

Red Grouper Catch Analysis

SSC Recommendations

Background

- Commercial and recreational red grouper fisheries have not reached catch limits in recent years
- The Council requested regular interim assessments (IAs) for red grouper as a “health check” for the stock and to adjust catch limits as may be needed
- Simultaneously, the Council is reviewing sector allocations for red grouper under Amendment 53

Interim analysis (IA)

- IA uses a representative fishery-independent index of abundance, evaluated against the catch limits determined in the last stock assessment, to update catch level recommendations
- Trends in the fishery-independent index of abundance are useful as a “health check” in their own right
- The full IA updates the catch limits as determined in the last stock assessment, based on sector allocations at the time
- Generally, when sector allocations are revised, catch limits need to be re-calculated with the new allocations

Bottom longline index of abundance

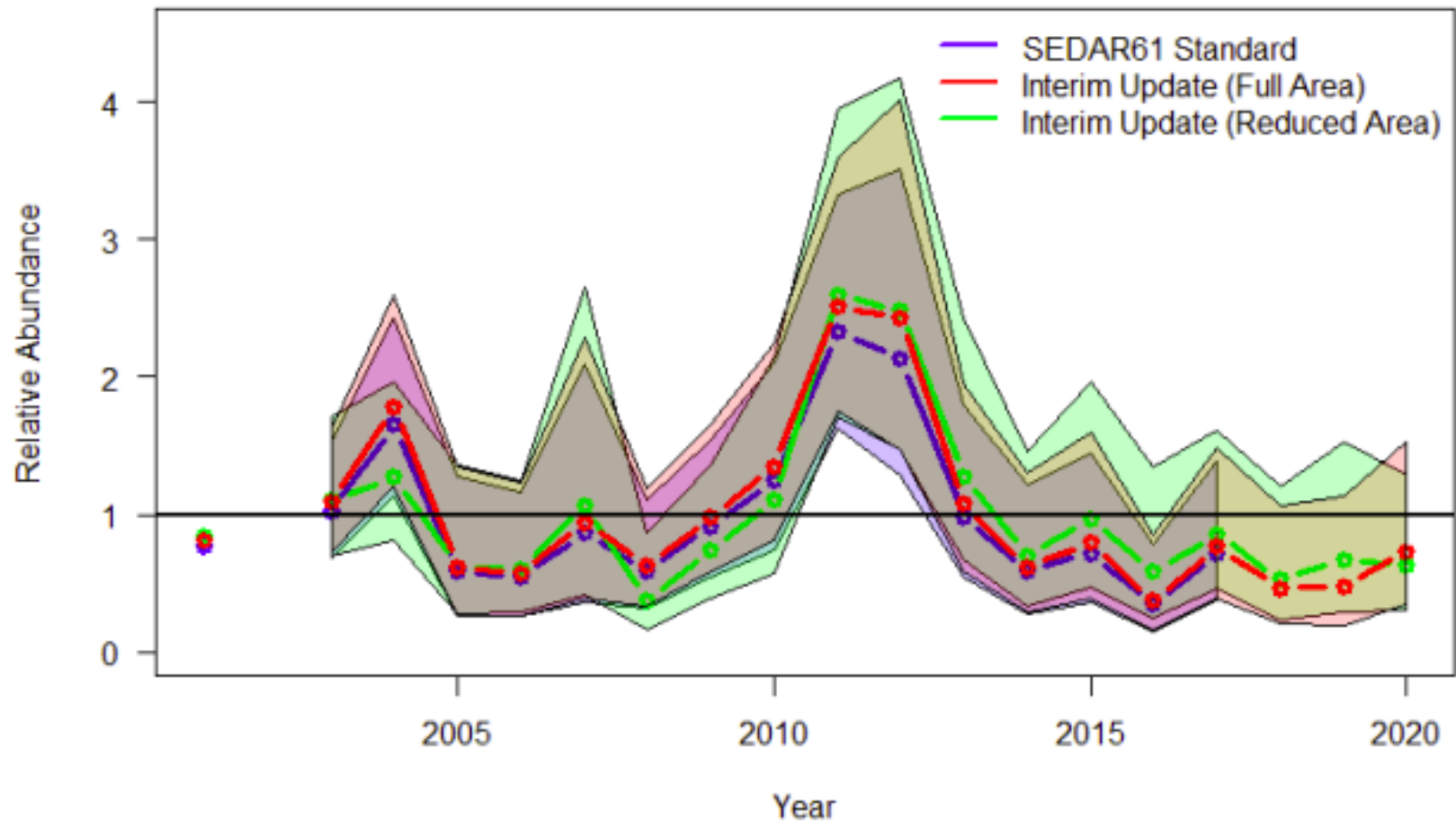
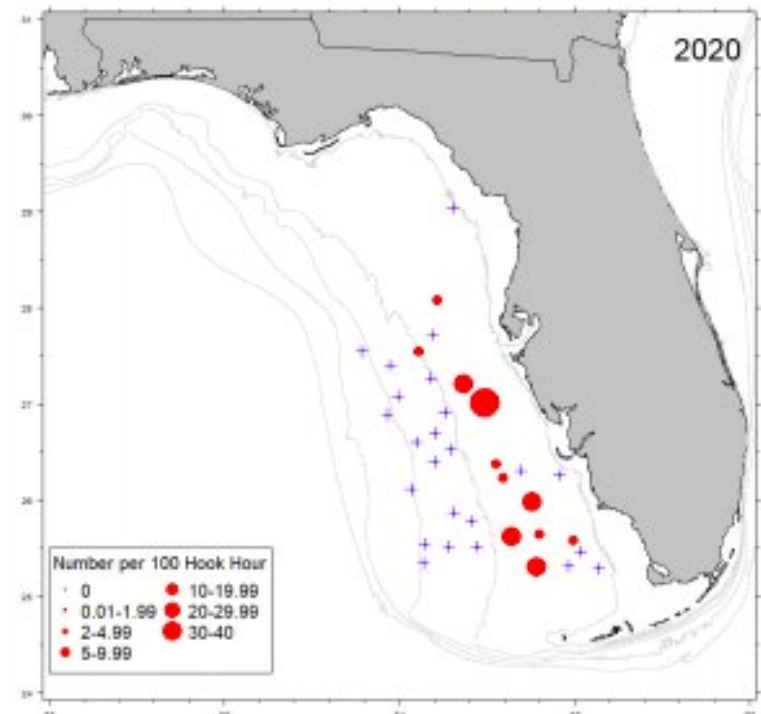
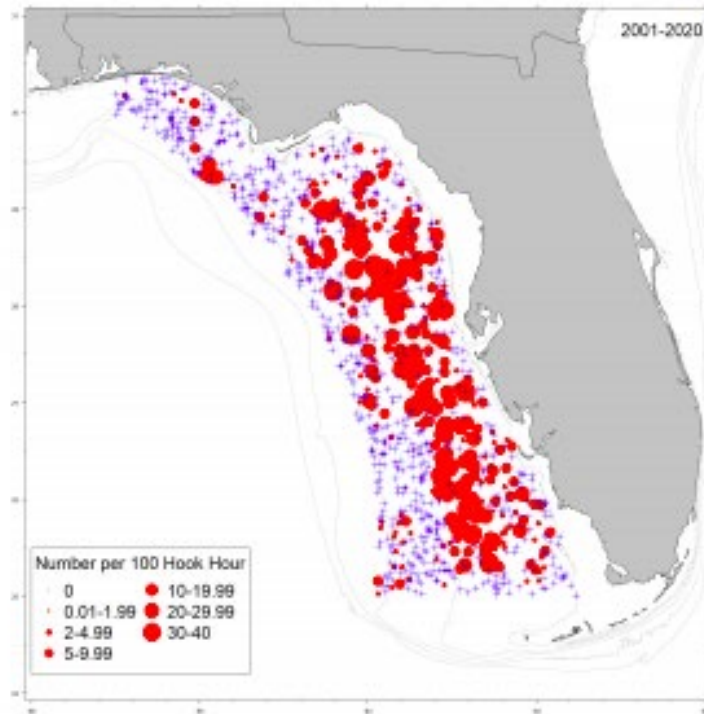


Figure 2. Comparison of NMFS MSLABS Bottom Longline Survey index of abundance derived for Red Grouper in the Gulf of Mexico for SEDAR61 compared to the index updated through 2020 for the full and reduced areas in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico with confidence intervals. All indices have been standardized to a mean of 1.

Bottom longline survey issues in 2020

- 2020 observed index value may be higher than it would have been with full spatial coverage
 - Zero catches usually encountered in the panhandle



SSC Recommendations

- Bottom longline index indicates stable abundance or slight increase
- Impact of 2020 survey constraints on estimated trend in abundance is limited
- Full interim analysis to update catch recommendations would require re-calculation of initial catch limits using the new sector allocations