Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

American Lobster Management Board

November 9, 2026
10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Draft Agenda

The times listed are approximate; the order in which these items will be taken is subject to change; other items may be added as necessary

1.	Welcome/Call to Order *(R. Zobel)*	10:30 a.m.
2.	Board Consent • Approval of Agenda • Approval of Proceedings from August 2026	10:30 a.m.
3.	Public Comment	10:35 a.m.
4.	Report from Management Objectives Process Steering Committee *(C. Starks, J. Kipp)* **Possible Action**	10:45 a.m.
5.	Technical Committee Reports *(C. Truesdale)* • Annual Data Update of American Lobster Indicators • Progress on Lobster Technical Committee Tasks	11:30 a.m.
6.	Reports from Gulf of Maine States on Industry Surveys and Meetings *(C. Wilson, R. Zobel, R. Glenn)*	12:00 p.m.
7.	Consider American Lobster and Jonah Crab Fishery Management Plan Reviews and State Compliance for the 2025 Fishing Year *(C. Starks)* **Action**	12:05 p.m.
8.	Update on Request for Information for Alternative Gear Marking Framework (*A. Murphy)*	12:10 p.m.
9.	Other Business/Adjourn	12:15 p.m.

The meeting will be held at Hotel Viking (One Bellevue Avenue, Newport, Rhode Island; 401.847.3300) and via webinar; click here for details.

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

MEETING OVERVIEW

American Lobster Management Board
November 9, 2026
10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Chair: Renee Zobel (NH) Assumed Chairmanship: 03/25	Lobster Technical Committee Chair: Corinne Truesdale (RI) Jonah Crab Technical Committee Chair: Corinne Truesdale (RI)	Law Enforcement Committee Rep: Rob Beal (ME)
Vice Chair: John Maniscalco (NY)	Lobster Advisory Panel Chair: Grant Moore (MA) Jonah Crab Advisory Panel Chair: Sonny Gwin (MD)	Previous Board Meeting: August 4, 2026
Voting Members: ME, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, DE, MD, VA, NMFS, NEFMC (12 votes)		

2. Board Consent

- Approval of Agenda
- Approval of Proceedings from August 2026

3. Public Comment – At the beginning of the meeting, public comment will be taken on items not on the agenda. Individuals that wish to speak at this time must sign-in at the beginning of the meeting. For agenda items that have already gone out for public hearing and/or have had a public comment period that has closed, the Board Chair may determine that additional public comment will not provide additional information. In this circumstance, the Chair will not allow additional public comment on an issue. For agenda items that the public has not had a chance to provide input, the Board Chair may allow limited opportunity for comment. The Board Chair has the discretion to limit the number of speakers and/or the length of each comment.

4. Report from Management Objectives Process Steering Committee (10:45-11:30 a.m.) Possible Action

Background

- The Board formed a steering committee (SC) in May 2026 to 1) review existing management objectives, as outlined in Amendment #3 and subsequent addenda, relative to the current GOM/GBK stock status, and social/economic conditions facing the fishery today, and 2) develop a process that would clearly identify new management objectives (across all stakeholders), to better understand socioeconomic status and concerns, and to identify potential management tools.
- The SC includes representation from the Board, TC, Commission staff, the Commission's Committee on Economics and Social Sciences, industry stakeholders, and the Commission's Assessment and Science Committee or Management and Science Committee with past experience in MSE.
- The SC met three times in June through September to develop recommendations to the Board on a stakeholder management objectives process **(Briefing Materials).**

Presentations

- Steering Committee Recommendations on Management Objectives Process by C. Starks and J. Kipp

Board Actions for Consideration at the Meeting

- Consider initiating next steps to conduct a management objectives process

5. Technical Committee Reports (11:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.)

Background

- An annual Data Update process between American lobster stock assessments was recommended during the 2020 stock assessment to more closely monitor changes in stock abundance. The objective of this process is to present information—including any potentially concerning trends—that could support additional research or consideration of changes to management. Data sets updated during this process are generally those that indicate exploitable lobster stock abundance conditions expected in subsequent years and include: young-of-year settlement indicators, trawl survey indicators, and ventless trap survey sex-specific abundance indices.
- This is the second Lobster Data Update after the 2025 Stock Assessment and includes the addition of 2025 data. Indicator status (negative, neutral, or positive) was determined relative to the percentiles of the stock assessment time series **(Briefing Materials).**
- At its February 2026 meeting, the Board discussed the possibility of adding environmental indicators into the annual data update process. The TC Chair and ASMFC staff met with staff within NOAA's Changing Ecosystems and Fisheries Initiative (CEFI) to discuss products developed for the State of the Ecosystem reports that may be relevant to lobster population trends, and the TC discussed possible indicators for further investigation **(Briefing Materials).**

Presentations

- Lobster Data Update by C. Truesdale

Board Actions for Consideration at the Meeting

- Provide guidance to TC on potential environmental indicators

6. Reports from Gulf of Maine States on Industry Surveys and Meetings (12:00-12:05 p.m.)

Background

- Concurrent with the implementation of Addendum XXXII, the Gulf of Maine states agreed to work with the lobster industry to develop management strategies to ensure the long-term health of the resource and the coastal communities it supports.
- The Board requested Maine and New Hampshire provide updates on industry meetings and possible alternative management measures to those of Addendum XXVII at each quarterly meeting.
- Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts have completed industry meetings and surveys to gather input on management approaches.

Presentations

- Update from Gulf of Maine States on Industry Meetings by C. Wilson, R. Zobel, and B. Glenn

7. Consider American Lobster and Jonah Crab Fishery Management Plan Reviews and State Compliance for the 2025 Fishing Year (12:05-12:10 p.m.)

Background

- State compliance reports for American lobster and Jonah crab were due August 1, 2026.
- The Plan Review Teams reviewed state compliance reports and compiled the annual FMP Reviews for lobster and Jonah crab for the 2025 Fishing Year (**Briefing Materials**).
- Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia have requested and meet the requirements for *de minimis* in the lobster and Jonah crab fisheries.

Presentations

- FMP Reviews for American Lobster and Jonah Crab for the 2025 Fishing Year by C. Starks

Board Actions for Consideration at the Meeting

- Approve Fishery Management Plan Reviews and state compliance reports for American Lobster and Jonah Crab for the 2025 Fishing Year
- Approve *de minimis* requests

8. Update on Request for Information on Alternative Gear Marking Framework (12:05-12:15 p.m.)

Background

- The New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Councils) are developing a joint alternative gear marking framework adjustment to provide alternative fixed gear surface marking requirements in all New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council fishery management plans. This regulatory modification would allow for the use of fixed gears without a persistent buoy line (i.e., on-demand gear).
- The Councils met in September and October 2025 and each agreed to postpone further action on the Framework until additional information on ropeless gear and visualization technology, as solicited through a NMFS Request for Information (RFI), is available to inform stakeholder input and Council decision-making.
- An RFI on ropeless fishing was published in the federal register on July 16, 2026, and comments were accepted until October 14, 2026.

Presentations

- Update on Request for Information for Alternative Gear Marking Framework by A. Murphy

9. Other Business/Adjourn (12:30 p.m.)

DRAFT PROCEEDINGS OF THE

ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

AMERICAN LOBSTER MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Westin Crystal City
Arlington, Virginia
Hybrid Meeting

August 4, 2026

These minutes are draft and subject to approval by the American Lobster Management Board.
The Board will review the minutes during its next meeting.

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INDEX OF MOTIONS

1. **Approval of agenda** by consent (Page 0).

2. **Approval of Proceedings of Monday May 4, 2026** by consent (Page 0).

3. **Main Motion**
   Move to approve the conservation equivalency (CE) proposal for LCMA 5 and that the Commission send a letter to NOAA Fisheries recommending the modification of the federal regulations for the LCMA 5 season closure to allow black sea bass fishermen that hold a lobster permit to set and haul gear to fish for black sea bass beginning on March 9 instead of March 24 while maintaining the prohibition on lobster harvest and possession from February 1 through March 31 (Page 4). Motion by John Clark; second by Mike Luisi. Motion to amend.

   Motion to Amend
   Move to amend to add "Jonah crab" after lobster (Page 4). Motion by Emerson Hasbrouck; seconded by Shanna Madsen. Motion approved by consent with one abstention (NOAA Fisheries) (Page 5).

   Main Motion as Amended
   Move to approve the CE proposal for LCMA 5 and that the Commission send a letter to NOAA Fisheries recommending the modification of the federal regulations for the LCMA 5 season closure to allow black sea bass fishermen that hold a lobster permit to set and haul gear to fish for black sea bass beginning on March 9 instead of March 24 while maintaining the prohibition on lobster and Jonah crab harvest and possession from February 1 through March 31. Motion carries by consent with one abstention (NOAA Fisheries) (Page 5).

4. **Motion to Adjourn** (Page 8).

ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Carl Wilson, ME (AA)
Rep. Allison Hepler, ME (LA)
Renee Zobel, NH (AA)
Doug Grout, NH (GA)
Dennis Abbott, NH, proxy for Sen. Watters (LA)
Bob Glenn, MA, proxy for D. McKiernan (AA)
Raymond Kane, ME (GA)
Rep. Sarah Peake, MA (LA)
Jason McNamee, RI (AA)
Eric Reid, RI, proxy for Sen. Sosnowski (LA)
Shanna Madsen, CT (AA)
Bill Hyatt, CT (GA)
Rep. Joseph Gresko, CT (LA)
John Maniscalco, NY, proxy for M. Gary (AA)
Emerson Hasbrouck, NY (GA)
Monica Martinez, NY (LA)
Joe Cimino, NJ (AA)
Adam Nowalsky, NJ, proxy for Sen. Gopal (LA)
Jorden Zimmerman, NJ (AA)
John Clark, DE, proxy for R. Miller (AA)
Michael Luisi, MD (AA)
Ethan Simpson, VA, proxy for J. Grist (AA)
Del. Adele McClure, VA (GA)
Allison Murphy, NMFS

(AA = Administrative Appointee; GA = Governor Appointee; LA = Legislative Appointee)

Ex-Officio Members

Tracy Pugh, Technical Committee Chair
Rob Beal, Law Enforcement Committee Rep.

Staff

Bob Beal
Toni Kerns
Tina Berger
Madeline Musante
Alexander Law
Caitlin Starks
Emilie Franke
Tracey Bauer
James Boyle
Chelsea Tuohy
Katie Drew
Jeff Kipp
Samara Nehemiah
Jainita Patel

The American Lobster Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Jefferson Ballroom of the Westin Crystal City Hotel, Arlington, Virginia, via hybrid meeting, in-person and webinar; Tuesday, August 4, 2026, and was called to order at 11:15 a.m. by Chair Renee Zobel.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR RENEE ZOBEL: Welcome, I'm going to go ahead and call this meeting to order. First item that I would like to do is go to Toni for the Board members that are online today.

MS. TONI KERNS: Thank you, I have Alli Murphy, Sarah Peake, and Delegate Adele McClure.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CHAIR ZOBEL: Thank you, Toni, first item of business is to approve the agenda. Is there anyone that has any changes for the agenda today? Seeing no changes, we will approve the agenda by consent if anyone has no opposition to that. Okay, agenda is approved by consent.

APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

CHAIR ZOBEL: Back to the proceedings from the May meeting. Are there any changes or amendments to the proceedings from May? Seeing no hands, we'll consider the proceedings approved by consent.

PUBLIC COMMENT

CHAIR ZOBEL: Next on the items is public comment on items that are not on the agenda today. Again, items not being covered by the agenda items today. We will allow for public comment as time allows. Anyone who would like to make public comment today in the room or online. Seeing no hands, we're moving right along.

UPDATE ON MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES PROCESS STEERING COMMITTEE PROGRESS

CHAIR ZOBEL: Next is an update on the Management Objectives Process Steering Committee Progress. I'm going to go to Caitlin Starks for that presentation.

MS. CAITLIN STARKS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to remind everyone quickly of the background on the Steering Committee. After the Board reviewed the 2025 Benchmark Stock Assessment last fall, it tasked the Technical Committee with updating previous guidance on the process for initiating Management Strategy Evaluation or MSE for the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank stock.

Then at the winter meeting the TC provided its guidance and its first recommendation was that as a critical first step before considering a Management Strategy Evaluation for the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank fishery that the Board should initiate a formal process to identify management goals and objectives for the future of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank lobster fisheries, possibly including a series of meetings at local and regional scales like by a third party facilitator.

Based on that TC recommendation in May, the Board formed a Steering Committee, tasked with developing the scope for such a process. The Steering Committee includes 17 members representing the Board, TC, Commission staff, the Commission's Committee of Economics and Social Sciences, and industry stakeholders.

The specific tasks for this Steering Committee as established by the Board are to review the current management objectives in the FMP relative to the current Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank stock status and social economic conditions facing the fishery today, and then to develop a process that was clearly identified in the Management Objectives across all stakeholders, to better understand socioeconomic status and concerns and identify potential management tools.

The Steering Committee met for the first time in June, and at that meeting they reviewed the existing management objectives, as well as a few other examples of management objectives processes from menhaden and horseshoe crab. They discussed gaps giving the current social and economic conditions of the fishery, and talked about how to incorporate those existing management objectives into a new management objectives process.

We have a second Steering Committee meeting scheduled for the end of August, which is the earliest we could get the majority of the Steering Committee members available. The goal for that meeting is to discuss the management objectives process in more detail, including identifying the universe of stakeholders to be involved, outlining the structure, schedule participants and objectives of the stakeholder meetings, and determining the roles of facilitator, as well as assigning tasks to the Steering Committee for writing a report and cost estimation.

Then we've also started working on the schedule for the final meeting in September or early October to wrap up the final details of the recommended process, and that would include the cost estimates and a final report for the Board. Our goal is still to have that Steering Committee Report out to the Board on the recommended management objectives process at the Annual Meeting. That is all I've got for an update and I can take any questions.

CHAIR ZOBEL: Are there any questions from the Board for Caitlin? Seeing no questions; thank you, Caitlin. Just a reminder to us, as she said 17 members. This is as very large group, and as anticipated it has been challenging to try to wrangle such a large group. For those who are a part of this Steering Committee, just a reminder to respond to Caitlin and John for doing a very good job trying to heard cats as quickly as possible. Next on the agenda will be Considering Lobster Conservation Management Team 5 Proposal to Modify Seasonal Closures. I'm going to go to John Clark first for that.

CONSIDER LOBSTER CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT TEAM 5 PROPOSAL TO MODIFY SEASON CLOSURE

MR. JOHN CLARK: Thank you, Madame Chair, there are some slides. Thank you to Caitlin for putting this together and all her help on this. I'll be brief. This item has come up to the Board a couple times already, but we were missing one critical component to move this along, which was we had not had a Lobster Conservation Management Team meeting.

The Lobster Conservation Management Team or LCMA 5, was reconstituted. They met two weeks ago, and asked us to submit this proposal to the Board. That is essentially to modify the season closure in LCMA 5 to allow earlier access to black sea bass. It's going to be a 15-day earlier season, open on March 9 instead of the 24th. Just to allow the pots to be hauled for harvesting black sea bass. The TC had reviewed this proposal. There was a memo before the spring meeting about that, and they suggested allowing the pots to be set and fished for black sea bass on March 9 instead of the 24th, while maintaining the closure dates for lobster, was not expected to increase lobster mortality.

The LCMT 5 at their meeting two weeks ago made the following recommendation to the Board. They request the Board that NOAA Fisheries, GARFO revise the LCMA 5 season to allow black sea bass pots to be set beginning on March 9 instead of March 24, while maintaining the current American lobster harvest closure, February 1 through March 31; as proposed by the TC in it's April 20 memo to the Board. That is all I have, so after any questions and discussion I have a motion, I would like to make.

CHAIR ZOBEL: I am going to go to Caitlin for some Plan Review Team and Law Enforcement Committee comments on the proposal.

MS. STARKS: I just wanted to go over the PRT and LECs comments. They reviewed the proposal and I just have a summary of those here. First, from the

PRT there was general support for Board consideration of the proposal from LCMT 5. There were a few issues they raised for the Board to consider, in its discussions.

First, the PRT members noted that it's not clear from the proposal whether it would allow for Jonah crabs to be retained and landed while the traps are being fished for black sea bass. They recommended that the Board discuss and clarify that point. Second, the proposal doesn't specify if the change would apply to all federal LCMA 5 lobster permit holders; that would be those with the LCMA 5 waiver and those with the regular permit.

The closure currently of 5 to all permit holders, so it makes sense for the change to also apply to both, but it would be good to make that point clear as well. Then third, the PRT noted that the current lobster closure is implemented in both state and federal regulations for LCMA 5 permit holders. The proposed change would need to be made across all of those regulations to be effective.

Then from the LEC comments on the proposal. Again, there was overall support for the changes. There was one concern raised by a member of the LEC, which was that they noted a concern about the potential of fishermen using black sea bass traps to pull lobsters during the closure, because there was a past incident of an LCMA 5 fisherman cutting lobster up in their black sea pots during the closed period, in anticipation of the lobster season opening back up.

That's why the LEC members were not concerned about the enforceability of proposed measures. They noted that generally closed seasons are highly enforceable, as described in the guidelines for resource managers on the enforceability of fishery management measures. Then one last point I wanted to bring up is that because the Southern New England stock status is depleted, according to the Commission's Conservation Equivalency Policy. There would need to be a two-thirds majority vote to approve this proposal.

CHAIR ZOBEL: Thank you, John and Caitlin. Go ahead and open it up to the Board for questions for John and Caitlin, and it looks like everyone is also looking for a little bit of clarification. Any questions? Jason McNamee.

DR. JASON McNAMEE: Just no issues at all, other than just curious as to why March 9 was the date. I even looked to see if it like started on a weekend or something, but it's like a Tuesday or something.

MR. CLARK: That was what was proposed. I think the two fishermen that first brought this to us thought that it was roughly two weeks earlier in the discussion the LCMT had. They thought that opening even earlier would be even better. But I think they figured two weeks would look like they were not asking for too much, just to fill in that timeframe. I don't know why 15 days instead of exactly two weeks, but it is roughly the same thing.

CHAIR ZOBEL: Any other questions? Okay, we did have a few points of clarification that Caitlain had asked for. I know some of these have been discussed in the background a little bit. Caitlin, refresh my memory here. The first one was on Jonah crab possession during this black sea bass season. Just looking for guidance from the Board on whether that was the intent, or whether that would be allowed during that period. John, go ahead.

MR. CLARK: If I could just say, as of right now our regulations for Delaware don't have a season for Jonah crab. It is an extremely small fishery in our part of, I think I could speak for all of LCMA 5. I don't think that is really an issue in our LCMA.

CHAIR ZOBEL: I'll go right along then, and probably keep questioning you, sir. The next one was, all LCMA 5 permit holders or the waiver versus the nonwaiver.

MR. CLARK: Yes, I had to go look u what the difference was. But yes, I think that our thinking is it would apply to all permits.

CHAIR ZOBEL: Then the final one for the Board was the proposed changed in both federal and state regulations.

MR. CLARK: I can speak for Delaware. Yes, we would have to change our season for lobster, but that is fairly simple. I think it is probably the same for Maryland, New Jersey and Virginia. But I think all four of our states we had great support on the LCMT call, and I think our states can work to get our state regulations changed quickly.

CHAIR ZOBEL: Again, for those online, I am seeing a lot of head nods in the room from the other states that might be involved as well. Thank you all for that feedback, any other questions? Are there any questions from the public on this? All right, seeing no questions from the public. I believe it's about time to entertain a motion, if anybody has a motion they would like to bring forward. John Clark.

MR. CLARK: Thanks again, Caitlin for writing up a motion that I think covers everything here, so I will read it into the record. **Move to approve the Conservation Equivalency Proposal for Lobster Conservation Management Area 5, and that the Commission send a letter to NOAA Fisheries recommending the modification of the federal regulations for LCMA 5 season closure, to allow black sea bass fishermen to hold a lobster permit to set and haul gear to fish for black sea bass beginning on March 9 instead of on March 24, while maintaining the prohibition on lobster harvest and possession from February 1 through March 31**.

CHAIR ZOBEL: Do we have a second for the motion? Mike Luisi, thank you. Any additional rationale? I know we've discussed this pretty extensively.

MR. CLARK: Yes, I would just say once again. This was a request made by our small fishery in the LCMA 5, and they think it will be helpful. It's tough time, as everybody knows for commercial fishermen. Giving them this extra time to fish for black sea bass should be a big help.

CHAIR ZOBEL: Mike, anything for you?

MR. MICHAEL LUISI: Nothing for me, Madam Chair, thanks.

CHAIR ZOBEL: Okay, any discussion by the Board? Toni.

MS. KERNS: Just for clarity purposes. Are Jonah crab going to be allowed to be harvested or not? While I recognize Delaware may not have a fishery, there are three other states that harvest from Area 5. I just want to have a better understanding. We need to know if they are allowed or not.

CHAIR ZOBEL: Ethan Simpson.

MR. ETHAN SIMPSON: Just like other states in LCMA 5, our fishery is so small that we would likely continue to allow that to be open, with no ill anticipated in that.

MS. KERNS: Right now, it should be closed not open during that timeframe. If you are going to do something different than it being closed during that timeframe, then it would need to be on the record.

MR. SIMPSON: Misunderstanding on my part, status quo.

CHAIR ZOBEL: Mike Luisi.

MR. LUISI: Toni, you said it's closed right now. In this area, in the Mid-Atlantic lower portion where we are, the DelMarVa. If Jonah crab is closed then my preference would be just to leave it closed. The request here was based on a need to harvest sea bass. The other species, there was no intent that they would be harvested through this. That is how I would see it moving forward.

CHAIR ZOBEL: Emerson Hasbrouck.

MR. EMERSON C. HASBROUCK: Just to clarify this and to get it on the record. I have a **motion to amend to add, Jonah crab after lobster in the second to the last line; or maintain a prohibition on lobster and Jonah crab harvest and possession**. That will formalize what the Board wants to do.

CHAIR ZOBEL: Do we have a second? Okay, go to Toni first.

MS. KERNS: Just to clarify. The reason why I bring it up is because the pots are not able to be fished at this time, so your regulations are silent on it, because your pots can't be fished. But if the pot can be fished, then you will need to add, you know within the regulation that lobster and Jonah crab cannot be possessed at that time. That is why we were clarifying.

MR. CLARK: Right now, as you said, it's silent about the core season for Jonah crab.

CHAIR ZOBEL: I've got a second from Shana Madsen. Any discussion on the motion to amend? Go ahead, Joe Cimino.

MR. JOE CIMINO: Yes, I apologize for doing the sound out for New Jersey. I was under the same impression that we would keep regulations status quo. Understanding Toni's concern, I can accept the motion, and we would be able to make that amendment along with our lobster change.

CHAIR ZOBEL: Because we need a two-thirds majority, then go ahead and do a roll call vote, for first the motion to amend, and then whether it passes or fails. I'll see if there is any objection to the motion to amend first, and then we'll do a roll call beyond that. **Is there any objection to this motion to amend? Okay, I am seeing no objection to the motion, so this now becomes the main motion.**

MS. ALLISON MURPHY: Pardon me, Madam Chair. This is Alli.

CHAIR ZOBEL: Yes, Alli.

MS. MURPHY: I just wanted to note my abstention.

CHAIR ZOBEL: Thank you very much, Alli, we've noted it. The motion carries with one abstention from NOAA Fisheries. This is now the main motion. Any further discussion on this as the main motion? Anything from the public, who would like to comment or has any questions on this before we vote?

Seeing no hands online or in the room, okay we are going to go ahead and do a roll call vote for this. If Toni or Caitlin can help me out with this, that would be wonderful. Getting some guidance on how to move forward here. We'll try this the easy way first despite the two-third. **Is there any objection to the motion on the board? Alli, I see your hand up, is that for an abstention?**

MS. MURPHY: Yes, that is correct, thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR ZOBEL: Okay, seeing no hands in objection, the motion carries with 1 abstention from NOAA Fisheries. Thank you.

REPORTS FROM GULF OF MAINE STATES ON INDUSTRY SURVEYS AND MEETINGS

CHAIR ZOBEL: That moves us on to the next item on the agenda, which is Reports from the Gulf of Maine States on Industry Surveys and Meetings. I think I went north to south last time, let's go south to north this time. Bob Glenn, you're up first.

MR. BOB GLENN: Just a quick update. We have not convened any meetings, but we have been working on reconstituting our LCMT list. Upon review it hadn't been updated since 2006, and many of the members had moved on in one capacity or another, so we're working internally and with some feedback from industry to reconstitute that list and to be in a better position to convene at a later date.

CHAIR ZOBEL: As far as New Hampshire, I have nothing to report. We'll move on to Carl Wilson and the state of Maine.

MR. CARL WILSON: We have had some activity up in Maine since our May Board meeting. We finished up a round of 7 lobster Zone Councils that straddled our meeting, and we have had 2 Lobster Advisory Councils, which are kind of Council of

Councils in May and June. Following our June Lobster Advisory Council meeting, which ended nearly a year of conversations following our survey that we sent out last summer.

The Lobster Advisory Council has voted to move forward with a modification to our biological escape panel, so not the escape vent but what we refer to as the bio panel, to increase that from an opening of 3 -3/4 by 3 -3/4 to now a proposed opening of 4.5 inches by 6 inches. This would allow a much lobster to escape when that panel degrades and opens up.

Our process would be that this would be taken out to our Zone Councils in our August/September meetings, and eventually put it out to rule making after the first of the year. We're not asking for any conservation equivalency or recognition from this body, other than saying that we feel that this is actually a small step, but it's a positive step to, if traps are lost that there is a better opportunity for lobsters that are in those traps to be able to over time get out.

This change would, as it is suggested right now, does not impact the attachment method of the panel. It's just speaking towards the size of that panel. Again, that was supported through the Lobster Advisory Council at the end of June. We also convened other LCMT members, as Bob said, first time probably in 15 years that we've done this.

It was as very short meeting, more of a meet and greet. I want to thank Caitlin Starks for participating in that meeting; giving us a nice short presentation on the role of LCMTs. Without any specific action needed from them or needed anticipated action from LCMTs, we agreed to meet after the first of the year and see where we go. I believe that is Maine's update.

CHAIR ZOBEL: Thanks, Carl. Are there any questions for either Bob, myself or Carl? Emerson Hasbrouck.

MR. HASBROUCK: Can I just ask Carl directly or should I bring my question to you?

CHAIR ZOBEL: You can ask the questions of Carl, thanks.

MR. HASBROUCK: I'm encouraged to hear about the change in the size of the panel. Is that Step 1? Are there further actions that are being considered, or you've got to that point and that is it for now?

MR. WILSON: There are additional conversations around support of lobster hatcheries. There has been a CDS request for the University of Maine to spearhead an initiative around lobster hatcheries. For now this is where we're at. My intention and our intention in the state is to continue the temporal conversations so that we're informed and ready to move with the next stock assessment coming forward.

CHAIR ZOBEL: Any other questions? Doug Grout.

MR. DOUGLAS E. GROUT: Just a quick one. Was there any rationale behind those particular dimensions and going bigger? How did you decide on that particular increase?

MR. WILSON: It was simply by; you could use the same escape vent and the method of attachment by simply clipping out one additional mesh. It was supposed to be a very simple, common-sense way to improve what happens to traps when they're lost. It is something that can be done at sea, and the intention was that it was going to have a two-year implementation point so people kind of can do this as they work through the gear over the next couple years.

CHAIR ZOBEL: Anything else? Seeing no other questions from the Board.

UPDATE ON REQUEST FOR INFORMATION FOR ALTERNATIVE GEAR MARKING FRAMEWORK

CHAIR ZOBEL: Moving on to Alli Murphy, who is going to give us an update on the Request for Information for Alternative Gear Marking Framework. On to you, Alli.

MS. MURPHY: I want to thank you and the Board for your patience and routinely maintaining some time on your agenda for this update, for when it finally published. I'm also really sorry that I wasn't able to rearrange my travel plans to be there in person with you all today. We'll dive in. As always, I'll start with a little background here. On demand and alternatively marked gear research has been conducted in the Greater Atlantic Region since 2019.

They are all recalled from past updates from my Science Center colleagues at NOAA Fisheries just working with industry, with states and other organizations to develop and test different gear designs with the goal of restoring fishing access to areas that currently function as fishery closures. The purpose of any of these tools is to provide a voluntary option that fishermen can use, or not, depending on whatever works best for them.

Such research unlocks various other tools, options like dynamically removing end lines if whales are present as well. Research really accelerated under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, which required NMFS to, and I'll quote, "in consultation with effected states and fishing industry participants, promote the innovation and adoption of gear technologies."

NOAA Fisheries has provided resources, and continues to work with fishermen, manufacturers, state agencies, fishery management organizations and other partners, to explore the benefits and limitations of these technologies. You'll also all recall that the New England and Mid Atlantic Councils initiated the Joint Alternative Gear Marking Framework, to consider whether to recommend to NOAA Fisheries to allow the use of fixed gear without physical surface markers in Council managed fisheries if an equivalent Alternative marking method was used.

NMFS was also considering whether to similarly modify the federal lobster regulations, along the lines of what the Council may have been considering. Council action was postponed, pending additional input from stakeholders, including the fishing industry. NMFS similarly postponed action with respect to the lobster/Jonah crab fisheries to gather additional input and to ensure consistency among actions.

Keep in mind, that regulations would need to be modified for other potential solutions such as fishing with only one end marked with surface markings, dynamic changes to surface markings like removing one end line. There could be value to this action moving forward, that action or a similar action moving forward as well.

Back to this request for information. This is a key step of the ongoing effort to comply with the mandates of the Consolidated Appropriations Act. But I'll also note that it does not limit NOAA Fisheries ability to consider other innovative gears or management activities, and various management options are being considered. With that I'll go on to more about this RFI.

This request for information seeks information specific to program design, utility, limitations, technical capabilities of alternatively marked gear. It contains questions and associated context that were developed with a focus on the Greater Atlantic Region and operational and management considerations.

However, we welcome feedback informed by experiences outside the region as well. It contains 52 questions organized under the 10 headings on the slide. But it also includes questions on other important considerations, including fishing with only one end using traditional surface markers, grappling, balancing cost versus complexity, potential need for future flexibility, et cetera.

Just quickly wanted to review how to comment. I've included the direct link that should bring you on the first bullet, it should bring you right to this request for information, and you should see on there the comment icon. You can also go to regulations.gov and type in the NOAA/NMFS 2026, 2080 in the search box, and that will bring you to the same place.

If you would like to submit a comment, you know click on that comment icon or some fields that are required to be filled out, so please check through those as appropriate. We're asking that you label your comments with the questions that you are responding to, just so we can kind of appropriately thin them.

Also wanted to note that both anonymous and non-anonymous comments will be accepted. The comment period closes on October 14, 2026; there is still a lot of time to think about this and submit responses. That's it. I am happy to answer any questions that you all might have. Thank you so much.

CHAIR ZOBEL: Thank you, very much, Alli. Out to the Board for any questions for Alli. Okay, no hands from the Board online or in the room. Go out to the public, since we have a few extra minutes here, if anybody has any questions for Alli. Okay, seeing no hands in the room or online for Alli. I guess I will just make one comment, since I have the mic here, Alli, and you said it yourself; 52 questions with 10 headings.

I got into the RFI in the Federal Register and I thought, whoa. If it overwhelmed me for a minute, it has definitely overwhelmed others. Just encouragement that if there is a way to summarize really important things, that NOAA Fisheries is really trying to get out of this as part of the outreach process. I think that would be valuable use of time.

ADJOURNMENT

CHAIR ZOBEL: That moves us on to Other Business for today. Is there any other business to come before the Board today? Seeing no other business; we are adjourned.

(Whereupon the meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m. on Tuesday, August 4, 2026)

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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American Lobster Management Objectives Process Steering Committee Report: *Recommendations for a Stakeholder Engagement Process to Identify Management Objectives for the Gulf of Maine/ Georges Bank Lobster Fishery*

November 2026

1 Introduction

The 2020 American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment results indicated that the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank (GOM/GBK) stock abundance was at record high levels. However, during the assessment, the American Lobster Technical Committee (TC) cautioned that if abundance levels declined from these record highs, there could be adverse impacts to the lobster industry and communities that depend on it, even before reaching the Abundance Limit reference point. To advise the American Lobster Management Board (Board) of these impacts, the TC recommended a new abundance reference point for the GOM/GBK stock: the Fishery/Industry Target, which would represent a point where decreased abundance from the record highs seen at the end of the 2020 assessment had the potential for negative socioeconomic impacts to the fishery. The TC acknowledged uncertainty in this reference point due to the lack of socioeconomic expertise included in the stock assessment process, and uncertainty about what levels of abundance would be ideal for sustainable industry performance and how performance changes as abundance declines below these levels. Thus, the TC recommended socioeconomic analyses be conducted following the stock assessment to proactively refine the target reference point and provide guidance on appropriate management actions, such as through a management strategy evaluation (MSE).

General management objectives were adopted in Amendment 3 to the Lobster Fishery Management Plan (FMP) in 1997. Since then, the resource and fishery have experienced significant changes. The TC advised that the development of modern consensus objective statements by the Board with input from industry would be critical to evaluating performance of strategies included in an MSE framework. Following the 2020 assessment, the Board tasked the TC with providing guidance on a lobster MSE but ultimately chose not to pursue this process at that time due, in part, to other ongoing activities affecting the industry.

In May 2023, the Board approved Addendum XXVII, which established a trigger mechanism to proactively increase protection of the GOM/GBK spawning stock before abundance levels approached the Abundance Limit reference point. Under Addendum XXVII, scheduled gauge and vent size changes would be triggered by a recruitment index declining below an established threshold representative of a 35% decline below the stock condition at the conclusion of the 2020 assessment. In October 2023, with updated data through 2022, the recruitment index declined

below the threshold, triggering the implementation of more restrictive gauge and vent sizes in subsequent years. Ultimately, the Board repealed the gauge and vent size changes through Addendum XXXII in October 2024 in response to significant concern from lobster industry members in the states of Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts regarding the potential economic impacts of increasing the minimum gauge size in LCMA 1 and about the uncertainty surrounding the implications for trade with Canada, which was not implementing similar management changes. No alternative management changes have been made in response to the recruitment index and states are currently discussing alternative conservation strategies to protect the long-term health of the resource.

Another benchmark stock assessment was published in October 2025 and found similar concerning patterns of declining abundance following time series highs at the end of the 2020 assessment. Specifically, GOM/GBK stock abundance had declined 34% since the terminal year of the 2020 stock assessment (2018) and fell below the Fishery/Industry Target from 2020-2022, indicating potential for degradation of economic conditions of the lobster industry. The TC strongly reiterated its recommendation for an MSE to better understand socioeconomic status and concerns and evaluate strategies that would have buy-in from industry, unlike those included in Addendum XXVII, to prevent further declines towards biological thresholds. Again, the TC highlighted the need to clearly identify management objectives across all stakeholders as a critical first step of a successful MSE. At the February 2026 Board meeting, the TC recommended the Board form a steering committee for scoping and coordinating all parts of an MSE process, including elicitation of management objectives as a first step. The TC emphasized that while a management objectives process (MOP) is a necessary precursor to initiating an MSE, it would not commit the Board to pursuing a full MSE process and would have beneficial outcomes regardless of whether an MSE is conducted.

In response to these TC recommendations, the Board formed a Steering Committee (SC) to:

1) Review existing management objectives, as outlined in Amendment 3 and subsequent addenda, relative to the current GOMGBK stock status, and social/economic conditions facing the fishery today.
2) Develop a process that would clearly identify new management objectives (across all stakeholders), to better understand socioeconomic status and concerns, and to identify potential management tools.

States nominated SC members following the Board meeting and membership was approved by the Board at its May 2026 meeting. Membership is provided in Appendix A. The SC met via webinar on June 8, August 31, and September 21, 2026. Over the course of these meetings, the SC reviewed management objective processes conducted for Atlantic menhaden and horseshoe crab as examples, types of objectives in structured decision-making processes, existing American lobster management objectives, and made recommendations on a MOP for American lobster. Types of objectives reviewed included fundamental objectives, means objectives, and operational objectives. Fundamental objectives are the high-level ends to achieve through management and describe what stakeholders intrinsically value. Means objectives describe the means by which fundamental objectives will be achieved. Operational objectives represent conversion of the above

conceptual objectives (fundamental and means objectives) to measurable objectives by pairing them with performance metrics that measure how well an action performs with respect to achieving an objective.

