



COASTAL RESOURCES DIVISION

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COMMISSIONER

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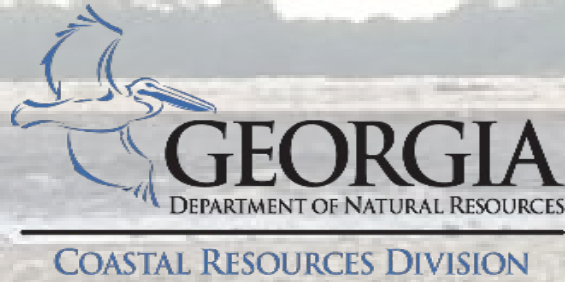
Finfish Advisory Panel

December 3, 2025 – 6:00PM-8:00PM

Arrival time 5:45PM

Shipman Building, CRH Brunswick

- 6:00 Welcome
- 6:05 Approve
- Agenda
 - Draft November 2024 Finfish AP Meeting Summary
- 6:10 Red Snapper Exempted Fishing Permit Request
<https://coastalgadnr.org/News/EFP251113>
- 6:25 Georgia Recreational Data Collection
- ACCSP Catch Card Pilot Study
 - For-Hire At-Sea Observer Project
 - State-funded APAIS Assignments Increase
 - Georgia Reef Fish Endorsement
- 6:45 ASMFC Red Drum FMP Amendment 2 Addendum II Update & Georgia Next Steps
<https://asmfc.org/news/press-releases/asmfc-sciaenids-board-approves-red-drum-addendum-ii/>
https://asmfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/SciaenidsBoardPresentations_October2025.pdf
<https://asmfc.org/resources/management-actions/draft-addendum-ii-to-amendment-2-to-the-interstate-fishery-management-plan-for-red-drum-for-public-comment/>
- 7:50 Other Business
- 8:00 Adjourn



Red Drum Update

Finfish Advisory Panel Meeting
December 3, 2025

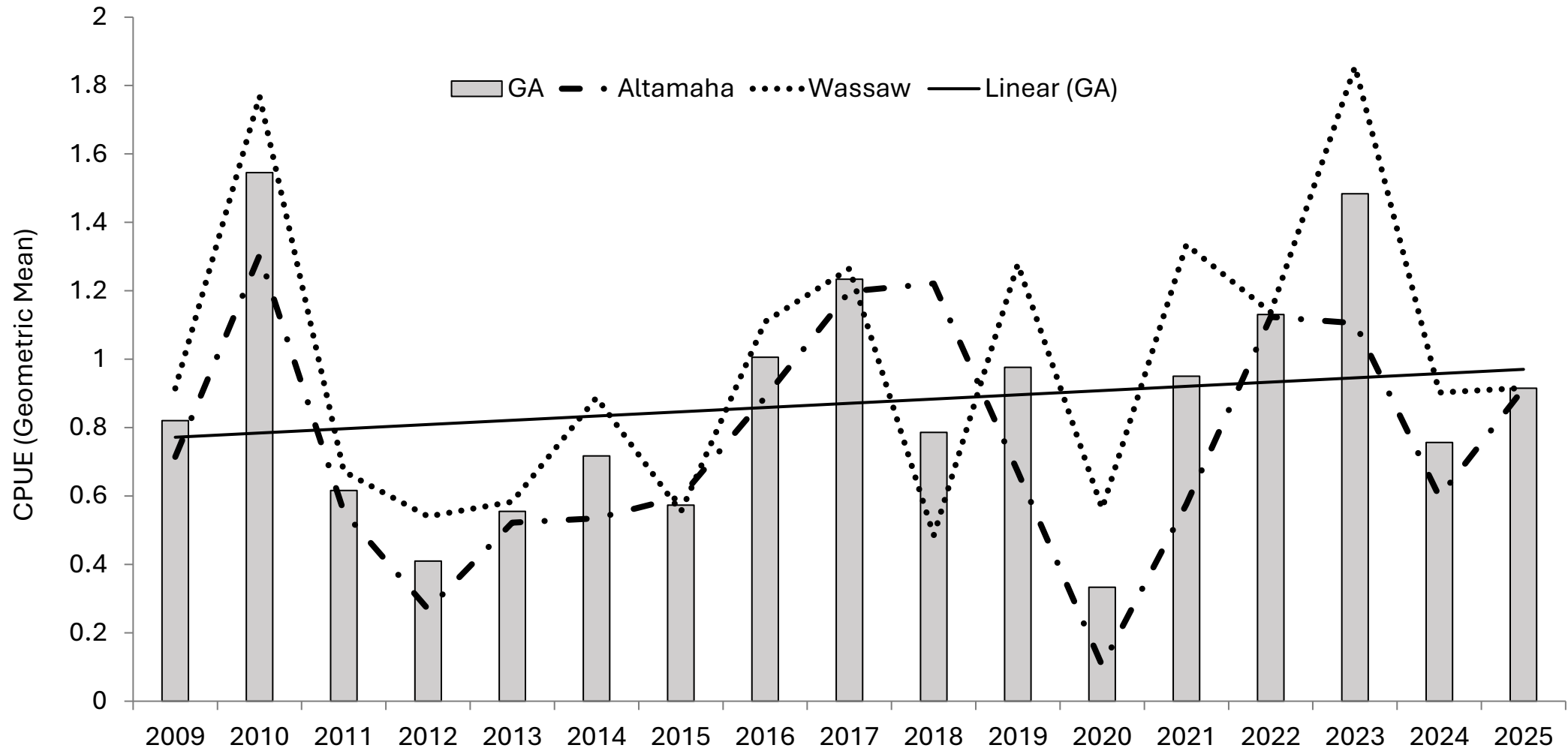
Mission Statement:

To balance coastal development and protection of the coast's natural assets, socio-cultural heritage and recreational resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

