

Reef Fish Amendment 65:

Regional Management of Recreational Greater Amberjack



**GULF
COUNCIL**

June 2026 : Tab B, No. 8

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Background: Recreational Management

- **Greater amberjack is a highly desirable species**
 - Occurs Gulf-wide
 - Targeted by both sectors
- **Intensively managed but long-overfished**
 - Rebuilding plans and management changes have not achieved desired outcomes
 - Stock expected to rebuild by 2027
- **Required reductions in catch limits, trip limits (commercial), and season durations have reduced angler satisfaction**



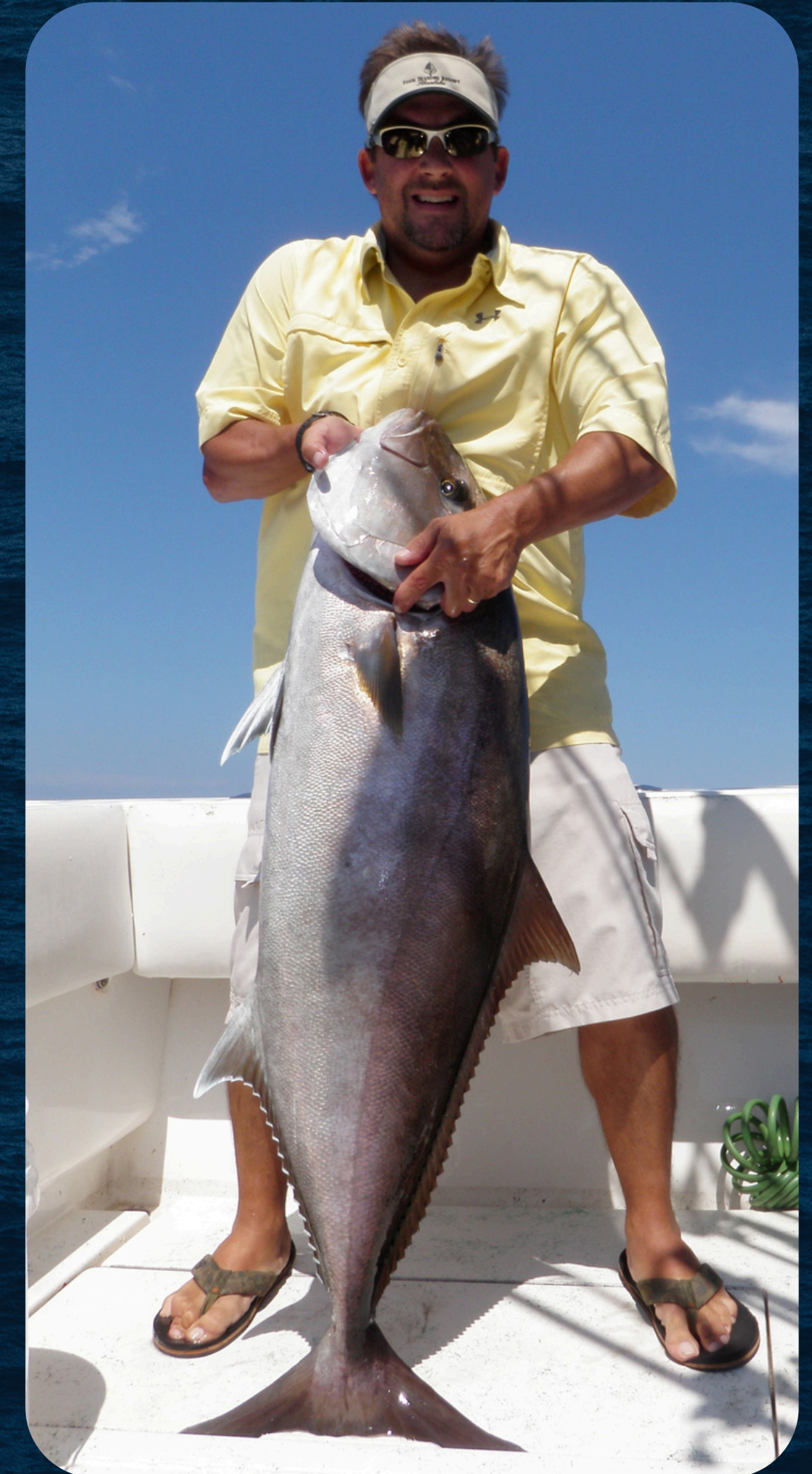
Where are we now?

- **The outcome of the next greater amberjack stock assessment will determine the effectiveness of the rebuilding plan**
 - A recent interim analyses indicated a stable, but not increasing population
- **If the stock continues to be overfished and/or overfishing**
 - ACLs are unlikely to increase in the near future
- A rebuilt stock could provide considerably more harvest opportunities and provide more options for state-specific management



Purpose & Need

- **To increase angler satisfaction while meeting the goals of the rebuilding program**
- **State management of the recreational sector could:**
 - Provide more desirable access windows
 - Improve recreational landings estimates and harvest monitoring
 - Reduce discards by targeting during desired seasons



