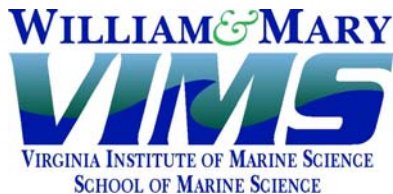


2009 Status of the Blue Crab Stock

Briefing for the Press

April 17, 2009

Teleconference



This Presentation

Blue Crab Life Cycle

The Harvest

Winter Dredge Survey Results

Summary

Blue Crab Life Cycle

Mating occurs
May through
September



females begin
Southward migration in
early fall



zoea
30-45 days
over
continental
shelf

for hatching
water temp = 66 to 81°F
salinity = 23-35 ppt

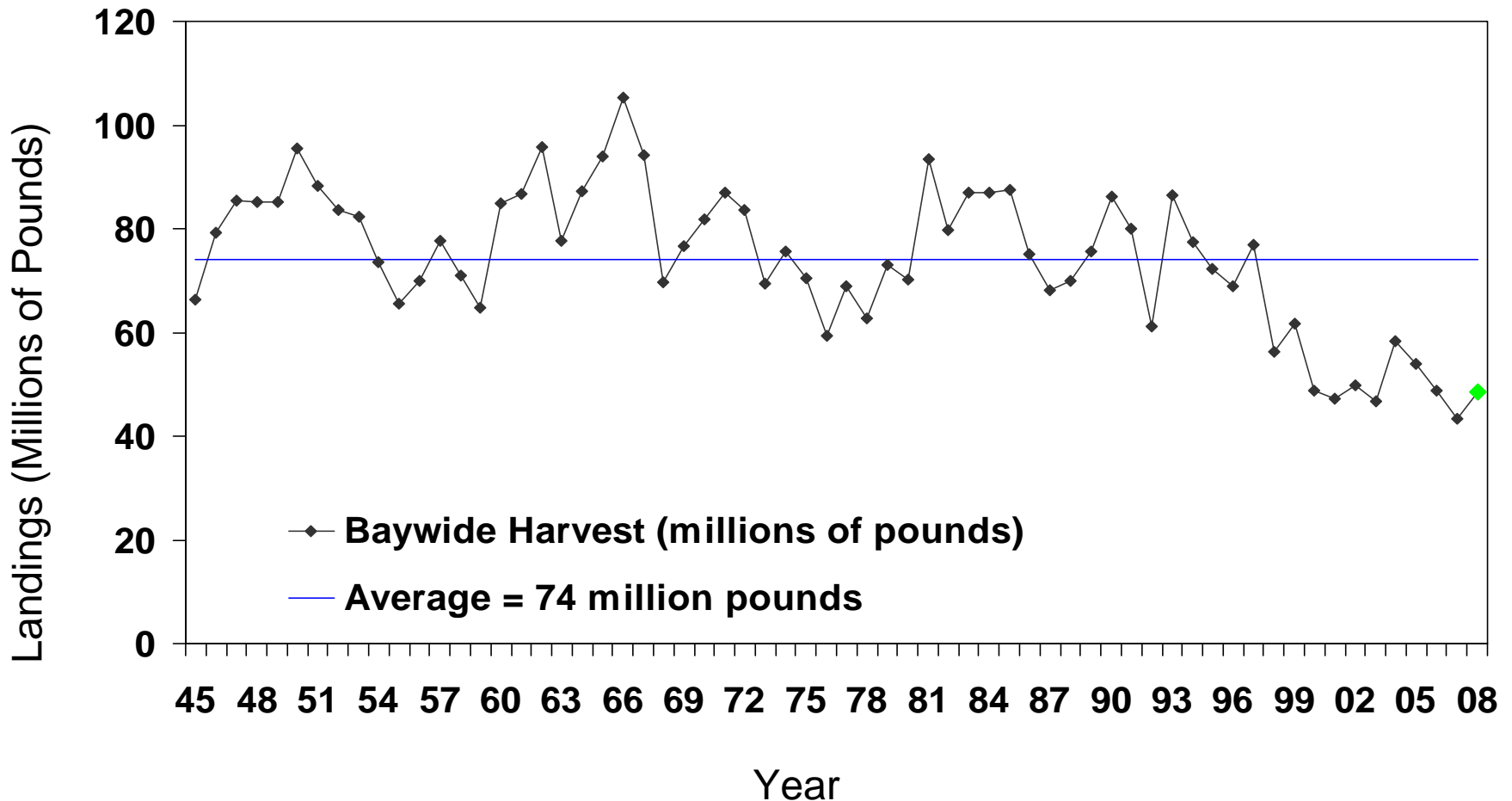
megalopae



6th or 7th
molt

The 2008 Bay-wide harvest was approximately 48.6 million pounds. The harvest of male crabs in 2008 increased in all jurisdictions, whereas the female harvest decreased.

2008 Harvest estimate is preliminary pending review of Maryland estimates by the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee



Success of the 2008 Female Conservation Measures:

- The 2008 Baywide harvest of mature female hard crabs was approximately 20.2 million pounds, an estimated 34% reduction from the potential 2008 Baywide female harvest.
- The 2008 Baywide mature female target harvest (to achieve the full 34% reduction was) 20.3 million pounds.

Estimated 2008 male, mature female and peeler harvest for Chesapeake Bay in millions of pounds.

	*Maryland	Virginia	Potomac River Fisheries	Total
Male Hard Crabs	18.7	5.8	1.6	26.1
Mature Female Hard Crabs	9.3	10	0.9	20.2
Peeler and soft crabs	1.4	0.89	.023	2.3
Total	29.4	16.7	2.5	48.6

**Maryland harvest estimates are preliminary pending review by the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee*

Harvest is an important indicator of fishery health, but the abundance of crabs and the percentage of crabs removed each year by the fishery is what concerns us most.

