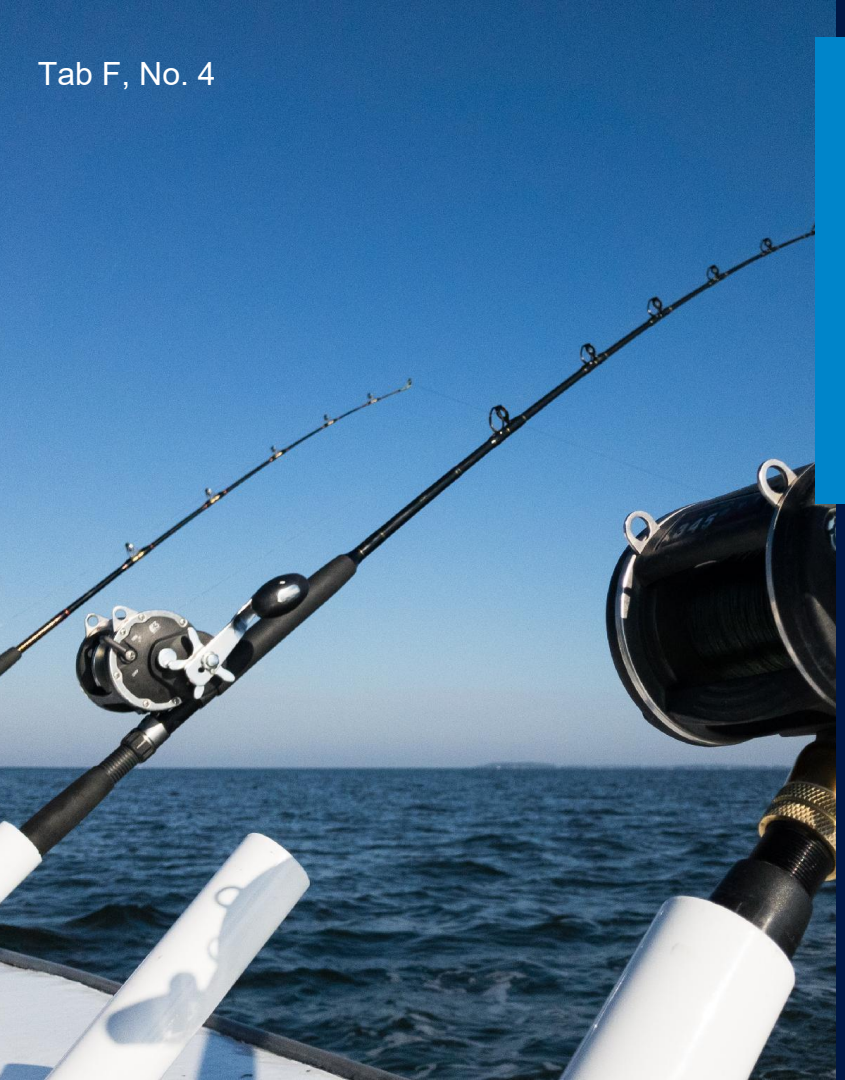
Tab F, No. 4



NOAA Fisheries Office of Science and Technology

Fishing Effort Survey transition and status update

Gulf Council Meetings, October 2026

NOAA Fisheries Office of Science and Technology
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

2026 Improved Fishing Effort Survey

- Began implementing the improved Fishing Effort Survey according to existing regional survey administration schedules.
- Revised design developed in response to concerns from the recreational fishing community and partners that our **shore and private boat fishing effort** estimates may be too high
  - Revised survey improves the accuracy of estimates by addressing potential overreporting of fishing trips.
  - This follows extensive testing and a favorable independent peer review that indicated the revised design offers improved utility for stock assessments and management decisions.

Key Improvements Compared to Previous FES Design

- **Revised question order:** The sequence of fishing activity questions changed to improve reporting accuracy.
- **Increased frequency of administration:** The survey is mailed monthly instead of every two months.
  - **Updated estimation methods corresponding to design:** improve the precision and stability of the estimates.

Key Differences Compared to Previous FES Design

Original FES

15 **How many days did this person go recreational saltwater fishing from the SHORE in <Merged State>?**

The shore includes docks, bridges, causeways, beaches, banks, or any other shore-based place or area. Do not include freshwater fishing.

☐ Did not recreational saltwater fish from shore in last 12 months ➔ ***Go to question 16***

☐☐ Number of days saltwater shore fishing in Jan. and Feb. of 2024

☐☐☐ Number of days saltwater shore fishing in last 12 months, including Jan. and Feb.

16 **How many days did this person go recreational saltwater fishing from a private or rental BOAT that returned to shore in <Merged State>?**

Do not include freshwater trips or trips where a paid captain or crew helped locate and catch fish.

☐ Did not recreational saltwater fish from private boat in last 12 months

☐☐ Number of days saltwater boat fishing in Jan. and Feb. of 2024

☐☐☐ Number of days saltwater boat fishing in last 12 months, including Jan. and Feb.

Improved FES

15 **How many days did this person go recreational saltwater fishing from the SHORE in <Merged State>?**

The shore includes docks, bridges, causeways, beaches, banks, or any other shore-based place or area. Do not include freshwater fishing or fishing for shellfish.

☐ Did not recreational saltwater fish from shore in last 12 months ➔ ***Go to question 16***

☐☐☐ Number of days saltwater shore fishing in last 12 months, including Jan. and Feb.

☐☐ Number of days saltwater shore fishing in Jan. of 2024

☐☐ Number of days saltwater shore fishing in Feb. of 2024

16 **How many days did this person go recreational saltwater fishing from a private or rental BOAT that returned to shore in <Merged State>?**

Do not include freshwater trips, shellfishing trips, or trips where a paid captain or crew helped locate and catch fish.

