



# Spotted Seatrout Fishery Management Plan: Draft Amendment 1

*Department of Environmental Quality*

*Marine Fisheries*

*NC Marine Fisheries Commission | M. Lambert and L. Pensinger | November 21, 2024*



# *Presentation Outline*

- Stock Status Review
- Public Comment Review
- MFC Advisory Committee Review
- Discard Mortality
- Division Recommendations
- *Action Item:* Vote on MFC preferred management options





**Not overfished**

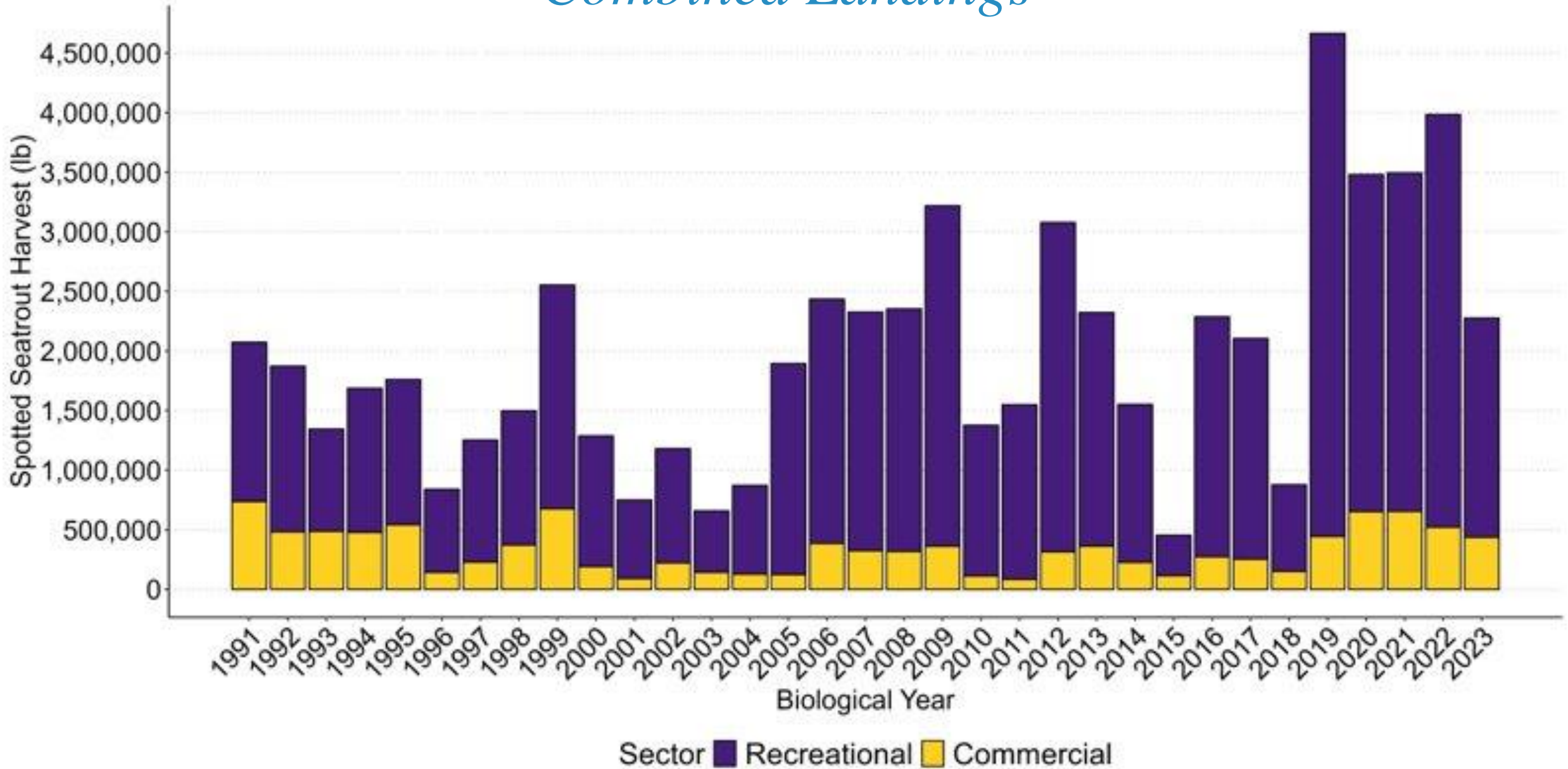
**Overfishing occurring**

Goal of management:

