

## Agenda Item Summary

### BACKGROUND

Oregon's sea urchin fishery began in 1986, as the fishery rapidly accelerated along the West Coast. Demand was high and stocks were virgin, making for a very profitable fishery for a large group of fishermen for a short period of time. Activity peaked in 1990 when 9.2 million pounds were landed by 60 divers. By 1996, stocks had diminished and markets reduced. Since then, participation has stabilized to several full time divers harvesting a total of around a half million pounds of red sea urchins per year.

Fishery-independent red sea urchin surveys, conducted throughout the duration of the fishery (up to 2011), show that stocks were quickly reduced and have since continued to decline. Recruitment, as determined from both fishery-dependent and fishery-independent data, has been very low in recent years. The last large scale recruitment event occurred over 20 years ago. There is concern from active harvesters and managers alike that the fishery is overcapitalized in permits compared to stock size, and that the now stable number of active fishery participants and the urchin resource cannot sustain potential future increases in fishing pressure.

### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

- April 2012: ODFW staff held an industry meeting with permit holders and presented results of recent survey work and analysis of stock trends. Staff and industry discussed current declining stock conditions and potential management measures for the future.

### ISSUE 1

#### SUSPENSION OF SEA URCHIN PERMIT LOTTERY

### ANALYSIS

#### *Stock conditions:*

Orford reef is the most important area for the urchin fishery (50% of landings) and is the site of continuous market sampling and the most robust set of fishery independent surveys. Recent analysis of these data shows that 1) adult urchin densities have continuously reduced over time, and 2) recruitment has been continuously low in recent years.

#### *Fishery interest:*

Landings and active permits (based on landings) have declined substantially since the early years of the fishery (Fig.1). Most sea urchin permits have been inactive for many years and permit lotteries have occurred in most years since 2003 with a trend of fewer renewals each year. In discussions at the April 2012 industry meeting, the participants agreed that the available stock cannot support fishing effort above current levels and that inactive permits should be reduced through attrition. With recent changes to neighboring states' stocks and management, Oregon's fishery participants perceive that continuance of the permit lottery would allow a significant effort shift from those states.

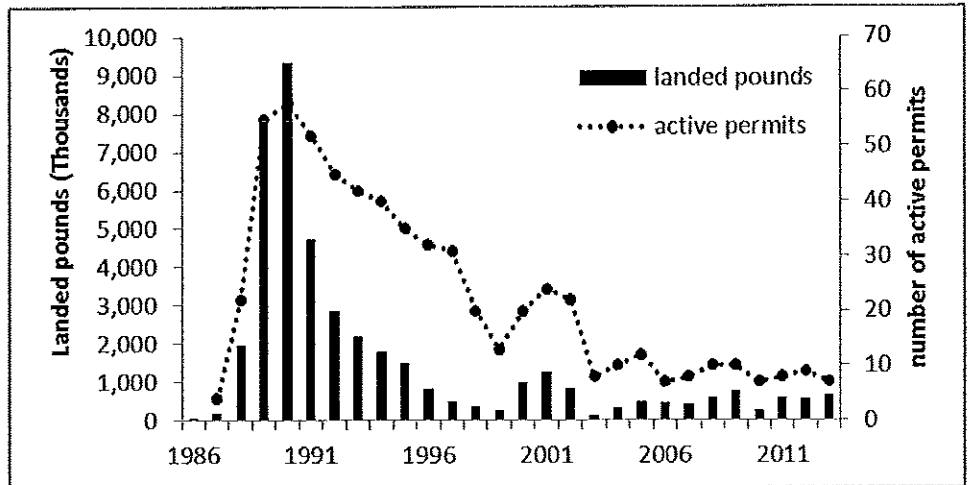


Figure 1. Fishery landings and number of active urchin permits over time

Given declines in abundance and recruitment, combined with the stability of the low effort fishery in recent years, reducing potential harvest effort should ultimately increase the likelihood for sustainability of the fishery.

Based on recent analysis of stock conditions and recommendations of current users, staff recommends suspending the sea urchin permit lottery for two years. During this period, staff intends to work with fishery participants to investigate appropriate long term management measures and will subsequently recommend long-term options to the commission.

Per OAR 635-005-0825 (10) "The Commission may suspend the lottery for up to two years based upon its assessment of the condition of the resource and recommendations of the Sea Urchin Permit Review Board." Currently, only one of three seats on this board is filled, and this member has been fully involved in discussions between industry and staff and has supported permit limitations.

**OPTIONS**

1. Exercise OAR 635-005-0825 (10) as proposed by staff.
2. No action (status quo).

**STAFF  
RECOMMENDATION**

1. Adopt option 1

<b>DRAFT MOTION</b>	I move to suspend the lottery of sea urchin permits for two years given the condition of the stock and recommendation of active harvesters.
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE</b>	April 1, 2014