

Sea Urchin Zone Council Meeting Summary January 25, 2017 in Ellsworth, ME

DMR staff: Trisha Cheney, Maggie Hunter, Robert Russell, Carl Wilson, Troy Dow (MPO) and Melissa Smith.

SUZC members present: Steve Eddy, Teresa Johnson, Alan Knowlton, Brian Preney, Joe Leask, John Dray, Sinuon Chau, Tim Peterson, Clint Richardson, Chuon Muth, and Chenda Doeur.

SUZC members absent: Larry Harris, Tracey Sawtelle and Mark Nickerson.

Public: Paul Cox, Sean Perry, Aaron Gilpatrick, Duane Carver, Dean Norris, Atitya Meas, James Campbell and Kim Ovitz, John Snider and David Foster.

Sea Urchin Zone Council Research Subcommittee Meeting Summary

No meeting scheduled.

Sea Urchin Zone Council Meeting

Meeting commenced at 4:53pm

Welcome & Introductions

J. Leask welcomed the group and asked everyone to introduce themselves around the room.

New council members (Alan Knowlton, Brian Preney, John Dray, Sinuon Chau, Tim Peterson, and Chenda Doeur) introduced themselves and their position on the council. Melissa Smith will be taking over the resource management duties pertaining to the sea urchin fishery.

Election of Officers

J. Leask initiated the vote for the positions of Chair and Vice-chair. M. Smith distributed the updated list of zone council members for the 2017-2018 term. T. Cheney collected the ballots and compiled the count. Results of the vote selected Tracey Sawtelle as Chair and Brian Preney as Vice Chair. T. Sawtelle was absent from the meeting; B. Preney stepped in as Vice Chair to run the meeting.

Nov 16, 2016 Meeting Summary

C. Richardson moved to accept; J, Leask seconded.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS. Approval of minutes passed.

DMR Updates: Legislative Items

T. Cheney updated the council [**Appendix A**] regarding the 128th session of the Legislature. The Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources (MRC) has a number of bills in this session that pertain to the sea urchin fishery. For more information, please go to MRC website: <http://legislature.maine.gov/committee/#Committees/MAR>. Also, to get on the MRC email list to be kept up to date on upcoming work sessions and public hearings, please reach out to Julia Brown at Julia.Brown@Legislature.Maine.gov to be included into the GovDelivery for these topics.

With respect to the biennial budget, the DMR proposes to increase license fees through a surcharge. A surcharge on license fees, the first of such in nearly a decade, is proposed to create an account known as the *Coastal Fisheries Research, Management, and Opportunity Fund*. The fund will provide a stable revenue stream that will enable the Department to pursue adaptive management approaches and economic opportunities for Maine's valuable marine resources.

DMR Updates: 2016/2017 Season Update

M. Hunter presented information from the current season's landings [**Appendix B**]. Landings to date are a combined total of diver and dragging at 1,579,067 pounds. This is 77% of 2015-16 landings and is current to January 23, 2017 landing reports. Compared to last year, landings were up for the months of September, October and November. December indicated a decrease in landings compared to last season, with weather as the primary cause.

Landed value for the current season is at 90% of 2015-16 landings and is current to January 23, 2017 landing reports. While December was down with respect to landings, the value of landings was the highest recorded in the last three seasons. This is reflected in the average price being higher this season than last (\$3.36/lb average over last season's \$2.88/lb average).

Percent roe is holding steady, by average, when compared to previous seasons: 11.8 average in Zone 2; 11.3 average statewide.

DMR Updates: Crab Data Trends

M. Hunter provided a presentation on crab data [**Appendix C**] collected through the urchin dive survey over the years. Crab species (rock and Jonah) presence has been documented in the sea urchin dive survey since 2001. Abundance of both species was higher in the early 2000s and had decreased steadily until 2013. For the last few years, abundance has either been stable, or slightly increased.

