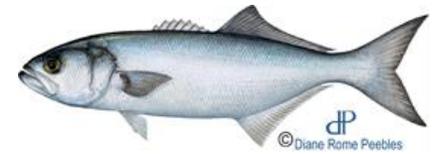
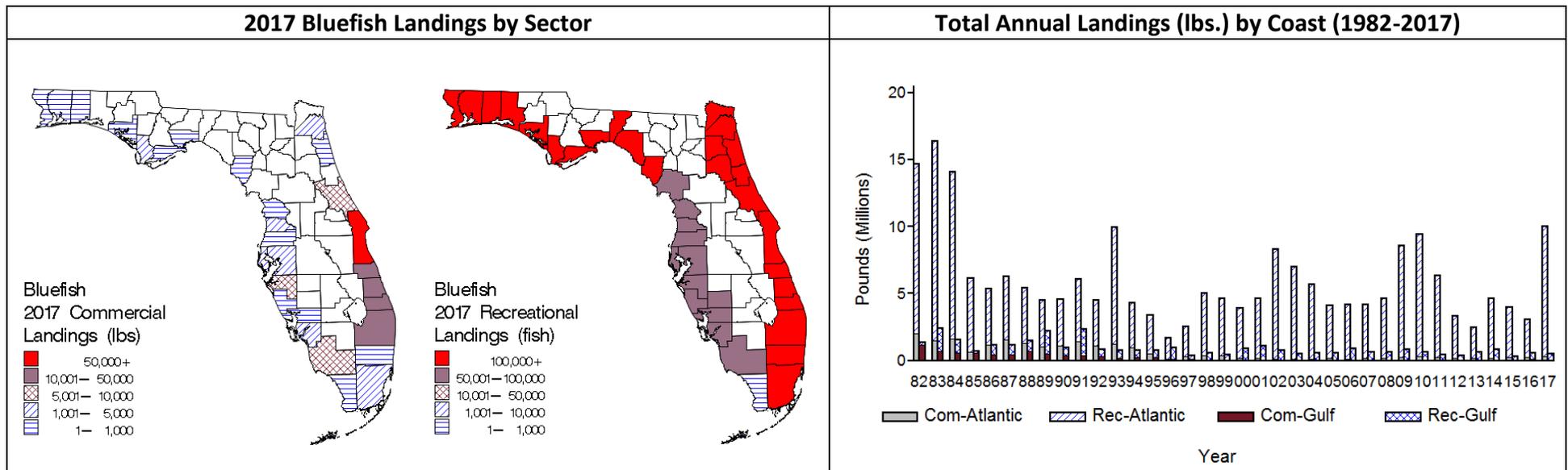


Bluefish, *Pomatomus saltatrix* (Linnaeus, 1766)



