

Committee Staff Summary for July 17-18, 2024 MRC

8. Recreational Take of Barred Sand Bass**Today's Item**Information Action

Receive and discuss Department update on the recreational barred sand bass fishery and considerations for potential regulation changes.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions (N/A)**Background**

The barred sand bass fishery is an historic recreational fishery in southern California that is open year-round and managed collectively with kelp bass and spotted sand bass. Current regulations of a five-fish bag limit (in any combination of the three species) and minimum size limit of 14 inches (35.6 centimeters) were established in 2013 due to concerns about the status of kelp bass and barred sand bass stocks.

Population Trends, Management Response, and Stakeholder Engagement

While no formal stock assessment exists for barred sand bass, abundance estimates suggest a severely depressed population in southern California. The presumed decline is likely due to a combination of environmental conditions, poor recruitment, and fishing pressure on easily targeted spawning aggregations.

The Department has analyzed available data for the species. Fishery-dependent data indicate continued declines in barred sand bass, except for the past year, with spawning aggregations becoming much smaller or difficult to find. Fishery-independent data over the past several years have shown a pulse of fish entering the fishery, corroborated by the fishery-dependent data showing a slight increase in catch. However, there has been no sizeable recruitment pulse seen behind the entry fish, suggesting that current regulations established in 2013 (lower bag limit and increased size limit) are insufficient to protect the stock, especially if the observed year class of juveniles enters the fishery and fishing effort increases.

Due to population concerns, the Department began discussions with the recreational fishing community and academic community about potential changes to barred sand bass fishery regulations. The Department also requested the Commission refer the topic to MRC and committed to bring a range of recommendations for MRC discussion.

Today, the Department will present an overview of the available data for barred sand bass, highlight outreach to date regarding the types of potential management changes under consideration, and describe additional collaboration with sportfishing associations and researchers to help recover barred sand bass populations while minimizing impacts to recreational fishing (Exhibit 1). The Department proposes to bring collectively-developed regulation change options and recommendations to the November MRC meeting for discussion and potential committee recommendation.

Significant Public Comments (N/A)

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Recommendation

Discuss Department presentation, receive stakeholder input, and provide guidance, if any, concerning planned stakeholder engagement and development of final recommendations for MRC consideration in November.

Exhibits

1. [Department presentation](#)

Committee Direction/Recommendation (N/A)



Regulation Change Considerations for the Barred Sand Bass Fishery

18 July 2024

Presented to:

**Marine Resources
Committee**

Presented by:

**Armand Barilotti
Environmental Scientist
CDFW Marine Region**



Life History

- Barred sand bass (*Paralabrax nebulifer*, referred as BSB hereon).
- Range: southern Baja California, Mexico to Santa Cruz, California; rare north of Pt. Conception.
- Habitat: coastal rocky reef, soft bottom, and bays.
 - Preference for ecotone where reef meets soft bottom.
- Size: up to 67 cm (26.4 in) and 6 kg (13 lb).
- Mature by 27 cm (10.6 in) and 5 years old.
- Life span: up to 24 years.
- Prey: small fishes, cephalopods, crustaceans, polychaetes, and ascidians.
- Predators: marine mammals, sharks and fish.

Photo Credit M. Haggerty, CDFW





Reproduction and Larval Stage

- Spawning peaks June through August.
 - Form large spawning aggregations over soft bottom.
- Pelagic larval duration: 21-30 days.
- SoCal can get sporadic larval pulses from Mexico when seasonal upwelling at San Quintin is interrupted during warm water years.
- Settle out in eelgrass habitat in protected bays, estuaries, and shallow coastal areas.

