

# **Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog - 2015 Specifications Review**

**Freehold, NJ  
June 10, 2014**



# Data Update for 2015 Specs

- Catch and LPUE (tables and maps) provided by NEFSC staff
- No changes to assessments
  - Feb. 2013 benchmark for surfclams and update for quahogs
- No change biology, status of stock, etc.

# Data Update for 2015 Specs

- Updated Fish Information Documents and Landings Reports
- Staff Recommendations for 2015
- Updated Fishery Performance Reports
- SSC recommendations



# Ocean Quahog Info Doc

- Page 5, Table 1: 2013 Landings = 3.2 mil bushels (9% less than 2012)
- Page 6, Table 2: Landings decreased in NJ, LI, and "Other"; increased in SNE and Georges Bank.
- Page 7,8, Figure 3,4: Landings by TMSQ over time; Northward shift



# Ocean Quahog Info Doc

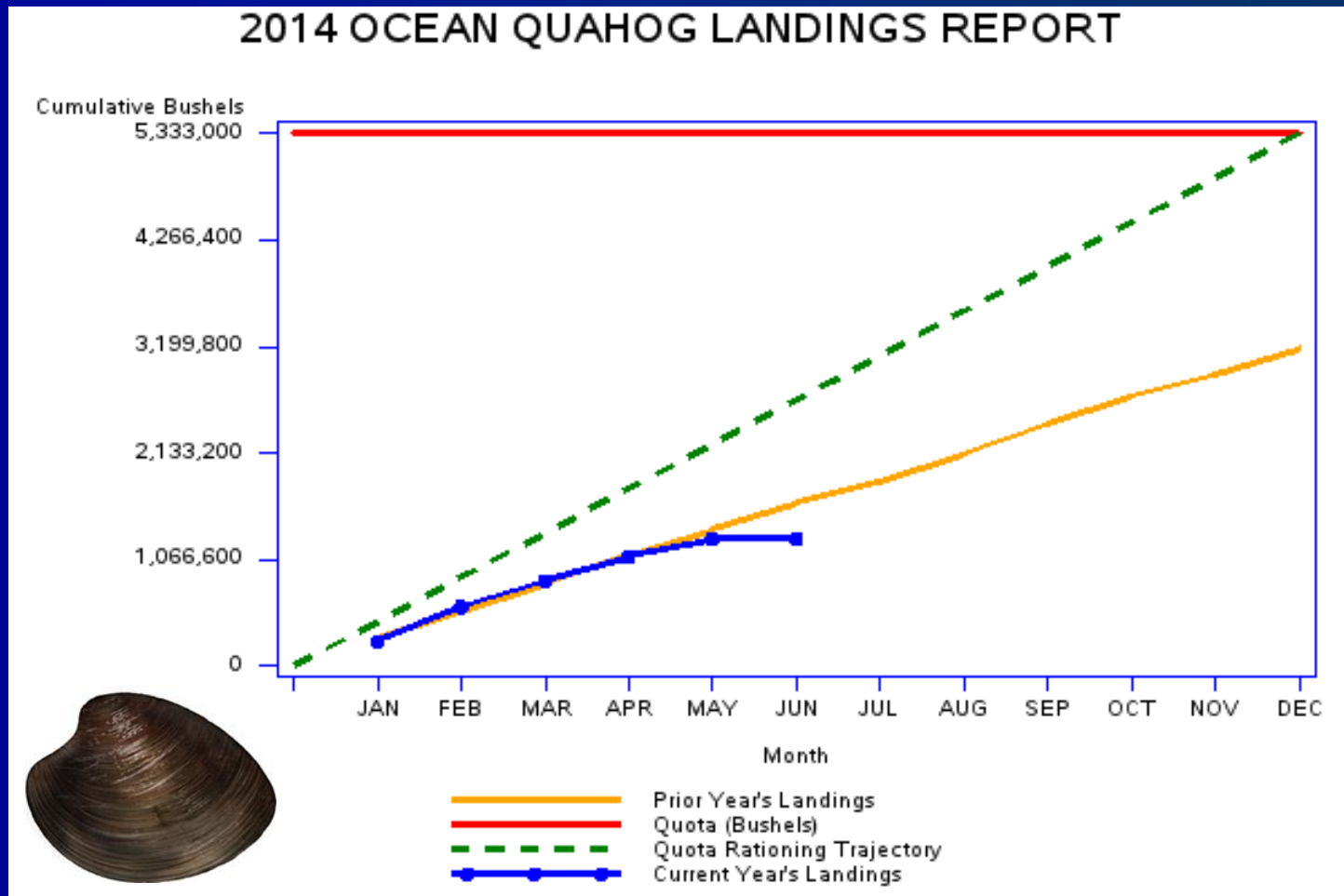
- Page 10, Table 3: Fleet profile quahogs and surfclams: About 20 non-Maine vessels; decline in Maine vessels to 11 in 2013 versus 34 in 2004.
- Page 10, Prices: Essential no change in non-Maine price per bushel; Maine ocean quahog price has declined.



