



# Oyster Harvest Summary

## 2025-2026 Season

Oyster Advisory Commission Meeting: 6/8/2026



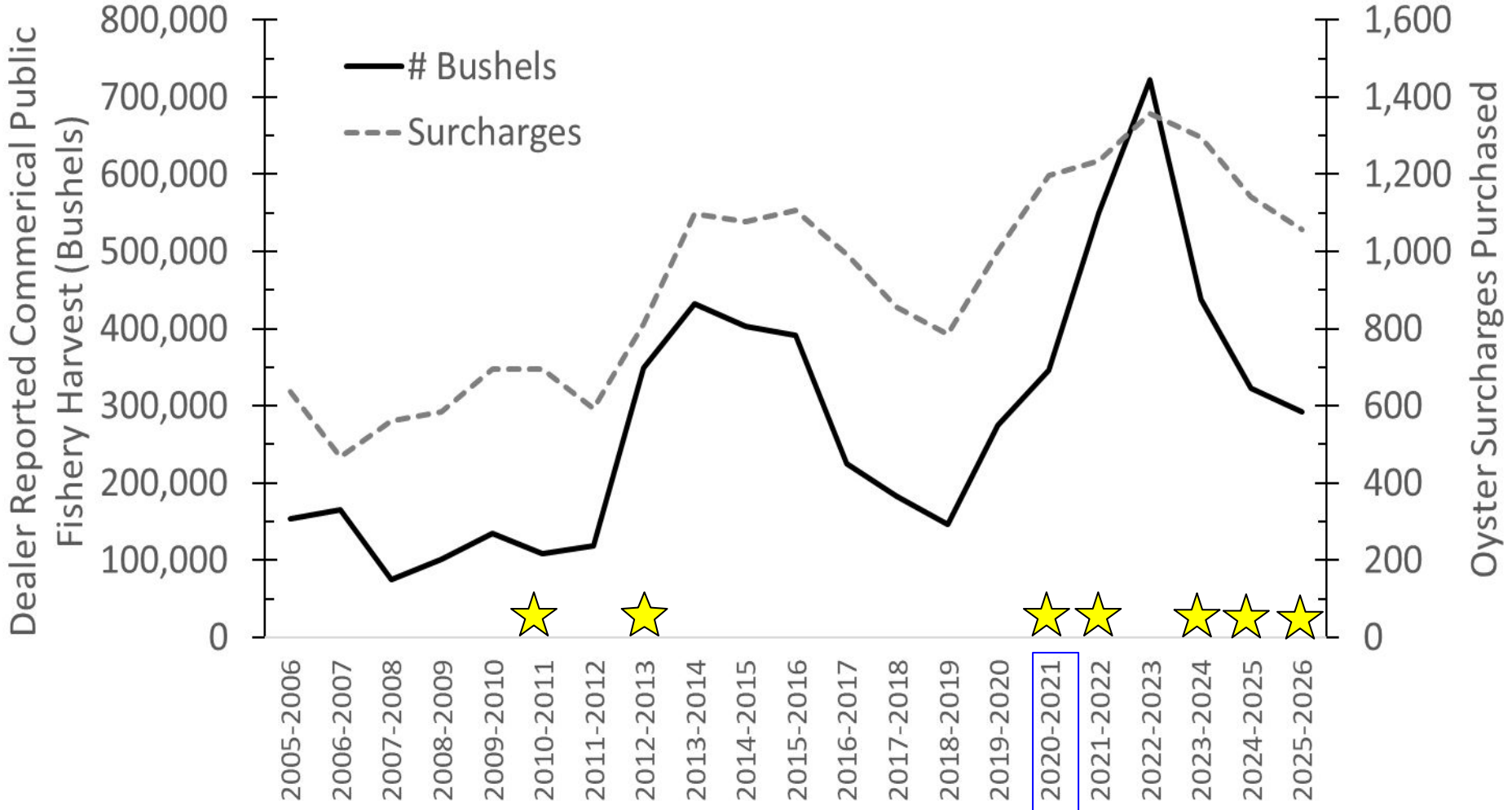
# Background

## Commercial Public Fishery Oyster Season October 1 - March 31

- Started on Wednesday October 1, 2025  
(except power and sail dredge which started on November 3)
- The season was extended for all gear types, until Tuesday April 14, 2026.



