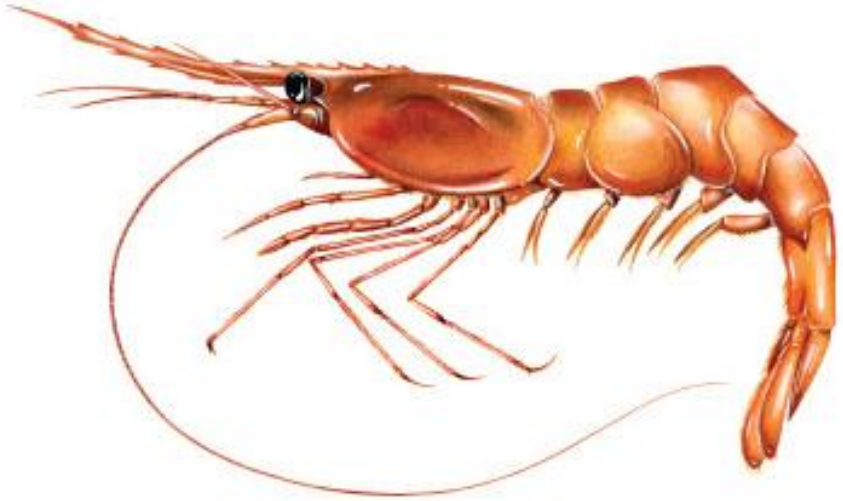
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

2025 Pilot Winter Sampling Program Report and 2026 Specifications



Northern Shrimp Section

December 2025

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Overview

- 2025 Pilot Winter Sampling Program Report
- 2025 Data Update and Management Trigger Analysis
- Specifications Overview
- Advisory Panel Report

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Background – Winter Sampling Program

- Six-week pilot winter sampling program (February-March 2025)
- 26.5mt (~58,400 pounds) research set-aside (RSA) quota
- Five trawlers and four trappers participated

Participant	Home Port	Gear	Assigned Region
Adam Gamage	South Bristol	Trap	East of Monhegan
Andrew House	South Bristol	Trap	Southport to Monhegan
William McLain	Pemaquid	Trap	West of Southport
Justin Libby	Port Clyde	Trawl	Eastern
Dana Hammond II	South Bristol	Trawl	Mid-Coast
Robert Tetrault II	Portland	Trawl	Western
David Osier	South Bristol	Trawl	Mid-Coast
Chris Adamaitis	Portsmouth	Trap	New Hampshire
Joseph Jurek	Gloucester	Trawl	Massachusetts

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Winter Sampling Program - Trawl

Five Trawlers Four Regions

- **Massachusetts**, **Western Maine** (Kittery to Small Point, Phippsburg), **Midcoast Maine** (Phippsburg to Monhegan Island), and **Eastern Maine** (east of Monhegan Island)
- Collect one 1-kg random sample from each day's shrimp catch

Maine Trawler Sample Collection

- Fish once per week for six weeks
- Standard Nordmore grate or a compound grate required
- 1,200-pound (544 kg) trip landing limit

Massachusetts Trawler Sample Collection

- Multiple trips per week up to 3,600 pounds (1,633 kg)
- Standard Nordmore grate or a compound grate required
- If 3,600 pounds caught in a single week, vessel revert to one trip per week with a landing limit of 1,200 pounds for three weeks

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Winter Sampling Trawl Summary

Region	Vessels	Trips	Tows	Northern Shrimp Catch Weight (lbs.)	Tow Time (total hours)	Avg. Rate (pounds/hour)	Avg. Depth (fathoms)	Samples	Total Northern Shrimp Count
Maine (Western)	Robert Michael	2	5	0.06	3.75	0.020	55	1	2
Maine (Midcoast)	Blue Water III	2	5	0.53	9.12	0.058	64	2	15
Maine (Midcoast)	Nicole Leigh	1	1	0.12	0.98	0.120	69	1	3
Maine (Eastern)	Capt'n Lee	2	2	0.42	2.60	0.178	54	0	12
Massachusetts	Mystique Lady	2	4	0.07	3.03	0.574	52	3	2
Totals and Averages		**9**	**17**	**1.20**	**19.48**	**0.19002**	**58.8**	**7**	**34**

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Winter Sampling Program - Trap

- Four trappers participated from two regions
  - Midcoast Maine (3) and New Hampshire (1)
  - The Midcoast area historically landed more than 90% of Gulf of Maine trapped shrimp

- Trap Sample Collection –
  - Forty traps tended (hauled) as often as needed
  - Landing no more than 500 pounds (227 kg) of shrimp per week
  - Combine the catches of all traps and collect one randomly chosen 1-kg sample from the day's catch once a week

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Winter Sampling Trap Summary

Port	Vessel	Trips	Trap Hauls	Northern Shrimp Catch Weight (lbs.)	Avg. Depth (fathoms)	Samples	Northern Shrimp Catch Count
ME (Midcoast)	Tory Lyn	5	77	0.00	32	0	0
ME (Midcoast)	Betty Lew	6	80	0.10	37	1	3
ME (Midcoast)	Shelia & Ivy	9	155	1.06	40	5	31
NH (Portsmouth)	Rough Times	5	165	0.06	37	3	2
Totals and Averages		**25**	**477**	**1.22**	**36.5**	**9**	**36**

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Winter Sampling Program - Results

