Jonah Crab Technical Committee Report

American Lobster Management Board
3 February 2026

Outline

- Background
  - Management history
  - Stock assessment overview
- Annual indicator update
  - Jonah crab stock indicators through 2024
  - Technical Committee recommendations

Status of Management

FMP

- Permits and participation
- 4.75” minimum size, no tolerance
- Prohibition on retention of egg-bearing females
- 50 whole crab recreational limit

Addendum I

- 1,000 crab bycatch limit for non-trap gear and non-lobster trap gear

Addendum II

- Coastwide standard for claw harvest and definition of bycatch

Addendum III

- Improved harvester reporting and data collection

Addendum IV

- Vessel tracking requirements effective December 15, 2023

Stock Assessment

- First Benchmark Assessment: October 2023
- Four stocks: OGOM, IGOM, OSNE, ISNE
- 2022 abundance was above historical lows for GOM and OSNE; status unknown for ISNE
- Fishing mortality rates unknown
- Given data limitations, stock status was uncertain

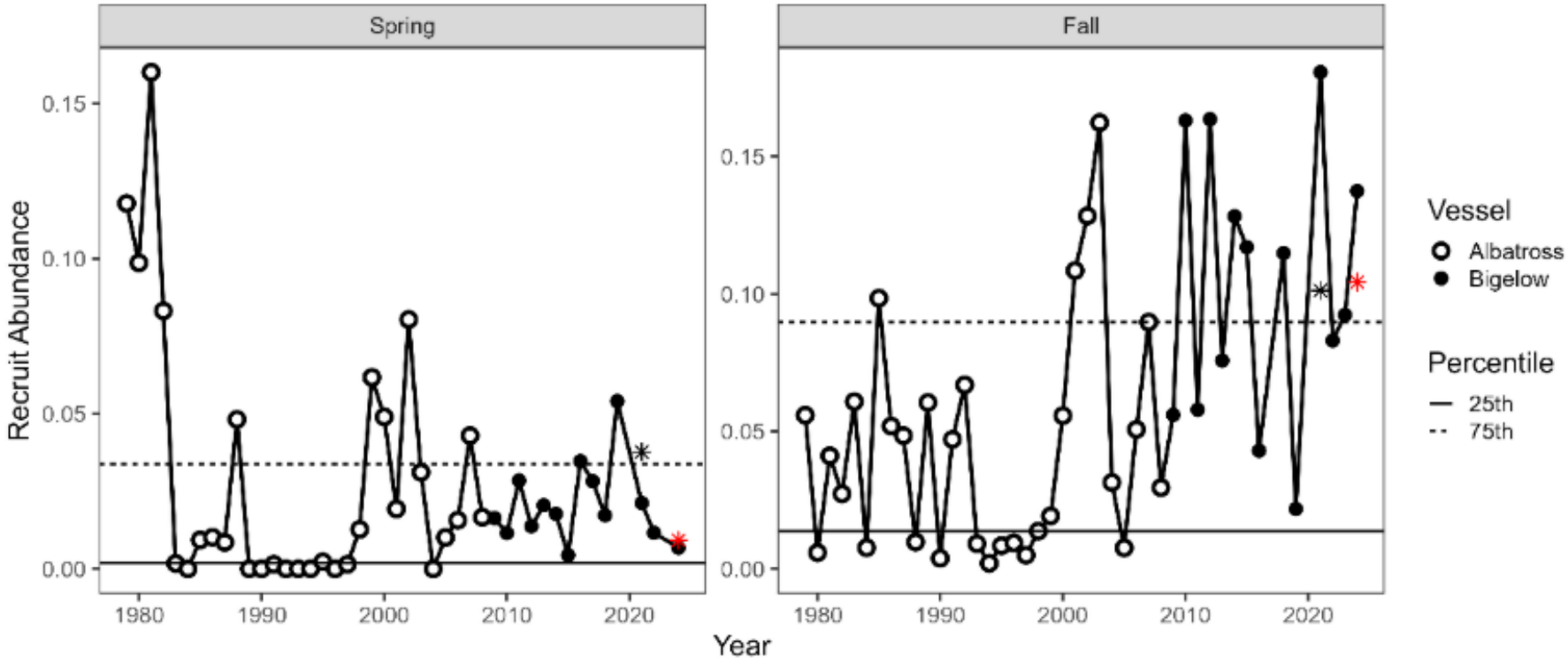
Technical Committee Tasks

- In 2024, the TC recommended annual updates of OSNE indicators from the assessment, plus a few additional indicators

- TC meeting January 8, 2026, to review indicators for second annual update
  - Fishery-independent abundance indicators available every other year and this is the first update since the stock assessment
  - TC recommended revisiting Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation (CFRF) ventless trap sampling as potential indicator following first annual update

Fishery Independent Indices

NOAA Fisheries seasonal bottom trawl survey, OSNE stock

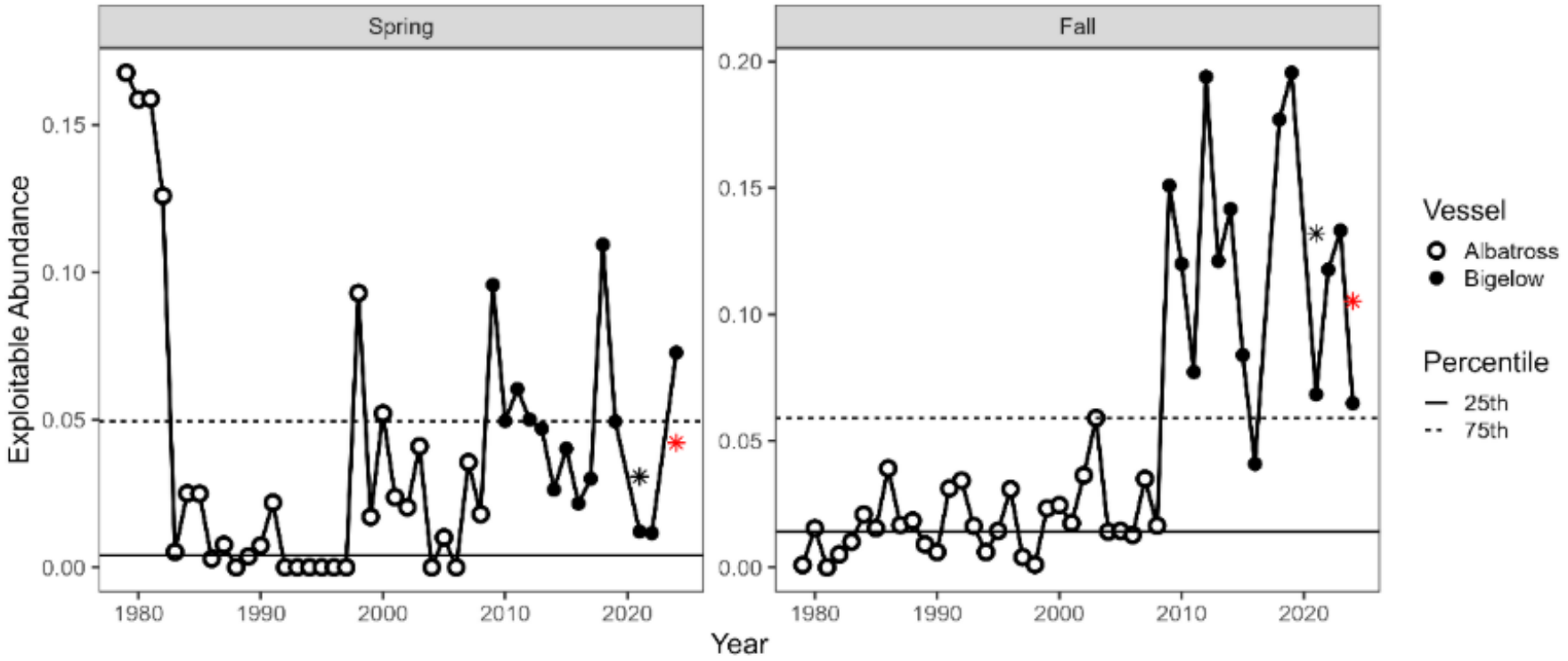


Jonah crab recruit (male crabs 90-119 mm carapace width) abundance

- Historical indicator data have been corrected since 2023 Benchmark
- Vessel calibration factors not available for Jonah crab

Fishery Independent Indices

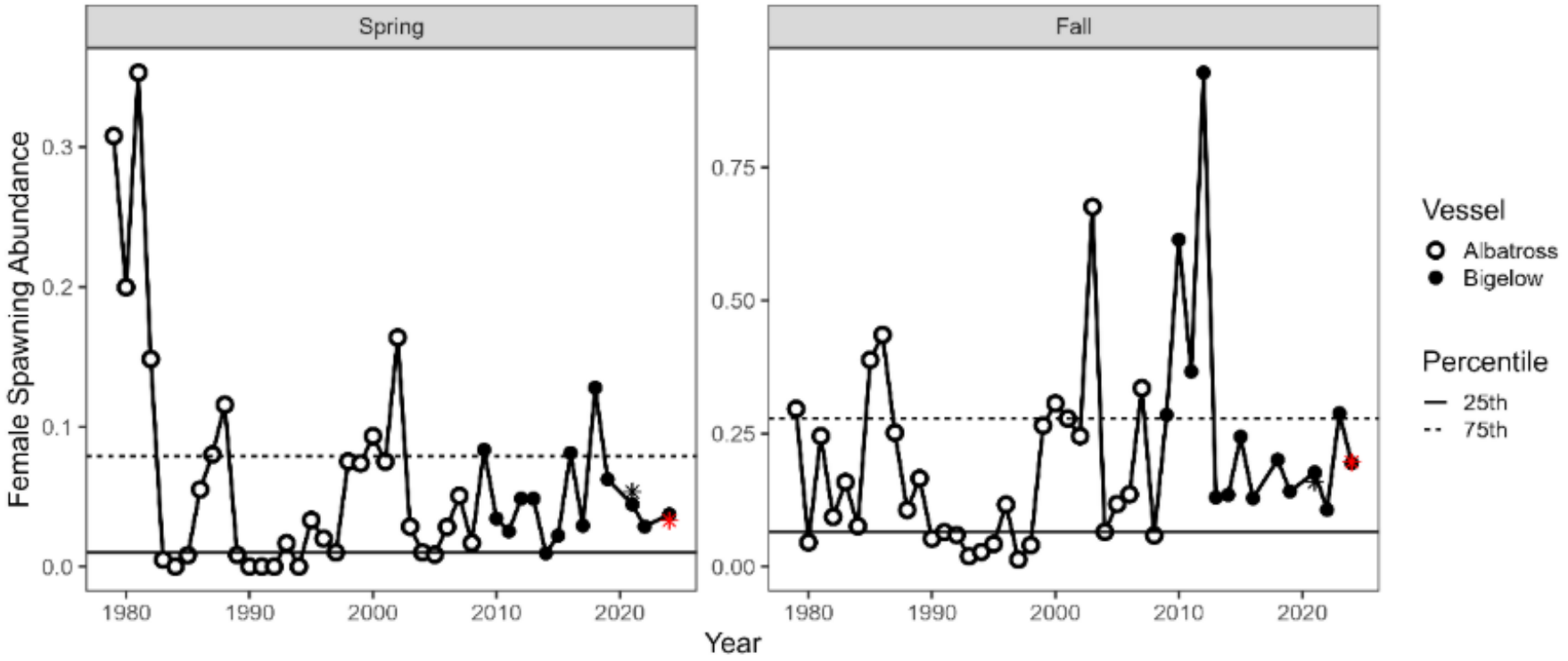
NOAA Fisheries seasonal bottom trawl survey, OSNE stock



