

THE NORTHEAST CANYONS AND SEAMOUNTS MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT: IMPACTS ON COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

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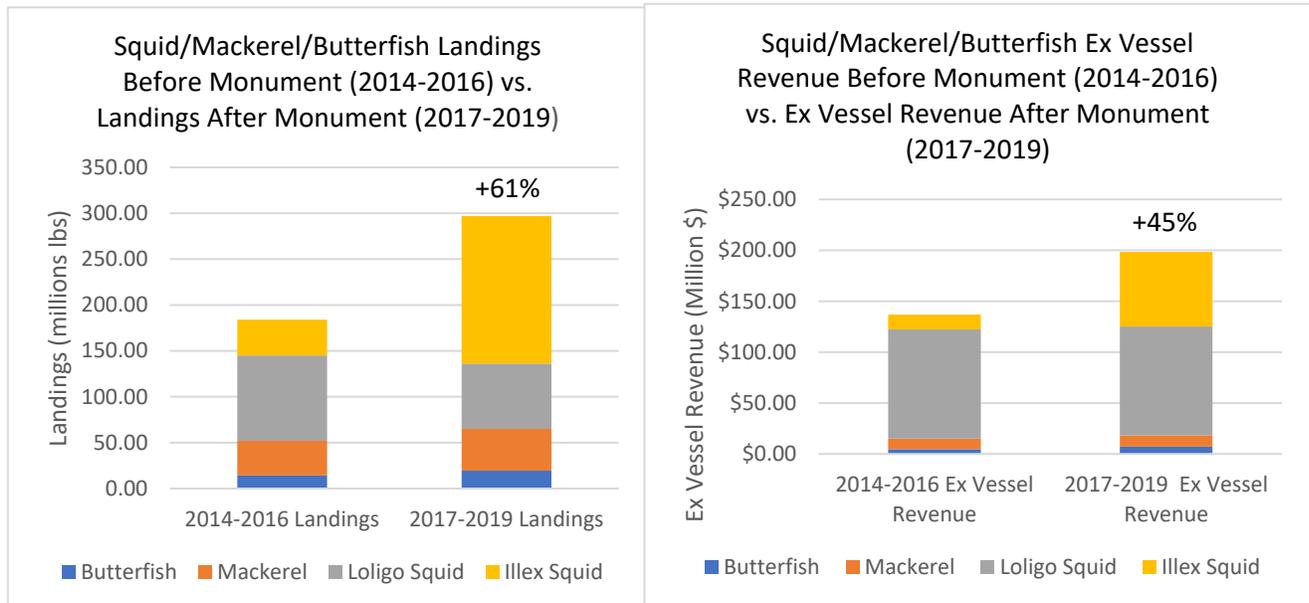
Before the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument was designated in September 2016, representatives of the New England commercial fishing industry claimed that it would devastate their fisheries. They continued to make such claims post-designation and, in June 2020, President Trump rescinded the Monument's commercial fishing prohibition, citing significant impacts on commercial fishing as the primary basis for his action.

To test the veracity of these claims, NRDC examined public data on commercial landings and revenues from the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program, a state-federal body that is charged with compiling this information for fisheries along the Atlantic coast. We specifically compared landings and revenues for the three years before designation (2014-2016) to the three years following designation (2017-2019) for (1) the squid, mackerel, and butterfish fishery and (2) the Atlantic highly migratory species (HMS) fishery, which targets tuna and swordfish. These are the primary commercial fisheries that had been operating in the Monument area, according to the fishing industry, and were prohibited in November 2016 as a result of the Monument's designation.¹ (The 2016 designation allowed fisheries for red crab and lobster to continue to operate until 2023.)

This is what we found: As detailed below, **in the three years following the Monument's designation in 2016, overall landings and revenues actually increased in the squid, mackerel, and butterfish fishery. Overall tuna and swordfish landings and revenues in the HMS fishery remained essentially the same. In other words, based on government data, there is no indication that the Monument caused economic loss for the commercial fishing industry while it was closed to commercial fishing.**

