

# Crab Management Advisory Committee

May 29, 2025



# CMAC Agenda

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I. CMAC Introductions; Announcements

II. Approval of minutes from the August 20, 2024 meeting

III. New Committee Meeting Policy

IV. New Business

1. Review the preliminary 2024/2025 Chesapeake Bay Winter Crab Dredge Survey results and preliminary 2024 Virginia harvest data
2. Discussion of possible management responses, if necessary
3. Terrapin petition

V. Other Business

1. License wait list
2. Dark sponge law

VI. Public Comment

VII. Adjournment



# Update to By-Laws

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- First established by CMAC in 2020
- Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
  - Rules for public meetings to be fully available to public
  - Advertisement notices required
  - Three or more committee members discussing committee business constitutes a public meeting
  - New rules for virtual meetings (2024)
- Committees must approve a policy for virtual meetings or participation to be allowed.

# ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

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- *Section 6: Quorum.* A quorum must be attended by at least 51 percent of the Committee members before business can be transacted or motions made or passed. Committee members participating remotely as per Article VI will only count toward a quorum if their physical attendance is prevented by a disability as defined in § 51.5-40.1 or if they are a caregiver for a family member with such a disability.



# ARTICLE VI – MEETING POLICIES

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***Section 1: Remote Participation.*** An individual Committee member may participate from a remote location only if a quorum of the Committee is physically assembled at the public meeting location, and there are arrangements for the voice of the remote participant to be heard by all persons at the primary or central meeting location, as permitted by Virginia Code §2.2-3708.3.

Individual members of the Committee may use remote participation instead of attending a public meeting in person if, in advance of the public meeting the member notifies the Chair and designated staff that:

1. The member has a temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition that prevents the member's physical attendance;
2. A medical condition of a member of the member's family requires the member to provide care that prevents the member's physical attendance;
3. The member's principal residence is more than 60 miles from the meeting location identified in the required notice for such meeting; or
4. The member is unable to attend the meeting due to a personal matter and identifies with specificity the nature of the personal matter. However, the member may not use remote participation due to personal matters more than two meetings per calendar year or 50 % of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater. There is no limit to the number of times that a member may participate remotely for the other authorized purposes.



# ARTICLE VI – MEETING POLICIES

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In the event of any such participation by a member from a remote location, the meeting minutes will record remote location from which the member participated; however, the remote location need not be open to the public and may be identified in the minutes by a general description. The meeting minutes will also reflect the fact that the member participated virtually due to one of the reasons listed above.

If a member's participation from a remote location is disapproved because such participation would violate this policy, such disapproval shall be recorded in the minutes with specificity.

***Section 2: All-Virtual Meetings.*** The Committee may convene a maximum of two all-virtual public meetings per calendar year or up to 50% of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater. However, the all-virtual meetings cannot be held consecutively with another all-virtual meeting. These limitations shall apply separately with respect to the meetings of any subcommittees.

All-virtual public meetings may be convened for the following reasons:

1. It is impracticable or unsafe to assemble a quorum of the Committee in a single location, but a state of emergency has not been declared; or
2. Other circumstances warrant the holding of an all-virtual public meeting, including, but not limited to, the convenience of an all-virtual meeting.

# ARTICLE VI – MEETING POLICIES

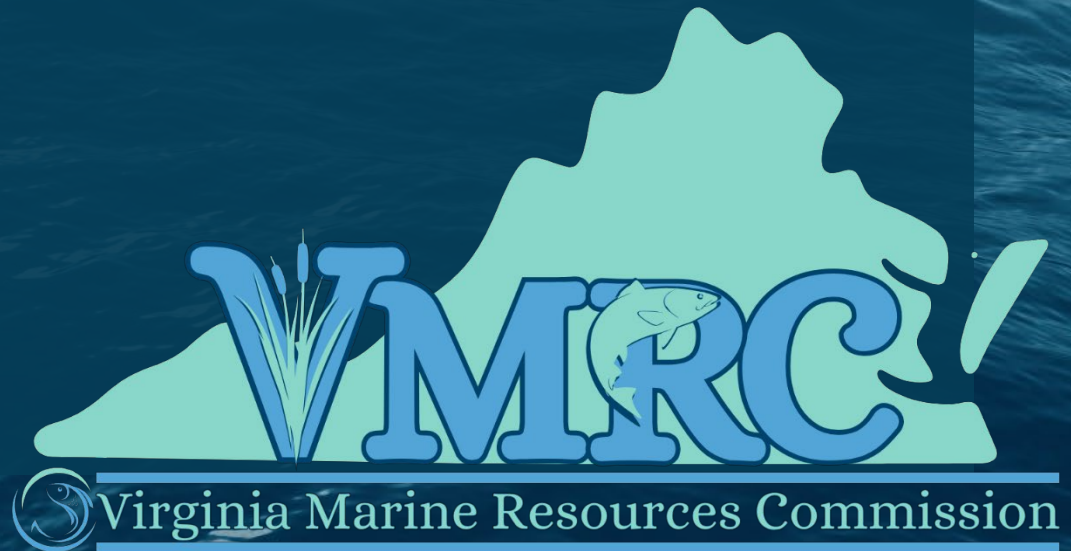
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All-virtual public meetings must meet the following conditions in accordance with §2.2-3708.3:

1. An indication of whether the meeting will be an in-person or all-virtual public meeting is included in the required meeting notice along with a statement notifying the public that the method by which a public body chooses to meet shall not be changed unless the public body provides a new meeting notice in accordance with the provisions of § 2.2-3707;
2. Public access to the all-virtual public meeting will be provided via electronic communication means;
3. The phone number of the Chair or designated staff will be provided at the start of each meeting to alert the Committee if the audio or video transmission of the meeting fails. The staff will monitor such designated means of communication during the meeting, and the Committee will take a recess until public access is restored if the transmission fails for the public; and
4. No more than two members of the Committee are together in any one remote location unless that remote location is open to the public to physically access it.



# 2025 Winter Dredge Survey Results





# Outline

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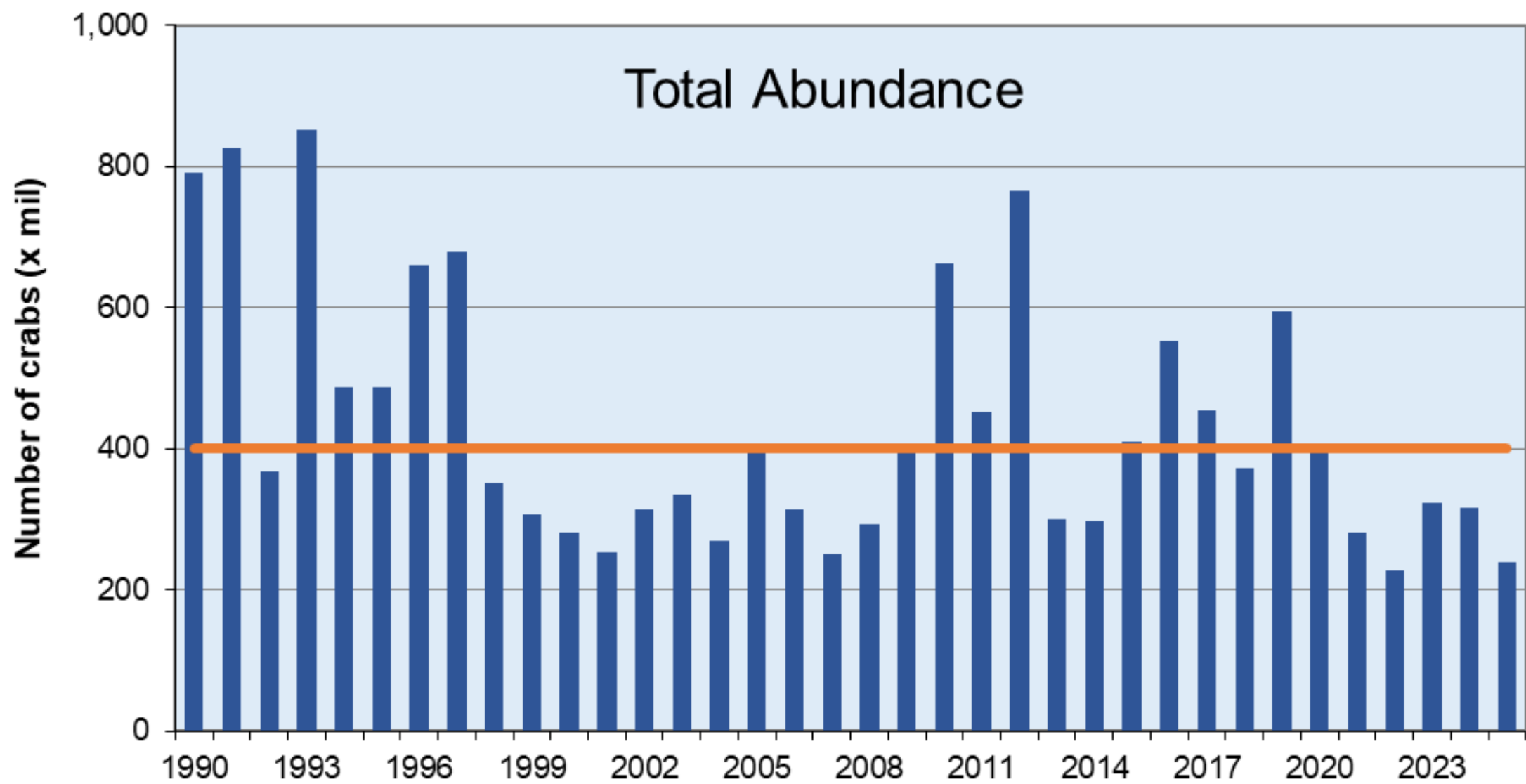
- I. **Winter Dredge Survey Abundance Results and Reference Points**
- II. Bay-wide Harvest Data and Reference Points
- III. Virginia Commercial Harvest Data

