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

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Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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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,

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.

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

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.

- 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.

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.

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).

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.

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.

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**

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

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.

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

14.0 Figures

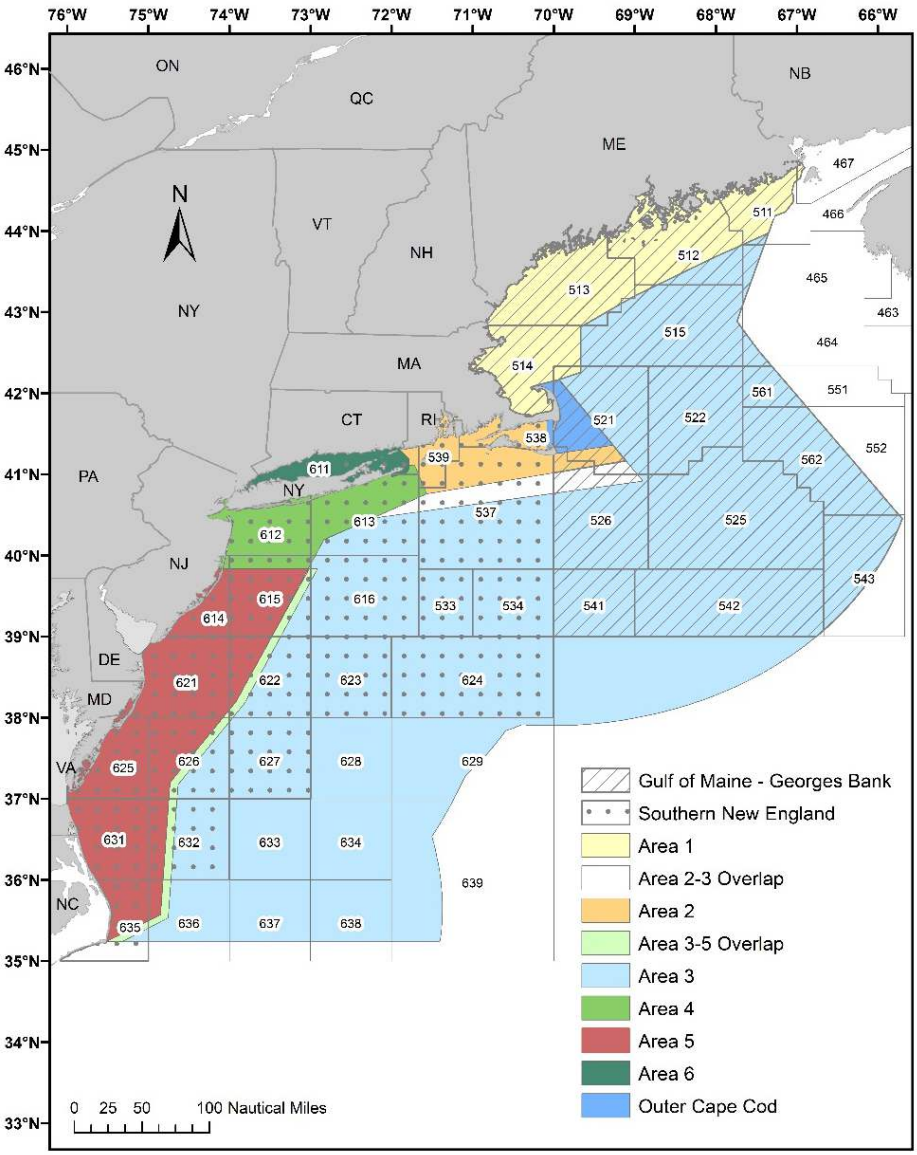


Figure 1. Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMAs) and stock boundaries for American lobster.

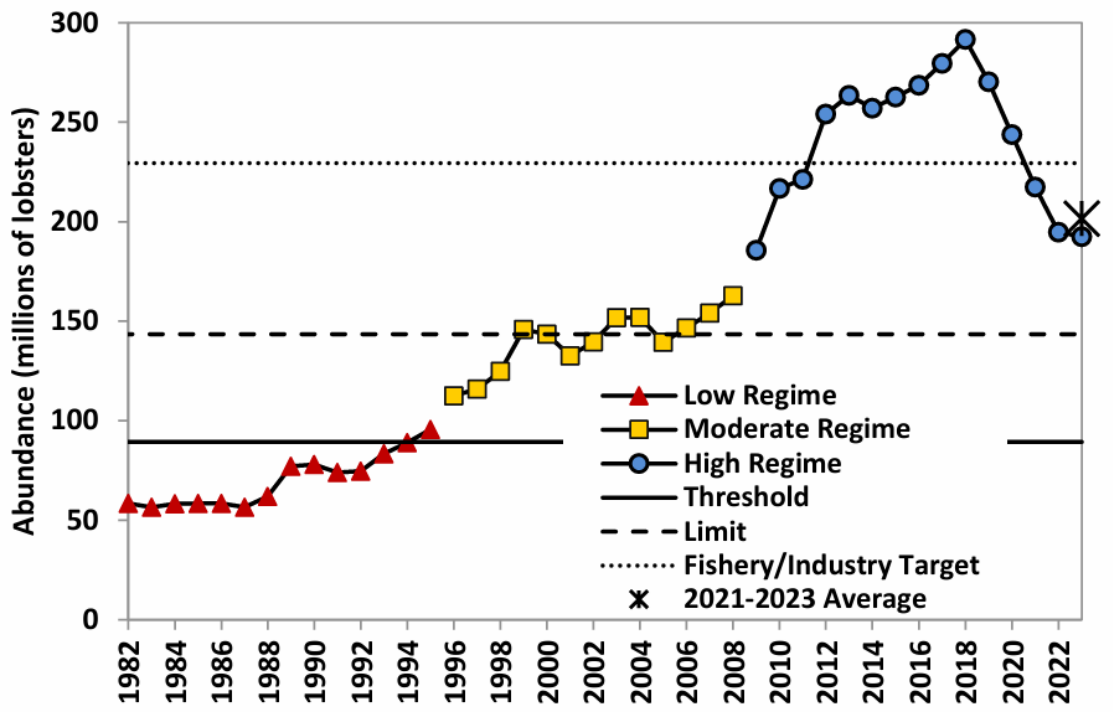


Figure 2. Abundance for GOM/GBK Relative to Reference Points. Source: 2025 Benchmark Stock Assessment for American Lobster.

