



2026 Scallop Survey Report
Maine Department of Marine Resources



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Maine Scallop Survey Report

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Zone 2 Survey Summary

The primary goal of the spring survey is to provide input for the management of the upcoming fishing season. For the 2026-27 season, rotation A in zone 2 is scheduled to be open. This rotation recorded its peak landings during the second opening in the 2017-18 season, this was also the first season with standard preseason survey in this rotation. The Eastern areas have experienced a considerable decline in recent years with more consistency in the Western areas.

Overall, the average density of harvestable scallops in Rotation A recorded during the 2026 survey was approximately equal to the catch in the survey prior to the previous opening in 2023. Although no high settlement events were observed, there was an overall increase in juvenile (<3 inches) and mature sublegal scallops (3-4 inches) compared to the previous rotation.

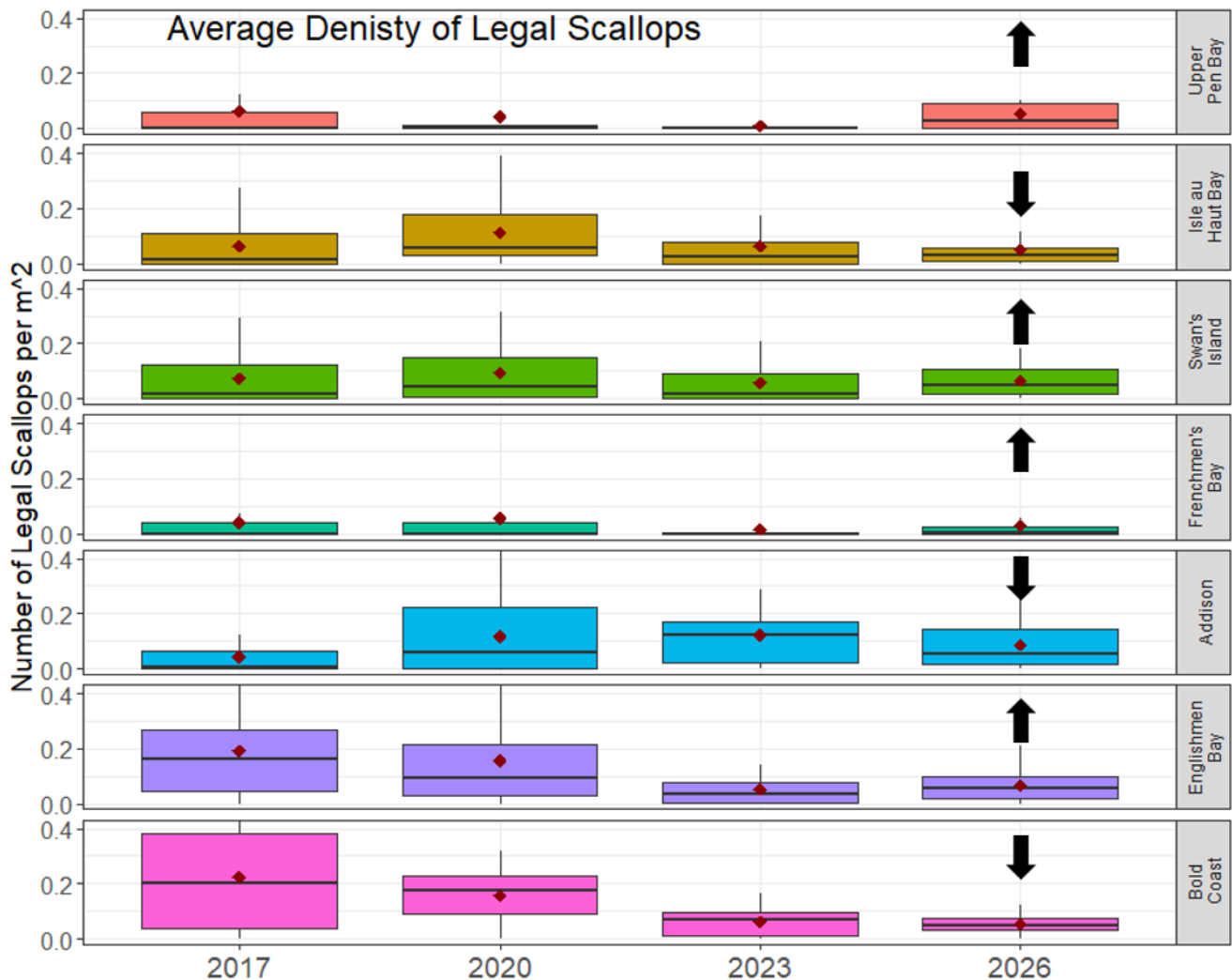


Figure 1. Survey Density of Legal Scallops for Each Year of the Spring Survey by Area. The height of each bar indicates the average number of legal scallops in each area for a given year. The arrows for 2026 are the relative change in comparison with the 2023 survey.

Background

Large areas throughout Maine state waters were closed in 2008 with a goal of rebuilding the Maine scallop fishery. In 2012, Zone 2 (Penobscot Bay to Lubec) began a transition period into the current rotational management plan. The current plan divides Zone 2 into 21 subareas, opening seven areas to drag harvest each season (Fig. 2). This allows for two years without scallop dragging activity for each subarea.

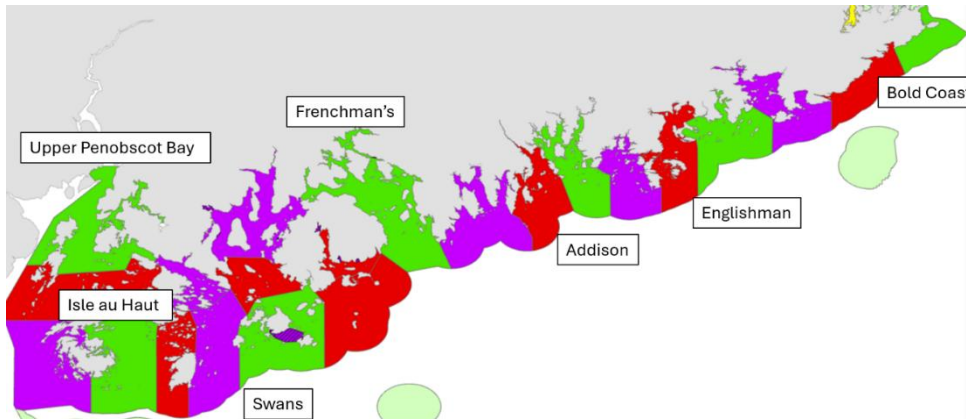


Figure 2. Map of Zone 2 scallop rotational areas. For the upcoming 2026-2027 season, Rotation A (Green) is scheduled to be open to dredging, Rotation B (Red) is scheduled to be closed and Rotation C (purple) is scheduled to be open to diving.

At the start of these large-scale closures, the State started the harvester reporting program. Comparisons of the survey data versus the landings data show the same declines in harvestable scallops in recent years. Total landings for all rotations peaked in the second full year they were open and remain dramatically higher than the years prior to rotational management (Fig. 3).

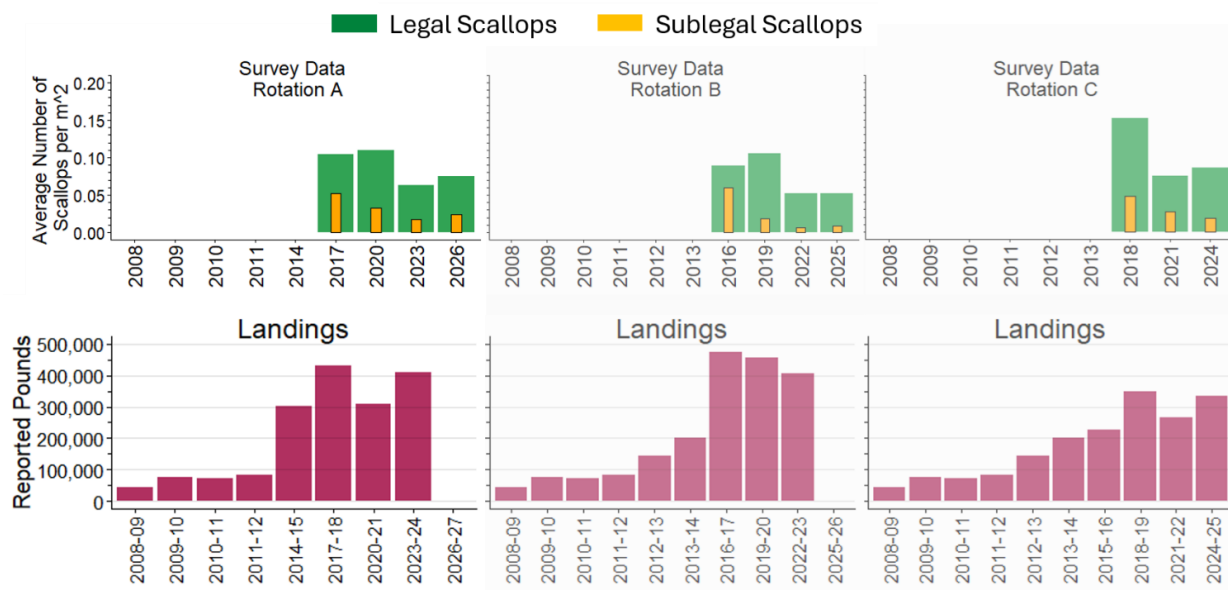


Figure 3. The annual spring survey densities for each rotation where the average density of legal scallops are the green bars and sublegal scallops are orange (Top). Total reported pounds landed in Zone 2 for each season grouped by the current rotation areas (Bottom).

