

Sea Urchin Zone Council Meeting Summary

April 11, 2024 in Augusta, ME

DMR staff: Melissa Smith, Lulu Bates, Robert Russell, Heather Glon

SUZC members present: Tracey Sawtelle (Chair), Sinuon Chau, Joe Leask, Tim Peterson, Steve Eddy, Larry Harris, Brian Preney

Public: Michael Eaton, Justin Gebo

5:30 PM - Start

5:35 PM - Melissa starts the meeting with a Welcome, covers the agenda and turns over the order of discussion topic to SUZC chair, Tracey Sawtelle.

- Tracey initiated discussions with fellow harvesters about how the season went, highlighting where issues occurred and asked for ideas to help get product to market easier – discussion takes place over an hour and a half
- Chair agreed to re-arrange the order of the agenda to focus on management discussion first
- Melissa gives her presentation on possible options to ease stress of getting product to market – harvesters were eager to discuss
 - o Options included changing language in the regulation that would allow for possession greater than 6 totes and allowing for carry over
- All harvesters in the room agree being able to hold urchins in cold storage would be helpful and ease the stress of having to get product to market in a strict timeframe.
 - o Cold storage seemed reasonable for 3-5 days, depending on method of harvest
- All agreed 18 totes (6 totes x 3 days of fishing) would be a good limit for weekly allowance.
- Sinuon talked about issues with buying/processing – cheaper and better product from Canada in September and October – needs multiple catches from multiple harvesters at a time to make a day of processing worthwhile
 - o Suggested a 60 tote minimum for processing
 - o Japan is current primary market
 - o Suggested that all dive and drag calendars begin in November
- Steve Eddy talked about urchin aquaculture, that CCAR had recently applied for a urchin related grant and put out an offer for harvesters to contact him about urchin seed
- Most harvesters thought dropping October from the calendars would be okay, however there was some hesitation in regards to concentrating fishing down to only 4 or 5 months
- Divers want different open days as opposed to draggers: divers have open days in the beginning of week and draggers have open days in the latter half of the week.
- Harvesters prefer open days before holidays and closed days after holidays
- There were mixed opinions about having a 5 day a week calendar, with carry-over vs sticking with a shorter week calendar with carry-over
 - o Also, there were some questions and comments regarding whether to stick with a daily 6 tote limit but an 18 tote weekly limit, with carry-over, or:
 - o To allow for just a weekly 18 tote weekly limit with carry-over
 - o These two options may impact the speed at which the resource is harvested

- Updated possession alternatives plus modifications to the calendars were requested for distribution to allow Council members to continue the conversations at the dock
- Have another in-person meeting to allow for final discussion
- Additional comment regarding the moving of legal urchins to better/optimal habitats

6:49 PM – Lulu and Robert give the season update which includes preliminary landings data and stats about the 2023-24 commercial season, data updates from the dive survey and announcing future research

- Harvesters were most interested in the power point slides that held statistics about how many fishing days were utilized, season totals and comparisons
- Several harvesters wanted to talk about the changes in ecosystems they have been witnessing, along with asking about invasive species
- Larry Harris commented on the new survey expansion into tracking invasives, suggesting another invasive to pay attention too coming down the pipeline
- <https://www.maine.gov/dmr/science/species-information/invasives/tunicates>
 - o Link created for tracking of invasive species

7:15 PM – Meeting Adjourned

Appendix: Slides

SUZC

2024–2025 Season Discussions



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Agenda

- › Welcome and Introductions – Note Hybrid meeting style
- › Review of last meeting minutes (05/11/23)
- › Industry Summary of past season
- › DMR Updates:
 - Season Summary
 - Survey Results
 - Legislative changes
- › **Discussion: 2024-25 Season Setting**
- › Other Business
- › Adjourn

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Changes to Dealer License

- › Legislative amendment to the urchin buyer permit surcharge amount
 - Effective July 2024
 - Price reduced from \$500 to \$100.
 - Must still buy wholesale seafood license
 - Total cost (approx): \$953 → \$543

Possession Language Ideas

- › What if the possession limit was a daily vessel limit only?
- › And, what if a dealer was able to purchase MORE THAN a vessel daily limit?
- › Example: Harvest Tuesday, but no sales – totes go into cold storage. Harvest Wednesday. Sales to dealer for both days. Harvester reports (2) equal dealer report (1).

