Scup Fishery Information Document

June 2025

This Fishery Information Document provides a brief overview of the biology, stock condition, management system, and fishery performance for scup (*Stenotomus chrysops*) with an emphasis on 2024. Data sources include unpublished National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Catch Accounting and Monitoring System (CAMS) data,[1] permit data, Northeast Fisheries Observer Program data, Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) data,[2] and stock assessment information. All 2024 data should be considered preliminary. Due to adjustments and corrections to the data over time, some values may differ from the values used in previous years and for final catch accounting. For more resources on scup management, including previous Fishery Information Documents, please visit http://www.mafmc.org/sf-s-bsb/.

Key Facts:

- The draft 2025 management track assessment indicated that scup was not overfished, and overfishing was not occurring in 2024. ***Note the 2025 management track assessment is pending final peer review.***
- Commercial landings increased from 13.02 mil lbs. (93% of the commercial quota) in 2023 to 14.50 mil lbs. (69% of the commercial quota) in 2024.
- Price per pound and total ex-vessel value increased compared to 2023 and were about $0.72 and $10.17 million in 2024, respectively.
- Recreational landings decreased from 11.91 mil lbs. (28% above the recreational harvest limit) in 2023 to 11.00 mil lbs. (17% below the recreational harvest limit) in 2024.
- An estimated 3.36 million recreational trips targeted scup as either the primary or secondary target species in 2024, about a 17% increase compared to 2023.

[1] CAMS includes commercial dealer data, including federal and state permitted dealers, as well as federal VTR data and expanded estimates of commercial dead discards. More information on CAMS is available at https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/ro/fso/reports/cams/index.html.

[2] In July 2018, MRIP released revisions to their time series of recreational catch and landings estimates based on adjustments for a revised angler intercept methodology and a transition from a telephone-based effort survey to a mail-based effort survey. The revised catch and landings estimates are higher than the previous estimates for shore and private boat modes. The revised MRIP estimates are used in this document except where otherwise noted. The MRIP program is currently evaluating additional potential revisions to the fishing effort estimation survey. Any potential future changes to the data will be implemented in 2026 at the earliest. More information is available at https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/recreational-fishing-data/fishing-effort-survey-research-and-improvements.

Basic Biology

Scup are a schooling, demersal (i.e., bottom-dwelling) species. They are found in a variety of habitats in the Mid-Atlantic. Scup essential fish habitat includes demersal waters, areas with sandy or muddy bottoms, mussel beds, and sea grass beds from the Gulf of Maine through Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. Scup undertake extensive seasonal migrations between coastal and offshore waters. They are found in estuaries and coastal waters during the spring and summer. In the fall and winter, they move offshore and to the south, to outer continental shelf waters south off New Jersey. Scup spawn once annually over weedy or sandy areas, mostly off southern New England. Spawning takes place from May through August and usually peaks in June and July (Steimle et al. 1999).

About 50% of scup are sexually mature at two years of age and about 17 cm (about 7 inches) total length. Nearly all scup older than three years of age are sexually mature. Scup reach a maximum age of at least 14 years. They may live as long as 20 years; however, few scup older than 7 years are caught in the Mid-Atlantic (NEFSC 2015).

Adult scup are benthic feeders. They consume a variety of prey, including small crustaceans (including zooplankton), polychaetes, mollusks, small squid, vegetable detritus, insect larvae, hydroids, sand dollars, and small fish. The Northeast Fisheries Science Center's (NEFSC) food habits database lists several predators of scup, including several shark species, skates, silver hake, bluefish, summer flounder, black sea bass, weakfish, lizardfish, king mackerel, and monkfish (Steimle et al. 1999).

Status of the Stock

A management track stock assessment for scup will be peer reviewed in June 2025. **The stock assessment information in this section is from the draft report which had not yet been peer reviewed at the time of finalizing this document and could be subject to change following peer review.**

The 2025 assessment retained the model structure of the previous benchmark stock assessment, completed in 2015,[3] and incorporated fishery catch and fishery-independent survey data through 2024. As indicated in the draft report (NEFSC 2025), the scup stock from Cape Hatteras, North Carolina extending north to the US-Canada border was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2024 (Table 1). A major retrospective pattern appeared in the 2025 assessment (as with the 2023 assessment; NEFSC 2023), requiring adjustments to the model results. These retrospective adjustments increased the SSB estimate and decreased the F estimate for 2024 (Figures 1 and 2); they are used in projections and management.

From the 2025 assessment, adjusted SSB was estimated to be 519.44 million pounds (235,613 mt) in 2024, about 3.23 times the SSB_{MSY} proxy reference point of 160.62 million pounds (72,855 mt; Figure 1) meaning that the stock was not overfished in 2024. There was a notable increasing trend in SSB since the early 2000s; however, in recent years SSB has declined from a peak in 2018 (Figure 1).

[3] 60th Northeast Stock Assessment Workshop (2015) assessment report and peer review summaries are available at: https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/4975.

Adjusted fishing mortality on fully selected age 4 scup was 0.098 in 2024, about 55% of the F_{MSY} proxy reference point of 0.177 (Figure 2), meaning that overfishing was not occurring in 2024. The 2015-year class is estimated to be the largest in the time series at 695 million fish, while the 2019–2024-year classes are estimated to be below average (Figure 3).

Table 1: Scup biological reference points from the draft 2025 management track stock assessment report (NEFSC 2025).

	Spawning stock biomass	**Fishing mortality rate (F)**
Target	160.62 mil lb (72,855 mt)	N/A
Threshold	80.31 mil lb (36,428 mt)	0.177
Terminal year estimate (2024)	519.44 mil lb (235,613 mt) 3.23 times target level	0.098 45% below threshold level
Status	**Not overfished**	**Overfishing not occurring**

