from NMS sector trips, and LOAs.

Joint PDT Tasking



Takeaways - Skate:

- Are skate limits constraining monkfish landings?
 - Trips landing 75-100% skate wing limits: avg monk landings were lower but varied by year, month, and permit category (13% in Nov for B/D permits to 106% in May for D permits)
- Monk landings ~ steady from Dec-March, increase in April, peak in May/June, low in Nov; range of landings and std. deviations very large with overages
- Industry couldn't take advantage of higher skate limits in July 2024
- Subset of monk trips not constrained by skate catch (esp. May/June) → inconsistent with info from fishing industry, data errors? conversion factor issues?

Joint AP and Committee Recommendations

Monkfish AP Motions (9/16)

*The motion passed
unanimously*

1. **Monkfish motion (Duckworth/Brady):** The Monkfish AP recommends ABCs for FY 2026-2028 for the southern area as recommended by the SSC (status quo, 5,861 mt) and maintaining status quo for FY 2029-2030 until a stock assessment is provided. The AP recommends setting specifications for three vs five years.

Rationale:

- Concerned about the data used to make these southern area specifications recommendations for next 5 years: old data, use of I-smooth, not using other information sources like monkfish CPUE
- Monkfish is data-poor → need updated data; specifications should be revisited more frequently.
- Support getting a stock assessment ASAP & more info in data updates (source of discards: fisheries and locations; scallop survey)
- Belief that monkfish will recover now that offshore wind farm surveys are done

- 2. Monkfish motion (Alexander/Duckworth):** The Monkfish AP recommends ABCs for FY 2026-2028 for the northern area as recommended by the SSC (status quo, 6,224 mt). The AP recommends setting specifications for three vs five years.

Rationale:

- Similar rationale as prior motion
- Concerned about the data used to make these specifications recommendations for next 5 years: old data, use of l-smooth, not using other information sources like monkfish CPUE
- Monkfish is data-poor → need updated data; specifications should be revisited more frequently.
- Support getting a stock assessment ASAP & more info in data updates (source of discards: fisheries and locations; scallop survey)

*The motion passed
unanimously*

- 3. Monkfish motion (Duckworth/Rainone):** The Monkfish AP recommends status quo DAS and possession limits for monkfish for FY 2026-2030 for the northern and southern areas.

Rationale:

- Concerned about potential price decreases with increased effort, and negative impacts on profitability.
- Desire to incentivize using Research Set-Aside DAS → status quo would support this

Monkfish Committee Motions (9/17)

1. **Monkfish motion (Platz/Odell):** To recommend to the Council a northern monkfish ABC of 6,224 mt and a southern monkfish ABC of 5,861 mt for FY 2026-2028.

Rationale:

- *Discomfort with setting specifications for FY 2029-2030 through this specifications process.*
 - *Scientific uncertainty in the NEFSC data update*
 - *Concern with reliance on Ismooth-based methods used for these values*
- *SSC noted concern with making a recommendation for five years*
- *Motion is consistent with the SSC & Monkfish PDT recommendations for FY 2026-2028.*

The motion failed 6/6/1.

- 
2. **Monkfish motion (Pappalardo/Hansen):** To recommend to the Council ABCs for northern and southern monkfish for FY 2026-2030 that are consistent with the SSC recommendations. The northern ABC would be 6,224 mt for each year and the southern ABC would be 5,861 mt for FY 2026-2028 and reduced to 3,766 mt for FY 2029-2030.

Rationale:

- *Consistent with the best available science and SSC recommendations*
- *Gives the Council the maximum available flexibility for setting specifications.*

The motion failed 6/6/1.

- 
- 3. Monkfish Consensus Statement:** The Committee recommends to the Council: 1) status quo monkfish effort controls (DAS and possession limits) for the northern and southern areas, and 2) to revisit effort controls in two years (in 2027) considering fishery performance.

Rationale:

- *Recommendation is supported by the Monkfish AP and the Monkfish PDT.*

Skate Specifications

	SSC Recommendation	
	FY 2026-2027	FY 2028-2030
ABC = ACL	41,282 mt	37,154 mt
Federal TAL	20,966 mt	18,800 mt

AP Recommendations

- **Unanimous** motion: to support 1) the SSC recommendation, 2) a data update in 2027, 3) revisit specifications for FY 2028-2030.
 - Data-poor management
 - ABC increase driven by single large data point in 2023 winter index.
 - Concern about little index approaching $B_{\text{threshold}}$.

Committee Recommendations

- **Failed** motion (6/6/1): recommend just FY 2026-2027.
- No other motions made.

Skate Possession Limits

Fishery	Season	Dates	% of TAL	Sub-Fishery	FY 2024-2025
Wing	1	May – Aug	57%	DAS	4,000 lb wing; 9,080 lb whole
				B-DAS	275 lb wing
				Non-DAS	625 lb wing
	2	Sept – Apr	Remainder	DAS	6,000 lb wing; 13,620 lb whole
				B-DAS	275 lb wing
				Non-DAS	625 lb wing
Bait	1	May – Jul	30.8%	n/a	25,000 lb whole
	2	Aug – Oct	37.1%		
	3	Nov – Apr	Remainder		

AP and Committee Recommendations

- *Wing DAS*: Increase each season by 500 lb → 4,500 lb and 6,500 lb.
 - Hesitant to increase more given current softening of wing market with higher landings.
- *Bait*: Increase by 5,000 lb → 30,000 lb
 - Help compensate increased steam time around wind farm areas.
- Revisit possession limits in 2027.

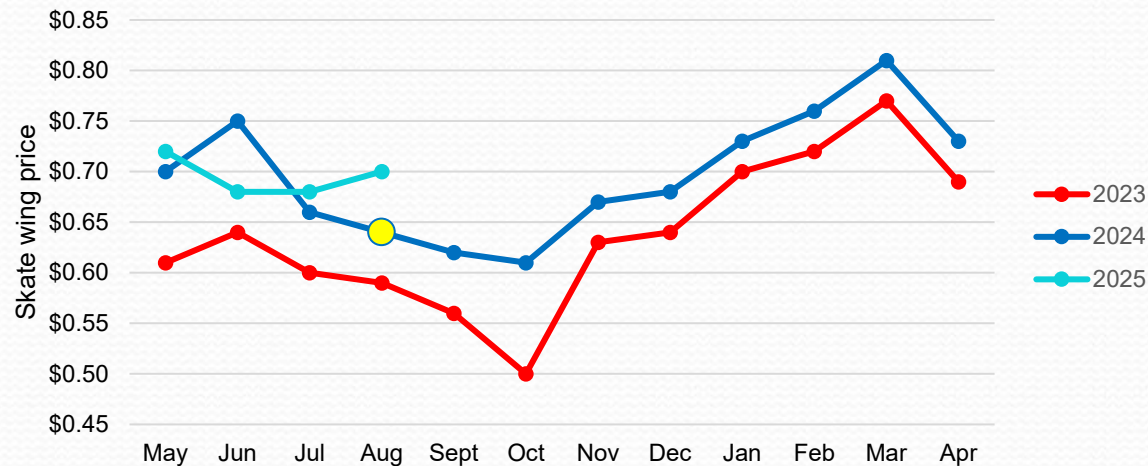
PDT analysis:

- *Wing landings could increase by 625K+ lb/year.*
- *Under 40 active bait vessels.*
- *Potential increases expected to remain within TALs*

