



Characterization of North Carolina's Black Drum Fisheries

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
Marine Fisheries

Marine Fisheries Commission | Chris Stewart | August 2025





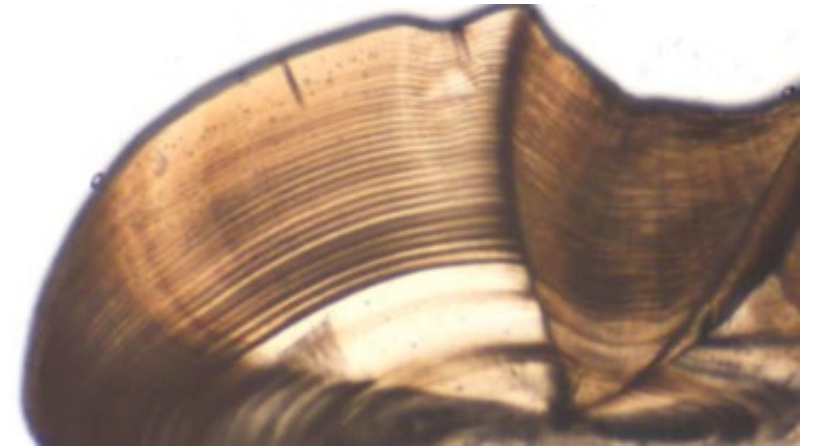
Presentation Outline

- Life History
- Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
- Management History
- State Regulations for Black Drum
- Stock Status
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 - Commercial
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- Age Data
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- Next Steps

Life History

Black Drum (*Pogonias cromis*):

- Largest member of drum family (Sciaenidae)
 - State record: 100 lb. 1 oz.
 - World record: 113 lb. 1 oz.
- Long lived species
 - Oldest known: age-67
 - Oldest in NC: age-60
- Sexually mature young age / large size
 - Females: age 4 & 6 (25 to 28 inches)
 - Males: age 4 & 5 (22 to 25 inches)
- Spawn offshore in winter and early spring
- Juveniles found throughout estuary, adults found in higher salinity waters
- Caught year-round, peak harvest in the fall



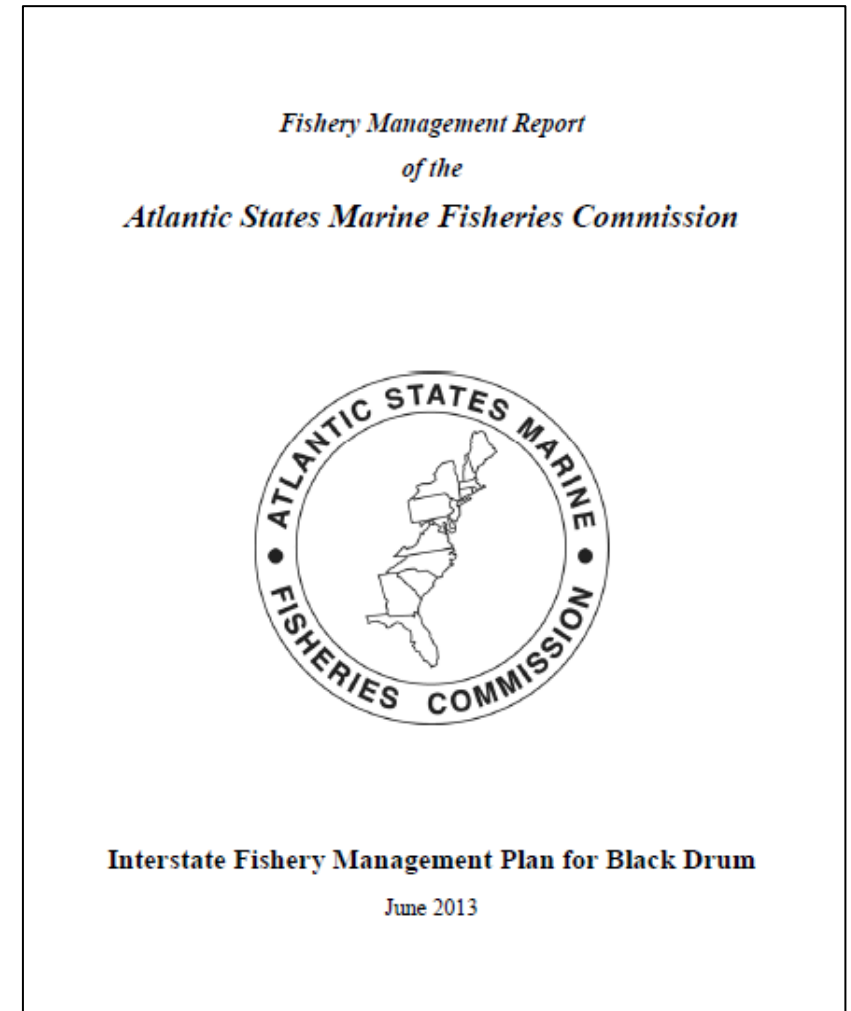
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

