

GROUNDFISH COMMITTEE MEETING

Portsmouth, NH and by Webinar

August 25, 2026



**New England Fishery
Management Council**

Groundfish Outlook by Quarter in 2026, updated August 14, 2026, NEFMC Staff

Council Priority*	Jan – Mar	Apr - Jun	July - Sept	Oct - Dec
Amendment 25	Final Submission		GARFO implementation	
Recreational Measures	Develop recommendations for cod & haddock	GARFO implementation		Planning for development of FY2027 measures
Framework Adjustment 72	Preliminary & Final Submissions		GARFO implementation	
Amendment 23 Review	Conduct review analyses		Complete review	Consider recommendations for follow-up actions
Redfish Sector Exemption Review	Conduct review analyses	Complete review		Consider recommendations for follow-up actions
ABC Control Rules Framework (68)	Contract work conducted to evaluate integration of Council's new Risk Policy with revised ABC CRs			Develop revised ABC CRs from simulation testing; develop ABC stability tools
Framework Adjustment 74		Develop scope Initiate action	Develop specifications & measures, conduct analysis	Final action
Atlantic Cod Management			Continue to develop transition plan; planning for IRA #2 groundfish management transition listening sessions (spring 2027)	
White Hake Rebuilding			Conduct rebuilding plan analyses & review biological reference points (align with 2027 MT assessment)	
Stock Assessments		MT- GB haddock (Jun.)	Updates for transboundary mgmt. (cod, haddock, yellowtail flounder) (Jul.)	MT- GOM haddock, plaice Data updates- pollock, witch flounder, halibut (Sept.)

*Additional: Participate in TMGC, coordinate on EFH designation updates, and make recommendations for 2027 Council priorities

FOR TODAY

Framework 68 / Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) Control Rules

- Receive an update on contract work to evaluate integration of risk policy with ABC control rules.
- Receive an overview of the updated draft work plan for the action.

Amendment 23 Monitoring Review

- Receive an update focused on additional information and new PDT analyses not previously presented.
- Discuss the completed review and outcomes.

Framework 74 / Specifications and Management Measures

- Receive a brief progress report on development of the action.



New England Fishery
Management Council

Framework 68

ABC CONTROL RULES AND ABC STABILITY TOOLS



New England Fishery
Management Council

FRAMEWORK 68: ABC CONTROL RULES – HISTORY & STATUS UPDATE

- The Council added development of revised groundfish ABC control rules (CRs) to its priorities in 2023. Framework 68 was initiated in June 2023.
- In August 2023, a facilitated meeting discussed draft goals and objectives.
 - Participants from the Groundfish Committee, the SSC, the Groundfish PDT, the GAP, the RAP, the Risk Policy Working Group, and the public.
- The Council paused development of ABC CRs / FW 68 to first revise its Risk Policy. The Council approved the revised Risk Policy Statement and Concept in September 2024 and finalized the Factors and their weights in June 2026.
- Ongoing simulation testing of potential ABC CRs for Groundfish through contract work under Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) initiative #1.
 - This work is a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) of possible new ABC CRs for groundfish that incorporate the Council's new Risk Policy.
 - This work may also inform future ABC CRs for other FMPs.



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- The goal of FW68 is to **modify/replace the existing groundfish ABC CRs** to better address the goals and objectives of the FMP considering increasing uncertainty/ variability in stock assessments, changing environmental conditions, and National Standard Guidelines. The new CR should produce catch advice that prevents overfishing, rebuilds stocks, improves attainment of optimum yield, and seeks to minimize large changes in catch advice as appropriate.
- **Develop a tiered groundfish ABC control rule which considers**, but is not limited to, potential categories, including:
 - 1) **Stock status**, including unknown and rebuilt;
 - 2) Stock assessment **model type** and sources or level of **uncertainty**; and
 - 3) **Productivity regime**.

The control rule should also consider **stability in the ABCs***, with decision rules for when to use **constant ABCs** and the ability to use **phased-in ABCs** consistent with National Standard 1 guidelines.



FW68 NEXT STEPS

- Draft alternatives for FW68 targeting final decision in April 2027.*
- Fall 2026, focus on alternatives for ABC Stability Tools:
 - Include [new \(2016\) NS 1 Guidance](#) ([see technical memo](#)):
 - [Phased-in ABCs](#) to foster industry stability (not to exceed 3 years),
 - [Carryover](#) to foster safety and market stability, and
 - Guidance for the use of constant ABCs.
- Winter 2026/2027:
 - Focus on alternatives for ABC CRs, developed through simulation work.
 - Bring to Committee.
- Spring 2027
 - Council final action on FW68 at April 2027 meeting.
 - Use in 2027 action for ABCs starting in FY2028.



PHASED-IN ABC

To help stabilize catch levels as stock assessments are updated, a Council may choose an ABC CR that phases in changes to ABC over time rather than making the full cut in 1 year.

- Cannot exceed 3 years.
- Overfishing must be prevented each year.
 - The phased-in ABC cannot exceed the OFL in any year.
- Council should evaluate the appropriateness of phasing in cuts for stocks that are overfished and/or rebuilding
 - The goal for such stocks remains to rebuild them in as short a time as possible.



ABC CARRYOVER

- A carry-over ABC control rule allows carryover of a portion of an ACL underage into the next year.
 - Increases the ABC based on the increased stock abundance that results from an ACL underage.
- The FMP must specify when a carry-over ABC control rule can and cannot be used and **how the control rule prevents overfishing**.
- The SSC must specify the new ABC.
 - Adjust carryover for natural mortality and growth.
- Alternative: Reduce the buffer between the ACL and ABC for carryover.
 - This is how sector ACE carryover works.



CONSTANT ABC

Holding year 1 of the projected ABC constant when the ABCs in year 2 and 3 would otherwise increase.

Draft list for when to consider constant ABCs:

- When a stock is in a rebuilding plan.
 - Particularly when near the end of its rebuilding plan.
- When a stock is approaching an overfished condition.
- When a high level of uncertainty in the projections is anticipated.
- When a stock is recently considered rebuilt.
 - To help to maintain that status in the specifications period.



