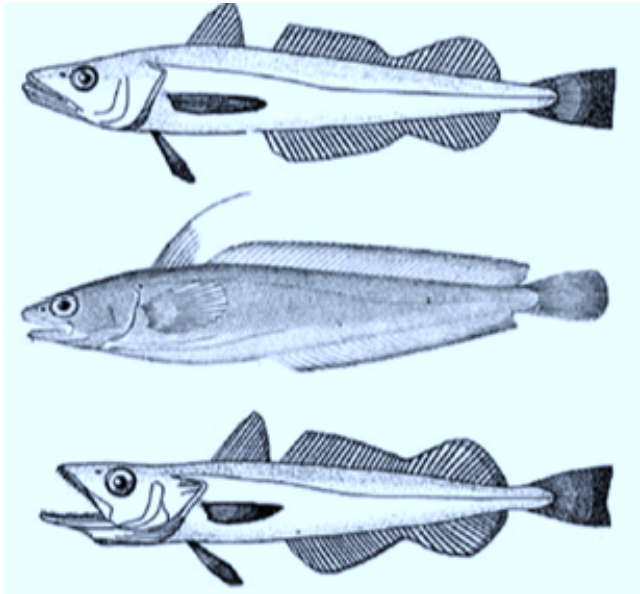
Approved 2027-2031 specification tables

Scientific and Statistical Committee
NEFMC

Report: November 10, 2026



New England Fishery
Management Council

What is new with Data Updates Since the 2023 Management Track?

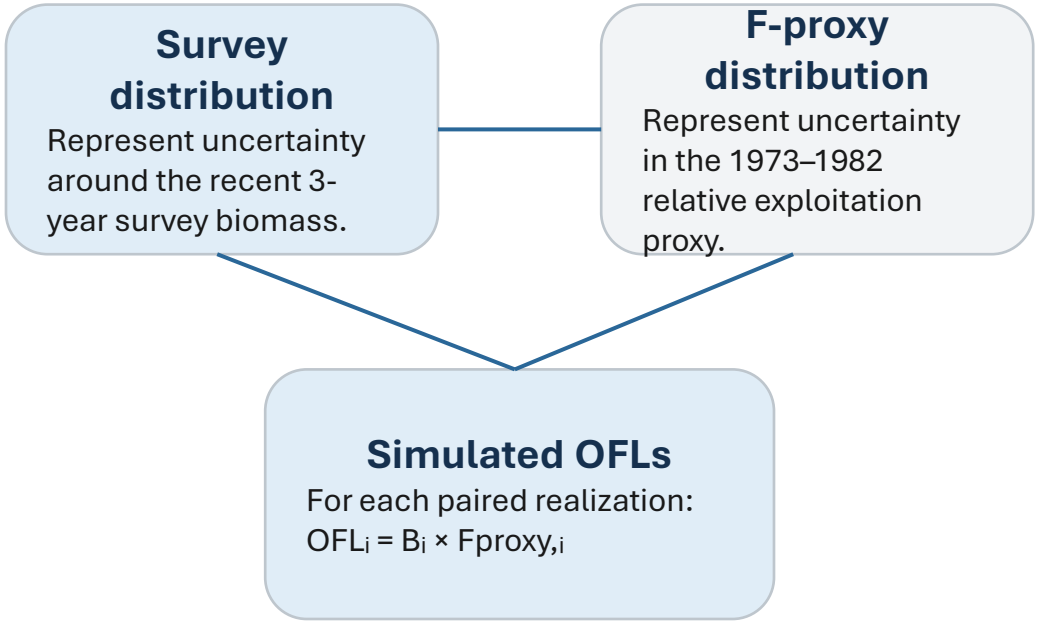
- Three additional calendar years of fishery data: 2023-2025.
- Silver hake - Three additional Fall survey observations: 2023-2025, with Fall 2025 survey-performance context reviewed explicitly.
- Red hake uses both Spring and Fall survey perspectives; Spring 2023 is treated as missing because coverage was incomplete.
- Primary question: do the new observations reinforce or alter the stock picture available at the 2023 Management Track?

2. OFL: propagate uncertainty in biomass and the FMSY proxy

Point estimate

$OFL = \bar{B}_3yr \times FMSY\ proxy$

where $\bar{B}_3yr$ = recent 3-year average Fall survey biomass index
and FMSY proxy = average relative exploitation during 1973–1982



Historical Method 2 estimated OFL uncertainty from the joint/cross-product distribution of the survey index and FMSY proxy.

