

# **MADMF Roundtable MLA weekend 2026**



# Topics

- ASMFC Stock Assessment
- DMF data update (survey data)
- MA landings and effort
- MA permits and trap tags data
- Industry survey results
- Herring and menhaden update
- NARW Monitoring
- Ropeless Fishing
- Lobster management – next steps





# An Overview of the 2025 U.S. Lobster Stock Assessment



**Full presentation to the Board:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrNrIA46OGM>

October 2025



# Components of the stock assessment

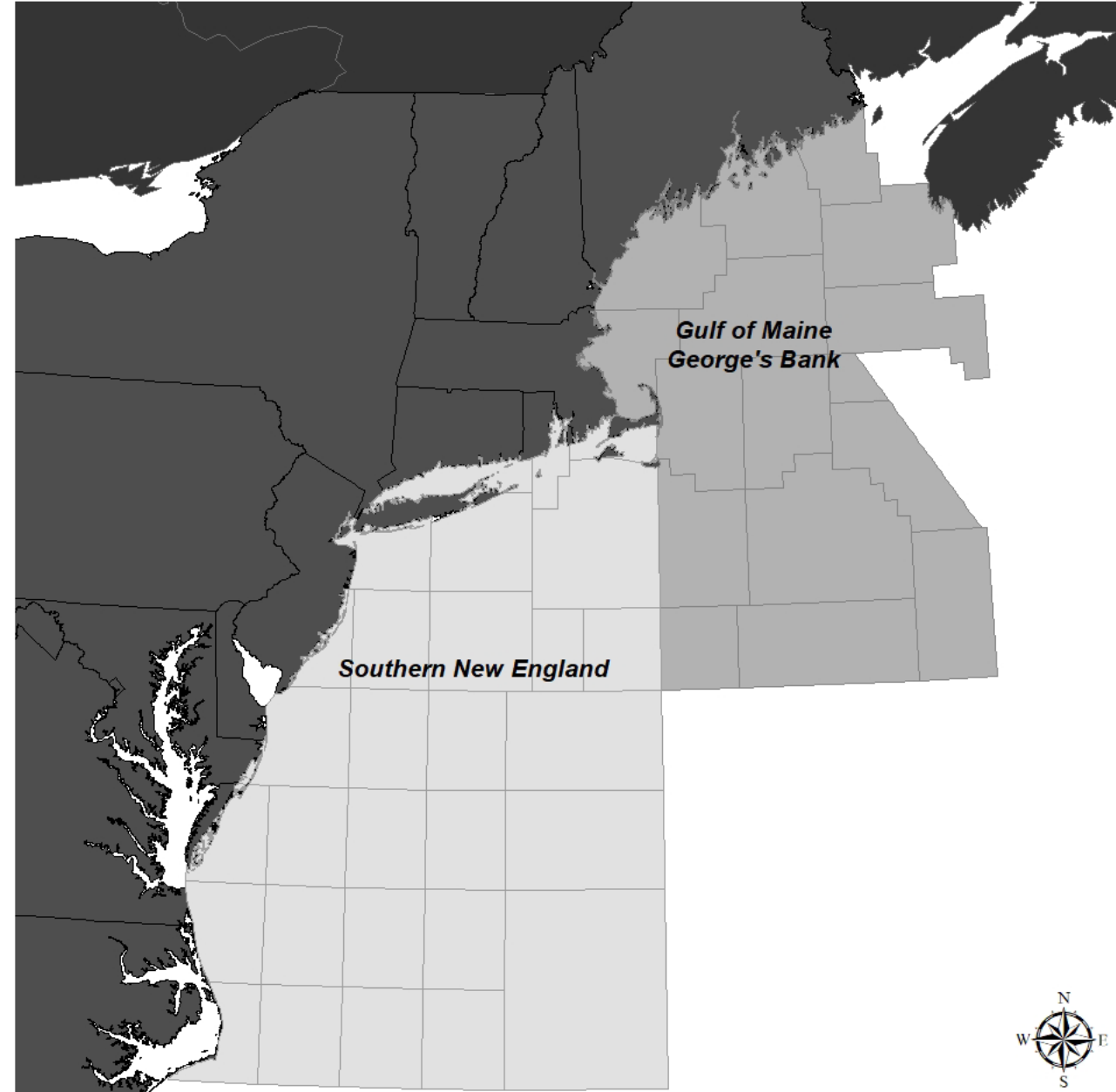
- Review of assessment and regulatory history
- Review life history information available
  - Vital rates (growth, maturity, natural mortality)
  - Updated research on diet, movement, disease, genetics, environmental impacts, etc.
- Review of the fishery – history of catch and effort
- Identification, description, and evaluation of data sources
  - Fishery-dependent data (landings, effort, sea and port sampling data, etc)
  - Fishery-independent data (surveys and other monitoring programs)
- Stock indicators
  - Empirical indicators (“model-free”)
- Population model
  - Including basecase runs, sensitivity runs, and projections
- Reference points and stock status determination
- Research recommendations





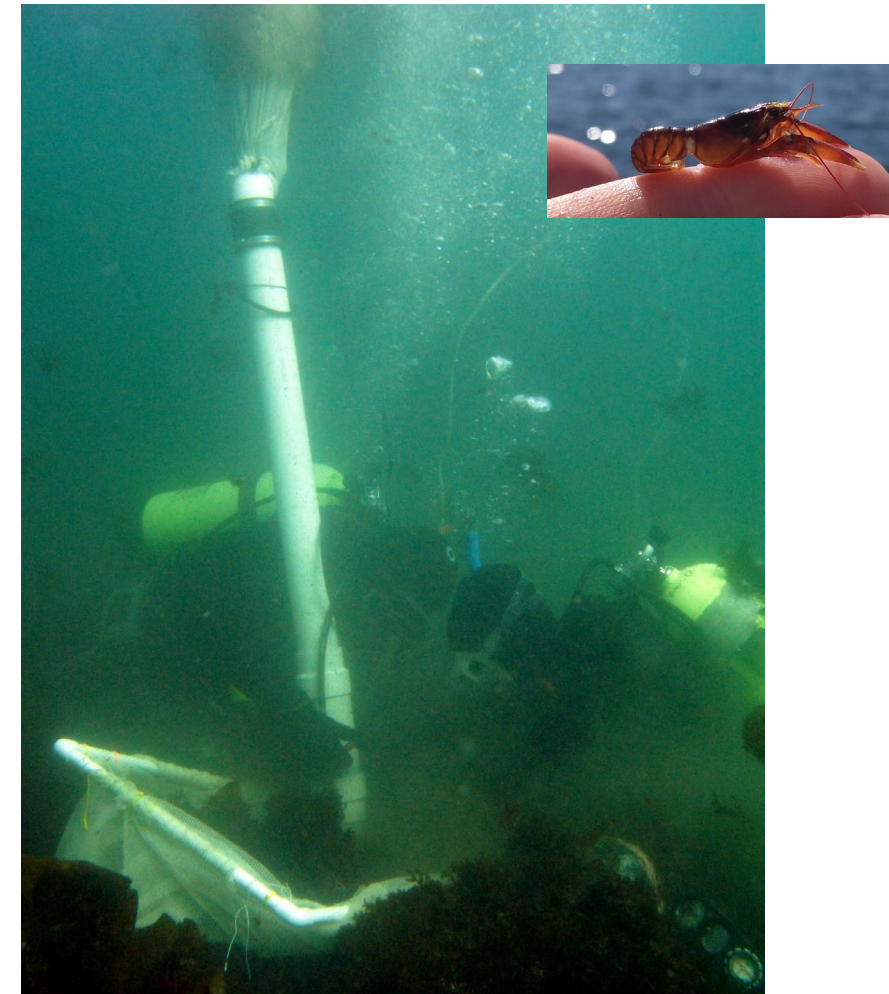
# Two U.S. Lobster Stocks

- Gulf of Maine / Georges Bank (GOMGBK)
- Southern New England (SNE)
- Defined based on
  - Maturity and growth patterns
  - Movement patterns
  - Size structure
  - Patterns of larval dispersal
- Each stock is assessed separately
- Focus is understanding how the stocks have changed over time
  - Trend-based assessment of stock status
  - **Don't** use biological reference points ( $F_{10\%}$ )
- Stock status is evaluated based on abundance and exploitation reference points

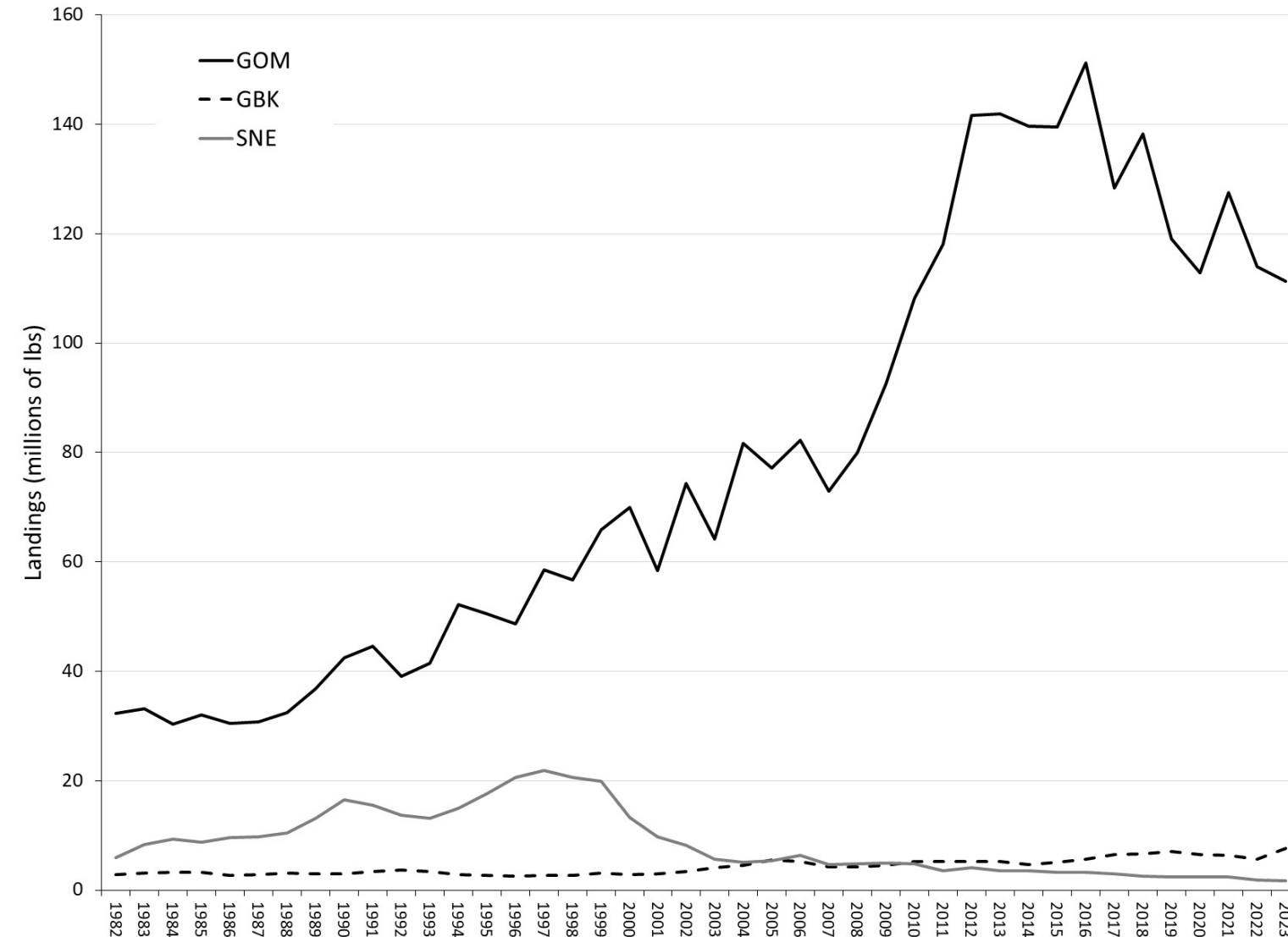


# Data Sources

- Random stratified surveys for relative abundance
  - Trawl surveys
  - Ventless trap surveys
- Other monitoring surveys
  - Early benthic phase suction sampling (density estimates)
  - Larval surveys
    - Seabrook power plant
    - Millstone power plant
  - Fixed-station trawl surveys
    - URI GSO trawls
    - Millstone power plant
- Fishery-dependent data
  - Harvester reported landings & effort
  - Sea and port sampling programs
    - State agencies
    - NOAA fisheries
    - CFRF Study Fleet



# Landings by sub-stock 1982 - 2023

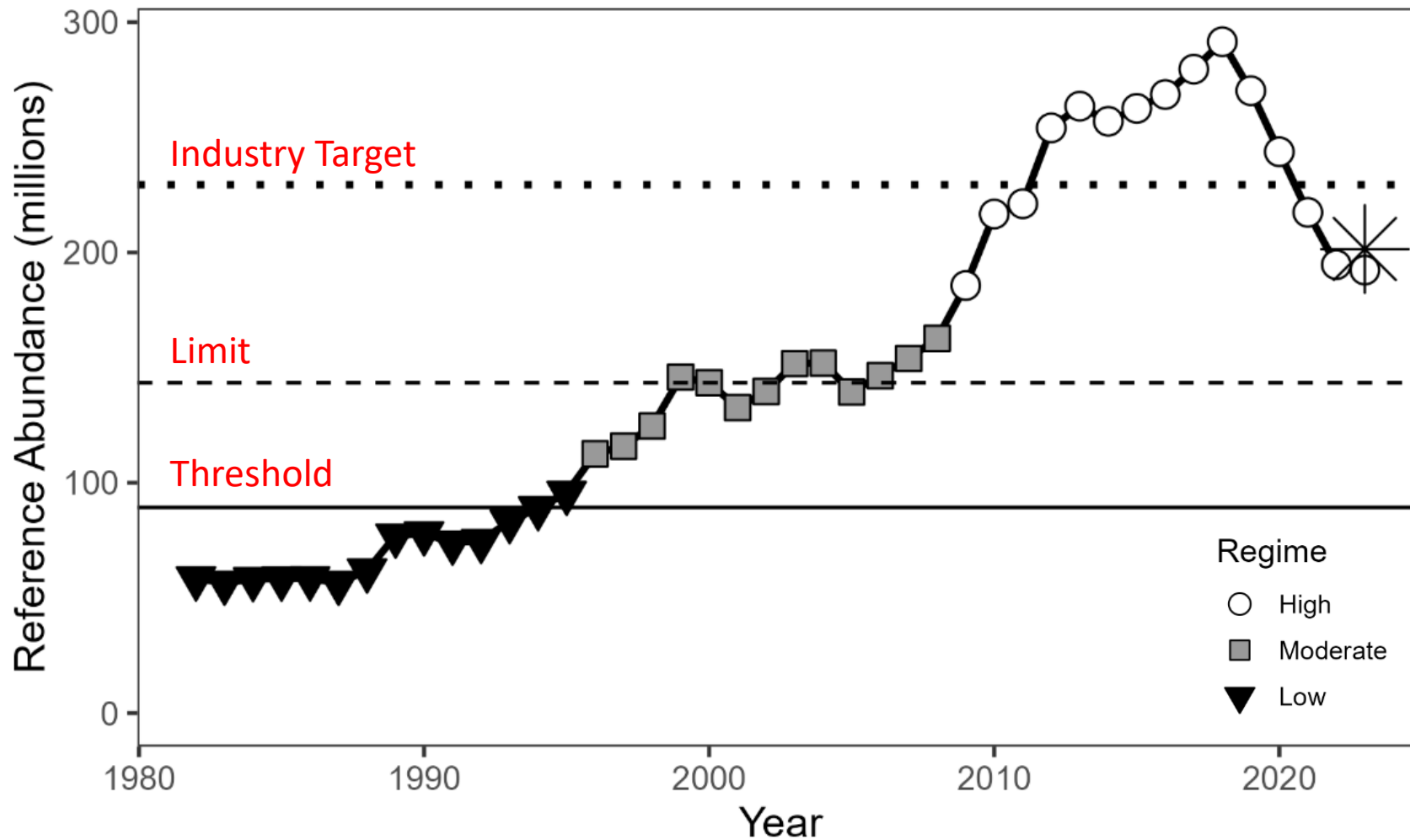


- Most US landings come from GOM sub-stock
  - Inshore GOM areas dominate landings
  - SA 512 (midcoast ME) increasingly more dominant through the 2000s ( $\geq 50\%$  of GOM catch)
- Spatial shifts to east in GBK
  - GBK landings shifting more towards SA 562
- Overall SNE at record low
  - Inshore has stabilized somewhat at very low levels
  - Offshore has declined over last decade



# Model Results - GOMGBK Stock status

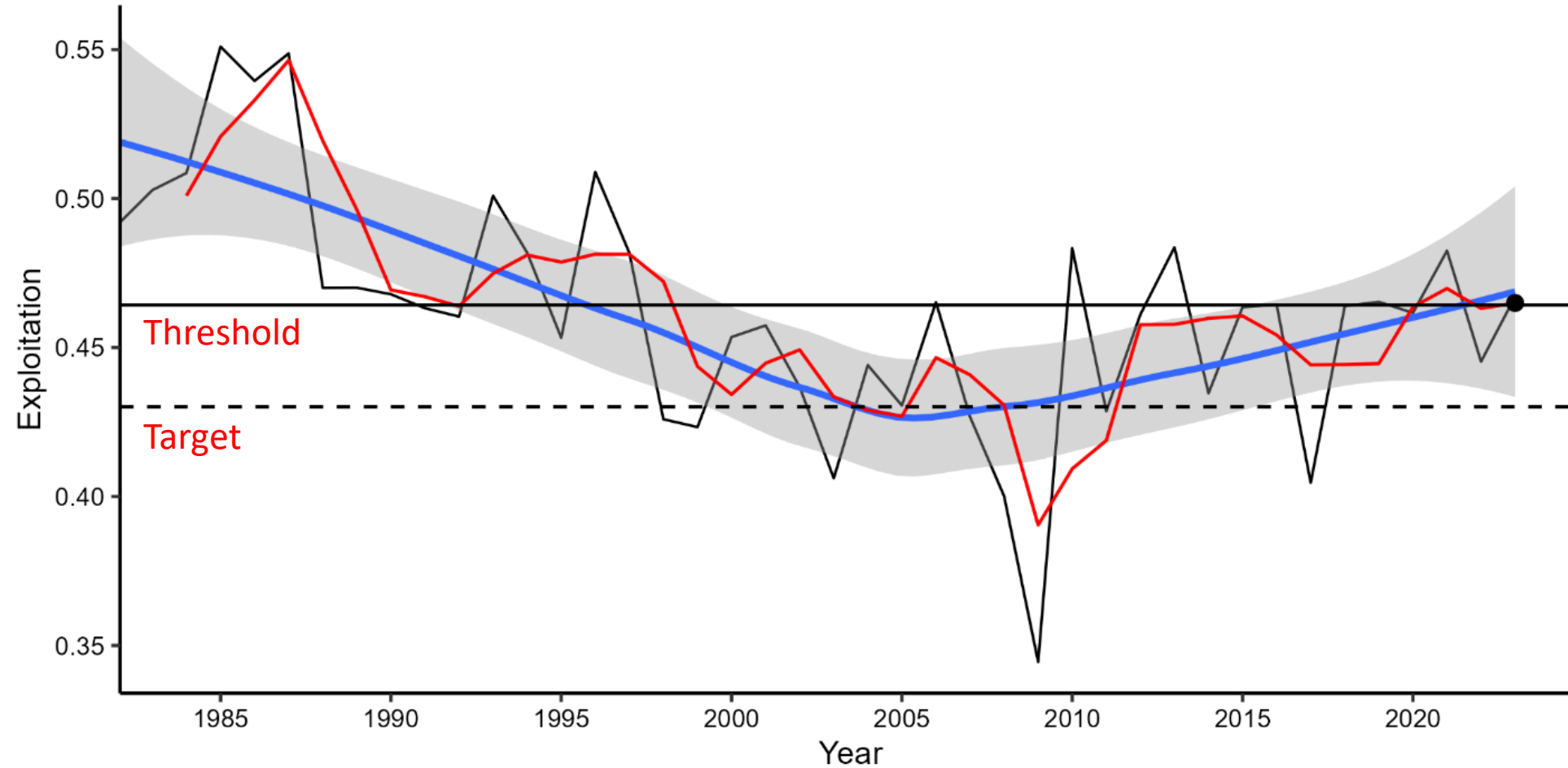
## Reference Abundance



- Abundance is below the Target but above the Limit
- Stock is not depleted

# Model Results - GOMGBK Stock status

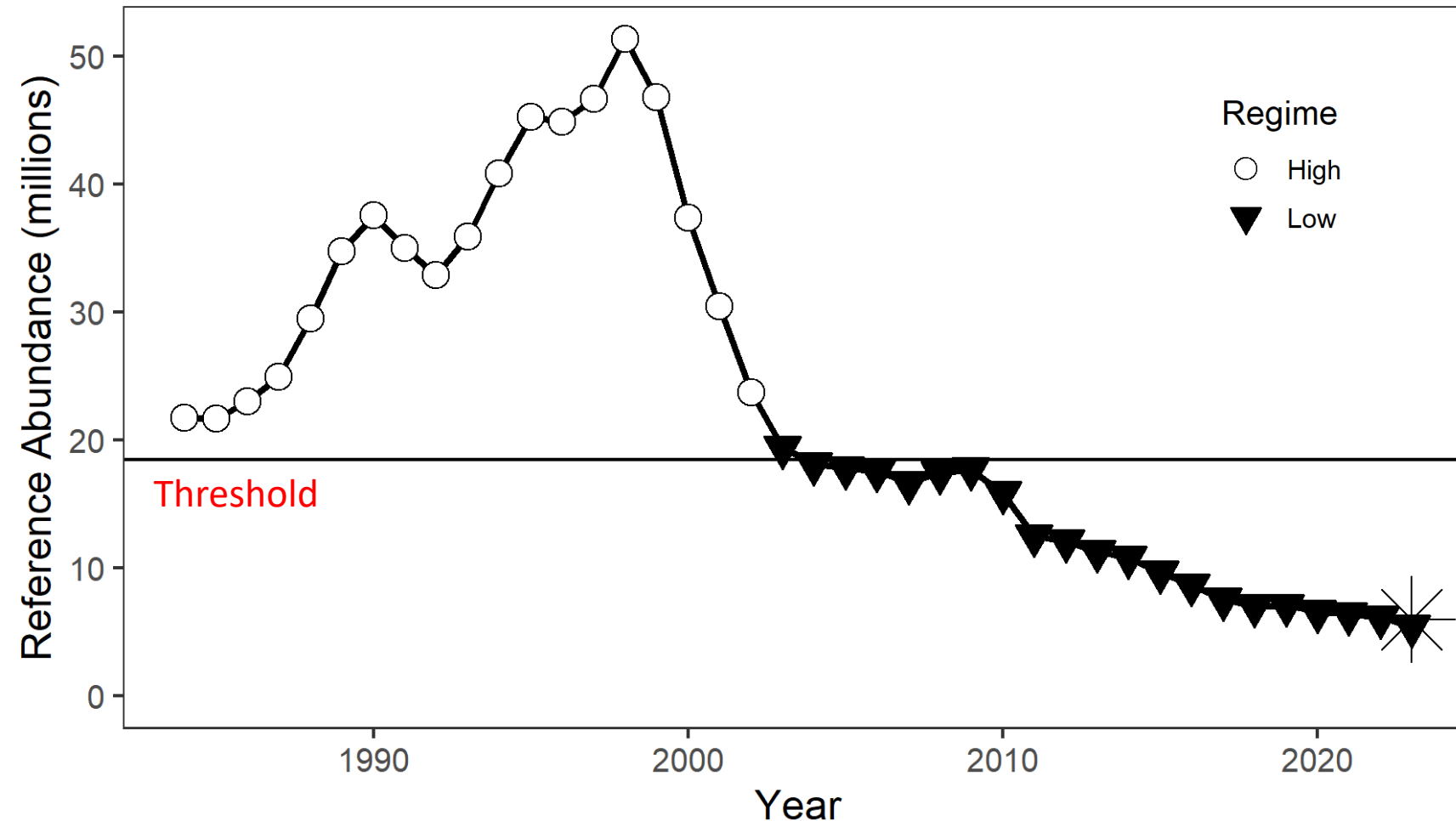
## Effective exploitation



- Exploitation is above the Threshold by 0.00066
- Overfishing is occurring

# Model Results – SNE Stock status

## Reference Abundance

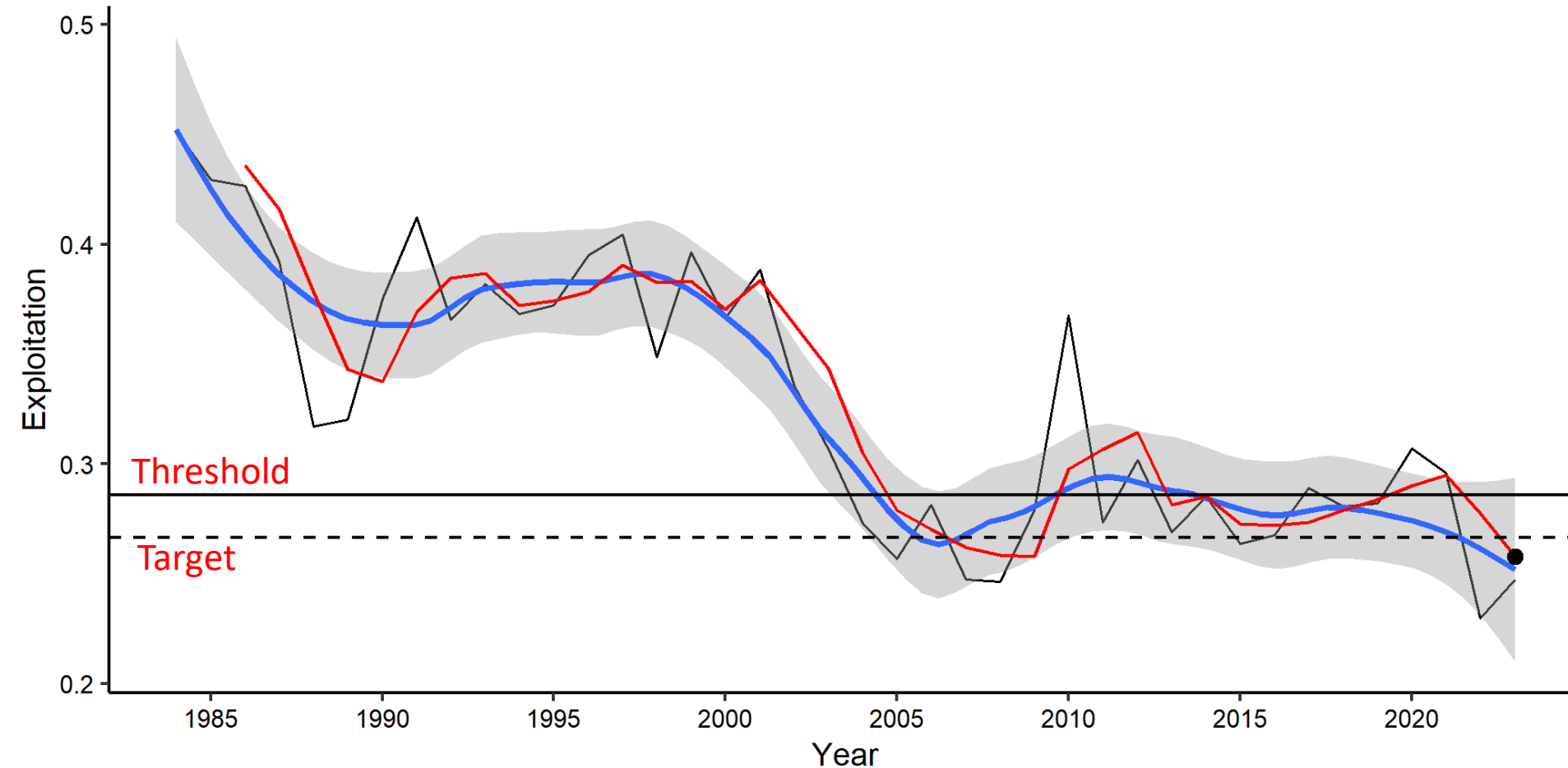


- Abundance is well below the Threshold
- Stock is significantly depleted
- SNE stock determination has been significantly depleted in every stock assessment since 2006



# Model Results – SNE Stock status

## Effective exploitation



- Exploitation is below the Target
- Overfishing is not occurring

# Summary points & recommendations

## **GOMGBK = not depleted**

- Strong spatial dynamics driving the increase and recent decline
  - Eastern Maine
- Inshore fishery is heavily recruit-dependent
- Exploitation has been relatively stable over time
  - Important to monitor, but may not be best way to assess impact of fishing on the stock
- Recommendation to immediately initiate a Management Strategy Evaluation
  - Clearly identify management goals/objectives
  - Better understand socioeconomic status and concerns
  - Identify potential management tools that will have buy-in from industry and prevent further declines towards biological thresholds

## **SNE = significantly depleted**

- SNE landings are at record lows
- Productivity is severely compromised and environmental conditions continue to worsen
  - Reproductive success from existing SSB appears insufficient to sustain a stable population at current exploitation levels
- Recommendation to initiate significant management action
  - Provides the best chance of stabilizing or improving abundance and reproductive capacity



