



*Interstate Fishery Management Plan
for Cobia*

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Marine Fisheries

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Nov. 15, 2017



Overview

Plan development and summary

Selected management options

Summary of recommendations from advisory committees

Recommendation



Plan Development

Board Initiated Public Information Document (PID)	August 2016
Board Approval of PID for Public Comment	October 2016
Public Comment on PID	Winter 2016-2017
Board Approval of PID and Initiation of Draft Fishery Management Plan (FMP)	February 2017
Board Approval of Draft FMP for Public Comment	August 2017
Public Comment on Draft FMP	September-October 2017
Board Considers Final Action on Draft FMP ASMFC Plan Adoption	October 2017
(Pending Board Approval) FMP Implementation	April 2018



Public Comment Summary

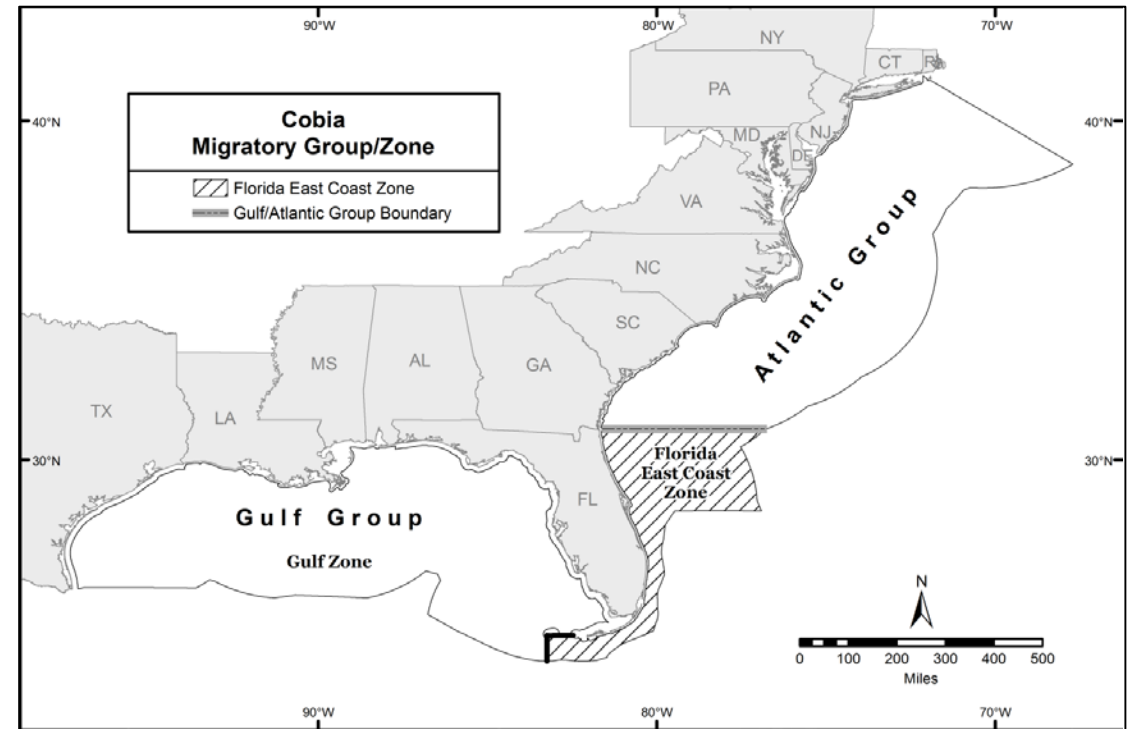
- Mistrust of Marine Recreational Information Program data
- Interest in reconsidering biological stock boundary between Atlantic and Gulf stocks
- Transfer of unused catch from Florida to Atlantic stock
- Concern of moving forward with Atlantic States involvement with management



Management Unit

Management Unit: Atlantic Migratory Group Cobia – Georgia through New York

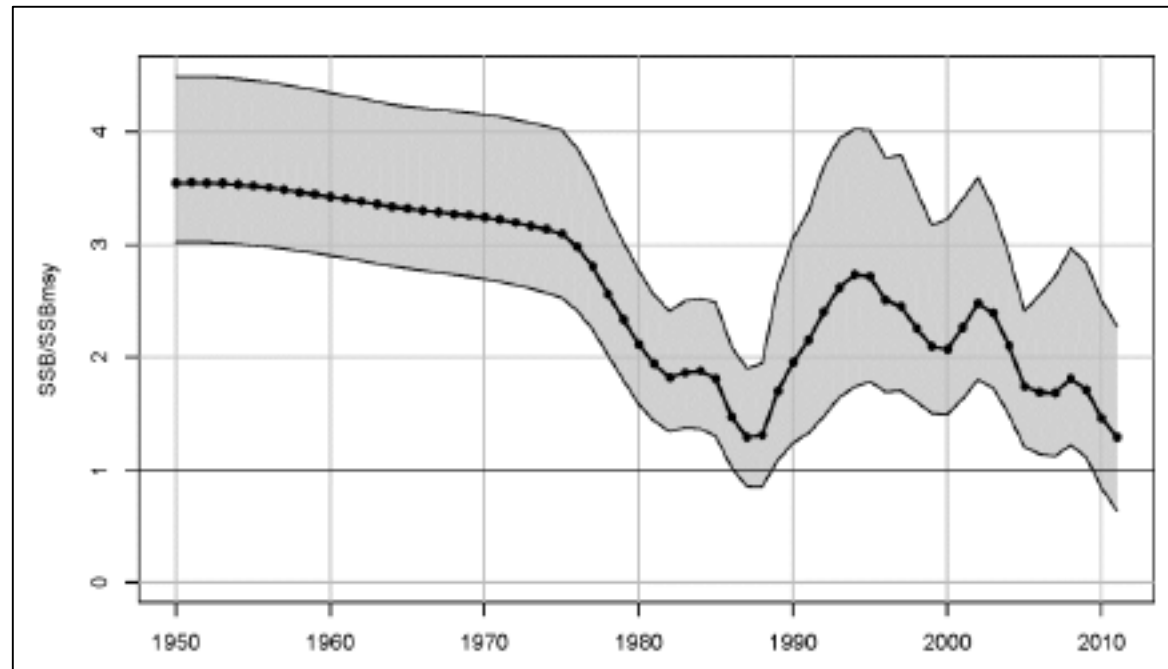
- South East Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR) 28 (2013); genetic and tag-recapture data
- SEDAR 58 Stock ID Workshop cooperatively planned for 2018 by South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico councils and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission



Stock Status

Not overfished/No overfishing in 2011

- Declining Spawning Stock Biomass
- New assessment initiated in 2018 with expected completion in 2019



South Atlantic Council Framework Amendment 4

Recreational:

- 620,000 pound Annual Catch Limit
- One fish per person
- 36 inches fork length size limit
- Up to six fish per vessel

Commercial:

- 50,000 pound Annual Catch Limit
- Two fish per person
- 33 inches fork length size limit
- Up to six fish per vessel