Trawl –

- Seven research samples
- Nine trawl trips
- Five vessels

Trap –

- Nine research samples
- Twenty-five trap trips
- Four vessels

- 70 individual northern shrimp caught weighing ~2.42 pounds or less than 1% of RSA quota
- Catches included mostly assumed 4-year-old Female IIs and females with eggs

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Winter Sampling Program - Results

- Trawlers ceased fishing after week 2
  - Initially due to unfavorable weather conditions in weeks 3 and 4
  - Continued participation further constrained by the financial burden of operating a trawl vessel in absence of viable catch
- Despite weather, exceptionally low catch levels reinforce concerns about viability of the northern shrimp stock in the Gulf of Maine
- Results of program congruent with the most recent stock assessment showing stock status continues to be poor
- **Northern Shrimp Technical Committee (TC) recommends the program not continue in 2026**

Traffic Light Analysis and Management Trigger Evaluation

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Traffic Light Analysis (TLA)

- Indices of total abundance
  - NEFSC Fall (through 2024)
  - ME-NH Spring (through 2025)

- Environmental Indices
  - Predation Pressure Index (PPI)
  - Stratified Mean Summer Bottom Temperature
  - Stratified Mean Spring Bottom Temperature
  - Boothbay Harbor Winter Surface Temperature

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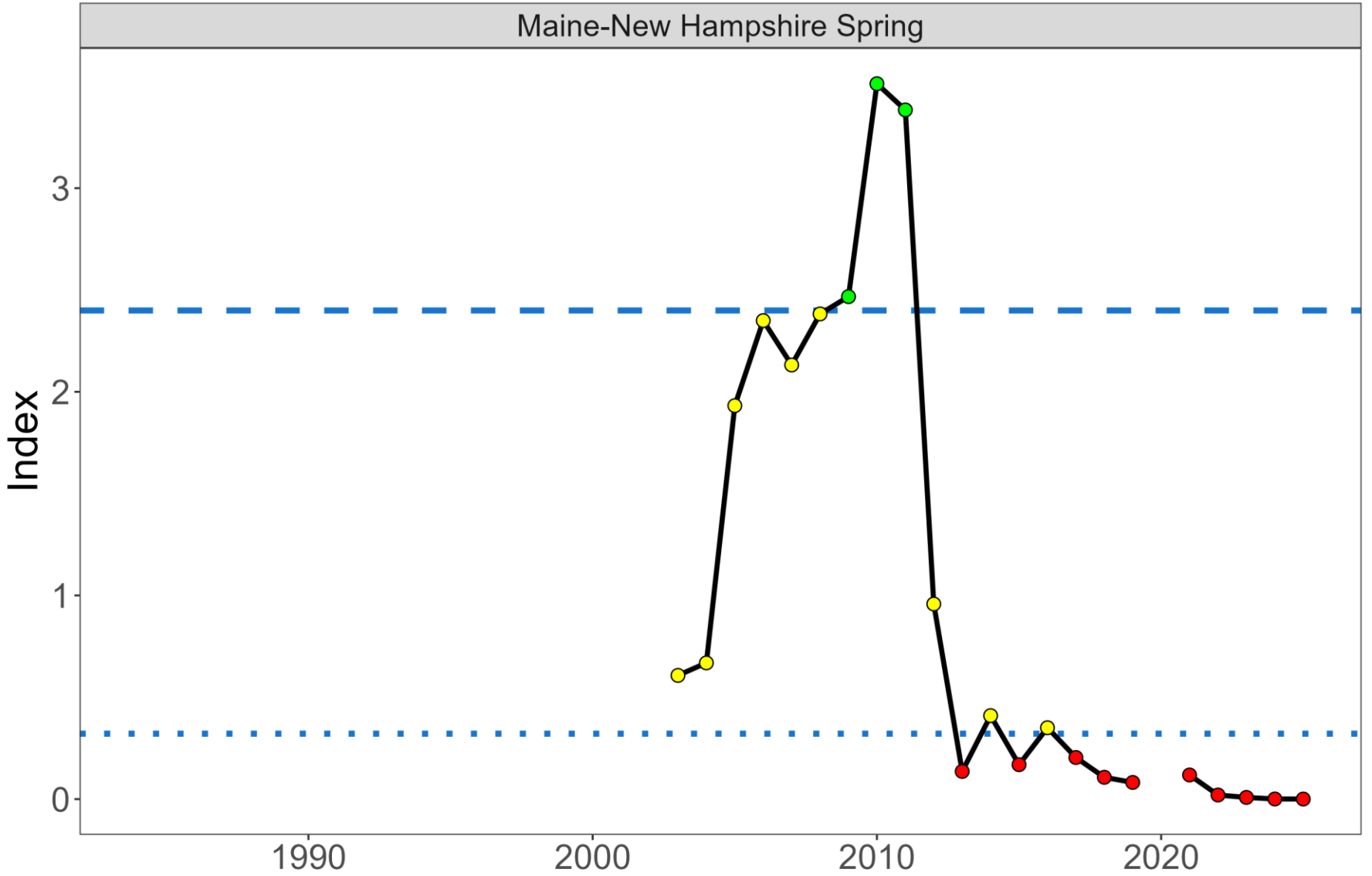
ME-NH Total Abundance