In Zone 1, 2003 survey results indicated the highest abundance of crabs observed during the urchin dive survey and data suggests an inverse trend between presence of urchins and crabs (i.e. when crab abundance is up, urchins are down; and vice versa). For Zone 2, 2005 was the highest abundance of crab and the trend held true in that presence of crabs meant less abundance of urchins.

However, in both 2013 (lowest crab abundance) and 2016 surveys, sample locations with low crab abundance did not always indicate high abundance of urchins. It is unknown why crab absence does not allow for an increase in urchin abundance.

DMR Updates: Blue Hill Bay Experimental Area

C. Wilson provided an overview on how the Lower Blue Hill Bay Experimental Area would occur [**Appendix D**]. Wilson and other DMR staff had previously met with fisherman that would be affected by a potential experimental area in Lower Blue Hill Bay. Goal is to minimize the impact to fishermen affected by the experimental management area, execute the experiment in an area where productivity is good and harvesting is occurring, and to successively reduce the closure size annually so that the most amount of closed area is minimized as the experiment proceeds.

Newest estimates for the cost of a spatial data tracker, size similar to a cellphone, has been reduced to around \$150-200 dollars per unit and would be provide to industry members who wish to fish the area. This industry-driven survey would assess the impact of fishing (or lack of fishing) on specific ledges, assess monitoring and roe (currently not collected in DMR survey), settlement of new recruits and also collect information on enhancement experiments.

DMR Updates: Picking Days for 2017-2018 Season

M. Hunter presented an example (strawman) for potentially picking your own days using a 3 days per week scenario [**Appendix E**]. For each Zone 1 and Zone 2 – keep the diving and dragging season the same, but maintain an early and late season schedule.

For Zone 1, it was proposed that 13 harvest days be available for a 20 day calendar. For Zone 2, it was proposed that 30 harvest days be available in a 45 day calendar. Harvest season would begin mid-September and continue through to mid-March, or as decided by the council.

A day is not counted until harvesters sell urchins and swipe their card. For example in Zone 2, if a harvester only get 2 trays one day, they can hold them overnight, get 5 trays the next day, selling the 7 trays the following day and only use up one fishing day. However, this scenario would not work on the final day of a calendar week; product must be sold on the last open day of a work week.

Discussion: Picking Days for 2017-2018 Season

B. Preney opened the floor for discussion on the potential picking your own days for the upcoming 2017-18 season.

There was general consensus for both zones on not giving up any additional fishing days; to maintain 15 and 38 harvestable days for Zone 1 and Zone 2, respectively. The potential reduction of 8 fishing days in Zone 2 would affect approximately 24 fishermen and the resulting loss of income from such a reduction was considerable. In most cases, even in bad weather situations, there are areas that can be accessed, if only for a few totes.

So, with the understanding that only a small portion of the licensed harvesters do utilize all available harvesting days, what would the harm be in allowing fishermen to pick their own day, based on a 3 open days/week? With the addition of swipe cards to report landings in the fishery, in-season monitoring would capture any great deviation in landings. And, the bonus of completing a season using all available days along with the option to pick the day you harvest would allow for complete data-gathering to determine if this was a viable option for future seasons.

Motion by J. Leask: *to allow for a 38 day season for Zone 2 divers and draggers using a 45 day calendar, 3 days a week.*

2nd by: J. Dray

Vote: 8 yes, 2 abstain. **MOTION PASSED.**

Motion by B. Preney: *to allow for a 15 day LATE season for Zone 1 divers using a 20 day calendar, 3 days a week.*

2nd by: J. Leask

Vote: 10 yes, 1 abstain. **MOTION PASSED.**

Motion by C. Richardson: *to allow for a 15 day EARLY season for Zone 1 divers using a 20 day calendar, 3 days a week.*

2nd by: B. Preney

Vote: 10 yes, 1 abstain. **MOTION PASSED.**

Motion by Alan Knowlton: *to allow for a 15 day season for Zone 1 draggers using a 20 day calendar, 3 days a week.*

2nd by: C. Doeur

Vote: 10 yes, 1 abstain. **MOTION PASSED.**

Other Business

T. Cheney suggested a meeting with the processors and buyers to be held separately in February to develop a draft calendar that would be used as a scratch calendar during the full council meeting in March. Everyone was in agreement and T. Cheney will proceed in scheduling this meeting in Portland.