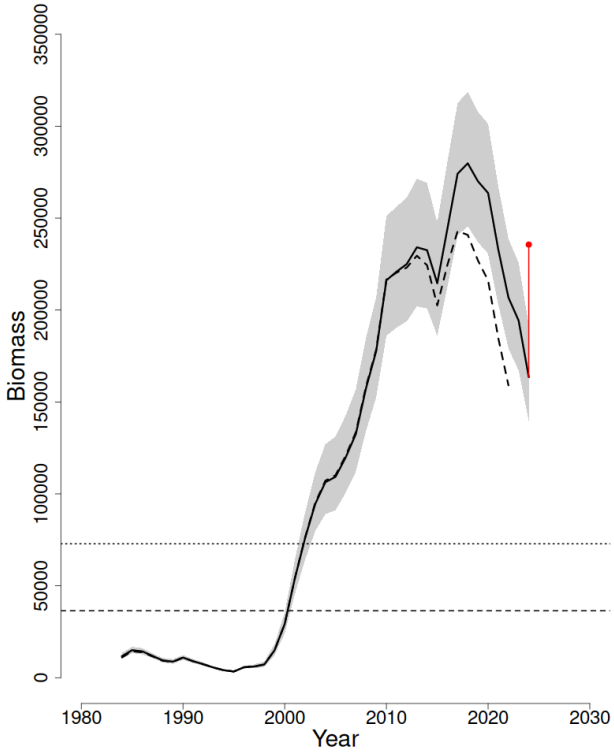

Figure 1: Trends in scup spawning stock biomass, 1989-2024 from the draft 2025 management track stock assessment (solid black line). The gray shading represents 90% confidence intervals. The dashed trend line shows spawning stock biomass estimates from the previous assessment (NEFSC 2023). Biomass was adjusted for a retrospective pattern, that adjustment is shown in red. The horizontal dotted line is the updated biomass target, and the horizontal dashed line is the updated biomass threshold. When biomass is above the threshold, the stock is not overfished. Source: NEFSC 2025.

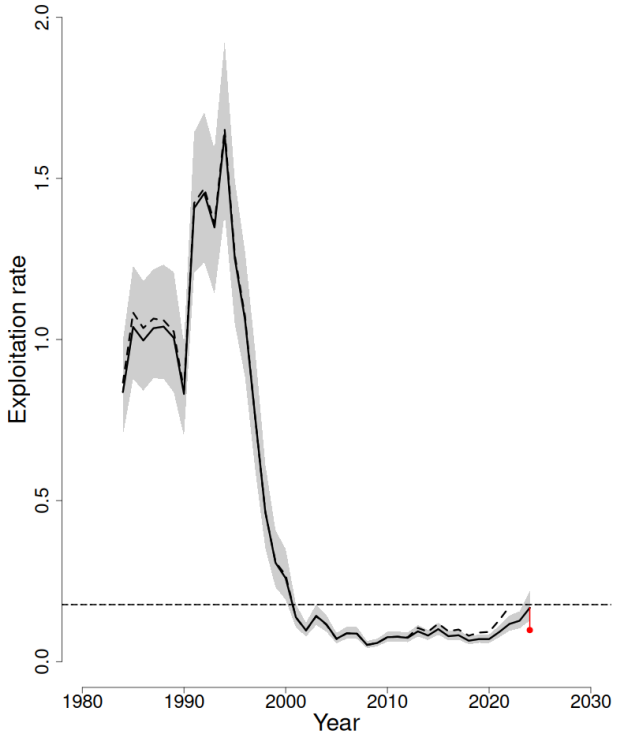

Figure 2: Trends in fully selected fishing mortality for scup, 1989-2024 from the draft 2025 management track stock assessment. The gray shading represents 90% confidence intervals. The dashed trend line shows fishing mortality estimates from the previous assessment (NEFSC 2023). Fishing mortality was adjusted for a retrospective pattern, that adjustment is shown in red. The horizontal dotted line is the updated fishing mortality reference point. When fishing mortality is below the reference point, overfishing is not occurring. Source: NEFSC 2025.

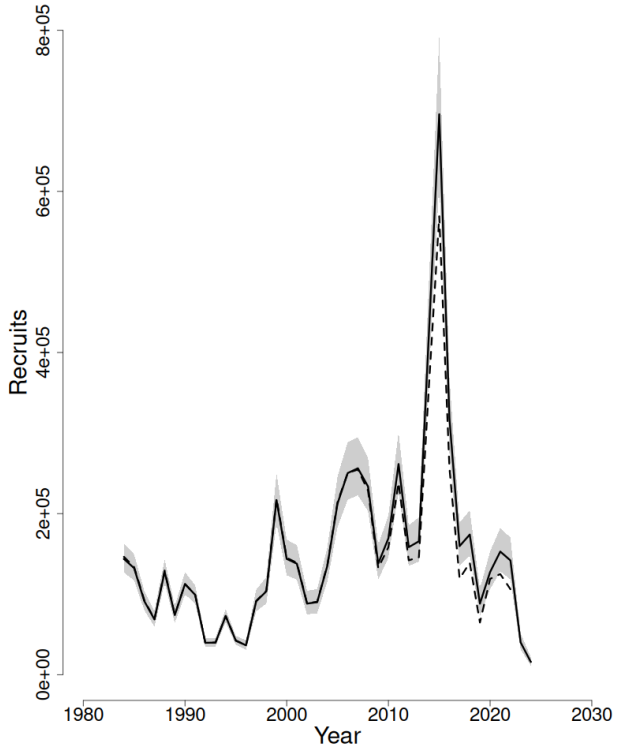

Figure 3: Trends in scup recruitment (i.e., age 0 fish), 1989-2024 from the draft 2025 management track stock assessment. The gray shading represents 90% confidence intervals. The dashed trend line shows recruitment estimates from the previous assessment (NEFSC 2023). Source: NEFSC 2025.

Management System and Fishery Performance

Management Overview

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) cooperatively develop fishery regulations for scup off the east coast of the United States. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) serves as the federal implementation and enforcement entity. This cooperative management endeavor was developed because a significant portion of the catch is taken from both state waters (0-3 miles offshore) and federal waters (3-200 miles offshore). The management unit for scup includes U.S. waters from Cape Hatteras, North Carolina to the U.S./Canadian border.

The federal Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for scup has been in place since 1996, when scup were incorporated into the Summer Flounder FMP through Amendment 8. Amendment 8 established gear restrictions, reporting requirements, commercial quotas, a moratorium on new commercial scup permits, recreational possession limits, and minimum size restrictions for scup fisheries. The Council has made several adjustments to the FMP since 1996. The FMP and subsequent amendments and framework adjustments can be found at: www.mafmc.org/sf-s-bsb/.

The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommends annual Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) levels for scup. The annual ABC is divided into commercial and recreational Annual Catch Limits (ACLs), based on the allocation percentages prescribed in the FMP. Through 2022 the allocation was 78% commercial, 22% recreational. Starting in 2023, the ABC is now allocated 65% to the commercial fishery and 35% to the recreational fishery. Both ABCs and ACLs are catch-based limits, meaning they account for both landings and discards. Projected discards are subtracted to determine the commercial quota and recreational harvest limit (RHL), which are landings-based limits.[4]

Fishery Catch Summary

Table 2 shows scup total catch and catch limits from 2016 through 2025, as well as the overfishing limit (OFL) from which the ABC is derived. The ABC is set less than or equal to the OFL to account for scientific uncertainty. According to the most recent available catch information, the OFL for scup was exceeded just slightly in 2017 and 2021, and by over 10% in 2022 and again in 2023 (Table 2). The scup ABC was also exceeded those same four years (2017, 2021, 2022 and 2023; Table 2). The OFL and ABC were not exceeded in 2024 (Table 2).