- New time-series low in 2025

Year	Index
2021	0.1184
2022	0.0200
2023	0.0082
2024	0.0006
2025	0.0003



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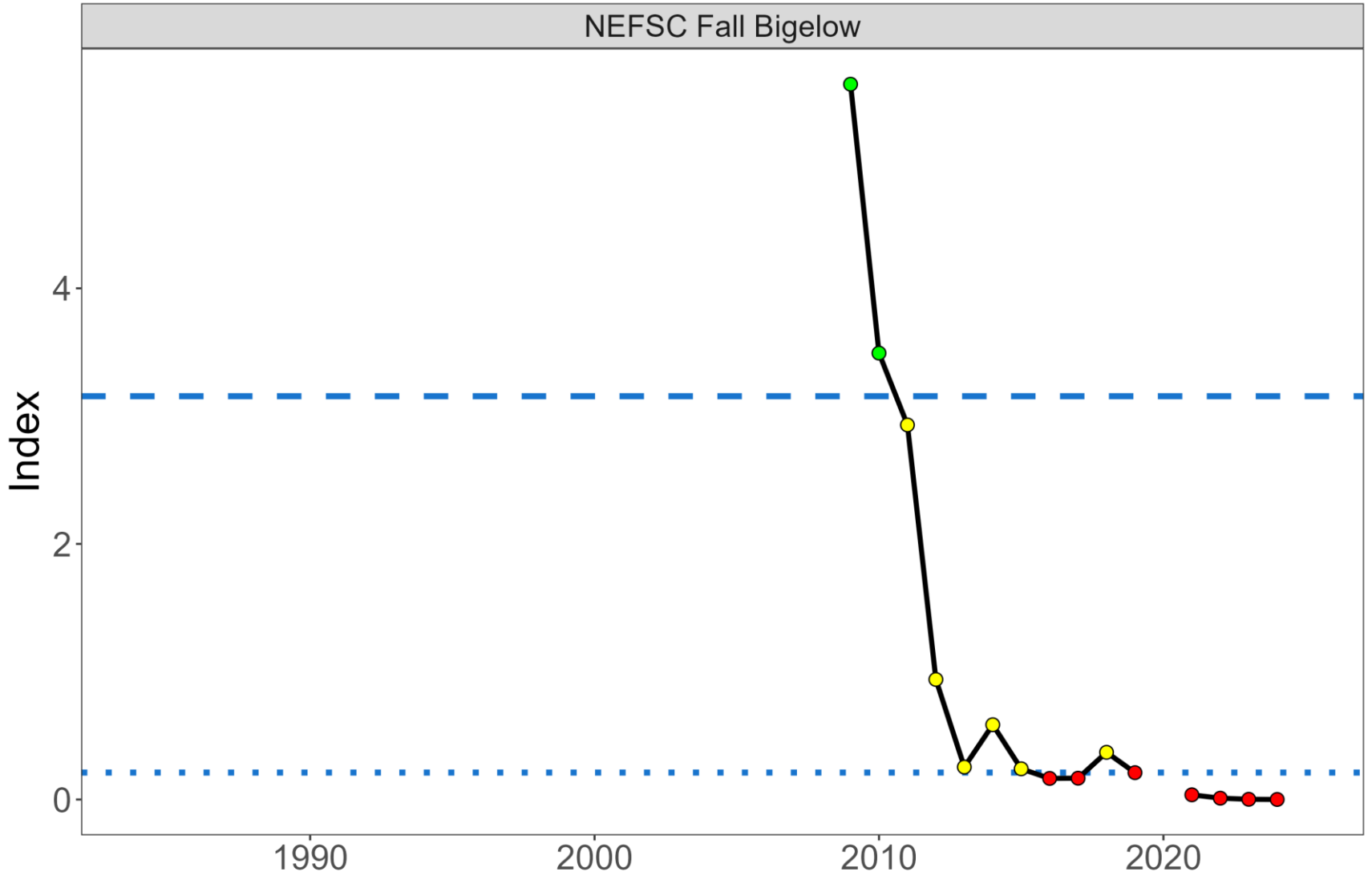
NEFSC Fall Bigelow Total Abundance

- New time-series low in 2024

Year	Index
2021	0.0367
2022	0.0103
2023	0.0016
2024	0.0003
2025	



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Environmental Indices

- PPI: through 2024
- Summer bottom temp: through 2023
- Spring bottom temp: through 2024
- Winter surface temp: through 2025