Meeting adjourned at 8:04 pm. The next meeting will be held on **Thursday, March 23rd at 3:00pm at Jeff's Catering in Brewer.** **Research subcommittee will begin at 1:00pm prior to Council Meeting.** The 2017/18 Season calendar development will be the primary discussion topic.

Appendix A

Proposed license fee rates:

Sea Urchin License Fees			
Zone 2 individual handfishing sea urchin license issued pursuant to §6748, subsection 1		\$ 152.00	\$ 46.00
Zone 2 handfishing sea urchin license with tender issued pursuant to §6748, subsection 1		\$ 202.00	\$ 61.00
Zone 1 individual handfishing sea urchin license issued pursuant to §6748, subsection 1		\$ 25.00	\$ 8.00
Zone 1 handfishing sea urchin license with tender issued pursuant to §6748, subsection 1		\$ 50.00	\$ 15.00
Zone 2 sea urchin dragging license issued pursuant to §6748-A, subsection 1		\$ 152.00	\$ 46.00
Zone 1 sea urchin dragging license issued pursuant to §6748-A, subsection 1		\$ 25.00	\$ 8.00
Sea urchin and scallop diving tender license issued pursuant to §6535, subsection 1		\$ 133.00	\$ 40.00

Appendix B

M. Hunter's update on current season metrics (landings, value, and roe content).

Maine Sea Urchin Price per Pound in Dollars

2014-2015 State	2015-2016 State	2016-2017 Maine Sea Urchin Price (\$/lb) by Zone, Gear, and Month*					
Sep	Sep	Zone 1		Zone 2		State Total	
\$2.08	\$1.78						
\$2.58	\$2.98						
\$3.01	\$2.72						
\$2.97	\$3.04						
\$2.55	\$2.67						
\$2.76	\$3.12						
\$2.79	\$3.43						
Total \$2.69	Total \$2.88						
<i>Preliminary data</i>	<i>Preliminary data</i>						
		Drag & Dive**	Dive & Rake	Drag	Total		
	Sep	\$2.09	\$3.12	\$3.12	\$3.12	\$2.38	
	Oct		\$2.77	\$3.14	\$2.95	\$2.95	
	Nov		\$3.58	\$3.68	\$3.63	\$3.63	
	Dec	\$2.28	\$3.89	\$3.91	\$3.90	\$3.63	
	Jan		\$3.91	\$3.89	\$3.90	\$3.90	
	Feb						
	Mar						
	Total	\$2.16	\$3.53	\$3.66	\$3.59	\$3.36	

*Preliminary data through 1/23/17
 ** Due to Confidentiality

Maine Sea Urchin Value in Dollars

2014-2015 State	2015-2016 State	2016-2017 Maine Sea Urchin Value (\$) by Zone, Gear, and Month*					
Sep	Sep	Zone 1		Zone 2		State Total	
\$413,376	\$332,053						
\$984,308	\$821,208						
\$507,160	\$650,844						
\$1,951,826	\$1,849,953						
\$442,670	\$642,555						
\$273,756	\$604,491						
\$1,030,103	\$1,009,748						
Total \$5,603,199	Total \$5,910,852						
<i>Preliminary data</i>	<i>Preliminary data</i>						
		Drag & Dive**	Dive & Rake	Drag	Total		
	Sep	\$290,941	\$201,592		\$201,592	\$492,533	
	Oct		\$422,062	\$499,821	\$921,883	\$921,883	
	Nov		\$490,223	\$557,541	\$1,047,764	\$1,047,764	
	Dec	\$309,419	\$897,540	\$821,640	\$1,719,180	\$2,028,599	
	Jan		\$483,994	\$316,111	\$800,105	\$800,105	
	Feb						
	Mar						
	Total	\$600,360	\$2,495,411	\$2,193,607	\$4,689,018	\$5,290,884	