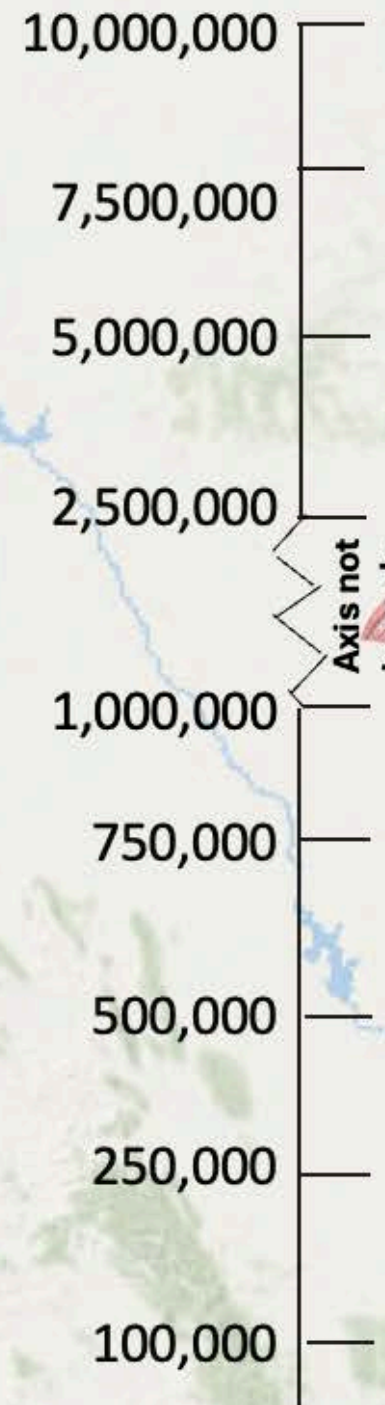
How do we improve access despite data limitations and small catch limits?



Recreational Annual Catch Limit

lbs. whole weight

2026 Recreational Annual Catch Limits



Red Snapper
7,991,900 lbs.



King Mackerel
6,793,200 lbs.



Red Grouper
2,110,000 lbs.*



Greater Amberjack
404,000 lbs.



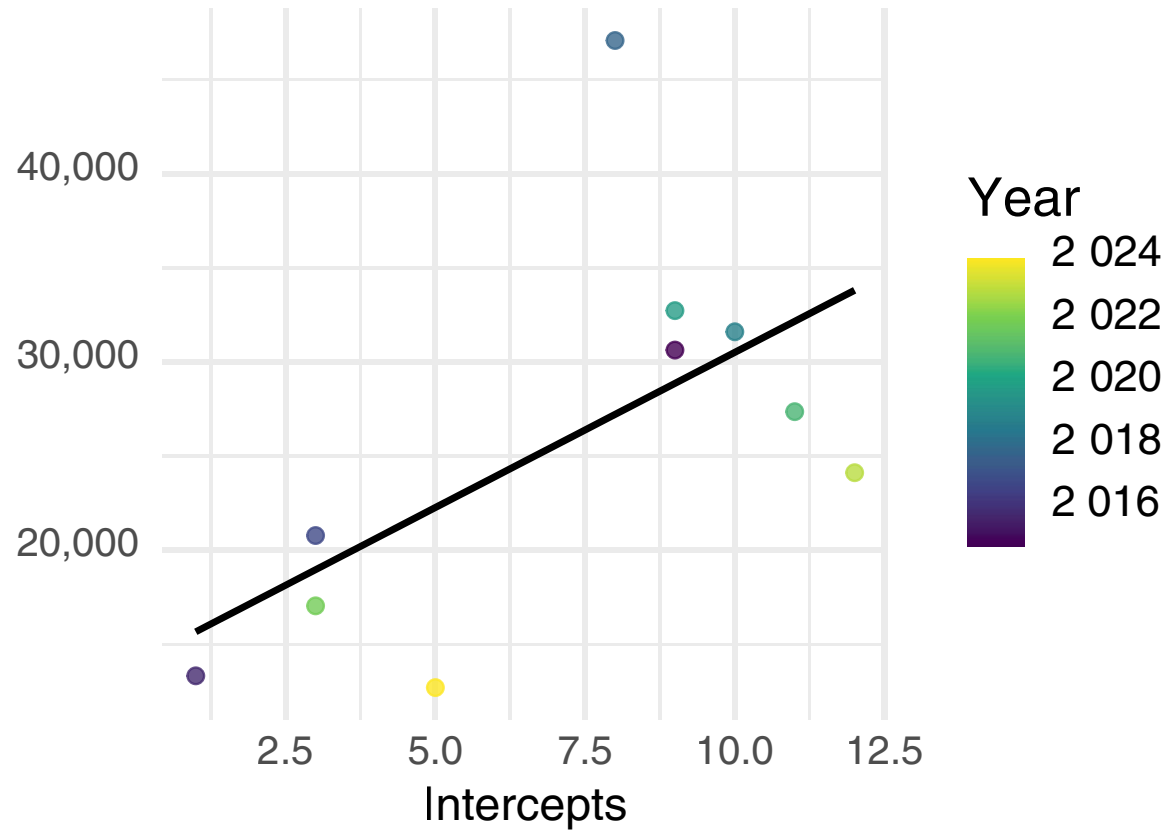
Gag Grouper
399,000 lbs.