[4] For more information on these allocation revisions, see the fact sheet at: https://www.mafmc.org/s/SFSBSB-Allocation-FAQs.pdf.

Table 2: Total scup catch (i.e., commercial and recreational landings and dead discards) compared to the OFL and ABC. All values are in millions of pounds. Total catch calculations use "old" MRIP data through 2019, and "new" MRIP data for 2020-2024.

Year	Total catch[a]	OFL	OFL overage/underage[b]	ABC	ABC overage/underage
2016	26.94	35.8	-25%	31.11	-13%
2017	32.27	32.09	1%	28.4	14%
2018	26.86	45.05	-40%	39.14	-31%
2019	26.58	41.03	-35%	36.43	-27%
2020	33.60	41.17	-18%	35.77	-6%
2021	35.41	35.3	1%	34.81	2%
2022	36.27	32.56	11%	32.11	13%
2023	33.21	30.09	10%	29.67	12%
2024	37.37	44.74	-16%	43.82	-15%
2025	--	42.19	--	41.31	--

[a] See Table 2 and Table 13 for the commercial and recreational data contributing to the total catch estimates.

[b] The inclusion of CAMS landings data in this table and in Table 2 indicates a slight deviation from past estimates. In some instances, this led to catches slightly exceeding the OFL, differing from past comparisons.

Figure 4 shows commercial and recreational landings and dead discards from 1996 through 2023. Total (commercial and recreational combined) scup catch has generally increased since the 1990s with a peak in 2017.

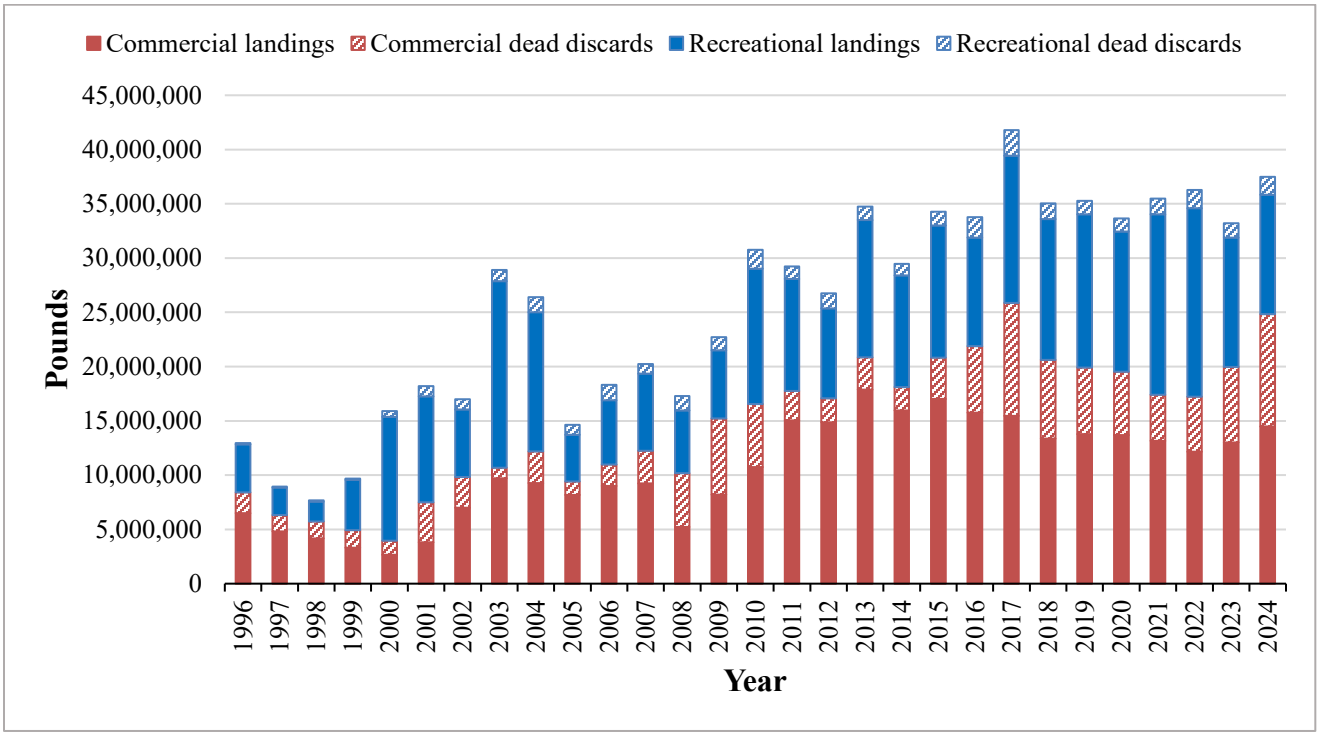

Figure 4: Commercial and recreational scup landings and dead discards in pounds, Maine-North Carolina, 1996-2024, based on the draft 2025 management track assessment for scup (S. Truesdell, pers. comm, June 2025). Full time series of recreational values reflect revised MRIP values.

Commercial Fishery

In 2024, about 14.50 million pounds of scup were landed in the commercial fishery, about 69% of the commercial quota. Commercial quota and ACL overages have been rare in this fishery, and as shown in Table , there was an ACL overage in 2017 and 2023. Where commercial ACL overages have occurred, they are generally caused by higher-than-expected dead discards, as commercial fishery landings for scup are typically well controlled to the commercial quota (Table 3).

Table 3: Scup commercial landings, dead discards, and catch compared to the commercial quota and commercial ACL, 2016-2025. All values are in millions of pounds.

Year	Com. landings[a]	Com. quota	Quota overage/ underage	Com. dead discards[a]	Com. catch[a]	ACL	ACL overage/ underage
2016	15.78	20.47	-23%	6.12	21.90	24.26	-10%
2017	15.52	18.38	-16%	10.43	25.95	22.15	+17%
2018	13.39	23.98	-44%	7.26	20.65	30.53	-32%
2019	13.81	23.98	-42%	6.13	19.94	28.42	-30%
2020	13.70	22.23	-38%	5.83	19.50	27.9	-30%
2021	13.16	20.5	-36%	4.26	17.35	27.15	-36%
2022	12.17	20.38	-40%	5.07	17.23	25.05	-31%
2023	13.02	14.01	-7%	6.94	19.96	19.29	+3%
2024	14.50	21.15	-31%	10.34	24.74	28.48	-13%
2025	--	19.54	--	--	--	26.85	--

[a] Commercial landings for 2016-2024 and dead discards from 2020-2024 are based on CAMS data. Commercial dead discards for 2016-2019 are from the 2025 Management Track Assessment.