The SC reviewed existing American lobster management objectives, focusing on perpetual, high level objectives in Amendment 3 not inclusive of more tactical/reactive objectives established in later management documents. The SC identified gaps in these objectives including (but not necessarily inclusive of) socioeconomic and economic vision for the fishery, international relationships, fishery effort levels and controls, and spatial management measure consistency. The SC recommended a MOP start fresh with a blank slate for objectives but noted this preliminary recommendation should be evaluated with professional facilitators during planning of the process. Ultimately, the SC made recommendations for conducting a MOP that are described in the following report.

2 Process Goal

The overall goal of the MOP is identification of comprehensive objectives with broad support across stakeholders for future management of the GOM/GBK fishery, both at a local and stockwide spatial scale. Objectives should include those that describe the desired vision for the resource and industry (fundamental objectives) and those that guide management in achieving this vision (means objectives). Objectives should be categorized as those that are measurable with existing information and those that need new information collected to be measurable in the future, with the guidance of subject matter experts participating in the process. The objectives would be provided in a report to the Board at the conclusion of the process.

The Board may consider the adoption of new management objectives through an Amendment to the FMP. These objectives would provide a foundation for future management of the GOM/GBK lobster fishery and allow for the identification of appropriate management tools and actions. For evaluation of management tools and actions, performance metrics will need to be identified for operationalizing the conceptual objectives identified during the MOP to measure achievement of these objectives. Simulation analyses can then be used to test various agreed-upon management tools and determine what strategies are most effective for achieving desired fishery objectives with explicit consideration of the trade-offs and risks associated with these strategies.

3 Process Recommendations

3.1 Structure and Goal of Stakeholder Meetings

The SC recommends that the MOP be carried out through a series of structured stakeholder meetings, sequentially, at three different spatial scales. The purpose of conducting meetings at various scales is to gather stakeholder input from all factions of the GOM/GBK fishery, recognizing that the operation, values, and needs of the fishery vary widely across different geographic areas. The SC identified three spatial scales, defined as follows:

1. Tier 1: Local scale
2. Tier 2: LCMA scale
3. Tier 3: Stockwide scale

Tier 1 meetings would be conducted first and would aim to focus on smaller geographic areas within the larger GOM/GBK fishery. The SC recommended 14 meetings to fully capture variation in the fishery (Table 1). Meetings would be conducted in each of the Maine lobster fishery management zones, as well as local meetings in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. One meeting would be dedicated to those fishing in the GOM/GBK fishery from Rhode Island and Connecticut. At the Tier 1 level, the SC recommends that participation be open to interested stakeholders, such as lobster fishers, dealers, and associated businesses.

Tier 2 meetings would be conducted after Tier 1 meetings are completed, to allow for the input from the Tier 1 meetings to be compiled and presented at the Tier 2 meetings. The SC recommends three Tier 2 meetings, one each for LCMA 1, LCMA 3, and LCMA OCC. It is recommended that these meetings be limited to a smaller number of participants to allow for more focused discussion, development, and refinement of management objectives.

A single Tier 3 meeting would be conducted following completion of the Tier 2 meetings, which would focus on identifying management objectives at the stockwide level. Again, the SC recommended this meeting be limited to a smaller number of participants representative of the variation across the GOM/GBK fishery. Tier 2 and 3 meetings should still be considered public, with non-participants allowed to listen to discussions and with time provided for public comments.

The overarching goal of each stakeholder meeting, regardless of scale, would be to produce a list of management objectives that is ranked or prioritized by the group of participants. The process for developing this list would likely be different for each tier, as described later in the report, and the sequential nature of the meetings would allow for Tier 2 and Tier 3 meetings to build on the outcomes from the previous tier. For example, Tier 2 and 3 meetings could start by reviewing the lists of objectives from the previous tier, then recommending changes to improve clarity and remove redundancies. It is possible that some management objectives put forward at the Tier 1 meetings would be more locally relevant; the Tier 2 and 3 meetings could also sort these objectives into stockwide versus local objectives. The SC also discussed that it could be useful to identify “fundamental” versus means “objectives” at the two higher Tiers.

After management objectives are developed from the Tier 3 meeting, the SC recommends that additional meetings be held at the Tier 1 level to report back on the outcomes from the Tier 2 and 3 meetings and receive feedback on stockwide objectives, but condensed to fewer meetings. The SC suggested meetings by statistical area level for LCMA 1, and one meeting each for LCMA 3 and OCC objectives. Feedback provided at these meetings would be provided for the Board’s consideration but would not alter the outcomes of the Tier 2 and 3 meetings.

Table 1. Proposed Meeting Structure

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 1 Loopback
ME Zone A ME Zone B ME Zone C ME Zone D ME Zone E ME Zone F ME Zone G NH LCMA 1 MA OCC MA LCMA 1 North MA LCMA 1 South LCMA 3 – Location 1 LCMA 3 – Location 2	LCMA 1 LCMA 3 LCMA OCC	GOM/GBK Stock	LCMA 1 – SA 511 LCMA 1 – SA 512 LCMA 1 – SA 513 LCMA 1 – SA 514 LCMA 3 LCMA OCC

3.2 Meeting Participants and Roles

When considering who would be the target participants in the MOP, the SC agrees that the process should include broad representation of the GOM/GBK lobster fishery and related industry stakeholders. Stakeholders would include not only harvesters, but also dealers, processors, shoreside support, and related businesses with a vested interest in the fishery. The SC noted the MOP should include a diversity of age groups, but that it is especially important to get input from younger and fully active harvesters that will be continuing to participate in the lobster fishery into the future. The SC also noted that the MOP should seek perspectives from various fishery interests, such as owner/operator fishermen, the larger corporate fleet, different geographic areas, Jonah crab harvesters, etc.

The SC recommends that the Tier 1 meetings should provide an opportunity for any fishery stakeholder to participate in identifying and ranking objectives. Thus, these would be considered open meetings where participation is not limited to select individuals. For the Tier 2 and 3 meetings, the SC agreed that the meeting participants should be limited to a subset of stakeholders that would be selected to represent the various fishery interests. It was noted that limiting the group to 10-15 people is more effective for working meetings.

For the Tier 2 and 3 meetings, the SC suggests that the participants should be selected by their peers and the groups they represent as much as possible, as opposed to being selected by managers or the SC through an application process. In Maine, zone council members are elected, and thus may be good representatives of their local fisheries, but not all areas have similar elected roles. The SC discussed that Tier 2 and 3 participants could be identified by the Tier 1 participants. For example, one person from each Tier 1 meeting could be nominated to represent that group at the Tier 2 meeting level to represent views from others in their local area. Industry groups could also nominate individuals to participate in Tier 2 and 3 meetings. The SC does not recommend that

LCMT members become the default participants for Tier 2 meetings because they are selected by states and may not represent all areas within the LCMA. However, the SC noted it is likely that LMCT members will be involved because they are generally more familiar and engaged in management discussions. The SC recommends the participants in the Tier 3 meeting fully represent the diversity within the GOM/GBK fishery seen in the Tier 1 level.

The SC agrees that if participants are selected by their peers for the Tier 2 and 3 meetings, it would be beneficial to develop a participant agreement for the selected individuals. The purpose of the agreement would be to ensure the participants accept their role and responsibilities for these meetings, make a commitment to fully engage, and acknowledge that participating may require some in-kind contribution in terms of forgone fishing time.

Regarding the role of managers and technical staff in the MOP, the SC agrees that they should attend the Tier 1 meetings in an informational capacity. Their role would be to provide background and contextual information when needed, but not to provide personal views on the management objectives being discussed. The SC noted that subject matter experts outside those involved in traditional stock assessment and management processes (i.e., economists, social scientists) will need to be recruited and involved in the process to provide guidance on available information content to address objectives. The SC sees there being more of a role for managers during the Tier 2 and 3 meetings, where it may be beneficial for managers to participate in helping identify feasibility, conflicting ideas, challenges, etc. associated with various management objectives.

While the MOP would be addressing management objectives for the US lobster fishery, the SC recommends that the Canadian lobster industry and fishery management bodies be made aware that the process is occurring. Canadian counterparts should be provided notice of meetings or summaries of meeting outcomes so they can stay informed on how discussions in the US are progressing and any potential changes that may impact Canadian fisheries in the future.

3.3 Meeting Timing and Locations

When considering the timing and location of stakeholder meetings, the SC made several general recommendations but noted that it would be beneficial to get input from the facilitator and industry members before finalizing any meeting details.

First, the SC recommends that the Tier 1 meetings be held at local state agency or industry association facilities to reduce costs, but that the Tier 2 and 3 meetings could be held at “neutral” locations such as hotel meeting spaces. When selecting meeting locations, geographic accessibility for the participants should be prioritized.

The timing of meetings should also consider input from the facilitator and stakeholder participants. Accessibility for participants should again be prioritized, with meeting dates and times selected to minimize participants’ time away from fishing or other jobs. To maximize stakeholders’ ability to participate in the meetings, they should be scheduled at least three months in advance, but ideally four to six months in advance.

The SC suggested durations for the different Tiers of meetings but noted that these could change depending on input from the facilitator. Tier 1 meetings would likely be scheduled for several hours

to a half day. Tier 2 meetings may require two days, and Tier 3 meetings may require two to three days.

The SC recommends holding virtual sessions before the in-person meetings occur, during which participants would become familiar with the meeting goals, process, and expectations. This would allow for in-person meeting time to focus on productive discussions.

3.4 Facilitation Needs

The SC strongly recommends that a professional third-party facilitator or facilitators be contracted to conduct meetings and help design the MOP process. A third-party facilitator would provide a neutral environment and effective conduct of the meetings to achieve objectives. The SC recommends contracting with a team of two facilitators as opposed to one individual to balance personal dynamics and manage large plenary or breakout groups at meetings.

It is recommended that the responsibilities of the facilitator(s) would include:

- Development of outreach materials and presentations to inform the public about the MOP purpose and objectives and pre-meeting information for participants
- Development of meeting format and approach for identifying new management objectives and incorporating existing management objectives into the process
- Facilitation of all stakeholder meetings. The SC acknowledges the cost of facilitation for all meetings but believes this is critical to the success of the MOP.
- Development and presentation of a final report on the MOP to the Board

Ideally, the facilitator(s) for this MOP would have the following qualifications:

- Experience with structured decision making and/or consensus-based decision making
- Experience in the realm of fisheries management
- Knowledge of the diversity of the lobster industry

The recommended process for selecting and hiring a facilitator would be to develop and release a request for proposals (RFP). The RFP could be developed using information from this report. The RFP should be sent in a general press release and directly to known facilitation groups. The SC would be responsible for developing criteria and evaluating the received proposals. Based on these evaluations a proposal would be selected.

To better understand and evaluate costs, the SC noted that it may be helpful to request that proposals include cost estimates for two scenarios: one including the facilitation of all three tiers of stakeholder meetings, and one with facilitation of Tier 2 and 3 only.

3.5 Outreach and Preparation for Meetings

The SC discussed what types of outreach and preparation should be conducted before beginning the MOP. As a first step, and as early as possible after a decision is made to pursue the MOP, the SC recommends that general outreach be conducted with the goal of raising awareness among lobster fishery stakeholders about the MOP. Outreach efforts would aim to inform all industry stakeholders about the process the Board and states are planning to undertake, the approximate

timeline, how people can participate, and expected outcomes. Providing ample notice about the MOP will allow the greatest opportunity for stakeholders to participate in meetings and contribute to the MOP.

Outreach should be a collaborative effort between ASMFC, NOAA, state agencies, and industry associations. All parties should take responsibility for informing their respective stakeholders and encouraging participation. Outreach could occur via webinar sessions, presentations at management and industry meetings, and press releases.

Leading up to Tier 1 meetings, a notice should be provided to target participants to inform them about the upcoming stakeholder meeting, the meeting objectives, and the expectations of participants. Once participants have been determined for the Tier 2 and 3 meetings, the SC recommends holding educational webinars for selected participants to go over the objectives and goals of the workshop, expectations of participants, review of existing lobster management objectives, some general structured decision-making terminology (e.g., fundamental objectives, means objectives, performance metrics), and the expected outcomes of the process and how it will be used to inform future management. The session would also allow participants to ask questions about the process in advance of the meetings. The SC recommends that attending the educational webinar or viewing a recording, as well as reviewing background materials, should be required as a condition of participation in the Tier 2 and 3. This could be included in the participant agreement described previously.

4 Additional Considerations

Through the course of the SC meetings, several topics were raised that should be considered by the Board and facilitators if the Board decides to proceed with an MOP:

- ***Professional facilitators***: The SC does not believe elicitation of stakeholder input will be as effective if meeting leaders are not trained in facilitation and strongly recommends professional facilitators for meetings at all spatial levels despite the trade-off of high costs.
- ***Avoid surveys***: SC members described industry burnout with surveys eliciting feedback and recommend survey use in the MOP be minimized or avoided, if possible. The SC recommended participation at local meetings be open to all stakeholders to provide equal opportunity for providing input on management objectives.
- ***Decision processes***: Some SC members did not favor use of the terminology “consensus” in the decision-making process. There is a belief true consensus is unlikely to be reached in many situations and often only represents a majority opinion without acknowledgment of the minority opinion. The SC favored ranking or voting processes as more transparent representation of stakeholder input and characterization of support.
- ***Stakeholder engagement***: SC members suggested stakeholder engagement may suffer without clear communication in advance of how the MOP and its outcomes may affect the industry in the future. The industry tends to engage more readily with management actions that present a pending, tangible impact to the industry.
- ***Process conflicts***: The SC identified at least two major processes including overlapping participants that pose potential conflicts with the proposed MOP. The next benchmark

stock assessment is scheduled to begin in 2028 and conclude in 2030. Additionally, the ongoing Atlantic Large Whales Take Reduction Team process is expected to meet for deliberations on take reduction measures affecting the lobster fishery in late 2026 and 2027.

5 Cost Estimation

The SC considered the potential costs associated with an MOP and attempted to estimate total costs based on the recommendations developed in this report. However, the SC acknowledges the possibility for higher realized costs and recommends the Board account for this by identifying a contingency fund. Major direct costs anticipated for the process are professional facilitator fees, meeting space costs, travel reimbursements, and food and beverage for meeting participants. Indirect costs not included in cost estimates include staff salary (Commission, state and federal resource agencies).

The estimated meeting costs (space and travel) are $112,859 (Table 2). Meeting costs are estimated based on average FY 2027 Federal per diem rates for Northeast locations. States are confident that no-cost meeting spaces can be secured for Tier 1 and Tier 1 loopback meetings, so meeting space costs (inclusive of meeting beverage service) would only pertain to Tier 2 and Tier 3 meetings. The SC recommended food and beverage be provided to participants during Tier 1 and Tier 1 loopback meetings. The estimated cost for professional facilitators is $110,400 and includes 552 total work hours (Table 3). Average hourly rates for a professional facilitator were estimated at $200 based on proposals submitted for other recent facilitation-based RFPs in Commission and Council activities.

Table 2. Estimated meeting costs for the lobster MOP.

Meetings	# Reimbursed Participants per Meeting	# Reimbursed Drivers	# Reimbursed Fliers	# Meetings	#Days per Meeting	Travel Reimbursements	Meeting Space Costs	Food and Beverage Costs	Total Costs
Tier 1	3	0	3	13	1	$15,733	$0	$1,300	$17,033
Tier 2	23	20	3	3	2	$45,844	$12,000	$0	$57,844
Tier 3	28	25	3	1	3	$25,118	$6,750	$0	$31,868
Tier 1 Loopback	2	0	2	6	1	$5,514	$0	$600	$6,114
									$112,859

*Assumes no state agency staff travel costs.
**Travel costs assume multiple meetings conducted during each travel event

Table 3. Estimated professional facilitator costs and proposed distribution of work hours according to example process timeline in Appendix B.

Task	Hours	# Facilitators	Spring 2027	Summer 2027	Fall 2027	Winter 2027/2028	Spring 2028	Summer 2028	Fall 2028	Winter 2028/2029	Costs
1. Process planning	24	2	24								$ 9,600
2. Outreach	12	2	12								$ 4,800
3. Local meeting planning	12	2		12							$ 4,800
4. Local meeting facilitation	52	2			52						$ 20,800
5. Regional meeting planning	12	2				12					$ 4,800
6. Regional meeting facilitation	48	2				48					$ 19,200
7. Stockwide meeting planning	12	2					12				$ 4,800
8. Stockwide meeting facilitation	24	2					24				$ 9,600
9. Local loopback meeting planning	12	2						12			$ 4,800
10. Local loopback meeting facilitation	24	1							24		$ 4,800
11. Documentation	48	2				16	8	8		16	$ 19,200
12. Dissemination	8	1								8	$ 1,600
Totals	544		36	12	52	76	44	20	24	24	$ 108,800

6 Next Steps

If the Board decides to move forward with an MOP considering the recommendations in this report, the immediate next step would be to search for and identify possible funding sources for the MOP. If a grant application is required, the SC could assist with developing proposals for funding opportunities.

Once funding has been identified, the next step would be to develop an RFP to identify possible contractors for the facilitation of the process.

An example timeline for the recommended process is provided in Appendix B, which is meant to provide a sense of the time the full process will require. However, it is likely the schedule would be adjusted with input from the selected facilitator.

Appendix A. Steering Committee Membership

Name	Role	Affiliation
Carl Wilson	American Lobster Management Board (ME)	ME DMR
Renee Zobel	American Lobster Management Board (NH)	NHFG
Bob Glenn	American Lobster Management Board (MA)	MA DMF
Jason McNamee	American Lobster Management Board (RI)	RI DEM
Kathleen Reardon	American Lobster Technical Committee (ME)	ME DMR
Tracy Pugh	American Lobster Technical Committee (MA)	MA DMF
Burton Shank	American Lobster Technical Committee (NMFS)	NMFS NEFSC
Todd Guilfoos	Committee on Economics and Social Sciences	URI
John Drouin	ME Zone A Industry	New England Fishermen's Stewardship Association
Richard Howland	ME Zones B, C, D Industry	Maine Lobstermen’s Association
John Jordan Jr.	ME Zones E, F, G Industry	Maine Lobster Industry
Michael Flanigan	NH LMA 1 Industry	Seaview Lobster Company
Beth Casoni	MA LMA 1 Industry	Massachusetts Lobstermen’s Association
Brendan Adams	MA Outer Cape Cod Industry	Outer Cape Lobstermen’s Association
Hank Soule	Offshore LMA 3 Industry	Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen’s Association
Jeff Kipp	ASMFC Science Staff	ASMFC
Caitlin Starks	ASMFC Policy Staff	ASMFC

Appendix B. Example Process Timeline

November 2026	Develop RFP for Facilitator
December 2026	Release RFP
January 2027	Review facilitator proposals
February 2027	Hire facilitator(s)
February-March 2027	Initial meetings with facilitator(s) to plan out the process
April 2027	Begin initial outreach (presentations at board meetings, industry meetings, state councils, etc.)
June 2027	Identify local meetings and conduct outreach
July 2027	Schedule Tier 1 meetings
October 2027	Educational sessions for participants
November-December 2027	Conduct Tier 1 meetings
December 2027	Develop meeting summaries from Tier 1 meetings
December 2027	Select participants for Tier 2 meetings
December 2027	Schedule Tier 2 meetings
February 2028	Conduct Tier 2 meetings
February 2028	Develop meeting summaries from Tier 2 meetings
March 2028	Select participants for Tier 3 meeting
March 2028	Schedule Tier 3 meeting
May 2028	Conduct Tier 3 meeting
May 2028	Develop meeting summary from Tier 3 meeting
June 2028	Local loopback meeting planning
November 2028	Conduct local loopback meetings
December 2029	Develop final report
February 2029	Present results to American Lobster Management Board

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

American Lobster Management Objectives Process Steering Committee Meeting 1 Summary

Monday, June 8, 2026
2:00 - 5:00 p.m.

The Americal Lobster Management Objectives Process (MOP) Steering Committee (SC) met for its first meeting to begin addressing the items tasked by the American Lobster Management Board in its February 2026 motion:

> *Move to form a Steering Committee (SC) to:*
> *1. Review existing management objectives, as outlined in Amendment #3 and subsequent addenda, relative to the current GOMGBK stock status, and social/economic conditions facing the fishery today.*
> *2. Develop a process that would clearly identify new management objectives (across all stakeholders), to better understand socioeconomic status and concerns, and to identify potential management tools.*
> *Representation on the SC shall follow recommendations outlined in the January 20, 2026, Technical Committee memo. The SC will recommend a process for both tasks for the August 2026 Lobster Management Board.*

The meeting discussions are summarized below in the order of the agenda:

1. Welcome & Introductions

To start the meeting the members of the SC introduced themselves to the group. Staff provided guidelines for participating in the virtual meeting. All SC members were in attendance for the meeting, along with several other attendees (Appendix 1).

2. Steering Committee Purpose and Expected Products

Jeff Kipp provided an overview of the purpose and objectives of the SC, as outlined in the Board motion, along with expected products to be developed for the Board. The presentation also described the typical process for a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE), which includes three general steps: 1) definition of management objectives; 2) conducting an MSE to determine relative performance of possible management strategies; 3) possibility for subsequent iterative process(es) to refine objectives. It was emphasized that the scope of work for this SC is to recommend a process for the completion of step 1, but not to provide recommendations or perform work related to the subsequent steps. The SC tasks are to review the existing management objectives, as outlined in Amendment 3 to the Lobster Fishery Management Plan (FMP), and to develop a process that would clearly identify new management objectives. It was clarified that this process is focused on the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank (GOMGBK) stock region and will not include the Southern New England region.

The SC discussed that the present task will not address the identification of management strategies, but the SC may recommend the timing during the MOP for discussing possible management approaches and getting stakeholder input.

3. Review Existing American Lobster Fishery Management Objectives

Caitlin Starks presented the management goal and objectives currently in Amendment 3 to the FMP. The SC discussed whether the recommended MOP should aim for the same level of specificity of these objectives. It was noted that objectives could be classified as "conceptual" or "means" objectives, with conceptual objectives being overarching objectives and means objectives being more specific and quantifiable statements of how conceptual objectives will be achieved. It was agreed that examples could be provided during the next meeting to provide the group with a better sense of the goal for this process, but that the SC should strive to address both of these objective types through this process to streamline a potential MSE later on. Jason McNamee noted it could be beneficial to separate objectives that can be quantifiably tested in an MSE and those that cannot. Bob Glen noted that some of the existing objectives conflict, and there is a lack of socioeconomic context in existing objectives that would need to be addressed.

4. Review of Other Management Objectives Process Examples

Ecosystem Management Objectives Workshop (EMOW)

Shanna Madsen presented on the EMOW that was conducted for Atlantic Menhaden in 2015. This process included convening stakeholders to define management objectives and associated measures of performance. The stakeholders met for an in-person workshop and provided input on fundamental (i.e., conceptual) and means objectives, as well as the performance measures that should be used to evaluate whether the objectives are achieved by management strategies. She noted that there has not been a full MSE for menhaden, but the objectives developed were helpful for guiding management.

Lessons learned from this process that could be helpful for the SC to consider included:

- The group size should be limited to a number that a facilitator can manage in a workshop, but there needs to be representation of important groups and perspectives.
- It can be challenging for the group to understand the purpose and scope of the workshop and stay focused on that.
- In advance of the workshop, the facilitator met with the stakeholders specifically to clearly identify goals and expected outcomes of workshop, which was very helpful.
- Meeting in-person versus over webinar is critical.
- It was very valuable to establish a strong timeline for project milestones and deliverables.

Additional materials from the EMOW process and development will be shared with the SC for reference after the call.

Horseshoe Crab Management Objectives Workshop

Caitlin Starks presented on recent stakeholder engagement processes carried out by the Horseshoe Crab Management Board: 1) a management objectives workshop in July 2024, and 2) a longer engagement process from September 2025 to May 2026, which was focused on developing recommendations to revise the values-based components of the Adaptive Resource Management model to better align with current stakeholder values.

Lessons learned from this process that could be helpful for the SC to consider were:

- It was beneficial to have the participants, as part of the application to be involved, sign an agreement to commit to participation guidelines, including attending all meetings and reviewing all background materials.
- Third-party facilitators bring fresh perspectives and could build trust with stakeholders when they do not have historical involvement with fishery and associated biases.
- Meeting location(s) and timing should consider accessibility for all stakeholders and accommodate their availability as much as possible.
- Trade-offs between group size and depth of discussion must be considered and weighed based on the goals of the meeting. Larger groups are very difficult to bring to consensus.
- It was beneficial for the facilitator to meet with some participants in small groups or individually before the workshop to better understand their specific perspectives and concerns.
- Establishing clear meeting objectives and preparing the participants in advance for the discussions and goals of the workshop was critical to success.

It was noted that the format and structure of this process for lobster management objectives may be very different from the menhaden and horseshoe crab examples. The Lobster Technical Committee suggestion for this process was to start with a series of meetings at smaller localized scales (e.g., state management zones) to capture as much input as possible, then have meetings with smaller groups of representatives across larger areas to refine that input.

Jason McNamee noted that in the Atlantic herring MSE process, he observed that there was a lack of continuity in participants across meetings, which created challenges for merging different ideas that emerged from each meeting.

Several SC members noted that it would be important to get input and guidance from a facilitator on developing the framework for this process.

5. Discussion: Identifying gaps in existing management objectives given social and economic conditions facing the fishery today

The SC discussed the current management objectives and noted several gaps that are not addressed. Below are the main topic areas identified by the SC as current gaps in the objectives:

- Socioeconomic vision for the fishery, including an improved understanding of baseline, current, and ideal conditions, and differences at local scales.

- Economics of the fishery
- Understanding relationships between the US and Canadian fisheries and trade, and how this should be addressed in objectives
- Consideration of trade-offs between uniformity and flexibility in management measures across areas.
- Fishery effort, including mechanisms for controlling it and current levels
- Consideration of different spatial scales for management (i.e., smaller scales than stock or LCMA)
- Objectives around communities (e.g., thinking about how whole communities are impacted by management, considering fishery reliance, equity, stability, etc.)

The SC suggested that objectives could be categorized into groups based on the focus and what they are intended to achieve, such as effort, fishing mortality, economics, etc. The SC noted that it seems like there is a critical need for individuals with expertise in lobster trade (e.g., dealers, wholesalers, etc.) and an understanding of trade impacts and interactions with Canada to be part of this process. It was suggested that the SC could look into other examples of fishery management in the US where Canada is involved, such as Pacific halibut and northeast groundfish.

6. Discussion: How to incorporate existing management objectives into current management objectives process

The SC discussed possible approaches for incorporating the current management objectives into a process to identify new objectives for management. Two approaches were suggested, but it was noted there may be other options: 1) a "blank slate" approach where the current management objectives are not presented, and stakeholders provide new objectives, or 2) presenting the current management objectives as a starting point and discussing how they should be modified.

Several SC members supported the blank slate approach and felt that it would allow for more valuable input and fresh ideas. The SC generally agreed that it would prefer to determine the best approach with guidance from a facilitator. It was noted that the SC providing a facilitator with a vision of where we are and where we want to get to would help support a facilitator get us to our end goal.

One SC member suggested using the results of the recent industry survey in Maine to frame discussions. It was also noted that it seems like the timeframe for this process could overlap with the timeframe for the upcoming Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (ALWTRT) process, and that it may create challenges if these two processes are happing simultaneously.

7. Next Steps and Other Business

The SC discussed agenda items for next meeting, including a deeper dive into the difference between fundamental and means objectives with examples, and how to involve LCMTs in this process. Several SC members felt strongly that the LCMTs need to be reconstituted and involved early on in the MOP.

The SC also reviewed a draft list of questions to guide the development of its recommendations (Appendix 2). These questions are meant to identify the information the SC should gather and provide to the Board in its report. The group added additional questions to the list related to appropriate meeting duration for participant learning curves, LCMT involvement, participant preparation, and ways to get input before meetings.

Before the next meeting, ASMFC staff will provide draft meeting minutes to the SC, create a Sharefile account for sharing meeting materials, and poll for the next meeting date.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

American Lobster Management Objectives Process Steering Committee Meeting 2 Summary

Monday, August 31, 2026
2:00 - 5:00 p.m.

The Americal Lobster Management Objectives Process (MOP) Steering Committee (SC) met for its second meeting to address the items tasked by the American Lobster Management Board in its February 2026. The Board motion was to form a Steering Committee to review existing management objectives relative to the current GOMGBK stock status, and social/economic conditions facing the fishery today, and to develop a process that would clearly identify new management objectives (across all stakeholders) to better understand socioeconomic status and concerns, and to identify potential management tools. The meeting discussions are summarized below in the order of the agenda:

1. Welcome & Introductions

To start the meeting the members of the SC introduced themselves to the group. Staff provided guidelines for participating in the virtual meeting. Most SC members were in attendance for the meeting, along with several other attendees (Appendix 1).

2. Understanding Fundamental Versus Means Objectives

As requested during the first SC meeting, Jeff Kipp provided an overview of the differences between two types of objectives used in structured decision making: fundamental and means objectives. Fundamental objectives are those that reflect the ultimate ends we are trying to achieve. Means objectives address the possible ways of achieving fundamental objectives. It is possible to have many layers of means objectives addressing a fundamental objective, and it is possible for one means objective to serve multiple fundamental objectives. This information will be important to provide to meeting participants to develop management objectives for the lobster fishery.

3. Review Strawman Recommendations for Management Objectives Process (MOP)

Caitlin Starks reviewed a document developed by ASMFC staff containing a set of strawman recommendations for the SC's consideration to facilitate discussion and development of MOP recommendations. The strawman recommendations expanded on the list of questions to guide the development of recommendations developed for the previous meeting. The document included suggestions related to the proposed meeting spatial scale and format, meeting objectives, stakeholder representation, meeting participants and roles, facilitator role and expertise, and outreach and preparation for meetings. These served as a starting point for the SC to further refine recommendations to the Lobster Board.

4. Refine recommendations for MOP

SC members discussed their vision and recommendations for an effective MOP for the GOMGBK lobster fishery. These will be incorporated into the final report. Several important

takeaways from this discussion that will impact the MOP recommendations are summarized here:

- The SC recommended three tiers of sequential meetings: Tier 1: Local level meetings, Tier 2: LCMA-level meetings, and Tier 3: One stock level meeting. It was agreed that there should be a follow-up round of meetings at the local level to review the resulting management objective recommendations.
- The SC emphasized the importance of professional, third-party facilitation for all of the stakeholder meetings to provide a neutral environment and effective conduct of the meetings to achieve objectives. The group acknowledged the cost but agreed that this is critical to the success of the MOP.
- While the group recognized the challenges associated with large meeting sizes, the SC generally agreed that the Tier 1 meetings should be open to anyone who wishes to participate. Tier 2 and 3 meetings could be limited to a smaller group of participants nominated by the stakeholders.
- When framing meeting objectives with stakeholders, industry participants on the SC advised that the term "consensus" should be avoided because of its negative association with previous management processes.
- The SC agreed that it will be critical to clearly communicate the purpose of this process, meeting objectives, and how the outcomes will be used by management to participants in advance of stakeholder meetings. Pre-process outreach webinars are recommended.
- The SC discussed the role that the Lobster Conservation Management Teams (LCMTs) could play in the MOP. They suggested that LCMT members will participate in the MOP, but that the LCMT bodies do not need to serve a specific role, and that it would be more appropriate for LCMTs to advise during the consideration of management measures, which could follow the MOP.
- The SC previously considered whether a survey could be used to gather information from full breadth of stakeholders. However, industry participants on the SC advised that stakeholders have been asked to participate in too many surveys in recent years and would be unlikely to respond to another.

5. Next Steps

The SC discussed that it should address the following items at the next meeting:

- Revisit the strawman document to finish discussions on remaining items
- Review a draft outline of the final report prepared by ASMFC staff and assign writing tasks to SC members
- Review data from previous facilitation project proposals and state meeting costs to develop cost estimates for the recommended MOP

The next meeting will be scheduled for Monday, September 21, from 2-5 pm.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Appendix 1.

August 31, 2026 Meeting Attendance

Steering Committee:
Beth Casoni
Bob Glenn
Brendan Adams
Carl Wilson
Hank Soule
Jason McNamee
Jeff Kipp
John Drouin
John Jordan
Kathleen Reardon
Renee Zobel
Richard Howland
Todd Guilfoos
Tracy Pugh

Additional Attendees:
Allison Murphy
Lorraine Morris
Raymond Kane

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

TO: **American Lobster Management Board**

FROM: **American Lobster Technical Committee**

DATE: **September 16, 2026**

SUBJECT: **American Lobster Data Update through 2025**

An annual Data Update process between American lobster stock assessments was recommended during the 2020 stock assessment to more closely monitor changes in stock abundance. The objective of this process is to present information—including any potentially concerning trends—that could support additional research or consideration of changes to management. Data sets updated during this process are generally those that indicate exploitable lobster stock abundance conditions expected in subsequent years and include:

- Young-of-year (YOY) settlement indicators
- Trawl survey indicators, including recruit abundance (71-80 mm carapace length lobsters) and survey encounter rate
- Ventless trap survey (VTS) sex-specific abundance indices (53 mm+ carapace length lobsters)
- Combined recruit abundance (71-80 mm carapace length lobsters) from Gulf of Maine (GOM) state spring and fall trawl surveys and VTS

VTS abundance indices are presented here in addition to several abundance indicators used in the stock assessment. During its October 2025 meeting, the American Lobster Management Board tasked the Technical Committee (TC) to include a combined recruit index for the GOM/GBK stock, similar to what was used in Addendum XXVII, as a part of future Data Updates to the Board. The combined recruit index presented in this update is consistent with the recruit index established in Addendum XXVII and averages relative recruit abundance across: 1) a combined Maine/New Hampshire and Massachusetts spring trawl survey three-year running average index, 2) a combined Maine/New Hampshire and Massachusetts fall trawl survey three-year running average index, and 3) a model-based VTS three-year running average index. As determined when developing the index for Addendum XXVII, individual survey indices are scaled to their 2017 values so indices are on a consistent scale before combining into the combined recruit index. All data are from the Gulf of Maine sub-stock, so this index is presented with the Gulf of Maine sub-stock indicators.

For all indicators other than the combined recruit index, an updated status based on the mean value over the most recent five years (2021-2025) is provided for each time series, for comparison to the five-year means provided at the end of the most recent stock assessment (2019-2023). Indicator status (negative, neutral, or positive – see table below) was determined relative to the percentiles of the stock assessment time series excluding the final five years used to determine status in the stock assessment (i.e., 1st year of the data set through 2018). Annual data points are presented in figures as shapes that indicate the status of the annual data point. A dashed red vertical line separates new data added in the current Data Update from data previously presented. A solid red horizontal line indicates the current five-year mean used as status for comparison to the assessment status. This line is broken where

missing data points occur during the five-year period. See Section 5 in the 2025 stock assessment report for more detail on indicator calculations.

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

For the combined recruit index, the annual index values represent proportional change of the running three-year average from the peak three-year average (2015-2017). For example, the 2025 index value represents proportional change of the 2023-2025 average from the 2015-2017 average. The proportional changes in the combined index are expected to approximate comparable changes in overall future abundance of the stock. For more details on the combined recruit index calculations, see Addendum XXVII.

Note that updated five-year means during the 2025 assessment for several trawl survey-based indicators remain impacted by COVID-19 survey terminations. Updated five-year means during the 2025 assessment and updated in this Data Update are also impacted by additional (unrelated to COVID-19) survey terminations for the NEFSC trawl survey in spring 2023 and fall 2025 and the CT trawl survey in spring and fall 2025. See the appendix for details on data changes throughout previous Data Update. Below are the results of updates by sub-stock.

Gulf of Maine (GOM)

Overall, Gulf of Maine indicators show a mix of conditions that are primarily neutral with marginal changes and variability since the stock assessment. Some brief improvements observed in the previous update reverted with this update, while the combined recruit index increased above the value in the terminal year of the stock assessment (2023).

