

Sea Urchin Zone Council Meeting Summary April 8, 2021 Remote Meeting

SUZC members present: Tracey Sawtelle (Chair), Larry Harris, Steve Bechard, Steve Eddy, Joe Leask, Tim Peterson, Clint Richardson

SUZC members absent: Randy Ramsdell, Sinuon Chau, Teresa Johnson, Tim Robbins, Brian Preney, Alan Knowlton, Mark Nickerson, Chuon Muth

DMR staff: Erin Wilkinson, Maggie Hunter, Robert Russell, Melissa Smith, Deirdre Gilbert

Public: Dana Morse, Ethan Genter, Coleen Suckling, Luz Kogson

Meeting commenced at 3:05 pm.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chair T. Sawtelle welcomed the group and asked everyone to introduce themselves around the virtual room, both council members and audience.

II. Approval of last meeting minutes (4/25/19)

T. Sawtelle requested an edit to the April 25, 2019 meeting minutes with respect to Whiting Denny's Bay Limited Access calendar. Motion by the board was to have WDB limited access on Thursdays and not Wednesdays.

T. Peterson motion to accept minutes as amended, J Leask seconds.

UNANIMOUS (quorum?). Approval of minutes passed.

III. Update on Elections

Erin spoke about the delay in the election process due to the pandemic. All positions will stay as is until the election can begin.

IV. DMR Update & Season Summary

Maggie Hunter - presentation

- Can't present all information as previous done, due to confidentiality and loss of buyers in

Zone 1

- Landings were down about 1/2 million pounds or 31%.
- Activity/participation was down, and price was down.
- Could still make a day's pay and comments that it was still ok.

Tracey mentioned a 30% reduction in harvest opportunity. But was the same number of harvest days as the previous season. Any question about whether buyers will be around next year?

Maggie Hunter - There were 4 processors, lost Family Seafood.

Joe Leask - Atchan bought all Family's equipment. Atchan and Sinuon will be the primary buyers for 2021-22 season.

the previous late season was when the market dropped due to the start of Covid (2019-2020 calendar), how does the average price factor out between the two seasons? As Covid has affected the two fishing seasons differently.

Maggie's data suggests that this March was a better price than last March

Robert Russell - presentation

- Zone 1 has been bouncing around, but is only representing Zone 3 around TH
- Jump up in Zone 2 -
 - Sites that they visited in Region 4 (NH, etc) every site was awesome. In previous years, the random pool resulted in clustered sites and had great observations of urchins
 - Also, Zone 2 Region 9 in Cobscook was also good.
- All other areas were similar to previous years.

V. Discussion

Recap of 2020/2021 Season

RR - Did sites have any longevity?

Tracey S - Region 9 -places where roe was really good haven't always been that large but have had a lot of general biomass. Really deep water do not have the same amount of biomass as previous. Has there been a die off or did they move off? Around Quoddy Head and Eastport.

Steve B - 90% of the areas dove around Stonington were similar to the prior year. Few areas that were barren. Most areas had come back in one years' time and was able to work on those areas for a number of days. Same areas that were hit in late season of 19/20.

- In the 19/20 season, possible that industry did not fully harvest nearshore bay areas. Many Stonington harvesters were not harvesting locally but moving for other areas.
- Very little searching in 20/21 season, albeit perhaps not as large, body wise, as last season

Early vs Late Seasons

Maggie - heard discussions about reverting back from split late/early season and combining the dragger season

- Issues with the market needing to have product present during the entire season

Tracey S - fisherman down in Cobscook, wanting the area to be open and no longer a LAA. Closed for 3 seasons and then has been opened for the last several seasons.

- Closed in 09 and open 2012
- Tim - what about dive and drag access?
- Maggie - enforcement issue?

Joe Leask - Zone 2 open the dive calendar like Zone 1 calendar.

- Market impacts?
- Moving toward 5 days/week and picking...

M. Smith – Heard during the season that perhaps September is becoming too early to harvest, comments regarding how to focus on peak roe quality, improve produce and price. Does the group have any comments on what could be done to focus catch to improve quality and market price?

Steve B - no market in March, need more days in December

- Quality has maybe been better in September
- Maybe a little less on the ends of the season and focus more on middle months to better the quality and market of the urchins

Tim P - row in March has been going to hell; needs less overlap between the 1st and 2nd season

Robert R - getting much product from Canada in the early season?

- SB - Canada comes in with a large bulk drop of biomass; spotty here and there, of product arriving throughout the season.