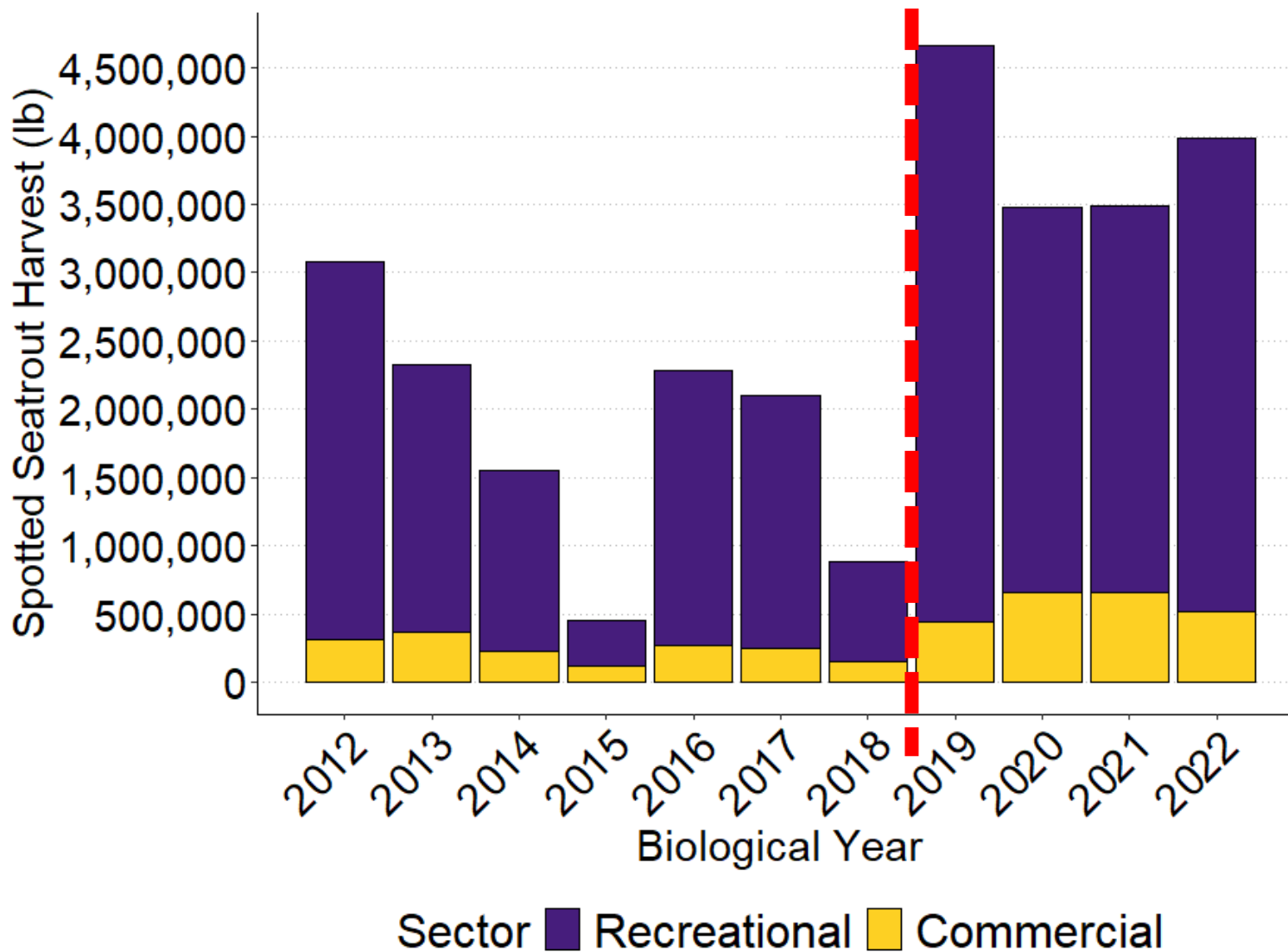
***End overfishing by reducing  
fishing effort and harvest***