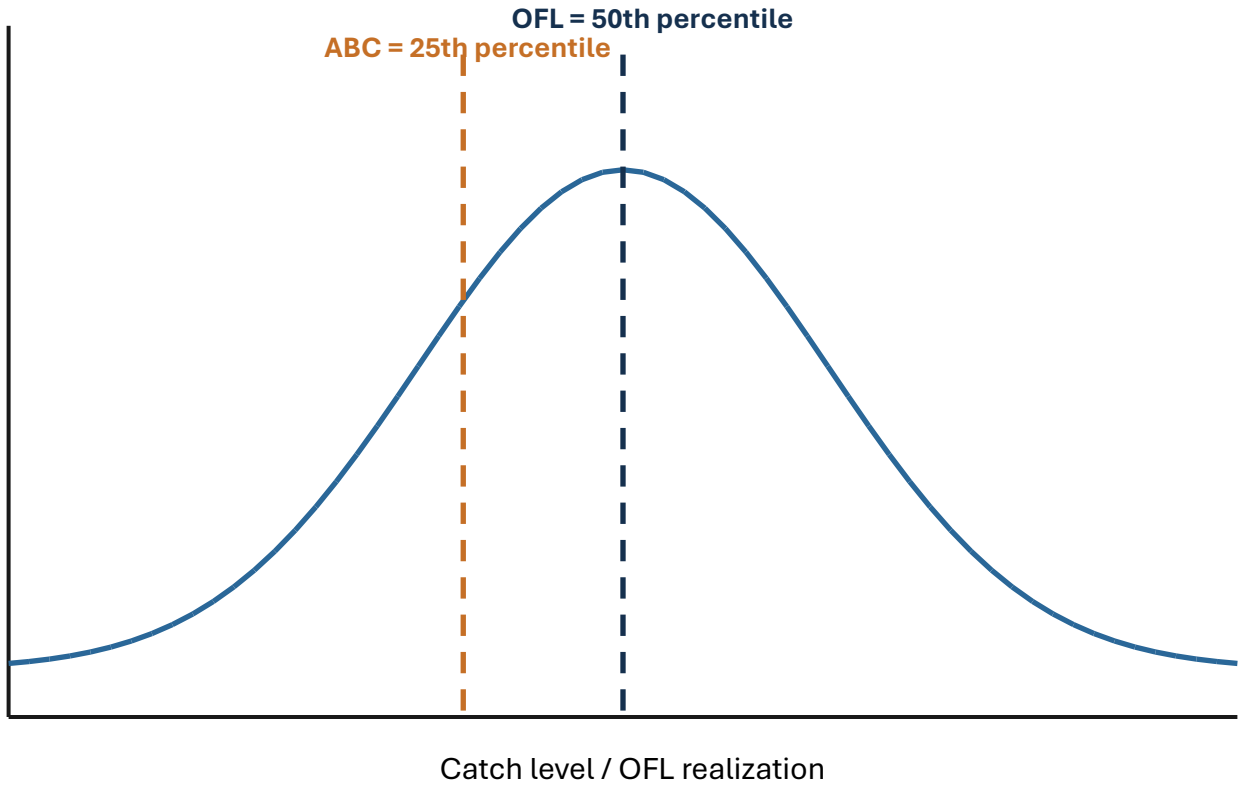
For silver hake, the FMSY-proxy uncertainty was characterized from the mean and variance of 1973–1982 exploitation ratios with a lognormal error structure.

The resulting OFL distribution carries uncertainty from both stock abundance and the exploitation reference point.

Method basis: 2011 Whiting PDT/SSC analyses; 2014 assessment-update methods presentation.

3. ABC: why the 25th percentile?

The percentile is a scientific-uncertainty buffer, not simply a fixed percentage reduction from OFL



Under the probabilistic framework, OFL is the median (50th percentile) of the OFL distribution.

Setting ABC at the 25th percentile lowers catch advice to account for scientific uncertainty; conceptually, 25% of modeled OFL outcomes lie below ABC.

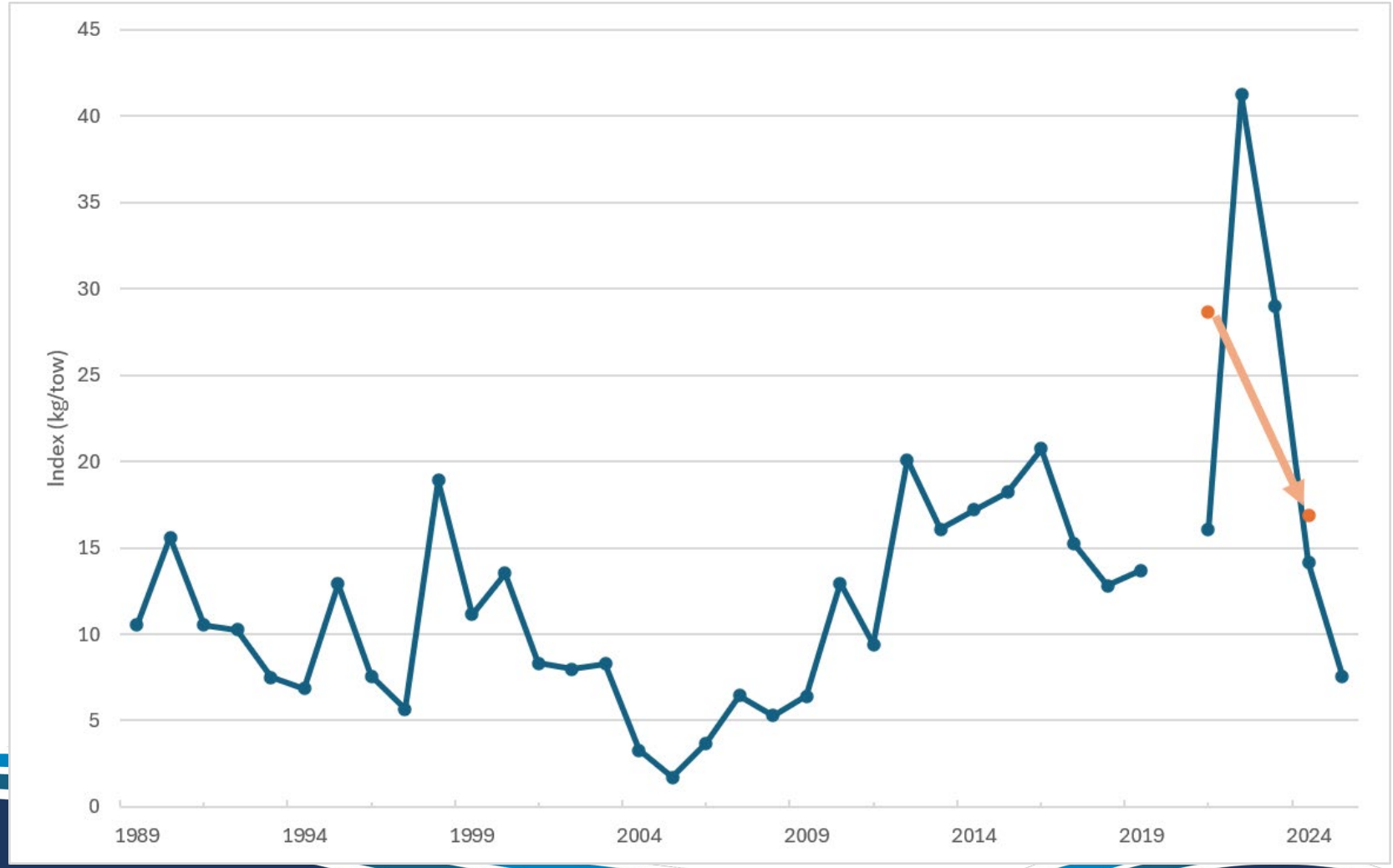
NEFMC adopted the 25th-percentile control rule for both silver hake stocks; the 2023 SSC continued to use it for FY2024–2026.