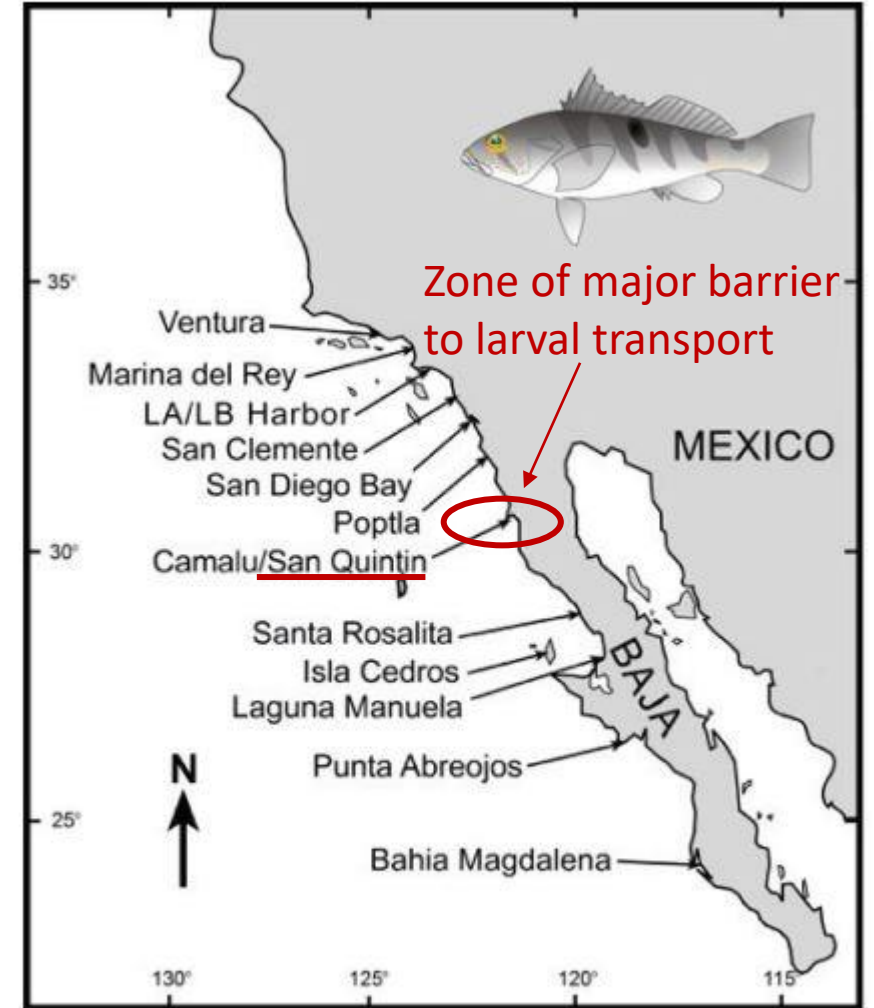


Figure 1. Map of sampling locations of *Paralabrax nebulifer*. Sampling covers the range in which *Paralabrax nebulifer* is commonly found. Sampling was performed using hook and line or from small scale trap fishermen.



Movements and Migrations

- Home range:
2,682–240,000 m² (0.66 – 59 ac).
- Transient spawning aggregation behavior.
 - Occurs in summer months.
 - Over soft bottom habitat.
- Spawning related movements:
Avg. 10 – 18 km (6 – 11 mi).
- Max recap distance:
92 km (57 mi).

