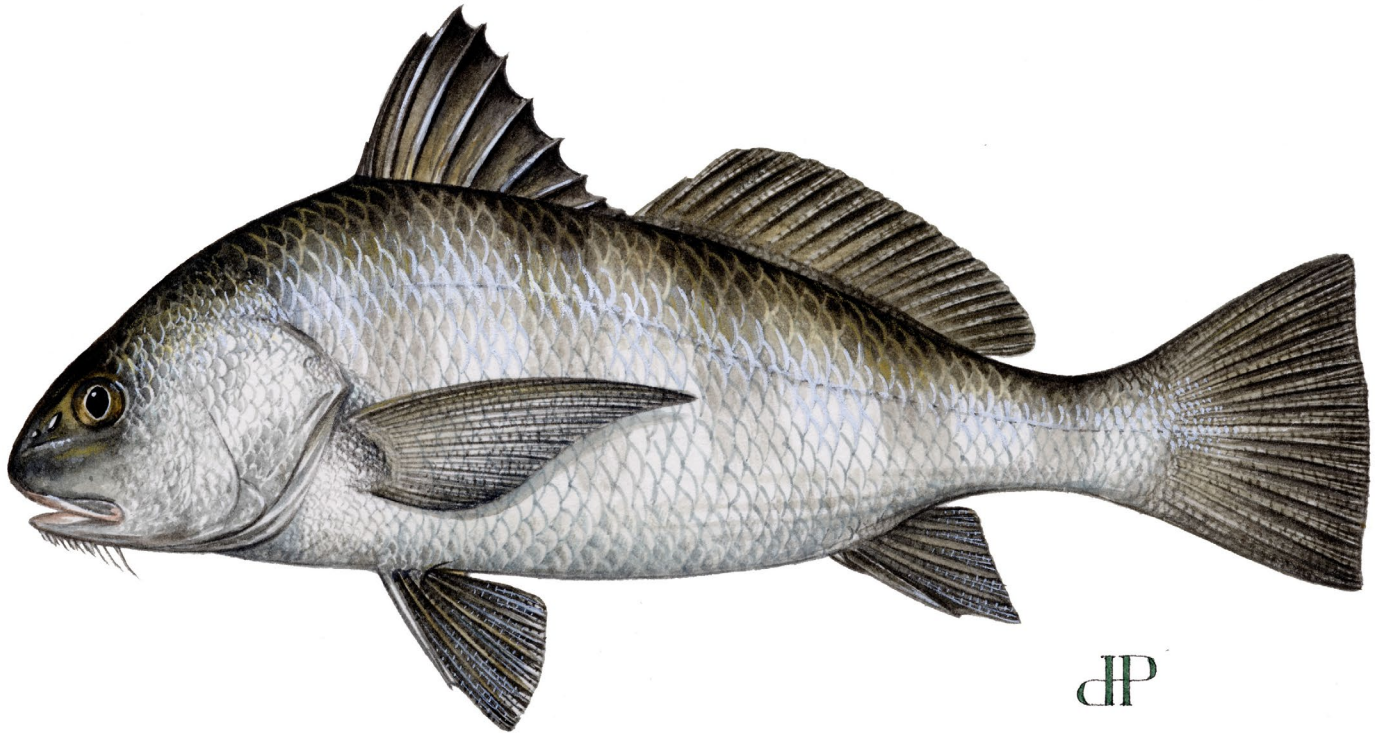
Management Profile for Gulf of America Black Drum (*Pogonias cromis*)



Progress on Profile Development

Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission Black Drum Technical Taskforce