Zone 1 Draft Calendar

2024 - 2025 Sea Urchin Season for Maine Zone 1 - DRAFT

A Zone 1 harvester may choose to fish 15 of the open days

☒ = open ☐ = closed

One Season for Divers, Rakers, Trappers and Draggers

S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
0	0	0	0	0	0	0

S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
29	30	31				
0	0	0				

S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
26	27	28	29	30	31	
0	0	0	0	0	0	

S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
23	24	25	26	27	28	
0	0	0	0	0	0	

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Zone 2 Draft

2024 - 2025 Sea Urchin Season for Maine Zone 2 - DRAFT

A Zone 2 harvester may choose to fish 30 of the 40 open days

☒ = open ☐ = closed

Each Season for Divers, Rakers, and Trappers

S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
0	0	0	0	0	0	0

S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
0	0	0	0	0	0	0

S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
0	0	0	0	0	0	0

S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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Zone 2 Draft

2024 - 2025 Sea Urchin Season for Maine Zone 2 DRAFT

For Whitings & Demers Bays Limited Access Area

☒ = open ☐ = closed

Each Season for Divers, Rakers, and Trappers

S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
0	0	0	0	0	0	0

S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
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10	11	12	13	14	15	16
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
0	0	0	0	0	0	0

S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
0	0	0	0	0	0	0

S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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Discussion

► Questions/Comments/Notes

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Maine Green Sea Urchin 2023-2024 Fishing Season Recap*

Lulu Bates, Robert Russell

*Data is preliminary



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Maine Sea Urchin Landings In Pounds (lbs.)

Month	Zone 1	Zone 2	State
October	*	85,222	*
November	*	111,771	*
December	18,676	101,089	119,765
January	26,801	114,364	141,165
February	*	83,502	*
March	N/A	33,478	33,478
TOTAL:	66,215	529,426	595,641

* data not shown to preserve confidentiality

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Maine Sea Urchin Landed Value (\$)

Month	Zone 1	Zone 2	State
October	*	\$218,921	*
November	*	\$297,493	*
December	\$61,679	\$301,440	\$363,119
January	\$94,471	\$366,118	\$450,589
February	*	\$264,525	*
March	N/A	\$110,999	\$110,999
TOTAL:	\$225,080	\$1,559,496	\$1,784,574

* data not shown to preserve confidentiality

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Maine Sea Urchin PPP to Harvesters (\$)

Month	Zone 1	Zone 2	Average
October	*	\$2.56	*
November	*	\$2.65	*
December	\$3.26	\$2.99	\$3.13
January	\$3.52	\$3.19	\$3.36
February	*	\$3.15	*
March	N/A	\$3.31	\$3.31
AVERAGE:	\$3.13	\$2.98	\$3.07

* data not shown to preserve confidentiality

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Maine Sea Urchin Roe Index (%)			
Month	Zone 1	Zone 2	Average
October	*	10.5	*
November	*	10.5	*
December	12.4	11.9	12.2
January	12.5	12.5	12.5
February	*	12.2	*
March	N/A	12.7	12.7
AVERAGE:	11.5	11.7	11.7

* data not shown to preserve confidentiality

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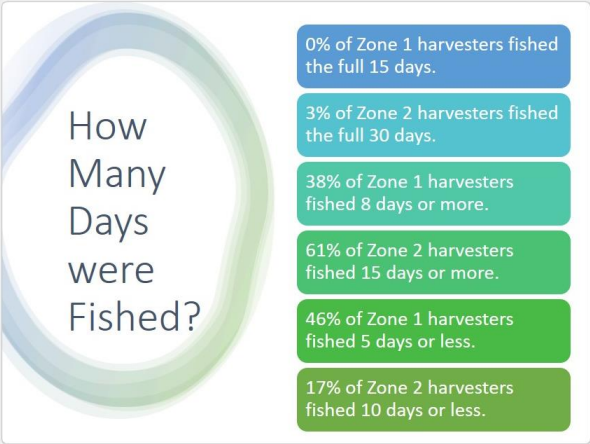
Season	Pounds landed	Value	PPP	Roe Index %
2020-21	1,030,897	\$3,105,500	\$3.01	12.6
2021-22	842,113	\$2,966,423	\$3.50	11.6
2022-23	777,167	\$2,418,863	\$3.10	11.2
2023-24	595,641	\$1,784,574	\$3.07	11.7

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Season	Active Harvesters	Number of Active Harvesters (fished at least TWICE)
2023-2024	72	
2022-2023	92	38% of licenses were active this season.
2021-2022	94	
2022-2021	110	
2019-2020	153	

Zone	# Of Active Harvesters	Average # of Days Fished
Zone 1	13	7
Zone 2	59	18

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Dive vs Drag

45:27

Diver average
landing: 534 lbs.