Important

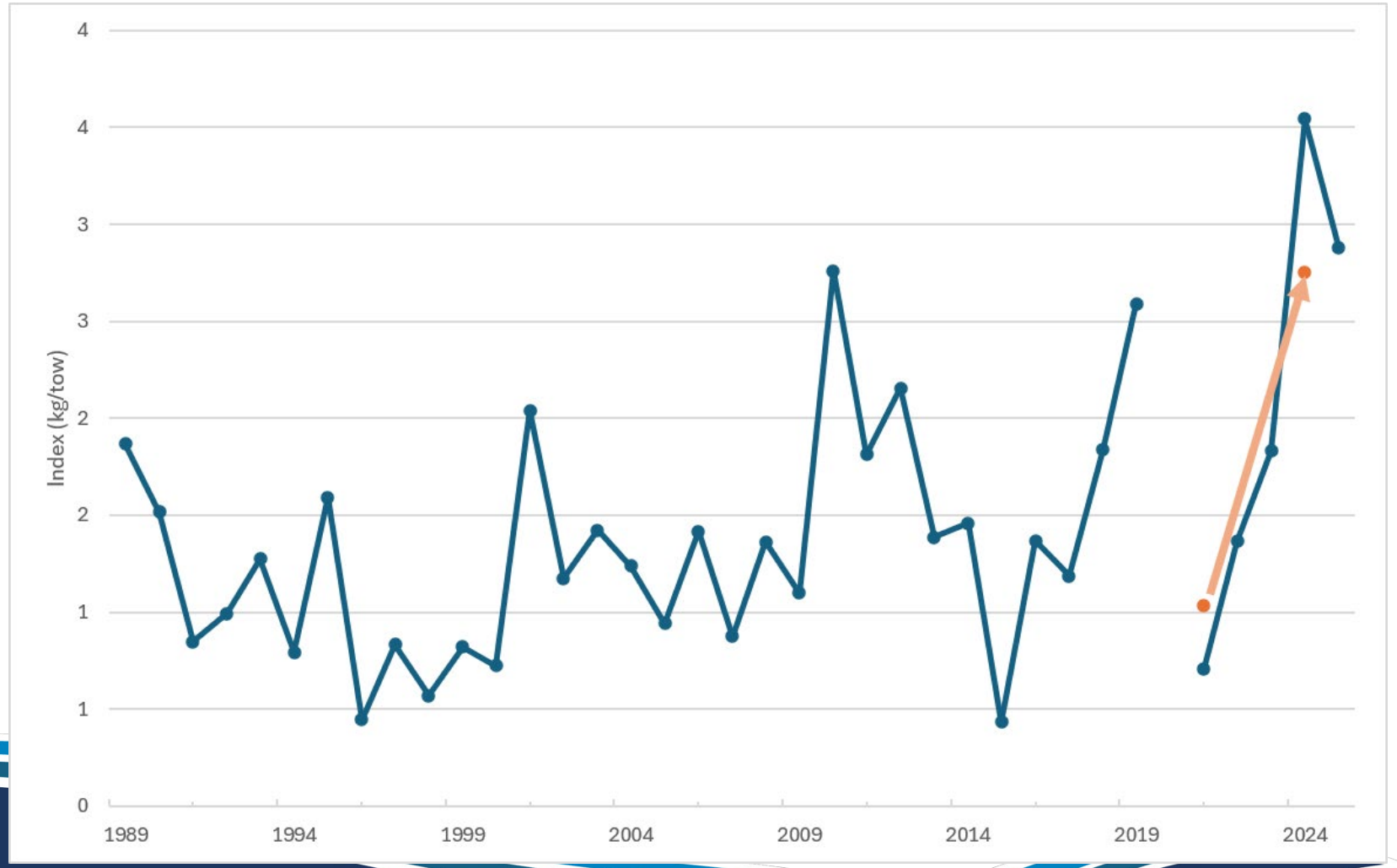
The ABC/OFL ratio varies with the width and shape of the OFL distribution; it is not a constant 25% buffer.

