

2024-2025

**Post-Season
Puget Sound Crab
Industry Meeting**

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4/29/2024



Agenda

- 1) Advisory Board Overview
- 2) Historical Fishery Performance
- 3) 2024-25 Season Overview
- 4) Management Issues
- 5) Other Topics



Puget Sound Commercial Crab Advisory Group Updates



Intention of Meeting

This meeting:

- Will not** decide the final details for the 2025-26 commercial season.
 - » Input here may be used to inform pre-season planning
- Will not** replace the advisory board or pre-season planning process.
- Will not** be an open forum:
 - » *Be respectful of department, staff, advisors, and each other.*
 - » *Be respectful of the time and opportunity for others to comment.*
 - » *Come with questions or specific points.*



Puget Sound Commercial Crab Advisory Group

- Advisory group is accepting applications for all 14 seats process for new members starting April 2025
 - 2-year terms
- Advisory Group has been split into Dealer and Harvester Subcommittees
 - To promote more targeted discussions on relevant topics for managers.
- Questions / Discussion

Puget Sound Commercial Crab
Advisory Board Application -
2025-2027



<https://forms.office.com/g/rD6j2KC2kB>



Puget Sound Commercial Crab Advisory Group Structure

Bellingham / Blaine Geographically Centered Harvester (2 seats)

Anacortes / La Conner / Oak Harbor Geographically Centered Harvester (2 seats)

S. Whidbey Island / Everett / Seattle Metro Geographically Centered Harvester (2 seats)

Olympic Peninsula Geographically Centered Harvester (2 Seats)

At-large Commercial License Holder or Lessee (1 seat)

Commercial License Holder or Lessee Un-affiliated with an Industry Association (1 seat)

Representative of the commercial buying, exporting, or processing industries, including limited-fish seller endorsement holders (3 seats)

At-large All-sector (buyer, harvester or other supporting industries) (1 seat)



Puget Sound Commercial Crab Advisory Group

'The PSCCAG is a volunteer group that provides both a forum for discussion of issues relevant to the commercial crab fishery within Puget Sound and vehicle for bringing industry perspectives to the department as well as sharing department perspectives and decisions with the industry at large. The purpose of the PSCCAG is to develop recommendations to help WDFW achieve the overall mission and management objectives for the Puget Sound commercial crab fishery.'



Roles and Responsibilities

General

- Provide advice and information to WDFW staff on relevant management issues including:
 - *Seasons for crab*
 - *Ideas to maintain and improve commercial crab fisheries in Puget Sound*
 - *Condition of the resource*
 - *Proposed or needed legislation or regulation changes*
- Work with department staff and advisors to resolve management issues and problems in a timely manner.
- Communicate to the department staff special issues or resource concerns that occur between meetings.
- Attend advisory committee meetings and appropriate Fish and Wildlife Commission meetings.

Harvesters

- Represent the interests of the *majority of fishers* in your area.
- Communicate to fishers in your area information from the department and from advisory group meetings, regulatory or legislative proposals, special agency needs, etc.
- Serve as the department's primary contact person in your area.

Dealers

- Communicate with the department regarding industry issues and challenges that effect the buyer's side of the fishery.
- Communicate out to harvesters that you engage in business dealings with information from department, advisory group meetings, regulatory or legislative proposals, special agency needs, etc.



2024-2025 Fishery Structure & Landings



2024-2025 Commercial Crab Season Review

The 2024-2025 season opened on October 1, 2024, with the following plan:

- **Region 1** with **40 pots**
- **Region 2E** with **25 pots**
- **Region 2W** with **25 pots**
- **Subregion 3-1** with **50 pots**
- **Subregion 3-2** with **35 pots**
- **Subregion 3-3** with **50 pots**
- **Subregion 3-4** with **50 pots**

November Retainer: *If total Region 1 harvest is greater than or equal to 1,400,000 lbs. then it would close until November 10, 2024. If Region 1 harvest is lower than 1,400,000 lbs. then it would remain open.*

Set-Aside: 100,000 lbs. (Det. by Industry Input)



2024-2025 Commercial Crab Season Review

- **Region 1** with **40 pots** (closed February 16, 2025)
 - Pot limit increased to 50 pots on November 21, 2024
 - Pot limit increased to 60 pots on December 14, 2024
- **Region 2E** with **25 pots** (closed November 7, 2024)
 - Reopened December 13, 2024, with a pot limit of 20 pots (closed on December 22, 2024).
- **Region 2W** with **25 pots** (closed October 7, 2024)
 - Reopened December 13, 2024, with a pot limit of 20 pots (closed on December 19, 2024).
 - Reopened January 31, 2025, with a pot limit of 20 pots (closed on February 7, 2025).



2024-2025 Commercial Crab Season Review

- **Subregion 3-1** with **50 pots** (closed November 27, 2024)
- **Subregion 3-2** with **35 pots** (closed March 17, 2025)
 - Pot limits increased to 45 pots on October 10, 2024
 - Pot limits increased to 60 pots on November 1, 2024
- **Subregion 3-3** with **50 pots** (closed April 15, 2025)
- **Subregion 3-4** with **50 pots** (closed December 17, 2024)



2024-2025 Commercial Crab Season – *Final Commercial Harvest*

Region	Harvest	Commercial Target	Balance
1	1,487,503	1,508,264	20,761
2E	480,166	525,828	45,662
2W	161,680	159,446	-2,234
3-1	40,846	12,326	-28,521
3-2	240,452	252,450	11,999
3-3	12,579	13,546	967
3-4	2,635	3,177	542



2024-2025 Commercial Crab Season – *State Harvest*

Management Region	Marine Area(s)	Regional State Share	State Summer Recreational Catch	State Summer EUC	State Winter Recreational Catch	State Winter EUC	State Commercial Harvest	State Commercial EUC	Total State Harvest To-Date	State Balance To-Date
1	7	1,972,849	375,084	37,396	47,382	4,724	1,472,775	14,728	1,952,088	20,761
2E	8-1,8-2	1,171,076	540,402	53,878	46,347	4,621	475,412	4,754	1,125,414	45,662
2W	9 less 25C	315,620	114,164	11,382	27,852	2,777	160,079	1,601	317,854	-2,234
3-1	6, N	45,000	26,169	2,609	3,543	353	40,442	404	73,521	-28,521
3-2	6, SE	375,000	95,072	9,479	16,367	1,632	238,071	2,381	363,001	11,999
3-3	6, W	15,500	1,516	151	261	26	12,454	125	14,533	967
3-4	4, 5	9,500	4,804	479	946	94	2,609	26	8,958	542
4	10	103,289	68,572	6,837	13,239	1,320	0	0	89,967	13,322
5	12 incl 25C	206,195	53,710	5,355	16,460	1,641	0	0	77,166	129,029
6	11	77,269	54,869	5,470	27,142	2,706	0	0	90,187	-12,918
7	13	0	188	19	19	2	0	0	228	-228
STATE HARVEST TOTALS		4,291,298	1,334,549	133,055	199,558	19,896	2,401,842	24,018	4,112,917	

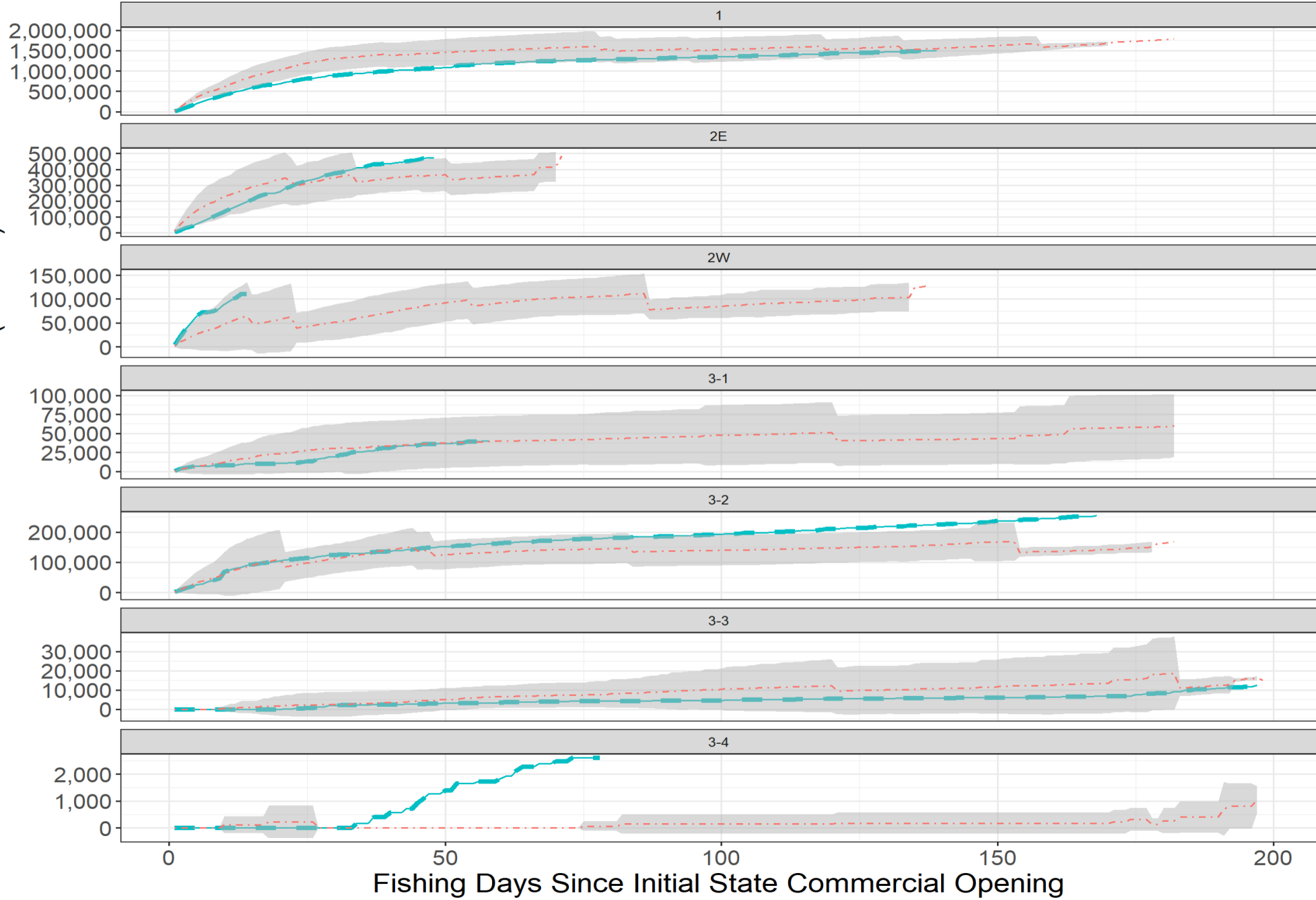


2024-2025 Commercial Crab Season – *Treaty Harvest* (as of 4/18/2025)

