

# MD Oyster Fishery Overview

March 25, 2025  
MD DNR Shellfish Division

# MD Oyster Fishery Overview

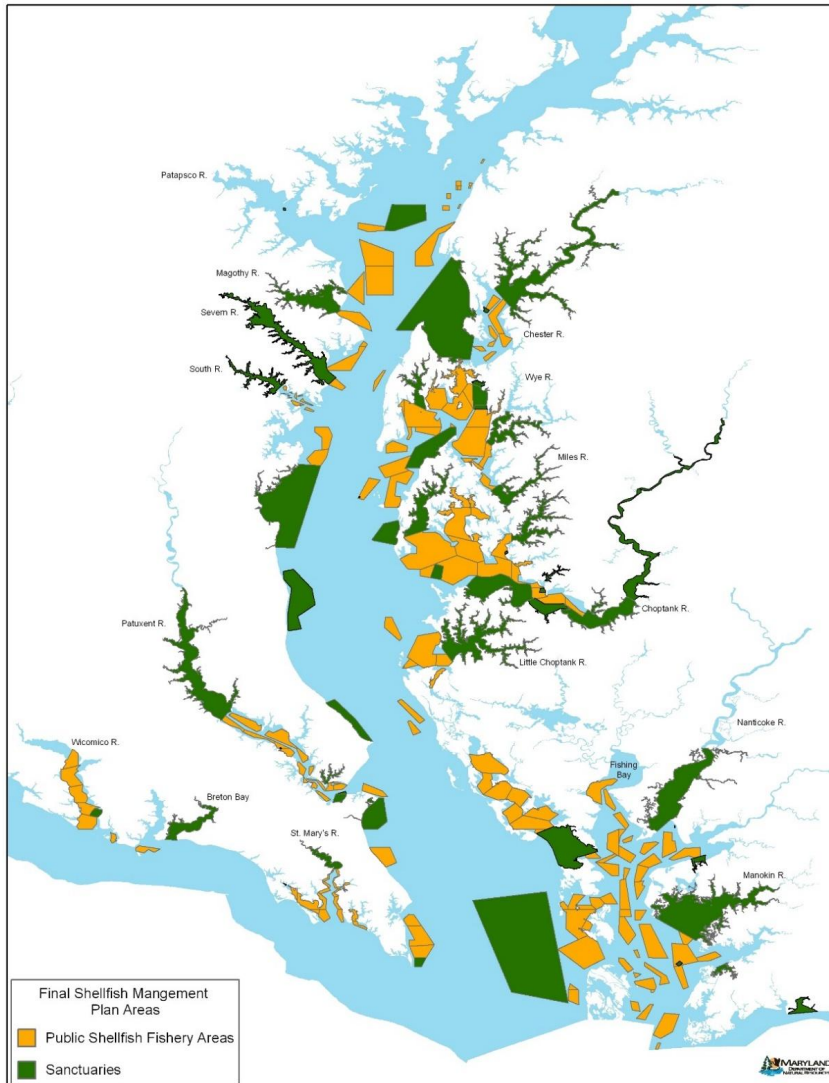
Management – Three priority Sectors

