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# Amendment 3 to the Puerto Rico, St. Croix, and St. Thomas/St. John Fishery Management Plans: New Management Measures for Dolphin and Wahoo

Sarah Stephenson, NMFS-SERO Caribbean Branch  
182nd Caribbean Fishery Management Council Meeting  
August 15-16, 2023



# Review from April 2023 Council Meeting

- Council requested staff add size limit and recreational bag limit actions for dolphin and wahoo in Puerto Rico.
- Council selected the 24" fork length size limit for dolphin as the **preferred alternative** for St. Croix and St. Thomas/St. John.
- Council selected the 40" fork length size limit for wahoo as the **preferred alternative** for St. Croix and St. Thomas/St. John.
- Council selected the 10 dolphin per person/day, not to exceed 32 dolphin per vessel/day, whichever is less recreational bag limit as the **preferred alternative** for St. Croix and St. Thomas/St. John. (*consistent with USVI regulations*)
- Council modified Alternative 3 of the wahoo recreational bag limit for St. Croix and St. Thomas/St. John to 2 wahoo per person/day, not to exceed 10 wahoo per vessel/day, whichever is less. **Preferred alternative not selected.**

# Purpose and Need Statements

- The purpose of Amendment 3 is to establish size limits and recreational bag limits for dolphin and wahoo under the Puerto Rico Fishery Management Plan, the St. Croix Fishery Management Plan, and the St. Thomas/St. John Fishery Management Plan.
- The need for Amendment 3 is to develop conservation and management measures for dolphin and wahoo to ensure undersized individuals have adequate time to mature and reproduce and to take a precautionary approach to management to protect against overfishing for resources with limited management structure.

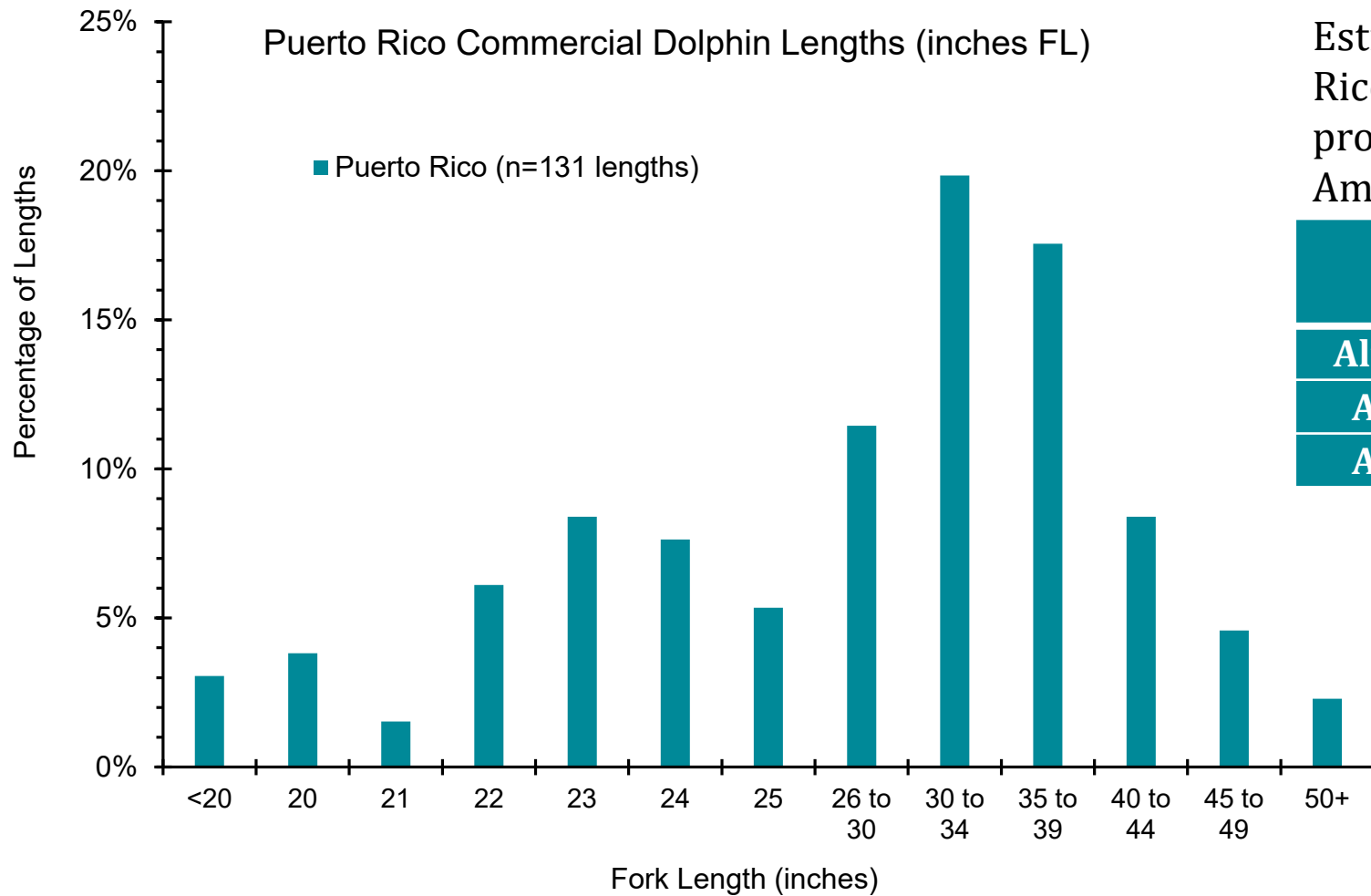


## Puerto Rico – Dolphin Size Limits (Action 1a)

- Alternative 1. No Action. Do not establish a minimum size limit for the commercial or recreational harvest of dolphin in federal waters around Puerto Rico.
- Alternative 2. Establish a 20” fork length minimum size limit for the commercial or recreational harvest of dolphin in federal waters around Puerto Rico.
- Alternative 3. Establish a 24” fork length minimum size limit for the commercial or recreational harvest of dolphin in federal waters around Puerto Rico.