In 2024, approximately 10.34 million pounds of scup were discarded in commercial fisheries, marking a 49% increase from 2023. Commercial discards had risen from 2014 to 2017, with a 70% increase just between 2016 and 2017. Discards peaked at about 10.43 million pounds in 2017, the highest since the early 1980s; this was likely due to the exceptionally large 2015-year class, the largest since 1984. As a result of the 2015-year class, scup were highly abundant in 2017 but mostly too small to meet the commercial minimum fish size of 9 inches total length. Since 2017, commercial discards have decreased (while remaining above pre-2015 levels), then increased to a level approaching the peak (Figure 3; Table 3).

The commercial scup fishery operates year-round, taking place mostly in federal waters during the winter and mostly in state waters during the summer. A coast-wide commercial quota is allocated between three quota periods, known as the winter I, summer, and winter II quota periods. These seasonal quota periods were established to ensure that both smaller day boats, which typically operate near shore in the summer months, and larger vessels operating offshore in the winter months can land scup before the annual quota is reached. The dates of the summer and winter II periods were modified in 2018 (Table 4). Both winter periods are managed under a coastwide quota while the summer period quota is divided among states according to the allocation percentages outlined in the Commission's FMP (Table 5).

Table 4: Dates, allocations, and possession limits for the commercial scup quota periods. Winter period possession limits apply in both state and federal waters.

Quota Period	Dates	Commercial quota allocated (%)	Possession limit
Winter I	January 1 – April 30	45.11%	50,000 pounds, until 80% of winter I allocation is reached, then reduced to 1,000 pounds.
Summer	May 1 – September 30[a]	38.95%	State-specific
Winter II	October 1 – December 31[a]	15.94%	12,000 pounds. If winter I quota is not reached, the winter II possession limit increases by 1,500 pounds for every 500,000 pounds of scup not landed during winter I.

[a] Prior to 2018, the summer period was May 1 - October 31 and the winter II period was November 1 - December 31, with the same allocations as shown above.

Table 5: State-by-state quota shares for the commercial scup fishery during the summer quota period (May-September).

State	Share of summer quota
Maine	0.121%
Massachusetts	21.587%
Rhode Island	56.195%
Connecticut	3.154%
New York	15.825%
New Jersey	2.917%
Maryland	0.012%
Virginia	0.165%
North Carolina	0.025%
Total	100%

Once the quota for a given period is reached, the commercial fishery is closed for the remainder of that period. If the full winter I quota is not harvested, unused quota is added to the winter II period. Any quota overages during the winter I and II periods are subtracted from the quota allocated to those periods in the following year. Quota overages during the summer period are subtracted from the following year's quota only in the states where the overages occurred.

A possession limit of 50,000 pounds is in effect during the winter I quota period. A possession limit of 12,000 pounds is in effect during the winter II period. If the winter I quota is not reached, the winter II possession limit increases by 1,500 pounds for every 500,000 pounds of quota not caught during winter I. During the summer period, various state-specific possession limits are in effect.

Since 1996, a moratorium permit has been required to fish commercially for scup. In 2024, 524 vessels held commercial moratorium permits for scup.[5] Vessels operating under the scup moratorium permit are required to use a minimum 5-inch diamond mesh throughout the codend for at least 75 continuous meshes forward of the terminus of the net. Vessels with a scup moratorium permit that are not fishing in compliance with the mesh requirements, may retain no more than 1,000 pounds of scup from October 1 to April 14, no more than 2,000 pounds of scup from April 15 through June 15, and no more than 200 pounds of scup from June 16 to September 30. Pots and traps for scup are required to have degradable hinges and escape vents that are either circular with a 3.1-inch minimum diameter or square with a minimum length of 2.25 inches on the side.

The commercial scup fishery in federal waters is predominantly a bottom otter trawl fishery. In 2024, 85% of the commercial scup landings (by weight) were caught with bottom otter trawls. Pots/traps accounted for about 9% of landings, and all other gear types, including handlines, pound nets, and other types of nets accounted for about 6% of the 2024 commercial scup landings.

CAMS data suggests that NMFS statistical areas 616, 539, 537, 611, and 613 were responsible for the largest percentage of commercial scup landings in 2024. Statistical area 539, off Rhode Island, had the highest number of trips which landed scup; however, statistical area 616 accounted for the greatest amount of scup landed (Table 6; Figure 5).

Table 6: Statistical areas which accounted for greater than 5% of the total commercial scup landings in 2024, with associated number of trips. based on CAMS data. CAMS data includes both state and federal dealer data as well as federal VTR data.

Statistical area	Percentage of 2024 commercial scup landings	Number of trips
616	25%	527
539	16%	7,508
537	12%	1,221
611	12%	5,130
613	11%	1,267
621	7%	105

[5] Source: https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/public/public/web/NEROINET/aps/permits/data/index.html.

