

RI Marine Fisheries Council  
 Scup – Black Sea Bass Advisory Panel  
 Meeting Minutes  
 October 15, 2013, 7:00 PM  
 URI Bay Campus, Coastal Institute

W. Mackintosh, Chairman	K. Booth
C. Brown*	J. Carvalho
MM	
R. Ballou - RIDEM	J. McNamee, DFW staff

(\*primary advisory panel member; <sup>A</sup> alternate member)

W. Mackintosh began the meeting. He stated that J. McNamee of the RI Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW or Division) had a presentation which covered the first 7 agenda topics and was broken in to a scup section followed by a black sea bass section. He stated that after each section of the presentation the panel would discuss any proposals they may have for commercial management for scup or black sea bass in 2014.

J. McNamee began the DFW presentation with a discussion about stock status for scup. The stock was rebuilt and overfishing was not occurring. He then went over the fishery performance in RI in 2013. The fishery went well in 2013, though catch rates started off extremely high and a drop in weekly possession limit was enacted in the first sub period. Several rollovers from the floating fish trap sector in to the general category fishery were needed in an effort to get the states allocation caught. In addition to the rollovers, a portion of the floating fish trap allocation was given to New York so that they did not have to incur any overages in 2013 (150,000 lbs). J. McNamee concluded by stating that the DFW would approve any option that was believed to remain within the quota allocated to the state. The DFW currently suggested similar starting possession limits to 2013 as there would be drops in quota over the coming years.

W. Mackintosh went to the panel for discussion. Several panel members voiced their displeasure with the upcoming quota decreases. They wanted this sentiment passed on to the Mid Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (MAFMC), as they felt the current policies for setting quotas was too conservative.

J. Carvalho stated that the state should not have had to give any of RI's quota to NY. He stated that other states will take our quota if we don't work to harvest it and he felt we could have harvested all of our allocation if we hadn't dropped the possession limit in the early season. J. McNamee stated that he didn't disagree but at the time there was going to be an overage, and it is the DFW's policy to manage for the sub period.

C. Brown stated that the split between the general category and the floating fish traps was not justified anymore, and this should be something that we should revisit, because the only reason the fishery did not close was because of the rollovers were triggered. There are no guarantees that these will be available in the future.

J. Carvalho submitted a proposal. He stated that the sub periods should be removed and there should be one possession limit set that would get them through the whole

state waters season. This would have helped in 2013 by most likely not having had the possession limit decrease in the early sub period. C. Brown stated that he had some hesitation about this proposal due to the possibility that there would not be any rollover from the floating fish traps and this could lead to a long closure during the state waters period. W. Mackintosh took a vote on the two proposals, status quo and J. Carvalho's proposal. The vote was split 2 for status quo and 2 for J. Carvalho's proposal. J. Carvalho withdrew his proposal so that the group might reach consensus.

M. Bucko offered an alternative. Instead of removing all of the sub periods in this first year, **he suggested combining the first two sub periods but leaving the fall sub period intact.** He then suggested they could run it this way in 2014 and re-evaluate next year to see if they would like to make the state waters period one single sub period or go back to the 3 sub period set up. **The panel accepted this proposal as a consensus proposal from the AP.**

J. McNamee then went through a discussion about the black sea bass fishery. The stock was rebuilt and overfishing was not occurring according to the only peer reviewed stock assessment available, but J. McNamee then went on to describe the situation that recently occurred with the benchmark assessment, the result of which was the assessment was rejected. A data workshop was held for black sea bass in January of 2013 and the result of this was a decision that nothing that is currently available will help the current assessment move in to a higher tier. A new spatially structured assessment was needed. One final note was that a recent meeting of the Mid Atlantic SSC resulted in an increase in the allowable catch for black sea bass in 2014. He then went over the fishery performance in RI in 2013. The fishery remained at a low possession limit and had numerous closures, all related to the very small quota. J. McNamee concluded by stating that the DFW would approve any option that remained within the allocated quota for the state. The DFW did make one suggestion that splitting the July through October sub period in to two sub periods with equal allocation might help get some fish in to the fall sub period.

W. Mackintosh went to the panel for discussion. C. Brown began the discussion by noting that the biomass of black sea bass had shifted northward. J. Carvalho and C. Brown noted that almost all of the harvest was directed at larger fish.

T. Baker made a few comments. He stated that the resource was extremely valuable to the industry and to RI. Because of this, money should be designated to fix whatever needed to be fixed for this species assessment. He suggested to the panel that they speak to local politicians to get them to devote resources to this species. He concluded by adding that they could request that DEM also support these requests to give them more weight. **The group agreed to this by consensus and formally made this request to the RIMFC, specifically that the RIMFC and DEM should reach out to local politicians and legislators to seek support for studying this species as it is a valuable resource to the state.**

J. Carvalho stated that black sea bass at its current quota is strictly a bycatch fishery. **The state should set a single possession limit to keep the fishery open all year.** The number presumably would be low so he suggested that they could **switch from a poundage to a number of fish possession limit.** His main point was to keep from having so many long closures as it was damaging their markets. MM agreed with this statement.

K. Booth made a counter proposal. He agreed with many of the concepts that J. Carvalho noted but he thought the best approach would be to **set a 25 pound per day possession limit under the current sub period set up**. Later he stated that he did not see much benefit in the DFWs proposal as it simply moved the problem around rather than helping it.

MM agreed with J. Carvalhos proposal. He felt the bycatch helps offset other costs associated with fishing for other species. He thought that the possession limit should remain pounds though, as a count can lead to other issues like high grading to maximize profits.