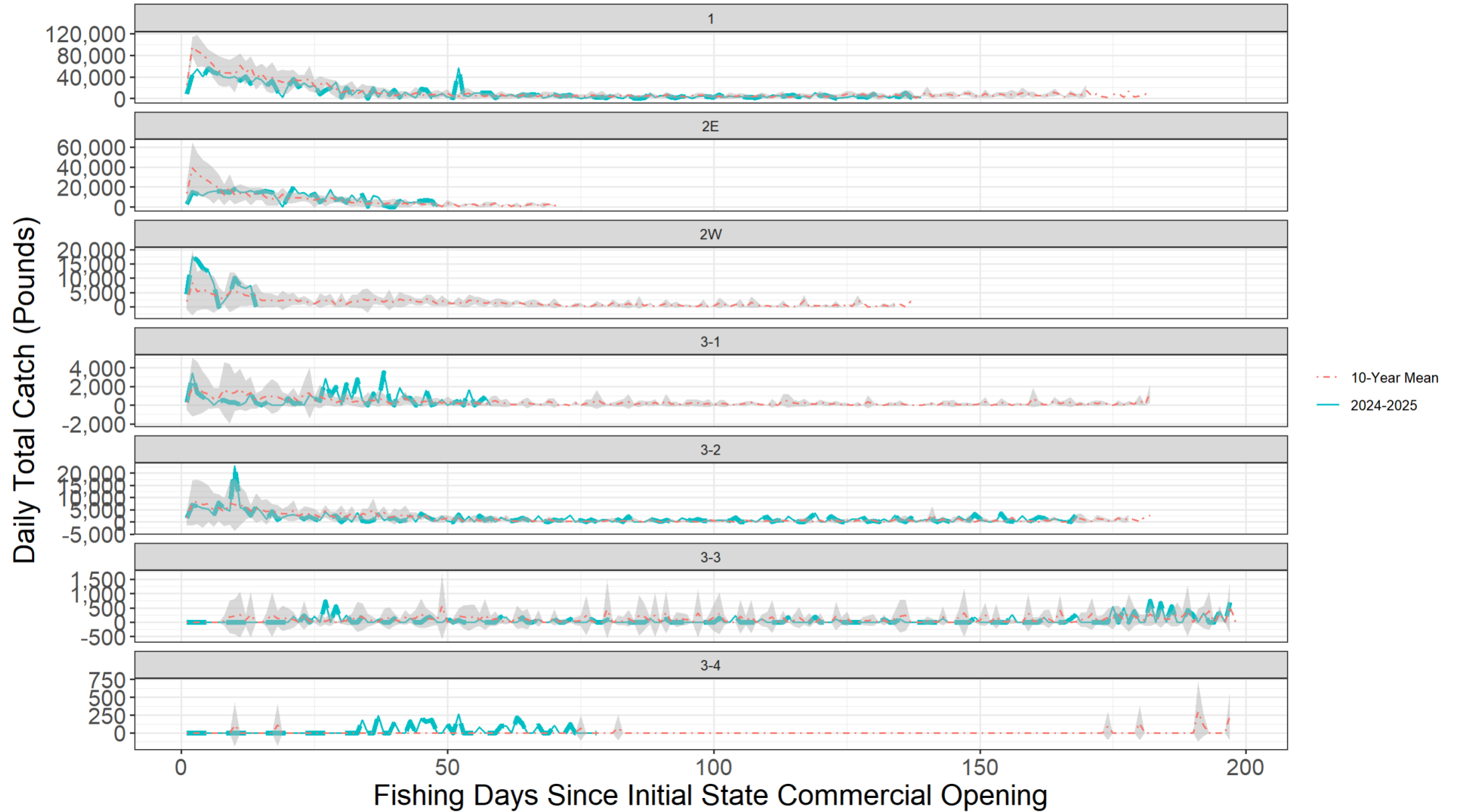
MANAGEMENT REGION	MARINE AREA	REGIONAL TREATY SHARE	TREATY COMMERCIAL HARVEST	TREATY COMMERCIAL EUC	TREATY C&S	TREATY C&S EUC	TOTAL TREATY HARVEST TO DATE	TREATY BALANCE TO DATE
1	7	1,972,849	2,021,154	20,212	1,366	82	2,042,813	-69,964
2E	8-1,8-2	1,200,000	1,176,212	16,052	17,182	1,031	1,210,478	-10,478
2W	9 less 25C	283,019	283,451	2,835	16	1	286,303	-3,284
3-1	6, N	45,000	69,861	699	0	0	70,560	-25,560
3-2	6, SE	375,000	385,694	3,857	500	30	390,081	-15,081
3-3	6, W	12,289	14,777	148	0	0	14,925	-2,636
3-4	4, 5	9,500	7,675	77	0	0	7,752	1,748
4	10	120,000	135,661	1,357	494	30	137,541	-17,541
5	12 incl 25C	206,195	221,913	2,219	410	25	224,567	-18,372
6	11	90,000	102,964	1,030	1,956	117	106,067	-16,067
7	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TREATY HARVEST TOTALS		4,313,852	4,419,362	48,483	21,925	1,315	4,491,086	

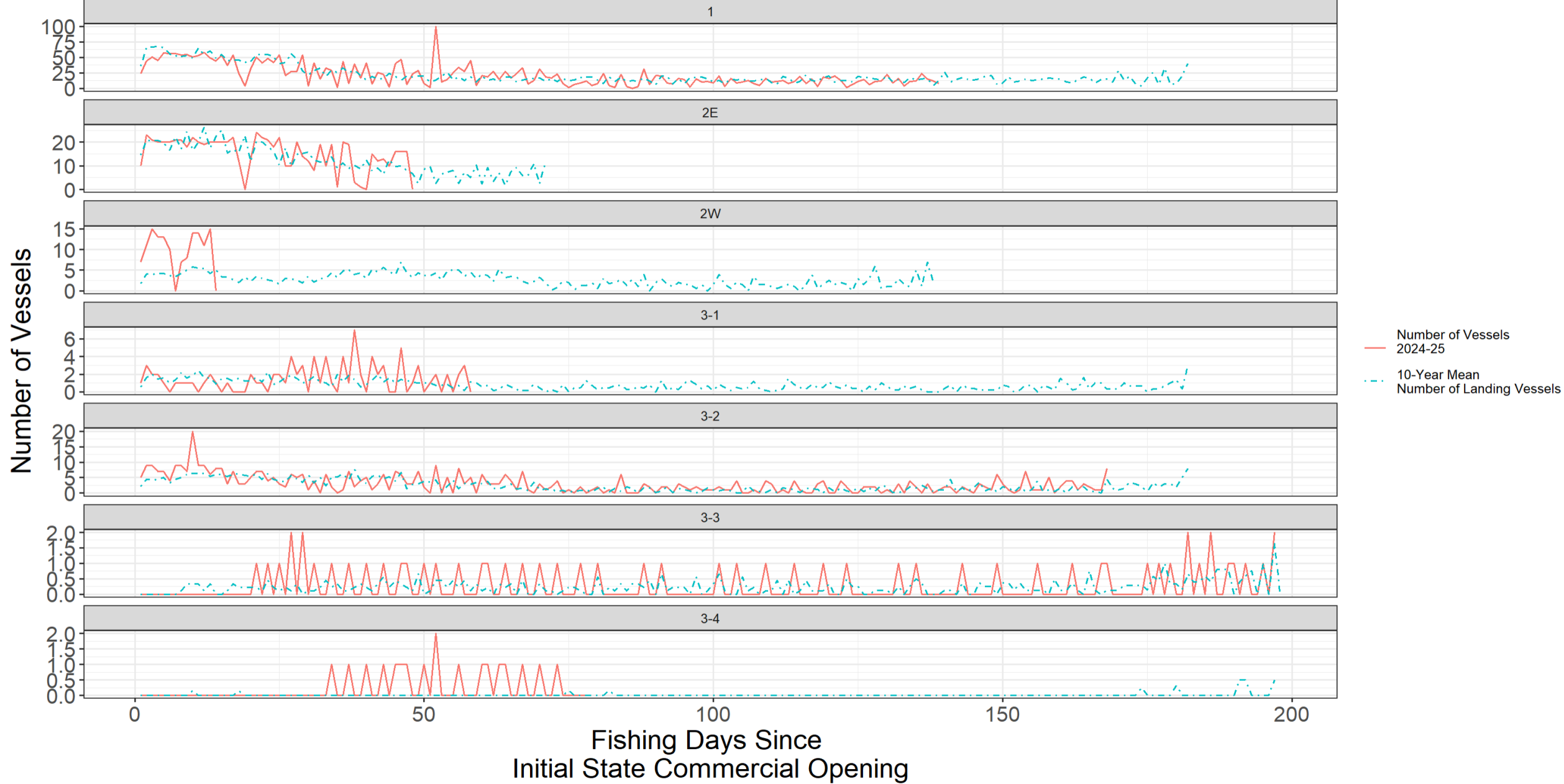


Cumulative Catch to Date (Pounds)



Daily Total Catch Full Season of State Commercial Fishery Versus the 10-year Mean Total Catch





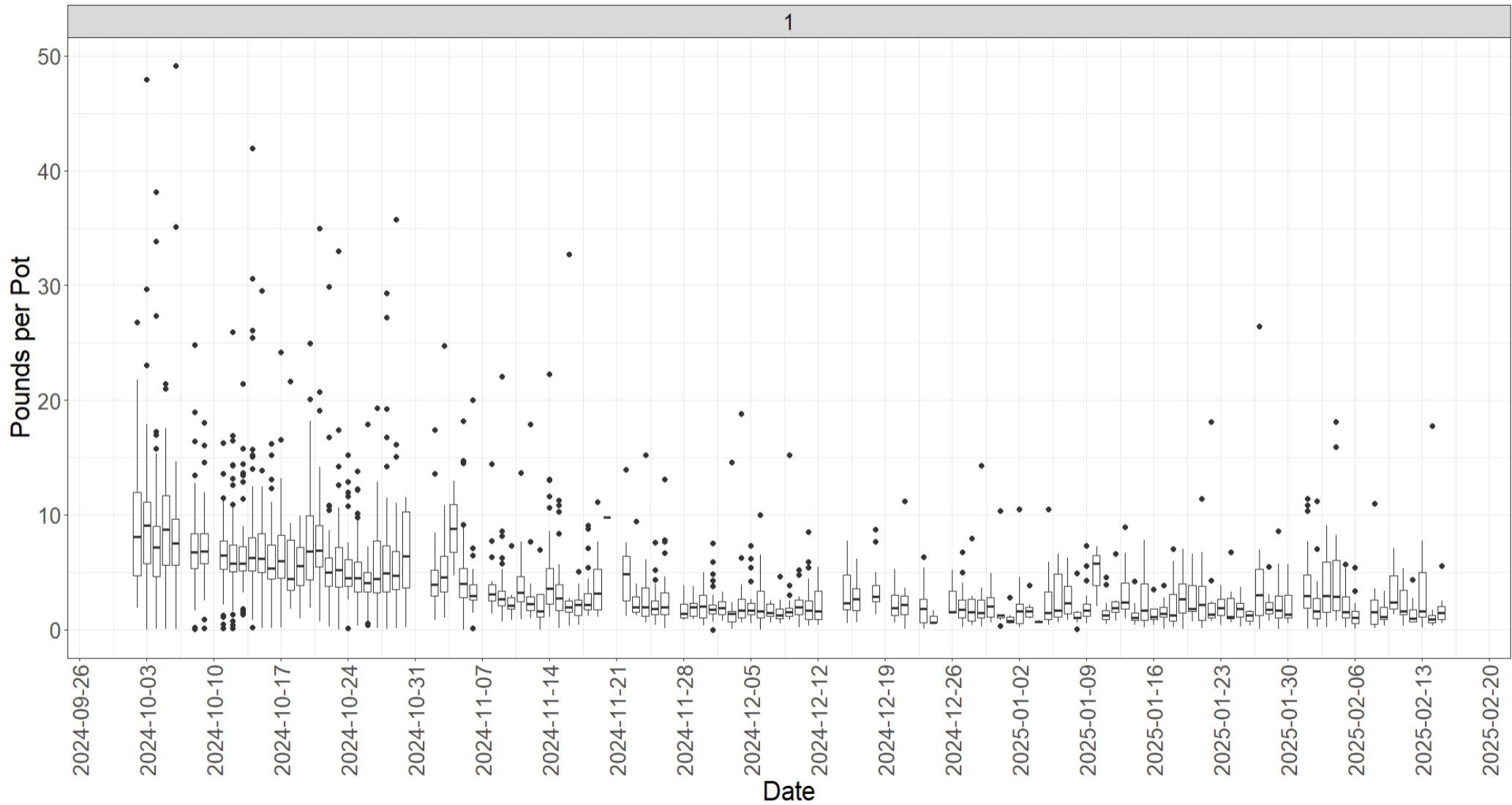
Historical Puget Sound Dungeness Crab Fishery Performance



