

Sea Urchin Zone Council Meeting Minutes

July 10, 2025, in Brewer, ME

DMR Staff: Commissioner Carl Wilson, Jen Harris, Lulu Bates, Robert Russell, Heather Glon, Melissa Smith and **MPO,** Tim Cormier

SUZC Members Present: Larry Harris, Mark Nickerson, Clint Richardson, Tracey Sawtelle, Teresa Johnson, Alan Knowlton, Frank Peasley, Justin Gebo, Brian Preney, Steve Eddy, Joe Leask, Sinuon Chau, Tim Peterson

SUZC Member Absent: Luke Meyers

AUDIENCE: David Tarr, Atchan Tamaki (ISF), Luz Kogson (CCAR), Bob Wood (Director of Planning, Passamaquoddy Tribe), Tristan Smith and Chandler Sendek (UMaine)

Meeting commenced at 3:01pm

Quorum achieved

Welcome and Introductions

T. Sawtelle called the meeting to order and asked that we introduce ourselves.

Minutes from May 21, 2025, SUZC Meeting

Motion: C. Richardson / T. Sawtelle

T. Sawtelle requested comments or edits to May 21, 2025, draft meeting minutes. There were no comments. A request for a motion to approve was put forth. Move to accept minutes was unanimous.

History of License Changes throughout the Fishery

J. Harris presented the history of urchin harvester license changes in two segments: from 1993 - 2004 and 2004 - present. She shared average harvester age through time, and metrics from 1993 - 2025. The 2014-2015 season was the last season that had over 200 active harvesters, where 317 sea urchin licenses were sold. Currently, the DMR is selling 8% of the licenses sold in 1993. J. Harris shared landings per unit effort (LPUE) for diver and dragger sectors from 1994 - 2024. Overall, LPUE has decreased over time and commercial landings have declined over time. There was a period of stability between 2010 through 2020, but it has since continued to decrease.

Future of Sea Urchin Industry

Commissioner Wilson introduced himself to the Sea Urchin Zone Council (SUZC) and industry members. He summarized he understands the urchin resource is not in the best condition, and there are areas that have not been fished in 20 years and haven't recovered. Alternatively, the

fishery is down to less than 100 fishermen actively participating and there has been a 92% decline in licenses since the fishery started. He believes this needs to be a group conversation where industry works with DMR to look forward to where the urchin fishery is headed.

SUZC and audience members voiced concerns including their dislike of lotteries as a vehicle for limited entry, they also questioned whether the urchin resource could support more harvesters and made statements that any entry into the fishery should be tied to supportive stock data. Concerns were voiced regarding the possibility of new people entering the fishery and harming the resource who have not been trained and have no prior knowledge of the fishery. SUZC members and audience members agreed they are invested in the future of the fishery, evidenced by increased participation in three recent SUZC meetings. If limited entry were to occur, it was voiced this should only be relatable to Zone 2, because Zone 1 is too depleted. Additional concerns arose regarding the potential latency issue of current licenses, stating this would need to be included in future discussions. Questions were raised about whether there would be equal opportunity for druggers and divers. Would there be a possibility for an apprenticeship program, like the lobster or scallop program? If so, this could be used as a vehicle to enter a weighted lottery and may address the knowledge data gap. Questions regarding transferability arose as well, and what could be performed under a rule change, or a statute change. Pitfalls and logistics of all methods of limited entry were discussed, with nothing being a conclusive ideal scenario. Commissioner Wilson voiced that DMR prefers to work with the SUZC and industry members moving forward in this discussion to find a solution for the future fishery.

2025-2026 Drafted Calendars

SUZC members and industry voiced concerns regarding draft harvest calendars going into 2025 rulemaking. These included a lack of fishing days during school vacation week, as well as harvest days moved in the May SUZC meeting, from March to December, when harvest days were already voted on at the April SUZC meeting. J. Harris responded that she planned to have the proposed Chapter 26 rule filed with the Secretary of State Office by mid-late July. She would then share when the public comment period and public hearing for the 2025-2026 harvest calendar would take place. During the public comment period, or at the public hearing, anyone would have a chance to submit comments, which will be reviewed by DMR.

