

Sea Urchin Zone Council Meeting Summary April 7, 2016 in Brewer, ME

DMR staff: Trisha Cheney, Carl Wilson, Maggie Hunter, Robert Russell, Marilyn Lash and Les White.

SUZC members: Teresa Johnson, Steve Eddy, Larry Harris, Joe Leask, Mark Nickerson and Clint Richardson.

Public: Justin Gebo, James McMillan, Tristan Smith, Max Ritchie and Kim Ovitz.

Sea Urchin Zone Council Research Subcommittee Meeting Summary

Meeting commenced at 2:00pm

Joe Leask provided an update to the Subcommittee on the Cat Ledges Project. On March 30, six totes were half filled with various sized urchins collected by hand in the Tenant Harbor Area, covered with kelp and transported to the Cat Ledges Study Site. It is estimated that approximately 210-250 lbs. [~1,500 animals] of urchins were transplanted; Kim Ovitz measured a subset of 113 urchins during transport. Most urchins were of low roe content. There were a good number of sublegal urchins right up to the measure taken along with legal product. The urchins were out of water approximately 4 hours. The group then watched some video that was taken at the site; to view, go to this link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B5kE_hlYpkeyOUE1SWlXU3V3NUU/view

Carl and Robert accompanied Joe for a day on the water to see some different sites that Joe harvests in North Penobscot Bay on April 6, 2016. They were able to observe a standard feeding from with an associated urchin barren. Harvesters are not getting to all their spots in one season because they are restricted by tote, allowing some urchins to go two seasons before being fished on, so some areas are getting overrun with urchins Carl noted.

After hosting another meeting with harvesters in the Blue Hill Area earlier this week and a number of internal meetings, Carl explained to the council that the Blue Hill Experimental Management Area project has hit a road block: the Department does not have the incentive to allow impacted harvesters in the area to pick their own days in exchange for purchasing a potentially required tracker for the area. [Appendix A for Carl's Slides] Larry noted that it would be good to get fishermen's buy in with the survey, one of the proposed goals of the project, despite the project as a whole not moving forward. It was suggested that Robert sit down with a group of fishermen from the area to provide input into potential survey sites.

Tristan Smith would like to pursue exclusive access to re-establish areas through Limited Purpose Aquaculture (LPA) leases. He suggested getting 4 LPAs for free for the first 3 years instead of having to pay the \$50 per LPA which is only 20'x20' and is too small to go commercially viable to help incentivize participation.

Sea Urchin Zone Council Meeting

DMR staff: Trisha Cheney, Carl Wilson, Maggie Hunter, Robert Russell, Marilyn Lash and Les White.

SUZC members: Teresa Johnson, Steve Eddy, Larry Harris, Joe Leask, Dean Norris, Mark Nickerson and Clint Richardson.

SUZC Members not present: Jeff Edwards, and Chuon Muth.

Public: Justin Gebo, James McMillan, Tristan Smith, Barry Huckins, Mike Potts, Ron Kennedy, Tim Proulx, Tim Peterson, David Tarr, Fred Gray, Ron Daniels, Issac ?, Max Ritchie and Kim Ovitz.

Meeting commenced at 3:30pm

Welcome & Introductions

J. Leask welcomed everyone and asked everyone to introduce themselves around the room.

March 22 Meeting Minutes

VOTE: UNANIMOUS. Approval of minutes passed.

DMR Updates

Since the last meeting was only 2 weeks ago, there are no updates.

Discussion: Whiting & Denny's Bays 2016-17 Calendar

After a brief conversation, the council selected days for the proposed 2016-17 season rulemaking. It was determined that each gear type and season will get 9 days in the area, status quo from last year, with the divers and draggers on separate days.

Motion to accept proposed calendar from Dean Norris, seconded by Clint Richardson. VOTE: 7 for and 1 abstention: Vote PASSES. See Appendix A for details.

[PLEASE NOTE: An extra day was included in error to the Zone 2 late Dive, Trapper & Rake calendar in the proposed rulemaking and will be removed from the calendar once the rule has been made final, pending approval by the DMR Advisory Council at their tentative June 29, 2016 meeting in Augusta. This will ensure that all gear types and seasons have equal access of 9 fishing days to the area.]

Discussion: Blue Hill Bay Experimental Management Zone

As noted above in the Research Subcommittee meeting, Carl explained that after hosting another meeting with harvesters in the Blue Hill Area earlier this week and a number of internal meetings, that the Blue Hill Experimental Management Area project has hit a road block: the Department does not have the incentive to allow impacted harvesters in the area to pick their own days in exchange for purchasing a potentially required tracker for the area. There was a discussion regarding moving urchins outside of the season in possible "Designated Research Days". This would allow industry members to be able to move all different sizes of urchins and not be restricted by the 5% culling requirement.