- YOY conditions are unchanged since the stock assessment (Table 1 and Figure 1).
    - All updated five-year means are neutral, including ME statistical area (SA) 512 which had briefly improved to positive during last year's update.
    - All available annual ME indicators declined in 2025.
    - Delays to the start of the ME survey in 2025 followed by poor weather and vessel and staffing issues led to reduced sampling and no samples collected from SA 511.
    - It is important to note that changes in YOY indicators are not expected to be detected in the recruit indicators for several years.
- Trawl survey recruit abundance indicators are unchanged since the stock assessment (Table 2 and Figure 2).
    - Three of the five-year means remain neutral and three remain positive.
    - Three annual indicators in 2025 were the highest since at least 2019 (NEFSC spring and MA spring and fall).
    - Five of six annual values are not available for 2020 due to COVID-19 sampling restrictions and the NEFSC survey value is not available for spring 2023 due to vessel issues or fall 2025 due to a lapse in appropriations.

- Trawl survey encounter rates show marginal deterioration, with one of six indicators changing to a poorer condition since the stock assessment (Table 3 and Figure 3).
    - One of the inshore updated five-year means changed from neutral to negative since the stock assessment. Both offshore means remain positive while the other three, all inshore, remain neutral.
    - The MA spring survey values have been negative in three of the four last years, the first negative observations across indicators since 2008.
    - Note that the ME/NH survey encounter rates (spring and fall) are still high within a narrow range relative to other surveys.
    - Five of six annual values are not available for 2020 due to COVID-19 sampling restrictions and the NEFSC survey value is not available for spring 2023 due to vessel issues and fall 2025 due to a lapse in appropriations.
- Ventless trap survey indicators are unchanged since the stock assessment (Table 4 and Figure 4).
    - Four updated five-year means are negative and four are neutral, including males in SA 513 which had briefly improved to positive during last year's update.
    - Statuses are variable across the stock with no clear latitudinal pattern.
    - The indicators for SA 513 have been more stable through time than the indicators for the other three areas.
- The combined recruit index increased slightly from lower values the previous two years (Figure 5).
    - The 2025 combined index value (2023-2025 average) is 0.61 which represents a 39% decline from the index peak in 2017 (2015-2017 average abundance of 1.00).
    - All individual indices contributing to the combined index show similar patterns across years.

Georges Bank (GBK)

Overall, Georges Bank indicators show a mix of positive and neutral conditions that are unchanged since the stock assessment. Note that there are no YOY or VTS indicators for this sub-stock area.

- Trawl survey recruit abundance indicators are unchanged since the stock assessment (Table 5 and Figure 6).
    - Both updated five-year means remain neutral.
    - Both indicators have been increasing since 2021.
    - No values are available for 2020 due to COVID-19 sampling restrictions, the spring value is not available for 2023 due to vessel issues, and the fall value for 2025 is not available due to a lapse in appropriations.
- Trawl survey encounter rates are unchanged since the stock assessment (Table 6 and Figure 7).
    - Both of the updated means remain positive.
    - The terminal annual values are at time series highs for both seasons (2025 in spring and 2024 in fall).
    - No values are available for 2020 due to COVID-19 sampling restrictions, the spring value is not available for 2023 due to vessel issues, and the fall value for 2025 is not available due to a lapse in appropriations.

Southern New England (SNE)

Overall, Southern New England indicators show continued negative conditions since the stock assessment. There were slight but consistent increases across RI indicators in 2025. However, most updated indicators are at or near time series lows.

- YOY conditions are unchanged since the stock assessment (Table 7 and Figure 8).
    - Updated status for the five-year means both remain negative.
    - No YOY have been caught during the MA survey for the last eleven years.
- Trawl survey recruit abundance indicators are unchanged since the stock assessment (Table 8 and Figure 9).
    - Updated status for the five-year means all remain negative.
    - The MA survey observed no recruit lobsters throughout 2025.
    - Six of eight annual values are not available for 2020 due to COVID-19 sampling restrictions, the NEFSC survey value is not available for spring 2023 due to vessel issues and fall 2025 due to a lapse in appropriations, and neither season value is available for the CT survey in 2025 due to boat operation obstacles.
- Trawl survey encounter rates are unchanged since the stock assessment (Table 9 and Figure 10).
    - Updated status for the five-year means all remain negative.
    - Six of eight annual values are not available for 2020 due to COVID-19 sampling restrictions, the NEFSC survey value is not available for spring 2023 due to vessel issues and fall 2025 due to a lapse in appropriations, and neither season value is available for the CT survey in 2025 due to boat operation obstacles.
- Ventless trap survey indices show slight deterioration, with one of four indicators changing to a poorer condition since the stock assessment (Table 10 and Figure 11).
    - Updated status for one five-year mean deteriorated from neutral to negative, while three remain negative.
    - It is important to note that the ventless trap survey has only taken place during depleted stock conditions coinciding with an adverse environmental regime, so interannual variability can be misleading without the context of a longer time series encompassing varying stock conditions.

Tables and Figures

Table 1. GOM abundance indicators: YOY indices.

YOUNG-OF-YEAR INDICES					
Survey	*ME*				*MA*
	511	*512*	*513 East*	*513 West*	*514*
1981					
1982					
1983					
1984					
1985					
1986					
1987					
1988					
1989			1.64		
1990			0.77		
1991			1.54		
1992			1.30		
1993			0.45		
1994			1.61		
1995		0.02	0.66		0.91
1996		0.05	0.47		
1997		0.05	0.46		0.10
1998		0.00	0.14		0.03
1999		0.04	0.65		0.43
2000	0.00	0.10	0.13	0.17	0.07
2001	0.24	0.43	2.08	1.17	0.39
2002	0.13	0.29	1.38	0.85	1.00
2003	0.22	0.27	1.75	1.22	0.75
2004	0.18	0.36	1.75	0.67	1.02
2005	1.42	1.25	2.40	1.12	1.06
2006	0.49	1.06	1.57	1.08	0.45
2007	0.59	1.11	2.23	1.30	1.27
2008	0.32	0.59	1.27	1.10	0.33
2009	0.66	0.33	1.51	0.48	0.17
2010	0.16	0.64	1.25	0.63	0.44
2011	0.41	0.98	2.33	0.90	0.58
2012	0.44	0.62	1.27	0.30	0.08
2013	0.09	0.22	0.34	0.12	0.00
2014	0.16	0.47	1.04	0.42	0.11
2015	0.15	0.22	0.42	0.03	0.00
2016	0.13	0.21	0.42	0.14	0.08
2017	0.21	0.36	0.65	0.23	0.08
2018	0.27	0.34	0.62	0.22	0.03
2019	0.43	0.64	0.94	0.45	0.06
2020	0.29	0.51	1.06	0.33	0.19
2021	0.06	0.12	0.38	0.28	0.28
2022	0.13	0.59	0.71	0.42	0.11
2023	0.44	0.95	1.43	0.57	0.22
2019-2023 mean	0.27	0.56	0.90	0.41	0.17
2024	0.50	0.82	1.15	0.59	0.08
2025		0.36	0.15	0.13	0.08
2021-2025 mean	0.28	0.57	0.76	0.40	0.15
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

Figure 1. GOM abundance indicators: YOY indices.

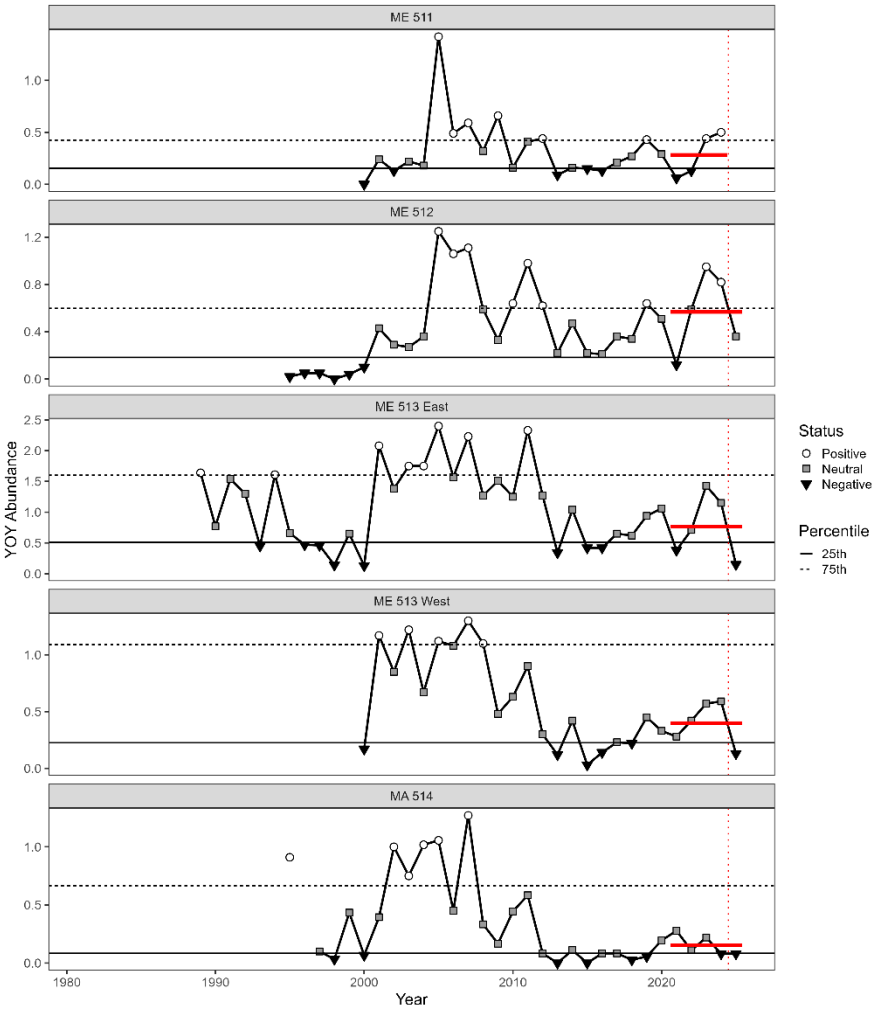


Table 2. GOM abundance indicators: trawl survey recruit abundance.

RECRUIT ABUNDANCE (SURVEY)						
Abundance of lobsters 71 - 80 mm CL (sexes combined)						
Survey	*NEFSC*		*ME/NH*		*MA 514*	
	Spring	*Fall*	*Spring*	*Fall*	*Spring*	*Fall*
1981	0.17	0.23			6.38	4.84
1982	0.29	0.43			2.74	3.85
1983	0.31	2.57			1.76	9.76
1984	0.22	2.57			2.15	6.13
1985	0.16	1.42			4.48	9.60
1986	0.29	3.33			3.01	3.80
1987	0.78	0.59			2.47	1.16
1988	0.78	2.94			2.52	4.12
1989	0.52	2.56			4.48	7.51
1990	0.37	2.88			6.11	15.36
1991	0.64	1.45			2.73	7.55
1992	0.54	1.39			4.31	8.95
1993	0.39	1.98			5.12	3.19
1994	0.17	5.39			7.59	13.77
1995	1.50	3.73			4.54	12.12
1996	0.78	4.74			3.09	12.10
1997	2.07	3.85			4.59	6.46
1998	1.64	2.66			4.50	7.47
1999	1.51	3.11			4.29	8.73
2000	4.84	3.10		24.09	4.24	8.87
2001	1.09	1.55	9.28	17.81	4.32	1.58
2002	1.14	1.97	22.00	22.41	3.43	5.00
2003	1.45	0.78	10.65	18.32	1.96	0.66
2004	0.87	2.75	7.55	12.29	2.46	1.30
2005	0.35	0.95	18.51	25.90	4.35	2.11
2006	2.23	1.29	18.07	18.30	6.09	5.30
2007	1.66	0.65	15.91	16.82	0.77	1.61
2008	1.01	2.47	17.88	31.61	2.54	6.12
2009	2.22	2.25	24.72	32.67	3.19	8.88
2010	1.38	2.46	17.66	37.35	2.22	9.39
2011	4.67	5.43	39.25	46.09	5.24	15.04
2012	5.12	3.10	36.55	37.12	3.03	11.30
2013	4.89	8.17	34.50	37.86	4.83	12.20
2014	5.20	9.70	50.79	41.95	3.35	7.06
2015	6.54	8.18	38.51	67.99	7.05	17.91
2016	6.04	10.21	50.83	60.07	13.61	17.41
2017	7.04	6.02	48.53	48.13	7.85	13.58
2018	6.35	6.25	42.77	55.84	5.25	25.69
2019	7.52	3.52	46.37	50.85	10.69	14.59
2020				34.65		
2021	4.64	3.69	32.86	32.19	6.39	10.16
2022	5.35	3.79	22.78	24.86	8.61	6.27
2023		7.62	25.08	32.09	4.51	8.78
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
2025	6.54		30.06	34.68	9.28	16.21
2021-2025 mean	5.15	5.22	28.78	32.91	6.29	9.54
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

Figure 2. GOM abundance indicators: trawl survey recruit abundance.

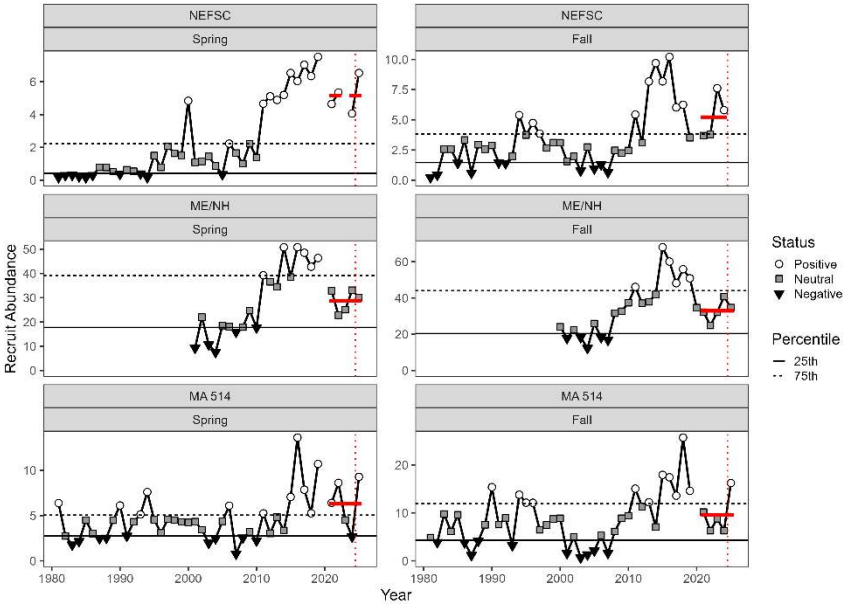


Table 3. GOM abundance indicators: trawl survey encounter rate.

SURVEY LOBSTER ENCOUNTER RATE						
Proportion of postive tows						
Survey	NEFSC		ME/NH		MA 514	
	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall
1981	0.45	0.28			0.86	0.73
1982	0.35	0.24			0.50	0.70
1983	0.30	0.38			0.76	0.76
1984	0.30	0.41			0.76	0.76
1985	0.38	0.49			0.71	0.67
1986	0.34	0.49			0.68	0.83
1987	0.42	0.24			0.85	0.54
1988	0.38	0.38			0.76	0.58
1989	0.37	0.43			0.78	0.95
1990	0.45	0.34			0.86	0.95
1991	0.41	0.32			0.87	0.94
1992	0.44	0.24			0.93	0.77
1993	0.44	0.41			0.97	0.82
1994	0.45	0.42			1.00	0.93
1995	0.43	0.44			0.93	0.93
1996	0.54	0.54			0.91	0.95
1997	0.64	0.38			0.93	0.86
1998	0.52	0.41			0.76	0.69
1999	0.52	0.42			0.73	0.91
2000	0.64	0.44		0.94	0.93	0.98
2001	0.56	0.42	0.88	0.86	0.93	0.72
2002	0.76	0.53	0.94	0.95	0.91	0.73
2003	0.69	0.49	0.92	0.85	0.82	0.55
2004	0.86	0.36	0.89	0.86	0.84	0.56
2005	0.77	0.38	0.95	0.91	0.95	0.67
2006	0.72	0.60	0.93	0.93	0.91	0.88
2007	0.72	0.43	0.97	0.85	0.51	0.54
2008	0.84	0.49	0.92	0.86	0.83	0.75
2009	0.82	0.63	0.98	0.92	0.89	0.87
2010	0.85	0.78	0.98	0.96	0.87	0.98
2011	0.83	0.74	0.99	0.96	0.89	0.85
2012	0.86	0.78	0.98	0.98	0.91	0.95
2013	0.87	0.73	1.00	0.93	0.96	0.95
2014	0.90	0.71	1.00	0.99	0.79	0.96
2015	0.93	0.69	1.00	0.96	0.98	0.95
2016	0.94	0.75	1.00	0.96	0.96	0.97
2017	0.86	0.82	0.99	0.94	0.84	0.98
2018	0.86	0.77	0.98	0.96	0.84	0.90
2019	0.83	0.71	0.99	0.95	0.85	0.93
2020				0.96		
2021	0.90	0.75	1.00	0.91	0.86	0.90
2022	0.79	0.76	0.98	0.90	0.78	0.85
2023		0.80	0.96	0.91	0.85	0.83
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
2025	0.87		0.98	0.93	0.71	0.91
2021-2025 mean	0.86	0.77	0.98	0.92	0.76	0.89
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

Figure 3. GOM abundance indicators: trawl survey encounter rate.

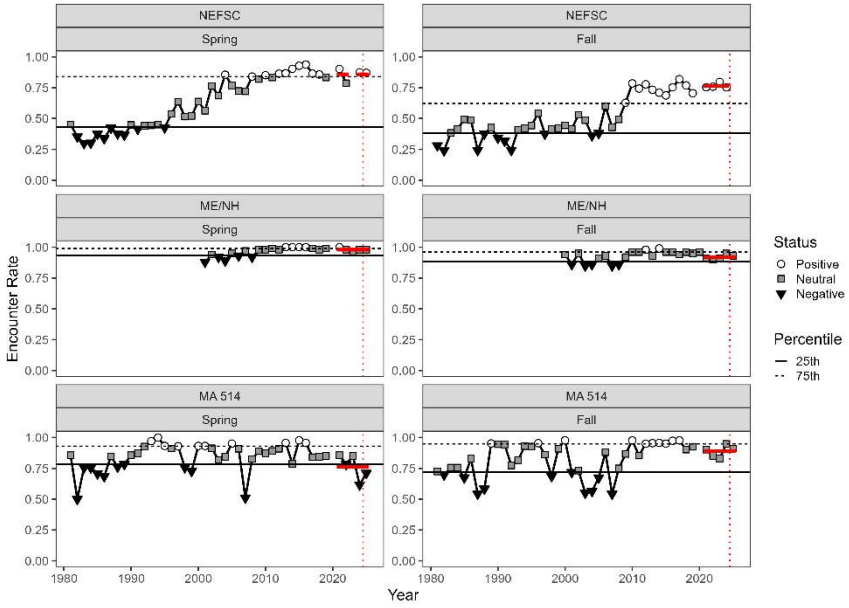


Table 4. GOM abundance indicators: ventless trap survey abundance.

VENTLESS TRAP ABUNDANCE								
Abundance of lobsters ≥ 53 mm CL								
Survey	*511*		*512*		*513*		*514*	
	Female	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*
1981								
1982								
1983								
1984								
1985								
1986								
1987								
1988								
1989								
1990								
1991								
1992								
1993								
1994								
1995								
1996								
1997								
1998								
1999								
2000								
2001								
2002								
2003								
2004								
2005								
2006	7.66	5.35	6.87	5.36	5.71	4.33	3.08	3.38
2007	5.07	3.92	3.95	3.81	5.79	4.29	1.85	1.83
2008	4.94	3.87	5.79	4.93	5.73	4.91	2.75	2.50
2009	3.60	2.65	6.30	5.33	6.86	5.48	2.69	2.63
2010	5.66	3.89	6.96	5.67	6.59	5.22	2.48	2.20
2011	8.70	6.52	11.12	8.46	7.29	5.54	3.46	2.59
2012	10.94	7.63	12.06	9.43	11.43	7.70	5.21	4.51
2013	11.17	7.95	11.91	8.64	9.35	6.45		
2014	10.41	6.63	11.95	8.03	7.74	4.94	3.15	2.34
2015	8.50	4.64	10.41	7.67	8.56	5.45	4.00	3.14
2016	14.61	9.15	14.39	10.72	10.77	7.49	4.78	3.55
2017	11.71	7.07	11.64	8.50	8.46	5.52	3.38	2.45
2018	15.12	9.43	11.30	8.21	9.58	6.34	3.47	2.42
2019	12.96	8.28	8.24	5.93	8.66	5.20	2.85	1.92
2020	7.68	5.48	7.94	5.95	9.26	6.55	2.50	1.68
2021	7.35	5.44	5.97	5.23	8.25	5.90	1.76	1.37
2022	6.70	4.96	4.86	4.21	7.84	6.19	1.62	0.96
2023	4.95	3.86	5.17	4.56	8.35	6.31	1.80	1.49
2019-2023 mean	7.93	5.60	6.44	5.18	8.47	6.03	2.10	1.48
2024	5.99	4.36	6.02	4.73	9.48	7.38	1.58	0.99
2025	7.22	4.88	6.05	5.13	7.38	5.31	1.73	1.19
2021-2025 mean	6.44	4.70	5.61	4.77	8.26	6.22	1.70	1.20

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	3.60	3.20

Figure 4. GOM abundance indicators: ventless trap survey abundance.

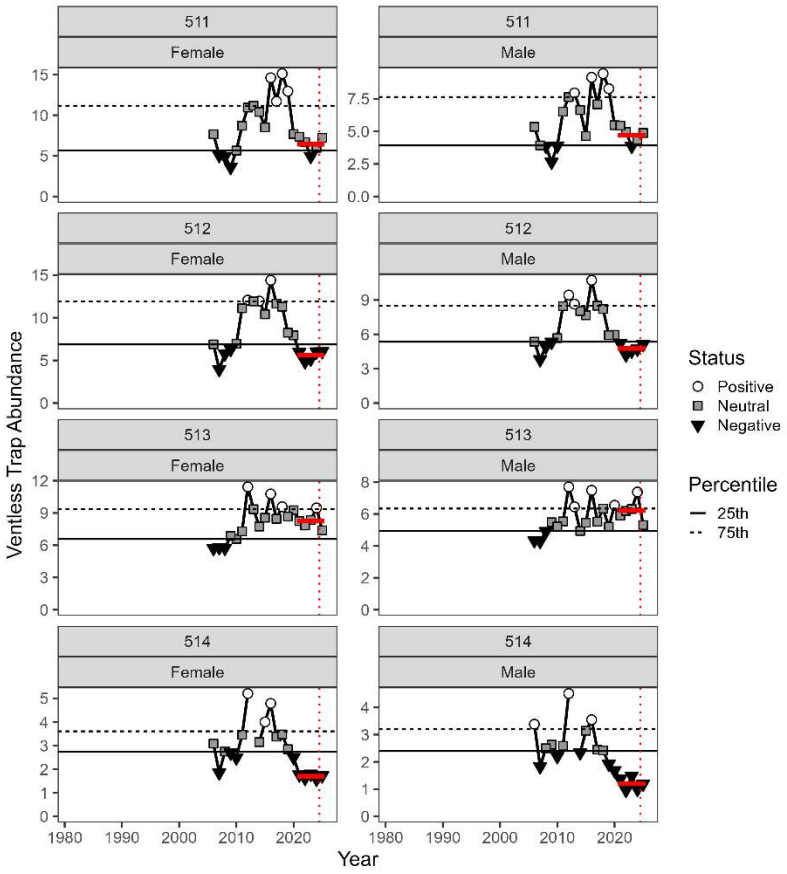


Figure 5. GOM recruit abundance indices aggregated into a combined index (top) and presented individually.

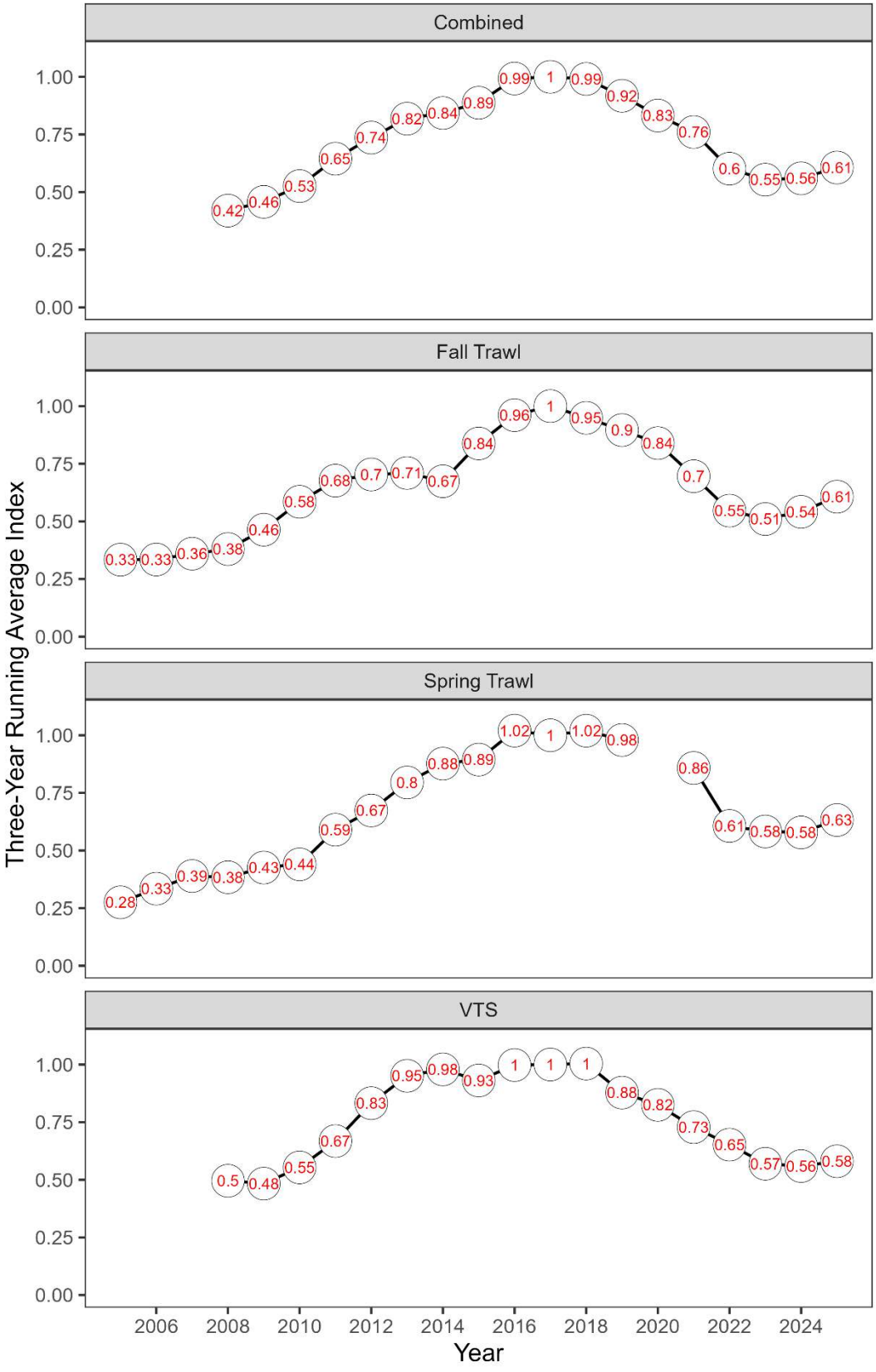


Table 5. GBK abundance indicators: trawl survey recruit abundance.

RECRUIT ABUNDANCE (SURVEY)		
Abundance of lobsters 71 - 80 mm CL (sexes combined)		
Survey	*NEFSC*	
	Spring	*Fall*
1981	0.07	0.30
1982	0.19	0.42
1983	0.17	0.19
1984	0.01	0.33
1985	0.12	0.06
1986	0.56	0.67
1987	0.45	0.57
1988	0.09	0.40
1989	0.04	0.14
1990	0.46	0.33
1991	0.08	0.31
1992	0.16	0.64
1993	0.49	0.23
1994	0.68	0.12
1995	0.00	0.22
1996	0.66	0.16
1997	0.76	0.92
1998	0.72	0.12
1999	0.60	0.29
2000	0.31	0.24
2001	1.26	0.37
2002	0.79	0.64
2003	0.32	0.18
2004	0.11	0.20
2005	0.05	0.14
2006	0.23	0.18
2007	0.03	0.13
2008	0.06	0.17
2009	0.13	0.17
2010	0.13	0.08
2011	0.04	0.16
2012	0.07	0.08
2013	0.07	0.14
2014	0.07	0.09
2015	0.03	0.19
2016	0.07	0.06
2017	0.16	0.19
2018	0.02	0.10
2019	0.07	0.06
2020		
2021	0.18	0.20
2022	0.19	0.27
2023		0.36
2019-2023 mean	0.15	0.22
2024	0.25	0.45
2025	0.25	
2021-2025 mean	0.22	0.32

25th	0.07	0.14
median	0.13	0.19
75th	0.45	0.32

Figure 6. GBK abundance indicators: trawl survey recruit abundance.

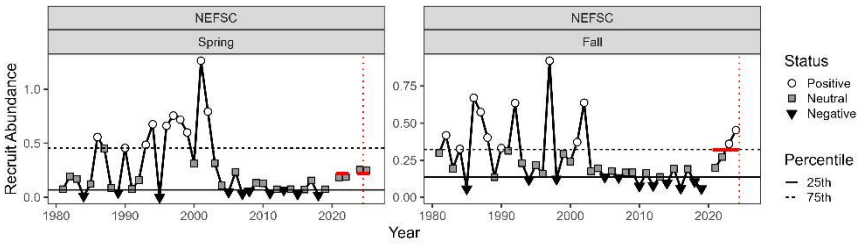


Table 6. GBK abundance indicators: trawl survey encounter rate.

SURVEY LOBSTER ENCOUNTER RATE		
Proportion of postive tows		
Survey	***NEFSC***	
	Spring	***Fall***
1981	0.26	0.52
1982	0.23	0.43
1983	0.20	0.38
1984	0.12	0.36
1985	0.21	0.38
1986	0.25	0.36
1987	0.19	0.34
1988	0.34	0.39
1989	0.19	0.39
1990	0.20	0.41
1991	0.20	0.42
1992	0.28	0.47
1993	0.22	0.36
1994	0.14	0.39
1995	0.13	0.42
1996	0.18	0.37
1997	0.13	0.49
1998	0.13	0.38
1999	0.19	0.56
2000	0.24	0.38
2001	0.26	0.47
2002	0.28	0.57
2003	0.26	0.43
2004	0.19	0.51
2005	0.17	0.56
2006	0.26	0.57
2007	0.25	0.46
2008	0.30	0.52
2009	0.33	0.55
2010	0.36	0.63
2011	0.30	0.69
2012	0.35	0.58
2013	0.33	0.66
2014	0.37	0.61
2015	0.27	0.59
2016	0.45	0.55
2017	0.40	0.56
2018	0.29	0.59
2019	0.36	0.57
2020		
2021	0.41	0.48
2022	0.34	0.62
2023		0.73
2019-2023 mean	0.37	0.60
2024	0.46	0.76
2025	0.50	
2021-2025 mean	0.43	0.65

25th	0.19	0.39
median	0.25	0.47
75th	0.30	0.56

Figure 7. GBK abundance indicators: trawl survey encounter rate.

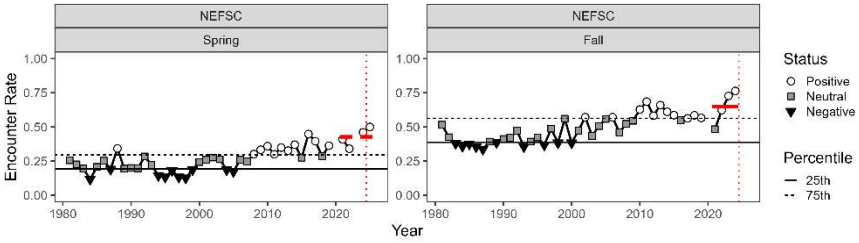


Table 7. SNE abundance indicators: YOY indices.

YOUNG-OF-YEAR INDICES		
Survey	***MA***	***RI***
1981		
1982		
1983		
1984		
1985		
1986		
1987		
1988		
1989		
1990		1.13
1991		1.45
1992		0.63
1993		0.51
1994		1.21
1995	0.17	0.34
1996	0.00	0.15
1997	0.08	0.96
1998	0.28	0.54
1999	0.06	0.91
2000	0.33	0.28
2001	0.11	0.72
2002	0.11	0.25
2003	0.00	0.70
2004	0.06	0.40
2005	0.17	0.54
2006	0.22	0.44
2007	0.17	0.54
2008	0.00	0.14
2009	0.06	0.06
2010	0.00	0.08
2011	0.00	0.00
2012	0.00	0.09
2013	0.17	0.19
2014	0.11	0.22
2015	0.00	0.17
2016	0.00	0.03
2017	0.00	0.03
2018	0.00	0.03
2019	0.00	0.03
2020	0.00	0.14
2021	0.00	0.08
2022	0.00	0.03
2023	0.00	0.01
2019-2023 mean	0.00	0.06
2024	0.00	0.04
2025	0.00	0.06
2021-2025 mean	0.00	0.04

25th	0.00	0.14
median	0.06	0.34
75th	0.17	0.63

Figure 8. SNE abundance indicators: YOY indices.

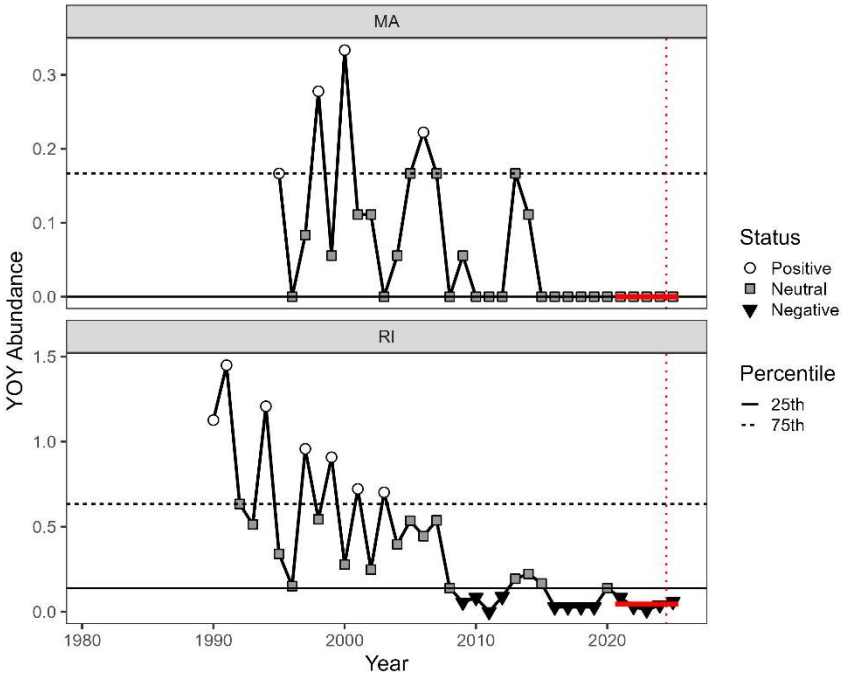


Table 8. SNE abundance indicators: trawl survey recruit abundance.