Sources: 2012 Secretarial Amendment; NEFMC SSC Report (Dec. 2023).

- **BIOMASS TREND AND CHANGE IN NORTHERN SILVER HAKE 3-YEAR AVERAGE BIOMASS**



- **BIOMASS TREND AND CHANGE IN SOUTHERN SILVER HAKE 3-YEAR AVERAGE BIOMASS**



Red Hake ABC methodology

Empirical catch advice because compatible OFL/MSY reference points are not currently available

1 Survey index

Spring year t + lagged Fall year t−1

2 Efficiency adjustment

Apply chain-sweep q and convert kg/tow to swept-area biomass

3 Recent biomass

Calculate trailing 3-year mean swept-area biomass

4 Baseline exploitation

Mean catch / swept-area biomass over SSC-selected reference period

5 ABC

ABC = terminal 3-year MA biomass × baseline exploitation rate

Why this approach?

- The empirical red hake assessment estimates exploitation as total catch divided by efficiency-adjusted swept-area biomass.
- Stock status is unknown under the new empirical framework because existing overfishing/MSY proxies were developed from the discarded AIM model.
- With no compatible OFL estimate or projections, the SSC used historical exploitation periods directly to derive ABC.

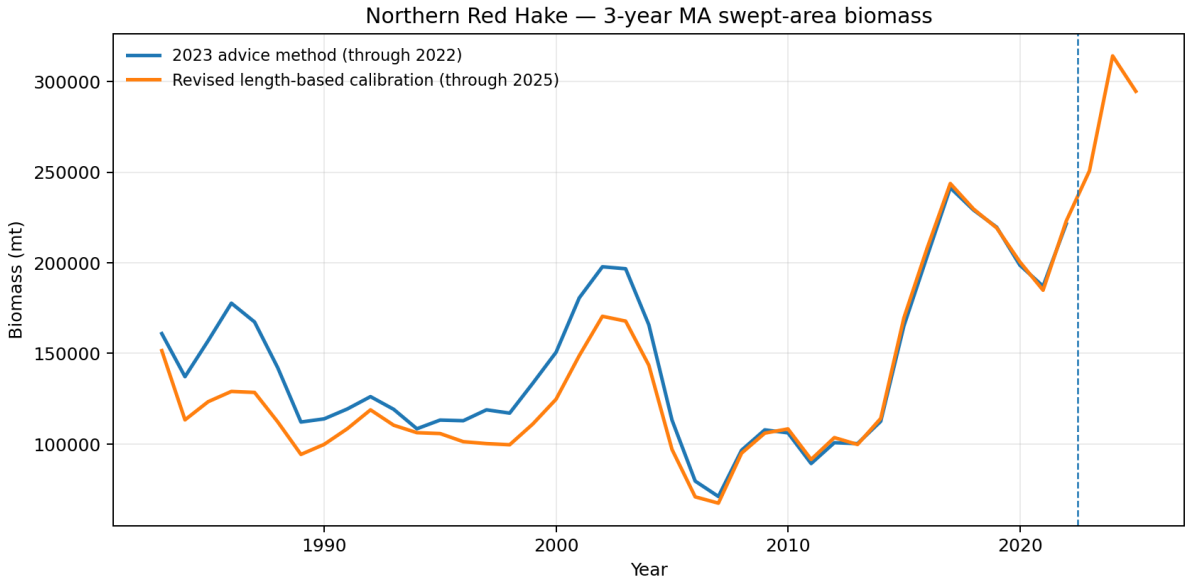
SSC basis retained from 2023

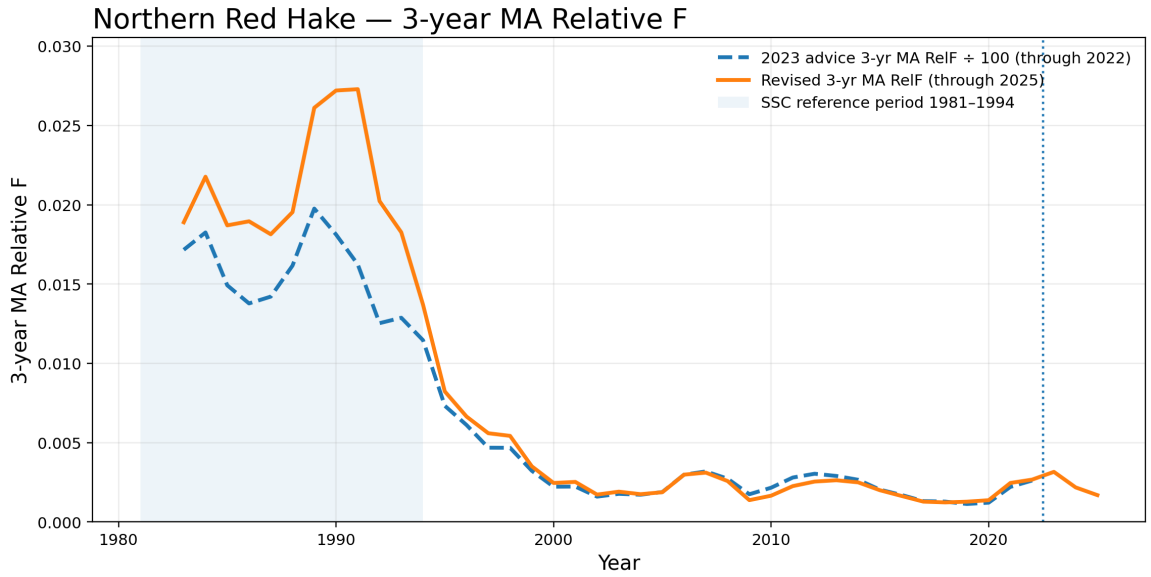
- Northern: mean exploitation during 1981–1994 — a period interpreted as showing a management response in biomass followed by stability.
- Southern: mean exploitation during 2001–2019 — lower exploitation, contemporary conditions, and low stock productivity.
- SSC/PDT also identified the need to further investigate the reference periods and potential F40% SPR-based reference points.

Catch includes commercial landings + estimated discards + recreational catch; swept-area biomass combines spring and lagged-fall survey information.

