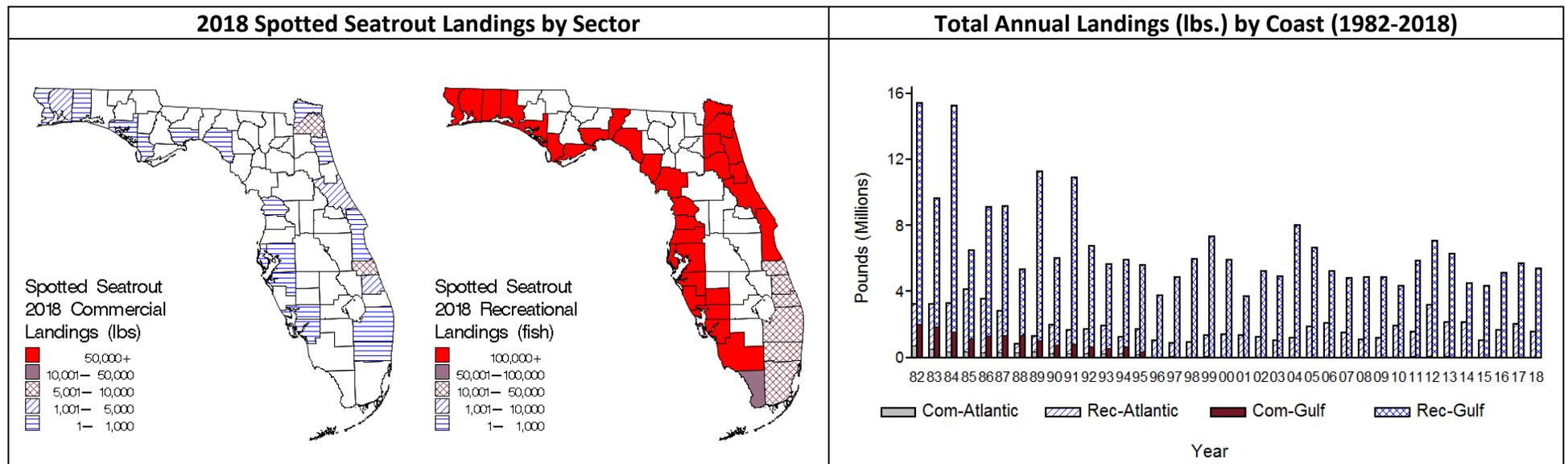


Spotted Seatrout, *Cynoscion nebulosus* (Cuvier, 1830)



