



**NOAA  
FISHERIES**

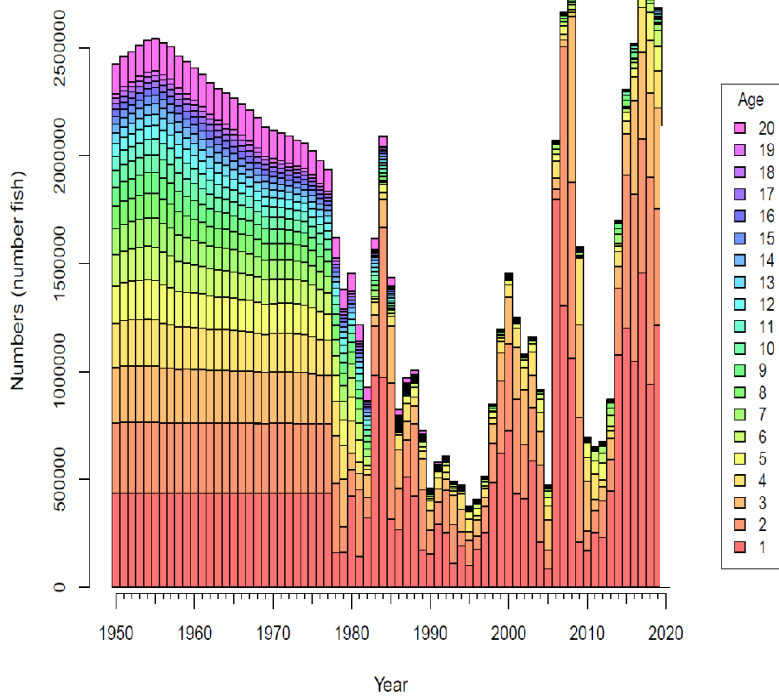
**SERO**

# South Atlantic Red Snapper

Snapper-Grouper Committee  
September 13, 2022

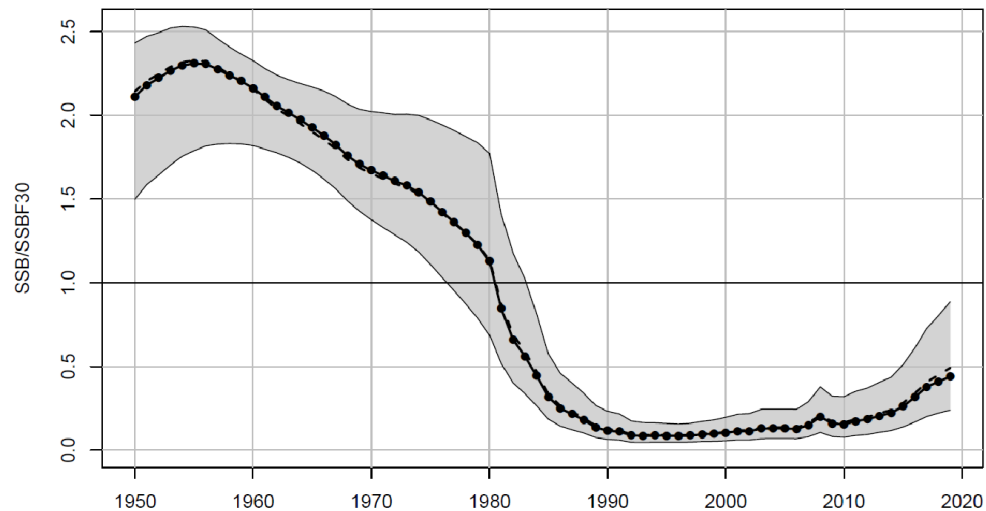
Andy Strelcheck  
Regional Administrator  
NOAA Fisheries SERO