# Survey indices

Trawl Survey

Ventless Trap Survey

YOY survey

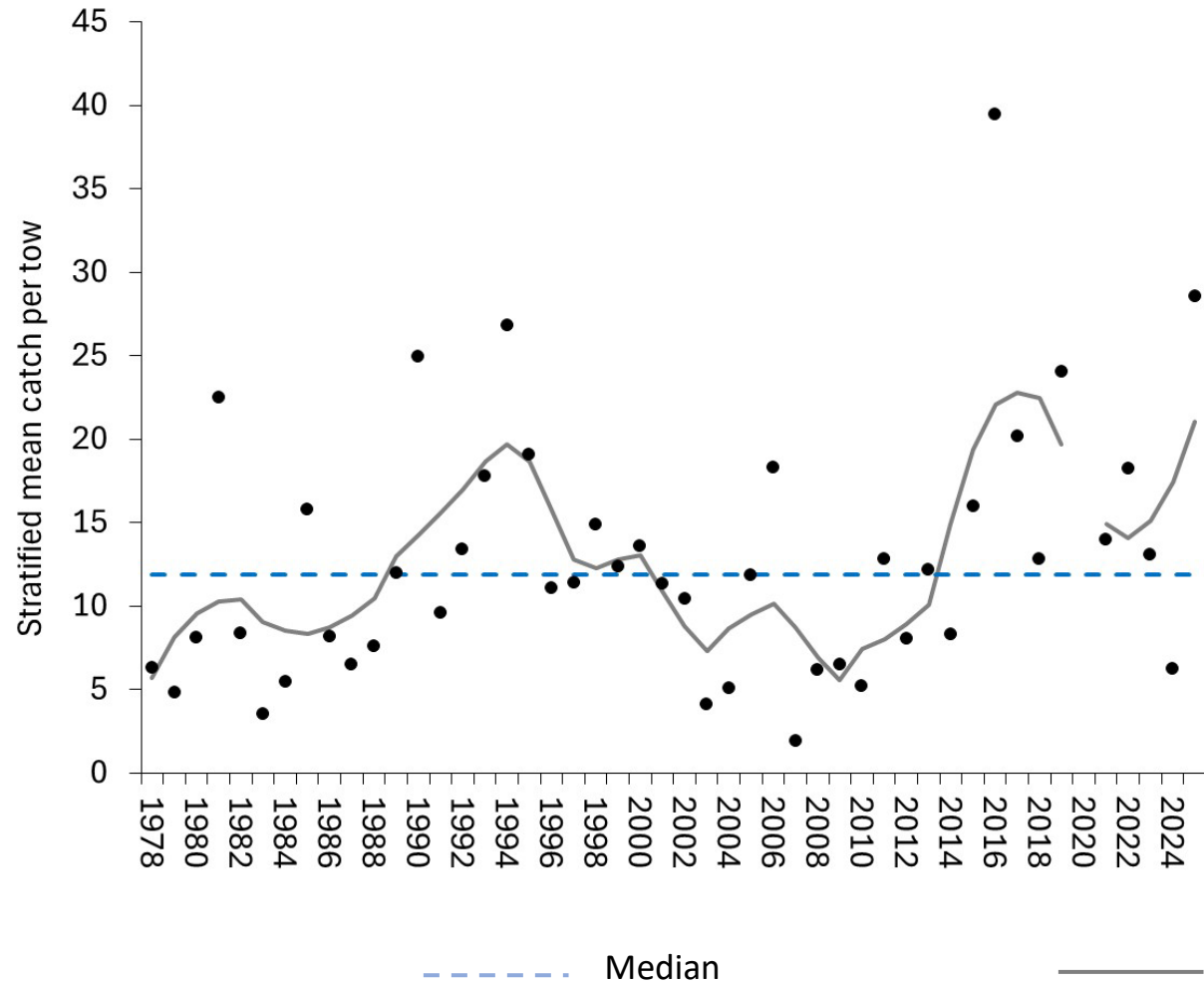




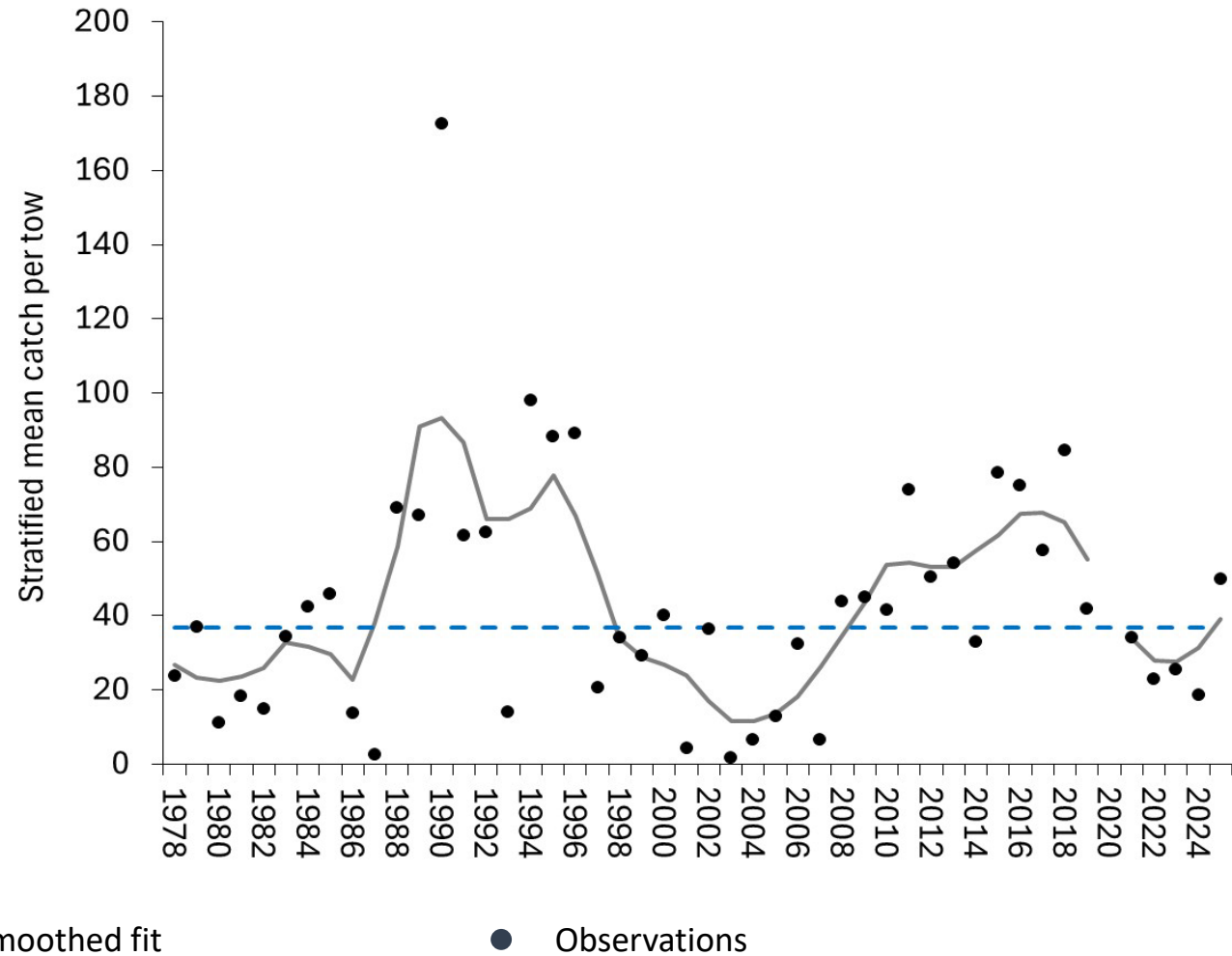
MA - Gulf of Maine

# Trawl Survey Lobster Catches – GOM

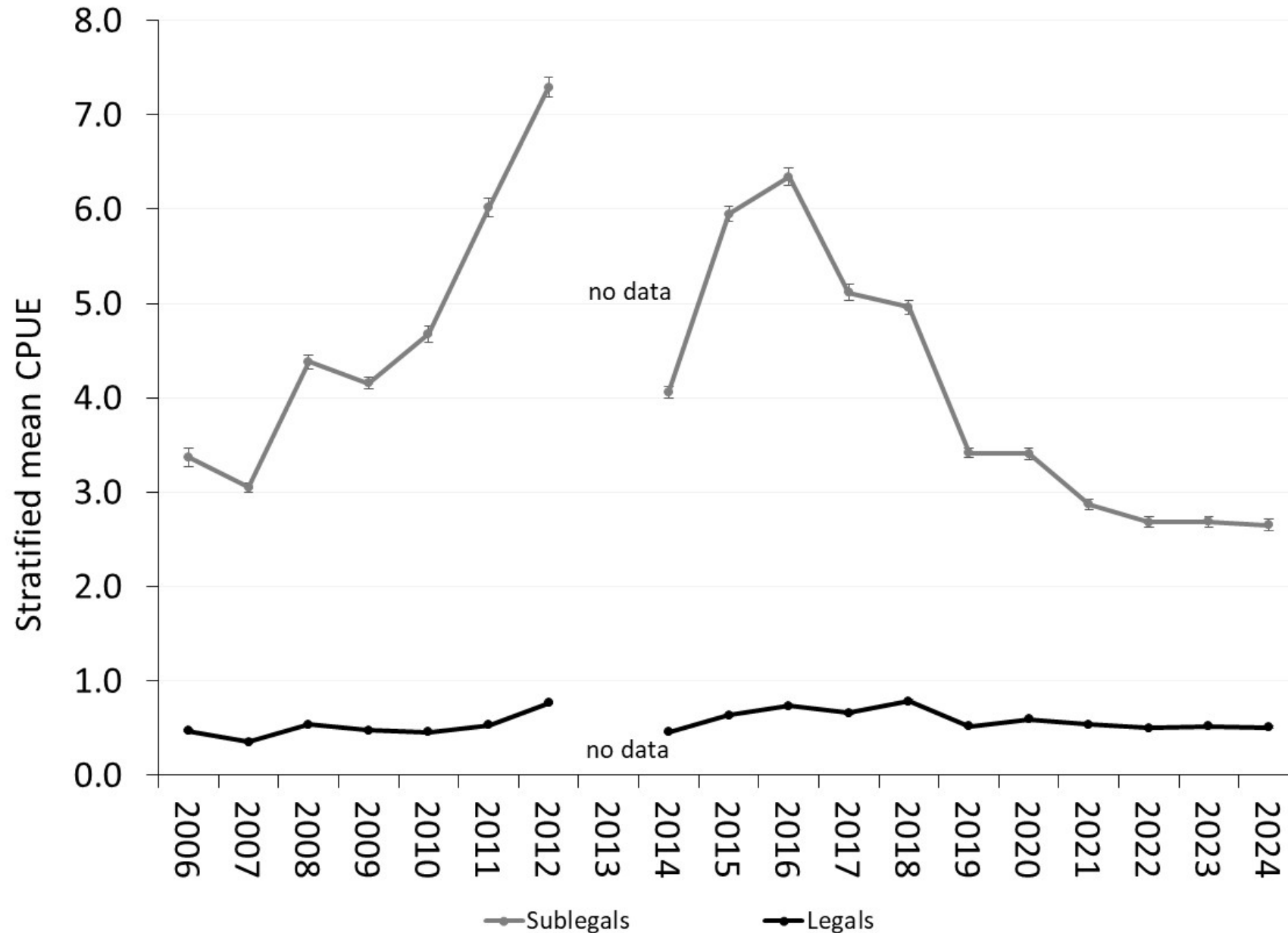
**Abundance - SPRING**



**Abundance - FALL**

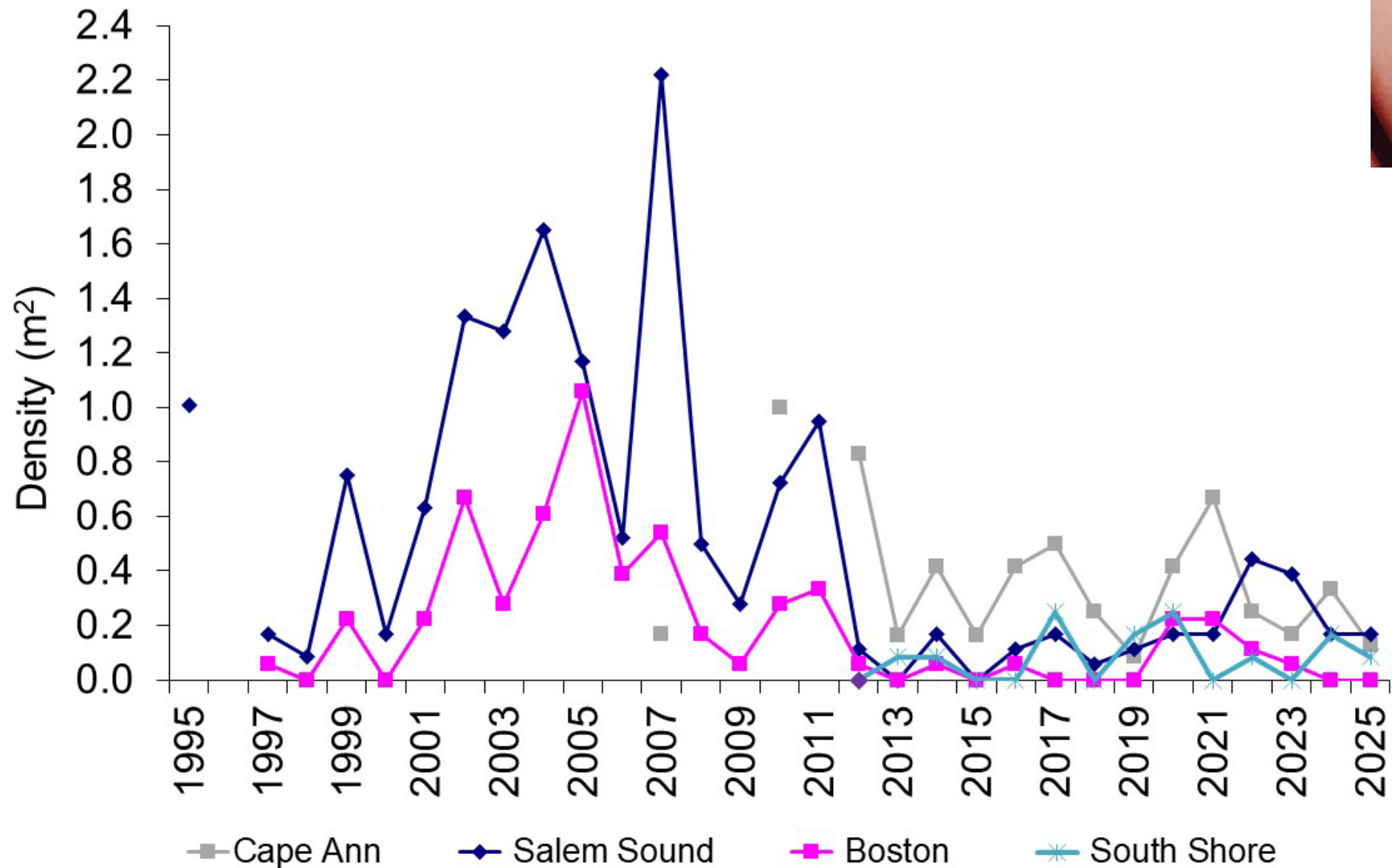


# Ventless Trap Survey – MA GOM abundance





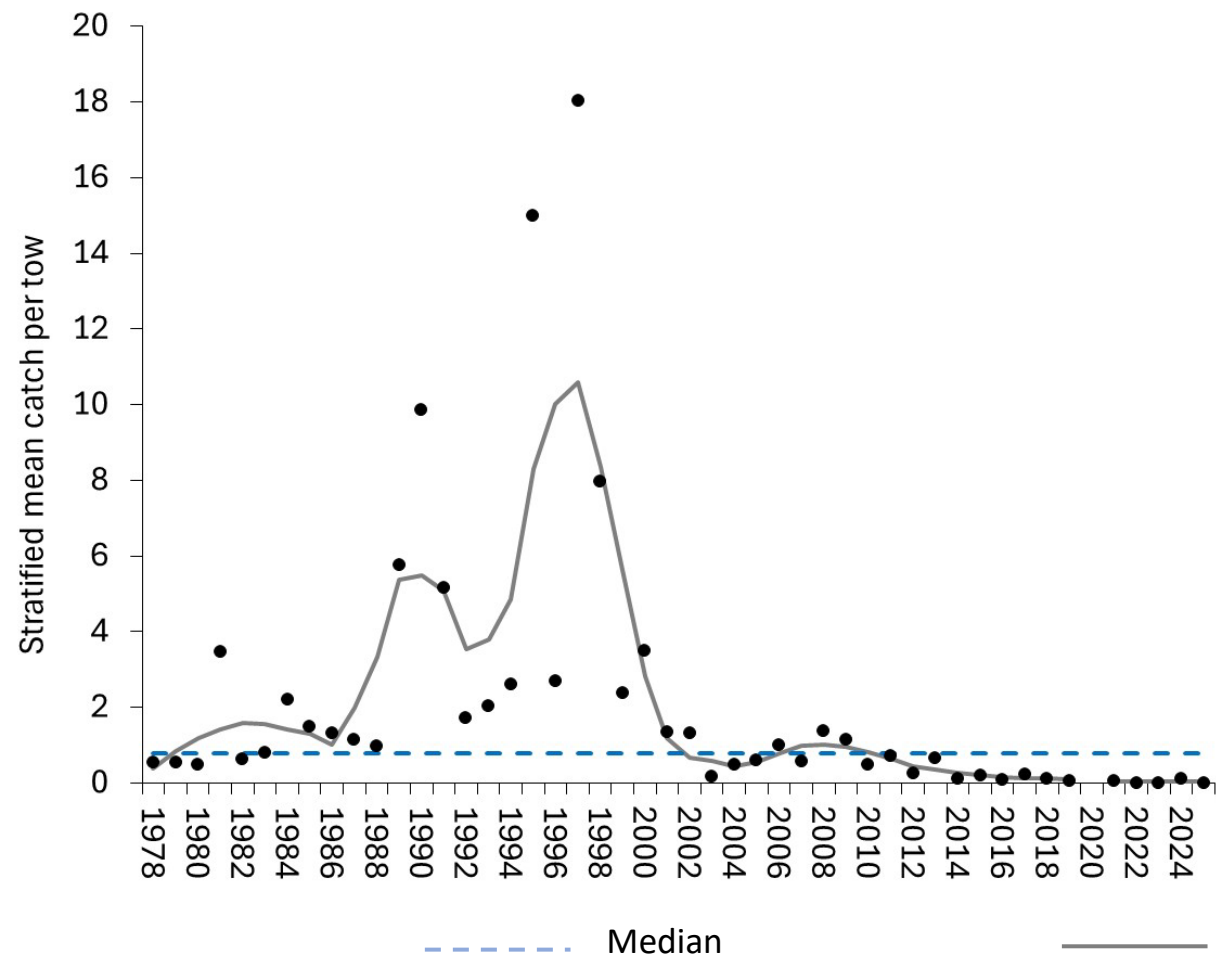
# Densities of YOY lobsters (MA GOM)



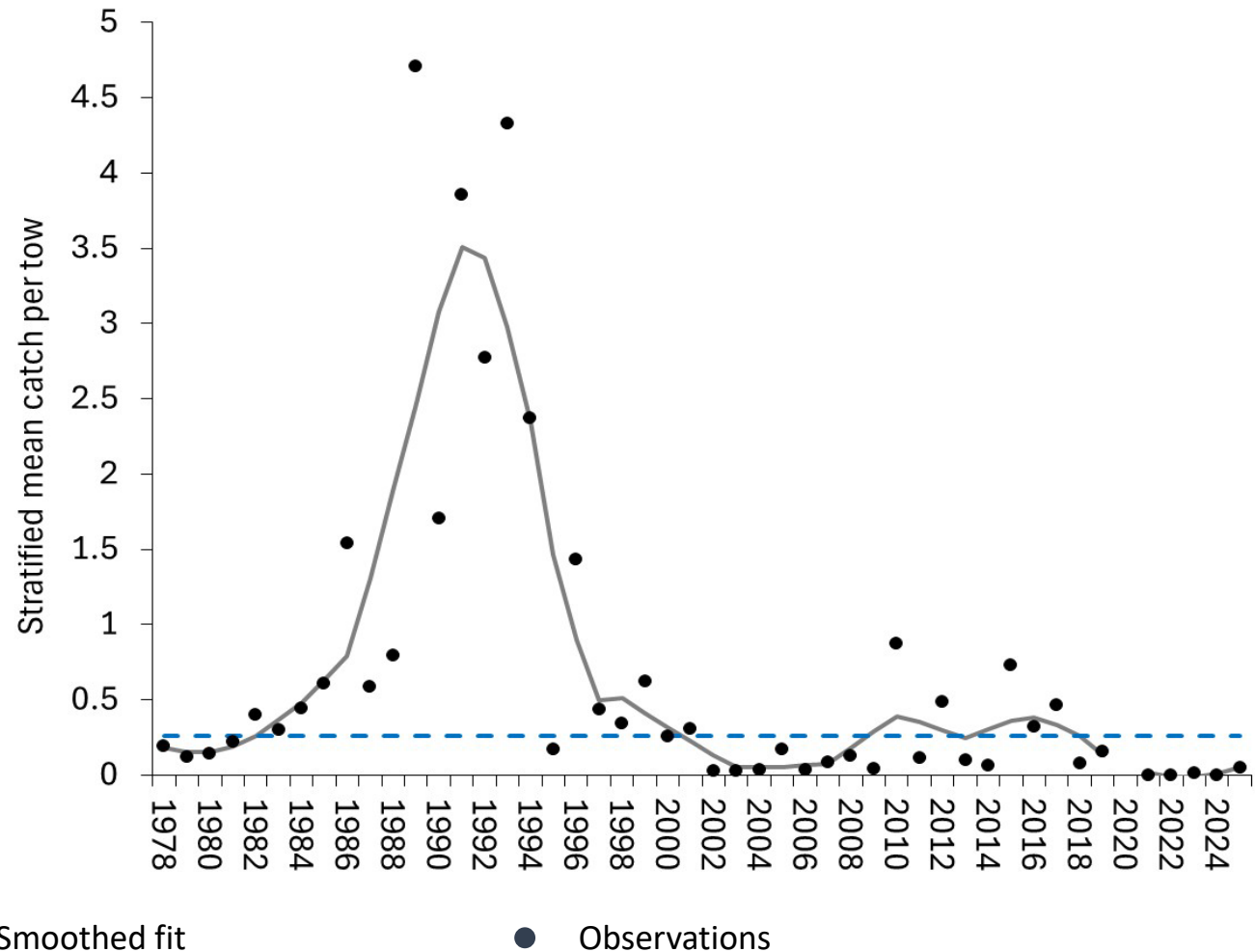
MA – Southern New England

# Trawl Survey Lobster Catches – SNE

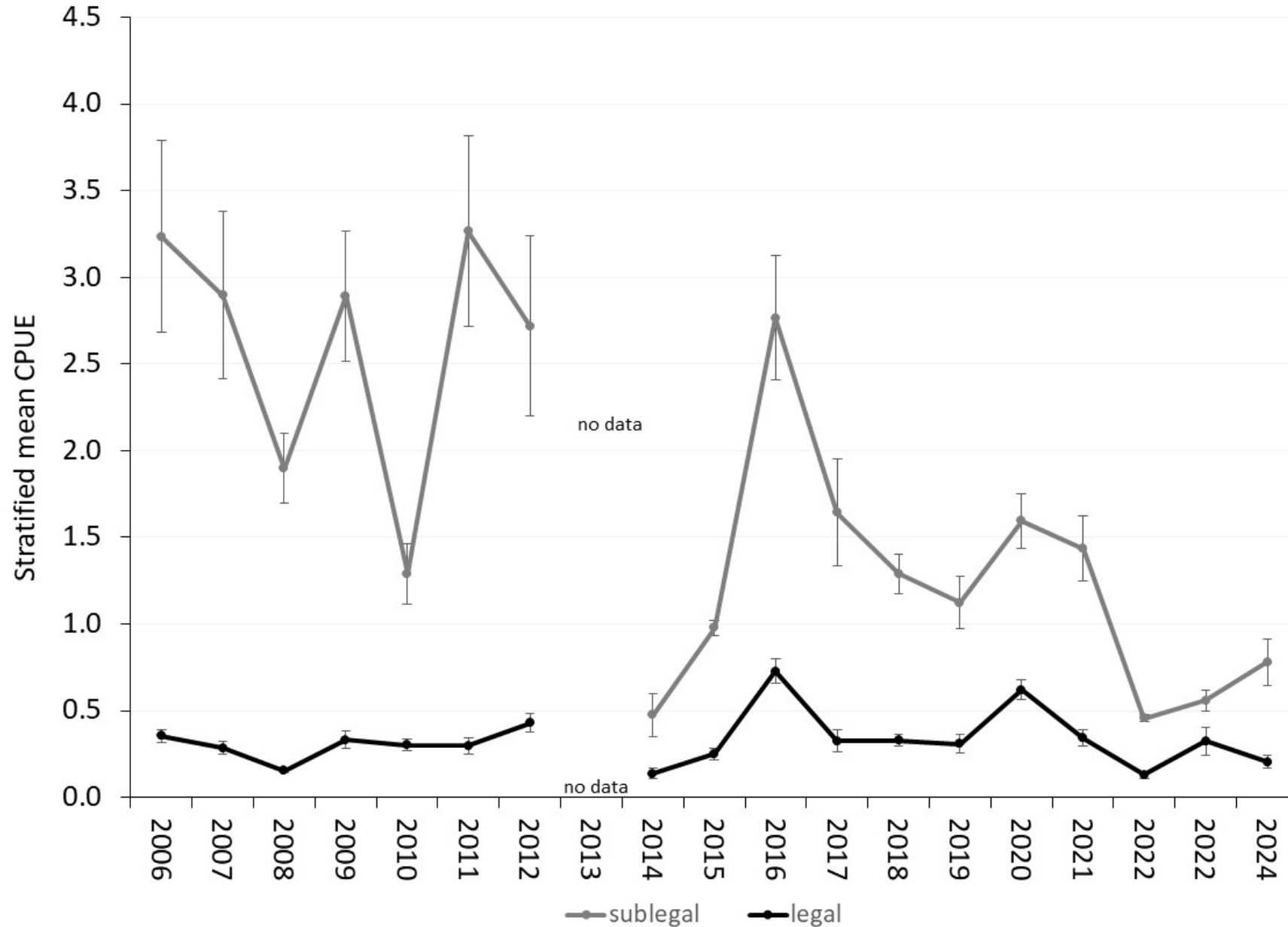
Abundance - SPRING



Abundance - FALL

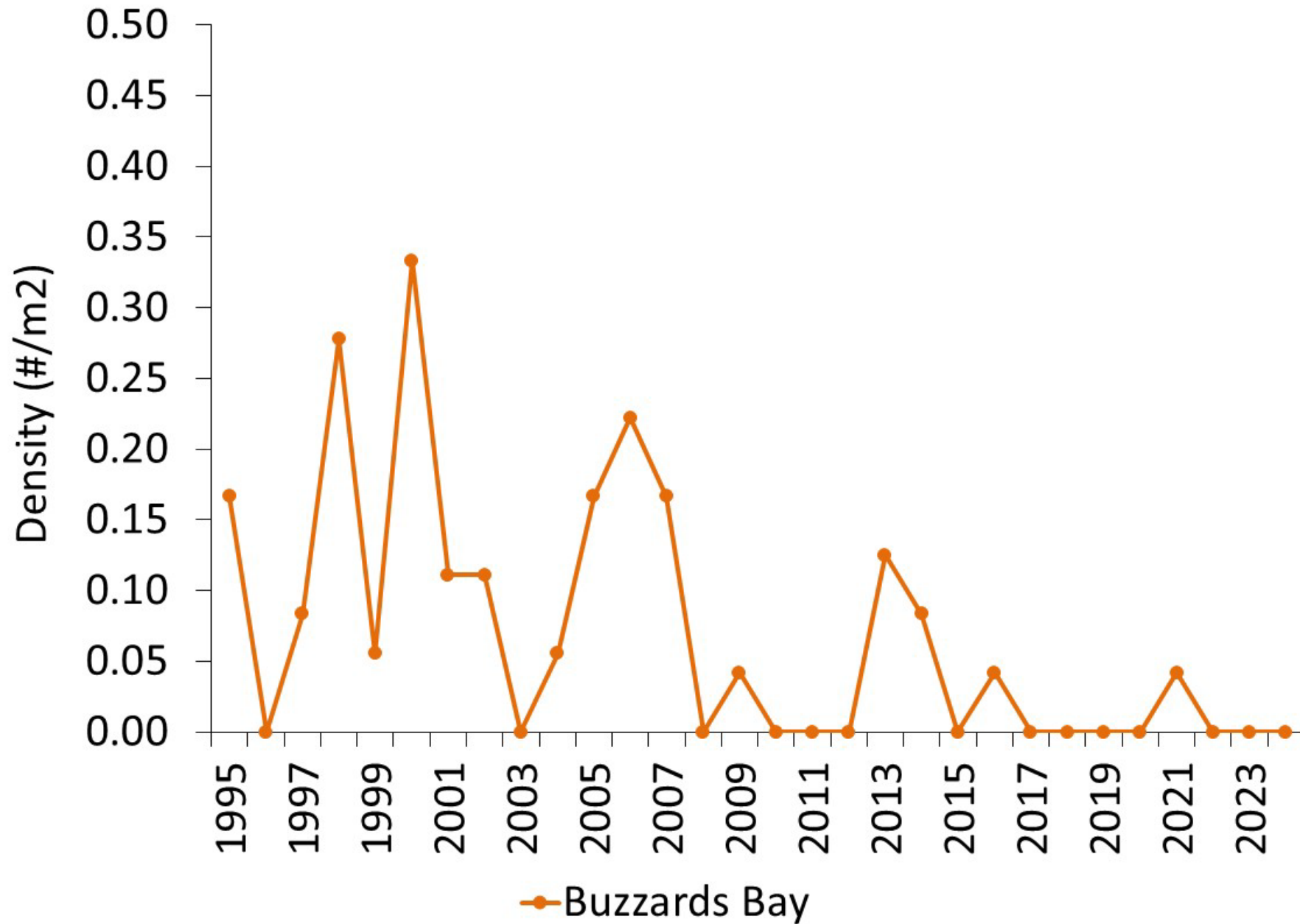


# Ventless Trap Survey (SNE) – abundance



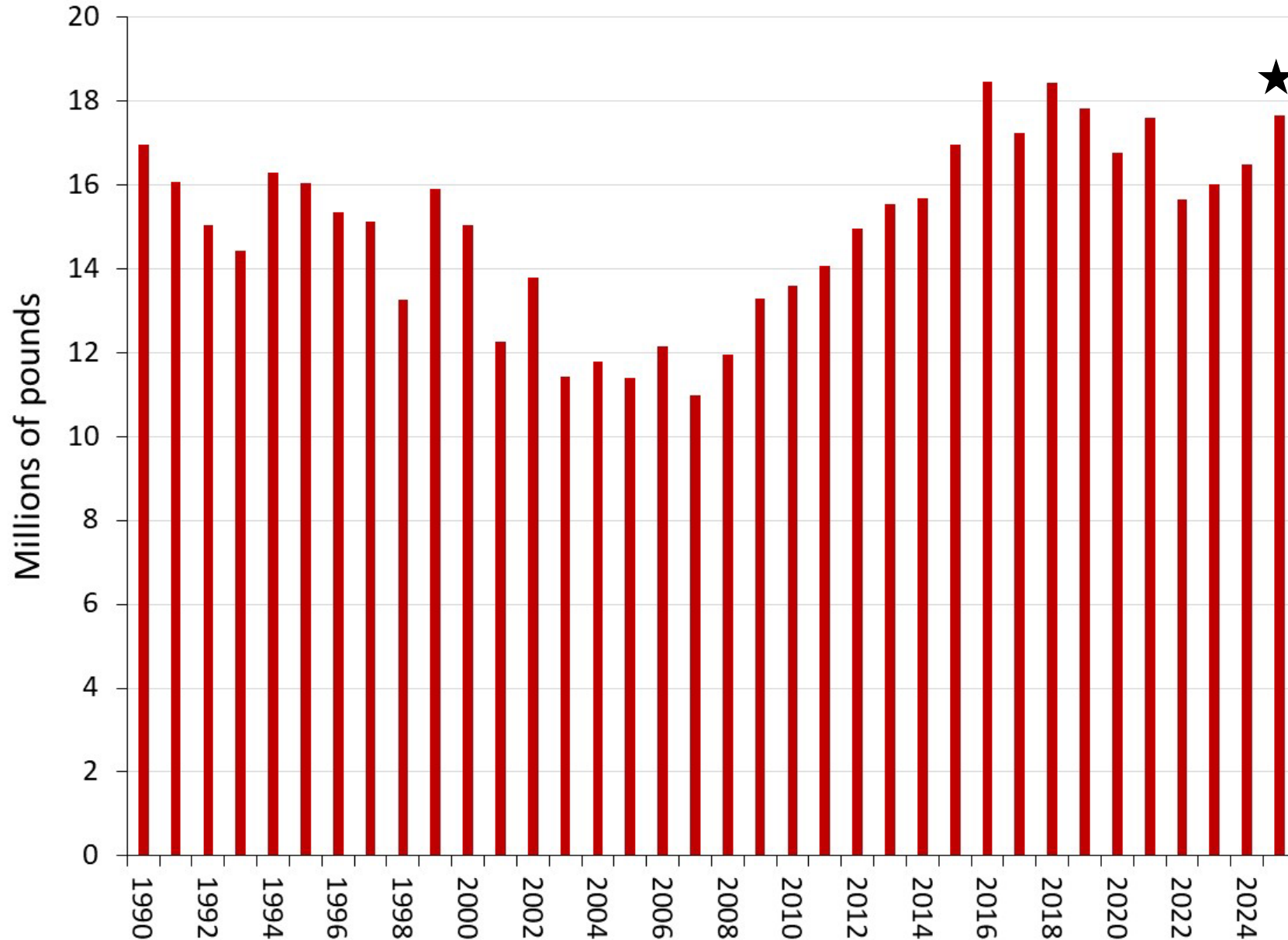


# Densities of YOY lobsters (MA SNE)



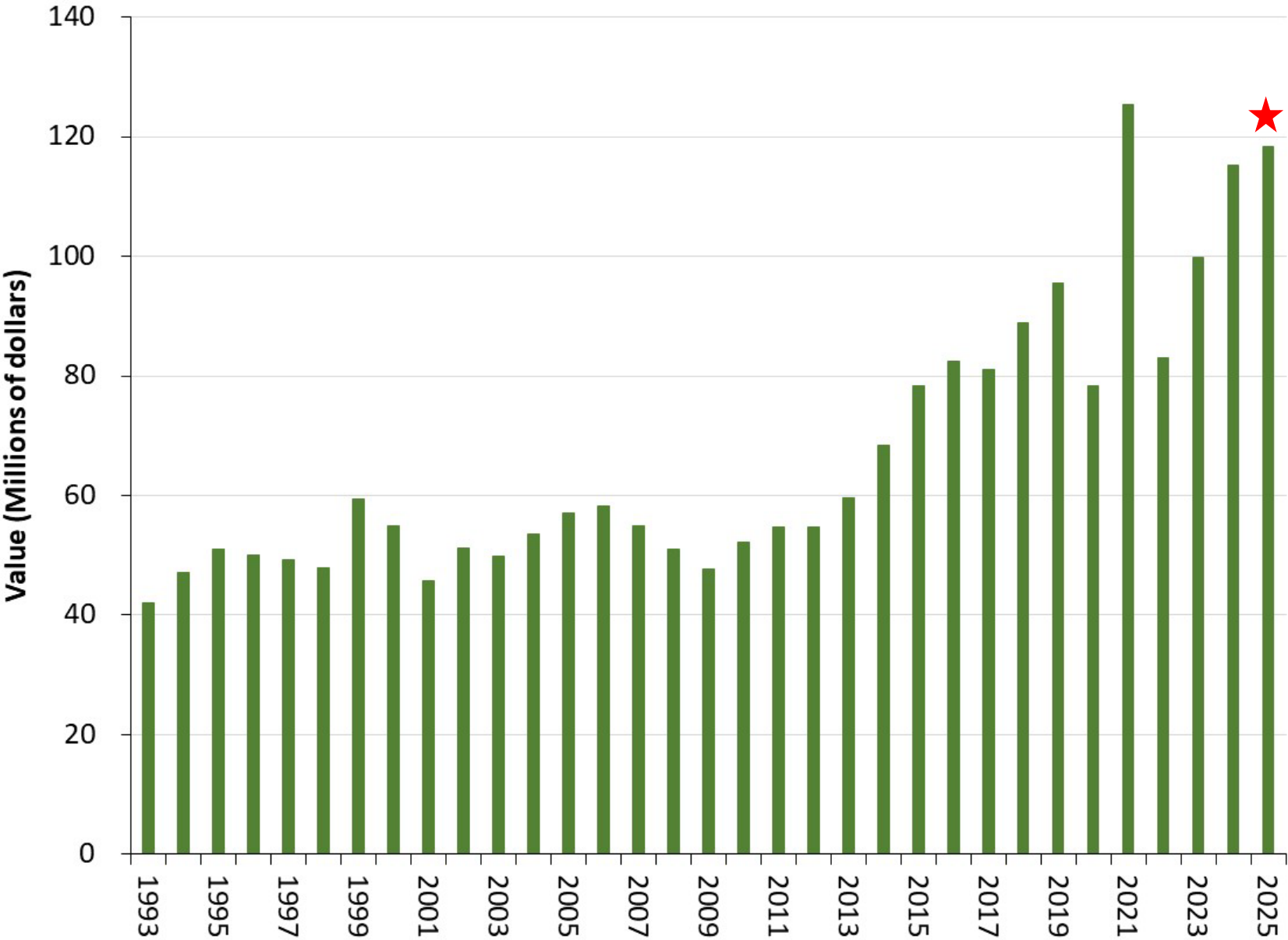
# Landings & effort

# Total Massachusetts Landings



- Total landings from all gear types
- Trap landings are ~95% of all landings
- **2025 value is preliminary**

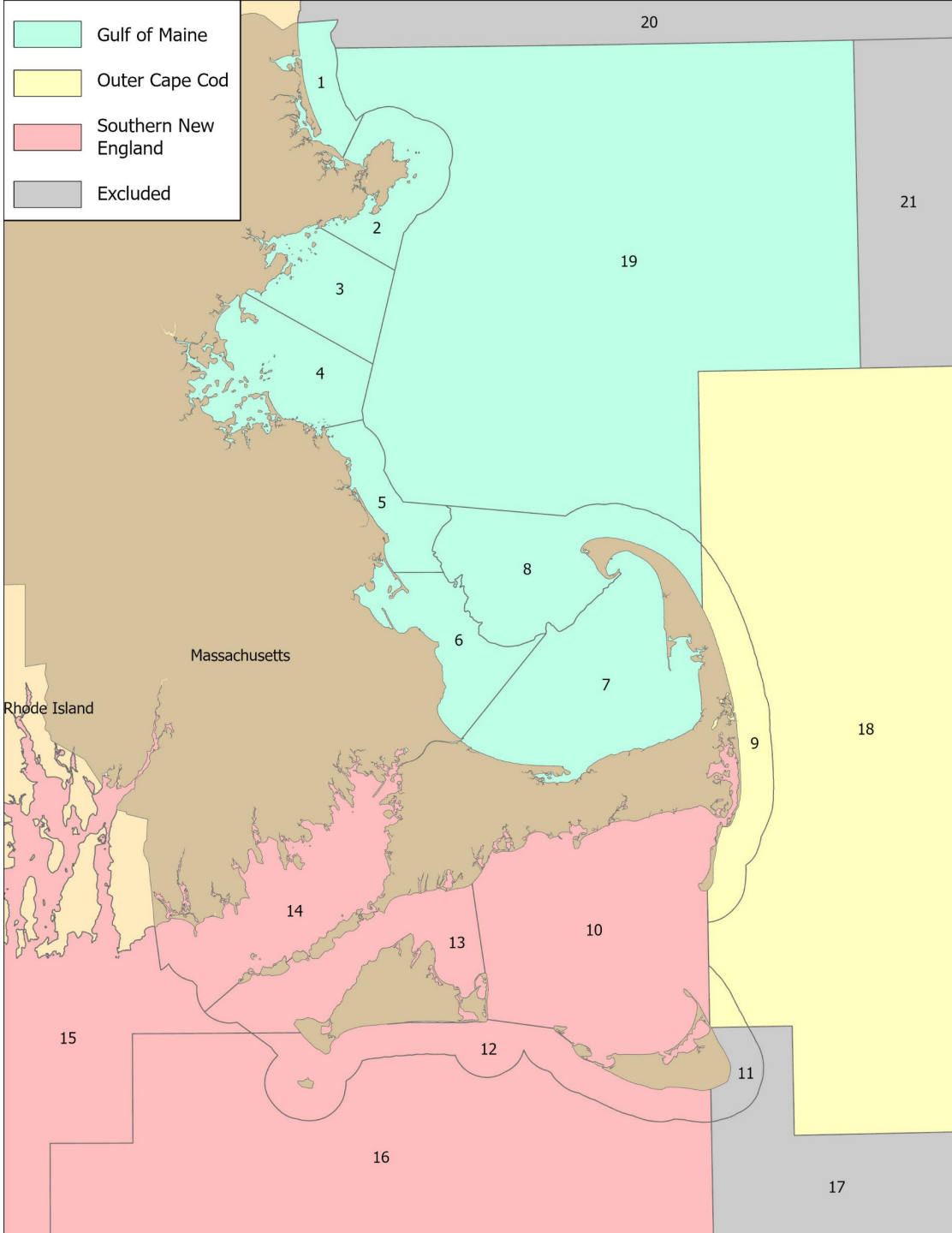
# Massachusetts lobster value (millions of dollars)



**2025 value is  
preliminary**

Data Source: Massachusetts trip-level reports, federal vessel trip reports, & dealer data, as of Jan 2026.