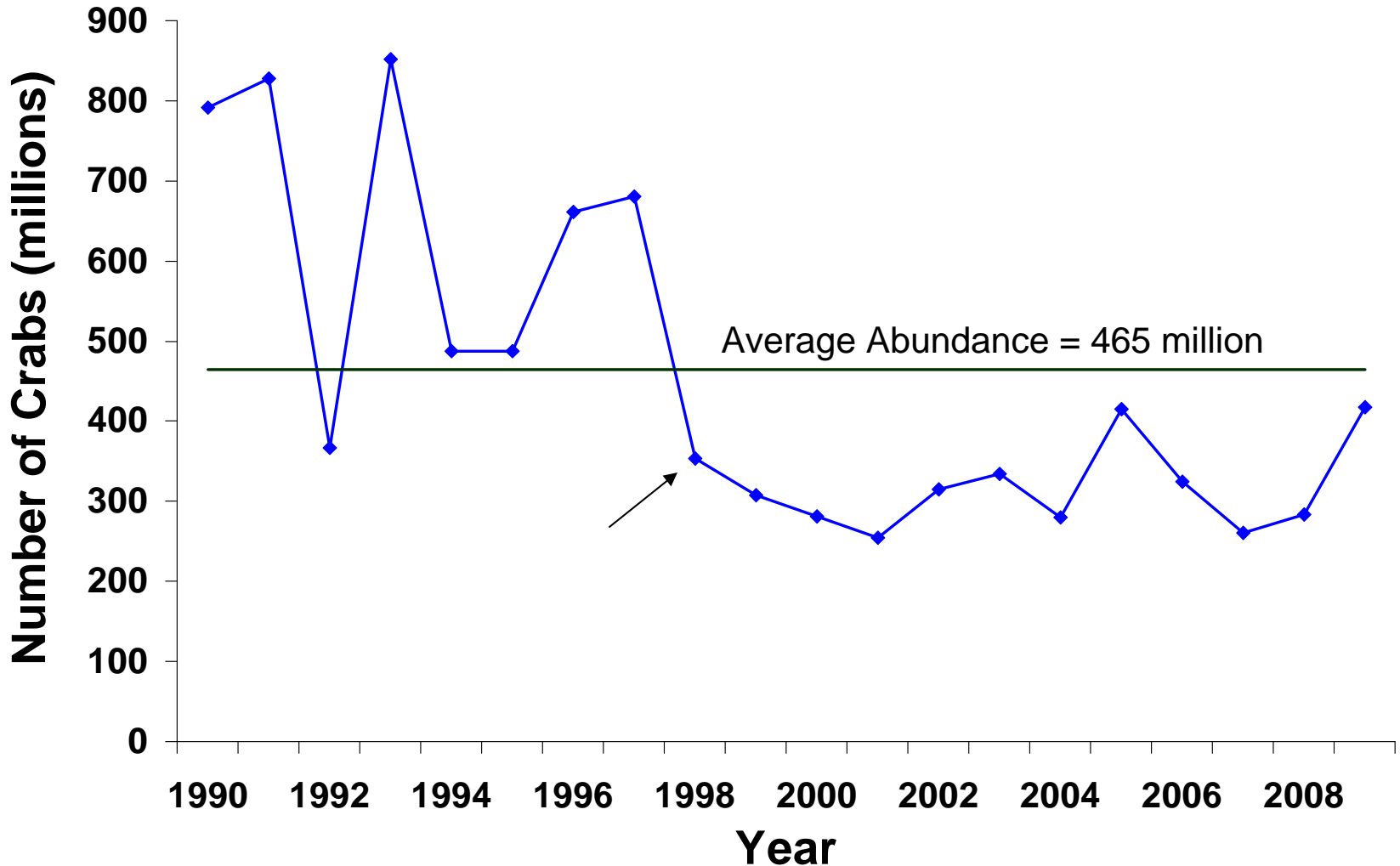
Abundance is measured each year by the winter dredge survey.

Survey results are combined with annual fishery removals to guide management decisions.

What are the Numbers...

The Total Number of Crabs Estimated to be Overwintering in Chesapeake Bay 1990-2009.