Jonah crab exploitable (male crabs 120 mm+ carapace width) abundance

Fishery Independent Indices

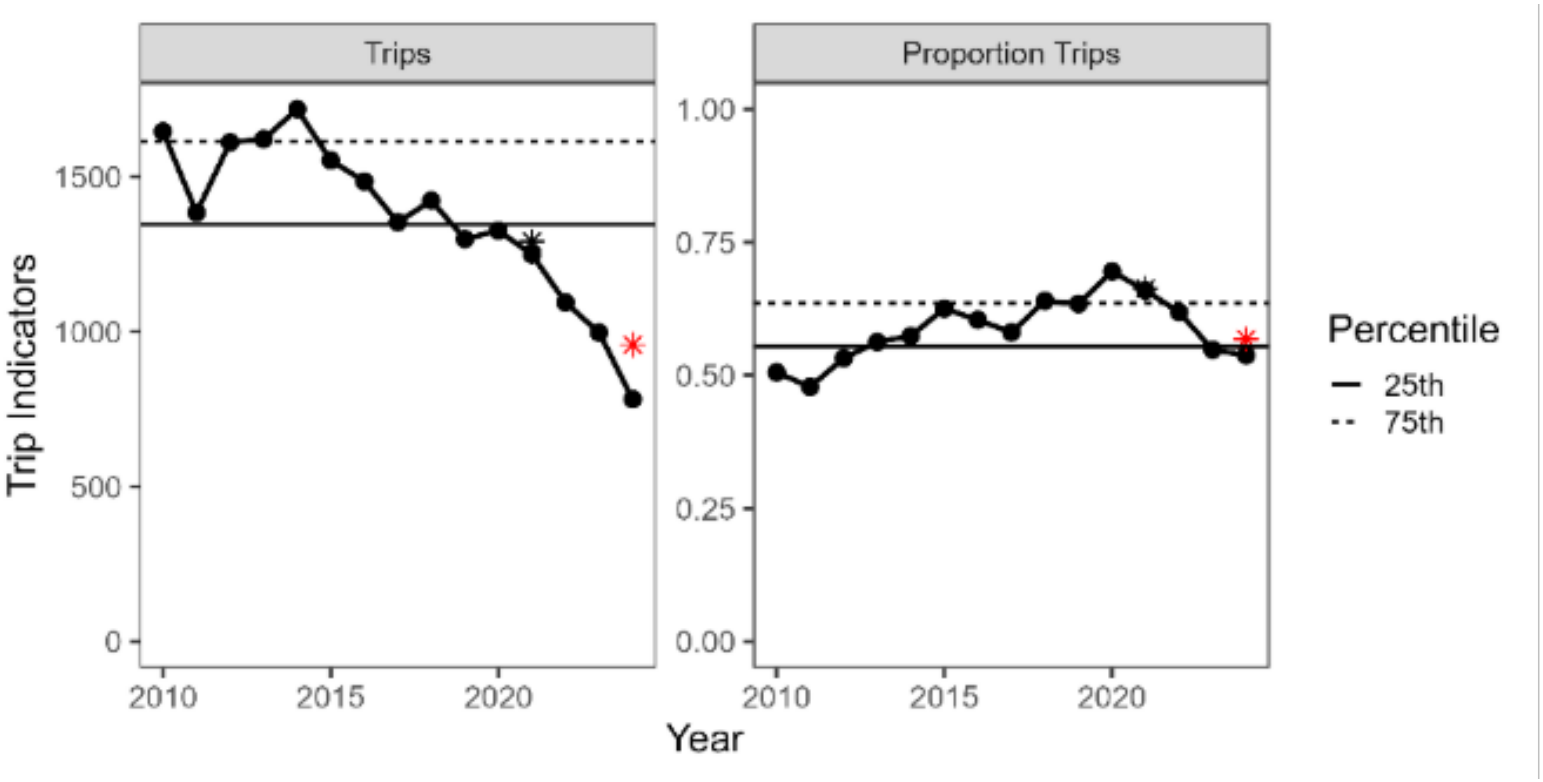
NOAA Fisheries seasonal bottom trawl survey, OSNE stock