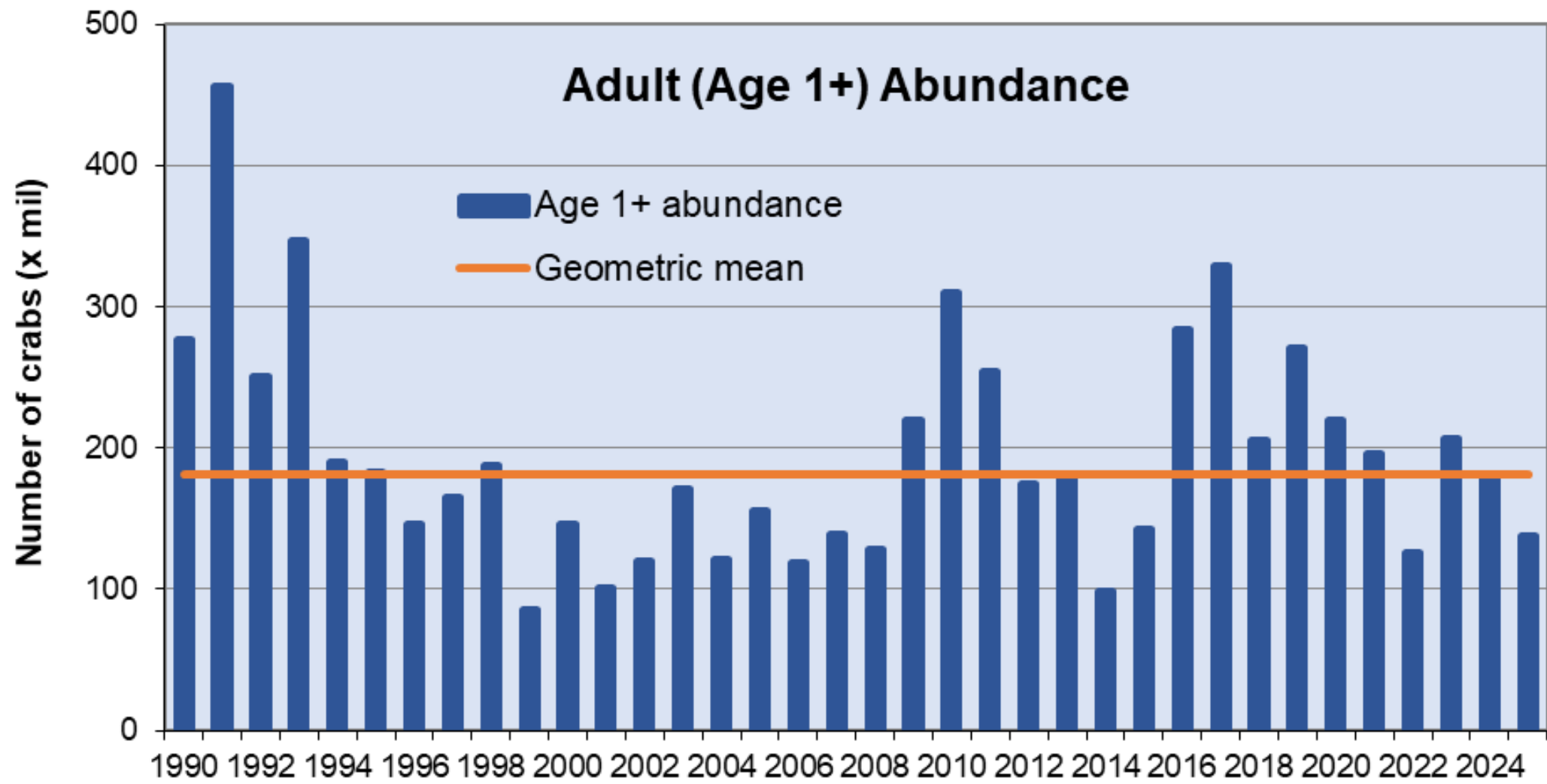
# 2025 Abundance Results

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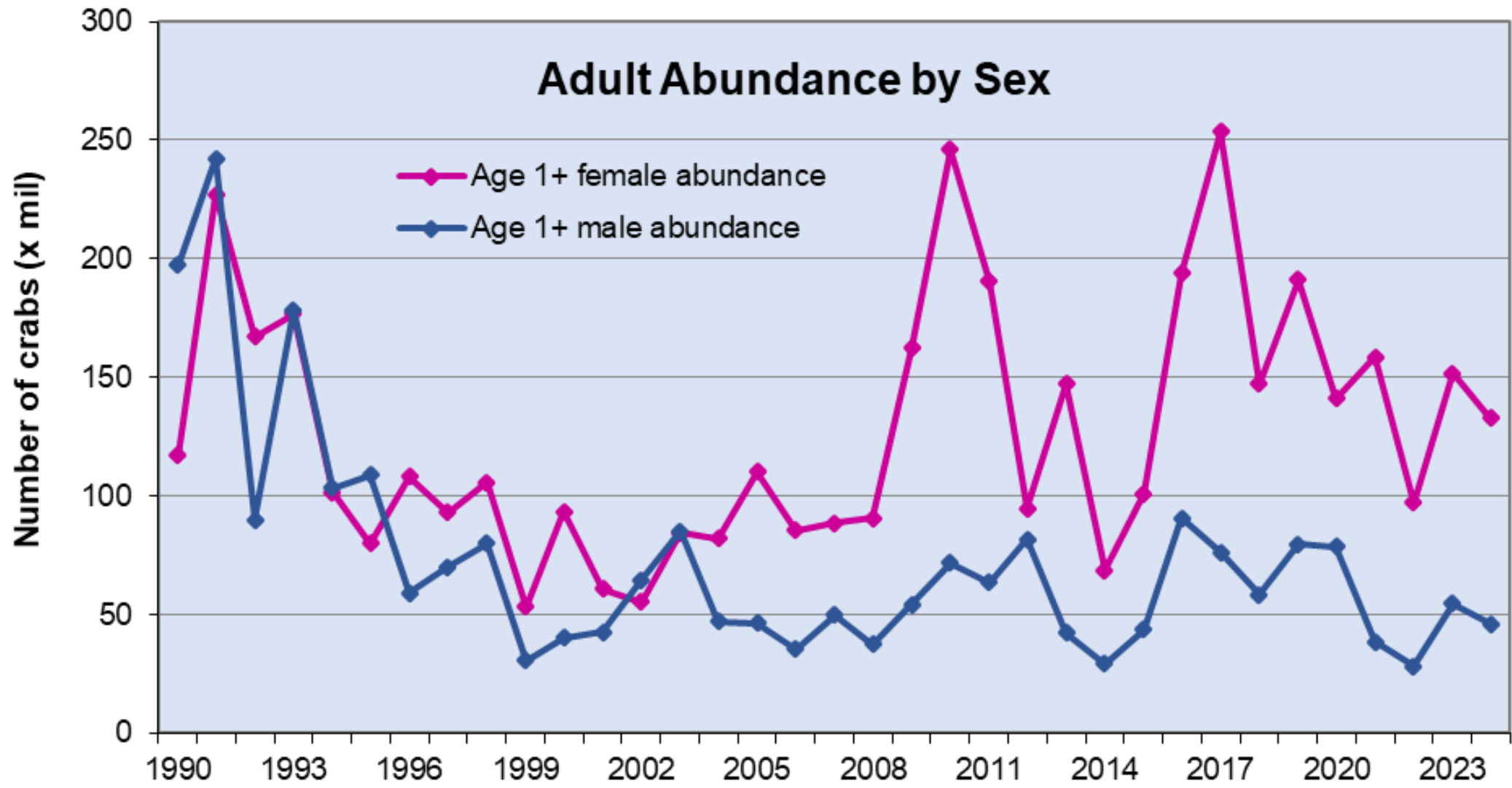
- Most abundance estimates decreased from 2024
- Total crab abundance decreased 25% to 238 million
  - Ranks 35<sup>th</sup> in 36 years of survey
- Adult female abundance decreased 19% to 108 million
  - Above the abundance threshold of 72 million crabs
  - Below the abundance target of 196 million crabs
- Adult male abundance decreased 43% to 26 million
- Juvenile abundance decreased 25% to 103 million

