



Blue Crab FMP Amendment 3

Adaptive Management

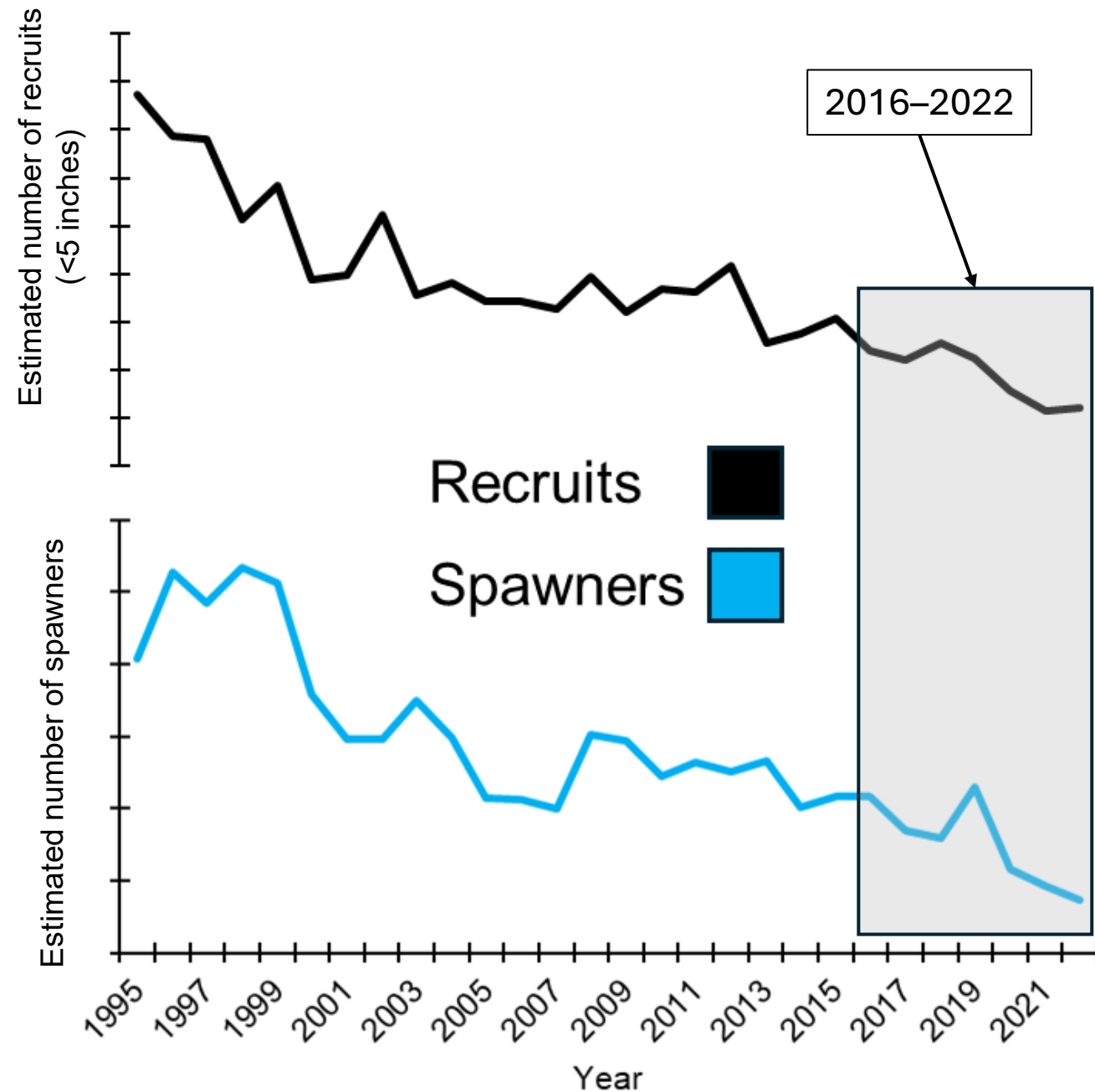
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
Marine Fisheries

Marine Fisheries Commission | Robert Corbett, McLean Seward | August 2025



Why Are We Here?

- Sampling programs show concerning negative trends
- Updated stock assessment highlights negative trends
- Updated information shows continued decline



A close-up photograph of several crabs, likely blue crabs, resting on a light-colored wooden surface. The focus is on the front of one crab, showing its greenish-brown carapace and white, segmented legs. Other crabs are visible in the background, slightly out of focus.

Presentation Outline

- Coastwide Trends and Data Collection
- Independent Data Collection
- Dependent Data Collection
- Review Adaptive Management



Coastwide Trends - South Carolina

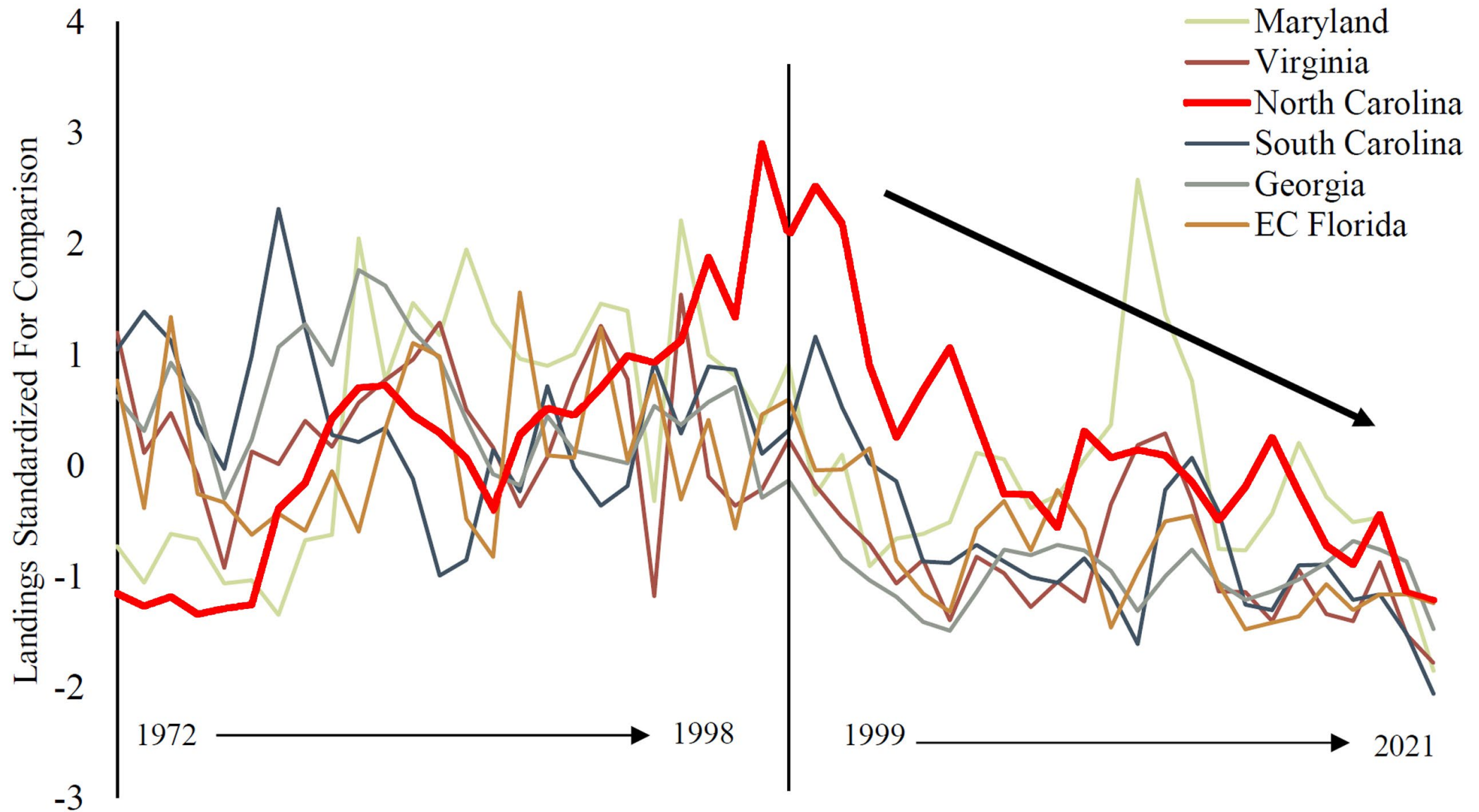
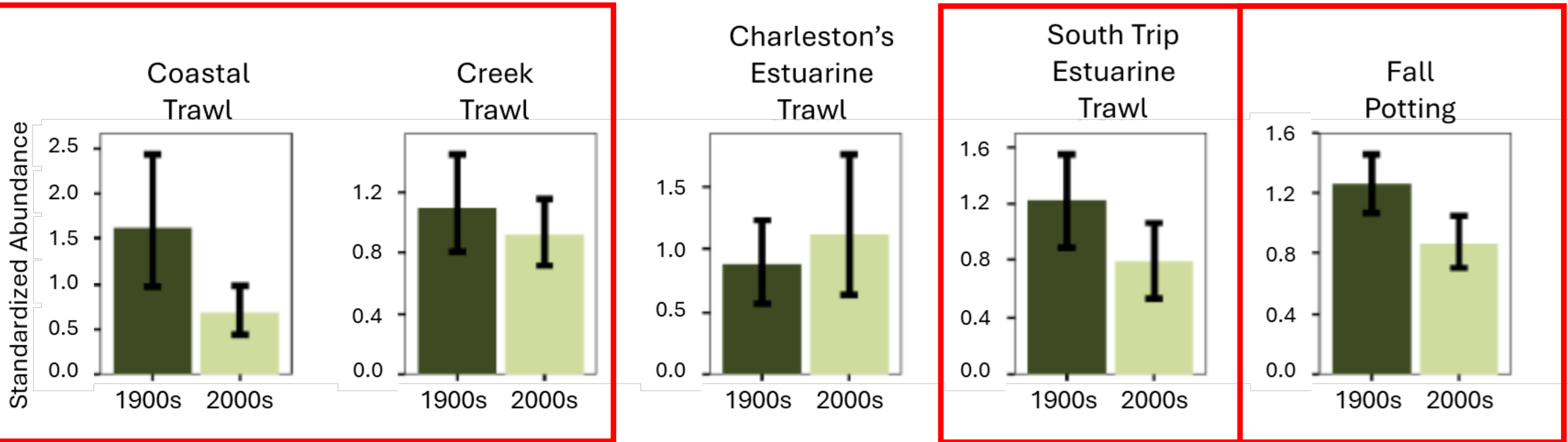