C. Brown stated that he agreed that the small quota does create a situation where this has become a bycatch fishery for many, but he stated that it was still a target of some fishermen. T. Baker agreed that it was a target species for pot fishermen. C. Brown went on to state that he agreed with the suggested modification by the DFW, but he did not agree to a 25 pound possession limit as he felt it would encourage more cheating and black market sales. He stated later that he did not agree with J. Carvalhos proposal as it was a defacto reallocation from the winter period.

T. Baker made a suggestion to **adopt the DFW suggested change to the summer/fall allocation period, but to adopt a 25 pounds possession limit beginning in May and going through October. In addition he supported dropping to 100 pounds in the sub period that starts in November.**

W. Mackintosh then noted that a proposal had been submitted on behalf of the Atlantic Offshore Lobstermens Association. They suggested creating aggregate limits in the sub periods so that the fish that are currently discarded could be turned in to landings. The group discussed the written proposal (attached) but in the end the panel opposed the proposal as they felt it would increase effort and exacerbate the current fishery closures.

This concluded the discussions and W. Mackintosh adjourned the meeting.

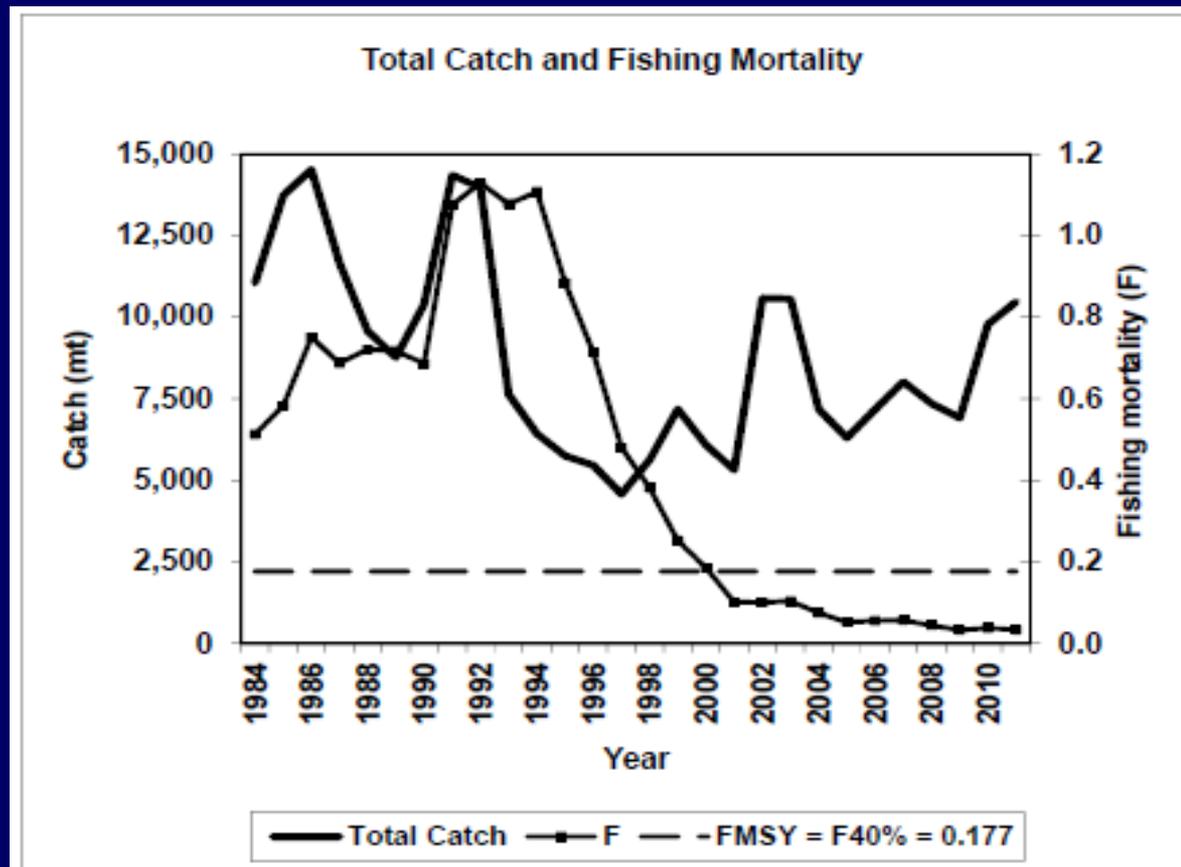
**Summary of Rhode Island Scup  
and Black Sea Bass Stock  
Status, 2013 Commercial Scup  
and Black Sea Bass Fishery  
Performance, and Division of  
Fish and Wildlife  
Recommendations for 2014**



# Scup Stock Status

## Stock Status:

- Relative to the DPSWG biological reference points, the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.
- There is a 50% probability that  $F$  in 2011 was between 0.026 and 0.042 . The fishing mortality threshold is  $F_{MSY} = 0.177$ .