*Preliminary data through 1/23/17
 ** Due to Confidentiality

Maine Sea Urchin Landings In Pounds

2014-2015 State	2015-2016 State	2016-2017 Maine Sea Urchin Landings (lbs) by Zone, Gear, and Month*					
Sep	Sep	Zone 1		Zone 2		State Total	
198,955	183,396						
374,914	274,394						
164,891	237,575						
658,335	617,972						
176,893	244,981						
99,049	194,034						
365,706	297,642						
Total 2,038,743	Total 2,049,994						
<i>Preliminary data</i>	<i>Preliminary data</i>						
		Drag & Dive**	Dive & Rake	Drag	Total		
	Sep	139,974	64,523		64,523	204,497	
	Oct		151,567	158,699	310,266	310,266	
	Nov		134,618	151,138	285,756	285,756	
	Dec	135,596	227,324	210,823	438,147	573,743	
	Jan		124,330	80,475	204,805	204,805	
	Feb						
	Mar						
	Total	275,570	702,362	600,717	1,303,079	1,579,067	

*Preliminary data through 1/23/17
 ** Due to Confidentiality

Maine Sea Urchin Roe Index (%)

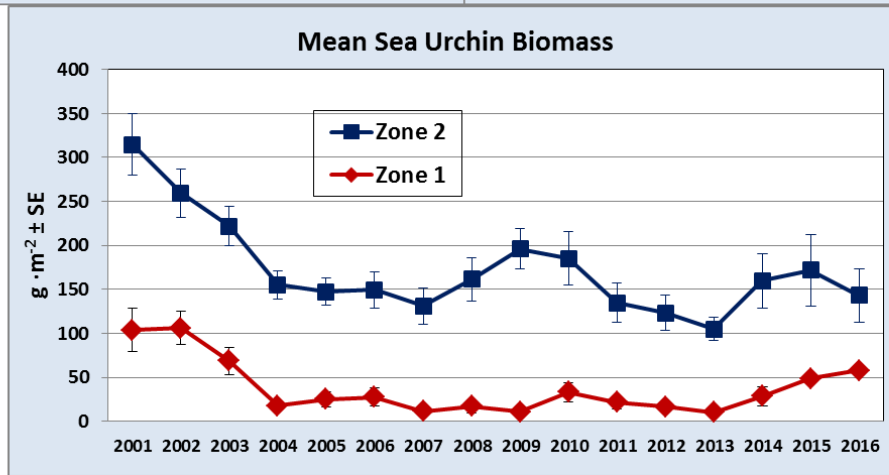
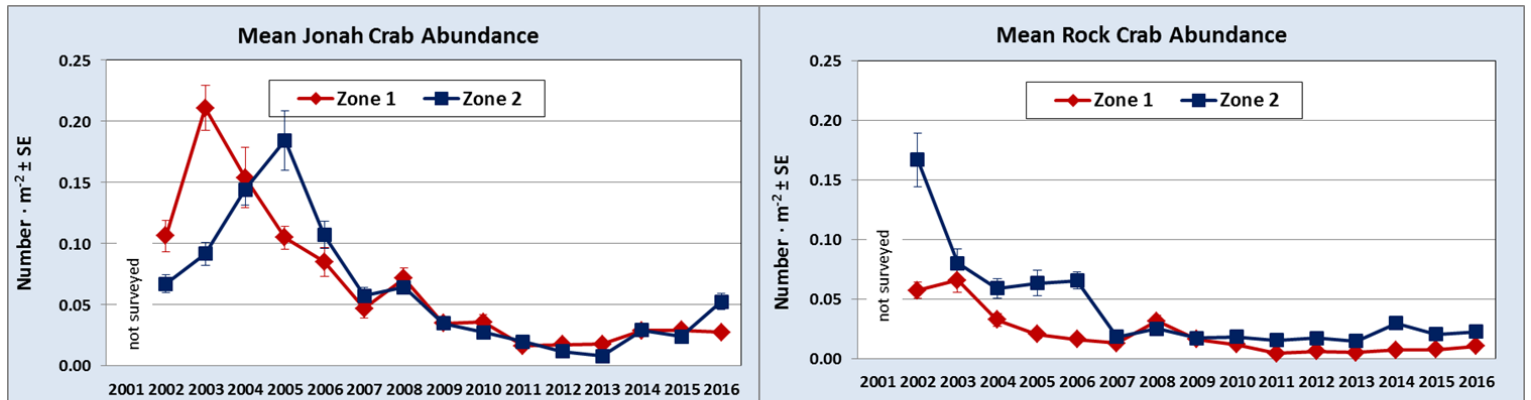
2014-2015 State	2015-2016 State	2016-2017 Maine Sea Urchin Roe (%) by Zone, Gear, and Month*					
Sep	Sep	Zone 1		Zone 2		State Total	
8.9	7.7						
12.0	12.2						
12.3	12.0						
12.0	11.9						
12.9	11.6						
13.2	13.6						
13.2	13.3						
Total 11.9	Total 11.8						
<i>Preliminary data</i>	<i>Preliminary data</i>						
		Drag & Dive**	Dive & Rake	Drag	Total		
	Sep	7.9	11.5		11.5	8.9	
	Oct		10.9	11.9	11.4	11.4	
	Nov		11.6	11.8	11.7	11.7	
	Dec	9.5	12.1	11.8	11.9	11.5	
	Jan		12.7	11.4	12.2	12.2	
	Feb						
	Mar						
	Total	8.5	11.8	11.8	11.8	11.3	