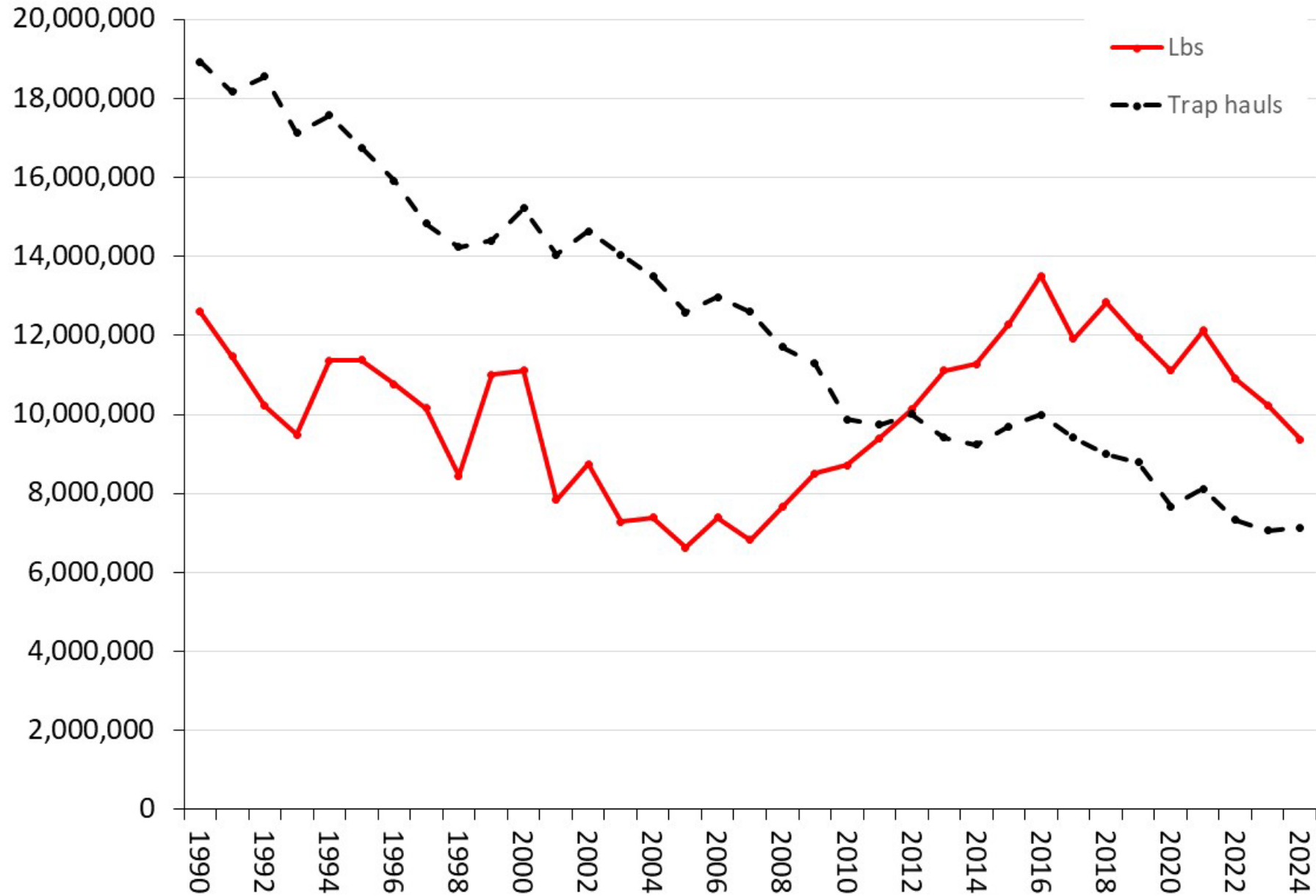
- MA Landings and traps hauled data by region
- Data are from harvester reports
- “Nearshore” reporting areas
- Updated through 2024

Breakdown of landings from these regions

Region	DMF SRAs	2024 Trap Lbs	2024 % of nearshore	Mean % last 10 yrs
GOM	1-8, 19	9,363,604	85.9	86.8
OCC	9, 18	1,019,454	9.4	8.4
SNE	10, 12-16	515,683	4.7	4.8

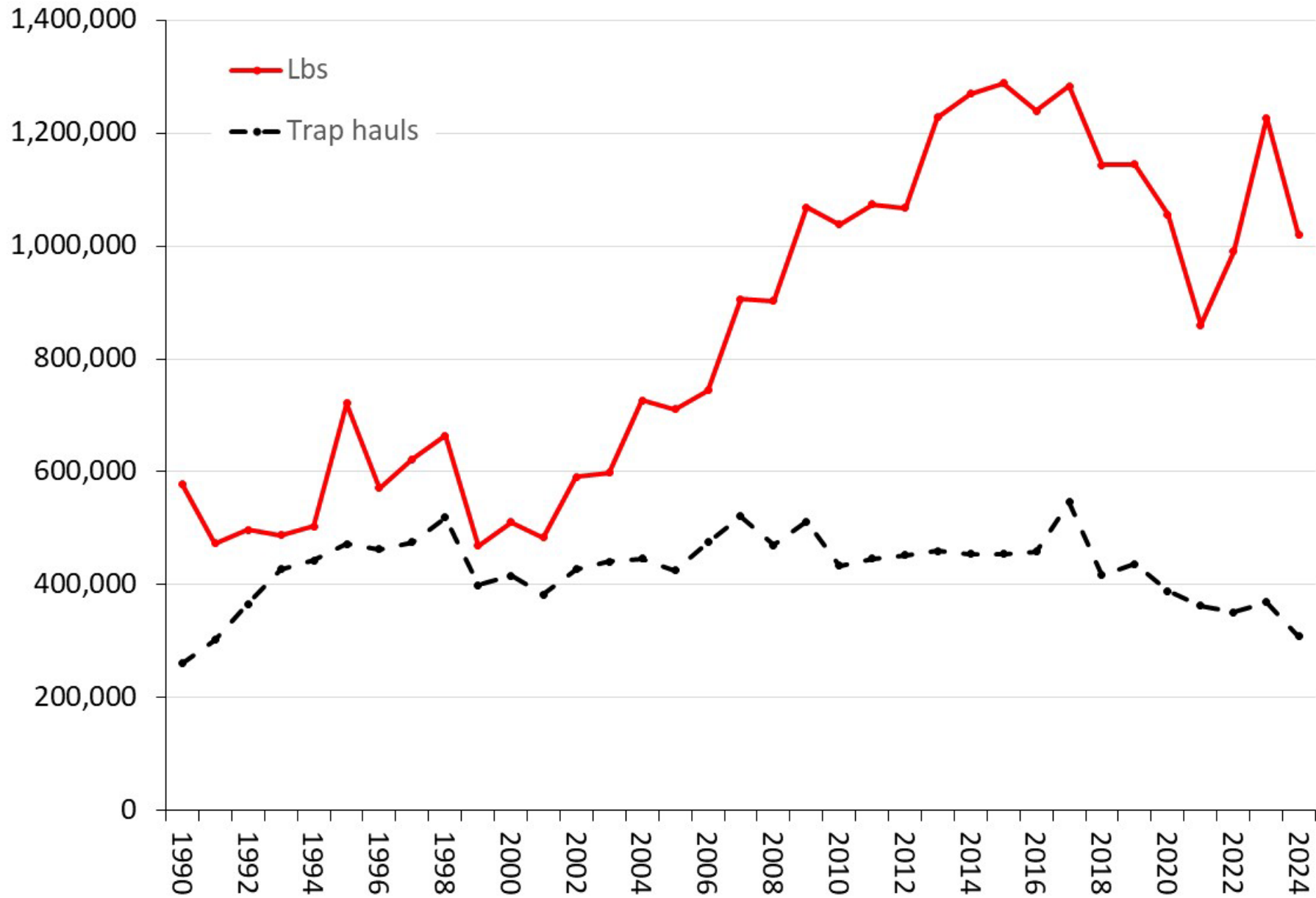
Data Source: Massachusetts trip-level reports & federal vessel trip reports, as of Dec 2025.

# MA GOM landings and effort



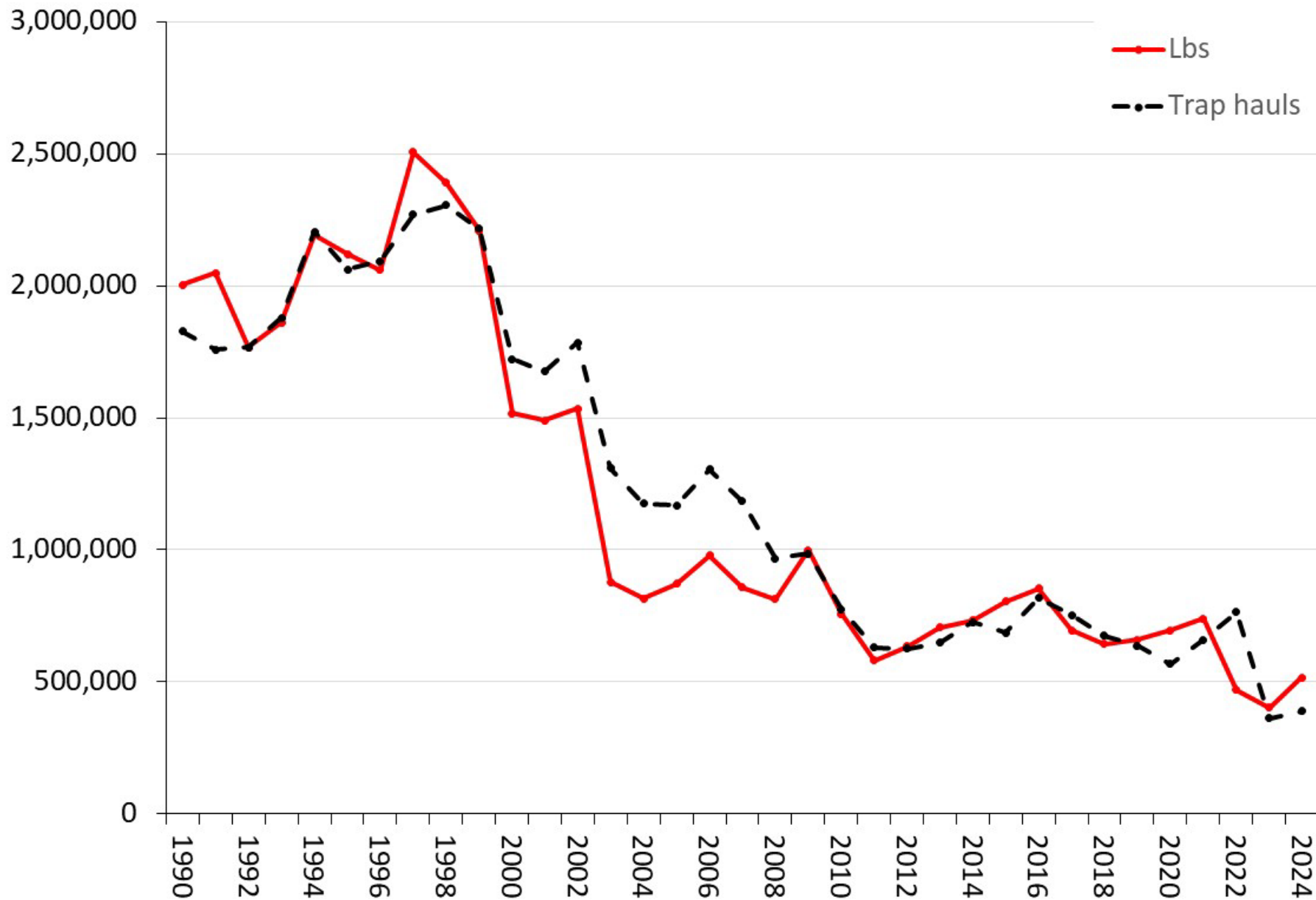
NMFS Area 514  
DMF SRAs 1-8, 19

# MA OCC landings and effort



NMFS Area 521  
DMF SRAs 9 & 18

# MA SNE landings and effort

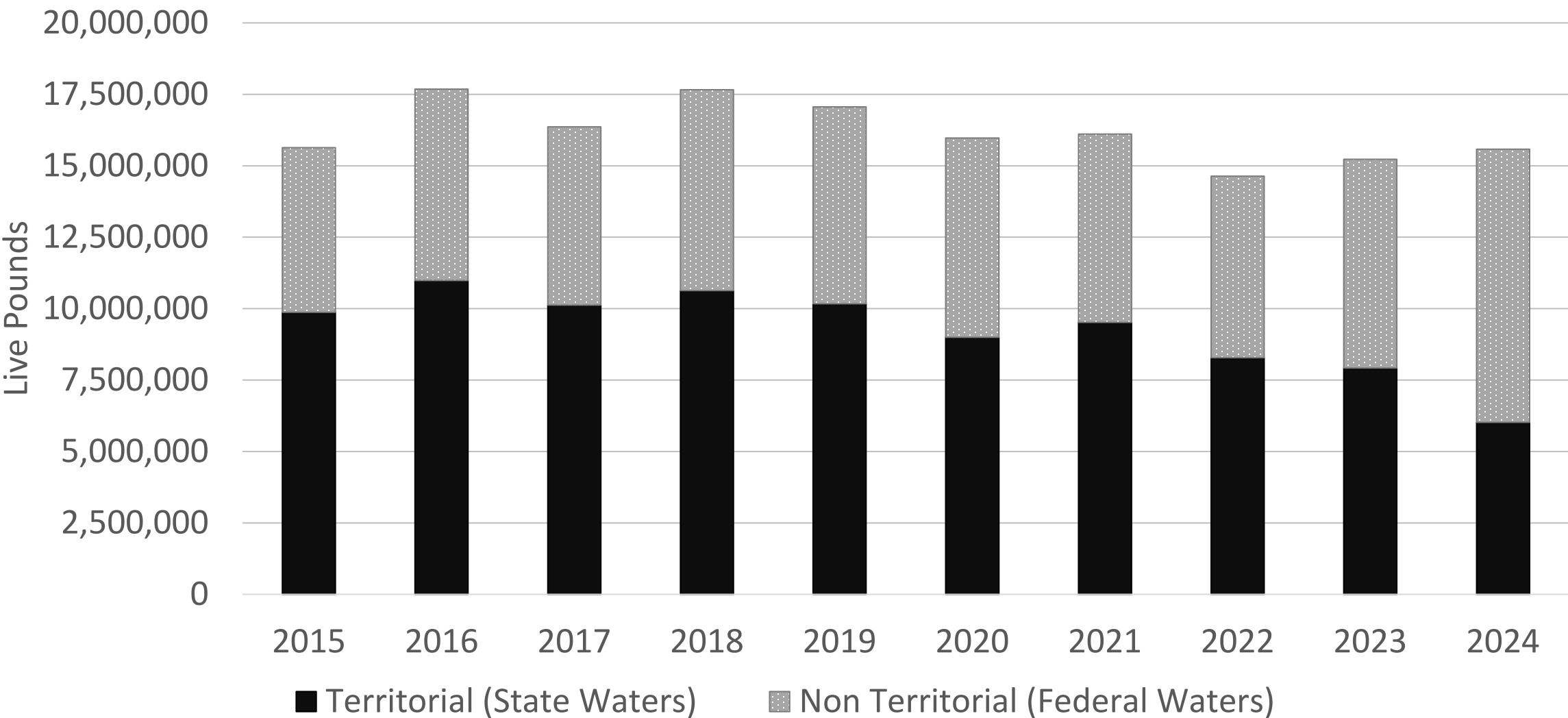


NMFS Area 537 & 538  
DMF SRAs 10, 12-16



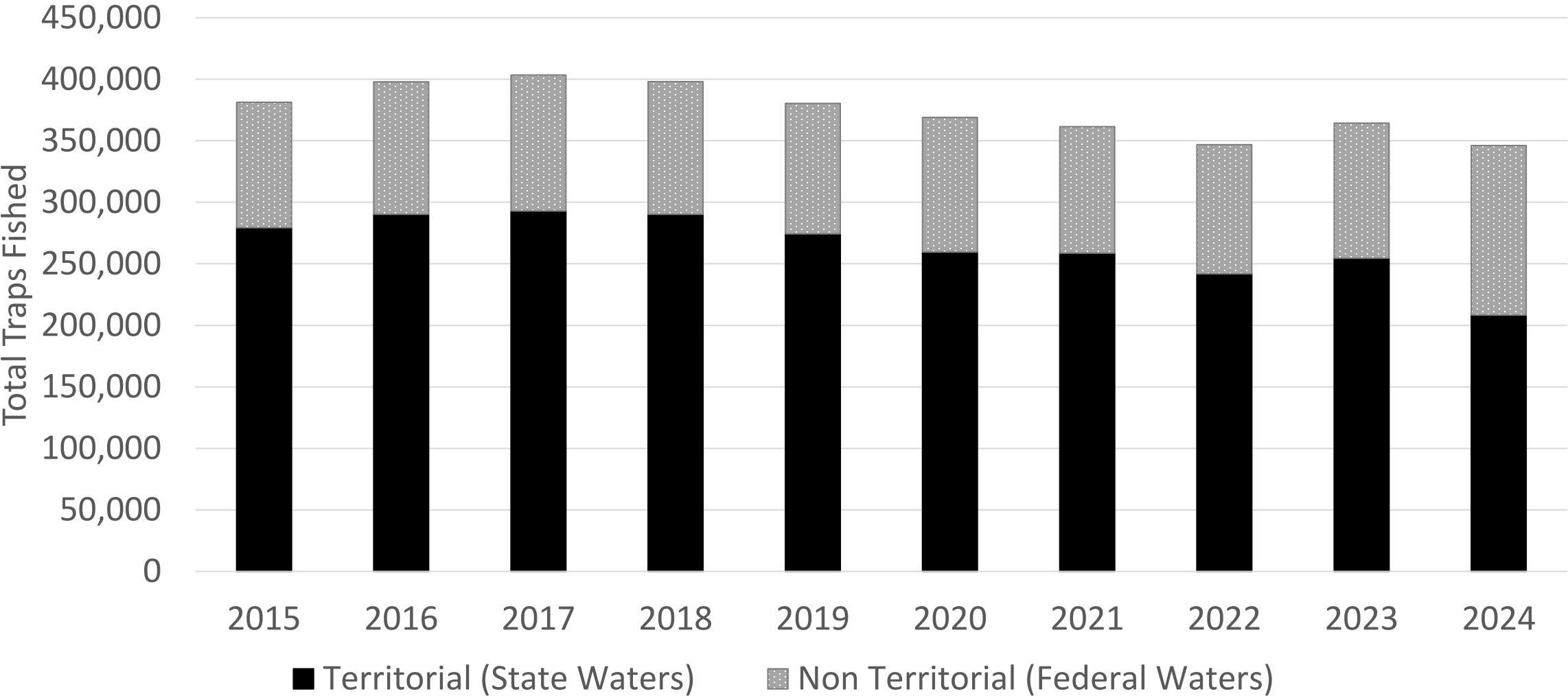
# MA Landings – State & Federal Waters

## State and Federal Waters Lobster Trap Landings, 2015-2024



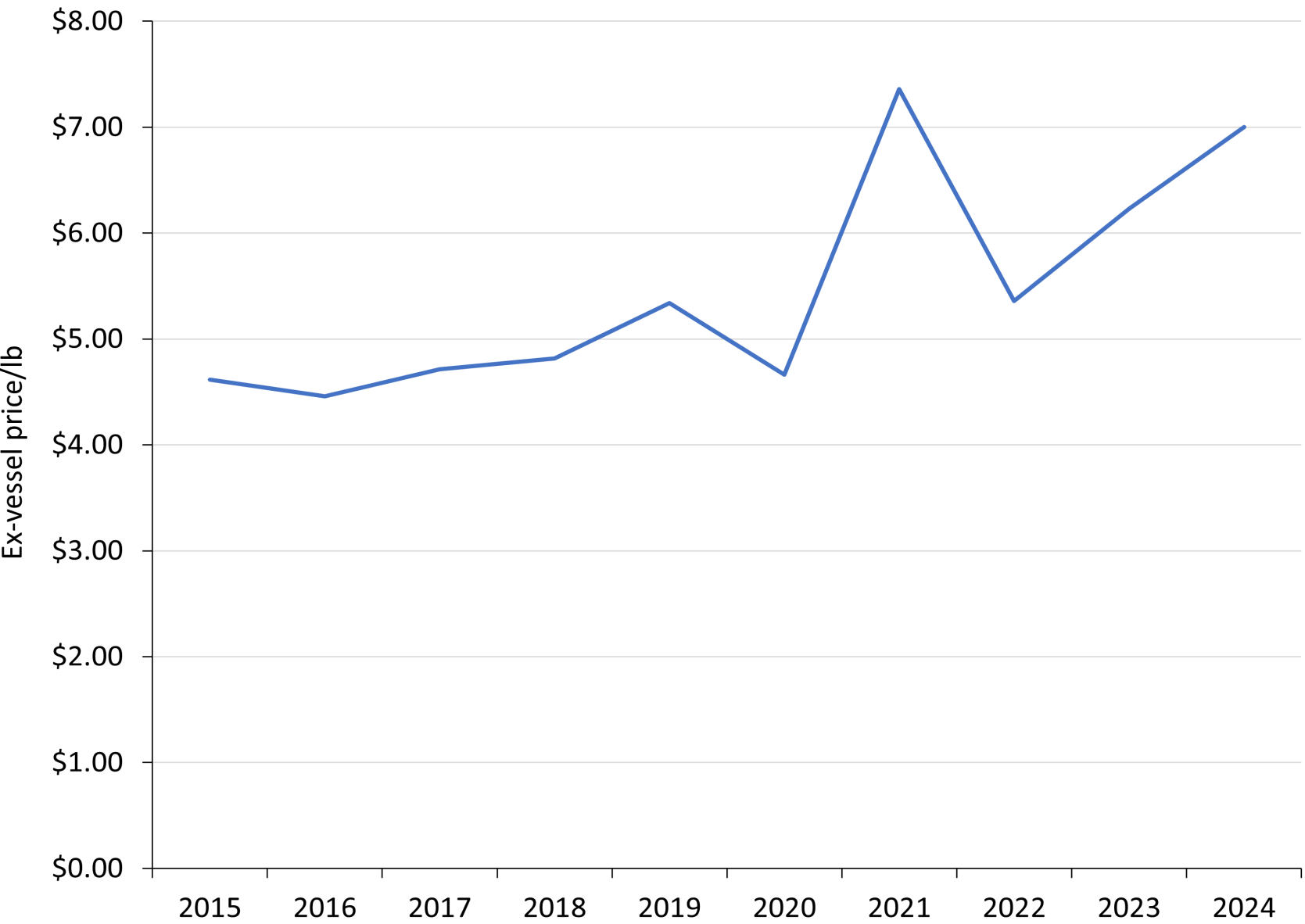
# MA Traps Fished – State & Federal Waters

**Total Lobster Traps Fished in State and Federal Waters, 2015-2024**



Data Source: Trip-Level Reports (DMF and NMFS VTR data), SAFIS Dealer Database, as of Dec 2025.

# MA Average price per pound



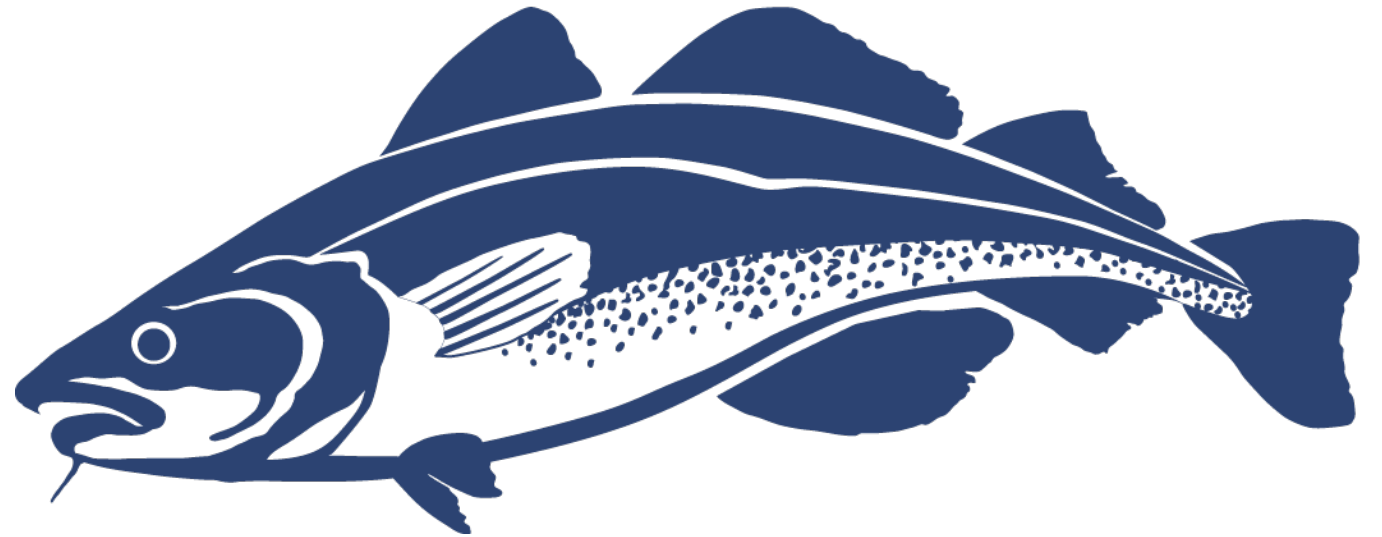
Questions?



Lobster  
Permitting &  
Statistics Update

# Marine Fisheries

Commonwealth of Massachusetts



# Online Permit Renewals Available!

## System accepts credit cards and electronic checks

- Fees apply
  - CC: 2.59%
  - DC: 2.49%
  - ACH: \$0.35 flat fee
- Cannot accept credit cards in the office.

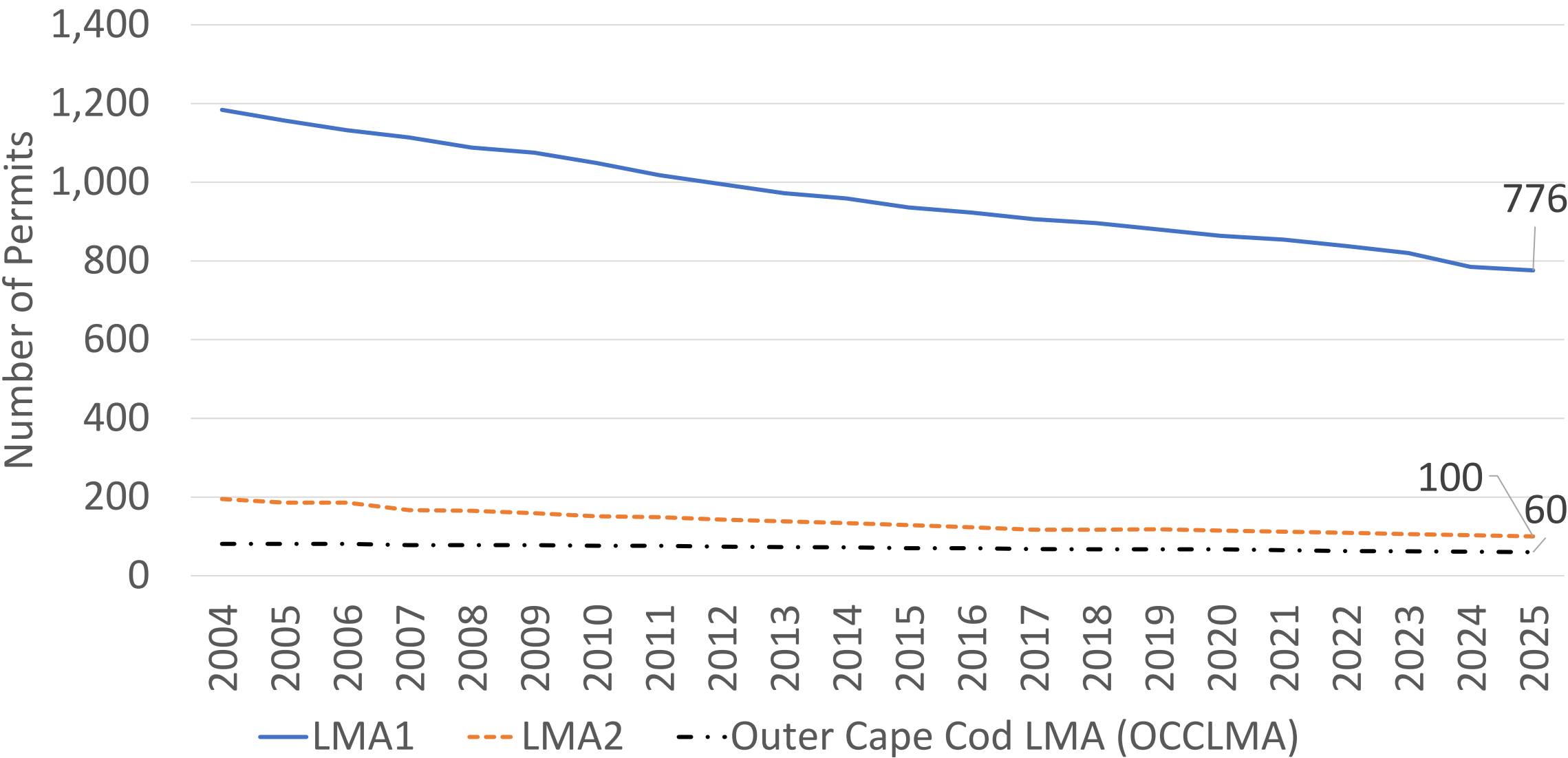
## Phone help desk available daily

- 617-626-1520
- Operated by DMF Staff, not a call center
- Available during business hours Monday-Friday
- Not available on holidays/weekends

## Webpage on how-to renew or apply for permits online

- Computer or tablet recommended over a phone.
- Linked from the commercial & dealer permit application sites
- Includes a series of pdf help guides (English only currently but will have other languages)

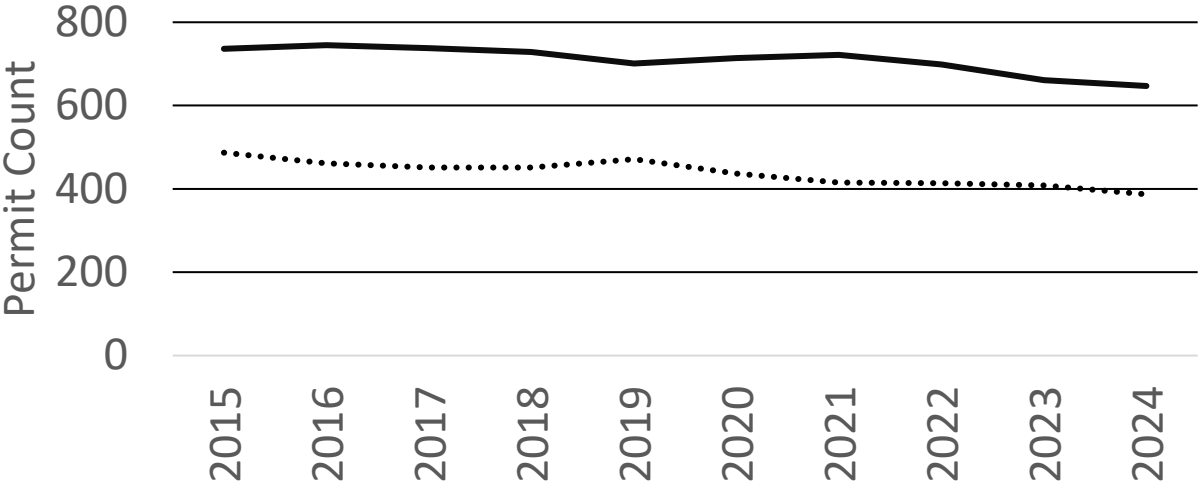
# Coastal Lobster Permit Trend



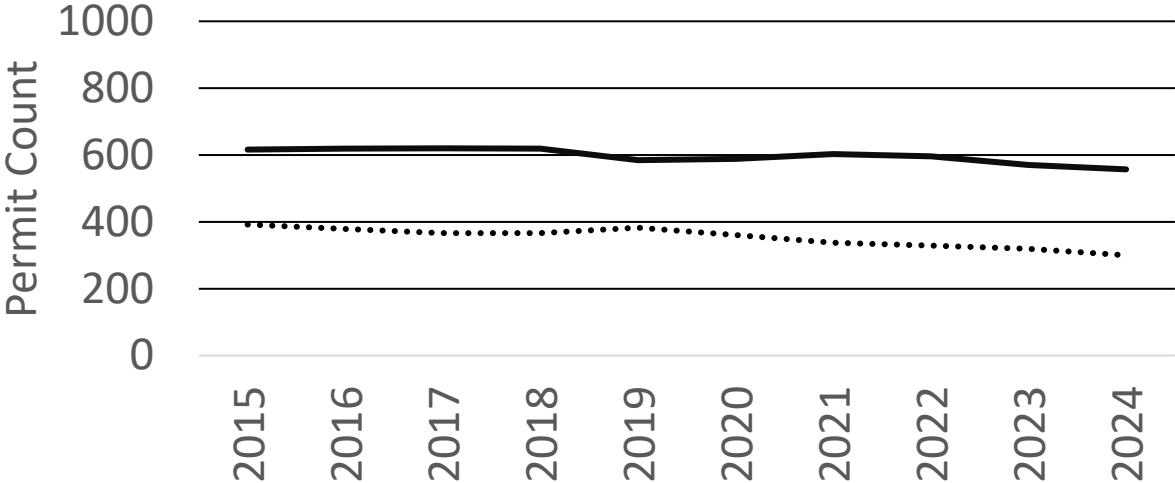
Data Source: Massachusetts permit data, as of January 2025.