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Fishery Management Plan Objectives

Complement South Atlantic Coastal Migratory Pelagics Fishery Management Plan for Cobia

Constrain harvest to the federal Annual Catch Limit from Georgia to New York

- 620,000 pounds – Recreational
- 50,000 pounds – Commercial

Provide states the flexibility to manage their specific cobia fisheries

- States can set their own seasons and vessel limits



Selected Management Options

Management options developed by each state to complement actions proposed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council in Framework Amendment 4

- Size limit, bag limit, and vessel limits

Approved management options are scheduled for implementation during the 2018 fishing season

- Implementation plan due to Technical Committee Jan. 1, 2018
- Technical Committee recommends approval/disapproval to the Board



Selected Management Options – De Minimis

Include *de minimis* program for recreational fisheries only

- *De Minimis* program provides 1% set aside of coastwide recreational Annual Catch Limit (6,200 pounds)
- Only applies to the recreational fishery; coastwide measures still apply to the commercial fishery



Selected Management Options - Commercial

Coastwide size limit: Minimum size limit of 33 inches fork length. A total length equivalent may be considered by the Technical Committee and Management Board

Coastwide possession limit: State-specific possession limits of no more than two fish per person, not to exceed six fish per vessel

- Language was modified in the final motion from original option in the draft plan to reflect that the South Atlantic Framework Amendment 4 commercial possession limit is per person, not per license holder.



Selected Management Options – Recreational

Coastwide size limit: Minimum size limit of 36 inches fork length (all future length limits in fork length). A total length equivalent may be considered by the Technical Committee and Management Board.

Coastwide bag limit: One fish per person.

Vessel limit: State-specific daily vessel limits not to exceed six fish per vessel.



Selected Management Options – Recreational

Season/Recreational Harvest Limits

State-defined seasons/harvest control measures

State-by-state recreational harvest targets based on coastwide

Recreational Harvest Limit

- Limits divided among non-*de minimis* states only
- **NC Recreational Harvest Limit = 236,316 pounds**

Average annual landings evaluated against state-allocated quotas over **three-year period**



Selected Management Options – Recreational

Historical Landings Reference Period

Allocation percent based on numbers of fish

State	a. 3-yr Average (2013-2015)	b. 5-yr Average (2011-2015)	c. 10-yr Average (2006-2015)	d. 5-yr/10-yr Average
GA	n = 1,421 4.5%	n = 2,150 9.0%	n = 2,445 10.0%	n = 2,298 9.5%
SC	n = 1,984 6.3%	n = 2,558 10.8%	n = 3,312 13.6%	n = 2,935 12.2%
NC	n = 15,065 48.2%	n = 10,344 43.5%	n = 8,203 33.6%	n = 9,273 38.5%
VA	n = 12,799 40.9%	n = 8,714 36.7%	n = 10,465 42.9%	n = 9,589 39.8%
Total	N = 31,269 100%	N = 23,766 100%	N = 24,425 100%	n = 24,095 100%



Selected Management Options – Recreational

Recreational Harvest Limit options

Include 1 percent (6,200 pounds) *de minimis* set aside

State	a. 3-yr Average (2013-2015) (lbs)	b. 5-yr Average (2011-2015) (lbs)	c. 10-yr Average (2006-2015) (lbs)	d. 5-yr/10-yr Average (lbs)
GA	27,621	55,242	61,380	58,311
SC	38,669	66,290	83,477	74,885
NC	295,852	267,003	206,237	236,313
VA	251,044	225,265	263,320	244,292



Analysis of Recreational Management Options

Framework Amendment 4 to the Coastal Migratory Pelagics Fishery Management Plan

- 36 inch fork length
- One fish per person per day
- No more than six fish per vessel

Recreational cobia harvest averaged over 2011-2015

- Assumes no closure in Federal waters

Analyzed percent reduction and average landings for various season and vessel limits, by mode.



Analysis of Recreational Management Options in Pounds for North Carolina 2011-2015

Potential Season Options	Vessel Limit					
	6	5	4	3	2	1
Charter no closure	43,639	42,520	40,865	34,566	26,682	15,593
Charter vessel May 1 through August 31	43,221	42,103	40,447	34,148	26,264	15,175
Charter vessel May 15 through August 31	37,103	36,525	35,411	29,985	22,974	12,859
Private no closure	271,581	267,211	262,841	248,793	218,904	163,674
Private vessel May 1 through August 31	264,932	260,562	256,193	242,145	215,566	158,744
Private vessel May 15 through August 31	239,862	237,468	235,074	223,001	198,398	143,551



Preliminary 2017 Landings for North Carolina

Wave	Fishing Mode	Number Harvested	Weight Harvested
May/June	Private Boat	5,984	214,250
	Charter Boat	467	17,511
	Shore/Man Made	0	0
July/August	Private Boat	796	27,233
	Charter Boat	110	2,980
	Shore/Man Made	0	0
Total		7,357	261,514



Input from the Advisory Committees

Northern Advisory Committee

Recommended a four fish per vessel limit for the charter sector; two fish per vessel limit for the private boat sector; no closed season

- 259,763 pounds exceeds Recreational Harvest Limit by 23,447 pounds
- Noted uncertainty in recreational harvest estimates used for analysis of management options and disadvantage of NC in selecting the five-year/10-year average for setting the recreational harvest target
- Cited that the difference in the projected landings for the 2017 measures (297,240 pounds) and the preliminary 2017 landings (261,514 pounds) as justification to recommend measures above the recreational harvest target



Input from the Advisory Committees

Southern Advisory Committee

Two fish per vessel limit for all sectors with no season closure

- 245,587 pounds exceeds Recreational Harvest Limit by 9,271 pounds

Finfish Advisory Committee

Allow up to four fish per vessel per day for charter boats and two fish per vessel per day for private boats

- Approximately 240,000 pounds through July 1
- If 50 percent of the recreational harvest target is not met by July 1, then the maximum vessel limits would increase to six
- All fish landed must be tagged and recorded by a system to be developed by the Division



Division Recommendation

The Division of Marine Fisheries recommends:

- One fish per vessel limit for private vessels
- Three fish per vessel limit for charter vessels
- No season closure

These management measures should constrain harvest to an estimated 198,241 pounds and allow harvest in the fishery throughout the year

Develop a mandatory reporting program to be designed by the Division



Next steps...

