

# Southern Flounder: Stock Status and Current Fishery Issues



Mel Bell  
Director,  
Office of Fisheries  
Management

Saltwater Recreational Fisheries  
Advisory Committee Meeting  
October 15, 2019

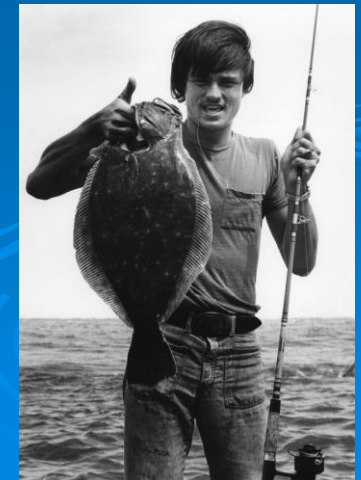
# SC Flounder Fishery

- Predominantly recreational landings
- Few directed commercial efforts
- Current regulations
  - 15" TL size limit
  - 10 fish/person/day
  - 20 fish/vessel/day
  - Trawler bag exemption



# SC Flounder Regulatory History

- Prior to 1990 - no size or bag limit
- 1990 - 12" TL size limit; no bag limit
- 1991 - 12" size; 20 fish bag (hook & line and gig)
- 2007- 14" size; 20 fish bag; 40 fish boat limit
- 2010 - Pawleys Island area: 10/person, 20 / boat and no gas-powered generators (sunset 2014)
- 2013 - 14" size; 15 fish bag; 30 / boat
- 2017 - 15" size; 10 fish bag; 20 / boat



# SC Commercial Fishery

## Total Landings 2009 - 2018

All gears - 18,835 lbs

- Gigging - 9,834 lbs (27 pers)
- Trawling - 8,482 lbs (103 pers)



Directed Fishery

## Total Value 2009 - 2018

All gears - \$55,646

- Gigging/Spear - \$35,964
- Trawling - \$17,873



By-catch Fishery



# SC Recreational Fishery

- Flounder ranks in top three for recreational species
- Significantly larger than commercial fishery (99%)
- Total annual landings 250 – 350 K lbs per year
- Predominantly hook & line and private boat-based
- Bag limit rarely achieved (avg < 2 fish/directed trip)
- Gig fishery smaller, but higher harvest per trip (< 4 fish)
- Gig fishermen 13% of surveyed license holders