Squid/Mackerel/Butterfish Fishery

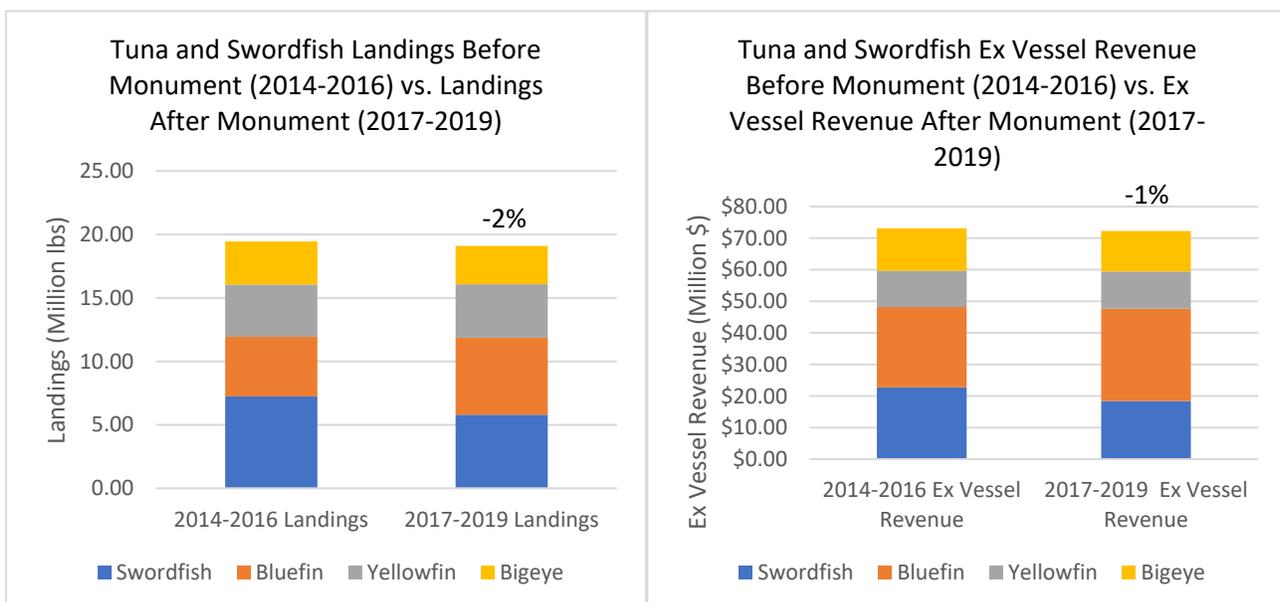
- As the left figure on the next page shows, overall landings in the squid, mackerel, and butterfish fishery increased 61% in 2017-2019, the three years following the Monument's designation, compared to overall landings in the previous three years (2014-2016).²
- As the right figure on the next page shows, overall revenues (ex-vessel) for the squid, mackerel, and butterfish fishery increased 45% in 2017-2019, following Monument designation, compared to overall revenues in the three years before designation (2014-2016).
- Landings and revenues in this fishery are also up for Rhode Island specifically, where most landings occur and which has the ports most proximate to the Monument: 2017-2019 squid, mackerel, and butterfish landings and revenues for Rhode Island increased 33% and 30% respectively over landings and revenues in 2014-2016.



Source: Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program. (20). *Non-confidential Commercial Landings* [Data file]. Retrieved from https://safis.accsp.org:8443/accsp_prod/f?p=1490:310:9873340730653::NO:RP:P310_GO_FLAG:-1.

Tuna and Swordfish (HMS) Fishery

- As the left figure below shows, overall landings of the principal tuna stocks (bigeye, yellowfin, and bluefin) and swordfish in the Atlantic HMS fishery did not meaningfully change in 2017-2019, the three years following the Monument's designation, from overall landings in the previous three years (2014-2016).
- Similarly, as the right figure below shows, **overall revenues (ex-vessel) from tuna and swordfish catch in the Atlantic HMS fishery remained essentially unchanged in 2017-2010, the three years after the Monument's designation, compared to overall revenues for the previous three years (2014-2016).**³



Source: Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program. (2020). *Non-confidential Commercial Landings* [Data file]. Retrieved from https://safis.accsp.org:8443/accsp_prod/f?p=1490:300:3914913153587::NO:RP:P300_GO_FLAG:-1.

¹ Meghan Lapp, Rhode Island's Seafreeze, "Murky doings: No due process in monument designation," published September 19, 2016, <http://centerforsustainablefisheries.org/murky-doings-no-due-process-in-monument-designation/>; Boston Globe, "Interior secretary visits Mass. to review marine monument," June 16, 2017, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2017/06/16/interior-secretary-visits-mass-review-marine-monument/7uvirr690diefQdbYVL9bO/story.html> (quoting Meghan Lapp); Blue Water Fishermen's Association, June 23, 2017 memorandum submitted to Secretary Zinke as part of National Monument Review Ref: DOI—2017—0002.

² All data used in this analysis is from: Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program. (2019). *Non-confidential Commercial Landings* [Data file]. Retrieved from https://safis.accsp.org:8443/accsp_prod/?p=1490:300:3914913153587::NO:RP:P300_GO_FLAG:-1.

³ The very slight decline in recent landings and revenues in this fishery is attributable to swordfish. Swordfish catch has been declining steadily for almost a decade, i.e., since before the monument's designation. NOAA Fisheries, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Stock Assessment and Fisheries Evaluation Report 2019, available at <file:///C:/Users/bsewell/Downloads/2019%20SAFE%20Report%20for%20Atlantic%20Highly%20Migratory%20Species.pdf>.