# Combined Landings



# Combined Landings



## 2012-2018 Average Landings

**Rec: 1,568,750 lb**

**Com: 242,800 lb**

## 2019-2022 Average Landings

**Rec: 3,311,982 lb**

**Com: 567,999 lb**



**+111% Recreational**

**+134% Commercial**

# *Harvest and Total Removals*

- Unprecedented levels of harvest and total removals
- Harvest and total removals through August 2024 are on track to reach a new time series high
- Precautious management approach



# Public Questionnaire Review



- 12 multiple choice questions and 1 open comment box
- Preference for single-option management strategies or combination management
- Open from September 27 to October 16.
- 201 participants
  - 153 responded to open comment

## Online Spotted Seatrout Public Comment

The North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries is accepting public comment on the [draft Spotted Seatrout Fishery Management Plan Amendment 1](#).

To submit your comments online, please fill out the questionnaire below. The public comment period closes on **October 16, 2024 at 5 p.m.**

### Spotted Seatrout Questionnaire



# Public Questionnaire Review

- Narrower slot limit as a single management measure
  - Bag limit reductions instead of season closure
- Support for Adaptive Management Framework

## Other topics mentioned:

- Trophy Allowance
- Equitable Management
- Enforcement

## Online Spotted Seatrout Public Comment

The North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries is accepting public comment on the [draft Spotted Seatrout Fishery Management Plan Amendment 1](#).

To submit your comments online, please fill out the questionnaire below. The public comment period closes on **October 16, 2024 at 5 p.m.**

## Spotted Seatrout Questionnaire





# *Northern Advisory Committee Review*

- No quorum
- Discussion topics included:
  - Stock assessments
  - Discard mortality
  - Projections
- No discussion around management options



# *Southern Advisory Committee Review*



## Appendix 2: Sustainable Harvest

### *Recreational*

5.h 14"-20" slot limit w/ allowance for one fish >26", 3-fish bag limit, Jan-Feb harvest closure

### *Commercial*

1.a Status Quo, Maintain 75-fish trip limit

Jan-Feb closure

### *Stop Net Management*

4.a Status Quo. Maintain Memorandum of Agreement

### *Adaptive Management Framework*

Adopt Adaptive Management Framework

**37%**  
**Total Harvest  
Reduction**



# *Southern Advisory Committee Review*



## Appendix 3: Supplemental Management

### 1.b Eliminate spotted seatrout captain-crew allowance on for-hire trips

Allow one vessel with one set of gear and two commercially licensed individuals on board to possess two commercial trip limits of spotted seatrout

## Appendix 4: Cold Stun Management

### 1.b Extend fishery closure until June 30 following a cold stun

Adopt Adaptive Management Framework



# *Finfish Advisory Committee Review*

- Commercial spotted seatrout season mimic the weekend closure in the striped mullet commercial fishery
- Implement a 16"-20" slot limit with one over 24" in the recreational fishery
- Implement a four-fish bag limit in the recreational fishery
- Eliminate the captain/crew allowance for a for-hire trip
- Adopt adaptive management framework in the event of a cold-stun
- Continue status quo in the stop-net fishery
- Require circle hooks when fishing with live bait in the recreational fishery