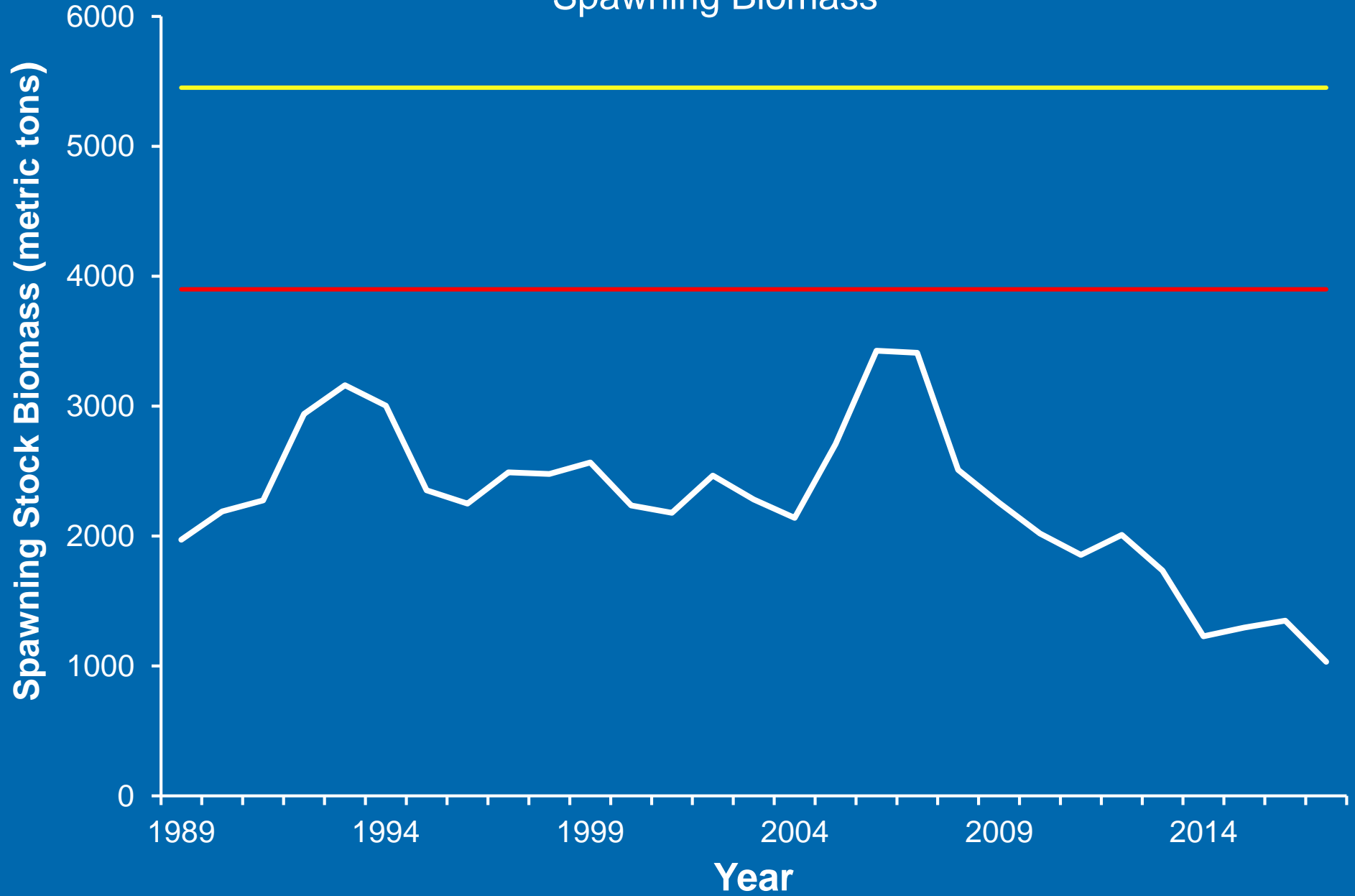
# Stock Assessment of Southern Flounder (*Paralichthys lethostigma*) in the South Atlantic, 1989–2017

A.M. Flowers, S.D. Allen, A.L. Markwith, and L.M. Lee (editors)