# Success: Stock is Rebuilding

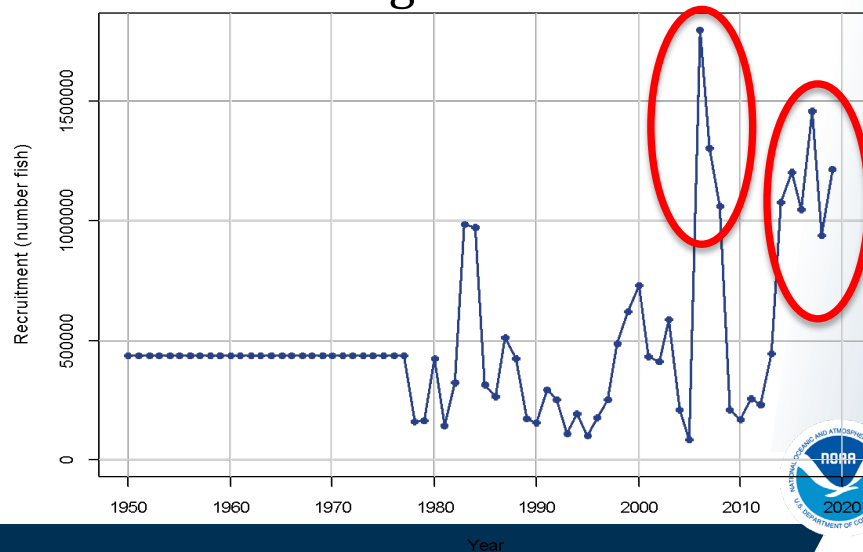


Abundance (numbers of fish) at high levels, but driven by age-1 recruitment

## Spawning Stock Biomass (fecundity) below rebuilt level



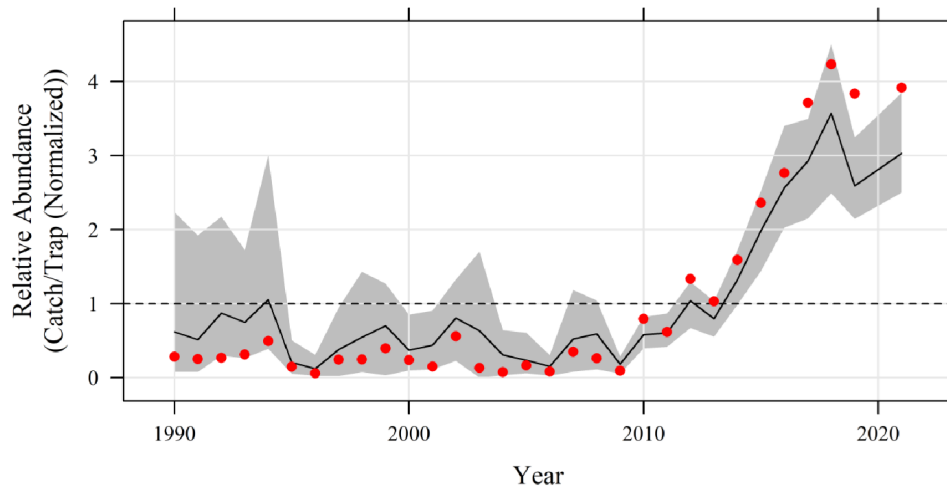
## Recent High Recruitment



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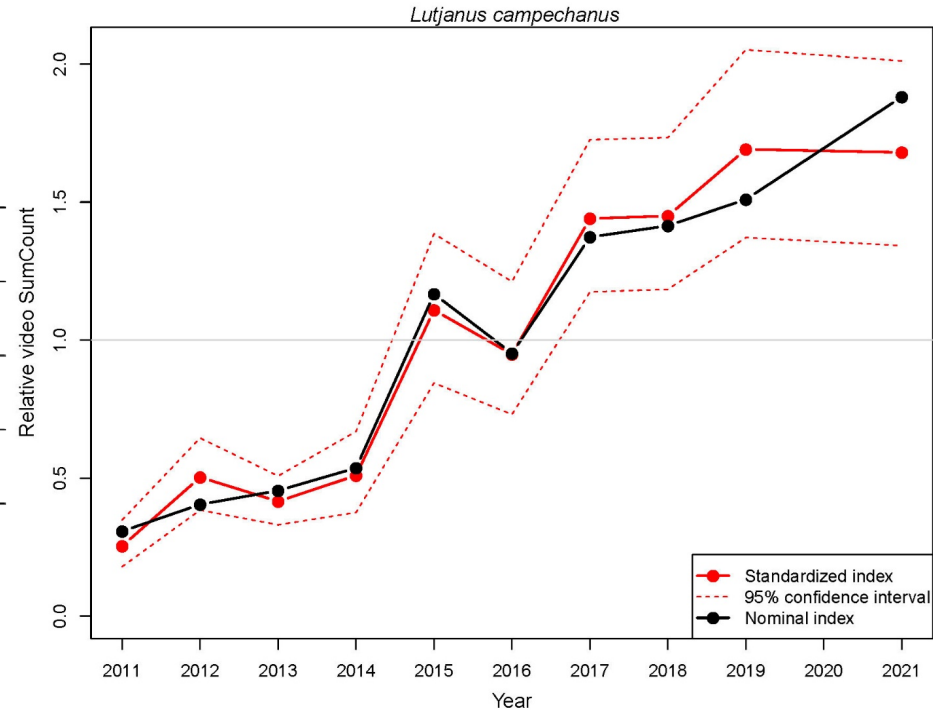
# Good News: Indices Are Increasing