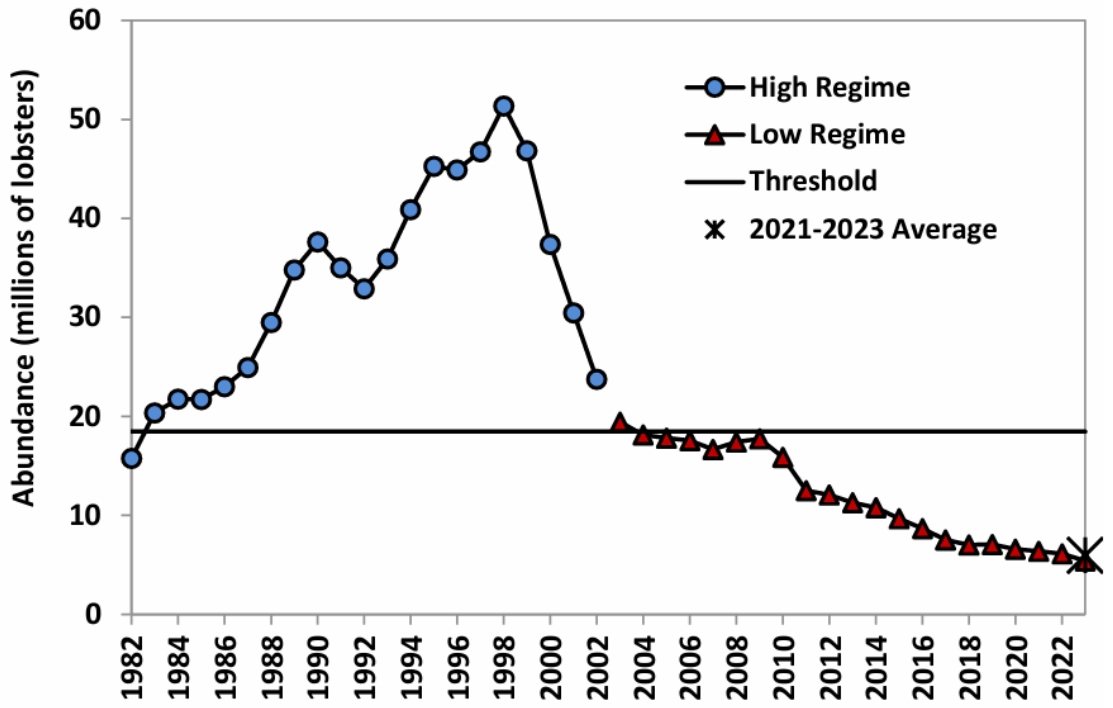


Figure 3. Abundance for SNE Relative to Reference Points. Source: 2025 Benchmark Stock Assessment for American Lobster.

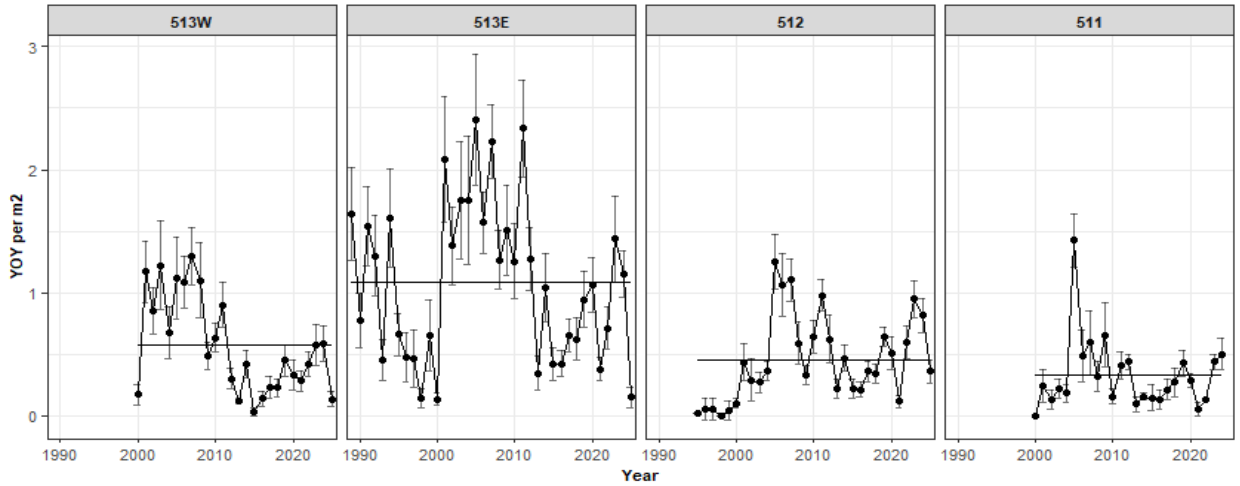


Figure 4. Maine Lobster Settlement Survey Index 1989-2025 for each statistical area with series average (solid horizonal line) for each region with standard error bars. The cut-off sizes for YOY vary by year and are based on the annual size frequency distribution and range from 11 to 14.5mm CL.

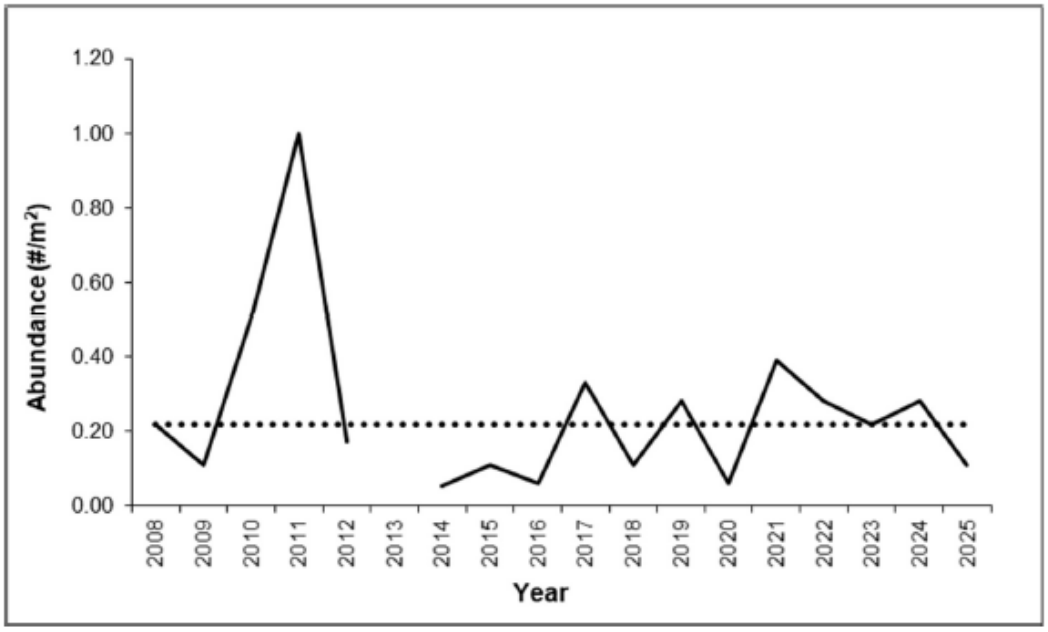


Figure 5. Catch per unit effort (#/m2) of young-of-year (YOY), one-year-olds (Y+), YOY and Y+ combined, and all lobsters during the American Lobster Settlement Index, by location, in New Hampshire, from 2008 through 2025.