*Preliminary data through 1/23/17
 ** Due to Confidentiality

Appendix C

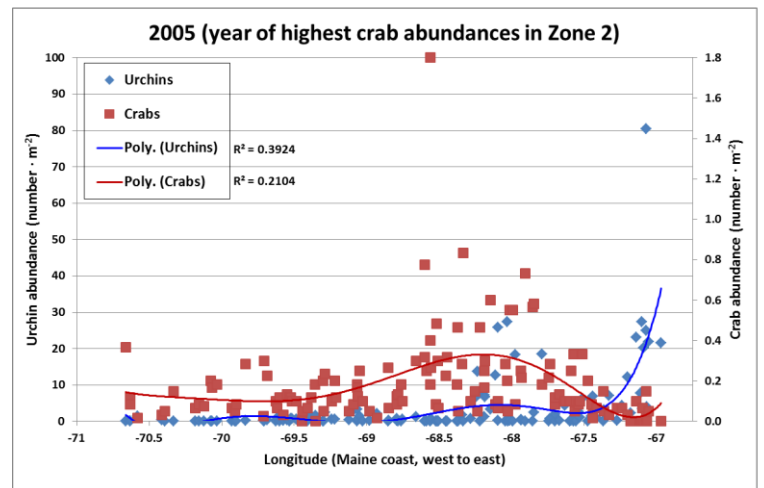
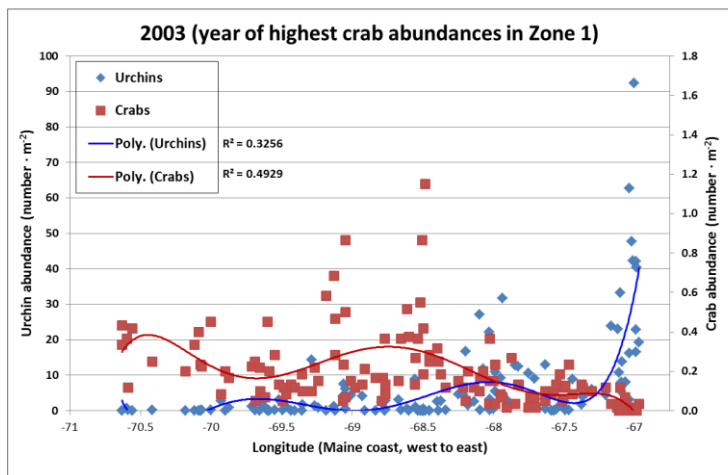
M. Hunter's update on crab presence within the Spring Urchin dive survey.

