

Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog (SCOQ)

2017-2018 Specifications

Council - June 14, 2016





Today



- Consider 2017-18 Specifications
 - Surfclam Fishery Information Docs
 - Staff recommendations for surfclam
 - SCOQ Fishery Performance Report
 - SSC recommendations for surfclams
 - Do the same for quahogs

- Update on voluntary industry area closures

SCOQ Specifications

- At end of 2014-2016 specification cycle
- Interim reviews in 2014 and 2015
- Action is required to set measures



SAW/SARC Schedule

- July 2016 SARC stock assess. for surfclams
- Feb/March 2017 SARC stock assess. for quahog
- Feed into May 2017 SSC Process

Surfclam Info Doc

- Summary of update (not all)
- No changes to biology, stock status
- Not overfished, overfishing in 2011
- 2014-2016, the SSC recommended:
 - OFL of 81,150 mt, 75,178 mt, 71,512 mt
 - ABC of 60,313 mt, 51,804 mt, and 48,197 mt

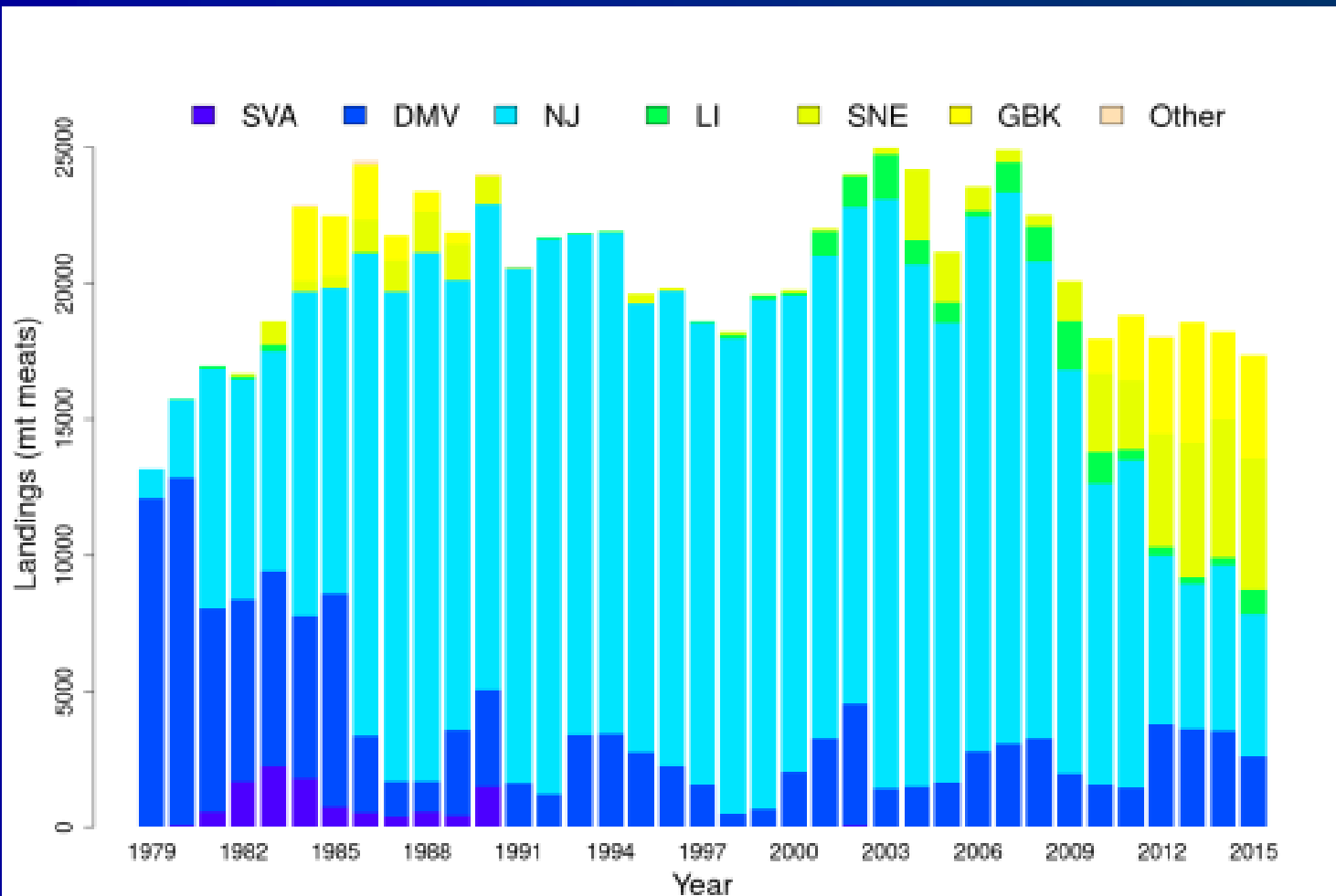


Surfclam Info Doc

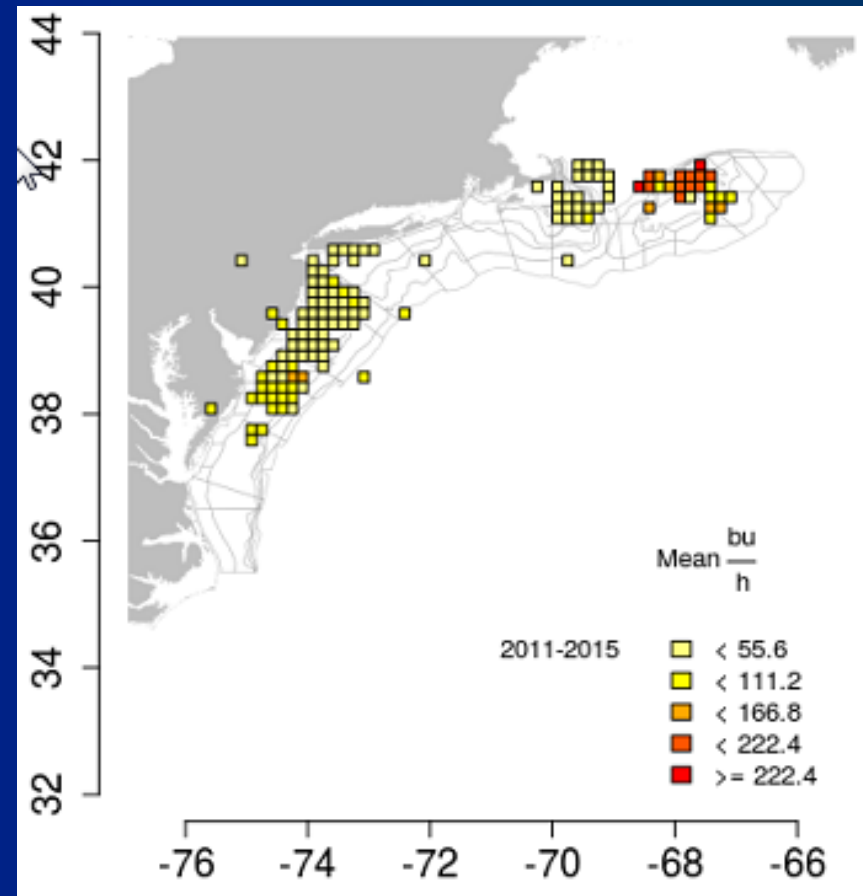
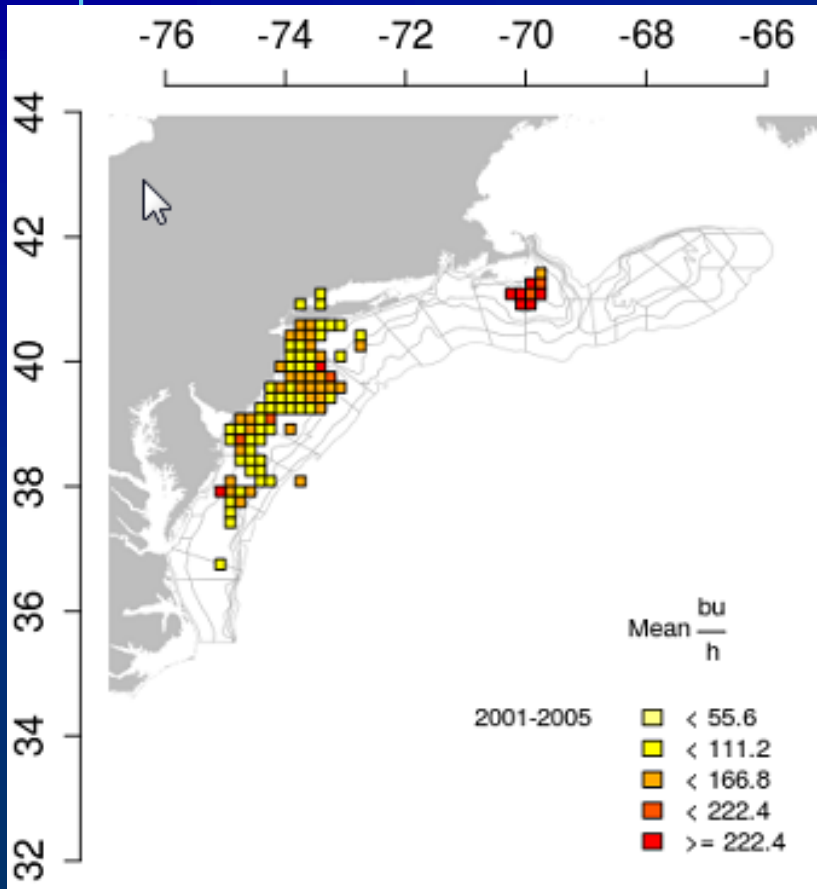
- 2015 landings were 2.3 mil bushels, or about 18,000 mt
- About the same as 2014