2024-2025 Region 1 Daily CPUE (Pounds per Estimated Pot)

Average of **4.94 pounds** landed per pot pull for 24-25 season

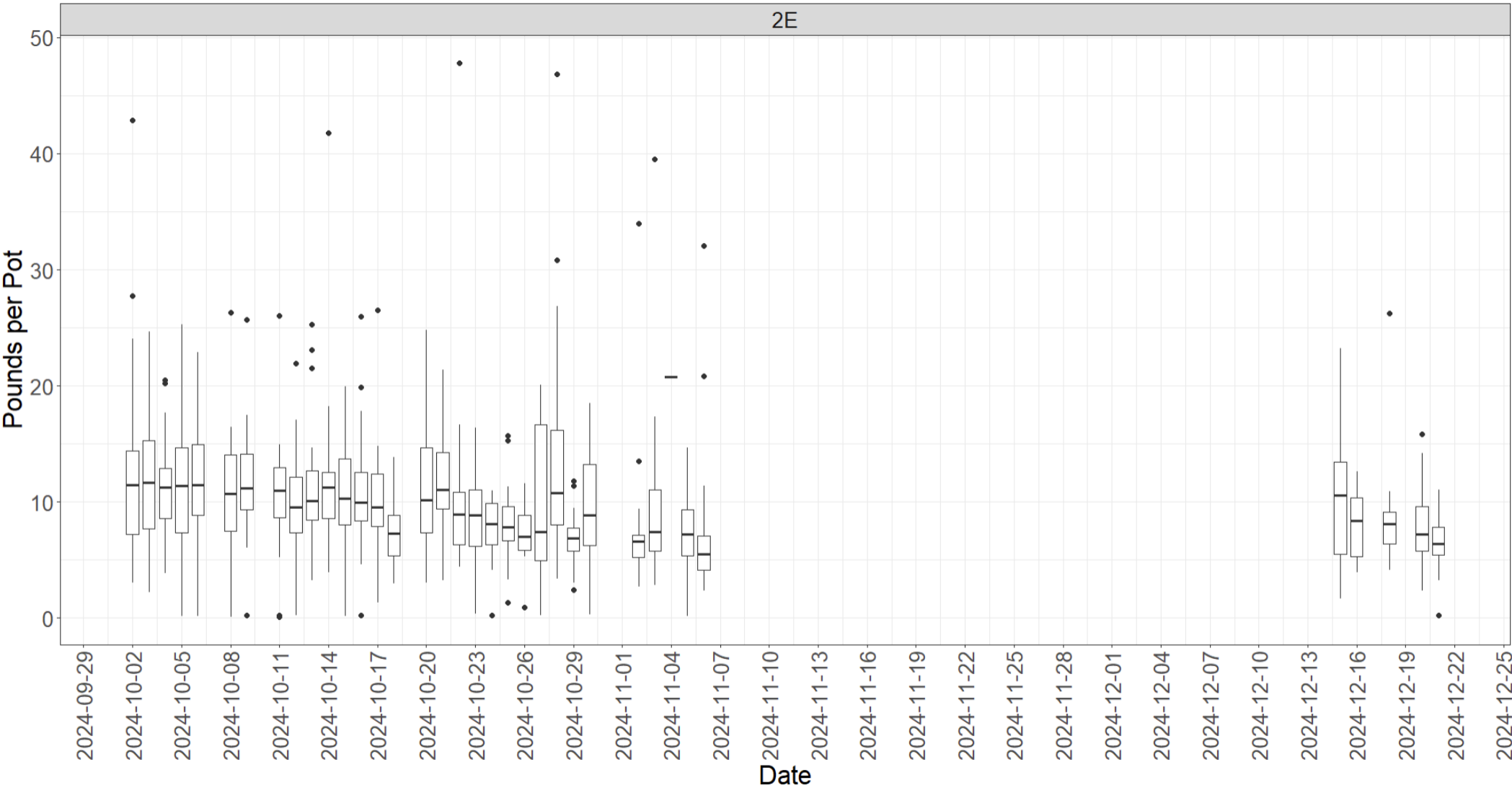
Average of **\$39.20 gross return per pot pull** for 24-25 season



2024-2025
Region 2E
CPUE
(Pounds per
Estimated
Pot)
per Day

Average of **10.0 pounds** landed per pot pull for 24-25 season

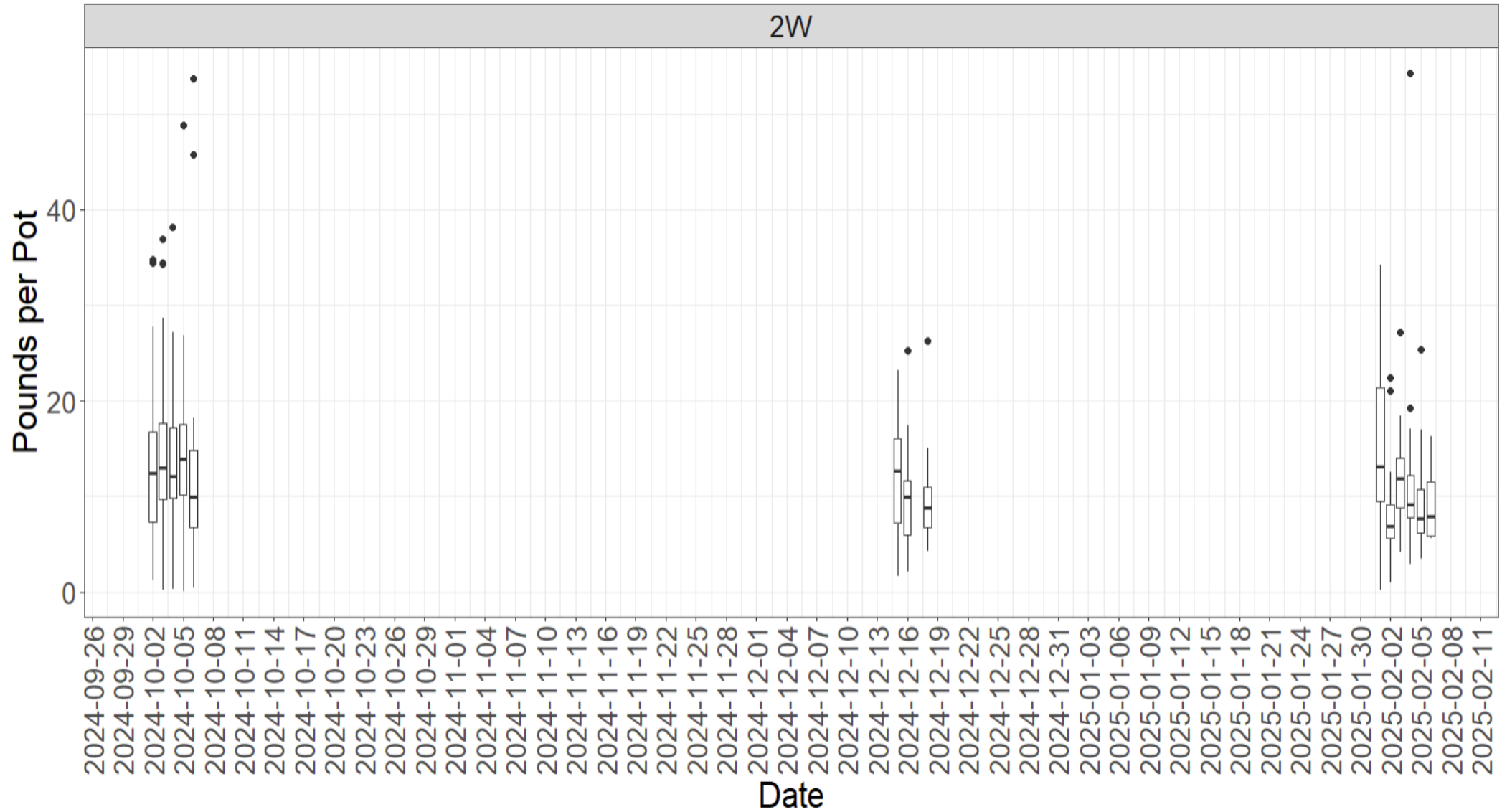
Average of **\$69.90 gross return per pot pull** for 24-25 season