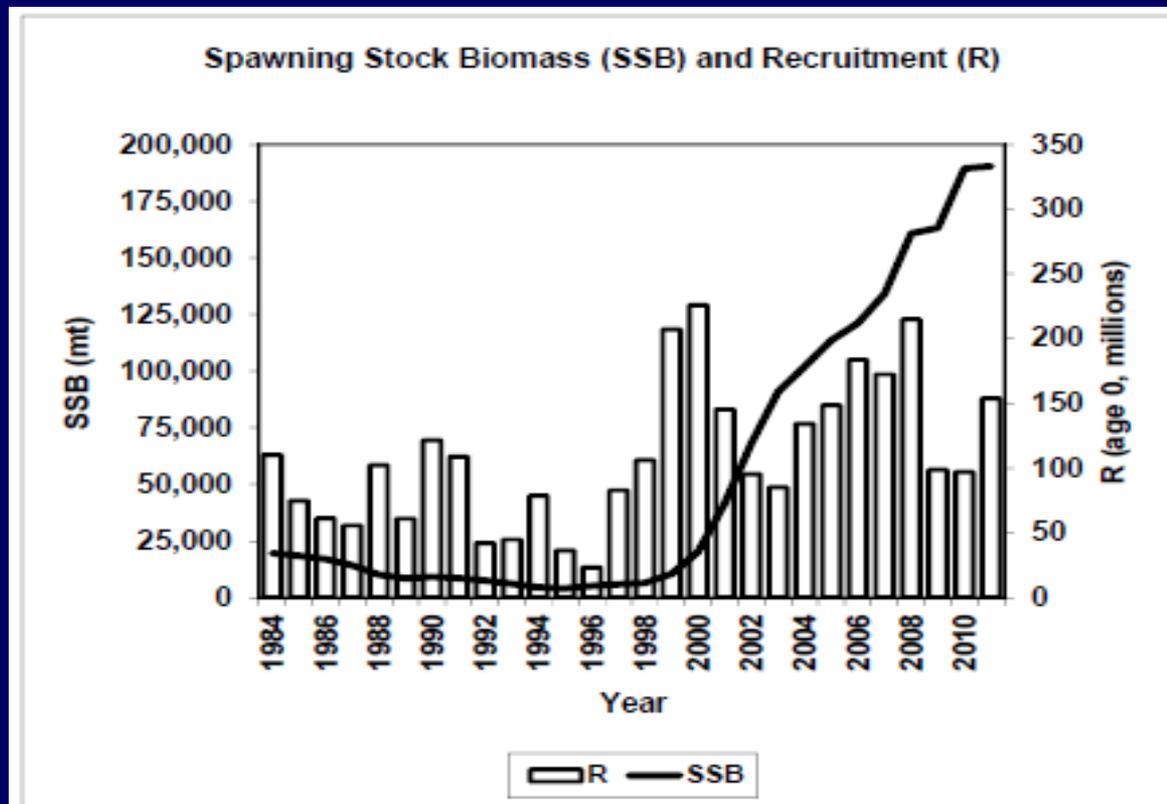


# Scup Stock Status

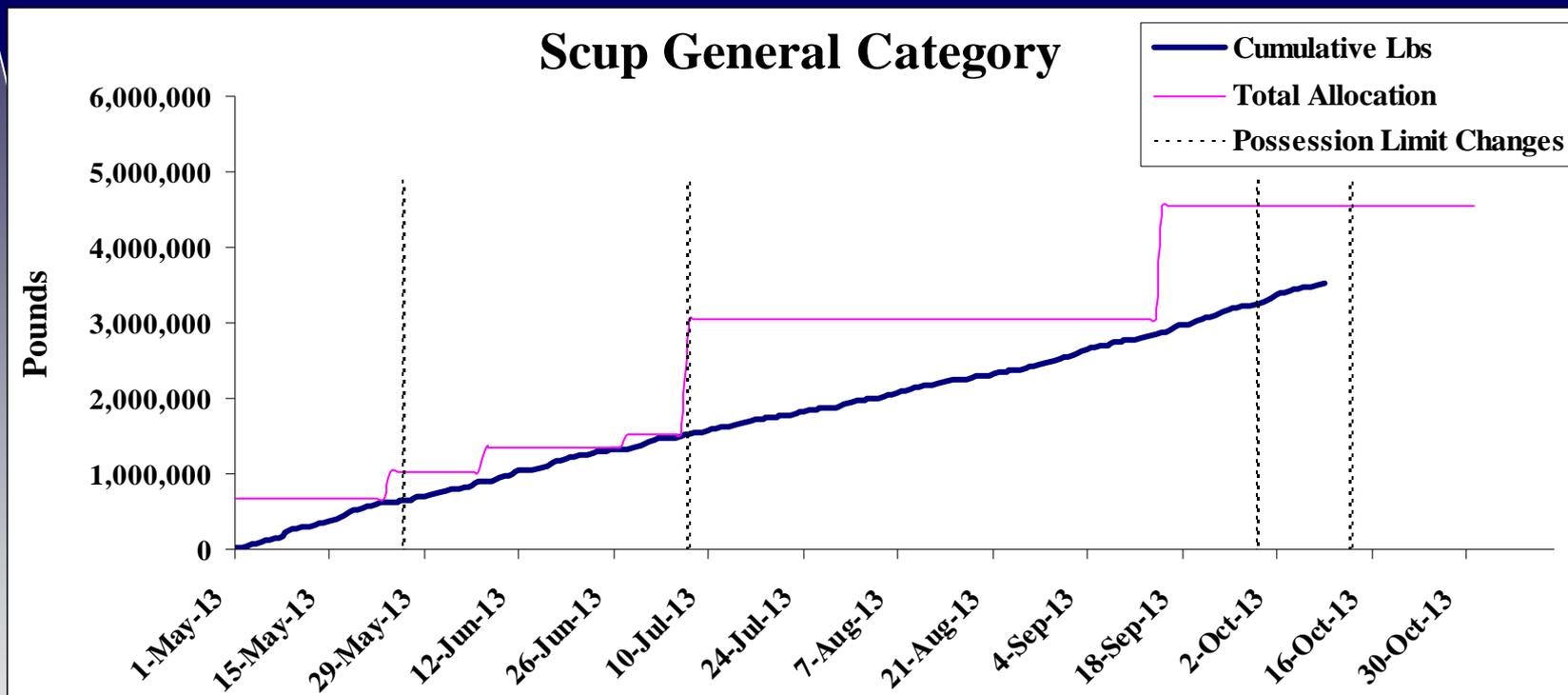
- **Stock Status:**

- SSB has steadily increased to about 418.8 m lbs in 2011 (slightly down from 2008) . The SSB reference point is  $SSB_{MSY} = 202.9$  m lbs. The minimum stock size threshold, one-half  $SSB_{MSY}$ , is estimated to be 101.5 m lbs.