It is up to the States to select their own vessel limits and season to constrain their harvest to the Recreational Harvest Limit

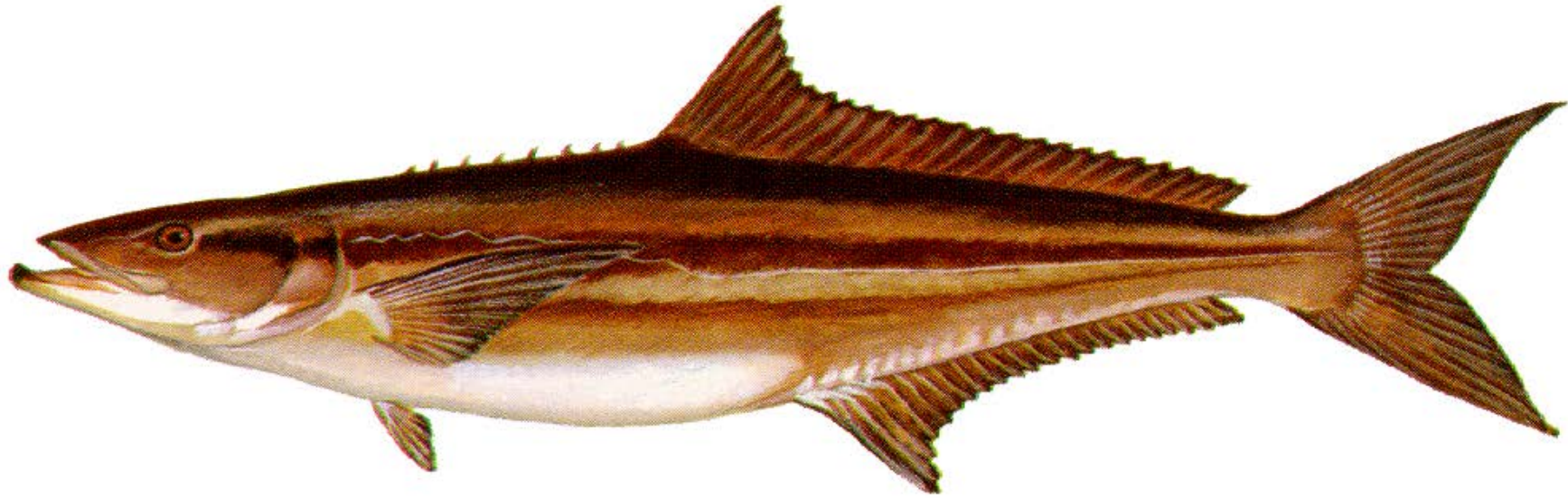
- NC Recreational Harvest Limit = 236,316 pounds

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Cobia Technical Committee will evaluate each states' plan in January 2018 to ensure that their harvest measures will achieve the Recreational Harvest Limits

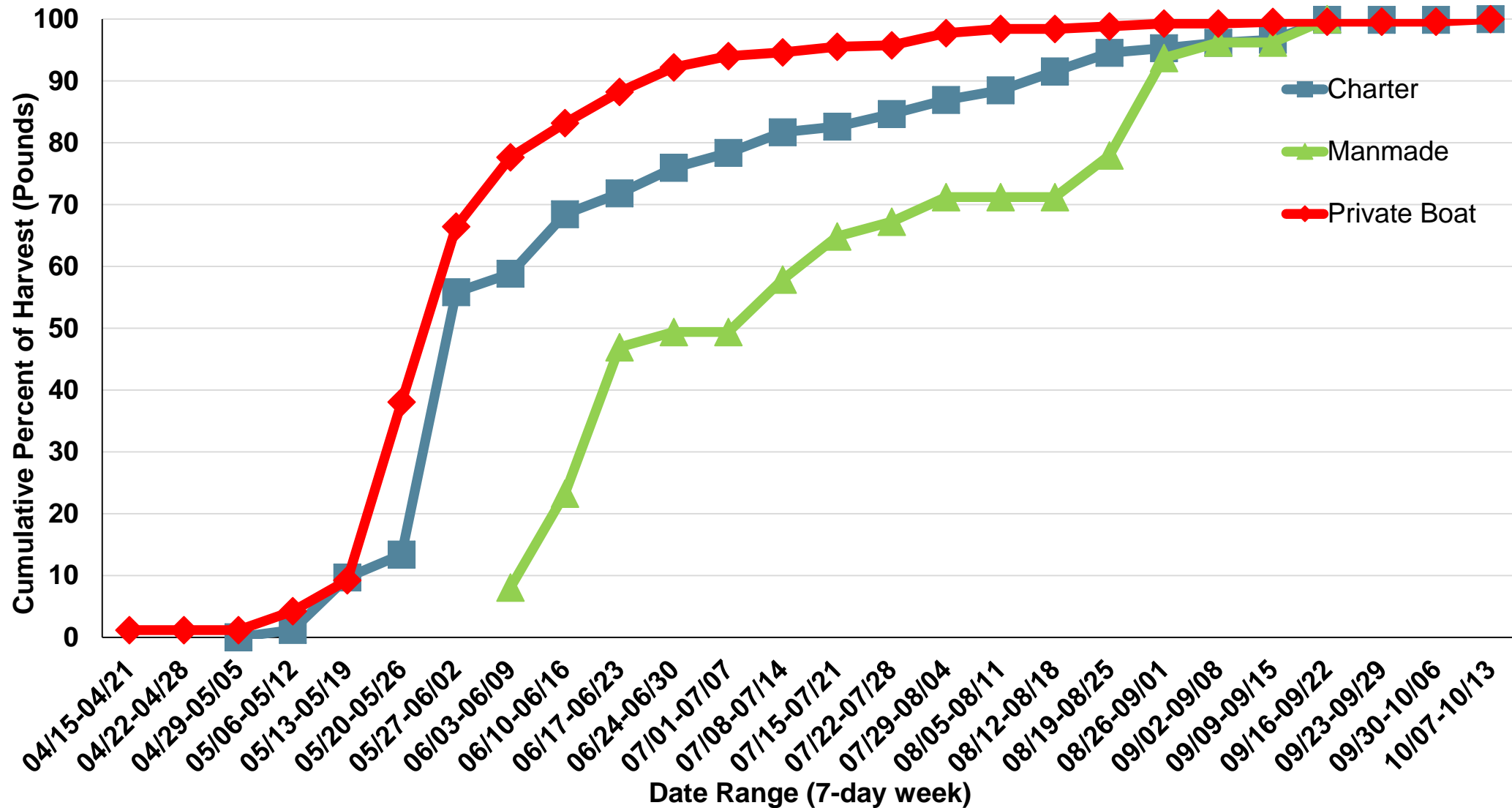
Cobia FMP will be implemented in April 2018