*Rationale:* *ensure undersized individuals have time to mature and reproduce*





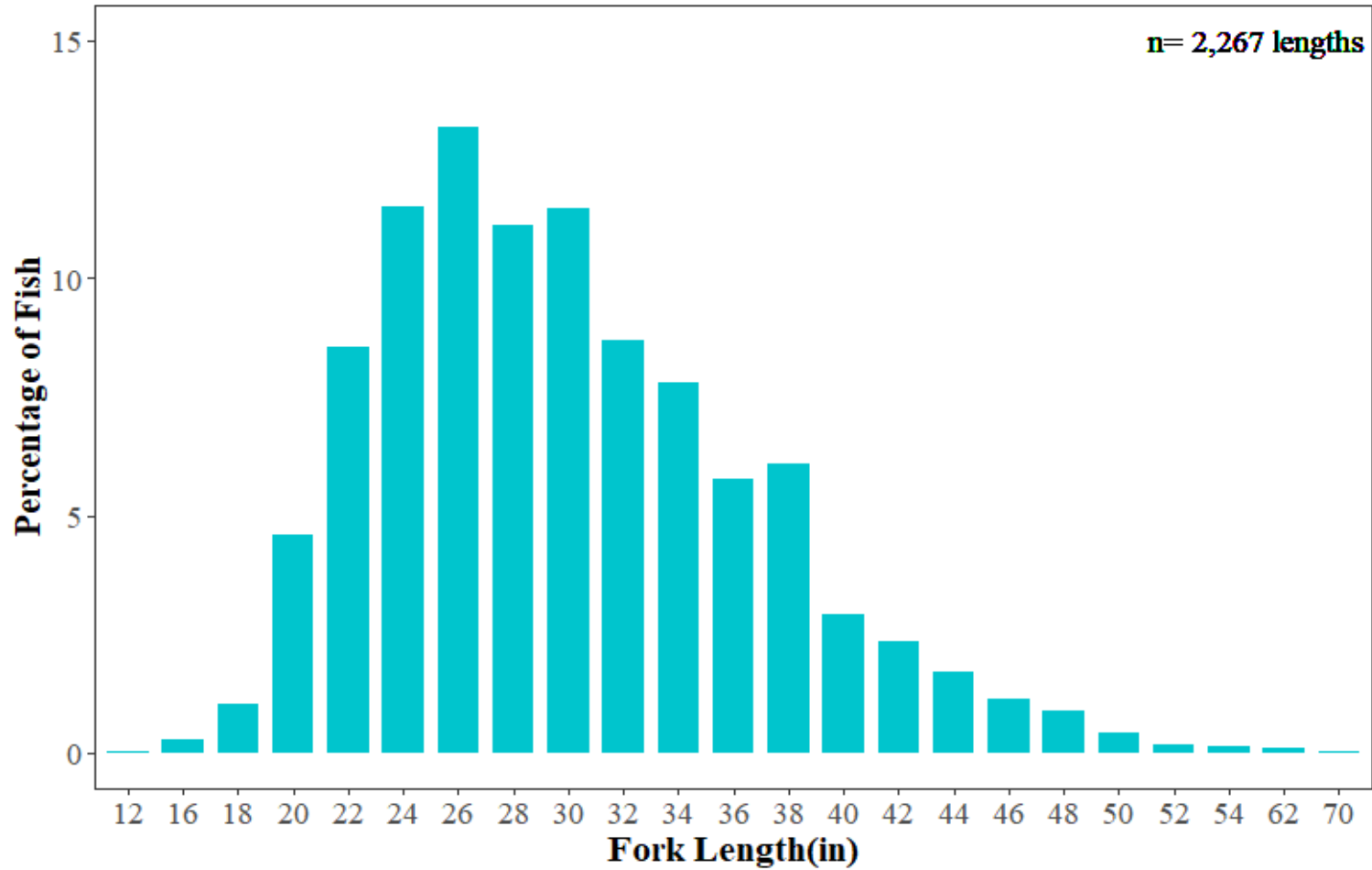
Estimated percent reduction for Puerto Rico dolphin commercial landings for the proposed minimum size limit options in Amendment 3.

Size Limit Alternatives	Percent Reduction
Alt. 1: No Size Limit	0
Alt. 2: 20-inch FL	<1%
Alt. 3: 24-inch FL	<1%

Puerto Rico dolphin length distribution (in inches fork length) from the commercial sector from 2017 to 2021. Data from the Trip Intercept Program.



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Estimated percent reduction for Puerto Rico recreational harvest of dolphin for the proposed minimum size limit options in Amendment 3.

Size Limit Alternatives	Percent Reduction
Alt. 1: No Size Limit	0
Alt. 2: 20-inch FL	1.3%
Alt. 3: 24-inch FL	14.5%

Puerto Rico dolphin length distribution (in inches fork length) from the recreational sector from 2000 to 2017 , in 2-inch bins. Data from the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey.