Surfclam Landings



Surfclam LPUE



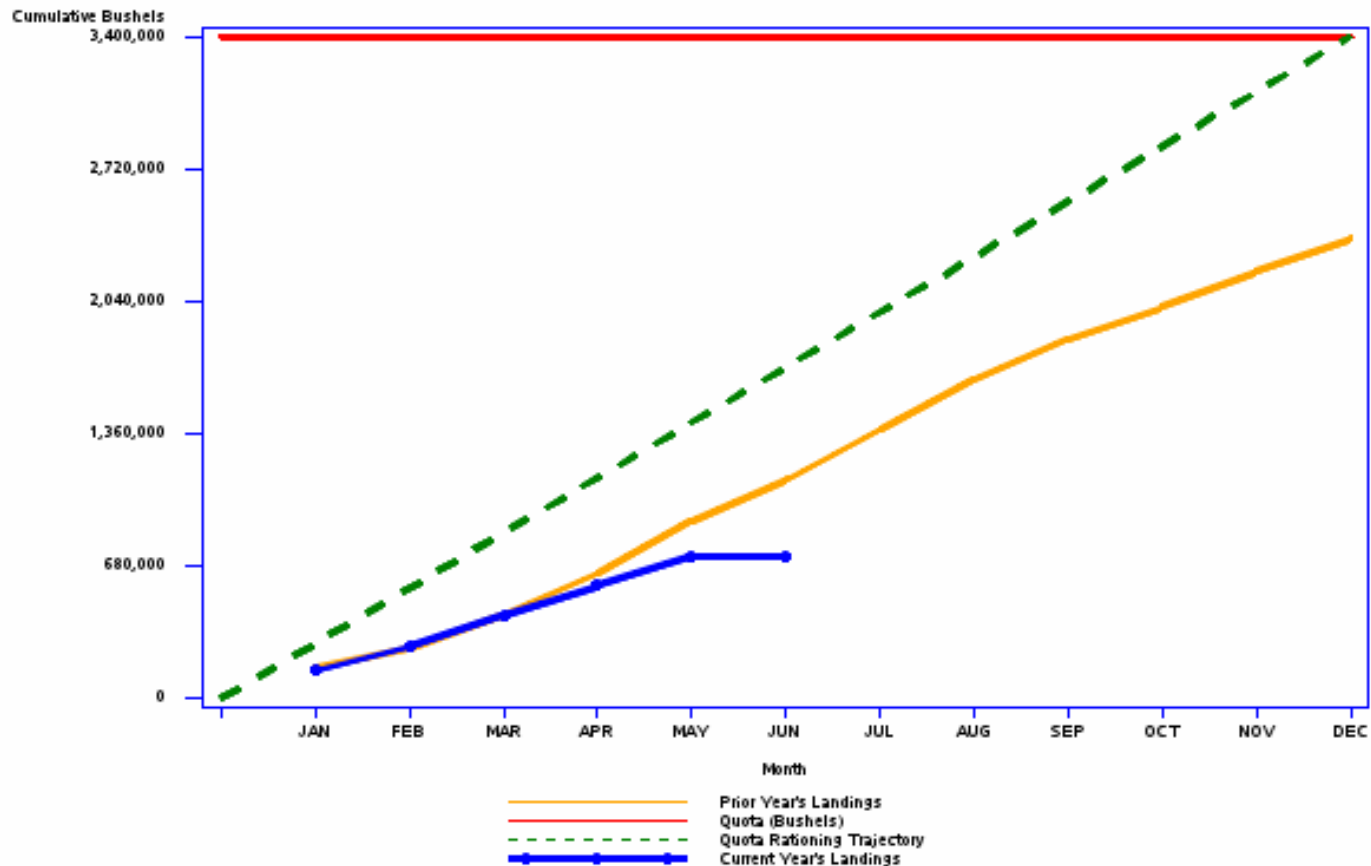
Surfclam Value

- 2015:
 - \$30 mil landed
 - About same as 2014



Surfclam Landings (thru June 5)

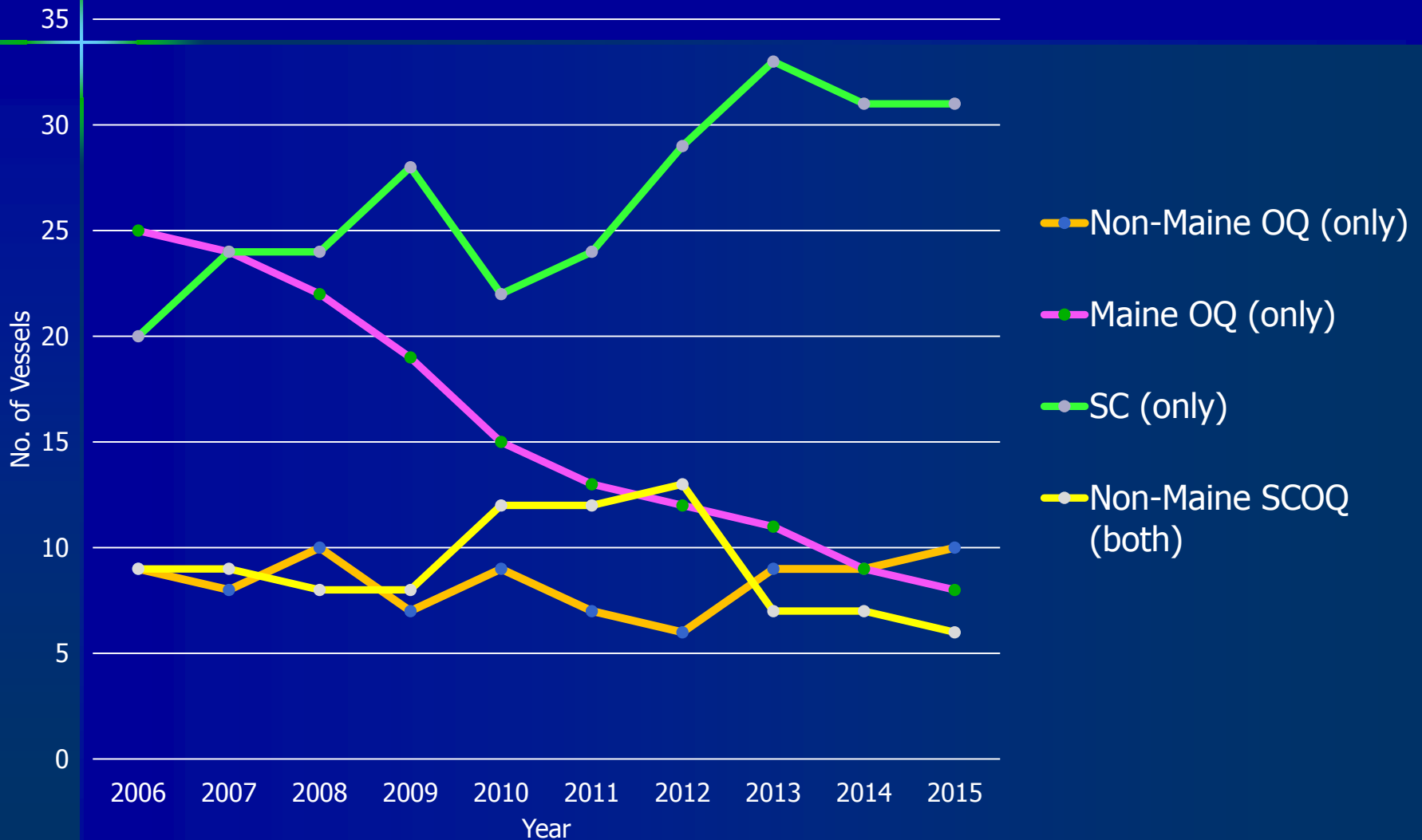
2016 SURFCLAM LANDINGS REPORT



SCOQ Ports and Communities

- Highlight economics and fleet profile for both species
- Ports in NJ and MA handle most volume for surfclams and quahogs
 - Atlantic City and Point Pleasant, NJ
 - New Bedford, MA
 - Ocean City, MD

SCOQ Fleet Profile



SCOQ Prices

- Slight increase in non-Maine quahog price per bushel (\$7.10/bu in 2015)
- Maine ocean quahog price has declined over time (\$28.27/Maine-bu in 2015)
- Surfclam price in 2015 (\$12.61/bu) nearly identical to 2014.