## Fishery-independent Trap Survey



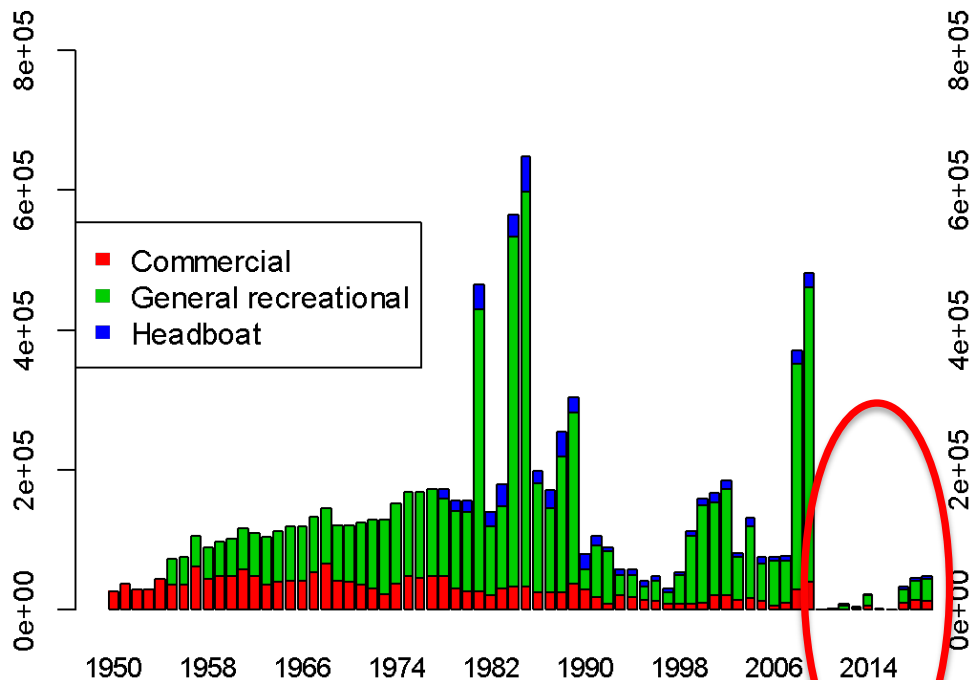
Nominal (red dot) and standardized (black line)