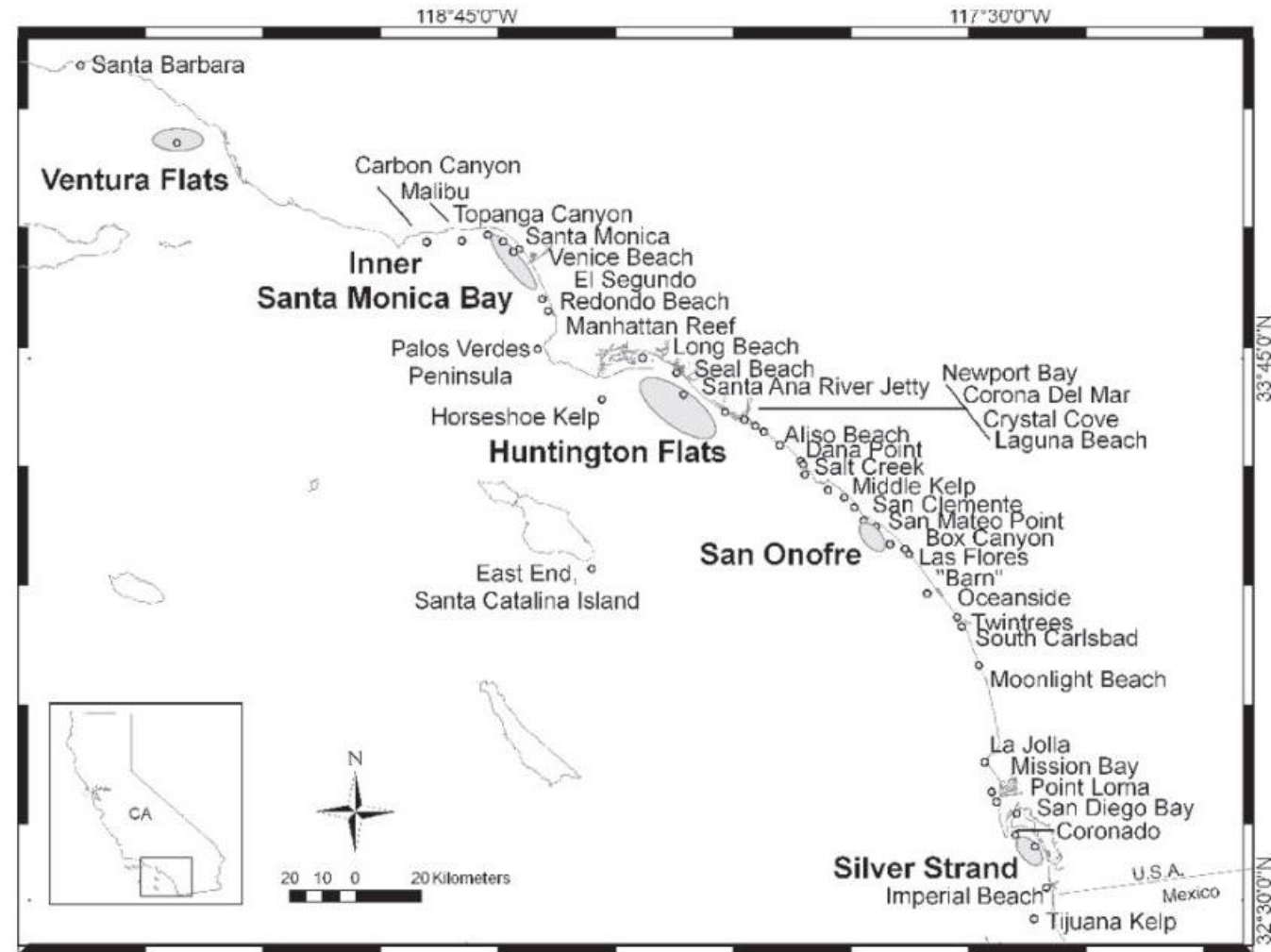


Fig. 1. Map of barred sand bass tagging locations in southern California, historical California Department of Fish and Game tagging project (1960s and 1990s). Shaded ellipses and bolded text identify historical barred sand bass spawning aggregation locations.

Jarvis et al. 2010



BSB Fishery

- Historic fishery in southern CA.
- Open year-round.
 - best fishing in summer months.
- Recreational only.
 - CA commercial fishery closed 1953.