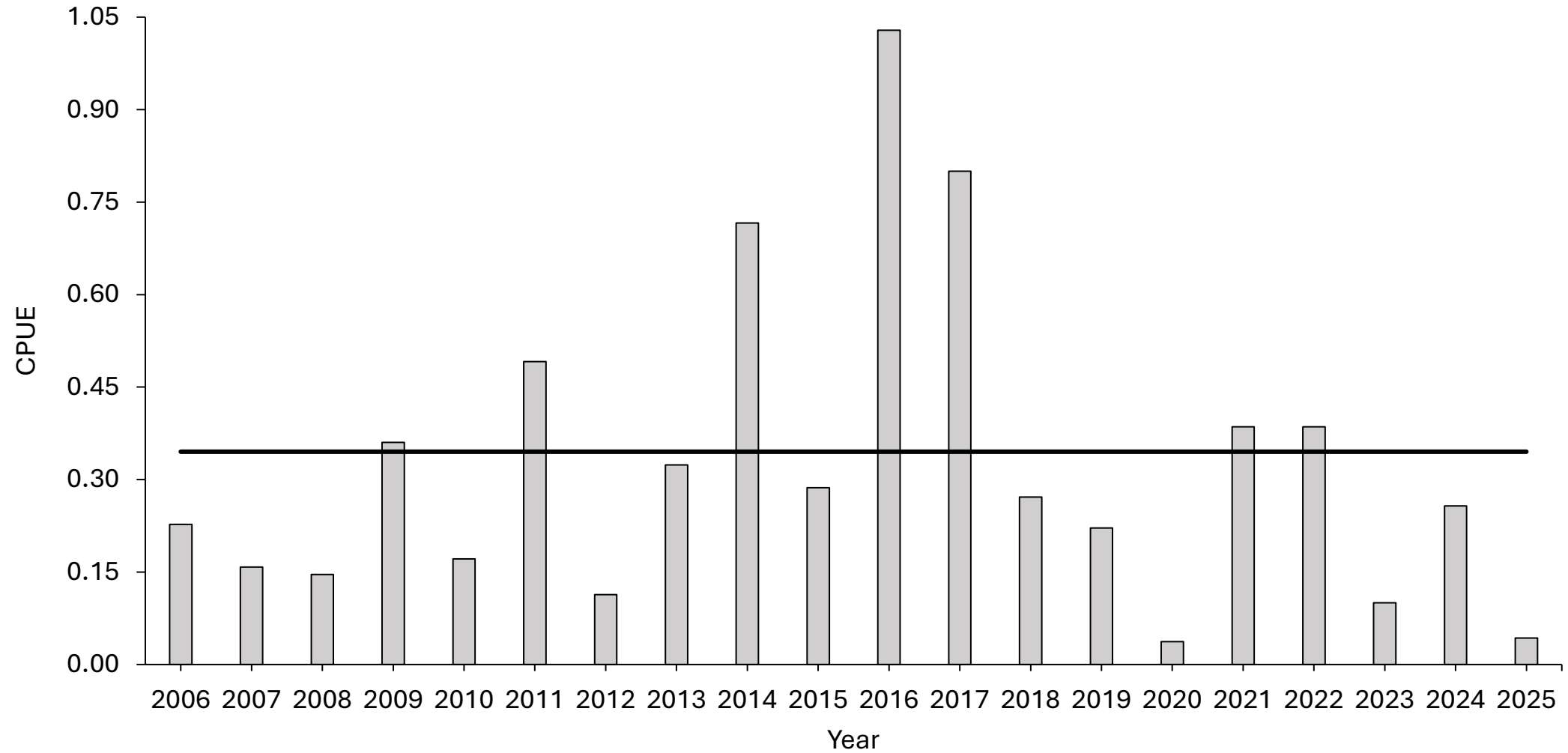
2025 Georgia Data Updates



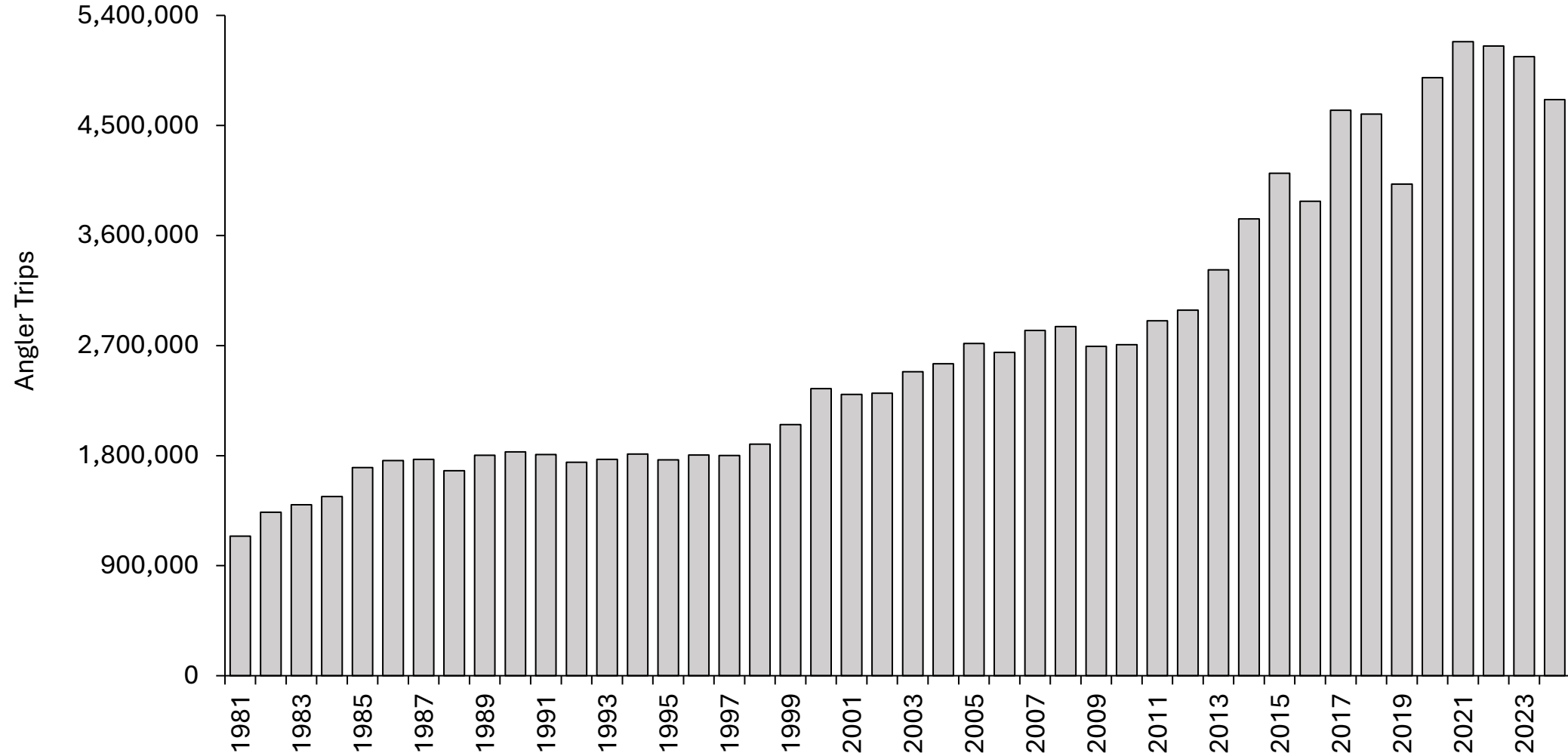
GA MSPHS Gillnet Survey



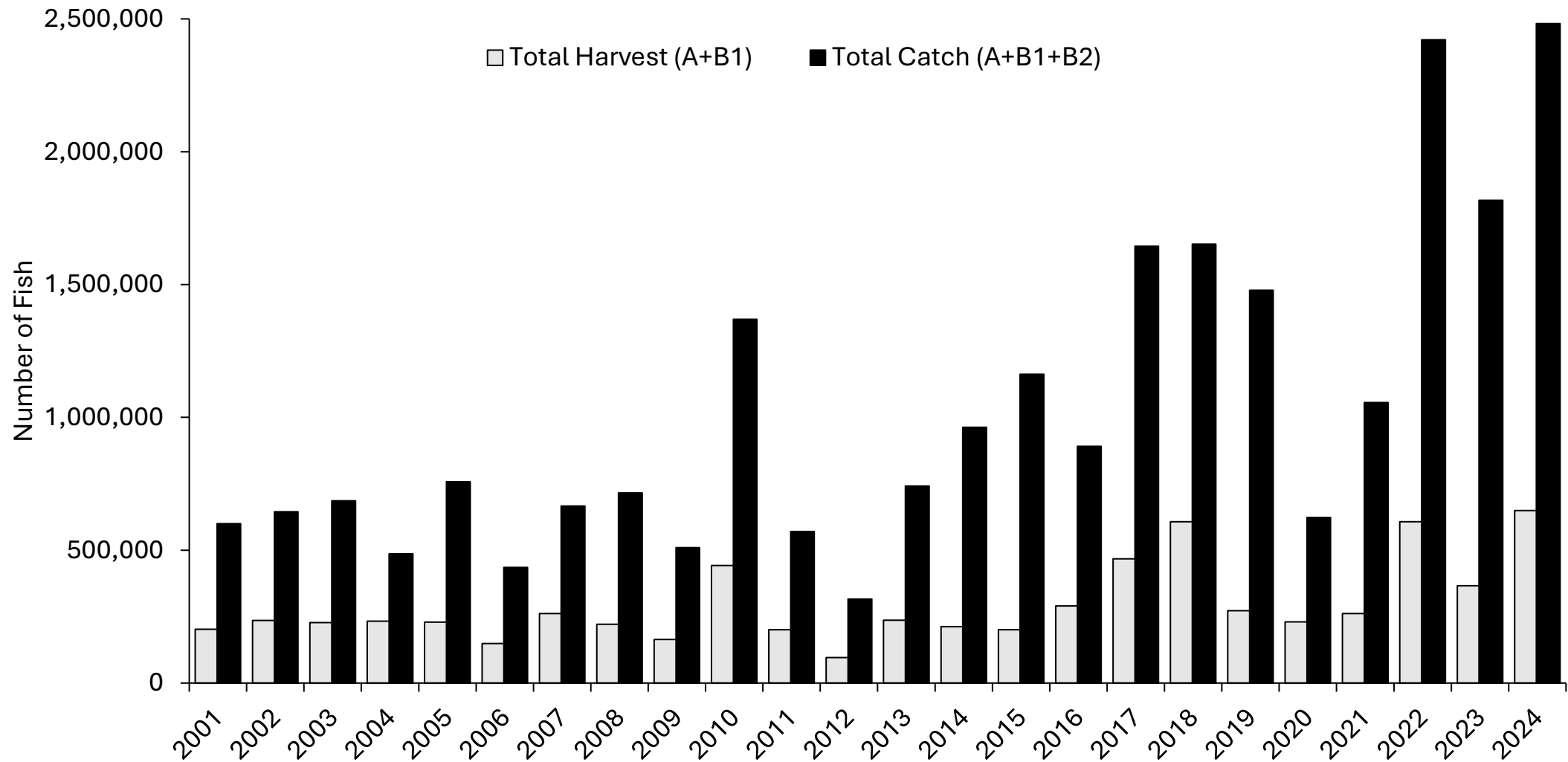
GA Coastal Longline Survey



MRIP Effort



MRIP Landings

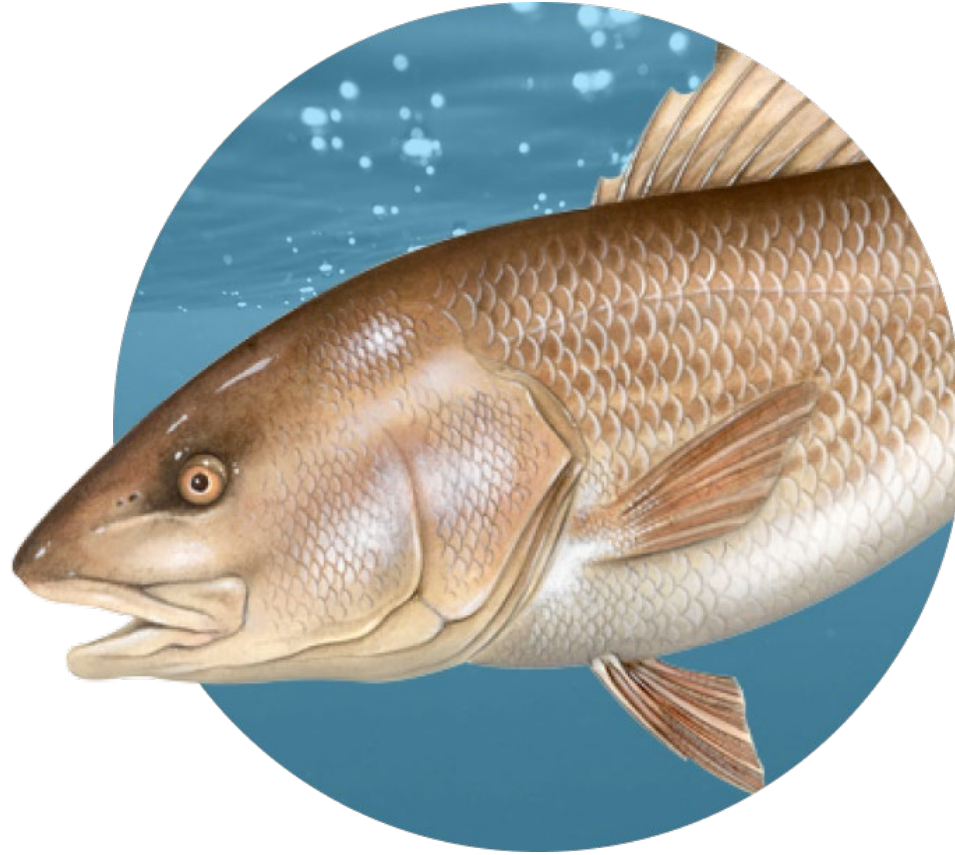


Outside Data

We have been made aware of erroneous Red Drum information and data circulating among the public in the past few weeks

- This information is incorrect and misleading
- Important points
 - CRD does not release raw data to the public
 - Survey information for Red Drum are available in a variety of places including CRD status and stock assessment reports on CRD, SEDAR, and ASMFC websites
 - Real fisheries data is always “noisy”
 - Surveys have had low catch years, but never “0” catch
 - There is no draft CRD Addendum II compliance plan yet

Red Drum Management Activities



Red Drum Management

Red Drum are managed regionally by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

- Compact among states along the Atlantic Coast
- Georgia is a participant
 - Supply data and expertise to assessments and management
- Compelled to follow fishery management plans developed by ASMFC

ASMFC Fall 2024 stock assessment :