☐ Did not recreational saltwater fish from private boat in last 12 months

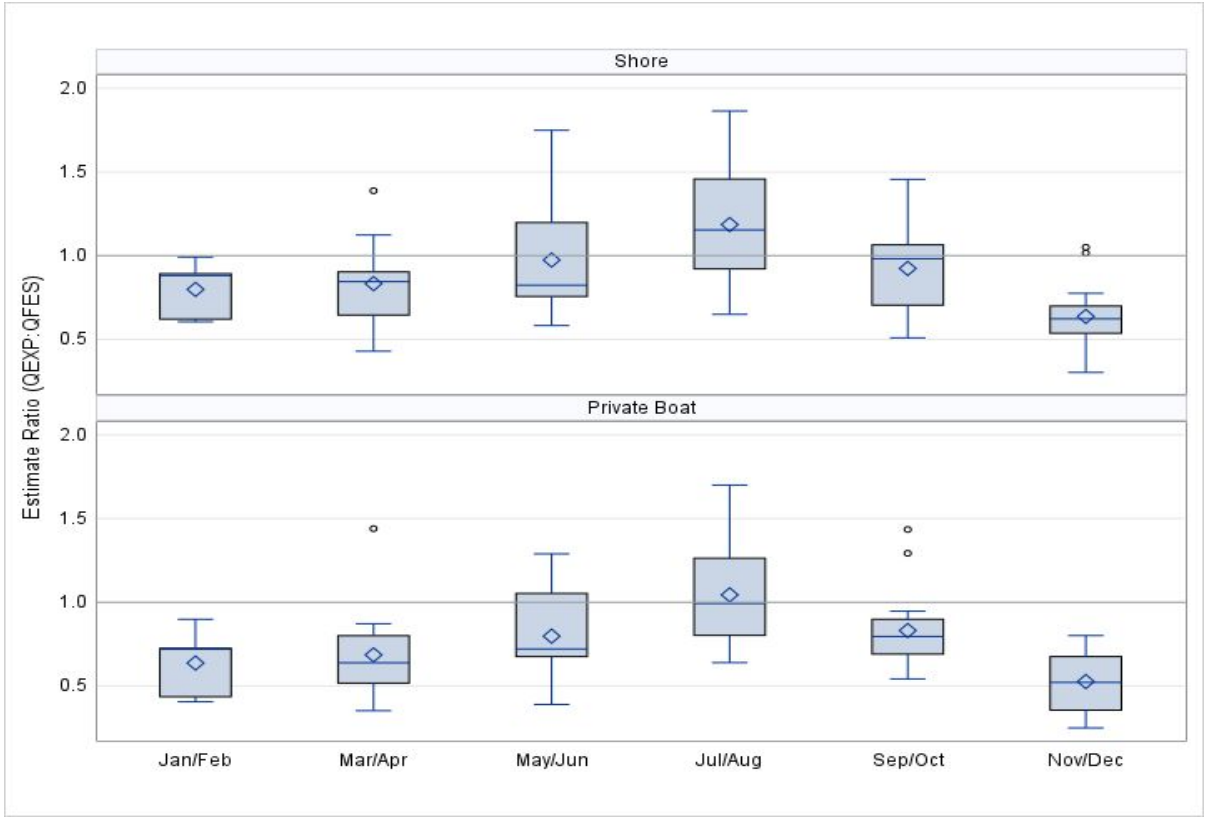
☐☐☐ Number of days saltwater boat fishing in last 12 months, including Jan. and Feb.

☐☐ Number of days saltwater boat fishing in Jan. of 2024

☐☐ Number of days saltwater boat fishing in Feb. of 2024

Benchmark Study Results

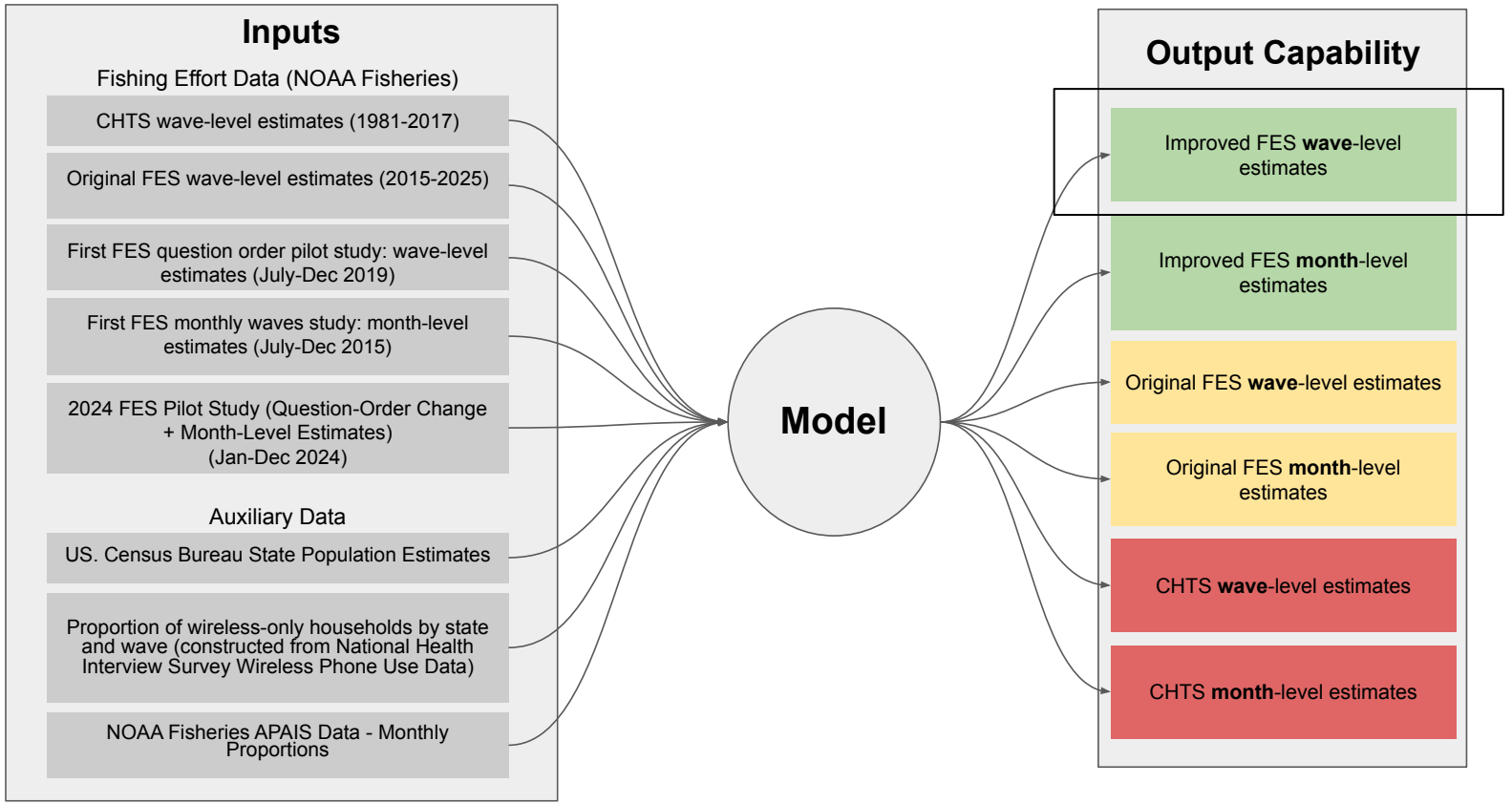
Distributions of experimental (QEXP) to FES (QFES) estimate ratios for total fishing effort across state domains by fishing mode and survey wave.