# Harvest and Surcharges 2006-2026

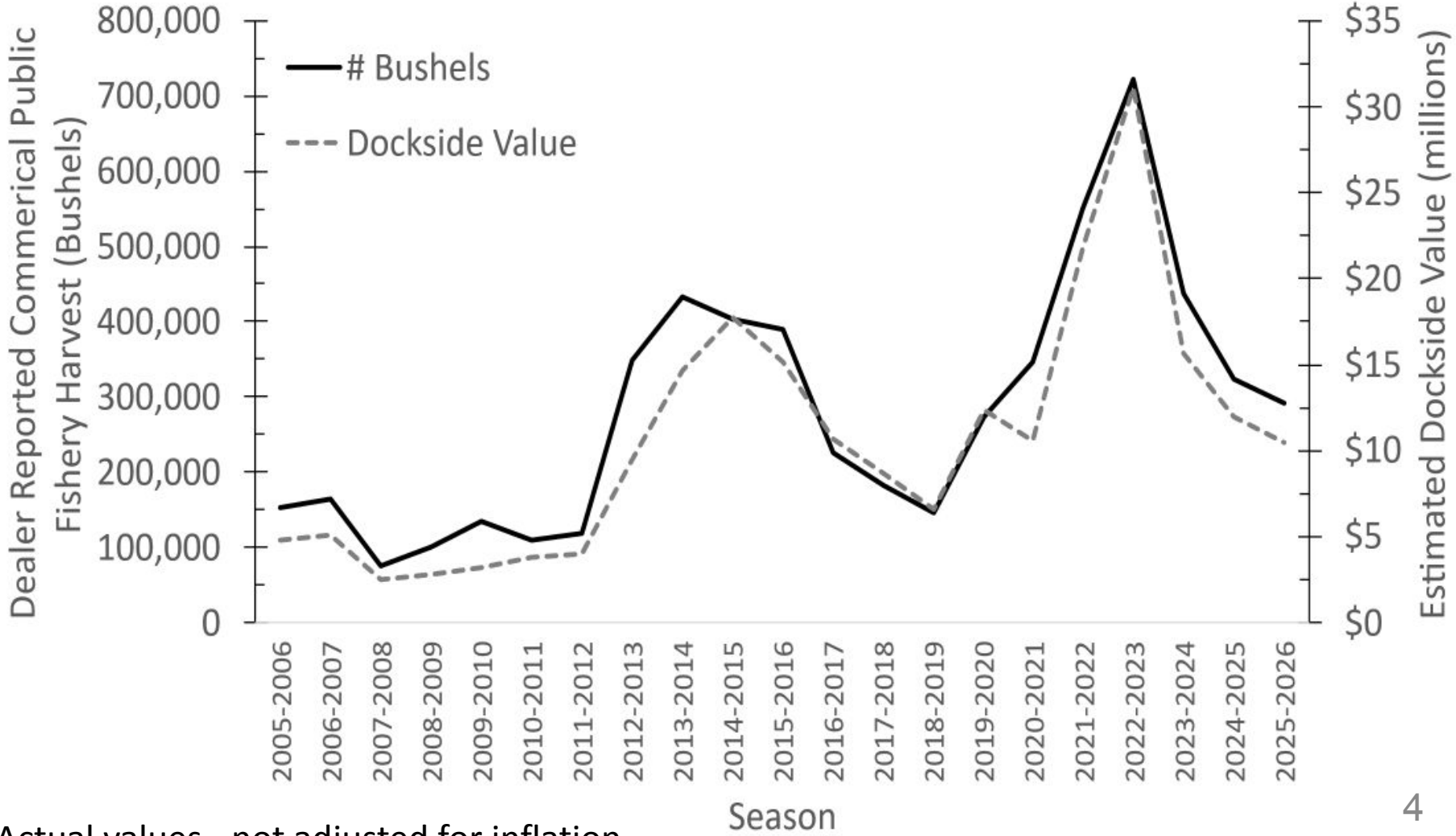


★ High spatfall index years

Count of surcharges changed to number sold



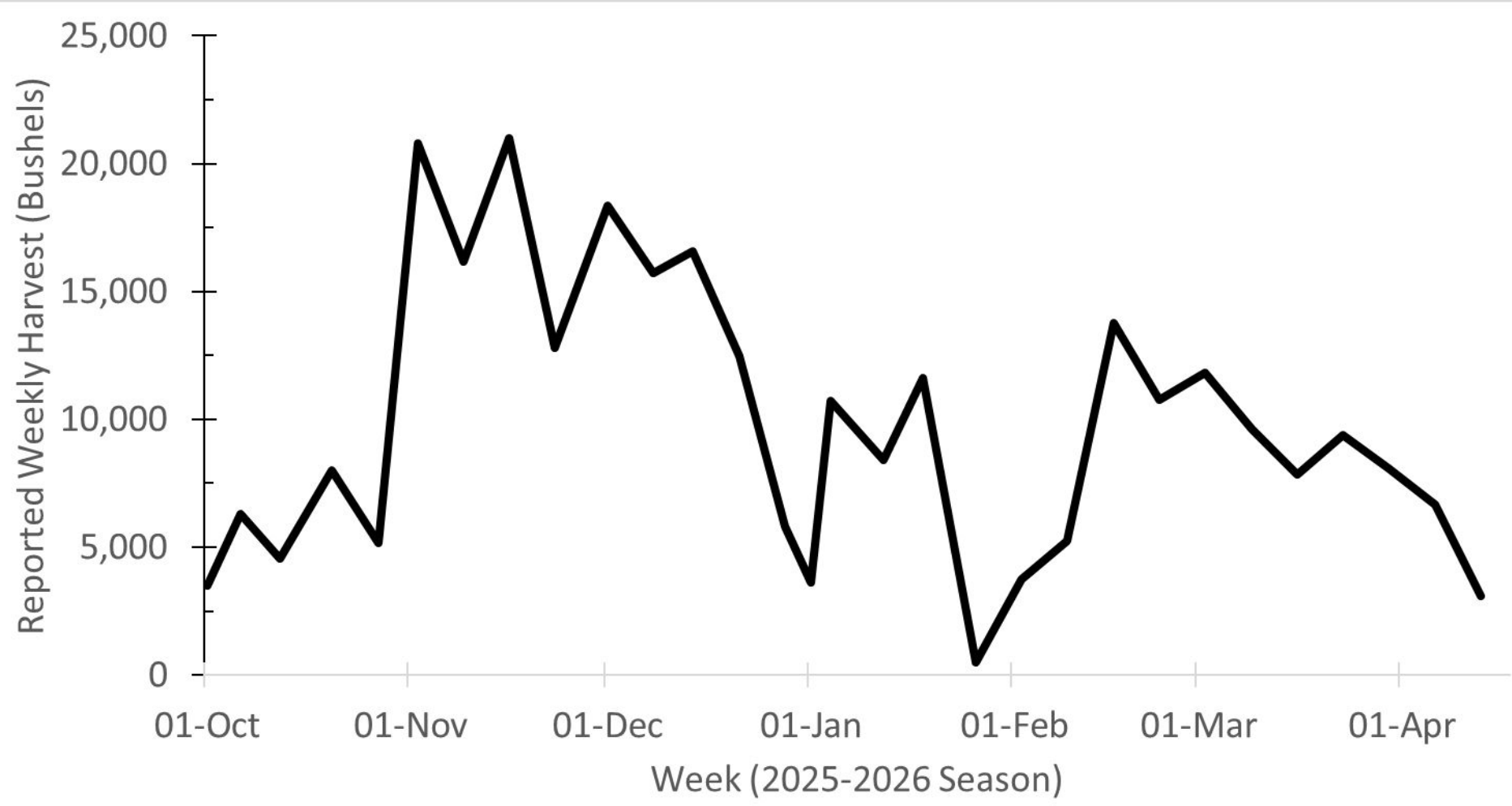
# Dockside Value 2006-2026



Actual values - not adjusted for inflation