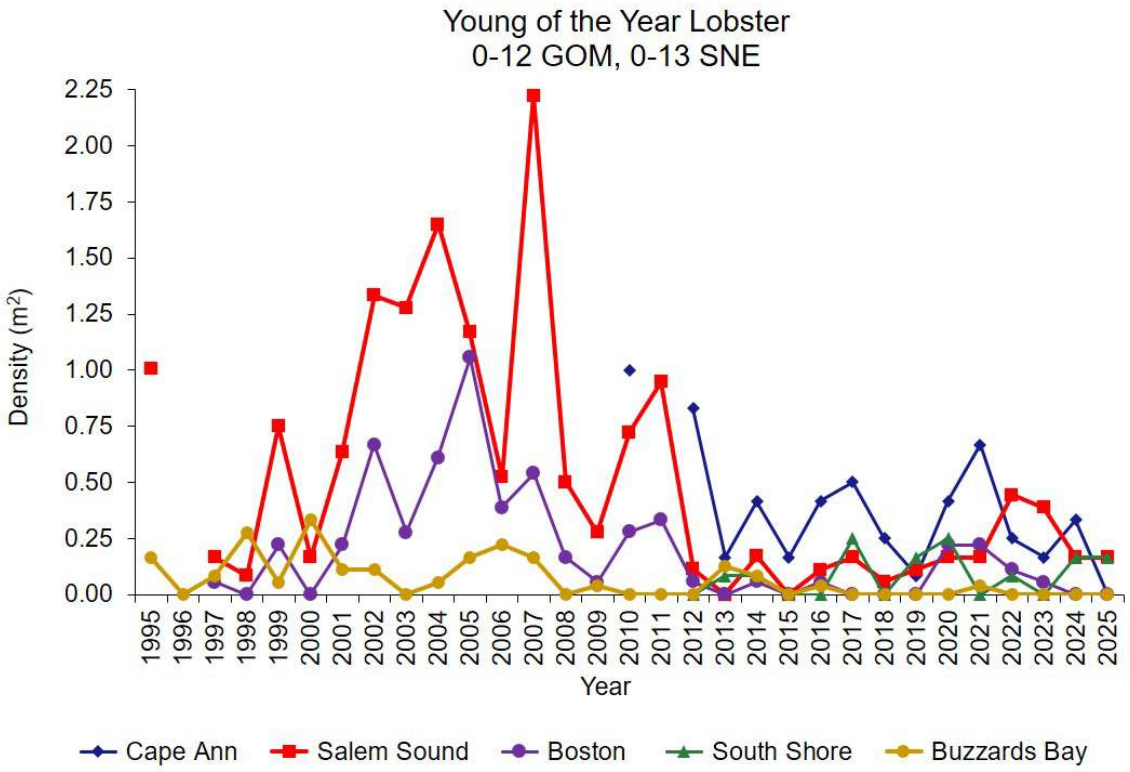


Figure 6. Young-of-year lobster density in four regions within the GOM stock unit – Cape Ann, Salem Sound, Boston, and South Shore, and one region in the SNE stock unit - Buzzards Bay. In GOM locations, lobsters ≤ 12 mm CL are considered YOY, while in SNE locations YOYs are ≤ 13 mm CL.

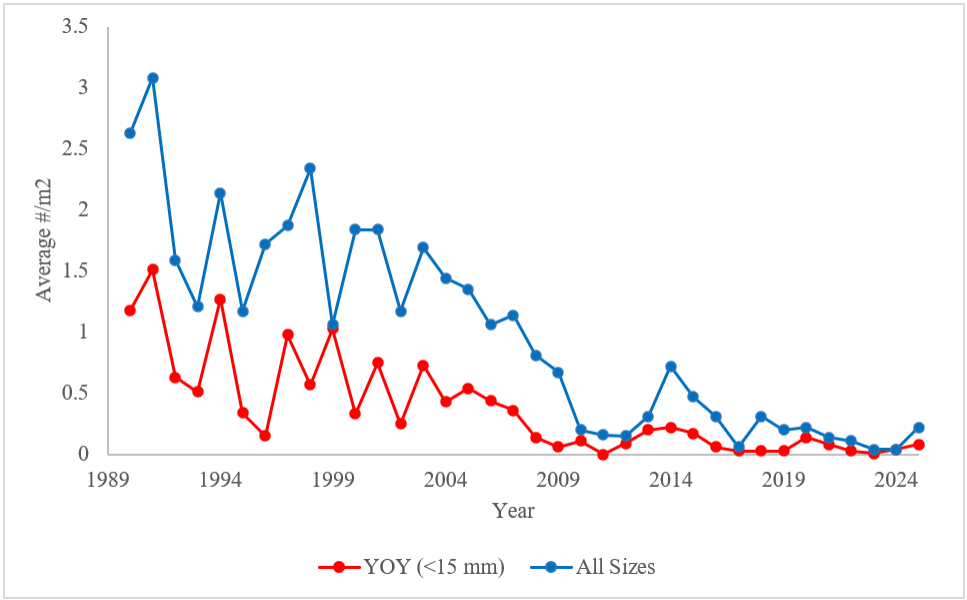


Figure 7. Average abundance of American lobster in Rhode Island suction sampling sites. Abundances are presented for YOY lobsters 13 mm or smaller (red line) and all sizes (blue line).

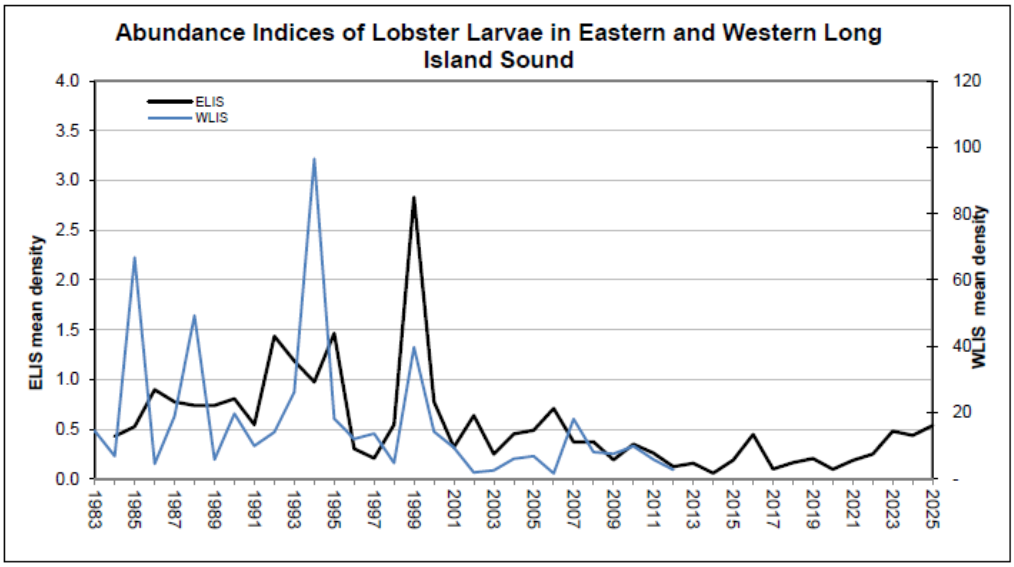


Figure 8. Abundance indices of lobster larvae from the Connecticut DEEP Larval Lobster Survey in western Long Island Sound (discontinued in 2013) and from the Millstone Power Station entrainment estimates in eastern Long Island Sound.