# Discussion

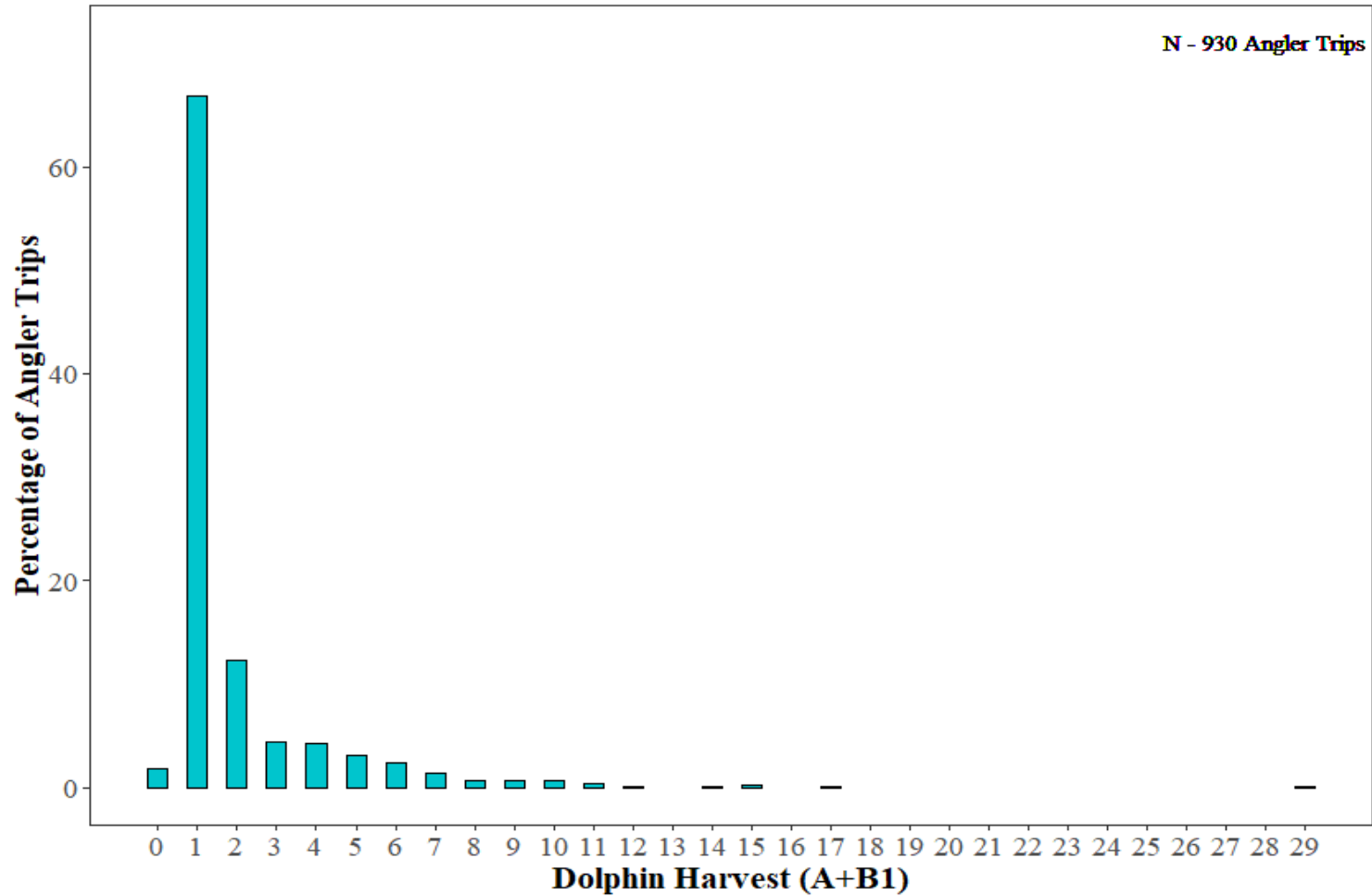
# Puerto Rico – Dolphin Recreational Bag Limits (Action 1b)

- Alternative 1. No Action. Do not establish a recreational bag limit for dolphin in federal waters around Puerto Rico.
- Alternative 2. Establish a recreational bag limit in federal waters around Puerto Rico of 10 dolphin per person per day, not to exceed 30 dolphin per vessel per day, whichever is less. (*compatible with Puerto Rico regulations*)
- Alternative 3. Establish a recreational bag limit in federal waters around Puerto Rico of 5 dolphin per person per day, not to exceed 15 dolphin per vessel per day, whichever is less.

*Rationale: precautionary approach to management to protect against overfishing of dolphin since no recreational data are available at this time*







Estimated percent reduction in recreational harvest of dolphin in federal waters around Puerto Rico under the options proposed in Amendment 3.

Rec. Bag Limit Alternatives	Percent Reduction
Alt. 1: No Bag Limit	0
Alt. 2. 10/30	3.11%
Alt. 3. 5/15	14.62%

Distribution of dolphin harvest (observed catch + reported catch) per angler for angler trips intercepted after fishing in federal waters, between 2000 and 2017. Data from the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey.



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# Discussion



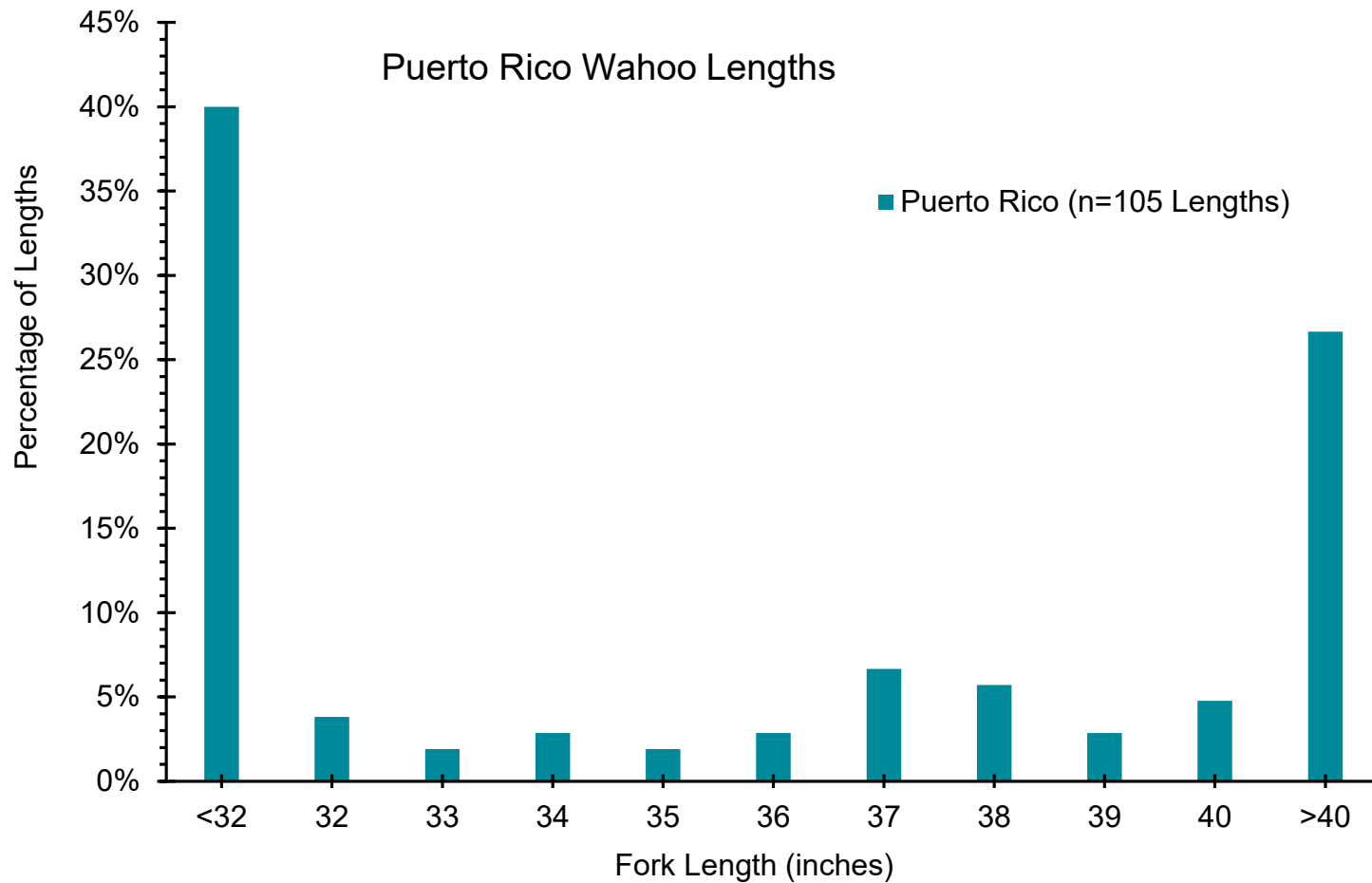
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## Puerto Rico – Wahoo Size Limits (Action 2a)