- Managed under two FMPs:
 - ASMFC Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Black Drum
 - And the N.C. FMP for Interjurisdictional Fisheries
- Black drum is managed as a coastwide stock by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC)
- Compact of 15 states (Maine to Florida)
- Atlantic migratory fish stocks in state waters (0-3 nautical miles offshore)
- Federal law mandates compliance with required management measures and/or complementary measures
- NCDMF actively participates in ASMFC black drum management process
- N.C. FMP for Interjurisdictional Fisheries



Management History

- ASMFC Interstate Fishery Management Plan adopted in 2013
- NCMFC implemented current management measures in 2014
 - 14- to 25-inch total length slot size limit
(with one fish over 25 inches)
 - 10-fish recreational bag limit,
 - 500-pound commercial trip limit
- Benchmark Stock Assessment completed in 2015
- Addendum I approved in 2018
 - Reopen Maryland's commercial fishery

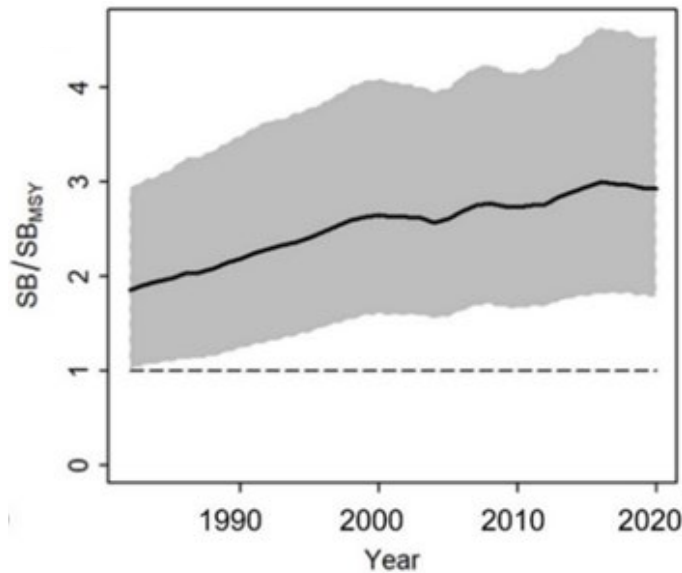


Current State Regulations for Black Drum

State	Recreational		Commercial		
	Size limit (inch)	Bag limit	Size limit (inch)	Trip Limit (lb)	Annual Quota
ME to NY	None	None	None	None	None
NJ	16" min	3/person/day	16" min	10,000 lb	65,000 lb
DE	16" min	3/person/day	16" min	10,000 lb	65,000 lb
MD	16" min	1/person/day - 6/vessel (Bay)	16" min (Atlantic coast), 28" (Bay)	10/vessel/day (Bay)	1,500 lb (Atlantic coast)
PRFC*	16" min	1/person/day	16" min	1 fish	None
VA	16" min	1/person/day	16" min	1/person/day	120,000 lb
NC	14" min - 25" max; 1 fish > 25" may be retained	10/person/day	14" min - 25" max; 1 fish > 25" may be retained	500 lb/trip	None
SC	14" min - 27" max	5/person/day	14" min - 27" max	5/person/day	None
GA	14" min	15/person/day	14" min	15/person/day	None
FL	14" min - 24" max	5/person/day	14" min - 24" max	500 lb/day	None

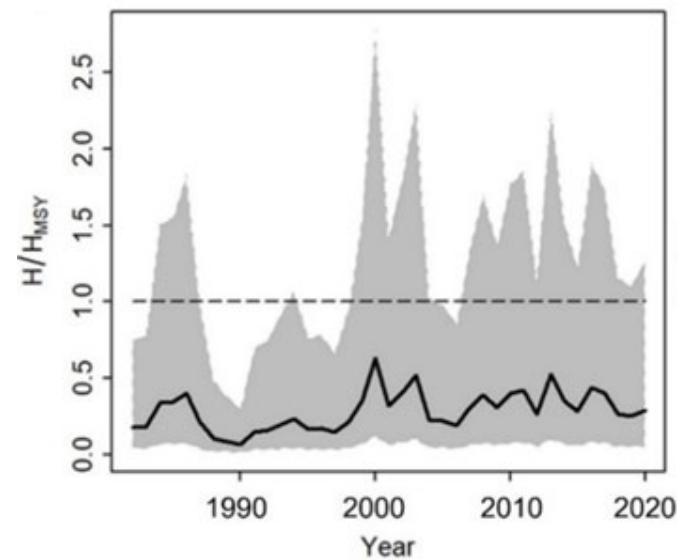
*PRFC = Potomac River Fisheries Commission