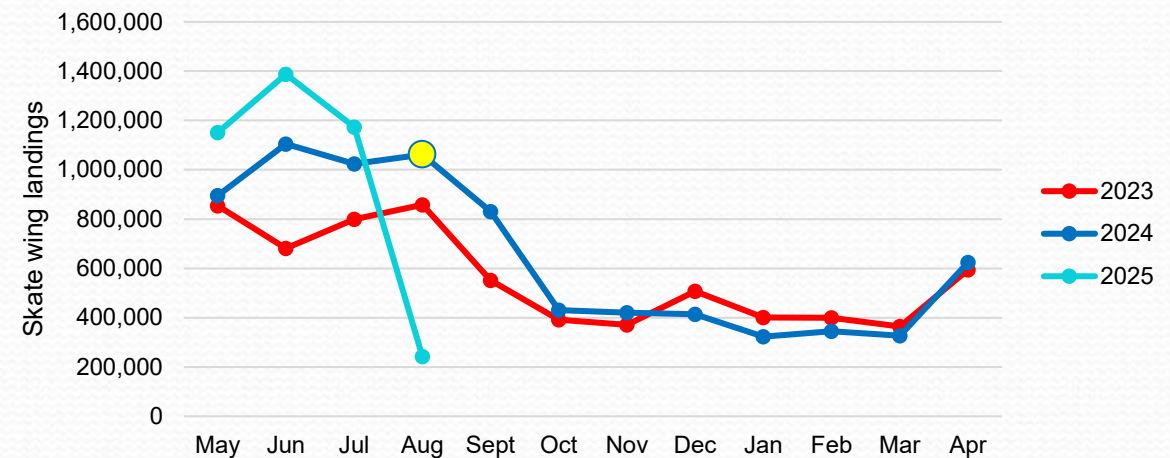
FY 2023-2025 Skate Wing Fishery Performance

New!

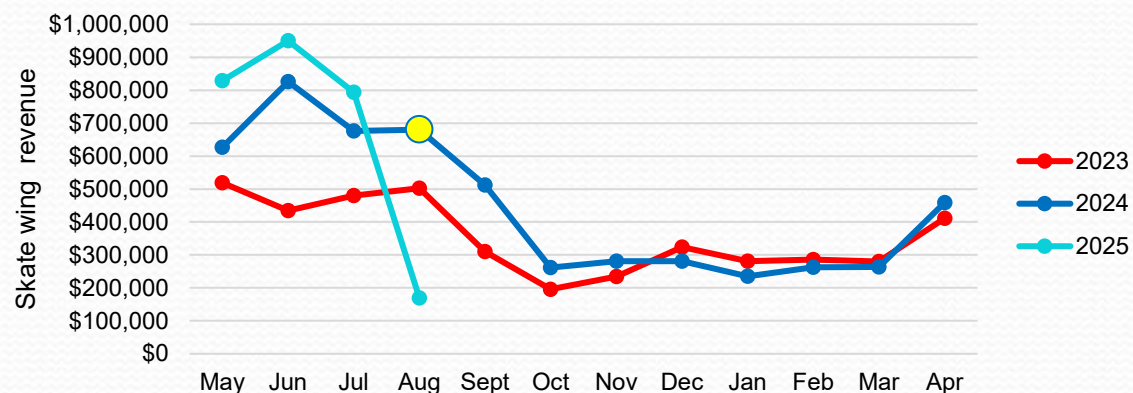
Average monthly skate wing prices



Average monthly skate wing landings



Average monthly skate wing revenue



- Price remained strong; higher across FY 2024, dip in Jun 2025, but revenue peaked.
- Monthly landings increased in FY24 in 8 of 12 mos, esp Jun-Sept. Higher start to FY25.
- Revenue driven more by landings than price trends.
- Skate prices, landings, and revenues consistent to stronger since possession limit increase.

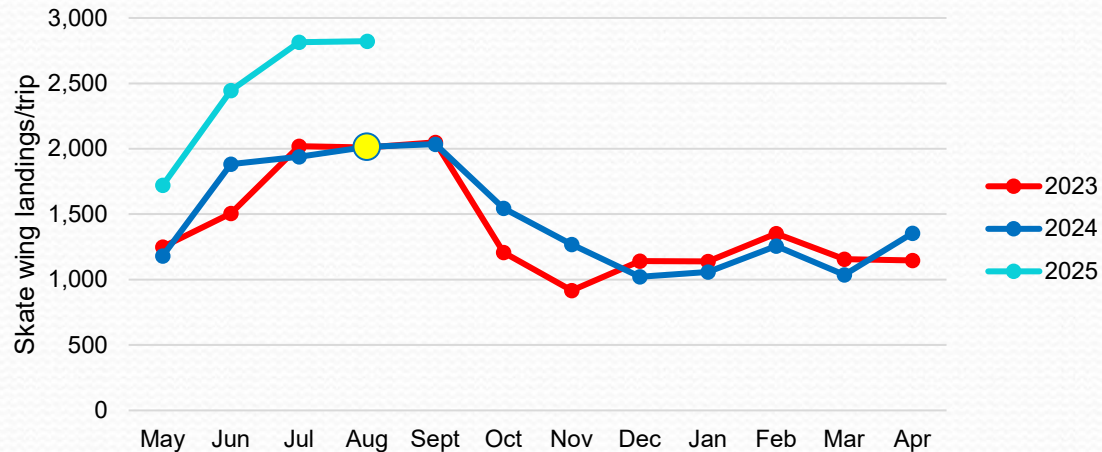
● = first full month of higher possession limits, August 2024.

Source: CAMS, through 8/11/25. \$ in 2025 real dollars.

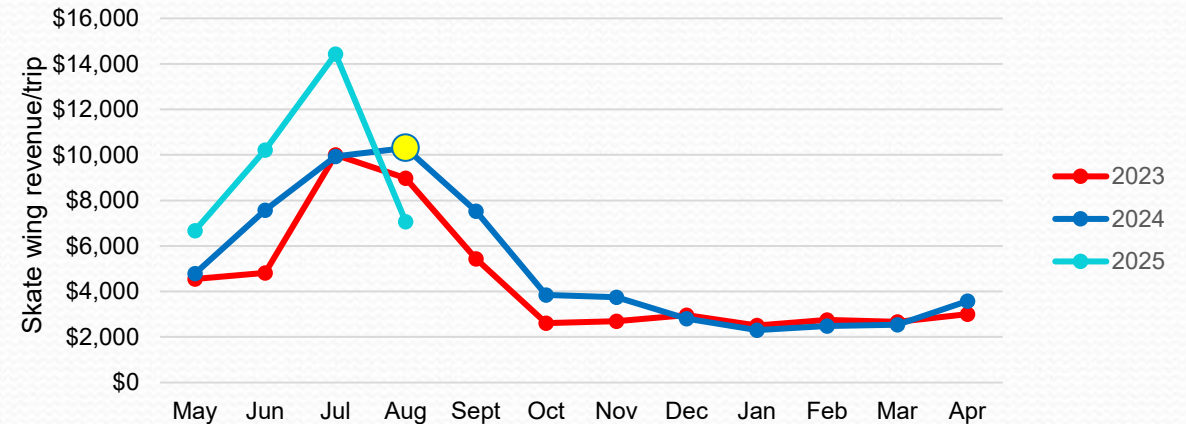
FY 2023-2025 Skate Wing Fishery Performance

New!

