



Washington Department of
FISH and WILDLIFE

Puget Sound Commercial Crab Advisory Group Meeting

February 27, 2025

5:30 pm – 7:00 pm

Meeting Agenda

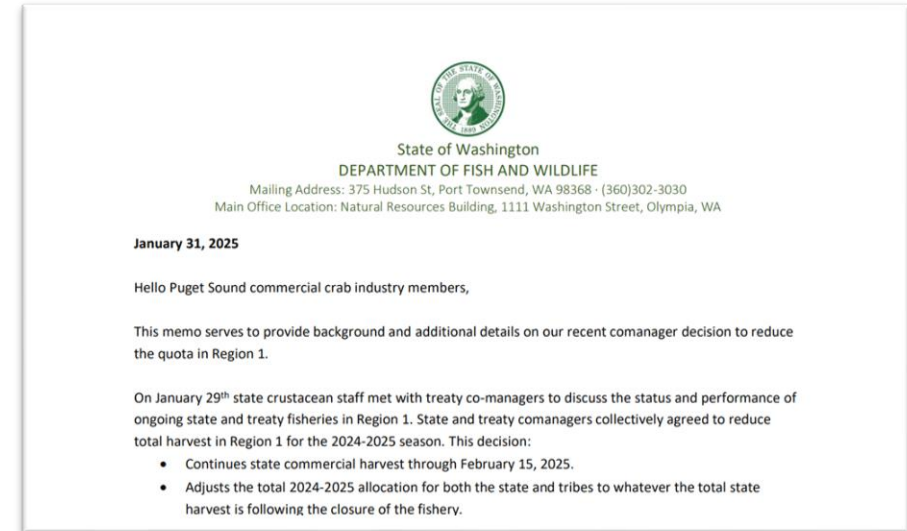
1. Welcome & Housekeeping
2. Review the Region 1 Early Closure Decision
3. Lessons Learned
4. Other Topics & Discussion
 - a. Advisory Board Terms
 - b. Post-season Meeting



Region 1 Early Closure Decision Review

On January 29, 2025, state and treaty comanagers collectively agreed to reduce total harvest in Region 1 for the 2024-2025 season. This decision:

- Continued state commercial harvest through February 15, 2025.
- Adjusted the total 2024-2025 Region 1 allocation for both the state and tribes to whatever the total state harvest is following the closure of the fishery.
 - **1,972,849 lbs. *per side* / 3,945,698 lbs. *total***
- Allows the treaty fisheries to continue until treaty total harvest in Region 1 equals the total harvest of the state.
- Requires treaty fisheries to close once the total treaty share equals that achieved by the state.



[Region 1 Memorandum - January 31, 2025](#)



Region 1 Early Closure Decision Review

What does this decision mean for next year?

This decision does not reflect a permanent change in fishery structure or management of Region 1 Dungeness crab fisheries.

1. *Treaty Harvest:* The treaty share in Region 1 is **1,972,849 lbs.** Harvest exceeding the treaty share will incur payback from next year's share.
2. *Hard Closure Dates:* The current hard closure dates and soft-shell extension criteria for Region 1 remain unchanged.
 - March 31 for Catch Areas 21A, 21B and 22B
 - April 15 for Catch Areas 20A, 20B and 22A

The department will continue to work towards evaluating these dates and pursuing management changes that balance mitigating fishery impacts with allowing opportunity.

3. *Quota:* The 2025/2026 quota has not been decided. The department will attempt to re-initiate more active management of quota in Region 1. This may result in a lower initial quota that is adjusted in-season which has been the historical practice.