Stock Status



Spawning Biomass

Overfished if $SB/SB_{MSY} < 1$

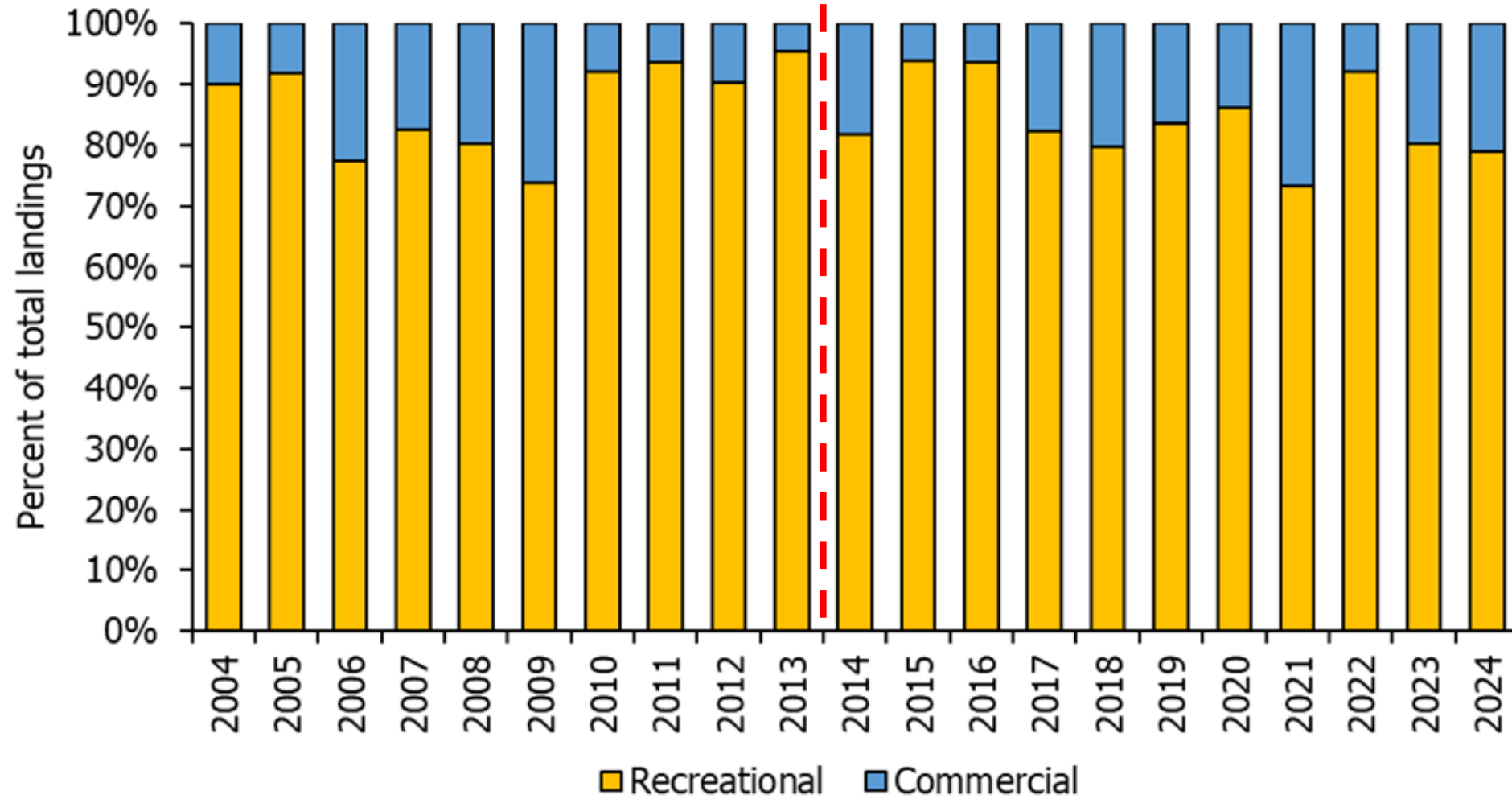


Annual Exploitation

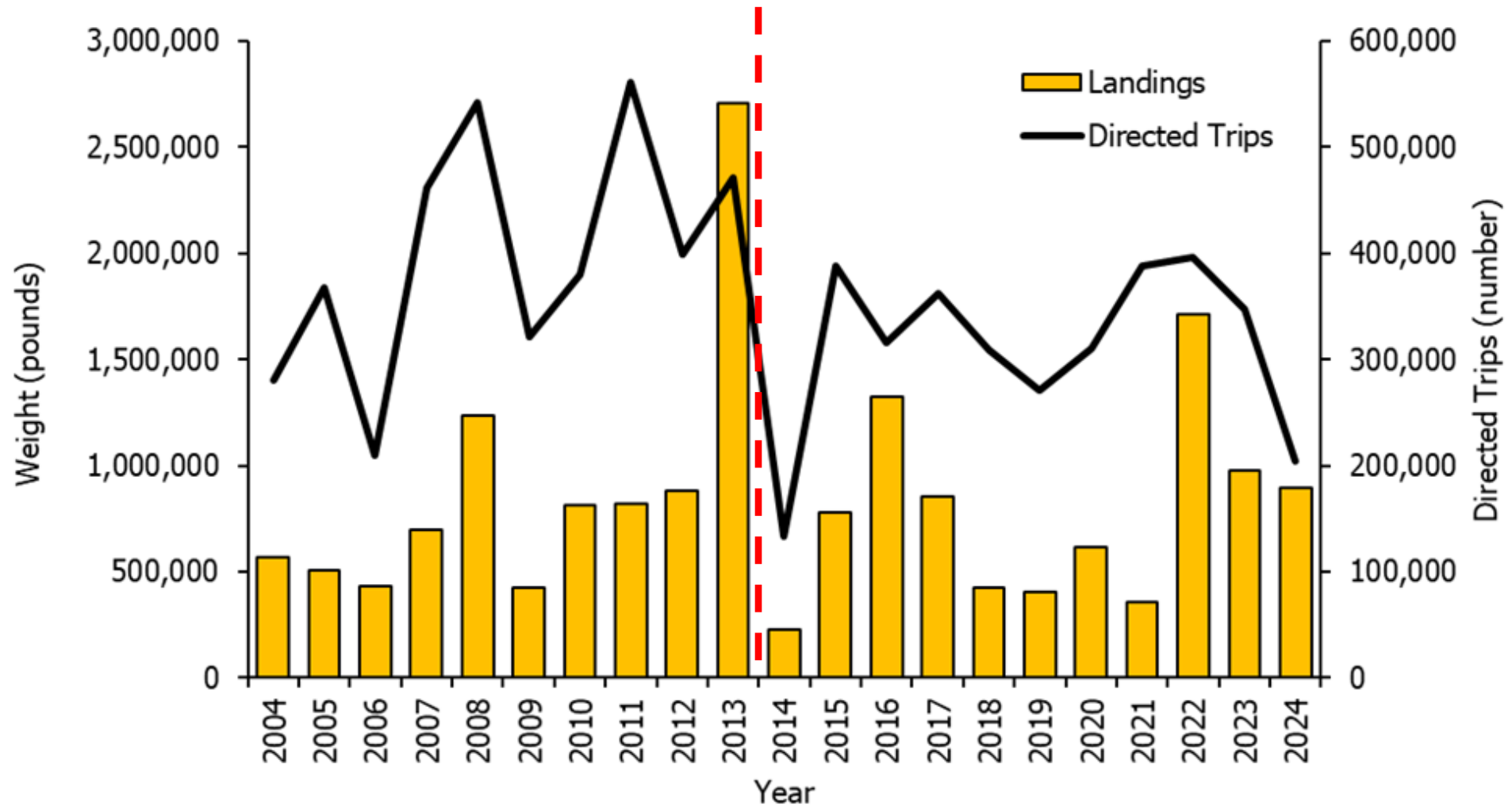
Overfishing is occurring if $H/H_{MSY} > 1$

- Stock not overfished and not experiencing overfishing as of 2020
- Stock indicators showed mixed signs of stability since the 2023 assessment
- Next data update scheduled for 2026
- Next stock assessment moved from 2027 to 2028