- Recruitment exceeded the 1984-2011 average of 104 million in 2011.



# Commercial Landings – Scup General Category



## Possession Limit Changes:

5/1/13 - 10,000 lbs/wk

5/26/13 - 5,000 lbs/wk

7/7/13 - 10,000 lbs/wk

9/29/13 - 15,000 lbs/wk

10/13/13 - 20,000 lbs/wk

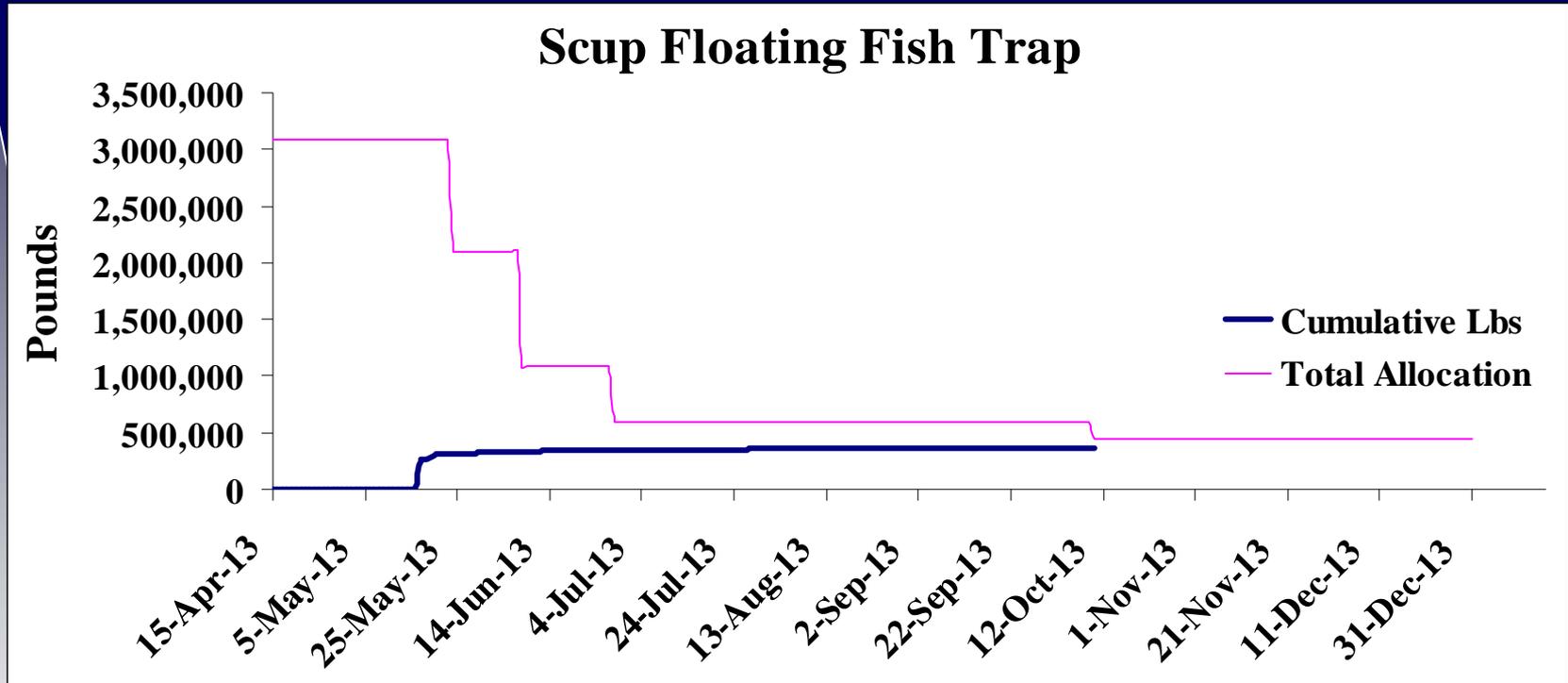


# Commercial Landings – Scup General Category

- ◆ A total of 2,500,000 lbs was rolled from FFT's to the GC in 2013. This resulted in each of the three sub-periods receiving 833,333 additional lbs of scup.
- ◆ There was a 22,960 pound underage in the first period (less than 2% of sub-period quota). This underage was split equally between the two remaining sub-periods, therefore each remaining sub-period received 11,480 lbs.
- ◆ There was a 173,181 pound underage in the second period (~11% of total quota). This underage was rolled into the third sub-period.
- ◆ Currently the third sub-period has ~1,039,199 lbs remaining with just over two weeks remaining



# Commercial Landings – Scup Floating Fish Traps



## Trap Rollovers:

5/24/13 - 1,000,000 lbs

6/7/13 - 1,000,000 lbs

6/28/13 - 500,000 lbs

10/10/13 - 150,000 lbs transferred to NY



# Commercial Landings – Scup Floating Fish Traps

- ◆ A total of 2,500,000 lbs was rolled from FFT's to the GC in 2013. This resulted in a remaining quota of 589,509 lbs for the FFT's.
- ◆ So far the FFT's have harvested 357,203 lbs.
- ◆ After transferring 150,000 lbs to NY, the FFT's have ~ 82,306 lbs remaining for 2013.