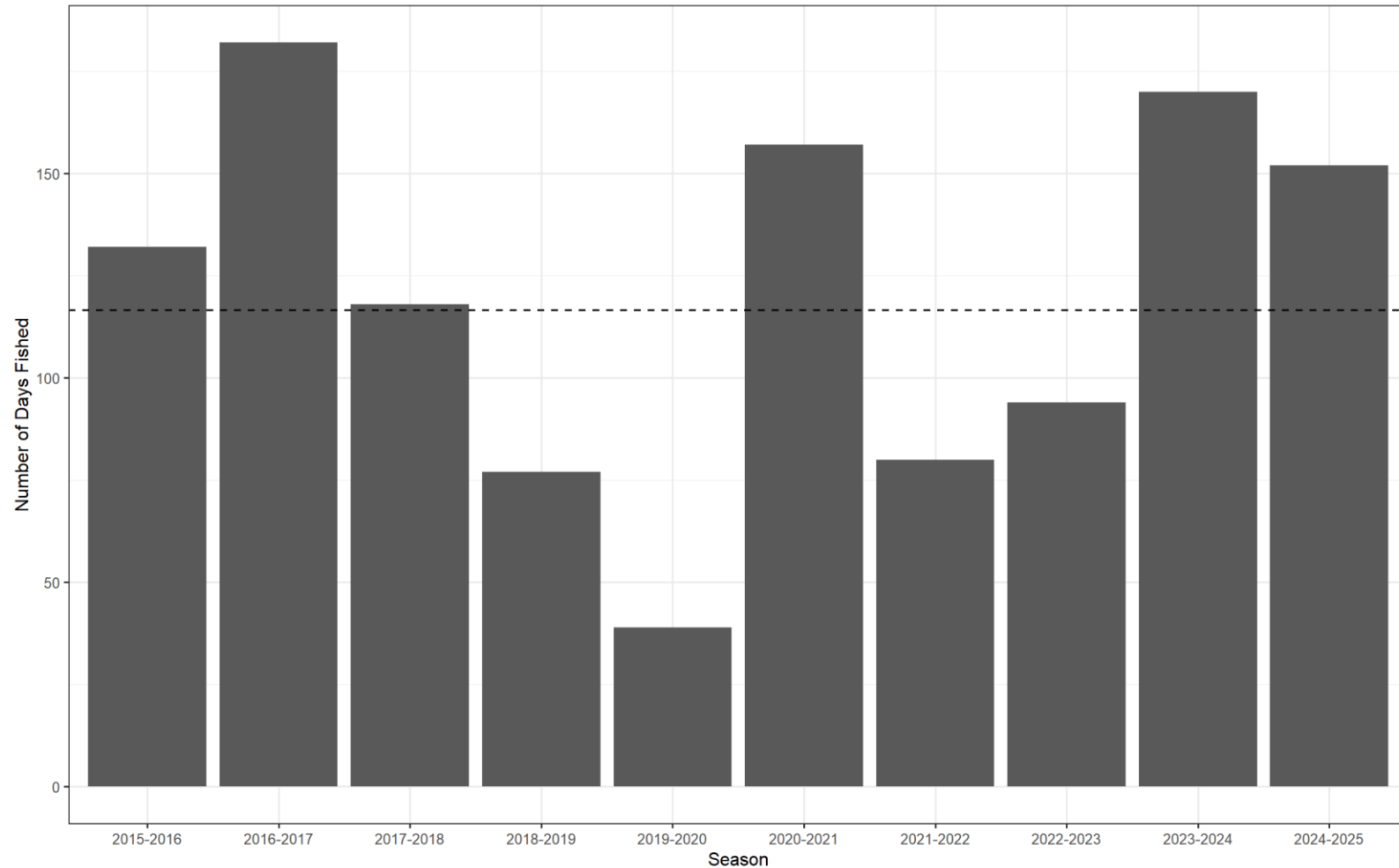
Region 1 Early Closure Decision Review

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 Decision Review

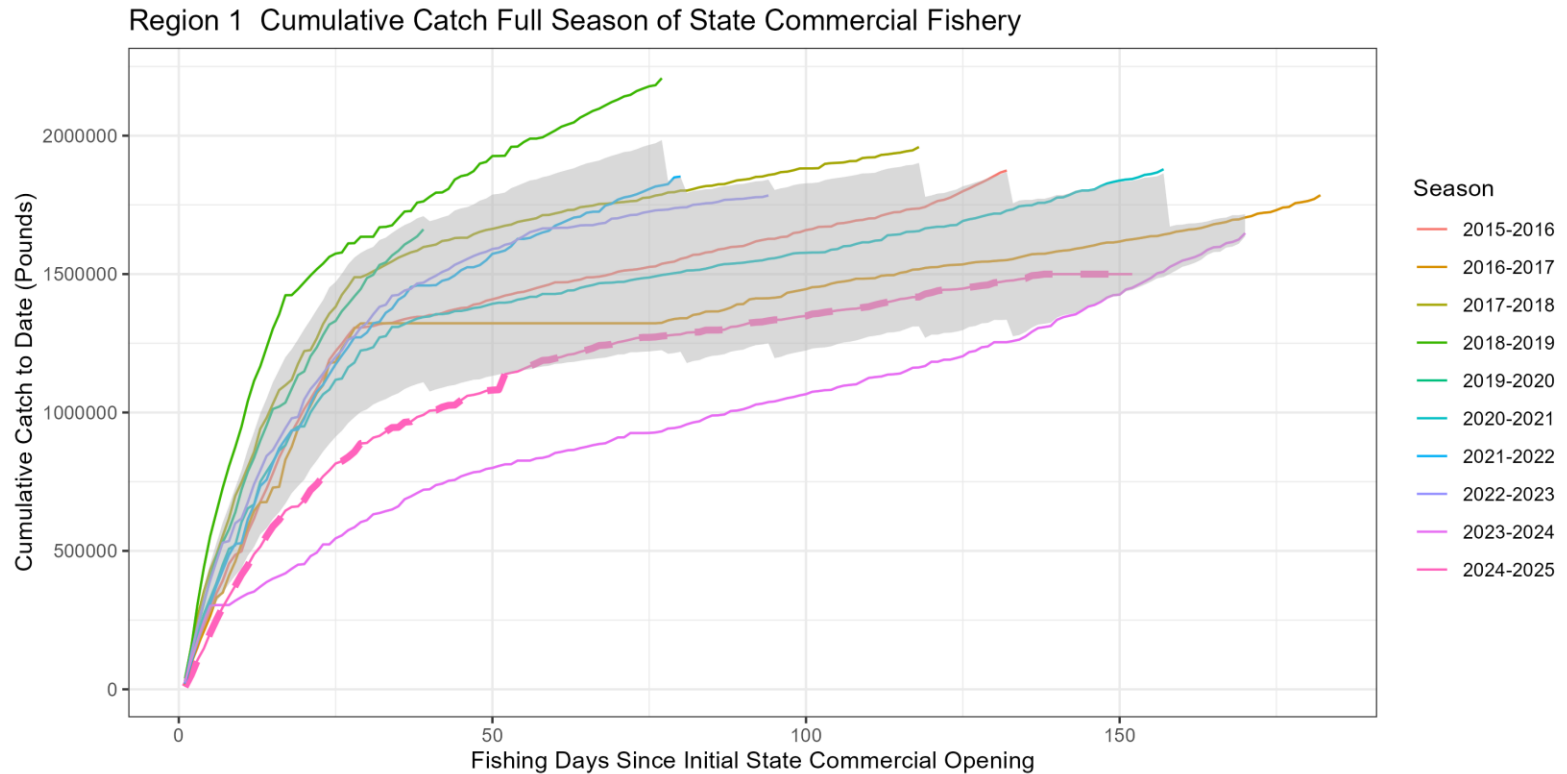
- Mean season duration to reach *full share* is 117 days
- Most seasons have been broken up in segments (October – November; December – January; March–April) but the last two have been near-continuous
- 2023-2024 season last 170 days (165 of which was continuous)
- 2024-2025 lasted 152 days