Harvest Trends – Bushels, Value, Gear, Areas

Eastern Bay Project – DNR implementing with Partners

Oyster Stock Assessment – New Benchmark SA 2025

# MD Oyster Management Overview

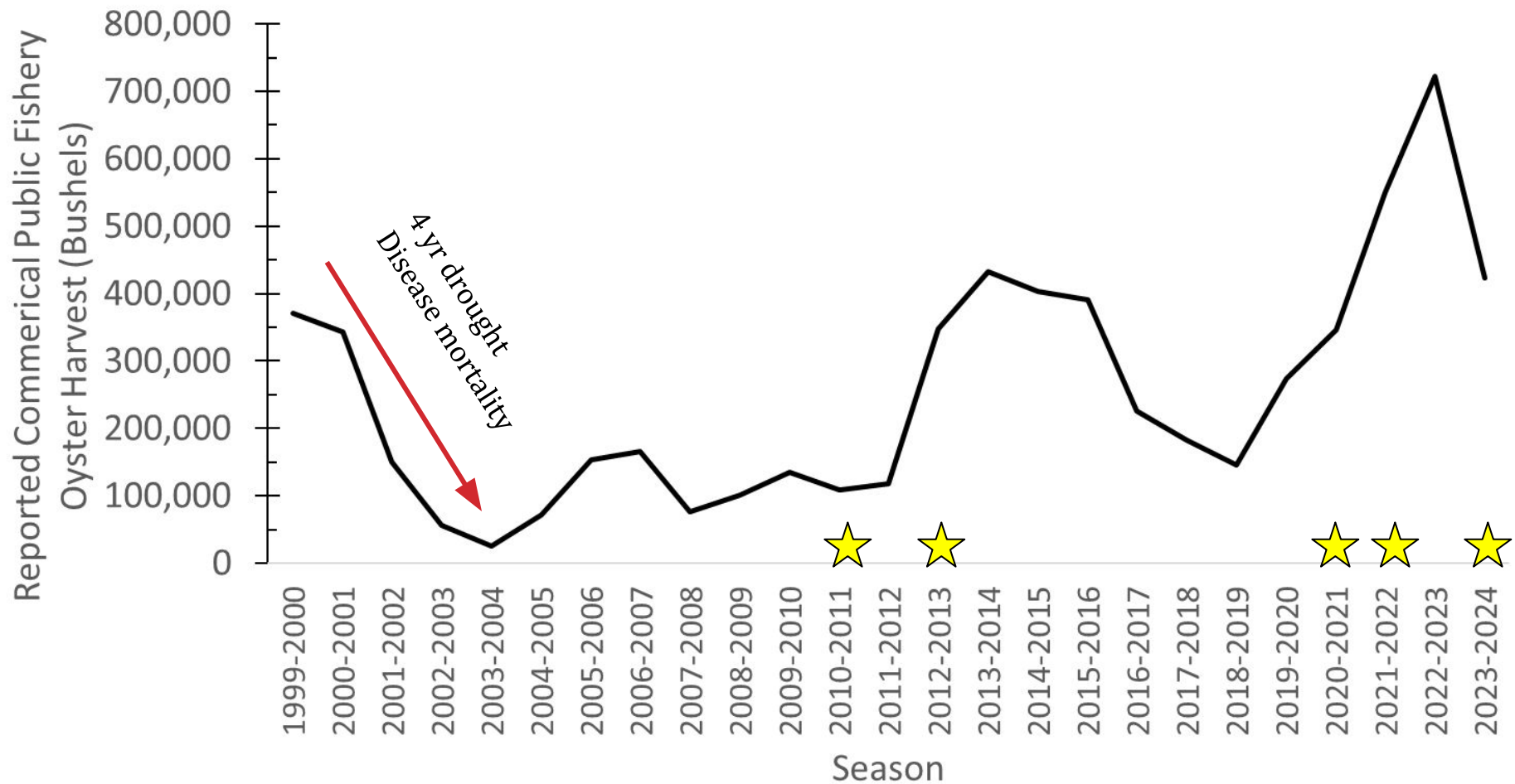