- Stock is **overfished** and **overfishing** is occurring
 - Assessment passed peer review
 - Accepted by ASMFC Sciaenids Board for management
 - Board requested additional information to inform management
- **Overfishing:** fish harvested faster than they can reproduce
- **Overfished:** fish stock is depleted to a level where its ability to replenish itself has been compromised



Management Response

- Sciaenids Board voted to revise Amendment 2 to the Red Drum FMP
 - Revised Amendment 2 goals:
 - Account for new assessment projections
 - Allow flexibility for regulation changes
 - Not unfairly punish states that have already taken management measures
- As part of the Southern Stock, Georgia must make changes to reduce fishing mortality levels
 - At minimum reductions must meet F30% threshold
 - Multiple options available to attain reduction

Fishery Management Plan Changes Over Time

- 1984 – Red Drum jointly managed between ASMFC and SAFMC
 - Main purpose: control growth overfishing and prevent recruitment overfishing
 - Lacked information on relative abundance for juveniles and adults
- 1991 – Amendment 1
 - Assessment conducted in 1990 determined stock was overfished → SSBR ratio was 2-3%
 - Defined OY → SSBR $\geq 30\%$; 40% was considered too stringent at the time
 - Fishing rate would need to be reduced to allow for 30% escapement
 - Required measures implemented by states must attain an SSBR $> 10\%$
- 1998 – SAFMC adopted new OY and Overfishing definitions
 - OY = 40% SPR
 - Overfishing if below 30% SPR, with a threshold of 10% SPR
- 1999 – Red Drum shifted to ASMFC
- 2002 - Amendment 2
 - Overfishing still defined when SPR is below 30%, target fishing rate should allow for 40% SPR
 - SPR values had increased from 2-3% to 15-18%; Commission recognized tighter restrictions were needed
 - Focus continued to be on escapement rate

Current Red Drum Management

- **Spawning Potential Ratio (SPR):** reproductive capacity of a fish stock under fishing pressure compared to its unfished potential
- Current management target of 40% SPR with an overfished threshold of 30% SPR
- Management based on static SPR targets identified in 2002 FMP Amendment 2:
 - Assessment directly estimated an SPR value attained by regulations
 - GA 14-23", 5 fish bag = SPR value of 42%
- The 2024 stock assessment used new methodology and could not reproduce these prior estimates
 - Instead estimated population projection estimates of SPR over time
 - Determined reduction of **fishing mortality (F)** needed to achieve target SPR levels
 - Based on various recruitment, selectivity, effort assumptions across the region
 - Change in methodology from 2004 to 2024 necessitated change in management approach

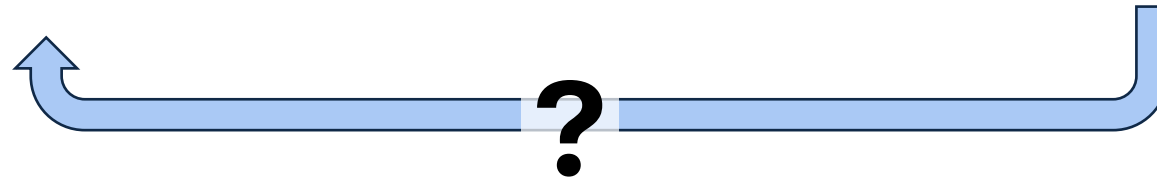
Red Drum Management Approaches

2002-Current

Regulations → Static SPR

2025+

Regulations → Reduction in F → Long-term dynamic SPR projections



Next steps

- South Carolina and Georgia will submit proposals by April 1, 2026 with regulatory options that, at minimum, achieve the 14.4% reduction associated with $F_{30\%}$
- The Board will review South Carolina and Georgia's proposals at its May 2026 meeting. The implementation date for all new measures for Maryland, PRFC, South Carolina, and Georgia is September 1, 2026
- In the meantime, CRD will seek public input for new regulations
 - “Straw poll” at September public meeting inconclusive
 - Will attempt to narrow options down to one or a few based on reduction level and input
 - Can submit potential options to the Sciaenids Board for approval
- After Sciaenids Board approval, will seek approval by DNR Board, then implementation

Georgia Regulations



Georgia Regulation History

Year	Regulation
1957	Prohibition of the use of gill nets in Georgia's estuarine waters (except for shad and diamondback terrapin)
1986	14-inch minimum-size and only 2 fish over 32-inches
1989	Year-round season; 14-inch minimum-size, 10 fish daily creel and only 2 fish over 32 inches
1989	Exclusive Economic Zone (3-200 miles) closed to harvest of Red Drum
1991	Year-round season; 14-inch minimum-size, 5 fish daily creel and only 1 fish over 27 inches
1992	Possession limit of 5 fish
1993	Year-round season; 14-27 inch slot; 5 fish daily creel and 5 fish possession limit
2002	Year-round season; 14-23 inch slot; 5 fish daily creel and 5 fish possession limit
2013	State implements game fish status

Where We Were in 2022

- In 2022 GA CRD investigated changes to Red Drum regulations in response to poor recruitment years and public comments
- Held a series of public town halls to explore options
- Proposed a 3 fish bag, 9 fish vessel limit, no captain retention for charters
 - Could not evaluate length limits at the time
- Chose to table any changes due to potential results of upcoming ASMFC Benchmark Stock Assessment
 - Could have potential changes in stock status
 - Could provide tools for evaluating length limits

Other State Regulations

South Carolina, Georgia, and east coast of Florida are in the Southern Stock

- South Carolina
 - Slot Limit: Not less than 15" no more than 23" total length
 - Daily Bag Limit: 2 fish per person per day; 6 fish per vessel limit
 - Changes being proposed (6 options):
 - 1 or 2 fish per day; 2-6 fish vessel limit
 - 17-19" min – 23-25" max (6-7" slot width)
- Florida
 - Changed prior to assessment
 - NE FL
 - Slot Limit: Not less than 18" no more than 27" total length
 - Daily Bag Limit: 1 fish per person per day; 4 fish per vessel limit
 - Indian River Lagoon
 - Catch and Release only

Reduction Levels

- Stock assessment projections determined reductions in fishing mortality needed to achieve SSB levels

Projected Fishing Mortality	Catch Reduction Need from 2019-2021 Average F Catch	Years to SSB Threshold (9,917 mt)	Years to SSB Target (13,250 mt)
F _{40%}	28.1%	5	32
F _{35%}	21.4%	6	NA
F _{30%}	14.4%	23	NA

Options

Potential Regulation Options

Change regulations to meet fishing mortality reduction targets

- $F_{30\%} = -14.4\%$
- $F_{35\%} = -21.4\%$
- $F_{40\%} = -28.1\%$



- Recommend a target of $F_{35\%}$ or higher reduction:
 - More precautionary approach for uncertainty in the fishery
 - Uncertainty in how the fishery will respond
 - Larger buffer given increasing fishing effort
 - Greater potential for regional population recovery
 - Less likely to have to make additional changes in the near future based on new assessments