2024-2025 Region 2W CPUE (Pounds per Estimated Pot) per Day

Average of **12.6 pounds** landed per pot pull for 24-25 season

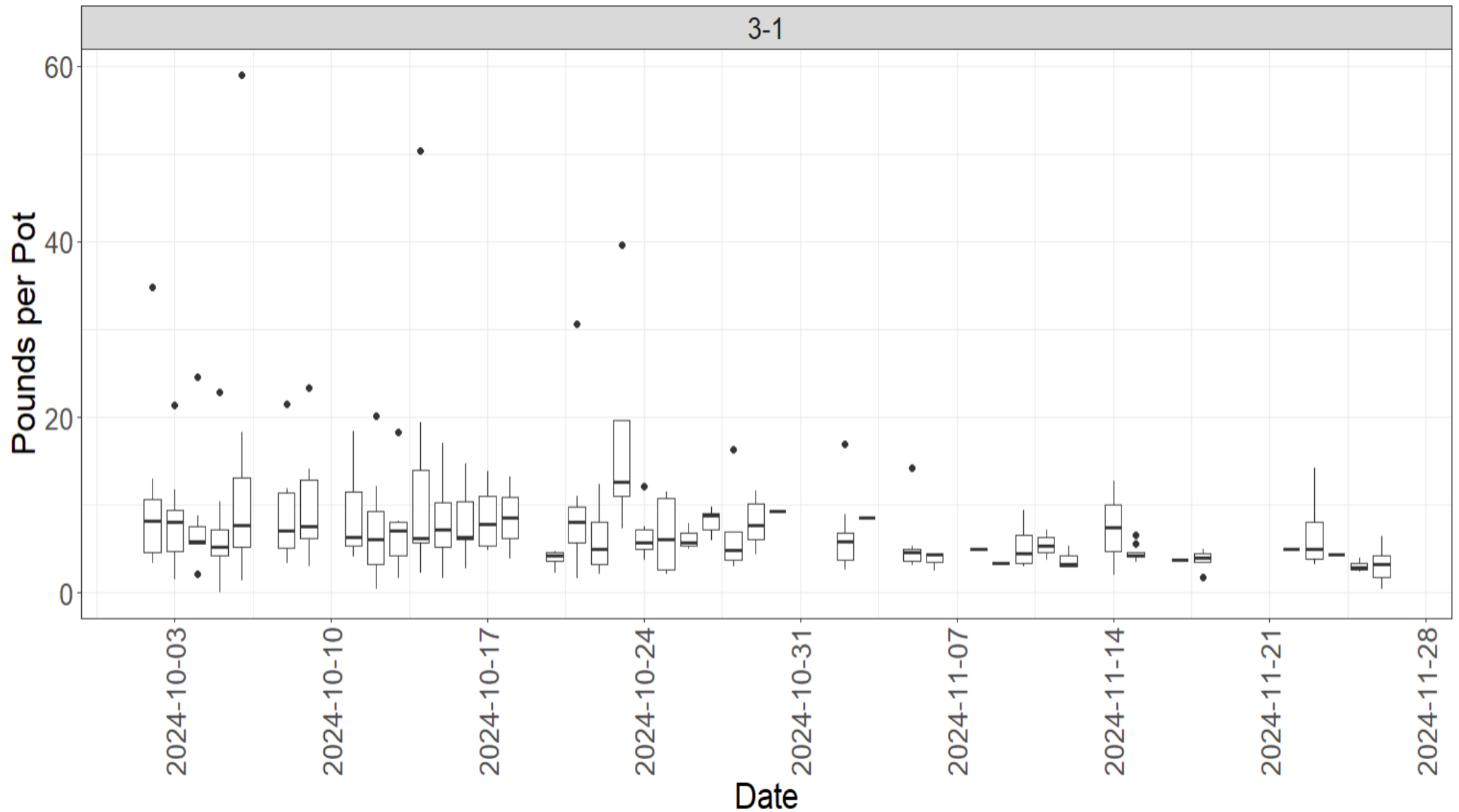
Average of **\$88.80 gross return per pot pull** for 24-25 season



2024-2025 Region 3-1 CPUE (Pounds per Estimated Pot) per Day

Average of **7.69**
pounds landed
per pot pull for
24-25 season

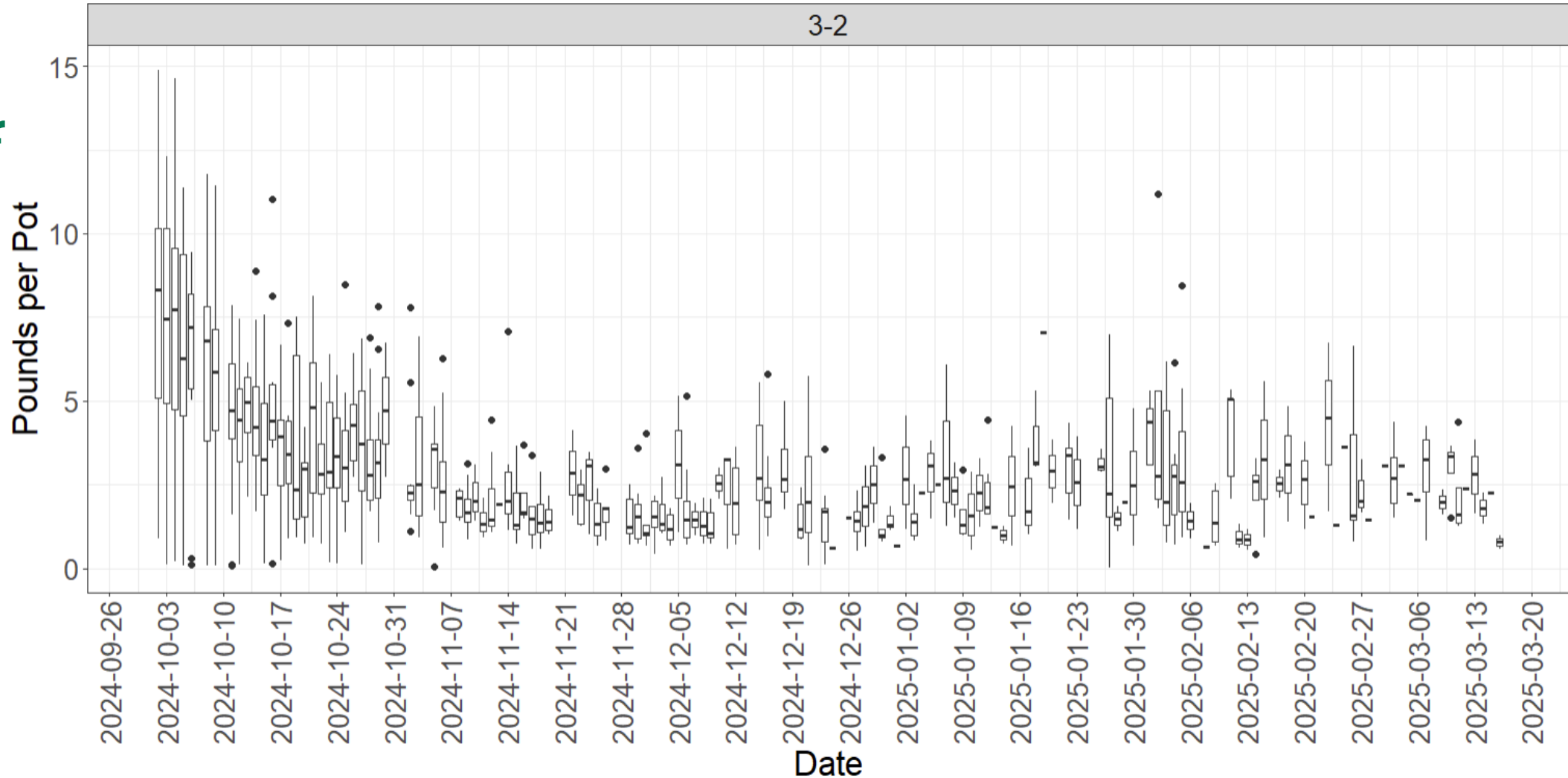
Average of **\$56.3**
gross return per
pot pull for 24-
25 season



2024-2025 Region 3-2 CPUE (Pounds per Estimated Pot) per Day

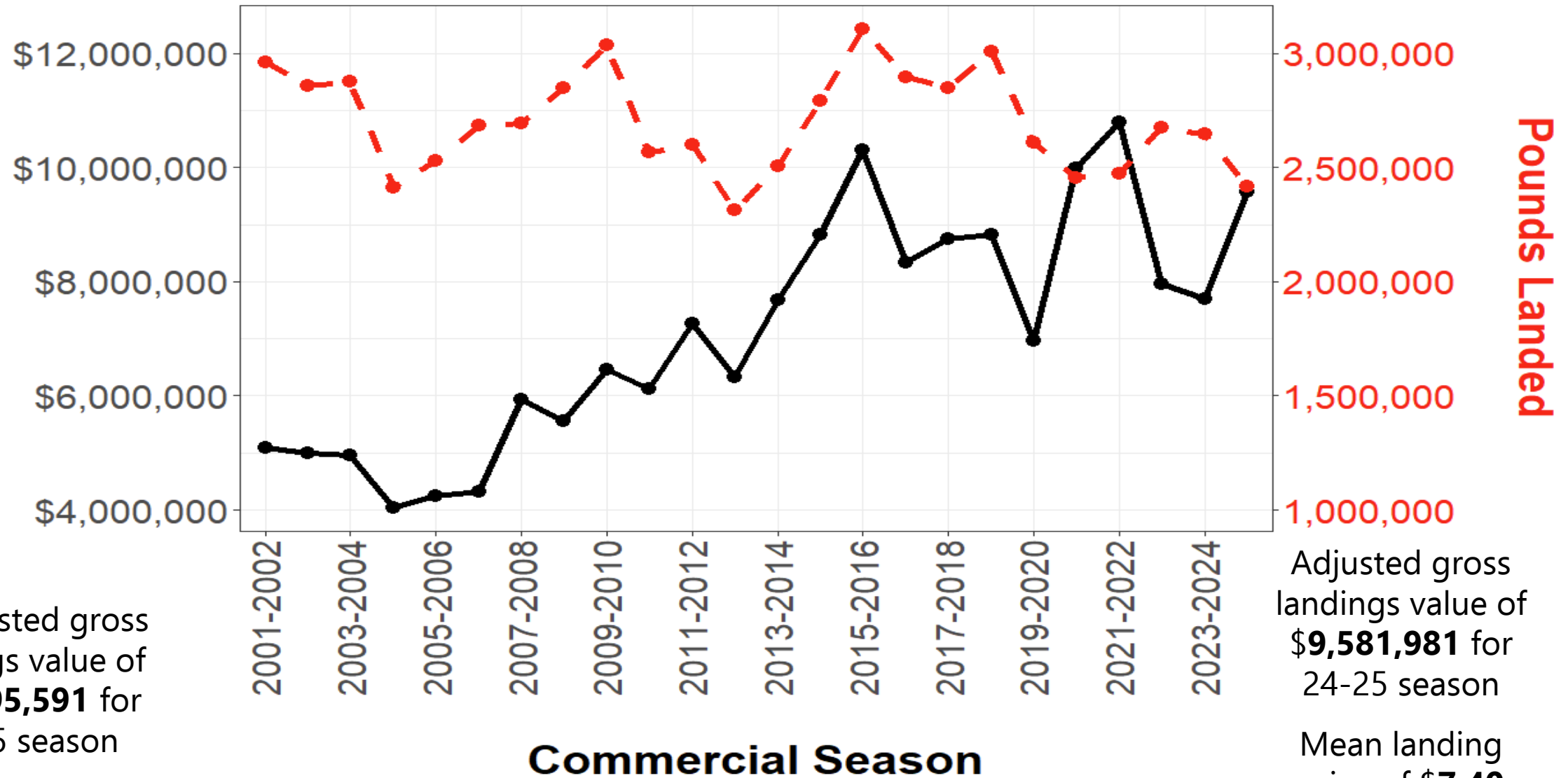
Average of **3.31 pounds** landed per pot pull for 24-25 season

Average of **\$24.00 gross return per pot pull** for 24-25 season



Total Value (Adjusted for Inflation) and Landings (2001-2025)