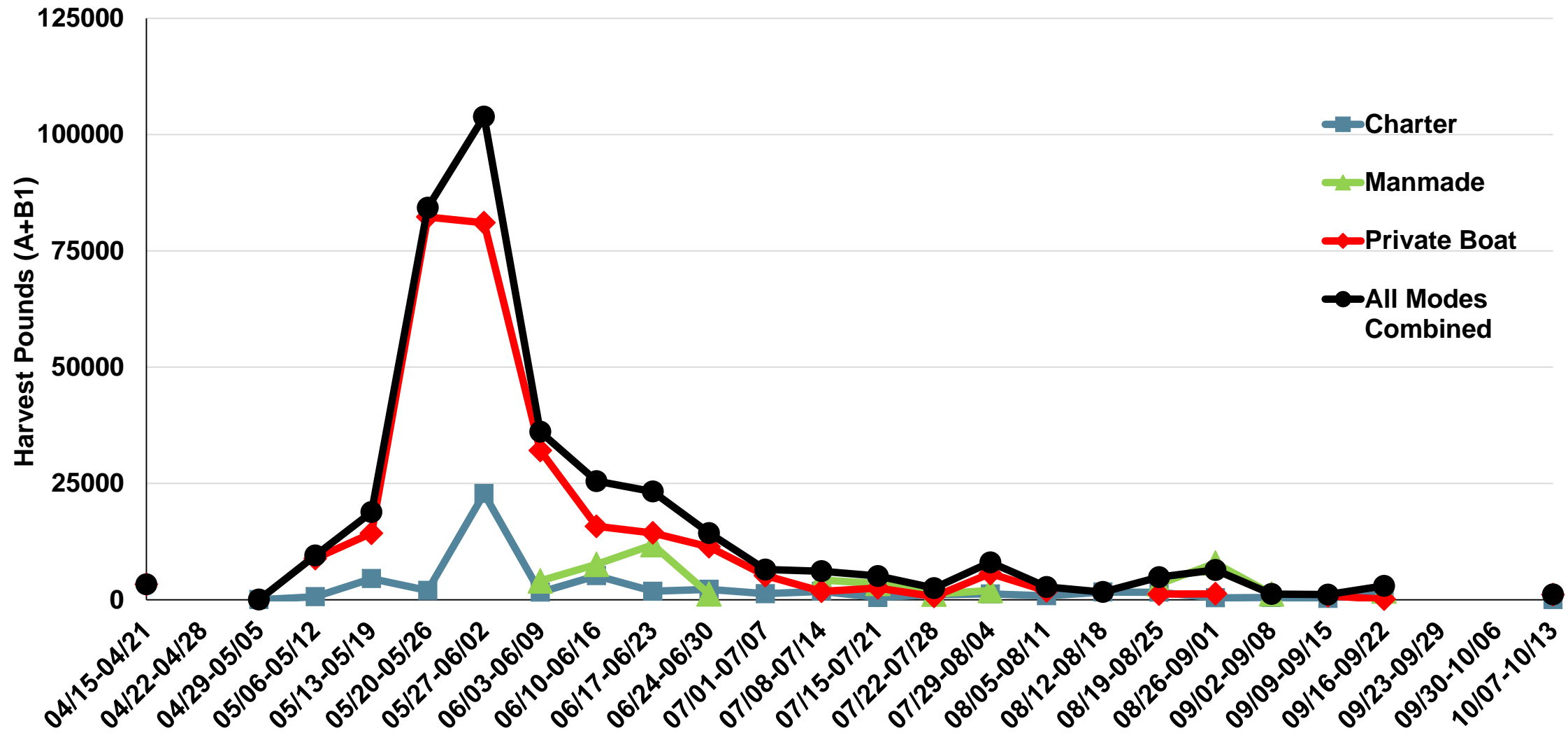
Questions?