## Priority Sectors

- Sanctuaries
- Fishery
- Aquaculture

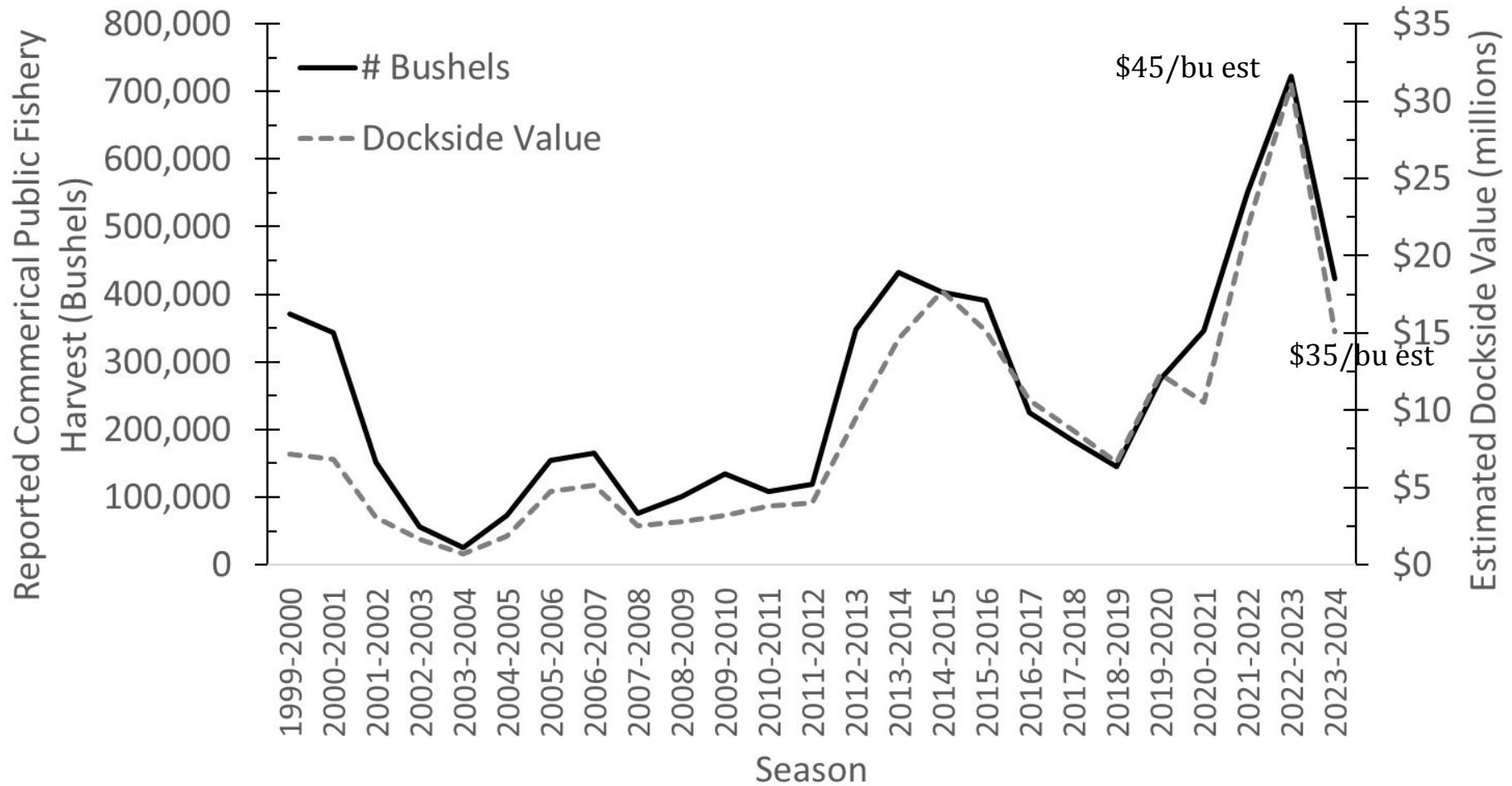
Fishery harvest rules - season, size limit, bushel limit, harvest hours, gear types, closure areas, etc