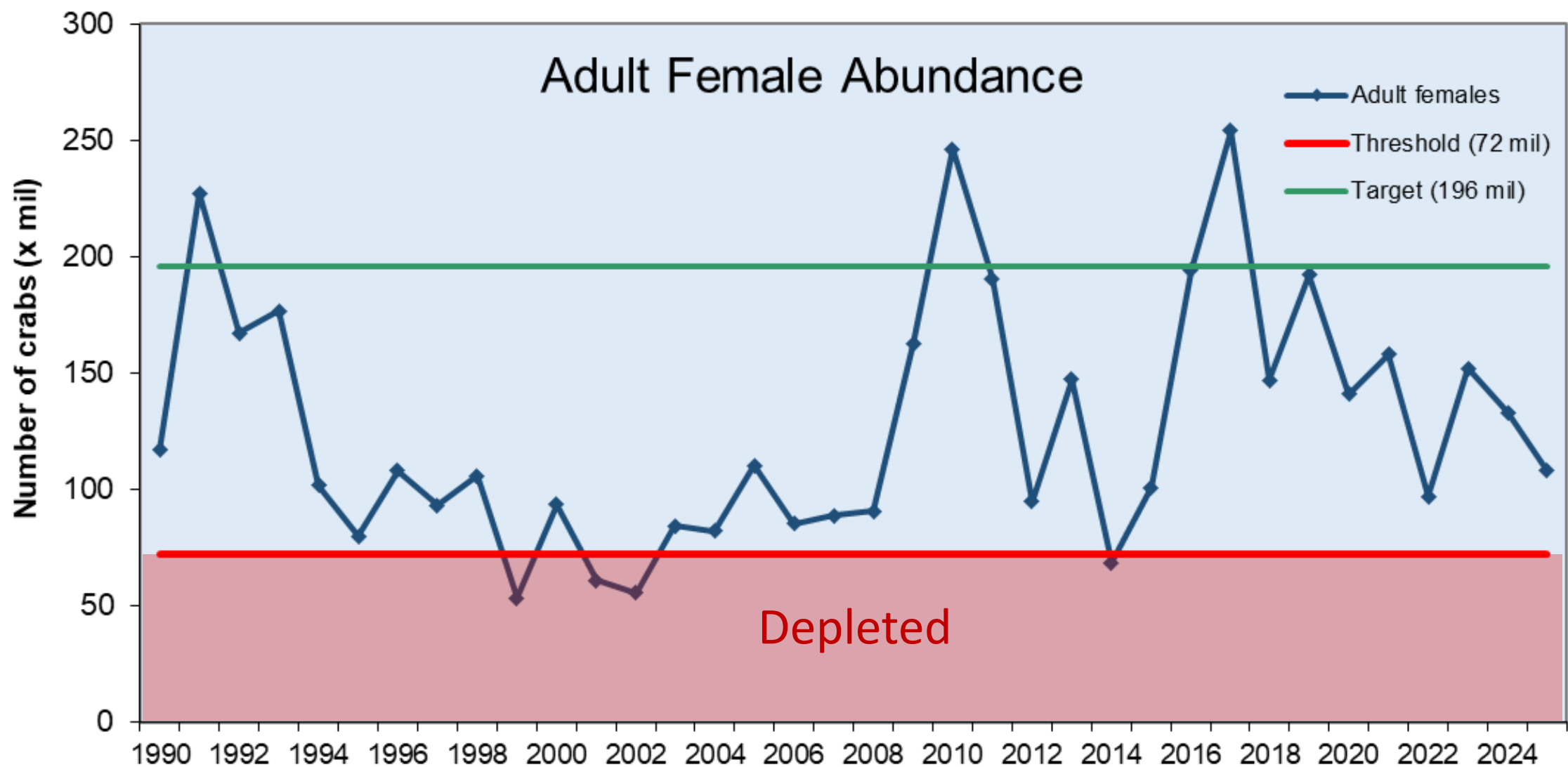




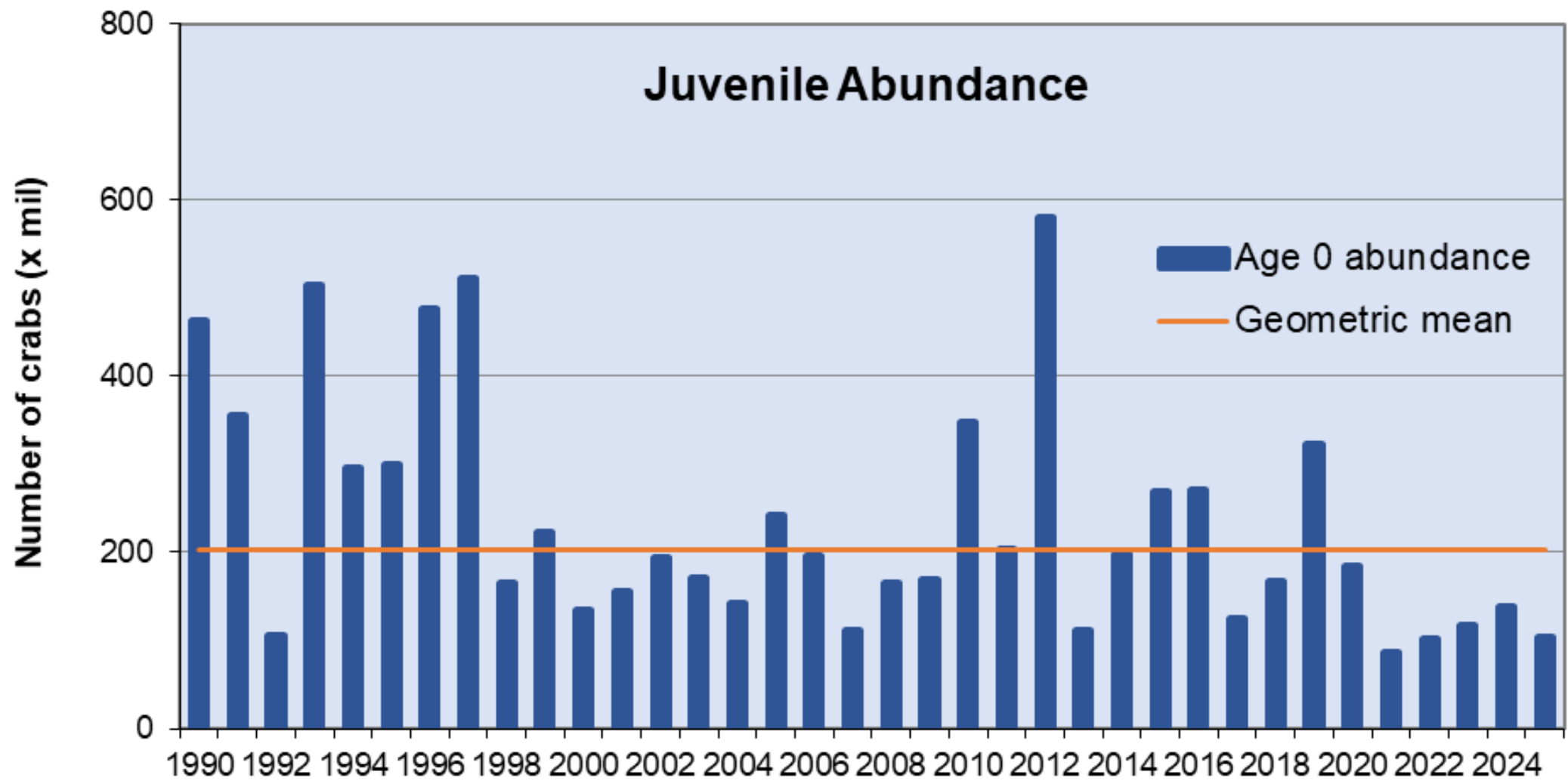












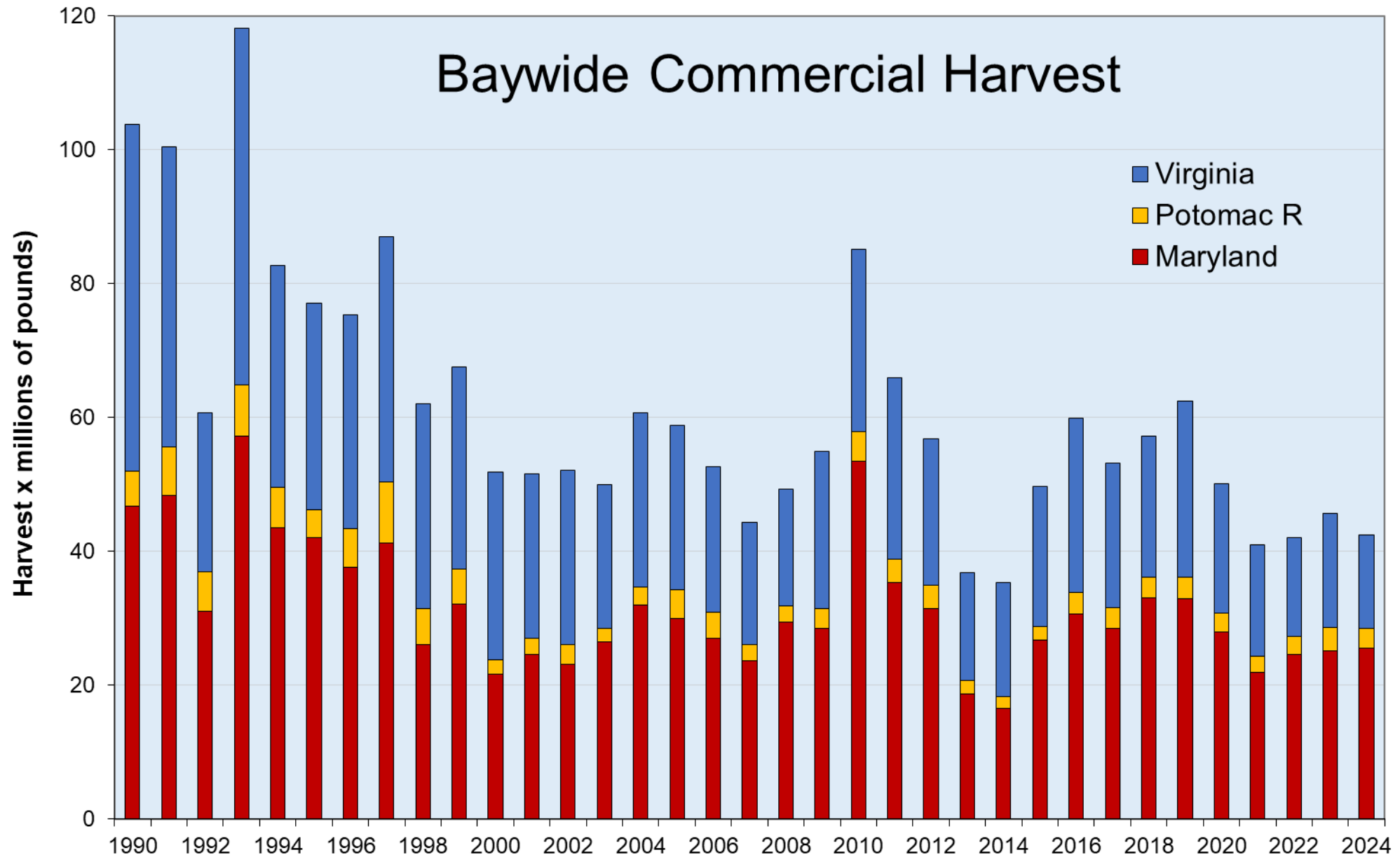
# Outline

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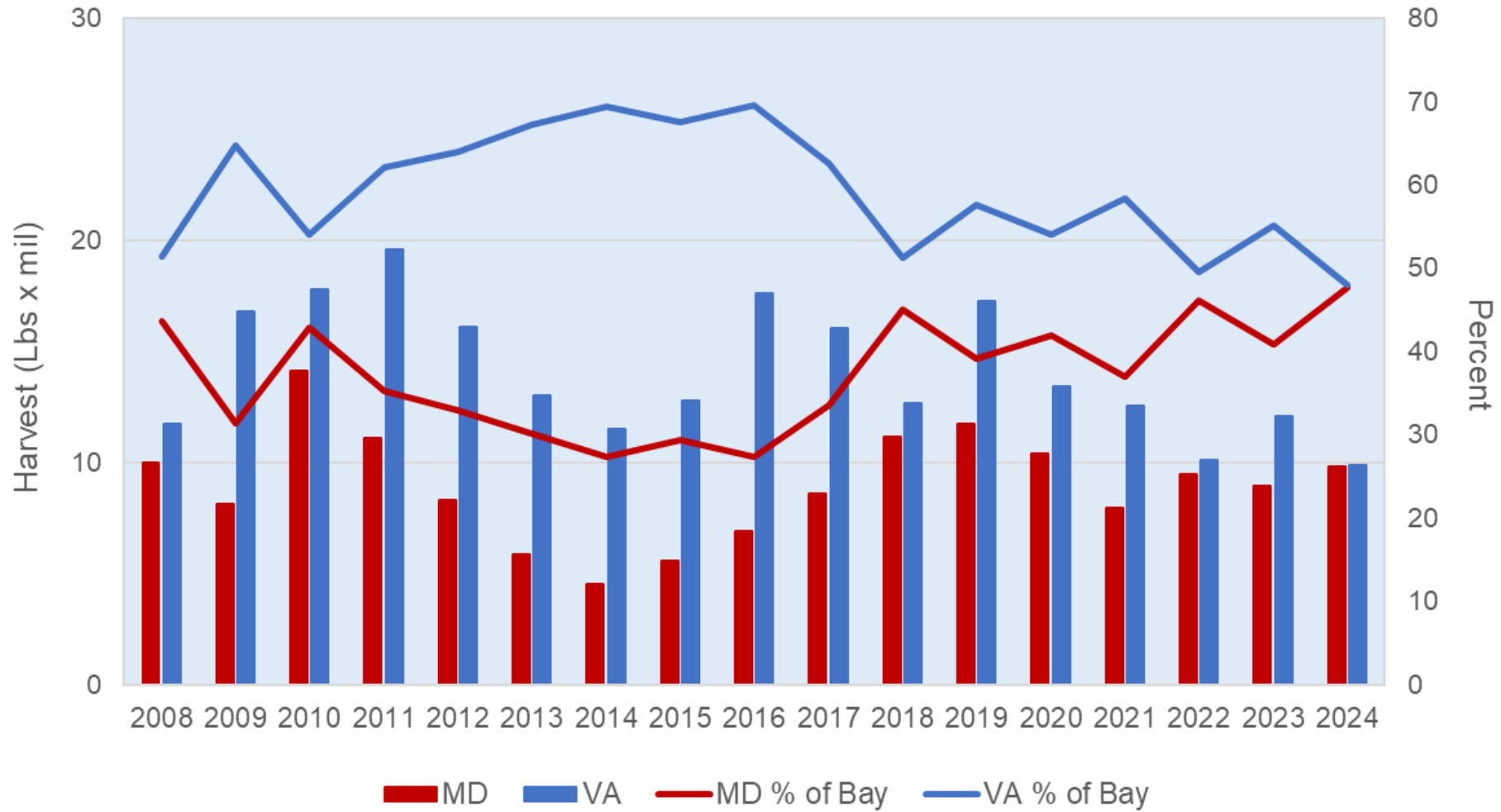
- I. Winter Dredge Survey Abundance Results and Reference Points
- II. Bay-wide Harvest Data and Reference Points**
- III. Virginia Commercial Harvest Data