SCOQ Dealers

- 9 dealers in MA and NJ in 2014 bought surfclams and quahogs
- 9 dealers in MA and NJ in 2015



Area Closures

- PSP closures – Georges Bank for SCOQ
 - Closed from 1990-2008, 2009-2012 EFP
 - Parts reopened in 2013, under new PSP protocol
 - Last stock assess data year was 2011
- Small surfclam area closure regs.
 - Criteria if percentages of small and large clams in areas meet thresholds
 - Last implemented in 1980s off NJ, MD, VA
 - Last closure reopened in 1991

Area Closures

- Industry indicated they have implemented a voluntary surfclam closure
 - Off Point Pleasant, NJ
 - Ocean City, MD
- To be discussed at end of session

Fisheries Performance Report

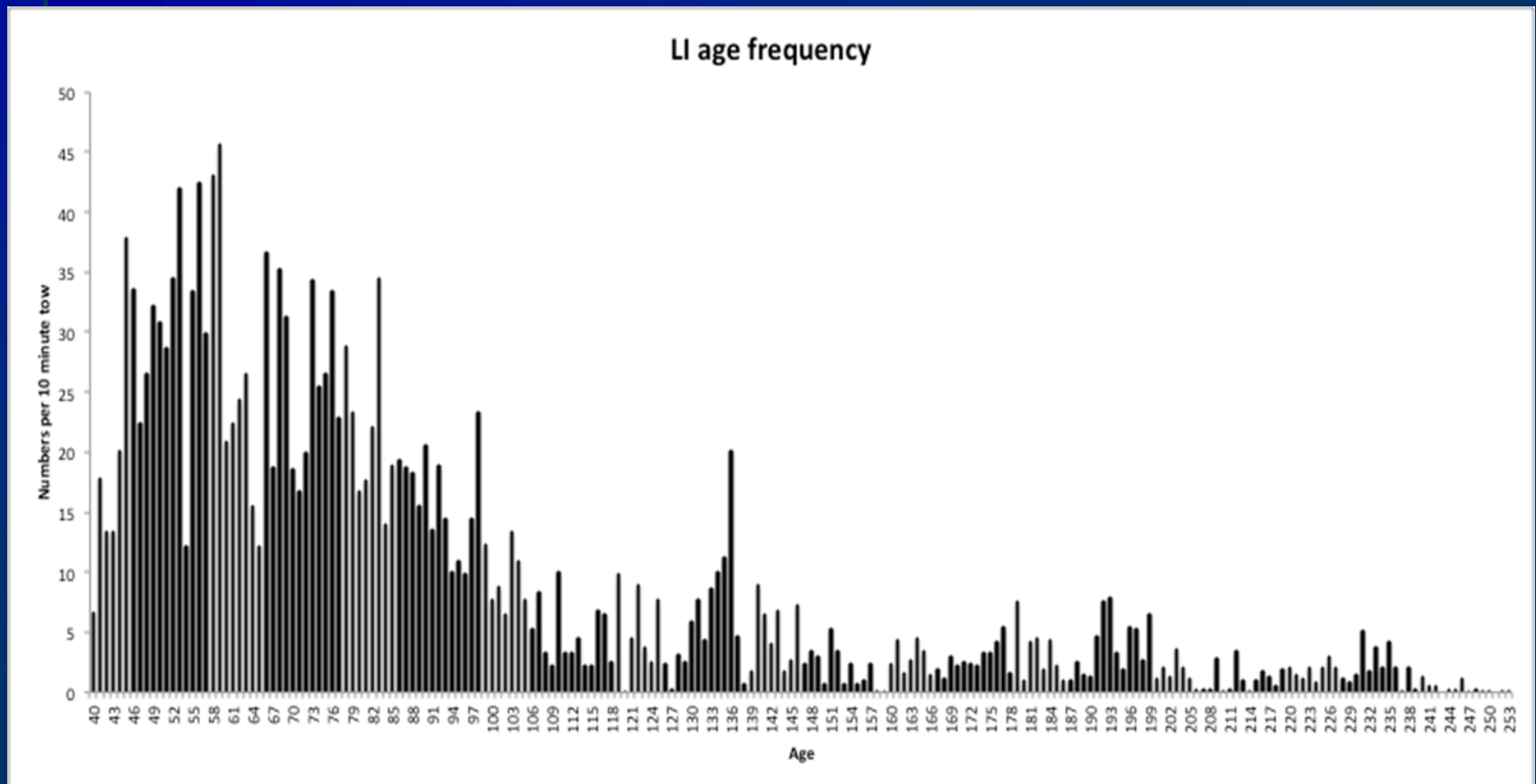
- Advisors met May 2, 2016.
- Critical Issues
 - New England Council's Omnibus Habitat Amendment
 - Potential to prohibit clam dredges from fishing certain hab. protection areas
 - Industry has funded some efforts to examine additional information and databases

Fisheries Performance Report

- Would like to see status quo quotas for upcoming fishing years; creates stability in markets
- Comfortable with a maximum OY of 3.4 mil bu surfclams and 6 million bu quahogs
- Highlighted S CeMFiS Projects (NSF and industry funded projects – Powell and Mann)

Fisheries Performance Report

- New quahog aging data; no final report yet.



Surfclam Staff Recommendations

- Recommend specifications be set for 2-years
- Follow same methods as used in 2013 by SSC; typical stock, OFL CV = 100%, etc.
- Use SAW 56 Report Projections



Surfclam Staff Recommendations

| Year | OFL (<u>mt</u>) | Biomass (<u>mt</u>) |
|-------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2014 | 81,150 | 886,251 |
| 2015 | 75,178 | 813,077 |
| 2016 | 71,512 | 792,205 |
| 2017 | 69,925 | 739,359 |
| 2018 | 70,102 | 757,738 |

| Year | ABC (<u>mt</u>) | P (overfishing) |
|-------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2014 | 60,313 | 36% |
| 2015 | 51,804 | 33% |
| 2016 | 48,197 | 32% |
| 2017 | 44,469 | 29% |
| 2018 | 45,524 | 30% |

Surfclam Staff Recommendations

- ACL=ABC as prescribed in FMP
- ACT = 29,364 mt (same as 2014-16)
- Commercial quota = 26,218 mt (3.4 mil bu; same as 2014-16)



Surfclam Staff Recommendations

- Recommend suspending minimum size of 4.75 inches (30% coastwide threshold not triggered)
- Careful review of information next year
- Small surfclam areas – recommend NMFS undertake analysis for SSC and Council in 2017





MAFMC SSC ABC Recommendation

Surfclams

2017 - 2018 Fishing Years

Amount of Uncertainty

- The SSC recommends that the assessment be considered a “SSC-modified OFL probability distribution” in line with its designation in 2013 (old Level 3).
 - Provides an acceptable OFL estimate;
 - Includes estimates of pertinent life history parameters; and
 - Explicitly incorporates a substantial amount of available data and permits uncertainty in input parameters.