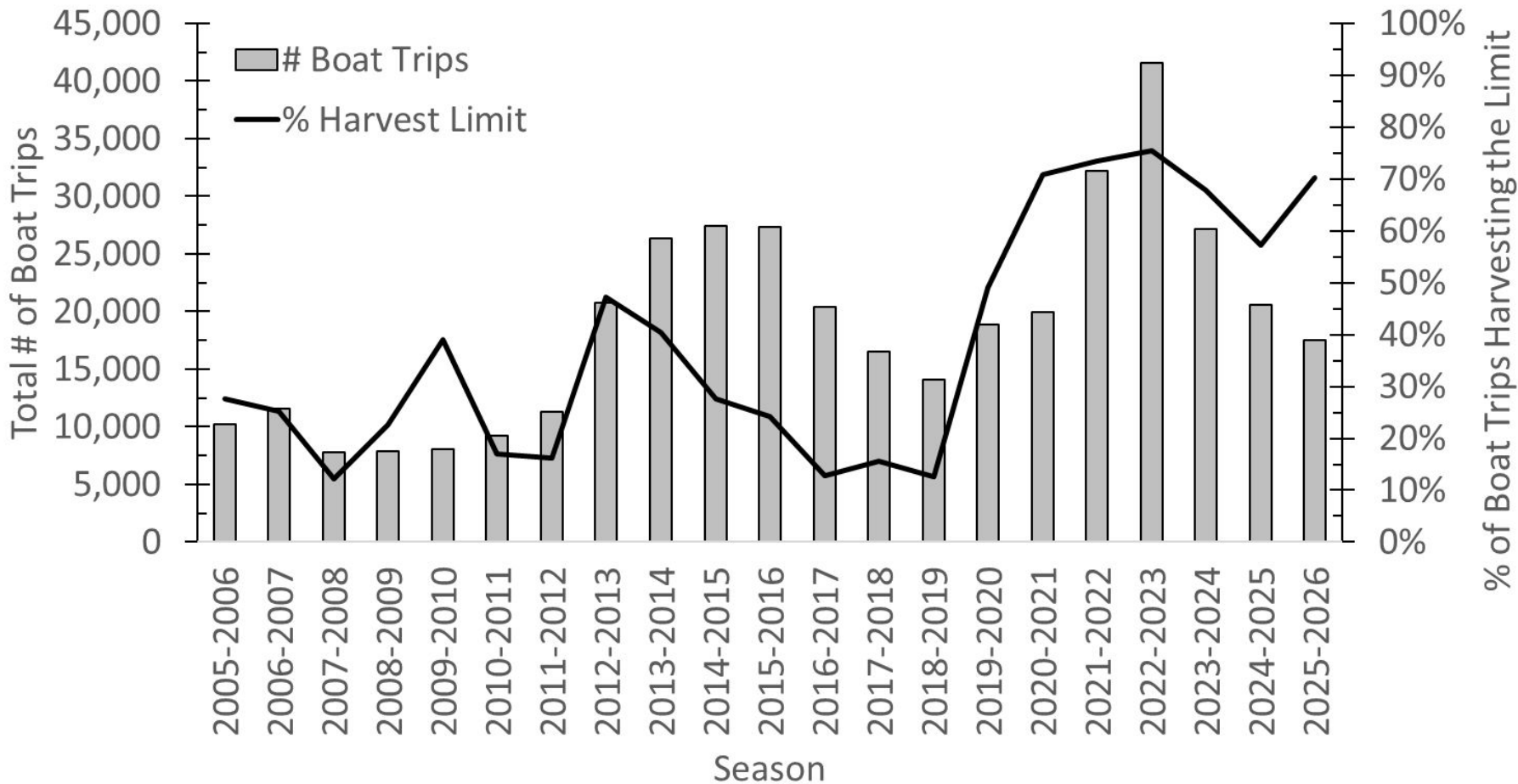


# Weekly Harvest 2025-2026



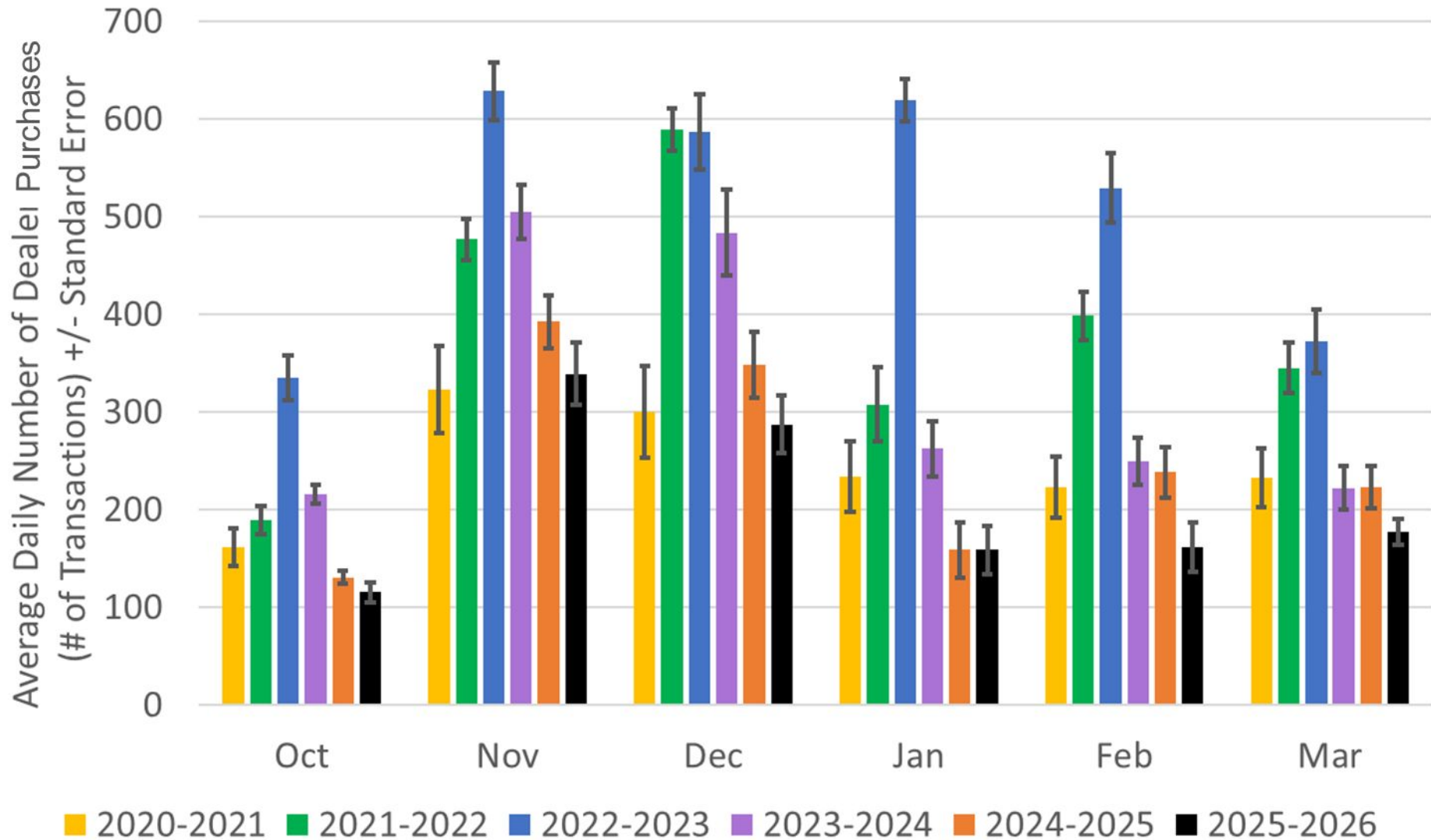


# Boat Trips Harvesting the Daily Bushel Limit



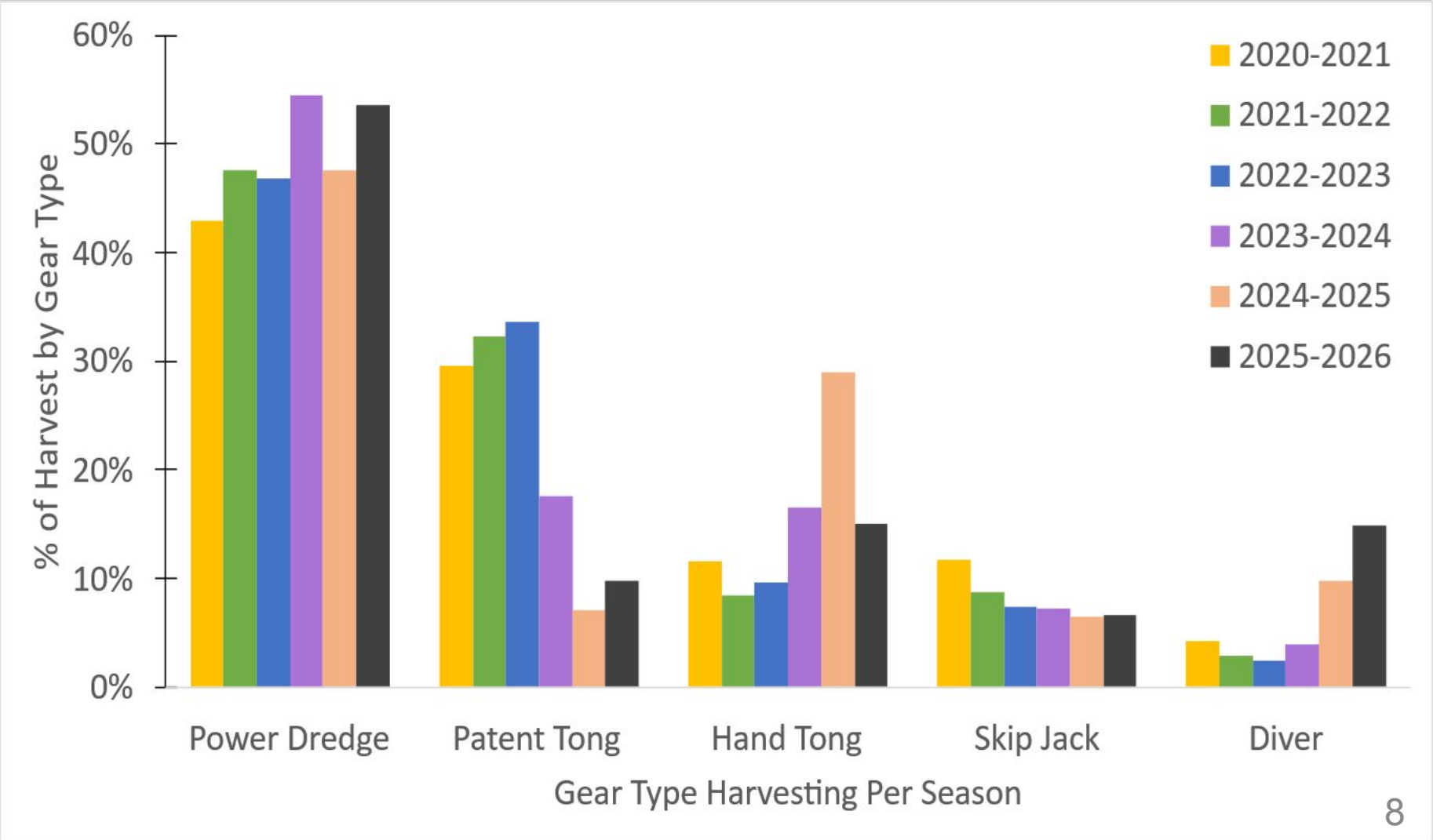
Current bushel limits have been the same since the 2019-2020 season. Prior to this limits were higher