# Baywide Commercial Harvest

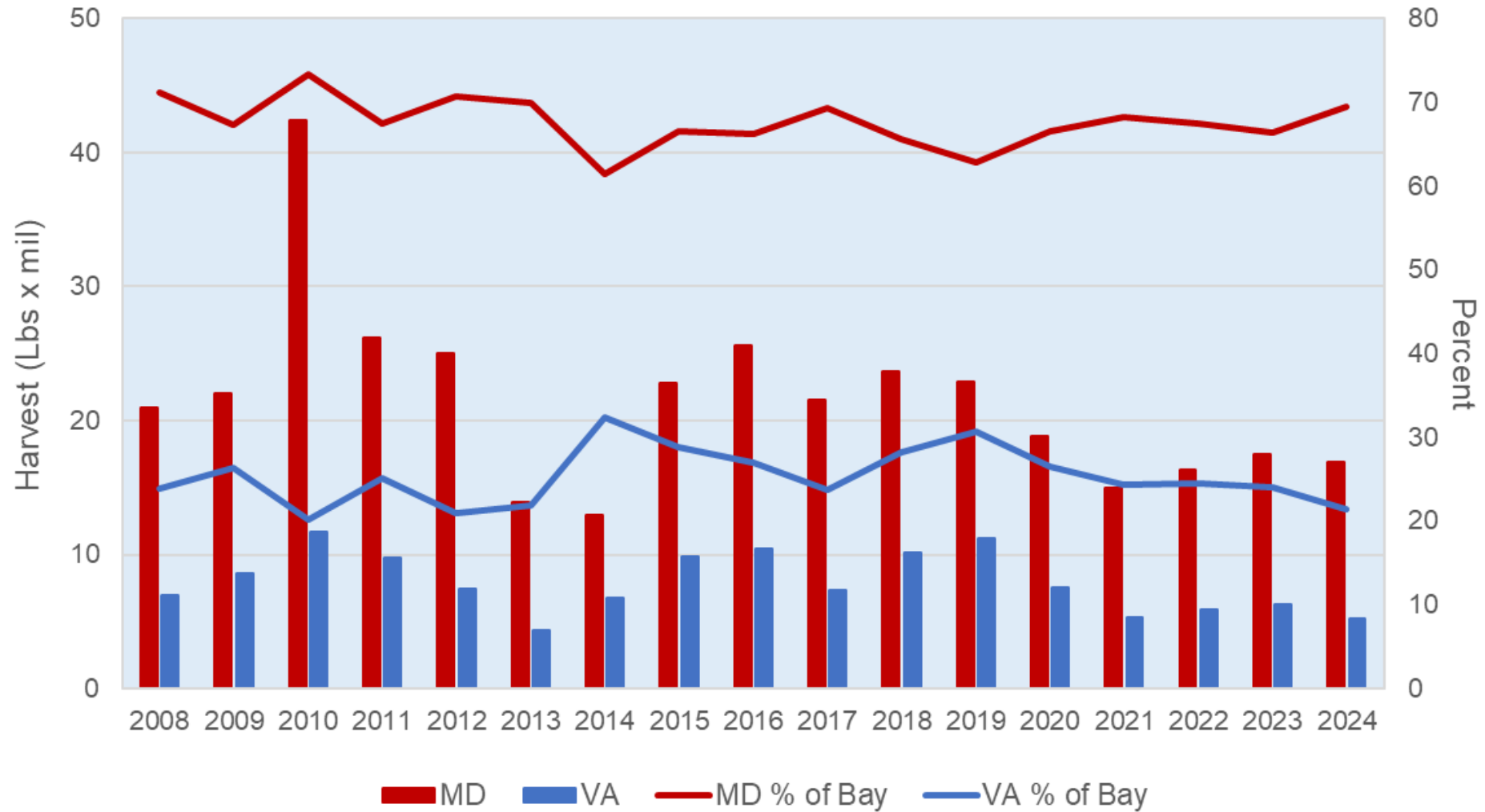


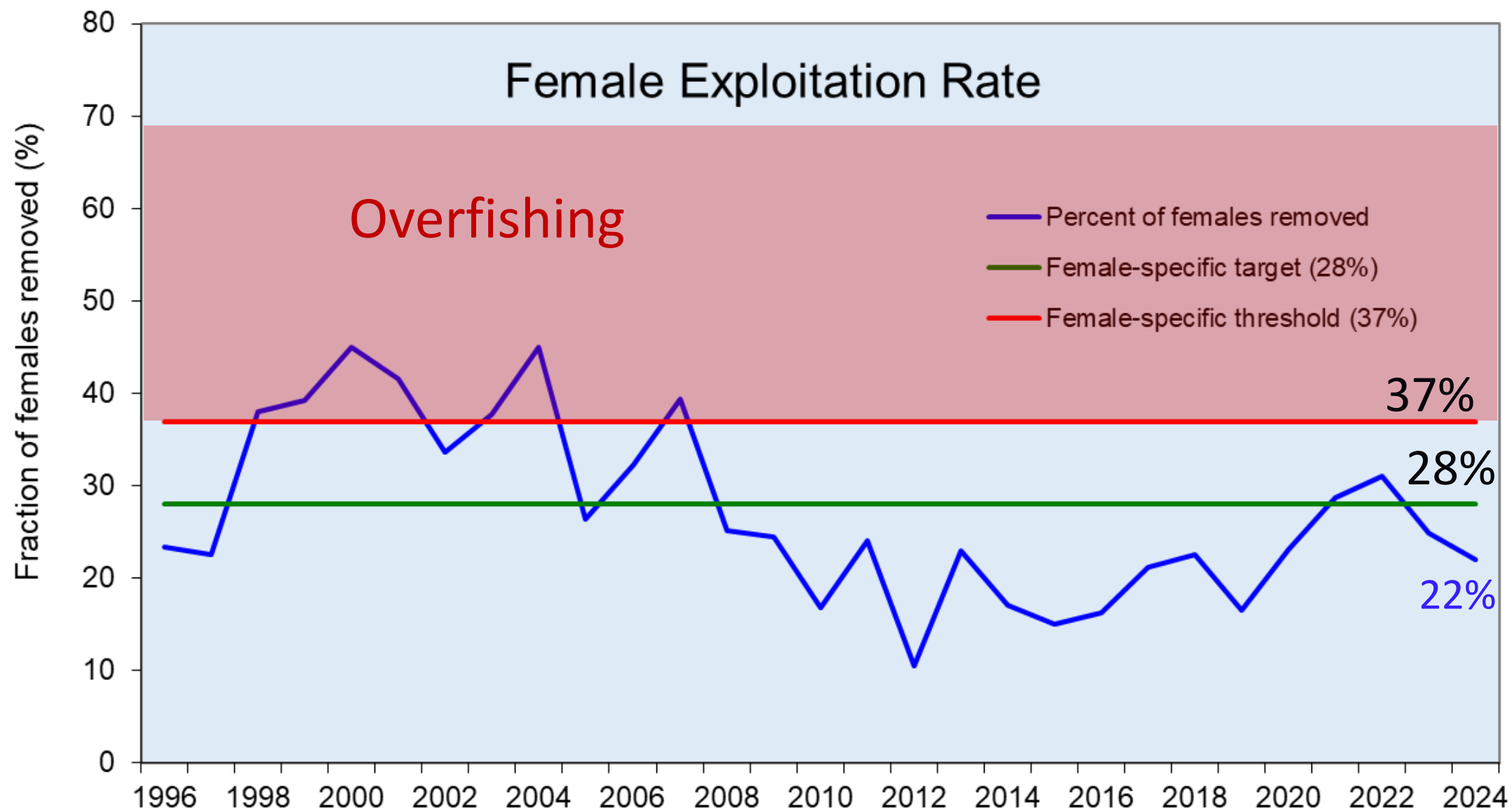
## Female Harvest



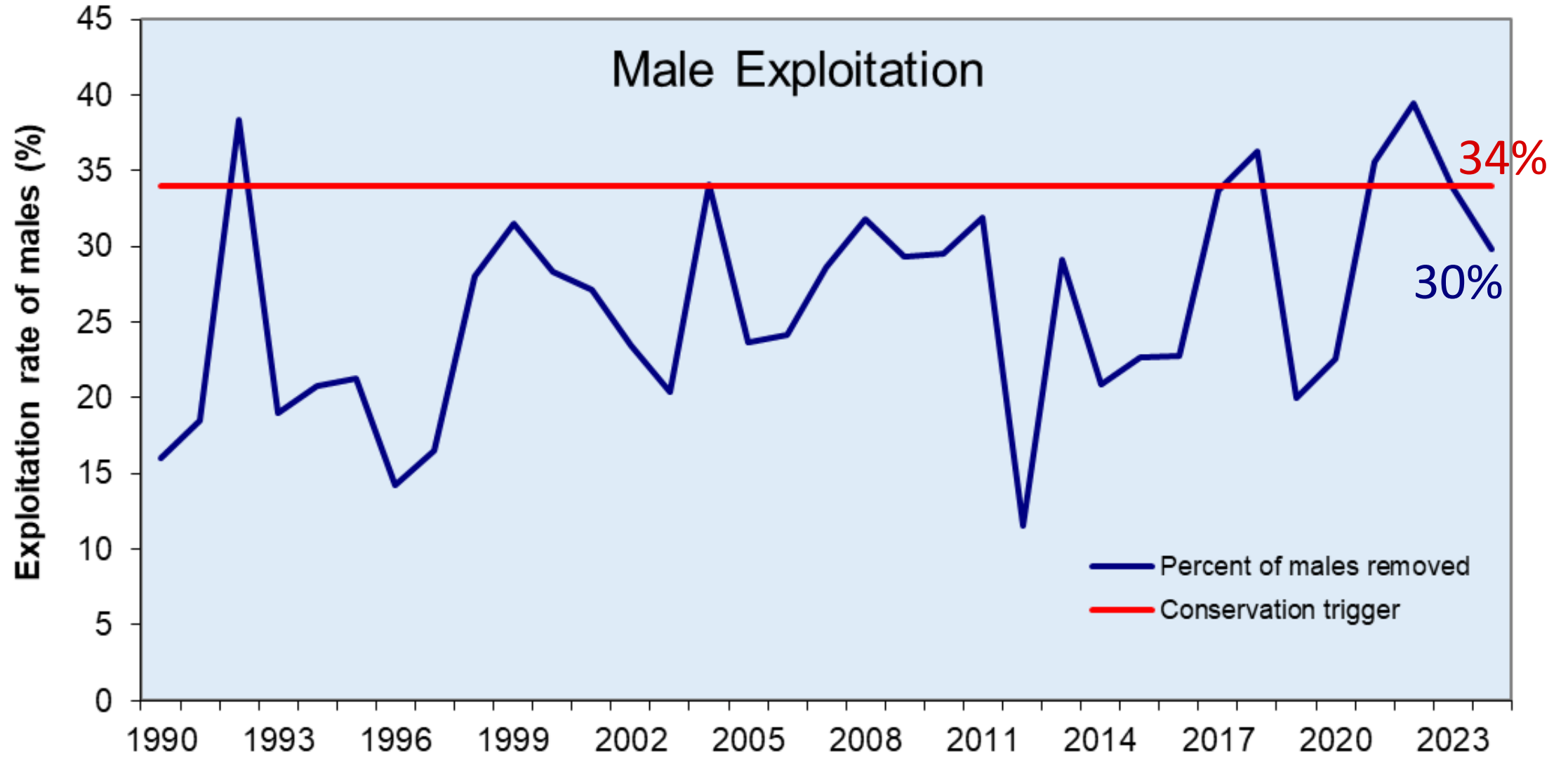


## Male Harvest













QUESTIONS?



# Outline

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- I. Winter Dredge Survey Abundance Results and Reference Points
- II. Bay-wide Harvest Data and Reference Points
- III. Virginia Commercial Harvest Data**