OFL

SSC used the same method that was used in 2013 to estimate the OFL catch in weight

| | |
|------|------------------|
| 2017 | 69,925 mt |
| 2018 | 70,102 mt |



ABC

- The SSC determined the ABC by using the Council's risk policy:

| | | |
|------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2017 | 44,469 mt | $P(\text{overfishing}) = 29\%$ |
| 2018 | 45,524 mt | $P(\text{overfishing}) = 30\%$ |



Most Significant Sources of Scientific Uncertainty

1. Lack of an assessment that uses the most recent data is an important source of uncertainty.
2. The $F = M$ foundation for establishing OFL;
3. Estimates of M used in the assessment;
4. The scales at which regional replenishment occurs and the potential impact of localized depletion;
5. Absolute biomass is not known, and biomasses are currently scaled to presumed abundance in 1999 to develop reference points; and
6. Uncertainty in the fishing mortality rates (F).



Questions?

Ocean Quahog Info Doc

- Summary of update (not all)
- No changes to biology, stock status
- Not overfished, overfishing in 2011
- SSC set ABCs for 2014-16 (26,100 mt per year); no OFLs recommended
- $F_{MSYproxy}$ concerns

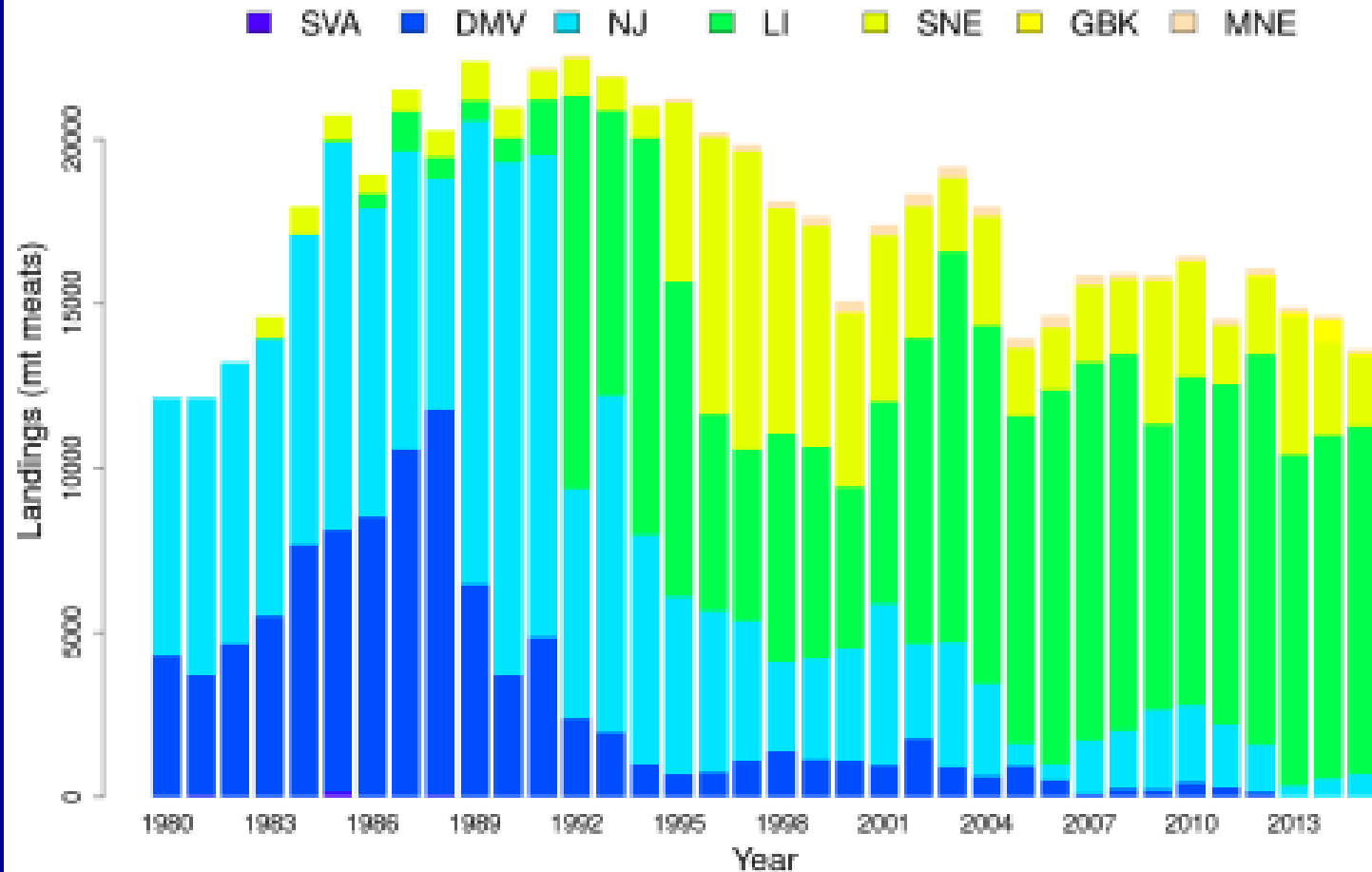


Ocean Quahog Info Doc

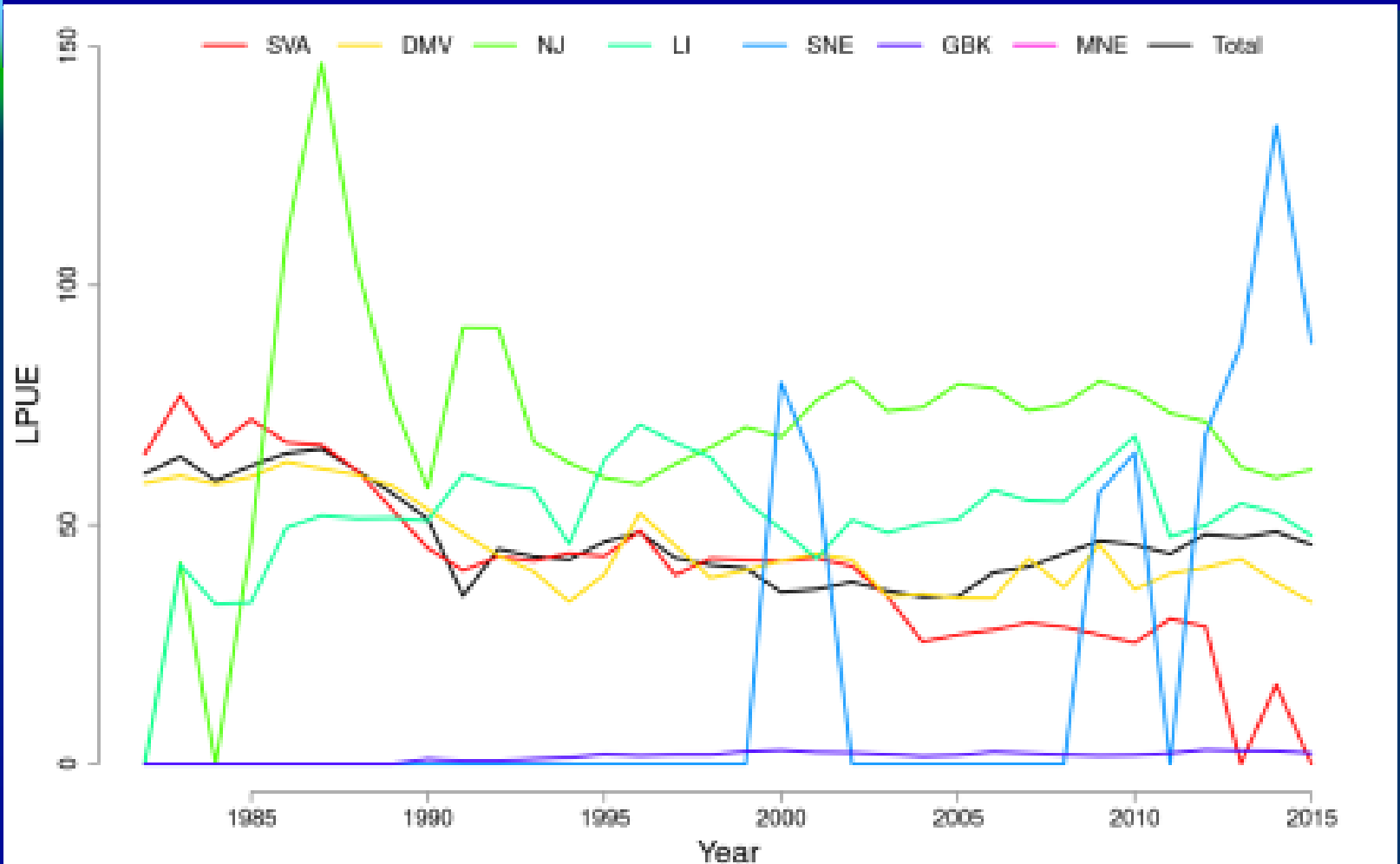
- 2015 Landings = 3.0 mil bushels (bu) or 13,500 mt
- Slightly less than 2014 (3.2 mil bu)



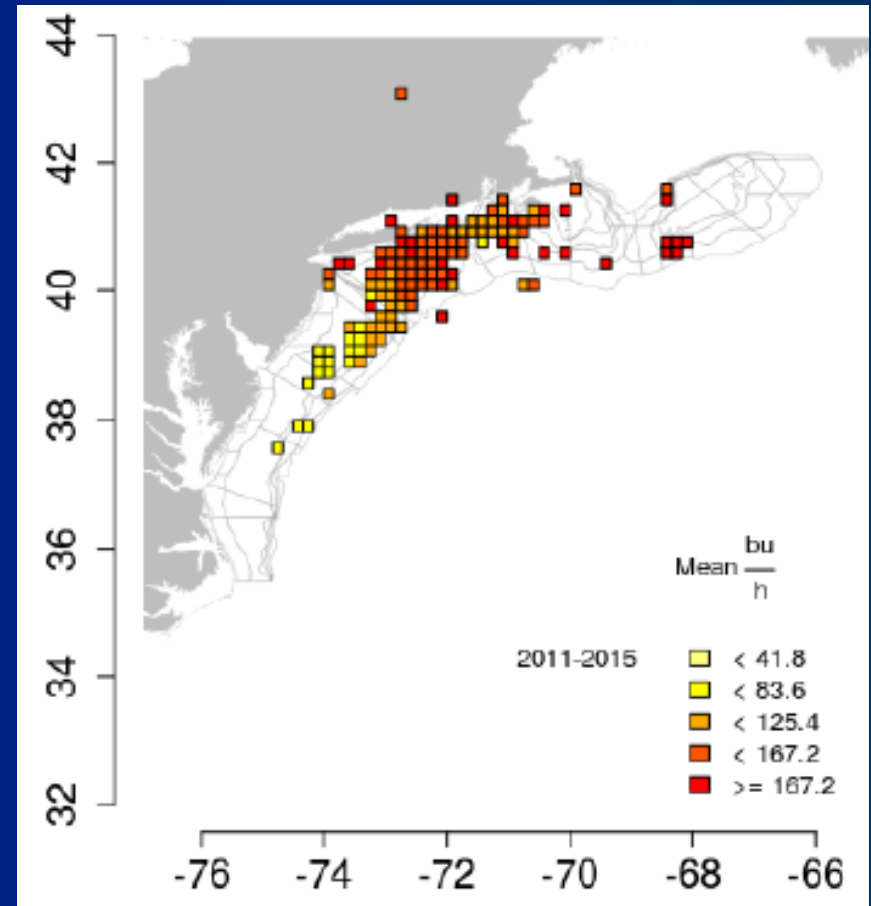
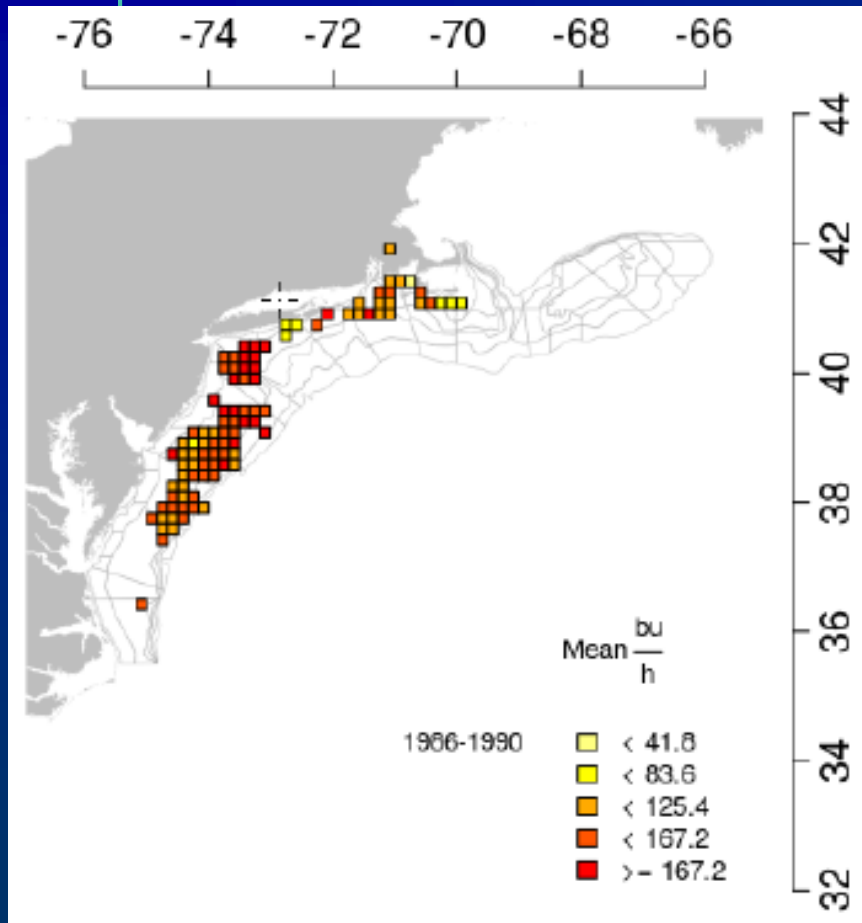
Ocean Quahog Landings