- Alternative 1. No Action. Do not establish a minimum size limit for the commercial or recreational harvest of wahoo in federal waters around Puerto Rico.
- Alternative 2. Establish a 32” fork length minimum size limit for commercial or recreational harvest of wahoo in federal waters around Puerto Rico.
- Alternative 3. Establish a 40” fork length minimum size limit for commercial or recreational harvest of wahoo in federal waters around Puerto Rico.

Rationale: *ensure undersized individuals have time to mature and reproduce*





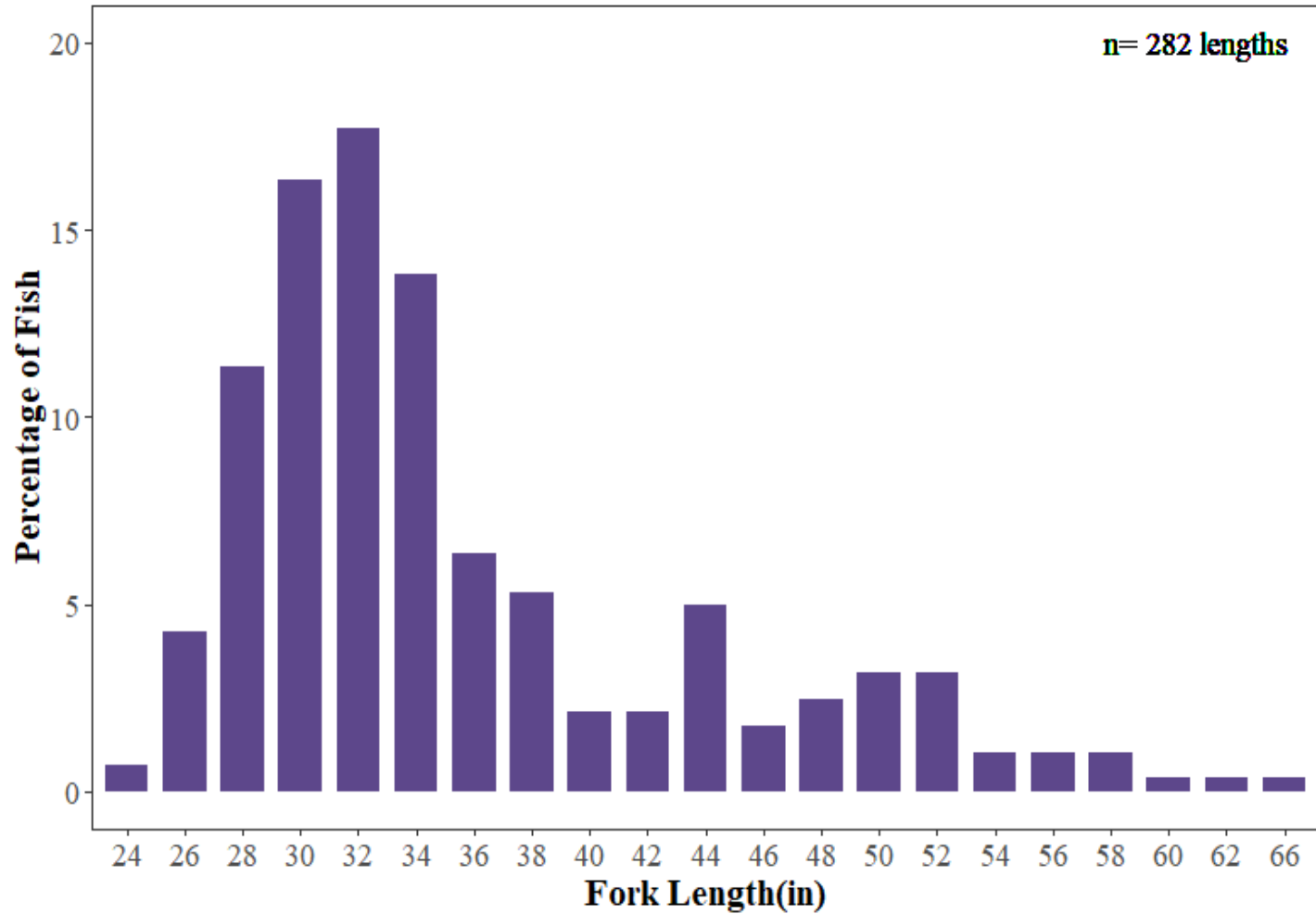
Estimated percent reduction for Puerto Rico wahoo commercial landings for the proposed minimum size limit options in Amendment 3.