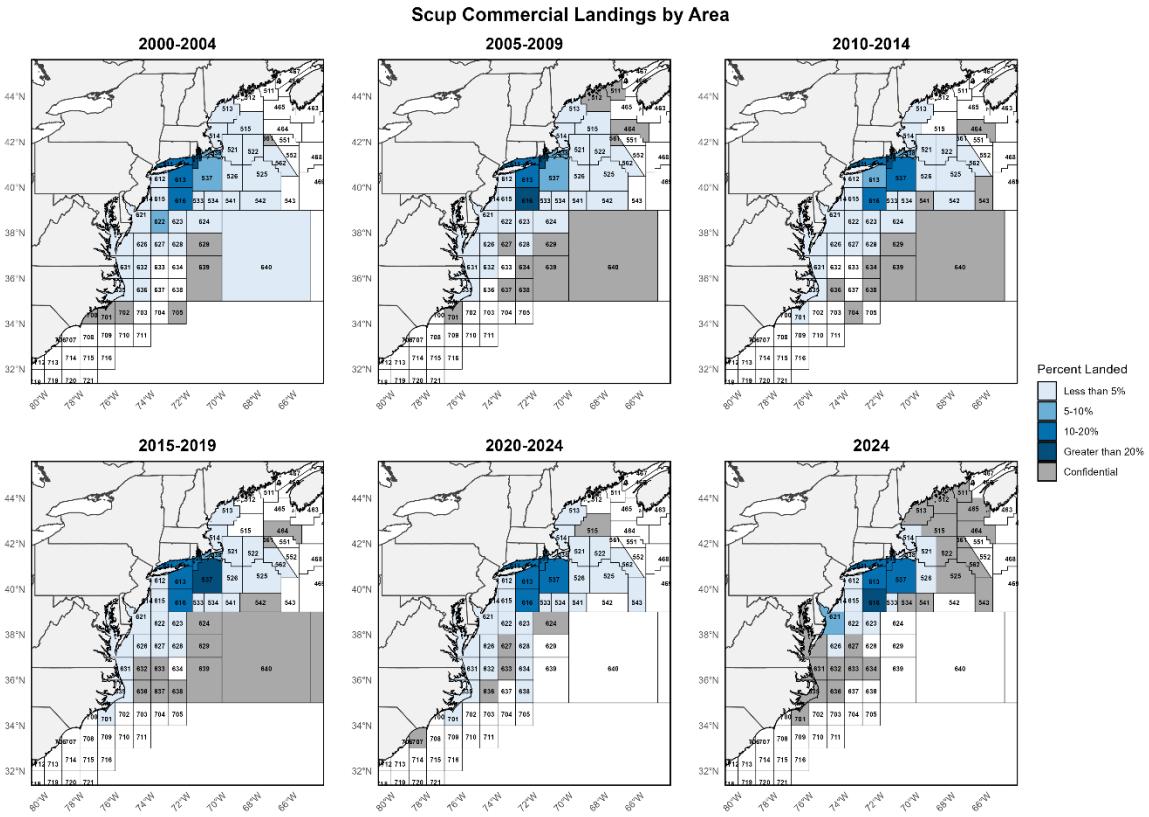

Figure 5: Percentage of scup commercial landings by statistical area from 2000 to 2024. Data are binned into 5-year time blocks with the most recent year of available data highlighted in the bottom right panel. These maps were created using data from CAMS, which includes both state and federal dealer data as well as federal VTR data.

Over the past two decades, total scup ex-vessel revenue ranged from a low of $5.70 million in 2001 to a high of $14.60 million in 2015. In 2024, total ex-vessel value was about $10.17 million with an average price per pound of $0.72 (Figure 6).

In general, the price of scup tends to be lower when landings are higher, and vice versa (Figure 5). This relationship is not linear and many other factors besides landings likely influence price. The highest average price per pound over the past two decades was about $2.61 and occurred in 1998. The lowest average price per pound was $0.68 and occurred in 2023. All revenue and price values were adjusted to 2024 dollars to account for inflation.

147 federally permitted dealers from Maine through North Carolina purchased scup in 2024. More dealers in New York purchased scup than in any other state (Table 7).

At least 100,000 pounds of scup were landed by commercial fishermen in 14 ports in 6 states in 2024, two of these ports; however, include confidential information. The top non-confidential ports accounted for approximately 89% of all 2024 commercial scup landings. Point Judith, Rhode Island was the leading port, both in terms of landings and number of vessels landing scup (Table 8). Detailed community profiles developed by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center's Social Science Branch can be found at www.mafmc.org/communities/.

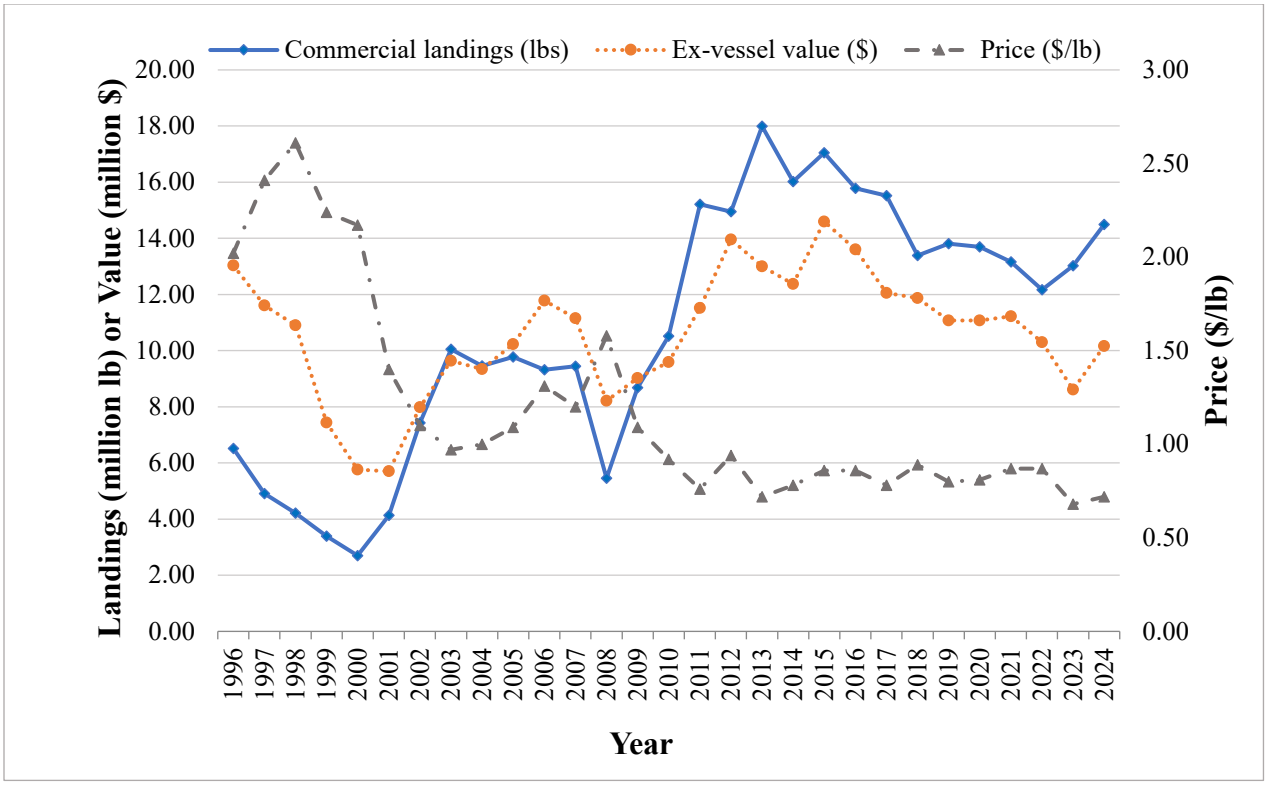

Figure 6: Landings, ex-vessel value, and price per pound for scup from Maine through North Carolina, 1996-2024 based on CAMS data. Ex-vessel value and price are inflation-adjusted to 2024 dollars using the Gross Domestic Product Price Deflator.