Conclusion

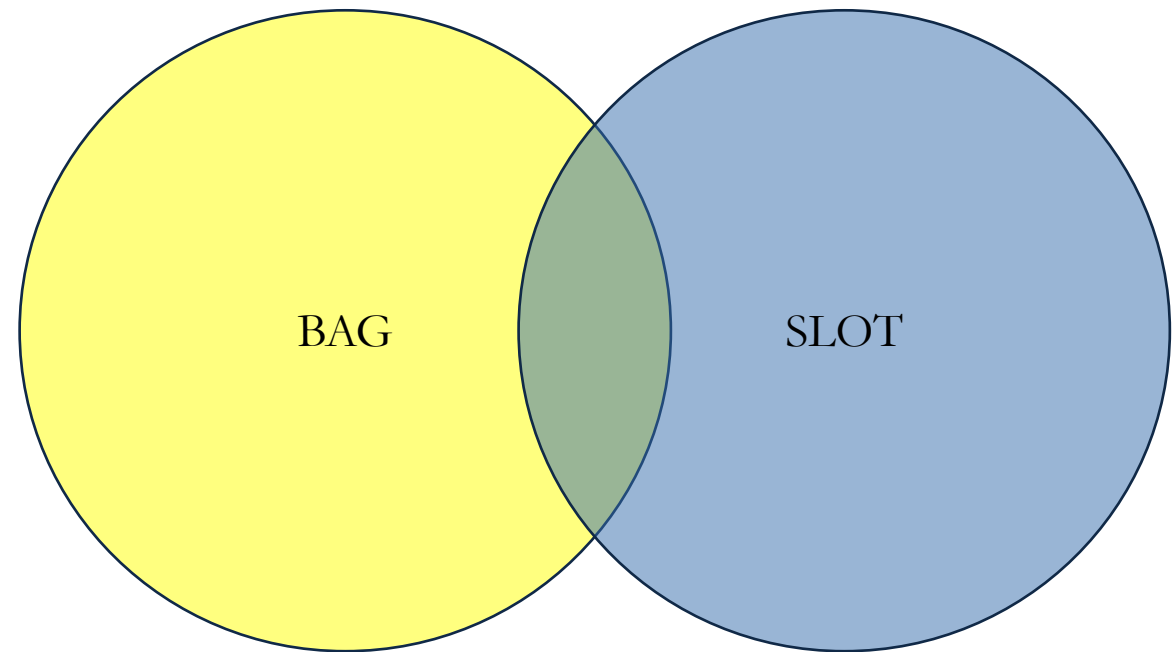
GA needs to make regulation changes in order to achieve reductions in F

- Prefer a minimum reduction in F to achieve at least an SPR of 35%
- New regulations could exceed 40% SPR
- Multiple regulation options exist to satisfy requirements
 - Bag
 - Slot
 - Bag + Slot
- Need public input for guidance, although ultimate decision will depend on various biological, social, and political factors

Options

Potential Regulation Options

- Bag only
 - Daily limit
 - Vessel limit
- Slot only
 - Raise lower limit
 - Maintain or change upper limit
 - Cannot retain Red Drum >27" TL - ASMFC
- Bag/Slot Combinations
- No charter captain retention
 - Beneficial, but minimal reduction
- Gear and handling practices
 - Beneficial, but not measurable



Regulations

- Bag only

Proposed Bag	Proposed Vessel	Percent Reduction
4	No Vessel	-6.2%
4	12	-6.2%
4	8	-7.1%
3	No Vessel	-12.5%
3	9	-12.5%
3	6	-14.3%
2	No Vessel	-21.7%
2	9	-21.7%
2	6	-21.7%
2	4	-23.9%

- Slot only

	Slot Only
15-23	-12.7%
15-24	-11.4%
15-25	-11.2%
15-26	-10.5%
15-27	-10.1%
16-23	-29.5%
16-24	-27.7%
16-25	-27.4%
16-26	-26.5%
16-27	-25.9%
18-27	-55.3%

*Cannot retain Red Drum >27" TL - ASMFC

- New reduction estimates not comparable to 2022 estimates

Regulations – 3 Fish Bag

Potential Options

- Slot and bag
 - F30% = -14.4%
 - F35% = -21.4%
 - F40% = -28.1%

3/ No Vessel		Lower				
		14	15	16	17	18
Upper	23	-16.7%	-23.6%	-38.3%	-52.6%	-65.2%
	24	-14.9%	-22.5%	-36.7%	-50.6%	-63.0%
	25	-14.6%	-22.3%	-36.5%	-50.3%	-62.6%
	26	-13.8%	-21.7%	-35.7%	-49.4%	-61.6%
	27	-13.2%	-21.4%	-35.2%	-48.8%	-60.9%

3/ 9 Vessel		Lower				
		14	15	16	17	18
Upper	23	-16.7%	-23.6%	-38.3%	-52.6%	-65.2%
	24	-15.0%	-22.5%	-36.7%	-50.7%	-63.0%
	25	-14.6%	-22.3%	-36.5%	-50.3%	-62.6%
	26	-13.8%	-21.7%	-35.7%	-49.4%	-61.6%
	27	-13.2%	-21.4%	-35.2%	-48.8%	-60.9%

3/ 6 Vessel		Lower				
		14	15	16	17	18
Upper	23	-18.4%	-25.2%	-39.6%	-53.5%	-65.9%
	24	-16.7%	-24.0%	-38.0%	-51.6%	-63.8%
	25	-16.3%	-23.8%	-37.7%	-51.3%	-63.4%
	26	-15.5%	-23.3%	-37.0%	-50.4%	-62.4%
	27	-14.9%	-22.9%	-36.5%	-49.8%	-61.7%

Regulations – 2 Fish Bag

Potential Options

- Slot and bag
 - F30% = -14.4%
 - F35% = -21.4%
 - F40% = -28.1%

2/ No Vessel		Lower				
		14	15	16	17	18
Upper	23	-25.4%	-31.6%	-44.8%	-57.6%	-68.9%
	24	-23.9%	-30.6%	-43.4%	-55.8%	-66.9%
	25	-23.6%	-30.4%	-43.1%	-55.5%	-66.5%
	26	-22.8%	-29.9%	-42.4%	-54.7%	-65.6%
	27	-22.3%	-29.6%	-42.0%	-54.1%	-65.0%

2/ 6 Vessel		Lower				
		14	15	16	17	18
Upper	23	-25.5%	-31.6%	-44.8%	-57.6%	-68.9%
	24	-23.9%	-30.6%	-43.4%	-55.8%	-66.9%
	25	-23.6%	-30.4%	-43.1%	-55.5%	-66.6%
	26	-22.8%	-29.9%	-42.5%	-54.7%	-65.6%
	27	-22.3%	-29.6%	-42.0%	-54.2%	-65.0%