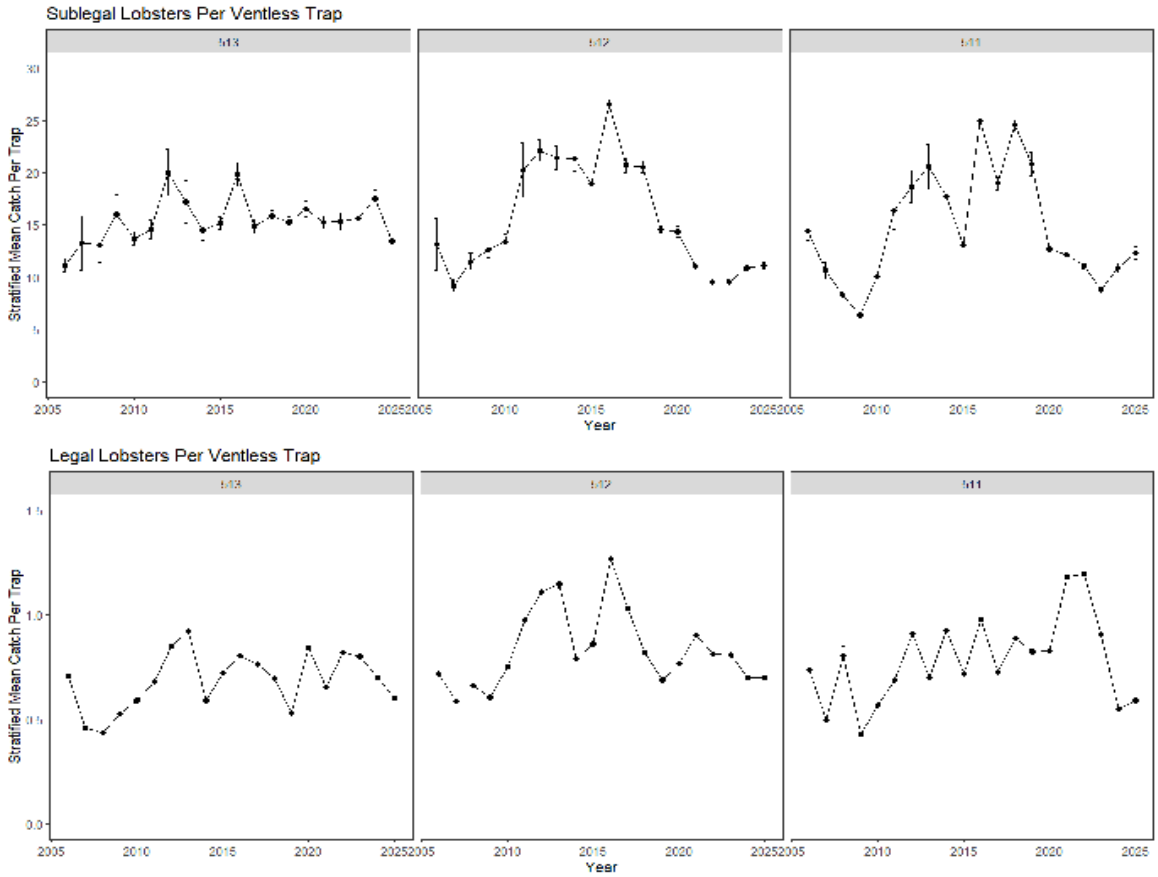


Figure 9. Stratified mean catch per trap for sublegal (top) and legal (bottom) sized lobsters from Maine's Ventless Trap Survey 2006-2024 by statistical area from ventless traps only. Standard error is shown.

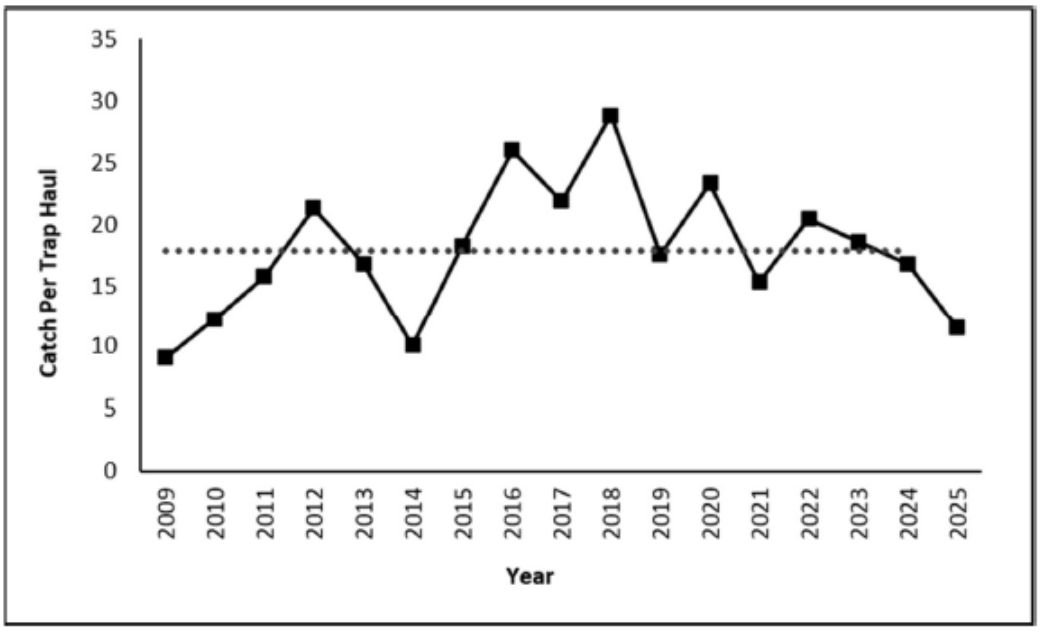


Figure 10. Stratified mean catch per trap haul (ventless traps only) for all lobsters captured during the coastwide random stratified Ventless Trap Survey in New Hampshire state waters.