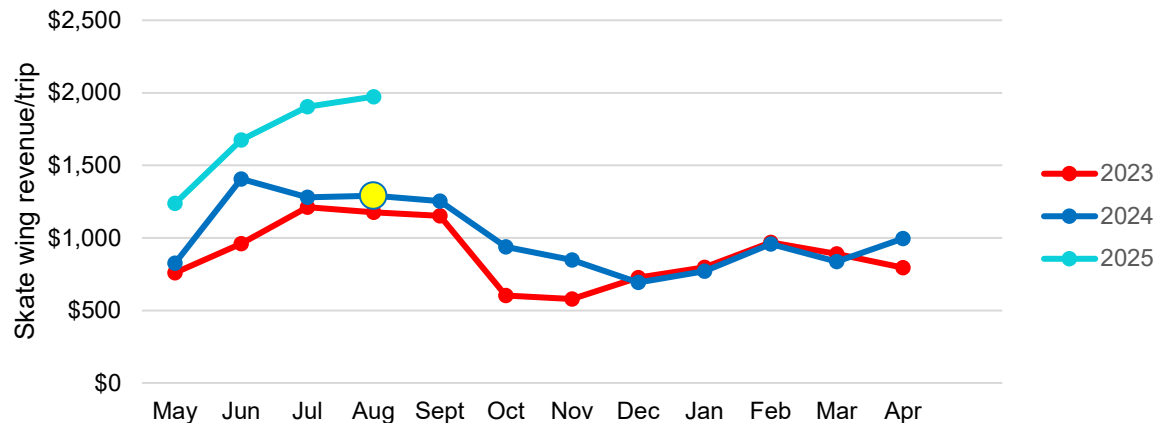
Average monthly skate wing landings/trip



Average monthly skate wing revenue/vessel



Average monthly skate wing revenue/trip



- Monthly landings/trip similar in FY23 and FY24, higher in FY25 so far.
- Revenue/trip and revenue/vessel higher in FY24 through Nov than FY23; higher still in FY25.

● = first full month of higher possession limits, August 2024.

Source: CAMS, through 8/11/25. \$ in 2025 real dollars.

2026 Council Priorities

- Joint Monkfish and Skate APs and Committees made several recommendations to the Council for 2026 work priorities to consider
- Ideas are grouped in highest and lowest priority → more specifics will be provided in the fall, before December final action on 2026 work

Overview of July 28th Monkfish CPUE Meeting

- Overview of original Monkfish FMP & how Monkfish DAS allocation was determined (80% monkfish landings occurred w/in 40 days absent or less)
- Presentation from Dr. Andy Jones (NEFSC Cooperative Research): trends in CPUE indices for trawl, gillnet, and scallop dredge gear & strawman ideas for how to use this work to adjust Monkfish DAS allocations
 - *Working paper expected soon*
- Presentation from Sierra Richardson (SMAST): standardized and raw catch rates for northern trawl fishery & southern gillnet fishery
 - *Work anticipated to be completed in the fall*
 - *For awareness: work was mostly funded by Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance and not via sale of Monkfish RSA DAS*
- CPUE research needs to be peer-reviewed to be used in assessments and by management; 2024 Council priority
 - Research track assessment intended to review these projects, but on pause indefinitely
→ idea for 2026+ priority

Questions?



<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/species/monkfish>



<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/species/northeast-skate-complex>

Extra slides

2025 Council Priorities



FMP	Topic	Timing	Progress
Monkfish	Develop FY 2026-2030 specifications	2025	Final action in Sept/Oct (moved up from Dec)
	Support management track assessment	2025	Cancelled; NEFSC provided data update in August
	Support research track assessment	Multiyear, review in 2027	Paused (not on 2026 schedule)
Skate	Develop FY 2026-2030 specifications	2025	Final action in Sept (moved up from Dec)
	Support management track assessment	2025	Cancelled; NEFSC provided data update in August
Monkfish & Skate	Coordinate Committee and AP activities and review effectiveness of joint planning	Multiyear	Joint PDT, AP, Cte meetings in 2025; development of staff white paper paused due to moving final action on specs
Habitat	Omnibus action: update monkfish, skate, herring and cod EFH designations, led by Habitat Cte	2025	Final action in Sept/Oct

Timeline



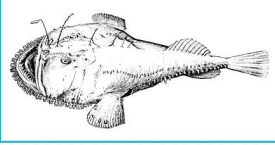
Month	Meeting	Topics
Aug. 5	Skate PDT (webinar)	Discuss NEFSC data update, FY 2024 catch accounting; develop memo to SSC re ABCs, risk policy matrix
Aug. 7	Monkfish PDT (webinar)	
Aug. 19	SSC (hybrid)	Recommend OFLs and ABCs
Aug. 21	Monk-Skate PDT (webinar)	Discuss SSC outcomes; develop Joint Cte tasking, any potential changes in effort controls
Sept. 16	Monk-Skate AP (webinar)	Recommend final preferred alternatives
Sept. 17	Monk-Skate Committee (hybrid)	
Sept. 23	NEFMC	Final action Omnibus Management Flexibility Action, then for Skate Specifications & Monkfish FW17
Oct. 8	MAFMC	Final action for Monkfish FW17

Setting specifications through FY 2030

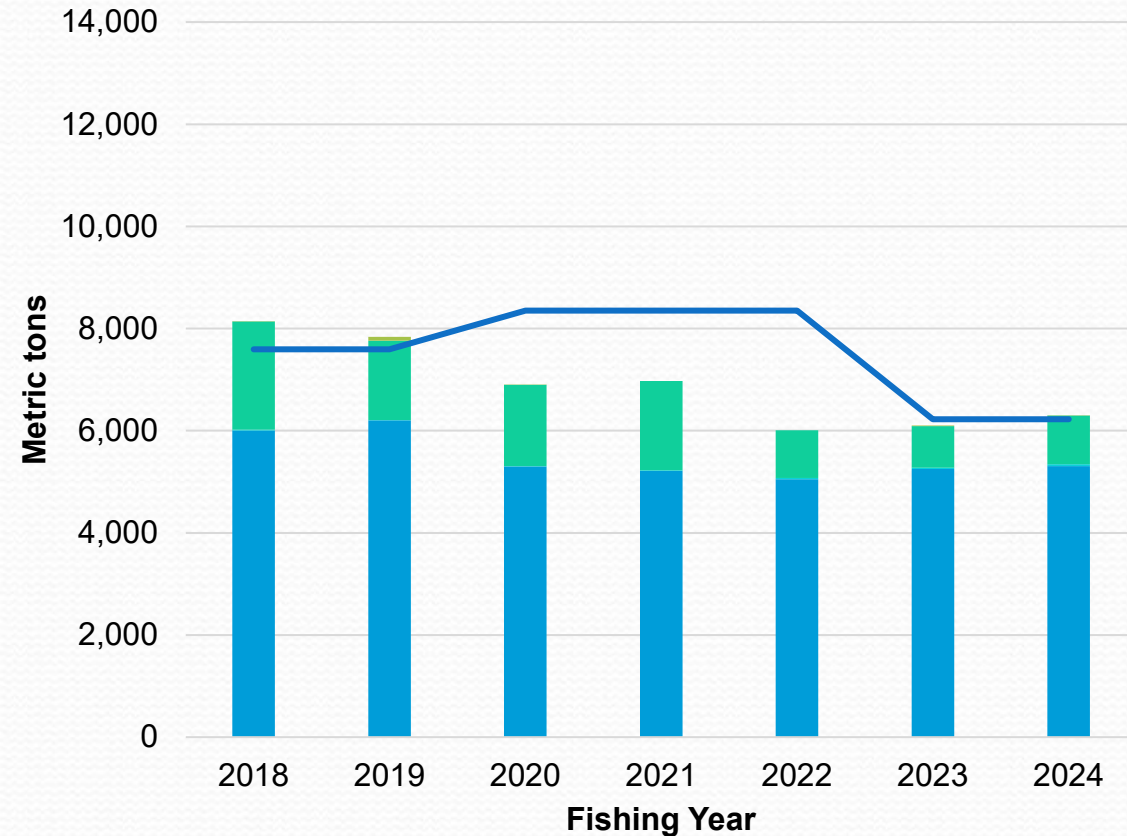


- **Omnibus Management Flexibility Amendment** – initiated in June, final action in Sept.
 - Each FMP modified to allow for specification frequency of up to 5 years
 - Would allow for flexibility to recommend specifications for 1-5 years
 - Greater flexibility in planning stock assessments/data updates & subsequent management actions
 - Could eventually allow Council to spread out its specifications-related actions throughout the year (vs final actions on most specifications in Sept. or Dec.)
- **Monkfish & Skate Specifications actions** – include specifications through FY 2030
 - Omnibus Management Flexibility action needs to be approved/implemented first
 - Intent of longer specifications: to supersede existing regulations → allow Council to turn the FY 2029-2030 monkfish / skate specs into future year catch advice