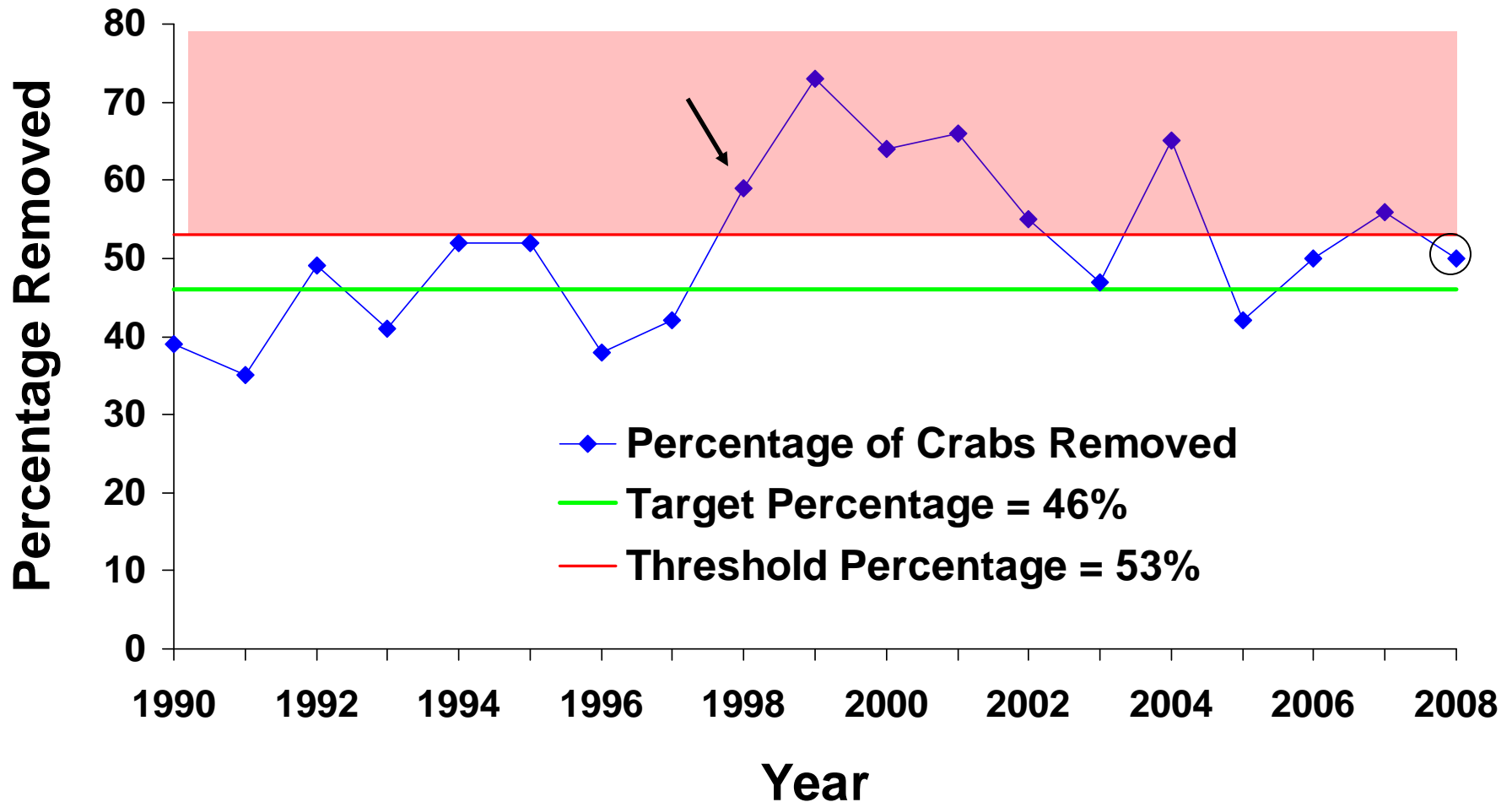
This includes the young-of-the-year (age 0) AND spawning-age crabs.



How Much of this Total Abundance can be Harvested Each Year?