# Daily Dealer Purchases



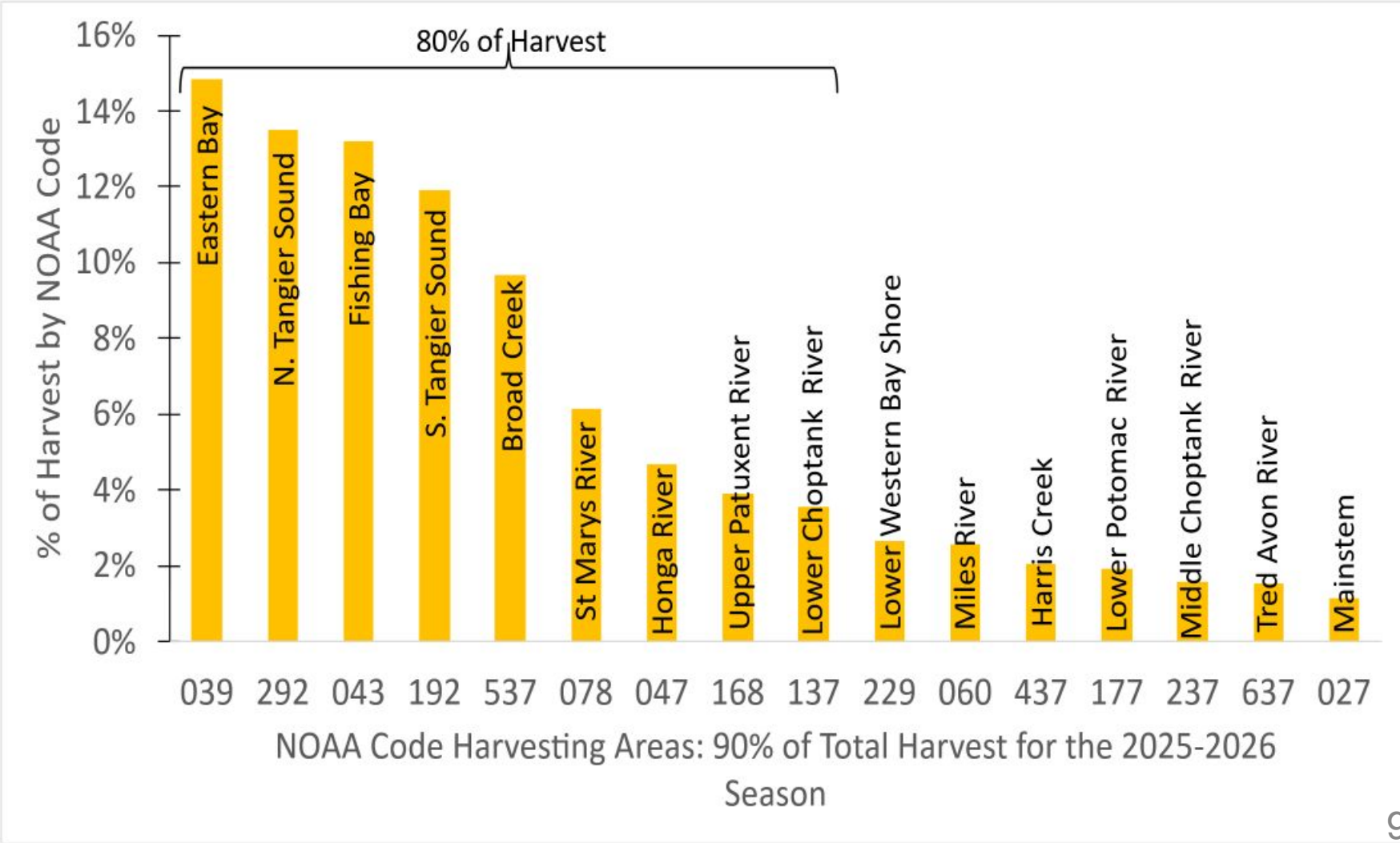


# Harvest by Gear Type





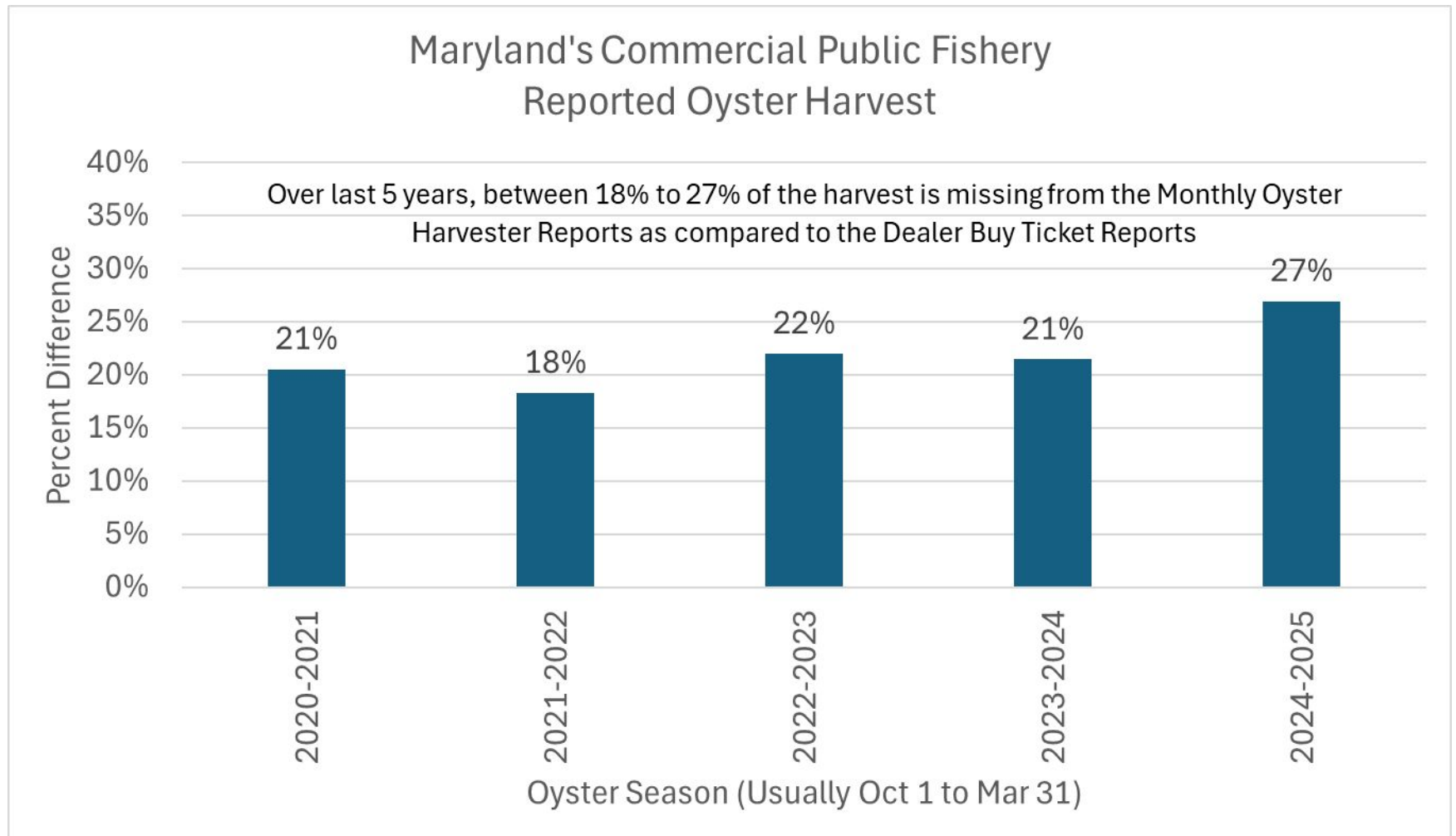
# Harvest by Area 2025-2026





# Reporting Compliance

~ 60% annual average reporting compliance on Monthly Oyster Harvester Reports





# Summary

- 291K bushels harvested in 2025-26 season. (preliminary total)
- Total harvest = reduced by 9.5% from last season
- 1,058 Surcharges = about 7% fewer than last year
- Avg bushel price = down by \$1.25
- 2nd season in a row where Hand Tong gear has the 2nd highest harvest and Diver 3rd highest (after power dredging).
- Per NOAA Code harvest was more spread out this season compared to last. 13 areas had 90% of ha Last season the top 5 harvest areas had 24.9%, 21.5%, 9%, 8.9%, 8.7% of the total harvest. This year the top 5 areas had 14.8%, 13.5%, 13.2%, 11.9%, and 9.7%.
- Eastern Bay (NOAA Code 039; doesn't include Miles River 060) had the highest reported harvest. Last year it was Broad Creek.
- 70% of boat trips caught their limit. Increase from 57% last season.

# **2026- 2027 Proposed Harvest Limits**

Oyster Advisory Commission Meeting: 6/8/2026

# Objectives

- Present proposed harvest limits for 2026-2027 season
- Solicit feedback on these proposed limits
- Publish the harvest limit public notice by 7/1/2026



# Goals

- Continue progress toward a sustainable fishery
- Manage oyster population toward improvement in habitat and abundance. Consider the fishery and abundance reference points from the benchmark assessment.



# Proposal Considerations

## 2024 Benchmark Stock Assessment Results

- Oysters have made progress and abundance has increased since 2005.
- Fishing pressure decreased. Only 4 areas over harvest rate limit.