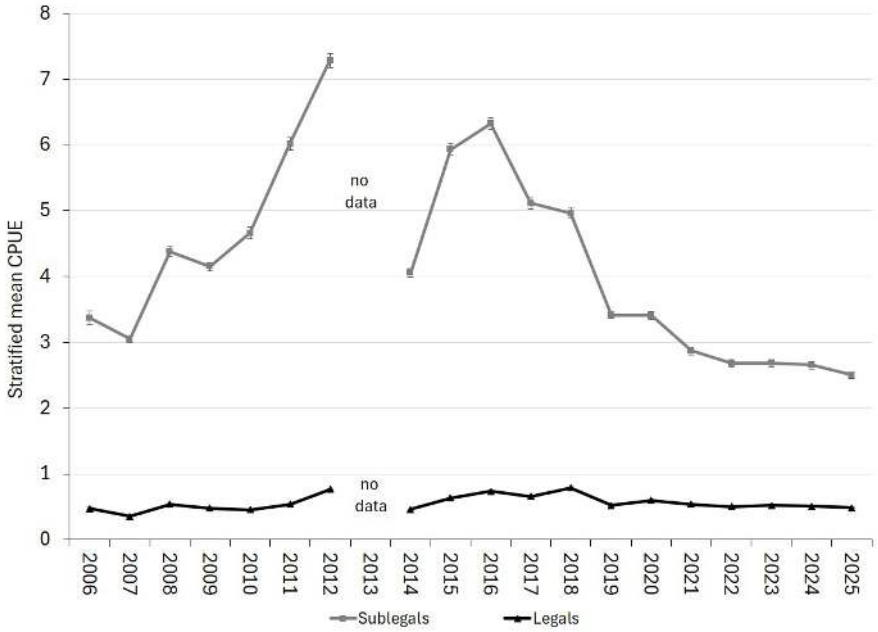


Figure 11. Stratified mean catch per trap haul (±S.E.) of sublegal (< 83 mm, grey line) and legal (≥ 83 mm, black line) lobsters in NMFS Area 514 from MADMF ventless trap survey from.

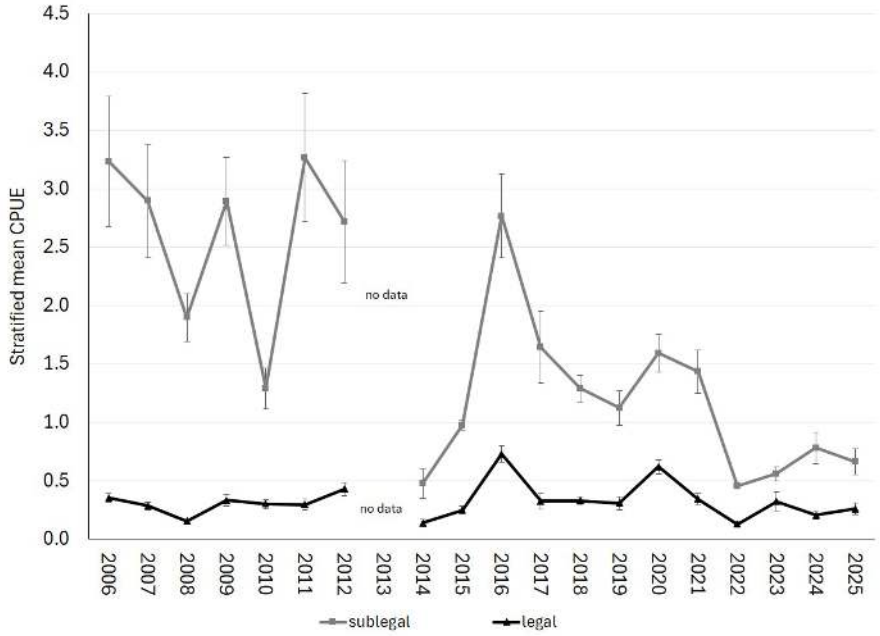


Figure 12. Stratified mean catch per trap haul (±S.E.) of sublegal (< 86 mm, grey line) and legal (≥ 86 mm, black line) lobsters in the reduced MA SNE survey area, Area 538.

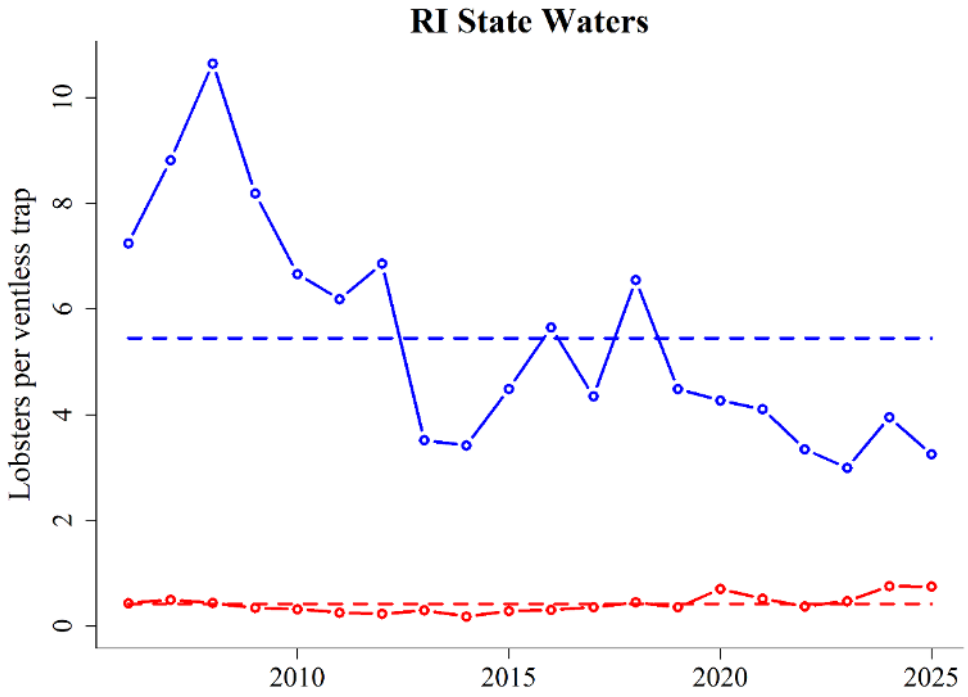


Figure 13. Depth-stratified mean catch of sublegal lobsters in the RIDEM DMF ventless trap survey.