2026 Calibration Model

- **Builds on peer-reviewed model** previously developed to calibrate historical recreational fishing estimates from the Coastal Household Telephone Survey (1981–2017) to the original FES scale in 2018. However, the new model **directly calibrates CHTS, original FES, and improved FES** effort estimates rather than using prior model outputs.
- Uses a **Bayesian hierarchical modeling approach** and a longer time series of mail data than the prior Fay–Herriot SAE model, resulting in more reliable and consistent historical estimates.
- Model **favorably peer-reviewed** in late 2025 via a 2-day peer-review workshop; provided **opportunity for** both **partner and public comment** and **incorporated key feedback** from review (on both model and preliminary results) prior to implementing model.

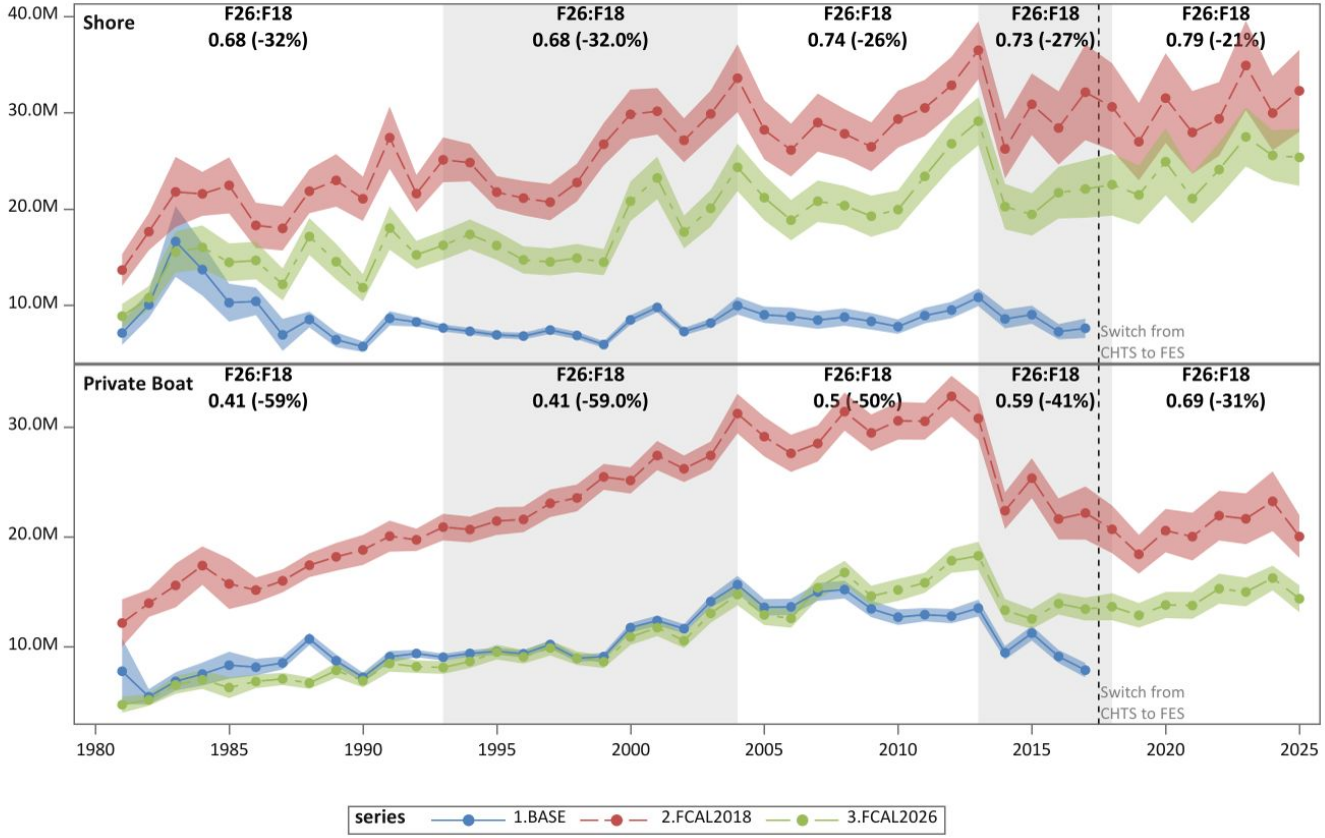
2026 Calibration Model Schematic



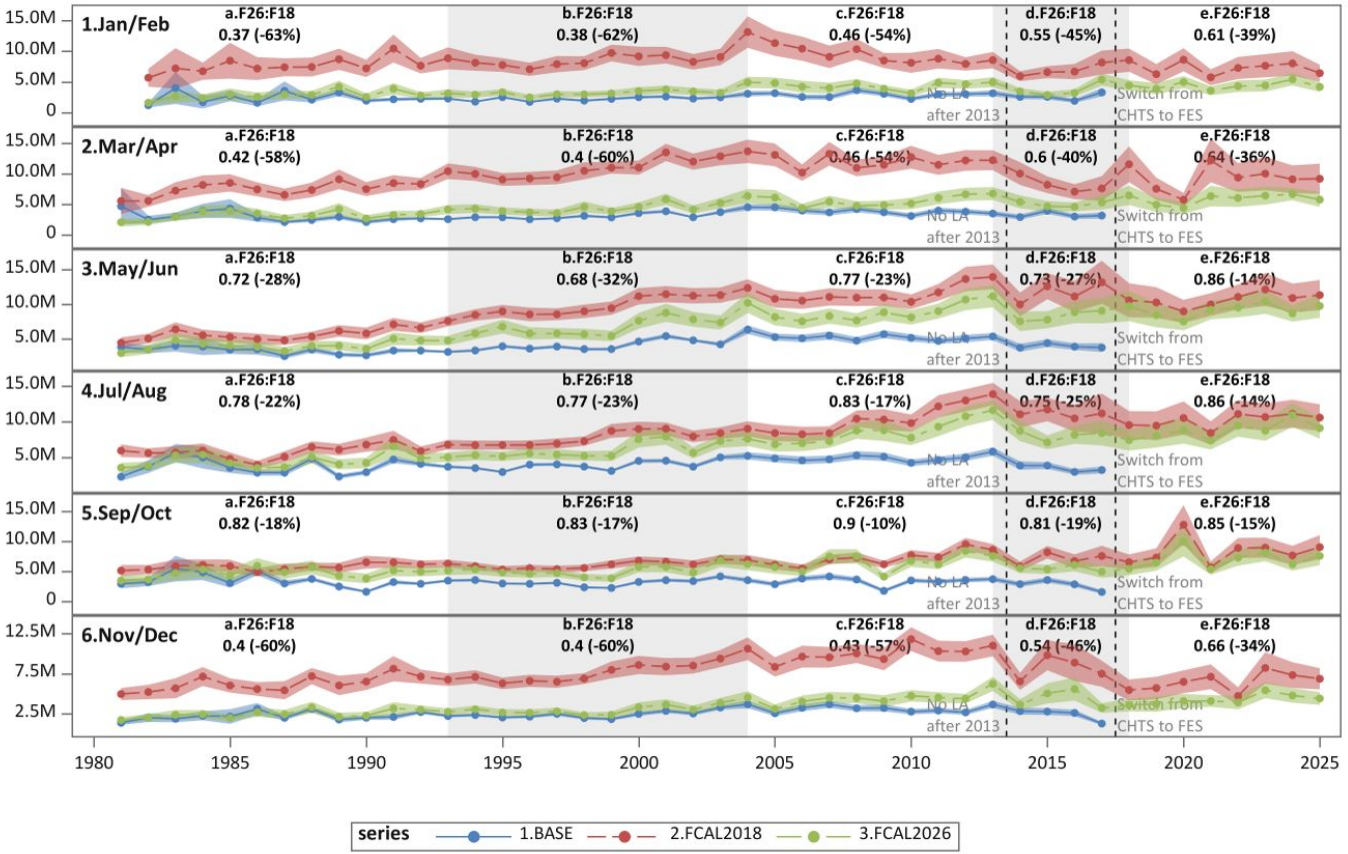
Changes to Effort Time Series - Key Takeaways

- Calibrated estimates are lower than original FES estimates
- Larger relative reductions for Private Boat compared to Shore
- Larger relative reductions in lower activity waves
- Differences across time series
  - Louisiana present 1981-2013, absent 2014-2025