## 2025 Fall Survey Results

- Oyster biomass index highest since began since calculating the metric 33 years ago.
- Spat Index was the 2nd highest in the 41 year time series. Widespread distribution. Follows very strong spatfall for 2024 and 2023.
- Caution that disease may creep up this year due to high salinity. Dermo, MSX, and Total Observed Mortality though still lower than 4 year drought period of 1999-2002

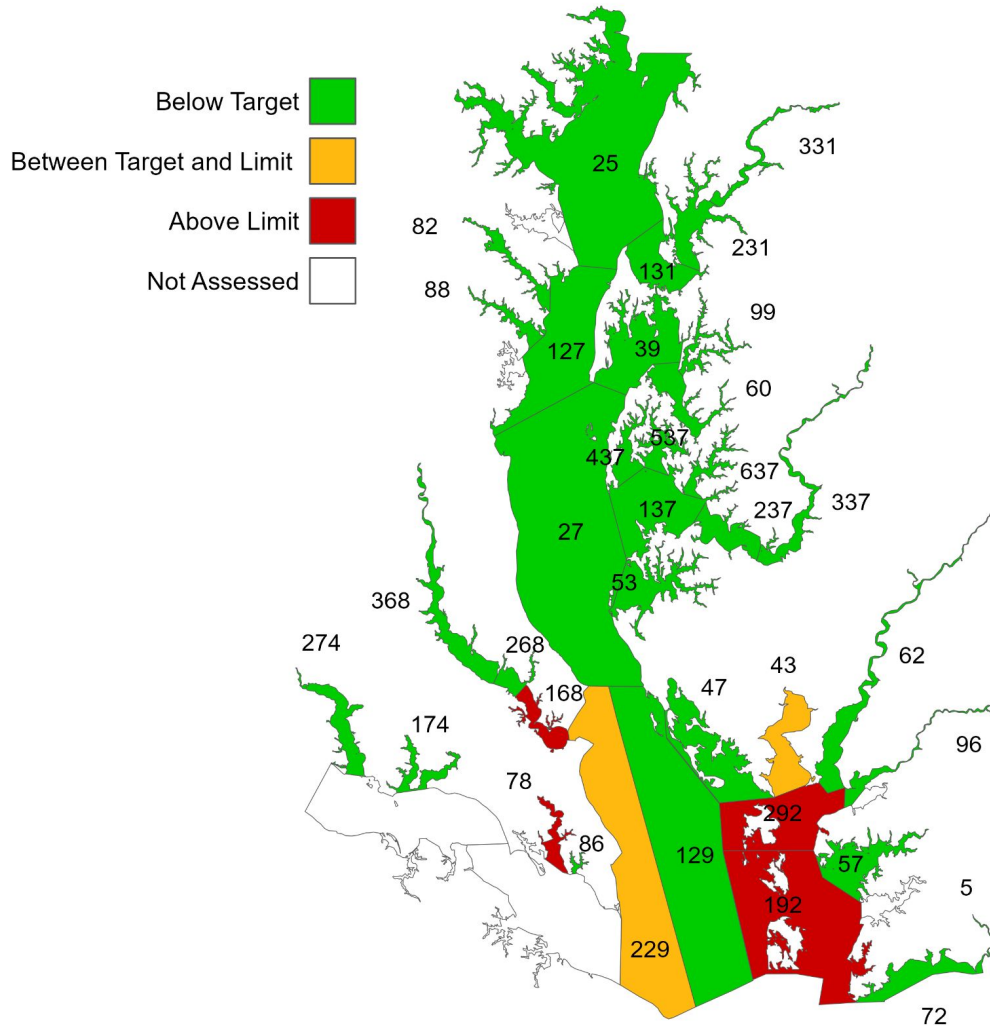
## Harvest Results

- Abundance is sufficient to ensure that, on average, 70% of trips achieve the catch limit.

## Statewide Oyster Committee Recommendation

- Recommends Status quo

# 2024 Benchmark Fishing Mortality Results



29 NOAA Codes  
below target

2 NOAA Codes  
between target and  
limit

4 NOAA Codes  
above limit

# 2024 Benchmark

# Abundance Reference Pt Results

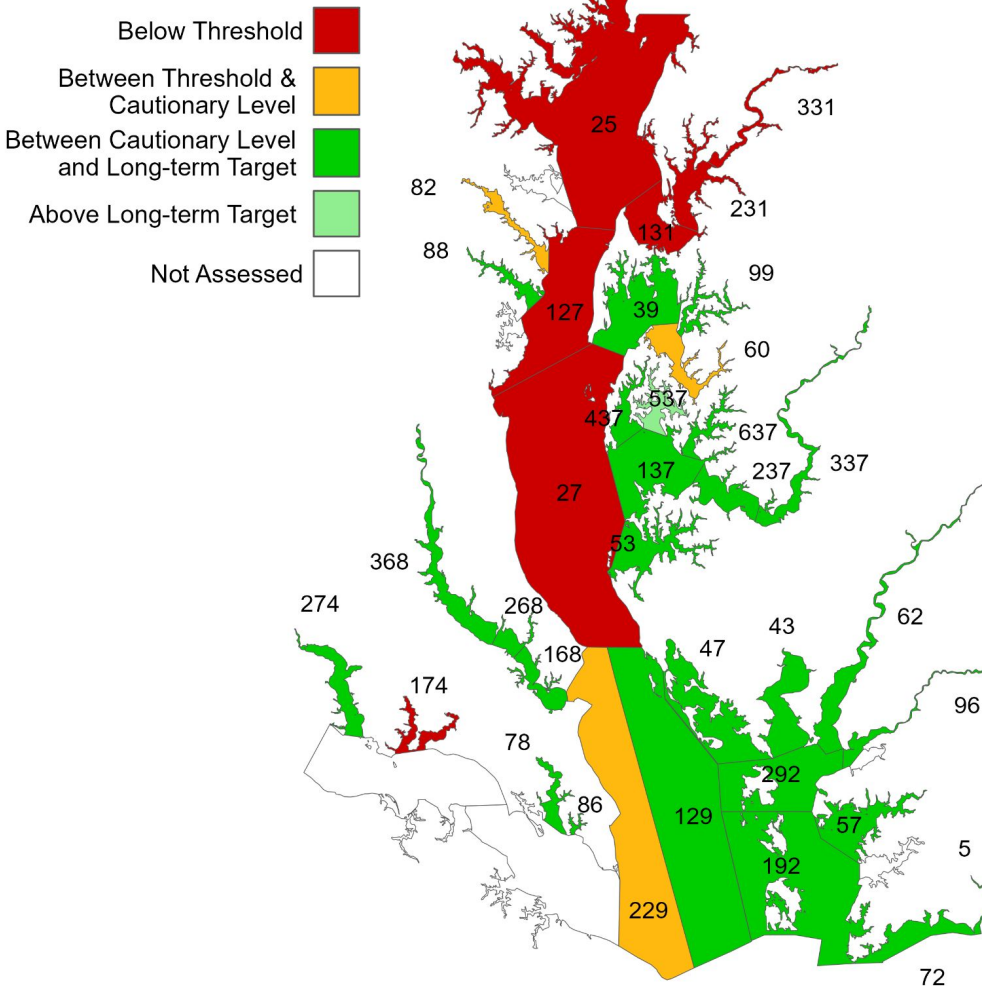


One NOAA  
Code above  
long-term target

24 NOAA Codes  
between long-term  
target and cautionary  
level

3 NOAA Codes  
between cautionary  
level and lower limit

7 NOAA Codes below  
lower limit



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## Statewide Oyster Committee Recommendation