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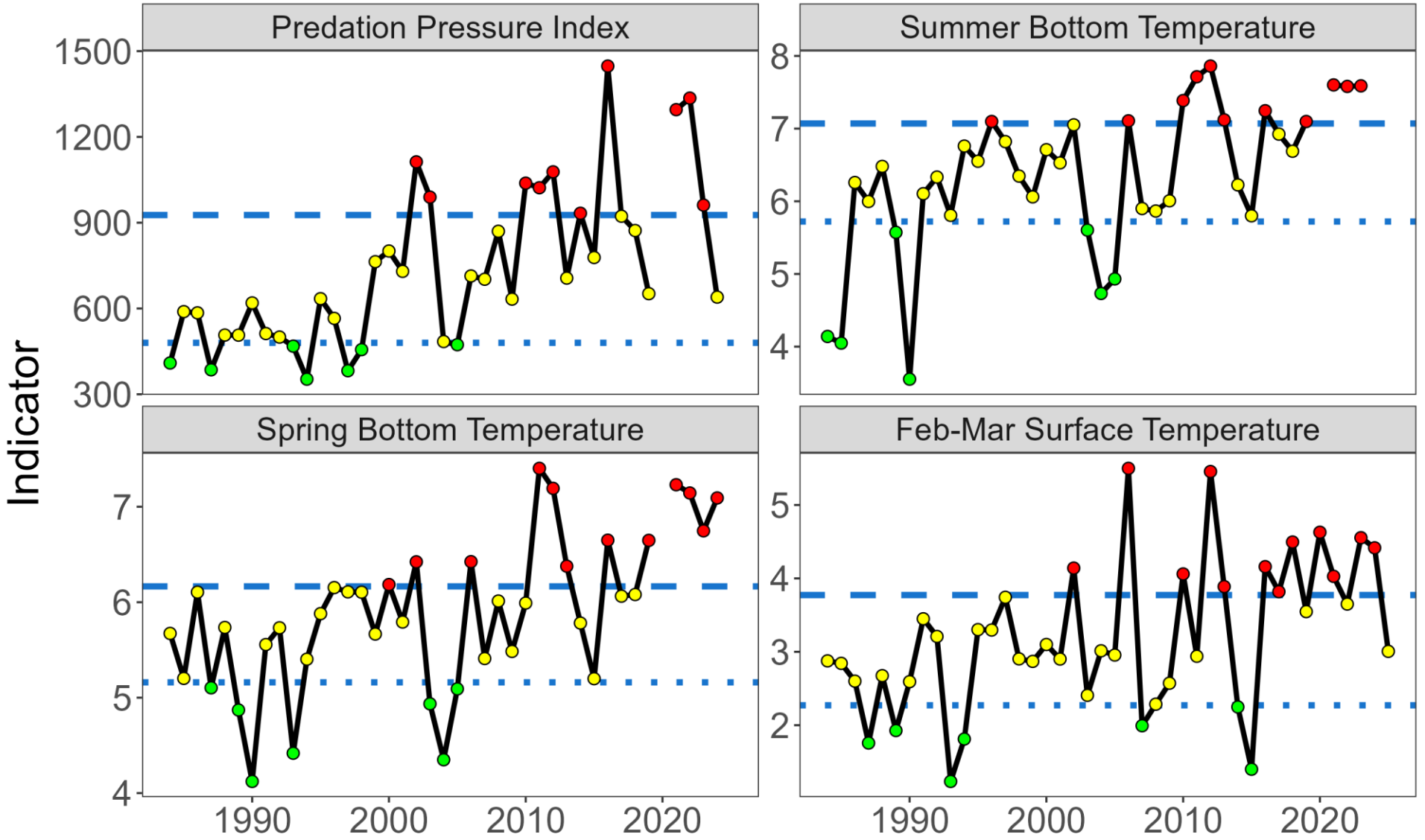
Environmental Indices



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Trigger Analysis

- Recruitment trigger: three consecutive years of non-failed recruitment
  - Indices of recruitment: abundance of 11mm-18mm shrimp
    - NEFSC Fall
    - ME-NH Spring

- Temperature trigger: two out of three consecutive years of winter surface temperature and spring bottom temperature below the 80th percentile of the reference period