Table 7: Number of dealers per state which reported purchases of scup in 2024.

State	MA	RI	CT	NY	NJ	DE	MD	VA	NC
Number of Dealers	30	29	13	37	15	3	5	9	6

Table 8: Ports reporting at least 100,000 pounds of scup landings in 2024, associated number of vessels, and percentage of total commercial landings. An additional port in New York and another in Virginia also had more than 100,000 pounds of commercial scup landings; however, the values are confidential as they are associated with fewer than three vessels and/or dealers.

Port	Scup landings (lbs.)	% of total landings	Number of vessels
Point Judith, RI	5,454,288	38%	269
Cape May, NJ	2,273,831	16%	31
Montauk, NY	1,918,354	13%	135
Point Pleasant, NJ	1,477,797	10%	37
New Bedford, MA	467,238	3%	154
Mattituck, NY	317,381	2%	25
Hampton Bays, NY	283,656	2%	29
New London, CT	168,259	1%	19
Little Compton, RI	153,192	1%	32
Westport, MA	138,521	1%	24
Hampton, VA	137,719	1%	18
Stonington, CT	128,526	1%	47

The top non-target species in the commercial scup fishery were identified based on raw data from Northeast Fisheries Observer Program (NEFOP) observed trips from 2019-2023 where scup made up at least 75% of the landings by weight. Using this definition of a directed trip, the most common non-target species in the scup fishery include spiny dogfish, northern sea robin, little skate, summer flounder, and black sea bass (Table 9).

Table 9: Percent of non-target species caught in observed trawls where scup made up at least 75% of the observed landings, 2019-2023. Only those non-target species comprising at least 2% of the aggregate catch are listed.

Species	% of total catch on scup observed directed trips, 2019-2023[a]
DOGFISH, SPINY	8.0%
SEA ROBIN, NORTHERN	3.7%
SKATE, LITTLE	3.3%
FLOUNDER, SUMMER (FLUKE)	2.6%
SEA BASS, BLACK	2.5%

[a] Percentages shown are aggregate totals over 2019-2023 and do not reflect the percentages of non-target species caught on individual trips. This analysis describes only observed trips and has not been expanded to the fishery as a whole.

Scup Gear Restricted Areas

Two scup gear restricted areas (GRAs) were first implemented in 2000 with the goal of reducing scup discards in small-mesh fisheries. The GRA boundaries have been modified multiple times since their initial implementation. The current boundaries are shown in Figure 8. Trawl vessels may not fish for or possess longfin squid, black sea bass, or silver hake in the Northern GRA from November 1 – December 31 and in the Southern GRA from January 1 – March 15 unless they use mesh which is at least 5 inches in diameter. The GRAs are thought to have contributed to the

recovery of the scup population in the mid- to late-2000s (Terceiro and Miller 2014). As previously stated, commercial scup discards increased by 70% between 2016 and 2017, likely due to the large 2015-year class (Table 3; Figure 3). In 2023, the Council and Board reviewed a commercial discard report and GRA analysis.[6] During the discussion the Council and Board recommended building on the analysis to investigate potential modifications to the GRAs. The Council is working with a contractor in 2024-2025 to complete this work.[7]

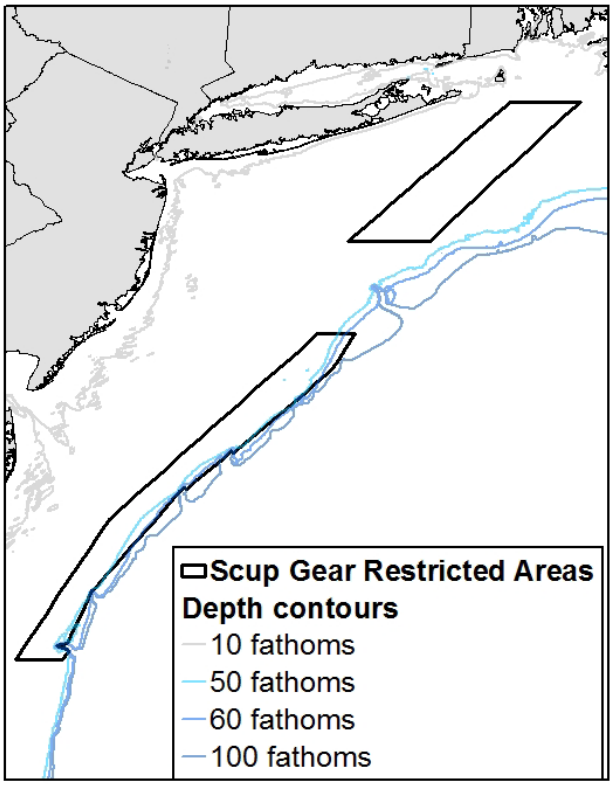

Figure 7: The Scup Gear Restricted Areas.

Recreational Fishery

Scup are a popular recreational fish and are managed on a coastwide basis in federal waters. Federal waters measures remained unchanged from 2015-2021. Measures were then restricted for the 2022 fishing year, and again for 2023 (Table 10). In 2024, the open season in federal waters was adjusted back to a year-round open season; however, given the minimal expected harvest that occurs from January-March of each year in federal waters this change was expected to have minimal to no impact on overall recreational harvest. State waters recreational measures were restricted for 2023 and 2024 and left unchanged for 2025 (Table 11).

[6] A copy of the Draft 2023 Commercial Discard Report and GRA Analysis can be found here: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/511cdc7fe4b00307a2628ac6/t/64c4132b4e00350a49cc85d9/1690571564804/Tab03_Scup+Commercial+Discards+Report.pdf.

[7] The Request for Proposal announcement can be found here: https://www.mafmc.org/newsfeed/2024/deadline-extended-may-24-request-for-proposals-for-collaborative-strategies-to-adapt-scup-gear-restricted-areas-gra-to-changing-ocean-conditions.

Prior to 2023, recreational bag, size, and season limits were set with the goal of allowing harvest to meet but not exceed the RHL. Starting in 2023, recreational measures are now set based on a process called the Percent Change Approach which considers both expected harvest under status quo measures compared to the upcoming RHL, as well as the most recent estimate of biomass compared to the target level when determining if and how measures should change. The Percent Change Approach can require measures to achieve a level of expected harvest that is equal to, less than, or higher than the RHL, depending on the considerations of expected harvest under status quo measures and biomass compared to the target level.[8]

For 2024, state waters measures were restricted with the goal of achieving 13.76 million pounds of coastwide harvest. The final 2024 MRIP landings estimate is 11.00 million pounds, about 20% less than the target of 13.76 million pounds and 17% less than the RHL of 13.18 million pounds (Table 12).