FRAMEWORK ADJUSTMENT 74 / SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES



New England Fishery
Management Council

DRAFT SCOPE

Fishing year (FY) 2027-2031 Specifications and Management Measures, to:

- Revise status determination criteria, as appropriate,
- Set FY2027 total allowable catches (TACs) for US/Canada management units of Eastern Georges Bank (GB) cod and Eastern GB haddock, and FY2027-FY2028 TACs for the GB yellowtail flounder stock,
- Set FY2027 specifications for GB cod and GB haddock, and FY2027-FY2028 specifications for GB yellowtail flounder,
- Set FY2027-FY2031 specifications for Gulf of Maine (GOM) haddock, American plaice, witch flounder, pollock, northern windowpane flounder, and southern windowpane flounder,
- Set FY2027-FY2031 specifications for Atlantic halibut, exploring sources of best available science to support catch setting methods,
- Review sub-component analysis for stocks with revised specifications, others as time permits,
- Review GB haddock sub-ACL in the mid-water trawl/herring fishery, set the sub-ACL at a fixed percentage amount, and discontinue the review requirement,
- Simplify the criteria for reducing the size of the southern windowpane flounder accountability measures area, and
- Adjust administration of the B DAS Program and Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock Special Access Program to change the default status



DRAFT RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES

1. Revised Status Determination Criteria (*if necessary*)
2. Specifications
 - FY2027 TACs for US/Canada management units of Eastern GB cod and Eastern GB haddock, and FY2027-FY2028 TACs for the GB yellowtail flounder stock,
 - FY2027 specifications for GB cod and GB haddock,
 - Set FY2027-FY2028 specifications for GB yellowtail flounder,
 - FY2027-FY2031 specifications for GOM haddock, American plaice, witch flounder, pollock, northern windowpane flounder, and southern windowpane flounder,
 - Set FY2027-FY2031 specifications for Atlantic halibut, exploring sources of best available science to support catch setting methods,
 - Sub-component analysis for stocks with revised specifications, others as time permits,
 - Review of GB haddock sub-ACL in the mid-water trawl/herring fishery, set the sub-ACL at a fixed percentage amount, and discontinue the review requirement



DRAFT RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES

3. Fishery Program Administration

Streamline administration of the **B DAS Program** and **Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock Special Access Program (SAP)**

- Adjust administration of the B DAS Program so that the program is by **default closed**
- Adjust administration of the Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock SAP so that **“open to target haddock”** is the **default status**

4. Commercial Fishery Management Measures - Southern Windowpane Flounder Accountability Measures

- **Simplify** the criteria to **reduce the size of the AM area** so that if the Large AM Area has been triggered and the **stock is rebuilt, only the Small AM Area** is implemented – for the **Groundfish Fishery** and **Large-Mesh Non-Groundfish Trawl Fisheries**



DRAFT TIMELINE

2026	
MAY-JUN	Committee/AP/PDT preliminary discussion
JUN 23-25	Council initiates framework
JUN 29	Peer Review – Management Track Assessment for GB haddock
JUL-SEP	Committee/AP/PDT develop draft alternatives
SEP 22-23	Peer review – Management Track Assessments for GOM haddock and American plaice
OCT 7	SSC recommends OFLs/ABCs for witch flounder* and windowpane flounder (northern and southern)*
OCT 14-16	TMGC/SC meets to recommend TACs for US/CA management units of EGB cod and EGB haddock, and GB yellowtail flounder stock
OCT 27-28	SSC recommends OFLs/ABCs for GOM haddock, American plaice, pollock*, and Atlantic halibut*
OCT-NOV	Committee/AP/PDT continue developing draft alternatives and complete impact analysis
DEC 8-10	Council receives draft alternatives and takes final action
2027	
JAN	Preliminary submission of framework document to NMFS
FEB	Final submission of framework document to NMFS
MAR	NMFS publishes proposed rule
MAY 1	Target Implementation

*Data update



New England Fishery
Management Council

ATLANTIC HALIBUT – DRAFT WORK PLAN



Set FY2027-FY2031 specifications for Atlantic halibut, exploring sources of best available science to support catch setting methods

- Review information on:
 - US assessment approach and past peer review / SSC discussions
 - Stock structure and tagging/migration studies
 - Canadian stock assessment
 - Fishery catch trends
- Develop TOR for October 27-28th SSC meeting – to consider best available science and alternative methods for catch advice setting



FOR TODAY

Framework 74 / Specifications and Management Measures

- Receive a brief progress report on development of the action.



New England Fishery
Management Council

Amendment 23 Review

REVIEW OF THE GROUNDFISH SECTOR MONITORING PROGRAM



New England Fishery
Management Council

A23 Review Metrics and Indicators

Evaluate efficacy of monitoring program in meeting A23 goals:

Legend:
(#) Review Theme
○ **Core metric**
➤ Supporting metric
➤ Secondary metrics**

A23 Goal: Improve documentation of catch (“improved catch accounting”)
Objective 1: determine total catch and effort of target or regulated species
Objective 2: achieve coverage to minimize effects of potential bias, maintaining flexibility to enhance fleet viability

(1) Program Reach / Efficacy	(2) Data Impacts	(3) Fishery Impacts
○ Achieved coverage ➤ ASM coverage targets ○ Coverage equitability ➤ Waiver counts ➤ Acceptance rates ➤ Refusals ➤ Incidents ➤ PTNS notification compliance ➤ PTNS cancellations ○ Distribution of vessels ➤ EM video review rates	○ Observer bias ➤ Biased vessels ➤ Magnitude of observer bias ➤ Spatial observer bias** ○ Discard estimates ➤ Catch allocation by statistical area / broad stock area reporting** ○ Exclusion catch estimates ○ Management uncertainty buffers	○ Total monitoring costs ➤ Industry monitoring costs ○ Cost efficiency

WHAT'S NEW?

- We did not have time to complete analyses for two secondary metrics:
 - M9 Catch Allocation by Statistical Area/BSA Reporting
 - M18 Spatial Observer Bias.
- Evaluating the Observer Effect for the Northeast U.S. Groundfish Fishery
 - The methods were changed
 - Statistical checks on the previous revised method raised concerns
 - The new methods are unique and worked well
 - The entire paper was re-written with new figures
 - The results are substantially similar



EVALUATING THE OBSERVER EFFECT FOR THE NORTHEAST U.S. GROUNDFISH FISHERY

Amendment 23 analyses

- Triplet sequences are established in each of two bins.
 - Bin one: OUO. Bin two: UUU.
 - Compare O-U to U-U

First attempt in 2026 – Presented to Council in 2026

- Amendment 23 design was built for a low-coverage fishery.
- Moved to just pairs of trips: O-U and U-U.
- Results were skewed.