Northern Red Hake — effect of calibration revision

2023 advice series ends in 2022; revised series extends through 2025

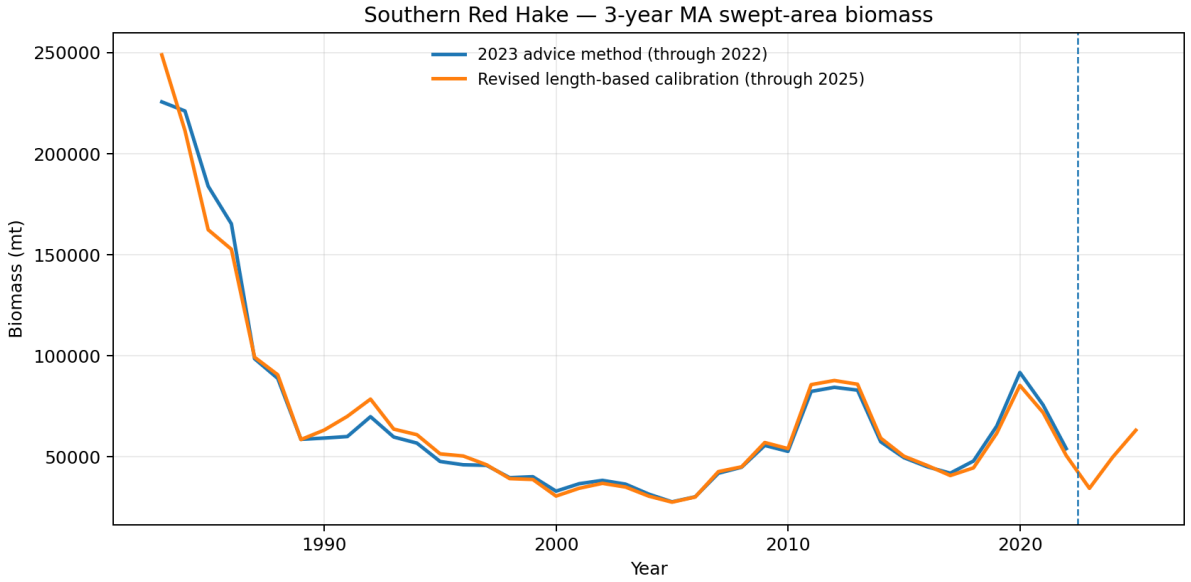


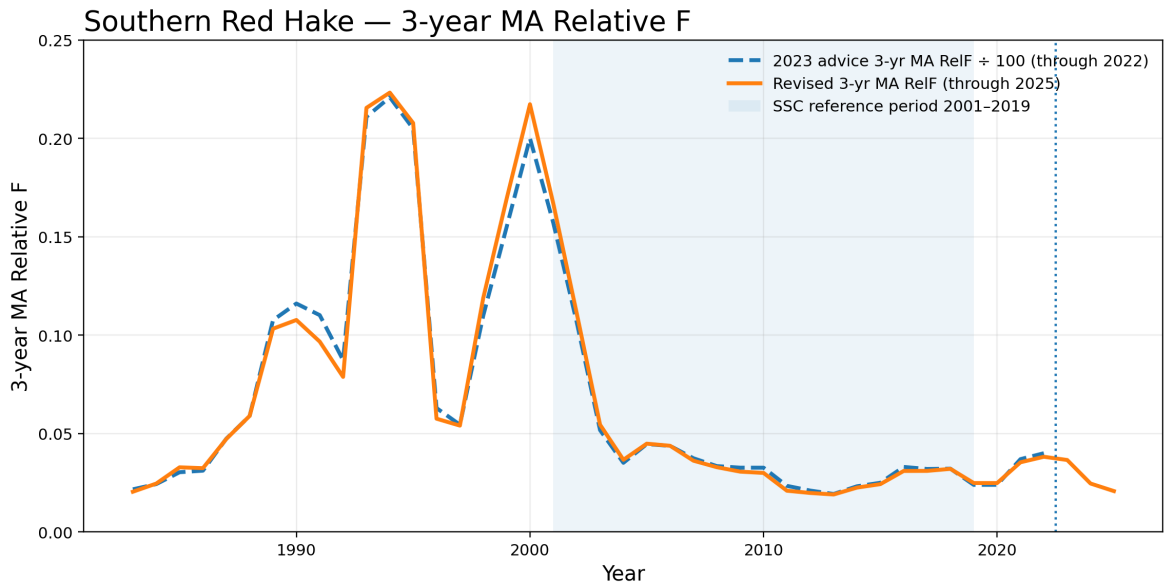


2023 terminal MA3	Revised 2022 MA3	2025 terminal MA3	2023 baseline RelF	Revised 1981–94 RelF