----- 10-year mean season duration

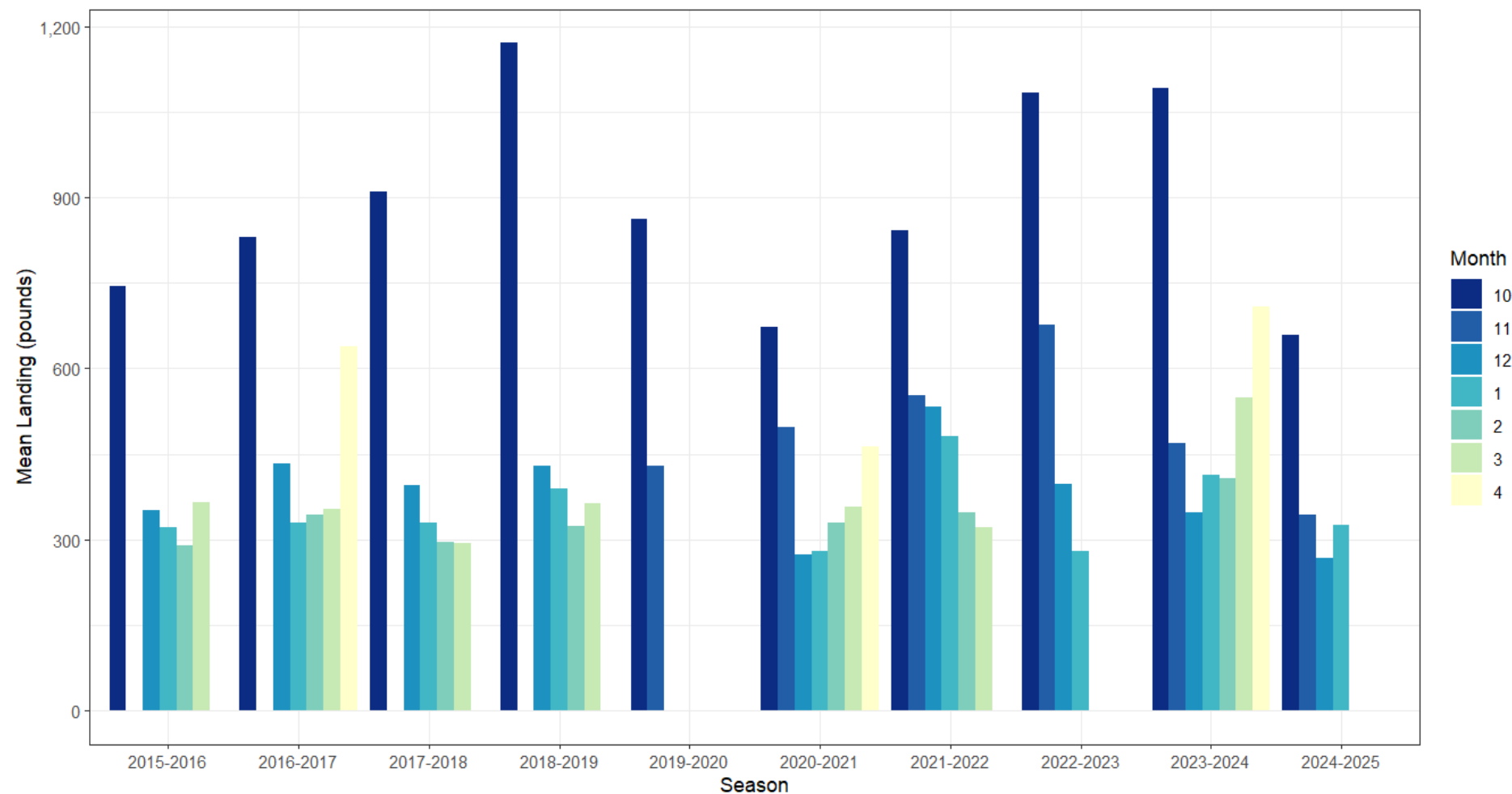
Region 1 Early Closure Decision Review

- 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 Decision Review

- 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.