Other Business

Next Season's Calendar Discussion: J. Harris proposed that the SUZC consider if they would prefer to have only one meeting related to setting the calendar, if quorum was achieved, at the first meeting of the next season. The SUZC discussed the benefit that the calendar wouldn't be changed after the initial calendar setting meeting, even if a quorum was achieved at a follow-up meeting. One of their concerns was that it could be changed during the public comment period. They discussed there should be more weight from SUZC calendar-setting meetings, when DMR addresses comments during the public comment period. DMR discussed the APA rulemaking cycle and procedures they follow when addressing public comments. They pointed out they can be more

communicative of comments received and industry should consider discussing calendar setting goals amongst themselves prior to each calendar-setting meeting. In addition, T. Sawtelle can bring industry concerns to the DMR Advisory Council, as SUZC members feel he represents them well.

Motion: T. Sawtelle/ B. Peterson

1 abstention. Passed

T. Sawtelle proposed the SUZC take a vote for the next harvest season. The vote would be for the council to have one calendar-setting meeting next season, and if there is a quorum at the meeting that the calendars would be set at that meeting. They would not be altered in later meetings by the council, prior to regular Chapter 26 rulemaking.

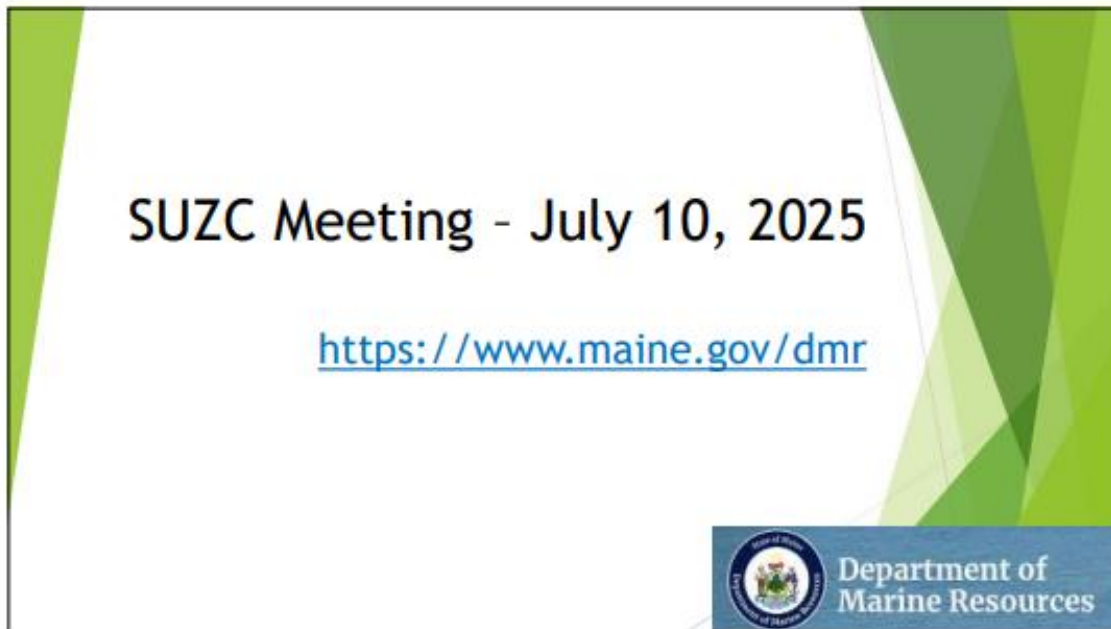
Latency Discussion: SUZC members further discussed potential methods of entry into the fishery, ratios of entry to keep the fishery sustainable, and the license latency issue. SUZC and audience members discussed a potential latency licensing fee that might be applicable to those who hold a license but have not harvested in one to three years. Those who wouldn't want to pay a higher licensing fee would harvest to avoid a latency fee. Some SUZC members voiced their concerns about this idea, stating that license latency doesn't hurt the fishery because the state is still receiving money each year for these licenses. A latency fee might be discriminatory.