2/ 4 Vessel		Lower				
		14	15	16	17	18
Upper	23	-27.5%	-33.5%	-46.4%	-58.7%	-69.7%
	24	-26.0%	-32.5%	-45.0%	-57.1%	-67.8%
	25	-25.7%	-32.4%	-44.7%	-56.8%	-67.5%
	26	-25.0%	-31.9%	-44.1%	-56.0%	-66.6%
	27	-24.5%	-31.6%	-43.6%	-55.4%	-66.0%

Regulations – 4 Fish Bag

Potential Options

- Slot and bag
 - F30% = -14.4%
 - F35% = -21.4%
 - F40% = -28.1%

4 / No Vessel		Lower				
		14	15	16	17	18
Upper	23	-10.7%	-18.1%	-33.9%	-49.2%	-62.7%
	24	-8.8%	-16.9%	-32.2%	-47.1%	-60.4%
	25	-8.5%	-16.7%	-31.9%	-46.7%	-59.9%
	26	-7.6%	-16.1%	-31.1%	-45.8%	-58.8%
	27	-6.9%	-15.7%	-30.5%	-45.1%	-58.1%

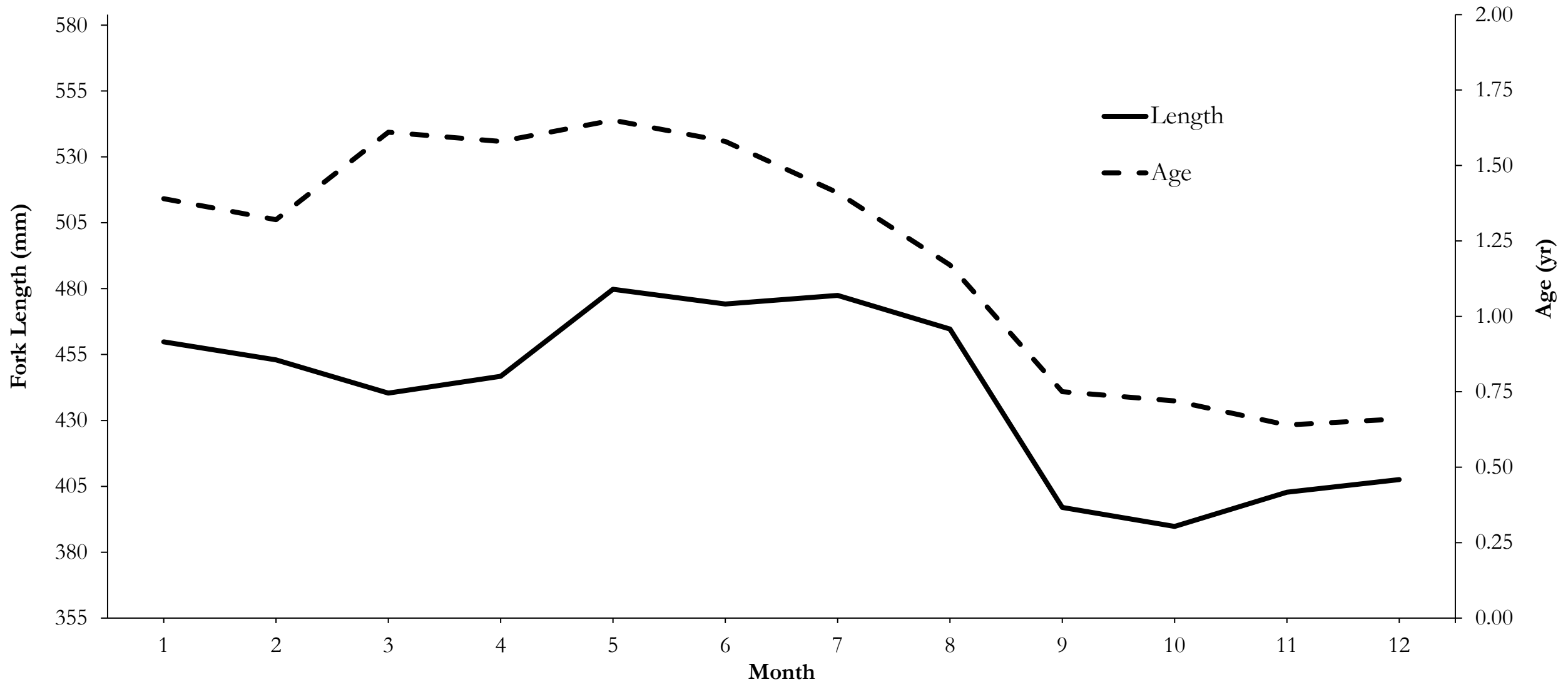
4 / 12 Vessel		Lower				
		14	15	16	17	18
Upper	23	-10.8%	-18.2%	-33.9%	-49.2%	-62.7%
	24	-8.9%	-16.9%	-32.2%	-47.1%	-60.4%
	25	-8.5%	-16.7%	-31.9%	-46.8%	-60.0%
	26	-7.6%	-16.1%	-31.1%	-45.8%	-58.8%
	27	-7.0%	-15.7%	-30.6%	-45.1%	-58.1%

4 / 8 Vessel		Lower				
		14	15	16	17	18
Upper	23	-11.4%	-18.7%	-34.4%	-49.6%	-63.0%
	24	-9.5%	-17.5%	-32.7%	-47.5%	-60.7%
	25	-9.2%	-17.3%	-32.4%	-47.1%	-60.2%
	26	-8.3%	-16.7%	-31.6%	-46.2%	-59.1%
	27	-7.6%	-16.3%	-31.1%	-45.5%	-58.4%

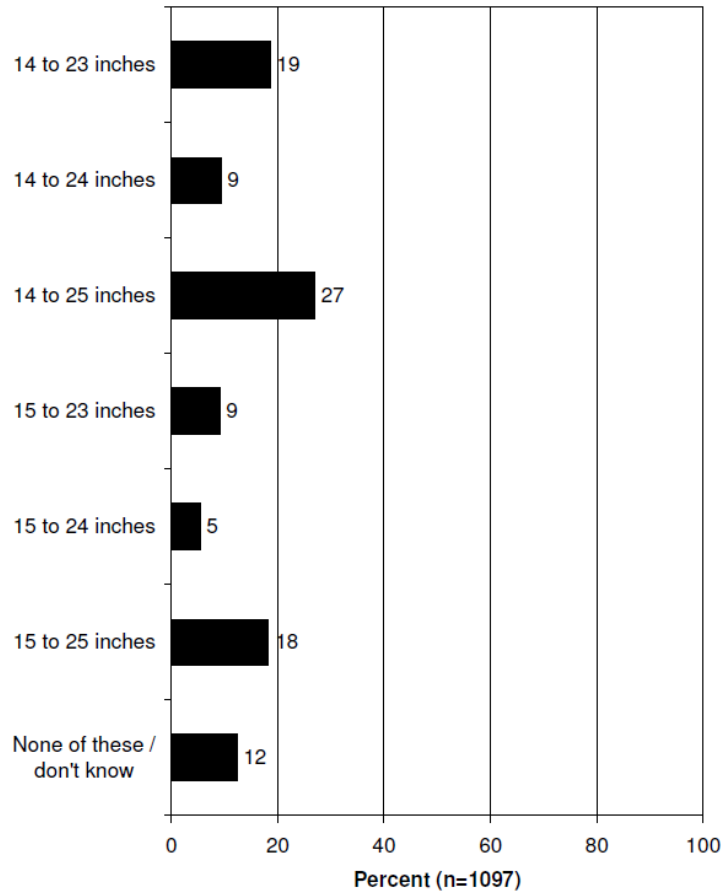
Questions?