# 2024 Virginia Harvest\*

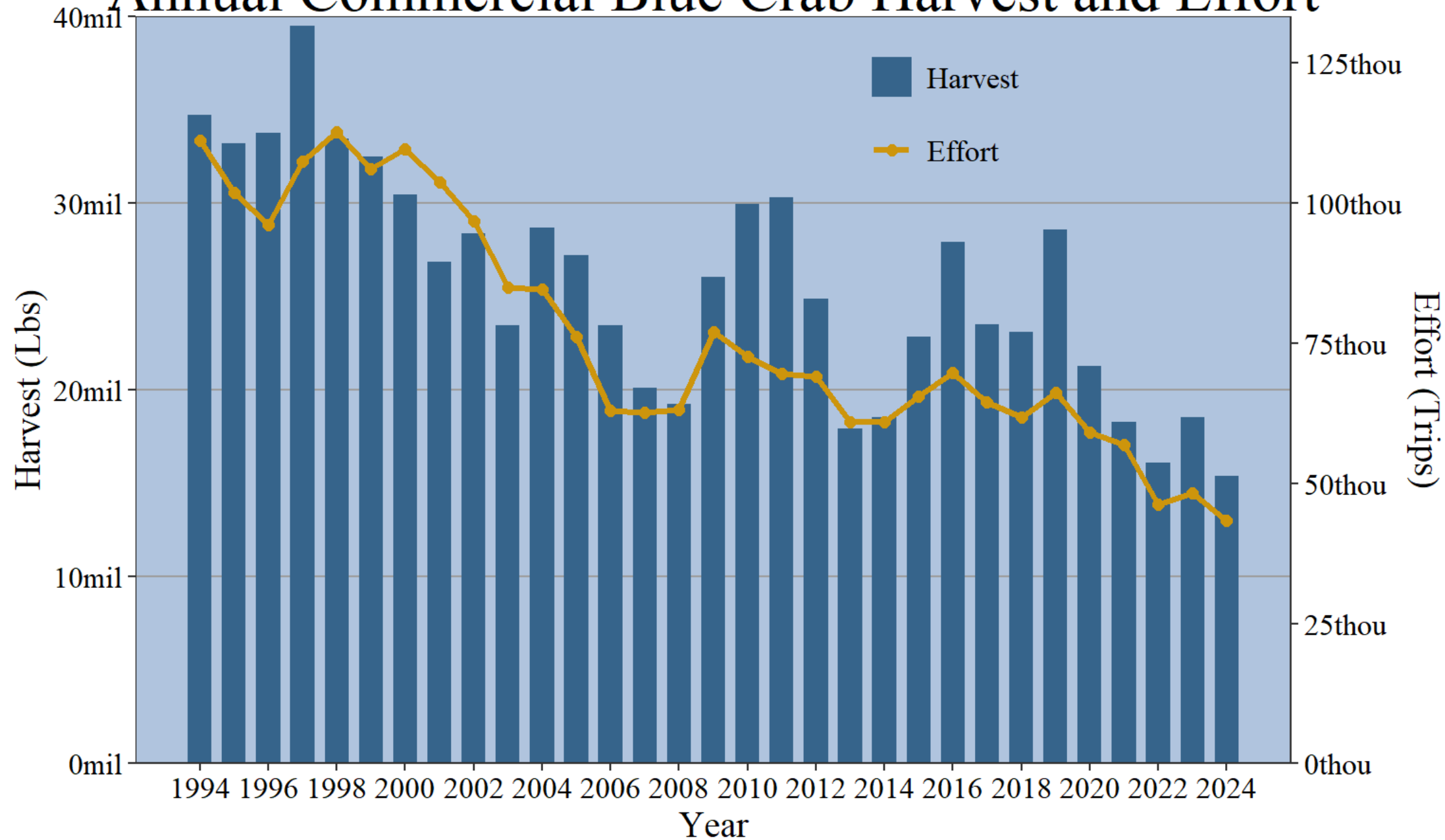
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- Harvest: 15,415,122 lbs (17% decrease)
  - Hard crab pots: 97%
  - Peeler pots: 3.0%
  - Other gears: 0.1%
- Dockside Value: \$34,510,589 (17% decrease)
- Harvesters: 745
- Trips: 43,452 (10% decrease)

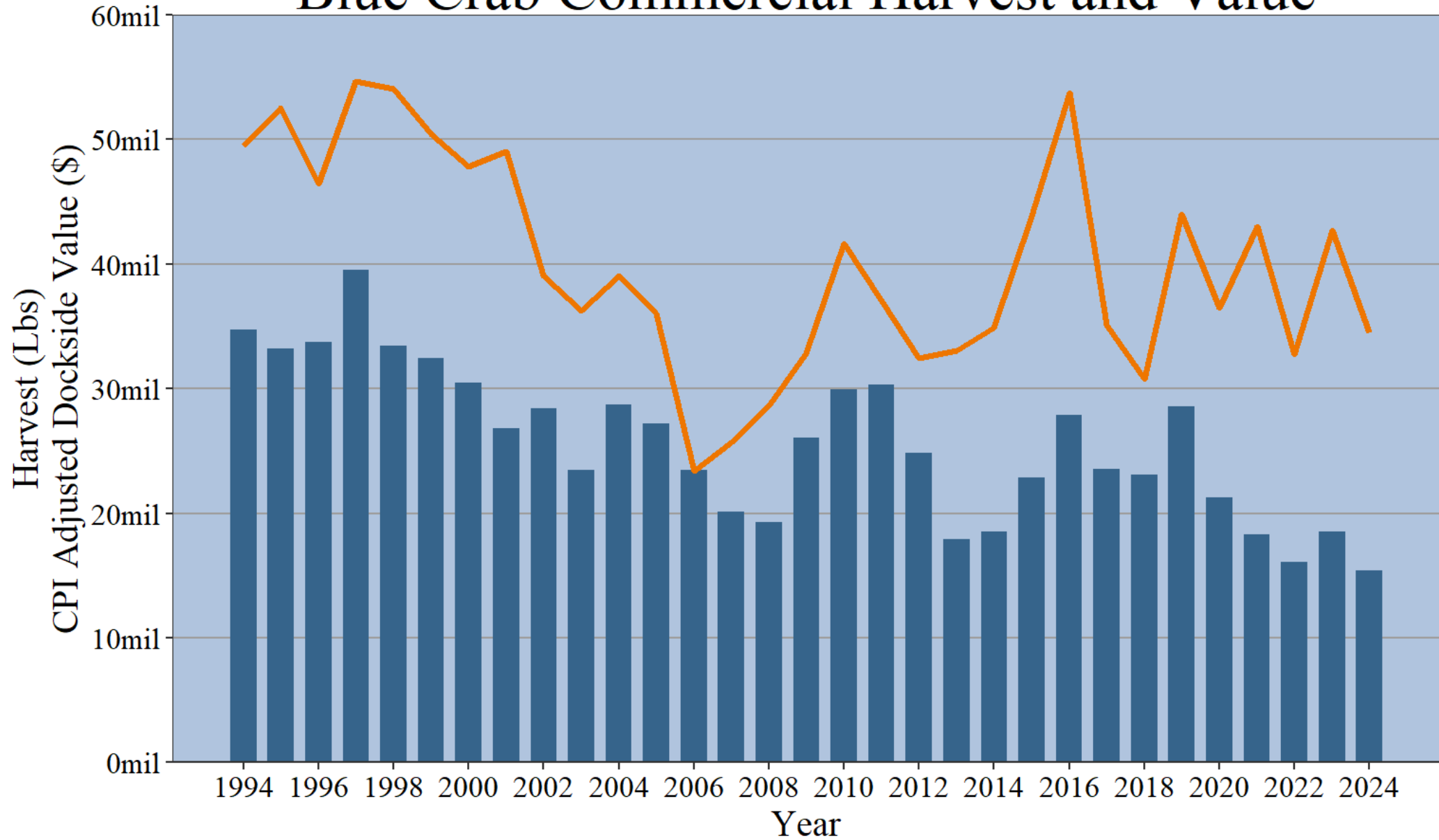
\*All 2024 Harvest  
data is preliminary