Monkfish Fishery Performance

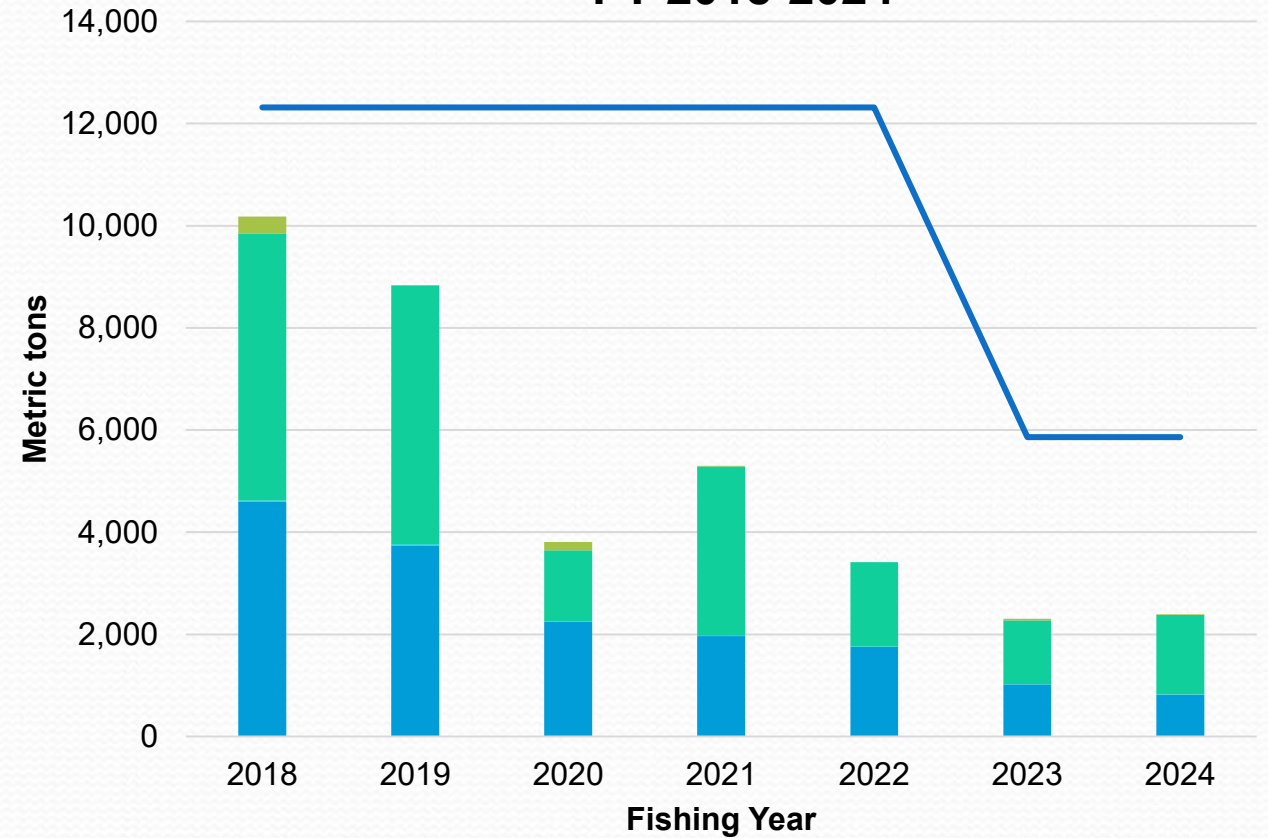


Northern Monkfish Catch Relative to ACL, FY 2018-2024



- Recreational catch (MRIP landings & discards)
- Estimated discards
- State commercial landings
- Federal commercial landings
- ACL