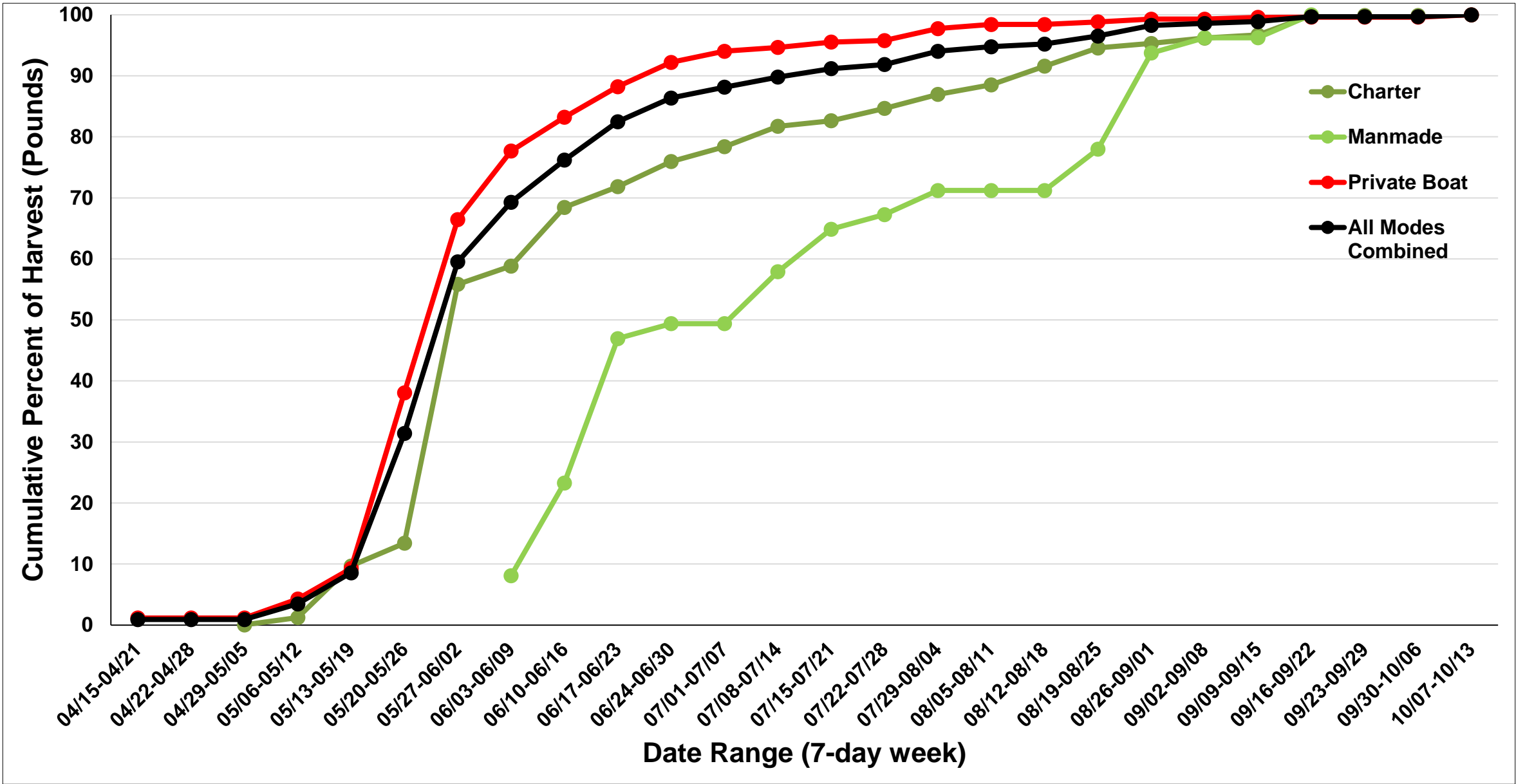


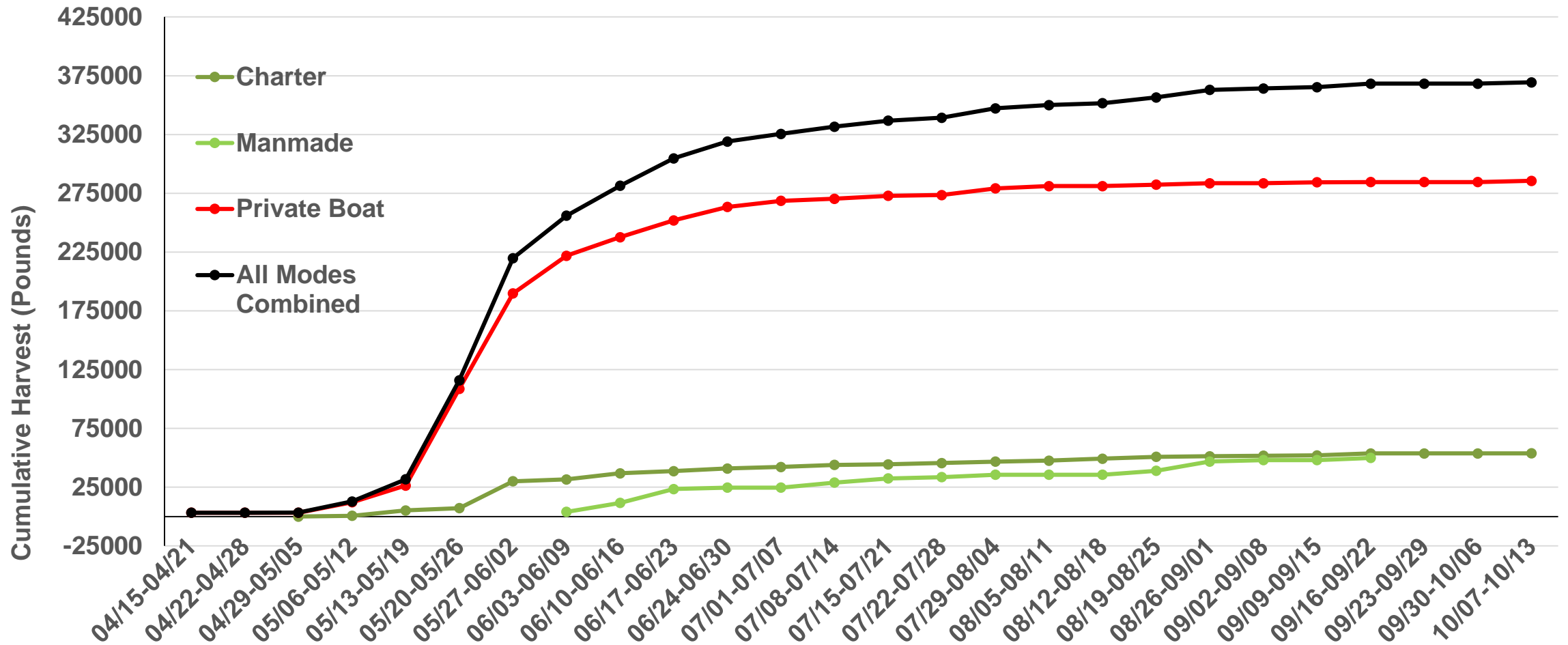
Characterization of the Recreational Cobia Fishery