221,920 mt	223,041 mt	294,602 mt	0.01411	0.01965
	~+0.5%			~+39%

Southern Red Hake — effect of calibration revision

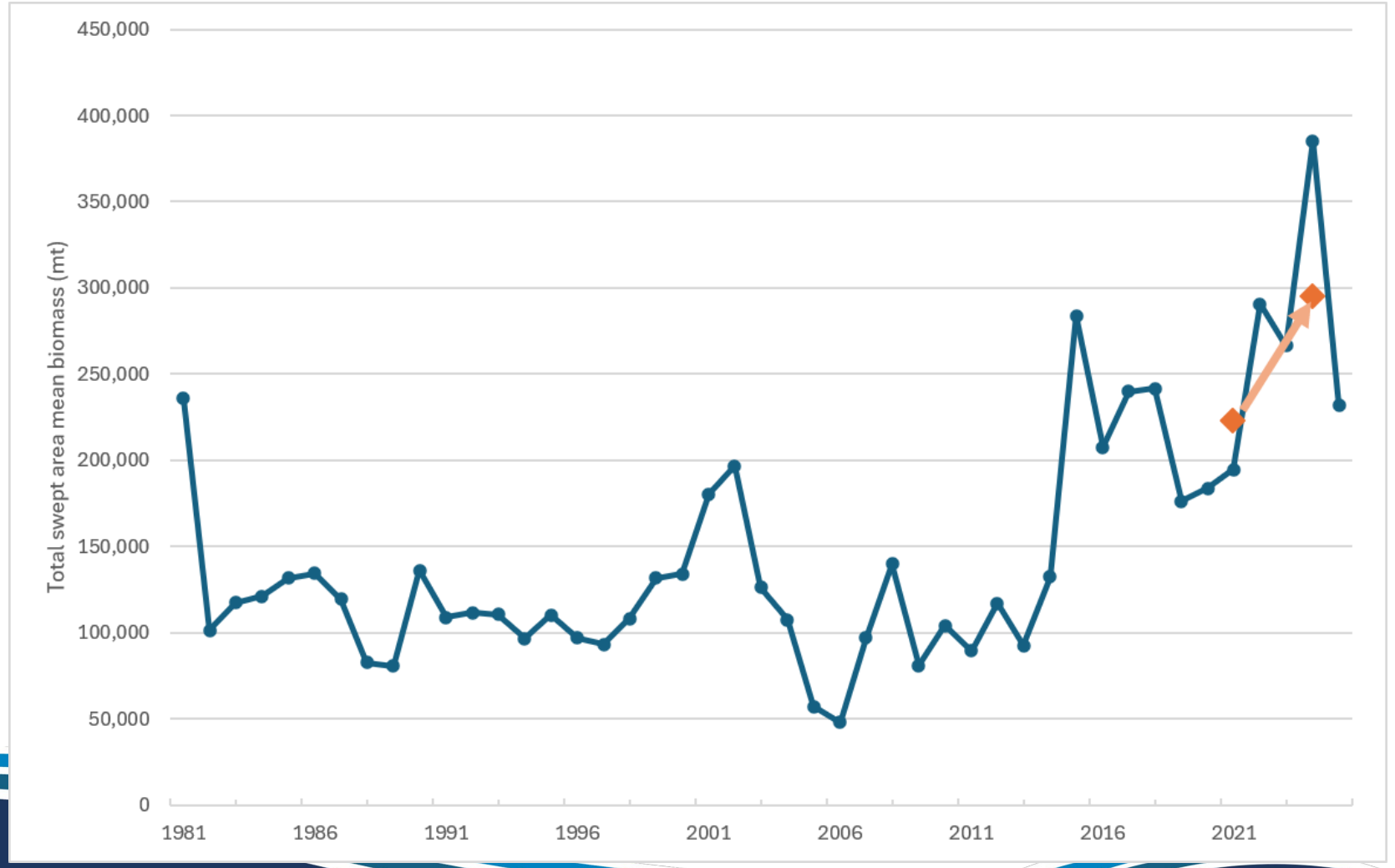
2023 advice series ends in 2022; revised series extends through 2025