# Ocean Quahog Info Doc

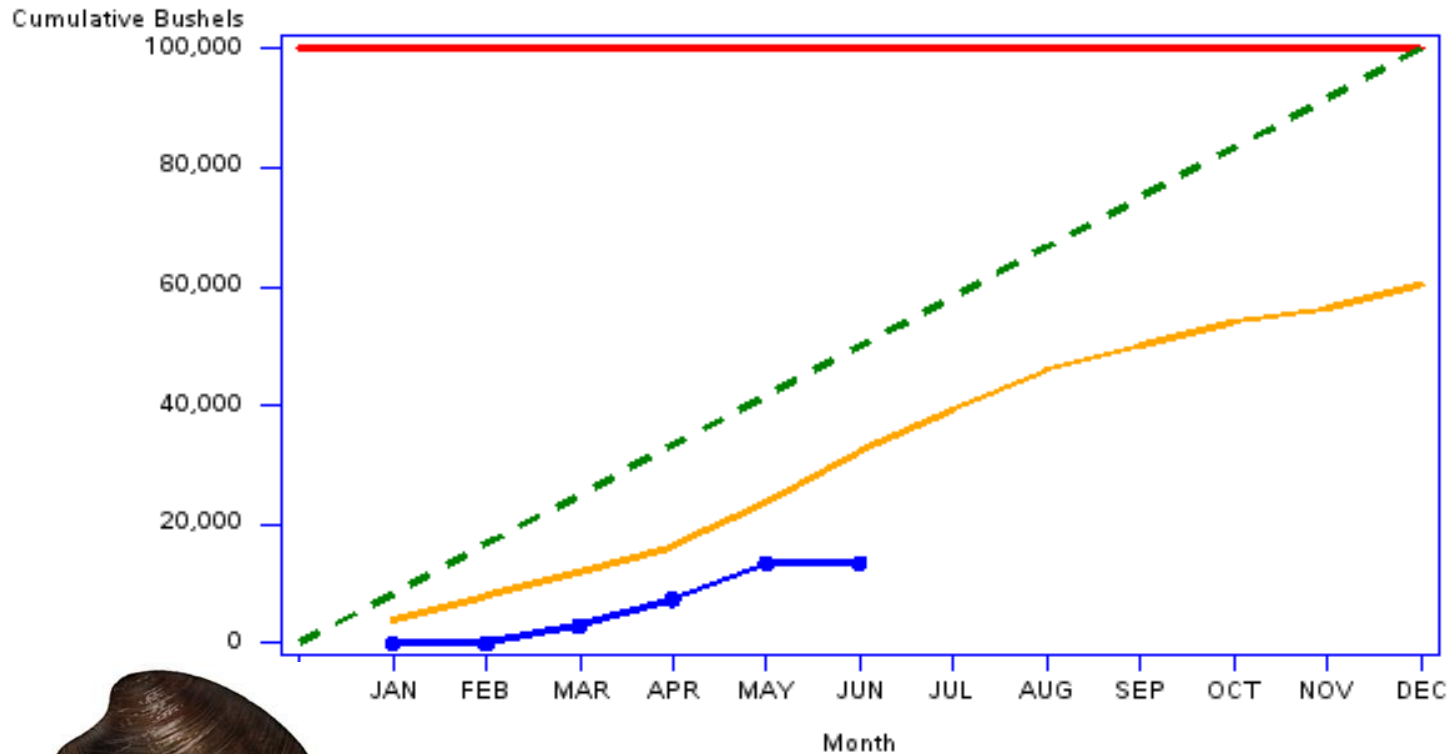
- 2013: \$23 mil Non Maine (up 10% from 2012; Maine \$1.5 mil (down 15%))
- Page 11, Figure 8: Ocean quahog LPUE by area; 2011-prelim. 2014
- Page 12, Table 4: 7 dealers in 2013 bought surfclams and quahogs; 9 dealers in 2012