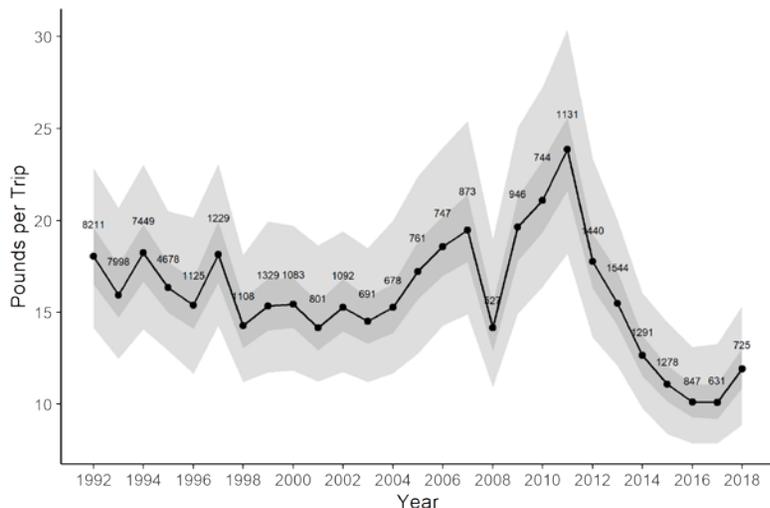
Life History

Spotted Seatrout are distributed throughout Florida's bays and coastal waters. Studies indicate that Spotted Seatrout from various areas of Florida become more genetically isolated from one another as their geographic separation increases (Ramsey and Wakeman 1987, Gold *et al.* 1999). Recent results (e.g. Seyoum *et al.* 2014; 2018) from a re-analysis of genetic structure in Florida show the presence of three genetic stocks: 1) a western Gulf stock from South Padre Island, TX to Fort Walton, FL; 2) a Florida Gulf stock from Apalachicola Bay, FL to Biscayne Bay, FL; and 3) an Atlantic stock from Sebastian Inlet, FL to Morehead, NC. Each area may have localized groups of fish that do not intermix regularly with other groups and thus may only be affected by local fishing pressure. Growth is sex- and area-specific with slower male growth. Maximum ages reached in Florida are 9 years for males and 8 years for females. Spotted Seatrout first spawn between 0 and 2 years old and 11.8–15.7 inches total length (TL). Spawning occurs within estuaries and in nearshore waters during spring, summer, and fall. The diet of juvenile seatrout (<1.2 inches SL) includes amphipods, mysids, and carideans (Hettler 1989). Larger juveniles and adults feed primarily on shrimp and fish such as Bay Anchovy, Gulf Menhaden, shad, mullet, Sheepshead Minnow, Gulf Toadfish, pipefish, Pinfish, Pigfish, Silver Jenny, Atlantic Croaker, and Spotted Seatrout (Hettler 1989; McMichael and Peters 1989).

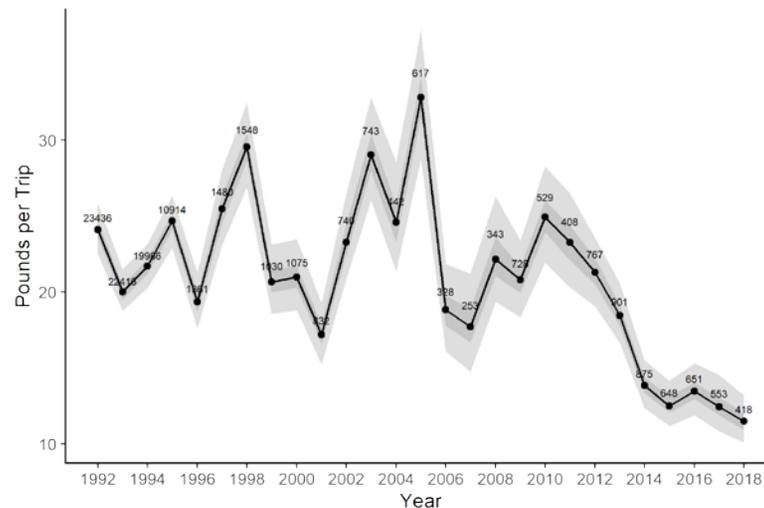


Fishers landed 6,965,403 pounds in 2018 which were 0.2% lower than the previous 5-year average (2013-2017). Coastwide, 77% of these were from the Gulf and 23% were from the Atlantic. Recreational landings constituted 99.6% of the total landings.