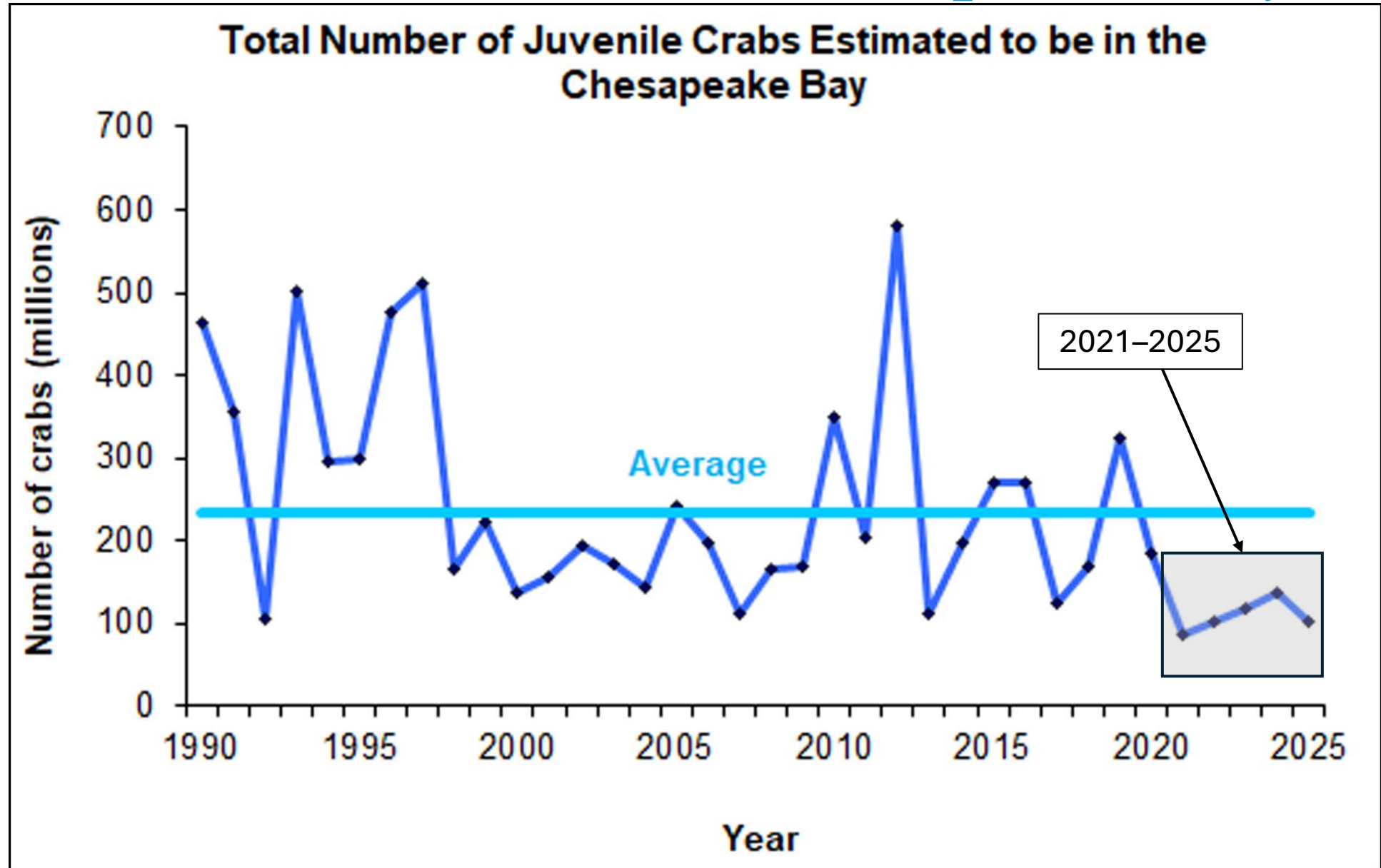
Figure from South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Blue Crab Status Report (SCDNR 2023)

Coastwide Trends - South Carolina

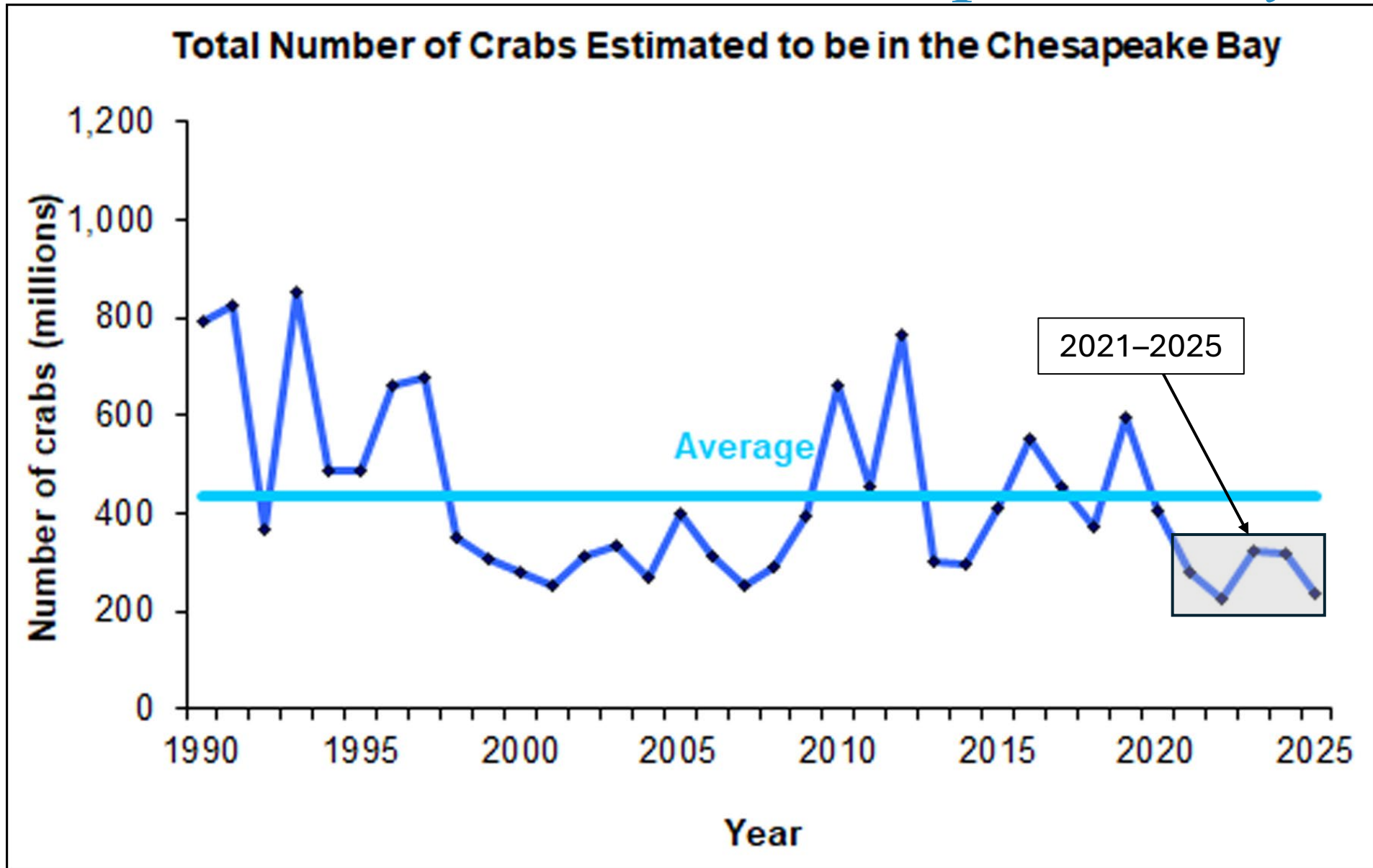


Comparison of mean standardized blue crab abundances ($\pm$ confidence limits) from five SCDNR fisheries-independent survey between samples collected through 1999 and since 2000