Jonah crab spawning (female crabs 80 mm+ carapace width) abundance

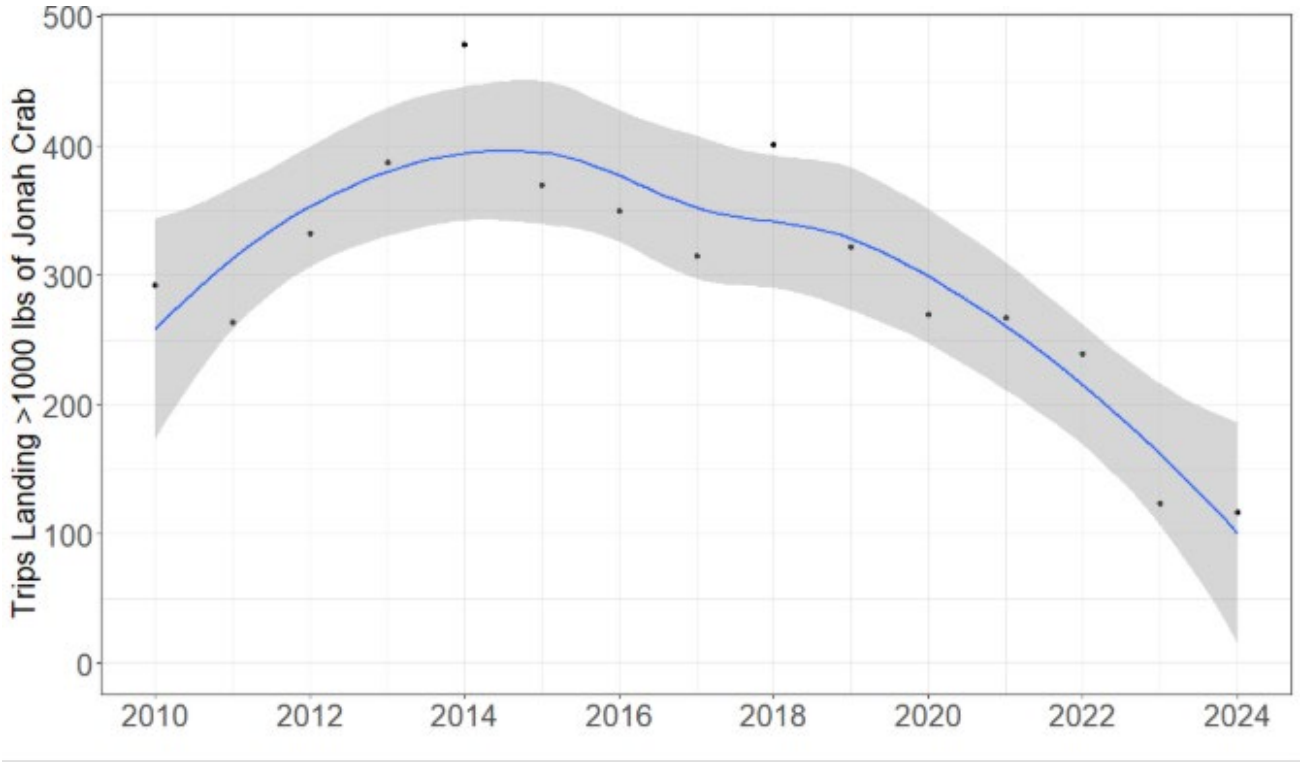
Trip Indicators

Trips landing Jonah crab, OSNE stock



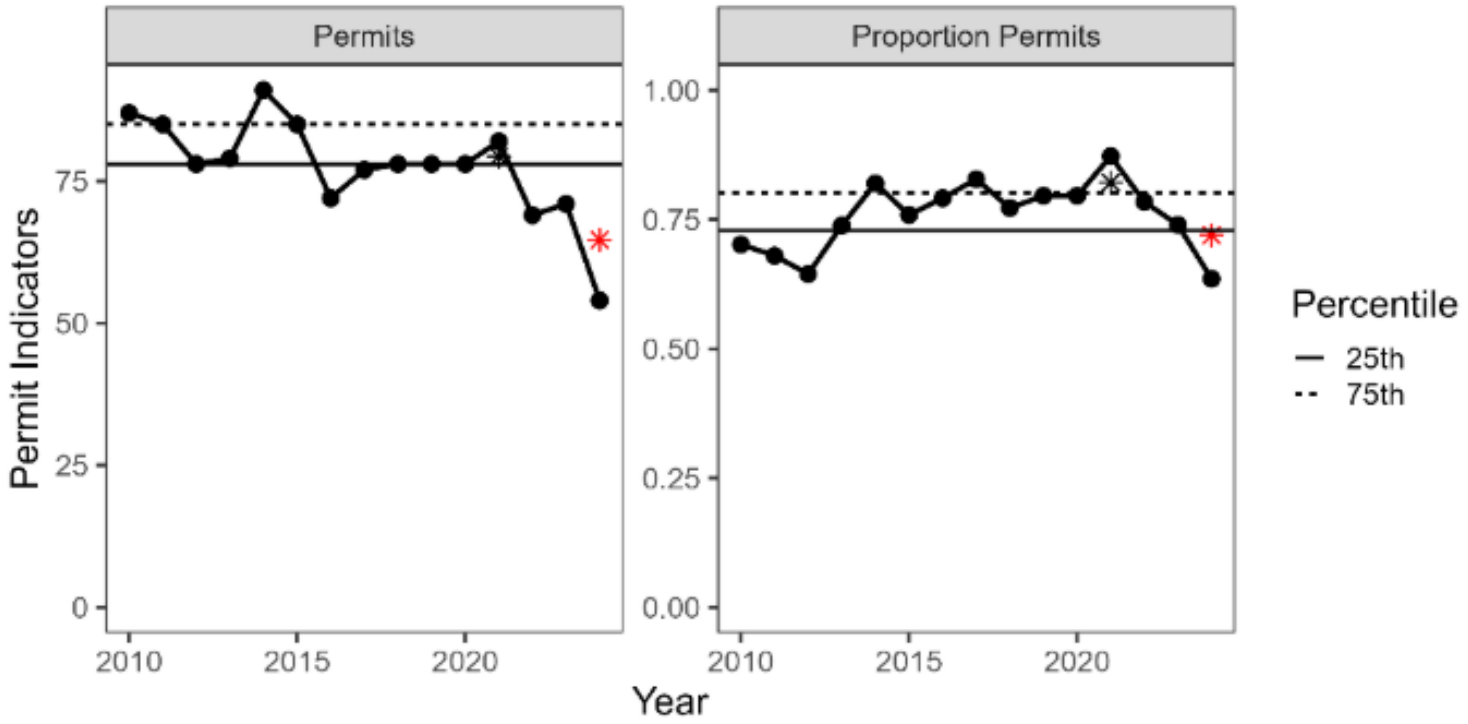
Trip Indicators

Trips landing Jonah crab, OSNE stock, Massachusetts



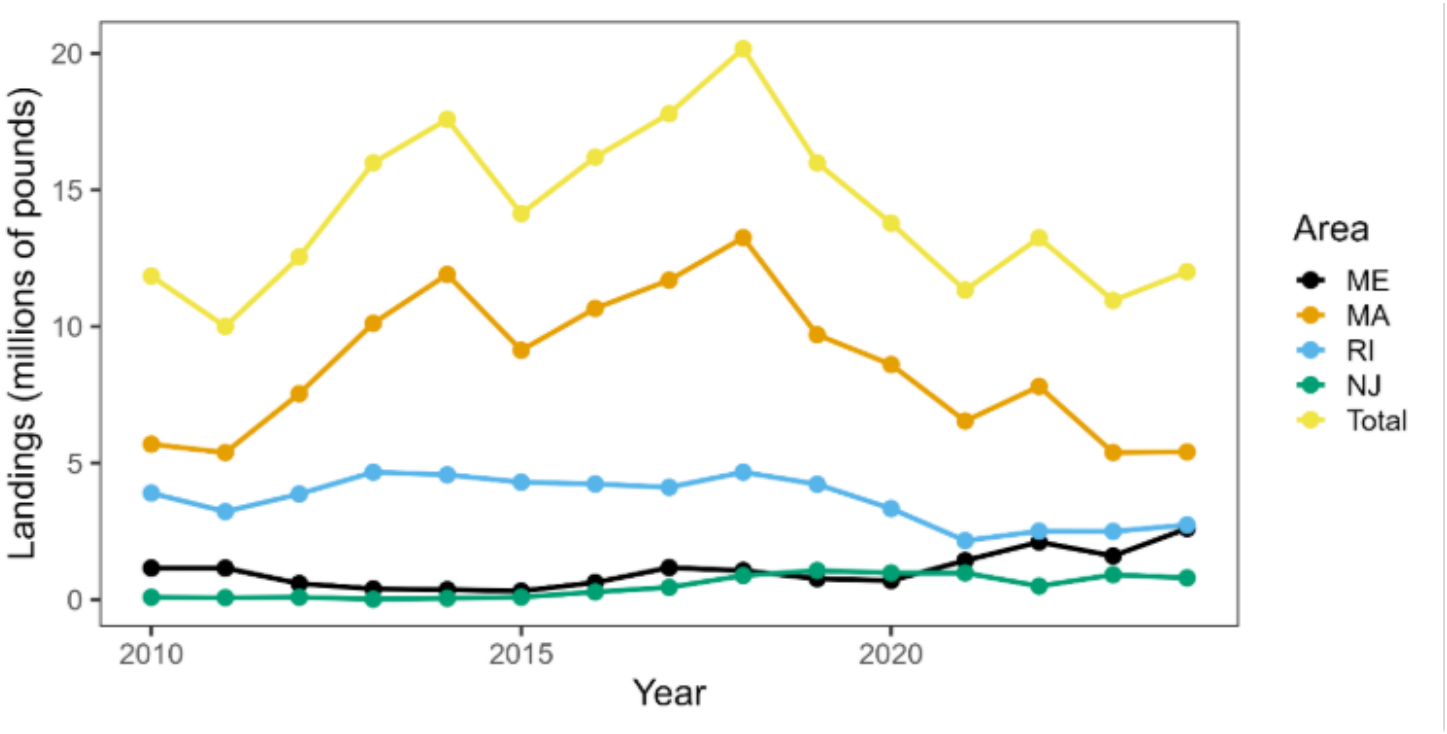
Permit Indicators

Permits landing Jonah crab, OSNE stock



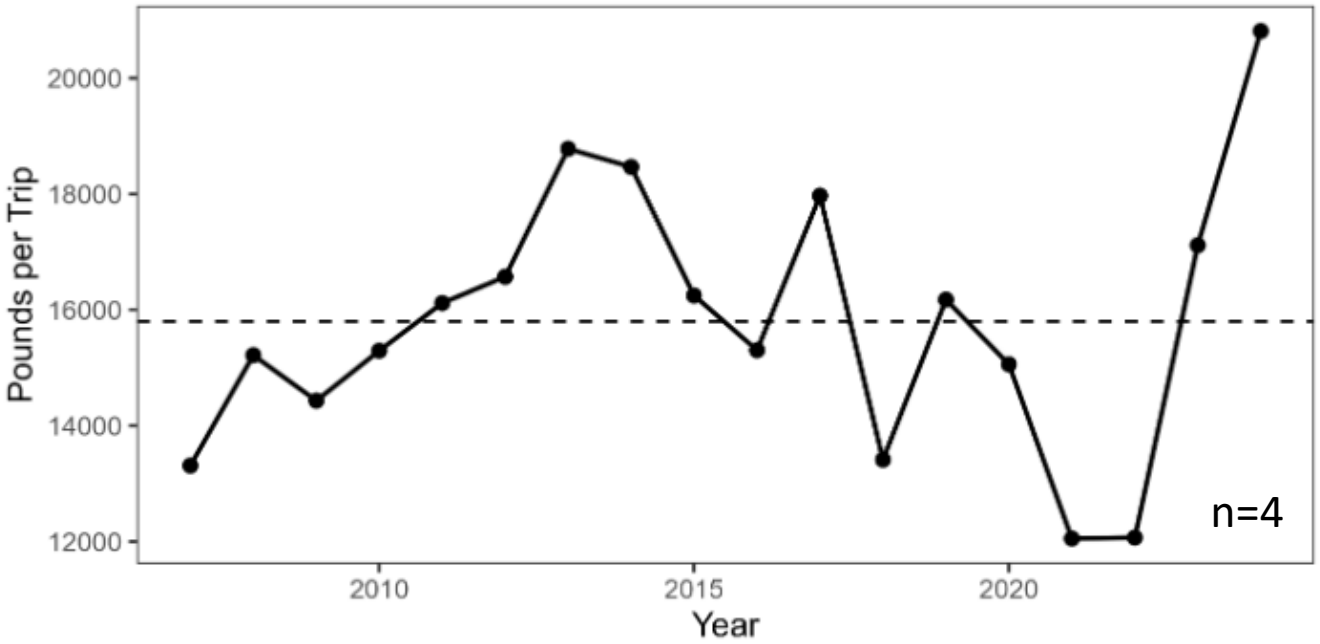
Landings Indicator

Landings of Jonah crab by state, all stocks



CPUE Indicators

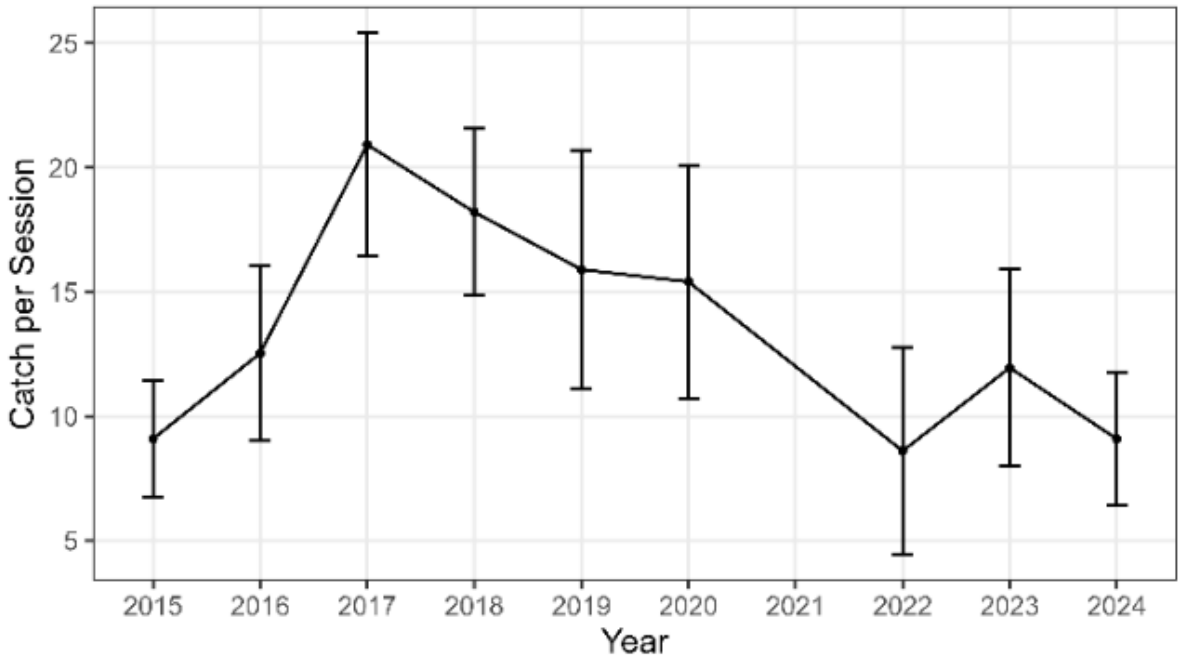
Rhode Island catch per trip: highliner vessels



- Increase in landings per trip, decline in number of trips taken
- Calculated catch per fishing day has decreased