# Commercial Landings – Compliance with the Aggregate program

- ♦ Total participation was 389 vessels to date (w/o unknown or from shore)
- ♦ Total times participants landed over the weekly aggregate amount were 10 to date
- ♦ The total additional pounds landed for entire state period (to date) were 41,870 lbs (~2% of Gen. Cat. Allocation)



# Scup Management Measure Recommendations 2014

- ♦ “Rumble Strips” Indicators:
  - ♦ NEFSC spring and fall survey biomass indices
  - ♦ Mean lengths from NEFSC spring and fall surveys
  - ♦ Relative F for spring and fall
  - ♦ Rumble strips = 65% CI around 2004-2011 mean
  - ♦ During 2004-2011,  $SSB \geq SSB_{MSY}$  and  $F \leq F_{MSY}$
  - ♦ 65% CI provided contrast in scores between periods of different stock status
- ♦ 2 of 6 indicators were outside of rumble strips in 2012
  - ♦ Fall index > upper rumble strip bound
  - ♦ Fall relative F < lower rumble strip bound



# Scup Management Measure Recommendations 2014

- ♦ Multi-year specifications for 2013-2015
- ♦ 2013 OFL = 47.80 million lb (21,680 mt)
- ♦  $SSB/SSBMSY = 212\%$ ;  $P^* = 0.4$ ; lognormal OFL distribution with  $CV = 100\%$ 
  - ♦ 2013 ABC ~81% of OFL
- ♦ Constant F applied to derive 2014 and 2015 ABCs



# Scup Management Measure Recommendations 2014

	ABC	Commercial ACL = ACT	Rec ACL = ACT
<b>2013</b>	38.71 mil lb (17,557 mt)	30.19 mil lb (13,694 mt)	8.52 mil lb (3,863 mt)
<b>2014</b>	35.99 mil lb (16,325 mt)	28.07 mil lb (12,732 mt)	7.92 mil lb (3,592 mt)
<b>2015</b>	33.76 mil lb (15,320 mt)	26.34 mil lb (11,950 mt)	7.43 mil lb (3,370 mt)



# Preliminary 2014 Commercial Allocations

- ♦ **Coastwide Commercial Quota = 21,950,000 lbs**
- ♦ **Coastwide Summer Allocation (-RSA) = 8,549,525 lbs**
- ♦ **RI 2014 Commercial Quota (56.19%) = 4,803,978 lbs (7% decr from 2013 quota)**
- ♦ **2013 Floating Fish Trap allocation = 2,882,386 lbs**
- ♦ **2013 General Category = 1,921,591 lbs**
  - ♦ **May 1 – June 30 = 640,530 lbs**
  - ♦ **July 1 – Sept 15 = 640,530 lbs**
  - ♦ **Sept 16 – Oct 31 = 640,531 lbs**



# Division of Fish and Wildlife Proposed Changes

♦ The RI Division of Fish and Wildlife proposes maintaining the current starting aggregate limits. The Division recommends the following:

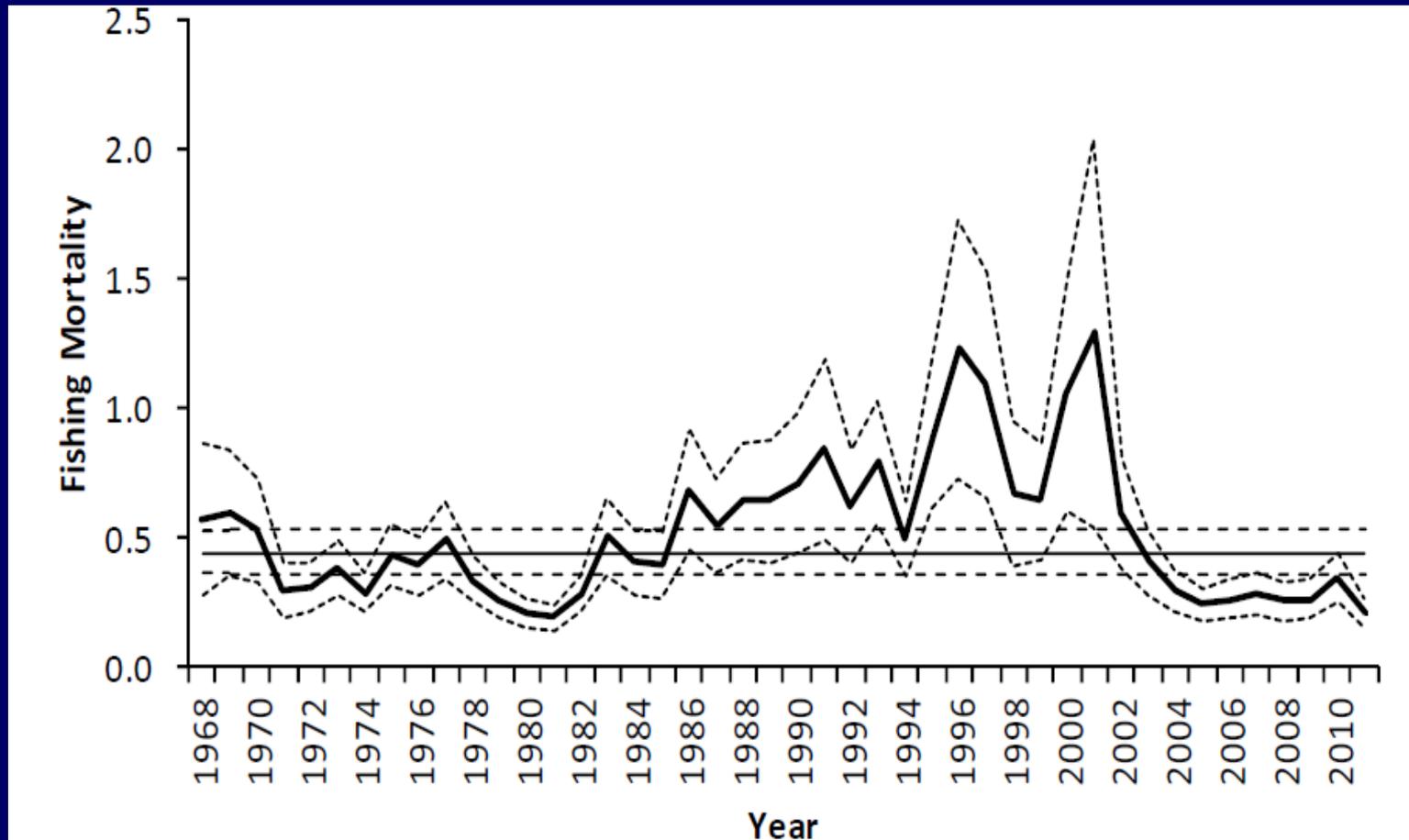
- ♦ May – June 30 = 10,000 lbs/wk
- ♦ July 1 – Sept 15 = 10,000 lbs/wk
- ♦ Sept 16 – Oct 31 = 10,000 lbs/wk