October 2025

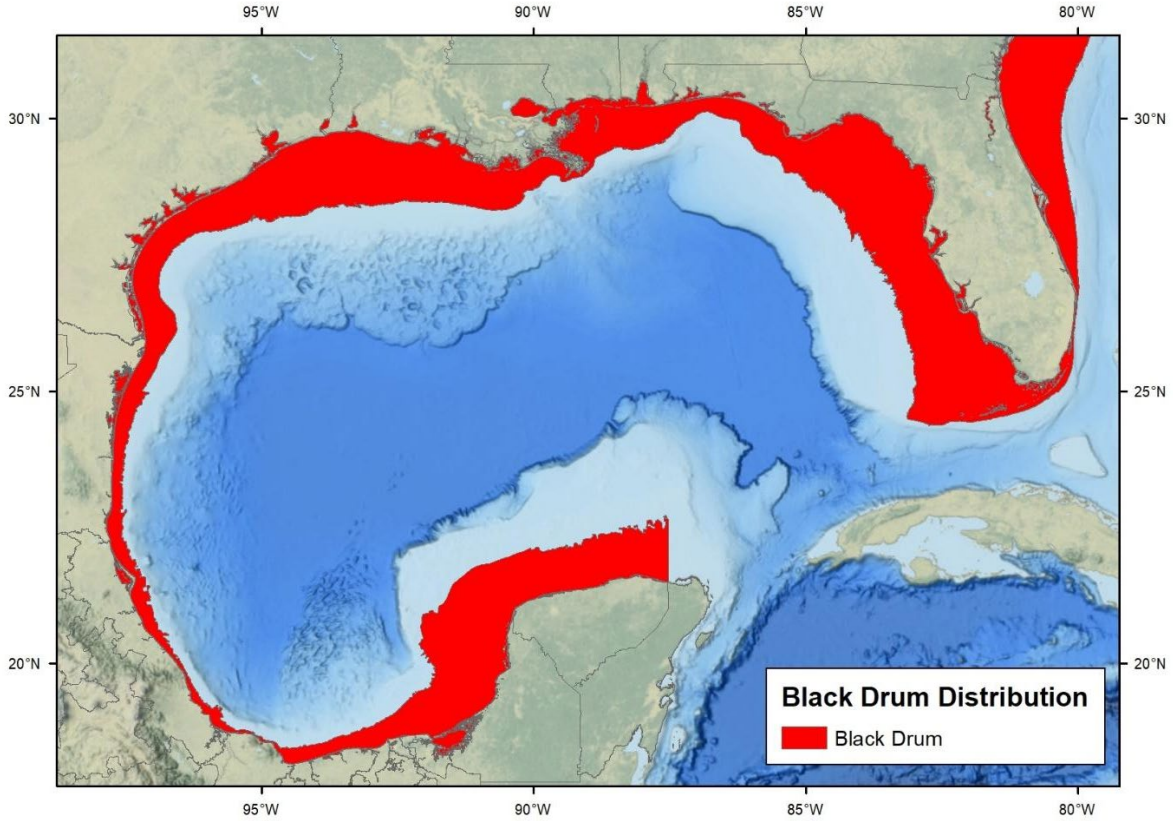
Gulf Black Drum

Distribution

- Coastal waters throughout the Gulf, along the Atlantic coast from Florida through Massachusetts
- Primarily occupy bays and estuaries

Habitat & Diet

- Prefer muddy substrates
- Feed on benthic infauna
- Highly adaptable to varying temperatures and salinities



Life History & Morphology

- Reach weights over 100 lb. and lengths over 3 ft.
- Maximum age estimated from 40 to 60 years
- Mature around 5 to 6 years
- Both sexes produce drumming sounds
- Regional variation in appearance and abnormalities