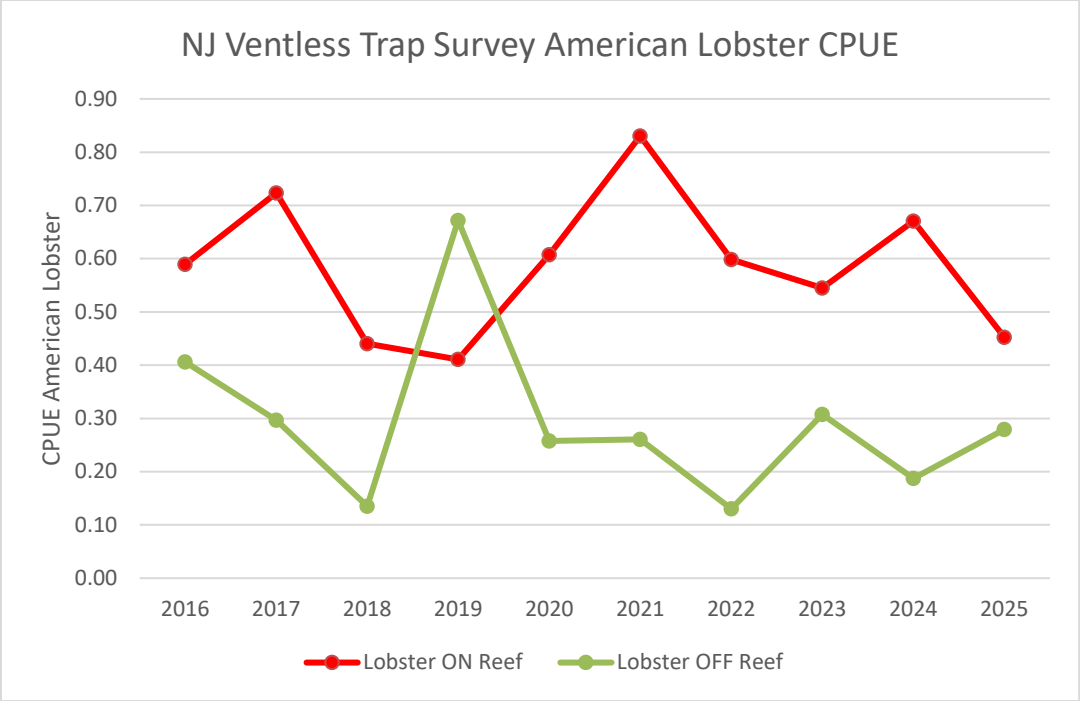


Figure 14. CPUE of American lobster captured on and off reef sites from NJ Ventless Trap Survey. Sampling is conducted during the months of April, July, and October to coincide with NJ's Ocean Trawl Survey.



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).

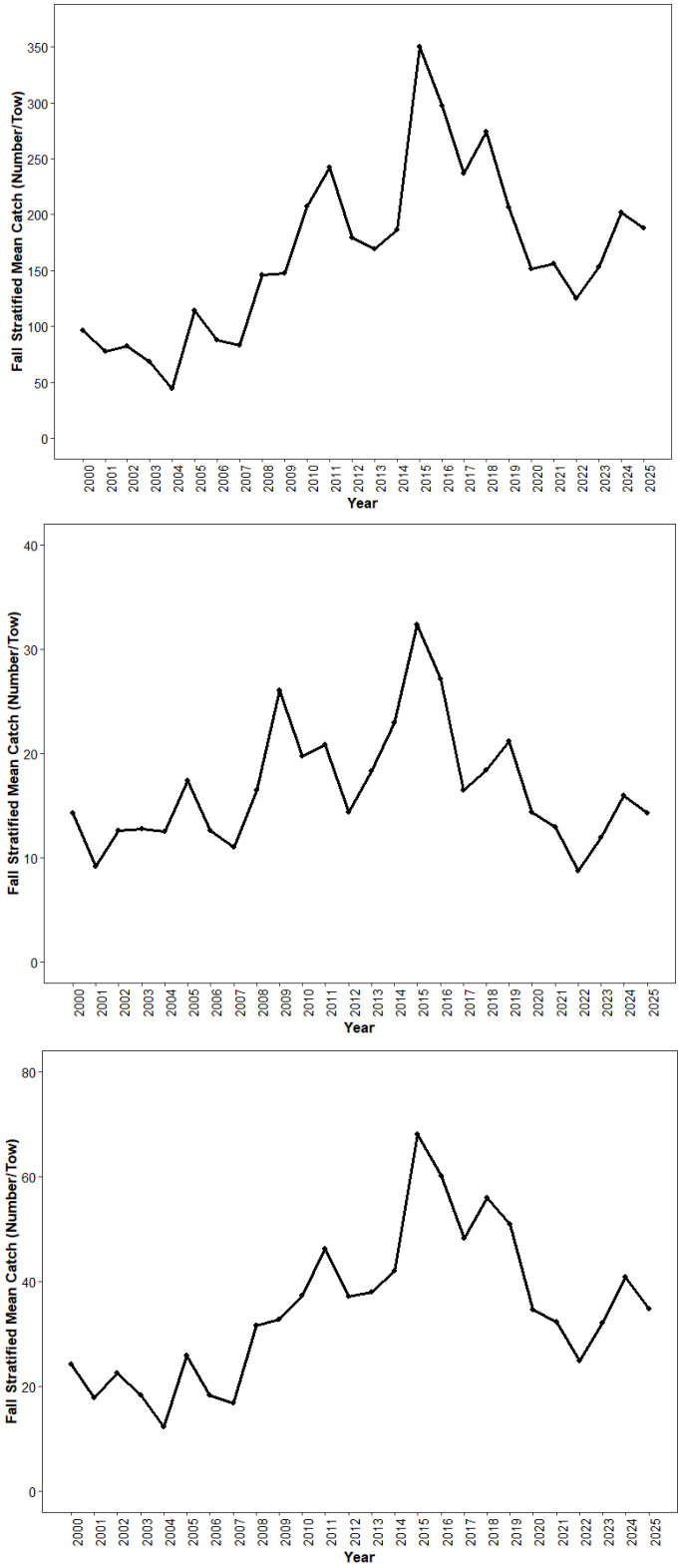


Figure 16. Stratified mean catch and recruit abundance for American lobster on the Fall ME/NH Inshore Trawl Survey (2000-2025). Top: Mean catch of sublegals (<83). Middle: Mean catch of legal sized lobsters (>82). Bottom: Recruit abundance (71-80 mm lobsters).