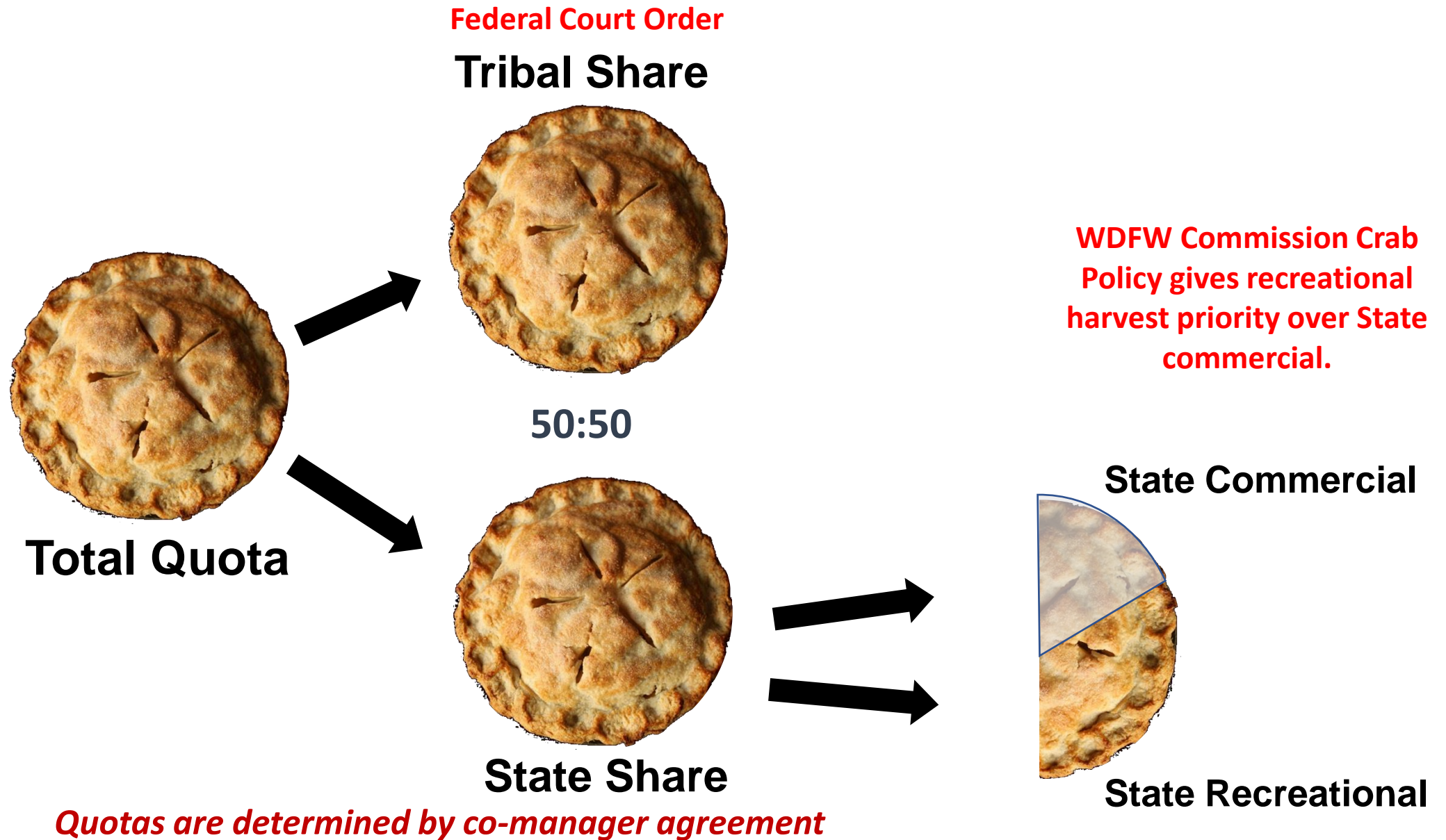
Region 1 Early Closure Decision Review

- 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.

