



**NOAA**  
**FISHERIES**

#5c

# 2021 Billfish Management

Atlantic HMS Advisory  
Panel Meeting  
December 7, 2020

# Discussion Topics

- Marlin stock status
- ICCAT marlin management
- Domestic Atlantic billfish regulations
- Recent marlin harvest trends
- Quarter 3 billfish accounting update - 2020
- Management approaches, should they be needed
- Discussion prompt questions



**NOAA**  
**FISHERIES**

# Marlin Stock Status



- ❖ Blue marlin (BUM)
  - Overfished
  - Overfishing
  - Most recent stock assessment: 2018
  
- ❖ White marlin (WHM) / roundscale spearfish (RSP)
  - Two species assessed together as a single stock
  - Overfished
  - Overfishing not occurring
  - Most recent stock assessment: 2019



**NOAA**  
FISHERIES

# ICCAT Marlin Management



- ❖ U.S. 250-Marlin Recreational Landings Limit
  - First included in ICCAT Rec. 00-13 for 2001-2002.
  - Carried forward in subsequent ICCAT recommendations.
  
- ❖ ICCAT Rec. 19-05: Rebuilding Program
  - Maintains the U.S. 250-Marlin Limit.
  - If any CPC exceeds its landings limit during any two consecutive years, its landings limit shall be reduced on/before the adjustment year by at least 125% of excess harvest.
  - No carryforward of underharvest starting with 2020 catches.



**NOAA**  
**FISHERIES**

# Domestic Atlantic Marlin Management

- ❖ 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP implemented provisions of ICCAT Rec. 00-13 and its subsequent modifications.

Species	Current minimum size:	To manage landings, NMFS may adjust min size to:	If 250-marlin limit is reached or projected to be reached:
BUM	99" LJFL	117" – 138" LJFL	Catch-and-release only
WHM / RSP	66" LJFL	70" – 79" LJFL	

- ❖ All U.S. landings are recreational – sale is not allowed.
- ❖ NMFS must subtract overharvest from landings limit for *the following year*.
- ❖ 14-day delayed effectiveness period.



**NOAA**  
FISHERIES

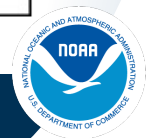
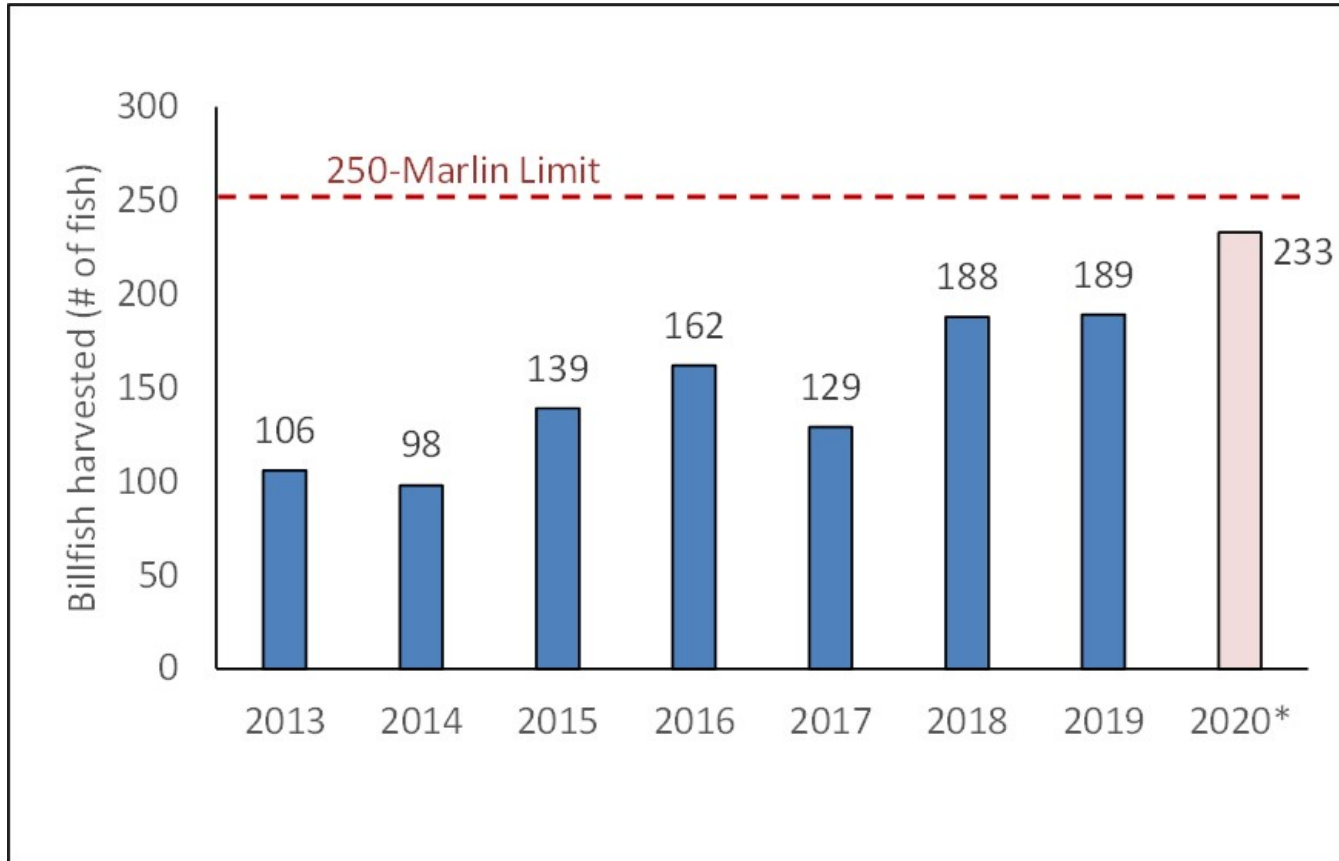
# Recent Marlin Landings Trends:

- ❖ High WHM/RSP landings in Q3, mainly from tournaments (↑ **42%** over 2019, July - Sept only):
  - High proportion of kept fish.
  - Landings and discards, and participation, were not very different than in previous years.
  - Most WHM/RSP and BUM landings were 69-70” LJFL and 99-116” LFJL, respectively.
- ❖ Catch-And-Release Only:
  - 250-Marlin limit was understood to have been reached and exceeded in September 2020 (later revised)
  - First ever change to catch-and-release status.
  - Effective September 30 – December 31, 2020.



**NOAA**  
FISHERIES

# Recent Marlin Harvest Trends



**NOAA**  
FISHERIES

# Quarter 3 Marlin Accounting Numbers

- ❖ Data are “preliminary” and may be affected by time lags in receiving landings data, late reporting, and normal QA/QC processes.
- ❖ Unique 2020 QA/QC issue - integration of eTrips.
  - Released fish reported via eTrips data were mistakenly pushed into landings data tables.
  - The source of the error has been identified and corrected.
- ❖ Preliminary Q3 Update (Sept 2020) = 268 billfish.
- ❖ Full Q3 Landings Update (Nov 2020) = 276 billfish.
- ❖ Revised Q3 Landings Estimate (Dec 2020) = 233 billfish.
  - 72 BUM, 95 WHM, 66 RSP





# Marlin Management Approaches to be Considered if Needed

- ❖ If NMFS determines that an overage occurred, the 250-Marlin landings limit would be adjusted for the following year.
- ❖ For example, a hypothetical 2020 overage would likely result in:
  - Initial adjustment of landings limit for 2021 (December 2020)

$$\begin{array}{|c|} \hline 250\text{-Marlin} \\ \hline \text{Limit} \\ \hline \end{array} \text{ — } \begin{array}{|c|} \hline \text{Overage} \\ \hline \text{(e.g., 26 fish)} \\ \hline \end{array} = \begin{array}{|c|} \hline 224\text{-Marlin} \\ \hline \text{Limit for 2021} \\ \hline \end{array}$$



- Final adjustment and additional measures if needed per Q4 update (February 2021)