Final Method – Source of Today's Results

- Focus on just the O-U pairs
- Still standardized by each vessel's individual means, by year, for each metric



WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

Vessel-level observer effects have been ameliorated, but not eliminated, with higher coverage.

- Fleet-wide average behavior does not change when observed in the most recent time stanza.
 - This is a behavioral change, not a composition effect.
 - Some biased vessels left the fishery, but not all.
- Looking at individual vessels over time, we see that their observer effect changed over time.
- **Vessels that changed their behavior when observed in the earlier time stanzas do not change their behavior now.**



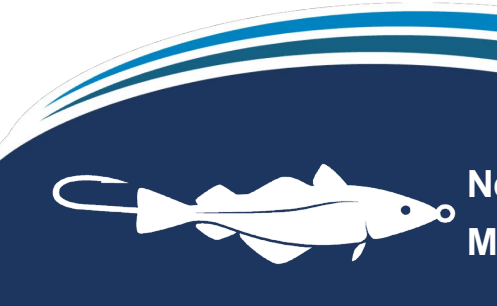
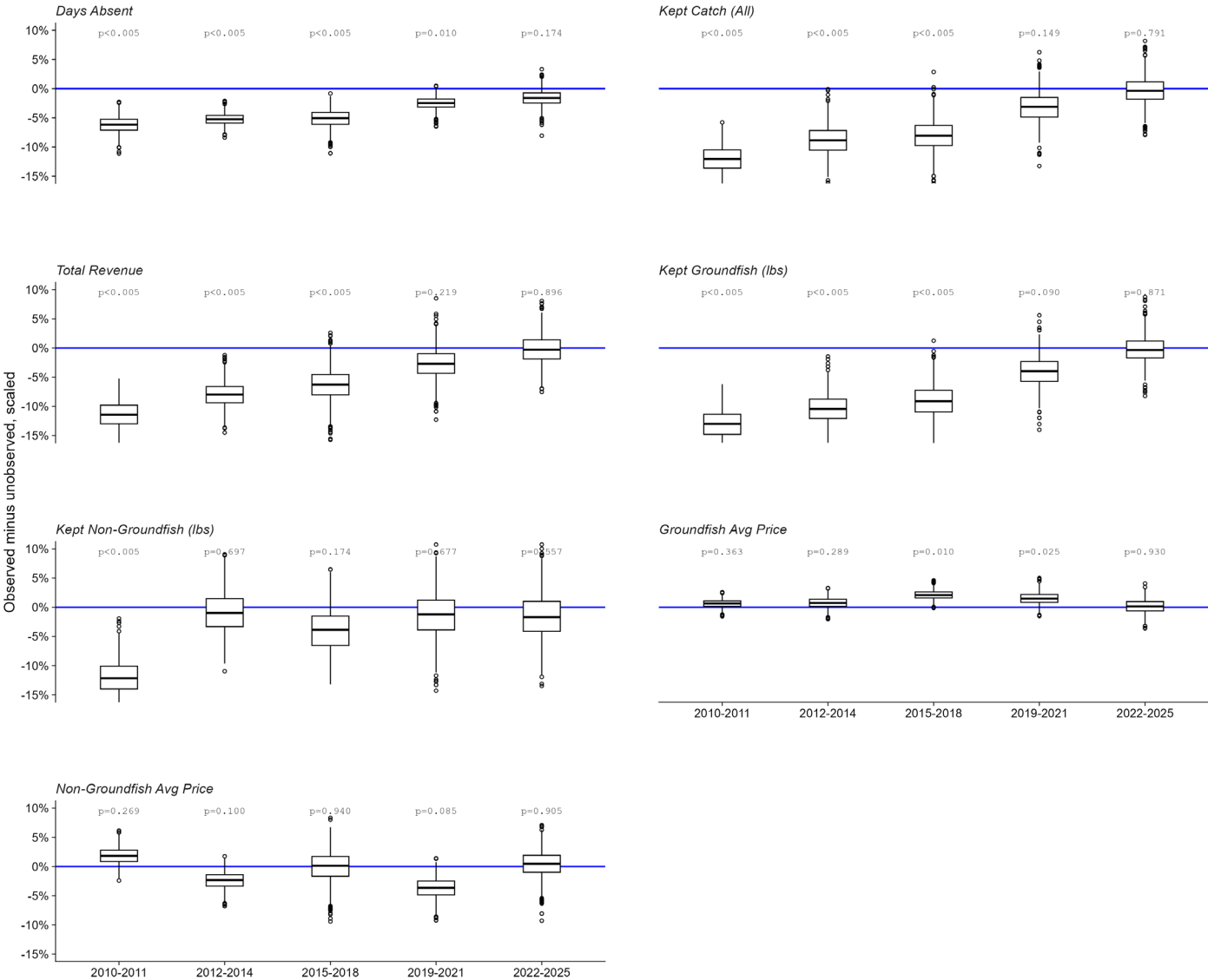
Figure 1:

Trawl vessel observer effect by management stanza.

Trawl Vessels (By Management Stanza)

Mean of treated pairs (observed minus unobserved). NEGATIVE = lower when observed. Scaled by the pooled vessel-year mean. 1,000 permit-clustered bootstrap replicates. Boxes show bootstrap spread. P-values taken from randomization tests.