# Oyster Fishery Harvest (bushels)

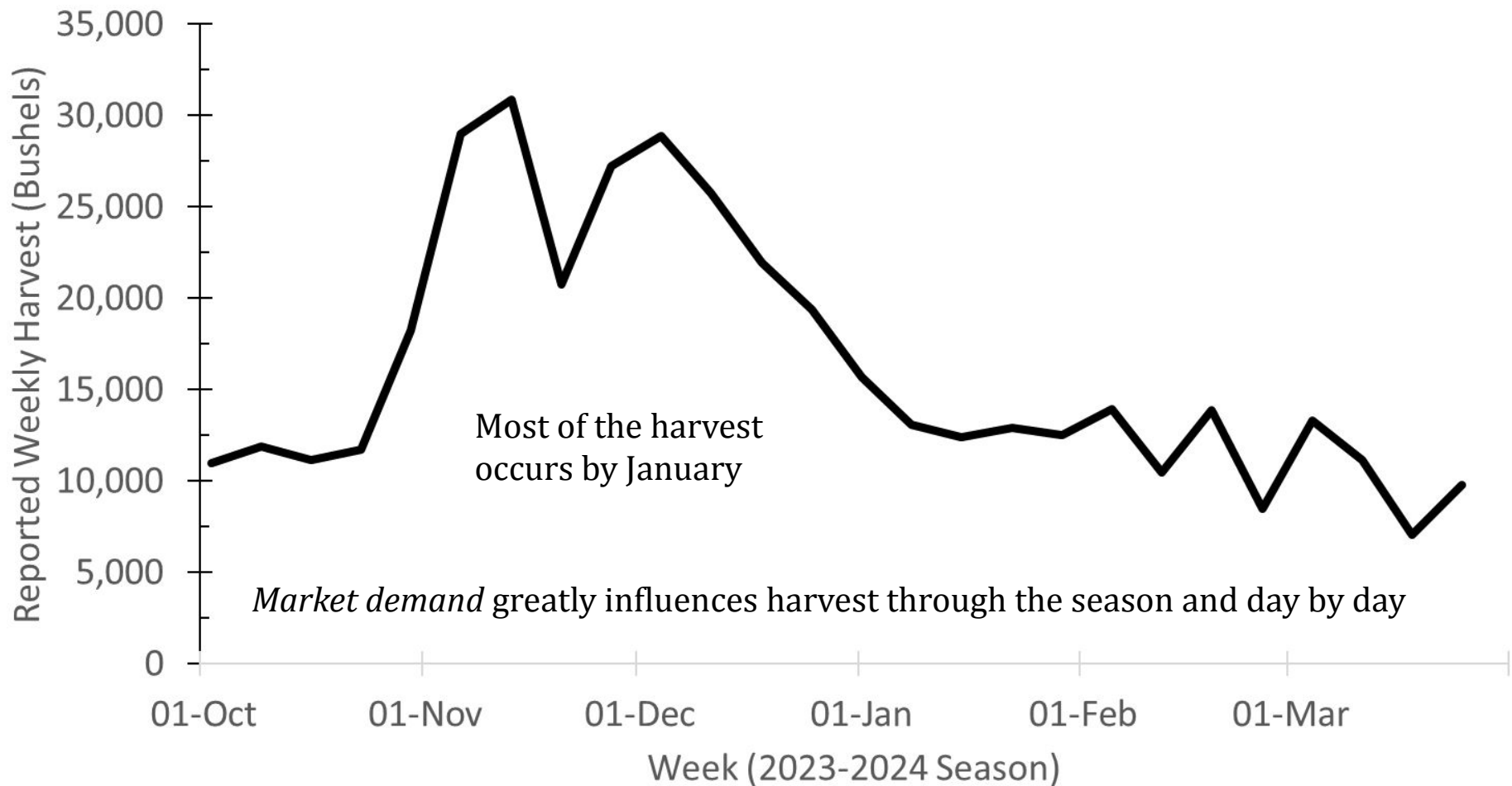


★ High spatfall index years

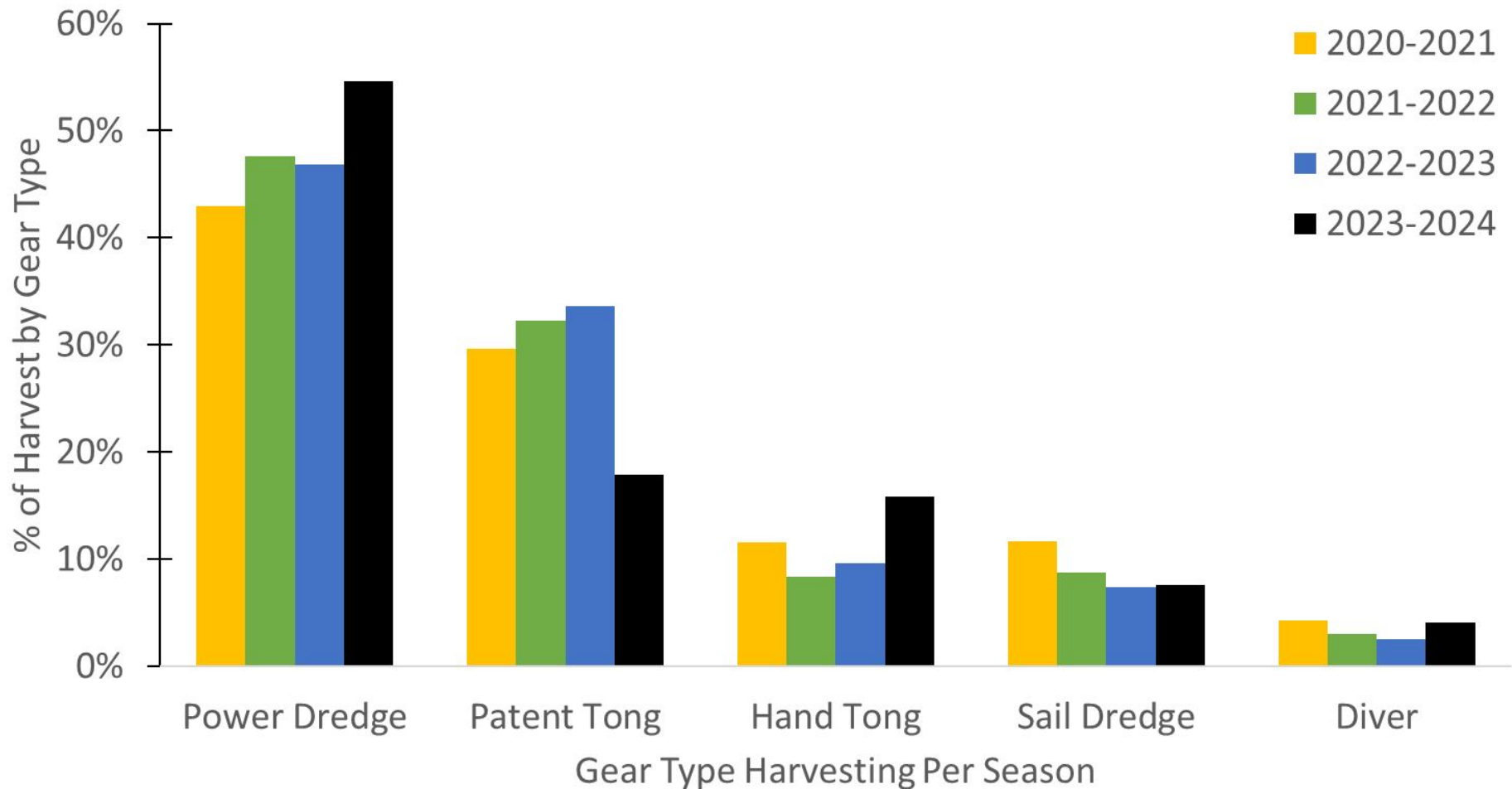