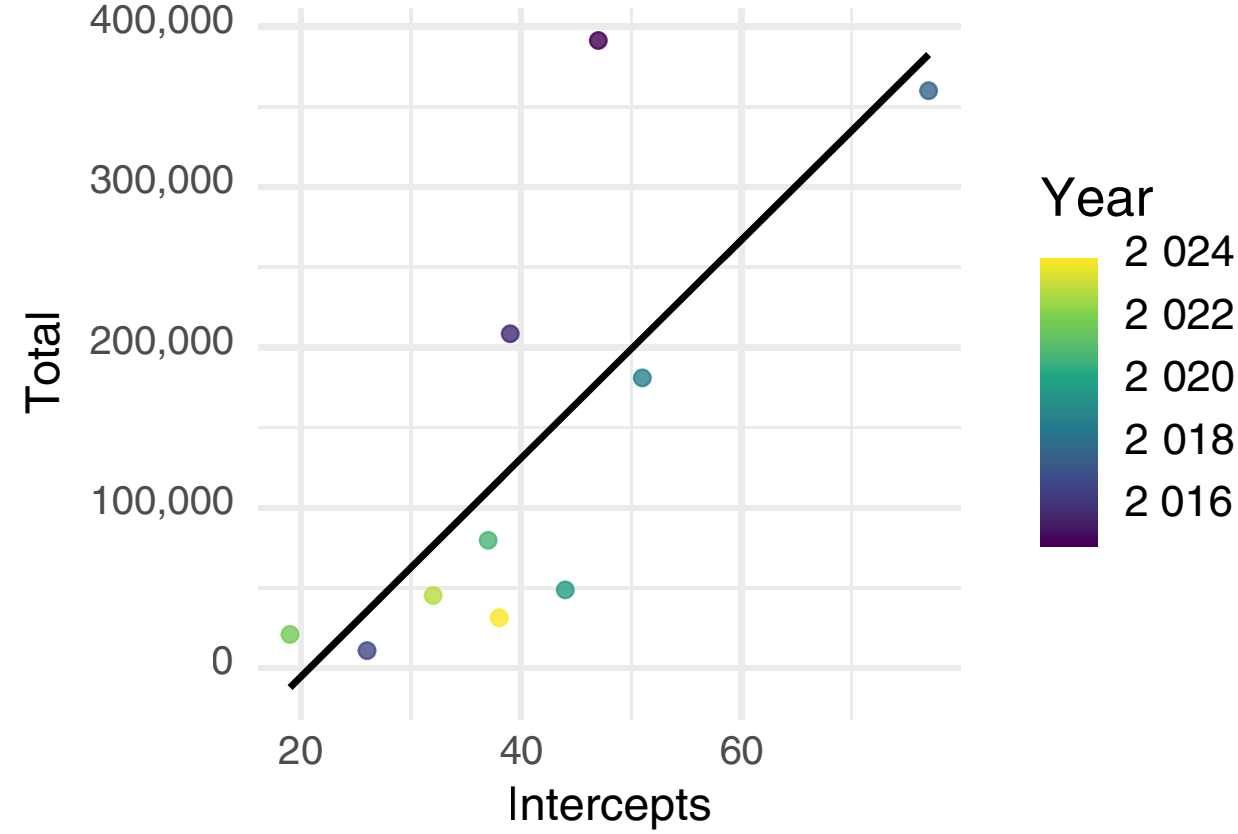
Gray Triggerfish
360,951 lbs.