**32.6%**  
**Total Harvest  
Reduction**



# Discard Mortality

## Discard Mortality

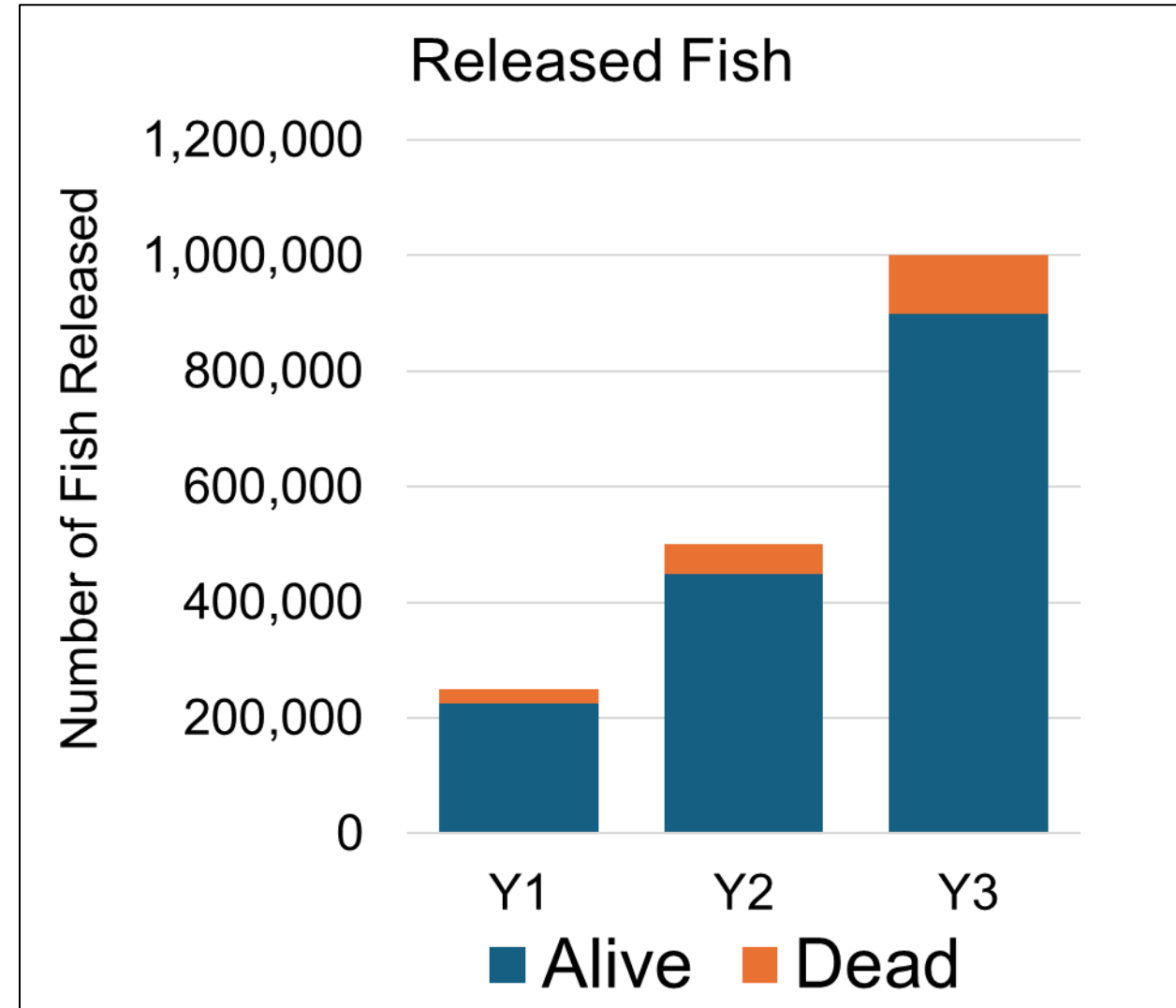
Fate of fish that die after being caught and released

## Discard Mortality Rate

Proportion of released fish that are expected to die

## Dead Discards

Estimated weight of fish that die after being discarded



# *Discard Mortality*

## *Discard Mortality*

Fate of fish that die after being caught and released

## *Discard Mortality Rate*

Proportion of released fish that are expected to die

## *Dead Discards*

Estimated weight of fish that die after being discarded



# *Discard Mortality Studies*

- 2022 Spotted Seatrout Stock Assessment
  - Recreational Discard Mortality Rate: 10%
- Consistent with previous two NC spotted seatrout stock assessments
- Consistent with South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Louisiana stock assessments