Atlantic Coast

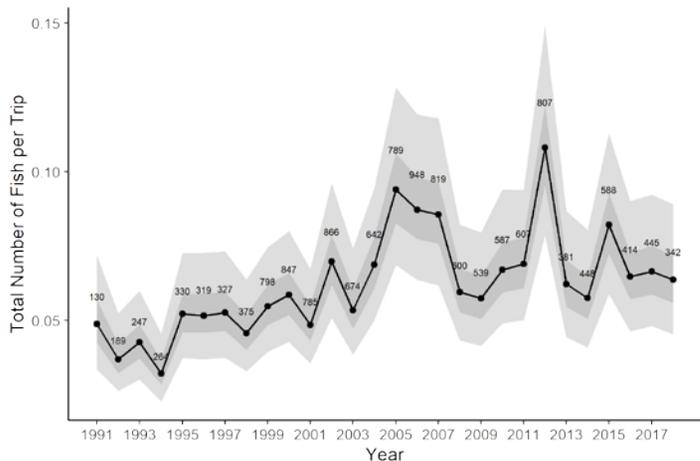


Gulf Coast

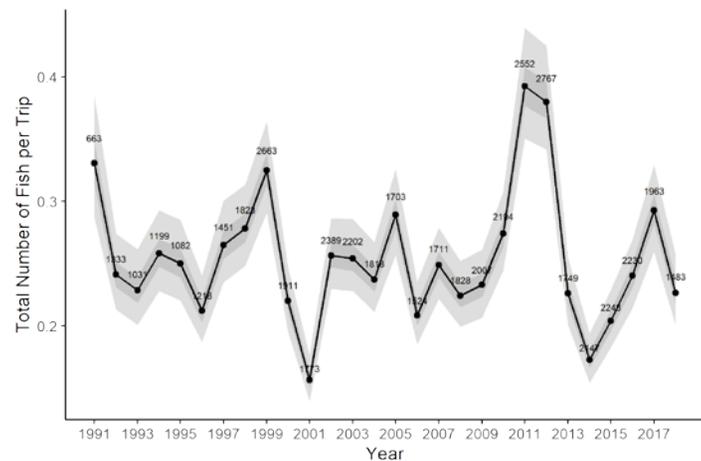


Standardized Commercial Catch Rates: Atlantic coast commercial catch rates varied in an upward trend through 2011 then decreased markedly through 2017. Gulf coast commercial landings rates varied widely between 1992 - 2010. Rates then declined in trend through 2018. Dark grey figure lines represent first and third quartiles while the light grey lines represent the 2.5% – 97.5% quantiles.

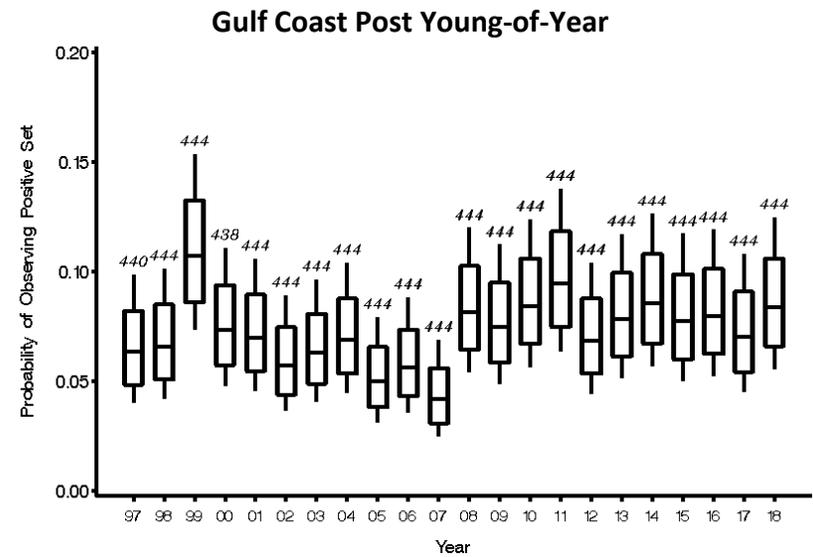
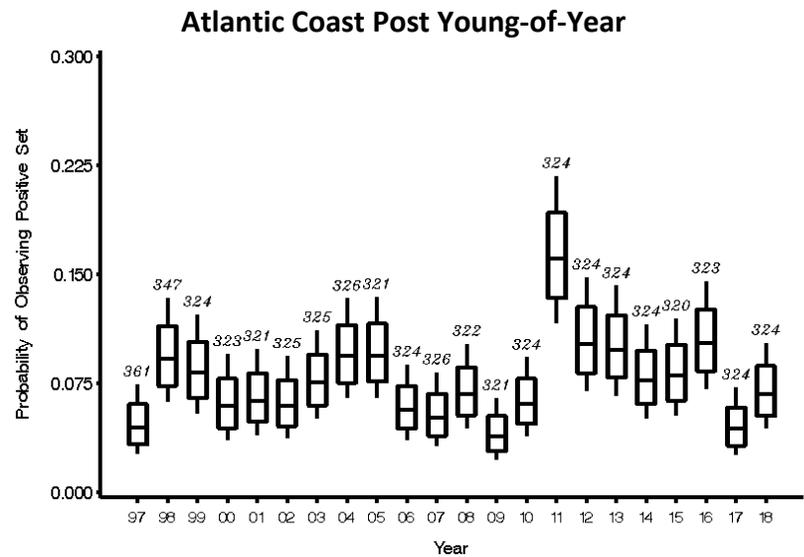
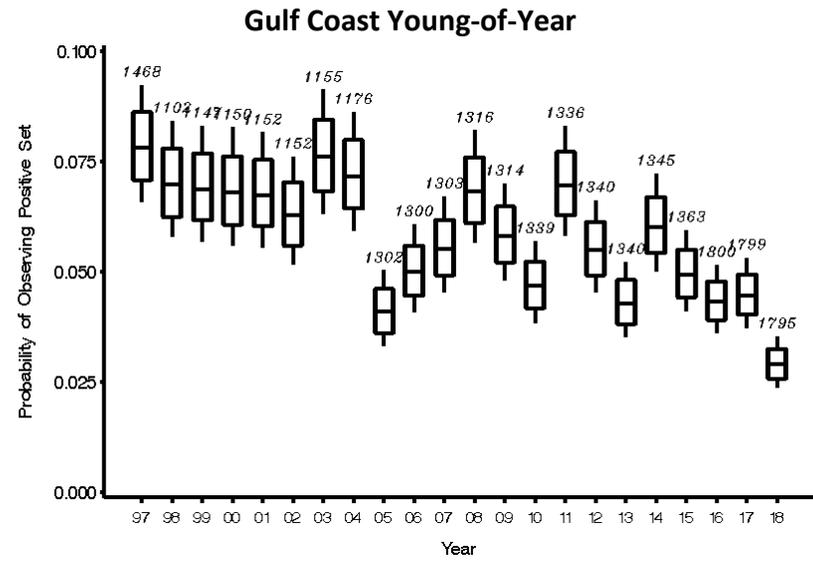
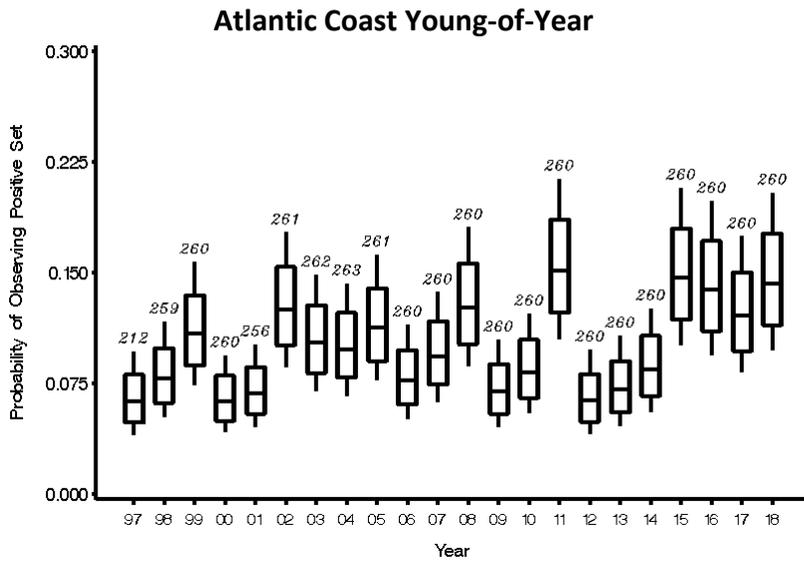
Atlantic Coast