Recreational
2026 Annual
Catch Limit

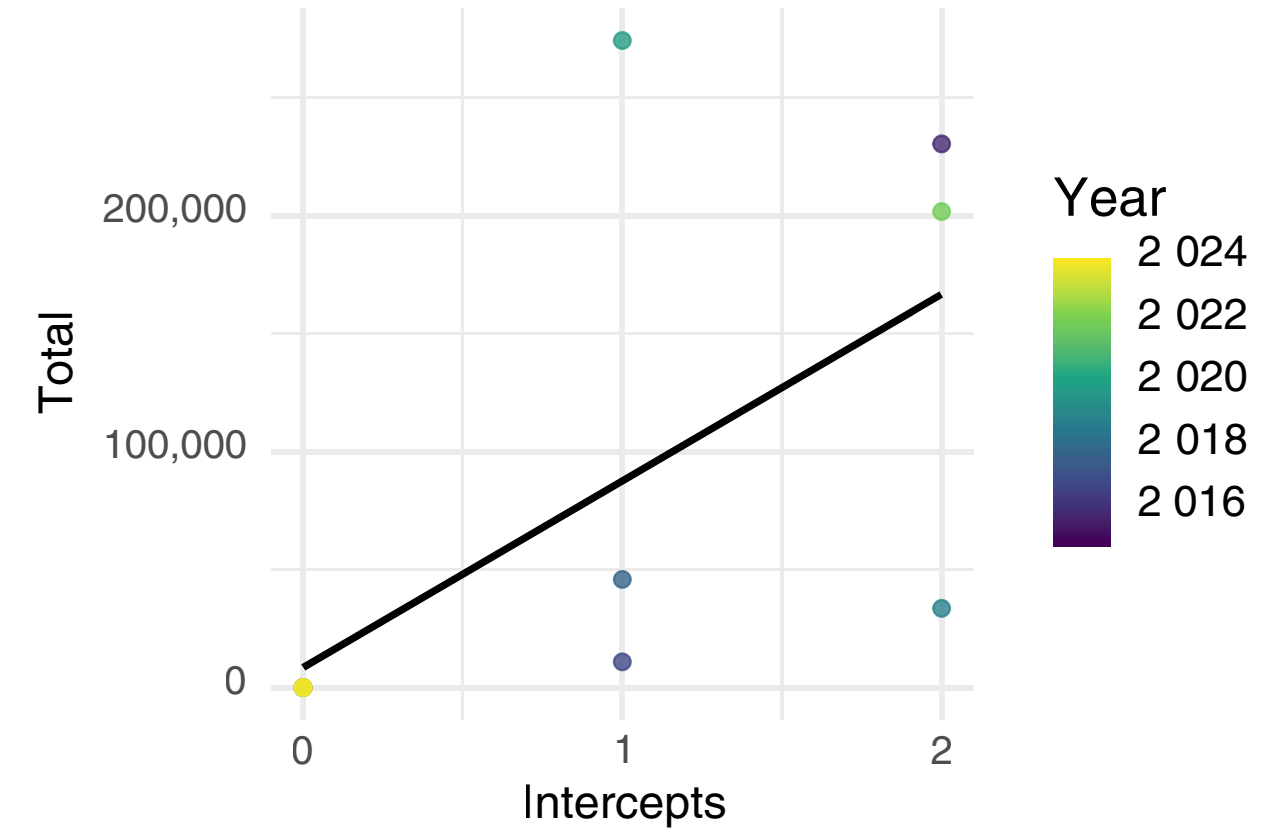
Texas



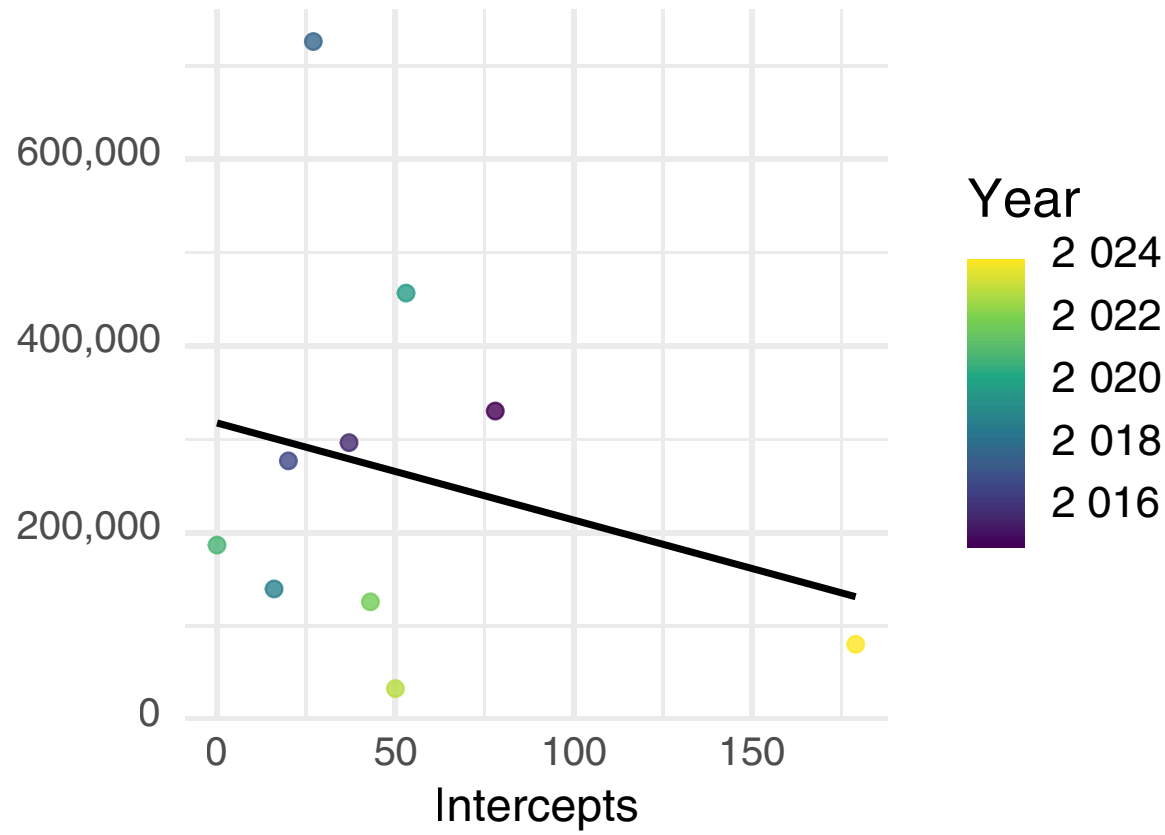
Louisiana



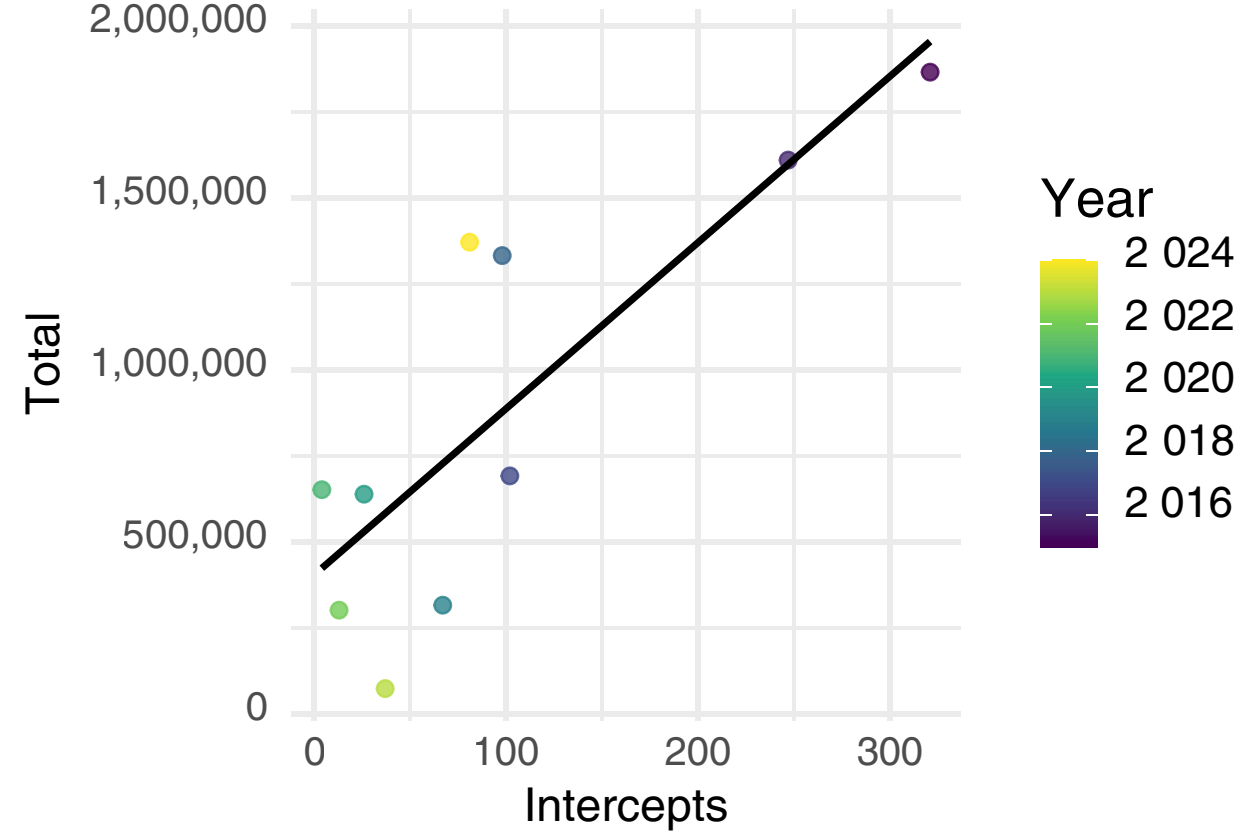
Mississippi