Motion to Adjourn:

T. Sawtelle/B. Preney and M. Nickerson – adjourn 4:59pm


All in favor.

Slideshow Presentation DMR:



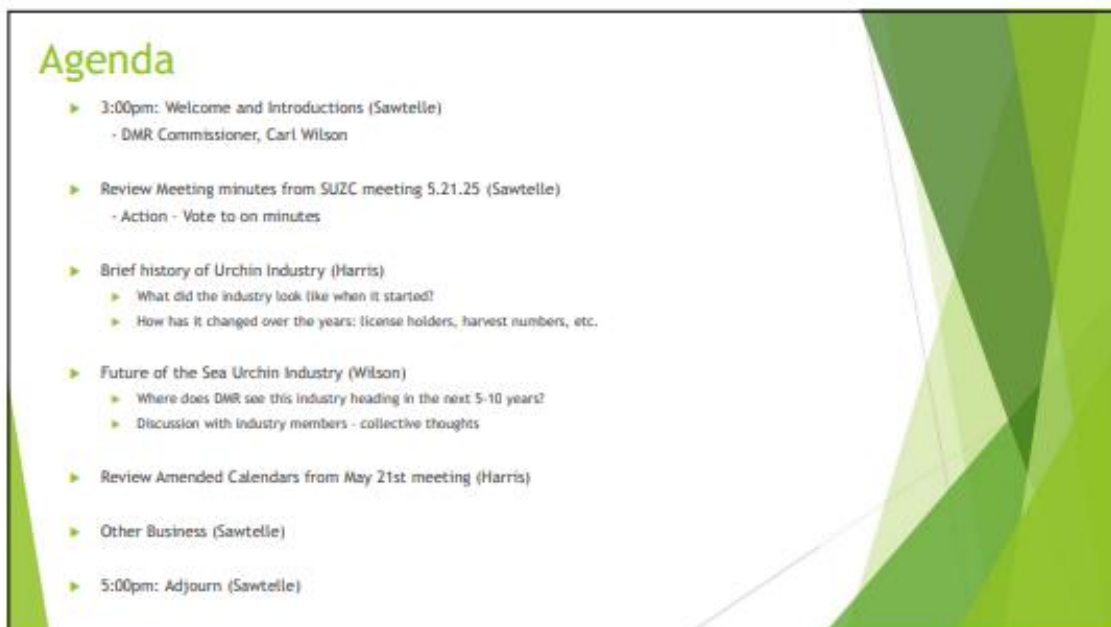
SUZC Meeting - July 10, 2025

<https://www.maine.gov/dmr>



Department of Marine Resources

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Agenda

- ▶ 3:00pm: Welcome and Introductions (Sawtelle)
 - DMR Commissioner, Carl Wilson
- ▶ Review Meeting minutes from SUZC meeting 5.21.25 (Sawtelle)
 - Action - Vote to on minutes
- ▶ Brief history of Urchin Industry (Harris)
 - ▶ What did the industry look like when it started?
 - ▶ How has it changed over the years: license holders, harvest numbers, etc.
- ▶ Future of the Sea Urchin Industry (Wilson)
 - ▶ Where does DMR see this industry heading in the next 5-10 years?
 - ▶ Discussion with industry members - collective thoughts
- ▶ Review Amended Calendars from May 21st meeting (Harris)
- ▶ Other Business (Sawtelle)
- ▶ 5:00pm: Adjourn (Sawtelle)