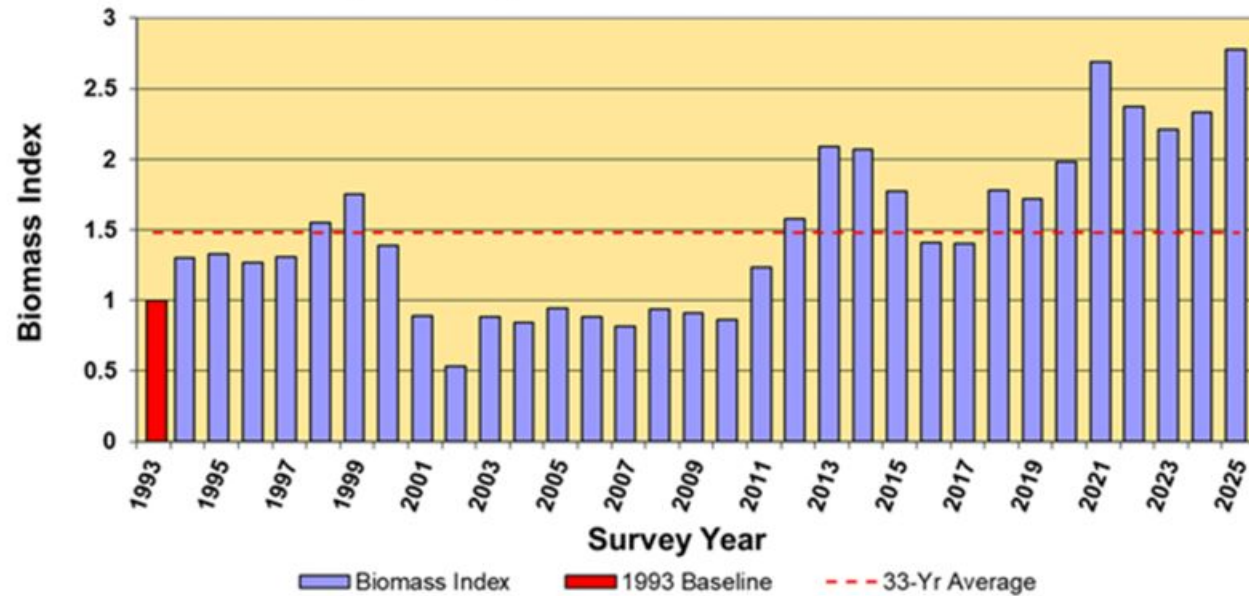
- Recommends Status quo

# Oyster Biomass & Spatfall

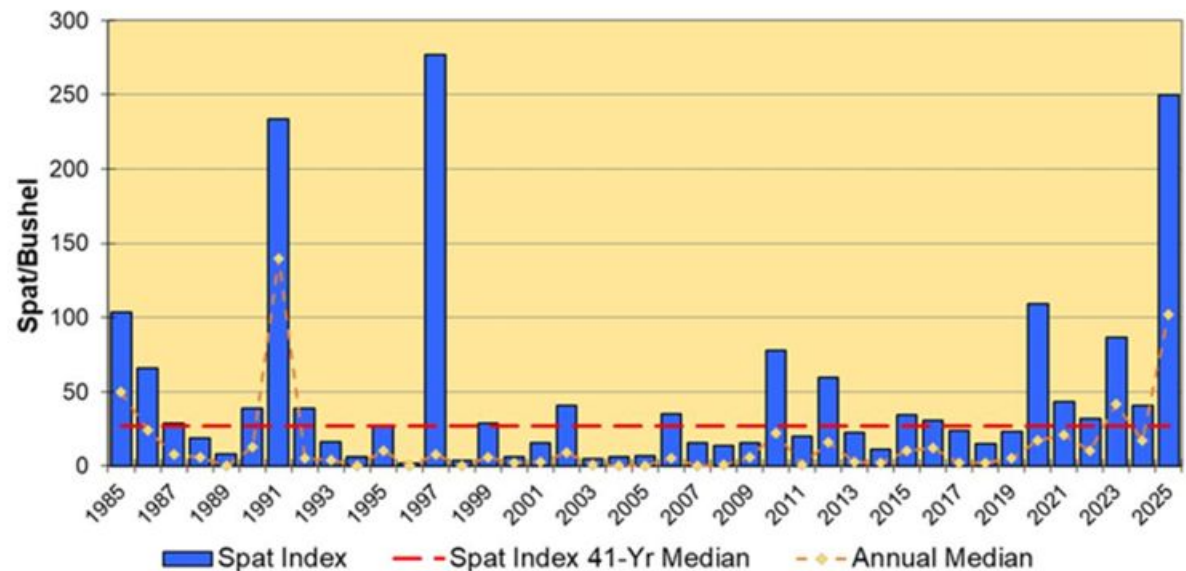
## Key Findings:

- The 2025 Biomass Index was the highest on record.
- It has been trending higher since 2011.
- The 2025 Spat Index was the 2nd highest in the 41-year series.

### Maryland Oyster Biomass Index



### Maryland Spatfall Index, 1985-2025





# Proposal Considerations

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# Statewide Committee Recommendation



## Statewide Oyster Industry Committee

The Statewide Oyster Industry Committee convened February 12, 2026, at the Grasonville VFW. The committee is comprised by the chairmen of the (11) county oyster committees or their proxies.

Two issues were discussed at the meeting:

1. An extension to the 2025-2026 Oyster season due to inclement weather and icing conditions. The committee unanimously supported the oyster season extension.
2. Raising bushel limits for the 2026-2027 Oyster season. The committee voted against raising the bushel limits at this time in vote of 4 in favor, 6 opposed with one abstention.

There being no further business before the committee the meeting was adjourned.

# Commercial Harvest Limit Proposal



## **Commercial Season**

Oct. 1 - Mar. 31 (Patent tong, Hand tong, Diver)

Nov. 1 - Mar. 31 (Power Dredge, Sail Dredge)

## **Commercial Days**

Monday through Friday

## **Commercial Bushel Limits**

Skipjack: 100 bushels/boat/day

Patent tong, Hand tong, Diver: 12 bushels/person/day not to exceed 24 bushels/boat/day

Power Dredge: 10 bushels/person/day not to exceed 20 bushels/boat/day

## **Recreational Season/Days/Limits**

Oct. 1 - Mar. 31

Monday through Saturday

100 oysters per person/day

## **Area Closures**

Chester River with exception of fishery plantings



# Feedback - Harvest Limits

In addition to feedback received tonight, the department would like to solicit feedback on the 2026-27 proposed harvest limits.

**Please submit comments to DNR  
By June 19, 2026**

Tomorrow morning, a feedback form weblink will be sent via email. Also, the feedback form and this presentation will be posted on DNR's website.



Questions?

## Continuing Efforts:

Continue to support oyster gardening.

- Ongoing.

Private/Public Partnerships:  
DNR: Create playbook for community supported restoration & technical assistance

- Every project is different, but DNR currently provides assistance to groups that want to do restoration work.

A fund that can accept donations.

- We have a donation fund, but we can create one that is specific to a purpose if recommended.

# Small Group Ideas from Jan 2026 - Update



## New Efforts:

Work the bottom to support ecosystem services (pilot project?)

- Swann Point study indicates that this alone would not be sufficient. Need planting. Could be part of the workgroup discussion?

Rotational harvest (pilot project).

- Workgroup formed to discuss this option.

Integrated strategy from group 4- relocating oysters.

- Watermen feedback at May meeting did not provide support moving oysters from public bar to sanctuary.

Shell addition and moving natural oysters for underperforming sanctuaries.

- Moving shell and oysters was part of group 4 option and not supported to move from public fishery bar but could still consider importing VA seed or moving between sanctuaries.

# Small Group Ideas from Jan 2026 - Update



## New Efforts:

### Mitigation and SEPs

- Ongoing. Is there anything we can investigate here regarding expanding mitigation opportunities?

### Review and analyze the 2017 KE/QA county plan in relation to current efforts.

- Plan was reviewed, but no recommendation on the plan.

### BMP opportunities

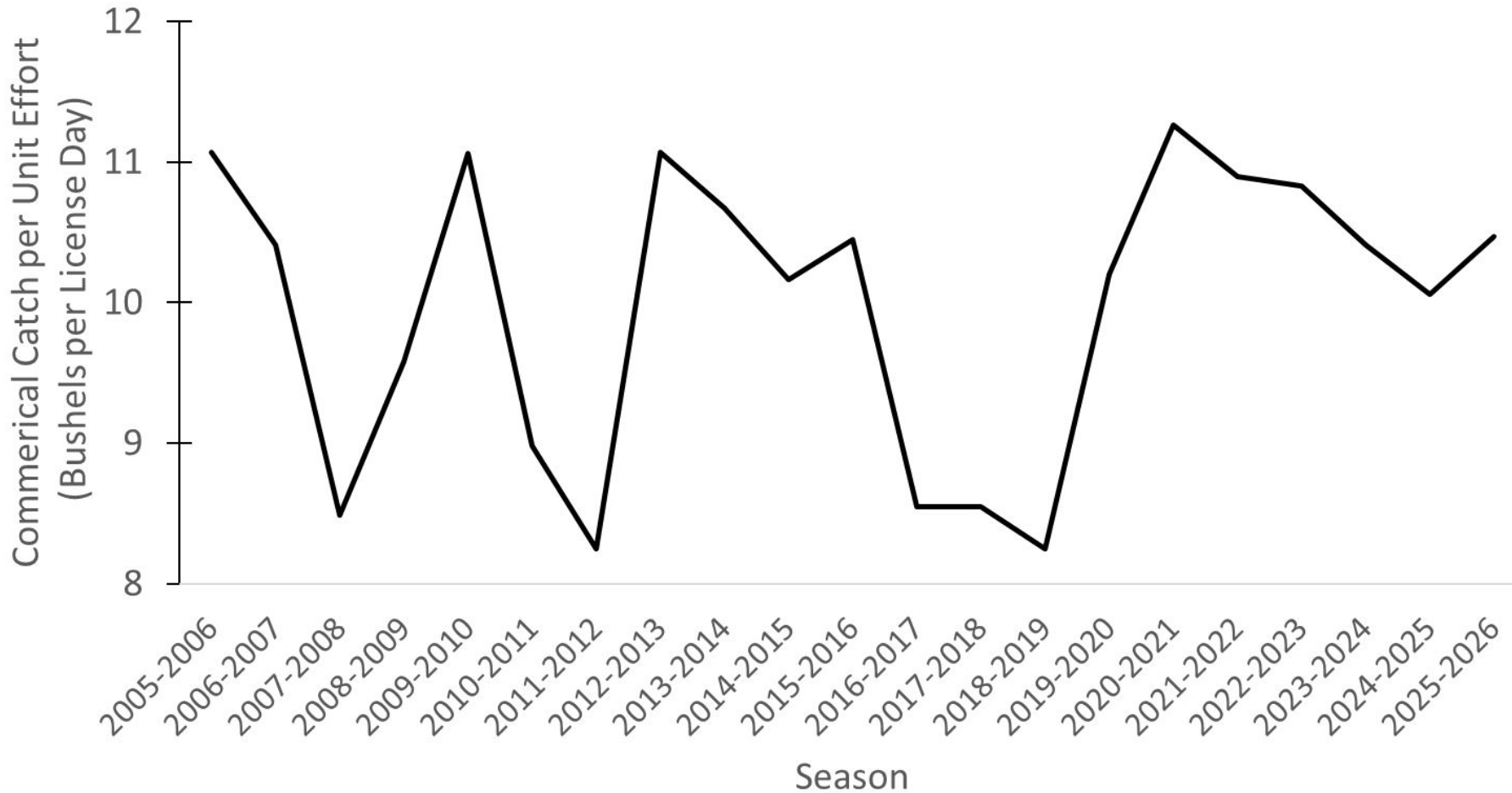
- New Sanctuary BMP Standard Operating Procedures was discussed at March meeting.