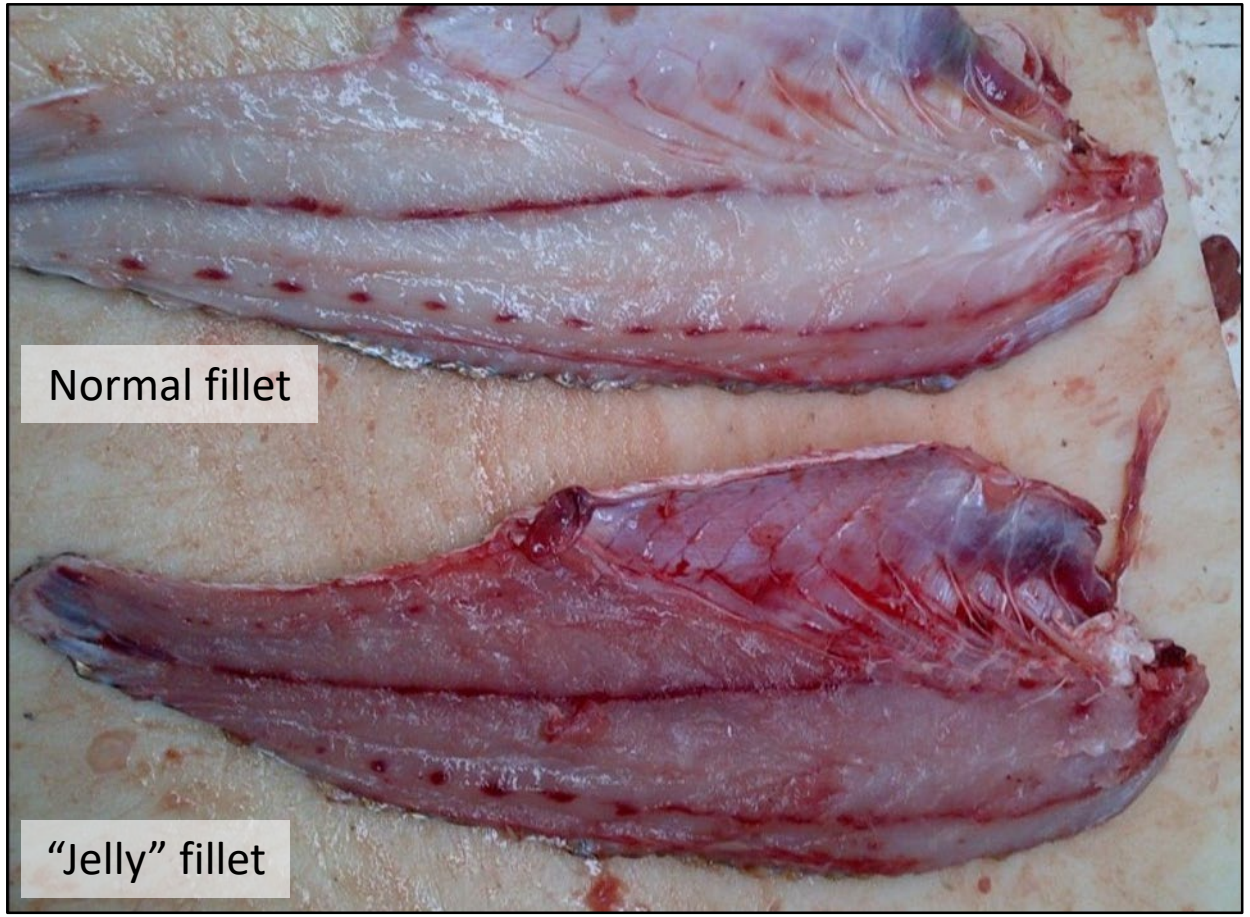
Parasites & Disease

Common Parasites

- Tapeworm larvae, “spaghetti worms”
- Copepods (external)
- Isopods (gill filaments, opercula)