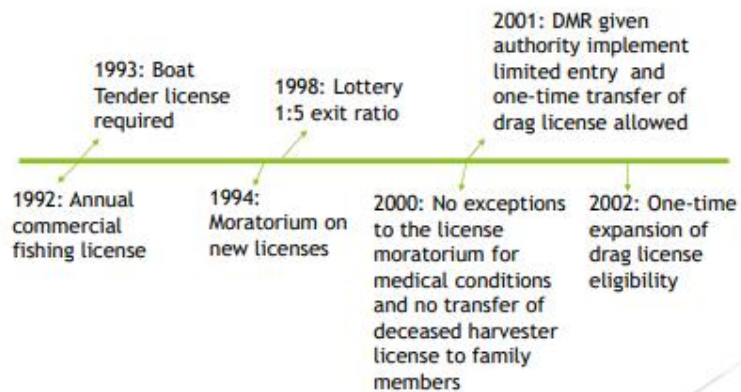
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Meeting Minutes from 5.21.25

- * Review 5.21.25 Meeting Minutes (Sawtelle)
- * Council Vote to approve if acceptable
- * If approved, will be posted to DMR website

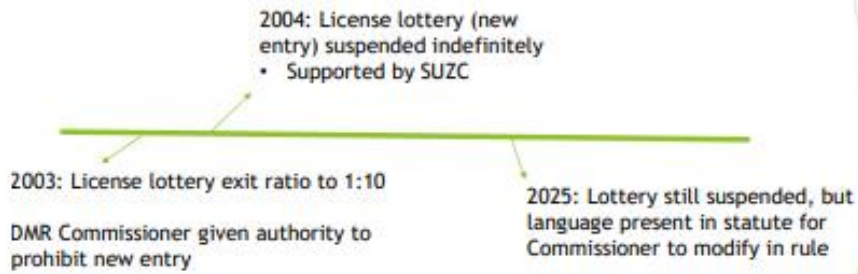
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History of Urchin Fishery Rules Controlled Access



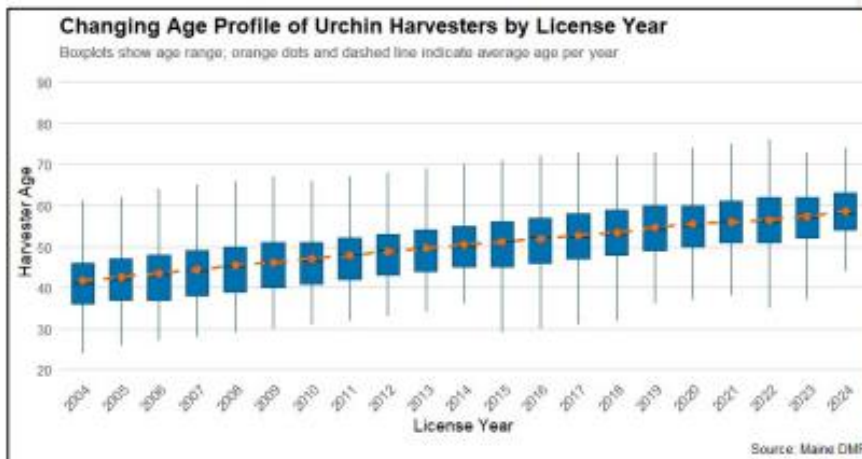
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History of Fishery - Limited Access- Harris



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2025: Today's Fishery - Harris