Gulf - Annual Effort by Fishing Mode



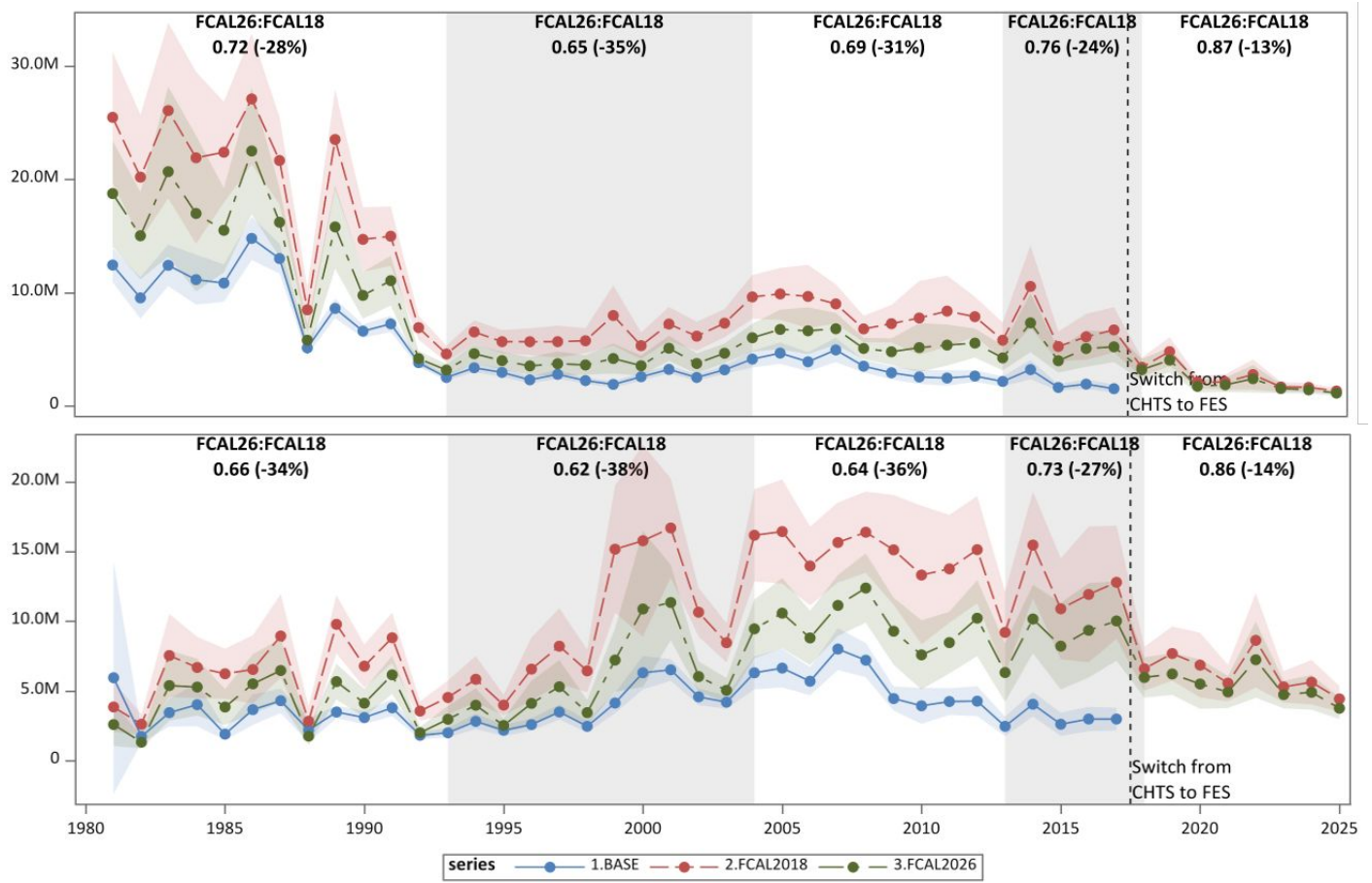
Gulf - Wave Effort by Year (all modes)



How the Effort Calibration Impacts Catch Estimates

- **Revised catch time series are systematically lower**
- **Reductions variable by species:** catch differences due to effort estimates varying across states, fishing modes (private boat v. shore), time