# Coastal Lobster + Seasonal Lobster Permits & Activity Status by LMA

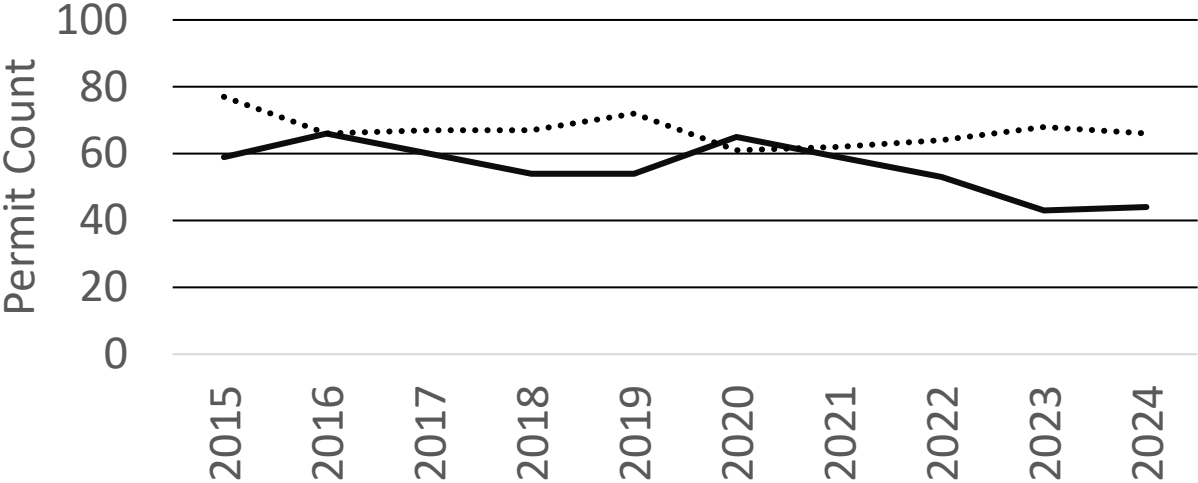
Total



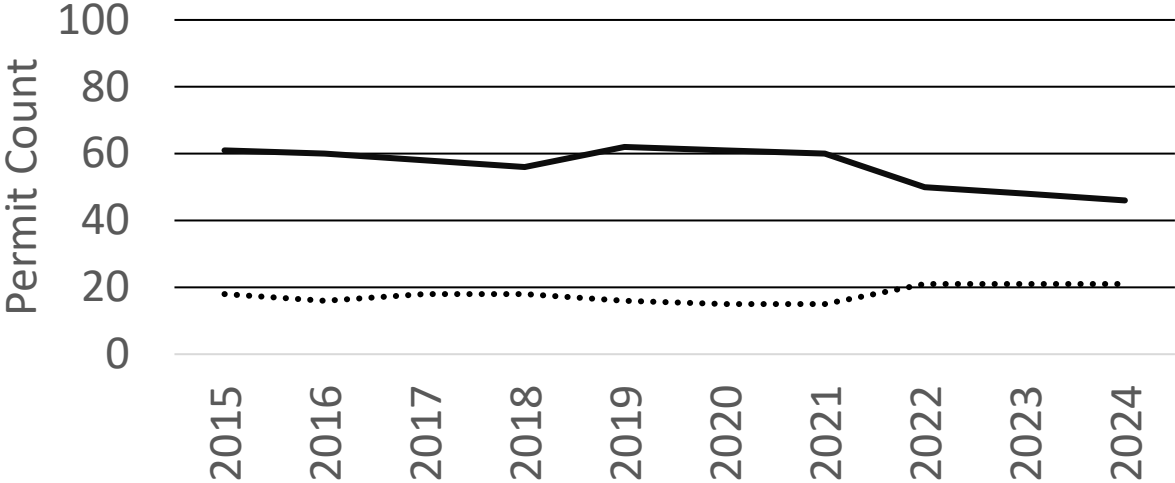
LMA1



LMA2



OCCLMA



— Active ..... Latent

Data Source: Massachusetts trip-level reports, federal vessel trip reports, & permit data, as of January 2025. In any given year, active means a permit holder fished lobster traps during at least one trip.

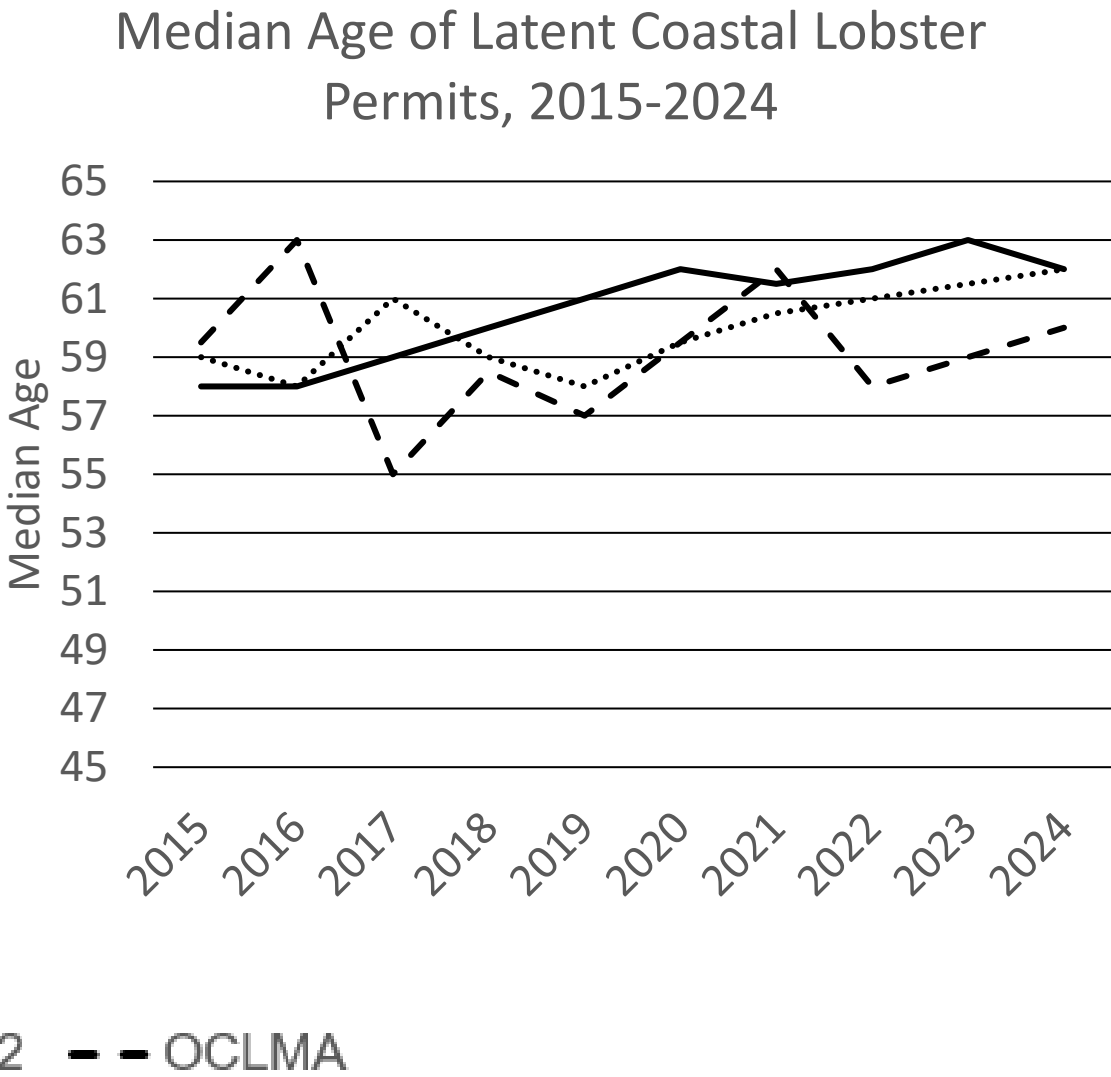
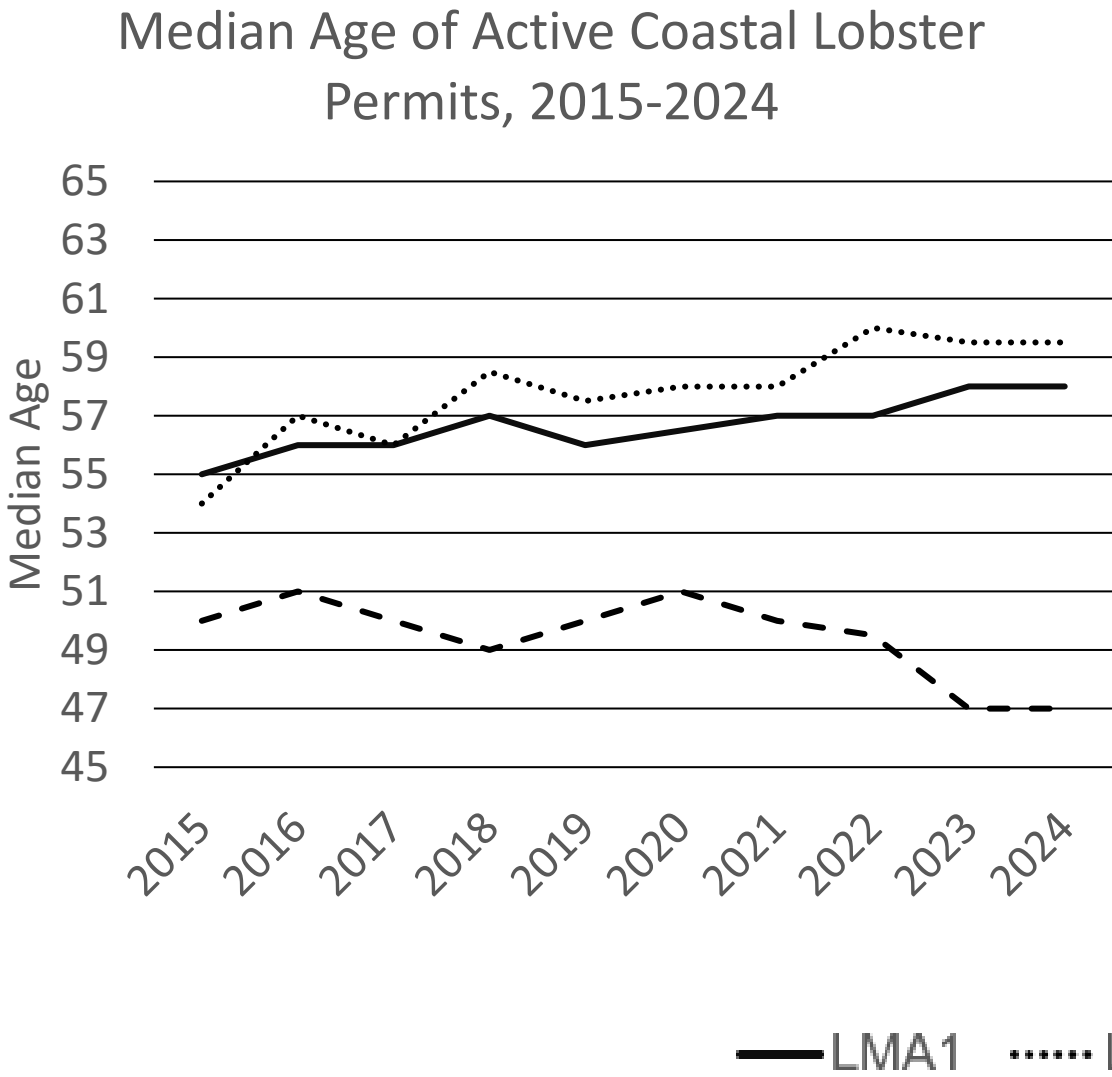
# Coastal Lobster + Seasonal Lobster Permits & Activity Status by LMA

LMA	Active Status	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
LMA1	Active	671	661	643	616	615	616	619	620	619	585	588	603	596	570	557
LMA2	Active	69	68	65	63	53	59	66	60	54	54	65	59	53	43	44
OCLMA	Active	68	68	65	69	65	61	60	58	56	62	61	60	50	48	46
LMA1	Latent	479	435	411	414	405	392	379	366	366	383	361	338	329	319	300
LMA2	Latent	90	87	81	79	83	77	66	67	67	72	61	62	64	68	66
OCLMA	Latent	18	19	21	19	19	18	16	18	18	16	15	15	21	21	21
Total Issued	Active	808	797	773	748	733	736	745	738	729	701	714	722	699	661	647
Total Issued	Latent	587	541	513	512	507	487	461	451	451	471	437	415	414	408	387

Data Source: Massachusetts trip-level reports, federal vessel trip reports, & permit data, as of January 2025. In any given year, active means a permit holder fished lobster traps during at least one trip.



# Coastal Lobster Permits, Median Age, & Activity Status by LMA



Data Source: Massachusetts trip-level reports, federal vessel trip reports, & permit data, as of January 2025. In any given year, active means a permit holder fished lobster traps during at least one trip.

# Seasonal (Student) Lobster Permit Summary

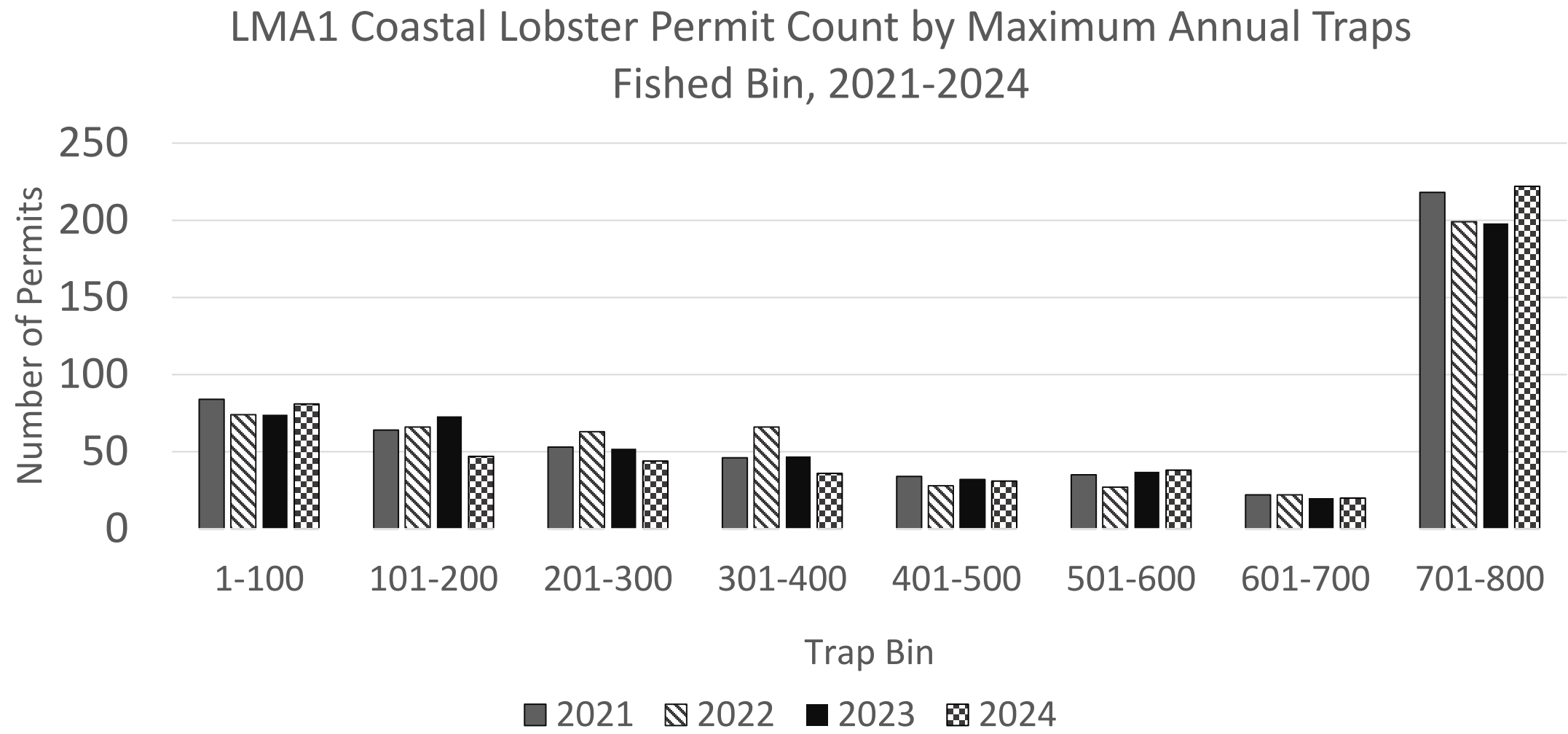
## Permit

- Limited to 150 issued per year
- 25 trap limit
- Open June 15 – September 15
- Must be 12 years of age or older. No maximum age.
- Must be full-time students. Verify full-time student status annually.

Seasonal Lobster Permit Holder Age Range					
Age Bin	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
<20	38	54	54	67	69
20-<30	67	50	27	12	11
30-<40		1			
40+	1			1	1

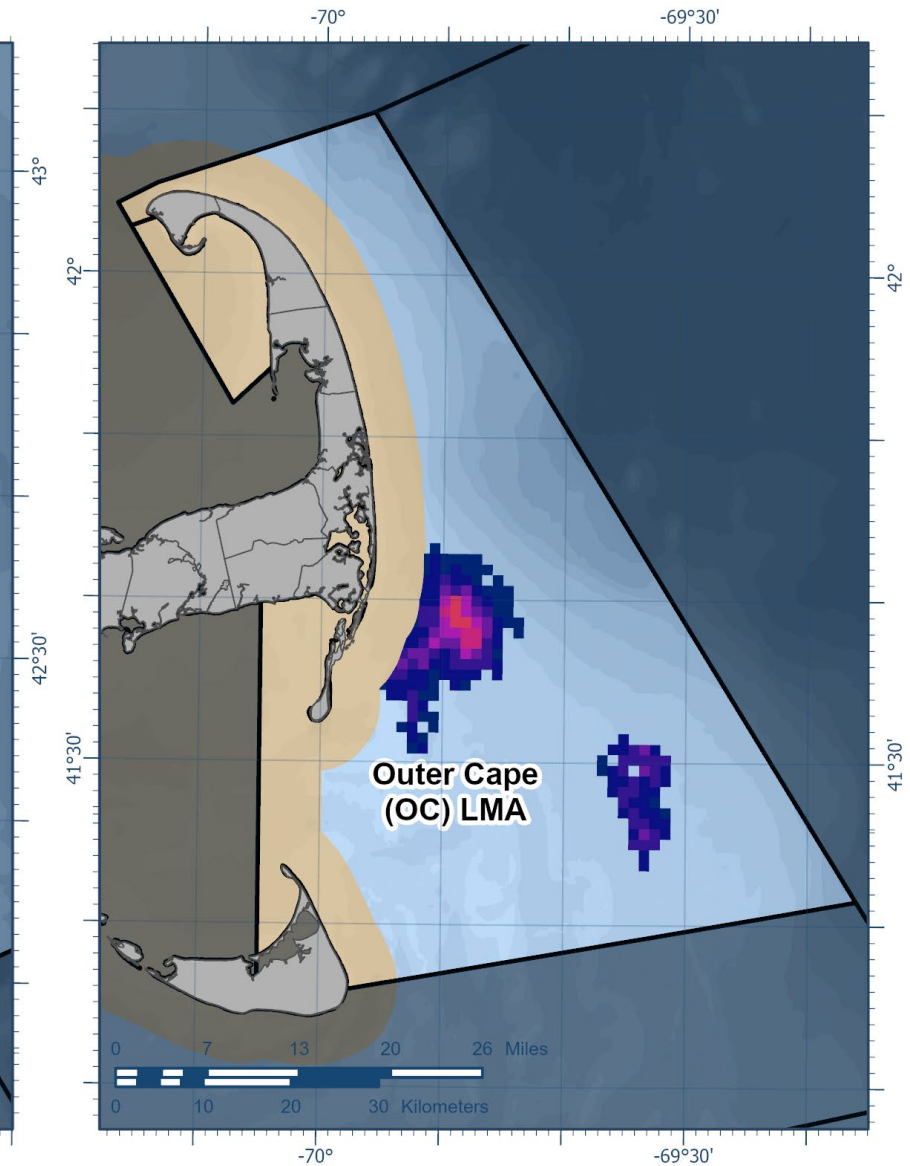
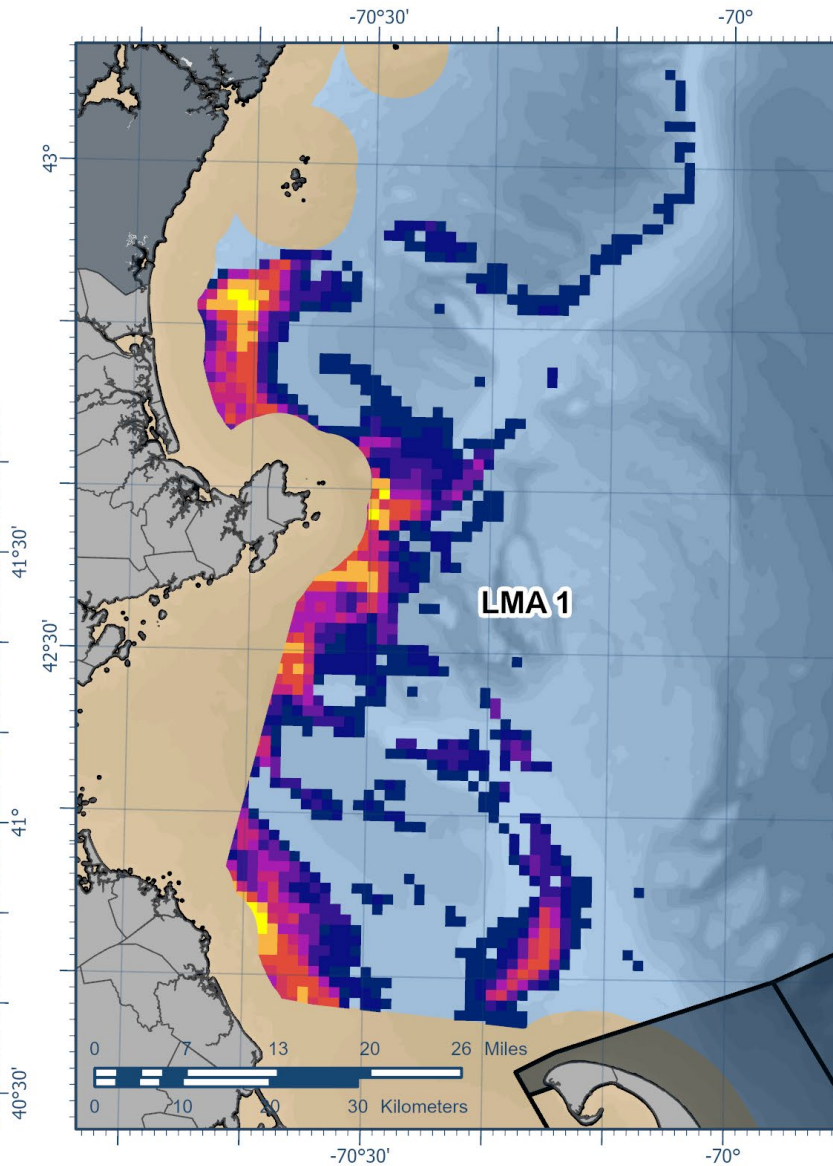
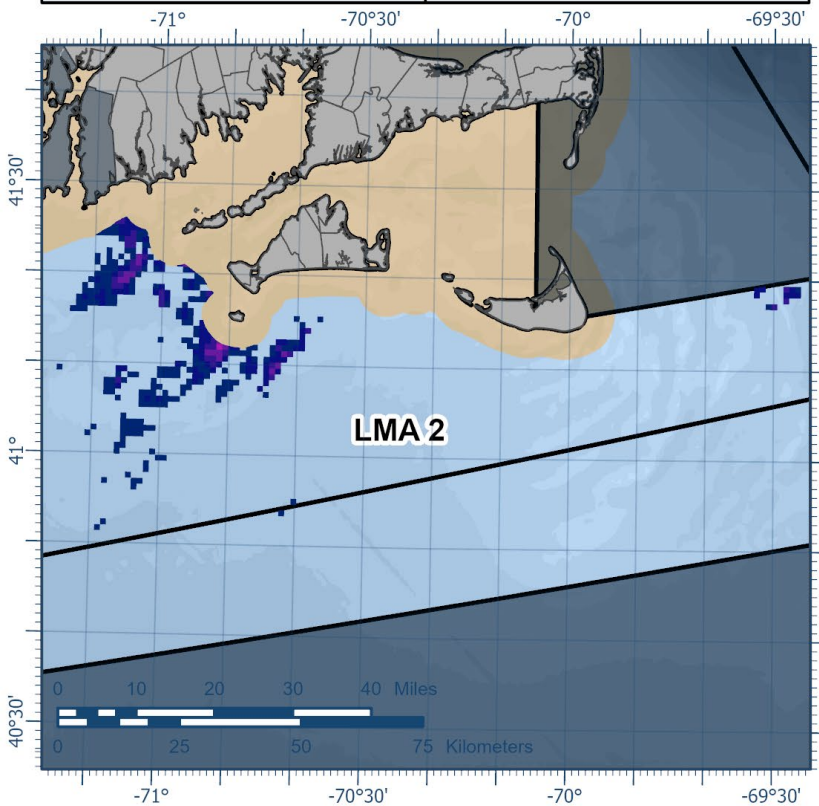
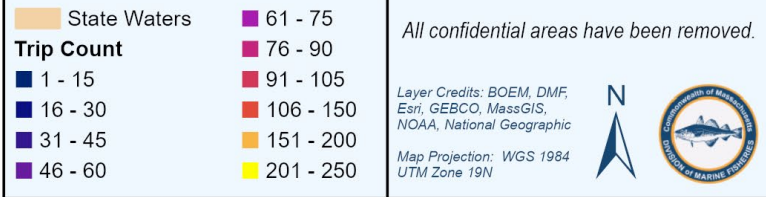
Seasonal (Student) Permits Activity				
Metric	2021	2022	2023	2024
Issued	101	105	81	81
Fished	54	50	42	45
Not Reporting	20	22	12	15
% Active	53%	48%	52%	56%

# Distribution of Number of LMA1 Traps Fished



# Tracking Data Update

**MASSACHUSETTS DIVISION of MARINE FISHERIES**  
**MA Lobster Vessels Tracked Fishing by 1-Mile Square**  
Federal Waters: June - October, 2025



# 2026 Lobster Trap Tags

## Reminders

- No 10% extra for LMAs 1 & 3
- If you need extra tags due to gear loss during the year, fill-out DMF's Gear Conflict/Loss form on the website and submit

## Trap Tag Order Forms

- Mailed in mid-January
- Cambridge Security Seals has received several orders and will begin fulfilling orders in the next 2 weeks
- Up to 12 week delivery time
- Contact Kerry Allard ([Kerry.allard@mass.gov](mailto:Kerry.allard@mass.gov)) with any questions



# 2026 Trip-Level Reporting Notes

- As of April 1, 2024, all federally permitted lobster vessels must report via electronic federal vessel trip reports.
  - Port agents are available for assistance (they are at this show!).
  - [Vessel Trip Reporting in the Greater Atlantic Region | NOAA Fisheries](#)
  - 2024/2025 Data Quality issues
    - VTR lat/longs – example: frequent reporting of 42° 0' 0", 70° 0' 0" is a problem; artificial concentration of effort in reporting area 8 off Provincetown; tracking helps fix this
    - Select the appropriate gear type of PTL or PTLL (avoid Trap Nets)
    - Enter number of traps hauled and number of traps per trawl in the correct fields
    - Enter separate efforts for different areas fished
- 100% electronic state reporting will begin March 2027, ongoing outreach campaign
- State reporting harvesters – please reach out with questions: 978-491-6279 or [dmf.stats@mass.gov](mailto:dmf.stats@mass.gov) both great options.
  - Regular data quality emails going out to current e-reporting harvesters
  - More information at [DMF's Trip Reporting Website](#)

# Lobster – Industry Survey Results

[2025 Massachusetts Lobster Industry Survey Results | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/2025-massachusetts-lobster-industry-survey-results)

## Number Sent

1,043

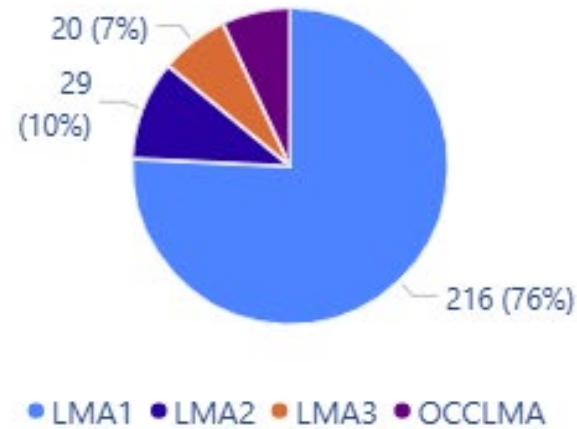
## Total Responses

285

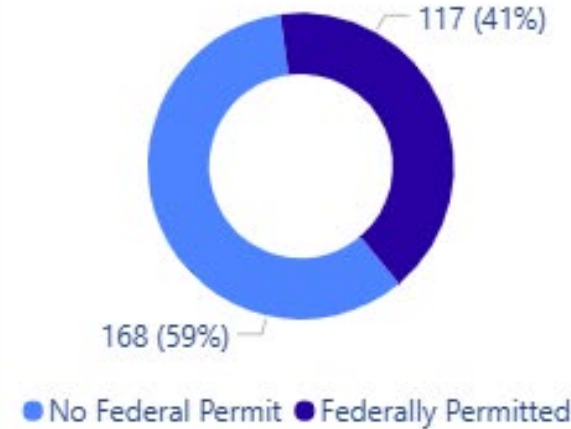
## Response Rate

27 %

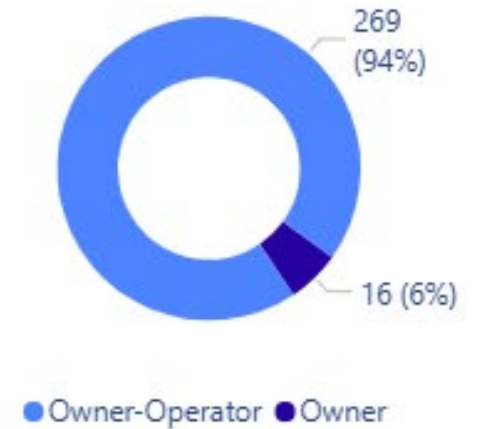
## Responses by Lobster Management Area (LMA)