CPUE Indicators

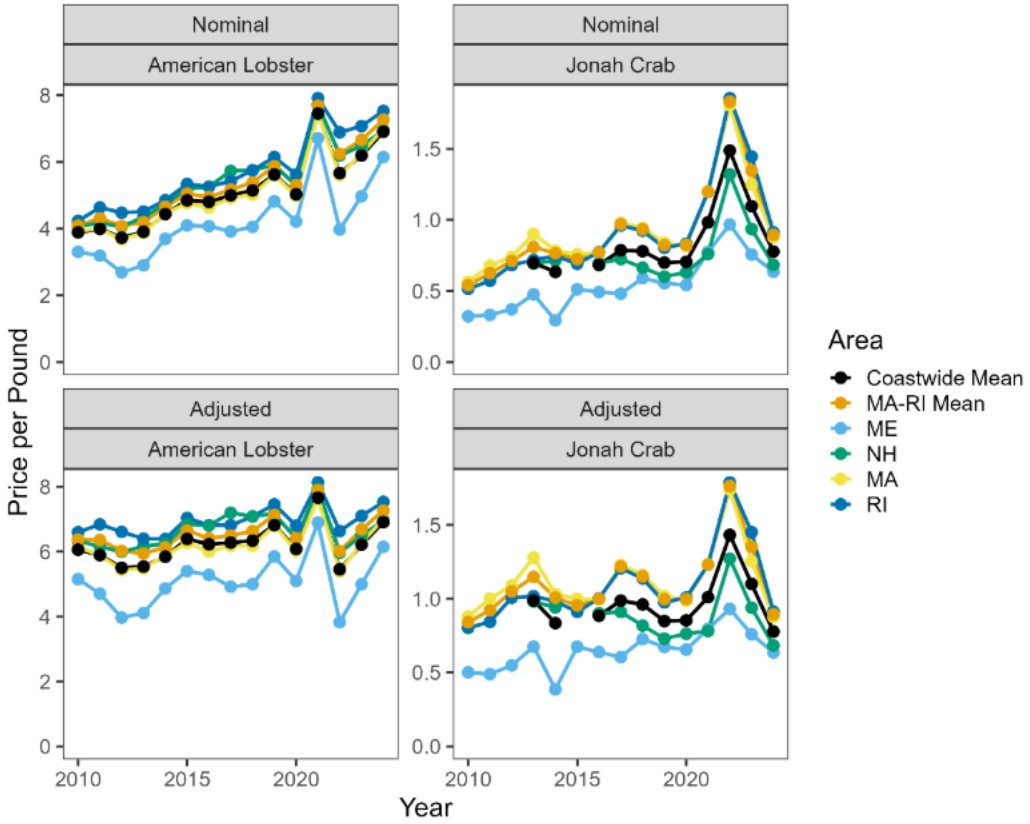
CFRF ventless trap CPUE time series



- Added to update this year following TC meeting to review methods and updated time series
- Standardized with generalized additive model
- Note that sampling program is not intended to measure abundance

Price Indicators

Price per pound of lobster and Jonah crab



Nominal (top) and adjusted for inflation (bottom)

- Jonah crab peak in 2022, decreasing since to previous levels
  - Price not strongly correlated with landings of Jonah crab or lobster
- Lobster price peak in 2021, followed by return to time series mean levels (adjusted)

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

- Stock conditions similar to those at the end of the assessment period; updated abundance indicators do not point to change in status
- Data limitations preclude recommendations for management intervention
- Market factors continue to influence fishing effort and harvest levels

Recommendations

- Include CFRF ventless trap CPUE as indicator in updates
  - To be interpreted with caution due to survey's purpose and influence of market factors on fishing behavior
- Compare wind farm survey data to available indicators
- Identify process to track dealer/processor-imposed trip limits (e.g., interview study)
- Support development of camera-based survey for measuring Jonah crab abundance

Questions?

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Lobster Data Update through 2024

Feb 3, 2026

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Purpose & indices

- Monitor abundance indicator changes between assessments
- Strictly informational, there is no required action tied to these updates
- Indices:
  - Lobster young-of-year (YOY) index (SCUBA survey, states)
    - Signal of abundance for newly settled juveniles
  - Trawl survey recruit abundance (71-80 mm) (states & NEFSC)
    - Will molt into legal size range in the next year
  - Trawl survey encounter rate (states & NEFSC)
    - Information on how widely distributed lobsters are
  - Ventless Trap Survey (states)
    - Abundance index for lobsters $\geq$ 53 mm (sex specific)
  - Combined recruit index (71-80 mm) (VTS & state trawl surveys)
    - GOM only
    - Combines a fall average, spring average, and VTS into a single recruit index

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Status determination

- Trend-based
  - Looking at change over time
- Status is determined based on the most recent 5-year average, compared to the time series
  - Current status: 2020 – 2024
- We also compare current status to status from the 2025 Assessment

Indicator	< 25th percentile	Between 25th and 75th percentile	> 75th percentile
YOY settlement (larval or YOY)	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Trawl survey recruit abundance	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Trawl survey encounter rate	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Ventless trap survey abundance	Negative	Neutral	Positive

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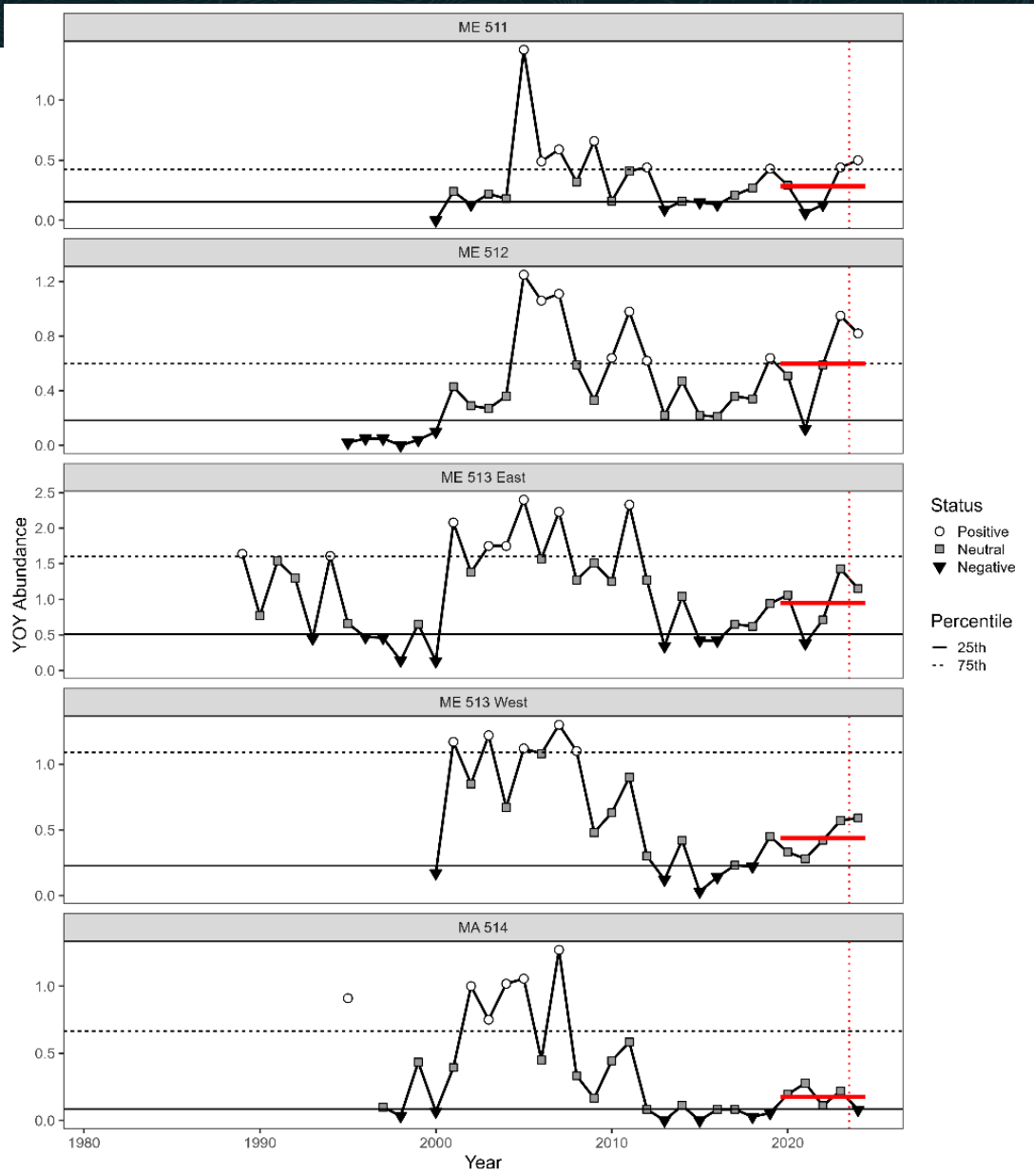
GOM - YOY

YOUNG-OF-YEAR INDICES					
Survey	*ME*				*MA*
	511	*512*	*513 East*	*513 West*	*514*
2019-2023 mean	0.27	0.56	0.90	0.41	0.17
2024	0.50	0.82	1.15	0.59	0.08
2020-2024 mean	0.28	0.60	0.95	0.44	0.18
25th	0.16	0.18	0.51	0.23	0.08
median	0.22	0.34	1.26	0.63	0.33
75th	0.43	0.60	1.60	1.09	0.67

- Status for 512 has improved from neutral to positive
- Status for other areas remains neutral