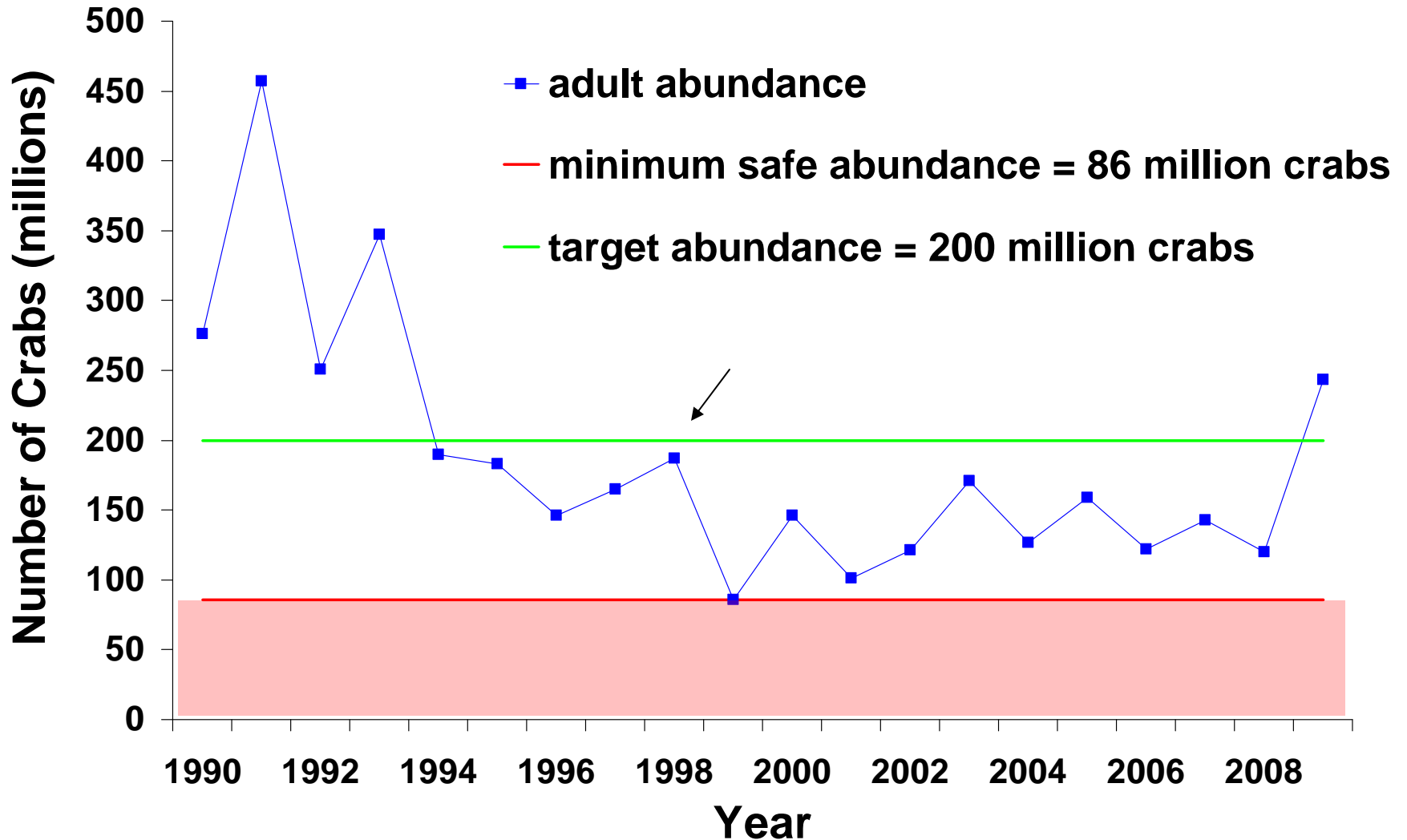
- Each year the crab fisheries can safely remove 46% of the total population.
- 46% of the population is the TARGET removal for management, which means that the average removal over many years should be 46% of the total abundance.
- Removing more than 53% of the total abundance can threaten sustainability of the population.
- Annual removals should NOT exceed 53%.

The percentage of crabs removed from the population each year by fishing relative to target and threshold levels.