## Responses by Federal Permit Status

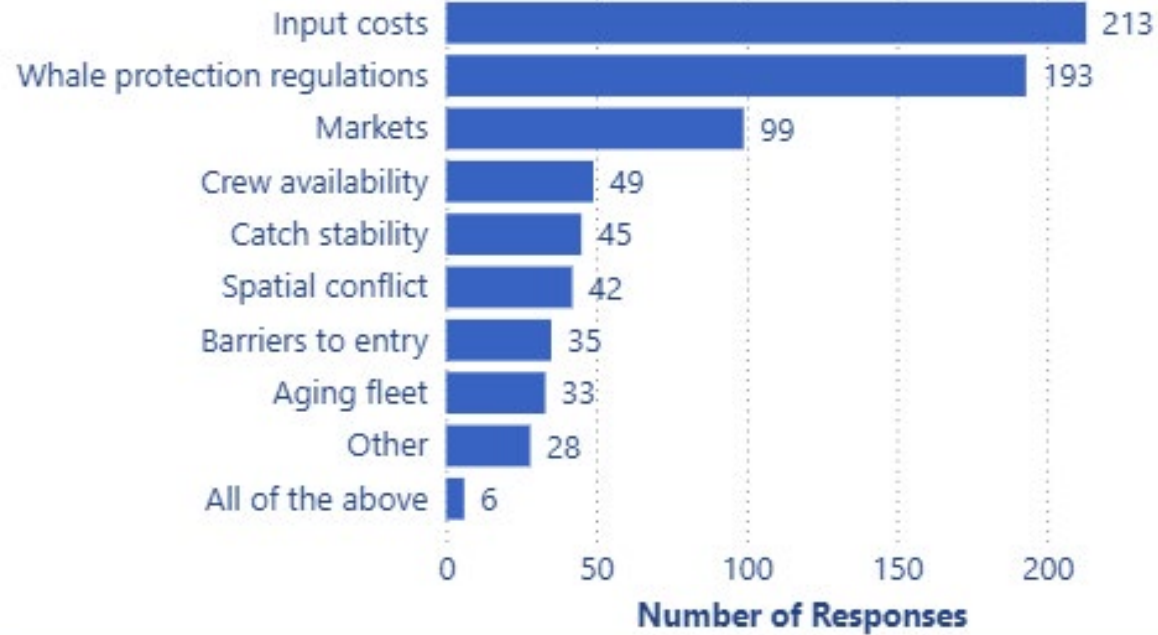


## Responses by Business Owner Role

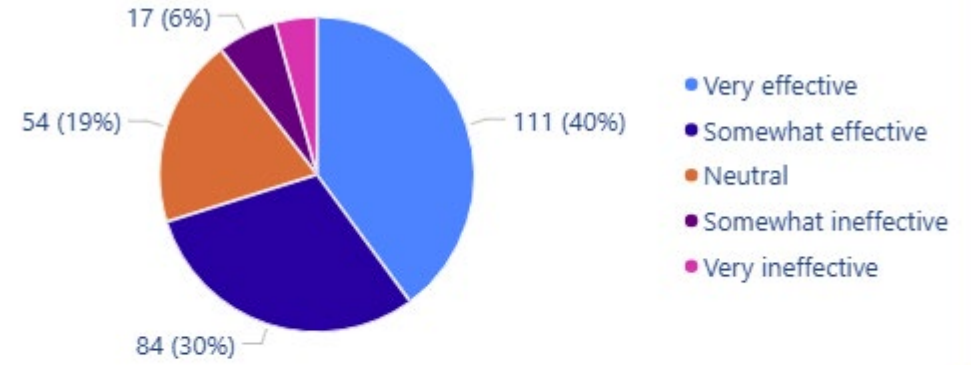


# Lobster – Industry Survey Results

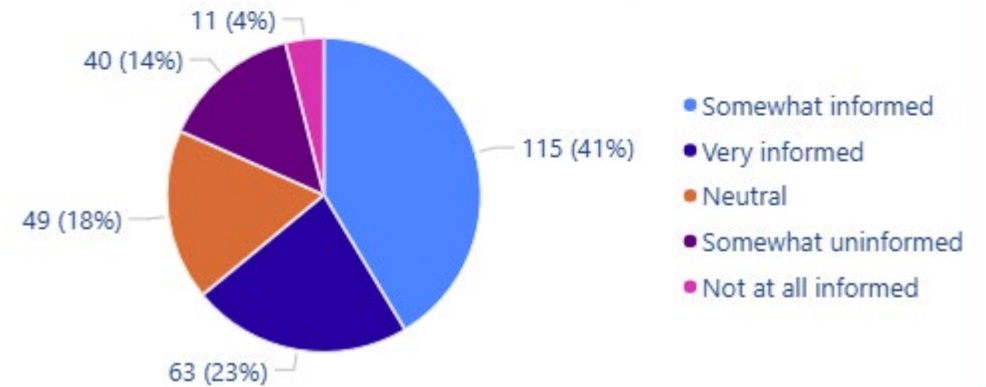
## Greatest Concerns for Fleet Sustainability (Selected up to 3)



## Effectiveness of Current Conservation Measures in Protecting the Future of the Lobster Population



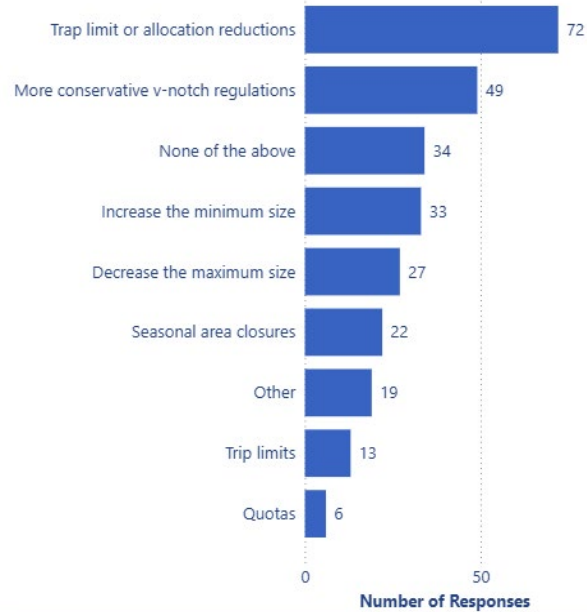
## Knowledge of Potential Upcoming Regulatory Changes Affecting the Lobster Industry



# Lobster – Industry Survey Results

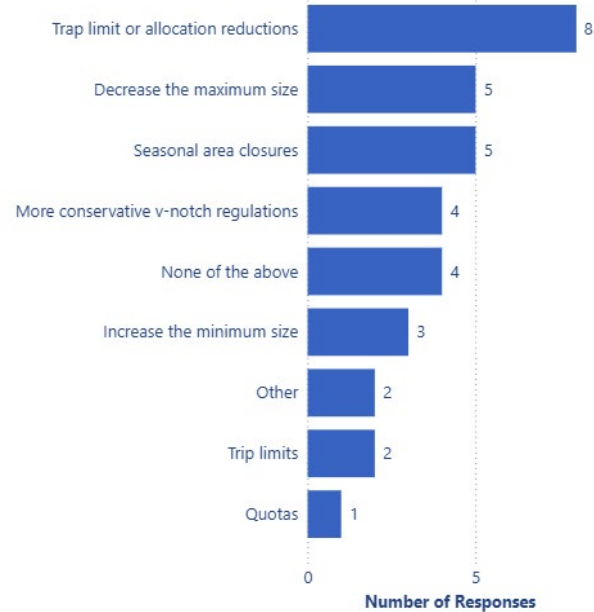
## LMA1

Conservation Measures Respondents Willing to Discuss  
(Selected all that applied)



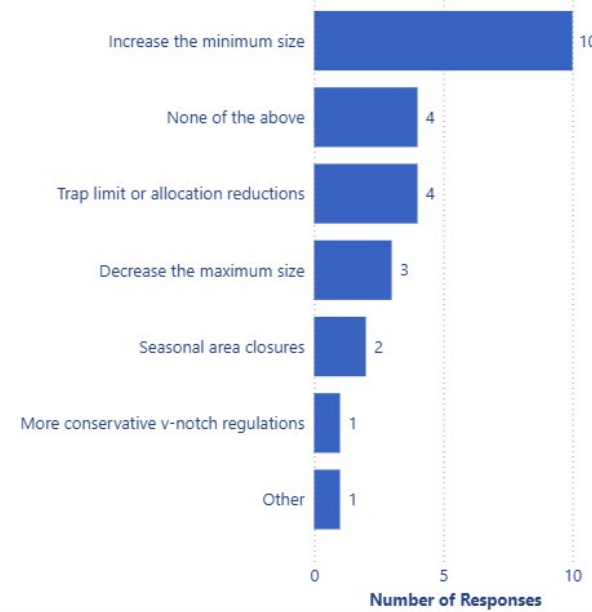
## LMA2

Conservation Measures Respondents Willing to Discuss  
(Selected all that applied)



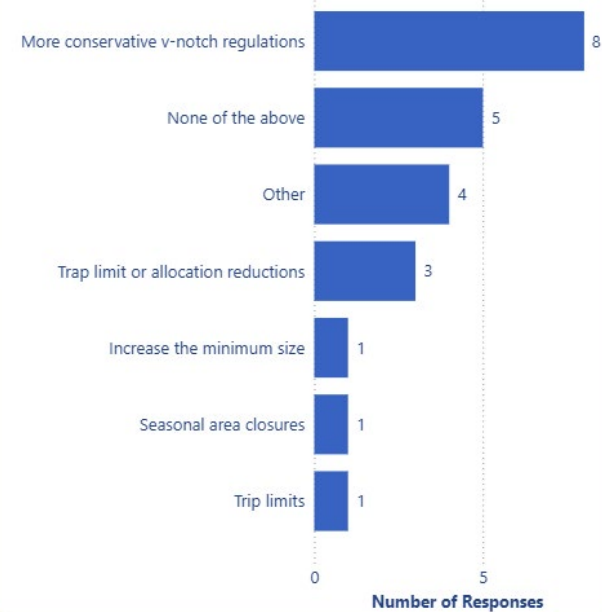
## OCCLMA

Conservation Measures Respondents Willing to Discuss  
(Selected all that applied)



## LMA3

Conservation Measures Respondents Willing to Discuss  
(Selected all that applied)



# Menhaden & Herring State of Science and Management

For MLA Annual Meeting

# Assessments, a little context...

## Menhaden



- ASMFC Assessment Process

- **Benchmark** (~5 yr cycle) major update of methods, gives new stock status
- **Update** (~3 yr cycle) uses most recent benchmark, incorporates new data, gives new stock status

## Herring



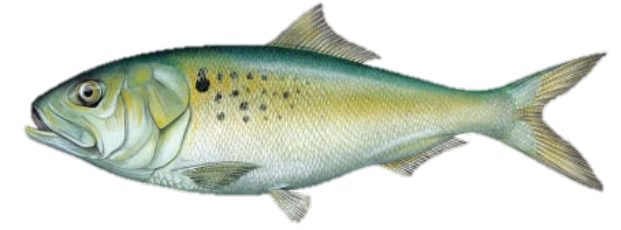
- NEFMC Assessment Process

- **Research Track** (~5-10 yr cycle) major update of methods, does NOT give new stock status
- **Management Track** (~2 yr cycle) using most recent research track, incorporates new data, gives new stock status

Completed in 2025

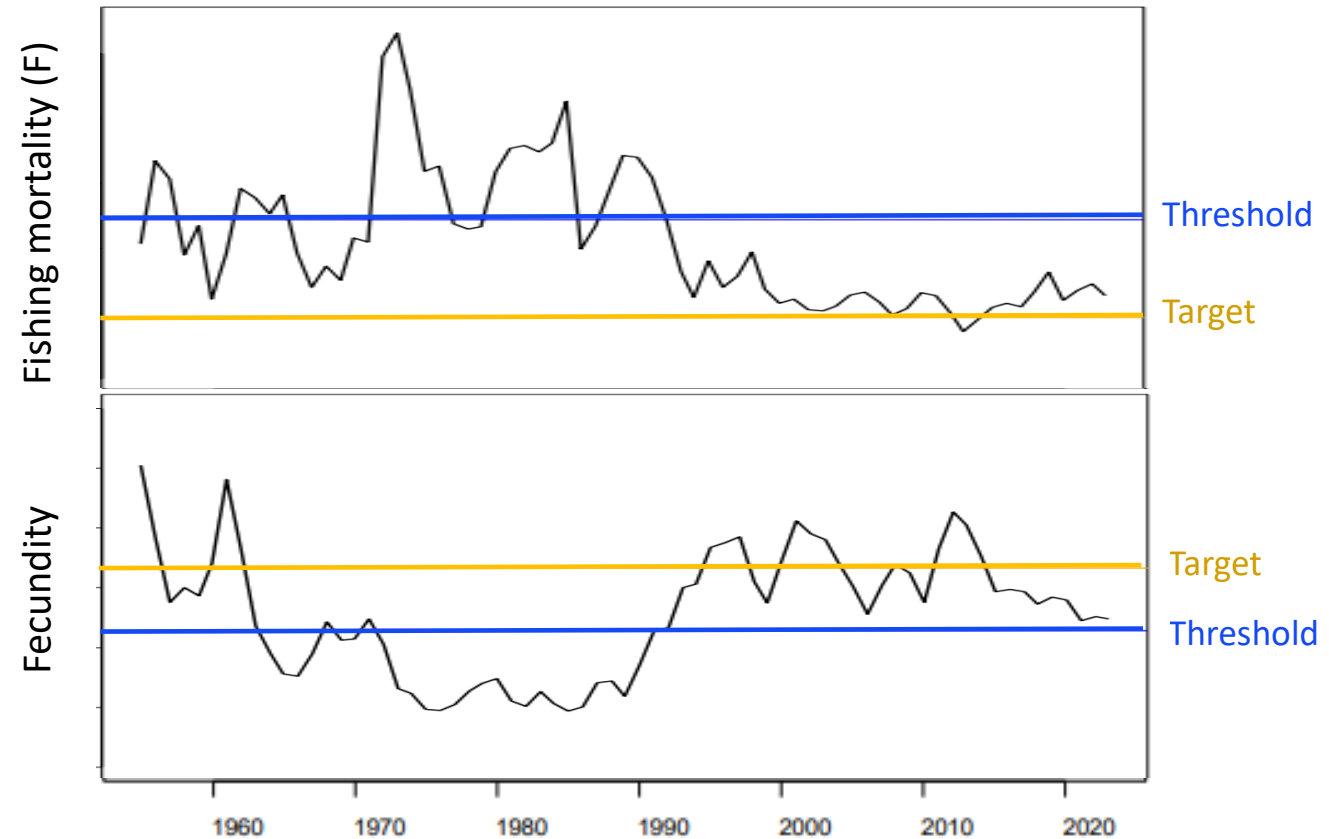


# Menhaden Stock Assessment



## Stock Status

- **Not overfishing**, but fishing mortality (F) is higher than target level
- Population (Fecundity) is **not overfished**, but lower than target level



# Menhaden Management

- ASMFC Interstate Management Plan
- Coastwide total allowable catch (TAC) and state-by-state quota allocations since 2013
- TAC set on Ecological Reference Points since 2021

Years	TAC (mt)	Allocation Basis*	MA Share
2013-2014	170,800	2009-2011 Landings	0.84%
2015-2016	187,880		
2017	200,000		
2018-2020	216,000	2009-2011 Landings, 0.5% minimum	1.27%
2021-2022	194,400		
2023-2025	233,550	2018/2019/2021 landings, 0.01/0.25/0.5% minimums	2.12%
2026	186,840		

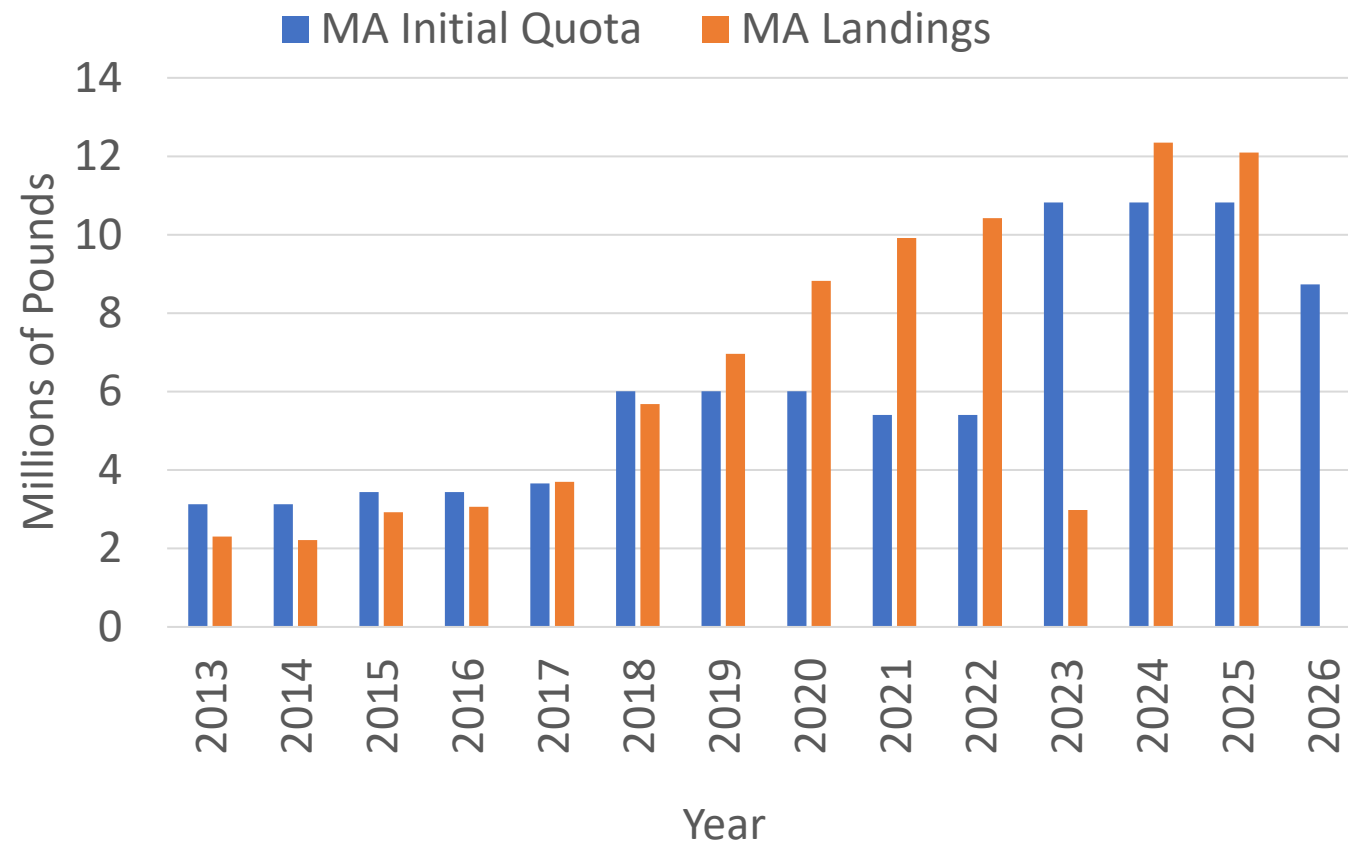
\* After 1% set-aside for “Episodic Events” in ME-NY

State	Current Allocations	2026 Quota (mlb)
ME	4.80%	19.57
NH	1.19%	4.83
MA	2.12%	8.65
RI	0.81%	3.31
CT	0.33%	1.35
NY	0.84%	3.43
NJ	11.00%	44.84
PA	0.01%	0.04
DE	0.27%	1.10
MD	1.17%	4.75
PRFC	1.09%	4.43
VA	75.21%	306.70
NC	0.37%	1.51
SC	0.25%	1.01
GA	0.25%	1.01
FL	0.29%	1.19

# Menhaden Management

- 2026 TAC Decision (ASMFC Fall 2025 Meeting)
  - Management Board set 2026 TAC at a 20% reduction, which has no risk of exceeding ERP F *threshold*, and will reconvene in Fall 2026 to set TAC for 2027-2028. Potential for additional reduction.
  - Potential for Board to reconsider allocation under FMP three-year revisit provision (Fall 2026 agenda); requires an addendum.

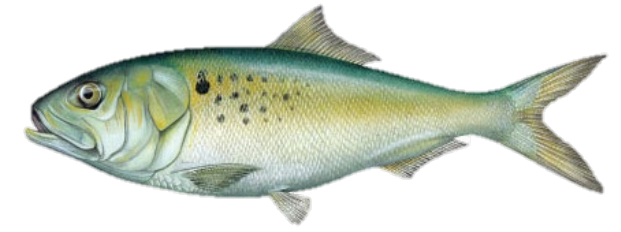
# Menhaden Management



- Landings in excess of quota represent quota transfers, use of EESA and/or incidental catch.
- Potential to offset 2026 quota reduction with these tools.

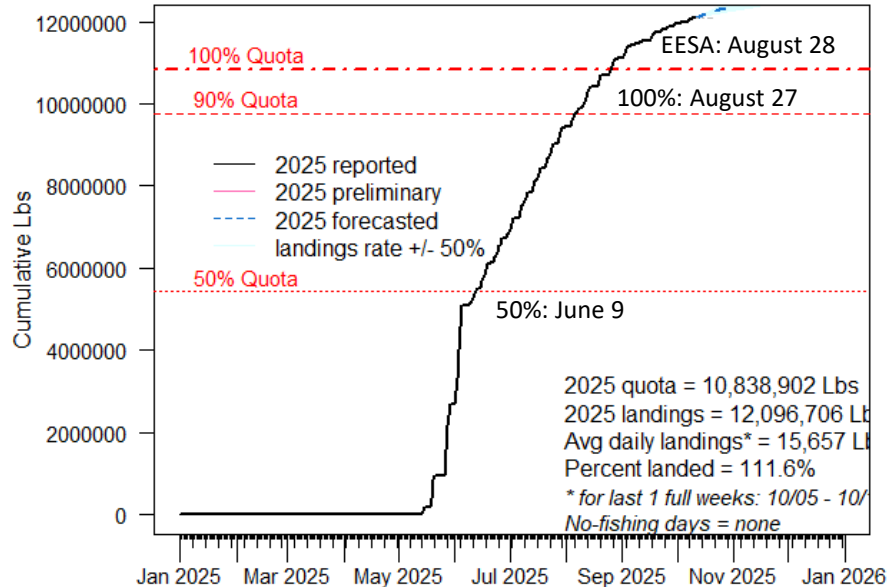
Data source: SAFIS eDR, as of November 2025.

# Menhaden Landings



## 2025 MENHADENS Quota Monitoring

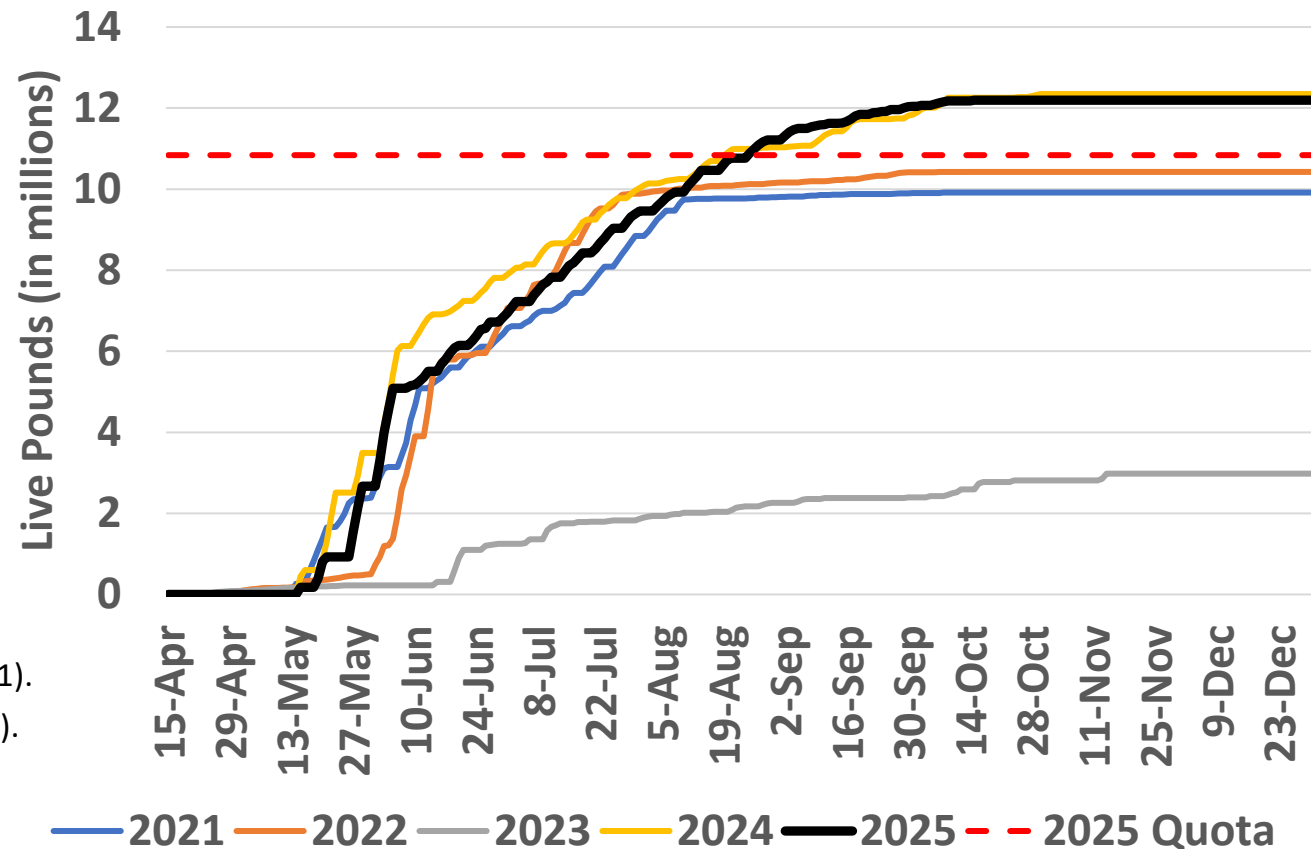
as of October 20, 2025 06:25 PM



### State Management Basics

- Directed purse seine fishery: May 15 - Quota
- Limited entry trip limit:
  - 120,000 lb until 50% quota use, then 25,000 lb (provided prior to 9/1).
  - 6,000-lb limit if reach 98% quota use after 9/1 (and can't enter EESA).
  - 360,000 lb on Oct 15 if >10% quota remains
- Open entry trip limit: 6,000-lb

## Annual Running Totals of Landings: Menhaden



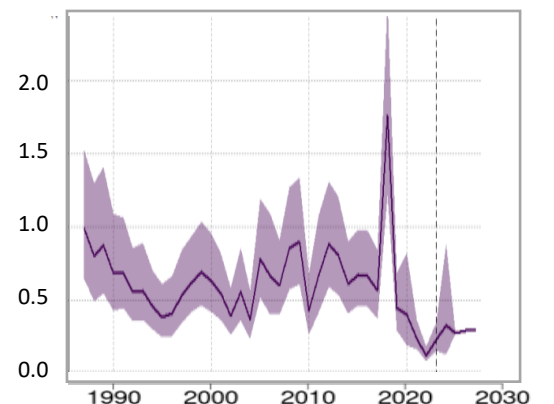
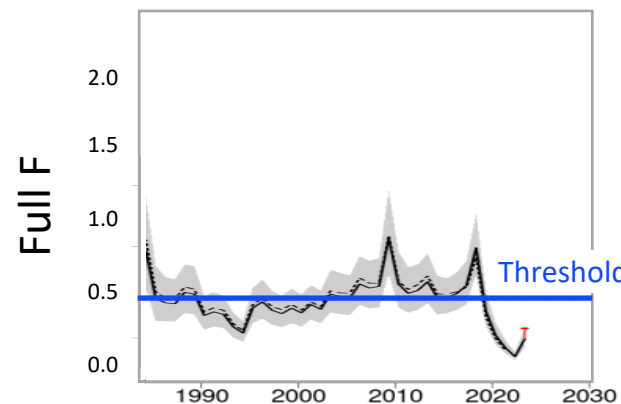
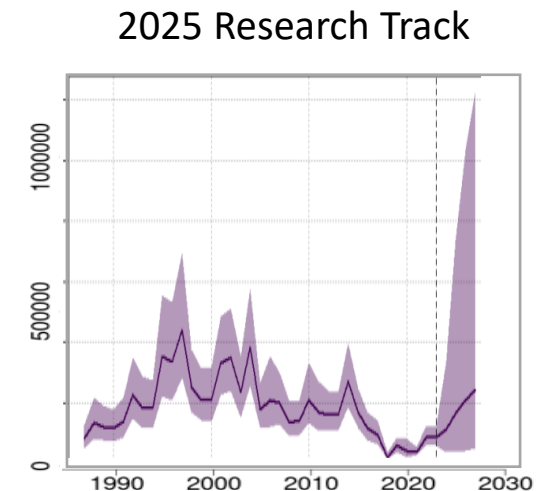
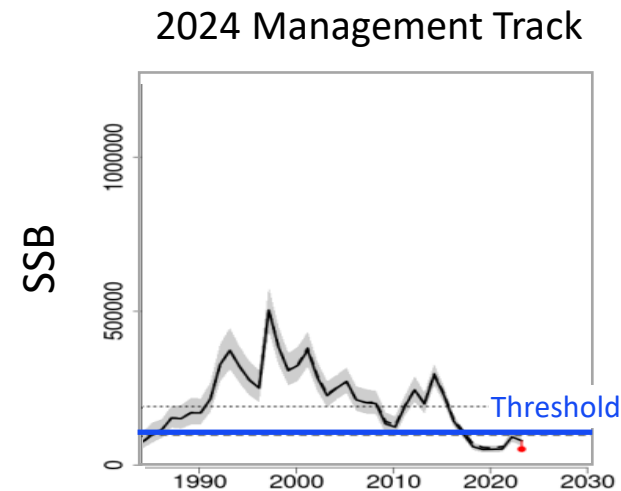
# Herring Stock Assessment



## Stock Status & Population Trend

- Spawning stock (SSB) is low
  - 52% of threshold = **Overfished**
  - Projected to increase
- Fishing mortality (F) is also low
  - 58% of threshold = **Not Overfishing**

BUT, accuracy of projections  
depends on recruitment  
...which is subject to ecosystem  
effects



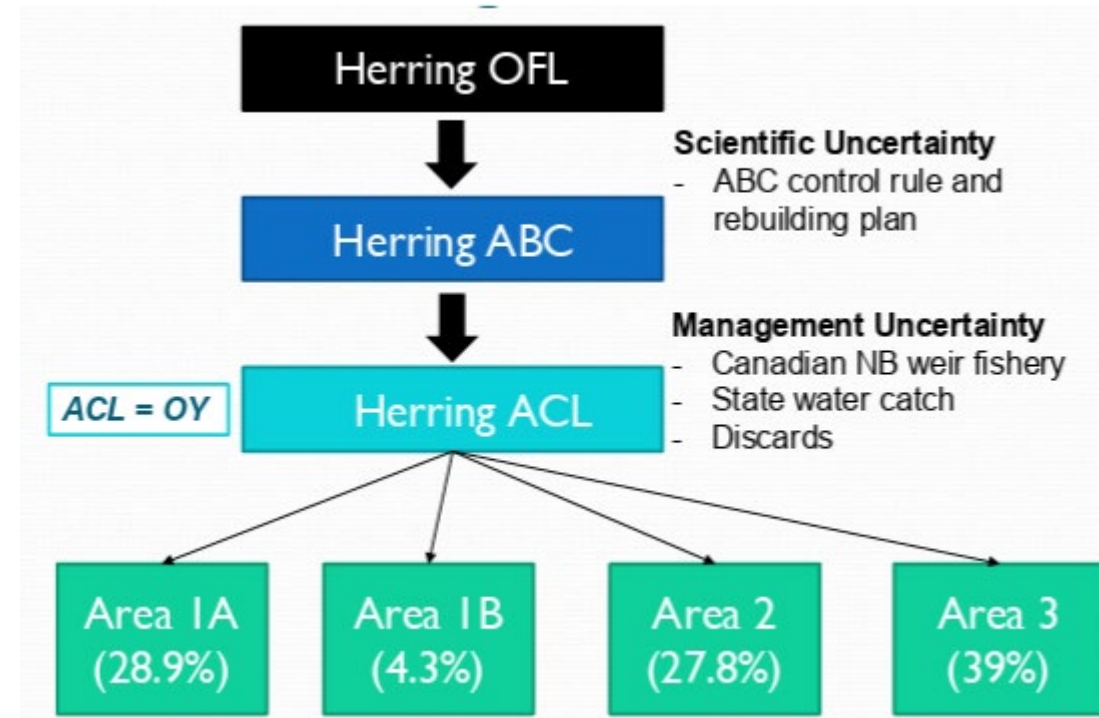


# Herring Management - NEFMC



## 2025-2027 Specifications

- lowest catch limits in history of plan
- NEFMC approved 3-5 year measures through streamlined specifications package or framework adjustment
- NMFS implemented Dec. 10th



Source: NEFMC

# Herring Management - ASMFC



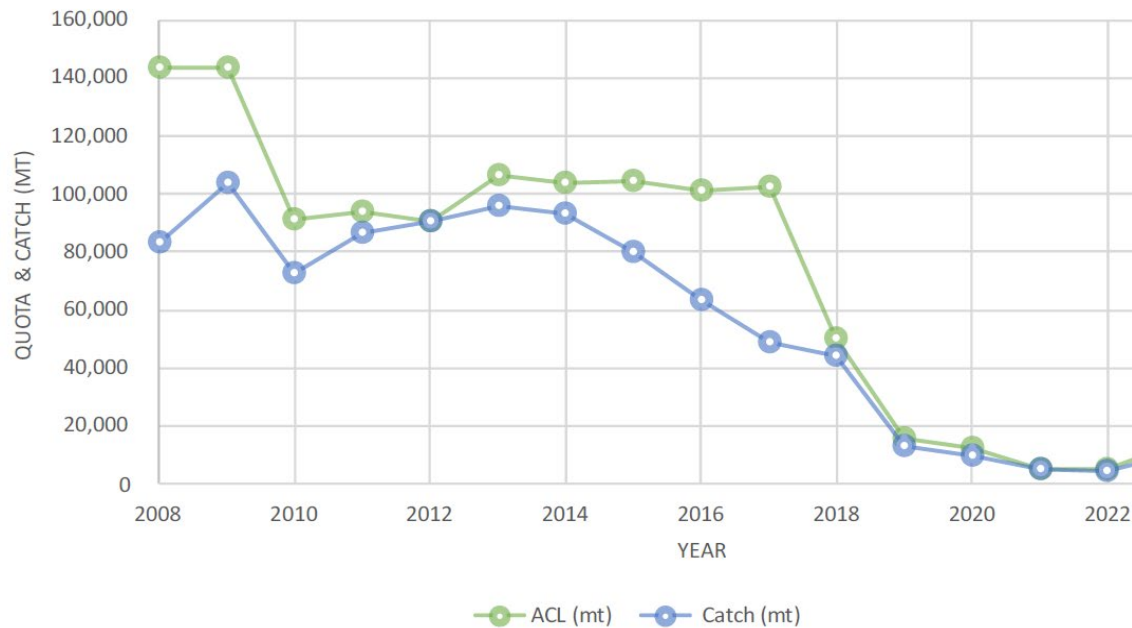
## Area 1A Measures set by ME/NH/MA

Limited Access Category A permit measures	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Season 1 (Jun – Sep) Quota	504 mt	3,666 mt	2,220 mt	700 mt	1,058 mt	2,152 mt
Season 1 Length	Jul 27 – Aug 5	Jun 30 - Sep 18	Jul 16- Aug 26	Jul 10 – Aug 2	Jun 13 – Aug 3	Jul 20 - Aug 21
Season 2 (Oct – Dec) Quota	~921mt	1,259 mt	995 mt	~1,174 mt	~1,184 mt	~1,914 mt
Season 2 Length	Nov 24 Dec 23	Oct 10-11 Nov 5 - 12	Oct 10-11 Nov 5-6	Nov 7	Nov 8	Oct 11-14 Oct 18 - 20 Nov 9

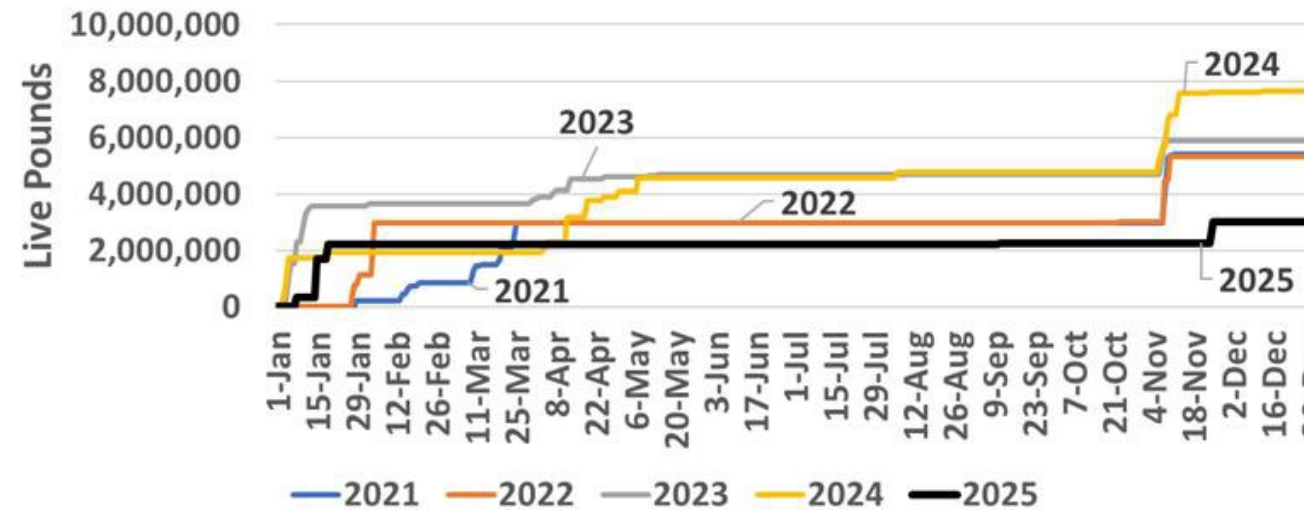
# Herring Landings



US Atlantic Herring Fishery Performance



Annual Running Totals of Landings: Atlantic Herring



Summary of US Atlantic herring fishery performance including US quota and catch (mt), 2008-2023 and preliminary 2024 (Source: NOAA Fisheries/GARFO).