	2010-2011	2012-2014	2015-2018	2019-2021	2022-2025
Treated pairs:	2,129	2,967	2,112	1,778	1,077
Control O-U:	700	935	383	623	3,589
Control U-U:	2,664	6,212	5,571	4,429	895
Treated vessels:	148	154	114	80	66



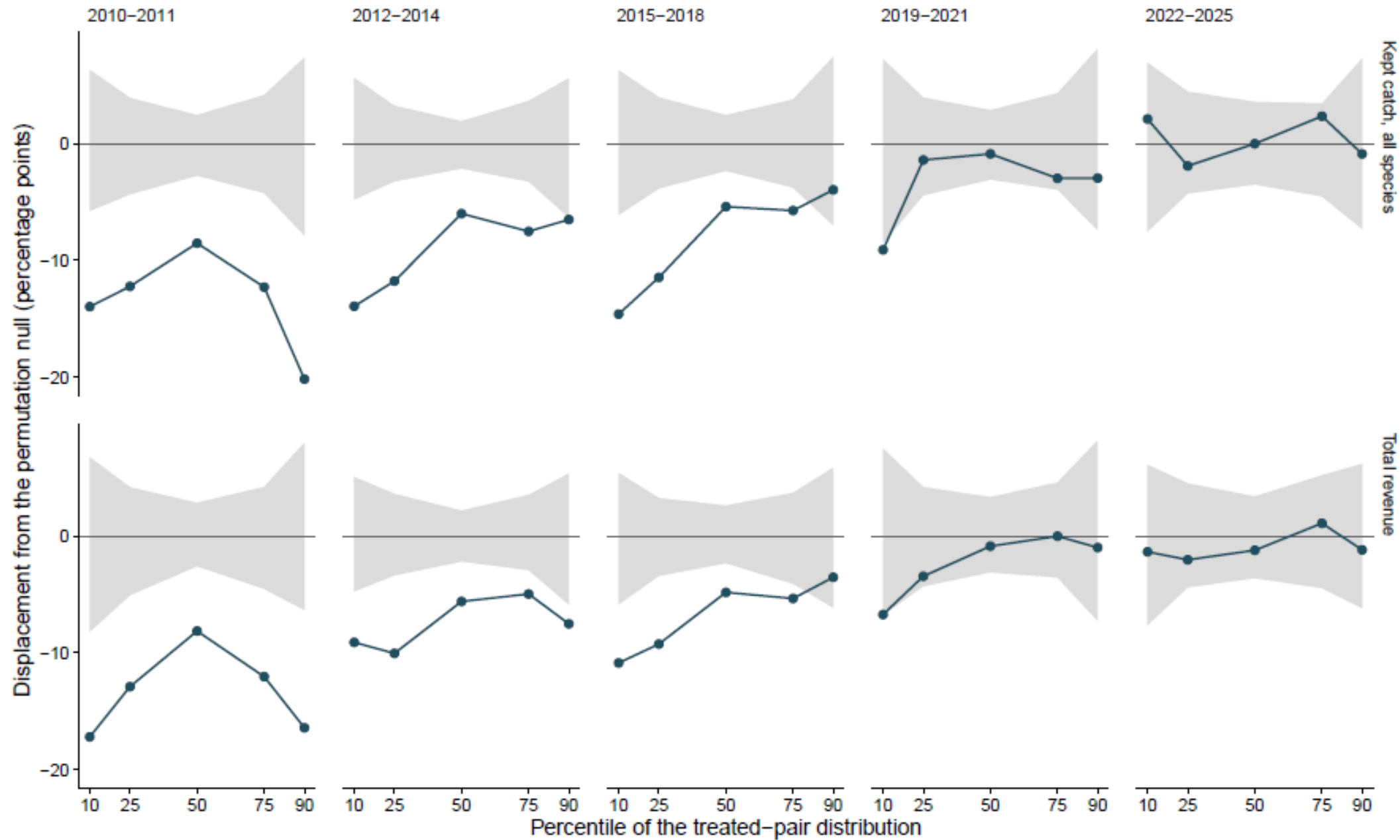


Figure 2:
Trawl vessel displacement of each quantile, in percentage points of the vessel fishing-year mean.

Figure 3:
Landings share
held by trawl
vessels with an
observer bias
greater than 40
percent.

Impact of responding vessels (All trips): Trawl fleet

A vessel-year 'responds' when its mean observed-minus-unobserved difference exceeds 40% of its own annual mean, in either direction. Both lines are shares of ALL all trips landings in the gear-year, and are labelled at the right-hand end. The responder series is a LOWER BOUND: vessels that could not be scored count as non-responders by construction. Grey is the identical calculation on concordant pairs, where no observer contrast exists; only the gap between the two lines is signal. Frame coverage 11-91% (treated-scored), 74-99% (concordant-scored). At least 5 pairs per vessel, 8 vessels per cell.