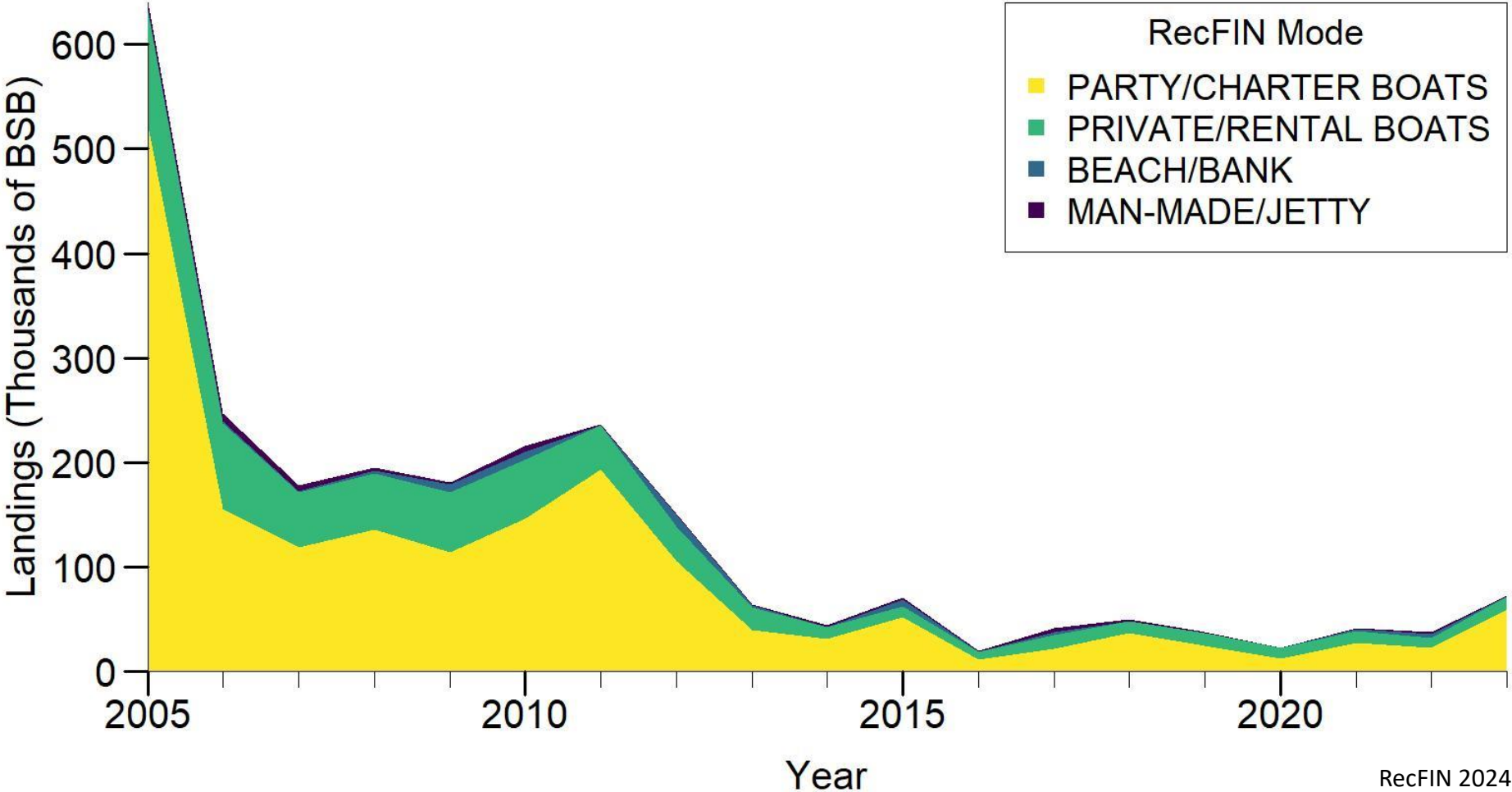
Photo Credit M. Haggerty, CDFW



Photo Credit M. Fain, CDFW



RecFIN Landings by Mode 2005 - 2023



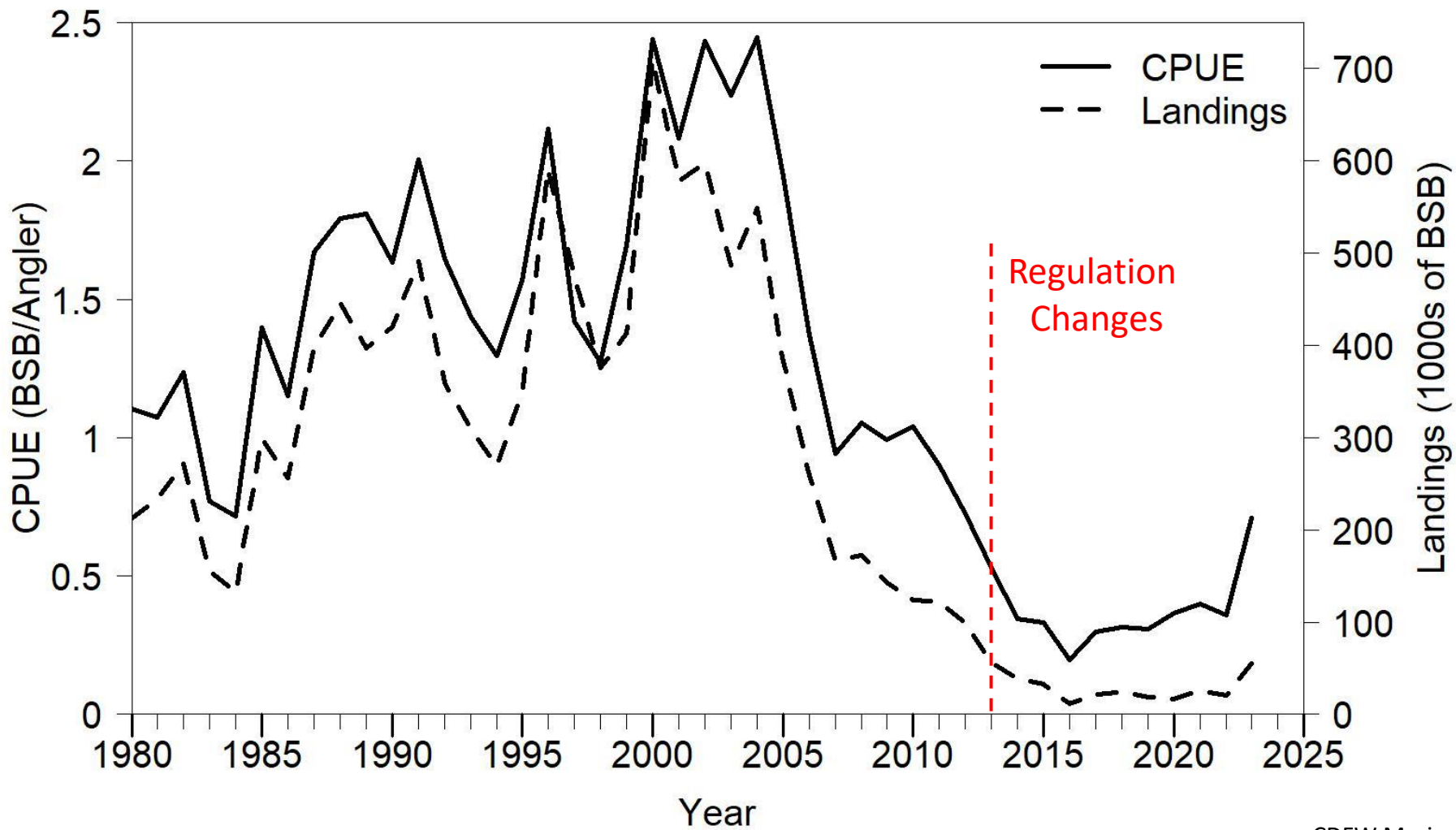


2013 Regulation Changes

- Title 14 CCR § 28.30. Kelp Bass, Barred Sand Bass and Spotted Sand Bass.
 - a. Minimum size: 14 inches total length.
 - Previously 12 inches total length.
 - b. Limit: Five in any combination of species.
 - Previously 10 in combination.
- Effective March 1, 2013.
 - Enacted to help protect and recover BSB & kelp bass.
 - Seasonal closure for BSB was recommended by the Department but rejected by the FGC.

