

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This is the twenty-fourth year that the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute Stock Assessment Group has produced the Status and Trends Report. This year's report summarizes the available 1992-2018 commercial landing, 1982-2018 recreational landings, fishing effort, fishery catch rates, and the 1997-2018 fisheries-independent sampling effort, and young-of-the-year and post-young-of-the-year abundance indices for 135 species or groups. The condition of these species or groups was determined using information from recent stock assessments, when available. Otherwise, the condition was assessed using available commercial landings rates, recreational total-catch rates, and fishery independent abundance indices. The status determination and supporting trend-analyses reported here are designed to highlight potential areas of concern about recent substantial changes in Florida's diverse marine fisheries.
- The ascribed conditions and trends reported here are not intended to replace stock assessments. Stock assessments entail in-depth analyses where the population dynamics of a particular species are thoroughly investigated using available biological, ecological, and fisheries data.
- Summaries of the data on life history, ecology, fishery characteristics, fish health, and recent stock assessments are provided for six important species or species groups of special interest to Florida's fisheries managers: Blue Crab, Red Drum, Stone Crab, Caribbean Spiny Lobster, Common Snook, and Spotted Seatrout. During alternate years, 'species accounts' include an additional 42 species or species groups.
- Most species or groups on the Atlantic coast in 2018 were judged stable (59 species or groups). Zero groups were determined to be increasing or decreasing. Twenty-five were too rarely caught to determine their status. Similarly, on the Gulf coast, most of the species or groups were stable (56), three were increasing, three were decreasing, and 21 were too rarely caught to determine their status. Valid data for two species were assumed to be available only from the waters along Florida's Atlantic coast: Weakfish and American shad.
- Compared to last year's report, the number of increasing groups this year was lower on the Atlantic coast (2 less) and lower on the Gulf coast (1 less). The number of decreasing groups was lower on the Atlantic coast (1 less) and the same on the Gulf coast.
- Oysters (invertebrate) on the Gulf coast have shown consecutive 'decreasing' status the last six years.