Ex Vessel Value
Adjusted for Inflation



Unadjusted gross
landings value of
\$17,595,591 for
24-25 season

Adjusted gross
landings value of
\$9,581,981 for
24-25 season

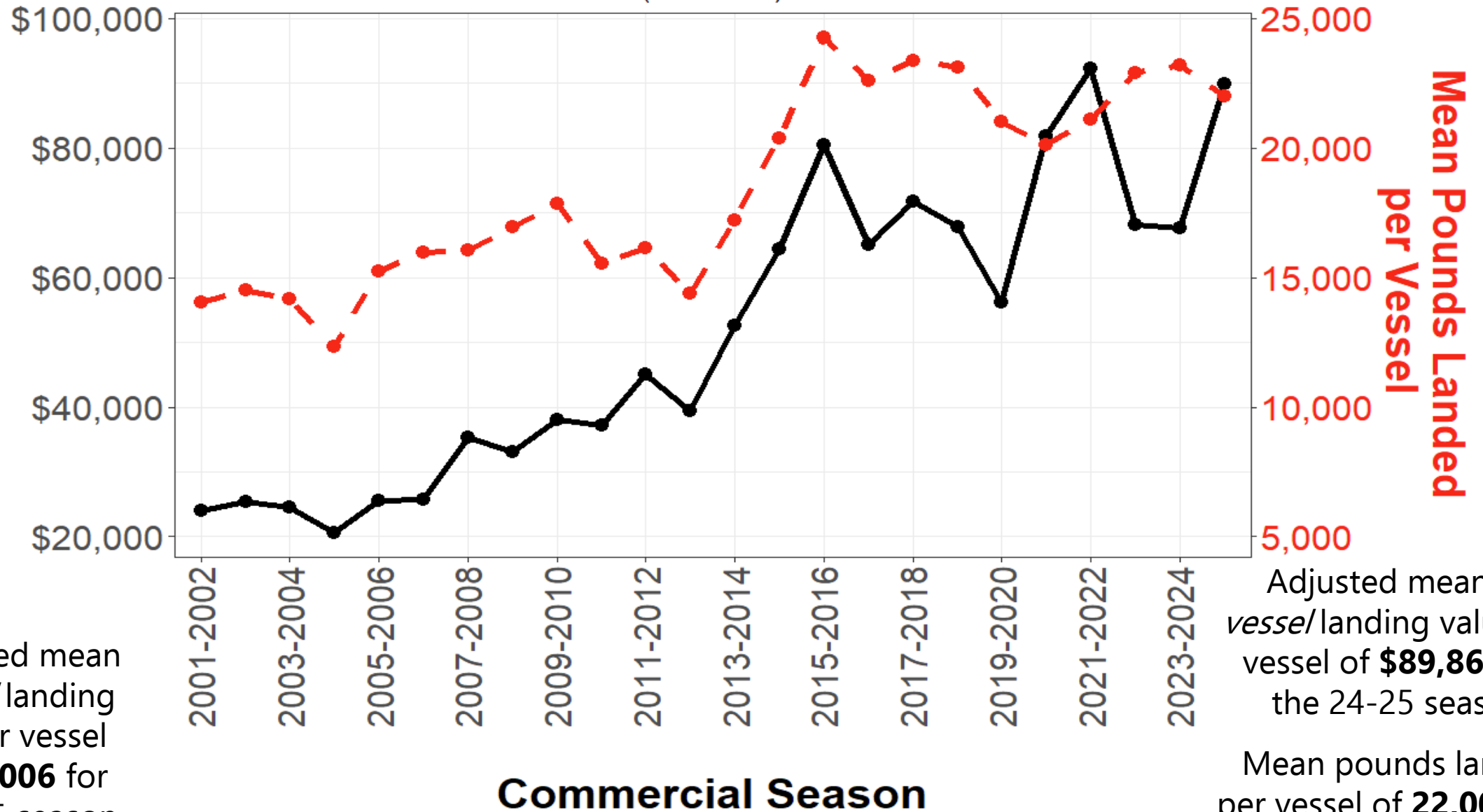
Mean landing
price of **\$7.40**
per pound for
24-25 season



Mean per Vessel Ex Vessel Value Adjusted for Inflation

Unadjusted mean
ex vesse/landing
value per vessel
of **\$165,006** for
the 24-25 season

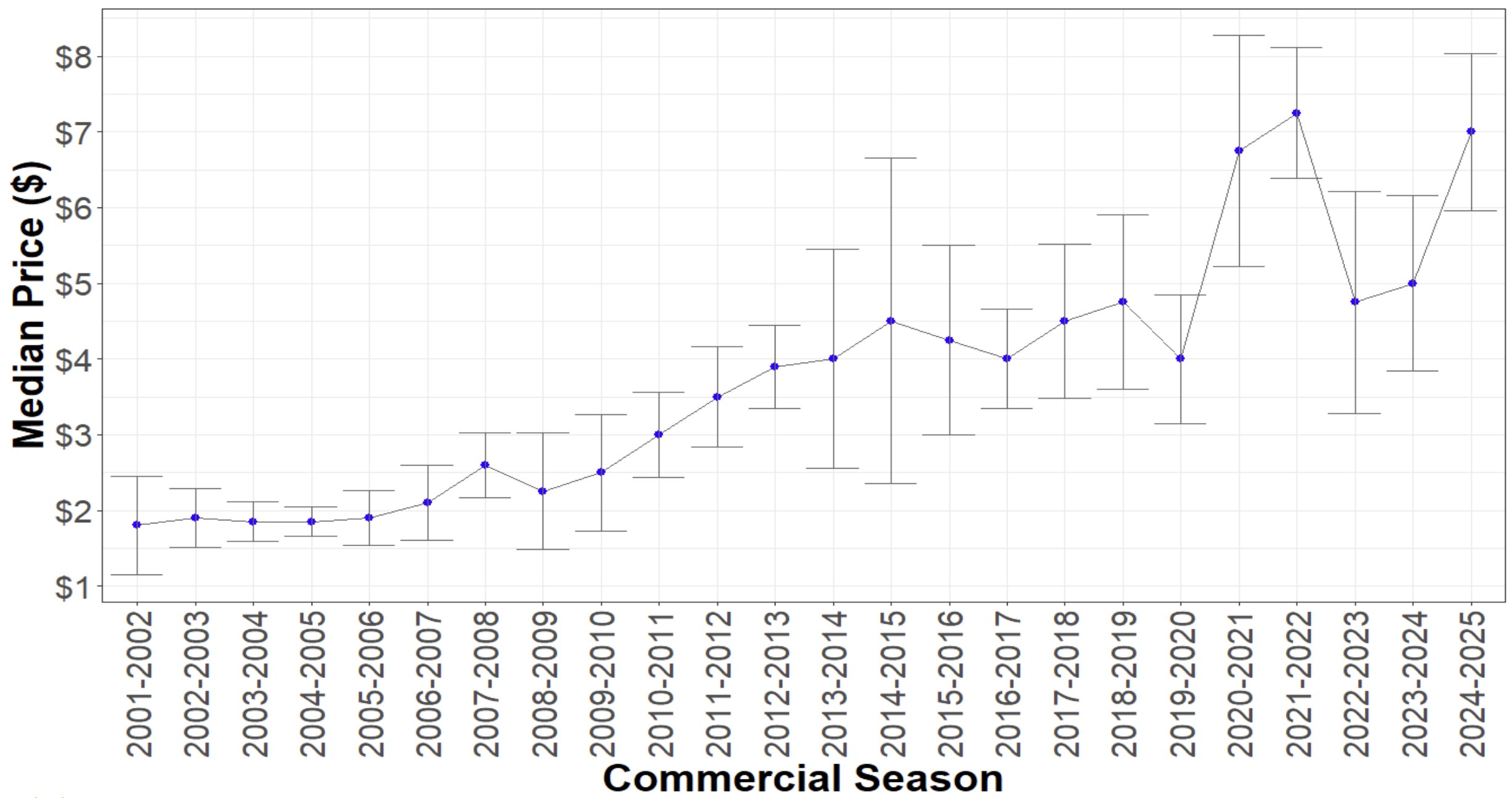
Mean per Vessel Value (Adjusted for Inflation) and Landings
(2001-2025)



Adjusted mean *ex vesse*/landing value per
vessel of **\$89,866** for
the 24-25 season

Mean pounds landed
per vessel of **22,000 lbs.**
for the 24-25 season





2024-2025 Commercial Crab Season Management Issues



Region 1 Early Closure

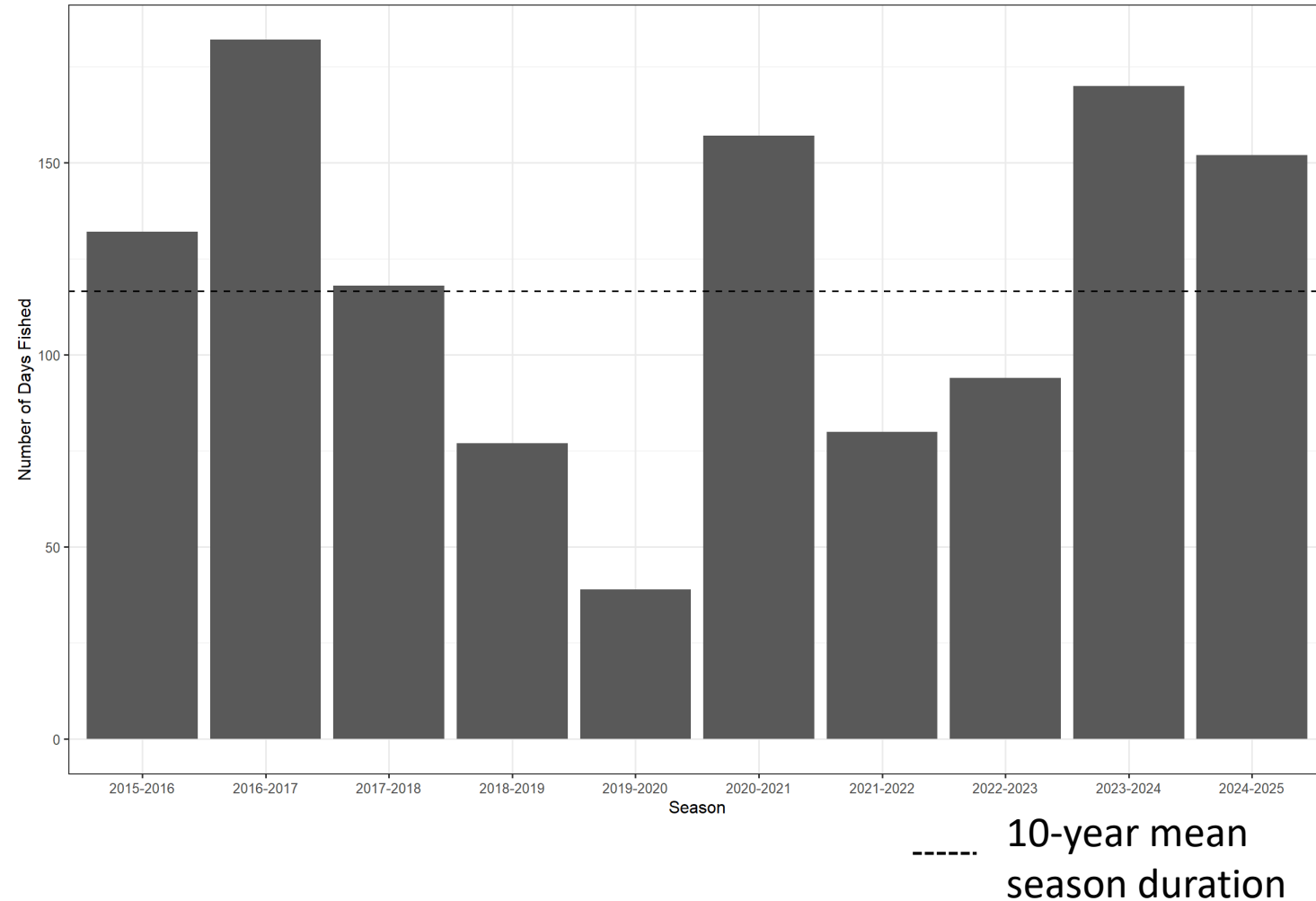
The decision to close Region 1 fisheries on February 15, 2025, focused on the following factors:

- Performance of both State and treaty fisheries in comparison to previous years,
- Allocation or *equal* sharing of the Region 1 crab resource between state and tribal co-managers,
- Mitigating the impacts of protracted and concentrated late-season fisheries.
- Management Tools



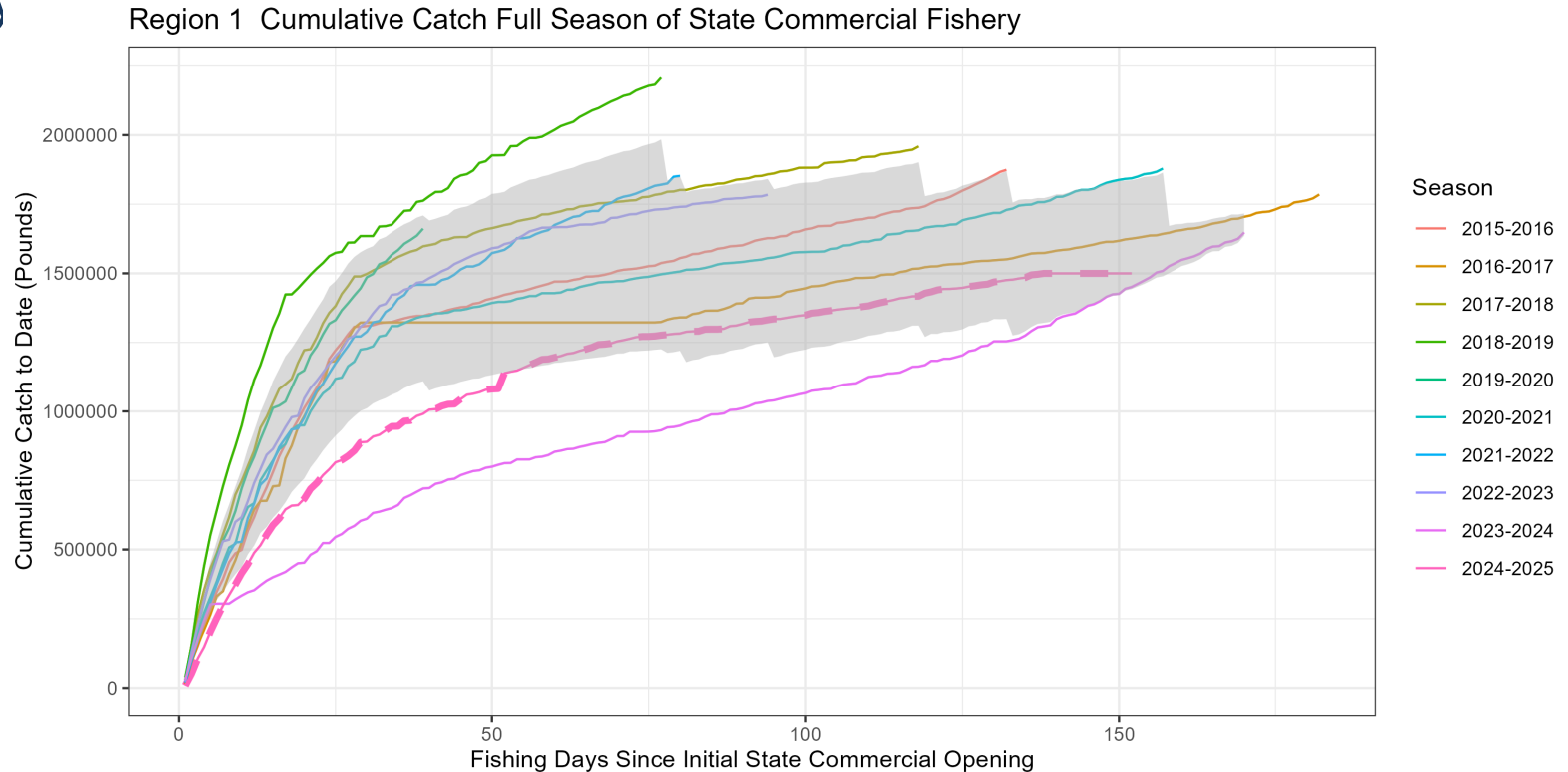
Region 1 Early Closure

- Mean season duration to reach *full share* is 117 days
- Most seasons have been broken up in segments
 - (October – November; December – January; March- April)
 - The 2023-24 and 2024-25 have been continuous
- 2023-24 season lasted 170 days (165 of which was continuous)
- 2024-25 lasted 152 days



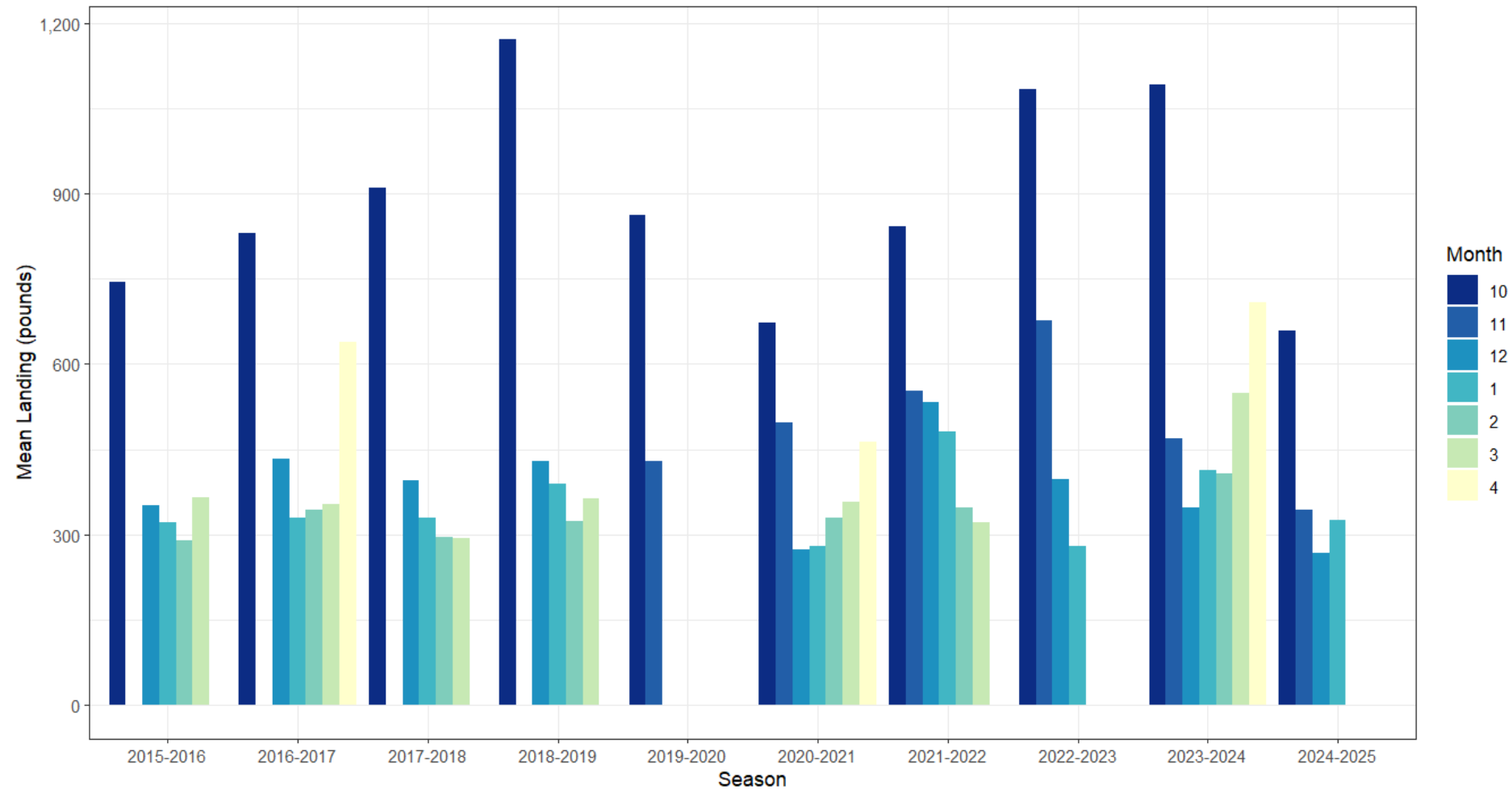
Region 1 Early Closure

- The early part of the fishery is significantly much more productive than was observed this year.
- Catch rates plateaued faster than the 10-year average
- Indicative that initial abundance was lower than average and that there may be less overall biomass as well to sustain harvest rates.



Region 1 Early Closure

- Mean landings in October and November this year in comparison to last year are ~30% weaker.
- Catch is generally higher in the early part of the fishery than occurred this year.



Region 1 Early Closure

- Equal allocation and harvest between parties one of the fundamental management objectives for the Puget Sound crab fishery.
 - The degree of co-management in Puget Sound fisheries is relatively unique and adds complexity to management and decision making.
- Treaty tribes have reserved right to 50% of the crab resource; State has court adjudicated rights to the other 50%.
 - Collectively, both parties are targeting 50% of an unknown number.
- How the state allocation is prioritized is guided by commission policy.