Coastwide Trends - Chesapeake Bay



Coastwide Trends - Chesapeake Bay



North Carolina Fishery-Independent Data Collection



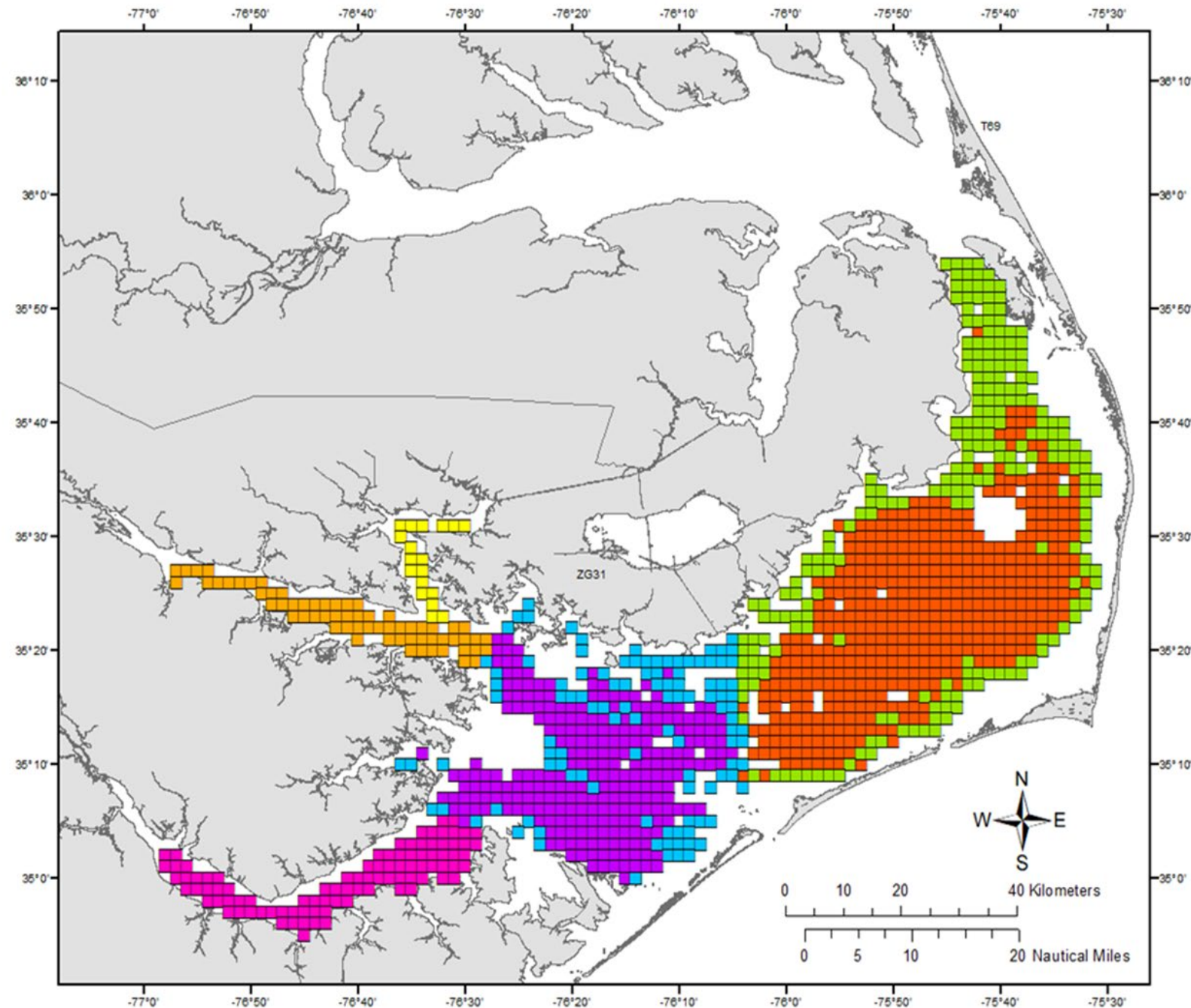


*Pamlico Sound Survey
(P195)*



Pamlico Sound Survey Stations (P195)

- Sampling in June and September
- 54 stations each month
- Stratified-random design
- 7 strata in Pamlico Sound, Neuse, Pamlico, and Pungo rivers

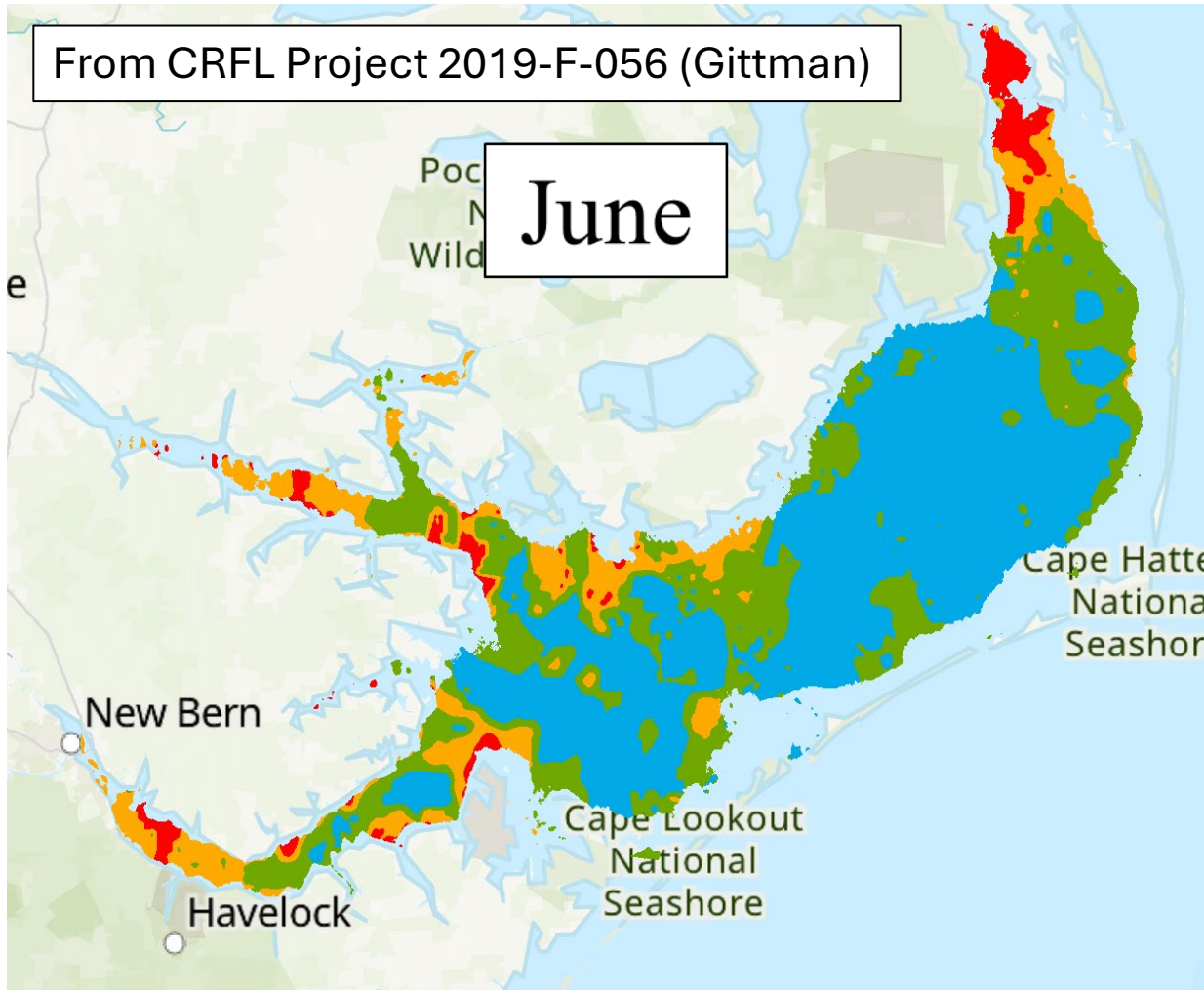


Pamlico Sound Survey (P195) Strata (Post- June 2022)

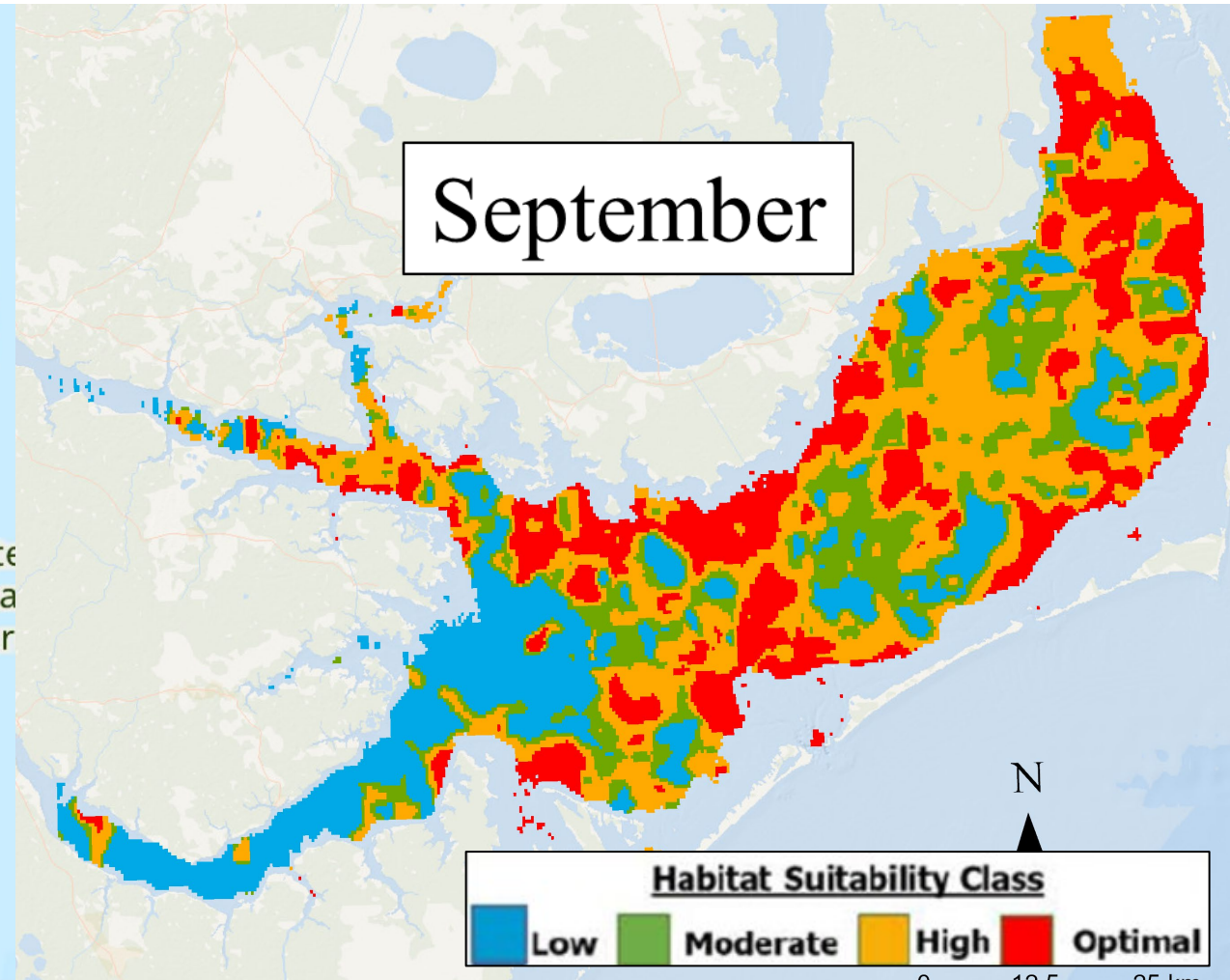
Blue Crab Habitat Suitability

From CRFL Project 2019-F-056 (Gittman)