Table 10: Federal recreational measures for scup, 2008-2025.

Regs	2008-2009	2010-2011	2012	2013	2014	2015-2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Min size (total length)	10.5 in.	10.5 in.	10.5 in.	10 in.	9 in.	9 in.	10 in.	10 in.	10 in.	10 in.
Possession limit	15	10	20	30	30	50	50	40	40	40
Open season	Jan 1 – Feb 28 & Oct 1– Oct 31	Jun 6 – Sept 26	Jan 1 – Dec 31	Jan 1 – Dec 31	Jan 1 – Dec 31	Jan 1 – Dec 31	Jan 1 – Dec 31	May 1 – Dec 31	Jan 1 – Dec 31	Jan 1 – Dec 31

[8] Additional information on the Percent Change Approach is available at https://www.mafmc.org/actions/hcr-framework-addenda.

Table 11: State recreational fishing measures for scup in 2024 and 2025.

State	Mode	Size Limit	Possession Limit	Open Season
MA	Shore	9.5”	30 fish	May 1 – December 31
	Private	11”		
	For-Hire	11”	40 fish	May 1 – June 30
			30 fish	July 1 – December 31
RI	Shore	9.5”	30 fish	May 1 – December 31
	Private	11”		
	For-Hire	11”	30 fish	May 1 – August 31
			40 fish	September 1 – October 31
			30 fish	November 1 – October 31
CT	Shore	9.5”	30 fish	May 1 – December 31
	Private	11”		
	For-Hire	11”	30 fish	May 1 – August 31
			40 fish	September 1 – October 31
			30 fish	November 1 – December 31
NY	Shore	9.5”	30 fish	May 1 – December 31
	Private	11”		
	For-Hire	11”	30 fish	May 1 – August 31
			40 fish	September 1 – October 31
			30 fish	November 1 – December 31
NJ	All	10”	30 fish	January 1 – June 30
				September 1 – December 31
DE	All	9”	30 fish	January 1 – December 31
MD				
VA				
NC North of Cape Hatteras (N of 35° 15’N)				

From 1996-2024, MRIP estimates indicate that recreational catch of scup (in number of fish) peaked in 2017 at 41.20 million scup and landings peaked in 2022 with an estimated 17.71 million scup landed by recreational fishermen from Maine through North Carolina. Recreational catch was lowest in 1997 and 1998 when an estimated 6.60 and 6.86 million scup were caught and 3.64 and 2.74 million scup were landed, respectively. In 2024, recreational anglers from Maine through North Carolina caught an estimated 27.74 million scup and landed 10.89 million scup (about 11 million pounds; Figure 9; Table 12).

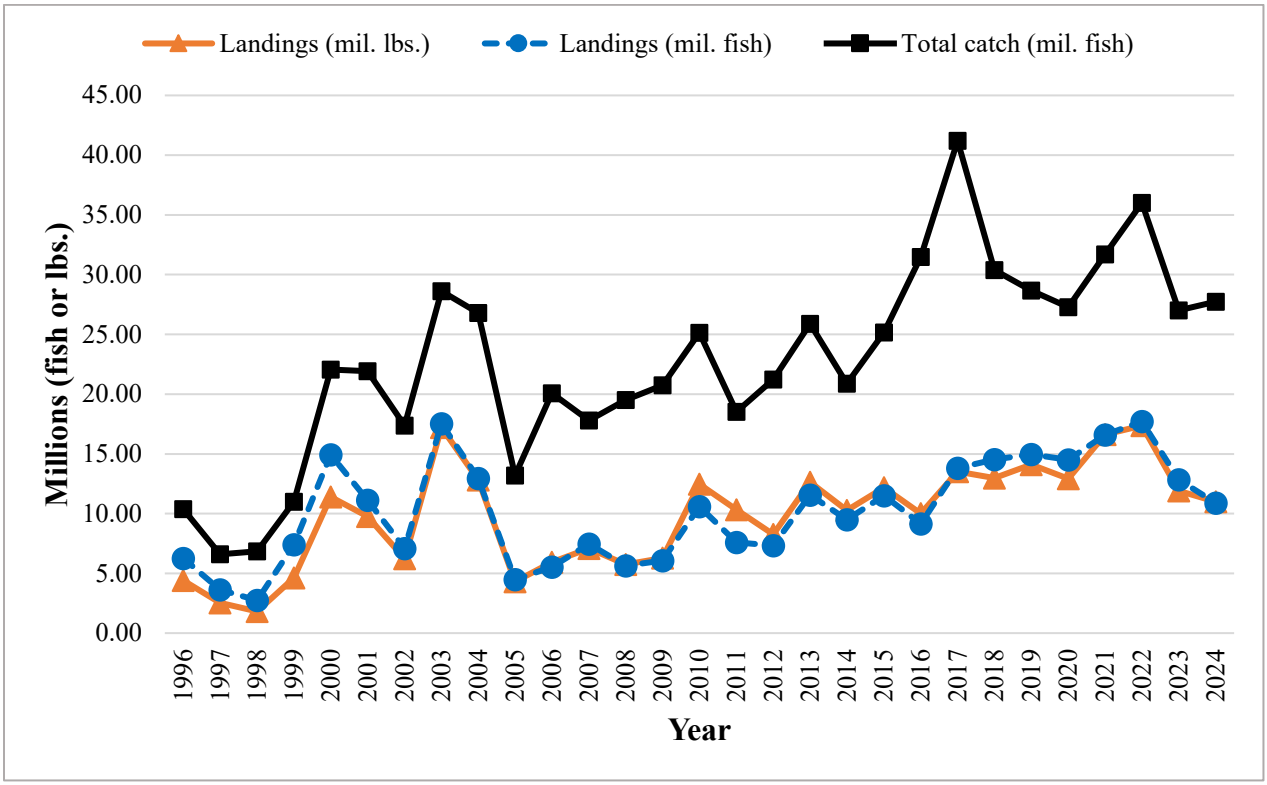

Figure 8: MRIP estimates of recreational scup landings in numbers of fish and pounds and catch in numbers of fish, ME - NC, 1996-2024.

Table 12: Scup recreational landings, dead discards, and catch compared to the RHL, recreational dead discards, and recreational ACL, 2015-2023. Information is provided in the "old" MRIP units for 2015-2019, and in the "new" MRIP units for 2020-2023. For scup, ACLs and RHLs did not account for the revised MRIP data until 2020. Therefore, overage/underage evaluations must be based in the old MRIP units through 2019 and the new MRIP units starting in 2020. All values are in millions of pounds.