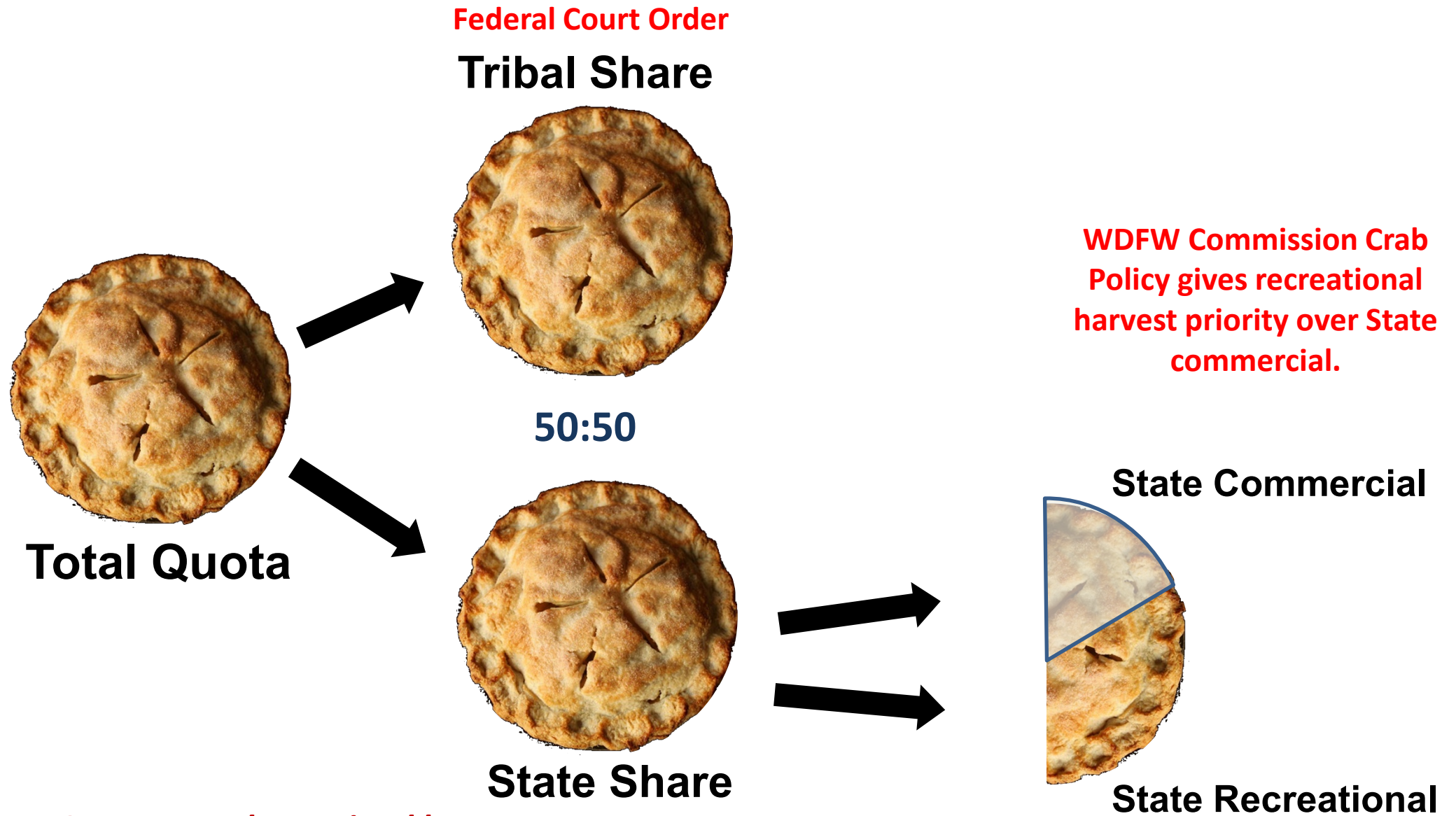
Region 1 Early Closure

Puget Sound Crab Policy (revised Sept. 2010)

- Recreational fishery priority
- State commercial in North Puget Sound only (Region 1, 2E, 2W, 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 3-4)
- State commercial fishery only occurs *after* the summer recreational fishery and the winter recreational season is accommodated
- State commercial access to recreational exclusive areas is not permitted
 - “mop up” commercial fisheries in recreational areas are not allowed.



How is the resource allocated to the various user groups?



Quotas are determined by co-manager agreement



How is the resource allocated to the various user groups?

Federal Court Order

Tribal Share



50:50



Total Quota



State Share

WDFW Commission Crab
Policy gives recreational
harvest priority over State
commercial.

State Commercial

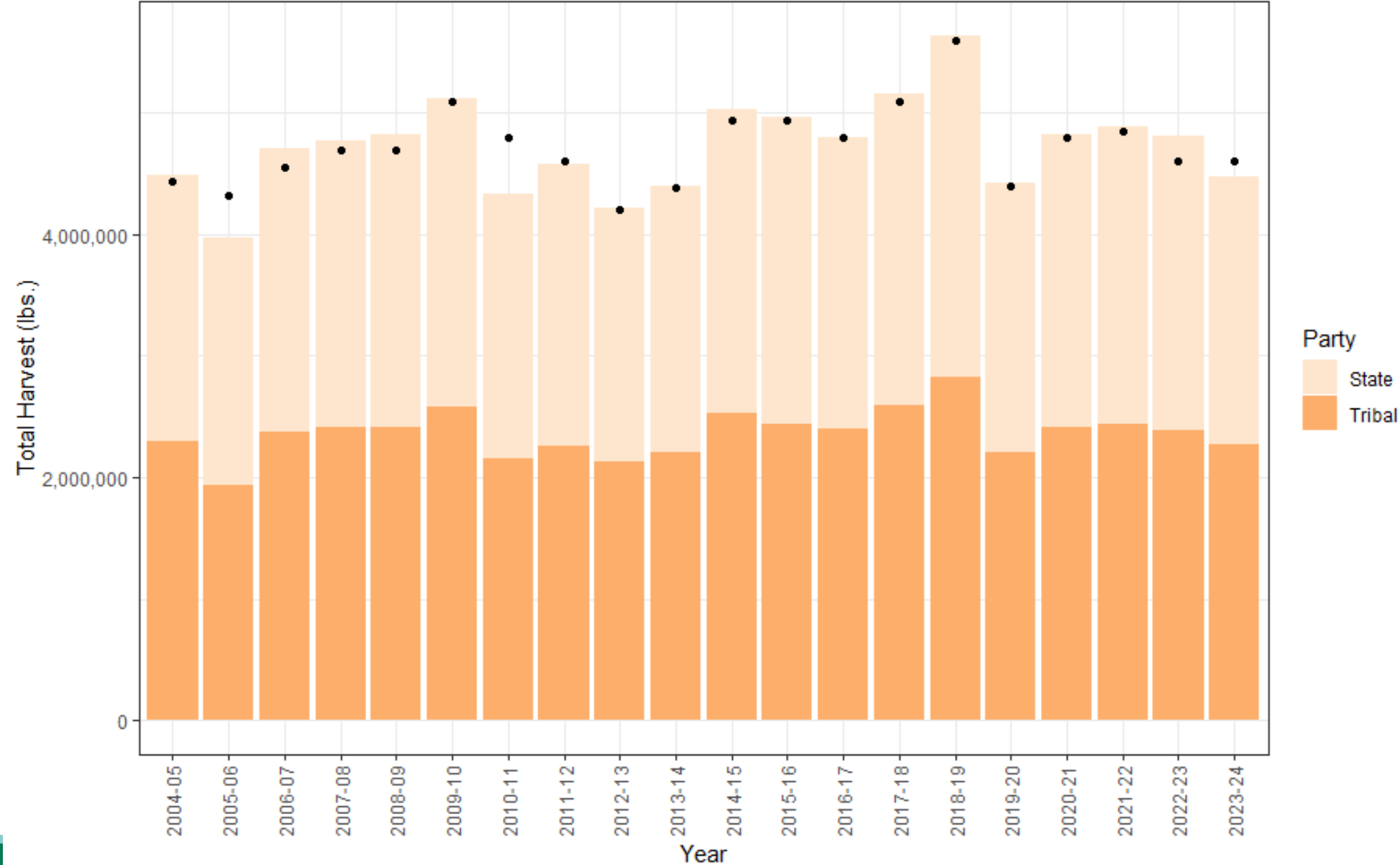


State Recreational

Quotas are determined by co-manager agreement



Region 1 Early Closure Decision Review



Quota Setting and Abundance Increases

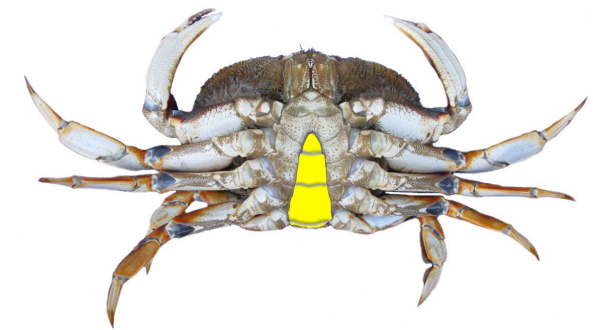
- Quotas are not based on an assessment of the resource.
 - They are a sharing mechanism to meet 50:50 allocation implemented by federal court order.
- Quota are based on historical fishery performance with some adjustments through time.
 - Test fishery performance
 - Current fishery performance
 - Prior fishery performance
- Quota setting and in-season abundance increase methods vary between Crab Management Regions.
 - In most regions they are lacking and differ between years
- In-season quota adjustments are partially dependent on having agreed-to management plans and good working relationships with co-managers.
 - Also dependent on staff (treaty and state) and policy (most often treaty) workload and capacity.



Region 1 Early Closure

3-S Management Framework

- **Size:** the minimum legal size of harvested crab is 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches in Puget Sound
 - Provides ~ 2 years for males to reproduce before entering the fishery
- **Sex:** only male crab can be legally retained by the fishery
 - Allows females the opportunity to reproduce without harvest pressure
- **Season:** harvest is limited to minimize interaction with 'soft' crab
 - Reduces bycatch mortality
 - Maximizes the quality / value of the resource
 - All seasons are set around crab molt periods (*to avoid soft crab*)



♂

Male Crab



Region 1 Early Closure

3-S management is built around a series of assumptions that work well in certain situations.

Some of the assumptions are:

- Males that are 6.25 inches and larger have had a chance to reproduce.
- Harvesting only males does not prevent reproduction.
- Harvest seasons are designed to avoid the molt and reduce fishery handling of crab during a sensitive period.
- Crab populations have consistent larval supply.

3-S is not a perfect framework for Puget Sound

- Policy and sharing constraints
- Geographic / ecosystem complexity



Region 1 Early Closure

3-S management is designed to limit interaction with crab during periods where they may be more sensitive handling.

In most Dungeness crab fisheries 3-S is not the only management measure used to help mitigate fishery impacts.

- Other fisheries have a combination of:
 - Landings Limits
 - Trip limits
 - Reduced pot limits
 - Soft-shell thresholds prompting area closures or depth limits.
- Most of these are not functional in Puget Sound due to the difference in scale that Puget Sound fisheries remain economically viable.
 - A 1200 pounds biweekly landing limit would not disincentive fishing in Puget Sound.