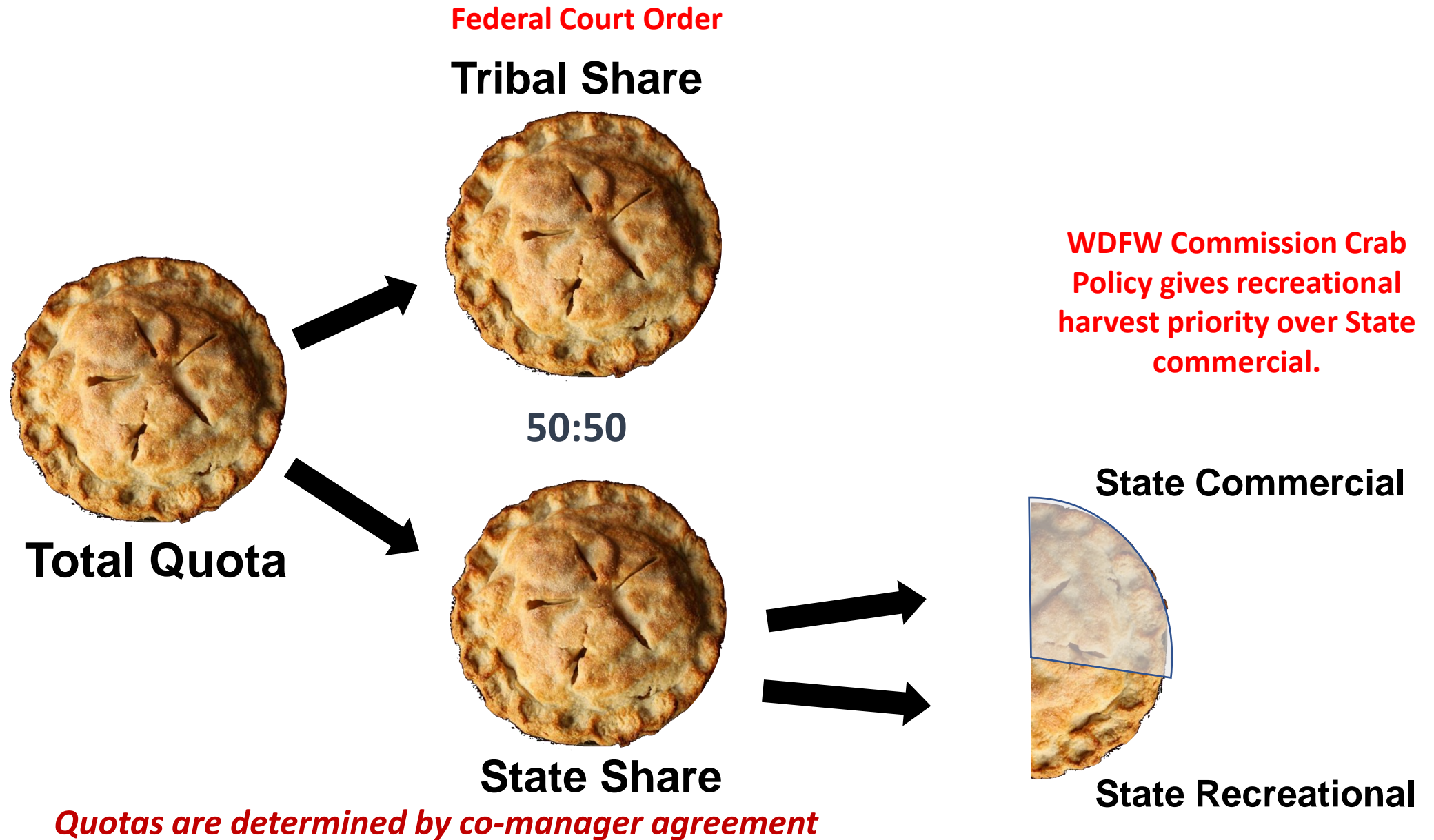
Region 1 Early Closure Decision Review

- [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.