In Whiting & Dennys Bays- Change dragging to Thursdays for dragging Zone 2. And diving switch to Wednesdays. (Folks seems to be all ok with this suggestion).

Quotas

Sticking with the same ratio of harvest days and totes for next season calendar

Tim Peterson motion to adjourn, Steve Bouchard seconds.

Vote: Unanimous.



Sea Urchin Zone Council Meeting

3:00pm Thursday, April 8, 2021

Microsoft Teams Remote Meeting

Join on your computer or mobile app

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Or call in (audio only):

+1 207-209-4724

Phone Conference ID: 475 809 864#

Agenda:

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Approval of last meeting minutes (04/25/19)
- III. Update on Elections
- IV. DMR Update & Season Summary
- V. **Discussion**
 - a. *Potential topics of discussion*
 - i. Recap of 2020/2021 season from harvesters and others
 - ii. *Resource Status*
 - iii. *Early vs. Late seasons*
 - iv. *Quotas*
- VI. Other Business
 - a. Blank calendars and agenda for the next meeting
- VII. Adjourn

Appendix: Slide Presentations

Preliminary Maine Sea Urchin Data 2020–2021 Fishing Season

Maggie Hunter
Lessie White

Maine Dept. of Marine Resources. March 23, 2021



Photo by Rachel Feeney, NEC, Sept. 2009



www.maine.gov/dmr

Maine Sea Urchin Landings In Pounds by Zone and Month

To protect the confidentiality of data from buyers, we are unable to present data by fishing method. However, the overall ratio of diver:dragger landings was roughly 60:40, similar to past years.

2020 – 2021

2019 – 2020

	<u>Zone 1</u>	<u>Zone 2</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>State</u>
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Total</u>
Sep*	*	175,318	*	19,397 *
Oct*	*		*	219,475 *
Nov	0	150,316	150,316	194,234
Dec	*	225,057	*	438,015 *
Jan	*	152,315	*	324,560
Feb	*	108,142	*	207,135
Mar	0	42,634	42,634	84,362
Total	177,115	853,782	1,030,897	1,487,178

* All Zone 1 data were combined, and September Zone 2 Dive data were combined with October, to preserve buyer confidentiality.

*Sep. - Oct. Zone 1 Dive data combined with December.

About 456,000 fewer lbs were caught in 2020–21 than in 2019–20, or 31% less.

All data are preliminary.

Maine Sea Urchin Price per Pound to Harvesters by Zone and Month

2020 – 2021

2019 – 2020

	<u>Zone 1</u>	<u>Zone 2</u>	<u>State</u>		
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Average</u>
Sep*	*	\$2.90	*	\$3.14	*
Oct*	*		*	\$3.80	*
Nov	-	\$3.12	\$3.12	\$4.04	
Dec	*	\$3.27	*	\$4.11	*
Jan	*	\$2.74	*	\$3.20	
Feb	*	\$2.84	*	\$2.73	
Mar	-	\$2.90	\$2.90	\$2.38	
Total	\$3.07	\$3.00	\$3.01	\$3.55	

Prices in 2020–21 declined by about \$0.54/lb, or 15%, compared with 2019–20.

All data are preliminary.

Maine Sea Urchin Landed Value by Zone and Month

2020 – 2021

2019 – 2020

	<u>Zone 1</u>	<u>Zone 2</u>	<u>State</u>		
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Total</u>
Sep*	*	\$508,633	*	\$60,919	*
Oct*	*		*	\$834,334	*
Nov	0	\$469,447	\$469,447	\$785,172	
Dec	*	\$735,057	*	\$1,799,621	*
Jan	*	\$418,075	*	\$1,039,109	
Feb	*	\$307,620	*	\$566,188	
Mar	0	\$123,742	\$123,742	\$200,654	
Total	\$542,925	\$2,562,575	\$3,105,500	\$5,285,997	

Value in 2020–21 declined by about \$2,180,00, or 41%, compared with 2019–20.

All data are preliminary.

Maine Sea Urchin Roe Index (%)

2020 – 2021

2019 – 2020

	<u>Zone 1</u>	<u>Zone 2</u>	<u>State</u>		
	<u>Average</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>State</u>	
	<u>Average</u>			<u>Average</u>	
Sep*	*	12.5	*	11.3	*
Oct*	*	12.6	*	11.8	*
Nov	-	12.7	12.6	12.8	
Dec	*	12.0	*	12.2	*
Jan	*	13.7	*	13.2	
Feb	*	13.8	*	14.0	
Mar	-		13.8	14.0	
Total	12.4	12.7	12.6	12.8	

Roe indices in 2020–21 were slightly lower than 2019–20.