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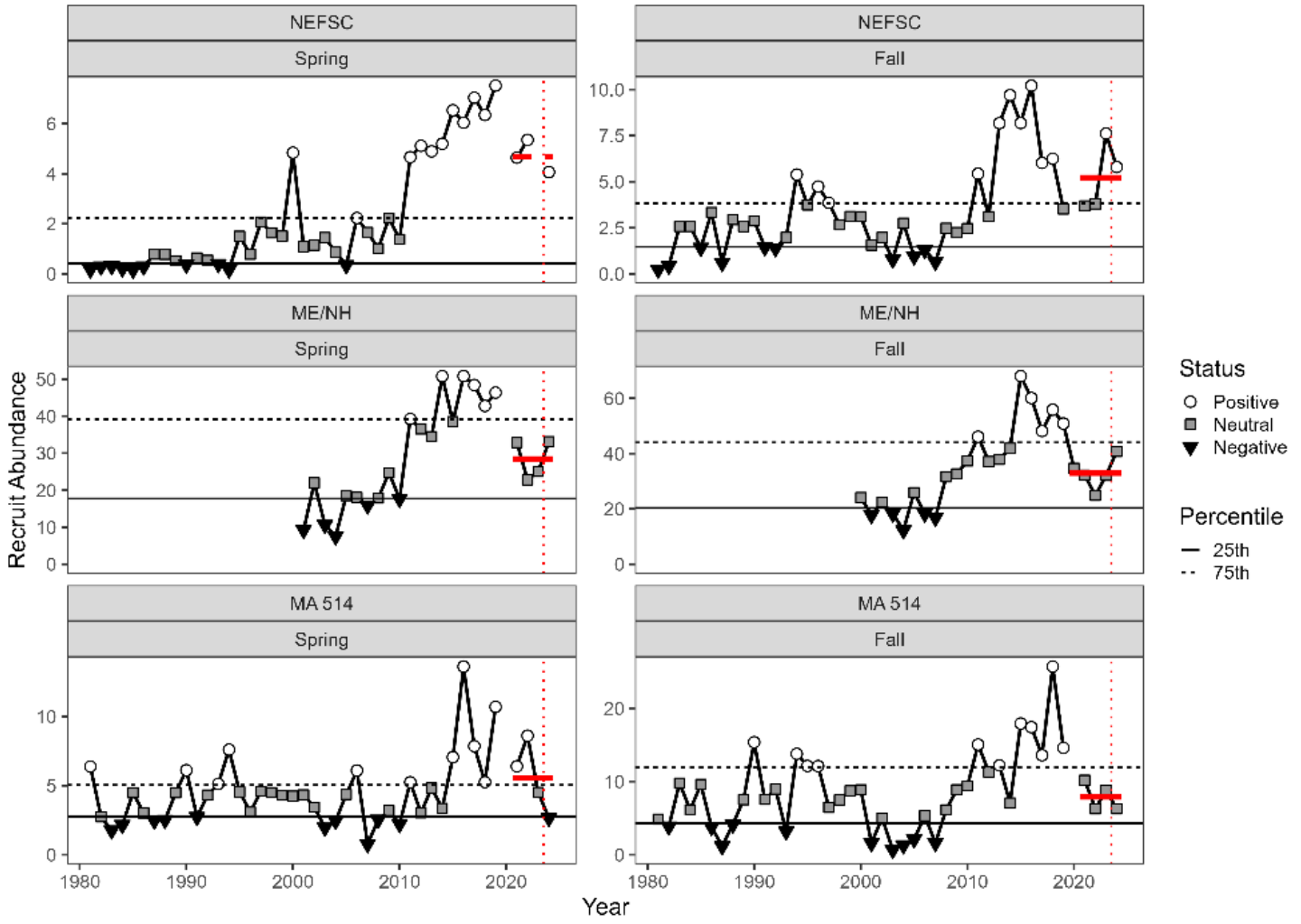
GOM – trawl survey recruits

RECRUIT ABUNDANCE (SURVEY)						
Abundance of lobsters 71 - 80 mm CL (sexes combined)						
Survey	*NEFSC*		*ME/NH*		*MA 514*	
	Spring	*Fall*	*Spring*	*Fall*	*Spring*	*Fall*
2019-2023 mean	5.84	4.65	31.77	34.93	7.55	9.95
2024	4.06	5.80	33.11	40.73	2.65	6.28
2020-2024 mean	4.69	5.22	28.46	32.90	5.54	7.87
25th	0.42	1.47	17.72	20.37	2.73	4.30
median	1.11	2.61	23.36	32.67	4.30	7.53
75th	2.23	3.82	39.07	44.02	5.05	11.90



- Status unchanged since assessment
- ME/NH and MA fall neutral, rest positive

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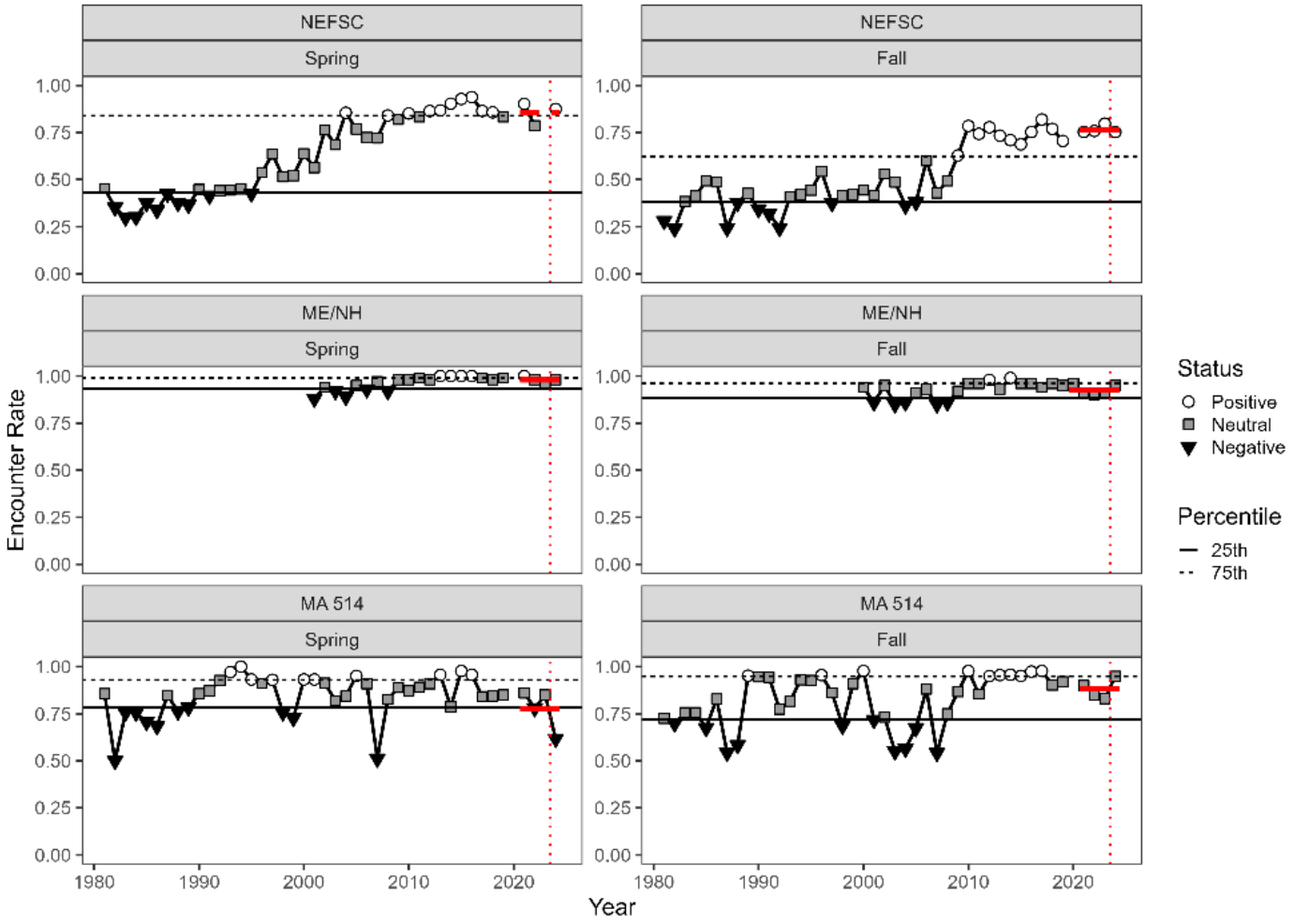
GOM – encounter rates

SURVEY LOBSTER ENCOUNTER RATE						
Proportion of postive tows						
Survey	*NEFSC*		*ME/NH*		*MA 514*	
	Spring	*Fall*	*Spring*	*Fall*	*Spring*	*Fall*
2019-2023 mean	0.84	0.75	0.98	0.93	0.84	0.88
2024	0.88	0.75	0.98	0.95	0.62	0.95
2020-2024 mean	0.85	0.77	0.98	0.93	0.78	0.88
25th	0.43	0.38	0.93	0.89	0.78	0.72
median	0.60	0.44	0.98	0.94	0.86	0.86
75th	0.84	0.62	0.99	0.96	0.93	0.95

- Status of MA spring declined from neutral to negative
- Others unchanged since assessment



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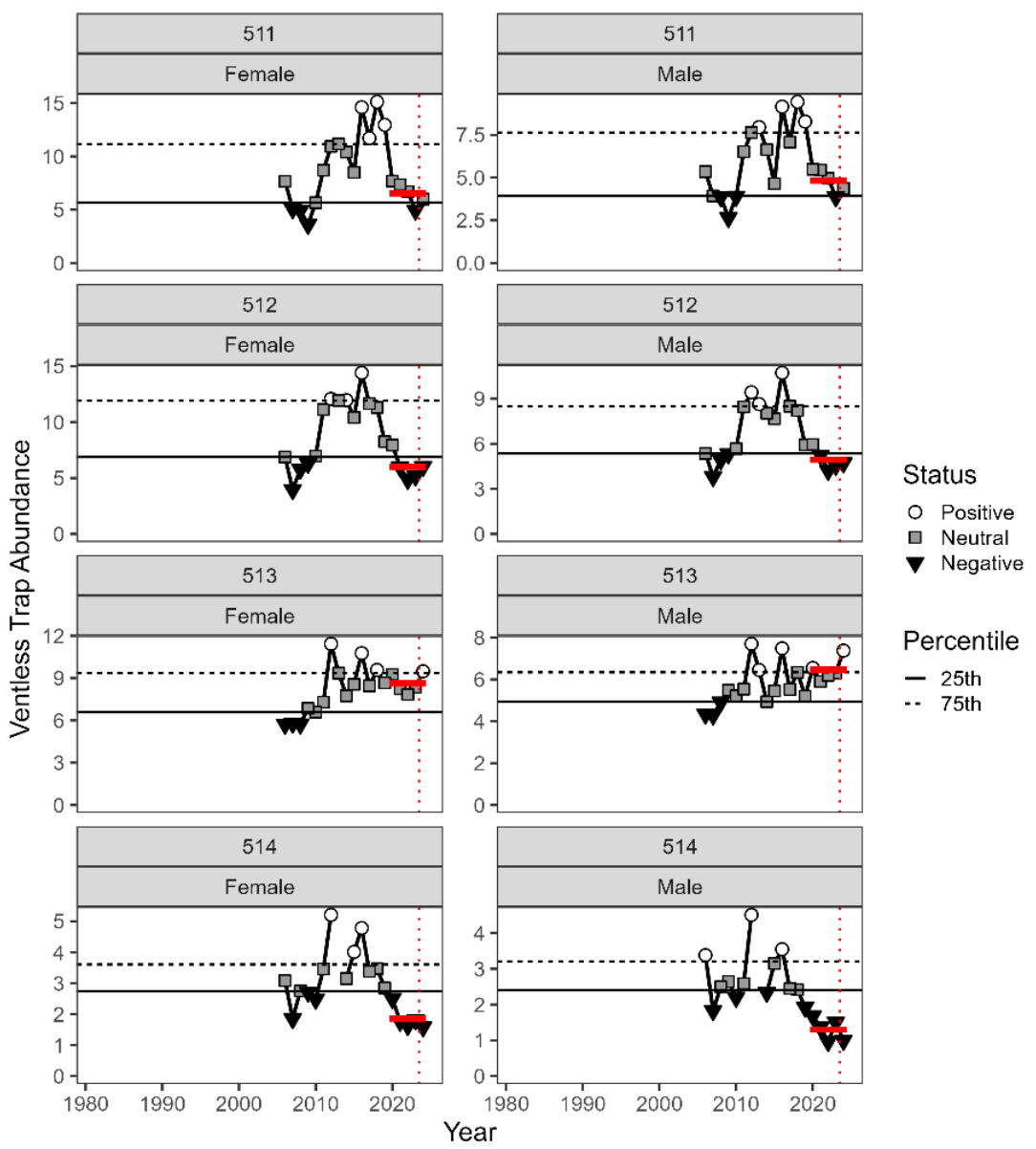
GOM – VTS indices