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*
1981	0.17	1.40	0.65	0.07	0.89	1.31		
1982	1.13	1.15	0.10	0.04	0.26	0.64		
1983	0.61	1.12	0.09	0.04	0.94	0.43		
1984	0.15	1.31	0.42	0.01	1.03	1.36	10.09	6.80
1985	3.05	1.65	0.34	0.09	0.28	0.97	3.08	3.93
1986	0.28	0.92	0.17	0.20	0.91	1.28	2.77	5.76
1987	1.54	0.96	0.26	0.17	0.79	3.14	2.93	6.86
1988	1.23	1.00	0.24	0.16	0.47	4.05	1.85	4.88
1989	0.15	2.57	0.14	0.43	0.91	3.26	4.86	5.28
1990	1.06	1.63	2.29	0.31	2.17	2.69	6.89	7.74
1991	0.47	0.98	1.18	0.87	4.77	3.10	10.83	10.32
1992	0.30	1.57	0.10	0.57	0.62	1.97	10.31	10.65
1993	1.02	0.61	0.25	0.52	7.81	8.29	7.78	15.18
1994	0.33	0.69	0.95	0.42	1.00	3.88	5.07	11.51
1995	0.13	0.93	1.14	0.03	1.33	4.50	12.13	11.20
1996	0.62	3.76	0.40	0.32	1.60	6.55	11.37	11.08
1997	2.62	2.49	1.45	0.12	2.58	6.10	15.42	24.99
1998	1.22	1.84	1.09	0.11	1.63	3.24	24.06	12.72
1999	3.74	1.21	0.75	0.19	1.71	2.07	24.57	12.96
2000	1.12	2.17	0.56	0.13	1.54	1.83	13.37	8.27
2001	0.60	0.86	0.18	0.03	2.97	2.17	10.77	7.41
2002	2.48	0.65	0.34	0.00	2.68	0.73	8.07	2.75
2003	0.55	0.67	0.07	0.00	0.29	0.93	3.52	4.08
2004	0.43	0.56	0.05	0.00	1.87	1.48	2.38	3.37
2005	0.22	0.51	0.08	0.00	1.07	2.53	2.26	1.54
2006	0.29	0.49	0.08	0.03	3.63	2.24	2.02	1.38
2007	0.30	0.55	0.08	0.00	0.68	2.68	2.65	1.12
2008	0.32	0.53	0.16	0.01	0.64	2.95	2.20	1.27
2009	0.10	0.24	0.16	0.05	1.14	1.36	1.20	1.33
2010	0.16	0.49	0.06	0.18	0.44	1.21	1.26	
2011	0.03	0.46	0.18	0.00	0.42	1.02	0.43	0.18
2012	0.07	0.70	0.07	0.21	0.30	0.18	0.44	0.08
2013	0.08	0.32	0.11	0.04	0.16	0.02	0.23	0.06
2014	1.47	0.49	0.04	0.00	0.02	0.14	0.15	0.05
2015	0.00	0.17	0.07	0.30	0.05	0.37	0.15	0.06
2016	0.57	0.47	0.05	0.14	0.57	0.25	0.16	0.00
2017	0.05		0.13	0.16	0.14	0.41	0.03	0.00
2018	0.05	0.27	0.02	0.01	0.18	0.68	0.00	0.01
2019	0.04	0.29	0.01	0.02	0.52	0.50	0.03	0.00
2020					0.23	0.32		
2021	0.00	0.43	0.01	0.00	0.27	0.07	0.03	0.00
2022	0.05	0.16	0.00	0.00	0.09	0.16	0.00	0.01
2023		0.14	0.00	0.01	0.07	0.05	0.00	0.00
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
2025	0.02		0.00	0.00	0.09	0.18		
2021-2025 mean	0.04	0.20	0.01	0.00	0.11	0.11	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

Figure 9. SNE abundance indicators: trawl survey recruit abundance.

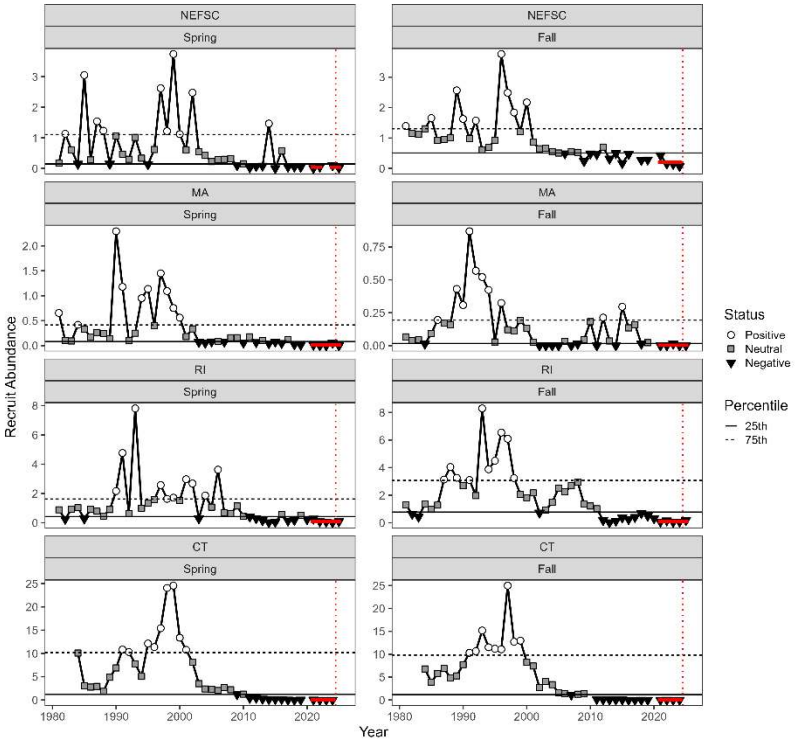


Table 9. SNE abundance indicators: trawl survey encounter rate.

SURVEY LOBSTER ENCOUNTER RATE								
Proportion of postive tows								
Survey	*NEFSC*		*MA*		*RI*		*CT*	
	Spring	*Fall*	*Spring*	*Fall*	*Spring*	*Fall*	*Spring*	*Fall*
1981	0.26	0.67	0.38	0.15	0.49	0.41		
1982	0.35	0.52	0.28	0.21	0.30	0.44		
1983	0.18	0.43	0.21	0.16	0.47	0.37		
1984	0.10	0.44	0.40	0.18	0.59	0.44	0.63	0.76
1985	0.29	0.47	0.51	0.22	0.31	0.50	0.57	0.69
1986	0.22	0.40	0.39	0.38	0.64	0.46	0.67	0.61
1987	0.19	0.41	0.28	0.18	0.35	0.47	0.63	0.76
1988	0.17	0.46	0.39	0.21	0.49	0.55	0.65	0.66
1989	0.18	0.53	0.50	0.33	0.52	0.57	0.75	0.63
1990	0.18	0.63	0.66	0.44	0.64	0.53	0.73	0.76
1991	0.20	0.56	0.41	0.39	0.77	0.69	0.81	0.77
1992	0.29	0.48	0.51	0.23	0.41	0.57	0.77	0.68
1993	0.20	0.40	0.54	0.26	0.50	0.71	0.73	0.75
1994	0.17	0.41	0.51	0.20	0.58	0.57	0.73	0.74
1995	0.09	0.51	0.44	0.13	0.55	0.67	0.77	0.68
1996	0.16	0.57	0.30	0.16	0.79	0.76	0.66	0.78
1997	0.39	0.43	0.45	0.21	0.75	0.71	0.71	0.81
1998	0.16	0.54	0.54	0.13	0.59	0.55	0.83	0.71
1999	0.29	0.44	0.41	0.21	0.76	0.59	0.78	0.79
2000	0.23	0.49	0.45	0.15	0.68	0.63	0.81	0.73
2001	0.29	0.39	0.28	0.18	0.65	0.60	0.77	0.58
2002	0.25	0.38	0.28	0.03	0.61	0.45	0.73	0.59
2003	0.17	0.44	0.14	0.03	0.51	0.41	0.71	0.64
2004	0.17	0.29	0.28	0.03	0.54	0.50	0.61	0.66
2005	0.14	0.32	0.34	0.15	0.49	0.45	0.63	0.54
2006	0.21	0.35	0.43	0.03	0.79	0.62	0.61	0.51
2007	0.19	0.33	0.34	0.10	0.44	0.54	0.70	0.53
2008	0.15	0.41	0.33	0.10	0.55	0.52	0.63	0.65
2009	0.24	0.46	0.50	0.05	0.57	0.41	0.49	0.55
2010	0.19	0.52	0.23	0.24	0.47	0.45	0.54	
2011	0.17	0.56	0.18	0.05	0.30	0.23	0.46	0.28
2012	0.19	0.56	0.18	0.15	0.27	0.16	0.43	0.20
2013	0.09	0.47	0.18	0.08	0.21	0.09	0.28	0.15
2014	0.22	0.41	0.13	0.08	0.07	0.23	0.26	0.10
2015	0.08	0.40	0.10	0.05	0.12	0.16	0.27	0.10
2016	0.21	0.38	0.08	0.11	0.30	0.14	0.25	0.03
2017	0.09		0.08	0.16	0.16	0.23	0.08	0.03
2018	0.12	0.42	0.11	0.06	0.09	0.18	0.09	0.01
2019	0.10	0.41	0.05	0.11	0.16	0.11	0.09	0.00
2020					0.16	0.16		
2021	0.04	0.29	0.08	0.00	0.20	0.12	0.06	0.03
2022	0.10	0.29	0.00	0.00	0.14	0.09	0.01	0.04
2023		0.29	0.00	0.03	0.18	0.05	0.00	0.01
2019-2023 mean	0.08	0.32	0.03	0.03	0.17	0.11	0.04	0.02
2024	0.15	0.25	0.03	0.00	0.02	0.07	0.03	0.01
2025	0.09		0.00	0.05	0.05	0.11		
2021-2025 mean	0.10	0.28	0.02	0.02	0.12	0.09	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

Figure 10. SNE abundance indicators: trawl survey encounter rate.

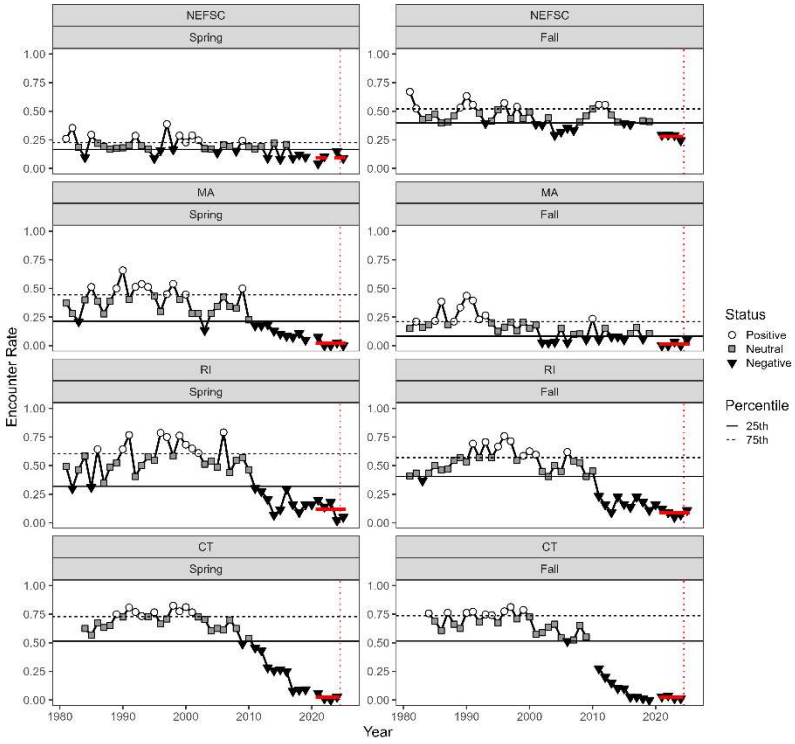
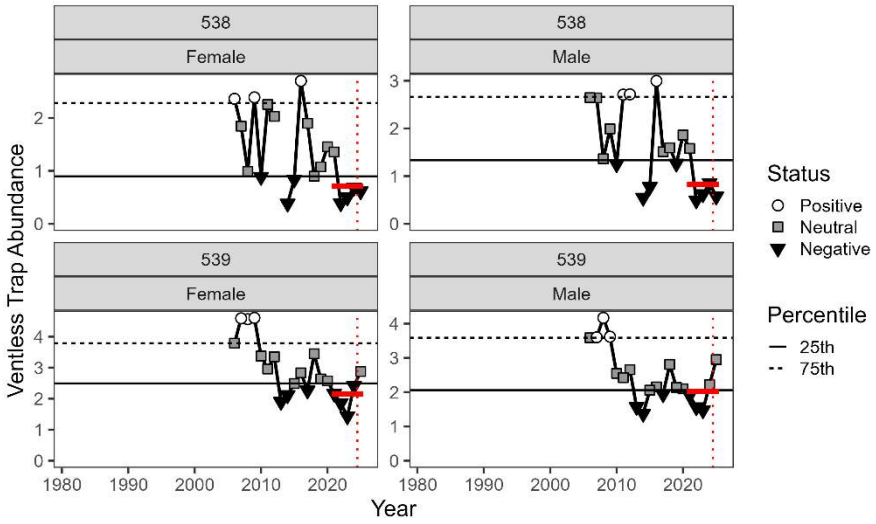


Table 10. SNE abundance indicators: ventless trap survey abundance.

VENTLESS TRAP ABUNDANCE Abundance of lobsters ≥ 53 mm CL				
Survey	*538*		*539*	
	Female	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*
1981				
1982				
1983				
1984				
1985				
1986				
1987				
1988				
1989				
1990				
1991				
1992				
1993				
1994				
1995				
1996				
1997				
1998				
1999				
2000				
2001				
2002				
2003				
2004				
2005				
2006	2.36	2.64	3.79	3.59
2007	1.84	2.64	4.59	3.60
2008	0.99	1.36	4.56	4.17
2009	2.39	1.99	4.61	3.62
2010	0.89	1.25	3.37	2.55
2011	2.25	2.71	2.96	2.43
2012	2.03	2.71	3.35	2.66
2013			1.90	1.57
2014	0.38	0.55	2.12	1.37
2015	0.84	0.77	2.49	2.06
2016	2.70	3.00	2.83	2.15
2017	1.90	1.51	2.27	1.94
2018	0.90	1.59	3.45	2.81
2019	1.08	1.26	2.63	2.14
2020	1.46	1.86	2.57	2.10
2021	1.36	1.58	2.17	1.91
2022	0.39	0.49	1.86	1.56
2023	0.50	0.62	1.43	1.47
2019-2023 mean	0.96	1.16	2.13	1.84
2024	0.68	0.85	2.41	2.22
2025	0.62	0.57	2.88	2.95
2021-2025 mean	0.71	0.82	2.15	2.02

25th	0.90	1.33	2.49	2.06
median	1.87	1.79	3.35	2.55
75th	2.28	2.66	3.79	3.59

Figure 11. SNE abundance indicators: ventless trap survey abundance.



Appendix: Data Update Data Changes

Ventless Trap Survey (Update through 2024)

Strata areas used to calculate ventless trap survey abundance indicators from the stratified random survey design as well as to weight observations in the model-based index used in the GOM combined recruit index changed marginally since the previous Data Update. This change was due to the transition from the retired *rgdal* R package to the modern replacement *sf* R package to calculate strata areas from shapefiles with strata spatial polygons. The transition resulted in similar trends over time within each time series, and less than 2% change from index values in the previous Data Update for areas with no data changes (see Rhode Island data changes below).

Northeast Fisheries Science Center (Update through 2024)

Updated indicators presented here for the NEFSC trawl survey are based on changes to the treatment of survey data developed during the 2025 stock assessment. This includes the removal of many survey strata in SNE that rarely captured lobster over the entire time series, removal of one strata in GBK that is no longer surveyed by the new survey vessel, and the use of gap-filling techniques to address cases where individual strata were unsampled in an otherwise mostly complete survey. Details of these changes are included in the 2025 stock assessment.

Additionally, as a general caveat, we recognize that the vessel change in 2009 for the federal trawl survey creates a bias in the trawl survey encounter rates across all regions. The NEFSC calibration study indicated that the new trawl vessel and gear catch more lobsters than previously. By extension, it is also more probable for lobsters to be present in a trawl than previously. While a calibration is applied to the recruit abundance to account for this, a similar calibration for encounter rates has not been developed. Thus, we expect encounter rates for the federal trawl survey are biased high, relative to the earlier time period, starting in 2009.

Rhode Island (Update through 2024)

The 2023 settlement survey abundance index value for Rhode Island has been modified to account for a calculation discrepancy between the state database and the coastwide data warehouse. The trajectory of the index remains the same, with recent values being the lowest in the time series. Additionally, minor QA/QC adjustments were made in the database to identify traps that should be excluded from analyses. Any index value adjustments were minor and produced no change in the indicator status throughout the time series.

Rhode Island (Update through 2023)

A slightly more conservative method for identifying traps to exclude from the VTS data set was adopted during the 2024 Data Update (terminal data year of 2023). For example, some traps with a hole in the funnel or side head were excluded whereas they were not in previous years. The table below compares the number of traps retained for index calculation between the 2024 Data Update and 2023 Data Update.

Year	2023 Data Update	2024 Data Update
2006	852	851
2007	848	848
2008	864	864
2009	804	804

2010	858	857
2011	858	858
2012	834	830
2013	839	836
2014	832	825
2015	854	846
2016	831	817
2017	833	831
2018	846	839
2019	858	850
2020	836	826
2021	864	851
2022	861	815

The only change in conditions the data change causes is for 2019 and 2020 annual values for both sexes which change from negative conditions during the 2023 Data Update to neutral conditions during the 2024 Data Update. The terminal five-year means are negative for both sexes during both Data Updates.

Maine (Update through 2022)

During the 2023 Data Update (terminal data year of 2022), a few errors were found in the upload process where data was not uploaded correctly and treated in a consistent manner as the assessment. For the Fall 2021 ME/NH Trawl Survey, the sex of sampled lobsters did not upload correctly, leading to 7 tows being excluded in error. These data have now been corrected and included. During the 2020 assessment, the stock assessment team, in consultation with survey staff, determined that a very large outlier tow in the Spring 2014 ME/NH Trawl Survey should be excluded from the assessment. However, this outlier tow was not excluded in the 2022 Data Update. It was excluded for the 2023 Data Update, consistent with the stock assessment. For the Maine settlement survey, data for 2013 was not uploaded completely and this has now been corrected.

Massachusetts (Update through 2022)

Following the 2022 Data Update (terminal year of 2021), an error was discovered in the data pull for the SNE VTS index that did not filter the frequency of trawl hauls per month in historical data to match the reduced sampling frequency in data since the footprint reduction (see below; reduced to 1 haul/month). This error was corrected in the data pull for the 2023 Data Update.

Massachusetts (Update through 2021)

Following the 2021 Data Update (terminal data year of 2020), there was a reduction in the spatial coverage of the SNE VTS (Statistical Area 538) due to reduced participation. This change necessitates dropping out data collected during earlier years from areas no longer sampled to calculate an index from a consistent survey footprint, resulting in changes to the indices. Note that the updated index increased slightly in scale (the reduced footprint excludes most of the interior of Buzzards Bay), but the pattern over time is generally consistent with the previous index.

Rhode Island (Update through 2021)

Some changes to the SNE VTS Statistical Area 539 (RI) data occurred between the 2021 Data Update (terminal data year of 2020) and 2022 Data Update (terminal data year of 2021). Upon further QA/QC in site or sample location, strata classification for select stations over time were rectified. Data as such were updated to reflect these changes during the 2022 Data Update.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

TO: **American Lobster Management Board**

FROM: **American Lobster Technical Committee**

DATE: **October 22, 2026**

SUBJECT: **Possible Annual Environmental Indicators**

The American Lobster Technical Committee (TC) met via webinar on August 27, 2026 to discuss environmental and ecosystem indicators that could be updated annually to provide additional information on conditions affecting American lobster. At its February 2026 meeting, the American Lobster Board (Board) discussed the possibility of adding environmental indicators into the annual data update process, and the potential to coordinate with NOAA Fisheries to identify relevant data sets that may already be available.

After the February Board meeting the TC Chair and ASMFC staff met with staff within NOAA's Changing Ecosystems and Fisheries Initiative (CEFI) to discuss products developed for the State of the Ecosystem reports that may be relevant to lobster population trends. Some examples of possible indicators discussed included indicators of zooplankton abundance, temperatures, ocean acidification, oceanographic processes, as well as port-level economic indicators. However, further coordination between the TC and CEFI staff and development and refinement of datasets would be required for them to be useful as part of the annual lobster data update.

The TC identified several possible indicators that may be suitable for further investigation, if the Board desires:

1. Empirical bottom temperatures from state and federal trawl surveys for additional context on potential catchability changes in existing trawl survey-based catch indicators.
2. Northeastern Regional Association of Coastal Ocean Observing Systems (NERACOOS) ocean climatology. This data set includes comparison of current sub-surface temperatures at a single buoy location relative to long-term averages.
3. Temperatures and molt timing prediction based on Gulf of Maine Research Institute research.
4. Zooplankton time series produced for NOAA State of the Ecosystem reports for context on food availability changes for larval lobsters. Note that there is a delay in availability for these time series of one to two or more years due to data processing (e.g., 2026 zooplankton update includes data through 2023).
5. Long-term modeled temperature time series from oceanographic modeling products used by CEFI. Similar to the buoy data, these would provide comparison of current conditions to historical conditions but would use model-estimated bottom temperatures spanning broader spatial scales instead of empirical temperatures from small spatial scales.

If the Board wishes to pursue the addition of environmental indicators to the annual data update of American lobster indices, the TC will need additional clarification of the Board's intent. The TC requests guidance from the Board on the following questions:

1. Environmental indicators/effects have been a major focus of the past two Assessments, and work will continue in subsequent Assessments to better understand how the environment may be influencing the population and survey catchability. With this in mind, which of the indicators the TC identified above are of interest for the Board to see on an annual basis, and which may be more appropriate for the next Assessment? How would updating these environmental indicator(s) on an annual basis better inform the Board?
2. The purpose of the current data update process is to better understand exploitable lobster stock abundance conditions expected in subsequent years. Is the Board more interested in reviewing annual indicators that would provide qualitative information related to environmental conditions experienced by the lobster stock (e.g., a simple time series of a temperature indicator), or is there a desire to estimate quantitative impact to lobster population dynamics and how it may impact future recruitment (e.g., modeling a linkage between temperature and lobster stock trends)? The TC notes that there is a significant difference in the workload that would be required for these two types of use. The latter would require additional analyses and likely iterative development and testing of indicators. Additionally, successfully modeling a meaningful linkage between the environment/ecosystem and lobster population dynamics cannot be guaranteed and is more feasible during the formal stock assessment process and peer review.
3. Is the Board interested in environmental indicators for one or both lobster stocks?

The TC also emphasized that there should be careful consideration of how pursuing annual environmental indicators would interact with other ongoing and upcoming activities to affect the TC's workload. These include the ongoing Board task to develop and evaluate candidate biological reference points that account for non-stationarity of environmental conditions/productivity, as well as the proposed stakeholder process to identify lobster management objectives.

Draft for Board Review

ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

REVIEW OF THE INTERSTATE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

FOR AMERICAN LOBSTER
(*Homarus americanus*)

2025 FISHING YEAR



Prepared by the Plan Review Team

October 2026

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

Draft for Board Review

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Draft for Board Review

1.0 Status of the Fishery Management Plan

Year of ASMFC Plan's Adoption: Amendment 3 (1997)

Plan Addenda:

Addendum II (2001)
Addendum III (2002)
Addendum IV (2003)
Addendum V (2004)
Addendum VI (2005)
Addendum VII (2005)
Addendum VIII (2006)
Addendum IX (2006)
Addendum X (2007)
Addendum XI (2007)
Addendum XII (2008)
Addendum XIII (2008)
Addendum XIV (2009)
Addendum XV (2009)
Addendum XVI (2010)
Addendum XVII (2012)
Addendum XVIII (2012)
Addendum XIX (2013)
Addendum XX (2013)
Addendum XXI (2013)
Addendum XXII (2013)
Addendum XXIII (2014)
Addendum XXIV (2015)
Addendum XXVI (2018)
Addendum XXIX (2022)
Addendum XXVII (2023)
Addendum XXX (2024)
Addendum XXXI (2025)
Addendum XXXII (2025)

Management Unit: Maine through North Carolina

States with a Declared Interest: Maine through Virginia (Excluding Pennsylvania and DC)

Active Committees: American Lobster Management Board, Technical Committee, Lobster Conservation Management Teams, Plan Development Team, Plan Review Team, Advisory Panel, Stock Assessment Subcommittee

2.0 Status of the Fishery

2.1 Commercial Fishery

The lobster fishery has seen incredible expansion in landings over the last 40 years. Between 1950 and 1975, landings were fairly stable around 30 million pounds; however, from 1976 to 2008 the average coastwide landings tripled, exceeding 98 million pounds in 2006. Landings continued to increase until reaching a high of 159 million pounds in 2016 but have been trending downward since then (Table 1). In 2025, coastwide commercial landings were approximately 108.5 million pounds, a 4% decrease from 2024 landings of 113.5 million pounds. The largest contributors to the 2025 fishery were Maine and Massachusetts with 74% and 17% of landings, respectively. The ex-vessel value for all lobster landings in 2025 was approximately $656 million, which is a 9% decrease from 2024.

Historically, Lobster Conservation Management Area (LCMA) 1 has had the highest landings and accounted for 80% of total harvest between 1981 and 2012. This is followed by LCMA 3, which accounted for 9% of total landings during the same time period. In general, landings have increased in LCMA 1 and have decreased in LCMAs 2, 4, and 6. According to state compliance reports, in 2025,

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approximately 90% of the total landings came from LCMA 1, while the remaining 10% were contributed by the other LCMAs[1]. A map of the LCMAs is found in Figure 1.

Landings trends between the two biological stocks have also changed, as a greater percentage of lobster are harvested from the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank (GOM/GBK) stock. In 1997, 26.3% of coastwide landings came from the Southern New England (SNE) stock. However, as the southern stock declined and abundance in the Gulf of Maine increased, proportional harvest has significantly changed. In 2000, only 15.6% of landings came from the SNE stock and by 2006, this declined to 7%. In 2025, only about 2% of coastwide landings came from the SNE stock[1].

2.2 Recreational Fishery

Lobster is also taken recreationally with pots, and in some states, by hand while SCUBA diving. While not all states collect recreational harvest data, some do report the number of pounds landed recreationally and/or the number of recreational permits issued. In 2025, New Hampshire reported 7,290 pounds of lobster harvested recreationally, Massachusetts estimated 145,331 pounds, and New York reported 1,119 pounds. Maine, Rhode Island, and Connecticut do not collect information on the number of pounds recreationally harvested. In 2025, Rhode Island issued 497 lobster licenses, and 213 lobster licenses were sold in Connecticut. In general, recreational activity appears to be declining in recent years.

3.0 Status of the Stock

The 2025 American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report describes contrasting conditions for the two American lobster stocks. The results indicate the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank (GOM/GBK) stock is not depleted but has declined 34% since peak levels in 2018, and overfishing is occurring with recent exploitation just above the exploitation threshold. Conversely, the Southern New England (SNE) stock remains significantly depleted with record low abundances for all life stages in recent years.

Extensive research has highlighted the influence of the environment on American lobster life history and population dynamics, with temperature standing out as the primary driver among the critical environmental variables. Environmental data were analyzed for regime shifts, which indicate a significant difference in the lobster's environment and population dynamics from one time period to another, which can impact a stock's productivity, recruitment levels, and ability to support different levels of fishing pressure.

Model-estimated abundance time series were also analyzed for shifts that may be attributed to changing environmental conditions and new baselines for stock productivity. The GOM/GBK stock shifted from a low abundance regime encompassing the early 1980s through 1995 to a moderate abundance regime from 1996-2008 and shifted once again to a high abundance regime from 2009-2023. The SNE stock shifted from a high abundance regime during the early 1980s through 2002 to a

[1] These values do not include data from Massachusetts, which were not provided.

low abundance regime during 2003-2023. These results were used to structure trend-based reference points, consistent with the 2020 assessment.

Three reference points are used to characterize stock abundance (Table 2). The abundance threshold is calculated as the average of the three highest abundance years during the low abundance regime, and stock abundance level below this threshold is considered significantly depleted and in danger of stock collapse. The abundance limit is calculated as the median abundance during the moderate abundance regime, and stock abundance below this limit is considered depleted because the stock's ability to replenish itself is diminished. The fishery/industry target is calculated as the 25th percentile of the abundance during the high abundance regime. When abundance falls below this target, the stock's ability to replenish itself is not jeopardized, but it may indicate a degrading of economic conditions for the lobster fishery. Two reference points are used to evaluate the fishing mortality condition of the stocks. The exploitation threshold (calculated as the 75th percentile of exploitation during the current abundance regime) and the exploitation target (calculated as the 25th percentile of exploitation during the current abundance regime). The stock is considered to be experiencing overfishing if exploitation exceeds the exploitation threshold, and fishing mortality levels are considered favorable if the three-year average exploitation is less than or equal to the target.

Based on the abundance reference points, the GOM/GBK stock condition is favorable. The average abundance from 2021-2023 (202 million lobsters) has declined below the fishery/industry target (229 million lobsters) but remains above the abundance limit (143 million lobsters) and abundance threshold (89 million lobsters) (Figure 2). Recruitment and spawning stock biomass estimates have declined in recent years from record highs. The average exploitation from 2021-2023 (0.465) was just above the exploitation threshold (0.464), indicating overfishing is occurring.

SNE stock abundance increased from the early 1980s, peaked during the late 1990s, then declined steeply through the early 2000s to a record low in 2023. The 2025 Assessment indicates the SNE stock is significantly depleted and overfishing is not occurring. The average abundance from 2021-2023 (6 million lobsters) was well below the abundance threshold (18 million lobsters). The average exploitation from 2021-2023 (0.258) fell below the exploitation threshold (0.286) and exploitation target (0.267) (Table 2, Figure 3).

4.0 Status of Management Measures

4.1 Implemented Regulations

Amendment 3 established regulations which require coastwide and area specific measures applicable to commercial fishing (Table 3). The coastwide requirements from Amendment 3 are summarized below; additional requirements were established through subsequent Addenda.

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Coastwide Requirements and Prohibited Actions

- Prohibition on possession of berried or scrubbed lobsters
- Prohibition on possession of lobster meats, detached tails, claws, or other parts of lobsters by fishermen
- Prohibition on spearing lobsters
- Prohibition on possession of v-notched female lobsters
- Requirement for biodegradable "ghost" panel for traps
- Minimum gauge size of 3-1/4"
- Limits on landings by fishermen using gear or methods other than traps to 100 lobsters per day or 500 lobsters per trip for trips 5 days or longer
- Requirements for permits and licensing
- All lobster traps must contain at least one escape vent with a minimum size of 1-15/16" by 5-3/4"
- Maximum trap size of 22,950 cubic inches in all areas except area 3, where traps may not exceed a volume of 30,100 cubic inches.

Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster (December 1997)
American lobster is managed under Amendment 3 to the Interstate FMP for American Lobster. Amendment 3 establishes seven lobster management areas. These areas include the: Inshore Gulf of Maine (LCMA 1), Inshore Southern New England (LCMA 2), Offshore Waters (LCMA 3), Inshore Northern Mid-Atlantic (LCMA 4), Inshore Southern Mid-Atlantic (LCMA 5), New York and Connecticut State Waters (LCMA 6), and Outer Cape Cod (OCC). Lobster Conservation Management Teams (LCMTs) comprised of industry representatives were formed for each management area. The LCMTs are charged with advising the Lobster Board and recommending changes to the management plan within their areas.

Amendment 3 also provides the flexibility to respond to current conditions of the resource and fishery by making changes to the management program through addenda. The commercial fishery is primarily controlled through minimum/maximum size limits, trap limits, and v-notching of egg-bearing females.

Addendum I (August 1999)
Establishes trap limits in the seven LCMAs.

Addendum II (February 2001)
Establishes regulations for increasing egg production through a variety of LCMT proposed management measures including, but not limited to, increased minimum gauge sizes in LCMAs 2, 3, 4, 5, and the Outer Cape.

Addendum III (February 2002)
Revises management measures for all seven LCMAs in order to meet the revised egg-rebuilding schedule.

Technical Addendum 1 (August 2002)
Eradicates the vessel upgrade provision for LCMA 5.

Addendum IV (January 2004)
Changes vent size requirements; applies the most restrictive rule on an area trap cap basis without regard to the individual's allocation; establishes LCMA 3 sliding scale trap reduction plan and transferable trap program to increase active trap reductions by 10%; and establishes an effort control program and gauge increases for LCMA 2; and a desire to change the interpretation of the most restrictive rule.

Addendum V (March 2004)
Amends Addendum IV transferability program for LCMA 3. It establishes a trap cap of 2200 with a conservation tax of 50% when the purchaser owns 1800 to 2200 traps and 10% for all others.

Addendum VI (February 2005)
Replaces two effort control measures for LCMA 2 – permits an eligibility period.
Addendum VII (November 2005)
Revises LCMA 2 effort control plan to include capping traps fished at recent levels and maintaining 3 3/8" minimum size limit.

Addendum VIII (May 2006)
Establishes new biological reference points to determine the stock status of the American lobster resource (fishing mortality and abundance targets and thresholds for the three stock assessment areas) and enhances data collection requirements.

Addendum IX (October 2006)
Establishes a 10% conservation tax under the LCMA 2 trap transfer program.

Addendum X (February 2007)
Establishes a coastwide reporting and data collection program that includes dealer and harvester reporting, at-sea sampling, port sampling, and fishery-independent data collection replacing the requirements in Addendum VIII.

Addendum XI (May 2007)
Establishes measures to rebuild the SNE stock, including a 15-year rebuilding timeline (ending in 2022) with a provision to end overfishing immediately. The Addendum also establishes measures to discourage delayed implementation of required management measures.

Addendum XII (February 2009)
Addresses issues which arise when fishing privileges are transferred, either when whole businesses are transferred, when dual state/federal permits are split, or when individual trap allocations are transferred as part of a trap transferability program. In order to ensure the various LCMA-specific effort control plans remain cohesive and viable, this addendum does three things. First, it clarifies certain foundational principles present in the Commission's overall history-based trap allocation

effort control plan. Second, it redefines the most restrictive rule. Third, it establishes management measures to ensure history-based trap allocation effort control plans in the various LCMAs are implemented without undermining resource conservation efforts of neighboring jurisdictions or LCMAs.

Addendum XIII (May 2008)
Solidifies the transfer program for OCC and stops the current trap reductions.

Addendum XIV (May 2009)
Alters two aspects of the LCMA 3 trap transfer program. It lowers the maximum trap cap to 2000 for an individual that transfers traps. It changes the conservation tax on full business sales to 10% and for partial trap transfers to 20%.

Addendum XV (November 2009)
Establishes a limited entry program and criteria for Federal waters of LCMA 1.

Addendum XVI: Reference Points (May 2010)
Establishes new biological reference points to determine the stock status of the American lobster resource (fishing mortality and abundance targets and thresholds for the three stock assessment areas). The addendum also modifies the procedures for adopting reference points to allow the Board to take action on advice following a peer reviewed assessment.

Addendum XVII (February 2012)
Institutes a 10% reduction in exploitation for LCMAs within Southern New England (2, 3, 4, 5, and 6). Regulations are LCMA specific but include v-notch programs, closed seasons, and size limit changes.

Addendum XVIII (August 2012)
Reduces traps allocations by 50% for LCMA 2 and 25% for LCMA 3.

Addendum XIX (February 2013)
Modifies the conservation tax for LCMA 3 to a single transfer tax of 10% for full or partial business sales.

Addendum XX (May 2013)
Prohibits lobstermen from setting or storing lobster traps in Closed Area II from November 1 to June 15 annually. Any gear set in this area during this time will be considered derelict gear. This addendum represents an agreement between the lobster industry and the groundfish sector.

Addendum XXI (August 2013)
Addresses changes in the transferability program for LCMAs 2 and 3. Specific measures include the transfer of multi-LCMA trap allocations and trap caps.

Addendum XXII (November 2013)
Implements Single Ownership and Aggregate Ownership caps in LCMA 3. Specifically, it allows LCMA

3 permit holders to purchase lobster traps above the cap of 2000 traps; however, these traps cannot be fished until approved by the permit holder's regulating agency or once trap reductions commence. The Aggregate Ownership Cap limits LCMA fishermen or companies from owning more traps than five times the Single Ownership Cap.

Addendum XXIII (August 2014)
Updates Amendment 3's habitat section to include information on the habitat requirements and tolerances of American lobster by life stage.

Addendum XXIV (May 2015)
Aligns state and federal measure for trap transfer in LCMA's 2, 3, and the Outer Cape Cod regarding the conservation tax when whole businesses are transferred, trap transfer increments, and restrictions on trap transfers among dual permit holders.