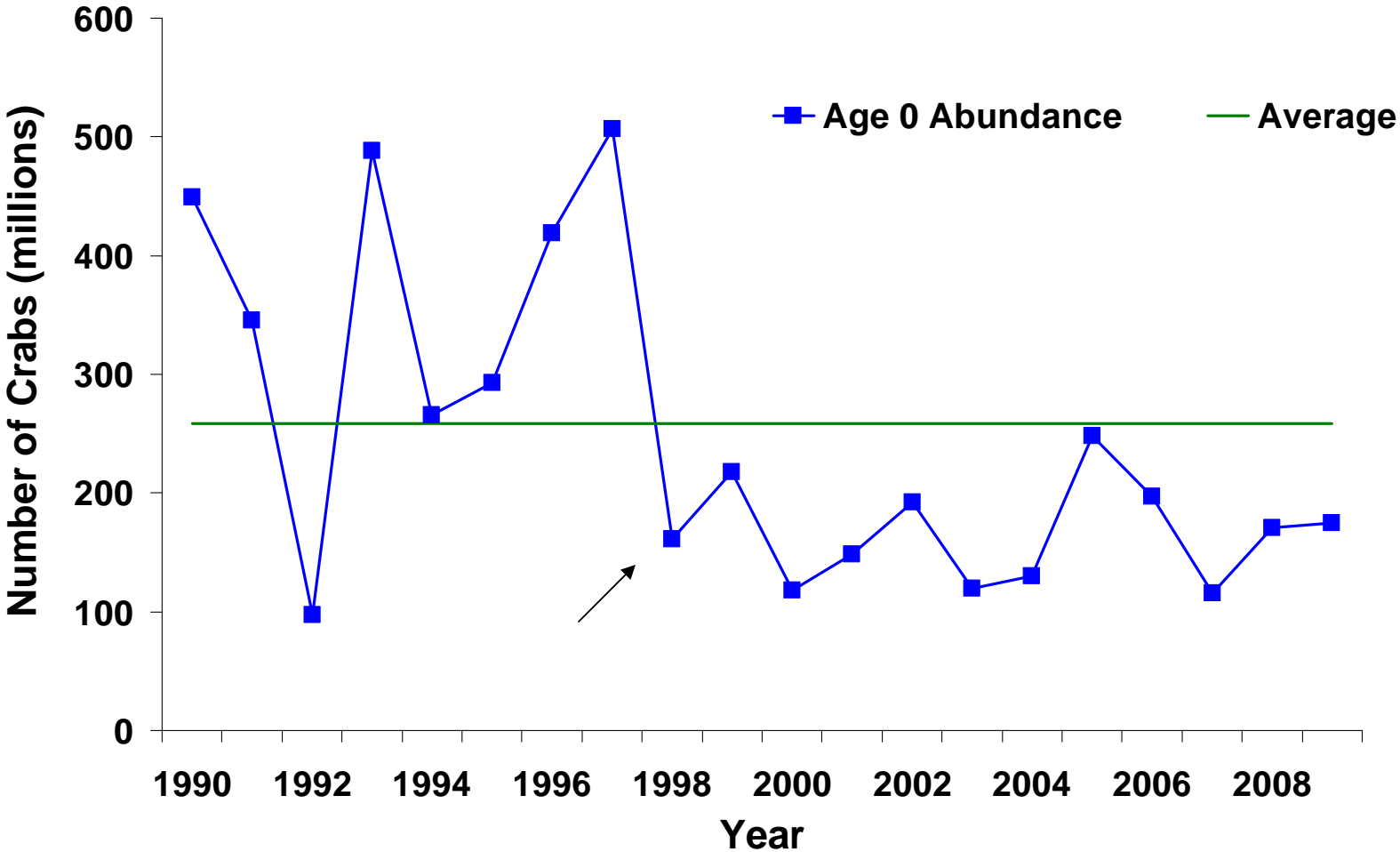


The 2008 removal level is estimated to be 50%. This estimate is preliminary pending review by the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee