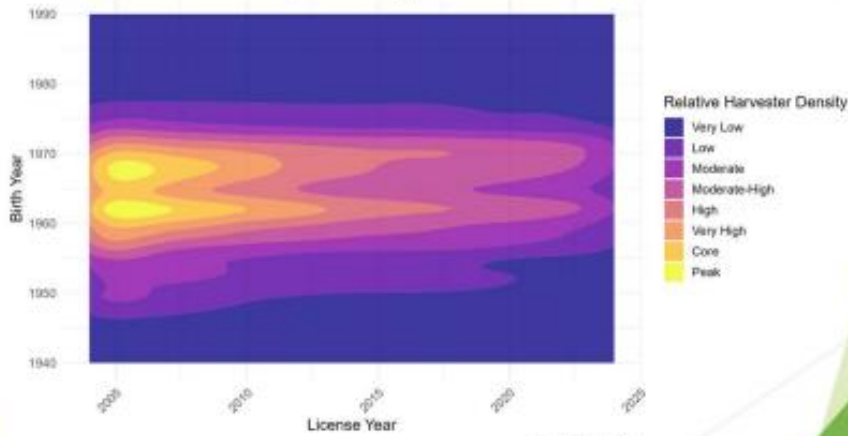


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2025: Today's Fishery - Harris

Shifting Demographics of Urchin Harvesters by License Year

Each band shows the relative density of harvesters by year of birth.

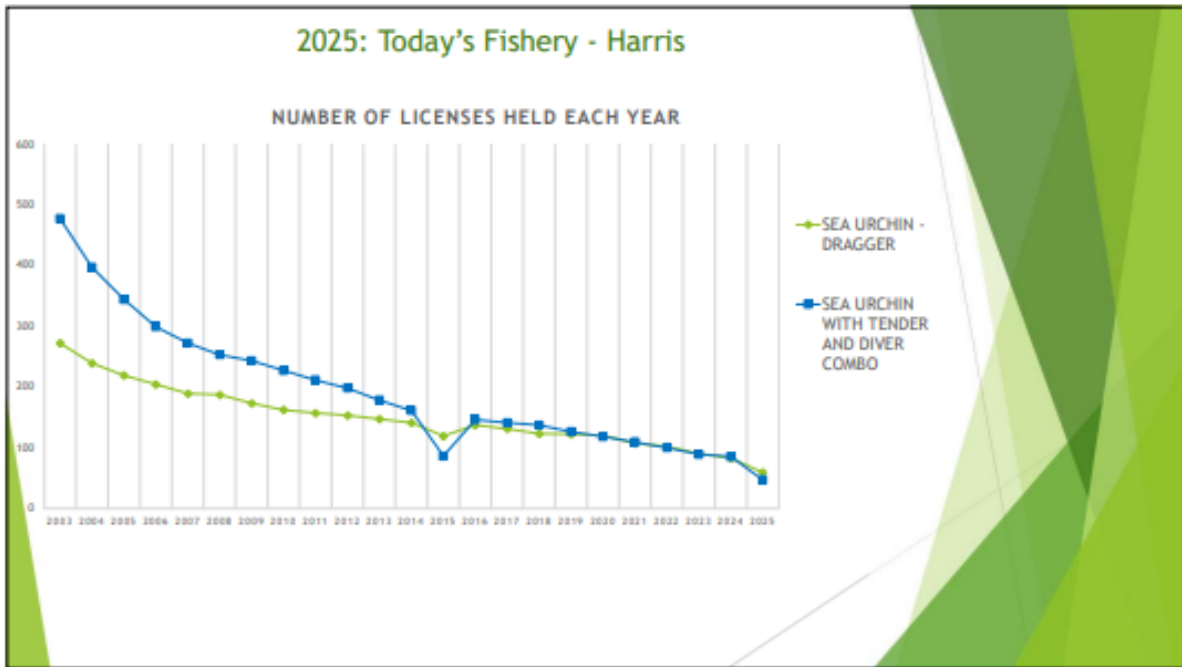


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2025: Today's Fishery - Harris

Year	Average Harvester Age
2004	42
2005	43
2006	44
2007	44
2008	45
2009	46
2010	47
2011	48
2012	49
2013	50
2014	51
2015	51
2016	52
2017	53
2018	54
2019	55
2020	56
2021	56
2022	56
2023	57
2024	59