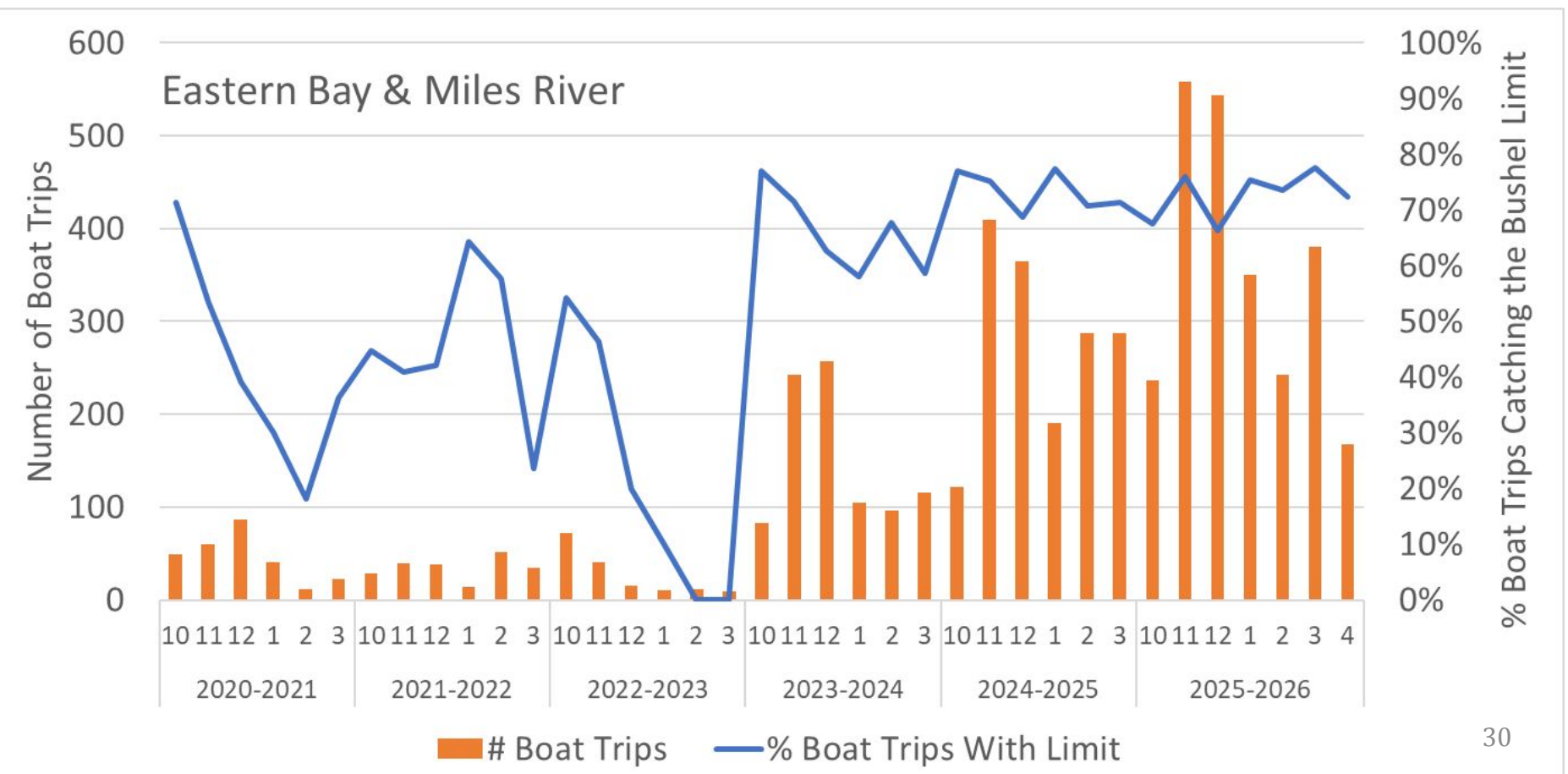
### Aquaculture opportunities in sanctuaries.

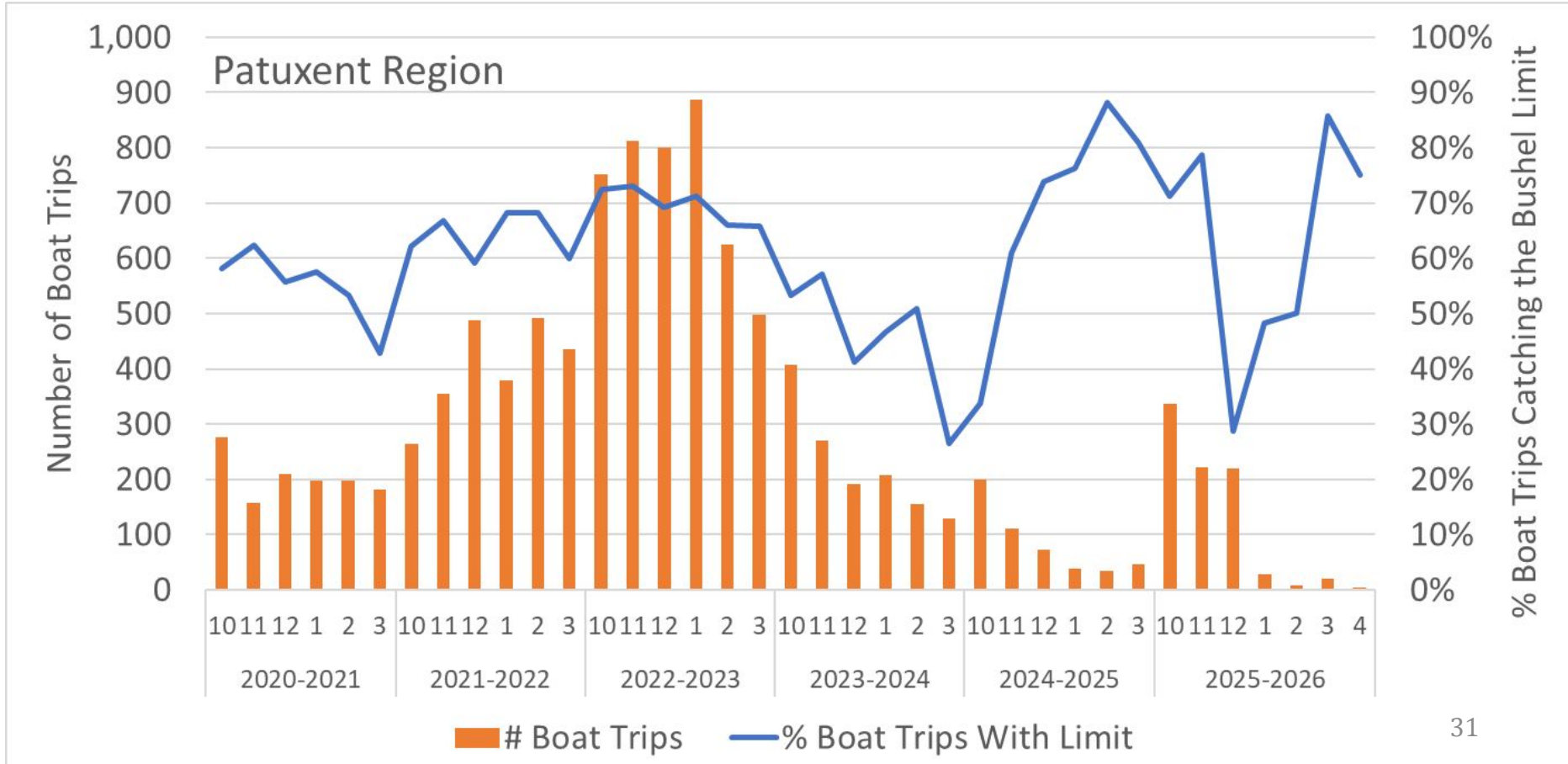
- Planned presentations for June meeting