Since 2016, the DMR has conducted a spring scallop survey to sample the areas in Zone 2 scheduled to be open in the coming season. In 2024, the spring scallop survey was slightly modified to collect data for additional management advice. The current goals of the spring survey are:

1. To estimate density and to describe the scallop populations for the upcoming season.
2. To monitor historic scallop beds or potential scallop habitat with low fishing pressure.
3. To evaluate density and size structure of scallops in priority areas and to provide data in response to recent management actions.

In order to accomplish these goals, we modified the survey domain. Instead of matching our rotational management footprint, we created 60 individual survey areas based upon historic scallop survey data, landings data, depth contours, and local oceanographic features (i.e. enclosed bays, bottom type, etc.; Fig 4).

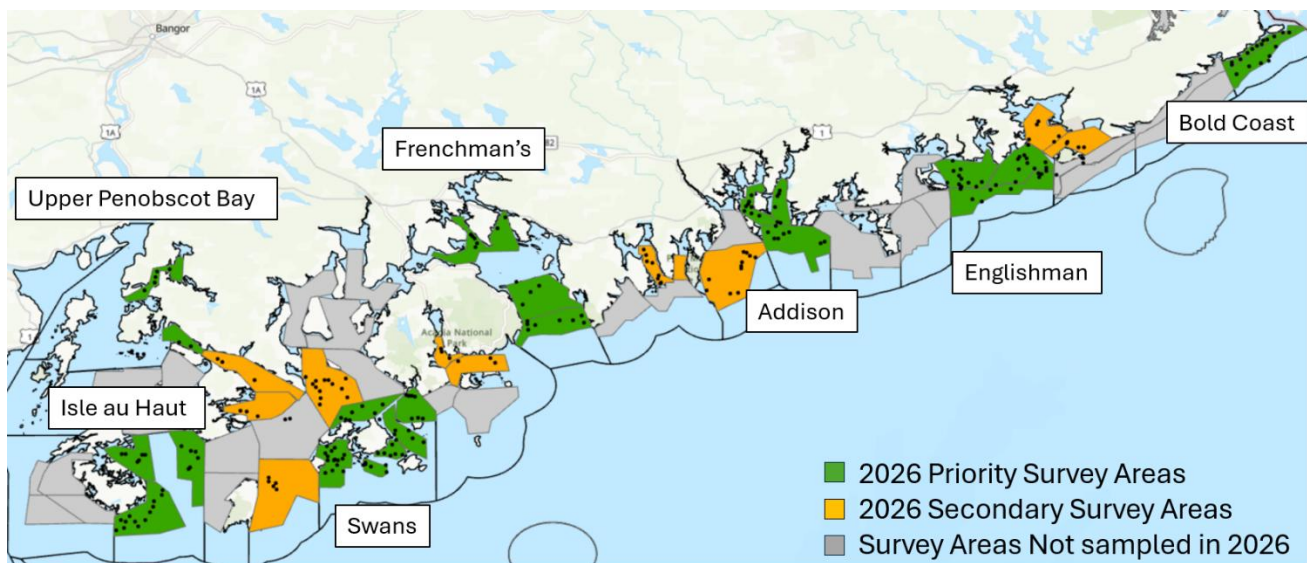


Figure 4. Map of the new survey domain used for the 2026 spring scallop survey. The areas in green were the priority areas surveyed (scheduled to open in 2026-27) and the areas in orange are the areas surveyed for the secondary objectives. The thick black lines represent the current scallop management boundaries.

Although the survey domain has been modified, our station selection process remains the same. In this process, a 500m grid is overlaid over the survey areas. Past survey work and interviews with fleet members have identified grids which are either not towable or poor scallop habitat, and these grids have been removed from our domain. The remaining grids are identified as either high-density or low-density area. The high-density grids were selected as areas where previous survey tows caught above the survey average of scallops or as areas with high concentrations of landings reports. These grids were then reviewed with local fleet members and modified as necessary. Improving our survey grid is an ongoing process; for those interested in helping, please reach out to Carl Huntsberger at carlton.j.huntsberger@maine.gov. The stations sampled each year are a subset randomly selected from the available survey grid.

Survey Methods

The annual spring scallop survey sampled 250 stations in Scallop Management Zone 2, between April 2nd and 18th, 2026, aboard the F/V Miss Sarah. All survey areas inside Rotation A (Fig. 4) that are scheduled to be open in the 2026-27 season were sampled. Upper Machias Bay, Chandler Bay, Gouldsboro, Western Blue Hill and partial coverage in Eggemoggin Reach and Jerico Bay, were also sampled to better inform management.

Each station was sampled following the same methods used since 2016 with our standardized 7-foot survey drag, rigged with 2-inch rings and a 5-inch twine top. This survey dredge and our tow specifications are designed to catch representative samples of the entire size range of scallops older than 2 years, not to maximize the catch of harvestable scallops. At each station, the drag is towed for a target time of 2.5 minutes covering approximately 300m (0.16 nautical miles).

The total volume and composition of the catch are recorded, then the scallops are counted and measured. For each rotational area, a representative sample of the scallops are selected for meat weights and quality measurements during which the scallops are visually screened for specific diseases (Fig. 5).



Figure 5: Meat quality categories used for analysis (left) and an example of a scallop collected from outside of Maine with evidence of a bacterial infection (right).

The data in this report are standardized for the number of legal scallops per square meter. Fishable densities of scallops are generally considered to be above 0.1 scallops/m². A typical 7-foot commercial dredge towing in a density of 0.25 scallops/m² should catch approximately 5 bushels in a 10-minute tow. For more information on the sampling details please contact the DMR Scallop Research Program.

Rotation A Overview

The average catch of all size bins was similar, but slightly higher, to the survey prior to the previous opening in 2023 (Fig 6). Although no high settlement events were observed, there was a notable increase in juvenile (<3 inches) and mature sublegal scallops (3-4 inches) compared to the previous rotation.