January 2019

# Overfished Status Determination

— Spawning Biomass



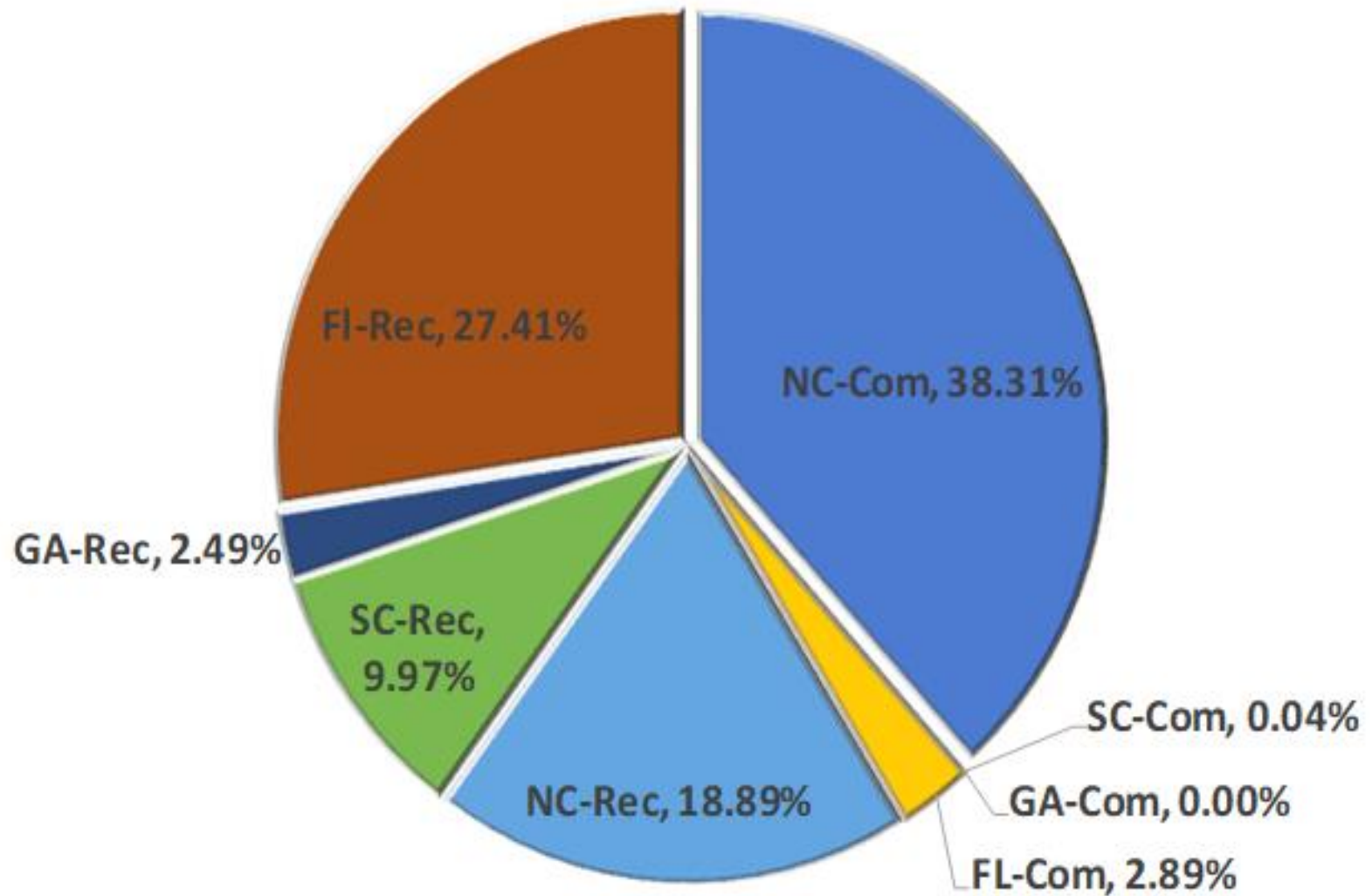
# Response to Current Stock Status

- **Regional (NC - SC - GA – FL) stock of summer flounder**
- **Regional stock assessment completed, peer-reviewed and approved for management use**
- **Regional problems identified (overfished and overfishing occurring)**
- **Regional solution necessary to correct these regional problems**