Crab Abundance – Spring Urchin Dive Survey

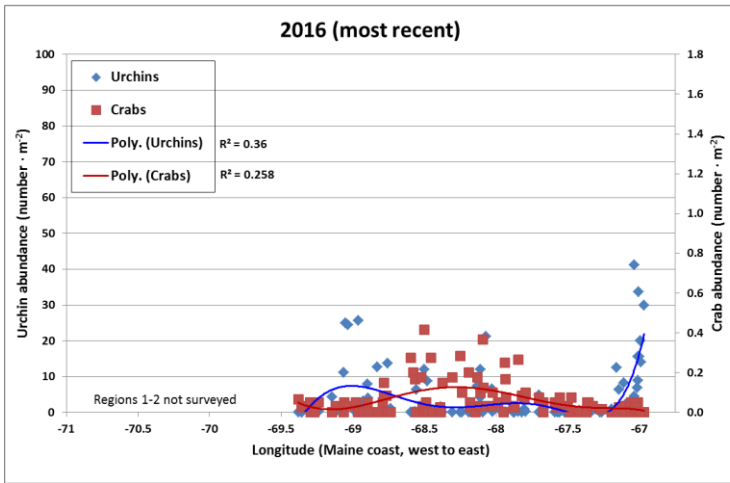


Crab (both) Abundance – Spring Dive Survey

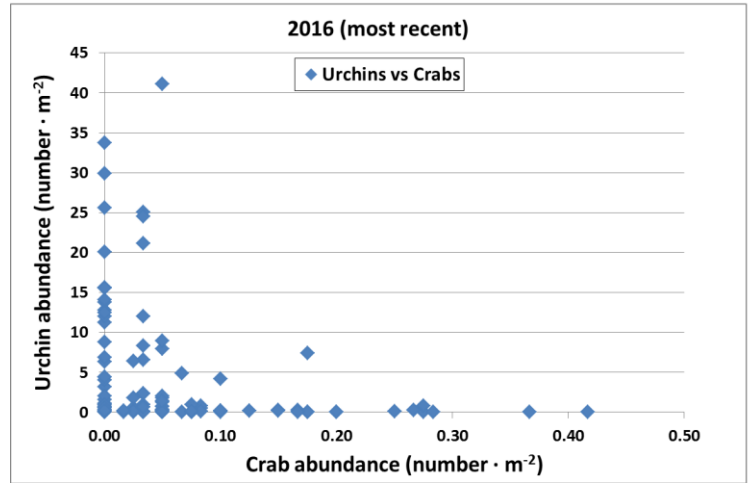
Crab (both) Abundance – Spring Dive Survey