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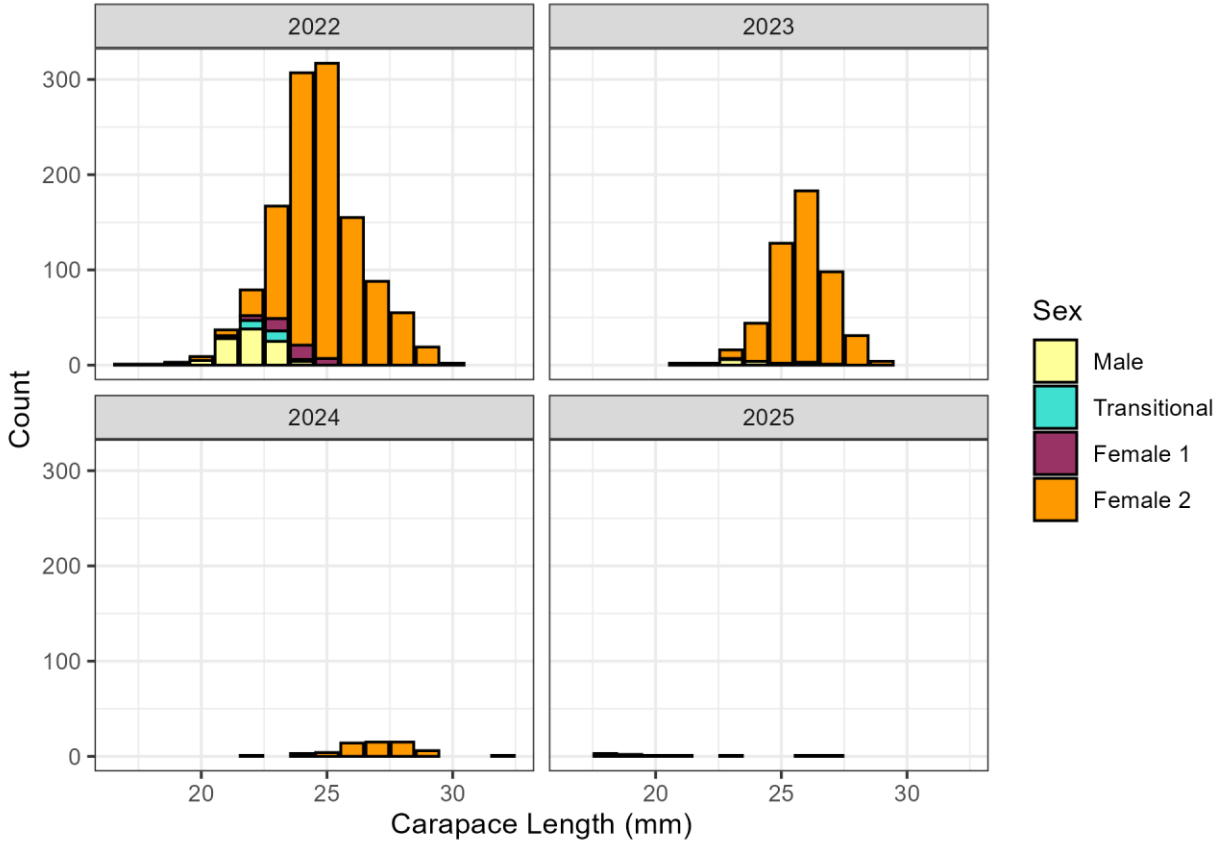
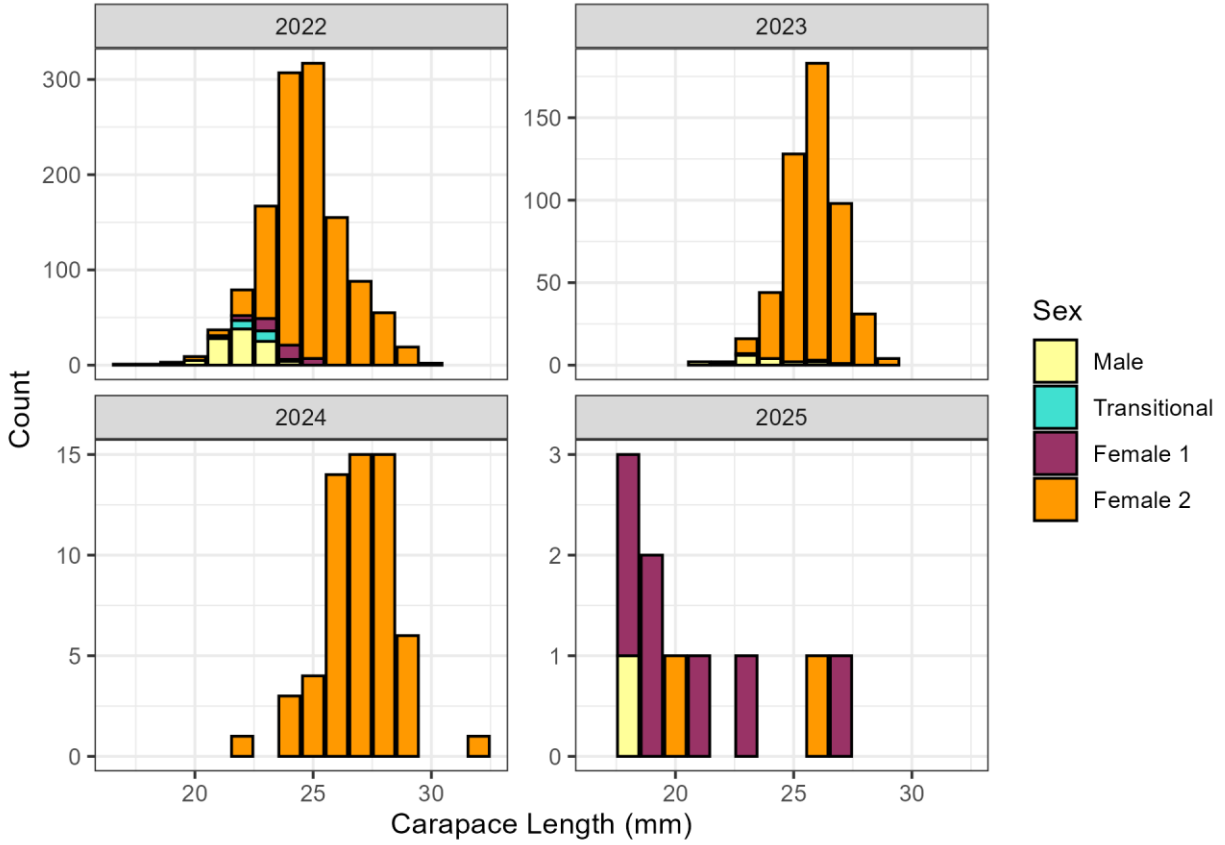
ME-NH Length Frequencies