Addendum XXVI (February 2018)
Advances the collection of harvester and biological data in the lobster fishery by improving the spatial resolution of data collection, requiring harvesters to report additional data elements, and establishing a deadline that within five years, states are required to implement 100% harvester reporting. The Addendum also improves the biological sampling requirements by establishing a baseline of ten sampling trips per year, and encourages states with more than 10% of coastwide landings to conduct additional sampling trips. Required reporting of additional data elements went into effect on January 1, 2019. The Addendum XXVI requirement for commercial harvesters to report their fishing location by 10 minute longitudinal/latitudinal square was implemented in 2021.

Addendum XXIX (2022)
Implements electronic tracking requirements for federally-permitted vessels in the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries to collect high resolution spatial and temporal effort data. Specifically, electronic tracking devices will be required for vessels with commercial trap gear area permits for LCMAs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and Outer Cape Cod. Requirements will become effective in 2023.

Addendum XXVII (2023)
Establishes a trigger mechanism to implement management measures (gauge and escape vent sizes) to provide additional protection of the GOM/GBK spawning stock biomass (SSB). It also implements changes to management measures for LCMAs 1, 3, and Outer Cape Cod to improve the consistency of measures across the GOM/GBK stock.

Addendum XXX (2024)
Clarifies the Commission's recommendation to NOAA Fisheries that the increased minimum gauge size in LCMA 1 triggered under Addendum XXVII would also apply to foreign imports of American lobster.

Addendum XXXI (February 2025)
Postponed implementation of the Addendum XXVII gauge and vent size measures to July 1, 2025 to reduce negative impacts to the US and Canadian lobster industries in 2025 and allow Canada more

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time to consider implementing complementary management measures.

Addendum XXXII (May 2025)
Repeals all gauge and escape vent size measures from Addendum XXVII to address continued economic concerns and provide the Gulf of Maine states the opportunity to collaborate with the lobster industry to identify alternative conservation approaches.

4.2 Conservation Equivalency Plans
Amendment 3 to the FMP for American Lobster outlines the adaptive management limitations for lobster management, including measures that can or cannot be substituted using conservation equivalency (CE). The following conservation CE plans have been adopted under the American lobster FMP.

- New Hampshire: In 1999, the Board approved a CE plan that allowed New Hampshire to allocate a portion of their Area 1 fishermen 1,200 traps and the rest 600 traps in a two-tiered system, as an alternative to the 800-trap allocation system as specified in Amendment III.
- New Jersey: Addendum I required initial trap allocations to be based on the number of traps fished in any one calendar year during the period from January 1, 1994 through September 15, 1998. In 2001, the Board approved a CE plan for New Jersey allowing the state to allocate traps to its fishermen based upon the LCMT criteria established for areas 3, 4 and 5 but with a modification of the historical time period to 1980. The CE plan also allowed New Jersey to allocate up to 500 traps to fishermen holding federal permits and using otter trawl gear.
- Massachusetts: In 2003, the Board approved a CE proposal for the OCC management area, specific to section 2.1.7.2 and 2.1.7.3 of Addendum III. The CE plan uses 1999 through 2001 as qualifying years to identify potential participants and allocates traps based on fishing performance during 2000 - 2002 with pounds as the qualifying parameter.
- Connecticut: In 2007, the Board approved a CE plan for Connecticut as an alternative to the Addendum XI measures to end overfishing and rebuild the SNE stock. The CE plan allowed for a v-notching program as an alternative to the minimum size increase to 3-3/8 inch required by Addendum XI for LCMA 6.
- Massachusetts: In 2008, the Board approved a CE plan to the Addendum X requirement that dealers buying lobster from harvesters must report NMFS Statistical Areas for each transaction with harvesters. The CE plan allowed Massachusetts to not require dealers to collect “Area Fished” on a transaction basis and instead rely on the annual recall log’s attribution of monthly effort and landings to statistical area.
- Maine: In 2008, the Board approved a CE plan to the Addendum X requirement that dealers buying lobster from harvesters must report NMFS Statistical Areas for each transaction with harvesters. The CE plan allowed Maine to instead assign Statistical Areas to landings from dealers based on the dealer port location.
- Maine: in 2016, the Board approved a CE plan for Maine to allow the transfer of trap tags between traps using hog rings. The American lobster FMP does not allow for trap tags to be moved between traps.

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- LCMA 5: In 2026, the Board approved a CE plan to modify the LCMA 5 season closure regulations to allow black sea bass fishermen that hold a lobster permit to set and haul gear to fish for black sea bass beginning on March 9 instead of March 24 while maintaining the prohibition on lobster and Jonah crab harvest and possession from February 1 through March 31.

5.0 Fishery Dependent Monitoring

The following provisions of Addendum XXVI went into effect January 1, 2019:

- Required reporting of additional data elements;
- Requirement to implement 100% harvester reporting within five years;
- Baseline biological sampling requirement of ten sea and/or port sampling trips per year.

The Addendum XXVI requirement for commercial harvesters to report their fishing location by 10 minute longitudinal/latitudinal square was implemented in 2021. Table 4 describes the level of reporting and monitoring programs by each state. *De minimis* states are not required to conduct biological sampling of their lobster fishery.

In recent years it has been a challenge for the states whose lobster fisheries primarily occur in SNE to complete the required ten required sea and/or port sampling trips for fishery dependent monitoring. In 2025, Connecticut and New Jersey were unable to meet the requirement. New Jersey completed zero trips and continues to have difficulty with vessel Captains accommodating an observer aboard. No fishery dependent sampling has been conducted by Connecticut since 2014 due to reductions in funding and staffing levels. Table 5 provides data on the amount of sampling performed by states.

6.0 Status of Fishery Independent Monitoring

Addendum XXVI also requires fishery independent data collection by requiring statistical areas be sampled through one of the following methods: annual trawl survey, ventless trap survey, or young-of-year survey.

6.1 Young of Year Index

Several states conduct young-of-year (YOY) surveys to detect trends in abundance of newly-settled and juvenile lobster populations. These surveys attempt to provide an accurate picture of the spatial pattern of lobster settlement. States hope to track juvenile populations and generate predictive models of future landings.

Maine: There are currently 40 fixed stations along the Maine coast. Sites were selected based on orientation to surface winds, position in bays, water temperature during settlement period (for eastern Maine sites) and presence of suitable habitat. Of these 40 stations 38 have been sampled consistently since 2001 with two additional sites added to zone D in 2005 and one site swapped years due to its proximity to storm/sewage overflow with an historical site in Zone A/SA 511 beginning in 2023. This historical replacement site was sampled in the 1990's but dropped because the water temperatures were deemed too low for good lobster settlement but is currently experiencing warmer water temperatures suitable for settlement.

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The start of sampling for the 2025 settlement season was delayed late into October based on results from lobster larval tows indicating a peak in larval abundance much later than expected. This delay was then followed by particularly poor weather through the end of year and a number of vessel and staff logistical problems. These issues led to only 26 out of 40 sites being sampled, some being visited in January-February, and with no coverage in SA 511. Data from the historical site swapped in SA 511 to replace the site that that was affected by a nearby sewage outfall active after rain events, will be incorporated into the MARVIN database but is not included in the 2025 data pull (Figure 4).

New Hampshire: New Hampshire Fish and Game conducted a portion of the coastwide American Lobster Settlement Index (ALSI). In 2025, a total of 28 juvenile lobsters were sampled from three sites; 23 older juveniles, two young-of-year (YOY) lobster, and three one-year-old (Y+). Figure 5 depicts the CPUE (#/m2) of YOY lobsters for all New Hampshire sites combined from 2008 through 2025. The abundance index shows a general increasing trend to a time series high in 2011, followed by sustained low to moderate levels from 2012 through 2025 (Figure 5).

Massachusetts: Annual sampling for early benthic phase/juvenile (EBP) lobsters was conducted using SCUBA and airlift suction sampling equipment during August and September, 2025. As of 2025, suction sampling is conducted in the GOM stock unit at 12 sites from Cape Ann to the South Shore area, and in the SNE stock unit at 4 sites in Buzzards Bay. In 2025, densities of YOY lobsters in the GOM remained below time series means in means in Cape Ann, Salem Sound, and Boston, but were above the mean for South Shore. In SNE there were no YOY lobsters found in the Buzzards Bay sampling locations in 2025 (Figure 6).

Rhode Island: In 2025, the RI DEM DMF YOY Settlement Survey (Suction Sampling) was conducted at six fixed stations with twelve randomly selected 0.5 m2 quadrats sampled at each survey station. The survey stations are located outside of Narragansett Bay along the southern Rhode Island coast, from Sachuest Point (east) to Point Judith (west). The index presented represents the average annual densities for YOY (≤ 13mm) and total lobsters caught. The 2025 YOY Settlement Survey index was 0.08 lobsters/m2, and with all lobsters was 0.22 lobsters/m2 (Figure 7).

Connecticut: The CT DEEP Larval Lobster Survey in western Long Island Sound (LIS) was discontinued after 2012. Alternative monitoring data are available for the eastern Sound from the Millstone Power Station entrainment estimates of all stages of lobster larvae. Abundance indices in both programs are delta mean density of larvae per 1000 cubic meters of water, entrained into the power plant in the case of the Millstone program and stage 4 only captured in surface plankton samples in the CT DEEP program. Both programs show a protracted decline in recruitment following the 1999 die-off through 2012. The eastern LIS larval index has remained at low levels in the years following the 1999 die-off. The 2025 value (0.537 Δ-mean density) represents thirty-six lobster observed larvae, thirty-three stage I, two individuals at stage II, and I individual at stage III. Although the highest since 2006, the 2025 value is determined from a low sample size of six tows. Important to note, the lobster larvae entrainment sample schedule was modified in 2022. The samples were reduced from six per week (3 day and 3 night) to three samples per week collected during the daytime only (Figure 8).

6.2 Ventless Trap Survey

To address a need for a reliable index of lobster recruitment, a cooperative random stratified ventless trap survey was designed to generate accurate estimates of the spatial distribution of lobster length frequency and relative abundance while attempting to limit the biases identified in conventional fishery dependent surveys.

Maine: The Maine Ventless Trap Survey changed strategies in 2015 to cover more area by eliminating the vented traps at each site. This change allowed the survey to double the number of sites with ventless traps and increase the sampling coverage spatially to 276 sites. Traps were set during the months of June, July, and August. The stratified mean was calculated for each area using depth and statistical area for ventless traps only. Compared to previous years, in 2025 the number of sublegal (<83 mm CL) lobsters caught decreased in area 513 and increased slightly in 512 and 511. The number of legal sized (≥ 83 mm CL) lobsters caught decreased in area 513 and increased very slightly in 512 and 511 (Figure 9).

New Hampshire: Since 2009, NHF&G has been conducting the coastwide Random Stratified Ventless Trap Survey in state waters (statistical area 513). A total of six sites were surveyed twice a month from June through August in 2025. Annual stratified mean catch per trap haul values varied without significant positive or negative trend throughout the fifteen-year time series (Figure 10).

Massachusetts: The coastwide ventless trap survey was initiated in 2006 and expanded in 2007 with the intention of establishing a standardized fishery-independent survey designed specifically to monitor lobster relative abundance and distribution. The survey was not conducted in 2013 due to a lack of funding; however, starting in 2014 the survey has been funded with lobster license revenues and will continue as a long-term survey.

The time series of relative abundance for sublegal (< 83 mm CL) and legal-sized (≥ 83 mm CL) lobsters for Area 514 (part of LMA 1) is shown in Figure 11 as the stratified mean CPUE (± S.E.). Note that the MA index includes data from both vented and non-vented traps, and includes all four survey months (June – Sept). The average catch of sublegal lobsters is much higher than the catch of legal-sized lobsters and generally increased from 2006 through 2016 but has been declining since. The rate of decline slowed considerably over the last five years (2021-2025), and values from the last five years all fall below the time series average of 4.19 sublegal lobsters/trap. The stratified mean catch per trap of legal-sized lobsters in 2025 was 0.49 (± 0.01), and was below the time series average of 0.56.

The time series of relative abundance (stratified mean CPUE ± S.E.) for sublegal (<86 mm CL) and legal-sized (≥ 86 mm CL) lobsters in the Area 538 (MA SNE survey area) is shown in Figure 12. Note that due to survey changes for the MA SNE survey region in 2021, the entire MA SNE time series now represents June – August only, first haul of the month, and only those stations that occurred in the reduced survey footprint. The mean sublegal CPUE in 2025 was 0.66 (± 0.11), well below the time series average of 1.68 sublegal lobsters/trap haul. The CPUE of legal-sized lobsters in 2025 was 0.26 (±0.05), below the time series average of 0.32 legal lobsters/trap haul.

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Rhode Island: Rhode Island conducted the 2025 ventless trap survey in June, July, and August at a total of 27 stations divided between Block Island Sound, Rhode Island Sound, and Narragansett Bay. Generally, the abundance index of sublegal lobsters in the survey has been below the time series mean, with a declining trend. The depth-stratified abundance index of sublegal lobsters in the 2025 survey, 3.25 lobsters per ventless trap, remains below the time series mean of 5.45 lobsters per ventless trap. The abundance index for legal-sized lobsters, at 0.75 lobsters per ventless trap, is above the time series mean of 0.41 lobsters per ventless trap (Figure 13).

New Jersey: A ventless trap survey has been conducted since 2016 during the months of April, July, and October to coincide with NJ's Ocean Trawl Survey. CPUE data for American lobster captured on and off reef sites is collected (Figure 14).

Delaware: A pilot study was initiated in 2018 to assess the population structure of structure-oriented fish in the lower Delaware Bay and nearshore Atlantic Ocean. Sampling was conducted in the lower Delaware Bay and the nearshore Atlantic Ocean using commercial-sized ventless fish pots during April through December 2024. Eighteen American Lobsters were caught in lower Delaware Bay and 471 American Lobsters in the nearshore Atlantic Ocean with a ratio of 46% males, 51% female and 2% egg laden. The sampled Atlantic Ocean American Lobsters ranged in length from 50 mm to 130 mm.

6.3 Trawl Surveys

Maine and New Hampshire: The Maine-New Hampshire Inshore Trawl survey conducted by Maine Department of Marine Resources began in 2000 and covers approximately two-thirds of the inshore portion of Gulf of Maine. The spring survey began on April 28th, 2025, off Portland, ME, and finished May 30th, 2025, off Lubec, Maine. Due to weather and gear conflicts, 104 out of the 120 scheduled tows were completed leading to an 87% completion rate for the survey. A total of 13,182 lobsters were caught and sampled, with 6,340 females, 6,840 males, and 2 of unknown sex (Figure 15). The fall survey began on September 22nd, 2025, beginning in Portland, ME, and finished on October 24th, 2025, off Lubec, Maine. Due to adverse weather and gear conflicts, 82 out of the 120 scheduled tows were completed leading to a 68% completion rate for the survey. A total of 15,369 lobsters were caught and sampled, with 7,612 females, 7,750 males, and 7 lobsters of unknown sex (Figure 16).

Massachusetts: Since 1978, the Division of Marine Fisheries has conducted spring and autumn bottom trawl surveys in the territorial waters of Massachusetts. This survey has run continuously since 1978, with the sole exception of 2020, when neither the spring nor fall survey took place due to Covid-19 restrictions. After low levels observed in the GOM during the early to mid-2000s, relative abundance indices have increased over the last decade but have declined in recent years. Over the last few years, the index for legal sizes has exhibited relatively large interannual variations. The 2025 value for sublegal-sized abundance was above the median. Legal abundance has remained above the time series median since 2011. In SNE, relative abundance from the spring and fall surveys remains low. There were no lobsters observed in the SNE spring survey in 2025 (Figure 17).

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Rhode Island: The Rhode Island DFW Trawl Survey program conducted seasonal surveys in the spring and fall, as well as a monthly survey. In 2025, 44 trawls were conducted in the spring and 44 in the fall. The monthly survey occurs at fixed stations throughout Narragansett Bay. There were 143 trawls performed as part of the monthly program in 2025. Below are figures depicting the annual mean catch per tow. Spring 2025 mean CPUEs were 0.00 and 0.14 for legal and sub legal lobsters (respectively), where Fall 2025 CPUEs were 0.05 for legal lobsters and 0.50 for sublegal lobsters. The 2025 mean Monthly trawl CPUEs were 0.07 and 0.36 per-tow for legal and sublegal lobsters, respectively (Figure 18).

Connecticut and New York: Juvenile and adult abundance are monitored through the Long Island Sound Trawl Survey during the spring (April, May, June) and the fall (September, October) cruises all within NMFS statistical area 611. Mechanical breakdown of the research vessel prevented sampling in fall 2010; an estimated index is shown as the average of 2009 and 2011 values. Similarly, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the spring and fall 2020 Long Island Sound Trawl Surveys were not conducted, an estimated index is shown as the average of 2019 and 2021. Additionally, Connecticut DEEP Marine Fisheries Program did not conduct the Long Island Sound Trawl Survey in 2025 due to boat operation obstacles that lasted the entire year. Spring abundance in the last twelve years (2011-2024) remains less than 1.0. All indices from 2008-2024 are below the time series median of 2.74. The fall time series median of 2.86 has not been exceeded since 2004 (Figure 19). Both legal and sublegal-size lobster abundance have declined with similar trajectory.

New York: New York initiated a stratified random trawl survey in the near shore ocean waters off the south shore of Long Island in 2018 from the Rockaways to Montauk Point and the New York waters of Block Island Sound. There are no survey data for 2025 because the survey was not completed. Only 8 out of 30 stations were sampled in the fall before work was halted due to weather, and all remaining surveys were cancelled due to vessel repairs.

New Jersey: An independent Ocean Trawl Survey is conducted from Sandy Hook, NJ to Cape May, NJ each year. The survey stratifies sampling in three depth gradients, inshore (18'-30'), mid-shore (30'-60'), offshore (60'-90'). The mean CPUE is calculated as the sum of the mean number of lobsters per size class collected in each sampling area weighted by the stratum area. The 2024 indices increased from 2023 values (Figure 20). No 2025 survey was conducted due to vessel repair.

Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia conduct bottom trawl surveys but lobster catch is very rare.

7.0 State Compliance

The Plan Review Team (PRT) notes a few inconsistencies with the requirements of the Lobster FMP during the 2025 fishing year. Connecticut and New Jersey did not conduct sea/port sampling in 2025, as required by Addendum XXVI. Connecticut is currently in the regulatory process to implement electronic tracking device requirements for federally permitted lobster and Jonah crab vessels with commercial trap gear area permits, as required by Addendum XXIX. All other states have fully implemented the measures required by the FMP.

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8.0 De Minimis Requests

The states of Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware have requested *de minimis* status. According to Addendum I, states may qualify for *de minimis* status if their commercial landings in the two most recent years for which data are available do not exceed an average of 40,000 pounds. Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia meet the *de minimis* requirement.

9.0 Regulatory Changes

Massachusetts

- 1/3/25 – Stopped the issuance of extra trap tags for LMA1 and LMA3. Adopted a standard 1/8" v-notch possession definition for OCCLCMA fishers. Allowed use of fully formed red weak rope with MASS Lobster tracer throughout to comply with buoy line marking requirements in body of buoy line for MA Mixed Species Pot/Trap Fisheries.

New Hampshire

- Changes were made to Fis. 602.16 (g) as follows: Replacement tags shall be available to a lobster licensee by exchanging trap tags with the fish and game department on a one-for-one basis to allow for the necessary rotation and maintenance of lobster traps.

Connecticut

- Connecticut is currently in the regulatory process to implement electronic tracking device requirements for federally permitted lobster and Jonah crab vessels with commercial trap gear area permits.

New York

- On July 10, 2024, NY implemented new regulations requiring all federally permitted vessels holding commercial lobster trap allocations have an approved electronic tracking device installed onboard.

10.0 Enforcement Concerns

Maine

- In 2025, Maine Marine Patrol Officers documented 348 lobster-related violations, with 98 being summonses. Marine Patrol's most notable cases in 2025 were: 3 individuals being charged with molesting lobster gear, 1 harvester found in possession of 94 short lobsters, 1 harvester found in possession on 5 oversized lobsters, 1 harvester found in possession of 12 v-notched lobsters, and 3 individuals were found to be fishing lobster traps beyond the Area 1 limit of 800 – the most egregious lobster trap limit violation was 950 lobster traps being fished by a license holder. 43 individuals were issued violations for fishing untagged lobster traps with the most serious violation being 150 improperly tagged lobster traps.

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Massachusetts

- DMF Adjudicatory proceeding: Matter of Schneider — due to non-compliance with vessel tracker requirements for federal lobster trap permit holders and abandoning of gear. This matter concluded in 2026 with an allowance for the permit holder to renew their Coastal Lobster Permit under certain circumstances. Their Offshore Lobster Permit was revoked.

New Jersey

- One summons was issued for deploying lobster pots within a reef site, and an additional three summonses were issued for failing to notify enforcement prior to deploying lobster gear on a reef.

11.0 Research Recommendations

The full list of research recommendations can be found in the 2025 Stock Assessment Report. Below is a summarized list of the high-priority research recommendations from the 2025 Stock Assessment that were compiled by the Lobster Technical Committee (TC) and Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS).

Port and Sea Sampling - Temporally and spatially explicit landings data, and complementary data to characterize the sex ratio and size distribution of landings, are the principal data needed to assess the impact of fishing on lobster populations. Limited funding, and in some cases, elimination of sea sampling and port sampling programs, will negatively affect the ability to characterize catch and conservation discards, limiting the ability of the model to accurately describe landings and stock conditions. It is imperative that funding for critical monitoring programs continues, particularly for offshore areas from which a large portion of current landings originate in SNE. Even if SNE modeling efforts are discontinued, the need for data describing catch and discards in the SNE fishery remains critical to understanding the resource. The CFRF Lobster and Jonah Crab Research Fleet has improved data availability and will continue to be imperative in describing landings for future stock assessments. At-sea sampling efforts directed at the SAs in federal waters fished by the LCMA 3 fleet need to be increased, via a NOAA Fisheries-implemented lobster-targeted sea sampling program. These fishery-dependent programs are essential for accurate lobster assessments and must have dedicated funding.

Commercial Data Spatial Resolution and Quality Control – Lack of fine scale spatial resolution and issues with reporting accuracy have made it a challenge to understand how commercial harvest and effort have varied through time. While improvements have been made with 10-minute square resolution reporting, the requirement to report the number of traps fished and vertical lines both in a SA and overall, 100% lobster harvester reporting, and vessel tracking, there are several major challenges relative to access, quality control, and integration with existing time series that need to be addressed. The implementation of these new data streams necessitates additional support to ensure compliance with requirements and assist harvesters to understand and accurately complete the various data elements requested of them. Time and effort will also be required to integrate the new data sources with existing time series of landings and effort.

Time Varying Growth - Growth of American lobster has been found to change through time

(McMahan et al. 2016). Although the newly developed RTMB assessment model can accommodate any number of growth transition matrices within and among years, the currently available tagging data used to estimate growth parameters and generate growth transition matrices are not comprehensive enough to detect time-varying growth. The SAS recommends a simulation study be conducted to examine the performance of the current base and alternative growth models and determine sample sizes and spatiotemporal coverage necessary to detect and adequately characterize time-varying growth, and that the study results inform development and implementation of a long-term, coordinated tagging program across both stock units to better monitor and characterize changes in American lobster growth.

Expansion of Growth Matrices - Exploration of expanding the model size structure to smaller sizes could allow the SAS to better capture changes in recruitment for the population by incorporating < 53mm lobster abundances from the surveys currently used, as well as incorporating additional surveys that currently are not model inputs for the assessment, such as those from the young of year settlement surveys. Due to decreased recruitment in SNE and some areas in GOMGBK, available survey data should be evaluated to determine whether current data sources for small sizes are sufficient for expanding the size structure and growth matrices.

Temperature-Molt Dynamics - Understanding how the timing for molting, molt increments, and probability by size vary with temperature for all stocks would allow for more accurate and realistic depictions of growth via updated annual growth matrices. The development of field-based approaches are also needed to compare and identify reliable predictors of molting to improve future seasonal monitoring of molt phenology in response to environmental change. The work of Groner et al. (2018) should be expanded by using the Millstone data to analyze how molt frequency and increment has changed seasonally and interannually.

Larval Ecology - Spatial expansion of larval surveys and further testing is warranted, particularly in areas like the eastern GOM and GBK that lack any studies of this nature. Studies that explore greater spatial coverage of larval sampling and examine lobster larval diets, *in situ* development time in current conditions, larval interactions with well-mixed versus stratified water columns, and varying growth and mortality with temperature would allow for greater context on these variables' influence on recruitment.

Deepwater Settlement - There is a need to determine settlement success in habitat not currently sampled and its contribution to overall stock productivity. Research needs to explore the levels of detectability, impact of stratification, and interannual temperature effects on the indices. Additionally, it will be important to understand whether there are differences in growth and survival in these deeper habitats, particularly relative to the desire to expand the growth matrix into smaller size ranges for modeling purposes.

Expansion of in situ Temperature Monitoring - Model-estimated bottom temperatures can be problematic given the prevalence of strong stratification across a large portion of nearshore waters in the GOM region. Strategic site location and deployment of fixed-station continuously logging temperature monitors throughout the nearshore range (at least) should be a high priority.

Assessment Model Platform - Based on the progress made in the 2025 assessment with Template Model Builder (TMB), the SAS prioritizes transitioning the assessment model from ADMB to TMB between now and the next assessment to ensure diagnostics are fully reviewed and the transition is successful.

Recruitment Index - Recent changes in GOMGBK recruitment observed during this assessment highlighted that the model can no longer rely on the monotonic trend it has in the past for describing recruitment changes through time. Future research should focus on exploring whether settlement data from outside traditional settlement surveys (i.e., deepwater settlement data or early benthic phase data) can be incorporated into settlement indices, and examining and incorporating variables that explain variation in recruitment.

Stock Structure Working Group - The SAS recommends that a workshop on stock boundaries be convened prior to the initiation of the next assessment to review results of any new research and re-evaluate appropriate stock boundaries. Inclusion of Canadian researchers at this workshop would be beneficial to share data and knowledge on this shared resource.

Spatial Analyses of Fisheries-Independent Data – Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) trawl survey data remains one of the richest data sources to understand abundance and distribution patterns through time for lobsters by size and sex. Formal analyses of NEFSC trawl survey and the ME/NH trawl survey should be performed. The Ecosystem Monitoring (EcoMon) Program's larval lobster information should also be considered.

Reevaluate Baseline Natural Mortality Rate - Intensive hypothesis-driven sensitivity analyses should be conducted to evaluate the base mortality rate for both stocks by season and year. Canadian tagging data should be examined to determine how natural mortality rates derived from these data compare to the assumptions used currently in the model and sensitivity analyses. Exploration of additional time series representing natural mortality hypotheses (e.g. sea temperature, shell disease prevalence, predators) should be continued to either inform time-varying natural mortality or correlate to rates produced in sensitivity analyses. If the assessment model platform is moved to TMB, interannual natural mortality should be explored using random effects.

Management Strategy Evaluation - Developing a true management strategy evaluation tool that can iteratively project and refit the operating model would best inform future management discussions on rebuilding the SNE stock or providing resiliency for the GOM stock and fishery. Development of clearly defined goals and consensus statements by the Board with input from industry about management objectives will be a critical aspect to the MSE and future management of this fishery.

Economic Reference Points - Economic analyses considering landings, ex-vessel value, costs, associated economic multipliers, number of active participants, and other factors are imperative to truly discern how declines in the population would impact the GOMGBK industry. The SAS strongly recommends a thorough economics analysis be conducted by a panel of experts to more properly

inform economic-based reference points and ultimately provide resiliency to both the GOMGBK stock and fishery.

12.0 Plan Review Team Recommendations

During its review of the state compliance reports, the PRT noted the following issues:

- Massachusetts was unable to provide a compliance report including all required data by the August 1 deadline[2].
- In 2025, Connecticut and New Jersey did not meet the Addendum XXVI minimum requirement of ten sea/port sampling trips. Given persistent issues with states being unable to meet the sampling requirement, the Board should consider how to address this issue moving forward.

The PRT Recommends the Board approve the *de minimis* requests of DE, MD, and VA. Other than the issues noted above, all states appear to be in compliance with the requirements of the FMP.

The following are general recommendations the PRT would like to raise to the Board:

- The PRT recommends the Board consider reviewing the monitoring requirements in SNE given the status of the stock and the difficulty obtaining sea sampling trips in a fishery with reduced effort. The TC has discussed the need for additional sampling trips in federal waters as the fishery has shifted offshore. The Board could consider reducing required sea/port sampling trips for SNE areas or revising the *de minimis* policy.

[2] Data for Massachusetts that were not available for this report will be added at a later date.

13.0 Tables

Table 1. Landings (in pounds) of American Lobster by the states of Maine through Virginia. Source: ACCSP Data Warehouse for 1990-2024 landings; state compliance reports for 2025 landings. *C= confidential data.*

	ME	NH	MA	RI	CT	NY	NJ	DE	MD	VA	Total Lbs
1990	28,068,238	1,658,200	16,572,172	7,258,175	2,645,951	3,431,111	2,198,867	68,300	24,941	58,260	**61,984,215**
1991	30,788,646	1,802,035	15,998,463	7,445,172	2,673,674	3,128,246	1,673,031	54,700	26,445	7,914	**63,598,326**
1992	26,830,448	1,529,292	14,969,350	6,763,087	2,534,161	2,651,067	1,213,255	21,000	27,279	753	**56,539,692**
1993	29,926,464	1,693,347	14,350,595	6,228,470	2,177,022	2,667,107	906,498	24,000	46,650	2,940	**58,023,093**
1994	38,948,867	1,650,751	16,176,551	6,474,399	2,146,339	3,954,634	581,396	8,400	7,992	460	**69,949,789**
1995	37,208,324	1,834,794	15,903,241	5,362,084	2,541,140	6,653,780	606,011	25,100	26,955	5,210	**70,166,639**
1996	36,083,443	1,632,829	15,312,826	5,295,797	2,888,683	9,408,519	640,198	20,496	28,726	C	**71,311,517**
1997	47,023,271	1,414,133	15,010,532	5,798,529	3,468,051	8,878,395	858,426	C	34,208	2,240	**82,487,785**
1998	47,036,836	1,194,653	13,167,803	5,617,873	3,715,310	7,896,803	721,811	1,359	19,266	1,306	**79,373,020**
1999	53,494,418	1,380,360	15,875,031	8,155,947	2,595,764	6,452,472	931,064	C	41,954	6,916	**88,933,926**
2000	57,215,406	1,709,746	14,988,031	6,907,504	1,393,565	2,883,468	891,183	C	62,416	C	**86,051,319**
2001	48,617,693	2,027,725	11,976,487	4,452,358	1,329,707	2,052,741	579,753	C	31,114	C	**71,067,578**
2002	63,625,745	2,029,887	13,437,109	3,835,050	1,067,121	1,440,483	264,425	C	20,489	C	**85,720,309**
2003	54,970,948	1,958,817	11,321,324	3,561,391	C	946,449	209,956	C	22,778	C	**72,991,663**
2004	71,574,344	4,076,845	11,675,852	3,059,319	646,994	996,109	370,536	13,322	14,931	27,039	**92,455,291**
2005	68,729,813	C	11,291,145	3,174,852	713,901	1,154,470	369,003	C	39,173	21,988	**85,494,345**
2006	75,420,639	2,612,389	12,102,232	4,355,690	806,135	1,252,146	470,878	3,706	26,349	28,160	**97,078,324**
2007	63,987,476	2,468,811	10,046,445	2,299,744	568,696	911,761	334,097	C	26,804	C	**80,643,834**
2008	69,911,680	2,568,088	10,606,534	2,782,000	427,168	712,075	304,479	C	32,932	C	**87,344,955**
2009	81,124,149	2,986,981	11,789,758	2,842,088	412,468	731,811	C	6,064	30,618	21,472	**99,945,409**
2010	96,247,042	3,648,004	12,772,983	2,928,688	441,622	813,513	692,910	C	29,149	16,345	**117,590,257**
2011	104,957,000	3,919,195	13,385,902	2,754,067	198,928	344,232	698,205	8,879	41,057	12,879	**126,320,344**
2012	127,464,536	4,229,227	14,486,428	2,706,384	247,857	550,441	919,351	C	65,579	10,823	**150,680,627**
2013	128,015,530	3,817,707	15,259,573	2,155,762	127,420	496,535	660,367	C	62,601	9,061	**150,604,556**
2014	124,941,344	4,374,656	15,312,852	2,412,875	127,409	222,843	526,368	26,330	57,414	11,099	**148,013,190**
2015	122,685,783	4,721,826	16,450,853	2,316,458	205,099	147,414	445,060	22,894	29,284	9,474	**147,034,145**
2016	132,749,768	5,782,098	17,784,921	2,260,335	254,346	218,846	349,880	C	29,254	2,854	**159,432,301**
2017	112,153,095	5,645,434	16,493,125	2,031,143	130,015	150,317	409,062	32,364	29,136	1,630	**137,075,319**
2018	121,226,471	6,199,365	17,697,243	1,905,689	110,580	112,685	344,547	C	24,893	2,727	**147,624,201**
2019	102,232,748	6,093,615	17,029,462	1,795,212	111,573	112,107	291,072	C	11,831	1,840	**127,679,459**
2020	97,916,077	5,014,169	15,711,853	1,695,279	159,173	111,678	309,197	11,098	10,176	C	**120,938,700**
2021	110,718,783	5,712,222	16,826,952	1,351,415	148,758	109,117	290,981	6,193	12,827	3,099	**135,180,348**
2022	99,020,181	5,264,476	14,907,099	1,189,045	88,654	81,950	266,612	C	13,336	C	**120,831,354**
2023	97,356,466	6,090,731	15,886,108	1,116,746	126,729	104,899	266,734	C	8,518	4,203	**120,961,134**
2024	87,535,403	7,629,847	16,521,672	1,147,499	188,270	143,770	315,667	C	C	2,954	**113,485,081**
2025	80,408,665	7,740,424	18,007,400	1,539,455	284,264	141,619	405,631	C	C	C	**108,527,458**

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Table 2. Top: Current (2021-2023) reference abundance estimates (millions), fishery/industry target, abundance limit and threshold (millions), and 2020 Assessment abundance reference points for both stocks. Bottom: Current (2021-2023) exploitation, current target and threshold exploitation, and 2020 Assessment target and threshold exploitation for both stocks.

	Quantity	GOMGBK	SNE
Abundance Reference Points	Current Reference Abundance (2021-2023 average)	202	6
	Current Fishery/Industry Target	229	NA
	Current Limit	143	NA
	Current Threshold	89	18
	2020 Assessment Fishery/Industry Target	212	NA
	2020 Assessment Limit	125	NA
	2020 Assessment Threshold	89	20
Exploitation Reference Points	Current Exploitation (2021-2023 average)	0.465	0.26
	Current Target	0.430	0.267
	Current Threshold	0.464	0.286
	2020 Assessment Target	0.461	0.257
	2020 Assessment Current Threshold	0.475	0.290

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Table 3. 2025 LCMA specific management measures.

Management Measure	LCMA 1	LCMA 2	LCMA 3	LCMA 4	LCMA 5	LCMA 6	OCC
Min Gauge Size	3 1/4"	3 3/8"	3 17/32"	3 3/8"	3 3/8"	3 3/8"	3 3/8"
Vent Rect.	1 15/16 x 5 3/4"	2 x 5 3/4"	2 1/16 x 5 3/4"	2 x 5 3/4"	2 x 5 3/4"	2 x 5 3/4"	2 x 5 3/4"
Vent Cir.	2 7/16"	2 5/8"	2 11/16"	2 5/8"	2 5/8"	2 5/8"	2 5/8"
V-notch requirement	Mandatory for all eggers	Mandatory for all legal size eggers	Mandatory for all eggers above 42°30'	Mandatory for all eggers in federal waters. No v-notching in state waters.	Mandatory for all eggers	None	None
V-Notch Definition[1] (possession)	Zero Tolerance	1/8" with or w/out setal hairs[1]	1/8" with or w/out setal hairs[1]	1/8" with or w/out setal hairs[1]	1/8" with or w/out setal hairs[1]	1/8" with or w/out setal hairs[1]	1/8" with or w/out setal hairs[1]
Max. Gauge (male & female)	5"	5 ¼"	6 3/4"	5 ¼"	5 ¼"	5 ¼"	State Waters: none Federal waters: 6 3/4"
Season Closure				April 30-May 31[2]	February 1-March 31[3]	Sept 8-Nov 28[4]	February 1-April 30
Trap Limit	800	Permit Specific, not to exceed 800	Permit Specific, not to exceed 1,945	Permit Specific, not to exceed 1,440	Permit Specific, not to exceed 1,440	Based on historical traps fished	Permit specific, not to exceed 800

[1] A v-notched lobster is defined as any female lobster that bears a notch or indentation in the base of the flipper that is at least as deep as 1/8", with or without setal hairs. It also means any female which is mutilated in a manner that could hide, obscure, or obliterate such a mark.