# Black Sea Bass Stock Status

## • Stock Status:

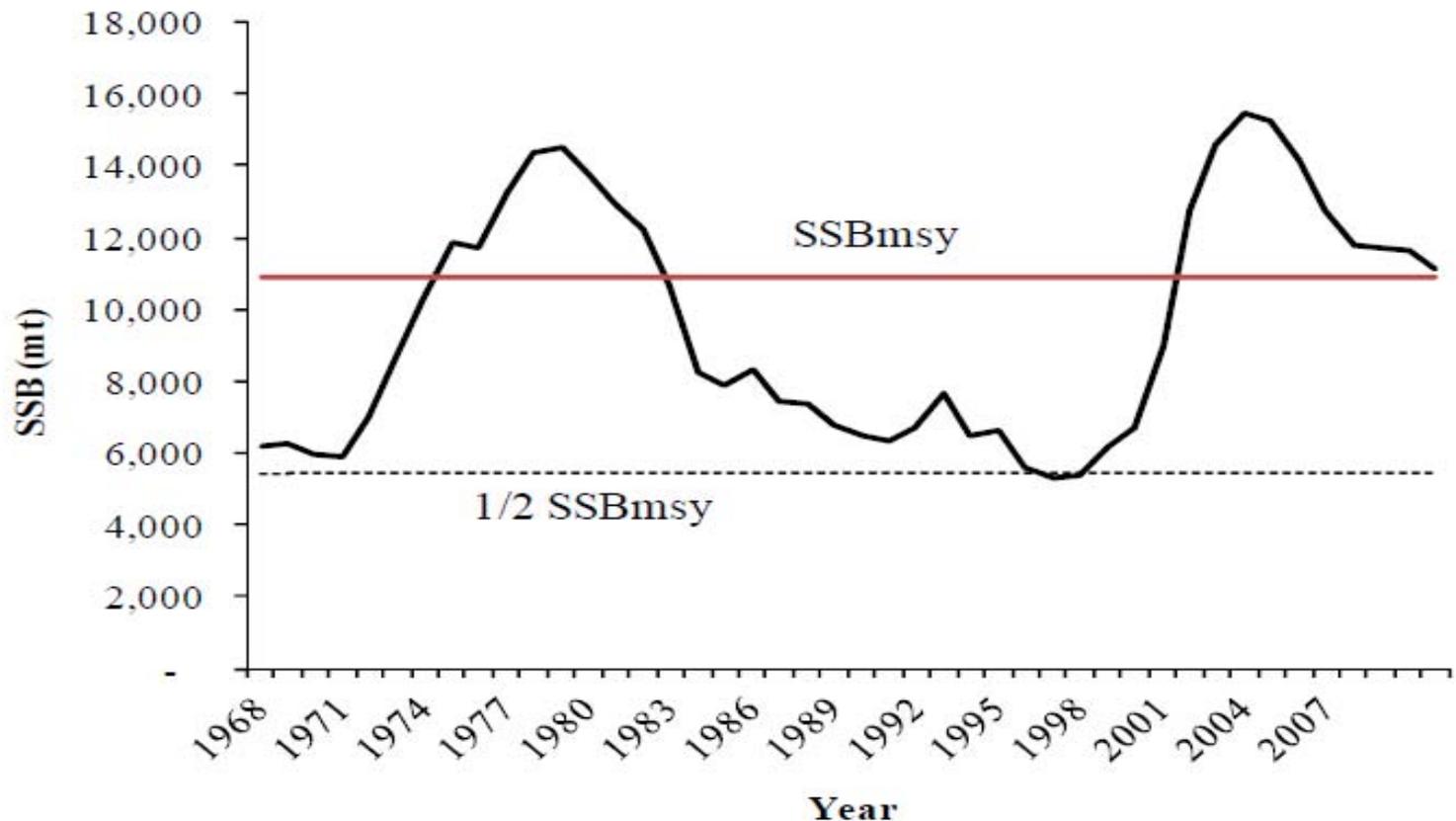
- Relative to the DPSWG biological reference points, the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.
- Fishing mortality  $F = 0.21$  in 2011, less than the threshold  $F = 0.44$