June



September



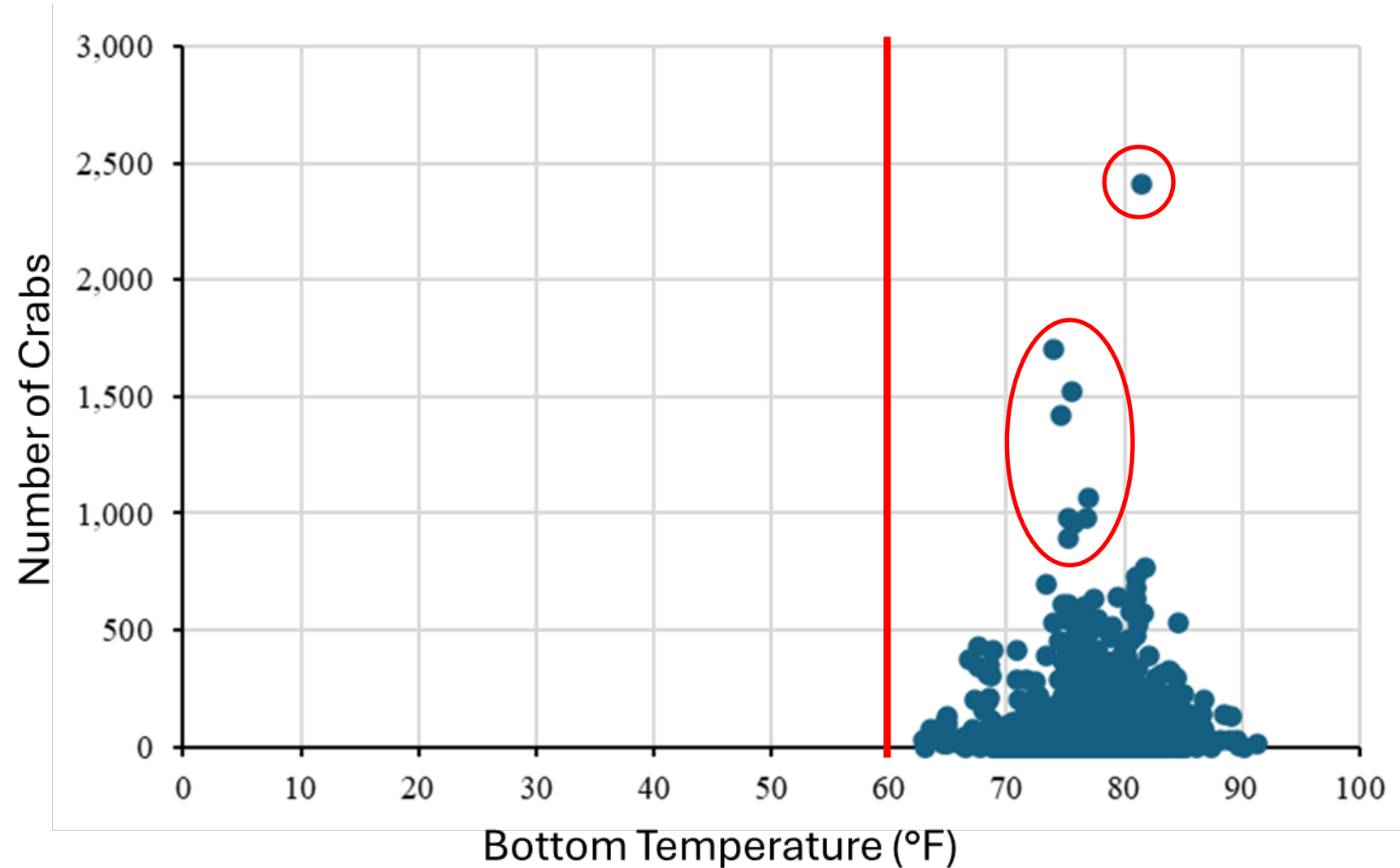
Program 195 Blue Crab Catch

Percent Positive Tows

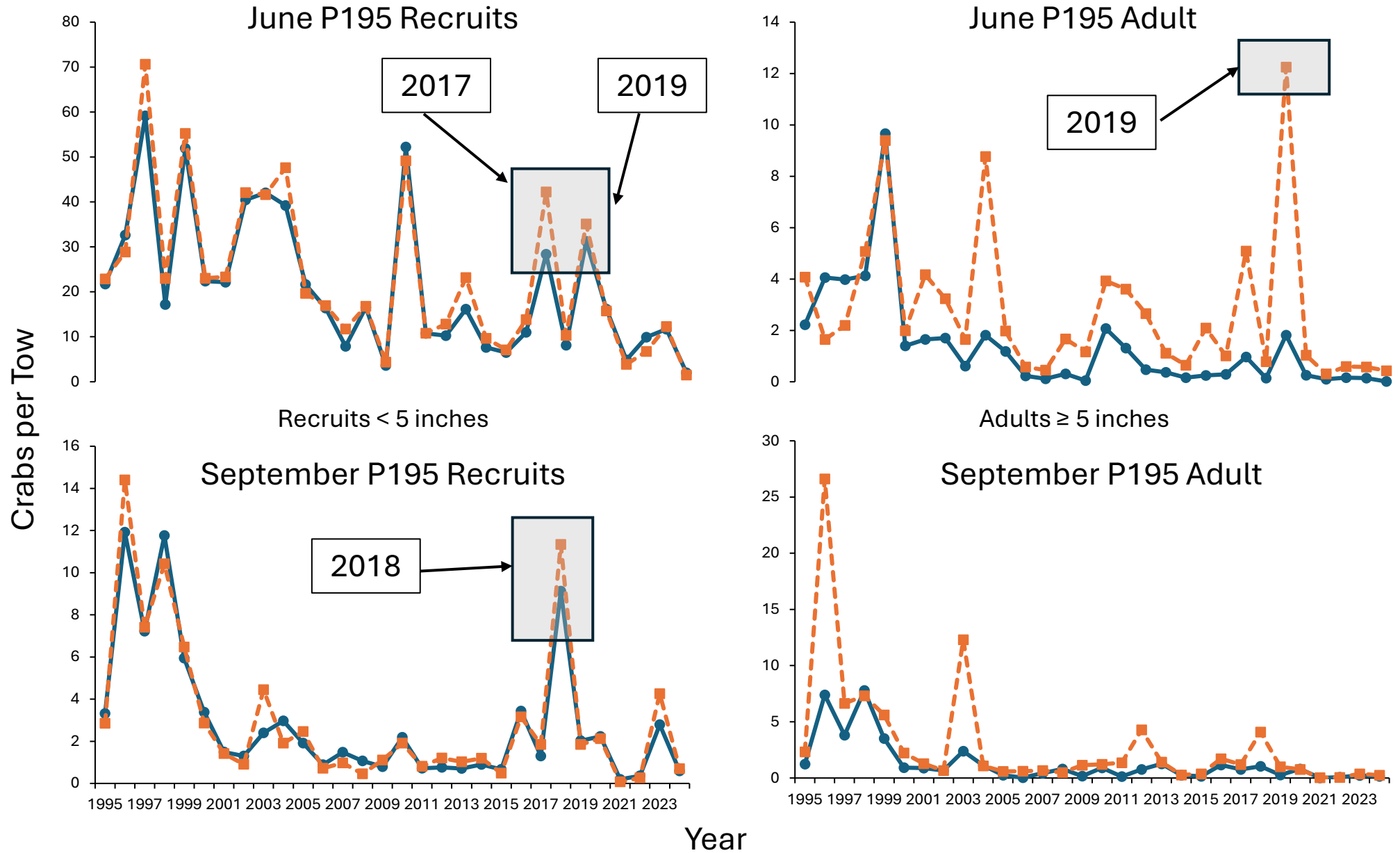
- Min: 61% (2024)
- Max: 100% (1990/1995)
- Total: 82%

Catch Range

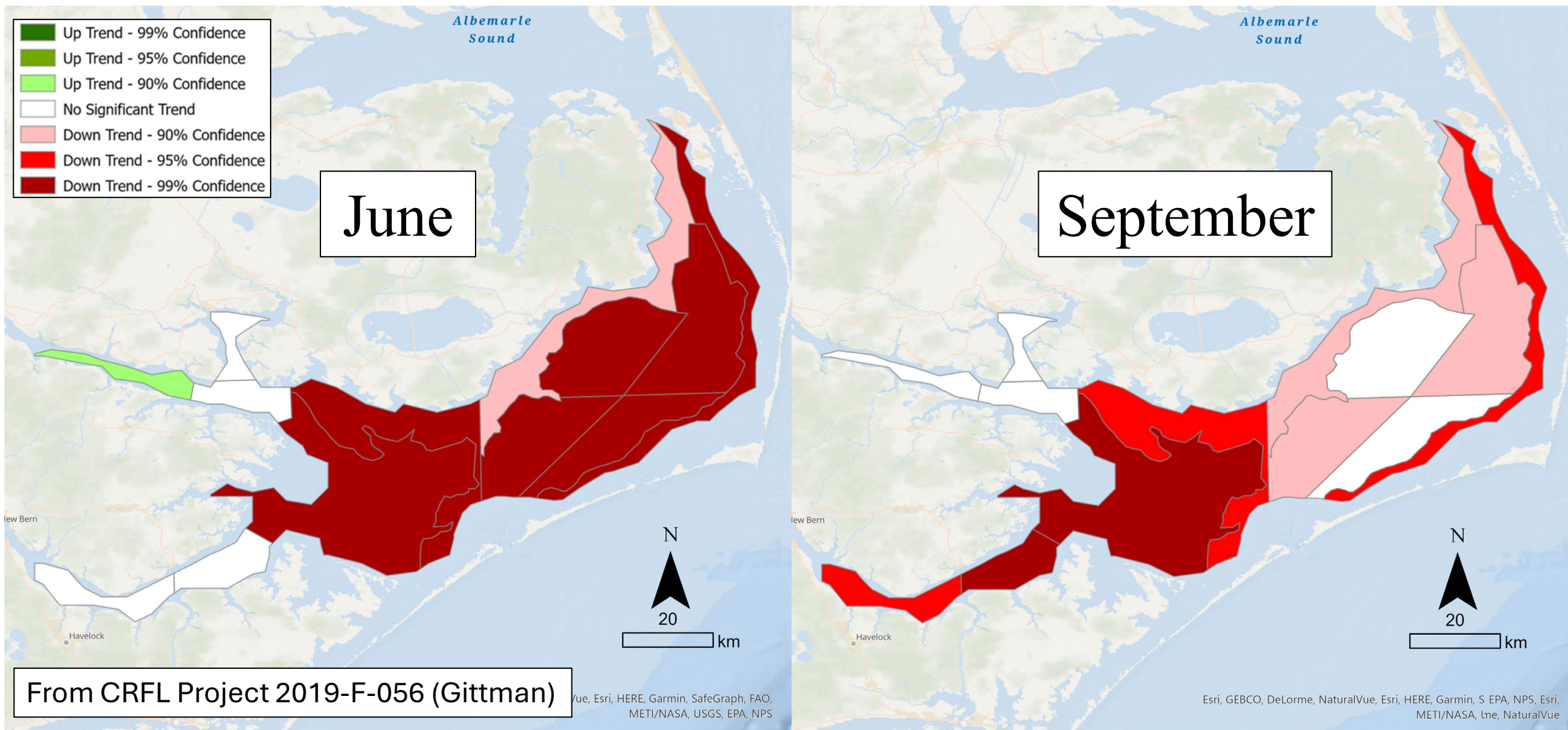
- Min: 0
- Max: 2,410 (2019)
- Average Max: 513