Characterization of the Recreational Cobia Fishery

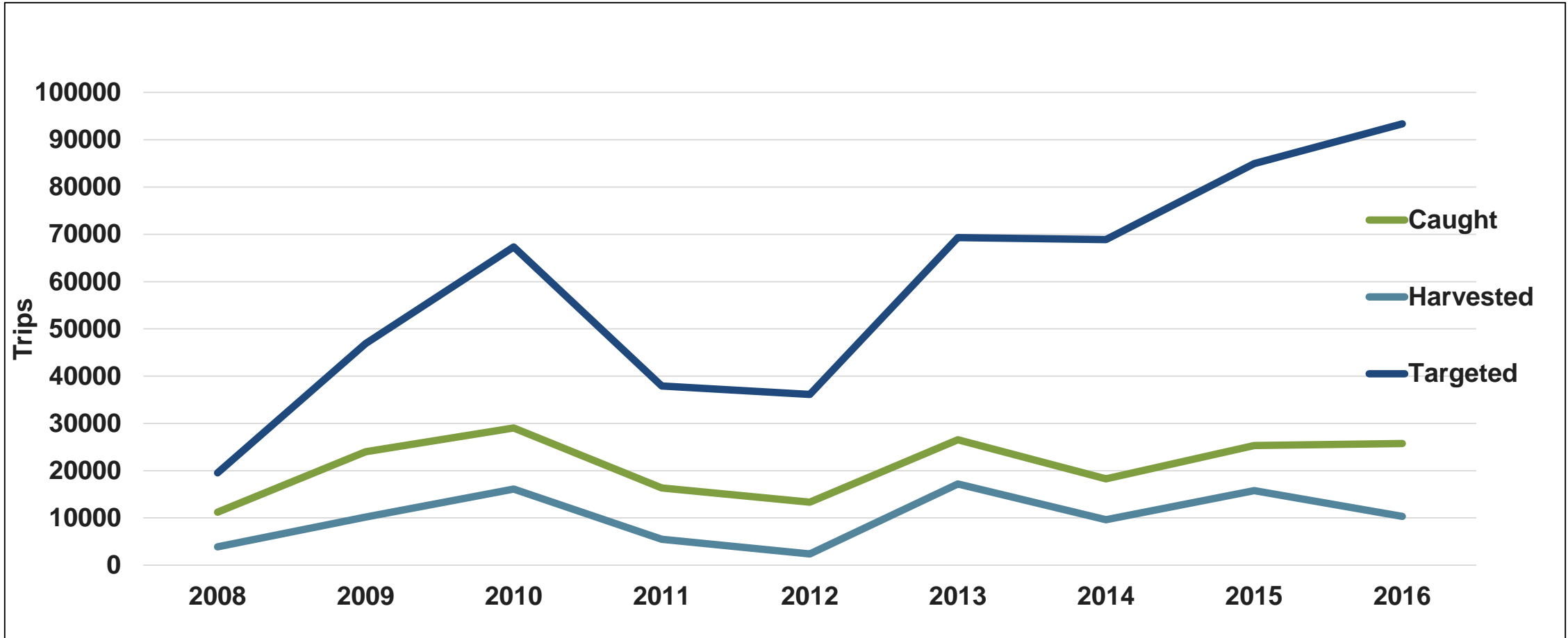




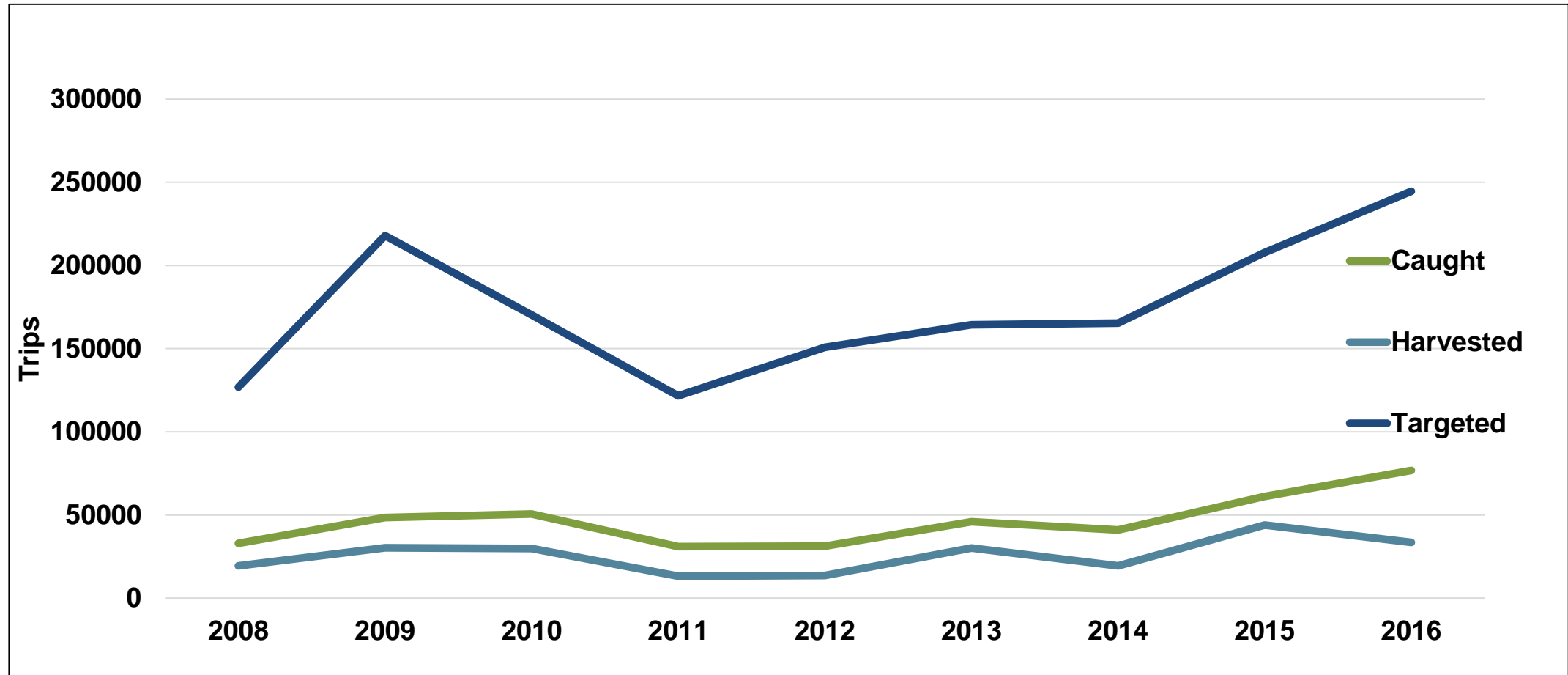


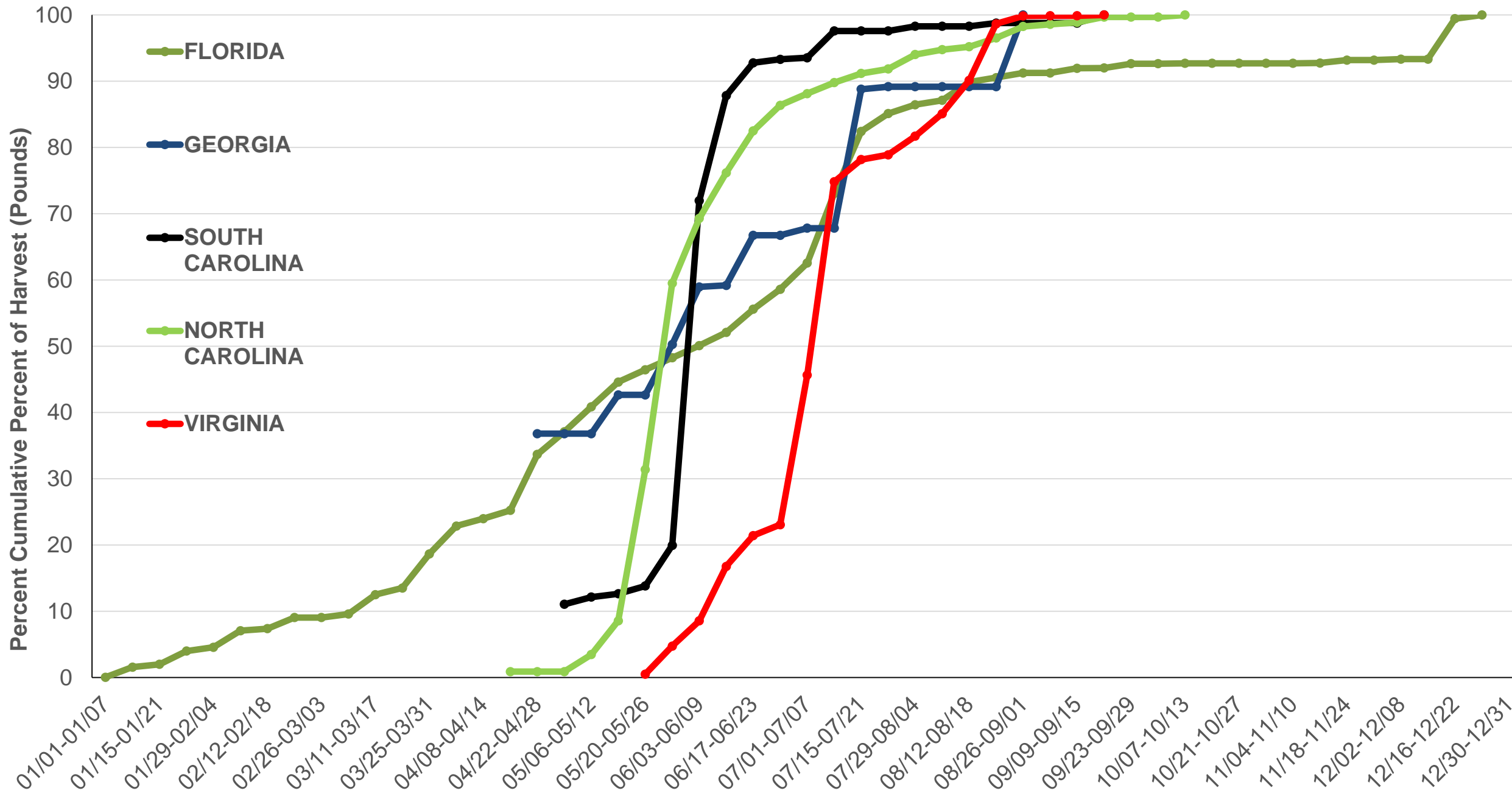
Date Range	Charter		Manmade		Private Boat		All Modes Combined	
	Pounds	Percent	Pounds	Percent	Pounds	Percent	Pounds	Percent
04/15-04/21					3,311	1.2	3,311	0.9
04/22-04/28					3,311	1.2	3,311	0.9
04/29-05/05	11	0.0			3,311	1.2	3,322	0.9
05/06-05/12	662	1.2			12,167	4.3	12,829	3.5
05/13-05/19	5,210	9.7			26,443	9.3	31,653	8.6
05/20-05/26	7,208	13.4			108,740	38.1	115,948	31.4
05/27-06/02	30,035	55.8			189,782	66.4	219,817	59.5
06/03-06/09	31,641	58.8	4,032	8.1	221,869	77.7	255,929	69.3
06/10-06/16	36,818	68.4	11,625	23.3	237,637	83.2	281,430	76.2
06/17-06/23	38,635	71.8	23,443	46.9	252,000	88.2	304,701	82.5
06/24-06/30	40,857	76.0	24,668	49.4	263,366	92.2	319,023	86.4