[2] Pots must be removed from the water by April 30 and un-baited lobster traps may be set one week prior to the season reopening.

[3] During the February 1 – March 31 closure, trap fishermen will have a two week period to remove lobster traps from the water and may set lobster traps one week prior to the end of the closed season.

[4] Two week gear removal and a 2 week grace period for gear removal at beginning of closure. No lobster traps may be baited more than 1 week prior to season reopening.

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Table 4. 2025 sampling requirements and state implementation. All states have 100% active harvester reporting. Sufficient sea sampling can replace port sampling. *De minimis* states (denoted by *) are not required to conduct biological sampling of their lobster fishery.

State	100% Dealer Reporting	10% Harvester Reporting	Sea Sampling	Port Sampling	Ventless Trap Survey	Settlement Survey	Trawl Survey
ME	✓	✓ (10%)	✓		✓	✓	✓
NH	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MA	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
RI	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CT	✓	✓	No[a]	No[a]		✓[b]	✓
NY	✓	✓		✓			✓
NJ	✓	✓	No	No	✓		✓
DE*	✓	✓			✓		✓
MD*	✓	✓					✓
VA*	✓	✓					✓

[a] No fishery dependent sampling has been conducted by CT since 2014 due to reductions in funding and staffing levels.

[b] Larval data are available for the eastern Sound (ELIS) from the Millstone Power Station entrainment estimates of all stages of lobster larvae.

Table 5. 2025 sea and port sampling trips and samples by state. *De minimis* states (denoted by *) are not required to conduct biological sampling of their lobster fishery.

State	Sea Sampling			Port Sampling		Totals	
	Trips	Samples	Traps	Trips	Samples	Trips	Samples
ME	200	225,703	49,521	0	0	200	225,703
NH	14	8,872	NR	12	1,048	26	9,920
MA	66	37,761	15,956	0	0	66	37,761
RI	4	1,240	1,109	9	2,315	13	3,555
CT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NY	0	0	0	18	1,827	18	1,827
NJ	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DE*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MD*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
VA*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	284	273,576	66,586	39	5,190	323	278,766

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14.0 Figures

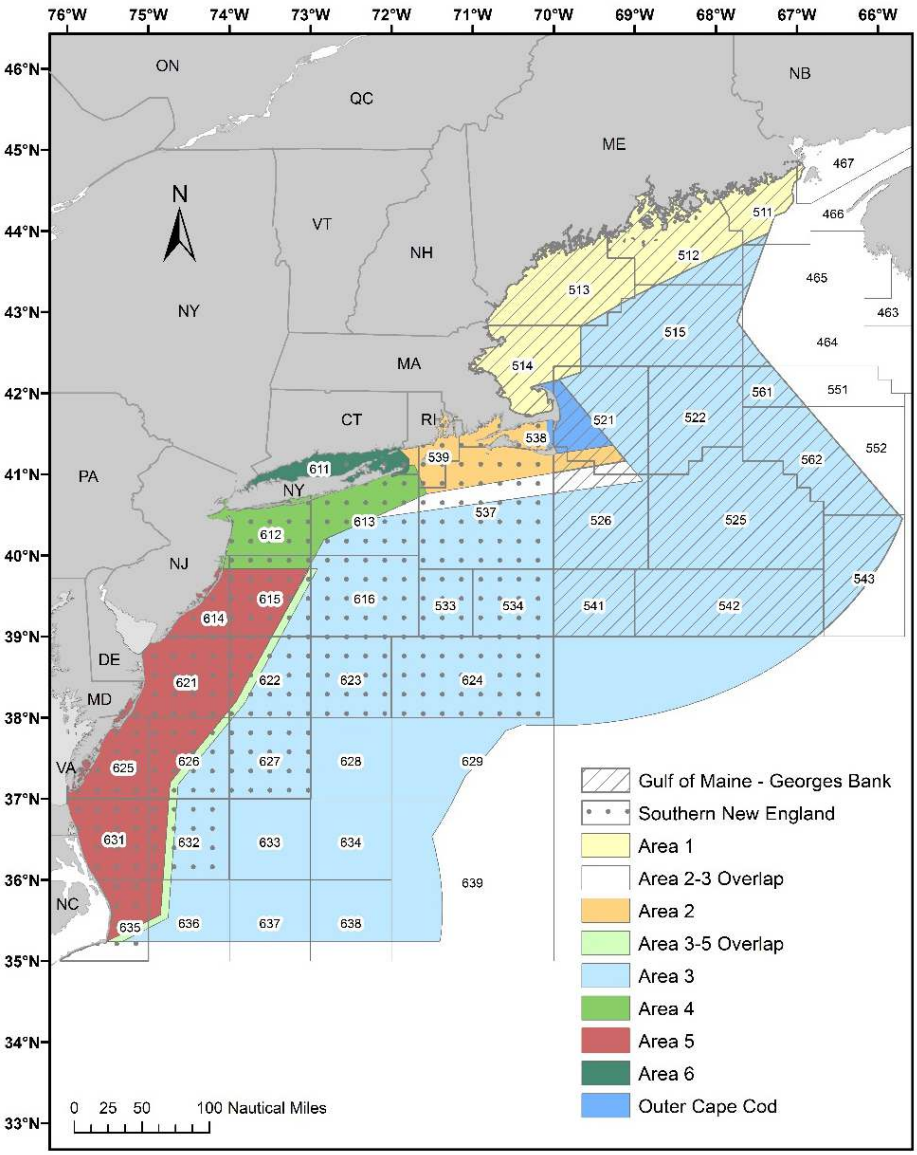


Figure 1. Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMAs) and stock boundaries for American lobster.

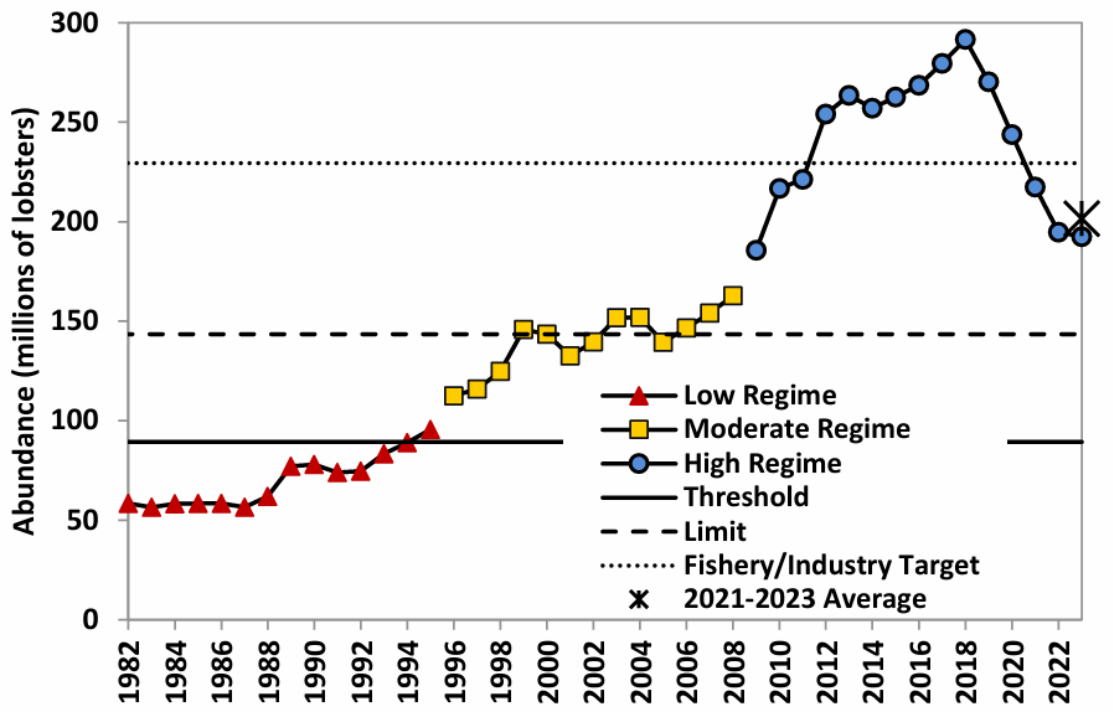


Figure 2. Abundance for GOM/GBK Relative to Reference Points. Source: 2025 Benchmark Stock Assessment for American Lobster.

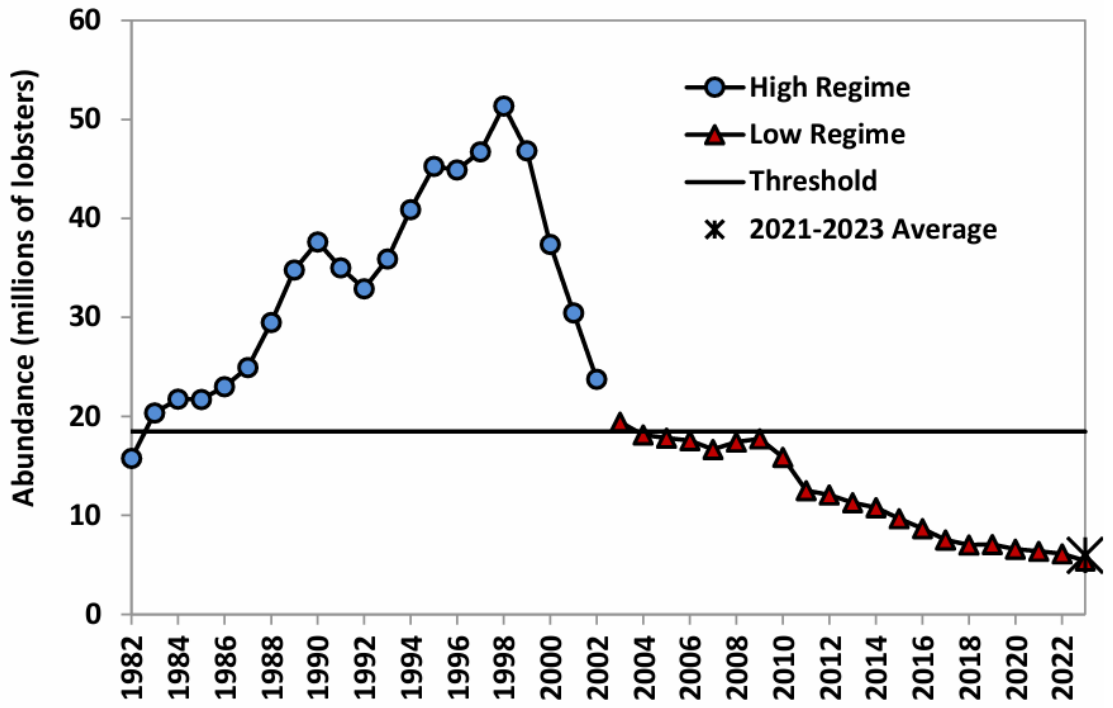


Figure 3. Abundance for SNE Relative to Reference Points. Source: 2025 Benchmark Stock Assessment for American Lobster.

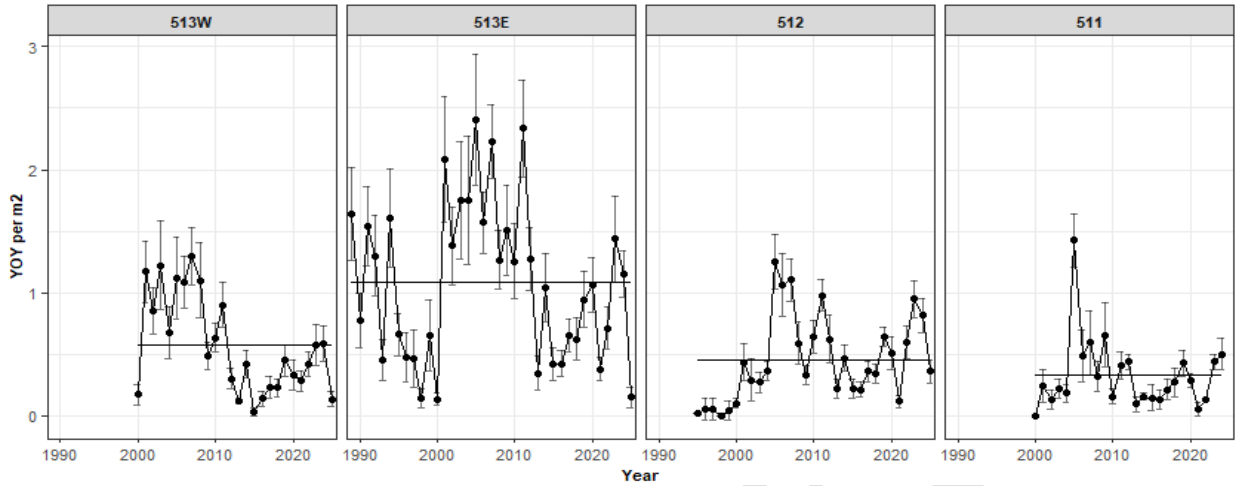


Figure 4. Maine Lobster Settlement Survey Index 1989-2025 for each statistical area with series average (solid horizonal line) for each region with standard error bars. The cut-off sizes for YOY vary by year and are based on the annual size frequency distribution and range from 11 to 14.5mm CL.

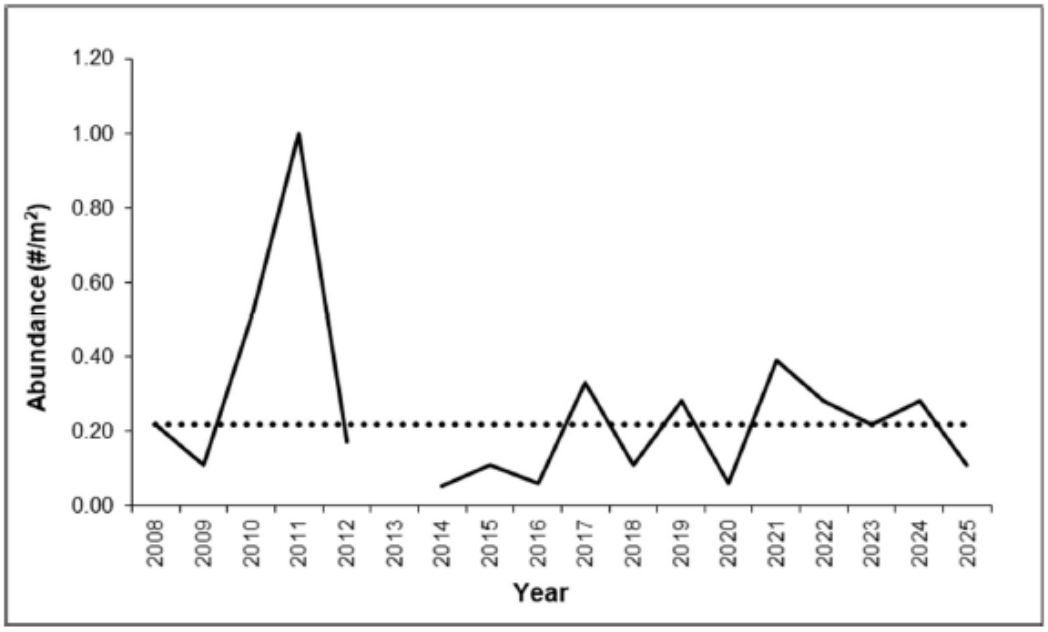


Figure 5. Catch per unit effort (#/m2) of young-of-year (YOY), one-year-olds (Y+), YOY and Y+ combined, and all lobsters during the American Lobster Settlement Index, by location, in New Hampshire, from 2008 through 2025.

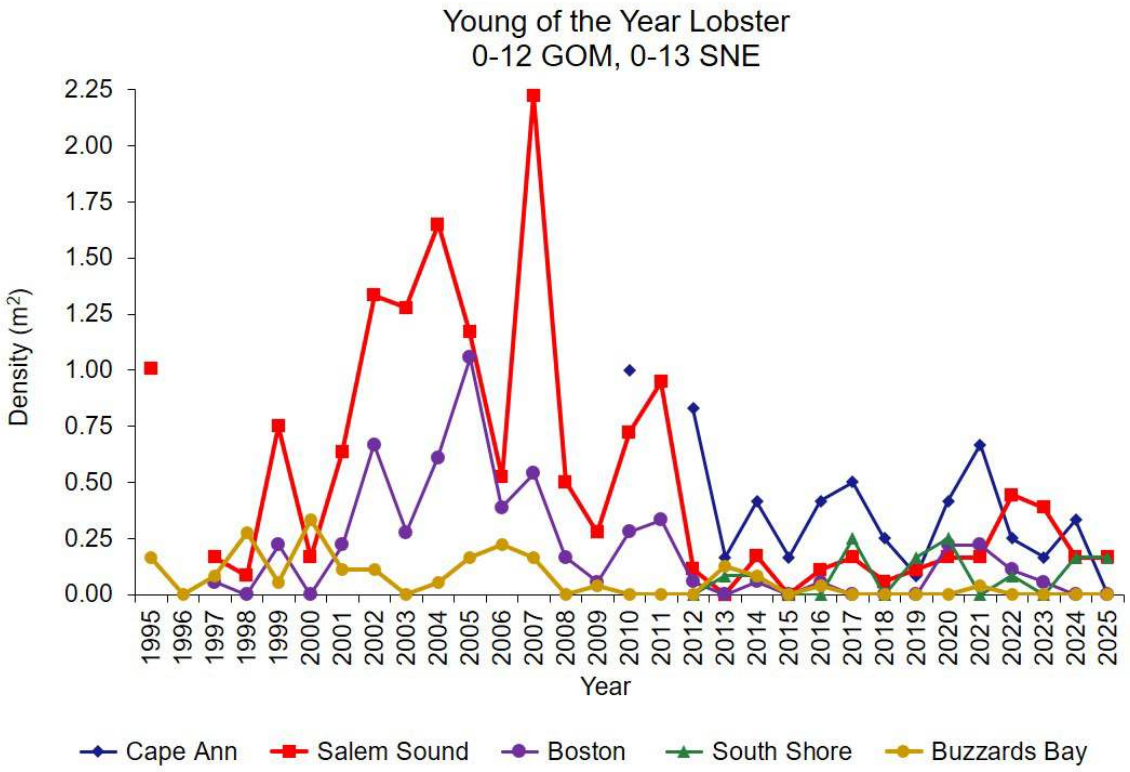


Figure 6. Young-of-year lobster density in four regions within the GOM stock unit – Cape Ann, Salem Sound, Boston, and South Shore, and one region in the SNE stock unit - Buzzards Bay. In GOM locations, lobsters ≤ 12 mm CL are considered YOY, while in SNE locations YOYs are ≤ 13 mm CL.

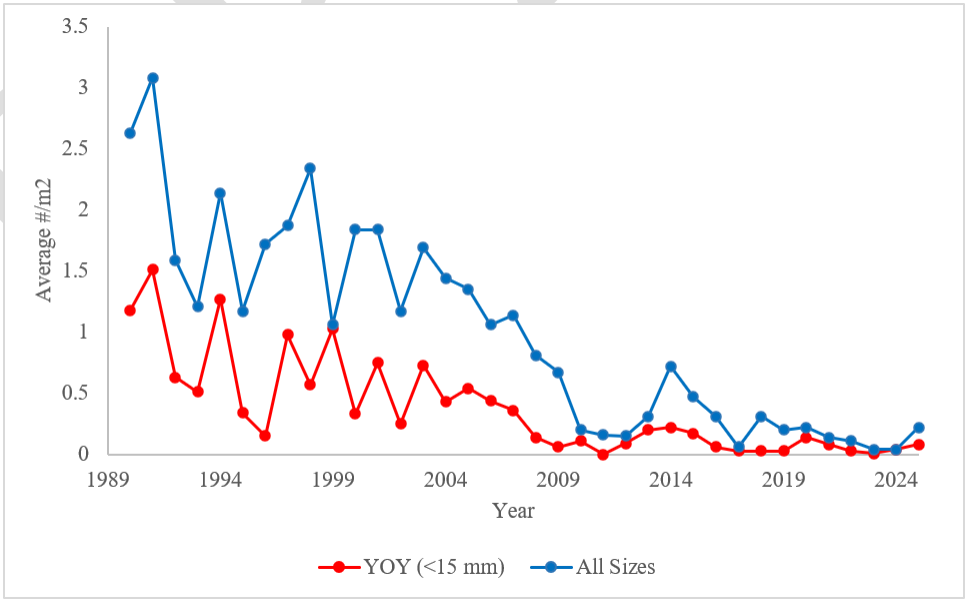


Figure 7. Average abundance of American lobster in Rhode Island suction sampling sites. Abundances are presented for YOY lobsters 13 mm or smaller (red line) and all sizes (blue line).

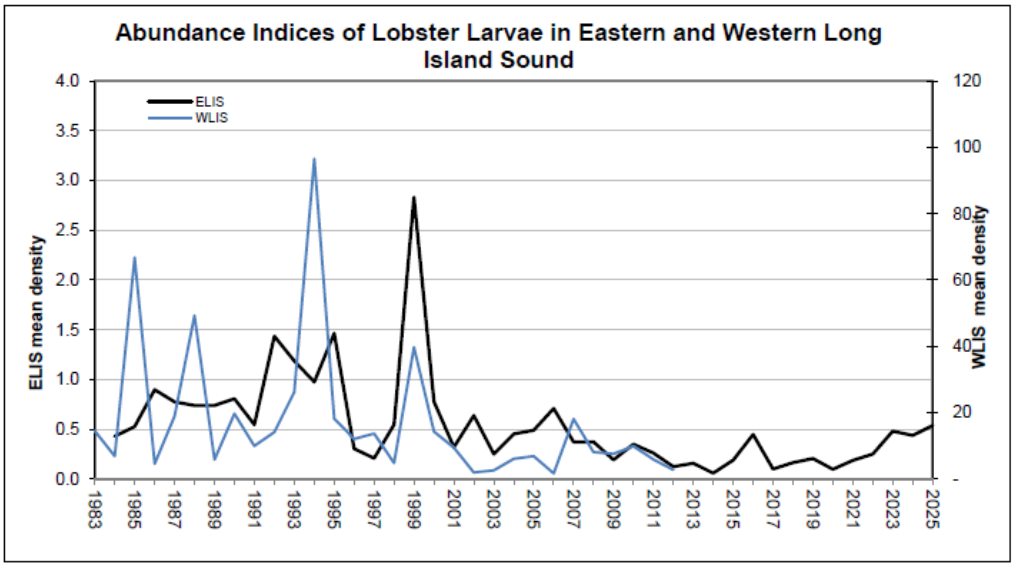


Figure 8. Abundance indices of lobster larvae from the Connecticut DEEP Larval Lobster Survey in western Long Island Sound (discontinued in 2013) and from the Millstone Power Station entrainment estimates in eastern Long Island Sound.

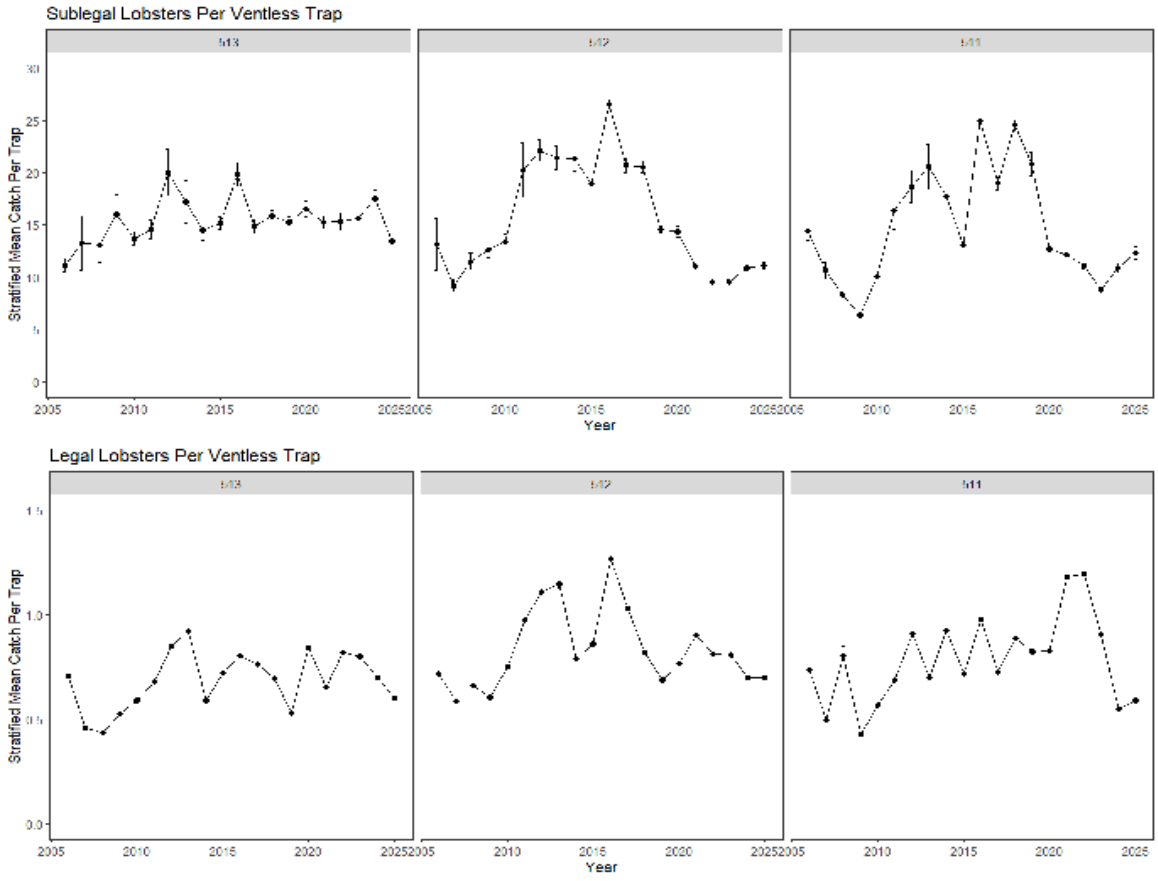


Figure 9. Stratified mean catch per trap for sublegal (top) and legal (bottom) sized lobsters from Maine's Ventless Trap Survey 2006-2024 by statistical area from ventless traps only. Standard error is shown.

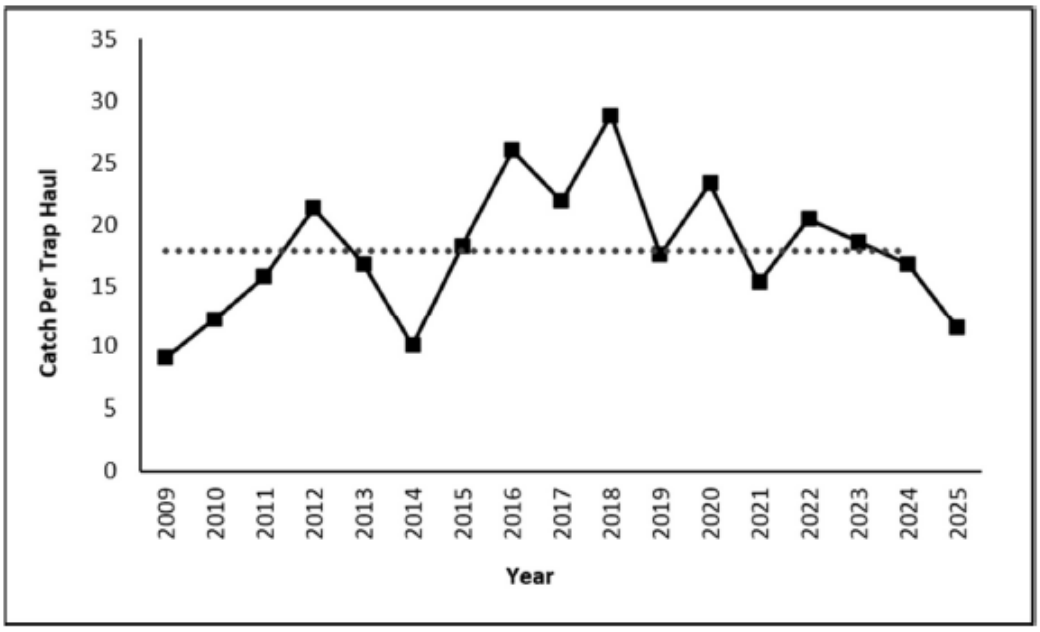


Figure 10. Stratified mean catch per trap haul (ventless traps only) for all lobsters captured during the coastwide random stratified Ventless Trap Survey in New Hampshire state waters.

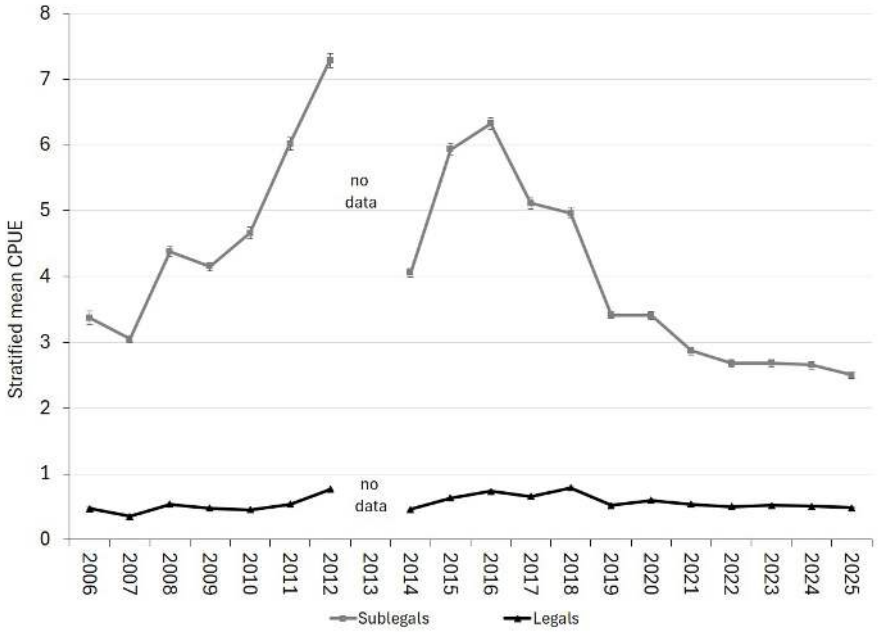


Figure 11. Stratified mean catch per trap haul (±S.E.) of sublegal (< 83 mm, grey line) and legal (≥ 83 mm, black line) lobsters in NMFS Area 514 from MADMF ventless trap survey from.

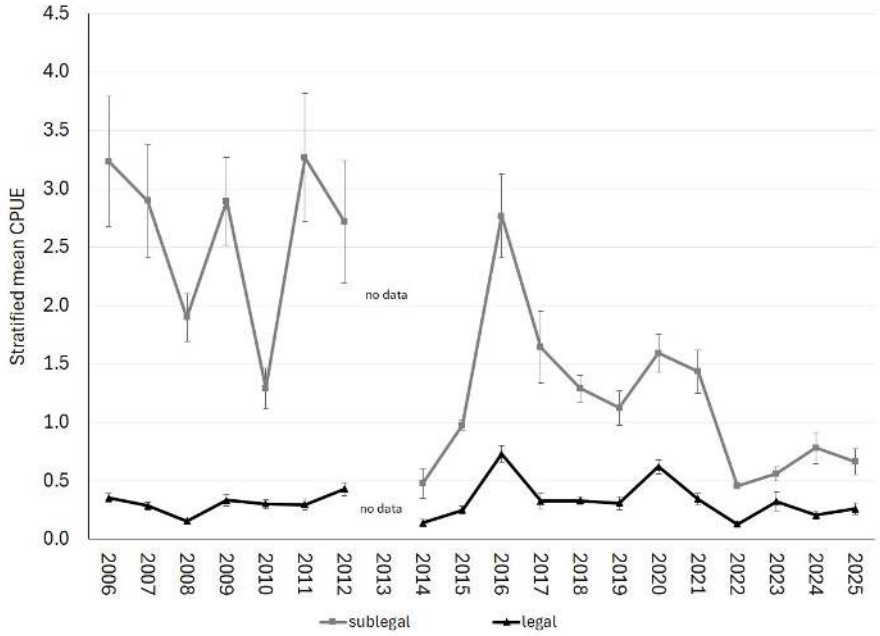


Figure 12. Stratified mean catch per trap haul (±S.E.) of sublegal (< 86 mm, grey line) and legal (≥ 86 mm, black line) lobsters in the reduced MA SNE survey area, Area 538.

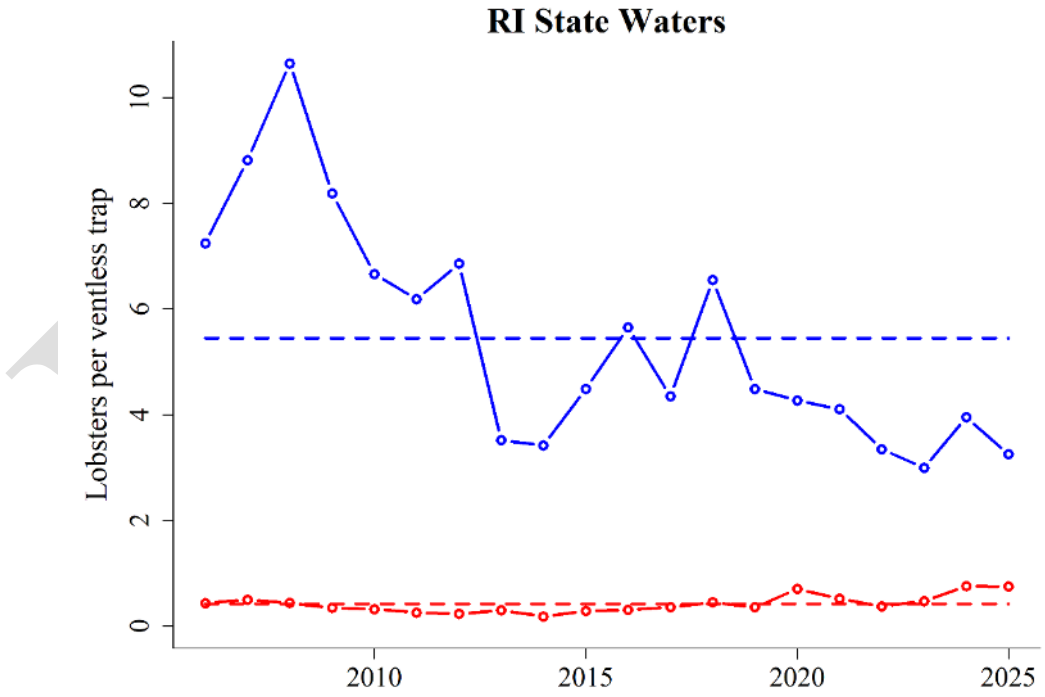


Figure 13. Depth-stratified mean catch of sublegal lobsters in the RIDEM DMF ventless trap survey.