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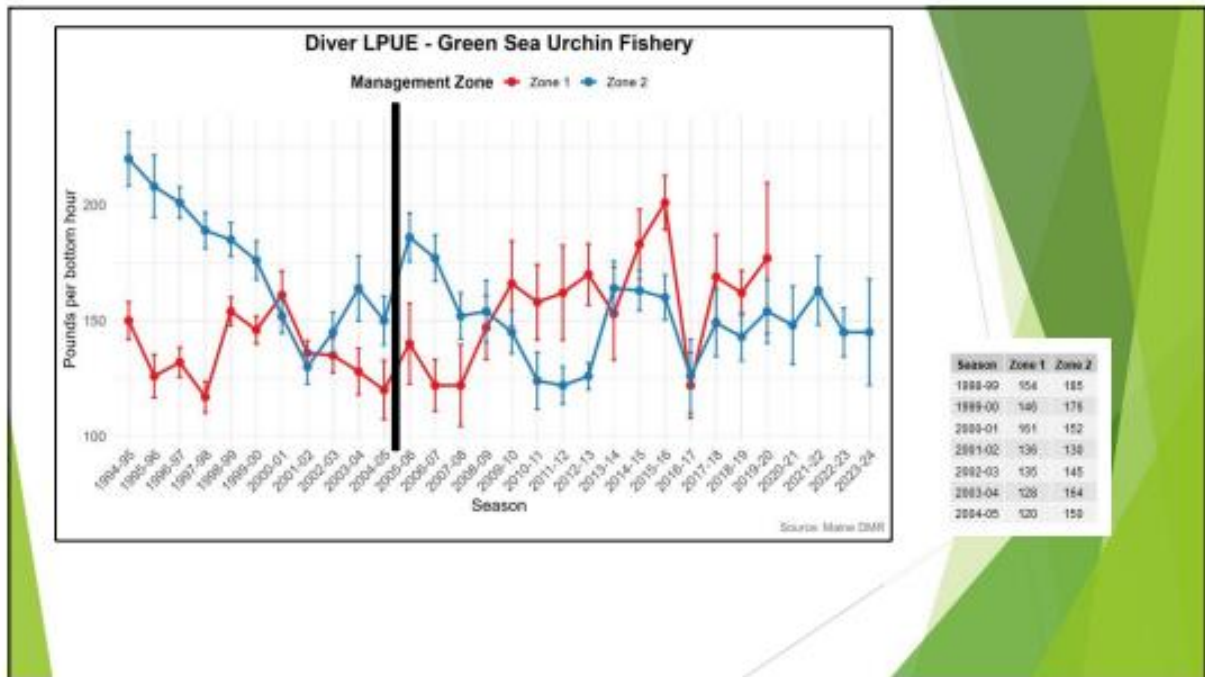