Alabama



Florida



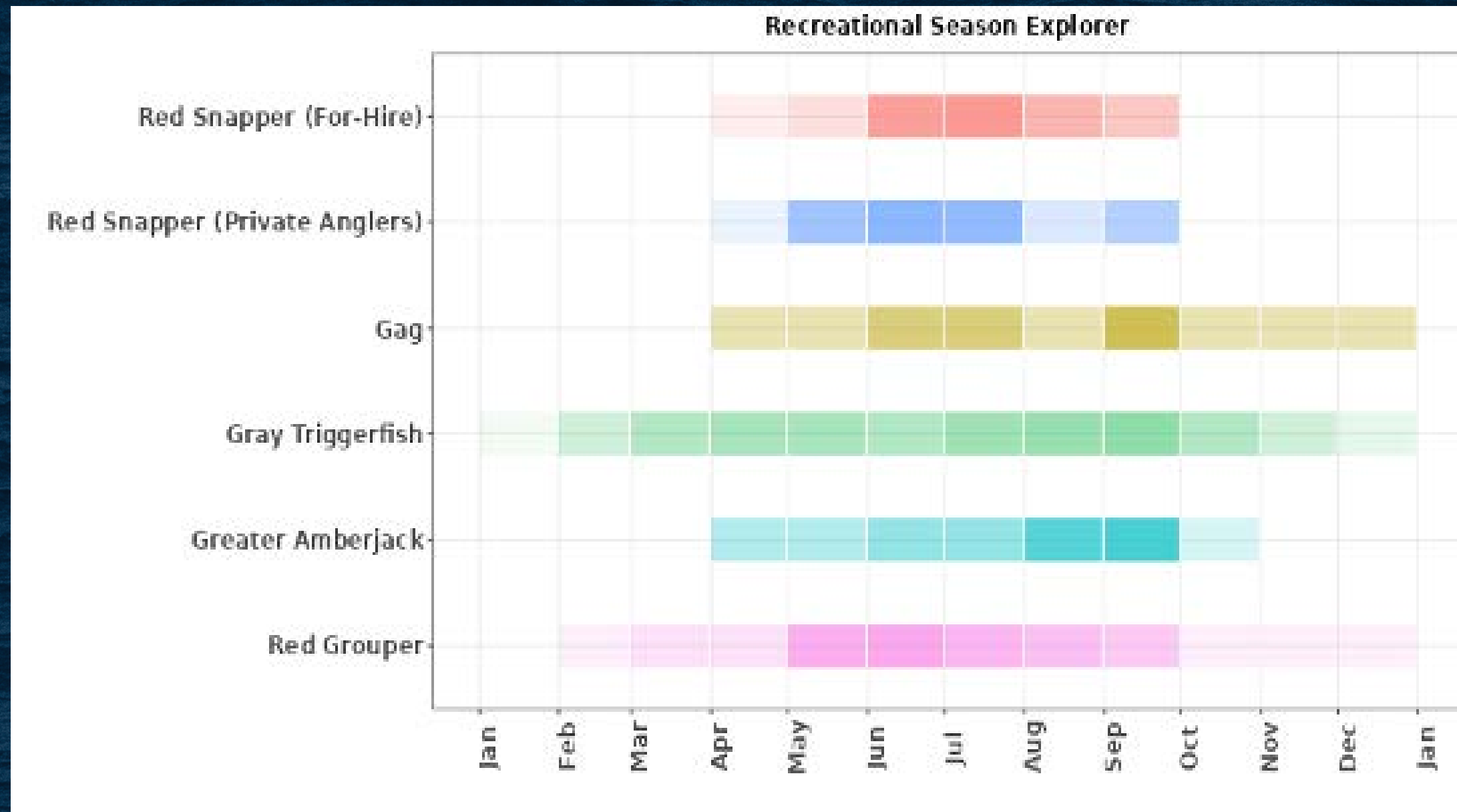
STATE	SLOPE	P
Alabama	-1039.65	0.48
Florida	4834.89	0.00
Louisiana	6812.14	0.01
Mississippi	79043.09	0.05
Texas	1651.5	0.07