## *Division Recommended Management*





*Division Recommended Management  
Appendix 2: Sustainable Harvest*

## *Appendix 2: Sustainable Harvest*

### *Possible Strategies*

- Size or Slot Limits
- Bag and Trip Limits
- Season Closures
- Stop Net Management
- Combinations of management strategies
- Adaptive Management



## *Appendix 2: Sustainable Harvest Management Carried Forward*

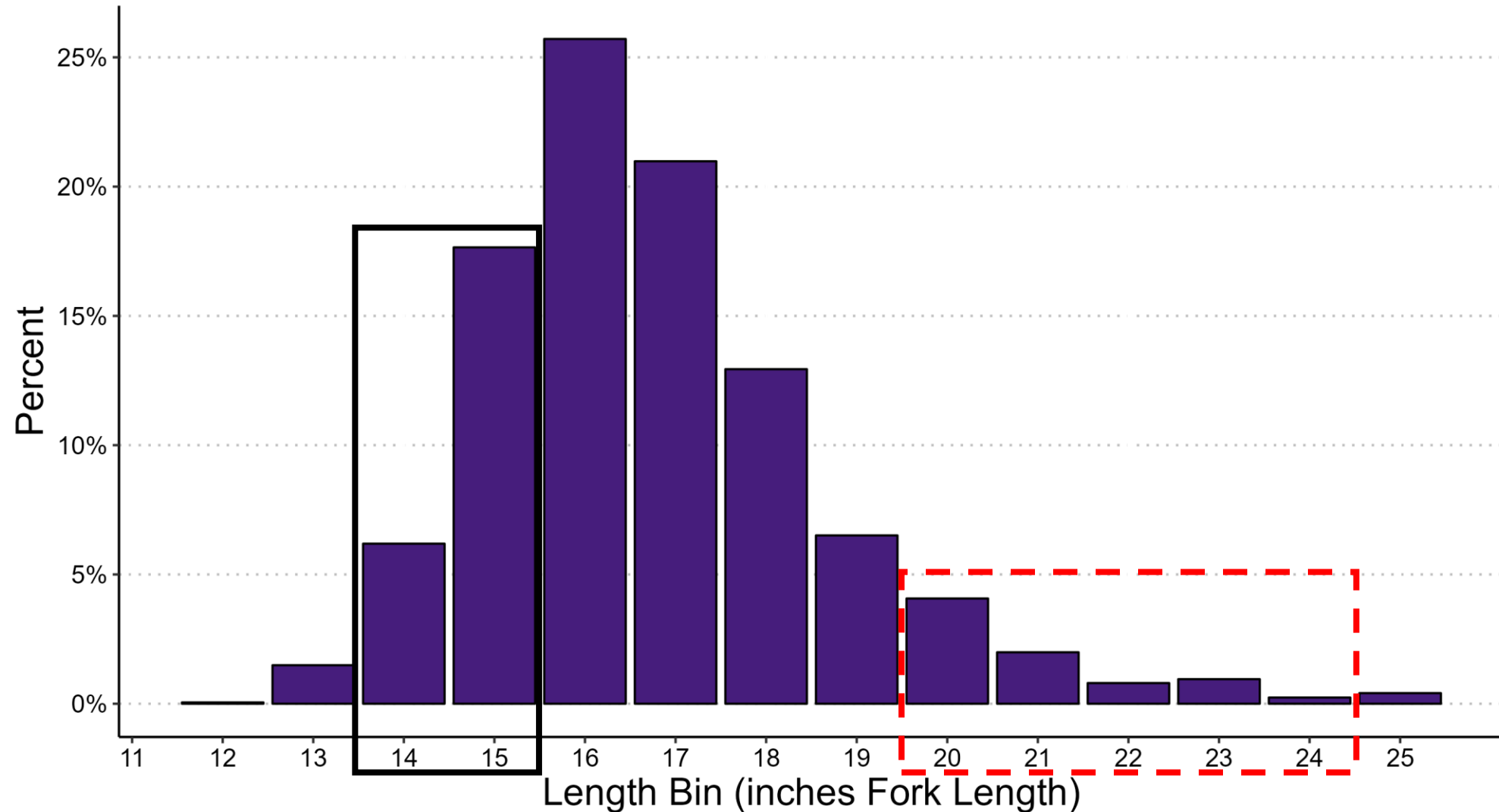
- Weekend gill net prohibition in Joint Waters
- Weekend commercial possession or sale prohibition in Joint Waters
- Hook-and-line limited to recreational bag limit
- Recreational purposes limited to recreational bag limit