## Fishery-independent Video Survey

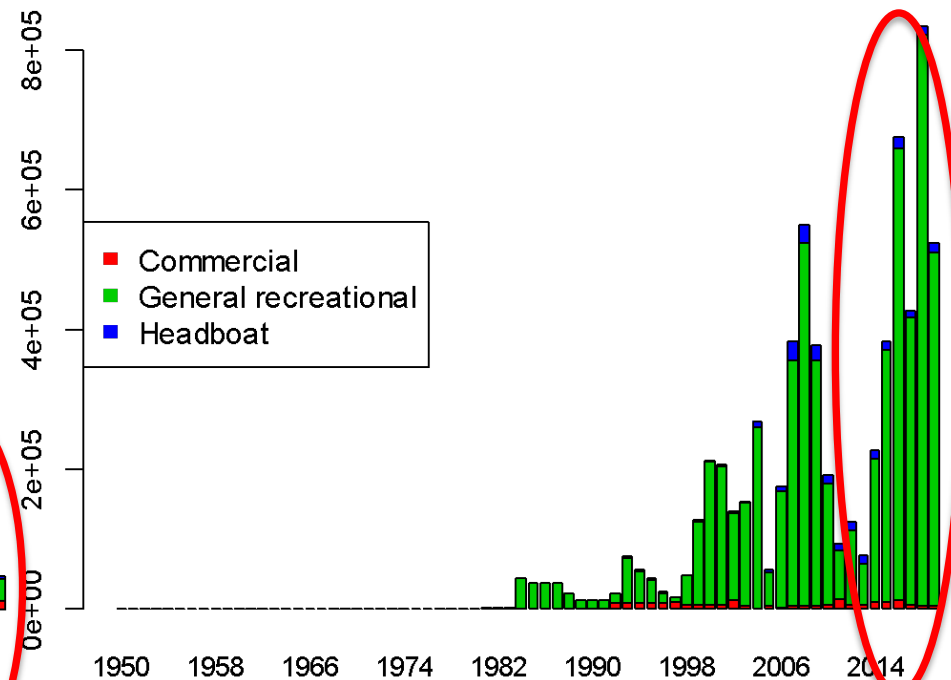


# Challenge: Low Landings and High Discards

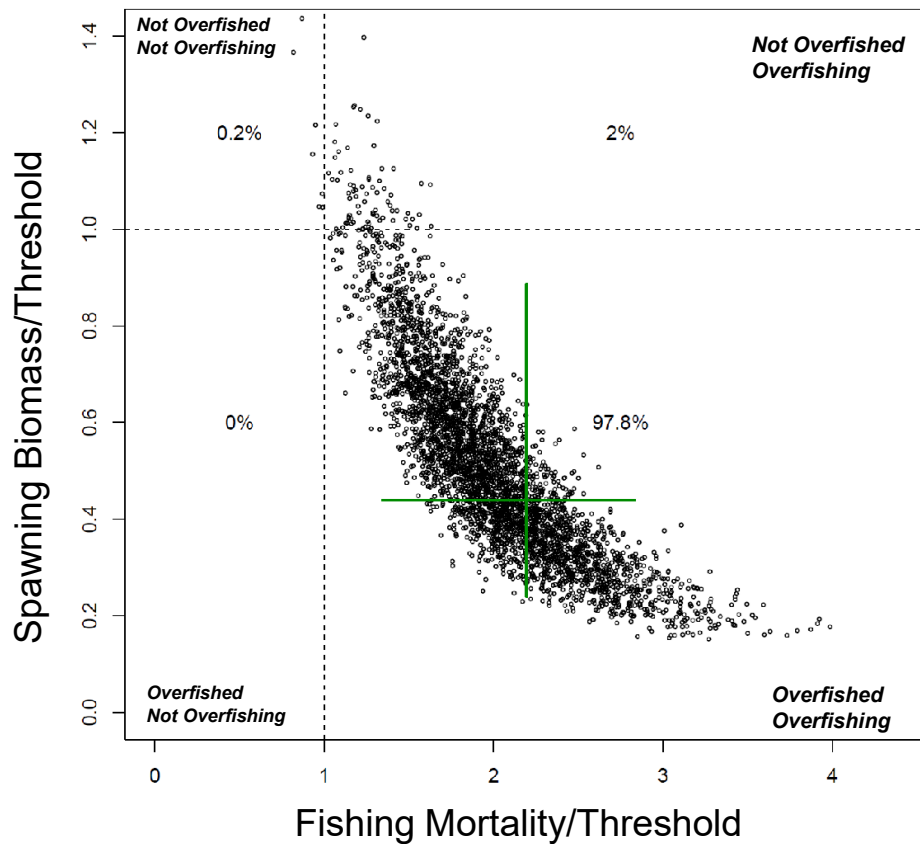
Landings in numbers (fish)



Dead discards in numbers (fish)



# And there is Scientific Uncertainty



Model Uncertainty

Data Uncertainty:

- Commercial Discards
- Recreational Discards

Population Dynamic Uncertainty:

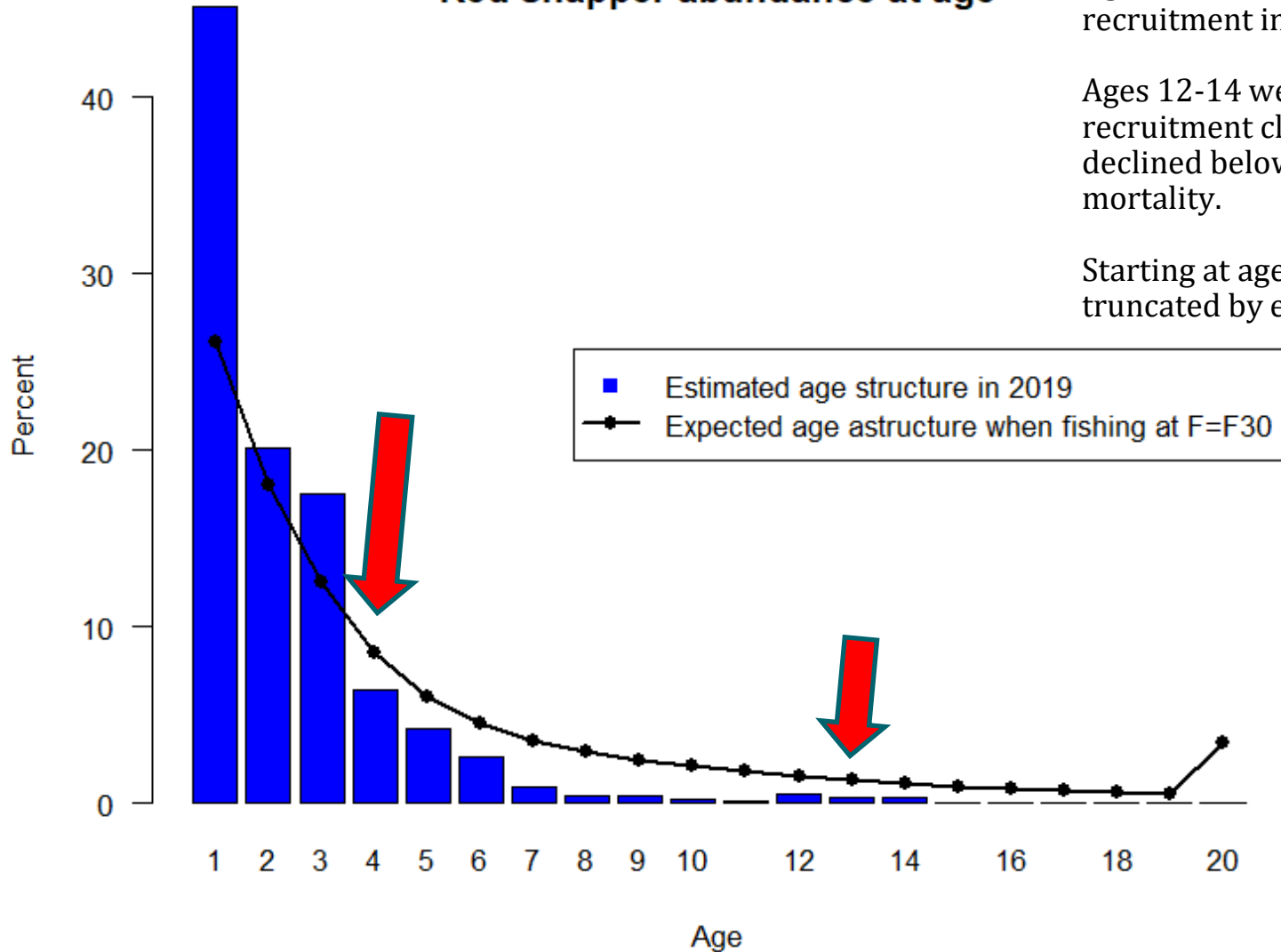
- Sources of Recruitment
- Environmental Changes

14 other sensitivity runs – all concluded stock was overfished; 1 hypothetical run with low discards indicated overfishing was not occurring



# So How Can the Stock be Undergoing Overfishing?

**Red snapper abundance at age**



Ages 1-3 indicate above target recruitment in 2016-2018.