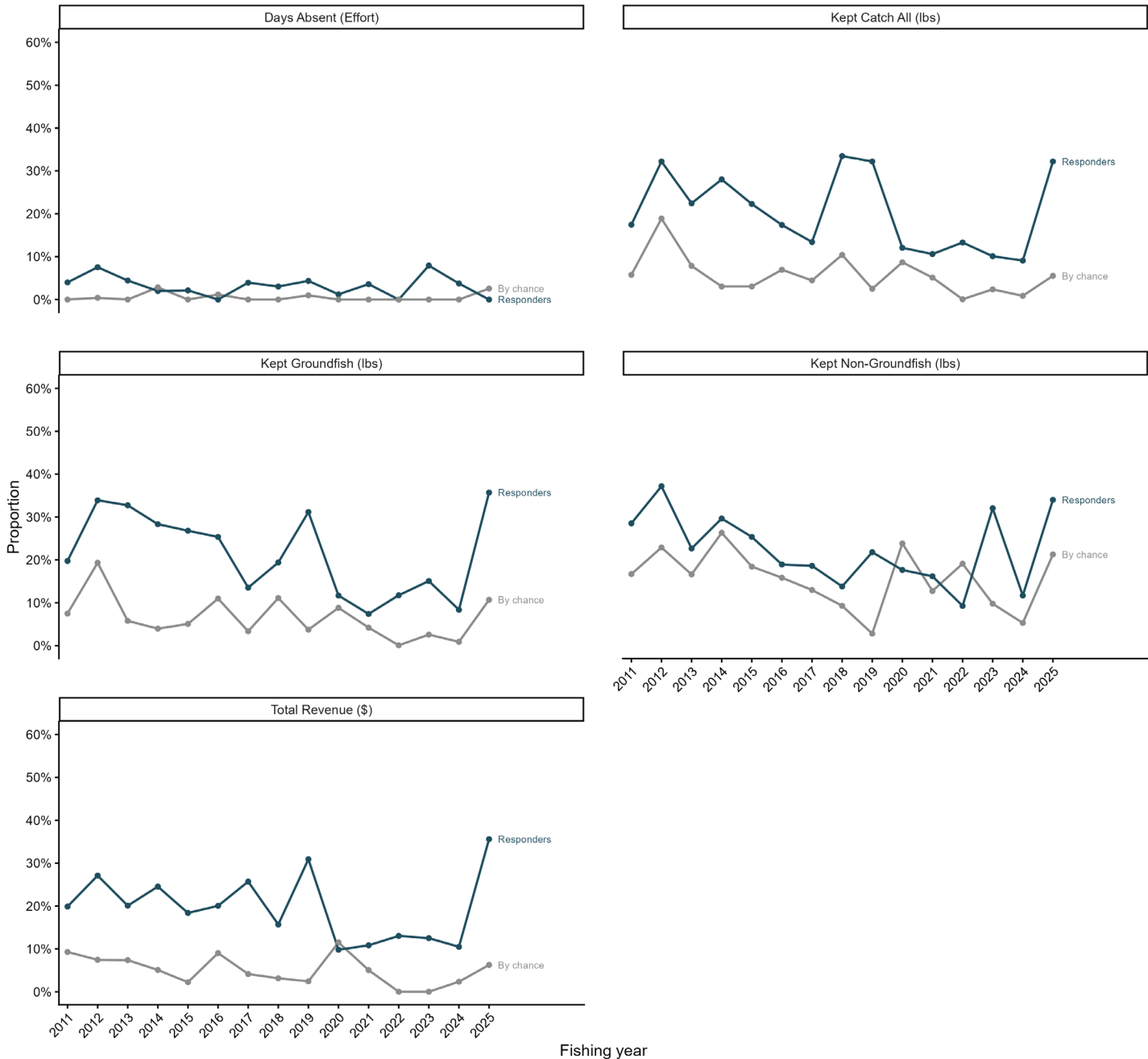


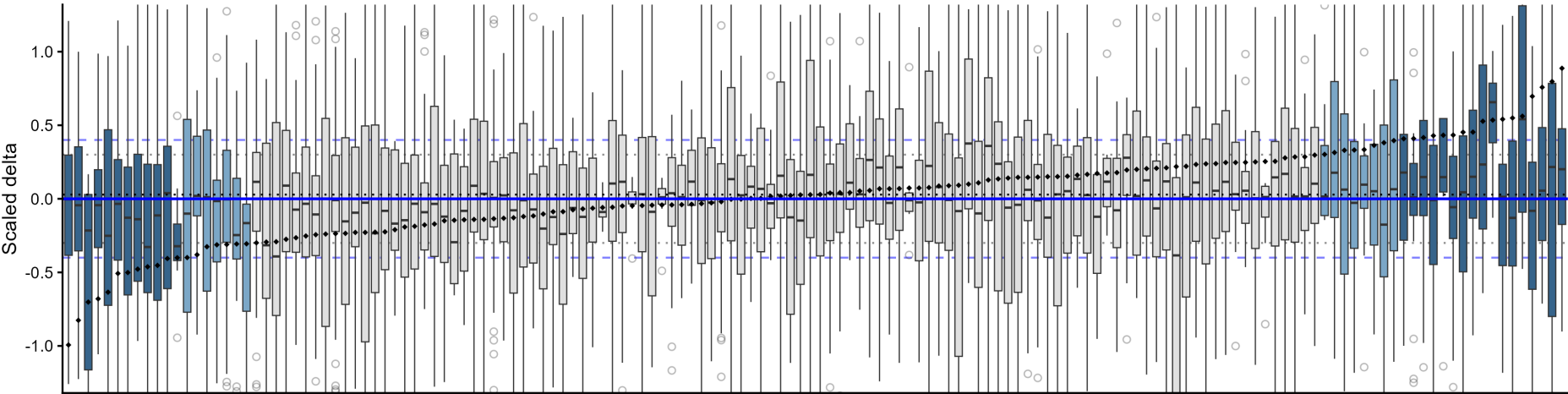
Figure 4: Trawl, kept catch, 2012-2014.

Kept catch, all species - Trawl, 2012-2014

Each box is one vessel; 6 pairs per vessel in every group so precision is constant. Diamonds are each vessel's matched mean, the value used for ordering and shading; box centre lines are medians. Dotted grey lines at +/-30%, dashed blue at +/-40%; the black dotted line is the panel's median vessel. Scaled by the pooled vessel-year mean. Y clipped to [-1.2, 1.2]. Spread beyond the control panel is signal in EITHER direction: both channels are observer responses.

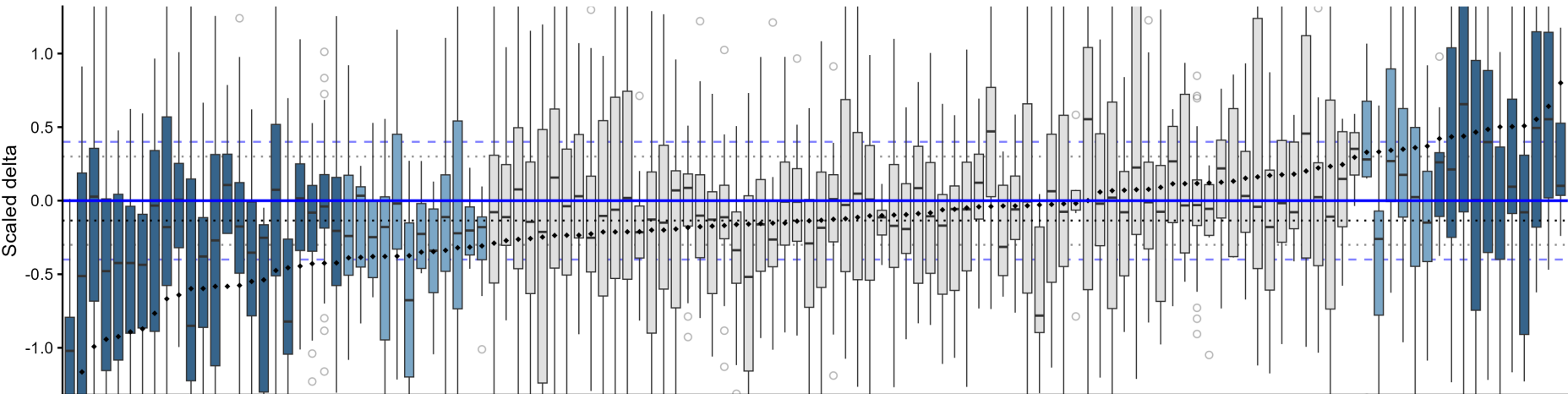
Control: concordant pairs

Visual null. Two trips of the same monitoring status (UU 87%, OO 13%).
152 vessels x 6 pairs | median vessel mean +0.029 | beyond +/-40%: 19% (8% lower, 11% higher) | 30-40% band: 10%