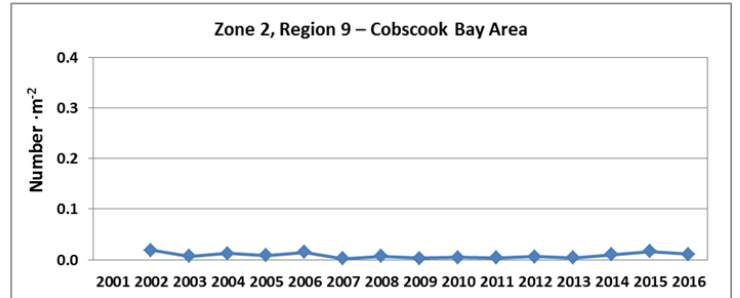
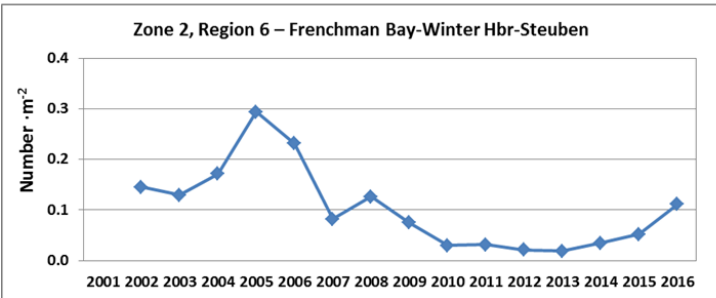
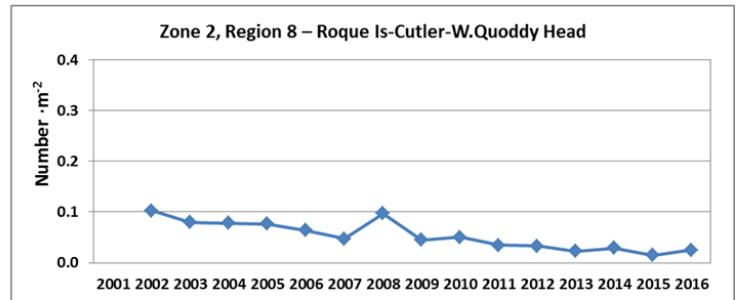
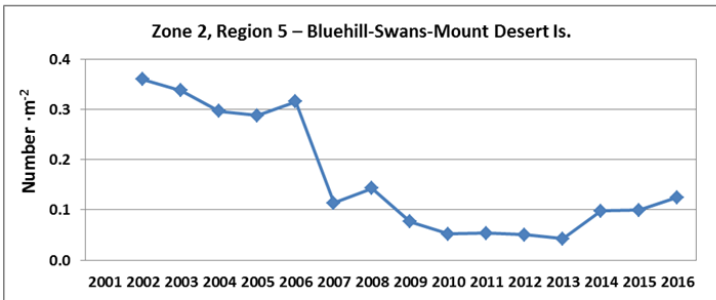
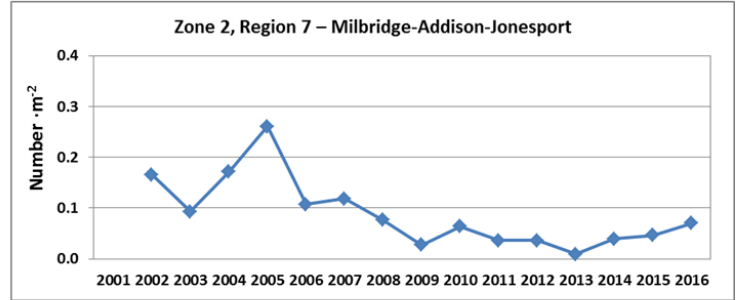
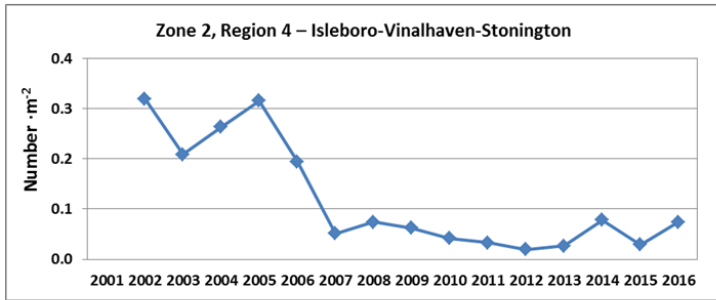
Crab (both) Abundance – Spring Dive Survey



Crab (both) Abundance – Spring Dive Survey



Crab (both) Abundance – Spring Dive Survey



Appendix D

C. Wilson's discussion on Lower Blue Hill Bay Experimental Area.

What defines the area

Why Blue Hill Bay

- Desire to work in a productive area
 - Approximately 5% of landings
- Mix of sizes from DMR survey
- Ability to access and monitor
- Scallop rotation
- Minimize impact to industry

Experimental Area – Blue Hill Bay

require trackers for access, SURF to cover costs (\$~7,500)