Diseases

- Emaciation events

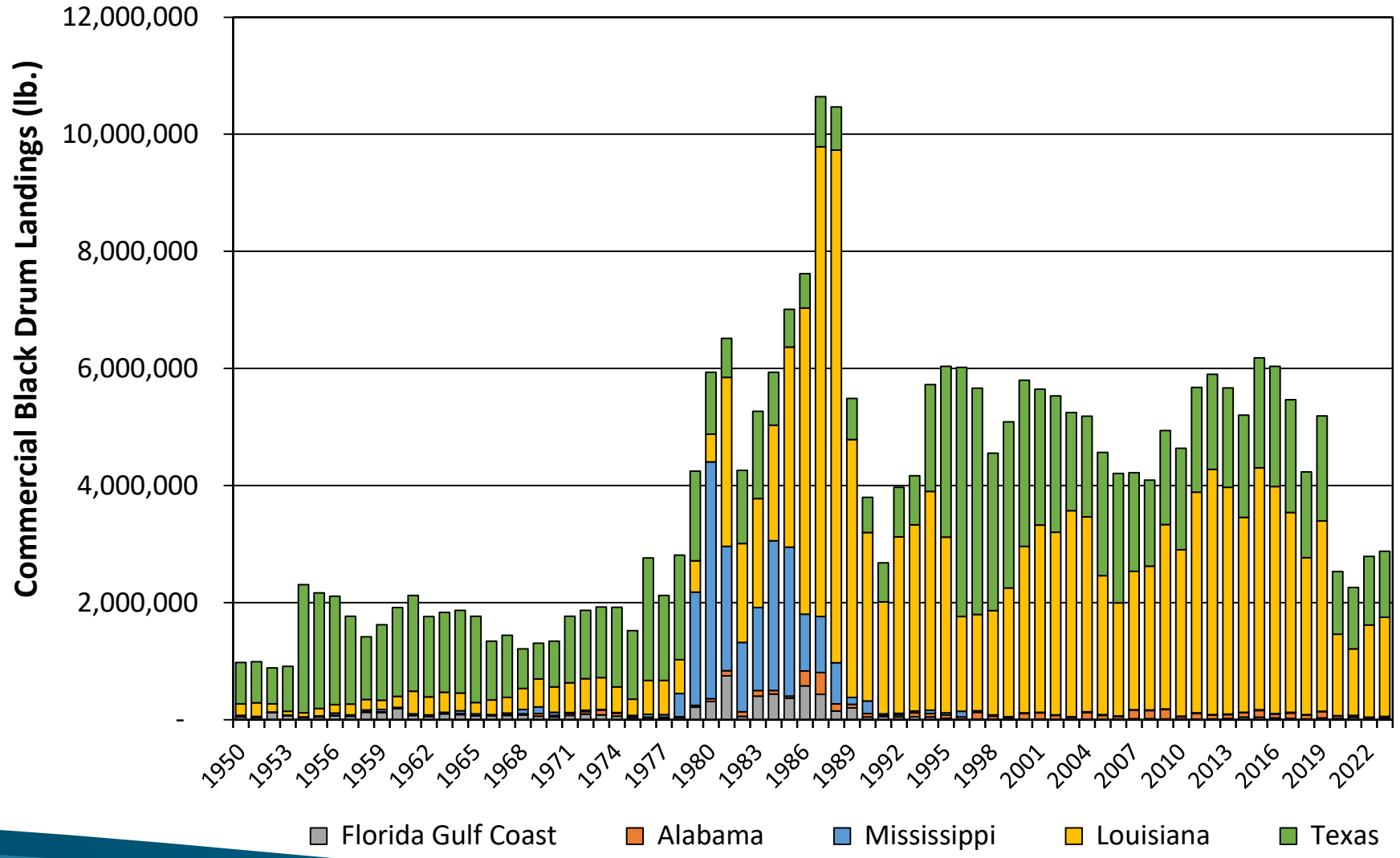


Reproduction

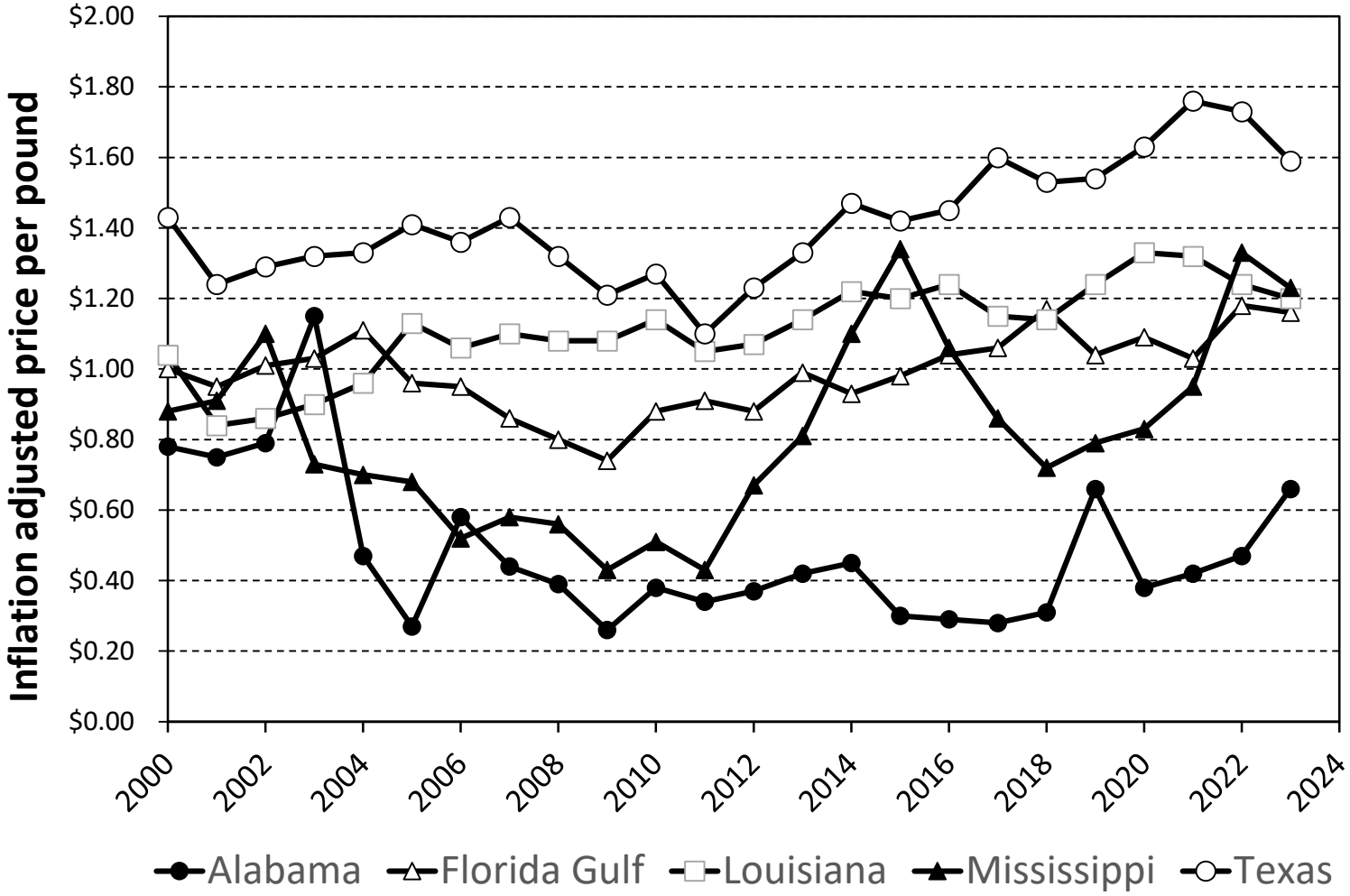
- Group synchronous batch spawners
- Most spawning occurs late fall through early spring
  - Varies regionally
  - Causes of regional variation not well understood