Gulf Coast

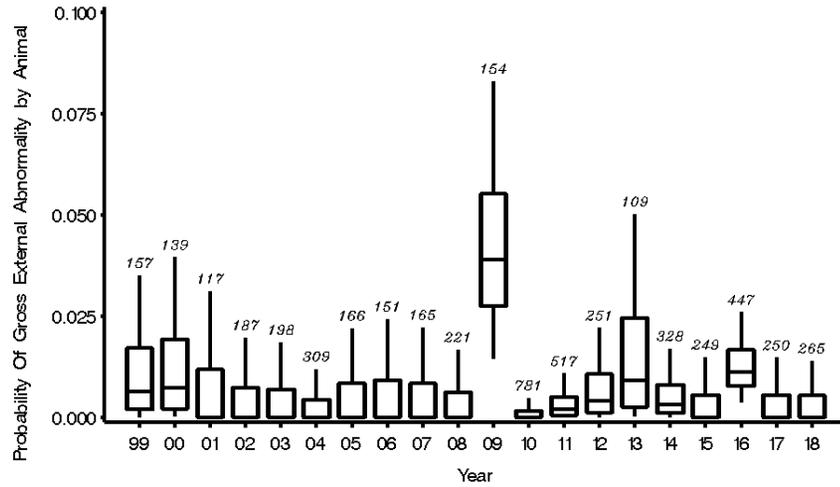


Standardized Recreational Total Catch Rates: Total catch rates for recreational anglers on the Atlantic coast have fluctuated with an overall increasing trend. On the Gulf, total catch rates varied highly without trend with notable highs in 2011-2012 and lows in 2001 and 2014. Dark grey figure lines represent first and third quartiles while the light grey lines represent the 2.5% – 97.5% quantiles.