Questions?



# MA DMF

## North Atlantic right whale research: passive acoustic monitoring update

Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association Trade Show  
January 2026

Leah Crowe, PhD – Science and monitoring lead, Protected Species Program,  
[leah.m.crowe@mass.gov](mailto:leah.m.crowe@mass.gov)

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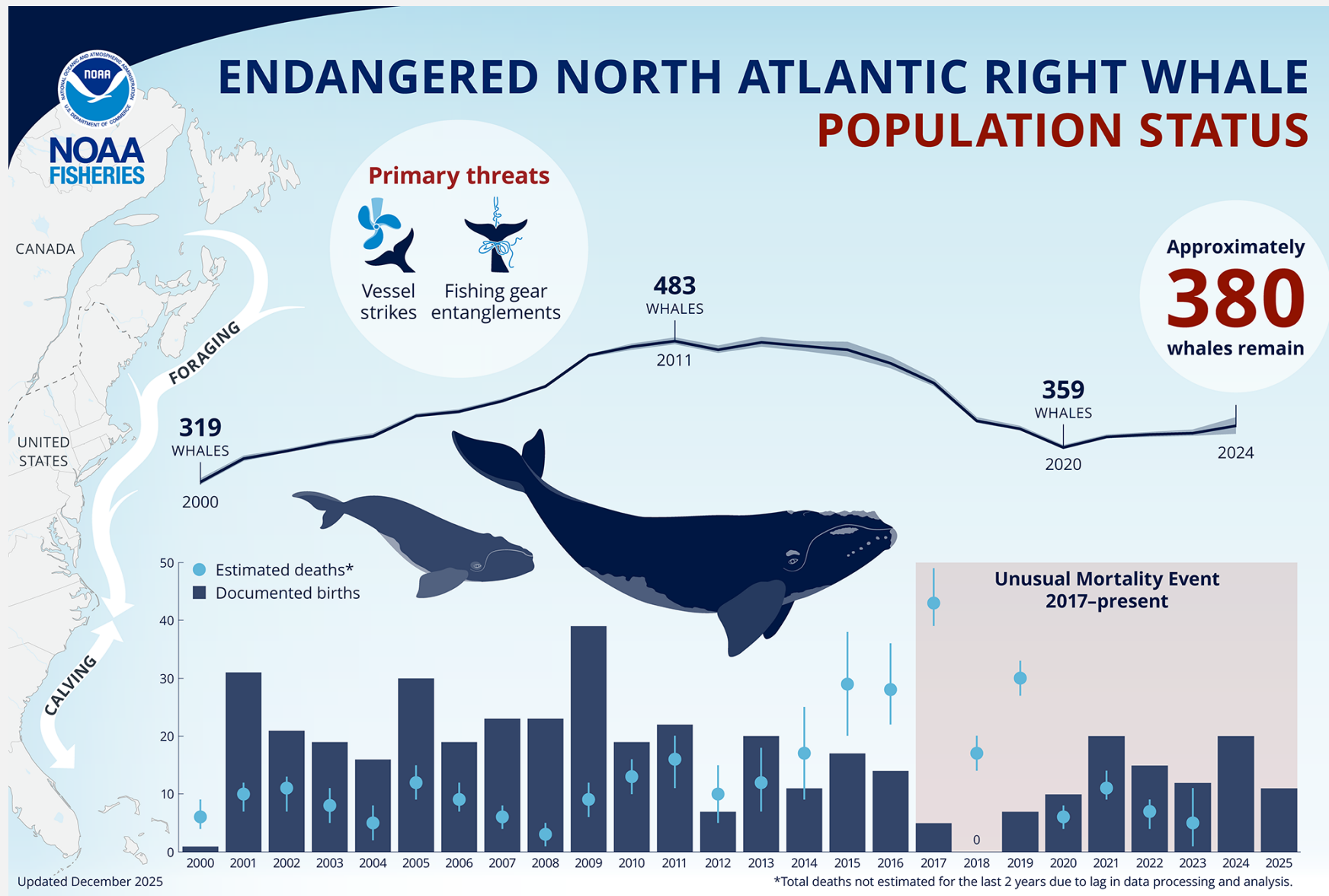
# Why are we adding more tools for detecting large whales off Massachusetts?

## Consolidated Appropriation Acts (2023 and 2024) funding

- Current rules under Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP) for American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries were compliant with the MMPA and ESA until December 31, 2028
- A “pause” in ALWTRP management actions to gather more info
- Proportional assistance to States with active federal lobster permit holders to:
  1. Expand monitoring of right whales
  2. Develop innovative fishing gear
  3. Assist with compliance and enforcement of regulations







So far in 2026...

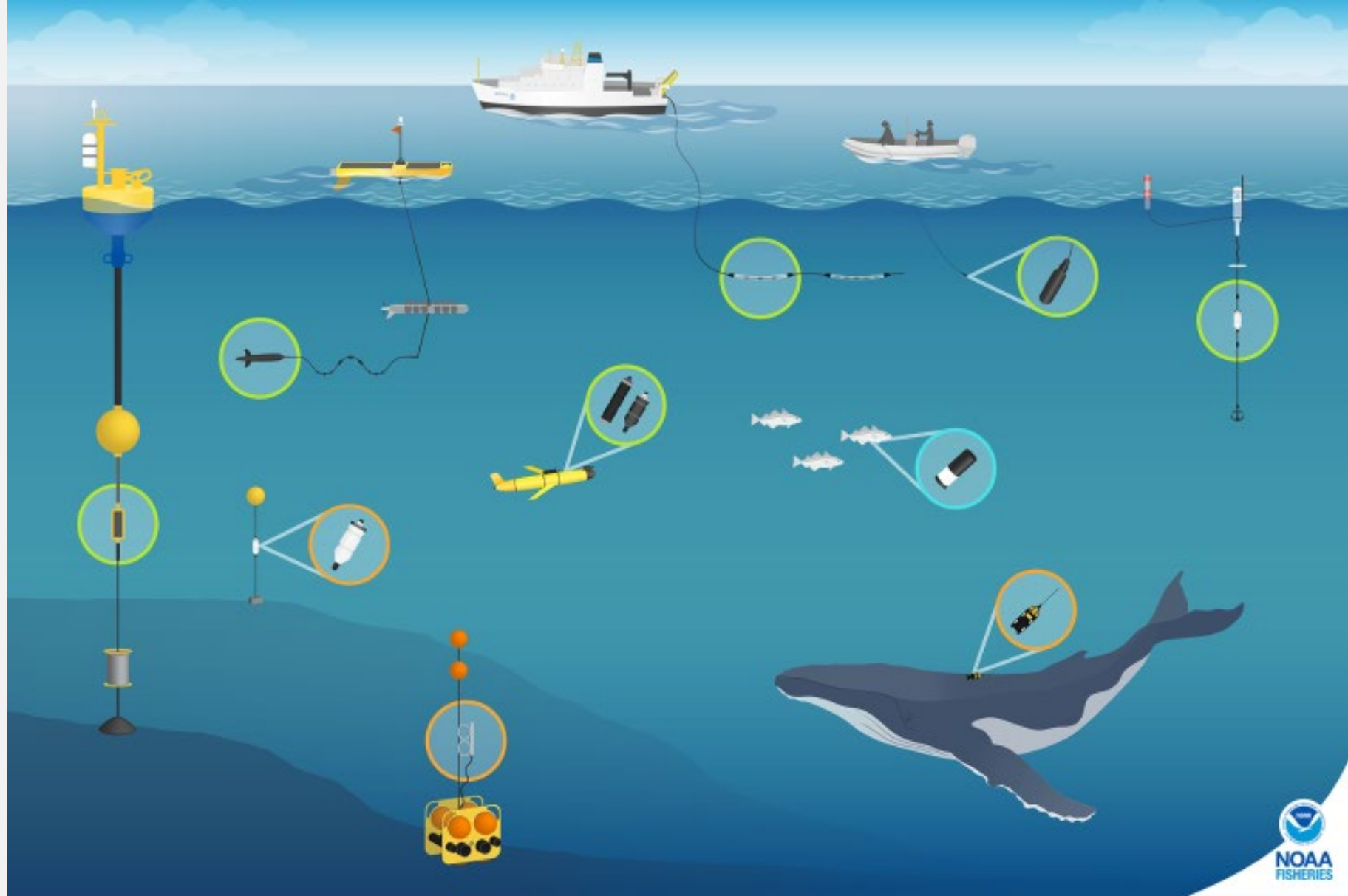
- 21 mother/calf pairs documented
- 1 dead off NC Jan 27th

Most recent population estimate is for 2024: 384 (credible interval: +10/-9) - based on photo-ID data collected in all habitats

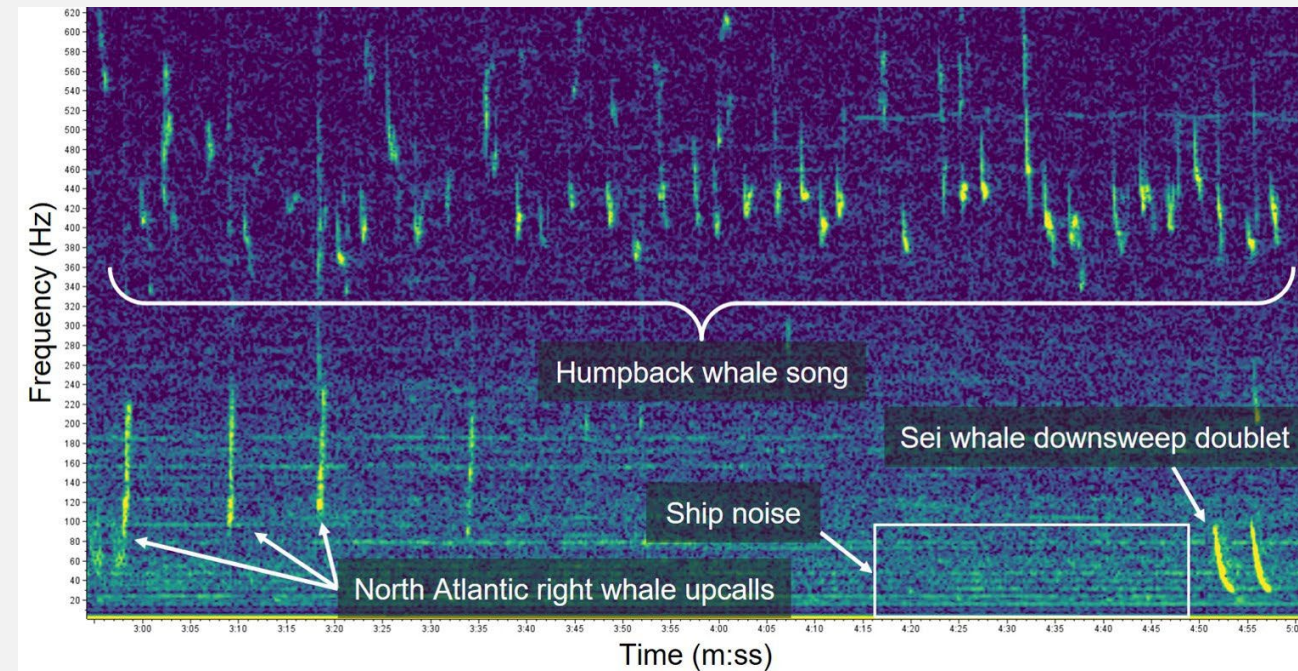
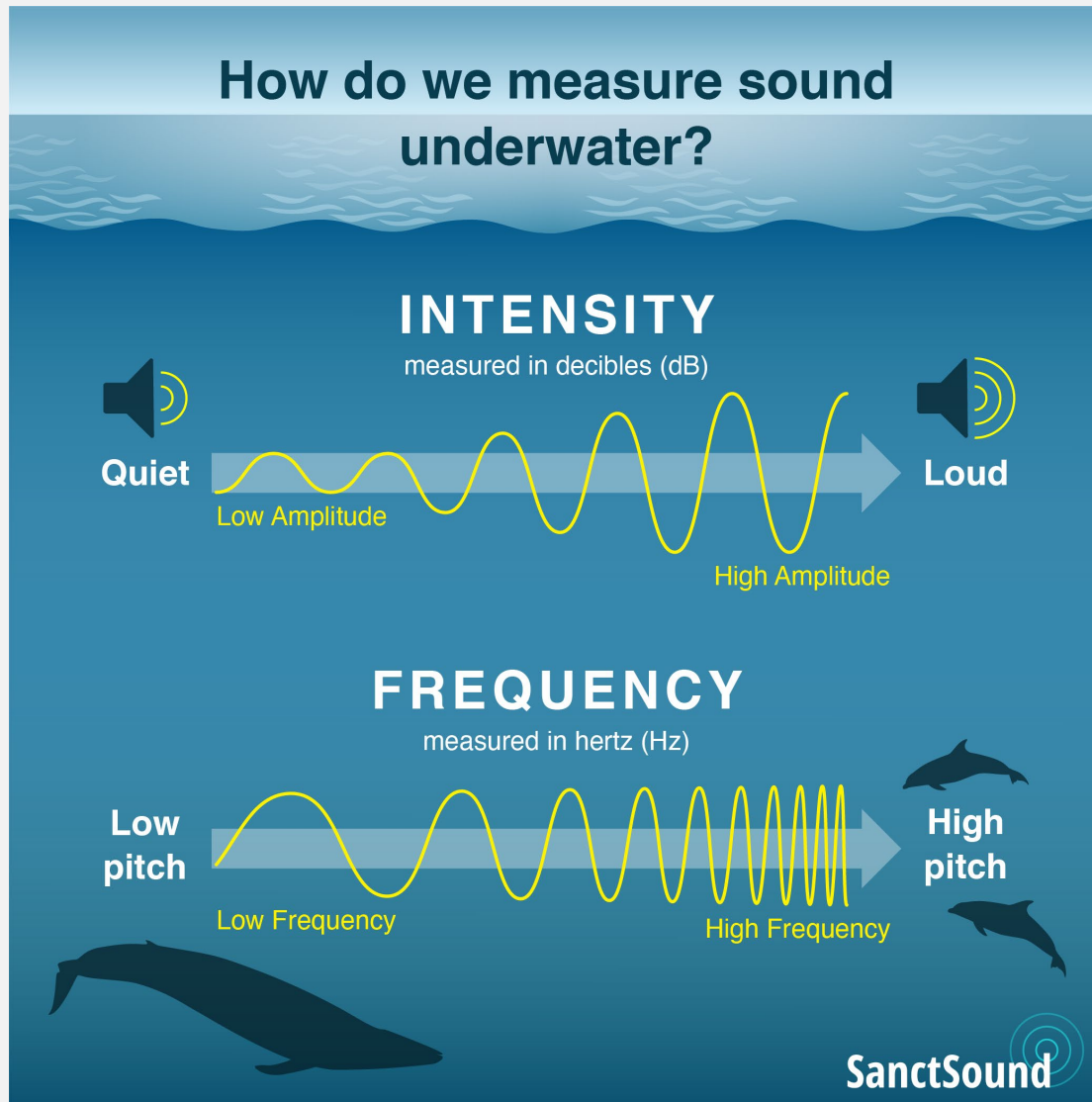
# What is "acoustic monitoring"?

- Passive = listening
  - Recording of raw sound
- Active = transmitting
  - Echosounders
  - Acoustic telemetry tags

PAM = passive  
acoustic monitoring



# Passive acoustic monitoring relies on sound



Right whales

Humpbacks

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## Acoustic detection relies on...

- whales vocalizing
  - AND with the target signal we are looking for (upcalls)
  - AND that we detect the signal correctly
- Can continuously monitor despite weather or daylight
  - A lot of data (and many possible applications)

Cryptic behavior is a challenge for both methods

## Visual detection relies on...

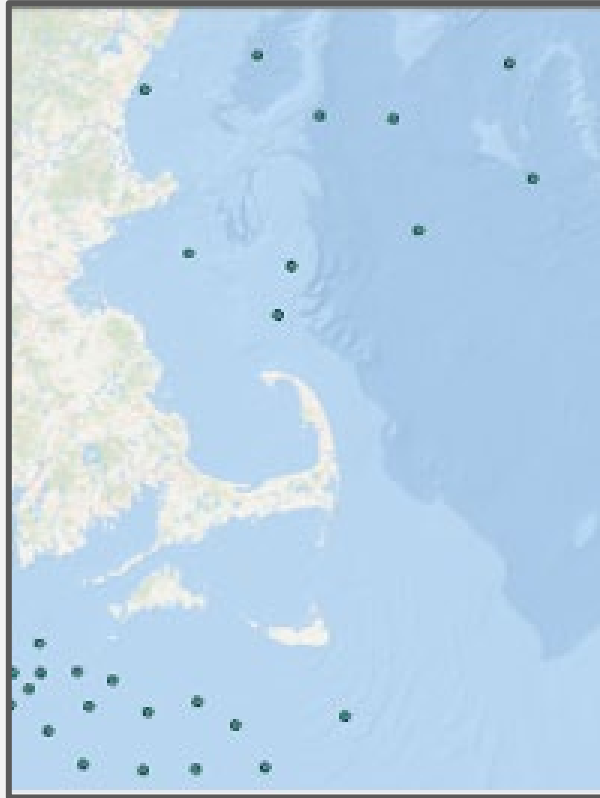
- whales being at the surface
  - AND someone being there to see it
  - AND someone seeing it
- Individual-based information
    - Entanglement/injury detection
    - Births and deaths



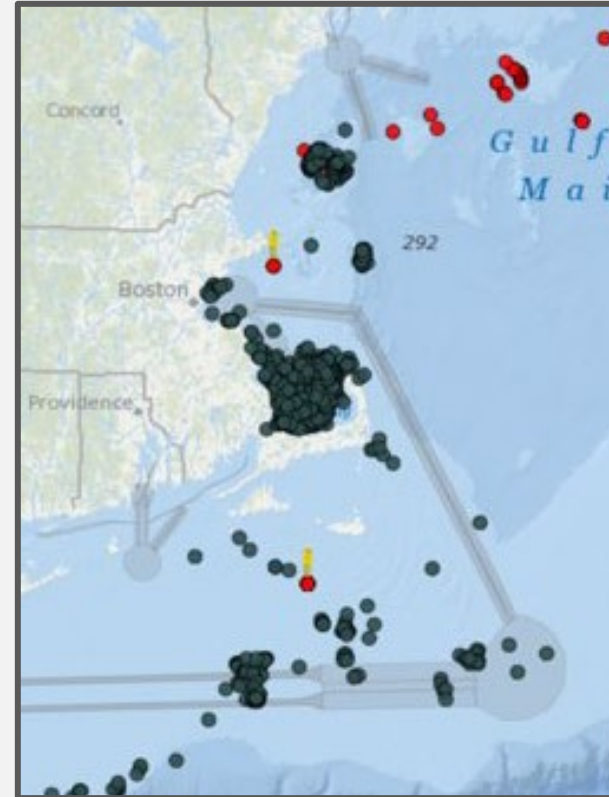
# DMF Passive acoustic monitoring station locations - other monitoring + previous sightings



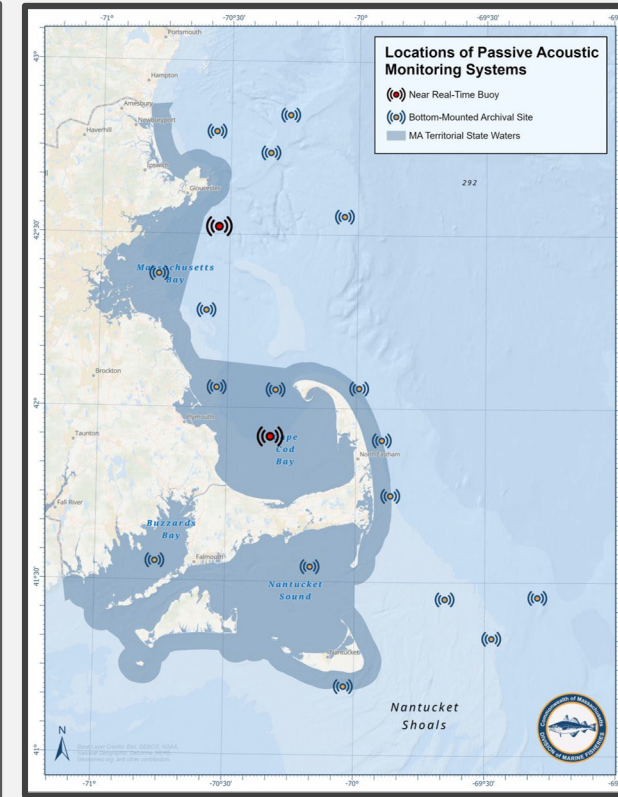
Visual survey effort



Other PAM effort



NARW sightings

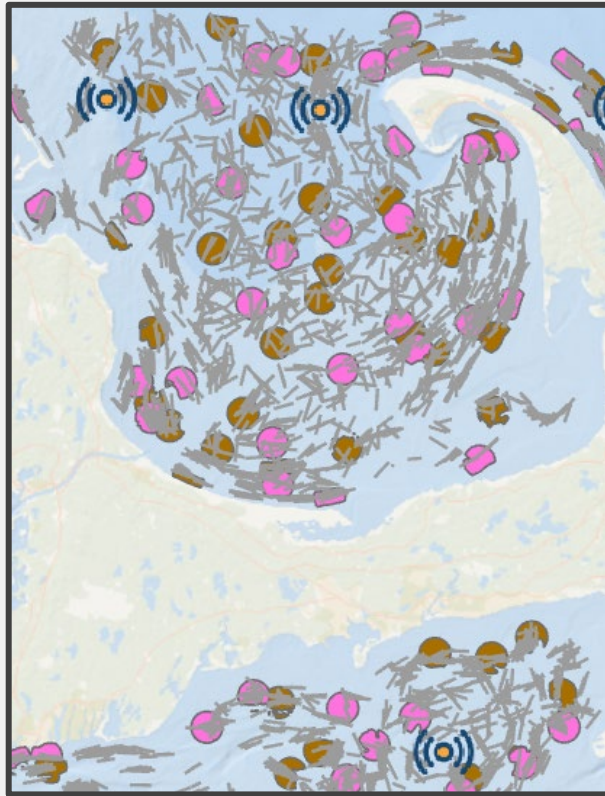


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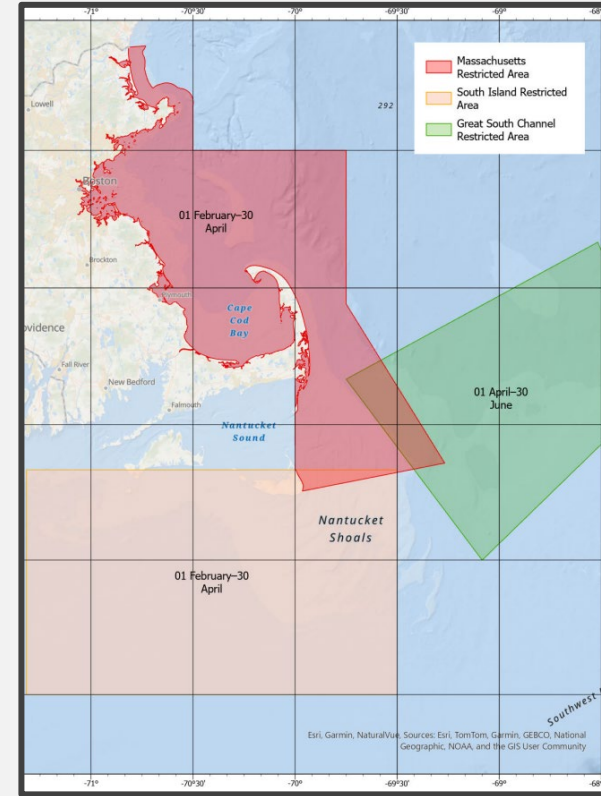
# DMF Passive acoustic monitoring station locations - spatial conflicts + management areas



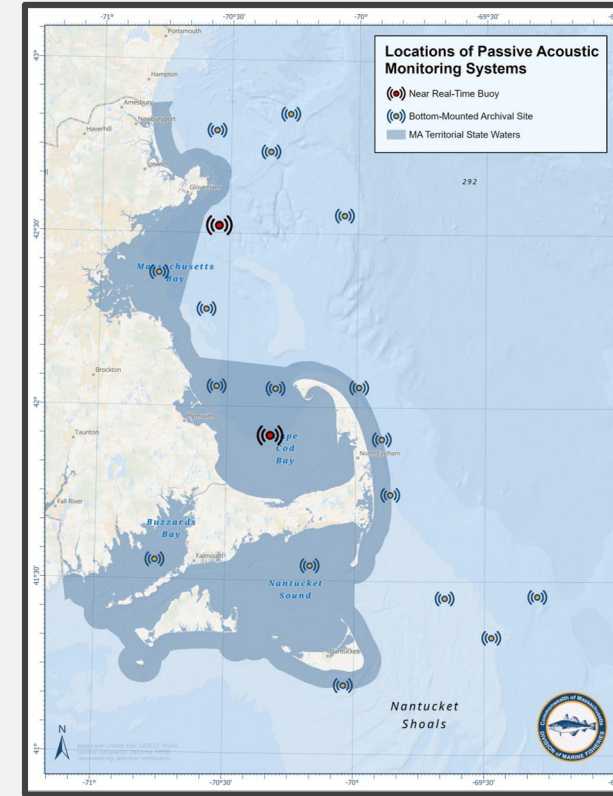
Space use conflicts



State regs



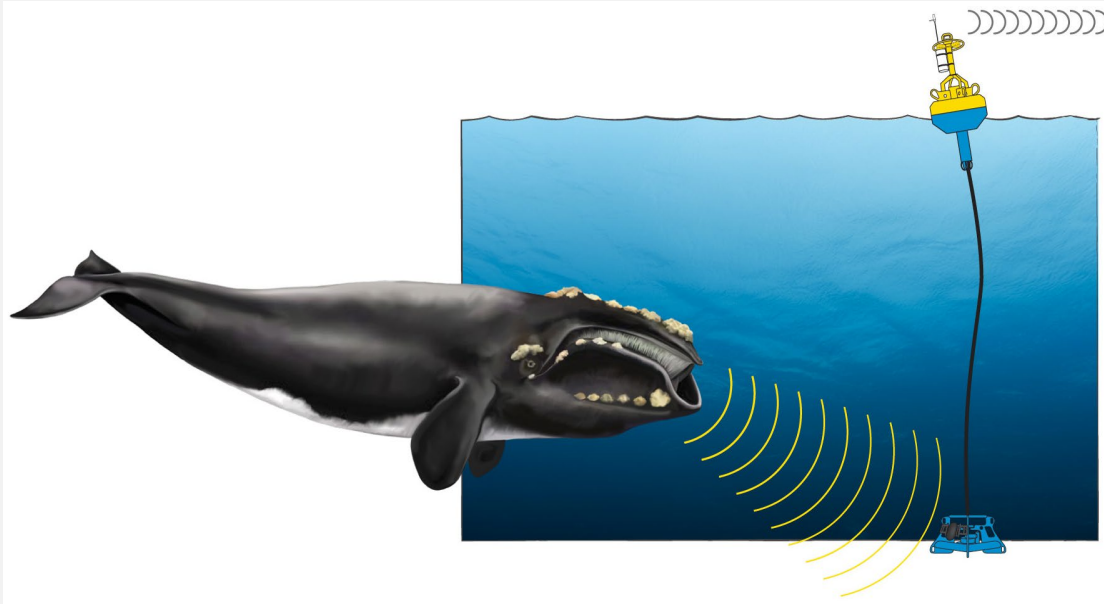
Federal regs





# Near real-time PAM – 2 sites

- Detections relayed via satellite
- Robots4Whales.com



© Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, E.S. Taylor WHOI Creative