Same y-axis



Different y-axis



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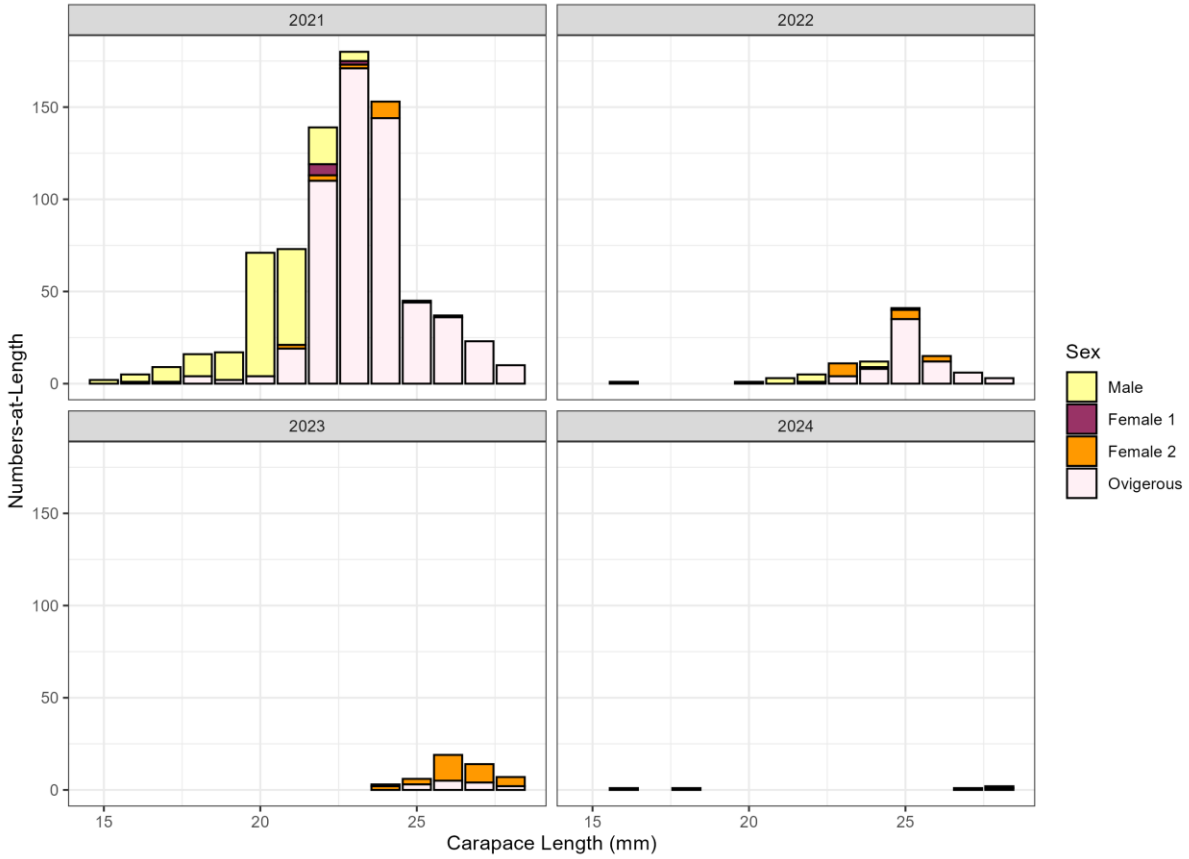
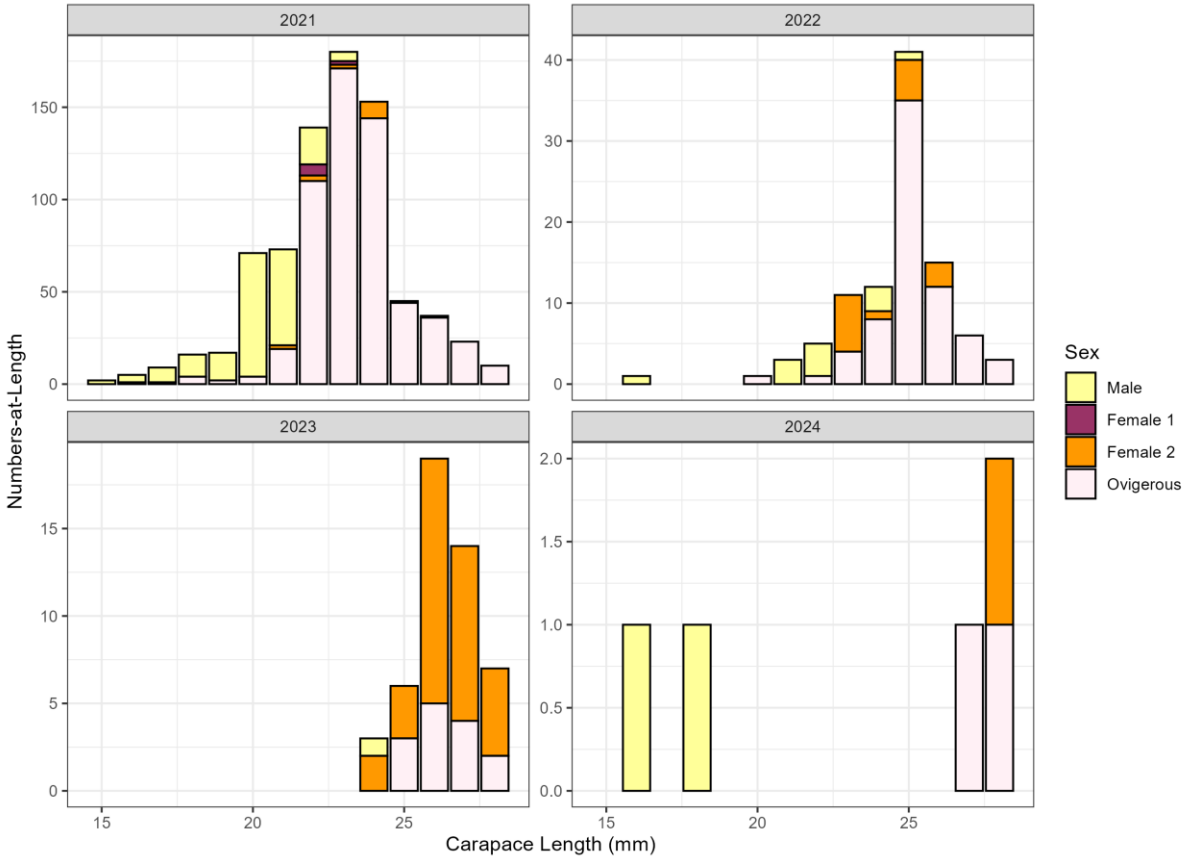
NEFSC Fall Length Frequencies