All data are preliminary.

Number of Active Urchin Harvesters (fished at least twice)

2020–2021 Active Harvesters

fished at least twice

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Total
Dive	17	43	60
Drag	2	47	49
Total	19	90	109

2019–2020 Active Harvesters

fished at least twice

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Total
Dive	22	62	84
Drag	5	60	65
Total	27	122	149

All data are preliminary.

44% of licenses were active in 2020–21.

2020 Sea Urchin Licenses

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Total
Dive	34	86	120
Drag	14	112	126
Rake		1	1
Unk			
	48	199	247

There were 40 (27%) fewer active harvesters in 2020–2021 compared with 2019–20.

Maine Sea Urchin Spring Survey Data

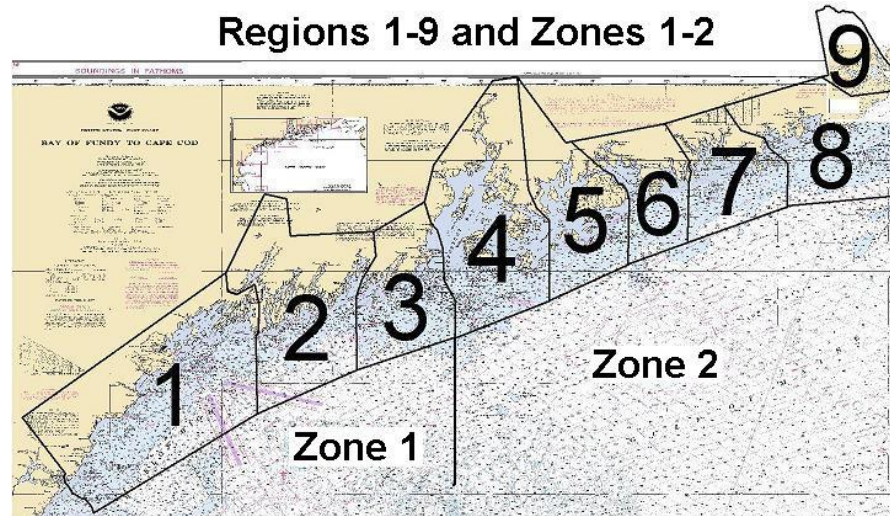
Robert Russell, Marcus Jones
Maggie Hunter