Treated: observed minus unobserved

Shading is magnitude only. Left of centre = landed less when observed; right = landed more. Both are candidate observer responses.
124 vessels x 6 pairs | median vessel mean -0.135 | beyond +/-40%: 27% (19% lower, 9% higher) | 30-40% band: 15%



Individual vessels, ordered by their own mean

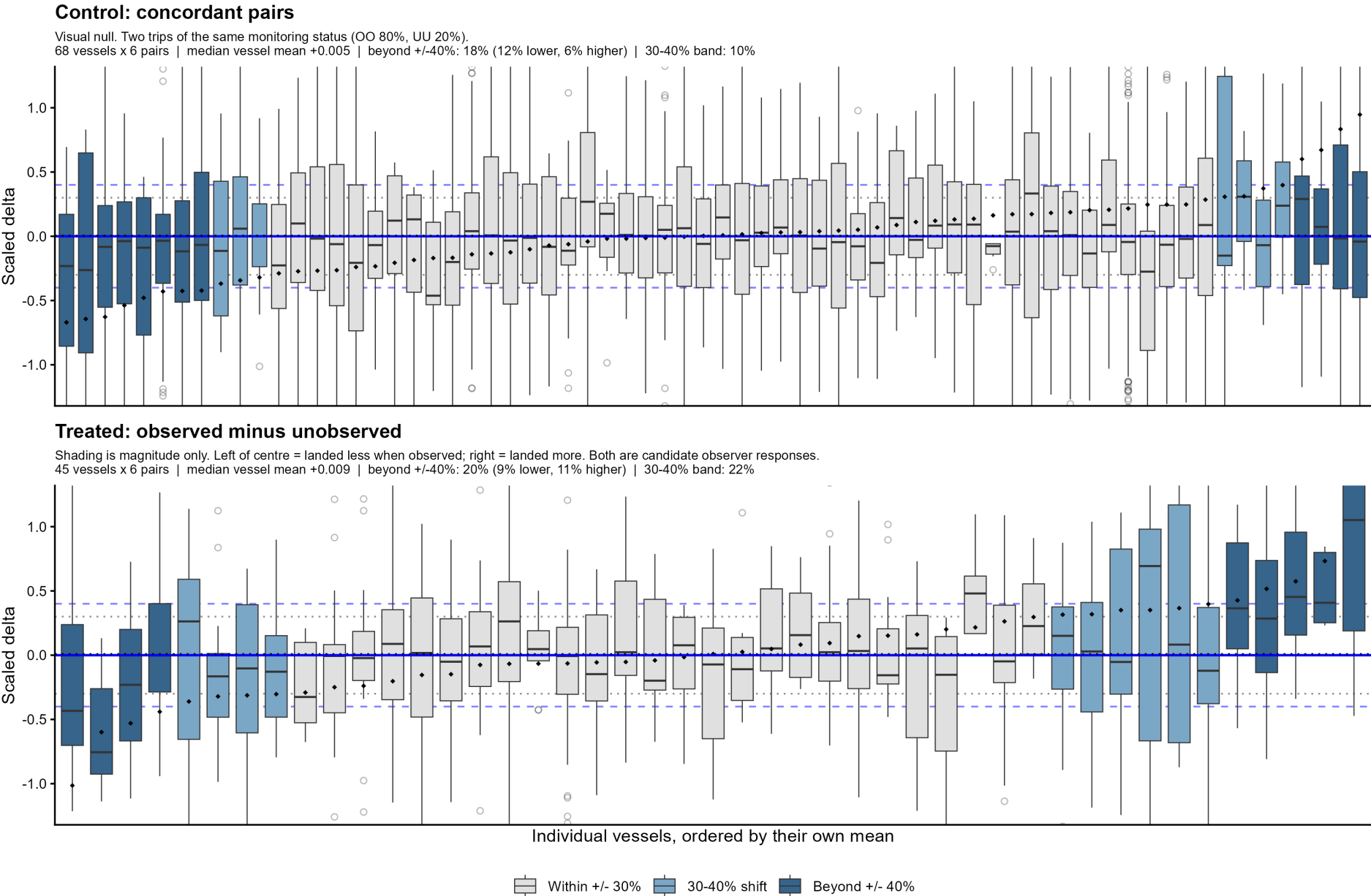
Within +/- 30% 30-40% shift Beyond +/- 40%



Figure 5: Trawl, kept catch, 2022-2025.