of year (2-month “waves”), and year ranges within the full time series.
- **Gulf:** LA-FLw 1981-2013, MS-FLw 2014-2025
- **Select Species:** King Mackerel, Red Snapper, Gag, Gray Triggerfish, Vermilion Snapper, Gray Snapper
- **Landings (A+B1) and Releases (B2)**

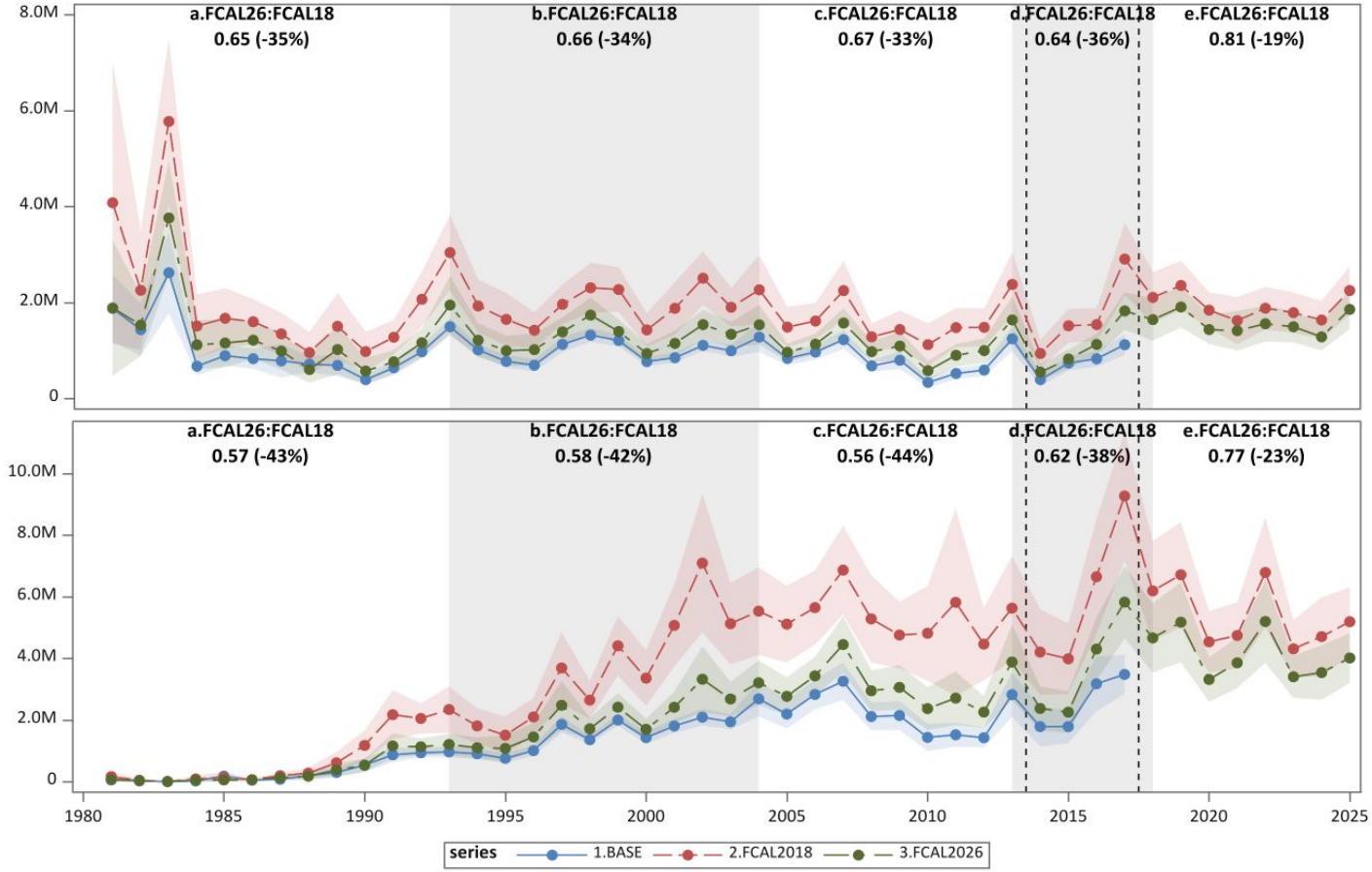
King Mackerel - Annual Landings (A+B1) and Releases (B2)



Landings (no.)