# Dockside Value



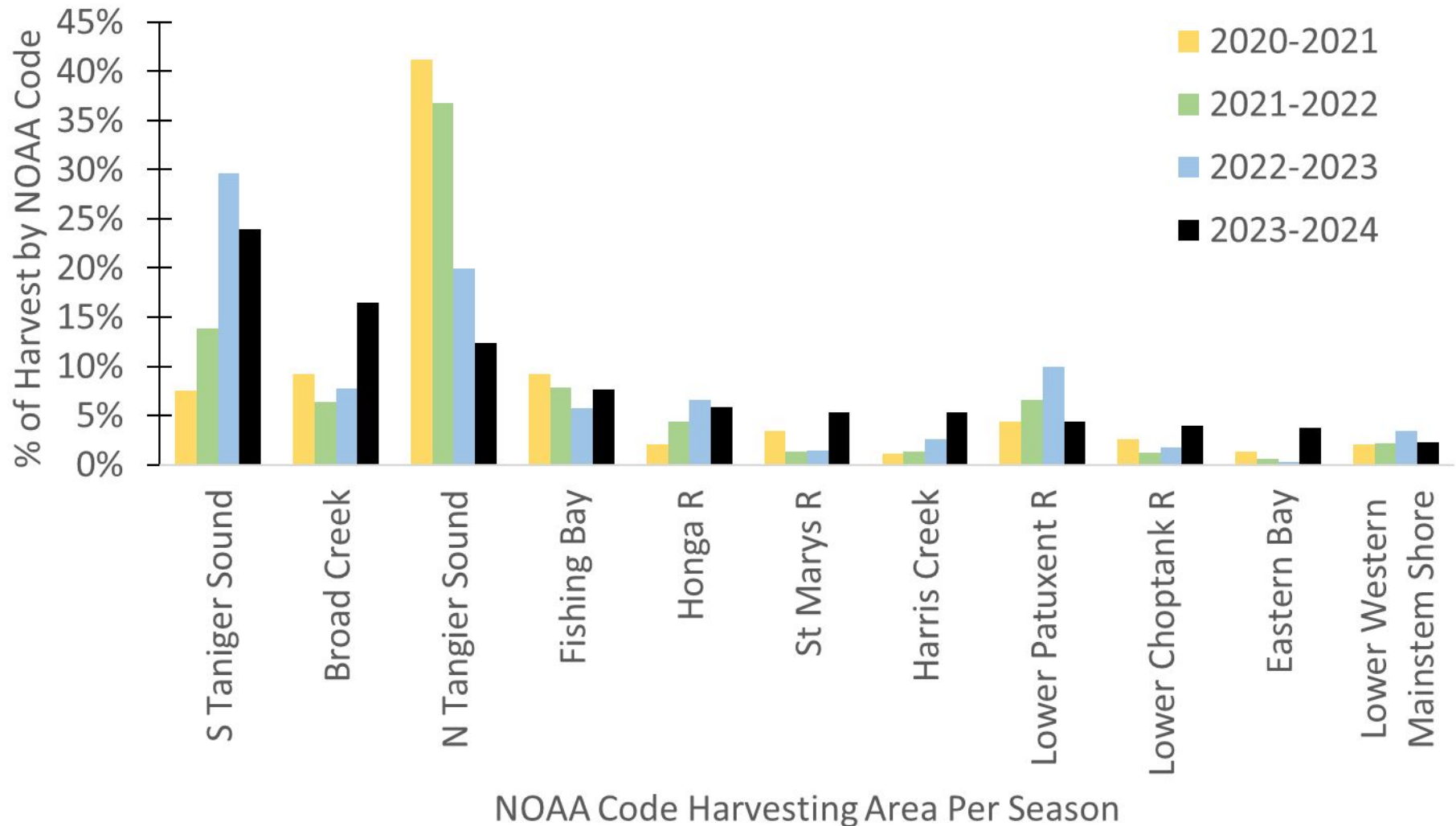
# Seasonal Harvest Trend



# Oyster Harvest Per Gear