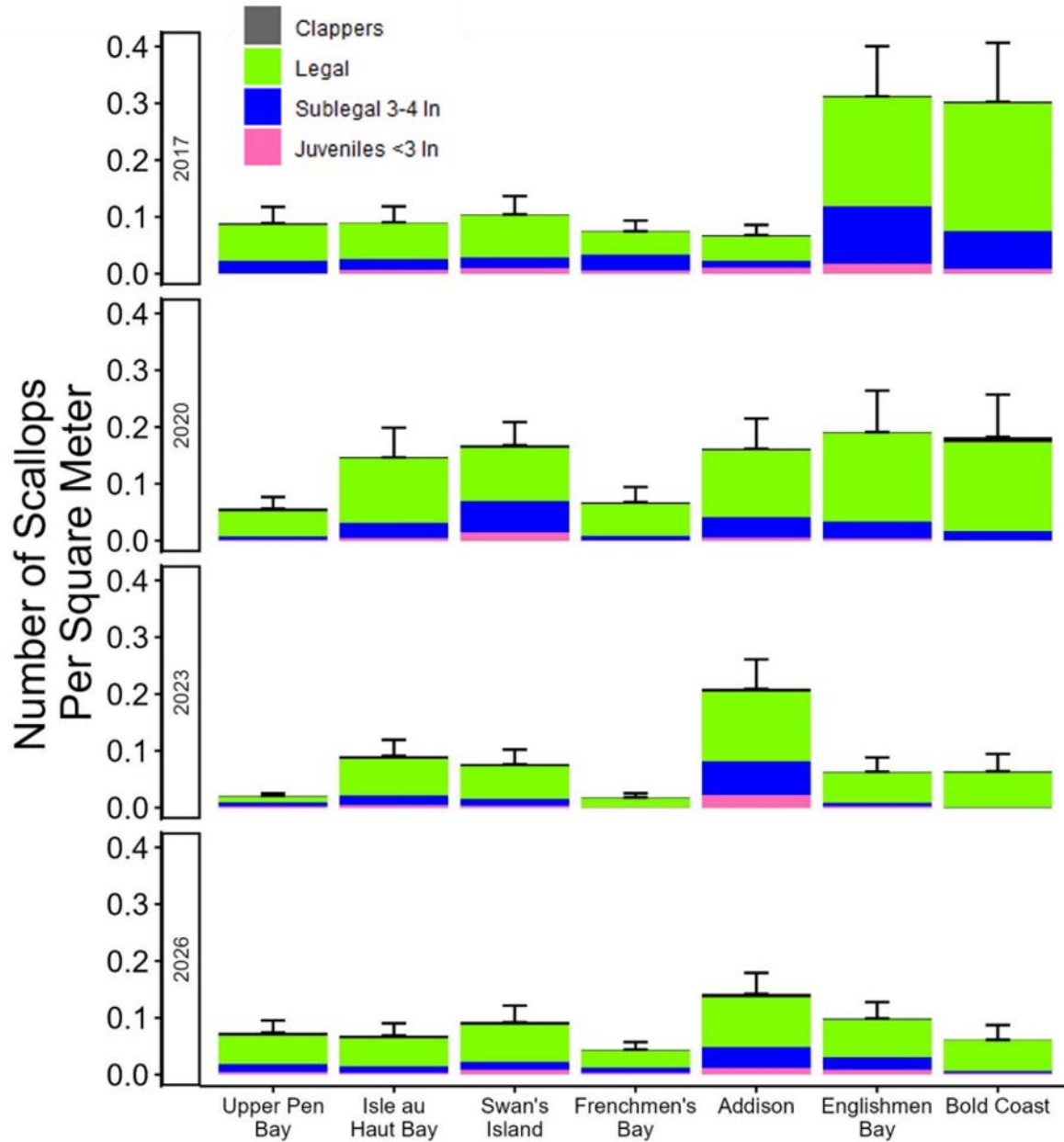


Figure 6. The height of each bar represents the average number of scallops caught for all tows of the past three surveys in Rotation A: the green segment represents legal scallops >4 inches, the blue is mature sublegal scallops 3-4 inches, the pink is juvenile scallops less than 3 inches, the black is clappers.

A typical tow for this survey east of MDI included a mixture of scallops, crabs and either clam or scallop shells, with many sea stars in the shallower areas. To the west of MDI, scallops, sea cucumbers, starfish, mussels and tunicates (sea squirts) were the most commonly observed species. It was noted that there appeared to be an increase in catch of small crabs, urchins, and seas stars, particularly in the areas to the west. There were several areas with moderate catches of tunicates, particularly in Blue Hill Bay and the northern part of Isle au Haut Bay.

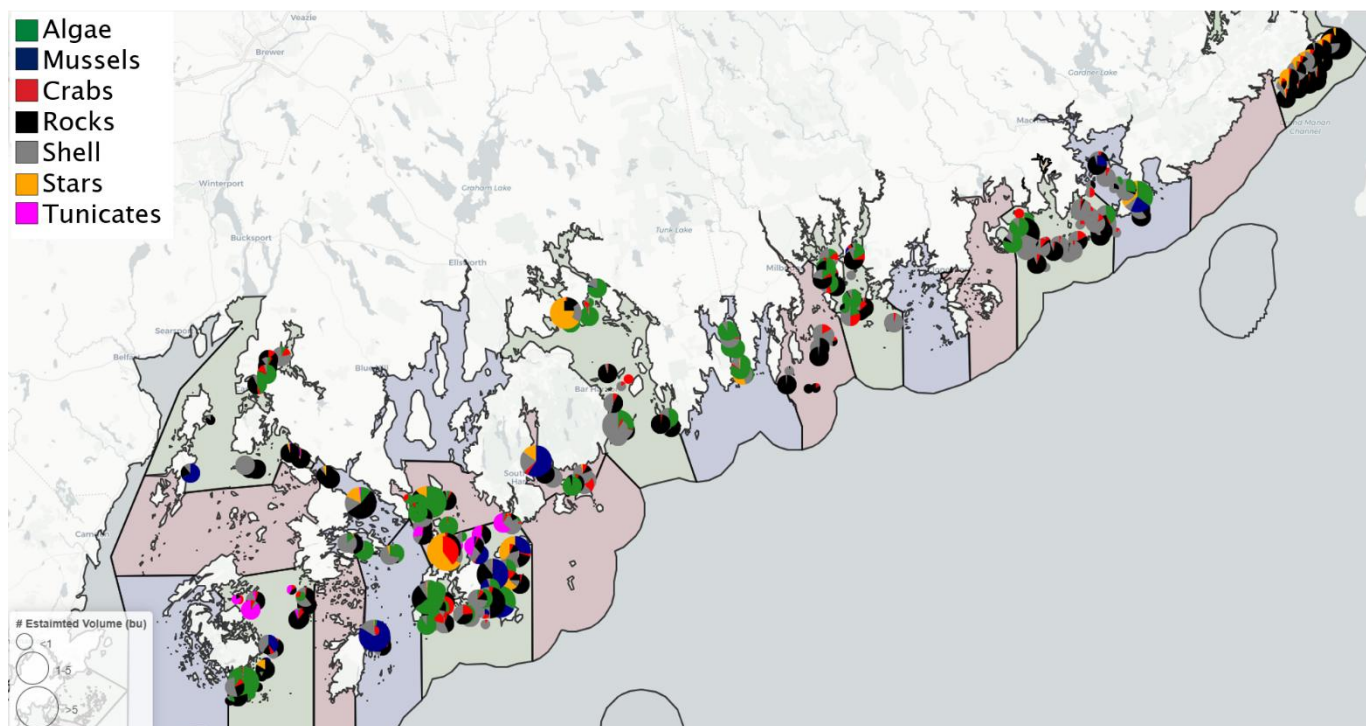


Figure 7. Map of the primary bycatch for each survey tow in the 2026 survey. Large circles are total catches >5 bushels medium circles are catches 1-5 bushels and the small circles are <1 bushel. Green=kelp/algae, blue=mussels, red=crabs, black=rocks, grey=shells, orange=sea stars, and pink = tunicates (sea squirts).

For most areas in Rotation A, legal scallop numbers were similar to those reported during the 2023 Spring Survey, despite not observing a strong signal of newly settled scallop seed since 2017. The largest decline was observed in Addison, which was also the area with the highest density of sublegal scallops in previous years. This was the first year since 2017 that juvenile scallops were seen in all areas, with a clear increase in the number of stations with juvenile scallops present compared to 2023. Scallop samples from Chandler and Jericho Bays were collected for routine baseline disease screening by the DMR pathologist.

Harvester Reported Landings

The daily reported landings from fleet members were grouped into rotational areas using the reported positions from the landings data for all years. These data were then used to calculate the total pounds harvested and the maximum boats fishing in that area on any given day. These data are only as reliable as the information provided by the fleet.

Rotation A in the most recent season (2023-24) observed an increase in the total number of boats fishing, which may be linked to reduction in effort in 2020-21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Englishman Bay has consistently been the highest landings area in rotation A. During the 2023-24 season, there was an increase in both effort and landings in Addison and Swan's Island (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Total harvester reported pounds by scallop draggers for each season for rotational areas in rotation A.

Prior to 2022, scallop divers were on the same rotational cycle as scallop draggers. Currently, diver access begins one year prior to drag access. For all of Zone 2, scallop diver landings have been consistently lower after this change (Fig 9). Upper Penobscot Bay is the most productive dive area in rotation A, with very little effort east of Schoodic Point. In upper Penobscot Bay, scallop diver landings are similar to drag landings. In other areas, the dive landings are <5% of the drag landings.

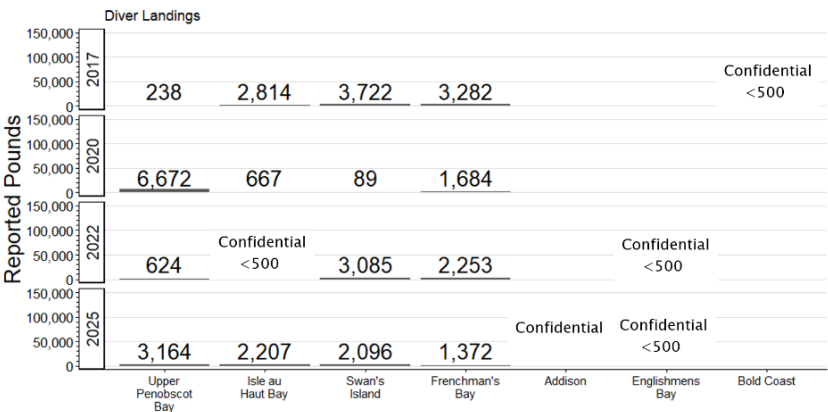


Figure 9. Total scallop dive harvester reported pounds for each season for subareas in rotation A.

