Blue Crab Abundance

OUTCOME

Maintain sustainable blue crab population based on the current 2012 target of 215 million adult females. Refine population targets through 2025 based on best available science.

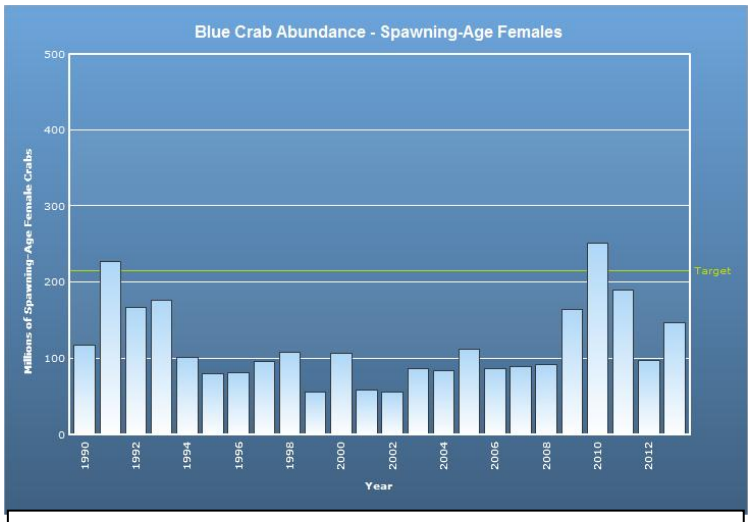
Concept only

Why is this outcome important?

Blue crabs have important commercial, recreational, ecological, and cultural value. Restoring populations of blue crabs would protect an iconic species of the region. They are the most valuable fished species in the Chesapeake Bay, both commercially and recreationally, as well as play an integral role in benthic ecosystems as both prey and predators.

Current Conditions:

- 2011: 191 million female blue crabs (1+ years old)
- 2012: 95 million female blue crabs (1+ years old)
- 2013: 147 million female blue crabs (1+ years old)



See how Blue Crabs are doing at chesapeakebay.net

How was the outcome derived?
Who came up with it?

Every year from December through March, researchers from Maryland and Virginia are out on the Bay conducting the winter dredge survey of blue crabs. This survey provides fisheries managers an estimate of the number of blue crabs available in the Bay related to the number that have been harvested. It includes stock status and comprehensive estimates of the numbers of male, female, and juveniles.

From the survey information, the Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee (CBSAC), which includes academic institutions, jurisdictional managers, scientists and federal partners, produces the annual Blue Crab Advisory Report. This document provides blue crab fisheries managers with a comprehensive break down of the status of the stock, and issues scientific recommendations to managers based on this data.

What was the basis or baseline?

Following the results of the 2011 crab stock assessment, which established a benchmark for the crab population, CBSAC developed the new target of 215 million spawning-aged females – the number experts estimate as needed to rebuild the crab population, and also set the minimum number of 70 million female crabs. Fisheries managers have been pursuing these goals since Maryland and Virginia adopted new crab regulations in 2012.

For More:

http://chesapeakebay.noaa.gov/fish-facts/blue-crab
http://www.chesapeakebay.net/indicators/indicator/blue_crab_abundance_adults

Blue Crab Management

OUTCOME

Manage for a stable and productive crab fishery, including working with the industry, recreational crabbers, and other stakeholders to improve commercial and recreational harvest accountability. By 2018, evaluate the establishment of a Bay-wide, allocation-based management framework with annual levels set by the jurisdictions for the purpose of accounting for and adjusting harvest by each jurisdiction.

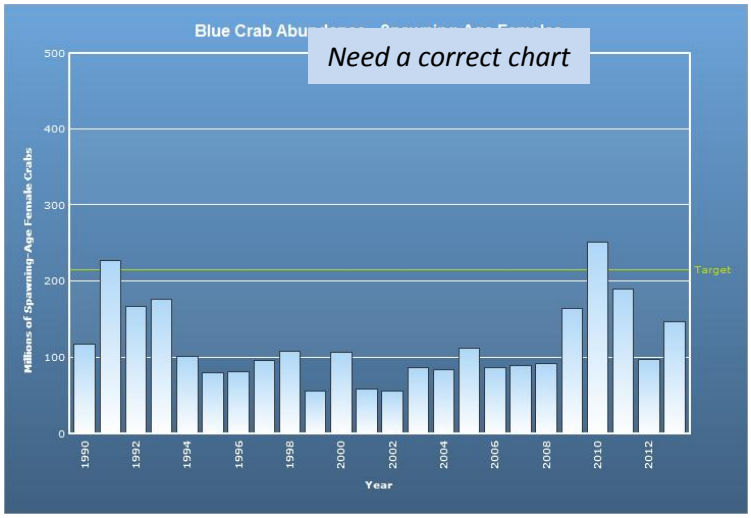
Concept only

Why is this outcome important?

Blue crabs have important commercial, recreational, ecological, and cultural value. This outcome describes specific strategies and tools that will be explored to improve management of the blue crab fishery.

Current Conditions:

- Jurisdictions are currently partnering with industry representatives to develop and test initiatives to improve harvest accountability
- Stakeholders have engaged in initial discussions with jurisdictions regarding exploring a Bay-wide allocation-based management framework.



How was the outcome derived?

Who came up with it?

The Sustainable Fisheries GIT Executive Committee and many stakeholders – Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Environmental Defense Fund, Chesapeake Bay Commission and local state management agencies including Virginia Marine Resources Commission, Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission – came up with this outcome. Additionally they discussed projects currently underway to improve harvest accountability and the importance of these efforts to improve the management. The group also discussed future consideration of a structure for managing the fishery based on allocations.

What was the basis or baseline?

The larger team considered 2018 as an appropriate target date since the intervening time allows them to address the science and management questions associated with managing the fishery based on allocations. Further, the next benchmark stock assessment is expected in 2016 and the results of this effort may present new data analyses and inform any changes to the current management.

For More:

http://chesapeakebay.noaa.gov/fish-facts/blue-crab
http://www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries/crab/
http://www.mrc.virginia.gov/index.shtm
http://www.chesapeakebay.net/indicators/indicator/blue_crab_abundance_adults