Program 195 Trends



Blue Crab Productivity

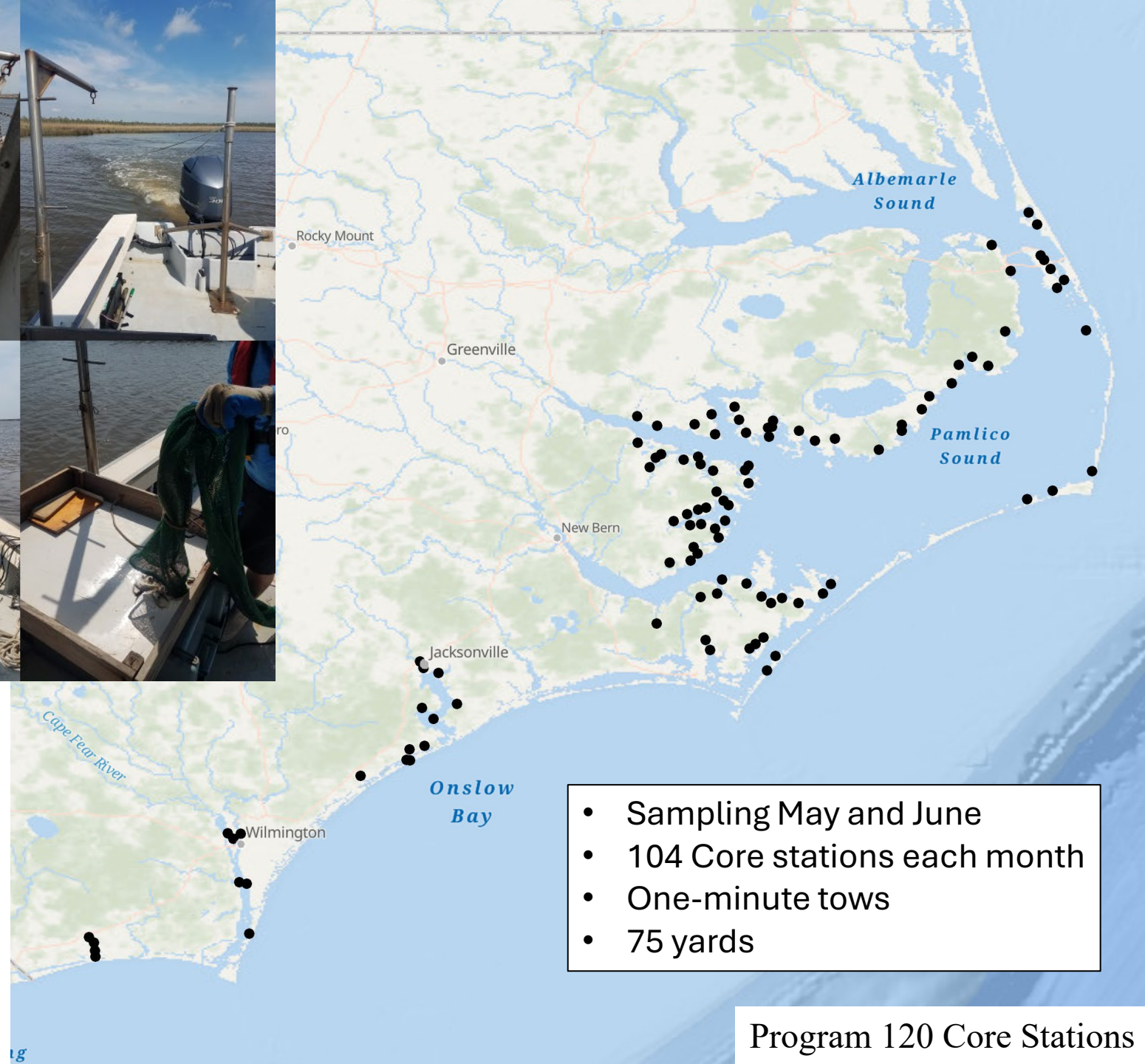


Carolina Coast





Estuarine Trawl Survey (P120)



- Sampling May and June
- 104 Core stations each month
- One-minute tows
- 75 yards