Releases (no.)

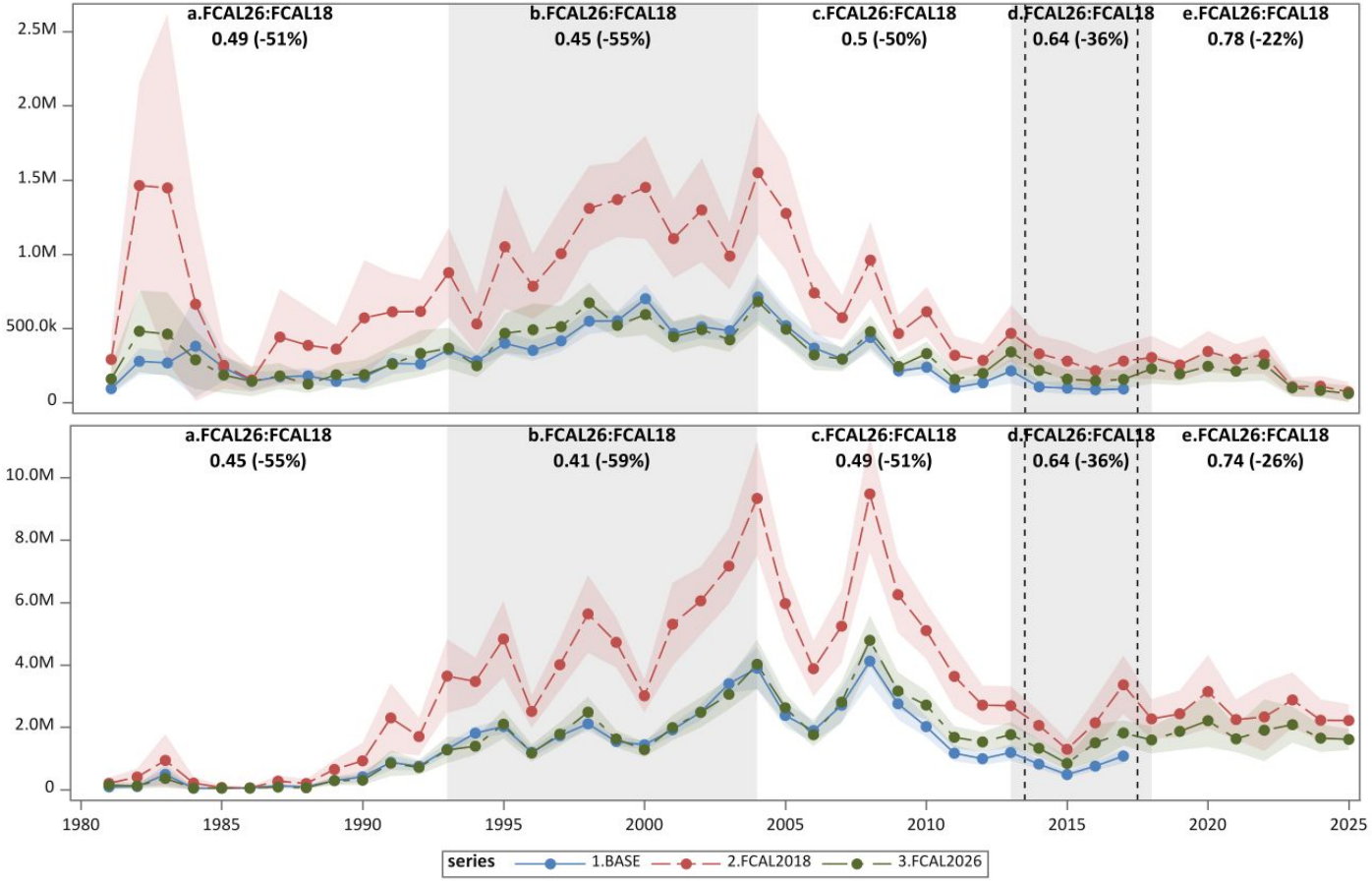
Gulf - Red Snapper Annual Landings and Releases



Landings (no.)

Releases (no.)