# *Appendix 2: Sustainable Harvest*

## *Possible Recreational Management*

### Slot limit only



## *Appendix 2: Sustainable Harvest* *Possible Recreational Management*

### Slot limit only

- Unlikely to achieve expected harvest reduction
- Protects large spawners
- Does not address effort

## *Appendix 2: Sustainable Harvest* *Possible Recreational Management*

### Slot limit only

- Unlikely to achieve expected harvest reduction
- Protects large spawners
- Does not address effort

# *Sustainable Harvest: Recommended Recreational Management*

## Combination Management

- Addresses unprecedented harvest
- Best chance to reduce effort
- Shortest season closure
- Protects large spawners
- Reduces likelihood of more drastic future changes

# *Sustainable Harvest: Recommended Recreational Management*

## Combination Management

- 14"–20" slot limit with allowance for 1 fish > 26"
- 3-fish bag limit
- January–February season closure
- Option 5.h



## *Sustainable Harvest: Recommended Recreational Management*

### Winter closure (January–February)

- Larger reduction in shorter time (preference for shorter closure)
- Potentially lower discard mortality rate
- Protects spawning capable fish

*14"–20" slot limit with allowance for 1 fish > 26" in combination with a 3-fish bag limit and January – February season closure (Option 5.h)*

## *Appendix 2: Sustainable Harvest*

### *Possible Commercial Management*

#### Mirror Striped Mullet Weekend Closures

- Simpler management across FMPs
- Reduces user group conflict
- Unlikely to achieve expected harvest reduction

## *Appendix 2: Sustainable Harvest*

### *Possible Commercial Management*

#### Mirror Striped Mullet Weekend Closures

- Simpler management across FMPs
- Reduces user group conflict
- Unlikely to achieve expected harvest reduction

## *Sustainable Harvest: Recommended Commercial Management*

### Season Closure AND Weekend Closure

- Reduces harvest
- Matches rec closure (Jan–Feb)
- Matches fall closure in Amendment 2 to Striped Mullet FMP
- Best chance of reducing effort

## *Sustainable Harvest: Recommended Commercial Management*

### Season closure AND Weekend Closure

- Jan–Feb statewide harvest closure
- Oct–Dec, 11:59 p.m. Friday to 12:01 a.m. Tuesday statewide harvest closure
- Maintain 75-fish trip limit and 14” minimum size
- Option 2.c

## *Sustainable Harvest: Recommended Commercial Management*

### Bogue Banks stop net fishery

- No quota change
- Formalize management in FMP
  - Simplify management
  - Increase transparency
  - Enforceable
- Option 4.b

## *Sustainable Harvest: Adaptive Management Framework*

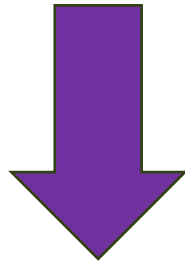
Allows for management update between full FMP review

- Flexible
- Proclamation authority
- Science based
- Adjust before needing more drastic changes
- Option 7

# *Sustainable Harvest: Adaptive Management Framework*

**Example of how adaptive management *MIGHT* work (for illustrative purposes only)**

Fewer old fish  
in population    +    High harvest    +    Slightly lower abundance



Use adaptive management to  
remove trophy allowance and  
protect larger/older fish