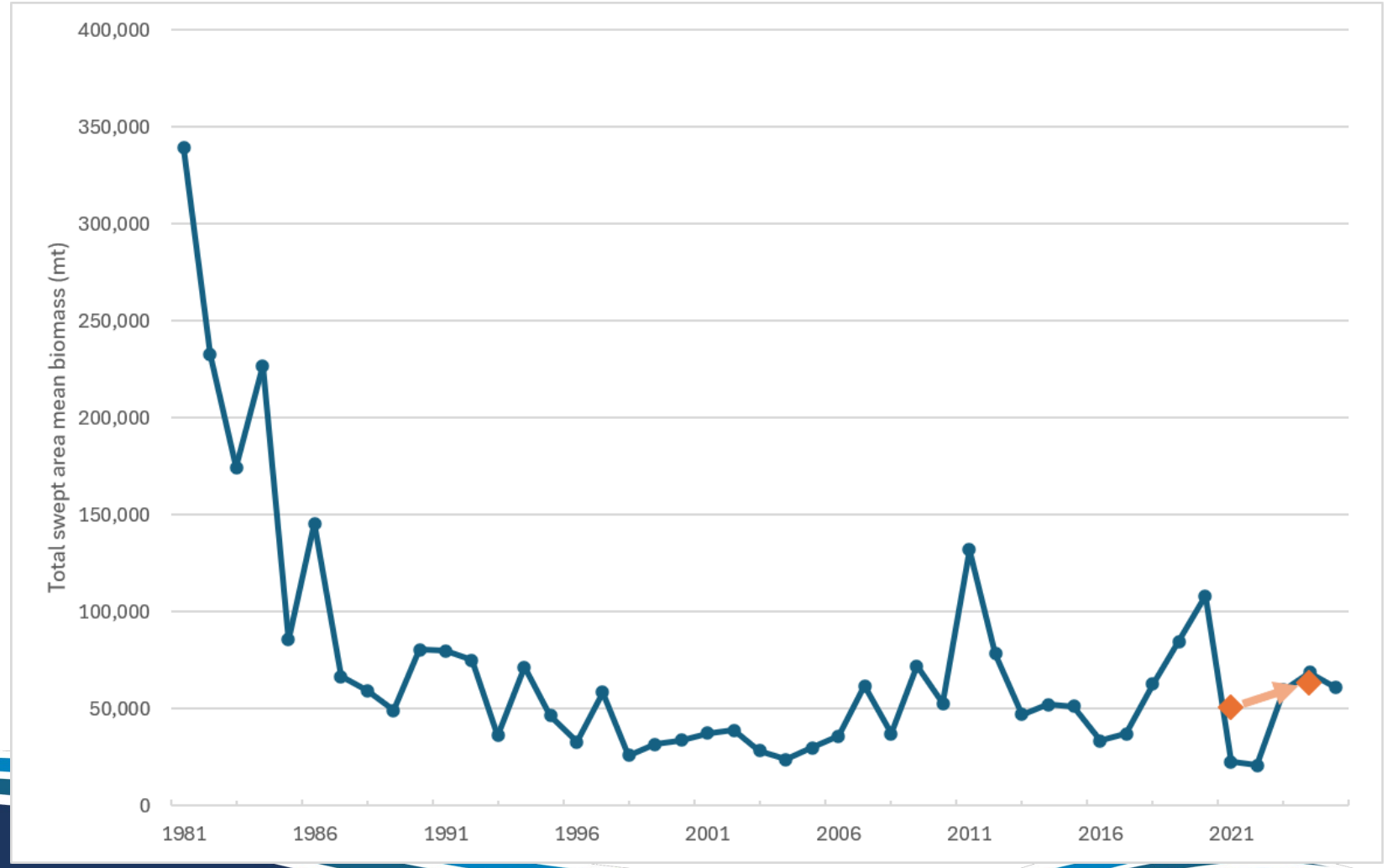


2023 terminal MA3	Revised 2022 MA3	2025 terminal MA3	2023 baseline RelF	Revised 2001–19 RelF
53,968 mt	50,536 mt	63,062 mt	0.0338	0.03362
	~−6%			~−1%