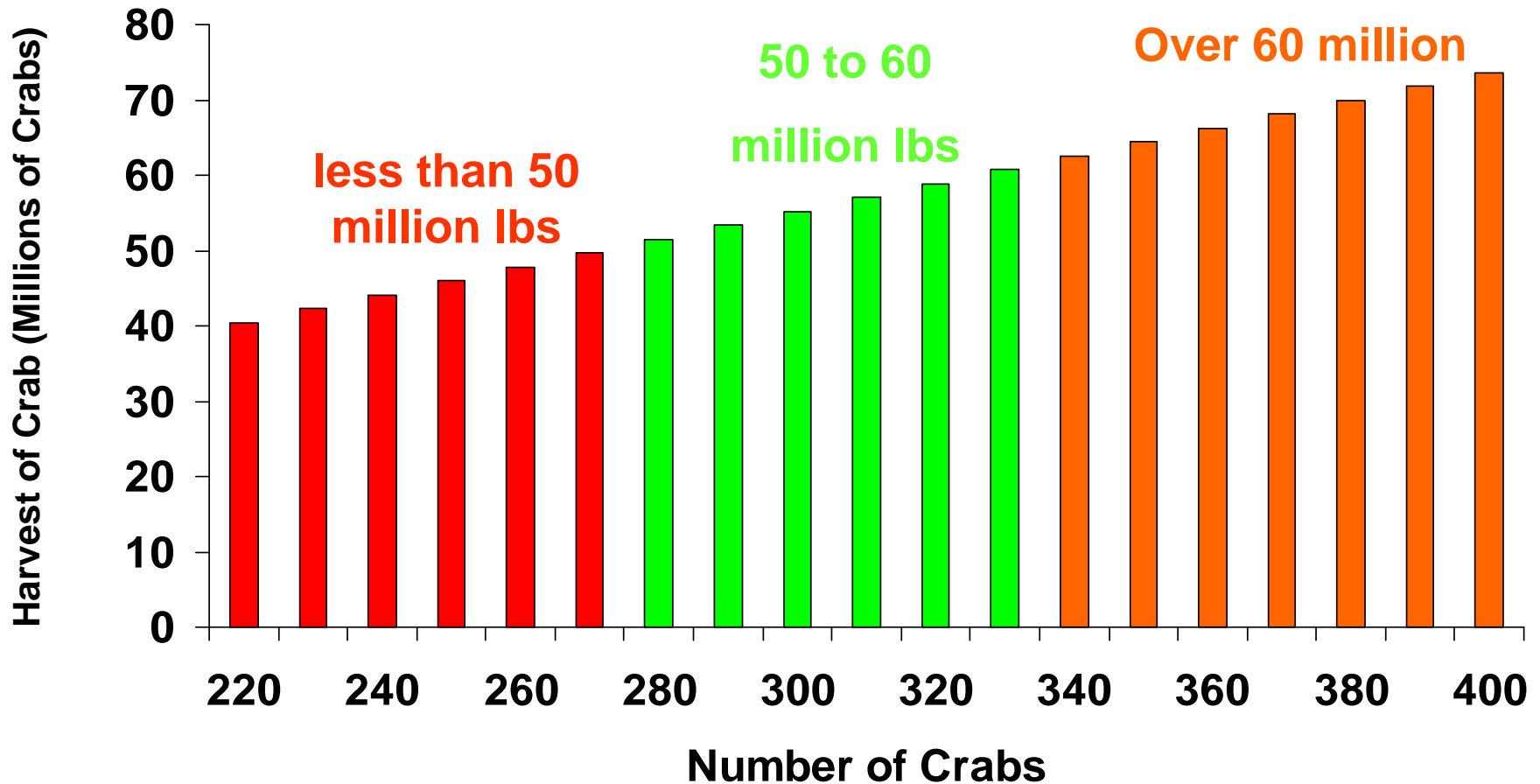
The Number of Spawning-Age Crabs in Chesapeake Bay between 1990-2009.



The Number of Young-of-the-year (Age 0) Crabs in Chesapeake Bay between 1990-2009.



Maintaining an annual harvest percentage of 46%, allows harvest to grow as abundance increases.



Summary Points

- Total number of crabs overwintering in Chesapeake Bay increased from 280 million in 2007-2008 to just over 400 million in 2008-2009.
- The increase was primarily due to a doubling in the number of adult female crabs, though adult male abundance also increased by 50 %.
- Overall adult abundance in 2008-2009 was 243 million crabs – slightly over the target of 200 million set by the Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee.

Summary Points - Continued

- Abundance of young-of-the-year crabs, did not change measurably from last year, and remains below the 18-year average.
- The sharp increase in crab abundance was not a random event nor was it due to environmental conditions. It was due to management actions.
- It is critical to ensure that the adult females survive to spawn this summer, and that the offspring produce a healthy spawning stock as well.

END