

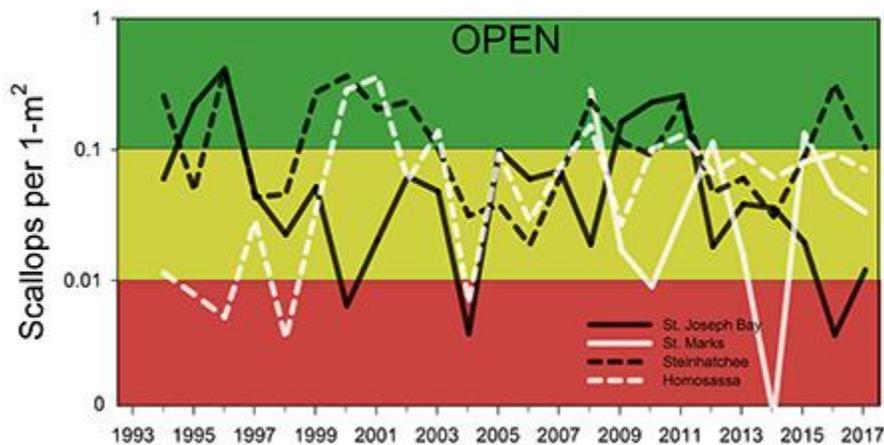
## 2017 FWRI Annual Bay Scallop Abundance Survey

Each summer, biologists assess bay scallop populations along the Gulf coast of Florida, located in open and closed recreational harvest areas (see map below). Surveys are usually initiated in June and completed in July. Scientists look at long-term trends in the abundance of scallops in both the open and closed areas and present those findings to the Division of Marine Fisheries Management.

Scientists classify bay scallop abundances into categories based on the average number of scallops per square meter (approximately 1.2 square yards). Collapsed (red) populations average between 0 and 0.01 scallop per m<sup>2</sup>; Vulnerable (yellow) populations average between 0.01 and 0.1 scallop per m<sup>2</sup>; and Stable (green) populations average between 0.1 and 1 scallop per m<sup>2</sup>. Based on the historic landings data, bay scallop abundances in Florida were likely greater than one scallop per square meter, and capable of supporting a commercial fishery. In the last 20 years, the greatest average observed at a study site in a given year was 0.50 scallop per square meter.

### Open Harvest Area

There are four study sites within the open harvest area: St. Joseph Bay (Gulf County), St. Marks (Franklin and Wakulla), Steinhatchee (Taylor and Dixie) and Homosassa (Citrus and Hernando). The graph below illustrates the average number of scallops observed per square meter in those study sites each year and how that number relates to the abundance categories. In most years, populations within the open harvest area have been stable (green) or vulnerable (yellow) and only occasionally collapsed (red). Usually those state-wide population collapses can be attributed to major environmental events such as an El Niño (1998), hurricanes (2004) or tropical storms (2010). A large-scale bay scallop restoration effort was conducted from 1998–2002 near the Crystal and Homosassa rivers in Citrus County and as a result the Homosassa abundance increased substantially in 2000 and 2001. Coastal communities benefited greatly from those restoration efforts, and the Crystal River/Homosassa Springs area continues to be a popular destination during scallop season.



Scallop abundance declined in three of the four open-harvest areas:

In St. Joseph Bay scallop density Increased (2 scallops per survey station in 2016 to 7 in 2017). The percentage of stations with scallops present increased. This area will be open for a limited season.

In Franklin/Wakulla area, density decreased (28 in 2016 to 20 in 2017) but the percentage of stations with scallops present increased.

In Taylor/Dixie scallop density decreased (189 in 2016 to 62 in 2017) but all survey stations had scallops present. This area opened to harvest early and will also close early in 2017.

In Citrus/Hernando County (open to harvest) density decreased (55 in 2016 to 34 in 2017) but the percentage of stations with scallops present increased.

The table below lists the average number of scallops observed per station (600m<sup>2</sup>) over the last five years within the four study sites that are located in the open harvest area.

Year	Gulf	Franklin/Wakulla	Taylor/Dixie	Citrus/Hernando
2017	7	20	62	34
2016	2	28	189	55
2015	11	79	52	48
2014	21	<1	18	36
2013	22	9	36	54
2012	10	68	28	39
Average All Time	50	39	86	52

### Closed Harvest Area

There are four study sites in the areas closed to scallop harvest: St. Andrew Bay (Bay County), Anclote (Pasco and Pinellas), Tampa Bay (Pinellas, Hillsborough and Manatee) and Pine Island Sound (Lee). In most years, populations in the closed harvest areas have been Collapsed. While there has been an increase in the number of scallops observed in the closed areas during the last 10 years, likely due to a combination of management (prohibited harvest) and restoration efforts, those scallop populations continue to be extremely sensitive to localized conditions and as a result suffer frequent collapses. Unstable populations take longer to recover from a collapse and have reduced reproductive success due to fewer adults available to spawn and an increased distance between them.

### Harvest regulations

Scallop harvesting is very popular in Steinhatchee, Port St. Joe, and Crystal River/Homosassa Springs. The map below shows the current coastal counties where bay scallop harvest is legal (shaded area). Harvest periods, harvest locations and fishing regulations are subject to change. Before collecting bay scallops, recreational harvesters should review current [rules and regulations](#)