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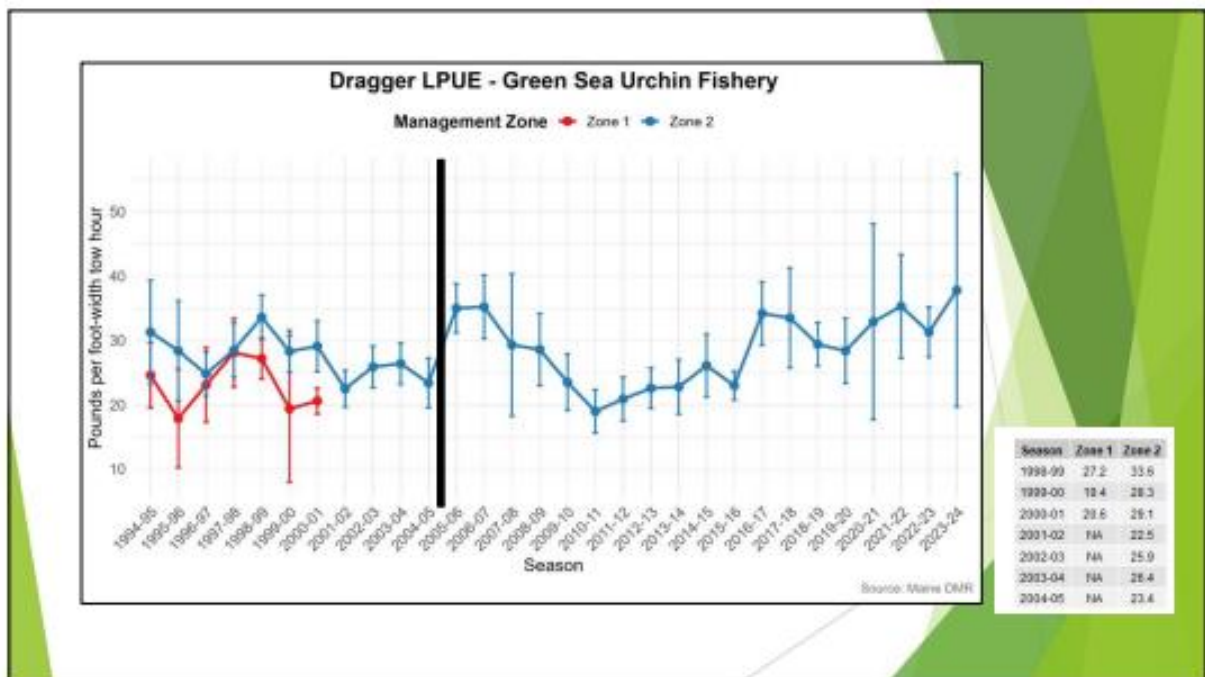
Commercial Urchin Season	Active Harvesters	Licenses	% Active	Commercial Urchin Season	Active Harvesters	Licenses	% Active
2008-2009	276	434	64	2024-2025	59	169	35
2007-2008	328	459	71	2023-2024	72	188	38
2006-2007	310	499	62	2022-2023	92	203	45
2005-2006	364	556	65	2021-2022	94	217	43
2004-2005	410	634	65	2020-2021	110	247	45
2003-2004	537	742	72	2019-2020	153	259	59
2002-2003	632	887	71	2018-2019	166	281	59
2001-2002	792	973	81	2017-2018	184	302	61
2000-2001	949	1,040	91	2016-2017	199	301	66
1999-2000	1,075	1,112	97	2015-2016	189	305	62
1998-1999	1,093	1,165	94	2014-2015	212	317	67
1997-1998	1,218	1,342	91	2013-2014	204	329	62
1996-1997	1,466	1,563	94	2012-2013	199	354	56
1995-1996	N/A*	1,840	N/A	2011-2012	241	380	63
1994-1995	N/A*	2,725	N/A	2010-2011	245	398	62
1993-1994	N/A*	2,004	N/A	2009-2010	228	412	55