Ocean Quahog LPUE



Ocean Quahog LPUE

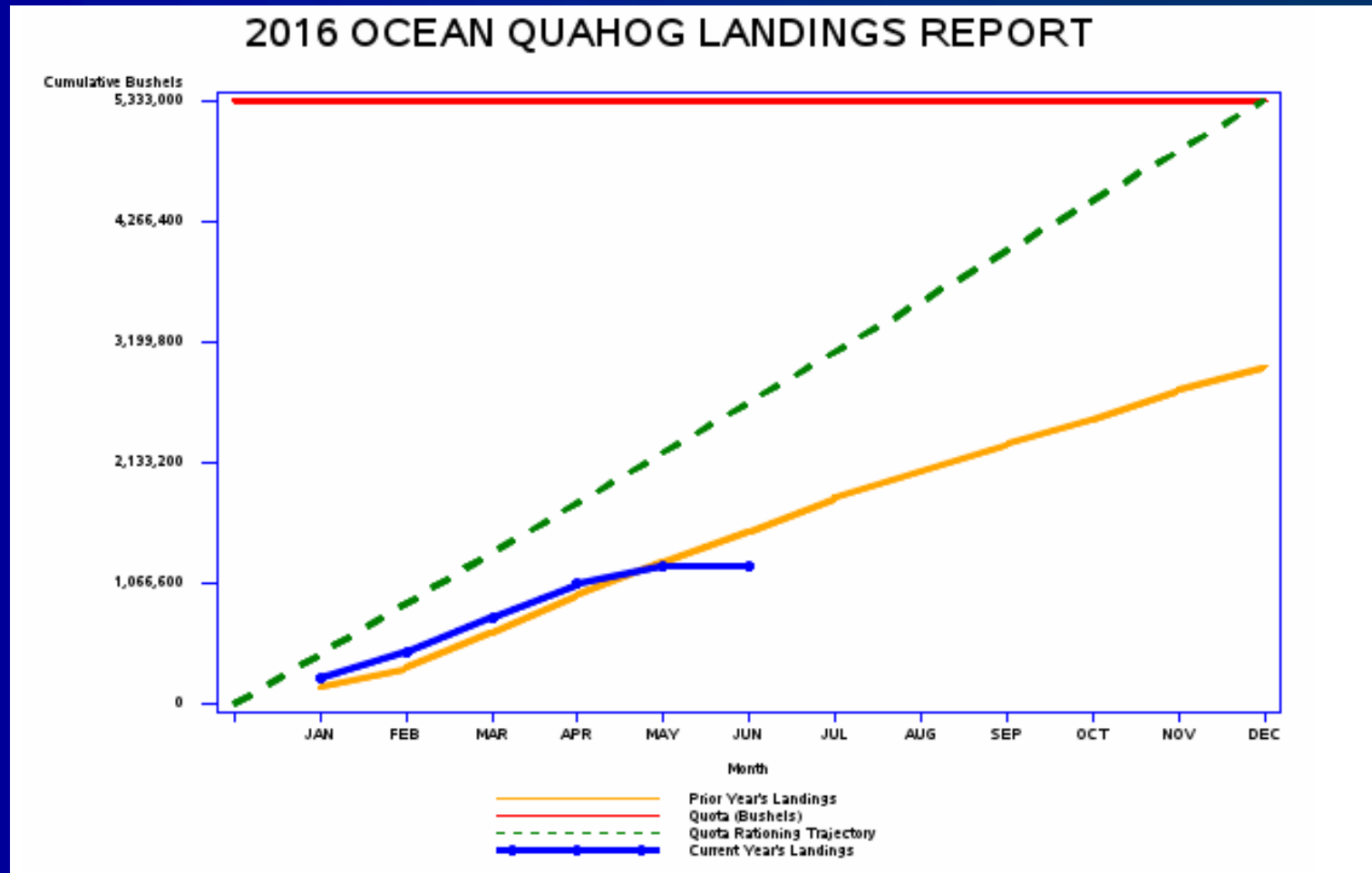


Ocean Quahog Value

- 2015 Value:
 - \$21 mil Non Maine - about same as 2014
 - Maine \$1.2 mil - down 10% from 2014