- **BIOMASS TREND AND CHANGE IN NORTHERN RED HAKE 3-YEAR AVERAGE BIOMASS**



- **BIOMASS TREND AND CHANGE IN SOUTHERN RED HAKE 3-YEAR AVERAGE BIOMASS**



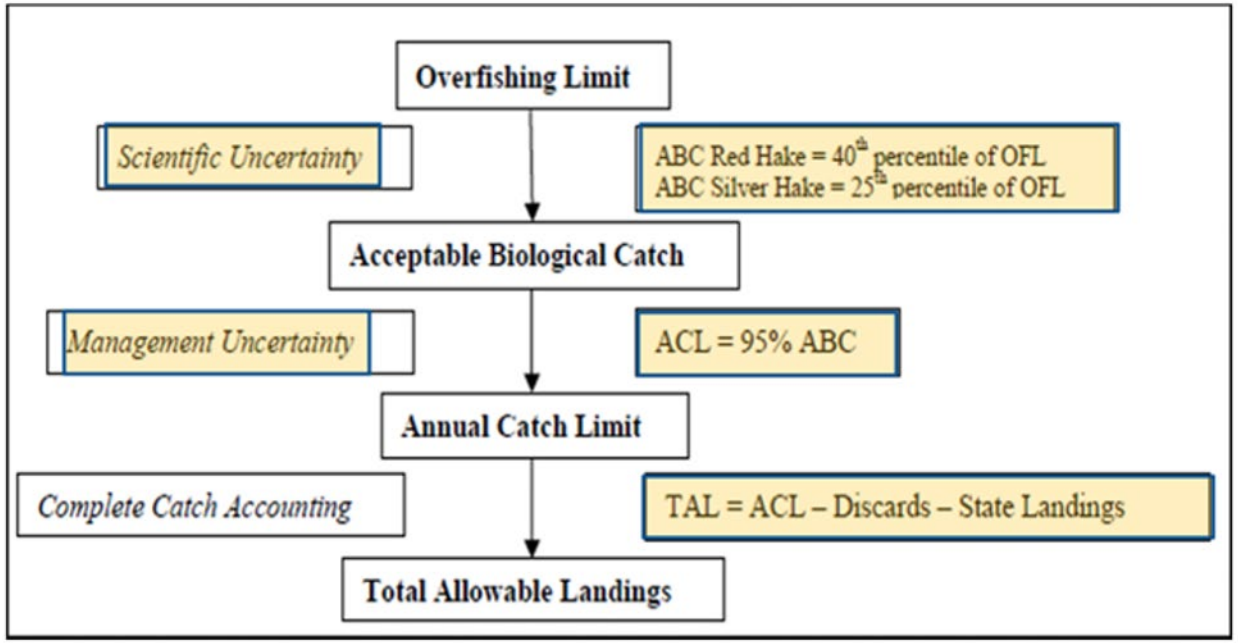
OVERFISHING LIMIT (OFL) AND ALLOWABLE BIOLOGICAL CATCH (ABC) FOR FISHING YEARS 2027-2031

Stock	OFL (mt)	ABC (mt)
Northern silver hake	48,540	26,260
Southern whiting[1]	96,260	53,660
Northern red hake	Unknown	5,790
Southern red hake[2]	Unknown	1,590

1. Includes 4% bump to account for estimated offshore hake catch
2. Includes a 25% ABC reduction to promote rebuilding biomass, required by Framework 62.

- **2027-2031 SPECIFICATIONS CONTROL RULE & FRAMEWORK**
- **Silver hake control rule:**
- OFL based on 1973-1982 MSY proxy
- ABC based on P*=25% application
- **Red hake control rule:**
- OFL unknown; AIM assessment rejected
- ABC based on an ad hoc reference period
  - 1981-1994 Northern red hake
  - 2001-2019 Southern red hake

Specifications framework



Comparison of proposed specifications with status quo. OFL and ABC specifications to be set by the SSC are highlighted in blue.

Comparison of proposed specifications with 2025 catch and landings. Differences represent ratios.

Table 1. Proposed 2027-2031 OFL and ABC specifications showing the ACL and TAL that would be set after accounting for expected discards and state landings, all compared to the 2024-2026 specifications. Red hake OFLs are not estimated by the current assessment methods for the stocks. Specifications to be set by the SSC are highlighted in the blue box.

2027-2031 advice								
Stock	OFL	ABC	ACL	Discard SA	State landings	TAL	TAL trigger %	TAL trigger
Northern red hake		5,790	5,501	87.7%	0.05%	676	0.9	608
Northern silver hake	48,540	26,260	24,947	18.6%	0.79%	20,123	0.9	18,111
Southern red hake		2,120	2,014	86.7%	1.00%	248	0.41	102
Southern whiting	96,260	53,660	50,977	32.3%	2.30%	33,362	0.9	30,026
SRH rebuilding	-	1,590	1,511			186		76
2024-2026 advice								
Northern red hake		3,129	2,973	91.2%	0.23%	1,274	0.9	1,147
Northern silver hake	79,476	40,868	38,825	19.1%	0.82%	31,347	0.9	28,212
Southern red hake		1,370	1,301	85.2%	0.72%	236	0.41	97
Southern whiting	35,419	20,149	19,142	41.2%	0.75%	13,881	0.9	12,493
Change in advice								
Northern red hake		85.0%	85.0%	-3.8%	-78.9%	-46.9%	0.0%	-46.9%
Northern silver hake	-38.9%	-35.7%	-35.7%	-3.0%	-4.7%	-35.8%	0.0%	-35.8%
Southern red hake		54.8%	54.8%	1.7%	39.9%	5.3%	0.0%	5.1%
Southern whiting	171.8%	166.3%	166.3%	-21.8%	207.7%	140.3%	0.0%	140.3%

Table 2. Comparison of proposed 2027-2031 specifications and 2023-2025 catch and landings. Catch and landings less than the proposed specifications are highlighted. Differences are the ratio between the 2027-2031 ACL and 2025 catch, or the 2027-2031 TAL and 2025 landings. Only the 2025 southern red hake landings exceeded the potential 2027-2031 TAL and in 2025 the catch did not exceed the ACL and the trigger was not enforced.

Stock	ACL	23-25 catch	ACL/catch	TAL	23-25 landings	TAL/landing
Northern red hake	5,501	470	11.70	676	58	11.66
Northern silver hake	24,947	2,182	11.43	20,123	1,777	11.32
Southern red hake	1,511	1,144	1.32	188	152	1.23
Southern whiting	50,977	4,451	11.45	33,362	3,015	11.07