Size Limit Alternatives	Percent Reduction
Alt. 1: No Size Limit	0
Alt. 2: 32-inch FL	11.9%
Alt. 3: 40-inch FL	37.7%

Puerto Rico wahoo length distribution (in inches fork length) from the commercial sector from 2010 to 2021. Data from the Trip Intercept Program.



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Estimated percent reduction for Puerto Rico recreational harvest of wahoo for the proposed minimum size limit options in Amendment 3.

Size Limit Alternatives	Percent Reduction
Alt. 1: No Size Limit	0
Alt. 2. 32-inch FL	32.6%
Alt. 3. 40-inch FL	75.9%

Puerto Rico wahoo length distribution (in inches fork length) from the recreational sector from 2000 to 2017, in 2-inch bins. Data from the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey.



# Discussion



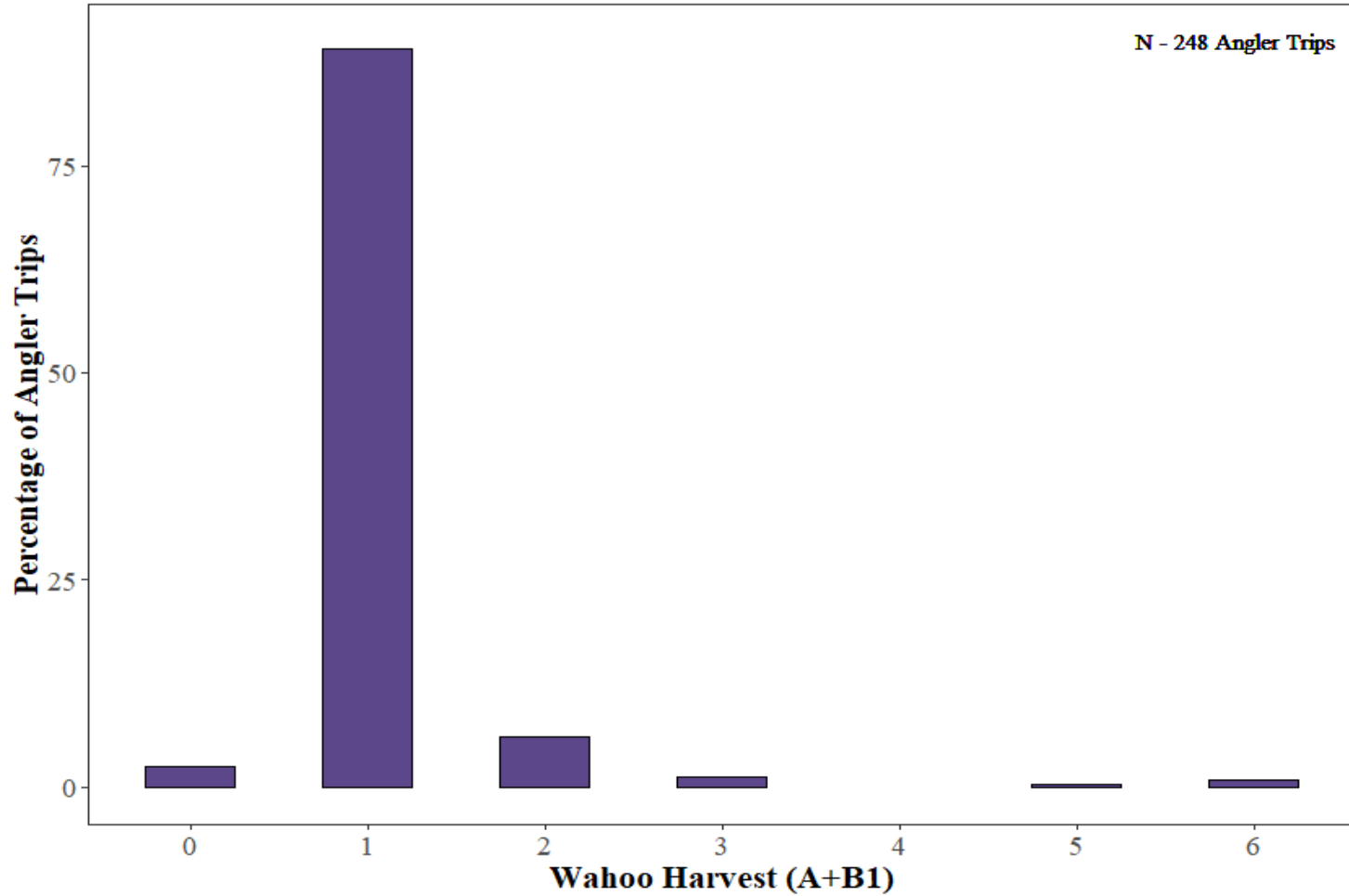
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## Puerto Rico – Wahoo Recreational Bag Limits (Action 2b)

- Alternative 1. No Action. Do not establish a recreational bag limit for wahoo in federal waters around Puerto Rico.
- Alternative 2. Establish a recreational bag limit in federal waters around Puerto Rico of 5 wahoo per person per day, not to exceed 10 wahoo per vessel per day, whichever is less. (*compatible with Puerto Rico regulations*)
- Alternative 3. Establish a recreational bag limit in federal waters around Puerto Rico of 2 wahoo per person per day, not to exceed 6 wahoo per vessel per day, whichever is less.

*Rationale: precautionary approach to management to protect against overfishing of wahoo since no recreational data are available at this time*





Estimated percent reduction in recreational harvest of wahoo in federal waters around Puerto Rico under the options proposed in Amendment 3.

Rec. Bag Limit Alternatives	Percent Reduction
Alt. 1: No Bag Limit	0
Alt. 2. 5/10	1.38%
Alt. 3. 2/6	9.56%

Distribution of wahoo harvest (observed catch + reported catch) per angler for angler trips intercepted after fishing in federal waters, between 2000 and 2017. Data from the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey.