Kept catch, all species - Trawl, 2022-2025

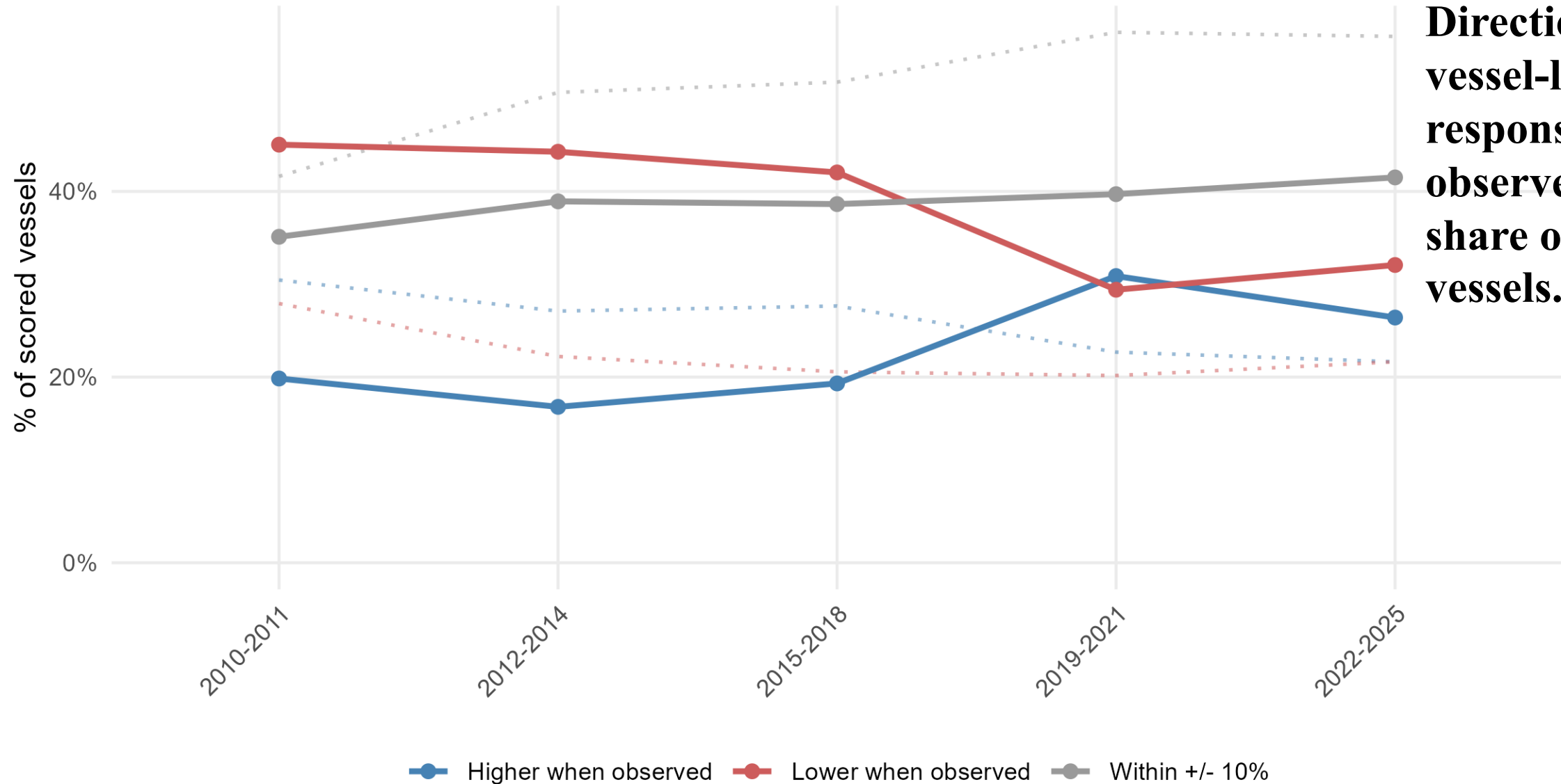
Each box is one vessel; 6 pairs per vessel in every group so precision is constant. Diamonds are each vessel's matched mean, the value used for ordering and shading; box centre lines are medians. Dotted grey lines at +/-30%, dashed blue at +/-40%; the black dotted line is the panel's median vessel. Scaled by the pooled vessel-year mean. Y clipped to [-1.2, 1.2]. Spread beyond the control panel is signal in EITHER direction: both channels are observer responses.



Direction of vessel-level response: Trawl fleet (k_all)

Solid lines: treated pairs, one observed and one unobserved trip. Dotted lines: concordant pairs, where no observer contrast exists, shown as the reference for what an absence of effect looks like. Share of scored vessels.

Figure 6: Trawl vessel kept catch. Direction of vessel-level response to observers, as a share of scored vessels.



BEHAVIORAL CHANGE OR COMPOSITIONAL CHANGE?

- The vessels that had clear bias on observed trips in 2015-2018 do not have a measurable bias in 2022-2025.
- Vessels that were active across these 10 years reduced their observer effect as coverage increased.
- This is evidence for a change in behavior but is not a definitive answer because only 45 of 135 active trawls permits had sufficient data for this examination.
- Further, vessels that have actively fished in this 10-year window may be different in meaningful ways from vessels that have exited the fishery.



QUESTIONS?