# Black Sea Bass Stock Status

## Stock Status:

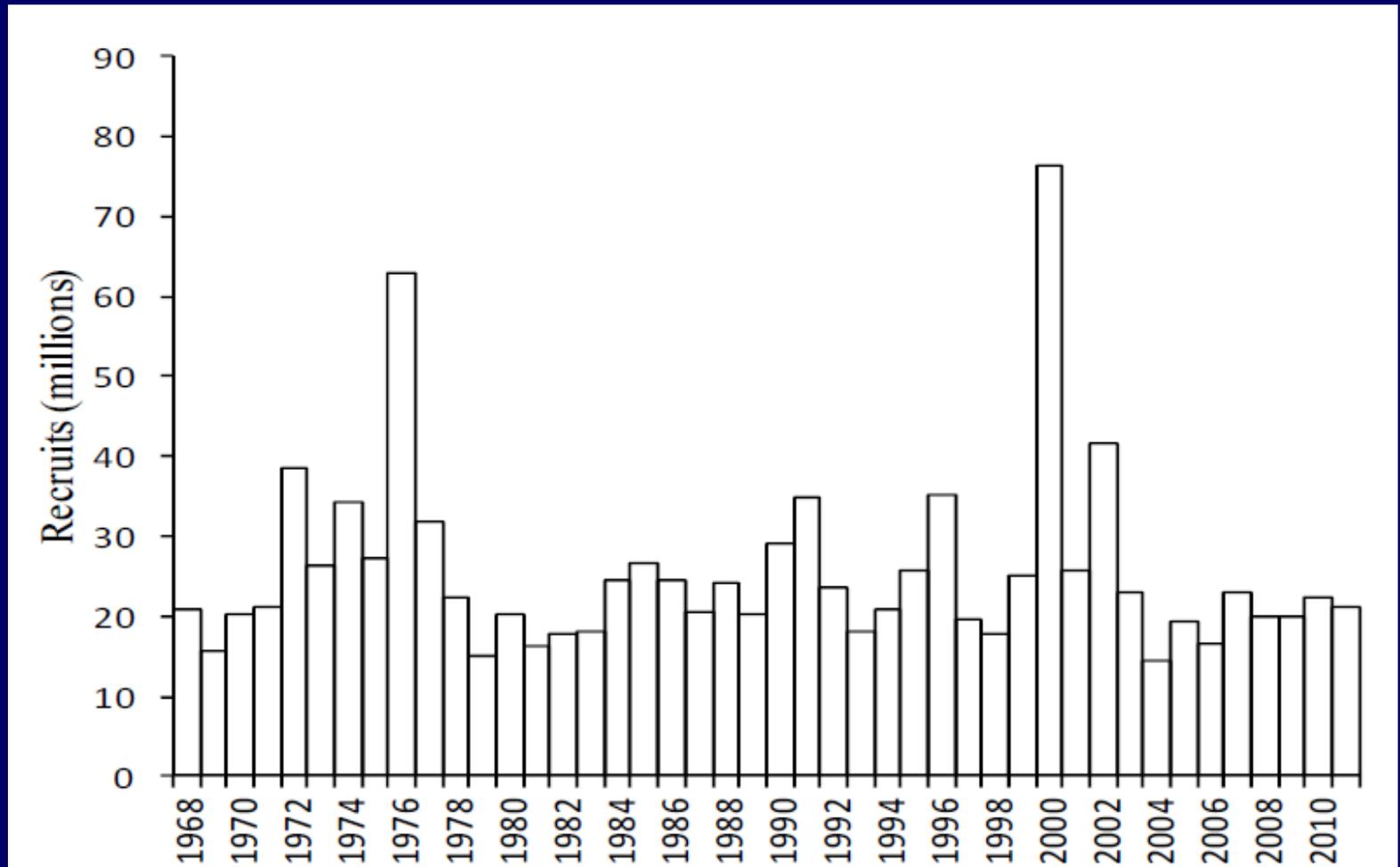
SSB was 24.6 million lbs in 2011. The SSB reference point is  $SSB_{MSY} = 24.9$  million lbs. The minimum stock size threshold, one-half  $SSB_{MSY}$ , is estimated to be 12.5 million lbs.