# Discussion

## Size Limits for Dolphin in St. Croix (Action 3a) and St. Thomas/St. John (Action 5a)

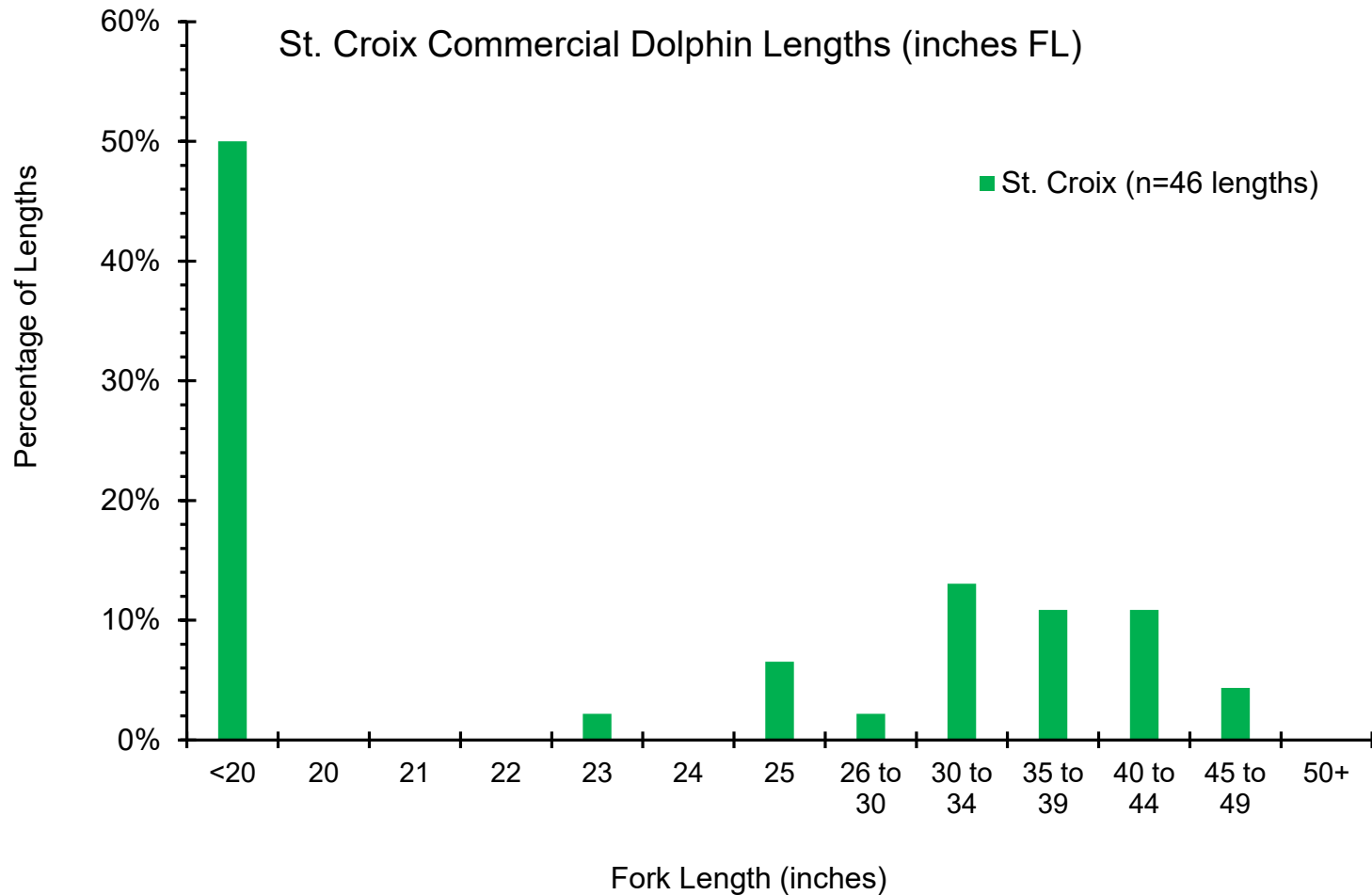
Alternative 1. No Action. Do not establish a minimum size limit for the commercial or recreational harvest of dolphin in federal waters around (St. Croix | St. Thomas/St. John)

Alternative 2. Establish a 20” fork length minimum size limit for the commercial or recreational harvest of dolphin in federal waters around (St. Croix | St. Thomas/St. John).

Alternative 3 (**Preferred**). Establish a 24” fork length minimum size limit for the commercial or recreational harvest of dolphin in federal waters around (St. Croix | St. Thomas/St. John).