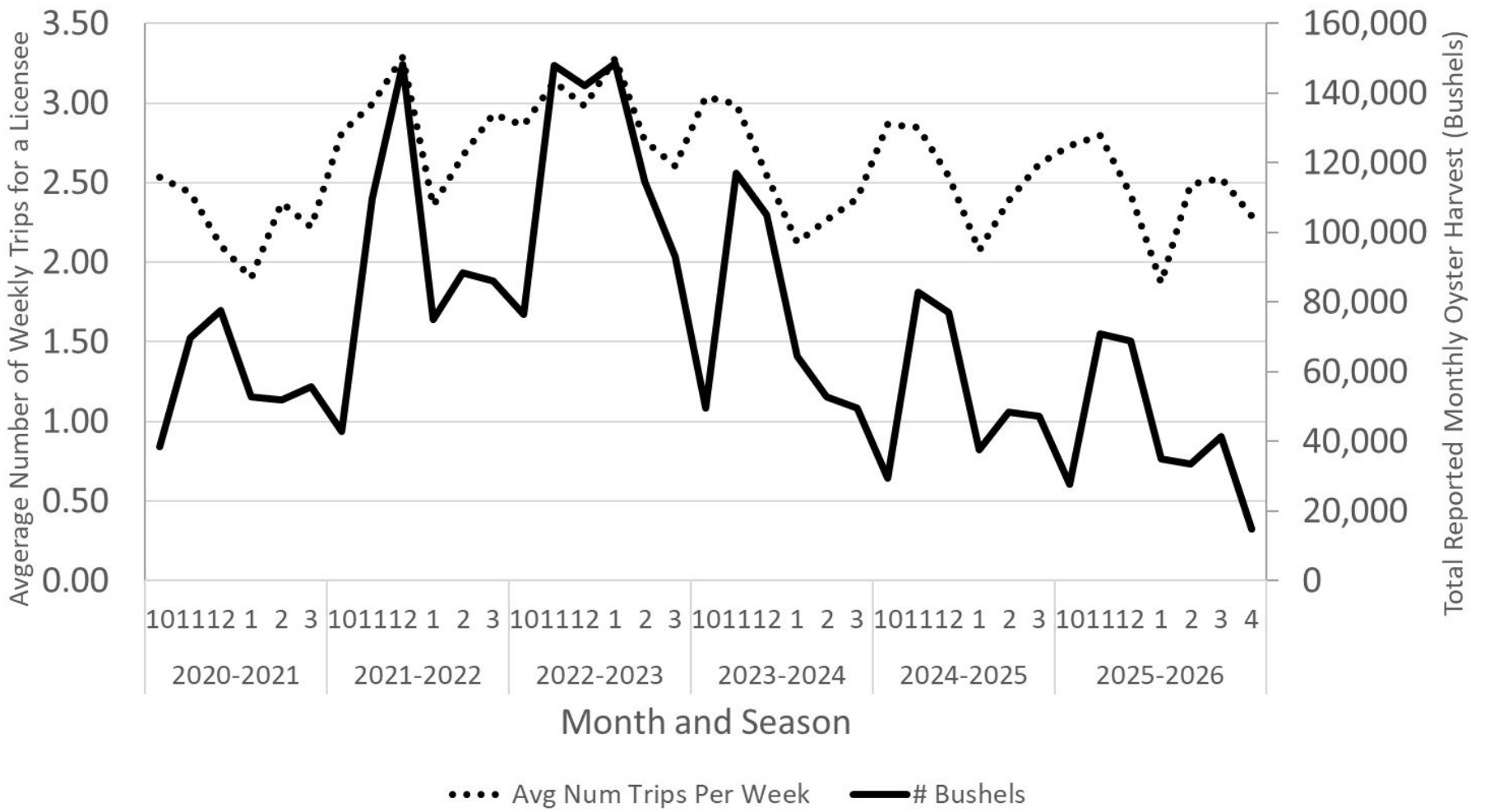


# Catch per Unit Effort

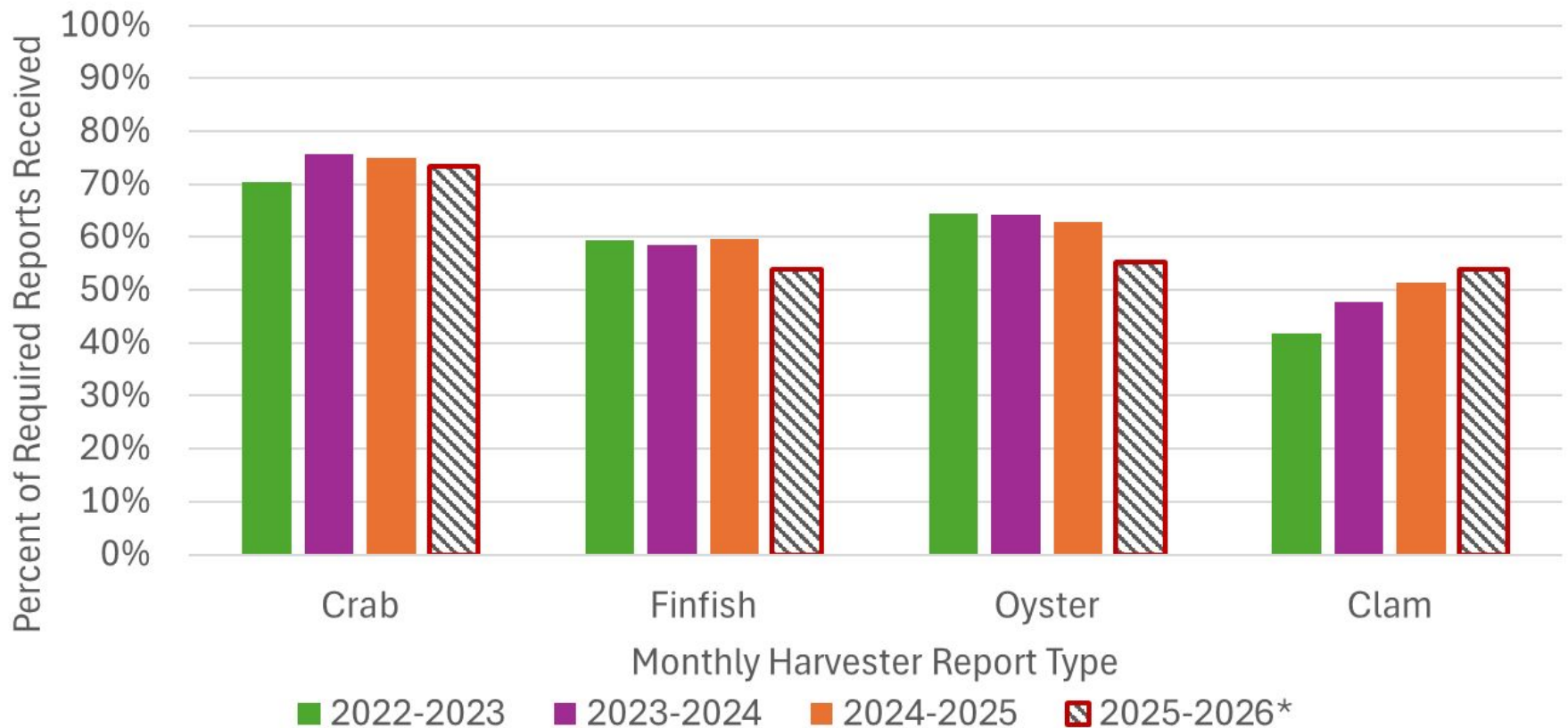








## Maryland's Commercial Fishery Reporting Compliance By License Season



2025-2026 license season is preliminary as the season is ongoing