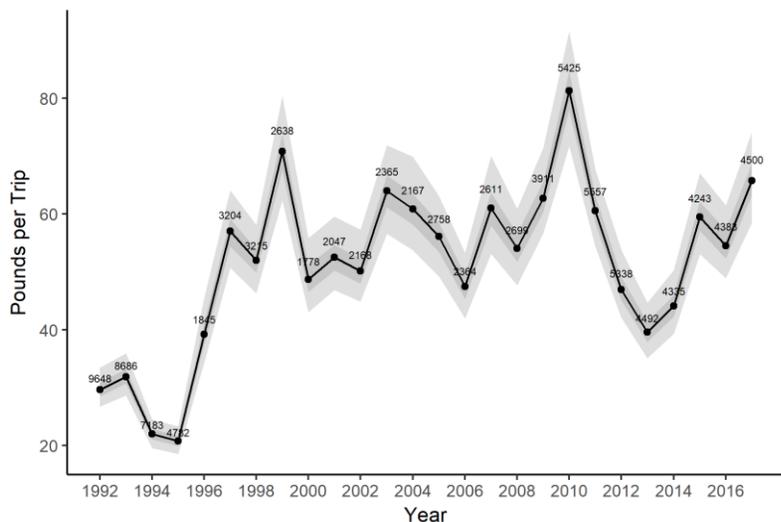
Life History

Bluefish are a schooling, migratory pelagic species that occur seasonally in Florida's inshore and continental shelf waters. In the western Atlantic, Bluefish range from Nova Scotia, Canada, along the Atlantic coast of the U.S. to Cuba's northwest coast, throughout the Gulf of Mexico, and along the South American coast from Colombia to Argentina. A coast wide tagging study indicated seasonal (spring and autumn) migrations of Bluefish between the Middle Atlantic Bight and Florida (Shepherd *et al.* 2006). Both tagging and *mtDNA* analyses show that sufficient mixing occurs between the U.S. Gulf and Atlantic coast Bluefish populations to maintain a single genetic stock (Miller 1969, Graves *et al.* 1992a); although, mixing may be limited enough to consider the two groups as separate fishery stocks. Within the mid-Atlantic stock, the physical environment during spawning and early juvenile stages has been suggested to influence morphological characteristics of annual mid-Atlantic Bluefish cohorts (Austin *et al.* 1999). A Bluefish age and growth study by Robillard *et al.* (2009) validated otolith ageing using marginal incremental analysis of annuli for ages 1-8. Bluefish grow rapidly in their first year of life and achieve a size of 32" fork length (FL) in about 10 years. The maximum age reached by Bluefish appears to be about 14 years (ASMFC 2015). Bluefish reach sexual maturity before age 2. Spawning occurs offshore continuously during the Spring migration (Robillard *et al.* 2008) with possible extension into the fall (Collins and Stender 1987).

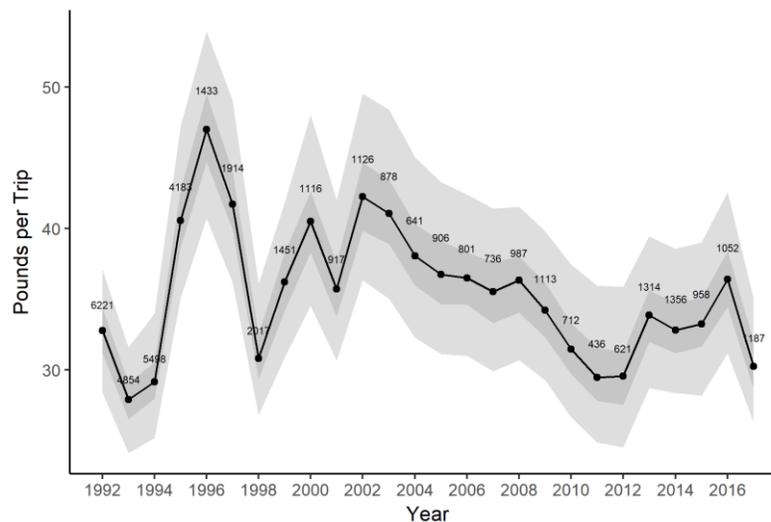


Fishers landed 10,500,452 pounds in 2017 which were 160% higher than the previous 5-year average (2012-2016). Coastwide, 95% of these were from the Atlantic and 5% were from the Gulf. Recreational landings constituted 97.1% of the total landings.