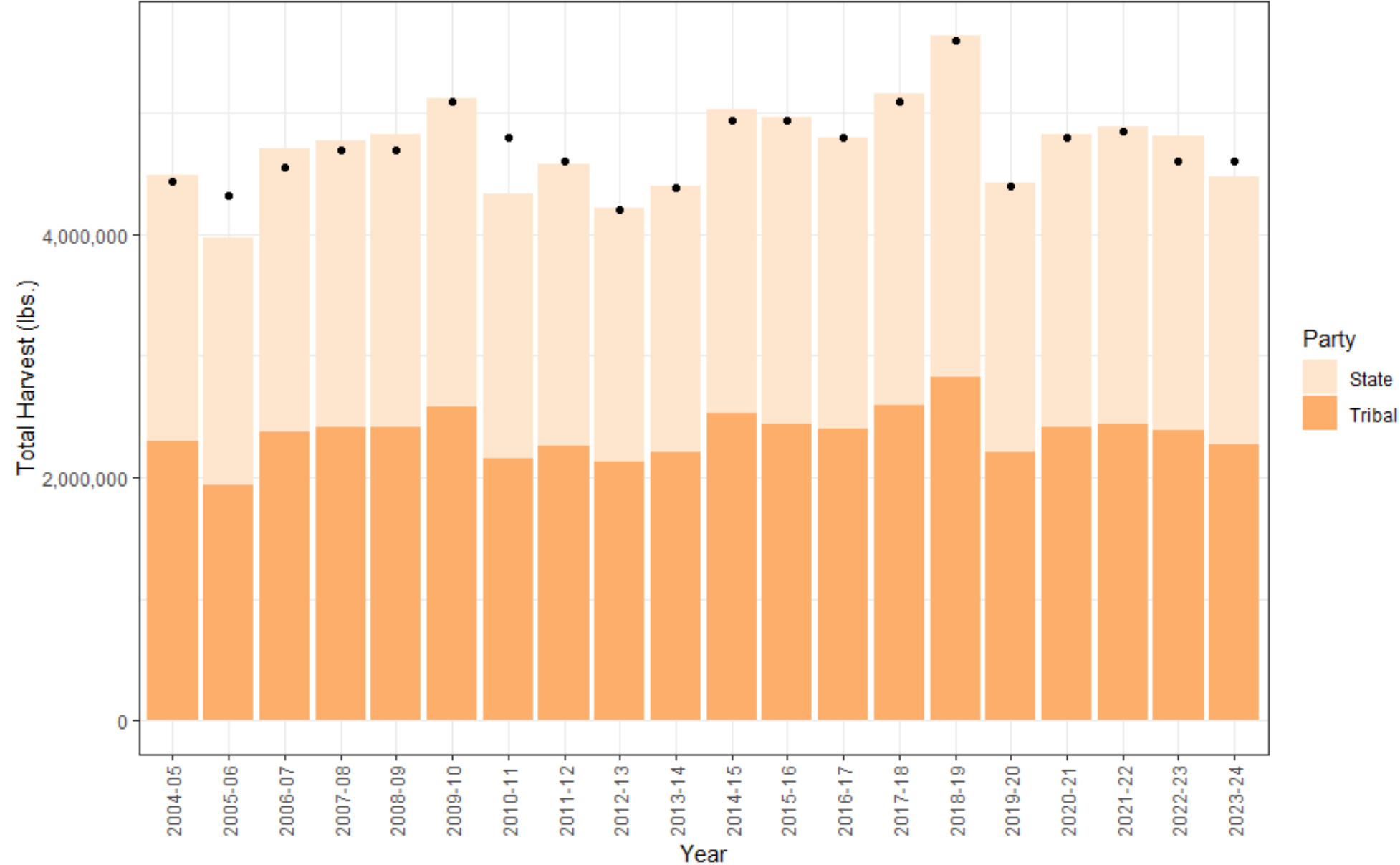
How is the resource allocated to the various user groups?



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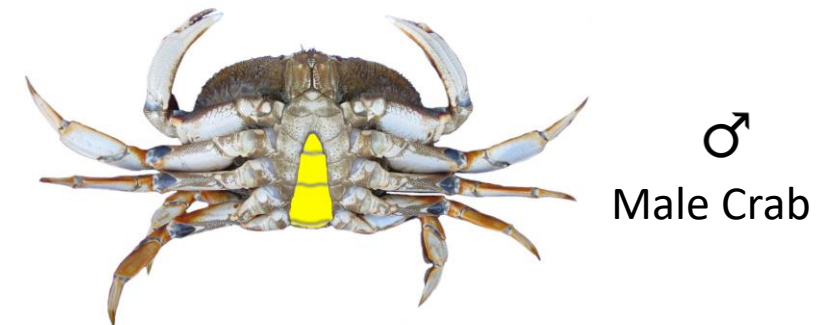
Region 1 Early Closure Decision Review



Region 1 Early Closure Decision Review

• 3-S Management Framework

- **Size:** the minimum legal size of harvested crab is 6 ¼ 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*)