Maine Dept. of Marine Resources. May 26 to June 17, 2020



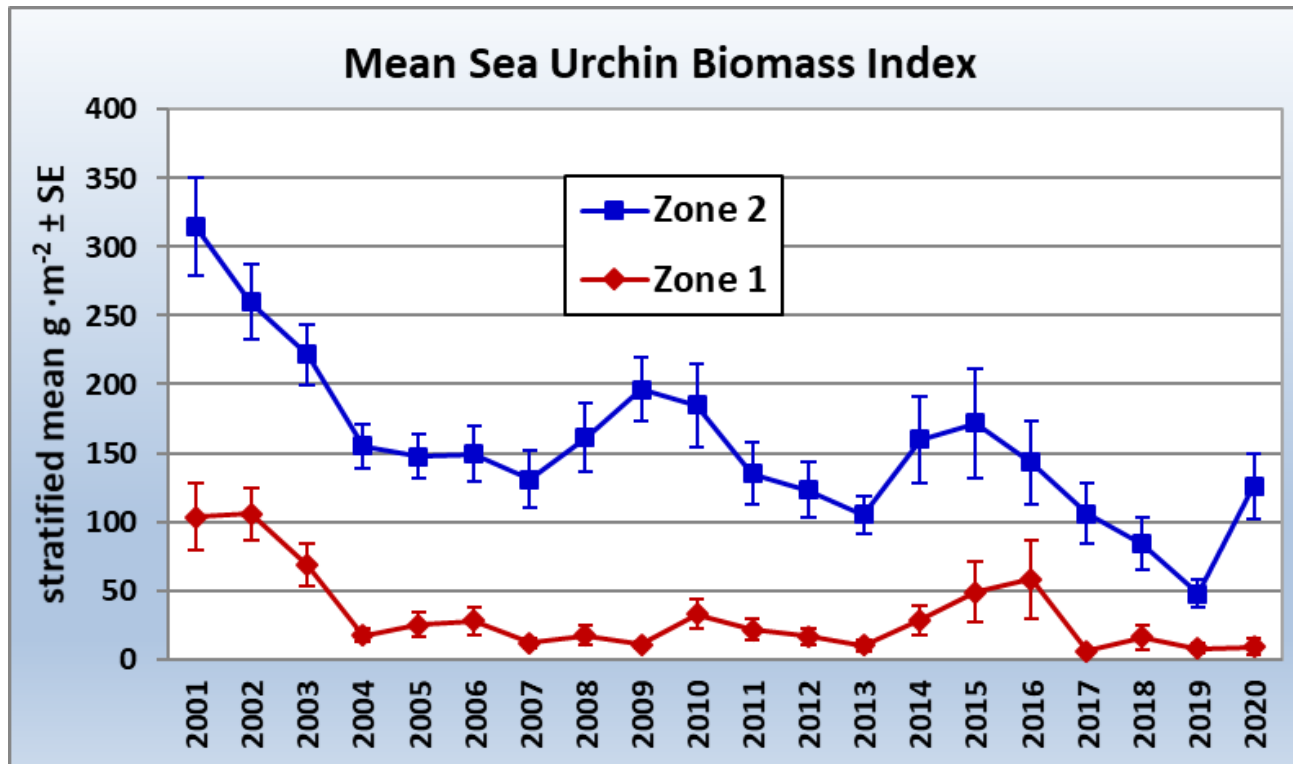
www.maine.gov/dmr

Maine Sea Urchin Dive Survey



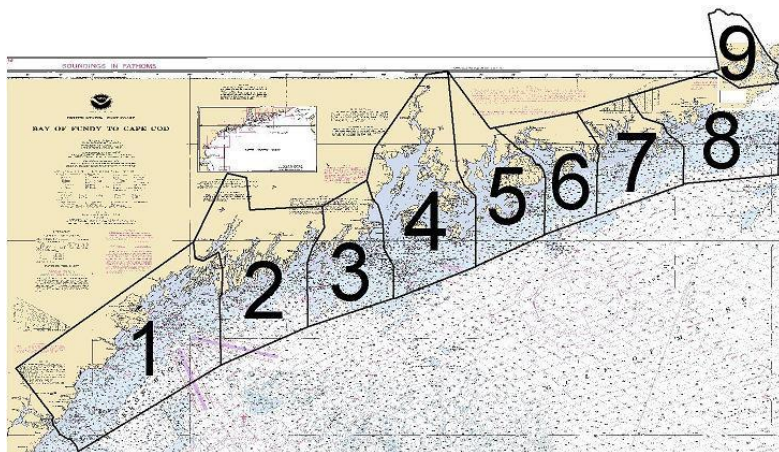
- Conducted annually since 2001 in nine regions: 1–3 in Zone 1, 4–9 in Zone 2
- In each region, 16 sites with hard bottom: 5 fixed locations and 11 picked at random
- At a site, 20 m² quadrats are evaluated in each of 3 depths: 0–5m, 5–10m, and 10–15m.