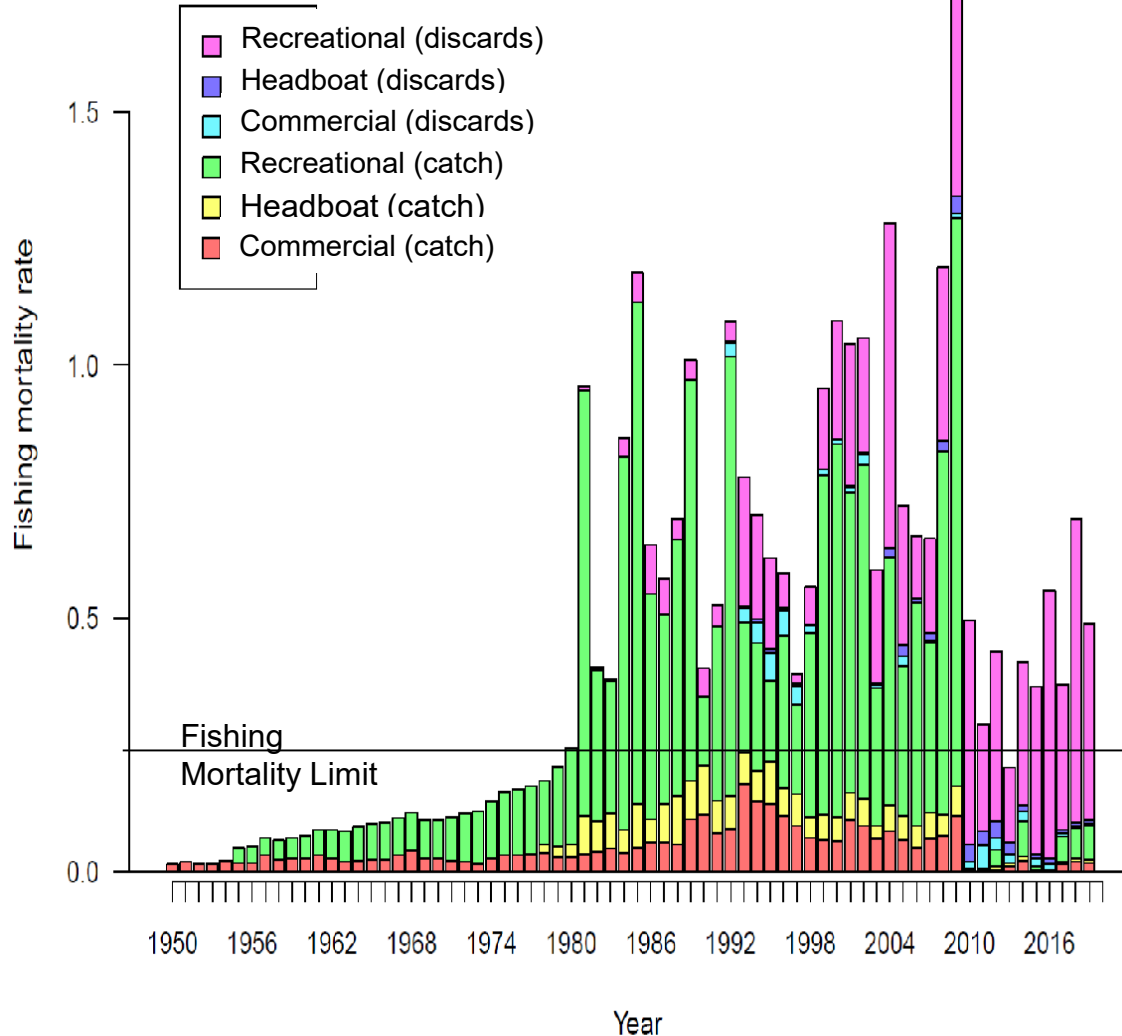
Ages 12-14 were above average recruitment classes and have since declined below target due to high mortality.

Starting at age 4, age structure becomes truncated by excessive mortality.



# Fishing Mortality Rate Has Declined But Remains Above Limit

Majority of mortality from recreational discards



# Legal requirements and NS guidance

- Implement regulations to end overfishing immediately and rebuild the stock
- Evaluate the cause of overfishing and address the issue that caused the overfishing
- Set catch limits at a level that prevents overfishing and does not exceed the SSC's ABC
- Minimize bycatch and bycatch mortality to the extent practicable





# Moving forward

Will preferred approach achieve management goals and legal requirements?