Region 1 Early Closure Decision Review

- 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 Decision Review

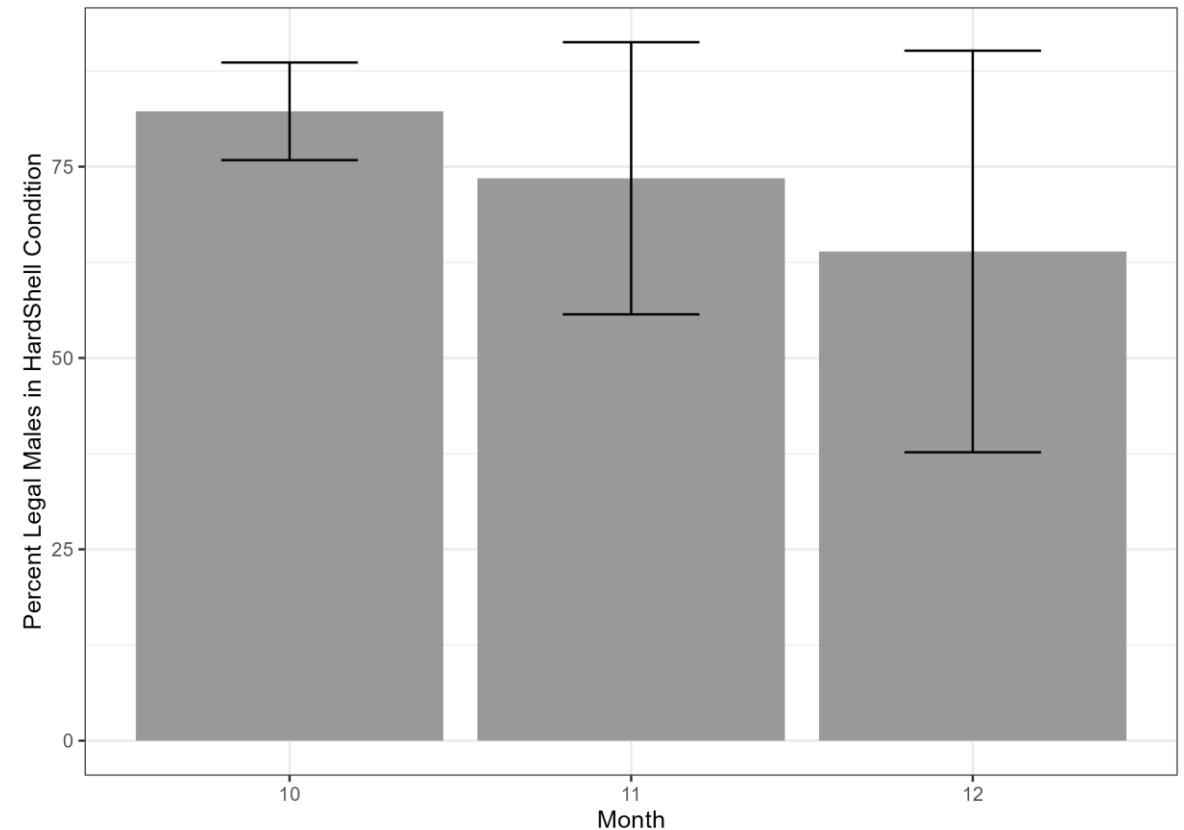
- 3-S management is designed to limit interaction with crab during periods where they may be more sensitive handling.
- In most Dungeness crab fisheries 3-S is not the only management measure used to help mitigate fishery impacts.
 - Other fisheries have a combination of:
 - Landings Limits
 - Trip limits
 - 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 Decision Review

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'.