- Year 1 – open
- Year 2 – 50% closure
- Year 3 – 25% closure
- Year 4 – 12% closure
- Year 5 – completely open

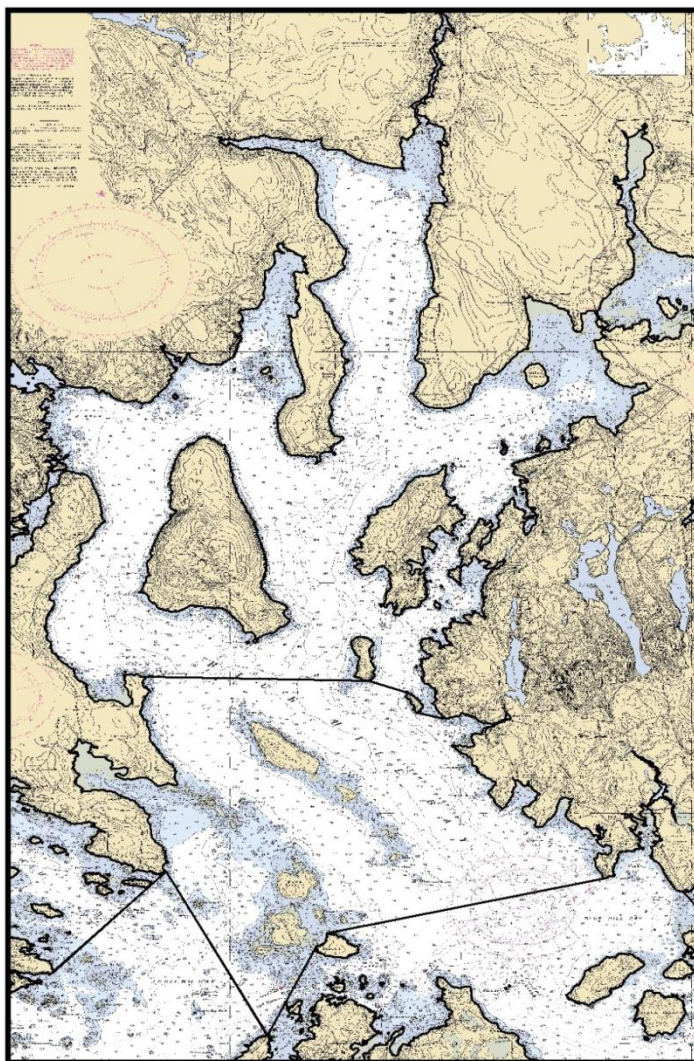


Figure 1-D: Lower Blue Hill Bay Scallop Rotational Area as potential for sea urchin experimental management zone.

Appendix E

M. Hunter's example of Pick Your Days Strawman.

Pick-Your-Days Season for 2017-18: Example

Early 2017 - 2018 Calendar

Total Days

45

September 2017						
S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	○	○	○			
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	○	○	○			
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	○	○	○			

October 2017						
S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	○	○	○			
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	○	○	○			
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	○	○	○			
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
	○	○	○			
29	30	31				
	○	○				

November 2017						
S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
			○			
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	○	○	○			
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	○	○	○			
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
	○	○	○			
26	27	28	29	30		
	○	○	○			

December 2017						
S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	○	○	○			
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	○	○	○			
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	○	○	○			
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	○	○	○			
31						

9 0.9 8

14 0.9 12

13 0.7 9

9 0.7 6

Total Days

45

Late 2017 - 2018 Calendar

December 2017						
S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	○	○	○			
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	○	○	○			
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	○	○	○			
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	○	○				
31						

January 2018						
S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
		○	○			
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	○	○	○			
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	○	○	○			
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
	○	○	○			
28	29	30	31			
	○	○	○			

February 2018						
S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	○	○	○			
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	○	○	○			
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
	○	○	○			
25	26	27	28			
	○	○	○			

March 2018						
S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	○	○	○			
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	○	○	○			
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
	○	○				
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

11 0.7 8

14 0.4 6

12 0.3 4

8 0.5 4