07/01-07/07	42,159	78.4	24,668	49.4	268,565	94.0	325,525	88.1
07/08-07/14	43,953	81.7	28,915	57.9	270,355	94.7	331,657	89.8
07/15-07/21	44,451	82.6	32,399	64.9	272,865	95.5	336,756	91.2
07/22-07/28	45,537	84.7	33,597	67.3	273,557	95.8	339,252	91.8
07/29-08/04	46,772	87.0	35,568	71.2	279,176	97.7	347,289	94.0
08/05-08/11	47,613	88.5	35,568	71.2	281,084	98.4	350,038	94.8
08/12-08/18	49,259	91.6	35,568	71.2	281,084	98.4	351,684	95.2
08/19-08/25	50,867	94.6	38,949	78.0	282,292	98.8	356,529	96.5
08/26-09/01	51,268	95.3	46,818	93.7	283,573	99.3	362,932	98.3
09/02-09/08	51,734	96.2	48,067	96.2	283,573	99.3	364,147	98.6
09/09-09/15	52,010	96.7	48,067	96.2	284,408	99.6	365,258	98.9
09/16-09/22	53,737	99.9	49,948	100.0	284,534	99.6	368,239	99.7
09/23-09/29	53,737	99.9			284,534	99.6	368,239	99.7
09/30-10/06	53,737	99.9			284,534	99.6	368,239	99.7
10/07-10/13	53,790	100.0			285,630	100.0	369,389	100.0