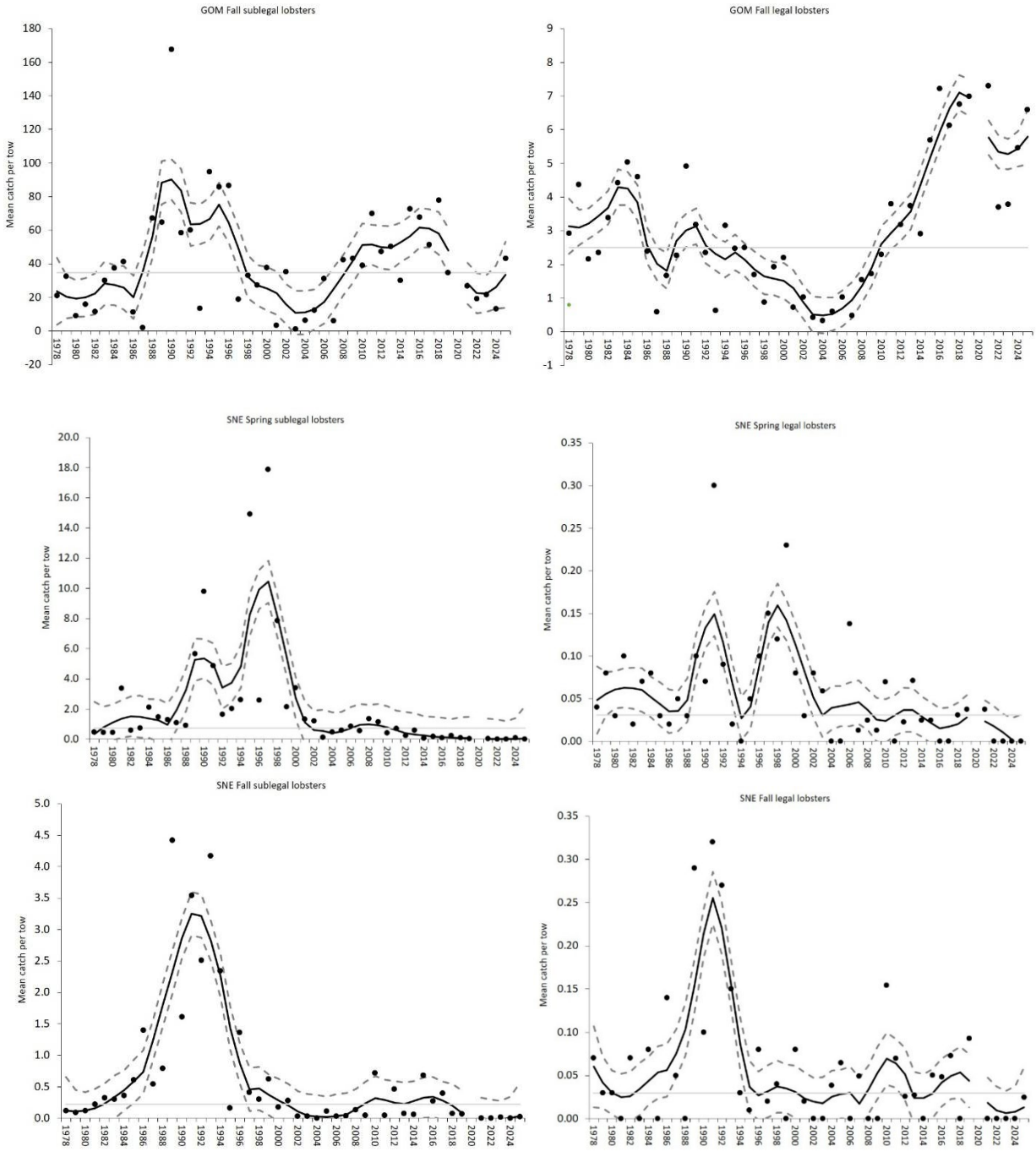


Figure 17. MADMF Fall Trawl Survey sublegal (left) and legal (right) indices from 1978-2025 sexes combined. No survey conducted in 2020 (spring or fall) due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The top two charts are from Gulf of Maine and the bottom four charts are from Southern New England. Black line represents 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.