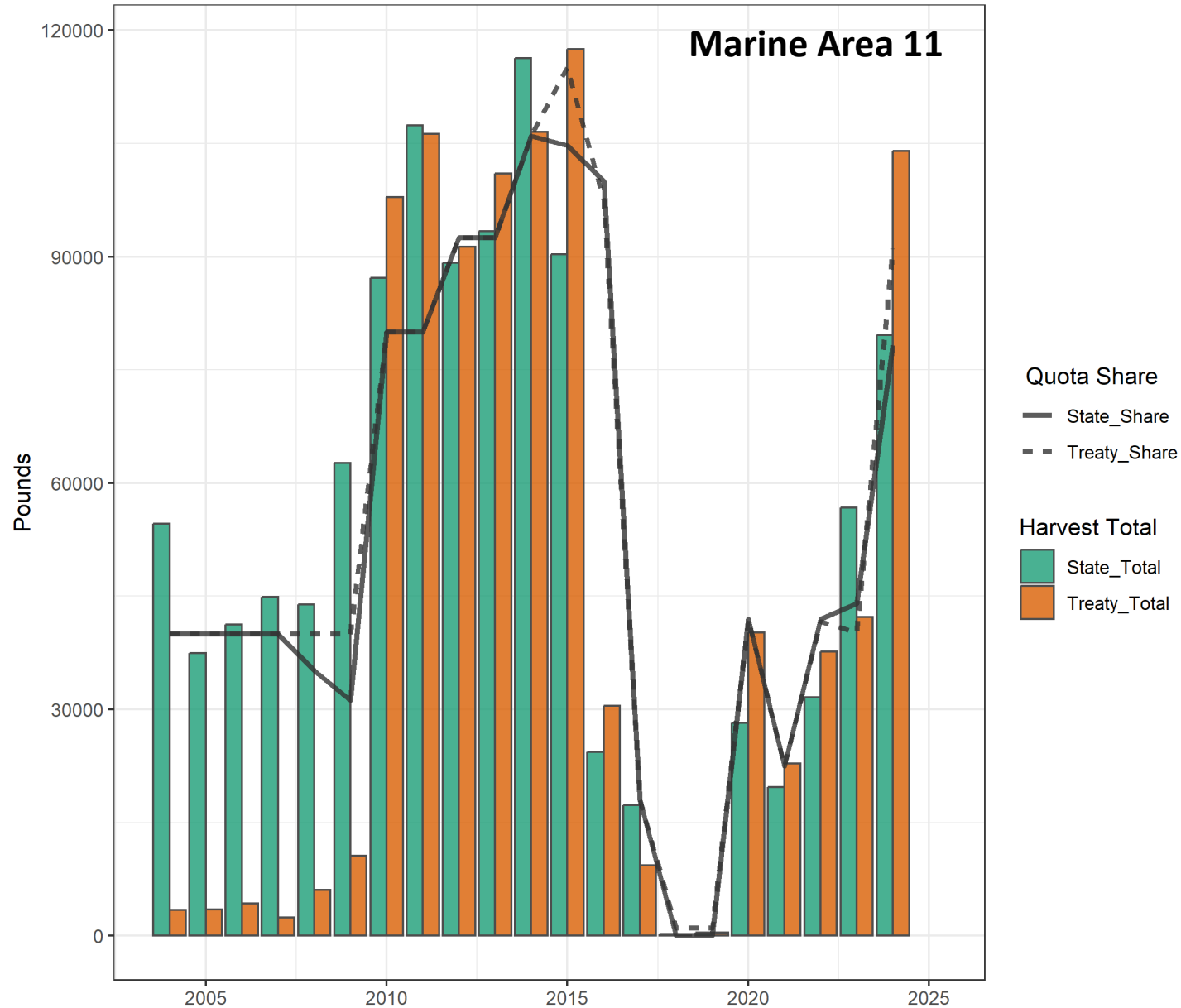


Region 1 Early Closure Decision Review

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 Decision Review



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 Cont.

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

- End of two-year advisory board terms.



Other Topics

- Post-season All-Industry meeting
 - Serve both last advisory group for current terms and public meeting.
 - Target some time in mid-April

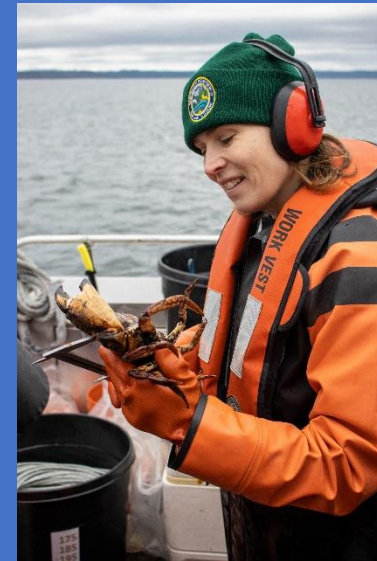
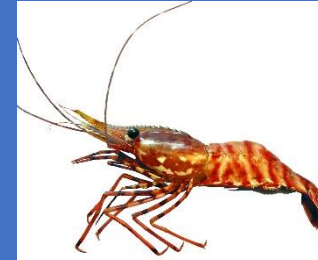
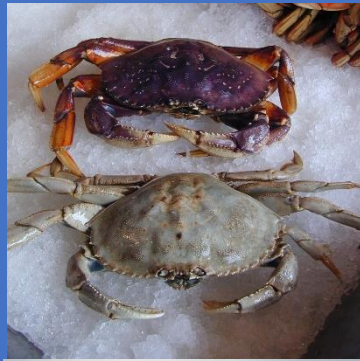


Discussion & Questions



Adjourn

Thank you!



Harvest Updates – 2024/2025 State Harvest

Region	Regional State Share	State Summer Rec. Catch	State Summer EUC	State Winter Rec. Catch	State Winter EUC	State Comm. Harvest	State Comm. EUC	Total State Harvest To-Date	State Balance To-Date
1	1,972,849	375,084	37,396	66,261	6,606	1,472,775	14,728	1,972,849	0
2E	1,171,076	540,402	53,878	84,208	8,396	475,412	4,754	1,167,050	4,026
2W	315,620	114,164	11,382	28,451	2,837	160,079	1,601	318,512	-2,892
3-1	45,000	26,169	2,609	7,871	785	40,442	404	78,280	-33,280
3-2	375,000	95,072	9,479	28,599	2,851	214,902	2,149	353,052	21,948
3-3	15,500	1,516	151	456	45	5,982	60	8,210	7,290
3-4	9,500	4,804	479	1,442	144	2,609	26	9,504	-4
4	103,289	68,572	6,837	0	0	0	0	75,408	27,881
5	206,195	53,710	5,355	10,043	1,001	0	0	70,109	136,086
6	77,269	54,869	5,470	17,508	1,746	0	0	79,592	-2,323
7	0	188	19	0	0	0	0	207	-207
TOTALS	4,291,298	1,334,549	133,055	244,838	24,410	2,372,201	23,722	4,132,775	

RED indicates areas without a signed plan and agreed-to quota



Harvest Updates – 2024/2025 Treaty Harvest

REGION	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	1,972,849	1,742,324	17,423	483	29	1,760,259	212,590
2E	1,200,000	1,175,213	16,052	19,052	1,143	1,211,461	-11,461
2W	283,019	283,451	2,835	16	1	286,303	-3,284
3-1	45,000	69,748	697	0	0	70,445	-25,445
3-2	375,000	381,926	3,819	500	30	386,275	-11,275
3-3	12,289	13,379	134	0	0	13,513	-1,224
3-4	9,500	3,190	32	0	0	3,222	6,278
4	120,000	135,954	1,360	294	18	137,625	-17,625
5	206,195	222,317	2,223	250	15	224,805	-18,610
6	90,000	102,964	1,030	0	0	103,994	-13,994
7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	4,313,852	4,130,466	45,605	20,596	1,236	4,197,902	

RED indicates areas without a signed plan and agreed-to quota