VENTLESS TRAP ABUNDANCE Abundance of lobsters ≥ 53 mm CL								
Survey	*511*		*512*		*513*		*514*	
	Female	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*
2019-2023 mean	7.93	5.60	6.44	5.18	8.47	6.03	2.11	1.49
2024	5.99	4.36	6.02	4.73	9.48	7.38	1.58	0.99
2020-2024 mean	6.53	4.82	5.99	4.94	8.63	6.47	1.86	1.30
25th	5.66	3.92	6.87	5.36	6.59	4.94	2.74	2.40
median	8.70	6.52	11.12	8.03	7.74	5.48	3.26	2.54
75th	11.17	7.63	11.91	8.50	9.35	6.34	3.61	3.21

- Status of SA 513 males improved from neutral to positive
- SA 512 (ME) and 514 (MA) remain negative, others remain neutral
- Note - SA 513 have been more stable over time



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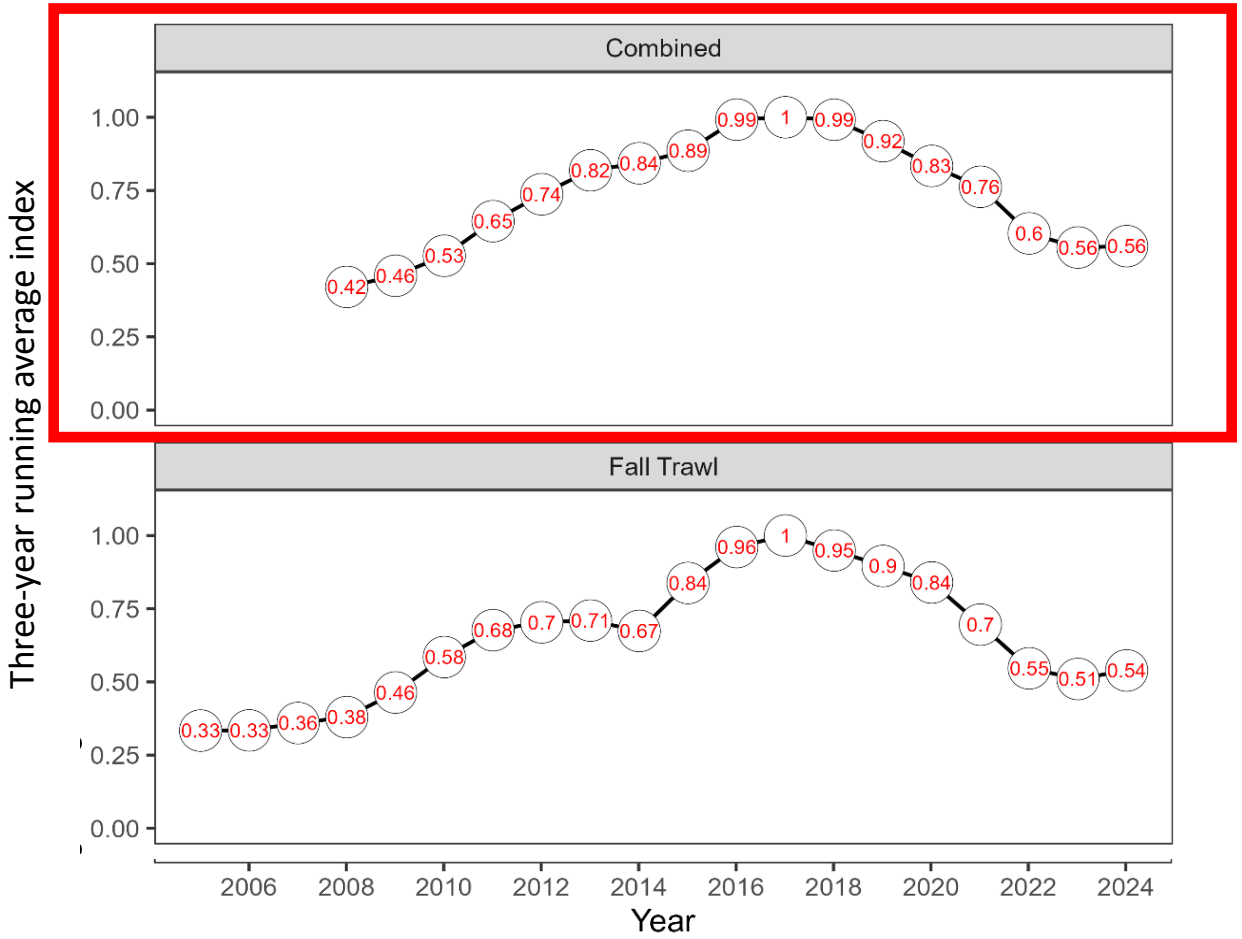
GOM – combined recruit index



- Values represent proportional change from the combined index peak (three-year average 2015-2017).
- Recent values have stabilized somewhat since the decline
- The 2024 value (average 2022-2024) is 0.56, which is a 44% decline from the index peak

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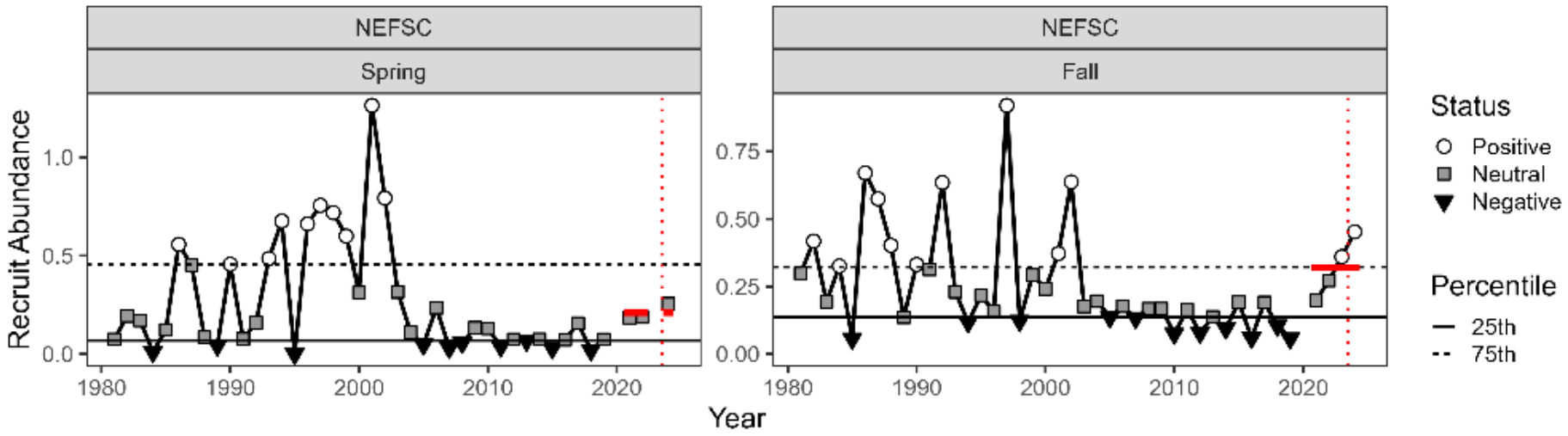
GBK – recruit abundance

RECRUIT ABUNDANCE (SURVEY)		
Abundance of lobsters 71 - 80 mm CL (sexes combined)		
Survey	*NEFSC*	
	Spring	*Fall*
2019-2023 mean	0.15	0.22
2024	0.25	0.45
2020-2024 mean	0.21	0.32
25th	0.07	0.14
median	0.13	0.19
75th	0.45	0.32



- Status unchanged since assessment
  - Both spring & fall remain neutral
- Note increasing trend in annual values
  - 2024 values highest in more than a decade

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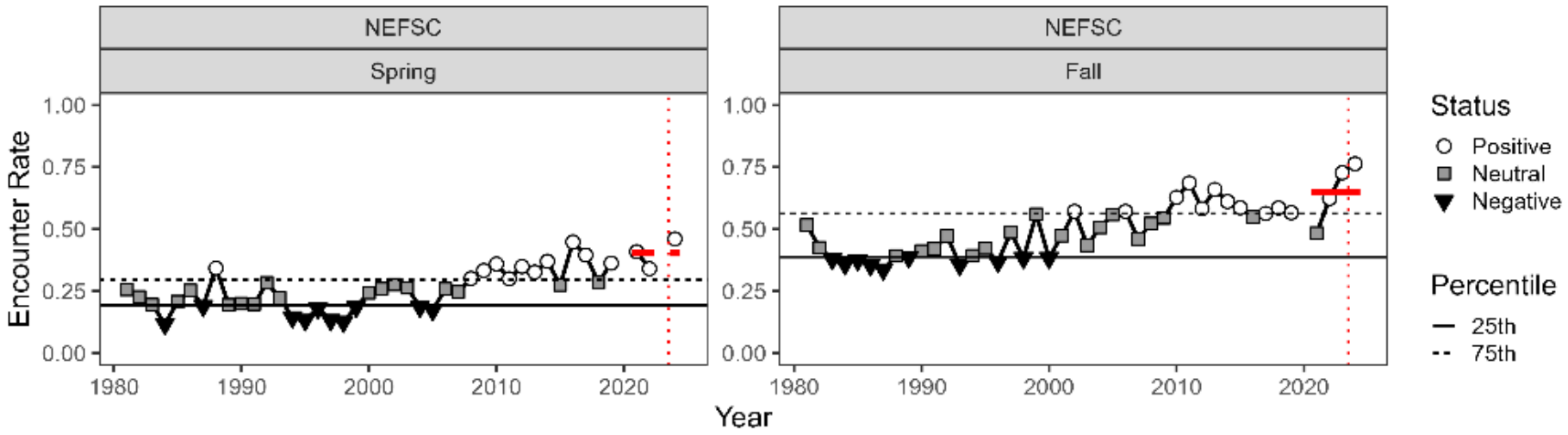
GBK – encounter rates