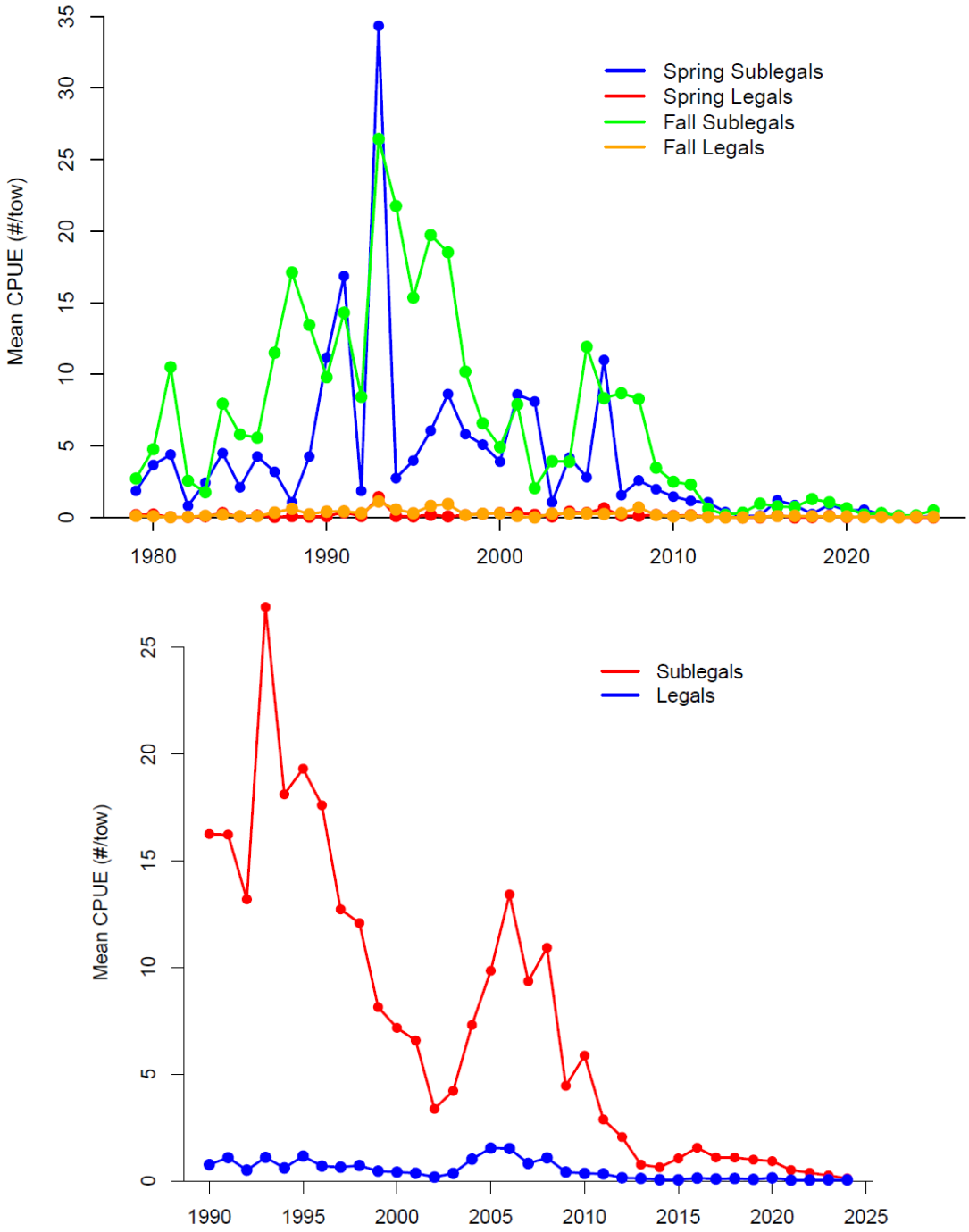


Figure 18. RIDFW Seasonal (spring and fall) Trawl lobster abundances (top) and Monthly Trawl lobster abundances (bottom). CPUE is expressed as the annual mean number per tow for sub-legal (<85.725mm CL) and legal sized (>=85.725mm CL) lobsters.

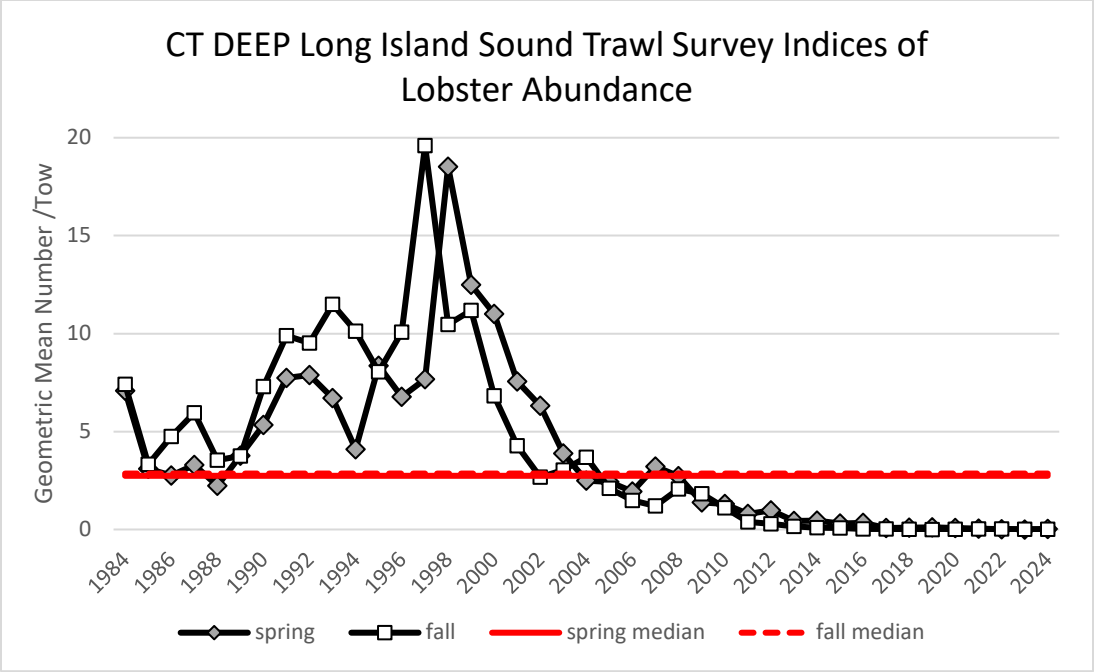


Figure 19. Results of the Long Island Sound Trawl Survey during spring (April-June) and fall (September-October) within NMFS statistical area 611.

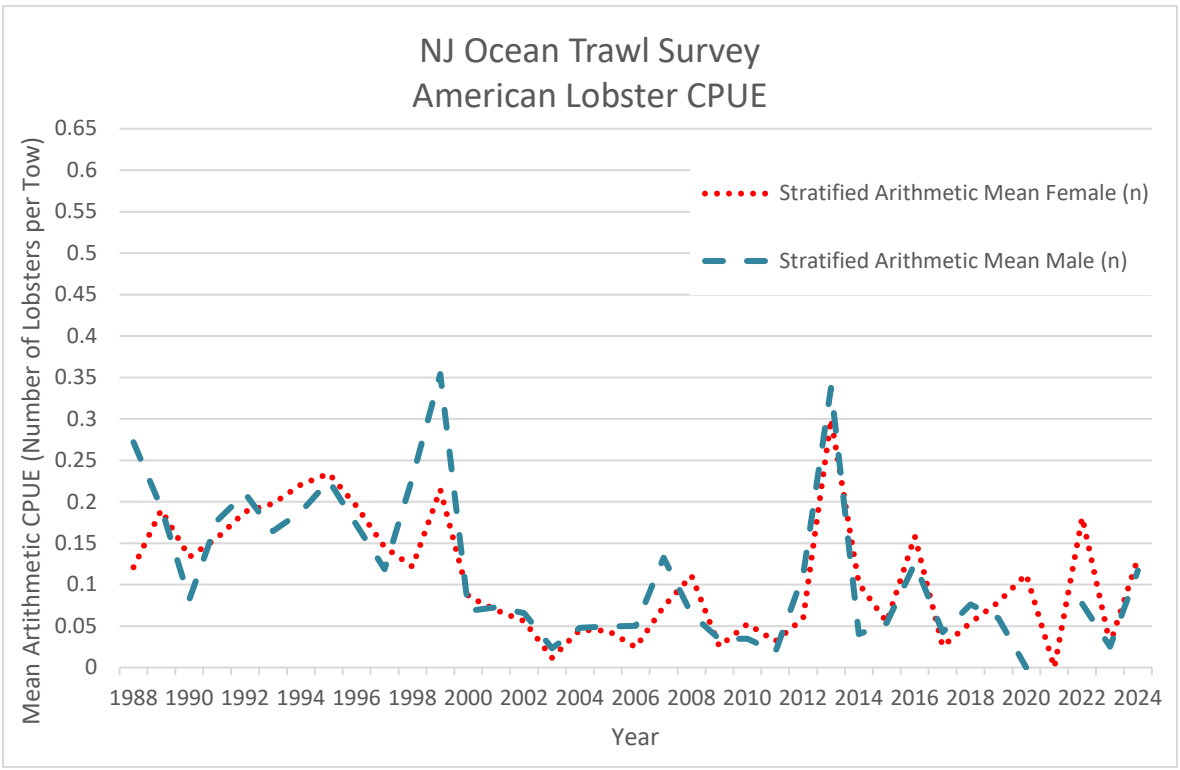


Figure 20. Stratified mean CPUE of all lobsters collected aboard the NJDFW Ocean Trawl Survey. No 2025 survey was conducted due to vessel repair.