Year	Location	July				Aug				Sept				Oct				Nov				Dec				Jan				Feb				March				April				May				June			
1971	Florida - south																																													
1990	Florida - west (TB)																																													
2007	Florida - west (CH)																																													
1993	Louisiana																																													
1993	Louisiana																																													
1993	LA & MS																																													
1929	Texas																																													
1983	Texas																																													
1985	Texas																																													

Commercial Fishery Landings



Commercial Fishery: Dockside Value

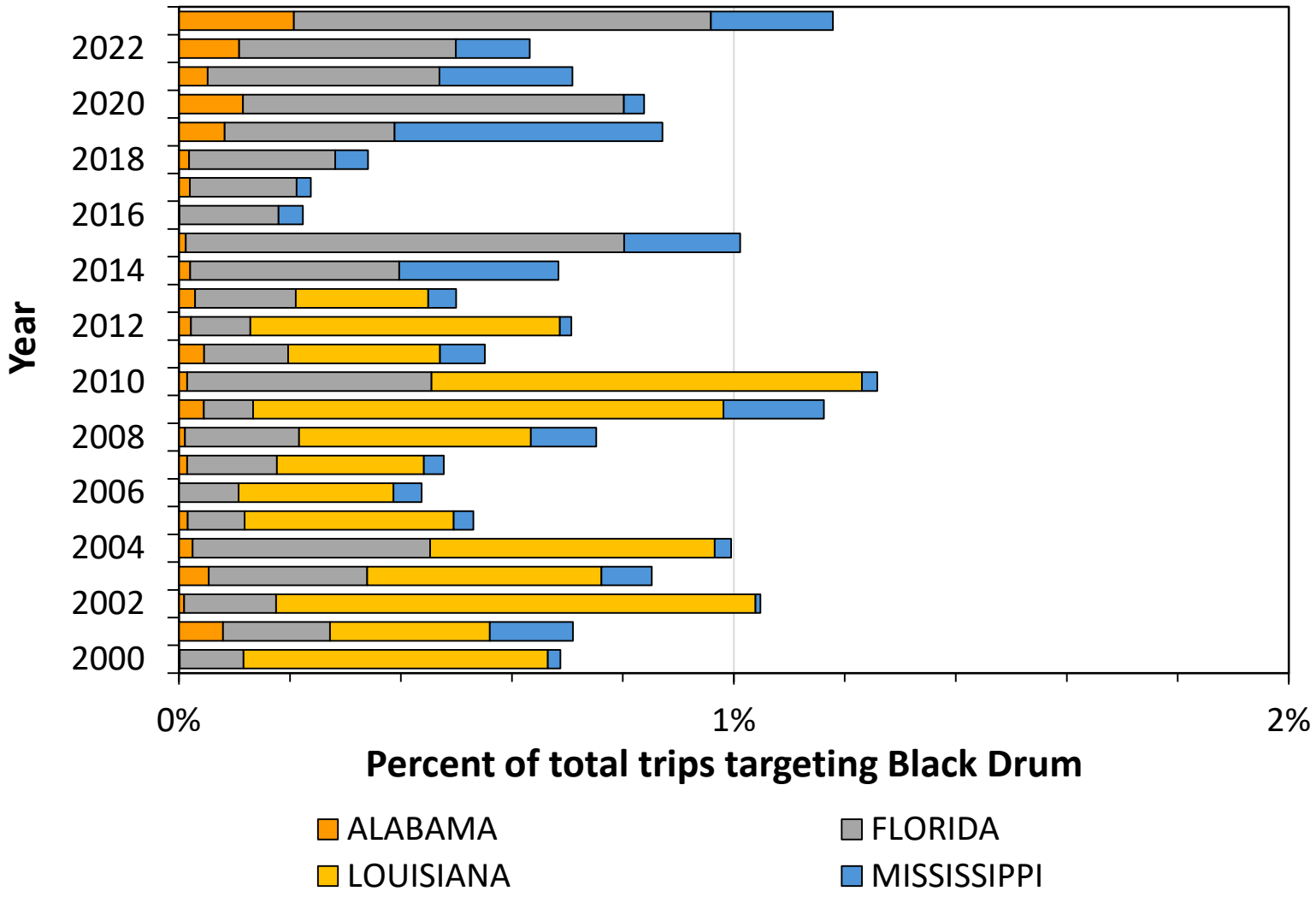


- Gulf-wide, price per pound peaked in 2020 at $1.33/lb., declined to $1.20/lb. in 2023
  - TX has had highest price/lb.
- Total dockside value declined over the last decade
  - $7.9 million in 2016
  - $3.9 million in 2022-23

Recreational Fishery

- Easily targeted by anglers without access to a vessel
- Far more likely to be targeted by shore-based anglers than more popular sport fish
- Smaller drum generally preferred, MRIP data indicates size preferences vary by state