Maine Sea Urchin Dive Survey

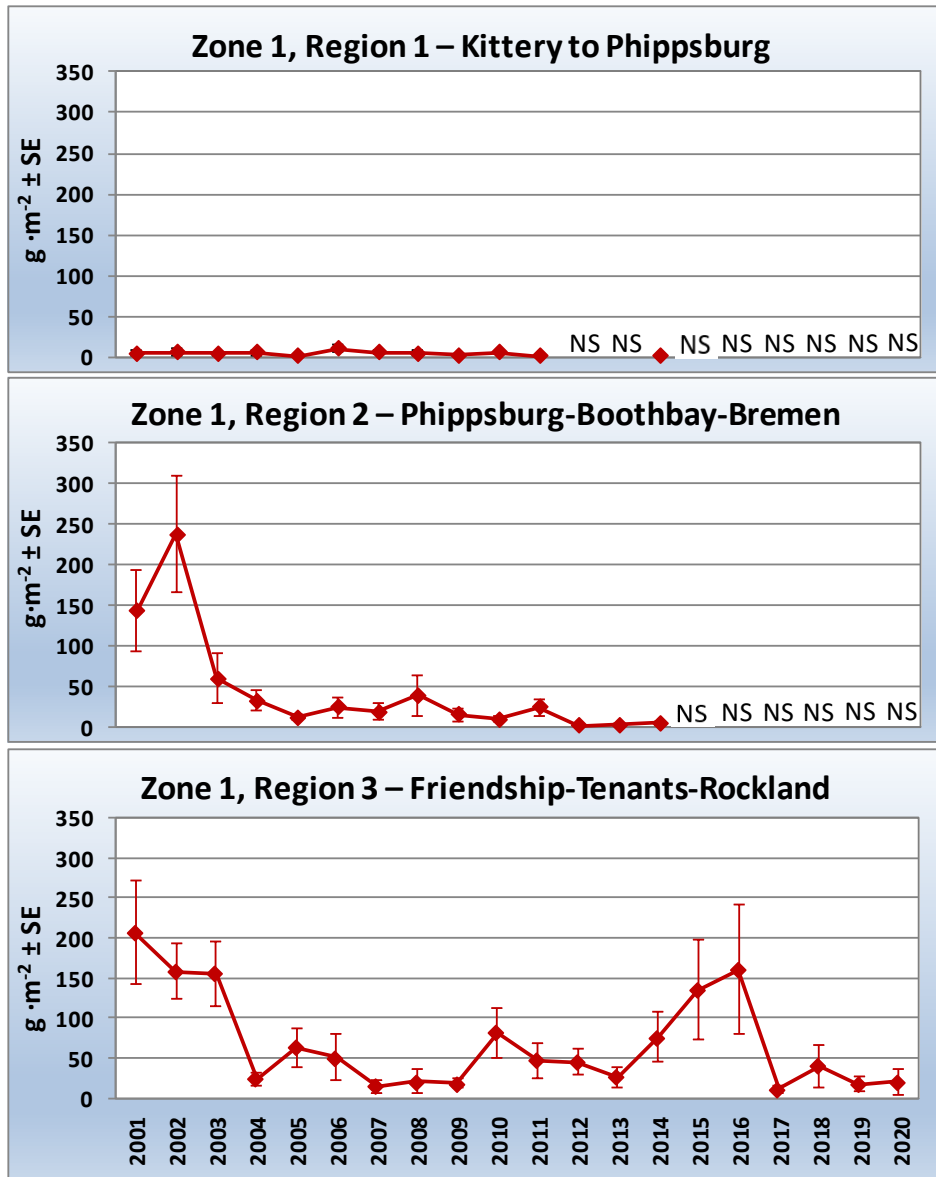


The 2020 index was about the same as 2019 in Zone 1, and up somewhat in Zone 2, due to increases in Regions 4 and 9.

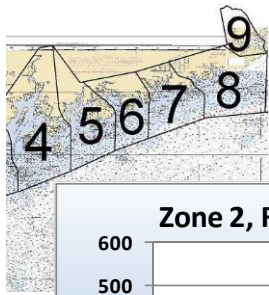
Zone 1 Sea Urchin Biomass Indices by Region