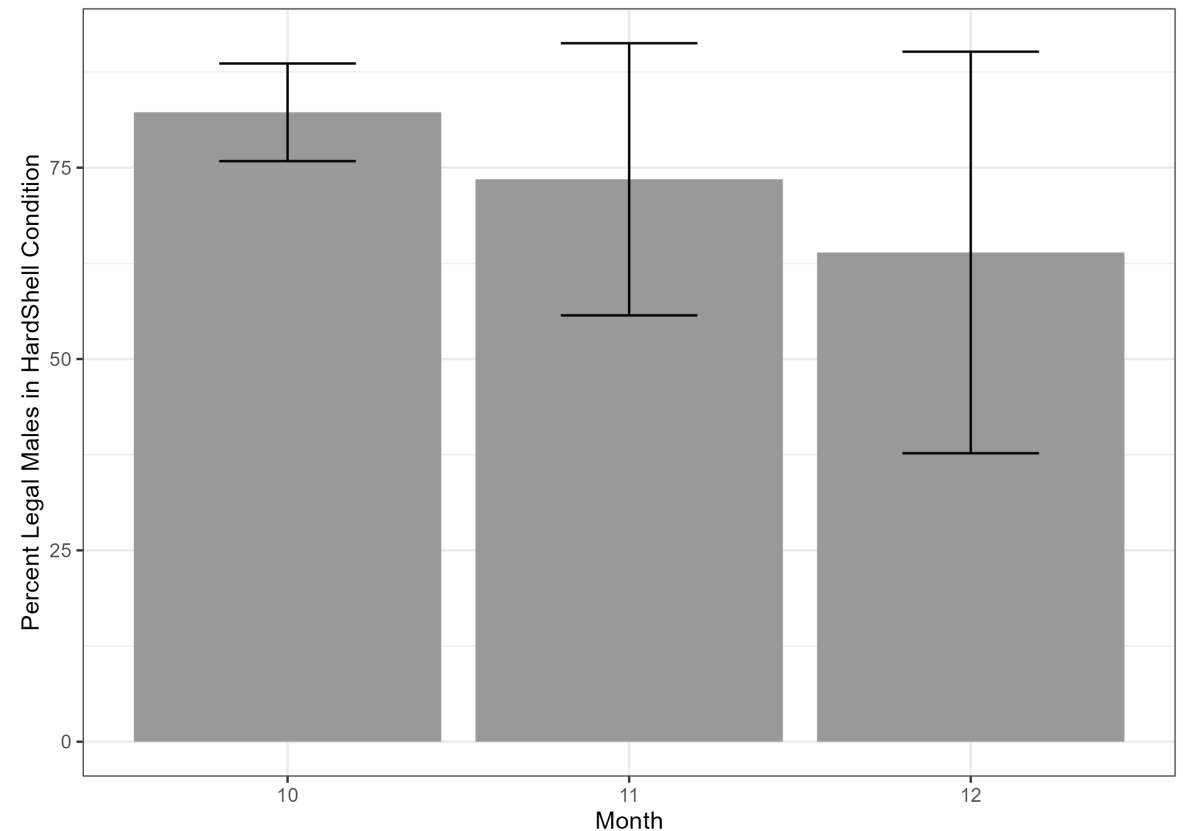


Region 1 Early Closure

Conservation: Softshell concerns

- In recent years, industry members and comanagers have expressed concern over fishery interactions with softshell season.
 - Increase mortality risk
 - Market reasons
- Very few fishery management tools currently available to limit softshell interactions
 - Reduction in fishing effort (fewer pots, lower quotas)
 - Fishery closure
- Increasing uncertainty in the defined 'molting period' for Region 1 and other areas of Puget Sound
- The WDFW team is attempting to learn more by sampling catch.

Average percent of hardshell crab sampled during monthly 'ride-alongs'.



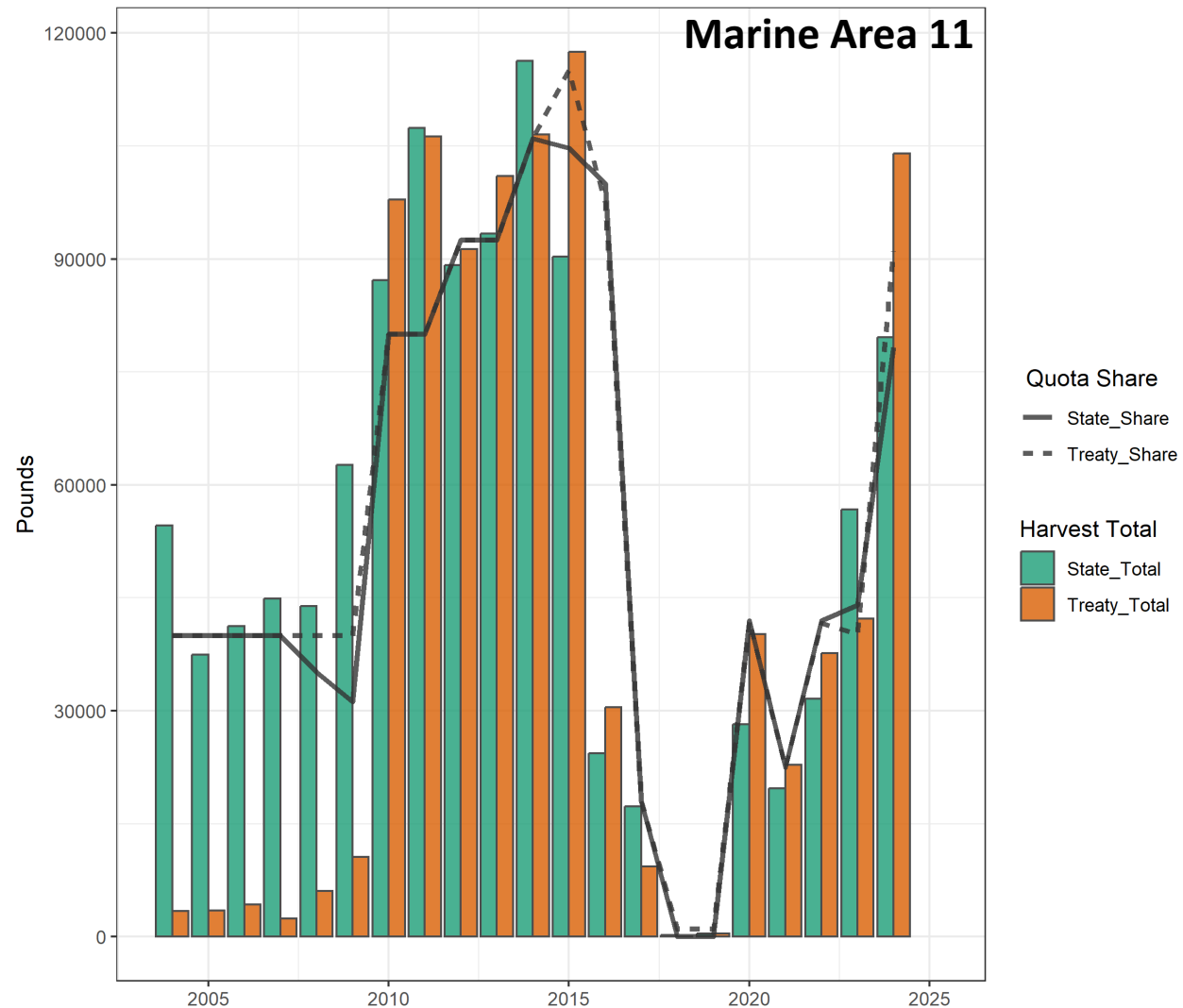
Region 1 Early Closure

Conservation: **Abundance**

- Region 1 fishery performance in 2024 and 2025 indicates that abundance is trending below the long-term average.
- **3S** management is based on a key assumption of consistent annual recruitment.
Changes in recruitment = changes in population abundance = changes in surplus for harvest
- Quota sharing is very difficult when fisheries are exploited to the fullest.
- Legal males not harvested have a high likelihood of surviving into the next year. More males that carry over to the next year will add resiliency to the fishery in years of low recruitment. ***More stable harvests and quotas.***
- The fishery has collapsed in other areas of Puget Sound. Reducing the harvest level has a positive impact on population abundance.



Region 1 Early Closure



Region 1 Early Closure

Treaty Commercial Fishery Status

- Region 1 Tribes closed the treaty commercial fishery on April 1, 2025, in all areas.
 - Current Total Harvest in Region 1 is approximately **2,042,813 lbs.**
- **Early closure implemented to:**
 - Ensure equal sharing provisions were met.
 - Reduce the overall number of crab harvested (conserve some of the resource).
 - Limit late-season (post-hard closure date) fishery effort during a period when the crab are in a sensitive condition.
 - Provide a longer break between fishing effort to allow additional time for crab condition to improve.



Lessons Learned – Department

In-season Decision-Making Process

- We strive to engage the advisory group for feedback whenever possible.
- The timeline for this decision occurred much faster than anticipated, which didn't allow that conversation to take place.
- While WDFW has the authority to make decisions without engaging the advisory group or fleet-at-large, we value your input and insight and believe that feedback is crucial for our decision-making, maintaining transparency and trust, and the long-term success of this fishery.

Why wasn't there a fleet vote?

- Polling the fleet is helpful for some decisions, such as season structure and pot limit changes.
- Conservation decisions are not well-suited to a democratic vote – these are tough decisions that impact your livelihoods



Lessons Learned – Department

Going forward...

- WDFW will continue to engage the advisory group on significant decisions, both preseason and in-season.
- Expect more communication on significant in-season decisions
 - More notification and requested feedback throughout season, if warranted - serves to help you all make consequential decisions for your operations and plan accordingly.
- Preseason decisions on quota – Making significant changes to quota in-season (especially lowering) is incredibly challenging on the fleet and fishery managers. We will strive to engage the tribes on quota changes preseason.
 - Lack of signed crab plans has impacted our ability to have this conversation in recent years



Other Topics

Ferry Terminal Rulemaking Fishing Closure

Purpose: ...improve public and worker safety by prohibiting either commercial or recreational crabbing, shrimping, purse seine fishing and gillnetting near all ferry terminals managed by the Washington state department of transportation (WSDOT). Commercial and recreational fishing equipment associated with these activities has caused significant and costly annual damage to WSDOT ferries.

- (1) It is unlawful for any vessel to engage in any recreational crabbing or shrimping or commercial crabbing, shrimping, gillnetting or purse seine fishing within a rectangular-shaped closure area that extends 100 yards to either side of a Washington state ferry terminal and extending 400 yards into the water from the end of the terminal. In addition to the definitions outlined within RCW 79.160.060, the end of the terminal is defined as the point of interchange where the ferry docks to load and unload passengers.
- (2) For recreational fishers, a violation of this section is an infraction punishable under RCW 77.15.160. For commercial fishers, a violation of this section is a gross misdemeanor under RCW 77.15.550.



Other Topics

- Coastal Crab Rulemaking
- Open floor to questions and discussion
 - Please raise your hand and staff will unmute you:
 - Hit the “hand” icon on in the Microsoft Teams app on your phone or computer.
 - Comments will be limited to 2 minutes.
 - Please be respectful and keep questions limited to topics related to the 2024-25 commercial crab season and the management of the commercial fishery.



Commercial advisory positions are open, please apply at the link below or contact staff for a paper application

Puget Sound Commercial Crab
Advisory Board Application -
2025-2027



<https://forms.office.com/g/rD6j2KC2kB>

Questions



Soft Shell Crab Criteria

STAGE	SHELL CONDITION DESCRIPTION
3-2	Newly molted - The exoskeleton feels like parchment, is very pliable and can be easily deformed without breaking. Endocuticle mineralization has begun.
3-1	Recently molted - The entire exoskeleton has begun to harden but can still be easily deformed. The dorsal side of the carapace will bend or crush under light pressure.
2-2	Early intermediate phase - This is the main period of tissue growth. The dorsal surface of the carapace continues to harden and is now only flexible at the posterior, left and right margins. The anterior ventral edge of the carapace and upper segment of the first walking leg are very flexible but will readily spring back into shape after pressure has been applied.
2-1	Late intermediate stage - Tissue growth continues. The dorsal side of the carapace is now hard. There is little to no flex left in the posterior dorsal edge of the carapace. The anterior ventral edge of the carapace and upper segment of the first walking leg are not yet firm. Additional tissue growth and endocuticle mineralization are needed to firm the exoskeleton at these points.
1-3	New hard-shell stage – The entire exoskeleton is now rigid and tissue growth, for the most part, is complete. The carapace is light gray to tan and supports little or no epifaunal growth.
1-2	Late hard-shell stage - The anterior ventral edge of the carapace and upper segment of the first walking leg are now firm when moderate pressure is applied. The color of the entire exoskeleton is beginning to darken and the crab is in prime quality for market.
1-1	Pre-molt stage - The color of the ventral surface of the exoskeleton is now dark yellow or brown. The crabs show signs of age; i.e. the exoskeleton may be damaged and may support sessile epifauna and may be starting to separate at the epimeral suture.