Program 120 Core Stations

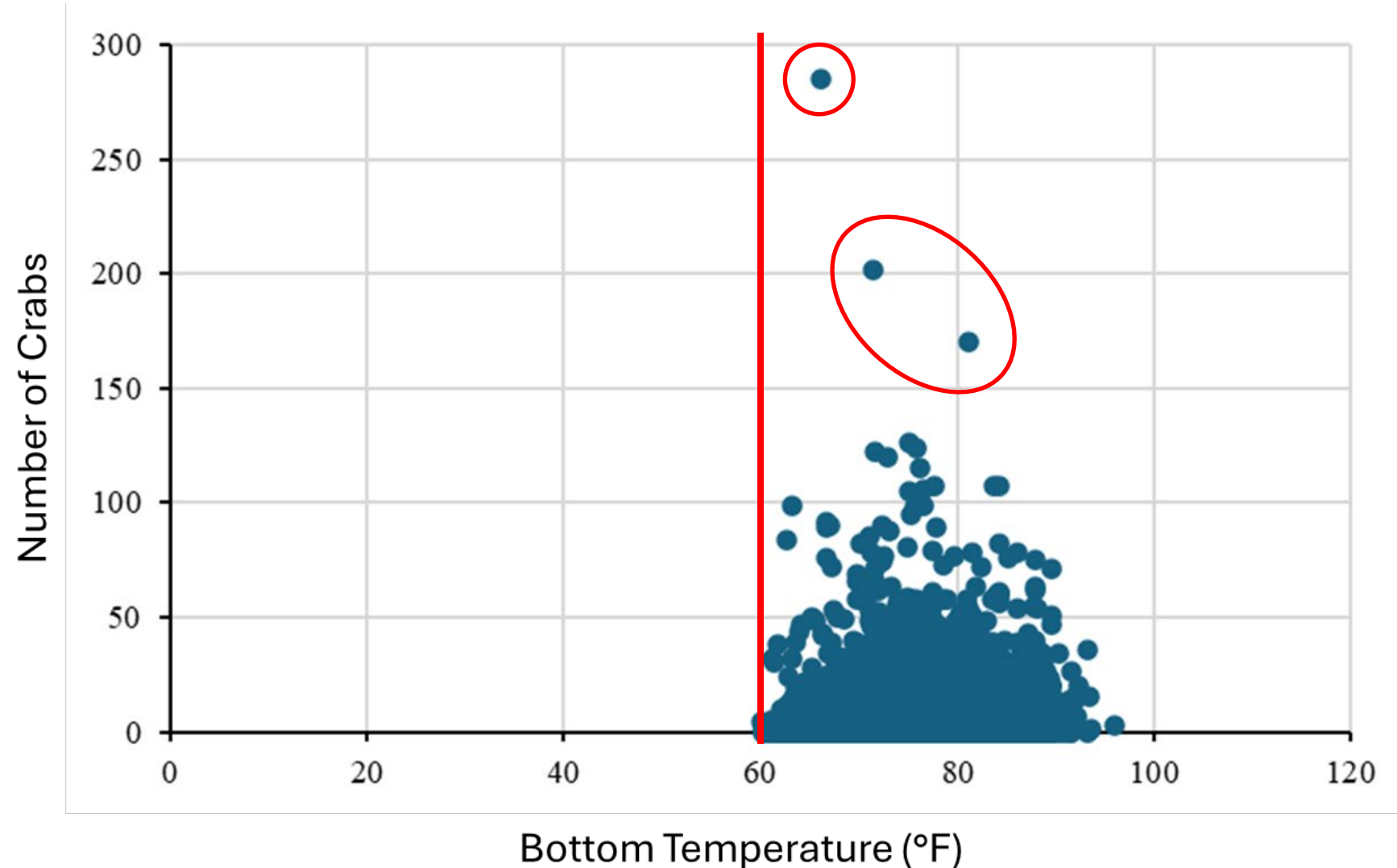
Program 120 Blue Crab Catch

Percent Positive Tows

- Min: 40% (2022)
- Max: 84% (1996/2004)
- Total: 67%

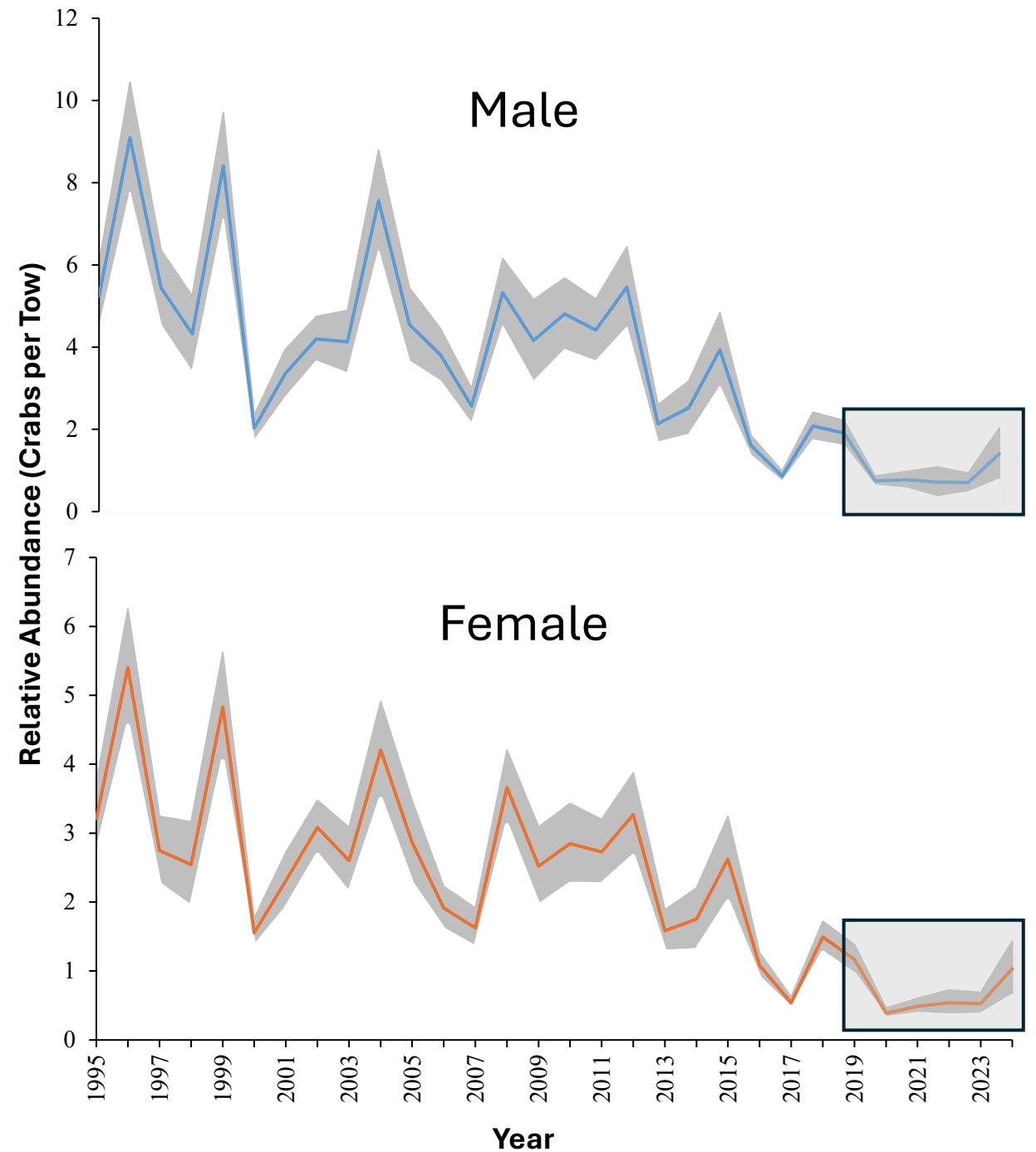
Catch Range

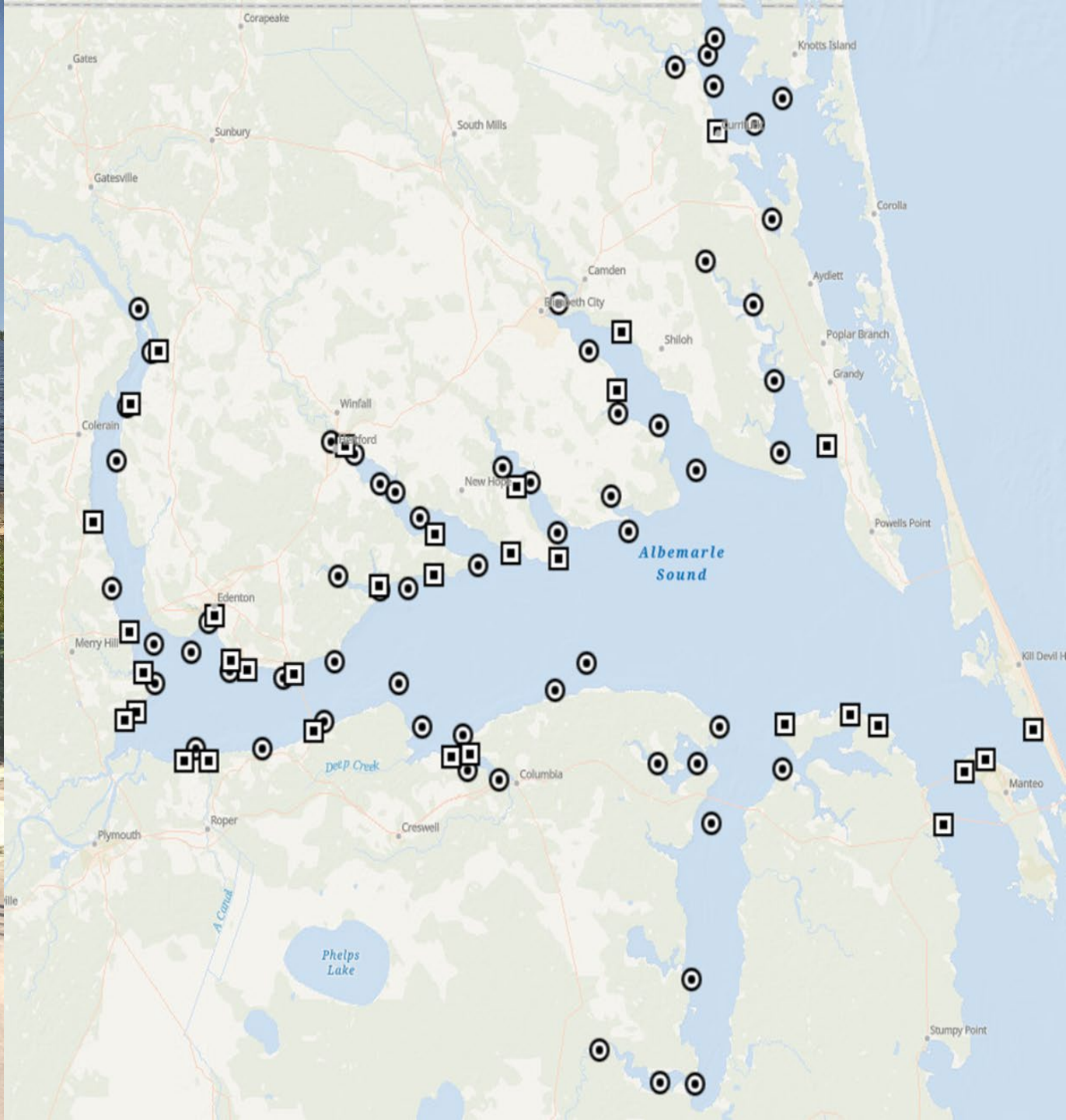
- Min: 0
- Max: 285 (2001)
- Average Max: 89



Program 120 Trends

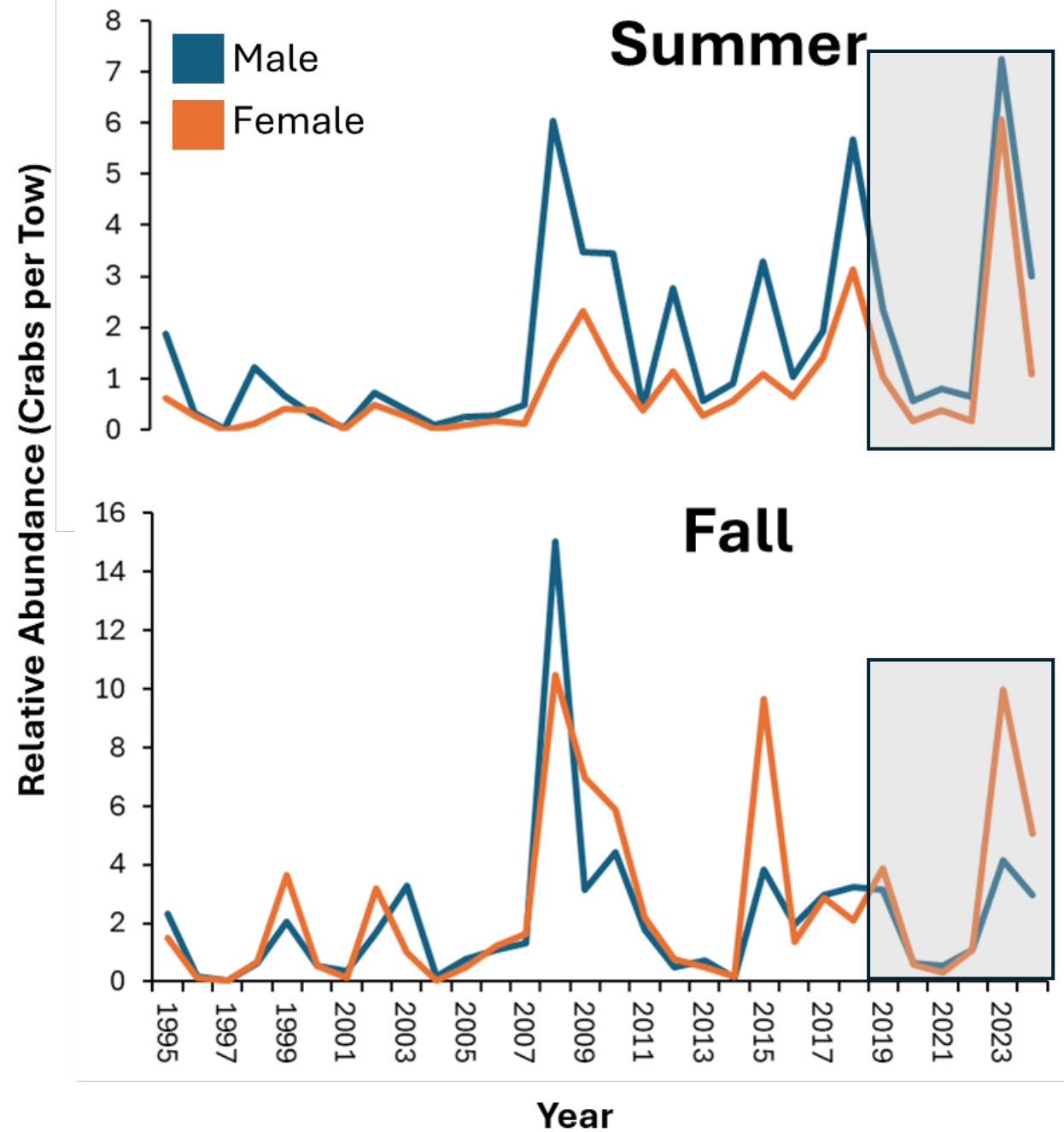
Recruits <5 inches carapace width





Program 100 Trends

Adults >5 inches carapace width



North Carolina Fishery-Dependent Data Collection



Fishery Dependent Programs

Trip Ticket Program

Fish House Sampling Programs

FISHERMAN NAME:		FISH DEALER #	
FISHERMAN LICENSE #		CHECK BOX IF NO VESSEL USED → →	
TRIP START DATE MO DAY YR		CPVR # P	
UNLOADING DATE MO DAY YR		NO. OF CREW:	