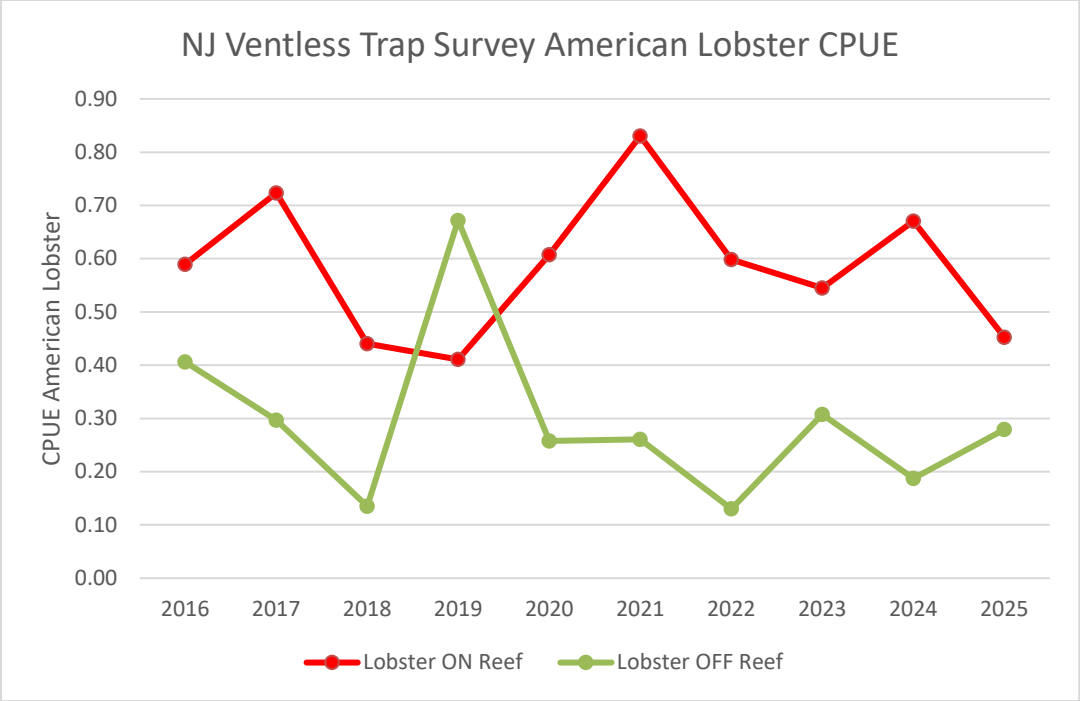


Figure 14. CPUE of American lobster captured on and off reef sites from NJ Ventless Trap Survey. Sampling is conducted during the months of April, July, and October to coincide with NJ's Ocean Trawl Survey.

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Figure 15. Stratified mean catch and recruit abundance for American lobster on the Spring ME/NH Inshore Trawl Survey (2000-2025). Top: Mean catch of sublegals (<83). Middle: Mean catch of legal sized lobsters (>82). Bottom: Recruit abundance (71-80 mm lobsters).

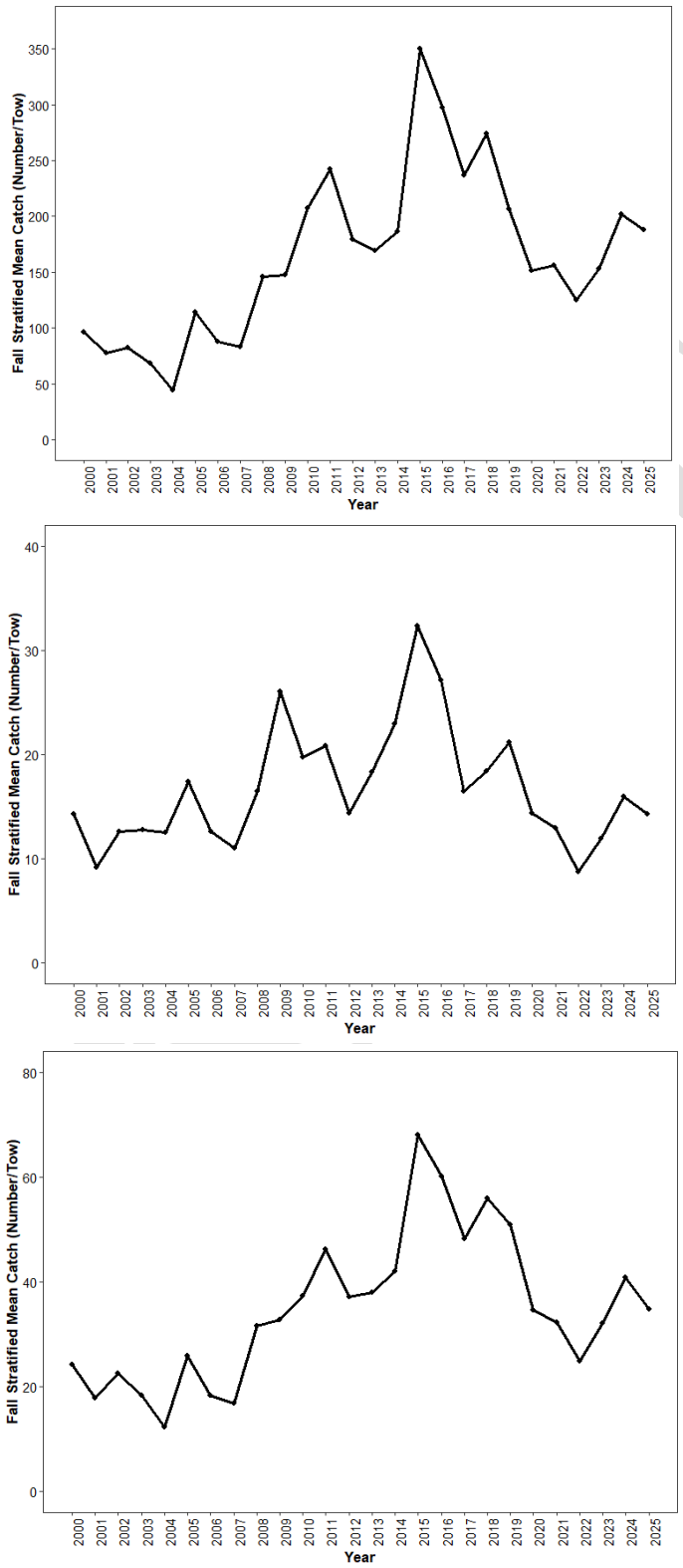


Figure 16. Stratified mean catch and recruit abundance for American lobster on the Fall ME/NH Inshore Trawl Survey (2000-2025). Top: Mean catch of sublegals (<83). Middle: Mean catch of legal sized lobsters (>82). Bottom: Recruit abundance (71-80 mm lobsters).

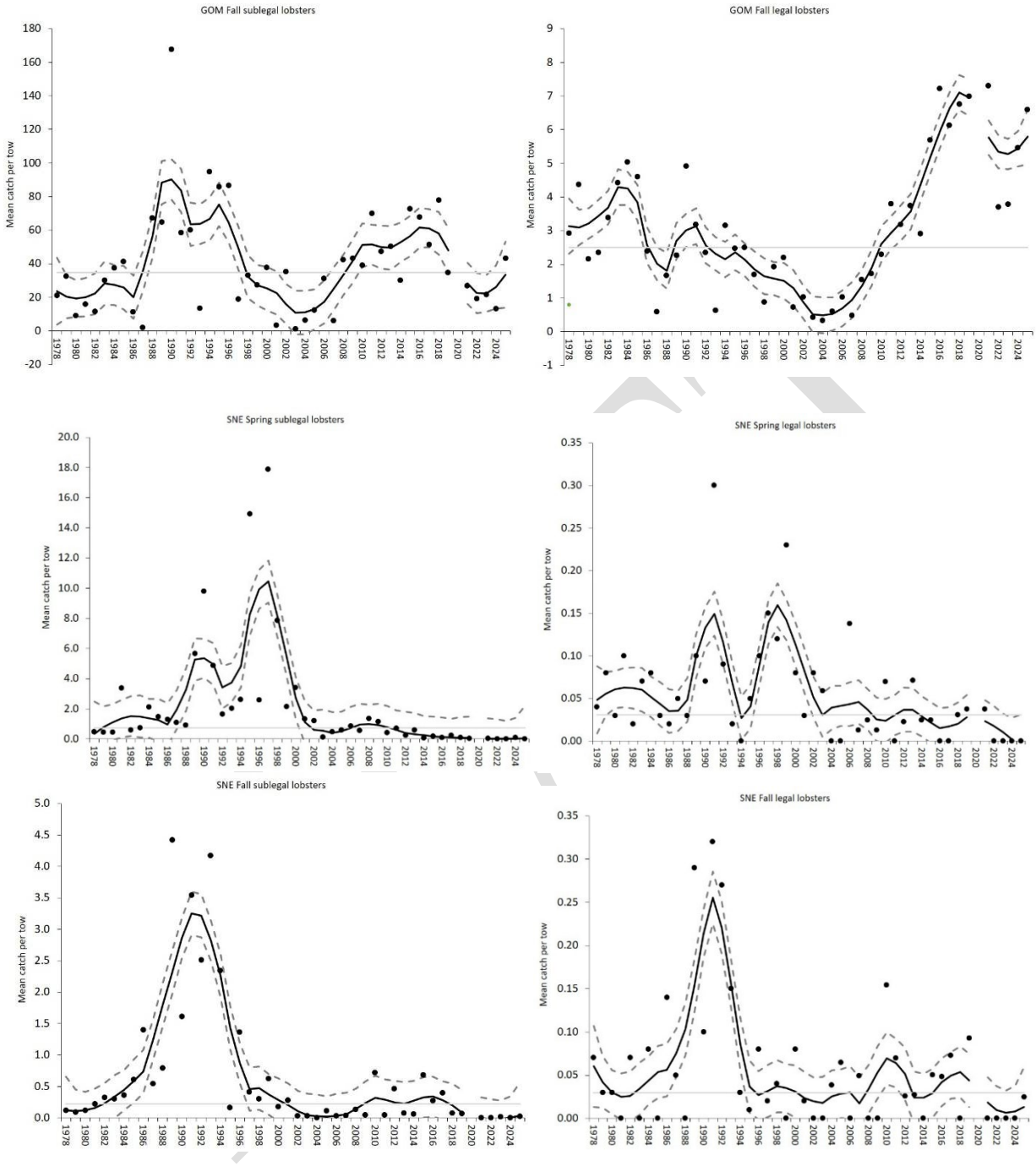


Figure 17. MADMF Fall Trawl Survey sublegal (left) and legal (right) indices from 1978-2025 sexes combined. No survey conducted in 2020 (spring or fall) due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The top two charts are from Gulf of Maine and the bottom four charts are from Southern New England. Black line represents a LOESS fit to the data (span = 0.25) and dashed grey lines are upper and lower standard errors of the model fit. The horizontal grey line is the time series median.

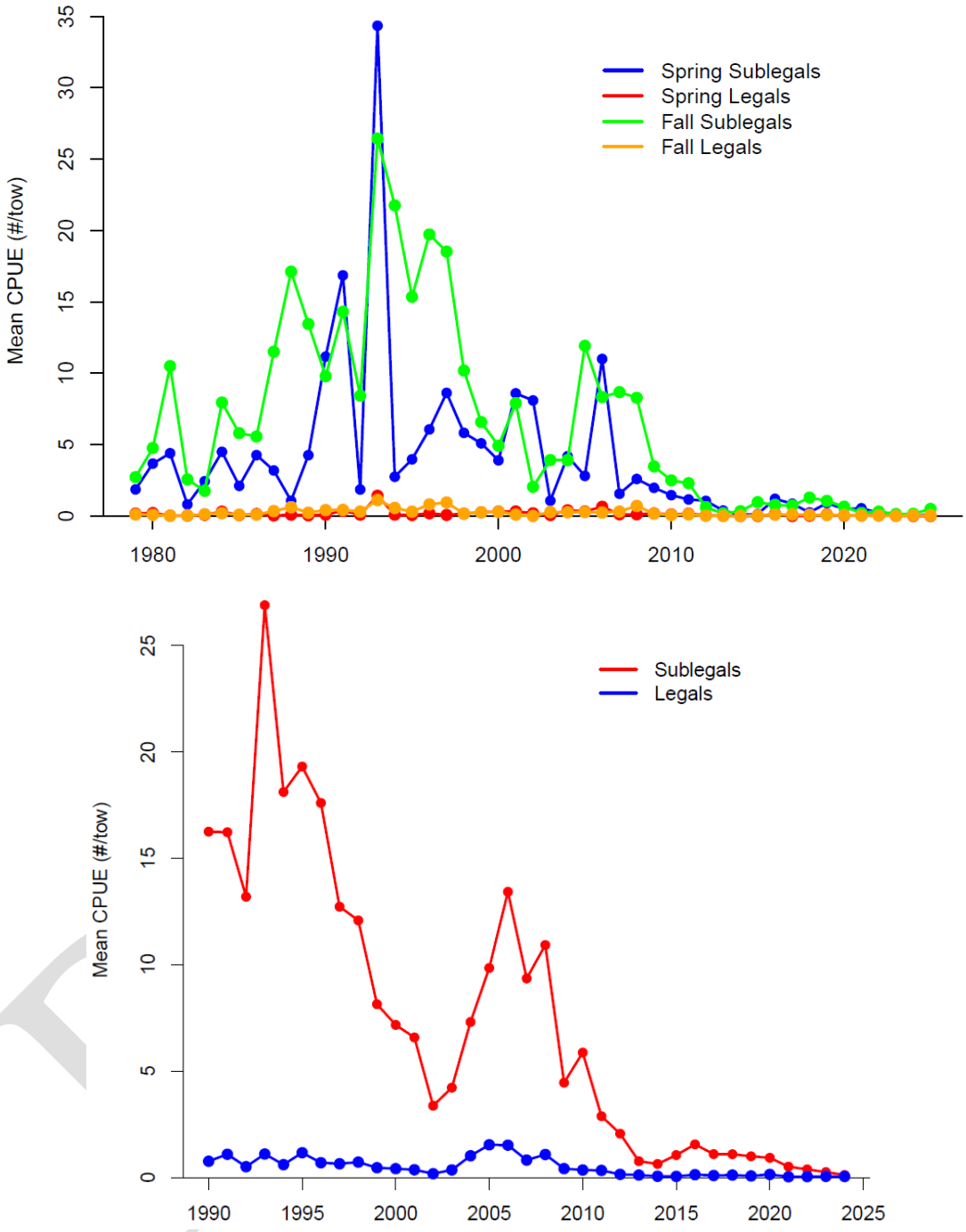


Figure 18. RIDFW Seasonal (spring and fall) Trawl lobster abundances (top) and Monthly Trawl lobster abundances (bottom). CPUE is expressed as the annual mean number per tow for sub-legal (<85.725mm CL) and legal sized (>=85.725mm CL) lobsters.

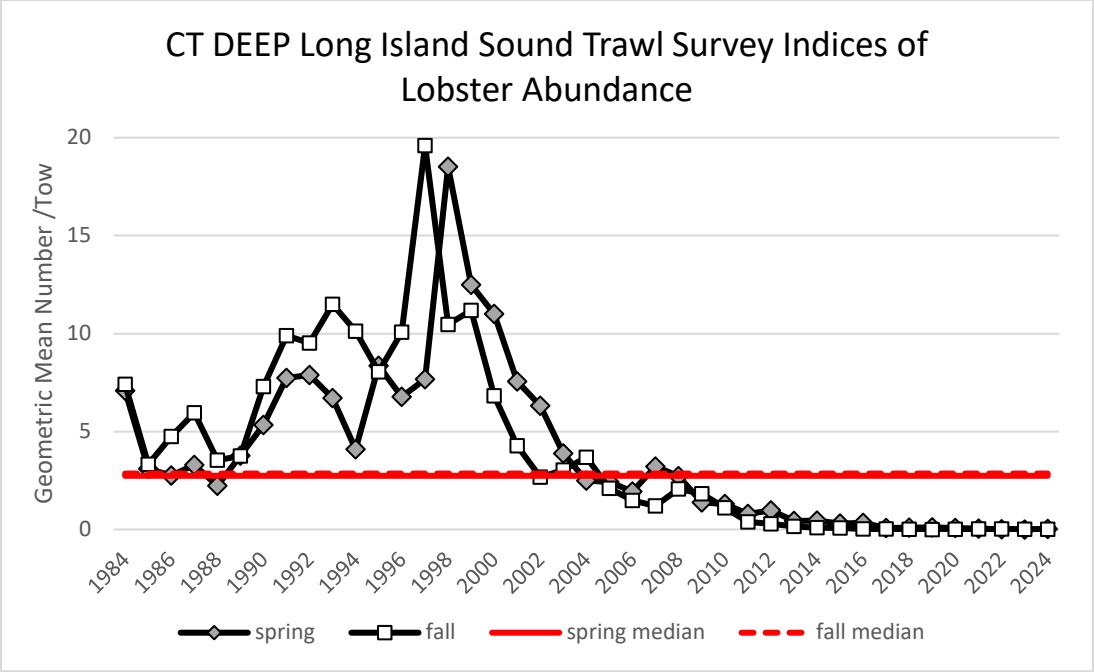


Figure 19. Results of the Long Island Sound Trawl Survey during spring (April-June) and fall (September-October) within NMFS statistical area 611.

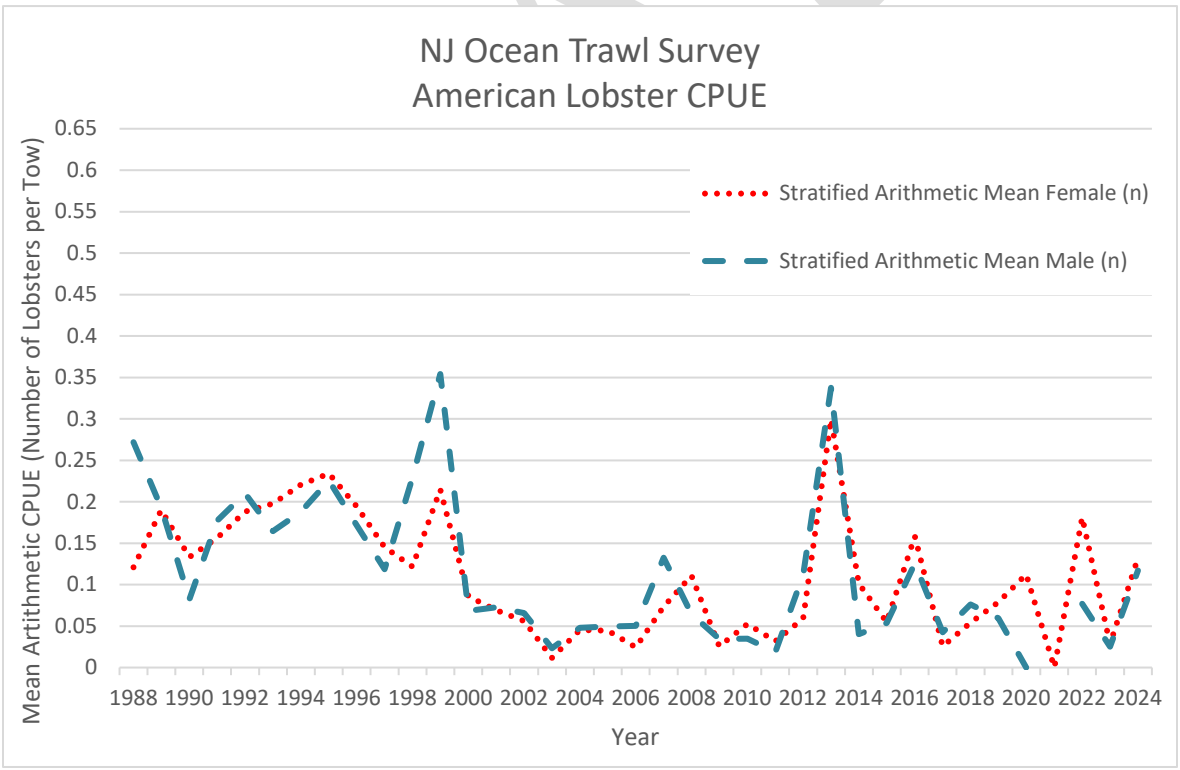


Figure 20. Stratified mean CPUE of all lobsters collected aboard the NJDFW Ocean Trawl Survey. No 2025 survey was conducted due to vessel repair.

Draft for Board Review

ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

REVIEW OF THE INTERSTATE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

For Jonah Crab
(*Cancer borealis*)

2025 FISHING YEAR



Prepared by the Plan Review Team

October 2026

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

Draft for Board Review

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Draft for Board Review

REVIEW OF THE ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR JONAH CRAB (*Cancer borealis*)

2025 FISHING YEAR

1.0 Status of the Fishery Management Plan

Year of ASMFC Plan's Adoption:	FMP (2015)
Framework Adjustments:	Addendum I (2016) Addendum II (2017) Addendum III (2018) Addendum IV (2022)
Management Unit:	Maine through North Carolina
States with a Declared Interest:	Maine through Virginia (Excluding Pennsylvania and DC)
Active Committees:	American Lobster Management Board, Technical Committee, Plan Review Team, Advisory Panel, Electronic Reporting Subcommittee, Electronic Tracking Subcommittee

2.0 Status of the Fishery

2.1 Commercial Fishery

Historically, Jonah crab was taken as bycatch in the lobster fishery; however, in the mid-2000s a directed fishery began to emerge, causing landings to rapidly increase. Throughout the 1990s, landings fluctuated between approximately 2 and 3 million pounds, and the overall value of the fishery was low. In the early 2000s landings began to increase, with over 7 million pounds landed in 2005. By 2014, landings had almost tripled to 17 million pounds and a value of nearly $13 million. Peak landings occurred in 2018 at 20,173,884 pounds. This rapid increase in landings can be attributed to an increase in the price of other crab (such as Dungeness, *Metacarcinus magister*), creating a substitute market for Jonah crab, as well as a decrease in the abundance of lobster in Southern New England, causing fishermen to redirect effort on Jonah crab. It should be noted that there is some uncertainty in the landings data—especially prior to 2008—due to species misidentification issues as well as underreporting of landings before the implementation of reporting requirements. Despite the uncertainty, the overall trend in landings is likely accurate.

Today, Jonah crab and lobster are harvested in a mixed crustacean fishery in which fishermen can target lobster or crab at different times of the year based on slight gear modifications and small shifts in the areas in which the traps are fished. While the majority of Jonah crab landings is harvested as whole crabs, fishermen from several states, including New York, Maryland and Virginia, land claws. Jonah crab claws are relatively large and can be an inexpensive substitute for stone crab claws (*Menippe mercenaria*). As a result, they can provide an important source of

income for fishermen. Along the Delmarva Peninsula, small boat fishermen have historically harvested Jonah crab claws because they do not have seawater storage tanks on board to store whole crabs.

In 2025, landings along the Atlantic Coast totaled approximately 14.7 million pounds of Jonah crab, representing $13 million in ex-vessel value. Landings increased 22.6% from 2024 landings of 12 million pounds, while ex-vessel value increased 33.7% from the 2024 value ($9.8 mil). Anecdotal information from the industry suggests that Jonah crab landings and price are highly dependent on market conditions, which have affected recent fishery trends. Almost all coastwide landings came from trap gear. The states of Massachusetts (47%), Rhode Island (24%), and Maine (23%) were the largest contributors to landings. While landings from Southern New England still comprise the majority of the total, landings from the Gulf of Maine have been increasing in the last few years (Figure 1).

2.2 Recreational Fishery

The magnitude of the Jonah crab recreational fishery is unknown at this time; however, it is believed to be quite small in comparison to the size of the commercial fishery. Only New Hampshire and Massachusetts have recreational landings reports.

3.0 Status of the Stock

The 2023 Jonah Crab Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report, released in October 2023, indicates the range-wide population of Jonah crab remains above historic lows of the 1980s and 1990s. However, evidence of declining catch per unit effort (CPUE) in the fishery presents concern and uncertainty for the status of the stock.

Based on life history and fishery characteristics, the assessment divided the population into four stocks: offshore Gulf of Maine (OGOM), inshore GOM (IGOM); offshore Southern New England (OSNE) and inshore SNE (ISNE). According to the stock indicators, IGOM, OGOM, and OSNE recruit, exploitable, and spawning abundance conditions from 2019-2021 were neutral or positive relative to historical periods. Indicators generally agree across these stocks that abundance has not been depleted compared to the historic low abundance observed in the 1980s and 1990s. There are no reliable abundance indicators for the ISNE stock so no determination about the condition of this stock's abundance could be made. Young-of-the-year (YOY) settlement indicators generally show neutral conditions and do not indicate that recruitment in the GOM stocks will decline to historical lows in the near future. Settlement conditions are unknown for SNE stocks.

According to the Peer Review Panel, "Despite the limited availability of current data, there is considerable urgency for the assessment due to a very steep, three-year, decline in landings. Commercial landings have declined 51% in three years, after an unprecedented 30-fold rise in landings. Although the recent decline is not well-detected in fishery-independent stock indicators, there is some evidence of declining CPUE in the fishery, creating concern and uncertainty for the status of the stock. Given the mixed signals, the status of the Jonah crab

stock is highly uncertain. The Panel strongly recommended close monitoring of annual stock indicators in the next few years.

In response to the assessment findings and peer review panel recommendations, the American Lobster Management Board accepted the Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report for management use. The Board also tasked the Technical Committee (TC) with recommending possible measures or actions to address the concerns about stock status and recent fishery trends. The TC did not recommend any management action, but recommended that indicator data for the OSNE stock, where the majority of the fishery occurs, be updated annually, while data for the other three stock areas should be updated every five years.

4.0 Status of Management Measures

Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Jonah Crab (2015)

Jonah crab is managed under the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) which was approved by the American Lobster Management Board in August 2015. The goal of the FMP is to promote conservation, reduce the possibility of recruitment failure, and allow for the full utilization of the resource by the industry. The FMP lays out specific management measures in the commercial fishery. These include a 4.75" minimum size and a prohibition on the retention of egg-bearing females. To prevent the fishery from being open access, the FMP states that participation in the directed trap fishery is limited to lobster permit holders or those who can prove a history of crab-only pot fishing. All others must obtain an incidental permit. In the recreational fishery, the FMP sets a possession limit of 50 whole crabs per person per day and prohibits the retention of egg-bearing females. Due to the lack of data on the Jonah crab fishery, the FMP implements a fishery-dependent data collection program. The FMP also requires harvester and dealer reporting along with port and/or sea sampling.

Addendum I (2016)

Addendum I establishes a bycatch limit of 1,000 crabs per trip for non-trap gear (e.g., otter trawls, gillnets) and non-lobster trap gear (e.g., fish, crab, and whelk pots). In doing so, the Addendum caps incidental landings of Jonah crab across all non-directed gear types with a uniform bycatch allowance. While the gear types in Addendum I make minimal contributions to total landings in the fishery, the 1,000 crab limit provides a cap to potential increases in effort and trap proliferation.

Addendum II (2017)

Addendum II establishes a coastwide standard for claw harvest. Specifically, it permits Jonah crab fishermen to detach and harvest claws at sea, with a required minimum claw length (measured along the forearm of the claw) of 2.75" if the volume of claws landed is greater than five gallons. Claw landings less than five gallons do not have to meet the minimum claw length standard. The Addendum also establishes a definition of bycatch in the Jonah crab fishery, whereby the total pounds of Jonah crab caught as bycatch must weigh less than the total amount of the targeted species at all times during a fishing trip. The intent of this definition is to address concerns regarding the expansion of a small-scale fishery under the bycatch limit.

Addendum III (2018)

Addendum III improves the collection of harvester and biological data in the Jonah crab fishery. Specifically, the Addendum improves the spatial resolution of harvester data collection by requiring fishermen to report via 10-minute squares. It also expands the required harvester reporting data elements to collect greater information on gear configurations and effort. In addition, the Addendum established a deadline that within five years, states are required to implement 100% harvester reporting, with the prioritization of electronic harvester reporting development during that time. Finally, the Addendum improves the biological sampling requirements by establishing a baseline of ten sampling trips/year, and encourages states with more than 10% of coastwide landings to conduct additional sampling trips.

Addendum IV (2022)

Addendum IV expands on reporting improvements by establishing electronic tracking requirements for federally-permitted vessels in the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries. Specifically, electronic tracking devices will be required for vessels with commercial trap gear area permits for Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMAs) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and Outer Cape Cod to collect high resolution spatial and temporal effort data.

5.0 Fishery Monitoring

The provisions of Addendum III went into effect January 1, 2019. Specifically, Addendum III requires reporting of additional data elements, the implementation of 100% harvester reporting within five years, and the completion of a minimum of ten sea and/or port sampling trips per year for biological sampling of the lobster/Jonah crab fishery. The Addendum III requirement for commercial harvesters to report their fishing location by 10 minute longitudinal/latitudinal square was implemented in 2021. Types of information collected vary by state, but can include shell width, sex, discards, egg bearing status, cull status, shell hardness, shell disease, and whether landings are whole crabs or parts. *De minimis* states are not required to conduct fishery-independent sampling or port/sea sampling. Data on the states' port and sea sampling in 2025 is summarized in Table 2.

6.0 Status of Fishery-Independent Surveys

The FMP for Jonah crab encourages states to expand current lobster surveys (i.e., trawl surveys, ventless trap surveys, settlement surveys) to collect biological information on Jonah crab. The following outlines the fishery-independent surveys conducted by each state.

Maine

A. Settlement Survey

The Maine settlement survey was primarily designed to quantify lobster young-of-year (YOY) but has also collected Jonah crab data from the sites throughout the survey. Jonah crab information collected includes carapace width, sex (when large enough), ovigerous condition, claw status, shell hardness, and location. Indications of a late start to the 2025 settlement season pushed the start of sampling late into October. After the delayed start to sampling, poor weather and numerous logistical problems led to only 26 out of 40 sites being visited and some being visited in January-February 2026. The density of YOY Jonah crab increased over the past

two decades with high values in 2012 and 2016, then declined slightly in recent years (Figure 2). In 2025, density of YOY Jonah crab increased in Statistical Area (SA) 513 and decreased slightly in SA 512 compared to 2024. There was no sampling in SA 511 in 2025. All areas remain at lower levels.

B. Ventless Trap Survey

Maine began its Juvenile Lobster Ventless Trap Survey in 2006. Since the beginning of the survey, Jonah crab counts were recorded by the contracted fishermen, but the confidence in early years of this data is low because of the confusion between the two *Cancer* crabs (Jonah crab vs. rock crab) and similar common names. In 2016, the survey began collecting biological data for Jonah crab including carapace width, sex, ovigerous condition, claw status, shell hardness, and location. Since 2016, the survey has sampled 276 sites coast wide using a stratified random design using depth and statitsical area (SA). From south to north: SA 513 covers Friendship to the New Hampshire border, SA 512 Schoodic Point to Friendship, and SA 511 Cutler to Schoodic Point. In 2025, Jonah crab catch in the survey decreased in SA 512 and 513, and increased in SA 511 compared to 2024. Concentrations of Jonah crab were highest in SA 511 and lowest in 513 (Figure 3).

C. State Trawl Survey

The ME/NH Inshore Trawl Survey began in 2000 and is conducted biannually (spring and fall) through a random stratified sampling scheme. Jonah crab data has been collected since 2003. The 2025 spring survey ran from April 28 to May 30 and completed 104 out of 120 scheduled tows. A total of 394 Jonah crab were caught and sampled, with 203 females, 190 males, and 1 unsexed crab caught and measured. The 2025 fall survey ran from September 22 through October 24 and completed 82 out of 120 scheduled tows. A total of 403 Jonah crab were caught and sampled, with 215 females and 188 males. Abundance indices for Jonah crab decreased compared to 2024 after increasing for the previous 3 years (Figure 4 and Figure 5).

New Hampshire

A. Settlement Survey

Since 2009, species information has been collected on Jonah crab in the New Hampshire Fish and Game portion of the American Lobster Settlement Index. The time series of CPUE (#/m^2) of Jonah crab for all NH sites combined shows a general upward trend from 2009 through 2022 followed by declining catch in subsequent years to median levels in the terminal year (Figure 6).

B. Ventless Trap Survey

Since 2009, New Hampshire Fish and Game has been conducting the coastwide Random Stratified Ventless Trap Survey in state waters (SA 513). A total of six sites were surveyed twice a month from June through September in 2025. Beginning in 2016, all Jonah crabs were evaluated for sex, carapace width (mm), cull condition, and molt stage. In 2025, a total of 17 Jonah crab over 6 trips were measured during the sampling season.

Massachusetts

A. Settlement Survey

The Juvenile Lobster Suction Survey has consistently identified *Cancer* crabs to genus level since 1995, and Jonah crab have been consistently identified to species since 2011. The mean number of Jonah crab observed in the MA DMF Settlement Survey in the GOM region has been relatively stable from 2011 through 2025 with a couple of higher values in 2018 and 2021 (Figure 7).

B. Ventless Trap Survey

The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MA DMF) Ventless Trap Survey is conducted in MA territorial waters of NMFS SAs 514 and 538. Stratified mean catch per trawl haul (CPUE) for the survey is standardized to a six-pot trawl with three vented and three ventless traps. The index produced from the MA DMF Ventless Trap Survey from area 514 increased from 2018 to 2023 and declined slightly in 2024 and 2025 (Figure 8). Jonah crab are infrequently captured in the area 538 portion of the survey, likely because water temperatures in this region frequently exceed the Jonah crab thermal preference.

C. Trawl Survey

While Jonah crab are common in the deeper, cooler, Federal waters portion of SNE, they are rare in Massachusetts state waters south of Cape Cod and therefore are infrequently captured by the MA DMF Trawl Survey in this area. The fall survey in the GOM generally has a declining trend over the last decade. But there are several positive outliers, including the 2025 data point which was the third highest of the time series. The spring survey is showing a slightly increasing trend in the GOM (Figure 9).

Rhode Island

A. Settlement Survey

The RI DEM lobster YOY Settlement Survey (Suction Sampling) intercepts Jonah crabs. Jonah crab catches in this survey are generally low. In 2025, the Jonah Crab Index was 0.8 crabs per m^2, compared with the time series (1990-2025) mean of 0.17 crabs per m^2.

B. Ventless Trap Survey

Since its inception in 2006, the RI Ventless Trap Survey (VTS) has recorded counts of Jonah crab per pot. Carapace width, sex, ovigerous condition, and location data have been collected for all Jonah crabs encountered in the survey since 2015; prior to this, only counts of Jonah crab were recorded. In 2025, the stratified abundance index of Jonah crabs was 0.74 crabs per ventless trap, lower than the time series mean of 1.45 crabs per ventless trap (Figure 10).

B. Trawl Survey

RI DEM has conducted spring and fall trawl surveys since 1979, and a monthly trawl survey since 1990. However, the survey did not begin counting Jonah crab specifically until 2015. Jonah crabs are rarely encountered in this survey, and abundance indices are variable yet low, averaging 0.04 crabs per tow over the time series.

Connecticut

A. Trawl Survey

Jonah crab abundance is monitored through the Long Island Sound Trawl Survey (LISTS) during the spring (April, May, June) and fall (September and October) cruises, all within NMFS SA 611. The survey documents the number of individuals caught and total weight per haul by survey site in Long Island Sound. The LISTS caught one Jonah crab in the fall 2007 survey and two in the fall 2008 survey. Both observations occurred in October at the same trawl site in eastern Long Island Sound. The fall 2018 trawl survey documented a total of 0.4 kg of Jonah crab, with crabs observed in one site in the central basin and one site in the eastern basin of Long Island Sound. No Jonah crabs were observed in the 2019 spring or fall surveys. No trawl survey sampling was conducted in 2020 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. No Jonah crabs were observed in the 2021, 2022 or 2023 spring or fall surveys. The Spring 2024 Long Island Sound Trawl Survey documented a total of 0.05 kg of Jonah crab. Two crabs were observed in April at the same trawl site in eastern Long Island Sound.

New York

A. Trawl Survey

New York initiated a stratified random trawl survey in the near shore ocean waters off the south shore of Long Island in 2018 from the Rockaways to Montauk Point and the New York waters of Block Island Sound. There are no survey data for 2025 because the survey was not completed. Only 8 out of 30 stations were sampled in the fall before work was halted due to weather, and all remaining surveys were cancelled due to vessel repairs.

New Jersey

A. Ventless Trap Survey

Since 2016, New Jersey has conducted reef monitoring through a Ventless Trap Survey. Ventless traps (measuring 43 ¾" L x 22 ½" W x 15" H) are randomly placed throughout four reef sites off the coast of New Jersey onto different substrates. Sampling is conducted during the months of April, July, and October to coincide with NJ's Ocean Trawl Survey, and an index of Jonah crab CPUE captured on and off reef sites is provided. CPUE for Jonah crab CPUE captured on and off reef sites in 2025 decreased compared to time series high values in 2024.

B. Trawl Survey

A fishery-independent Ocean Trawl Survey is conducted from Sandy Hook, NJ to Cape May, NJ each year. The survey stratifies sampling in three depth gradients, inshore (18'-30'), mid-shore (30'-60'), and offshore (60'-90'). The mean CPUE, which is calculated as the sum of the mean weight of Jonah crab collected in each sampling area weighted by the stratum area, has remained low throughout the time series, but increased in 2022 and 2023, which are the last two years of data available. 2024 indices are still being analyzed and currently not available and the 2025 survey was not conducted due to vessel repair (Figure 11).