- Reducing the ABC will mean a shorter commercial and recreational seasons
- Gear modifications will reduce discards and discard mortality, but by themselves, likely won't be sufficient
- We need to explore new approaches to reduce discards and increase opportunities in the fishery as the stock rebuilds



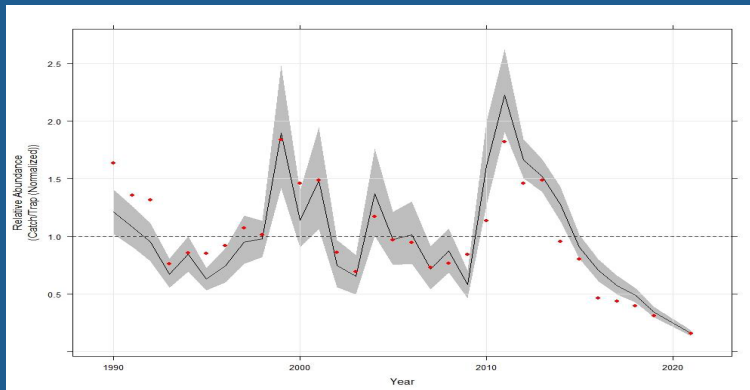
# And We Should Keep in Mind that this is Bigger than Red Snapper

- Multi-species snapper grouper fishery
- High levels of fishing effort; overcapitalization
- Modern electronics
- Open access sectors

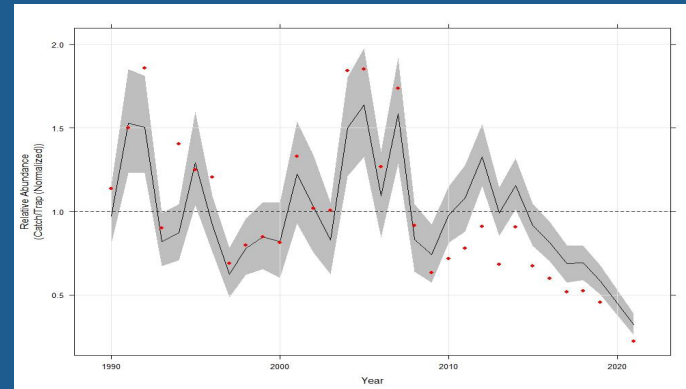


# Abundance is declining for many other Snapper-Grouper species

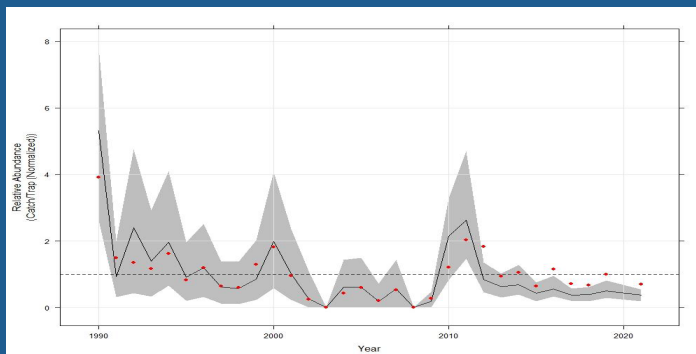
black sea bass



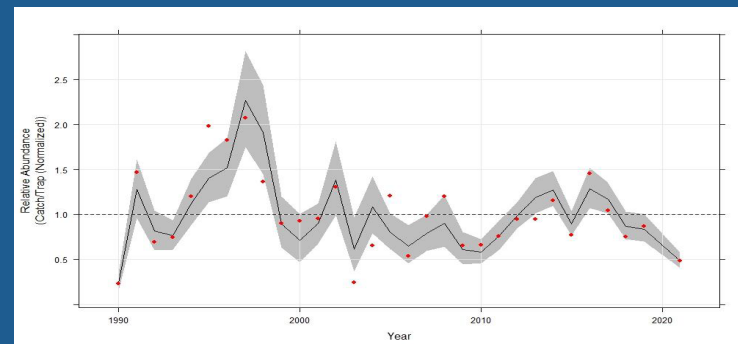
red porgy



gag



gray triggerfish



## Southeast Reef Fish Survey

# Options Going Forward: Snapper-Grouper

- Limit Catch – Adjust Catch Levels
- Technological Solutions to Reduce Encounters and Discard Mortality
- Limit Effort
- Limit Where/When Fishing Occurs
- A combination of all of these



# Options Going Forward: Red Snapper

## Short-term

- Close fishery to address overfishing
- Complete Reg Amendment 35 quickly

## Mid-term

- Implement further actions to reduce discards
- Pilot studies/exempted fishing permits

## Longer-term

- SA Red Snapper Count results + next assessment
- New science: Expanded observer coverage + FWC effort count
- Management Strategy Evaluation results





Thank you