CIRCLE ALL GEARS USED

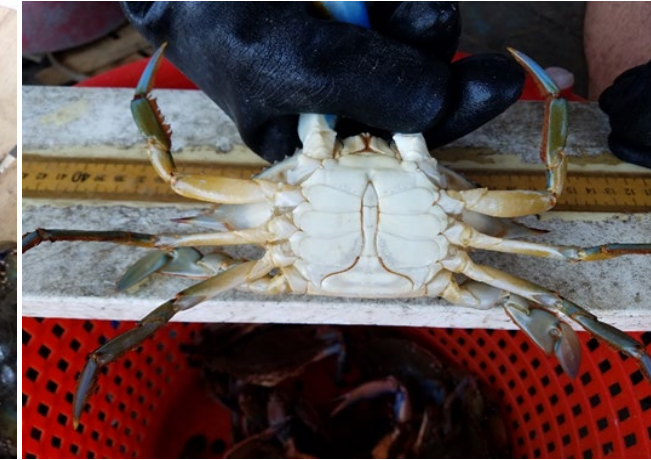
330	Crab Pot →	No. Of Pots Fished →	
334	Peeler Pot →	No. Of Pots Fished →	
205	Crab Trawl	340	Eel Pot
206	Peeler Trawl	426	Small Mesh Set Gill Net (< 5 in.)
215	Shrimp Trawl	427	Large Mesh Set Gill Net (>= 5 in.)
275	Pound Net	475	Runaround Gill Net

CIRCLE ONE WATERBODY WHERE MOST OF CATCH WAS MADE

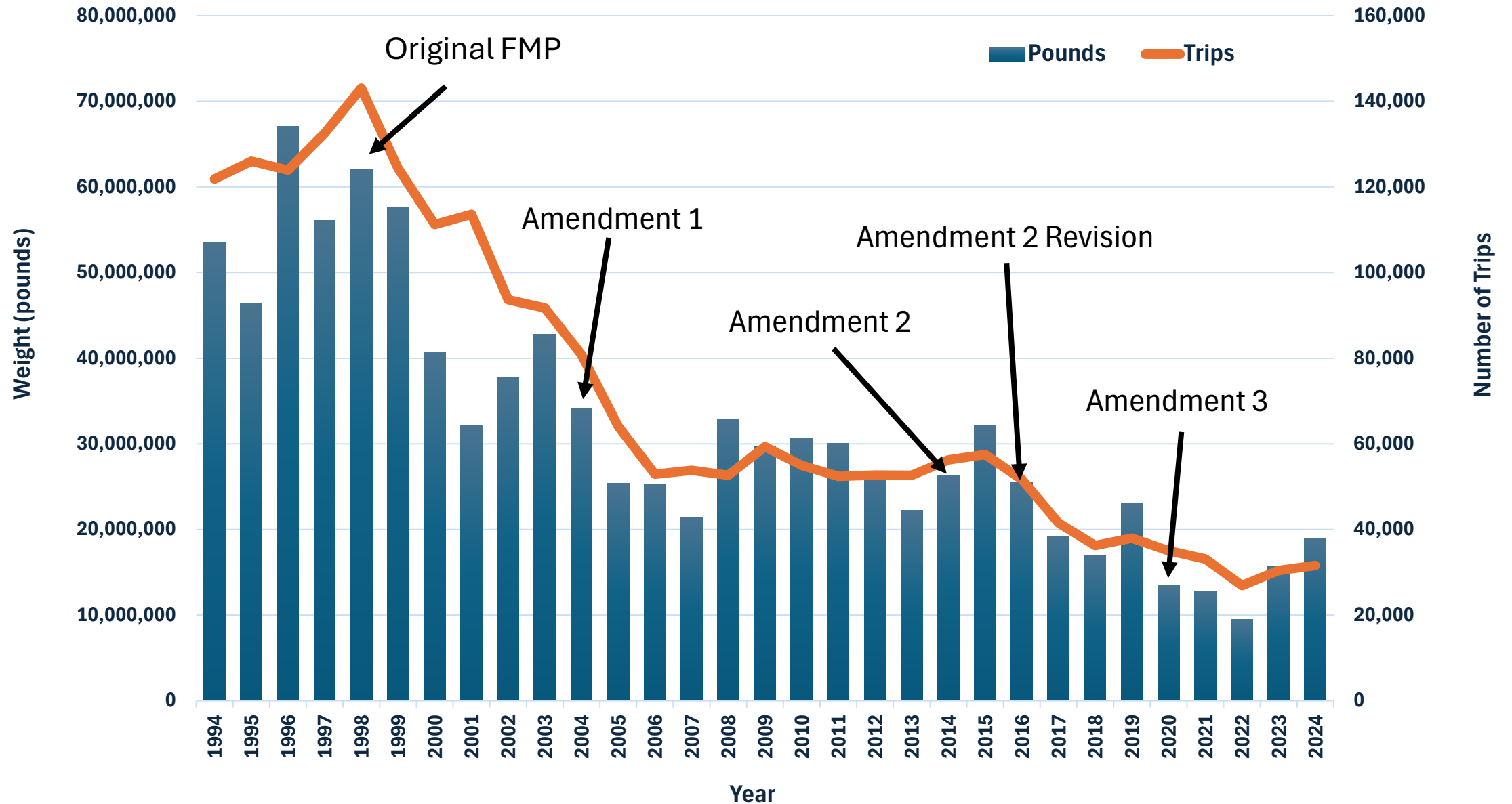
01	Albemarle Sound	30	New River
02	Alligator River	31	Newport River
03	Bay River	43	North River/Back Sound
05	Bogue Sound	33	Pamlico River
06	Cape Fear River	34	Pamlico Sound
07	Chowan River	35	Pasquotank River
08	Core Sound	36	Perquimans River

3 - NORTH CAROLINA TRIP TICKET (CRAB)

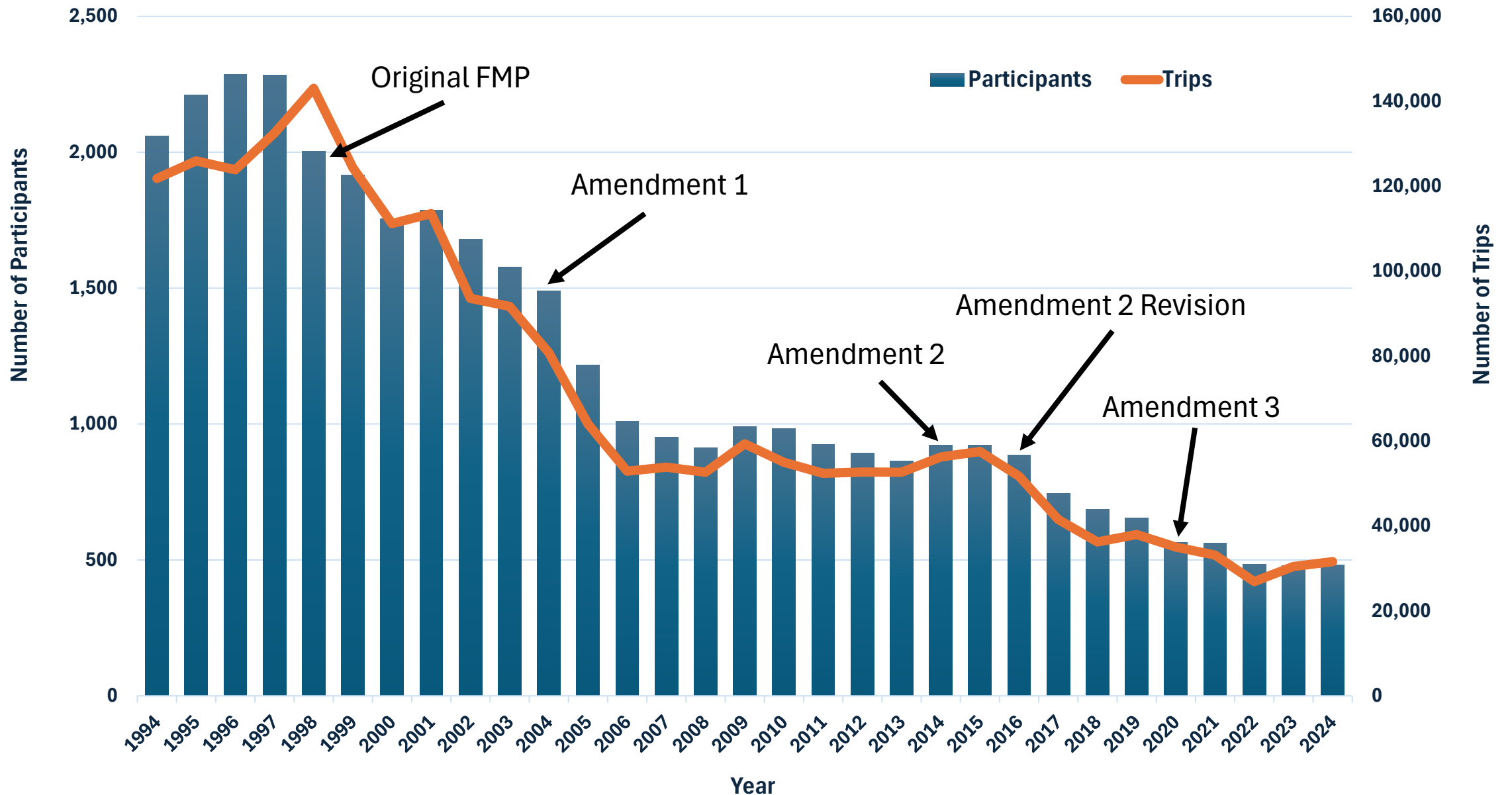
		TRANSACTION #			
KIND	CODE	POUNDS	DSP	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL PRICE
Hard Crabs Straight (LB)	8000				
Culls (LB)	8006				
No. 1 (LB)	8001				
No. 2 (LB)	8002				
No. 3 (LB)	8003				
No. 4 (LB)	8004				
Jumbos (LB)	8005				
Hard Crabs Straight (Doz)	8030				
Hard Crabs Straight (BU)	8010				
No. 1 (BU)	8011				
No. 2 (BU)	8012				
No. 3 (BU)	8013				
Peeler Crabs	Number	8060			
	Dozens	8070			