# Ocean Quahog Non-Maine Landings (thru June 3)



# Ocean Quahog Maine Landings (thru June 3)

## 2014 MAINE QUAHOG LANDINGS REPORT



- Prior Year's Landings
- Quota (Bushels)
- - - Quota Rationing Trajectory
- Current Year's Landings





# Surfclam Info Doc

- Page 6, Table 1: 2013 Landings = 2.4 mil bushels (2% higher than 2012)
- Page 7, Table 2: Landings decreased in DMV, NJ, LI, and "Other"; increased in SNE and Georges Bank.
- Page 8,9, Figure 6,7: Landings by TMSQ over time; NJ, SNE, Georges

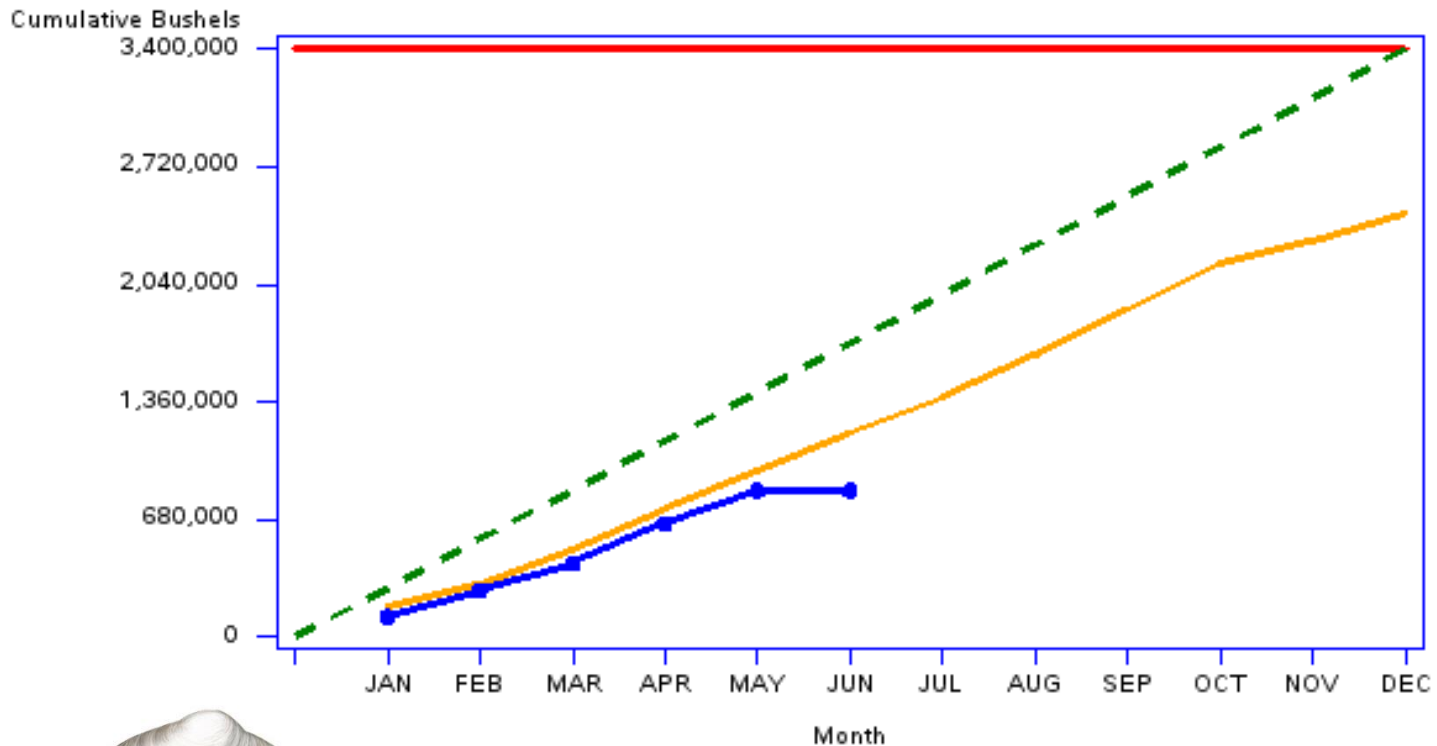






## Surfclam Info Doc

- Fleet profile and dealers for surfclams and quahogs, already discussed.
- Page 10, Prices: average ex-vessel price increased about 2%, total value up about 7% at \$31 mil.
- Page 11, Figure 8: surfclam LPUE by area; 2011-prelim. 2014