# *Division Recommended Management*

## **Appendix 3: Sustainable Harvest**

<i>Recreational</i> (39.5% reduction)	Option 5.h	14"–20" slot limit with allowance for 1 fish > 26" 3 fish bag limit January – February closure
<i>Commercial</i> (40.2% reduction)	Option 2.c	Oct–Dec, 11:59 p.m. Friday to 12:01 a.m. Tuesday statewide harvest closure January – February closure Maintain 75-fish trip limit and 14" size limit
<i>Stop Net Fishery</i>	Option 4.b	No change to Bogue Banks stop net quota but formalize management in Amendment 1
<i>Adaptive Management</i>	Option 7	Adopt Adaptive Management framework



*Division Recommended Management  
Appendix 3: Supplemental Management*

## *Appendix 3: Supplemental Management Possible Strategies*

### Nonquantifiable options

- Vessel Limits
- Effort Controls (limited entry)
- Gear Requirements
- Tournaments
- Commercial Hook and Line Harvest
- One Boat, Two License Holders, One Gear Limit, Two Commercial Limits

## *Appendix 3: Supplemental Management Possible Strategies*

### Nonquantifiable options

- Vessel Limits
- ~~Effort Controls (limited entry)~~
- ~~Gear Requirements~~
- ~~Tournaments~~
- ~~Commercial Hook and Line Harvest~~
- One Boat, Two License Holders, One Gear Limit, Two Commercial Limits

## *Appendix 3: Supplemental Management Possible Strategies*

### Southern Advisory Committee Motion

- “To recommend allowing one vessel, with one set of gear, with two commercially licensed individuals on board, to possess two commercial trip limits of spotted seatrout.”

## *Appendix 3: Supplemental Management Possible Strategies*

### Nonquantifiable options

- Vessel Limits
- ~~Effort Controls (limited entry)~~
- ~~Gear Requirements~~
- ~~Tournaments~~
- ~~Commercial Hook and Line Harvest~~
- ~~One Boat, Two License Holders, One Gear Limit, Two Commercial Limits~~

Eliminate the captain/crew allowance (Option 1.b)

# *Division Recommended Management*

## ***Appendix 3: Supplemental Management***

Option 1.b                      Eliminate the captain/crew allowance





*Division Recommended Management  
Appendix 4: Cold Stun Management*



## *Appendix 3: Supplemental Management Possible Strategies*

Options for *Temporary* Management Measures following a Severe Cold Stun:

- Season closures
- Adjust size or slot limits
- Adjust bag and trip limits
- Adaptive management



## *Cold Stun Management: Division Recommended Management*

Extend fishery closure through June 30 following cold stun (Option 1.b)

- Allows more fish a chance to spawn before subject to harvest

Adopt Cold Stun Adaptive Management Framework (Option 4)

- Adds “tools” to the cold stun Adaptive Management Framework
- Allows more robust response based on severity of cold stun