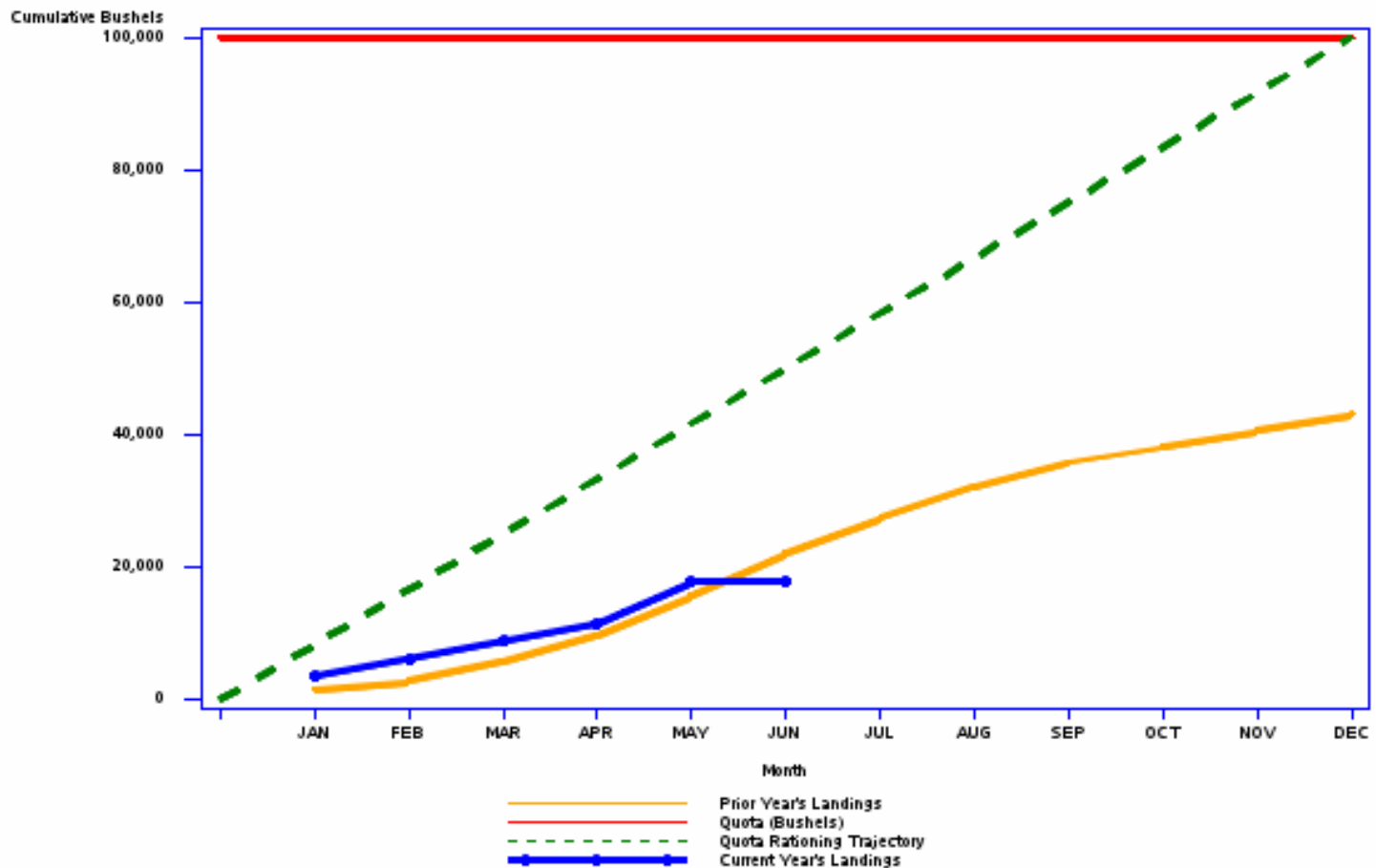


Ocean Quahog Non-Maine Landings (thru June 5)



Ocean Quahog Maine Landings (thru June 5)

2016 MAINE QUAHOG LANDINGS REPORT



Surfclam Staff Recommendations

- Recommend specifications be set for 2-years
- Follow same methods as used in 2013 by SSC; ABC set equivalent to “status quo”
- 26,100 mt in 2014-2016



Surfclam Staff Recommendations (same measures as 2014-16)

- ABC = 26,100 mt for 2017 and 2018
- ACL=ABC as prescribed in FMP
- ACT = Maine 524 mt; Non-Maine 25,511 mt
- Commercial quota = Maine 499 mt (100,000 ME bu); Non-Maine 24,296 mt (5.36 mil bu)





MAFMC SSC ABC Recommendation

Ocean Quahog
2017 - 2018 Fishing Years

Amount of Uncertainty

- The SSC followed/confirmed its previous evaluation of this stock as one for which “OFL cannot be specified with current state of knowledge” (old Level 4)



OFL

Not possible, given the lack of an acceptable estimate of OFL.



ABC

- The SSC recommends setting an ABC for the 2017 and 2018 fishing years that maintains *status quo*.
- The recommended ABC in each year is **26,100 mt** – a direct extension of the level of ABC that has been in operation since 2014.



Most Significant Sources of Scientific Uncertainty

- The fishing mortality rate reference point was deemed non-credible because species to which Ocean Quahog was compared were not appropriate;
- 40-year forecasts were provided in the previous assessment report and should be continued;
- Mechanisms for low recent recruitments are not known – could be either a result of underlying stock productivity or a consequence of life history of a long lived-species; and



Most Significant Sources of Scientific Uncertainty (cont'd)

- The nature of historical recruitments is poorly known.

The SSC also encourages that information from the SCeMFiS program on levels of recruitment be brought forward for consideration by the SAW/SARC working group and SSC.



Specifications Actions Today

- Recommend measures for 2017-2018
- Suspending the minimum surfclam size requires action (no rollover in plan)