Bold Coast Area

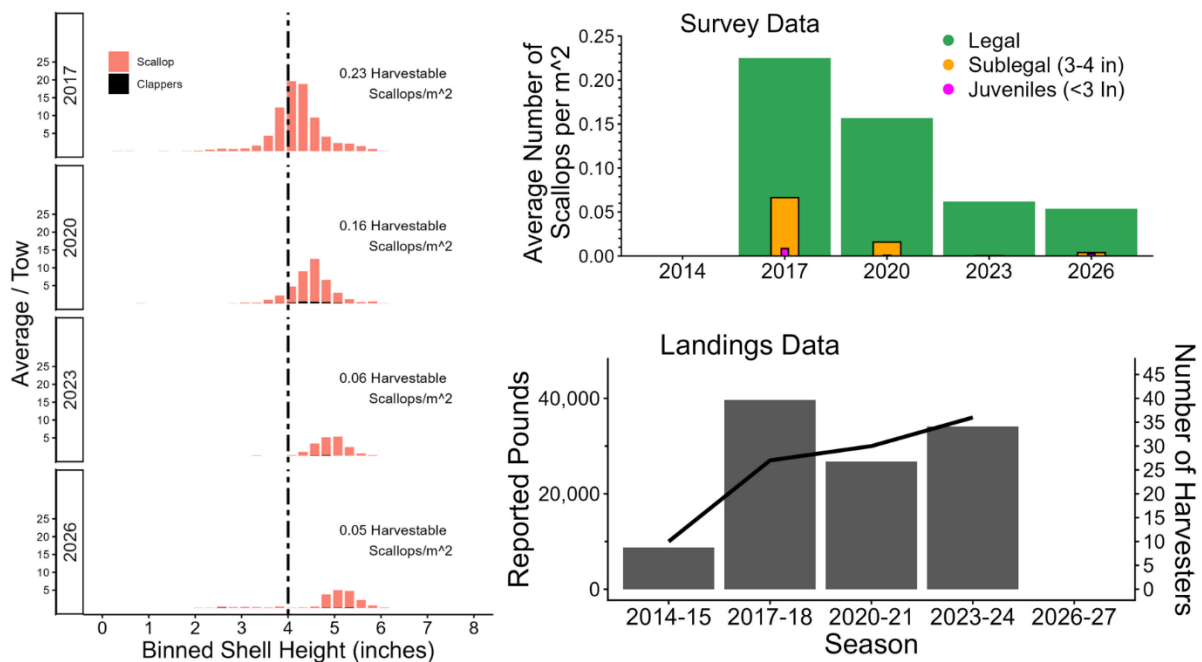


Figure 10. Annual survey average size frequency of scallops (orange) and clappers (black), labeled with the average density of legal scallops (Left). Average survey density of legal (green) mature sublegal 3-4 inches (orange), and juvenile (less than 3 inches- Pink) scallops within this rotation for each year (top right). Harvester reported pounds by season for draggers as the solid bars, with the maximum number of boats reporting in the area shown as the solid line (bottom right)

Although this spring the survey recorded the lowest density of legal scallops in Bold Coast, the it was similar to the catch in 2023. Most tows in the Bold Coast rotation were rocky bottom. Almost every tow had a low density of scallops with two moderate density tows (0.1-0.25 scallops/m²). Nearly ¼ of the scallops along the shore <150 ft were juveniles or mature sublegal scallops. These small scallops were not observed in the previous rotation. There were also starfish present at many of these inside tow sites. The meat yield measured on this survey was the lowest of the survey time series, with a four-inch scallop being approximately a 32-count and a five-inch scallop being a 12-13 count.

Effort for the past three seasons has remained relatively high, with approximately 30-35 harvesters reporting landings between 26,800 and 39,641 lbs. No scallop divers have reported fishing in this area during the rotational management.

Englishman Bay

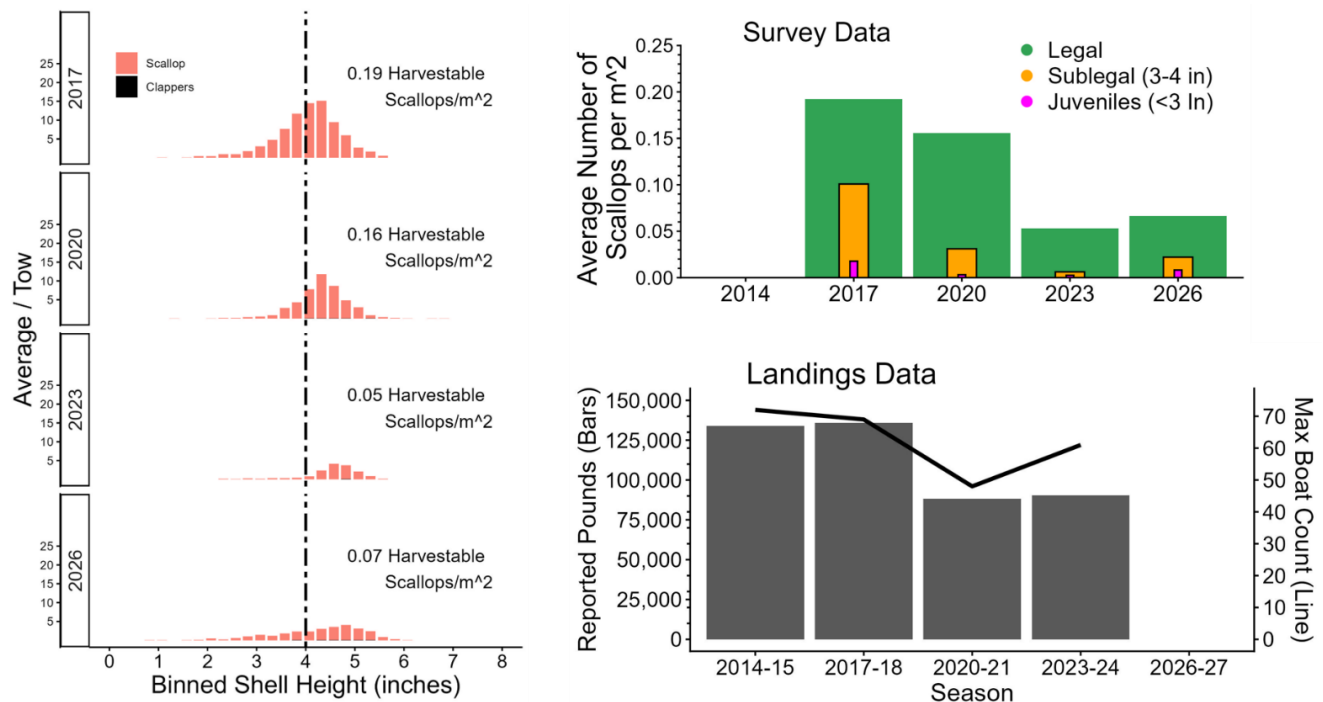


Figure 11. Annual survey average size frequency of scallops (orange) and clappers (black), labeled with the average density of legal scallops (Left). Average survey density of legal (green) mature sublegal 3-4 inches (orange), and juvenile (less than 3 inches- Pink) scallops within this rotation for each year (top right). Harvester reported pounds by season for draggers as the solid bars, with the maximum number of boats reporting in the area shown as the solid line (bottom right)

There was a slight increase in density of all size classes this spring compared to the previous rotation in Englishman Bay. At many locations within the islands, over half of the scallops were sublegal or juveniles, however there were no clear areas of only small scallops. This area inside the islands was protected with an emergency closure during the previous season. There were several survey tows inside this closure area that had moderate to high density catches this spring. There were several areas outside of this closure which were moderate to high density during the previous rotation but low density in the 2026 survey. The meat yield was lower than the past rotation but within the average range.

The harvester reports from scallop draggers have continued to report high effort in this area, with a maximum of 60 vessels landing approximately 90,000 lbs in each of the past two seasons. There were fewer than 3 scallop divers reporting from this area, resulting in the total scallop diver landings being confidential.

In April 2024 500 scallops were tagged in this region to improve our understanding of region-specific growth. These data are essential to effective management. If a tagged scallop is caught: save both shells, write down the date and location and return the shells to marine patrol or Carl H at 207-350-6004.