**NOAA**  
FISHERIES

# Additional Marlin Management Approaches to be Considered if Needed

## ❖ Minimum Size Adjustment if Needed

### ➤ Species (Which)

- Only: blue marlin
- Only: white marlin and roundscale spearfish
- All: blue marlin, white marlin, and roundscale spearfish

### ➤ Adjusted Minimum Size (What)

- Blue marlin (from 99" to somewhere between 117-138" LJFL)
- White marlin and roundscale spearfish (from 66" to somewhere between 70-79" LJFL)

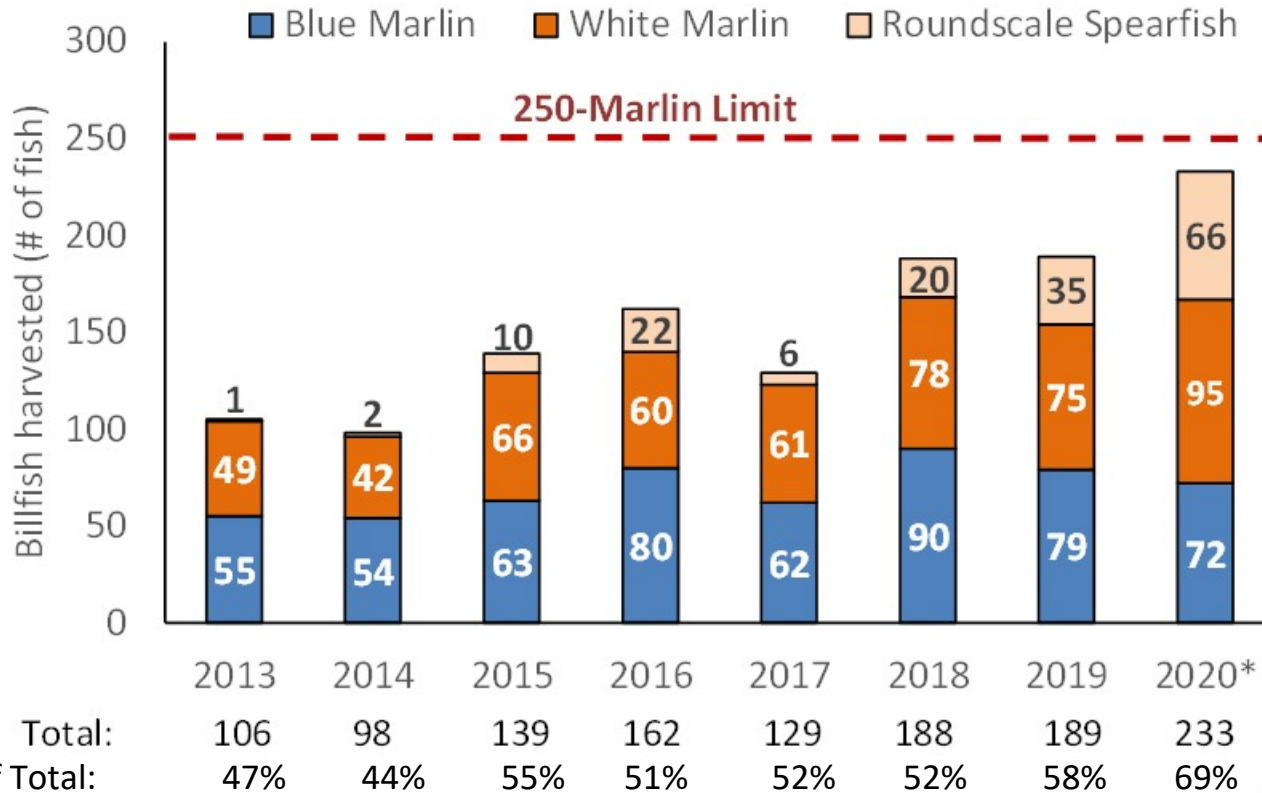
### ➤ Timing of Adjustment if Needed (When)