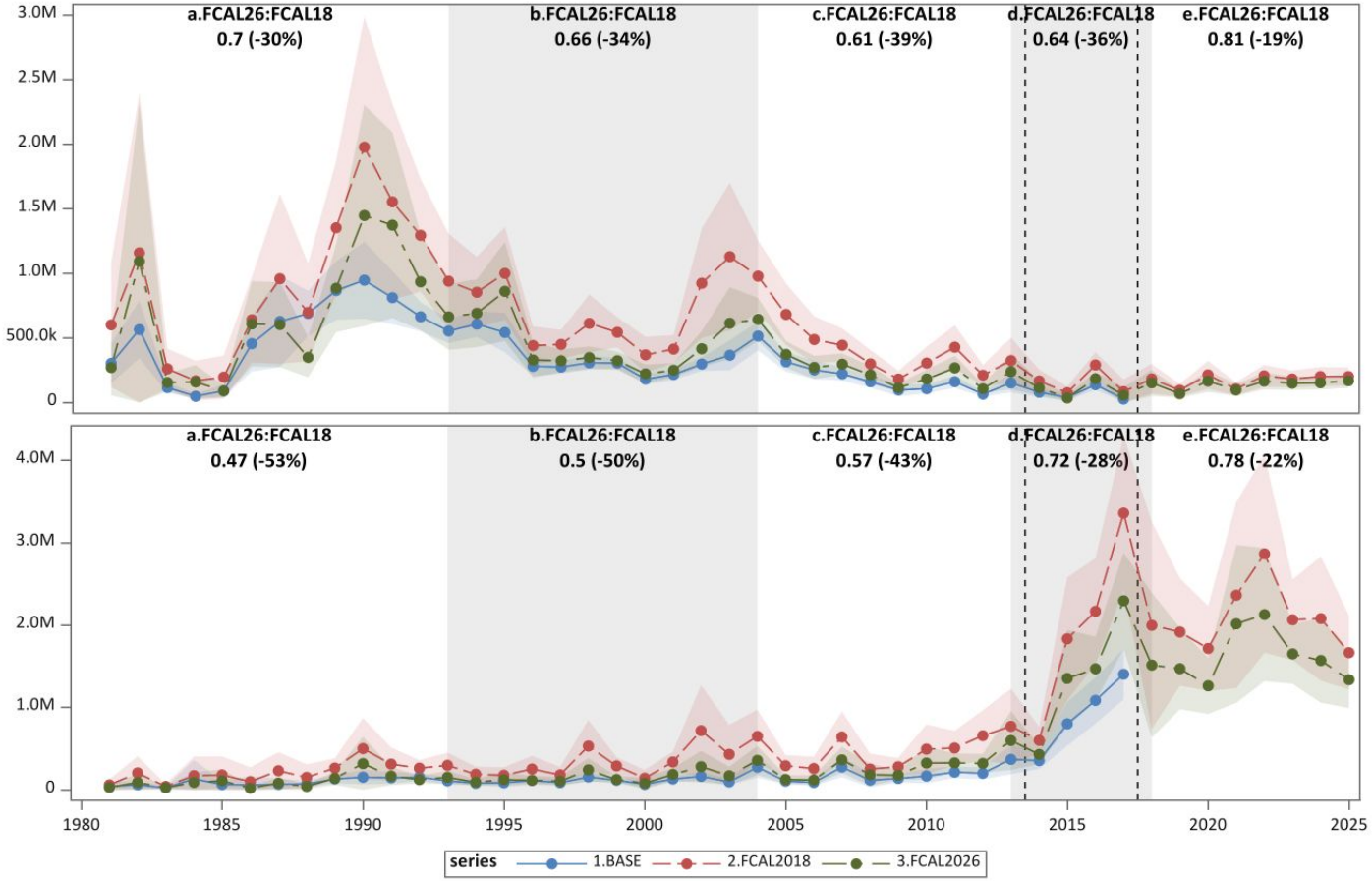
Gulf - Gag Annual Landings and Releases



Landings (no.)

Releases (no.)

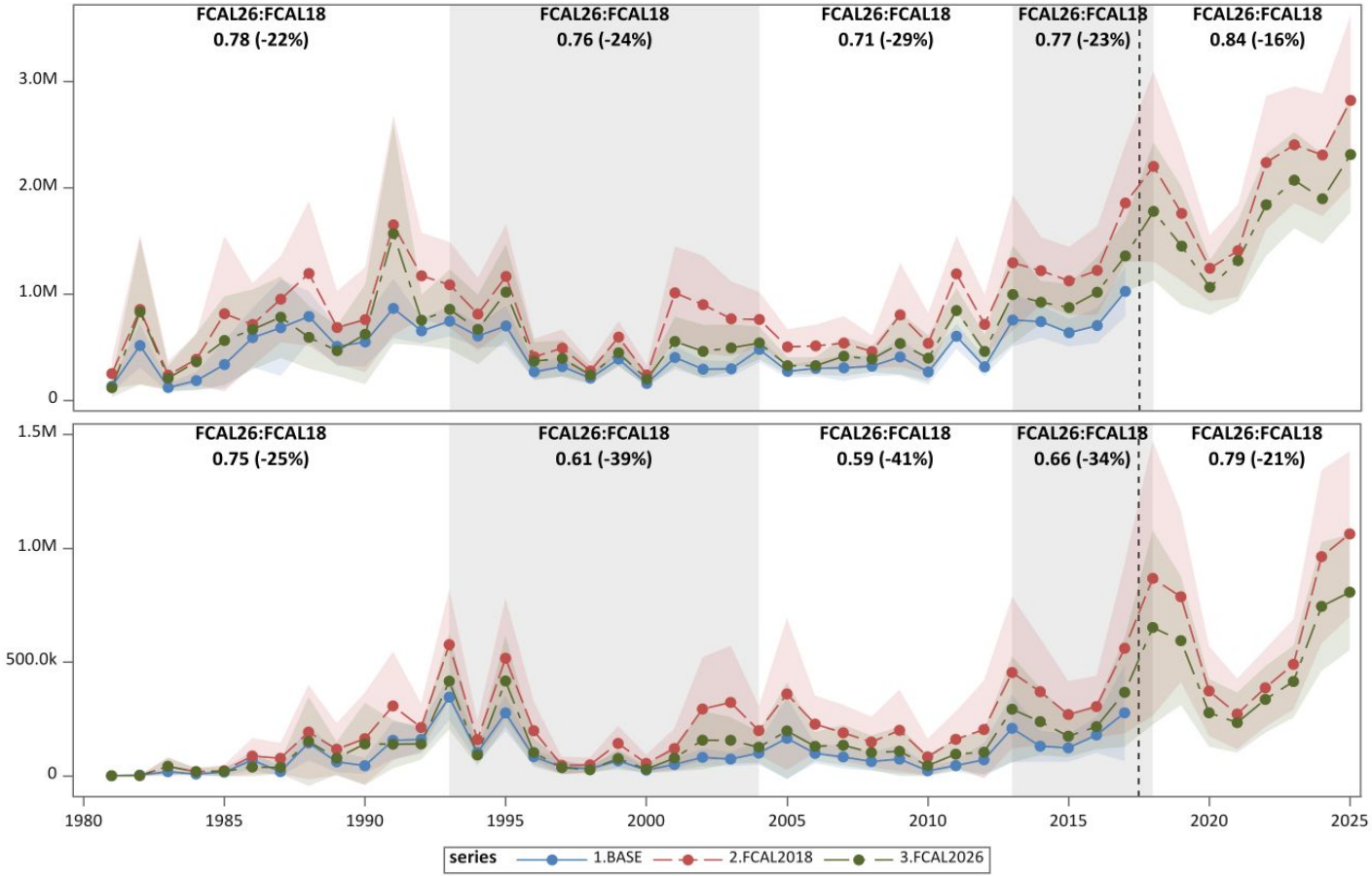
Gulf - Gray Triggerfish Annual Landings and Releases



Landings (no.)