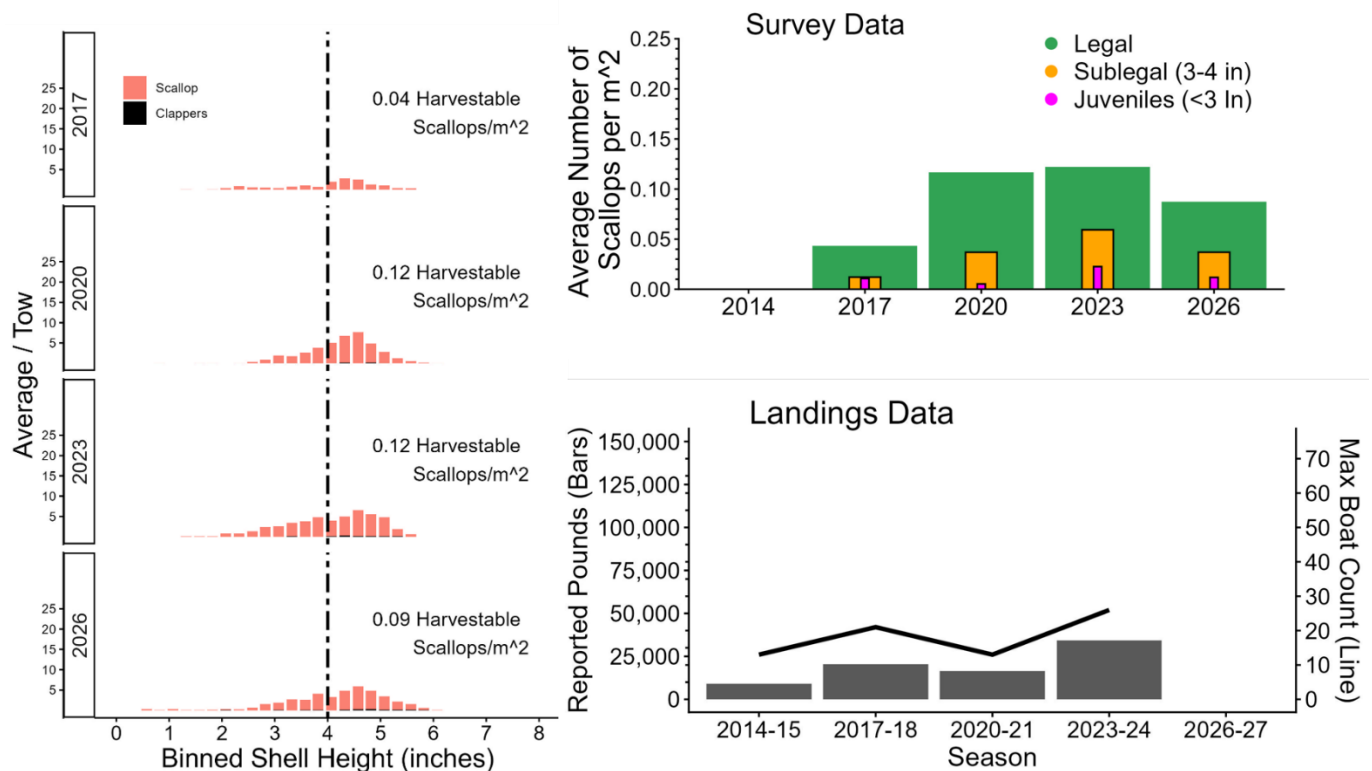


Figure 12. Annual survey average size frequency of scallops (orange) and clappers (black), labeled with the average density of legal scallops (Left). Average survey density of legal (green) mature sublegal 3-4 inches (orange), and juvenile (less than 3 inches- Pink) scallops within this rotation for each year (top right). Harvester reported pounds by season for draggers as the solid bars, with the maximum number of boats reporting in the area shown as the solid line (bottom right)

The 2026 survey data showed a decline in harvestable and sublegal scallops in Addison, after the highest reported landings for this area in 2023. There was an increase of scallops less than 2 inches, similar to what was observed in 2017. The meat yield was nearly the same as previous years, remaining one of the best meat yield areas in rotation A. There were multiple high density survey tows within the emergency closure area, with several moderate density stations throughout the entire survey area.

The landings in the most recent scallop drag season were nearly double the previous seasons, with 26 vessels catching a total of 34,300 lbs compared to an average of 18,400 lbs for the previous two seasons. There were fewer than 3 scallop divers reporting from this area in the 2025-2026 season, with no reports of scallop divers from previous years.

Frenchman's Bay

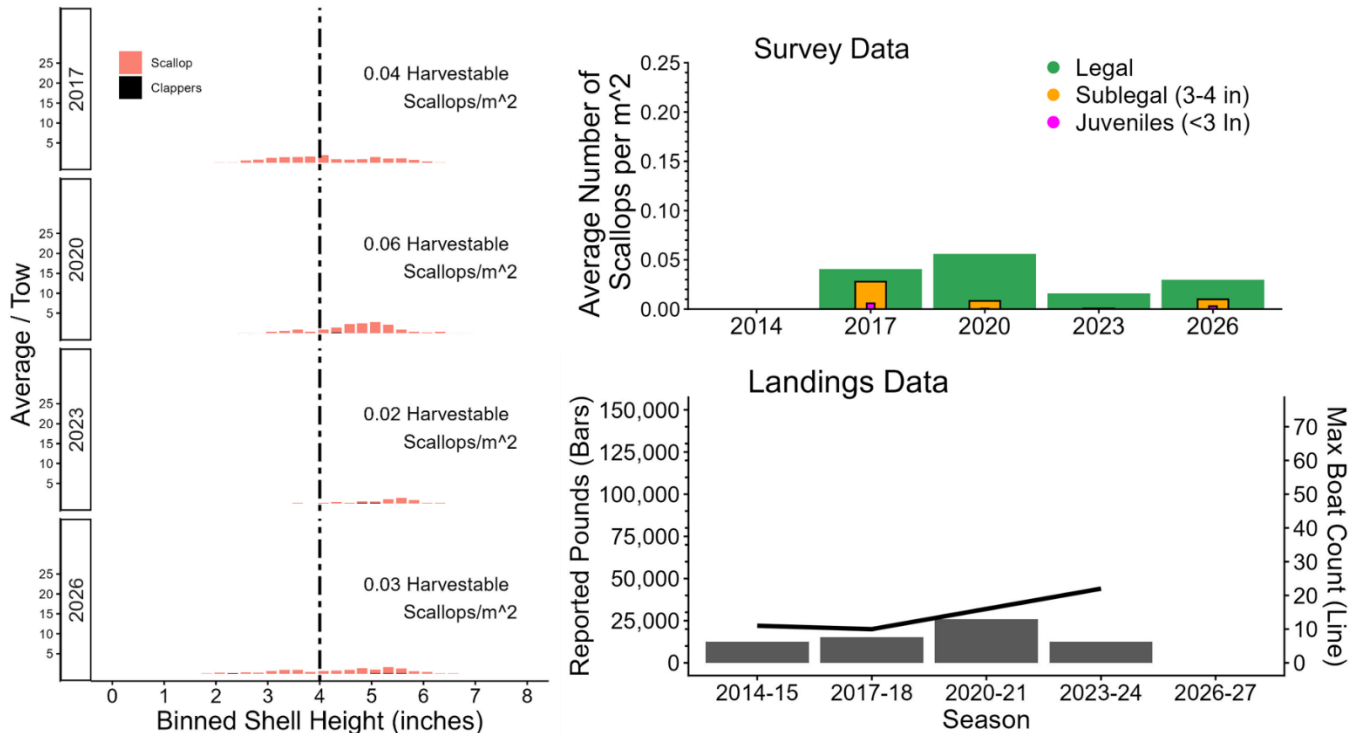


Figure 13. Annual survey average size frequency of scallops (orange) and clappers (black), labeled with the average density of legal scallops (Left). Average survey density of legal (green) mature sublegal 3-4 inches (orange), and juvenile (less than 3 inches- Pink) scallops within this rotation for each year (top right). Harvester reported pounds by season for draggers as the solid bars, with the maximum number of boats reporting in the area shown as the solid line (bottom right)

Frenchman's bay had the lowest scallop density of all surveyed areas in Rotation A this year, likely due to the several survey sites which caught zero scallops. At many of the sites where scallops were caught, there were also sublegal scallops present, both near the opening of the bay and up in the Skillings and Sullivan rivers. In the Skillings River 37% of the scallops were sublegal, with all sizes observed. Meat yield was slightly lower in this survey, mostly in the larger scallops but it is still the highest yield area in rotation A.

Scallop drag landings in this area have remained relatively low, despite an increase in the number of harvesters fishing in this area. Scallop drag landings averaged 16,600 lbs each season, with the previous rotation reporting 12,600 lbs. Scallop divers have reported landings in this area for each open season since 2017, averaging 2,148 lbs/season, with the most recent season reporting the lowest diver landings of 1,372 lbs (11% of the 2023-24 drag landings).