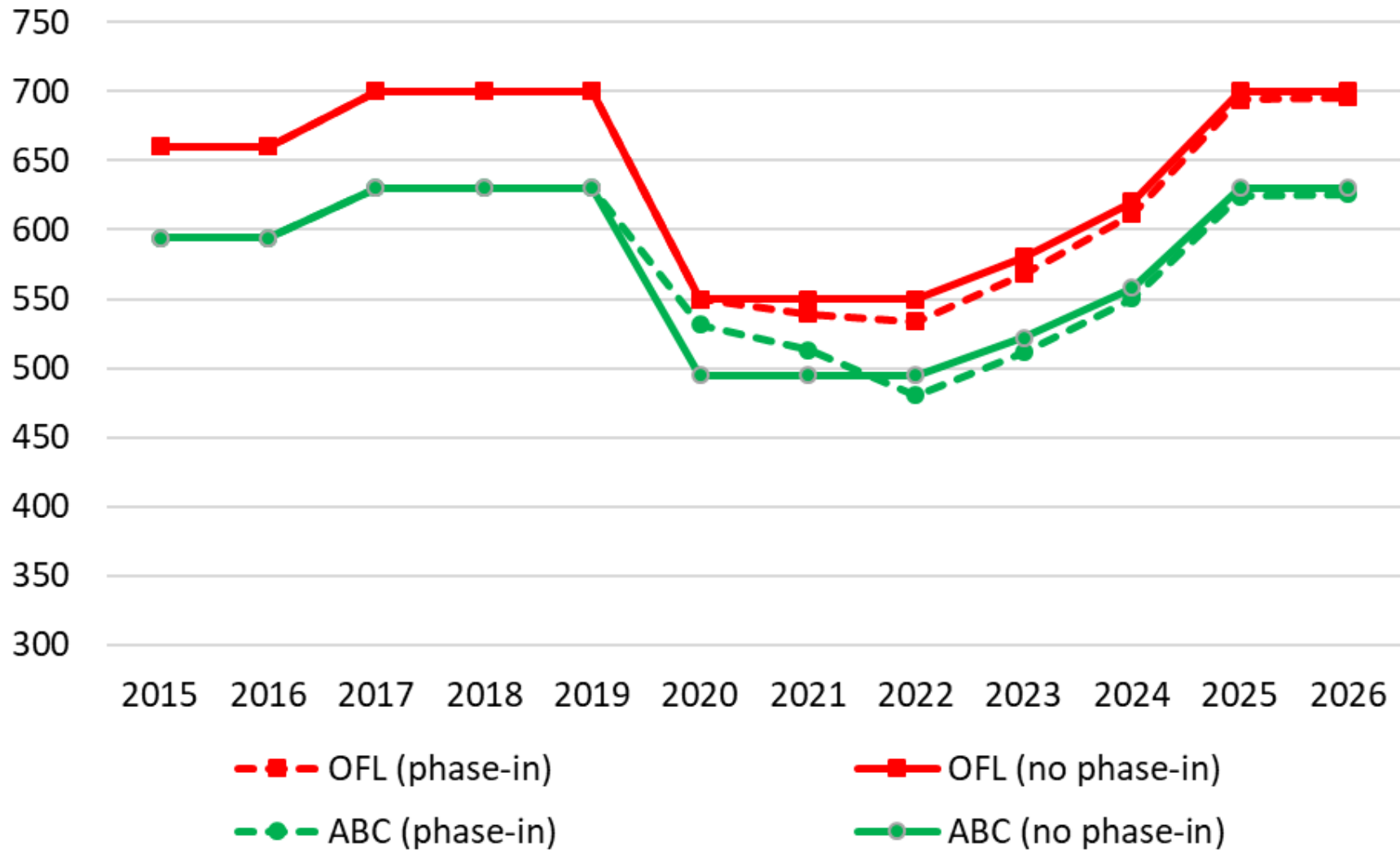


EXTRA SLIDES



New England Fishery
Management Council

OFLs and ABCs With and Without Phase-in

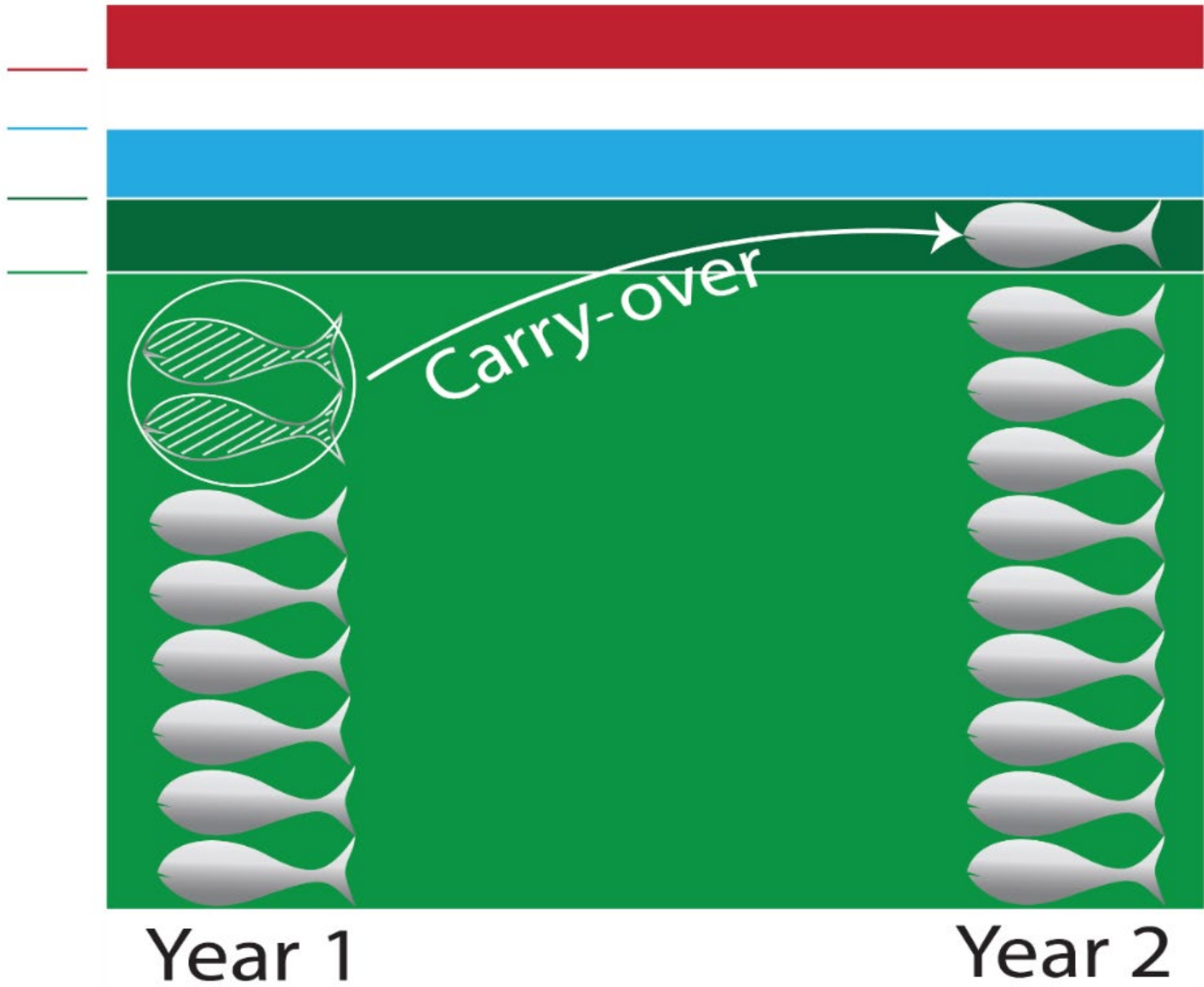


Overfishing
Limit

Acceptable
Biological
Catch

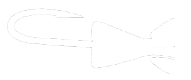
Annual
Catch
Limit year 2

Annual
Catch
Limit year 1



Year 1

Year 2



Overfishing
Limit

Option
B

Acceptable
Biological
Catch year 2

Acceptable
Biological
Catch year 1

Carry-over

Acceptable = Annual
Biological Catch = Catch
Limit

Year 1

Year 2