# Surfclam Landings (thru June 3)

## 2014 SURFCLAM LANDINGS REPORT



-  Prior Year's Landings
-  Quota (Bushels)
-  Quota Rationing Trajectory
-  Current Year's Landings

# FPR - SC and OQ on April 23

- Attended by 6 advisors, Boreman, Houde, staff, and 4 public
- First prepared last year for 2014-2016 specs; Updated information about surfclam and ocean quahogs for interim 2015 review
- Provide input on variety of issues

# Critical Issues

- New England Council's Omnibus Habitat Amendment
- Has potential to ban bottom tending mobile gear (including clam dredges) in proposed areas in SNE and Georges Bank
- Impacts on the spatial distribution of the fishery; cause biological, social, and economic impacts.
- Impacts Council's ability to manage its stocks

# FPRs - Market/Consolidation Issues

- Updated to reflect current ports of landing
- Fuels prices and distance needed to travel to harvest (affects vessels, processors, ports, etc.)
- Increased foreign imports and price constraints
- Cost of complying with regulatory functions
- Cost of keeping vessels in class
- Food safety requirements/sustainability initiatives
- Limit in market demand

# FPRs - Environmental

- Discussed surfclam and quahog pop. movements towards poles or into deeper waters
- Shift in fishery has followed shift in stock distribution
- Issues relating to impacts from use of clam dredge on habitat
- Activities that support sustainability: 1) opening of Georges Bank, alleviate fishing pressure in South 2) S CeMFIS project examining small clam areas

# FPRs - Mgmt Issues

- Council should become more involved in NEFMC habitat issues
- Many proposed gear or fishery closures will impact surfclam, quahog, or other fisheries
- Keeping up to date and proactive is additional cost



# FPRs - Fishing Trends

- Effort moving Northward because of high catch rates; results in smaller footprint
- Larger vessels will be accessing Georges Bank
- Nantucket shoals is a smaller vessel fishery

# FPRs - Fishing Trends

- The LPUE may not be indicative of abundance
- SARC panel recommended a more detailed analysis be undertaken on LPUE, and did not make definitive conclusions about the utility as an index
- Advisors noted that the LPUE's in the 1970's and 1980's were lower, then increased, and then decreased again

## FPRs - Other

- Advisors would like to see status quo quotas for SCOQ for upcoming fishing years
  
- New SCeMFIS industry and NSF supported:
  - 1) shell breakage studies for survey
  - 2) modified survey dredge design
  - 3) BRPs for black sea bass, surfclams and quahogs
  - 4) MSE for regional/rotational closures

## FPRs - Other

- Advisors expressed concerns about conclusions in assessment update (Chute et al., 2013)