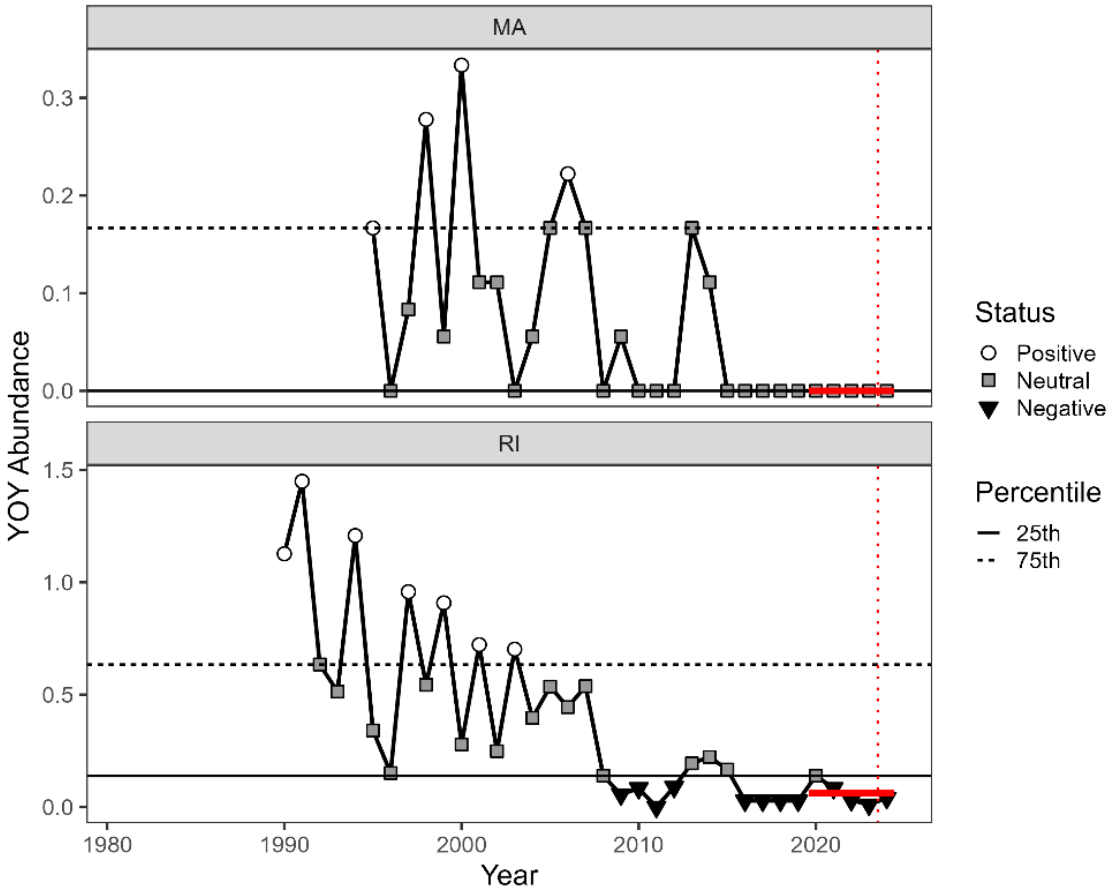
SURVEY LOBSTER ENCOUNTER RATE		
Proportion of postive tows		
Survey	*NEFSC*	
	Spring	*Fall*
2019-2023 mean	0.37	0.60
2024	0.46	0.76
2020-2024 mean	0.40	0.65
25th	0.19	0.39
median	0.25	0.47
75th	0.30	0.56



- Status unchanged since assessment
  - Spring & fall both positive
- 2024 values were time series highs for both seasons

SNE – YOY

YOUNG-OF-YEAR INDICES		
Survey	*MA*	*RI*
2019-2023 mean	0.00	0.06
2024	0.00	0.04
2020-2024 mean	0.00	0.06
25th	0.00	0.14
median	0.06	0.34
75th	0.17	0.63



- Status unchanged since assessment
  - Both MA and RI are negative

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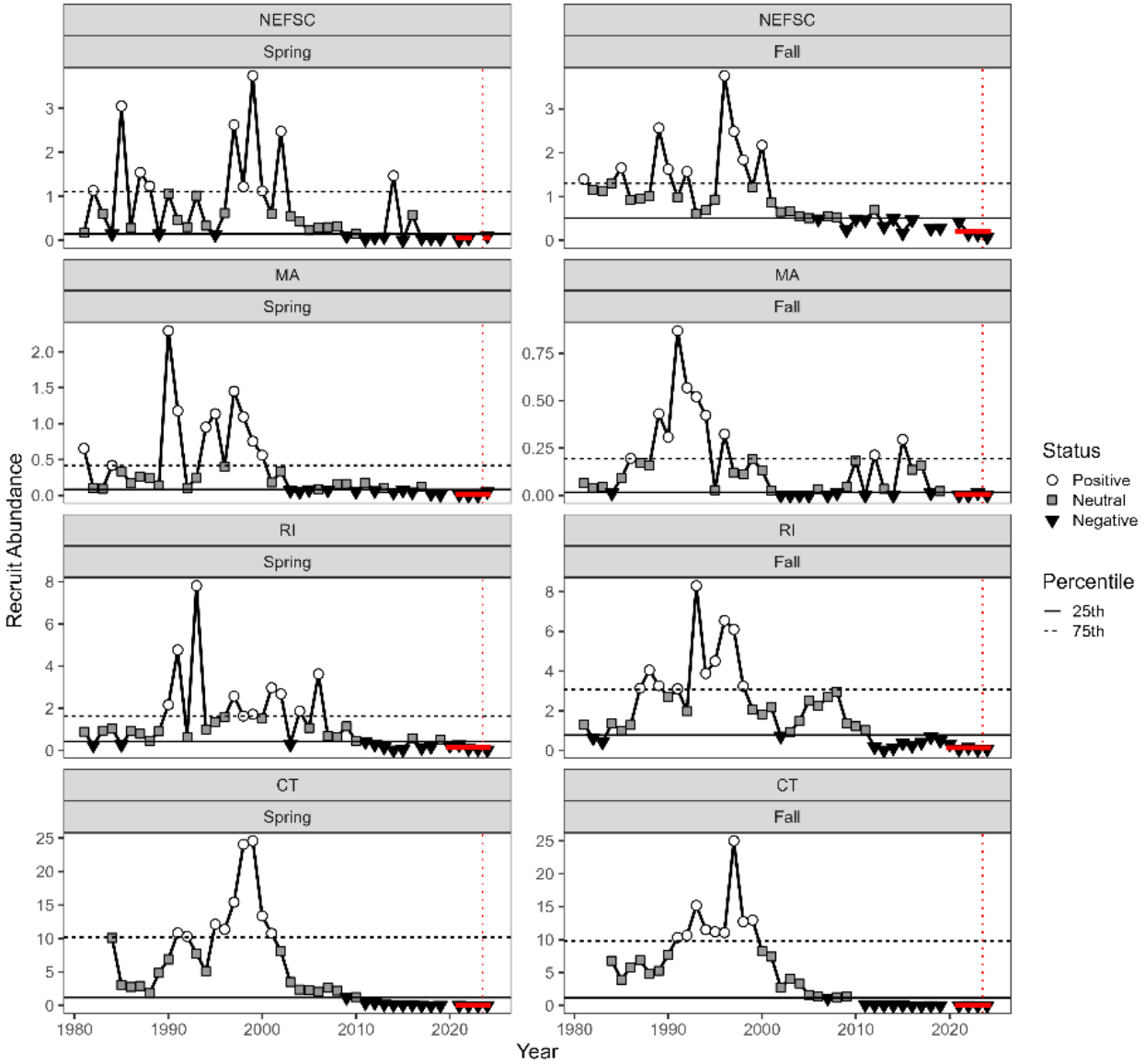
SNE – recruit indices

RECRUIT ABUNDANCE (SURVEY)								
Abundance of lobsters 71 - 80 mm CL (sexes combined)								
Survey	*NEFSC*		*MA*		*RI*		*CT*	
	Spring	*Fall*	*Spring*	*Fall*	*Spring*	*Fall*	*Spring*	*Fall*
2019-2023 mean	0.03	0.25	0.01	0.01	0.24	0.22	0.01	0.00
2024	0.10	0.07	0.05	0.00	0.02	0.07	0.01	0.00
2020-2024 mean	0.05	0.20	0.02	0.00	0.14	0.13	0.01	0.00
25th	0.15	0.51	0.08	0.02	0.42	0.78	1.23	1.16
median	0.38	0.86	0.16	0.10	0.91	1.65	2.93	4.48
75th	1.11	1.31	0.41	0.19	1.62	3.07	10.20	9.81

- Status unchanged since assessment
  - All inshore and NEFSC surveys are negative
- 2024 values were time series lows for 4 of these surveys