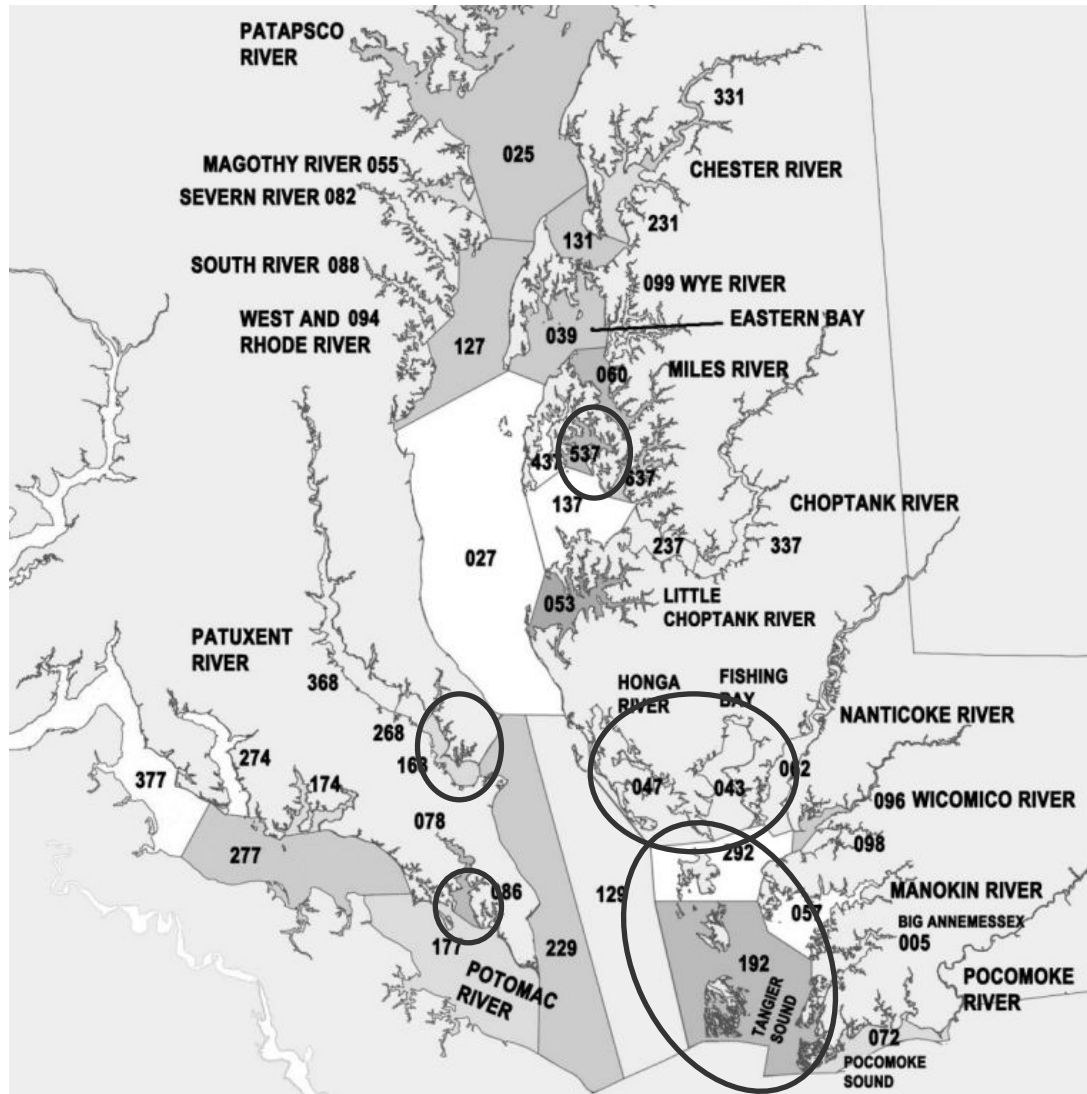


# Oyster Harvest by Area





# Oyster Harvest by Area

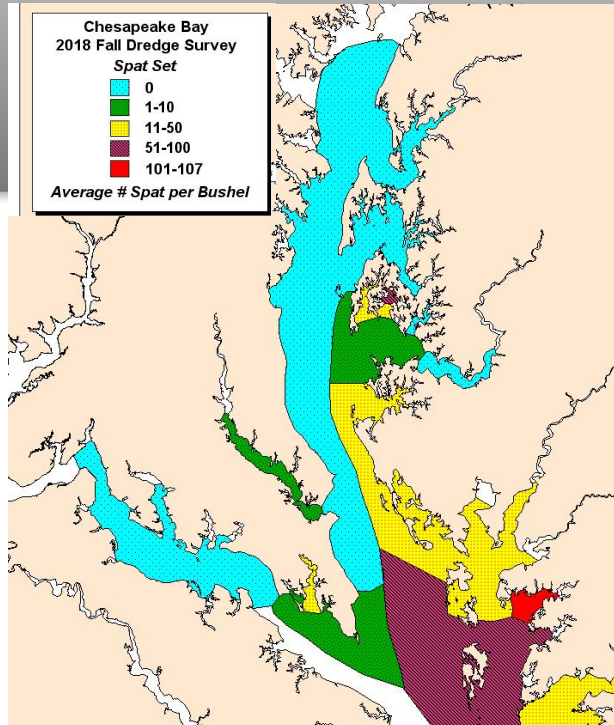