**NOAA**  
FISHERIES



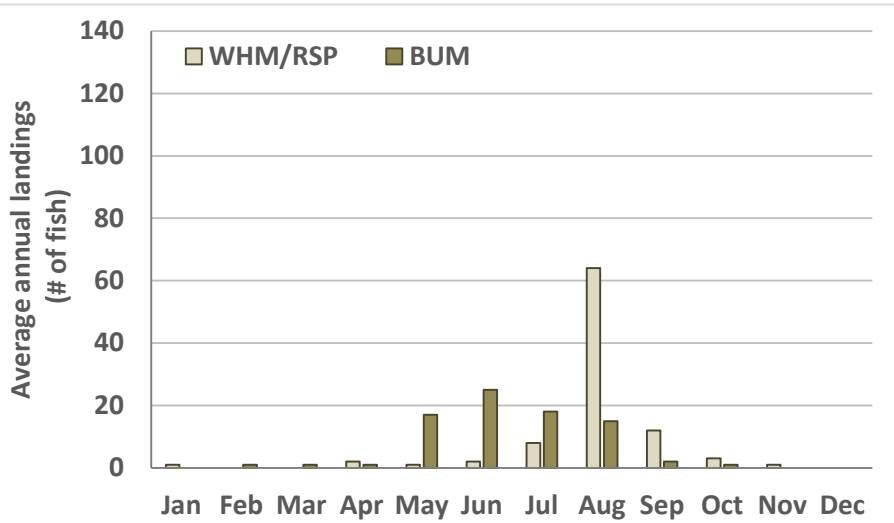
# Additional Marlin Management Approaches to be Considered if Needed: Species



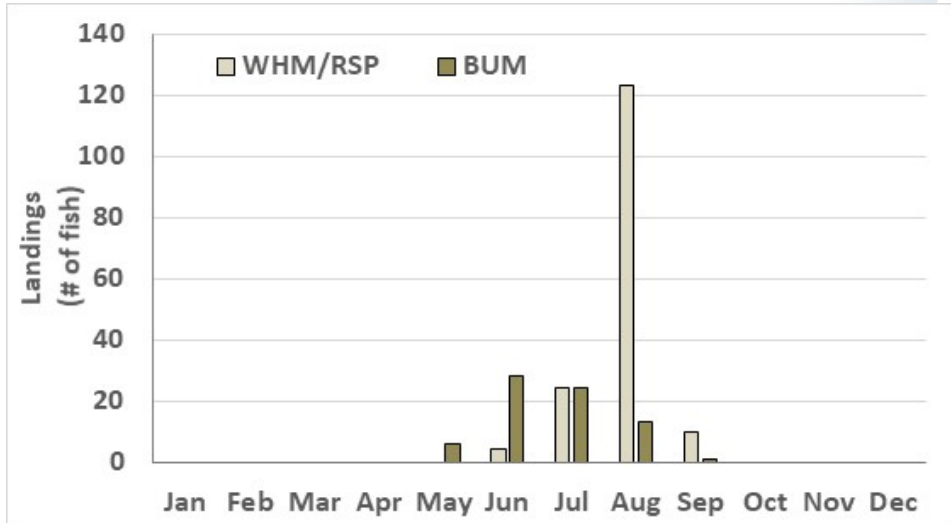
**NOAA**  
FISHERIES



# Additional Marlin Management Approaches to be Considered if Needed: Species and Timing of Landings



**Average Annual Billfish Landings Per Month (2017-2019)**



**2020 Billfish Landings (January-September)**





# Hypothetical Impact on 250-Marlin Landings Limit

If the landings limit was adjusted early in the year (Q1)...

	66" LJFL	70" LJFL	WHM + RSP
99" LJFL	0.00%	-25.30%	
117" LJFL	-33.60%	-58.89%	
BUM			

If the landings limit was adjusted at the start of Q3...