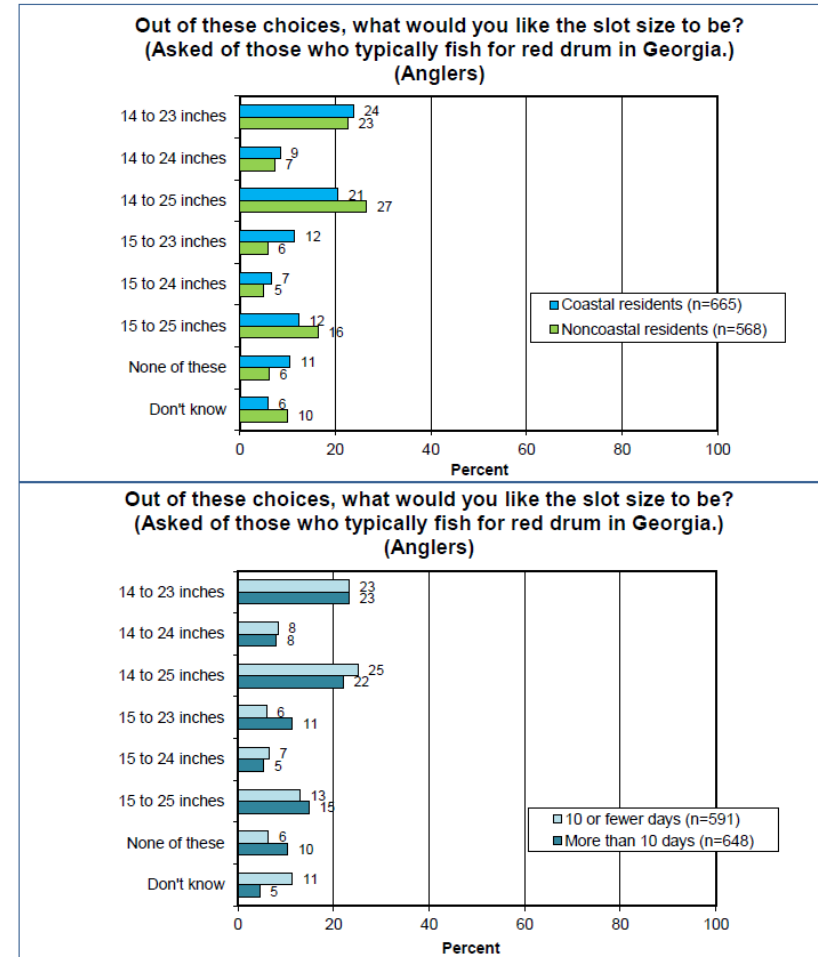
Results – Carcass Monthly Mean Age and Length



Prior Angler Input



2017 Angler Satisfaction Survey



2022 Angler Satisfaction Survey

Southern Flounder

Acoustic Telemetry

3 Southern flounder were tagged over the summer of 2025 using “dummy” tags for a tank study. Fish were tagged on the ventral side of the body with one to two sutures. All sutures dissolved around two weeks.

36 tags were purchased for tagging in St. Simons and Wassaw Sound.

- 30 Vemco V9 tags – 912 day estimated tag life
- 6 Vemco V13 tags – 1825 day estimated tag life

Tagging will begin in winter and spring of 2026. Acoustic tagged fish will also have a visible spaghetti tag near the base of the tail where anglers can report any tagged flounder to CRD’s Cooperative Angler Tagging Project.

Fillet Analysis

146 Southern Flounder have been processed for fillet yield analysis with sizes ranging from 11 to 22 inches. Only 1 male (12 inches) was collected. Average yield of edible meat across all sizes was 37.9% of the whole weight.

Size (inches)	# Processed	Avg. Whole Weight (lbs)	Average Fillet Weight (lbs)	% Edible Fillet
11	4	0.79	0.29	36.29
12	34	0.78	0.30	38.22
13	35	1.03	0.40	38.36
14	26	1.24	0.46	37.46
15	17	1.52	0.57	37.70
16	14	2.04	0.76	37.07
17	4	2.24	0.86	38.30
18	6	2.55	0.95	37.37
19	2	2.48	1.06	41.46
20	3	3.69	1.30	35.17
22	1	4.85	1.89	38.99
Totals	146	1.35	0.51	37.85

**Preliminary results*

This project will continue through 2026 to get a more even distribution across size bins.

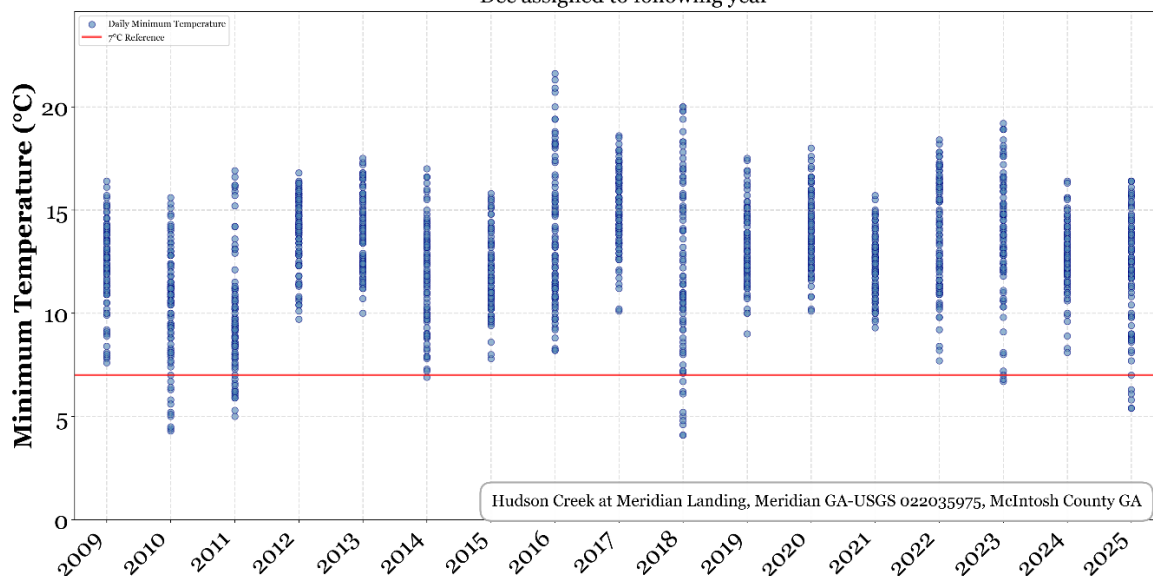
ryan.harrell@dnr.ga.gov chris.kalinowsky@dnr.ga.gov