Spring Urchin Dive Survey



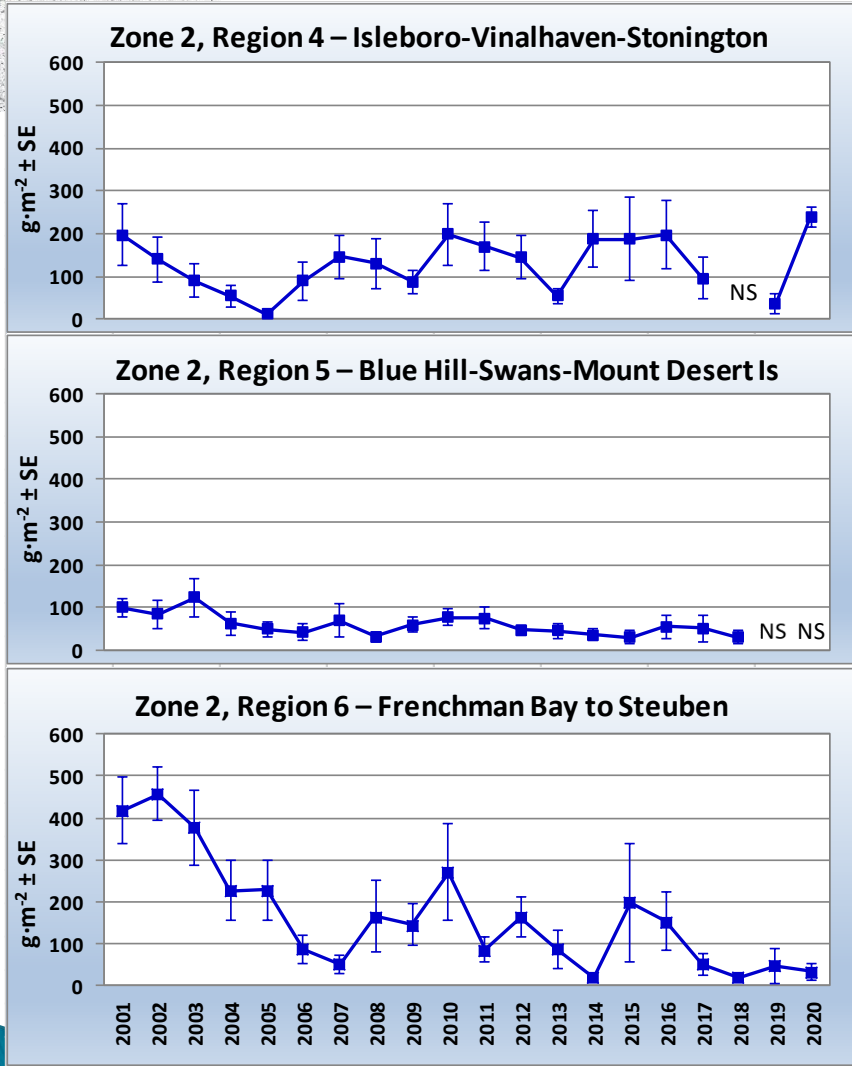
NS = Not Surveyed



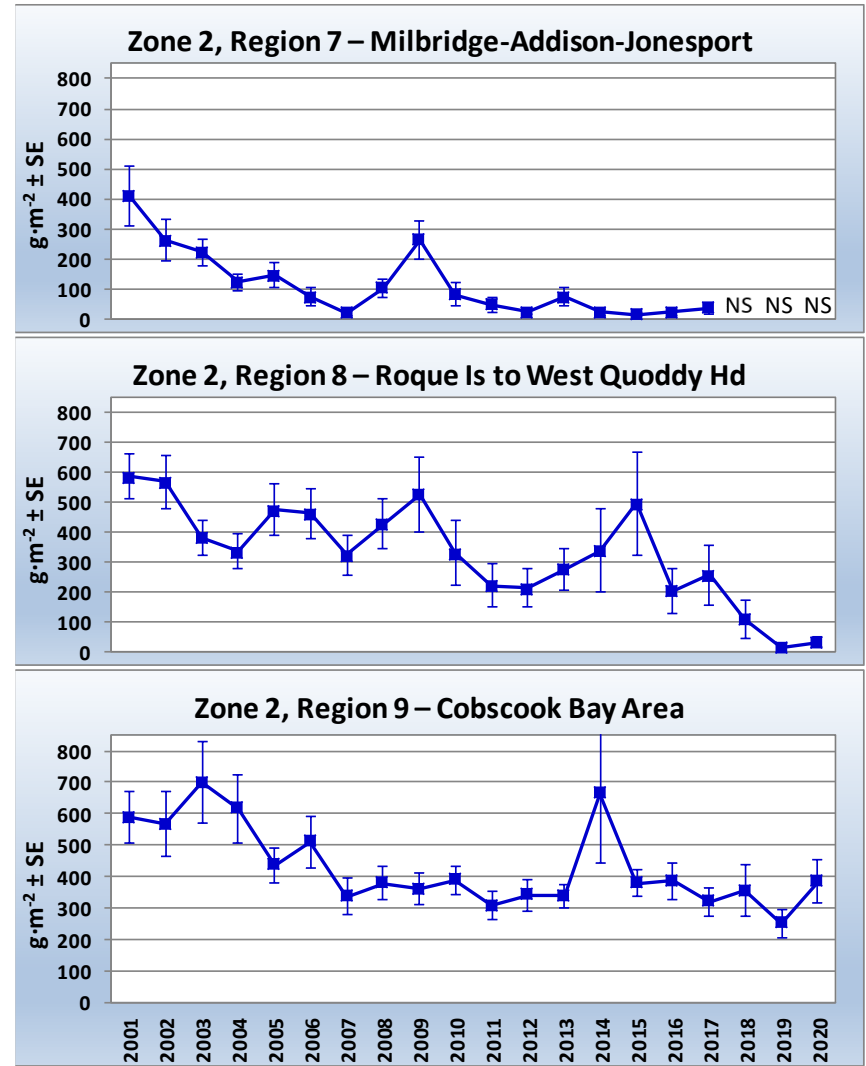
Zone 2 Sea Urchin Biomass Indices by Region

Regions 4-6

Regions 7-9



Note different vertical axes



NS = Not Surveyed