Delaware

A. Ventless Trap Survey

Delaware initiated a study in 2018 to assess the population structure of structure-oriented fish in the lower Delaware Bay and nearshore Atlantic Ocean. Sampling was conducted with commercial sized ventless fish pots. In 2025, Delaware encountered 945 Jonah Crabs in the nearshore Atlantic Ocean with a ratio of 68% males and 32% female. The survey ran from April to December. The sampled Jonah Crabs ranged in length from 30 mm to 175 mm. Mean CPUE was 0.55 with CPUE calculated based on soak days (Figure 12).

7.0 Recent and On-Going Research Projects

A. CFRF Research Fleet

The Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation (CFRF) has expanded its lobster commercial research fleet to sample Jonah crab. Biological data collected include carapace width, sex, shell hardness, egg status, and disposition. To date 162,969 Jonah crabs have been sampled through the program[1].

8.0 State Compliance

The implementation deadline for the Jonah Crab FMP was June 1, 2016; the implementation deadline for Addendum I was January 1, 2017; the implementation deadline for Addendum II was January 1, 2018; and the implementation deadline for Addendum III was January 1, 2019 (with the exception of the 10-minute square reporting requirement). Reporting at the 10-minute square level was implemented in 2021. Addendum IV required states to implement electronic tracking requirements for federally-permitted vessels in the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries by December 15, 2023.

The PRT notes that Connecticut is in the process of implementing regulations consistent with the Addendum IV requirements. All other states have implemented the provisions of the Jonah Crab FMP and associated addenda.

9.0 De Minimis Requests

The states of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia, have requested *de minimis* status. According to the Jonah crab FMP, states may qualify for *de minimis* status if, for the preceding three years for which data are available, their average commercial landings (by weight) constitute less than 1% of the average coastwide commercial catch. Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia meet the *de minimis* requirement.

10.0 Research Recommendations

Research recommendations made by the Stock Assessment Subcommittee and Peer Review Panel in the 2023 Jonah crab benchmark stock assessment are summarized below.

High Priority

[1] https://www.cfrfoundation.org/jonah-crab-lobster-research-fleet

- Surveys to track abundance in SNE during all life stages (e.g., settlement, recruitment, abundance) for future stock assessments and potential management advice.
- Research to provide a more comprehensive understanding of recruitment dynamics, including tracking of spatiotemporal settlement dynamics and the source of recruitment to offshore SNE, to inform development of Jonah crab settlement surveys.
- Appropriate survey methodologies need to be researched to track abundance of Jonah crab. Behavioral interactions with survey gear need to be better understood. Video surveys are recommended to examine these interactions. Video surveys could also be used for snapshot estimates of total stock size (i.e., swept-area biomass) that could be used to gain a better understanding on exploitation levels.
- Female migration pathways/seasonality and distribution needs to be researched to help understand movement and inform connectivity. Ventless trap surveys (state-run and windfarm impact) offer a potential data set to explore interannual variability in distribution.
- Information on larval duration in the field, mortality, and dispersal are needed to better understand possible connectivity. Spawning female distribution information would supplement efforts to model these processes. Evaluate larval data sets for species identification and to explore abundance, seasonality, and interannual variability.
- Inter-molt duration of adult crabs is currently unknown and growth increment data for mature crabs is limited. There are no growth data from offshore SNE where the bulk of the fishery occurs and differences in growth between regions are unknown.
- Research growth mechanisms for both sexes (e.g., potential for terminal molt, lack of growth associated with molting, high natural mortality for adults) to explain lack of exploitation signal (i.e., lack of size structure change) in available data sets.
- Increase and improve consistency of fisheries-dependent monitoring and biosampling. Sampling intensity by statistical area should be based on landings.
- Continue to improve accuracy of commercial reporting to improve quantification of effort in the directed and mixed-crustacean fisheries. Evaluate new spatial to better understand spatial dynamics of the fishery.
- Study the effect of temperature on Jonah crab behavior/activity.
- Studies should be done to identify and understand drivers of ecosystem/environmental drivers of Jonah crab population dynamics.
- Determine how to interpret fisheries-dependent data considering interactions between fishery response to abundance, economic drivers, and lobster fishery dynamics.

Moderate Priority

- Explore historical data sets from the scallop dredge survey and video surveys like HabCam to understand habitat use/suitability, abundance, distribution, and to inform potential covariates for catchability effects.
- Analyze food habits data, with an emphasis on offshore areas, to better understand predation of Jonah crab and as a potential measure of abundance and distribution.
- Evaluate evidence for a defined stock-recruit relationship or lack thereof. If lack of evidence, identify recruitment drivers and mechanisms of population abundance change.

Low Priority

- Information should be collected to help delineate stock boundaries and understand possible connectivity, with an emphasis on the GOM/SNE boundary.
- Reproductive studies pertaining to male-female spawning size ratios, the possibility of successful spawning by physiologically mature but morphometrically immature male crabs, and potential for sperm limitations should be conducted.
- If improved abundance data with higher encounter rates becomes available, cohort tracking analyses should be conducted across and within surveys to better understand if surveys are tracking true abundance signals and provide information on growth, mortality, and other demographic factors.
- The development of aging methods or determination of the mechanism responsible for the suspected annuli formation found in the gastric mill should be explored.

11.0 Plan Review Team Recommendations

The following are recommendations and comments from the Plan Review Team:

- The PRT recommends the Board approve the *de minimis* requests of DE, MD, and VA.
- The PRT notes that MA has been unable to meet the August 1 deadline for compliance reports for the last several years.
- Connecticut and New Jersey were not able to complete the sea and/or port sampling required by the FMP. These states have noted concerns with staff availability, funding, and lack of agreement by fishermen, which have contributed to the inability to complete the required sampling trips.
- The 2023 Benchmark Stock Assessment recommended that fisheries-dependent monitoring and biosampling be increased and improved, with sampling intensity by statistical area based on landings. The PRT recommends the TC provide recommendations on adequate sampling numbers by statistical area.
- The PRT notes that while more fishery-dependent monitoring could improve the stock assessment, some states do not appear to have the capacity to increase sampling. The PRT recommends appropriate sampling levels for each state be determined based on landings and capacity.

12.0 Tables

Table 1. Landings (in pounds) of Jonah crab by the states of Maine through Virginia. 2010-2024 landings were provided by ACCSP based on state data submissions. 2025 landings were submitted by the states as a part of the compliance reports and should be considered preliminary. *C= confidential data*

	ME	NH	MA	RI	CT	NY	NJ	DE	MD	VA	Total
2010	1,154,564	C	5,689,431	3,899,239	C	995,059	84,645	C	23,909	C	11,846,847
2011	1,152,651	C	5,381,140	3,221,119	C	69,440	71,632	C	104,838	C	10,000,820
2012	586,449	C	7,540,545	3,865,978	2,349	468,364	86,736	C	C	C	12,550,421
2013	391,690	340,751	10,117,595	4,665,489	51,462	407,755	16,425	C	C	C	15,991,166
2014	361,500	404,703	11,904,649	4,568,400	49,998	95,855	48,008	C	154,764	C	17,587,878
2015	312,063	C	9,128,876	4,298,894	C	215,140	88,283	C	88,467	C	14,131,722
2016	625,240	150,971	10,661,416	4,232,785	C	177,425	279,249	C	64,552	9,658	16,201,295
2017	1,169,474	114,155	11,698,447	4,111,281	C	176,424	447,048	C	75,991	C	17,792,819
2018	1,061,799	22,434	13,250,803	4,665,701	320	231,705	880,192	C	60,932	C	20,173,884
2019	763,807	70,818	9,698,145	4,222,305	C	125,391	1,061,194	C	47,829	C	15,989,489
2020	696,314	31,658	8,605,007	3,331,552	C	105,841	975,522	C	35,606	C	13,781,500
2021	1,427,245	123,729	6,539,131	2,157,071	C	72,066	976,248	C	34,327	C	11,329,815
2022	2,107,544	295,529	7,803,736	2,504,895	C	41,816	493,179	C	C	C	13,246,700
2023	1,596,023	359,695	5,382,873	2,496,661	28	202,218	909,167	C	1,745	C	10,948,410
2024	2,603,485	123,583	5,407,248	2,730,169	C	326,967	795,201	C	C	C	11,986,653
2025	3,352,584	87,129	6,940,968	3,572,753	C	143,072	603,040	C	C	C	14,699,546

Table 2. Fishery-dependent sampling (port/sea) by state in 2025. Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia are not required to complete fishery-dependent monitoring.

	Sea Sampling Trips	# of Samples	Port Sampling Trips	# of Samples
ME	5	195	0	0
NH	14	144	4	302
MA	0	0	12	6,982
RI	0	0	8	1,654
CT	0	0	0	0
NY	0	0	19	954
NJ	0	0	0	0
DE	None	None	None	None
MD				
VA				
Total	**19**	**339**	**43**	**9,892**

13.0 Figures

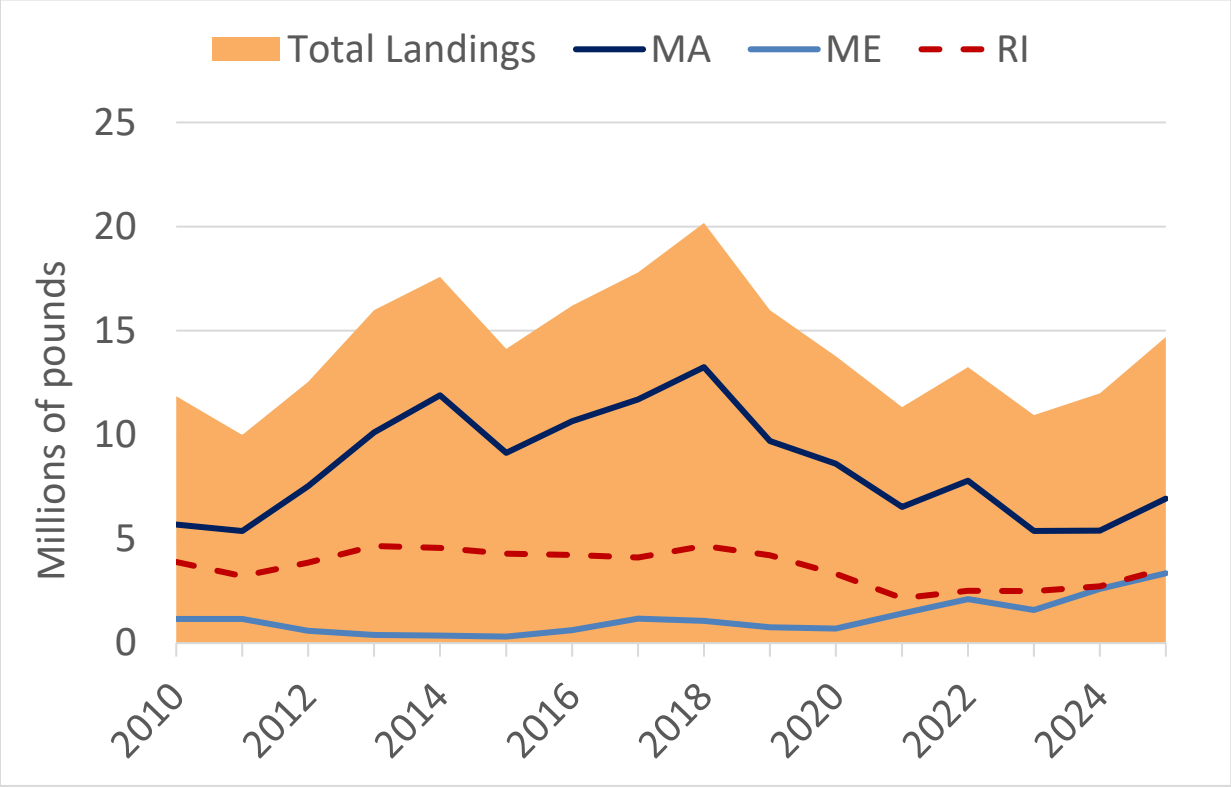


Figure 1. Coastwide commercial Jonah crab landings, 2010-2025. Data from 2010-2024 are from the ACCSP Data Warehouse, and 2025 landings are based on state compliance reports.

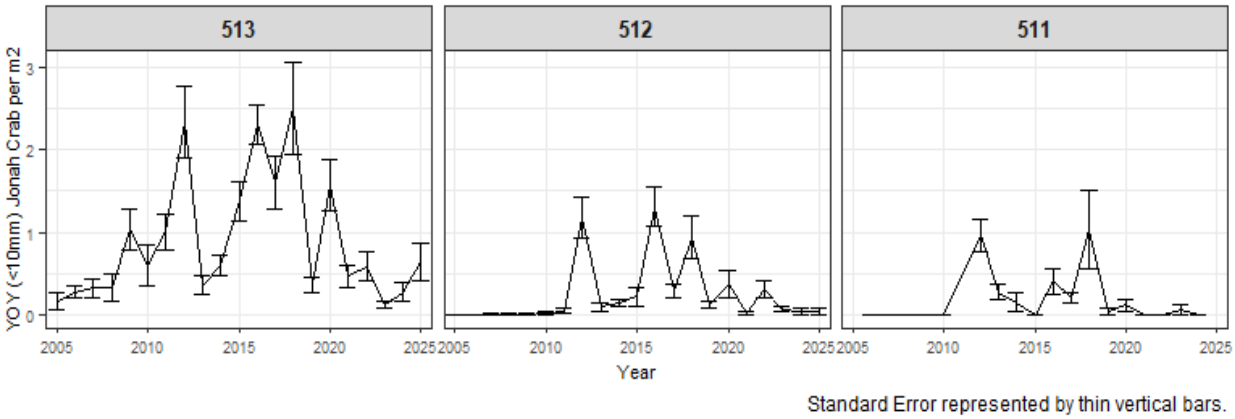


Figure 2. Density of YOY (<10mm carapace width) Jonah crab over time in the Maine Settlement Survey by statistical area.

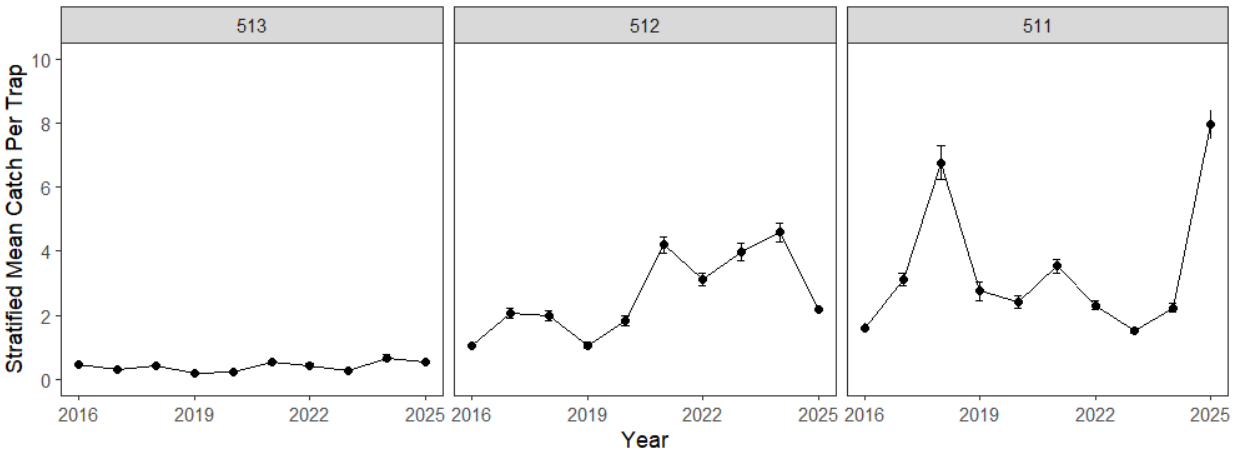


Figure 3. Stratified mean of Jonah crab from Maine Ventless Trap Survey 2016-2025. Standard error is represented by vertical bars.



Figure 4. Stratified mean weight (kg/tow) of Jonah crab for Spring Maine-New Hampshire Inshore Trawl Survey 2001-2025.



Figure 5. Stratified mean weight (kg/tow) of Jonah crab for Fall Maine-New Hampshire Inshore Trawl Survey 2000-2025.

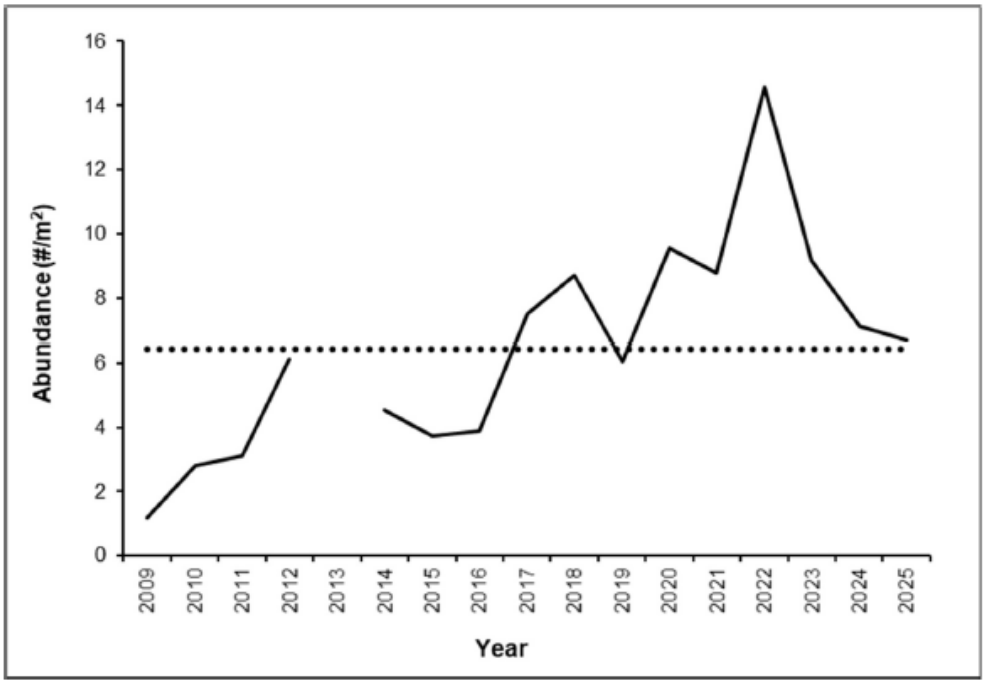


Figure 6. Catch per unit effort (#/m^2) of Jonah crab during the American Lobster Settlement Index Survey, in New Hampshire, from 2009 through 2025.

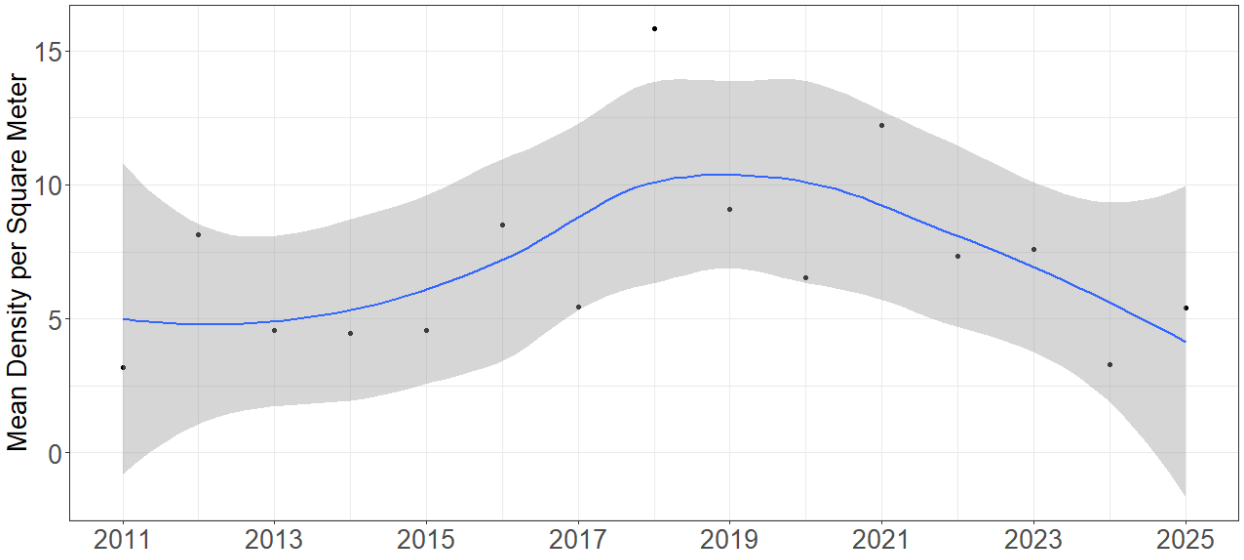


Figure 7. Mean number of Jonah crab per square meter from the MA DMF Settlement Survey from the Gulf of Maine (GOM) region. Black dots are annual means, blue line is a Loess soother, gray area is confidence interval around the Loess smoother.

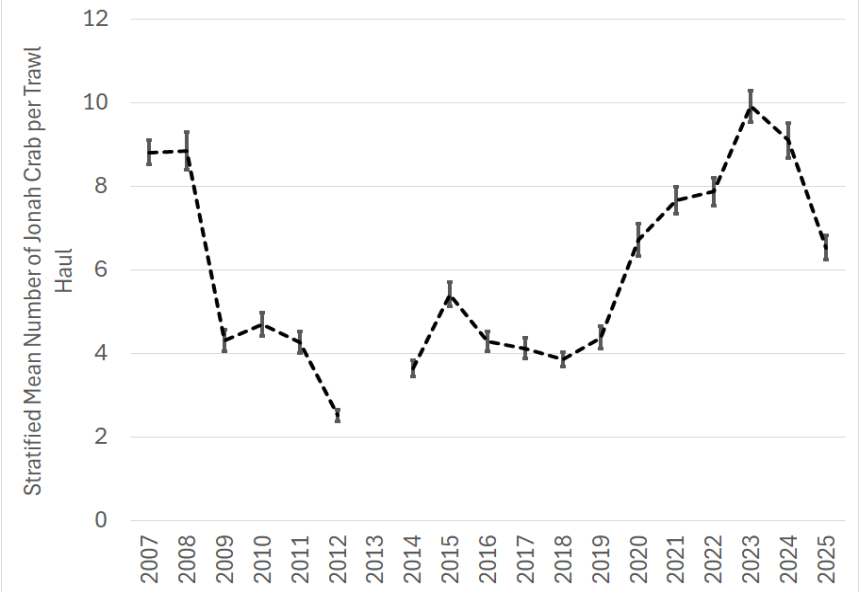


Figure 8. Mean number of Jonah crabs per trawl haul from ventless traps from GOM region of the MA DMF Ventless Trap Survey (standardized to a 6-pot trawl with three vented and three ventless traps). Error bars are two times the standard error. The survey was not conducted in 2013 due to a gap in funding.

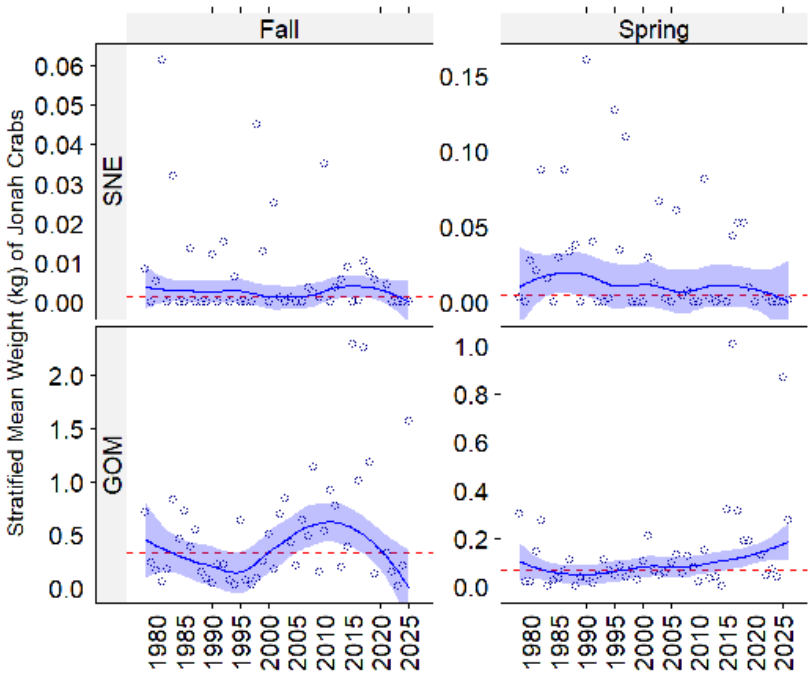


Figure 9. Stratified mean weight (kg) of Jonah crab from the MA DMF Trawl Survey. The left column shows the fall surveys, the right columns show the spring surveys. Southern New England (SNE) is on the top row, Gulf of Maine (GOM) is on the bottom. Red dashed line is the time series median. Blue line is a trend line (Loess smoother), and the blue shaded area is the confidence interval around the trend line.

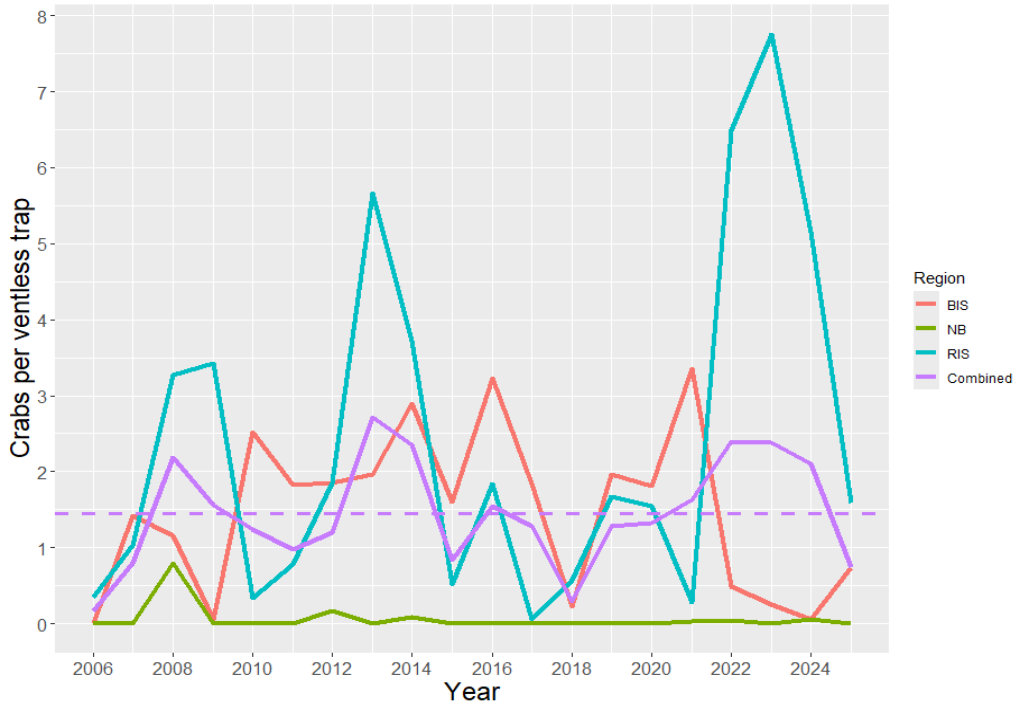


Figure 10. Rhode Island ventless trap survey index of Jonah crab abundance by region: Narragansett Bay (NB), Rhode Island Sound (RIS), and Block Island Sound (BIS). Time series mean for the combined region is presented as a dashed purple line.

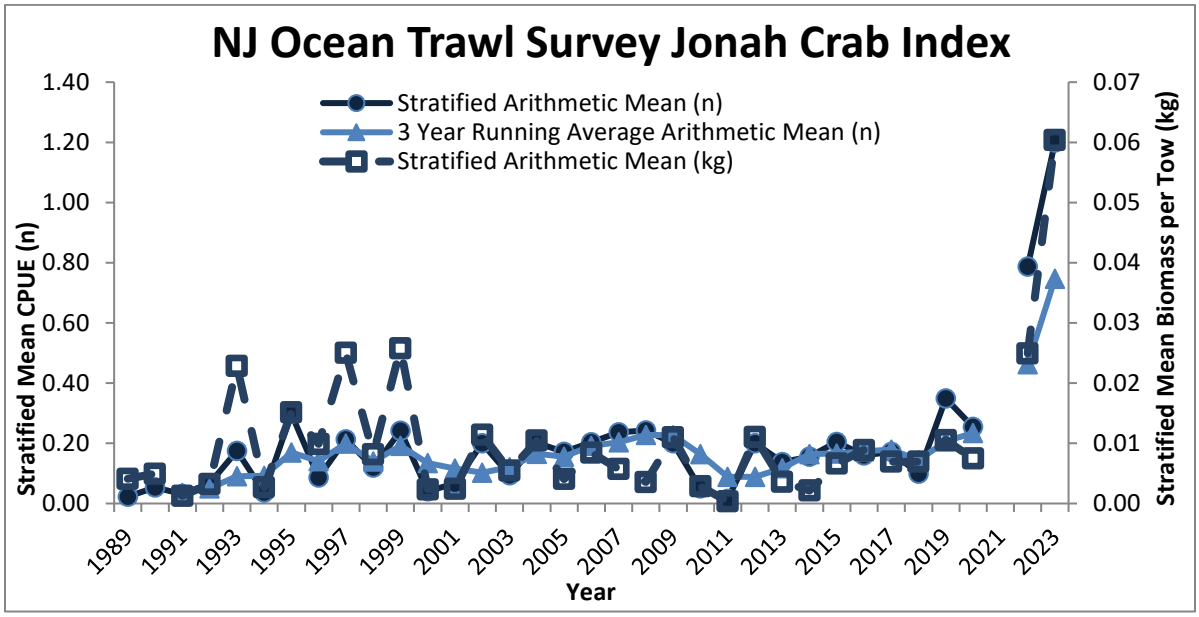


Figure 11. Stratified mean CPUE of all Jonah crab collected aboard the NJDFW Ocean Trawl Survey. The survey stratifies sampling in three depth gradients, inshore (18'-30'), mid-shore (30'-60'), offshore (60'-90'). The mean CPUE was calculated as the sum of the mean weight (in kg) of Jonah crab per size class collected in each sampling area weighted by the stratum area. *NOTE: No April 2019 Survey was conducted due to Research vessel mechanical issues. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Apr-Oct 2020 and 2021 CPUE and indices were not obtained.

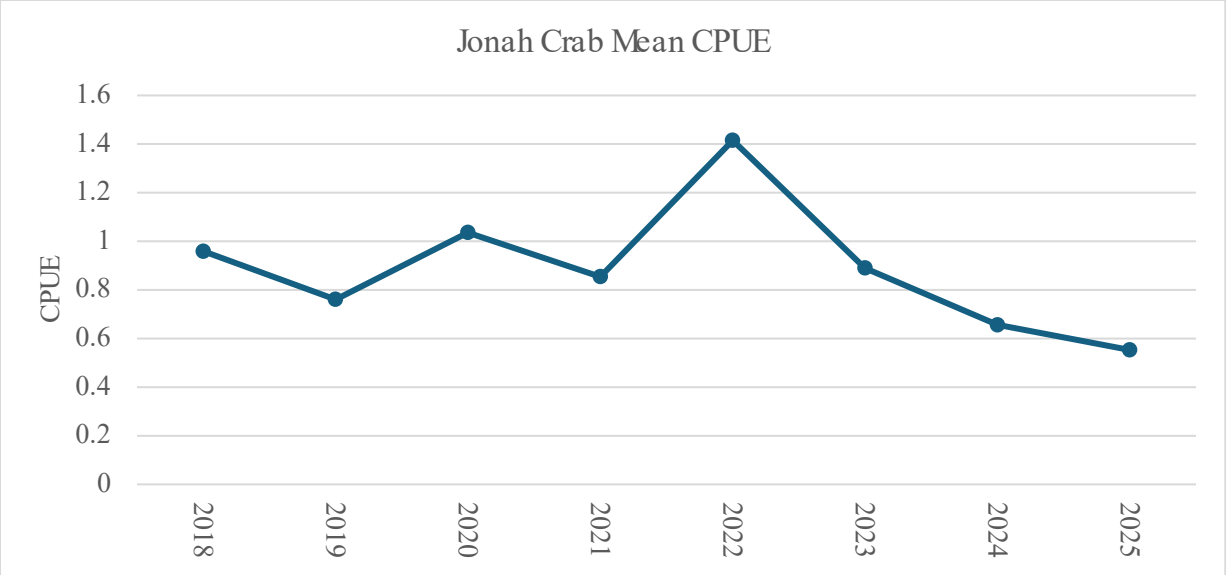


Figure 12. Jonah Crab mean CPUE in Delaware's Ventless Trap Survey from 2018 to 2025.

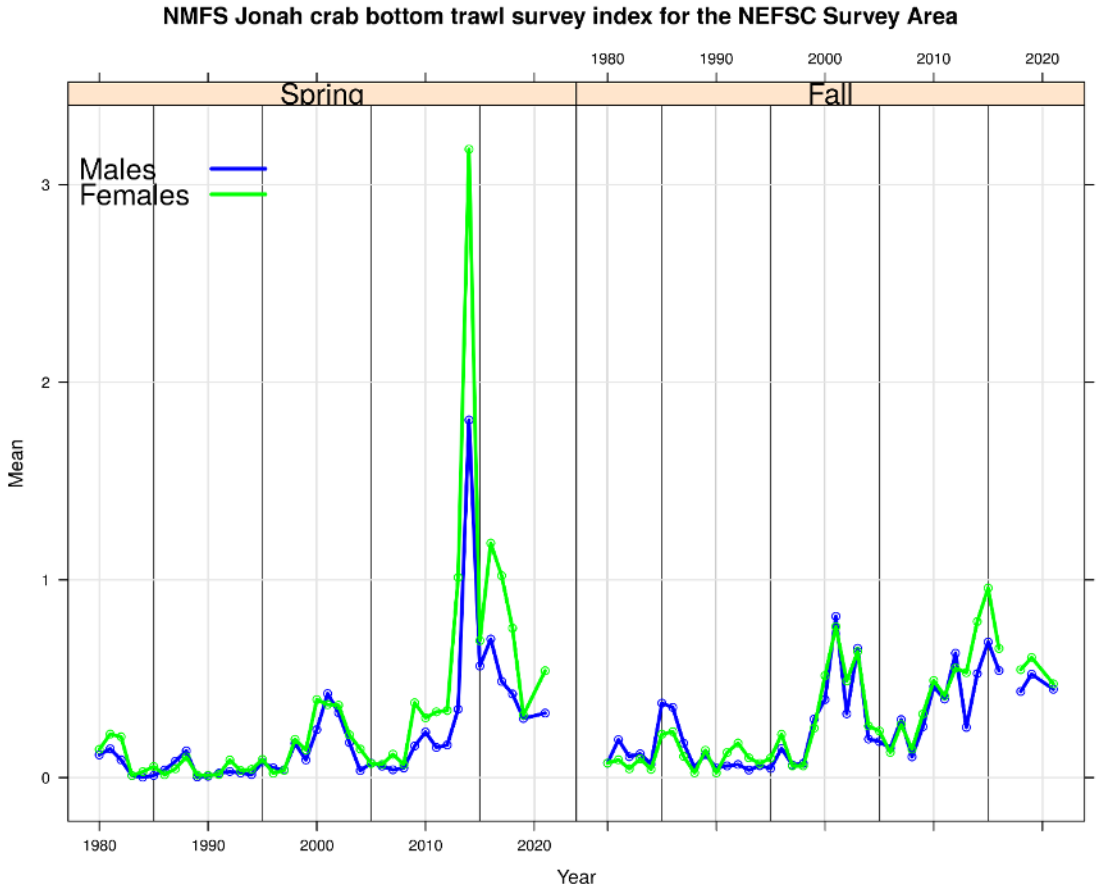


Figure 13. NMFS Jonah Crab index (mean number per tow) from the bottom trawl survey for the NEFSC Survey Area, through fall 2021. There was no survey conducted in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Data for 2022-2025 are not yet available.