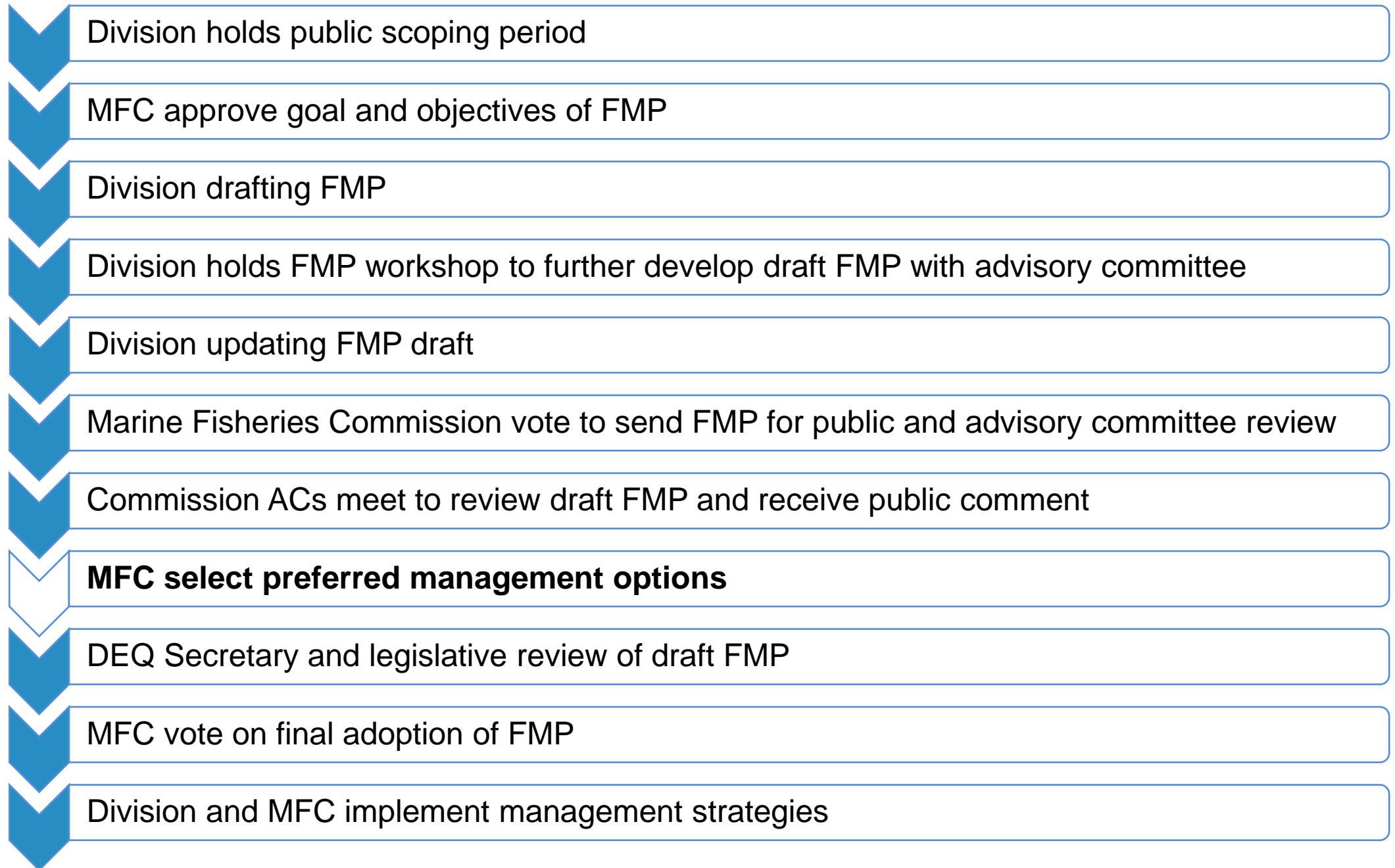
# *Division Recommended Management*

## ***Appendix 4: Cold Stun Management***

Option 1.b	Extend fishery closure through June 30 following cold stun
Option 4	Adopt Adaptive Management Framework



# *Amendment 1 Timeline*



# *Action Item: Vote on MFC preferred management options*

## **Appendix 2: Achieving Sustainable Harvest in the Spotted Seatrout Fishery**

*Recreational Management      Stop Net Fishery Management*  
*Commercial Management      Adaptive Management*

## **Appendix 3: Supplemental Management**

*Vessel Limits*

## **Appendix 4: Cold Stun Management**

*Season closures      Bag and Trip Limits*  
*Size Limits      Adaptive Management*



# Questions?

Lucas Pensinger

Email: [lucas.pensinger@deq.nc.gov](mailto:lucas.pensinger@deq.nc.gov)

Office: 252-515-5638

Melinda Lambert

Email: [melinda.lambert@deq.nc.gov](mailto:melinda.lambert@deq.nc.gov)

Office: 252-423-5266



# *Action Item: Vote on MFC preferred management options*

## **Appendix 2: Achieving Sustainable Harvest in the Spotted Seatrout Fishery**

*Recreational Management      Stop Net Fishery Management*  
*Commercial Management      Adaptive Management*

## **Appendix 3: Supplemental Management**

*Vessel Limits*

## **Appendix 4: Cold Stun Management**

*Season closures                      Bag and Trip Limits*  
*Size Limits                              Adaptive Management*