## Major Harvest Areas

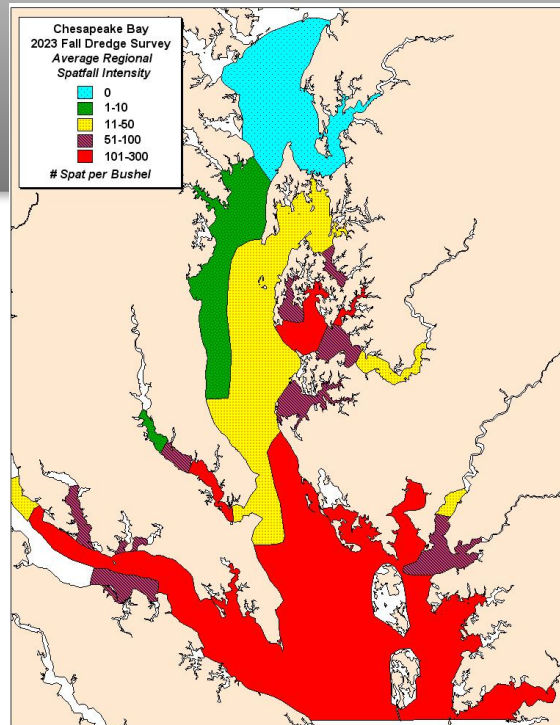
- Tangier Sound
- Fishing Bay
- Broad Creek
- Honga River
- Lower Patux
- St Marys River