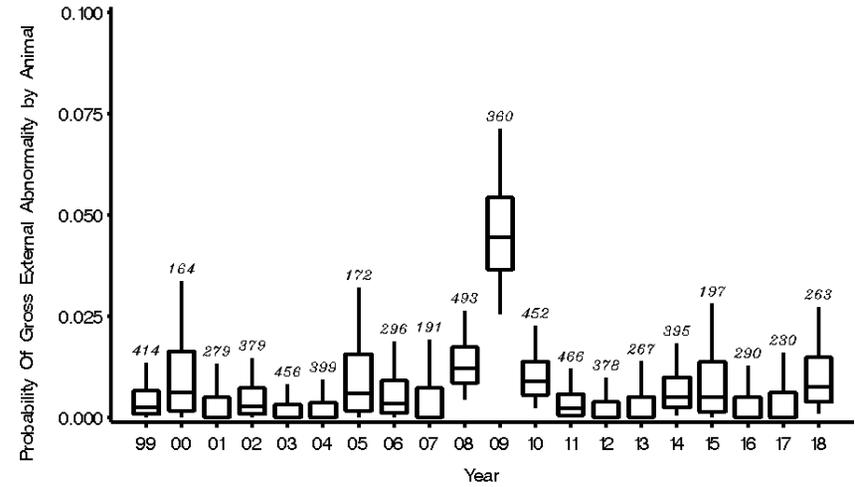


Fishery-Independent Monitoring: The index of abundance for young-of-the-year (YOY) Spotted Seatrout on the Atlantic coast has fluctuated without major trend since 1997 but with a notable peak in 2011. Gulf coast YOY abundance trends were generally stable from 1997-2004 before decreasing markedly in 2005. Abundances then were variable, peaking in 2008, 2011, and 2014, with lows in 2005, 2010, 2013, and 2018. Post-YOY abundance follows a cyclical pattern on the Atlantic coast with highs in 1998-1999, 2004-2005, 2011, and 2016. The Gulf coast post-YOY index has varied without trend over the timeseries with the highest value in 1999 and the lowest in 2007.

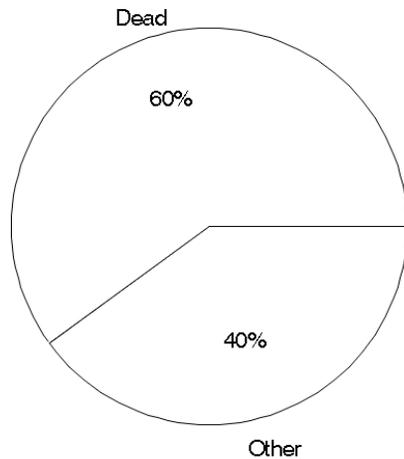
Atlantic Coast Proportion to Total Collected



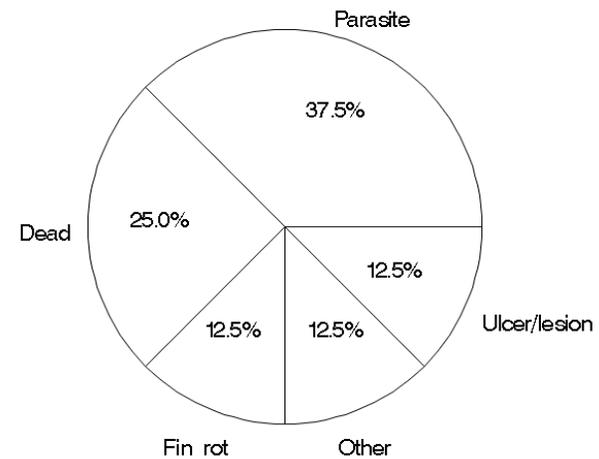
Gulf Coast Proportion to Total Collected