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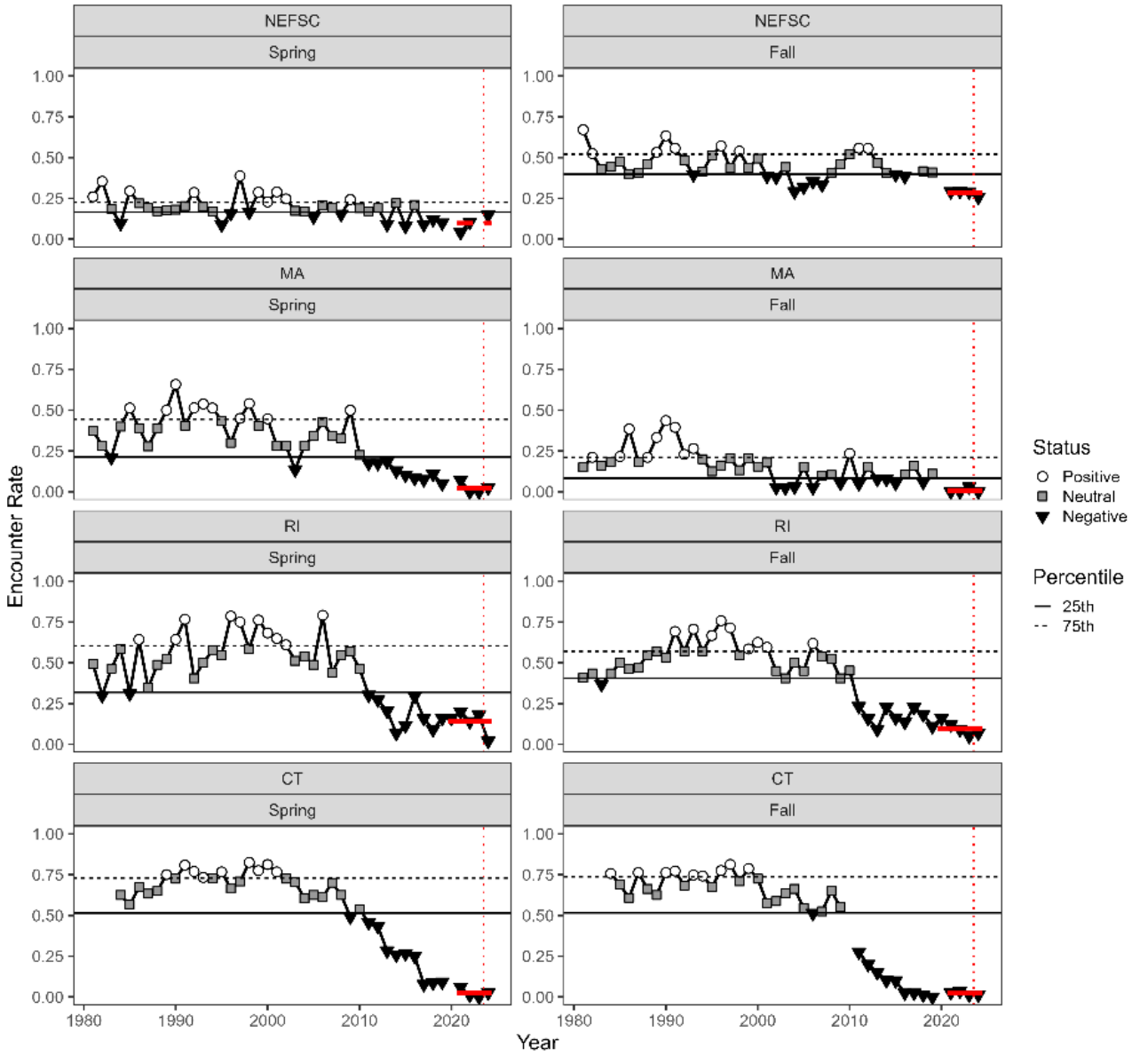
SNE – encounter rates

SURVEY LOBSTER ENCOUNTER RATE Proportion of postive tows								
Survey	*NEFSC*		*MA*		*RI*		*CT*	
	Spring	*Fall*	*Spring*	*Fall*	*Spring*	*Fall*	*Spring*	*Fall*
2019-2023 mean	0.08	0.32	0.03	0.04	0.17	0.11	0.04	0.02
2024	0.15	0.26	0.03	0.00	0.02	0.07	0.03	0.01
2020-2024 mean	0.10	0.28	0.02	0.01	0.14	0.10	0.02	0.02
25th	0.17	0.40	0.21	0.08	0.32	0.41	0.52	0.52
median	0.19	0.44	0.34	0.16	0.51	0.49	0.65	0.64
75th	0.23	0.52	0.44	0.21	0.60	0.57	0.73	0.74

- Status unchanged since assessment
  - All inshore and NEFSC surveys are negative
- 2024 values were time series lows for 3 of these



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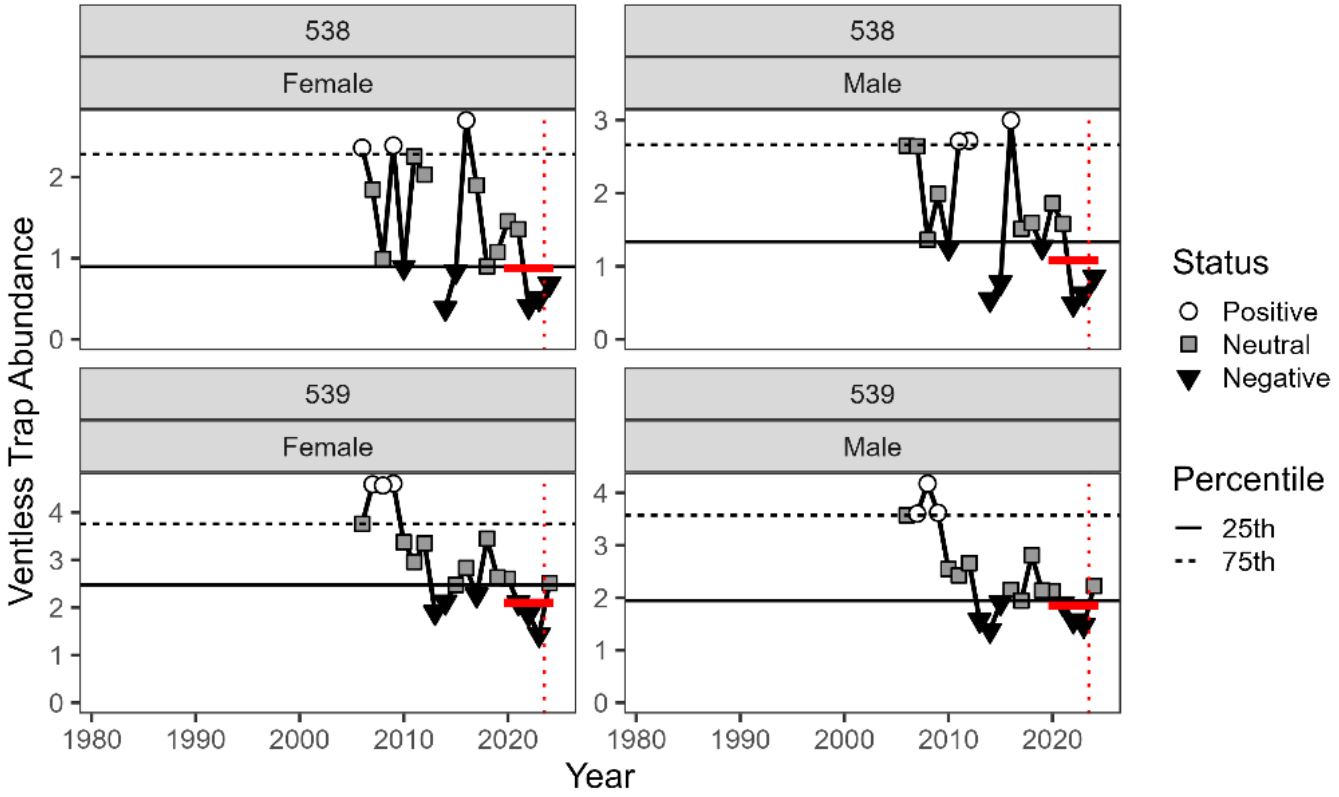
SNE – VTS indices

VENTLESS TRAP ABUNDANCE				
Abundance of lobsters ≥ 53 mm CL				
Survey	*538*		*539*	
	Female	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*
2019-2023 mean	0.96	1.16	2.13	1.84
2024	0.68	0.85	2.51	2.23
2020-2024 mean	0.88	1.08	2.10	1.86
25th	0.90	1.33	2.48	1.94
median	1.87	1.79	3.35	2.55
75th	2.28	2.66	3.76	3.57



- Status for SA 538 (MA) females declined from neutral to negative
- Note SA 539 (RI) saw relatively large increase in 2024
- Note survey has short time series, occurring only during depleted stock conditions

Summary

- GOM sub-stock conditions very similar to those reported in the 2025 stock assessment
  - Only marginal changes in status of a few survey indicators, two improved (512 YOY, 513 VTS males) and one declined (MA fall encounter rate)
  - Noted that many 2024 annual values in 514 (MA) were negative
- GBK sub-stock conditions are unchanged from those reported in the 2025 stock assessment
- SNE conditions remain unchanged
  - All negative

QUESTIONS?

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GOMGBK Lobster Management Strategy Evaluation Development

Feb 3, 2026

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Background

- GOMGBK abundance declined 34% from previous assessment
  - Abundance is below the Fishery/Industry Target
    - Potential for degrading economic conditions
  - Abundance is above the biological limit, the stock is not depleted
- Exploitation is just above the threshold, overfishing is occurring
  - Exploitation status (and its interpretation) is less certain than abundance status
- Assessment strongly recommended immediate initiation of Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process

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MSE recommendation

- Goals of the MSE process for GOMGBK
  - Clearly identify management objectives for the stock
    - Across all stakeholders
  - Improve understanding of socioeconomic status and concerns
  - Identify potential management tools that will have buy-in from industry and prevent further declines towards biological limit
- Two recommendations to start this process

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GOMGBK MSE Guidance

- Formation of a Steering Committee
  - Responsible for scoping and coordination of all parts of MSE process
  - MSE requires interdisciplinary approach including expertise outside of the TC
  - Membership to include representation from:
    - Board
    - TC
    - ASMFC staff
    - Industry stakeholders
    - Members of ASMFC Committee on Economics & Social Sciences
    - Members of ASMFC Assessment & Science or Management & Science Committees with past MSE experience
  - Populated through nominations & Board action to approve

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GOMGBK MSE Guidance

- Initiate formal process for developing management goals & objectives for GOMGBK lobster fisheries
  - Steering committee to develop this process
  - TC recommends this include a series of meetings
    - Local scale (state, zone, LCMA)
    - Regional, stock-wide scale

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GOMGBK MSE Guidance

- Development of management objectives are a necessary 1st step for MSE
  - Development of objectives does not necessarily commit the Board to pursuing a formal MSE
  - Clear objectives will benefit Board and Industry regardless of whether the Board further pursues MSE
- Costs associated with these initial steps
  - Professional facilitator(s)
    - Critical to guide respectful and productive conversations
    - Cost range $40,000 – $100,000 depending on level of involvement
  - Meeting costs

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American Lobster Advisory Panel Report

February 3, 2026

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries COMMISSION

Background

- Lobster AP met on January 12, 2026
  - Reviewed the 2025 Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report
  - Provided input on assessment findings and state of the fishery
- 7 advisors attended

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AP Comments: SNE

- Concern that assessment does not adequately account for predation impacts from species like black sea bass, scup, etc. in SNE
  - Predator species well above stock abundance targets negatively impacting the lobster stock
- Other negative stock impacts in SNE: habitat loss lowering lobster productivity
- Advisors from SNE agreed that current effort is so low that further restricting the fishery may not have an impact

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AP Comments: GOM/GBK

- Management measures will not be effective without improved enforcement
- Emphasis on regional differences within the stock
  - Some areas better off than others (predation, temperature)
  - Need to consider how regulations can have different effects in different regions
- Reduction in licenses in Maine, trips may also be down
- Regulations should not be considered until after new whale rules in 2028

Questions?