Swans Island

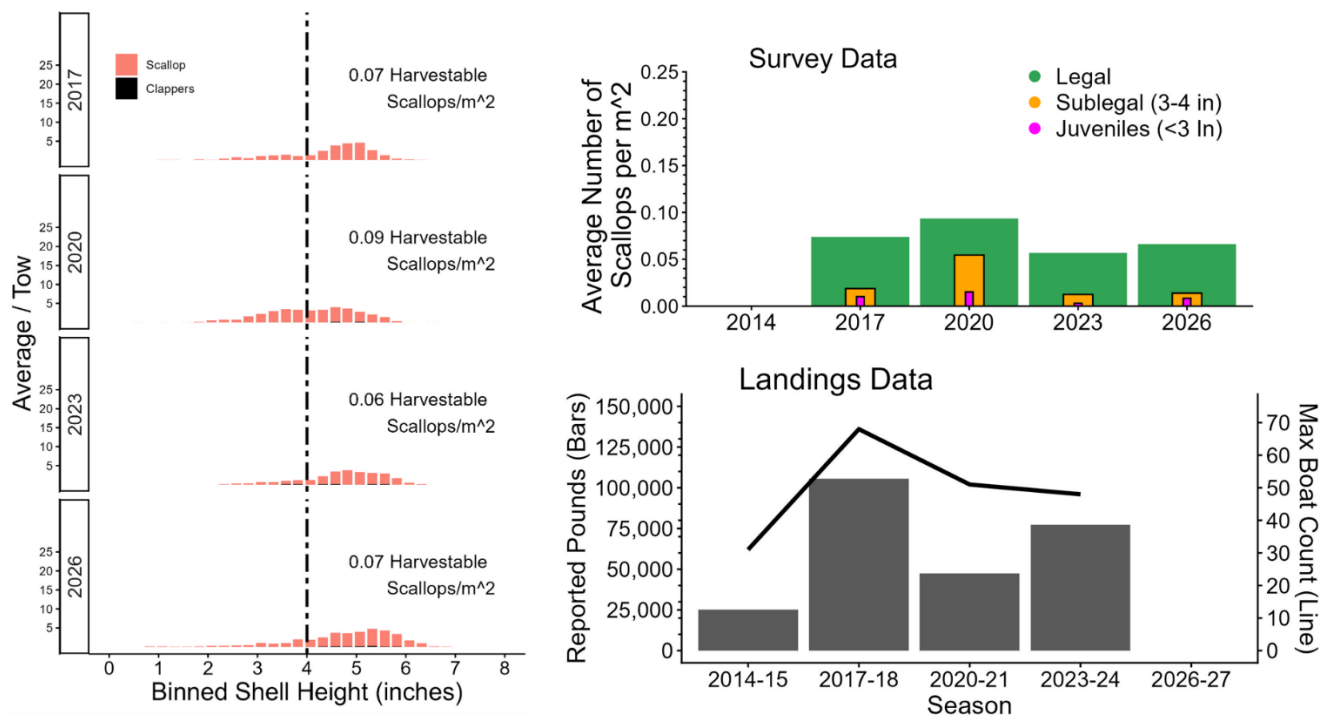


Figure 14. Annual survey average size frequency of scallops (orange) and clappers (black), labeled with the average density of legal scallops (Left). Average survey density of legal (green) mature sublegal 3-4 inches (orange), and juvenile (less than 3 inches- Pink) scallops within this rotation for each year (top right). Harvester reported pounds by season for draggers as the solid bars, with the maximum number of boats reporting in the area shown as the solid line (bottom right). All data is excluding catch within the Frenchboro Cable closure.

Overall, Swan's Island area had a slight increase in the scallop density this season, with sublegal scallops observed on almost all tows. There was a clear increase in juvenile scallops in Casco Passage, still with a low abundance of legal scallops. This was the furthest to the east that invasive tunicates (sea squirts) were observed, although not in high densities. Catch within the Frenchboro Cable area was similar to the previous rotation, with the scallops appearing to be very healthy.

Landings in this area have varied, ranging from 25,100-105,600 lbs. The most recent season had the second highest reported landings at 77,400 lbs from 48 vessels. Scallop divers have reported activity in this area each opening, landing between 89 lbs and 3,700 lbs, reporting 2,096 lbs this most recent season (2.7% of the drag landings in 2023-24).

Isle au Haut Bay

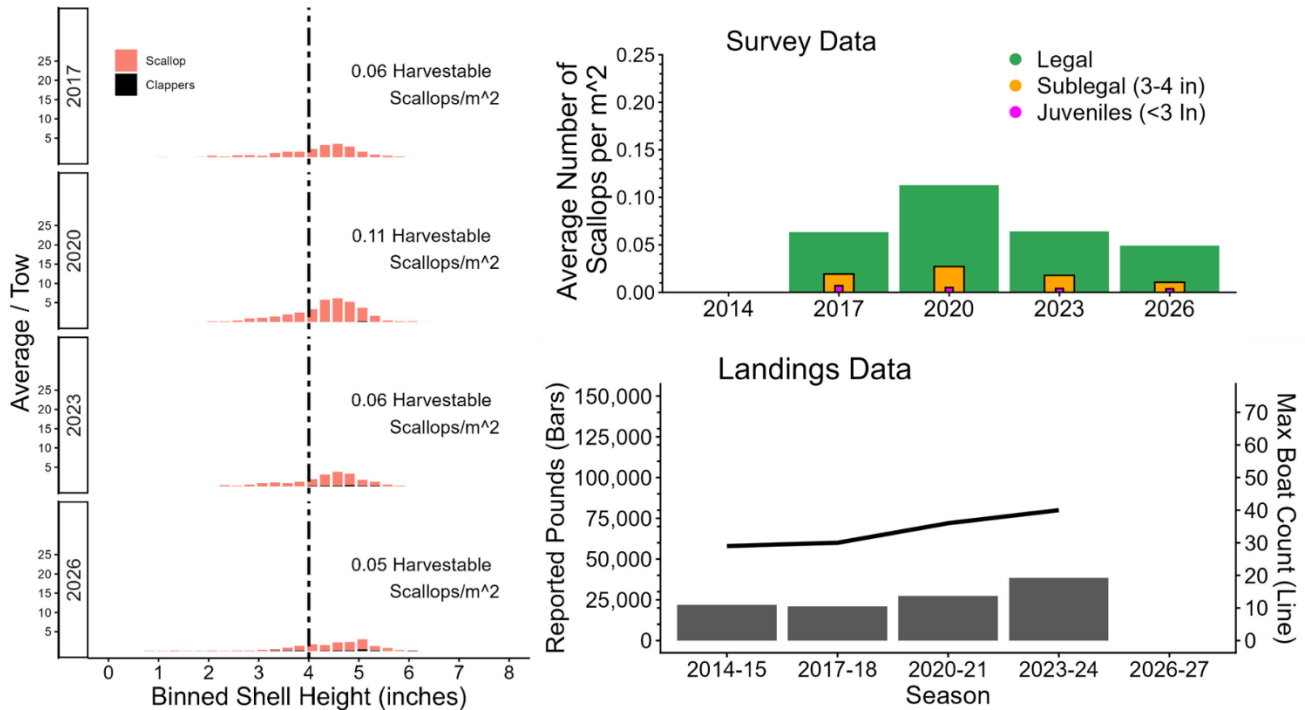


Figure 15. Annual survey average size frequency of scallops (orange) and clappers (black), labeled with the average density of legal scallops (Left). Average survey density of legal (green) mature sublegal 3-4 inches (orange), and juvenile (less than 3 inches- Pink) scallops within this rotation for each year (top right). Harvester reported pounds by season for draggers as the solid bars, with the maximum number of boats reporting in the area shown as the solid line (bottom right)

The survey data indicates Isle au Haut scallop numbers have continued to decline since their peak in 2020. Scallops smaller than 2.5 inches were last observed in 2017, but there were multiple survey tows this spring with juvenile scallops. There were fewer moderate density stations this year compared to the previous rotation. There were sea squirts observed in the northern part of this area. The yield this year was average, but this area has always had fairly low yield.

Scallop drag landings have consistently increased from 22,000lbs in 2014-15 to 38,600 lbs in 2023-24. The number of harvesters has also increased from 29 to 40. Scallop divers have also utilized this area each season, with 2,207 lbs reported in the 2025-26 season (5.7% of the drag landings in 2023-24).