Recreational Fishery Popularity

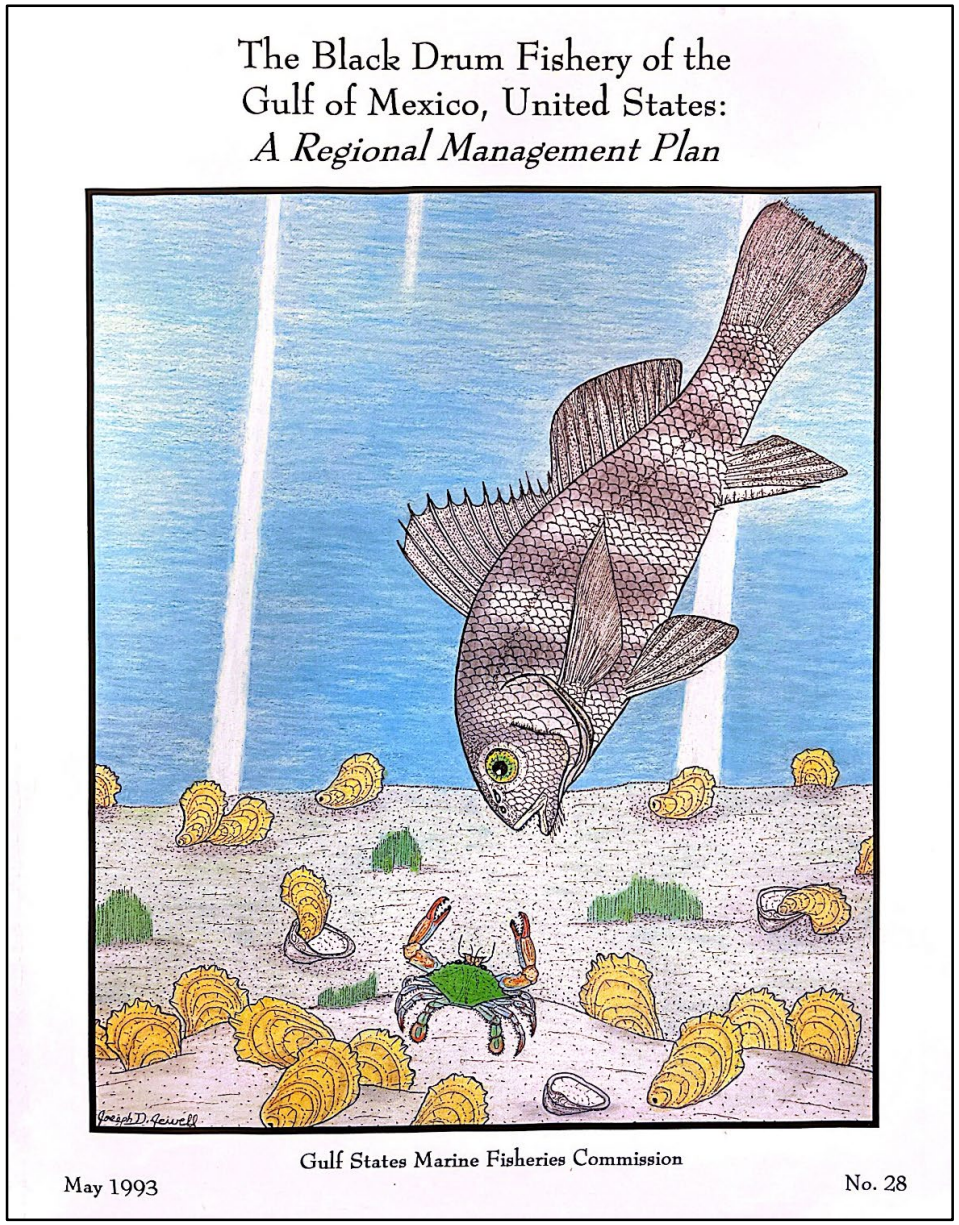


Fishery Management

State	Size limits	Commercial Catch Limit	Recreational Bag Limit	Gear restrictions
Florida	14 - 24", one >24"	500 lb./day *(vessel limit)*	5 per person per day	Snagging prohibited
Alabama	None	None	None	Purse seines, hook-and-line with >5 hooks prohibited
Mississippi	None	None	None	None
Louisiana	16 - 27", one >27"	16-27": 3.25M lb. >27": 300k fish *(quota)*	5 per person per day	None
Texas	14 - 30", one >52"	None	5 per person per day	All legal gears and methods allowed

Status of the Fishery

- No formal regional assessment since the 1993 FMP
- Recent estimates from Louisiana indicate that local stocks are not overfished or undergoing overfishing
- Florida monitoring through a combination of commercial, recreational, and fisheries independent data
- Anecdotally, Florida anglers do not have concerns about Black Drum populations



Knowledge Gaps

Movement & Habitat Use

- Estuarine egress and ingress, residency patterns
- Migration/movement patterns between Gulf and Atlantic
- Offshore occurrences and distribution

Fish Health

- Causes of emaciation events and potential synergistic effects of environmental factors

Population Analyses

- Lacking genetic work in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi

Growth & Reproduction

- Potential responses to climate change, shifts in growth and spawning already observed in Texas
- Environmental queues that act as spawning predictors
- Batch fecundity in Florida and Alabama

Fisheries & Culture

- Characterize commercial fishery participants and related fisheries
- Recreational use and perceptions
- Subsistence use and shore-based fishing pressure

Profile Contributors

GSMFC Staff

- Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
- Keith Wilson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

TTF Members

- Jessica Marchant, ADCNR, Dauphin Island, AL
- Wade Hardy, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
- Jack Isaacs, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
- Jeff Rester, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
- Catherine Eckert, Corpus Christi, TX
- Rachel Bratton, FWC, Gainesville, FL
- Erin Parker (chair), FWC, St. Petersburg, FL
- Dean Aucoin, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
- David Norris, LDWF, Bourg, LA
- Joel Anderson, TPWD, Palacios, TX