# Annual Commercial Blue Crab Harvest and Effort

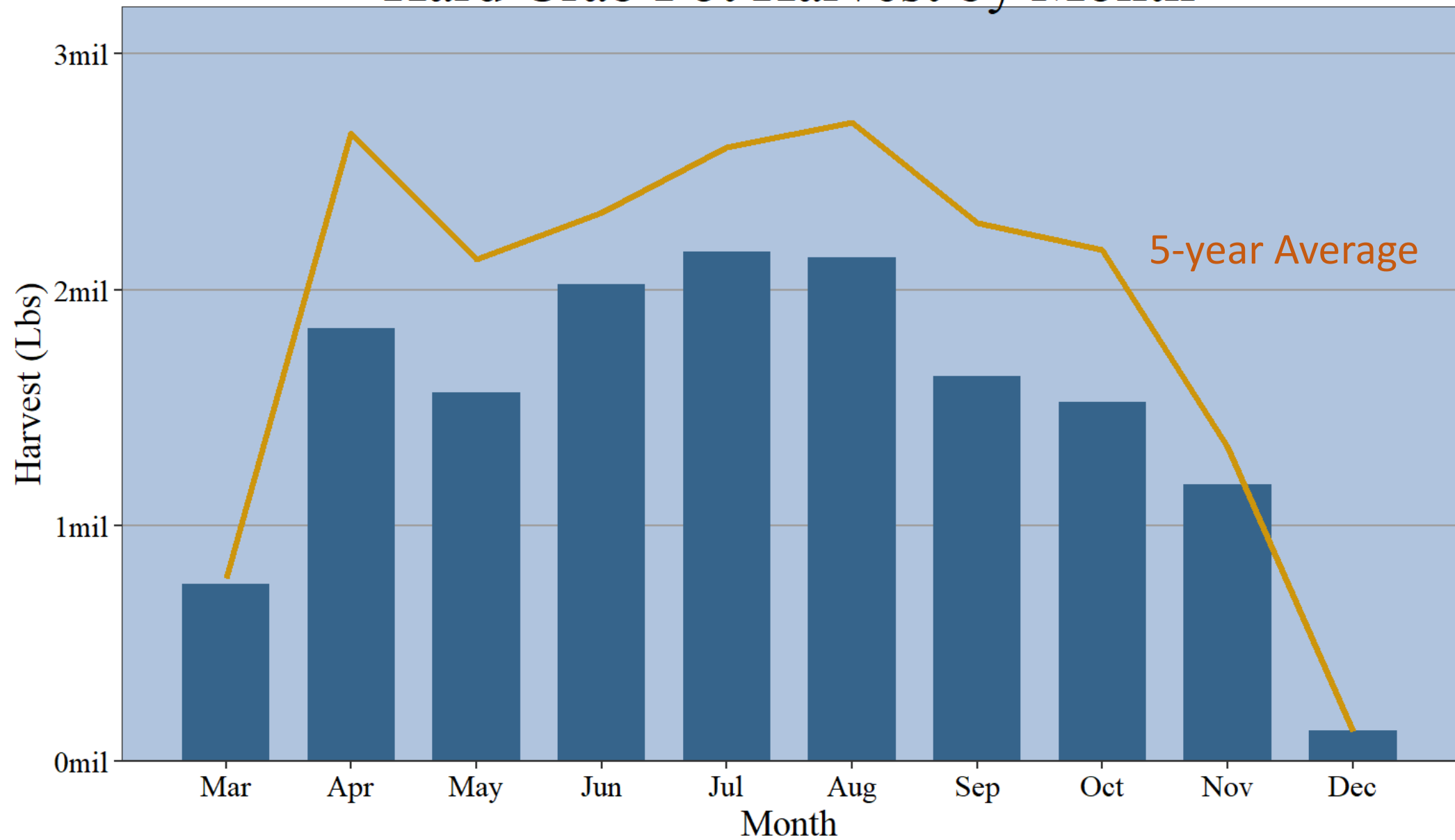


# Blue Crab Commercial Harvest and Value

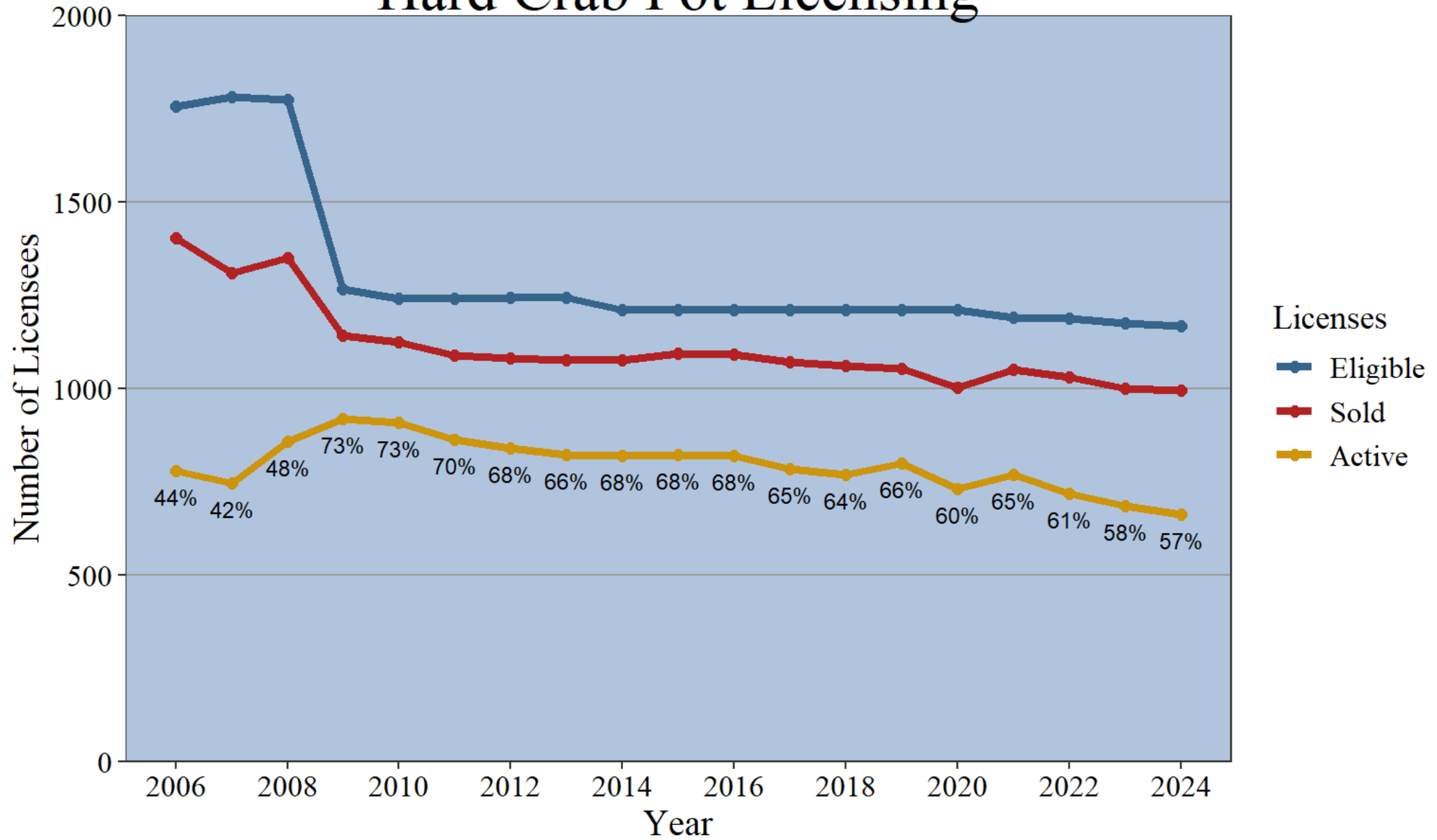




# Hard Crab Pot Harvest by Month



# Hard Crab Pot Licensing





MONTH	POUNDS			TRIPS			HARVS		
	2023	2024	2025	2023	2024	2025	2023	2024	2025
3	1,224,788	752,391	547,399	2,020	1,586	1,130	289	259	189
4	2,436,525	1,845,996	2,051,950	4,857	4,512	3,633	420	392	324
5	1,932,206	1,685,108		6,477	6,508		529	525	
6	2,075,742	2,101,523	0	7,641	7,099	0	572	544	0
7	2,231,373	2,294,313	0	7,307	7,308	0	571	563	0
8	2,480,686	2,212,891	0	7,155	6,305	0	535	520	0
9	2,316,158	1,682,818	0	5,782	4,549	0	507	444	0
10	2,225,100	1,533,369	0	4,105	3,212	0	387	322	0
11	1,446,219	1,176,109	0	2,572	2,084	0	252	198	0
12	183,214	130,605	0	428	289	0	92	75	0
Total	18,552,011	15,415,122	2,904,001	48,344	43,452	5,662	772	745	368

Confidential data removed

% of Licensees who have reported				
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
	100	97	91	78

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# 2025-26 Management Measures

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- Status quo
  - Same season and bushel limits as last year
    - Hard Crab Pot: March 17 – December 16
      - High bushel limit: May 16 – October 31
    - Peeler pot and other gears: April 15 – October 15
  - Closure of winter dredge fishery

# Timeline

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- May 15: CBSAC reviewed results
- May 22: VA and MD press release
- May 29: Results presented at CMAC
- June 24: Commission meeting for 2025-2026 management measures
- Upcoming: Stock assessment
  - Stock Assessment Team currently at work
  - Peer reviewed results expected Spring 2026



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# Terrapin Petition

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- Petition to Protect Diamondback Terrapins (*Malaclemys terrapin*) from Mortality in Blue Crab Pots by Requiring Bycatch Reduction Devices in Near-Shore Waters
- Submitted February 12, 2025
- Petitioners:
  - Center for Biological Diversity
  - Virginia Herpetological Society
  - Wild Virginia
  - Dr. Willem M. Roosenburg (Ohio University)



# Terrapin Petition (pg 2)

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Initiate rulemaking to:

- **What:** Require BRDs (bycatch reduction devices) on licensed commercial and recreational blue crab pots.
- **Where:** Waters less than 150 yards from shore (at mean low water mark/tide) and manmade lagoons, creeks, coves, rivers, tributaries, shallow bays, inlets, and near-shore harbors.
- **When:** Within three years of approval of the petition.

# Petitions for Rulemaking

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Petitions for rulemaking follow § 2.2-4007 of the Code of Virginia.

“Any person may petition an agency to request the agency to develop a new regulation or amend an existing regulation. The petition shall state (i) the substance and purpose of the rulemaking that is requested, including reference to any applicable Virginia Administrative Code sections, and (ii) reference to the legal authority of the agency to take the action requested.”



# Petitions for Rulemaking

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Within 14 days of receiving a petition, VMRC sends notice for publication in the Virginia Register of Regulations and the petition is posted on Virginia Regulatory Town Hall.

## **Public Comment Period**

- A 21-day public comment period is provided after publication in the Register.
- During this time VMRC will conduct an interagency and university request for comments to be considered by the Commission for decision and action.

## **Agency Decision**

- Within 90 days after the close of the comment period, the Commission issues a written decision to grant or deny the petitioner's request, including reasons for decision.