Upper Penobscot Bay

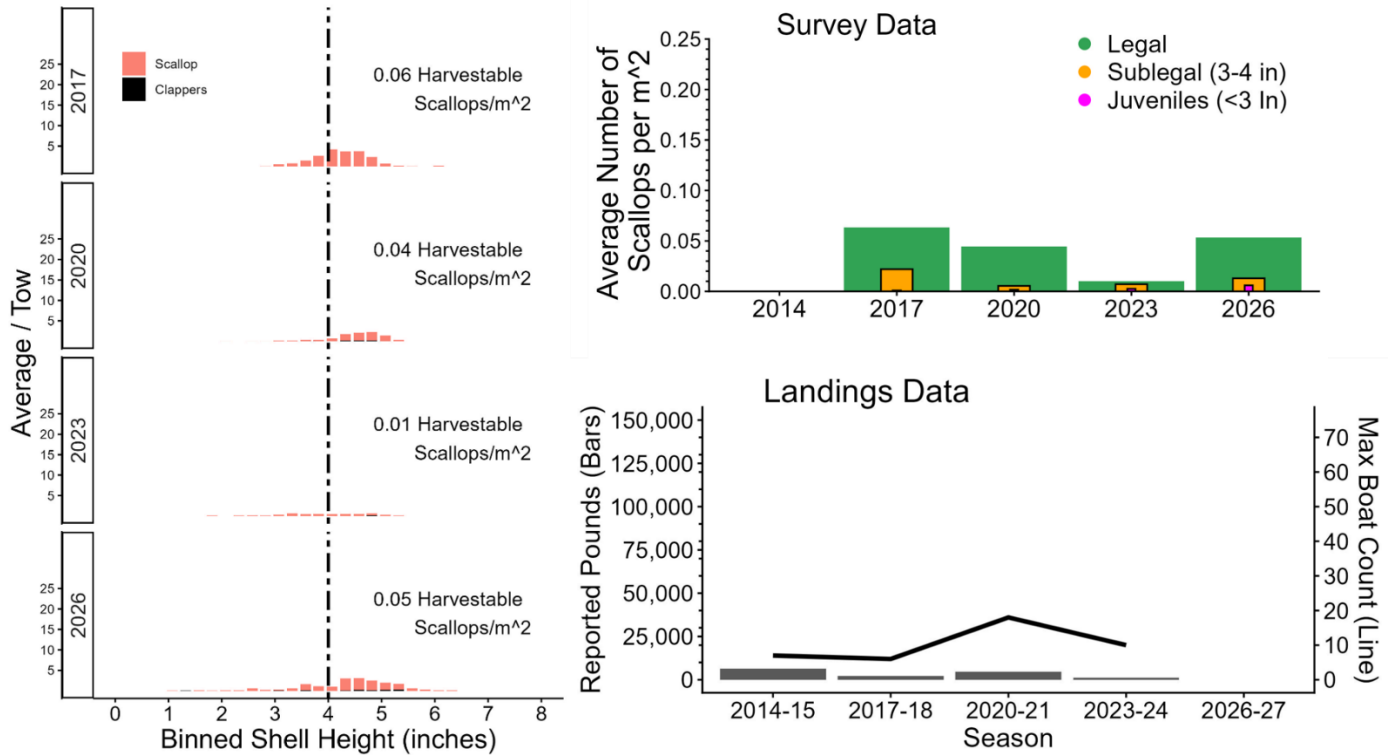


Figure 16. Annual survey average size frequency of scallops (orange) and clappers (black), labeled with the average density of legal scallops (Left). Average survey density of legal (green) mature sublegal 3-4 inches (orange), and juvenile (less than 3 inches- Pink) scallops within this rotation for each year (top right). Harvester reported pounds by season for draggers as the solid bars, with the maximum number of boats reporting in the area shown as the solid line (bottom right)

The survey area in Upper Penobscot Bay is only a small portion of the rotational area, mostly representing the Bagaduce River. There were few sublegal or juvenile scallops observed outside the Bagaduce river. Within the Bagaduce River, sublegal scallops were approximately a third of the scallop catch.

Scallop drag landings are low in this area, with fewer than 20 boats fishing here. The dive activity is approximately equal to the drag activity, although they typically harvest different areas than scallop draggers.

Meat Yield Data

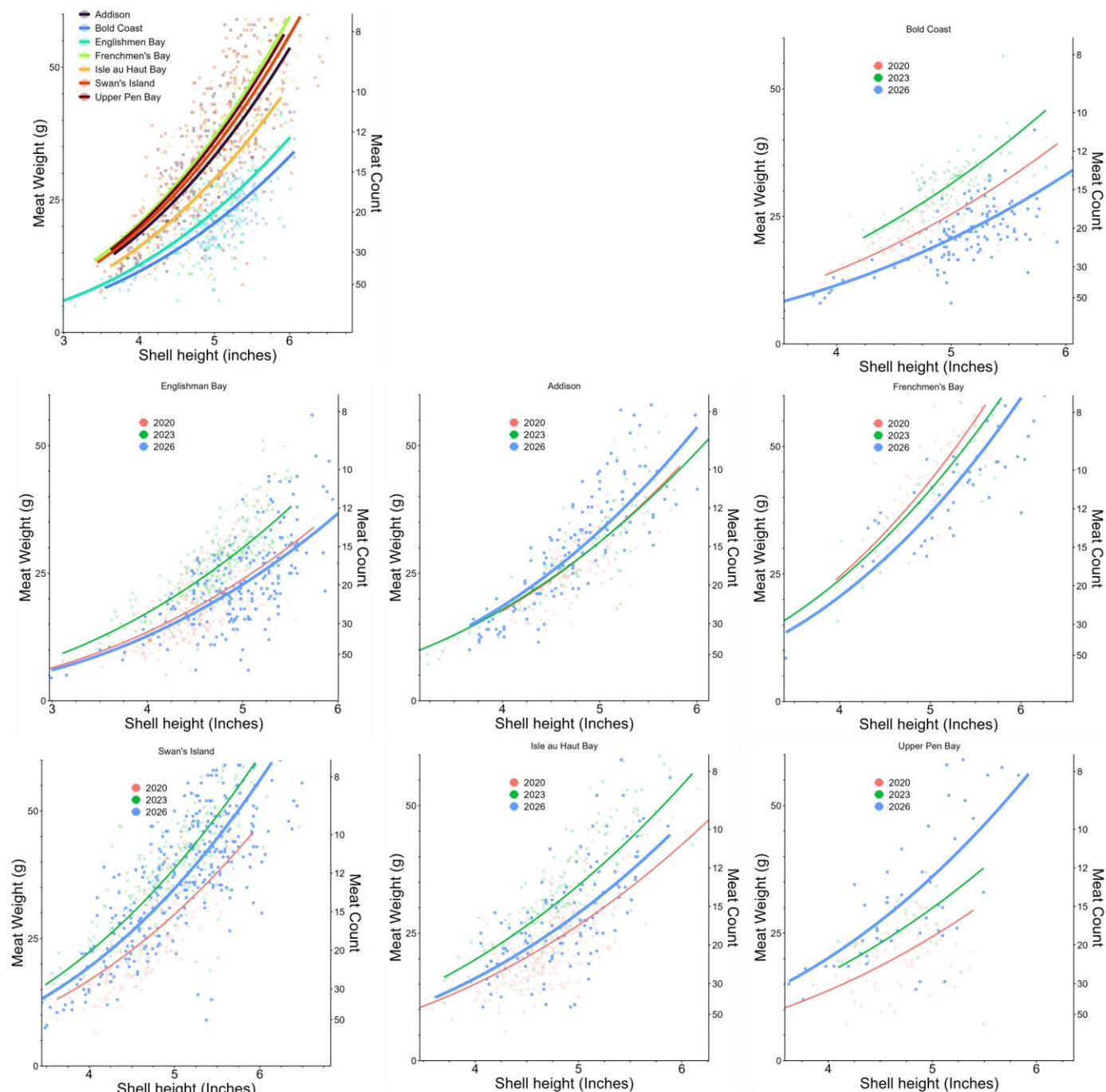


Figure 17 Meat Yield Data: Top left plot is the shell height to meat weight relationship for all areas for the 2026 survey where the other plots are the relationship for each area with the color representing the year (red=2020, green=2023, and blue=2026). For all plots the size of the scallop shell is on the bottom, and the height of each point is the weight of scallops with the scale in grams on the left and the scale in meat count per pound on the right.