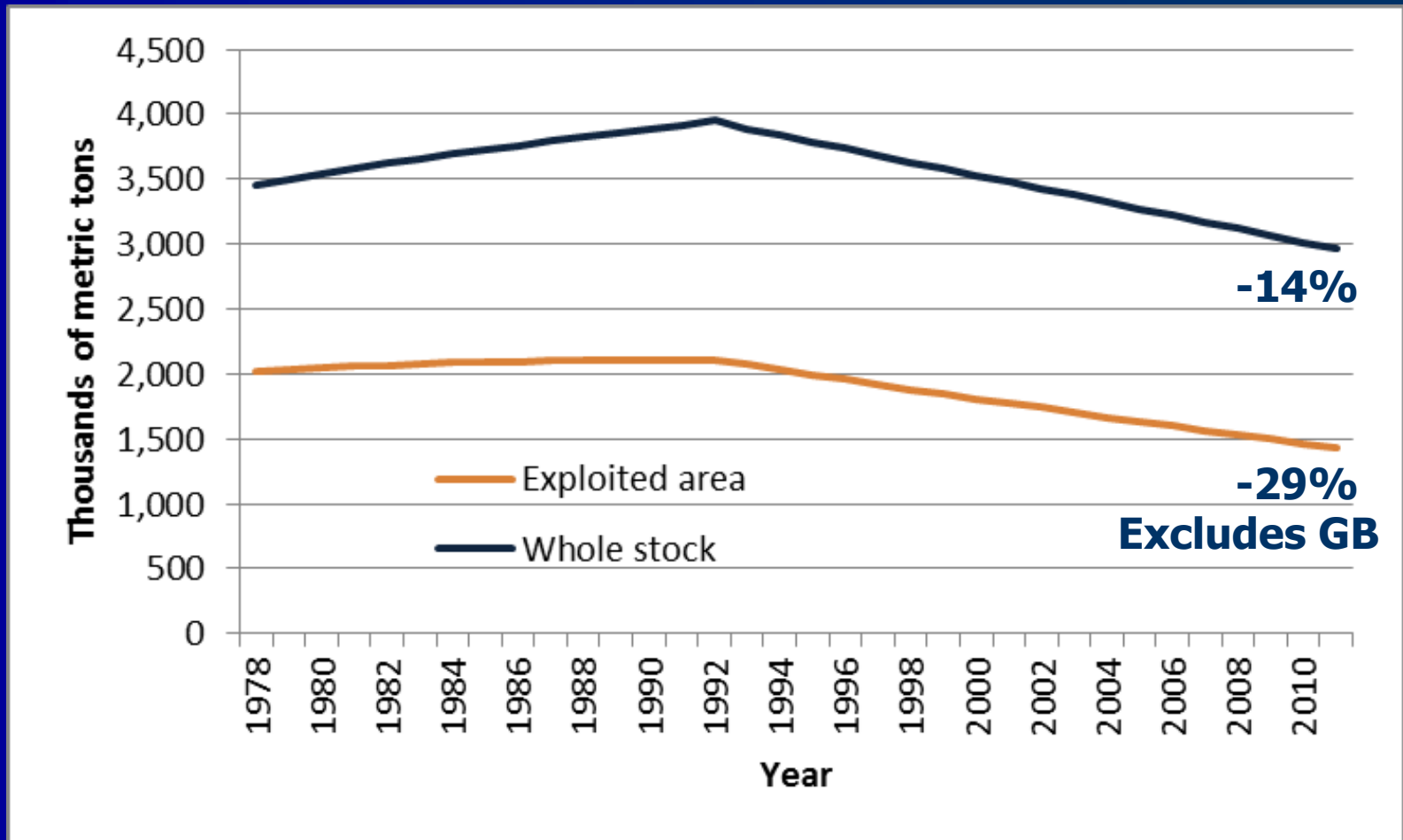
"Based on assessment data, the ocean quahog population is an unproductive stock with infrequent recruitment, and thus vulnerable to overfishing. After three decades of fishing at a low  $F$ , the stock as a whole is being fished down."

"Recruitment events appear to be localized and separated by decades, although survey length frequencies show that a low level of recruitment occurs on a continuous basis. The potential contribution of this recruitment to stock biomass and productivity is unknown."