# Total Removals by State

Average 2008-2017



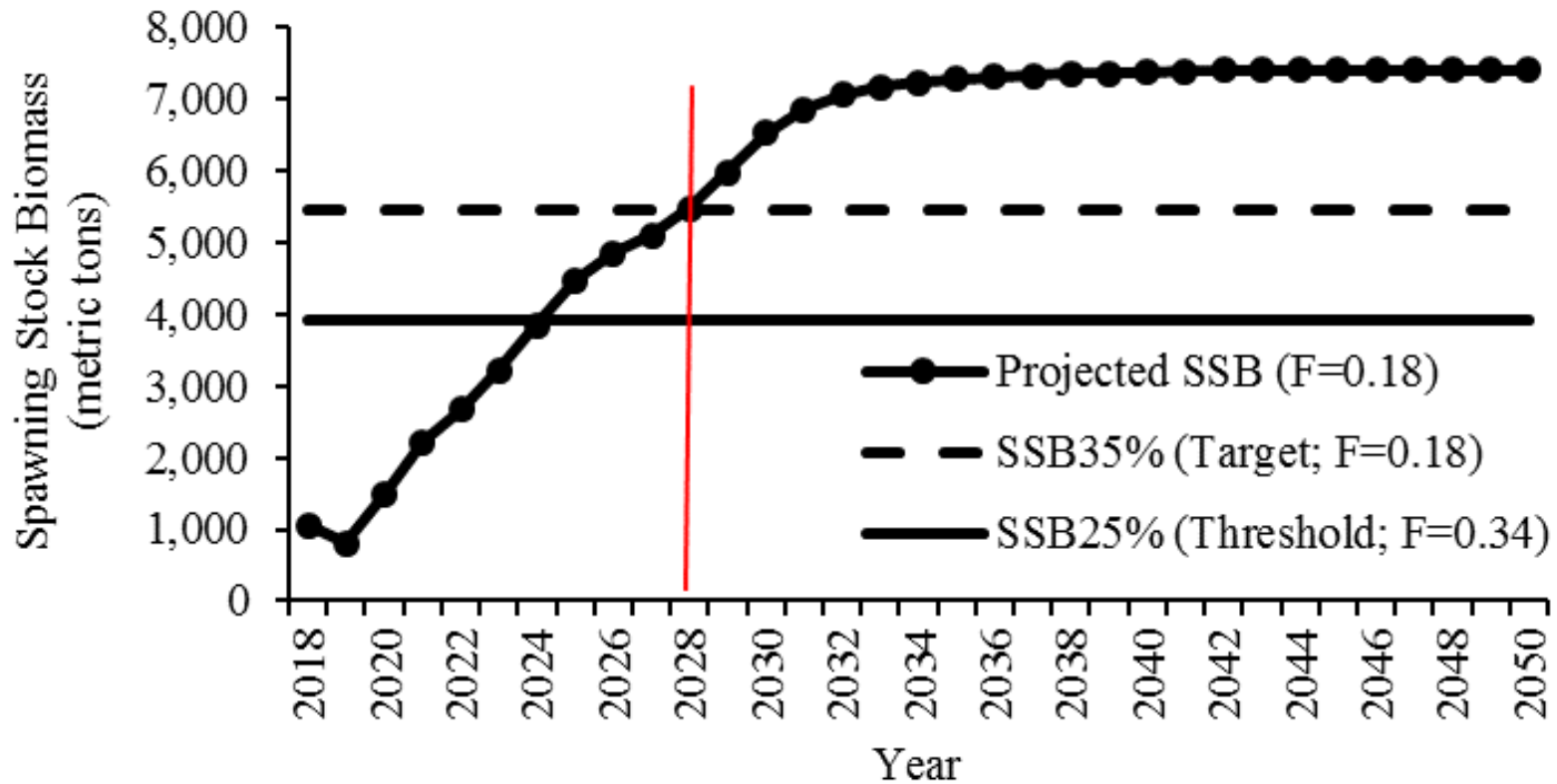
# Flounder Regulations By State

State	Size Limit	Bag Limit	Reference
North Carolina	15 in TL	4 fish per person per day/No boat limit	NCDMF
South Carolina	15 in TL	10 fish per person per day/ 20 fish per boat per day	SCDNR
Georgia	12 in TL	15 fish per person per day/ No boat limit	GADNR
Florida	12 in TL	10 fish per person per day/ No boat limit	FWC

# NC Actions from Amendment 2

- Commercial and recreational harvest seasons closed following the August 2019 NCMFC meeting
- Abbreviated 2019 commercial season reopened
- Newly adjusted commercial seasons in 2020
- Recreational hook & line and gig season closed until August 16, 2020; open until September 30, 2020
- 62% reduction in total removals in 2019
- 72% reduction in total removals in 2020