Same y-axis



Different y-axis



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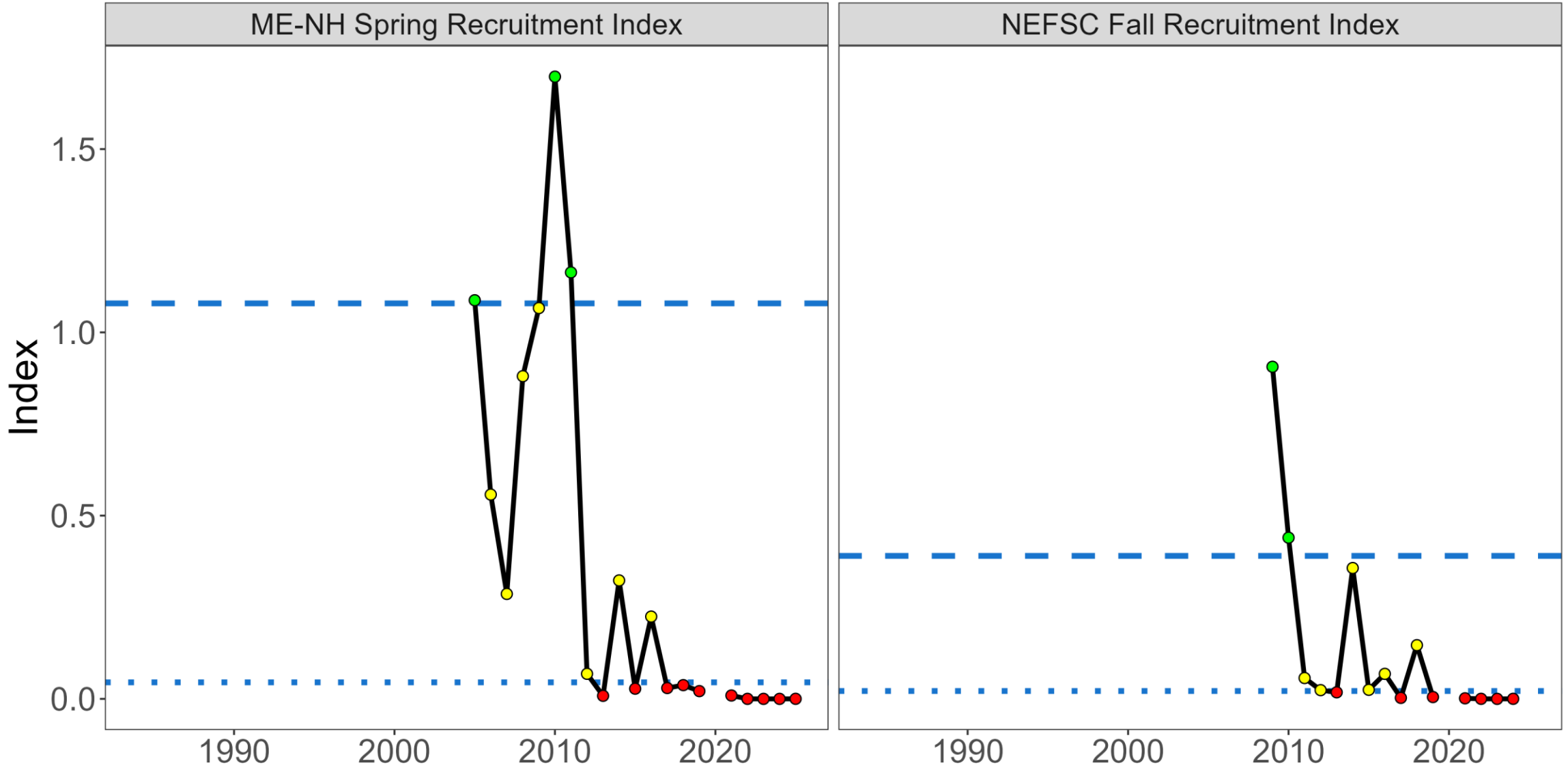
Recruitment Indices