Atlantic Coast Percentage of Abnormality Types
Percentage of gross external abnormalities



Gulf Coast Percentage of Abnormality Types
Percentage of gross external abnormalities



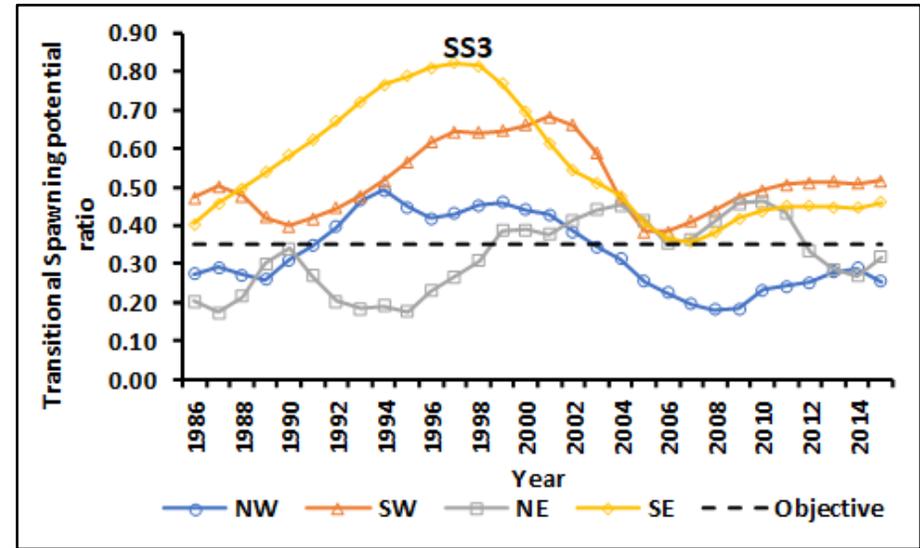
Fish Health: Increased prevalence of gross external abnormalities on Spotted Seatrout ≥ 75 mm was noted on both coasts in 2009. Gross external abnormalities were observed on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts in 2018, with dead or other dominating the Atlantic abnormalities and parasites and dead dominating the Gulf abnormalities.

Stock Status

Current Condition: The Northwest and Northeast regions *did not* exceed the Commission’s 35% $tSPR_{current}$ management target (Addis et al. 2018).

Management History: Spotted Seatrout is managed for both commercial and recreational fishing in Florida. Management in Florida by the Commission began for Spotted Seatrout in the late 1980s when the fishery was declining. Effective February 1, 2020, the FWC created two new management zones by splitting the Northwest zone into the Western Panhandle and Big Bend and created the renamed South Florida zone and Central East zone by moving the boundary between the southern management zones. Bag limits have been reduced for the Western Panhandle (3), Big Bend (5), South Florida (3), Central East (2), and Northeast (5). The recreational slot size limit was modified to 15-19 inches TL, with the allowance of one seatrout over 19 inches per vessel. The captain and crew of for-hire trips are prohibited from keeping a bag limit. A February recreational closure in the Western Panhandle zone and a November-December recreational closure in the Central East zone were established, and a daily commercial limit to 50 per harvester and 100 per vessel was implemented.

The management objective for Spotted Seatrout by Florida is to maintain the transitional spawning potential ratio (tSPR) at or above 35%. Stock assessments conducted in 2003 and 2006 showed the Spotted Seatrout population was relatively stable through 2005. The 2010 stock assessment showed that the Northeast, Southeast and Southwest zones were exceeding the 35% SPR management goal, however, the Northwest region was hovering right at 35%. The most recent stock assessment (Addis et al. 2018), which used data through 2015, estimated that only the Southeast and Southwest regions were recently exceeding the Commission’s management target.



2018 Spotted Seatrout Stock Assessment (Addis et. al. 2018)

Reference Point	Northwest	Southwest	Northeast	Southeast
$sSPR_{current}$	0.27	0.52	0.33	0.46
$tSPR_{current}$	0.27	0.51	0.29	0.45

Derived reference points from model configurations (1950-2015). $sSPR$ is static spawning potential ratio; $tSPR$ is transitional spawning potential ratio; *current* = geometric mean of last 3 years (2013-2015).