Defining ‘Improved Access’

- **Season duration**
 - Goal = Maximize season duration within catch limits
 - More opportunity in less desirable times of year
- **Time of year**
 - Desired seasons coincide with higher catch rates
 - Targeting desirable species simultaneously vs. having a desirable species open year-round

You can either choose the best days or the most days

Insights from the Recreational Initiative



Season Duration (Months)

Species	Months
Red Snapper (Federal For-Hire)	3
Red Snapper (Private Angler)	3
Gag	1
Gray Triggerfish	8
Greater Amberjack	2
Red Grouper	5

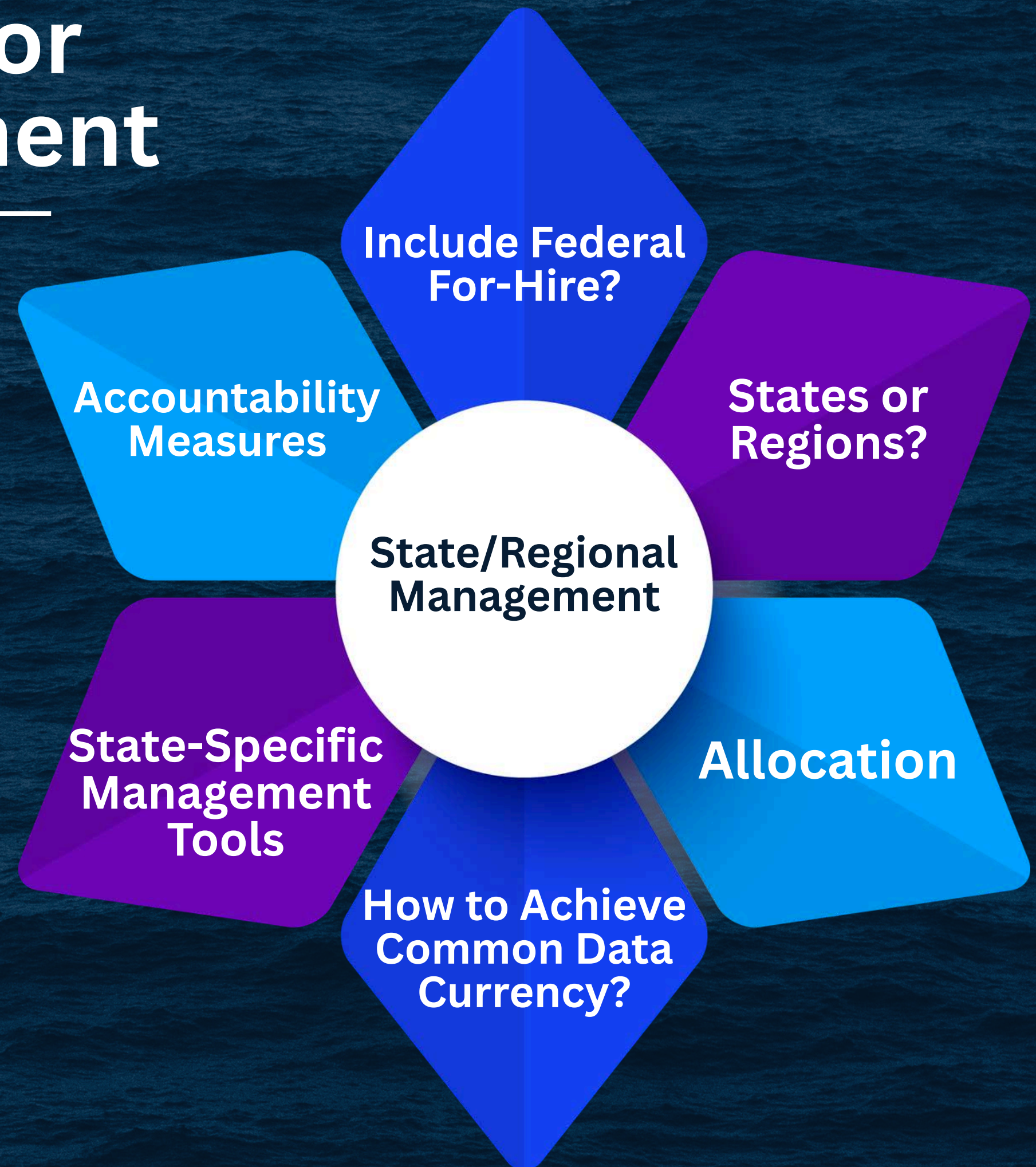
Addressing Tradeoffs to Improve Satisfaction