Southern Monkfish Catch Relative to ACL, FY 2018-2024



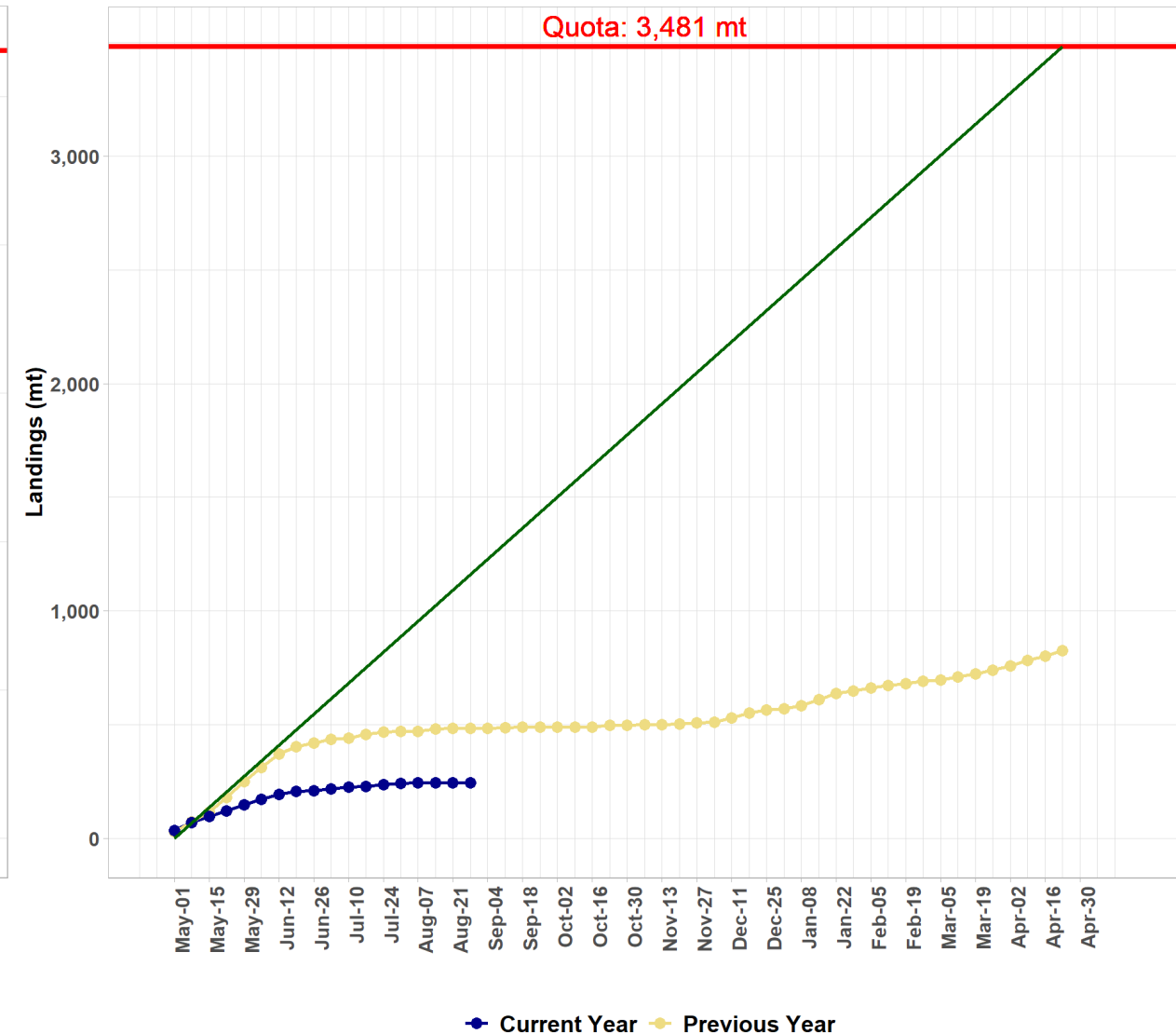
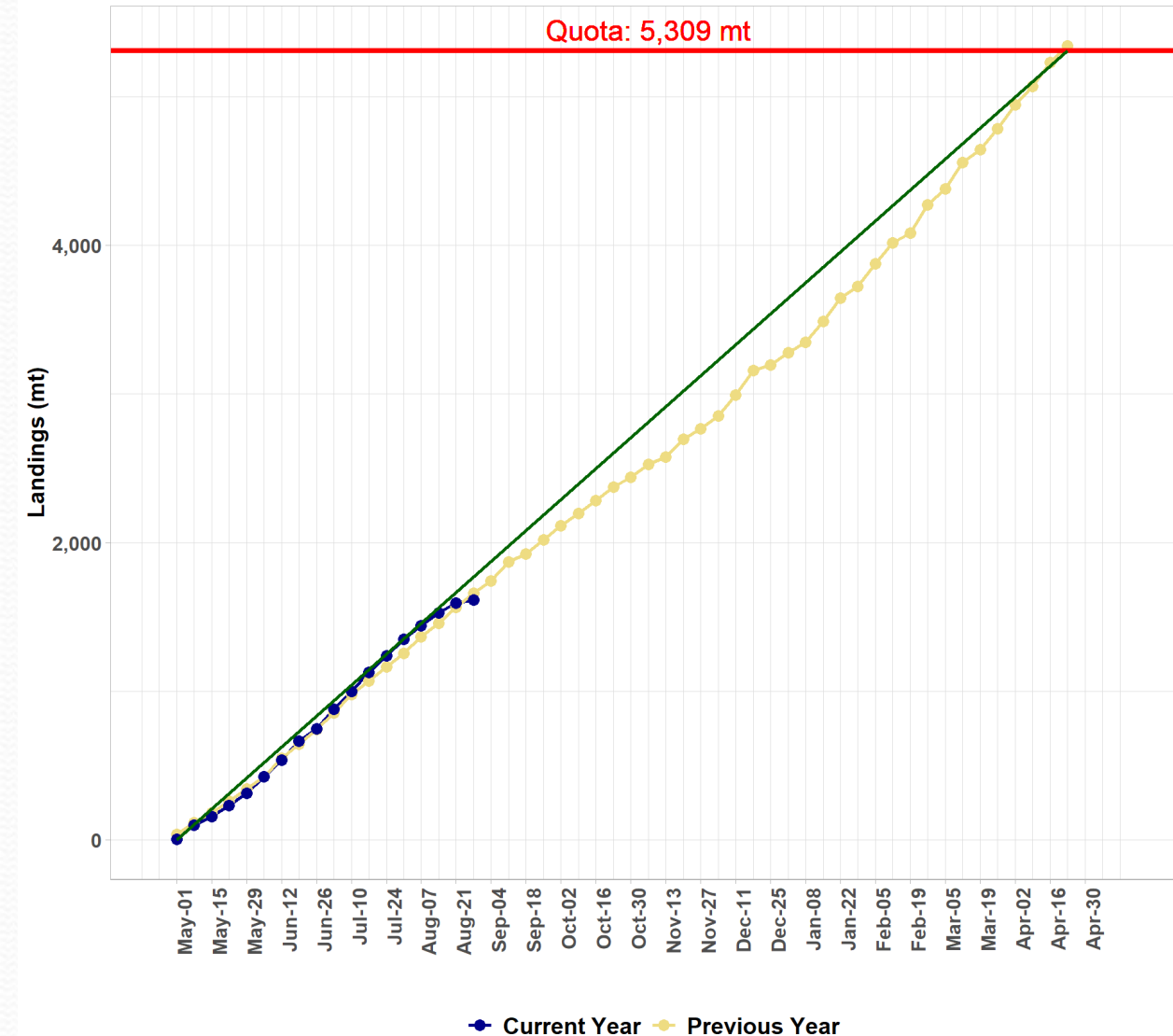
- Recreational catch (MRIP landings & discards)
- Estimated discards
- State commercial landings
- Federal commercial landings
- ACL

Monkfish Quota Monitoring – FY2025 to date



North

South



U.S. commercial monkfish landings and discards (mt) by management area from 2018 – 2024

Calendar Year	Northern Fishery Management Area		Southern Fishery Management Area	
	Monkfish Landings (mt)	Monkfish Discards (mt)	Monkfish Landings (mt)	Monkfish Discards (mt)
2018	6,009	1,253	4,388	3,476
2019	6,084	1,080	4,373	3,358
2020	5,508	721	2,644	2,263
2021	5,043	788	1,954	2,317
2022	4,900	947	1,818	1,758
2023	5,687	914	1,364	1,634
2024	4,998	886	961	2,134

North:

- Landings have fluctuated over 2022-2024 while discards have declined

South:

- Landings have generally declined over 2022-2024 while discards have fluctuated

Bottom trawl survey spring and fall index (biomass, kg/tow) of northern and southern monkfish from 2018 – 2025.

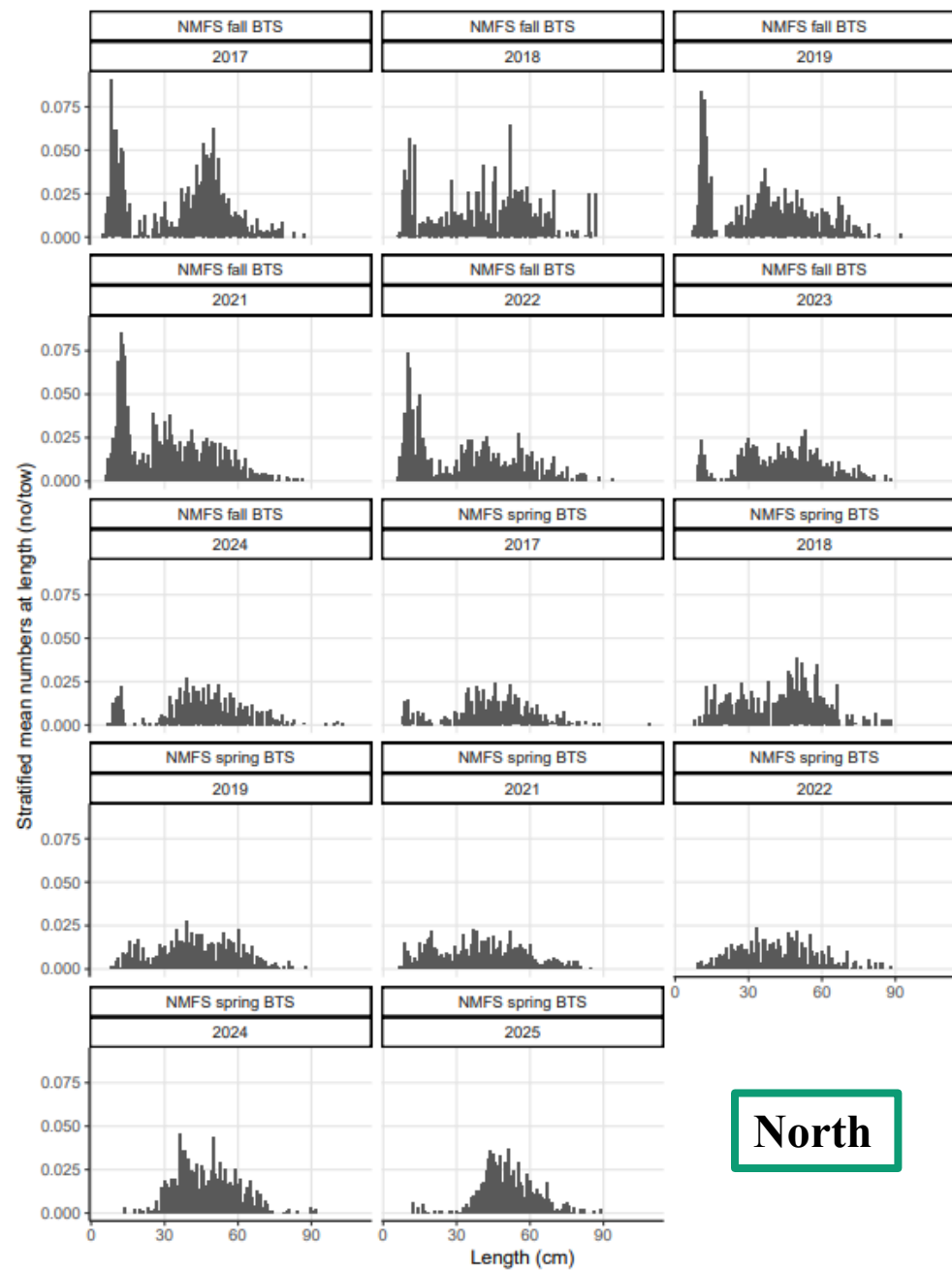
Calendar Year	Northern Fishery Management Area			Southern Fishery Management Area	
	Fall index	Spring index		Fall index	Spring index
2018	2.1099	1.5277		0.2657	0.6615
2019	1.5151	1.1198		0.4706	0.3634
2020					
2021	1.2224	0.9202		0.1322	0.2588
2022	1.2406	0.9460		0.1263	0.1832
2023	1.2865			0.0955	
2024	1.3245	1.6959		0.1655	0.1584
2025		1.5028			0.2162