Releases (no.)

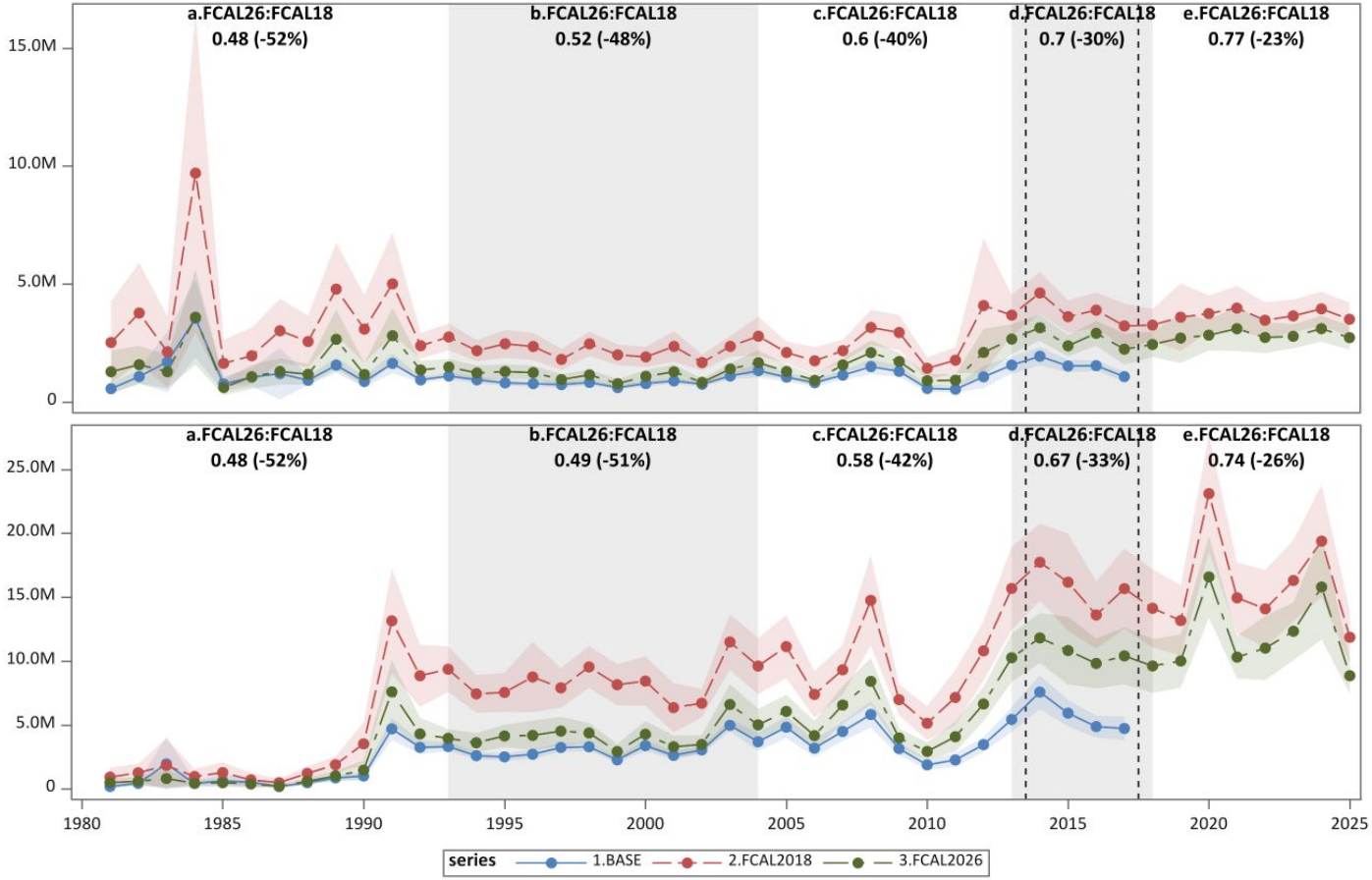
Vermilion Snapper - Annual Landings and Releases



Landings (no.)

Releases (no.)

Gulf - Gray Snapper Annual Landings and Releases



Landings (no.)

Releases (no.)

Current Status

- **MRIP Queries**
  - 2026 Calibration Comparisons for original FES (PRE) and calibrated (CAL) catch and effort estimates
  - Standard queries now return calibrated estimates
- **MRIP Data Downloads**
  - Estimate datasets, public-use (trip,catch,size) datasets are all updated for the calibrated estimates
- **Data products available for 1981-2025**
- **Coordinating with SEFSC, SERO and Council on data needs**

2026 Estimation

- **Waves 1-3 (Jan/Feb,Mar/Apr,May/Jun) 2026**
  - Targeting early November for release of preliminary estimates for all three waves
  - Will also produce back-calibrated “original FES” estimates and make available in the 2026 Calibration Comparison queries
  - Coordinating with SEFSC on CHTS-like estimates

2026 Estimation

- **Waves 4-5 2026**
  - Plan to release individual waves
  - Will release Waves 4 & 5 together if delayed
- **Wave 6 and Final 2026**
  - Plan to release on schedule
    - mid-February 2027
    - mid-April 2027



Questions?

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