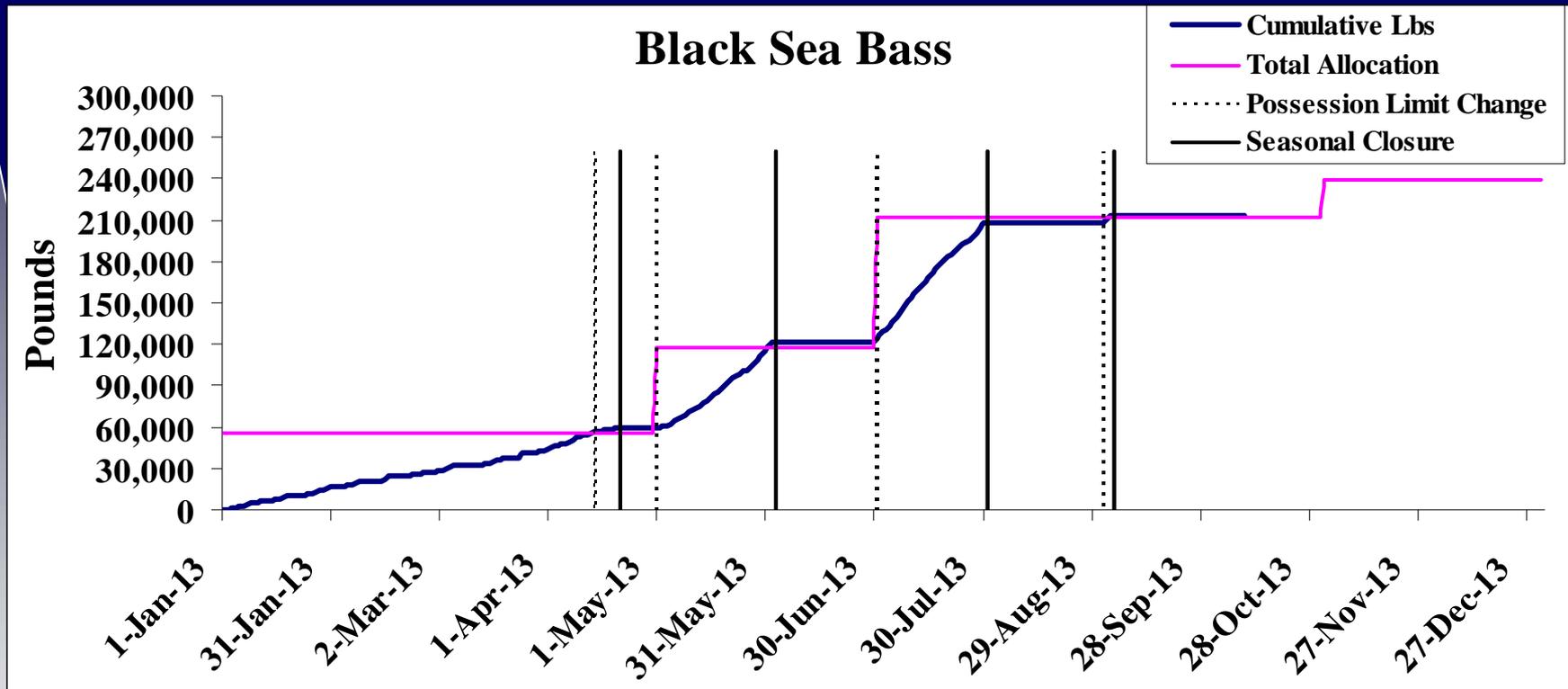
# Black Sea Bass Stock Status

• Stock Status:

• 2011 recruitment was 21 million fish, recent years have been near average.



# Commercial Landings – Black Sea Bass



## Possession Limit Changes:

1/1/13 - 750 lbs/day

4/14/13 - 200 lbs/day

4/21/13 - CLOSED

5/1/13 - 50 lbs/day (new sub period)

6/3/13 - CLOSED

7/1/13 - 50 lbs/day (new sub period)

7/31/13 - CLOSED

9/1/13 - 50 lbs/day

9/4/13 - CLOSED



# Commercial Landings – Black Sea Bass

- ◆ There was a 2,817 pound overage in first period (5% of sub-period quota). This overage was split equally between the three remaining sub-periods, therefore each remaining sub-period lost 939 lbs.
- ◆ There was a 1,831 pound overage in second period (3% of sub-period quota). This overage was split equally between the two remaining sub-periods, therefore each remaining sub-period lost 916 lbs.
- ◆ There was a 646 pound underage in third period (less than 1% of sub-period quota). This underage will be rolled into the remaining sub-period.



# Black Sea Bass Management Measure Recommendations 2014

- ♦ 2012: SSC recommended ABCs for 2013-2015
  - ♦ Council/Commission implemented only 2013
- ♦ Level 4 assessment designation
- ♦ ABC recommendations based on constant catch approach (4.5 mil lb)
- ♦ December 2012: Council requested SSC revisit 2013-2014 recommendations
  - ♦ Re-examine assessment level, review additional data
- ♦ January 2013 SSC meeting
  - ♦ Reviewed additional fishery-independent indices compiled by Technical Committee
  - ♦ Updated catch and landings information



# Black Sea Bass Management Measure Recommendations 2014

- ♦ January 2013 SSC conclusions:
  - ♦ Little information to support change from Level 4 or constant catch approach
  - ♦ However, re-evaluated constant catch level used from 2010-2012
  - ♦ Continued application overly conservative; recommended 2013-2014 ABC constant catch level of 5.50 mil lb (2,494 mt)



# Black Sea Bass Management Measure Recommendations 2014

- ♦ Review of state and federal fishery independent and dependent data; additional research and projects
- ♦ Developed short and long term research recommendations to address assessment concerns
- ♦ Conclusions:
  - ♦ No additional data/analyses in short term that would likely result in elevation of assessment level
  - ♦ Highly unlikely that an assessment update would change perception of uncertainty; continued application of ad-hoc approach likely
  - ♦ Recommended delay of 2014 benchmark to 2016 or later to allow progress on analyses and modeling approaches



# Black Sea Bass Management Measure Recommendations 2014

- ♦ No changes to BSB ABCs in 2014
- ♦ Recommended same ABCs for 2015, subject to review next year
- ♦ Formed subcommittee to address dealing with data poor stocks as applied to black sea bass
- ♦ MC did not add any management uncertainty to the ABC calculations



# Black Sea Bass Management Measure Recommendations 2014

- ♦ **RI 2014 Commercial Quota (11%, -RSA) = 238,700 lbs**
- ♦ **2014 Sub period allocations**
  - ♦ **January 1 – April 30 = 56,079 lbs**
  - ♦ **May 1 – June 30 = 61,759 lbs**
  - ♦ **July 1 – Oct 31 = 93,668 lbs**
  - ♦ **November 1 – December 31 = 27,194 lbs**



# Division of Fish and Wildlife Proposed Changes

- ♦ The RI Division of Fish and Wildlife proposes one potential change to the black sea bass commercial fishery in 2014:
  - ♦ Take existing July sub period and break it in to 2 sub periods with equal allocations and decrease Winter 2 period possession limit
  - ♦ July 1 – July 31 = 19.5% at 50 lbs per vessel per day
  - ♦ September 1 – October 31 = 19.5% at 50 lbs per vessel per day
  - ♦ November 1 – December 31 = 11% at 100 lbs per vessel per day
- ♦ The RI Division of Fish and Wildlife believes that this stock can accommodate more harvest than is currently being removed from the stock, and will continue to work on improving the uncertainty estimates in the stock assessment as well as continuing to improve the stock assessment itself, so that harvest levels can be increased in the future.