## **Initiating Rulemaking**

- If the Commission agrees to initiate a rule change, it is placed in Town Hall and advertised following normal regulatory procedure for a public hearing.

# Petition Order of Proceedings – June 24, 2025

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1. Staff introduction to petitions and petition timeline
2. Petitioner presentation – 10 minutes
3. Staff presentations concerning the petition
4. Public comment period, with a time limit determined by the Chair
5. Response from the petitioner – five minutes allocated
6. Commission questions and deliberation
7. Commission decision



# Petition Process

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- Commission issues a written decision to grant or deny the petitioner's request.

## **If granted:**

- Written decision is published in Virginia Register and rulemaking is initiated and advertised per § 28.2-209 and placed in the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall for review by the Office of Regulatory Management.

## **If denied:**

- Written decision is published in Virginia Register.

# Public Comments

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- Public comment period: March 10 – March 31, 2025
- Comments in support: 35
- Comment in opposition: 424
- Petition presentation: June 24, 2025, Commission meeting
  - This is the only remaining opportunity for public comment



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# License Wait List

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- In 2008, a Blue Crab Fishery Disaster was declared for Chesapeake Bay
- Overcapitalization of the fishery, overfishing, and latent effort were identified as issues to be addressed
- VMRC's Blue Crab Regulatory Review Committee said effort control is hampered by substantial latent effort
  - Latent effort: Unused but potential effort

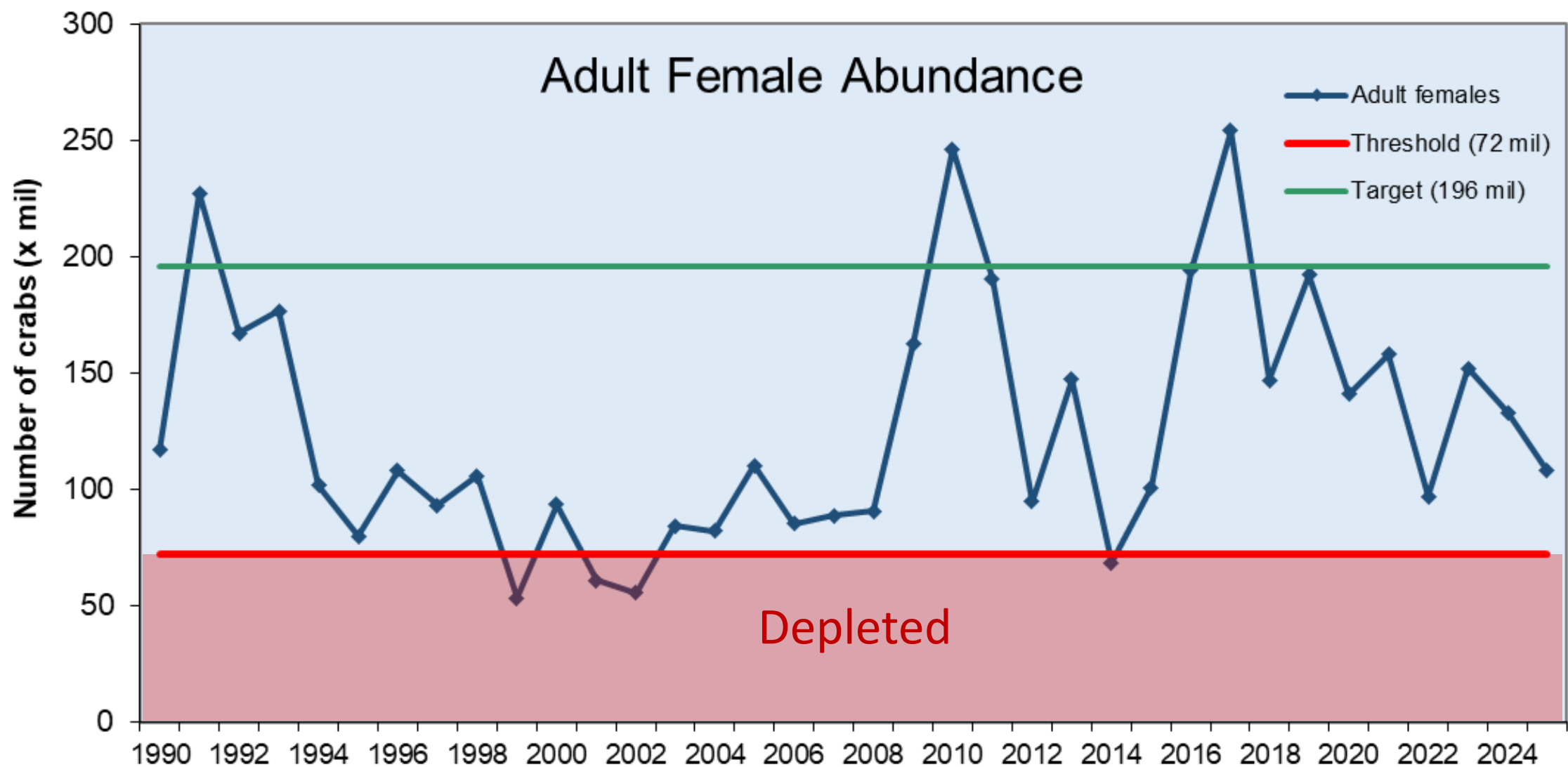


## 4VAC20-1040-20. License sales moratorium and license ineligibility conditions.

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B. For any lawful commercial crab fishery season, those registered commercial fishermen who were eligible from 2004 through 2008 for any crab pot or peeler pot licenses but reported no harvest from 2004 through 2007 were placed on a waiting list in 2009 and shall remain ineligible to purchase a commercial crab pot or peeler pot license in accordance with subsection C of this section.

C. At such time as results from the Bay-wide Blue Crab Winter Dredge Survey indicate that an abundance of 215 million age 1+ female blue crabs (blue crabs 2.4 inches and greater, in carapace width) has been attained in three consecutive, seasonal (December – March) Bay-wide Blue Crab Winter Dredge Surveys, those registered commercial fishermen on the waiting list as described in subsection B of this section shall resume their eligibility to purchase their commercial crab pot or peeler pot licenses according to a limited and delayed access system established by the commission.





# Wait List

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	Hard Crab Pots	Peeler Pots	Total
Original Wait List	524	343	867
Current Wait List	63	25	88

88 Licenses for 71 individuals

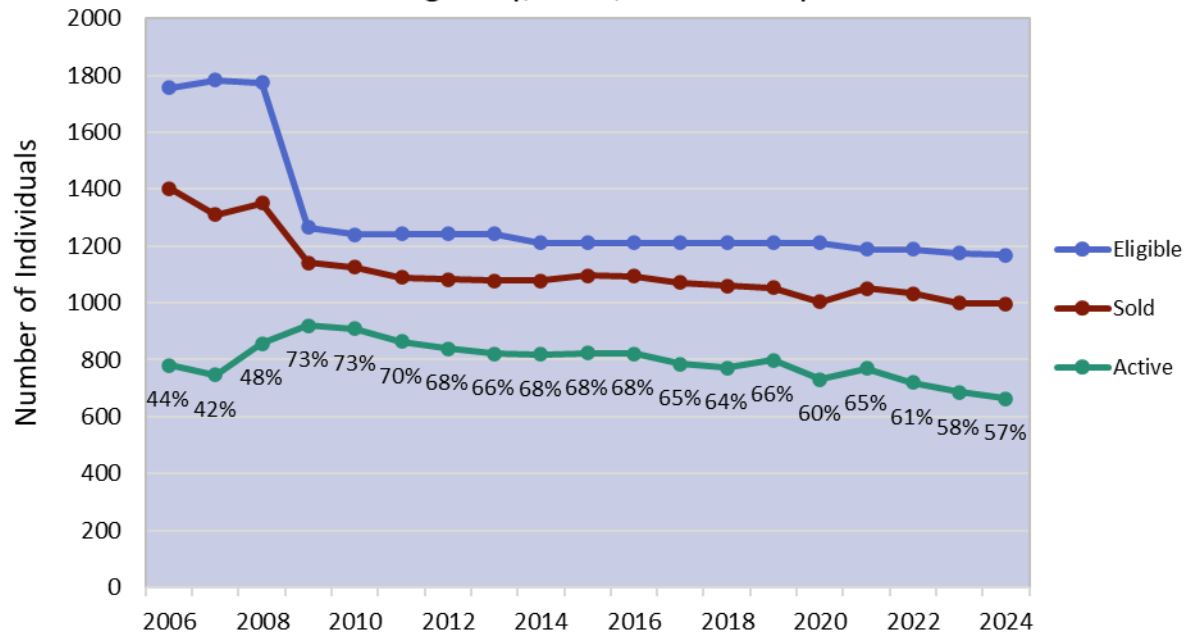
## Latent Effort of Current Wait List

	License	# of Licenses	# of Pots
<b>Hard Crab Pots</b>	85 pot	25	2,125
	127 pot	4	508
	170 pot	2	340
	255 pot	30	7,650
	425 pot	2	850
	Total	67	11,473
<b>Peeler Pots</b>	210 pots	25	5,250

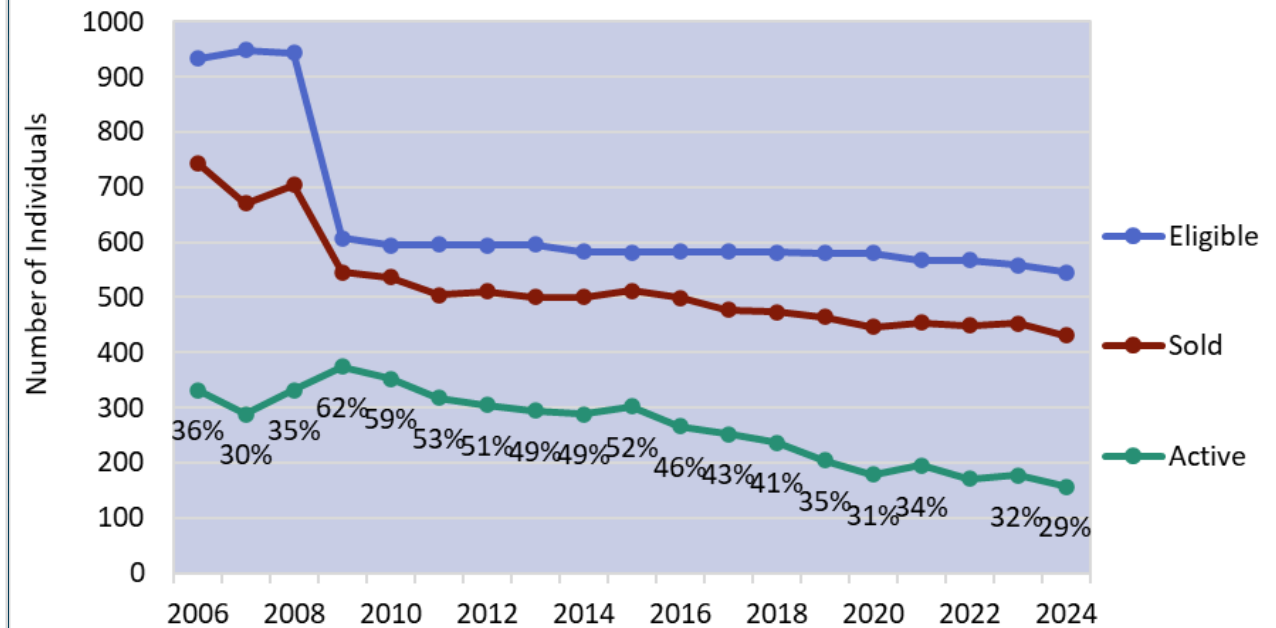


# Latent Effort in Current Fishery

Crab Pot License  
Eligibility, Sales, and Activity



Peeler Pot License  
Eligibility, Sales, and Activity



	Latent Effort in Current Fishery (2024)			
	License	Eligible	Sold	Active
Hard Crab Pot	85 pot	334	263	150
	127 pot	71	60	32
	170 pot	28	23	14
	255 pot	617	540	376
	425 pot	118	110	92
	Total Pots	249,652	218,335	154,174
Peeler Pot	210 pot	546	431	157
	Total Pots	114,660	90,510	32,970