Spotted Seatrout

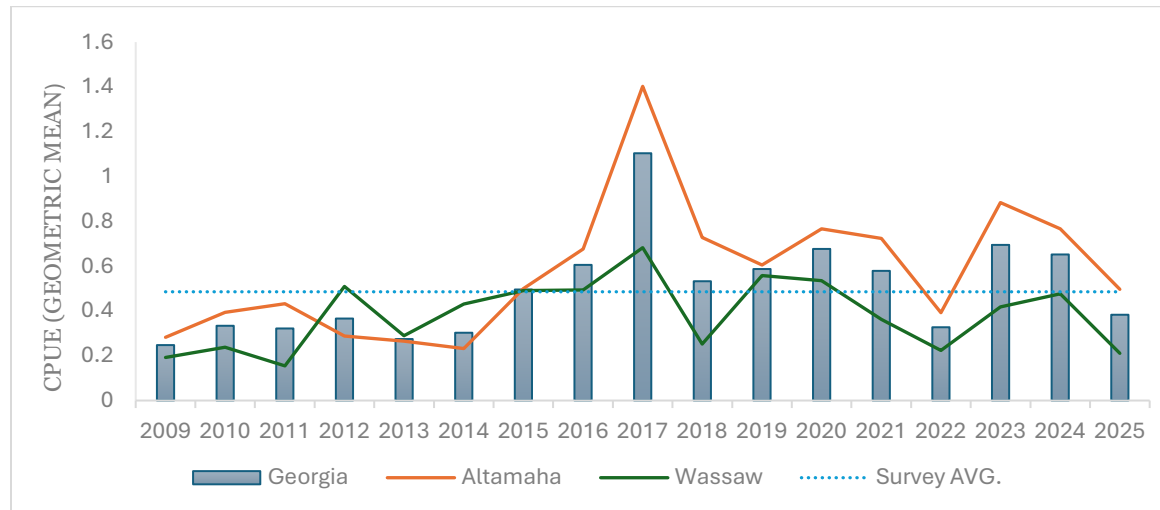
Coastal Georgia experienced a hard freeze in January 2025. Researchers in other regions have documented detrimental effects on Spotted Seatrout populations when water temperatures fall below 7°C. Reports of seatrout kills were reported in 2010, 2011, and 2018 during similar winter conditions (below).

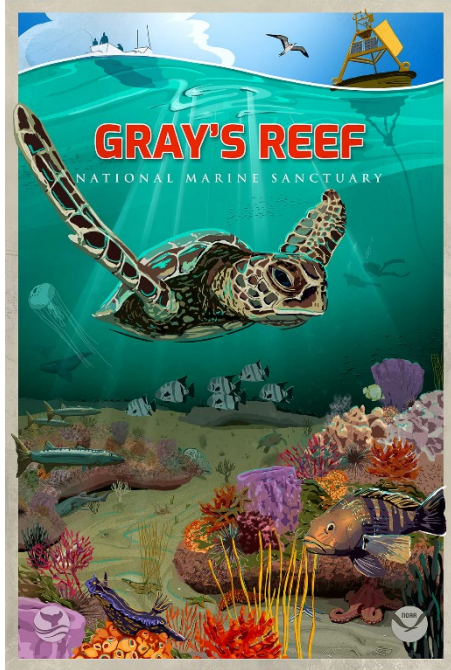
Winter Water Temperature Index - Daily Minimum Temperatures (Dec, Jan, Feb)

*Dec assigned to following year



As a precaution, Georgia launched Operation R.O.E. and asked anglers to voluntarily release all seatrout over 18 inches in length through September 2025. CPUE (catch per unit of effort) was below the long-term survey average for 2025.





Gray's Reef Advisory Council Open Recruitment

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary is seeking applicants to serve on its volunteer advisory council. The council provides NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries with advice and recommendations on the management of the sanctuary. Eligible applicants may apply for any of the following council seats:

- Citizen-At-Large, three-year term - 2 seats
- Conservation, three-year term - 2 seats
- Education (K-12), three-year term
- Fishing Industry, three-year term
- Research, three-year term – 2 seats
- Sport Diving, three-year term
- Sport Fishing, three-year term
- Tourism, three-year term

Applications are due by 11:59 PM on December 14, 2025. Applications received or postmarked after 11:59 PM on December 14, 2025 will not be considered. Applications should include 1) a completed and signed application form, and 2) your responses to the 10 essay questions on the application form.

The SAC application form is available below:

<https://nmsgraysreef.blob.core.windows.net/graysreef-prod/media/docs/2025-grnms-sac-application.pdf>

Applications can be emailed to Scott Kathey at scott.kathey@noaa.gov, or physically mailed to Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary, 10 Ocean Science Circle, Savannah, GA 31411. Note: If you desire a secure method of transmitting electronic documents, contact Scott Kathey at the email link above or by phone at 912-598-2381.

Application Packet Cover Letter and Support Materials

Applicants should review the cover letter and support materials to fully understand qualification requirements for each respective council seat and the role and responsibilities of advisory council members before submitting an application. Those can be found at

<https://graysreef.noaa.gov/management/advisory-council/recruitment.html>

- Application Packet Cover Letter
- Advisory Council Member Qualifications & Expectations
- General Advisory Council Roles & Activities
- Sanctuary Advisory Council Charter 2025

The Gray's Reef Advisory Council provides NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries with advice and recommendations on the management of Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary. The Advisory Council is composed of 21 members representing a variety of interests, including, fishing, diving, conservation, science, education, tourism, the general public, and state and federal government.

Term lengths for council members are three years and incumbent members can serve up to three consecutive terms if they re-compete for each additional term and are re-selected. The advisory council generally meets four times each year, and council working group and subcommittee meetings occur as necessary to study specific topics. Meetings may occur in person or virtually.

Applicants are chosen based upon their particular expertise and experience in relation to the seat for which they are applying; community and professional affiliations; views regarding the protection and management of Gray's Reef's resources; and the applicant's ties to the stakeholder group they wish to represent. Applicants chosen as members are expected to serve a three-year term, attend advisory council meetings, and serve as liaisons both for and to the stakeholder group they represent.

NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries values the remarkable variety of knowledge, perspectives, and experience found throughout sanctuary communities, and invites a wide range of individuals to seek membership on our sanctuary advisory councils. Due to their multifaceted membership, advisory councils help promote enhanced public understanding and participation in marine conservation and governance, foster innovation and creative problem solving, and advance the mission of the National Marine Sanctuary System to facilitate public use, enjoyment, and stewardship of special marine areas.

Prior visitation to Gray's Reef is not a requirement for serving on the advisory council. We encourage anyone interested in supporting the mission of the advisory council to apply.

For more information about the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council, including recruitment, contact Scott Kathey, Resource Protection Coordinator, at scott.kathey@noaa.gov or 912-598-2381.