*Rationale: ensure undersized individuals have time to mature and reproduce*





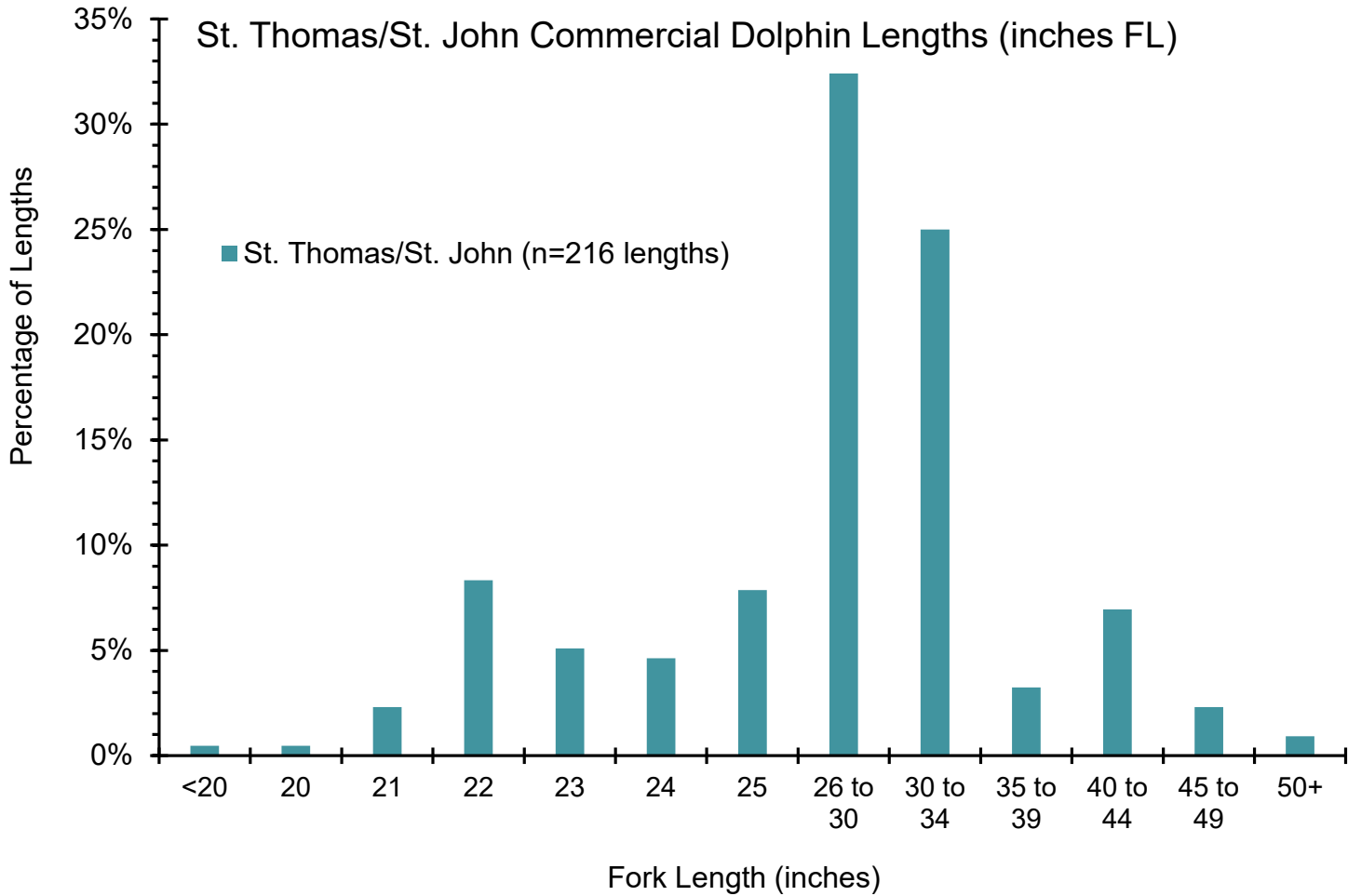
Estimated percent reduction for St. Croix dolphin commercial landings for the proposed minimum size limit options in Amendment 3.

Size Limit Alternatives	Percent Reduction
Alt. 1: No Size Limit	0
Alt. 2. 20-inch FL	3.9%
Alt. 3 (Pfd). 24-inch FL	5.0%

St. Croix dolphin length distribution (in inches fork length) from the commercial sector from 2017 to 2021. Data from the Trip Intercept Program.



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Estimated percent reduction for St. Thomas/St. John dolphin commercial landings for the proposed minimum size limit options in Amendment 3.

Size Limit Alternatives	Percent Reduction
Alt. 1: No Size Limit	0
Alt. 2. 20-inch FL	<1%
Alt. 3 (Pfd). 24-inch FL	<1%

St. Thomas/St. John dolphin length distribution (in inches fork length) from the commercial sector from 2017 to 2021. Data from the Trip Intercept Program.



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## Recreational Bag Limits for Dolphin in St. Croix (Action 3b) and St. Thomas/St. John (Action 5b)

Alternative 1. No Action. Do not establish a recreational bag limit for dolphin in federal waters around (St. Croix | St. Thomas/St. John).

Alternative 2 (**Preferred**). Establish a recreational bag limit in federal waters around (St. Croix | St. Thomas/St. John) of 10 dolphin per person per day, not to exceed 32 dolphin per vessel per day, whichever is less. (*compatible with USVI regulations*)

Alternative 3. Establish a recreational bag limit in federal waters around (St. Croix | St. Thomas/St. John) of 5 dolphin per person per day, not to exceed 15 dolphin per vessel per day, whichever is less.

*Rationale: precautionary approach to management to protect against overfishing of dolphin since no recreational data are available at this time*



# Discussion

## Size Limits for Wahoo in St. Croix (Action 4a) and St. Thomas/St. John (Action 6a)

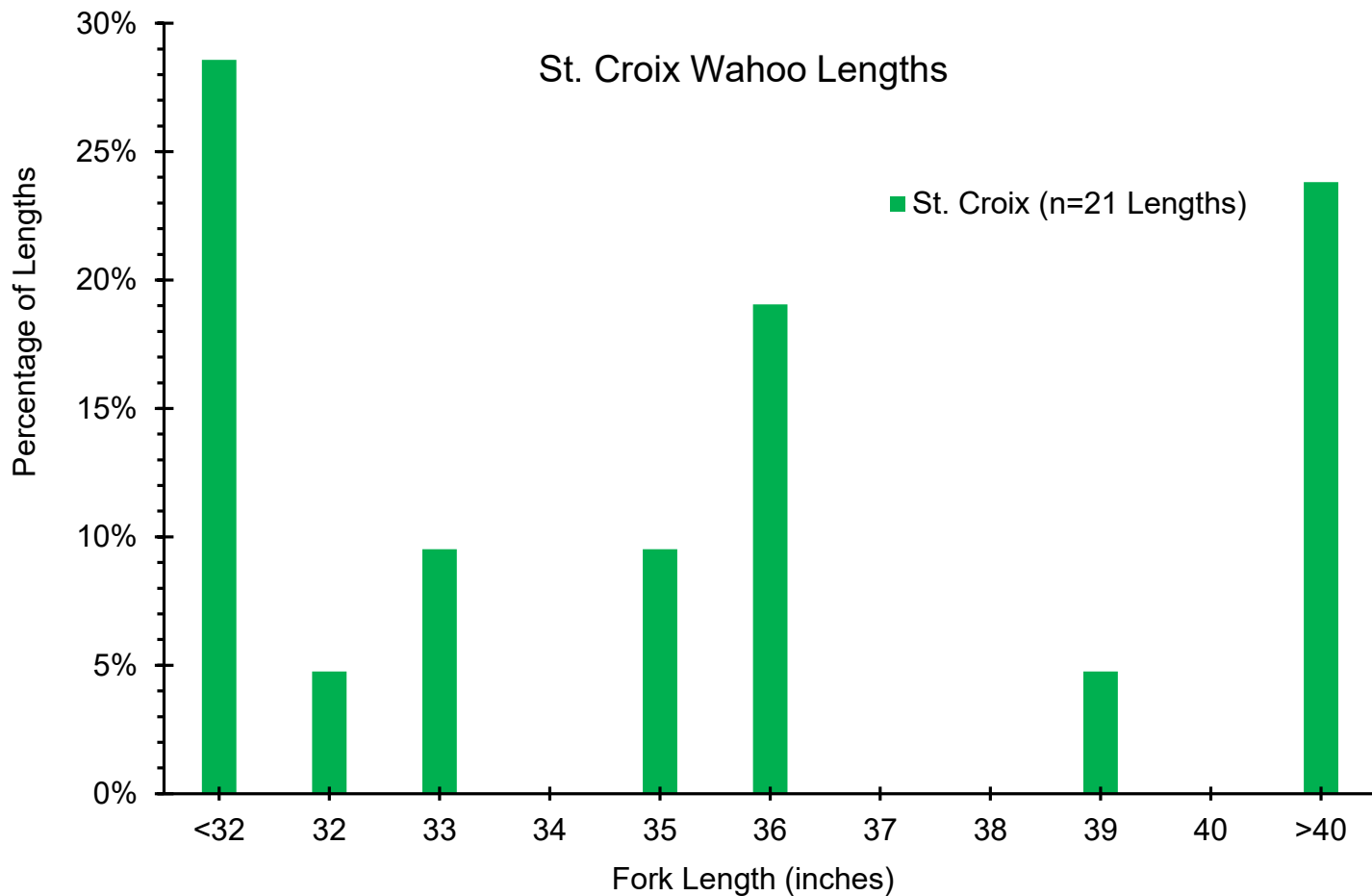
Alternative 1. No Action. Do not establish a minimum size limit for the commercial or recreational harvest of wahoo in federal waters around (St. Croix | St. Thomas/St. John)