- **Solutions must adhere to annual catch limits**
- **State management of the recreational sector could:**
 - Provide more desirable access windows
 - Improve recreational landings estimates and harvest monitoring
 - Reduce discards by targeting during desired seasons

Initial Considerations for State/Regional Management

Committee Feedback:

- Purpose & Need of the Action
- Management Actions
- Range of alternatives for each action
- Anticipated timeline



Include Federal For-Hire?

Committee Feedback:

- Should an action be included to separate federal permitted for-hire vessels?
- If yes, may require 'sector separation' and an allocation for each component
- Anticipated timeline is lengthy



States or Regions?

Committee Feedback:

- Need Committee feedback on units for management.
- State-specific may be simpler in concept
- Data may be sparse in some states and harvest monitoring may be difficult or uncertain. Regions could reduce this effect.



Allocation?

Committee Feedback:

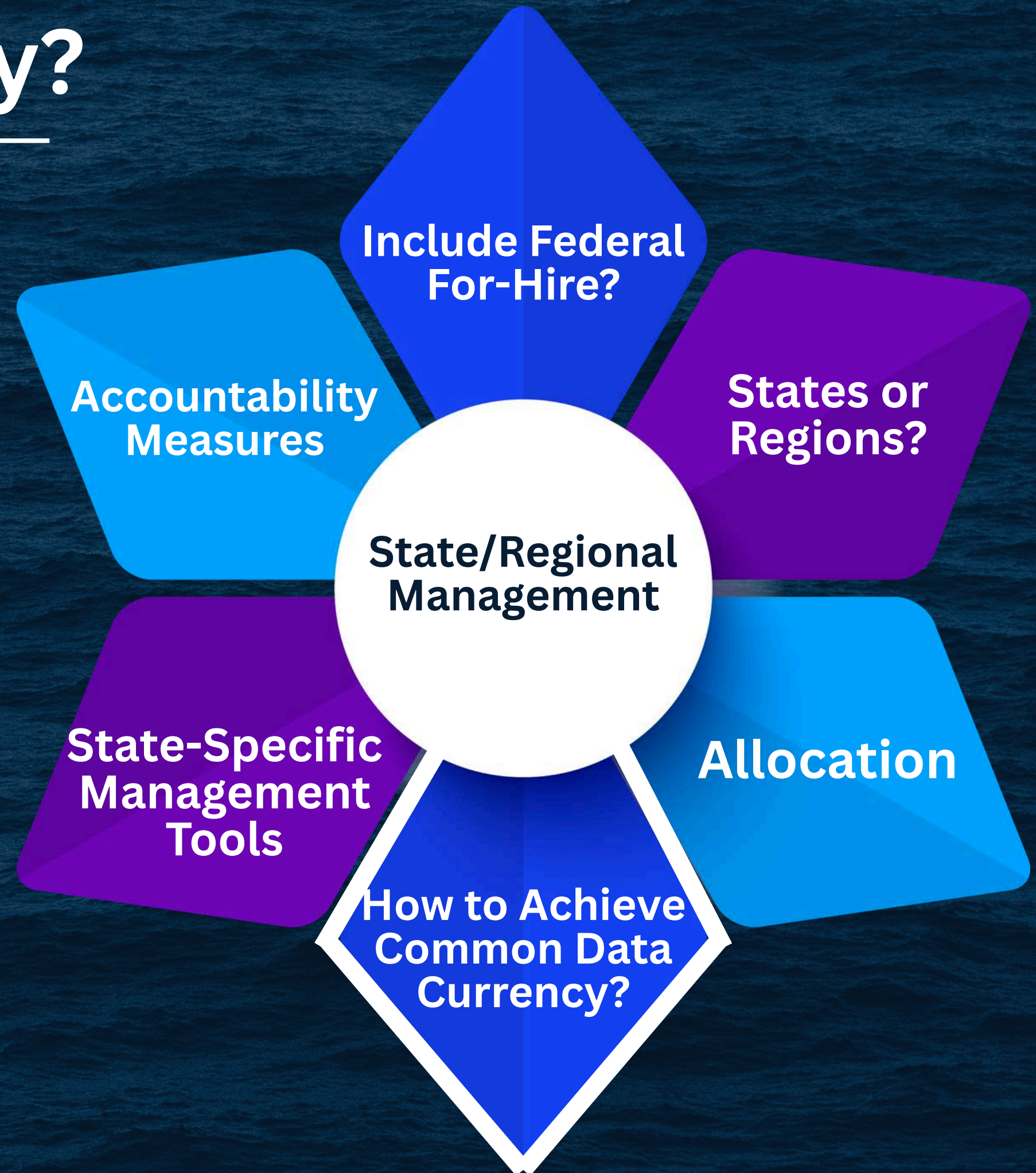
- Will need to determine allocations for each management unit
- Consider landings, biomass, negotiated agreement, or other approach
- Changing & incompatible data units require consideration



Common Data Currency?