Atlantic Coast

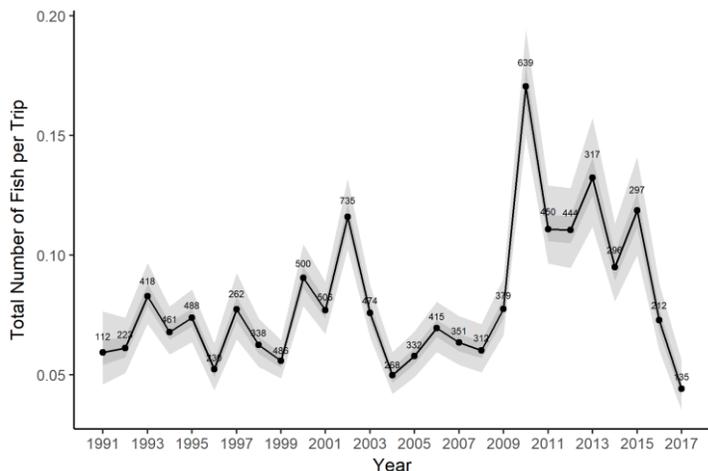


Gulf Coast

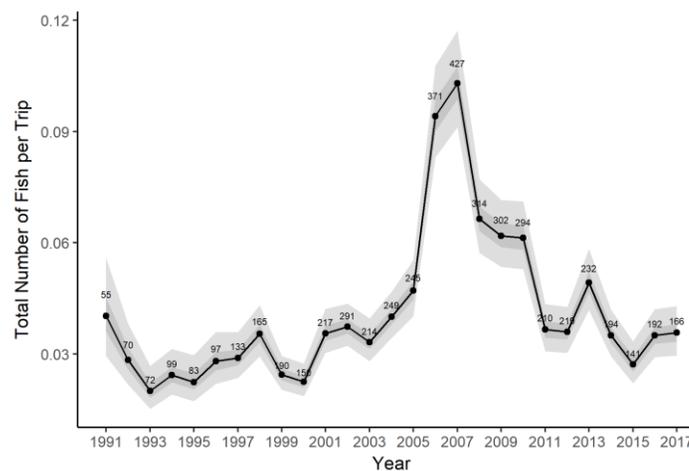


Standardized Commercial Catch Rates: Atlantic coast commercial catch rates increased in 1996 – 1997 to a greater level of landings and have varied through 2017. Gulf coast commercial landings rates varied widely between 1992 – 2002, declined in trend through 2012, rebounded through 2016 before dropping in 2017. Dark grey figure lines represent first and third quartiles while the light grey lines represent the 2.5% – 97.5% quantiles.

Atlantic Coast

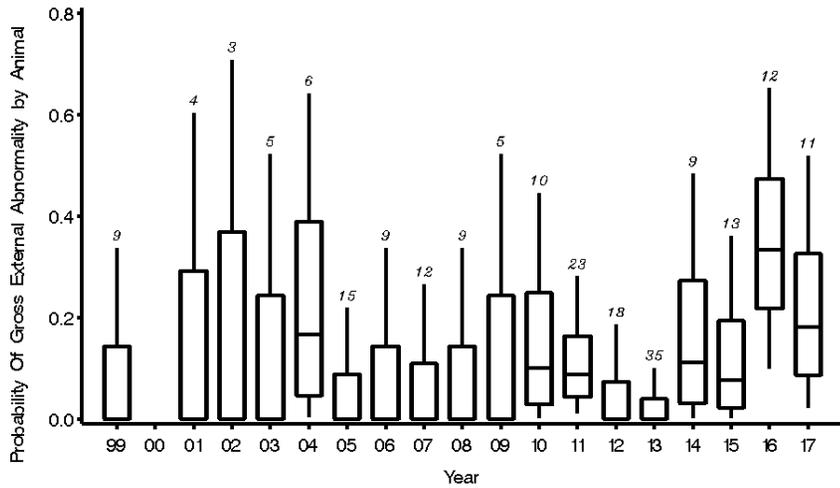


Gulf Coast

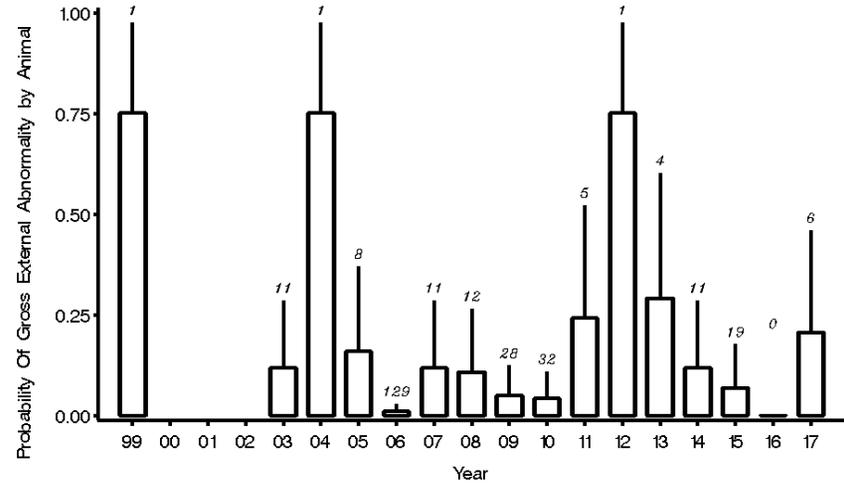


Standardized Recreational Total Catch Rates: Total catch rates for recreational anglers on the Atlantic coast have fluctuated without trend. On the Gulf, total catch rates were steady through 2005, then increased sharply in 2006 – 2007 before decreasing again in trend through 2017. Dark grey figure lines represent first and third quartiles while the light grey lines represent the 2.5% – 97.5% quantiles.

Atlantic Coast Proportion to Total Collected

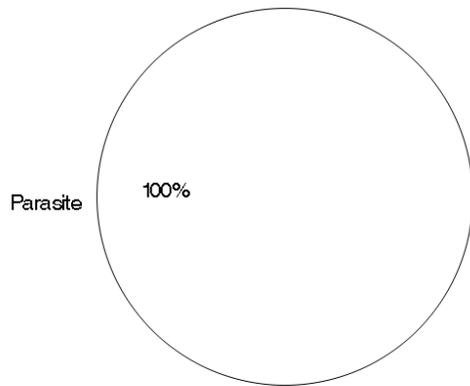


Gulf Coast Proportion to Total Collected



Atlantic Coast Percentage of Abnormality Types

Percentage of gross external abnormalities



Gulf Coast Percentage of Abnormality Types

No Data Available

Fish Health: The occurrence of gross external abnormalities has been fairly low on both coasts with the largest proportion of individuals showing abnormalities in 2004, 2016, and 2017 on the Atlantic coast. Parasites on the Atlantic coast were the only observed abnormalities.