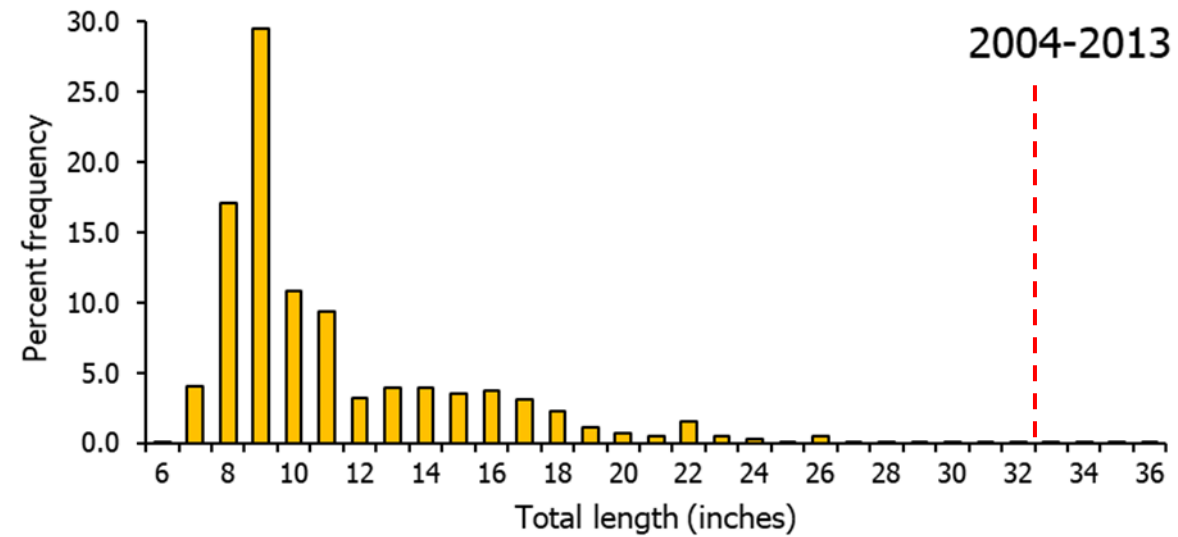
Recreational and Commercial Landings



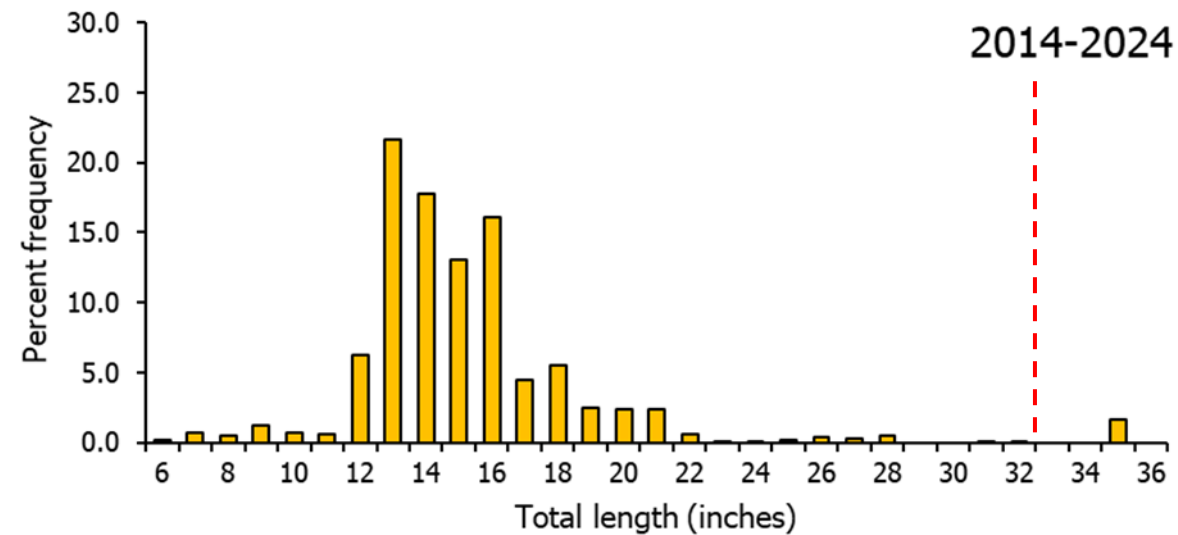
Recreational Landings



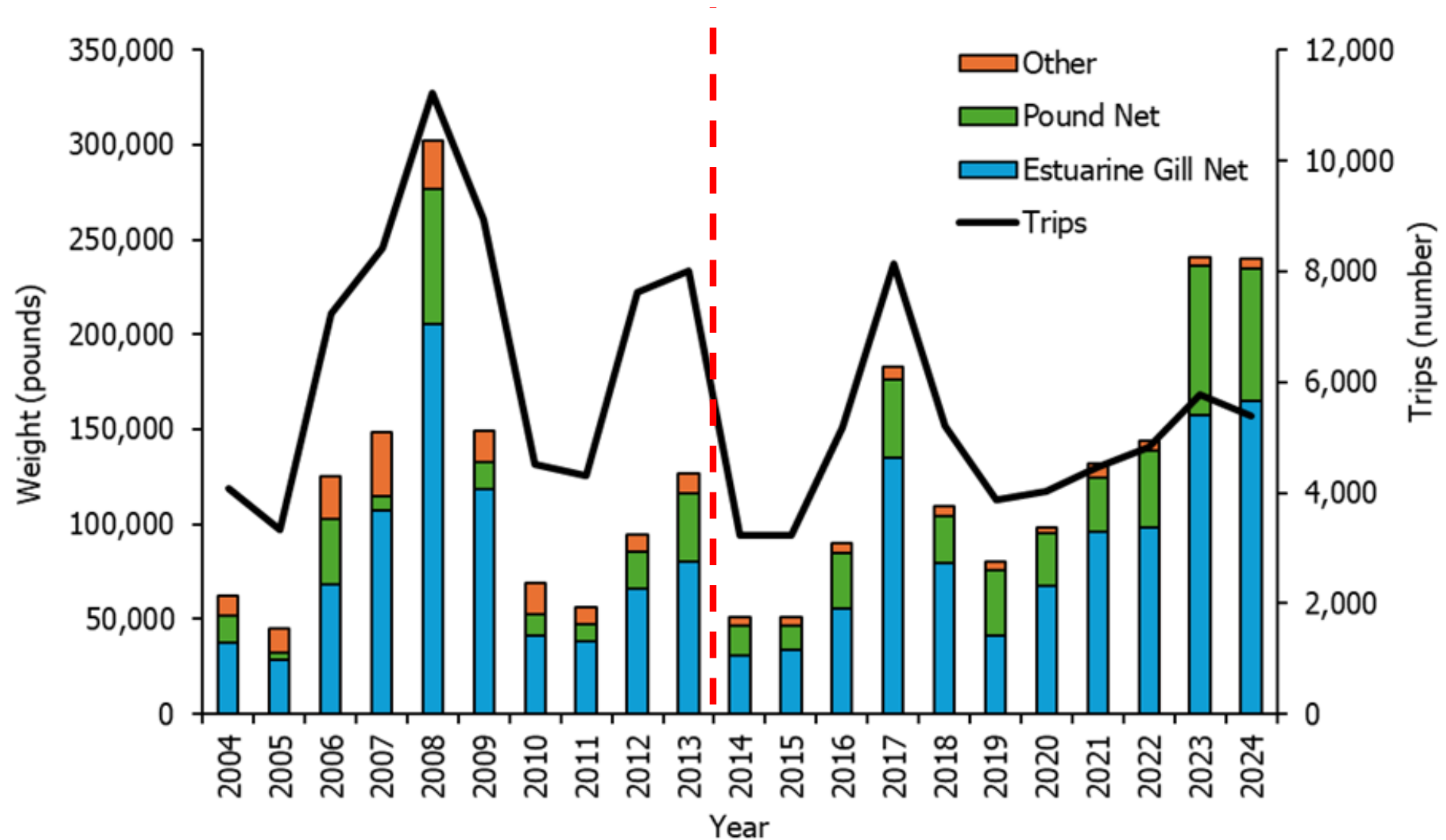
Recreational Length Frequency



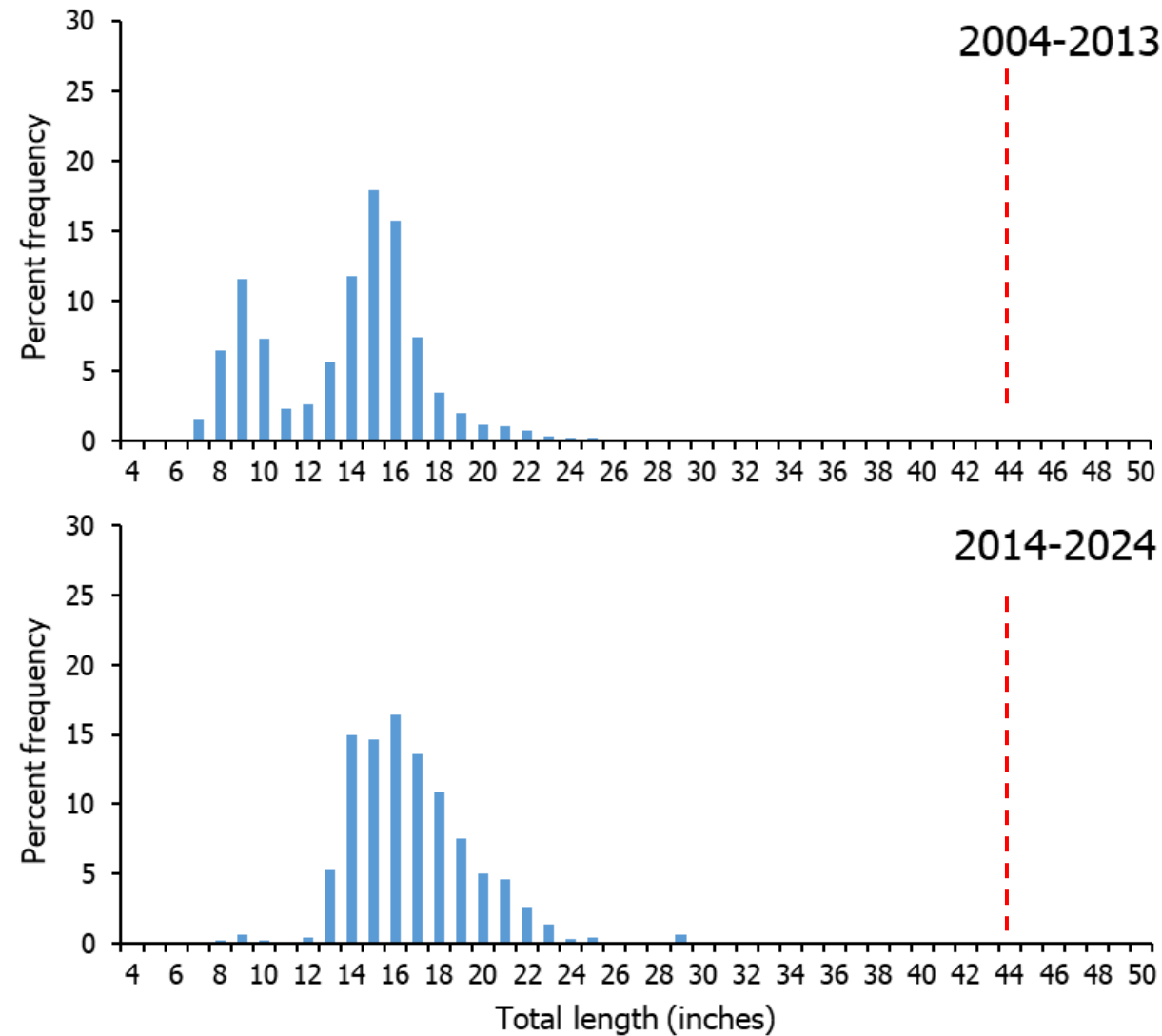
**100% Mature
~33 inches TL**



Commercial Landings

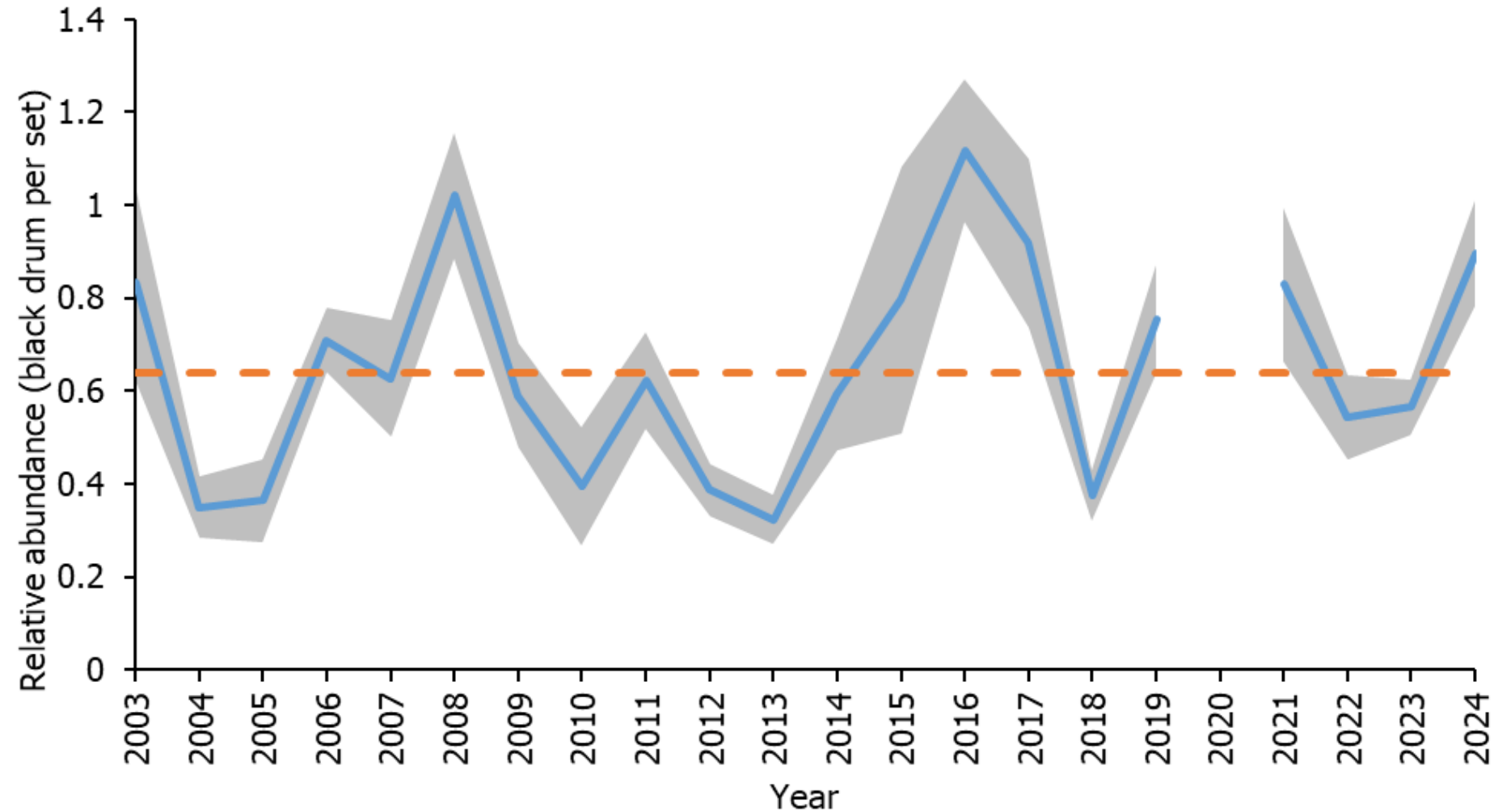


Commercial Length Frequency

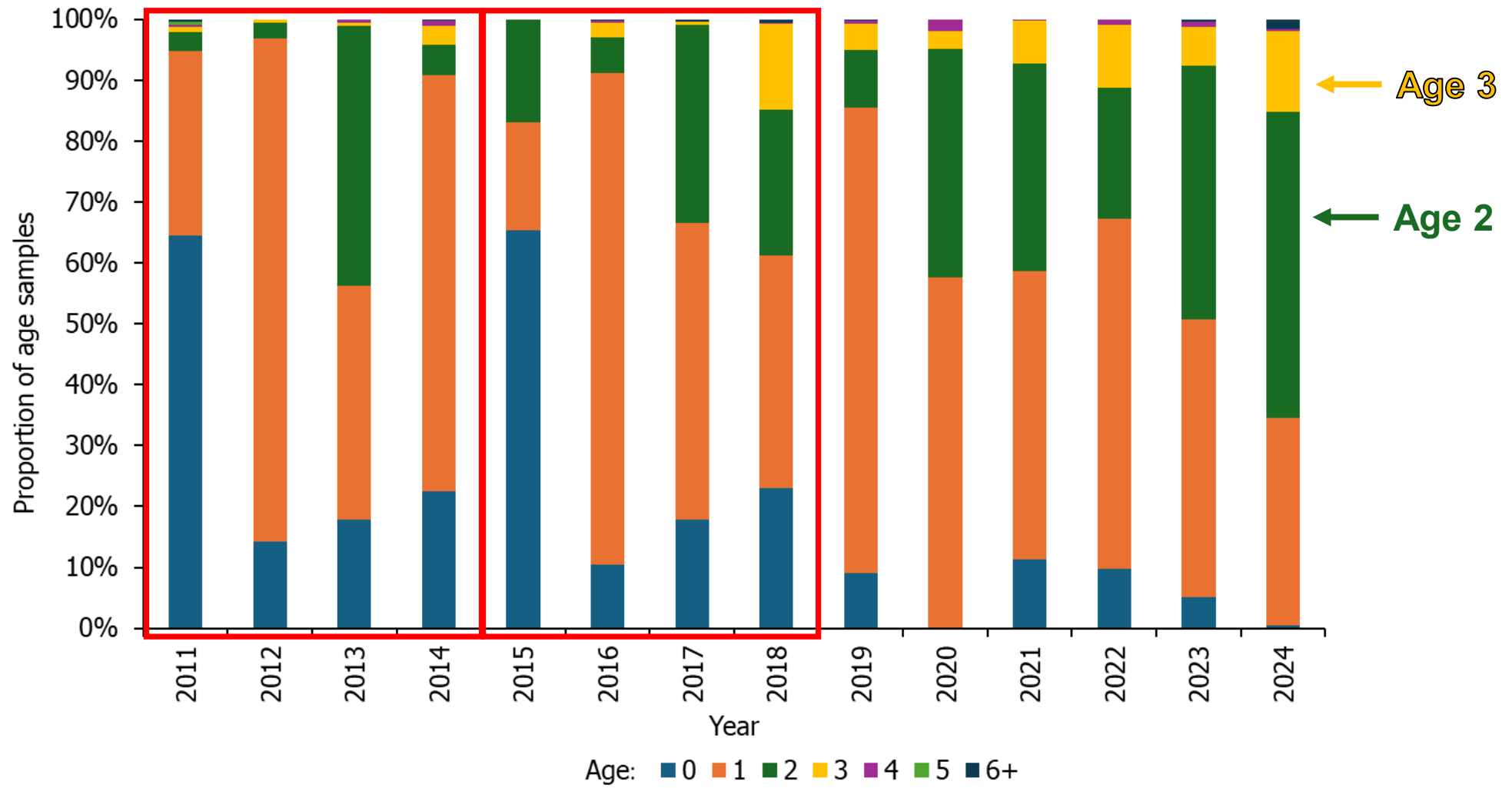


**100% Mature
~33 inches TL**

Fishery-Independent Gill Net Survey



Age Data



Summary

- The stock is not overfished and not experiencing overfishing
- A 2024 review (ASMFC Technical Committee) of coastwide stock indicators found mixed signs of stability and declines, and that additional data were within their respective historical ranges
- Recreational landings and effort in NC have high interannual variability; declining in 2023 and 2024
- Commercial landings have increased since 2014 and remained high in 2024
- Higher availability of fish following strong year-classes have resulted increased recreational and commercial harvest
- Implementation of minimum size limit delayed harvest of juvenile fish and upper slot allowed for increased escapement
- The index of relative abundance was above the time-series average in 2024
- Expansion of localized age structure



Next Steps

- Based on the findings of this information paper and the 2024 ASMFC Data Update, changes to the current black drum size, bag, and trip limits are not needed at this time
- The Division will continue to monitor the stock as part of the annual FMP update
- The Division will continue its role as a member of the ASMFC Technical Committee and will review the stock indicators as they become available in 2026



Questions?



Chris Stewart

Chris.Stewart@deq.nc.gov

910-796-7370