# Ending Overfished Status Through 72% Reduction in F



Coast-wide effort necessary

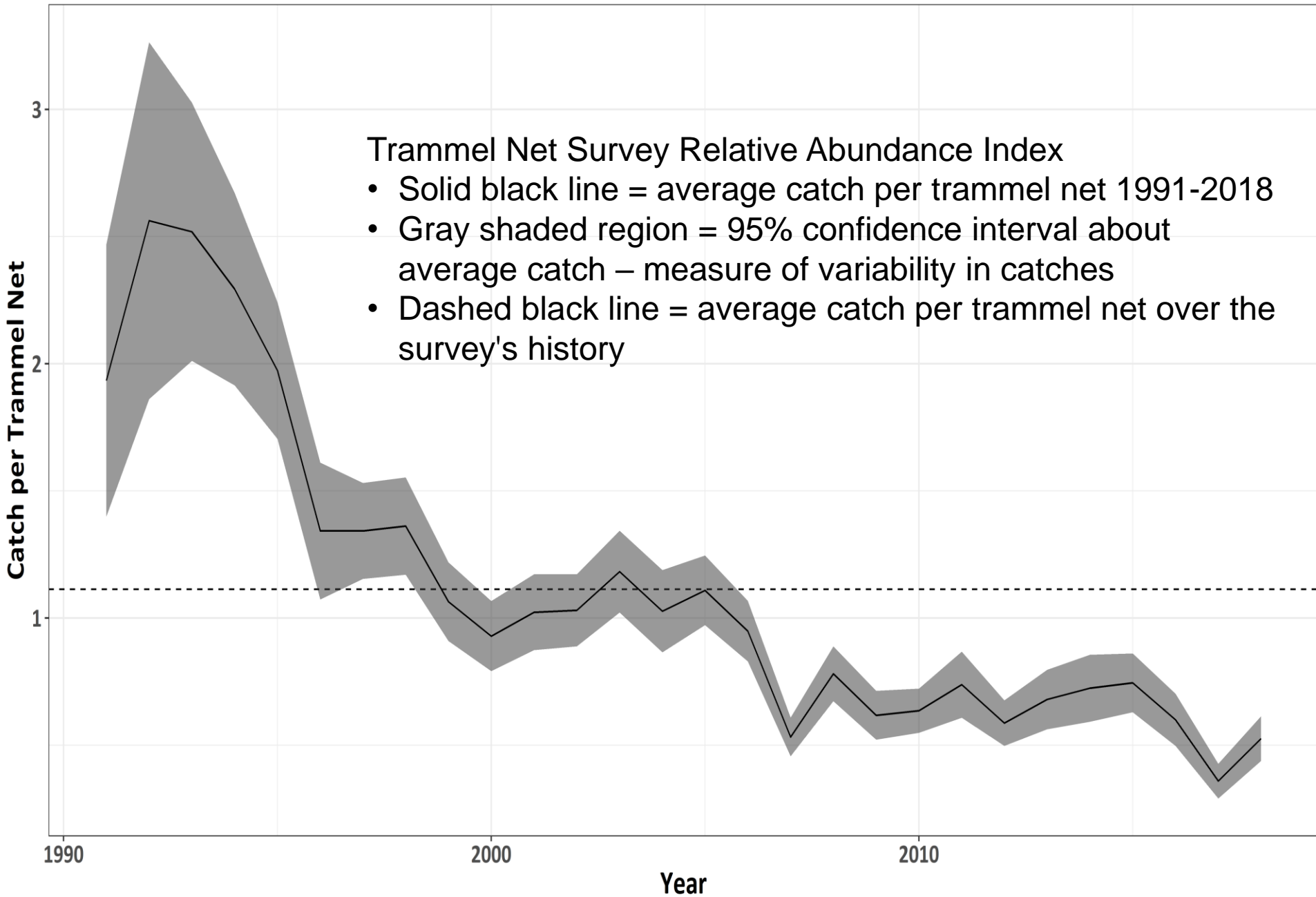
Current NC Goal

# SC Response to Stock Status

- Recent stock assessment and multiple long-term SC surveys indicate southern flounder depleted and overfished over the past 30 years
- Previous and current SC flounder fishery regulatory actions appear to have had minimal long-term impact on improving or maintaining southern flounder stock
- State and federal regulatory restrictions of the SC shrimp trawl fishery and others have contributed to the significant reduction of SC commercial flounder landings
- Any future meaningful reductions in SC southern flounder landings will need to come from the recreational fishery

# Southern Flounder

(Jan - Dec)





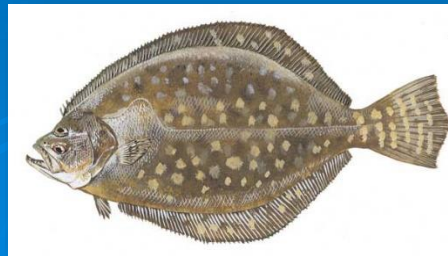
# Regulatory Tools for Reducing F

- Lower bag limit
- Increase size limit
- Establish a fishery season (commercial and/or recreational)
- Time/area-based harvest restrictions
- Gear-based harvest restrictions
- Combination of measures



# Possible Path Forward

- Issues brought out in the regional assessment as well as SC long-term data require further attention
- DNR-MRD will reach out to SC constituents to inform them of the issues and seek input
- DNR-MRD will further analyze SC data and explore possible options to rebuild southern flounder stock and report back to the MAC
- DNR-MRD will continue to work with state fisheries partners in developing a multi-state approach to monitoring and rebuilding the regional flounder stock



# Questions / Discussion