Latent Effort by Gear (2024)			
Gear	Eligible	Sold	Active
Dip Net	31	12	0
Peeler Pot	546	431	165
Pot	1168	996	697
Pound/Trap	36	33	5
Scrape	220	100	8
Trotline	30	17	3

# Potential Options

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- Reinstate crab waiting list licensees, but reinstated licenses would be non-transferable.
- Reinstate crab waiting list licensees that did purchase their licenses from 2004 through 2007, but reinstated licenses would be non-transferable.



# Dark Sponge Law

"Dark sponge crab" means the adult female hard crab which has extruded her eggs on the abdomen or abdominal flap and the eggs have developed a coloration ranging from any shade of brown through black.

A. All crabs taken from the tidal waters of Virginia shall be culled to the legal size and possession limits by the catcher at the location of the harvest.

D. From March 17 through June 15, it shall be unlawful for any person to possess for a period longer than is necessary for immediate determination of the presence of a dark egg mass more than 10 dark sponge crabs per United States standard bushel or 35 dark sponge crabs per barrel, and the following conservation measures shall be in effect:

1. During culling, those dark sponge crabs in excess of the allowance level shall be immediately returned to the water alive and shall not be altered or destroyed in any manner.

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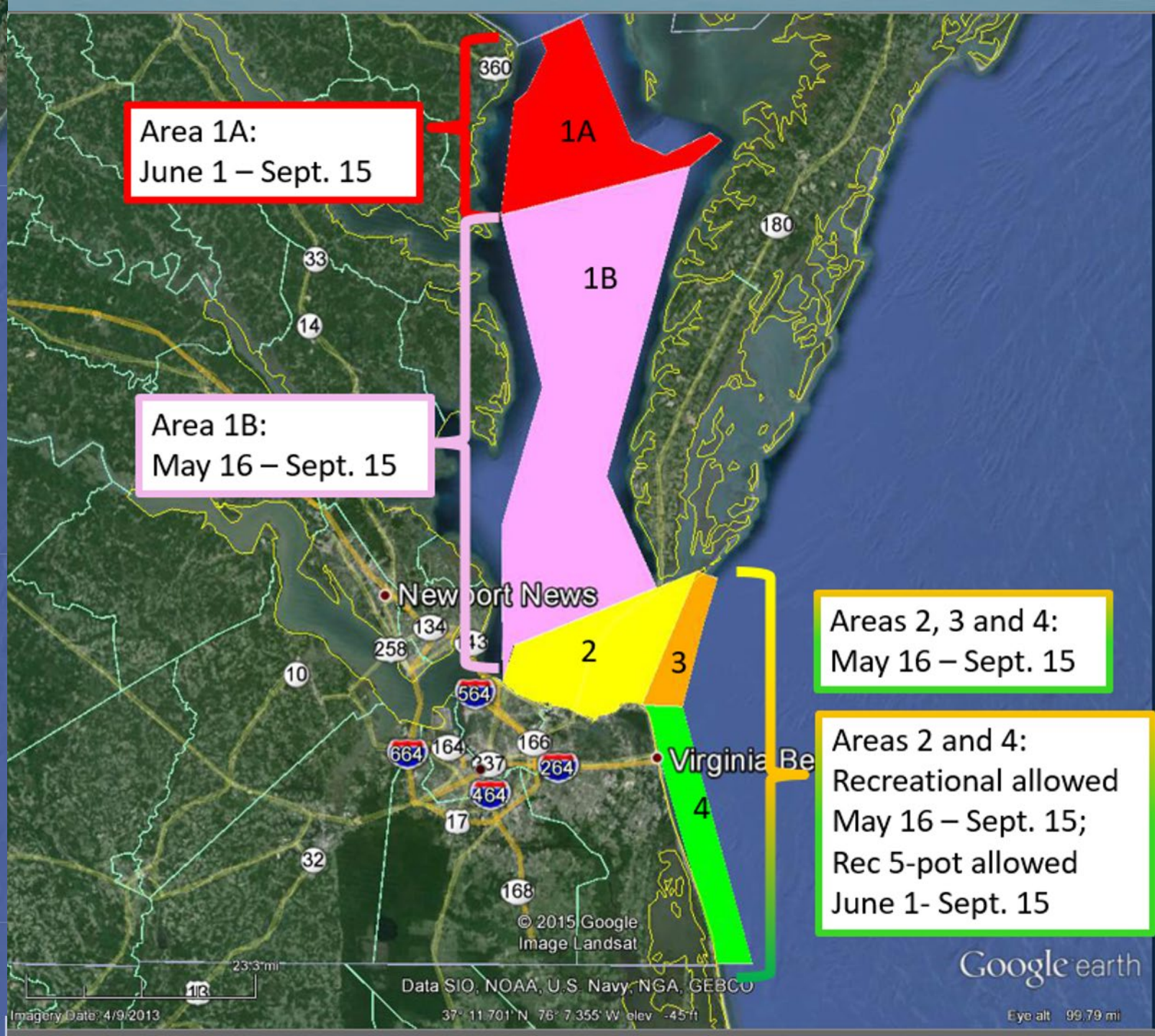
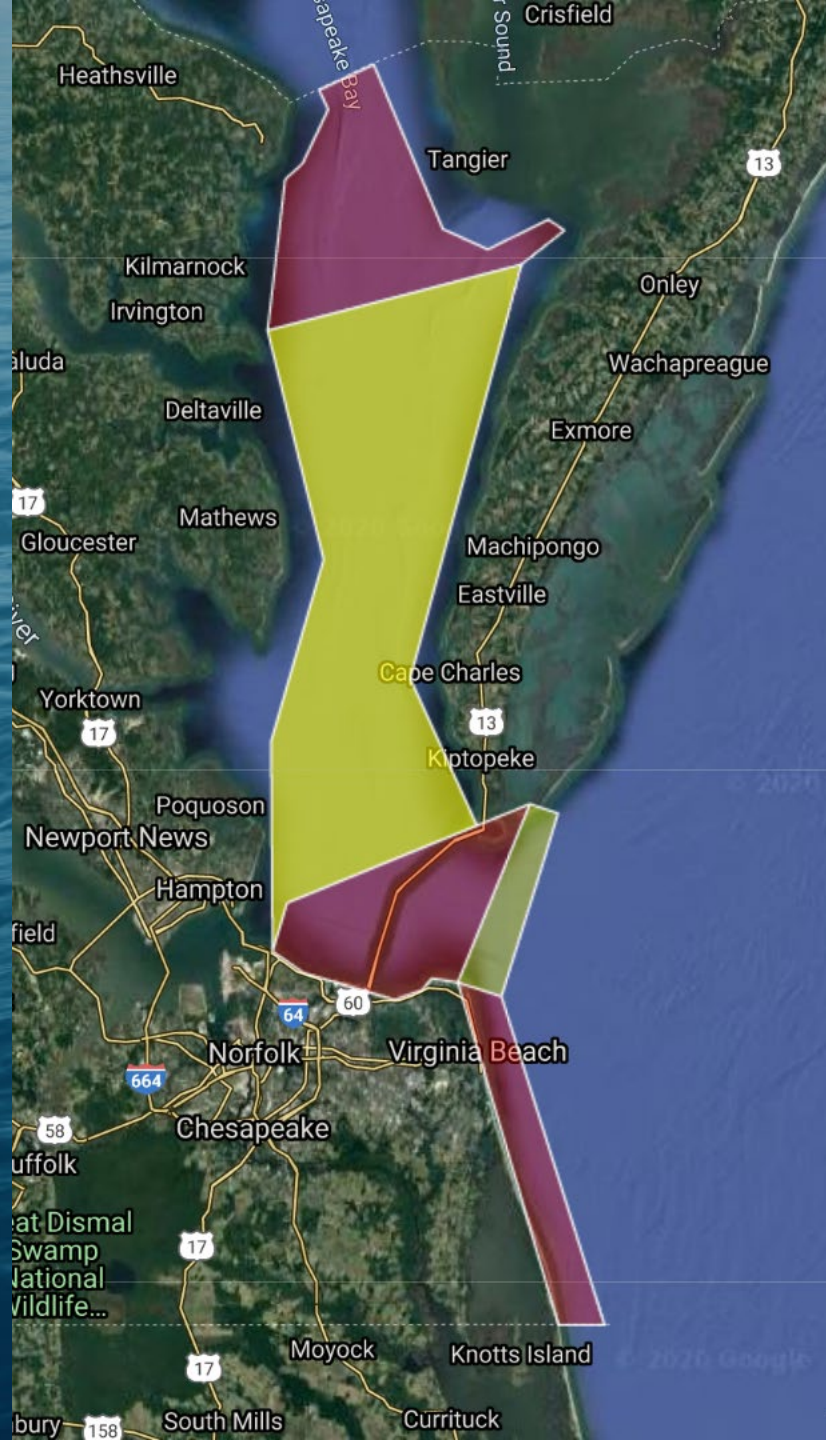
VII. Adjournment



# Backup slides












### Legend

-  §334.320 Chesapeake Bay entrance; naval restricted area.
-  Blue Crab Sanctuary Areas 3 & 4
-  Proposed section to open to commercial crabbing

### § 334.320 Chesapeake Bay entrance; naval restricted area.

(b) The regulations. (1) Anchoring, trawling, crabbing, fishing, and dragging in the area are prohibited, and no object attached to a vessel or otherwise shall be placed on or near the bottom. (2) This section shall be enforced by the Commandant, Fifth Naval District, Norfolk, Va.

Google Earth

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Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO

10 mi



Earth Point