Only selling 8% of licenses

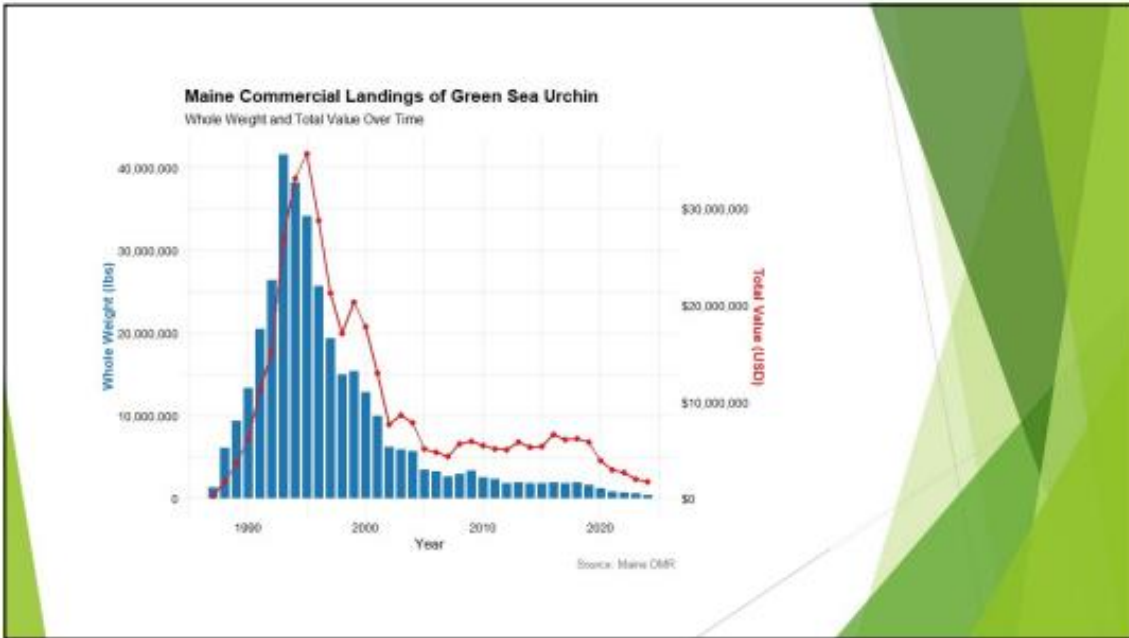
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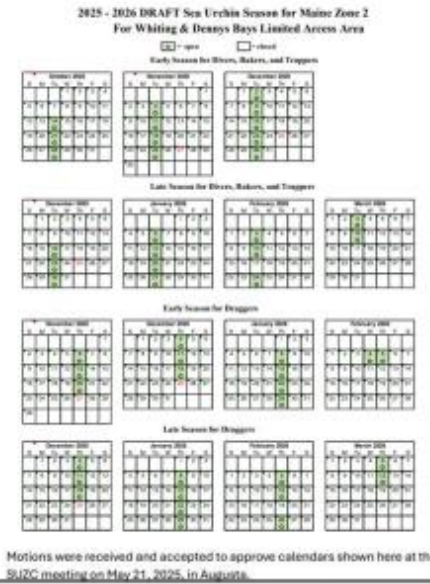
Ideas for future of industry (Wilson)

- ▶ We are at the tipping point of critical mass to try to keep those that are currently fishing in the industry going - to sustain the industry.

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Discuss Calendars going into Rulemaking (Harris)

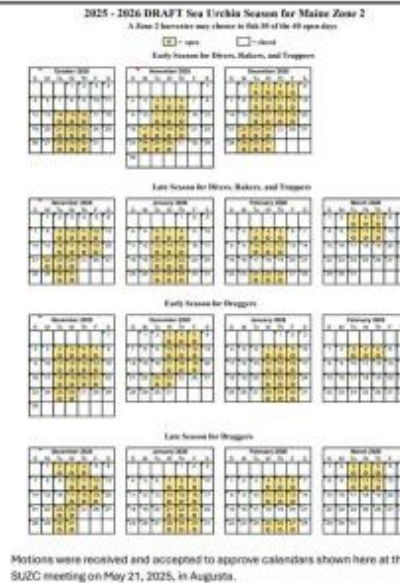
- ▶ Jen will notify industry when the Comment Period opens and when the public hearing occurs. All comments welcome (in favor, opposed, neutral - Please comment!)



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2025 - 2026 DRAFT Sea Urchin Season for Maine Zone 1

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

= open = closed

One Season for Divers, Rakers, Trappers and Druggers

November 2025							December 2025						
S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S	S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
						1		1	2	3	4	5	6
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	28	29	30	31			
30							31						

January 2026							February 2026						
S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S	S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3		1	2	3	4	5	6
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	28	29	30	31			

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Agenda Continued

- ▶ Other Business (Sawtelle)
- ▶ Adjourn 5:00pm

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