Alternative 2. Establish a 32” fork length minimum size limit for the commercial or recreational harvest of wahoo in federal waters around (St. Croix | St. Thomas/St. John).

Alternative 3 (**Preferred**). Establish a 40” fork length minimum size limit for the commercial or recreational harvest of wahoo in federal waters around (St. Croix | St. Thomas/St. John).

*Rationale: ensure undersized individuals have time to mature and reproduce*





St. Croix wahoo length distribution (in inches fork length) from the commercial sector from 2010 to 2021. Data from the Trip Intercept Program.

Estimated percent reduction for St. Croix wahoo commercial landings for the proposed minimum size limit options in Amendment 3.

Size Limit Alternatives	Percent Reduction
Alt. 1: No Size Limit	0
Alt. 2. 32-inch FL	2.2%
Alt. 3 (Pfd). 40-inch FL	44.6%

*The St. Thomas/St. John TIP data from 2010 to 2021 only has 17 wahoo samples; all above 40 inches fork length. Sample sizes range from 42 to 56 inches fork length with an average of 54.4.*



## Recreational Bag Limits for Wahoo in St. Croix (Action 4b) and St. Thomas/St. John (Action 6b)

Alternative 1. No Action. Do not establish a recreational bag limit for wahoo in federal waters around (St. Croix | St. Thomas/St. John).

Alternative 2. Establish a recreational bag limit in federal waters around (St. Croix | St. Thomas/St. John) of 4 wahoo per person per day, not to exceed 20 wahoo per vessel per day, whichever is less. (*compatible with USVI regulations*)

Alternative 3. Establish a recreational bag limit in federal waters around (St. Croix | St. Thomas/St. John) of 2 wahoo per person per day, not to exceed 10 wahoo per vessel per day, whichever is less.

*Rationale: precautionary approach to management to protect against overfishing of wahoo since no recreational data are available at this time*



# Discussion

# Action Items and Next Steps

August  
2023

- Council selects preferred alternatives, where possible

Sept - Nov  
2023

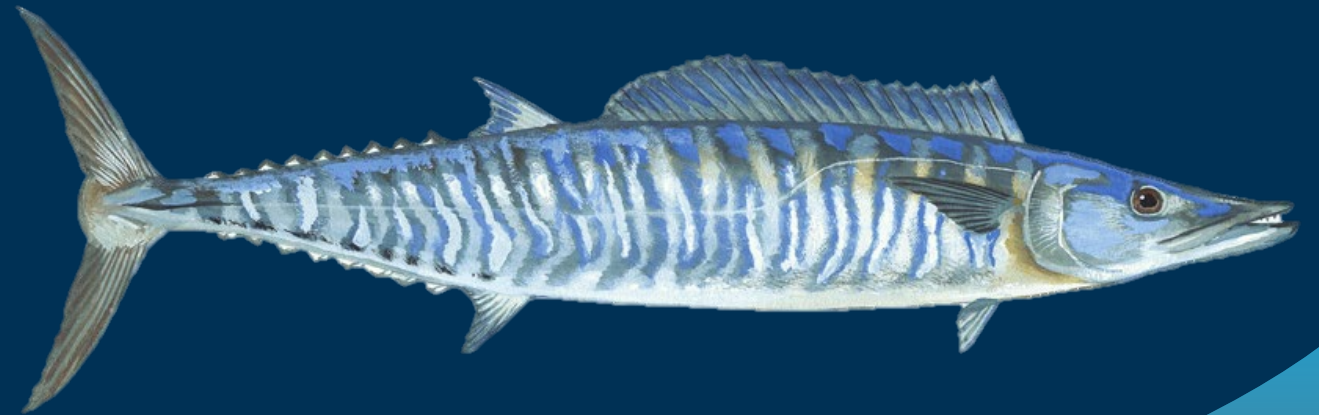
- IPT updates the actions with preferred alternatives and prepares full amendment
- Staff prepares draft codified text (regulations) for Council review

December  
2023

- Council reviews final draft amendment and draft codified text
- If possible, Council approves amendment for submission to Secretary of Commerce (allowing staff to make editorial edits)



Thank You



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