Year	Version of MRIP data used	Rec. landings[a]	RHL	RHL over/ under	Rec. dead disc.[b]	Rec. dead catch	ACL	ACL over/ under
2016	Old MRIP (pre-revision)	4.26	6.09	*-30%*	0.78	5.04	6.84	-26%
2017		5.42	5.5	*-1%*	0.90	6.32	6.25	1%
2018		5.61	7.37	*-24%*	0.60	6.21	8.61	-28%
2019	Old MRIP (provided by NEFSC)	5.41	7.37	*-27%*	1.23	6.64	8.01	-17%
2020[c]	New MRIP (post-revision)	12.91	6.51	*98%*	1.19	14.10	7.87	79%
2021		16.62	6.07	*174%*	1.44	18.06	7.66	136%
2022		17.36	6.08	*186%*	1.68	19.04	7.06	170%
2023		11.91	9.27	*28%*[d]	1.34	13.25	10.39	28%
2024		11.00	13.18	*-17%*[d]	1.63	12.63	15.34	-18%
2025		--	12.31	--	--	--	14.46	--

[a] Based on MRIP data for all years except 2018 and 2019. Estimates in the "old" MRIP units were not available for those years, but were necessary for comparing against the RHL. Therefore, NMFS used alternative methods to calculate the 2018 and 2019 estimates shown here.

[b] Estimates for 2016-2017 are from a data update provided by the NEFSC in 2018 (most recent data from NEFSC in "old" MRIP units; NEFSC 2018). Estimates in the "old" MRIP units were not available for 2018-2019, but were necessary for comparing against the ACL. Therefore, NMFS used alternative methods to calculate the 2018 and 2019 estimates shown here. Estimates for 2020-2024 are from the 2025 Management Track Assessment report.

[c] Recreational harvest estimates for 2020 were impacted by temporary suspension of shoreside intercept surveys due to COVID-19. NMFS used imputation methods to fill gaps in 2020 catch data with data collected in 2018 and 2019. For scup, the 2020 harvest estimate relied on approximately 25% imputed data. For more information on imputation methods see: https://www.mafmc.org/s/1-2020-Marine-Recreational-Catch-Estimates-QA-52121.pdf.

[d] Recreational measures for 2023-2025 were set using the Percent Change Approach, as implemented through Framework 17. Under this new process, measures are no longer set with the primary goal of allowing harvest to meet but not exceed the RHL. Instead, 2023 as well as 2024-2025 measures were set with the goal of achieving a 10% reduction in harvest compared to the expectation of harvest in each year if the previous year's measures had remained in place. Specifically, the recreational measures implemented in 2023 aimed to achieve a target of 12.88 million pounds of harvest and in 2024-2025 a target of 13.76 million pounds of harvest.

Vessels carrying passengers for hire in federal waters must obtain a federal party/charter permit. In 2024, 859 vessels held scup federal party/charter permits. Many of these vessels also held party/charter permits for summer flounder and black sea bass.

An estimated 3.36 million recreational trips from Maine through North Carolina targeted scup as either the primary or secondary target species in 2024. This represents about a 17% increase compared to 2023 (2.87 million trips).

Most recreational scup catch occurs in state waters during the warmer months when the fish migrate inshore. Between 2022 and 2024, on average 95% of recreational scup catch (in numbers of fish) occurred in state waters and about 5% occurred in federal waters (Table 13). New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New Jersey accounted for over 99% of recreational scup harvest in 2024 (Table 14).

About 49% of recreational scup landings (in numbers of fish) in 2024 were from anglers who fished on private or rental boats and about 41% were from anglers fishing from shore. Additionally, about 11% were from anglers fishing on party or charter boats (Table 15).

Table 13: Estimated percent of scup recreation landings (in numbers of fish) from state vs. federal waters, Maine through North Carolina, 2015-2024.

Year	State waters	Federal waters
2015	99%	1%
2016	95%	5%
2017	97%	3%
2018	96%	4%
2019	97%	3%
2020	90%	10%
2021	96%	4%
2022	97%	3%
2023	95%	5%
2024	**94%**	**6%**
2015-2024 average	**96%**	**4%**
2022-2024 average	**95%**	**5%**

Table 14: State contribution (as a percentage) of total recreational landings of scup (in numbers of fish), from Maine through North Carolina, 2022-2024.

State	2022	2023	2024	2022-2024 average
Maine	0%	0%	0%	0%
New Hampshire	0%	0%	0%	0%
Massachusetts	12%	13%	12%	13%
Rhode Island	17%	17%	24%	19%
Connecticut	11%	18%	10%	13%
New York	59%	51%	53%	54%
New Jersey	1%	1%	1%	1%
Delaware	0.01%	0.05%	0%	0.02%
Maryland	0.01%	0%	0%	0%
Virginia	0%	0%	0%	0%
North Carolina	0.02%	0.03%	0%	0.02%

Table 15: Percentage of scup recreational landings (in numbers of fish) by fishing mode, from Maine through North Carolina, 2015-2024. Due to rounding, the annual percentages may not equal 100% exactly.

Year	Private/rental	Shore	Party/charter
2015	76%	17%	8%
2016	56%	34%	10%
2017	65%	24%	11%
2018	48%	43%	9%
2019	56%	29%	15%
2020	62%	28%	10%
2021	73%	18%	9%
2022	67%	25%	8%
2023	53%	36%	12%
2024	49%	41%	11%
2015-2024 average	60%	29%	10%
2022-2024 average	56%	34%	10%

A species guild approach was used to identify other species commonly caught with scup in the recreational fishery from 2017-2021 (2021 MRIP data used here were preliminary and excluded wave 6). Black sea bass, sea robins, summer flounder, bluefish, and tautog were highly correlated with recreational scup catch. (J. Brust, personal communication March 2022).

References

Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC). 2015. 60th Northeast Regional Stock Assessment (60th SAW) assessment report. Northeast Fisheries Science Center Reference Document 15-08. Available at: http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/publications/.

Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC). 2023. Scup 2023 Management Track Assessment Report. Available at: https://apps-nefsc.fisheries.noaa.gov/saw/sasi.php.

Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC). 2025. Scup 2025 Management Track Assessment Report. Available at: https://apps-nefsc.fisheries.noaa.gov/saw/sasi.php.

Steimle, F.W, C. A. Zetlin, P. L. Berrien, D. L. Johnson, S. Chang. 1999. Essential Fish Habitat source document: Scup, *Stenotomus chrysops*, life history and habitat characteristics. NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-NE-149; 39 p.

Terceiro, M., A. Miller. 2014. Commercial fishery scup discarding and the Gear Restricted Areas (GRAs). White paper for the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. 30 p.