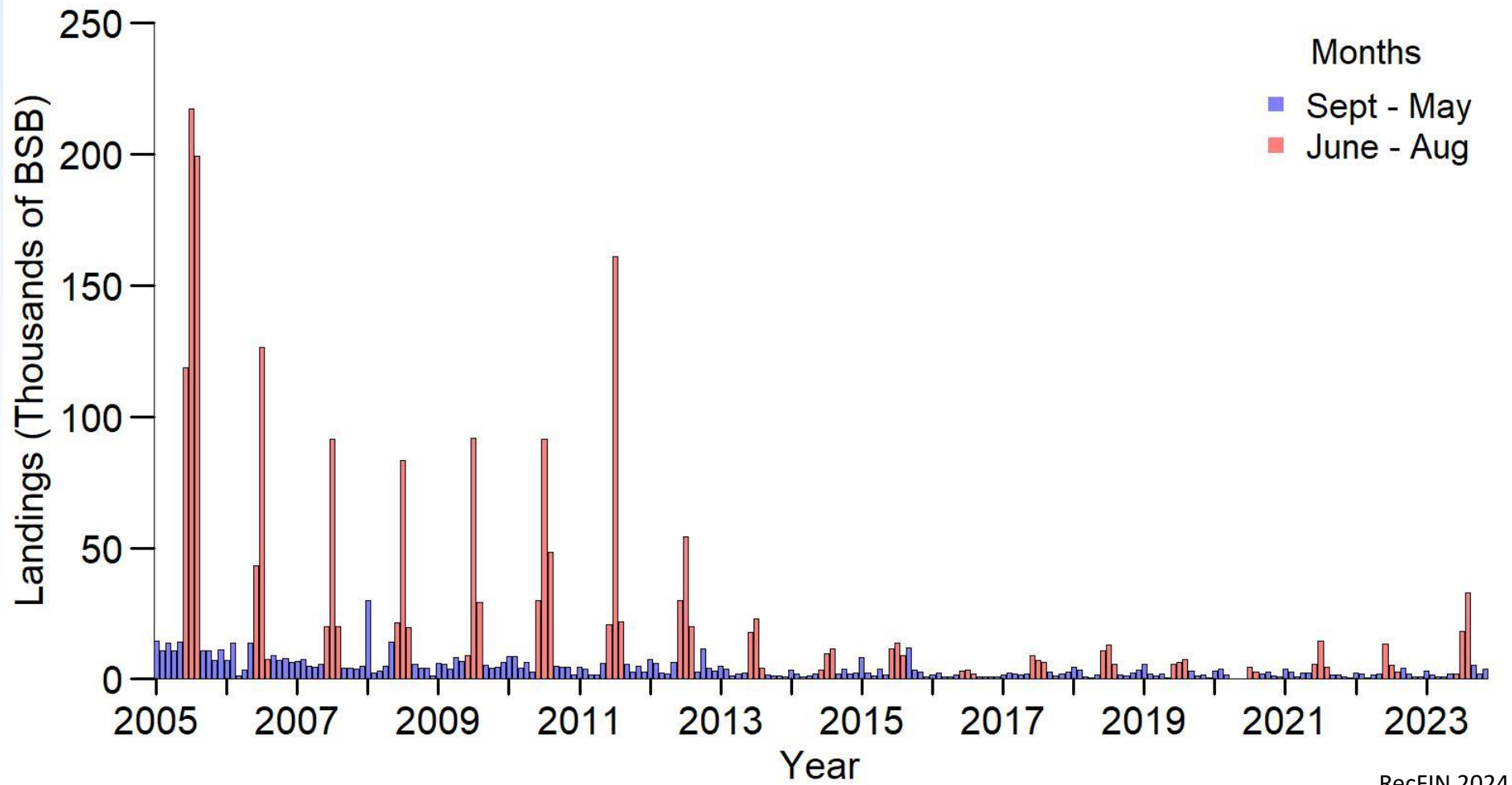


BSB CPFV landings 1980 - 2023





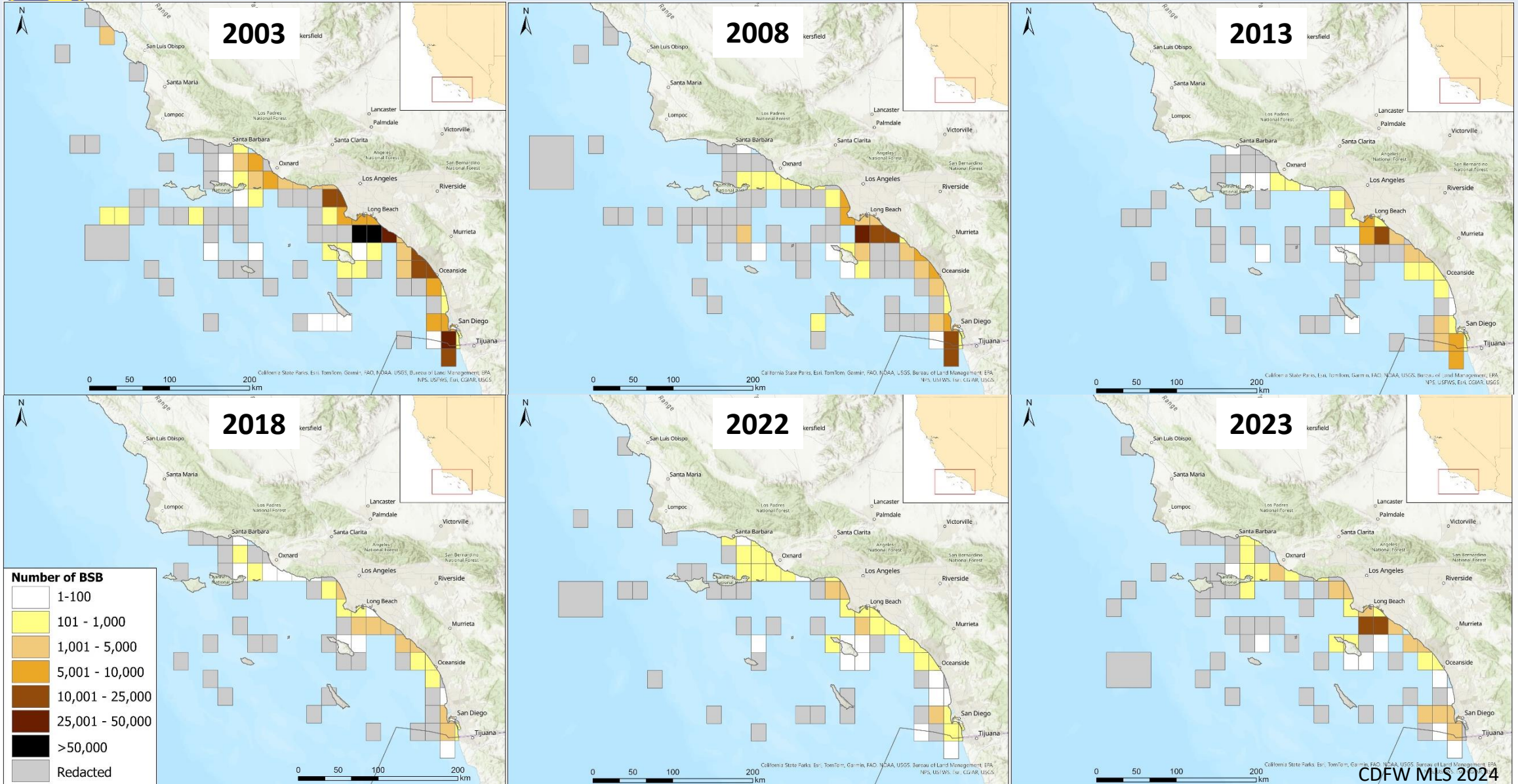
RecFIN Landings by Month 2005 - 2023



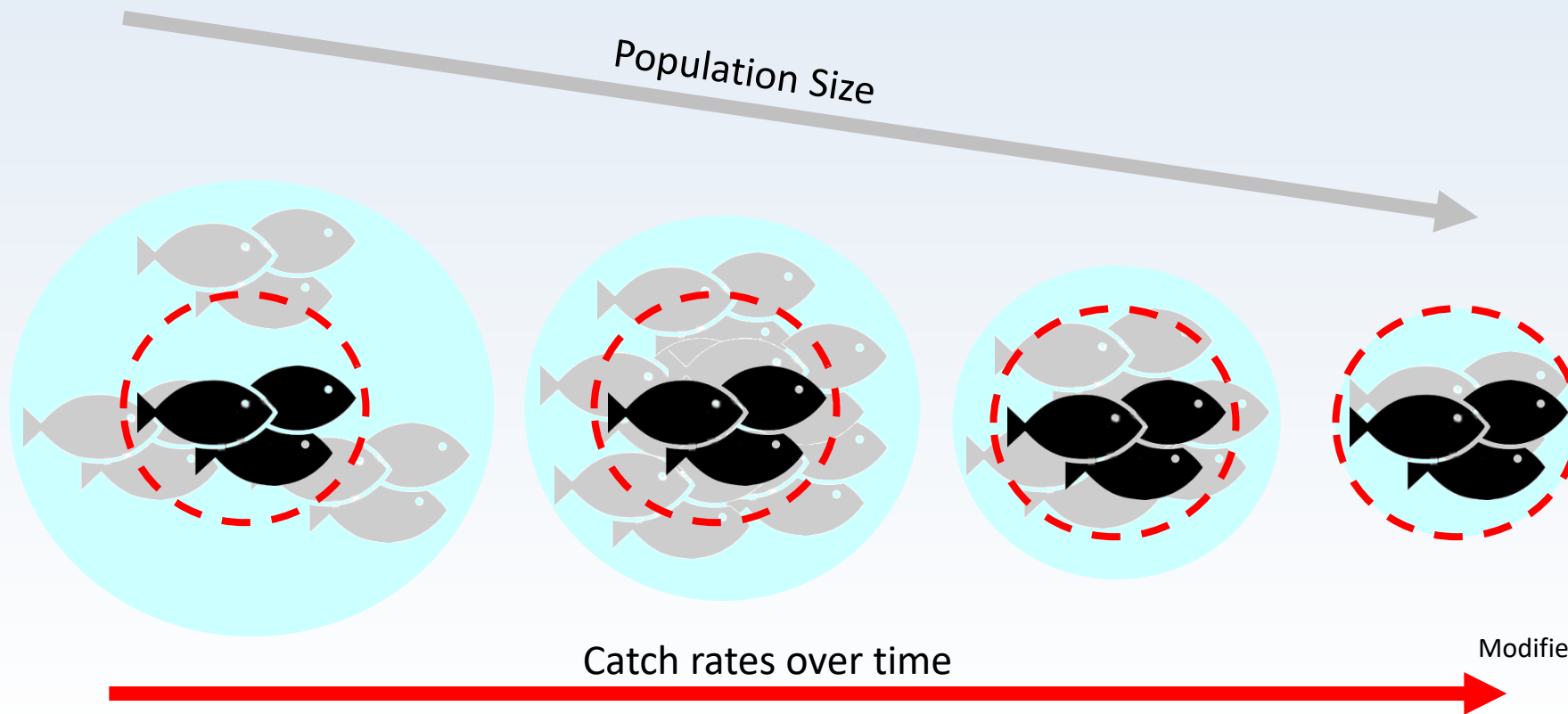
RecFIN 2024



CPFV Landings by CDFW Fishing Block



Hyperstability & Population Size

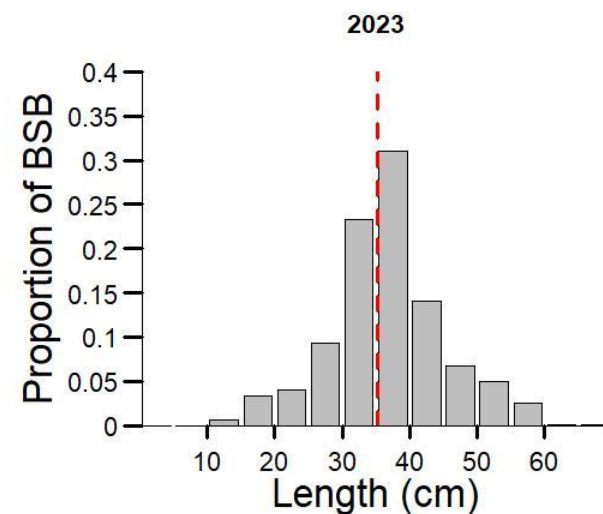
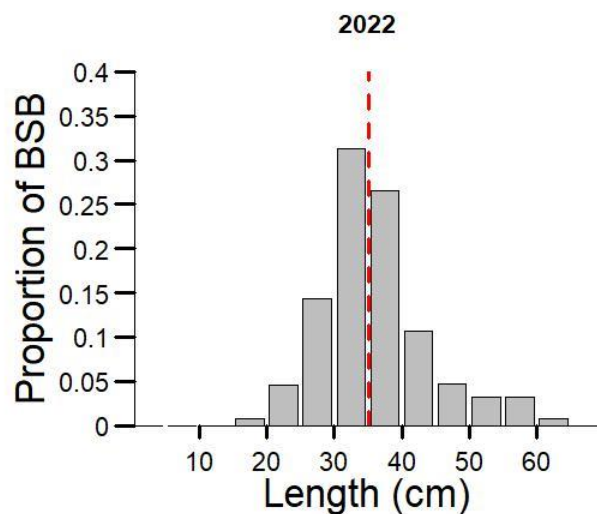
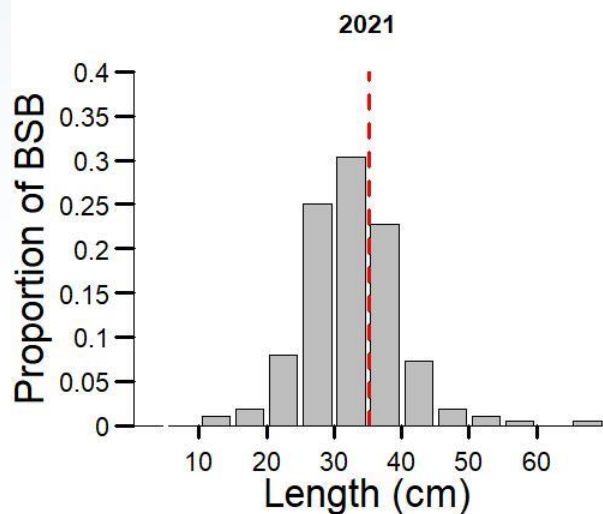