Stock Status

Current Condition: Not overfished nor undergoing overfishing

Management History: Bluefish are commonly caught by shoreline anglers from beaches, piers and jetties. They are voracious eaters and feed primarily on schools of baitfish. While they are found throughout the year in many parts of Florida, they do migrate south in the Fall to avoid cold water temperatures in the northern Gulf of Mexico. Recreational regulations for Bluefish on both coasts of Florida have a 12" fork length minimum size limit and a 10 per harvester per day limit.

Bluefish is managed by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission under Amendment 1 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Bluefish Fishery and Addendum I. Based on the 2015 benchmark stock assessment and peer review conducted by the Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop, bluefish are not overfished and not experiencing overfishing relative to the new biological reference points defined in the assessment. Though the assessment indicated bluefish are neither experiencing overfishing nor considered overfished, the assessment indicates lower biomass estimates and reference points relative to the previous assessment. Spawning stock biomass (SSB) in 2014 was estimated to be 191 million pounds, which is less than the SSB target (223 million pounds) but greater than the SSB threshold (112 million pounds). Fishing mortality (F) in 2014 was estimated to be 0.157, below the F threshold ($F_{MSY\ PROXY} = F_{35\%SPR} = 0.19$). Short-term projections of Bluefish total biomass through 2018 under different F scenarios suggest that biomass will not change significantly, varying between 114,731 and 122,966 MT (ASMFC 2015).

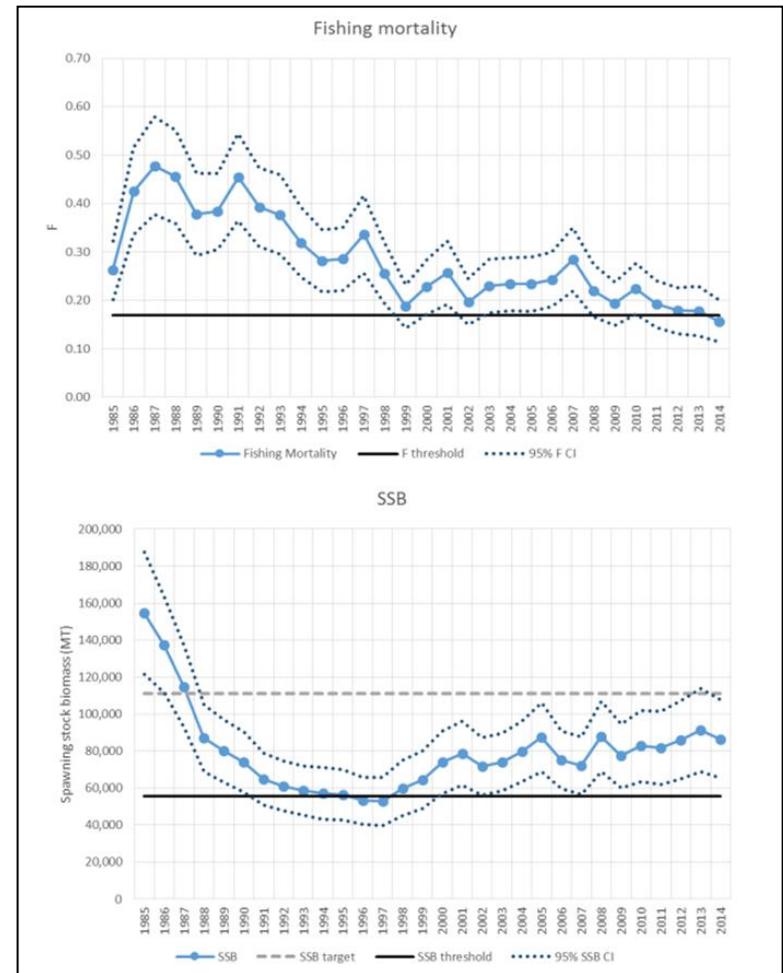


Figure 1. Fully selected F (top) and spawning stock biomass (bottom) from the final revised model run plotted with their respective overfishing and overfished thresholds and 95% confidence intervals (ASMFC 2015).