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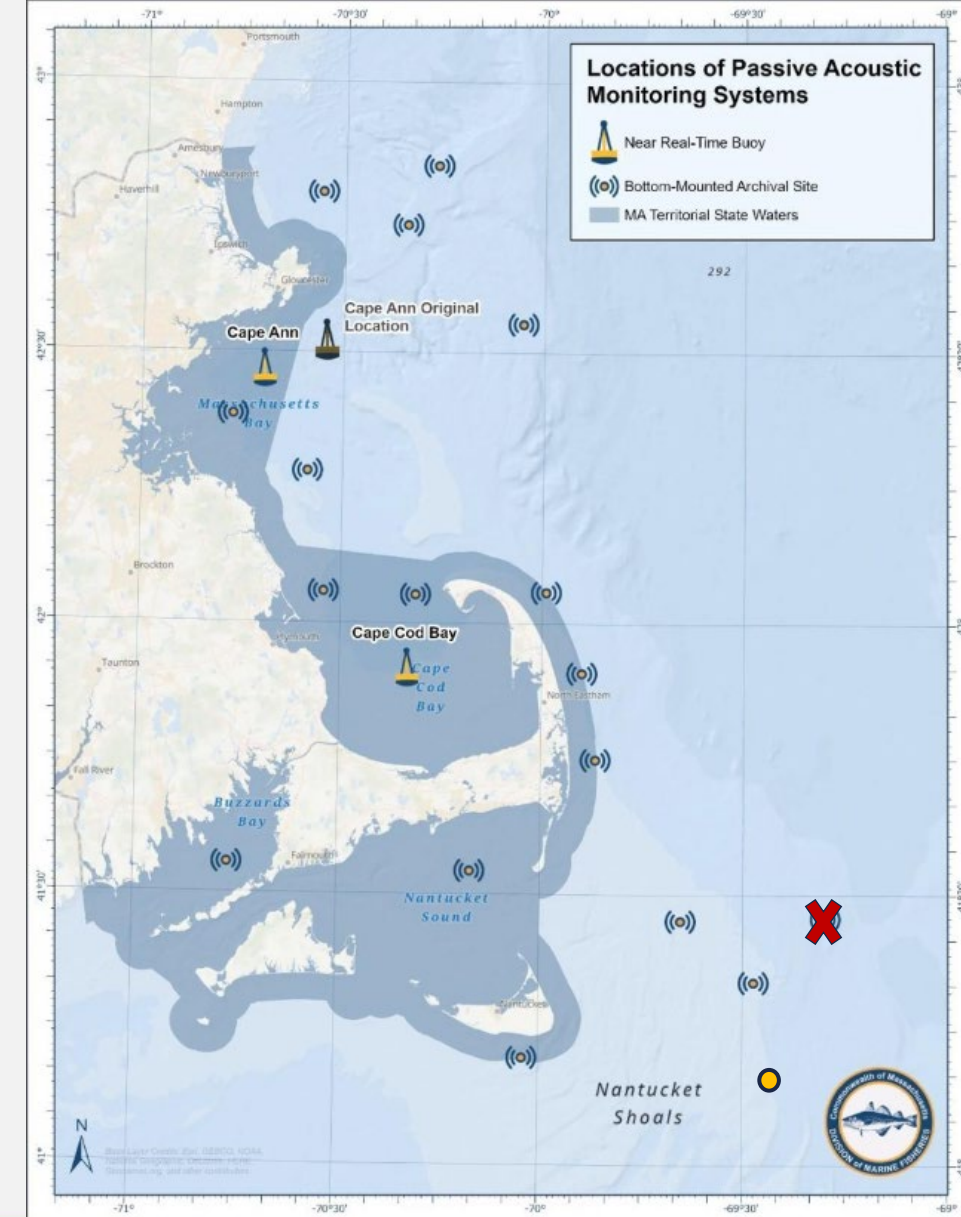
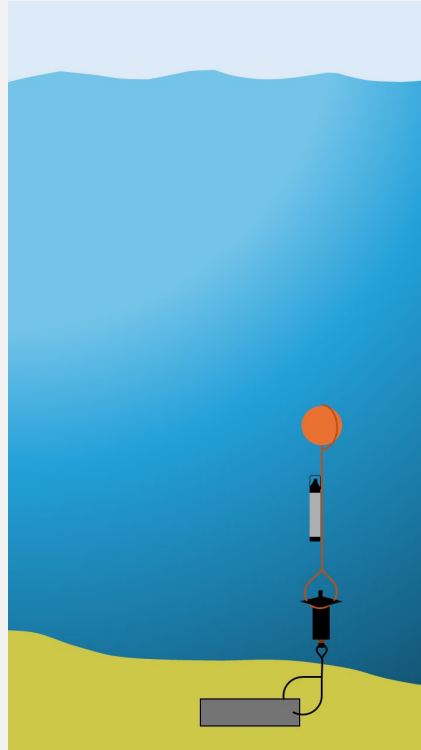
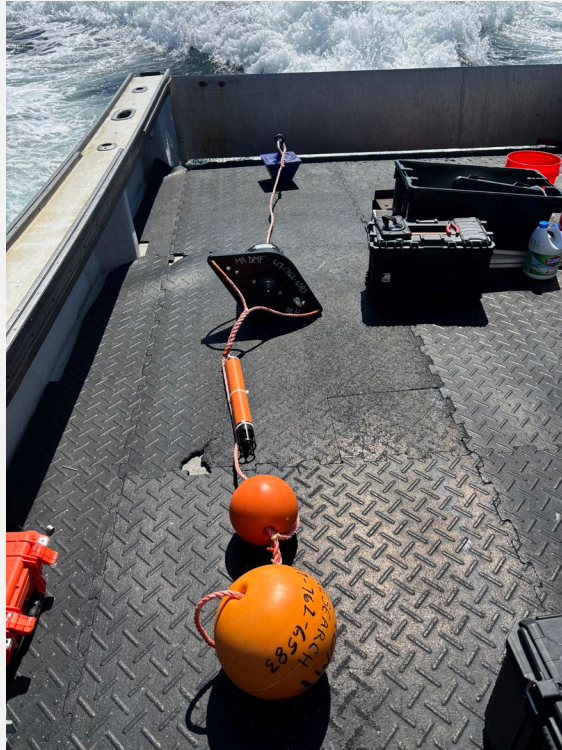
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# Archival PAM – 17 sites

- Continuously recording, 48 kHz
- Data retrieved approx. every 5 mos



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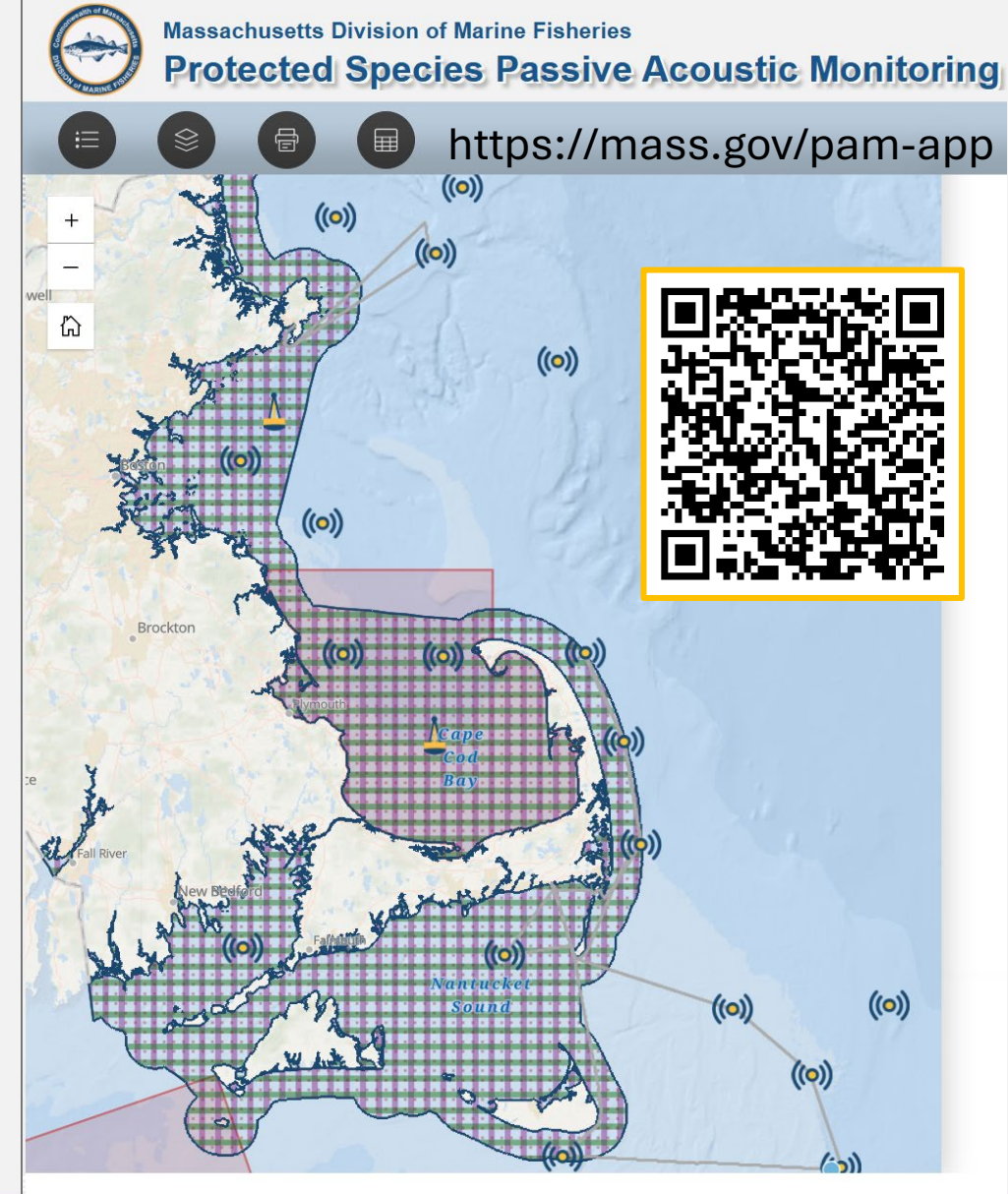
# DMF Passive Acoustic Monitoring website

Interactive web resource for more details:

- Current PAM deployment locations
- Current active spatial regulations
- Sightings and effort data from latest PAM recovery/deployment trips

Website also includes other resources:

- WhaleMap (visual data)
- Robots4Whales (near real-time acoustic detections)
- Links to advisories, news, & resources



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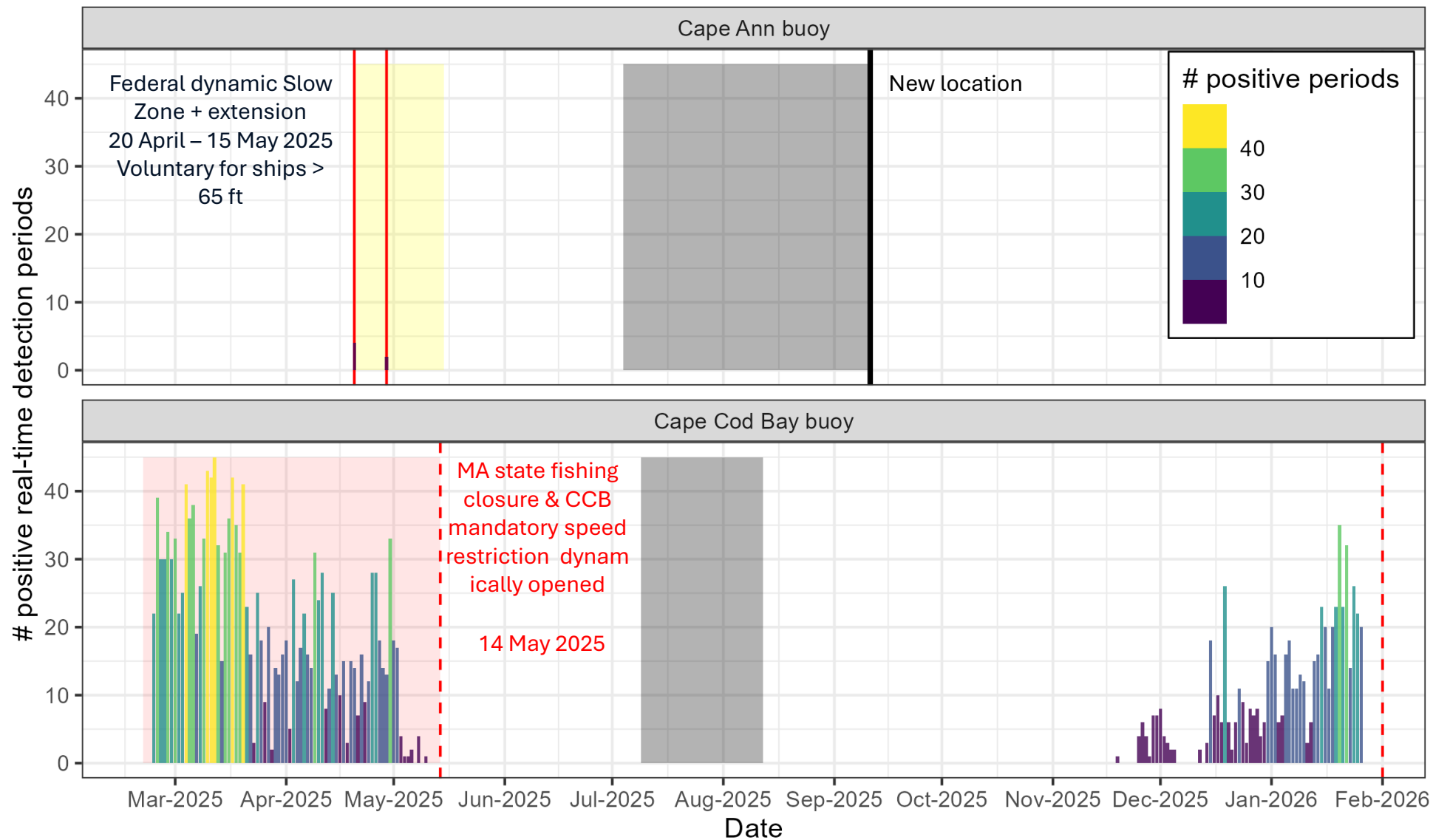
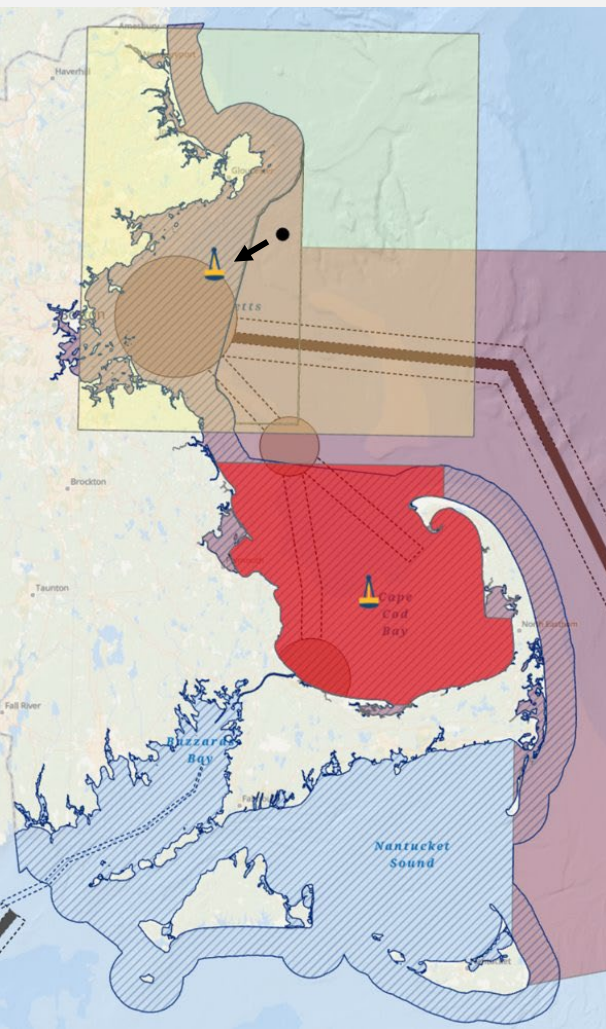




# Passive Acoustic Monitoring project goals

- Improve our understanding of the spatial and temporal presence of North Atlantic right whales in MA coastal waters
  - Develop model of acoustic data to estimate occupancy
  - Integrate with visual data to better understand limitations of right whale detection
- Increase effectiveness of dynamic management (e.g., lifting of closures)
- Help to inform the development of future conservation strategies







Questions?

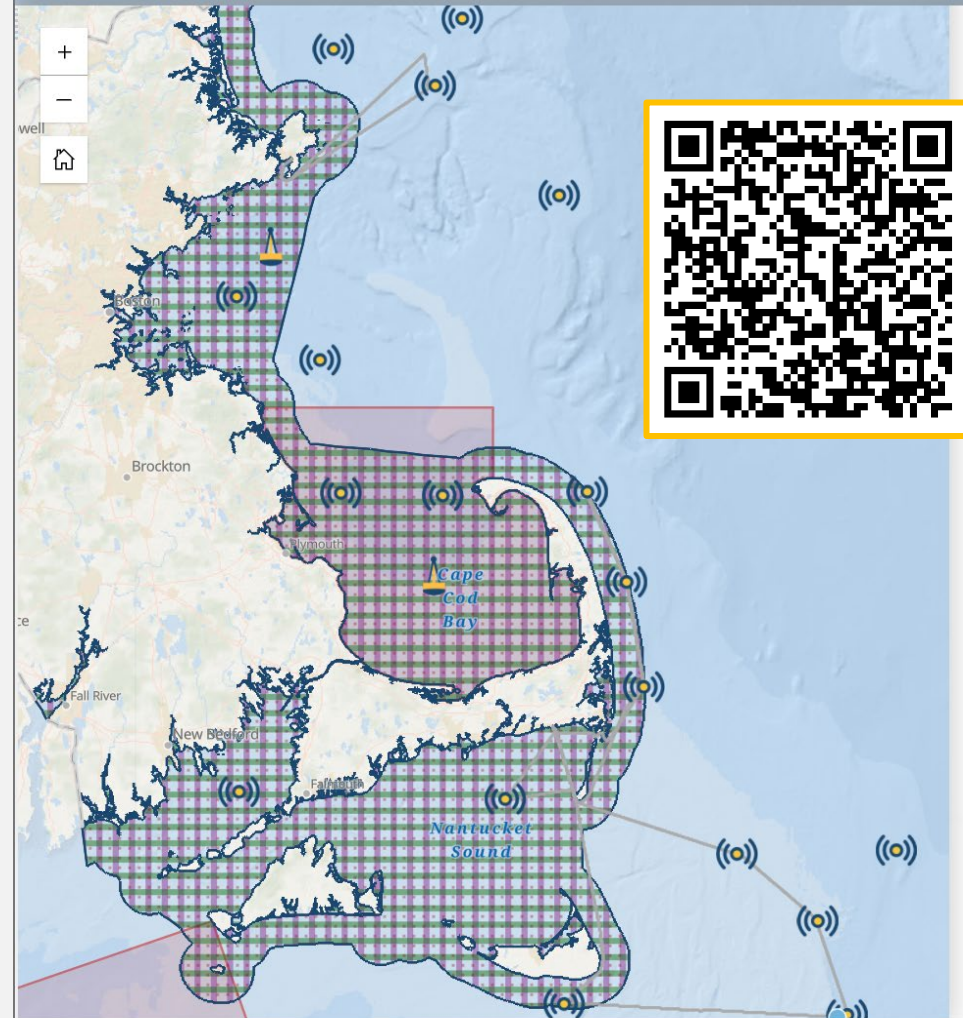


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Protected Species Passive Acoustic Monitoring



<https://mass.gov/pam-app>



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of Marine Fisheries



# On-Demand Fishing in Massachusetts and DMF's On-Demand Grant Program

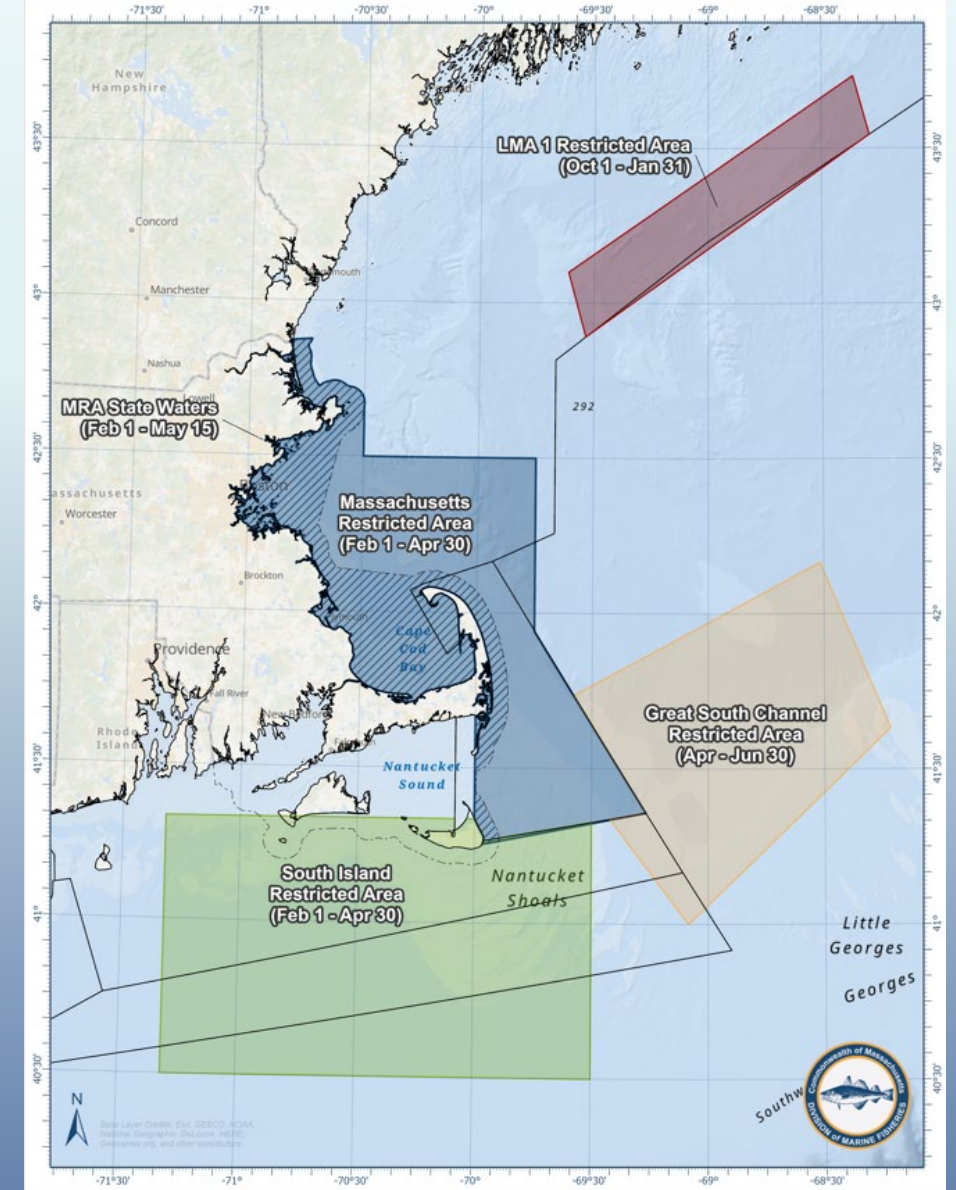
Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries  
*Erin Burke, David Chosid, Brendan Reilly*

Massachusetts Division  
of Marine Fisheries





- Massachusetts most broadly impacted by seasonal Restricted Areas
  - 63% of state waters
- On-demand gear allows access to areas closed seasonally to persistent endlines
- On-demand testing is occurring in state and federal waters during the open and closed seasons.
  - Under NEFSC EFP and DMF LOA
  - Fully on-demand trawls in closed season
  - Hybrid trawls (one surface endline) in open season



# Consolidated Appropriations Act

- DIVISION JJ—NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALES TITLE I—NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALES AND REGULATIONS SEC. 101. NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALES AND REGULATIONS. (a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law except as provided in subsection (b), for the period beginning on the date of enactment of this Act and ending on December 31, 2028, the Final Rule amending the regulations implementing the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (86 Fed. Reg. 51970) shall be deemed sufficient to ensure that the continued Federal and State authorizations of the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries are in full compliance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.) and the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 2115 et seq.). The National Marine Fisheries Service shall— (1) throughout the period described in the preceding sentence, in consultation with affected States and fishing industry participants, promote the innovation and adoption of gear technologies in the fisheries described in the preceding sentence, in order to implement additional whale protection measures by December 31, 2028; (2) promulgate new regulations for the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries consistent with the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.) and the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) that take effect by December 31, 2028, utilizing existing and innovative gear technologies, as appropriate; and (3) in consultation with affected States, submit an annual report to Congress on the status of North Atlantic Right Whales, the actions taken and plans to implement measures expected to not exceed Potential Biological Removal by December 31, 2028, the amount of serious injury and mortality by fishery and country, and the proportion of the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries that have transitioned to innovative gear technologies that reduce harm to the North Atlantic Right Whale. (b) EXCEPTION.—The provisions of subsection (a) shall not apply to an existing emergency rule, or any action taken to extend or make final an emergency rule that is in place on the date of enactment of this Act, affecting lobster and Jonah crab



# Consolidated Appropriations Act

- *“In addition, the agreement provides \$26,000,000 to States through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to cover costs incurred by the fishing industry to comply with the final 2021 rule to modify the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP) (FR210827-0171 ), as well as additional uses outlined below. This amount is \$12,000,000 above the fiscal year 2022 enacted level. This assistance may be used by the relevant States to help defray the cost of compliance with new regulations, including for gear modification, configuration, and marking within the Northeast lobster and Jonah crab fisheries, both in Federal and State waters. Additional eligible uses of the funds may include NARW monitoring to inform State dynamic fisheries management, innovative gear development, implementing electronic tracking requirements within the Northeast lobster fishery, and research to inform future management actions. including in preparation for potential subsequent modifications to the AL WTRP related to gillnet and Atlantic mixed species trap/pot fisheries. Funding to the States shall be proportional to the number of active federally permitted lobster trap harvesters in each State, and the allocation details shall be developed by the States through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Not more than five percent shall be used for administrative costs.”*



# MA Legislation Bill H.1059

- Establishes a Fisheries Conservation Gear Grant Program to provide funding assistance for research, development and acquisition of gear aimed at reducing lethal and sub-lethal impacts of fishing gear on protected species.
- Grant administered by DMF to fishing industry participants or research organizations
- Goal to eliminate a portion of the costs of acquiring on-demand gear
- November 2025 – bill reported favorably and referred to House Ways and Means committee

<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/H1059>



February 3, 2026

Division of Marine Fisheries

Slide 77





# On-Demand Testing Landings and Value

- Based on reporting requirements for on demand gear: 9 vessels with state LOAs active in the closure between 2023-2025
  - Reviewed February, March, April
  - 3 in 2023, 5 in 2024, 7 in 2025
- Using dealer reported data for all purchases from participating vessels: Averaged over the 3 years, average ex-vessel income per vessel per closure month: ~\$5,800
- Total value across the three years: \$280k
- Caveats
  - Dealer data may include both buoyed and non-buoyed gear
    - if participating vessels do both during the time period or
    - have delayed starts/early transitions back to buoyed gear
    - Carring can make it difficult to match
  - Not adjusted for inflation
  - Not weighted by activity in any way; some vessels are highly active, others are not



# On-Demand Testing Landings and Value

Year	Number of Vessels	Total Value	Average Value per Vessel per Year	Average Value per Vessel per Month per Year
2023	3	\$38,900	\$13,000	\$4,300
2024	5	\$91,500	\$18,300	\$6,100
2025	7	\$148,300	\$21,200	\$7,100
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>\$278,800</b>	<b>\$17,500</b>	<b>\$5,800</b>



# DMF On-Demand Gear Research

- Consolidated Appropriations Act funding for innovative gear research
- Initiated on-demand gear research program
  - Gear density study relative to gear conflict
  - Support authorization of on-demand testing in open and closed season
  - Collect data on throughput rates of on-demand and standard trawls
  - Conduct economic modeling of on-demand implementation scenarios
- New Efforts
  - On-demand grant program
  - DMF EFP for on-demand fishing in closed federal waters in 2026





# Authorizations of On-Demand Testing

- On-demand testing occurring in MA coastal waters under:
  - NEFSC EFP
  - DMF EFP
  - DMF LOA

## 2026 Closed Season

- 16 permit holders in federal waters under NEFSC EFP
  - 12 of them also have DMF LOA to fish in state waters (mostly Mass Bay and Cape Ann)
- 2 permit holders in federal waters under DMF EFP
- 1 permit holder in state waters (Cape Ann) under separate DMF LOA



# On-Demand Grant Program

- Assist fixed and mobile gear fishermen to acquire equipment and services needed to access restricted areas and avoid gear conflict
- Cover items needed to conduct on-demand fishing or to visualize the location of on-demand gear.
- GOALS
  - 1) Support NEFSC EFP participants with non-gear library needs
  - 2) Expand opportunities to test ODG under DMF's EFP or LOA
  - 3) Reduce conflict with mobile gear



- Provide reimbursements to fixed and mobile gear fishers
- Up to \$35,000 for fixed gear permit holders + \$6,000 for mobile gear permit holders.

## Fixed Gear

On-demand gear

ODG related supplies (rope, compressor)

Through hull transducer

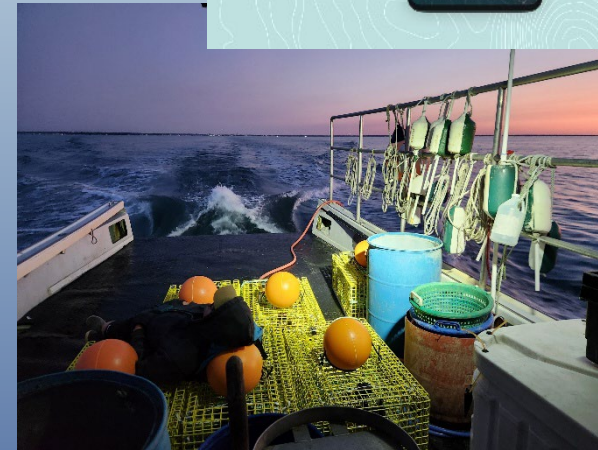
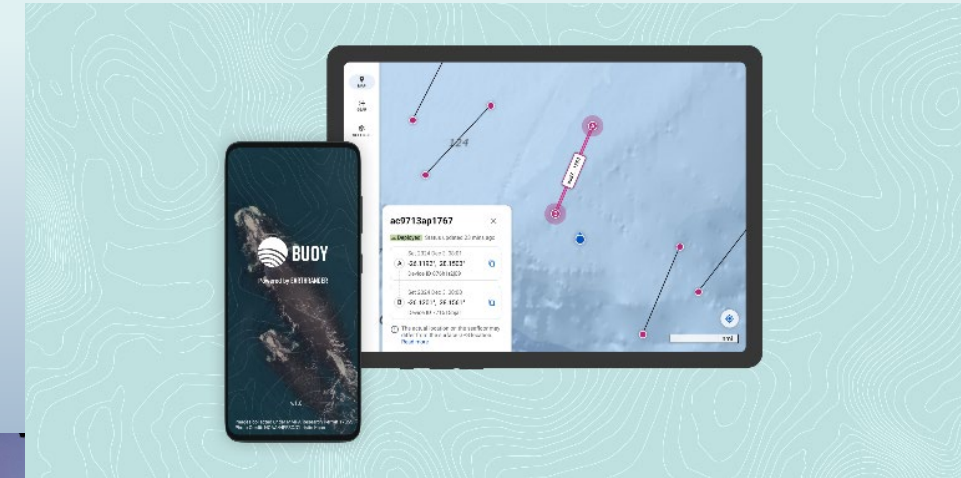
Satellite communication systems

Devices for on-demand gear retrieval and visualization

## Mobile Gear

Satellite communication systems

Devices for on-demand gear visualization



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# Numbers so Far...

- Sent notices to approx. 800 fixed gear + 300 mobile gear permit holders
  - Information about the grant program, eligible reimbursements and requests for application
- Completed reimbursements for 6 mobile gear + 13 fixed gear permit holders
- Total of \$245,000 spent in 2025
  - Mix of ODG, transducer install, software, satellite services, tablet/plotter + ODG supplies
- \$273,000 available for program in 2026

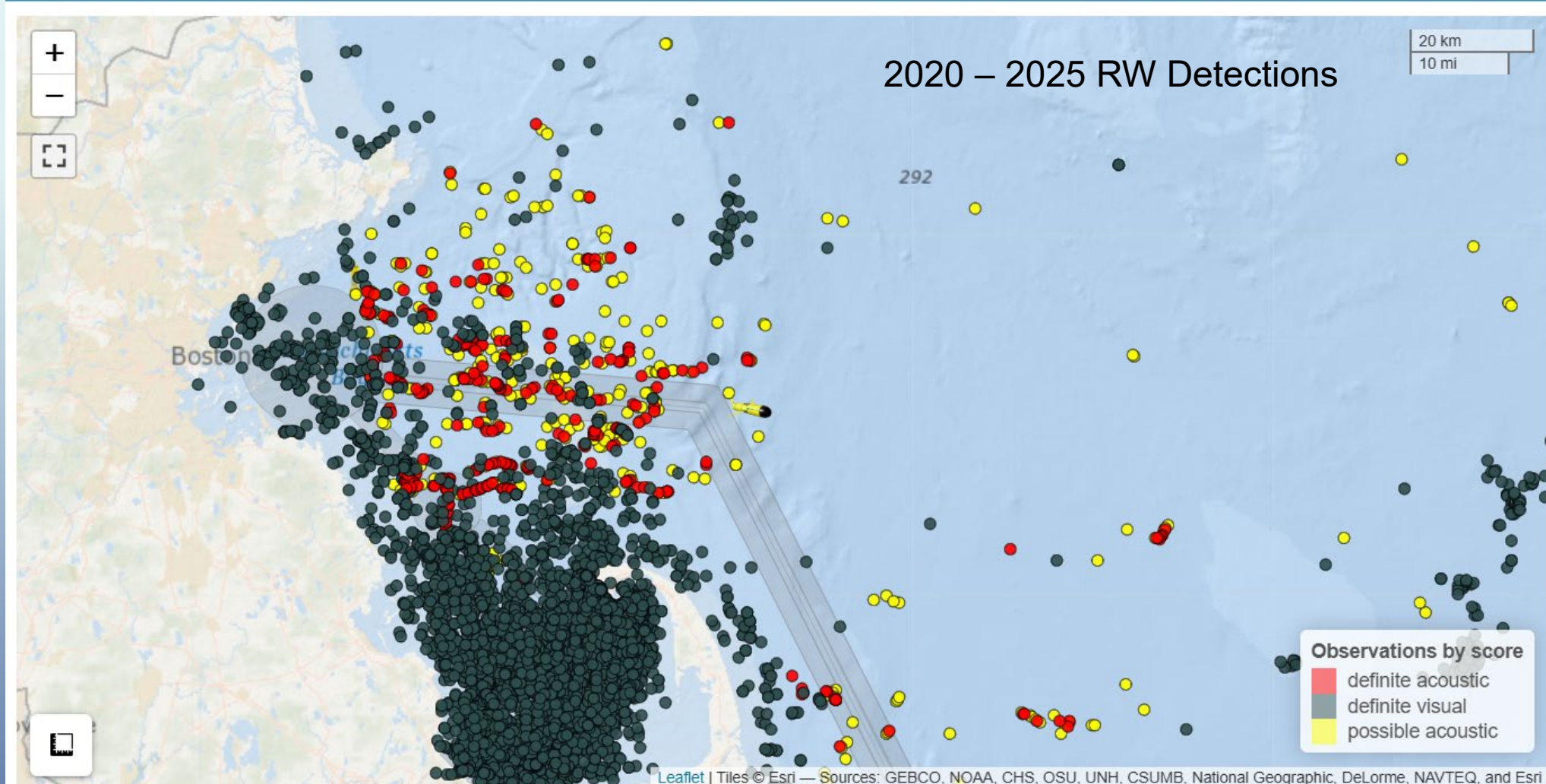


# What's Next for 2026

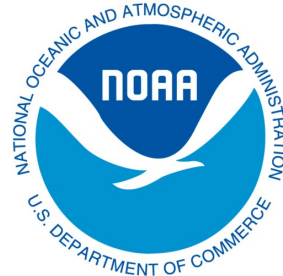
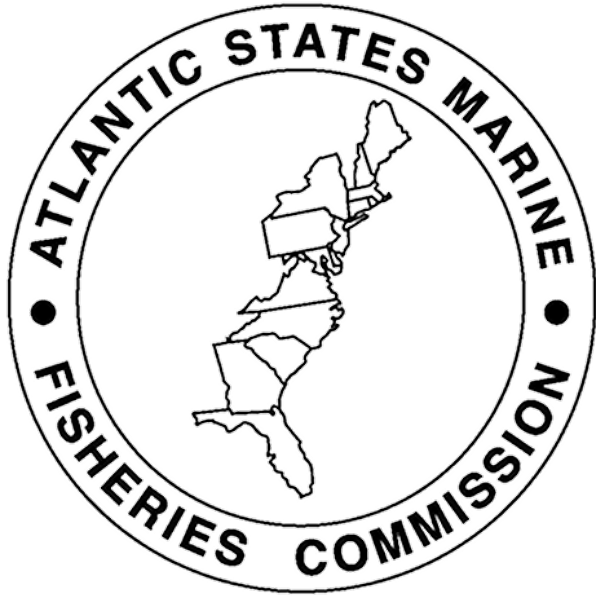
- DMF EFP issued for on-demand fishing in 2026
  - Allow on-demand testing in Restricted Areas in closed season
  - Allow up to 50 participants fishing up to 20 on-demand units each
    - Only 2 permit holders signed up for 2026 season
  - Use ODG purchased thru grant program (de facto gear library)
- Advertise second round of grant funding for fixed and mobile gear fishers to get on-demand related equipment and services.