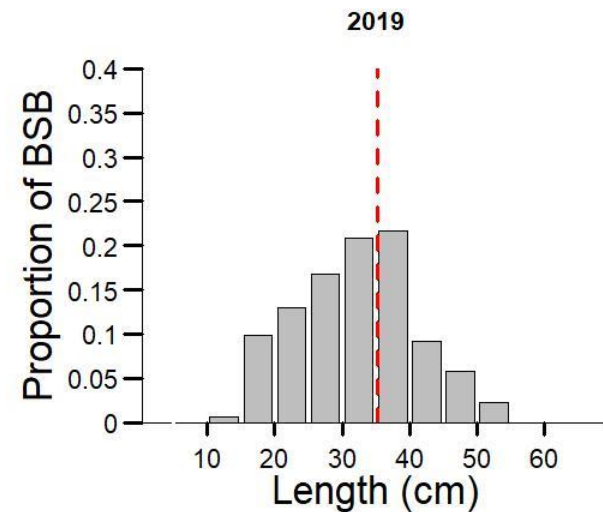
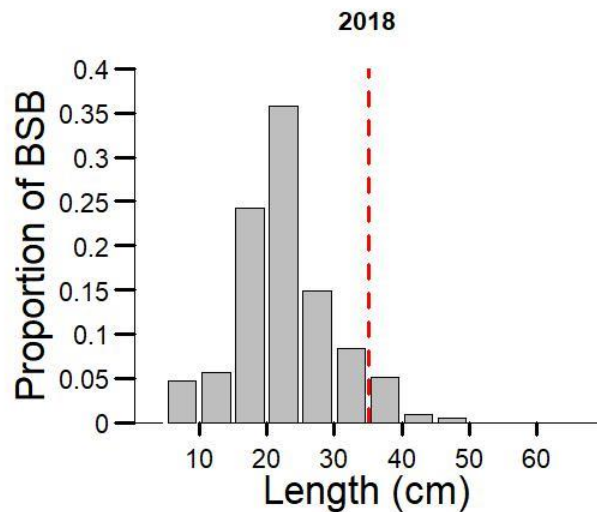
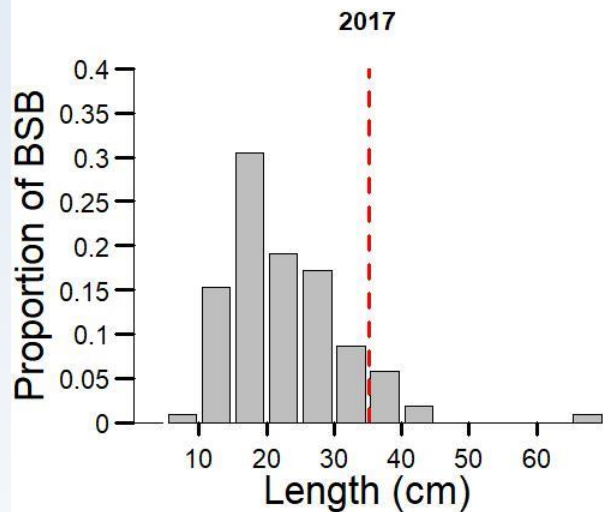


Modified from *Larry G. Allen, 10-18-10*

- Catch rates remain constant while populations size drops.
 - Decrease in population abundance masked by aggregating behavior.



CDFW BSB Surveys 2017 - 2023





Stakeholder Outreach Efforts

- Additional conservation efforts are needed to protect spawning aggregations which contribute to local recruitment.
- Meetings held with industry and academia.
 - Sportfishing Association of California and Coastal Conservation Association of California.
 - Southern California BSB researchers.



Next Steps

- Amend Title 14 CCR § 28.30
 - Geared towards protection of BSB during the summer spawning aggregations.
- Working group with fishing industry and researchers to find an amenable solution(s) to help recover BSB while having reduced impacts on fishing industry.
- Return to MRC in November with a supported recommendation.

Thank You

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Department of Fish and Wildlife

Marine Region

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Enhanced Status Report:

<https://marinespecies.wildlife.ca.gov/barred-sand-bass/true/>