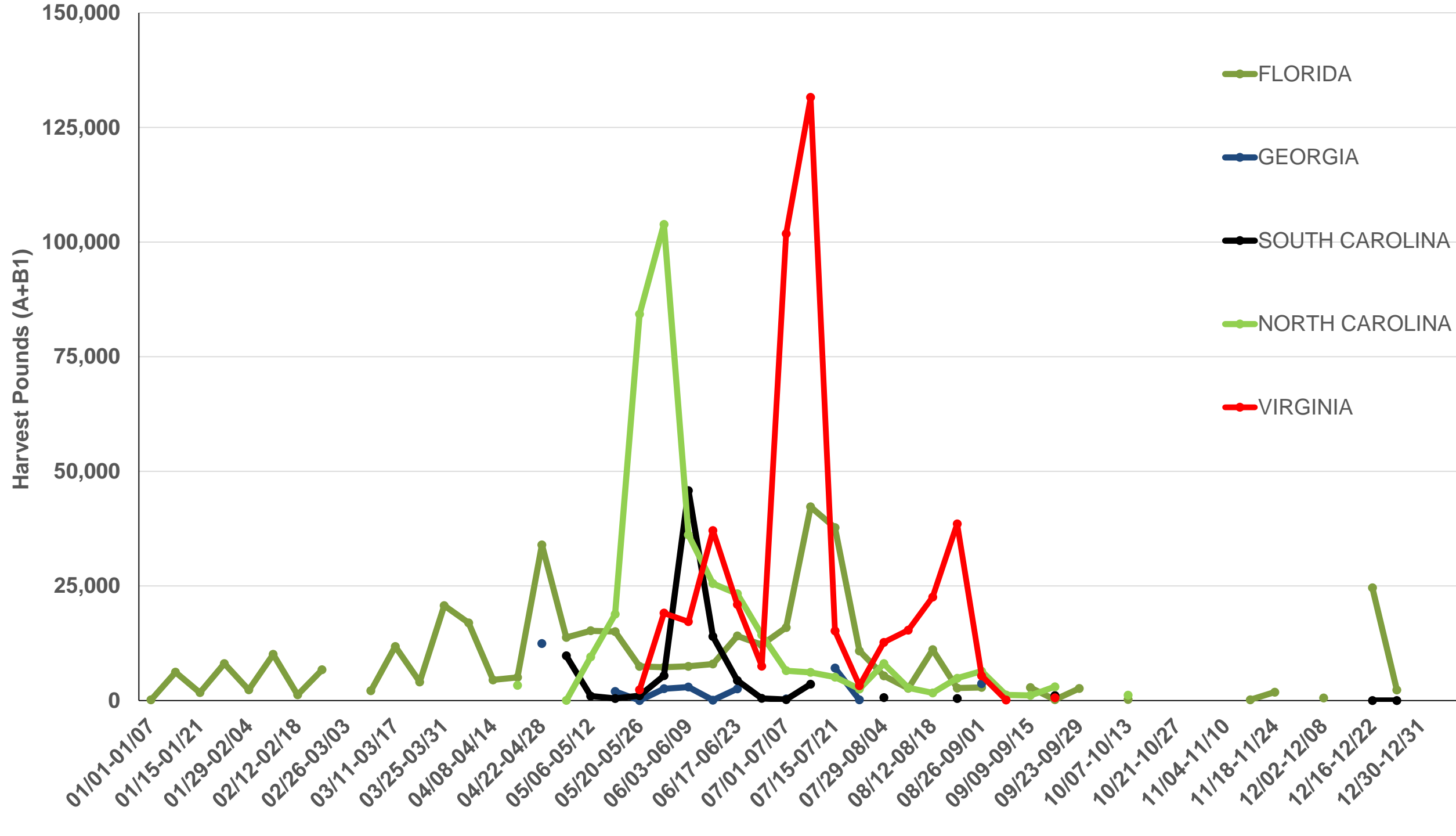
NC Recreational Effort

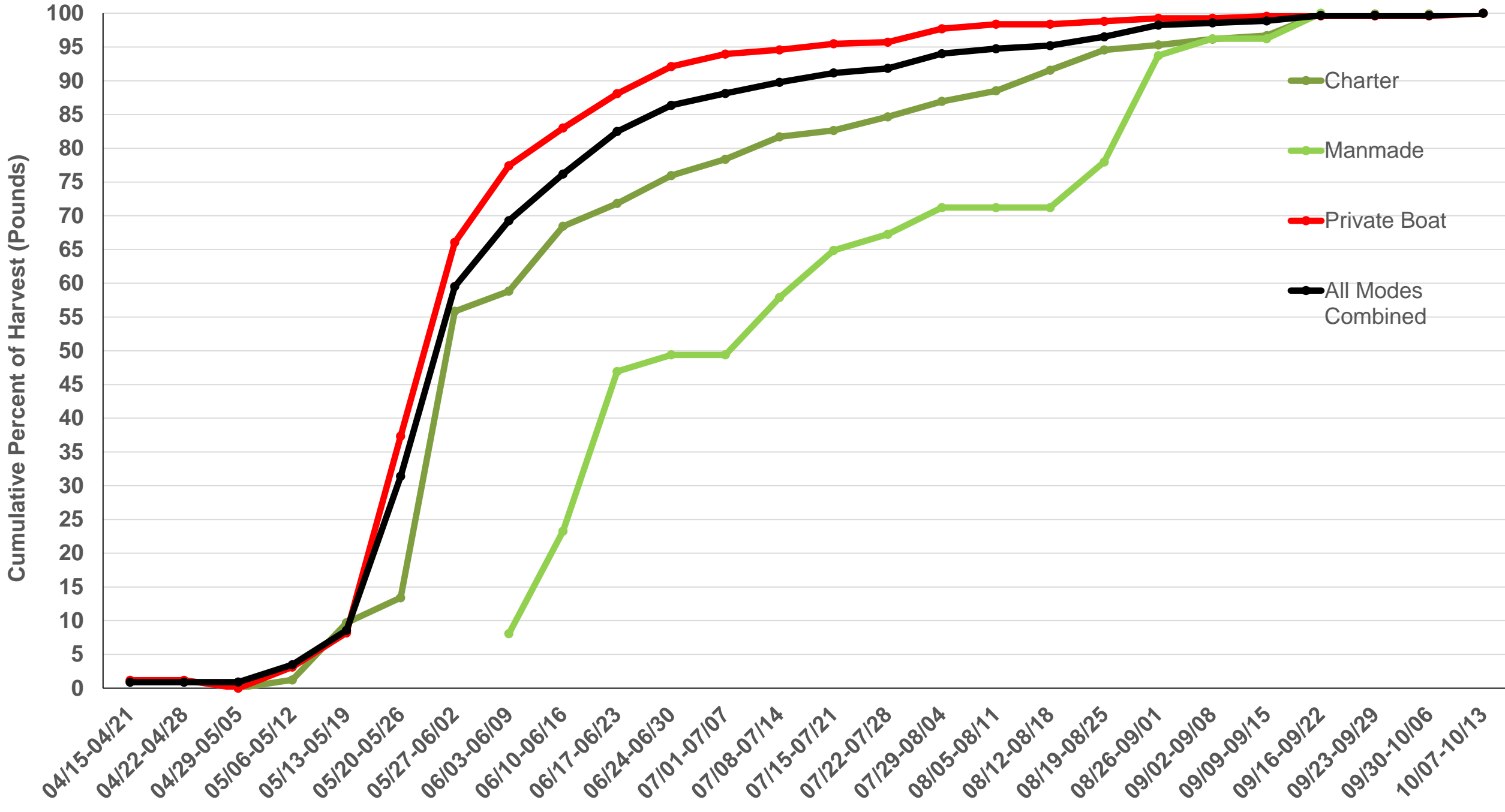


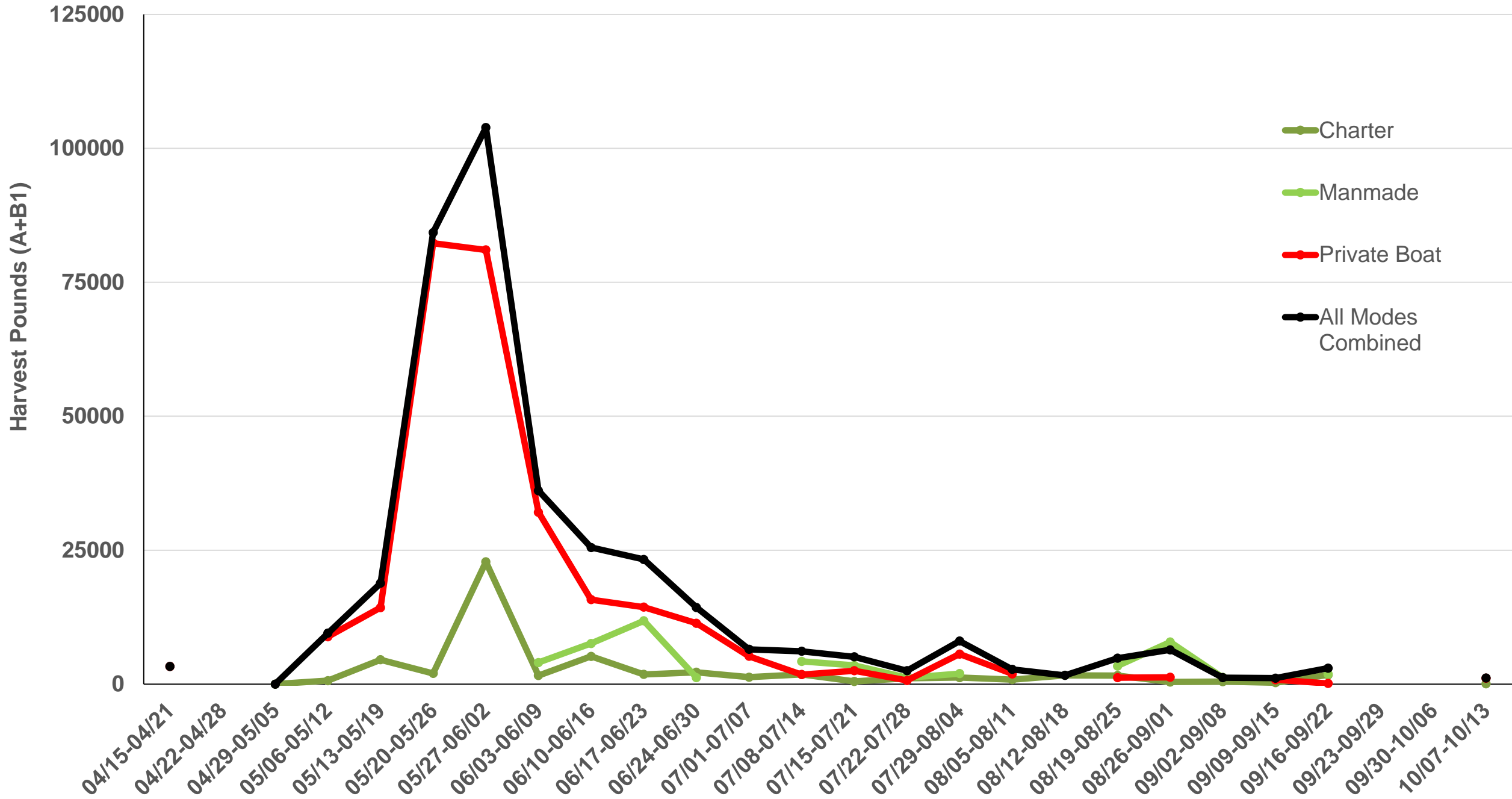
Coastwide Recreational Effort











Pounds Harvested By Mode and Week (N&S of Hatteras)