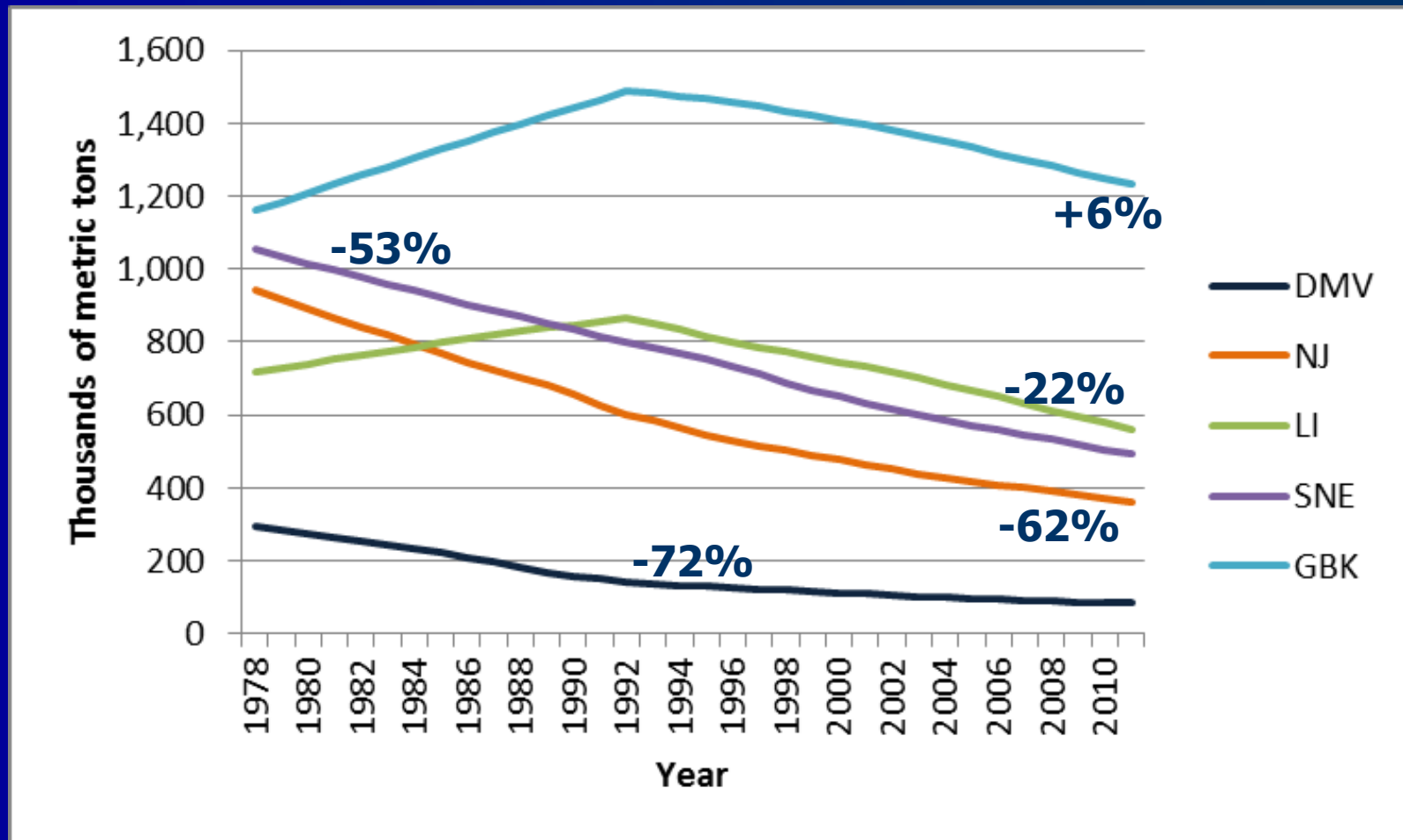
## FPRs - Other

- Advisors noted that although these statements were made:
- They were not the result of a rigorous peer review
- The quahog stock declined about 15% over the last three decades
- There is little concern from the industry view

# Quahog Stock Biomass (Chute et al. 2013; Table 13)



# Quahog Stock Biomass (Chute et al. 2013; Table 13)



# Staff Memo

- Based on a review of this information, staff recommends no change to the 2015 fishing year specifications.
- In 2015, SSC and Council will review info to determine if changes are warranted for 2016
- Next multi year specs cycle - 2017-2019



# SSC Report

- Based on a review of information, "the SSC saw no compelling reason to alter their 2015 ABC recommendation for either species."
- "The SSC was informed about NEFMC proposed omnibus habitat amendment. The SSC agreed that there might be aspects of the NEFMC's amendment process where input from the MAFMC SSC might be beneficial, but deferred to the MAFMC for further direction."

# SSC Surfclam Recommendations

- 3-year specifications, 2014-2016
- Level 3, typical stock:

<b>Year</b>	<b>OFL (mt)</b>	<b>ABC (mt)</b>	<b>OFL (mil bu)</b>	<b>ABC (mil bu)</b>
<b>2014</b>	<b>81,150</b>	<b>60,313</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>7.8</b>
<b>2015</b>	<b>75,178</b>	<b>51,804</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>6.7</b>
<b>2016</b>	<b>71,512</b>	<b>48,197</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>6.2</b>

# SSC Quahog Recommendations

- 3-year specifications, 2014-2016
- Level 4, atypical life history:

<b>Year</b>	<b>OFL (mt)</b>	<b>ABC (mt)</b>	<b>OFL (mil bu)</b>	<b>ABC (mil bu)</b>
<b>2014</b>	None	26,100	None	5.7
<b>2015</b>	None	26,100	None	5.7
<b>2016</b>	None	26,100	None	5.7

# Other Updates

- Proposed rule for Data Collection Protocol expected sometime this summer (July/August); to be implemented for 2015
- After data has been collected, the Excessive Share Accumulation Amendment will be developed



# Questions/Discussion?