North:

- Fall: index increased by ~0.04 kg/tow in each of the last three years
- Spring: index increased by ~0.75 kg/tow from 2022 to 2024 (missing survey index in 2023) and declined by ~0.2 kg/tow from 2024 to 2025

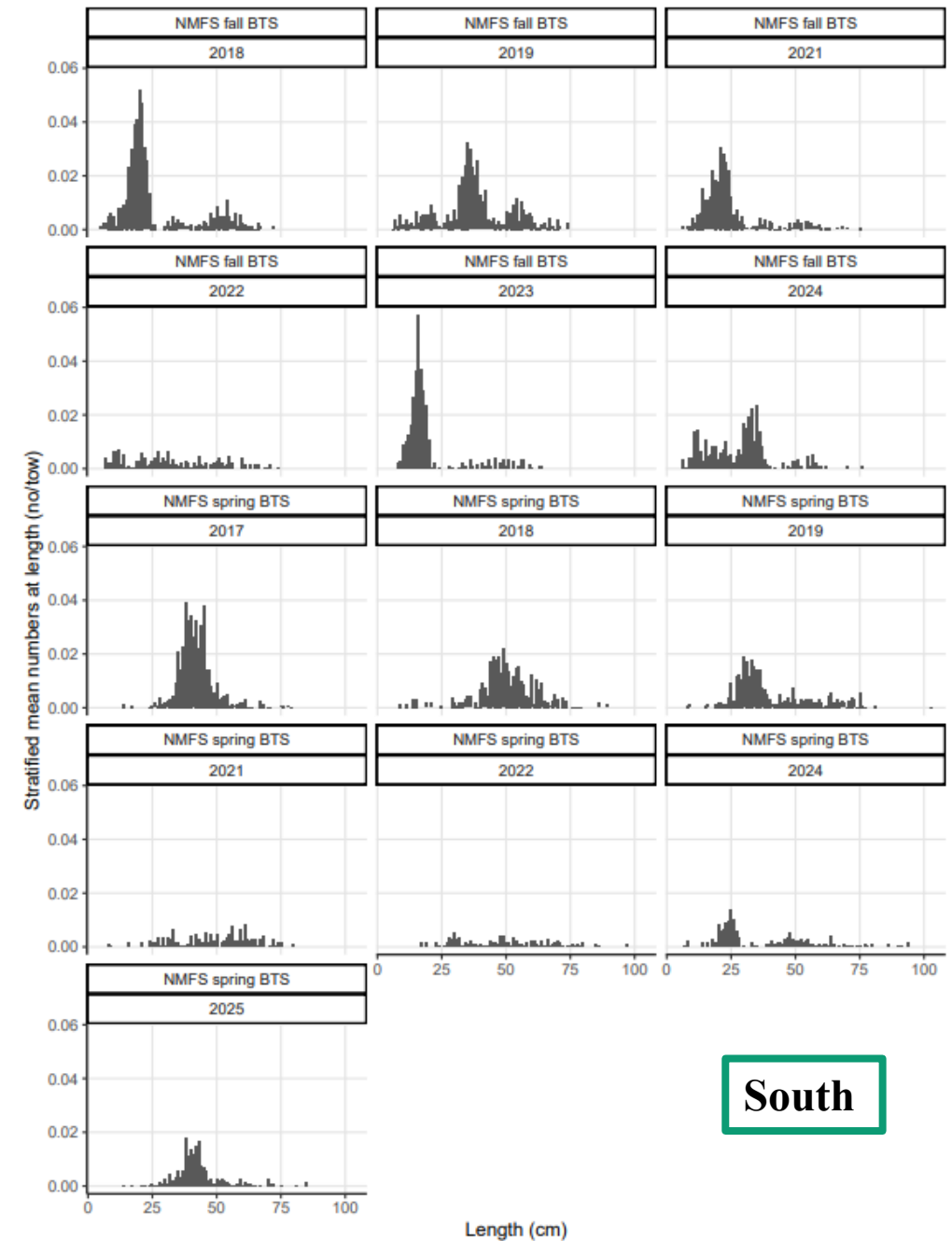
South:

- Fall: index marginally decreased over 2021 to 2023 and increased by 0.07 kg/tow from 2023 to 2024
- Spring: index followed a similar trend as the fall during those time periods