Annual Hard Crab Landings & Trips



Annual Hard Blue Crab Participants & Trips



Fish House Sampling Programs

Fish house Sampling Programs

P400 – Anadromous Comm Harvest

P431 – Sciaenid Pound Net

P432 – Flounder Pound Net

P433 – Winter Trawl

P434 – Ocean Gill Net

P435 – Beach Seine

P436 – Blue Crab Harvest

P437 – Long Haul Seine

P438 – Offshore Live Bottom

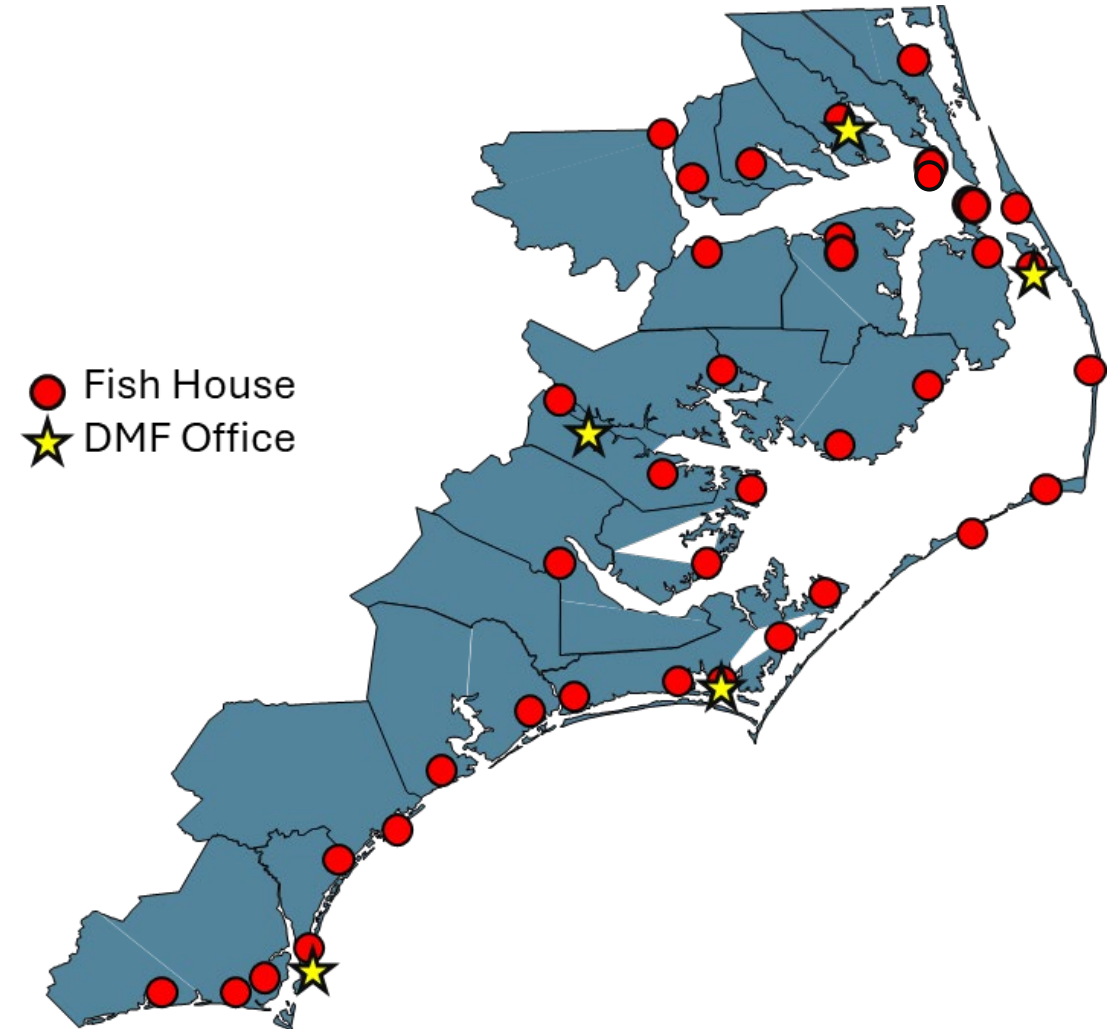
P439 – Coastal Pelagic

P460 – Miscellaneous Survey

P461 – Estuarine Gill Net

P476 – Commercial Gig

P646 – Commercial Shellfish Harvest



Commercial Crab Sampling P436

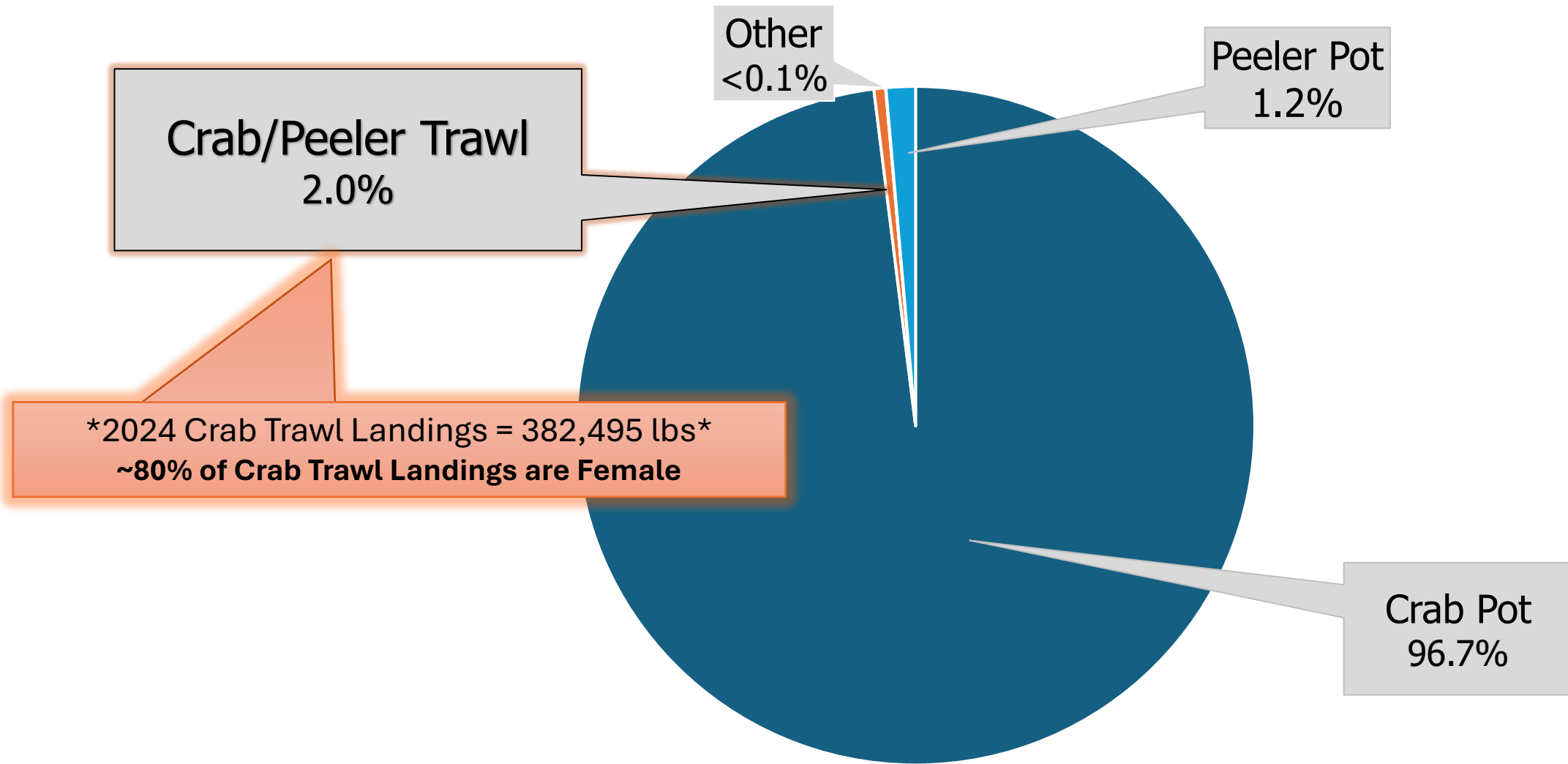
Collection of these data is a collaboration between division staff, commercial crabbers, and others involved in the commercial fishery



Crab House Sampling (P436)



Percent of Blue Crab Landings by Gear in 2024



2024 Total Landings = 18,943,488 pounds

Key Points

- Concern for stock
- Strong indicators stock is not recovering
- Halfway through statutorily required rebuilding period



Management Options

Initial options focus on limiting harvest during biologically important time of year and limiting harvest of females



Management Options

Initial Options:

- Prohibit crab trawling
- Season closures
- Prohibit sponge crab harvest
- Bushel limits
 - Including sex specific limits



Moving Forward...

- Final adaptive management action scheduled for November 2025
- Exploring additional options
- Prioritizing assessing the stock



Amendment 3 Adaptive Management Timeline

May 2024	DMF presents results of stock assessment update and adaptive management plan to MFC
May 2024 – August 2024	Outreach and analysis
September 2024	DMF updates Northern, Southern, and Shellfish/Crustacean advisory committees
September 2024 – December 2024	Additional outreach and analysis. DMF drafts Revision to Amendment 3
March 2025	MFC AC (Northern, Southern, Shellfish/Crustacean) review draft
May 2025	DMF updates MFC on advisory committee recommendations and next steps
August 2025	DMF provides update to MFC – NO ACTION
November 2025	MFC scheduled to vote on adoption of Amendment 3 Revision

Questions?

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