75%  $\pm$  of the MD harvest

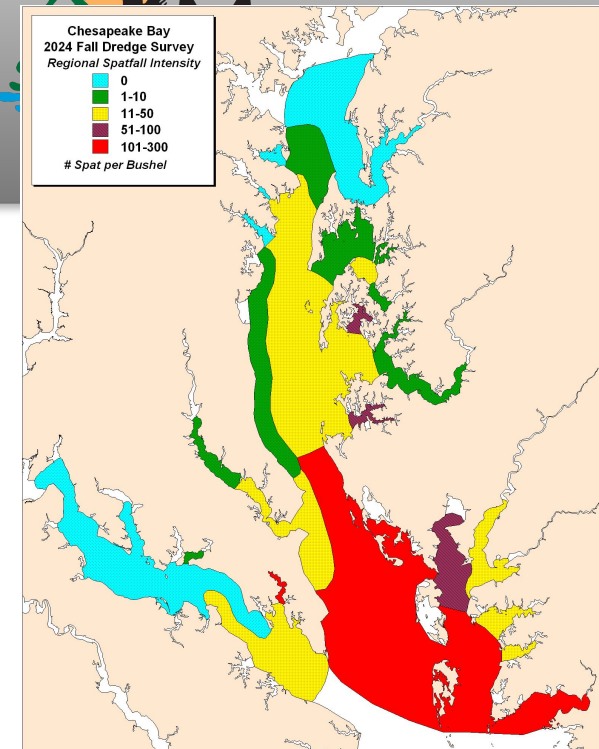
2018



2023



2024

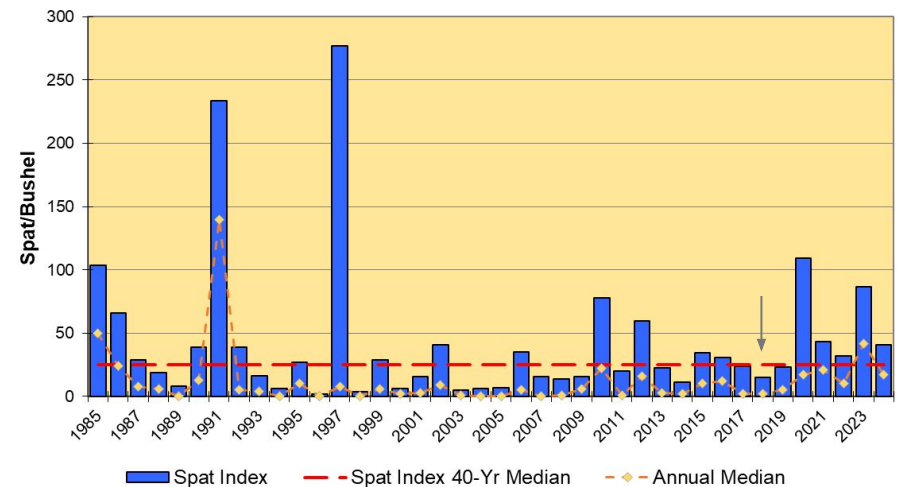


## Natural spat set drives the fishery

The main harvest areas typically have dependable spat sets, even when the Spat Index is low.

Other areas can become productive when they receive a strong spat set.

Maryland Spatfall Intensity Index, 1985-2024



# DNR's Eastern Bay Project



## Initiated by DNR as a New Model

- for managing oysters
- for working together
- for restoring an area

Began prior to COVID (then delayed)

OAC was briefed, endorsed the project, and recommended it in their final report

Legislature approved \$\$

ORP recently convened the Oyster Coalition to enhance the project





- Plant seed oysters
- Allow for growth
- Document harvest
- Estimate nutrient reduction values for N and P

.....Too early to give specifics

# Oyster Aquaculture - summary

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>HARVEST</u>	<u>EST. VALUE</u>	<u>Est Nutrients Removed (lbs)</u>	
<b>2023</b>	<b>94,286 bu</b>	<b>\$13,339,544</b>	<b>N 5,657</b>	<b>P 943</b>
2024	..... data still undergoing QA/QC.....			

## LEASE DATA 2024

Acres        7,737

Leases        471 (377 bottom, 94 water column)

Plantings 275-300 Million shellfish planted per year (estimate of small spat and larger seed, from hatcheries and/or wild seed)

# Oyster Stock Assessment



- The SA must be run every 2 years
- A benchmark SA required every 6 years

## Timeline.....

- Fall 2023            Benchmark SA began
- October 2024      Update to the OAC
- Spring 2025        Independent peer review  
                              Benchmark SA completed
- May 2025            Present results to OAC