North

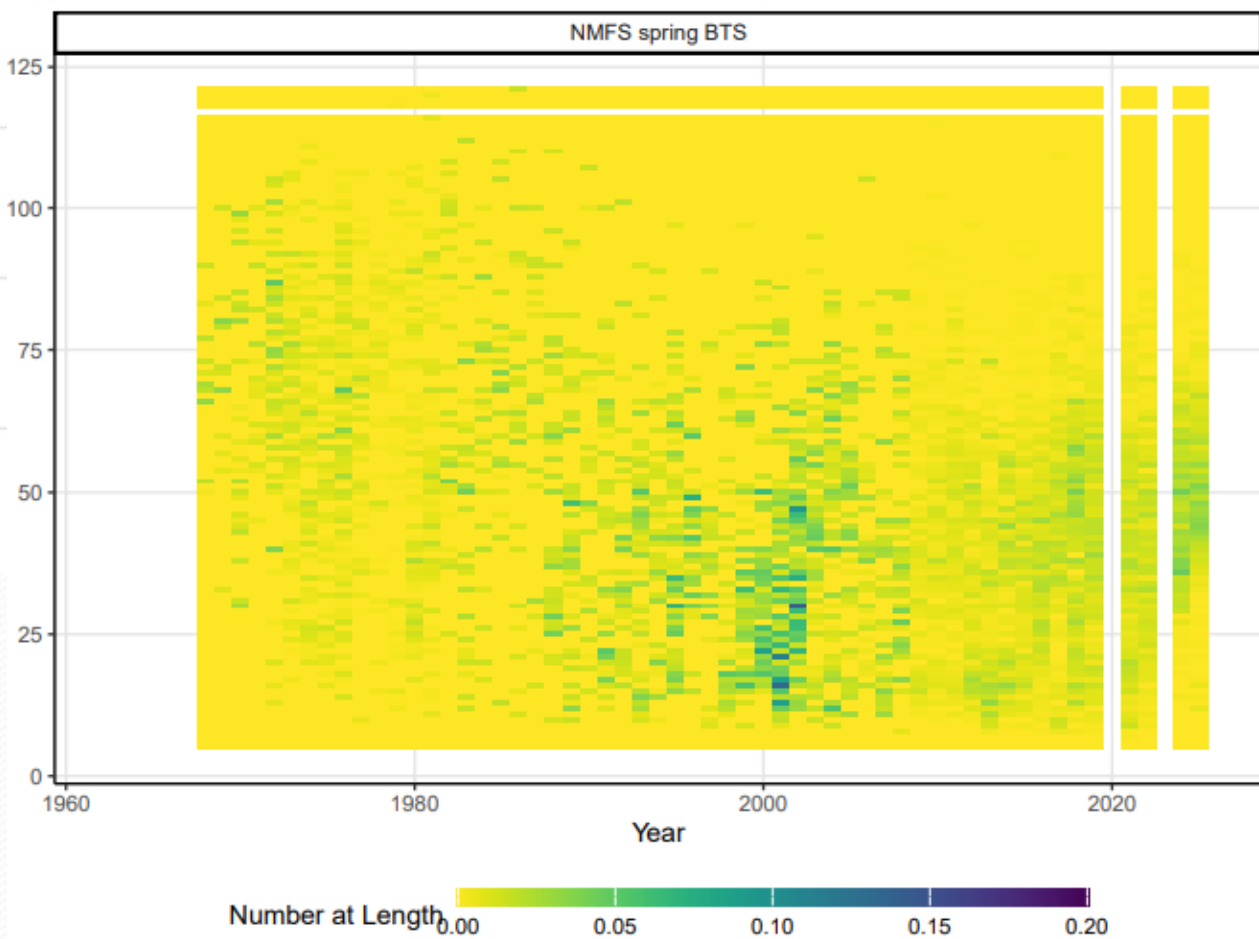
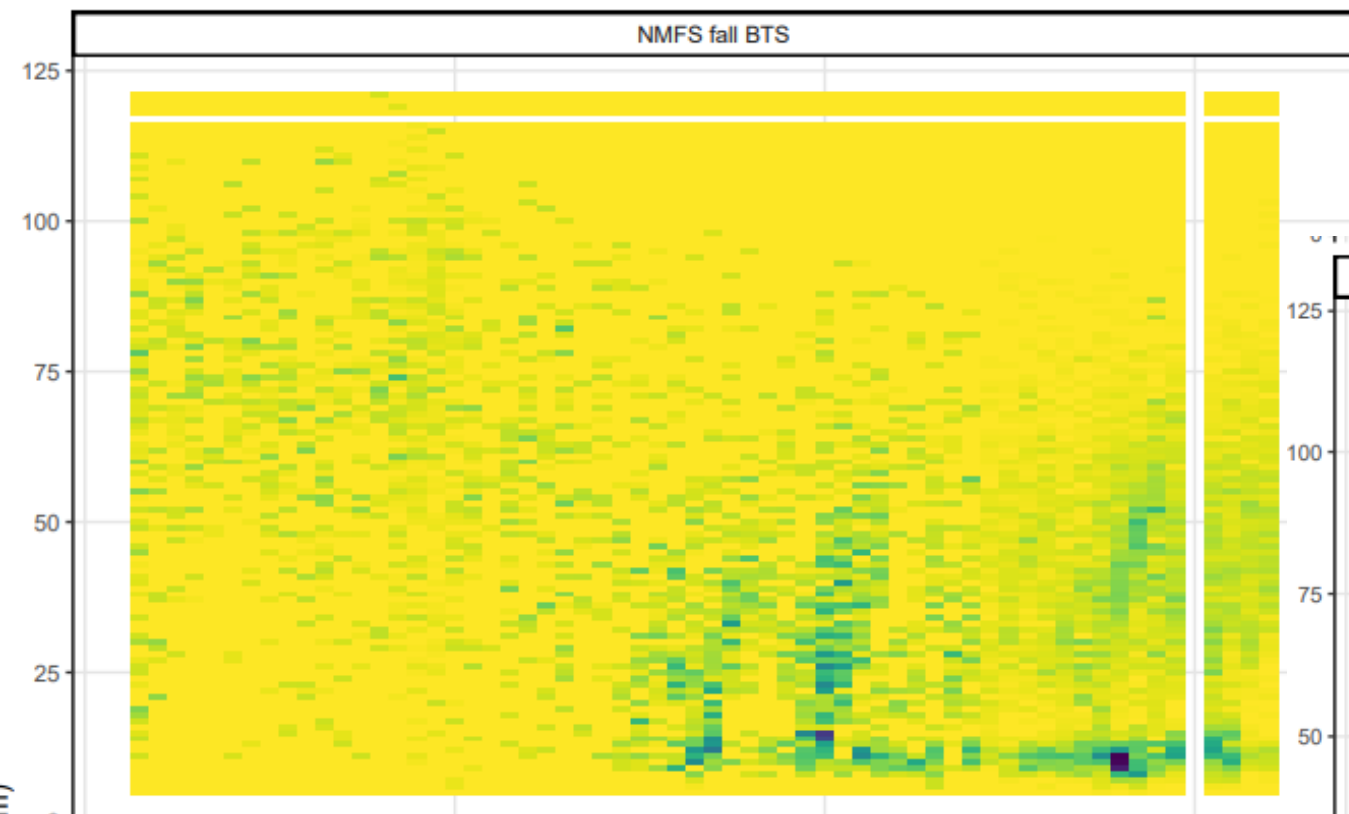
Figure 5: Stratified Mean Indices at Length for the Bottom Trawl Survey of Northern Monkfish from 2017 through 2025. Survey was incomplete in Fall 2020, Spring 2020, and Spring 2023.