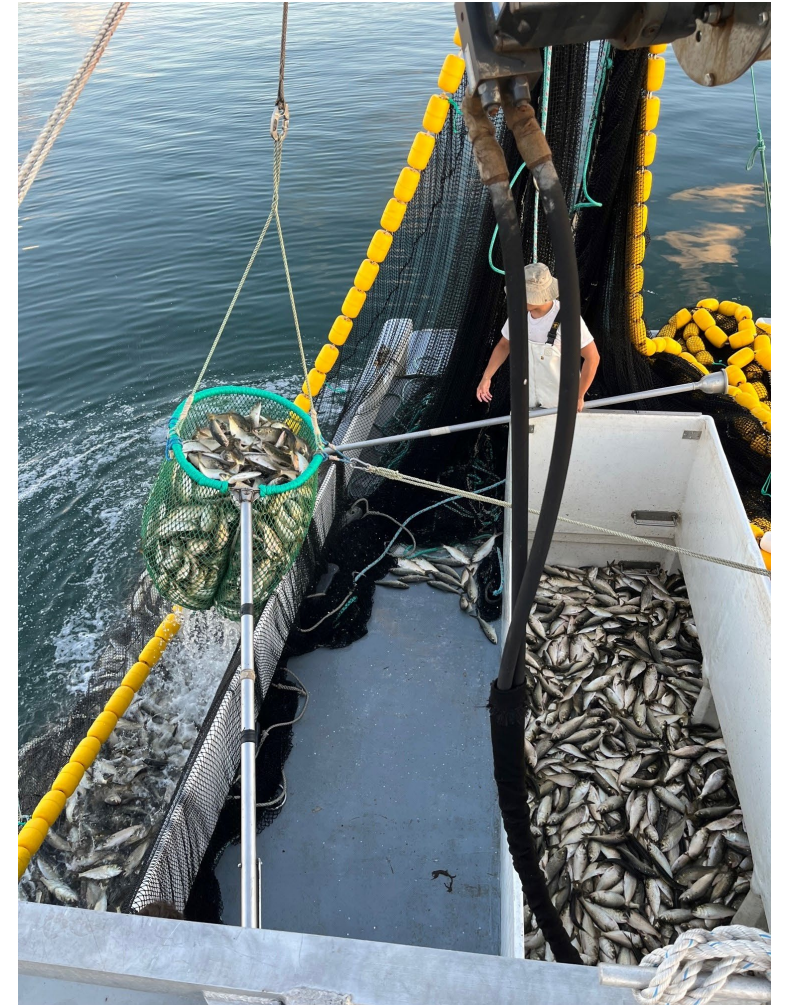




# Lobster Management - What's Next?



**NOAA**  
**FISHERIES**

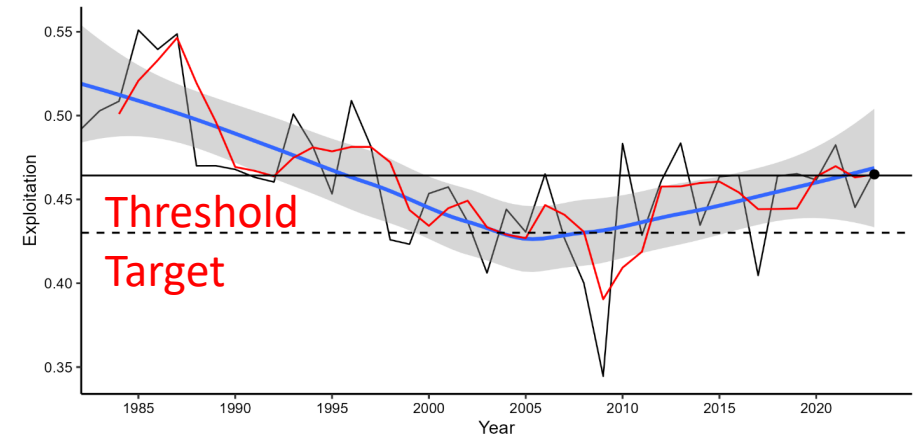
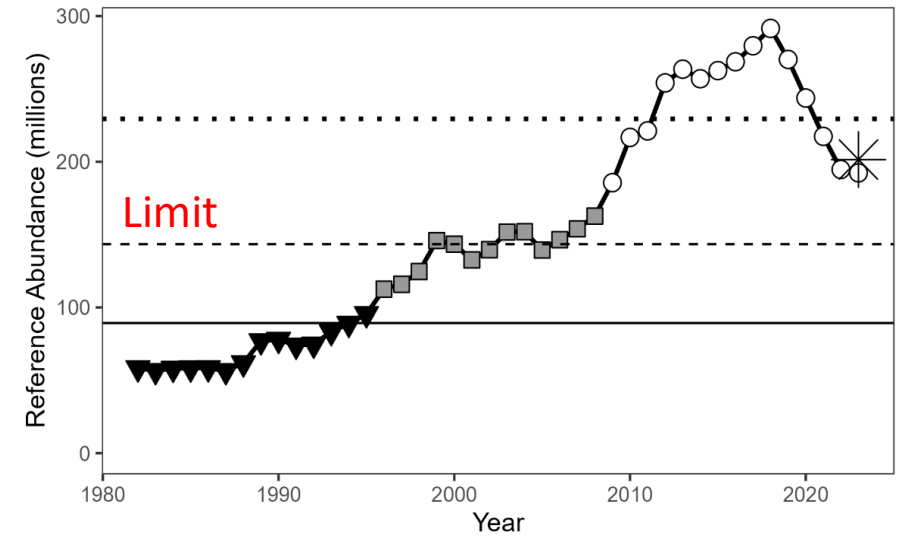




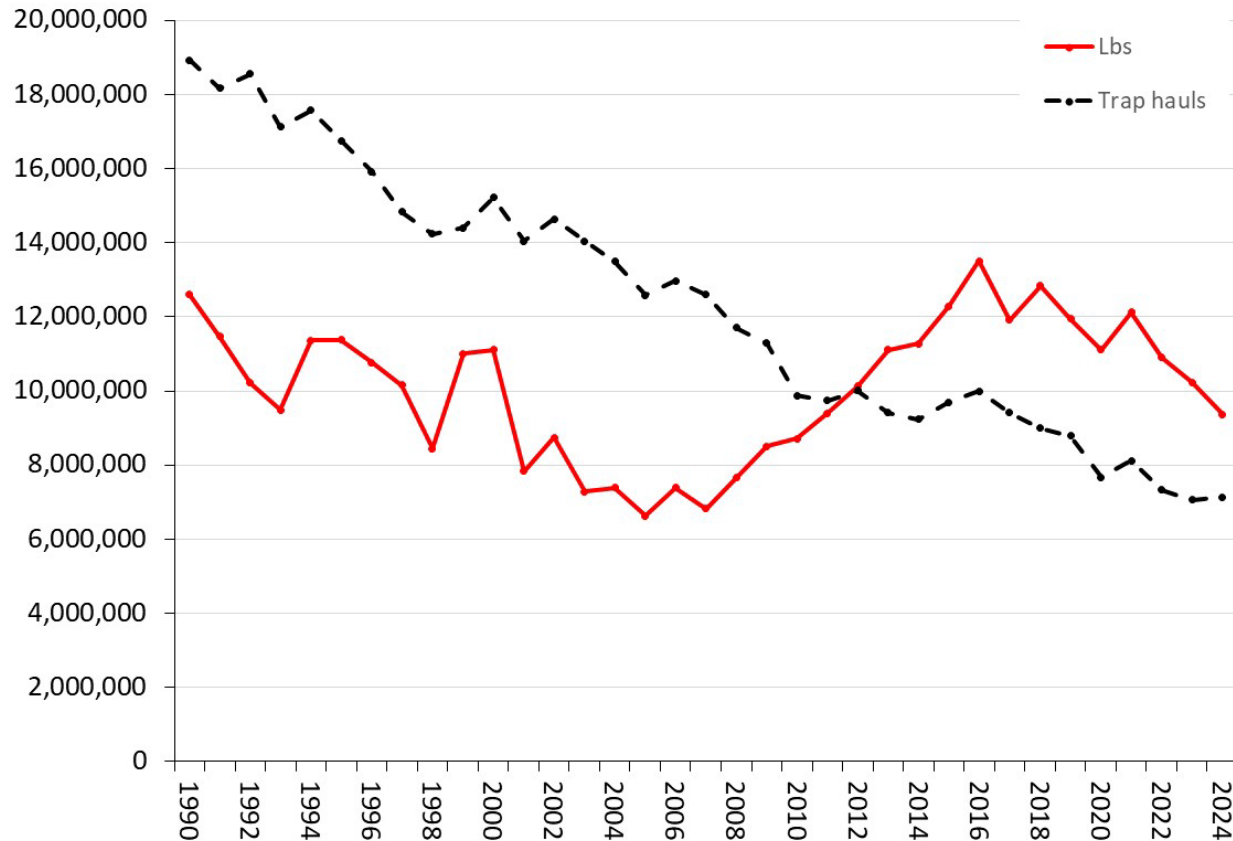
# ASMFC – Lobster Management

## GOM/GBK - LMA1/LMAOCC

- 2025 Stock Assessment
  - Stock is not depleted (overfished)
  - Exploitation Rates are right at the threshold (technically overfishing is occurring)
  - No mandate within the FMP for lobster board to act
  - However, it is likely that landings will continue to remain below historic high in observed in the 2010's
  - ASMFC Lobster Board considering industry scoping and Management Strategy Evaluation

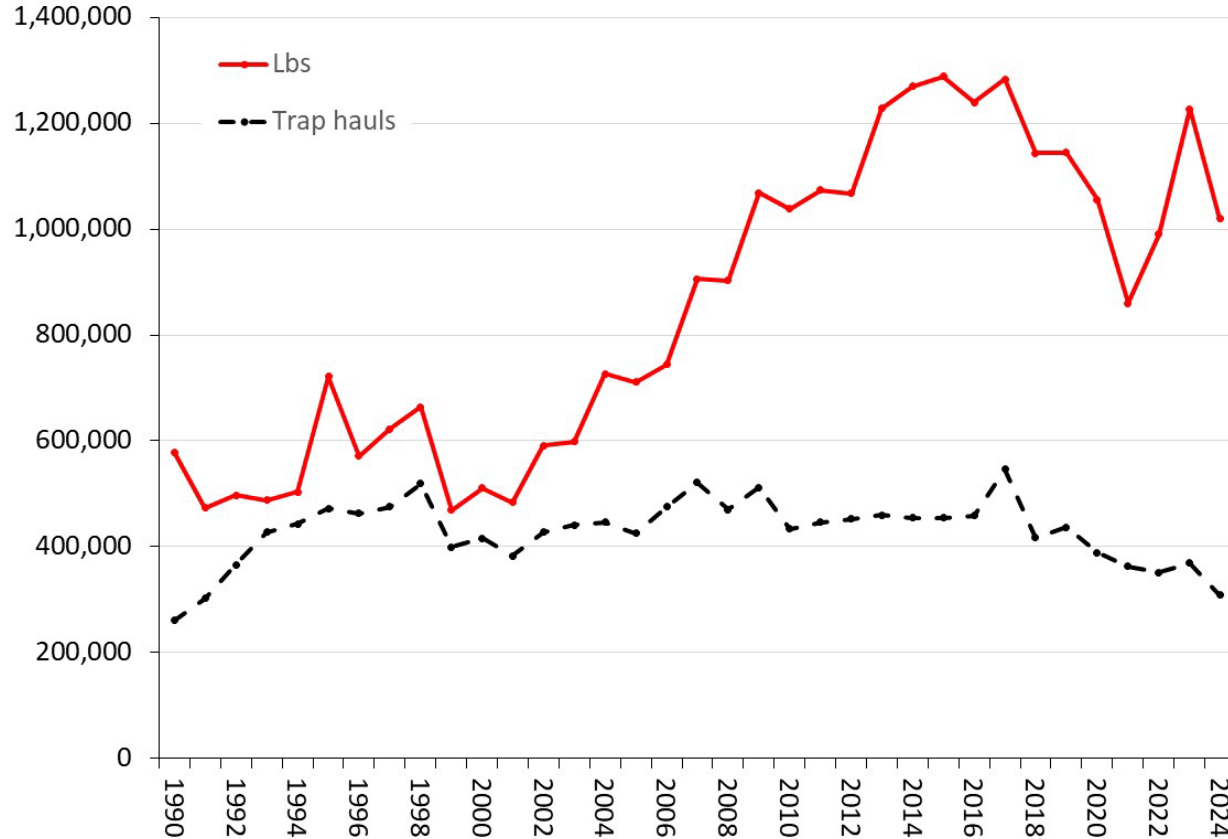


# Fishery Outlook - LMA1



- Catch high and steady
- Effort declining
- Participation declining
- Near record revenues

# Fishery Outlook – LMAOCC



- Catch high and steady
- Effort stable
- Participation stable to slightly declining
- Near record revenues

# NARW Management

- **Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan Rulemaking on PAUSE.**

- **Consolidated Appropriations Act 2023**

- DIVISION JJ—NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALES TITLE I—NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALES AND REGULATIONS SEC. 101. NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALES AND REGULATIONS. (a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law except as provided in subsection (b), for the period beginning on the date of enactment of this Act and **ending on December 31, 2028**, the Final Rule amending the regulations implementing the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (86 Fed. Reg. 51970) shall be deemed sufficient **to ensure that the continued Federal and State authorizations of the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries are in full compliance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1361 et 20 seq.) and the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 21 1531 et seq.).** The National Marine Fisheries Service **shall**— (1) throughout the period described in the preceding sentence, in consultation with affected States and fishing industry participants, promote the innovation and adoption of gear technologies in the fisheries described in the preceding sentence, in order to implement additional whale protection measures by December 31, 2028;

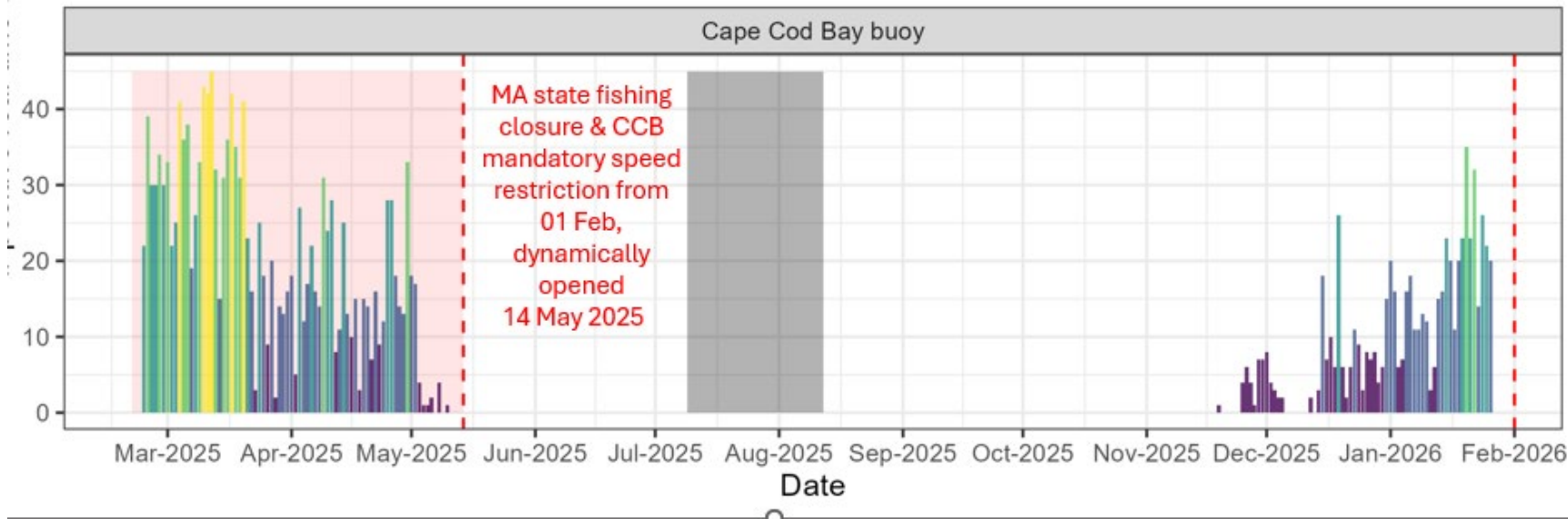
- **NOAA Fisheries will reinstate the rule making with the ALWTRT in November 2026 to have new regulations in place by January 1, 2029**

- **DMF Incidental Take Permit on PAUSE**

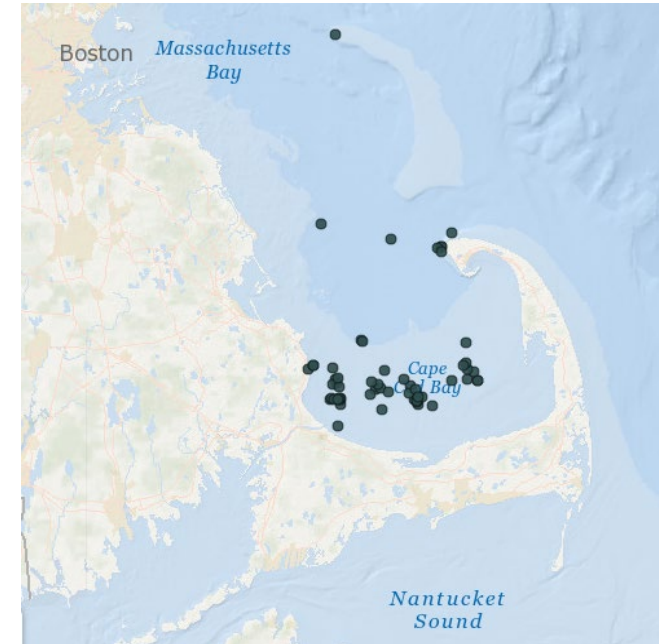
- DMF submitted the application in 2024
  - June 2025 NOAA Fisheries advised that they could not issue an incidental take permit including NARW at this time because it is their interpretation that the CAA makes all lobster fisheries in compliance with the MMPA and ESA until December 31, 2028

# NARW Management

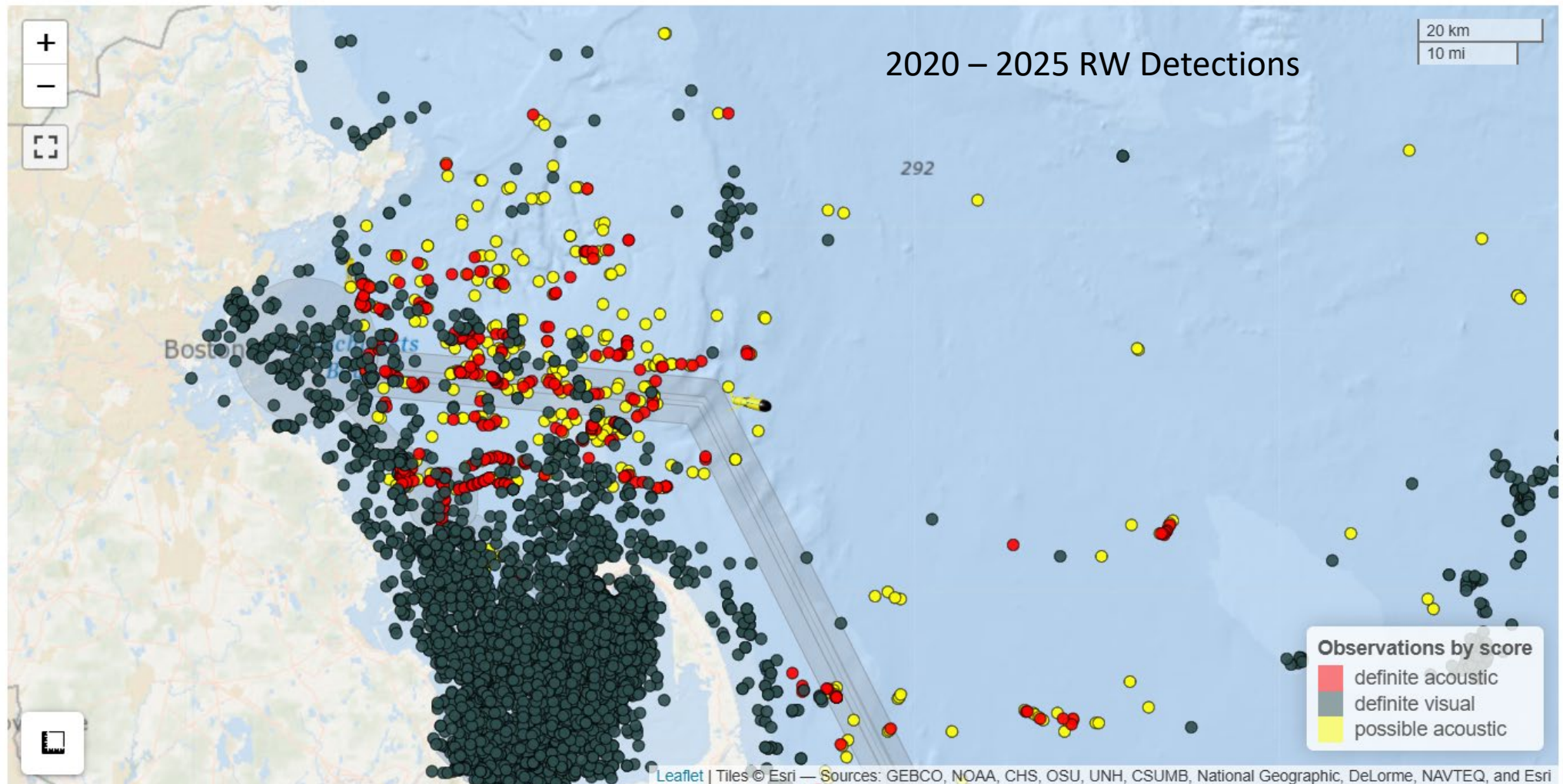
Number of positive Acoustic Detections



Visual Detections  
Nov 15, 2025 to Jan 29, 2026

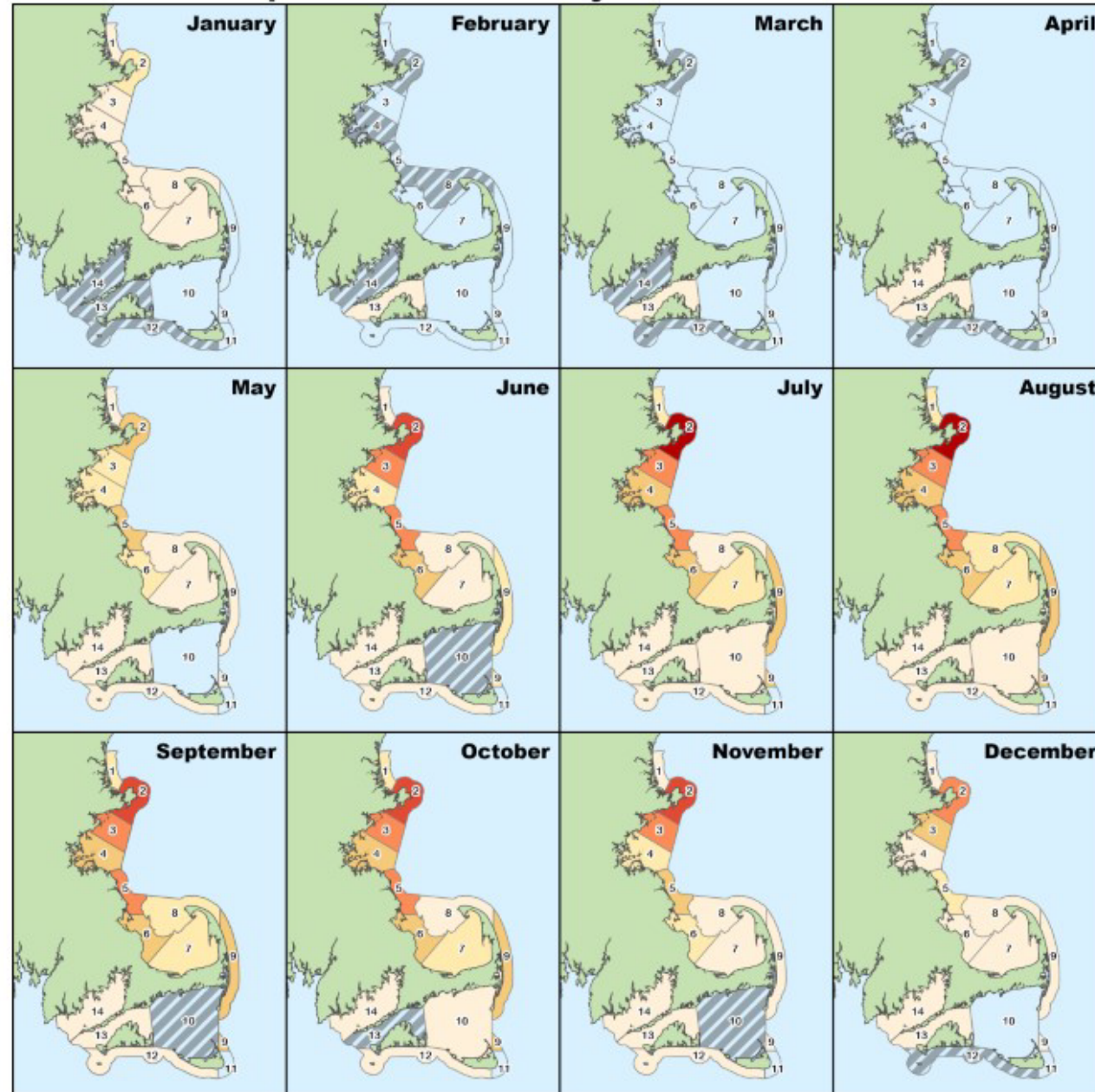


- Acoustic monitoring and aerial surveillance demonstrate substantial NARW presence in December and January in Cape Cod Bay
- Suggests entangle risk is in December and January





## 2023 Lobster Trap Vertical Line Density



## Vertical Lines Summary

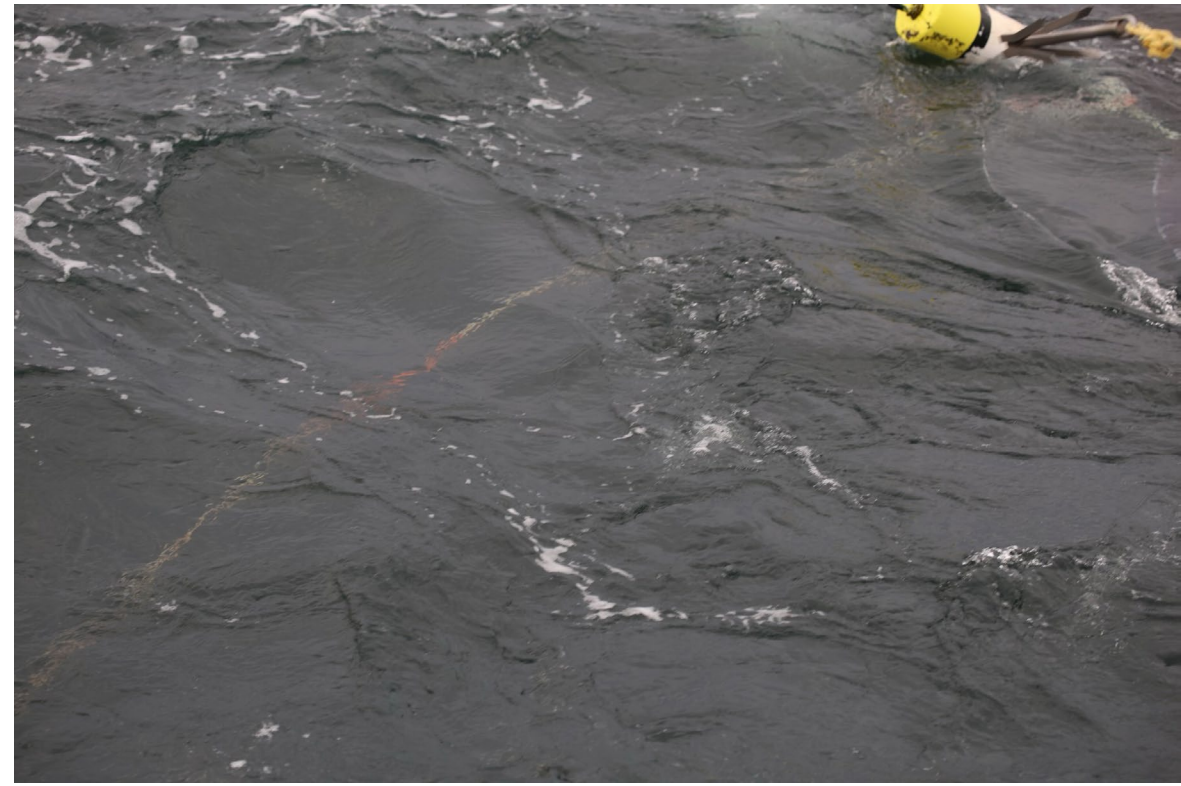
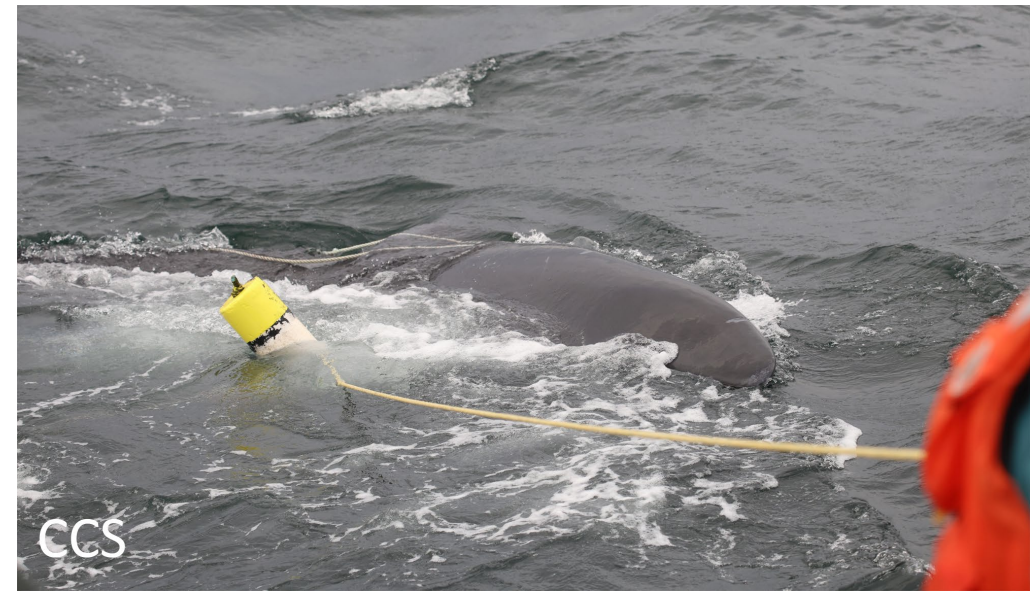
### Total MA Lobster Pot Vertical Lines by LMA, 2018-2023

LMA	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
LMA1	60,776	58,982	54,657	55,535	56,359	53,152
LMA2	6,188	6,162	5,665	4,722	3,977	3,471
LMA3	1,714	1,883	1,743	1,829	1,944	2,019
OCCLMA	13,449	13,041	11,917	10,999	10,096	8,710
<b>Total</b>	<b>82,127</b>	<b>80,068</b>	<b>73,982</b>	<b>73,085</b>	<b>72,376</b>	<b>67,352</b>

- The MRA opened to trap fishing on May 8 in 2023.
- 2023 density figure is not yet available.
- Table references total lobster vertical lines by year and LMA.

# NARW Management

- Confirmed Entanglement Cape Cod Bay
  - CCS responded to reports on 1/17/26
  - CCS partially disentangled on 1/19/26
  - A wrap of rope still remains on the whale
  - Buoy and partial buoy line recovered
  - Inspected by MEP and DMF
  - Confirmed to be MA LMA1 inshore gear
  - Rope appeared to part at a weak contrivance
  - 1 year old male - 2025 calf of Monarch



# Management Considerations

- Right whales – entanglement risk still a problem
  - benefits for continued reductions in vertical lines
- Bait limitations – reduction in availability, increased cost
  - benefit to fishing less gear to reduce bait consumption
- Trap reductions had the most support of any option in industry survey
  - LMA1 and LMA2
- Catch remains near record highs despite steady declines in effort
  - Trap reductions increase CPUE, enhance efficiency, and lower input costs – data support this
- Lobster permit numbers continue to decline...how far do we let them drop?
  - Is it time to reconsider permit transfer criteria?

Questions.....