The council discussed the potential to pick days in the future, which could be enabled by the swipe card system that will be implemented in the coming season. Department staff noted that weather currently provide a conservation equivalency that would have to be taken into consideration and that if able to pick days, it could be less than 38 days. When looking at the data, Zone 2 harvesters on average fish 18 days in a year. It was suggested that this data be more closely examined to look at break down between early and late season as weather plays a larger role in the late season and to only look at harvesters landing on more than 10 days and up as lower would suggest it is possibly scallop bycatch. A harvester suggested 30 days would be reasonable.

A harvester noted that there used to be a lot of urchins on the outer islands; however, this has changed over time as now a lot of the urchins are inner protected areas. Looking ahead, it was suggested that the transplant work be put on the next agenda. Perhaps participants could do transplant work after the season in a community to move product to the outer ledges. However, this idea was met with a comment that divers from away would harvest those urchins in the following season if they are not protected with a closure such as the one Cat Ledges has. Also, early season guys would be able to harvest those urchins before late season guys would get a chance to.

There was a brief discussion on limited entry and the possibility of an apprenticeship program. It was suggested that new license holders could have a different license that would allow their tiered access to the resource, such as starting out with a 4 tote limit vs. the 7 tote limit for current license holders. A participant noted that additional access should be provided to the current license holders first before new entry is allowed into the fishery.

Finally, a meeting participant made the suggestion that there be weather days where the fishery be closed if inclement weather was in the forecast and then days be added to the end of the calendar. Unfortunately, the Departments emergency rulemaking

authority only allows for days to be taken removed from the calendar and more fishing opportunity cannot be added mid-season via an emergency action.

The meeting ended at 6:15pm. The next meeting is scheduled for June 22 in Ellsworth at City Hall at 4:00pm. A Research Subcommittee Meeting will be hosted at the same location at 2:00pm. Both meetings are open to the public.

Appendix A

Whiting & Denny's Bays Calendar recommended by the Sea Urchin Zone Council. The red highlighted day denotes an extra day that was included by mistake, but removed during the rulemaking process to ensure all calendars have 9 days access to area.

**2016-2017 Sea Urchin Season for Maine Zone 2
for Whiting & Denny's Bays**

O = Open **□** = Closed

Early Season for Divers, Rakers and Trappers

September 2016							October 2016							November 2016							December 2016						
S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S	S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S	S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S	S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3							1			1	2	3	4	5					1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30		23	24	25	26	27	28	29	27	28	29	30				25	26	27	28	29	30	31
							30	31																			

Late Season for Divers, Rakers and Trappers

December 2016							January 2017							February 2017							March 2017						
S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S	S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S	S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S	S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7				1	2	3	4				1	2	3	4
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30	31					26	27	28					26	27	28	29	30	31	

Early Season for Draggers

December 2016							February 2017							March 2017						
S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S	S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S	S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3				1	2	3	4				1	2	3	4
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	26	27	28					26	27	28	29	30	31	

Late Season for Draggers

December 2016							February 2017							March 2017						
S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S	S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S	S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3				1	2	3	4				1	2	3	4
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	26	27	28					26	27	28	29	30	31	

Appendix B
Carl Wilson's Slides

Where are we today

- We can not provide an incentive to advance the concept of the Experimental Area.
Concept: access to the area in return for picking days
- The administrative process can provide requirements to participate (i.e. trackers) but can not provide exclusivity
The unknown response to picking days could jeopardize the delicate balance that exists today between harvesters/dealers/days/limits

Options

- ~~Designate large experimental area and require trackers for access~~
- Designate smaller areas with limited fishery data
- Expand surveys

Questions to be addressed 3-5 years

- Changes in the resource
 - DMR dive survey
 - New industry survey
- Impact of fishing or lack thereof (access fishing)
- Roe monitoring
- Settlement
- Enhancement experiments

Experimental Area – Blue Hill Bay

- Year 1 – open
- Year 2 – 50% closure
- Year 3 – 25% closure
- Year 4 – 12% closure
- Year 5 – 6% or completely open

The DMR believes

- The resource and the fishery have a future
 - We are in it for the long haul
 - A viable fishery is important for the State of Maine
- The long-term goal is to rebuild the resource to 2001 levels and match a 2015 fishing rate to it
 - 4 to 5 million pound fishery
- Short-term experiments can inform goal
 - Develop a common language to proceed

Why a closed area

- Need to bracket:
 - Nuclear option (no fishing)
 - Status quo
 - Manipulation
- Monitor changes
 - From the DMR perspective
 - From industry perspective

What defines the area

- Desire to work in a productive area
 - Approximately 5% of landings
- Mix of sizes from DMR survey
- Ability to access and monitor
- Scallop rotation
- Minimize impact to industry

Urchins are at a tipping point

- Relatively stable but low population levels
- Much of western Maine has not recovered even with minimal or zero fishing
- Processors are at critical point with regards to volume and fishing days
 - Need more high quality volume
 - Importing product from Canada and further afield
- A new license has not been issued since 2004

Blue Hill Bay Scallop Areas