	66" LJFL	70" LJFL	WHM + RSP
99" LJFL	0.00%	-24.70%	
117" LJFL	-15.42%	-40.12%	
BUM			

Note: Estimates based on landings data from 2017-2019

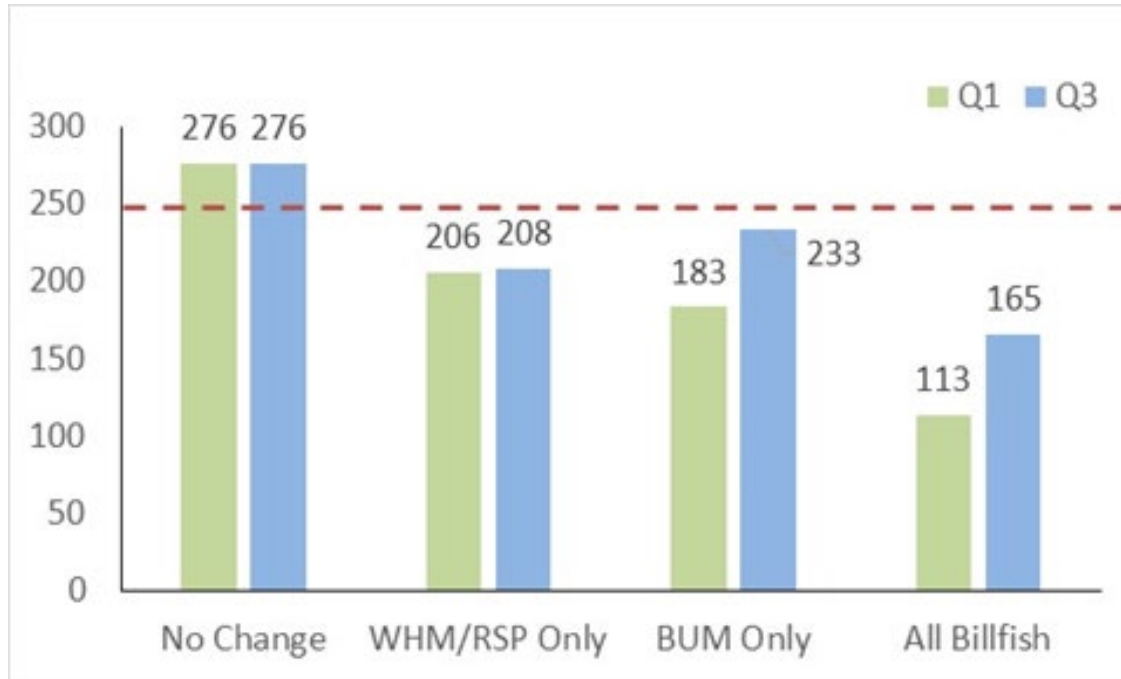


**NOAA**  
FISHERIES



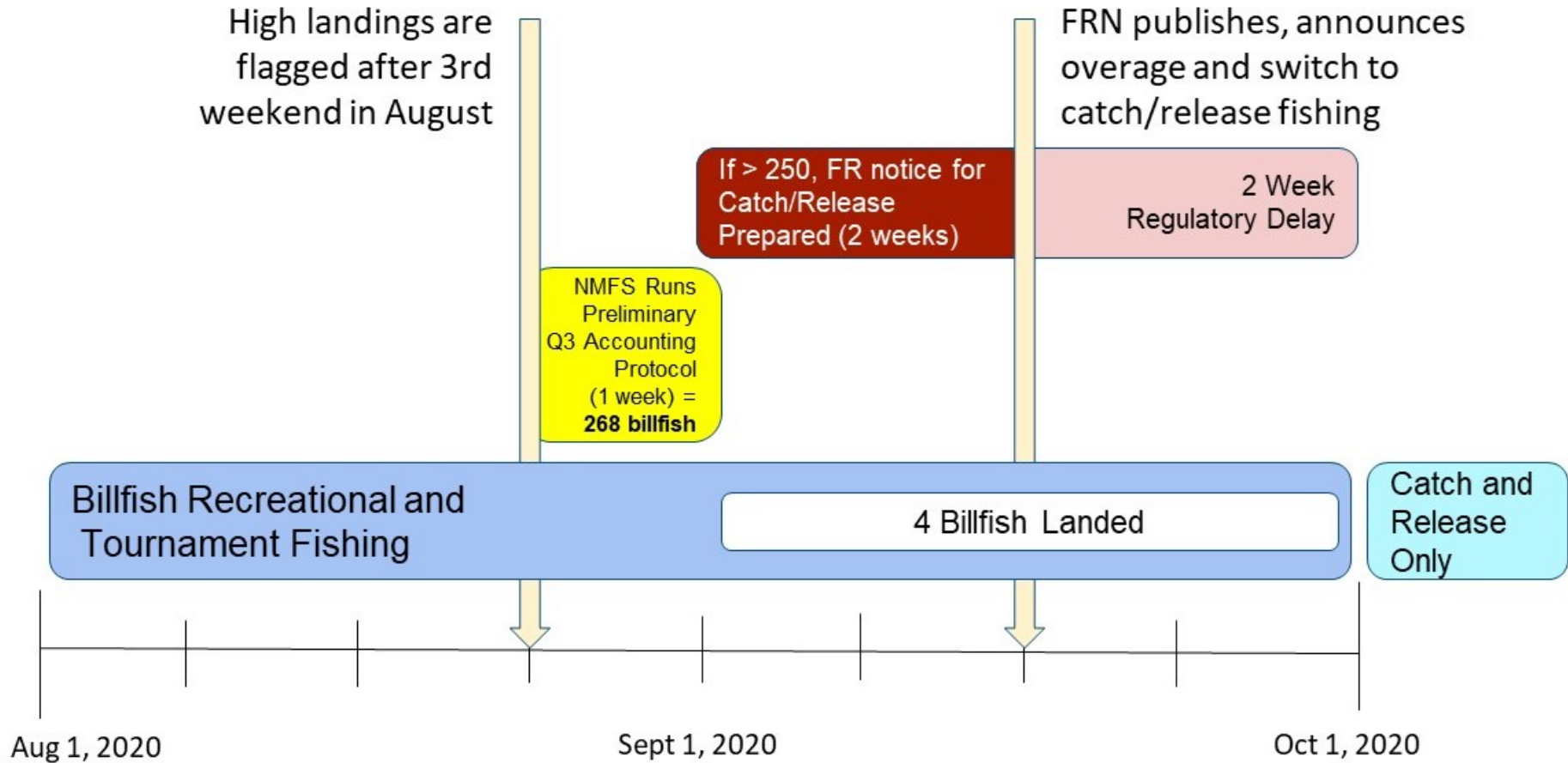
# Hypothetical Impact on 250-Marlin Landings Limit

If Estimated Percent Reductions were Applied to an Overage (e.g., if  $n = 276$  billfish through September 30):



**NOAA**  
FISHERIES

# Case Study: Timing of Action Based on 2020's Experience



# Discussion Prompt Questions

- ❖ What can we expect to happen in 2021?
  - Will landings keep rising in 2021 consistent with recent trends in the fishery and perhaps with the stock, or was 2020 anomalous?
- ❖ If 250-Marlin landings limit were exceeded in 2021, what response is most appropriate? This could include -
  - ...adjusting minimum sizes for certain billfish species or all billfish species?
  - ...selecting specific minimum sizes for each species?
  - ...appropriate timing for adjustments?
- ❖ Should NMFS consider any long-term regulatory changes to improve inseason management for billfish?
  - Modify the two-week window for delayed implementation?
  - Different minimum size adjustment ranges? E.g., 67-69” for WHM/RSP? 100-116” for BUM?



**NOAA**  
**FISHERIES**



# Questions?

Jennifer Cudney – [jennifer.cudney@noaa.gov](mailto:jennifer.cudney@noaa.gov)

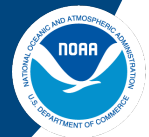
Nicolas Alvarado – [nicolas.alvarado@noaa.gov](mailto:nicolas.alvarado@noaa.gov)

Cliff Hutt – [cliff.hutt@noaa.gov](mailto:cliff.hutt@noaa.gov)

Brad McHale, Peter Cooper, Randy Blankinship



© 1992, Diane Rome Peebles



**NOAA**  
**FISHERIES**