Dragger average
landing: 496 lbs.

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2023-24 Phone Interviews

Interviews conducted by phone from November through February

Concerns heard throughout the season:

- Not enough buyers
- Prices not good in October
- Urchins becoming harder to find
- No young blood in the industry

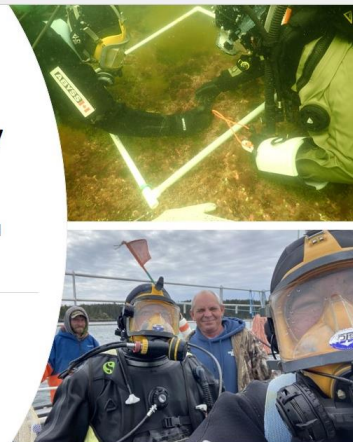


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Maine Sea Urchin Spring Dive Survey

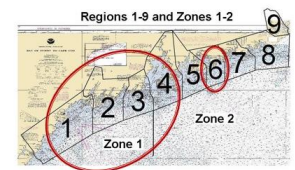
Robert Russell,
Marcus Jones, Lulu Bates

May 2023



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Maine Sea Urchin Dive Survey

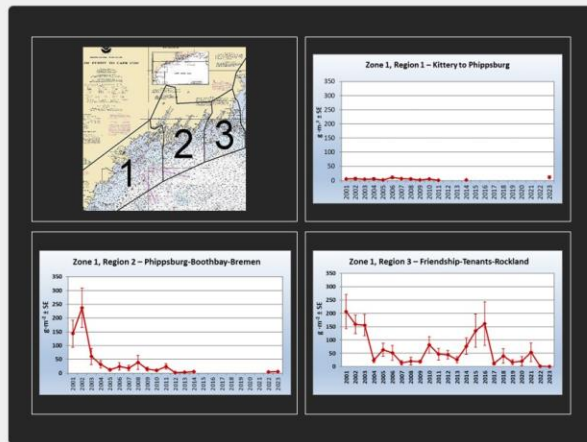


Regions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 surveyed in 2023

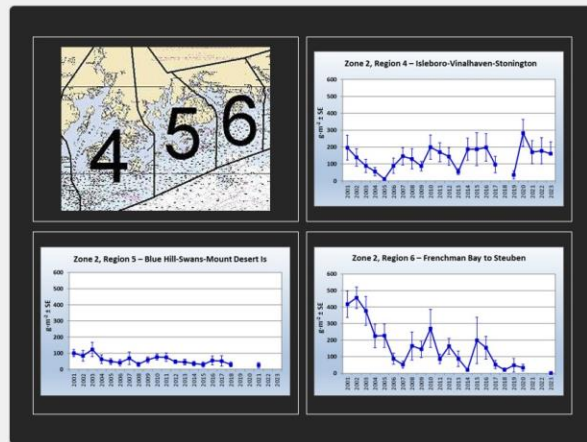
16 sites in each region: 5 fixed and 11 random

Twenty 1-m² quadrats evaluated in each of 3 depth strata: 0-5m, 5-10m, and 10-15m for every site

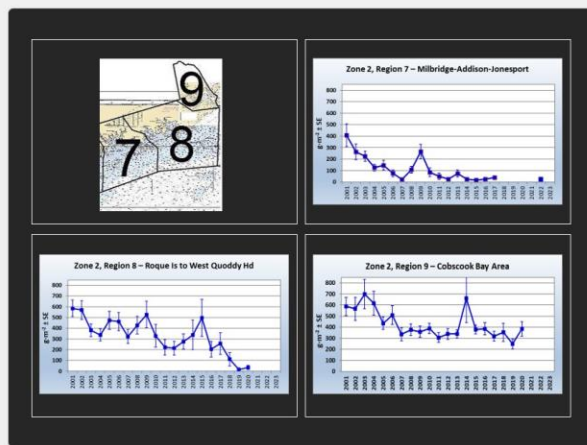
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Grant Funded Research



DMR is partnering with URI researchers to assess changes in green sea urchin spawning time over 2 years along the Maine coast.

May 2024 – May 2026


Results from this study will be shared with industry and management.



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Spring Dive Survey



Funding to survey the full coast for the next 3 years, with the addition of new data streams

Environmental:

- Temperature & Light

Invasives:

- European Sea Squirt
- Purple Bushy Bryozoan
- Desmarestia






Photo by Heather Glon, DMR

Arjan Gittenberger

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