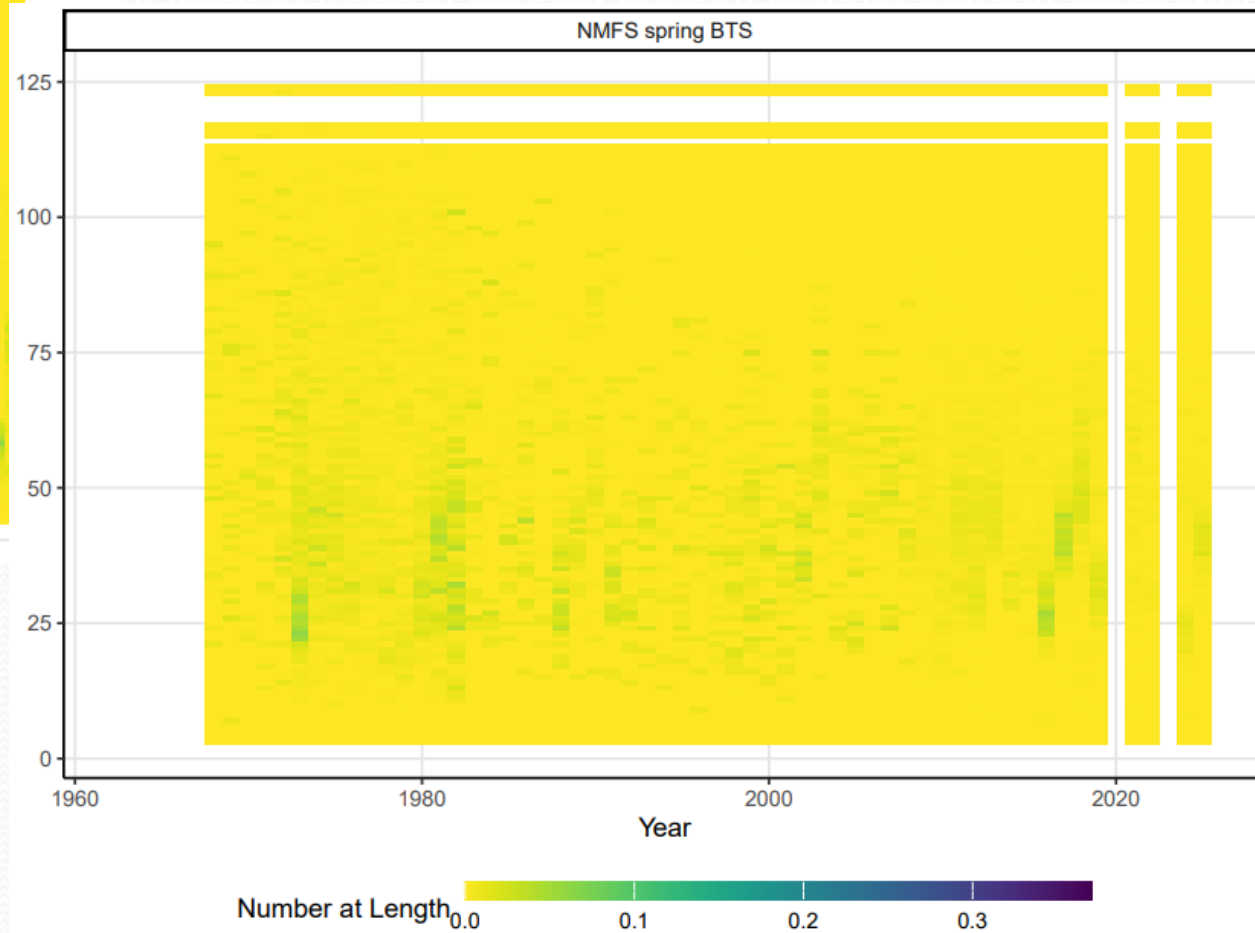
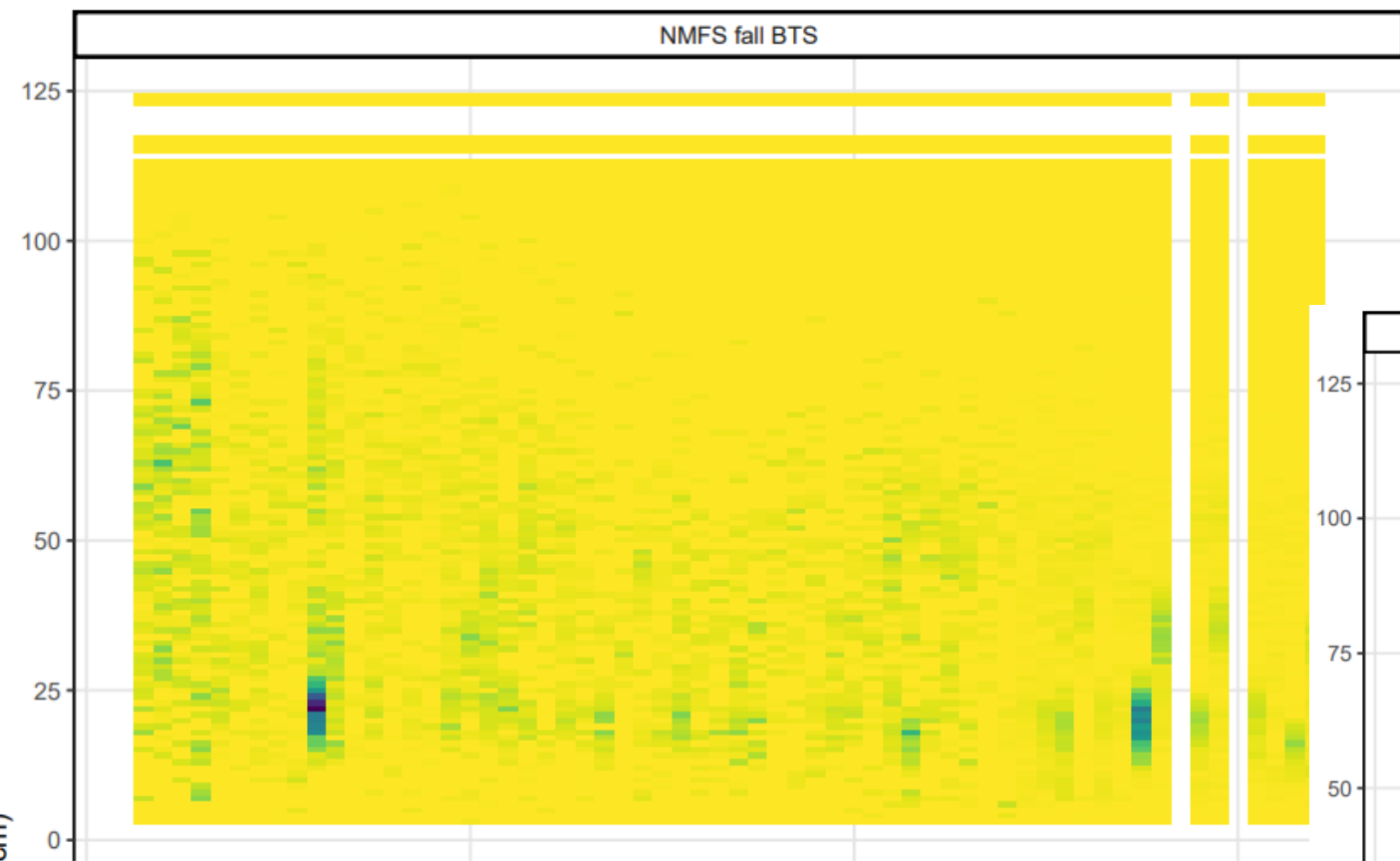
South

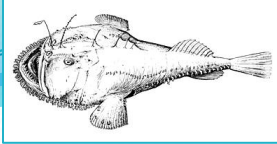
Figure 5: Stratified Mean Indices at Length for the Bottom Trawl Survey of Southern Monkfish from 2017 through 2025. Survey was incomplete in Fall 2020, Spring 2020, and Spring 2023.

North



South





Monkfish SSC outcomes

Full report

- OFLs remain unknown

ABC (mt)	Northern	Southern
2026	6,224	5,861
2027	6,224	5,861
2028	6,224	5,861
2029	6,224	3,766
2030	6,224	3,766

Research recommendations

- Seek a data update in the next 2 years.
- Exploration of criteria around decision making when using a data update.
- Explore if there are truly 2 unit stocks and if the southern stock is moving/being influenced by warming.
- Move towards alternate assessment methods; explore use of alternate surveys (NEAMAP), and fishery-dependent information.

Precautionary approach; values are the Nov. 2022 SSC recommendations (before the remand) using Ismooth approach applying survey multipliers to most recent 3-yr avg catch (vs. transition approach, which is status quo ABC now for South)

SSC discussion on Monkfish - recap

- Strong discomfort setting specifications through FY2030 → want another data update/additional work before then & include rumble strips for how the SSC should react/act upon data to adjust ABCs (i.e., criteria for decision-making)
- Questions related to whether the PDTs discussed the transition period via FW13 with applying trawl survey multiplier to recent catch (vs ABC) and implications for setting specifications this year with status quo (esp. for South)
- Questions and concern related to high southern area ABC and index for last 3 years → lowest in time series, below historic levels, suggests a stable stock but in depleted state; reference to 2022 assessment & ABC being 1/3 of swept area biomass
- Several questions related to frequency at mean length figures & the difference between recent southern catch & ABC: “despite recent decreases in Southern monkfish catch, the survey indices have not responded, signaling that more precautionary advice for FY 2026-2030 may be warranted”
- Uncertainty regarding monkfish movement, changes in habitat suitability, environmental factors; catch not necessarily a proxy/indicator of stock
- Perhaps other indicators can be evaluated (SOE reports, socioeconomic profiles, etc.) in lieu of data updates/assessments