Committee Feedback:

- Common data currency essential for combined harvest monitoring
- Ongoing change to data collection programs will require integration into a compatible units
- Historical landings data may also require calibration pending MRIP updates



State-Specific Management Tools?

Committee Feedback:

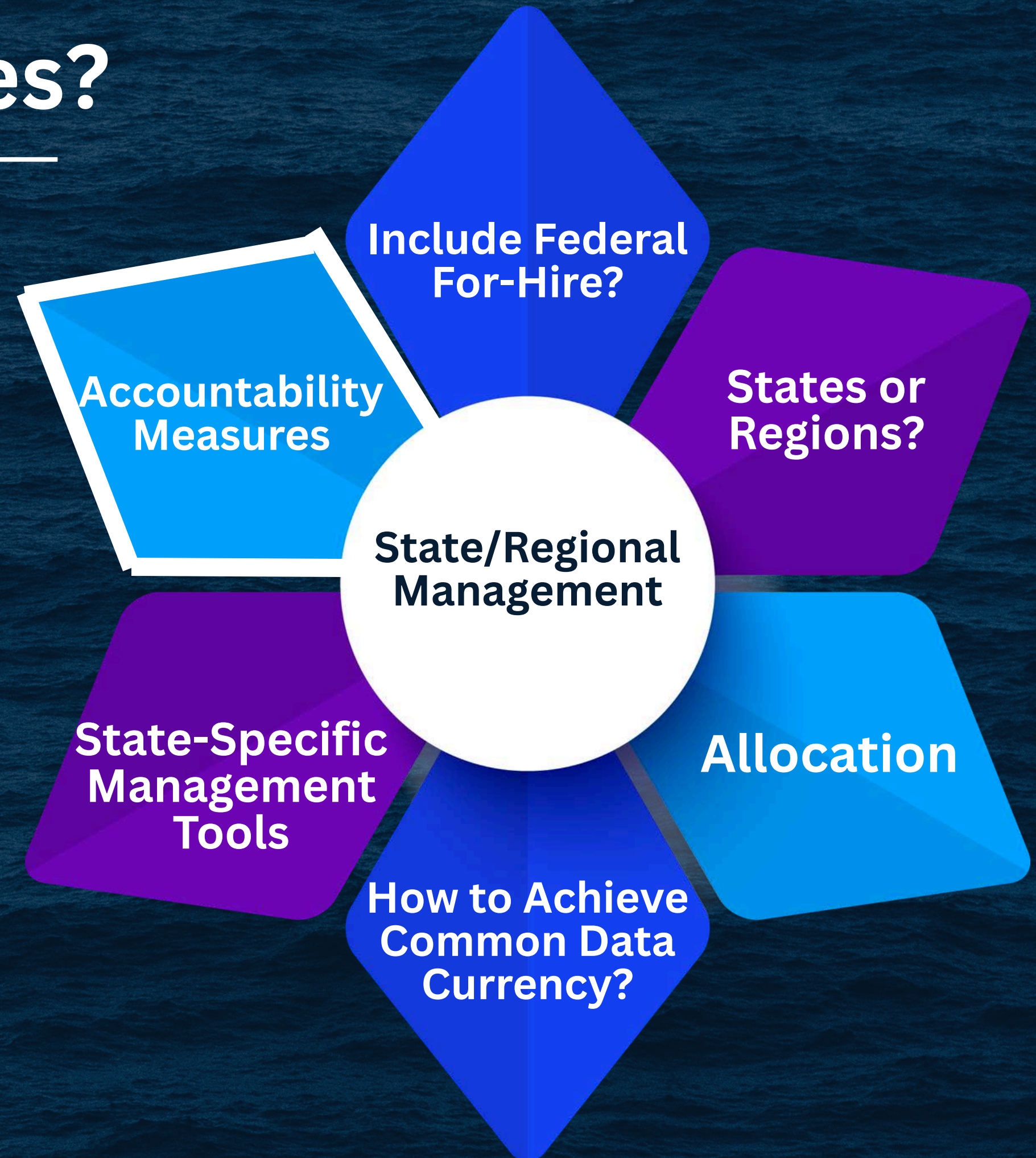
- Desired management flexibility?
- Seasons
- Minimum size-limits (within ranges)
- Bag or vessel limits



Accountability Measures?

Committee Feedback:

- Are new accountability measures necessary or appropriate
- Should flexibility measures similar to red snapper framework action be considered
- Should stock status (i.e., overfished or not) affect accountability measures



Next Steps?

IPT will consider feedback:

- Bring back revised document integrating feedback
- Will be complex document, unexpected challenges may arise
- Consider timeline, and priority relative to other documents
- Consider timeline of upcoming stock assessment starting mid-2027, with 2025 as terminal year, to be completed fall 2028