Rotation B: Narraguagus Bay

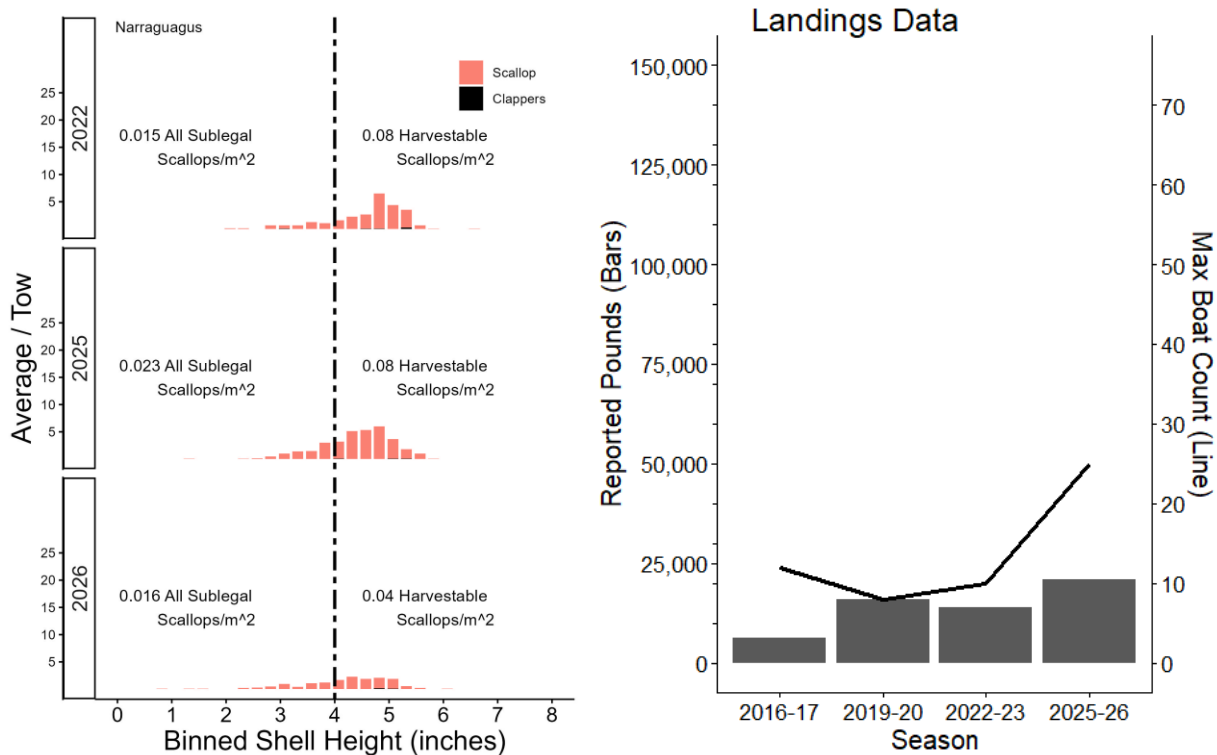


Figure 19 Annual survey average size frequency of scallops (orange) and clappers (black), labeled with the average density of legal scallops and all sublegal scallops (Left). Harvester reported pounds by season as the solid bars, with the maximum number of boats reporting in the area shown as the solid line (bottom right)

Narraguagus experienced more than double the historic effort during the 2025-26 season with total reported landings of 20,900 lbs. This area historically has had relatively consistent settlement. For these reasons and to collect adult scallops in support of a DMR/UMaine research project, examining the genetic connectivity of juvenile scallops, this area was added to the 2026 sampling. Scallops collected for genetic analysis were also processed for routine disease screening. This screening has not yet been completed.

The 2026 survey documented a 50% decline in harvestable scallops after the 2025-26 season, as well as a slight reduction in the density of sublegal scallops.

Rotation C: Machias Bay

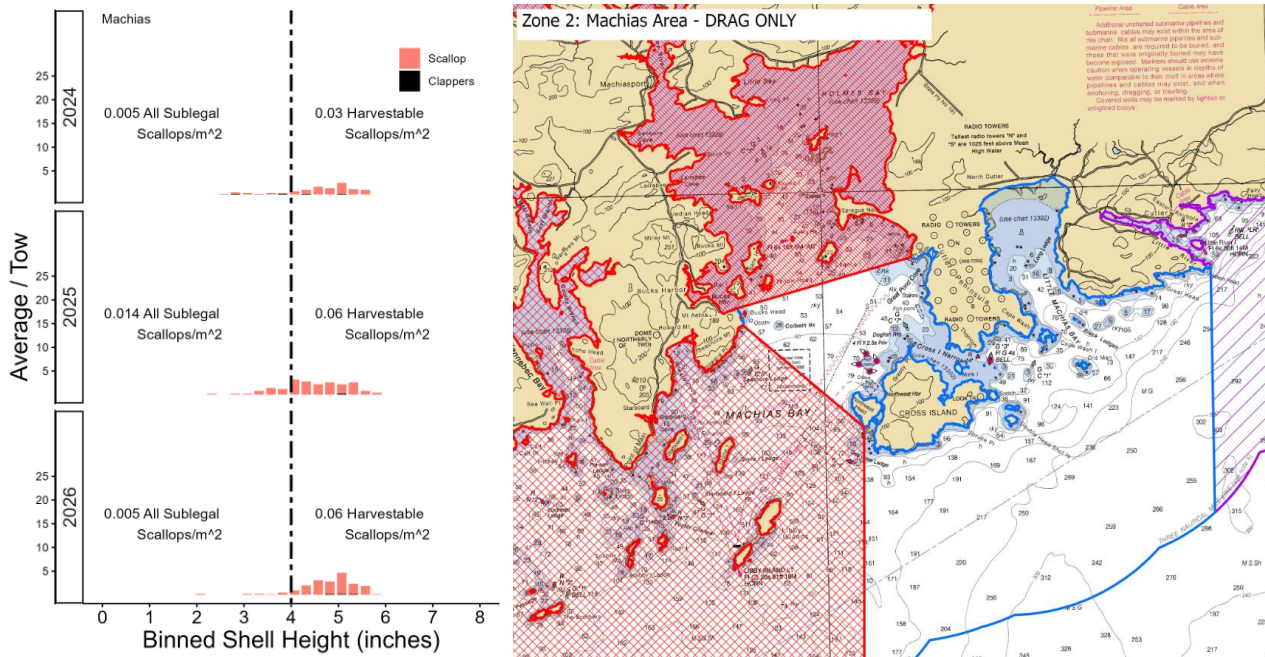


Figure 18 Annual survey average size frequency of scallops (orange) and clappers (black), labeled with the average density of legal scallops and all sublegal scallops (Left). Map of the preseason closure for upper Machias Bay.

The upper portion of Machias Bay has historically supported productive scallop beds, but during the dredge survey time series the scallop density has been relatively low. The 2024 survey showed extremely low densities north of Cross Island with some Juvenile scallops near Hog Island. The low densities and signs of juveniles prompted a preseason closure in this area for the 2024-25 season, with the remaining inside areas closed by emergency action on January 19th 2025. The DMR has been surveying this area consistently since 2024 with a slight increase in harvestable density but no notable increase in juvenile scallops. There were signs of juvenile scallops south of Cross Island in the 2026 survey.

Rotation C: Gouldsboro Bay

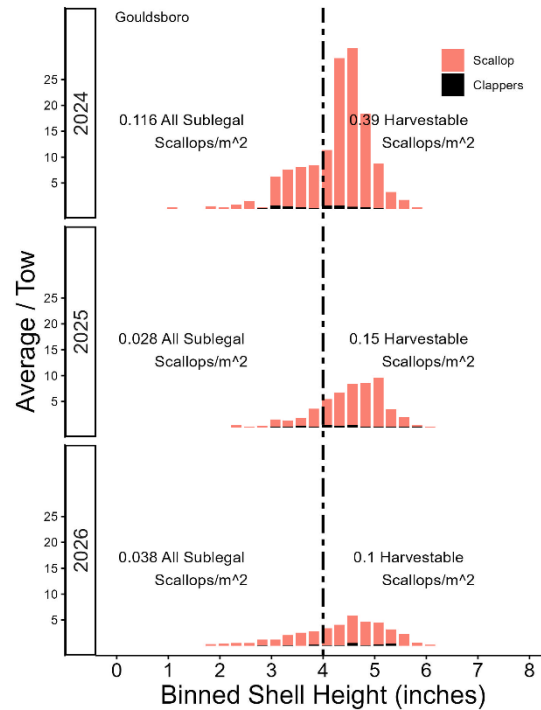


Figure 19 Annual survey average size frequency of scallops (orange) and clappers (black), labeled with the average density of legal scallops and all sublegal scallops (Left).

This area was open to divers in 2023. A total of 6 divers reported harvesting in this area, landing a total of 1,699 lbs in 16 trips. When the season was open to draggers in 2024, there was a total of 95 reported trips with a total of 11,400 lbs reported. This was nearly double the reported landings in the 2021 season (5,580 lbs). This area was resurveyed in 2025 and 2026 with relatively similar results. The 2025 survey documented a 60% decline after the 2024-25 season, with few juvenile scallops. In 2026 the density of legal scallops was slightly lower with a slight increase of the juvenile scallops.

Other Survey Areas

Cranberry Isle: The area closed for the 2024 season north of Cranberry Isle was surveyed in 2025 and 2026. In 2025, 2 sublegal scallops were observed and the legal density was $<0.01/\text{m}^2$. In 2026 there were slightly more sublegal scallops with the legal density at $0.02/\text{m}^2$.

Western Lower Blue Hill: The area west of Tinker Island in Lower Blue Hill was surveyed in 2026. This area had extremely low densities <0.02 prior to the 2025 season and was closed by emergency action on January 8th. There were reports from the fleet of seed in this area. This area was also a target area for the genetic sampling. The spring survey did observe some sublegal scallops in 2026 ($0.003/\text{m}^2$) and few legal scallops ($0.01/\text{m}^2$).

Jericho Bay: The Scallop Spat Monitoring project (<https://coastalfisheries.org/sustainable-fisheries/sea-scallops/>) reported record high spat settlement from their spring 2023 retrieval in Jericho Bay, with over 300,000 spat on some lines. This area has been surveyed since 2024 by the DMR to determine if this spat signal will be observed in the survey. There was an increase in the 2.5-3 inch size bin in 2025, corresponding with the expected growth. Assuming average growth conditions, scallops settling in 2023 should be entering the fishery in 2027 when this area is scheduled to open.

Eggemoggin Reach: Exploratory sampling was done in this region and Southeast Harbor. There were no high density scallop tows observed but some relatively high catches of Juvenile scallops. The DMR intends to continue to monitor these areas of juvenile scallops.