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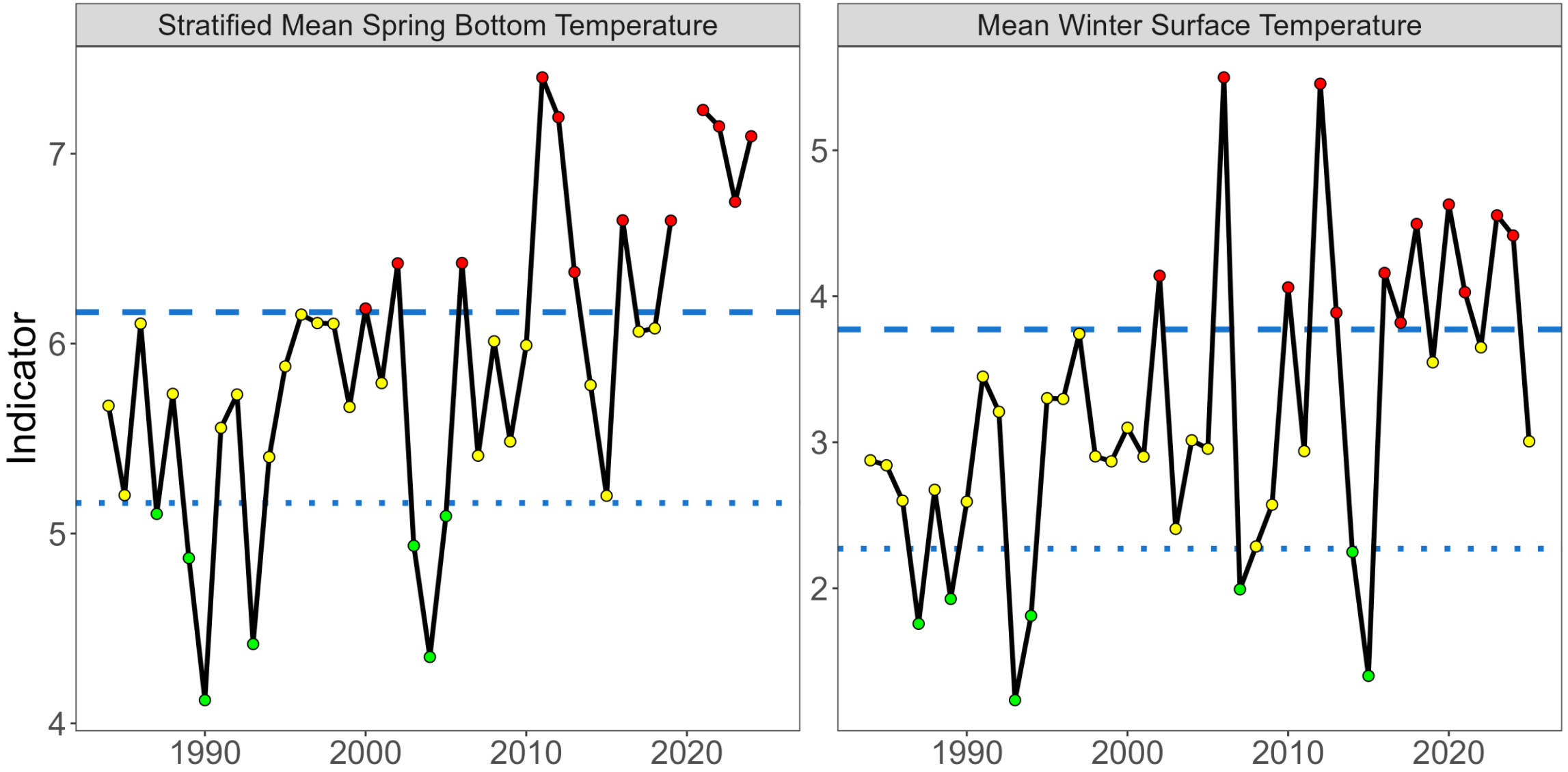
Temperature Triggers



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Temperature Triggers

- 2025 spring temperature data were not publicly available at the time of the analysis

- Did not affect the results: 2023 and 2024 were above the threshold, so even if 2025 had been below the threshold, the trigger would not have tripped

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Results/Conclusions

- Neither the recruitment trigger nor the temperature trigger tripped
- ME-NH and NEFSC total abundance indices reached new lows
- TC does not see any biological or scientific justification for a fishery next year
- Should the TC investigate alternative sources of spring bottom temperature data?

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Upcoming Specifications - Process

- Amendment 4 (approved May 2025)
  - Extends the length the Section can set a moratorium from 1 year at a time to up to 5 years at a time
  - Added recruitment trigger – three consecutive years of non-failed recruitment
  - Added temperature trigger – two out of three consecutive years of winter surface temperature (Boothbay Harbor, Maine) and spring bottom temperature (NEFSC Spring Bottom Trawl Survey) below the 80th percentile of the reference period (1984-2017)

- Recruitment trigger and temperature trigger not tripped in 2025 – no action necessary

Advisory Panel Report

One advisor was unable to attend and emailed the following comments:

- I recommend no season for 2026 and 2027 and no industry survey for 2026
- I recommend we reconvene in December 2026 to decide whether to run an industry survey in 2027
- My rationale for two years with no season is that even if we had spawning success in the last two years there would be no marketable biomass until 2028
- Water temperatures have remained cool, and we appear headed for an average winter which would be conducive to spawning success

Advisory Panel Report

One advisor was unable to attend and emailed the following comments:

- Shrimp caught by the Midnight Sun between 50 to 70 fathoms east of Cape Cod
- Captain Tom has been seeing female shrimp with eggs since September
- September is early for eggs and shrimp carrying eggs were small (1-3 inches)
- Thoughts to run by the Technical Committee:
  - Is northern shrimp growth severely stunted by lack of food?
  - Northern shrimp appear to be transitioning early in some kind of evolutionary response to produce more eggs
  - If biologists would like a sample, perhaps they could grant the Midnight Sun a permit to take a small number of shrimp to shore for them to examine

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Advisory Panel Report

- Include temperature data from trawlers, more data is better
  - There is currently a lack of data
  - Not confident with Albatross and timing of inshore trawl survey
- Permits for each state so states can run their own fisheries and sampling programs
  - Set a season for each state
- Short lived species we can miss years if moratorium is set for multiple years at a time
- We have been seeing colder temperatures that usual
  - Finished lobstering earlier than usual because of North and West winds
  - We are going to meet the triggers if this trend keeps up
  - We are going to have a fishery down the road

Advisory Panel Report

Sampling Program Recommendations:

- Disagree with no sampling program in 2026
- Should be annual
- More state involvement
- Last winter's program not conducive to success
  - MA setup was better than 1 trip per week
  - More participants
  - More area covered
  - No size sorting grates

Questions?